

«We' re just little people, Louis» : Marie-Antoinette on Film

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In 1938, with much fanfare and advance notice, MGM released the lavish costume drama, *Marie-Antoinette*. Designed as a star vehicle for Norma Shearer, one of the most popular Hollywood actresses of the decade, the film's supporting cast included matinee idol Tyrone Power as Marie-Antoinette's supposed lover, Count Axel von Fersen, the ageing Shakespearean actor John Barrymore as an ageing Louis XV, and Robert Morley as a singularly befuddled and inept Louis XVI. Although MGM executives mismanaged the film's production, they promoted an energetic ad campaign for the finished product and arranged for Shearer to reprise her role on the «Maxwell House Coffee Radio Hour.» In the end, *Marie-Antoinette* achieved only moderate commercial success but it met with a generally favourable critical reaction. Praised by the *New York Herald Tribune* as «the most sumptuous historical spectacle of the year ,» it was named one of the ten best movies of 1938 by *Film Daily* and was nominated for four Academy Awards.¹

Today, the film seems to have little critical merit. Norma Shearer was not an especially talented actress under any circumstances, but even her limited abilities suffered in *Marie-Antoinette*, as her mugging and fluttering went unchecked by the minimalist direction of W. S. Van Dyke (known as «One-Shot Woody» for his breakneck production style). Tyrone Power veered in the opposite direction, giving a flat, nearly affectless performance. Judged in cinematic terms, the film's greatest appeal is kitsch: it boasts remarkable costumes, theatrically over-stated performances by Robert Morley and Joseph Schildkraut (as Philippe d' Orleans), and a weepy celebration of a kind hearted but misunderstood Queen. And yet, while *Marie-Antoinette* may have few aesthetic merits, it is significant in representing a popularised American vision of the French Revolution and, in company with *Tale of Two Cities*, it is one of less than a half dozen such films that continue to find a contemporary audience through video.²

Scholars have traditionally shied away from films such as this, preferring to treat cinema that restricts itself to domestic history; French films about the French Revolution, for example, or American films about the Civil War.³ Certainly there are clear disciplinary reasons for this approach, but it has imposed an unnecessarily narrow perspective on rich bodies of cinematic work. American film-makers by no means restricted themselves to the domestic experience, and their breadth of inspiration was increasingly important as movies became the principal form of American mass culture in the thirties and forties. Aggressively marketed and filling an ever-greater portion of Americans' leisure time, movies provided audiences across the country with common texts that offered lessons about politics, culture, and sexual mores; they became, as Margaret Thorp argued in 1939, a «new form of collective symbolism.»⁴ And historical films constituted no small part of this collective symbolism. However, as film-makers ranged widely, to embroider American and European pasts alike and so seem to offer an important new source of film-goers' historical knowledge, they remained profoundly rooted both temporally and geographically. And so they produced films whose representations of the past were profoundly shaped by current and American concerns, as well by the classic narrative style that dominated Hollywood in those years.⁵

Marie-Antoinette is just such a film. Ostensibly based on Stefan Zweig's biography of the French Queen, the film's narrative and characterisations were shaped by the genre requirements of the Hollywood standard and infused with concerns that plagued Americans at the end of a decade of economic depression. Generic conventions determined the film's representation of historical causality for, in order to achieve the Hollywood desideratum of temporal and narrative unity, MGM scenarists cast the events and personalities of Marie-Antoinette's life as the principal causes of the French Revolution. Meanwhile, the turmoil over sex roles that rumbled through American society in the Thirties governed the explanatory weight given particular events and personal characteristics. Faced with the economic disruption of older family structures and sex roles, Americans turned their attention away from women's struggle for personal and professional independence to focus instead on the blow that the Depression

dealt to ideals of masculine strength and self-sufficiency. And this shift markedly shaped the way in which the French Queen's life was represented cinematically, producing a very precisely gendered vision of Old Regime France. In *Marie-Antoinette*, the heroine's search for an ideal masculine authority serves the narrative by giving cause for the French Revolution at the same time that it reflects prevailing concerns in Depression-age America about the status of contemporary masculinity.

