

# “From a Woman’s Pen”: an analysis of women’s correspondence to Miguel de Unamuno in the first third of the 20th century

“Bajo Pluma de Mujer”: análisis de la correspondencia femenina a Miguel de Unamuno en el primer tercio del siglo xx

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## ABSTRACT

The figure and work of Miguel de Unamuno has been an object of investigative interest from different academic areas and perspectives. Of particular importance is the study of the correspondence that the Spanish thinker had with prominent personalities of his era. In this regard, one cannot overlook the rich legacy that exists in the Unamuno House-Museum, property of the University of Salamanca, which makes up the writer’s archive of correspondence, with over 25,000 letters. In this investigation, we have explored a field that had remained largely unknown: the correspondence that the former Rector of Salamanca received from the pen of relevant women in the first third of the 20th century. Through a content analysis of a selection of 40 women, we have studied the exchange of ideas that they expressed in their letters and which they wanted to share with the writer. The results elucidate clear connections between certain historical events linked to the figure of Unamuno and the sociological problems these women experienced.

**Key words:** Correspondence. Gender. Miguel de Unamuno. Women. Letters. 20th Century.

## RESUMEN

La figura y obra de Miguel de Unamuno han sido objeto de interés investigador desde diferentes áreas académicas y perspectivas. Entre ellas cabe destacar el estudio de la correspondencia que mantuvo el pensador español con personalidades importantes de su época. A este respecto, no se puede obviar el rico legado que existe en la Casa-Museo Unamuno, perteneciente a la Universidad de Salamanca, que compone el fondo epistolar del escritor, con más de 25.000 cartas. En esta investigación se realiza una aproximación a un campo en parte desconocido, como es la correspondencia que el antiguo rector salmantino recibió de la pluma de mujeres relevantes del primer tercio del siglo xx. A través de un análisis de contenido sobre una selección de 40 mujeres, se estudia el intercambio de ideas que plasmaron en sus epístolas y que querían compartir con el escritor. Los resultados visibilizan las conexiones con ciertos acontecimientos históricos ligados a la figura de Unamuno y con la problemática sociológica que vivieron esas mujeres.

**Palabras clave:** Correspondencia. Género. Miguel de Unamuno. Mujer. Epistolario. Siglo xx.

## SUMARIO

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### *1.—Introduction*

The famed Spanish writer and philosopher, Miguel de Unamuno y Jugo, is known worldwide for his important intellectual contributions. This key figure in the Generation del '98 developed a host of facets linked to the fields of literature (as a novelist, essayist, poet, playwright and columnist), philosophy, education (he was named Rector of the University of Salamanca in 1900, a position which he held for three periods), as well as with the ideological and political field; but also in other arts like drawing and even origami. Something which has, perhaps, received less attention is his great interest in letter-writing; a passion which led him to use a term to refer to his great passion: “epistolomanía”. Such is his importance that, within the academic field, the study of his correspondence constitutes one of the richest and most interesting lines of investigation which, even today, continues to generate great scientific interest, both in term of the letters sent by the writer, as those that he received over the course of his life. In this context, the archive of correspondence held in the Unamuno House-Museum, which is owned by the University of Salamanca, deserves special attention: made up of 25,000 letters, it constitutes the rich legacy that the writer has made available for consultation and

future investigations. Interest in these letters has mainly been in those related to well-known men like José Ortega y Gasset, Rubén Darío and Jorge Luis Borges, among many others, within the political and cultural panorama of the 20th century in which the Spanish Rector lived. Even so, the large volume of this correspondence means that there is still much to explore.

This research shines the spotlights on a special correspondence, that of women. At a time when women's roles were expanding in society, many started to write to Miguel de Unamuno. Specifically, we will study the letters sent by well-known women in the first third of the 20th century, in order to understand the ideas, worries, concerns and feelings reflected in the letters that they wrote during Unamuno's lifetime.

## 2.—*Theoretical Framework*

This research is based on the theoretical concepts which will be examined hereafter, with a focus on the letters women sent to Miguel de Unamuno.

### 2.1.—The importance of studying correspondence

The idea of dialogue is the defining characteristic of the epistolary genre. Letters can be considered a form of dialogue, insomuch as they represent one that is not spoken, but written and sent. This is characterised because it only contains one of the parts, namely, that which corresponds to the sender. This means that the aforementioned dialogue is, evidently, not going to be produced at the same time, as time elapses between when it is sent and received. At the same time, there is going to be a change in space, given that the places from which the letter is written and read will also be different (Bardaxí, 1564; Fernández, 2009; Trueba, 1996). Letter-writing involves an agreement between the writer and reader, which is determined by the formal aspects adopted in the letter. Letters offer the sender the chance to hide behind a mask while, at the same time, seeking to open a direct and unfiltered path to the innermost depths of their being.

The letter is a matter between two people, private readers, for whom the letter has a very clear aim: through epistolary dialogue, one establishes the personal and intellectual "map", and the progress between past and present communication. (Bou, 1998: 40).

From a communicative point of view, it is interesting to note Oyanedel's observation about the "absent presence" (1985: 29), in reference to the situation of the sender and recipient at the time of writing and reading the letter. This relates to the

internal structure of the messages, which enables the sender to make the recipient present, and vice versa, during the process of epistolary communication. In this regard, correspondence can be defined as a conversation that is written and read.

When referring to the function of the letter, we can talk about macrosocial and microsocial discourse (Soto, 1996). As Salinas (1948) indicates, the macrosocial perspective goes back to the Ancient Age, in the sense that the letter is a kind of linguistic communication, ideas which are also shared by Barrenechea (1990) and Voloshinov (1930), who further add that this practice adheres to social convention. The microsocial aspect, in turn, is related to the idea of discourse. In other words, letter-writing consists of a two-way verbal interaction, in which one agent is tasked with writing and the other, with reading (Van Dijk, 1978).

As far as types of letter are concerned, Trueba (1996) alludes to two. The first kind draws a distinction between official letters and private ones, differentiating other subcategories by the nature of the topic (e.g. serious or light-hearted) or their function (like requesting favours, consolation, gratitude, etc.) that derive from the tradition of the authors. The second kind classifies letters according to the literary styles deriving from standard epistolary models. (Sierra, 2003).

Along with the aspects described above, and in order to better analyse the content, it is also necessary to focus on their internal structure. According to Doty (1973), in order to speak of the parts of a letter, one must go back to the Hellenic period, which gave birth to the three-section structure that we know today: the introduction, body and conclusion. In relation to this, Soto (1996: 158) makes the following observation:

Cada categoría presenta expresiones características y selecciona tipos adecuados de información. Así, por ejemplo, la introducción incluye la determinación del remitente, la determinación del destinatario y saludos de apertura, entre otros; la conclusión incluye nuevamente saludos, expresiones de buenos deseos —en especial para personas distintas del destinatario—, un saludo de despedida y, a veces, la fecha de la emisión.

(Each category provides characteristic expressions and selects adequate types of information. Thus, for example, the introduction includes information about the sender and the addressee, along with opening greetings, among other things; the conclusion includes further greetings, expressions of good wishes —in particular for people other than the addressee—, and, sometimes, the date of dispatch).

Over time, and due to the context of each period, there have been changes in letter-writing, which have also had an effect on the various way that authors have interpreted their internal structure. That said, the aforementioned general outline of the three parts has remained largely unchanged.

The study here described takes into account a form of analysis referred to by Bauman and Briggs (1990) as textualisation, which argues that the text of the letter, as a discourse generator, introduces aspects of its history or context. Textualisation,

therefore, allows us to observe to what extent what the sender expresses in the text of the letter answers to its communicative needs. In relation to this aspect of correspondence, Castillo (2002: párr. 5) adds the following:

Actualmente es documento de vital importancia para la historia de las mentalidades y para la reconstrucción de sucesos de la vida cotidiana. Así, también, aporta al conocimiento de segmentos de la sociedad que la historia tradicional no ha asumido con detenimiento, como es el caso de la historia de las mujeres. Las cartas, además, han resultado documentos interesantes para otras disciplinas, entre ellas la antropología cultural.

(At present [the letter] is a document of vital importance to the history of attitudes and the reconstruction of events in everyday life. Thus, it also contributes to our knowledge of sectors of society that traditional history has overlooked, as in the case of women’s history. Moreover, letters have proved to be interesting documents for other disciplines, including cultural anthropology).

