

the Coquette

*The
ability to delay satisfaction is
the ultimate art of seduction—while
waiting, the victim is held in thrall. Coquettes
are the grand masters of this game, orchestrating a
back-and-forth movement between hope and frustration.
They bait with the promise of reward—the hope of physical
pleasure, happiness, fame by association, power—all of which,
however, proves elusive; yet this only makes their targets pursue
them the more. Coquettes seem totally self-sufficient: they do
not need you, they seem to say, and their narcissism proves devil-
ishly attractive. You want to conquer them but they hold the cards.
The strategy of the Coquette is never to offer total satisfaction.
Imitate the alternating heat and coolness of the Coquette
and you will keep the seduced at your heels.*

The Hot and Cold Coquette

In the autumn of 1795, Paris was caught up in a strange giddiness. The Reign of Terror that had followed the French Revolution had ended; the sound of the guillotine was gone. The city breathed a collective sigh of relief, and gave way to wild parties and endless festivals.

The young Napoleon Bonaparte, twenty-six at the time, had no interest in such revelries. He had made a name for himself as a bright, audacious general who had helped quell rebellion in the provinces, but his ambition was boundless and he burned with desire for new conquests. So when, in October of that year, the infamous thirty-three-year-old widow Josephine de Beauharnais visited his offices, he couldn't help but be confused. Josephine was so exotic, and everything about her was languorous and sensual. (She capitalized on her foreignness—she came from the island of Martinique.) On the other hand she had a reputation as a loose woman, and the shy Napoleon believed in marriage. Even so, when Josephine invited him to one of her weekly soirees, he found himself accepting.

At the soiree he felt totally out of his element. All of the city's great writers and wits were there, as well as the few of the nobility who had survived—Josephine herself was a vicomtesse, and had narrowly escaped the guillotine. The women were dazzling, some of them more beautiful than the hostess, but all the men congregated around Josephine, drawn by her graceful presence and queenly manner. Several times she left the men behind and went to Napoleon's side; nothing could have flattered his insecure ego more than such attention.

He began to pay her visits. Sometimes she would ignore him, and he would leave in a fit of anger. Yet the next day a passionate letter would arrive from Josephine, and he would rush to see her. Soon he was spending most of his time with her. Her occasional shows of sadness, her bouts of anger or of tears, only deepened his attachment. In March of 1796, Napoleon married Josephine.

Two days after his wedding, Napoleon left to lead a campaign in northern Italy against the Austrians. "You are the constant object of my thoughts," he wrote to his wife from abroad. "My imagination exhausts itself in guessing what you are doing." His generals saw him distracted: he would leave meetings early, spend hours writing letters, or stare at the miniature of Josephine he wore around his neck. He had been driven to this state by the unbearable distance between them and by a slight coldness he now detected

There are indeed men who are attached more by resistance than by yielding and who unwittingly prefer a variable sky, now splendid, now black and vexed by lightnings, to love's unclouded blue. Let us not forget that Josephine had to deal with a conqueror and that love resembles war. She did not surrender, she let herself be conquered. Had she been more tender, more attentive, more loving, perhaps Bonaparte would have loved her less.

—IMBERT DE SAINT-AMAND,
QUOTED IN *THE EMPRESS*
JOSEPHINE: NAPOLEON'S
ENCHANTRESS, PHILIP W.
SERGEANT

Coquettes know how to please; not how to love, which is why men love them so much.

—PIERRE MARIVAUX

*An absence, the declining
of an invitation to dinner,
an unintentional,
unconscious harshness are
of more service than all
the cosmetics and fine
clothes in the world.*

—MARCEL PROUST

*There's also nightly, to the
uninitiated, \ A peril—not
indeed like love or
marriage, \ But not the less
for this to be depreciated: \
It is—I meant and mean
not to disparage \ The
show of virtue even in the
vitiated— \ It adds an
outward grace unto their
carriage— \ But to
denounce the amphibious
sort of harlot, \ Couleur
de rose, who's neither
white nor scarlet. \ Such is
your cold coquette, who
can't say say "no," \ And
won't say "yes," and keeps
you on- and off-ing \ On a
lee shore, till it begins to
blow— \ Then sees your
heart wreck'd with an
inward scoffing. \ This
works a world of
sentimental woe, \ And
sends new Werters yearly
to the coffin; \ But yet is
merely innocent flirtation, \
Not quite adultery, but
adulteration.*

