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Girlhood, Postfeminism and Contemporary Female Art-House Authorship: The "Nameless Trilogies" of Sofia Coppola and Mia Hansen-Løve

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Abstract: *Both Sofia Coppola and Mia Hansen-Løve's first three films can be understood as trilogies of female coming of age. These are thematic or conceptual trilogies, declared as such after the fact by their directors, and thus a self-conscious declaration of authorial agency, but the trilogy itself is not given a definitive name. This article explores the complex position these trilogies thus occupy. On the one hand, they testify to the impact of feminist activism and theorising on filmmaking, as they demonstrate the creative power and autonomy of the postfeminist auteur. On the other, they concentrate on narrow, girlish worlds, and remain marked by hesitancy and containment, demonstrating the persistent restrictions for women within postfeminist cultural norms.*

Upon the release of Mia Hansen-Løve's third film, *Goodbye First Love* (*Un amour de jeunesse,* 2011), Jacques Mandelbaum wrote in *Le Monde*: "so with this film, Mademoiselle Hansen-Løve completes the third section of her cinematic training, a magnificent trilogy of youth that whispers to us that loss, however irremediable it might be, helps us to live" (my trans). In this sentence, Mandelbaum reaffirms the implicit framework that underpins critical reception of Hansen-Løve's films and that suggests more broadly the complex network of possibility and constraint for female authorship in the contemporary cinematic field. From the use of "Mademoiselle", drawing attention to the gender and youth of the director, to the allusion to coming-of-age (both in terms of fictional character and personal career trajectory), and most significantly, the use of the term trilogy, Mandelbaum's review offers a thumbnail sketch of some of the contours of contemporary art-house postfeminist authorship that I shall discuss in this article. The critical response to the first three films of Mia Hansen-Løve resonates with and is enriched through comparison to those of Sofia Coppola. In this article, I consider the first three films of each director: Coppola's *The Virgin Suicides* (1999), *Lost in Translation* (2003) and *Marie Antoinette* (2006), and Hansen-Løve's *All is Forgiven* (*Tout est pardonné*, 2007), *The Father of my Children* (*Le Père de mes enfants*, 2009) and *Goodbye, First Love*. These films have been labelled as trilogies both by reviewers such as Mandelbaum and by the directors themselves. This is despite the lack of shared narratives, characters or settings. These are a very particular kind of trilogy, formed in the crucible of reception and self-conscious auteurist assertion of personal creative autonomy and individual style, and linked by perhaps more nebulous continuities of sensibility and theme. Concerning as they do the process of a girl coming-of-age and her attendant emotional history, these trilogies, and their constituent parts, encourage identification between the self-fashioned brand of the girl director and her films (to the extent, for example, that Elvis Mitchell labels *Lost in Translation* part of "an on-going metaphorical autobiography"). The point is not so much how contingent or truthful such assertions are, but rather how, especially given the visibility of Coppola's childhood and family, and Hansen-Løve's personal connections and journalistic work, the trilogies reinforce the sense we are gaining an insight into the personal universes of the women who made them. Furthermore, the format of the accidental trilogy,

designated as such only after the third film has been made, speaks to certain culturally received notions of girlhood itself as an affective state that privileges serial repetitions, close attention to charged sensory experience and a visible performance of the self. Exploring the form of these trilogies and their discursive construction illuminates a particular aspect of female-authored screen media in the twenty-first century: the girl coming-of-age within the specific production context of the postfeminist auteur film. This girl is both the subject of the film's content and understood in some ways as its originating consciousness.

The Continuities of Postfeminism

Bringing together Coppola and Hansen-Løve in a discussion of the contemporary role of the female auteur sheds light on a surprising communality and demonstrates the paradoxes of postfeminism within the culturally elite world of American Indiewood and contemporary French auteur cinema, both of which are positioned commercially within art-house film, and film festival distribution and exhibition circuits. The term postfeminism is one that has had currency in debates concerning the impact of feminism upon gender relations for several years now, and can be used to signal a theoretical position, a type of feminism after the Second Wave, or a regressive political stance. However, as Rosalind Gill explains, when it comes to using the term postfeminism to analyse media production, it is most useful to think of it as a cultural sensibility that typifies an increasing number of television shows, films, magazines and so on. She identifies several features that characterise this sensibility: the notion femininity is a bodily property; the need for obsessive self-surveillance; a focus on individualism, choice and empowerment; and the complex entanglement of feminist and antifeminist ideas. She concludes that, in its promotion of a self-fashioning and self-motivated individual, postfeminist culture is intimately linked to neoliberal idea(l)s of governance and further suggests that the relentless focus on women as the prime targets of this sensibility means neoliberalism itself is a gendered category (147–66).

Gill's identification of postfeminism as a cultural sensibility that informs a certain ideologically dominant, media-articulated understanding of contemporary femininity is very useful and is the starting point for this article's interrogation of postfeminist authorship. However, as Gill herself explains, her article is unable to pay attention to differences of various kinds (162). Furthermore, the cultural production from which Gill draws her examples is entirely Anglophone and mainstream (television programmes such as *What Not to Wear*; lads' mags; chick lit such as *Bridget Jones' Diary*). This is rather typical of writing on postfeminist media culture, which tends to discuss the most paradigmatic films, such as *Mean Girls* (Mark Waters, 2004), the *Sex and the City* films (Michael Patrick King, 2008; 2010) or *The Devil Wears Prada* (David Frankel, 2006), as these films produced by Conglomerate Hollywood "frequently function as lynchpin elements in a system of media synergies" and work as the place where ideological contradiction can be managed (Radner 9).

