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Catalan Review, Vol. I, number 1, (1986), p. 61-78

J. V. FOIX: "THERE ARE POETS, THE BEST ONES, WHO CAN MILK CELESTIAL COWS"

MANUEL DURAN

If "to see Infinity in a grain of sand" is still a valid formula for a visionary poet such as J. V. Foix, if Blake's dictum is still indeed the battle cry of most of the great poets of our modern times, from the Romantics to the last Surrealists, it remains the task of the critic to examine *how*, in what way, with what techniques and language tools each poet sets out to accomplish this task.

In the case of J. V. Foix the all-encompassing vision is often rooted in minute, microscopic detail which can often be useful for us, readers and critics, as a point of departure. Anthropologists, when taking photographs of vast monuments surrounded by desert sands or twisted jungle trees, are wont to ask a colleague or a native to pose at the foot of the monument, thus introducing a human dimension, a human scale, into what otherwise would appear to us perhaps bigger or perhaps smaller than it actually is. We should do the same with the gigantic prose compositions of J. V. Foix, start with some humble everyday object which the poet, deliberately or not, has placed in the picture, a significant yet modest *collage* that will help us relate to the grain of sand without losing touch with Infinity.

For it is the humble and commonplace that is the indispensable collaborator of the poet — provided, however, that this humble object, this landscape seen day after day every time the poet opens his window in the morning, possesses an inner light that a privileged eye can see. What this inner light can be is

not easy for us to imagine if we are not beside the poet, if we are not guided by his words and by his wisdom. Working on Foix from this side of the Atlantic, Patricia Boehne states,

> A translator an ocean removed from the Costa Brava and the "lived" reality of the poet cannot capture all the nuances of a surreal landscape. The rock formations, hidden coves, flowering herbs and even lifestyle of the poet and his friends all contribute meaning. The colors of the Mediterranean where it meets rock and sand, the wind patterns, the shape of a rock on a certain beach, the speech of the fisherman who tends his boat are all reflected in Foix's poetry.[1]

Always close to the minutiae of everyday life, Foix was for years a modest businessman in one of his parents' shops:

> He himself sits as *caissier* beneath the pictures of his father and mother ... He was a dutiful son, obedient to his parents in every exterior way — even to the point of marriage — but he never shared his interior life with them. They went to their graves without knowing that he had written one word of poetry or prose. Their prudent business heads, however, gave Foix the training and steady income which has kept his own life from being the precarious existence traditionally endured by so many poets. It has enabled him to write for over fifty years, to maintain his health (which is not of the best) and has spared him physical and material abuse — unlike his two close friends and poets, Salvat-Papasseit who died of tuberculosis at twenty-four and Gabriel Ferrater, a poet, who committed suicide.[2]

A son of shopkeepers, a grandson of shepherds: Foix reminds us that it is possible to reach the blinding heights of a Blake, a Coleridge, a Rimbaud, without necessarily becoming a *poète maudit*. Foix followed a path equally arduous and perhaps more difficult: he became invisible. It was not only his parents

[1] Patricia Boehne, *J. V. Foix*, Boston, Twayne Publishers, 1980, 10.
[2] *Ibid.*, 21.

