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„What is a Girl's Best Friend?: Blonde American Trickster Women in Post-WWII Film"

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Introduction

The infamous trickster trope has given scholars from various disciplines across the humanities endless material to study in its numerous manifestations and unending performances of trickery. Indeed, many corners of world literature host a trickster, from the African Anansi spider to the Norse god Loki to the Indigenous Coyote. As the purposes, tactics, and lessons of the trickster vary, the figure remains ambiguous and complex. Through their tricks, systems of hegemonic power are exposed and buffoonery displayed – even if they do not achieve their goals. The trickster continues to raise questions for scholars of literary and cultural studies: Does the trickster ultimately provide change or do their acts of subversion only enforce power imbalances? The answer is hardly a straightforward one. The trickster figure changes and evolves throughout the different eras of popular culture within which it exists. This thesis will aim to examine a less commonly considered manifestation of the trickster figure – the blonde woman – by using a selection of post-World War II Hollywood films. The aim of this thesis is to examine how blonde women perform as tricksters through the two popular tropes, the dumb blonde and the ice blonde. By conducting a feminist reading of the films, my analysis will ultimately consider the hegemonic power (im)balances the trickster finds herself in, what and how she is resisting, and the results her trickster tactics produce.

Male Trickster Figures in North America

The first comprehensive study of trickster figures is often attributed to Paul Radin (1956). Other theorists have since built upon Radin's work, such as William G. Doty and Willian J. Hynes. Scholars have viewed tricksters in many different variations – from a kind of picaresque mythology to a figure that brings disorder to order, as Karl Kerényi writes (185, qtd. Doty & Hynes 2009), or as Carl G. Jung saw as the "shadow" side of a culture or person to be used as an instructional tool ("On the Psychology" 211). Victor Turner views the figure as a liminal character of clownery existing on the margins who obfuscates actions and understandings of social institutions (1967; qtd. in Doty & Hynes 20). Lewis Hyde writes that the "trickster is the mythic embodiment of ambiguity and ambivalence, doubleness and duplicity, contradiction and paradox" (9). As seen from the varied views and responses to the trickster figure, the trope is not easily comprehended. And while the trickster already appears to be slippery with its "polarities, dualities, and multiple manifestations" (Doty & Hynes 25.),

the intricacy of the trickster only grows as it occupies different traditions with different purposes and tactics, for the "trickster is everywhere" (Hyde 10). The endless manifestations reveal that there is no "universally or archetypally 'correct'" version of the trickster" (Doty & Hynes 26). What seems to be consistent, however, is that the trickster has a 'social function' (Doty & Hynes 32) that often reveals some truth of the social order within which they live.

To broadly define the trickster threatens to oversimplify the character, and it is important to consider the specific cultural contexts the trickster of question materializes in as that will provide necessary and relevant information to help shape the figure's motivations. However, some parameters have been offered as heuristic guides to help understand the figure. Hynes lists similarities between trickster myths: "the fundamentally ambiguous and anomalous personality of the trickster [...], deceiver/trick-layer, shape shifter, situation-invertor, messenger/imitator of the gods, and sacred/lewd bricoleur" (34). While not every trickster will manifest these traits, often different ones will share some characteristics. Furthermore, the role of the trickster varies in different cultures. In some, the primary purpose is entertainment; in others, to teach a moral adage or instruction. Tricksters can even be employed to explore how one ought *not* to act and the consequences that follow in blatant disregard of societal rules (Doty & Hynes 25).

As it is relevant to this thesis, one helpful tool to identify a trickster is to see how they are gaining power – whether through overt force or covert methods of subversion. It is through this mindset that the trickster is a figure who, as Lori Ruth Landay writes, is "part of the community who may venture outside, but who always starts and ends within" (16). While the figure sees an opportunity for change, they do not so fully alter the status quo, but end up finding methods of resistance within them. Bei Cai writes that "tricksters set events into motion [...], they reverse identities and roles [...], they disrupt hierarchy as they move in and out of it [...] and they subvert cultural conventions as they remake truth on their own terms" (278). Here is where the trickster occupies; they disrupt boundaries while still remaining inside of them. The nature of tricksters allows them to "transgress taboos and norms, demystify social mores, disrupt status quo, and shift power centers" (Cai 278) without fully exiting those structures. These methods further complicate tricksters as one may question whether the final achievements of their trickery, while a personal success, offer more harm than good to future subjects within those power structures.

Landay identifies three prominent areas in which the male trickster figure occupies in North American culture. These are Native American tricksters, African American tricksters, and confidence men. Each present themselves and their trickery differently, have different goals and different means of resistance, and experience varying degrees of success. The Native American trickster alone can be divided into multiple categories such as whether the trickster focuses on bodily functions, those who satirize social or religious conventions, or who attack dangerous institutional power structures (Landay 12). The trickster can either be a cultural hero or an "overreacher" who is humiliated by their futile efforts to achieve more than their allotted social expectations (Landay 13), but as noted by Hyde, an important element of the Native American trickster is a "sacred context" within which it is found (11). Ultimately, while the stories may offer entertainment, the trickster's disruption to their community is often used as a moral lesson. By demonstrating the negative consequences of the 'shadow-side' of said culture, the readers receive a lesson of what not to do or how not to act (Hyde 11).

The African American tricksters find resistance when little to no means of resistance is available. Landay considers the trickster figure Slave John and notices the "specific articulation of tactics of survival in a society that systematically victimizes and marginalizes people" so that the trickster "uses trickery, parody, and disguise to expose hypocrisy and inequality, to subvert existing social systems, and to gain power" (17). John W. Roberts writes that "enslaved Africans turned to behaviors which allowed them to subvert the masters' authority and control in ways that did not disrupt the system" (32). These subversive tactics allow opportunities to gain agency while still playing into the traumatic power imbalances that the enslaved characters found themselves. This mindset perpetuated subversive behaviors which were used both as "everyday strategies" and populated many personal stories of enslaved Africans (Roberts 32). Furthermore, the African American tradition sought for ways to resist systems of oppression and preserve African cultures (Roberts 33). It is no surprise then that these tricksters quickly became "folk hero[es]" (ibid.) who offered opportunities to witness resistance and a disruption of a fallacious status quo while still working within the confines of those structures.

The third and final trickster figure that Landay identifies in male, North American trickster traditions is the confidence man. Karen Halttunen recognizes one iteration of the confidence man to be a villain used in advice literature to warn younger, more naïve men to

be wary as the trickster "threatened to usurp the traditional authority exercised by legitimate leaders" (24, qtd. in Landay 22). The confidence man could also be seen as a hero who "personifies the newness of the ever-expanding, fluid America" (Landay 23). As Lloyd Michaels writes, "the confidence man has generally been regarded as a modern character development of the trickster figure reflecting and ultimately subverting the diversity, literacy, and self-assurance of a new urban culture" (1) and can be seen as the "reborn trickster myth" (Hyde 10). This manifestation of the trickster proves the shifting nature of the figure, allowing it to create new meanings within different eras, ultimately letting the female tricksters to also be "pioneers in the 'new country,'" this time in the "frontier of mass consumer culture" (Landay 23). Because the nature of the trickster allows for changes, a female trickster has the opportunity to move into contemporary culture, occupying margins and utilizing new tactics in her tricks.

Female Trickster Figures: Power and Persona

While the male trickster has been studied by past scholars, the female trickster has been kept to the margins – where tricksters tend to be found. Landay not only identifies varying female tricksters in many mediums of popular culture, she also recognizes the long history and methods of female trickery. From Scheherazade from *1001 Nights* to Catwoman from *Batman Returns* (1992), Landay writes that the "jump" between the two characters "suggests the scope of the female trickster [...]" and indicates to "the universality of the trickster figure in human cultures" (Landay 3-4). Landay notes that the span from Scheherazade to Catwoman proves the female trickster has been a long-lasting trope, even if only just recently recognized, with varying and evolving modes of resistance. Just as male trickster figures are "border-breakers" (Doty & Hynes 33) and "boundary-crosser[s]" (Hyde 8), so too does the female trickster break boundaries and borders. From Landay's two examples alone, one can see Scheherazade performing her trickery through hedonic modes of power, which is achieved through "indirect methods of control" such as display or adornment (Landay 6). In contrast, Catwoman utilizes agonic force which is "based on actual or threatened force" and "embodies the overt strategy of *action*" (ibid.). She rejects "the covert model in favor of physical mobility and prowess, self-transformation [...], tactics of revenge and justice [...], and an insistence of self-reliance rather than dependence" (ibid.). The female trickster, just like the male trickster,

is nuanced and confusing, presenting new performances of trickery and complicating simple definitions.

The trickster woman finds herself with few avenues of resistance. In her attempt to grab at more agency, the female trickster coopts hedonic and covert power. Michel Foucault describes power not as something to be gained, but something which exists all around, able to be controlled or grasped but not mastered: "No one, strictly speaking, has an official right to power; and yet it is always exerted in a particular direction" (qtd. in Bouchard 213). As Richard A. Lynch quotes, Foucault believed that power is less about an "institution or a structure" or an "individual capacity" for violence, but rather a "complex arrangement of forces in society" (21). These forces can be anything "in one's social interactions that pushes, urges or compels one to do something" (Lynch 19). Furthermore, Paul Oliver writes that power is an "aspect of an inter-relationship or interaction" between two people (44), so prevalent that it can even be considered omnipresent (Lynch 21). As Ian Buchanan writes of Foucault's study that "power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere" (n.p.). Because it is found among relational exchanges, it is not owned but exercised (Lynch 22). This understanding takes the focus away from the top of the 'pyramid' of control – such as dignitaries, institutions, monarchies, etc. – and instead, looks at the base, the "complex webs of interwoven relationships" (ibid.). When power cannot be possessed but rather used, it does not stay in the hands of the top but is found below and can be exercised by even the marginalized. Another key aspect of Foucault's understanding of power is that it will always be resisted (Lynch 24). The most important part of this for the trickster is that "through resistance, power relations can always be altered" (Lynch 24). The female trickster looks to change these hierarchies through methods of resistance available to her, allowing her to trick and manipulate through mainly covert tactics of trickery.

This thesis will argue that one of the tactics available to the female trickster is the performative persona. Jung understands the persona as the "mask of the actor" (*Volume 9* 20) or the "general idea of ourselves which we have built up from experiencing our effect upon the world and its effect upon us" (*Volume 6* 218). The persona is "a functional complex" which is created to adapt to society and community but does not equal one's identity (Jung, *Volume 6* 465). Buchanan defines the persona as the 'mask' someone is expected to wear to be accepted in their given society and societal, hegemonic relationships (n.p.). In Murray Stein's consideration of the persona, he describes it as "the persona-as-presented" in contrast

to “the person-as-real” (111). This ‘persona-as-presented’ is not a true reflection of a person’s real identity because it has been constructed as a “result of acculturation, education, and adaptation to our physical and social environment” and is a performance to be displayed within one’s social world (Stein 106). The persona is constructed very purposefully to fulfill a need or expectation in a person’s social or personal situation.

The feminine persona – or the mask expected for specifically feminine presenting persons to wear – also comes with expectations surrounding behavior as well as roles and spheres in which to perform. As Helena Bassil-Morozow claims, “Persona is a gendered concept” (“Persona and Rebellion” 31). The gendered persona is constructed at an early age, which Stein discusses in his chapter:

> Gender is certainly one way in which we sort ourselves out early on, and these features are taken up in the persona. A youngster realizes that he or she is treated in a certain way if the behavior is right, and responds in a gender-appropriate manner. (117-118)

One’s awareness and subsequent performance of their gender are rewarded when that gendered performance meets the societal expectations. This complement Judith Butler’s idea of gender as performance (“Performative Acts” 1988). Butler writes that women “become” women as they “compel the body to conform to a historical idea of ‘woman,’ [...] and to do this as a sustained and repeated corporeal project” (“Performative Acts” 522). The two ideas of the performative persona and gender as performance support the understanding that gender and the expected roles for one’s gender are both performed. That performance can be used to manipulate and trick when the individual is aware of these two ideas. Landay observes, the “modern female tricksters impersonate other ‘types’ of women in order to take advantage of people’s belief in social hierarchy,” which allows for post-WWII trickster women to “present a myriad of public personas, fluidly shifting between different impersonations as the situation dictates” (11). Women not only perform their gender, but they also perform the different masks their gender is expected to wear, offering the female trickster different avenues of resistance.

The Female Tricksters in Hollywood Film

Female trickster figures can be found in all areas of popular culture throughout different eras. However, this thesis project will specifically study female trickster characters from post-WWII Hollywood film. To narrow in on a trickster figure is to look to the margins of a dominant

society. When considering post-WWII America, Landay recognizes that such spheres typically associated with women were – "the parlors, kitchens, and bedrooms of domesticity" (3) – and it is there where female tricksters are found. Female tricksters look for ways to gain agency and further their spheres of influence and power. To do so, they use the limited opportunities they have to exert covert power (Landay 12). Trickster women appear in many different films across post-WWII Hollywood. Some notable female trickster characters that are well recognized include Amy Elliott-Dunne (*Gone Girl* 2014); Lucy (*I Love Lucy* 1951-1957); and the titular character from Fleabag (*Fleabag* 2016-2019). The presence of female tricksters in American media is plentiful if one knows how to look for them. This thesis will focus on blonde, female tricksters centered in Hollywood film.

An important note to be added here is of the context within which the analyzed characters are situated. The female characters discussed in my thesis are all white and blonde. This descriptor holds a certain kind of privilege and power that is not found among many other groups of people (perhaps the only group accessing more privilege and power than the figure I will be studying is the white, heterosexual male). This thesis looks at a singular representation of whiteness in the sense that this figure is a white person's representation of whiteness. Richard Dyer makes clear that white people have had the most control over how they are defined and viewed in comparison to other groups (xxxiii). When white people have control over the way they are represented, they are able to perpetuate whiteness as dominant, natural, and valued. Steve Garner considers how whiteness has been made to be a norm, "a practice or an idea viewed as constituting what is normal in a given place at a time among a given group of people" (48); a value, "an objective that is seen as one that is preferable to aspire to, something that is considered an important goal in society" (ibid.); and even a cultural capital, "an acquired set of values, beliefs, norms, attitudes, experiences and so forth that equip people differentially for their life in society" (49). Whiteness has been viewed as each of these, allowing for it to represent not a racialized identity but a "dominant, normalised location" (Garner 6). "Whiteness invokes power relations" (Garner 9), and this thesis is all about power relations within whiteness – between the white, blonde female and the white male especially. Furthermore, this analysis understands that whiteness is a "system of privilege" (Garner 5), as my project focuses on the power relations within a white privileged and white centered world and situates itself within whiteness which has been seen to represent "normality, dominance and control" (Garner 9). White women find themselves in

an interesting position to "simultaneously stand for white power and yet are shown to be unable either to exercise it effectively or to change what they perceive to be its abuses" (Dyer 30). Here is where the thesis questions how the white, blonde female sees her limitations to power and studies her efforts against the system which she finds restricting.

Female Trickster Tactics

Female tricksters, even more than male ones, rely on the use of hedonic over agonic modes of power. The brilliance of the female trickster lies in her ability to use what is originally seen as weakness as a way to grasp at power, but this grab is both unexpected and often unrecognized. By capitalizing on the limited – or different, in comparison to men – resources they have available, female tricksters utilize tactics like "impersonation, disguise, theft, and deceit to expose hypocrisy and inequality, to subvert existing social systems, and to widen their sphere of power" (Landay 2). Indeed, the female trickster is aware of her limited means of resistance but is still eager to pursue her goals to "secure autonomy and to rebel against the cultural dictates which limit women's place" (Landay 40-41). In the recognition that her place is limited, a female trickster seeks for ways to rebel but through the restricted means of hedonic power that is available to her. Two of the primary methods of hedonic power this thesis will analyze are the performative persona and the method of being seen, a tactic used to their advantage when female tricksters do not have typical means of resistance available to them. Rita Freeman recognizes that a women's strength lies in presentation: "[a]ggressive action is considered masculine and consequently unfeminine [...]. Beauty, not dominance, is a woman's domain" (72). This marks one of the many ways female tricksters perform differently than male ones. Among others, Landay's lists tactics such as "deception, disguise, duplicity, subversion, feigned submission, parody, and impersonation" (30), as well as "charisma, withholding of affection or sex, and dependency" (6). The employment of masquerade and the persona are also used by the female trickster as ways to achieve their goals. Bassil-Morozow describes the female persona as having "connotations of modesty, kindness, dependency, silence, and fragility" and the "mask of femininity" as an "inactive woman who voluntarily renounces her agency in order to be accepted by society" ("Persona and Rebellion" 36). By donning the mask of the "little woman" (Landay 201), female tricksters deceive others to see them as unassuming, helpless women, from behind which they can trick others into doing what they want.

It is through this lens that I will conduct a feminist reading of the films chosen and the blonde characters who center them. Clear power relations are delineated within which the blonde trickster must participate. These female tricksters resist the power structures as a way to gain agency and autonomy however they can. I will focus on the trickery that they perform to resist these hierarchies, as power "can only be effectively exerted if people accept the legitimate right of someone to exert power" (Oliver 43). When the women tricksters recognize that the power exerted over them is not necessarily legitimate, and, even further, that they can oppose it, they use their trickery to achieve their own agency, to push the boundaries of their influence, and to find ways of resistance that will shift the power dynamics.

Thesis Overview

My thesis will focus on blonde, female tricksters found in Hollywood film created and popularized after WWII and will continue to the postfeminist era of the 1990s and early 2000s. I will first review the history and importance of blonde hair in chapter one. While blondeness has been something often sought after with popular slogans crafted by Shirly Polykoff like "blondes have more fun" circulating in popular culture (n.p.), blondeness has attached to it both a social privilege and a social prejudice. The two famous blonde stereotypes that this thesis will focus on is the dumb blonde and the ice blonde. Both tropes have a longstanding history in media with multiple representations to solidify the figures. Lorelei Lee from *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1953)[2] and Frances Stevens from *To Catch a Thief* (1955)[3] are two representations of these tropes from Hollywood film and will be further analyzed in chapter two and three by studying the figures' trickster tactics, such as the manipulation of their personas, and the goals they achieve.

Many blonde, female characters have become popularized in postfeminist films. This thesis will focus primarily on girlie feminist and protagonist, Elle Woods, from *Legally Blonde* (2001)[4], who finds herself in a position of privilege by being heterosexual, white, and middle-

[2] All further references and in-text quotations of Hawks' *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* will be referred to as "*GPB"* and "(*GPB* time-stamp)"

[3] All further references and in-text quotations of Hitchcock's *To Catch a Thief* will be referred to as "*TCAT"* and "(*TCAT* time-stamp)"

[4] All further references and in-text quotations of Luketic's *Legally Blonde* will be referred to as "*LB"* and "(*LB* time-stamp)"

class with the ability to purchase for power. Academia and popular culture alike have labeled Elle Woods as a post/girlie feminist icon in her embrace of girlie feminism, all things pink, sisterhood, and fashion (Dole 2008; Moreno 2017; Yee 2019). In her interview with Derek Blasberg of the *Wall Street Journal*, actress Reese Witherspoon who played Elle Woods recognizes the merging of femininity and success when she says, "It's incredible [...] You can be unapologetically feminine but also smart and driven" (n.p.). Chapter four will consider how the blonde, trickster women who preceded Elle have contributed to the stereotypes Elle must work within which also offer tactics of trickery through the manipulation of the persona.

The claim this thesis will make is that blonde characters have performed as trickster figures by popularizing and playing the dumb blonde and the ice blonde in post-WWII Hollywood films. By performing feminist readings of the films, chosen for their popularity and impact on both the film industry and popular culture, I offer the assessment that these blonde characters are more than just stereotypes. Indeed, they are also trickster figures who resist their given roles through manipulation. By questioning how power is coopted, one will recognize that, as is common in trickster readings, blonde tricksters both gain and lose power by performing their trickery. Likewise, they have the ability to both subvert and uphold hegemonic power structures in their trickster performances: they find creative means to achieve their goals while ultimately perpetuating damaging stereotypes. By identifying the personas the blonde tricksters use – dumb blonde and ice blonde – this thesis will be able to demonstrate the tactics of trickery these figures employ and the ways they offer a mode of resistance while simultaneously enforcing stereotypes within which future, blonde tricksters of the postfeminist era will find themselves.

