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Salvador J. Fajardo
Binghamton University (SUNY)

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Cernuda in Current Spanish Poetry

Abstract

The poet Luis Cernuda (Spain, 1902-Mexico, 1963) has left his mark on much of the poetry written in Spain since the sixties. First rediscovered in the Peninsula in the late fifties and early sixties by, among others, Francisco Brines, José Angel Valente, and Jaime Gil de Biedma, his influence became pervasive both through the work of these poets, and, through the reading of Cernuda's poetry itself, available since 1975 in Harris and Maristany edition. Referring in particular to Biedma, whose impact on younger poets has been significant, this paper examines the presence of Cernuda in certain approaches to language and reality in the poetry of several "poetas de la experiencia" 'poets of experience,' such as Jesús García Montero, Felipe Benítez Reyes, and Álvaro García. Centering mainly on the simplification of language and the search for a non-rhetorical rhythm, developing in Cernuda from *Invocaciones* 'Invocations,' to *Desolación de la Quimera* 'The Disconsolate Chimera,' this article examines the same traits in Biedma. Thereafter it traces their incorporation in the poetry of García Montero, Benítez Reyes, and García. These readings offer an occasion to reflect on some of the strengths of the "poesía de la experiencia" that underlie its apparent straightforwardness and simplicity.

Keywords

poesía de la experiencia, poetas de la experiencia, poets of experience, Luis Cernuda, Spain, Spanish poetry, language, reality

Cernuda in Current Spanish Poetry

Salvador J. Fajardo
Binghamton University (SUNY)

Luis Cernuda's poetry has had a formative influence on the Spanish poetic landscape of the second half of the twentieth century and has done so across the entire expressive range of the genre. Its impact has been felt in terms of language (a colloquial turn, the avoidance of the poetic, simplicity); in terms of forms (interior monologues, auto-dialogue, fictional I, meditative turn); in terms of its approach to reality (objective, experiential); in terms of themes (intimate realism, homosexuality, art, ethics). While these topics offer a richly suggestive gamut of issues to explore, I will only be able to address those concerning language and the poets' approach to reality.

Upon first contact, what probably attracted most readers who discovered Cernuda in the late fifties and early sixties may have been the elegiac tone of his poetry, a number of its themes, and its cultural cosmopolitanism. He stood apart from the other modernists¹ of his period, those more familiar to the young poets of the fifties and sixties: Lorca, Alberti, Guillén, Salinas, and, of course, Aleixandre who was still in the Peninsula. Francisco Brines, upon finding a dusty copy of *Como quien espera el alba* 'Like Someone Waiting for the Dawn' in some library, recalls how he read it, "despaciioso y maravillado" (*La caña gris* 152) 'with lingering wonder'; José Ángel Valente is especially taken with the poetry's moral and intellectual rigor, and proclaims it "una de las piezas capitales en el desarrollo contemporáneo de nuestra poesía" (38) 'one of the principal components in the contemporary development of our poetry.'² According to Jacobo Muñoz, editor of the special 1962 issue of *La caña gris* dedicated to him, Cernuda is not as well-known to the Spanish public as others of his generation, but his influence on younger poets and critics has been "callada y decisiva" (154) 'quiet and decisive.'

Later on, the seventies and eighties was the period of the

epigones of Cernuda. Indeed, in *El País* (19 August 1986), Luis Suñén decried the mediocrity of Cernuda's "disciples" (15 Extra). Thus the impact of Cernuda remained pervasive in the second half of the twentieth century, both through the influence of that first group of poets who read him and absorbed him during the sixties (Brines, Valente, Biedma, for instance) and who were themselves key presences for the younger generations, and through the reading of his poetry, re-edited in the Peninsula.³ In the following remarks, I trace the path of Cernuda's influence, through the intervening generation, and up to the poets who became known in the nineties. I will focus in particular on Jaime Gil de Biedma, both as receptor and transmitter of the Cernudian style.

In a collection of essays on Biedma by Luis García Montero, Antonio Jiménez Millán, and Álvaro Salvador, Emilio Barón remarks that, among the mid-century generation of poets, Biedma is the one most worthy of assuming Cernuda's mantle (*Jaime Gil de Biedma* 130). According to Barón, the presence of Cernuda is embodied in the very syntax and diction of the younger poet's verses (134). And Gonzalo Corona Marzol observes that Biedma, in explaining the main traits of the "poesía de la experiencia," cites Cernuda's definition of the essential poetic structure not as one that conveys to the reader the effect of the poet's experience, but rather as one that guides the reader through the experience itself (78).