who were unaware of his work as a writer. Before 1939 almost no one in Catalonia or elsewhere suspected that Foix had become a first-rank poet. As Pere Gimferrer, one of the Catalan critics who knows Foix best, has pointed out, "he has not remained unpublished, like Juan Larrea, but one could say that he has taken pleasure in walking along the paths of poetry like a monarch travelling incognito." Before the end of the Spanish Civil War almost no mention is found anywhere of his poetry. His intense activity as an essayist, a journalist, and the editor in chief of the daily newspaper *La Publicitat*, focused attention upon his prose writings. Moreover, the few poems that he did publish were almost undecipherable to the average reader. He was known and appreciated as a poet only by a select few. He continued writing in Catalan after 1939, but by then the persecution of the Catalan language under Franco had turned the activity of every Catalan writer into something akin to a crime, something clandestine and unmentionable. Catalan had become a non-language. Catalan poetry had gone underground. Catalan avant-garde poetry was twice an orphan, first because the Government had banned Catalan as a publishable language, secondly because even when an avant-garde poem could be mimeographed or printed, the audience was not there, the readers had been turned off avant-garde art and literature — or have never been in tune with it. Foix's universe seemed to have collapsed all around him. His basically conservative and religious background had prevented him from siding wholeheartedly with the Republic during the Civil War. He did not go into exile as other Catalan poets, such as Josep Carner and Carles Riba, had done. Yet Franco's Spain was denying him the possibility of publishing in his own language. Faced with official repression some Catalan writers abandoned their mother tongue for a while and wrote in Castilian: this was the case of

Josep Pla, one of the keenest and most sensitive writers Catalonia has produced. Even writers who had little to fear from Franco because they had supported him ideologically, such as Villalonga, switched to Castilian for a few years: thus Villalonga's masterpiece, *Bearn*, was written in Castilian in its first version.

Foix never gave up hope, never stopped writing in Catalan. It is true that until 1964 none of the slim books he published reached a printing beyond 300 copies: these were almost private editions, which made it easier for the censors to overlook or ignore them. Patience has been Foix's main characteristic, a certain deliberate undramatic nonchalance that has allowed him to last out his troubles and his initial lack of an audience. Patience does not mean passivity: towards the end of the Forties an attempt was made by Foix and other members of the Catalan avant-garde to regroup and establish a link, a continuity, with the avant-garde that had flourished in Catalonia before the war and the Franco regime.

A group of poets and painters announced in 1948 that they were ready to resume the exploration started in the Twenties and Thirties. The group gave itself a name: "Dau al Set", literally "The Die with Seven Points". The inspirer of this group was Foix. The most famous artist was Foix's close friend, Joan Miró. Other young members would soon become well-known, such as the painter Tàpies and the poet Brossa. The presence of the visual artists in this group was essential. It was in the visual arts that the avant-garde had reached the highest levels of creation in Catalonia before the war, especially with Miró and Dalí. Dalí had to be left out because ethically and politically he had betrayed the avant-garde (André Breton had made an anagram with the letters of his name: "Salvador Dalí" could be read thus: "Avida Dollars") and had become an inter-

national buffoon. This was regrettable, since no one denied Dalí's talent and doubly so for Foix because he and Dalí had been close friends at the beginning of their careers. Yet the Catalan avant-garde was not lacking in talent. Traditionally all great international movements have penetrated into the Iberian Peninsula through Catalonia. The *dolce stil nuovo* of Italian Renaissance poets reached Garcilaso through his friend Joan Boscà. Catalonia played a major role in the introduction of Romanticism. Art Nouveau found its highest expression in Gaudí. This Catalan love for the visual arts from Gaudí on, flourishing in the avant-garde works of Miró and the young Dalí, probably induced Francis Picabia to publish several issues of his magazine in Barcelona in the Twenties. The famous Dalmau art gallery invited Breton to Barcelona where he gave a lecture later published in *Point du jour.*

We should not forget that, during the Forties, Foix was fast becoming the key figure in the Catalan avant-garde. Not only its main poet, he was also its main theoretician, the introducer of Eluard's poetry, the apologist of Le Corbusier. He had been Lorca's friend, Dalí's companion. He had already collaborated with Miró for a ballet set to twelve-tone music by Robert Gerhard.