Stefan Zweig's biography of Marie-Antoinette, published in German in 1932 and translated into English in 1933, was subtitled *The Portrait of an Average Woman*. The author introduced his work by explaining that his purpose was to strip away both the hagiographic and the demonising impulses that had characterised earlier descriptions of Marie-Antoinette, in order to reveal the «mediocre woman» whom History required to play a part in a «profoundly moving drama».

Had it not been for the outbreak of the Revolution, this insignificant Habsburg princess [...] would have continued [...] to live her life after the fashion of hundreds of millions of women of all epochs. She would have danced, chattered, loved, laughed, made up her face, paid visits, bestowed alms; she would have borne children and would at long last have died in her bed, without ever having lived in any true sense of the term.⁶

But, Zweig continued, the suffering and misfortunes of the Revolution reshaped the French Queen, «until all the greatness derived from a long line of ancestors (though till now hidden) had been brought to light. [...] Just before the mortal, the transient frame perished, the immortal work of art was perfected. Marie-Antoinette, the mediocrity, achieved a greatness commensurate with her destiny.» (pp. xiv-xv)

In writing this biography, Zweig faced the complex task of explaining the contours and development of Marie-Antoinette's individual character, as well as the relationship between her life and the period in which she lived: thus, he had, to a certain extent, to explain the causes of the French Revolution. Zweig argued that the single most important detail in the life of Marie-Antoinette and in the development of the French nation, was Louis XVI's impotence, which prevented him from consummating his marriage for almost seven years. The public and private consequences of this impotence were equally disastrous. The King's «secret shame» (Zweig's nomenclature) rendered him shy and retiring, incapable of exerting his will over wife or subjects. Meanwhile, Marie-Antoinette, frivolous and sexually frustrated, turned to an extravagant lifestyle that attracted the attention and hostility of enemies at and away from Court. To make matters worse, she intervened in political affairs on impulse: responding to personal whims or the prompting of the ambitious Duchess de Polignac, Marie-Antoinette developed neither the knowledge about, nor the sustained interest in politics that had been the source of the domestic and diplomatic successes of her mother, Maria-Theresa.

Zweig went on to describe the scandal of the Diamond Necklace Affair, when extortionists used the Queen's name to defraud a jeweller of an extremely expensive necklace, as the catalyst of long-simmering discontents. Regardless of the Queen's innocence, even total ignorance of the original affair, her name had been dragged through the mud and she henceforth became a scapegoat for the troubles that plagued France. The long-hostile nobility accused her of isolating them from the King, just as the mistresses of Louis XV had done in earlier decades. Meanwhile, an increasingly cultured and self-confident bourgeoisie claimed that Marie-Antoinette was responsible for forfeiting France's international prestige even as she fed its debts. Finally, the overburdened peasantry came to believe that it was the Queen's extravagance, rather than inefficient economic structures and an anachronistic system of taxation, that were the source of their ills.

Thus, while Stefan Zweig focused on Marie-Antoinette's life, he situated it within the broader context of eighteenth century politics and culture: he sought to explain why the Queen's contemporaries hated her, and how the seemingly personal details of a family life at Court dovetailed with broader historical change to contribute to the causes of the Revolution. But context, like Zweig's avowed hostility toward hagiography, was stripped away by the scenarists, directors, and actors who turned the biography into a film.

Ironically, biography is a likely source for a classic Hollywood narrative because, as David Bordwell has explained, these narratives are character-centred and driven by the protagonist's desire to overcome obstacles in pursuit of a specific goal. «It is easy to see in the goal-oriented protagonist an

ideology of American individualism and accomplishment, but it is the peculiar accomplishment of the classical cinema to translate this ideology into a rigorous chain of cause and effect.»⁷ The protagonist's efforts acquire even grander significance in historical films, for they do not simply drive the story forward; they become the principal cause of historical events. Thus, in *Marie-Antoinette*, the protagonist's private search for love and conjugal guidance set in motion the events that lead to the collapse of the French monarchy and the opening of the French Revolution.