1 Women and Blondeness

The blonde woman has taken an important role in fashion and popular culture through many different figures. Sometimes she is seen as the promiscuous tempter, at others she is the naïve and innocent child, and still at other times she is the sexpot icon of the decade. Pam Cook writes that "in the long and capricious history of fashions in women's hairstyles, blond locks retain a prominent position as a potent statement of feminine allure" (n.p.). With the rise of popularity in blonde haired women and the growing acceptance of dying one's hair, Joanne Pitman notes the taglines claiming beliefs like "blondes have more fun" circulated with

Clairol hair dying products, equating a change of hair color to a change of lifestyle or personality (ch. 14). These advertisements focused not only on the look of blonde hair to sell their products but also shifted their focus on the woman that one could be when blonde: "Blonde was no longer just a look; it was a whole psychology" (ibid.). The ability to manipulate one's appearance, especially through cosmetics and hair-dye, promoted the idea that hair color could reflect the personality of a woman with assumptions such as "the dark-haired and exotic vamp, the golden-haired and gold-digging girl, and the fiery and unconventional redhead" (Landay 67). By becoming blonde, a woman could become a 'type' that was reinforced in popular culture. The connection of hair color to the type of woman someone wanted to be reinscribed cultural and personal significance of hair color and popularized tropes such as the fiery redhead or the dumb blonde. Jörg Schweinitz defines stereotypes as "standardized conceptions of people, primarily based on an individual's belonging to a category [...] or the possession of characteristic traits symbolizing one of these categories" (4-5). The persistence of stereotypes "focuses on belief patterns and emphasizes their guiding influence on attitudes and perceptions" (Schweinitz 5). Through the creation and proliferation of stereotypes, society crafts assumptions that are expected to be followed. The blonde woman's societal popularity and significance offered fertile ground for stereotypes to be shaped and maintained throughout different eras.

As Victoria Sherrow recounts, blondeness became a distinct category for women that was further divided into different labels including brassy blondes, bombshell blondes, and sunny blondes (McCracken 1995, qtd. in 150). Perhaps the most well-known of these stereotypes are the dumb blonde and the ice blonde. These clichés were further solidified in media, such as Hollywood films, and became well-known tropes. With them bore certain implications for the woman's alleged character, habits, values or actions that, while intentional or not, have deep roots in public expectations. Such expectations have followed the blonde woman from before the 1950s, into the post-feminist era of the early 2000s, and even beyond. This chapter will give a brief overview of the history of the blonde woman's image and consider its rise to social prominence by focusing on the most famous female blonde tropes – the dumb blonde and the ice blonde. It will also consider the social privilege and prejudices that are attached to blonde women and will contemplate how the blonde trickster woman uses both of these to her advantage. Through manipulating the privilege given to a blonde woman and exploiting the assumptions that follow, as either a dumb or ice

blonde, the trickster blonde woman finds new ways to grasp at power. The chapter will end by looking at blonde trickster characters in the popular 1950s Hollywood film, *How to Marry a Millionaire* (1953)[5], and consider some of the female characters' covert power tactics like feigned interest, submission, and masquerading the feminine ideal in their pursuit to secure positions of social prominence and economic agency.

1.1 The History of Blonde Hair

The significance of blonde hair goes far back into human history and continues to have relevance in popular culture today. Sherrow notes that blonde hair has often been seen as alluring "possibly because this color is associated with gold and light," and is considered valued and desirable (149). Sherrow summarizes how blonde women are often seen as either youthful and naïve or sexual and seductive. Despite the vast differences of assumptions, both are considered as attractive and alluring in their own ways. As hair has been known to naturally dull and darken with age, blonde hair can often imply youthfulness, and this young look can, as Sherrow argues, "appeal to men, since youth connotes health and fertility" (ibid.). Innocence and naivety which are connected to youth arguably reinforce the ignorant, dumb blonde stereotype. There are many cultural factors which contributed to the close connection between dumbness and blondeness, including popular literature (Gaffney 1992; Sherrow 2006); nineteenth-century burlesque dancers (Landay 63); media such as television and movies; and blonde actresses like Marilyn Monroe, Goldie Hawn, Judy Holliday, and others who often performed as stereotypical dumb blondes in their films (Sherrow 150). With suggestions of youth and ignorance, the dumb blonde is seen as a woman who, while beautiful, is ignorant and often needs to be educated about life and her role in society. Rosalie Duthé, a French courtesan of the eighteenth century, is often considered the first dumb blonde (Sherrow 149; Pitman ch. 8). She is known to have "developed a reputation for being beautiful but empty-headed and incapable of carrying on a conversation" (Sherrow 149). In 1775, the play *Les Curiosités de la foire* premiered in France and satirized Duthé as a dumb blonde, portraying her as both stupid and literally dumb in her inability to speak. The play shows the long-standing roots of the dumb blonde trope. Exactly this depiction of the

[5] All further references and in-text quotations of Negulesco's *How to Marry a Millionaire* will be referred to as "*HTMAM"* and "(*HTMAM* time-stamp)"

blonde woman continued to be popularized and scandalized as it carried through from the 1700s into present day.

In stark contrast to the stereotype of the slow-witted and ignorant dumb blonde and her beginnings, blonde hair on women has also been attributed to cunningness and sexual desire. Blondeness has often been connected to promiscuity, starting even as early as the Roman Empire which associated blonde hair with prostitution and continuing to the fourteenth century when blonde hair was regarded as "provocative and a symbol of female seductiveness" (Sherrow 148). One example of the provocative blonde woman is seen in the portrayal of the biblical Eve, who has been viewed as Adam's temptress, and has often been interpreted with blonde hair (Sherrow 148; Pitman ch. 3). This depiction continued well into the 1930s when Mae West performed a radio skit written by Arch Oboler. West's trickster Eve looks to escape the Garden of Eden and explore her sexual relationship with Adam. West, who Landay refers to as "the modern female trickster and self-proclaimed 'bad girl'" (94), performed her role as Eve provocatively who successfully tricks both the snake and Adam to fulfill her wishes. She does not see the Garden of Eden as a paradise but instead "a cage, a prison, a place of domestic entrapment" (Landay 96). Eve seeks to escape this 'prison' using her covert tactics of submission, feigned interest, and duplicity by drawing "on the domestic role that traps her" (ibid.). Eve's trickery must be performed in stages: first she manipulates Adam into telling her the way to "break the lease" (Chesterton Radio 00:02:49-00:02:51) and get kicked out of Eden. She then convinces the formerly unwilling snake to help her pick the fruit, and finally, Eve tricks her husband into eating the applesauce she prepared. Eve's actions and deceit successfully force them out of the Garden. Only then does Eve achieve her desired goal and can explore her sexual relationship with Adam, which allows her to find her own agency – what she describes as expanding her personality (Chesterton Radio 00:01:55-00:01:57) – outside of the restraints of the garden. West's performance of the seductive, trickster Eve demonstrates that blonde hair tied to promiscuity finds itself in multiple eras. Indeed, the promiscuous, tempting blonde continues into the 1950s with films like *HTMAM* and *TCAT* which will be analyzed later in this thesis.

However, the promiscuous blonde's popularity did not stop there but instead made its way into the 1980s – with blonde Elvira played by Michelle Pfeiffer in *Scarface* (1983) – the 1990s, and beyond. Madonna took the concept of the sexual blonde woman and applied it to her Blond Ambition tour (1990) which exemplified blondeness with "blatant sexuality and

aggressiveness" (Sherrow 149). Blonde hair became a powerful trait of seduction, either to trick men into falling for women's sexual charms or to stand for their empowerment and sexuality. This trait of the ice blonde makes her a good candidate for the well-known femme fatale label, and indeed characters like Phyllis Dietrichson (Barbara Stanwyck) in *Double Indemnity* (1944), Catherine Tramwell (Sharon Stone) in *Basic Instinct* (1992), and even more recently, Amy Dunne (Rosamund Pike) in *Gone Girl* (2014) are all dangerous, blonde femme fatales. While the provocative blonde is not always a femme fatale, her use of her sexuality in a seductive chase to capture men offers similarities between the two tropes that can often overlap, as shown above. The ice blonde has many iterations throughout the years and continues to make appearances during different eras of popular culture.

As these examples show, blonde hair became a signifier of different cultural or societal values in various time periods: Pitman writes that, "Every age has restyled blonde hair in its own image and invested it with its own preoccupations" (introduction). In Pitman's study, blondness shifted over the years as it was,

> a prejudice in the Dark Ages, an obsession in the Renaissance, a mystique in Elizabethan England, a mythical fear in the nineteenth century, an ideology in the 1930s, a sexual invitation in the 1950s and a doctrine of faith by the end of the twentieth century. (ibid.)

Pitman's summary shows the reinvention of the blonde woman as different eras find new ways to understand the figure's societal importance. This signifies not only her social prominence but also the fascination that Western society has with the blonde woman. Landay also considers this constant reinvention of the blonde woman as she notes that Eva's blondeness in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) symbolizes goodness and moral influence (Landay 62), while Lorelei Lee in the novel *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1925) is placed in a "modern commodified culture" and stands for "a consumer-hedonist symbol of gold" (Landay 62). These two examples of the blonde woman's shifting symbolism highlight the cultural values that are represented in the blonde woman and often "best expresses the feminine ideal of her time" (Landay 63). Ginette Vincendeau also recognizes how "blondness is always a cultural construction, but one that is somehow meant to hint at the essence of femininity, in a way that other hair colours do not" (3). The symbolic blonde woman is an example "of how cultural values are contained, transmitted, and transformed in visual images" as the blonde shifts from representing goodness during Victorian sentimentalism to

blonde equaling gold in a consumerist-minded culture (Landay 63). This transformation highlights the "cultural mythos" (Landay 62) of the blonde woman and shows that she has often represented a symbol or a cultural ideal rather than an individual person. For example, the ending of the novel *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* "calls attention to 'the blonde' as a type: instead of being an adjective, it is a noun" (Landay 61). Instead of a mere descriptor, the word 'blonde' became something that someone was. As the blonde woman became a 'type' of woman, certain expectations followed closely behind. As quoted earlier, the creation of a stereotype can also be founded on "the possession of characteristic traits" which are attached to the type (Schweinitz 5), and so the blonde woman might be expected to be dumb or overtly sexual. In sum, the symbolism of the blonde woman was eventually solidified in popular culture, signifying expectations for how a woman will be, but the trickster blonde can use these assumptions in her trickery of covert tactics.

1.2 Blonde Privilege versus Societal Prejudices

Americans in the 1950s, found themselves on the continued pursuit of the American Dream, described by Robert C. Hauhart and Mitja Sardoč as "upward mobility" whether that be economically or socially (9). Indeed, the American Dream is supposed to allow for "groups that were formerly passive [to become] actively engaged in demanding change" (Hauhart & Sardoč 17). However, women find themselves disadvantaged when it comes to the idea of the American Dream. Carol Loranger recognizes that patriarchal mentalities divide men and women to "separate spheres" providing difficulties for women to "freely leave the domestic sphere and seek their fame and fortune" (37). To begin in such disadvantaged state meant that "freedom – understood as autonomy or the right of self-determination – was the goal, not the starting point of American women's dreams" (Loranger 38). However, blonde women found a kind of favor to their hair color, for blonde hair and the prominence that follows offer social distinction even while simultaneously attaching a certain prejudice against the blonde woman. It is no question that blonde hair on women became desirable, symbolizing various messages throughout the "cultural mythos" (Landay 62) and representing allurement. Pitman writes, "For a woman, being blonde in 1950s America was part of a dream of being desirable to men" and inclusion to the upper levels of society (ch. 14). The popularization and acceptance of blonde hair-dye allowed women the possibility to "slip from one identity to the next with no more ado than twenty minutes in the bathroom" (ibid.). Indeed, blonde hair had

accrued more attractions with advertising statements such as “If I’ve only one life, let me live it as a blonde” (Polykoff qtd. in ibid.). Along with the assumptions that blondes ‘have more fun,’ Clairol and other hair-dye companies wanted women of the 1950s to believe that “anyone could begin to acquire the trappings of the established affluent class, which still included a head of blonde hair” (ibid.). This connection of affluence and upper-class society to blonde hair aligns itself with the shifting cultural myth of the blonde woman. In 1950s America, the belief was that women were more desirable to men when blonde and, furthermore, had a better chance of upper-class privileges and the upward mobility of the American Dream which favored blonde women over those of other hair colors.

However, with all the allure and social prominence that comes with blonde hair, a prejudice follows. For example, the dumb blonde trope moved past Hollywood permeated personal and professional realms; one study conducted by Jay L. Zagorsky shows that employers are less likely to hire women with blonde hair because of believed lower IQ levels (2016). The rise of sexist beliefs in popular culture promoted the idea that blonde women were only good for sexual exploitations or the highly popular ‘dumb blonde joke’. Dara Greenwood and Linda M. Isbell write that with the creation of the dumb blonde trope, so too did “a highly popularized new sexist joke genre featuring a woman who was easy on the eyes, easy to get into bed, and above all, easy to ridicule” (341). While the blonde woman can be favored for her beauty, she is ultimately discriminated against for her blonde hair in ways that are insidious and culturally entrenched, so much so that this discrimination is not always recognizable. Greenwood and Isbell’s study of the sexist genre of dumb blonde jokes shows that perhaps the “overtly offensive” jokes to women are “so familiar” that they result in “widespread desensitization to [their] offensive nature” (342). The sexist beliefs filter through Hollywood and popular culture to permeate real life, offering a very real social prejudice the blonde woman must face in her pursuit of societal standing. What Vincendeau refers to as a “double-edged game” shows how “the blond beauty premium, when achieved, brings success and privilege, and indeed sometimes stardom itself” while simultaneously causing “denigration” (3). Vincendeau refers to blondeness as creating “binaries: purity vs. sexuality, glamour vs. trash, privilege vs. being ‘dumb’, naturalness vs. artificiality” (1). These binaries, the privileges alongside the prejudice blondes must face, offer a fine line between social distinction and stigmatization.

Perhaps even more interesting is to further consider the differing beliefs and assumptions between dark haired women and blonde haired women. Sherrow writes that in contrast to the blonde woman, women with dark hair have been viewed as "competent, intelligent, and reliable" (150). Furthermore, dark haired women have been seen as "wifely or motherly" in the twentieth century (ibid.) in contrast to the sexually available and consumable blonde. This is an interesting note to make, as many times the blonde woman in Hollywood films has either a brunette best friend or antagonist who are often more intelligent than she is. The sequel to Anita Loos's novel *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* is *But Gentlemen Marry Brunettes* (1927). The titles alone hint at a cultural understanding that while blonde women may be tempting, it is the brunette who is the more reliable, responsible, and intelligent choice for a man seeking a wife. Sherrow writes that "dark hair has been associated with higher intelligence or more common sense, in contrast to the 'dumb blond' label" (151). In a consumerist culture that ties appearances such as hair color to consumable goods – blonde equals gold (Landay 63) – men choose their wives as they would choose clothing and seem to make such decisions based on superficial assumptions. In contrast to the postfeminist era that will be considered in chapter four, during which women try to take the position of the buyers in the sex/love economy, the men of the 1950s are the ones who are the purchasers and the women are like commodified goods that can be attained. The assumptions of dumbness or provocativeness label the blonde woman throughout different decades and offer insight into how others – specifically men who hold the overt power – view her. This social price and the judgement of the blonde woman, her intelligence, and her capabilities are indeed a limiting factor but are also what the tricky, blonde woman, when aware, can manipulate to her end. The prejudice that follows the blonde woman, while denigrating and discriminatory, offers opportunities for the trickster woman to use in her trickster tactics.

1.3 The Blonde in Hollywood: *How to Marry a Millionaire*

Blondeness continued to grow into more of a 'type' with the popularization of movies and blonde actresses. Like Loos's novel, which assisted the change of 'blonde' from an adjective to a noun (Landay 61), the use of color in films also allowed for the blonde to become more of a character rather than just a description. This helped create and popularize tropes like the dumb blonde or Hitchcock's iconic ice blonde. Blonde hair in films solidified stereotypes that further popularized blonde generalizations. As Schweinitz continues in his study of

stereotypes in film, the persisting stereotypes "serve as important reference points for the creation of fictional characters. For spectatorship to function, it matters that a film and its characters [...] closely relate to the world of everyday beliefs and values" (43). However, the relationship works both ways as "popular media narratives actively affect the audience's imagination, even if only by visually shaping and concretizing current schemata of thought and thus supplying a repertoire of vivid patterns" (ibid.). This shows the dual function of the relationship between film and spectatorship: The film will draw on real world expectations to curate a character the audience will recognize, but then the audience will take the understanding of that character into their reality. Thus, the perpetuation of stereotypes continues in media. Furthermore, Hollywood encouraged the sexualization of the blonde woman as blonde actresses were essentially "engineered and sent out on to the screen in the 1950 and 1960" and were "highly professional sex symbols who fulfilled Hollywood's requirements as popular saleable commodities" (Pitman ch. 14). Marilyn Monroe, Lauren Bacall, and Grace Kelly are examples of these highly successful, famous, yet commodified blondes. Their work in film moved past individual performances and helped solidify the stereotypes like the dumb blonde and the ice blonde.

An example of the proliferation and popularization of the dumb blonde and ice blonde in films can be seen in the 1953 film *HTMAM* directed by Jean Negulesco. In this movie, three blonde women work together to secure for themselves millionaire husbands. Two of the women can be seen as representations of two stereotypes of blonde women – the dumb blonde and the ice blonde – while the third woman, a woman named Loco and played by Betty Grable, does not necessarily perform the expectations of a certain persona but rather is seen in general as a consumable blonde. Marilyn Monroe, who will be further analyzed in the following chapter, plays a dumb blonde named Pola, while the mastermind behind their plan, Schatze, is played by Lauren Bacall. I will argue that Schatze performs as an ice blonde throughout the film, being a source of cunning duplicity and using her implicit sexuality to trap her men, unlike Pola, who flaunts her sexual allure. While neither of these characters necessarily represents the quintessential iteration of their trope, by performing a feminist reading of this film, I will compare the two blonde tropes side-by-side and consider their trickster tactics.

The female characters' scheme to find and marry millionaires is Schatze's own idea. The women decide to throw together all their money and sell their belongings to rent out a

penthouse. When explaining her plan, Schatze asks Loco whether she would rather marry a rich man or a poor man. After Loco answers that she would rather marry a rich one, Schatze follows up with another question: "Then where would you be more likely to meet a rich one? In a walkup on Amsterdam Avenue, or in a joint like this?" (*HTMAM* 00:15:58-00:16:04). She continues by saying, "If you want to catch a mouse, you set a mousetrap. So, alright, we set a bear trap" (*HTMAM* 00:16:26-00:16:30), referring to a millionaire. By pretending to be rich enough to own their own penthouse and by placing themselves where they would most likely meet a rich penthouse owner, the ladies set their trap. It is at this time that Loco turns to Pola and declares that Schatze is "the most intelligent person" that she has ever met (*HTMAM* 00:18:08-00:18:11). Indeed, the idea of setting a trap for men to walk into is an idea that will be repeated in another ice blonde performance, which will be analyzed in chapter three. Furthermore, Schatze's cunning intelligence in her planning and subsequent wooing of rich men is one of the ways she exhibits the ice blonde persona. Schatze's trickery revolves around meeting, charming, and 'trapping' a millionaire. She is coy, cunning, and beautiful with indirect sex appeal, some of the typical ice blonde qualities as defined by Jeff Saporito (2016). She uses her blonde appeal and her intelligence to trick the millionaire J.D. Hanley (William Powell) into believing she truly loves him. Hanley tries to leave, believing he is too old for Schatze, and her affection – which is based solely on his money – will fade as he grows older. But Schatze performs admirably, doing her best to trick him into believing that she loves him because of his age (*HTMAM* 00:52:58-00:53:00). As seen in Figures 1 and 2, the camera prioritizes showing Schatze over Hanley so that the audience can see her trickery in action. Schatze's performance works, and Hanley returns at the end of the movie to marry Schatze.

Figures 1. and 2. Schatze tricking Hanley who is turned away from the camera (HTMAM 00:53:07; 01:21:40)

However, Schatze's trickery is not brought to fruition because she decides to leave Hanley before marrying him and acquiring his wealth. Schatze is in love with another man, whom she believes to be destitute, and only after she admits her feelings does she find out that he is in fact wealthier than her original catch. While the movie ends happily for Schatze, the "romantic ending undercuts" her "independence and mobility" (Landay 202). It is not through her trickery that Schatze achieves her goal; instead, her success comes from a stroke of luck. However, the audience can observe that Schatze's trickery would have indeed worked if she had placed her material gain and independence over her feelings. Perhaps Schatze is not a fully-fledged trickster figure as her trickery does not come to fruition, but her cunning plans, awarding of sex and affection, and performing the ice blonde persona give the audience an understanding of how a blonde woman performs her trickster tactics.

In comparison to Schatze's ice blonde persona, Monroe's Pola performs as a dumb blonde throughout *HTMAM*. Pola's dumb blonde persona is exemplified by her use of glasses, which she refuses to wear in front of men, believing that "men aren't attentive to girls who wear glasses" (*HTMAM* 01:06:15-01:06:17). This refusal to wear glasses causes her to run into doors and walls, adding to her dumb blonde performance with her wide-eyed and often seemingly vacant expression (Figures 3 and 4).

Figures 3. and 4. Monroe uses eye makeup and facial expressions to accentuate Pola's vacant, wide-eyed expression (HTMAM 00:10:56; 01:05:15)

Pola also attempts to use female trickster tactics to find herself a millionaire to marry, something that she is unsuccessful in only because she falls in love with the original owner of the penthouse suite from whom the girls are renting. However, Pola's main trickster tactic revolves around masquerading. When going on a date with a rich bachelor she hopes to trick into falling in love with her, she wears a show-stopping pink gown, reminiscent of the gown Monroe wears in *GPB* which came out earlier that same year.

