

Imagining Marie Antoinette: Cultural Memory, Coolness and the Deconstruction of History in Cinema

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Well, um, when I was growing up, it was Godard, Truffaut, the French New Wave. The style was so cool to me.... I mean, I've always been drawn to individuals really, people with their own distinctive but identifiable style that no one else has. That's all I try to do, find my own distinctive way of doing things.¹

This is how Sofia Coppola defined her aesthetic approach to reviewer Sean O'Hagan shortly after the debut of her film *Marie Antoinette* at the 2006 Cannes Film Festival. The "Sofia Aesthetic," as it has often been described by O'Hagan and Ray Pride, is one that is "self-aware" and "personal," seen not just in *Marie Antoinette*, but in her other films *The Virgin Suicides* and *Lost in Translation*.² In comparison with the latter two films, however, *Marie Antoinette* was a dismal failure.³ Critics such as Agnès Poirier noted the problem with the film as one of self-focus in which cinema is used by the director as "a mirror in which she looks at herself, not a mirror she holds to the world."⁴ This effectively summed up historians' objection to the film. Largely

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¹ Sofia Coppola, interviewed by Sean O'Hagan. See O'Hagan, "Sofia Coppola," *The Observer*, 8 October 2006, <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2006/oct/08/features.review1>> (accessed 21 July 2010).

² Ray Pride, <<http://www.mcnblogs.com/mcindie/archives/2006/10/>> (accessed 11 November 2009).

³ For examples of the negative criticism the film received in print following the American opening on 6 October 2006, see Eric Konigsberg, "A Looking Glass: Marie Antoinette, Citoyenne," *New York Times*, 22 October 2006, 5; and Alexander Zevin, "Marie Antoinette and the Ghosts of the French Revolution," *Cineaste* 32:2 (2007): 32-35. One of the more positive reviews is A. O. Scott's "A Lonely Petit Four of a Queen," *New York Times*, 13 October 2006, B1.

⁴ Agnès Poirier, "An Empty Hall of Mirrors," *The Guardian*, 27 May 2006. <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2006/may/27/comment.filmnews>> (accessed 21 July 2010).

ignoring social and historical context, the film focuses in on the surfaces of history – costumes, furniture, extravagant clothing and spaces, all of which appeal to the *dix-huitièmiste* – while simultaneously insisting upon anachronisms of objects, time and space, which is far more problematic for the historian.

For Poirier, this betrayed what she called “the dictatorship of the anecdote,” a conclusion which no doubt comes from images within the film that focused on still lifes of anachronistic food and fashion.⁵ Examples include extended shots that are filled by the display of shoes and baked confections inspired by the eighteenth century rather than reproductions of eighteenth-century originals. This appears intentional, rather than an oversight. Manolo Blahnik certainly *could* have re-crafted eighteenth-century footwear, just as pastry chefs at Ladurée would have been able to recreate eighteenth-century versions of baked confections.⁶ Yet the fact that a pair of Chuck Taylor style high-tops are added to the mix of stylised Blahniks in the climatic shopping orgy scene adds to the sense that the film intends audiences to recognize and focus on the anachronisms. This had the result of infuriating historians and fashionistas alike, the latter noting that surely Marie Antoinette would have worn Prada. According to Poirier, Coppola

renounced her duties as an artist and a citizen. To choose to create a portrait of Marie Antoinette and not to have anything to say about it defies reason, decency even.... All we learn about Marie Antoinette is her love for Ladurée macaroons and Manolo Blahnik shoes. No doubt both brands will be pleased with the publicity. Art has become a beautiful and empty box, an accessory and an excuse for commerce or profit. Art is the new marketing.⁷

This quotation conveys certain ideas that are taken for granted by audiences and critics alike concerning the genre of the period film in general and the place of the director as artist more specifically. First, it contends that a period film is a pedagogical instrument as a cultural document memorialising history. It should bring history to life so that audiences will become closer to the historical past through visual authenticity. Second, it believes that the director has an obligation to history (past, present and future), a duty to represent subjects from the past so that something can be learned in the present, which often comes into conflict with a contemporary belief in artistic independence and the intellectual freedom of the artist. By her own admission, Coppola was motivated by this conflict: “For me it was a challenge.... How do you make a film in that period but also do it in my style and make it personal to me?”⁸ This essay takes as its focus this very issue of style, not only that of Coppola’s as a director, but also that of the eighteenth century in history and that of the eighteenth century in film.

