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Writing of the self Iberian diary writing

Enric Bou and Heike Scharm

Iberian autobiography

When inquiring about autobiographical writing in the Iberian Peninsula one cannot but take into account the infamous words by a major Spanish philosopher, who expressed total distrust in the ability of his fellow countrymen to practice this kind of writing. José Ortega y Gasset argued that “memoirs are a symptom of complacency in life [...]. The scarcity of Memoirs [in Spain] ought not to surprise us if we realize that the Spaniard considers life to be a universal toothache!” Commenting on this assertion, James Fernández stated “this is curious and specious reasoning, no doubt, which mysteriously attributes silence to the victim of a toothache” (qtd in J. D. Fernández 1992, 2). Ortega’s justification does not hold water when confronted with reality. A closer look at what has been published in the last thirty years, since the disappearance of the dictatorships in Portugal and Spain, reveals a sudden increase in publication of autobiographical texts. Among them, diaries account for more and more of the activity of senior and young writers alike. The advent of the internet and the development of blogs have sparked a new boom in autobiography.

During the years of political oppression there was no refusal to write autobiography, but rather an impossibility of doing so. Censorship and other obvious editorial difficulties led to a severe restriction of texts, such as autobiographies, since they might reflect too closely the reality experienced by the Portuguese and Spaniards alike, and were thus perceived as contrary to the political interests of Salazar’s or Franco’s regime. This is, unfortunately, the condition of literatures that have to develop under harsh dictatorship conditions. As Silvia Molloy once pointed out, the lack of autobiography in Spanish-speaking countries should be related to an attitude of self-protection adopted by most writers. In a politically unstable climate, most writers do not dare to write the “truth” about themselves, but instead prefer to write autobiographical books under the umbrella of history or fiction (Molloy 1991, 2). Anna Caballé also underscored the fact that in Spanish literature authors have been negating for decades the existence of autobiography in their own country. This attitude founded such unfortunate assertions as that by Ortega y Gasset about the inherent “psychological” impossibility of Spanish authors writing any autobiography at all. This has created a historically absurd negation of the existence of this genre, a negation that appears even more incongruous when one takes into consideration the abundance of such texts in Spanish literature (Caballé 1995, 42–43). In the Iberian Peninsula, because of decades of living under extremely repressive political regimes, autobiographical writing has had a difficult existence. Nevertheless, there have been significant examples of this kind of writing (see Bou 1993, Caballé 1995, Gabilondo 2006a, Rocha 1992).

Ángel Loureiro, in his book on Spanish autobiography, has stated that “a considerable number of autobiographical works have been published in Spain in the last two centuries, yet only a small number of them veer from a safe memoristic pattern” (2000, xiv). At the end of the book,

he elaborates on this distinction between autobiography and memoir, and concludes that Spanish autobiography “is often about a self that regulates how much it is convenient or appropriate to say; but it is usually a self assured of itself, rarely one that sees itself as a problem” (2000, 185). When Loureiro writes “problem,” he is referring to a self that opens up to the Other, in the Levinasian sense, and constitutes itself with regard to this Other through an ethical bond of responsibility. Loureiro hints at the reason for this memoristic tradition that consistently refrains from problematizing the self: “If the most compelling Spanish autobiographies have been written against the grain of the nation, against Spain’s past and past Spains, the issue must be the national subject and its history” (A. G. Loureiro 2000, 186). The recent modernization of Spain has brought an end to this autobiographical void. According to Joseba Gabilondo, “the eruption of autobiographical literature in the Spanish Basque Country points in exactly the opposite direction [...] autobiography emerges when the national subject experiences crisis instead of modernization.” If we accept that Spain is experiencing modernization without modernity, “we are witnessing complex negotiations to write and think beyond the horizon of a national (modern) subject: a post-national horizon where the national continues to linger as problem rather than as utopia or solution” (Gabilondo 2006b, 184).

Diary writing

Diary writing is a (sub)genre which focuses its attention on trivialities. It tends to ponder upon every day minor details in a repetitious and almost obsessive manner, expressing thus a strong curiosity about such details. Writers live and they observe their own actions, paying special attention to such central activities as reading and writing. Diary writing is a paradoxical genre, both within the margins of autobiography and yet central to it, because in most cases it reflects both intimacy and public domain. When a writer starts keeping a journal this means that a particular day, some of what happened has a particular importance, and it is deemed worth saving for future reference. This type of discourse always belongs to a series, creating — by presence or absence, repetition and negation, utterance or silence — a web of implied meaning, for both the writer and the reader. People hardly ever write or read an isolated journal entry out of context, out of a series, because when reading a journal readers pay special attention to the series, to repetition, variety, and fidelity to certain ethical or literary principles. Days keep piling up in their monotony, yet within the wholeness of a series, what seemed at first insignificant or irrelevant all of a sudden acquires a special richness and intensity.

