

# Trance Art and Other Possessions<sup>1</sup>

Christopher Danowski and Laura González

## Abstract (300 words)

How can one be reflexive when examining something from inside the object of research?

In 2010, I finished a project researching seduction. The road to completion was tortuous, as I found that in studying seduction, I was being seduced that is, led astray. I was, simultaneously, subject and object of the research. I was in a trance, obsessed and possessed by the object of study. Rather than compromise, I turned this problem into an asset, devising a methodology to study wicked phenomena from within.<sup>2</sup> I called this the *self-reflexive methodology*. It has three steps: recognition, capture and reflection, which can be enacted in a variety of fields, as well as methods or media. For this project, I chose writing, psychoanalytic practice and performative photography. Following a presentation of the methodology and the works produced as part of the seduction project, my aim is to see whether this methodology can be applied to the pedagogical practices I have developed at Transart, and in particular to PhD supervision.

In 2010, I thought that a PhD program was beyond me. I would occasionally have flashes that this body of work might be leading to larger questions, but I was always sidetracked by Desire. Taking Desire as a theme, I would lose my navigational star over and over, as Desire's etymology suggested, and I let myself be seduced into the possibility of going in the wrong direction consciously, in conscious repetitions. Following the constraints of being as unrestrained as possible, my navigational star's replica brought me into a PhD program anyway, where I would recognize that a self-reflexive methodology might open doors, or keep open doors still open, or capture my attention, and that this would need further reflection. It was not midnight. It was not raining. It was not Transart. It was not a PhD program.

## Biographies (100 words)

Laura González is an artist and writer. When she is not following Freud, Lacan and Marx's footsteps with her camera, she supervises students at the Glasgow School of Art and Transart Institute. She has written on the seductive qualities of Philippe Stack's *Juicy Salif*. She is the author of an edited collection on madness to which she contributed a work on hysteria. She has performed with various dance companies, including Michael Clark. Her current research explores knowledge and the body of the hysteric through text, dance performance and video. She writes a blog with her thoughts on hysteria: [www.lauragonzalez.co.uk](http://www.lauragonzalez.co.uk)

Christopher Danowski is a performance artist with a background in theater. He makes films to project on gallery walls, constructs rituals to be enacted in front of these films, and writes and creates theatrical events to play along with the films and the rituals. He is based in Phoenix, and his work has been shown locally, in New York, Minneapolis, Seattle, Yucatán, Mexico City, Dublin, Laval, Vienna, and Berlin. He is currently working on a practice-based PhD on the subject of desire, sorcery and new media performance at Transart Institute. <http://chrisdanowski.blogspot.com>

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<sup>1</sup> The images in this text are composites, worked from source material from the authors. They mirror the conversation. We have chosen to leave them unreferenced, as they do not reference anything outside themselves.

<sup>2</sup> Horst W. J. Rittel and Melvin M. Webber, 'Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning', *Policy Sciences* 4, 1973, pp. 155-169.





Lets start with possessions before we get into a trance or approach art. Possessions can be both liberating—for one can let go, let someone else do the work—and scary—for one is not oneself anymore. But possession is not only possession by a spirit. It can also mean custody and ownership. I am sure you will understand if I told you that, during my PhD, which I completed in 2010,<sup>3</sup> I was often referred to as obsessed, possessed, in a trance. Possessed by knowledge, I hope.

The metaphor (sometimes metonymy?)<sup>4</sup> of possession is a useful one, one that can withstand iterations and unpackings in multiple directions; taking the idea of possession from a very specific cultural perspective might open up unexpected metaphors. Spirit possession in Caribbean contexts<sup>5</sup> (by this I mean, with roots in Africa, a new birth in the Caribbean under crisis during the slave trade, and the subsequent migrations to the rest of the Americas and the world at large) is almost unequivocal about the subject-object relationship. The Orisha, the Loa, the Goddess or God, or Ancestor spirit, is the subject, entering into the world of human culture by turning someone into an object.

In many of these traditions (if not most), the one being possessed is an initiate into the mysteries of their particular deity. In Vodun, the initiate is called the horse, and the Loa (goddess or god) is the rider.<sup>6</sup> The horse submits to the rider. In Yoruba culture and Yoruba-derived cultures, the initiate is called the *Iyawo*, bride of the secret, or the orisha's *junior-wife*,<sup>7</sup> and it is always Bride, no matter the initiate's biological sex or the gender of the deity. It is not a casual metaphor. The bride submits to the god. While this points out certain inherent gender biases, most of which is far too complicated for the purposes of this work, it also points out some ideas about possession that might be applied to PhD work.