I am interested in what happens when a postfeminist sensibility is articulated in the culturally privileged arena of contemporary auteur cinema outside of the Anglophone mainstream, where the pressures to contain contradiction via narrative are attenuated through a cultural form more associated with narrative ambiguity and authorial expressivity. Through adopting Coppola and Hansen-Løve as exemplary case studies of how postfeminist sensibility is articulated in various inflections of the art house, this article discusses how their trilogies revisit and complicate some of the aspects of postfeminist media and film identified by Gill and Radner. Several commentators have discussed how Coppola's films trace

postfeminist norms and how her own celebrity image further implicates her in postfeminist culture. Caitlin Yuneun Lewis explains that

> the clearly contrasting views of Coppola's filmic practice—one that she is an innovative feminist film-maker articulating important issues of contemporary womanhood, the other that she is a shallow, spoiled daughter of privilege who spends excessive amounts of her father's money on frivolous girlishness—highlight a contrast that reflects the contemporary dilemmas of femininity that are at work in all aspects of her stardom. Rather than being feminist, anti-feminist, or even quasi-feminist, Sofia Coppola is strongly located in the current climate of postfeminism. (180)

While Lewis identifies Coppola with postfeminist culture mainly through the critical reception of her films and her broader star-director persona, Todd Kennedy and Amy Woodworth both identify a distinctive postfeminist aesthetic at work in her films. For Kennedy, Coppola's films are important above all because of their reformulation of the gaze. He explains that Coppola "has developed an aesthetic that simultaneously evokes foundational gaze theory, comments upon postfeminist concerns about consumption as a feminine ideal and attempts to reverse macho tropes from the 1960s and 1970s male auteur movement, which includes her father" (37). In his argument, *Marie-Antoinette* figures as Coppola's masterpiece, developing an aesthetic that asks the audience to identify and sympathise with the "naked, vulnerable" object of the gaze, not those who gaze upon her (45) (Figure 1). The more difficult critical reception of this film is precisely because, unlike the male narrators of *The Virgin Suicides* or Bill Murray's Bob in *Lost in Translation*, there is no proxy for a male gaze that can intercept and forestall the pain of this identification with the abject and vulnerable sides of femininity. For Woodworth too, Coppola's work provides an opportunity to revisit the vexed question of the male gaze and its formulation in feminist film theory. She explains that "these tasks are important because as scholarship turns towards issues of postfeminism, it seems scholars spend more time discussing character and plot than film form" (142). She too credits *Marie Antoinette* as having a "fully realised feminine aesthetic based on Coppola's careful use of the camera for mediating Marie-Antoinette's experience without objectifying her" (155).



Figure 1: Identifying with Marie-Antoinette as the vulnerable object of the gaze. *Marie Antoinette* (Sofia Coppola, 2006). Sony Pictures, 2006. Screenshot.

This article aims to develop the scholarship outlined above through demonstrating how the trilogy format of Coppola's work speaks to aspects of postfeminist girlhood, examining how it illuminates continuities across the divides of national cinema, and how it helps in pinpointing what the characteristics of postfeminist art cinema might be. Through naming their films as trilogies, both Coppola and Hansen-Løve permit themselves the time and space to engage with the complex, fraught and ambivalent process of growing up female in a cultural formation infused with a postfeminist sensibility. One of the most striking and pertinent features of this culture is a reconfiguration of the relationship between age and femininity and a concomitant intense interest in adolescent girlhood. With its neoliberal emphasis on the (female) self as a flexible project ever amenable to improvement, postfeminism promotes an image of femininity in flux. The girl coming of age can thus be considered as a representative figure of postfeminist values and their impact upon the individual female identified subject more generally, for, as Sarah Projansky astutely explains:

> Girlness—particularly adolescent girlness—epitomises postfeminism. If the postfeminist woman is always in process, always using the freedom and equality handed to her by feminism in pursuit of having it all (including discovering her sexuality) but never quite managing to attain full adulthood, to fully have it all, one can say that the postfeminist woman is quintessentially adolescent … no matter what her age. (45)

The art-house postfeminist girl director carves out an alternative view of girlhood and girlishness to the celebratory rhetoric of "girlpower", giving space to the contradictions and paradoxes of postfeminist girlhood without necessarily seeking to resolve them. I understand these trilogies of girlhood as simultaneously postfeminist and post-feminist: that is to say, as participating in a cinema environment that is shaped by the predominance of postfeminist cultural norms and as self-consciously performing female cinematic auteurship in full conscious knowledge of their coming *after* (or post) the feminist theorising of what it means for a woman to make films.

