

BOOKS

Ionela Diaconu Ablai, *Țipătul lăncii*
Book Review: Ionela Diaconu Ablai. *Țipătul lăncii* [The Howl of the
Spear] Iași: Ars Longa, 2018, 141 p.

"For, you see, each, alone, with the map of his own thoughts," (p. 122) is perhaps the phrase which would best encapsulate the atmosphere and tone of Ionela Diaconu Ablai's volume of poetry *Țipătul lăncii*. As a collection of 55 short prose poems arranged in an alphabetical order, Ablai's poems can be conceived as a series of 'howls' that embody the turbulent and tempestuous wave of emotions experienced by the lyrical 'I', which provide a stimulating view of such iconic themes as erotic relationships, the condition of man within an indifferent universe and the purpose of art, all of which have pervaded many contemporary poets' predecessors in the field of poetry.

Conceivably drawing inspiration from German-born poet and novelist Herman Hesse's works, as evidenced by the epigraph included in the preface of the volume, the dominating figure of



Ablai's reflections is the "weary, greedy, wild, childlike, and sophisticated man of our late age, dying European man who wants to die, overstrung by every longing, sick from every vice, enraptured by knowledge of his doom," (p. 7) whose inherent duality resonates throughout the entirety of the work. As the author adopts a multitude of voices, that do not limit themselves to gender, she creates a vivid image of the melancholy which

characterizes most of the narrators of the poems, which is further complimented by Maria Teodora Crișan's illustrations. Through their simplicity and abstractness they manage to capture the sombre, yet expressive language of the poet as she describes the tumultuous manifestations of the ego's mental state.

Reflections upon the duplicitous nature of existence are common among the poems and are often the driving force behind the need of the 'I' to ques-

tion the condition of man in a hostile and inimical environment as demonstrated by poems such as "Ecuția puiului de șarpe", in which the 'I' remarks that: "In an entirety of nonsense, we add a chance event and... how much death must we subtract to be left with a life, more or less?!" (p. 52) and is then echoed in "Roagă-te să bată vântul!" where the 'I' concludes that man's life is little more than an accumulation of chaotic events whose very nature prevents the individual from affirming themselves as autonomous in the face of the overwhelming forces of the universe which they inhabit: "yet in my epic scenario I have not accounted for a single detail and that has ruined my vision: the Wind! By that I mean something that does not belong to me. /Love, beauty, truth, freedom, kindness is the same. Their absence will destroy your view of life, it will show you just how futile you have become in all those years." (p. 96)

Moreover, the funeral motifs which abound within the poems also enforce the fatalistic worldview presented in the volume's short prose as poems such as "Cineva and ceva," "Din Valea Regilor, cu vanitate," "Natură moartă: Flori de nu-mă-uita" and "Țipătul peste care arunci pământ" have the narrators return from the grave and be relegated with consciousness in order to communicate to the reader the futility of not only the experience of living, but of death itself. The individual is unable to escape the subjugation imposed upon it by forces which lay beyond the comprehensive capability of the human and is ultimately forced into a position of passivity and immolation. "Două nopți și două zile" is the most illustrative in regards to this theme as its narrator, the unborn and genderless child of a suicidal woman,

lacks agency due to their dependence upon the body of the mother, regardless of the fact that this connection proves to be fatal once she engages in an act of self-destruction. Moreover, though "the uterus is stormed by thousands of demons" (p. 48) during the mother's death, the poet merely remarks that the child remains indifferent to this event as "they close their eyes weary of that death on the outside," (p. 48) apathetically accepting the termination of their life.

It is an image which is reproduced to an extent in several poems, though it is often undercut by the reader's awareness that the ineptitude displayed by the many egos presented in the poems is due to their own desire to cleave themselves to another person, even at the expense of their own independence. In the hostile environment which is presented as the natural state of the world by the author, the individual's ostracism at the hands of society as presented in poems such as "Alcamie," "Imitație la sevraj," "Manifest," and "Vedere selenară," has ultimately resulted in an absence of plurality. As Ablai demonstrates the 'I' is incapable of incorporating an alien perspective into its consciousness without completely dismantling the Self and forcing it to be consumed by the other's ego. The importance of this particular phenomenon is accentuated by its incorporation into the poems which focus on the theme of erotic relationships.

Love is often portrayed as an antagonistic and belligerent process of subjugating the object of adoration, attempting to completely dominate them and forcing them to undergo a metamorphosis whose results are often monstrous in nature, as demonstrated in "Eu-realitate, tu-fantasmă a minții mele":

"The brutality of rejection has made me become a monster. Hair has grown on my face, my limbs, even on my lips, so I may never kiss anyone in this life and the one after death." (p. 55) Passion is thus translated into aggression: "You've committed acts of supreme egoism, you've annihilated my desire to dream if the dream did not involve you," (p. 112, "Tinere, nu înfrunta apusurile"!)) and the cosmic scale to which the lovers are elevated due to the erotic relationship merely allows their egoism to reach what one might consider its natural conclusion in which the lovers create worlds of their own, divided between them and unable to commune with each other ("Cearta pe lumi").

It is for this very reason why the "Țipătul lăncii" trilogy remains the most significant set of poems of Ablai's volume as it encapsulates the majority of the themes that are present in the work. The inherent egoism of man converts the first part of the trilogy, "Nihil", into a rejection of the "unadamic woman" (p. 118) by her lover: "Leave! Go away now, for I am Earth. And shall you see me in you, I call you mad, beyond time!" (p.

118-119) The Biblical allusions present in the poem create a primordial context, in which the two lovers affirm their hostile, yet co-dependent relationship as demonstrated in the second part "Fere nihil", where the loss of the woman has driven her lover mad with grief to the extent that he is no longer certain whether he desires salvation or destruction at her hands. The funeral motifs transform this poem into a twisted elegy in which the hostility between the lovers survives the death of the erotic relationship, which would then return in the third part "Minus nihilo", where the mourning lover has come to worship the image of the "traitorous" woman (p. 120) who has come now to represent for him the "only woman." (p. 121) The image which this trilogy creates is one which ultimately characterizes the entirety of the volume as the poet strikingly captures through her poems the essence of a world seen through a 'broken mirror': because they cannot escape it, the individual's revolt against the indifference of the universe is reduced to the act of howling, expressing through it their 'disgust for the nonsense of life'.

ADINA FLORINA DRAGOȘ

Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca
dr.florina@yahoo.com