On the basis of these observations, the study of correspondence archives constitutes a valuable area of analysis, as it allows us to reconstruct the historical context of their senders and discover information about how people thought and lived at the time when the letters were written, in this case, about women in particular.

## 2.2.—Unamuno, letters and women

Miguel de Unamuno wrote correspondence throughout most of his life, right up to his death in 1936. He himself even went so far as to coin the term “epistolomanía” to refer to his great hobby:

[...]el acto de escribir cartas obedece a una necesidad vital que Miguel de Unamuno analiza pronto, valiéndose de un neologismo —epistolomanía— apropiado sobre todo hasta finales de la primera década del siglo xx. Esta palabra suena como la confesión de una enfermedad o al menos de una adicción irreprimible, contra la que afirma a menudo su voluntad de luchar, pero sin conseguirlo verdaderamente. (Rabaté and Rabaté, 2017: 22).

(... the act of writing letters fulfils a vital need that Miguel de Unamuno soon analyses, availing of a neologism, “*epistolomanía*”, which he coined towards the end of the first decade of the 20th century. This word sounds like the confession of a disease or at least of an irrepressible addiction, against which he often claims to fight, but without truly succeeding).

As a result of this hobby, Miguel de Unamuno wrote and received thousands of letters, which have given rise to a very important line of investigation related to the writer. That said, the main focus of these studies has been the correspondence that he had with men, some celebrated thinkers of the period (García, 1956; Gó-

mez, 1980; Onís, 1988; Robles 1994; Serrano, 1987; Tellechea, 2003), while an analysis of the correspondence written by women has been left in the background. Consequently, although some studies have analysed Miguel de Unamuno's epistolary relationships with women (Campoamor, 1976; Castañeda, 2008; Toro, 2011), there still remains much to explore.

Another line of investigation of great utility is the one linking women to the works of Miguel de Unamuno, which is better developed than the previous one (Dogaya, 1967; Martínez, 1992; Morales, 1971; Pedraz, 1962; Sandoval, 2004; Thomas, 2017; Wood, 1975; Zanon, 1999) and which can be added to the extensive bibliography about this multifaceted author.

This theoretical framework would not be complete without taking into consideration the context in which female correspondence was written. It should not be forgotten that, in the first third of the 20th century, gender relations began to evolve. Until then, there had existed a widespread idea that women were considered inferior to men, which led to the imposition of a patriarchal and protectionist system, in which male primacy safeguarded or legitimised the standards of family law in that period. Such notions are reflected in the Spanish Civil Code of 1889, which remained in force until the Second Republic and was reestablished in Francoist Spain in 1938, which stipulated that the husband had to protect his wife while she, in turn, had to obey him (art. 57). Little by little, we begin to see advances in the situation of women, particularly in matters relating to the educational, social and working contexts in which they lived. In opposition to the idea of women being "angels of the home" (Cruz-Cámara, 2004) subject to male permission, some voices were raised from feminist institutions and forums —such as the Lyceum Club (Gómez, 2009)—, advocating for better rights in terms of equity. This revolutionary and tumultuous time, full of major changes, was led by a large group of women, as Broullón (2021) states:

Entre estas despuntaron literatas, editoras, cofundadoras de revistas modernistas, profesionales, esposas de profesionales y, por supuesto, autodidactas. No podríamos citar a todas ellas —entre las que se hicieron más visibles— en estas líneas, pero desde una perspectiva introductoria destacaríamos las aportaciones de Concepción Arenal; Emilia Pardo Bazán; Carmen de Burgos; María Lejárraga, Margarita Nelken o María Espinosa de los Monteros. Sus demandas giraron en torno a la preocupación de la formación, el acceso a la educación y las mejoras socio laborales como eje central del debate sobre la cuestión femenina en la España finisecular y el periodo de entreguerras, hasta que las vindicaciones, entre otras, por el sufragio femenino confrontaron las dos posiciones públicas lideradas por Clara Campoamor y Victoria Kent. (Broullón, 2021: 3).

(The most notable among them included women of letters, editors, co-founders of modernist magazines, professionals, wives of professionals and, of course, self-taught women. It would be impossible to list here each and every one of the female pioneers who became better known, but as a means of introduction



Fig. 1.—Letterheads of Carmen de Burgos “Colombine”, Margarita Xirgu and Emilia Pardo Bazán. Source: Epistolary archive of the Unamuno House-Museum, Salamanca.

we could highlight the contribution of Concepción Arenal, Emilia Pardo Bazán, Carmen de Burgos, María Lejárraga, Margarita Nelken or María Espinosa de los Monteros. Their bids to access training and education and to achieve better social and working conditions were at the core of the debate around the situation of women in Spain at the end of the century and in the inter-war period; until campaigns for female suffrage, among other issues, confronted the two main public positions, led by Clara Campoamor and Victoria Kent, respectively).

Undoubtedly, the political achievements of the Second Spanish Republic were one of the main reflections of the evidenced evolution in women’s rights. However, it must not be forgotten that those changes had to coexist with a series of contradictions related to the hierarchy values that stemmed from ecclesiastic institutions. An example of this is the passing of the Divorce Law of 1932; however, as Soler notes (2020: 26):

La recién estrenada Ley de Divorcio de 2 de marzo de 1932, pionera en España en esta materia, no era del todo progresista (...) el artículo 44 de la Ley regulaba el humillante “depósito de la mujer casada” por considerarse el domicilio conyugal “casa del marido”.

(The recently introduced Divorce Law of 2nd March 1932, while pioneering in Spain in this regard, was not entirely progressive (...) Article 44 of the Law regulated the humiliating “married woman’s deposit”, as it regarded the conjugal home as “the husband’s house”).

Consequently, during the period on which this study focuses, we observe a society burdened with traditional roles, which tolerated a double standard that expected women, unlike men, to safeguard their virtue (Agullo, 1991), but in which women are slowly beginning to move out of the private and into the public sphere. All this was reflected in the different contributions made by the women

being studied in this research; contributions related to the improvements they achieved in the educational, cultural, social and working spheres, as well as in their affective relationships. Although this feminist struggle was significant, it did not fully develop until structural changes were generated in Spanish society.

### 3.—*Methodological Framework*

As a consequence of the situation described above, the methodological approach of this research is rooted in the concept of intersectionality. Hill and Bilge (2016) explore the theoretical and practical aspects and challenges that intersectionality dispersions face nowadays. Feminist positions are directing their efforts towards criticism and change (Martínez and Aguado, 2015) in order to put an end to the multiple discriminations women experience: political exclusion, economic exploitation, social invisibility and many others, which are perpetuated through cultural representation (Mayobre, 2007).

As a result of this, a theoretical and practical framework uniting the diverse identities and the different inequalities is being developed (Crenshaw, 1991; Zafra and López, 2019). Together with gender, there are other systems of oppression based on race/ethnicity (Perdices-Castillo and Perianes-Rodríguez, 2014), social class, religion, sexual orientation and age, among others, that must be addressed in order to analyse how the different systems of social discrimination are interconnected (Dunezat, 2017). Intersectional studies aim to show, on the one hand, the multiplicity of experiences women have as a result of the dynamic intersection between different social categories; and, on the other hand, the privileged position of those people who do not suffer from any kind of discrimination because they incarnate the “norm”, namely masculinity, heteronormativity or being white, among others (Viveros, 2016).

Intersectionality also studies the social categories involved both at a macro-sociological and micro-sociological level, examining the effects the structures of social inequality have on individuals’ personal lives (Hill, 2000; Walters, 2011). Furthermore, it analyses the possible interrelationships between the different categories (Dorlin, 2009), trying to determine if gender can lead to a specific social class when facing the salary gap or the glass ceiling problems at work; the same way gender can be used to enhance racial identity, as when black men are hyper-masculinised or indigenous men are feminised (Kergoat, 2009; Scodari, 2012). It is believed that, for every person, every element or personal trait is intertwined with all the other elements, thus creating personal identity.

The object of study of this research, the epistolary literature that women from diverse social and cultural backgrounds wrote to Miguel de Unamuno, Professor and Rector of the University of Salamanca, fits in this field of study, as their letters have been brushed aside from Literature and, therefore, invisibilised.



