

## INTRODUCTION

This book analyses the questions of aesthetics, gender and sexuality as they are addressed in Luis Cernuda's last four books of poetry—*Como quien espera el alba*, *Vivir sin estar viviendo*, *Con las horas contadas* and *Desolación de la Quimera*—and has three main objectives: firstly, to offer new readings of subjects that are well established within Cernuda criticism, such as the figure of the poet, mythology, the Absolute, nature, and the divine; secondly, to focus on the questions of male homosexuality and the sublime to which Cernuda's critics have directed little sustained attention; and, thirdly, to introduce into the secondary literature on Cernuda's work the issues of gender, sexuality and perversion with which critics have not engaged at all. In developing my arguments, I draw on four principal bodies of theoretical knowledge: aesthetics, feminism, gay and lesbian theory, and psychoanalysis. Almost entirely, these bodies of knowledge are either wholly new within Cernuda criticism or have never been used extensively by Cernuda's critics. In addressing a number of different issues and using a variety of theoretical approaches, I have taken my cue from Salvador Jiménez-Fajardo who, in 1989, recommended that critical work on Cernuda should use a 'variety of analytical instruments' and elucidate areas of Cernuda's work that still remain in obscurity.<sup>1</sup>

I have chosen Cernuda's last four collections of poetry because they occupy such contrasting positions within Cernuda criticism. On the one hand, critics tend to consider *Como quien espera el alba* and *Desolación de la Quimera* to be two of Cernuda's most significant books, while, on the other, *Vivir sin estar viviendo* and *Con las horas contadas* are generally held to be less important. Two years after *Desolación de la Quimera* first appeared, Elisabeth Müller analysed the treatment of art and poetry in it. More recently, in 1984, Luis Antonio de Villena published a critical edition of *Desolación de la Quimera*, while, in the late 1980s, Manuel Ulacia and John C. Wilcox wrote articles on one of the poems collected in it, 'Luis de Baviera escucha *Lohengrin*'.<sup>2</sup> For its part, *Como quien espera el alba* contains many of Cernuda's most analysed poems, including 'La familia', 'A un poeta futuro', and 'Noche del hombre y su demonio', and was recently the subject of a monograph by M<sup>a</sup> Victoria Utrera.<sup>3</sup> In his 1978 study, Salvador Jiménez-Fajardo dedicated twenty-six pages to *Como quien espera el alba* compared with just nineteen pages on *Vivir sin estar viviendo* and seventeen on *Con las horas contadas*.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, in his 1982 book, Luis Maristany discussed *Vivir sin estar viviendo* and *Con las horas contadas* in three pages each compared with five on *Como quien espera el alba* and four on *Desolación de la*

*Quimera*.<sup>5</sup> In studying these four books together, therefore, I intend to reinterpret two of Cernuda's most canonical poetic collections and to stimulate critical interest in two of his supposedly more marginal books of poetry.

Many of Cernuda's critics have examined the links between Cernuda's biography (including his 'leyenda') and his poetry, and this is one reason why a chronological approach to Cernuda's work is standard practice.<sup>6</sup> In contrast, I do not interpret Cernuda's last four books of poetry (auto)biographically nor do I analyse them chronologically. My purpose in severing the tie between Cernuda's life and work in these ways is to create a space for new readings of his later poetry that will lead to the knot between his life and text being retied differently. As part of my attempt to refocus Cernuda criticism, I have also tended not to address questions of poetic form, which are an integral part of the study of the relation between Cernuda's life and poetry and have already been the subject of much critical attention.<sup>7</sup>

In my first chapter, I shed new light on Cernuda's discussions of the figure of the poet and poetry through an analysis of the ideas about mythology developed by the German Romantic writer Friedrich Schlegel. Despite my use of Schlegel's work, my approach in this chapter is not literary historical. Consequently, I do not seek to argue that Cernuda was influenced by or sought to develop Schlegel's ideas nor do I engage with the debate about Cernuda's relation to Romanticism and the figures of the 'poeta maldito' and 'poeta moderno'. Rather, in this chapter, I argue that Cernuda's last four books of poetry construct a collectively valid mythology of freedom in an attempt to bring about change in the then contemporary historical present.

