Divine Madness: Archetypes of Romantic Love

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Seduction And Fidelity: Intimacy's Chambers

There is no love without some kind of drawing in or leading on -- some kind of seduction. We perhaps tend to think that to seduce is to lead astray, to draw another person into sin -- that seduction is the province of the demon lover. I am inclined to think, however, that we do not risk the liabilities of intimacy unless we are *enticed* into letting go our hold on the secure and familiar.

Originally, to seduce meant to lead *aside* -- whether to safety or to ruin was not implied. The demon lover always leads us aside from our habitual purposes. We experience him (or her) as demonic because he leads us into dealings with our shadow which we have made it our business to avoid. He challenges our life style and customary assumptions. When we are wedded to our old values, we inevitably fear his challenges and very possibly wonder about their morality. Then seduction seems to be a leading astray. When, however, we do not arrest the demon lover's challenge before having come to understand it, when we are led into discovering the mystery of our beloved's unique personhood -- the divine spark -- , then we may say that we have been seduced into discovering our own Self as well as our beloved. Rumi knows the ambiguity of seduction very well, even with reference to the love of God:

> You don't have "bad" days and "good" days.
> You don't sometimes feel brilliant and sometimes dumb.
> There's no studying, no scholarly thinking having to do with love,
> but there's a great deal of plotting, and secret touching,
> and nights you can't remember at all (Rumi 1984: #674).

For Rumi and for me, the only love worthy of the name is that which centers and unites us -- the love so transparent we can glimpse its foundation in the love of God.

Seduction's plotting, however, comes in many styles and with quite varying sets of implications. My first two examples come from Ingmar Bergman's comic treatment of the Don Juan legend, *The Devil's Eye*. When we first see the world's greatest seducer, he is in hell; and a beautiful woman is approaching him with a knife in her hand and a glint in her eye. She is evidently a victim of his villainies. He engages her boldly:

> You give me a thrill of delight. My breast will open as gladly to your dagger as your thighs opened to the sharp blade of my love. Give us the final ecstasy, the only one our bodies have not yet tasted.

Seconds later he is striving to "cool" her off by removing her clothes as he simultaneously

fans the flames of her ardor with his intemperate words. There is no question the woman has been "turned aside" from her initial intention, but it is equally clear that Don Juan has led her to a deeper sentiment which underlay her rage.

In the same film, a rather different seduction is effected by Don Juan's valet, Pablo, on the matronly wife of a foolish country parson. Pablo begins by encouraging her to resist his advances on the grounds that it will heighten their pleasure. He then claims to read her character in her eyes, naming her prudence, affectionateness, and frail health. all of which forbid her to abandon herself to passion. He sees, as well, a dark, sensuous spot in her nature which is able to express itself only in her dreams. Reminding her to resist, he says, "In your dreams you wallow in voluptuousness, to the very limit of pain and shame." She runs out of the room. But later he follows up with an appeal to her sympathy. He has suffered three hundred years of torment in hell for the ill luck of having died in the arms of his chambermaid. And now, when he has been sent to earth for twenty-four hours, he chances to meet the loveliest woman he has ever seen. He appeals to her maternal instincts. In yielding, she says: "You've done a rare thing -- touched my heart -- given me an experience. It entitles you to a reward."

Again, a bold display of seductive technique is based on a genuine reading of the woman's heart. The same is evidently true of the disreputable old Karamazov, father of Dmitry, Ivan, and Alyosha. General opinion holds him for a crass, sleazy libertine who succeeds in his self-centered ambitions only because he is so wealthy. He apparently even believes this himself, as he waits timidly for Grushenka to agree to become his mistress. He is believed to keep under his pillow an envelope addressed to her, his "chicken," containing three thousand rubles. But some of his words belie this portrait of a hopelessly insensitive man:

> According to my rule, you can find in every woman something -- damn it! -- something extraordinarily interesting, something you won't find in any other woman. Only you must know how to find it -- that's the point! That requires talent! For me ugly women do not exist . . . the first thing to do with barefooted girls and ugly women is to take them by surprise . . . They must be surprised till they're enraptured, till they're transfixed, till they're ashamed that such a gentleman should have fallen in love with such a swarthy creature (1958: 159).

There is a simplicity and genuineness in old Karamazov which awakens our sympathy. Still his sentiments are not so different from those of Casanova or several of the literary Don Juans. I think in particular of the valet Leporello's famous aria (#4) in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, cataloguing his master's conquests: "In Italy 640 . . .in Spain already 1003 . . . in winter he prefers them plump, in summer thin . . ." He likes them young and old, fat and thin, rich and poor, so long as they wear skirts. But there is a cynicism here which we do not find in old Karamazov. It has to do with the Don's inconstancy. Moliere's Don Juan hits the nail on the head:

> We savor an infinite sweetness in overcoming a young beauty's heart by a thousand acts of homage, in seeing day by day the little steps by which we progress, in combating by our transports, tears, and sighs, the innocent modesty of a soul loath to surrender its arms, in forcing step by step, the little obstacles with which she resists, in conquering the scruples in which she takes honor, and bringing her gently to the point where we want to bring her. But once we are the master, there's nothing more to say and nothing more to wish for; all the beauty of the passion is finished, and in the tranquillity of such a love we fall asleep, unless some new object comes to awaken our desires and offer our heart the alluring charms of a conquest to be made (322).