It took a long time for Spanish poetry to liberate itself from the linguistic shackles of Modernism⁴ (i.e., the Hispanic version of French Parnassianism-Symbolism). Those shackles were the distinction between poetic and non-poetic language, as well as the view that some subjects are more poetic than others. The vanguardists rejected such notions though the distinctions still surfaced in their poetry.⁵ Even the modernists of the twenties and thirties who went into exile, while they formulated highly individual, distinctive voices, were on the whole too concerned about falling into prosaism to abandon decisively a certain high tone, a still select vocabulary, a common use of syntactical figures (epithet, hyperbaton).⁶ They may have thought that a truly plain style threatened to dilute the necessary compactness of the poetic line. Not so Cernuda, or at least the later Cernuda, especially from *Las nubes* (1937-40) 'The Clouds' on. Although his becoming familiar with Anglo-Saxon modernism,

Eliot in particular, probably had much to do with lowering the tone of his language, this was a tendency that began earlier while he was still in Spain.⁷ Already in *Invocaciones* (1934-35) ‘Invocations’ there is an effort to relax the syntax and attend to spoken rhythms:

16 Ante vuestros ojos, amantes,
 17 Cuando el amor muere,
 18 La vida de la tierra y la vida del mar palidecen juntamente;
 19 El amor, cuna adorable para los deseos exaltados,
 20 Los ha vuelto lánguidos como pasajeramente suele hacerlo
 21 El rasguear de una guitarra.... (“Dans ma péniche,” *La realidad y el deseo* 116 ‘Reality and Desire’)⁸

16 Before your eyes, lovers,
 17 When love dies,
 18 The life of the earth and the life of the sea turn pale together;
 19 Love, adorable cradle for exalted desires,
 20 Has turned them languid as the strumming of a guitar
 21 Tends to do transiently....

The poetic tone initiated by the vocative of the first line is gradually brought down to the explicitness of lines 18, 19, and 20. Line 18 is a straightforward declarative statement with a slight poetic elevation in “juntamente.” This same line, whose topic itself seems somewhat abstract and elevated, is anchored down by adjectives that follow the nouns “cuna adorable,” “deseos exaltados,” and are descriptive rather than evocative. Line 20, “Los ha vuelto lánguidos como pasajeramente suele hacerlo,” is again a declarative statement practically indistinguishable from plain prose, although far from being prosaic: there is some inner rhyming and phonetic echoing, for instance, in “palidecen juntamente” and “lánguidos ... pasajeramente”; within the line there are phonetic echoes between “**Los ha vuelto**” and “**Suele hacerlo.**”

It is with *Las nubes* and increasingly thereafter that Cernuda’s plain style becomes evident:

Junto a mesas con tulipanes amarillos,
 Retratos de familia y teteras vacías.

La sombra que caía
Con un olor a gato
Despertaba ruidos en cocinas
(“Impresión de destierro” ‘Impression of exile’ RD 163-64).

Next to tables with yellow tulips,
Family portraits and empty teapots.
The shadow that fell
Together with a cat smell
Awakened noises in kitchens.

After gradually lowering his tone in intervening collections, in “Nocturno yanqui” ‘Yankee Nocturne,’ from *Con las horas contadas* ‘*With Time Running Out*’ (1950-56), one of his best known poems, Cernuda achieves his most matter-of-fact tone, a tone that he will retain henceforth:

Y piensas
Que así vuelves
Donde estabas al comienzo
Del soliloquio: contigo
Y sin nadie.
Mata la luz, y a la cama
(“Nocturno yanqui” 115-20, RD 288)

And you think
That thus you return
To where you were at the beginning
Of the soliloquy: with yourself
And without anyone.
Kill the light, and to bed.