Inadvertently the critic Poirier’s quotation comes close to the description of what a Cool style has become in the present day, what authors Dick Pountain and

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Pierre Desfontaines is credited with the creation of the first modern macaroons that appeared in the film in the early twentieth century. See “The Story of the Macaroon,” <http://www.laduree.fr/public_en/historique/histoire_macaron.htm.plus.htm> (accessed 8 September 2010).

⁷ Poirier, “An Empty Hall of Mirrors.”

⁸ Coppola quoted in Ray Pride, “Marie Antoinette,” *Movie City News Review* (2006). <http://www.moviecitynews.com/reviews/2006/marie_antoinette.html> (accessed 21 July 2010).

David Robins in *Cool Rules* have discussed as a phenomenon that is “now primarily about consumption, seized on by advertisers who are constantly updating a bricolage of styles and entertainments that are designed to affect the way people think about themselves and their society.”⁹ Coppola’s film is certainly one in which style is paramount. It is Designer history, rather than Realist history or Melodrama. The aim is not to portray the historical or political significance of events, or to cause viewers to identify with characters emotionally, which are both characteristics of the latter categories of period film respectively. Instead, the Designer history film is a self-sustaining artefact in which historical references are secondary to design.¹⁰ In the case of Coppola’s *Marie Antoinette*, the style is Cool, not so much because it markets Ladurée or Blahnik as brands, but because it updates the eighteenth century through a compression of styles, intermixed and confused, causing audiences to remember themselves and their society, rather than to think about an historical figure or the past. Indeed, this is the central problem of the film. It not only questions the authority of history, but also goes beyond a mere questioning to deconstruct history through an insistence upon the authority of individual response and personal imagination. As a deconstruction of history, the film can be interpreted as a twenty-first-century need to remake the eighteenth century as Cool and then to use a concept of Coolness to reject its image in favour of an image of the self.

Coppola opens her book *Marie Antoinette* (2006), which features the skeletal script and stills from the film, with the following quotation:

Being there (at Versailles) you can feel how they must have been, so isolated from any kind of reality outside their gates. And I tried to imagine her being there, then. A gold-plated, Versailles hangover of the memory of a lost girl, leaving childhood behind, to the final dignity of a woman...and the partying into the dusk of an era.¹¹

Such comments are highly revealing about the aims of the artist as director. They expose that for Coppola, the film is about *her* imagination and *her* memory. But what does this achieve for the viewer? Film audiences expect to see the past in a period film. Given the exceptional access given to Coppola, her cast and crew at Versailles, publicity prior to the film’s release suggested that the setting alone would provide these anticipated glimpses into the past. At the same time, personal subjectivity was guaranteed as it was leaked that the film would be set to “a post-punk-pre-new-romantic rock-opera” soundtrack with 1980s music from bands like Adam and the Ants and Bow Wow Wow. This blending of a timeless historical space and a dated contemporary soundtrack raises certain questions: Does Coppola’s film cause the

⁹ Dick Pountain and David Robins, *Cool Rules: An Anatomy of an Attitude* (London, 2000), bookflap. A section of this book, “Hollywood Gets Hip,” explores the relationship between Hollywood and Cool, 80-84. Caryn James has noted the links between *Marie Antoinette*, celebrity culture and Hollywood ‘royalty’ in “Royal P.R.: People’s Princess Obliterates the Stiff Upper Lip,” *New York Times*, 11 October 2006, B7. For a related analysis of *Marie-Antoinette* in connection with the contemporary popular phenomenon of ‘chick culture’, see Suzanne Ferriss and Mallory Young “*Marie Antoinette*: Fashion, Third-Wave Feminism, and Chick Culture,” *Literature/Film Quarterly* 38:2 (2010): 98-116. Ferriss and Young discuss the film as a revisionist portrait that presents “a third-wave feminist aesthetic focused on youth, fashion, sexuality, celebrity, and consumerism.”

¹⁰ For definitions of Realist History, Designer History and Melodrama see C. S. Tashiro, *Pretty Pictures: Production Design and the History Film* (Austin, 1998), passim.