In the bathroom, when the three women meet to discuss their dates, Pola is the only one who takes a long time to look at herself in the mirror and admire her reflection (Figure 5). While the ice blonde is characterized as having indirect sex appeal, the dumb blonde is often a sex symbol and seen as curvy, attractive, and beautiful. Pola, to some degree, is aware of her trickster abilities based on her image and sex appeal and uses it to her advantage by showcasing her body – she is the only one in a swimming suit for the model show. She confidently struts forward and poses in an outfit that is the most revealing, compared to the other models (Figure 6). As Pola masquerades, she also hides certain attributes that would strike her as unattractive to men, like wearing glasses.


Figures 5. and 6. Pola masquerading her body through costume (HTMAM 00:31:28; 00:32:23)

Both Schatze's and Pola's trickery is undercut by their decision to marry for love rather than money, and their trickery does not come to fruition in the ways they planned. While perhaps not ideal representations of their respective female trickster figures, both of these characters offer an interesting comparison of the two personas and their manipulation of trickster tactics. One that they share is feigned interest. Because both women are only interested in the wealth of the millionaire men they hope to marry, Schatze and Pola practice the trickster tactic of feigned interest to trick their men into thinking they truly love them. The film shows this tactic in mirrored shots (Figures 7 and 8), switching back and forth between the dates. Everything, from the setting of the table to the positions of the characters, is basically identical. These shots, presented so similarly, reinforce the shared trickster tactic among women used to fool men. Even though Schatze is an iteration of the ice blonde and Pola is the dumb blonde, both women find this tactic to be successful in their schemes. In fact, for both Schatze and Pola, their trickery would have been ultimately effective – they would have

married their initial millionaire catches – except that both women find husbands to marry for love instead of wealth.


Figures 7. and 8. Mirrored shots of Schatze's and Pola's feigned interest tactic (HTMAM 00:27:05; 00:28:18)

The creation of blonde stereotypes has a long-standing history in popular culture and societal expectations. While offering the blonde woman some social prominence, the prejudices that follow can often cause disadvantages. However, trickster, blonde women use societal assumptions and expectations in their covert tactics in the pursual of subverting hegemonic power dynamics. The next chapter will consider two specific and focused iterations of the blonde tropes and will analyze their trickster methods of masquerading, awarding and withholding sex, and the performative persona, along with other female trickster strategies. In the study of two popular films of the 1950s, *GPB* and *TCAT*, the next two chapters will analyze two women who embody the female tropes of the dumb blonde and the ice blonde in these particular performances. The chapters will question not only if the two blonde women utilize trickster tactics to get what they want but will also consider how they use the performative persona in their trickery and how this both advantages and disadvantages their overall goals of furthering their power and autonomy.

2 "Diamonds are a Girl's Best Friend": The Dumb Blonde

Through the popularization of Hollywood films, blonde characters created a certain statement that both reflected and helped formulate the image of blonde women. As a result, Hollywood film mirrored the perceptions and expectations of blonde women as the blonde, female characters performed the "feminine public self" (Landay 49). The feminine public self is a type of mask a woman will create as a way to negotiate the public sphere. In this construction, a woman can deploy "costume, makeup, behavior, and comportment to create a mask from behind which to negotiate the public sphere" (ibid.). The feminine public self can manifest in the performances of the persona, like the dumb blonde or ice blonde, which is used as

an opportunity for the woman to "dissociate [herself] from the feminine public self that is surveyed, judged, and discriminated against," allowing the private self to operate "in pursuit of her desires while the public self impersonates an appropriate spectacle of femininity" (ibid.). Landay considers this to be a particular strategy of the 1920s, jazz age female trickster; however, I would argue that this tactic is not limited alone to the jazz age tricksters but instead is used by all of the blonde female tricksters I will study. Indeed, the distinction of the private versus the public self will play an important role in understanding both the female trickster's tactics and her goals. This is where the performative persona operates: The trickster woman – aware, clever, and tricky – considers the perception the societal public expects of her and wears this as a mask to achieve her goals. This chapter will argue that Lorelei Lee from *GPB* utilizes the feminine public self along with other female trickster tactics of masquerading, feigned interest/submission, and awarding of affection to find agency and achieve her goals.

2.1 *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*' Lorelei Lee

As stated earlier, the dumb blonde is a trope which extends far back in popular culture and prevails throughout different eras, molding into a specific character type as it does. While Rosalie Duthé is perhaps the first dumb blonde represented in literature and popular culture, the term was not used in the United States of America until 1926 in the *Iowa Citizen*, as Gary Martin quotes: "Many capable, loyal, reliable sweethearts and wives are deserted for the featherweights. Such a woman may be worth her weight in rubies; but if you're only a mere man you are going to prefer any dumb-bell blonde" (n.p.). Besides presenting the blonde woman as inferior, this line also conflates the blonde woman's value with the value of commodified rubies. The dumb blonde can be defined as a woman who is naïve, makes stupid mistakes and remarks, and often needs guidance from someone else – usually from either a male counterpart or a (brunette) friend. She is curvy, beautiful, and attractive but is depicted as having a "striking lack of intellect, integrity, and rational thought" (Greenwood & Isbell 342). This trope was greatly popularized with Anita Loos's novel *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1925) which features Lorelei Lee, the "consummate Jazz Age female trickster" (Landay 55). Loos's novel shifts the description of blonde from operating as merely an adjective to instead becoming acceptable as a noun or type (Landay 61). In a feminist reading of the film *GPB,* Lorelei Lee, the quintessential dumb blonde, becomes a female trickster figure in her hunt for more diamonds at the hands of willing, gentlemen benefactors.

Landay writes that the trickster woman uses and manipulates the feminine public self as a way to safely and successfully allow her private self to pursue her desires while the public self is the one on display (49). This public self, or persona, of a dumb, beautiful, and naïve blonde is a mask Lorelei seems more than happy to wear as it continues to be a successful tactic of trickery. When considering the Lorelei Lee of the 1925 novel, Landay writes, "Despite her ignorance (she is, after all, the quintessential 'dumb blonde'), she is fully cognizant of the social capital of her appearance and of the tricks she can pull off because of the emphasis 'gentlemen' place on it" (53). The awareness and use of trickery, despite what has been viewed as a dumb blonde's intellectual lack, shows how Lorelei is still aware and in control. She has a clear goal in mind – acquiring more gems – and she is successful in her endeavor by the end of the novel. Landay explains: "Lorelei has been acting with her gentlemen all along, feigning interest in them, impersonating their particular ideal of a woman, while calculating what she could acquire before disappearing" (61). As Lorelei studies what is both expected and desired of her as a blonde, she becomes and performs as this woman. Nancy Walker writes that when Lorelei realizes society places a higher value on her for her appearance, she uses the stereotype of the dumb blonde in partnership with "her wits to turn the situation to her own – material if not emotional – advantage" (93). This trickiness shows Lorelei's cleverness to manipulate gentlemen into satisfying her goals and providing her with more gems and wealth.

This thesis project shifts its attention from Anita Loos's novel and focuses instead on the film adaptation released in 1953, directed by Howard Hawks and starring Marilyn Monroe as Lorelei Lee and Jane Russel as Lorelei's brunette best friend, Dorothy Shaw. Loos's novel and the film which followed nearly thirty years later helped shape and popularize the dumb blonde, more so than "any other single work" (Walker 92). Especially Marilyn Monroe's performance as Lorelei was the "embodiment of the 'dumb blonde'" (Landay 156). While both novel and film present the character of the dumb blonde, Landay considers the film's iteration of Lorelei as less of a trickster figure than the novel because the film "privileges Monroe's embodiment of the feminine ideal over Lorelei's trickiness" (156). However, despite the seemingly innocent play acting that Marilyn Monroe might use to display her blondeness, the trickery is still evident in the 1953 Lorelei Lee who uses covert, female trickster tactics to manipulate the men of the film as a way to get what she wants.

Hawks' *GPB* offers a look at Lorelei's story in a classical Hollywood narrative structure – a motivated protagonist with a specific goal in mind facilitates the cause-and-effect structure of the plot. Lorelei Lee is this motivated protagonist with one goal in mind: to obtain more jewels – specifically diamonds – through the hands of wealthy gentlemen. And while she faces a few obstacles, Lorelei always finds a way to overcome them in the pursual of her goals. Monroe portrays Lorelei as the quintessential dumb blonde. She is curvy, beautiful, and obviously attractive to all the male characters in the film. This sexual allure is emphasized through the mise-en-scéne in regards to the lighting of the film and the use of costumes. The whole atmosphere of the film is generally light, with bright lighting illuminating Lorelei in every scene she is in. The brightness allows the characters of the film to be seen clearly and matches the cheerful genre of a musical romantic comedy.

The use of costumes helps solidify the sexual component of Lorelei's dumb blonde persona. Whether through her cabaret show costumes, her everyday outfits, or her evening gowns, Lorelei's sense of style is a mixture of flashy, showy, and sexy. She enjoys wearing nice clothes which allow her the opportunity to take the center of attention. In one scene, Lorelei arrives to dinner and the other characters' conversations stop when they see her. Lorelei is wearing a form-fitting orange gown, adorned with sparkling beads. The scene starts as a medium long shot, emphasizing Lorelei as the focal point in the way she takes the center of the screen, how the surrounding characters turn to face her, and how her dress is the brightest object in the shot – all eyes naturally are drawn to it (Figure 9). The shot cuts to a medium close-up, allowing the audience to see the purpose and intentionality with which Lorelei walks forward as she takes in all the attention. When Lorelei sits down at her table, the men that surround her face her, and the focal point of the shot is Lorelei as she talks at, not with, the men sitting around her (Figure 10). Furthermore, Lorelei is the only character in focus during this scene, emphasizing her signification as a blonde woman who works for and achieves the attention of those around her. The costumes that Lorelei wears throughout the film emphasize the sexual display she both revels in and uses to her advantage to capture the recognition of others.


Figure 9. Lorelei masquerading her body through costume as the rest of the room watches (GPB 00:32:59)
Figure 10. Lorelei the only one in focus at dinner (GPB 00:34:01)

Lorelei's flaunting of her body shown through the use of costumes coupled with her exhibitions of a "lack of intellect, integrity, and rational thought" (Greenwood & Isbell 342) help the audience identify her as a dumb blonde. Throughout the film, Lorelei has many 'dumb blonde moments' where she makes a foolish mistake or blunder. These moments offer the audience a laugh as Lorelei does not know how simple things in life work – like letters of credit or coupons – or even how to properly wear a tiara. Monroe uses a specific voice when performing her dumb blonde characters, whether Lorelei from *GPB* or Pola from *HTMAM*. It is high-pitched and airy, and Monroe's blondes always seem to be surprised, as if they are primarily ignorant over most topics. Lorelei in *GPB* makes mistakes in her speech pattern that would not be accepted as proper grammar, such as mixing up 'I' and 'me' – "that's I" or "a girl like I" (*GPB* 00:39:35-00:39:36). While perhaps not always performed intentionally, Lorelei still makes use of tools like the tone of her voice or choice in vocabulary to highlight and sustain her performance. The use of makeup also helps Monroe play this dumb blonde persona. The specific way Monroe wears her makeup in this film makes her eyes appear bigger than they are, emphasizing her continually surprised, ignorant, and naïve image, as shown in Figure 11. However, where Lorelei may have made a name for herself as being 'stupid' or a 'dumb blonde' throughout the film, it is clear that she is far from either. Lorelei proves to the viewers that she is actually quite intelligent, clever, and tricky. By conducting a feminist reading of the film and Lorelei's trickster tactics – feigned interest and submission, performative persona, masquerading femininity, and awarding/withholding affection – one can argue that Lorelei is a blonde female trickster who performs her tricks and successfully achieves her goals.

Figure 11. Monroe's use of acting and make-up to show Lorelei's wide eyes (GPB 00:39:35)

2.2 Lorelei Lee's Trickery

Lorelei Lee, a performer from Little Rock, Arkansas, is on the hunt for one thing: diamonds. Gus Esmond (Tommy Noonan) is a millionaire's son who has desperately fallen in love with her. Lorelei's best friend, Dorothy Shaw, is her performing partner and pseudo-care-taker: when Gus cannot travel with Lorelei to Europe, he sends Dorothy as her chaperone. However, the two friends cannot be more different as Dorothy's love interest, Ernie Malone (Elliot Reid), comments: "I just can't figure out how two girls can be so different and be such good friends" (*GPB* 00:37:57-00:38:03). In contrast to Lorelei's over-exuberant personality and diamond lust, Dorothy is a brunette with a dry sense of humor and is completely uninterested in money. Their sharp contrast helps elevate Lorelei as a caricature with her eccentricities and infatuations more recognizable against the relatively normal backdrop of Dorothy's level-headedness. The differences between Dorothy and Lorelei accentuate the commonly accepted beliefs of blonde hair and brown hair highlighted in *The Encyclopedia of Hair* (2006). The blonde is sexually available while the brunette is intelligent and respectable (Sherrow 151). Where Lorelei believes money is the imperative factor of a relationship and thus is willing to offer her body as a means to achieve that, Dorothy believes that love and not money is the most important part of a relationship. This again reaffirms the idea of the consumable blonde (Landay 63) who, while tempting, is not as stable or wise of an option compared to competent and "wifely" brunette (Sherrow 150). Furthermore, to the same level that the blonde is consumable, the blonde consumes as the "gold-digging blonde" (Landay 67). To

Lorelei, love only comes after the accruement of wealth, and that is her main goal to achieve throughout the film. Lorelei performs her trickery to achieve this wealth.

Lorelei longs to escape poverty and enter into the upper-class world of wealth and diamonds, which causes her to pursue this goal through the female trickster tactics available to her. In her pursuit of wealth and self-advancement, she must exploit the system of the sex/love economy; an economy "in which [her] physical appearance makes [her] valuable" (Landay 21). Lorelei is aware of her effect on men and her ability to get things from them. When Lorelei is accused of stealing a diamond tiara, Dorothy suggests hustling the worth of the tiara – what she estimates at fifteen thousand dollars – from Gus. Lorelei tells Dorothy that she will need "at least an hour and forty-five minutes" (*GPB* 01:13:09-01:31:10). The brief conversation is shown to the audience with both Lorelei's and Dorothy's characters on screen. This offers a chance for the camera to focus on Lorelei's face, which shows not only determination but also certainty that she can and will procure this money from Gus.

Figure 12. Lorelei calculates how long it will take to get the money from Gus (GPB 01:13:10)

The scene and the way it is shot prove that not only does Lorelei – and Dorothy for that matter – know it is possible for Lorelei to hustle large sums of money from Gus, but also that it has been done enough times so that Lorelei has an adequate gauge to calculate how long she would need to acquire a certain amount. The shot-reverse shot sequence is limitedly used throughout the film; however, the implementation of this filming sequence is applied generally when Lorelei is scheming or following through with her trickery. This editing allows for the audience to focus on Lorelei's face, which is often shot in a medium close-up, such as when Lorelei is ready to perform her trickery to get Gus to pay the fifteen thousand dollars.

The camera shows Gus's back as he knocks on the dressing room door, permitting for the audience to see Lorelei clearly when she opens it. This centers the focus on Lorelei as she seductively calls Gus "daddy darling" (*GPB* 01:13:21-01:13:22), bats her eyelashes, pouts when he is mad at her, and eventually pulls him into the dressing room for a kiss.

Figure 13. Camera positioned behind Gus shows the audience what he is seeing as Lorelei tricks (GPB 01:13:34)

The filming of these two scenes lets the audience see the change in Lorelei when she is scheming with Dorothy in comparison to when she is performing her trickery on Gus. In the first scene, she is determined and focused and shares the screen with Dorothy, while in the second, she is submissive and flirtatious but takes the center of the shot, signifying the command she has over the situation. And while the audience is not privy to the conversation between Lorelei and Gus, it is clear that Lorelei's trickery is successful; in the next shot Gus and Lorelei are together again. The only man in the film who does not seem to be taken by Lorelei's charms, Ernie Malone, requires both Dorothy and Lorelei to work together to get what they want from him: incriminating photographs of Lorelei and Piggy Beekman. Lorelei confidently declares that she can get the photographs from Ernie, and when Dorothy asks how, Lorelei answers, "He's a man, isn't he?" (*GPB* 00:41:50-00:41:52). Lorelei believes that she can manipulate any man to do whatever she wants or needs, only that Ernie is the exception since he is "too smart for that" (*GPB* 00:41:53-00:41:55). However, the viewer and Dorothy alike witness Lorelei very successfully manipulate men throughout the film, from millionaire Gus Esmond, to diamond mine-owner Piggy Beekman, and Gus's skeptical father, Mr. Esmond Sr.

Most of Lorelei's trickery can be observed in her relationships with Gus Esmond and Piggy Beekman, the men who have the means to provide her with expensive jewelry. Lorelei is aware of the dumb blonde stereotype she is perceived as and advantageously uses the feigned naivety that is expected. She is pleased to have men and women believe she is only a flighty girl who does not need to be carefully watched. The only one who truly seems to understand her as dangerous is Dorothy, who wants to protect Piggy Beekman from ever meeting Lorelei. She tells him, "Would you be careful not to spread it around about your diamond mine? I wouldn't want my girlfriend to hear about it" (*GPB* 00:26:58-00:27:03). However, Lorelei's main love interest is Gus, the man Lorelei declares she is getting married to at the beginning of the film, despite Mr. Esmond Sr.'s objections. Gus is willing to find ways around his father's disapproval as he reciprocates Lorelei's declared love. However, while it is clear that Gus is infatuated with Lorelei, Lorelei's true affections are questionable. Does she only view Gus as someone from whom she can get her main object of desire, diamonds? Or does she truly love him? Lorelei keeps everyone in the film guessing, including Dorothy, Gus, Mr. Esmond Sr., and even the audience. When Lorelei tries to convince Dorothy that she loves Gus, she does so by praising his "gentle disposition" which looks to Lorelei like Gus never winning an argument, doing everything she asks, and having the money with which to do it (*GPB* 01:11:38-01:11:44). This further confuses Lorelei's intentions, but reinforces her conflation of love with money. To Lorelei, love cannot exist without money, as she admits to Dorothy: "If a girl's spending all her time worrying about the money she doesn't have, how is she going to have any time for being in love?" (*GPB* 00:19:17-00:19:22). Lorelei's pursuit of love will and must have wealth attached, preferably in the form of diamonds, but often this very motivation causes the characters and the audience to wonder if Lorelei loves the man or the diamonds he presents.

The opening scene of the film is a musical number performed by Dorothy and Lorelei which gives important insights into Lorelei's motivation. The choreographed song establishes the protagonist of the film, Lorelei Lee, and offers the audience background information for the character. The song, "A Little Girl from Little Rock," can be seen as at least partially autobiographical – in a fit of rage, later in the film, Lorelei tells Gus that is was men like him who have made her the way she is now (*GPB* 01:05:33-01:05:27) referencing back to the song lyrics. The song explains that Lorelei and Dorothy grew up on "the wrong side of the tracks," seemingly in poverty and with 'gentlemen' callers who ultimately broke the girls' hearts (*GPB*

00:00:24-00:00:26). This opening song shows how Lorelei understands "the hand she has been dealt" (Landay 21) and her longing to move past it: "I was young and determined to be wined and dined in ermine and I worked at it all around the clock" (*GPB* 00:01:00-00:01:09). And Lorelei certainly does work at it as she follows the advice she sings: "Find a gentleman who is shy or bold, or short or tall, or young or old. As long as the guy's a millionaire!" (*GPB* 00:03:07-00:03:30). At this point, the camera zooms in to shoot a close-up of Lorelei singing at Gus, who is indeed to inherit a millionaire status from his father, Mr. Esmond Sr. This momentary pause in choreography as the camera focuses on Lorelei's face, shown in Figure 14, is the first moment Lorelei reveals some truth behind her trickery, which she will do again purposefully in the film. The cuts from Lorelei to Gus then back to Lorelei disclose two pieces of information to the audience: one, Lorelei has indeed found a man, no matter what he is like, to be her millionaire lover, and two, that man is Gus. Furthermore, this shot reveals to the audience exactly the kind of girl Lorelei is: someone willing to do everything in her power to marry a millionaire who will provide her with money and a high social standing. Perhaps not a completely accurate autobiographical account of Lorelei's life – the audience is not granted full knowledge to know exactly what is or is not fictional – there are still elements of truth in Lorelei's song. While she grew up underprivileged, she found a way to ensure her own success at the hands of a millionaire.

Figure 14. Close-up of Lorelei in "Little Girl from Little Rock" singing to Gus (GPB 00:03:19)

Lorelei benefits financially from having millionaire lovers, and she is determined to maintain these benefits by rewarding behavior she finds desirable such as gifting her expensive jewelry and diamonds. One example of Lorelei using the reward of affection in a

way to educate men in this behavior can be seen when Gus goes backstage to visit her. While starting out polite and referring to him as Mr. Esmond, Lorelei does not show outwardly affection until he gives her a diamond ring. Only after the presentation of the gift does Lorelei make a show of rewarding Gus with her affection. She calls him 'daddy' – a pet name she uses very strategically throughout the film – and proclaims that he has made her the "happiest girl in the world" (*GPB* 00:05:35-00:05:38). The reward Lorelei offers Gus is complete when she kisses him, presenting her body as a kind of payment for consumable goods. The kiss is shown to have the desired outcome on Gus in that he is momentarily stunned which is characterized by a nondiegetic, classic Hollywood 'boing'-like sound effect illustrating the stupefying influence Lorelei's kisses have on him. Dorothy questions if Lorelei puts Novocain in her lipstick as she observes Gus's momentary loss of words and actions (Figure 15).

