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# From Foix to Dalí: Versions of Catalan Surrealism between Barcelona and Paris

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## From Foix to Dalí: Versions of Catalan Surrealism between Barcelona and Paris

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### Abstract

This article illustrates a little known episode of Salvador Dalí's initial intervention in the surrealist movement: his relationship with Catalan writer Josep Vicenç Foix. He made an impact in Catalan literary circles as one of the first imitators of Apollinaire (and Breton). Foix helped Dalí with the publication of his first texts. Close reading of surrealist texts by Foix and Dalí provide an illustration of the limitations of Catalan Surrealism. Foix and Dalí accomplished a dynamic process capable of transforming and reconfiguring the meaning and function of surrealist aesthetics in Catalonia in a complex network and context.

### Résumé

Cet article illustre un épisode peu connu de l'intervention initiale de Salvador Dalí dans le mouvement surréaliste : sa relation avec l'écrivain catalan Josep Vicenç Foix. Ce dernier influença les cercles littéraires catalans comme l'un des premiers imitateurs d'Apollinaire (et de Breton). Foix aida Dalí pour la publication de ses premiers textes. Une lecture attentive des textes surréalistes de Foix et Dalí illustre cependant les limites du surréalisme catalan. Foix et Dalí ont accompli un processus dynamique capable de transformer et de reconfigurer le sens et la fonction de l'esthétique surréaliste en Catalogne dans un réseau et un contexte complexes.

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Salvador Dalí's impact on French Surrealism is a well-known episode that illustrates his many changes during his formation years. A lesser-known episode is his relationship with Josep Vicenç Foix, decisive at the time of Dalí's early activity as a writer, particularly his contributions to the journal, *L'Amic de les Arts* [Friend of the Arts] (1926-29).<sup>1</sup> Foix was a crucial figure in the introduction of the avant-gardes in Catalonia. Always well informed, between 1922 and 1936 he wrote a daily section titled *Meridians* in *La Publicitat*, a Barcelona newspaper. He dealt mostly with cultural (and political) news with special attention to the avant-gardes.<sup>2</sup> He did not sign or adhere to the Catalan version of Surrealism, but his first books *Gertrudis* (1927) and *KRTU* (1932) prove otherwise.<sup>3</sup>

Close reading of early texts by Foix and Dalí illustrate the limitations of Catalan Surrealism and help understand why Dalí had to flee to Paris, where Foix never went, becoming a crucial voice in the French surrealist group. Also it demonstrates how Dalí used many sources, among others his Barcelona connections, to build his artistic and literary identity, and what impact he had before becoming a member of the surrealist group. Foix and Dalí accomplished a dynamic process capable of transforming and reconfiguring the meaning and function of surrealist aesthetics in Catalonia in a complex network and affinities.

<sup>1</sup> J.V. Foix (Barcelona, 1893-1987) was a Catalan poet, journalist and essayist, and a key figure in the local literary avant-garde. A close friend of Joan Miró and Antoni Tàpies, he managed to combine in his poetry imitations of medieval troubadours, Renaissance poetics and a genuine interest in Surrealism. The owner of a pastry shop, he was also the author of surrealist prose poems and poetry.

<sup>2</sup> See Manuel Guerrero, *J.V. Foix, investigador en poesia*, (Barcelona: Empúries, 1996), 122-128; Pere Gómez Inglada, *Quinze anys de periodisme. Les col·laboracions de J.V. Foix a "La Publicitat" (1922-1936)* (Barcelona: Institut d'Estudis Catalans, 2010).

<sup>3</sup> Foix attitude is characteristic of most Catalan and Spanish artists and writers. Those who became truly involved in Surrealism (Buñuel, Dalí, Larrea, Miró) moved to Paris. For an early account see Juan Ramón Masoliver, "Possibilitats i hipocresia del surrealisme d'Espanya," *Butlletí de l'Agrupament Escolar*, n° II (1930): 7-9. Also Vittorio Bodini, *I poeti surrealisti spagnoli*, (Torino: Einaudi, 1963); Paul Ilie, *The Surrealist Mode in Spanish Literature* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1968); C. B. Morris, *Surrealism and Spain (1920-1931)* (Cambridge, University Press, 1972). Robert Havard presents a more recent approach: "most who breathed Surrealism's heady air flatly deny it and look upon the surrealist label as a French contagion (...) Unsurprisingly, they felt the surrealist tag compromised their originality," *A Companion to Spanish Surrealism* (London: Tamesis Books, 2004), 2. This would apply to Alberti, García Lorca, Cernuda, etc. See also Isabel Navas Ocaña, "La crítica al surrealismo en España," *Bulletin hispanique*, n° 111 - 2, 2009, 551-581. It is a limited account that does not include any information on what happened in Catalonia.

