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Sofia Coppola, *Cosmopolitan Icon*

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POPULAR REACTION

SOFIA COPPOLA,
COSMOPOLITAN ICON

Sara Pesce

Introduction

Sofia Coppola's sphere of influence has spread far beyond film narrative and cinematic style. It has stretched to fashion, home design, personal style, pop music, and even tourism and opera. We might see her *La Traviata*, for example, as containing a few core features of her brand attractiveness.¹ Shining with haute couture dresses designed by the fashion emperor Valentino and set in majestic sets, this opera displays a convergence between her cultivated fashion connections and a bold attitude in crossing cultural boundaries, venturing into artistic areas that bear crucial autobiographical meanings—including her Italian-American origins and her family connections.² Coppola straddles multiple social realms and cultural meanings. They range from the milieu of the New York indie-rock scene to Californian wine culture (Francis Ford Coppola dedicated two wines from his Napa Valley estate to his daughter). They include the early success of her MilkFed fashion collection in Tokyo and her interactions with Japanese artists to her liaisons with French and Italian fashion designers. They embrace polarities such as being a photographer and being photographed by famous professionals. They touch on multiple cultural capitals—New York, Los Angeles, Paris, and Tokyo. All these realms are showcased in an autobiographical narrative and highlighted in her work. The overall effect is a bending of genres, media, and cultural environments to her trademark personality as an icon of unfussy elegance, femininity, and class, a status measured by her appearances at galas and official occasions, but also by her Hollywood pedigree.

If we observe her audiences' behaviors—how they are inspired by her films or influenced by her musical choices and her fashion—we can deduce that Sofia Coppola's fanbase is not constituted by a consistent community or a network of followers. Coppola manages instead to carve her space into an expanded consumer base, diversified in terms of interests and geographically disseminated, in which each person, instead of identifying with a specific trend, style, or a group of people, has a sophisticated self-conception and monitors themselves in terms of self-expression.

The ongoing circulation of media content engaging with Coppola's personality has turned her into an icon. Her appearances on television, on the covers of magazines, on stage to advertise fashion brands or promote artistic events follow the hypertextual and syncretic logic of today's entertainment. The historical roots of her example are drawn from media developments in the 1980s, when the consumption of films and many other cultural products started to change. The theater no longer represented the main venue of film watching, as audiences moved to a more conscious form of cultural consumption. Viewing platforms have multiplied ever since, from television, home video, and pay TV to pay-per-view, IPTV, streaming via the internet, not to mention peer-to-peer exchange.

In the new millennium, the breadth of entertainment products on offer has expanded enormously and films now represent only a tiny fraction of today's vast entertainment market. Simultaneously, demand has grown extremely targeted and focused.³ The trend is a strongly oriented choice in use, an effect of the escalation of cultural industries' marketing efforts and of the birth of new markets. Like branded clothes, audiovisual products are more exportable and reusable, made to be experienced according to personal timelines.⁴ The public also reflects on their experience of the goods on hand and creates derivative products.

Pervasiveness, interactivity, enhanced availability of goods—these have been the hallmarks of the mediascape in which audiences have developed their affection for Coppola's work and personality. They have been affected by the endless movements of ideas and media, besides capital, people, and goods, induced by globalization—movements that “appear to congeal into a new whole, abstracted from the tangible materials of territory, nationality, identity and power.”⁵ In the last ten years or so, circulation of Coppola-related content has happened on social media platforms such as Instagram, Pinterest, Tumblr, or Flickr, in lifestyle, fashion, and gossip magazines (dozens of them, from Marie Claire to Vogue, from Vanity Fair and Life to Air Magazine), through photographic exhibitions (curated by Sofia⁶ or dedicated to her⁷), and at cultural events aimed at a cultivated but large audience. For example, interest in Marie Antoinette (2006) continues in France via a focus on Kirsten Dunst's costumes at the exhibition Marie Antoinette, métamorphoses d'une image set in Paris in 2019. And the reviews of La Traviata in Rome or in Tokyo emphasize Coppola's effort to make Verdi's heroine more relatable to modern audiences.⁸ Consumption of products created by Coppola transcends boundaries, involving lovers of high fashion, lifestyle devotees, viewers of indie cinema, but also fans of blockbusters, professional photographers, and musicians of various tastes. It concerns communication, or what Roger Silverstone calls “the Mediapolis,” the space of appearance, in which relations between self and other are conducted in a global public sphere.⁹ Her influence is visible outside the United States, with a peak in Japan, France, and Italy, although meaningful in the rest of Europe and Asia.

Coppola triggers aspirations that transcend cultural differences, treasure consumption habits that convey the notion of mobility and plurality, and encourage transnational connections based on womanly views and lifestyle. Her fans are involved in a form of cosmopolitan consumerism, where audiences, consumers, and citizens express their awareness of their role and personal responsibility, including as media users, in a global civic space. These media contents are concerned primarily with the negotiation between personal freedom and cultural superimpositions, a sphere of meaning Coppola summons up in her alter-ego characters and in her films' atmospheres, as well as in her appearances on the stages of fashion and lifestyle.

