

# **Anglophone years of Luis Cernuda:**

## **Los años anglófonos de Luis Cernuda**



## **TRABAJO DE FIN DE GRADO**

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## SUMMARY

### Spanish summary

Este trabajo se centra en el tiempo que Luis Cernuda, autor español, estuvo exiliado en tierras de habla inglesa. Pasó la mayor parte de su vida en el exilio, por eso este período es fundamental para entenderlo como autor y como persona. Se analizarán las obras que compuso durante aquel tiempo de exilio, tanto en Inglaterra como en América, para explicar el impacto que tuvieron ciertas vivencias en él como resultado de su exilio.

**KEY WORDS:** Luis Cernuda, exilio, Inglaterra, América

### English summary

This essay is focused on the English-speaking period of the Spanish author Luis Cernuda. As he spent most of his life exiled from his country, the analysis of his poetry is vital to understand him as an author and as a person. That is the reason why we will analyze his works, written in the UK and the United States, which will explain the impact this period had on him as a result of his exile.

**KEY WORDS:** Luis Cernuda, exile, UK, United States

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## 1. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

### INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study focuses on the experiences Luis Cernuda underwent as an exiled author in the English-speaking period, both in the United Kingdom and in the United States. It is important to understand this period of his life, because his greatest compositions were written while he was away from Spain. When I decided to undertake the research, I realized that Luis Cernuda was not like other contemporary authors: he experienced the sensitivity of a romantic and the impotence of being alone in a foreign country. Above all, what made me continue this project were the poems he wrote and the feelings he transmitted which made him a unique author.

### PURPOSE

The main purpose will be to investigate how much exile meant for Luis Cernuda and how much it influenced him and his poetry through an analysis of the works written during his English-speaking period. It is relevant to mention this period because his work and his life would never be the same afterwards. That is why it is so interesting to have a look at what provoked his exile and the impact it had on him and his works.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

First, I based my study on exile theory. Exile theory is intrinsically related to identity and culture, and in that respect, we should mention the extraordinary work of Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, among many others that contributed to the topic of exile, and to the understanding of exiled identity. Then, I based this project on secondary sources, as a biography and an analysis of his poetry.

We should also include Antonio Rivero Taravillo's biography of Luis Cernuda, whose importance I would like to highlight because it was the base I used to comprehend Cernuda, and his life before UK.

After this previous investigation, the next step was to analyze all compositions written in this period of exile. In order to achieve that, we should appreciate the deep analysis of Cernuda's poetry written by Derek Harris, which was the starting point for my own interpretation. However, *Historial de un libro*, written by Cernuda himself, where he talks about his life and his poetry, was the key for this project. The comparison of this work with his biographical data and the analysis, leads to the information needed to accomplish this task. *Poesía completa*, edited by Derek Harris was incredibly necessary too, as it brings together the most important books to take into consideration. Having the most important information compiled, the rest of the essay was devoted to the analysis of the works themselves to understand the impact of exile on Cernuda.

### 3. STATE OF THE QUESTION: EXILE LITERATURE

The literature of exile does not have a clear beginning nor a clear end that defines it, but as Claudio Guillén points out, it is relational: it depends on the period of time. It could be written in exile or as a response to it, but it is still interesting to compare different authors and their production once they face exile. According to Guillén, the first book dealing with exile dates back to Ancient Greece. From that point on, there have been many writings related to exile. In his short but quite understandable book, *El sol de los desterrados: Literatura y exilio*, he covers exile from Ancient Greece or even the Bible, reviewing different books to end in the Twentieth Century.

From the Greek philosophers who believed in the existence of soul and body as separate parts of the human beings to an exile provoked by a war, everything is relational and, depending on the culture and the time, exile can be a positive or negative situation. Of course, the different dimensions that exile adopts through time are noticeable, whether it is a Roman cast from society or an author banished from a modern European country or a medieval author.

There is also the fact that the book can be about exile without the authors themselves being out of their country, or being non-related to exile but the author residing outside his home country. Claudio Guillén distinguishes them as “(...) situándose *en él*, (...) y escribe *desde el exilio*” (31), making the difference according to the author’s feelings.

The early and young Odysseus on his long trip to Ithaca could be considered as a work related to exile, since the longing and nostalgia the protagonist felt for his land could be associated with the same feelings one exiled author could feel. Although this work was not written by an exiled author, it deals with the general topic. From ancient times, as the Odyssey shows, humanity has been writing about travelling, about isolation and about foreign lands.

Exile itself can take another form and become a state of mind, a new different way that one particular author sees things and, at the same time, exile establishes a sort of relationship with the world and with the person struggling with it.

Nationalism and immigration are intrinsically related to exile as Guillén argues in *El sol de los desterrados*. Not only did humanity undergo different waves of

immigration or exile in its history, but also encountered what was discovering the world. Banishing people to other lands was not new, but not at such a big scale as it was done in the Sixteenth Century with the conquest of America and other undiscovered places. Identity issues, nationalism and what today is called immigration became more important with the passing of time. Exiled authors were not the only ones who understood what it was like to be in a foreign country, but they were the ones that explained it through their words. This line of argumentation is also discussed in *Reflexiones sobre el exilio*, where Edward Said talks about the idea of alienation and the sense of 'we' and 'outsiders' and the exiled people who are in between. People who are forced to fit in a particular society, but they do not belong to any place: neither the exiled country nor their home country.

Literature of exile could vary depending on the century we look into, but it will always share some feelings that are essentially the same for authors of other periods: nostalgia, agony or *angst* mixed with a feeling of not belonging in any place. Works in exile tend to be similar among them, but as exile is always relational, there are features that always change from one author to another depending on different periods of time.

Said states exile as a condition of abandonment, but without fully understanding why in modern society exile has been determined by motivation. He explains it as if it could not be another way: time. Our time, our society is not the same as it was before, and this can only be interpreted as the relational feature Guillén talked about. Of course, another matter that changes is the period of time in which the author was exiled. On the one hand, that could explain why many authors exiled around the same time shared similar feelings and their work were similar. On the other hand, some previous works from an exiled author would share those feelings (above mentioned), but also many other concerning their time that could not appear later. Nevertheless, the essential features and feelings remain the same and what changes is very little.