In his 'Talk on Mythology', Schlegel defined mythology in two contradictory ways. On the one hand, he argued that mythology could represent the infinite totality of nature and freedom, the Absolute. On the other hand, he claimed that mythology gave form to the sublime, to that which marked the failure to represent the Absolute and, through the experience of that failure, aroused in the subject a sense of his freedom. Both these strands of thought can be found in the secondary literature on Cernuda's poetry. It has long been recognized by critics that the representation of the Absolute is central to Cernuda's poetics. For example, Philip Silver has argued that, for Cernuda, poetry is a 'quest for permanence' motivated by the poet's desire to be reunited with nature.<sup>8</sup> In writing poetry, according to Silver in the same book, Cernuda seeks to make the ephemeral permanent (p. 166) and to 'perceive the unity of the universe' (p. 180). Similarly, Derek Harris has argued that poetry's interrelated aims are to 'unite the divided visible and invisible realities in the world' and to 'halt the flux of time'.<sup>9</sup> At the same time, there has existed within Cernuda criticism an

awareness of the difficulty of these poetic projects. For example, in *'Et in Arcadia Ego'*, Silver describes the poet's goal of 'bestow[ing]' eternity on the transient as impossible (p. 39) and argues that the poet's 'ideal union with nature is only rarely and fleetingly achieved' (p. 43). For his part, Harris argues that Cernuda has 'no illusions about the inescapable failure' of the desire to stop time and gain access to the 'invisible reality' (p. 98).<sup>10</sup> Critical analyses of the representation of the Absolute in Cernuda's work have, therefore, frequently but tacitly also acknowledged the importance of the sublime in his work.

To my knowledge, the one exception to this rule of tacit acknowledgement is Silver's discussion of 'lo sublime cernudiano', with which he concludes his study of Cernuda in *De la mano de Cernuda: invitación a la poesía*.<sup>11</sup> For Silver, the sublime in Cernuda's work is not equivalent solely to the failure of representation. In keeping with this, Silver describes his analysis of the sublime in the fifth section of this book's last chapter as a reinterpretation of the 'Poética del Fracaso' that he sketched in the previous four sections (p. 117). Similarly, Silver concludes that the sublime in Cernuda's poetry not only signifies 'el fracaso de fundamental, de eternizar' but also alludes, in the 'contraste figurado' between oppositions, to 'lo que se retira, que es inefable' (p. 120), to 'el Ser' (p. 121). In contrast, in my discussion of Schlegel's ideas on mythology, I argue that, through oppositions (among other things), mythology can embody, rather than simply allude to, the Absolute and, as a result, is not limited to sublimity. In this respect my argument is similar to that of César Real Ramos, for whom the 'dimensión mítica' of Cernuda's poetry stems from its '*comprensión de la variedad y mutaciones del universo, [su] visión totalizadora que le da sentido [al universo]*'.<sup>12</sup>

Freedom is at the heart of the poet's identity in as much as he is an instance of the Absolute, of the unity of spirit and matter. Under different guises, this characterization of the poet is a commonplace in critical work on Cernuda. For example, Alexander Coleman argues that the poet is a 'mediator [...] between the world of things and the soul' who has a 'sense of divine power' and assumes a 'divine perspective'.<sup>13</sup> In the same vein, Jiménez-Fajardo describes the poet as, in part, the 'voice of the gods' (p. 87), while Harris terms the poet a 'mediator between man and the daemonic power' (p. 97) and, therefore, an 'interpreter of the divine law' (p. 98). As a result, the poems in which the figure of the poet is represented can be considered mythological and inextricable from freedom because that figure is an embodiment of the Absolute.

The mythology of the poet created in Cernuda's later poetry functions as the cornerstone of a free, collective identity for both poets and non-poets. In emphasizing the collective nature of the mythology created in Cernuda's later

work, my argument is in keeping with my deferral of an (auto)biographical reading and differs from that of those critics who have seen Cernuda's poetry as a private or personal mythology. For example, Silver has argued that 'there is no part of Cernuda's literary *opus* that does not correspond to a particular point on the trajectory of [his] "personal myth"' ('*Arcadia*', p. 48), while Coleman has stated that Cernuda created a 'private mythology' by representing and appropriating the voices of figures that he admired (p. 88). In 1975, Jenaro Talens argued that, for Cernuda, poetry involved the 'creación del *otro* [...], el enajenamiento [del yo personal] como forma de salvación' but that Cernuda resolved this question with 'la seudolución idealista: ocultarse en el mito'.<sup>14</sup> Three years later, Jiménez-Fajardo echoed these arguments by describing Cernuda's poetry as an 'individual myth' (p. [ii]) and linked Cernuda's interest in myth with his 'search for idealized reality' (pp. [i-ii]). My emphasis on the collective nature of the mythology in Cernuda's later poetry also distinguishes my reading from those of Octavio Paz and Derek Harris, for whom Cernuda's poetry is mythical because it idealizes (Paz) or universalizes (Harris, p. 177) Cernuda's personal history but without transcending it.<sup>15</sup>

The principal ingredient of the collective mythology articulated in Cernuda's later poetry is a commitment to freedom (in the sense of a capacity for purposes). As will become apparent, one form that the mythology's commitment to freedom takes is an emphasis on faith. Such an emphasis places it in an apparently contradictory relation to reason that other critics have also noted in their analyses of Cernuda's work. For example, Rafael Argullol has argued that the Absolute cannot be known 'por medio de un ejercicio meramente racional' (p. 29) and that, in his efforts to reach 'lo divino', the poet 'no puede contentarse con los limitados horizontes de la razón' (p. 30). Rather, Argullol argues, the poet must submerge him/herself in 'el vértigo de las corrientes opuestas' (p. 30). In the same vein, Real Ramos has argued that the totalizing 'comprensión' of the world that the poet enjoys 'no es una comprensión racional' (p. 123) but, rather, 'un saber [...] que se nos manifiesta; es revelación' (p. 124). Like these critics, I argue that the Absolute is not an object of rational knowledge. However, unlike these critics, I also argue that the Absolute and faith are not in opposition to knowledge but are, rather, its necessary preconditions.<sup>16</sup>

