**Cernuda, Luis (1902-1963)**

Luis Cernuda was one of the most talented poets of twentieth-century Spain. He belonged to the literary group GENERACIÓN DEL 27, but unlike his contemporaries, FEDERICO GARCÍA LORCA, RAFAEL ALBERTI, JORGE GUILLÉN, VICENTE ALEIXANDRE, and PEDRO SALINAS, did not receive recognition until after his death. Cernuda’s complete poems, *La realidad y el deseo* [*Reality and Desire*], published in 1936 and expanded in 1958 and 1964, constitutes, according to critic Derek Harris, a poetic autobiography that expresses the conflict between the poet’s personal aspirations and desires and objective reality. Cernuda was solitary and melancholic in character and felt the inhibitions and controls imposed by society especially keenly because of his openly homosexual inclinations. Alienated from Spain, Cernuda went into exile in 1938 and would never return to his country. Cernuda’s most successful poems were written under the spell of French SURREALISM and his poetry in general owed more to European and American authors (Hölderlin, Nerval, Wordsworth, T.S Eliot, Yeats) than to the folkloric traditions of his native Andalusia. Consequently, many consider Cernuda the least Spanish of Spanish poets.

Born in Seville, Cernuda studied law and literature at its university. There he met Pedro Salinas who became his mentor and encouraged him to pursue writing. In 1927 he published his first book of poems, *Perfil del aire* [*The Air in Profile*]—a vaguely symbolist work in the manner of JORGE GUILLÉN’s verse and Juan Ramón Jiménez’s “poesía pura” [pure poetry].

In September of 1928 he left Seville for Madrid and travelled to France a few months later, where he discovered SURREALISM, the strongest influence on his next two poetry collections, *Un río, un amor* [*A River, A Love*] (1929) and *Los placeres prohibidos* [*Forbidden Pleasures*] (1931). Surrealism provided Cernuda with the means to insert his personal rebellion into a more general strategy of subversion. In spite of its title, *A River, A Love* is not about love, but reflects on the absurdity of the world and expresses the longing for a lost paradise. In contrast, *Forbidden Pleasures,* a vindication of homoerotic love, espouses an aggressively erotic tone.

In 1934, Cernuda published *Donde habite el olvido* [*Where Forgetfulness Dwells*], in which he downplayed avant-garde techniques and began to dialogue with Romantic poet Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer. Cernuda’s next volume, *Invocaciones* [*Invocations*] (1935) continued to explore Romanticism, inspired by the romantic stance of sublime loneliness in Hölderlin and Nerval. Shortly after the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, Cernuda, who had been a supporter of the Republicans, went into exile in 1938. During his nine-year stay as a teacher in England and Scotland he wrote *Las nubes* [*Clouds*] (1940), expression of his exilic despair. In 1947 he immigrated to the United States and settled in Mexico five years later. He died of a heart attack in Mexico City in1963.

Cernuda, L. (1993) *Poesía Completa*. Vol. 1. Madrid: Siruela.

Paratextual Materials:

[www.cernuda.org](http://www.cernuda.org): a website created by the Residencia de Estudiantes. It features a biography of the poet, photographs, and voice recordings of the poems. (available in Spanish and English)

List of Recommended Works:

Harris, D. (1992) *La poesía de Luis Cernuda*, Granada: Universidad de Granada.

Paz, O. (1965) *Cuadrivio. Darío, López Velarde, Pessoa, Cernuda*, México City: Joaquín Mortiz

Silver, P. (1996) *Luis Cernuda el poeta en su leyenda*, Madrid: Castalia.

**Timeline of Life**

**1882 1928-9 1938 1947 1952 1963**

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born Teaches in France Exile in England Moves to U.S Settles in Mexico dies of a

heart attack

**Timeline of Works Published During Lifetime**

**1927 1929 1931 1934 1936**

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*Perfil del aire Un río, un amor Los placeres prohibidos Donde habite el olvido La realidad y le deseo*

[*The air in Profile*][*A River, A Love*][*Forbidden Pleasures*] *Where Forgetfulness Dwells*][*Reality and Desire*]

**1940 1942 1947 1949 1952**

| | | | |

*Las nubes Ocnos Como quien espera el alba Vivir sin estar viviendo Variaciones sobre tema mexicano*

[*Clouds*] [*As One Awaiting Dawn*] [*Living Without Being Alive*] [*Variations on a Mexican Theme*]

**1956 1958**

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*Con las horas contadas Desolación de la quimera*

[*Time Meted Out*] [*The Chimera’s Despair*]