In most cases, and in clear opposition to memoirs or other kinds of autobiographical writing, diary entries are closely connected to marking time with exactitude and to contemplating apparently insignificant events. It is through reading a series that one becomes aware of its hidden secrets and rhythms. In this respect diaries are very similar to epistolary collections. The author of a diary writes for a particular reader: the writer herself. This intended intimacy explains why so many diaries never reach print, and why, when reading them, we experience the sensation of eavesdropping on somebody else’s most intimate thoughts. The fact that an author decides to publish a private diary raises many questions about his real (or his original) intentions. Was it meant — was it written — to be published in the first place? To what extent should we then expect to be reading a manipulated text? A diary is written to oneself, and any further circulation of a

text of that nature is rather extraordinary. Therefore, it is reasonable to consider the possibility of some degree of manipulation by the author, as many critics have rightfully pointed out, among others, Pla, Gil de Biedma, Pessoa.

It is characteristic of diary writing to spell out a poetics of the genre. Diarists muse about their task. Critics such as Roland Barthes and Maurice Blanchot have echoed how difficult it is for a diary to mature into a real literary text, to become a *livre* (book). In fact, diary writers propose a theory of the diary as a marginal text within the limits of literature. And this puzzle-ment creates the environment for fruitful reflection, including a vindication. Henry Amiel, one of the best diarists of all times, who has had many followers in the Iberian Peninsula, wrote in his diary: “A private diary does not teach you the art of composition. It teaches neither to speak or write, nor to think with order and methodically. It is a psychological relaxation, a recreation, a *gourmandise*, a lazy activity, posing as work.”¹ Besides what may sound like a negative opinion on diary writing, Amiel’s statement expresses his own reflections about the genre. In fact, he would consider his *Journal intime* (Intimate journal) an essential tool for keeping his own sanity; not only to register events but to enable the author to establish a sort of continuity in his life, “to preserve his spiritual itinerary,” and to take on “the struggle against life’s dissipation and dispersion,” as he wrote on January 31, 1853 (“la conservation de [son] itinéraire spirituel, la lutte contre la dissipation et la dispersion de la vie”; Amiel 1976–94, 407).

Many critics have expressed their skepticism about diaries’ literary value. Roland Barthes, for example, commented on this issue in *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes*, a sort of autobiographical text. According to the French critic, diary writing implies limitation and a reduction in quality with regard to the integrity of a literary text. Contrary to an elaborated and well-organized kind of discourse, a *dissertation*, a school activity with a well-established status in French schools, a diary opens the doors to “fragments,” which in his view is the most characteristic element of this genre. As Barthes was trying to justify the main topic in Gide’s diary, he announced that: “the (autobiographical) journal is nowadays completely discredited. Cross translation: in the seventeenth century, when people started writing them, without any reluctance, people would call them a ‘diare’: diarrhea and secretion.” He concluded defining the diary as: “Production of my fragments. Contemplation of my fragments (correction, polishing, etc). Contemplation of my excrements (narcissism).”² This extremely negative vision of diaries equates its writing to diarrhea, and female vaginal secretion, rejecting it thus as a valid literary genre. Going beyond Barthes’s provocation, his remarks encourage us to observe more carefully certain characteristics of diaristic writing, such as its periodicity, intimate situation, and the difficulties of its being read and understood outside of a private circle. New forms of diary writing — blogs — take Barthes’s scatological metaphor a step further, leading us to never-seen boundaries: from the WC’s solitude, to the Net’s solitude. That is, diaries have advanced from a cemetery of words where nothing is read, to a literature for the living dead, or today’s “blogomania.”

1. “Le journal intime n’est pas une préparation à l’enseignement ni à l’art de la composition. Il n’apprend ni à parler ni à écrire, ni à penser avec suite et méthode. C’est un délassément psychologique, une récréation, une gourmandise, une paresseuse activité, un faux-semblant de travail” (1976–94, 158).
2. “Le ‘journal’ (autobiographique) est cependant, aujourd’hui, discrédité. Chassé-croisé (chassé-croisé (cross translation): au XVIIe siècle, où l’on commençait à en écrire, sans répugnance, on appelait ça un diare: diarrhée et glaire.” “Production de mes fragments. Contemplation de mes fragments (correction, polissage, etc). Contemplation de mes déchets (narcissisme)” (Barthes 1975, 99).

Iberian diary writing

Until recently, diary writing in the Iberian Peninsula has been relegated to a secondary role in the literary system. But it is worthy of remark that this well-known type of autobiographical writing was of significant importance in at least two of the literatures written in the Peninsula. In both Portugal and Catalonia, this supposedly minor genre has been practiced by major figures and, in fact, some of its better-known works outside their linguistic domains have been diaries. This is the case, obviously of Fernando Pessoa and Josep Pla. What is most remarkable is the number of works that belong to this area: Juan Larrea's *Orbe* (1990) or J. V. Foix's project *Diari 1918* (1956), come immediately to mind (for an erratic albeit incomplete account of diary writing in Spanish and Catalan, see Trapiello 1998; Romera Castillo 2004 proposes a detailed summary of recent scholarly publications).

