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## Fake Identities: Nature, Representation, and Self-projection

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If the implication of the art object in the psychological, social, and cultural processes of identification is commonly recognised and hallowed, it nevertheless remains paradoxical, in as much as it often consists precisely in the demonstration of the problematic character of the very concept of identity. Based on that hypothesis, and drawing from Aesthetics, Art History and Theory of Representation, this article wishes to attempt an archaeology of the work of art as an apparatus of identification, focusing on the specular links that articulate vision, knowledge, nature and identity in Western culture. Our starting point is the dialectical nature, physical (sensible and material) as well as mental (cognitive and psychological), of the process of identity construction. From this point of view, to consider the art object as an apparatus of identification is to recall the traditional definition of representation as a projection determined by the dialectics of specularity and reflexivity: on the one hand, a passive, automatic and immediate mechanism of reduplication; on the other hand, an active, emancipatory and mediated process giving birth to a unified consciousness. Through a brief overview of the metaphor of the work of art as a mirror in Plato, Plotinus, Alberti, Stoichita and Hegel, we would like to discuss the process following which the modern focus on the artificial, constructed character of the (self-)projection permitted to disconnect recognition from resemblance, previously assimilated in the operation of identification as the discovery of an inner nature. Three photographs by Diane Arbus will enable us to call attention to one among the ways photography has registered (as well as produced) this rupture, staging the duplicity of the image of the self and the performative dimension of its specular constitution.

Key words: specular apparatus, self-reflexivity, resemblance, duplicity, photography

*Men can see nothing around them that is not their own image: everything speaks to them of themselves. Their very landscape is alive.*

Karl Marx

### Introduction

To ask about the relation between artistic production and the construction of identities – individual or collective – is to enter a large field which can be (and has been) explored in many different ways and combining various methods and theoretical tools, philosophical, psychoanalytical, cognitivist, or anthropological. Notably, from the 60s and the 70s onwards, the development of Cultural, Post-colonial, Feminist, Gender and Queer Studies enabled researchers to update and challenge the more traditional, metaphysical, phenomenological and class-based accounts on the function of art in the psychological, social and cultural processes of identification, considering representation as not merely a participating but as a literally structuring element of these processes<sup>1</sup>.

It is not my intention here to enumerate all the possible angles of approach. Rather, I wish to insist on the fact that, although the implication of the art object in identity construction is commonly recognised and hallowed, it nevertheless remains paradoxical, in as much as it often consists precisely in the demonstration of the problematic character of the very concept of identity as something homogeneous, coherent and centered on a self-aware subject, implying one's matching with oneself through the discovery and recognition of his or her inner nature. During the last half of a century, the influence of psychoanalysis, structuralism, semiotics and deconstruction theory on art discourse displaced our understanding of the mediating function of representation towards the arbitrary mechanisms through which the image produces the viewer as a subject and the contradictory operations, performative as well as discursive, that inform its duplicity as a projection of the self. In a certain way, it is as if the double nature of the artwork, both an object and an image, reflected the double nature, both physical and mental, of the beholder.

Within the limited space of this article, I would like to attempt to present a brief archaeology of the work of art as an apparatus of identification, focusing on the specular links that articulate vision, knowledge, nature and identity in Western culture. First of all, this means to recall the traditional definition of representation as a projected image determined by the dialectics of specularity and reflexivity: on one hand, a passive, automatic and immediate mechanism of reduplication; on the other hand, an active, emancipatory and mediated process giving birth to a unified consciousness – that is, the consciousness of a unity.

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<sup>1</sup> To mention just one, and probably the most well known reference, Laura Mulvey, in her “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” *Screen* 16, no. 3 (1975): 6-18, combined film theory and psychoanalysis in a feminist perspective, questioning the cinematic apparatus of classical Hollywood films and the specular mechanisms according to which it determines spectatorship.