Like C. P. Otero, for whom Cernuda's 'crítica nacional' was stimulated by an 'afán transformador' (p. 181), I argue that the mythology created in Cernuda's last four books of poetry was designed to have repercussions in the culture of the then contemporary Spain. In this respect, my argument differs from that of José Sánchez Reboledo for whom the 'transformaciones prácticas que pueden producir unas palabras' are of secondary importance in

discussing the figure of the poet.<sup>17</sup> In attempting to bring about such change, historical periods or individuals that exemplify the Absolute are frequently commemorated in Cernuda's later poetry. The status of the cultures or individuals remembered means that the poems in which such remembrance occurs are mythological. Similarly, those of Cernuda's later poems which portray the present are also examples of mythology because the present is characterized by the failure to unite freedom and nature and, as a result, is an instance of the sublime (whereas, for Schlegel, the sublime was linked with nature). In contrast to his contemporaries, the present's sublimity is noticed by and unacceptable to the poems' speaker and generates in him a sense of his freedom which he realizes in his poems of historical remembrance. These poems are also mythological in that they are the sensuous products of the speaker's exercise of his freedom in order to perceive the Absolute in the past, a perception which is stimulated by his awareness of the absence of the Absolute in the present. However, in Cernuda's later poetry, the speaker's attitude towards the past, whether Spanish or non-Spanish, is not one of idealization or simple nostalgia. Rather, the use of history to establish a culture of freedom in the then contemporary present includes a critical attitude to history. As a result, the mythology articulated in Cernuda's last four books of poetry can be said to seek to change the present by simultaneously drawing on and differing from the past.

In my second chapter, which consists of two sections, I offer new readings of the divine and nature in Cernuda's later poetry by examining their relation with questions of masculinity and femininity. One of the distinctive characteristics of Cernuda's last four books of poetry is that female divinities appear in them more frequently than in any of his other books of poetry, which means that they offer particularly fertile ground for the analysis of the relationship between femininity, masculinity, and the divine. In the first section, I draw on Luce Irigaray's account of the relation between the divine and gender in order to challenge what is perhaps the one point of agreement among all Cernuda's commentators: the universality of Cernuda's poetry, to which I too subscribe in my first chapter. Against the critical consensus, I argue that the divinity (Christian and non-Christian) represented in Cernuda's later poetry, while supposedly universal, in fact frequently guarantees a form of masculinity which represses the specificity of women's gender identity and leaves women in a state of dereliction. A clear-cut example of the repression of women's gender identity in Cernuda criticism is Françoise Peyrègne's reference to a sculpture of seven women's bodies by Giacometti in order to exemplify her claim that verticality is the defining characteristic of the implicitly ungendered human body.<sup>18</sup> However, at the same time, I also analyse a number of poems which show a greater respect for sexual

difference and/or the capacity of the maternal-feminine to undermine the coherence of the masculinity represented in Cernuda's later poetry.

In the second section, I argue that the male subject's relations to nature (including his country of origin) and his boyhood are built on an appropriation of the maternal-feminine which is not always without disruptive consequences for masculinity. Following on from my argument earlier in the chapter, the universality of nature is implicit in the link between nature and the divine made in other critics' analyses of Cernuda's later work.<sup>19</sup> For example, Paz has argued that, in 'la antigua naturaleza', Cernuda discovers 'no a Dios sino a la divinidad misma' and that nature is transcendent as well as the site of 'lo santo y lo divino' (p. 156). Similarly, Otero has argued that, for Cernuda, nature is 'realidad radical y trasunto de la Divinidad' and that 'el sentimiento de la Naturaleza' in Cernuda's work is 'cifra de una emoción hondamente religiosa' (p. 181). The appropriation of the maternal-feminine in the male subject's relation to nature is suggested by a slippage in the chapter of Coleman's book entitled 'Nature as Symbol' (pp. 43–63). On the one hand, Coleman distinguishes between the 'two parts of the world', 'things' (natural objects) and 'beings' (humans) (p. 51). On the other hand, he describes natural objects as a being by arguing that, in transcending what he is by manipulating nature, the poet 'extends his whole being *into another*' (p. 63; my emphasis). Although this slippage by itself does not reveal the gender of the being that is equated with nature, Coleman's comments elsewhere suggest that that being is maternal. For example, Coleman writes that, when he transcends his temporal existence, Cernuda is carried back into a 'timeless world of *childlike* innocence', that Cernuda strives for 'rebirth' (p. 62; my emphasis), and that Cernuda's imagination '*feeds on* the particulars of the world' (p. 44; my emphasis). Other critics have also associated nature with the maternal-feminine. For instance, Paz describes the divinity that the poet finds in nature as 'madre de dioses y mitos' (p. 156), while Silver refers to the 'timeless embrace of maternal nature' ('*Arcadia*', p. 50). In the same vein, Maristany uses the comment that 'la imagen materna lleva aparejada la *imago* opuesta, la "madrstra"' ('*La realidad y el deseo*', p. 44) to gloss his argument that the idea of Andalusia is contaminated by that of Spain, while José Luis Cano compares Cernuda's relation to Spain with a male lover's 'desengaño' with his female beloved.<sup>20</sup>