It is not love he is after, but conquest, an exercise of power. The marvelous mystery of the woman's soul is for him only a series of obstacles. He needs to know that soul, and to convince the woman that he knows it very well, indeed. But -- here is where treachery enters the picture -- in his own mind her uniqueness is but the lever he turns to accomplish his own paltry purposes.

One final example reveals another kind of seduction -- perhaps a woman's style. We know from earlier discussion of *Women in Love* that Gerald's attachment to the Pussum leads only to partial satisfactions, diversions from life's burdens. But it, too, is based upon a deliberate and bold, yet subtle, penetration of the soul of the seduced:

> The Pussum sat near to Gerald, and she seemed to become soft, subtly to infuse herself into his bones, as if she were passing into him in a black electric flow. Her being suffused his veins like a magnetic darkness, and concentrated at the base of his spine like a fearful source of power. Meanwhile her voice sounded out reedy and nonchalant . . .Then she found his hand, and grasped it in her own firm, small clasp. It was so utterly dark, and yet such a naked statement, that rapid vibrations ran through his blood and over his brain, he was no longer responsible. Still her voice rang on like a bell, tinged with a tone of mockery. And as she swung her head, her fine mane of hair just swept his face, and all his nerves were on fire, as with a subtle friction of electricity. But the great center of his force held steady, a magnificent pride to him, at the base of his spine (126).

That steady force at the base of Gerald's spine in which he takes so much pride is what he would have to yield if he were to "pass away" through the Pussum. This scene suggests that fana might really a possibility, were Gerald not so wedded to his habitual strengths and so defended against his unconscious weaknesses. He will not be able to love until he can be seduced away from those defenses.

The Pussum has insinuated herself into Gerald's soul no less subtly than the legendary Don Juan into his thousands, but she does it in such a different way. She is no less capable than he, even of manipulation. But, whereas he works under the surgical glare of directed thought beamed down from above, she proceeds up from below -- feeling her way through the thick, wet darkness of throbbing arteries. While the Spanish Don is coolly analytical, she obliterates the distinctions between herself and Gerald in a warm mystical participation. There is a good deal of the love potion in her approach.

Before proceeding to draw conclusions from these quite specific examples, let us consider a story which comes from the mythic level of human imagination. It is the Grimm fairy tale entitled "Allerleirauh" -- which means a hodge-podge of "raw" things. In this case the raw things are pelts of animals which a princess named Allerleirauh wears, sewn together into a coat.

The Story of Allerleirauh

> Once upon a time there was a king who had a beautiful wife with golden hair, who, on her death-bed, made him promise not to remarry unless he could find a woman equally as beautiful and as golden of hair as she. After her death the king sent his ambassadors far and wide to find such a woman, but they were unsuccessful. As only the king's own daughter fit the description, he decided to ask her for her hand. Afraid to refuse her father, the princess set some preliminary demands: a dress as golden as the sun, one as silvery as the moon, and one as bright as the stars, and a coat made from the skin of every animal in the realm.

> Upon receiving these gifts, the princess packed the dresses in a nut shell, donned the coat of sundry furs, blackened her hands and face with soot, and set out for the forest. She also took with her three golden trinkets: a ring, a spinning wheel, and a reel. When she had travelled as far as her legs could carry her, she fell asleep in a hollow tree, warmly wrapped in her furs.
>
> Meanwhile the king to whom this part of the forest belonged was out hunting, and one of his men discovered what seemed to be a strange furry animal in a hollow tree. The king commanded that it be captured alive. On discovering that it was a maid, he put her to work in his kitchen and gave her a place to sleep under the stairs where the daylight never shone.
>
> At the first ball held in the castle, Allerleirauh washed herself and for a short time appeared in her golden dress and danced with the king. The king was enchanted with her and asked his watchmen where she had come from, but they had not seen her arrive or leave. As soon as the music stopped, she ran under the stairs where she changed back into her fur and blackened her face and hands. Then, in the kitchen, she placed her golden ring in the king's soup bowl. The king noticed the change in the taste of the soup and called the cook, who admitted Allerleirauh had made it. The black and furry maid, however, denied all knowledge of the ring.
>
> The same events transpired at the next two balls, where she, respectively: wore her silvery dress and placed the spinning wheel in the king's soup, and wore her star-sparkling dress and placed the reel in the soup. On the third occasion, however, the king contrived to place the ring on her finger while they were dancing and to extend the time of the dance so that Allerleirauh had not sufficient opportunity to change. She threw on her fur skins over the starry dress and failed to notice that one finger had escaped the blackening with soot. When she appeared with the soup, the king recognized the ring, espied the white finger, and caught a glimpse of starry glitter under her furs. He had her unmasked and married her. They lived happily ever after.