Samuel Pepys started a literary genre with his *Diary*. Written between 1660 and 1669, he provides a startling insight into Cromwell's London, with special attention to cultural activities (music) but also sensual pleasures (women and taverns). Johann Kaspar Lavater, the founder of physiognomy as science, wrote *Geheimes Tagebuch von einem Beobachter seiner selbst* (Secret journal of a self-observer), published in two volumes in 1772–73. Lavater combines a close self-examination with a very pious Christian philosophy. Contemporary to these European examples, one can locate similar texts in the Iberian Peninsula, such as those of Catalan diarist Baró de Maldà (a contemporary of Spanish writer Leandro F. de Moratín) or Portuguese writers Antero de Quental (if we consider as diary his letter exchanges with Oliveira Martins) and Cavaleiro de Oliveira, who wrote *Recriação periódica* (Periodical recreation) a sort of diary, as well as several travelogues.

In Galicia and Euzkadi, one finds only a few examples of autobiographical writing. Basque literature has paid little or no attention to autobiography, thus tragically stressing the marginality of this kind of writing. One can mention marginal texts such as those written by Jesuit Manuel de Uriarte, *Diario de un misionero de Mainas* (Journal by a missionary from Mainas, 1768), Julián de Salazar Garaigorta, *Acaecimientos de un diario de navegación* (Events from a journal of navigation, 1896), or Lore de Gamboa (Carmen Balzer), *Diario de mar y cielo* (Journal of sea and heaven, 1966). From a more literary perspective, it is worth mentioning *Diario íntimo* (Intimate journal) by Miguel de Unamuno, written while he was living in Alcalá de Henares between April 9 and May 28, 1897. In this diary, Unamuno expresses a deep crisis in his religious beliefs. While defending his position against Catholicism, he reevaluates Christianity. *Diario íntimo* constitutes a particularly insightful examination of the religious Unamuno. He confesses his appreciation of atheism: "I have arrived at atheism, even at imagining a world without God..." ("He llegado hasta el ateísmo, hasta imaginar un mundo sin Dios..."). But he accepts nevertheless the fact that he cannot live without God. He even manipulates his old Communist beliefs when he speaks about a "Saint Communism" ("Santo Comunismo"), which allows people to participate in "one and the same God, the communion in spirit" ("un mismo Dios; el comulgar en espíritu"; Unamuno 1998, 20). According to one of the authors cited in this *Diario íntimo* — S. Felipe Neri — he writes: "God's true servant does not know any other fatherland but heaven" ("El verdadero siervo de Dios no conoce más patria que el cielo"; Unamuno 1998, 23). In recent years there have been several examples of autobiographical writing (in Spanish) by Basque authors.

According to Gabilondo, "the reconstruction of the present at a time of national and global destabilization only seems to be possible in these autobiographies by voiding the past and

continuously looking for new possible models of identity” (2006, 218). Faced with an autobiographical story deemed impossible to narrate, these writers opt for textual violence. Thus, the rejected past, which can be considered a void of history, becomes like an amputated limb, which still can be felt, and the writer, as Savater explains, becomes a *mutilado* with a prosthetic memory: “Far from San Sebastian I feel as if I were mutilated, but what I have lost keeps throbbing as if more present than what is present, and I cannot adjust to the use of crutches or false limbs. Until I do go back to Donosti, I keep limping.”³

A leading Galician writer, Castelao, wrote his *Diario 1921* (Journal 1921), which was partly published in *Nós* (Us), during a government-funded trip across Europe. He traveled through France, Belgium, and Germany, interested in the art scene of those countries. The result is a diary that pays profound attention to art, one of Castelao’s main preoccupations. As stated by one of his critics: “as he traveled, he expressed with more confidence his rejection of artistic new tendencies and articulated a fondness for folk art and painting from old ages” (Ventura 2004, 666). Castelao recognized the value of his trip as an educational adventure: “Here in Europe everything I saw, observed, and experienced made me a stronger man of thought, reassured me about my convictions and refusals as an artist rooted in my land and spirit.”⁴ *Diario 1921* is, unquestionably, a collection of Castelao’s aesthetic responses to art styles, painters, and masterpieces by Picasso, Brueghel, and Rubens, among many other artists. But it is also a visual representation of the diary mode as an extension of a creative self. Castelao’s visits to museums and exhibitions combine with his own drawings and artistic projects. In fact, *Diario 1921*’s modernity parallels the cultural pluralism that Castelao finds in Paris. His definition of internationalism (Castelao 1977, 129) explores universalism and regional differences; individual and collective history; and personal identity and pluralism. Certainly, *Diario 1921* shows a collage design that mirrors the Galician writer’s most private life (e.g., personal and family concerns), his cosmopolitan subjectivity, and his aesthetic values: “At last I received my wife’s letter, and I am so glad. I am so happy that I believe that this is the reason why I made the color drawing in the next page. The truth is that this diary is so full of different things.”⁵

