



**Luis Cernuda**  
**Author: Miguel Augusti**

Luis Cernuda runs away from Spain during the war and arrives in England from France. It will be a stay of nine years in the country (1938-1947). Time during which Cernuda reach his final adult voice. Physical space (we could differentiate between the geographical and mythical) and the feeling of a loss bound will be consolidated in his poetry.

His first stage is in North Stoneham near Winchester, as a monitor for a group of Basque refugee children hosted in the land of Lord Faringdon, work achieved and managed by Stanley Richardson who later, in 1941, will perish in the blitz and who had inspired Cernuda the poem '*Por unos tulipanes amarillos*' included in the book *Invocaciones* (1935). Such unpleasant experience (including the death of adolescent José Sobrino origin of the poem '*Elegía a un niño vasco muerto en Inglaterra*') makes him accept without a doubt the position offered at the University of Glasgow as a Spanish reader.

Cernuda will be established in this city since the beginning of 1939 until the summer of 1943, when is called by the Cambridge University to occupy a similar position until the summer of 1945. His visits London regularly because in the city he has friends and acquaintances as Salvador de Madariaga, the painter Gregorio Prieto or the Panero family.

In January 1945 he settled permanently in London to start to working in the newly created (January 20, 1944) Spanish Republican Institute.

He is housed in a meager room at Gregorio Prieto's house in Hyde Park Gate. The last two years of his stay in England will be especially difficult for him and will end leaving the country in September 1947 bound for North America.

Present work focuses on a way used by Cernuda to present (to contrast) a story. Facing mirrors and complementary both by opposition forming one body: the diptych. It is at once a direct allusion to his work '*Díptico español*', from the book '*Desolación de la Quimera*' (1956-1962).

In the hope that Cernuda himself could explain his British experience comes the idea of the interview, course impossible, hence the division into two separate poems the poem together. The first poem works as an invocation to the author, kind of Ouija, lending him voice in the second piece. It is in the second part where the invoked discuss about his english experience: loss of geographic references and encounter with a mythical space, belonging to a voice (language) independent of the body and place.

*Bibliography: La realidad y el deseo, Editorial Siruela, 1994; Antología, Editorial Cátedra by José María Capote, 1992; Espejo de sombras, Felicidad Blanc, Editorial Argos, 1977; Nostalgia de una patria imposible by Juan Matas Caballero, Ediciones Akal ,2005; Luis Cernuda by Jordi Amat, Espasa Biografías ,2002; Luis Cernuda en su sombra, by Armando López Castro, Verbum Editorial ,2003; Luis Cernuda Antología personal (CD), Editorial Visor, 1996.*

**Luis Cernuda, from Mexico, recalls his stay in England.<sup>i</sup>**

**Diptych<sup>ii</sup>**

I

The distant voice  
that today comes to you<sup>iii</sup>  
hard, compressed,  
adverse,  
it results not to agree  
to your reading and your forecasts.  
The encounter dreamed of so many times  
becomes then unexpected.  
Your amazement before him  
it-s not just the unusual pitch  
or different pace,  
but the vague oblivion  
faced with such absence.  
And think how strange it is  
to retrieve a day in the life  
to someone distant,  
frozen with his leaves,  
furniture, traffic and cat.  
There you have finally the room and  
the possible gesture, dense atmosphere  
sleeping up to you.  
And before thee this only truth:  
Time and desire retrieved:  
The presence, shape.  
But where am I?  
And where are you?

## II

Quit without a voice your soul.

This oneness lost into  
maturity in this divided

escape

Hyde Park Gate.<sup>iv</sup>

Turned your gaze

into the clouds<sup>v</sup>, 1938,

in this island of oblivion

you mourned for some shirts

and now you walk without a corpse!

From your poet chores:

Lessons and evenings.

Dreamed of an eternal winter

and the body not always rest

wherever we want.

If only the exile were

an oversight<sup>vi</sup>...

Never since yours and mine alone

fate would remain,

and bare, the word

stands against the other an abyss:

The boredom of the wandering poet:

Between what the crowd say,

and what the crowd feel.

Then the language makes

emotional filigree

to the daily solitude:

Everything is landscape.

Except desire, unavoidable,

always a kiss away.

Coward

into solitude, the soul howls

as if birds sang

in the night<sup>vii</sup>.

- i An allusion to the title of the poem 'Luis de Baviera escucha Lohengrin', from the book 'Desolación de la Quimera', 1962.
- ii Reference to the poem 'Díptico español', from the book 'Desolación de la Quimera', 1962. In this poem Cernuda speaks of exile, language and the division that supposes to feel connected to a voice, to a language from a nation that he repudiates, that no longer feels his. The book as a whole offers a summary of his life: love, exile and being a poet.
- iii Antología personal. Editorial Visor, 1996 Poetry reading by the author.
- iv 59 Hyde Park Gate: address of the residence of the painter Gregorio Prieto in London where Cernuda took a room during his residence in London.
- v 'Las Nubes' Cernuda's first book written in English soil (1940-1943) and opens his mature period.
- vi An allusion to the poem and book of the same title 'Donde habite el olvido'.
- vii [1] Birds in the night: poem from the book 'Desolación de la Quimera', 1962. In this poem Cernuda relates an episode in the life of the poets Paul Verlaine and Arthur Rimbaud, fled to London by the scandal of their relationship. This motif serves Cernuda to review and reckoning with his past, and this is the meaning of this diptych.  
[2] Birds in the night: Luis Cernuda's allusion to Paul Verlaine's poem of the same title.