When a fairy tale says they were married and lived happily ever after, I take that to mean that they discovered their oneness at the level of Self. They drank the love potion, and knew they did so. They recognized the importance of their erotic bond sufficiently to want to make it a fundamental condition in their lives. Its reality becomes their touchstone in evaluating the significance of anything else. It does not necessarily mean that they decided to live together and have children. Such plans belong to the more personal levels of the psyche. Here we are at the level of mythic imagery.

Although not a predictor of marital success, "married happily ever after" is a necessary condition of genuine relationship. In the story of Allerleirauh, we can see why. The poor girl is an incest victim. Her father's offers of love are heavily freighted with demands which perhaps no daughter is strong enough to refuse outright. Fortunately she has learned to be devious enough to put him off and to reject his offer while seeming to accept it. This evidently saves her from a wedding with her father which would have meant psychological death for her. Nevertheless, her father's attempted violation leaves her with a wound somewhat like Paul Morel's. She has been drawn into an unhealthy dependency on her father in which her legitimate expectations for support, stability, nurturing encouragement, and the like, are replaced by a demand that she fulfill *his* needs. He wants her to stop up the gap in his Self. If she gives in to this, she will never develop a Self of her own.

Paul Morel failed to develop a reliable Self because he depended too much on his mother to provide him that sense of oneness, balance, and integration which makes us whole. Allerleirauh's father is offering her the same illusory security which wounded Paul.

Still, her relationship with her father has provided her with something very precious -- symbolized by the three dresses. Because no seduction is more powerful than that from the

one we trust implicitly, from a parent, Allerleirauh had virtually no defense against her father's penetration to the most secret recesses of her soul. His seduction opened her to the silvery shimmer of the anima, the golden radiance of the Self, and the brilliance of the instinct-archetypes twinkling in the abyss beneath the wound.

On the one hand, she knew she needed these gifts if she was ever to establish a satisfyingly deep relationship in the future. But on the other hand, she was condemned to *wear* them. I take this as almost a defining characteristic of the narcissistically wounded individual: to live with the deepest beauties of one's soul exposed and to be unable to close the gap through which they glitter. Allerleirauh needs the coat of sundry furs and the lampblack to cover over the wound. In doing so, she hides the light of her divine spark behind the beastly shadow of the instinct-archetypes (the sundry furs).

A fierce animality from the instinct-archetypes very frequently characterizes the emotional life of narcissistic and borderline individuals. Because they cannot close their gap, they have to drive us away with primal displays of aggression. They feel their vulnerability so acutely that they are glad to find sunless holes in which to hide, like Allerleirauh's bedroom under the stairs.

But at the same time, they cannot forget their extraordinary gifts. This is what the psychological literature refers to as their "grandiosity." For Allerleirauh, her giftedness is symbolized both by the dresses and by the three golden trinkets she places in the king's soup. She deals successfully with her woundedness by maintaining her sundry-fur disguise so that the king will not be inadvertently seduced by what she cannot conceal of her soul. Instead, she parcels out hints of her soul's beauty, symbolized by the quality of her soup and the valuable surprises she hides in it. By gradually revealing her soul, she deliberately seduces the king . Through the great effort and patience of this work, she builds her ego and knits together the Self which were both so badly wounded by her father's intrusions.

If we conclude from the the fairy tale and literary instances cited above that seduction always requires some kind of exposure of soul, I think we do not go far wrong. Don Juan and old Karamazov seduce by accurately reading the souls of women and reflecting back to them what they have seen. The Pussum seduces by insinuating herself into Gerald's soul and stimulating it to new life. Allerleirauh seduces by parceling out intimations of mysterious inner riches. These realities lie behind even the cynicism of Shaw's *Man and Superman*, where the Don Juan figure, Tanner, reiterates the sentiments Shaw expressed in the introductory essay:

> The true artist will let his wife starve, his children go barefoot, his mother drudge for his living at seventy, sooner than work at anything but his art. To women he is half vivisector, half vampire. He gets into intimate relations with them to study them, to strip the mask of convention from them, to surprise their inmost secrets, knowing that they have the power to rouse his deepest creative energies, to rescue him from his cold reason, to make him see visions and dream dreams, to inspire him, as he calls it. He persuades women that they may do this for their own purpose whilst he really means them to do it for his (61).

For Shaw and Tanner, only the artist is strong enough to stand up to woman's seduction. By *seduction* they mean a process of persuading another to do my will under the guise of seeming to do his own. What a contrast with William of Poitier and Aquitaine's regard for his Unknown Lady: Obedience to her coincides with perfect fidelity to myself.

The false seducer succeeds because he imitates the behavior of real love. Even the deceiver must come to know his victim's soul. The seducer who, like Moliere's Don Juan or Casanova or old Karamazov, pursues his prey out of a true appreciation of the beauties of her soul, may even win a bit of our sympathy. He honestly admires and reflects some of the deeper realities of her psyche and may even thereby enhance her life. But we know there is something wrong when he loses interest shortly after making the conquest.