The relationship between Foix's poetry and the avant-garde artists who became his friends is a symbiotic one. Foix has been consistently inspired in his visions by the mystery and depth of avant-garde art. In turn Foix's poetry has inspired his friends' art. The most recent example of such an influence can be found in Antoni Tàpies' etchings in the book *L'estació*, a subjective interpretation of the poems, published in 1984. In his first books, *Gertrudis* (1927) and *KRTU* (1932), Foix's prose poems were often organized around plastic, visual elements not too far from the visions of Miró and early Dalí. There were of course

subtle differences created by the personality and temperament of each artist. Miró was primitive, child-like, full of wonder and mystery but never far from naiveté. Dalí was more sophisticated and hieratical. Foix was occasionally whimsical but often gave his readers "the obscure feeling of the solemn and the grandiose" of a world beyond appearances, of what Rudolf Otto looked upon as the *mysterium tremendum*.[3] Of the three it was Foix who was closest to religious inspiration and metaphysical awe.

These differences are much less relevant than what the three Catalan artists had in common. Erich Neumann, in *Art and the Creative Unconscious*, has defined archetypes of the collective unconscious in the following manner:

> as intrinsically formless psychic structures which become visible in art. The archetypes are varied by the media through which they pass — that is, their form changes according to the time, place, and the psychological constellation of the individual in whom they are manifested.[4]

In every instance the works of these artists reminds us also of Carl Jung's interpretation of serial poems or pictures in *The Spirit in Man, Art and Literature*:

> A series of images whether in drawn or written form, begins as a rule with a symbol of the Nekya — the journey to Hades, the descent into the unconscious, and the leave-taking from the upper world. What happens afterwards, though it may still be expressed in the forms and figures of the

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[3] Rudolf Otto, *Le Sacré*, Paris, Payot, 1969, 103.

[4] Erich Neumann, *Art and the Creative Unconscious*, New York, Pantheon, 1959, 82. See also Bettina L. Knapp, *A Jungian Approach to Literature*, Carbondale, Southern Illinois University Press, 1984, ix-xvi, and *Word, Image, Psyche*, University, Ala., The University of Alabama Press, 1985, 1-5.

day-world, gives intimations of a hidden meaning and is therefore symbolic in character.[5]

Whatever we may think of Dalí as a moral man, there is no question that, in his "portrait-landscapes" and anguished, mysterious depiction of space and infinity, Dalí created in his youth a visionary world of such powerful originality that his place among 20th Century avant-garde artists is secure. He was more in tune with our "Age of Anxiety" as he unfolded his art during the Thirties than almost anybody else. Miró, on the other hand, had more sustained growth, more enduring power. Accepting most of the visual language propounded by the avant-garde, including a leaning towards abstraction, he remained poetic, evocative, visionary, never dry or over-rational. If Dalí could at times become the voice of our century we find in Miró the immemorial voices of the eternal children which every society carries in its secret recesses, hidden yet struggling to come to our attention.

It goes without saying that such talent could not flourish unrewarded. The names Dalí and Miró are instantly recognized by any person with an average education in the Western world. Their art is present in most of the major museums around the world. The Miró Foundation on the outskirts of Barcelona is a magnet for art lovers and researchers. The Dalí museum is, after the Prado, the most visited art center in all of Spain. It is sad yet unavoidable to acknowledge that Foix, who is their equal in creative and visionary power, is still almost totally unknown outside Catalonia and even in his native land he has become above all a name and a symbol, not an author with whose poems most readers are familiar.

[5] C. G. Jung, *Collected Works*, New York, Pantheon Books, 1966, vol. XV, 138.

