

Phase Three

The Precipice— Deepening the Effect Through Extreme Measures

The goal in this phase is to make everything deeper—the effect you have on their mind, feelings of love and attachment, tension within your victims. With your hooks deep into them, you can then push them back and forth, between hope and despair, until they weaken and snap. Showing how far you are willing to go for your victims, doing some noble or chivalrous deed (16: Prove yourself) will create a powerful jolt, spark an intensely positive reaction. Everyone has scars, repressed desires, and unfinished business from childhood. Bring these desires and wounds to the surface, make your victims feel they are getting what they never got as a child and you will penetrate deep into their psyche, stir uncontrollable emotions (17: Effect a regression). Now you can take your victims past their limits, getting them to act out their dark sides, adding a sense of danger to your seduction (18: Stir up the transgressive and taboo).

You need to deepen the spell, and nothing will more confuse and enchant your victims than giving your seduction a spiritual veneer. It is not lust that motivates you, but destiny, divine thoughts and everything elevated (19: Use spiritual lures). The erotic lurks beneath the spiritual. Now your victims have been properly set up. By deliberately hurting them, instilling fears and anxieties, you will lead them to the edge of the precipice from which it will be easy to push and make them fall (20: Mix pleasure with pain). They feel great tension and are yearning for relief.

Prove Yourself

Most

people want to be seduced. If they resist your efforts, it is probably because you have not gone far enough to allay their doubts—about your motives, the depth of your feelings, and so on. One well-timed action that shows how far you are willing to go to win them over will dispel their doubts. Do not worry about looking foolish or making a mistake—any kind of deed that is self-sacrificing and for your targets' sake will so overwhelm their emotions, they won't notice anything else. Never appear discouraged by people's resistance, or complain. Instead, meet the challenge by doing something extreme or chivalrous. Conversely, spur others to prove themselves by making yourself hard to reach, unattainable, worth fighting over.

Seductive Evidence

Anyone can talk big, say lofty things about their feelings, insist on how much they care for us, and also for all oppressed peoples in the far reaches of the planet. But if they never behave in a way that will back up their words, we begin to doubt their sincerity—perhaps we are dealing with a charlatan, or a hypocrite or a coward. Flattery and fine words can only go so far. A time will eventually arrive when you will have to show your victim some evidence, to match your words with deeds.

This kind of evidence has two functions. First, it allays any lingering doubts about you. Second, an action that reveals some positive quality in you is immensely seductive in and of itself. Brave or selfless deeds create a powerful and positive emotional reaction. Don't worry, your deeds do not have to be so brave and selfless that you lose everything in the process. The appearance alone of nobility will often suffice. In fact, in a world where people overanalyze and talk too much, any kind of action has a bracing, seductive effect.

It is normal in the course of a seduction to encounter resistance. The more obstacles you overcome, of course, the greater the pleasure that awaits you, but many a seduction fails because the seducer does not correctly read the resistances of the target. More often than not, you give up too easily. First, understand a primary law of seduction: resistance is a sign that the other person's emotions are engaged in the process. The only person you cannot seduce is somebody distant and cold. Resistance is emotional, and can be transformed into its opposite, much as, in jujitsu, the physical resistance of an opponent can be used to make him fall. If people resist you because they don't trust you, an apparently selfless deed, showing how far you are willing to go to prove yourself, is a powerful remedy. If they resist because they are virtuous, or because they are loyal to someone else, all the better—virtue and repressed desire are easily overcome by action. As the great seductress Natalie Barney once wrote, "Most virtue is a demand for greater seduction."

There are two ways to prove yourself. First, the spontaneous action: a situation arises in which the target needs help, a problem needs solving, or, simply, he or she needs a favor. You cannot foresee these situations, but you must be ready for them, for they can spring up at any time. Impress the target by going further than really necessary—sacrificing more money, more time, more effort than they had expected. Your target will often use these

*Love is a species of warfare.
Slack troopers, go
elsewhere! \ It takes more
than cowards to guard \
These standards. Night-
duty in winter, long-route
marches, every \ Hardship,
all forms of suffering: these
await \ The recruit who
expects a soft option.
You'll often be out in \
Cloudbursts, and bivouac
on the bare \ Ground. . . .
Is lasting \ Love your
ambition? Then put away
all pride. \ The simple,
straightforward way in may
be denied you, \ Doors
bolted, shut in your face —
\ So be ready to slip down
from the roof through a
lightwell, \ Or sneak in by
an upper-floor window.
She'll be glad \ To know
you're risking your neck,
and for her sake: that will
offer \ Any mistress sure
proof of your love.*

—OVID, *THE ART OF LOVE*,
TRANSLATED BY PETER GREEN

*The man says: " . . . A
fruit picked from one's own
orchard ought to taste
sweeter than one obtained
from a stranger's tree, and
what has been attained by*

greater effort is cherished more dearly than what is gained with little trouble.

As the proverb says: "Prizes great cannot be won unless some heavy labor's done." • The woman says: "If no great prizes can be won unless some heavy labor's done, you must suffer the exhaustion of many toils to be able to attain the favors you seek, since what you ask for is a greater prize." • The man says: "I give you all the thanks that I can express for so sagely promising me your love when I have performed great toils. God forbid that I or any other could win the love of so worthy a woman without first attaining it by many labors."

—ANDREAS CAPELLANUS
ON LOVE, TRANSLATED BY
P. G. WALSH

One day, [Saint-Preuil] pleaded more than usual that [Madame de la Maisonfort] grant him the ultimate favors a woman could offer, and he went beyond just words in his pleading. Madame, saying he had gone way too far, ordered him to never ever appear before her again. He left her room. Only an hour later, the lady was taking her customary walk along one of those beautiful canals at Bagnolet, when Saint-Preuil leapt out from behind a hedge, totally naked, and standing before his mistress in this state, he cried out, "For the last time, Madame—Goodbye!" Thereupon, he threw himself into the canal, head first. The lady, terrified by such a sight,

moments, or even manufacture them, as a kind of test: will you retreat? Or will you rise to the occasion? You cannot hesitate or flinch, even for a moment, or all is lost. If necessary, make the deed seem to have cost you more than it has, never with words, but indirectly—exhausted looks, reports spread through a third party, whatever it takes.

The second way to prove yourself is the brave deed that you plan and execute in advance, on your own and at the right moment—preferably some way into the seduction, when any doubts the victim still has about you are more dangerous than earlier on. Choose a dramatic, difficult action that reveals the painful time and effort involved. Danger can be extremely seductive. Cleverly lead your victim into a crisis, a moment of danger, or indirectly put them in an uncomfortable position, and you can play the rescuer, the gallant knight. The powerful feelings and emotions this elicits can easily be redirected into love.

Some Examples

1. In France in the 1640s, Marion de l'Orme was the courtesan men lusted after the most. Renowned for her beauty, she had been the mistress of Cardinal Richelieu, among other notable political and military figures. To win her bed was a sign of achievement.

For weeks the rake Count Grammont had wooed de l'Orme, and finally she had given him an appointment for a particular evening. The count prepared himself for a delightful encounter, but on the day of the appointment he received a letter from her in which she expressed, in polite and tender terms, her terrible regrets—she had the most awful headache, and would have to stay in bed that evening. Their appointment would have to be postponed. The count felt certain he was being pushed to the side for someone else, for de l'Orme was as capricious as she was beautiful.

Grammont did not hesitate. At nightfall he rode to the Marais, where de l'Orme lived, and scouted the area. In a square near her home he spotted a man approaching on foot. Recognizing the Duc de Brissac, he immediately knew that this man was to supplant him in the courtesan's bed. Brissac seemed unhappy to see the count, and so Grammont approached him hurriedly and said, "Brissac, my friend, you must do me a service of the greatest importance: I have an appointment, for the first time, with a girl who lives near this place; and as this visit is only to concert measures, I shall make but a very short stay. Be so kind as to lend me your cloak, and walk my horse a little, until I return; but above all, do not go far from this place." Without waiting for an answer, Grammont took the duke's cloak and handed him the bridle of his horse. Looking back, he saw that Brissac was watching him, so he pretended to enter a house, slipped out through the back, circled around, and reached de l'Orme's house without being seen.

Grammont knocked at the door, and a servant, mistaking him for the duke, let him in. He headed straight for the lady's chamber, where he found her lying on a couch, in a sheer gown. He threw off Brissac's cloak and she gasped in fright. "What is the matter, my fair one?" he asked. "Your headache, to all appearance, is gone?" She seemed put out, exclaimed she still had the headache, and insisted that he leave. It was up to her, she said, to make or break appointments. "Madam," Grammont said calmly, "I know what perplexes you: you are afraid lest Brissac should meet me here; but you may make yourself easy on that account." He then opened the window and revealed Brissac out in the square, dutifully walking back and forth with a horse, like a common stable boy. He looked ridiculous; de l'Orme burst out laughing, threw her arms around the count, and exclaimed, "My dear Chevalier, I can hold out no longer; you are too amiable and too eccentric not to be pardoned." He told her the whole story, and she promised that the duke could exercise horses all night, but she would not let him in. They made an appointment for the following evening. Outside, the count returned the cloak, apologized for taking so long, and thanked the duke. Brissac was most gracious, even holding Grammont's horse for him to mount, and waving goodbye as he rode off.

Interpretation. Count Grammont knew that most would-be seducers give up too easily, mistaking capriciousness or apparent coolness as a sign of a genuine lack of interest. In fact it can mean many things: perhaps the person is testing you, wondering if you are really serious. Prickly behavior is exactly this kind of test—if you give up at the first sign of difficulty, you obviously do not want them that much. Or it could be that they themselves are uncertain about you, or are trying to choose between you and someone else. In any event, it is absurd to give up. One incontrovertible demonstration of how far you are willing to go will overwhelm all doubts. It will also defeat your rivals, since most people are timid, worried about making fools of themselves, and so rarely risk anything.

When dealing with difficult or resistant targets, it is usually best to improvise, the way Grammont did. If your action seems sudden and a surprise, it will make them more emotional, loosen them up. A little roundabout accumulation of information—a little spying—is always a good idea. Most important is the spirit in which you enact your proof. If you are lighthearted and playful, if you make the target laugh, proving yourself and amusing them at the same time, it won't matter if you mess up, or if they see you have employed a little trickery. They will give in to the pleasant mood you have created. Notice that the count never whined or grew angry or defensive. All he had to do was pull back the curtain and reveal the duke walking his horse, melting de l'Orme's resistance with laughter. In one well-executed act, he showed what he would do for a night of her favors.

began to cry and to run in the direction of her house, where upon arriving, she fainted. As soon as she could speak, she ordered that someone go and see what had happened to Saint-Preuil, who in truth had not stayed very long in the canal, and having quickly put his clothes back on, hurried to Paris where he hid himself for several days. Meanwhile, the rumor spread that he had died. Madame de la Maisonfort was deeply moved by the extreme measures he had adopted to prove his sentiments. This act of his appeared to her to be a sign of an extraordinary love; and having perhaps noticed some charms in his naked presence that she had not seen fully clothed, she deeply regretted her cruelty, and publicly stated her feeling of loss. Word of this reached Saint-Preuil, and he immediately resurrected himself and did not lose time in taking advantage of such a favorable feeling in his mistress.

—COUNT BUSSY-RABUTIN,
HISTOIRES AMOUREUSES DES
GAULES

To become a lady's vassal . . . the troubadour was expected to pass through four stages, i.e.: aspirant, suppliant, postulant, and lover. When he had attained the last stage of amorous initiation he made a vow of fidelity and this homage was sealed by a kiss. • In this idealistic form of courtly love reserved for the aristocratic elite of chivalry, the phenomenon of love was considered to be a state

of grace, while the initiation that followed, and the final sealing of the pact—or equivalent of the knightly accolade—were linked with the rest of a nobleman's training and valorous exploits. The hallmarks of a true lover and of a perfect knight were almost identical. The lover was bound to serve and obey his lady as a knight served his lord. In both cases the pledge was of a sacred nature.

—NINA EPTON,
LOVE AND THE FRENCH

In one of the goodly towns of the kingdom of France there dwelt a nobleman of good birth, who attended the schools that he might learn how virtue and honor are to be acquired among virtuous men. But although he was so accomplished that at the age of seventeen or eighteen years he was, as it were, both precept and example to others, Love failed not to add his lesson to the rest; and, that he might be the better harkened to and received, concealed himself in the face and the eyes of the fairest lady in the whole country round, who had come to the city in order to advance a suit-at-law. But before Love sought to vanquish the gentleman by means of this lady's beauty, he had first won her heart by letting her see the perfections of this young lord; for in good looks, grace, sense and excellence of speech he was surpassed by none. • You, who know what speedy way is made by the fire of love when once it fastens on the heart and fancy, will

2. Pauline Bonaparte, the sister of Napoleon, had so many affairs with different men over the years that doctors were afraid for her health. She could not stay with one man for more than a few weeks; novelty was her only pleasure. After Napoleon married her off to Prince Camillo Borghese, in 1803, her affairs only multiplied. And so, when she met the dashing Major Jules de Canouville, in 1810, everyone assumed the affair would last no longer than the others. Of course the major was a decorated soldier, well educated, an accomplished dancer, and one of the most handsome men in the army. But Pauline, thirty years old at the time, had had affairs with dozens of men who could have matched that resume.

A few days after the affair began, the imperial dentist arrived chez Pauline. A toothache had been causing her sleepless nights, and the dentist saw he would have to pull out the bad tooth right then and there. No painkillers were used at the time, and as the man began to take out his various instruments, Pauline grew terrified. Despite the pain of the tooth, she changed her mind and refused to have it pulled.

Major Canouville was lounging on a couch in a silken robe. Taking all this in, he tried to encourage her to have it done: "A moment or two of pain and it's over forever. . . . A child could go through with it and not utter a sound." "I'd like to see you do it," she said. Canouville got up, went over to the dentist, chose a tooth in the back of his own mouth, and ordered that it be pulled. A perfectly good tooth was extracted, and Canouville barely batted an eyelash. After this, not only did Pauline let the dentist do his job, her opinion of Canouville changed: no man had ever done anything like this for her before.

The affair had been going to last but a few weeks; now it stretched on. Napoleon was not pleased. Pauline was a married woman; short affairs were allowed, but a deep attachment was embarrassing. He sent Canouville to Spain, to deliver a message to a general there. The mission would take weeks, and in the meantime Pauline would find someone else.

Canouville, though, was not your average lover. Riding day and night, without stopping to eat or sleep, he arrived in Salamanca within a few days. There he found that he could proceed no farther, since communications had been cut off, and so, without waiting for further orders, he rode back to Paris, without an escort, through enemy territory. He could meet with Pauline only briefly; Napoleon sent him right back to Spain. It was months before he was finally allowed to return, but when he did, Pauline immediately resumed her affair with him—an unheard-of act of loyalty on her part. This time Napoleon sent Canouville to Germany and finally to Russia, where he died bravely in battle in 1812. He was the only lover Pauline ever waited for, and the only one she ever mourned.

Interpretation. In seduction, the time often comes when the target has begun to fall for you, but suddenly pulls back. Your motives have begun to

seem dubious—perhaps all you are after is sexual favors, or power, or money. Most people are insecure and doubts like these can ruin the seductive illusion. In the case of Pauline Bonaparte, she was quite accustomed to using men for pleasure, and she knew perfectly well that she was being used in turn. She was totally cynical. But people often use cynicism to cover up insecurity. Pauline's secret anxiety was that none of her lovers had ever really loved her—that all of them to a man had really just wanted sex or political favors from her. When Canouville showed, through concrete actions, the sacrifices he would make for her—his tooth, his career, his life—he transformed a deeply selfish woman into a devoted lover. Not that her response was completely unselfish: his deeds were a boost to her vanity. If she could inspire these actions from him, she must be worth it. But if he was going to appeal to the noble side of her nature, she had to rise to that level as well, and prove herself by remaining loyal to him.

Making your deed as dashing and chivalrous as possible will elevate the seduction to a new level, stir up deep emotions, and conceal any ulterior motives you may have. The sacrifices you are making must be visible; talking about them, or explaining what they have cost you, will seem like bragging. Lose sleep, fall ill, lose valuable time, put your career on the line, spend more money than you can afford. You can exaggerate all this for effect, but don't get caught boasting about it or feeling sorry for yourself: cause yourself pain and let them see it. Since almost everyone else in the world seems to have an angle, your noble and selfless deed will be irresistible.

3. Throughout the 1890s and into the early twentieth century, Gabriele D'Annunzio was considered one of Italy's premier novelists and playwrights. Yet many Italians could not stand the man. His writing was florid, and in person he seemed full of himself, overdramatic—riding horses naked on the beach, pretending to be a Renaissance man, and more of the kind. His novels were often about war, and about the glory of facing and defeating death—an entertaining subject for someone who had never actually done so. And so, at the start of World War I, no one was surprised that D'Annunzio led the call for Italy to side with the Allies and enter the fray. Everywhere you turned, there he was, giving a speech in favor of war—a campaign that succeeded in 1915, when Italy finally declared war on Germany and Austria. D'Annunzio's role so far had been completely predictable. But what did surprise the Italian public was what this fifty-two-year-old man did next: he joined the army. He had never served in the military, boats made him seasick, but he could not be dissuaded. Eventually the authorities gave him a post in a cavalry division, hoping to keep him out of combat.

