

MODERN PERSPECTIVES ON ION BĂIEȘU'S THEATER AND HIERONYMUS BOSCH'S PAINTINGS

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Abstract

This article aims to demonstrate that there are no boundaries that could separate arts and literature, the two fields being connected to the same aesthetic reality. The approach of Ion Băieșu's theater reveals a surprising fictional universe in which bizarre figures live and turn into grotesque hypostases. The doctor or the healer become more than simple dramatic characters and more likely projections of tormented selves fighting against each other for a brutal and absurd purpose. In an authentic manner, these symbolic images manage to describe a sublime universe that encounters Bosch paintings by reconstructing emblematic scenes, named suggestively by the painter: Cutting the Stone (The Cure of Folly) or The Ship of Fools. In fact, the perspective is absolutely inspiring, both pictures conveying the very sense of madness as a form of being both in the writer's and the painter's world. This analysis-reflection will highlight the powerful connection between these two artists, trying to emphasize symbolic and truthful meanings.

Keywords: *strangeness, grotesque, humor, irrational, dehumanization*

INTRODUCTION

Modernity conveys a full sense of estrangement, becoming a concept that overwhelms the 20th century, being one of the most powerful mean of understanding the inner self, in a way that expresses one's sorrows, frustrations or broken identity. In art and literature, modern perspectives offer the possibility of understanding not only the individual, but also his world, composed of contradictory elements, capable of describing the artist's understanding of real life. It is acknowledged that the personal crisis is the world's crisis, this universe lacking the authenticity and rationality which will give it the force of surviving in a tormented world.

Taking into account Ortega y Gasset's statement that the cynical giving up rationality is a particularity of all major cultural and social crisis, we could consider appropriate that the images composing Hieronymus Bosch universe is an expression of a universe on the verge of collapse. The 15th century is marked by a darkness symbolically associated with an age of degeneration, which will bring to the surface uncertain, surprising, grotesquely comic figures intended to show that in a schizoid world, where there are no cultural, intellectual or human landmarks, anything is possible. In the same way, Ion Băieșu's world constructs another type of degeneration, that of the urban world under the rule of imposture, of deceit, falsehood and lies detected at every step, through the existence of bizarre figures who claim to be healers, doctors, saviors of spaces crossed by an acute crisis of identity, morality and sense of value. The comic is at the heart of this unimaginable grotesque, which makes it possible to affirm that: never in the history of the world have literature, plastic art and philosophy been anything but the best forms of expression of universally valid truths.

My approach intends to bring to the foreground both the modernity of Ion Băieșu's work, whose symbols go beyond his era, and to reconnect with the artistic figures of an era which, in reality, is going through the same crisis as the world under the rule of a censoring system, annihilates, undermines, transforms society into a horrible bed of Procrustes, which Băieșu detects, amends, points the finger at, in the hope that art still has this purifying power and can change mentalities, opinions, people. Bosch's incursion into the space of image and color, of surprisingly strange forms, in which the individual sometimes becomes himself a form of visible alienation, a victim of attitudes and actions that mutilate him externally and internally, translates, as E.H. Gombrich said: „..... an atmosphere of cruelty and crude humor. In any case, for visitors to Italy, his creepy inventions

deserved all the attention because they were so appealing and fantastic (cose tanti piacevoli et fantastiche), funny grotesque images that they greatly appreciated.” (Gombrich, 1981, 135)

Beyond the renunciation of reason, which becomes a constant of both worlds, absurd humor develops deep meanings of the literary and plastic space, recognizing a process of reification, specific to the crisis that the authors bring to the pictorial or imagistic-linguistic level. „This process, which takes place in various guises and on various levels in capitalist society, extends to the whole of psychological, moral and spiritual life, to all axiological positions, making the abstract and quantitative prevail over the concrete and qualitative. Qualitative human relations become mere quantitative attributes of inert things. Administrative bureaucracy, institutionalization, abstract conventions that do not take account of living reality, are examples of reification. The formalism of justice that automatically judges on the grounds of abstract laws, giving "legal" sentences, but contrary to equity and ethical categories, belongs to the same sphere of reification “ (Balotă, 1971, 13-14).