## 1. Foix and Dalí

As early as 1918, Foix edited a journal, *Trossos* [fragments], in which he mentioned Guillaume Apollinaire's 1917 "drama sobrealista" *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*.<sup>4</sup> Also in 1918 he published a poetical prose, "Gertrudi" that imitated Apollinaire's writing. That same year Foix published another text, "Capítol II d'una autobiografia" (Chapter II of an autobiography) that can be read as a precedent of Dalí's 1931 "Rêverie."<sup>5</sup> Even though Foix was always very critical of Surrealism, nevertheless he continued to write in a surreal vein never acknowledging his acceptance of surrealist aesthetics.

Dalí's connection to Foix deals with what could be called the "black box" of Dalí's writing. Very early Dalí started a writing career that he would continue until the end of his life. Before moving permanently to Paris in 1929 (combining it with sojourns in Port Lligat), he made a shocking intervention in Catalan avant-garde circles, particularly through the journal *L'Amic de les Arts*. Dalí's upbringing as an artist and writer comes from many sources,<sup>6</sup> but a crucial one and lesser known is his relationship with J.V. Foix. He was 11 years older than Dalí. They met in December 1926, at the time when Dalí was preparing his second exhibition at Galeries Dalmau. Dalí showed Foix a selection of the drawings about to be shown, and asked Foix to write a presentation.<sup>7</sup> Shortly after Foix wrote a "Presentació de Salvador Dalí," published in *L'Amic de les Arts* (December 31, 1926), and mentioned in *KRTU* (1932) that: "He had also reproduced the most outstanding images

<sup>4</sup> This is the first time that the adjective "sobrealista" was used in Catalan. Manuel Guerrero, *J.V. Foix, investigador en poesia*, 68.

<sup>5</sup> See Rafael Santos Torroella, *Salvador Dalí correspondal de J.V. Foix. 1932-1936*, (Barcelona: Editorial Mediterrània, 1986), 34-35. The full text is available in Foix, J.V. *Obras completes I. Obra poètica en vers i en prosa* (Barcelona: Ed. 62 - Diputació de Barcelona, 2000), 598-600. Salvador Dalí, « Rêverie » *Le surréalisme au service de la révolution*, 4, 1931, 31-36, URL: [http://melusine-surrealisme.fr/site/Surr\\_au\\_service\\_dela\\_Rev/Surr\\_Service\\_Rev4.htm](http://melusine-surrealisme.fr/site/Surr_au_service_dela_Rev/Surr_Service_Rev4.htm).

<sup>6</sup> García Lorca and Buñuel played a significant role in Dalí's initiation as an experimental writer. They shared a taste for shocking associations. For a detailed account see Andrew A. Anderson, "García Lorca's *Poemas en prosa* and *Poeta en Nueva York*," *A Companion to Spanish Surrealism*, ed. Robert Havard (London: Tamesis Books, 2004), 164-169. Also on Dalí's collaboration with Buñuel and Lorca's secretive rapprochement to Surrealism, see Gwynne Edwards, *Lorca, Buñuel, Dalí. Forbidden Pleasures and Connected Lives* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009), 105-133.

<sup>7</sup> Manuel Guerrero, "El sud-realisme de J.V. Foix," Jaume Pont, ed., *Surrealismo y literatura en España* (Lleida: Universitat de Lleida, 2001), 201-2.

collected from the platforms of the underground avenues of pre-sleep.”<sup>8</sup>

Both had a good working relationship. Foix was in charge of “translating” into readable Catalan Dalí’s writing, something that could be published in a journal.<sup>9</sup> The last page in *Gertrudis* (1927) announces two up-coming books: an edition of the complete *Diari 1918*, and a deluxe edition of “Conte de Nadal” illustrated by Salvador Dalí. It was never published. In other texts, Foix defined Dalí as “el solitari de Cap del Creus.”<sup>10</sup> Foix skepticism about Dalí’s involvement in Surrealism is a good example of Christophe Charle’s “Temporal Discordance”<sup>11</sup> and it stresses the complexities of cultural transfer, that is the absence of circulation and the phenomena of resistance to exchange and transformation.