The uses that audiences make of Coppola's products reveal how Hollywood cinema participates in a network of rebounds and reverberations between films, consumption of material goods, and user-generated content. As I will demonstrate, these uses are driven by a cosmopolitan ideal whose inclusive potential is undermined by a logic of distinction that reproduces material and symbolic inequalities.¹⁰

Social Media

In a number of Facebook profiles across the world, posts about Sofia Coppola reveal a tendency for collecting items related to her as a means of conveying a state of mind or a personal stance. This sort of “collector-attitude,” fragmented, erratic, and individual, is present on other platforms like Pinterest, Instagram, or Flickr, and also on fashion blogs. This use of Coppola-related content could be characterized as a form of cultural participation and a permanent conversation.¹¹ Audiences are drawn far from the spectacle per se—cinema, theater, museum, exhibition, concert. Their engagement, allowed by consumption practices that take place through cellphones, tablets, and e-readers, is increasingly based on the de-materialization and de-localization of cultural contents, which makes the identification between places and objects less obvious. Not only do Coppola’s admirers tend to divorce her or her films from the cinematic space, by using portraits, casual shots, pictures of her red-carpet appearances, excerpts of her films, and items related to her narratives or personal style as part of their online conversations, they also drag meanings away from the geographic coordinates of her narrative and biography. Their passion for Coppola expands to lifestyle, everyday assets, and self-perception. A number of Facebook posts concern the wine named after her, touching on desires to make the home experience special, refined, and multicultural.

Coppola’s multifaceted work integrates with audiences’ behavior in an extensive range of activities turned global, including interior design, art, tourism, and music, as well as dress and accessories. Coppola’s fans are accustomed to a convergence between watching films, videos, clips or listening to music and buying items. They participate in a wider phenomenon of confluence between audiencing (media utilization) and consumption (material purchase), which blurs geographic specificity,¹² where personal communication and advertising overlap, due especially to the pervasiveness of fashion consumption habits.¹³

While there is some discussion of Coppola’s filmmaking, especially in France and Italy, communities that publish subjective reactions and film reviews are extremely small and not very active. Online forums do exist but are scarcely populated. There we can find that the interest of viewers intersects with Coppola’s use of rock music. On the Italian forum *ondarock.it*, in 2016 a reviewer declared, “Lost in Translation is the film that made me discover Shoegaze.”¹⁴ Posts on Facebook focus on film viewing (i.e., posts of cinema tickets or film posters in the theaters), on the pleasure of cinemagoing, or of rewatching her films on television. Similarly, YouTube, a platform conveying media content with a strong amateurish component, chiefly hosts favorite parts of her films and videoclips, or interviews. Private YouTube channels publish mashups of her work,¹⁵ where meaning and pleasure stem from reducing Coppola’s film characters to the form of gestures and colors—collected, assembled, and transformed into cult objects.¹⁶ On a microblogging website like Tumblr, fans’ engagement with Coppola’s films is also central, as in the case of *sofiacoppolafan.tumblr.com*. Blogging on Tumblr is limited in terms of personalization, but it integrates contents coming from other social networks constructing a sort of diary that hosts other fans’ contributions.¹⁷

Many forms of engagement with Coppola on social networks help connect individuals to others in the Mediapolis where contents are functional to the production and circulation

of identity.¹⁸ Coppola's films become opportunities for users to reflect on themselves, finding affinity with the characters in her films who, like them, are engaged in self-definition. As Suzanne Ferriss argues, "all of Coppola's films share a thematic focus on appearance, identity, and surveillance."¹⁹ On the social networks these themes transcend US national borders, appear marked as educated forms of self-surveillance, and become vehicles for women's global citizenship defined by a passion for exquisite tastes and framed by artifacts of contemporary urbanity. A Bangladesh college girl posts a screenshot from *Lost in Translation* (2003) on Facebook, with captions from a dialogue concerning the definition of women. In France, photos of Scarlett Johansson and film posters are published, primarily by women, as symbols of a state of mind or emotion. An Italian creative and cultural company, *Colori Vivaci Magazine*, posts images of *Lost in Translation*. Its profile declares "the more you know yourself and what you want, the less you allow yourself to be overwhelmed by events." Coppola's film is picked for its protagonist's self-reflexive stance.

Other users appropriate Coppola's works and image as part of their own aesthetic productions or views. On a Japanese Facebook page, for example, the covers of booklets dedicated to *The Virgin Suicides* (1999) and *Lost in Translation* appear in a series of posts in which a guitar player (Kouta Kanamori) shows his favorite album covers on his kitchen table next to cups of tea and cakes, making a visual composition of a ritual daily pleasure (see Figure 26.1). A photographer (Nobuko photography) chooses an unusual portrait of the director (see Figure 26.2). Sophisticated in terms of angle and light, different from the red-carpet shots usually associated with celebrities, this kind of artistic photography envisages Sofia as allowing a closer approach and insight. A filmmaker (Manami Yashiro) publishes a post about Coppola under the auspices that an increasingly feminine vision of the world can appear on the screen. Yoshiro matches Coppola with filmmakers Mika Minagawa (whose style is nostalgic and flamboyant) and Miwa Nishikawa (who addresses social contradictions in contemporary Japan), and also with Chinese-American independent filmmaker Chloe Zhao.²⁰

Figure 26.1 A Facebook post by Kouta Kanamori, March 6, 2021.

Figure 26.2 A Facebook post by Nobuko Photography, January 24, 2018

These realms of media production and consumption testify to how frequently in the audience's mind Coppola exits the realm of filmmaking and appears instead as a model, an icon of girly imagination and sensitive femininity confronting marginality, and possessed of an elusive, artistic imagination. She attracts the devotion of film viewers exactly like her actresses and often overlaps symbolically with them. In other words, she appears as an icon as much as a producer of images.

This expansion of Coppola's meaning outside of filmmaking is widely registered on repositories of images such as Instagram, Pinterest, Getty Images, and Flickr. Even the thematically diverse Instagram brings Coppola's connection with style and fashion to the fore, as in the page [sofiacoppolastyleicon](#), which focuses on the variety of her outfits and on her ability to pose or even to catwalk.²¹ Except for the more high-fashion/brand-oriented Getty Images, on these platforms we find a plethora of images of her

casual outfits. Street style frequently catches the imagination. A form of “style therapy,” it reveals how Coppola’s imagery can be part of a toolkit for personal well-being and an inspiration for visual display.²² Pinterest specifically hosts a variety of images across national boundaries showing Coppola sitting on her sofa, on her bed, or at her desk, or catching her while entering a boutique or crossing the street, in her uniform-like style (shirt and straight trousers) or in a collection of elegant dresses.²³ Poses of the director in front of the camera, of her bags and clothes, but also the furniture gracing her interiors are visual signs of an attitude, a finely tuned self-consciousness, independent but also trendy, culturally transversal but also Euro-American.²⁴ Her geographic mobility, her subjectivism, and refined consumerism mark her as a cosmopolitan icon.

