

Xavier Pla, Maximiliano Fuentes and  
Francesc Montero (eds)

# A Civil War of Words



The Cultural Impact of the Great War  
in Catalonia, Spain, Europe and  
a Glance at Latin America

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ENRIC BOU

## Witnesses to an 'Apocalyptic Storm': Catalan Intellectuals and the Great War<sup>1</sup>

Sense sospitar encara de què es tractava en realitat, però sobrats ja, en el fons, per una angoixa misteriosa: un pressentiment vague de la tempesta apocalíptica que encara dura i que només Déu sap quan i com acabarà.

— GAZIEL

### War of Words

In Gaziel's prologue to *Paris 1914. Diari d'un estudiant* [Paris 1914. Diary of a student] written for the 1964 edition, he indicated an awareness of the world's transformation that took place in 1914, similar to what Stefan Zweig summed up years later in a much-cited title *Die Welt von Gestern* [The world of yesterday], his posthumously published memoirs of 1944. In a passage from his diary Gaziel had already evoked loneliness at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris and commented self-consciously:

Aquesta guerra que ha desorganitzat traïdorament l'exèrcit de la cultura europea, del qual jo sóc només un petit i humil aspirant, serà vençuda i dominada per ella. I la mateixa barbàrie serà motiu d'engrandiment més de la biblioteca futura. D'aquí a

1 I am most thankful to Joan de Déu Domènech and Toni Mollà for their bibliographic suggestions and support to prepare this article.

cent anys, la guerra de 1914, convertida en tema d'estudi, quedarà reduïda a alguns centenars de volums més que ompliran nous prestatges d'aquesta catedral silenciosa.<sup>2</sup>

[This war has disrupted treacherously the army of European culture, of which I'm just a small and humble member, will be dominated and defeated by her. And it is barbaric characteristic will be the reason to enlarge over the future library. In a hundred years, the war of 1914, turned into a subject of study, will be reduced to a few hundred volumes that fill the shelves of this new silent cathedral]

*Wishful thinking* we could say just by taking a look at today's newspapers, because that 1914 apocalyptic storm did not stop and there has been a continuous series of tsunamis that have reached our present. This is precisely what reflects the preface to a book by Paul Fussell, *Great War and Modern Memory*:

War is simply too frightful, too chaotic, too arbitrary, too bizarre, too uncanny a set of events and images to grasp directly. We need blinkers, spectacles, shades to glimpse war even indirectly. Without filters, we are blinded by its searing light. Language is such a filter.<sup>3</sup>

Gaziel at the beginning of his diary expresses an almost evil happiness when he notes that the war had broken his monotonous life of student:

tota la meua vida anterior em sembla ara quelcom de vulgar i rutinari, d'una tirànica monotonía. L'existència és, per fi, alguna cosa més que la caiguda compassada i lenta dels fulls del calendari, on tot està previst i fixat per endavant. I sento que, en el fons del meu esperit, avesat al rigor d'una disciplina mental, s'hi alça –com un mal esperit– el desig maligne d'assistir a l'espectacle bàrbar d'una guerra moderna, que haurà de ser, per força, la més esgarrifosa que fins ara hagin fet els homes.<sup>4</sup>

[all my previous life looks now as something vulgar and tedious, with a tyrannical monotony. To live is finally something more than the rhythmic and slow fall of

2 Gaziel, *Paris 1914. Diari d'un estudiant* (Barcelona: Editorial Aedos, 1964), 72.

3 Jay Winter, 'Preface' in Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern memory* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2013), 16.

4 Gaziel, *Paris 1914*, 41. We could add François Truffaut testimony in *Jules et Jim* when Jim evokes a soldier he had met and the impact of war on his love life.



calendar pages, where everything is planned and fixed in advance. I feel that in the back of my mind, accustomed to a rigorous mental discipline, rises like a bad spirit, an evil desire to attend a barbaric spectacle of modern warfare, which must be, by force, the most chilling war that until now have men made.]

Gaziel's statement pervades a morbid curiosity and the intuition that this would be a different war. The Great War generated and continues to generate great interest. The Great War was marked since the beginning by powerful intellectual discussions: Romain Rolland and *défaitisme*. Stefan Zweig, Ernst Jünger, Erich Maria Remarque, Robert Graves, among others gave their opinions and created opinion. It was a war filled with little absurd heroism. Walter Benjamin escaped the war by pretending to be sick: he drank coffee all night to come up with tremors.

Paul Fussell wrote a book exciting and instructive, *The Great War and Modern memory* (1975). He confessed in the preface that that he could have put as a subtitle 'An Inquiry into the Curious Literariness of Real Life.' He was interested in

the way the dynamics and iconography of the Great War have proved crucial political, rhetorical, and artistic determinants on subsequent life. At the same time the war was relying on inherited myth, it was generating new myth, and that myth is part of the fibre of our own lives.<sup>5</sup>

Here we see the great difference and distance between the bombast of the battles, the military facts, and the smallness of the war view from a personal, intimate, situation. The difference in intensity between the two is enormous.

My goal here is to study the various forms of reaction to the Great War and how it was explained to contemporaries through a limited sample of texts by Agustí Calvet 'Gaziel,' Santiago Rusiñol and Joan Pérez-Jorba.

