



## **"I TOTS FRUIRÍEM LA PAU": EUGENI ORS AND "LA GUERRA GRAN"**

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War, and wars, the continuation of politics by other means, according to the famous phrase of Carl von Clausewitz, is all too present in our society. Peaceful solutions, the League of Nations or the UN, have not worked. In the post-Covid world alone, there have been countless conflicts on all continents, which dominate the radio and television newscast, the newspapers. A few people participate directly in these wars, but their cultural and social impact is remarkable. According to Antonio Monegal war is an eminently cultural phenomenon that transcends its concrete violent manifestation and has accompanied human beings since their origins. Because culture is not a series of works or products, but it is a complex system through which human beings negotiate their relationship with their environment: a series of models, norms and options that govern both individual and collective behavior (Monegal, 21). Moreover, cultural products serve to shape the ideological framework that underpins our conception of war and makes it possible for wars to occur. Those cultural products related to war are not neutral. They contribute to subscribing to an epic, glorifying vision of war, or, on the contrary, to rejecting and opposing it. Any representation or discussion of war, therefore, carries with it a message that can be understood as political. But this culture of war involves not only explicitly war-themed products, but all those discourses that identify other nations or collectives as an adversary or threat. Without an enemy there is no war, and therefore the construction of the image of the enemy is one of the indispensable cultural mechanisms for the escalation of the conflict to violence (Monegal, 35). This is what Ors and Gaziel did from two different perspectives. They participated in the conflict, one as a witness from

the French capital with a slightly partisan view. The other trying to adopt a *super partes* position, and looking for an equidistant position, from a Europeanist perspective.

Ors' is one more of the many Catalan witnesses to the Great War. Gaziol's diary written in Paris at the beginning of the war, shows some of those powerful intellectual discussions. Many contemporaries through prose fiction, memoirs, essays and journalism or poetry expressed their refusal of the war: Rusiñol, Agustí Calvet 'Gaziol,' Apel·les Mestres and Joan Pérez-Jorba, among many others. In Gaziol's prologue to *París 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 Gaziol 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 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>1</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]

Just by taking a look at today's newspapers, we can realize that the 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

1 Gaziol, *París 1914. Diari d'un estudiant* (Barcelona: Editorial Aedos, 1964), 72. Unless otherwise indicated translation are mine.

are blinded by its searing light. Language is such a filter".<sup>2</sup> Gaziél at the beginning of his diary expresses and almost evil happiness when he notes that the war had broken his monotonous life of student:

tota la meva vida anterior em sembla ara quelcom de vulgar i rutinari, d'una tirànica monotonia. 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>3</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 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.]

Gaziél'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>4</sup>

2 Jay Winter, 'Preface' Fussell, Paul. *The Great War and Modern memory* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 2013), 16.

3 Gaziél, *París 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.

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

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>5</sup> were founded to defend the Franco-British side. Others, mostly in Madrid, defended the legitimacy of the Central Empires.<sup>6</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] (64-66). It was not an easy decision but most intellectual 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: '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>7</sup> [Vote for France? Vote for

5 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).

6 See Joan Safont, *Per França i Anglaterra. La primera guerra mundial dels aliadòfils Catalans* (Barcelona, A Contra Vent, 2012).

7 Eugeni d'Ors, *Lletres a Tina*. Ed. Josep Murgades (Barcelona, Quaderns Crema, 1993), 22. See also Enric Jardí, 'Repercussions de la Gran Guerra' dins *Els moviments d'avantguarda a Barcelona* (Barcelona, El Cotal, 1983), 27-59; Enric Jardí, *Eugeni d'Ors* (Barcelona: Edicions Aymà, 1967), 152-154; Josep Murgades, 'Repercussions de la guerra en la cultura' dossier *Catalunya davant el món en guerra (1914-1918)*, *L'Avenç*, 69 (març-1984), 74-79.

Germany? – My, voting is for Europe. My longing is for a mystical rebuilding of Charlemagne’s empire: from the Ebro River to Cologne.]<sup>8</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.

### Engeni d’Ors and a European Civil War

Eugeni Ors’ contribution to the Great War debate was definitely a very original one. *Tina i la Guerra Gran* was conceived as a discussion in which the figure of a seven-and-a-half-year-old Prussian girl, Tina, is used as someone who never responds to the writer’s arguments. It is a metaphorization of war in the form of a rational debate by a single participant – a monologue – in which an idealized adversary without a proper name is assumed.<sup>9</sup> Thus Xènius can deploy an argumentation in order to obtain a sure victory in which the defense of his positions is based on the relevance of his theses. Right from the start the writer introduces himself as “L’Únic Amic” of this little German girl:

Jo sóc més tost com el teu pare, l’oficial, com el teu germà el químic, un home del Nou-cents, bon amic de l’acció i de la voluntat, ben trobat amb l’ambient deportiu; una mica pragmàtic, tanmateix, enmig de l’idealisme; plantat dret davant la vida i esguardant sense parpelleig la cara de la vida, sia ella aspra o dolça. La fortitud que ha donat a l’un d’ells son exèrcit colonial, a l’altre son laboratori, jo l’he haguda també: a mi me la donava Filosofia. Filosofia no és art de blans ensomnis, sinó, al contrari, ull impàvid sobre la realitat del món; ull que hi dissol l’anècdota, deixant-hi només la seva arquitectura d’eternitat... (20)

In his presentation as philosopher, Ors stresses for the little German girl his opinions on past colonial wars:

Dic-te doncs, que jo no sóc un bla filantrop sentimental i que, de no ser-ne Filosofia m’ensenyava. M’ensenyava que no hi ha llum sense ombra i que el mal forma part del bé

<sup>8</sup> See Josep Murgades Edition of *Lletres a Tina* and Maximiliano Fuentes doctoral dissertation, cap. 5.

<sup>9</sup> Fuentes Codera has provided an excellent analysis of the political implications of this book.

en el món i que, com ens mostra sant Pau, és bo que hi hagi heretges, i que cal que les guerres sien. Solen afirmar les gents que als homes d'avui, ens ha estat concedit de viure en un temps pacífic. ¿Què es vol significar amb això? ¿No s'han batut seguidament els exèrcits a les colònies? ¿No ha estat vessada en vida nostra, per ventura, la sang al Transvaal o a Port Arthur? (21)

Ors also devotes some attention to Spanish colonial wars such as the ones in North Africa or the Caribbean: "Els nostres vint anys d'ús de raó, ¿no han vist, a la nostra Espanya mateixa, dues guerres d'Àfrica – i el daltabaix de 1898? Mes de tot això n'havíem dolor, no defalliment encara. (...) No, no era el sentimentalisme el nostre flac, ni l'ideologisme viciós, ni la sorda anarquia moral que ens mostraren els decadents a la Fi de segle..." (21) Moral decadentism is thus associated with mal du siècle and other malaises.

Many critics have considered this book an example of frustrated dialogue that ends up being a monologue. According to Cacho Viu this kind of dialogue/monologue was inspired by authors such as Juan Ramón Jiménez. An immediate antecedent of this one-sided story is to be found in Jiménez's *Platero y yo* (CACHO VIU, Review..., 125). On the contrary I would argue that *Tina i la Guerra Gran* is much closer to a diary, an autobiographical text that differently from letters expects no answer. Suddenly he has a vision, that reminds us of avant-garde version of reality: big capital letters appear sending a not so cryptic message

Com sacerdot es girés a beneir-nos, una estranya cosa es va esdevenir. – Tal com t'ho conto va ser: ¿per que et mentiria? – Mos ulls sobtà una manera d'allucinació. Sobre el mur tot emblanquinat, unes grans lletres blaves, totes tremoloses, van dibuixar-se, l'espai d'un llampec. Era una S, era una I i després una R i una G aquesta ja més pàl·lida... I mon seny llavors, avivat per l'aire del matí, va entendre sense sorpresa el mot de l'oracle, el sant mot, que era una fórmula i era un auguri.

Sí: «Sacre Imperi Romà Germanic»! – Sí, la guerra entre França i Alemanya és una guerra civil!

Una guerra civil, dins la viva unitat d'Europa, dins el Sacre Imperi Romà Germanic. Una guerra civil, al cor d'ell.

Hi ha una Europa viva – platònicament val el mateix que dir: hi ha una idea d'Europa –. Grècia la paria, la Lloba l'alletava. Qui marcà sa forma, darrera la gran creixença, fou Senyor Carlemany. (30)

Ors had the gift of the easy phrase and witty maxims. In this book he is no less so and we find opinions like this one about the impact that the war will have on recovering the strength of Europe at the cost of pleasure and commerce:

Amiga, més d'un escriptor comença ja de notar que, amb la guerra, una onada immensa de purificadora exaltació espiritual ve a sanejar la nostra vella Europa, on la vida era massa còmoda, massa fàcil, massa sensual... Si, en la guerra d'avui, hi ha, Tina, dos transcendents aspectes: la *humiliació del Plaer* i la *humiliació del Comerç*... En el primer aspecte sol creure's que París és la víctima principal. (56)

In Eugeni Ors coexist a strong devotion to France, the result of the influence received through the integral nationalism of Maurras, and a great admiration for Germany and its imperial past, and especially the values of order and hierarchy. One of the letters in particular, that of September 16, expresses this ambivalence between the two countries, especially when it vindicates the value of the philosophical, universalist, humanitarian, peaceful Germany represented by authors such as Kant, Beethoven, Schopenhauer, Goethe, and which is at the antipodes of the brutal, ambitious, militaristic Germany represented by the emperors Friedrich and Wilhelm and their marshals. This tension between two Germanys becomes almost warlike, and will be resolved through the idea of a Moral Unity of Europe. Consequently Ors' point is that the current war is an European civil war. This is particularly evident in the two "Parentèsis" where he defines his conception of a European unity, as we can read in the second one:

L'home europeu i lliure pensarà que la guerra present constitueix una ruptura de la unitat de l'Europa, i en aquest sentit una Guerra Civil.