A Cosmopolitan Icon

An illustrated book published in 2012 in Japan—*Sofia Coppola: Perfect Style of Sofia’s World*—appears as a diagram of the aesthetics and concepts associated with her personality.²⁵ The book testifies to the long-lasting favor the Japanese market has granted to Coppola’s fashion since the 1990s. Designed as a sort of instruction manual edited by fashion curators, the book catalogs Sofia’s clothes, accessories, hair, and makeup for admiration and imitation. Readers access beauty tips suitable for public appearances or leisure time. The miniskirt, for example, is as a symbol of Sofia’s girly attitude, while her blue jeans and manly shirts signal her ability to defy standards of femininity and be true to herself. Her casual-chic vibe together with her LA background as a capital of this style make the link apparent between Coppola and the Japanese cult of denim, a long-lasting form of globalized consumption that has now become “a new arena for national pride” due to a prolific high-end manufacturing addressing an expanding market of international connoisseurs.²⁶ This bond between Coppola’s natural style and a Japanese fashion trend striving to occupy the global mainstream since the 1960s demonstrates the filmmaker’s enduring success as an icon of exquisite simplicity, in a nation where luxury is synonymous not only with prestigious brands but also with high quality, vintage styles, and retro tastes. It is not incidental that Coppola’s fashion line MilkFed continues to be remembered—with its informality and its connection to the realm of dance-pop and indie-rock (Sonic Youth), a “rough and cute” atmosphere of the 1990s.²⁷ Coppola easily intersects with an international worship of the American casual, with its accent on bodily ease and comfort.

Through their pics and preferences, Coppola’s fans often position themselves self-indulgently within an international geography of refinement based on her example, a culture where brands have an attractive potential and distinguish mediocrity from quality, as, for instance, Ladurée, which appears in the Japanese book on the pages dedicated to Marie Antoinette. Associated with Paris and French sophistication, Ladurée has become the global projection of a ladylike leisure. It is not incidental that the book chooses Coppola’s film scenes that portray characters at moments of leisure in glamorous environments, such as a still from *Somewhere* (2010) showing father and daughter lying in the sun at the Chateau Marmont hotel. The film still appears opposite a photo of actual guests in the same position, reinforcing the idea that film viewers, fashion consumers, or, more generally, travelers who pay for the same hotel room can aspire to be part of a world emphasized in the book’s title as Sofia’s. Therefore, Coppola encourages a framework where real and fictional entities cohabit, a melting of material and imaginary allowing us

to be relieved from ordinariness and attain a fantasy. She embodies, and also represents on-screen, pop culture's structural encounter between the cultural industry products and the everyday lives of ordinary people, where not only the star but also common people transform themselves into characters and literally enter a narrative dimension.²⁸

International geography is crucial to identification with Coppola's personality. Her multiple residences include those in the fashion capitals Paris and New York. Mobility and situated experience are attributes of her working procedure—that is, her preference for shooting on location—but are also a symbolic quality of her consumption, for she has liberty in selecting a home while crossing diverse cultural territories, involving travel, urban culture, exotic cuisine, fashion, and lifestyle. As seen on social media, but also in fashion, lifestyle, and gossip magazines, Coppola's materialism includes references to tourism, food and drink, and music. Cosmopolitanism has been associated with consumption, as emerging in everyday material practices and habits of thought and feeling.²⁹ Pierre Bourdieu has described it as the cultural response of a social life that, since the 1980s and especially in the West, has been largely shaped by globalization and by a general shift from a producer to a consumer culture.³⁰ In this context, leisure, taste, and style are pivotal to the construction of individual and collective identity, heading to mundane consumptive experiences.³¹ This cosmopolitanism has developed even further through social networks' familiarization with a variety of content and delight in difference.

Lost in Translation, for example, reverberates with what John Urry has described as aesthetic cosmopolitanism, a cultural disposition that has sprung from popular tourism.³² The Park Hyatt hotel, with its patterning of cultures—the French restaurant, the New York bar, the Ikebana classes—showcases Tokyo as one of those cities that “brand themselves as cosmopolitan by offering world-class accommodations, transportation and entertainment, while at the same time accentuating unique environmental or cultural features that make visiting that particular place worthwhile.”³³ A gigantic floating atoll dominating the city from above, it is in line with Coppola's uncomplicated combination of luxury and cultural generalization.

Cosmopolitanism downplays the awareness of cultural hegemony. This is an aspect Coppola's spectators have detected in *Lost in Translation*. Tokyo is so blatantly offered as a receptacle of pop cults, a flattening combination of hypermodernity and tradition that Japanese viewer response has been surprise and criticism. On the Japanese cinema site Kinenote, reviewers comment about being puzzled by the film's high ratings in the United States, although they also notice the straightforwardness of a foreign look on the capital, aware of the simplifications that transnational exchange brings about. This is a film, one commentator underlines, that can be “perceived as a fantasy set in the world's largest tourist city.”³⁴ Coppola's Tokyo is criticized as a Wonderland brimming with stereotypical images of “Cool Japan,” the source of the Otaku and Kawaii culture since the 2000s.³⁵ The film has been charged with orientalism: sexualization, feminization, infantilization.³⁶

While many film viewers might have felt uneasy, Coppola's committed fans, on the contrary, have recognized in the film a whole subcultural world which, like most Japanese subcultures, is dominantly feminine.³⁷ This occurs to a blogger who spots in the film her juvenile idols, mentioning a few names and places,³⁸ including *Dune's* editor-in-chief Fumihiro Hayashi, who is also mentioned as crucial in making Sofia popular in Japan.

