

## Editors' introduction

Maria-José Blanco and Sinéad Wall

Little has been written on women diary writers and the diary form in Spain<sup>1</sup> and Portugal,<sup>2</sup> and nothing as far as we know on Latin America. Indeed, few diaries written by women were published before the second half of the twentieth century in either Spain or Portugal. Apart from the well-known sixteenth century confessions of Saint Teresa de Ávila (1515–82), addressed here by Kevin Smullin Brown's article, another rare Spanish example is the diary-letter written by Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda (1814–73) to her former lover Ignacio Cepeda, which was published in 1907 by his wife after his death, *Autobiografía y cartas (hasta ahora inéditas) de la ilustre poetisa Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda* [Autobiography and Letters (Unedited Until Now) of the Illustrious Poet Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda].<sup>3</sup>

However, since the 1970s Spain and Portugal have seen the publication of an increasing number of women's diaries, especially amongst women who are already established writers. As both countries were governed by dictatorships until 1975 and 1974 respectively, diaries were often written and/or published by writers in exile. Many of these were published in Spain in later years, for example Rosa Chacel *Alcancía Ida* (1982);<sup>4</sup> María Zambrano, *Delirio y destino: Los veinte años de una española* (1989) [*Delirium and Destiny: Twenty Years of a Spanish Woman*]; Zenobia Camprubí, *Diario* (1991) [*Diary*]. Others were published abroad during their authors' exile: Victoria Kent (1947) published in Argentina; Silvia Mistral (1940) published in Mexico; and Federica Montseny (1949) published in France. In Portugal, the publication of the diaries of writers, most of them poets, opened up a new direction in women's diary writing, for example, Maria Velho da Costa's *O mapa cor-de-rosa* (1984) [*The Rose Coloured Map*] is a diary written while the author was living in London and was published in a Lisbon newspaper as a collection of articles on English life as seen through her eyes. On the other hand Natália Correia's *Não percas a rosa: Diário e algo mais* (1978) [*Do Not Miss the Rose: Diary and Something More*] is a diary written from the day of the *coup d'état*, known as the Carnation Revolution (25 April 1974) which ended the Portuguese dictatorship, until the end of 1975, the end of the Continuing Revolutionary Process which opened a new era towards a new Portuguese democratic state; Luísa Dacosta's *Na água do tempo* (1992) [*In the Stream of Time*], also written and published in Portugal, presents the diaries of the author written from 1948 to 1987; and Florbela Espanca's *Diário do último ano* (1981) [*Diary of the Last Year*] is the diary published posthumously of her last days of life after being diagnosed with pulmonary oedema. Portuguese author Maria Gabriela Llansol's diaries (1985, 1987 and 1996), written in exile, are addressed in this volume by Raquel Ribeiro.

Similarly, Spanish women's published diaries of the last twenty years have covered a wide range of themes: for example, in Cristina de Areilza's *Diario de una rebeldía* (1983) [*Diary of a Rebellion*], the young journalist writes about the last days of her life suffering from cancer; in Rosa Regàs's *Diario de una abuela de verano* (2004) [*Diary of a Summer Grandmother*], the author writes about her memories (taken from her own diaries) of the summers spent with her grandchildren in her summer house; in Carme Riera's *Tiempo de espera* (1998) [*Time in Waiting*], the author writes about her pregnancy. Spanish author Carmen Martín Gaité's *Cuadernos de todo* (2002) [*Notebooks of Everything*], discussed in this special issue by Maria-José Blanco, has set a new trend in Spain for the publication of celebrated authors' posthumous diaries and journals, similar to those of Virginia Woolf or Katherine Mansfield. These diaries give us an insight into authors' lives and into the use of diaries as a writer's workshop.