Figure 15. Gus is stunned from Lorelei's kiss while a nondiegetic sound-effect plays in the background (GPB 00:05:43)

This same reward of affection can be seen throughout the film, such as when Gus purchases her a diamond bracelet before her journey to France. Once again, Lorelei calls him 'daddy' and is more open and forward with her show of affection than before. When seeing the effect she has on Gus, it is no wonder that Lorelei notes that, "Sometimes Mr. Esmond finds it very difficult to say no to me" (*GPB* 00:07:06-00:07:10). This is exactly where she wants him, and this line shows the success of Lorelei's trickery, of which she is also aware. While Lorelei rewards him with affection, she also withholds love and sex as a form of punishment. Lorelei in Loos's novel refuses to see Mr. Eisman by claiming she has a headache when in reality she is mad that Eisman gave her a diamond that is too small (qtd. in Landay 56). In a similar

manner, Monroe's Lorelei reacts coldly to Gus after he cancels her letter of credit and hotel reservations in France. Lorelei's punishment revolves around distancing herself from him and calling him Mr. Esmond again instead of his pet name. Her outward display of love for him does not return until she tries to get fifteen thousand dollars from him for the price of the diamond tiara. Lorelei recognizes the power she has over Gus and uses it strategically to pursue her goals. All this allows Lorelei the opportunity to transform her suitor, a common female trickster trait. As Landay writes of another female trickster, Scheherazade in *1001 Nights*: "Scheherazade enacts a covert strategy of *influence* over the king [...] she transform the place of her victimization into a base from which to seduce, charm, interest, and most importantly *change* him. [...] she has created an ideal man to be her husband and partner" (3 [emphasis in original]). Comparably, the Lorelei of Loos's novel and the Lorelei of Hawks' film use covert tactics to not only achieve their goals but also to influence the men they trick, transforming them as they see fit.

Lorelei's trickery is again on display when she meets Piggy Beekman, the owner of a diamond mine. Upon their meeting, the audience is offered a perpetually subjective view, meaning they are given the opportunity to see Piggy's introduction through Lorelei's point of view. As they make their introductions, a glittering diamond appears over the entirety of Piggy's head, which is shot in a medium close-up, and the audience sees what Lorelei imagines (Figure 16).

Figure 16. Perpetually subject view when Lorelei meets Piggy and there is a diamond over Piggy's head (GPB 00:27:25)

This moment is what incites Lorelei to use her trickery again. After learning that this man, who is significantly older than her, possesses a diamond mine, Lorelei activates her charms.

She constantly makes Piggy feel younger than he is and flatters him by calling him interesting and making it appear as though she prefers his company over anyone else's. This tactic of feigned interest and submission is a common ploy among the female trickster. As shown in the previous chapter, both Schatze and Pola in *HTMAM* rely on making their millionaire suitors feel younger, remarkable, and the object of their affections. However, the true object of all of these women's desires, including Lorelei's, is not the millionaire himself but the means and wealth he can provide for them. Lorelei is not interested in Piggy but the diamond tiara his wife owns; furthermore, Lorelei's goal is not to acquire Piggy's affections but the diamonds he possesses. To achieve her goal, Lorelei acts every bit the helpless and naïve dumb blonde Piggy expects her to be while layering on tactics of feigned interest and submission. She assures Piggy she feels lonesome without someone like him around: "A girl like I almost never gets to meet a really interesting man. Sometimes my brain gets real starved!" (*GPB* 00:39:33-00:39:40). Once again, the scene is presented in a shot-reverse shot sequence, allowing the audience to witness her performance which can appear overly exaggerated in her compliments and naivety (Figure 17). However, this act works as she intends, and Piggy does everything she asks of him. Schweinitz discusses in his study of stereotypes the idea of a character playing a role, or "acting within acting, which still bridges realistic acting" (263). Monroe plays Lorelei who plays a helpless, clueless dumb blonde. This acting within acting offers a chance for the audience of the film to see something more disparate than the diegetic audience within the plot. The double performance Monroe utilizes in her portrayal of Lorelei Lee provides the nondiegetic viewers a chance to see the manipulations of the blonde trickster woman as she curates her persona.

Figure 17. Lorelei's exaggerated performance of a downcast girl (GPB 00:39:43)

One of Lorelei's main acts of trickery follows after she acquires the incriminating photos Ernie Malone took of Piggy and Lorelei. In the photos, Piggy is showing Lorelei how pythons in South Africa squeeze goats to death – "Piggy was being the python, and I was the goat" (*GPB* 00:40:56-00:40:58). Lorelei's initial trickery of feigned interest is documented as evidence that can be used against her if shown to Mr. Esmond Sr., who already disapproves of his son's relationship with Lorelei. The photos, if shown to Gus's father, could incentivize him to withhold his money from Gus and thus are an obstacle Lorelei must find a way to overcome. Once the film is in her possession, Lorelei switches tactics, develops the photos, and uses them in corroboration with her trickery. The photos, which show Piggy and Lorelei in a tight embrace, can easily be used to question her loyalty to Gus. However, what was going to be used against Lorelei, she uses to her gain. She shows them to Piggy who is abounding in thankfulness – "You little angel, you don't even know that there is a certain kind of girl that would take advantage of a thing like this" (*GPB* 00:51:39-00:51:46) – and desires to reward Lorelei with a kiss on the hand. However, while Lorelei laments that someone who would use this to their advantage would have to be "a terrible girl to be mean to a sweet, intelligent, generous man" like Piggy (*GPB* 00:51:46-00:51:54), she ends up doing just that as she reminds him "a kiss on the hand might feel very good, but a diamond tiara lasts forever" (*GPB* 00:52:03-00:52:08). Her trickery is subtle and revolves around flattering Piggy, affirming her affection for him, and leveraging his fear of his wife to her advantage. When he seems reluctant, Lorelei flatters him further by claiming he is clever enough to figure out how to take the tiara from his wife and justifies herself by claiming it is the least she can have since Lady Beekman is the one who ultimately gets Piggy. In her pleading, the tiara appears to be the consolation prize and not the main object of her desire. In this scene, Lorelei sits upright so that she is taller than Piggy, forcing him to look up slightly at her. This technique signifies to the audience that although Piggy might be unaware of it, Lorelei is the one who is in control (Figures 18 and 19). By the end of the scene, her trickster tactics of feigned interest and subversion prove to be successful: Piggy vows to take the tiara from his wife and bring it to Lorelei as he worshipfully exclaims, "Anything you say, my dear, anything you say" (*GPB* 00:52:42-00:52:44). Through her awareness of Piggy's interest in her and how easily handled he is when she flatters his ego, Lorelei manipulates the events exactly to her liking and secures Lady Beekman's tiara.

Figure 18. Piggy looking up at Lorelei (GPB 00:52:09)
Figure 19. Lorelei looking down at Piggy showing who is in control (GPB 00:51:51)

Lorelei's trickery is masterful as she intentionally chooses moments to reveal her tactics; one example occurs during the most famous song of the film – "Diamonds are a Girl's Best Friend." This performance features Lorelei in a stunning pink gown and overly adorned with prop diamonds. The song allows Lorelei a chance to reveal the purposes of her trickery as she openly admits to her audience and Gus, who is watching her performance, that "diamonds are a girl's best friend" for inevitably "men grow cold as girls grow old, and we all lose our charms in the end. But square-cut or pear-shaped, these rocks don't lose their shape" (*GPB* 01:08:36-01:08:50). Landay explains that "the only thing a 'girl' can count on are the material goods she can get from men now and keep, because 'we all lose our charms in the end'" (158). While Lorelei still has the charm, sex appeal, and beauty to manipulate, she will perform her trickery to gain wealth through diamonds until that no longer works. The "men grow cold," and she must instead rely on the diamonds she has already accrued. This revelation of her trickery is used punitively towards Gus who, jealous of Piggy's attention towards Lorelei, cancelled her letter of credit. Lorelei uses the song to reveal some of the intentions of her trickery and further explain herself, both to the diegetic audience watching her performance and to the nondiegetic audience watching the film. Lorelei, as mentioned before, understands "the hand she has been dealt" (Landay 21), and uses what she has as a way to ensure that she will be taken care of. Through the lyrics of the song, the viewer can see that Lorelei does not trust men as she sings her advice. Whether the man is a "hard-boiled employer who thinks you're awful nice" or a lover who's "your guy when stocks are high" but hurries back to his wife when the stocks "start to descend" (*GPB* 01:09:21-01:09:44), Lorelei is quick to remind the listeners that it is not the men but the diamonds upon which a girl can

rely. In the choreographed performance, Lorelei sings to a group of young female dancers also clad in pink costumes, giving the visual example of teaching young girls the ways of female trickery to help them succeed (Figure 20). The use of a diegetic spotlight focuses on Lorelei and the dramatic costumes, stage setting, and bold colors present this song as a pivotal scene in the film (Figure 21). It is, in fact, as it allows Lorelei the opportunity to blatantly confess her frustrations and fears along with her plans to overcome these difficulties. While her moment of honesty is meant to serve as a punishing measure, it does not seem to work in Lorelei's favor and only bruises Gus's pride further as he declares their relationship is over. Lorelei pivots when her plan fails and instead displays affection again towards Gus in hopes to get the money needed for the stolen tiara. While Lorelei's song does not work to get Gus back, it does help establish sympathy between Lorelei and the audience as she proves that she not only performs her trickery on purpose but also finds an imperative need to do so. In this framework, Lorelei sees that the only way to be truly independent, have agency, and security is by acquiring diamonds.

Figure 20. Lorelei surrounded by the young women she instructs (GPB 01:09:17)
Figure 21. Lorelei in a pink gown against the red backdrop (GPB 01:07:58)

Lorelei is aware of the persona she is expected to embody in society as a blonde woman. Her awareness and manipulation of the dumb blonde persona is part of what classifies her as a blonde female trickster. Lorelei again reveals her trickery at the end of the film with Gus Esmond and Esmond Sr. This scene is filmed in a shot-reverse shot sequence where Gus and Lorelei are shown standing together while they face Mr. Esmond Sr. When Gus's father exclaims that he thought Lorelei was stupid, Lorelei confidently replies, "I can be smart when it's important, but most men don't like it" (*GPB* 01:25:22-01:25:30). Here, Lorelei admits to recognizing that not only do most men see her as stupid, but that she also allows

them to believe her to be a dumb blonde. By claiming that "most men don't like it," Lorelei confesses to playing the persona of the dumb blonde to appease her male counterparts and, presumably, gain an advantage from their assumptions about her. Furthermore, when Mr. Esmond Sr. is still hesitant to give his approval for his son's marriage as he tells Lorelei that she does not fool him, Lorelei replies, "I'm not trying to, but I bet I could though" (*GPB* 01:24:14-01:24:21). In her responses to Mr. Esmond Sr., Lorelei begins to step closer to him, taking up more of the screen than Gus (Figure 22). In her actions, Lorelei becomes the central focus of the shot, once again allowing the audience to observe her own awareness and trickery.

Figure 22. Lorelei steps forward to take the center of the shot as she talks to Mr. Esmond Sr. (GPB 01:25:00)

By assuming the focal position in this shot-reverse shot sequence, Lorelei stands on her own, without Gus, and the filming highlights the two main participants in this conversation: Lorelei and Mr. Esmond Sr. By the end of this conversation, it will be Mr. Esmond Sr. and Lorelei who decide whether Gus and Lorelei will marry or not. She has become a key player of her own future, despite being a woman born underprivileged. Lorelei reveals the confidence she has in her own ability to trick men. However, Lorelei chooses in this moment to be honest and explain herself to Mr. Esmond Sr.. Lorelei declares that she is indeed interested in marrying Gus for his money, or rather the money he is to inherit. While this seems like a slip of her trickery, she is quick to give her reasons: "Don't you know that a man being rich is like a girl being pretty. You might not marry a girl just because she's pretty, but my goodness, doesn't it help?" (*GPB* 01:24:58-01:25:08). Lorelei reframes the whole proposal in the "marketplace of sex" within which she knows she must operate (Landay 21). In this system, Gus provides

the money and she provides the love as she is valued primarily for her looks and beauty. It is a relationship she is comfortable manipulating because she knows how it works, as seen in the ways Lorelei awards Gus for his expensive gifts. Lorelei sends Gus away to have a private conversation with his father as she tries persuading Mr. Esmond Sr. to give his approval. Gus needs his father's blessing to inherit the money, and Lorelei needs Mr. Esmond Sr.'s blessing because, for Lorelei, love can only come after the accruement of wealth. While the viewer is not privy to this conversation, whatever Lorelei says works because the next scene is a long shot of the boat, then of a wedding inside the dining room of the ship, before finally zooming to a medium close-up of Lorelei and Dorothy walking down the aisle in matching wedding dresses. While Mr. Esmond Sr. initially calls Lorelei a "blonde mantrap" who will never marry his son (*GPB* 01:14:12-01:14:13), he changes his mind due to Lorelei's persuasion and, one can assume based on her previous actions, her trickery. Lorelei ends the film declaring her love for Gus, and marrying the millionaire who will provide her with expensive gifts, represented in the enormous wedding ring Lorelei adjusts fondly during the wedding. As mentioned earlier, Landay observes of a situational comedy from the 1960s that "the romantic ending undercuts her independence and mobility" (202). However, it appears that whether Lorelei's independence is undercut or not, her scheme is fulfilled exactly as she planned. She will now marry a millionaire who happily provides her with what she wants – diamonds. This conflation of love and money is what drives Lorelei forward in her trickery. She is the ideal example of the consumerist blonde who views both love and wealth as materials to consume. Her focus on consumption is a trend that highlights American cultural values, starting in the 1920's when Lorelei Lee was first introduced in Anita Loos's novel as "the flapper, the pleasure-seeking, independent modern woman of mass consumer culture" (Landay 61) but will continue into the postfeminist culture of the early 2000s, which will be discussed in chapter four. However, for Lorelei, she finds herself in an ideal situation where she has the certainty to consume both wealth and love in the marketplace of sex/love with her marriage to Gus Esmond.

2.3 Dorothy Masquerading as the Dumb Blonde

An interesting note must be made about another scene of female trickery in the film, this time of Lorelei's brunette friend Dorothy's. While Landay considers Dorothy's performance to be the only true act of female trickery in the film, I would argue that it is just another example of

it alongside Lorelei's. Dorothy impersonates the blonde woman as well as the expectations of the blonde woman to disrupt the courthouse proceedings, providing a more stark example of this "acting within acting" in regards to stereotypes (Schweinitz 263). This furthers the understanding of the blonde woman as a mask or persona that can be manipulated. When Lady Beekman accuses Lorelei of stealing her tiara, Dorothy sends Lorelei to try to hustle the money from Gus while she goes to the courtroom and pretends to be Lorelei Lee. By donning a blonde wig, changing the inflection of her voice to match that of Lorelei's and repeating some of her phrases – "a girl like I" (*GPB* 01:16:59-01:17:00) – Dorothy successfully pulls off the dumb blonde persona. She plays the helpless and confused blonde as if she does not know what is going on and needs advice from the men around her, specifically the judge – "you're so much more intelligent than poor little me. Won't you tell me what I ought to say" (*GPB* 01:16:40-01:16:54). Not only that, Dorothy makes reference to her blonde hair and appearance, aware of how this both advantages and disadvantages the friend she is pretending to be: "You see, judge, sometimes life is very hard for a girl like I, especially if she happens to be pretty, like I, and have blonde hair" (*GPB* 01:16:51-01:17:04). This interesting detail affirms that beauty as well as the blonde color of a woman's hair play a particular role in how one is treated in the world, to which Dorothy references in her answer to the judge. However, Dorothy manipulates that disadvantage to her advantage, something she has witnessed Lorelei do, as she distracts the courtroom with her beauty, charm, and seeming lack of intelligence. Dorothy throws off her heavy coat, revealing a cabaret costume underneath, and reprises Lorelei's stage performance, "Diamonds are a Girl's Best Friend." While Dorothy performs, she is "in full knowledge and control of the effect her machinations have on the men around her" (Landay 159). The success of Dorothy's trickery is shown in a series of medium long shots, allowing the audience to see the choreography which channels the sexual availability of the dumb blonde as she shakes the tassels and beads on her cabaret costume. The camera does not focus on Dorothy's face, as it does for Lorelei when she is utilizing trickster tactics, but instead allows for the audience to watch Dorothy's dance and the rest of the people around her. Furthermore, the medium-long shot provides the viewers the chance to see the contrast between Dorothy's lightly colored cabaret costume and the dark uniforms of the officers around her. The cinematography and use of costumes offers an obvious example of the blonde woman manipulating the circumstances through dress and performance to stand out, something Lorelei did when she entered the dining room in her

orange dress earlier. By giving the audience this view point, the camera shows how Dorothy's performance has the desired effect of distracting, tempting, and confounding the court to buy Lorelei more time. Dorothy assumes the dumb blonde persona and commands the courtroom as she waits for Lorelei to get the money needed to settle the case.


Figure 23. Dorothy commands the courtroom (GPB 01:18:42); Figure 24. Dorothy's sexual choreography (GPB 01:18:52)

The viewer sees how subtle yet subversive Lorelei's trickery is, even when it is Dorothy who is performing it. Lorelei and Dorothy when she is performing as her friend are masters at subversion. The men fall prey to the helpless, naïve blonde, and while their guards are down, they end up doing exactly what the blonde woman wants of them. Sometimes that means buying more jewels, stealing a diamond tiara from one's wife, acquitting someone who appears to be a thief, or granting permission to a gem-hunting woman to marry one's son. Landay might view Monroe's Lorelei as less of a trickster than the 1925 Lorelei Lee or even Jane Russel's Dorothy, but this thesis argues against that view. Landay claims that Monroe's Lorelei is the "embodiment of the feminine ideal" (156) and her "trickery is restricted to the kinds encouraged by postwar culture as the social practices of femininity in everyday life" such as "makeup, influence over men through the tactics of covert power, manipulation of sexual attractiveness as a survival skill" (158). However, this is still trickery and, furthermore, does not weaken Lorelei's schemes but allows her to trick in a safe environment. As Bassil-Morozow writes, "the trickster genre is ultimately about the freedom of expression, the freedom from oppression, and the balance between individual life and societal demands" ("Persona and Rebellion" 35). Lorelei sees that freedom in a particular light: having ownership of her own diamonds, which is its own avenue of power (c.f. Grant 2020; Russell 2010). As Landay notes, "the only way for women to survive, given their subordinate position and

limited opportunities for exercising overt power, is to use the covert power of female trickery" (12). This is what Lorelei does in her quest for diamonds and security. Lorelei's trickery may seem shadowed by the ideal of femininity which Monroe flaunts in her portrayal, but the film version of Lorelei Lee still uses covert tactics of the female trickster – such as masquerading, a performative persona, feigned interest/submission, and awarding affection – in her quest to attain more diamonds. By manipulating the persona of the demure, clueless, and sexual dumb blonde, Monroe's Lorelei and even Russell's double performance as Dorothy impersonating Lorelei portray successful, dangerous female tricksters. Through her trickster tactics, Lorelei secures a husband in her quest to acquire wealth and diamonds, which she values over love, and is expected to live a future of comfort and pseudo-agency through her millionaire husband who cannot say no to her.

3 "Just as Long as You're Satisfied": The Ice Blonde

The ice blonde character found popularity in post-WWII film, alongside the sexual and naïve dumb blonde, but differs from the dumb blonde because the she grew in her reputation as an intelligent and attractive temptress. While Lorelei Lee's dumb blonde "relied on looks more than intelligence" (Sherrow 255) to achieve her goals through trickery, the ice blonde is known for recognizing the power she has in both her looks and her duplicitous intelligence. The ice blonde, also referred to as the cool blonde or the Hitchcock blonde, is another trope that blonde characters embody as a persona to trick male and female counterparts. The trope was popularized by film director Alfred Hitchcock. A defining feature of his is the inevitable blonde leading lady who became known as the 'Hitchcock blonde.' Women such as Kim Novak, Tippi Hedren, and Grace Kelly, among others, have all played a Hitchcock blonde. Through popular culture, the ice blonde became another well-known stereotype for blonde women. She can best be understood as contradictory – on the one hand she is seen as 'pure' like "virgin snow," as Hitchcock once said, quoted by Stephen Pizzello (76), but on the other hand, she is duplicitous, cunning, and implicitly sexual. As Everett Evans cited, Hitchcock described his blondes in one interview as "the drawing room type [...] An English girl, looking like a schoolteacher, is apt to get into a cab with you and, to your surprise, she'll probably pull a man's pants open" (n.p.). The sexually tempting and dangerous woman under the disguise

of a demure girl is what made the ice blonde so fascinating and alluring to Hitchcock. This contradictory tension crafted a popular blonde character who can be the protagonist, love interest, adversary, or a mixture of these roles. While this character trope has been more famously labeled as the Hitchcock blonde, I will be referring to the character as the 'ice blonde' in an attempt to distance these women, their characters, and their characters' performances from Hitchcock and place them in the broader context of film instead of strictly in relation to one director.