This viewer response expresses a durable form of fandom dwelling in the streets of Tokyo, where, in 2014, a pop-up store appeared in Shinjuku,³⁹ recreating the atmosphere of 1990s girls' culture, a huge movement in which young women wore MilkFed and X-girl,⁴⁰ with elements of music and street culture sprinkled in, and enjoyed Pizzicato Five and Shibuya-kei music such as Kahimi Karie.⁴¹ Coppola's position between the youth fashion and high-fashion communities has been playing a crucial role in connecting girly subcultures to the mainstream.

In *Lost in Translation* Coppola displays her special ability of self-positioning as an intermediary between spectators and pop icons. It is a film grounded on her personal comprehension of Tokyo, drawing from the years when her MilkFed line reached its highest sales peak in Japan and she started working as a fashion photographer for the avant-garde magazine *Dune*.⁴² A few references in the film are picked out by her fans, either cinephile suggestions (her father also did a whisky commercial in Tokyo, with Akira Kurosawa) or fashion references (items from her MilkFed collections appear, although they are not overtly displayed, and her Japanese fashion connections are part of the cast: Fumihiro Hayashi, Takashi Homma, Hiromise, Kahimi Karie). In a narrative populated by media exponents—the photographer, the actor, the promoter—and sprinkled with references to celebrity worship, her alter ego Scarlett Johansson carries the spectator's candid gaze on the star (Murray) and on pop cults, including hi-tech Tokyo.⁴³

The Royal Court and the Opera House

The Japanese context demonstrates how Coppola's cosmopolitan image branches into local and national cultures, intersecting with larger reformulations of national history and citizenship. This is true for France, where her alliance with the high-fashion milieu has expanded to Versailles' tourism (and we should not forget that the Chateau has served high fashion as an ideal catwalk and photoshoot set).⁴⁴ The queen's private residence was restored between 2000 and 2008. Christine Albanel, president of the Chateau at the time, "carefully orchestrated a marketing promotion built upon Coppola's notoriety,"⁴⁵ with the effect of increasing visitor numbers.⁴⁶ When the Petit Trianon reopened to the general public a reshaping of the queen's fame occurred. A re-aestheticization of her image extended to her spaces of retirement. Le Petit Trianon and le Hameau de la reine became symbols of escape from palace protocol, of extravagance and self-indulgence. They were transformed into an extraordinary target of fashion tourism that turned the historical Marie Antoinette into a modern commodity.⁴⁷ After the film's release, Versailles came to encourage a consumption that flattens historical perspective, discards authenticity, and represents a menace of decontextualization.

French criticism has targeted Marie Antoinette's effect of "turning Versailles into a boutique hotel for the jet set."⁴⁸ A display of references to Marie Antoinette's coquettish picks started to dwell in the palace's boutiques of souvenirs, together with books and myriads of objects like fans, medallions, and perfumes.⁴⁹ Colors in the pastel palette became a constant of this merchandise, especially in the confiserie. When interviewed, visitors revealed their assumption that the queen's favorite color was pink, although not on the basis of having watched Coppola's film in its entirety. They have admitted to being influenced by the film's imagery, but, in most cases, they have seen only a trailer or a poster of the pastries or the shoes. What emerges is an arbitrary appropriation of film

content. Marie Antoinette has created a cult, both global and geographically rooted (in pilgrimages to the Chateau), that transcends actual film viewing. The film still provokes engagement in physical research or in a trip to the site where the spectacle of the queen is made special.

Putting Versailles on the same par with park themes and shopping malls, the Palace's promotional operation activated collective fantasies and consumption habits. The Republican historical thesis engraved in French national culture started to coalesce with a cinematic imagery celebrating the aesthetics of luxury, an imagery that is intrinsically global, molded by "a multitude of concurring subliminal factors, such as marketing, advertising and heritage commodification."⁵⁰ Bloggers and social media users have long rejoiced in collecting pictures of the historical site, publishing them next to selected stills from the film, therefore "accommodating" the queen's rooms within their virtual life spaces and personal relations.⁵¹ Whether they have visited the historical site or not, working with visuals and being personally engaged connects these users, the queen, and Coppola's imagination, an imagination of Versailles' ability to shape a newcomer into a public personality in every detail of attire and behavior.⁵² Engaging with Marie Antoinette is engaging with Coppola. Their affluence and refinement are inspiring.

Sofia belongs to a cosmopolitan elite. She embodies multiple privileges: granted access to a world of cultural production, geographic mobility, and secured economic resources. Her self-development is expressed through luxury and materialism, reflecting one of many facets of femininity in a postfeminist context, one that is ideal and elitist. This has indeed elicited the counterreaction of many, based on Coppola's wrapping herself in her insulated world of opulence and fame.⁵³ Coppola stirs identification among women of different nationalities and ages who share a similar drive to distinction. Her persona and her work mirror the audience's participation in a social environment turned global embracing luxury, publicity, fandom, and gossip.

A girl's accessibility "to worlds that kids are not usually around": this is what Sofia reveals of herself.⁵⁴ Her self-narrative revolves around a restricted entertainment entourage and fashion aristocracy. Paradoxically, fantasies of accessibility to niche social spaces are fostered by a self-declared privileged woman. Her films convey the limits put on social mobility at the same time focusing on characters belonging to a social elite. Even her street style, so often admired by her fans, broadcasts a breaking away from the conventional fashion imperatives, although the fondness for the brand maintains its hold.⁵⁵ Both her personal style and film narrative parade in a context trapped in the contradictions of late-capitalist consumer culture, the contradictions between participation and equality on the one hand and, on the other, luxury corporations' elitist-consumerist marketing, selling symbols of distinction and hierarchy but also mixing elitism with mass consumption.⁵⁶

This happens in the new millennium's enhanced visibility of ordinary people, where "anyone, apparently, . . . can be empowered by the seemingly endless possibilities in digital spaces, and yet where the divide between rich and poor continues to grow."⁵⁷ On the one hand, Coppola represents Hollywood's social elite, based on a vertical concentration of wealth. On the other, she expresses a phenomenon vast and contradictory, where it is not illogical to be a consumer and a producer at the same time, a fan and an icon.