The main objective of this research is to analyse the perception of power relations from an intersectionality perspective that aims to identify and deconstruct the normative categories dictated by the hegemonic discourse (Foucault, 1980), and to detect the different hegemonic patterns.

The methodological approach of this investigation is therefore shaped by the following considerations:

### 3.1.—Definition of the object of study

The object of study is the correspondence that Miguel de Unamuno received from 40 women of different social and cultural backgrounds. That said, we must specify that the primary focus of attention is on the female authors and senders of the correspondence, and not so much on the figure of the well-known writer, as the single and common recipient of the letters. Consequently, the possible replies that Unamuno gave these women will not be the object of investigative interest here.

### 3.2.—Selection of the sample

The archive kept in the Unamuno House-Museum, which comprises the writer’s entire heritage, was the main source of information for this research. In order to select the sample for this study, it was first necessary to make a preliminary exploration of this great archive. Thus, letters written by around 600 women were identified and categorised (by name, date of dispatch, place and profession of the senders) among which we found those sent by family members, by women of great literary, political or social relevance, and even by unknown women. Furthermore, it was also established that many of these women did not just write him one letter but, on occasion, sent him more than one, which generates a very important epistolary corpus.

In order to narrow the sample of study, a non-probabilistic sampling technique has been used. Specifically, the letters that have been selected for analysis are those sent by women who were well-known in social, cultural or intellectual circles during the first third of the 20th century. Thus, the object of study is ultimately made up of letters sent by 40 women, which makes up a total corpus of analysis of 137 letters, to which are added five telegrams, six cards, four postcards and a press cutting.

### 3.3.—General and specific objectives

As a result of the aforementioned considerations —and according to the intersectional approach—, the present research is historically defined within the

context of Miguel de Unamuno's lifelong epistolary production. At the same time, a micro-sociological perspective is adopted, aiming to determine if the herein studied female epistolary literature can contribute to a better knowledge of these women, considering the existence of inequalities traditionally linked to them.

Taking into account this starting point, and in order to tackle the aforementioned object of study, two general objectives have been set:

1. To analyse the content of the letters sent by the women under study.
2. To identify the worries and concerns that the women under study shared from a social, politico-ideological, cultural and intellectual point of view through the correspondence that they sent to Miguel de Unamuno in the first third of the 20th century.

These general objectives encompass, in turn, the following specific objectives:

1. To identify the emissaries who wrote to Miguel de Unamuno and their letters.
2. To identify the language used in the correspondence.
3. To establish the reasons why these women wrote to Miguel de Unamuno.

#### 3.4.—Methodological analysis tools

In order to address the stated objectives, a content analysis (Berelson, 1952) of the text of the letters has been carried out. This methodological tool is defined by Bardin as the “set of techniques of analysis of communications aiming to obtain indicators (quantitative or not) by systematic procedures and objectives of description of message content” (1996: 32). As a means to carry out this technique, an analysis sheet has been created, taking into account the following variables:

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Indicator</i>
Woman's identification details	Name and Surnames
	Nickname (if applicable)
Descriptive information about the letter	Date of dispatch of the letter
	Place of dispatch of the letter (city, country)
	Language of the letter
Rapprochement tactics (language)	How do they address Miguel de Unamuno?
	How do the women introduce themselves?
	How do they sign off?

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Indicator</i>
Topics covered in the letter	Social aspects
	Cultural aspects
	Literary aspects relating to Unamuno or the women
	Politico-ideological aspects
	Personal aspects (invitations) and/or aspects relating to the family of the woman who is writing
	Aspects relating to Unamuno or his family

Source: Author’s own creation.

#### 4.—*Analysis and Results*

As has already been specified in the theory section, a letter can reveal a lot of information, not only when it comes to descriptive details, such as the identity and location of the senders; but also when it comes to the personal details of the women found in the body of the letter, but also in the opening and closing words, as will be discussed further in the following sections.

##### 4.1.—What women write to Miguel de Unamuno and from where?

The professions of the women who write to Miguel de Unamuno are numerous and varied. Within the areas of activity included in the present study, that is to say, those of the women who are most well-known in social, cultural and intellectual terms, the analysis has allowed us to identify the following senders:

TABLE 2  
RELATIONSHIP OF THE FEMALE SENDERS OF THE CORRESPONDENCE UNDER ANALYSIS

<i>Sender</i>	<i>Profession</i>	<i>N.º of letters</i>	<i>Date of the first letter</i>	<i>Date of the last letter</i>	<i>Country of origin</i>
Halma Angélico	Writer	6	17/05/1935	17/06/1936	Spain
Ángela Arancoa	Writer	2	19/10/1905	07/10/1907	Spain
Ángela Barco	Writer	10 + 1 postcard	11/04/1907	17/03/1935	Spain
Matilde Brandau de Ross	Lawyer and Educator	26 + 1 telegram	27/10/1908	1936	Spain and Chile
Carmen de Burgos y Seguí	Journalist and Writer	5+ 1 press cutting	21/07/1903	31/01/1904	Spain

<i>Sender</i>	<i>Profession</i>	<i>N.º of letters</i>	<i>Date of the first letter</i>	<i>Date of the last letter</i>	<i>Country of origin</i>
Clara Campoamor Rodríguez	Lawyer	1 card + 1 telegram	16/05/1934	n/a	Spain
Enriqueta Carbonell	Wife of the pastor Atilano Coco	1	Undated	n/a	Spain
Sofia Casanova de Lutoslawski	Writer	3 letters + 1 card	04/06/1900	18/12/1900	Spain and Poland
Carmen Conde Abellán	Writer	2	23/02/1930	19/06/1930	Spain
Magda Donato (Carmen Eva Nelken)	Actress	1	05/03/1923	n/a	Spain
María Luisa Dorado Seirullo	Educator	1	07/03/1924	na/	Spain
Concha Espina Tagle	Writer	10 + 2 cards	27/01/1920	01/03/1930	Spain
María Margarita Ferreras Lorenzo	Writer	7 + 1 postcard	26/03/1934	27/12/1935	Spain
Flérida García de Nolasco	Writer	1	14/09/1935	n/a	Dominican Republic
Magdalena Garretas	Educator	1	Undated	n/a	Spain
Juana de Ibarbourou	Writer	2	29/07/1919	11/09/1919	Uruguay
María de Maeztu y Whitney	Educator	10	19/05/1908	10/10/1933	Spain
Elisa Emilia Martínez y Arana	2 <sup>nd</sup> Countess of Rodas	1 telegram	17/05/1934	n/a	Spain
Lola Membrives	Actress	7	24/12/1932	04/03/1936	Spain and Argentina
Gabriela Mistral (Lucila Godoy Alcayaga)	Poet, diplomat and educator	1	1929	1930	Italy
Pilar Montaner de Sureda	Painter	1 + 1 telegram	1922	1922	Spain
Margarita Nelken Mansberger	Writer and Politician	4	14/11/1919	27/06/1932	Spain
Hedwig Ollerich	Translator	1	04/11/1931	n/a	Germany
Gratiana Oniciu	Student, wife of Miguel Pizarro Zambrano (1897-1956)	1	29/06/1936	n/a	Romania
Regina Opisso de Llorens	Writer	3 letters and 1 postcard	24/11/1917	01/09/1923	Spain
Augusta Palma	Sister of Clemente Palma Román (1872-1946) and daughter of Ricardo Palma (1833-1919)	1 card	22/09/1904	n/a	Peru
Emilia Pardo Bazán	Writer	6 letters and 1 postcard	04/04/1905	24/02/1920	Spain
Mathilde Pomès	Hispanist	13 and 1 telegram	14/03/1922	05/05/1935	France

<i>Sender</i>	<i>Profession</i>	<i>N.º of letters</i>	<i>Date of the first letter</i>	<i>Date of the last letter</i>	<i>Country of origin</i>
Teresa Raveca de Crespo	Educator	1	08/05/1930	n/a	Uruguay
Ruzanna de Romaña	Translator	1	16/10/1934	n/a	China
Maria del Rosario Rodríguez	Daughter of Luis Rodríguez Miguel	1	14/09/1931	n/a	Spain
Mariblanca Sabas Alomá	Writer	2	03/09/1922	07/12/1922	Cuba
Soledad A. de Samper	Writer	1	25/07/1905	n/a	Colombia
Condesa de San Jorge	Noblewoman	1	27/06/1932	n/a	Spain
Josefina Saravia E.	Director of “Alma América”	1 card	21/10/1924	n/a	Guatemala
Ria Schmidt-Koch	Educator	1	28/02/1935	n/a	Germany
Josefina de la Serna y Espina	Writer and Journalist	2	16/02/1930	09/03/1930	Spain
Blanca Silveira-Armesto	Journalist	1	25/11/1934	n/a	Spain
Marquesa del Ter (Lilly Rose Schenrich)	Pianist	2	05/02/1919	18/09/1918	Spain
María Concepción del Valle Inclán	Daughter of Ramón María del Valle-Inclán	1	18/07/1936	n/a	Spain
Margarita Xirgu	Actress	1 and 1 telegram	07/04/1915	Undated	Spain

Source: Author’s own creation.