Reification is not a process that we see evolving only in capitalist societies, but becomes a constant in the communist world, a way of hiding the individual from his real self and the world that constrains him. From a strictly historical point of view, the community is carefully and consistently built creating links that are both dangerous and superficial in their essence, which Băieșu transposes so plastically through *homo homini vecinus*, a paraphrase of the Latin saying that emphasizes man's need for survival by annulling common sense, empathy, kindness as fundamentally human values. Ion Băieșu's theater goes back five centuries to glorify an existential absurdity that marks one of the most problematic eras of Romanian history. Still a psychological Middle Ages, communism constrains, annihilates, limits man to identify, if not with a sterile, minimal space, with an acute lack of freedom that subjugates him internally. Here, as a reaction to this traumatized interior, Bosch's world intervenes, illustrating in image and color the grotesque humor of Băieșu's plays, conceptually and symbolically defining the isolation, the destruction of the neighbor, the absence of inner elevation.

1. MATERIALS AND METHODS

1.1. Materials

In this article we investigated the unusual association between different cultural fields, by finding similarities between the dramatic work of Ion Băieșu, a Romanian playwright affiliated to the last four decades of the 20th century, and the paintings of Hieronymus Bosch, a Flemish artist of the 15th century. We have chosen several texts by the Romanian playwright and two representative paintings by the Flemish artist, using both online resources and art albums in physical format. We assessed the possibility that creators so far from each other could meet in a happy way through symbols, contours, content. What binds them is the indissoluble perspective on existence, which generates this point of view that I set out in the introduction.

1.2. Methods

The main method of investigating the literary work, respectively the artistic one, was that of trans-disciplinarity, which allowed going beyond the evaluated field, relating it to another area of significance. Literature and art function as methods of investigation, being of a creative, heuristic nature, emphasizing the importance of details that highlight particular aspects. We have combined hermeneutic research with art criticism, considering that the symbols found in color, lines, profiles are described at the linguistic and literary level through dialogues, characters, bizarre but significant identities. In fact, the research has revealed that borders in creation are illusory and that the fundamental motifs are visible in different forms of manifestation over the centuries, building a universal matrix.

1.2.1. *The Healer and The Master face to face with the doctor in „The Cure of Folly”*

The unusual in Hieronymus Bosch's painting has the aspect of a profound revelation of the reality that the playwright tendentiously exposes in his comedies. We realize that everything that Băieșu manages

to do in *The Master* or *The Healer* is nothing but a simple way of stating that everything that seems to be outside the bounds of reason and normality is the very reality of a dysfunctional society, in which the ordinary man needs witches, doctors, sorcerers, impostor doctors who manage to restore normality to a completely irrational world. In this case, the healer cannot be a normal individual, he needs a dose of madness to propel him into a unanimously accepted reality. He is defrauding a system which, in turn, deceives him, deludes him, encourages him to practice, undeservedly, not a genuine medicine of body and soul, but one of simulacra, generating cascades of laughter, in which is hidden a pertinent and very vocal lamentation. The Flemish painter also strikes the perfect balance between the bizarre and the natural, creating a pictorial harmony, which in Băieșu's work is transposed into the linguistic coherence of the comic situation or character: „In Bosch the unusual is not disorienting, because it has the logical coherence of great vision that does not need to be helped from outside with any text. He does not go beyond ordinary reality with a superimposed reality. The unusual comes from the fact that it is felt as possible, though imagined in impossible figures. This abnormal and unbroken tension that Bosch achieves between the ordinary and the unusual makes us accept it as our own tension.” (Tarangul, 1974, 6)

In this context, does the bizarreness of Bosch's universe disorient or is it also an effect of the lack of inner coherence? The hermeneutic analysis will reveal the aspects that support a relevant point of view in relation to the constants of the literary space, that there are no ruptures in Băieșu either, since the unusual becomes normality, and the malady is an effect of a historical and individual crisis. This can be mitigated only with the help of the comic, which, thickening characters and attitudes, however, transforms the hideous and grotesque into quantities digestible by the literarily informed receiver.