—LORD BYRON,

THE COLD COQUETTE

*There is a way to represent
one's cause and in doing so
to treat the audience in
such a cool and
condescending manner that
they are bound to notice
one is not doing it to please
them. The principle should
always be not to make
concessions to those who
don't have anything to give
but who have everything to
gain from us. We can wait*

in her—she wrote infrequently, and her letters lacked passion; nor did she join him in Italy. He had to finish his war fast, so that he could return to her side. Engaging the enemy with unusual zeal, he began to make mistakes. "To live for Josephine!" he wrote to her. "I work to get near you; I kill myself to reach you." His letters became more passionate and erotic; a friend of Josephine's who saw them wrote, "The handwriting [was] almost indecipherable, the spelling shaky, the style bizarre and confused What a position for a woman to find herself in—being the motivating force behind the triumphal march of an entire army."

Months went by in which Napoleon begged Josephine to come to Italy and she made endless excuses. But finally she agreed to come, and left Paris for Brescia, where he was headquartered. A near encounter with the enemy along the way, however, forced her to detour to Milan. Napoleon was away from Brescia, in battle; when he returned to find her still absent, he blamed his foe General Würmser and swore revenge. For the next few months he seemed to pursue two targets with equal energy: Würmser and Josephine. His wife was never where she was supposed to be: "I reach Milan, rush to your house, having thrown aside everything in order to clasp you in my arms. You are not there!" Napoleon would turn angry and jealous, but when he finally caught up with Josephine, the slightest of her favors melted his heart. He took long rides with her in a darkened carriage, while his generals fumed—meetings were missed, orders and strategies improvised. "Never," he later wrote to her, "has a woman been in such complete mastery of another's heart." And yet their time together was so short. During a campaign that lasted almost a year, Napoleon spent a mere fifteen nights with his new bride.

Napoleon later heard rumors that Josephine had taken a lover while he was in Italy. His feelings toward her cooled, and he himself took an endless series of mistresses. Yet Josephine was never really concerned about this threat to her power over her husband; a few tears, some theatrics, a little coldness on her part, and he remained her slave. In 1804, he had her crowned empress, and had she born him a son, she would have remained empress to the end. When Napoleon lay on his deathbed, the last word he uttered was "Josephine."

During the French Revolution, Josephine had come within minutes of losing her head on the guillotine. The experience left her without illusions, and with two goals in mind: to live a life of pleasure, and to find the man who could best supply it. She set her sights on Napoleon early on. He was young, and had a brilliant future. Beneath his calm exterior, Josephine sensed, he was highly emotional and aggressive, but this did not intimidate her—it only revealed his insecurity and weakness. He would be easy to enslave. First, Josephine adapted to his moods, charmed him with her feminine grace, warmed him with her looks and manner. He wanted to possess her. And once she had aroused this desire, her power lay in postponing its satisfaction, withdrawing from him, frustrating him. In fact the torture of

the chase gave Napoleon a masochistic pleasure. He yearned to subdue her independent spirit, as if she were an enemy in battle.

People are inherently perverse. An easy conquest has a lower value than a difficult one; we are only really excited by what is denied us, by what we cannot possess in full. Your greatest power in seduction is your ability to turn away, to make others come after you, delaying their satisfaction. Most people miscalculate and surrender too soon, worried that the other person will lose interest, or that giving the other what he or she wants will grant the giver a kind of power. The truth is the opposite: once you satisfy someone, you no longer have the initiative, and you open yourself to the possibility that he or she will lose interest at the slightest whim. Remember: vanity is critical in love. Make your targets afraid that you may be withdrawing, that you may not really be interested, and you arouse their innate insecurity, their fear that as you have gotten to know them they have become less exciting to you. These insecurities are devastating. Then, once you have made them uncertain of you and of themselves, reignite their hope, making them feel desired again. Hot and cold, hot and cold—such coquetry is perversely pleasurable, heightening interest and keeping the initiative on your side. Never be put off by your target's anger; it is a sure sign of enslavement.