Italy had little experience in war, and its military was somewhat chaotic. The generals somehow lost track of D'Annunzio—who, in any

readily imagine that between two subjects so perfect as these it knew little pause until it had them at its will, and had so filled them with its clear light, that thought, wish, and speech were all aflame with it. Youth, begetting fear in the young lord, led him to urge his suit with all the gentleness imaginable; but she, being conquered by love, had no need of force to win her. Nevertheless, shame, which tarries with ladies as long as it can, for some time restrained her from declaring her mind. But at last the heart's fortress, which is honor's abode, was shattered in such sort that the poor lady consented to that which she had never been minded to refuse. • In order, however, to make trial of her lover's patience, constancy, and love, she granted him what he sought on a very hard condition, assuring him that if he fulfilled it she would love him perfectly forever; whereas, if he failed in it, he would certainly never win her as long as he lived. And the condition was this: she would be willing to talk with him, both being in bed together, clad in their linen only, but he was to ask nothing more from her than words and kisses. • He, thinking there was no joy to be compared to that which she promised him, agreed to the proposal, and that evening the promise was kept; in such wise that, despite all the caresses she bestowed on him and the temptations that beset him, he would not break his oath. And albeit his torment seemed to him no less than that of Purgatory,

yet was his love so great
 and his hope so strong,
 sure as he felt of the
 ceaseless continuance of the
 love he had thus painfully
 won, that he preserved his
 patience and rose from
 beside her without having
 done anything contrary to
 her expressed wish. • The
 lady was, I think, more
 astonished than pleased by
 such virtue; and giving no
 heed to the honor, patience,
 and faithfulness her lover
 had shown in the keeping
 of his oath, she forthwith
 suspected that his love was
 not so great as she had
 thought, or else that he had
 found her less pleasing
 than he had expected. •
 She therefore resolved,
 before keeping her promise,
 to make a further trial of
 the love he bore her; and to
 this end she begged him to
 talk to a girl in her service,
 who was younger than
 herself and very beautiful,
 bidding him make love
 speeches to her, so that
 those who saw him come so
 often to the house might
 think that it was for the
 sake of this damsel and not
 of herself • The young
 lord, feeling sure that his
 own love was returned in
 equal measure, was wholly
 obedient to her commands,
 and for love of her
 compelled himself to make
 love to the girl; and she,
 finding him so handsome
 and well-spoken, believed
 his lies more than other
 truth, and loved him as
 much as though she herself
 were greatly loved by him.
 • The mistress finding that
 matters were thus well
 advanced, albeit the young
 lord did not cease to claim
 her promise, granted him
 permission to come and see
 her at one hour after
 midnight, saying that after

case, had decided to leave his cavalry division and form units of his own. (He was an artist, after all, and could not be subjected to army discipline.) Calling himself *Commandante*, he overcame his habitual seasickness and directed a series of daring raids, leading groups of motorboats in the middle of the night into Austrian harbors and firing torpedoes at anchored ships. He also learned how to fly, and began to lead dangerous sorties. In August of 1915, he flew over the city of Trieste, then in enemy hands, and dropped Italian flags and thousands of pamphlets containing a message of hope, written in his inimitable style: "The end of your martyrdom is at hand! The dawn of your joy is imminent. From the heights of heaven, on the wings of Italy, I throw you this pledge, this message from my heart." He flew at altitudes unheard of at the time, and through thick enemy fire. The Austrians put a price on his head.

On a mission in 1916, D'Annunzio fell against his machine gun, permanently injuring one eye and seriously damaging the other. Told his flying days were over, he convalesced in his home in Venice. At the time, the most beautiful and fashionable woman in Italy was generally considered to be the Countess Morosini, former mistress of the German Kaiser. Her palace was on the Grand Canal, opposite the home of D'Annunzio. Now she found herself besieged by letters and poems from the writer-soldier, mixing details of his flying exploits with declarations of his love. In the middle of air raids on Venice, he would cross the canal, barely able to see out of one eye, to deliver his latest poem. D'Annunzio was much beneath Morosini's station, a mere writer, but his willingness to brave anything on her behalf won her over. The fact that his reckless behavior could get him killed any day only hastened the seduction.

D'Annunzio ignored the doctors' advice and returned to flying, leading even more daring raids than before. By the end of the war, he was Italy's most decorated hero. Now, wherever in the nation he appeared, the public filled the piazzas to hear his speeches. After the war, he led a march on Fiume, on the Adriatic coast. In the negotiations to settle the war, Italians believed they should have been awarded this city, but the Allies had not agreed. D'Annunzio's forces took over the city and the poet became a leader, ruling Fiume for more than a year as an autonomous republic. By then, everyone had forgotten about his less-than-glorious past as a decadent writer. Now he could do no wrong.

Interpretation. The appeal of seduction is that of being separated from our normal routines, experiencing the thrill of the unknown. Death is the ultimate unknown. In periods of chaos, confusion, and death—the plagues that swept Europe in the Middle Ages, the Terror of the French Revolution, the air raids on London during World War II—people often let go of their usual caution and do things they never would otherwise. They experience a kind of delirium. There is something immensely seductive about

danger, about heading into the unknown. Show that you have a reckless streak and a daring nature, that you lack the usual fear of death, and you are instantly fascinating to the bulk of humanity.

What you are proving in this instance is not how you feel toward another person but something about yourself: you are willing to go out on a limb. You are not just another talker and braggart. It is a recipe for instant charisma. Any political figure—Churchill, de Gaulle, Kennedy—who has proven himself on the battlefield has an unmatched appeal. Many had thought of D'Annunzio as a foppish womanizer; his experience in the war gave him a heroic sheen, a Napoleonic aura. In fact he had always been an effective seducer, but now he was even more devilishly appealing. You do not necessarily have to risk death, but putting yourself in its vicinity will give you a seductive charge. (It is often best to do this some way into the seduction, making it come as a pleasant surprise.) You are willing to enter the unknown. No one is more seductive than the person who has had a brush with death. People will be drawn to you; perhaps they are hoping that some of your adventurous spirit will rub off on them.

4. According to one version of the Arthurian legend, the great knight Sir Lancelot once caught a glimpse of Queen Guinevere, King Arthur's wife, and that glimpse was enough—he fell madly in love. And so when word reached him that Queen Guinevere had been kidnapped by an evil knight, Lancelot did not hesitate—he forgot his other chivalrous tasks and hurried in pursuit. His horse collapsed from the chase, so he continued on foot. Finally it seemed that he was close, but he was exhausted and could go no farther. A horse-driven cart passed by; the cart was filled with loathsome-looking men shackled together. In those days it was the tradition to place criminals—murderers, traitors, cowards, thieves—in such a cart, which then passed through every street in town so that people could see it. Once you had ridden in the cart, you lost all feudal rights for the rest of your life. The cart was such a dreadful symbol that seeing an empty one made you shiver and give the sign of the cross. Even so, Sir Lancelot accosted the cart's driver, a dwarf: "In the name of God, tell me if you've seen my lady the queen pass by this way?" "If you want to get into this cart I'm driving," said the dwarf, "by tomorrow you'll know what has become of the queen." Then he drove the cart onward. Lancelot hesitated for but two of the horse's steps, then ran after it and climbed in.

Wherever the cart went, townspeople heckled it. They were most curious about the knight among the passengers. What was his crime? How will he be put to death—flayed? Drowned? Burned upon a fire of thorns? Finally the dwarf let him get out, without a word as to the whereabouts of the queen. To make matters worse, no one now would go near or talk to Lancelot, for he had been in the cart. He kept on chasing the queen, and all along the way he was cursed at, spat upon, challenged by other knights. He

having so fully tested the love and obedience he had shown towards her, it was but just that he should be rewarded for his long patience. Of the lover's joy on hearing this you need have no doubt, and he failed not to arrive at the appointed time. • But the lady, still wishing to try the strength of his love, had said to her beautiful damsel—"I am well aware of the love a certain nobleman bears to you, and I think you are no less in love with him; and I feel so much pity for you both, that I have resolved to afford you time and place that you may converse together at your ease." • The damsel was so enchanted that she could not conceal her longings, but answered that she would not fail to be present. • In obedience, therefore, to her mistress's counsel and command, she undressed herself and lay down on a handsome bed, in a room the door of which the lady left half open, whilst within she set a light so that the maiden's beauty might be clearly seen. Then she herself pretended to go away, but hid herself near to the bed so carefully that she could not be seen. • Her poor lover, thinking to find her according to her promise, failed not to enter the room as softly as he could, at the appointed hour; and after he had shut the door and put off his garments and fur shoes, he got into the bed, where he looked to find what he desired. But no sooner did he put out his arms to embrace her whom he believed to be his mistress, than the poor girl, believing him entirely her

own, had her arms round his neck, speaking to him the while in such loving words and with so beautiful a countenance, that there is not a hermit so holy but he would have forgotten his beads for love of her. • But when the gentleman recognized her with both eye and ear, and found he was not with her for whose sake he had so greatly suffered, the love that had made him get so quickly into the bed, made him rise from it still more quickly. And in anger equally with mistress and damsel, he said— "Neither your folly nor the malice of her who put you there can make me other than I am.

But do you try to be an honest woman, for you shall never lose that good name through me. " • So saying he rushed out of the room in the greatest wrath imaginable, and it was long before he returned to see his mistress. However love, which is never without hope, assured him that the greater and more manifest his constancy was proved to be by all these trials, the longer and more delightful would be his bliss. • The lady, who had seen and heard all that passed, was so delighted and amazed at beholding the depth and constancy of his love, that she was impatient to see him again in order to ask his forgiveness for the sorrow that she had caused him to endure. And as soon as she could meet with him, she failed not to address him in such excellent and pleasant words, that he not only forgot all his troubles but even deemed them very fortunate, seeing that their issue was to the glory of his constancy and the perfect

had disgraced knighthood by riding in the cart. But no one could stop him or slow him down, and finally he discovered that the queen's kidnapper was the wicked Meleagant. He caught up with Meleagant and the two fought a duel. Still weak from the chase, Lancelot seemed to be near defeat, but when word reached him that the queen was watching the battle, he recovered his strength and was on the verge of killing Meleagant when a truce was called. Guinevere was handed over to him.

Lancelot could hardly contain his joy at the thought of finally being in his lady's presence. But to his shock, she seemed angry, and would not look at her rescuer. She told Meleagant's father, "Sire, in truth he has wasted his efforts. I shall always deny that I feel any gratitude toward him." Lancelot was mortified but he did not complain. Much later, after undergoing innumerable further trials, she finally relented and they became lovers. One day he asked her: when she had been abducted by Meleagant, had she heard the story of the cart, and how he had disgraced knighthood? Was that why she had treated him so coldly that day? The queen replied, "By delaying for two steps you showed your unwillingness to climb into it. That, to tell the truth, is why I didn't wish to see you or speak with you."

Interpretation. The opportunity to do your selfless deed often comes upon you suddenly. You have to show your worth in an instant, right there on the spot. It could be a rescue situation, a gift you could make or a favor you could do, a sudden request to drop everything and come to their aid. What matters most is not whether you act rashly, make a mistake, and do something foolish, but that you seem to act on their behalf without thought for yourself or the consequences.

At moments like these, hesitation, even for a few seconds, can ruin all the hard work of your seduction, revealing you as self-absorbed, unchivalrous, and cowardly. This, at any rate, is the moral of Chrétien de Troyes's twelfth-century version of the story of Lancelot. Remember: not only what you do matters, but how you do it. If you are naturally self-absorbed, learn to disguise it. React as spontaneously as possible, exaggerating the effect by seeming flustered, overexcited, even foolish—love has driven you to that point. If you have to jump into the cart for Guinevere's sake, make sure she sees that you do it without the slightest hesitation.

5. In Rome sometime around 1531, word spread of a sensational young woman named Tullia d'Aragona. By the standards of the period, Tullia was not a classic beauty; she was tall and thin, at a time when the plump and voluptuous woman was considered the ideal. And she lacked the cloying, giggling manner of most young girls who wanted masculine attention. No, her quality was nobler. Her Latin was perfect, she could discuss the latest literature, she played the lute and sang. In other words, she was a novelty, and since that was all most men were looking for, they began to visit her in

great numbers. She had a lover, a diplomat, and the thought that one man had won her physical favors drove them all mad. Her male visitors began to compete for her attention, writing poems in her honor, vying to become her favorite. None of them succeeded, but they kept on trying.

Of course there were some who were offended by her, stating publicly that she was no more than a high-class whore. They repeated the rumor (perhaps true) that she had made older men dance while she played the lute, and if their dancing pleased her, they could hold her in their arms. To Tullia's faithful followers, all of noble birth, this was slander. They wrote a document that was distributed far and wide: "Our honored mistress, the well-born and honorable lady Tullia d'Aragona, doth surpass all ladies of the past, present, or future by her dazzling qualities. . . . Anyone who refuses to conform to this statement is hereby charged to enter the lists with one of the undersigned knights, who will convince him in the customary manner."

Tullia left Rome in 1535, going first to Venice, where the poet Tasso became her lover, and eventually to Ferrara, which was then perhaps the most civilized court in Italy. And what a sensation she caused there. Her voice, her singing, even her poems were praised far and wide. She opened a literary academy devoted to ideas of freethinking. She called herself a muse and, as in Rome, a group of young men collected around her. They would follow her around the city, carving her name in trees, writing sonnets in her honor, and singing them to anyone who would listen.

One young nobleman was driven to distraction by this cult of adoration: it seemed that everyone loved Tullia but no one received her love in return. Determined to steal her away and marry her, this young man tricked her into allowing him to visit her at night. He proclaimed his undying devotion, showered her with jewels and presents, and asked for her hand. She refused. He pulled out a knife, she still refused, and so he stabbed himself. He lived, but now Tullia's reputation was even greater than before: not even money could buy her favors, or so it seemed. As the years went by and her beauty faded, some poet or intellectual would always come to her defense and protect her. Few of them ever pondered the reality: that Tullia was indeed a courtesan, one of the most popular and well paid in the profession.

Interpretation. All of us have defects of some sort. Some of these we are born with, and cannot help. Tullia had many such defects. Physically she was not the Renaissance ideal. Also, her mother had been a courtesan, and she was illegitimate. Yet the men who fell under her spell did not care. They were too distracted by her image—the image of an elevated woman, a woman you would have to fight over to win. Her pose came straight out of the Middle Ages, the days of knights and troubadours. Then, a woman, most often married, was able to control the power dynamic between the sexes by withholding her favors until the knight somehow proved his worth

assurance of his love, the fruit of which he enjoyed from that time as fully as he could desire.

—QUEEN MARGARET OF NAVARRE, *THE HEPTAMERON*, QUOTED IN *THE VICE ANTHOLOGY*, EDITED BY RICHARD DAVENPORT-HINES

A soldier lays siege to cities, a lover to girls' houses, \ The one assaults city gates, the other front doors. \ Love, like war, is a toss-up. The defeated can recover, \ While some you might think invincible collapse; \ So if you've got love written off as an easy option \ You'd better think twice. Love calls \ For guts and initiative. Great Achilles sulks for Briseis— \ Quick, Trojans, smash through the Argive wall! \ Hector went into battle from Andromache's embraces \ Helmeted by his wife. \ Agamemnon himself, the Supremo, was struck into raptures \ At the sight of Cassandra's tumbled hair; \ Even Mars was caught on the job, felt the blacksmith's meshes— \ Heaven's best scandal in years. Then take \ My own case. I was idle, born to leisure en deshabille, \ Mind softened by lazy scribbling in the shade. \ But love for a pretty girl soon drove the sluggard \ To action, made him join up. \ And just look at me now—fighting fit, dead keen on night exercises: \ If you want a cure for slackness, fall in love!

—OVID, *THE AMORES*, TRANSLATED BY PETER GREEN

and the sincerity of his sentiments. He could be sent on a quest, or made to live among lepers, or compete in a possibly fatal joust for her honor. And this he had to do without complaint. Although the days of the troubadour are long gone, the pattern remains: a man actually loves to be able to prove himself, to be challenged, to compete, to undergo tests and trials and emerge victorious. He has a masochistic streak; a part of him loves pain. And strangely enough, the more a woman asks for, the worthier she seems. A woman who is easy to get cannot be worth much.

Make people compete for your attention, make them prove themselves in some way, and you will find them rising to the challenge. The heat of seduction is raised by such challenges—show me that you *really* love me. When one person (of either sex) rises to the occasion, often the other person is now expected to do the same, and the seduction heightens. By making people prove themselves, too, you raise your value and cover up your defects. Your targets are too busy trying to prove themselves to notice your blemishes and faults.

Symbol: *The Tournament*

*On the field, with its bright pennants
and caparisoned horses, the lady looks on as knights fight for
her hand. She has heard them declare love on bended knee, their
endless songs and pretty promises. They are all good at such things.
But then the trumpet sounds and the combat begins. In the tournament
there can be no faking or hesitation. The knight she
chooses must have blood on his face, and a few
broken limbs.*

Reversal

When trying to prove that you are worthy of your target, remember that every target sees things differently. A show of physical prowess will not impress someone who does not value physical prowess; it will just show that you are after attention, flaunting yourself. Seducers must adapt their way of proving themselves to the doubts and weaknesses of the seduced. For some, fine words are better proofs than daredevil deeds, particularly if they are written down. With these people show your sentiments in a letter—a different kind of physical proof, and one with more poetic appeal than some showy bit of action. Know your target well, and aim your seductive evidence at the source of their doubts or resistance.

Effect a Regression

People who have experienced a certain kind of pleasure in the past will try to repeat or relive it. The deepest-rooted and most pleasurable memories are usually those from earliest childhood, and are often unconsciously associated with a parental figure. Bring your targets back to that point by placing yourself in the oedipal triangle and positioning them as the needy child. Unaware of the cause of their emotional response, they will fall in love with you. Alternatively, you too can regress, letting them play the role of the protecting, nursing parent. In either case you are offering the ultimate fantasy: the chance to have an intimate relationship with mommy or daddy, son or daughter.

The Erotic Regression

As adults we tend to overvalue our childhood. In their dependency and powerlessness, children genuinely suffer, yet when we get older we conveniently forget about that and sentimentalize the supposed paradise we have left behind. We forget the pain and remember only the pleasure. Why? Because the responsibilities of adult life are a burden so oppressive at times that we secretly yearn for the dependency of childhood, for that person who looked after our every need, assumed our cares and worries. This daydream of ours has a strong erotic component, for the child's feeling of being dependent on the parent is charged with sexual undertones. Give people a sensation similar to that protected, dependent feeling of childhood and they will project all kinds of fantasies onto you, including feelings of love or sexual attraction that they will attribute to something else. We won't admit it, but we long to regress, to shed our adult exterior and vent the childish emotions that linger beneath the surface.