As Dalí radicalized and became more involved with French Surrealism Foix stayed in contact but keeping a distance. He maintained that Dalí’s origins were very important in his work and in his contribution to Surrealism. In 1933, he wrote in *La Publicitat*, amending the opinion of French critics on the originality of Dalí’s paintings: “critics (...) have recognized his primacy in the so-called ‘surrealist’ painting. They have not understood that it was precisely for his sharp *realism* deeply exclusively local.”<sup>12</sup>

They remained friends until the end of their lives. Foix had a summer house in Port de la Selva, near Port Lligat, on the other side of Cap de Creus. He was one of the few friends who remained in good terms with Dalí until the end. Dalí respected Foix’s opinions and the latter was enthralled with his embrace of Surrealism. Important questions about these two authors include to what extent writers such as Foix adapted Surrealism in their own writing and what kind of exchanges they had with

Paris. Did Dalí’s early writing imitate Foix? Some of these questions have been only partially answered.<sup>13</sup>

## 2. Foix and Surrealism

J. V. Foix had a contentious relationship with Surrealism. As many other authors of the time Foix carefully avoided any direct connections to the movement calling it often in a derogatory way “the Paris sect.” He was well informed about new developments in Paris and André Breton’s ideas. He might even have attended his lecture in Barcelona on November 17, 1922. In 1925 he published an article that can be read as a critical response to Breton’s first surrealist manifesto. Foix vehemently criticized the influence of Cubism and Futurism. These were movements that had only created confusion among Catalan poets with their acrobatics that were merely spiritual without any social function.<sup>14</sup> In contrast, he praised Dadaism and Surrealism. But at the same time he endorsed artists with a traditional rhetorical education:

Who writes poetry without punctuation, words-in-freedom, or enjoys composing a literary puzzle must know how to write a sonnet extremely well. The daring innovations can only be afforded by exceptional temperaments. Some pastiches of avant-garde literature published in Catalan are just embarrassing.<sup>15</sup>

Between 1926 and 1930 Foix collaborated in several avant-gardist venues: *L’Amics de les Arts*, *Revista de Poesia*, and *Quaderns de Poesia*. In all these journals he gave timely news about Surrealism thanks to his reading of Paris publications and regular Dalí’s letters. He wrote

<sup>8</sup> “Portava també, reproduïdes, les més singulars imatges recollides a les andanes de les avingudes subterrànies del pre-somni” in J.V. Foix, *Obres completes I*, 57.

<sup>9</sup> Joaquim Molas, “Dalí, escritor,” *Las vanguardias literarias en Cataluña. Imitación y originalidad* (Lleida: Editorial Milenio, 2010), 159-168 (quotation p. 160).

<sup>10</sup> Rafael Santos Torroella, *Salvador Dalí corresponsal de J.V. Foix*, 17. See also the articles on Dalí by Foix, *Obres completes 4* (Barcelona: Ed. 62, 1990), 495-510.

<sup>11</sup> Christophe Charle, *Discordance des temps. Une brève histoire de la modernité* (Paris: Armand Collin, 2011).

<sup>12</sup> “Els crítics (...) han reconegut la seva primàcia dins la pintura anomenada ‘surrealista’. No han vist prou bé que era, precisament pel seu agut *realisme*, profundament, exclusivament local.” J.V. Foix, *Obres completes 4*, 499.

<sup>13</sup> See Vicent Santamaria de Mingo, *El pensament de Salvador Dalí en el llindar dels anys trenta* (Castelló de la Plana: Universitat Jaume I, 2005).

<sup>14</sup> Foix had in mind writers such as Salvat-Papasseit who imitated futurist poetics combining it with anarchist ideology. See Gabriella Gavagnin, “Mites i objectes futuristes en la poesia de Salvat-Papasseit,” *Estudis Romànics* n° 29 (2007): 193-212. Foix’s point was that only a sophisticated modern literature could explore anti-art. This was not the case of Catalan literature at the time. In his opinion Salvat had failed.

<sup>15</sup> “Qui escriu versos sense puntuació, o mots en llibertat, o gaudeix component un puz literari ha de saber escriure correctíssimament un sonet. Els atreviments, les innovacions només poden permetre’s a temperaments excepcionals. Alguns pastixos de literatura d’avantguarda apareguts en català us fan acotar el cap avergonyits.” J.V. Foix, “Algunes consideracions sobre l’art d’avantguarda,” *Revista de poesia* n°1, 2 (1925), *Obres completes 4*, 26-31 (quotation p. 31).

reflections on his own poetry, translated and explained authors of relevance, and most significantly, published surrealist prose poems that attempt to reproduce the free flow of dreams. These texts were collected in two volumes *Gertrudis* (1927) and *KRTU* (1932) that rank among the best examples of Catalan surrealist prose. Foix's world makes us think of fear of death and deprivation, distortion, shape-changing and metamorphosis, a dystopian world, casual violence, a world upside down. Foix's point, as expressed in "Algunes consideracions..." (1925), is that there is a distinction between "surrealisme" and "superrealisme." The first was the one defended by Breton and his Paris school. The latter included all those who in any time and in any place had remained faithful to everything that represented a genuine liberation of the imagination. This does not imply a full rejection of Parisian Surrealism, but a precision, and a statement of his preferences.

