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Women's Friendship in Exile

*Healing in the Epistolary Correspondence between
Zenobia Camprubí and Pilar de Zubiaurre*

IKER GONZÁLEZ-ALLENDE

The epistolary correspondence between the Spanish intellectuals Zenobia Camprubí (1887–1956) and Pilar de Zubiaurre (1884–1970) from October 1938 to August 1956 reveals a long friendship that began in Madrid in the 1910s and continued during the exile that they, as supporters of the democratic Second Republic, both suffered after the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939) and the victory of dictator Francisco Franco, who ruled Spain from 1939 until his death in 1975. During exile Camprubí writes to Zubiaurre from the United States, Cuba, and Puerto Rico, while Zubiaurre responds from Mexico, where she lived the last thirty years of her life. Out of their mutual correspondence fifteen letters written by Camprubí are held in the Archives of the Museum of Fine Arts in Bilbao, Spain, while five letters written by Zubiaurre are kept in the Zenobia–Juan Ramón Jiménez Foundation, in Huelva, Spain.¹ The importance of these letters is that they illustrate the significant role that women played in exile as transmitters of information and preservers of the national culture in the communities of Spanish Republican exiles.

In this chapter I argue that both Camprubí and Zubiaurre experienced a suffering and nostalgic exile and used their epistolary correspondence as a means to cope with it. Exchanging letters contributed to healing their exilic pain in three main ways: by giving and receiving information, by asking for and offering help, and by finding comfort and consolation in difficult times. Thus, both intellectuals conveyed to each other the situation

of numerous mutual friends and the news they received from Spain. Letters also allowed them to ask favors of each other, for instance, offering advice on several issues and conveying messages to common friends. Finally, Camprubí and Zubiaurre found in each other's letters the affection needed in hard times, as shown in the references to the importance of their friendship over others. Thus, these letters demonstrate how exiled women supported each other while being away from home and found solace through their mutual friendship.

Devotion to Culture and Social Relations

Camprubí and Zubiaurre shared numerous similarities during their lifetime. Both women had great social skills and were friends with the Spanish intellectuals and artists most relevant in their time. They also participated actively in the founding and development of the Lyceum Club, the first female cultural association in Spain, created in 1926 and chaired by María de Maeztu. In the Lyceum, Camprubí acted as secretary, while Zubiaurre directed the literature section. Another resemblance between them is that they were overshadowed by their husbands' fame: the Nobel laureate Juan Ramón Jiménez and the art critic Juan de la Encina (pseudonym of Ricardo Gutiérrez Abascal), respectively. Both women devoted their time to helping advance their relatives' career: Camprubí worked tirelessly on Juan Ramón's poetry, while Zubiaurre served as the manager for her two deaf brothers' paintings. In contrast, they were unable to develop their own artistic or literary careers and barely published during their lifetime. Camprubí published a few articles, translated some works, and wrote several diaries, which were published posthumously. Zubiaurre also wrote diaries, mostly during her youth, and published under two pseudonyms some essays and stories in the Basque nationalist newspaper *Bizkaitarra* in 1909 and in the magazine *Euzko Deya* in Mexico between 1944 and 1958.²

Besides supporting their relatives' careers, both intellectuals devoted themselves to cultural and social projects, often related to children. For instance, during the Spanish Civil War Cam-

prubí and Jiménez took in twelve abandoned children, and, once in exile, they maintained contact with them, sending money so that their needs were covered. Zubiaurre also cared for children at the beginning of the war by directing an orphanage for girls, and later in Mexico she supported the education of disadvantaged children. Both Camprubí and Zubiaurre shared other characteristics typical of the women writers of Spain's so-called Generation of '98: an early love for study and culture, a tendency toward autobiographical writing, an interest in popular and intrahistoric traditions, and a deep conviction about the importance of friendships.