Early in his career, Sigmund Freud confronted a strange problem: many of his female patients were falling in love with him. He thought he knew what was happening: encouraged by Freud, the patient would delve into her childhood, which of course was the source of her illness or neurosis. She would talk about her relationship with her father, her earliest experiences of tenderness and love, and also of neglect and abandonment. The process would stir up powerful emotions and memories. In a way, she would be transported back into her childhood. Intensifying this effect was the fact that Freud himself said little and made himself a little cold and distant, although he seemed to be caring—in other words, quite like the traditional father figure. Meanwhile the patient was lying on a couch, in a helpless or passive position, so that the situation duplicated the roles of parent and child. Eventually she would begin to direct some of the confused emotions she was dealing with toward Freud himself. Unaware of what was happening, she would relate to him as to her father. She would regress and fall in love. Freud called this phenomenon "transference," and it would become an active part of his therapy. By getting patients to transfer some of their repressed feelings onto the therapist, he would bring their problems into the open, where they could be dealt with on a conscious level.

The transference effect was so potent, though, that Freud was often unable to move his patients past their infatuation. In fact transference is a powerful way of creating an emotional attachment—the goal of any seduc-

[In Japan,] much in the traditional way of child-rearing seems to foster passive dependence. The child is rarely left alone, day or night, for it usually sleeps with the mother. When it goes out the child is not pushed ahead in a pram, to face the world alone, but is tightly bound to the mother's back in a snug cocoon. When the mother bows, the child does too, so the social graces are acquired automatically while feeling the mother's heartbeat. Thus emotional security tends to depend almost entirely on the physical presence of the mother. . . . Children learn that a show of passive dependence is the best way to get favors as well as affection. There is a verb for this in Japanese: amaeru, translated in the dictionary as "to presume upon another's love; to play the baby." According to the psychiatrist Doi Takeo this is the main key to understanding the Japanese personality. It goes on in adult life too: juniors do it to seniors in companies, or any other group, women do it to men, men do it to their

mothers, and sometimes wives. A magazine called *Young Lady* featured an article (January 1982) on "how to make ourselves beautiful." How, in other words, to attract men. An American or European magazine would then go on to tell the reader how to be sexually desirable, no doubt suggesting various puffs, creams, and sprays. Not so with *Young Lady*.

"The most attractive women," it informs us, "are women full of maternal love. Women without maternal love are the types men never want to marry. . . . One has to look at men through the eyes of a mother."

—IAN BURUMA, *BEHIND THE MASK: ON SEXUAL DEMONS, SACRED MOTHERS, TRANSVESTITES, GANGSTERS, DRIFTERS AND OTHER JAPANESE CULTURAL HEROES*

I have stressed the fact that the beloved person is a substitute for the ideal ego. Two people who love each other are interchanging their ego-ideals. That they love each other means they love the ideal of themselves in the other one. There would be no love on earth if this phantom were not there. We fall in love because we cannot attain the image that is our better self and the best of our self

From this concept it is obvious that love itself is only possible on a certain cultural level or after a certain phase in the development of the personality has been reached. The creation of an ego-ideal itself marks human progress. When people are entirely satisfied

tion. The method has infinite applications outside psychoanalysis. To practice it in real life, you need to play the therapist, encouraging people to talk about their childhood. Most of us are only too happy to oblige; and our memories are so vivid and emotional that a part of us regresses just in talking about our early years. Also, in the course of talking, little secrets slip out: we reveal all kinds of valuable information about our weaknesses and our mental makeup, information you must attend to and remember. Do not take your targets' words at face value; they will often sugarcoat or overdramatize events in childhood. But pay attention to their tone of voice, to any nervous tics as they talk, and particularly to anything they do not want to talk about, anything they deny or that makes them emotional. Many statements actually mean their opposite: should they say they hated their father, for instance, you can be sure that they are hiding a lot of disappointment—that they actually loved their father only too much, and perhaps never quite got what they wanted from him. Listen closely for recurring themes and stories. Most important, learn to analyze emotional responses and see what lies behind them.

While they talk, maintain the therapist's pose—attentive but quiet, making occasional, nonjudgmental comments. Be caring yet distant—somewhat blank, in fact—and they will begin to transfer emotions and project fantasies onto you. With the information you have gathered about their childhood, and the trusting bond you have forged, you can now begin to effect the regression. Perhaps you have uncovered a powerful attachment to a parent, a sibling, a teacher, or any early infatuation, a person who casts a shadow over their present lives. Knowing what it was about this person that affected them so powerfully, you can now take over that role. Or perhaps you have learned of an immense gap in their childhood—a neglectful father, for instance. You act like that parent now, but you replace the original neglect with the attention and affection that the real parent never supplied. Everyone has unfinished business from childhood—disappointments, lacks, painful memories. Finish what is unfinished. Discover what your target never got and you have the ingredients for a deep-rooted seduction.

The key is not just to talk about memories—that is weak. What you want is to get people to act out in their present old issues from their past, without their being aware of what is happening. The regressions you can effect fall into four main types.

The Infantile Regression. The first bond—the bond between a mother and her infant—is the most powerful one. Unlike other animals, human babies have a long period of helplessness during which they are dependent on their mother, creating an attachment that influences the rest of their lives. The key to effecting this regression is to reproduce the sense of unconditional love a mother has for her child. Never judge your targets—let them do whatever they want, including behaving badly; at the same time surround them with loving attention, smother them with comfort. A part of

them will regress to those earliest years when their mother took care of everything and rarely left them alone. This works on almost everyone, for unconditional love is the rarest and most treasured form. You do not even have to tailor your behavior to anything specific in their childhood; most of us have experienced this kind of attention. Meanwhile, create atmospheres that reinforce the feeling you are generating—warm environments, playful activities, bright, happy colors.

The Oedipal Regression. After the bond between mother and child comes the oedipal triangle of mother, father, and child. This triangle forms during the period of the child's earliest erotic fantasies. A boy wants his mother to himself, a girl does the same with her father, but they never quite have it that way, for a parent will always have competing connections to a spouse or to other adults. Unconditional love has gone; now, inevitably, the parent must sometimes deny what the child desires. Transport your victims back to this period. Play a parental role, be loving, but also sometimes scold and instill some discipline. Children actually love a little discipline—it makes them feel that the adult cares about them. And adult children too will be thrilled if you mix your tenderness with a little toughness and punishment.

Unlike infantile regression, oedipal regression must be tailored to your target. It depends on the information you have gathered. Without knowing enough, you might treat a person like a child, scolding them now and then, only to discover that you are stirring up ugly memories—they had too much discipline as child. Or you might stir up memories of a parent they loathed, and they will transfer those feelings to you. Do not go ahead with the regression until you have learned everything you can about their childhood—what they had too much of, what they lacked, and so on. If the target was strongly attached to a parent, but that attachment was partially negative, the oedipal regression strategy can still be quite effective. We always feel ambivalent toward a parent; even as we love them, we resent having had to depend on them. Don't worry about stirring up these ambivalences, which don't keep us from being tied to our parents. Remember to include an erotic component in your parental behavior. Now your targets are not only getting their mother or father all to themselves, they are getting something more, something previously forbidden but now allowed.

The Ego Ideal Regression. As children, we often form an ideal figure out of our dreams and ambitions. First, that ideal figure is the person we want to be. We imagine ourselves as brave adventurers, romantic figures. Then, in our adolescence, we turn our attention to others, often projecting our ideals onto them. The first boy or girl we fall in love with may seem to have the ideal qualities we wanted for ourselves, or else may make us feel that we can play that ideal role in relation to them. Most of us carry these

with their actual selves, love is impossible. • The transfer of the ego-ideal to a person is the most characteristic trait of love.

—THEODOR REIK, OF LOVE AND LUST

I gave [Sylphide] the eyes of one girl in the village, the fresh complexion of another. The portraits of great ladies of the time of Francis I, Henry IV, and Louis XIV, hanging in our drawing room, lent me other features, and I even borrowed beauties from the pictures of the Madonna in the churches. This magic creature followed me invisibly everywhere, I conversed with her as if with a real person; she changed her appearance according to the degree of my madness; Aphrodite without a veil, Diana shrouded in azure and rose, Thalia in a laughing mask, Hebe with the goblet of youth—or she became a fairy, giving me dominion over nature. . . . The delusion lasted two whole years, in the course of which my soul attained the highest peak of exaltation.

—CHATEAUBRIAND, MEMOIRS FROM BEYOND THE GRAVE, QUOTED IN FRIEDRICH SIEBURG, CHATEAUBRIAND, TRANSLATED BY VIOLET M. MACDONALD

ideals around with us, buried just below the surface. We are secretly disappointed in how much we have had to compromise, how far below the ideal we have fallen as we have gotten older. Make your targets feel they are living out this youthful ideal, and coming closer to being the person they wanted to be, and you will effect a different kind of regression, creating a feeling reminiscent of adolescence. The relationship between you and the seduced is in this instance more equal than in the previous kinds of regressions—more like the affection between siblings. In fact the ideal is often modeled on a brother or sister. To create this effect, strive to reproduce the intense, innocent mood of a youthful infatuation.

The Reverse Parental Regression. Here you are the one to regress: you deliberately play the role of the cute, adorable, yet also sexually charged child. Older people always find younger people incredibly seductive. In the presence of youth, they feel a little of their own youth return; but they are in fact older, and mixed into the invigoration they feel in young people's company is the pleasure of playing the mother or father to them. If a child has erotic feelings toward a parent, feelings that are quickly repressed, the parent must deal with the same problem in reverse. Assume the role of the child in relation to your targets, however, and they get to act out some of those repressed erotic sentiments. The strategy may seem to call for a difference in age, but this is actually not critical. Marilyn Monroe's exaggerated little-girl qualities worked just fine on men her age. Emphasizing a weakness or vulnerability on your part will give the target a chance to play the protector.

Some Examples

1. The parents of Victor Hugo separated shortly after the novelist was born, in 1802. Hugo's mother, Sophie, had been carrying on an affair with her husband's superior officer, a general. She took the three Hugo boys away from their father and went off to Paris to raise them on her own. Now the boys led a tumultuous life, featuring bouts of poverty, frequent moves, and their mother's continued affair with the general. Of all the boys, Victor was the most attached to his mother, adopting all her ideas and pet peeves, particularly her hatred of his father. But with all the turmoil in his childhood he never felt he got enough love and attention from the mother he adored. When she died, in 1821, poor and debt-ridden, he was devastated.

The following year Hugo married his childhood sweetheart, Adèle, who physically resembled his mother. It was a happy marriage for a while, but soon Adèle came to resemble his mother in more ways than one: in 1832, he discovered that she was having an affair with the French literary critic Sainte-Beuve, who also happened to be Hugo's best friend at the

time. Hugo was a celebrated writer by now, but he was not the calculating type. He generally wore his heart on his sleeve. Yet he could not confide in anyone about Adèle's affair; it was too humiliating. His only solution was to have affairs of his own, with actresses, courtesans, married women. Hugo had a prodigious appetite, sometimes visiting three different women in the same day.

Near the end of 1832, production began on one of Hugo's plays, and he was to supervise the casting. A twenty-six-year-old actress named Juliette Drouet auditioned for one of the smaller roles. Normally quite adroit with the ladies, Hugo found himself stuttering in Juliette's presence. She was quite simply the most beautiful woman he had ever seen, and this and her composed manner intimidated him. Naturally, Juliette won the part. He found himself thinking about her all the time. She always seemed to be surrounded by a group of adoring men. Clearly she was not interested in him, or so he thought. One evening, though, after a performance of the play, he followed her home, to find that she was neither angry nor surprised—indeed she invited him up to her apartment. He spent the night, and soon he was spending almost every night there.

Hugo was happy again. To his delight, Juliette quit her career in the theater, dropped her former friends, and learned to cook. She had loved fancy clothes and social affairs; now she became Hugo's secretary, rarely leaving the apartment in which he had established her and seeming to live only for his visits. After a while, however, Hugo returned to his old ways and started to have little affairs on the side. She did not complain—as long as she remained the one woman he kept returning to. And Hugo had in fact grown quite dependent on her.

In 1843, Hugo's beloved daughter died in an accident and he sank into a depression. The only way he knew to get over his grief was to have an affair with someone new. And so, shortly thereafter, he fell in love with a young married aristocrat named Léonie d'Aunet. He began to see Juliette less and less. A few years later, Léonie, feeling certain she was the preferred one, gave him an ultimatum: stop seeing Juliette altogether, or it was over. Hugo refused. Instead he decided to stage a contest: he would continue to see both women, and in a few months his heart would tell him which one he preferred. Léonie was furious, but she had no choice. Her affair with Hugo had already ruined her marriage and her standing in society; she was dependent on him. Anyway, how could she lose—she was in the prime of life, whereas Juliette had gray hair by now. So she pretended to go along with this contest, but as time went on, she grew increasingly resentful about it, and complained. Juliette, on the other hand, behaved as if nothing had changed. Whenever he visited, she treated him as she always had, dropping everything to comfort and mother him.

The contest lasted several years. In 1851, Hugo was in trouble with Louis-Napoleon, the cousin of Napoleon Bonaparte and now the president of France. Hugo had attacked his dictatorial tendencies in the press, bitterly and perhaps recklessly, for Louis-Napoleon was a vengeful man. Fearing for

the writer's life, Juliette managed to hide him in a friend's house and arranged for a false passport, a disguise, and safe passage to Brussels. Everything went according to plan; Juliette joined him a few days later, carrying his most valuable possessions. Clearly her heroic actions had won the contest for her.

And yet, after the novelty of Hugo's new life wore off, his affairs resumed. Finally, fearing for his health, and worried that she could no longer compete with yet another twenty-year-old coquette, Juliette made a calm but stern demand: no more women or she was leaving him. Taken completely by surprise, yet certain that she meant every word, Hugo broke down and sobbed. An old man by now, he got down on his knees and swore, on the Bible and then on a copy of his famous novel *Les Misérables*, that he would stray no more. Until Juliette's death, in 1883, her spell over him was complete.

Interpretation. Hugo's love life was determined by his relationship with his mother. He never felt she had loved him enough. Almost all the women he had affairs with bore a physical resemblance to her; somehow he would make up for her lack of love for him by sheer volume. When Juliette met him, she could not have known all this, but she must have sensed two things: he was extremely disappointed in his wife, and he had never really grown up. His emotional outbursts and his need for attention made him more a little boy than a man. She would gain ascendancy over him for the rest of his life by supplying the one thing he had never had: complete, unconditional mother-love.

Juliette never judged Hugo, or criticized him for his naughty ways. She lavished him with attention; visiting her was like returning to the womb. In her presence, in fact, he was more a little boy than ever. How could he refuse her a favor or ever leave her? And when she finally threatened to leave him, he was reduced to the state of a wailing infant crying for his mother. In the end she had total power over him.

Unconditional love is rare and hard to find, yet it is what we all crave, since we either experienced it once or wish we had. You do not have to go as far as Juliette Drouet; the mere hint of devoted attention, of accepting your lovers for who they are, of meeting their needs, will place them in an infantile position. A sense of dependency may frighten them a little, and they may feel an undercurrent of ambivalence, a need to assert themselves periodically, as Hugo did through his affairs. But their ties to you will be strong and they will keep coming back for more, bound by the illusion that they are recapturing the mother-love they had seemingly lost forever, or never had.

2. Around the turn of the twentieth century, Professor Mut, a schoolmaster at a college for young men in a small German town, began to de-

velop a keen hatred of his students. Mut was in his late fifties, and had worked at the same school for many years. He taught Greek and Latin and was a distinguished classical scholar. He had always felt a need to impose discipline, but now it was getting ugly: the students were simply not interested in Homer anymore. They listened to bad music and only liked modern literature. Although they were rebellious, Mut considered them soft and undisciplined. He wanted to teach them a lesson and make their lives miserable; his usual way of dealing with their bouts of rowdiness was sheer bullying, and most often it worked.

One day a student Mut loathed—a haughty, well-dressed young man named Lohmann—stood up in class and said, "I can't go on working in this room, Professor. There is such a smell of mud." Mud was the boys' nickname for Professor Mut. The professor seized Lohmann by the arm, twisted it hard, then banished him from the room. He later noticed that Lohmann had left his exercise book behind, and thumbing through it he saw a paragraph about an actress named Rosa Fröhlich. A plot hatched in Mut's mind: he would catch Lohmann cavorting with this actress, no doubt a woman of ill repute, and would get the boy kicked out of school.

First he had to find out where she performed. He searched high and low, finally finding her name up outside a club called the Blue Angel. He went in. It was a smoke-filled place, full of the working-class types he looked down on. Rosa was onstage. She was singing a song; the way she looked everyone in the audience in the eye was rather brazen, but for some reason Mut found this disarming. He relaxed a little, had some wine. After her performance he made his way to her dressing room, determined to grill her about Lohmann. Once there he felt strangely uncomfortable, but he gathered up his courage, accused her of leading schoolboys astray, and threatened to get the police to close the place down. Rosa, however, was not intimidated. She turned all of Mut's sentences around: perhaps *he* was the one leading boys astray. Her tone was cajoling and teasing. Yes, Lohmann had bought her flowers and champagne—so what? No one had ever talked to Mut this way before; his authoritative tone usually made people give way. He should have felt offended: she was low class and a woman, and he was a schoolmaster, but she was talking to him as if they were equals. Instead, however, he neither got angry nor left—something compelled him to stay.

Now she was silent. She picked up a stocking and started to darn it, ignoring him; his eyes followed her every move, particularly the way she rubbed her bare knee. Finally he brought up Lohmann again, and the police. "You've no idea what this life's like," she said. "Everyone who comes here thinks he's the only pebble on the beach. If you don't give them what they want they threaten you with the police!" "I certainly regret having hurt a lady's feelings," he replied sheepishly. As she got up from her chair, their knees rubbed, and he felt a shiver up his spine. Now she was nice to him again, and poured him some more wine. She invited him to come back, then left abruptly to perform another number.

The next day he kept thinking about her words, her looks. Thinking about her while he was teaching gave him a kind of naughty thrill. That night he went back to the club, still determined to catch Lohmann in the act, and once again found himself in Rosa's dressing room, drinking wine and becoming strangely passive. She asked him to help her get dressed; that seemed quite an honor and he obliged her. Helping her with her corset and her makeup, he forgot about Lohmann. He felt he was being initiated into some new world. She pinched his cheeks and stroked his chin, and occasionally let him glimpse her bare leg as she rolled up a stocking.