She who would long retain her power must use her lover ill.

—OVID

The Cold Coquette

In 1952, the writer Truman Capote, a recent success in literary and social circles, began to receive an almost daily barrage of fan mail from a young man named Andy Warhol. An illustrator for shoe designers, fashion magazines, and the like, Warhol made pretty, stylized drawings, some of which he sent to Capote, hoping the author would include them in one of his books. Capote did not respond. One day he came home to find Warhol talking to his mother, with whom Capote lived. And Warhol began to telephone almost daily. Finally Capote put an end to all this: "He seemed one of those hopeless people that you just know nothing's ever going to happen to. Just a hopeless, born loser," the writer later said.

Ten years later, Andy Warhol, aspiring artist, had his first one-man show at the Stable Gallery in Manhattan. On the walls were a series of silkscreened paintings based on the Campbell's soup can and the Coca-Cola bottle. At the opening and at the party afterward, Warhol stood to the side, staring blankly, talking little. What a contrast he was to the older generation of artists, the abstract expressionists—mostly hard-drinking womanizers full of bluster and aggression, big talkers who had dominated the art scene for the previous fifteen years. And what a change from the Warhol who had badgered Capote, and art dealers and patrons as well. The critics were both

until they are begging on their knees even if it takes a very long time.

—SIGMUND FREUD, IN A LETTER TO A PUPIL, QUOTED IN PAUL ROAZEN, *FREUD AND HIS FOLLOWERS*

When her time was come, that nymph most fair brought forth a child with whom one could have fallen in love even in his cradle, and she called him Narcissus. . . . Cephisus's child had reached his sixteenth year, and could be counted as at once boy and man. Many lads and many girls fell in love with him, but his soft young body housed a pride so unyielding that none of those boys or girls dared to touch him. One day, as he was driving timid deer into his nets, he was seen by that talkative nymph who cannot stay silent when another speaks, but yet has not learned to speak first herself. Her name is Echo, and she always answers back. . . . So when she saw Narcissus wandering through the lonely countryside, Echo fell in love with him and followed secretly in his steps. The more closely she followed, the nearer was the fire which scorched her: just as sulphur, smeared round the tops of torches, is quickly kindled when aflame is brought near it. How often she wished to make flattering overtures to him, to approach him with tender pleas! • The boy, by chance, had wandered away from his faithful band of comrades, and he called out: "Is there anybody here?" Echo answered: "Here!" Narcissus stood still in astonishment,

looking round in every direction. . . . He looked behind him, and when no one appeared, cried again:

"Why are you avoiding me?" But all he heard were his own words echoed back. Still he persisted, deceived by what he took to be another's voice, and said, "Come here, and let us meet!" Echo answered: "Let us meet!" Never

again would she reply more willingly to any sound. To make good her words she came out of the wood and made to throw her arms round the neck she loved: but he fled from her, crying as he did so, "Away with these embraces! I would die before I would have you touch me!" . . . Thus scorned, she concealed herself in the woods, hiding her shamed face in the shelter of the leaves, and ever since that day she dwells in lonely caves. Yet still her love remained firmly rooted in her heart, and was increased by the pain of having been rejected. . . . • Narcissus

had played with her affections, treating her as he had previously treated other spirits of the waters and the woods, and his male admirers too. Then one of those he had scorned raised up his hands to heaven and prayed: "May he himself fall in love with another, as we have done with him! May he too be unable to gain his loved one!" Nemesis heard and granted his righteous prayer. . . . • Narcissus, wearied with hunting in the heat of the day, lay down here [by a clear pool]: for he was attracted by the beauty of the place, and by the spring. While he sought to quench his thirst, another thirst grew

baffled and intrigued by the coldness of Warhol's work; they could not figure out how the artist felt about his subjects. What was his position? What was he trying to say? When they asked, he would simply reply, "I just do it because I like it," or, "I love soup." The critics went wild with their interpretations: "An art like Warhol's is necessarily parasitic upon the myths of its time," one wrote; another, "The decision not to decide is a paradox that is equal to an idea which expresses nothing but then gives it dimension." The show was a huge success, establishing Warhol as a leading figure in a new movement, pop art.