It is not a secret that many diaries had been kept unpublished for years, and that most texts were only published in their complete version at the end of dictatorship, or after many years had passed since the events portrayed. Self-censorship, for moral or political reasons, has played a significant role in the diffusion of these texts. Diary writing has two significant phases: when it is written and the moment of being sent to the press. Josep Pla (1897–1981) or Jaime Gil de Biedma (1929–90) are excellent examples of the manipulation typical of diary writing. Pla wrote his diary *El quadern gris* between 1918 and 1919, but it was not published until 1966, almost fifty years after its inception. Gil de Biedma wrote a diary in 1956, but it was published in two different moments,

3. “Lejos de San Sebastián me siento mutilado pero lo perdido sigue latiendo como más presente que lo presente y no me acomodo a muletas ni miembros postizos. Hasta que vuelvo a Donosti, no dejo de cojear” (Savater 2003, 116).
4. “Eiquí, en Europa, canto vin, canto observéi, canto paséi trocúme nun home máis forte de pensamento, máis seguro nas miñas afirmacións e as miñas negacións de artista enraizado na Terra e no esprito” (Castelao 1977, 311).
5. “Por fin xa recibín carta da mina dona i estou contento, moi contento. Tanto que coido que foi por iso que fixen ise dibuxo en côr que deixo pegado na páxina seguinte. A verdade é que iste xornal vai ben cheo de cousas diferentes” (Castelao 1977, 197).

in sharply different versions. In 1974 he published a harshly censored selection of his diaries under the title *Diario del artista seriamente enfermo* (Diary of a seriously ill writer), and in 1991, right after his death, a longer version of his diary was published under the title *Retrato del artista en 1956* (A portrait of the artist in 1956). The text of the second version bears little similarity to the former. In the first diary he only published the second part of that year, which consists of notes about long days spent recovering from a malady. He had just returned to Spain after an extensive job-related visit to the Philippine Islands. After a brief stay in Barcelona, he falls sick with tuberculosis and under medical orders spends time at the family house near Segovia. The notes from the first part of the year are filled with sexually explicit accounts of his life in Manila, while at the same time he chronicles his poetry writing. In the second part he narrates about his, in Carlos Barral's words, literary *fratría* (brotherhood) and about a sedentary life writing an excellent book on Jorge Guillén's poetry. This was a particularly important year for him, as he decided to work seriously in the family business, Tabacos de Filipinas. During the same timeframe he was keeping a close interest in poetry writing and criticism. *Retrato del artista en 1956* is both a confession and the chronicle of a literary activity of utmost importance for the cultural future of the country. This amazing diary narrates first-hand the Spanish literary renewal process under Franco's dictatorship.

Gil de Biedma compiles two very different diaries (in the same year) according to the place where he is located. While he is in the Philippines he writes extremely frank confessions about his sexuality and many adventures in gay parts of the city. Back in Spain and living in very bourgeois atmosphere he writes only about literary friends, and literary projects. The first half deals with his sexuality and self-pity as a colonialist. In the second one, between Barcelona and La Nava, sexual abstinence opens the door to his literary success. In-between the two, there is a business-like report written in a very dry bureaucratic prose, which is the text he was supposed to write while in the Philippines. This apparently boring work provides the reader with a clue about the author's leisure time on the island, and his difficulties to adapt to his previous life when he is back in Barcelona. The diary justifies his life-long drama as a lawyer working in the family business, while trying to have a real life in literature, as a poet and critic. According to Clara Rocha, a similar phenomenon takes place in Miguel Torga's diary: "in certain episodes in the first few volumes the subject, a mature man, adopts strategies (focalization by the main character) which help him recreate a child's world view" (Rocha 1992, 50).

A diary is a text without limitations or models, and therefore it is always struggling to find its own definition. Diarists ask themselves about the status of what they write. Josep Pla argues this way: "September 5. — I ask myself if this diary is an absolutely intimate text. The first problem one faces is this: is it possible to express one's intimacy? I mean by this to express intimacy, clearly, coherently, in an intelligible way. Pure intimacy, one can think, must be pure spontaneity, that is an instinctive and incoherent segregation. If we disposed of an efficient language and lexicon in order to be able to portray this segregation, there would not be a problem. But we must accept that there is no style or lexicon effective enough to express sincerity."⁶ This is neither a rhetorical nor

6. "5 de setembre.— Em demano sovint si aquest dietari és sincer, és a dir, si és un document absolutament íntim. La primera qüestió que es planteja és aquesta: ¿és possible l'expressió de la intimitat? Vull dir l'expressió clara, coherent, intel·ligible, de la intimitat. La intimitat pura, ben garbellat, deu ésser l'espontaneïtat pura, o sigui una segregació visceral i inconnexa. Si hom disposés d'un llenguatge i d'un lèxic eficaç per a representar aquesta segregació, no hi hauria problema. Però el cert és que no existeix ni un estil adequat a la sinceritat ni un lèxic eficient" (Pla 2005, 306–07).

