Pedro Salinas (1891-1951)

Pedro Salinas was a poet, an essayist and a playwright. Known as the poet of love of the Generation of ‘27, and the senior member of the group, he spent most of his life teaching in universities. He obtained his PhD from the Sorbonne, where he also lectured for several years, specializing in Marcel Proust, whose work he would translate into Spanish. His extensive academic career started at the University of Seville in 1918. It was during his years in Seville that he met Luis Cernuda, on whom he would exert great influence and who would also become a member of the Generation of ‘27. After teaching in Cambridge University and in the University of Murcia, he started working at the University of Madrid in 1926, where he founded a literary magazine called *Índice literario* [*Literary Index*]. In 1933, the Spanish Republican Government appointed him Secretary General of the Universidad Menéndez Pelayo.

Salinas got married to Margarita Bonmatí Botella in 1915. For years he wrote a daily love letter to her; this correspondence would later be published by their daughter under the title *Cartas de amor a Margarita* [*Love Letters to Margarita*](1912-1915). In 1932, while teaching at the University of Salamanca, he met Katherine R. Whitmore, a North American student with whom he had a fifteen-year long affair. It is to Katherine that he dedicated his poetic trilogy *La voz a ti debida* [*My Voice Because of You*] (1933)*,* *Razón de amor* [*Love’s Reason*](1936) and *Largo lamento* [*Long Lament*](1939). This trilogy is considered to be his highest poetic achievement.

His poetry has traditionally been divided in three periods: the initial period (1923-1932), the love period or plenitude period (1933-1939), and the exile period (1940-1951). The work produced during the initial period is marked by the influence of the pure poetry of Juan Ramón Jiménez and the avant-garde movements, particularly futurism and *ultraismo*. Salina’s himself, as well as most critics, considered *Presagios* [*Omens*] (1924) his best work of those years. *La voz a ti debida*, on the other hand,is usually considered the best book of poems from his love period. His most representative work from the exile period is *El contemplado* [*The Contemplated*](1946), dedicated to the sea of Puerto Rico, where he stayed for three years teaching at the Universidad de Río Piedra. Salinas’ wish to be buried in Puerto Rico shows the affection he felt for this country.

In 1936, Pedro Salinas, together with his wife, left Spain for the United States to teach at Wellesley College, where he was offered a position before the war broke out. He then taught at the John Hopkins University; he continued teaching there until his death in 1951, with the exception of the aforementioned three-year stay (1943-1946) in Puerto Rico.

Salinas’ theatrical plays were mostly written in exile, between 1936 and 1947, but he is mostly known for his poetic and academic work.

His work as a literary critic, widely respected, spreads throughout his career; some of his best known works are *Literatura española siglo XX* [*Spanish Literature of the XX Century*] (1940), *Jorge Manrique o tradición y originalidad* [*Jorge Manrique or Tradition and Originality*](1947) and *La poesía de Rubén Darío* [*The poetry of Rubén Darío*](1948).

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