In 1963, Warhol rented a large Manhattan loft space that he called the Factory, and that soon became the hub of a large entourage—hangers-on, actors, aspiring artists. Here, particularly at night, Warhol would simply wander about, or stand in a corner. People would gather around him, fight for his attention, throw questions at him, and he would answer, in his noncommittal way. But no one could get close to him, physically or mentally; he would not allow it. At the same time, if he walked by you without giving you his usual "Oh, hi," you were devastated. He hadn't noticed you; perhaps you were on the way out.

Increasingly interested in filmmaking, Warhol cast his friends in his movies. In effect he was offering them a kind of instant celebrity (their "fifteen minutes of fame"—the phrase is Warhol's). Soon people were competing for roles. He groomed women in particular for stardom: Edie Sedgwick, Viva, Nico. Just being around him offered a kind of celebrity by association. The Factory became *the* place to be seen, and stars like Judy Garland and Tennessee Williams would go to parties there, rubbing elbows with Sedgwick, Viva, and the bohemian lower echelons whom Warhol had befriended. People began sending limos to bring him to parties of their own; his presence alone was enough to turn a social evening into a scene—even though he would pass through in near silence, keeping to himself and leaving early.

In 1967, Warhol was asked to lecture at various colleges. He hated to talk, particularly about his own art; "The less something has to say," he felt, "the more perfect it is." But the money was good and Warhol always found it hard to say no. His solution was simple: he asked an actor, Allen Midgette, to impersonate him. Midgette was dark-haired, tan, part Cherokee Indian. He did not resemble Warhol in the least. But Warhol and friends covered his face with powder, sprayed his brown hair silver, gave him dark glasses, and dressed him in Warhol's clothes. Since Midgette knew nothing about art, his answers to students' questions tended to be as short and enigmatic as Warhol's own. The impersonation worked. Warhol may have been an icon, but no one really knew him, and since he often wore dark glasses, even his face was unfamiliar in any detail. The lecture audiences were far enough away to be teased by the thought of his presence, and no one got close enough to catch the deception. He remained elusive.

* * *

Early on in life, Andy Warhol was plagued by conflicting emotions: he desperately wanted fame, but he was naturally passive and shy "I've always had a conflict," he later said, "because I'm shy and yet I like to take up a lot of personal space. Mom always said, 'Don't be pushy, but let everyone know you're around.' " At first Warhol tried to make himself more aggressive, straining to please and court. It didn't work. After ten futile years he stopped trying and gave in to his own passivity—only to discover the power that withdrawal commands.

Warhol began this process in his artwork, which changed dramatically in the early 1960s. His new paintings of soup cans, green stamps, and other widely known images did not assault you with meaning; in fact their meaning was totally elusive, which only heightened their fascination. They drew you in by their immediacy, their visual power, their coldness. Having transformed his art, Warhol also transformed himself: like his paintings, he became pure surface. He trained himself to hold himself back, to stop talking.

The world is full of people who try, people who impose themselves aggressively. They may gain temporary victories, but the longer they are around, the more people want to confound them. They leave no space around themselves, and without space there can be no seduction. Cold Coquettes create space by remaining elusive and making others pursue them. Their coolness suggests a comfortable confidence that is exciting to be around, even though it may not actually exist; their silence makes you want to talk. Their self-containment, their appearance of having no need for other people, only makes us want to do things for them, hungry for the slightest sign of recognition and favor. Cold Coquettes may be maddening to deal with—never committing but never saying no, never allowing closeness—but more often than not we find ourselves coming back to them, addicted to the coldness they project. Remember: seduction is a process of drawing people in, making them want to pursue and possess you. Seem distant and people will go mad to win your favor. Humans, like nature, hate a vacuum, and emotional distance and silence make them strain to fill up the empty space with words and heat of their own. Like Warhol, stand back and let them fight over you.

