

## The Immanence of Abysmal Seduction in the Art of Acting

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**Abstract:** The study makes a descent into the abysmal psychology of the creator, seeking to reveal the drive that makes the act of creation necessary: the need to seduce. In the attempt to rehabilitate seduction and the essential role it has in the entire creative process, up to the meeting with the viewer - the ultimate witness and subject of seduction -, the study explores the psychological, philosophical, and professional dimensions of the concept of seduction, moving away from its immediate and trivial meanings. The intrinsic purpose of the approach is to restore the role of being a creator for the actor and to seduce him into becoming a conscious one, thus abandoning the irresponsible condition of the marionette. In an attempt to restore seduction's numinosity, the study appeals to the great seducers of philosophy, psychoanalysis, and literature – Kirkegaard, Kant, Jung, Liiceanu, and Pessoa - supporting its arguments on their considerations, to reveal the impregnability of the link between seduction and creation.

**Keywords:** seduction; creation; movie actor; knowledge; conscience

### Introduction

In the context of an ever-changing artistic climate, in both theatre and cinema, dictated by authors who cannot agree on the actors' performance, who even seek to differentiate themselves from each other through the predilections they cultivate for a specific acting manner, and which they justify as the authentic one, the actor finds himself frequently in the situation of no longer having the right to consider what is, in fact, authentic in his own profession. After two decades of auteur cinema, and syncretic theatre performances, in which actors had to learn to perform for both scene and screen at the same time, the Romanian actor has become a puppet in the hands of directors, more or less gifted at manipulating such a puppet, that insists on being alive.

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The actor has ceased being a creator. It became important for him to lose the prerogatives of this authority so that he could play the puppet role better and more faithfully. To achieve this degree of creative catatonia, the actor had to suppress his capital of seduction. For, the histrionic act the stage can bear – up to the point of cabotage -, to reach the unconceited naturalness that life-playing demands on the cinema screen, the process of inhibiting seduction seemed necessary. But the sum of my experiences as a film actress, film acting teacher, casting director, and acting coach, led me to a different conclusion: actors do not know how to seduce, and worse, they do not know that they need to seduce. They don't know that seduction is, actually, the essence of their job. And it is my belief that it is imperative for them to recover this dimension, so that acting becomes an act of creation again, for its author to take responsibility, and free himself from the codependency he developed with the director. Without inciting disobedience, this manifesto is necessary, precisely to denounce the malignancy of a relationship of subordination, which can only suffocate creativity.

Such an approach can only remain an empirical one, like any consideration one can make about the act of creation, even if the consideration was born from within. Having the ability to operate with psychoanalytical mechanisms and concepts, and philosophical ideas - which generated a specific capacity for analysis and integration of them, both in practicing one's job as a film actress, and in guiding that of students and actors -, the author investigates her ten years of experience working with actors, students, and herself, generating a personal conclusion. The process must also be seen as one of self-analysis, a descent into one's own abysmal psychology, to bring to light the unacceptable mechanisms of the actor's creative act - narcissism and manipulation, lying and projection -, the main culprits for the repudiation of seduction and its exile in the unconscious from which it proceeds, from fear of being judged.

### **A Redefinition of Seduction**

To seduce has its roots in the Latin word *seducere*, whose original meaning was to lead aside. To part with what is, and become what can be. It is Christianity that exposed the darkness of seduction and connoted it with the meanings of deception because the only side to which the being had to be taken was Christianity. Any other way became a scam. Christianity proclaimed itself as the only truth and became the greatest seducer of all time by condemning

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seduction. This is where the ambivalence of any act of seduction seems to reside, the conflicted state between attraction and rejection that overwhelms both the one who performs it and the one who is seduced, but especially the one who, uninvolved in this exchange, becomes a witness to it.