Self-conscious Authorship: Taking Control

Coppola and Hansen-Løve both self-consciously claim to create an authorial persona in interviews when they talk about their first three films as a trilogy, setting up a preferred reading strategy for film critics and film scholars and thus implicitly the cineliterate audience they are aimed at. They encourage us to interpret them according to auteurist principles—as part of a body of work; as invested with meaning embedded via authorial intent; as allowing insight into personal values and experiences.

Coppola, for example, comments in relation to her films in an interview with *The New York Times*:

> I see them like a trilogy, and this [*Marie Antoinette*] is the final chapter … It's a continuation of the other two films—sort of about a lonely girl in a big hotel or palace or whatever, kind of wandering around, trying to grow up. But in the other ones, you know, they're always sort of on the verge. This is a story about a girl becoming a woman. And in this, I feel like she does. (Hohenadel)

Hansen-Løve uses a strikingly similar vocabulary of narrative themes to confirm her sense that her films form a trilogy:

> I feel like I've made all three films in the same spirit. Even if in this one there's no death or grief, I feel like I've come to the end of something, and whatever I do afterwards, I'm going to have to start over. I'm not going to write anymore about a 16-year-old girl who survives something. In a way, *Goodbye First Love* is my first film that I made my third. I couldn't have started with a film that was so clearly autobiographical. It's the hidden source of the two others, even from a literal point of view, because I filmed the sources of the Loire river, where I spent my childhood. (Delorme 52; my trans.)

The self-conscious declaration of agency and authorship via the promotion of the trilogy offers the perfect vehicle for the paradoxical performance of postfeminist art-house cinema. Firstly, the trilogy format with its emphasis on repetition and duration enables a productive engagement with, or reworking of, the feminist tropes of ennui and boredom (in the case of Coppola) and identity and seriality (in the case of Hansen-Løve), which is post-feminist in the sense of benefitting from and enriching feminist insights. Secondly, the discursive nature of these trilogies, named as such after the fact, gestures to a very particular claiming of the power of authorship that I read as self-consciously repudiating a feminist position and thus contradicting its first function. Of course, such entangled feminist and antifeminist ideas are typical of postfeminist cultural production. Thirdly, this paradox is refracted through the fact that, while confidently positing their first three films as trilogies, neither Coppola nor Hansen-Løve give a definitive form or name to this trilogy. As such, a disavowal, or at least containment of, authorial privilege is enacted at the very moment that the authorial persona is constructed. Thus, at the very moment that female creativity is expressed, it is also contained within an immature or daughterly model, which reflects a broader problem in postfeminist film of picturing the fully grown woman and not seeing her as a threat.

Boredom, Repetition, Duration: Feminist Themes in the Trilogy Form

Coppola and Hansen-Løve's respective decisions to envisage their explorations of girls growing up as trilogies enable the films to take their time exploring the subtleties of girlhood, as the directors have the luxury of cinematic duration. Considerable attention is paid to dead time: the films are marked by everyday events (food preparation, reading, hanging out, walking), ellipsis, dedramatisation and stillness. Even remarkable narrative events—the suicide of a father, the French Revolution—are incorporated into an overall tenor that keeps them within the bounds of the everyday and the banal. For Belinda Smaill, it is precisely the emphasis on predictability and recurrence within the female experience of the everyday in Coppola's films that allows us to see them as "more entrenched in a feminist sensibility than is immediately apparent" (151). She turns to the work of Patrice Petro to support this idea. Petro argues that ennui, boredom and repetition have been central to women's lives and culture. Moreover, Petro notes, much feminist work over the past decades has involved "an aesthetics as well as a phenomenology of boredom: a temporality of duration, relentless in its repetition, and a stance of active waiting, which, at least in their feminist formulations, allow for redefinition, resistance, and change" (93).

Coppola's bored girls have also been analysed by Nathan Lee, who traces the multiple appearances of supine, listless, fed-up girls across Coppola's trilogy: "the Lisbon girls sprawled in a languorous tangle of limbs", "the panty-clad appetizer to *Lost in Translation*, that luscious morsel of pastel booty", "[Marie Antoinette] wakes up late, cozies in carriages, rolls in meadows, passes out on the couch, tumbles into cushions, and droops on damask whenever possible" (24–5) (Figure 2). Lee suggests that the feminist impulse behind these images of passive girls would be revealed in a manner similar to such "hardcore" feminist directors as Catherine Breillat and Chantal Akerman, if only Coppola would end her films with the outbreak of brutal violence that characterises the conclusion of *Fat Girl* (*À ma soeur!*, Catherine Breillat, 2001) and *Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* (Chantal Akerman, 1975) (both films, prior to the sudden depiction of murder and rape, concentrate precisely on the minutiae of girls' and women's lives). However, following Petro's logic, the sheer repetition of bored girls across her films allows us to insert Coppola's work into a feminist continuum, in which the trilogy format enhances the feeling of circularity and repetition embedded within the content of the films. A growing sense of claustrophobia and despair characterises the emphasis on repeated actions that become increasingly futile and meaningless in their very repetition, even if they begin as pleasurable, such as the all-night parties in Versailles in *Marie Antoinette*.



Figure 2: Coppola's bored girls. *The Virgin Suicides* (Sofia Coppola, 1999). Twentieth Century Fox, 2000. Screenshot.