The central dilemma of Marie-Antoinette's life is foreshadowed in the first scene of the film. Having announced to her daughter that she will be wed to the dauphin of France, Maria-Theresa offers advice for a union that sounds more like bourgeois marriage than political alliance. Marie-Antoinette must try, she urges, to accustom herself to the manners of the French and become a good queen and a good wife; to do so she must, above all, «trust to your husband.» However, the futility of Maria-Theresa's parting words are revealed upon the princess' arrival at Versailles. Tall but podgy, clumsy and thoroughly tongue-tied, the dauphin seems far from the kind of husband upon which an adolescent girl might depend for guidance. Matters go from bad to worse on the wedding night itself. After the marriage bed has been blessed and the Court withdraws to leave the royal couple in isolation, Marie-Antoinette attempts to win over the withdrawn dauphin and accomplish aspirations that are both domestic and dynastic. But the dauphin silences her chatter about how many children they might have by blurting out an explanation that was, doubtless, rendered enigmatic by the conditions of the Hays Code. «There will be no heirs to the throne. . .because of me.» Having revealed to Marie-Antoinette that he can make her neither wife nor mother, he swears her to secrecy on the matter and leaves her alone to collapse in tears on the empty marriage bed.

The rest of the film's narrative, which resumes two years later, is set in motion by the dauphin's physical and psychological impotence. Frustrated by Louis' refusal to play the husband and defend her against the attacks of the King's mistress, Madame du Barry, Marie-Antoinette makes an alliance with the ambitious and reptilian duc d'Orleans. Under d'Orleans' patronage, the dauphin becomes the centre of a dazzling and scandalous social life until she disgraces herself by publicly snubbing du Barry, thus provoking Louis XV to prepare her return to Vienna with the explanation that she has failed to bear an heir. Worse yet, d'Orleans abandons the dauphin upon hearing of her disgrace. During the night that follows, Marie-Antoinette encounters the handsome Swedish count Axel von Fersen and, falling in love, she prepares to embrace the annulment of her marriage. But upon returning to the Palace, she learns that the King is on his deathbed and the dauphin has undergone a mysterious transformation with the result that, «now we can truly be one.» Fersen tells the Queen that she must live openly and honestly, doing what is best for her people, and he leaves for America. Marie-Antoinette becomes a good wife, a good mother, and a good Queen, but her subjects cannot forget the past because the scorned and ever-ambitious d'Orleans, turning from palace intrigue to rabble-rousing, stirs them to revolt. The French Revolution ensues; Fersen returns to mastermind the royal family's escape; the attempt fails and eventually Louis, then Marie-Antoinette herself, goes to the scaffold.