Foix's attitude was one of calculated ambiguity. He would always combine a simultaneous interest for classicism and the avant-garde. One of Foix's puzzling statements in a 1936 sonnet is representative of this quandary: "M'exalta el vell i m'enamora el nou" [I'm enthralled by the new and I'm in love with the old].<sup>16</sup> It pictures perfectly his ambivalent situation, attracted by the newest tendencies, but fearing a total commitment with the avant-garde. It is not incidental that he refused to sign a pro-surrealist manifesto, *Manifest Groc*, at the last minute.<sup>17</sup> His attitude was not an exception. As noted above, except for Dalí most Catalan artists never accepted an affiliation with Surrealism. Their refusal of Freud's ideas on a moral basis is not astonishing.<sup>18</sup> Projects such as a Catalan anthology of Surrealism never materialized, but nevertheless he developed a

good relationship with Paul Éluard with whom he exchanged several letters about this project.<sup>19</sup>

### 3. Foix's Early Writings

Early Foix writings are very similar to what Breton and Philippe Soupault wrote in *Les Champs magnétiques*, (1920). In that book they made a daring use of dream, hypnosis, and automatic writing. He also received inspiration from a previous work by Apollinaire, "Onirocritique," published in *La Phalange* (1908) that was used by Soupault and Breton as a model for their poetical proses in *Les champs magnétiques*.<sup>20</sup> Apollinaire wrote in this seminal text:

Les charbons du ciel étaient si proches que je craignais leur ardeur. Ils étaient sur le point de me brûler. Mais j'avais la conscience des éternités différentes de l'homme et de la femme. Deux animaux dissemblables s'accouplaient et les rosiers provignaient des treilles qu'alourdissaient des grappes de lune.<sup>21</sup>

One detects the presence of a burning sky, the difference between man and woman, animals making love, or the presence of capitalized letters that mean something: "Un sacrificateur désira être immolé au lieu de la victime. On lui ouvrit le ventre. J'y vis quatre I, quatre O, quatre D." These four letters spell out "IOD" symbolizing the name of Yahweh, of which is the initial letter.<sup>22</sup> Similar effects can be detected in Breton's writing and even more forcefully in Foix's experiments. This would be cannibalized by Foix and later Dalí would take it to new levels. Foix imitated Apollinaire, perhaps through a reading of Breton-Soupault. At any rate, Apollinaire's text is very close to the first prose poems written by Foix with

<sup>16</sup> It coincides with Ultraísmo's affinities with classicism. See Andrés Ortega Garrido, "Tradición clásica grecolatina, arte y poesía de vanguardia en España," *Espéculo: Revista de Estudios Literarios*, nº 44 (2010). Accessed 9 February 2017. Ultraísmo had no impact in the Catalan literary field.

<sup>17</sup> Guerrero explains his connections to Surrealism, particularly with Éluard, *J.V. Foix, investigador en poesia*, 172-176.

<sup>18</sup> See Vicent Santamaria de Mingo, *El pensament de Salvador Dalí*, 113 note 101.

<sup>19</sup> Manuel Guerrero provides details about this never finished anthology, *J.V. Foix, investigador en poesia*, 250-54. Several letters by Éluard attest of Foix interest in the anthology. Foix met Éluard and Gala in Cadaqués in 1929 at the time of their visit to Dalí and Buñuel, Santos Torroella, *Salvador Dalí corresposal de J.V. Foix*, 199-210.

<sup>20</sup> On the relationship between Apollinaire and Breton see Willard Bohn, *The Rise of Surrealism: Cubism, Dada, and the Pursuit of the Marvelous* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 121-140.

<sup>21</sup> Apollinaire, "Onirocritique," *Œuvres en prose*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1977), 73.

<sup>22</sup> See also the ending of this poem: "Des vaisseaux d'or, sans matelots, passaient à l'horizon. Des ombres gigantesques se profilèrent sur les voiles lointaines. Plusieurs siècles me séparaient de ces ombres. Je me désespérai. Mais, j'avais la conscience des éternités différentes de l'homme et de la femme. Des ombres dissemblables assombrissaient de leur amour l'écarlate des voilures, tandis que mes yeux se multipliaient dans les fleuves, dans les villes et dans la neige des montagnes." *Ibid.*, 77.

which they share more than one trait, like the feeling of claustrophobia or the role of the letters in the alphabet.<sup>23</sup> According to Vicent Santamaria, Dalí came from the other extreme of the avant-garde, not least debtor to Apollinaire. He was a follower of the *L'Esprit Nouveau's* appraisal of mechanization and proclaimed purity, reason and order, as essential components of everything that meant the opposite pole of Surrealism.<sup>24</sup>