The poems analysed in this chapter remain valuable despite my criticism of the violence against women found in them. Firstly, these poems make it possible to raise the important question of the relation between gender and the divine by representing women and goddesses with comparative frequency. And, secondly, these poems are valuable for the complex and varied relation between gender and the divine that they portray, which includes not only

appropriation but also a hesitant respect for sexual difference and the maternal-feminine's power to disrupt masculinity despite its exploitation by men.

In my third chapter, I use the work of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick to examine the four different discourses through which male same-sex desire is articulated in Cernuda's last four books of poetry. I argue that Cernuda's work draws on gender-separatist and gender-transitive representations of male homosexuality as well as on minoritizing and universalizing understandings of male same-sex desire. Although, in this chapter, I bring into question the unity of the category 'male homosexuality' and thereby problematize its applicability to the male same-sex desire articulated in Cernuda's later work, it is not my intention to do away with that category. On the contrary, I show its pertinence to Cernuda's last four books of poetry and argue for its pluralization. As part of this pluralizing project, I also examine the representation of male same-sex desire in Cernuda's later poetry through the use of men-loving men from history and myth. These poems, I argue, not only testify to the difficulty of articulating and sustaining male homosexual identities in a hostile environment but also, through the plurality of sexualities represented in them, provide further evidence of the challenge to dominant understandings of sexual identity to be found in Cernuda's later poetry. One of the characteristics of this chapter and, in particular, of my examination of the use of history and myth to articulate male homosexuality is that it raises the question of the relation between gender and sexuality, which I suspended in my second chapter in order to concentrate on the question of gender.

Critical writing on male homosexuality in Cernuda's later poetry strongly supports Sedgwick's argument that discourses of sexual definition coexist with rather than eclipse one another. Most frequently, Cernuda criticism uses minoritizing and universalizing discourses to discuss male same-sex desire and often uses them together. For example, Rupert C. Allen emphasizes the specifically gay character of the identity and desire articulated in Cernuda's poetry and represents gay male identity in minority terms.<sup>21</sup> At the same time, Allen also suggests that homosexual love may be condemned as a so-called abomination because the 'mind that so thinks secretly believes *all* forms of sexuality to be an abomination' (p. 76). In other words, rather than being an issue solely for a distinct, relatively small group of homosexual men, male same-sex desire is interwoven with other forms of desire which do not ostensibly have anything to do with same-sex object-choice. Adrián G. Montoro is another critic who combines minoritizing and universalizing discourses of male same-sex desire. He refers, for example, to the love described in Cernuda's poetry as 'el amor de un hombre por otro'

yet also describes homosexuality as ‘una forma de conducta sexual humana que [...] no conlleva ni más ni menos riesgos que toda relación de intimidad entre dos seres humanos’.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, Montoro also argues that, through his use of codes and the ‘tú’ form in particular, Cernuda constructs an affirmative, minoritizing discourse of male homosexual identity that is universally applicable in a way that does not erase that identity’s specificity (pp. 25–30).<sup>23</sup> Two critics who emphasize a minoritizing understanding of male homosexuality are Ángel Sahuquillo and Patricia Corcoran Thomas, whose work is among the most gay-affirmative that has been written on Cernuda’s poetry.<sup>24</sup> In contrast to the frequency of its deployment of minoritizing and universalizing discourses of male homosexual identity but in keeping with its silence on questions of gender, Cernuda criticism has, to my knowledge, never drawn on a gender-separatist model of male same-sex desire and very rarely on a gender-transitive one. An example of the latter model is found in Francisco Romero’s argument that the social requirement that Cernuda be ‘nada menos que todo un hombre’ meant that he had to repress his gestures, words and attitudes so that they did not give him away (p. 548).<sup>25</sup>