Because of the deception we have been inoculated to believe it is, seduction becomes a form of deprivation of the freedom to have access to the truth. The seduced allows himself to be carried away by his seducer, by lying about what's real, and this turns the whole act into a form of perversion. The only perversion, however, is precisely that of religious uniqueness that has enshrined every other form of seduction but itself: mt way is the only way. Directors tend to have the same oration. "Unfortunately, nothing hovers over so much seduction and so much curse as over a secret."<sup>1</sup> And the biggest secret, what religion has censored, by instilling seduction, is knowledge itself. It needed to, as knowledge is the only way religion could be denounced as what it is: an act of seduction. It becomes vital, from religion's point of view, that the being does not seek to know, doesn't give in to the serpent's seduction, so doesn't find out who she truly is, but chooses paradise, in the bliss of ignorance. But seduction also remains vital for the being, because seduction is the promise of knowledge. The being seduces and allows itself to be seduced, because it has no choice. Because "our being lives from the very beginning in the vagueness of its desires, in their as yet unexpressed and unexplained state"<sup>2</sup> and any pretext that promises the slightest explanation will become seductive. And that's exactly what the stage and screen are is: a place of seduction in which the actor plays the main role - that of the seducer.

### **The Immanence of Seduction in the Act of Knowing and Its Transcendence in Creation**

Knowledge is not a choice, but a propensity. To survive, the being needs to know, and everything that can't be known will put her in the condition to surmise because nothing disturbs her more than the unknown. She cannot exist within what she does not know. She looks for explanations and, if they are not given to her, she gives them herself. She invents, fabulates, fantasizes,

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1 Soren Kirkegaard, *Jurnalul Seducătorului*, București: Editura Scripta, 1992, p. 19

2 Gabriel Liiceanu, *Despre Seducție*, București: Editura Humanitas, 2007, p. 2

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and substitutes to knowledge the belief in what she invented, fabled, or fantasized. And she doesn't accept that what she believes is a lie, something her mind has created to make existence bearable. "Metaphysics is a natural disposition (*metaphysica naturalis*). For human reason advances irresistibly, not impelled by the mere vanity of knowing much, but driven by its own need, to such problems that cannot be solved by any empirical use of reason and principles borrowed from experience; and thus, in all men, as soon as reason rises to speculation, it has been a kind of metaphysics at all times, and will always remain."<sup>3</sup>

Knowledge presupposes a descent into the inferno, into the abyss, into the mud from which we were made. With the understandings made there the being returns, and only through them she becomes creative. Without first getting lost, being lost, and carried away from the place she's in, to find all the places that the universe hides within her, the being has nothing to create from. It can only imitate, without being able to generate revelation. Just as not knowing the already existing revelations, she will think that the minor of what she has discovered is a major revelation. Hence the confusion of all those who, just because they mimic the creation process, think they are creators. But creator can only be the one guilty of knowledge. The greater the guilt, the greater the creation.

In the act of creation, seduction moves from the state of immanence to that of transcendence. When the author does not manage to get out of himself, after having traveled in himself to become his truest self, if he has not allowed himself to be carried away in that place where good and evil lose their power, in the amoral and abysmal weightlessness of the longings of being, his act cannot become creative but will remain one of artistic nature. Without being himself seduced first, without having become aware of the truths his Shadow hides in his own abyss, so that he'll be able to carry somebody else into that knowledge, the actor can only seduce by accident. His act will lack coherence, fluidity, and credibility, and the viewer will lose confidence that he can get out safe from fighting the angel, as he won't even know the truth about "every angel being terrifying"<sup>4</sup>. Not being seduced, he won't descend into his own abyss. He will remain the same, the experience won't become cathartic.