3.1 *To Catch a Thief*'s Frances Stevens

The ice blonde is perhaps not as solidly established in popular culture as the dumb blonde; however, she still has certain qualities that help distinguish her from the other blonde categories. She can be defined as "a beautiful, sophisticated, poised woman who carries with her an air of mystery and indirect sex appeal" and furthermore can be an "unexpected source of duplicity" and a "cunning and intelligent adversary" (Saporito n.p.). Consequently, she has her own way of performing the expectations of her persona, which do not rely on her playing dumb. The ice blonde is 'cool,' elegant, yet passionate (Cook 2016). She is seen as both repressed and desired with the potential to lash out with fiery passion hiding under her composed exterior. Katie Calautti quotes Hitchcock who once called Grace Kelly a "snow-covered volcano" (n.p.), meaning Kelly was like an "ice goddess who could unleash unexpected flames of passion" (Evans n.p.). In this definition, Kelly – Hitchcock's idée fixe of an ice blonde (ibid.) – is a feeling and passionate woman who puts on a feminine public self to negotiate the public sphere. Kelly was Hitchcock's perfect ice blonde not only in her performances but also in the way her appearances captured the essence of the trope – Kelly's hair was "crucial in defining her persona as the ultimate cool blonde" and the "epitome of understated elegance and finesse" (Cook n.p.). Ice blondes are "captivating but dangerous, their blondeness a beautiful but false colour that hid[es] something dark and threatening" (Pitman ch. 14). The duality of the ice blonde provides contradictory forces within which the blonde woman negotiates public expectations and hidden desires.

Some, such as Mike Yuelett, have likened the ice blonde of Hitchcock's films to the femme fatale of that time – "whether good or bad, each and every 'Icy Blonde' has a dark side," and this dark side should not be crossed (n.p.). As Julie Grossman defines, the femme fatale is a woman who "seduces a male protagonist into criminality and a web of deceit,

causing his demise" and often her own also (Grossman 1). Certainly many of Hitchcock's ice blondes can be considered femme fatales – Yuelett notes Lisa Fremont in *Rear Window* (1954) and Madeleine Elster in *Vertigo* (1958) as two such femmes fatales – however, not every ice blonde necessarily coerces the male protagonist into criminality or to his demise. Frances in *TCAT* is an interesting example in that her femme fatale performance, like Grossman's analysis of Lauren Bacall's Marie in *To Have and Have Not* (1944), "is subordinate" and because of this her character is "rewarded with romance and happy endings" (Grossman 6). While Kelly's character of Frances may not be considered a true femme fatale – she does not successfully draw the male protagonist into criminality and she does not cause their demise – her trickery as a blonde female certainly questions the demarcation between femme fatale and ice blonde. As Grossman writes of the femme fatale,

> The theme of performance captures the double bind that active and rebellious or transgressive female characters find themselves in: they perform roles sometimes to escape objectification or the rigid or socially sanctioned positions that oppress them. (3-4)

However the performance of "unconventional or unprescribed roles" as a way to "find fulfillment outside of conventions constitutes them as 'bad actors,' as deceptive, inauthentic" (Grossman 4). Grossman's analysis demonstrates the overlap of femmes fatales and the ice blonde trickster woman: In an attempt to push past their given circumstances, both perform as a way of escape, but this performance is seen as dangerous and connotes a negative label. However, perhaps it can be said that the femme fatale performance yields more serious consequences for the male protagonists. While the ice blonde of Kelly's Frances and the femme fatale category do seem to overlap, Frances' performances do not lead to Robie's death or her own. Furthermore, she does not use these performances as a "mocking vengeance against those who have contributed to [her] desolation" like the femme fatale (ibid.). Nevertheless, the trickster woman and the femme fatale find similarities in that both "perform roles in order to survive, to seduce, or to manipulate others in order to get what they want" (Grossman 6). These performed roles are often categorized as negative and dangerous.

This section will study one of Hitchcock's well-known films, *TCAT* (1955), which stars Grace Kelly as Frances Stevens and Carey Grant as the retired jewelry thief, John 'The Cat' Robie. *TCAT* has many differences from *GPB*. For starters, the blonde woman I will study in

Hitchcock's film is not the protagonist, unlike Lorelei, but is the love interest to protagonist John Robie. Furthermore, *TCAT* is a different genre of film; whereas *GPB* is a musical comedy, Hitchcock's film is a romantic thriller. The mise-en-scène of *TCAT* matches the darker tone of the film, and shadows are used to draw attention to the thrilling and mysterious aspects of the story. *TCAT* was also primarily filmed on location in the south of France, rather in a studio, and Hitchcock beautifully shows the landscape in a number of long shots establishing the setting of the film. These two aspects coming together – the dark, suspenseful shots, such as a close-up on a wrench with the intended use as a murder weapon (Figure 25) or a gloved hand stealing jewels in the night (Figure 26), in contrast to the bright, beautifully landscaped long shots of France (Figures 27 and 28) – represent the merging of two genres: thriller and romance.

Figures 25. and 26. Dark, close-up shot showing wrench as murder weapon (TCAT 01:19:53) and jewels stolen by a gloved hand in the night (TCAT 00:02:09)

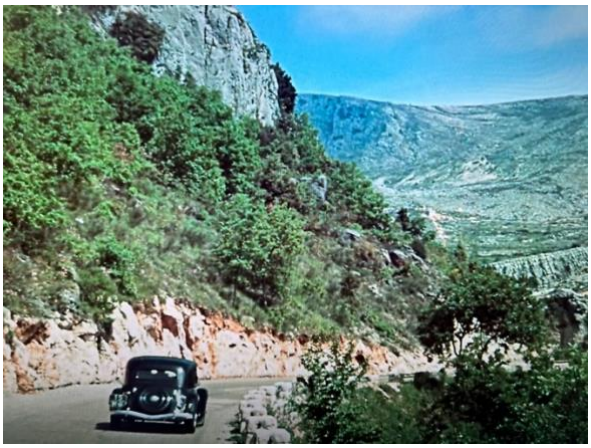

Figure 27. Brightly lit long shots establishing the setting of France as a car drives along the mountains (TCAT 00:03:10); Figure 28. Long shot of the beach resort establishing the setting of the film (TCAT 00:02:20)

The mise-en-scène also works to foreground Frances' character through use of lighting and costuming. An important aspect of Frances' character, both to this thesis and to Hitchcock who prioritized blonde women, is her hair. The lighting of the film often draws attention to Kelly's blondeness, even at times lighting her from the above so the audience notices first her cool, blonde locks. To further establish Frances' character, the film uses costumes to show her position in society, which is upper class from new money, and to stress the way she stands out among others. In one scene, Frances waits for Robie in the hotel lobby. As she waits, Frances stands serenely in the middle of the hotel while all of the people around her begin to turn towards her, establishing her as the focal point of the shot (Figure 29). While perhaps not as publicly aware of the attention, unlike Lorelei, both blonde women appear to revel in it and encourage it.

Figure 29. Frances as the focal point of the medium long shot, framed by others looking at her (TCAT 00:43:32)

Frances is presented to the audience as the unattainable ice blonde that she is, able to be looked at but never touched. Kelly also establishes her character's ice blonde persona in her tone of voice. While Monroe utilizes a high-pitched, airy voice for Lorelei, Kelly speaks in a sultry mid Atlantic accent that makes her sound erotic and sexual, especially as she hides innuendoes in her replies to Robie. The lighting which often emphasizes first her hair, the use of costumes, Kelly's tone of voice, and the focus of the camera all help establish Frances' persona of the sexual yet untouchable ice blonde.

In the following, I will analyze Kelly's character, Frances Stevens, who can be seen as an ice blonde, and will question how Kelly's character uses the ice blonde persona as well as her other trickster tactics. Kelly's Frances, who goes by her nickname Francie for the majority

of the film, engages in trickery as she pursues the object of her desire – Robie – and operates as an active player, hiding her action in the covert practices of female trickery. By analyzing Francie's performance through a feminist lens, I will study her multifaceted trickery in an attempt to understand how she, as a trickster, engages in the performative act of the ice blonde persona alongside other female trickster tactics such as sexual allurement, masquerading, submission, and emotional manipulation.

3.2 Frances 'Francie' Stevens' Trickery

While Lorelei Lee's main objective is diamonds, Francie does not need to find ways to obtain wealth as she and her mother are already affluent. Trickster Francie looks for something other than money to satisfy her; she desires Robie. Whether because she truly loves him or because she enjoys the game of pursual, Francie utilizes female trickster practices to trap Robie. In her chase, tempting and tricking are what Francie uses to catch her thief. As mentioned in chapter one, Schatze, another iteration of the ice blonde, says, "If you want to catch a mouse, you set a mousetrap. So, alright, we set a bear trap" referring to trapping a millionaire husband (*HTMAM* 00:16:26-00:16:30). When Loca, the third woman in their scheme, asks if she means to marry the millionaire, Schatze replies, "If you don't marry him, you haven't caught him, he's caught you" (*HTMAM* 00:16:35-00:16:38). The language of catching and being caught highlights a question of agency among these blonde characters and is used consistently throughout Hitchcock's film *TCAT*, even in its title. The film's title has a double meaning: While Robie hopes to catch the new jewelry thief and clear his name, Francie works to capture the ex-thief, Robie, and his affections. For Francie to be the one catching Robie means that she is the one manipulating the circumstances, laying her trap, and successfully commanding the situation to her favor as she works to capture a man. When Robie asks what Francie hopes to get out of him by being nice, she answers, "Probably a lot more than you're willing to offer" (*TCAT 00*:53:18-00:53:21). Robie has already guessed that Francie is in Europe to "buy a husband," which Francie answers quickly that the man she is after "doesn't have a price" (*TCAT* 00:53:21-00:53:28). When Robie replies that this rules him out, implicating that he does indeed have a price, the chase begins. The feeling of a thrilling chase has already been established in this scene as a police car is chasing the pair. Francie soon becomes aware of this and drives recklessly away from the police. Hitchcock characterizes the nature of a suspenseful chase to his audience by compiling a montage of match on action shots which

establishes tension, such as a close-up of Francie's rearview mirror, which shows the police car chasing them in deep focus (Figure 30), or a close up of the car's back tire with the police car close behind (Figure 31). The thrilling car chase also helps establish the romantic chase that is happening between the two characters. When Robie declares that he is unattainable, Francie realizes that she cannot just buy him with her money which "handles most people" (*TCAT* 00:52:28-00:52:30) but must catch him. The romantic pursuit presented during a car chase asks the question of who is catching who in the context of a romantic thriller film. Throughout the scene, it is Francie who is the driving force, quite literally as she is in the driver's seat, while Robie is along for the, what appears to be, terrifying ride (Figure 32). This dynamic is repeated not only in the context of driving but also in the context of their relationship: it is Francie who focuses on capturing Robie.

Figures 30. and 31. Close-ups with deep focus showing the rearview mirror and back tire with the police car in the background (TCAT 00:57:25; 00:58:45)

Figure 32. Francie driving the car and in control while Robie watches anxiously from the passenger seat (TCAT 00:59:39)

With Francie's desires centered on capturing a man, she gets to work on performing an elusive but irresistible trap for him. Her trap relies on showcasing different layers of herself

which she intentionally removes as time passes. I will argue that Francie's trickery is complex and intentional; she takes her time in presenting herself as a multifaceted woman who sheds these assumptions when convenient. In contrast to Lorelei, who uses her performance of the dumb blonde persona as a way to sustain the image of a naïve and unsuspecting girl perfect for tricking gullible and rich men, Francie manipulates different aspects of her ice blonde persona in a complex game. While she perhaps begins as appearing naïve and innocent, Francie intentionally breaks this perception of herself to maintain her agency and lay her alluring trap, through which she uses her intelligence and her body as tools in her devices. Her goal is to remain the object of Robie's desire since he is firstly the object of hers. She uses what Landay explains as the "consciousness of the 'masquerade' of femininity" in which Francie "deliberately construct[s]" a "feminine public self" (49). Francie's coolness as a quintessential ice blonde allows her to pursue her desires while "the public self impersonates an appropriate spectacle of femininity" (ibid.). Francie is aware and clever. She uses the mask of the feminine persona to both appease and surprise Robie in her pursuit of him. Francie first creates and then disrupts her feminine public self when she takes agency in her relationship with Robie. During their first meeting, she presents to others the image of a quiet, aloof, and seemingly uninterested girl. This scene of Mrs. Stevens, Robie, Francie, and the Stevens' jewelry insurer – Mr. Hughson – around the table is presented in a medium shot and situates Francie slightly a part from the rest of the table. While the audience can see Robie's, Mrs. Stevens', and Mr. Hughson's faces, Francie is turned away from the camera (Figure 33).

Figure 33. Robie's, Mrs. Stevens', and Hughson's faces all in clear shot while Francie sits turned away from the camera (TCAT 00:35:46)

Eventually, the camera cuts to a medium close-up of Francie's side profile, presenting her to the audience in statue like stillness which again emphasizes her untouchable nature (Figure

34). A light illuminates her from the top down, highlighting her blonde hair. When Francie's mother asks Robie about her daughter, Robie responds with "very pretty" and "quietly attractive" while her mother responds that Francie is "too nice" and that her finishing school "finished her" (*TCAT* 00:37:30-00:37:40). As Mrs. Stevens and Robie discuss Francie, the camera cuts to a medium close-up of Francie from the front with her eyes downcast as the light continues to shine down on her (Figure 35). This shot creates the image of a woman exactly as Robie and Mrs. Stevens describe. Through her demure attitude and soft voice, Francie has created an image of a wholesome, blonde woman. This connection of blondeness and virtue is easily manufactured for Francie as blondeness was often associated with goodness or youthfulness, as stated earlier (c.f. Sherrow 149; Landay 63). Without making too much of an effort, Francie is assumed to be 'too nice' of a girl, just from societal connections that were established years before. However, the awareness of these assumptions and the way she can capitalize upon them – such as leading Robie to believe these descriptions of her are true so she could surprise him later – is something that will be seen again in the post-feminist blonde tricksters in chapter four. Francie, in her trickery, utilizes the preconceived beliefs society has for her as a tactic in her pursuit of Robie.

Figure 34. Medium close-up of Francie's side in statue-like stillness (TCAT 00:35:48); Figure 35. Front profile with a light shining down on her (TCAT 00:37:33)

While Francie purposely constructs an image of a woman who is pure and unassuming, the first stage of her feminine public persona, she disrupts this performance when she reclaims agency and kisses Robie at the door of her hotel. The camera is positioned behind Robie's shoulder so that it can follow Francie's movements as she walks into the room, purposefully turns around, and kisses him. By positioning the camera in this way, the audience

is not aware of Robie's reaction but instead focuses on Francie and sees the determination of her sexual advances (Figure 36).

Figure 36. Francie's face in clear focus and well-lit while Robie is out of focus (TCAT 00:39:03)

This action of power, which shocks the dumbstruck Robie, provides a way for Francie to intentionally disrupt his expectations of her. Throughout the remainder of the film, the viewer sees that the initial assumption of a 'quietly attractive' Francie is quite false and even dangerous for Robie to assume. Francie's performance of a 'too nice' girl disarms Robie, so that when she breaks these expectations, she surprises and marvels him. As he confesses later, "You do things with dispatch. No wasted preliminaries. Not only did I enjoy that kiss last night, I was awed by the efficiency behind it," to which Francie answers that she believes in "getting down to essentials" (*TCAT* 00:52:49-00:52:59). The tactic of creating a feminine public self which she later intentionally breaks is a continued practice Francie employs. As the ice blonde, she embodies the "contradictory forces" of "the quiet sexuality, duplicitousness, superficial perfection and shocking disobedience" (Saporito n.p.). Francie is not what she initially seems, and she uses these surprises to lure Robie to herself as she constantly challenges his assumptions of her.

Francie continues to be an active player when she next performs as the dominating, adversarial, and implicitly sexual ice blonde. This second stage of her feminine public self emerges after she purposefully disturbs the initial, quietly attractive image of herself by kissing Robie. Francie operates in a place of control as she organizes dates with Robie – she invites him to breakfast, then to go swimming, then to drive him to the villa – all to her liking. The camera shows the audience this place of control in the way that it displays Francie in the

following scenes. For instance, when Francie offers to drive Robie to the villa, the camera shows her in a long shot, standing outside the hotel, with her hands on her hips (Figure 37). This power stance marks the beginning of her shift to a domineering woman. In the shot-reverse shot conversation that follows, Francie stands on a curb so that she is slightly taller than Robie and he must look up at her (Figure 38). In the conversation, Francie does not allow Robie to say no to her offer – "I guess I can't seem to get out of this gracefully," Robie says as he gestures towards the car – and claims that her terms are "too generous to refuse" (*TCAT* 00:50:39-00:50:51). It is in this place of control that Francie pieces together Robie's true identity as the ex-jewelry thief. She smugly reveals her sleuthing, pleased with herself, unthwarted by Robie's stubborn attempt to keep his identity secret. She coyly declares, "I've never caught a jewelry thief before. It's stimulating" (*TCAT* 01:01:43-01:01:45). Here, Francie hides a double meaning in her words. Not only does she intend to catch Robie in his false identity, but she also intends to capture his affections. As the ice blonde's cunning intelligence can be seen as an adversary force, Francie indeed is one of sorts by almost thwarting Robie's plan and revealing his true identity. His scheme to catch the new burglar in action under a false identity, and by doing so clearing his name, is complicated when Francie sets her eyes on Robie. She is an unexpected hindrance and distraction, using the truth as leverage to make Robie spend time with her – "Everywhere you go, I'll have you paged as John Robie, the Cat" (*TCAT* 01:05:22-01:05:24). Francie continues to make it impossible for Robie to refuse her offers, which is precisely what she wants as she continues to lay her trap.

Figure 37. Long shot of Francie's power pose (TCAT 00:49:43)
Figure 38. Shot-reverse shot while Francie stands taller than Robie and looks down at him (TCAT 00:50:03)

Francie sheds the quiet facade and instead performs as a coy, sexual, controlling, and adversarial woman. She takes pride in her performance, enjoying this persona and the way it

plays with Robie. In her performance of a sexually enticing yet untouchable ice blonde, she lures Robie to her. Francie's untouchability manifests itself in her implicit sexuality to which she often draws attention. As Seabastian wrote, Hitchcock films and the blondes they center "went against many of the popular female stereotypes of the 1940s-1960s" as "sultry sex-symbols such as Marilyn Monroe and Jayne Mansfield were far too overt in their sexuality for the Master of Suspense" (n.p.). Kelly's Francie models this implicit sexuality throughout the film, letting it be one of her main tactics to catch Robie's attention. For example, when Robie notes that she never wears jewelry, Francie responds, "I don't like cold things touching my skin" (*TCAT* 00:54:24-00:54:36). Francie brings attention to her skin, not by showing it off but by mentioning it nonchalantly. Furthermore, Francie speaks in innuendos while they eat the picnic she has prepared. When referring to the chicken, she asks, "You want a leg or a breast?" and Robie's brief pause as he stumbles to answer, "You make the choice" (*TCAT* 01:02:02-01:02:05), shows that her sexual nuance is not lost on him. Francie uses tactics like double entendres in her erotic presentation of herself through her performance as a sexually alluring yet unattainable ice blonde in her attempt to 'catch' her thief and win over Robie.

While Francie performs as an untouchable and implicitly sexual ice blonde, she shifts yet again to flaunt her sexual allure when she deems the time is right. Francie uses the subject of commodified diamonds when she tries to tempt Robie with her eroticism while they watch the fireworks over the Riviera. Francie purposefully positions herself as the object of Robie's desire in her trickery of being seen. Her implicit sexuality can be encapsulated as the idea of having 'it' which Landay discusses: "The most common definition of 'It' is sex appeal" (76). However, Elinor Glyn's understanding of 'it' in Glyn's novel turned film, *It*, looks different. Landay explains that Glyn "meant something closer to a magnetic, irresistible force so elusive that it could not be fabricated or learned, but also so desirable that it became for decades a topic of discussion" (Landay 76). To possess the 'it' factor can also be understood as flaunting personal and sexual allure in the public persona while used as a covert tactic of female trickery. Francie and, in the broader context, the ice blonde master the 'it' factor. Francie showcases her mastery of 'it' by masquerading hyper-femininity to remain the object of Robie's desire. Mary Anne Doane theorizes that to masquerade as excessively feminine and womanly is a kind of "mask which can be worn or removed" ("Film and the Masquerade" 81). This mask of femininity offers the opportunity for a woman to use "her own body as a disguise" (Montrelay 93 qtd. in ibid.). In conjunction with the feminine public self, Francie

dons excessive femininity as a trickster tactic to attract Robie and uses her own body as a tool in her schemes.