This is, for example, what drove Valentino to invite Sofia to direct *La Traviata* for the Opera Theatre in Rome in 2016, after having admired her *Marie Antoinette*. Sofia and Valentino have repeatedly connected in the past.⁵⁸ Valentino put himself in the position of Coppola's fan while conflating two different cultural industries, opera and fashion, and different cultures: a French text inspired an Italian opera, directed by an American filmmaker with costumes by an Italian designer. Coppola, on her side, conceived her direction on the basis of the Maison's costumes and highlighted Valentino and Violetta as the stars of the show.⁵⁹ This whole operation broadened the Opera's public. *La Traviata* opened to an audience of nonexperts and the Teatro dell'Opera registered the highest rates since its foundation in 1880. Coppola's *La Traviata* conflates an attunement to a culture of affluence and bohemian tastes. Non-connoisseurs, attracted by fashion icons and brands more than by Verdi's opera, appreciated the direct rhetoric of costume and scenography. Their comments online highlight Valentino's choice of primary colors, pop colors, we might say, seducing with strong sensorial sparking.⁶⁰

With Coppola, *La Traviata* symbolically exits the theater. A production that conflates artistic resources from Italy and the United States (the star scenographer Nathan Crowley was also involved), it has enacted a transformation of the cultural space of the Opera, a delocalization consistent with high-fashion cosmopolitanism, whose artistic directors frequently move from one brand to another and from a nation to another (Maria Grazia Chiuri, who designed the costumes with Valentino and Pierpaolo Piccioli, had previously been Dior's first female creative director). *La Traviata*'s Paris is the capital of the belle époque, of leisure and illicit pleasures. Coming from a piece of minor literature (Dumas the son's *La dame aux camélias*), this opera makes marginality extremely fascinating, drawing what is insignificant and inconsiderable to the center of attention. Violetta's romanticism is bound to ephemeral inclinations. She lives a materialistic existence to the fullest. Her romanticism is also a key to Valentino's brand of femininity, a materiality reflected in *La Traviata*'s majestic decor and costumes.

Conclusion: Niche versus Mainstream

Coppola's reception embraces the whole arc of participatory culture, from its inception to its branching to a new television culture, including YouTube's destabilization of television's power structures and centralized schedule, and the increased control over viewing allowed by streaming TV. Primarily a site of amateur videos, spreading a new form of cinephilia,⁶¹ YouTube has circulated a great part of Coppola's audiovisual products, including interviews, music clips, and fashion videos, including on specific channels such as FandomEntertainment or YouTube Fashion. On the one hand, YouTube has "developed unique, 'authentic' aesthetics and narrative structures"⁶² that Sofia fiercely opposes. The YouTube kind of authenticity, often equivalent to approximation and amateurishness, is something she occasionally "quotes" (as in *The Bling Ring* [2013], which indicts social media users as literal thieves).⁶³ It could be argued that Coppola's stance and primary creative drive—a precise duty of an heir of the Hollywood cinema tradition—is that of countering a representational standard spread by social media. Her insistent staging of conflicts between hegemony and individual agency, between *mise-en-scène* and authenticity, or between homogenization and inventiveness relates to a media environment turned flexible. Hollywood may survive only when an aristocracy of images comes by, visionary and original. On the other hand, the YouTube ludic component, a

pivotal motivation of user-generated content, is what Coppola shares with her fans in many aspects of her productions, incorporating the contemporary spectator's audacious attitude in crossing and mixing. We may think of her video collage in tribute to Gabrielle Chanel on the occasion of the *Mademoiselle Privé* exhibition in Tokyo (2019) as but one example. Her pop music choice of Grimes' *Oblivion*, the heterogeneity, and the cinephilia are all aspects of YouTube communication. Therefore, in a plurality of spheres of influence, Coppola draws attention to hegemony in the attention economy and in the sphere of imaginary production.

Coppola's reception occurs in an extremely varied media environment, where advertising is more targeted and TV programming is intended for small groups.⁶⁴ This is a broad media environment, inhabited, for example, by a kind of instructional television like "lifestyle factials" addressing a targeted, fragmented audience. It comprises delivery systems for television like Amazon Video, Apple TV+, and Netflix that have restored the idea of cinematic experience as authentically chosen. They "tie in with neoliberal discourses that put increased choice and control over these choices in a direct relationship with responsibilities of self-care."⁶⁵ Coppola has been increasingly involved in this reshaped distribution system that has reconfigured American independent cinema by way of its media access and modes of consumption (*A Very Murray Christmas* with Netflix, *On the Rocks* and *The Custom of the Country* with Apple TV+).⁶⁶