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3 Immanuel Kant, *Critica Rațiunii Pure*, București: Editura IRI, 1998, p. 30

4 Reiner Maria Rilke, *The First Elegy*, sursa <https://poetrysociety.org/poems-essays/readinginthedark/mark>

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The main obstacle to inducing catharsis is the lucidity with which the actor admits his role as a seducer. If he does not accept the damnation of having chosen to be one, the actor will remain a puppet who, in the hands of the director, will be shaped not by the creative side of the director, but by how manipulative or good he is at penetrating the mysteries of the psyche, and direct it. And most of the directors are rather manipulative than empathetic natures that don't always gently direct the pains and traumas that the actors contain and make available. It's the actor's role to protect himself and work with them within himself and inside the part, and not to make himself available to someone who is not equipped to guide him to do so. His pain is the fuel that seduction burns. But, because the actor does not understand this and continues to look at the director as he were a Messiah, and because the director also cultivates this self-image, the relations between the two entities become complicated, even toxic, abusive, torturous. Too often, they even become toxic, abusive, and torturous. Until the actor understands that he is a seducer - and thus a creator -, he cannot even take responsibility for what he creates, because he does not. He does not create but only allows himself to be used. Therefore, he cannot occupy any other position than that of the director's vassal. Never his equal in creation.

### **Is Seduction a Condemnable Act?**

Manipulation, narcissism, and judgment are the damned components of the psyche and their necessity is difficult to understand. They are definitions used to denote reprehensible acts of the human being. Just as help, generosity, and understanding are those with which she is rewarded when she undertakes something worthy of praise. But help is an act of manipulation, understanding is the result of judgment, and generosity is a manifestation of narcissism. This descent into abyssal psychology is not an attempt to denigrate the beauty of being, but to reveal the numinosity of the abyssal, and therefore immanent, aspects of the psyche. The being is judgmental, manipulative, and narcissistic by definition. The more she tries to prove she isn't, the more unconsciously seductive she becomes. But the more aware she becomes of these truths, the better she will be able to decipher her actions, and consciously seduce through authenticity.

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Not only criticism hides the three damned, praise does it too, when the moral is satisfied. Judgment unravels the thread of the subject and analyzes it, narcissism measures it as a good one and believes it has the right to express its judgment, while manipulation, through praise, tries to ensure that the action will be repeated. The three are not even so separate, but like the trinity of the Moirae they rather determine each other, substituting one another. The judgment that something is good or bad cannot be made in the absence of narcissism, which determines the quality of something according to every individual narcissism.

Manipulated is not only he who is judged, and induced by praise to continue to act that way, but also, he who manipulates, when, in the process of judgment, he interprets the action and its details to resemble him. The manipulator primarily manipulates himself to convince. And this whole process is nothing but seduction. Every creator is guilty of all this, but even more so the actor. Because, the actor's creation, unlike any other creator, is made in his image and his likeness, and that is not a metaphor. He cannot hide behind the piano keys, the easel, or the director's indication. He is the face of his creation. And the face betrays any form of imposture. The theatre, through its distance, convention, immediacy, and perishability, remains a more lenient space. Cinema, on the other hand, has something relentless within it. The lenses magnify and can see everything. And, above all, it lasts. It can be and is endlessly reviewed. The theater actor can remain as a preserved memory in that moment of grace, without being challenged. Or, if he falls short of grace, he may at least be forgotten. The film actor will not be able to evade future consciences. He will continue to be judged perpetuum. And this a pressure that only great seducers can handle.

*„Aaah, how Interesting Life Becomes when your Consciousness is Replete!”<sup>5</sup>*

In Soren Kirkegaard's supposed autobiography, *The Seducer's Diary*, we witness seduction at its cruelest. Premeditated, the seduction that Johan stages for Cordelia becomes abominable. Or, at least, that's how it would morally be considered. However, the reader wants Johan to succeed. The witness thus glimpses at his own seductive face. Whether he will recognize it

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<sup>5</sup> Soren Kirkegaard, *Jurnalul Seducătorului*, București: Editura Scripta, 1992, p. 12

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or not depends on each reader's ability to stand face to face with his own Shadow. From disgust and fear to guilt and pity, oscillating between revolt and hope, the reader lets himself be seduced by the author's honesty to expose and judge himself, to reveal to the world an unacceptable truth about being: the need to seduce. And this is the intellectualization, behind which the witness can hide his guilt of having identified himself with Johan, even if for just a second. And therein lies Kirkegaard's true talent as a seducer: the reader is, without knowing it, the subject of seduction. And this is what the actor must have the courage to do: under the guise of the character, to expose the darkest parts of his being, since what he wants is to seduce his viewer.