As scholar-artists, we become married to the idea, the thought, the knowledge, of our study, submit to it, with an implicit understanding that our research is something that will overwhelm us. The subtext is always that we will one day become completely possessed by these thoughts.

These ideas are beginning to seduce us, and we suspect that the seduction might go on for a long time (and of course, much longer than most doctors would recommend).

The promise of being possessed becomes stronger once we start to meet others along the academic and artistic path, who are possessed by the same ideas, or similar ones: the idea's sisters, or cousins. We have been seduced, to the point where we are, in a sense, marrying into a family.

Once a child of Oshun (the orisha of love, of honey and rivers) has been possessed by her, they do seem to become especially talented in charming someone. Like a spell. Being under a love spell is not the same thing as being possessed, but there are some similarities, and it is not at all casual that one who has been submitting to a goddess

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<sup>3</sup> See Laura González, *Make Me Yours—The Psychodynamics of Seduction Through Works of Art*, unpublished PhD thesis, Sheffield: Sheffield Hallam University, 2010.

<sup>4</sup> Joël Dor, *Introduction to the Reading of Lacan: The Unconscious Structured Like a Language*, New York: Other Press, 1998, p. 50.

<sup>5</sup> Robert Farris Thompson, *Flash of the Spirit: African and Afro-American Arts and Philosophy*, New York: Vintage, 1984, p. 9.

<sup>6</sup> Maya Deren, *Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti*, Kingston, New York: McPherson & Company, 1983, p. 29.

<sup>7</sup> David Brown, *Santería Enthroned: Art, Ritual, and Innovation in an Afro-Cuban Religion*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003, p. 166.



becomes capable of charming someone into submitting to their own charms. Being possessed and being charmed are both echoes of the same counter-moves in a dance of seduction. Those who know the ceremony are given the secrets to take someone else into that space, that sacred space, where there is only you and the thing that is calling you.

*He starts to miss the one he never met, so he constructs an image of her, and leaves the image in front of his altar. He says: this one here, if she is in this world, bring her to my table, and let me recognize her by how she might capture me in her eyes.*<sup>8</sup>



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<sup>8</sup> Jacques Lacan, *Book XIII: The Object of Psychoanalysis*, tr. by Cormac Gallagher, available from <http://lacaninireland.com> [accessed 21 Aug 2013], p. 90

Then, my object of study was seduction, which is a principle (Jean Baudrillard wrote that ‘everything is seduction and nothing but seduction’),<sup>9</sup> a phenomenon, a process and a practice. The most comprehensive, yet open definition, comes from Rex Butler, who, paraphrasing Baudrillard wrote that seduction is ‘the getting of another to do what we want, not by force or coercion, but by an exercise of their own, though often mistaken or misguided, free will’.<sup>10</sup> As you can see, the definition is complex, as seduction is something that applies to many fields of study, from criminology to marketing, from philosophy to popular psychology and, of course, psychoanalysis.

It was more than twenty years ago that I set out on this precarious little boat, where I thought the boldness of my vision would be enough to keep me safe. I was seduced by these muses who promised me that they would never stop talking as long as I didn’t stop listening. When it was apparent that it wasn’t safe, making art as a way of making a life, the recklessness wore away, because it wasn’t useful. Those large archetypes, and the promise of an eternal return to a collective consciousness, guided by an obsessive attention to synchronicity,<sup>11</sup> eventually they all crashed against the weight of history, where decolonial and post-feminist consciousnesses started to ask me to be more specific, and more intentional. When I was floating at sea, I really couldn’t do anything except repeat mantras that I had already spoken (even though I thought they were always new), but when I grounded myself and worked from there, it was as if the muses woke up with different faces, as if they were guiding me to their ancestral home. I found my grounding in Lacanian theory, Afro-Caribbean cosmologies, and the radical empiricism of phenomenology.