Now Professor Mut showed up night after night, helping her dress, watching her perform, all with a strange kind of pride. He was there so often that Lohmann and his friends no longer showed up. He had taken their place—he was the one to bring her flowers, pay for her champagne, the one to serve her. Yes, an old man like himself had bested the youthful Lohmann, who thought himself so suave! He liked it when she stroked his chin, complimented him for doing things right, but he felt even more excited when she rebuked him, throwing a powder puff in his face or pushing him off a chair. It meant she liked him. And so, gradually, he began to pay for all her caprices. It cost him a pretty penny but kept her away from other men. Eventually he proposed to her. They married, and scandal ensued: he lost his job, and soon all his money; finally he landed in prison. To the very end, however, he could never get angry with Rosa. Instead he felt guilty: he had never done enough for her.

Interpretation. Professor Mut and Rosa Fröhlich are characters in the novel *The Blue Angel*, written by Heinrich Mann in 1905, and later made into a film starring Marlene Dietrich. Rosa's seduction of Mut follows the classic oedipal regression pattern. First, the woman treats the man the way a mother would treat a little boy. She scolds him, but the scolding is not threatening; it is tender, and has a teasing edge. Like a mother, she knows she is dealing with someone weak, who cannot help his naughty behavior. She mixes plenty of praise and approval in with her taunts. Once the man begins to regress, she adds physical excitement—some bodily contact to excite him, subtle sexual overtones. As a reward for his regression, the man may get the thrill of finally sleeping with his mother. But there is always an element of competition, which the mother figure must heighten. The man gets to possess her all on his own, something he could not do with father in the way, but he first has to win her away from others.

The key to this kind of regression is to see and treat your targets as children. Nothing about them intimidates you, no matter how much authority or social standing they have. Your manner makes it clear that you feel you are the stronger party. To accomplish this it may be helpful to imagine or visualize them as the children they once were; suddenly, powerful people do not seem so powerful and threatening when you regress them in your imagination. Keep in mind that certain types are more vulnerable to an

oedipal regression. Look for those who, like Professor Mut, seem outwardly the most adult—straitlaced, serious, a little full of themselves. They are struggling to repress their regressive tendencies, overcompensating for their weaknesses. Often those who seem the most in command of themselves are the ripest for regression. In fact they are secretly longing for it, because their power, position, and responsibilities are more a burden than a pleasure.

3. Born in 1768, the French writer François René de Chateaubriand grew up in a medieval castle in Brittany. The castle was cold and gloomy, as if inhabited by the ghosts of its past. The family lived there in semiseclusion. Chateaubriand spent much of his time with his sister Lucile, and his attachment to her was strong enough that rumors of incest made the rounds. But when he was around fifteen, a new woman named Sylphide entered his life—a woman he created in his imagination, a composite of all the heroines, goddesses, and courtesans he had read about in books. He was constantly seeing her features in his mind, and hearing her voice. Soon she was taking walks with him, carrying on conversations. He imagined her innocent and exalted, yet they would sometimes do things that were not so innocent. He carried on this relationship for two whole years, until finally he left for Paris, and replaced Sylphide with women of flesh and blood.

The French public, weary after the terrors of the 1790s, greeted Chateaubriand's first books enthusiastically, sensing a new spirit in them. His novels were full of windswept castles, brooding heroes, and passionate heroines. Romanticism was in the air. Chateaubriand himself resembled the characters in his novels, and despite his rather unattractive appearance, women went wild over him—with him, they could escape their boring marriages and live out the kind of turbulent romance he wrote about. Chateaubriand's nickname was the Enchanter, and although he was married, and an ardent Catholic, the number of his affairs increased with the years. But he had a restless nature—he traveled to the Middle East, to the United States, all over Europe. He could not find what he was looking for anywhere, and not the right woman either: after the novelty of an affair wore off, he would leave. By 1807 he had had so many affairs, and still felt so unsatisfied, that he decided to retire to his country estate, called Vallée aux Loups. He filled the place with trees from all over the world, transforming the grounds into something out of one of his novels. There he began to write the memoirs that he envisioned would be his masterpiece.

By 1817, however, Chateaubriand's life had fallen apart. Money problems had forced him to sell Vallée aux Loups. Almost fifty, he suddenly felt old, his inspiration dried up. That year he visited the writer Madame de Staël, who had been ill and was now close to death. He spent several days at her bedside, along with her closest friend, Juliette Récamier. Madame Récamier's affairs were infamous. She was married to a much older man, but they had not lived together for some time; she had broken the hearts of the most illustrious men in Europe, including Prince Metternich, the Duke of

Wellington, and the writer Benjamin Constant. It had also been rumored that despite all her flirtations she was still a virgin. She was now almost forty, but she was the type of woman who seems youthful at any age. Drawn together by their grief over de Staël's death, she and Chateaubriand became friends. She listened so attentively to him, adopting his moods and echoing his sentiments, that he felt that he had at last met a woman who understood him. There was also something rather ethereal about Madame Récamier. Her walk, her voice, her eyes—more than one man had compared her to some unearthly angel. Chateaubriand soon burned with the desire to possess her physically.

The year after their friendship began, she had a surprise for him: she had convinced a friend to purchase Vallée aux Loups. The friend was away for a few weeks, and she invited Chateaubriand to spend some time with her at his former estate. He happily accepted. He showed her around, explaining what each little patch of ground had meant to him, the memories the place conjured up. He felt youthful feelings welling up inside him, feelings he had forgotten about. He delved further into the past, describing events in his childhood. At moments, walking with Madame Récamier and looking into those kind eyes, he felt a shiver of recognition, but he could not quite identify it. All he knew was that he had to go back to the memoirs that he had laid aside. "I intend to employ the little time that is left to me in describing my youth," he said, "so long as its essence remains palpable to me."

It seemed that Madame Récamier returned Chateaubriand's love, but as usual she struggled to keep it a spiritual affair. The Enchanter, however, deserved his nickname. His poetry, his air of melancholy, and his persistence finally won the day and she succumbed, perhaps for the first time in her life. Now, as lovers, they were inseparable. But as always with Chateaubriand, over time one woman was not enough. The restless spirit returned. He began to have affairs again. Soon he and Récamier stopped seeing each other.

In 1832, Chateaubriand was traveling through Switzerland. Once again his life had taken a downward turn; only this time he truly was old, in body and spirit. In the Alps, strange thoughts of his youth began to assail him, memories of the castle in Brittany. Word reached him that Madame Récamier was in the area. He had not seen her in years, and he hurried to the inn where she was staying. She was as kind to him as ever; during the day they took walks together, and at night they stayed up late, talking.

One day, Chateaubriand told Récamier he had finally decided to finish his memoirs. And he had a confession to make: he told her the story of Sylphide, his imaginary lover when he was growing up. He had once hoped to meet a Sylphide in real life, but the women he had known had paled in comparison. Over the years he had forgotten about his imaginary lover, but now he was an old man, and he not only thought of her again, he could see her face and hear her voice. And with those memories he realized that he had in fact met Sylphide in real life—it was Madame Ré-

camier. The face and voice were close. More important, there was the calm spirit, the innocent, virginal quality. Reading to her the prayer to Sylphide he had just written, he told her he wanted to be young again, and seeing her had brought his youth back to him. Reconciled with Madame Récamier, he began to work again on the memoirs, which were eventually published under the title *Memoirs from Beyond the Grave*. Most critics agreed that the book was his masterpiece. The memoirs were dedicated to Madame Récamier, to whom he remained devoted until his death, in 1848.

Interpretation. All of us carry within us an image of an ideal type of person whom we yearn to meet and love. Most often the type is a composite made up of bits and pieces of different people from our youth, and even of characters in books and movies. People who influenced us inordinately—a teacher for instance—may also figure. The traits have nothing to do with superficial interests. Rather, they are unconscious, hard to verbalize.

We searched hardest for this ideal type in our adolescence, when we were more idealistic. Often our first loves have more of these traits than our subsequent affairs. For Chateaubriand, living with his family in their secluded castle, his first love was his sister Lucile, whom he adored and idealized. But since love with her was impossible, he created a figure out of his imagination who had all her positive attributes—nobility of spirit, innocence, courage.

Madame Récamier could not have known about Chateaubriand's ideal type, but she did know something about him, well before she ever met him. She had read all of his books, and his characters were highly autobiographical. She knew of his obsession with his lost youth; and everyone knew of his endless and unsatisfying affairs with women, his hyperrestless spirit. Madame Récamier knew how to mirror people, entering their spirit, and one of her first acts was to take Chateaubriand to Vallée aux Loups, where he felt he had left part of his youth. Alive with memories, he regressed further into his childhood, to the days in the castle. She actively encouraged this. Most important, she embodied a spirit that came naturally to her, but that matched his youthful ideal: innocent, noble, kind. (The fact that so many men fell in love with her suggests that many men had the same ideals.) Madame Récamier was Lucile/Sylphide. It took him years to realize it, but when he did, her spell over him was complete.

It is nearly impossible to embody someone's ideal completely. But if you come close enough, if you evoke some of that ideal spirit, you can lead that person into a deep seduction. To effect this regression you must play the role of the therapist. Get your targets to open up about their past, particularly their former loves and most particularly their first love. Pay attention to any expressions of disappointment, how this or that person did not give them what they wanted. Take them to places that evoke their youth. In this regression you are creating not so much a relationship of depen-

dency and immaturity but rather the adolescent spirit of a first love. There is a touch of innocence to the relationship. So much of adult life involves compromise, conniving, and a certain toughness. Create the ideal atmosphere by keeping such things out, drawing the other person into a kind of mutual weakness, conjuring a second virginity. There should be a dreamlike quality to the affair, as if the target were reliving that first love but could not quite believe it. Let all of this unfold slowly, each encounter revealing more ideal qualities. The sense of reliving a past pleasure is simply impossible to resist.

4. Some time in the summer of 1614, several members of England's upper nobility, including the Archbishop of Canterbury, met to decide what to do about the Earl of Somerset, the favorite of King James I, who was forty-eight at the time. After eight years as the favorite, the young earl had accumulated such power and wealth, and so many titles, that nothing was left for anyone else. But how to get rid of this powerful man? For the time being the conspirators had no answer.

A few weeks later the king was inspecting the royal stables when he caught sight of a young man who was new to the court: the twenty-two-year-old George Villiers, a member of the lower nobility. The courtiers who accompanied the king that day watched the king's eyes following Villiers, and saw with what interest he asked about this young man. Indeed everyone had to agree that he was a most handsome youth, with the face of an angel and a charmingly childish manner. When news of the king's interest in Villiers reached the conspirators, they instantly knew they had found what they had been looking for: a young man who could seduce the king and supplant the dreaded favorite. Left to nature, though, the seduction would never happen. They had to help it along. So, without telling Villiers of their plan, they befriended him.

King James was the son of Mary Queen of Scots. His childhood had been a nightmare: his father, his mother's favorite, and his own regents had all been murdered; his mother had first been exiled, later executed. When James was young, to escape suspicion he played the part of a fool. He hated the sight of a sword and could not stand the slightest sign of argument. When his cousin Queen Elizabeth I died in 1603, leaving no heir, he became king of England.

James surrounded himself with bright, happy young men, and seemed to prefer the company of boys. In 1612, his son, Prince Henry, died. The king was inconsolable. He needed distraction and good cheer, and his favorite, the Earl of Somerset, was no longer so young and attractive. The timing for a seduction was perfect. And so the conspirators went to work on Villiers, under the guise of trying to help him advance within the court. They supplied him with a magnificent wardrobe, jewels, a glittering carriage, the kind of things the king noticed. They worked on his riding,

fencing, tennis, dancing, his skills with birds and dogs. He was instructed in the art of conversation—how to flatter, tell a joke, sigh at the right moment. Fortunately Villiers was easy to work with; he had a naturally buoyant manner and nothing seemed to bother him. That same year the conspirators managed to get him appointed the royal cup-bearer: every night he poured out the king's wine, so that the king could see him up close. After a few weeks, the king was in love. The boy seemed to crave attention and tenderness, exactly what he yearned to offer. How wonderful it would be to mold and educate him. And what a perfect figure he had!

The conspirators convinced Villiers to break off his engagement to a young lady; the king was single-minded in his affections, and could not stand competition. Soon James wanted to be around Villiers all the time, for he had the qualities the king admired: innocence and a lighthearted spirit. The king appointed Villiers gentleman of the bedchamber, making it possible for them to be alone together. What particularly charmed James was that Villiers never asked for anything, which made it all the more delightful to spoil him.

By 1616, Villiers had completely supplanted the former favorite. He was now the Earl of Buckingham, and a member of the king's privy council. To the conspirators' dismay, however, he quickly accumulated even more privileges than the Earl of Somerset had done. The king would call him sweetheart in public, fix his doublets, comb his hair. James zealously protected his favorite, anxious to preserve the young man's innocence. He tended to the youth's every whim, in effect became his slave. In fact the king seemed to regress; whenever Steenie, his nickname for Villiers, entered the room, he started to act like a child. The two were inseparable until the king's death, in 1625.

Interpretation. We are most definitely stamped forever by our parents, in ways we can never fully understand. But the parents are equally influenced and seduced by the child. They may play the role of the protector, but in the process they absorb the child's spirit and energy, relive a part of their own childhood. And just as the child struggles against sexual feelings toward the parent, the parent must repress comparable erotic feelings that lie just beneath the tenderness they feel. The best and most insidious way to seduce people is often to position yourself as the child. Imagining themselves stronger, more in control, they will be lured into your web. They will feel they have nothing to fear. Emphasize your immaturity, your weakness, and you let them indulge in fantasies of protecting and parenting you—a strong desire as people get older. What they do not realize is that you are getting under their skin, insinuating yourself—it is the child who is controlling the adult. Your innocence makes them want to protect you, but it is also sexually charged. Innocence is highly seductive; some people even long to play the corrupter of innocence. Stir up their latent sexual feelings and

you can lead them astray with the hope of fulfilling a strong yet repressed fantasy: sleeping with the child figure. In your presence, too, they will begin to regress as well, infected by your childish, playful spirit.

Most of this came naturally to Villiers, but you will probably have to use some calculation. Fortunately, all of us have strong childish tendencies within us that are easy to access and exaggerate. Make your gestures seem spontaneous and unplanned. Any sexual element of your behavior should seem innocent, unconscious. Like Villiers, don't push for favors. Parents prefer to spoil children who don't ask for things but invite them in their manner. Seeming nonjudgmental and uncritical of those around you will make everything you do seem more natural and naive. Have a happy, cheerful demeanor, but with a playful edge. Emphasize any weaknesses you might have, things you cannot control. Remember: most of us remember our early years fondly, but often, paradoxically, the people with the strongest attachment to those times are the ones who had the most difficult childhoods. Actually, circumstances kept them from getting to *be* children, so they never really grew up, and they long for the paradise they never got to experience. James I falls into this category. These types are ripe targets for a reverse regression.

Symbol: *The Bed.* Lying alone in bed, the child

feels unprotected, afraid, and needy. In a nearby room, there is the parent's bed. It is large and forbidding, site of things you are not supposed to know about. Give the seduced both feelings—helplessness and transgression—as you lay them into bed and put them to sleep.

Reversal

To reverse the strategies of regression, the parties to a seduction would have to remain adults during the process. This is not only rare, it is not very pleasurable. Seduction means realizing certain fantasies. Being a mature and responsible adult is not a fantasy, it is a duty. Furthermore, a person who remains an adult in relation to you is harder to seduce. In all kinds of seduction—political, media, personal—the target must regress. The only danger is that the child, wearying of dependence, turns against the parent and rebels. You must be prepared for this, and unlike a parent, never take it personally.

18

Stir Up the Transgressive and Taboo

There are always social limits on what one can do.

Some of these, the most elemental taboos, go back centuries; others are more superficial, simply defining polite and acceptable behavior. Making your targets feel that you are leading them past either kind of limit is immensely seductive. People yearn to explore their dark side. Not everything in romantic love is supposed to be tender and soft; hint that you have a cruel, even sadistic streak. You do not respect age differences, marriage vows, family ties. Once the desire to transgress draws your targets to you, it will be hard for them to stop. Take them further than they imagined—the shared feeling of guilt and complicity will create a powerful bond.

The Lost Self

In March of 1812, the twenty-four-year-old George Gordon Byron published the first cantos of his poem *Childe Harold*. The poem was filled with familiar gothic imagery—a dilapidated abbey, debauchery, travels to the mysterious East—but what made it different was that the hero of the poem was also its villain: Harold was a man who led a life of vice, disdaining society's conventions yet somehow going unpunished. Also, the poem was not set in some faraway land but in present-day England. *Childe Harold* created an instant stir, becoming the talk of London. The first printing quickly sold out. Within days a rumor made the rounds: the poem, about a debauched young nobleman, was in fact autobiographical.

Now the cream of society clamored to meet Lord Byron, and many of them left their calling cards at his London residence. Soon he was showing up at their homes. Strangely enough, he exceeded their expectations. He was devilishly handsome, with curling hair and the face of an angel. His black attire set off his pale complexion. He did not talk much, which made an impression of itself, and when he did, his voice was low and hypnotic and his tone a little disdainful. He had a limp (he was born with a clubfoot), so when an orchestra struck up a waltz (the dance craze of 1812), he would stand to the side, a faraway look in his eye. The ladies went wild over Byron. Upon meeting him, Lady Roseberry felt her heart beating so violently (a mix of fear and excitement) that she had to walk away. Women fought to be seated next to him, to win his attention, to be seduced by him. Was it true that he was guilty of a secret sin, like the hero of his poem?

Lady Caroline Lamb—wife of William Lamb, son of Lord and Lady Melbourne—was a glittering young woman on the social scene, but deep inside she was unhappy. As a young girl she had dreamt of adventure, romance, travel. Now she was expected to play the role of the polite young wife, and it did not suit her. Lady Caroline was one of the first to read *Childe Harold*, and something more than its novelty stirred her. When she saw Lord Byron at a dinner party, surrounded by women, she looked at his face, then walked away; that night she wrote of him in her journal, "Mad, bad, and dangerous to know." She added, "That beautiful pale face is my fate."