Francie works to seduce Robie when she invites him over to watch the fireworks. In this scene, Francie's tactics of sexual allurement and being seen are used to tempt Robie. The atmosphere of the room is much darker, which happens when Francie turns out the lights so that they can see the fireworks better. However, this scene differs from the other scenes that have a dark atmosphere because the lack of light is not meant to give the feeling of mystery and thrill. Instead, the dark atmosphere is used in Francie's seductive schemes to catch Robie. However, despite the room being dark, the lighting of the scene keeps Francie well-lit throughout the majority of the dialogue. This allows the audience and Robie to see her seductive trickery at work. Francie uses light and shadow deliberately in her trickery, which is shown through the cinematography. For example, when Francie goes to turn off the light, she makes a comment that Robie has been looking at her diamond necklace in what she insinuates as lustfully. When she says her line – "The way you looked at my necklace I didn't know" (*TCAT* 01:06:53-01:06:57) – she exposes her neck to catch the glimmer of lamplight right before she turns it off (Figure 39).

Figure 39. Medium close-up of Francie positioning herself and the necklace to be illuminated by the light (TCAT 01:06:54)

This marks the beginning of Francie's intentional conflation of herself and the diamonds she wears. Her trickery will hinge upon being seen. While this tactic is meant to trap Robie, the voyeuristic nature of the shots reminds the audience of Hitchcock's films which prioritize the male gaze and offer women up as desirable images for the male protagonist, himself, and the

audience (Mulvey 1975; Doane 1982). Trickster Francie, however, uses this to her advantage and hopes that Robie will watch and desire her body. Francie continually refers to herself and her body through the language of consumable objects, such as the fireworks to watch or the diamonds to steal. Francie begins the date by saying, "I have a feeling that tonight you're going to see one of the Riviera's most fascinating sights" which she follows coyly with "I was talking about the fireworks" (*TCAT* 01:06:43-01:06:51). This language of seeing and being looked at highlights Francie's understanding that one of her most successful and powerful tactics is attracting Robie's gaze. During the fireworks scene, Francie's aim is to seduce Robie, which she does by conflating her sexuality with jewels. At another point in the conversation, Francie moves back into the shadows so that her face is darkened but the jewels shine in the light. The camera shows this in a medium shot of Francie as she steps backwards into the darkness (Figure 40). She says, "The thrill is right there in front of you, but you can't quite get it" (*TCAT* 01:07:59-01:08:02). Francie equates herself to the unreachable diamonds and draws attention to her untouchable nature as an ice blonde while simultaneously enticing Robie to take her anyway.

Figure 40. Francie's face in the shadow while her necklace and body remain lighted (TCAT 01:08:04)

Francie tempts Robie by openly addressing his desire, which is still coded in the conversation of jewelry as she says, "even in this light, I can tell where your eyes are looking" (*TCAT* 01:09:36-01:09:28). Francie may say this in reference to the necklace which points down directly to her chest, but she, Robie, and the viewers know that Robie's eyes are on her. In each of her lines, with blatant sexual undertones and her flaunting of 'it', Francie invites and

encourages Robie to want her. Francie does her best to lure him to her with the diamonds she wears – the one thing she claims he cannot resist. Throughout the entire scene, the viewer is not sure whether Francie is talking about herself or the diamonds around her neck, which is precisely her game. Thus, she offers her body as something that Robie can consume. Francie, like Lorelei, is aware of her position in the sexual marketplace, but the payment she desires differs from Lorelei's. Francie works to enjoy herself in this game. However, the one thing that Robie cannot resist does not turn out to be diamonds but Francie herself, as the scene ends with him kissing her. This, again, is exactly what Francie hoped to accomplish. She is aware of her assets as a stunning, blonde woman and uses them successfully. As mentioned earlier, Freeman writes: "As women learn to channel energy into being seen rather than into being strong, attracting becomes a substitute for acting" (72). Francie, in her attempt to seduce Robie, repositions herself to a submissive lover, and the camera pans from Robie to Francie during her line, "Just as long as you're satisfied" (*TCAT* 01:10:28-01:10:30). Her intentional shift from dominant to submissive works as yet another female trickster tactic. The sexual experience that Francie and Robie share are symbolized by the fireworks exploding outside their window, which the camera cuts to as Francie performs her trickery and Robie gives in.

While Francie is skillful in her presentation of a woman who will tempt and eventually trap Robie, she is also skillful in knowing when to allow her mask of the cool ice blonde to slip. Francie's ability to essentially shed layers of her persona in her pursuit of Robie showcases the expertise of her trickery. Her 'feminine public self' changes as it needs to, beginning first as a demure, quiet girl then transforming into a confident, alluring woman. Both of these performances are exactly that – performances – which break down when not carefully curated by Francie herself. Francie appears to momentarily lose her masterful performance of the ice blonde persona when Robie becomes the main suspect in the case of her mother's stolen jewels. She appears to be no longer in a place of control as she grows desperate, fearing that she is losing her game. She follows Robie and confesses her love for him. However, it can be argued that her confession is yet another example of Francie's trickery. This time, she uses the trickster tactic of emotional manipulation. When Francie has her emotional outburst, she appears to perform outside of her character as the cunning and independent woman; nevertheless, she still seems to get what she wants. When she learns she is wrong – that Robie is not the present 'Cat' burglar in action – she tries to apologize. In the scene, she is seated in

the car, again in the driver's seat, but this time Robie is outside the car. As she is talking to him, she is forced to look up at him. From this angle, Francie takes a submissive position as she stays lower than him (Figures 41 and 42). However, the fact that she still remains in the driver's seat reminds the viewers of the car chase when Francie operated in a place of power. Perhaps this is a good way to see the blonde trickster – while she positions herself in a place of submission, she is still secretly in control.

Figure 41. Francie and Robie are both in the medium shot, Robie looks down at her (TCAT 01:28:58)
Figure 42. Medium close-up as Francie looks up at Robie, but she is still in the driver's seat (TCAT 01:27:52)

When Robie attempts to leave before she is satisfied with outcome of the conversation, she forces Robie to stay by clutching his arm and proclaiming that she is in love with him. This wild display of emotion is different from the cold, sexually implicit, and controlled Francie the audience and Robie have seen up until this point. The camera focuses on Francie and Robie in a medium close-up, shot-reverse shot sequence while the characters speak to each other in an eyeline match. However, when Francie clutches Robie's sleeve, the camera cuts to show a close up of her grasp on his arm, signifying the action's importance and Francie's desperation, before returning back to a medium close-up of Francie declaring her love for Robie. For the rest of the scene, the camera continues this medium close-up, shot-reverse shot sequence of the characters' dialogue, which allows the audience to see Francie's trickery in action – she performs as a dejected child when John does not immediately accept her apology. However, by the end of the scene, her outburst of love works to her favor, even when Robie claims it is ridiculous: He finally asks for Francie's help in catching the real jewel thief, something she has wanted from the very beginning. In a few different scenes, the film makes note of Francie's desire for excitement and thrill – when touring the villa, Robie asks what Francie gets a "thrill out of most," Francie answers by saying, "I'm still looking for that one" (*TCAT* 00:54:34-00:54:48). As she answers, the camera cuts to Francie in a medium close-

up shot of her looking directly at Robie, supplying the answer to his question not through words but through her gaze (Figure 43).

Figure 43. Medium close-up of Francie watching Robie while talking about what thrills her the most (TCAT 00:54:45)

And again, during the fireworks scene, when Francie tries to get Robie to admit his identity, Robie says, "You know, I have about the same interest in jewelry that I have in [...] women who need weird excitement. None" (*TCAT* 01:08:31-01:08:38) This 'weird excitement' that Robie points out is reminiscent of the way Hitchcock described the ice blonde – a woman who seems innocent until she tries to rip open a man's pants in a taxi. Francie wants in on the action, and that is exactly what she gets. When Robie successfully catches the real 'Cat' which clears his name and saves him from jail, he has Francie to thank. As Mr. Hughson declares, "Frankly, I didn't believe this scheme of yours would work, Francie. But it has" (*TCAT* 01:38:33-01:38:27). Francie, through a momentary display of emotion, gets what she wants and participates in Robie's plan as his accomplice – what she titles as the Cat's new "Kitten" – and clears Robie's name (*TCAT* 01:04:27-01:04:28).

Robie almost escapes Francie's catch at the end of the film but is unsuccessful once again due to her emotional manipulation. When she chases him back to his villa, he is surprised since he only just said goodbye. Another one of Francie's tricks is at play here: acting the role of the downcast, forgotten lover. She forces Robie to admit, as both an apology and thanks, that he is not the "lone wolf" he considered himself to be, and that he needed "the help of a good woman" to clear his own name (*TCAT* 01:45:28-01:45:34). However, Francie's dejected and distanced act is immediately broken when Robie pulls her in for a kiss. Like in

the beginning of the film when Francie shocks Robie by breaking the diminutive, shy illusion of herself and kissing him at her door, Francie again shows how quickly her performance shifts depending on what serves her in the current moment. Francie's emotional manipulation is the final trickster tactic of her ice blonde performance which appears to be the very thing needed to ultimately capture Robie.

Figure 44. Francie's dejected performance as she looks down (TCAT 01:45:30)

Robie describes Francie as a headstrong woman who knows exactly what she wants and how she's going to get it, and his own hypothesis is proven true as Francie engages in female trickster tactics to secure Robie's affections by the end of the film. Throughout her trickery, Francie's manipulation of the persona and her masquerading as the feminine ideal are her strongest tactics. Francie Stevens' trickery differs from Lorelei Lee's in that Francie is able to flaunt her intelligence instead of hiding it. The role she takes on and performs is not like the more commonly performed dumb blonde – Francie is able to be domineering of the situation, cunning, adversarial, and dangerous. Her performance of an erotic yet untouchable ice blonde proves to be a powerful source of temptation that allows her to lay her trap and catch her thief. The ice blonde may not be as common a trope as the dumb blonde and perhaps does not have as many expectations attached. However, the persona of a cool, sexually alluring, yet unattainable and cunning blonde is indeed a performance which can be manipulated, as shown in Francie's example. While perhaps Francie does not use her blondeness to highlight the cultural expectations for her as specifically a blonde woman – like Lorelei does by playing the dumb blonde – Francie does manipulate the perception of blondeness as beautiful, dangerous, elite, and sexual, which allows her to use her blonde hair

as a tactic in her trickery. Throughout Francie's trickery of the performative persona and cunning intelligence visible in her tactics, Francie successfully achieves her goal of winning over Robie. It seems as if her thief is finally 'caught' when they share a kiss at the end of the film. However, it is Francie's line, "Mother will love it up here" (*TCAT* 01:46:11-01:46:14), which demonstrates that their relationship is on her terms. As she sees fit, her mother will join them in their lives, despite the disapproval clearly shown on Robie's face. Francie remains blissfully and intentionally unaware, again proving that she is a woman who knows what she wants and does not allow anything to stop her. The camera also demonstrates this, as it shows the kiss in a medium close-up shot before the couple ends in an embrace. It is Francie, not Robie, who is closest to the camera, thus she blocks his head from view. While the camera clearly sees Francie's face, only his eye is visible after she says, "Mother will love it up here." Francie keeps her eyes shut, willingly choosing to not see Robie's look of disapproval (Figure 45). The diegetic bell tolling as the film fades to black could foreshadow a wedding between the couple. As shown through her performances and trickster tactics, Francie proves she is someone who does not allow anyone to get in her way but successfully attains the object of her desire. Francie, aware of what she wants and how she is going to get it, is always an active player; however, this action is seen not through overt practices like strength but through the covert practices of female trickery, including masquerading, the feminine public self, and performing the ice blonde persona as well as by emotional manipulation and intentional submission. These performances and trickster tactics allow Francie to play the role of the ice blonde and maintain her agency; instead of being the one caught, she catches Robie.

Figure 45. Francie remains blissfully unaware of Robie's disapproval in this medium close-up shot where she is the focal point and well-lit while Robie is in the background (TCAT 01:46:16)

4 “What, Like it’s Hard?”: Blondes in Postfeminism

To jump from the classic Hollywood films of the 1950s to the postfeminist age of the early 2000s calls for a massive leap over many culturally important events in the American twentieth century. Most notable for this thesis project are the second-wave of feminism, which occurred in the 1960s-1970s and focused on the liberation of women through political activism, and the third-wave in the years leading up to and immediately following the turn of the century. Claire R. Snyder explains that those in the third-wave did not seek to “completely reject the agenda of the second-wave feminism,” but rather simply sought to get rid of feminism’s “perceived ideological rigidity” (176). Snyder defines four main differences between third-wave feminism and second-wave feminism. For starters, third-wavers wanted to create a new version of feminism for their generation as they already found themselves “entitled to equality and self-fulfillment” while simultaneously recognizing injustices (Snyder 178). Secondly, third-wavers position themselves to be “less rigid and judgmental than their mothers’ generation, which they often represent as antimale, antisex, antifemininity, and anitfun [sic]” (Snyder 179). This allows third-wave feminists to “feel entitled to interact with men as equals, claim sexual pleasure as they desire it [...] and actively play with femininity” (ibid.). The third-wave mindset gives way to girlie culture, a strand of third wave often contested (ibid.), which has similarities between third-wave and postfeminism, as will be shown later. Snyder points to the third-wave’s desire to reclaim girlie culture which follows the third-wavers “project of reclamation, which also redeploys terms like ‘bitch,’ ‘cunt,’ and ‘slut’” (179). Thirdly, third-wavers see and depict their movement as more racially diverse and inclusive than second-wave feminism (Snyder 180). Finally, third-wavers attempt to stay away from political party divisions and adopt a broader focus than just women’s concerns (Snyder 181). As Snyder is quick to notice, these claims often create a “revisionist history to conflate second-wave feminism as a whole with the so-called antisex feminists and the third-wavers with the prosex side” (179), as well as other broad claims which discredit and devalue the second-wavers to an exclusive and limited movement. Indeed, something reiterated is that third-wave feminism is not a rejection of second-wave feminism, but rather a movement which was built upon its predecessors.

Whether the third-wave feminists fulfill their claims or not, the new wave developed in the late 1990s but continued to be met with contentious criticism. Perhaps one of the most misunderstood movements which emerged from the third-wave is postfeminism. Postfeminism is widely opposed and argued, as scholars cannot seem to agree on whether it is a continuation of feminist goals or a reduction of such progress. Stéphanie Genz and Benjamin A. Brabon consider many of the conflicting conversations regarding postfeminism, attributing scholars' uncertainty to its origination: "Rather than being tied to a specific contextual and epistemological framework, postfeminism emerges in the intersections and hybridization of mainstream media, consumer culture, neo-liberal politics, postmodern theory and, significantly, feminism" (5). While third-wave and postfeminism find similarities in their movements, one of the main defining differences is that the third-wave has a presence in the political realm while postfeminism manifests in popular culture. A tangible example of this can be shown in the differences between Riot Grrrls and the Spice Girls. While the underground, punk movement of the Riot Grrrls had a strong, political presence, the Spice Girls were a mainstream band and promoted 'Girl Power' (Genz & Brabon 227). Third-wavers have often claimed the underground, grunge, political motivation and "'angry rebellion' against the patriarchy" (Genz & Brabon 232) of Riot Grrrls while postfeminists have celebrated Girl Power, fashion, and pink. However, despite the differences between the two, there is a "slippage" (Genz & Brabon 227) which, when one only views the movements as dualities, can be overlooked. These overlaps are more than just a shared time in which the two movements were founded. As Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra write, postfeminism and third-wave feminism "share a dissatisfaction with the feminism they seek to supplant or supplement" (19). Ann Braithwaite finds another "salient example of the overlaps and similarities between third-wave and post-feminism" which includes the "insistence on examining one's personal life, on exploring its many contradictions, desires, pleasures and fun" (339). Even among their differences, the two separate movements find similarities specifically in reclaiming Girl Power and Culture.

One of the complications of postfeminism is what the 'post' signifies and whether it suggests a retraction or furtherment of feminist goals. Genz recounts that some believe the 'post' indicates 'against' or 'anti' and is "a depoliticization of feminist goals" which yields to "a retrogressive and reactionary conservatism" (336). This definition of postfeminism "refers both chronologically and semantically to that which comes 'after' feminism as a current,

largely negative, sometimes even hostile reaction against an earlier feminism" (Braithwaite 337). This understanding of 'post' puts postfeminism in opposition to feminism as a kind of 'anti-feminism.' However, as Braithwaite recognizes, this would call for "only one stable meaning of feminism that could be surpassed" (ibid.). Many recognize a more helpful way of viewing this movement and all its complications: instead of being either progressive or retrogressive, the 'post' is seen as both (Tasker & Negra 22, Genz & Brabon 8). This understanding of 'post' "can (indeed, must) be read in relationship to its central term as a prefix that constitutes a link with, rather than a break from, its core word" (Braithwaite 340). Indeed, feminism and postfeminism should not be seen as in direct opposition nor be understood in a linear kind of progression (Genz & Brabon 13). Braithwaite encourages her readers to see postfeminism as "a continuing relationship to feminism [...] a way to talk about the changes in feminist thinking over the last forty years rather than a rupture with it" (340-341). To view postfeminism in this light allows for the movement to explore its relationship to feminism within popular culture without being seen as a simple regression from feminist progress.

4.1 Defining Postfeminism in Popular Culture

So what is postfeminism? Braithwaite writes that postfeminism "allows for – indeed joyously promotes – all the things that earlier feminism supposedly denied women" due to the rigidity of second-wave feminism (338). Furthermore, the "emphasis in this self-identified 'fun' feminism is on exploring the lifestyle choices and pleasures of women rather than on outlining agendas for more direct and recognizable kinds of social activism" (ibid.). Indeed, postfeminism promotes "feminine fun and female friendship with a celebration of (mostly pink-coloured) commodities and the creation of a market demographic of 'Girlies' and 'chicks'" (Genz & Brabon 5). A strong presence within postfeminism is Girl Power and girlie culture which have been both criticized and praised. Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards write that "Girlie encompasses the tabooed symbols of women's feminine enculturation – Barbie dolls, makeup, fashion magazines, high heels – and says using them isn't shorthand for 'we've been duped'" (302-303 qtd. in Snyder 179). Carol M. Dole describes girlie feminism as a celebration of "emphatic femininity" (61) which "embraces both sexual pleasure and the childhood girl pleasures of knitting, nail polish, and of course the emblematic color pink" (60).

Among other things, postfeminism allows women the opportunity to celebrate their femininity, sexuality, and individuality through consumption and agency.

Popular culture can be used to help define postfeminism, since the movement was largely founded and conceptualized there. Darren Star's *Sex and the City*[6], which aired on HBO from 1998-2004, is viewed as a postfeminist text and used by scholars to explore the postfeminist movement. Consumerism, fashion, personal and sexual pleasures, and individualism have been labeled as some of the movement's more defining pillars. The four, female protagonists of *SATC* are common representations of postfeminist women who are affluent, white, and heterosexual. Indeed, this limited representation of postfeminism is one of the main criticisms of the movement. While some scholars might argue that postfeminism can be for all women across race, class, sexuality, etc. (cf. Genz & Brabon 2009), it is true that the main benefactor of postfeminism is a certain kind of privileged woman. Tasker and Negra write that postfeminism has a "limited race and class vision" (15) as the postfeminist culture is "exemplified by the figure of the white, middle-class, heterosexual woman" (16). They continue that postfeminism is "anchored in consumption as a strategy (and leisure as a site) for the production of the self" (Tasker & Negra 2). The women of *SATC* have the social and financial status which afford them opportunities to engage in consumerism to construct new identities and subvert patriarchal power structures.

One of the main pillars of postfeminism as shown in *SATC* is consumerism. The celebration of New York City's shopping and fashion allows the women to create "entrepreneurs of their identities" (Genz 338). Perhaps critics have seen the act of shopping as an "instance of patriarchal colonization" (Genz 345), but Genz argues that women can instead use fashion to "exert their consumer agency to achieve empowerment by using their bodies as political tools within the parameters of a capitalist economy" (ibid.). Jane Arthurs recognizes that consumerism and, more specifically, fashion "have been considered as a source of pleasure and power that is potentially resistant to male control" (87). Postfeminists do not view fashion as a trap meant to manufacture women into a sexual role but instead as an opportunity to claim back "self-esteem and autonomy" (ibid.). In fact, women can use fashion as a tool to create new identities and try on different roles. Elle Woods, protagonist

[6] All further in-text references to Star's *Sex and the City* will be written as *SATC*.

of *LB,* utilizes this technique as she changes her clothes and hairstyles over forty times in the film to discover her place at Harvard Law. Fien Adriaens and Sofie Van Bauwel further this idea as they write that "consumption within a neo-liberal context is a tool to achieve power and pleasure" and offer the ability for women to "construct their identity and receive societal appreciation" (8). By consuming fashion, the characters in *SATC* and, by extension, postfeminists exert agency over their bodies as they craft an identity through the devices available to them.