5 Fussell, *The Great War and Modern memory*, XV.

## Paris at War as witnessed by Gaziel

Every country that fought in the Great War produced an image of war through writing that corresponds to its own image as a country. Leaving aside the propaganda literature, each author had his own record, or dramatic irony, and their own inflections, echoing the political and cultural consequences of the conflict. Despite Spain's declaration of neutrality, in Catalonia there was a very active discussion. Magazines such as *Iberia* (1915–1919)<sup>6</sup> were founded to defend the Franco-British side. Others, mostly in Madrid, defended the legitimacy of the Central Empires.<sup>7</sup>

Vinyet Panyella examined the many versions of the discussion as seen in the pages of *Trossos*, *La Revista*, *Un enemic del Poble*, *Iberia ... La Revista* for instance published a survey 'Catalunya davant la guerra europea' [Catalonia and the European war].<sup>8</sup> It was not an easy decision but most intellectuals took sides. Ors had to combine his liking of Maurras with his preference for an organized Germany and a strong imperial past. He perceived the war as a civil war between France and Germany in his series *Lletres a Tina*, fictional letters addressed to a Prussian girl. He tried to maintain a neutral voice:

- 6 Magazine *Iberia* made a point of denouncing German brutality. They published the anthology *Kameraden* (Barcelona: Fills d'E. Detouche, 1917) with many drawings by Feliu Elias 'Apa.' A drawing entitled 'Àtila', shows the German emperor Wilhelm II with his pants descended, supported by the King of Belgium and whipped respectively by an English general and, in the background, the marshal of France, the Catalan Josep Joffre. The text says: 'Wilhelm II, German Emperor. And I thought that he was the scourge of God ...' This book gave Feliu Elias the French Legion d'Honneur. Similarly, opposing militarism and German intervention in France, opposing also Catholicism to Protestantism and liberalism to authoritarianism, Apel·les Mestres wrote the poem *Àtila* (1917), a composition in twenty-seven songs, with a Prelude and Epilogue, containing the Poet's Dream-Nightmare and becoming a witness of cruelty. See Enric Casasses, 'Pérez Jorba i Àtila', *El País* (11.06.2009).
- 7 See Joan Safont, *Per França i Anglaterra. La primera guerra mundial dels aliadòfils Catalans* (Barcelona: A Contravent, 2012).
- 8 Vinyet Panyella, *Cronologia del noucentisme: una eina* (Barcelona: PAM, 1996), 64–6.

'Voteu per França? Voteu per Alemanya? – El meu, de vot, és per Europa. El meu, d'anhel, és per la reconstrucció mística de l'Imperi de Carlemany: de Colònia a l'Ebre'<sup>9</sup> [Vote for France? Vote for Germany? – My, voting is for Europe. My longing is for a mystical rebuilding of Charlemagne's empire: from the Ebro river to Cologne.]<sup>10</sup>

The most original contribution of Catalan literature to the conflict's narrative was Gaziel's book, *París 1914. Diari d'un estudiant*. This book helped him become a journalist and made him visit the front on many occasions. His are authentic reports written by a young yet experienced observer with a pacifist temperament and irreducibly Francophile attitude. Other volumes include *Narraciones de tierras heroicas* [Narrative in heroic lands] (1916), *En las líneas de fuego* [In the front line] (1917), *De París a Monastir* [From Paris to Monastir] (1917) and *El año de Verdún* [The year of Verdun] (1918). The volume *El ensueño de Europa* [Europe's Dream] (1922) gathered his articles written on the 1922 Genoa conference and formed a kind of appendix to his sustained interest.<sup>11</sup>

His book was very well read in the Spanish-speaking world. Manuel Llanas explained that when Gaziel travelled to Colombia in 1937 he was greeted by the Publisher of *El Tiempo* with these words: 'Caramba, Gaziel, cuánto me alegro de poder abrazarle en carne y hueso, ya que desde 1914 le

9 Eugeni d'Ors, *Lletres a Tina*, Josep Murgades, ed., (Barcelona: Quaderns Crema, 1993), 22. See also Enric Jardí, 'Repercussions de la Gran Guerra', *Els moviments d'avantguarda a Barcelona* (Barcelona: El Cotal, 1983), 27–59; Enric Jardí, *Eugeni d'Ors* (Barcelona: Edicions Aymà, 1967), 152–4; Josep Murgades, 'Repercussions de la guerra en la cultura' dossier *Catalunya davant el món en guerra (1914–1918)*, *L'Avenç*, 69 (March 1984), 74–9.

10 See Josep Murgades edition *Lletres a Tina* and Maximiliano Fuentes doctoral dissertation, chapter 5.

11 Another significant contribution was by Santiago Rusiñol with his *Glosari de Xarau*, a regular section in *L'Esquella de la Torratxa* magazine. It became, from the very beginning of the war, 'plataforma d'una abrاندada francofilia i, de rebot, d'una germanofòbia agressiva que el glosador va anar destil·lant.' Margarida Casacuberta, *Santiago Rusiñol: Vida, Literatura i Mite* (Tesi doctoral UAB 1993), 843 [an ardent Francophile platform and in turn an aggressive critic of German attitudes distilled by the glossador].

estuve saqueando a usted impunemente'<sup>12</sup> [Wow, Gaziél, I am so happy to embrace you, because since 1914 I have been plundering you with impunity.] The book was published illegally on many occasions.

In the first pages we discover an author with great knowledge of Paris and the French *esprit*: 'Aquest matí, amb el cor tot negre, després de llegir, a la golfa on tinc la meva cel·la d'estudiant novici de filosofia, el diari que la serventa m'acabava de dur amb l'esmorzar...' [This morning, with my heart all black, after reading the newspaper in the attic where I have my novice cell as student of philosophy, the maid carried in my breakfast ...]. The same day he writes to a friend, the Marquis de Saint Ange, and later that afternoon he reports seeing the mobilization announcement at the door of a police station in Saint-Germain-des-Prés; by the end of the day he learns that Germany has declared war on Russia. His conclusion: 'cal perdre tota esperança'<sup>13</sup> [we must lose all hope]. With his friend Martorell he visits the Spanish Embassy to get some information. An official who is 'like an inhabitant of the moon' responds: 'Aquí todavía no sabemos nada.'<sup>14</sup> [Here we do not know anything yet]. In the street they read a notice addressed to German and Austrian citizens ordering them to leave the country or go to concentration camps. He describes briefly the pension inhabited by young men and women: 'la joia de viure és com aura màgica que tothora circula pel laberint de la pensió, fins en els seus passadissos més foscos i tortuosos, els recambrons sense balcó ni finestra o les golfes on cal pujar com en els colomars'<sup>15</sup> [the joy of living is as magical aura that runs all the time through the maze of the boarding house, even in their darkest and winding corridors, the back rooms without balcony or window, or in the attic where you have to climb as if it were a pigeon house]. They are all very young except for the mistress and her sister, an old English lady and a priest.