[Narcissistic] women have the greatest fascination for men. . . . The charm of a child lies to a great extent in his narcissism, his self-sufficiency and inaccessibility, just as does the charm of certain animals which seem not to concern themselves about us, such as cats. . . . It is as if we envied them their power of retaining a blissful state of mind—an unassailable libido-position which we ourselves have since abandoned.

—SIGMUND FREUD

in him, and as he drank, he was enchanted by the beautiful reflection that he saw. He fell in love with an insubstantial hope, mistaking a mere shadow for a real body. Spellbound by his own self, he remained there motionless, with fixed gaze, like a statue carved from Parian marble. . . . Unwittingly, he desired himself, and was himself the object of his own approval, at once seeking and sought, himself kindling the flame with which he burned. How often did he vainly kiss the treacherous pool, how often plunge his arms deep in the waters, as he tried to clasp the neck he saw! But he could not lay hold upon himself. He did not know what he was looking at, but was fired by the sight, and excited by the very illusion that deceived his eyes. Poor foolish boy, why vainly grasp at the fleeting image that eludes you? The thing you are seeking does not exist: only turn aside and you will lose what you love. What you see is but the shadow cast by your reflection; in itself it is nothing. It comes with you, and lasts while you are there; it will go when you go, if go you can. . . .

• He laid down his weary head on the green grass, and death closed the eyes which so admired their owner's beauty. Even then, when he was received into the abode of the dead, he kept looking at himself in the waters of the Styx. His sisters, the nymphs of the spring, mourned for him, and cut off their hair in tribute to their brother. The wood nymphs mourned him too, and Echo sang her refrain to their lament. • The pyre, the tossing

*torches, and the bier, were
now being prepared, but
his body was nowhere to be
found. Instead of his
corpse, they discovered a
flower with a circle of white
petals round a yellow
centre.*

—OVID, *METAMORPHOSES*,
TRANSLATED BY
MARY M. INNES

*Selfishness is one of the
qualities apt to inspire love.*

—NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

*The Socrates whom you
see has a tendency to fall in
love with good-looking
young men, and is always
in their society and in an
ecstasy about them...but
once you see beneath the
surface you will discover a
degree of self-control of
which you can hardly form
a notion, gentlemen. . . .
He spends his whole life
pretending and playing
with people, and I doubt
whether anyone has ever
seen the treasures which are
revealed when he grows
serious and exposes what
he keeps inside. •
. . . Believing that he was
serious in his admiration of
my charms, I supposed that
a wonderful piece of good
luck had befallen me; I
should now be able, in
return for my favours, to
find out all that Socrates
knew; for you must know
that there was no limit to
the pride that I felt in my
good looks. With this end
in view I sent away my
attendant, whom hitherto I
had always kept with me
in my encounters with
Socrates, and left myself
alone with him. I must tell
you the whole truth; attend
carefully, and do you,*

Keys to the Character

According to the popular concept, Coquettes are consummate teasers. Experts at arousing desire through a provocative appearance or an alluring attitude. But the real essence of Coquettes is in fact their ability to trap people emotionally, and to keep their victims in their clutches long after that first titillation of desire. This is the skill that puts them in the ranks of the most effective seducers. Their success may seem somewhat odd, since they are essentially cold and distant creatures; should you ever get to know one well, you will sense his or her inner core of detachment and self-love. It may seem logical that once you become aware of this quality you will see through the Coquette's manipulations and lose interest, but more often we see the opposite. After years of Josephine's coquettish games, Napoleon was well aware of how manipulative she was. Yet this conqueror of kingdoms, this skeptic and cynic, could not leave her.