The next day, to Lady Caroline's surprise, Lord Byron called on her. Evidently he had seen her walking away from him, and her shyness had intrigued him—he disliked the aggressive women who were constantly at his

It is a matter of a certain kind of feeling: that of being overwhelmed. There are many who have a great fear of being overwhelmed by someone; for example, someone who makes them laugh against their will, or tickles them to death, or, worse, tells them things that they sense to be accurate but which they do not quite understand, things that go beyond their prejudices and received wisdom. In other words, they do not want to be seduced, since seduction means confronting people with their limits, limits that are supposed to be set and stable but that the seducer suddenly causes to waver. Seduction is the desire of being overwhelmed, taken beyond.

—DANIEL SIBONY,
L'AMOUR INCONSCIENT

Just lately I saw a tight-reined stallion \ Get the bit in his teeth and bolt \ Like lightning—yet the minute he felt the reins slacken, \ Drop loose on his flying mane, \ He stopped dead.

We eternally chafe at
 restrictions, covet \
 Whatever's forbidden.
 (Look how a sick man
 who's told \ No immersion
 hangs round the bath-
 house.) \ . . . Desire \
 Mounts for what's kept out
 of reach. A thief's attracted
 \ By burglar-proof
 premises. How often will
 love \ Thrive on a rival's
 approval? It's not your
 wife's beauty, but your own
 \ Passion for her that gets
 us—she must \ Have
 something, just to have
 hooked you. A girl locked
 up by her \ Husband's not
 chaste but pursued, her
 fear's \ A bigger draw than
 her figure. Illicit passion—
 like it \ Or not—is
 sweeter. It only turns me
 on \ When the girl says,
 "I'm frightened."

—OVID, *THE AMORES*,
 TRANSLATED BY PETER GREEN

It is often not possible for
 [women] later on to undo
 the connection thus formed
 in their minds between
 sensual activities and
 something forbidden, and
 they turn out to be
 psychically impotent, i.e.
 frigid, when at last such
 activities do become
 permissible. This is the
 source of the desire in so
 many women to keep even
 legitimate relations secret
 for a time; and of the
 appearance of the capacity
 for normal sensation in
 others as soon as the
 condition of prohibition is
 restored by a secret
 intrigue—untrue to the
 husband, they can keep a
 second order of faith with
 the lover. • In my opinion
 the necessary condition of
 forbiddenness in the erotic
 life of women holds the
 same place as the man's

heels, as it seemed he disdained everything, including his success. Soon he was visiting Lady Caroline daily. He lingered in her boudoir, played with her children, helped her choose her dress for the day. She pressed him to talk of his life: he described his brutal father, the untimely deaths that seemed to be a family curse, the crumbling abbey he had inherited, his adventures in Turkey and Greece. His life was indeed as gothic as that of Childe Harold.

Within days the two became lovers. Now, though, the tables turned: Lady Caroline pursued Byron with unladylike aggression. She dressed as a page and sneaked into his carriage, wrote him extravagantly emotional letters, flaunted the affair. At last, a chance to play the grand romantic role of her girlhood fantasies. Byron began to turn against her. He already loved to shock; now he confessed to her the nature of the secret sin he had alluded to in *Childe Harold*—his homosexual affairs during his travels. He made cruel remarks, grew indifferent. But this only seemed to push her further. She sent him the customary lock of hair, but from her pubis; she followed him in the street, made public scenes—finally her family sent her abroad to avoid further scandal. After Byron made it clear the affair was over, she descended into a madness that would last several years.

In 1813, an old friend of Byron's, James Webster, invited the poet to stay at his country estate. Webster had a young and beautiful wife, Lady Frances, and he knew Byron's reputation as a seducer, but his wife was quiet and chaste—surely she would resist the temptation of a man such as Byron. To Webster's relief, Byron barely spoke to Frances, who seemed equally uninterested in him. Yet several days into Byron's stay, she contrived to be alone with him in the billiards room, where she asked him a question: how could a woman who liked a man inform him of it when he did not perceive it? Byron scribbled a racy reply on a piece of paper, which made her blush as she read it. Soon thereafter he invited the couple to stay with him at his infamous abbey. There, the prim and proper Lady Frances saw him drink wine from a human skull. They stayed up late in one of the abbey's secret chambers, reading poetry and kissing. With Byron, it seemed, Lady Frances was only too eager to explore adultery.

That same year, Lord Byron's half sister Augusta arrived in London to get away from her husband, who was having money troubles. Byron had not seen Augusta for some time. The two were physically similar—the same face, the same mannerisms; she was Lord Byron as a woman. And his behavior toward her was more than brotherly. He took her to the theater, to dances, received her at home, treating her with an intimate spirit that Augusta soon returned. Indeed the kind and tender attention that Byron showered on her soon became physical.

Augusta was a devoted wife with three children, yet she yielded to her half brother's advances. How could she help herself? He stirred up a strange passion in her, a stronger passion than she felt for any other man, including her husband. For Byron, his relationship with Augusta was the ultimate and crowning sin of his career. And soon he was writing to his friends, openly

confessing it. Indeed he delighted in their shocked responses, and his long narrative poem, *The Bride of Abydos*, takes brother-sister incest as its theme. Rumors began to spread of Byron's relations with Augusta, who was now pregnant with his child. Polite society shunned him—but women were more drawn to him than before, and his books were more popular than ever.

Annabella Milbanke, Lady Caroline Lamb's cousin, had met Byron in those first months of 1812 when he was the toast of London. Annabella was sober and down to earth, and her interests were science and religion. But there was something about Byron that attracted her. And the feeling seemed to be returned: not only did the two become friends, to her bewilderment he showed another kind of interest in her, even at one point proposing marriage. This was in the midst of the scandal over Byron and Caroline Lamb, and Annabella did not take the proposal seriously. Over the next few months she followed his career from a distance, and heard the troubling rumors of incest. Yet in 1813, she wrote her aunt, "I consider his acquaintance as so desirable that I would incur the risk of being called a Flirt for the sake of enjoying it." Reading his new poems, she wrote that his "description of Love almost makes *me* in love." She was developing an obsession with Byron, of which word soon reached him. They renewed their friendship, and in 1814 he proposed again; this time she accepted. Byron was a fallen angel and she would be the one to reform him.

It did not turn out that way. Byron had hoped that married life would calm him down, but after the ceremony he realized it was a mistake. He told Annabella, "Now you will find that you have married a devil." Within a few years the marriage fell apart.

In 1816, Byron left England, never to return. He traveled through Italy for a while; everyone knew his story—the affairs, the incest, the cruelty to his lovers. But wherever he went, Italian women, particularly married noblewomen, pursued him, making it clear in their own way how prepared they were to be the next Byronic victim. In truth, the women had become the aggressors. As Byron told the poet Shelley, "No one has been more carried off than poor dear me—I've been ravished more often than anyone since the Trojan war."

Interpretation. Women of Byron's time were longing to play a different role than society allowed them. They were supposed to be the decent, moralizing force in culture; only men had outlets for their darker impulses. Underlying the social restrictions on women, perhaps, was a fear of the more amoral and unbridled part of the female psyche.

Feeling repressed and restless, women of the time devoured gothic novels and romances, stories in which women were adventurous, and had the same capacity for good and evil as men. Books like these helped to trigger a revolt, with women like Lady Caroline playing out a little of the fantasy life they had had in their girlhood, where it had to some extent been permit-

need to lower his sexual object. . . . Women belonging to the higher levels of civilization do not usually transgress the prohibition against sexual activities during the period of waiting, and thus they acquire this close association between the forbidden and the sexual. . . . The injurious results of the deprivation of sexual enjoyment at the beginning manifest themselves in lack of full satisfaction when sexual desire is later given free rein in marriage. But, on the other hand, unrestrained sexual liberty from the beginning leads to no better result. It is easy to show that the value the mind sets on erotic needs instantly sinks as soon as satisfaction becomes readily obtainable. Some obstacle is necessary to swell the tide of the libido to its height; and at all periods of history, wherever natural barriers in the way of satisfaction have not sufficed, mankind has erected conventional ones in order to be able to enjoy love. This is true both of individuals and of nations. In times during which no obstacles to sexual satisfaction existed, such as, maybe, during the decline of the civilizations of antiquity, love became worthless, life became empty, and strong reaction-formations were necessary before the indispensable emotional value of love could be recovered.

—SIGMUND FREUD,
"CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE
PSYCHOLOGY OF LOVE,"
SEXUALITY AND THE
PSYCHOLOGY OF LOVE,
TRANSLATED BY JOAN RIVIÈRE

This is how Monsieur
Mauclair analyzed men's
attitude toward prostitutes:

"Neither the love of a
passionate but well-
brought-up mistress, nor
his marriage to a woman
whom he respects, can
replace the prostitute for the
human animal in those
perverse moments when he
covets the pleasure of
debasement himself without
affecting his social prestige.
Nothing can replace this
bizarre and powerful
pleasure of being able to
say everything, do
everything, profane and
parody without any fear of
retribution, remorse, or
responsibility. It is a
complete revolt against
organized society, his
organized, educated self
and especially his
religion." Monsieur
Mauclair hears the call of
the Devil in this dark
passion poetized by
Baudelaire. "The
prostitute represents the
unconscious which enables
us to put aside our
responsibilities."

—NINA EPTON,
LOVE AND THE FRENCH

Hearts and eye go traveling
along the paths that have
always brought them joy;
and if anyone attempts to
spoil their game, he only
makes them the more
passionate about it, God
knows. . . . so it was with
Tristan and Isolde. As
soon as they were forbidden
their desires, and prevented
from enjoying one another
by spies and guards, they
began to suffer intensely.

Desire now seriously
tormented them by its
magic, many times worse
than before; their need for
one another was more

ted. Byron arrived on the scene at the right time. He became the lightning rod for women's unexpressed desires; with him they could go beyond the limits society had imposed. For some the lure was adultery, for others it was romantic rebellion, or a chance to become irrational and uncivilized. (The desire to reform him merely covered up the truth—the desire to be overwhelmed by him.) In all cases it was the lure of the forbidden, which in this case was more than merely a superficial temptation: once you became involved with Lord Byron, he took you further than you had imagined or wanted, since he recognized no limits. Women did not just fall in love with him, they let him turn their lives upside down, even ruin them. They preferred that fate to the safe confines of marriage.

In some ways, the situation of women in the early nineteenth century has become generalized in the early twenty-first. The outlets for male bad behavior—war, dirty politics, the institution of mistresses and courtesans—have faded away; today, not just women but men are supposed to be eminently civilized and reasonable. And many have a hard time living up to this. As children we are able to vent the darker side of our characters, a side that all of us have. But under pressure from society (at first in the form of our parents), we slowly repress the naughty, rebellious, perverse streaks in our characters. To get along, we learn to repress our dark sides, which become a kind of lost self, a part of our psyche buried beneath our polite appearance.

As adults, we secretly want to recapture that lost self—the more adventurous, less respectful, childhood part of us. We are drawn to those who live out their lost selves as adults, even if it involves some evil or destruction. Like Byron, you can become the lightning rod for such desires. You must learn, however, to keep this potential under control, and to use it strategically. As the aura of the forbidden around you is drawing targets into your web, do not overplay your dangerousness, or they will be frightened away. Once you feel them falling under your spell, you have freer rein. If they begin to imitate you, as Lady Caroline imitated Byron, then take it further—mix in some cruelty, involve them in sin, crime, taboo activity, whatever it takes. Unleash the lost self within them; the more they act it out, the deeper your hold over them. Going halfway will break the spell and create self-consciousness. Take it as far as you can.

Baseness attracts everybody.

—JOHANN WOLFGANG GOETHE

Keys to Seduction

Society and culture are based on limits—this kind of behavior is acceptable, that is not. The limits are fluid and change with time, but there are always limits. The alternative is anarchy, the lawlessness of nature, which we dread. But we are strange animals: the moment any kind of limit is im-

posed, physically or psychologically, we are instantly curious. A part of us wants to go beyond that limit, to explore what is forbidden.

If, as children, we are told not to go past a certain point in the woods, that is precisely where we want to go. But we grow older, and become polite and deferential; more and more boundaries encumber our lives. Do not confuse politeness with happiness, however. It covers up frustration, unwanted compromise. How can we explore the shadow side of our personality without incurring punishment or ostracism? It seeps out in our dreams. We sometimes wake up with a sense of guilt at the murder, incest, adultery, and mayhem that goes on in our dreams, until we realize no one needs to know about it but ourselves. But give a person the sense that with you they will have a chance to explore the outer reaches of acceptable, polite behavior, that with you they can vent some of their closeted personality, and you create the ingredients for a deep and powerful seduction.

You will have to go beyond the point of merely teasing them with an elusive fantasy. The shock and seductive power will come from the reality of what you are offering them. Like Byron, at a certain point you can even press it further than they may want to go. If they have followed you merely out of curiosity, they may feel some fear and hesitation, but once they are hooked, they will find you hard to resist, for it is hard to return to a limit once you have transgressed and gone past it. The human cries out for more, and does not know when to stop. You will determine for them when it is time to stop.

The moment people feel that something is prohibited, a part of them will want it. That is what makes a married man or woman such a delicious target—the more someone is prohibited, the greater the desire. George Villiers, the Earl of Buckingham, was the favorite first of King James I, then of James's son, King Charles I. Nothing was ever denied him. In 1625, on a visit to France, he met the beautiful Queen Anne and fell hopelessly in love. What could be more impossible, more out of reach, than the queen of a rival power? He could have had almost any other woman, but the prohibited nature of the queen completely enflamed him, until he embarrassed himself and his country by trying to kiss her in public.

Since what is forbidden is desired, somehow you must make yourself seem forbidden. The most blatant way to do this is to engage in behavior that gives you a dark and forbidden aura. Theoretically you are someone to avoid; in fact you are too seductive to resist. That was the allure of the actor Errol Flynn, who, like Byron, often found himself the pursued rather than the pursuer. Flynn was devilishly handsome, but he also had something else: a definite criminal streak. In his wild youth he engaged in all kinds of shady activities. In the 1950s he was charged with rape, a permanent stain on his reputation even though he was acquitted; but his popularity among women only increased. Play up your dark side and you will have a similar effect. For your targets to be involved with you means going beyond their limits, doing something naughty and unacceptable—to society, to their peers. For many that is reason to bite the bait.

painful and urgent than it had ever been. . . . Women do lots of things just because they are forbidden, which they would certainly not do if they were not forbidden. . . . Our Lord God gave Eve the freedom to do what she would with all the fruits, flowers, and plants there were in Paradise, except for only one, which he forbade her to touch on pain of death. . . . She took the fruit and broke God's commandment . . . but it is my firm belief now that Eve would never have done this, if she had not been forbidden to.

—GOTTFRIED VON STRASSBURG, *TRISTAN UND ISOLDE*, QUOTED IN ANDREA HOPKINS, *THE BOOK OF COURTLY LOVE*

One of Monsieur Leopold Stern's friends rented a bachelor's pied-à-terre where he received his wife as a mistress, served her with port and petits-fours and "experienced all the tingling excitement of adultery." He told Stern that it was a delightful sensation to cuckold himself.

—NINA EPTON, *LOVE AND THE FRENCH*

In Junichiro Tanazaki's 1928 novel *Quicksand*, Sonoko Kakiuchi, the wife of a respectable lawyer, is bored and decides to take art classes to wile away the time. There, she finds herself fascinated with a fellow female student, the beautiful Mitsuko, who befriends her, then seduces her. Kakiuchi is forced to tell endless lies to her husband about her involvement with Mitsuko and their frequent trysts. Mitsuko slowly involves her in all kinds of nefarious activities, including a love triangle with a bizarre young man. Each time Kakiuchi is made to explore some forbidden pleasure, Mitsuko challenges her to go further and further. Kakiuchi hesitates, feels remorse—she knows she is in the clutches of a devilish young seductress who has played on her boredom to lead her astray. But in the end, she cannot help following Mitsuko's lead—each transgressive act makes her want more. Once your targets are drawn by the lure of the forbidden, dare them to match you in transgressive behavior. Any kind of challenge is seductive. Take it slowly heightening the challenge only after they show signs of yielding to you. Once they are under your spell, they may not even notice how far out on a limb you have taken them.

The great eighteenth-century rake Duc de Richelieu had a predilection for young girls and he would often heighten the seduction by enveloping them in transgressive behavior, to which the young are particularly susceptible. For instance, he would find a way into the young girl's house and lure her into her bed; the parents would be just down the hall, adding the proper spice. Sometimes he would act as if they were about to be discovered, the momentary fright sharpening the overall thrill. In all cases, he would try to turn the young girl against her parents, ridiculing their religious zeal or prudery or pious behavior. The duke's strategy was to attack the values that his targets held dearest—precisely the values that represent a limit. In a young person, family ties, religious ties, and the like are useful to the seducer; young people barely need a reason to rebel against them. The strategy, though, can be applied to a person of any age: for every deeply held value there is a shadow side, a doubt, a desire to explore what those values forbid.

In Renaissance Italy, a prostitute would dress as a lady and go to church. Nothing was more exciting to a man than to exchange glances with a woman whom he knew to be a whore as he was surrounded by his wife, family, peers, and church officials. Every religion or value system creates a dark side, the shadow realm of everything it prohibits. Tease your targets, get them to flirt with whatever transgresses their family values, which are often emotional yet superficial, since they are imposed from the outside.