The rest of the pages of this fascinating book tell of three parallel actions: slow emptying of the boarding house; the transformation of

12 Manuel Llanas, 'La trajectòria periodística de Gaziél', *Revista de Girona*, 123 (1987), 41.

13 Gaziél, *París 1914*, 21.

14 Gaziél, *París 1914*, 22.

15 Gaziél, *París 1914*, 22.

everyday life in Paris (the city progressive loneliness, survival, difficulties at the end of the month to find a safe passage and a train ticket back to Barcelona); information of military actions and their impact on the mood of French citizens, all seen through the hieroglyphics of the information in newspapers and the news deformed and contradictory that come through people's accounts. Gaziél manages to make us experience the uncertainty of overlapping events, claustrophobia due to lack of information or the frequently contradictory news. He devotes many pages to decipher the information hieroglyphs in newspapers.<sup>16</sup> Often news are contrasted to the harsh reality when people fled the front of Paris, before the push of invading Germans.<sup>17</sup>

A young Italian woman has lost all her savings, an Austrian young woman in love with Paris cannot come to terms with her new situation. Those who were friends a few hours ago now belong to different sides: 'Una de les primeres transfiguracions horribles, encara impensables fa només unes hores, que produeix una guerra.'<sup>18</sup> [One of the first horrible transfigurations, unthinkable even a few hours ago, which produces war]. He chronicles the city's transformation with great detail:

Aquestes vies populars que, en realitat, en fan una de sola, travessera del cor multitudinari de París, aquesta nit tenen un aire de febre estranya, com jo no l'havia vista mai, però de febre continguda sorda. [...] Com que el trànsit rodar ha disminuït molt, es percep sovint el ròssec dels milions de petjades damunt l'asfalt –talment el d'un exèrcit encara no ben compassat, però que ja va congriant-se.<sup>19</sup>

[These popular streets that actually are only one, a crossing of Paris' heart tonight have a strange feverish air, as I had never seen, but it is a contained fever. [...] As the traffic has decreased a lot, often one can perceive millions of tracks moving on the asphalt –as if it were an army still not very rhythmic, but already organizing itself.]

16 See Gaziél, *París 1914*, 191, 207, 254, 263.

17 Gaziél, *París 1914*, 226.

18 Gaziél, *París 1914*, 24.

19 Gaziél, *París 1914*, 25–6.

All of a sudden some excitement: Frau Erika returns to the boarding house in secret, after a week of living hidden, fearing for her life (she has witnessed the lynching of a German), under the protection of the French government. He narrates the gathering:

–Fräulein Erika és aquí.

I tots han callat de sobte. Quan Erika ha entrat, les noies s'han alçat a fer-li llargues i trèmules besades de pau. I ja no s'ha parlat més de la guerra durant el sopar. I tots plegats s'han esforçat a fer reviure les hores felices en què l'amistat existia a Europa, sense traves, franca i cordial. Ningú no hauria endevinat qui de nosaltres era l'enemic segut a taula.<sup>20</sup>

[–Fräulein Erika is here.

And everybody remains silent all of a sudden. When Erika enters, the girls raise to give her long and tremulous peace kisses. No longer anybody talks over dinner about the war. And everybody tries to relive the happy hours when unimpeded, frank and cordial friendship existed in Europe. Nobody would have guessed who among us was the enemy sitting at the table.]

By the end of evening he accompanies Erika to her house. He asks what she thinks of war and she replies with confidence 'astoradora' [astonishing]: 'No he pogut anar a Alemanya a ajuntar-me amb els meus germans. Però tant se val, perquè ells vindran aquí, a buscar-me a França.'<sup>21</sup> [I failed to go to Germany to join with my brothers. But it doesn't matter, because they will come here looking for me in France.] A few days later, Gaziél receives a letter from a concentration camp in Périgueux. She tells him how she was transferred in a convoy of freight cars, such as those used to deport Jews a few years later.

Gaziél is very concerned with one question: the difference between human beings and their political leaders. He is utterly surprised by the ease of transformation of one into another, to assimilate propaganda speeches. He is astonished by the sudden interruption of everyday life: newspapers

20 Gaziél, *Paris 1914*, 25–6.

21 Gaziél, *Paris 1914*, 113.

have only four pages<sup>22</sup> they have the feel of parochial newsletter,<sup>23</sup> public transportation has been suspended and a number of cafes and restaurants have closed.<sup>24</sup> He rebels against the transformations he observes around him, the return of prophecies, horoscopes, omens and predictions: 'N'hi ha per fregar-se els ulls de veure com en ple segle XX, a la França actual, laica i racionalista, i en una època dominada per les grans invencions de la ciència i la tècnica, la gent retrocedeix sentimentalment. Als temps més tenebrosos de l' 'obscurantista' Edat Mitjana.'<sup>25</sup> [One cannot believe that in the twentieth century, in secular rationalist France, and in an era dominated by the great inventions of science and technology, people have gone back in time emotionally. To the darkest time of the reactionary Middle Ages.]