Foix early writings made an impression on young Dalí. Foix published in 1918 a prose poem, "Gertrudi," that he would later include and use as the title of his first book, *Gertrudis* (1927). Five years later he published another one, *KRTU* (1932). There is an obvious connection between *Gertrudis* and *KRTU*. These texts belong to a longer series he titled *Diari 1918* [Journal 1918], and they deal compulsively (or should I say neurotically?) with human loneliness and the frustration of desire. The poems refer to a woman named "Gertrudis," which is reproduced by a sort of catalectic anagram in the title of the second book. Or as Dalí would call it, an anamorphosis, that is a distorted projection or perspective requiring the viewer to use special devices or to occupy a specific vantage point to reconstitute the image. It is easy to see a variation of Apollinaire's "Onirocritique" mentioned earlier. The word KRTU is the result of writing in uppercase the same consonants, in their guttural version, which one can recognize in the name Gertrudis and removing the vowels: Gertrudis > GRTU > KRTU. When Dalí read this last book he wrote enthusiastically to Foix: "it is a document of a undeniable surreal value."<sup>25</sup>

These poetical proses are dominated by an "I" who writes (the poet) and is often in relation to a female you, Gertrudis. The action takes place in a

village, possibly the same that is sometimes called *poble* [town], probably Sarrià, Foix's native town, alluding to communications with Barcelona (train, tram), a sea pier and beaches, in addition to mentioning other real sites such as Pedralbes, Sant Pere Màrtir and Molins de Rei. Besides the two main characters, the reader encounters other people around them: women names, such as Ofèlia, Virgínia, Laura and Julieta, that coincide with well-known literary heroines, all of them associated with love, or women who might seem more real, like Pepa la lletera [the dairy Pepa], next to impossible and surprising characters, such as "l'home de la carota de gegant" [the man in the giant mask], "el maniquí de la cotillaire" [the mannequin of the lingerie shop], and the corpulent "director de la banda municipal" [director of the municipal band]; and also many names of trades, such as the "lletera," [milk woman] the "espardenyaire" [espadrille maker], the barber, in the unusual company of some mythological monsters and real people, particularly poets such as Folguera López-Picó, and architects and painters like Josep Francesc Ràfols and Joan Miró. In between a series of transformations experienced by objects, the poet looks dwarfed against a hostile outside world. The figure of the hunchback and a series of dreamlike images allow symbolic subconscious exploration of the world. Foix liked to say that the subconscious and the unreal are more real than life itself. Transformation of the everyday, claustrophobia, fear of subjugation, personality, are just a few of the topics presented in these poems.<sup>26</sup> Dalí performed a similar operation in his first Catalan texts, incorporating characters and details from the Cap de Creus landscape.

There is continuous transformation of the landscape, the presence of characters that belong to the everyday. Language is characteristically impregnated by a nearby reality. From an imagined situation we move to reality and backwards. This reversibility is surprising and becomes part of an absurd logic. In one of the

<sup>23</sup> It is remarkable that Foix started publishing his surrealist poetical proses of *Gertrudis* and *KRTU* in avant-garde journals *Trossos* ("Gertrudis", *Trossos*, 5, 1918, 4-5) and *L'Amic des Arts* ("KRTU", 1927). It is a shocking text that foreshadows a problematic sexuality: the poet tries twice unsuccessfully to possess his beloved Gertrudis, it looks like being raped by a black man in the Sarrià market scales and it ends up turning into a dwarf.

<sup>24</sup> Vicent Santamaria de Mingo, "El encuentro de Foix y Dalí en las avenidas subterráneas del pre-sueño," *Escritura e imagen* nº 113, 3 (2007), 113-134 (quotation p. 115), URL: <http://revistas.ucm.es/index.php/ESIM/article/view/ESIM0707110113A>.

<sup>25</sup> "és un document d'un valor surrealista indiscutible," Santos Torroella, 71. Unfortunately there are no critical editions of these two books.

<sup>26</sup> Pere Gimferrer, *La poesia de J. V. Foix* (Barcelona: Edicions 62, 1974).

poems, Gertrudis has been killed, but shortly after reappears alive. Reality is segmented, transformed, a sort of mirror where the “I” pictures it, becoming pieces of a larger reality. Carles Miralles has indicated that there is no separation between the stage and what we call reality. The only sense of unity is provided by the composition with words of a text in which the real world is reflected platonically—or cinematographically—in the cave and the reflection itself—the theatrical play, film, circus attraction or number magic trick—appear interconnected, integrated in a single sequence. It does not appear as a sequence—among other things because the sequence, ignoring as it does the usual time and space, cannot be fiction, but it is presented as fragments, or figurative aspects, meaning that the action is told but evoked through crucial moments, carved and presented as a single piece, as it is done in poetry form and not in narrative or drama form.<sup>27</sup>