It has been said that a woman seduced by Casanova feels ennobled, while one seduced by Don Juan feels demeaned. There is a grain of truth in this saying, although it is very much oversimplified. It is certainly not true of Byron's or Bergman's Don Juan that they demean. Mozart's and Moliere's Don Juans badly mistreat their women. Shaw's is primarily afraid of women, and Byron's is more frequently seduced than seducing. Furthermore, Casanova is quite calculating, and never sees women as of equal value with men. Casanova, however, does conquer women in order to be able to dally with them, while some Don Juan figures dally in order to conquer.

It is clearly not easy to draw the line between honorable and dishonorable seductions, but the principle is to be found in how faithfully the seducer behaves vis-a-vis the soul of the seduced. There is quite a range between the seducer who discovers the divine spark in his partner and "passes away" through her to a centering divine love and the one who discovers only enough of her soul to conquer and possess her. When Shaw's Tanner claims art as a higher principle than love, we need to know what place love has in his view. His idealized artist mistreats mother, wife, and children to such an extent, that we believe his dedication to art may well be an excuse rather than a higher principle. Since he leaves no hint that art may deal with the All, we fear rootless self expression may have eclipsed a search for Truth. Still, in all cases, even those lacking fidelity to the partner's soul, a seducer cannot succeed unless he know or seem to know the soul of his woman.

The same is true of that arch villain among seducers, the Vicomte de Valmont in Choderlos de Laclos' brilliant scandal-causing eighteenth-century novel, *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* . The story concerns the efforts of a pair of "libertines," (as they call themselves), Valmont and the Marquise de Merteuil, to avenge themselves on a man who had offended them both. The revenge is to be the seduction of a fifteen-year-old girl to whom the man is betrothed. Insofar as they are manipulating hearts, Valmont and Mme. de Merteuil seem to be dealing in love. But all their actions serve their striving for power and honor. For them, love is a weakness, regrettable in oneself but useful when observed in someone else.

Despite his proud profession of faith in the power principle, Valmont finds he has an unsettlingly powerful interest in a beautiful, prudish woman who seems beyond all seductive ploys, Mme. de Tourvel. Preeminent among the devices he employs to win her heart is the disclosure or seeming disclosure of his own soul. For example, he sets up an elaborate set of circumstances to make Mme. de Tourvel believe that he is a generous benefactor to the poor (56ff). Also, in order to discredit what others may tell her of him in warning, he himself recounts some of his sexual exploits in such a way that she hears it as "rare candour": "He confides freely in me, and I lecture him with utmost severity" (36). The seduction works because she believes he is sharing his soul with her. Even faithless seductions are based on

disclosures and discoveries of soul.

There is another characteristic of seduction evident in these examples. Like Allerleirauh, who hides in her under-stairs closet and behind her animal skins while deliberately parceling out glimpses of her soul, Valmont requires distance from his involvement with a woman in order to observe her reactions accurately and plan his moves:

> I looked down her from head to foot and then up again. . . . My love, that sweet gaze was fixed upon me! It was immediately lowered, but so as to encourage its return I looked away. Thus was established between us that tacit agreement, the first treaty ratified by timid lovers, which, to satisfy a mutual need of seeing and being seen, allows glances to succeed each other until the moment when they can safely meet. . . . To this end I first took one or two of her glances by surprise; but with as much reserve as could give modesty no alarm; and to put the bashful creature more at her ease I pretended to be as embarrassed as she was. By degrees her eyes, growing accustomed to meeting, met for longer, and at last looked away no more; and I saw in hers that languid softness which is the happy sign of love and desire (164).

Laclos lets us right inside the head of a Don Juan figure. Byron, Moliere, Shaw, and Bergman are not so obliging; Mozart only hints with his music; and even Casanova's confessions are undependable -- since he is lying to himself as much as to us.

One aspect of Valmont's achievement is nearly admirable -- his ability to take active part in a situation while remaining a cool, detached observer. He appears to hold this balance by denying his feelings for Mme. de Tourvel. When our consciousness sinks to the Self level of unity with another person, we enter a kind of mystical participation or unconscious identity. It is in this love-potion space that we read the other's soul. But if we have lost contact with the higher levels of the psyche, we have lost most of our ego -- our autonomous subjectivity. We cease to be an individual facing another individual. If I no longer know where I leave off and my beloved begins, I have not the wits to seduce. Seduction requires at least that the seducer be free enough of the unconscious oneness in romantic love to be able to see the other as she really is.

Else had to ask the questions Lohengrin forbade in order to achieve any dependable accuracy in her perception of him. She drove him away by asserting her own needs, by establishing her autonomy. Blissful, unconscious oneness was the primary threat she faced. The demon lover frequently presents us with a different problem. He holds us in a kind of stalemate between two ways of life, two sets of values. Instead of driving him away, we require a fairly extended "marriage" with him before we can see the divine spark in his soul and the shadow in our own. Only then do we understand what had held us and acquire the strength to accept it or let it go.