Yet, there are a number of constants in all the literature available on the topic, and I established four rules of seduction. *First rule: seduction belongs to objects*. This principle has been best articulated by Baudrillard in *Fatal Strategies*: ‘only the subject desires; only the object seduces’.<sup>12</sup> Seduction and desire are not discrete terms, but continuous with each other. They seem to relate to each other as if part of a moëbius strip, a topological surface with one single side and only one boundary component. As the two sides are continuous, a cross over, from inside to outside and back is possible. However, when one passes a finger round the surface of the moëbius strip, it is impossible to say at which precise point the crossing has taken place. To paraphrase Slavoj Žižek, seduction is not a simple reverse of content, ‘we encounter it when we progress far enough on the side’ of desire itself.<sup>13</sup> Seduction, in and through Jacques Lacan’s *objet petit a*—the object cause of desire, not the

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<sup>9</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Seduction (De la séduction [1979])*, tr. by Brian Singer, New York: Saint Martin’s Press, 1991, p. 83.

<sup>10</sup> Rex Butler, ‘Seduction’, in *Jean Baudrillard: The Defence of the Real*, London: Sage, 1999, pp. 71–118. The quote is from p. 71.

<sup>11</sup> The Police, *Synchronicity*, A&M, 1983, CD.

<sup>12</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Fatal Strategies (Les stratégies fatales [1983])*, tr. by Philip Beitchman and W. G. J. Nieslichowski, London: Pluto Press, 1999, p. 111.

<sup>13</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*, London: Verso, 1991, p. 230.

object to which desire is directed, but that which provokes desire—seduces desire and then moves on.<sup>14</sup>

*Second rule: the choice of an object of seduction depends on the individual subject.* Seduction is something that is not fully generalizable. There is no one seductive object, other than the Lacanian *objet petit a*, although some objects (technological, fashion objects) stand for it for a wide variety of people.

*Third rule: seduction is seductive.* In order to seduce, one has to be seduced first. Baudrillard wrote: ‘the illusion that leads from the one to the other is subtle. Is it to seduce, or to be seduced, that is seductive? But to be seduced is the best way to seduce’.<sup>15</sup> Seduction is a matter of two and in this doubling up, there is a reversibility. It takes place between a viewer—singular—and the work of art.

*Fourth rule: seduction is pervasive,* it will seduce everything, especially my attempts to study it. How can one overcome this? Well, the answer, as Baudrillard ascertained, is to be seduced, to allow oneself to be seduced, however, with a tool that facilitates the capture of the moment of seduction. This is what I called the self-reflexive methodology. It is comprised of three steps.

Working with the idea that performance is an act of seduction, one that plays on itself through many layers of enchantment, I am wondering about the idea of the spell as a metaphor, and wondering what if the metaphor is removed, and there is just the spell. What if the performers are under a literal spell? There is no such thing as a purely literal spell, they all work in metaphor, and it is very easy to be caught up in so many layers of metaphors or spells that no one really remembers what it was like to not be under a spell. Spells work by drawing the object close, so there is no distance. However, in these traditions, there is a point that keeps all of this in check, and that is the knowledge and experience of those who have gone before. The elders are the ones who speak with the authority of the ancestors, and they always help to remind me that this is nothing new. This is not the first seduction. This has happened before.<sup>16</sup> That is just enough distance to step out and ask them for more information: what happened the last time? How did it turn out?

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<sup>14</sup> The inaccessible object of desire, which relates to the Freudian *Thing*, is called *objet petit a* by Jacques Lacan. This is, arguably, his major contribution to the field of psychoanalytic practice and theory. *Objet petit a* is a complex concept, in flux throughout Lacan’s work. This algebraic formula, normally left untranslated, refers to the little other (*autre*, in French), which in Lacanian theory relates to reflexivity, identification and the Ego, as opposed to the big Other, the radical alterity of language and the law. *Objet petit a* is the cause of desire: not the object to which is desire is directed, but that which provokes desire. It is unspecularizable, it resists symbolisation and has no representation or alterity. *Objet petit a* evolves from earlier formations such as Plato’s *agalma*. Desire is paramount to Lacan’s thought: in its unconscious form, it is ‘at the heart of human existence and [is] the central concern of psychoanalysis’ (Dylan Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, London: Routledge, 1996, p. 36). *Objet petit a* mobilises this force. Paradoxically, the *objet petit a* is also the object of anxiety. It is a lack, a void, around which the drives circle. As such, obtaining it and satisfying desire is impossible. Attempts, however, are made through partial objects, which stand in for *objet petit a*. See Lacan’s part two of Seminar XI, entitled ‘Of the Gaze and *objet petit a*’. Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis (Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan, livre XI: Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse [1973])*, ed. by Jacques-Alain Miller, tr. by Alan Sheridan, New York: W.W. Norton, 1981, pp. 65–119, and Bruce Fink, ‘Object (a): Cause of Desire’, in *The Lacanian Subject. Between Language and Jouissance*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995, pp. 83–97.