What is common in these random selections, besides the general plainness of the vocabulary, is an underlying conversational rhythm. Through his fusing of speech patterns and poetic meter—i.e., the meter that emerges from a poetic line—Cernuda wanted to elicit veiled phonetic and rhythmical values and achieve his discursive, and yet highly compact, poetic diction.⁹

Consider the following statement Cernuda might have made in conversation: “Hay en la vida quienes dejan que la vida les viva y

quienes imponen a la vida dirección y sentido, mas son excepcionales los unos y los otros: el hombre medio si no acepta enteramente que la vida se le imponga, tampoco acepta imponerse a ella” “There are in life those who allow life to live them and those who impose upon life direction and meaning, but both types are exceptional: the average man, if he does not entirely allow life to impose itself on him, neither does he accept imposing himself on it.” Reading this in a straightforward manner, as generally happens in normal speech—i.e., unmodified by rhetorical emphases—accents tend to fall at the end of syntagmas. In this case there would be a slight stress in “vida les viva,” “dirección y sentido,” “los unos y los otros.” In the fourth syntagma the adverb “enteramente” acquires a stress, but there are no further stresses until “imponga”; in the last syntagma the stresses fall on “imponerse a ella.” Usually these stresses are elicited by the pauses at the end of syntagmas and by the weight of the sense that also tends to flow in that direction.

Now these lines happen to be the opening of “El poeta y la bestia” ‘The Poet and the Beast’ from *Desolación de la Quimera*:

Hay en la vida quienes dejan que la vida les viva
 Y quienes imponen a la vida dirección y sentido,
 Mas son excepcionales los unos y los otros:
 El hombre medio, si no acepta
 Enteramente que la vida se le imponga,
 Tampoco acepta el imponerse a ella (“El poeta y la bestia” 1-6,
 RD 343).

There are in life those who allow life to live them
 And those who impose upon life direction and sense,
 But both types are exceptional:
 The average man, if he does not accept
 Entirely that life impose itself upon him,
 Neither does he accept imposing himself upon it.

Cernuda’s syntagmatic distribution is almost identical as poetic lines, except for the long syntagma “[el] hombre medio si no acepta enteramente que la vida se le imponga,” to which he has assigned two lines. As we compare the distribution of pauses between prose and poetry we see how Cernuda incorporates the rhythm and movement

The trajectory toward straightforward language, so notably initiated in Cernuda and pursued with increasing decisiveness by Biedma, arrives at its more recent expression in the poetry of García Montero, recipient of the Premio Nacional de Literatura ‘National Literature Prize’ in 1995, and described as both a *poeta realista* and a *cernudiano*, who says, remembering Machado’s *Juan de Mairena*, that some present-day poets have opted for writing about “las cosas que pasan en la calle” ‘things that happen in the street,’ and others about “los eventos consuetudinarios que acontecen en la rúa” (*Últimos veinte años de poesía española* 86) ‘the events that transpire in the thoroughfare.’ It is clear that in his poetry García Montero falls on the side of “las cosas que pasan en la calle.”

Luis Antonio de Villena, in his anthology *Fin de siglo* (1992) ‘End of Century,’ identifies García Montero’s work not only as the closest in tone to Biedma, but also as the poetry that best exemplifies “una renovada poética de la experiencia. Poesía que habla y medita sobre la vida más cercana...” (25) ‘a renewed poetics of experience. Poetry that speaks and meditates on life close by.’ The prosody of “Mujeres” is fundamentally traditional, with a predominance of hendecasyllables and heptasyllables, in muted reference to the classical *lira* with a largely triple stress pattern and intermittent assonance. A sense of loss is sustained as well by the elegiac tone that finds its concentrated expression in the farewell of the concluding quartet: “Que tengas un buen día, / que la suerte te busque / en tu casa pequeña y ordenada, / que la vida te trate dignamente” ‘May you have a good day, / may good luck seek you / in your small well-ordered house, / may life treat you with dignity.’ The lovers’ parting is all the more poignant as it is contrasted with the continuities of the women going to their daily labors, tired still and recalling, perhaps, recent yet distant embraces: “...van dejando al descubierto, / en los cristales de la marquesina, / un anuncio de cuerpos escogidos / y de ropa interior” ‘...and reveal, / in the awning panes, / an ad for select bodies / and undergarments,’ their own possible youth-already a fixed representation: “Las muchachas nos miran a los ojos / desde el reino perfecto de su fotografía, / sin horarios, sin prisa, / obscenas como un sueño bronceado” ‘The young women look us in the eye / from the perfect realm of their photographs, / without schedules, without hurry, / obscene as a tanned dream.’ The lovers’ experience,

displaced at first as a suburb of quotidian doings, an early morning preceding busyness, is intensified in the speaker as if he resisted its gradual loss:

la mano que dejaste
 olvidada en mi mano,
 al venir de la ducha
 hace solo un momento,
 mientras yo me negaba a levantarme
 (Últimos veinte años 95)

the hand that you left
 forgotten in my hand,
 coming from the shower
 just a moment ago
 while I refused to get up