There are probably many reasons for this relative lack of fame. Poetry, especially poetry written in a minority language, travels poorly or not at all. Moreover, modern poetry is less influential than the poetry, let us say, of the Renaissance or of the Romantic period. The Romantic poets were often endowed with "public" personalities. Lord Byron, Victor Hugo, Pushkin, Petöfi, among many others, embodied the struggle for freedom and the rebirth of nationalities. It was relatively easy then to be on the side of the angels in politics and in social affairs. The tortuous contradictions of our era were not yet born. Moreover the readers of the Romantic period were sated with abstraction and reasonableness. The poets' voices rang loud and clear in favor of passion, even of excess, and found a ready audience in a Europe that Napoleon's defeat and the triumph of the Holy Alliance had plunged into a state of sluggishness and political torpor. Poetry has been losing readers ever since, first displaced by fiction — the novel, as we know, became the mirror of the ascending bourgeoisie — and later by a combination of mass culture and new technologies that tend to give the upper hand to anything that is not the written word, whether film, pop music, or TV. We are slowly abandoning the Guttenberg era and going back to an oral culture, just when poetry, having abandoned in many instances the rhyme and beat that made it easy to remember and recite, has become partially unfit for an oral culture. Poetry — and this is especially true of Foix's most characteristic and difficult poems — has to be treated therefore like any other literary text. Yet since it is more concentrated, more intense and difficult than narrative prose, it needs an intermediary if it attempts to reach a sizable reading public. This bridge between a difficult author and his public has traditionally been criticism. Literary criticism, however, has become interested in Foix's poetry in a belated and

limited way. Much remains to be done if we want to make Foix's poetry understood and liked by his readers. Moreover an influential group of literary critics, from the advent of Structuralism to the latest trends, has become almost as obscure as the most difficult contemporary poets and can no longer be counted upon to enlighten the average reader.

There is, however, another aspect to contemporary literary criticism. It is after all literary critics who integrate the committees in charge of awarding prizes. A poet striving for recognition can count today upon only two possible groups of allies: the critics who compile anthologies and the critics who may manage to award him or her an important literary prize. As for the first group, Foix has no reason to complain since he has been as well anthologized as any other major Catalan poet in our century. As far as the second group is concerned, he can no longer claim to be neglected, having been given in 1984 Spain's most prestigious award, the "Premio Nacional de las Letras Españolas", which is endowed with 5 million pesetas. Instant fame and newspaper headlines are not without danger for a shy, retiring 91 year-old poet. We cannot but applaud the jury's decision: as Patricia Boehne has stated,

> events of contemporary history have denied him his rightful place as a major Hispanic writer until now. His power to endure has been tested for more than sixty years, and he has met that challenge. Foix is the most classic — and unique — Catalan writer of the twentieth century.

The main problem about a literary award is that it does not in itself guarantee the durability — and the correct understanding — of an author's *oeuvre*. What it does best is to concentrate, albeit momentarily, the collective attention upon a specific writer. Probably more than one third of the writers who received the Nobel Prize for Literature are almost totally neglected

today. Who reads among us Sully Prudhomme, the laureate of 1901, or Echegaray, or R. Euckey, or P. Von Heyse? C. Spitteler and W. Reymont, K. Gjellerup and H. Pontoppidan are not on many reading lists. *Mais où sont les neiges d'antan?*

Serious criticism does have an important role to play when we want to explore the texture and the contents of an author's writings and extract as much meaning as possible from his or her texts. It is only serious criticism that can ensure that any injustice, whether of overvaluation or neglect, will be corrected in the long run. Granted that, as John Updike puts it, "writing criticism is to writing fiction and poetry as hugging the shore is to sailing in the open sea", the fact remains that for the purposes of maintaining the accuracy of the historical record and preserving for posterity a cultural continuum the work of serious critics is indispensible. Only criticism can create for a writer a "permanent address" where he or she resides, with his or her neighbors and friends, within a complex network of relationships, until the end of time — or the end of the culture that created him. It happens very often that the announcement of an important literary award catches the army of critics off guard, in complete disarray. This is perhaps the case with the recent award to Foix.