<sup>15</sup> Baudrillard, *Seduction*, p. 81.

<sup>16</sup> Natalia Bolívar Aróstegui, *Los Orishas en Cuba*, Habana: Ediciones Unión, 1990, p. 27.



The first step is recognition. For recognition—the seduction *per se*—to take place, the subject has to identify, see and accept herself within the object, or the object as a part of herself that is beyond herself, a surplus. It is in this recognition that the psychodynamic elements of seduction begin to take place and the imaginary awakens to the possibilities seduction offers. For this to happen—and, by extension, for recognition to occur—the subject has to position herself in such a way as to be able to see herself through the other. Real and imaginary worlds, just like seduction and desire, have to enter into a reversible relation.

*It the corner of this cafe, he is a little bit more than surprised when she says, 'I am your mirror, even though you can never really see yourself,' and he is seeing his reflection in her eyes, and he sees that this is going to be a problem.*

The second is capture. Capture in this context refers to two processes: the literal capture of the subject by the object (part of the process of seduction) and the recording of this operation (part of the method of studying seduction).

*And what makes things worse, so much worse, is that when she leaves, she takes his image with her, and even worse than that, he has her image in the corner of his eye, and it will be awhile before he even notices.*

The last step is reflection. While the other two steps are relatively descriptive, reflection is the most difficult one to complete. But it is the one that will ascertain that seduction did happen, through relating recognition and capture to the context in which seduction operates. The framework for this analysis comes from various sources, from the psychoanalytic free association, and *evenly hovering attention*<sup>17</sup> to that developed by the artist Daniel Spoerri in his work *An Anecdoted Topography of Chance*.<sup>18</sup>

*She is constructing a negative image of him, one suitable for reproduction. When she misses him, she stares at the image until her eyes start to water, and then stares at a blank wall. When she blinks, his image comes to her,<sup>19</sup> and that's where it lives, in the blink of an eye, in every blink of her eye, while time is moving forward and he is disappearing and so is she.*

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<sup>17</sup> Free association is the key method of psychoanalysis, by which the patient lays down on the couch and says everything that comes into her head, an impossible task. See Christopher Bollas, *Free Association (Ideas in Psychoanalysis)*, Cambridge: Icon Books, 2002. Freud described *evenly hovering attention* (also named *free floating attentiveness*) as a state of reverie or meditation allowing the mind to be aware of more than one dimension at once, refusing to make one thing more important than others. It is akin to listening with certain indifference, but with engagement and interest. *Evenly hovering attention* requires indifference and engagement, and this may seem, at first, to be at cross-purposes. The analyst needs to be actively engaged in the act of listening, with interest and attention. Yet, she also needs to be indifferent in terms of the content of the analysand's speech, not giving more emphasis or importance to aspects of the narrative just because they have cultural importance attached to them. This means that, in analysis, the account of someone's death may have the same weight as the purchase of new curtains, for example. As Wilfred Bion writes, the psychoanalyst engages without memory or desire. Wilfred Ruprecht Bion, 'Notes on Memory and Desire', *Psychoanalytic Forum*, vol. II no. 3, 1967, pp. 271–280.

<sup>18</sup> Daniel Spoerri, *An Anecdoted Topography of Chance*, London: Atlas Press, 1995. Spoerri first produced this work, detailing the objects on the blue table as encountered on 17 October 1961 at exactly 3:47 p.m, for an exhibition in Paris in 1962.

<sup>19</sup> For example, Steve McGough, 'How does this work? Stare at the red dot and see the woman in full color on the wall', *Radio Vice Online*, 25 January 2012. Available from: <<http://radioviceonline.com/how-does-this-work-stare-at-the-red-dot-and-see-the-woman-in-full-color-on-the-wall/>> [accessed 21 August 2013].