J.V. Foix’s two volumes show the use of a sophisticated language, extremely rich vocabulary and a versatile and efficient syntax. It is a little known classic of European avant-garde, that reads as a series, in its puzzling unity, provides an order, an artistic sense built with words that are useful to build a narrative but that also construct a dispersive unity. Extra-textual elements, two illustrations by Miró, help us to better understand the text and the personality of Gertrudis. The first one opened the first edition of the book.<sup>28</sup>

It is a very schematic drawing, in which Miró includes a horse and a star with a tail that forms a circular line around the design and ends in a shape that looks like the body of a woman with fluttering hair. Miró also writes the letters (G, e, r, t, r, u, d, i, s), that will shrink to become completely illegible and that make up the name Gertrudis.<sup>29</sup> Miró in creating this design could have had in mind the

poem “Gertrudis” that opens the book, which is concentrated in the poet’s inability to achieve intercourse with his mistress, or even the closing poem, “Conte de Nadal,” where we find words that will break and shrinking images:

The warden closed his eyes and said: - No, no, Nak, Nak, Nak ... Nagpur, Nak, Nak ... Nakhitxevan. And I then: Pp; no, ans: Dj, Dk ... I had lost though the sense of vowels, ignoring the value, and even the spelling. [...] I felt small, small in front of that man who treated me with respect, and I was cold, very cold. [...] Small, insignificant, I cringed in a crate full of eggshells.<sup>30</sup>

Miró also illustrated *KRTU*.<sup>31</sup> In this case he created an abstract portrait of a human figure, probably female, of which we can recognize the hands, one eye and two legs. The style of this picture is very different from the one chosen to illustrate *Gertrudis*, and is in line with the poetical proses of the book: while the first design reflected the reality of *Gertrudis* title, this abstract portrait, entitled “Dibuix per a un objecte,” [Drawing for an object] expresses the mystery of *KRTU*’s title.

#### 4. Dalí’s Reading of Foix

Young Dalí had to be moved by these texts. He could definitely recognize an anguished sexuality. Both writers expressed it in their early writings. It was expressed more or less openly in their work. As mentioned earlier, Foix’s poem “Capítol II d’una autobiografia” was one source of inspiration for Dalí’s provocative prose poem “Rêverie.” Foix wrote a first person confession where he tells of being made prisoner and seduced by his uncle, who taught him the use of a typewriter and how to use a pistol. Sexual intercourse was stimulated by the exotic sound produced by two bass strings activated by a copper boiler that would start when hitting the appropriate switch. Santos Torroella

<sup>27</sup> See Carles Miralles, “Setanta-cinc anys de Gertrudis,” *Avui*, 5 desembre 2002, VI-VII. Also Joaquim Molas, “El retrat d’un poeta adolescent. Notes per a una lectura de *Gertrudis*, de J. V. Foix” (Barcelona: Reial Acadèmia de Bones Lletres, 1993).

<sup>28</sup> Joan Miró, “Gertrudis,” available at [www.catedramariustorres.udl.cat/materials/biblioteca/visor2.php?tipus=cont&tornar=&op=&autor=foix002&codi=451&pos=8&zoom=normal&ordre=edicio](http://www.catedramariustorres.udl.cat/materials/biblioteca/visor2.php?tipus=cont&tornar=&op=&autor=foix002&codi=451&pos=8&zoom=normal&ordre=edicio).

<sup>29</sup> Manuel Guerrero, *Miró i els poetes. J.V. Foix. Traços. Train Passant Sans Arrêt*, URL: [http://www.clipmedia.net/galera/fundaciomiro/carnet04/tracosFo\\_ca.html](http://www.clipmedia.net/galera/fundaciomiro/carnet04/tracosFo_ca.html).

<sup>30</sup> “El vigilant clogué els ulls i digué: - No, no: Nak, Nak, Nak... Nagpur, Nak, Nak... Nakhitxevan. I jo a continuació: Pp; no, ans: Dj, Dk... Havia perdut, però, el sentit de les vocals, n’ignorava la valor i, àdhuc, la grafia. [...] Vaig sentir-me petit, petit davant aquell home que em deia de vós, i vaig tenir fred, molt de fred. [...] Petit, insignificant, em vaig arronsar dins un caixó ple de closques d’ou.” J.V. Foix, *Obres completes* I, 31, 33.