In this game of double doubling, Cordelia is the weakness that Kirkegaard reckons the reader to have, and he speculates it. He knows that the reader will fall victim to his own morality and sensibilities, and that he will empathize with Cordelia's drama, detesting Johan. That is why he assumes the identity of a third party, the one who accidentally finds Johan's secret notes and who is forced to admit his moral weakness "that an uncontrollable anguish has once again caught me in its grip"<sup>6</sup>. With this self-declaration, torn by conflicting impulses, Soren begins his journey into the abyss, never admitting that Johan's history is, in fact, his. He puts on the mask of morality to assure the reader that the one who tells the truth is of his own kind, that is, moral. By giving him the power to judge and pass sentences, he manipulates the reader into seeing his true self. And the reader will only see what he can bear about himself. It is the same halving that the actor must coerce himself into, knowing and accepting the reprehensible truths about himself, to act them out, recognizing them to belong to him, and seduce the spectator to admit them too. The limit of any actor is himself. The more he is willing to reveal his shadows and let them darken his face, the deeper his acting will be, and the more seduced the viewer. Without the courage to show thy Shadow, an actor cannot and should not be called a creator.

Johan would never have succeeded in seducing Cordelia, had it not been for Cordelia's unconscious desire to be seduced. "Every seduction falls on a prepared ground of expectation and desire. There is an a priori of desire that hovers over the world of men, a horizon in which we all bathe, and under

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6 Gabriel Liiceanu, *Despre Seducție*, București: Editura Humanitas, 2007, p. 11

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which we seduce and can be seduced."<sup>7</sup> Cordelia is not attracted to Eduard, the one genuinely in love with her, because his love cannot transform her. And it's not just Cordelia who is seduced. Johan is the first to be seduced by Cordelia. The difference between the two acts of seduction is that one is unconscious and the other perfectly conscious. And that's what's unforgivable: the power that Johan is aware of and uses to lead Cordelia aside, only to, having done so, leave her. Seduction becomes guilty when the seducer abandons. If Johan's approach had been the same, but he had taken her as his wife, then his act of seduction would no longer have been reprehensible. But Johan acts like a god: he creates and then abandons. He does not assume the destiny of what he created. Cordelia loving Johan is no longer Cordelia, she is Cordelia altered by Johan, the bearer of divine breath. The guilt that the witness imposes on Johan is the very guilt that he fears imposing on God: of having created him and then abandoned him. For fear of the god he believes in, man does not act according to his impulses, since fear of impulses made him invent the gods that would control those impulses. And when one of us dares to act like a god, when one goes beyond good and evil, and assumes one's destiny with all its impulses, one must be punished. Our inability to resist seduction wants that. Johan's power seduces us, so we refuse to resemble Cordelia, the victim. We can idealize her, but we don't want to be her, because we pity her, for what she loves doesn't exist. Johan, as she knows him, is Johan's creation. And so, not even what elevates Cordelia, her love, is true. Only if Cordelia would admit that she was not a victim, but a volitional being willing to explore the forbidden, the unacceptable at whatever cost, because she feels she is more than a woman aspiring to be conformable. But she doesn't. Cordelia embraces the limits that society imposed on her as a woman, and accepts its never-ending pity, just so she doesn't have to face her Shadow. Cordelia is the symbol of the being itself, in all its innocence, ignorance, and helplessness.