Progress in relationship requires such distance from our beloved that each partner is free to become his own unique Self and each is able to observe his partner's individuality accurately. The naked sword of freely accepted distance from my beloved enables me to know both myself and her. It confers a personal power on each of us. Valmont's partner in crime, the Marquise de Merteuil, is very much aware of this fact. She expresses it, here, as she wonders whether she will be able to turn Cecile, the fifteen-year-old girl she is seducing, into a powerfully aware colleague:

> She has a stupid ingenuousness . . . a weakness of character which is nearly always incurable, and is an impediment to everything; so that, while attempting to fit the girl for a life of intrigue, we should only be turning out a woman of easy virtue (Laclos, 254).

We see here that the Marquise, though she lived two centuries ago, has a lot in common with modern feminists. She wants to develop in the girl sufficient ego and sufficient social awareness so that she can handle herself as an equal with men. She worries that the girl may be incapable of duplicity. She says there are two kinds of women in the world: those who depend on youth and beauty and those who depend on their wits (271). She, herself, lives by her wits and finds herself superior in personal power and social achievement to most men and nearly all women. This is what she would like to be able to pass on to the girl. We may well despise the manipulative uses to which she puts her considerable power, but we can hardly deny her achievement -- particularly as she lived in an age when society forbade women all overt exercise of power.

If the Marquise redeems herself a bit in our eyes by her sympathetic tutelage of the young girl, Valmont does also in that his heart comes near to overruling his faithless conquest of Mme. de Tourvel. She means more to him than a notch in his belt. He tells us that he is learning the delights of seductions' disclosures and discoveries:

> If our first loves . . . make much slower progress, it is not, as is generally thought, because of delicacy or modesty, but because the heart, surprised by a new feeling, pauses, so to speak, at each step in order to enjoy the delight it feels . . . This is so true that even when a libertine falls in love, if a libertine ever does, he becomes from that moment less anxious to enjoy his mistress (126).

Valmont is the libertine who -- despite his best intentions -- has fallen in love. For him it is a humiliation to think, "that I might in any way have been dependent on the very slave I subjected to my will" (297). Further proof of love's ascendancy over the power principle in Valmont is his desire for her to retain her independence of will. He insists on a high level of consciousness and deliberation on her part:

> It is not enough for me to possess her; I want her to give herself up. . . . But the better I know what has to be done, the more difficult I find it to do; and even if you are going to laugh at me again, I must admit that my embarrassment increases the more I think about it (264).

His embarrassment belongs to the quest for power that he is on, in the context of which his tender feelings appear to be nothing but weakness. He wants her to give herself freely, to disclose her soul without reserve; and he knows that to accomplish this he has to disclose or at least seem to disclose aspects of his own soul. He thirsts for a soul-to-soul bond with her, but seems unable to allow himself. He has no notion of *fana*. In his mind, there is no "passing away" but only possession. Still, his heart protests and knows inchoately that there is an alternative to calculations based on the drive for power and conquest. Mme. de Tourvel responds to this "other side":

> I love him to idolatry and yet much less than he deserves . . . Who can know true love as he does? What more can I say? His feelings are equal to the feelings he inspires. . . . Since he has been able to give himself up without constraint to the impulses of his heart, he seems to divine all the wishes of my own. . . . What other woman could make him happier than I do? And I know from my own experience, the happiness one gives is the strongest bond, the only one that really holds (316).

She is right about everything except his fidelity. But even where she is wrong, it is instructive to see what she thinks she has in Valmont. She thinks she knows his "heart" and that "his feelings are equal" to hers, that he has relinquished all that "constrains" his emotional response to her. Valmont's seduction has worked because he has made her believe that the two of them have attained a heart to heart connection.

We have learned that seduction -- be it honest or not -- requires at least two things. The seducer must disclose aspects of his own soul; and/or he must discover the soul of his partner. Seduction, we might say, is an imitation and encouragement of an individual's natural inclination toward intimacy. The great seducers and libertines know this very well. Byron (who ought to know) says of Don Juan:

> His manner was perhaps the more seductive,
> Because he ne'er seem'd anxious to seduce;
>
> . . . with women he was what
> They pleased to make or take him for; and their
> Imagination's quite enough for that . . .
> (Canto 15; v.12, 16).

His naturalness and passivity allows the women he seduces to believe him too innocent and genuine to deceive them. Casanova, too, is a master of giving people what they want. He describes his successes this way: "I was not handsome, but I had something better than beauty -- a striking expression which almost compelled a kind interest in my favor, and I felt myself ready for anything" (i, 53).

Can we believe that these great seducers are just acting naturally? Perhaps Byron and Casanova would like to believe that of themselves, as evidently they have cultivated a naive persona which they find a very effective tool. But we know Casanova and Don Juan as seducers because of the faithlessness concealed behind their imitation of candor. Casanova describes himself more believably when he tells us why he considers himself ready to seek his fortune in Rome:

> The man who intends to make his fortune in this ancient capital of the world must be a chameleon susceptible of reflecting all the colours of the atmosphere that surrounds him -- a Proteus apt to assume every form, every shape. He must be supple, flexible, insinuating, close, inscrutable, often base, sometimes sincere, sometimes perfidious, always concealing a part of his knowledge, indulging but in one tone of voice, patient, a perfect master of his own countenance, as cold as ice when any other man would be all fire; and if unfortunately he is not religious at heart . . . he must be religious in his mind . . . ; he must suffer quietly, if he is an honest man, the necessity of knowing himself as an arrant hypocrite. . . . Of all those qualities I possessed but one -- namely flexibility; for the rest I was only an interesting, heedless young fellow, a pretty good blood horse, but not broken, or rather, badly broken; and that is much worse (i, 54).