Streaming services not only enter as financial players in cinema, but they also bring issues of quality, cultural capital, and taste to the fore. Quality television, with its liberal values, has advanced a mindset delegitimizing "other" types of television considered inferior,⁶⁷ a mindset that is noticeable in Coppola's work, for example, in *Lost in Translation*, in the frustrating experience of Bob Harris/Bill Murray watching himself on television in his hotel room, or, in *A Very Murray Christmas* (2015), in Murray's on-air crisis. *On the Rocks* (2020) engages streaming TV viewers' expectations of cultural distinction through aesthetics. Coppola's fans know they can plunge into high-standard style. Popular "subgenres" are also included but only to be outclassed, as when a televised comedy special appears briefly. Via a stand-up comedian (Chris Rock), television is designated here to convey blatantly what the film implies only obliquely: marriage kills sex. A hierarchy of distinction is presumed. Coppola's viewers are allowed in the ranks of "the refined." They are a new species of privileged spectators, the subscribers. They are media consumers who aestheticize their consumption. Apple TV+, like other platforms, articulates cultural legitimation in the context of media convergence. "Cinephiles once belonged to an elite club of movie theater dwellers, but the mass proliferation of technology and social media has granted anyone admission."⁶⁸ Coppola's work is more and more intermingled with media-philia and series-philia, and viewers' new conditions of involvement.⁶⁹

Inspired by Coppola's array of media images and experiences, her admirers around the world are promised membership in the global community via a striving for engagement and the dialectics between central and peripheral, in a convergence of viewing and purchasing. It is not incidental that Coppola's films always fall in the category of indie ones. Their participation requires a level of knowledge, competence, and sophistication that makes them stand out. Therefore, Coppola is made the object of a cultural consumption based on the logic of distinction, one that reproduces material and symbolic inequalities. Considering the particularly Euro-American, white, male, and privileged nature of cosmopolitanism, Coppola occupies this social space as a white woman not

only eliciting the attention of elite white and Asian women but also attracting a particular male audience intrigued by her art—her films, her music choices. Coppola achieves the status of cosmopolitan icon conjuring up a spectrum of meanings: the otherness of the girly realm, the trans-genre attractiveness of pop music, the mobility of transmedia contents, the geographic convergence of fashion. Outside cinemas and theatrical venues, Coppola secures global acclaim through ancillary markets that are manifestly not ancillary anymore. She is not simply a filmmaker or a style icon. She is the icon of a system of image production blurring boundaries and enjoying paradoxes.

Notes

1 Angela Carroll, “Brand Communications in Fashion Categories using Celebrity Endorsement,” *Journal of Brand Management* 17, no. 2 (2009): 146–58.

2 Sofia’s family connections include not only her grandfather Carmine—composer and opera lover—but also her great uncle Anton, himself a conductor of *La Traviata*. See Ruth Mac Kee, “Sofia Coppola’s *La Traviata* Opens at Rome Opera House,” *The Guardian*, May 20, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2016/may/20/sofia-coppolas-la-traviata-opens-rome-opera-house>.

3 Veronica Innocenti and Guglielmo Pescatore, “Dalla crossmedialità all’ecosistema narrativo. L’architettura complessa del cinema hollywoodiano contemporaneo,” in *Il cinema della convergenza: Industria, racconto, pubblico*, ed. Federico Zecca (Milano: Mimesis, 2012), 128.

4 Innocenti and Pescatore, “Dalla crossmedialità,” 129.

5 Roger Silverstone, *Media and Morality: On the Rise of the Mediapolis* (Cambridge, Malden: Polity, 2007), 12–13.

6 One example is the 2011 Paris exhibition on Mapplethorpe: <https://ropac.net/press-documents/56/>.

7 Coppola’s impact on photography is demonstrated by a recent photographic exhibition in Tokyo, *Photography and Fashion: Exploring the Relationship Since the 1990s* (Top Museum, January–July 2020), whose curator, the photographer Nakako Hayashi, makes reference to Sofia Coppola and Kim Gordon’s involvement with the fashion line X-girl. See <https://brutus.jp/article/911/35790> and <https://topmuseum.jp/contents/exhibition/index-3451.html>.

8 *The Fashion Post Japan*, October 2, 2017, <https://fashionpost.jp/news/116295>; Atsuko Tatsuta, “Costumes by Valentino! What Is ‘Sofia Coppola’s *La Traviata*’?” *Vogue Japan*, September 22, 2017, <https://www.vogue.co.jp/lifestyle/culture/2017-09-22>; Marco Baldari, “*La Traviata* di Sofia Coppola e Valentino non delude le attese,” *La platea. Rivista di cultura teatrale*, October 30, 2017, <https://www.laplatea.it/index.php/teatro/recensioni/1496-la-traviata-di-sofia-coppola-e-valentino-non-delude-le-attese.html>.

9 Silverstone, Media and Morality.

10 Jennie Germann Molz, "Cosmopolitanism and Consumption," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Cosmopolitanism*, ed. Maria Rovisco and Magdalena Nowicka (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 40.

11 Francesco De Biase, ed., *I pubblici della cultura: Audience development, audience engagement* (Franco Angeli, 2014), 366.

12 Romana Andò, *Audience for Fashion: Consumare moda e media con i media* (Milano: Egea, 2020), 10–11.

13 D'Aloia and Pedroni analyze Chiara Ferragni's paradigm of media syncretism in Adriano d'Aloia and Marco Pedroni, "Ferragnez: Anatomia di un sincretismo mediale," in *Supertele: Come guardare la televisione*, ed. Luca Barra and Fabio Guarnaccia (Roma: Minimum Fax, 2021), 86.

14 <http://forum.ondarock.it/index.php?/topic/21459-sofia-coppola/>.

15 https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCxe0kUck4-d_142JPxTNEVQ/videos.

16 Andò, *Audience for Fashion*, 11.

17 See, for example, <https://sofiacoppola.tumblr.com/>.

18 Silverstone, *Media and Morality*.

19 Suzanne Ferriss, *The Cinema of Sofia Coppola: Fashion, Culture, Celebrity* (London: Bloomsbury, 2021), 21.

20 Available at <https://www.facebook.com/manami.yashiro.3/posts/3944925535583793>.

21 https://www.instagram.com/sofiacoppolastyleicon/?utm_source=ig_embed&ig_mid=271EFDC5-2A01-4CF4-A89E-E06DC34A12E5&hl=it.