Gaziel cannot come to terms with the sudden transformation of civilization. He is surprised at the cruelty of human beings, the ability to be irrational. His diary entails a portrait of a society gone awry, describing the emptying of the boarding house and the changes in everyday life. There is a hilarious character, an old English lady, Mrs Parthiker, who tells him the secret about the war's origin: it has been caused by a mummy.<sup>26</sup> Similar information can be found in Vicente Blasco Ibáñez's novel *Los cuatro jinetes del Apocalipsis* because for a while he lived in Paris during the war years. In 'Al lector' informs us about the novel's writing. He had first hand information because he sailed from Argentina to Europe in a German boat right before the start of the conflict and explains with detail the pro war attitude he detected among Germans. An interesting detail: he links the onset of war to crucial changes in everyday life:

el ambiente extraordinario de la gran ciudad me sugirió todo el resto de la presente novela. Marchando por las Avenidas afluentes al Arco del Triunfo, que en aquellos días parecían de una ciudad muerta y contrastaban, por su fúnebre soledad, con los esplendores y riquezas de los tiempos pacíficos, tuve la visión de los cuatro jinetes,

22 Gaziel, *París 1914*, 34.

23 Gaziel, *París 1914*, 61.

24 Gaziel, *París 1914*, 61.

25 Gaziel, *París 1914*, 96.

26 Gaziel, *París 1914*, 102.

azotes de la Historia, que iban a trastornar por muchos años el ritmo de nuestra existencia.<sup>27</sup>

[the extraordinary atmosphere of the big city suggested the rest of this novel. Marching through the Avenues merging into the Arc de Triomphe, which in those days seemed of a dead city and contrasted, for their funeral loneliness, with the splendour and riches of peace times, I had a vision of the four horsemen, whips of History, that would upset for many years the pace of our existence.]

Gaziel like Blasco was very perceptive of changes in the streets:

Passo un parell d'hores voltant carrers tot sol, amb l'estranya avidesa de veure com canvia ràpidament el rostre de París, talment l'aspecte d'un organisme viu a les entranyes del qual es revela de sobre una greu malaltia. El símptoma més general el dóna l'instint de previsió portat a un grau d'obsessió morbosa. Els uns fugen, els altres fan proveïments: no es veu altra cosa. Arreu homes, dones, dones i criatures transiten, a peu o a cavall, carregats de maletes i altres bagatges o carregats de cabassos, sacs de lona, paperines i xarxes.<sup>28</sup>

[I spend a couple of hours around the streets alone with strange eagerness to see how quickly the face of Paris has changed, as if it were a living organism in the bowels of which suddenly a serious disease reveals. The most evident symptoms can be detected through a morbid obsession with prevention. Some fled, other accumulate supplies, and you cannot see anything else. Everywhere men, women, women and children travel on foot or horseback, loaded with suitcases and other baggage or laden with baskets, canvas bags, cones and nets.]

He walks around the three main train stations. At the Quai d'Orsay, after the departure of a train filled to the top with people, he muses: 'he vist que les andanes quedaven sembrades de paraigües, bastons, capses, capells i fins i tot una gàbia amb un lloro. No cal dir com devien anar per dins els vagons'<sup>29</sup> [I saw that the platforms were sown with umbrellas, walking

27 Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, *Los cuatro jinetes del apocalipsis* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 2011), 7–8.

28 Gaziel, *París 1914*, 32.

29 Gaziel, *París 1914*, 33.



sticks, boxes, hats and even a cage with a parrot. I cannot imagine how they were inside the carriages.]

At various times he discusses the causes of war. One of the best moments is a long conversation on a Sunday afternoon in Bellevue, when he listens to three French intellectuals. There is a shared opinion: in the coming years it will be clear that this war is the struggle between two imperialisms that cannot coexist: English and German.<sup>30</sup> Gaziél is very aware of the magnitude of the moment: 'Temps a venir, 1914 serà una data que anirà agafant més relleu com més s'allunyi, com ho fan únicament les muntanyes més altes. En tindrà molt més que 1870 o 1848, almenys tant com 1789, i qui sap si un relleu comparable a 1453'<sup>31</sup> [In time, 1914 is a date that will be taking a more and more emphasis the farther we are, as only do the highest mountains. It will be more important than 1870 or 1848, at least as much as 1789, and who knows if a relevance comparable to 1453.]

War atmosphere is filled with superstitions and newspapers' confusing information. One night with his friend Martorell they go around the most dangerous neighbourhoods in the city and with surprise they discover that the city has changed dramatically. Ordinary people live off false rumours:

un enfilall inacabable d'anècdotes sagnats i esborronadores, sense cap mena d'il·lació, disperses en una correntia misteriosa de crueltat i de barbàrie. 'Els alemanys disfressats de Germanetes dels Pobres, reparteixen bombons explosius als més menuts que troben tot passant; altres, pertanyents a la Creu Roja, duen armes amagades al braçal i assassinen miserablement els ferits; a tal lloc han emmetzinat les aigües públiques; un ferit alemany ha disparat el seu revòlver, a boca de canó, contra un metge francès que l'anava a socórrer; a una dona belga, li han tallat bocins de carn i els han llançat als gossos afamats...' Res de combats entre grans exèrcits, ni d'accions heroiques; la guerra, vista per aquesta gent, apareix com un seguit de fets dispersos i incoherents realitzats per una banda d'assassins que van per despoblats sense més rumb que l'afany insadollable del crim.<sup>32</sup>

[an endless string of gory and creepy anecdotes, with no relationship, scattered in a mysterious stream of cruelty and barbarism. 'The Germans disguised as Sisters of the

30 Gaziél, *Paris 1914*, 136–41.

31 Gaziél, *Paris 1914*, 72.

32 Gaziél, *Paris 1914*, 146–7.

Poor, distributed chocolates explosives to children they encounter; others belonging to the Red Cross carry hidden weapons in their armband to kill the wounded; at such place they have poisoned public waters; a wounded German fired his revolver at close range against a French doctor who went to the rescue; a Belgian woman, was cut in small pieces and released to hungry dogs... Nothing about battles between large armies, nor heroic actions; war as seen by these people appears as a series of scattered and incoherent events performed by a band of assassins who go around without any goal but the insatiable desire of crime.]

