A FILM THEORY ESSAY

[A Coppola Tradition](http://maxnadon.files.wordpress.com/2013/04/a-coppola-tradition.pdf)

No matter one's education, filmmaking is a very personal type of art. Each director has their own techniques and styles that they develop over the years. They tend to stick to elements they love and mix them with the stories they want to bring to life in a cinematic way. Sofia Coppola is no exception to the rule. Her expertise on colours and cinematography has made her one of the most beloved director in the world of independent cinema. In the following lines, the auteurism film theory will be applied to discuss her use of light, music, the way she creates her shots and how she sticks to the same genre for most of her films.

Her first short movie, *Lick the Star (1998)*, has her name written all over it even though it was shot in black and white. There is sharp cutting, stark compositions and the use of the soundtrack is well done, as usual. Throughout her career, music always seems to have an integral part of her work. She is a director who understands the importance of music. By choosing the right track, she elevates her scenes and underlines her characters' emotion. Speaking of characters, Coppola tells stories about women with women's perspective. In this short film, the artist evokes how difficult high school can be for young girls. Presented through a dramatic and dark tonality, Lick the Star tells the story of a clique of four 7th graders who plan to poison their male classmates, and how the queen bee gets played and unsuccessfully tries to commit suicide.

The talented director knows how to express the raw feelings of having to grow up or having to evolve from a girl’s point of view. These themes are used in *Lick the Stars*, *Marie Antoinette* (2006) and *The Virgin Suicides (1999),* but vulnerability also resonates through all of her movies, but does so in her own way. Instead of relying on a script, Coppola showcases her characters' introspections and moments of reflection in silent scenes that lingers. By doing so, she creates intimate moments that presents the human side and emotional complexity of her characters. She executed this technique in most of her films, but, her work on *Marie Antoinette,* featuring the great Kirsten Dunst*,* is absolutely remarkable and memorable.

The opening credit for her short movie is without doubt worth mentioning. The selection of a rock song, the editing, and the close up shots all worked together and embodies the spirit her the whole movie. The film’s main character's first appearance is done with a slowed down motion which accentuates the effect of her arrival. Sofia always knows how to create an interesting entrance for her main characters. She is also known for having a ‘‘car scene’’ opening. Her shots of sunlight piercing through tree branches, while her protagonist is in a moving vehicle are used in *Somewhere (2010)*, *The Virgin Suicide*, Lick the *Stars* and *Marie Antoinette*.

In *The Virgin Suicides* Coppola’s use of blue and browned pink well represents her ability to play with colours to create emotions and/or ambiance. This particular palette was selected to represent the 70's, but also the inner turmoil, depression and the girl's feeling of suffocation. The ending scenes, diverse shots of the main family’s empty house, are all in a pastel blue palette, bringing in a sorrowful and melancholic touch to the film's conclusion. Knowing this, we can see how Sofia uses her colours in a smart way. She doesn’t just work with them for aesthetic purposes, but rather to elevate the emotions she is trying to convey.

In *Marie Antoinette*, extravagant colours and patterns are in order to reflect the personality of the young queen of France. Here, it means a lot of pink, bright blue, yellow, green and white. Eye candy is surely the best term to define the chosen palette of colours in this movie. Her shots are always done as if they were carefully curated by her character's taste and persona. The final result is something that both resonate romanticism and tragedy.

Fashion is an important part of the Sofia Coppola’s movies as well. The director has always been open about how clothes are an extension of the arts, and how it can help the progression of a storyline. Thus, her chosen costumes and attire have the obligation to fit the characters and/or their story perfectly. *The Virgin Suicides* stayed traditional with dresses that were made by the sisters’ mother. A lot of white, the colour of purity, is applied in the character’s wardrobe reflecting on the parent’s belief in Christianity and their daughter’s oppression. As for *The Bling Ring*, she used Los Angeles's fashion trends from the late 2000's. Each style was wanted to be a reflection of the characters' personality and their attitude, adding the trait of fashionistas and celebrity obsessed to her cast of young rebels. *Marie Antoinette* was surely her most eccentric work fashion-wise. The exuberant lifestyle of the Austrian duchess is presented to the audience with beautiful gowns stamped with floral prints. Each character are seen with their public and private styles thus giving details about who they want to be perceived as and who they truly are underneath all the fuss.