a cynical question. It is the most crucial dilemma a diary writer faces, and it is even more acute when he is rewriting his own text composed fifty years earlier. In a similar way, Pere Gimferrer often reflects upon what he is doing in his somewhat postmodern *Dietari* (Diary). In “Escriure un dietari” (To write a diary), he muses: “Fake diary, true diary? Public or intimate? Those of us who write a diary know that this is as risky and as ambiguous and as seductive and as weak as all of literature. Or as life.”⁷ He goes as far as to propose literature, that is the act of writing a diary, as a substitution for life: “Here we have the distinction between a narrator and a writer. A narrator tells us about life events. A writer may tell us about life events but he also explains himself. He portrays himself through somebody else: the human being who is born during the reflective act implied by writing a diary. What interests us about Amiel’s diary is precisely Amiel himself, not what his opinions were, but who he was. As Heraclit once said: ‘I looked into myself.’”⁸ Torga puts the problem in these terms: “A diary is not this. A real diary is the one of that Englishman who, so that nobody may read him, even invented a code. What would I write if I knew how to write in cipher!”⁹

Andrés Sánchez Robayna, a Spanish poet and author of excellent diaries, wrote about the distinctiveness of this kind of literature. After reading Jünger’s diaries, he compared them to some well-known names who also wrote diaries: the Goncourt brothers, Virginia Woolf, Lev Tolstoy, Léon Bloy, etc. Sánchez Robayna makes then a useful distinction between plot-oriented and philosophical diaries. These two conceptualizations of a literary genre allow him to introduce another reflection by Juan Ramón Jiménez, always in the margins, who had advised that: “In reality, a poet, mute or writing, is an abstract dancer and if he writes it is because of a daily weakness, because he should not write. He who should write is the man of letters.”¹⁰ This is another way of expressing a similar preclusion like the one stated by Maurice Blanchot (1959) against the literary status of diaries. In fact, Juan Ramón Jiménez never wrote a real diary. Instead, he looked for a poetical solution in *Diario del poeta recién casado* (Diary of a recently married poet, 1917), a series of poems written during a trip he started on January 16, 1916, when he went to the United States to meet his wife to be, Zenobia Camprubí. The closest to a diary are the notes taken by his good friend Juan Guerrero Ruiz (1998 & 1999), in *Juan Ramón de viva voz* (Juan Ramón, his own words).

Diaries have played a significant role in Catalan literature. In the seventeenth century, Jeroni Pujades wrote a magnificent diary (Casas Homs 1975–76). John Elliott has explained how he discovered it in 1956 at the University of Barcelona library in the manuscript section. Historian Jaume Vicens Vives cried “Sensacional, Elliott, sensacional” (Great, Elliott, great!) when told

7. “Dietari fals, dietari ver? Extern o bé intern? Els qui escrivim un dietari sabem que això té tant de risc i tanta d’ambigüitat i tanta de seducció i tantes de defallences com tota la literatura. O com la vida” (Gimferrer 1996, 152).
8. “Heus ací, potser, descompartida la zona fronterera entre el cronista i l’escriptor. El cronista explica coses, l’escriptor, encara que expliqui coses, s’explica a si mateix. Es fa una mena de retrat per persona interposada: la persona que neix per l’acte reflexiu d’escriure un dietari. El que ens interessa del dietari és, precisament, Amiel: no el que opinava, sinó el que era. Ja ho deia el vell Heràclit: ‘Jo em vaig sotjar a mi mateix’” (Gimferrer 1996, 151–52).
9. “Um Diário não é isto. Diário é o daquele inglês que, para que ninguém o lesse, até uma cifra inventou. O que eu diria aqui se soubesse escrever em cifra!” (Torga 1999a, 42–43).
10. “En realidad, el poeta, callado o escrito, es un bailarín abstracto, y si escribe, es por debilidad cotidiana, que, en puridad, no debiera escribir. El que debe escribir es el literato” (Sánchez Robayna 2002, 148).

about the finding. This anecdote illustrates the difficult life of these kinds of texts. Pujades's diary is crammed with items of local, and broader, news, and interlaced with mordant comments on people and events. As Elliot (2001) points out, "perhaps what most impressed me about Pujades's reactions, and to some extent counteracted the revisionist and iconoclastic approach I had been adopting when confronted with over-romanticized interpretations of the 1640 revolt, was the love of the motherland [*pàtria*] that runs through the diary, and the author's passionate feeling for Catalan liberties." Reading this diary, one perceives a deep sense of *pàtria*, both at the local level (his home town was Castelló d'Empúries) but also regarding the Principality as a whole, as a community held together by a common faith, and by shared history, laws, and traditions. It is especially interesting that by reading this diary a historian such as Elliott could reassess his views of Catalonia and Castile. Pujades issues a revealing comment in 1626, the year in which Philip IV and Olivares visited the Principality for a disastrous session of the Corts, as he writes: "I think it to be true that his Majesty does not know what Catalonia is, nor do his advisors understand it, or maybe, out of excessive respect, they do not dare to tell him."¹¹

Baró de Maldà's diary is of a very different nature. Over a span of more than fifty years, between 1769 until his death in 1819, he writes more than seventy handwritten volumes, which bear witness to the transformation of Catalan society. Under the title *Calaix de Sastre* (Taylor's box), nobleman Rafael d'Amat de Cortada i de Senjust, baró de Maldà, mixes personal and popular views about society, mores, the state of Catalan language, culture, and literature, offering us a unique perspective on those years. In the twentieth century three diarists stand out: Josep Pla, Marià Manent, and Pere Gimferrer. More recently, other authors have very successfully published this kind of writing: Feliu Formosa, Enric Sòria, Toni Mollà, Ponç Pons.