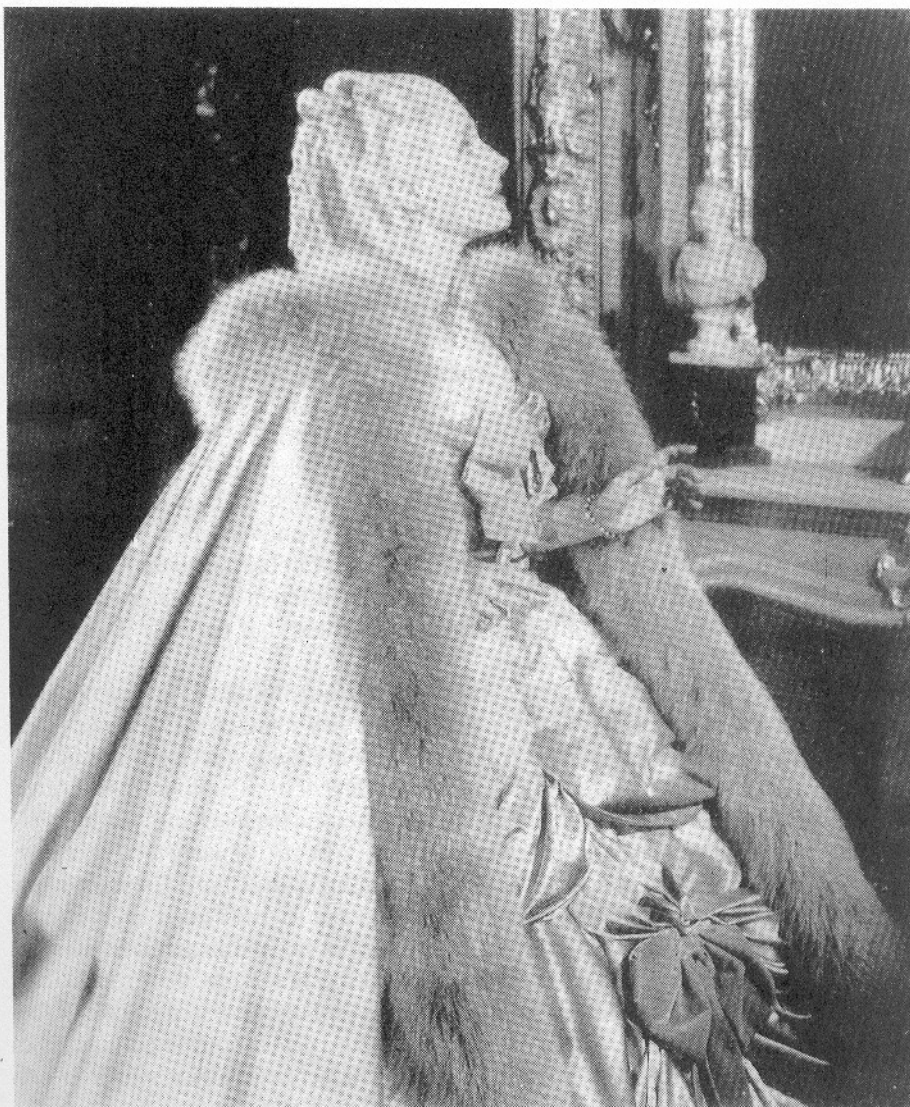
Just as film-makers shaped the events of Marie-Antoinette's life in France to achieve narrative unity, so they represented the unhappy Queen and her cohorts according to Hollywood principles of character development: each figure embodies one or two principal traits that define him or her and, more importantly, motivate the plot.⁸ At the film's centre is, of course, Marie-Antoinette, whose character is defined by her search for love and her desire to fulfil her mother's aspirations by becoming a good Queen. But Marie-Antoinette's ability to accomplish these goals is alternately thwarted and facilitated by the men she encounters in France; encounters which, logically, bring the male characters' essential traits into play. Each of these men- Louis, d'Orleans, and Fersen- may be said to be trying out for the role of «husband» in Marie-Antoinette's life: in other words, each is potentially the man who will offer her the love and guidance she needs to accomplish her goals. And as they represent different conjugal possibilities, so each character represents a different kind of maleness; but only the ideal, truly masculine type- Fersen- will succeed.

In making gender a central preoccupation of *Marie-Antoinette*, Hollywood film-makers found a certain affinity with the period that they represented. Sex roles and sexual practices played an important part in political discourse developed during the final years of the Old Regime and throughout the first half of the Revolution itself. After the death of Louis XV in 1774, libellous pamphlets accused the late King's mistresses, Madame du Pompadour and her successor, Madame du Barry, of using their sexuality to

control the King and involve themselves in the politics of the Court. These accounts employed pornographic detail to depict key players and to drive home their central point: that the dominance of women at Court corrupted politics and emasculated the men who should properly be running the country. For a variety of reasons, these same kinds of attacks came to focus on Marie-Antoinette in the mid-eighties, in the wake of the Diamond Necklace Affair. And as libelists made these accusations in pornographic pamphlets, more sober arguments about the corrupting influence of women's involvement in politics were developed by recognised members of the Enlightenment, most notably by Jean-Jacques Rousseau.⁹ These two strands of thought came together during the Revolution, to reach their zenith in 1793 when revolutionary prosecutors went beyond accusing Marie-Antoinette of treason to claim that she had committed incest with her son.¹⁰