One of the most seductive men of the twentieth century, Rudolph Valentino, was known as the Sex Menace. His appeal for women was twofold: he could be tender and attentive, but he also hinted of cruelty. At any moment he could become dangerously bold, perhaps even a little violent. The studios played up this double image as much as possible—when it was reported that he had been abusive to his wife, for example, they ex-

ploited the story. A mix of the masculine and the feminine, the violent and the tender, will always seem transgressive and appealing. Love is supposed to be tender and delicate, but in fact it can release violent and destructive emotions; and the possible violence of love, the way it breaks down our normal reasonableness, is just what attracts us. Approach romance's violent side by mixing a cruel streak into your tender attentions, particularly in the latter stages of the seduction, when the target is in your clutches. The courtesan Lola Montez was known to turn to violence, using a whip now and then, and Lou Andreas-Salomé could be exceptionally cruel to her men, playing coquettish games, turning alternately icy and demanding. Her cruelty only kept her targets coming back for more. A masochistic involvement can represent a great transgressive release.

The more illicit your seduction feels, the more powerful its effect. Give your targets the feeling that they are committing a kind of crime, a deed whose guilt they share with you. Create public moments in which the two of you know something that those around you do not. It could be phrases and looks that only you recognize, a secret. Byron's seductive appeal to Lady Frances was connected to the nearness of her husband—in his company, for example, she had a love letter of Byron's hidden in her bosom. Johannes, the protagonist of Søren Kierkegaard's *The Seducer's Diary*, sent a message to his target, the young Cordelia, in the middle of a dinner party they were both attending; she could not reveal to the other guests that it was from him, for then she would have to do some explaining. He might also say something in public that would have a special meaning for her, since it referred to something in one of his letters. All of this added spice to the affair by giving it a feeling of a shared secret, even a guilty crime. It is critical to play on tensions like these in public, creating a sense of complicity and collusion against the world.

In the Tristan and Isolde legend, the famous lovers reach the heights of bliss and exhilaration exactly *because* of the taboos they break. Isolde is engaged to King Mark; she will soon be a married woman. Tristan is a loyal subject and warrior in the service of King Mark, who is his father's age. The whole affair has a feeling of stealing away the bride from the father. Epitomizing the concept of love in the Western world, the legend has had immense influence over the ages, and a crucial part of it is the idea that without obstacles, without a feeling of transgression, love is weak and flavorless.

People may be straining to remove restrictions on private behavior, to make everything freer, in the world today, but that only makes seduction more difficult and less exciting. Do what you can to reintroduce a feeling of transgression and crime, even if it is only psychological or illusory. There must be obstacles to overcome, social norms to flout, laws to break, before the seduction can be consummated. It might seem that a permissive society imposes few limits; find some. There will always be limits, sacred cows, behavioral standards—endless ammunition for stirring up the transgressive and taboo.

Symbol: *The Forest. The children are told not to go into the forest that lies just beyond the safe confines of their home. There is no law there, only wilderness, wild animals, and criminals. But the chance to explore, the alluring darkness, and the fact that it is prohibited are impossible to resist. And once inside, they want to go farther and farther.*

Reversal

The reversal of stirring up taboos would be to stay within the limits of acceptable behavior. That would make for a very tepid seduction. Which is not to say that only evil or wild behavior is seductive; goodness, kindness, and an aura of spirituality can be tremendously attractive, since they are rare qualities. But notice that the game is the same. A person who is kind or good or spiritual within the limits that society prescribes has a weak appeal. It is those who go to the extreme—the Gandhis, the Krishnamurtis—who seduce us. They do not merely expound a spiritual lifestyle, they do away with all personal material comfort to live out their ascetic ideals. They too go beyond the limits, transgressing acceptable behavior, because societies would find it hard to function if everyone went to such lengths. In seduction, there is absolutely no power in respecting boundaries and limits.

19

Use Spiritual Lures

*Every-
one has doubts and in-
securities—about their body,
their self-worth, their sexuality. If
your seduction appeals exclusively to the
physical, you will stir up these doubts and
make your targets self-conscious. Instead, lure
them out of their insecurities by making them fo-
cus on something sublime and spiritual: a religious
experience, a lofty work of art, the occult. Play up
your divine qualities; affect an air of discontent with
worldly things; speak of the stars, destiny, the hidden
threads that unite you and the object of the seduc-
tion. Lost in a spiritual mist, the target will feel
light and uninhibited. Deepen the effect of
your seduction by making its sexual cul-
mination seem like the spiritual
union of two souls.*

Object of Worship

Liane de Pougy was the reigning courtesan of 1890s Paris. Slender and androgynous, she was a novelty, and the wealthiest men in Europe vied to possess her. By late in the decade, however, she had grown tired of it all. "What a sterile life," she wrote a friend. "Always the same routine: the *Bois*, the races, fittings; and to end an insipid day: dinner!" What wearied the courtesan most was the constant attention of her male admirers, who sought to monopolize her physical charms.

One spring day in 1899, Liane was riding in an open carriage through the Bois de Boulogne. As usual, men tipped their hats at her as she passed by. But one of these admirers caught her by surprise: a young woman with long blond hair, who gave her an intense, worshipful stare. Liane smiled at the woman, who smiled and bowed in return.

A few days later Liane began to receive cards and flowers from a twenty-three-year-old American named Natalie Barney, who identified herself as the blond admirer in the Bois de Boulogne, and asked for a rendezvous. Liane invited Natalie to visit, but to amuse herself she decided to play a little joke: a friend would take her place, lounging on her bed in the dark boudoir, while Liane would hide behind a screen. Natalie arrived at the appointed hour. She wore the costume of a Florentine page and carried a bouquet of flowers. Kneeling before the bed, she began to praise the courtesan, comparing her to a Fra Angelico painting. All too soon, she heard someone laugh—and standing up she realized the joke that had been played on her. She blushed and made for the door. When Liane hurried out from behind the screen, Natalie chastised her: the courtesan had the face of an angel, but apparently not the spirit. Contrite, Liane whispered, "Come back tomorrow morning. I'll be alone."

The young American showed up the next day, wearing the same outfit. She was witty and spirited; Liane relaxed in her presence, and invited her to stay for the courtesan's morning ritual—the elaborate makeup, clothes, and jewelry she put on before heading out into the world. Watching reverently, Natalie remarked that she worshiped beauty, and that Liane was the most beautiful woman she had ever seen. Playing the part of the page, she followed Liane to the carriage, opened the door for her with a bow, and accompanied her on her habitual ride through the Bois de Boulogne. Once inside the park, Natalie knelt on the floor, out of sight of the passing gentlemen who tipped their hats to Liane. She recited poems she had writ-

*Ah! always to be able to
freely love the one whom
one loves! To spend my life
at your feet like our last
days together. To protect
you against imaginary
satyrs so that I can be the
only one to throw you on
this bed of moss. . . .
We'll find each other again
in Lesbos, and when dusk
falls, we'll go deep in the
woods to lose the paths
leading to this century. I
want to imagine us in this
enchanted island of
immortals. I picture it as
being so beautiful. Come,
I'll describe for you those
delicate female couples, and
far from the cities and the
din, we'll forget everything
but the Ethics of Beauty.*

—NATALIE BARNEY, LETTER TO
LIANE DE POUGY, QUOTED IN
JEAN CHALON, *PORTRAIT OF A
SEDUCTRESS: THE WORLD OF
NATALIE BARNEY*, TRANSLATED
BY CAROL BARKO

*Terrible Natalie, who used
to ravage the land of love.
Formidable Natalie, feared
by husbands since no one
could resist her
seductiveness. And one
could see how women*

would abandon their husbands, homes, children, to follow this Circe of Lesbos. • Circe's method was to concoct magic potions. Natalie preferred writing poems; she always knew how to blend the physical and the spiritual.

—JEAN CHALON, PORTRAIT OF A SEDUCTRESS: THE WORLD OF NATALIE BARNEY, TRANSLATED BY CAROL BARKO

There once lived in the town of Gafsa, in Barbary, a very rich man who had numerous children, among them a lovely and graceful young daughter called Alibech. She was not herself a Christian, but there were many Christians in the town, and one day, having on occasion heard them extol the Christian faith and the service of God, she asked one of them for his opinion on the best and easiest way for a person to "serve God," as they put it. He answered her by saying that the ones who served God best were those who put the greatest distance between themselves and earthly goods, as happened in the case of people who had gone to live in the remoter parts of the Sahara. • She said no more about it to anyone, but next morning, being a very simple-natured creature of fourteen or thereabouts, Alibech set out all alone, in secret, and made her way toward the desert, prompted by nothing more logical than a strong adolescent impulse. A few days later, exhausted from fatigue and hunger, she arrived in the heart of the wilderness,

ten in Liane's honor, and she told the courtesan she considered it a mission to rescue her from the seamy career into which she had fallen.

That evening Natalie took her to the theater to see Sarah Bernhardt play Hamlet. During the intermission, she told Liane that she identified with Hamlet—his hunger for the sublime, his hatred of tyranny—which, for her, was the tyranny of men over women. Over the next few days Liane received a steady flow of flowers from Natalie, and telegrams with little poems in her honor. Slowly the worshipful words and looks became more physical, with the occasional touch, then a caress, even a kiss—and a kiss that felt different from any in Liane's experience. One morning, with Natalie in attendance, Liane prepared to take a bath. As she slipped out of her nightgown, Natalie suddenly flung herself at her friend's feet, kissing her ankles. The courtesan freed herself and hurried into the bath, only for Natalie to throw off her clothes and join her. Within a few days, all Paris knew that Liane de Pougy had a new lover: Natalie Barney.

Liane made no effort to disguise her new affair, publishing a novel, *Idylle Saphique*, detailing every aspect of Natalie's seduction. She had never had an affair with a woman before, and she described her involvement with Natalie as something like a mystical experience. Even at the end of her long life, she remembered the affair as by far her most intense.

Renée Vivien was a young Englishwoman who had come to Paris to write poetry and flee the marriage that her father was trying to arrange for her. Renée was obsessed with death; she also felt there was something wrong with her, experiencing moments of intense self-loathing. In 1900, Renée met Natalie at the theater. Something about the American's kind eyes melted Renée's normal reserve, and she began sending poems to Natalie, who responded with poems of her own. They soon became friends. Renée confessed that she had had an intense friendship with another woman, but that it remained platonic—the thought of physical involvement repulsed her. Natalie told her about the ancient Greek poet Sappho, who celebrated love between women as the only love that is innocent and pure. One night Renée, inspired by their discussions, invited Natalie to her apartment, which she had transformed into a kind of chapel. The room was filled with candles and with white lilies, the flowers she associated with Natalie. That night the two women became lovers. They soon moved in together, but when Renée realized that Natalie could not be faithful to her, her love turned into hatred. She broke off the relationship, moved out, and vowed to never see her again.

Over the next few months Natalie sent her letters and poems, and showed up at her new home—all to no avail. Renée would have nothing to do with her. One evening at the opera, though, Natalie sat down beside her and gave her a poem she had written in her honor. She expressed her regrets for the past, and also a simple request: the two women should go on a pilgrimage to the Greek island of Lesbos, Sappho's home. Only there could they purify themselves and their relationship. Renée could not resist.

On the island they retraced the poetess's steps, imagining they were transported back into the pagan, innocent days of ancient Greece. For Renée, Natalie had become Sappho herself. When they finally returned to Paris, Renée wrote her, "My blond Siren, I don't want you to become like those who dwell on earth. . . . I want you to stay yourself, for this is the way you cast your spell over me." Their affair lasted until Renée's death, in 1909.

Interpretation. Liane de Pougy and Renée Vivien both suffered a similar oppression: they were self-absorbed, hyperaware of themselves. The source of this habit in Liane was men's constant attention to her body. She could never escape their looks, which plagued her with a feeling of heaviness. Renée, meanwhile, thought too much about her own problems—her repression of her lesbianism, her mortality. She felt consumed with self-hatred.

Natalie Barney, on the other hand, was buoyant, lighthearted, absorbed in the world around her. Her seductions—and by the end of her life they numbered well into the hundreds—all had a similar quality: she took the victim outside herself, directing her attention toward beauty, poetry, the innocence of Sapphic love. She invited her women to participate in a kind of cult in which they would worship these sublimities. To heighten the cult-like feeling, she involved them in little rituals: they would call each other by new names, send each other poems in daily telegrams, wear costumes, make pilgrimages to holy sites. Two things would inevitably happen: the women would start to direct some of the worshipful feelings they were experiencing toward Natalie, who seemed as lofty and beautiful as the things she held up to be adored; and, pleasantly diverted into this spiritualized realm, they would also lose any heaviness they had felt about their bodies, their selves, their identities. Their repression of their sexuality would melt away. By the time Natalie kissed or caressed them, it would feel like something innocent, pure, as if they had returned to the Garden of Eden before the fall.

Religion is the great balm of existence because it takes us outside ourselves, connects us to something larger. As we contemplate the object of worship (God, nature), our burdens are lifted away. It is wonderful to feel raised up from the earth, to experience that kind of lightness. No matter how progressive the times, many of us feel uncomfortable with our bodies, our animal drives. A seducer who focuses too much attention on the physical will stir up self-consciousness, and a residue of disgust. So focus attention on something else. Invite the other person to worship something beautiful in the world. It could be nature, a work of art, even God (or gods—paganism never goes out of fashion); people are dying to believe in something. Add some rituals. If you can make yourself seem to resemble the thing you are worshiping—you are natural, aesthetic, noble, and sublime—your targets will transfer their worship to you. Religion and

where, catching sight of a small hut in the distance, she stumbled toward it, and in the doorway she found a holy man, who was astonished to see her in those parts and asked her what she was doing there. She told him that she had been inspired by God, and that she was trying, not only to serve Him, but also to find someone who could teach her how she should go about it. • On observing how young and exceedingly pretty she was, the good man was afraid to take her under his wing lest the devil should catch him unawares. So he praised her for her good intentions, and having given her a quantity of herb roots, wild apples, and dates to eat, and some water to drink, he said to her: • "My daughter, not very far from here there is a holy man who is much more capable than I of teaching you what you want to know. Go along to him." And he sent her upon her way. • When she came to this second man, she was told precisely the same thing, and so she went on until she arrived at the cell of a young hermit, a very devout and kindly fellow called Rustico, to whom she put the same inquiry as she had addressed to the others. Being anxious to prove to himself that he possessed a will of iron, he did not, like the others, send her away or direct her elsewhere, but kept her with him in his cell, in a corner of which, when night descended, he prepared a makeshift bed out of palm leaves, upon which he invited her to lie down and rest. • Once he

had taken this step, very little time elapsed before temptation went to war against his willpower, and after the first few assaults,

finding himself outmaneuvered on all fronts, he laid down his arms and surrendered.

Casting aside pious thoughts, prayers, and penitential exercises, he began to concentrate his mental faculties upon the youth and beauty of the girl, and to devise suitable

ways and means for approaching her in such a fashion that she should not

think it lewd of him to make the sort of proposal he had in mind. By putting certain questions to her, he soon discovered that

she had never been intimate with the opposite sex and was every bit as innocent as she seemed;

and he therefore thought of a possible way to persuade her, with the pretext of serving God, to grant his desires. He began by delivering a long speech in which he showed her how

powerful an enemy the devil was to the Lord God, and followed this up by impressing upon her that of

all the ways of serving God, the one that He most appreciated consisted in putting the devil back in

Hell, to which the Almighty had consigned him in the first place. •

The girl asked him how this was done, and Rustico replied: • "You will soon

find out, but just do whatever you see me doing for the present. "And so saying, he began to divest himself of the few clothes he was wearing, leaving himself completely naked.

The girl followed his example, and he sank to his knees as though he

spirituality are full of sexual undertones that can be brought to the surface once you have made your targets lose their self-awareness. From spiritual ecstasy to sexual ecstasy is but one small step.

Come back to take me, quickly, and lead me far away. Purify me with a great fire of divine love, none of the animal kind. You are all soul when you want to be, when you feel it, take me far away from my body.

—LIANE DE POUGY

Keys to Seduction

Religion is the most seductive system that mankind has created. Death is our greatest fear, and religion offers us the illusion that we are immortal, that something about us will live on. The idea that we are an infinitesimal part of a vast and indifferent universe is terrifying; religion humanizes this universe, makes us feel important and loved. We are not animals governed by uncontrollable drives, animals that die for no apparent reason, but creatures made in the image of a supreme being. We too can be sublime, rational, and good. Anything that feeds a desire or a wished-for illusion is seductive, and nothing can match religion in this arena.

Pleasure is the bait that you use to lure a person into your web. But no matter how clever a seducer you are, in the back of your targets' mind they are aware of the endgame, the physical conclusion toward which you are heading. You may think your target is unrepressed and hungry for pleasure, but almost all of us are plagued by an underlying unease with our animal nature. Unless you deal with this unease, your seduction, even when successful in the short term, will be superficial and temporary. Instead, like Natalie Barney, try to capture your target's soul, to build the foundation of a deep and lasting seduction. Lure the victim deep into your web with spirituality, making physical pleasure seem sublime and transcendent. Spirituality will disguise your manipulations, suggesting that your relationship is timeless, and creating a space for ecstasy in the victim's mind. Remember that seduction is a mental process, and nothing is more mentally intoxicating than religion, spirituality, and the occult.

In Gustave Flaubert's novel *Madame Bovary*, Rodolphe Boulanger visits the country doctor Bovary and finds himself interested in the doctor's beautiful wife, Emma. Boulanger was brutal and shrewd. He was something of a connoisseur: there had been many women in his life." He senses that Emma is bored. A few weeks later he manages to run into her at a county fair, where he gets her alone. He affects an air of sadness and gloom: "Many's the time I've passed a cemetery in the moonlight and asked myself if I wouldn't be better off lying there with the rest. . . ." He mentions his bad reputation; he deserves it, he says, but is it his fault? "Do you really not know that there exist souls that are ceaselessly in torment?" Sev-

eral times he takes Emma's hand, but she politely withdraws it. He talks of love, the magnetic force that draws two people together. Perhaps it has roots in some earlier existence, some previous incarnation of their souls. "Take us, for example. Why should we have met? How did it happen? It can only be that something in our particular inclinations made us come closer and closer across the distance that separated us, the way two rivers flow together." He takes her hand again and this time she lets him hold it. After the fair, he avoids her for a few weeks, then suddenly shows up, claiming that he tried to stay away but that fate, destiny, has pulled him back. He takes Emma riding. When he finally makes his move, in the woods, she seems frightened and rejects his advances. "You must have some mistaken idea," he protests. "I have you in my heart like a Madonna on a pedestal. . . . I beseech you: be my friend, my sister, my angel!" Under the spell of his words, she lets him hold her and lead her deeper into the woods, where she succumbs.