The "perfidy" in his seductions is that Casanova gets a woman to give him her heart while he withholds his. To do so, he has to be "supple, flexible, insinuating," etc., convincing her that he is ready to submit to her. Surrender is hard to avoid when one's beloved has already passed away in *fana*. The perfidious seducer convinces us of a fidelity he does not have.

In some of the most convincing literary examples, however, the villainous seducer is himself seduced by the beauty of the soul disclosed to him. He all but submits. We readers

may sometimes even hope that he undergoes a permanent transformation of character. When his naive victim recognizes his vulnerability to her, her susceptibility is substantially increased. Thus the most interesting and convincing perfidious seducers walk a fine line between eros and power. For example, Rodolphe, the rogue who set Mme. Bovary on her downward path:

> But she was so pretty. He had possessed so few women of such ingenuousness. This love without debauchery was a new experience for him, and, drawing him out of his lazy habits, caressed at once his pride and sensuality. Emma's enthusiasm, which his bourgeois good sense disdained, seemed to him in his heart of hearts charming, since it was lavished on him (184).

He is not awakened out of his selfishness, and his awareness of the transcending realm of eros is barely dawning -- nothing like what Valmont discovered through Mme. de Tourvel. But his bourgeois quest for power and position has been called into question for the first time. His partner in dalliance has for the first time appeared as someone unique and other. She cannot be reduced to the image he has of her.

Contrast, for example, these dawning discoveries of Valmont and Rodolphe with the phoney chivalry of Newland Archer in Edith Wharton's *Age of Innocence*:

> The case of the Countess Olenska had stirred up old settled convictions and set them drifting dangerously through his mind. His own exclamation: "Women should be free -- as free as we are," struck to the root of a problem that it was agreed in his world to regard as non-existent. "Nice" women, however wronged, would never claim the kind of freedom he meant, and generous-minded men like himself were therefore -- in the heat of argument -- the more chivalrously ready to concede it to them (43f).

We know from the broader discussion of Archer's affair in Chapter II that he was in some ways more greatly shaken in his habitual worldview than the above quotation would suggest. Nevertheless, the Countess Olenska always remains for him a demon lover. The two of them do not undergo the transformation of an unholy marriage, and the psychological process which their falling in love began was never completed. Even more truncated is the adventure between Tess of the d'Urbervilles and her romantic theologian, Angel Clare. When he finds hint of Tess' demonhood in the story of her earlier seduction, he runs away to South America "and hardly knew that he loved her still" (272). Hardy describes Clare's psychology as follows:

> Within the remote depths of his constitution, so gentle and affectionate as he was in general, there lay hidden a hard, logical deposit, like a vein of metal in a soft loam, which turned the edge of everything that attempted to traverse it. It had blocked his acceptance of the Church; it blocked his acceptance of Tess (258).

That hard vein in Angel Clare is a defense and a compensation. Its hardness compensates for his loamy soft, undifferentiated feelings which leave him so childish in the ways of love. At the same time it defends his self-centered plans and fantasies, keeping him inside his narcissistic cocoon and impervious to Tess' unique otherness. Having no distance from her and no flexibility in his defenses, he cannot see her for who she is.

Thus we have a progressive series of lovers, beginning with Clare, who cannot tolerate Tess' uniqueness, and proceeding through Archer, who is able to see the Countess Olenska's individuality when it does not clash too severely with his own habitual views. Rodolphe

knows that he has found something new and wholly different in Mme. Bovary, but it is not compelling enough to halt his self-aggrandizing career. Valmont, finally, is stopped in his tracks by his genuine love for Mme. de Tourvel. His indiscretions bring to ruin the whole network of seduction and intrigue which he and the Marquise de Merteuil had constructed.

We can summarize what we have seen of seduction in three principles. First, there is no seduction without the discovery and disclosure of soul. Second, fidelity in romantic love consists in the seducer's remaining faithful to what he has discovered in the soul of his partner as well as to the disclosures he has made of his own soul. Third, while discovery and disclosure presume and develop a oneness between the partners, seduction requires a certain distance whereby the lovers retain their individuality and appreciate one another's uniqueness. There is a fourth principle: when seduction proceeds with fidelity, the seducer is as much seduced as seducing.

Most of literature's great seducers have discovered this fourth principle. Casanova says, "In trying to win over the girl I had won over myself" (ii, 320). Valmont describes his success with Mme. de Tourvel this way:

> Intoxication was complete and reciprocal and, for the first time with me, outlasted pleasure. I left her arms only to fall at her feet and swear eternal love; and to tell the whole truth, I meant what I said. Even after I had left her, the thought of her was still with me, and I have even now to make an effort to be rid of it (Laclos, 303).