In a waiting room that verges on the ridiculous by the fact that it is subject to ruin (*dirty, with blackened walls, badly lit and poorly furnished, almost sordid*), a medical act is consummated, going beyond the professionalism, becoming a masquerade that arouses laughter through the absurdity of dialog and human interactions, subjected as if to an atrocious distortion. The play's author deliberately and acutely distorts figures taken from the social arena, defined by physical and moral deficiencies, which propels them into the sphere of absurd comedy: the hunchback, the fat man, the tailor and the woman. These four are under the absolute domination of the apprentice, who directs the whole unfolding of events in the midst of which the image of the master appears, being the one who heals through the advice he gives: general, for body, soul, animals and children. It is worth noting that the fees increase according to the importance of the suggestions given, but also that the advice aimed at raising children is offered free of charge, which seems to maximize its importance. On the other hand, it could signify the opposite: educating children is so simple and natural, that doesn't need any advice. Still, the author's perspective on family and education affirms the contrary, having enough examples of inappropriate parents' behavior, irresponsibility and immaturity.

The absurd is gradually constructing a puppet of the natural which feeds the irrationality of individuals who are unaware of the ridiculousness in which they are sinking irretrievably. Reconfiguring a universal motif, the hunchback becomes the expression of a lack of maturity. By this retort, the apprentice gives the negative sign of his moral possibility, the apprentice denounces the character of the master, whose image he represents. A terrestrial god, the hilarious embodiment of pettiness and all-sufficiency, they continue their peroration, warning of a possible punishment for committing such an act, the seriousness of which is supported by the hunchback's assertion that the wife's screams have stagnated the movement of the whole world, the birth being difficult. Nothing could be more absurd, illogical, grotesquely comic, in which the possibility of bringing a hunchbacked child into the world becomes one of the most somber of all events.

The tailor proposes a different existential philosophy, a fascination with perfection that forces him to go beyond the objective, pragmatic stage, reaching its peak in his career in which he also becomes a kind of inventor, to seek advice for the soul. He is warned by the apprentice not to use metaphors in his speech and to be as exact as possible. Apparently, there is a reversal of values here, a world that works in reverse, as the object is metaphorized, elevated to the status of a symbol, and the soul must be translated concretely to avoid confusion. But who is the master who does not understand allegories and needs simple, minimal language? The woman wonders if she thinks a lot and if it doesn't hurt her.

The apprentice's reply outlines the same sphere of the ridiculous, because thinking a lot is tantamount to maintaining a genius that must function mechanically. Again, a reversal of natural principles, for genius presupposes brilliance, the spontaneous flow of ideas, the atypical, the breaking out of conformism and the unusual assertion of a lively intellectual and emotional intelligence. These ideas, proposed by the hunchback in reply to the apprentice's response, become the preamble to an event that disturbs the silence of the waiting room. The tailor is thrown out of the room where he had met the master, like a rag, his face covered in blood. The healer is the aggressor, the cause of the physical and emotional illness, because the patient dared to contradict him. The fat man and the hunchback remain immune to the event that occurs, ruminating about pockets full of eggs, broken during a brawl, or pockets full of frogs after crossing a puddle. The playwright responds to his readers' need to offer an image of existential absurdity, of man's detachment from the mundane, from the rational aspects of life, which progressively leads to a loss of contact with reality. Driven mad by a world that offers him no chance of evolution, the boyish man has such irrational manifestations, reflecting the human passion to attract, to possess, to feel his ego fed in any form. The individual ignores the value of the condition of being and plunges into futility, and everything he does is futile.

The comedy is savory and translates the charm of the fictional universe, where diversity is the key to meaning. The narratives tie together in a frieze-like continuum, with the tailor confessing that the master has an extraordinary physical strength that reminds him of a priest who has done bodybuilding. Nothing could be more bizarre, comic or absurd, than the image of the priest killing his parishioners by hugging them, or the advice he received to walk on his hands to impress his wife, persuading her to return to him. Yet, the master is profoundly immoral, he is aggressive and he does it all behind the walls of his room, interrupting counseling because of an unexpected visit (an incredibly beautiful girl who is not his wife).