As we can observe, among the senders, we find some women who had great relevance in the first third of the 20th century. From the field of literature, we see names like Carmen Conde, Concha Espina, Gabriela Mistral and Emilia Pardo Bazán, among others; from the artistic scene, the famous actresses Lola Membrives and Margarita Xirgu, as well as the painter Pilar Montaner, deserve special mention. In the intellectual field, journalists like Carmen de Burgos and Sofía Casanova also exchange words with Unamuno. Nor should we forget the ideological and political world, as women like Clara Campoamor and Margarita Nelken, among others, also write to him. These are not the only female voices that were relevant in their time, but they could be regarded as a broad cross-section of them.

When opening the folders for each of the women stored in this archive, even before beginning an in-depth analysis of their contents, their value is already evident. Aesthetic details, like the sizes of the paper that they used to write, as well as their colours and typeface, already offer information about their senders. For instance, letters written on a sheet with a black border is indicative of mourning, while a blue border indicates that they come from abroad. Similarly, the question of whether they are handwritten or typed, the quality of the paper, the size of the

sheets, and the number of sheets used for each letter, may indicate something about the social status or profession of their authors.

In order to identify the senders of the letters, one must look at the final lines of the message where the signature is normally found. However, on some occasions, authors use letterhead sheets that bear their name or initials at the top, as can be observed in the figure 1.

However, this method is not very common, perhaps due to its cost, at a time when paper was a scarce resource. We have found letters written not only on both sides of the page, which is the most common practice, but also written with notes in the margins and reused pieces of paper, as well as ones written with hotel letterheads.

Information about the provenance or origin of the letters can also be found at the top. The corpus analysed reflects a correspondence that mainly comes from different Spanish provinces, but of equal interest are those sent from Latin America (Argentina, Chile, Peru, Uruguay, etc.). Although Miguel de Unamuno never travelled to these countries, one must not forget that the writer had a great presence there through the edition and reedition of his texts, as well as his contributions in newspapers and journals (remembering, for example, that Unamuno wrote extensively in the great Buenos Aires newspaper *La Nación*). For this reason, it is no surprise that his correspondence with admirers and intellectuals from Latin American countries is very important.

In addition to correspondence from other European countries, like France, Italy and Germany, a letter sent from Shanghai (China) has also been found. That said, regardless of their origin, it should be noted that the language in which these women write to him is usually Spanish, although we have identified some letters written in French among those penned by Mathilde Pomés. This provides evidence of the interest in and knowledge of other languages shown by these women, who, despite not having Spanish nationality, had a mastery of the language; such is the case of the Romanian Ruzana de Romaña —then based in China— or the Germans Hedwig Ollerich and Ria Schmidt-Koch.

Lastly, in addition to considering information about the identity of the senders who are writing to Miguel de Unamuno, one must always bear in mind the period in which these women are writing. Undoubtedly, this time period, spanning from 1900 to 1936, is vital to the scientific rigour of this study, as this broad span of 30 years, which coincides with various important moments in the author's life, will enable us to contextualise the contributions that these women wish to share with Miguel de Unamuno, as will be reflected in the following sections.

#### 4.2.—*Rapprochement tactics and sign-off phrases in the letters under analysis*

For a more in-depth content analysis of the letters, one must study the courtesy formulas that the senders use, both when addressing Miguel de Unamuno at

the start of the letter, as when signing off. In this regard, it has been possible to identify various *rapprochement* tactics and sign-off phrases which, undoubtedly, provide very valuable information about the closeness and trust that these women may have had with the writer.

Some women address him out of the friendship that joins them. This is the case with Carmen de Burgos, Concha Espina, Emilia Pardo Bazán, María de Maeztu and Pilar Montaner.

Mi querido amigo: Lo eterno: La tiranía de Kronos. No he tenido ni un segundo para escribir a usted respondiendo a sus dos cartas tan bonitas. (Carta de Emilia Pardo Bazán, 20 de marzo de 1916).

(My dear friend: The eternal struggle against the tyranny of Chronos. I have not had a second to write to you in response to your two beautiful letters. [Letter of Emilia Pardo Bazán, 20th March 1916]).

Muy recordado y apreciado Don Miguel: Realmente nuestra lucha por la vida ha ido siendo cada vez más grande y hoy con a larga enfermedad de dos hijos se nos hace insostenible no habiendo nadie en casa que gane nada. (Carta de Pilar Montaner, 1922).

(Fondly remembered and appreciated Don Miguel: Our struggle to survive has been getting increasingly difficult and today, with our two children’s long illness, it is now becoming impossible, with no one at home earning anything. [Letter from Pilar Montaner, 1922]).

Mi querido amigo: he recibido a D. Isidoro Iglesias con su hija y con mucho gusto les he proporcionado cuantos datos sabía acerca del ingreso en la Escuela Superior del Magisterio. (Carta de María de Maeztu, 21 de diciembre de 1916).

(My dear friend, I received D. Isidoro Iglesias with his daughter and have, with great pleasure, provided them with as much information as I could about entering the *Escuela Superior del Magisterio*. [Letter from María de Maeztu, 21st December 1916]).

Others, on the other hand, use the courtesy formulas that they have learned at school, like Concepción del Valle Inclán, Lola Membrives, the Countess of San Jorge, Ángela Arancoa and Margarita Nelken.

Señor Don Miguel de Unamuno. Muy admirado Señor Unamuno: Hace unos días he llegado a Madrid. (Carta de Lola Membrive, 30 de enero de 1935).

(Señor Don Miguel de Unamuno. Most admired Señor Unamuno: I arrived in Madrid a few days ago. [Letter from Lola Membrive, 30th January 1935]).

Ilustre señor: Me permito dirigirme a usted en nombre de la amistad que le unió a mi padre y rogarle no me desatienda. (Carta de Concepción del Valle Inclán, 18 de julio de 1936).

(Illustrious Sir: I take the liberty of addressing you in the name of the friendship that bound you to my father and ask that you attend me. [Letter from Concepción de Valle Inclán, 18th July 1936]).

Muy respetable Sr. mío de mi más distinguida consideración: Leído su hermoso discurso, que me deja admirada, no sin proyectar en mi cerebro mucha luz... (Carta de Ángela Arancoa, 19 de octubre de 1905).

(Most respectable Sir, worthy of my highest consideration. Having read your beautiful speech, which greatly impressed me and flooded my brain with light... [Letter from Ángela Arancoa, 19th October 1905]).

Others, such as Carmen Conde, Ángela Barco, Magda Donato, Lola Membrives, Gratiana Oniciu and Flérida de Nolasco, allude to his facet as a teacher or professor:

Amado maestro: Me permito enviarle un pequeño trabajo en el cual con especialísima devoción he escrito su nombre y hecho mías sus palabras. (Carta de Flérida de Nolasco, 14 de septiembre de 1935).

(Beloved teacher: I am taking the liberty of sending you a little work in which I have, with most careful devotion, written your name and made your words mine. [Letter from Flérida de Nolasco, 14th September 1935]).

Querido y venerado maestro: Es posible que aún no haya usted encontrado mi nombre entre los millares de cartas que le dieron la bienvenida. (Carta de Carmen Conde, 19 de junio de 1930).

(Dear and venerated teacher, It is possible that you have not yet found my name amidst the thousands of letters that welcomed you. [Letter from Carmen Conde, 19th June 1930]).

Muy admirado maestro. Sin duda, no ignora usted que el “Teatro de la Escuela Nueva” tendrá dentro de muy pocos días el honor de representar su “Fedra”. (Magda Donato, 5 de marzo de 1923).