Rodolphe's strategy is threefold. First he talks of sadness, melancholy, discontent, talk that makes him seem nobler than other people, as if life's common material pursuits could not satisfy him. Next he talks of destiny, the magnetic attraction of two souls. This makes his interest in Emma seem not so much a momentary impulse as something timeless, linked to the movement of the stars. Finally he talks of angels, the elevated and the sublime. By placing everything on the spiritual plane, he distracts Emma from the physical, makes her feel giddy, and packs a seduction that could have taken months into a matter of a few encounters.

The references Rodolphe uses might seem clichéd by today's standards, but the strategy itself will never grow old. Simply adapt it to the occult fads of the day. Affect a spiritual air by displaying a discontent with the banalities of life. It is not money or sex or success that moves you; your drives are never so base. No, something much deeper motivates you. Whatever this is, keep it vague, letting the target imagine your hidden depths. The stars, astrology, fate, are always appealing; create the sense that destiny has brought you and your target together. That will make your seduction feel more natural. In a world where too much is controlled and manufactured, the sense that fate, necessity, or some higher power is guiding your relationship is doubly seductive. If you want to weave religious motifs into your seduction, it is always best to choose some distant, exotic religion with a slightly pagan air. It is easy to move from pagan spirituality to pagan earthiness. Timing counts: once you have stirred your targets' souls, move quickly to the physical, making sexuality seem merely an extension of the spiritual vibrations you are experiencing. In other words, employ the spiritual strategy as close to the time for your bold move as possible.

The spiritual is not exclusively the religious or the occult. It is anything that will add a sublime, timeless quality to your seduction. In the modern world, culture and art have in some ways taken the place of religion. There are two ways to use art in your seduction: first, create it yourself, in the target's honor. Natalie Barney wrote poems, and barraged her targets with

were about to pray, getting her to kneel directly opposite. • In this posture, the girl's beauty was displayed to Rustico in all its glory, and his longings blazed more fiercely than ever, bringing about the resurrection of the flesh. Alibech stared at this in amazement and said: • "Rustico, what is that I see sticking out in front of you, which I do not possess?" • "Oh, my daughter," said Rustico, "this is the devil I was telling you about. Do you see what he's doing? He's hurting me so much that I can hardly endure it." • "Oh, praise be to God," said the girl, "I can see that I am better off than you are, for I have no such devil to contend with." • "You're right there," said Rustico. "But you have something else instead, that I haven't." • "Oh?" said Alibech. "And what's that?" • "You have Hell," said Rustico. "And I honestly believe that God has sent you here for the salvation of my soul, because if this devil continues to plague the life out of me, and if you are prepared to take sufficient pity upon me to let me put him back into Hell, you will be giving me marvelous relief, as well as rendering incalculable service and pleasure to God, which is what you say you came here for in the first place." • "Oh, Father," replied the girl in all innocence, "if I really do have Hell, let's do as you suggest just as soon as you are ready." • "God bless you, my daughter," said Rustico. "Let's go and put him back, and then perhaps he'll leave me alone." • At which point

he conveyed the girl to one of their beds, where he instructed her in the art of incarcerating that accursed fiend. • Never having put a single devil into Hell before, the girl found the first experience a little painful, and she said to Rustico: • "This devil must certainly be a bad lot, Father, and a true enemy of God, for as well as plaguing mankind, he even hurts Hell when he's driven back inside it." • "Daughter," said Rustico, "it will not always be like that." And in order to ensure that it wouldn't, before moving from the bed they put him back half a dozen times, curbing his arrogance to such good effect that he was positively glad to keep still for the rest of the day. • During the next few days, however, the devil's pride frequently reared its head again, and the girl, ever ready to obey the call to duty and bring him under control, happened to develop a taste for the sport, and began saying to Rustico: • "I can certainly see what those worthy men in Gafsa meant when they said that serving God was so agreeable. I don't honestly recall ever having done anything that gave me so much pleasure and satisfaction as I get from putting the devil back in Hell. To my way of thinking, anyone who devotes his energies to anything but the service of God is a complete blockhead." • . . . And so, young ladies, if you stand in need of God's grace, see

them. Half of Picasso's appeal to many women was the hope that he would immortalize them in his paintings—for *Ars longa, vita brevis* (Art is long, life is short), as they used to say in Rome. Even if your love is a passing fancy, by capturing it in a work of art you give it a seductive illusion of eternity. The second way to use art is to make it ennoble the affair, giving your seduction an elevated edge. Natalie Barney took her targets to the theater, to the opera, to museums, to places full of history and atmosphere. In such places your souls can vibrate to the same spiritual wavelength. Of course you should avoid works of art that are earthy or vulgar, calling attention to your intentions. The play, movie, or book can be contemporary, even a little raw, as long as it contains a noble message and is tied to some just cause. Even a political movement can be spiritually uplifting. Remember to tailor your spiritual lures to the target. If the target is earthy and cynical, paganism or art will be more productive than the occult or religious piety.

The Russian mystic Rasputin was revered for his saintliness and his healing powers. Women in particular were fascinated with Rasputin and would visit him in his St. Petersburg apartment for spiritual guidance. He would talk to them of the simple goodness of the Russian peasantry, God's forgiveness, and other lofty matters. But after a few minutes of this, he would inject a comment or two that were of a much different nature—something about the woman's beauty, her lips that were so inviting, the desires she could inspire in a man. He would talk of different kinds of love—love of God, love between friends, love between a man and a woman—but mix them all up as if they were one. Then as he returned to discussing spiritual matters, he would suddenly take the woman's hand, or whisper into her ear. All this would have an intoxicating effect—women would find themselves dragged into a kind of maelstrom, both spiritually uplifted and sexually excited. Hundreds of women succumbed during these spiritual visits, for he would also tell them that they could not repent until they had sinned, and who better to sin with than Rasputin.

Rasputin understood the intimate connection between the sexual and the spiritual. Spirituality, the love of God, is a sublimated version of sexual love. The language of the religious mystics of the Middle Ages is full of erotic images; the contemplation of God and of the sublime can offer a kind of mental orgasm. There is no more seductive brew than the combination of the spiritual and the sexual, the high and the low. When you talk of spiritual matters, then, let your looks and physical presence hint of sexuality at the same time. Make the harmony of the universe and union with God seem to confuse with physical harmony and the union between two people. If you can make the endgame of your seduction appear as a spiritual experience, you will heighten the physical pleasure and create a seduction with a deep and lasting effect.

Symbol: *The Stars in the sky. Objects of worship for centuries, and symbols of the sublime and divine. In contemplating them, we are momentarily distracted from everything mundane and mortal. We feel lightness. Lift your targets' minds up to the stars and they will not notice what is happening here on earth.*

that you learn to put the devil back in Hell, for it is greatly to His liking and pleasurable to the parties concerned, and a great deal of good can arise and flow in the process.

—GIOVANNI BOCCACCIO,
THE DECAMERON, TRANSLATED
BY G. H. MCWILLIAM

Reversal

Letting your targets feel that your affection is neither temporary nor superficial will often make them fall deeper under your spell. In some, though, it can arouse an anxiety: the fear of commitment, of a claustrophobic relationship with no exits. Never let your spiritual lures seem to be leading in that direction, then. To focus attention on the distant future may implicitly constrict their freedom; you should be seducing them, not offering to marry them. What you want is to make them lose themselves in the moment, experiencing the timeless depth of your feelings in the present tense. Religious ecstasy is about intensity, not temporal extensity.

Giovanni Casanova used many spiritual lures in his seductions—the occult, anything that would inspire lofty sentiments. For the time that he was involved with a woman, she would feel that he would do anything for her, that he was not just using her only to abandon her. But she also knew that when it became convenient to end the affair, he would cry, give her a magnificent gift, then quietly leave. This was just what many young women wanted—a temporary diversion from marriage or an oppressive family. Sometimes pleasure is best when we know it is fleeting.

20

Mix Pleasure with Pain

The

greatest mistake in seduction is being too nice.

At first, perhaps, your kindness is charming, but it soon grows monotonous; you are trying too hard to please, and seem insecure. Instead of overwhelming your targets with niceness, try inflicting some pain. Lure them in with focused attention, then change direction, appearing suddenly uninterested. Make them feel guilty and insecure. Even instigate a breakup, subjecting them to an emptiness and pain that will give you room to maneuver—now a rapprochement, an apology, a return to your earlier kindness, will turn them weak at the knees. The lower the lows you create, the greater the highs. To heighten the erotic charge, create the excitement of fear.

The Emotional Roller Coaster

One hot summer afternoon in 1894, Don Mateo Díaz, a thirty-eight-year-old resident of Seville, decided to visit a local tobacco factory. Because of his connections Don Mateo was allowed to tour the place, but his interest was not in the business side. Don Mateo liked young girls, and hundreds of them worked in the factory. Just as he had expected, that day many of them were in a state of near undress because of the heat—it was quite a spectacle. He enjoyed the sights for a while, but the noise and the temperature soon got to him. As he was heading for the door, though, a worker of no more than sixteen called out to him: "*Caballero*, if you will give me a penny I will sing you a little song."

The girl's name was Conchita Pérez, and she looked young and innocent, in fact beautiful, with a sparkle in her eye that suggested a taste for adventure. The perfect prey. He listened to her song (which seemed vaguely suggestive), tossed her a coin that was equal to a month's salary, tipped his hat, then left. It was never good to come on too strong too early. As he walked along the street, he plotted how he would lure her into an affair. Suddenly he felt a hand on his arm and he turned to see her walking alongside him. It was too hot to work—would he be a gentleman and escort her home? Of course. Do you have a lover? he asked her. No, she said, "*I am mozita*"—pure, a virgin.

Conchita lived with her mother in a rundown part of town. Don Mateo exchanged pleasantries, slipped the mother some money (he knew from experience how important it was to keep the mother happy), then left. He considered waiting a few days, but he was impatient, and returned the following morning. The mother was out. He and Conchita resumed their playful banter from the day before, and to his surprise she suddenly sat in his lap, put her arms around him, and kissed him. His strategy flying out the window, he took hold of her and returned the kiss. She immediately jumped up, her eyes flashing with anger: you are trifling with me, she said, using me for a quick thrill. Don Mateo denied having any such intentions, and apologized for going too far. When he left, he felt confused: she had started it all; why should he feel guilty? And yet he did. Young girls can be so unpredictable; it is best to break them in slowly.

Over the next few days Don Mateo was the perfect gentleman. He visited every day, showered mother and daughter with gifts, made no advances—at least not at first. The damned girl had become so familiar

The more one pleases generally, the less one pleases profoundly.

—STENDHAL, *LOVE*,
TRANSLATED BY GILBERT AND
SUZANNE SALE

You should mix in the odd rebuff \ With your cheerful fun. Shut him out of the house, let him wait there \ Cursing that locked front door, let him plead \ And threaten all he's a mind to. Sweetness cloy the palate, \ Bitter juice is a freshener. Often a small skiff \ Is sunk by favoring winds: it's their husbands' access to them, \ At will, that deprives so many wives of love. \ Let her put in a door, with a hard-faced porter to tell him \ "Keep out," and he'll soon be touched with desire \ Through frustration. Put down your blunt foils, fight with sharpened weapons \ (I don't doubt that my own shafts \ Will be turned against me). When a new-captured lover \ Is stumbling into the toils, then let him believe \ He alone has rights to your bed—but later, make him

conscious \ Of rivals, of
shared delights. Neglect \
These devices—his ardor
will wane. A racehorse runs
most strongly \ When the
field's ahead, to be paced \
And passed. So the dying
embers of passion can be
fanned to \ Fresh flame by
some outrage—I can only
love, \ Myself, I confess it,
when wronged. But don't
let the cause of \ Pain be
too obvious: let a lover
suspect \ More than he
knows. Invent a slave who
watches your every \
Movement, make clear
what a jealous martinet \
That man of yours is—
such things will excite him.
Pleasure \ Too safely
enjoyed lacks zest. You
want to be free \ As *Thais*?
Act scared. Though the
door's quite safe, let him in
by \ The window. Look
nervous. Have a smart \
Maid rush in, scream
"We're caught!" while you
bundle the quaking \ Youth
out of sight. But be sure \
To offset his fright with
some moments of carefree
pleasure— \ Or he'll think
a night with you isn't
worth the risk.

—OVID. *THE ART OF LOVE*,
TRANSLATED BY PETER GREEN

"Certainly," I said, "I
have often told you that
pain holds a peculiar
attraction for me, and that
nothing kindles my passion
quite so much as tyranny
cruelly and above all
unfaithfulness in a
beautiful woman."

—LEOPOLD VON SACHER-
MASOCH, *VENUS IN FURS*,
TRANSLATED BY JEAN MCNEIL

with him that she would dress in front of him, or greet him in her nightgown. These glimpses of her body drove him crazy, and he would sometimes try to steal a kiss or caress, only to have her push him away and scold him. Weeks went by; clearly he had shown that his was not a passing fancy. Tired of the endless courtship, he took Conchita's mother aside one day and proposed that he set the girl up in a house of her own. He would treat her like a queen; she would have everything she wanted. (So, of course, would her mother.) Surely his proposal would satisfy the two women—but the next day, a note came from Conchita, expressing not gratitude but recrimination: he was trying to buy her love. "You shall never see me again," she concluded. He hurried to the house only to discover that the women had moved out that very morning, without leaving word where they were going.

Don Mateo felt terrible. Yes, he had acted like a boor. Next time he would wait months, or years if need be, before being so bold. Soon, however, another thought assailed him: he would never see Conchita again. Only then did he realize how much he loved her.

The winter passed, the worst of Mateo's life. One spring day he was walking down the street when he heard someone calling his name. He looked up: Conchita was standing in an open window, beaming with excitement. She bent down toward him and he kissed her hand, beside himself with joy. Why had she disappeared so suddenly? It was all going too quickly, she said. She had been afraid—of his intentions, and of her own feelings. But seeing him again, she was certain that she loved him. Yes, she was ready to be his mistress. She would prove it, she would come to him. Being apart had changed them both, he thought.

A few nights later, as promised, she appeared at his house. They kissed and began to undress. He wanted to savor every minute, to take it slowly, but he felt like a caged bull finally set free. He followed her into bed, his hands all over her. He started to take off her underwear but it was laced up in some complicated way. Eventually he had to sit up and take a look: she was wearing some elaborate canvas contraption, of a kind he had never seen. No matter how hard he tugged and pulled, it would not come off. He felt like hitting Conchita, he was so distraught, but instead he started to cry. She explained: she wanted to do everything with him, yet to remain a *mozita*. This was her protection. Exasperated, he sent her home.

Over the next few weeks, Don Mateo began to reassess his opinion of Conchita. He saw her flirting with other men, and dancing a suggestive flamenco in a bar: she was not a *mozita*, he decided, she was playing him for money. And yet he could not leave her. Another man would take his place—an unbearable thought. She would invite him to spend the night in her bed, as long as he promised not to force himself on her; and then, as if to torture him beyond reason, she would get into bed naked (supposedly because of the heat). All this he put up with on the grounds that no other man had such privileges. But one night, pushed to the limits of frustration, he exploded with anger, and issued an ultimatum: either give me what I

want or you will never see me again. Suddenly Conchita started to cry. He had never seen her cry, and it moved him. She too was tired of all this, she said, her voice trembling; if it was not too late, she was ready to accept the proposal she had once turned down. Set her up in a house, and he would see what a devoted mistress she would be.

Don Mateo wasted no time. He bought her a villa, gave her plenty of money to decorate it. After eight days the house was ready. She would receive him there at midnight. What joys awaited him.

Don Mateo showed up at the appointed hour. The barred door to the courtyard was closed. He rang the bell. She came to the other side of the door. "Kiss my hands," she said through the bars. "Now kiss the hem of my skirt, and the tip of my foot in its slipper." He did as she requested. "That is good," she said. "Now you may go." His shocked expression just made her laugh. She ridiculed him, then made a confession: she was repulsed by him. Now that she had a villa in her name, she was free of him at last. She called out, and a young man appeared from the shadows of the courtyard. As Don Mateo watched, too stunned to move, they began to make love on the floor, right before his eyes.

The next morning Conchita appeared at Don Mateo's house, supposedly to see if he had committed suicide. To her surprise, he hadn't—in fact he slapped her so hard she fell to the ground. "Conchita," he said, "you have made me suffer beyond all human strength. You have invented moral tortures to try them on the only man who loved you passionately. I now declare that I am going to possess you by force." Conchita screamed she would never be his, but he hit her again and again. Finally, moved by her tears, he stopped. Now she looked up at him lovingly. Forget the past, she said, forget all that I have done. Now that he hit her, now that she could see his pain, she felt certain he truly loved her. She was still a *mozita*—the affair with the young man the night before had been only for show, ending as soon as he had left—and she still belonged to him. "You are not going to take me by force. I await you in my arms." Finally she was sincere. To his supreme delight, he discovered that she was indeed still a virgin.

Interpretation. Don Mateo and Conchita Perez are characters in the 1896 novella *Woman and Puppet*, by Pierre Louÿs. Based on a true story—the "Miss Charpillon" episode in Casanova's *Memoirs*—the novella has served as the basis for two films: Josef von Sternberg's *Devil Is a Woman*, with Marlene Dietrich, and Luis Buñuel's *That Obscure Object of Desire*. In Louÿs's story, Conchita takes a proud and aggressive older man and in the space of a few months turns him into an abject slave. Her method is simple: she stimulates as many emotions as possible, including heavy doses of pain. She excites his lust, then makes him feel base for taking advantage of her. She gets him to play the protector, then makes him feel guilty for trying to buy her. Her sudden disappearance anguishes him—he has lost her—so that when she reappears (never by accident) he feels intense joy; which, however, she

Oderint, dum metuant
[Let them hate me so long
as they fear me], as if only
fear and hate belong
together, whereas fear and
love have nothing to do
with each other, as if it
were not fear that makes
love interesting. With what
kind of love do we embrace
nature? Is there not a
secretive anxiety and horror
in it, because its beautiful
harmony works its way out
of lawlessness and wild
confusion, its security out
of perfidy? But precisely
this anxiety captivates the
most. So also with love, if
it is to be interesting.
Behind it ought to brood
the deep, anxious night
from which springs the
flower of love.