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<sup>7</sup> Idem, p. 16

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### **The Immanent Role of Seduction in the Art of Acting for the Movies**

Despite the rejection, Johan attracts. Despite compassion, Cordelia repulses. The reader's moral conflict, if he dares to face it, is unbearable. Kirkegaard guides his reader into his inferno, and there the reader finds his purgatory. Kirkegaard knows the reader because he knows himself. He knows what to show and what to hide, he plays all the roles. The creator, therefore also the actor, who has not descended into the abyss, has nothing to reveal to the public. And the only abyss he has access to is the one within himself. Without this descent, his act will forever remain a mimetic one, or one that happened without them knowing what they did. This is when magical thinking kicks in, and the actor feels the chosen one. But great actor always knows what he did, whether his seduction was authentic or a sham, and he doesn't indulge himself in the latter, because creators don't accept the mimic of a catharsis. They have a great instinct at knowing when the one in front of them is genuinely seduced. When the actor is not a creator, the witness – director or spectator – can't find the measure of the sublime, but only that of the reprehensible of the act of seduction.

Being a witness never means that you can sit outside the act of seduction. The witness is also seduced. So, the measure he will give is his own, deeply subjective. And this is the very purpose of any act of creation: for the one who becomes its witness to discover his own subjectivity. "The social importance of the work of art: it works continuously to educate the spirit of the age because it brings those aspects that it lacked more. From the dissatisfaction of the present, the artist's desire retreats, until it reaches that primordial image in the unconscious capable of compensating most efficiently the insufficiency and one-sidedness of the spirit of the age. (...) The artist can be seen as an educator of his era. (...) The relative inadequacy of the artist is his real advantage, it allows him to stay off the high road, to follow his ambition, and to find what others lack without knowing it. Just as in the individual, the one-sidedness of his conscious attitude is corrected by unconscious reactions in the way of self-regulation, so art represents a process of spiritual self-regulation in the life of nations and ages."<sup>8</sup>

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8 Carl Gustav Jung, *Opere. Vol. 15. Despre Fenomenul Spiritului în Artă și Știință*, București: Editura Trei, 2014, pp. 86-87

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Whether he accepts it or not, the actor wants to seduce. To create, he has to deceive. But he refuses this condition because he wants to be innocent, a victim of a higher act of seduction: the muse, the grace, of faith, chance, or god. He is the one wounded by being closer to the divine and forced to reveal to others what is hidden in this proximity. Any act of seduction involves some form of counterfeiting, alteration, or falsification of what is - or, at least, of what is known to be - to lead the seduced one to the fulfillment of the seducer's desires. Not only the seduced goes through the process of alteration, but also the seducer, because he has to play exactly the role that the one who allows himself to be seduced projects on him. There is a very thin line of demarcation between the two conditions since no seducer would succeed in the act if the potential for transformation does not exist in the one being seduced. „We are just not strong enough to endure more! It is too shaking and wearing. So often people (...) in ecstatic moments say, 'It's too much', or 'I can't stand it', or 'I could die'(...) Delirious happiness cannot be borne for long. Our organisms are just too weak for any large doses of greatness.”<sup>9</sup> But the actor must be able to go there. The spectator follows him, voyeuristically, without risking anything that the actor risks. If the actor has done it before him, then the spectator is assured that whatever he finds there will destabilize him—because he unconsciously aspires to it—but he will come out of that journey unscathed. The angel will frighten him, but he will come out safe and sound from the fight. Virgil must have already been in hell to be able to guide Dante through the human comedy.

If "a seducer is a character who takes you aside, one who takes you where he wants"<sup>10</sup>, then the actor cannot remain dependent on his unconscious disposition to seduce. He must be able to redo the act as often as necessary until the director recognizes himself in the moving picture sequence. Because the director wants nothing more than to be seduced by the actor as he too seeks to seduce the viewer. If the director doesn't feel seduced, he knows the viewer won't be either. At least, not the viewer he is trying to seduce. And that's what's hard for him to admit, and for the actor to assume. But the more the actor is aware of this, the more the director gains the confidence to let himself go into the actor's abysmal journey. The only condition is that the place in which he

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9 Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death*, London: Souvenir Press, 2020, p. 49

