

A blue rope knot is centered on an orange background. The rope is thick and has a textured, braided appearance. The knot is a reef knot (square knot), with four strands extending outwards towards the corners of the frame. The text is arranged around the knot.

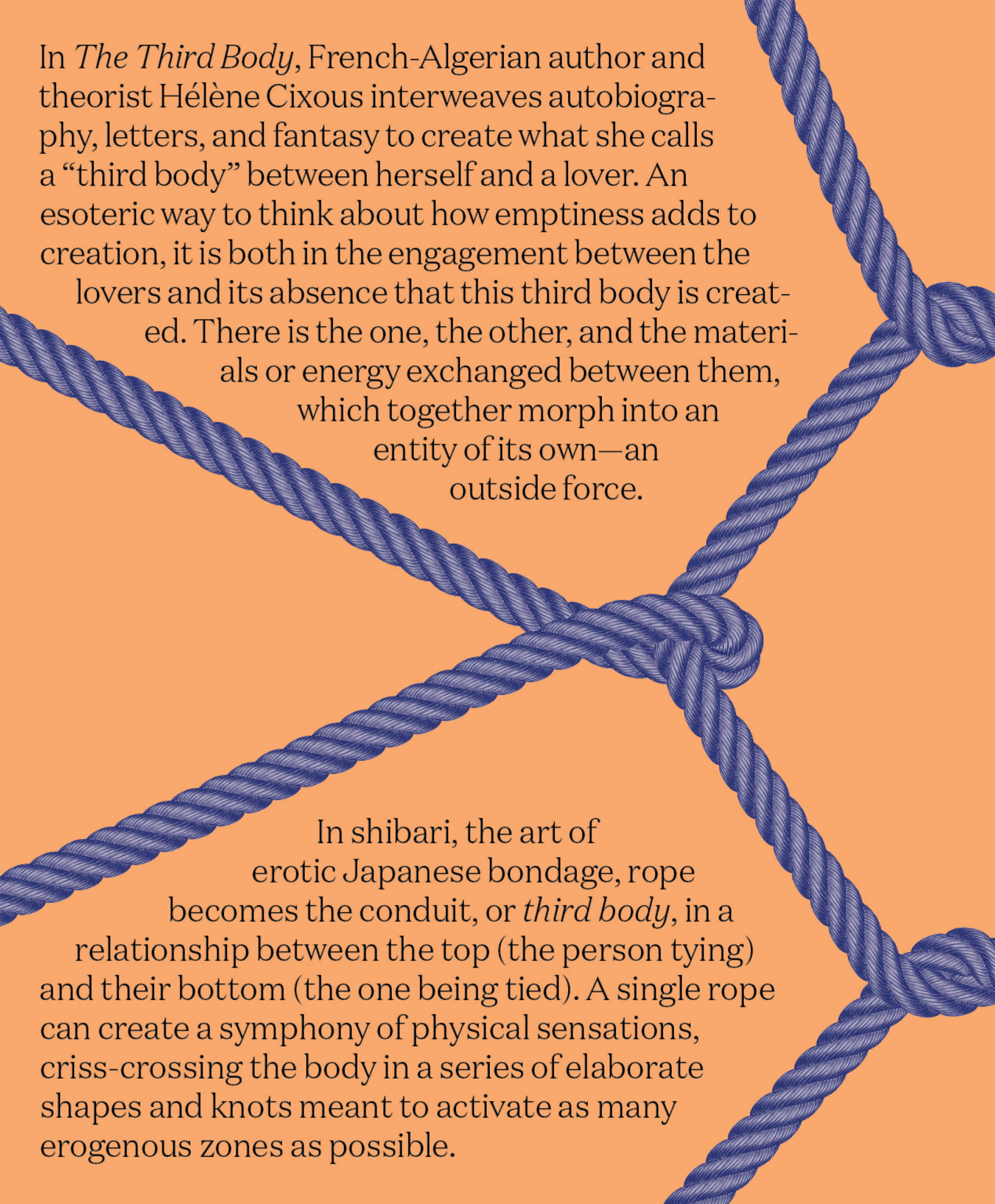
Ties

That

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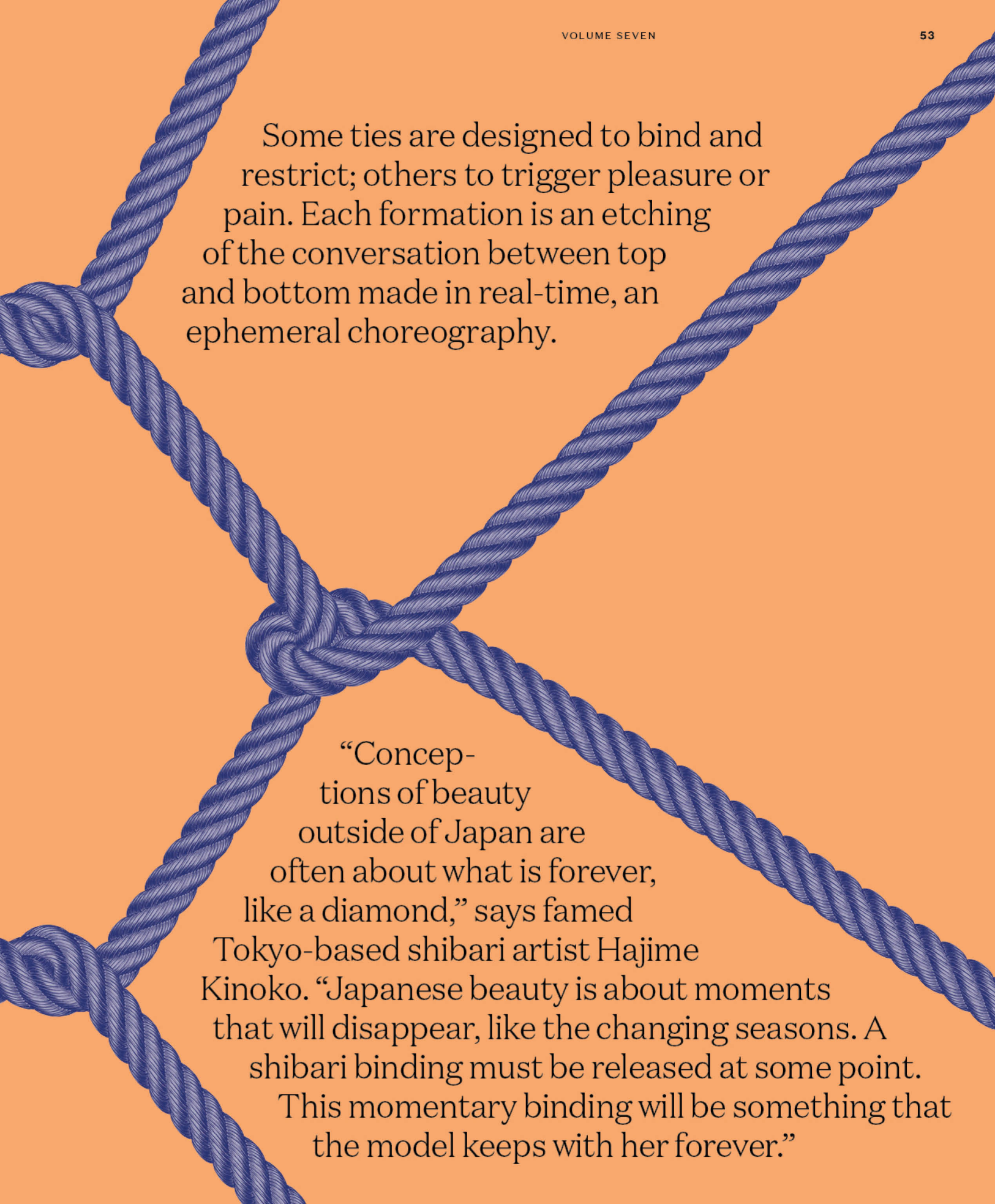
Bind

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In *The Third Body*, French-Algerian author and theorist Hélène Cixous interweaves autobiography, letters, and fantasy to create what she calls a “third body” between herself and a lover. An esoteric way to think about how emptiness adds to creation, it is both in the engagement between the lovers and its absence that this third body is created. There is the one, the other, and the materials or energy exchanged between them, which together morph into an entity of its own—an outside force.

In shibari, the art of erotic Japanese bondage, rope becomes the conduit, or *third body*, in a relationship between the top (the person tying) and their bottom (the one being tied). A single rope can create a symphony of physical sensations, criss-crossing the body in a series of elaborate shapes and knots meant to activate as many erogenous zones as possible.

A blue rope is intricately knotted into a large, symmetrical structure that resembles a stylized 'X' or a complex knot. The rope is thick and has a textured, braided appearance. The background is a solid, warm orange color. The text is centered within the negative space of the knot.

Some ties are designed to bind and restrict; others to trigger pleasure or pain. Each formation is an etching of the conversation between top and bottom made in real-time, an ephemeral choreography.

“Conceptions of beauty outside of Japan are often about what is forever, like a diamond,” says famed Tokyo-based shibari artist Hajime Kinoko. “Japanese beauty is about moments that will disappear, like the changing seasons. A shibari binding must be released at some point. This momentary binding will be something that the model keeps with her forever.”

