RAMÓN: The Papers of Ramón Gómez de la Serna at the University of Pittsburgh

Exhibition Fall 2013
University of Pittsburgh Library System
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In collaboration with the Digital Research Library, the Special Collections Department has recently digitized the majority of the Ramón Gómez de la Serna Papers and made them available online. This project has created free and open access to the legacy of one of the most innovative literary figures in Spanish literature of the 20th century. To celebrate this occasion, an exhibition has been created in the Special Collections reading room with displays highlighting Ramón’s unique personality and prolific literary creations.

**Exhibit Case I:**
Biographical Material and Photographs of Ramón

1. **Ramón In His Study With Lifesize Doll**
   Digital Reproduction of Original
   RGS 3-2

2. **Ramón In His Study**
   Digital Reproduction of Original
   RGS 3-2

3. **Portrait by Daniel Vázquez Díaz,** unknown date
   RGS 3-6

4. **Ramón and Others**

   Pierre Henri Cami, Pitigrilli, Ramón, and Massimo Bontempelli, all members of the *French Academy of Humor.*
   From left to right: Pierre Cami (French Humourist), Ramón, Pitigrilli (Italian journalist and novelist), and Massimo Bontempelli (Italian poet, playwright, novelist and composer), undated.

   RGS 3-3
5. Ramón
Original and Print from Online Image

RGS 3-1

6. Ramón and Luisa Sofovich, 1949
Original and Print from Online Image

RGS 3-4

7. “First Photograph of Ramón and Luisita,”
Buenos Aires, 1931

RGS 3-4

8. Ramón and Luisa Sofovich, January 1955
Original and Print from Online Image

RGS 3-4

9. ID Card (Argentina) and Passport (Spain), 1936 and 1958

RGS 1-3

10. "El postal": First Book Authored by Ramón, 1902

Ramón’s inscription reads:
“Published in 1902 at the age of 14.
The important thing was to produce 20 copies of each issue for all subscribers.”

RGS 1-5
11. “Ramón dedicado a la alquimia de los Greguerías,”
Original Clipping and Print of Online Image,
unknown date and artist

RGS 3-7

12. Print of Solana’s Painting
“La tertulia del café de Pombo,” 1920

13. “Inefable Ramón,” Clipping,
unknown date and source

RGS 1-13

14. Máximo San Juan, “Regalo a Ramón,” Clipping,
unknown date and source

RGS 1-13

15. Manuel Alcantara, “Un sistema planetario llamado Ramón,”
Clipping, unknown date and source

RGS 2-2

**Exhibit Case II:**

**Greguerías**

As expected, Ramón's papers comprise a wide range of materials documenting his creative work, research, and interest in greguerías, including his own drawings to illustrate greguerías, anthologies of phrases and sayings in related style selected from a wide range of authors, his notes and
explorations into associated subject areas such as humor and the metaphor, and much more. Shown here are a few samples.

RGS 3-11

17. "Nueva explicación de las greguerías"
RGS 3-12

18. Clippings of Humoristic Sayings

19. "Greguerías ilustradas,"
Originals and Prints from Online Images
RGS 4-3

20. "Gregues:" Compilation of Phrases from a Range of Authors,
Originals and Prints from Online Images
Quotes by Charles Dickens, Don Herlod, and William Osler, Jean Cocteau, Hans Arp, and others. And a riddle about “tirabuzón” (corkscrew).
RGS 4-4

21. Clippings of Ramón’s Published Greguerías
from ABC, undated
RR 4-13

22. "Nuevas greguerías: Inéditas en libro,"
Typescript, 1958-1959
RGS 5-5
23. *Annotated Published Greguería Clippings*,
unknown source and date

RGS 5-9

**Exhibit Case II:**

**Novels**

*Published Short Stories*

24. *Aquella Novela*, Madrid, 1924

RGS 6-2

25. *El turco de los nardos*, Buenos Aires, 1941

RGS 6-20

**Hombre de alambre**

Drafts, fragments, and notes for the until recently unpublished novel *El Hombre de alambre* illustrating the early stages of Ramón’s creative process. Most of the drafts form a complete narrative or dialogue in themselves but the linking material and the development of the novel as a whole are still lacking. The central character is an old and lonely emigrant whose personality is constructed through the metaphor of wire. Disillusioned, he metaphorically transforms his essential being into wires in order to make himself immune to sorrow. As death approaches, he begins an interior dialogue in which he finds the meaning of life and reconciles himself both to himself and to the idea of death, finally dying in a state of peace.

