

The History of Coquette Atheistic and Its Role in Modern Society

Changran Chen *

Shanghai High Tech Creative School, Shanghai, China

* Corresponding Author Email: tbn@ldy.edu.rs

Abstract. The coquette atheistic is an intricate composition of hyper-feminine stylings, emerged prevalently in contemporary media spaces with increasing cultural significance. This research interrogates the coquette style through textual analysis of visual imagery, social media, and literary texts. In theoretical feminist frameworks, this research also explores how coquette fashion publicly reproduces, reclaims the feminine autonomy and voice, while resists the dominant patriarchal objectifying narratives. Involving themes of nostalgia, sexualization and girlhood, the study examines how coquette fashion operates as a coded language of identity and performance. By critically engaging with the aesthetics' visual and textual components, this study seeks to illustrate how coquette style functions not merely as a fashionable look, but as a symbolic image where power, desire and identity are presented. The findings suggests that even though the spreading of coquette risks reinforcing problematic gender archetypes according to its historical and literary precedents, it still demonstrates strong female empowerment. This study contributes to ongoing debates in fashion and media studies by revealing the fashion's history, evolution and influences.

Keywords: Coquette Atheistic; Fashion; History.

1. Introduction

The coquette aesthetic blends visuals of hyper-femininity, youthful innocence and vintage nostalgia, has become a prominent fashion phenomenon in modern time. Particularly with the rise of digital spaces, it derived into various subcultures on media platforms like Pinterest, Instagram, and Tumblr. With elemental references ranging from 1950s Americana iconography to Catholic motifs, and the controversial "Lolita" archetype, coquette fashion trigger dynamic debates between both its followers and critics. The atheistic is complicatedly tangled in issues of gender performance and sexuality, particularly the objectification of women. Though its continuous gained popularity over time, fashion scholars were staying inquiring into how coquette defines historical femininity and female image today.

This study employs textual analysis of visual and literary sources, including films, photography, artwork, social media posts and literary texts like Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*, to underpin coquette's ideology. This research also draws upon feminist theories, cultural influences, and media perspectives to discuss how visual symbols and textual narratives craft the aesthetics' role in modern cultural context, ultimately fostering a multifaced understanding of its societal impact.

This research's significance is shown in its effort to contextualize coquette atheistic within historical contexts and broader socio-cultural discourse on sexualization, secularization of religious icons, and the increasing past nostalgia in younger generations.

2. Background

The Coquette atheistic, with its captivating charm and allure, is a fashion trend rooted in historical archetype and gained remarkable in modern popular culture, especially prominent in social media platforms. Due to its contradictory nature of both innocent playfulness received by viewers and the display of female user's autonomy, this trend is no longer just about how to style and dress, but transcends to challenge as existing patriarchal power structure, revealing contemporary power dynamics.



Historically speaking, the coquette archetype originates between the 17th and 18th centuries, particularly among European royal courts where aristocracy exhibit their lavish lifestyle and abundance through clothing. In literature, the coquette is often portrayed as a seductress or sometimes, escort who wields emotional power and manipulation over men for her own benefits, which swings away from the classic female ideal of the “damsel in distress” accepted at that time. In order to add on to the literacy effect, the coquette’s features and tactics often described in ambiguous terms that blurs into the imagination of her admirers in the storyline and readers outside the novel, leaving both of them yearning and speculating.

The impression of the coquette --- someone who plays with love and human desire while maintaining emotional distance and dominance --- has diffused into various artforms, from classic literature to contemporary cinema, unveiling her mystifying mask over centuries.

In modern era, with the rise of internet and social media, the coquette aesthetic has been frequently reinterpreted and romanticized in digital spaces, particularly by younger generations who are willing to escape from the harsh, masculine reality to the tender, feminine, pink and furry dreams. Influencers and celebrities often employs this phenomenon and develop complex, desirable personas that create parasocial relationships over their followers to exert consumerism, which echoes back to the historical context above.