As explained by Llanas, Gaziél's complexity as a character is expressed *in nuce* in this Parisian diary. First, the conflict between journalism and his literary vocation that leads the writer to a cul-de-sac and a sort of inferiority complex; then Gaziél's loyalty to a 'liberalisme conservador de fons humanista'<sup>33</sup> [conservative liberalism with a humanist background] and later the loss of points of reference that, at the end of the civil war, makes him distance, from both Francoists and illegal resistance groups.

## War in the Sky: Planes & Stars

One of the many new signs of war in an industrialized world was the presence of airplanes, machines that surprise and terrorize the enemy, and that place warriors nearer to the mythology of stars. This war was the first to see the use of planes and obviously it had an impact. Many literary texts refer to this novelty. The aircraft is perceived as a machine symbolizing the industrial world close to the mysterious stars, the most distant from the natural world on earth. The contrast between the artificial world and the natural world has a new setting and characters. Significantly, Catalan texts on the conflict adopt the perspective of the viewer / commentator, while

33 Manuel Llanas, *Gaziél: vida, periodisme i literatura* (Barcelona: PAM, 1994), 460.

those written in French or English give voice to the conflict, because they tell the pilot's experience.<sup>34</sup> Marcel Proust testimony adds to this interest:

Les aéroplanes que j'avais vu quelques heures plus tôt faire comme des insectes des taches brunes sur le soir bleu passaient maintenant dans la nuit qu'approfondissait encore l'extinction partielle des réverbères comme de lumineux brûlots. La plus grande impression de beauté que nous faisions éprouver ces étoiles humaines et filantes était peut-être surtout de faire regarder le ciel vers lequel on lève peu les yeux d'habitude.<sup>35</sup>

[The planes I had seen some hours earlier, like insects or brown spots upon the evening blue, continued to pass into the night deepened still more by the partial extinction of the street lamps like luminous faggots. The greatest impression of beauty given us by these flying human stars was perhaps that of making us look at the sky whither one rarely turned one's eyes.]

Gaziel frequently writes atmosphere notes that are used as objective correlative of his moods and the progress of the war. They are a kind of forerunner of what Marià Manent made comprehensively in his *Vel de Maia* about the civil war. Often he looks into the skies as if he were looking for answers. On 26 August, he writes:

La capital s'ha entristit en vint-i-quatre hores. Els carrers encara es veuen més deserts. S'ha fet de dia plovent. L'aire és fred, desagradable; el cel humit, opac, cobert de boires cendroses que es destrien per a tornar-se a ajuntar després, en vols rabents que emplen l'ànima de melangia.<sup>36</sup>

[The capital was saddened in twenty-four hours. The streets are even more deserted. The day started with rain. The air is cold, nasty; the sky wet opaque covered with ashy fog that gets apart and gets together a while later, the speedy drifts fill the soul with melancholy.]

34 See Kyle Nellesen, 'Fighting On Borrowed Wings: The Combat Experiences of Americans Serving with French and British Units During the First World War', *Voces Novae: Chapman University Historical Review*, Vol 1, No 1 (2009), 205–20.

35 Marcel Proust, *Le Temps retrouvé* (Paris: Gallimard, 1954), III, 801.

36 Gaziel, *París 1914*, 229.

Another day he returns by himself to the boarding house: 'Amunt, amunt, s'endormiscava el cel pàl·lid del capvespre. Hem tornat a la pensió caminant a poc a poc, amb el pressentiment que la nostra estada a París s'està acabant'<sup>37</sup> [Up, up, the pale evening sky was falling asleep. We returned to the boarding house walking slowly, with the feeling that our stay in Paris is about to end]. His final pages tell about the stars he sees arriving to Portbou and with a prayer in favour of France's victory.<sup>38</sup> The arrival of German airplanes dropping bombs with impunity over Paris<sup>39</sup> helps him make an assessment of how many deceptive information newspapers have provided during the month of August. He considers that French authorities have deceived the population, and that they did not inform correctly about the actual movements of the Germans.

Other writers consider the novelty of planes and aviators from a much more precise perspective. A very well-known calligram summarizes the pro-allied position sustained by many Catalan intellectuals during the war: 'Ode a Guynemer' by Josep M. Junoy is a calligram approved by Apollinaire with a very simple text:

'CIEL DE FRANCE / dins de l'avió mortalment ferit per l'espai hi *brunceix* encara el lluent cor del motor mes l'ànima viva *del* adolescent heroi aeri vola ja vers les *constelacions*'.

[CIEL DE FRANCE / mortally wounded in the plane through the space the shiny engine's heart still *roars* but the living soul of the adolescent aerial hero is already flying towards the *constellations*.]