(Most admired teacher. Undoubtedly, you are not unaware that the “Teatro de la Escuela Nueva” will, within the next few days, have the honour of staging your “Fedra”. [Magda Donato, 5th March 1923]).

The rapprochement strategies reflected provide information about the relationship and degree of intimacy that these women may have had with Unamuno, as could be observed in the previous analysis. These formulas are intrinsically linked to another important aspect related to their introduction, where we find evidence of whether these women had a friendly or close relationship to him, if they do not need to explain who they were. In this regard, we may once again mention Carmen de Burgos, Emilia Pardo Bazán, María de Maeztu or Pilar Montaner.



Additionally, we find women who are well-known in the period for the relevance or position which they then possessed or would acquire later, but whom Unamuno does not know personally and in this case, in their introduction, they keep a certain distance and adopt a posture of respect and admiration. This can be observed in the correspondence of Margarita Nelken or the Countess of San Jorge.

Muy Sr mío: me permito el atrevimiento de dirigirme a usted sin tener el gusto de conocerle personalmente primeramente porque deseo vea usted en estas líneas ante todo una prueba de gran respeto y sincera admiración. (Carta de Margarita Nelken, 14 de noviembre de 1919).

(Dear Sir: I am taking the liberty of addressing you without having the pleasure of knowing you personally, because I wish you to see in these lines, first of all, a demonstration of great respect and sincere admiration. [Letter from Margarita Nelken, 14th November 1919]).

Excelentísimo Señor Miguel de Unamuno. Muy distinguido Sr: Perdona Ud. que una castellana de pura cepa, pero que por circunstancias especiales habita en Barcelona desde hace seis años se tome la libertad de dirigirse a tan elevado personaje como Vd. y sin el menor motivo para excusar tal atrevimiento. (Carta de Condesa de San Jorge, 27 de junio de 1932).

(Most excellent Sr. Miguel de Unamuno. Most honourable Sir: Forgive the fact that a pure-bred Castilian who, due to special circumstances, has lived in Barcelona for six years, should take the liberty to address a person as distinguished as yourself and without the least reason to excuse such boldness. [Letter from the Condesa de San Jorge, 27th June 1932]).

The end of the letters, as occurs with the opening, also allows us to extract very valuable information about the relationships that these women established with Miguel de Unamuno. We must mention here, once again, the epistolary canons that these women had read or learned at school, with formulas like “atentamente se despide de usted” (“I bid you a sincere farewell,”), “de usted atenta” (“attentive to you”), “afectísima de usted que besa su mano” (“your most affectionate friend who kisses your hand”), as well as more cordial ones like “su amiga” (“your friend”), “su discípula” (“your disciple”) or “su admiradora” (“your admirer”). In many of the letters analysed, we have also found affectionate references to his family members.

Besa sus manos. Carmen Conde. (Carta de Carmen Conde Abellán, 23 de febrero de 1930).

(Carmen Conde kisses your hands. [Letter from Carmen Conde Abellán, 23rd February 1930]).

Su afectísima amiga y discípula M.<sup>a</sup> Luisa Dorado. (Carta de María Luisa García Dorado Seirullo, 7 marzo de 1924).

(Your most affectionate friend and disciple M.<sup>a</sup> Luisa Dorado. [Letter from María Luisa García Dodora Seirullo, 7th March 1924]).

Lo saluda con respeto y admiración. Juana de Ibarbourou. (Carta de Juana de Ibarbourou, 29 de julio de 1919).

(Juana Ibarbourou greets you with respect and admiration. [Letter from Juana de Ibarbourou, 29th July 1919]).

Le manda su más entrañable devoción su admiradora y amiga Mathilde Pomès. (Carta de Mathilde Pomès, 9 de junio de 1922).

(Your admirer and friend Mathilde Pomès sends you her sincerest. devotion. [Letter from Mathilde Pomès, 9th June 1922]).

Reciba el saludo atento y afectuoso de su admiradora Lola Membrives. (Carta de Lola Membrives, 14 de abril de 1934).

(Receive the attentive and affectionate greeting of your admirer Lola Membrives. [Letter from Lola Membrives, 14th April 1934]).

¿Y Concha y sus hijos? Salúdelos en mi nombre se lo ruego. A usted le estrecha la mano con todo el respeto y afecto su muy amiga Ángela Barco. (Carta de Ángela Barco, 23 de noviembre de 1918).

(And Concha and your children? I ask you to send them my regards. Your good friend Ángela Barco offers you her hand, with all of her respect and affection. [Letter from Ángela Barco, 23rd November 1918]).

Saludos afectísimos a Concha y niños y Ud. acepte un recuerdo respetuoso de la más desgraciada de las mujeres. Matilde de Ross. (Carta de Matilde Brandau de Ross, 27 de octubre de 1908).

(With most affectionate greetings to Concha, your children and you, accept this respectful greeting from this most wretched of women. Matilde de Ross. [Letter from Matilde Brandau de Ross, 27th October 1908]).

De Ud. ata. y sa.sa. (Carta de Hedwig Ollerich, el 4 de noviembre de 1931).

(With the utmost attention and affection. [Letter from Hedwig Ollerich, 4th November 1931]).

In any case, what most attracts attention is the affection and esteem that all of these women have for Miguel de Unamuno.

#### 4.3.—What ideas do the senders of the letters want to share with Miguel de Unamuno?

In order to identify the topics that these women wanted to share with Miguel de Unamuno, we must now delve into the body of the letters under study. This part constitutes the central nucleus of the letter, where we can find the richest aspects from an analytical point of view, since this is where the women, by means of different topics, explain what led them to write to him.

This study has allowed us to identify subjects related to different social, cultural, literary, ideological and political aspects, personal to them and to Miguel de Unamuno, which will be addressed below.

From a social perspective, the correspondence analysed reflects the worries and concerns that some of these women had about divorce, motherhood, women’s suffrage and the various difficulties that they encountered as women. It is for these and other reasons that Ángela Barco, Halma Angélico, Mathilde Pomés, Carmen de Burgos, Sofia Casanova, la Marquesa de Ter, Mariblanca Sabas and Ángela Arancoa write to him.

Todo, absolutamente todo lo que usted me dice respecto a la mujer que escribe para el público lo he pensado yo. Y algo de eso le decía en mi primera carta. Es verdad; civilización, instituciones e ideas públicas, lenguaje literario todo es exclusivamente masculino. Así que las mujeres que nos lanzamos a un tiempo que no es el nuestro, a la fuerza hemos de ponernos pantalones, es un fastidio, pero es irremediable. (Carta de Ángela Barco, 11 de junio de 1907).

(Everything, absolutely everything that you have told me about the woman who writes for the public is what I have thought myself. And I said something about that in my first letter. It is true: civilisation, public ideas and institutions, literary language, all of it, is exclusively masculine. Thus, we women who engage at a time which is not our own, are forced to put on trousers, which is a nuisance, but an inevitable one. [Letter from Ángela Barco, 11th June 1907]).

Ahora tengo que suplicarle un nuevo favor. En el “Diario universal” estoy tratando de la implantación del divorcio en España, por ser el del divorcio un problema muy complejo solicito la opinión de nuestros hombres. (Carta de Carmen de Burgos, 12 de enero de 1904).

(I must now beg a new favour of you. In the “Diario Universal”, I am tackling the introduction of divorce in Spain. As the problem of divorce is a very complex one, I request the opinion of our men. [Letter from Carmen de Burgos, 12th January 1904]).

Mi respetable y distinguido amigo: Una multitud de quehaceres me ha impedido menos tarde enviar a usted las gracias más sentidas por su opinión acerca del divorcio que ya vería usted publicada. (Carta de Carmen de Burgos, 31 de enero de 1904).

(My respectable and distinguished friend: A host of tasks have prevented me from sending you heartfelt thanks for your opinion about divorce, which you will now see in print. [Letter from Carmen de Burgos, 31st January 1904]).

Mi distinguido amigo: sabiendo cuánto se interesa por todo lo que es cultura y progreso, mucho le agradecería tuviera la bondad de darme a conocer su valiosa opinión sobre la “Liga Feminista Española” que para la emancipación de la mujer acaba de formarse en Valencia y a la que aquí en Madrid nos propone-

mos prestar nuestra adhesión. Creemos así prestar un gran servicio a la España hermosa y digna de ponerse a la altura de las demás naciones. (Marquesa de Ter, 18 de septiembre de 1918).