Photography,<sup>20</sup> writing and psychoanalysis (not only as a body of theory, but as a practice one engages in) have been the media that have best worked for me for the second step, the capture, the key link between recognition and reflection. But can this methodology also be applied to the very particular practice of PhD supervision? When I recognise something in you and you in me, can we capture it to reflect on it?

In the economy of seduction, possession is hinted at in the moment of capture, or perhaps is that moment of capture. Seduction opens up the desire to be possessed, to be the object of desire.

To be possessed by an idea: an understanding that the idea will not possess us entirely, but will play with us, seducing us, with moments where we are overtaken, or moments where there is just a promise of a future possession. (*Some time in the near future, this enticing idea will take me over entirely.*) To trust that this is a worthy commitment: that this idea, this body of knowledge, will hold the same thrill for a few years, and always with hopes that it might last much longer, possessed, by something that might actually have no end, something that can hold us in its seductive grip forever. To set off in an uneasy direction: it gets clearer, and faith become stronger, once we start finding other minds who have been captured by the same thought, idea, body of knowledge. (*I have been in that room and met the same people that you did.*)

In the clinical setting, the term transference refers to the relationship between patient and analyst, as it develops during treatment. In analysis, as something is transferred, from past to present, into the room where the analysand finds herself and to the person of the analyst, situations are worked through not by remembering, but by re-living and re-enacting them.<sup>21</sup> Of course, transference is evident in most relationships (friends, teaching situations, PhD supervision) but the context of analysis, the *privileged enclosure*,<sup>22</sup> the rules of engagement, and the analytic hour<sup>23</sup>—the tool of analysis, which allows unseen things to be made visible—heighten it. The same is true of the supervision. Transference has a transforming effect. If transference is love, as Freud asserted, that love is first and foremost a love of knowledge (*wissenstrieb*).<sup>24</sup> The problem is how to make that knowledge visible to others.

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<sup>20</sup> For details of the photobook, submitted for Laura González's PhD, see Laura González, *Make Me Yours* [photobook], available from <<http://www.lauragonzalez.co.uk/make-me-yours/>> [accessed 27 August 2013].

<sup>21</sup> Listen to Adam Phillips in Lisa Appignanesi, *Freudian Slips, 4: Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria*, [Radio Programme] BBC, first aired on Thursday 17 March 2005 at 3.45pm, available from <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/science/freudianslips.shtml>> [accessed 13.08.13].

<sup>22</sup> '[W]hat is exemplified here is the privileged enclosure. At one level the analytic space, behind closed doors, the locus of seduction, a place of the wildness of intimacy, for believe it or not, all this does exist, which is not to say that it happens to all.' Chris Oakley, 'A Disturbance of Memory on the Acropolis – A Response', in Kivland and du Ry (eds), *In the Place of an Object*, JCFAR, pp. 141–160, p. 149.

<sup>23</sup> Ernest Jones, 'Self-Analysis (1897—)', in *Sigmund Freud life and Work, Volume One: the Young Freud 1856–1900*, London: The Hogarth Press, 1954, pp. 351–360.

<sup>24</sup> Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book I: Freud's Papers on Technique, 1953–1954* (*Le séminaire I: Les écrits techniques de Freud* [1975]), ed. by Jacques-Alain Miller, tr. by John Forrester, New York: W.W. Norton, 1991, p. 109; Sigmund Freud, 'Observations on Transference-Love (Further Recommendations on the Technique of Psychoanalysis III)' (*Bemerkungen über Die Übertragungsliebe* [1915]), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, under the general editorship of James Strachey in collaboration with Anna Freud, assisted by Alix Strachey and Alan Tyson, 24 vols, vol. 12, London: Vintage, 2001, pp. 157–174; Evans, *Introductory Dictionary*, p. 212.