One of the aims of Sedgwick’s work which I develop in this third chapter is to refine understandings of sexual identity by introducing into them terms other than the gender of the sexual object. The need for such a refinement is readily apparent in Cernuda criticism. Two characteristics of critics’ analyses of male same-sex desire in Cernuda’s later work have been a concentration on the gender and youthfulness of the sexual object. However, this latter factor has rarely led to an inflection of the term ‘male homosexuality’. For example, although Montoro refers to ‘la *paidierastía*’ in his discussion, he conflates this with male homosexuality (p. 25), while Silver refers to the ‘conflict between homosexual love and the established order of society’ yet specifies that the ‘objects of [Cernuda’s] love’ are adolescents (*‘Arcadia’*, p. 96).<sup>26</sup> With two notable exceptions, Cernuda criticism has also not acknowledged the historical specificity of male same-sex desire. The first exception is Allen who distinguishes the desire of the ‘modern gay world’ from ancient Greek pederasty (p. 73) as well as acknowledging the pertinence of age to discussions of sexual identity (pp. 64, 71–74). The second exception is Corcoran Thomas’s analyses of the cultural status of homosexuality in Spain, particularly in the Generation of 1927 and the Second Republic (pp. 45–53), and of the ‘creation of homosexuality’ in religious, legal and medical discourses from Biblical times to 1986 (pp. 118–27).<sup>27</sup>

In my fourth chapter, which consists of three sections, I analyse the question of perversion from four main perspectives. In the first section, drawing on the work of Jonathan Dollimore, I use ‘perversion’ and its

derivatives to describe both the relation between the terms of the 'natural/unnatural' and 'truth/error' oppositions in the representation of male homosexuality and the relation between heterosexuality and male homosexuality. I also use the term 'perversion' to identify particular forms of non-sexual identity. I begin this section by examining the legitimation of male same-sex desire through the appropriation of the category of 'nature'. According to some critics, this extension of 'the natural' also inverts the 'natural/unnatural' opposition and leads to heterosexuality being identified with culture and homosexuality with nature.<sup>28</sup> In contrast, I argue that the transgressive reinscription of male homosexuality as natural is accompanied by an internal division within nature. As a consequence, although male homosexuality and heterosexuality are both posited as natural, the relation between them is represented as one of proximity rather than identity. Allen and Corcoran Thomas have both implied the same point. According to Allen, Cernuda knew that his 'sexual orientation was fully as "natural" as any other' (p. 64), while Corcoran Thomas argues that Cernuda believed that 'homosexuality was as natural [...] as heterosexuality' (p. 169).<sup>29</sup> After examining the interweaving of male homosexual desire with two non-sexual meanings of 'perversion', I analyse that desire's conjugation with truth. Whereas other critics, most influentially Paz and Harris, have tended to approach the question of truth in Cernuda's later poetry (auto)biographically, I examine the reworking of truth in the context of the representation of male homosexuality. The relation between truth and male homosexual identity in Cernuda's later poetry, I argue, not only reveals an awareness of the former's inextricability from error but also, and relatedly, at times involves the perversion and displacement of truth as the ground of that identity.

In the second section of this chapter, I point towards a reworking of men's relation to God (as also represented by the figure of the father) by drawing on Leo Bersani's account of the modulation of sadism by masochism in male homosexual desire. In as much as the divine is the traditional guarantee of the 'natural/unnatural' and 'truth/error' oppositions, my argument in this section develops that of the previous one. The account of male homosexuality on which I draw is part of Bersani's wider argument that the analysis of male homosexual identity should start from a consideration of male homosexual desire. The relevance to Cernuda criticism of Bersani's argument should not be overlooked. A recurrent element of critics' discussions of male homosexuality in Cernuda's work has been the claim, made most influentially by Paz, that homosexuality is about morality rather than desire for another man. For Paz, 'homosexualismo se vuelve sinónimo de libertad; el instinto no es un impulso ciego: es la crítica hecha acto. Todo, el cuerpo mismo, adquiere una *coloración moral*' (p. 151).<sup>30</sup> According to this line of

argument, male homosexuality is the effect, rather than the ground, of a political or moral situation. Similarly, Manuel Ramos Otero states that Cernuda's homosexuality, 'más que pasión erótica, es concepción ética del mundo, producto directo de su marginación'.<sup>31</sup> From a different perspective but to the same effect, Harris has argued that the 'erotic concern of [Cernuda's] poems is, in fact, just another vehicle for the analysis of his personality' and that Cernuda's 'search for love' is 'part of his struggle for self-affirmation' (p. 119). Even Corcoran Thomas's 'working definition of gay sensibility' draws on similar arguments since it is based on the idea of 'consciousness of oppression and marginality' (p. 9; see also pp. 114, 116–17). In contrast with these critics, I argue that the male homosexual desire represented in Cernuda's later poetry derives its structure from the fantasy of penetrative sex between men and that that fantasy should form the ground for the analysis of male homosexuality in Cernuda's later work.