Though curated TikTok videos, fashion blogs and Instagram posts constructed by young female influencers (also increasingly male) utilize this aesthetic to send out a mixture of a both vulnerability and manipulation, these hyper-performative actions still facilitated the spread of coquette fashion and the establishments of substyle communities online.

Coquette quickly seeped into forming numerous subcommunities and style choices over time, as presented by the Baby doll style in 1960s Hollywood, and the gloomy girl style popular on platforms like Pinterest, offering elaborate and multi-layered representation of identity and self-expression. Also, key motifs such as ribbons and bows flourished in overall public mostly composed of non-coquette users, and becoming dominant element that represent classic femininity.

The appeal of the coquette aesthetic lies in its deliberate vagueness. It offers intricate puzzle about attraction and sexual appeal --- one that invites admiration as well as critique. Coquette style face series criticism due to its partial origin in modern literature, Nabokov’s *Lolita*, which contains pedophilia undertone and the objectification of women. Nonetheless, most users place their focus on the positive side, the presentation of women’s autonomy and female empowerment not disguised in male costume. By blending elements of both attraction and detachment, coquette divides itself from the tradition portrayal of women heart-broken over love affairs, to an elusive figure that establish control over people by staging her femininity.

3. Coquette Definition & Earlier History

The concept of coquette as both an archetype and aesthetic is deeply rooted in the earlier history of European aristocracy in the 17th to 18th century [1].

The term “coquette”, derived from the French word “coquet” (meaning “flirt” or “sly”), refers to a woman to flirt without sincere affection to gain the attention of men first in the late 1600s. Still, the figure of coquette as cultural phenomenon predates the term, showcasing a long-standing power struggle between sexes and hierarchies [2]. In early modern contexts, the coquette was not merely a woman sought to attract men, but someone with absolute self-autonomy and wield her charm as a strategic tool in the highly stratified and competitive environments of royal salons and male dominated society.

European courts during the time possess escorting culture where women used flirtation as means of maneuvering and climbing the social ladder. Particularly under the reign of Louis XIV in the 17th century, when courtly love affairs and innumerable courtships played notable roles in aristocratic life. The emergence of salon, a gathering of artists, nobles and famous thinkers, became an important

sector for social interactions among the French upper class. Flirtation started to take on a highly stylized form of allure, revealing the underlying power dynamics of the lovers, especially young women trying to establish their status manipulating affluent men.

Fashion in this period was of decisive role in establishing the coquette's identity. In the French court, intricate garment and luxurious textiles like brocades, silks, velvets, and hand-made laces are symbolization of status and wealth, leading to the development of Rococo styles. The Rococo period was characterized by opulence, splendor and extravagance with great focus on detailing, featuring ornate corsets, towering wigs and delicate jabot collars. The coquette was expected to present herself as desirable and unattainable, flooding with sumptuousness and fortune. The fashion style reflected this illusionary duality: while tight corsets emphasize the figure and draws admirers closer, the voluminous skirt and under pants create the effect of space, distancing people both physically and emotionally. A well-time glanced over the crowd may be hinting an invitation and accessories such as fans and gloves became tools for communication, conveying flirtatiousness and shyness at the same moment. An iconic example can be found in the painting of French artist Fragonard's *The Swing* (1767) depicting a lavishly dressed young woman in a shepherdess hat riding a swing, her show flinging in the air while a young man hiding in the bushes in the lower left corner peaking underneath her fluffy frock. The soft, billowing fabrics of the dress, as if a hand inviting touch only to pull away swiftly, coupled with the woman's playful mannerism, accentuated the flirtatious feeling and sense of sexual power.

Marie Antoinette was undoubtedly most renowned figure at this time in relation to coquette fashion both for power and play [3]. Her fashion wardrobe was revolutionary for 17th century France, and many of her Rococo style ensembles evoke coquette ideals. Infamously known for her extravagant lifestyle, her clothing choices were not just expressions of personal taste but also deeply tied to the image she wanted to project to her subjects and other European aristocracy. However, unlike earlier French queens, she abandoned the rigid dress codes of the royal court, and adhered to a more informal yet delicately constructed styling approach. Such as the *Chemise à la reine* that she was so fond of. Like female undergarment with a gathered neckline and dropped shoulder seam, the gown is soft, flowing and intimate, exposing just the right portion of the body to be tempting like a piece of cream cake while maintaining modesty. Her choice of fabric, including silks, muslins, and light chiffons, also reinforced the association fragility and refinement with coquette. However, with the influence of the conservative misogynistic social climate during that time, Marie Antoinette's "coquettish" dress code was considered immoral by her critics as immoral and seductive [4].