Beginnings, endings, the imperceptible gains of finality, all this is couched in an objectivity that attends to dismissible detail and yet is retroactively suffused with the aching loss of the concluding lines.

de Villena defines “poesía de la experiencia” as “[c]otidianeidad, claridad, temas próximos, sean urbanos, amatorios o nostálgicos. Evocaciones del pasado. Fuerte presencia de la temporalidad. Elegía. Paisajismo” (23-24) ‘the quotidian, clarity, accessible themes, be they urban, amatory or nostalgic. Evocations of the past. Strong presence of temporality. Elegy. Landscapes.’ One theoretical reference for the expression is Robert Langbaum’s still useful *The Poetry of Experience* (1957), whose subtitle, *The Dramatic Monologue in Modern Literary Tradition* already gives the term some specificity. Cernuda, of course, wrote “poesía de la experiencia” both in this sense and also in another sense that might be preferable as a generational descriptor, that of attention to daily reality. Proclaimed relentlessly for about a decade and a half, the 80’s and the 90’s, the term “poesía de la experiencia” was in danger of losing all descriptive value. There is of course a sense in which all poetry is poetry of experience, conveying the poet’s experience and seeking thereby to enrich that of the reader. Certainly, much controversy was elicited by the term and yet it did not actually lose its referentiality. Of the label “poesía de la experiencia” one critic says: “... todos sabemos a qué ámbito

se refiere ese término, a qué poetas, a qué estética y a qué obras” (Virtanen 197) ‘...we all know to what scope that term refers, to what poets, to what esthetics, and to what works.’ García Montero would be one of such poets, as well as Benítez Reyes, who also won the Premio Nacional de Literatura (1996, *Vidas improbables* ‘Improbable Lives’).

If “poesía de la experiencia” leads us back to Biedma, Valente, or Brines, their antecedent, besides Cernuda, would be Eliot—as even Biedma allows: “Yo he leído bastante poesía inglesa y son unas constantes de la tradición poética inglesa las que me han influido. Si tuviera que dar un nombre, yo diría que Eliot, y, a través de él, mencionaría los metafísicos” (*Conversaciones* 118) ‘I have read quite a bit of English poetry and what has influenced me are certain constants in the English poetic tradition. If I had to give a name, I would say Eliot, and, through him, I would mention the metaphysical poets.’ Eliot and Auden are key presences in Biedma’s poetry and would filter down to the more recent work of García Montero and Benítez Reyes, for instance. One should also expand the notion of *cotidianeidad* to include the use of objective descriptive detail as “objective correlative”¹¹ of inner emotion forcibly held in check—as in “Mujeres” until the final lines.

The impact of Cernuda, both transmuted by intervening poets or assumed directly by recent generations, is not only echoed in the deliberate colloquialism and realism of many younger poets, but also in the frequent meditative turn of their poetry and its elegiac tone, and in the use of auto-dialogue or interior monologue. Felipe Benítez Reyes shares these traits as well. For de Villena, he (and García Montero) would belong to a *postnovísimos* group. Villena’s anthology gathers these poets, together with Carlos Marzal, Álvaro García, and Juan Lamillar, among others. The anthology’s subtitle, *El sesgo clásico en la última poesía española* ‘The classical slant in the latest Spanish poetry’ has narrowed somewhat the *postnovísimo* group to those with such a classical tendency. Villena begins by saying that this tendency characterizes the poets that he prefers, whose selection is, of course, the anthologizer’s prerogative and further defines such poets as those who manifest

un concepto humanista del poema. Un texto que—rico y fiel a las reglas de la retórica—mezcla vida y mitología, saber y experiencia,

y se demora y varía en los temas de amor desdichado o ardiente, la melancolía del paso del tiempo, el regusto íntimo del retiro del mundo, la celebración de los amigos, el paisaje o el bienestar de un vivir que—pese a las sombras de Hades—se quiere hedonista siempre. (11)

a humanistic concept of the poem. A text that—rich and faithful to the rules of rhetoric—mixes life and mythology, knowledge and experience, and lingers on and varies the themes of unhappy or burning love, the melancholy of passing time, the intimate aftertaste of withdrawal from the world, the celebration of friends, the landscape or well-being of a living that—in spite of the shadows of Hades—wants always to be hedonistic.