If in Băieșu everything takes place beyond the prying eyes of others, in his office the master having a different attitude from one patient to another, the extraction of the stone of madness from Bosch's painting (fig.1) takes place in an exposed space, under the eyes of other curious people, in fact symbolic characters meant to convey the meaning of the so-called treatment. Reification again plays an extraordinarily important role, as madness is treated by mechanical, aggressive methods, consisting of a cranial trepanation to identify the metaphorical stone. The procedure is invasive, dangerous, performed in an open space, favoring possible infection. The healer wears a funnel on his head and a girdle from which a cup hangs, making the section with a regular knife, which transfers the sense of madness from the patient to the doctor. The absurdity of the operation is also accentuated by the attitudes of those watching the scene: the woman wearing a book on her head, but also holding the money bag, and the monk closer to the patient holding an aluminum jug. The calm of the three is contrasted with the restlessness of the patient, who is tied to a chair, his mouth slightly ajar. The operation seems more like a dull spectacle, performed in the midst of nature, a grotesque projected into the natural, as is the case with the Romanian playwright. As in theatre, two registers meet: one concrete, main, affiliated with lines, contours and perspectives, the other of subliminal composition, beyond color and hypostasis. If in theatre this role is played by the captions, which convey the hidden details of the actual story, in Bosch's painting objects play an essential role, as does facial expression. The almost sickly indifference of the witnesses and the doctor reveals insensitivity to the suffering of the other, exacerbated ego, an inability to empathize.

At the same time, the doctor, character in the play entitled *The Healer*, comes to the small village and he is an impostor, like many of Băieșu's characters, and gives the impression of being professional, having the power to find a cure for any disease, whether it is mental or physical, social or individual. He looks at the universe as if it belonged to him, as an unofficial emperor, the one who governs this world. He is the outsider, the cheater, a real felon, taking advantage of their credulity, which makes them victims of a fractioned system.

The doctor's name is hilarious, Molfini, more like a magician's appellation, an individual who has just come out of the circus, trying to impress his audience by performing an embarrassing show. His medical utensils are improvised and real frightening, but not suspicious for anyone, which brings him closer to the doctor figure in Bosch painting. Molfini plays a perfect role, pretending to practice

medicine as a retort to the naivety of some of the simpletons who take his methods for real. The string of remedies is laughable, but proposes another paradigm of the tragic, in which a system on the verge of collapse cannot offer its members access to quality treatment. Powders brought from the South Pole, taken in the wrong quantities, are poisonous, and acupuncture is performed with a huge syringe, which does more harm to the patient. The ailments are hilarious: a disease that is due to a virus recently arrived from Pago-Pago by air, or one that passes by standing on one leg, sticking out your tongue and breathing deeply. The doctor even threatens to perform a reverse procedure, such as giving Țumpi his hump back, if he refuses to take the prescribed medicine: „MOLFINI (takes out a huge syringe, with a needle as thick as a wheat straw): Now I will proceed to acupuncture. More precisely, I will insert this needle into the hump, touching and sensitizing the atrophied nerve. (Molfini sticks the needle into Țumpi's hump. Aunt Maria pulls out a stick.) Did it hurt? TUȘA MARIA: Not me, but him, the poor man(...)! MOLFINI: I told you that he is under hypnosis and feels absolutely nothing. When he wakes up, he discovers that he has escaped the hump. Look, the hump disappears. You can come closer. (The three take a step forward, but do not have the courage to come any closer.)” (Băieșu, 2003, 424)



Fig. 1. The Cure of Folly

Source: Hieronymus Bosch www.museodelprado.es

1.2.2. *The Ship of Fools and The Ladybird*

In *The Ship of Fools* (fig.2), any sense of becoming, of human salvation is suppressed, as in Băieșu's play, in which the absurdity of living confirms the impossibility of man to rise above an existence lived in the specter of lies, of falsity. Bosch's painting transposes the same irrationality that we identify in the image of Grănescu, a deeply immoral, adulterous and possibly murderous man who repeatedly fails to kill his wife in order to have an affair with his mistress. Totally subhuman, incompatible not only with the norms of any worldly or divine ethics, but gradually building up a character bordering on the grotesque. Unimaginably transposed through a nonchalant discourse, Grănescu strikes by the ease with which he speaks of murder, lying, theft, confessing that his social position is far more important than any interhuman relationship he might have. What is Băieșu's innovation at this level of creating a modern character? Going beyond the existential absurdity of Camusian or Sartrean origin, Băieșu condemns his characters to an empty life, deprived of the most elementary feelings. Atypical individuals, with an uncommon sarcasm and irony, Băieșu's people live not in an order that precedes morality and spirituality, but in one that they have created themselves, voluntarily, choosing to suppress value and humanity. They become grotesque projections of an ailing