¹¹ Sofia Coppola, *Marie Antoinette* (New York, 2006), np.

viewer to see into the eighteenth century or only into the imagination of the artist? In its use of anachronisms to temper traditionalisms of costume, character and sound, does it cause the viewer to see Marie Antoinette as Cool or is it only subjectivity itself that achieves this goal?

To consider these questions, it is useful to go back to a much earlier Realist history film, one that set initial standards for the genre and coincidentally (or not) was about Marie Antoinette.¹² In 1938 at the height of the Depression, MGM released *Marie Antoinette* starring Norma Shearer. A big-budget motion picture, if ever there was one, the film provided much needed relief from the gloom of unemployment gripping America at the time. In viewing the film, American audiences sought an escape into a seemingly authentic version of the past – a past that was ornate, wealthy and foreign.¹³

Production press releases prior to the opening fed into a reception of the film as “authentic” history, or what Tashiro has termed in his book on production design *Pretty Pictures* as Realist history.¹⁴ They rehearsed the extremes to which MGM had sought to recreate the past in every detail: the 2500 costumes that were achieved only by bringing 50 Guadalupe women to Los Angeles from Mexico to hand-make intricate embroidery and sew on countless sequins. The actual fabric had been sourced in Lyon by scouts sent to Europe to locate period furniture. Fabrics were specially woven at great expense. Max Factor made over 900 wigs for the main characters and another 1200 for the extras. Norma Shearer’s wigs were painstakingly researched by MGM’s chief hairstylist, Sydney Guilaroff, who incorporated period height and curls, but he avoided the correct period width (which would have overpowered the star’s face), as well as period teasing and frizzed curls.¹⁵ Hollywood-hairdresser smooth had far more audience appeal and fed into the desire to escape the Depression era not through history itself, but through a proto-Cool recreation that provided a 1930s image of beauty, luxury and sophistication.¹⁶

The costume designer, Adrian, searched art history books and based many of Norma Shearer’s costumes on formal court portraits of the Queen by Elisabeth Vigée Lebrun.¹⁷ These dresses had a width of more than two meters and the understructure had to be constructed in the studio’s machine shop; a special dressing room was placed on the sound stage as the dresses were so difficult to manoeuvre. Still, the

¹² Elizabeth Ford and Deborah Mitchell have analysed Coppola’s *Marie Antoinette* and the MGM *Marie Antoinette* as female biopics in their book *Royal Portraits in Hollywood: Filming the Lives of Queens* (Lexington, 2009), ch. 6. A central question of the book explores the fashioning of female actresses as queens of the cinema by casting them in roles as famous queens of Europe. For another recent comparison of the two films as historical biopics, see Dennis Bingham, *Whose Lives Are They Anyway? The Biopic as Contemporary Film Genre* (New Brunswick, 2010), 361-76.

¹³ Laura Mason argues that the aesthetic merits of the film lie in its “kitsch” appeal achieved through elaborate costuming and theatrically overstated performances. See Mason, “‘We’re Just Little People Louis’: Marie-Antoinette on Film” in *Marie-Antoinette: Writings on the Body of a Queen*, Dena Goodman, ed. (New York, 2003), 239-51. For further discussion of the image of Shearer and the ways that MGM sought to assure historical accuracy of sets and costumes, see Gavin Lambert, *Norma Shearer: A Life* (New York, 1990), 251-66 and Lawrence J. Quirk, *Norma: The Story of Norma Shearer* (New York, 1988), 182-92.

¹⁴ Tashiro, *Pretty Pictures*, ch. 5.

¹⁵ For details regarding the production expenses of costuming and make up in the film see Edward Maeder, *The Celluloid Image: Historical Dress in Film*, exhibition catalogue, Los Angeles County Museum of Art (Los Angeles, 1987), 34-35 and 73-74.

¹⁶ On historical precedents to Cool as a modern phenomenon and use of the term ‘proto-Cool’, see Poutain and Robins, *Cool Rules*, 53-55.

¹⁷ Maeder, *The Celluloid Image*, 73.

dresses and makeup made certain concessions to 1930 expectations of beauty and fashionability – particularly those concerning a Hollywood starlet. Norma Shearer's costumes were lowered at the shoulders in a way that accords with 1930s tastes and her makeup and polished fingernails are also local to the film's own time.¹⁸

Setting is also important. Wide shots distance the audience from the characters but bring into focus and survey spectacle as part of cinema of attraction.¹⁹ Realist history films aim to convince the viewer that they have successfully recreated the total historical space, and they do this through techniques that encompass large-scale interiors and the period details within those shots. Such films assume that the truth of history lies in its surfaces.