According to Bersani, in sadomasochism, the pleasure of self-dissolution which inheres in the exercise of power or sadism is repressed. In contrast, penetrative sex between men enables that pleasure to be acknowledged and, as a result, modulates the hyperbolic sense of self characteristic of the paternal or sadistic position. Such modulation represents the son's power to displace not only his father but also his own paternal identification, displacements which create a space for a gentler, compassionate exchange between men. In Cernuda's later poetry, I argue, each partner in the sexual exchange, through his identification with the other, comes to enjoy and rework the pleasures of both sadism and masochism, which cease to be polarized as they tend to be in sadomasochism. While many of Cernuda's critics have seen the experience of love as one of self-realization (for example, Silver, 'Arcadia', pp. 44, 120; and Peyrègne, pp. 137, 139), others have linked it with the destruction of the self. For example, Cano states that love involves (or can involve) 'destrucción y muerte',<sup>32</sup> Jiménez-Fajardo that love implies the 'surrender of oneself' (p. 136), and Quirarte that love destroys the lover (p. 79). In as much as the link that I establish between love and masochism makes love an experience of self-dissolution, my argument resembles that of these critics. However, these critics often also describe the effect of love in terms of self-realization or plenitude. According to Cano, love is also a moment of 'gloria y éxtasis' ('Notas', p. 225) while Jiménez-Fajardo refers to love as 'those instants of greatest self-realization' (p. 97). For his part, Quirarte characterizes love as a moment in which 'descubrimos a nosotros mismos' and in which we recover 'la idea de totalidad, del ser único e indivisible que fuimos' (p. 79).<sup>33</sup> In contrast, I argue that the place of self-dissolution in the love represented in Cernuda's later poetry undermines the hyperbolic sense of self that other critics have highlighted. However, although I emphasize the place of self-loss

in male homosexual desire, I do not posit such loss as synonymous with the death of the self but, rather, with what Bersani calls the subject's nonsuicidal disappearance.

In the third and final section of this chapter, I draw on the work of Jean Laplanche to argue that perversion is a structure common to all forms of sexuality rather than a term which can be applied to nonreproductive forms of sexual identity. According to Laplanche, in its emergence, sexuality is defined by three factors—propping, autoerotism, and the erotogenic zone—which point to its perversion of the self-preservative instincts. In Laplanche's argument, propping describes the relation between the vital and the sexual orders whereby sexuality first attaches itself to a nonsexual function and then detaches itself from the instinct. Cernuda criticism has tended to describe the love and desire represented in Cernuda's last four books of poetry in terms of the first of these two movements. This coupling of desire to biology is evident in, for example, Silver's argument that, for Cernuda, 'desire [...] is life' or the 'poet's life force' (*Arcadia*, pp. 113, 123 respectively) and in J. Luis Couso Cadahya's statement that, for Cernuda, 'el placer erótico [...] es la vida misma' (p. 27). Similarly, Talens states that, in Cernuda's earlier work, desire is an 'entidad física' (p. 58) but that, in his later work, it disappears 'por ley natural' (p. 58, fn. 8). For his part, Harris describes desire as an 'elemental life force' (p. 126) and argues that the 'condition of indolence and the feeling of nullity which Cernuda experiences as a result of the waning of desire with age are negative indications that desire continues to be equated with life' (p. 137). At the same time, in describing the 'identification of love with life' as a 'common trope' (p. 146), Harris points to a metaphorical displacement of the most general instinctual aim (the continuation of biological life), a displacement which, according to Laplanche, is a defining characteristic of sexuality. A similar displacement is also suggested when Jiménez-Fajardo describes as a 'wellspring of metaphor' the view that the 'object of love is a creation of our desire and does not exist truly as we see it' (p. 133). In line with this separation of sexuality from biology, I examine the applicability to Cernuda's later poetry of Laplanche's argument that every region of the skin, every organ, every function, and every human activity can potentially give rise to sexuality and, therefore, act as an erotogenic zone. I argue that Cernuda's last four books of poetry articulate a radical reorganization of pleasure because, in them, the sources of sexuality are extended beyond those privileged by biology (such as the genitals).

The role of autoerotism in the emergence of sexuality causes the sexual object to be constituted as an internalized and fantasmatic object. As a result, any subsequent sexual relation to an object mimics and reactivates the relation

to the original object. Quite clearly, therefore, in this account of the emergence of sexuality, the subjectivity of the sexual object is of secondary importance. Indeed, according to Laplanche, the sexual object functions primarily as a means by which the subject attains satisfaction and need only possess certain traits for the subject's satisfying action to arise. One of the commonplaces in critical discussions of love in Cernuda's later work is the argument that the sexual object lacks subjective being, is merely an object.<sup>34</sup> However, whereas critics, including those just cited, have tended to interpret such objectification in terms of narcissism and homosexuality,<sup>35</sup> I argue not only that the sexual object's objectification is linked with autoerotism but also that it is a defining feature of all sexuality and not simply of male homosexuality.