Jospe Pla, Marià Manent, and Pere Gimferrer have published noteworthy examples of this genre of discontinuity. Their diaries *Quadern Gris* (Gray notebook), *Vel de Maia* (Maià's veil), and *Dietari* (Diary) are good examples of how a well-established author mediates, through a diary, the reading of their own work. This is most noticeable in the case of Pla. He manipulates dates of his youth, as one can appreciate thanks to Xavier Pla's recent facsimile edition. When reaching the age of seventy, Pla prepares himself for history. He uncompromisingly modifies his own text, manipulating chronological information. By comparing both versions one realizes that he has gone as far as to rewrite the original text from 1918–19, embellishing stylistically or morally many entries (Pla 1999). All references to *bordellos*, for example, are suppressed in the 1966 edition. He does not hesitate to change the beginning of the diary to a more significant date: that of his eighteenth birthday. In *El quadern gris*, Pla explains his upbringing between two different worlds: his hometown of Palafrugell, a backward provincial town opposed to — in a way — cosmopolitan Barcelona. In his anotations he systematically expresses his opinions about the Catalan literary world and of his education as a writer. His voice is that of an adult, not that of the young Josep Pla from 1918. There is a systematic process of rewriting, that is of reduction and re-elaboration. Reduction occurs because as an adult he knows perfectly well how to trace what is most poignant about a certain experience, or he devises a way to stress a day's distinctiveness. Thus, at an advanced age, he amplifies the text through re-elaborating and fictionalizing events experienced in his youth. A perfect example could be this journal entry from 1919. In the original

11. "Yo crec ser axí, que ni sa Mt. sap lo que és Catalunya, ni los qui lo aconsellan, ho entenen, o per respectes humans, no le y gosan dir" (Casas Homs 1975–76, 58).

diary he writes: “I saw a magnificent young woman in Ferran and Llibreteria streets. She had big mouth and lips, bright eyes, dark hair, very sheer stockings.”¹² In the 1966 version, this brief annotation becomes a much more elaborated text:

I like in the afternoon to wander through the streets of old Barcelona. In Ferran street and Llibreteria street I have seen a magnificent young woman. She had dark hair, sensuous lips, brilliant teeth, bright eyes, surprised like those of a gazelle, abundant and rounded thighs under sheer stockings. Legs have to be long and the calves full. *Les mollets bien fournis!* to put it in French. Magnificent creature, glorious Astarte!¹³

This reference to Phoenician goddess Astarte, the goddess of reproduction and fertility, culminates the intense re-elaboration of his remembrance, converting a very short note into literature through *auxesis* or hyperbole. One cannot but suspect that this is what happens to many diarists. They are tempted to manipulate the text while preparing it for the press. Many decide to intervene through self-embellishment and self-censorship, which has a strong impact on the final version. Maybe a writer’s merit consists in part in his ability to hide this bleak process.

In Portugal, Fernando Pessoa stands out as the most original writer of this kind. Penned under one of his heteronyms, Bernardo Soares, he wrote *Livro do Desassossego* (The book of disquiet), of which he only published a few entries before his death. In the *Livro do Desassossego*, he displayed his theory and practice of heteronyms. The alias closest to his personality was Bernardo Soares. In a very famous letter to Adolfo Casais Monteiro from January 13, 1935, Pessoa discusses the genesis and characteristics of his three principal heteronyms: “This tendency to create another world within me, identical to this one but with different people, has never left my mind. This tendency went through various phases of which this is one, which has already become of age. A witty remark which had been burgeoning within me, would occur to me, completely alien, for one reason or another, about who I am, or who I suppose I am.”¹⁴ Diary writing permits him to develop his illusion of the self, one of the remarkable achievements of his literary project. It is through the combination of heteronyms that a complete series of alternative lives are presented to the reader. As he explains in the same letter: “My semi-heteronym, Bernardo Soares, who, by the way, in many respects resembles Alvaro de Campos, always appears when I am feeling tired or drowsy and appears in such a way that his qualities of reasoning power and inhibition are a little erratic; his prose is a continuous reverie. He is a semi-heteronym because, although not being my personality itself, it is not different from mine, but simply a mutilation of it. It is I less the reasoning power and the affectivity. His prose, with the exception of the tenuous quid which is present in mine, is the equal of mine, and from the language point of view the Portuguese is