<sup>31</sup> Joan Miró, “KRTU,” available at <http://www.catedramariustorres.udl.cat/materials/biblioteca/visor2.php?tipus=cont&tornar=&op=&autor=foix002&codi=452&pos=16&zoom=normal&ordre=edicio>.

stressed the fact that this machine (or apparatus) could be linked to other similar in the work of Franz Kafka, Apollinaire, Marcel Duchamp or Raymond Roussel.<sup>32</sup> There is a noticeable similarity between Foix and Dalí's texts: the confession of one's introduction to sexuality, the difficulties to attain a climax, the ambiguity male-female, and latent cruelty that pervades the scenes. In Foix's text the lost of virginity is associated with the shot of a Browning revolver. In Dalí's "Rêverie," there is a documentary precision with painstaking descriptions of the surroundings, things, gestures, positions, and schemes elaborated down to the minutest detail. The reverie ends swiftly, culminating in an earlier dream in which Dulita is Gala, and then returns to the reality from which it has never really departed.<sup>33</sup> This poem, published in issue 4 of *La révolution surréaliste*, was denounced by Louis Aragon as pornographic, while Breton defended it as a "très belle 'Rêverie.'"<sup>34</sup> Dalí's text is a fine example of groundbreaking surrealist prose poetry. It was natural development after the work of previous years, in exchanges with García Lorca and Buñuel, and the *Amic de les Arts* group, and particularly a reading of Foix.

When Dalí started writing he did it mostly in Catalan.<sup>35</sup> When he moved to Paris he combined it with French, English and Spanish, he wrote in an idiolect of his own creation. Dalí's Catalan period should be read as an announcement of what was about to happen in Paris with his wholehearted incorporation to the Paris group and his major contributions to Surrealism such as *La femme visible* (1930), *L'amour et la mémoire* (1931) or *La conquête de l'irrationnel* (1935). Texts from the Catalan period are instrumental in developing his surrealist program. Those with a more literary penchant are amongst the best contributions to literary Surrealism. They include "Sant Sebastià," "Poema de les cosetes," "Peix perseguit per un

raïm," "La meva amiga i la platja," "L'alliberament dels dits" or "Poema agafat al vol no taquigràficament." There are many coincidences and superposition between these texts and contemporary paintings by Dalí. The technique applied is the same: objectivity. It entails meticulous description of the smallest elements. According to Joaquim Molas these poems are of gritty lyricism and arbitrary, but dense and poignant.<sup>36</sup> Santos Torroella pointed out that for Dalí this objective micro-reality was the real super-reality sought out by the Surrealist. Dalí used the last issue of *L'Amic de les Arts* as his letter of recommendation to be accepted by the Paris surrealist group.<sup>37</sup>

Dalí's prose poems of the 1920's, published in *L'Amic de les Arts*, "defy the reader's attempts to perceive a consistent narrative structure."<sup>38</sup> The so-called "strange metaphors" are based on an accumulation of elements, which refer to his past provincial world (Figueres and Cadaqués) and the cosmopolitan one, which he is discovering, first in Madrid and Barcelona, and finally in Paris. Many of the "peasant" elements have an origin: the beach, where he spent his summers: fish, fish spines, sea urchins, snails, seashells, cork, stones of varied colors and shapes. As indicated by Finkelstein, "these 'small things' undergo incongruous metamorphoses of matter; they are the protagonists of a dialectic involving the juxtaposition of hardness and softness."<sup>39</sup> But this apparent chaotic enumeration hides (as is the case of Pablo Picasso's surrealist poems from the time when he painted *Guernica*) a deliberate mixture of elements from the peasant and the cosmopolitan world. In fact Dalí was imitating what Foix had done earlier, when transforming his local landscape, the town of Sarrià, into a dreamlike landscape, the ideal and unusual setting for shocking and violent sexual acts.

<sup>32</sup> Santos Torroella, *Salvador Dalí corresponçal de J.V. Foix*, 34. Michel Carrouges, *Les Machines Célibataires*, (Paris: Editions du Chêne, 1976).

<sup>33</sup> Juan José Lahuerta, "'Rêverie' (notes, fragments, and collage for a lecture)," *Avant-garde Studies* (Fall 2016), accessed 21.03.2107.

<sup>34</sup> André Breton, *Oeuvres complètes*, 2 (Paris: Gallimard, 1992), 23.

<sup>35</sup> Salvador Dalí, *L'alliberament dels dits. Obra catalana completa*, ed. Félix Fanés, (Barcelona: Quaderns Crema, 1995).

<sup>36</sup> Joaquim Molas, "Els moviments d'avantguarda: Joan Salvat Papasseit," *Història de la literatura catalana IX* (Barcelona Ariel, 1987), 375.

<sup>37</sup> Santos Torroella, *Salvador Dalí corresponçal de J.V. Foix*, 30.

<sup>38</sup> Haim Finkelstein, *The Collected Writings of Salvador Dalí* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1998), 17.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.