Using Edward Said and other studies, Homi Bhabha takes the issue of identity and culture further away in his work: *The Location of Culture*, where he focuses his main points on post-colonial works, talking about nationality, identity, otherness and many issues dealing with politics, ethnicity and race. In the introduction, which talks about the space in between and the designation of identity, we find the opening of the



debate the book establishes with other previous theories and now put into different perspectives.

The encounter of 'newness' which is not part of the past nor the present as he states: "it renews the past, refiguring it as a contingent 'in-between' space, that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present" (7). Well explained in the quote, this is the first attempt to define what will later be hybridity. Bhabha talks about cultural authority, stereotypes, crisis of representation, discrimination, the duality between Self/Other, inside/outside, among many interesting points throughout the book. What is fascinating is that he takes some examples from different authors' works, compare them with the previous theory and then he shapes his own theory. The sense of identity acquires a new meaning when cultures and traditions are mixed and the 'in-between' space appears, as he says.

Talking about identity and language, he names it as Third Space: "(...) Third Space, which represents both the general conditions of language and the specific implication of the utterance in a performative and institutional strategy of which it cannot 'in itself' be conscious" (36). When it happens in life, it does not have a specific name, but he would later call it 'hybridity' or 'Third Space' as an agreement between two parts that are "*neither the one nor the other*" (25). There is a need behind the creation of a new identity for those people as Edward Said recalls from Simone Weil's words: "Tener raíces (...) quizá sea la necesidad más importante y menos reconocida del alma humana" (qtd. in W. Said: 191). Producing a new identity for people is important as many negative feelings would be felt with less intensity and they would find a 'place' to belong to.

Related to the Third Space and the concept of hybridity, Ragnhild Johnsrud Zorgati tries to "explore whether the concept of hybridity adds to the notion of acculturation (...)" (7). In his book, *Pluralism in the Middle Ages*, Zorgati uses Bhabha's words to illustrate his own work, focused on the Middle Ages in Medieval Iberia. Acculturation deals with both hybridity and identity, which is an important issue in migrant and exile literature. Identity, the absence of it, as well as the notion of being inside a culture, outside it, in two cultures and without any, is crucial for humanity and even more important in exiled authors. The impact that these notions have on every author depends on every specific situation that they are living in, but *Pluralism in the*

*Middle Ages* explores it through a particular period of time, in a particular place. Familiar or social hybridity is another form of hybridity, as the book states, and it has its beginning when a person whose situation and experiences change through the process of culture of contact. This aspect of the book shows that exiled authors would be affected too by the culture of contact.

Representation, as Bhabha said, is crucial when it comes to hybrid identity. In the article, “Claiming the (N)either/(N)or of ‘Third Space’: (Re)presenting Hybrid Identity and the Embodiment of Mixed Race”, Torika Bolatagici, drawing from the words of Bhabha, talks about her own perspective about mixed races and applies them to the art, literature and film created during post-colonial times. The article states how negatively hybridity has been represented in literature and in films: tragic figures whose lives and deaths were terrible because they were not completely ‘white’. Yet, it can be found in those representations the same sense of lost identity that exiled poets felt. Not knowing where they belonged to or even if they belonged somewhere, and this way of losing one’s nationality is shared both by mixed race people and exiled authors. Hybridity and its representation, as Bhabha said, should be examined under a new perspective: from the person who identifies themselves as a hybrid.

In addition, migrant literature emerged and gained attention around the end of the Twentieth Century. Written by migrant authors or dealing with their migration, migrant literature makes a difference with exile literature. Some works established within exile literature were then considered to belong to migrant literature and the process of categorization in order to see if works corresponded to one or the other group, attracted more attention.

Within this line of argumentation, it can be found the following article: “From Literature of Exile to Migrant Literature”, stating that not every work gathered within literature of exile should be in this category. Carine M. Mardorossian discusses about the importance of the two different kinds of literature: migrant and exile literature. The shift from exiled to migrant is significant and could have major repercussions, especially in the works classified as exile literature. The subtle meaning of migration deals with willingness and freedom to choose whether to go or not, whereas the connotations of exile are different: willingness and freedom are part of exile, but from a very negative point of view. Mardorossian chooses two different works written in exile

and compares them, trying to categorize them as 'migrant literature'. The comparison is not as relevant as the idea of the revision of works included as exile literature. Adding migrant literature as a new innovative way of listing works could change the way some authors are perceived and could include modern works too. Works considered as exile literature in past centuries could also be incorporated and by that means, we could innovate the way literature has always been analyzed.

Concretely, we will analyze how exile affected both Cernuda's life and poetry. As we mentioned, exile took many forms depending on the authors themselves and the period of time, thus we will focus now on how it was in Luis Cernuda's case. The years previous to his departure would be the onset to see the effects of exile particularly at that moment of time and how it changed his own perception of reality and his worldview.

#### 4. IN SPAIN

Now turning our attention to Cernuda himself, it is important to know more about his biography, since it will later be reflected in his works during his exile. Cernuda himself realizes the importance of the reflection of his own life in his writing, which is the reason why he decided to write *Historial de un libro* (1958). As he explains: “Debo excusarme, al comenzar la historia del acontecer personal (...) por tener que referir, juntamente con las experiencias del poeta que creó aquellos, algunos hechos en la vida del hombre que sufriera estas” (Cernuda 483).

For this, I decided to concentrate on the biography written by Antonio Rivero Taravillo, which had everything I could wish for in the first stage of this project. Thus, I have tried to summarize the important parts concerning the topic we are dealing with.

Luis Cernuda Bidón or Bidou (he would change his last surname) was born in Seville in 1902 and had two older sisters: Amparo and Ana. As far as we know, his father was away from home most of the time, since he was a colonel in the Spanish Army and was destined to many different places throughout his life. Thus, he was surrounded by women in his early life and that will be reflected in *Ocnos* (1949), written in exile, where he remembered Spain. The reality described in a poem “*la familia*” is sad and hopeless, where he would mention his family but avoiding the figure of his father.

He started his university degree in 1919, where he met young adults that shared his same concerns and aspirations about life. One of the most important events of his early life was meeting a teacher and a poet, Pedro Salinas, who was one of the reasons Cernuda started to take interest in poetry and made him see poets under a new different light. Encouraged by his teacher, Cernuda would start reading Spanish and French poetry recommended by him.

He would be influenced by the authors he read, such as Keats, Hölderlin or Mallarmé. Cernuda loved to read, and as his knowledge of French grew, the books written in this language that he could read also increased, with André Gide as the main influence in French.