This is exactly the type of period film, however, that Coppola insisted she did not want to make, despite the fact that the film incorporates typical tableau shots. As Tashiro has pointed out, Designer history films can still only go so far in contradicting historical expectations.²⁰ Period details and the cinema of attraction that is initiated through an emphasis on elaborate spectacle are expected by audiences and necessary to locate the film in an identifiable past. Nevertheless, Coppola insisted that her "main objective was to not make a big, historical epic" of the Realist history type: "I didn't want to make a dry, historical movie with the distant cold tableau of shots."²¹ This is not to say, however, that she did not base her film on research or that she did not make reference to previous period films. On the contrary, her filming was preceded by as much painstaking research as the film by MGM. Coppola was reported to have spent months in Europe putting together a reference book of materials, yet this was merged with the contemporary and the personal.²² As the film's costume designer Milena Canonero reported, Coppola took the essence of how things were and stylised them. Coppola told Canonero of her ideas about the "Ladurée macaroon colours – the bold pinks, the gold yellows, the pastachio greens...so we started with that as an inspiration."²³ The production designer, K.K. Barrett, also noted how Coppola sought out châteaux that had period details but were in a good deal of disrepair, so that they could incorporate new items and fresh surfaces, bringing in "walls to embellish and manipulate."²⁴

This approach, which starts from a rather loose version of history that is then turned into an imaginative account of the past, applied to Coppola's use of biography as well, her primary source being Antonia Fraser's book on the Queen.²⁵ The director set out to create what she called "an intimate portrait" of Marie Antoinette that was based on Fraser's research into letters and memoirs of the period.²⁶ The actors also sought to find the personal side of their characters. Jason Schwartzman, who played Louis XVI, noted how he read the king's personal diaries, but found them to obscure the individual more than to reveal insights with brief daily entries like "Met the

¹⁸ Maeder, *The Celluloid Image*, 35 and 73.

¹⁹ On the use of this term, see Peter Cosgrove, "The Cinema of Attraction and the Novel in Barry Lyndon and Tom Jones," in *Eighteenth-Century Fiction on Screen*, Robert Mayer, ed (Cambridge, 2002), 16-35.

²⁰ Tashiro, *Pretty Pictures*, 95ff.

²¹ See the Production Notes provided by Columbia Pictures, available to download as a pdf at <<http://www.visualhollywood.com/movies/MarieAntoinette/about.php>> (accessed 8 September 2010).

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Antonia Fraser, *Marie Antoinette: The Journey* (London, 2006).

²⁶ Coppola quoted in Pride, "Marie Antoinette."

Dauphine today” or “Nothing happened.”²⁷ After all this research (using the term loosely), Schwartzman decided to base his characterisation on Fraser’s book and Coppola’s script.²⁸ Once again, history is touched on and dismissed in favour of the contemporary and personal impression: “Everything we did is based on research about the period, but it’s all seen in a contemporary way.”²⁹

It is perhaps not surprising that when Marie Antoinette is presented in a “contemporary way,” aspects of her life are expressed through the language of Cool. There is a historical basis for this, as Marie Antoinette wanted to present herself as a fashionable woman who rejected court conventions and was consequently part of a proto-Cool phenomenon. At various times in her life, she set new fashion trends by wearing relatively casual clothes, such as a male-inspired riding habit and the *chemise en gaulle*. Studies by Caroline Weber and Mary Sheriff have shown that donning masculine riding clothes, riding astride like a man (instead of the traditional side saddle), refusing the corset and wearing the *chemise en gaulle* in the gardens of Versailles were defiant acts and assertions of personal identity through which Marie Antoinette attempted to contend with the formalities and traditions of the French court.³⁰ While Coppola may or may not have been aware of these theoretical studies addressing the queen’s self-expression and identity, she clearly understood Marie Antoinette’s fashion choices as one informed by tendencies familiar to the phenomenon of Cool – an attitude of rebellion and self-contained individualism.³¹ So when Kirsten Dunst, as Marie Antoinette, languishes on the lawns of Versailles with her natural blond locks flowing and in what appear to be anachronistic poses on her own or within a tight circle of friends, she effectively expresses aspects of the queen’s historical persona in the visual language of Cool.