In Latin America, on the other hand, *testimonio* [testimony] life narratives are prevalent and women writers have used this form to highlight abuses, inequalities and mistreatment of women in Latin America.<sup>5</sup> Nobel prize winner Rigoberta Menchú's *Yo soy Rigobeta Menchú y así nació la consciencia* (1983) [*I, Rigoberta: An Indian Women in Guatemala* (1984)] is a prime example of this form. Public, political and social issues of Latin America are explored through *testimonios*. As in Portugal, where most published diarists are poets, in Latin American we see another distinct form of life narrative: the diaries of female poets. Some excellent examples are the Nobel prize winning Chilean poet Gabriela Mistral's *Bendita mi lengua sea: diario íntimo de Gabriela Mistral, 1905–1956* (2002) [*Blessed be my Voice: The Intimate Diary of Gabriela Mistral, 1905–1956*] and *Invenções del recuerdo* (2006) [*Inventions of Memory*] by the Argentine writer Silvina Ocampo. Argentine poet, Alejandra Pizarnik's diaries were recently published in Spain, and in the prologue the editor Ana Becciu writes about how Pizarnik viewed diary writing more as a workshop than as an account of everyday life (Pizarnik 2003: ii).

That diaries as life narratives, and women's narratives in particular, are complex and varied, cross boundaries and increasingly engender critical debate is reflected in this special issue, which focuses on the different ways women have manipulated diaries and the diary form of discourse to change their lives or to understand their thinking processes.<sup>6</sup> According to Lauren Martens: 'Women were encouraged to keep journals for wholly traditional reasons, which go back to diary keeping as a religious exercise and have little to do with the sophisticated "modern" view of the diary [as intimate journal]' (Martens 1985: 173). However, the diary form nowadays blurs the boundaries between the private and the public. As Béatrice Didier explains, there is an inside and an outside in all diary writing:

S'il est un mouvement constant chez le diariste, c'est celui qui va d'un dehors à un dedans. Le dehors, c'est l'univers entier: les autres, la vie active ou sociale, le métier, l'événement historique, les divertissements. Le dedans, c'est cette bienheureuse intériorité que le journal permet de découvrir, de développer – ou de créer, diront les sceptiques. (Didier 1976: 87)

[If the diarist reveals a constant movement, it is from the outside to the inside. The outside is the entire universe: others, an active or social life, work, historic events, leisure pursuits. The inside is that blessed interiority of which journal writing enables the discovery, the development – or the creation, as sceptics might say.]<sup>7</sup>

In this special issue, we see the different ways diaries have been used to express the outside and the inside of the diarist's universe: from the diary written to escape prosecution like Saint Teresa de Ávila's *Libro de la vida* (1562–5) [*Book of Life*] to the intimate diaries written by contemporary writers like Carmen Martín Gaité or Maria Gabriela Llansol to blogs, the new types of diaries.

Another way of looking at diaries or journals is as a journey from one place to another, or from one time to another. As Margo Culley summarizes: "The words "journal" and "journey", like the word "diary", have their roots in the French word for "day" [*jour*]" (Culley 1985: 23). Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson (2001) identify over fifty genres of life narratives, ranging from diary to memoir, confessional narrative to *testimonio* and travel writing. It is the very inability to pin it down that impels its diversity, complexity and ever-changing boundaries. We also include here journeys taken by women writers *into* the Hispanic world, like Mary Morris with her 'Latin American diary' written during her time in Mexico and published as travel book, addressed here by Sinéad Wall, and the journey taken and recorded by Gwen MacKeith in her quest for the perfect translation, travelling into Argentinean poet Amelia Biagioni's territory to understand her thinking process in order to incorporate it into her translation of Biagioni's poetry.

The attempts to shed light on how intimate diaries and other diary forms have helped the development of women's writing to explore inner states, dialogues or experiences is at the heart of this collection. *Airing the Private*, which originated in a postgraduate conference of the same name held at University College London in June 2007, brings together an eclectic mix of diaries, journals, diary narrative, web logs, travel memoir and even the personal diary of a translator, in an examination of diaries as spaces for self-reflection, intimacy and introspection.<sup>8</sup> We would like this issue to serve as an example of the diversity in women's diaries and diary narratives in the Luso-Hispanic world.