Cernuda abandoned Seville, the place he hated for most of his life. In fact, after he left his hometown, he would only go back once (1934) until the end of his life. Our

author described his feelings towards the city in *Historial de un libro*: “(...) habiendo pasado la niñez y juventud primera en Sevilla, donde la gente pretendía vivir no en una capital de provincia más o menos agradable, sino en el ombligo del mundo, con la falta consiguiente de curiosidad hacia el resto de él” (533).

He met another famous author of the time, Juan Ramón Jiménez, when he visited Seville in 1924. Nevertheless, the initial admiration that Cernuda felt for this famous poet would disappear once he found out that Juan Ramón was again in Seville two years later (1926) and he did not pay him a visit. His friendship would never be the same from that point onwards.

In 1927, his first book of poems, *Perfil del aire*, was published in a magazine, *Litoral*. However, it was not as successful as Cernuda expected, receiving some negative reviews in other journals, implying that his work was only a good copy of another well-known author, Jorge Guillén.

Twenty years after the publication of *Perfil del aire*, Cernuda would evaluate his first work and the criticism it generated in *Historial de un libro*:

*Perfil del aire* es el libro de un adolescente, aún más adolescente de lo que era mi edad al componerlo, lleno de afanes no del todo conscientes, melancólico, precisamente por la impotencia en que me hallaba para satisfacer esos afanes (...), pero al mismo tiempo, libro de un poeta que, desde el punto de vista de la expresión, sabía más o menos a dónde iba. (491)

The noticeable influence of Garcilaso that can be appreciated in “*Égloga*”, from *Égloga, elegía, oda* (1928), would be stronger after the commemorative ceremony in Seville in 1927. Cernuda himself did not participate in the several acts honouring the memory of the deceased author Góngora, who had passed away one hundred years before. However, he met some of authors of the 27<sup>th</sup> Generation that Cernuda belonged to, such as Rafael Alberti or Federico García Lorca.

After the sudden death of his mother in 1928, he would feel free, so he went on a trip with his friends around some villages in Málaga before going to Madrid the same year. He wanted to stay in the Students’ Residence, but he knew it would not be possible due to economic reasons. At the end of the year, he found a guest house instead.

As the days passed, he would feel better about his new life in Madrid, starting to enjoy his new situation more. From 1929 on, Cernuda's poetry would be influenced by the Surrealist movement, reading authors such as Mallarmé, Rimbaud and Verlaine.

He travelled to Toulouse, but he would be more impressed by Paris, where he would watch a sound film for the first time, which made a huge impression on him. This experience inspired him to write the poem "Durango" from the book *Un río, un amor* (1929). This book was written with the purpose of gathering the poems in one source and its first name was *Cielo sin dueño*, but Cernuda changed it to a *Un río, un amor*. He changed the title when he realized that the main topic of the poems was love.

When he went through Barcelona in order to arrive to Madrid, he met Vicente Aleixandre upon his arrival, whose friendship will provide Cernuda with someone to trust in and share his thoughts with. Moreover, they both shared the same sexual orientation, which was often shown in their poetry. His friendship could have been initiated as two authors talking about literature or common readings, but it evolved into something more personal in order to centre on their feelings.

Despite the fact that Cernuda ended *Un río, un amor*, it was not published until 1936 along with *La Realidad y el Deseo*. This anthology included *Un río, un amor* because when Cernuda first tried to publish it, the editorial went bankrupt. Nevertheless, with *Un río, un amor*, Cernuda would get rid of the rhyme and he would not use it again unless it was a special occasion. He will leave his own thoughts about it in *Historial de un libro*:

Poco a poco fui siguiendo el camino que me llevaba hacia un tipo de poesía en el cual lo que yo quería decir me parecía más urgente que lo que resultara al seguir los laberintos de la rima (...) no creí conveniente imitarles, prefiriendo seguir el hilo de mi pensamiento a dejarme conducir, lejos de él, por la rima.  
(498-499)

At the beginning of 1931, Gerardo Diego was preparing his famous *Antología*, and Cernuda, who was going through his surrealist period, did not want to be represented by *Perfil del aire*, so he submitted some compositions from *Los placeres*

*prohibidos*, unpublished until 1936. However, most of the poems integrating this work would be composed by 1931.

This year, Cernuda would be introduced to a new man who arrived to Madrid. He fell madly in love with him, to the point of starting a relationship with him. They even began to live together, being Serafín his main inspiration for *Los placeres prohibidos*, whose addressee was, in fact, his lover. Cernuda would suffer in this relationship as Serafín was bisexual and he even started living with a woman. He manipulated Cernuda, asking for money, making the poet terribly jealous. After a year, they broke up in the spring in 1932. From this heartbreaking experience Cernuda would come up with *Donde habite el olvido* (1934).

In 1933, Cernuda's first anthology was published, *La imitación de la poesía*, containing 19 poems, most of them from his surrealist period. In the summer of the same year, he would fall in love again and had a new relationship in Málaga. In *Ocnos*, Cernuda would write about those happy afternoons that he spent with his new romance:

Unos jazmines o unos nardos, colocados luego sobre la  
almohada para orear la media noche, te traían el recuerdo de  
aquellos golfillos que por la calle los vendían, ensartadas las  
biznagas en pencas de chumbera, no menos delicado el cuerpo  
del vendedor, ni menos tersa su piel morena, que el pétalo de la  
flor veladora de tu sueño. (*Poesía Completa* 587-588)

He was on a trip with 'Misiones pedagógicas', whose main purpose was to teach and offer resources to some regions of Spain that did not have the opportunity to obtain them. This could also be an inspiration for the author, writing many poems that would be later included in *Invocaciones a las gracias del mundo* (1935).

It would not be long until all the meetings he attended were practically secret goodbye parties for those Spanish authors that could not stay in Spain due to the Civil War that began in 1936.

The unstable situation of Spain would make Cernuda express his political opinion, but this determination would fade when time passed. He became the secretary of an ambassador sent to Paris on a brief trip and on a mission in order to maintain peace between both countries. It would fail as his short dream of being a diplomat.

At the outbreak of the war, killings of innocent people happened all over Spain. Bombs murdered people and destroyed buildings, endangering important cultural places as the National Library. Spain was becoming then an extremely dangerous place and our author would take notice of it not much later. As many other authors, he had to flee from the country in order to survive the Civil War and Franco's dictatorship.