Junoy's calligram was dedicated to the memory of Georges Guynemer, a war pilot who was considered the hero of French aviation during the Great War. His plane was shot down in combat, on 11 September 1917 by Kurt Wisseman, who piloted a Jasta 3. His body nor his plane, were never

37 Gaziol, *París 1914*, 241.

38 Gaziol, *París 1914*, 290.

39 Gaziol, *París 1914*, 263, 271, 278.

found. The poem plays with the separation between body and soul, to separate the rumour of war machines, that novelty of the war that had all the trappings of lethal toys and games provided by the industrial revolution ('within the plane mortally wounded' and 'the shiny engine's heart still roars'); and praises the aviator's heroic behaviour suggesting that after his death a new constellation has been formed. In addition the construction based on Cubist technique emphasizes futuristic warrior values. A version of the poem published in *Iberia* had a note that helps understand the poem: 'L'auteur a proposé, le 6 Octobre 1917 [when the poem was first published], à M. Le Ministre d'Instruction Publique et à M. Le Président de la Société Astronomique de France d'honorer la mémoire du glorieux aviateur en désignant, désormais, du nom de Guynemer une des plus belles constellations de la carte céleste' [The author suggested on 6 October 1917 to the Minister of Public Instruction and to the President of the Astronomical Society of France to honour the memory of the glorious aviator naming henceforth Guynemer one of the most beautiful constellations in the celestial map].

This visual poem was echoed in the French literary world. Apollinaire wrote Junoy a letter with great praise and Junoy used it as a prologue of his *Poemes & Calligrammes*:

Mon cher poète: Je n'ai reçu votre beau calligramme: Guynemer qu'avec un grand retard, car j'étais à l'hôpital où j'ai été couché deux mois.

J'ai été fort heureux de voir et de lire votre beau poème. Je me suis félicité d'avoir imaginé cette plastique poétique, à laquelle vous fournissez son premier chef-d'oeuvre. Je me'n félicite doublement comme poète et comme français puis qu'elle permet à l'amitié catalane de s'exprimer si lyriquement, si finement et si délicatement.

J'aurai l'occasion de parler de ce calligramme qui n'est pas le résultat d'un truc comme a écrit Maurras, mais est vraiment le fruit d'une authentique inspiration à la fois lyrique et plastique.

Je m'y connais et vous embrasse.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Josep M. Junoy, *Poemes & Calligrammes* (Barcelona: Llibreria Nacional Catalana, 1920), 5.p.

[My dear poet: I have received your beautiful calligram Guynemer after a long delay, because I was in the hospital where I was lying for two months.

I was very happy to see and read your beautiful poem. I welcomed having imagined this poetic plasticity, to which you provide its first masterpiece. I congratulate myself both as a poet and as French and it allows the Catalan friendship to speak in such a lyrical, fine, and delicate way.

I will have the opportunity to talk about this calligram that is not the result of a trick as written by Maurras, but is really the result of a genuine inspiration both lyrical and plastic.

I recognize myself in it and I embrace you.]

Incidentally one of the best texts by Rusiñol is also a calligram, which is a 'Retrat futurista' [Futuristic Portrait] from his series *Espurnes de la guerra* [Sparks of War].<sup>41</sup>

Another significant contribution is by Joan Pérez-Jorba, a critic, poet and banker, who was living in Paris since 1901. He published a book, *Sang en rovell d'ou* (1918) [Blood in egg yolk], which includes fiery pro-allies poems on the Great War. He devoted two calligram poems to Guillaume Apollinaire (1880–1918), who died victim of the Spanish grippe on 9 November 1918, two days before the armistice. Pérez-Jorba was very attentive to the avant-garde from the privileged perspective of somebody living in Paris. He was also advantaged spectator of the Great War, joining a chorus of voices in the Iberian Peninsula and Europe who wrote about the conflict. In an article, 'Parloteig de París' [Paris chatting] published in *El Poble Català* (15.07.1916), he coincided with ideas by futurist Marinetti and his comrades. They did not exactly hold a pacifist version of armed conflicts:

Els avions esperen l'hora d'emprendre el vol, amb les ales esteses, a ran de terra, arren-  
glerats. Ells, els campions del moviment aeri, romanen ara immòbils. Duen petits  
canons els uns i ametralladores els altres. Roda vertiginosament de l'avió, l'hèlix i el  
motor zumzeja, rítmic, com un burinot enorme. L'aviador munta en l'alat aparell  
de guerra; l'aeroplà avença com un automòbil, lliscant per terra; pren vol, després  
s'enlaira; després se fon pels núvols blancs de l'estiu, solemne, líric, heróic. Els fadrins  
més formosos de França, rosos o bruns, que tot és hu, aimen generalment fer d'aviadors.  
La valentia de cor, el desig de gloria patriòtica els duen a menypreuar el perill, fins a

41 Santiago Rusiñol, *Espurnes de la Guerra* (Barcelona: L'Avenç, 2004), 169.

cercar-lo. Guaitau, sinó, el front d'En Guynemer o els ulls d'En Gibert; hi veïeu tot seguit una expressió lluminosa de voluntat, una flama d'heroisme.

[Aircraft expect the time of take off with wings extended, at ground level, lined. They, the champions of air movement, remain motionless now. Some carry small cannons and others machine guns. The aircraft runs rapidly, propeller and engine rumble, rhythmic, like a huge bumblebee. The Aviator jumps into the winged war machine; the airplane moves forward like as a car, sliding on earth; after taking off starts to fly; after a while melts with white clouds of summer, in a solemn, lyrical, heroic way. The most beautiful French bachelors, with blond or brown hair, it's the same, generally love to be aviators. Heart of courage, desire of patriotic glory makes them forget about danger, they even look for it. Look rather Guynemer's front or Gibert's eyes; you see in them a bright expression of will, a flame of heroism.]

In the text we read an exaltation of aviation, the technical innovation of that moment that convulsed the so-called Art of War, made in a characteristic futuristic appeal to patriotism that now may seem a bit stale. The documents such as this one are not suitable for stately people. This kind of text asks for a non-vegan reader.