Anna Backman Rogers draws our attention to how this repetition can also be read through the discourse of ritual. Backman Rogers argues that *The Virgin Suicides* and *Lost in Translation* both offer "sensitive portraits of the female rite of passage" and that *Marie-Antoinette* intensifies this focus on "the female adolescent body and the way in which it is re-fashioned and controlled through various rituals." In a series of persuasive and beautiful close readings of sequences from the film, Backman Rogers demonstrates how "the ritual process through which Marie becomes a queen serves to control and re-fashion her identity and body; as such she becomes absorbed in the mechanistic procedures that maintain Versailles as an institution." Most useful for our purposes are the ways in which everyday activities such as eating, waking and dressing become subject to a series of baroque and cumbersome rituals. The ritual becomes a means in and of itself, a way of signalling precisely the unchanging nature of the world and its power hierarchies. The viewer infers that one day is exactly like

the next. This impression is underscored both by the extra-diegetic Baroque music, which has a strict, repetitive rhythm, and the repetition, no fewer than three times, to comic effect, of a sequence that shows Marie-Antoinette rising, dressing, attending mass and taking lunch with her husband. The film invites us to laugh at the sheer stupidity of treating banal activities such as getting up in the morning with such high ceremony, as Marie-Antoinette shivers, naked, while ladies-in-waiting bicker over who has the right to handle her clothes. The ossification of the processes of living into complex, baroque ritual are denounced by the lively young princess as ridiculous, only for her to be chastised by the curt rejoinder that "this is Versailles!", the very location demanding and justifying the grotesque parody of domestic bliss.

Emma Wilson traces another feminist possibility within the aesthetics of return when she discusses the increasing interest in questions of identity and seriality in works by female visual artists and film directors. Drawing on the work of Simone de Beauvoir and Judith Butler, Wilson argues that the figure of the girl captures most acutely the always imperfect and provisional nature of identity and that "the moving image can … be modelled to reflect on temporal shifts, bodily change, [and] the precariousness of subject formation" ("Precarious Lives" 276). While she mentions the films of Noémie Lvovsky, Martine Dugowson, Lucille Hadzihalilovic and Catherine Breillat, it is above all in the films of Hansen-Løve, Wilson argues, that we explore "the figure of the girl, emerging out of childhood, turning in new directions, catalysed to define and unsettle her place in the world" ("Precarious Lives" 281). She discusses sequences that capture identity in its intermittence, stressing the ability of the girl to cast herself adrift from networks of family and inheritance in an attempt to determine her own agency, before she finds herself back in an orbit of obligation and love that enable and constrain her sense of self.

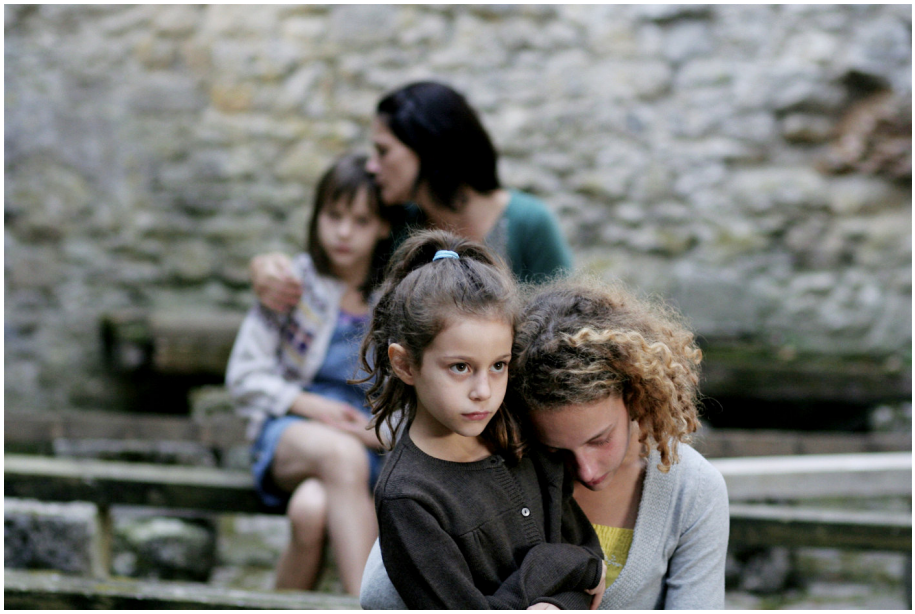


Figure 3: Hansen-Løve fractures girlhood through the ages of her characters. *The Father of My Children* (Mia Hansen-Løve, 2009). Artificial Eye, 2010. Screenshot.