Seen from the perspective of this side of the Atlantic, for instance, we may notice that we find the best bibliography on Foix in a book written by an American scholar, Patricia Boehne, and published by Twayne in 1980, as well as a judicious and well-balanced overview, but, aside from an incisive essay by David Rosenthal in *Books Abroad*, very little else specifically on the Catalan poet. On the other hand, the present issue of the *Catalan Review* offers a number of critical approaches by U.S. critics and scholars. Boehne's book is still little known outside American academic circles, and practi-

cally unobtainable in Catalonia. Important books and magazines with essays on Foix published in Catalonia are our best source of critical materials, most especially the book by Pere Gimferrer, *La poesia de J. V. Foix* (Barcelona, Edicions 62, 1974), and the essays by Arthur Terry which appeared in *Serra d'Or* (March 1968 and January 1973) but are hard to find in the United States, as are the essays by J. Romeu i Figueras, "Comentaris a un poema de *Les irreals omegues*" (*Serra d'Or*, Jan. 1973), and J. Triadú's "J. V. Foix en la situació de la poesia catalana", which appeared in the same issue of the same magazine. Much work remains to be done, here, in Catalonia and elsewhere. Foix has awaited the arrival of literary fame patiently for so many years.

We may almost assume the same hopeful patience in his poems: they will wait calmly, serenely, until our critical task is more advanced and mature: then and only then will they reveal to us all their splendor.

Yet I do not think it premature to try to establish a few coordinates in Foix's poetry. It is, on the whole, a poetry that is experimental and boldly embraces most of the principles of the avant-garde and even surrealism — occasionally making use of "automatic writing", as in some poems in *Desa aquests llibres al calaix de baix* — and yet does not turn its back on the classical traditions:

> L'antic museu, les madones borroses,
> I el pintar extrem d'avui! Càndid rampell:
> M'exalta el nou i m'enamora el vell.
>
> (The old museum, the faded madonnas,
> And today's frantic painting! I feel a naïve
> And sudden impulse: The new inflames me
> And yet I am still in love with the old.)

(*Sol, i de dol*, sonnet 7)

Foix, who in 1918 translated Tristan Tzara and Philippe Soupault, is also the author of many sonnets. Perhaps Foix, writing in Catalan, and Gerardo Diego, the Spanish poet, are the only two avant-garde poets who still remain fascinated by the formal possibilities of the sonnet. Yet what we consider the quintessential Foix poem is usually a prose poem in which a dream, or an incident that can hardly be distinguished from a dream, is described vividly.

There can be no doubt about the modernity of this type of poem by Foix. Yet such poems have their roots in the past, more specifically in the Romantic tradition of Blake, Coleridge, Hugo, Novalis, continued by Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Mallarmé and the Symbolists. In this tradition the poet is a *seer*: there are no barriers between poetic revelation, on the one hand, and religious or philosophical revelation on the other. Yet Foix belongs to our tormented century, and as such he is also the heir to a "tradition of crisis", a tradition that has shaped our modern sensitivity. The evolution leads from the German and English romantics to Baudelaire, Rimbaud and Mallarmé, and from them to Eliot, Joyce, Kafka and the Surrealists, and during this evolution the poet's "I" undergoes many painful experiences, passes through many avatars that tend to diminish its value, to crush it between an external world which seems to have lost its transcendental values, and a conception of human personality becoming progressively more decentralized, more chaotic and atomized. Blake and Novalis were still visionaries full of hope. They believed that poetry could be a force leading to positive action. Poetry could, and should, become the new religion in our modern world. Yet during the course of the 19th century this vision was to dim or to become corrupted. Baudelaire's universe is anguishing in its ambivalence and contradictory in its moral values. For