## The Mirror and the Self

In Plato's account, it becomes evident that the Delphic maxim "Know thyself" can not be fulfilled by works of art. By opposing the world of immaterial Ideas to the one of material appearances, Plato discusses the cognitive process as an act of identification (that is, the recognition of previously formed models) from which visual representation is excluded as false and dangerous, since it interposes a double, a simulacrum, between true knowledge and the human mind, i.e. between man and himself. Identity (like beauty and knowledge, which are here one and the same, that is, they all participate to "sameness" as such), is not a matter of projection but of its surpassing, something to which the mediation of philosophy and science gives unmediated access, whereas the visual image only mimics natural immediacy in order to illusively replace the model by the copy (i.e. the end by the means). Hence also the metaphor of the work of art as a mirror, which assimilates mimetic representation with specular reflection only to establish the superficial and illusory character of all images as blurred shadows<sup>2</sup>. It is noteworthy that if this metaphor, which haunts the Theory of representation until today, first appears in Classical antiquity, the mirror image does not yet stand as an emblem of self-identification neither as an expression of the self-reflexive properties of the image (as it will do in 17<sup>th</sup> century Western painting, and notably in self-portraiture<sup>3</sup>), but quite the opposite. Maybe this has also something to do with the technical evolution of the fabrication process of reflecting surfaces, and the development, since the 16<sup>th</sup> century, in Venice, of glass production. Before that, mirrors were mainly made of polished metal, giving only a dark, approximate reflection. At the beginning of the Christian era, it is this phantom-like quality of the projected image that will be given an allegorical meaning, rather than its automatism and natural immediacy. This is what we find in Saint Paul's *First Epistle to the Corinthians* (13, 9-12), where the metaphor of the mirror illustrates the distorted and incomplete image which separates the human from the divine: "Videmus nunc per speculum in aenigmate, tunc autem facie at faciem". In the King James Version (1611), the "per speculum in aenigmate" of the Vulgate is translated "through a glass darkly" (which has also served as a title to a 1961 film by Ingmar Bergman).

"For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known".

The word "darkly" here marks a spiritual deficiency, metaphorically – or rather metonymically – encoded into a visual one, the obscurity of the reflecting surface. Even if art is not directly concerned (and despite the fact that knowledge has not the same meaning here as in Plato), once again, the process of becoming oneself is opposed to the specular projection as is the totality to a fragment. True knowledge is not the knowledge of which I am the subject, but the object. I shall know fully as also I am known fully, *insofar as* I am known fully. Identity is outside, or inside, which means at this instance almost the same thing, in as much as it always indicates an *elsewhere*, something that exceeds me and of which I am a part. But to be known is not to know oneself: the operation of identification escapes the folding of the projected image back to the subject, adopting a passive mode which is presented as the guarantee of its authenticity and inner unity. In that sense, to become oneself is to lose oneself in the universal likeness of the same, to be abstracted in a transcendent generality which overcomes specific differences. The locus where identity takes place is not the human but the divine.

For a Neo-platonist like Plotinus, this takes the form of a transformative absorption given by the nominalisation of a verb, where all tension between subject and object, active and passive, disappear and vanish. Describing the final stage of the purification process of what he calls "inner vision", and which takes over the ascending movement described in Plato's *Symposium* (210a-212c), Plotinus writes:

"(...) you are now become very vision (...). To any vision must be brought an eye adapted to what is to be seen, and having some likeness to it. Never did eye see the sun unless it had first become sunlike, and never can the soul have vision of the First Beauty unless itself be beautiful."<sup>4</sup>

It is no longer about being known but about becoming the very process of knowing, metaphorically replaced here by the act of seeing. To see – and to know – is to become integrally what one sees and knows, to identify with it by recognising likeness as such; it is to recognise oneself *in* this likeness, to recognise the self *as* likeness. But, like in

2 Cf. Plato, *The Republic*, X, 596a-596e.

3 Cf. Victor Stoichita, *The Self-Aware Image: An Insight into Early Modern Meta-Painting*, trans. Anne-Marie Glasheen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

4 Plotinus, *The Six Enneads*, I, 6, 9, accessed June 4, 2015, <http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/plotenn/enn069.htm>.