In all of the films in her trilogy, Hansen-Løve offers us a vision of girlhood identity as formed in a play of sameness and difference, identity and desire. In *All is Forgiven*, we see Pamela at the ages of six and seventeen, played by two different actresses, Victoire and

Constance Rousseau. Victoire and Constance are sisters, thus figuring a kinship on screen that is more than illusory. In *The Father of My Children*, the children in question are three girls. In the unified time line of the film's action, girlhood is fractured across the three ages of the girls (Figure 3). In *Goodbye, First Love*, Hansen-Løve returns to a fractured time narrative wherein Lola Créton plays Camille from the ages of fifteen to twenty-four. Across all three films Hansen-Løve figures girlhood as fractured and nonidentical, shifting and changing across relations to the self and to kin. In the very opening sequence of *All is Forgiven*, we see Pamela (Victoire Rousseau) and her father Victor (Paul Blain) playing. Pamela holds a pair of dolls to her chest as her father explains to her that she cannot name them both "*poupée*", as then one could not be distinguished from the other. Dolls are designed with vacant expressions, so that the child can project her own desires and beliefs onto them. Here, it is as if Victor is explaining to Pamela the need for identity to change and holding out to her the possibility, both exhilarating and terrifying, that she will not always know herself, a truth underlined in a later exchange between father and daughter when she confuses her Viennese and Parisian homes as she tries to remember her past. While the home of the Lisbon sisters, the jet-lagged haze of the Tokyo Hyatt and the court of Marie Antoinette create timeless spaces of eternal sameness, with entombing consequences for the girls trapped within them, Hansen-Løve's serial revisiting of girlhood illustrates possibilities of changes to our embodied and affective identities as we move forwards in time.

Gender(ed) Matters: The Discursive Trilogy of Girlhood

Thomas Elsaesser argues that a mere glance at the filmographies of Krzysztof Kieślowski, Michelangelo Antonioni, Werner Herzog, Jean-Luc Godard, François Truffaut and Wim Wenders demonstrates the appeal of the trilogy for the self-identity of the European auteur (qtd. in Perkins and Verevis 7). Indeed, Elsaesser goes on to argue that the trilogy, with its consistent aesthetic approach and repeated cast of players, can be seen to compensate for European art cinema's historic absence of popular genres and stars. These dominant discourses of European cinema have now dissolved into a field of international art cinema, where auteurs aim to appeal to international film festival circuits and have more in common with each other than any bounded sense of a national (or perhaps even continental) identity. Elsaesser lists Lars von Trier, Tom Twyker, Abbas Kiarostami, Hal Hartley, Paul Thomas Anderson, Wong Kar-Wai, Tsai Ming-Liang and Richard Linklater as directors who have more in common with each other than with any national or continental grouping. Intriguingly, many of these directors have made trilogies, as if this form is still intimately connected to notions of auteurist intent and art cinema leanings within this new, transnational, festival-driven framework. Noticeably, however, neither Elsaesser nor Perkins and Verevis, in their summary of his work, comment on the fact that all of these directors are men, as if in this regard we have barely progressed from the all-male groupings that characterised Italian Neo-Realism and the French New Wave.

Through commenting on the trilogy format that characterises the first three films of Coppola and Hansen-Løve, I want partly to address this critical blind spot, suggesting a particular feminist charge in the trilogy format, and also to demonstrate that across the differing, nationally located production contexts in which these two directors work, their gender matters, despite claims they may themselves make. It is no coincidence that, in establishing their auteur credentials, Coppola and Hansen-Løve draw attention to the recurrent motifs and ideas that run through their work; indeed, this can be seen as a self-conscious recuperation of romantic/classical auteur theory in the service of a commercial

need for brand name recognition within competitive funding models. Given that these are the first three films of the directors in question, they operate as a calling card and a self-conscious assertion of authorial agency and subjectivity. Through their trilogies, Coppola and Hansen-Løve perform postfeminist cinematic girlhood as authorial persona and brand identity while their films offer it up as an object of sustained inquiry and debate. If, as Catherine Grant explains in her useful overview of feminist interest in female authorship and what its political purpose may be, questions of agency and subjectivity have become paramount in recent years (as against poststructuralist or psychoanalytic readings, which tended to deny authorial intent), the proclamation of the first three of one's own films as a trilogy is a triumphant assertion of agentic authorship both within and outside of the film texts. While Grant explains that any association with film authorship places the individual concerned into a cultural elite, their proclamation of an auteurist trilogy, and its particular connotation of art-house cinema, places Coppola and Hansen-Løve into a highly unusual position of discursive power and underscores the striking degree of fit between the autonomous female subject posited by postfeminist politics and its (disavowed) reliance on privilege.

In the case of Hansen-Løve and Coppola, the existence of the trilogy bristles with contradiction and paradox concerning issues of commerce and art. Commercial Hollywood trilogies such as *Star Wars* (George Lucas, 1977; 1980; 1983), *The Lord of the Rings* (Peter Jackson, 2001; 2002; 2003) and *The Matrix* (Andy and Lana Wachowski, 1999; 2003; 2003) are planned, tripartite exercises and the trilogy designation is an explicit prop in the promotion and marketing of the films from the outset. The films are marked by continuity of narrative and setting and repetition/development of characters from one film to the next. Such trilogies are associated with cinema as an industrial and commercial entity and related to the proliferation of sequels and franchises (from James Bond to Harry Potter) that mark this form of cinema. Here, in contrast, the trilogy exists as an assertion of authorial control and critical acumen, for it cannot be defined via repetition of narrative, setting, or character: these are auteur-based trilogies of theme, concept and style, coalescing around the figure of the girl. Yet the trilogy is also a form of branding. The assertion of authorship creates and sustains an audience for the work of Coppola and Hansen-Løve. We can see this as symptomatic of broader shifts in the contemporary auteur function and a necessary accommodation to the commercial pressures that their films simultaneously resist (as independent products, produced outside of dominant conglomerate forces, with a highly personal aesthetic recognisable across the films) and embody (as the very logic of the trilogy and its association with repetition and branding demonstrate). As Timothy Corrigan has asserted, there is a commerce of authorship, in which a claim to auteur status is not made on the basis of careful deciphering of signs of genius and singular world view in the text, as would classically have been the case, but rather the development of a cult of personality that makes directors into stars and situates itself in publicity and advertisement. Discussing the auteur Alexander Kluge, Corrigan argues that he has a "specific cultural strategy" in which

