

Lihn's poems, unlike Cernuda's, have been Englished by several hands: Jonathan Cohen, John Felstiner, and David Unger. What amazes me in this collection is that these three people, poets themselves, have managed to show Lihn as he essentially is and have not intruded their own style into what he has to say. This is the soul of good translation: you will defend to the death the way you have done the thing, but you will always defend it as you see, or think, the poet has seen fit. This is one of the best "collective" collections of translations that I have seen in many a moon wherein the poet has been preserved as he is by those who work on him.

Exile is best expressed as loneliness, as Lihn does with his "Six Poems of Loneliness" (*Seis soledades*). This is a slight *nostrum* in these poems as compared to those that Góngora wrote under the same title or those by Antonio Machado later on. It is the yearning for something, just something, that the Portuguese have in their *saudade*, the same word. With Lihn it comes down to a lack of sex, or the tom-cat sneaking around and growling across the sexual gap, as he puts it and David Unger translates it so well in English:

Women  
steeped in everything there is,  
good or bad, it makes no difference.  
Huge, obliging sponges.  
They are my great resentment,  
what my spiteful glands secrete,  
my loneliness, my daily bread.

("Six Poems of Loneliness," VI)

The loneliness here blends into that expressed by Gabriel García Márquez in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Things and people are by themselves and yearn for what there is that they may have thought they left behind; the loneliness of Proust, vindicated in Shakespeare's Sonnet XXX from which Scott Moncrief drew his title for the translation so denigrated by those who neglected to consult the sonnet and its theme. There is no future, lest it be solitude and loneliness, which is what we others have learned.

It is strange that there has been a mistake in the set-up: the edition is flawed, God help us. The title in translation for "*Monólogo del poeta con su muerte*" has been confused with "*Monólogo del viejo con la muerte*"; that is, the title "The Old Man's Monologue with Death" has been swapped with "Monologue of the Poet and His Death." Time works on and does it right and God bless editors because poets are nothing but old men before their time. It is also the reflection of defeat. In the case of Cernuda it was observant, in Lihn's it is prophetic. His poem "The Defeat" predicts what will happen in Chile, taking everything else with it:

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FROM Gregory Rabassa, "Other Voices, Other Rheums: Three Versions of the Outsider," rev. of *Selected Poems*, by Luis Cernuda, trans. Reginald Gibbons, *The Dark Room and Other Poems*, trans. Jonathan Cohen, John Felstiner, and David Unger, and *Songs of Cifar and the Sweet Sea*, by Pablo Antonio Cuadra, trans. Grace Schulman, *Parnassus: Poetry in Review* 9.1 (1981): 140-147.

Chinemachinema. Its machinery is so  
crushingly simple to run, but who  
among its operators  
can establish order where the premeditated  
treachery of chaos always ruled?  
Form follows form and a huge deformity  
slowly directs the whole thing in a  
fatal direction.

(p. 59)

He puts together the wheel—not a symbol of life, but life as a symbol of  
the wheel—and the grinding mill of time:

The wheel was already turning perfectly, as in the age  
it appeared in the myth, as in the day  
it was first carved in wood  
with a sound of medieval sparrows' song;  
time was flying in the right direction. You could hear it  
moving toward us  
quicker than the dining room clock whose ticking grew  
louder to break up so much silence.

. . . .  
and life—symbol of the wheel—moved ahead to storm by  
making the wheel turn faster and faster,  
as in a mill furiously grinding time.

(“The Dark Room”)