'Crusts of bread,' is the poem located at the end of the book *Sang en rovell d'ou* [Blood in egg yolk]. Constructed from small poems similar to short dialogues *nunistes* written by Albert-Birot whom he had met in 1917, Pérez-Jorba released these 'rosegons' [crusts] (stanzas) playing with typographic layout of the verse. However, it is not exactly a calligram, and he separates the verses with a dash. Each verse is also part of the story told in the present and a separate image. Onomatopoeia, and the accumulation of images that occur simultaneously imitate the battlefield dynamics:

L'horitzó fa de desfila cotonosa pels ulls  
de pols curulls  
enllà del Mosa s'alça el teló de l'acte primer  
els cors s'enfilen damunt de la paret  
del drama.

nang nang nang

pam pam pam

sang<sup>42</sup>

42. Pilar Garcia-Sedas, *Joan Pérez-Jorba (1874–1928). Del modernisme a l'avantguarda (articles, poemes i cartes)*. Pròleg d'Enric Bou (Barcelona: PAM, 2015). In edition.

[The horizon acts as cotton yarn to the eyes  
 dust laden  
 beyond the Moselle a curtain rises on the first act  
 hearts climb over the wall  
                                 of drama.  
 ding-dong ding-dong ding-dong  
                                 p-taff p-taff p-taff  
 blood]

In yet in another poem he includes the image of the plane:

Espantall apocalíptic  
 damunt del cel un cavall de ferre cavalca  
 Els minyons apunten l'avió que vola vola  
 Com si volguessin fer blanc en la lluna que brilla  
 I no l'erren com mai erren l'infanteria enemiga  
 L'avió cau  
 cau cau  
 s'en puja la cridoïra fins el cel  
 l'avió sembla un astre que s'ha després del cel.<sup>43</sup>

[Apocalyptic scarecrow  
 an iron horse is riding iron on heaven  
 The boys point to the airplane flying flying  
 As if they wanted to hit the shining white moon  
 And they do not miss it the same way they do not miss enemy infantry  
 The plane falls  
 falls falls  
 cries reach heaven  
 the plane seems to be a star fallen from the sky.]

The identification of aircraft and stars is one of the most recurring motifs in these texts. Pérez-Jorba had a profound Cubist awareness. In his book on Pierre-Albert Birot we encounter an authentic cubist Picassian self-portrait:

Era precisament en el seu despatx de treball, en la rue –fosc, neu, soletat, silenci  
 decembrals – de la Tombe Isoire, on Albert-Birot em parlava d'aquesta guisa amb la

43 Garcia-Sedas, *Joan Pérez-Jorba*.



seva veu metàl·lica com la música cubista. El seu rostre d'una rojor verament volcànica era en els meus ulls oberts com finestrals de bat a bat. I jo, Pérez-Jorba, sembla que estiga perdut entre els quadres penjats a les parets, entre les portes de la biblioteca de laca, entre els plecs dels cortinatges sedosos, com tot, giravoltant amb ritme, transformat per llei geomètrica, volgués caure damunt de l'otomana on sec. La visió rectangular de l'estança entra encara en el meu esperit tot i escrivint aquestes línies.<sup>44</sup>

[It was precisely in his office working on rue –darkness, snow, solitude, December silence– de la Tombe Isoire, where Albert-Birot spoke to me with his metal voice like Cubist music. His face with a truly volcanic redness was in my eyes opened as windows wide open. And I, Pérez-Jorba, feel lost in the pictures hanging on the walls, between the library's lacquer doors, between the curtains silky folds, as if everything swirling with rhythm, transformed by a geometric law, would fall on the Ottoman where I am sitting. The rectangular vision of the room comes yet into my mind while writing these lines.]

In a similar fashion we can consider both calligrams written as homage to Guillaume Apollinaire, and that are complemented with the interview that Pérez-Jorba made to Apollinaire in *La Publicidad* in July 1918. The poems are little known contributions to visual poetry and connect with the francophone partisanship adopted by many Catalan intellectuals during the Great War.

In the poem, signed with his pseudonym LITUS, after the mathematical formula in the title, begins a series of allusions to the colours of the French flag and a rooster. In Latin 'gallus' means 'gall' [rooster] and 'gal' [from Gaul]. The verses of the poem draw the structure of an aircraft, alluding yet again to the new technology that transformed warfare.

'Victory x Glory/ War'  
Joy to the three colors  
                  he pinned them on a flag

44. Garcia-Sedas, *Joan Pérez-Jorba*.

that he had bought on rue St. Charles for a few pennies

co

co

ri

co

two and three times

The Seine was no longer in fire and blood  
she was no longer making a dazzling dream

on the docks

laughter ran on the cracked facades

where bad manners were fleurdelisées

what an emotion I'm choking

fog hung on ragged holes for eyes

a glorious thrill was eavesdropping

feet on thoughts

and the sea in the background such a good girl

and this love color of dawn

all its ancestors rode his soul

France

dead in vain tried to show their heads

in the middle of the crowd.

In a different way, the second calligram presents Apollinaire's portray, using war elements and also mentioning his head war wounds.