Coquette was commonly rendered as a seductress who arouse men's desire effortlessly combined with a karmically tragic ending in historical literature [5]. Evident in the literary portrayal of La Marquise de Merteuil in Pierre Choderlos de Laclos's *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* (1782). Fashion terminology relating to coquette also began to evolve during this time. Words like *decolletage* (the low-cut neckline of a dress) and *panache* (describing the flamboyance in one's appearance) started to emerge.

In short, the coquette aesthetic was actively embedding her own image in the history of the 1600-1700s. Being deeply intertwined with the culture of European upper class, from the grandiose gowns in royal palace to the soft, airy fabrics of the Rococo era, the fashion served both in self-expression and social means, demonstrating feminine empowerment in the earlier days.

4. Case Analysis

More often than not, coquette aesthetic in contemporary context put aside its historical flamboyance in design, and focused more on feminine features and the luxury of delicacy.

The baby doll style in the 1950-60s Hollywood characterized by femininity and elegance embodies traits that would lead to the contemporary formation of coquette fashion. For instance, Audrey Hepburn, who is a popular Hollywood actress during that time, epitomize coquette aesthetic through

her fashion choices [6]. Represented by her portrayal of Holly Golightly in the film *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, Hepburn created iconic looks that are both youthful and sophisticated together with designer Hubert de Givenchy, showing her preference for ballet flats, fitted dresses and dainty accessories.

Coco Chanel and her style of sophistication and simplicity quickly grow in influence during the 1960s [7]. While her minimalist but sensuous designs contrasts with the more elaborate styles of her time, its choice of soft fabric and design of the little black dress, send out message about refinement which is central to coquette's style. In a way, the later incorporation of classic pieces like pearly necklaces and tweed jackets in modern coquette was influenced by Chanel's designs.

Also, Christian Dior's "New Look" in 1947 revolutionized women's fashion by announcing feminine features by using cinched waists and full skirt to emphasize silhouette, and its girlish sense echo to coquette style [8]. It laid the groundwork for the baby doll dress emerged in the 1950s and 60s, presented in short hemline and delicate fit, celebrating the female form.

The coquette aesthetic gained popularity on Tumblr in the early 2010s and TikTok around 2021, when people were facing global scale pandemic and down-sloping economy, needing surreal fantasy like coquette for them to escape from the harsh reality.

For example, Vintage Americana, partially derived from the 1960s Hollywood fashion, often consists of a red, blue and white coordination is reminiscent of the US flag, bringing nostalgia toward the good old days and revive of American dreams [9]. Through artistic representations in music by Lana Del Rey and Sabrina Carpenter, as well as popular key motifs like heart-shaped sunglasses, mini-skirts and blue jeans representing of American culture and high school dreams. It vividly conveys vintage summertime imagery of a sumptuous young women in retro bathing suit drinking milkshake by the beach.

Moreover, the Dark coquette aesthetic (also known as dark nymphet) is also considered as a subgenre of coquette. Emerged on Tumblr, the substyle first featured images of young girls with a darker, more edgy vibe than traditional coquette style [10]. Its style combination sometimes shares similarities in motifs in Victorian style gothic fashion such as corsets, black laces, precarious stilettos and catholic crosses.

Similar to the former subgenre, the gloomy coquette also possesses a melancholic presentation that is both somber and angelic [11]. Portrayed by key subjects like floral print, bows, lip gloss and stuffed animals, along with unsaturated color palettes often consisting of gray, sliver and pink, it produces an out of touch, almost immaterialized atmosphere. However, it retains aspects about negative experience in girlhood, sometimes serves as an outlet for teenage girls to express their traumas.