22 <https://www.pinterest.it/daianavujcic/sofia-coppola-style-icon/>.

23 <https://www.pinterest.it/pin/162974080250668168/>; <https://www.pinterest.it/pin/135178426303541449/>; <https://www.pinterest.it/pin/61009769939148683/>.

24 See Joanne Entwistle's updated discourse on how a mode of being and style enables women to cope with the frenzy of modern life and her perspective on dress as situated bodily practice in *The Fashioned Body: Fashion, Dress and Modern Social Theory* (London: Polity, 2015). See also Pam Cook, who argues, "Coppola's authorial brand projects a Europeanised persona, work and lifestyle that evoke familiar notions of cosmopolitanism and cultural sophistication." See Pam Cook, "An American in Paris: Sofia Coppola and the New

Auteurism,” Melbourne University workshop, September 25, 2013, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0Bz2RL4R29LF2YjLWYW82M3FORjQ/edit>.

25 Sofia Coppola: Perfect Style of Sofia’s World (Japan: Marbletron, 2012). This is a particular kind of publication called “mook” (ムック mukku), a hybrid between a book and a high-profile magazine, dedicated to a specific topic or character, illustrated, and often concerning fashion, travel, or lifestyle. Sofia Coppola: Perfect Style of Sofia’s World belongs to a series of photographic mooks (distinguished from other kinds of mooks for their smaller size) dedicated to international celebrities, where Sofia Coppola is the only filmmaker.

26 David W. Marx, *Ametora: How Japan Saved American Style* (New York: Basic Books, 2015), 391.

27 Hirayoshi Hikoro, “Between Fashion and Costume: A Look at Sofia Coppola Starting from Beguiled,” *Eureka (Yurika)*, March 2018, 85. My translation.

28 See John Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989); Lucio Spaziante, *Icone Pop: Identità e apparenze tra semiotica e musica* (Milano: Mondadori, 2016), 18.

29 John Binnie and Beverly Skeggs, “Cosmopolitan Knowledge and the Production and Consumption of Sexualized Space: Manchester’s Gay Village,” *The Sociological Review* 52, no. 1 (2004): 39–61.

30 Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction. A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984).

31 Zlatko Skrbis and Ian Woodward, “Cosmopolitan Openness,” in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Cosmopolitanism*, ed. Maria Rovisco and Magdalena Nowicka (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 65.

32 John Urry, *Consuming Places* (London: Routledge, 1995). It is a disposition anchored in popular consumer culture. See John Tomlinson, *Globalization and Culture* (Cambridge: Polity, 1999).

33 Molz, “Cosmopolitanism and Consumption,” 38.

34 http://www.kinenote.com/main/public/cinema/detail.aspx?cinema_id=36948#cont_movie.

35 Ozawa Eimi, “Maturity and Women’s Loss: Sofia Coppola’s Perspective,” *Eureka (Yurika)*, March 2018, 48. My translation.

36 Eimi, “Maturity and Women’s Loss,” 48–9.

37 Yuniya Kawamura, *Fashioning Japanese Subcultures* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 12.

38 The blogger declared in 2011: “Hiroshi Fujiwara, Nigo, Hiromix, Nobuhiko Kitamura . . . I knew them all . . . it was all in Tokyo, in places like Shibuya, Nakameguro, and Daikanyama AIR, where I used to hang out.” See <https://ameblo.jp/dmnoissue/entry-11018508975.html>.

39 <https://www.fashion-headline.com/article/9671>.

40 X-girl, started by Kim Gordon and Daisy von Furth of Sonic Youth, still lives in the memory of a group of enthusiasts from Tokyo, as demonstrated by sightings in the underground fashion environment (<https://www.fashion-press.net/brands/1877>). It is also source of true nostalgia for English and American readers of Dazed and Confused magazine: see Claire Marie Healy, “Remembering Kim Gordon’s 90s Fashion Label,” Dazed, April 28, 2015, <https://www.dazeddigital.com/fashion/article/23513/1/remembering-kim-gordon-s-90s-fashion-label>.

41 The shop showed pictures of Coppola’s friend Hiromix, renowned for having started the girly photo boom of the 1990s. See <https://www.fashion-headline.com/article/16490>. See also Ferdinand Brueggemann, “The Woman’s Decade,” Priska Pasquer, <https://priskapasquer.art/the-womens-decade/>.

42 As Maria Francesca Genovese reports, Fumiro Hayashi, Dune’s head editor, became one of Sofia’s dearest friends in Tokyo. He guided Sofia throughout the “coolest” spots in the city and in its artistic milieu. Maria Francesca Genovese, Sofia Coppola. *Un’icona di stile* (Recco: Le mani, 2007), 42.

43 Further reflection on Coppola’s melting of material and imaginary typical of the pop universe, and her staged encounters between cultural industry and ordinary people, would require a focus on her use of pop music, a social and aesthetic realm where normality can become the scenery of a staged life. This is apparent not only in her music videoclips but also in the party scenes of her films, which allow a space for celebration, self-release, and imagination, as in the electro-pop preferences of her soundtracks.

44 Robin Givhan, *The Battle of Versailles: The Night American Fashion Stumbled into the Spotlight and Made History* (New York: Flatiron Books, 2015); Laurence Benaïm, *Fashion and Versailles* (Paris: Flammarion, 2018).

45 Denise Maior-Barron, “Was This Really Marie Antoinette’s House? Who Was She Anyway?” in *Heritage: Proceedings of the 4th International Conference on Heritage and Sustainable Development*, ed. Rogério Amoèda, Sérgio Lira, and Cristina Pinheiro, vol 2 (Barcelos: Green Lines Institute, 2014), 1401.

46 Denise Maior-Barron, “Petit Trianon, Home of Marie Antoinette,” in *Narrative and the Built Heritage: Papers in Tourism Research*, ed. Charlie Mansfield and Simon Seligman (Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag D. Muller, 2011), 40–62.