Weapon under the arm

On the color purple trapeze

APOLLI / NAIRE

your triangle is offered the fowler

to force him to a heavenly

liberation

of the birdsong

she was decked

it glittered

locomotive whistling on your birth

O rose of hope

POET / SCHOLIAST

you walked without a stick  
you were flying on a plane  
eavesdropping on factories  
whose chimneys rose to the clouds  
symphonies  
there were stars  
around your trepanned forehead  
your feet shod winged books  
by thy invincible laughter  
you danced playful and hugged an sculpture  
of Aphrodite and Marizibill  
MANDOLINE / ET CLAIRON  
a gust of wind you closed the door  
A gust of wind you left  
with your dead youth  
flowers followed eyes your hearse  
floating desolation  
a glorious smile  
was in the windows of houses  
to where the jet climbed  
your song as an aurora  
to fall back into the pool of our dreams  
APOLL / INAIRE

According to Montserrat Prudon these poems are of futuristic inspiration. The name of the poet creates a triumphal arch or an inverted V for victory, and evokes a bandage around the head to protect Apollinaire's trepanned head.<sup>45</sup> Two crosses divide the poem into three parts. It starts and ends with the name of Apollinaire broken into two wings (of a plane?) or V of victory. It ends with a reference to the funeral procession. Some important elements refer to the opposition between the artificial-industrial world and the natural world:

45 Montserrat Prudon, "Nous sommes tous fils d'Apollinaire". De la présence de Guillaume Apollinaire chez les créateurs catalans. *Les literatures catalana i francesa al llarg del segle XX. Les literatures catalane et française au XXème siècle*. Claude Benoit, Ferran Carbó, Dolors Jiménez i Vicent Simbor, eds (Barcelona: PAM, 1997), 241.

la libération/céleste [heavenly/liberation]  
 la locomotive qui sifflait sur ta naissance [locomotive whistling on your birth]  
 tu volais en avion [you were flying on a plane]  
 aux écoutes sur les usines [eavesdropping on factories]  
 dont les cheminées élevaient aux nuées [whose chimneys rose to the clouds]  
 des symphonies [symphonies]  
 il y avait des étoiles [there were stars]  
 autour de ton front trépané [around your trepanned forehead]

Both poems are songs of war, clearly committed to the French, and a vindication of poetry and the poet, with echoes of some of the most famous Apollinaire's calligrams.

## Literary Warriors

The Great War implied a great transformation of everyday life. According to Paul Fussell, many instances in the texture of British daily life still commemorate the war:

It is remembered in the odd pub-closing hours, one of the fruits of the Defense of the Realm Act; the afternoon closing was originally designed, it was said, to discourage the munitions workers of 1915 from idling away their afternoons over beer. The Great War persists in many of the laws controlling aliens and repressing sedition and espionage. 'D'-notices to newspapers, warning them off 'national-security matters,' are another legacy. So is Summer Time. So are such apparent universals as cigarette-smoking, the use of wristwatches (originally a trench fad), the cultivation of garden 'allotments' ('Food Will Win the War'). So is the use of paper banknotes, entirely replacing gold coins.<sup>46</sup>

46 Fussell, *The Great War*, 340. Furthermore he mentions changes in cooking and eating habits of many Europeans: eggs and chips became popular during the war because both bacon and steak were scarce and costly.

Another crucial change was that of women's role in society and the development of a new literary genre:

After the war women dramatically outnumbered men, and a common sight in the thirties—to be seen, for some reason, especially on railway trains—was the standard middle-aged Lesbian couple in tweeds, who had come together as girls after each had lost a fiancé, lover, or husband. A sign of the unique persistence of the war in England is literally a sign, above a large section of shelves in Hatchard's Bookshop, Piccadilly. I have seen nothing like it in any other country. It reads: 'Biography and War Memoirs,' in recognition of a distinct and very commonly requested English genre.<sup>47</sup>

Catalan literature does not have a shelf devoted to the Great War memoirs although it did contribute quite a bit to the war effort. When we read texts related to the Great War there is a surprising unanimity to have it declared an apocalyptic event that changed the world and started a new era, along with German brutality and disregard for human life and cultural heritage. Gaziol's book (also Blasco Ibáñez or Rusiñol) has the great merit of being written before the end of the conflict, when it is not known what the final outcome would be. It is a defence of a way of living they recognize in the French model. Rusiñol, though from a very ardent anti-German position often wastes his argument under a childish Manichaeism. Extremely young Gaziol has genuine voice filled with perplexities and contradictions.

Gaziol was an outstanding testimony in two different moments and in two different ways: first as an innocent and anonymous bystander while writing his diary, a student in Paris which gained recognition when it was published in *La Vanguardia* the main Barcelona newspaper. This happened the same year the events took place and shortly after was published as a book. In a second time, he became a war correspondent and achieved notoriety, as shown by his chronicles from Monastir. Gaziol discovered right at the start that war had a great impact on daily life. It is worth mentioning his attention to anecdotes about the heroism of French people, the silence in the Paris' streets, the absurdity of the military, the effect of censorship in the press, the thinning of newspapers.

The war has a role in the Marcel Proust's *Le Temps retrouvé* [Time Regained]. It is seen from the perspective of those who tried to hide. He tells of a man who, after having left Paris after mobilization, returns to the city in 1916, 'un Paris bien différent de celui... d'août 1914'<sup>48</sup> [a Paris quite different from that ... of August 1914]. The atmosphere of the streets is disconcerting: the war is present everywhere, remembered, celebrated, but everything happens 'comme si les gens, malgré elle, continuaient à être ce qu'ils étaient'<sup>49</sup> [As if people, in spite of it, continued to be what they were], as if the drama national existed without their knowledge. The narrator, who follows the course of military operations, realizes that the war was not only strategic but mostly 'mental' because '[elle] se vit comme un amour ou comme une haine, (elle) pourrait être racontée comme un roman'<sup>50</sup> [(It) is experienced as a love or as a hate, (it) could be told as a novel]. The most notable contributions of Catalan writers to this new literary subgenre are Gaziell's diary and the poems, from traditional Apelles Mestres, or more experimental by Junoy, Pérez-Jorba, or even Rusiñol. A new form of war, implied an original literary response. Catalonia was far from the trenches but its writers were very much committed to victory.

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48 Marcel Proust, *Le Temps retrouvé*, 129.

49 Proust, *Le Temps retrouvé*, 128.

50 Proust, *Le Temps retrouvé*, 388.

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