A particularly striking example is the poem “Peix perseguit per un raïm.”<sup>40</sup> Following Foix’s example, who was able to render a surrealist version of his hometown and of his personal anguishes, Dalí’s intervention in Surrealism, his particular contribution to the renovation of the arts, feeds upon hybridism and confronting elements of nature (always seen as landscape and understood against the backdrop of the untamable and mysterious Empordà) with civilized, controllable society. In this crucial text from his pre-surrealist period, Dalí organizes his ideas around a dual structure, confronting concepts such as “Saint Objectivity” and “Putrefaction.” Saint Objectivity is related to the industrial world of cars, phonographs, cinema, and shops filled with mannequins (or “tailor’s dummies”). Against this he places “putrefaction”:

cry-baby transcendental artists, removed from all clarity, cultivators of all germs, ignorant of the precision of the graduated double decimeter; families that purchase art objects to be placed on top of the piano; the public-work employees; the associate committee member; the university professor of psychology...<sup>41</sup>

This concept of putrefaction condemned by Dalí echoes Breton’s proclamation about the reality of dreams. This superior (sur)reality is found, according to the Catalan artist, in his peasant landscape, which he believed had been able to preserve a unique prehistoric, antediluvian quality, and whose “atavismos del crepúsculo”<sup>42</sup> become an important inspiration for his renewal of the arts.

Dalí’s renewal of the arts is based on contrast, confrontation, hybridism, and anthropomorphism. The unique geographical features of his homeland, as captured in his paintings and writings, forged his radical perspective on nature, technology and civilization. The starting point of this process has to do with his relationship with a well-informed Foix

who wrote in 1933: “True knowledge is obtained thanks to the risky adventure in hypnagogic landscapes of which the real landscape is a leftover.”<sup>43</sup> As most Catalan and Spanish authors Foix decided not to adhere completely to Surrealism. He kept flirting with it, and in the end renegading from Surrealism. Foix decided not to travel to Paris. Dalí did travel to Paris and in doing so he transformed Surrealism and the avant-gardes.

## Conclusion

Foix and Dalí changed their writing thanks to a process of re-semanticization that went in opposite directions. Foix was very well informed about new developments in Paris. Dalí, after somehow imitating Foix’s writing, settled down in Paris and had a much more direct contact with Surrealism. Typical of Spanish/Catalan surrealists, Foix always denied having had anything to do with it. His work, some of the projects he tried to develop prove otherwise. Foix made contradictory assertions. He used to say that “throughout Catalonia I have only known one person who is not a surrealist, and that’s me.”<sup>44</sup> In a 1973 interview he declared: “I do not deny having participated in the surreal liturgy.”<sup>45</sup> Moving from one cultural and linguistic context to another was crucial for the development of Dalí’s theory of critical paranoia and to put it into practice.

The relationship between Foix and Dalí is also a good example of the many senses of cultural transfer: influence and genealogy, circulation, emergence, adaptation, transfer, transplantation, evolution. Foix was influential in helping Dalí to be introduced in Barcelona artistic circles. Even though Foix was always skeptical towards Surrealism, both maintained a fruitful dialogue. It shows what happens when artists, artworks, and information circulate and migrate. Foix used Dalí’s

<sup>40</sup> For a close reading of this poem see Enric Bou, “A Catalan Peasant: Dalí’s Renewal of Surrealism,” in *The New Ruralism. An Epistemology of Transformed Space*, eds. Joan Ramon Resina and William Viestenz (Madrid – Frankfurt: Iberoamericana – Vervuert, 2012), 157-172.

<sup>41</sup> Finkelstein, *The Collected Writings of Salvador Dalí*, 24

<sup>42</sup> Salvador Dalí. *El mito trágico de “El Angelus” de Millet*, ed. Oscar Tusquets (Barcelona: Tusquets, 2002), 117.

<sup>43</sup> “La veritable coneixença poètica és obtinguda en el risc de l’aventura dels paisatges hipnagògics dels quals el paisatge material és un rebuig.” “Véuen uns i diuen ...”, *Àlbum Foix. Una successió d’instants*, eds. Joan de Déu Domènech i Vinyet Panyella, (Barcelona: Quaderns Crema, 1990), 273.

<sup>44</sup> Guerrero, J.V. *Foix, investigador en poesia*, 174.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

letters from Paris to keep well informed his readers at *La Publicitat* about Paris surrealist activities. Dalí, through his personal evolution (provocative moral attitude and his taste for experimentation), his direct connections with the Paris art scene, changed dramatically. Foix kept in touch with Dalí until the end of his life, exchanging poems and drawings. This was, maybe, in recognition of the help he had received. But the relationship goes also in the other direction: Foix was fascinated by Dalí's ability to go beyond what he had envisioned as an avant-garde writer and never dared to realize.