Plato and Saint Paul, Plotinus's conception of likeness is opposed to visual resemblance. The inner vision constitutes a metaphor for a process in front of which the physical eyes remain blind. The tacit reference to the myth of Narcissus, in the section which precedes the one quoted above, pleads for the separation of the intellectual world of ideal identity (the universal "One") from the material one of appearances<sup>5</sup>. Identification remains a matter of the soul rather than the body. Nevertheless, art is no longer seen as incompatible with the process of spiritualisation of vision, in as much as artistic *form* exceeds physical resemblance towards the rational and immaterial principles which animate nature itself<sup>6</sup>. This Neo-platonist conception will be further developed later on, by the Renaissance artists and theoreticians who attempted to reconcile christian faith with pagan antiquity. In Marsilio Ficino, for instance, the myth of Narcissus can be read as an allegory of the original sin after which mankind, made in the image of God and according to His likeness, kept the image but lost the likeness<sup>7</sup>. Mirror reflection still conveys only a false identity, deprived of genuine resemblance, for it is considered as an external, objectified projection alienating the subject in the image instead of bringing it back to itself – that is, to its spiritual and intellectual constitution<sup>8</sup>.

But it is also the Renaissance which will redeem Narcissus and operate the synthesis between specular projection and reflexive identification, merging optical and intellectual vision, which were previously incompatible, through what Louis Marin, referring to Brunelleschi's *tavoletta*, calls the "reflexive/reflecting" apparatus of easel painting<sup>9</sup>. Indeed, in the 15<sup>th</sup> century the platonic repressed of the painter as "the man with a mirror" returns to the surface inverted, that is, used as an argument for and not against image-making. Recuperating in Ovid the myth of Narcissus, Leon Battista Alberti refers to the latter as the founder of painting, associating the narrative with a reflexivity which is the one of the liberal arts, the noble arts of the spirit, rather than with a skin-deep attachment to the appearance of things<sup>10</sup>.

The invention of perspective allowed, for the first time, to reconcile vision and consciousness through a conception of the image as an "incorporeal", the result of a dematerialised process of light projection (the mechanics of which are still based to the antique belief of a visual reciprocity between the eye which sees and the light which makes visible). Euclidian geometry built a bridge between the human and the divine, a bridge thanks to which the affirmation of the artist's individual style is not opposed to but depends on its transparency and equivalence with the universal laws of nature. At the intersection of the specular and the reflexive, the painter – and the viewer – identifies himself as the subject of vision, a universal subject rather than a particular one. In Joséphin Péladan's *The Last Lesson of Leonardo da Vinci at his Milan Academy, 1499*, we read: "The flapping of a bird's wings will give you the outline of an eyelid and the wave fading away on the sand teaches the motion of a smile. I have found in the sky reflections suitable for the gaze and the flowers taught me postures for the hands"<sup>11</sup>. I think that, in our context, there is no better commentary to this than Karl Marx's quotation which serves as an epigraph to this article: "Men can see nothing around them that is not their own image: everything speaks to them of themselves. Their very landscape is alive."<sup>12</sup>

## The Self and Its Double

If, at the moment of the Renaissance, there is no contradiction between the reflexive workings of the image and its claims to illusionistic transparency, the Baroque era experiences the first symptoms of the Cartesian split between the *cogito* and the surrounding world, a split which will take the dimension of a crisis in Modernity.

During the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the recognition of the thinking subject as the foundation of knowledge displaces the *locus* of identity from the divine towards the human, a displacement in which representation (and notably portraiture) plays a

5 Plotinus, *Enneads*, I, 6, 8.

6 Plotinus, *Enneads*, V, 8, 1-2.

7 Cf. Marsilio Ficino, "Sixth Speech," in *Commentary on Plato's Symposium*, trans. Sears Reynolds Jayne, *The University of Missouri Studies* XIX, no. 1 (1944): 182-215. In *Genesis* (1, 26), we read: "Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.'"

8 Nevertheless, in Ficino, the metaphor of the mirror is also used in a positive way, in order to describe the three successive degrees (the angel, the soul, and the body) which reinterpret in christian terms the dematerialising process described by Diotima in Plato's *Symposium*. Cf. Marsilio Ficino, "Fifth Speech," in *Plato's Symposium*, 164-181.

9 Cf. Louis Marin, *To Destroy Painting* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 46-47.

10 At the beginning of Book II of *On Painting*, Alberti writes, "Consequently I used to tell my friends that the inventor of painting, according to the poets, was Narcissus, who had turned into a flower; for, as painting is the flower of all the arts so the tale of Narcissus fits our purpose perfectly. What is painting but the act of embracing by means of art the surface of the pool?" Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting and on Sculpture: The Latin Texts of De Pictura and De Statua*, ed. and trans. Cecil Grayson (London and New York: Phaidon, 1972), 61-62. See also Cristelle L. Baskins, "Echoing Narcissus in Alberti's 'Della Pittura,'" *Oxford Art Journal* 16, no. 1 (1993): 2.

