

The Actor, "A Traveller" through the World of Characters

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Abstract: *The whole world is a field of study, unfolding before our eyes. Whenever we want to thrill an audience, we have to be seemingly thrilled ourselves. In order to portray a character, we primarily make use of the indications given by the author, but these are sometimes incomplete, abstract, and our participation, with our own data, in contact with the situation in which we are meant to evolve, must be objective. With the help of memory, imagination and exercise, the primary capacity of an actor must be the judgement, the detachment, the creation of the character as an ideal model, with improvisation being an ABC that helps building the interpretation of the character.*

Keywords: *traveller; character; role; work; performance;*

Introduction

Whenever we choose to create *characters*, the actor is a *traveller* who walks through life while disguised as the numerous *characters* he embraces, searches for and asks them to be played, I don't think he does anything else but *walk* through worlds and lives that he has to take on with the first reading he has with his colleagues and the director of the show. Why *traveller*? Because after each reading, the moment he discovers *the road* he has to travel on his *journey*, he discovers *paths, alleys, lanes, trails* he either takes up again each time, or allows himself to be carried in other *directions*, in new *maps* that he seeks in the resolution of the situations and actions proposed on his way to his final *destination*.

Throughout the *journey*, the actor encounters *torches* that light his way in the *tunnel* that represents the *World*. Each *torch* he walks through the *World* with also has a new story and connection as he discovers *the paths* and *maps* through which he walks in discovering the *cities* where we aim to find out our location, who we are and where/with whom we identify. With each experience we decipher *roads, alleys, streets, neighbourhoods*, that the *World* presents to you as the *photographs* of a new album. In each story you are led into, you, the traveller, choose to find out who you are, what you seek and where you need to go. "The sensitive man submits to the impulses of his nature, and plays exactly only the cry of the heart; the moment he softens or strengthens his cry he is no longer himself, but an actor who plays a role"².

1. Mirroring the character and/or humanity of the actor

The creation of the characters that the actor builds in the various and multiple performances are projections and characters that he searches for, learns, detects in his own being with whom he is in the work process. Each character is a new appearance of the thousands and

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² Diderot, Denis. 2010. *Paradox despre actor*. București: Nemira, p. 431.

³ Niculescu, Radu. 2009. *Actorul călător printre existențe*. Constanța: Editura Ovidius University Press, p. 25.

thousands of personalities with whom/and whom we bring to the limelight daily, depending on the situations and stories with which we agree to resonate, or not. Each character becomes a new search and a new appearance of the one we build, to parade in the paintings through which we give life to the roles and lives of those written in the books and in the scenarios in which we find ourselves.

In his book, *The Actor Travelling Through Existences*, Radu Niculescu augments the above as follows: "The actor detects and establishes the situations he finds himself in and which *the character plays* in the economics of the play, and it depends on the nature of his talent to reinterpret these situations to create a real life and body in the given conditions"³. The characters that the actor builds in the different and multiple performances are projections and dispositions that he looks for, that he learns and detects in his own being, which goes through the process of working. Each character is a new guise of thousands and thousands of personalities which we daily take out into the spotlight, depending on the situations and stories with which we accept to resonate, or not. Each character becomes a new quest and a new guise for the one we build, to parade in the *tableaux* through which we bring to life the roles and lives of those written in the books and scripts in which we find ourselves.

The actor becomes a *traveller* in the seen and *unseen world* of events and situations self-proposed, or imposed by the director, led in the transition from reality to fiction, from action to re-action, from impulse to a technical gesture, from patterns to non-patterns. If the actor does not come alive on stage and lets himself in a routine that repeated every hour of rehearsal, the character ends up *dead*. An actor has the task and the responsibility to act according to the rules, to pay attention to detail, to be present and always available to create.

Taking the role represents the early stage; the one where after reading the play, the script, and the actor discovers *the world* where he is going to create his life story. The actual *playing of the role* is the stage where, after discussions with the director and the acting partners, he learns by actually *taking on the role*, contributing with something personal to the particular role, while experimenting and adapting to it. Having confidence to let things unfold spontaneously actually means *creating the role*. And the character *dies* with the last re-enactment of the performance.

When the actor stops making contact with the character, stops imitating or technically repeating what he has built up during rehearsals and, by default, during the performances he has had, his character disappears, *dies*, closes itself in a world where it has gathered and met the other characters played and created during the years. "Feelings push us to the highest tension of our reason, reason purifies our feelings"⁴.

If a musician has a portfolio of the scores learned throughout his career, an actor has the number of performances, the number of performances of all the characters he has built and brought to life throughout his career. "The actor is not only the artist of the word. In addition to the expressiveness of the articulate language, he must know how to benefit from the immense expressive resources of body language"⁵.

The actor has the responsibility to work and to perfect himself both in terms of speech and body, of voice, through work and study, through exercises, for hours a day, in order to assimilate psychological states "...until he progressively becomes a sounding board, a kind of transmitter-receiver-amplifier of images, feelings, impulses of all kinds"⁶.

⁴ Bertold, Brecht. 1960. *O teatre*, Izd-vo inostrannoi literaturî (I.L.). Moskova, p. 218.