Cernuda had wanted to go to England for a while to be a Spanish teacher. He had the opportunity to go in 1938 when Richardson, founder member of the Arden Society for Artists and Writers Exiled in England, offered him the possibility of giving some lectures there. According to the author himself, he only accepted those terms because he thought he would not be away for more than two months. He described his feelings about it in *Historial de un libro*:

(...) La marcha de los sucesos me hizo ver poco a poco que no había allí posibilidad de vida para aquella España con que me había engañado. Al margen de todo, no pensé en salir de allá, que hubiera sido lógico dada mi opinión sobre la situación española; todavía me parecía que, trabajando en lo que siempre fuera mi trabajo, la poesía, estaba al menos al lado de mi tierra y en mi tierra. (509)

As we can see in this first period, we could easily assume that Cernuda was on the path of becoming a writer, but not until exile did he start to gain conscience of many important features that would be essential for him to become one of the most excellent authors of Spain. However, in his own time, he was not as well-known as the other writers of this same period, maybe due to the fact of his age, since he was younger than the ones surrounding him. Nevertheless, that never stopped Cernuda from writing and expressing his feelings and when he acquired experience, he began to be acknowledged by his contemporaries in the subsequent publications of his works. I would say that he deserved more than the harsh reviews he received from his contemporaries, but later in his life his poetry would be greatly recognized.



## 5. EXILE

As I mentioned above, Cernuda only accepted going to the United Kingdom under the condition that he would only stay there for two months. However, never did he know that those two months were the introduction to the lonely years that he would be away from Spain. After staying in the United Kingdom for more than a decade (1938-1947), his next stop would be North America, where he spent a little period of time if we compare it to the time in the English islands. Mexico would start to draw his attention until the point that he moved and remained there until the end of his days. Little did he know that his first trip to England would be the last time he would be in Spain. He never went back: “Pero mi ausencia ha durado ya, a estas fechas, más de veinte años” (*Historial de un libro* 510). I do not think that he did not want to come back, but the circumstances he lived and the choices he made did not allow him to actually come back. It is noticeable that he hated Seville, but living abroad and in a cold country as the UK was for him, made him realize what he had in Seville and could never regain. Nevertheless, he found Mexico, and after long years of exile, speaking a language that was not his mother tongue, going to Mexico would mean a certain relief in that respect and the image of Spain would gradually disappear, especially Seville. *Historial de un libro* transmits the feeling to the reader that, despite the fact that he was away from his country and spent those years living in two different countries, he finally settled in Mexico, the real country that he could call home again.

### 5.1. United Kingdom

According to Derek Harris and Antonio Rivero Taravillo, Cernuda moved to London to impart some lectures, spending a few months in the south of the country, but later in the same year, he would move to Glasgow, Scotland (1939) to be an assistant at the university. Yet, he would not spend all the years of his exile in the north of the English island. In fact, he travelled quite a lot during holidays to Oxford from 1941 until he got the opportunity to move to Cambridge in August 1943, as he was offered a job as a lecturer in Emmanuel College. In July 1945 he would start a new but similar job at the Spanish Institute in London, spending his holidays in Cornwall, because he was tired of London and its urban life. In 1947 Cernuda finally would leave the UK.

Derek Harris states that the influence he received during this period from his surroundings and British authors was the last one he would ever get until the end of his

life. However, I would question that statement, since he would later travel to the United States of America and finally to Mexico, where he would compose his last poems. As an author always inspired by the elements surrounding him, I think we should not assure that the decisive and last influence he would get was to happen in England, in spite of being a crucial period for him. Probably, travelling to America and Mexico would provide him with other essential sources of inspiration that Harris might not have taken into account.

In fact, Harris confirms that his time in Mexico was of great importance for Cernuda and his works, but does not make any reference about any late influence possibly acquired during his time in America. The reason why Harris affirms this could relate to Cernuda's words in *Historial de un libro*: "La estancia en Inglaterra corrigió y completó algo de lo que en mí y en mis versos requería dicha corrección y compleción. Aprendí mucho de la poesía inglesa, sin cuya lectura y estudio mis versos serían hoy otra cosa" (513).

#### 5.1.1. *Las Nubes* (1943)

During 1937 and 1940, he wrote *Las Nubes*. The first poems were written when he was still in Spain but his situation changed. As we know, he had to move to England and while staying there, the knowledge about the language, culture and poetry increased. *Las Nubes* was inspired directly by what Cernuda lived during the war and its consequences. Many poems of this book deal with the concern the author felt about the country where he lived until he was a young adult. Yet, reading the poems that compose the book, it can be seen how the topic of the poems changes from the beginning to the end. For example, the three first poems "*Noche de luna*", "*A un poeta muerto*" and "*Elegía Española [I]*" share the same worry about the loss or the war and its consequences not only for those people, but for the country. The sadness, the impotence for not being able to stop the death of many people and at the same time, the appreciation for human life, all mixed up with feelings of exile, makes the beginning of *Las Nubes* a great example of what it was like for him to live the horrors of the war: "Contempla ahora a través de las lágrimas: / Mira cuántos traidores (...) No sabe qué es la vida / Quien jamás alentó bajo la guerra" ("*Elegía Española [I]*" 260).

He dedicated a poem to García Lorca, with whom he had a good friendship and his death meant a tough time for him: "Algo de eso quise expresar en los poemas

escritos durante el año primero de la guerra civil, que luego formaron parte de *Las Nubes*. La muerte trágica de Lorca no se apartaba de mi mente” (*Historial de un libro* 509). He also wrote a poem for Larra, “*A Larra con unas violetas*”, somehow different because the censure of liberty of expression can be seen as Larra also experienced it: “Escribir en España no es llorar, es morir, / Porque muere la inspiración envuelta en humo” (267). Nevertheless, the topic changes and the passing of time begins to appear mixed with the previous topics of the war, Spain and exile. Soon, the impact of the English surroundings begins to show in his poems, as in “*niño muerto*”: “De tus amigos, por el aire blanco / de los campos ingleses, vivamente” (273). Cernuda pointed it out in *Historial de un libro*: “La luz, los árboles, las flores del paisaje inglés comenzaron a aparecer en mis versos, para matizarlos con un colorido y claroscuro nuevos. Así fue el norte completando en mí, meridional, la gama de emociones sensoriales” (515). “*Impresión de destierro*” or “*Cementerio en la ciudad*” could be representative in *Las Nubes* when he talks about himself and his exile in a country that did not bring any happiness and he was happy to leave. At that time, he was still in Glasgow and he absolutely hated the north and this city, as well as the industrial and cold life there.