The Japanese Lolita Fashion is also deeply intertwined with coquette, but tends to illustrate more on child like innocence and modesty. Drawing inspiration from Rococo and Baroque clothing, Japanese Lolita style creates a look distinguished by petticoats, blouses, and knee-length skirts, offering a form of escapism and identity for young women away from mainstream fashion norms [12].

5. Coquette's Influence on Modern Culture

5.1. Nostalgia for the Past: Reminiscence of vintage American Imagery

Romanticization of the mid-20th century America is central to the vintage Americana subgenre. This sub-aesthetic draw inspiration from 1950s Hollywood icons such as Marilyn Monroe, who represented the era's prosperity and wealth abundance. Typically, during the 2020 pandemic which acted as a time of overall economic hardship, this aesthetic channeling visuals from American in her prime time evokes a yearning for past days, even for younger generations (Gen Z) who never experienced the bygone era.

5.2. Religious Undertones: Catholic Symbolism

The coquette aesthetic combines underlying religious symbols, particularly Catholic motifs like crucifixes and rosette patterns. This fusion may be the result from its historical European origin that encompasses considerable religious dominance, evident by the constructions of grand gothic cathedrals and rose windows depicting biblical narratives. This trend also indicates a broader cultural movement where religious symbols are bind and re-contextualized within a contemporary setting, bringing it closer into people's lives on a global scale across different culture and sparking debates about appropriation at the same time.

5.3. Dressing Like a Little Girls: Objectification and Obsessive Beauty Trends

Resembling of the Japanese Lolita Fashion, coquette aesthetic is rising concerns about sexualization and objectification of young girls. The Tumblr origin of coquette was inspired by the term "Nymphet", which refers to young maidens that are found sexually attractive by older men in Vladimir Nabokov's 1955 novel *Lolita*. The novel's depiction of an exploiting relationship between a young girl and her stepfather triggers discussions about sexualization of youth in fashion and the implication of picturing teen girls in aesthetics. In Meenakshi Gigi Durham's book, the *Lolita Effect* (2008), Durham argues how media portray of adolescent girls sexualizes and negatively affecting their societal perceptions. Thus, the coquette aesthetic is often being criticized for perpetuating gender power imbalance and sometimes being deemed unfeminism, pursuing the male gaze [13].

Nonetheless, coquette users respond to these concerns by redefining the aesthetic. They try to separate the problematic implications away from the fashion itself, undermining its offensive connotation and focusing purely on positive self-expression [14]. Their actions celebrate the resilient strength of femininity, allowing individuals to engage in the fashion that soft empowers people rather than violently objectifies.

5.4. Fashion Integrations in the Digital Age

The rise of internet platforms like Tumblr, TikTok and Instagram has been instrumental in the formation and spread of these subcultures. Social media allows users to curate or edit visual content, and post it to other users with potential interest to those topics, facilitating the growth of online communities and shared identities [15]. Especially through these communities' feminine fashion styles, they offer people to fully escape to the coyness of femininity with feeling the guilt and complexities of the real world. Furthermore, the globalization of fashion trends has led to cross-cultural style exchange, such as Dark Nymphet style integrates with gothic fashion, elements of Lolita fashion appearing in coquette styling and vice versa. These interplays showcase the fluidity of fashion in digital age.

6. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that coquette fashion, while superficially a celebration of delicate femininity and vintage aesthetics, is laden with deeper cultural implications. Through its revival of mid-century Americana, symbolic use of Catholic imagery, and references to the debating "Lolita" figure, the aesthetic serves as a site where discourses of gender, sexuality, and nostalgia converge. The textual analysis reveals that coquette fashion is not a neutral or purely stylistic phenomenon but rather a form of visual storytelling that participates in the negotiation of identity, power, and cultural memory. While some communities engage with the aesthetic to reclaim feminine identity and agency, its embedded historical and literary references also risk reinforcing regressive ideas about women and girlhood. Finally, this essay underscores the importance of critical awareness in aesthetic consumption and calls for further scholarly attention to the intersections of fashion, media, and cultural ideology.

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