Shaw's Don Juan is impressed only with the dangers of such a fall as Valmont experienced:

> Well, I found that when I had touched a woman's imagination, she would allow me to persuade myself that she loved me; but when my suit was granted she always said, first, "At last, the barriers are down," and second, "When will you come again?" . . . These two speeches always alarmed me; for the first meant that the lady's impulse had been solely to throw down my fortifications and gain my citadel; and the second openly announced that hence forth she regarded me as her property; and counted my time as already wholly at her disposal (152f).

He makes a great show of cynicism and would have us believe that there is no fidelity in his seductions. But what he fears is nothing other than being seduced. When he touches a woman's imagination so that she lets him have his way with her, she is having her way with him. He knows that then he is sunk, being more seduced than seducing.

The situation is even more complicated than this, for we cannot begin to seduce another until we have first seduced ourselves. At the very least, we need to convince ourselves that the risks of intimacy are worth the rewards it offers. We proceed by disclosing a piece of our soul. The clumsy seducer who is more aware of his own fears than his partner's soul reveals aspects of himself perhaps randomly, perhaps by starting with matters which most arouse his rejection anxieties. The more accomplished seducer reads his procedures in the soul of his partner. In that sense, she tells him precisely how she can be seduced. But that is her seduction of him; that is her disclosure of soul which heightens his desire and draws him further into the process of love making. The goal is to involve the whole being of both partners. Only then do we pass away in *fana*. Only then do we experience our own full identity and the full identity of our partner.

As in all other matters related to romantic love, the mystics have known these truths all along. In her great spiritual classic, *The Interior Castle*, Teresa of Avila presents what might be taken as a blue-print for faithful seduction. It is a description of the stages which the mystic traverses in her growth in the love of God. The central metaphor is a castle comprised of a labyrinthine set of chambers arranged in a kind of spiral fashion about a central room in which shines the pure light of divinity. God's love and enlightenment seduces the mystic into entering one chamber after another. From a psychological perspective, the Interior Castle is an image of the psyche and the labyrinthine course to the center a description of our discovery of Self. From the perspective of interpersonal relationship, it is a metaphor for the soul of the other whom I penetrate through my seductive discoveries and disclosures. And it is also an image of my own psyche whose Self I knit together in this process.

The mode of entry to the Interior Castle is prayer and reflection (38). Those who enter the first chambers may be individuals very much involved in the business of the world. But they reflect upon who they are, on the nature of things -- "although in a rather hurried fashion" -- ; and they pray. By "prayer," Teresa does not necessarily refer to a recitation of traditional formulas or an asking for favors or even an earnest conversation with an invisible listener. The essence of prayer is a certain *turning*, an orientation of consciousness toward the One. For these individuals, it means that they at least occasionally catch a glimpse of their deepest spiritual identity. There is a momentary "paradigm shift," and the hurly-burly of mundane preoccupations finds its humble place within the *ultimate* concerns of human existence. In the first chamber, this is only a momentary and dim recognition. "Hardly any of the light from the King's royal chamber reaches these first dwelling places" (45), and distractions and temptations ("reptiles") abound.

In the second and third chambers, dwellers in the Interior Castle become progressively more serious in their quest for the center. At first they hear the Lord's calling through the words and examples of other people. Then they begin to suffer from dryness in prayer and a sense of their distance from God. Their growing conviction of the importance of their quest leads them to the realization that they have not yet given up everything for God. Their worldview oscillates back and forth between the mundane and the ultimate. They need the self discipline of penance and seek it out. Although reason and intellect are still firmly in control of these individuals, they are beginning to use them to serve their striving for the center.

When we translate this imagery into the language of relationship, the Interior Castle is the realm of intimacy. The reptiles of distraction and temptation -- which abound outside the Castle and are to be found in decreasing numbers in the first few chambers -- have to do with the pursuit of pleasure and power, where my partner exists to gratify my mundane needs. We begin to enter the Castle of Intimacy when our paradigm shifts and we catch a glimpse of the divine spark in our beloved. At first this may only be a momentary glimpse, but it changes our mind. It reorients us like prayer. We may forget these profound flashes, but they leave an impression. Now the business of intimacy becomes significant for us. We have discovered something essential about our beloved's soul. We want to know more and more about her (or him) and follow every gesture and word and inclination for further hints about that spark we have glimpsed. There are more than vestiges of self-interest in this quest. We hope our beloved will complete us, open us further and further to our own wholeness which she helps us to realize. Self-interest is deepened and reoriented. We are ready to be generous and

self-denying, but we still have not lost sight of our desire to possess our beloved. We are still thinking about our relationship in fairly conventional terms and plotting its success.

Only in the Fourth Dwelling Place does conventional, rational knowledge begin to give way to *gnosis*, to non-rational, experiential, mystical knowing. "There are things to see and understand so delicate that the intellect is incapable of devising a way to explain them" (67). Here we may begin to speak of the love potion, for a genuine union is finally being effected. Still, it is limited, for while "the soul is perhaps completely joined with Him . . . the mind is on the outskirts of the castle suffering from a thousand wild and poisonous beasts, and meriting by this suffering" (71). True spiritual delights, possible for the first time in the fourth chamber, are like water from an abundant natural spring, produced by God with the greatest peace, quietness, and sweetness. Welling up in the interior parts of ourselves, they dilate our whole being (74f).