11 Joséphin Péladan, *La dernière leçon de Léonard de Vinci à son académie de Milan* (Paris: Éditions Sansot, 1904), 65-66, accessed June 3, 2015, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k55005x/texteBrut>, translated by the author.

12 Quoted in Guy-Ernest Debord, "Theory of the Dérive," trans. Ken Knabb, accessed June 3, 2015, <http://library.nothingness.org/articles/SI/fr/display/314>.

crucial role, in as much as it reveals the problematic function of the mediating image at the heart of the self-reflexive process of the *cogito*.

This is what Victor Stoichita calls the Cartesian “schize”, proposing to consider the type of self-awareness of which it is the correlate, as paradigmatic of 17<sup>th</sup> century painting<sup>13</sup>. Assembling three different texts by Descartes<sup>14</sup> on the basis of their common preoccupation with self-reflexivity<sup>15</sup>, the art historian reads them as the same attempt of their author, stated in the *Discourse*, “to represent his life like a painting”<sup>16</sup>. This picture enables the philosopher to keep his (reflexive) distance from his work and, hiding himself behind it, like the ancient painter Apelles, to listen to the commentaries that people would address to it. The “schize” describes this division of the subject being simultaneously inside the picture and behind it, the splitting up of self-consciousness by the very image of its own unity and identity. Thus the picture is both a portrait and a mask, a kind of mirror in which Descartes projects himself only to get detached from it in a simultaneous movement of reduplication and identification which guarantees the transparency of the consciousness and the transcendence of the subject.

In the Renaissance, as suggested above, there was no contradiction between the scientific discovery of nature and a strong religious belief, for God, creator of the Universe, was thought to be visible in His creation. Hence, to study natural appearances was to study the visible part of God. But, since the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, the scientific evolution displaces the understanding of nature towards a mechanical model, no longer ruled by divine elements but by laws discovered by human science. God is not dead (yet), but, since He becomes less and less necessary in order to explain the world, He withdraws from it, becoming a hidden, concealed God (a concealment which reflects on the Cartesian motto *larvatus prode*). In visual terms, the specular apparatus is what operates the epistemological separation which subordinates the reflexive act to an introverted movement, disconnecting it from the world. From now on, the quest of self-reflexivity and knowledge must go through a withdrawal from nature as a pre-given element<sup>17</sup>. In order to take nature, including his own, as an object of scientific knowledge, the subject has to distance itself from it. Or, to put it differently, nature exists henceforth as a construction, not as a creation, as something that can be abstracted and modelised according to a coherent, artificial system. Moreover, human nature is dissociated from nature in general, on the basis of the inherent capacity of the mind to order and arrange things.

Thus, progressively detached from, God, thanks to the development of science, man seems to be more and more detached from himself: the birth of the modern subject appears to be a function of its own division, and its identity a projection mediated by representation, a fabricated image of the self, a double, a persona, an artifice. If the mirror image has served as a self-reflexive device in 17<sup>th</sup> century painting<sup>18</sup> it is to the degree that it exhibited the constructed, artificial nature of image-making as an apparatus of identification<sup>19</sup>.

However, it is in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century that identity as a construction will evolve from the mechanics of dissimulation to the emancipatory quest of self-determination. Hegel describes self-consciousness as a process of projective identification and identification not simply as a modeling but as a transformative act marking nature with the human seal. Art is an integral part of this process, in as much as man, as a thinking consciousness “draws out of himself and puts before himself what he is and whatever else is. Things in nature are only *immediate* and *single*, while man as spirit *duplicates* himself, in that (i) he *is* as things in nature are, but (ii) he is just as much *for* himself; he sees himself, represents himself to himself [...]”<sup>20</sup>. Art springs from the man's need to alter the external world, like himself, in as much as he is a part of this world, by impressing on it the mark of his activity and thereby recognizing himself in

13 Stoichita, *Self-Aware Image*, 200.

14 The *Twelfth Rule for the Direction of the Mind*, the *Discourse on the Method* and the *Dioptrics* (also entitled *Optics*). Cf. René Descartes, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, Vol. 1, transl. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff and Dugald Murdoch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 39-51, 111-151 and 152-176 respectively.