—SØREN KIERKEGAARD,
THE SEDUCER'S DIARY,
TRANSLATED BY HOWARD V.
HONG AND EDNA H. HONG

The lovely marble creature
coughed and rearranged the
sable around her shoulders.
• "Thank you for the
lesson in classics," I replied,
"but I cannot deny that in
your peaceful and sunny
world just as in our misty
climate man and woman
are natural enemies. Love
may unite them briefly to
form one mind, one heart,
one will, but all too soon
they are torn asunder. And
this you know better than
I: either one of them must
bend the other to his will,
or else he must let himself
be trampled underfoot." •
"Under the woman's foot,
of course," said Lady
Venus impertinently. "And
that you know better than
I." • "Of course, that is
why I have no illusions." •
"In other words you are
now my slave without
illusions, and I shall

trample you mercilessly. " • "Madam!" • "You do not know me yet. I admit that I am cruel—since the word gives you so much delight—but am I not entitled to be so? It is man who desires, woman who is desired; this is woman's only advantage, but it is a decisive one. By making man so vulnerable to passion, nature has placed him at woman's mercy, and she who has not the sense to treat him like a humble subject, a slave, a plaything, and finally to betray him with a laugh—well, she is a woman of little wisdom." • "My dear, your principles . . ." I protested. • "Are founded on the experience of a thousand years," she replied mischievously, running her white fingers through the dark fur. "The more submissive woman is, the more readily man recovers his self-possession and becomes domineering; but the more cruel and faithless she is, the more she ill-treats him, the more wantonly she toys with him and the harsher she is, the more she quickens his desire and secures his love and admiration. It has always been so, from the time of Helen and Delilah all the way to Catherine the Great and Lola Montez."

—LEOPOLD VON SACHER-MASOCH, *VENUS IN FURS*,
TRANSLATED BY JEAN MCNEIL

In essence, the domain of eroticism is the domain of violence, of violation. . . .

The whole business of eroticism is to strike to the inmost core of the living being, so that the heart stands still. . . . The

quickly turns back into tears. Jealousy and humiliation then precede the final moment when she gives him her virginity. (Even after this, according to the story, she finds ways to continue to torment him.) Each low she inspires—guilt, despair, jealousy, emptiness—creates the space for a more intense high. He becomes an addict, hooked on the alternation of charge and withdrawal.

Your seduction should never follow a simple course upward toward pleasure and harmony. The climax will come too soon, and the pleasure will be weak. What makes us intensely appreciate something is previous suffering. A brush with death makes us fall in love with life; a long journey makes a return home that much more pleasurable. Your task is to create moments of sadness, despair, and anguish, to create the tension that allows for a great release. Do not worry about making people angry; anger is a sure sign that you have your hooks in them. Nor should you be afraid that if you make yourself difficult people will flee—we only abandon those who bore us. The ride on which you take your victims can be tortuous but never dull. At all costs, keep your targets emotional and on edge. Create enough highs and lows and you will wear away the last vestiges of their willpower.

Harshness and Kindness

In 1972, Henry Kissinger, then President Richard Nixon's assistant for national security affairs, received a request for an interview from the famous Italian journalist Oriana Fallaci. Kissinger rarely gave interviews; he had no control over the final product, and he was a man who needed to be in control. But he had read Fallaci's interview with a North Vietnamese general, and it had been instructive. She was extremely well informed on the Vietnam War; perhaps he could gather some information of his own, pick her brain. He decided to ask for a preinterview, a preliminary meeting. He would grill her on different subjects; if she passed the test, he would grant her an interview proper. They met, and he was impressed; she was extremely intelligent—and tough. It would be an enjoyable challenge to outwit her and prove that he was tougher. He agreed to a short interview a few days later.

To Kissinger's annoyance, Fallaci began the interview by asking him whether he was disappointed by the slow pace of the peace negotiations with North Vietnam. He would not discuss the negotiations—he had made that clear in the preinterview. Yet she continued the same line of questioning. He grew a little angry "That's enough," he said. "I don't want to talk any more about Vietnam." Although she didn't immediately abandon the subject, her questions became gentler: what were his personal feelings toward the leaders of South and North Vietnam? Still, he ducked: "I'm not the kind of person to be swayed by emotion. Emotions serve no purpose." She moved to grander philosophical issues—war, peace. She

praised him for his role in the rapprochement with China. Without realizing it, Kissinger began to open up. He talked of the pain he felt in dealing with Vietnam, the pleasures of wielding power. Then suddenly the harsher questions returned—was he simply Nixon's lackey, as many suspected? Up and down she went, alternately baiting and flattering him. His goal had been to pump her for information while revealing nothing about himself; by the end, though, she had given him nothing, while he had revealed a range of embarrassing opinions—his view of women as playthings, for instance, and his belief that he was popular with the public because people saw him as a kind of lonesome cowboy, the hero who cleans things up by himself. When the interview was published, Nixon, Kissinger's boss, was livid about it.

In 1973, the Shah of Iran, Mohammed Riza Pahlavi, granted Fallaci an interview. He knew how to handle the press—be noncommittal, speak in generalities, seem firm, yet polite. This approach had worked a thousand times before. Fallaci began the interview on a personal level, asking how it felt to be a king, to be the target of assassination attempts, and why the shah always seemed so sad. He talked of the burdens of his position, the pain and loneliness he felt. It seemed a release of sorts to talk about his professional problems. As he talked, Fallaci said little, her silence goading him on. Then she suddenly changed the subject: he was having difficulties with his second wife. Surely that must hurt him? This was a sore spot, and Pahlavi got angry. He tried to change the subject, but she kept returning to it. Why waste time talking about wives and women, he said. He then went so far as to criticize women in general—their lack of creativity, their cruelty. Fallaci kept at him: he had dictatorial tendencies and his country lacked basic freedoms. Fallaci's own books were on his government's blacklist. Hearing this, the shah seemed somewhat taken aback—perhaps he was dealing with a subversive writer. But then she softened her tone again, asked him about his many achievements. The pattern repeated: the moment he relaxed, she blindsided him with a sharp question; when he grew bitter, she lightened the mood. Like Kissinger, he found himself opening up despite himself and mentioning things he would later regret, such as his intention to raise the price of oil. Slowly he fell under her spell, even began to flirt with her. "Even if you're on the blacklist of my authorities," he said at the end of the interview, "I'll put you on the white list of my heart."

Interpretation. Most of Fallaci's interviews were with powerful leaders, men and women with an overwhelming need to control the situation, to avoid revealing anything embarrassing. This put her and her subjects in conflict, since getting them to open up—grow emotional, give up control—was exactly what she wanted. The classic seductive approach of charm and flattery would get her nowhere with these people; they would see right through it. Instead, Fallaci preyed on their emotions, alternating harshness and kindness. She would ask a cruel question that touched on the deepest

whole business of eroticism is to destroy the self-contained character of the participators as they are in their normal lives. . . . We ought never to forget that in spite of the bliss love promises its first effect is one of turmoil and distress. Passion fulfilled itself provokes such violent agitation that the happiness involved, before being a happiness to be enjoyed, is so great as to be more like its opposite, suffering. . . . The likelihood of suffering is all the greater since suffering alone reveals the total significance of the beloved object.

—GEORGES BATAILLE,
EROTISM: DEATH AND
SENSUALITY, TRANSLATED BY
MARY DALWOOD

Always a little doubt to set at rest—that's what keeps one craving in passionate love. Because the keenest misgivings are always there, its pleasures never become tedious. • Saint-Simon, the only historian France has ever possessed, says: "After many passing fancies the Duchesse de Berry had fallen deeply in love with Riom, a junior member of the d'Aydie family, the son of one of Madame de Biron's sisters. He had neither looks nor brains; he was fat, short, chubby-cheeked, pale, and had such a crop of pimples that he seemed one large abscess; he had beautiful teeth, but not the least idea that he was going to inspire a passion which quickly got out of control, a passion which lasted a lifetime, notwithstanding a number of subsidiary flirtations and affairs. . . . He would

excite but not requite the
desire of the princess; he
delighted in making her
jealous, or pretending to be
jealous himself. He would
often drive her to tears.

Gradually he forced her
into the position of doing
nothing without his leave,

even trifles of no
importance. Sometimes,
when she was ready to go
to the Opera, he insisted
that she stay at home; and
sometimes he made her go
there against her will. He
obliged her to grant favours
to ladies she did not like or
of whom she was jealous.

She was not even free to
dress as she chose; he
would amuse himself by
making her change her
coiffure or her dress at the
last minute; he did this so
often and so publicly that
she became accustomed to

take his orders in the
evening for what she would
do and wear the following
day; then the next day he
would alter everything, and
the princess would cry all
the more. In the end she
took to sending him
messages by trusted

footmen, for from the first
he had taken up residence
in Luxembourg; messages
which continued

throughout her toilette, to
know what ribbons she
would wear, what gown
and other ornaments;

almost invariably he made
her wear something she did
not wish to. When she
occasionally dared to do

anything, however small,
without his leave, he
treated her like a servant,

and she was in tears for
several days. . . . Before
assembled company he

would give her such
brusque replies that

everyone lowered their eyes,
and the Duchess would
blush, though her passion

insecurities of the subject, who would get emotional and defensive; deep down, though, something else would stir inside them—the desire to prove to Fallaci that they did not deserve her implicit criticisms. Unconsciously they wanted to please her, to make her like them. When she then shifted tone, indirectly praising them, they felt they were winning her over and were encouraged to open up. Without realizing it, they would give freer rein to their emotions.

In social situations we all wear masks, and keep our defenses up. It is embarrassing, after all, to reveal one's true feelings. As a seducer you must find a way to lower these resistances. The Charmer's approach of flattery and attention can be effective here, particularly with the insecure, but it can take months of work, and can also backfire. To get a quicker result, and to break down more inaccessible people, it is often better to alternate harshness and kindness. By being harsh you create inner tensions—your targets may be upset with you, but they are also asking themselves questions. What have they done to earn your dislike? When you then are kind, they feel relieved, but also concerned that at any moment they might somehow disappoint you again. Make use of this pattern to keep them in suspense—dreading your harshness and keen to keep you kind. Your kindness and harshness should be subtle; indirect digs and compliments are best. Play the psychoanalyst: make cutting comments concerning their unconscious motives (you are only being truthful), then sit back and listen. Your silence will goad them into embarrassing admissions. Leaven your judgments with occasional praise and they will strive to please you, like dogs.

*Love is a costly flower, but one must have the desire to
pluck it from the edge of a precipice.*

—STENDHAL

Keys to Seduction

Almost everyone is more or less polite. We learn early on not to tell people what we really think of them; we smile at their jokes, act interested in their stories and problems. It is the only way to live with them. Eventually this becomes a habit; we are nice, even when it isn't really necessary. We try to please other people, to not step on their toes, to avoid disagreements and conflict.

Niceness in seduction, however, though it may at first draw someone to you (it is soothing and comforting), soon loses all effect. Being too nice can literally push the target away from you. Erotic feeling depends on the creation of tension. Without tension, without anxiety and suspense, there can be no feeling of release, of true pleasure and joy. It is your task to create that tension in the target, to stimulate feelings of anxiety, to lead them to and fro, so that the culmination of the seduction has real weight and intensity. So rid yourself of your nasty habit of avoiding conflict, which is in any

case unnatural. You are most often nice not out of your own inner goodness but out of fear of displeasing, out of insecurity. Go beyond that fear and you suddenly have options—the freedom to create pain, then magically dissolve it. Your seductive powers will increase tenfold.

People will be less upset by your hurtful actions than you might imagine. In the world today, we often feel starved for experience. We crave emotion, even if it is negative. The pain you cause your targets, then, is bracing—it makes them feel more alive. They have something to complain about, they get to play the victim. As a result, once you have turned the pain into pleasure they will readily forgive you. Stir up their jealousy, make them feel insecure, and the validation you later give their ego by preferring them over their rivals is doubly delightful. Remember: you have more to fear by boring your targets than by shaking them up. Wounding people binds them to you more deeply than kindness. Create tension so you can release it. If you need inspiration, find the part of the target that most irritates you and use it as a springboard for some therapeutic conflict. The more real your cruelty, the more effective it is.

In 1818, the French writer Stendhal, then living in Milan, met the Countess Metilda Viscontini. For him, it was love at first sight. She was a proud, somewhat difficult woman, and she intimidated Stendhal, who was terribly afraid of displeasing her with a stupid comment or undignified act. Finally, unable to take it any longer, he one day took her hand and confessed his love. Horrified, the countess told him to leave and never come back.

Stendhal flooded Viscontini with letters, begging her to forgive him. At last, she relented: she would see him again, but under one condition—he could visit only once every two weeks, for no more than an hour, and only in the presence of company. Stendhal agreed; he had no choice. He now lived for those short fortnightly visits, which became occasions of intense anxiety and fear, since he was never quite sure whether she would change her mind and banish him forever. This went on for over two years, during which the countess never showed him the slightest sign of favor. Stendhal never found out why she had insisted on this arrangement—perhaps she wanted to toy with him or keep him at a distance. All he knew was that his love for her only grew stronger, became unbearably intense, until finally he had to leave Milan.

To get over this sad affair, Stendhal wrote his famous book *On Love*, in which he described the effect of fear on desire. First, if you fear the loved one, you can never get too close or familiar with him or her. The beloved then retains an element of mystery, which only intensifies your love. Second, there is something bracing about fear. It makes you vibrate with sensation, heightens your awareness, is intensely erotic. According to Stendhal, the closer the loved one brings you to the edge of the precipice, to the feeling that they could abandon you, the dizzier and more lost you will become. Falling in love means literally falling—losing control, a mix of fear and excitement.

Apply this wisdom in reverse: never let your targets get too comfortable

for him was in no way curtailed." • For the princess, Riom was a sovereign remedy against boredom.

—STENDHAL, *LOVE*,

TRANSLATED BY GILBERT AND SUZANNE SALE

with you. They need to feel fear and anxiety. Show them some coldness, a flash of anger they did not expect. Be irrational if necessary. There is always the trump card: a breakup. Let them feel they have lost you forever, make them fear that they have lost the power to charm you. Let these feelings sit with them for a while, then pull them back from the precipice. The reconciliation will be intense.

In 33 B.C., Mark Antony heard a rumor that Cleopatra, his lover of several years, had decided to seduce his rival, Octavius, and that she was planning to poison Antony. Cleopatra had poisoned people before; in fact she was an expert in the art. Antony grew paranoid, and finally one day confronted her. Cleopatra did not protest her innocence. Yes, that was true, it was quite within her power to poison Antony at any moment; there were no precautions he could take. Only the love she felt for him could protect him. To demonstrate, she took some flowers and dropped them into his wine. Antony hesitated, then raised the cup to his lips; Cleopatra grabbed his arm and stopped him. She had a prisoner brought in to drink the wine, and the prisoner promptly dropped dead. Falling at Cleopatra's feet, Antony professed that he loved her now more than ever. He did not speak out of cowardice; there was no man braver than he, and if Cleopatra could have poisoned him, he for his part could have left her and gone back to Rome. No, what pushed him over the edge was the feeling that she had control over his emotions, over life and death. He was her slave. Her demonstration of her power over him was not only effective but erotic.

Like Antony, many of us have masochistic yearnings without realizing it. It takes someone to inflict some pain on us for these deeply repressed desires to come to the surface. You must learn to recognize the types of hidden masochists out there, for each one enjoys a particular kind of pain. For instance, there are people who feel that they deserve nothing good in life, and who, unable to deal with success, sabotage themselves constantly. Be nice to them, admit that you admire them, and they are uncomfortable, since they feel that they cannot possibly match up to the ideal figure you have clearly imagined them to be. Such self-saboteurs do better with a little punishment; scold them, make them aware of their inadequacies. They feel they deserve such criticism and when it comes it is with a sense of relief. It is also easy to make them feel guilty, a feeling that deep down they enjoy.

Other people experience the responsibilities and duties of modern life as such a heavy burden, they long to give it all up. These people are often looking for someone or something to worship—a cause, a religion, a guru. Make them worship you. And then there are those who want to play the martyr. Recognize them by the joy they take in complaining, in feeling righteous and wronged; then give them a reason to complain. Remember: appearances deceive. Often the strongest-looking people—the Kissingers and Don Mateos—may secretly want to be punished. In any event, follow up pain with pleasure and you will create a state of dependency that will last for a long time.

Symbol: *The Precipice. At the edge of a cliff, people often feel lightheaded, both fearful and dizzy. For a moment they can imagine themselves falling headlong. At the same time, a part of them is tempted. Lead your targets as close to the edge as possible, then pull them back. No thrill without fear.*

Reversal

People who have recently experienced a lot of pain or a loss will flee if you try to inflict more on them. They have enough in their lives already. Far better to surround these types with pleasure—that will put them under your spell. The technique of inflicting pain works best on those who have it easy, who have power and few problems. People with comfortable lives may also feel a gnawing sense of guilt, as if they had gotten away with something. They may not consciously know it, but secretly they long for some punishment, a good mental thrashing, something that will bring them back down to earth.

Also, remember to not use the pleasure-through-pain tactic too early on. Some of the greatest seducers in history—Byron, Jiang Qing (Madame Mao), Picasso—had a sadistic streak, an ability to inflict mental torture. If their victims had known in advance what they were getting themselves into, they would have run for the hills. In truth, most of these seducers lured their targets into their webs by appearing to be paragons of sweetness and affection. Even Byron seemed like an angel when he first met a woman, so that she tended to doubt his devilish reputation—a seductive doubt, for it allowed her to think of herself as the only one who really understood him. His cruelty would come out later on, but by then it would be too late. The victim's emotions were engaged, and his harshness would only intensify her feelings.

In the beginning, then, wear the mask of a lamb, making pleasure and attentiveness your bait. First get under their skin, then lead them on a wild ride.