Marie-Antoinette initially seems to follow the lead of eighteenth-century criticism, problematizing women's place in politics through visual criticism of the inappropriate and potentially emasculating influence of Madame du Barry. We first see her feeding a clothed poodle that stands uncomfortably on its hind legs as du Barry asks the King, «Have you ever had a gallant more decorous or obedient?» But this woman's nastiness proves to be motivated by simple feminine jealousy as she complains of having been abandoned by her courtiers when the dauphin arrived at Court, and her concerns seem properly familiar in their emphasis on dynasty. For, astonishingly, it is Madame du Barry who proves to be most concerned about Marie-Antoinette's failure to bear an heir to the throne, and so her mocking of the dauphin- which twice serves as crucial plot device- is founded on the desire to continue a lineage from which she herself is excluded. Meanwhile the other harpy of eighteenth-century literature, Marie-Antoinette, is shielded from all hint of accusation by the very structure of the film's plot, which requires that she plays the part of demure heroine.

Women's potential for harm is, however, peripheral to Marie-Antoinette for other than generic reasons, for the film's gender concerns were also shaped by the society in which, and for which it was produced. Pornographers and political theorists in eighteenth-century France were, in part, able to blame their social and political anxieties on women because they could find a handful of remarkable and exemplary figures: women who, as *salonières* or members of the Court, decisively shaped the political and intellectual life of the realm. In twentieth-century America, on the other hand, a women's movement that was only nascent had been powerfully undermined by the economic crisis of the Depression. By the end of the 1930s, women had suffered both economically and culturally: while the Depression cost them a disproportionate share of the labor market, new Hollywood production codes encouraged representations of women that promoted sexual discretion and the sustenance of nuclear families headed by men.¹¹ *Marie-Antoinette's* representation of women was consistent with this transformation, for the film celebrities a heroine whose love exceeded worldly ambition and transcended all obstacles, even death.



Norma Shearer was "Marie-Antoinette"

But women's status and representation were not the only gender issues of the Thirties. Masculinity was in flux as well, and it was on this point that *Marie-Antoinette* delivered its most pointed commentary. Unemployed or underemployed, American working men felt a keen loss of status in the 1930s; as their earning power declined, many believed that their positions as heads of households were endangered as well. Couples reported that their sexual relations diminished in these years as women's increasingly important contributions to the family economy freed them from the compulsion to unfailingly agree to sex, or as men's impaired self-esteem impinged on their virility.¹² Against this background, *Marie-Antoinette's* exploration of masculinity can be seen as both reflection of, and attention to concerns that were common within the film's projected audience.

We have already given brief consideration to Louis XVI's impotence, both literal and figurative. And it is, in truth, his figurative impotence that is the greater source of trouble. *Marie-Antoinette* initially agrees to keep her (nominal) husband's secret and stand by his side, and we are given to understand that she does so faithfully for two years; we next see her whiling away a deadening afternoon with a female

friend while Louis comes and goes from his workshop like a happy child. But when du Barry viciously attacks the dauphin's barrenness, and Louis refuses to bring the matter to his father's attention, Marie-Antoinette loses all patience. «This woman only dares to insult me because you seem to despise me,» she rages at Louis. «I want life to be rich and full and beautiful.» She goes on to make clear that it is not the dauphin's actual failure at being a husband that is the source of her discontent; it is his refusal to even play the part. Determined to seek other means to have herself recognised as the dauphine of France, she turns to an alliance with the duc d' Orleans, the King's cousin and a scorned minion of Madame du Barry .

In the world of *Marie-Antoinette*, d' Orleans proves to be the most dangerous character at Court, perhaps in all of France, and his untrustworthiness is made manifest to the viewer by his sexually ambiguous appearance. Even at a Court in which all men wear silk and lace, d' Orleans is distinctively feminised: his eyebrows are pencilled into a permanent arch and he alone among all the characters, male or female, has a mouth obviously painted into a cupid's bow; his gestures are delicate, his expression sneering, and he speaks in an unnaturally high voice. The physical impression is reinforced by Marie-Antoinette's innuendo when she refuses him a kiss at an artist's ball by sneering, «Perhaps you don't have enough *allure* Philippe.» When d' Orleans replies that it may be his «*excess* of allure» that has caused her to refuse him the kisses she gives other men at Court, Marie-Antoinette slaps him. And this gesture reveals the full dimensions of the character, for the duc d' Orleans visibly relaxes and allows a smile of pleasure to cross his face. «Thank you» he whispers as, finally, he and the dauphin kiss.