society in search of healers and masters. Grănescu is part of a heterogeneous criminal group, together with other equally corrupt individuals, but not smart enough not to fall into an inspector's trap, who comes to investigate the fraud they have unreservedly set up, embezzling large sums from the company Grănescu heads. For Grănescu, the idea of suicide is the only way out, although he hopes to escape the justice system this time. A morally perverted individual, he does not regret his wrongdoing, but rather the fact that he has failed to deceive the system one last time, becoming a sure victim. The final monologue opens the sphere of a philosophy that places Băieșu in the spectrum of the existentialism he has hitherto renounced, since the condemnation to freedom that Camus proclaims is, in his case, a stupid arrogation of almost divine rights. Grănescu is not fatally subject to a destiny that he cannot elude and living by virtue of inertia, under the critical magnifying glass of a blind society, he goes to the end of the line, knowing that he can do so. Whether atheist or agnostic, Grănescu explains his failure by a misfortune of fate which he blames. His desacralization takes on unimaginable proportions and becomes a form of geometric progression of a distorted, abulic, out-of-phase self, trapped in a merry-go-round of chaotic experiences. His mistakes keep coming, even the one that will generate his final gesture, becomes a form of unconsciousness. Although he plans to commit suicide and carefully prepares the ground, one wrong move precipitates his final act, lending an air of stupidity to his gesture. On the brink between life and death, he keeps on picking up the receiver and calling it a mistake, Nuți's intervention being equally irrational, as the young woman is not impressed by his gesture, but rather by the fact that he has kept her waiting for an unreasonably long time.

Beyond the naive attempt to restrict Băieșu to the sphere of a literature strictly framed in a stultifying, limiting system, lies a pertinent affirmation of a vast spirit, whose links with European literature remain undeniable. The absence of a deeper probing of these connections, by no means unequivocal, leaves room for eloquent interpretations that allow us to define not so much the paradigms of a universally valid human tragic as a philosophy of life that imposes him as one of the most sarcastic and ironic voices of a questionable, controversial time. These interrelationships are subtly hidden behind lines which, simulating absurdity and derision, open the way to symbolic territories of probing the psychology of man and his time.

„When I was a kid (laughs to himself), I put a ladybug in a bottle. Airtight. No food, no water. I wanted to see how long it would live. It lived a year, two, three, four, five... Until one day, by chance, the bottle broke. We're all weevils! We're.. (Pause). Actually, I think I understand what life is now. Life is... (Cell phone rings. He leans forward to pick up the receiver, but he makes a wrong move and the chair tips over; he hangs on the rope. With his last strength he shouts into the receiver.) Hello! It's a mistake...”

(Băieșu, 2003, 482)

Grănescu's assertion (*We are all weevils.*) renders the nihilistic philosophy of the individual subjected to a curse of fate, in which operate both total but mismanaged freedom and an emotional anguish that underlies man's perception of the world. Nietzschean, Grănescu will have constructed a personal system of supposed values, his own law in which he acts illicitly, however, failing badly, which places him on the verge of fulfilling his own destiny. He devours him, ignoring his death. Is this a form of cannibalism? Is it the manifestation of man's atrocious cruelty towards man? „Jean-Jacques Rousseau saw the origin of social life in the feeling that urges us to identify ourselves with our fellow man. After all, the simplest means of identifying our fellow man with ourselves is still to eat him.” (Levi-Strauss, 2014, 173-174) What is in fact the escape: Grănescu's stupid death or his liberation from the curse of a life he missed? How much tragedy lies in this juxtaposition of the individual who dies by mistake, answering the telephone? I have said that they depart from the pure sense of the tragic and fall into absurdity and derision by not understanding what they are experiencing. The tragic man is aware of his drama, he lives it to the full, he takes on the resulting suffering and dies sacrificially in order to purify and save himself. In the painting, the sense of loss is canceled out by the feast of fools who inhabit a drifting ship and indulge in excesses designed to separate them from the reality of an undigestible world.