26. "*Asaltante,*"

Original Cover and Manuscript

RGS 7-7
27. "El hombre que fue una S de hierro,"
Original Cover and Manuscript
RGS 7-11

Los muertos

The manuscripts and clippings comprised in this section were most likely compiled in preparation for the novel Los muertos y las muertas (Espasa Calpe, 1961, Madrid, 3rd ed.), representing reflections on death with a mixture of wit, anguish and stoicism, providing an interesting addition to the author’s frequent treatment of the theme. Most of the notes probably belong to the mid and late 1950s, though some are earlier and several might have been written in the last two or three years of his life.

28. "Muertos (archivado)," Manuscripts
RGS 7-22

El corral del matarife

These are fragments for a novel or short story entitled “El matarife” that was never completed. About half of the fragments can be placed with certainty in the author’s period in Buenos Aires. The story is a piece of expressive, often macabre realism set in a Castilian village where the local butcher is found to have committed several atrocious murders. There are partial sketches of two village characters, of a coalman who has converted a palace into a coal shed, of the slaughterer’s yard contrasting against the otherwise peaceful setting, and a piece on public executions.

29. "El artesonado de la carbonería,"
Manuscript
RGS 8-9
Toros–Páramo

The theme of these notes and manuscripts is an exaltation of the bullfight, which is justified in terms of heroism, tragic catharsis, and religious symbolism. Noticeable is an implicit Spanish patriotic attitude, adding a forced, exaggerated tone. The material for the novel *El torero Páramo* represents an attempt at a continuation of *El torero Caracho* (1926), at the end of which Páramo appeared as the promising new matador. He has developed mystical tendencies and saintly habits and wished to retire and devote himself to the priesthood. The Catholic tone of ascetic renunciation contrasts strongly with the earlier novel.

30. **Loose Notes**  
RGS 8-16

31. **"Tarde de toros"**  
RGS 8-18

Las tres gracias

This display features handwritten drafts for the novel *Las tres gracias* (novela madrileña de invierno), published by Editorial Perseo, Madrid in 1949.

32. **Original Cover**  
RGS 8-25

33. **"Preludio"**  
RGS 8-26
Exhibit Case IV:

Essays and Articles

Zoo

This section contains impressions about the zoo and its animals both in form of manuscripts and clippings of published articles by the author. Many of the drafts are narrative fragments for the chapter of a novel to be set in a zoo. This proposed novel is entitled *Vida, pasión y muerte de un humorista*. Listed among Ramón’s works as early as 1923, it was never published and it seems he was still working on it in the 1950s, although most of the material here is probably earlier. Some of it was also destined for another chapter in which the protagonist “Ramón” investigates the world of fish and includes a humorous, fantastic episode involving his own pet goldfish. It is possible that the plans for the novel had been abandoned and the material was then consolidated to eventually produce a book on the zoo.

34. Loose Notes: "Pez"
RGS 9-9

35. "Paseos por el zoo"
RGS 9-12

36. “En el zoo,” Clipping
from *Temas*, September 1955
RGS 9-24
38. "Diálogo máscara"

"Diálogo máscara" takes the form of a poetically imaginative and witty dialogue between Ramón and a masked woman ("El" and "Yo" respectively). The first half is in Luisa Sofovich's hand, the latter in Ramón's. It may be a collaboration, although the piece is stylistically homogeneous.

RGS 10-6

39. "Li-Tai-Poh y la poesía chino-japonesa"

RGS 10-11


RGS 10-19

41. "Mi corbata serpentiente," Clipping, unknown date and source

RGS 10-18
Teatro

Besides a few general ideas on the theatre, Ramón created mainly notes, sketches, and occasional pieces of dialogue for plays that were apparently never written.

42. "Jardín del Eden," Comedia
RGS 11-6

43. "Proyectos obras"
RGS 11-7

Buenos Aires

These manuscripts contain impressions of Buenos Aires, possibly in preparation for a new or enlarged edition of Explicación de Buenos Aires, which first appeared in Madrid in 1950, and fragments of which were included in Luisa Sofovich's Ramón Gómez de la Serna (Ediciones Culturales Argentinas, 1962). Featured are published clippings that reflect an optimistic, picturesque impressionism; and Ramón's manuscript notes that, for the most part, reveal some disillusionment and distaste for an immoral and materialistic environment.

44. "Buenos Aires," Manuscripts
RGS 12-12

45. "Temario: 'Bancos de flores'," Manuscripts and Clippings
RGS 12-18
Manuscript and Clippings
RGS 12-19

47. "Prólogo a Explicación de Buenos Aires,"
Manuscript
RGS 13-04

Exhibit Case VI:

Essays and Articles

Romanticismo

Gathered here are documents, graphic materials, clippings of Ramón’s own articles on the literary and social movement of Romanticism: Article clippings and notes on José de Espronceda, "Fígaro" (Mariano José de Larra), and Don Juan.