12. “He vist una noia magnífica al carrer de Ferran i Llibreteria: boca i llavis grossos, ulls brillants, morena, mitjes finíssimes” (Pla 2005, 48).
13. “Magrada —a la tarda— de divagar pels carrers de la Barcelona vella. Al carrer de Ferran i al de la Llibreteria, he vist avui una noia magnífica: morena, boca i llavis molsuts, dents lluminoses, ulls brillants, astorats, de gasela, anca rodona i turgent, cama tibant i llarga sota les mitges fines. La cama ha de ser llarga i la pantorrilla plena. *Les mollets bien fournis!* —per dir-ho en francès. Animal magnífic, gloriosa Astarté!” (Pla 1966, 477).
14. “Esta tendência para criar em torno de mim um outro mundo, igual a este mas com outra gente, nunca me saiu da imaginação. Teve várias fases, entre as quais esta, sucedida já em maioridade. Ocorria-me um dito de espírito, absolutamente alheio, por um motivo ou outro, a quem eu sou, ou a quem suponho que sou” (Pessoa 1986a, 181).

exactly the same.”¹⁵ Interestingly enough, this process is very similar to that of the Catalan poet J. V. Foix and his combination of two personalities: “Josep Vicenç Foix,” owner of a pastry shop in an elegant Barcelona neighborhood, and “J. V. Foix” (Bou 1988 & 1993), a metaphysical and somewhat surrealist poet. His *Diari 1918*, with fewer textual problems than the *Livro do Desassossego*, discusses this intricate personality, especially in sections like *Gertrudis* and *KRTU* (Foix 1981).

Pessoa projects into this Lisbon accountant a diarist’s dilemma: “I have not existed for a long time. I am extremely disquieted. Nobody distinguishes me from who I am. I feel myself breathing now as if I practiced a new or overdue thing. I am beginning to be conscious of being conscious.”¹⁶ Pessoa’s diary contains only a few dates. In the words of Richard Zenith, he mixes “symbolist and diary texts” together with “philosophical reflections, aesthetical, sociological comments, literary opinions, aphorisms” (Soares 2005, 19). Moreover, the *Livro do Desassossego* follows a systematic program intended to provide a substitution of life by the writing of it: “And so, contemplators of statues and mountains alike, enjoying both books and the passing days, and dreaming all things so as to transform them into our own substance, we will also write down descriptions and analyses which, when they’re finished, will become extraneous things that we can enjoy as if they happened along one day.”¹⁷ Soares’s obsession with writing is poignant. On many occasions he recognizes that writing is a substitute for life: “I am, in large measure, the selfsame prose I write. I unroll myself in sentences and paragraphs, I punctuate myself. In my arranging and rearranging of images I’m like a child using newspaper to dress up as a king, and in the way I create rhythm with a series of words I’m like a lunatic adorning my hair with dried flowers that are still alive in my dreams.”¹⁸ Pessoa’s attitude, expressed through the words of his heteronym Bernardo Soares, can easily be put in relationship with Josep Pla’s obsession with living through his *Quadern gris*. Life and reality become a literary matter, re-lived through re-writing his own youth. Similarly, Gil de Biedma’s diary has an unexpected value. While composing notes and letters, he reads himself as he lives: “to read my own writing is even more fun than to write about me” (“leerme me divierte todavía más que contarme”; Gil de Biedma 1991, 32). Originally, he confesses, his diary’s objective is to train him to write prose, but he realizes that the diary is helpful as a self-control tool (1991, 66). He even goes so far as to assume that his diary is provoking

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15. “O meu semi-heterónimo Bernardo Soares que aliás em muitas coisas se parece com Álvaro de Campos, aparece sempre que estou cansado ou sonolento, de sorte que tenha um pouco suspensas as qualidades de raciocínio e de inibição; aquela prosa é um constante devaneio. É um semi-heterónimo porque, não sendo a personalidade a minha, é, não diferente da minha, mas uma simples mutilação dela. Sou eu menos o raciocínio e a afectividade. A prosa, salvo o que o raciocínio dá de ‘ténue’ à minha, é igual a esta, e o português perfeitamente igual” (Pessoa 1986a, 182).
 16. “Há muito tempo que não existo. Estou sossegadíssimo. Ninguém me distingue de quem sou. Senti-me agora respirar como se houvesse praticado uma coisa nova, ou atrasada. Começo a ter consciência de ter consciência” (Soares 2005, 156).
 17. “E assim, contempladores iguais das montanhas e das estátuas, gozando os dias como os livros, sonhando tudo, sobretudo, para o convector na nossa íntima substância, faremos também descrições e análises, que uma vez feitas, passarão a ser coisas alheias, que podemos gozar como se viessem na tarde” (Soares 2005, 46).
 18. “Sou, em gran parte, a mesma prosa que escrevo. Desenrolo-me em períodos e parágrafos, faço-me pontuações, e, na distribuição desencadenadas imagens, visto-me, como as crianças, de rei com papel de jornal, ou, no modo como as crianças, de rei com papel de jornal, ou no modo como faço ritmo de uma série de palavras, me touco como os loucos, de flores secas que continuam vivas nos meus sonhos” (Soares 2005, 200).

events in his life (1991, 182). As is the case of many diary writers, there is a degree of self-analysis. For example he compares the kind of diary he wrote while in the Philippines and the one he is writing in Barcelona. Back in Spain he lacks control over his life, because between dealing with his job and his friends he recognizes that he does not have a life (1991, 130–31).