10 Gabriel Liiceanu, *Despre Seducție*, București: Editura Humanitas, 2007, p. 16

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gets carried away reflects him. The better the actor knows the abyss, the more he will be able to reveal it and thus more faithfully reflect the truths inside the living. Because it is not the objective understandings that seduce, but the input of subjective content. "You must always substitute yourself. You are never enough for yourself. Always be surprised by yourself. Happen to yourself. (...) You must be a lawless universe to succeed in being superior. (...) Make a metaphysics, an ethics and an aesthetics out of your soul. Substitute yourself shamelessly for God. It is the only truly religious attitude. (...) Make of your soul an atheistic religion; and from your sensations a rite and a cult."<sup>11</sup> Heretical and seductive, Fernando Pessoa's ability to become another cannot be overlooked by any actor. His biography is his work, and the heteronyms were the result of the hysteria in him, as he admitted. Bernardo Soares, Ricardo Reis, Alberto Caeiro, and Alvaro de Campos were the best-known, but Pessoa had more than twenty literary identities. Twenty characters that lived within their creator, twenty distinct universes that continue to seduce to this day.

Any act of creation is one of seduction. It is the *sine qua non* condition for the spectator to follow the author. That's why he comes to the theatre or the cinema: he wants to be seduced. Seduction is not a negotiation. The spectator gives his consent upon entering, be it a cinema, theater, exhibition, or concert hall. It is a blank signature, by which the viewer assumes that what is about to happen to him is his choice. Including being disappointed, or outraged. Whatever the emotion, it is the expression of elation or anguish at having been, or not, seduced. And, when it doesn't happen to him, when his emotions, and through them his understandings, have not been carried beyond him, into the welcoming interiority of the other, the viewer feels cheated. Ignored, exposed in his desire to have been seduced and let down by a world that does not recognize him, he revolts. Any desire that cannot be fulfilled generates the feeling of inadequacy. The viewer feels out of place with the world on stage, or screen and rejects it. That is what he had come for, to be seduced, to surrender, waiting to be given back whole, completed, better than before. If this happens to him, he will call the seducer his idol, and worship

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11 Fernando Pessoa, *Ultimatum și Alte Manifeste*, București: Editura Humanitas, 2012, p. 45

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him. If it doesn't, he will denounce him for being an impostor. It's his right to do so.

In any act of seduction, for the one being seduced, self-recognition is paramount. That is where knowing begins: from the recognition of one's image, on which the world as we know it reflects, consciously or just intuitively. More than any other form of art, theatre and cinema even more can take its similitudes with the world to the point of consimilitude. But, "the decisive question for man is: do you or do you not relate to infinity? This is the criterion of his life. Only if I know that boundlessness is the essential thing do I not fix my interest on the futility and on things that have no decisive significance. If I don't know, then I insist that I be recognized as having some value in the world because of some quality or other that I perceive as a personal asset: my talent or possibly my beauty."<sup>12</sup> And the infinite, for an actor, is not an abstract notion, but the knowledge of his deepest self, which cannot end, but towards the end of which he must tend to. The knowledge that has not traveled through emotion cannot be metaphysical, "because the Shadow is a living part of our personality and wants to participate in the life of the whole, and only when we can see and accept its knowledge, we can suppress the personal unconscious (...) because only by turning towards oneself, one can meet oneself"<sup>13</sup>. Assuming its impossibility to become total, knowledge must descend into the space of shadows, since no glory, nor the brilliance, but the power to endure one's Shadow, to have been seduced by it and to have survived it gives the actor the right to consider himself a creator,

Expression is the one by which we recognize what happens to the one in front of us, the place where the inner abyss meets the outer one. Neurology says that, through an unconscious mimetic act, we reproduce what is known, guessed, or even hidden from the inner abyss of the one in front of us. In the natural process of mirroring "people unwittingly imitate each other (...) my facial muscles reflect what I feel, and your neural machinery takes advantage of this"<sup>14</sup>. As in a *prepetuum mobile* kaleidoscope, a part of our brain discerns what is happening to the person in front of us, confronting it to what we are

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12 Carl Gustav Jung, *Amintiri. Vise. Reflecții.*, București: Editura Humanitas, 2020, p. 370