Vito Russo has argued that, in the films of the Twenties and Thirties, effeminate male characters served as measures of the masculinity of the «real» men who surrounded them, and this is the heavily laden role accorded to d' Orleans.¹³ D' Orleans underscores masculine weakness because his ability to join Marie-Antoinette's inner circle makes clear the extent of Louis' impotence and renunciation of authority.¹⁴ But the duc is not the benign or comic measure that Russo describes; rather, he is a malignant presence who undermines the dauphine's standing and, finally, strikes at the very root of the tiny bourgeois circle of the royal family. Under his tutelage, Marie-Antoinette gambles, attends «artists' balls», and spends outrageous sums of money on clothes and jewels; activities that damage her's and the Court's reputations, and which will, in the end, serve d' Orleans efforts to rouse the populace against the monarchy.

If d' Orleans first serves to measure the impotence of Louis XVI, he later throws into relief the sufficient and appropriate masculinity of the man who will act as Marie-Antoinette's savior: Count Axel von Fersen. Representational, Fersen's appearance is as evocative as that of his antithesis. While the latter carries Court fashion to outrageous excess, the former shuns it almost altogether. His clothes are dark and simple; he does not even wear a powdered wig. And like d' Orleans, so Fersen's behavior confirms the suggestion of his appearance from his first meeting with Marie-Antoinette. While still under the thrall of the evil duc, the dauphin invites Fersen into a gaming house to help her win a turn at forfeits. Rejecting the warning of his companion in the street, who tells him that it is Marie-Antoinette who has beckoned, Fersen joins her circle only to find that they are pretending to be an actor's troupe. Once amongst this company, where d' Orleans vies with the women in ogling the Count, Fersen's self-possession and reserve stand in marked contrast to the laughter and innuendo being exchanged by the other men. Playing along with the ruse that Marie-Antoinette is an actress, Fersen claims that she is known throughout Paris for kindness and easy virtue alike. When he persists in this judgement even after the dauphin has claimed her true identity, Fersen makes clear his unswerving scrupulousness and the fact that he sees the woman rather than the royal symbol.

It is moral rigor and a determination to recall Marie-Antoinette to her duty that characterise Fersen throughout. The Count only declares his love for the dauphine after she has fallen into disgrace, and he retreats as she prepares to ascend the throne, explaining that nothing must stand between Marie-Antoinette and her people. It is clearly this scrupulousness and authority that the young woman has sought all along for she tells Fersen rapturously, «With you I'll be everything I'm meant to be: serious, and helpful and... a *good* Queen.» Even when he leaves, it is with the command that she continue to meet the standard he has set for her.

Fersen: If you need me I shall come to you.

Antoinette: I shall always need you.

Fersen: And if I should ask you, 'Was it well done?' You will tell me, 'It was well done.'

Until this point, Marie-Antoinette has been the active one who sets goals, takes action, makes future plans but now Fersen, in exerting the authority she seeks, has fixed her in place. Appropriately enough then, it is he who walks away from this meeting, the camera racing backward before him, as Marie-Antoinette stands silently in the deepening shadows of the background.

Fersen's declaration of love and Louis XV's death occur in scenes that follow upon one another to constitute the central turning-point of the film. Here, the context shifts from static Old Regime to revolutionary climate as both members of the royal couple achieve sexual maturity. But the transformation is not absolute: the old King's death may have rendered the dauphin sexually potent, but he remains the psychological innocent who relies upon Marie-Antoinette for guidance. Meanwhile, she has found a masculine power to back her throne and so can play her part by becoming, quite literally, a Queen Mother. She bears children and includes the King among them, preparing his speeches, guiding his policy, and imposing economies on the royal household that become manifest in costumes with increasingly discreet necklines.