„For Bosch, people were losing their religious references, especially the religious themselves. Priests, friars and nuns were the first to drink, play cards and indulge in lust and gluttony in convents and monasteries. This dissolute morality and vice gave rise to sin, and for the artist this resulted in madness. Bosch wanted to denounce this type of behavior in the best way he knew how: with his strange and fascinating paintings. In this one, we see a ship sailing on land. The mast is a May tree, where the devil hides sibylline. It waves a flag with the moon stamped on it, the symbol of madness. The crew is made up of jesters, thieves, drunks, musicians... The people climb, laugh, eat and sing, drifting along, while some vomit from the excesses. As usual in Bosch's works, we can be blinded by the details. If we take out the magnifying glass, we can see all kinds of symbolism, such as the pitcher (sex), the inverted funnel (madness), a dead fish (sin)... A satirical triptych that perfectly represents the moral and artistic ideas of one of the most fascinating painters of Northern Europe, with one foot in the Middle Ages and the other in the Renaissance.” (Santos, 2021)

In *Gărgărița*, *the ship of fools* is steered by Grănescu who co-opts Gigi, Bubu, Vava, Sotir, bizarre characters of atrocious selfishness, who, *seeing the ship sinking*, abandon Grănescu, and one of them is considered a traitor. Blaming each other, they beg Grănescu to take all the blame, believing that he is the only one capable of doing so. Nevertheless, the four plot to kill Turbatu, the inspector who had dared to expose their theft. With a gun loaded with blanks, the situation becomes awkward, the same awkwardness that Grănescu experiences in the end. With unmistakable humor, the playwright mixes the registers and transforms the lines of dialogue into inappropriate incursions into a deeply shaken world: Bubu and Sotir pick up the victim, making a walking test with him, or Bubu straightens his head, pretending to continue a discussion, commenting on a football match. *The dead man* wakes up and talks to them, without anyone understanding the absurdity of the situation, until he himself explains. This event triggers the madness: „The four, that is Bubu, Vava, Gigi and Sotir, suddenly realize that the dead man is the one who is talking, go out of their minds, scream, terrified, and throw themselves out of the windows.” (Băieșu, 2003, 480)

Băieșu's image of madness creates a different universe, almost impossible to find in other dramatic discourses. The madness consists in the very audacity of assuming the creation of atypical characters who go beyond the boundaries of the natural in an attempt to defy normality. I believe that they have a superiority complex that brings them to the brink of collapse once they realize that there is no way out of the falsely constructed reality. Vices, inconsistencies, the hunt for the other, the absence of humanity become the flaws of a system that Bosch, in *The Ship of Fools* manages to imagine through original lines and contours.



Fig. 2. The Ship of Fools

Source: Hieronymus Bosch www.hetnoordbrabantsmuseum.nl

2. RESULTS

Carrying out this analysis of the works of the two authors, I reached the following results:

- Ion Băieșu is a Romanian playwright whose literary universe is built in harmony with the universal symbols also found in art.
- Hieronymus Bosch, even if more than four centuries back in time, seems to reproduce in images the grotesque, but also hilarious character of an absurd world, as is Băieșu's.
- The correlation between the two worlds revealed other possible connections, which will give the opportunity to expand the study by inserting other symbols and meanings.
- Through the grotesque, the absurd, the crazy and the derisory comic, the two worlds reach a common denominator that made possible an interesting analysis of the literary and artistic content.

3. DISCUSSION

The realization of this study, which redraws the similarities between literary texts and works of art, was a challenge for me and started from the premise that Ion Băieșu is an author who transcended his era through the cultural and symbolic allusions inserted in his texts. I began by analyzing two dramatic texts entitled *The Master* and *The Healer*, in order to highlight possible intersections with Hieronymus Bosch's painting *The Cure of Madness*. We have identified both similar human figures and attitudes that converge towards the idea that both societies in the exhibition are acutely feeling an inner crisis, the absence of values, of moral landmarks: doctors have inadequate methods of treating their patients, becoming themselves mad men that they raise into professionals, causing great suffering.