Friendships and social relations were indeed a pivotal component in Camprubí's and Zubiaurre's lives. Both women cultivated their friendships while in exile through numerous and long epistolary correspondences. To date, three volumes of Camprubí's letters have been published: one volume of letters to Juan Ramón Jiménez during their courtship and two volumes of letters written during her exile, addressed respectively to Graciela Palau de Nemes—student and subsequent friend of Jiménez and Camprubí and editor of Camprubí's diaries—and to Juan Guerrero Ruiz—man of letters and editor who remained in Spain after the war.³ As Gemma Mañá Delgado and her coauthors indicate, Camprubí was in charge of most of the epistolary correspondence of her household.⁴

Zubiaurre also maintained a large amount of correspondence from her youth to her death in 1970, a selection of which was published in 2014.⁵ In the 1910s and 1920s she corresponded with prominent cultural figures such as Ortega y Gasset, Gabriel Miró, Azorín, and Concha Méndez. During her exile the recipients of her letters were mostly female friends, many of whom were intellectuals and/or wives of important personalities. Among these friends were Margarita Salinas, wife of the poet Pedro Salinas; María Luisa Urgoiti, wife of Guillermo Angulo, a medical doctor; and María Martos de Baeza, wife of the translator and editor Ricardo Baeza. Zubiaurre's correspondence with Martos de Baeza spans the period 1938 to 1970 and, as with the cor-

respondence with Camprubí, illustrates how writing letters to female friends in exile was for her a great source of healing. For instance, Martos de Baeza offers emotional support to Zubiaurre when her brother Valentín dies in Spain in 1963 and she cannot attend his funeral: “Well, Pilar, I have tried to entertain you for a few minutes and to be with you in your sorrow at least by letter.”⁶

The fact that Camprubí and Zubiaurre treasured their friends’ letters until the end of their lives shows how important communication and personal relationships were to them. Letter-writing has traditionally been considered a female activity, as letters, like women, have been conventionally associated with the private and domestic sphere.⁷ Since the sixteenth century male commentators have noted that the natural and improvised style, the variety of themes, the immediacy, and the fragmentation of the letter accord particularly well with what they called women’s “spontaneous” expressiveness.⁸ Thus, the epistolary form has been labeled a “female” genre and, therefore, a less important literary form or even not “literary” at all. Olga Kenyon states that women’s letter-writing has seldom been taken seriously and has never counted as “real” writing.⁹ Additionally, if the letters were written by exiled women who barely published and were overshadowed by their relatives’ fame, as in the case of Camprubí and Zubiaurre, critics have given them little consideration.

Maintaining Continuity in Their Lives

The correspondence between Camprubí and Zubiaurre is relevant for us to gain a better understanding of the lives of Spanish Republican exiles. Camprubí’s interest in the situation of her compatriots and her need to keep connected to Spain and its people contradict the idea that she did not suffer a painful exile. Many critics have minimized Camprubí’s experience of exile. For example, Anna Caballé writes that Zenobia, in contrast to her husband, “does not show any homesickness for a country that wasn’t hers.”¹⁰ Although Camprubí’s maternal family was Puerto Rican and she received an American education and lived

part of her youth in the United States, there is no doubt that she endured a painful exile.¹¹ It is true that in her daily life Camprubí did not reveal her nostalgia, probably because, as the poet and fellow exile Ernestina de Champourcin points out, women are “very aware of the consequences that our emotional sinking can cause.”¹² In the letters to Zubiaurre, though, Camprubí expresses her wish to return to Spain, as in this one from 1946: “So many things we didn’t get to see [in Spain]! And what a longing [I feel] for flying through those roads toward them!”¹³

Zubiaurre also yearned for her native Basque Country in the north of Spain, as was apparent in the articles and stories she published in the Basque exile magazine *Euzko Deya*. In all of them she recalls the landscape, customs, and people she left behind. Zubiaurre writes her articles by traveling the routes of her memory, generally starting from an association between her Mexican present and her Basque past.¹⁴ These articles become a means to compensate for her sense of loss in exile. Nostalgia then turns into a strategy for overcoming the anxiety of separation from the native country, allowing self-exploration and understanding of one’s identity. However, in addition to this therapeutic function, nostalgia may also become a prison for the exiled person if she isolates herself without being able to appreciate the positive aspects of the host country.