In this sense Villena considers Benítez Reyes “uno de los más *clásicos* del grupo” (26) ‘one of the most *classical* in the group.’ The elegiac turn of much of Benítez Reyes’s poetry also harks back to Cernuda directly or as transmitted by Biedma, Ricardo Molina, or Juan Luis Panero. Virtanen points out that, in a general sense,

[l]a poesía elegíaca de base cernudiana y cuyos límites, en algunos casos, se mantenían próximos al contexto metafísico, estuvo bien presente en la década de los ochenta La juventud perdida, indiferencia hacia el presente o la elevación de lo nocturnal, son síntomas de lo elegíaco expresado en autores importantes: Felipe Benítez Reyes (Rota, Cádiz, 1960), con *Los vanos mundos* (1985) o *La mala compañía* (1989)... (164-65)

[e]legiac poetry in the style of Cernuda and whose limits, in some cases, remained close to the metaphysical context, was always present in the decade of the eighties Lost youth, indifference toward the present or the elevation of the nocturnal, are symptoms of the elegiac mode expressed in important authors: Felipe Benítez Reyes (Rota, Cádiz, 1960), with *The Vain Worlds* (1985) or *Bad Company* (1989)

An example of this manner would be “Persistencia del olvido,” ‘Persistence of Forgetting’ whose opening lines read:

Recuerdo una ciudad como recuerdo un cuerpo.
Caía ya la luz sobre las calles
y caía en tu cuerpo
en un hotel oscuro, o en no sé
qué habitación sin muebles de no sé
qué ciudad – la luz agonizante
de velas encendidas.

Un temblor
de velas, o un temblor de árboles,
en el otoño sucedía–no lo sé–
en la ciudad que no recuerdo
y esa desmemoriada sensación
de haber estado allí, ignoro adónde, con alguien que no sé,
quizás en la ciudad que siempre olvido. (Munárriz, *Últimos veinte*
años 200)

I remember a city as I remember a body.
Light already fell on the streets
and it fell on your body
in a dark hotel, or in I don't know
what unfurnished room in I don't know
what city–the dying light
of lit candles.

A trembling
of candles, or a trembling of trees,
it happened in the fall–I don't know–
in the city I don't remember
and that sensation of having no memory
of having been there, I don't know where, with someone I don't
know,
perhaps in the city I always forget.

The title may refer to Dalí's famous painting "The Persistence of Memory," though the poem is in no way ekphrastic of the picture. There may also be a reminiscence of the softness/hardness contrast explored in the painting in the body/city relationship in the poem, though this relationship is probably one among spaces rather than matter. One might say that there is a reminiscence of Dalí's soft

watches (as relative time) in Benítez Reyes's "olvido" "forgetting."¹²

The overall prosody of the poem—especially as it opens—is traditional with, beyond the framing first line of thirteen syllables, a predominance of hendecasyllables and occasional heptasyllables. The tone of these opening lines is that of conversational musing. Although there is a predominance of triple stresses, they are distributed along the poetic line in a variety of positions and this, together with frequent enjambments, maintains a tension between the spoken cadence and the near-lyrical queries of memory/forgetting so that the elegiac tone is mitigated.

The persistence of forgetting is the persistence of remembrance and, in the speaker's halting search through the dim avenues of memory, the reminiscence of Saint John of the Cross's "Cántico espiritual" ("un no sé qué que quedan balbuciendo" 'I know not of what they are darkly speaking') in his own repeated "no sé / qué" emphasizes the sense of loss that matter-of-factness wants to mute.¹³ Yet the memory (or forgetting) is there, the body is there, as the heart of a past city. Benítez Reyes uses a strategy of exchanges to merge the memories of space and love: body as city, candles as trees, being as absence, forgetting as persisting or forgetting as remembering.

At the banquet celebrating the publication of the earliest edition of Cernuda's complete poetry as *La realidad y el deseo* (Cruz y Raya 1936), Federico García Lorca said:

No habrá escritor en España, de la clase que sea, si es realmente escritor, manejador de palabras, que no quede admirado del encanto y refinamiento con que Luis Cernuda une los vocablos para crear su mundo poético propio; nadie que no se sorprenda de su efusiva lírica gemela de Bécquer y de su capacidad de mito. (*Obras completas* 158)

There is probably no writer in Spain, of whatever kind, if he is really a writer, a handler of words, who will not feel admiration for the enchantment and refinement with which Luis Cernuda puts words together to create his own poetic world; no one who will not be surprised by his effusive lyricism, twin of Bécquer's, and by his capacity for myth.