Another aspect of postfeminism is personal and sexual pleasures. *SATC*'s female characters exhibit similar behaviors between consumerism and sexual experiences as the four women consume both men and goods throughout their time in New York City. Katherine Hyunmi Lee recounts a scene where Carrie and Samantha are admiring a pair of shoes, and Carrie says, "hello, lover" (qtd. 2). Carrie links the consumption of sexual partners to the consumption of goods by calling the shoes a term of endearment. Furthermore, the women of *SATC* try on men to see if their choice of sexual partner fits their desires, needs, or lifestyles. This act of trying on men is clearly seen in another of Carrie's lines when she compares a man to a brand of clothing: "He was like the flesh and blood equivalent of a DKNY dress; you know it's not your style but it's right there, so you try it on anyway" (qtd. in Adriaens & Van Bauwel 8). Stephanie Harzewski claims that men are seen as fashion accessories when the female protagonists give their romantic partners nicknames, "blurring the boundaries between man and accessory" (n.p.). Even Carrie's fantasized, ideal lover is named 'Manolo,' a famous shoe brand. However, when men disappoint and do not fulfill the expectations placed on them, women find consolation in acquiring fashion. Fashion, unlike men, is "always there to be possessed, offering a fetish substitute for the satisfactions denied by men" (Arthurs 93). As Meredith Nash and Ruby Grant recognize, *SATC* protagonists use their consumerist agency and find their liberation both in "economic and sexual independence" (979). By considering these arguments of *SATC* as a postfeminist text, the women protagonists are shown to deny men the control over their happiness. Instead, the women claim agency by finding pleasure in themselves and their ability to consume fashion and sexual experiences. This act of consuming men like fashion can be seen as reclaiming agency in the sexual marketplace. Unlike Lorelei and Francie, the women in *SATC* do not conflate themselves, but rather the men, with consumable objects. They view their lovers as objects to consume and themselves as the ones with the agency to buy those experiences. Instead of having to offer up their

bodies and affection as a way to gain material goods, such as diamonds, the women of *SATC* do not have to give up one to have the other. Instead they revel in consuming and owning both – they buy their own goods and they consume men to their liking.

Through this definition of postfeminism as a celebration of consumption, Girl Power, individualism, and personal and sexual pleasures, it is clear that *LB* finds itself within this context. Girlie feminist and postfeminist icon, Elle Woods, centers the narrative with her multiple costume changes and her "signature color" pink (*LB* 00:04:14-00:04:16). Elle is one example of the "icons of postfeminist culture" who views "the self as a project; kick-ass, working-out women as expressions of agency; or freedom as the freedom to shop" (Tasker & Negra 21). It is as this postfeminist icon that Elle finds herself in the aftermath of her blonde foremothers – Lorelei Lee and Francie Stevens – and indeed must work the game as a blonde trickster using the sources of covert power to get what she desires in a world that only sees her as a consumable blonde.

4.2 *Legally Blonde*'s Elle Woods

Chick culture can be seen emerging around the 1990s in the United States and Great Britain as many scholars view Helen Fielding's popular novel turned film, *Bridget Jones's Diary* (1996), as its beginnings (Wilkens 150; Genz & Brabon 18). *LB*, released in 2001 and directed by Robert Luketic, is recognized as a 'chick flick'. Heidi Wilkins helps define this genre by explaining that often female leads in modern chick flicks are "strong, confident and quick-witted, engaging in verbal battles to achieve their 'happily ever after' either with their lead male character or with fellow female characters, or sometimes with both" (149). The female protagonists "revel in the pleasures of womanliness, embrace consumerism, thrive on the notion of 'having it all' and do not hold back when it comes to verbalising their experiences of contemporary womanhood" (ibid.). Elle Woods, played by Reese Witherspoon, exemplifies these elements of a chick flick protagonist. The film itself also supports the genre of the classic chick flick; even within the first five minutes, the audience knows exactly what kind of film they are watching.

Figure 46. Opening shot of the film, close-up on blonde hair (LB 00:00:26)

LB opens with a close-up of blonde hair (Figure 46), then with the camera crosscutting between two events: Elle getting ready and a pink, glittery card being passed around a sorority house. The camera cuts between clips of cheerleaders, exercise classes, shaving, nail care, and giggling, blonde sisterhood. The montage is used to demonstrate that the two events are happening simultaneously while also establishing the postfeminist, chick culture setting. While the nondiegetic audience begins to understand the social status of the sorority house, a montage of Elle getting ready interestingly establishes Elle's character without her face being shown for the first few minutes. Instead, the audience is encouraged to associate Elle with the elements around her (Figures 47 & 48). Before even showing her face, the camera shoots close-ups of manicured nails, charm bracelets, magazines, Clairol blonde hair-dye, make-up, perfume, and a Prada bag. Finally, a medium close-up of Elle's face is presented to the audience as she reads the pink card her sorority sisters made for her (Figure 49). Through the first few minutes alone, the audience recognizes the genre of chick flick and the protagonist as a girlie postfeminist.

Figure 47. and 48. Close-up shots of items used to present Elle as a girlie, postfeminist (LB 00:02:24; 00:01:18)

Figure 49. First shot of Elle in a medium close-up, her blonde hair illuminated (LB 00:03:33)

If Lorelei Lee is the typical dumb blonde and Frances Stevens the ice blonde; this thesis project views Elle Woods as the quintessential postfeminist with her revelry and reclamation of all things girlie. Elle is seen throughout *LB* reveling in traditionally feminine elements such as salons, fashion, glitter, and, of course, pink. *LB* is a celebration of postfeminism as it offers women the chance to be highly ambitious and successful while simultaneously reclaiming their femininity. As Witherspoon explains of the movie: "[Elle] enjoyed getting dressed up and having her hair done, but she also was fierce and knew what she wanted and was determined to get it" (qtd. in Lowe n.p.). Sherrow reaffirms this picture of Elle as she writes, "Witherspoon's petite, fashion-conscious character, Elle Woods, combines beauty with brains to succeed at Harvard Law School despite the biased opinions of people who cannot see beyond her Barbie-doll looks" (149). Elle differs from the blonde characters which were analyzed earlier in this thesis. While Lorelei and Francie curate the personas of the dumb and ice blondes respectively, Elle does not get a chance to subsume one of these tropes for herself. On the contrary, people willingly and eagerly place her into either category of the naïve dumb blonde or sexually duplicitous ice blonde. Instead of creating and sustaining a persona, Elle must work within the stereotypes others have placed her in as she tries to overcome their biases. The blonde, trickster foremothers have made this difficult for Elle as she is immediately judged by everyone who sees her blonde hair and automatically equates her to the blonde women who came before and perpetuated the stereotypes. Even more so than Lorelei, Elle understands "the hand she has been dealt" (Landay 21) when she laments that all people will ever see when they look at her is "blonde hair and big boobs" (*LB* 01:17:13-01:17:15). Landay continues that characters like Lorelei are examples "of how and why covert

power is so easily co-opted," because while "reinforcing and extending existing stereotypes of femininity, 'tricks,' [...] and the social practices of female trickery, like impersonating a 'little woman,' may seem tactically useful at the moment," they "fail to challenge the structure, institutions, and ideology of the sexist limitations that originally prompted the tricks" (201). These sustained performances of feminine trickery provided power in the moment for Lorelei and Francie but failed to help future blonde women like Elle. However, the expectations of these personas have paradoxically given Elle an avenue of covert power through which she can achieve her goals. Elle finds some benefits in how others view her, and she uses these to her advantage not because she necessarily wants to but because she must. Postfeminist, trickster Elle uses the perceptions of her as a dumb or ice blonde in conjunction with other female trickster tactics – masquerading, especially through the use of consumerism to perform different roles, being seen, emotional manipulation, and performing and disrupting the personas of the dumb and ice blonde – in the pursual of both romantic and professional success. It is through these tactics that Elle creates power for herself as blonde woman.

4.3 Elle Woods' Trickery

Elle is immediately assumed to be a superficial and naïve dumb blonde due to her hair color, her bubbly personality, her love of fashion, and her high-pitched voice. The performative voice was seen earlier in this thesis by both Lorelei and Francie in the creation and performance of their personas. Wilkins writes: "This performative and creative element to voice in mainstream cinema can be linked to the idea that many of the female characters we encounter in chick flicks are overwhelmingly stereotypical, representing a particular 'type' of woman" (153). Witherspoon deploys the clichéd, high-pitched, and airy dumb blonde tone that sounds familiar to Lorelei's. Despite the use of this voice, Elle is incredibly intelligent, something the other characters in the film fail to recognize, favoring instead to see her as a stereotype. Elle's life begins to change when her college boyfriend, Warner Huntington III (Matthew Davis), breaks up with her. Warner claims that he needs to marry someone serious if he is to run for office one day, but he reveals the full picture of how he views Elle when he says, "I need to marry a Jackie not a Marilyn" (*LB* 00:07:57-00:08:00). This is the first time the audience and Elle begin to realize how quick others are to put her into the box of a dumb, sexual blonde. The scene is portrayed in a shot-reverse shot sequence that slowly zooms in on the characters as they discuss what Elle believes to be a proposal but what actually is a

breakup. This slow zoom builds tension in the scene until eventually the camera steadies on Elle in a close-up, shown in Figure 50, as she responds to Warner: “So you’re breaking up with me because I’m too... blonde?” (*LB* 00:08:01-00:08:04).

Figure 50. Close-up of Elle, framed by her blonde curls, as she shouts “I’m too ... blonde?” (LB 00:08:04)

Here, Elle realizes that her blonde hair deprivileges her in the way others see her value. Quickly following that line, Elle asks if her “boobs are too big” (*LB* 00:08:08-00:08:09). This follow-up question, again shot in a close-up, continues to demonstrate Elle’s awareness to Warner’s perceptions of her as a consumable, sexual blonde. However, Warner is not the only person to see her as this: When Elle tells her guidance counselor at CULA that she will be going to Harvard, her counselor advises Elle to look for back-up schools. When Elle informs her parents about Harvard, her father tells her that law school is for “people who are boring and ugly and serious. And you, button, are none of those things” (*LB* 00:13:37-00:13:43). Her father’s line is shot from a low angle, as her father looks down at Elle, literally and figuratively talking down to her (Figures 51 & 52).

Figure 51. Elle’s father shot from a low angle as he talks down at her (LB 00:13:37)
Figure 52. Elle looking up at her dad (LB 00:13:35)

Furthermore, Elle's mother reminds Elle that she was "First Runner-Up at the 'Miss Hawaiian Tropics' contest" and asks Elle, "Why are you going to throw that all away?" (*LB* 00:13:23-00:13:29). This line serves as a reminder that many people, Elle's parents included, only see her as valuable for her looks, something Elle laments about later when she contemplates quitting Harvard Law: "I just felt like for the first time that someone expected me to do something more with my life than just become a Victoria Secret model" (*LB* 01:17:28-01:17:38). Further comments from Elle's peers make it clear that they view her as a dumb blonde, such as when they mock her by saying their study group "is, like, a smart people thing" (*LB* 00:37:19-00:37:21). Alongside the dumb blonde, they also consistently see her as a consumable blonde – either to consume through looks or sexual experiences. When Elle first arrives at Harvard, one guy calls out of his window, "Check out Malibu Barbie!" (*LB* 00:21:02-00:21:03). In another scene, while Elle walks down the hall, one girl mutters, "There's no way she got in here on her own" (*LB* 00:24:06-00:24:07), suggesting that Elle sexually used her body to get into law school. These two perceptions follow Elle throughout her time at Harvard, and she finds ways to both use them to her advantage while also breaking these expectations.

Elle's goals shift throughout the film, causing her to utilize trickster tactics differently. However, one of Elle's consistent tactics is the power of being seen. As quoted earlier, "Beauty, not dominance, is a woman's domain" and "power often lies in presentation of the body" (Freeman 72). Landay furthers this thought as she writes, "Paradoxically, the acceptance of cosmetics and the rise of beauty industry extended women's reliance on covert rather than overt modes of power by locating the source of a woman's power [...] in her appearance" (67). Elle knows and demonstrates her knowledge of power residing in beauty repeatedly throughout the film as she masquerades excessive femininity to try to win Warner back. Elle originally applies to and starts attending Harvard Law with the sole intention of recapturing her ex-boyfriend from his new fiancé, Vivian Kensington (Selma Blair). Because her goals focus on tempting and seducing Warner, Elle places an emphasis on sexually showcasing her body. For example, while Warner plays a football game, Elle positions herself directly in his line of sight in a bikini top to tan. However, by the way she greets him suggestively, it is clear that Elle's goal is not to tan but to be seen by Warner. Again, when Elle is invited to what she thinks is a costume party, she arrives in a playboy bunny outfit. The camera places an emphasis on her outfit as it starts with a close-up of her shoes from behind

then slowly pans up her legs, torso, and head, zooming out to show Elle's complete outfit (Figures 53 & 54).

Figure 53. Camera pans up the back of Elle's outfit (LB 00:40:14)
Figure 54. Full body shot of Elle's playboy bunny outfit from behind (LB 00:40:18)

As she masquerades, Elle recognizes the power in her portrayal of excessive femininity and utilizes it to her advantage. Her main goal is to be seen by Warner and to tempt him. Like the blonde women before her, Elle wants others, specifically Warner, to objectify her to trap him. When Elle arrives at the mixer and realizes it is not a costume party, she commands a place of power by owning her outfit and strutting around confidently. Elle goes to confront Vivian, who tricked Elle into coming dressed up. In the scene, Elle stands with her hands on her hips while Vivian sits below her. The camera shows Elle looking down at Vivian in a medium shot, commanding a place of power despite of, or perhaps because of, her overtly sexual outfit (Figure 55). Elle recognizes her power of costuming and being seen both to objectify herself in her trickery to win back Warner and to command authority among others through her excessive femininity.

Figure 55. Medium shot of Elle looking down at Vivian, taking a position of power (LB 00:40:52)

One of Elle's most obvious portrayals of masquerading and the awareness of being seen as a power tactic is shown in her admissions essay to Harvard. When told that she will need a "heck of an admissions essay" (*LB* 00:14:23-00:14:24), she decides to create a video essay. Her choice demonstrates her recognition in the power she holds by being seen. The video essay is a series of cuts as Elle explains why the board should "vote for me. Elle Woods: future lawyer for the class of 2004" (*LB* 00:18:42-00:18:48). Throughout the video, Elle wears pink dresses, fancy updos showing off her blonde hair, and bikinis (Figures 56 & 57). This last outfit choice with which Elle both starts and ends her video essay, reveals her awareness of her body as a tool of trickery (Figure 58).


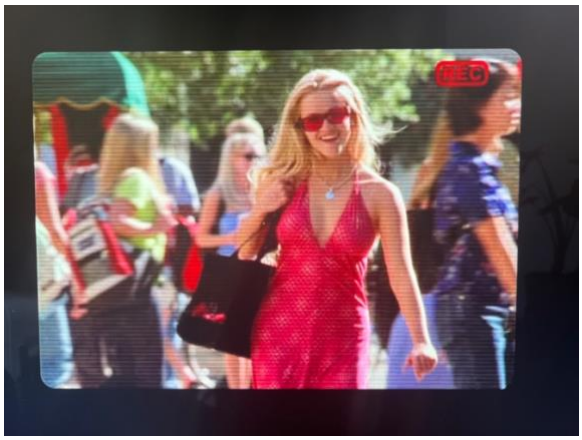

Figure 56. & 57. Shots from Elle's video essay, showing off her body and her blonde hair (LB 00:17:19; 00:17:46)

Figure 58. The diegetic camera shoots Elle in a power pose, confidently showing off her body (LB 00:18:42)

After the nondiegetic audience is shown the video essay, they see the diegetic audience who has been viewing it also: the admissions board of Harvard Law which is comprised of all men (Figure 59). Harkening back to Laura Mulvey's theory of the male gaze, Elle positions herself as the object of voyeurism for the male board to view and enjoy. Her tactic of presentation works in her favor, the board at Harvard vouch for her and the scene ends with the Head of

Admissions saying, “Elle Woods. Welcome to Harvard” (*LB* 00:19:27-00:19:33). Through Elle’s use of being seen in her trickster tactics, she is granted admission into law school.

Figure 59. Diegetic audience viewing Elle’s video essay (LB 00:18:51)

Another tactic Elle uses throughout the film in conjunction with her trickster tactic of being seen and her postfeminist values is the use of consumerism to try on and perform different roles. Elle recognizes the significance of fashion in the film, as can be seen with her numerous costume and hair changes. Elle discloses to her friends and the audience that she places a high value on clothes and the message they can send. When shopping for what she believes will be the night Warner proposes, Elle sees the need for a new outfit that will help set apart “*the* date” by dressing her as “bridal” (*LB* 00:04:19-00:04:26). Elle even considers something other than her “signature color” pink (*LB* 00:04:14-00:04:16). This short moment of dialogue demonstrates Elle’s understanding of clothing’s ability to relay a message or help her try on and fit into new roles. This becomes exceptionally clear when Elle gets ready for her first day of law school. Wearing a sweater of blues and greens, a tie, pencil skirt, and knee-high boots, Elle’s fashion looks completely different from what the audience has previously seen. However, the outfit, which is really a costume, is not complete without glasses, something Elle has not needed up to this point. She looks at herself in a mirror, with the camera behind her, giving the audience the sense that she is aware of the power of being looked at and using appearances, as she gazes at herself (Figure 60). It is after Elle places the glasses on her face that she says, “totally look the part” (*LB* 00:23:57-00:23:59).

Figure 60. Elle views her costume as a 'serious law student' with the camera behind her (LB 00:23:56)

Elle plays the role of a 'serious law student', something she associates with dark colors and glasses. As a postfeminist trickster, she understands the tactic of performing a role. This, in conjunction with the agency she finds in consumerism, manifests through the utilization of costume and fashion. She draws strength from the use of fashion, which is shown again when she performs as Paulette Bonafonte's attorney. Paulette (Jennifer Coolidge) represents the story Lorelei sings about in "Diamonds are a Girl's Best Friend." Lorelei warns that "men grow cold as girls grow old, and we all lose our charms in the end" (*GPB* 01:08:36-01:08:45). Paulette experiences this in her life because her husband "followed his pecker to greener pastures" (*LB* 00:33:32-00:33:34). When Elle tries to offer her sympathy, Paulette is quick to remind her that this kind of story "happens every day" (*LB* 00:33:44-00:33:35). Paulette's experience symbolizes the very real danger Lorelei tries to avoid – knowing she is bound to lose her 'charms' one day, Lorelei accrues power through diamonds so she can stay in control of her own life. Paulette, who did not attain monetary power, lost both the shared residence and her dog. Elle encourages Paulette to change her circumstances and claim back the dog; however, Paulette requires Elle's help. When confronting Paulette's ex-husband, Elle puts on her pair of glasses, shown in Figure 61, before coming forward and introducing herself as "Ms. Bonafonte's attorney" (*LB* 00:45:52-00:45:54).

Figure 61. Medium close-up showing Elle wearing glasses to aide in her performance (LB 00:45:54)

Through her performance, Elle again utilizes costume as a way to assume a role. She uses legal jargon and successfully wins her case – Paulette gets back her dog. As Marilyn Jurich writes, the female trickster

> raises consciousness about the male dominated hierarchy [...]. Mostly, she is distinctly beneficial, a challenger of prevailing conditions and a creator of more ideal means of human interaction and relationship. At the same time, she finds a means of gaining control over her own life, a means of finding a significant role. (70)

Elle, aware of this male dominated hierarchy, uses her trickery to seek justice on Paulette's behalf and fight for disadvantaged women, helping Paulette be an active agent rather than passive recipient of her circumstances.

In Elle's mission to win back Warner, she also employs emotional manipulation. A typical female trickster tactic, Elle exploits outbursts to her advantage. When Warner begins to breakup with her, Elle starts crying loudly so that everyone in the restaurant notices the scene. The camera shows this by cutting away from Warner and Elle's dialogue revealing the other customers watching Elle's performance. She cries, shrieks, and hyperventilates while Warner attempts to justify his reasons for breaking up with her. Elle's emotionality places Warner in an uncomfortable situation as he tries to explain himself while also blaming her outbursts on a bad salad to the other restaurant-goers. In her performance, she is reacting punitively towards Warner while also trying to trick him into changing his mind. Her act quickly shuts off when Warner tries to call her "pooh bear" – the nickname he has for her (*LB* 00:08:49-00:08:50). As soon as she hears this, Elle stops her performance of hyperventilation

and shrieking, throws a disgusted look at him, and storms out of the restaurant. The scene cuts away to show her walking home, crying privately to herself, which is a much more authentic show of emotion than what was displayed at the restaurant.

More than just emotional manipulation, the previous scene also shows Elle's ability to switch performances as is convenient, just like the ice blonde who came before her. In fact, many of Elle's run-ins with Warner at Harvard consist of these rapidly shifting performances. For example, when Warner first sees Elle at Harvard, he asks if she is here to visit him, to which she responds, "No, silly. I go here" (*LB* 00:24:43-00:24:45). When Warner asks for her to clarify – "You got into Harvard Law?" (*LB* 00:24:50-00:24:53) – Elle's smile drops, and she asks, "What, like it's hard?" (*LB* 00:24:53-00:24:54). This feigned ignorance has dualistic motives. First, Elle draws attention to the fact that Warner does not think she can get into Harvard because he sees her as a dumb blonde. Her faked confusion draws attention to the fact that both Warner and a perceived dumb blonde can get into the same institution. Elle is also using this line to make it seem like the application was, in fact, not hard for her. In her performance, Elle utilizes some of the ice blonde persona of flaunting cunning intelligence, which is used to punish Warner for making assumptions that because of her hair color and personality, she is not good enough to attend law school or serious enough to marry him. This is a momentary interruption from her bubbly, outgoing personality – Elle starts by pretending she forgot Warner attended Harvard, then disrupts this first performance with her iconic line, then reverts back to her upbeat personality: "This is gonna be just like senior year except for funner [sic]" (*LB* 00:25:03-00:25:05). The camera cuts between Warner and Elle, and while he is shown in medium shots, she is presented in close-ups which give the audience the opportunity to see her shifting performances (Figures 62 & 62). The interruption recalls Francie's tactic of creating then breaking the expectations of a blonde woman. Just like Francie, Elle leaves the man she is trying to (re)capture totally stunned by the performance he just witnessed.