In order to counteract their homesickness and keep themselves grounded in their present time, Camprubí and Zubiaurre inform each other in their letters about their lives and mutual friends’ situations. The information they convey and receive performs a healing function, since it makes them feel that they are still present in their national community and that not everything from their previous life has been lost because of their exile. Keeping updated about mutual friends provides them with a sense of continuity with their past. For this reason Camprubí’s letters give a lot of information about Spanish Republican exiles and even have a polyphonic nature, since exiles communicated to each other the news they received, read letters together, or passed letters to each other. Camprubí confirms this idea in a letter

from 1938: "From Cuba I will write to Teresa. I figure that you see each other often and I feel I am writing a collective letter."¹⁵ In fact the separation between the private and the public may disappear in the epistolary genre. In relation to this idea Claudio Guillén states that a letter written for one specific person may be read by other people or by other readers in different historical moments.¹⁶ At times the diversity of voices appears explicitly in the letter, such as when at the end of the letter Zenobia's husband adds a few closing lines, an example being, "With a lot of affection for all of you."¹⁷

The positive psychological effects of knowing the situation of mutual friends lead Camprubí to ask Zubiaurre directly about the community of exiles in Mexico. She shows a clear wish to keep alive her relationship with other exiles: "Write me soon with more news about all of you"; "Tell me things about you, your husband, your son, Ernestina, Teresa Canedo and her family, Manuela and Alfonso [Reyes], and many and many [*sic*] friends whose names no longer fit on this sheet of paper."¹⁸ Zubiaurre expresses similar feelings at the end of a letter written in 1956: "Write me soon and tell me many things about all of you."¹⁹ At other times she requests news from her friend: "I haven't heard from you, from all of you, in a century, and I would really like to hear news directly from you."²⁰ Camprubí and Zubiaurre also send each other the addresses of mutual female friends so that they can start corresponding with them as well.

In addition to giving information about herself and her family, Zubiaurre writes about the social life among Spanish exiles, describing, for example, two notable weddings.²¹ She also mentions the economic situation, careers, and life events of mutual friends: "About Ernestina, I will tell you that her poetry and soul have taken the path of a deep mysticism. [. . .] And most of the Spaniards, the Acostas, Germán Garcías, the Barnes, all are very well and earning good money."²² She tells Camprubí about the news that María Martos conveys in her letters and about the situation of Madrid when she returned to Spain for the first time, in 1955: "Madrid looks really beautiful, tidy, clean, improved.

It has grown in an incredible way and has become an industrialized city.”²³ Camprubí appreciates that Zubiaurre keeps her informed firsthand: “Every other day, here the newspapers bring news about the dissent among the Spanish refugees. So your letter giving me news about the constructive things that are being done has greatly satisfied me.”²⁴

Similarly, Camprubí conveys to Zubiaurre information about mutual exiled friends, mostly about those living in New York: “Among the fortunate ones, because they had a job, were Santullano and Paquito García Lorca, in Columbia [University] like Navarro Tomás; Isabelita G. Lorca, who taught classes at a high school in New Jersey; Fernando de los Ríos, as a professor at the Institute of Intellectual Cooperation.”²⁵ Camprubí also informs Zubiaurre about visits of Mexican intellectuals, such as Alfonso Reyes, and about news of American friends, such as the educator Susan Huntington.

Help as a Means of Support

The second way this epistolary correspondence produces healing effects in Camprubí and Zubiaurre is by allowing them to do favors for each other. Letters were a means of asking for help and advice in difficult times, and the two correspondents felt they could rely on each other. Offering help could bring about positive effects, not only by increasing their own feelings of usefulness but also by making their friendship stronger.