(My honourable friend: Knowing how much you care about all things cultural and progressive, I would be most grateful if you could share with me your valuable opinion about the “Liga Feminista Española” [“Spanish Feminist League”], which has just been formed in Valencia and which we, in Madrid, are proposing to join. We believe that we will be doing a great service to Spain, which is sufficiently beautiful and worthy to rise to the height of other nations. [Marquess of Ter, 18th September 1918]).

Esta carta, ha de ser intempestiva y hasta casi inexplicable para usted. Es más; acaso le parezca tonta. ¡Estoy tan segura de que es usted tan devoto de esa creencia tan generalizada que niega corazón a la mujer, que niega sinceridad a la mujer, que niega a la mujer todo noble impulso sincero y generoso!... Si, usted es así; en cuanto a los valores femeninos, un escéptico. ¡Vaya! ... y casi ni lo deploro, porque yo también soy a veces una escéptica. (Mariblanca Sabas Aloma, 3 de septiembre de 1922).

(This letter must be untimely and even almost inexplicable to you. What is more, it may even appear foolish. I am sure that you are so wedded to that general belief that denies a woman heart, that denies a woman sincerity, that denies a woman every noble, sincere and generous impulse! ... Yes, that is how you are; and skeptical when it comes to female values. Very well! ... And I almost do not deplore it, because I, at times, am also skeptical. [Mariblanca Sabas Aloma, 3rd September 1922]).

Correspondence on these subjects underscores Miguel de Unamuno’s progressive side, a very forward-thinking man for his age, a defender of women’s suffrage and the feminist cause. All this without forgetting the perspective of the context of the period in which these letters are written.

Cultural subjects are also very recurrent in many of the letters; the reason for this can be found in their connection, in most cases, to the professional environment in which these women operate. From the world of culture, the letters of writers and artists, like Ángela Barco, Carmen de Burgos, Sofía Casanova, Pilar Montaner, the sisters Margarita and Carmen Nelken (Magda Donato), Ángela Arancoa, Soledad Samper, María de Maeztu, Margarita Xirgu, Lola Membrives, Concha Espina, Gratiana Oniciu and Ruzzana de Romaña, among others, stand out. Authors from this field write to him from a primarily literary and artistic point of view, about translations of Unamuno’s work or adaptations of his work for theatrical and cinematographic performances.

When it comes to literary production, the letter of a very young Carmen Conde, who sends her first work to Miguel de Unamuno so that he could make an assessment of it, is particularly notable; the Uruguayan author Juana de Ibarbourou

writes to him for the same reason, requesting his opinion about her book of poems, *Las lenguas de diamante* (*Diamond Tongues*).

[...]le envío a Usted mi libro 1.º de poemas: BROCAL. En el momento menos ocupado de su vida, léalo usted. (Carta de Carmen Conde, 23 de febrero de 1930) (... I send you my 1st book of poems: "BROCAL". In the least occupied moment of your life, read it. [Letter from Carmen Conde, 23rd February 1930]).

Y otro ruego, gran Don Miguel: (es así como aquí en América lo llamamos) ¿quiere usted decirme si mis versos le gustan? Yo no sé si esto constituirá para usted, qué tantas tareas tiene, mucha incomodidad. ¡Pero deseo tanto su opinión! (Carta de Juana de Ibarborou, 29 de julio de 1919).

(And another request, great Don Miguel (as we call you here in America): could you tell me whether you like my verses? I do not know whether this would be a great inconvenience to someone with so many tasks, but I so desire your opinion! [Letter of Juana de Ibarborou, 29th July 1919]).

Espero muy en breve poder arreglar mi vida de otra manera y entonces volveré a mi trabajo intelectual y a la propagación de mis ideas por medio de las Conferencias. Entretanto tengo que resignarme a suplicar a ustedes aplacen su invitación para dentro de unos meses. Ruégole, amigo mío, haga presentes estas observaciones al Ateneo de Salamanca a la vez que les envío la expresión más sincera de mi agradecimiento por haberse acordado de mí. (Carta de María de Maeztu, 8 de febrero de 1921).

(I hope that I will soon be able to reorganise my life and thereafter return to my intellectual work and spread my ideas through conferences. In the meantime, I must resign myself to begging you to postpone your invitation by a few months. I ask you, my friend, to present these observations to the Athenaeum of Salamanca, while I also send them my sincerest expression of gratitude for thinking of me. [Letter from María de Maeztu, 8th February 1921]).

The call for literary translations of Unamuno is another very recurrent theme in the archive of female correspondence under analysis. Of importance, in this regard, are the letters of women like Gratiana Oniciu, Ria Schmidt-Koch, Magdalena Garretas, Ruzzana de Romaña and Hedwig Ollerich, who suggest translating some of his works into languages as diverse as English, German, Romanian, Russian and Greek.

El Ministro de España en Rumanía a quien usted tiene que conocer por lo mucho que se interesa en propagar entre nosotros la cultura de España, me presenta a usted para que Don Miguel de Unamuno me haga la gracia de darme una autorización y un prólogo que me permita la publicación de mi traducción "Trei Nuvele exemplare si un prolog" que me ha costado un año de trabajo y de consulta entre el oficial español y otras traducciones extranjerias (Gratiana Oniciu, 29 de junio de 1936).

(The Spanish Ambassador to Romania, whom you surely know for his interest in propagating Spanish culture among us, is introducing me to you so that Don Miguel de Unamuno may do me the service of granting me authorisation and a prologue which will allow me to publish my translation “Tre Nuvele exemplare si un prolog” [“Three Exemplary Novels and a Prologue”] which has cost me a years’ work, during which time I have consulted the official Spanish version and other foreign translations. [Gratiana Oniciu, 29th June 1936]).

Muy señor mío: Quisiera pedirle a usted el permiso de traducir algunas de sus obras al ruso y al inglés. (Carta de Ruzana de Romaña, 16 de octubre de 1934).

(Dearest Sir, I would like to request your permission to translate some of your works into Russian and English. [Letter from Ruzana de Romaña, 16th October 1934]).

Como en Alemania su nombre también está conocido y citado de gente que aún ignora sus obras por no saber el castellano, la traducción de uno de sus trabajos encontrará el mayor interés aquí (...) para mí sería la realización de un sueño muy audaz el poder traducir algo de usted. (Carta de Hedwig Ollerich, el 4 de noviembre de 1931).

(As your name is also known and cited by people in Germany, who are still unfamiliar with your works due to their not knowing Castilian, the translation of one of your works will be received with the greatest interest here [...] for me, it would be the fulfilment of an audacious dream to translate one of your works. [Letter from Hedwig Ollerich, 4th November 1931]).

Mathilde Pomés, Lola Membrives and Carmen Nelken write to Unamuno to share ideas with him about cinematic and theatrical adaptations of his works. Chief among these, undoubtedly, is the especially curious letter sent to him by Mathilde Pomés, who even dares to advise Unamuno about the treatment of one of his characters, going so far as to suggest changes to the script.

Unamuno tiene que ir a un gran teatro y a grandes actores. Se me figura que sean cuales fueren ese teatro y esos actores se habría de hacerles alguna concesión en el tercer acto. Es algo duro para un público no hecho a ver la mujer reducida a líneas tan descaradas, lo que no supone que se haya de arropar, que haya que añadir, sino al contrario quitar: si quitar algunos gritos de aquellas dos harpías y hacerla a Damiana hablar algo más veladamente de su luna de miel porque eso con ser de tan anchas tragaderas, no creo que nuestro público lo trague. (Carta de Mathilde Pomés, 26 de mayo de 1933).

(Unamuno should go to a great theatre and great actors. I imagine that, whatever the theatre or whoever the actors, some concession would have to be made in the third act. It is rather hard on a public unused to seeing a woman reduced to such insolent lines, which should not be covered up or added, but rather, taken out: take out some of the screams of those two harpies and making Damiana speak rather more discreetly about her honeymoon, because I doubt that her line

about being able to swallow a lot is something that our audience would be able to swallow. [Letter from Mathilde Pomés, 26th May 1933]).

In this cultural context, the correspondence sent to Miguel de Unamuno by important actresses of the period does not go unnoticed. The famous Spanish actress Margarita Xirgu specifically writes to him to request advice about the performance, treatment and wardrobe of the author’s female characters. The Argentine Lola Membrives also writes to him about theatrical topics.