Rimbaud and Mallarmé, God has totally disappeared and man must in turn assume an impossible burden. Almost immediately the world around them seems to oscillate and assaults the poets' consciousness. Often Rimbaud's poems describe a chaotic invasion which the poet's conscious mind cannot and will not resist. There are sudden illuminations, flashes of insight that lead to no conclusion, explosions, delirium: "je devins un opéra fabuleux", Rimbaud writes, and also: "*je* est un autre". For Mallarmé, the relationship poet-language-world has deteriorated and become precarious: the world as a consistent image which the poet can share with others has disappeared, while language is fast becoming transparent and meaningless, "aboli bibelot d'inanité sonore". For him, as for Rimbaud and Baudelaire, the most urgent problem is to escape the boredom and weariness of everyday life. Drugs, attempts at suicide, flights to Africa, depersonalization, are possible roads of escape ("il faut s'abêtir") leading out of a world ever more devoid of meaning (we know what a powerful influence Rimbaud and Mallarmé, together with Lautréamont, another poet close to nihilism, had upon the Surrealist movement, and through it upon most contemporary poetry). The disappearance of a trustworthy image of the world meant that true reality could not be found outside but rather within, in the heart and the head of the poet. On the other hand, what modern psychology, beginning with and even predating Freud, was about to show us was the complexity of the human psyche, and, more ominously still, its lack of unity. "Things fall apart, the center will not hold", according to Yeats. The unifying powers of consciousness operate only part of the time, and often with meager results. Besides, both the Surrealists and James Joyce were expressing forcefully their faith in the creative powers of language, viewing language as semi-independent from our conscious self, or to-

tally so, often superior and independent, imposing itself upon our individual minds, as eminent as these minds might be.

The general trend of contemporary literature, from the late Joyce with *Finnegans Wake* to Raymond Queneau's experiments with language and *exercices de style*, to electronic poetry, seems to give the upper hand to language. Language acquires a life of its own. Words generate other words. The mind of the poet becomes a passive receptacle where the evolution of language takes place. In turn, criticism has become more interested in words than in the poets behind the words, more in tune with inter-textuality than with human beings as creators of texts. This is possible only when a poet can write, as Neruda does, "It happens that I grow tired of being a man".

This statement is part of Neruda's poem "Walking Around", a poem which is one of the highlights of *Residence on Earth*, perhaps the climax in Neruda's poetry and certainly an area in which the avant-garde, born of the convulsions of the First World War, mingles with the political tensions of the Thirties and anticipates the Existential mood of the Forties. Things fall apart, the center — in other words, the unifying force of our individuality — will not hold. The crisis of the idea of self, of individual self, of personality, is perhaps the decisive factor in this evolution. Many of the poems of Foix express the basic idea that the poet feels at one and the same time that he is himself, but he is also his reader, and also someone else. Constant change, surprises, explosions, unforeseen metamorphoses, are only oblique, indirect ways of expressing this basic doubt about the durability, the truth, the essence, of the human self.

The poet is a victim. The poet is also a seer, a prophet. The poet is, and will always be, a citizen, a man with roots in a given land. These three sides of Foix as a poet and as a man are always to be taken into account when we look at his poetry as a

whole: as Pere Gimferrer has stated, Foix is a writer who has received an endless gift, a limitless power in his verbal expression, and this power has become the vehicle to his quest. How to be many, how to become all of us, and at the same time remain faithful to an essential root? Foix has become a modern Guido Cavalcanti, a modern troubadour, and also an all-encompassing eye floating in space, in orbit around the present and also around the past like a vast poetic satellite. The center of gravity, the coordinating nucleus, can wander from the individual to the collective. This displacement creates a void, a feeling of instability that in turn gives birth to anguish. Strange shadows appear, as in Giorgio de Chirico's canvasses. The poet's doubts about his reality become contagious. Nothing is safe any more — yet everything entices us to go on, even flight is a tempting adventure. The whole world has become as unreal as a stage set:

VAM ARRIBAR EN AQUELL POBLE I NO HI HAVIA NINGÚ, PERÒ PER PLACES I PASSATGES SENTÍEM LA FRESSA DELS QUI FOREN I DE LLURS DANSES, I LES ESQUERDES DELS MURS ESBOSSAVEN LA FAÇ DELS QUI VINDRAN. UNA LLEGENDA CLANDESTINA GRAVADA AL PEU D'UNES FIGURES QUE IMITAVEN, RÚSTEGUES, UNS MÍSERS INFANTS, DEIA: "SEMPRE SOM EN EXISTÈNCIA D'ALTRI". VAM FUGIR PEL COLL FRONTERER VESTITS AMB PELLS PRIMITIVES I CARREGATS DE LLIBRES.