To understand the peculiar power of the Coquette, you must first understand a critical property of love and desire: the more obviously you pursue a person, the more likely you are to chase them away. Too much attention can be interesting for a while, but it soon grows cloying and finally becomes claustrophobic and frightening. It signals weakness and neediness, an unseductive combination. How often we make this mistake, thinking our persistent presence will reassure. But Coquettes have an inherent understanding of this particular dynamic. Masters of selective withdrawal, they hint at coldness, absenting themselves at times to keep their victim off balance, surprised, intrigued. Their withdrawals make them mysterious, and we build them up in our imaginations. (Familiarity, on the other hand, undermines what we have built.) A bout of distance engages the emotions further; instead of making us angry, it makes us insecure. Perhaps they don't really like us, perhaps we have lost their interest. Once our vanity is at stake, we succumb to the Coquette just to prove we are still desirable. Remember: the essence of the Coquette lies not in the tease and temptation but in the subsequent step back, the emotional withdrawal. That is the key to enslaving desire.

To adopt the power of the Coquette, you must understand one other quality: narcissism. Sigmund Freud characterized the "narcissistic woman" (most often obsessed with her appearance) as the type with the greatest effect on men. As children, he explains, we pass through a narcissistic phase that is immensely pleasurable. Happily self-contained and self-involved, we have little psychic need of other people. Then, slowly, we are socialized and taught to pay attention to others—but we secretly yearn for those blissful early days. The narcissistic woman reminds a man of that period, and makes him envious. Perhaps contact with her will restore that feeling of self-involvement.

A man is also challenged by the female Coquette's independence—he wants to be the one to make her dependent, to burst her bubble. It is far more likely, though, that he will end up becoming her slave, giving her in-

cessant attention to gain her love, and failing. For the narcissistic woman is not emotionally needy; she is self-sufficient. And this is surprisingly seductive. Self-esteem is critical in seduction. (Your attitude toward yourself is read by the other person in subtle and unconscious ways.) Low self-esteem repels, confidence and self-sufficiency attract. The less you seem to need other people, the more likely others will be drawn to you. Understand the importance of this in all relationships and you will find your neediness easier to suppress. But do not confuse self-absorption with seductive narcissism. Talking endlessly about yourself is eminently anti-seductive, revealing not self-sufficiency but insecurity.

The Coquette is traditionally thought of as female, and certainly the strategy was for centuries one of the few weapons women had to engage and enslave a man's desire. One ploy of the Coquette is the withdrawal of sexual favors, and we see women using this trick throughout history: the great seventeenth-century French courtesan Ninon de l'Enclos was desired by all the preeminent men of France, but only attained real power when she made it clear that she would no longer sleep with a man as part of her duty. This drove her admirers to despair, which she knew how to make worse by favoring a man temporarily, granting him access to her body for a few months, then returning him to the pack of the unsatisfied. Queen Elizabeth I of England took coquettishness to the extreme, deliberately arousing the desires of her courtiers but sleeping with none of them.

Long a tool of social power for women, coquettishness was slowly adapted by men, particularly the great seducers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries who envied the power of such women. One seventeenth-century seducer, the Duc de Lauzun, was a master at exciting a woman, then suddenly acting aloof. Women went wild over him. Today, coquetry is genderless. In a world that discourages direct confrontation, teasing, coldness, and selective aloofness are a form of indirect power that brilliantly disguises its own aggression.

The Coquette must first and foremost be able to excite the target of his or her attention. The attraction can be sexual, the lure of celebrity, whatever it takes. At the same time, the Coquette sends contrary signals that stimulate contrary responses, plunging the victim into confusion. The eponymous heroine of Marivaux's eighteenth-century French novel *Marianne* is the consummate Coquette. Going to church, she dresses tastefully, but leaves her hair slightly uncombed. In the middle of the service she seems to notice this error and starts to fix it, revealing her bare arm as she does so; such things were not to be seen in an eighteenth-century church, and all male eyes fix on her for that moment. The tension is much more powerful than if she were outside, or were tartily dressed. Remember: obvious flirting will reveal your intentions too clearly. Better to be ambiguous and even contradictory, frustrating at the same time that you stimulate.