47 Richard Covington, “Marie Antoinette,” *The Smithsonian Online Magazine*, November 2006,

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/marie-antoinette-134629573/>. French visitors to the Petit Trianon have largely expressed their fascination with the queen's persona online. They have made parallels between Marie Antoinette and other detested noblewomen based on an imagery of refinement. See <http://www.noblesseetroyautes.com/le-petit-trianon-et-marie-antoinette/>. Film imagery populates blogs concerning the queen's pursuits. See <https://www.tumblr.com/blog/view/vivelareine/search/petit+trianon>.

48 Agnès Poirier, "An Empty Hall of Mirrors," *The Guardian*, May 27, 2006.

49 Laurent Mauron, "Au château de Versailles, c'est la ruée sur les cadeaux souvenirs," *Le Parisien*, December 22, 2017.

50 Maior-Barron, "Was This Really Marie Antoinette's House?," 1402.

51 Ana Maria Munar, "Paradoxical Digital Worlds: Tourism and Social Media," in *Transformations in Identity, Community and Culture*, ed. Ana Maria Munar, Szilvia Gyomthy, and Liping Cai (Bingley: Emerald publishing, 2013), 35. One blogger comments on a limited collection of six scents, *In the Steps of Marie Antoinette*, released by the label Poesie in 2019 using GIFs from Coppola's film. See <https://www.tumblr.com/blog/view/vivelareine/search/petit+trianon>.

52 This imagination is embedded in Coppola's ability to promote herself as well as her films drawing on European culture, history, and film tradition, an ability addressed by Pam Cook. See Pam Cook, "An American in Paris." See also Sara Pesce, "Marie Antoinette, Fashion Queens and Hollywood Stars," in *Moving to the Mainstream Women On and Off Screen in Television and Film*, ed. Marianne Kac-Verne and Julie Assouly (London: Bloomsbury, 2022), 174–96.

53 Coppola's popularity has a negative reflection that I am not analyzing in this article, based on her privilege, which is nevertheless commented upon on social media such as Reddit (see https://www.reddit.com/r/movies/comments/k6ocsf/sofia_coppola_wants_you_to_feel_bad_for_the_very/ or https://www.reddit.com/r/TrueFilm/comments/7wfu28/why_do_people_tend_to_dislike_sofia_coppola_so/) and in the popular press (see Nathan Heller, "Sofia Coppola: You Either Love Her or Hate Her. Here's Why," *Slate*, December 28, 2010, <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2010/12/you-either-love-sofia-coppola-or-hate-her-here-s-why.html>). Academic criticism includes Caitlin Yunuen Lewis, "Cool Postfeminism: The Stardom of Sofia Coppola," in *In the Limelight and Under the Microscope: Forms and Functions of Female Celebrity*, ed. Su Holmes and Diane Negra (New York and London: Continuum, 2011), 174–98.

54 "Sofia so Good," *Air: A Magazine with Altitude* (Gama Aviation), September 28, 2013, 45.

55 A discourse on Sofia's simple chic can be found on a blog called *Madame Figaro*. Jp available

at <https://madamefigaro.jp/blog/figaro-japon/180911-camelias.html>. See also Suzy Menkes,

“Sofia Coppola, Discreet, Chic and Grown Up,” *New York Times*, October 14, 2008, and Kate Finnigan “Sofia Coppola’s Shares her Style Secrets,” *The Telegraph*, May 22, 2016, posted on Pinterest, <https://www.pinterest.it/pin/372039619209474946/>.

56 Dana Thomas, *Deluxe: How Luxury Lost its Luster* (London: Penguin, 2007), 13–17.

57 Banet Weiser, *Authentic: The Politics of Ambivalence in a Brand Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 17.

58 <http://www.valentiniogara-nimuseum.com/features/1648/sofia-coppola>.

59 Interview available at the Teatro dell’Opera di Roma Facebook page. See <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=938222423274764>.

60 See the comments on the costumes’ colors posted on the editor’s blog of Madame Figaro. Jp, September 11, 2018, <https://madamefigaro.jp/blog/figaro-japon/180911-camelias.html>.

61 Scott Balcerzak and Jason Sperb, eds., *Cinephilia in the Age of Digital Reproduction: Film, Pleasure and Digital Culture*, vol. 1 (London: Wallflower Press, 2009); Dina Iordanova and Scott Cunningham, eds., *Digital Disruption: Cinema Moves On-Line* (St. Andrews: St. Andrews University Press, 2012).

62 Mareike Jenner, *Netflix and the Reinvention of Television* (London: Palgrave, Macmillan, 2018), 97.

63 See Sara Pesce, “Ripping off Hollywood Celebrities: Sofia Coppola’s *The Bling Ring*, Luxury Fashion and Self-branding in California,” *Film, Fashion and Consumption* 4, no. 1 (2015): 5–24.

64 Jenner, *Netflix*, 103.

65 Renata Salecl, *The Tyranny of Choice* (London: Profile Books, 2010).

66 Yanis Tzioumakis, *American Independent Cinema* (Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 276.

67 Jenner, *Netflix*, 144; Michael Z. Newman and Elana Levine, *Legitimizing Television: Media Convergence and Cultural Status* (New York and London: Routledge 2012), 13.

68 Jon Lisi, “Cinephilia Culture and the Fear of Missing Out,” *Pop Matters*, April 10, 2014, <https://www.popmatters.com/179957-cinephilia-culture-and-the-fear-of-missing-out-2495677791.html>.

69 Roy Menarini, "Forme della cinefilia digitale e streaming: Trasformazioni e slittamenti," in *Streaming Media. Distribuzione, circolazione, accesso*, ed. Valentina Re (Milano: Cinergie, 2017), 186.