The issue opens with the contribution of the conference keynote speaker, Laura Freixas, a well-known Catalan writer and critic who addresses the relative absence of intimate diaries in Spain until well into the twentieth century. Kevin Smullin Brown's article on Saint Teresa de Ávila follows, bringing the philosophical terms, epistemology and conversational justification, to a new examination of the self-reflective confessional of Saint Teresa. Fearing for her life, Saint Teresa confesses and reveals her inner experiences, moving from a statement of her own inner, personal belief to inviting her readers' complicity in experiencing this with her. Deirdre Kelly, for her part, draws on the psychoanalytical theory of thanatophobia in her analysis of the extent to which Rosa Montero, in her novel *La función Delta* (1981) [*The Delta Function*], uses the writing process (through diary and memoir) to reflect and look back on her life in order to deal with the protagonist's approaching death. Maria-José

Blanco argues for a reading of Carmen Martín Gaité's diaries (*Cuadernos de todo*) and challenges their misogynist label by looking at how Martín Gaité uses her notebooks to reflect in private on ideas about society and women in Spain in the changing times of the 1960s, while Raquel Ribeiro examines the diaries of Maria Gabriela Llansol in relation to ecofeminist theory and also to what extent the exilic and nomadic aspect of her writing is represented in her work.

At the Round Table discussion at the end of the 2007 conference, examples of a variety of diary forms were explored. The use of collage, video-diaries, travel memoirs, blogs and personal diaries were some of the formats discussed, and these are reflected here by several articles. Sinéad Wall examines the use of the diary-journal in travel writing to construct a memoir and the role of the writing process in the construction of self in an analysis of a U.S. writer's journey in Mexico. Margaret Andrews's article engages with the growing use of online intimate writing, such as web logs (blogs), to shrink the world and to construct the self as diverse, drawing on Rosi Braidotti's concept of the nomadic subject in the postmodern feminine. The final article in the collection takes the form of the personal diary of a translator who reflects upon the process of translating the Argentine poet Amelia Biagioni's work. The poem *Arpa* [*Harp*] draws upon the darker side of (N)ature and Gwen MacKeith records her struggle with that darker side of the poem. Her diary reveals her own writing process as she battles or colludes with other texts, images and songs, seeking a voice in her translation.

With this special issue, we hope to open up new ways of looking at the use women writers in Spain, Portugal and Latin America make of diaries in their work. In essence, diaries are never finished (products), much like our own journey into women's diary writing. We hope that this issue will inspire others to continue that journey.<sup>9</sup>

## Notes

1. See *Revista de Occidente* (1996) dedicated to the intimate diary and *El diario como forma narrativa* (Ferrús Antón *et al.* 2002) [*The Diary as Narrative Form*]; see also Romera Castillo (1992), who looks at autobiographical writing in contemporary Spain, and Bergmann (1991), who centres her study on the diary as narrative strategy.
2. See Brauer-Figueiredo and Hopfe (2002) which includes several articles about diaries (by male and female writers) by, for example, Florbela Espanca, Maria Gabriela Llansol, Luísa Dacosta, Olga Gonçalves. See also Medeiros (1998 and 2008).
3. Published later as *Diario de amor* (1914) [*Diary of Love*] or *Diario íntimo* (1945) [*Intimate Diary*].
4. 'Alcancía' is a word that derives from the classical Arabic *kanz*, meaning treasure.
5. Maier and Dulfano (2004) have edited one of the few books dedicated to this theme, *Woman as Witness*.
6. In 2004, a journal specifically dedicated to life narratives was launched. *Life Writing: Exploring the Contemporary Meanings of Life Narratives* is published annually by Routledge.
7. Translated by Maria-José Blanco and Gill Rye.
8. We would like to thank Margaret Andrews for encouraging us to propose this special issue.
9. We would like to express our gratitude to all those who have helped this special issue come about. To our contributors, thanks for your excellent papers and quick responses to our

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