The great spiritual leader Jiddu Krishnamurti was an unconscious coquette. Revered by theosophists as their "World Teacher," Krishnamurti was also a dandy. He loved elegant clothing and was devilishly handsome. At the

Socrates, pull me up if anything I say is false. I allowed myself to be alone with him, I say, gentlemen, and I naturally supposed that he would embark on conversation of the type that a lover usually addresses to his darling when they are tête-à-tête, and I was glad. Nothing of the kind; he spent the day with me in the sort of talk which is habitual with him, and then left me and went away. Next I invited him to train with me in the gymnasium, and I accompanied him there, believing that I should succeed with him now. He took exercise and wrestled with me frequently, with no one else present, but I need hardly say that I was no nearer my goal. Finding that this was no good either, I resolved to make a direct assault on him, and not to give up what I had once undertaken; I felt that I must get to the bottom of the matter. So I invited him to dine with me, behaving just like a lover who has designs upon his favourite. He was in no hurry to accept this invitation, but at last he agreed to come. The first time he came he rose to go away immediately after dinner, and on that occasion I was ashamed and let him go. But I returned to the attack, and this time I kept him in conversation after dinner far into the night, and then, when he wanted to be going, I compelled him to stay, on the plea that it was too late for him to go. • So he betook himself to rest, using as a bed the couch on which he had reclined at dinner, next to mine, and there was nobody sleeping in the

room but ourselves. . . . I swear by all the gods in heaven that for anything that had happened between us when I got up after sleeping with Socrates, I might have been sleeping with my father or elder brother. • What do you suppose to have been my state of mind after that? On the one hand I realized that I had been slighted, but on the other I felt a reverence for Socrates' character, his self-control and courage . . . The result was that I could neither bring myself to be angry with him and tear myself away from his society, nor find a way of subduing him to my will. . . . I was utterly disconcerted, and wandered about in a state of enslavement to the man the like of which has never been known.

—ALCIBIADES, QUOTED IN
PLATO, *THE SYMPOSIUM*

same time, he practiced celibacy, and had a horror of being touched. In 1929 he shocked theosophists around the world by proclaiming that he was not a god or even a guru, and did not want any followers. This only heightened his appeal: women fell in love with him in great numbers, and his advisers grew even more devoted. Physically and psychologically, Krishnamurti was sending contrary signals. While preaching a generalized love and acceptance, in his personal life he pushed people away. His attractiveness and his obsession with his appearance might have gained him attention but by themselves would not have made women fall in love with him; his lessons of celibacy and spiritual virtue would have created disciples but not physical love. The combination of these traits, however, both drew people in and frustrated them, a coquettish dynamic that created an emotional and physical attachment to a man who shunned such things. His withdrawal from the world had the effect of only heightening the devotion of his followers.

Coquetry depends on developing a pattern to keep the other person off balance. The strategy is extremely effective. Experiencing a pleasure once, we yearn to repeat it; so the Coquette gives us pleasure, then withdraws it. The alternation of heat and cold is the most common pattern, and has several variations. The eighth-century Chinese Coquette Yang Kuei-Fei totally enslaved the Emperor Ming Huang through a pattern of kindness and bitterness: having charmed him with kindness, she would suddenly get angry, blaming him harshly for the slightest mistake. Unable to live without the pleasure she gave him, the emperor would turn the court upside down to please her when she was angry or upset. Her tears had a similar effect: what had he done, why was she so sad? He eventually ruined himself and his kingdom trying to keep her happy. Tears, anger, and the production of guilt are all the tools of the Coquette. A similar dynamic appears in a lover's quarrel: when a couple fights, then reconciles, the joys of reconciliation only make the attachment stronger. Sadness of any sort is also seductive, particularly if it seems deep-rooted, even spiritual, rather than needy or pathetic—it makes people come to you.