The decline of life towards death is intrinsically related to the unreal existence of exile, where death itself loses its importance because time acquires more value. The first pessimistic reactions against the war that were introduced in *Las Nubes* began to fade away and the worry he carried for his country started to hesitate. In a brief period of time, he suffered from problems of identity due to exile, as it can be observed in *Las Nubes*, but it is more recognizable in later works, where this feeling will be better developed.

The painful memories from the past remained with him, creating a need to reaffirm himself in the sad existence of exile. Pessimism hid the desperate necessity of finding a purpose for life and that would worry him more and more as time passed, as he will show in *Vivir sin estar viviendo* (1949).

Feeling apathetic, time began to acquire this sort of negative connotations, like a force that would consume his youth, leading him to death. Yet, this feeling would be later expressed. Meanwhile, this book in particular focuses on the immediate events of the war and its aftermath, the feelings of those trapped in that reality and the frustration of not being able to do anything to help.

### 5.1.2. *Ocnos*

After the publication of *Las Nubes*, the first edition of *Ocnos* was published (1942), with most of the poems in prose talking about Seville and Spain. The second edition, the only one that will be mentioned in this work, was published in 1949. The poems composed for this edition were written during the time he was still in England, so it can be observed the impact that the environment and exile had on his style and his life. “*Ciudad Caledonia*” is the one that better shows his feelings towards Glasgow, the well-known city that he came to hate:

Todo en este país, él, y la tierra donde se asienta, parece inconcluso, como si Dios lo hubiera dejado a medio hacer, recelando de la obra. Y tal el país, la ciudad. (...) ¿Cómo llenar las horas de esta existencia sin fondo?

Divinidad de dos caras, utilitarismo, puritanismo, es aquella a que pueden rendir culto tales gentes, para quienes pecado resulta cuanto no devenga un provecho tangible. (*Ocnos* 125)

During his exile in England, he moved from Glasgow to the south of the country, where he lived in Emmanuel College, working as a lecturer in Cambridge, from his previous position as a Spanish Assistant. In 1947 he moved to the United States, inspiring “*La partida*” y “*La llegada*”. The first one talked about leaving the UK and in the second one it can be appreciated the description of his arrival and the evident relief of leaving Scotland, “*La llegada*”:

Ya estaba allí: la línea de rascacielos sobre el mar, esbozo en matices de sutileza extraordinaria, un rosa, un lila, un violeta como los de la entraña en el caracol marino, todos emergiendo de un gris básico graduado desde el plomo al perla (...) Parecía ahora tan trivial, igual en las calles pardas y las casas sórdidas a aquella Escocia aborrecible, dejada atrás hacía años. (155)

In this edition of *Ocnos*, it can be seen that he misses not only his country, but also the weather and the sun, since it is common knowledge that the English islands do not enjoy the mild weather Spain has, as it can be seen in “*La primavera*”: “Este año no conoces el despertar de la primavera por aquellos campos, cuando bajo el cielo gris,

bien temprano a la mañana, (...) tienes el asfalto sucio de estas calles” (*Poesía completa* 601). While *Las Nubes* was mostly focused on the war and the concerns about Spain, this edition of *Ocnos* seems to be a reminder that he was feeling isolated in a foreign country where he could not fully understand as he did not master English yet. Anxiety mixed with the feeling of not belonging and the nostalgia for Spain could be what best summarises the content of *Ocnos*. For instance, a poem called “*La soledad*”: “La soledad está en todo para ti, y todo para ti está en la soledad” (*Poesía completa* 604). Following what Derek Harris said about Cernuda’s poetry, there is one characteristic that needs to be factored in to understand his poetry: the use of the second person singular to talk about himself, not to a specific addressee, but referring to his own feelings and experiences, not only shown in *Ocnos*, but in many of his other works.

Like his first publication *Perfil del aire*, *Ocnos* was reviewed and rewritten many times. Some of the poems created in the British exile would not appear in the third edition. The same happened with some poems of the first edition that did appear in the second edition of 1949. This critique against himself and the constant analysis of improving his poetry is the result of the first harsh criticism that he faced with the publication of *Perfil del aire*. From that moment on, he would be constantly revising his works and editing them, so it is not strange to find different editions of the same book that contains different poems. This perfectionism matches with his personality and could be the long term consequence of those harsh critiques that we mentioned above.

#### 5.1.3. *Como quien espera el Alba* (1947)

Durante uno de esos períodos de vacaciones en Oxford, en el verano de 1941, comencé allá *Como quien espera el Alba*, lo continué en Glasgow y lo terminé en Cambridge en 1944. El otoño, invierno y primavera de 1941 a 1942 fue uno de los períodos de mi vida cuando más requerido me vi por temas y experiencias que buscaban expresión en el verso. (*Historial de un libro* 517)

Springing from this quote, we move now to the next publication of this author in exile. It seems that he spent time in Oxford while he was in Scotland, and also came to like the south of the country more than the cold north. Spending time in Oxford helped him to recover inspiration, looking for life experiences that would be reflected in his

works mixed with his feelings. He started to devote his holidays to this city from the year he began to write *Como quien espera el Alba*:

Ni Glasgow ni Escocia me resultaban agradables. A partir de 1941 comencé a pasar en Oxford los meses de vacaciones estivales. En sus librerías, aunque la guerra también repercutiese en ellas (...). El regreso a Escocia me deprimía en extremo. (*Historial de un libro* 516-517)

One year after moving to Cambridge, in 1944, *Como quien espera el Alba* was completed. As Cernuda himself says, the end of the war caught him already in Cambridge and this publication, as he explains, it is just expressing his waiting for the rise of hope again after the horrors:

La terminación de la guerra me alcanzó en Cambridge y a esos años alude el título de *Como quien espera el Alba*, ya que entonces solo parecía posible esperar, esperar el fin de aquel retroceso a un mundo primitivo de oscuridad y de terror, en medio del cual Inglaterra era como el arca cerrada donde Noé sobrevivió a las aguas del diluvio. (*Historial de un libro* 519)