But history has determined that this will not be a film with a happy ending and it is the unwelcome return of the unmanly man, the duc d'Orleans, that proves to be the royal family's undoing. Frustrated in his ambitions by his break with Marie-Antoinette, d'Orleans turns to rabble-rousing. He stirs class hatred by circulating stories amongst the people about royal expenditures. And the crowd that he rouses is as unmindful of proper authority as had been the youthful dauphine: they refuse the offers of assistance from a deputy to the Assembly and shout instead that they will head to the Bastille. Worse yet, they are as ignorant of proper gender roles as the duc d'Orleans for, when a crowd invades the royal household in the Tuileries Palace, a man steps forward to slap Marie-Antoinette. Here, finally, Louis takes action by restraining the man with the reminder that, «It's cowardly to strike a woman.»

But Louis' action is brief and fails to be decisive. The rest of the film, like the rest of Zweig's biography, unwinds as a series of disappointments and humiliations that lead almost inexorably to the scaffold. The extent of d'Orleans' corroding influence on the royal family is made clear in scenes of pathos that follow upon one another as Louis joins his family for a last dinner in the prison of the Temple before heading to the guillotine and then, immediately after the King's execution, guards arrive to wrest the dauphin from the arms of his weeping mother, Marie-Antoinette. Deprived of her double role of Queen-Mother by the emasculated d'Orleans, Marie-Antoinette ages quickly and follows her husband to the guillotine. But death is cinematically subverted: the viewer is spared the sight of the Queen's head falling beneath the blade as the film gives the last scene to Fersen, who stands alone above the city, preparing to cherish the memory of the woman who would do as he commanded and say, «It was well done.»

My point here is not that Hollywood somehow got the history of the French Revolution wrong; Pierre Sorlin, Marc Ferro, and others have argued eloquently that, like more traditional forms of historical writing, cinematic representations of history involve interpretation.¹⁵ Rather, I am concerned with the particular kinds of interpretations that *Marie-Antoinette* promoted. Above all, American film-makers drew on their own national traditions and contemporary concerns in representing eighteenth-century France. Unable to conceive of a world in which women actively shaped politics and culture, they painted a picture of Old Regime society that suffered bitterly from the absence of bourgeois marriages and households headed by men. Had Marie-Antoinette's affairs been left to follow a more «natural» course, the film implies, we would not have known of her at all; not, as Zweig suggests, because she was a particularly mediocre woman but simply because she was a woman. Under other circumstances, she would have remained happily in the shadows where she belonged because she had found fulfillment in a patriarchal marriage. And ironically, this is where Hollywood hagiographers found an unexpected point of contact with some of their historical subjects for, in making masculinity the only potential savior of the French throne, they implied that they found the notion of womanly authority as monstrous as had pornographers and republicans in the eighteenth century.

O. T. *Marie-Antoinette*. Production: Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (USA, 1938). Producer: Hunt Stromberg. Director: W.S. Van Dyke (revolutionary sequences: Julien Duvivier). Screenplay: Claudine West, Donald Ogden Stewart, Ernst Vajda, based on the book by Stefan Zweig. Photography: William Daniels. Music: Herbert Stothart. Art Directors: Cedric Gibbons, William A. Hoving. Editor: Robert J. Kern. Set Decorator: Edwin B. Willis. Gowns: Adrian. Leading Players: Norma Shearer (Marie-

Antoinette), Tyrone Power (Count Axel von Fersen), John Barrymore (Louis XV), Gladys George (Mme. DuBarry), Robert Morley (Louis XVI), Joseph Schildkraut (Duc d' Orleans), Reginald Gardiner (Count d' Artois), Albert van Dekker (Count of Provence), Henry Stephenson (Count of Mercey), Leonard Penn (Toulan), Joseph Calleia (Drouet), George Meeker (Roberpierre), Scotty Beckett (dauphin), Marilyn Knowlden (princess Therese). B & W -160 min.