In the face of this dilation and change of heart, we are irresistible to our beloved. Infidelity is no longer possible once we enter the fourth chamber. Seduction sweeps us both along like a flood. Disclosure of my soul and discovery of yours become a single act. I know not whether I am drawn along by the beauty of your soul or by that of my own. I am free in a more profound way than I had ever imagined. Teresa says the soul loses all fear of hell and distaste for penance; its faith is more alive (82).

In the Fifth Dwelling Place, union falls short of betrothal, but the lovers are beyond any exchange of gifts (103f). We gaze at one another. We take so much delight in these matters of ultimate concern, that we no longer need to deliberately reorient ourselves to the center. Now the divine spark is so real for us that there is no mistaking, forgetting, or becoming distracted. The lizards of suspicion cannot enter (87). The soul flies like a butterfly from a cocoon; how could it be happy walking step by step? (94). "Union is always short and seems to the soul even much shorter than it probably is" (89). It is not characterized by visionary experiences but by "a certitude remaining in the soul that only God can place there" (89). Only a few of those who have tasted the love potion fail to enter this fifth chamber (85) of Intimacy’s Castle .

Those who enter the sixth chamber are said to be "betrothed" to their Spouse. Their union may be compared to the flames of two candles which burn as one when the candles are brought close together, but again become two when they are separate (179). One finds oneself wounded with love for the Spouse and strives for more opportunities to be alone and to eliminate obstacles (108). But they cannot be removed by our conscious efforts, they belong to our otherness from one another. They are a manifestation of the incompleteness of our union.

Because our love affair is our only orientation, our strangeness becomes quite apparent to others. Teresa says that God, in order to increase our love, sends us sufferings in the form of criticism and praise from our peers; doubting confessors; and, the most precious and painful suffering of all, a smoldering love which refuses to burst into flame (111-117). Amidst all this pain suffered on account of our distance from one another, there is also great joy and union. Now the soul experiences what Teresa calls "locutions" with God (119ff). We converse with one another, generally without words in the intimate depths of our souls. Amidst a profound quiet we may experience visions and ecstasies -- and raptures in which

our spirits sail off together at high speeds (133).

Our souls are wed in the Seventh Dwelling Place, where the Spiritual Marriage takes place. Our union is like rain falling "from the sky into a river or fount; all is water . . ." (179). We are no longer distracted -- even when apart from our Spouse and attending to affairs of the mundane world (175). The sense of presence we feel is not always like an intense light; sometimes it is like the awareness we have of another person who is with us in a dark room. Though we do not see him, we know he is there (176). If in intimacy's sixth chamber we were tortured by the distance we experienced amidst our mutual presence to one another, then here in the seventh chamber the joy of our presence permeates our distance. We have passed away through one another and find ourselves resting in the One.

In this sense, faithful seduction is a "leading aside," a reorientation away from the habitual and mundane to the ultimate and eternal. Dmitry Karamazov underwent such a paradigm shift when he discovered the divine spark in Grushenka during their *Liebesnacht*: "Before, I was only tormented by those infernal curves of hers, but now I've taken all her soul into my soul and through her I've become a man myself!" (698). Grushenka's testimony at Dmitry's trial reflects the same "turning," the same discovery of sublime truth in the soul of her beloved: "What the prisoner tells you, you must believe. He is not the sort of man to tell a lie" (833). Dmitry's prosecutor makes a mockery of these words, for the prisoner is a known and admitted drunkard, brawler, womanizer, and spendthrift. Surely Grushenka's words will not convince a jury; for how are they to know love has given her more perfect sight, and not just "blinded" her as love is so often reputed to do? We readers know that despite the demonic element in her relationship, what Grushenka says about Dmitry's soul is utterly dependable.

In their *Liebesnacht* Dmitry and Grushenka entered the fourth chamber of Intimacy's Castle, where further progress in seduction presumes fidelity. Before that, love was too undeveloped to know what it was agreeing to. In the first three chambers it glimpsed the spark, as through a glass darkly. But only as it grew into the fourth chamber did it become a reliable guide to the soul of the beloved as well as to one's own.

Every seduction, every "turning aside," raises the question: which course is most truly *mine*? A reliable test for whether an "in love" episode or a course of seduction is "real" or delusional is to examine what the adventure has done for me. Has it changed my course? Has it reoriented me? Am I more centered, more convinced, less distractible, calmer?

Robert Stein says, "We only experience love as a betrayer when we are dependent on another person to keep us connected to it"; and, "He who is betrayed by those he loves does not know Eros" (124). He is referring to what Teresa ascribes to the fourth chamber of intimacy, an orientation to Self and oneness which brings solid conviction and joyful fidelity. Seduction can be faithless only when the divine spark ("Eros") has been forgotten or perhaps has never been known at all.