15 The writing of the writing in the first, the thinking self in the second and the vision viewing itself in the third.

16 Stoichita, *Self-Aware Image*, 198.

17 Maurice Merleau-Ponty describes the Cartesian conception of the mirror as follows: “A Cartesian does not see *himself* in the mirror; he sees a dummy, an ‘outside’, which, he has every reason to believe, other people see in the very same way but which, no more for himself than for others, is not a body in the flesh. His ‘image’ in the mirror is an effect of the mechanics of things. If he recognizes himself in it, if he thinks it ‘looks like him’, it is his thought that weaves this connection. The mirror image is nothing that belongs to him”. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception and Other Essays on Phenomenological Psychology and the Philosophy of Art, History and Politics*, ed. James M. Edie (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964), 170, original emphasis.

18 In the field of painting, mirror has fulfilled at least two functions: authorial insertion (self-portrait) and visualization of the making of the image, the scenario of its own production. Cf. Stoichita, *Self-Aware Image*, 217.

19 Whereas in Brunelleschi's box, the mediated character of the projection is somehow naturalised, made transparent thanks to the specular surface. Cf. Louis Marin, *Destroy Painting*, 46-47 and Vangelis Athanassopoulos, “Why do vampires avoid mirrors? Reflections on specularly in the visual arts,” *Journal of Aesthetics & Culture* 4 (2012), accessed June 3, 2015, doi: 10.3402/jac.v4i0.10203.

20 G.W. F. Hegel, *Aesthetics*, Vol. 1, trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 31, original emphasis.

it. “Man does this in order, as a free subject, to strip the external world of its inflexible foreignness and to enjoy in the shape of things only an external realization of himself<sup>21</sup>.”

Self-identification appears here as an active process of self-duplication. The self is simultaneously the agent of this process and its result, producing identity – and being produced *as* an identity – out of the double. The consequence of this on the function of art will be crucial, in as much as the doubling property traditionally attributed to the image will henceforth be regarded not as an imitation of nature but as its altering. Man's self-recognition in the art work implies the transformation of nature in the image of man, *through* the art work. The specular metaphor returns once again but this time stripped off its mimetic essence. Evoking a quite different Narcissus in the figure of a boy throwing stones into the river, Hegel explicitly disconnects the reflexive process of self-recognition from mimetic resemblance to nature as what already exists. Marveling “at the circles drawn in the water as an effect in which he gains an intuition of something that is his own doing”<sup>22</sup>, the child recognises himself in something he can not be confused with; if ever there were identification, it is not with the water's reflection but with the product of his own free act.

The disconnection between recognition and resemblance underlines the active, performative character of the process of identification through art as an expression of man's freedom. And man's freedom is to transform, that is, to reinvent his own nature in order to become himself<sup>23</sup>. As a consequence, the status of representation will undergo a mimetic inversion: imitation describes here a dialectical link relating the image and the subject, rather than the image and the world; by identifying with a fabricated (and not with a natural) image of itself, the subject tends to resemble with that image, to transform itself according to that image<sup>24</sup>.

This redefinition of identification as a dynamic process of cultural invention and construction rather than as the discovery of an already established inner nature, will reverberate, through Baudelaire, all along Modernity, thanks to the transfigurative power of the work of art; “a difficult interplay between the truth of what is real and the exercise of freedom” eager “to imagine [reality] other than it is”, “simultaneously respect[ing] this reality and violat[ing] it<sup>25</sup>.” As Michel Foucault notes, this describes “also a mode of relationship that has to be established with oneself [...]. To be modern is not to accept oneself as one is in the flux of the passing moments; it is to take oneself as object of a complex and difficult elaboration [...]” which corresponds to the

“indispensable revolt [of man] against himself [...]. Modern man, for Baudelaire, is not the man who goes off to discover himself, his secrets and his hidden truth; he is the man who tries to invent himself. This modernity does not ‘liberate man in his own being’; it compels him to face the task of producing himself<sup>26</sup>.”