During her exile Camprubí used correspondence to ask friends for help, as is apparent in her letters to Guerrero Ruiz and Palau de Nemes, which were full of requests, such as for the delivery of materials and the sale of objects. In the letters to Zubiaurre she asks her to send messages to mutual friends, requesting her to tell Champourcin, for instance, that she had already answered her letter. She also asks Zubiaurre to give her regards to the Spanish exiles in Mexico. On other occasions the favor consists of requests for the shipment of books: “This is to ask you for a big favor, which is that you mail to Juan Guerrero Ruiz, Square Gabriel Miró 5, Alfonso Reyes’s latest book and all the interesting

Mexican magazines that talk about the arrival of our group.”²⁶ This quotation reveals the important role that women like Camprubí performed to connect the communities of exiles with Spain.

In Zubiaurre’s letters there are also a few requests for advice and help. For instance, she asks Camprubí about her experience selling handcrafted Spanish objects because she and a friend are thinking of starting this type of business in Mexico. On another occasion Zubiaurre shares with Camprubí her plans to organize in the United States an exhibition of her brother Valentín’s paintings and reminds her of her offer of help: “So once I do something here, I will rely on your offer and goodwill, which I highly appreciate, and will write you in hopes that, with everybody’s help, we can achieve something that leads us to success.”²⁷

Indeed, Camprubí truly cared for her friends and fellow exiles and did her best to improve their situation. Thus, although not always with positive results, Camprubí makes an effort to get entry permits to the United States for Spanish exiles who remain in Europe: “I receive quite frequently S.O.S. from France and England and I try to help them the best I can, but I’m afraid that my arrangements are not very satisfactory due to the complexities between one country and another.”²⁸ In addition, she tries to help exiles’ economic situation by inviting them to give talks at universities in Cuba and Florida. She proposes this possibility to Zubiaurre’s husband in 1938: “What do you think of a visit to La Habana for Christmas if the Hispanic-Cuban Institute invites Juan de la Encina to give a presentation? They pay \$100 per conference and, I believe, \$150 for traveling expenses.”²⁹ Zubiaurre eagerly received this invitation: “That probability of meeting again gives us great pleasure and, of course, Ricardo would gladly accept going to La Habana to give a series of presentations.”³⁰ Two years later Camprubí asks Zubiaurre for the names of Spanish exiles who can speak English to invite them to give talks in Miami. Besides helping them economically, Camprubí’s objective with these invitations was to enjoy again the company of the compatriots who were far away from her.

Comfort in Difficult Times

The unconditional support and consolation that Camprubí and Zubiaurre found in each other's letters helped them cope with exile. Letters may allow exiles to momentarily forget the suffering and difficulties they are facing in the host nation.³¹ In this sense the oral component of many letters plays an important role in making the correspondents feel they are closer to and understand each other. For this reason letters have traditionally been related to dialogues. For Liz Stanley, letters are dialogic, while Janet Altman considers them to be a dialogue formed by monologues.³² Camprubí follows this conception of the epistolary genre when on several occasions she equates the writing of her letters with a talk: "I am now ready to chat by letter with you"; "I have talked my ears off and I wish it were true."³³ Zubiaurre expresses a similar idea in her first letter: "Your pleasing letter has resumed our suspended, hardly started, talks in New York."³⁴

In addition to orality Camprubí and Zubiaurre use other strategies to make themselves more present to each other, such as mentioning when they are writing and relating their experience of reading each other's letters. Esther Milne has studied how letters and other kinds of interpersonal communication can convey a sense of immediacy, intimacy, and presence. References to the physical body, the moment of writing, the medium that carries the letter, that is, the "here" and "now" of corporeality, help the correspondents collapse the time and distance that separate them.³⁵ For instance, Camprubí mentions the circumstances when she has to stop writing her letter: "New interruption and now I am writing you at dusk, after going for a long walk on a new road by the pine woods."³⁶ Both correspondents also indicate their happiness when they receive and read each other's letters. Zubiaurre expresses her joy this way: "You can't imagine how happy I was when I saw your handwriting and read your letter with so much news which I wanted to hear from you firsthand."³⁷ Camprubí displays the

same feeling: "As soon as I see your handwriting on an envelope and under the Mexican stamps, my heart jumps a little, full with memories."³⁸ These expressions reinforce their mutual friendship because they confirm how important they are to each other.