Figure 62. & 63. Elle's rapidly shifting performance with Warner (LB 00:24:53; 00:24:55)

The audience can see this tactic of Elle's switching performances again at the end of the film. After she wins Brooke Windham's trial, Warner tries to get Elle back, claiming that she is the girl for him. The camera shows a close-up of Elle's face as she smiles dreamily and says, "Oh Warner, I've waited so long to hear you say that" (*LB* 01:28:11-01:28:14). However, the close-up shot allows for the audience to see clearly when Elle's loving smile falls and her performance shifts again as she continues, "But if I'm going to be a partner in a law firm by the time I'm thirty, I need a boyfriend who's not such a complete bonehead" (*LB* 01:28:16-01:28:21). Once again, this leaves Warner completely speechless as Elle struts away. In this interaction, Elle is shown having the power of the postfeminist women in *SATC*: she reclaims her autonomy by discarding an old lover, like old fashion. In the final scene of the film, nondiegetic captions reveal that Emmett (Luke Wilson) is her new lover and will be proposing to Elle. True to postfeminism, Elle has both her career and her (new) lover, but the means in which she attains these allow her more options and autonomy. Elle shows the postfeminist woman is in control of whom she consumes as well as who consumes her, and Elle manipulates this autonomy by tapping into trickster tactics of the ice and dumb blondes who came before her. To finish the scene, Elle walks confidently forward through the double doors the officers open for her, and she disappears into bright, blinding light (Figure 64). This shot and use of lighting emphasizes Elle's blonde hair and as she steps forward into a white background, appearing untouchable to Warner who cannot have her even though he wants her.

Figure 64. Elle steps forward into blinding light (LB 01:28:27)

One further instance of Elle's shifting performances offers an interesting example of her awareness of the two blonde personas. Furthermore, this scene can be viewed as the quintessential representation of Elle Woods as a postfeminist blonde who utilizes past trickster personas to both confront the societal prejudice she faces as a blonde woman as well as to gain an advantage. In the beginning of the film, Elle is trying on dresses for what she believes will be for her engagement. A shopkeeper watches Elle and her two sorority friends before saying to her colleague, "There's nothing I love more than a dumb blonde with daddy's plastic" (*LB* 00:04:28-00:04:31). The shopkeeper proceeds to try to convince Elle to buy an old dress for the full price. Elle, however, is aware of the shopkeeper's trickery and performs her own. Elle pretends to believe her while asking about the make of the dress, trapping the shopkeeper into answering falsely. In this scene, Elle is aware of the perception the shopkeeper has of her, and begins her trickery by performing just that, the unsuspecting, gullible dumb blonde. However, once Elle catches the shopkeeper in her lies, Elle drops the performance and uses her knowledge of fashion and girlie culture to correct the shopkeeper, saying, "if you're trying to sell [the dress] to me for full price, you picked the wrong girl" (*LB* 00:04:56-00:05:00). Elle uses both personas in this scene to catch the shopkeeper in her lies, first by appearing as the innocently trusting dumb blonde, then by proving her intelligence and composure through the ice blonde persona. This example shows both the disadvantages Elle faces as a blonde, as well as the power available to her through these perceptions. Through her expertise of girlie culture as a postfeminist, Elle is not only aware of but also uses to her advantage the perceptions of others to fight the negative biases while still getting her way.

Elle's trickster tactics begin to change when her goals change also. What started as tricks to recapture Warner changes as Elle begins to prioritize her education and professional success. When Elle and Warner discuss the possibility of getting a highly competitive internship, Warner tells Elle she will not get the position because she is "not smart enough" (*LB* 00:42:01-00:42:02). Upon hearing this, Elle backs up as the camera zooms in on her face, again ending in a close-up, shown in Figure 65, when she has the realization: "I will never be good enough for you" (*LB* 00:42:25-00:42:27).

Figure 65. Close-up of Elle's face when she realizes how Warner views her (LB 00:42:27)

The focus on Elle's face presents yet another turning point – instead of using her trickery to win back Warner, she now focuses on achieving academic and professional goals to prove "just how valuable Elle Woods can be" (*LB* 00:42:39-00:42:41). As Landay notes, the trickster "always refuses to stay in place" (20), and similarly, Elle refuses to stay where Warner and others have placed her. The close-up of her face when she makes this realization emphasizes the importance of the scene. As she realizes that others will undervalue her because of her status as a blonde woman, she works to fight against these stereotypes. More aware than ever of how others view her, Elle is often seen recalling the trickster tactics of the blonde women who came before her to draw attention to the stereotypes others place her in before proving them wrong. Another example of this is when Elle realizes that she was chosen to assist one of her professors on an important trial. Elle turns to Warner and Vivian and, both sweetly and seductively, says to Warner, "Do you remember when we spent those four amazing hours in the hot tub together after winter formal?" to which she follows with, "This is so much better than that!" (*LB* 00:50:45-00:50:56). Once again, Elle first performs in one way, as the sexually available blonde, before switching and leaving Warner stunned. This

moment is particularly interesting because Elle places her academic and professional achievement over a sexual experience. Unlike the trickster women this thesis has already analyzed, Elle no longer sees sexual experiences as something necessary to achieve her goals nor as one of her ultimate goals. Instead, Elle places more value on her professional achievements and portrays this through the shifting of personas. While Elle does not use this moment to trick anyone into doing or saying anything, she is still accessing the personas and expectations others have for her before intentionally disrupting these expectations in a way that shocks and surprises others while also demonstrating how her goals have shifted to advancing her career.

Because of the importance Elle places on fashion to help her perform a certain role, it is no surprise that she would wear a very distinctive outfit when she takes over as Brooke Windham's lawyer in her murder trial. Callahan (Victor Garber) sexually propositions Elle, placing her again in the position of a consumable blonde who will sexually use her body to gain professional progress. Elle refuses, disproving his assumption of her, and Callahan's client, Brooke Windham (Ali Larter), decides to replace her head lawyer. Brooke's decision punishes Callahan while also proving the faith she has in Elle. While everyone else first believes Elle to be stupid or naïve, Brooke immediately recognizes Elle's intelligence and value. When Brooke first learns that Elle will be on her defense team, she says, "Well, thank God one of you has a brain" (*LB* 00:54:30-00:54:31). Maybe because Brooke is also a blonde, she knows hair color is not a measure of one's intelligence and finds comradery with Elle. Despite Callahan's objections, Brooke unseats him as her lawyer and invites Elle into the court room. The double doors open and the camera cuts to a close-up on her pink heels, slowly panning up to show Elle in an all-pink outfit, her blonde hair curled, illuminated, and in plain view rather than tied back. While Elle had originally been wearing mostly black throughout the case – no doubt to help play the part as a member of Brooke's defense team – she reclaims her signature color. Instead of being used in preparation for a proposal, pink is now worn proudly in Elle's most important professional moment thus far. This shot is similar to how the camera shot her playboy bunny outfit, but instead of her clothes being used to objectify, her all-pink outfit is empowering (Figures 66 & 67). Elle reclaims the girlie color of pink and uses it as a powerful statement of girlie strength when she represents Brooke and wins the trial. Elle challenges the society that perceived her as less than because of her blonde hair and celebration of Girl Culture. Like how she draws on pink and blondeness in her position of

power, she draws on her girlie knowledge of hair care to win the case and trap the perpetrator in her lies.


Figure 66. & 67. The camera pans in a close-up shot of Elle's court outfit, starting with her shoes and ending with her blonde hair, this time from the front (LB 01:20:18; 01:21:21)

Elle Woods, a blonde in the early 2000s, does not craft for herself personas of the dumb or ice blonde in her trickery. Rather, others around her willingly fit her into those stereotypes. As mentioned earlier, Schweinitz writes, "stereotypes obviously serve as import reference points for the creation of fictional characters," but they also work "in the opposite direction. Popular media narratives actively affect the audience's imagination" (43). The sustained performances of blonde tricksters in the past shaped the diegetic society in Elle's life. Instead of crafting and sustaining stereotypes of the dumb or ice blonde, Elle must work within these expectations in her trickery. Elle is aware of the kind of judgement she faces, as she discloses to Emmett, "I'm discriminated against as a blonde" (*LB* 01:03:57-01:03:59). She has witnessed in her life people like Warner, her parents, Callahan, and others who only see "blonde hair and big boobs" (*LB* 01:17:13-01:17:15) when they look at her and expect for her to become a "Victoria Secret model" (*LB* 01:17:28-01:17:38). Emmett reminds Elle that "being a blonde is actually a pretty powerful thing" and he encourages her to use that power for the greater good since she "holds more cards" than she realizes (*LB* 01:03:50-01:04:02). Elle recognizes the privilege and discrimination she faces as a blonde and utilizes both to help her in the pursual of her goals. Just as the 'post' in postfeminism is argued to be informed by past waves of feminism, so is Elle informed by the blonde women who came before her. She is not a reinvention of the blonde personas, nor does she discard them but rather she builds upon past performances to remake her own. By using trickster tactics like masquerading excessive femininity, shifting her performances, utilizing fashion to try on roles, and emotional manipulation, Elle finds victory in both winning back her old boyfriend – whom she promptly

turns down – and by succeeding professionally. The film ends with Elle graduating from law school with a position at a prestigious law firm. Elle recognizes the perceptions of personas past female trickster figures have perpetuated, yet she finds ways to maneuver within those personas to achieve success.

Conclusion: Women, Jewelry, and Power

An interesting observation regarding the three films is the prevalence and importance of jewelry. For Lorelei, obtaining diamonds is her main objective, and she uses her trickery as a way to own more jewels. For Francie, the main conflict between her and Robie revolves around the theft of her mother's jewels and the imperative to retrieve them. While Elle and Vivian seem to be fighting for Warner, they often refer to him as the engagement ring – a six carat, Harry Winston. Melanie Grant in an article with Vogue reflects on courtesans in the 19th century and how their jewelry pieces were in fact symbols of "financial freedom and overt femininity" (n.p.). The prevalence of this topic in nonacademic conversations shows how these ideas have indeed filtered into popular culture also. Jewelry is not always about its "to-be-looked-at-ness" (Mulvey 1959), but instead can be a position of power for the women. A feminist reading of the blonde tricksters observed here suggests that these women sought jewelry for their own personal, material gain and can further be a grab for power. The jewelry they were seeking allowed them to enter the public sphere more independently than before. Rebecca Ross Russell writes that while jewelry was "erstwhile a tool of oppression" it can be "transformed into a method of resistance" (6). The blonde characters of the films seek jewelry for different means. However, what remains true for all is the possibility that jewelry holds for women to be economically independent and symbolize ownership over something of value. Russell sees jewelry as the "primary or sole source of wealth under direct control of women" which has a "historical effect on [women's] ability to function as independent entities" (69). To view jewelry not only as a fashion tool or a function which highlights the 'to-be-looked-at-ness' of women's passivity, but indeed as "bestowed power" (Russell 2) allows for trickster women to pursue their independence through these means.

Lorelei's fascination with diamonds lies less in how others would view her but rather in enjoying the diamonds for her own pleasure. Russell writes that women can create independence through jewelry by reversing "the full pleasure, experience, and control for the

wearer" (88). This example of independence does not hinge upon men expressing their gratitude or approval but in Lorelei's celebration of herself and her diamonds. Lorelei tricks for diamonds that can both satisfy her material desire and act for her as a way to gain agency. For women, jewelry can be a "portable and personal repository of wealth" (Russell 74). Men are only used in Lorelei's relationship to jewelry as a means to provide her with those diamonds; she does not care about their opinion of her wearing the jewelry at all. With Russell's historical reference of jewelry as a form of agency and power, one can use this frame "to distinguish not when a jewelry tradition is perfect from a feminist point of view, but when it opens doors to opportunities and agency that women would not have had otherwise" (98). For Lorelei, jewels and jewelry alike offer opportunities to live as she wants, displayed in her two songs "Little Girl from Little Rock" and "Diamonds are a Girl's Best Friend."

Francie Stevens and her mother are in a different position of power and agency. Instead of needing others to buy them their jewelry, Francie's mother has purchased all her jewelry with her own money, and she claims that they have little sentimental significance to her. It is a curiosity then when Francie has a strong reaction to her mother's jewels being stolen. More so than a lack of power, wealth, or independence, Francie sees these jewels as a symbol of Robie's desire for her. Russell writes that "the association between diamonds and sexuality was so successfully cemented in the American psyche" (62), as is proven through many eras and advertising taglines like "every kiss begins with Kay" (Kay Jewelers 1985). In this phrase, the diamond that is purchased at Kay jewelers promises the reward of a romantic experience. This trade-off of jewels for sex is what Frances advertises when she continually conflates her body with the diamonds. Francie has plenty of diamonds from her mother and does not need tricks to gain more; she even tells Robie that she does not like to wear them. However, Francie has a function for jewelry besides fashion: she tempts Robie through the jewels to achieve sexual and romantic experiences.

Finally, when Elle and Vivian fight for Warner, it appears as though they are actually fighting for the ring. In more than one instance, the women refer to the ring as the ultimate prize rather than the fiancé. When Elle first sees that Warner is engaged, the camera offers a close up of a giant diamond on Vivian's finger, with sparkles added as a special effect (Figure 68). Elle laments later, "She's got the six-carat Harry Winston on her bony, unpolished finger" (*LB* 00:32:54-00:32:59).

Figure 68. Extreme close-up of the coveted Harry Winston ring (LB 00:31:09)

Later in the film, Vivian's friend reminds Vivian that she's "got the ring, sweetie," as if that was more important than Warner himself (*LB* 00:41:03). While Elle is not in the same position as Lorelei – she has the money as a middle class postfeminist to purchase for herself and can find more agency through other methods such as attending law school – she still looks to seize back the ring as a demonstration of power over Vivian. It is not until Elle's goals shift towards her personal and academic career that she loses sight of the ring. In fact, both women do as the nondiegetic captions at the end of the film reveal that Vivian breaks up with Warner and becomes best friends with Elle. The women, in true postfeminist fashion, have the freedom to choose (Wilkins 149) and with that freedom do not choose a relationship with Warner and the ring he promises but instead their friendship. However, Elle with her postfeminist ability to have it all (ibid.) gets both romance and success; she ends the film with her new (and improved) boyfriend, Emmett, and a promising job offer.

The presence of jewelry is not to be overlooked in the analyses of the films. Diamonds play a distinct role in symbolizing power and the expansion of the tricksters' "sphere of power" (Landay 2). The three goals of the female figures studied are different. However, all three characters aim to test the limits society has dictated for them. When they test those structures, they, as tricksters, challenge "outdated guidelines and [trigger] reform and renewal" (Landay 33). As Hyde writes, tricksters look to "open the road to possible new worlds" (11). However, as they work to expand their power, the blonde trickster ultimately pays her own price. Unable to fully exit the power hierarchy and only able to work within it, she does not gain full autonomy. Though powerful in her own middle-class whiteness, the blonde woman finds herself unable to "exercise [power] effectively" within white hierarchies (Dyer 30). While male is considered dominant, female access to power continues to be

limited, which is why blonde, female characters can use trickster tactics. One consequence a blonde trickster must pay, this thesis argues, is the perpetuation of harmful stereotypes. Indeed, one must inquire how their specific covert tactics both help the female trickster "escape the system" as well as contribute to the factors which "prevent that escape" (Landay 26). As Landay comments, covert power of female trickery "necessitates that practitioners maintain positions of submission" (29). Perhaps Lorelei and Francie are able to utilize the power found through covert, female trickster tactics in tandem with their blonde personas, but their practices require them to maintain submission and confirm stereotypes. This perpetuates harmful tropes, offering a delayed consequence blonde tricksters must pay in the form of societal prejudice – without trying to perform a persona, Elle is immediately placed into the ones her blonde, trickster predecessors coopted. Yet, as mentioned before, those stereotypes still allow women access to covert methods of trickery. While not perfectly, blonde tricksters find ways to reach for power within the limits society has delineated and create opportunities to achieve their goals: Lorelei gains her wealth, Francie captures her thief, and Elle begins to slowly destabilize harmful stereotypes while gaining academic achievements without having to compromise her love of girlie culture.

By considering the performances of these three blonde female tricksters, I have sought to explore how the characters utilize trickster tactics in conjunction with their blonde hair and the personas that follow. These women perform within hegemonic power structures; they do not permanently change these hierarchies but instead work within them through their covert tactics as a way to manipulate the patriarchal system. Arguably, the presentation of covert trickster tactics like performative persona, emotional manipulation, feigned interest and submission of the 1950s tricksters work to their favor; however, their performances do not challenge harmful stereotypes but instead perpetuate them. As Lorelei and Francie trick, they are only affirming preconceived beliefs that blonde women are dumb or promiscuous temptresses. Elle, nearly fifty years later, must challenge these beliefs while working within them. Through the continued presentation of stereotypes, an audience's belief of these types is confirmed. The three trickster figures analyzed here are all seeking to expand their spheres of influence through their tactics of covert, hedonic power. They demonstrate how tricksters, through their marginal status, can critique power imbalances while reimaging different concepts of self and community through their tactics. The three tricksters become aware of the power structures within which they live, how this disadvantages them or otherwise

represents a limiting factor to their goals, and they create new opportunities through which to change their circumstances.

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Appendix A: Abstract

English Version

This thesis seeks to explore a variation of the trickster figure, namely the blonde woman, in post-WWII Hollywood films. While female tricksters have been studied in the past (cf. Bassil-Morozow 2020; Jurich 1999; Landay 1998), the complexity of the figure offers the protentional for endless manifestations that tend to remain in the margins of scholarship. The blonde trickster still finds herself without certain autonomy and agency, specifically within white hierarchies despite, holding power in her own right as a white woman with coveted, blonde locks. Instead, she can find herself categorized into denigrating labels like the dumb blonde or the ice blonde. While these labels are societal prejudices she faces, they paradoxically offer a kind of power the trickster can coopt to expand her sphere of influence. This thesis will conduct a feminist reading of a selection of popular films which center a blonde, female protagonist and will question her use of hedonic and covert trickery. The results will discover that while she does indeed find avenues of power through performing the personas of the dumb or ice blonde in conjunction with other trickster tactics, these practices lead to a perpetuation of harmful stereotypes which will directly affect future, blonde characters. By beginning the analysis in the 1950s and ending in the postfeminist era, this thesis offers its readers insight into the wide range of blonde, female trickery present in Hollywood film. Furthermore, it questions the success of her goals as well as the consequences the blonde trickster must face as a result of her trickery.

Deutsche Version

Diese Arbeit untersucht die blonde Frau als eine Variation der Tricksterfigur in Hollywood-Filmen nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg. Während weibliche Betrügerinnen bereits in der Vergangenheit analysiert wurden (vgl. Bassil-Morozow 2020; Jurich 1999; Landay 1998), bietet die Komplexität der Figur aber endlos mögliche Manifestationen, die sonst am Rande der Wissenschaft bleiben. Die blonde Betrügerin hat teilweise keine Autonomie und Entscheidungsfreiheit, insbesondere innerhalb weißer Hierarchien, obwohl sie als weiße Frau mit begehrten, blonden Locken durchaus in einer Machtposition sein kann. Stattdessen wird sie abwertenden Kategorien wie die der dummen Blondine oder der ‚Ice Blonde' zugeordnet. Während diese Label gesellschaftliche Vorurteile sind, mit denen sie konfrontiert wird, bieten sie ihr paradoxerweise auch eine Art Macht, die sie nutzen kann, um ihren Einflussbereich zu

erweitern. Diese Arbeit wird eine feministische Analyse einer Auswahl beliebter Filme, in deren Mittelpunkt eine blonde Protagonistin steht, durchführen. Anhand dessen wird die Verwendung von hedonischer und versteckter Betrügerei hinterfragt. Die Resultate der Arbeit werden zeigen, dass die Protagonistinnen zwar tatsächlich Wege der Macht finden, indem sie die Rolle der dummen Blondine oder der ‚Ice Blonde' in Verbindung mit anderen Trickster-Taktiken spielen, diese Praktiken jedoch zu einer Aufrechterhaltung schädlicher Stereotypen führen, die sich in der Folge auf zukünftige blonde Charaktere auswirken. Die Analyse beginnt in den 1950er Jahren und endet in der postfeministischen Ära, um so den Leser:innen einen Einblick in die breite Palette blonder, weiblicher Trickster in Hollywood-Filmen zu zeigen. Darüber hinaus hinterfragt die Arbeit, wie erfolgreich die Protagonistinnen beim Erreichen ihrer Ziele sind sowie die Konsequenzen, die die blonde Tricksterfigur aufgrund ihrer Betrügerei tragen muss.

Appendix B: Anti-Plagiarism Statement

I hereby declare that this research paper was written by me and in my own words, except for quotations from sources. All of these quotations are clearly marked and referenced following the "Style Sheet for Literary and Cultural Studies" of the English and American Studies Department of Vienna.

26th July 2022