⁵ Deleanu, Horia. 1982. *Elogiul actorului*. Bucureşti: Editura Meridiane, p. 23.

⁶ Tchekhov, Mikhail. 1967. *Etre acteur, méthode psychophysique du comédien*. Paris: Ed. Olivier Persrin, p. 20.

In our emotional baggage, we hold many characters, personalities that we may not be able to decipher in everyday life, as they actually happen when we have to build the path of *the character* we have to play with the fellow actors and the director who leads the whole process. We don't get to the depths until we allow ourselves to discover what is hidden, or what we need to discover in our inner quests that we may not get to confront, except on stage. Outside of the everyday situations we are placed in, or place ourselves in, as a result of the circumstances we place ourselves in, the situations and lives we create on stage are in a dimension where we push certain *buttons* that may not have been used at all by us. The actor must be able to decipher the mechanisms of his body accessible to him. By grasping these mechanisms, the actor starts the work of freeing himself from any resistance. The actor, who reveals himself sacrificing his most intimate side (that which is not made for the eyes of the world) must be able to express his last impulse. He must be able to give life, through sound and movement, to those impulses that oscillate on the border between dream and reality. In short, he must be able to construct his own psycho-analytical language of sounds and gestures just as a great poet creates his own language of words⁷.

In the first phase, the actor deciphers the dramatic writing, asks questions about the character's condition in the given situation, researches and discovers the social, political and economic context in which the play was written, that influences drama and any artistic or documentary writing so much. Learning a role, if we are discussing from the point of view of psychodrama, according to Moreno's theory, goes through three stages: *assuming the role, playing the role, creating the role*⁸.

In the second phase, the actor assumes the text, the character information and is able to explain and justify any thought or action of his character. Rehearsing the text in movement is the creative process most preferred by the actor. He must "forget" the text and find the justification for any gesture, mimicry or stage movement in full harmony with his lines. The final stage in the creative process is the thrill of the first performance and later of each dramatic performance. In this last stage, the actor must be present and involved *in* and *at the* performance as if it is the first time the performance takes place. This relationship between text and actor is led and mediated by the director, who must know and understand clearly what his vision of the performance is, to help the actor to own the character as part of it. "The actor takes from reality or imaginary life all that I can give to man. But all the impressions, passions, pleasures, all the things that others experience for them, are transformed in actors into material for creation"⁹.

In order to be clearer, direct in my work, I will demonstrate the above by a small presentation of a *character* I played in my dissertation performance, which I analyzed from all the established points of view, in order to manage to draw a straight path, which I am not afraid to defend.

⁷ Jerzy Grotowski. 1998. *Spre un teatru sărac*. București: Unitext eri Magister, p. 21.

⁸ Tian Dayton. 1994. *Drama interioară. Psihodrama și terapia experiențială*. Florida: Health Communications, Inc. Deerfield Beach, p. 22.

⁹ K. S. Stanislavski. 1955. *Munca actorului cu sine însuși*. București: Editura de Stat pentru pentru Literatură și Artă, p. 244.

**2. Case Study: The experience that destroy innocence, but also leads you back to it.
(James Baldwin)**



Fig. 1. Character Medea – The Archeology of Crime Dissertation Performance.
Source: Personal archive

My name is Medea and I am 28 years old. I came to therapy because I committed a crime of passion due to intense anger. I was determined to commit this murder to punish my high school teacher who seduced me 14 years ago, with whom I had a child but did not start a family. Through therapy, I allow the little girl from 14 years ago to come forward so that I examine what I have accepted as true about a situation, or myself, to do and say what I didn't say back then, considering it far too threatening or dangerous. I release the inner problem and reconstruct everything in the present, releasing the feeling either on a psychic, cellular or bodily level. By allowing it to express itself, I free the voiceless victim living inside me to open up, thus reducing trauma and releasing hidden emotions, emotional tension and events stored in the unconscious.

Through this therapy I have given voice to my inner life, to the pain I was ashamed to share, to the dreams I hardly dared to have, I go through the stages of existence and inner life getting in touch with my dark side and bring it back to light through techniques that seem natural and are carried out in a safe and controlled environment. Right from the moment I got in touch with the character, from reading the text to inclusively assuming the data appropriated by the author; I was surprised by the feeling of fear. Later with hidden shame, as finally with barely whispered hopes and dreams. Through it, I had the courage to speak words I didn't have the courage to say, but which screamed inside me.

3. Conclusions

I'll end by saying that with each role we had to take on, play, create each time, we also take responsibility for everything we received both from the director and the personal contribution of giving birth to who/what we are, to manifest through us. It has always been difficult for me to express through words what is happening both in my inner self and what I

convey through gesture, attitude, and movement. Regardless of the importance of your role in the performance, the fact that you are there and your presence is necessary, the work must be taken seriously. It is very important to know *who* you are, *why* you are and *what* your purpose is, your personal development as an actor having a great contribution both personally and professionally. Thus, the actor's contribution to society is a significant one, if we can understand: "to shape the viewer's conception of life, possibly to change it, to determine new relationships to the various parameters of social life around us"¹⁰.

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¹⁰ György Kovacs. 1963. „Despre nou și vechi în arta actorului” (interviu luat de Mira Iosif). In *Teatrul*, no. 8/1963.