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**According** to a very persistent cliché, for centuries Spaniards have avoided the autobiographic: apparently, they—or we, if I may—wrote few texts about the self, and even fewer of them with a true commitment to self-criticism. During the last three decades, a vast number of scholars—notably, philologists—have attempted to refute it by consolidating a provisional corpus and emphasizing some conspicuous examples. Despite all that valuable effort, the state-of-art is far from exhaustive and still requires further research.

In this precarious context, a case as the one discussed here—the memoirs of a woman artist—falls immediately into the category of the *exceptional*. Yet it must face a triple exclusion: first, the disputed legitimacy of autobiography as a literary genre, due to a traditional dichotomy that equated fiction with literature and non-fiction with non-literature; second, the little attention drawn by artists—apart from José Moreno Villa, Salvador Dalí or Antoni Tàpies—perhaps based on the assumption that their fine arts background would lead to a poor literary quality; and third, the subordinate position of female agents within patriarchy, which implies in this specific scenario a more difficult access both to the autobiographical canon and to the social recognition as a professional artist.

As Sidonie Smith or Leigh Gilmore have theorized, and Anna Caballé or Mercedes Arriaga have pointed out in Spain, gender and genre intertwine with considerable consequences. The autobiographical space has been monopolized by great historical figures (of course, white, heterosexual males...), only leaving room for women through spiritual testimonies, illustrated albums, intimate diaries or short first-person notices. It is not a mere debate of formats, but it constitutes indeed a battleground for alternative subjectivities.

The production of autobiographical texts by Spanish artists had been insignificant until mid-twentieth century. The Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) transformed the former situation, since it entailed a decisive turning point in their lives and careers, but at the same time it set a starting point for their memory processes: under Francisco Franco's dictatorship, painters and sculptors such as Fernando Álvarez de Sotomayor, Juan Renau, Eugenio Hermoso, Luis Quintanilla, José Nogué Massó, Manuel Millares, Manuel Rivera, Victorio Macho or Carles Fontseré—among many others—decided to propose narratives of their respective trajectories, rather than waiting for historians to establish the official version.

However, this is a male genealogy. As far as we know, autobiographical projects by Spanish women artists were only developed after the Transition to democracy: in the 1980s, Amalia Avia's draft of *De puertas adentro; Memorias* and Lola Anglada Sarriera's

notes for *Memòries, 1892-1984*; in the 1990s, Mercè Llimona i Raimat's *No m'oblidis. Diari d'una col·legiala* and *Han passat els anys i més apunts*; in the 2000s, Glòria Morera i Font's *El caballete cojo-nudo. Memorias* and Fina Miralles's *Testament vital*. It is not just a matter of late formulation compared to their male counterparts, because there is an additional delay between the original creation and the definitive publication: Amalia Avia finished her memoirs in 1980 but kept them in a drawer until 2004; Lola Anglada left them almost finished before her death in 1984, but they were finally retrieved for a monographic exhibition in 2015. Those dates represent the tip of the iceberg of a very complex circulation for these kinds of documents, always confronting archival obstacles, distrust from inheritors, commercial strategies of publishing houses, and expectations of potential readers.

Taking all these adverse circumstances into account, the recent discovery and edition of Victorina Durán's *Mi vida* by Idoia Murga and Carmen Gaitán offers a major input to the history of the autobiography in Spain; not only because it increases the amount of women's voices—which clearly is a pertinent task in this framework—but also because it reveals a very compelling story that had been ignored for too long. Victorina Durán Cebrián (1899-1993) takes part in that group of female artists who recalled their past in the 80's, but she belongs to a very different generation—just as Lola Anglada—and her profile is much more ambiguous: painter, scenographer, designer, theatre director, lecturer, art and film critic...multiple aspects of a heterogeneous oeuvre that nevertheless remained at a blind spot between the methodological boundaries of traditional disciplines.

The content of the three volumes configures a precise image of the protagonist and help us to acknowledge the person behind it: the features of her family, related to the Royal Theatre; some memories of her childhood, around popular neighborhoods of Madrid; the training both at the National Music Conservatory and the Special School of Painting, Sculpture and Engraving; the position as a student at the Museum of Decorative Arts and as a teacher at several local institutions; the prizes received at the Spanish National Exhibitions of Fine Arts and at the International Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts, held in Paris in 1925; the foundation of the Feminine Lyceum Club and occasional appearances as actress; the collaboration with Cipriano Rivas Cherif's School of Art Theatre; the experience of war during a whole year; the exile in Buenos Aires, where she continued with her activities; and the final return to Spain in 1963. Detailed descriptions of various places, people, and situations—all of them carefully clarified by the editors in 645 endnotes—complete the epochal atmosphere.

Each volume has a different structure and focus: *Sucedió* maintains a more traditional chronological progression, from the very first memories to a sharply interrupted anecdote in Argentina; *El Rastro. Vida de lo inanimado* activates objects found in this famous flea market to elaborate personal reminiscences; *Así es* vindicates female homosexuality through a series of diverse love affairs. This narrative option—likewise subdivided into brief chapters—preserves the spontaneous and affective condition of remembrance, as well as putting forward—from an unusual point of view for that period—many topics that were overlooked by precedent autobiographers.

“I have so much accumulated in my memory I can’t put everything in order. It’s a whole life, or maybe several lives. Because we often split. Double emotions, double feelings, facts I can’t tell whether they were dreamed or real. Does it matter?” (1:111; my translation), reflects Victorina Durán—who was also named Víctor by some close friends—to initiate her project. Some pages before that eloquent affirmation, the editors have included a photograph dedicated to her mother in 1914 where Durán depicted herself multiplied five times. Such an intricate identity—double, multiple, performative—was too modern to be assimilated by preexisting hegemonic discourses, but it well might become the basis of a new contemporary historiography.

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**Competing Interests**

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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