13Idem, p. 29

14 David Eagleman, *Creierul Povestea Noastră*, București: Editura Humanitas, 2018, pp. 144-146

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experiencing, and struggling to find common ground. We mimetically mirror the one standing before us, to reflect him back contaminated with what we are. And sometimes, when our neural machinery is overstimulated, and can no longer discern to whom it is happening what we feel, whose emotion it is, we end up reflecting ourselves, forgetting who the other one is. We use it, as a projection screen, on which we see ourselves reflected, with our entire Tartarus of shadows, archetypes, cyclops, and fantastic animals. They are what prevent us from realizing that we do not see the one in front of us, that we only use them, unconsciously, to soothe the fears of the very entities that we see crossing the face of the one we are looking at. And we think they are his. For a while, we feel liberated, fault-free, innocent. But as soon as the mirror disappears, we wake up again fearful, guilty, corseted by fear. It is a mechanism of life, it occurs naturally. And it is precisely the mechanism on which the seduction of the cinema is based. That is why the organicity, naturalness, realism, or naturalism of the actor's acting are paramount. Because, otherwise, seduction is not possible.

Mankind needs cinema as “man is reluctant to move out into the overwhelmingness of his world, the real dangers of it; he shrinks back from losing himself in the all-consuming appetites of others, from spinning out of control in the clutching and clawings of men, beasts, and machines”<sup>15</sup>. To seduce the spectator, to carry him into that "world that the seduced one was waiting for and which sits with perfect naturalness on the horizon of that longing for something still unknown"<sup>16</sup>, the actor must overcome his Jonah Syndrome, that „fear of being torn apart, of losing control, of being shattered and disintegrated, even of being killed in the experience. And the result of this syndrome is what we would expect a weak organism to do: to cut back the full intensity of life”<sup>17</sup>, and become "the one who can open the world because, unlike the one being seduced, he knows the object that the seduced desires without knowing it"<sup>18</sup>.

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15 Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death*, London: Souvenir Press, 2020, p. 53

16 Gabriel Liiceanu, *Despre seducție*, Ed. Humanitas, 2007, pag. 2

17 Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death*, London: Souvenir Press, 2020, p. 53

18 Gabriel Liiceanu, *Despre Seducție*, București: Editura Humanitas, 2007, p. 24

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## Conclusions

“He did not belong to reality, although it had a lot to do with it. He hovered above it, and even when he was absolutely abandoned to it, he was far from it. But it was not the good that drove him away, and, in fact, neither the evil; (...). He had what is called *exacerbatio cerebri*, for which reality did not have a strong enough stimulus, but only one that was too weak. He did not succumb to reality, yet was not so weak that he could not bear it; on the contrary, he was too strong, but this strength was a disease in him. As soon as reality lost its incentive, he found himself disarmed; therein lies the evil in him. He was aware of this in the very presence of the stimulus—and in this awareness lay the evil.”<sup>19</sup> The way the moral Kirkegaard describes himself as the seducer bears striking similarities to the actor's relationship with the two realities he experiences: the one on stage, which he must transform to seduce his viewer, and the other one, the real insufficient ordinary one that he has to accept for what it is. Actors feel alive only in front of the camera, or on stage. When the curtain is drawn, the reality hits and they can no longer lie about it, like they could when they assumed another identity, another destiny. Once the lying stops, all the demons return: the fear of being the best version of themselves, the fear of their own greatness, the need of escaping their own destiny, the avoidance of exercising the talent of being themselves. And the lie was only possible through the freedom to seduce that they gave themselves, like Johan, who "sometimes had a parastatic body and then it was nothing but pure sensuality (...) Individuals were nothing to him but stimulants (...) He will end up cheating himself in the way he cheated others. Because he deceived them about their inner self (...) It's outrageous (...) to put someone in a position to deceive their own self.”<sup>20</sup> To deceive, that is, to seduce. And the actor who does not know that he is seducing is deceiving himself.

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