In our writing, in particular, we involve the reader in a play of mirrors. We are many, enacting—or, shall I say, acting out—seduction, falling for it while making the text fall for us. Françoise Collin already used this strategy when she wrote ‘to write is to enter into seduction’.<sup>25</sup> Yet, there are some writings that are more conducive to this—letters, detective stories, case expositions, and, of course, dialogues—as they quite directly address the reader. Our structures circle around the scopic and invocatory drives, between gaze and voice.<sup>26</sup>

*You write to try to capture me, by writing things that I want to hear. I don't get caught, I'm not easy to seduce with flattery (no careful reader is easy to seduce), but flattery does get my attention. I am seduced at that moment when, in getting lost in your trying to write me, I start to find tics, stutters, and gaps,<sup>27</sup> those moments where, in a blink, it looks as though you and I were both seduced by the same thing. A blink of an eye when we were both possessed by something that we'll never understand.*

Yet, we need a distancing device, a forensic look into our case in which we are both the subject and the object. But becoming the centre of our own research, although we tend to resist it, is absolutely necessary. As Roger Lewinter writes ‘indeed, one is never tempted—seduced—but by oneself’.<sup>28</sup>

The relationship between desire and its object is negative and aporetic, we desire what we cannot have and this structure also characterises gaze and voice.<sup>29</sup> Both are essence-less objects, areas of analytical impossibility and theoretical resistance. They have the function of interpellation, as they are related to the experiences of addressing and being addressed. The experience of being addressed is imposed from the outside and cannot be readily defended against. For that reason, voice and gaze can become invasive and threatening. The self-reflexive methodology, like the analytic couch amongst other things, helps to modulate this experience, to keep you and I separate.<sup>30</sup>

*The performance space is a space where spells happen, where the dead come back to life, where the living lose their bearings and forget themselves, and performers seem charmed with an irresistible magnetism.<sup>31</sup> It is like an opening into a timeless space, where the symbolic gives way to the imaginary, and the real that is lurking beneath the foundation*

<sup>25</sup> ‘*Écrire c'est entrer dans la séduction*’; Françoise Collin, ‘Le séducteur cache la séduction’, in Maurice Olender and Jacques Sojcher (eds), *La séduction*, Paris: Aubier Montaigne, 1980, pp. 189–196, p. 195. My translation.

<sup>26</sup> Evans, *Introductory Dictionary*, p. 47–48.

<sup>27</sup> For an example of a Lacanian conversation: Chris Danowski and Claire Sanchez, *clarity (approximately)*, 2013, available from <[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7IndOPC\\_mDg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7IndOPC_mDg)> [accessed 21 August 2013].

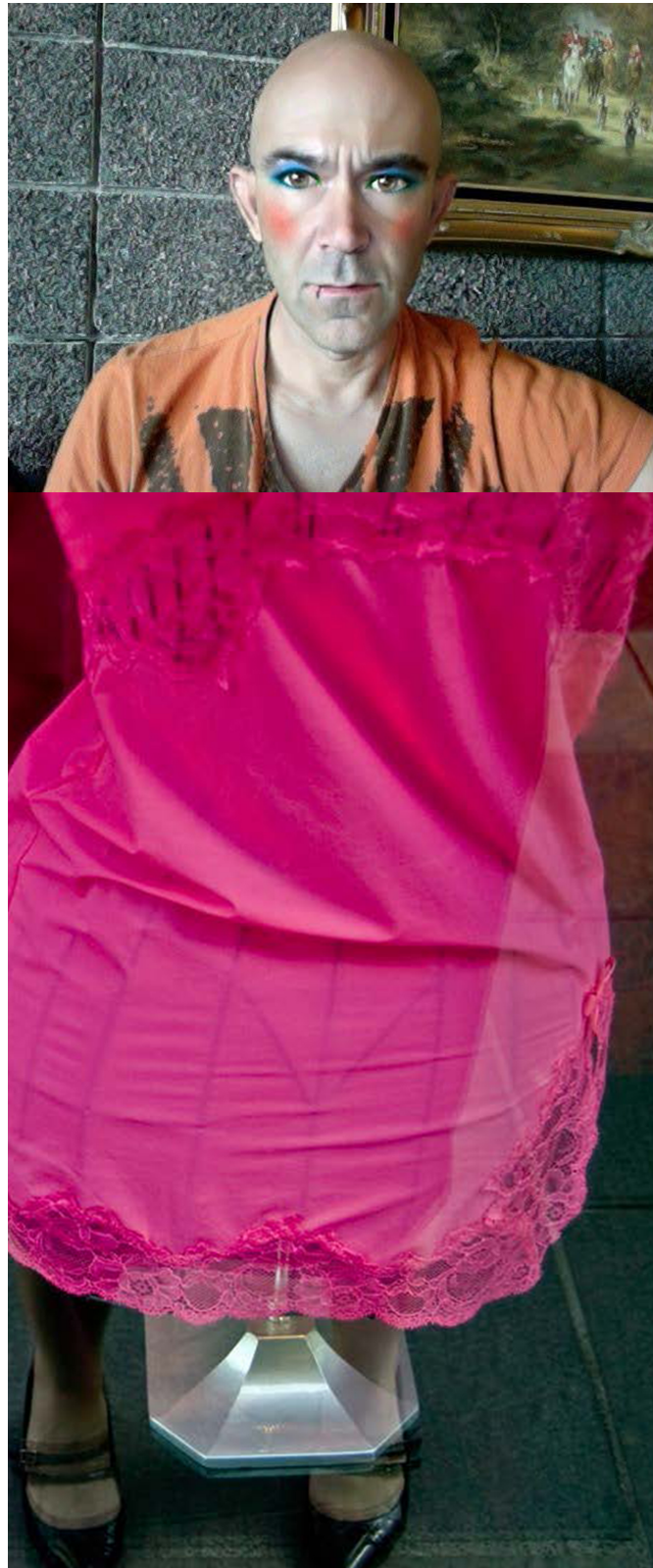
<sup>28</sup> ‘*En effet, on n'est jamais tenté—séduit—que par soi*’. Roger Lewinter, ‘La comédie magnétique’, in Maurice Olender and Jacques Sojcher (eds), *La séduction*, Paris: Aubier Montaigne, 1980, pp. 11–15, p. 15. My translation.