No tinguis por, les ombres són de pedra ...

(WE ARRIVED IN THAT TOWN AND THERE WAS NO ONE, BUT IN PLAZAS AND PASSAGEWAYS WE HEARD THE NOISE OF THOSE WHO HAD BEEN THERE AND THEIR DANCES, AND THE FISSURES OF THE WALLS SKETCHED THE FACES OF THOSE TO

COME. A CLANDESTINE LEGEND ENGRAVED AT THE FEET OF SOME FIGURES WHICH IMITATED, CRUDELY, SOME POOR CHILDREN, SAID: "WE ARE ALWAYS IN THE EXISTENCE OF OTHERS". WE FLED OVER THE HILL OF THE FRONTIER DRESSED IN PRIMITIVE SKINS AND LADEN WITH BOOKS.

Don't be afraid, the shadows are of stone ...)[6]

The feeling of unreality, or rather the description of a reality unlike the one which is familiar to us, is a product of the long title (titles are always capitalized in *The Unreal Omegas* which, by the way, is my favorite book of Foix's poetry, and are unusually long). Titles operate as long and careful introductions which prepare the reader for the text of the poem. These poems can be said therefore to be organized into two sections, the first one being indispensable for the correct understanding of the second.

Unreality is evoked by several devices. Situations become impossible because they seem to violate the laws of physics and common sense. If the town is empty, how can it be that the noise of the people who had been there, the echo of their dances, is still floating in the empty plazas and passageways? How can the fissures on the walls sketch the faces of people who have not arrived yet? How can a legend be at the same time clandestine and exhibited in the open? Why carve crudely the statues of some poor children? Is there any

[6] I am following Patricia Boehne's excellent translation (p. 69 of her *J. V. Foix*) but have translated "foren" by "had been there" instead of "were there", on l. 3. Both translations are possible but "had been there" seems to increase the mystery in the poem.

logical reason why these poor children should be an interesting subject for a sculptor? Why must the narrators escape, and why dressed in primitive skins, and why laden with books, which must make their escape more difficult? Perhaps the brief and mysterious sentence, "We are always in the existence of others", has frightened our narrators, but we do not know why. Moreover, we do not know who the "we" refers to. One single uncertainty, or contradiction, or impossible statement, is enough to trouble the reader. So many, one after the other, overwhelm us. Our logical mind gives up, retreats, tries to escape — perhaps escape is indeed the only possible solution, perhaps we must all find a disguise which will facilitate our escape.

We are playing a strange game in which rules are changing all the time, a game worthy of *Alice in Wonderland*, and almost from the beginning we realize that unreality is both inside and outside the poet's mind, that reality and unreality are twins, each disguised as the other, and moreover these twins are part of us — or we are part of them: they play their games in our memory and will play tomorrow in our future. We can decipher their secret and become sure of their identity only at the price of destroying or denying our own being. Analysis can lead nowhere: "We were three, we were two, I was alone, we were no one..." is the title of a poem from *On he deixat les claus*... (Where Have I Left the Keys...) and another title is also relevant, "És quan dormo que hi veig clar..." (Only When I Sleep Can I See Clearly).

Both subversion of everyday logic and paradox are necessary to Foix's poetry, a visionary poetry with strong religious roots like Blake's, because ordinary logic and reasoning apply only to the here and now of our lives, not to cosmic vision. "There are poets, the best ones, who can milk celestial cows",

stated Foix in a recent interview.[7] When that happens, and it happens often in his poetry, even the humblest events of the poet's life, and of his readers', can acquire a cosmic dimension.

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[7] Maruja Torres, "Entrevista. El Premio Nacional de las Letras Españolas se abre en catalán", *Cambio 16*, Madrid, No. 679, Dec. 13, 1984, 173-4. Foix's complete sentence is: "There are poets who work in a barn where they milk goats and kids, and there are other poets, the best ones, who work in another barn, where they can milk celestial cows."