L'home europeu i lliure deplorarà, com una manera de traïció, la intervenció en la guerra present d'elements bàrbars, extra europeus o contra europeus, i àdhuc l'aliança de qualsevulla de les parts amb elements ja europeus, però llunyans encara en la tradició central de l'imperi de Carlemany i hostils, amb més o menys franquesa, a la tradició de l'hegemonia d'ell.

L'home europeu i lliure considerarà un bé que en la constitució interna del nou imperi intervingui predominantment, amb dret de triomfador, el clàssic esperit d'Autoritat, dominant les tendències a l'Anarquia, i que ha treballat darrerament la salut social d'alguns dels millors pobles d'Europa. (95-96)

It is remarkable his triple claim of a hypothetical "European and free man", based on his rejection of the ongoing civil war in Europe, alien to the barbarism that cannot be European, and who abides by a principle of Authority that dominates the tendencies of Anarchy.

Towards the end of the book Ors introduces the theme of the possibility of war as a means of purification, of spiritual exaltation, to liquidate the order in place in Europe during the Nineteenth-century and promote one more harmonious with its social and cultural perspectives. The pattern underlying Ors' approach to the Great War is the identification of France as responsible for the liberalism and democracy crisis during the previous century. On the other hand, Germany is portrayed as the heir and protector of the values of Eighteenth-century European culture with a penchant for hierarchy, authority and order.

The book closes with a few episodes describing the adventures in Barcelona of Karl and Eva, a couple of brothers that have fled the war.

## 2. Paris at War as witnessed by Gaziell

One of the most original contributions by Catalan writers to the conflict's narrative was Gaziell 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 formed a kind of appendix to his sustained interest (Llanas 1987, 41).<sup>10</sup>

His book was very well read in the Spanish-speaking world. Manuel Llanas explained that when Gaziell travelled

<sup>10</sup> Another significant contribution was by Santiago Rusiñol with his *Glossary of Xarau*, a regular section in *Iberia* magazine. He became, from the very beginning of the war, 'plataforma d'una abranda francòfilia 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].

to Colombia in 1937 he was greeted by the Publisher of *El Tiempo* with these words: 'Caramba, Gaziél, cuánto me alegro de poder abrazarle en carne y hueso, ya que desde 1914 le estuve saqueando a usted impunemente' (Llanas 1987, 41) [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' (Gaziél, 21) [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.' (Gaziél, 22) [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.' (Gaziél, 22) [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 remaining pages of this fascinating book tell of three parallel actions: slow emptying of the boarding house; the transformation of 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>11</sup> Often news are contrasted to the harsh reality when people fled the front of Paris, before the push of invading Germans (Gaziél, 226).

A young Italian woman has lost all his 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.' (Gaziél, 24) [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 rodat 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. (Gaziél, 25-26) [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.]

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. (Gaziél, 25-26)

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

[– 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’ [astounding]: ‘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.’ (Gaziel, 113) [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, Gaziel 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.

Gaziel 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 have only four pages (34) they have the feel of parochial newsletter (61) public transportation has been suspended and a number of cafes and restaurants have closed (61). 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.’ (96) [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, and old English lady, Mrs. Parthiker who tells him the secret about the war’s origin: it

has been caused by a mummy (102). 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, azotes de la Historia, que iban a trastornar por muchos años el ritmo de nuestra existencia. (Blasco Ibáñez 2011, 7-8)

[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 canviar ràpidament el rostre de París, talment l'aspecte d'un organisme viu a les entranyes del qual es revela de sobte una greu malaltia. El símptoma més general el dona 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. (32)

[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' (33) [I saw that the platforms were sown with umbrellas, walking 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 (136-141). Gaziel 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.' (72) [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. (146-147)

[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 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' (Llanas 1998, 460) [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.

The testimonies and reactions of Ors and Gaziél are representative of that of other Catalan intellectuals, as privileged spectators of the Great War. The writings they produced confirm that cultural products related to war are not neutral. By rejecting and opposing it, or by trying to create a narrative *super partes* they still are involved politically, particularly in the construction of an enemy or trying to create a moral discourse that reunites old foes.

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