Another Portuguese diarist, Miguel Torga (1907–95, literary pseudonym of Adolfo Correia da Rocha) is the author of another gigantic diary project. Most of Torga's literary work falls under the category of autobiography, starting with his life-long project, *A Criação do Mundo* (World's creation, 1937–78), a masterful rendition of his life — a life — divided into seven “days,” which covers events, life episodes very similar to those of Torga, beginning with his adolescence in Brazil, a long period of imprisonment, and finishing with the April Revolution of 1974. As Rocha puts it, with his entire work he has built an “autobiographical space”: *Rampa* (1930), “Vicente” in *Bichos* (Bugs, 1940), a play *O Paraíso* (The paradise; 1949, 1977), and, of course, the *Diários* (Journal, 1941–83). He wrote sixteen volumes of his *Diários*, which he started publishing in 1941. Blessed with an interest in classic literature, Torga writes like “Hesiod's contemporary” in Sophia de Mello Breyner's words, mixing in other interests, such as a preoccupation with God's death and the abuse of human beings under totalitarian regimes. In his work one can feel the discovery of new paths towards beauty, paying special attention to human relationships. Each volume of his diary is written under the protection of Amiel's sentence: “Chaque jour nous laissons une partie de nous-mêmes en chemin” (Every day we lose something of ourselves on the road). The entire sixteen volumes are saturated with a sense of deep sadness. In Rocha's words, “[t]he history of an existence, the draft of an individual image, the situation of the self (microcosmos) in the world (macrocosmos), are common *topoi* in the *Diário* and *A Criação do Mundo*” (1977, 274). He muses about sincerity in many entries. Torga's combination of several autobiographical modes allows him to show more poignantly the diary's specificity. Due to its fragmentation, the diary illustrates the self in its unity and complexity (Rocha 1977, 289). On many occasions he has harsh judgments on his fellow countrymen: “There is no way. Even though we try, an argument in this Portuguese land always ends with howls and insults. It is a pity that this spiritual presumptuousness goes together with our old apostolic tendency: if there is a castaway, we have to save him.”¹⁹ Torga's diary is also a good source for reading his poetry. Notes about readings and travels, general opinions about the time and human essence, are ornamented with many poems: the result of a day's work.

Vergílio Ferreira, who since 1980 has published nine volumes of his *Diário Conta-Corrente* (Journal bank-account, 1980–94), provides another good example of how significant diary writing is in Portuguese contemporary literature. This writer states at the beginning of the fourth volume: “I will begin [...] But in reality it is a real beginning. To eliminate all references to daily banalities, to reduce myself to what is meaningful [...] I will try something else. Reflections, impressions of what may have happened, ideas, which I wish had existed.”²⁰ José Saramago, a

19. “Não há maneira. Por mais boa vontade que tenham todos, uma discussão nesta santa terra portuguesa acaba sempre aos berros e aos insultos. [...] E a desgraça é que a esta presunção do espírito se junta ainda a nossa velha tendência apostólica, que onde sente um naufrago tem de o salvar” (Torga 1999b, 127; Coimbra, November 20, 1940).

20. “Vou começar [...] Mas na realidade é verdadeiramente um começo. Eliminar todas as referências ao banal quotidiano, reduzir-me ao que de si tem alguma significação [...] irei tentar outra coisa. Reflexões, impressões do que de importante possa ter acontecido, ideias que valha a pena existirem” (V. Ferreira 1980–94, 4:129).

much more political kind of writer, has published five volumes of his *Os Cadernos de Lanzarote* (Lanzarote notebooks), which he started writing when he moved to the island of Lanzarote, after one of his books was censored. Saramago's diary expresses his intimate views on Portuguese and world politics, ethical issues, the diffusion of his work, and the island where he lives. With his characteristic irony he calls his activity "an exercise of cold narcissism" ("um exercício de narcisismo a frio"), and he adds: "This Narcissus that today is contemplating himself in the water will destroy tomorrow the image he contemplates."²¹ Natália Correia (1978) has also published a diary worth mentioning: *Não Percas a Rosa: diário e algo mais (25 de Abril de 1974–20 de Dezembro de 1975)* (Don't miss the Rosa: Journal and something else), which is also related to a political event in Portugal: the April Revolution of 1974.

Diary writing started as a literary genre in countries such as the United Kingdom and Germany. In the early twentieth century it became a major genre in the Iberian Peninsula, especially in Portuguese and Catalan literatures, and one could say that those writers helped reinvent the diary. This is a well-kept secret, which deserves more attention. A comparative reading of these texts both illuminates diary's diversity as a literary genre and provides a complex view about the state of Iberian literature: rich and sophisticated, the autobiographical works of Portuguese and Spanish authors are pushing further previous innovations by European literatures. Blog writing may take this contribution yet another step further.

21. "este Narciso que hoje se contempla na água desfará amanhã com a sua própria mão a imagem que o contempla" (Saramago 1994, 13).