<sup>29</sup> Jacques Lacan, ‘The Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectic of Desire’, *Écrits. The First Complete Edition in English (Écrits [1966])*, tr. by Bruce Fink, New York, London: W.W. Norton, 2006, pp. 671–702, p. 691.

<sup>30</sup> Belgian psychologist and anthropologist Francis Martens wrote: ‘*C'est ainsi que la seduction, le miroir et le masque ont aussi fonction de vérité et de dévoilement*’; it is thus that seduction, the mirror and the mask also have a function of truth and unveiling. Francis Martens, ‘Éloge de la grimace’, in Maurice Olender and Jacques Sojcher (eds), *La séduction*, Paris: Aubier Montaigne, 1980, pp. 25–34, p. 29. My translation.

<sup>31</sup> Chris Danowski and Natalia Jaeger, *TIMB surrealcouple*, 2006, available from <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BvsK9X0QObE>> [accessed 21 August 2013].

starts to peek in.<sup>32</sup> But performance ends. Everyone will leave, eventually. And the thing that seduced us and possessed us is gone, because we can't stay there, because no one can hold a goddess in their head for very long, the dividing line comes up, it has to, when it doesn't, that's the kind of thing that kills people like Marilyn Monroe. We can't stay there.



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<sup>32</sup> Christopher Danowski, *twitch*, 2011, available from <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nZ9z49n6Q7I>> (accessed 21 August 2013).

There is always something that remains un-writeable, un-recordable, something beyond symbolization when speaking of seduction. This is because of our own involvement in it. As Maurice Olender and Jacques Sojcher write it is as if, beyond the theories and the seducers, seduction had the last word.<sup>33</sup>

I was lying on a straw mat in the corner of my godfather's living room. I was wearing all white, and I would be in this small corner for the next seven days. I was listening to my godfather, a child of Oshun, the orisha of love, talking to my godbrother, a child of Oshun, and my godmother, also a child of Oshun, was quiet. My godbrother started talking about all the different kinds of love magic he knew, all the spells he had used to capture someone's heart. He had a long list. We all pretend that we are not witches, but of course, we are. Eventually, my godmother, the oldest, who had been a priestess for more than thirty years, interrupted. She said, 'all those spells are good, I know they work, but there is one you haven't mentioned yet, and that one is my favorite.' My godbrother was thinking for a bit, then gave up, and asked her, 'what is it?' She said, 'that's the one where you tell the girl that you like her.'

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<sup>33</sup> 'Le concept ici y laisserai de ses plumes, [...] la seduction ainsi aurait le dernier mot'; the concept would leave here some of its feathers, [...] seduction would thus have the last word. Maurice Olender and Jacques Sojcher (eds), 'Préface', in *La séduction*, Paris: Aubier Montaigne, 1980, pp. 7–10, p. 7. My translation.



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