This redefinition will also open the way for the displacement of the process of identity construction from the recognition of the universal same towards the confrontation with the particular, the different, the other; a displacement in which photography played a critical role.

## Broken Mirrors

I would like to conclude with three photographs by Diane Arbus<sup>27</sup>.

Arbus has developed a very sharp sensibility towards difference and resemblance, and their various connections: analogy, affinity, particularity, singularity, categorisation, standardisation. In fact, the totality of her work can be seen as an attempt to stress the similarities that exist between apparently diverse things and, in return, to show the disparity that arises between those who seem identical. This photograph, entitled *Two Friends in a Park, New York City* (1965), was included in the Diane Arbus exhibition held at the Jeu de Paume in Paris from October 2011 to February 2012. Commenting on the image in front of a group of students, I realised that, unlike its French translation, the apparent

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21 Hegel, *Aesthetics*, 31.

22 Hegel, *Aesthetics*, 31.

23 “And it is not only with external things that man proceeds in this way, but no less with himself, with his own natural figure which he does not leave as he finds it but deliberately alters. This is the cause of all dressing up and adornment, even if it be barbaric, tasteless, completely disfiguring, or even pernicious like crushing the feet of Chinese ladies, or slitting the ears and lips. For it is only among civilized people that alteration of figure, behaviour, and every sort and mode of external expression proceeds from spiritual development.” Hegel, *Aesthetics*, 31.

24 An inversion of which Oscar Wilde's art and philosophy of life constitute an exemplary case: it is not the art work that imitates reality but reality (that is, culture, as opposed to nature) that imitates the art work.

25 Michel Foucault, “What is Enlightenment?” in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. P. Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 32-50, accessed June 4, 2015, <http://genius.com/Michel-foucault-what-is-enlightenment-annotated#note-4552745>.

26 Foucault, “Enlightenment.”

27 Given what has been said above about mirrors, the reader would notice the implicit reference of the title of this last section on Diane Arbus to Susan Sontag, “America, Seen Through Photographs, Darkly,” in *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977), 27-50.

neutrality of the original English title had deliberately evacuated any reference to the gender of the persons photographed. The things started to become clearer for the students when they saw this photograph, *Two Friends at Home, New York*, taken in the same year. Once again, the French translation “betrays” the ambiguity of the original title; not in the sense that it leads to a misinterpretation, but in that it stops interpretation, exposing the “unsaid” (but shown) of the image and thus guiding its reading and giving a definitive answer to the question raised by the image. In the first photograph, the students believed that they saw two boys, where in fact there were two girls. In the second one, they saw a heterosexual couple in their love nest; there were still two girls, in fact the same ones as in the first photograph. In the meanwhile, the demonstration of the conventional character of the attributes according to which (sexual) identity is attributed and acquired in our society (clothing choices, haircut, corpulence, spatial context etc.) has displaced heteronormativity: in the first photograph the taller girl appears more “male”; which is not the case in the second. That what seemed a protective posture of comradeship, appears to be in reality an affectionate gesture between lovers.

But I think that the relation between image, language and identity that Arbus has elaborated can be better illustrated by this last photograph, *A Naked Man Being a Woman* (1968). This is not about a man pretending to be a woman, disguised as a woman, or else. It's about a “man-being-a-woman”, that is, about a composed identity, a combination of a body and an image, a man transforming himself into a woman and being that woman within and through the photograph. And the photograph becomes the tangible proof of his transformation, not by concealing but, on the contrary, by exposing its artificial character.

In fact, the most accurate commentary about that photograph is a quote from Pedro Almodovar's, *All About my Mother* (1999), where Agrado, the transexual character interpreted by Antonia San Juan, after having self-ironically exposed all the artifices of his/her body reconstruction, states, before a theater public: “The more you resemble what you have dreamed of being, the more you become what you really are”. Which reminds me of a discussion, in fact an other film quote, this time from Jean-Luc Godard's *Nouvelle Vague* (1990):

Question: “We say someone leads a double life [...] Doesn't he often lead one life, full and complete – his own life – by seeming to lead two?”

Answer: “True. But how many lead only half a life, lacking guts for a whole one, full and complete, which seems double to others?”

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