Both women tend to emphasize how valuable their friendship is to them. Thus, Camprubí writes that her relationship has priority over others: "The first letter of the new year has to be for you."³⁹ She also states that she thinks of her on special holidays, even though she hasn't sent her a letter. Zubiaurre makes references to their past together, underlining how long their friendship has existed: "I see you with the same energy and joy of living as when I used to see you in the living room of your apartment on the Castilian's Mall."⁴⁰

The correspondence allowed both intellectuals to share their hardships and difficult times and find in each other the emotional support of a good and understanding listener. For example, Camprubí appreciates her friend's words when her brother dies: "You are right about imagining how hard it has been for me to lose my brother José. I loved him so dearly, and he so loved us, that it seems like a part of myself has died."⁴¹ She also describes the illnesses and deaths of mutual friends such as Susan Huntington and Irene Lewisohn and mentions her husband's health problems and her own cancer: "I know you know how sick J.R. was, how I wandered all over like a lost soul searching for his recovery [. . .], [and] all of the sudden, I was hit. I flew to the Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston the day after J.R. turned 70, my surgery was successful."⁴² Under these circumstances, in several of her letters Zubiaurre encourages Camprubí in her recovery: "[T]his is a great sign of your vitality, and I hope that this will have a great influence on overcoming your physical problems"; "You haven't told me anything about how you're feeling after everything you went through. But in you, spirit always overcomes matter."⁴³

Likewise, Zubiaurre opens up to her friend and tells her about her worries and sufferings. In a letter from 1946 she discusses

her tight economic situation and the uncertainty of her life in Mexico: "always in an unresolved situation and spirit, which has caused that years have gone by and we are still living in a temporary way."⁴⁴ In 1956, once she returns from her visit to Spain, she narrates to Camprubí her homesickness and painful separation from her brothers: "Here I felt my readaptation enormously and I am still very far from being well and not in the mood for writing or doing anything. [. . .] In Madrid I was often with my brothers, but the separation from them was very painful when I left."⁴⁵ She also mentions her health problems: "I was quite fed up with one thousand annoying things that happened to me. Now I am following a treatment based on a preparation of cortisone."⁴⁶ By sharing their inner feelings and receiving each other's consolation, Camprubí and Zubiaurre's epistolary correspondence has a healing effect on both.

Furthermore, just writing about their hardships could have been therapeutic for both intellectuals, since putting down one's thoughts offers the possibility of introspection and self-reflection. In this regard José María Naharro-Calderón has pointed out that writing in exile has a therapeutic function.⁴⁷ For Michael Ugarte exile means a symbolic death, whereas autobiographical writing in exile constitutes a rebirth.⁴⁸ In this sense Camprubí and Zubiaurre's letters, as autobiographical texts, can also be considered products of scriptotherapy—the process of writing out and writing through a traumatic experience in the mode of therapeutic reenactment. Suzette Henke proposes that autobiography has the potential to be scriptotherapy because it "generates a healing narrative that temporarily restores the fragmented self to an empowered position of psychological agency."⁴⁹ Writing and receiving letters allowed Camprubí and Zubiaurre to share their pain openly with each other and receive the solace of empathy.

In this epistolary correspondence Camprubí expressed many times her wish to visit Zubiaurre in Mexico, while Zubiaurre tried to convince her to do so by describing Mexican landscapes where Camprubí and Jiménez could live. However, this visit

never took place because Juan Ramón Jiménez did not want to travel to Mexico due to its high altitude. After Camprubí's death in 1956, Zubiaurre published an article about her in *Euzko Deya* in 1958, remembering the first time they met, her "luminous smile," and her "musical, happy and frisky voice."⁵⁰ This was the end of a long friendship between two female intellectuals who, despite not seeing each other in person for almost twenty years, kept in contact from their multiple locations until their deaths. Their epistolary correspondence helped them cope with the difficult circumstances of exile. Through their letters, they were informed about their mutual friends, helped each other, and found comfort and empathy.

