

THE MAIDEN AND DEATH: OR DEAR HUNTER / Tali Tamir

“At that time there was a deer. He did not come and appear, he was just there. He had no likeness to a ghost but rather it was as though all the light in the world had gathered in him and he was the source”

William Faulkner, “The First Ones”.

In this group of paintings by Noga Linchevsky entitled “DEAR HUNTER”, it is impossible to ignore the biographical starting point that set the entire process in motion - a complex illness that undermined natural feelings of stability and life expectancy, and cast its heavy shadow of death on everyday life. Noga Linchevsky, an active artist, graduate of Bezalel, was marked by fate and projected into the bull’s eye of the target. At the time it was an open question whether she would be delivered from it or not.

The illness marked out its field of action: The body. Within the body. In the beginning the gaze was focused on the body surface and branded it in varied ways. This was the traumatic stage, the instinctive attempt to perform a ceremony of exorcism. From the artistic point of view, this stage was pushed aside and concealed. In its wake an imaginary field appeared, an undefined field identified by its inner colors – red, pink, yellow, purple. From within rose the metaphoric image of the hunted animal – the deer.

The deer becomes the “Spokesman”, the voice of the hunted. Linchevsky marks the associative – semantic field where she moves. The words: pleading, shooting range, sighting, slaughter, interception, the moment of honing in on the target, marking. However, precisely from that point, trapped in the range of fire, she appeals directly to the hunter. Her appeal is intimate and personal; dear, she appeals to him softly, and unfurls an ambivalent relationship where it seems that the victim falls in love with his executioner and the prey is ensnared in the charms of the hunter. As in the famous etching of Munch, inspired by “The Girl and Death” by Schubert, the sick girl dances in the arms of Death and is intoxicated by his charms. The play on words in English between *dear* and *deer* identifies the “hunter” specifically as a “deer hunter” – archetype of the steely, tough, male hunter described by Faulkner (in his book “The First Ones”) who waits his entire life for the moment when he can pull the trigger: “Now, said Sam Pathers, shoot fast, and slowly, slowly.”

The determining moment: who spots whom first – does the hunter spot the animal first or does the animal spot the hunter? Whose point of view does Noga Linchevsky describe – that of the hunter who spots the animal or, that of the animal who detects the impending danger and understands that his fate has been sealed? Linchevsky wavers between identifying herself with the animal or with the hunter, between the woman who is intoxicated and tortured, and the artist who observes from without.

Thomas Mann described the association between love and illness in his great epic “The Magic Mountain”. Mann places the metaphor of illness in western culture in the center of his work, and especially the great illness of the Romantic period – consumption (tuberculosis). He puts his theoretical ideas into the mouth of Dr. Krokovsky – a lecturer who comes to the mountain and penetrates the territory of

of the patients as a stranger coming from the outside: "... What then is the disguise and what is the image wherein suppressed and outcast love appears? Thus questioned Dr. Krokovsky and glanced at the columns of his audience as though he earnestly expected an answer from them. And then Dr. Krokovsky said: In the image of the illness: the symptoms of the illness are none but the disguised dynamics of love, and all illnesses are only a reincarnation – a form of love." Hans Kanstrup, Mann's hero, does not succeed in examining seriously the far-reaching assumption that was presented to him in a very erudite way, because he was distracted and tempted into the bare arms of the woman who sat in front of him, and he was already deep in thought about the nature of women and their dress. Only the question of temptation remained in the air.

..... And the wounded animal remained – defeated, bleeding. Through its death another change in the order of things was made possible, towards the appearance of a female image: girl-woman clutches a heart and seemingly unites, into one image, the essence of all of the contradictory qualities – illness and health, life and death, the hunter and the hunted.