Shibari originated from a martial art called *hojo-jutsu*, which was developed by Japan's Edo-period military to capture, bind, and restrain prisoners. It was an elegant, skilled discipline, but one meant to inflict pain. In the late 19th century, Kabuki theater began integrating rope bondage into their performances in a stylized, aesthetic form. After World War II, pulp magazines featuring imagery of erotic bondage were published by the Yakuza, Japan's organized crime syndicate. The photographs and illustrations spread through underground sex clubs, where rope bondage scenes

became increasingly popular. To distinguish being tied up as punishment versus a consenting act of pain or pleasure, practitioners called this form of tying *kinbaku*. The terms are now used interchangeably in Japan, though there is some contention around them in U.S. bondage circles.

Shibari is a lineage-based apprenticeship art rooted in the practice of four grandmasters, all men, the last of whom died in 2016. Each grandmaster developed their own "school" or approach,

which seeded a *ryu*, or shibari dojo, with its own philosophies and technical approaches to tying.

Murasaki Haruan was the first woman *nawashi*, or rope artist, trained by grandmaster Yukimura Haruki in his signature "caressing style". Caressing style largely eschews suspensions to focus on seated floor work, the aesthetic beauty of ties, and the emotions of the rope bottom. Whereas *semenawa*, or torture rope, is often more painful and focused on creating a sense of helplessness and capture,



caressing style, or *newaza*

in Japanese, is about the interplay between pain and constriction, and is designed to tease out the intense and often unseen emotional connection between top and bottom.

"Yukimura-sensei often talked about doing things with spirit," says Haruan. "Certain places on the body simply have that spirit. I consciously look for those