Indeed, the aristocrat as proto-Cool figure is an idea that many late twentieth century films about the eighteenth century employ. It is how the libertine’s nonchalance and emotional effacement can be grasped by contemporary audiences who understand these characteristics as Cool. Perhaps the Coolest of all characters from eighteenth-century period films are those of the libertine’s Mme Merteuil and Valmont in Stephen Frear’s late 1980s version of Pierre Choderlos de Laclos’ *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, played by Glenn Close and John Malkovich, respectively. While the opening scene cuts between the male and female toilette, the actors physically express what Pountain and Robins defined in *Cool Rules* as the three primary character traits of the Cool personality: ironic detachment, narcissism and hedonism in preparing for their parts.³² In these first shots of the film, we see the actors transformed into eighteenth-century figures. They are Cool bodies set back in time.

While *Dangerous Liaisons* is in many ways faithful to the epistolary novel that is its source and the historical period in which it is set, it clearly employs

²⁷ *Marie Antoinette* Production Notes, as in footnote 18.

²⁸ Coppola’s casting of Schwartzman, her cousin, as Louis XVI served to reinforce the disjuncture between historical accuracy and artistic license, as well as the conflation of this biopic with her personal biography. Louis XVI was tall, blonde and lacked strong features, whereas Schwartzman is short, dark and intense, known for his distinctive looks that have attracted *auteur* directors and independent filmmakers, such as Wes Anderson and David O. Russell.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Caroline Weber, *Queen of Fashion: What Marie Antoinette Wore to the Revolution* (London, 2008), especially chs. 4 and 6; Mary Sheriff, *The Exceptional Woman: Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun and the Cultural Politics of Art* (Chicago, 1996), ch. 5.

³¹ Pountain and Robins, *Cool Rules*, 23.

³² Pountain and Robins, *Cool Rules*, 26-28.

anachronistic posing to express the inner personalities of its characters. In the scene, for example, when Mme Merteil describes how she learned to hide her self and her feelings, mastering a Cool detachment, Valmont expresses the value of such detachment through a largely teenage pose, half seated on a canapé, leaning back on his elbow, with one leg thrown over the delicately carved arm of the delicate piece of furniture. Certainly this is not the highly controlled and elegant pose of the nobility found in eighteenth-century paintings on intimacies exchange, which can be seen in works like Jean-François de Troy's *Declaration of Love* (1724, Williams College Museum of Art, Williamstown, Mass.). Yet other aspects of the Realist history film – the emphasis on surfaces in the wide-angle shot and ornate details of objects – normalise the pose as authentic and of its time.

Curiously, Coppola eschews this more traditional filmic presentation of the proto-Cool in twentieth-century terms. Her version of Cool is one that breaks with the more overt presentation of character that is found in *Dangerous Liaisons*. Instead, Coolness comes from the viewer's recognition and acknowledgement of the director's independent (which is simultaneously hedonistic and narcissistic) style, rather than that of the character. Coppola's *Marie Antoinette* anticipates a knowing audience, yet not one of historians or literary critics searching for historical or narrative fidelity. Those efforts to search out text-based truths are thwarted and ignored. The film does not engage with history – but it does engage with art history, and what is solicited is the art historian's response, a search for a debt to art that can be found throughout the film.

The well-trained art historian (and knowing amateurs versed in visual history) know that Coppola's staging of Marie Antoinette's dream sequence in which she imagines Count de Fersen on the battlefield is a visual quotation of Jacques-Louis David's *Napoleon Crossing the Alps* (1800, Château de Malmaison, Rueil-Malmaison). Intentionally anachronistic or a visual accident, the shot uses a scene of imagination to spark memory and engage creativity on the part of the knowing viewer. Coppola is using visual history much as the way that early modern artists referenced the work of past masters to claim their solid training as much as their independence from that training.³³