Coquettes are never jealous—that would undermine their image of fundamental self-sufficiency. But they are masters at inciting jealousy: by paying attention to a third party, creating a triangle of desire, they signal to their victims that they may not be that interested. This triangulation is extremely seductive, in social contexts as well as erotic ones. Interested in narcissistic women, Freud was a narcissist himself, and his aloofness drove his disciples crazy. (They even had a name for it—his "god complex.") Behaving like a kind of messiah, too lofty for petty emotions, Freud always maintained a distance between himself and his students, hardly ever inviting them over for dinner, say, and keeping his private life shrouded in mystery. Yet he would occasionally choose an acolyte to confide in—Carl Jung, Otto Rank, Lou Andreas-Salomé. The result was that his disciples went berserk trying to win his favor, to be the one he chose. Their jealousy when he suddenly favored one of them only increased his power over them. People's natural insecurities are heightened in group settings; by

maintaining aloofness, Coquettes start a competition to win their favor. If the ability to use third parties to make targets jealous is a critical seductive skill, Sigmund Freud was a grand Coquette.

All of the tactics of the Coquette have been adapted by political leaders to make the public fall in love. While exciting the masses, these leaders remain inwardly detached, which keeps them in control. The political scientist Roberto Michels has even referred to such politicians as Cold Coquettes. Napoleon played the Coquette with the French: after the grand successes of the Italian campaign had made him a beloved hero, he left France to conquer Egypt, knowing that in his absence the government would fall apart, the people would hunger for his return, and their love would serve as the base for an expansion of his power. After exciting the masses with a rousing speech, Mao Zedong would disappear from sight for days on end, making himself an object of cultish worship. And no one was more of a Coquette than Yugoslav leader Josef Tito, who alternated between distance from and emotional identification with his people. All of these political leaders were confirmed narcissists. In times of trouble, when people feel insecure, the effect of such political coquetry is even more powerful. It is important to realize that coquetry is extremely effective on a group, stimulating jealousy, love, and intense devotion. If you play such a role with a group, remember to keep an emotional and physical distance. This will allow you to cry and laugh on command, project self-sufficiency, and with such detachment you will be able to play people's emotions like a piano.

Symbol: The

*Shadow. It cannot be grasped. Chase
your shadow and it will flee; turn your back on
it and it will follow you. It is also a person's dark side,
the thing that makes them mysterious. After they have given
us pleasure, the shadow of their withdrawal makes us yearn
for their return, much as clouds make us yearn for the sun.*

Dangers

Coquettes face an obvious danger: they play with volatile emotions. Every time the pendulum swings, love shifts to hate. So they must orchestrate everything carefully. Their absences cannot be too long, their bouts of anger must be quickly followed by smiles. Coquettes can keep their victims emotionally entrapped for a long time, but over months or years the dynamic can begin to prove tiresome. Jiang Qing, later known as Madame Mao, used coquettish skills to capture the heart of Mao Tse-tung, but after ten years the quarreling, the tears and the coolness became intensely irritating, and once irritation proved stronger than love, Mao was able to detach. Josephine, a more brilliant Coquette, was able to adapt, by spending a whole year without playing coy or withdrawing from Napoleon. Timing is everything. On the other hand, though, the Coquette stirs up powerful emotions, and breakups often prove temporary. The Coquette is addictive: after the failure of the social plan Mao called the Great Leap Forward, Madame Mao was able to reestablish her power over her devastated husband.

The Cold Coquette can stimulate a particularly deep hatred. Valerie Solanas was a young woman who fell under Andy Warhol's spell. She had written a play that amused him, and she was given the impression he might turn it into a film. She imagined becoming a celebrity. She also got involved in the feminist movement, and when, in June 1968, it dawned on her that Warhol was toying with her, she directed her growing rage at men on him and shot him three times, nearly killing him. Cold Coquettes may stimulate feelings that are not so much erotic as intellectual, less passion and more fascination. The hatred they can stir up is all the more insidious and dangerous, for it may not be counterbalanced by a deep love. They must realize the limits of the game, and the disturbing effects they can have on less stable people.