Article Clippings and Some Notes on José de Espronceda
RGS 14-12

49. "Fígaro" (Mariano José de Larra),
Article Clippings, Notes, and Manuscript Drafts on Figaro
RGS 15-01
**Temas diferentes**

Here are notes for Ramón's newspaper articles dealing with a variety of subjects including clocks and time, teddy bears, and ‘Sunday’. Notes on any one subject may be the result of an accumulation over a period of ten years or more.

50. "Relojes y tiempo"
RGS 16-09

51. "Domingo"
RGS 16-18

52. "Osos de los niños"
RGS 16-24

**Sobre novela y novela corta y cuento**

These notes contain ideas either not included in or subsequent to the publication of the essay “Novelismo” in *Ismoa* (2nd ed. Buenos Aires, 1947), reflecting Ramón’s conception of the novel and short story.

53. “Ideas sobre la novela,” Original Cover and Manuscript
RGS 17-01

54. “El cuento”
RGS 17-08
Ramón describes the caprichos represented here in subheadings as surreal, absurd, humorous, and terrifying. Most of them are in form of brief notes; others are longer pieces on manuscript pages. Apparently, some of the caprichos were originally intended for inclusion in the novel *El hombre perdido*.

55. "Caprichos para España"
RGS 18-03

56. "Caprichos surrealistas"
RGS 18-08

Exhibit Case VII:

Essays and Articles

*Futuros ensayos*

Ramón’s notes reveal critical commentaries on the modern world: the corruptive and false illusion of the cinema exposing the secret aspirations of society; the truck as an image for the machine culture as well as the revolutionary violence of the workers; airplanes and cars and a modern obsession with speed and travel divert man from his true spiritual nature; banks ought to modify their structure in order to end exploitation.

57. "Cine," Manuscript
RGS 20-1
58. "Cultura del camión," Manuscript
RGS 20-2

RGS 20-3

60. "Bancos," Manuscript
RGS 20-6

_Tiempo y reloj_

These notes, fragments, and clippings are discussing the topics of time and time-keeping.

61. “Tiempo y reloj”
RGS 21-09

_España_

These notes discuss the eternal, unchanging character of the country, with its spiritual wealth despite—or rather because of—its poverty and sobriety, and Spain’s relationship with Latin America.

62. “Repetición de España”
RGS 23-4
63. "España y América/España y los Españoles"
RGS 25-5

64. "Dios"
A small excerpt of Ramón’s extensive notes on God and many related aspects of the Christian belief system such as the Devil, Hell and Heaven, Jesus, and the Bible.
RGS 26-24

"Diccionario Manual"
These cards appear to be a private working thesaurus compiled by Ramón showing his interest in and concern for language, and the picturesque and expressive richness of words. Usually, each card has on one side handwritten word lists and on the other pasted clippings of sayings, anecdotes, brief articles, or similar published texts.

65.-68. RGS 37-3, 37-5, 37-8, and 37-12

Flat Exhibit Case I:

Correspondence

69. Letter to Ernesto Bustamante, July 13, 1953
RGS 39-2

70. Letter from Camilo José Cela, April 19, 1957
RGS 39-5
71. **Letter from Alberto Hidalgo**, June 21, 1926

Written on a clipping of the *Revista Oral* featuring Hidalgo’s poem “Ubicación de Lenin” on the reverse.

RGS 39-6

72. **Letter from Macedonio Fernández**, February 1, 1932

RGS 34-11

73. **Letter and Dedication by Jean Cocteau**, Christmas 1959 and July 1923

RGS 39-6

74. **Letter by Enrique Jardiel Poncela**, July 19, 1938

RGS 39-6

75. **Letter by Rafael Sánchez Mazas**, March 12, 1940

Spanish nationalist writer and a leader of the Falange, a right-wing political movement created in Spain before the Spanish Civil War

RGS 39-6

**Flat Exhibit Case II:**

**Drawings & Clippings**

76. **Drawing of Ramón by Antonio Casero**, undated

RGS 39-8
77. Drawing and Quote by Uruguayan Painter and Artist Rafael Barradas, 1921

RGS 39-8

78. “Menu,” Colored Pencil Drawing by Unknown Artist, August 30, 1941

RGS 39-8


RGS 45-9

80. “Por aqui se va a Ramón,” Clipping, ABC, January 31, 1968

RGS 45-6