Notes

1. For my previously published analysis of these letters by Camprubí, see González-Allende, "Hermandad femenina en el exilio."
2. Zubiaurre, *Evocaciones*.
3. In 2017 the letters Camprubí exchanged with Olga Bauer were also published for the first time.
4. Mañá Delgado et al., *La voz de los naufragos*, 156.
5. Unless otherwise noted, all quotations from Camprubí and Zubiaurre's letters come from Zubiaurre, *Epistolario de Pilar de Zubiaurre (1906–1970)*. All the translations of the quotations from their original Spanish are mine.
6. González-Allende, "Women's Exile and Transatlantic Epistolary Ties," 217. After Martos de Baeza's exile in Argentina, her letters to Zubiaurre from Madrid show her dedication to helping returning exiles adapt to their new life in Spain. She also made a great effort to make the work and achievements of exiles recognized in Spain. González-Allende, "De retornos incompletos," 176–77.
7. Jolly, *In Love and Struggle*, 82.
8. Earle, *Epistolary Selves*, 6.
9. Kenyon, *800 Years of Women's Letters*, xiii.
10. Caballé, "Pasé la mañana escribiendo," 64 (my translation).
11. Camprubí, *Diario de juventud*.
12. Champourcin, *La ardilla y la rosa*, 133 (my translation).
13. Zubiaurre, *Epistolario*, 248.
14. González-Allende, "Pilar de Zubiaurre," 63.
15. Zubiaurre, *Epistolario*, 227.
16. Guillén, "El pacto epistolar," 90.
17. Zubiaurre, *Epistolario*, 248.
18. Zubiaurre, *Epistolario*, 245, 253.

19. Zubiaurre, *Epistolario*, 264.
20. Zubiaurre, *Epistolario*, 263.
21. Zubiaurre, *Epistolario*, 258.
22. Zubiaurre, *Epistolario*, 261.
23. Zubiaurre, *Epistolario*, 264.
24. Zubiaurre, *Epistolario*, 228.
25. Zubiaurre, *Epistolario*, 234–35.
26. Zubiaurre, *Epistolario*, 226–27.
27. Zubiaurre, *Epistolario*, 258.
28. Zubiaurre, *Epistolario*, 235.
29. Zubiaurre, *Epistolario*, 225.
30. Zubiaurre, *Epistolario*, 256.
31. Bou, “Defensa de la voz epistolar,” 39.
32. Stanley, “The Epistolarium,” 202; Altman, *Epistolarity*, 135.
33. Zubiaurre, *Epistolario*, 231, 242.
34. Zubiaurre, *Epistolario*, 256.
35. Milne, *Letters, Postcards, Email*, 14–15.
36. Zubiaurre, *Epistolario*, 238.
37. Zubiaurre, *Epistolario*, 259.
38. Zubiaurre, *Epistolario*, 243.
39. Zubiaurre, *Epistolario*, 245.
40. Zubiaurre, *Epistolario*, 259.
41. Zubiaurre, *Epistolario*, 241.
42. Zubiaurre, *Epistolario*, 251.
43. Zubiaurre, *Epistolario*, 259, 262.
44. Zubiaurre, *Epistolario*, 257.
45. Zubiaurre, *Epistolario*, 263.
46. Zubiaurre, *Epistolario*, 262.
47. Naharro-Calderón, *Entre el exilio y el interior*, 48.
48. Ugarte, *Shifting Ground*, 89.
49. Henke, *Shattered Subjects*, xvi.
50. Zubiaurre, *Evocaciones*, 207 (my translation).

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Art from Trauma

GENOCIDE AND HEALING BEYOND RWANDA

Edited and with an introduction by
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Foreword by Patricia A. Simpson

University of Nebraska Press
Lincoln