In Coppola's textual version of the film – the Rizzoli publication – such debts to art history are exposed although not referenced. The production designer has taken rococo arabesques and transposed them into the design for the opera scene. The knowing viewer/reader who recognizes the eighteenth-century source sees how visual research has been used; yet there is no textual reference accompanying the text.³⁴ Search as one might, no debt to history is acknowledged for the uninitiated. This is part of the experience of Cool in Coppola's film, to feel part of a group that understands and recognizes references, sharing a creative moment with the director. These creative moments are not tied to the historical past either. The viewer who recognizes in Dunst's masquerade costume a debt to the airbrushed black mask painted on Daryl Hannah's character "Pris" in the 1982 film *Blade Runner* knows that the intertextuality of film is more important to the filmmaker than the surfaces of history and cinema of attraction found in Adrian's costuming of Shearer for MGM.

Which leads to the final questions posed by this essay in relation to a filmic representation of the eighteenth century. Should we consider Coppola's *Marie Antoinette* ultimately as deconstructive cinema, calling attention to our own

³³ See, for example, Laura Auricchio, "The Laws of Bienséance and the Gendering of Emulation in Eighteenth-Century French Art Education," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 36:2 (2003): 231-40.

³⁴ Coppola, *Marie Antoinette*, np, plates found within pages printing dialogue for scene 53.

ideological investment in realism as historians and is this why it is often rejected as an unsuccessful period film? Did she build an image of Versailles simply to destroy it, as the final shots of the film suggest, leaving the viewer with only a “gold-plated” hang-over of vacuous consumption, a memory and sensation that they momentarily share with the film’s protagonist? More importantly than this, however, is whether or not in destroying an image of the eighteenth century that is based on historical documentation, Coppola destroys our faith in *any* image of history? Certainly the film causes viewers “in the know” to distrust *this* image of history.

As film studies scholars such as Peter Cosgrove have noted, period films as a genre promise to provide sensations of both the “having-been-there of actors and events and the being-there-ourselves in our imaginations.”³⁵ Consequently, standard period films such as MGM’s *Marie Antoinette* that rely on the principle of historically-reconstructed spectacle cause the viewer to look past the story to the costumes and the sets filled with meticulous attention to historical detail based on authenticity (even when these films modify historical details to provide an impression of history that is authentic – for the general non-specialized audience is not willing to tolerate high levels of strangeness when viewing the past). Still other period films regarded as highly successful by critics, like Stephen Frear’s *Dangerous Liaisons* allow the specialist to disregard film’s surfaces to get at the “really important” material – relatively authentic history and narrative adherence to the spirit of the text through an emphasis on characterisation and dialogue.

With Coppola’s *Marie Antoinette*, however, both history as text and narrative are entirely absent, and the surfaces of history – the costumes and sets – are filled with anachronistic details which confound the viewer’s expectations of escaping into the past and pull them back into the present. The anachronisms of Ladurée macarons, pastel coloured high-top sneakers and the sounds of “I Want Candy” insist that the film cannot be trusted, as the historically-minded individual who seeks the pleasure of being there knows that she or he is not “there” at all. Still the sensation of “being there” is exactly what Coppola set out to achieve. In making this Designer version of history, she insists that the truth of history does not lie in its surfaces. Instead the only “truth” of history is the “truth” of imagination, a creative projection into the past that privileges the self.

This is the ultimate link to Coolness – a distinct lack of interest in defining one’s place in making history along a historical trajectory with links to the politics of the past (whether academic or filmic) and its conservatism. Instead the focus is on remaking the past in the present by looking inward into the self. In an interview with Mark Olsen, the director was asked if she felt part of something as she appeared to be a hub of creative activity involving photography, fashion, music and film, to which Coppola responded:

Not really no. I feel like I know people who are doing interesting things and it’s always exciting when you talk to them and you find you both like the same painting or song or whatever.... but there are other moments when you don’t feel part of anything.³⁶

It is this emphasis on disconnection that is Coppola’s brand of Cool explored through *Marie Antoinette*. As a viewer, we share with the director tastes and references that

³⁵ Cosgrove, “The Cinema of Attraction,” 16-35.

³⁶ Mark Olsen, “Interview: Sofia Coppola: Cool and the Gang,” *Sight and Sound* 14 (January 2004), 15.

provide a momentary connection, but they are not sustained. In fact they are interrupted to emphasise a fleeting sensation of history that is ultimately personal, individual, isolated and Cool in every sense of the word.