Cernuda moved to the south of the country because he was offered a new job as a lecturer, but in a different environment and university. The change of city brought him, if not happiness, some relief as he was finally able to leave Glasgow:

El traslado a la universidad de Cambridge me alegró mucho. La tarde en que debía tomar el tren camino de Londres y Cambridge, dejando al fin Escocia, fui por última vez a la universidad y, deteniéndome en el *quadrangle*, miré bien a todos lados (...). Luego me fui. Rara vez me he ido tan a gusto de sitio alguno. (*Historial de un libro* 517)

By the time he was composing the poems that would be included in this new work, Cernuda started to wonder about the crucial concept of the passing of time. Past, present and future seemed to gather around him, consume him, making him realize that he needed to take conscience that he could only count on himself in exile. Banished from Spain not because he wanted to, Cernuda remembered the past with a nostalgic

feeling, forcing him to overcome his current situation and realising that his dreamed reality might never happen. This pessimistic reality can be seen in “*Las ruinas*”:

Mas los hombres, hechos de esa materia fragmentaria  
Con que se nutre el tiempo, aunque sean  
Aptos para crear lo que resiste al tiempo,  
Ellos en cuya mente lo eterno se concibe,  
Como en el fruto el hueso encierran muerte. (*Poesía completa* 325)

However, he seems to find some agreement within himself. As Derek Harris suggests in *Poesía de Luis Cernuda*, the author resigned himself to his new life and that can be appreciated in the different tones of the poems, which go from pessimism and nostalgia, to forgiveness. Nevertheless, from one reality that might seem filled with hope, Cernuda is able to turn it into despair when he acquires the awareness that time passes for everyone and there is no way to stop it, life becoming death.

In exile, Cernuda was aware of time, the only active element in his life at that period. Time is also what gives Cernuda’s poetry in exile a sense of unity. Instead of looking forward to the future, the author goes back to memories in order to avoid the loneliness and emptiness that he felt in this foreign country.

A sense of nothingness can be felt: constant wondering and questioning about what is going to happen next. It is not as developed as in *Vivir sin estar viviendo*, but it is the beginning of what later he would constantly be feeling and expressing in his poetry.

#### 5.1.4. *Vivir sin estar viviendo* (1949)

*Vivir sin estar viviendo* followed the same pattern as *Como quien espera el Alba*. It was started in England, in Cambridge and continued in London, where he lived from 1945-1947: “Antes de dejar Cambridge, comencé *Vivir sin estar Viviendo*, que continué en Londres, adonde me fui en 1945” (*Historial de un libro* 520). It was not finished and published until he moved to the United States. Although he was relieved about being in America, this feeling did not last long, and the poet could not find the satisfaction that he was looking for. What would his promised land be? Logically, it should have been

Spain, but instead, the promised lands were to be found in Mexico, where he even found a new love: “Creo que ninguna otra vez estuve, si no tan enamorado, tan bien enamorado (...)” (*Historial de un libro* 528).

This book seems to confirm what Derek Harris states in his analysis of Cernuda’s poetry: conformism. The poem which could be the perfect example of his attitude is called “*El poeta*”: “Agradécete pues, que una palabra / Amiga mucho vale (...) Para el poeta hallarla es lo bastante / E inútil el renombre u olvido de su obra (...)” (*Poesía completa* 405). However, I would say that Harris’ words could be not really true, since Cernuda alludes to the title of this particular composition in *Historial de un libro*: “Téngase en cuenta que llevaba algunos a los de vivir *vicariously* (a eso alude el título de *Vivir sin estar Viviendo*), y que a veces leía para sustituir la vida que no vivía. (...) sin pena ni gloria, me movía suspendido en un estado ilusorio que no era de vigilia ni tampoco sueño” (526). Perhaps, what Harris refers to was the fact that Cernuda was living without a purpose to define him, something to make his life remarkable and that could lead him to the conformism D. Harris talks about.

In *Ocnos*, Cernuda included the poem “*La llegada*” about the arrival to America. However, his thoughts while he was leaving the United Kingdom were reflected in *Vivir sin estar viviendo*, mostly composed in Britain:

En Cambridge había escrito los ocho poemas primeros de *Vivir sin estar Viviendo*, y a ellos añadiría trece más antes de marcharme de Inglaterra, aunque, de estos, algunos los escribí en Cornualles, cerca de costa, adonde me acostumbré a pasar cuantas vacaciones tenía (...). (*Historial de un libro* 522)

This last poem written in the UK would be the final point to the creations and experiences he lived there. “*La partida*” contains his feelings and summarizes Cernuda’s life and with its last words, condemned the place where he was forced to live: “(Adiós al fin, tierra como tu gente fría, / Donde un error me trajo y otro error me lleva. / Gracias por todo y nada. No volveré a pisarte)” (*Poesía completa*, 424). In spite of his attempt at reflecting his emotions about his last moments, he would later say in *Historia del un libro* that he could not achieve or retrieve his emotions at that decisive moment: “Más tarde traté de expresar en un poema “*La Partida*”, aquella experiencia, pero no lo conseguí” (524-525).



## 5.2. America

He boarded a French ship that was docked in Southampton on September 10<sup>th</sup>, 1947. From there, the ship would go to New York. At this point in his life, he had forgotten about Spain, but doubts were pondering in his mind, wondering what America would look like. Cernuda spent the next five years as an Assistant Professor in the Spanish Department of Mount Holyoke, a college for women in Massachusetts, where he lived, specifically in South Hadley. The years he taught in Mount Holyoke go from 1947 to 1952, mainly assigned to Spanish literature from Cervantes to the Golden Age of Spanish literature. During those years, Cernuda decided to spend his holidays in Mexico, even staying one year there (1951) and returning the next year, in the second semester, as the Bulletin of Mount Holyoke shows. He eventually quit his job at Mount Holyoke and moved to Mexico in 1952, where he would teach again at the university (1954). Between 1960 and 1963 he would come and go three times from Mexico to the United States (California and San Francisco), and had to turn down one more conference in order to extend his visa. He died from a heart attack on November 5<sup>th</sup>, 1963.

### 5.2.1. *Con las horas contadas* (1956)

Like *Vivir sin estar viviendo* followed the path of the previous book, this publication also continued the path opened by *Como quien espera el Alba*.