As will be apparent by now, I address a wide range of subjects in this book rather than tracing a single question or motif through Cernuda's later poetry. In keeping with my wish to introduce new questions and perspectives into Cernuda criticism, I also adopt a number of different theoretical approaches. The heterogeneity of my reading of Cernuda's last four books of poetry is motivated by the hope that these analyses will serve as starting points for new avenues of research into Cernuda's later poetry. Despite this heterogeneity, a number of questions do recur throughout my argument—humanity, the divine, nature, gender, and sexuality—and represent points of convergence and divergence between the different chapters. The chapters are also bound together by a central concern with the terms in which identity is represented, whether it be the poet's identity, masculinity, femininity or sexual identity, and, especially, male homosexual identity.

#### NOTES

1. 'Preface', in *The Word and the Mirror: Critical Essays on the Poetry of Luis Cernuda*, ed. by Salvador Jiménez-Fajardo (London: Associated University Presses, 1989), pp. 7–8 (p. 7). I will refer to essays included in this collection by their title followed by the abbreviation *The Word and the Mirror*.
2. Elisabeth Müller, 'La importancia del arte y de la poesía en *Desolación de la Quimera*', *RML*, nos. 1–2 (January–February 1964), 46–52; Luis Cernuda, *Las nubes. Desolación de la Quimera*, ed. by Luis Antonio de Villena, *Letras hispánicas*, 209 (Madrid: Cátedra, 1984); Manuel Ulacia, 'El teatro de Narciso: "Luis de Baviera escucha *Lohengrin*"', *Vuelta*, 12 (1988), 68–72; and John C. Wilcox, 'The Rhetoric of Bifocal Discourse in Luis Cernuda's "Luis de Baviera escucha *Lohengrin*" (*Desolación de la Quimera*)', in *The Word and the Mirror*, pp. 181–204. For an explanation of the abbreviations used in the footnotes and bibliography, see the list of abbreviations at the beginning of the book.
3. 'La estructura temporal de *La realidad y el deseo* en *Como quien espera el alba*', *AH*, n.s. 74 (1991), 119–45.
4. *Luis Cernuda*, TWAS, 455 (Boston: Twayne, 1978), pp. 70–95, 96–114, 115–31. All future references to work by Jiménez-Fajardo are to this book.

5. *'La realidad y el deseo'*: Luis Cernuda, Guías Laia de literatura, 5 (Barcelona: Laia, 1982), pp. 78–82, 82–84, 85–87, 89–92.
6. A critic who has recently linked Cernuda's biography with his poetry in book-length form is Eloy Sánchez Rosillo, *La fuerza del destino: vida y poesía de Luis Cernuda* (Murcia: Universidad de Murcia, 1992).
7. Recent examples of such critical attention are Stephen Summerhill's article, 'Luis Cernuda and the Dramatic Monologue', in *The Word and the Mirror*, pp. 140–65; and the work of Hilda Pato, 'El "tú" (y el "otro") en la poesía de Luis Cernuda', *ALEC*, 11 (1986), 225–35; *Los finales poemáticos en la obra de Luis Cernuda* (Boulder, CO.: SSSAS, 1988); and 'Cernuda and Poetic Closure: An Account of One Way of Ending Poems and Its Variants', in *The Word and the Mirror*, pp. 205–24. Unless otherwise specified, all future references to Pato's work are to *Los finales poemáticos*.
8. *'Et in Arcadia Ego': A Study of the Poetry of Luis Cernuda*, Colección Támesis: Serie A—Monografías, 2 (London: Tamesis Books, 1965), p. 50.
9. Derek Harris, *Luis Cernuda: A Study of the Poetry*, Colección Támesis: Serie A—Monografías, 33 (London: Tamesis Books, 1973), p. 97. Other critics who have made these points include C. P. Otero, 'Poeta de Europa', in *Letras: I*, Colección Támesis: Serie A—Monografías, 8 (London: Tamesis Books, 1966), pp. 176–83 (p. 180); J. Luis Couso Cadahya, 'Búsqueda de lo absoluto en la poesía de Luis Cernuda', *CHA*, 316 (1976), 21–44 (p. 21); Jiménez-Fajardo, p. 112; and Rafael Argullol, 'Cernuda romántico', *Quimera*, no. 15 (January 1982), 29–32 (pp. 29, 31). Unless otherwise specified, all future references to Otero's work are to this essay.
10. Other critics who have pointed to such failure include Jiménez-Fajardo, p. 23; and Argullol, pp. 31, 32.
11. Philip Silver, *De la mano de Cernuda: invitación a la poesía* (Madrid: Fundación Juan March/Cátedra, 1989), pp. 101–21.
12. 'La raíz de la diferencia de Luis Cernuda: la visión mítica de la realidad', *ALEC*, 15 (1990), 109–27 (p. 121).
13. *Other Voices: A Study of the Late Poetry of Luis Cernuda*, UNCSRL, 81 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969), pp. 14, 17, 18 respectively.
14. *El espacio y las máscaras: introducción a la lectura de Cernuda*, Argumentos, 35 (Barcelona: Anagrama, 1975), pp. 14, 16 respectively.
15. Octavio Paz, 'La palabra edificante', in *Luis Cernuda*, ed. by Derek Harris, *El escritor y la crítica*, 103 (Madrid: Taurus, 1977), pp. 138–60 (p. 140).
16. According to Otero, Cernuda's poetry is wielded 'contra toda suerte de abstracciones científicas' (p. 180) in an attempt to correct them (p. 178).
17. 'La figura del poeta en la obra de Luis Cernuda', *CHA*, 316 (1976), 5–20 (p. 5).
18. *L'Expression du sentiment de solitude chez cinq poètes espagnols de la génération de 1927* (Paris: Centre de recherches hispaniques, 1981), pp. 237–41.
19. For a universalizing reading of nature in Cernuda's work, see Andrew P. Debicki, 'Luis Cernuda: la naturaleza y la poesía en su obra lírica', in *Estudios sobre poesía española contemporánea: la generación de 1924–1925*, Biblioteca románica hispánica: estudios y ensayos, 113 (Madrid: Gredos, 1968), pp. 285–306.
20. José Luis Cano, 'Estela de Luis Cernuda', in *La poesía de la generación del 27*, Colección universitaria de bolsillo: Punto omega, 87 (Madrid: Guadarrama, 1970), pp. 251–56 (p. 253). Similarly, Patricia Angélica Pinto has analysed the portrayal of natural Spain in Cernuda's work in terms of the Jungian Earth-Mother archetype, a subdivision of the Feminine. See, Patricia Angélica Pinto, 'España (presente e historia) en la poesía de Luis Cernuda' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1979; abstract in *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 40 (1979–1980), 5050–51–A), pp. 126–81.
21. 'Luis Cernuda: Poet of Gay Protest', *Hispanófila*, 28 (1985), 61–78 (pp. 61, 63, 67).