Considering that this parallel between the dramatic texts of Ion Băieșu and the paintings of Hieronymus Bosch might seem daring, I think that the hypothesis from which I started, that of a unanimously accepted universality of Băieșu's texts might not be considered valid by some researchers in the field. The more conservative might consider such an association to be exaggerated at a time when there is such a large temporal and cultural gap. However, starting from the premise that anything

goes in literature and art, I believe that revealing the image of the grotesque and madness in both fields emphasizes the absolutely extraordinary character of an under-researched dramatic space. Why did we choose Bosch to realize this parallel of meanings and not turn to more modern figures or closer to the contemporary Romanian author? What prompted me to make this choice was the simplicity of the universes depicted and the depreciative character of life, of its meaning, which is transferred from dark medieval to communism, which overshadows any possibility of human manifestation. His limitation, the absurdity of existence, the inability to communicate, alienation, the attack on the other person are elements common to both creators. For example, starting from the figure of the doctor, a totally unprofessional who not only does not treat his patients properly, but almost mutilates them, struggling to extract the stone of madness, and applies painful, senseless treatments, becoming himself the prototype of the sick, of the madman, and continuing with a whole community that turns into a ship of madmen, who hope to escape unpunished, but lynch their boss, all the symbols generate the sense of fraud, hypocrisy, ignorance and madness which destroy human beings and their hopes and dreams.

So, considering all the meanings discovered at an imagistic, literary and linguistic level, I am considering to carry out a future study that will identify other possible connections between the two universes with the aim of rendering the vastness of the cultural and literary phenomenon that makes such connections possible. Emphasizing particular figures or by analyzing details of a chromatic nature, face to face with the significant didactic of the dramatic text, the hermeneutic will happily meet the art critic, extending the observations to other paintings of Bosch, considered relevant from this point of view.

In few but consistent words, we could say that literature and painting are ways of being in the world, separated only by the way they choose to express this. In essence, *literature is just a picture in significant words*.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Attempting to be an original approach to both fields of signification, one literary and the other plastic, this article aimed to bring to the foreground a bold comparison between the dramaturgy of a Romanian playwright, who marks by attitude and creation the last three decades of the twentieth century, and a Flemish painter associated with the fifteenth century. In spite of the discrepancies that the time gap would imply, we consider that the association of some of Băieșu's texts and two of Bosch's paintings revealed the visionary character of the artist and the versatility of his fictional dramatic universe, which recomposes symbols, images, figures.

Our analysis has revealed three important aspects of this literature-painting continuum, which is the subject of this article. First of all, we have subjected to deconstruction two of the author's texts that propose as a central figure the image of the doctor, the healer, caught in an aura of the ridiculous by the fact that he is not authentic, but acts selfishly, for the fulfilment of precise material ends. The intention to heal is completely lacking and characterizes an age of personality illnesses, of the soul rather than the body, a society sickened by a lack of communication, resources or ideals. This sense of becoming can be seen in Bosch's painting, which also proposes an irrational treatment of an individual being tortured in the name of medicine. The extraction of the stone of madness becomes a mechanical, concrete process instead of a psychological, psychiatric, spiritual therapy. The similarities revealed the same cruelty of man towards man, ignorance, falsehood, charlatanism.

Secondly, the degeneration in Băieșu's world is echoed in *The Ship of Fools*, as a form of subjugation to vice, irrationality, a taste for chaos, in a world of the same charlatans, who too often escape unpunished. I believe that Grămescu's destiny in the play *Gărgărița* is that of any individual born into a society in which he chooses to compromise himself. Note that the choices are his and not those of the system. Yes, sometimes he runs into obstacles, yes, sometimes absurdity constricts his being, but in the end, it is about choice.

Ultimately, Băieșu is a universal author, he stands the test of time by continuously validating his world that reverberates in every aspect of contemporary existence. Likewise, if none of Bosch's figures is

abstracted from the real world, leading to the idea that the grotesque and the comic are harmoniously blended, constituting a true aesthetics of the tragic absurd in which the derisory replaces reality, then Ion Băieșu's theater infinitely multiplies these concepts through the genius of constructing memorable dramatic personalities.

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