Es verdad que, contrario al vaticinio, *Vivir sin estar Viviendo* fue continuado y terminado en Mount Holyoke, y que allí empecé también *Con las Horas contadas*, aunque esta colección la terminaría ya abandonados los Estados Unidos, en México.  
(*Historial de un libro* 527)

Started in America, this book would be the last composition he created during a period of his life where he was living in an English-speaking society. The difference with his time in the UK was his attitude towards the new place. According to his own words, he was more optimistic in a country that was not as affected by war as Britain. In addition, he was finally being recognized for his work and under such circumstances, of course his inclinations to like America were more favorable than in Britain:

Viniendo de un país donde la Guerra y la posguerra impusieron, y seguían imponiendo todavía al marcharme de allí, penitencia y ascetismo excepcionales, las tiendas de Nueva York, que son quizá uno de sus encantos mayores, me lo hicieron aparecer como país de Jauja. Mount Holyoke me agradó, así como la cordialidad de la gente y la abundancia de todo. Téngase en cuenta que, por vez primera en mi vida, mi trabajo iba a pagarse de manera decorosa y suficiente, lo cual, como es natural acaso ayudaba a mi primera reacción optimista. (*Historial de un libro* 526)

This initial reaction of optimism would soon fade with the first time he travelled to Mexico: “Vine a México por vez primera en el verano de 1949 y, contra mis presunciones, el efecto resulta considerable; tanto que la vida en Mount Holyoke se me hizo enojosa” (527). This conflict was reflected then in *Con las horas contadas*, as well as in *Variaciones sobre el tema Mexicano* (1952).

The title of this book, as it seems clear to me, alludes to time, indispensable to understand his poetry, since Cernuda was aware of the part that time plays in his compositions: “el título indicando no solo la urgencia del tiempo (...) el tiempo ha sido, a partir de cierta fecha en la vida, una de mis preocupaciones constantes (...)” (*Historial de un libro* 532). I would even dare to say that ‘this certain moment’ was the time when he realized that he could not go back to Spain and had to inevitably remain in the United Kingdom.

As he says, time is one of the most important concerns for him, because the fact that he was away from his home, his country, made him realize that the past will not come back, and the future was uncertain. Cernuda’s thoughts tended to go back to past experiences, since only his past seemed a reality for him.

Spain turned slowly into something terrible and, as a consequence, the author began to feel less patriotic, as if he was abandoned by his own country. This feeling had been present from the beginning of exile, even though he tried to keep the sense of belonging to the country, as Harris explains. The disillusion he experienced provoked that the idealized vision of Spain was transferred to Mexico, as we said before, the so called “promised land”, now with a new lover waiting, and with his new love, hope

would come to him. Cernuda himself would acknowledge this when he had to make the decision to go back to America in 1947: “Aunque parezca increíble, no había pensado en cómo y dónde habría de continuar mi existencia. Volver a mi tierra ni pensaba en ello: poco a poco se consumaba la separación espiritual, después de la material, entre España y yo” (*Historial de un libro* 522).

Even though he found in Mexico what he was looking for, he still went back to Mount Holyoke several times until he finally left the job in 1952. He would go back to North America, but not to Massachusetts. California was the last American land he visited during some months when he got the inspiration he needed to continue writing. In Mexico he would teach at a university again. Cernuda would go back to the United States between 1960 and 1963 to deliver conferences and poetic lectures in different institutions and colleges, managing to always pay visits and have little breaks in Mexico. In 1963, he was troubled with paperwork for his visa since he intended to go back to California for more conferences. He passed away, as we said before, after the summer of that year (1963) due to a heart attack.

## 6. CONCLUSION

We analyzed the period that Luis Cernuda spent in England and in America, focusing on his works and life experiences. As a prolific writer, Luis Cernuda worked hard and never stopped writing until the end of his life, and this would certainly deserve more space than the one available for this project.

Through all the compositions written in UK and US, the different phases the poet lived can be perceived: starting from the war, maturity, and coming to a point that he could not find the purpose of his life. He ended up feeling lost into the immensity of time, not being able to move forward and returning to the past as a response. He seemed to find the way to express his emotions in his poetry and, if one reads all the poems written in this period, one can notice the changes between them depending on what happened to him at the time.

Many of his most brilliant works were created in an environment that was, if not dangerous, hostile. Books filled with representations of his life, experiences and his surroundings. Taking that into account, it is not surprising that he wanted to explain some of the facts by himself in *Historial de un libro* which, in my opinion, is something that each writer should do. Not only did he write his impressions, but also constantly reviewed his own works and editions, finding a way to criticize himself and make his work even better.

Even today he is not as famous as other writers of the time and the people who have studied him only focused on one part: his life in Spain, or life as a foreigner and his writings. I can understand it because there is much to say, and focusing on every single aspect could take hundreds of pages and at the end, it would not be a fair representation. Moreover, he was influential in later centuries, being considered as one of the representative figures of Spanish literature in that century.

This project as introduction, or summary of his life in the English-speaking period could be a starting point for a deeper investigation of the author, as a general overview of his period in English-speaking lands. Obviously, it would be necessary to undertake a research about it, since his best compositions started when he had to go to England and ended up being exiled. It has to do with age, because the older one gets, the more experienced and knowledgeable one is, and that happened in exile. That is an

unusual combination that makes his poetry different from the rest of the poetry written in his generation. The fact that he was homosexual only adds more to his personality and the way he felt. He faced censure and was not able to express his romantic feelings, so he did what he was allowed to until a certain point: reflecting his way of loving and turning it into literature, creating magnificent compositions. His feelings, being love or despair, were well depicted in his poems, making Luis Cernuda a unique and a great representative of his time. So we can affirm the significant impact exile had on his life and works.

Unfortunately, I could not do a research as detailed as I would have liked to, but, indeed, every aspect of his life influenced him when he had to write or express his emotions, and I think we have yet a lot to discover about him.

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## 8. ANNEX

### 8.1. Book composition

I have included here a list of the compositions mentioned in order to clarify dates in which they were composed, the place and the year in which they were published.

Books	Places of composition	Dates of composition	Year of publication
<i>Las Nubes</i>	Madrid, London, Cranleigh Glasgow	1937 - 1940	1943
<i>Ocnos</i>	Glasgow, Cambridge, London	1940 - 1947	1949 (second edition)
<i>Como quien espera el Alba</i>	Oxford, Glasgow Cambridge	1941 - 1944	1947
<i>Vivir sin estar viviendo</i>	Cambridge, London, Cornwall	1944-1949	1949
<i>Con las horas contadas</i>	Mount Holyoke, Mexico	1950-1956	1956
<i>Pensamiento poético en la lírica inglesa del siglo XIX</i>	England, <sup>1</sup> Mexico	1956-1958 <sup>2</sup>	1958

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<sup>1</sup> Probably, the data, books and all he needed to write the essay were to be found in England, so I would not want to discard England as an actual place of composition.