Contesto a sus letras fechadas en Salamanca el 29 de marzo próximo pasado, para decirle que efectivamente D. Jacinto me hizo entrega en su día del manuscrito de su obra “Fedra” y bien hubiera yo querido corresponder a la honra que usted me dispensa pensando en mí como intérprete de su obra. (Carta de Margarita Xirgu, 7 de abril de 1915).

(In reply to your letter(s) dated in Salamanca on 29th March of this year, I can tell you that D. Jacinto did, indeed, submit the manuscript of your work “Fedra” and I would like to repay the honour that you have granted me in considering me as an interpreter of your work. [Letter from Margarita Xirgu, 7th April 1915]).

Por una circunstancia imprevista, efecto de una sacudida muy propia de estos tiempos, me he quedado sin primer actor en mi compañía, causa que afecta directamente a la presentación, estreno, en B. Aires, de la obra que usted tan gustosamente me confió a tal fin en Madrid y, en la que, por mi parte tenía puestas mis esperanzas y gran deseo de dar aquí a conocer. (Carta de Lola Membrives, 14 de abril de 1934).

(Due to an unforeseen circumstance, the consequence of a shock worthy of the times, I have been left without a lead actor in my company, an occurrence which will directly affect the premiere, in B[uenos] Aires, of the work that you so gladly entrusted to me in Madrid and, in which, I had placed my hopes and great desire in making known here. [Letter from Lola Membrives, 14th April 1934]).

Additionally, the political and ideological situation of the period, both in Spain and in Spanish America, is another topic that appears in this correspondence. This is expressed in the letters of Ángela Barco, Gabriela Mistral, Mathilde Pomés, Concepción del Valle Inclán, María Luisa García Dorado Seirullo, Matilde Brandau, Carmen Conde, Ángela Arancoa or Teresa Raveca.

Perdóneme, ante todo, la molestia y el atrevimiento, en gracia del objeto. Soy Vascongada pero no Bizkaitarra ni mucho menos. Lectora de Ud. a quien admiro, lo que más me ha complacido es verle en la patriótica actitud suya respecto del Bizkaitarrismo absurdo y retrógrado, idiota y jesuita que padecemos. (Carta de Ángela Arancoa, 7 de octubre de 1905).

(Forgive me, first of all, for the inconvenience and boldness. I am Basque but by no means a nationalistic one. As a reader who admires you, it has given

me great pleasure to see your patriotic attitude towards the absurd, retrograde, idiotic and Jesuitical *Bizkaitarrismo* [Basque nationalism] that afflicts us. [Letter from Ángela Arancoa, 7th October 1905].

Espero y deseo que pronto muy pronto le veamos ya en su cátedra (supongo que el Directorio se encontrará muy satisfecho con que esté en las competentes manos de Goiza). Hasta tanto no hay más remedio que tomarlo con calma, con tanta más calma cuanto mayor es la injusticia. (Carta de María Luisa García Dorado Seirullo, 7 de marzo de 1924).

I hope and wish that we will see you back in your chair very soon [I suppose that the directorate will be very satisfied that it has been left in the competent hands of Goiza]. Until then, there is no option but to take it in your stride: the greater the calm, the greater the injustice. [Letter from María Luisa García Dorado Seirullo, 7th March 1924].

Yo me enteré desde los primeros momentos de su injusto destierro, y fui de las primeras maestras en formar en las filas del Comité de desagravio y que pedían se levantara ese injusto destierro, cuyo comité patriótico se formó en la Plaza Independencia, en Montevideo, encabezado por el Doctor Carlos Vaz Ferreira maestro y abogado muy distinguido. (Carta de Teresa Raveca, 8 de mayo de 1930).

(I was immediately aware of your unjust banishment, and was one of the first teachers to join the ranks of the Relief Committee to call for the lifting of this unjust banishment. This patriotic committee met in Plaza Independencia in Montevideo, headed by Doctor Carlos Vaz Ferreira, a teacher and lawyer of great renown. [Letter from Teresa Raveca, 8th May 1930]).

Of particular political and ideological interest is the letter addressed to him by Enriqueta Carbonell, wife of Atilano Coco, a Protestant pastor and friend of Don Miguel's. This letter is historically significant as the one on which Unamuno wrote the notes that he would later use in the famous speech that he gave in the *Paraninfo* (Assembly Room) of the University of Salamanca on 12th October 1936.

Se acusa a mi marido de masón y en realidad lo es, lo hicieron en Inglaterra en el año 20 o 21, me dice que consulte con Ud que es lo que tiene que hacer, mi esposo desde luego no ha hecho política de ninguna clase, lo hicieron eso porque sabe Ud que en Inglaterra casi todos los pastores lo son y muchos también en España. (Carta de Enriqueta Carbonell, sin fechar).

(My husband is being accused of being a mason, which, in fact, he is. They did it in England in 1920 or '21. He has told me to consult you about what to do. My husband has, of course, not been involved in politics of any kind. They did it because, as you know, in England, almost all pastors are masons and many in Spain are, too. [Letter from Enriqueta Carbonell, undated]).

In addition to these social, cultural, political and ideological elements, the very nature of letter-writing, intimate and private, is the ideal scenario for these



women to make confessions to Miguel de Unamuno. This allows us to find out about their psychology, their family relationships, their friendships, their fears and prejudices, their joys and frustrations, granting, through their letters, direct and unfiltered access to their innermost thoughts.

He sufrido mucho recluida en un sanatorio de enfermedades nerviosas. Debí seguir el tratamiento en casa, pero a mi lado faltó una voluntad enérgica y los médicos convencieron a mi madre de la necesidad de un aislamiento total. (Carta de Margarita Ferreras, 26 de marzo de 1934).

(I have suffered a lot being shut away in a hospital for nervous disorders. I had to follow treatment at home, but I felt a lack of energy and the doctors convinced my mother of the need for total isolation. [Letter from Margarita Ferreras, 26th March 1934]).

[...] cuántas veces en el desierto de este mundo me he refugiado en el regazo de su alma para poder soportar la vida. No hay parentesco como el del espíritu y yo me siento (y aquí diría como Santa Teresa: “nadie me convencerá de que esto que siento no es verdadero”) hija suya por obra del espíritu. Esta es una confesión que sólo en secreto me atrevería a declarar. Pero lo hago con toda la sencillez de mi alma, porque sé que Ud. no se burlará de mi insignificancia (Carta de Flérida de Nolasco, 14 de noviembre de 1935).

([...] how often in the desert of this world have I sought refuge in the lap of your soul to find life bearable. There is no kinship like that of the spirit and, as Saint Teresa would say, “no one shall convince me that what I feel is not true”, I feel like your daughter in the Spirit. This is a confession that I would only dare to declare in secret. Yet I do so with all of the simplicity of my soul, because I know that you will not mock my insignificance. [Letter from Flérida de Nolasco, 14th November 1935]).

Yet Miguel de Unamuno, as evidenced in the correspondence analysed, is regarded as a guiding light in the social, political and cultural life of the period, which is why these women also write to him to request favours. M.<sup>a</sup> del Rosario Rodríguez and Teresa Raveca, Matilde Brandau and Concepción del Valle Inclán are some of the women who write to him to request letters of recommendation, guidance on how to obtain some kind of document or intercession on their behalf, or on behalf of a family member, in difficult situations.

Quiero reunirme lo más pronto con mi familia y me iré a Chile en el vapor que pasará por Lisboa 10 de noviembre; pero Don Miguel, tropiezo con el amargo inconveniente de que no tengo quien me vaya a dejar y no me atrevo, no me atrevo, a hacer el viaje de Madrid a Lisboa sola y además no sabría cómo embarcarme, Dios mío (...) Yo he pensado, Don Miguel, que Ud. podría hacer el sacrificio, de venir a Madrid para acompañarme a Lisboa, se lo pido en nombre de mi Luis. (Carta de Matilde Brandau, 27 de octubre de 1908).

(I want to rejoin my family as soon as possible and shall be going to Chile on the steamboat that passes by Lisbon on 10th November; but Don Miguel, I have stumbled on the bitter inconvenience of not having anyone to leave me there and I dare not, I dare not make the trip from Madrid to Lisbon on my own, and, moreover, I would not know how to board the boat, my God [...] I thought, Don Miguel, that you might be able to take the trouble to come to Madrid to accompany me to Lisbon, which I ask on my Luis' behalf. [Letter from Matilde Brandau, 27th October 1908]).