> a politics of agency takes its place as much in an extra-textual as in a textual business, more exactly as a "semi-textual" practice where Kluge admits to performing himself as an image of the writer/producer/filmmaker but primarily as a strategy for eliciting certain relations with his audience. In a crucial sense, Kluge's writing of a self in today's national/international film industry situates itself between the more social and political work surrounding the films (his involvements with government policies or television networks) and the reception of his film practice (whose material textuality refuses to be the authority for its reading). (44)

In the very different contexts of Coppola and Hansen-Løve, we are also offered a politics of agency. Girlishness is taken up as part of the brand identity of the author and her trilogy, shaping a link between the director, her image, and her material, so that the films are positioned both as highly personal artistic expression and within broader flows of a postfeminist culture that celebrates youth and consumption. The trilogy helps to navigate the fraught terrain between personal artistic expression and commercial brand identity and is symptomatic of the constraints female authorship works within, with its repetitive investments in mood, tone, emotion and girlhood. This perhaps reflects the narrow feminine fields in which women are permitted to excel within what Diane Negra labels "a platitudinous postfeminist culture that continually celebrates reductions and essentialisms … and … fetishizes female power and desire while consistently placing these within firm limits" (4).

Coppola's "writing of the self" in her media image and film publicity is shaped by notions of chic, girlish femininity. She undertakes a range of activities across the fluid boundaries of directing, modelling and acting that associates her with couture fashion, such as her advertisements for Louis Vuitton and Marc Jacobs, her editing of Paris *Vogue* in July 2005 and her appearance as Australia *Vogue* cover star in August 2013. She offers us an image of authorship not so much as individual genius as a market-place positioning that draws together strands from fashion, music, travel, photography and film to offer a vision of a certain highly desirable, aspirational lifestyle. Nor can we ignore the significance of our extra-textual knowledge that Coppola is a famous daughter, her soft voice and gentle demeanour in contrast to Francis Ford Coppola's ebullient persona.[1]

While Corrigan senses in Kluge's fragmentation, diversification and multiplication a political desire to disperse authorship as authority and play up its material conditions, Coppola's equally fragmented, diverse and multiple body of work illuminates the complex accommodations that must be made for activities traditionally marked as girly or feminine to be recuperated into the high-art world of the film auteur. This is an accommodation that Pam Cook interprets as an act of feminist refusal, as Coppola's brand positioning undoes the traditional art-commerce dichotomy: it is "a radical revision of traditional visions of cinematic authorship that position the (usually male) heroic auteur outside or in conflict with commodity production." Coppola's status as daughter and part of a Hollywood privileged elite and the dreamy, feminine look of her light-saturated films that deliberately *linger* on girlish pleasures could potentially be reread in this light as affording a more radical perspective to the girl whose enjoyment of (and potential empowerment in) consumer culture in usually read as pure acquiescence.

In the case of Hansen-Løve, her identity as a girl auteur is established not within the glamorous, girly and highly commodified feminine world of fashion, perfume and cosmetics, but through savvy navigation of the contemporary French production context which has seen the relative expansion of opportunities for young female filmmakers, as Tim Palmer assesses in some detail (41–54). Hansen-Løve takes a postfeminist stance precisely in her rejection of the significance of her gender, as if feminism is irrelevant to her concerns:

> Like any other filmmaker who is invested in their films, I think I can say my films couldn't be made by anyone else. It just so happens that I'm a woman. ... The world, in the cinema, is increasingly divided into sociological or communitarian identities, such as men or women, separated by a huge chasm. This binary view seems to me without interest or use … What's a feminine vision of the world? What's a vision of

> the world? Between these two questions, I prefer to ask the second: then I feel like I'm opening a window, breathing, moving forward as a filmmaker (29).