<sup>2</sup> Possible dates since as far as I know, there is no actual information for the dates when the book was composed.

## 8.2. OTHER RELATED WORKS

### 8.2.1. Translations

As far as we can tell, Cernuda translated not only compositions from English, but also German poets, and expressed the will to translate from Greek too, but in the end, it just ended in his admiration towards Greek poets.

The first attempt to translate any text began in Madrid but not as a proper translation but out of curiosity. He became interested in poets born in other countries and, as a consequence, he tried to learn those languages in order to understand them, forgetting about the French authors that once brought him inspiration, and devoting his attention to German and English poets:

Cansado de la estrechez en preferencias poéticas de los superrealistas franceses, cosa natural en ellos, como franceses que eran, mi interés de lector comenzó a orientarse hacia otros poetas de lengua alemana e inglesa y, para leerlos, trataba de estudiar sus lenguas respectivas. (*Historial de un libro* 506)

About these translations, at first, as an initial learner of a foreign language, there was not much that he could do to translate difficult texts or texts dealing with complex matters. One of Cernuda's characteristics though, from the onset of his writing career, was the constant reviewing of his own works due to the harsh criticism he once faced with his first work *Perfil del aire*, as we previously mentioned. Some of the poems included in this first publication would be discarded by him in *Primeras poesías*. He did the same with the translations and he thought over them, understanding the corrections, as he did when he edited *Ocnos*, excluding some poems and adding more in the different editions: “de ahí uno de los errores más enojosos en la traducción, error que no comprendí sino años después (...)” (*Historial de un libro* 507).

I would then suppose that when he moved to the United Kingdom, the difficulties and problems that came from the lack of understanding of the language would eventually be forgotten and not only would he read, but also translate his favorite poets, such as Blake, Shakespeare, Keats, Hölderlin, Yeats or Wordsworth, among others. The translations that might have been complicated for him at first, would later



become easier to understand from the linguistic point of view and also from the content the texts evolved around.

When it comes to the authors he translated, it is obvious that he did not translate what was popular at the time. He decided to translate poets of his preference, mentioned above. Thus, we can find translations from German and English poets especially. As it would happen later with his critical essays, the fact that he chose different authors to translate or study is enough to consider that he was not impartial with his works, but was really passionate about them.

#### 8.2.2. *Pensamiento poético en la lírica inglesa del siglo XIX* (1958)

This book is a proper critical work where Cernuda had the opportunity to explain some of the features that his favorite British authors such as Wordsworth or William Blake shared. Although his first critical essay was *Estudios sobre la poesía Española contemporánea*, I think that this second work is more important for the topic we are dealing with.

Despite making clear that he was absolutely dispirited with Scotland, Glasgow and what England was like at the time, he was inspired by the English authors to the point that he wrote a book about them. It is obvious that the information and all the works that he had to consult were reachable when he was living in England, so I would not discard that he compiled the information he needed for *Pensamiento poético en la lírica inglesa del siglo XIX* while he was there. He studied 19<sup>th</sup> English literature with a different approach as the title indicates: he investigated the reasoning behind the characteristics the English writers had in common. In *Historial de un libro* once more, he explained the reason behind the study:

Acostumbrado al ornato verbal, borroco en gran parte, de la poesía Española, que de manera sutil me parecía repetirse en la francesa, me desconcertaba no hallarlo en la inglesa o, al menos, que ésta no hiciera lo mismo (...) Pronto hallé en los poetas ingleses algunas características que me sedujeron (...). (514)

According to some critics, this work is not as important as other works mentioned before, since it does not actually refer to Cernuda or was written with the intention to show or explain experiences and feelings. Nevertheless, I would like to state

that he had to choose among many authors that lived and wrote during that century and the selection of what he considered essential for the century indicated Cernuda's point of view about how important each author was. It is certainly fascinating to see why he picked some authors and left some others behind, but as I said before, this is not the topic of this project, but it would certainly be interesting to go deeper into this issue.

### 8.2.3. His experience as a teacher

One of the most interesting parts in his life was being an assistant or a Spanish lecturer. In any case, he had classes to prepare and teach. He taught classes since the moment he stepped in the UK until the end of his life, and he could even relate that to what writing meant for him:

Por otra parte, el trabajo de las clases me hizo comprender como necesario que mis explicaciones llevaran a los estudiantes a ver por sí mismos aquello de que yo iba a hablarles; que mi tarea consistía en encaminarles y situarles ante la realidad de una obra literaria española. De ahí sólo había un paso a comprender que también el trabajo poético creador exigía algo equivalente, no tratando de dar sólo al lector el efecto de mi experiencia, sino conduciéndole por el mismo camino que yo había recorrido, por los mismos estados que había experimentado y, al fin, dejarle solo frente al resultado. (*Historial de un libro* 513)

After reading this quote, we can imagine the type of class Cernuda would give to his students. Teaching would be an important experience for him that would actually help to organize his thoughts, because the job itself requires the ability to explain the same concept more than one time, providing examples and getting to know a lot about the topic itself. Thus, we can affirm that his thoughts about writing were in some way structured and clarified by that process. It was vital that his works were able to move readers' feelings to the point that they would feel exactly what Cernuda experienced. Our author did not want just to communicate the resultant feeling of a poem, but to transmit the way of thinking and feeling that led him to the final poem.

The fact that he treated his students as if they were the readers of his books could have prepared him to see in first person how someone would react to his poems. I

guess from the way the classes were structured, the students would probably ask questions, so the communication was bidirectional. Comparing to writing, teaching is a different way of communication in which the response of the audience is immediate. Therefore, the way he expressed himself in classes could have been received in many ways and Cernuda could have used that in order to compose poems, to get a glimpse into what he could expect from critics and readers. This experience as a teacher was used in order to write.

As a conclusion of this part, I would not dare to say that this part of Cernuda's work is not studied, but I would consider this approach as an innovative way of seeing his poetry and his classes: not as something separated from his poetry, but as parallel to it.