Don Pío Baroja hace unos días publicó en un periódico de Pamplona un artículo y dicho artículo lo reprodujeron los periódicos de Vigo, en este artículo el Sr. Baroja decía que mi padre era comunista quizás sin darse cuenta de la gravedad que en estos tiempos traen semejantes acusaciones, el resultado ha sido la inmediata detención de mi hermano Carlos en Santiago y la de mi Marido Jerónimo Toledano en Astorga, y yo con toda mi familia en Madrid me encuentro sola y con un hijito mío muy pequeñito. (Concepción Valle Inclán, sin fecha).

(A few days ago, Don Pío Baroja published an article in a newspaper in Pamplona, which was subsequently reprinted in newspapers in Vigo. In this article, Mr. Baroja said that my father was a communist, perhaps without realising the gravity that such accusations carry with them these days, the result of which has been the immediate arrest of my brother Carlos in Santiago and that of my husband Jerónimo Toledano in Astorga. And I find myself alone in Madrid with my whole family and my little baby son. [Concepción Valle Inclán, undated]).

The personal details reflected in the letters are not only related to the women, but are also of personal interest to the famous Rector of Salamanca, especially when they concern those closest to him. In this regard, we have identified letters in which the women congratulate him on the birth of a new member of the family, as well as letters of support or condolence upon the loss of a loved one.

Me ha alegrado saber que todos ustedes pasan muy buenas vacaciones; pero, lo que me ha hecho poner el grito en el cielo ha sido la noticia del octavo descendiente. Ha sido para mí y para Segundo y para todos nosotros una sorpresa. Nos habíamos habituado a considerar a Rafaelito como el pequeñín de la casa. (Carta de Matilde Brandau, 15 de noviembre de 1909).

(I was happy to hear that you were all having a great holiday; but what made me cry out to heaven was the news of your eighth child. It came as a surprise to me, Segundo and all of us. We were so used to thinking of little Rafael as the baby of the house. [Letter from Matilde Brandau, 15th November 1909]).

Con solidaridad emocionada por su dolor le envía sus saludos amistosos Clara Campoamor. (Telegrama de Clara Campoamor, sin fechar).

(Moved by your grief, Clara Campoamor sends you her kind regards in solidarity. [Telegram from Clara Campoamor, undated]).

Muy ilustre y querido maestro. No he sabido jamás decir palabras de consuelo cuando un gran dolor es justificado y no tiene límites. Así el suyo al perder para siempre (?) á la buenisima de D. Concha, la incomparable madre de sus hijos. (Carta de Ángela Barco, 18 de mayo de 1934).

(Most illustrious and beloved teacher. I have never been able to utter words of consolation for a justified grief that knows no bounds. Such must be your grief upon losing forever the wonderful Doña Concha, the incomparable mother of your sons. [Letter from Ángela Barco, 18th May 1934]).

Lastly, this analysis has allowed us to extract what might be regarded today as one of the standards of cultural consumption of the period, related to the sending of letters in which they ask well-known figures like Unamuno for some verses, his autograph or photographs, to make them part of their personal collections.

Muy señor mío: Abusando de la amistad que une a usted con mi padre y mi hermano Clemente, me permito rogarle que firme algunas frases en la tarjeta que le adjunto. (Carta de Augusta Palma, 22 de septiembre de 1904).

(Dear Sir: Taking full advantage of the friendship that binds you to my father and my brother Clemente, I take the liberty of asking you to write some lines on the adjoining card. [Letter from Augusta Palma, 22nd September 1904]).

Ya a la fecha en que escribo a Ud. esta carta, habrá recibido Ud. una de principios de julio en que pedía un retrato suyo para colocarlo en el escritorio. Anhelamos vivamente Valentín y yo tenerlo a la vista siempre (Carta de Matilde Brandau, 12 de agosto de 1909).

(By the date on which I am writing you this letter, you will have received another from early July in which I requested a picture of yours to put on the writing desk. Valentín and I keenly desire to have it ever before us. [Letter from Matilde Brandau, 12th August 1909]).

## 5.—*Conclusions*

The study presented here shows that research into the figure and work of Miguel de Unamuno remains a lively object of study. In this case, special interest was paid to the rich wealth of correspondence that the writer left behind and which is currently kept in the Unamuno House-Museum of the University of Salamanca, and more specifically in the letters written by women. It has been possible to confirm the interest shown by a large group of relevant women in the society of that time, in social, cultural, intellectual, political and ideological fields, in exchanging ideas with the writer through their correspondence. Among the 40 women from different parts of the world that have been identified, one can find writers like Halma Angélico, Ángela Barco, Carmen Conde Abellán, Concha Espina, Margarita Ferreras, Juana de Ibarbourou, Regina Opisso de Llorens, Mariblanca Sabas, Emilia Pardo

Bazán and Soledad Samper; women from the world of law or politics, like Clara Campoamor and Margarita Nelken; well-known educators like Matilde Brandau, Magdalena Garretas, María de Maeztu, María Luisa García Dorado Seirullo or Teresa Raveca; journalists like Carmen de Burgos, Sofía Casanova, Josefina Saravia, Josefina de la Serna and Blanca Silveira; translators like Ruzzana de Romaña or Hedwig Ollerich; and important artists, like Magda Donato, Lola Membrives, Pilar Montaner and Margarita Xirgu. The contributions of these women were undoubtedly significant in their respective professional fields in their time and still resonate today. Thus, we can talk about a confluence of generations, insofar as we have identified women belonging to the Generation of 1898, like Emilia Pardo Bazán, Concha Espina and Carmen de Burgos; to the Generation of 1915, like María de Maeztu; and the Generation of 1927, like Carmen Conde and Clara Campoamor.

However, the main contributions that this study offers are related to the content of the aforementioned letters. These reflect very valuable information from the first line to the last. On the one hand, the correspondence under study has demonstrated the degree of closeness that many of these women had to Miguel de Unamuno. These aspects could be extracted from an analysis of the opening and closing lines of the letters. Thus, we have drawn a distinction between women with a very close relationship to the writer as a result of being, in many cases, acquaintances of his; and others who, for their part, write to him from a certain distance about professional matters. This can be observed in the wide range of rapprochement tactics on display, from the most formal that they have learned at school, which reflect distance, to others which display trust. Nor do expressions that even indicate a certain degree of boldness and daring, as the authors themselves acknowledge in their letters, go unnoticed. In this regard, all of the women included in this study voice admiration and respect in their letters to Miguel de Unamuno.

On the other hand, the body of the letters has allowed us to extract results about the reasons that lead these women to address their letters to the famous writer. This is the part of the analysis which is most linked to the perspective of intersectionality described in the theoretical framework, as it is in the body of these letters where these women from the early 1900s reflect their worries, concerns, feelings, ideas, desires, aspirations, etc. The most interesting information that can be extracted is related to historical events or episodes in the life of Unamuno, like the publication of a work (his or theirs), his dismissal in 1914, his banishment in 1924, his return in 1930, the death of his wife Concha, the birth of one of his children, or the Spanish Civil War in 1936. All this contributes to the sociological perspective, as these women provide in their letters information about the social, politico-ideological, cultural and intellectual context in which they lived. Thus, the social topics addressed in these letters revolve around the problem of divorce, motherhood or the difficulties that they had to confront when plying their trade. On a cultural level, various literary topics related not only to Unamuno's publications, but to those of the women themselves, are also of interest. Theatrical and cinematic

adaptations of some of Unamuno’s works are another recurring theme, as is the translation of his works. Ideology and politics are also discussed in these letters, albeit to a lesser extent; in this case, these are mainly linked to women’s suffrage and events relating to the Spanish Civil War. As mentioned earlier, many of these women display a closeness to the writer when it comes to personal matters, such as a request for favours and advice when confronting aspects of life in which they were involved.

The analysis conducted in this research offers new insights into the figure of Miguel de Unamuno —as an intellectual, teacher, thinker, confidant, thought-provoker, reference and active interlocutor for the concerns of these relevant women in recent history— from a unique female perspective. New useful information will appear if researchers keep exploring the wide female epistolary archive that lies in the Unamuno House-Museum, yet to be exploited.

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