Lorca would then not have been at all surprised by the profound

and lasting impact of the work of his fellow Andalusian on later Spanish poetry. The quiet excellence and exquisite craftsmanship of Cernuda's poetry, and its avoidance of the high rhetorical tone that marked the nineteenth century tradition, were guidelines that poets of the sixties would be eager to follow, if only to keep pace with European models as well in a period of still noticeable intellectual isolation. That Cernuda explored and experimented with what turned out to be lasting fundamental issues of poetic craft was later confirmed by the following generations of poets who still looked to him for inspiration.

Notes

1 Still frequently referred to as the "Generation of '27" especially in Spain.

2 All translations are mine.

3 The first complete edition of Cernuda's works to appear in Spain after the Civil war was the two-volume edition by Harris and Maristany, vol. 1, *Prosa completa*. Barcelona: Barral, 1975; vol. 2. *Poesía completa*. Barcelona: Barral, 1977.

4 I use Modernism, with a capital, in reference to the movement that incorporated Rubén Darío, Salvador Rueda, etc., and modernism for the poets of the so-called generation of '27 (or '25).

5 Already in the nineteenth century, the much maligned Campoamor had advocated for a pared down poetic diction saying that only rhythm separates poetry from prose. Cernuda himself says of Campoamor that "su mérito principal [es] haber desterrado de nuestra poesía el lenguaje preconcebidamente poético" (*Estudios* 31) 'his principal merit is to have exiled from our poetry language that is preconceived as poetic.'

6 Stylistically speaking, an epithet is a qualifying expression (e.g. the crafty Ulysses); in Spanish it is often the use of qualifying—before the noun—as opposed to descriptive—after the noun—adjectives. Hyperbaton is a syntactical trope whereby the common order of words is modified.

7 Cernuda went to England on a lecture tour in 1938 and never returned to Spain.

8 Henceforth quoted as *RD*. I use the first complete edition of Cernuda's poetry, published in Mexico by the Fondo de Cultura Económica," 1958.

9 In "Historial de un libro," his poetic autobiography, Cernuda says: "[el

encabalgamiento] me condujo poco a poco a un ritmo doble, a manera de contrapunto: el del verso y el de la frase. A veces ambos pueden coincidir, pero otras diferir, siendo en ocasiones más evidente el ritmo del verso y otras el de la frase. Este último, el ritmo de la frase, se iba imponiendo en algunas composiciones En ciertos poemas míos ... el verso queda como ensordecido bajo el dominio del ritmo de la frase" (*Poesía y literatura, I y II* 'Poetry and Literature, I and II' 205) '[Enjambment] led me little by little to a double rhythm, as in counterpoint: that of the poetic line and that of the sentence. The latter, the rhythm of the sentence, was imposing itself in some compositions ... In certain poems of mine ... the poetic line remains somewhat muted under the rule of the rhythm of the sentence.'

10 In the poem, Biedma recalls two earlier memory pieces, one by Antonio Machado from "Retrato" 'Portrait': "Mi infancia son recuerdos de un patio de Sevilla" 'My childhood is the memory of a courtyard in Seville,' which becomes in Biedma "Mi infancia eran recuerdos de una casa" 'My childhood was a memory of a house,' and another by Alberti, from "Carta abierta" 'Open Letter,' the last poem of *Cal y canto* 'Quicklime and Song': "Yo nací ¡ respetadme! con el cine" 'I was born -- respect me! -- with the cinema,' and in Biedma, "Yo nací (perdonadme) / en la edad de la pérgola y el tenis" 'I was born (forgive me) / in the age of the pergola and tennis.'

11 The notion is, of course, Eliot's.

12 On the other hand, when asked whether the soft watches were meant as a representation of the relativity of time and space, Dalí said that they reminded him of Camembert cheese melting in the sun, a typical putdown to any lucubrations that might take us beyond paint on canvas.

13 In the "Cántico..." the "Esposa" (Wife, the soul) begs the "Esposo" (Husband, Christ) to surrender to her love and cease sending messengers who wound her even more than his absence with their inchoate praises of her beloved ("un no sé qué...").

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