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- (1) JACOBS, Jack and BRAUM, Myron. *The Films of Norma Shearer*. South Brunswick, N. Y.: A.S. Barnes & Co., 1976, pp. 212-219; PARISH, James Robert, MANK, Gregory W., and PICCHIARINI, Richard. *The Best of MGM: The Golden Years (1928-1959)*. Westport, Conn.: Arlington House Publishers, 1981, pp. 131-133.
- (2) In *La Victoire en Filmant*, Roger VIRY -BABEL lists 281 films made internationally, - between 1897 and 1989, about the French Revolution; 41 are American. «Marie-Antoinette» has been available for sale and rental on video since 1990. It can be rented in 453 of the 2323 American Blockbuster Stores (about 115), the largest video rental store in the U.S. *Tale of Two Cities* (1936) starring Ronald Colman, is available in 1308 stores (more than half). Figures on Blockbuster available from Blockbuster Video Public Relation's Office.
- (3) See, for example, SORLIN , Pierre. *The Film in History. Restating the Past*. Oxford Blackwell, 1980; FERRO, Marc. *Cinema and History*. Translated by Naomi Greene. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988; *Feature Films as History*. Edited by SHORT, K.R.M. Knoxville: University of Tenn. Press, 1981.
- (4) Quoted by JOWETT , Garth. *Film: The Democratic Art*. Boston & Toronto: Little, Brown, & Co., 1976, p. 266. Jowett includes the quote approvingly in his more general discussion of American film-going habits during the 1930s.
- (5) Pierre Sorlin has demonstrated how present concerns and national traditions shape films that treat domestic histories. I would argue that geographically and temporally local concerns exert a still more decisive influence in films that purport to describe other national histories. See SORLIN, P. *The Film in History*, cit..
- (6) ZWEIG, Stefan. *Marie-Antoinette: The Portrait of an Average Woman*. Translated by Eden & Cedar Paul. Garden City & New York: Garden City Publishing Co., 1933, p. xiii.
- (7) *Ibid.*, p. xiii
- (8) On the definition and importance of characterization, see BORDWELL, David. «The Classical Hollywood Style, 1917 -1960,» in *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film and Mode of Production to 1960*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985.
- (9) For a more detailed discussion of pornographic attacks on Louis XV' s mistresses and their association with attacks against Marie-Antoinette, see MAZA, Sara. *Private Lives and Public Affairs: The Causes Célèbres of Prerevolutionary France*. Berkeley & London: University of California Press, 1993. chapter 4.
- (10) HUNT, Lynn. *The Family Romance of the French Revolution*. Berkeley & London: University of California Press, 1992; LANDES, Joan. *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution*. Ithaca & London: Cornell University Pr ., 1989; COLWILL, Elizabeth. «Just Another Citoyenne? Marie-Antoinette on Trial, 1790-1793.» *History Workshop*, No.28 (Autumn 1989).
- (11)On production codes, see ROSEN, Marjorie. *Popcorn Venus: Women, Movies, the American Dream*. New York: Coward, Mc Cann, & Geoghegan, 1973; HASKELL, Molly. *From Reverence to Rape: the Treatment of Women in the Movies*. Second Edition. Chicago & London: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1987; JOWETT, Garth. *Film: the Democratic Art*, cit.. On the economic impact of the Depression on women, see WOLOCH, Nancy. *Women and the American Experience*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf,

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(12) WOLOCH, Nancy. *Women and the American Experience*, cit., pp. 439-446. FILENE, Peter. *Him/Her/Self*, cit., pp. 149-160.

(13) RUSSO, Vito. *The Celluloid Closet: Homosexuality in the Movies*. Revised edition. New York: Harper & Row, 1985, chapter 1, «Who's a sissy?»

(14) Louis' immaturity is underscored by a ball scene in which the camera pans up from the dance floor to find the dauphin watching from the balcony- like a small child- as he eats an apple.

(15) SORLIN, P. *The Film as History: Restating the Past*, cit.; and FERRO, M. *Cinema and History*, cit.

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