22. Adrián G. Montoro, 'Rebeldía de Cernuda', *SiN*, 6 (1976), 19–30 (pp. 25, 26 respectively).
23. For other examples of the combination of minoritizing and universalizing discourses, see Paz, pp. 150–56; and Francisco Romero, 'El muro y la ventana: la "otredad" de Luis Cernuda', *CHA*, 396 (1983), 545–75 (pp. 560, 572).
24. Ángel Sahuquillo, *Federico García Lorca y la cultura de la homosexualidad masculina: Lorca, Dalí, Cernuda, Gil-Albert, Prados y la voz silenciada del amor homosexual*, Ensayo e investigación, 27 (Alicante: Diputación de Alicante, 1991); and Patricia Corcoran Thomas, "'La verdad de su amor verdadero": Gay Love and Social Protest in the Poetry of Luis Cernuda' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1991; abstract in *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 52 (1991–1992), 3306–A).
25. See also, Allen, pp. 65–66, 70–71.
26. See also, Maristany, '*La realidad y el deseo*', p. 45; and Armando López Castro, 'Ética y poesía en Cernuda', *CILH*, 8 (1987), 75–105 (p. 99).
27. Sahuquillo's analyses also take historical considerations into account. However, although important, his book only deals fragmentarily with Cernuda's last four books of poetry.
28. One critic who develops this argument is Vicente Quirarte in *La poética del hombre dividido en la obra de Luis Cernuda* (Mexico, D.F.: UNAM, 1985), pp. 88, 89.
29. For his part, Montoro argues that homosexuality is neither natural nor unnatural because 'el hombre no tiene naturaleza, sino historia' (p. 26).
30. See also, José Olivio Jiménez, '*Desolación de la Quimera*', in *Luis Cernuda*, ed. by Derek Harris, pp. 326–35 (pp. 331–32) (first publ. as part of 'Tres poetas, tres libros: Alexandre, Cernuda, Guillén (1962–1963)', in *Diez años de poesía española: 1960–1970* (Madrid: Ínsula, 1972), pp. 61–99).
31. 'La ética de la marginación en la poesía de Luis Cernuda', *Cupey*, 5 (1988), 16–29 (p. 22).
32. José Luis Cano, 'Notas sobre el tema del amor en la poesía de Luis Cernuda', in *La poesía de la generación del 27*, pp. 223–33 (p. 225).
33. Silver ('*Arcadia*', pp. 91, 123) and Harris (pp. 129–30) also describe love in terms of ecstasy and transcendence. In addition, Harris argues that, for Cernuda, love is a 'form of self-fulfillment' (p. 120), a means by which Cernuda comes to know himself (p. 119).
34. See, for example, Paz, pp. 154–55; Jiménez-Fajardo, p. 136; Maristany, '*La realidad y el deseo*', p. 46; and Luis Martínez Cuitiño, 'El reflejo del mundo en la obra de Luis Cernuda', *RLit*, 45 (1983), 127–48 (p. 139).
35. For a different reading of the link between objectification and male homosexuality, see Corcoran Thomas, pp. 33–34.