Such a position echoes that of an earlier generation of French female filmmakers, such as Diane Kurys, who reject the label "woman filmmaker" for fear of their work being placed into a narrow category. As Carrie Tarr explains, this fear pertains

> within the specific context of French culture and French cinema, in which the concept of the auteur, if ostensibly ungendered, remains resolutely masculine, and in which, paradoxically, despite the growing number of female directors, it is difficult to explore female subjectivity without subscribing to conventional patriarchal notions of French "femininity" and sexual difference. (3)

However, as Tarr goes on to comment, female authored films do nevertheless offer the possibility of greater engagement with female emotions, experiences and concerns, not because women are essentially different from men, but because their work is produced from within a different set of social relations and discourses (5). As the number of female directors has risen in France over the past two decades, so that now some thirty percent of films are directed by women, their films have been made in a variety of styles and with a wide range of content. However, Emma Wilson explains, "whether or not women's film-making may be gender-marked in style and content, it is arguably affected to some degree by women's late-coming and marginal status in the industry" ("État Présent" 221). Hansen-Løve proclaims the primacy of her individual vision, but fails to acknowledge the structural differences in gender that will condition women's access to film, even if merely in the historical sense of her very proclamation of individual ability being against a backdrop of male dominance within the French cinema industry, especially the New Wave as analysed by Geneviève Sellier. In this context it is revealing that when she took part in a round table organised by the Centre Georges Pompidou and the trendy urban French cultural review *Les Inrockuptibles* in December 2008 on the theme of "Filiation, Transmission and Possible Genealogies of Current Cinema", including discussions on cinephilia and more specifically on the legacy of the New Wave cinema on contemporary French cinema, no reference was made to the fact Hansen-Løve was the only woman on the panel (of four directors), nor that her inheritance would be specifically marked by the historically marginal position women occupied in New Wave cinema.

In ironic proof of Wilson's point about women's continued marginal status within the global context of cinema, Hansen-Løve's assertion of individual primacy is made in a special issue of *Cahiers du cinéma* from September 2012, produced under the rubric "Where Are the Women?" This issue was produced in response to the feminist organisation La Barbe's petition after there were no female-directed films presented in competition at the 2012 Cannes Film Festival. Stéphane Delorme, the editor of *Cahiers du cinéma*, made the decision to interview female directors from around the world about their thoughts on this. Strikingly, the journal prioritised young filmmakers, noting a desire to understand what, exactly, might characterise a feminist response to this lack of representation in a postfeminist era where the women's cinema of Marguerite Duras, Chantal Akerman and Agnès Varda and its belief in a feminist politics of form has passed. *Cahiers du cinéma* places the problem of representation and gender very much in the lap of young, female filmmakers: filmmakers who, while they might not be chronologically girls, are positioned as feminism's discursive daughters, coming to filmmaking in the wake of 1970s debates concerning the male gaze and conscious of how auteurism has been traditionally constructed as masculine. Hansen-Løve's assertion of her

individual vision and right chimes with a postfeminist perspective which benefits from feminist struggle (here, the right to make films and desire for fair representation) while repudiating any ongoing relevance for feminist politics. Ironically, then, Hansen-Løve's defence of the filmmaker as individual reminds us of her status as postfeminist girl filmmaker, able to fashion her own films, and their intense focus on the experiences of girls, precisely because of the historical and institutional moment in which she finds herself.

The Paradoxes of Girlhood, or What's in a Name?: Containing Meanings

Hansen-Løve's defiant expression of directorial autonomy places her performance as girl auteur into a similar postfeminist frame as that of Coppola. Both of them benefit from new possibilities opened up to young female filmmakers in such a way that a feminist politics of the image may seem irrelevant to their concerns. Yet, despite the positive postfeminist branding of their versions of girlhood in their star-auteur images, Coppola and Hansen-Løve's three films each stage aspects of female adolescence in a mode that pays close attention to loss, death and trauma in the complex negotiation of growing up female. In all three of Coppola's films, her female characters find themselves trapped in claustrophobic situations. In two of her three films, her girls are in exile, lost in an alien environment; in a different two, her characters' imprisonment ends in their death. In all three of Hansen-Løve's films, her characters experience the devastating loss of a significant male figure—either the suicide of a father or the termination of a love affair. In two of the three films, the girls have a foreign mother, creating ruptures between the world of the mother and that of the daughter.

Not only are there echoes and resonances within each set of films, there are also similarities across the two bodies of work. For Coppola and Hansen-Løve, girlhood constructs itself in opposition. Frequently the figure of the mother represents oppression whereas fathers are, in the words of the title of Hansen-Løve's debut film, forgiven all their trespasses. In *The Virgin Suicides* the grief-stricken and mild-mannered Mr. Lisbon (James Woods)is a far more sympathetic character than his strict wife (Kathleen Turner) who insists that their daughter Lux (Kirsten Dunst) burn her rock records. Furthermore, *The Virgin Suicides* is narrated retrospectively by a middle-aged man and thus concerns male midlife yearning for youth as much as it does the plight of its girl protagonists: "the only way we could feel close to the girls was through these impossible excursions which have scarred us forever, making us happier with dreams than with wives." Similarly, *Lost in Translation* pays attention to a mid-life male identity crisis, having Bill Murray as Bob Harris "act out the myth of masculinity that he [now] knows is only an absurd performance, but nonetheless has rewarded him with a career, fame and recognition of sorts" (McCabe 169). Telling, here, is the continuity between Hansen-Løve and Coppola's approach toward mother- and father-figures and the gendered attributes of the older people towards whom presumably the coming-of-age narrative is propelling its youthful protagonists. Coppola's sympathetic approach toward older male figures is in stark contrast to a hostility toward middle-aged women, who are seen as either bossy harridans, if mothers (Mrs. Lisbon (Kathleen Turner) and Marie-Antoinette's mother, Maria Theresa (Marianne Faithfull)), or lonely, desperate and promiscuous, if (presumably) childless (the nightclub singer in *Lost in Translation* (Catherine Lambert); Madame du Barry (Asia Argento) in *Marie-Antoinette*). While fathers are highly unreliable in Hansen-Løve's films, mothers again seem to bear the brunt of their daughters' hostility and resentment. Jean-Marc Lalanne perceptively comments about *All is Forgiven* that:

> Pamela bears no resentment toward her volatile father. He reappears and she welcomes him with open arms. However, some resentment advances in this film, but not from its main character. The resentment comes from the film itself and the surprising role it gives to the mother in its second half. As a victim, she is moving and dignified (her role in the first half). In the film's second half, she is relegated to the extreme periphery of the story … In a completely shocking, and almost unconscious way, the film can't forgive the mother for not having pardoned the father too … This hostility, which is never overtly expressed, other than by the narrative form of the film, towards a fairly irreproachable character, is what is most troubling about this film. (My trans.)

In the remarkably consistent depiction of their girl protagonists' emotional universes of melancholic or lost men and bitter, angry, neglectful or needy women, we can find a notable resonance between these films and what Kathryn Rowe Karlyn labels the "matrophobic" films more usually associated with girls and postfeminism such as *Titanic* (James Cameron, 1997) or *Mean Girls* (Mark Waters, 2004) (20). These films offer up a vision of "Girl World": "a liminal time and space between childhood and adulthood where girls rule" (74). However, while "Girl World" may seem to offer girls an unruly space of experimentation and desire, it remains nevertheless contained within a patriarchal, postfeminist culture, awash with rescue fantasies, the expressive fun of fashion and make-up remaining entangled with more insidious ideas about feminine acceptability and body image. Girls have turned their enjoyment of femininity into a sign of unruliness—a defiance of maternal (feminist) interdiction—and remain daddy's girls. "Mothers may be more present in these postfeminist films than in classical Hollywood romantic comedies, but fathers remain their daughters' emotional touchstones … Girl World tends to be daddy-identified, a bittersweet recognition that outside it's still a man's world" (80, 98).

Even within the process of classifying the films as trilogies, there is still an inherent resistance on the part of both directors to giving final, definitive shape to their form through naming the respective trilogy, a hesitancy that suggests an ambivalence that lies at the heart of female authorship for these directors and the politics of their agency. On the one hand, they proclaim their authorship, demonstrate their financial and creative autonomy and independence, and attend to the ambivalences and frustrations of girlhood in contemporary culture in their films. On the other, in both their auteur images and their films, they remain contained within a daddy-identified girl world. This paradox is perhaps articulated in the fuzziness of the trilogy: proclaimed but significantly not named. Hansen-Løve's first three films were screened as a retrospective at the TIFF Bell Lightbox in Toronto in August 2012, under the title "Fathers and Daughters", a label she debated:

> To me it's very obvious that they make a trilogy … They are so much connected—three portraits of young girls, about the passing of time, about the power of filming—about melancholy, in a way. They come from the same parts of me. But I have a hard time finding a title for this trilogy. It would be easy to make a title with "fathers and daughters," but that's not exactly what I want to say. (Wilner)

Coppola performs exactly the same kind of rhetorical strategy, confirming that she considers her first three films a thematic or conceptual trilogy, but being rather vague about what exactly she's filming:

> When I finished this movie I definitely looked at the... that there's a connection between the themes of my films. I feel like this is sort of the final chapter of something I was working on—it's the next step of a girl's evolution from *Lost in Translation* [where] she's on the verge of trying to find her identity. I feel like this story is her going from a girl into a woman. So for me, there's a connection. (Gilchrist)

Names are never innocent in the fields of authorship or feminist studies. As Janet Staiger explains, the name of the author has a particular weight for female directors. Commenting on poststructuralist deconstructions of the author coinciding with the rise of identity politics, she explains that "depriving us of our voices just as we are speaking more loudly seems like a plot" and justifies feminist interest in female authorship precisely as a question of names and naming: "What matters whose speaking? … It matters, for example, to women who still routinely lose their proper name on marriage, and whose signature—not merely their voice—has not been worth the paper it's been written on" (49). These trilogies only come into existence through the process of being named as such, as they lack any internal markers of that status. In the difficulty these directors encounter in giving these trilogies a definitive name, Coppola and Hansen-Løve thus simultaneously assert authorship and withdraw from claiming any kind of definitive stance over their work. They present us with an image of postfeminist art-house authorship as a complex negotiation, where creative agency is nevertheless balanced with a performance of girlish moderation, acquiescence and hesitancy.

Note

[1] Particularly telling here, for example, is Coppola's appearance on *The Late Show with David Letterman* in 2004 ("Sofia Coppola on Letterman"). Coppola had just received four Oscar nominations for her second film *Lost in Translation*. Letterman asked her if she received advice from her father, and if her father visited the film set, rather than posing any questions about her own style, technique, or decisions. For more on Coppola as daughter, see Handyside.

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