Episode 3: The Dumb Blonde and the Femme Fatale

Source List

Content note: This episode discusses racism, abuse, the sexual exploitation of enslaved Black women, and a woman's execution.

Films and television

- A Fool There Was (1915), starring Theda Bara as "The Vampire."
- Double Indemnity (1944), starring Barbara Stanwyck.
- Gilda (1946), starring Rita Hayworth.
- Born Yesterday (1950), starring Judy Holliday.
- Niagara (1953) and Gentlemen Prefer Blondes (1953), starring Marilyn Monroe.
- Carmen Jones (1954), starring Dorothy Dandridge.
- Private Benjamin (1980), starring and produced by Goldie Hawn.
- Three's Company (1977–1984).
- Newlyweds: Nick & Jessica (2003–2005).

Music

- Dolly Parton, "Dumb Blonde" (1967), written by Curly Putman.

Books and poems

- Anita Loos, Gentlemen Prefer Blondes (1925).
- Rudyard Kipling, "The Vampire" (1897).
- Britney Spears, The Woman in Me (2023).
- Dolly Parton, Behind the Seams.
- Joanna Pitman, On Blondes.
- Barbara Leaming, If This Was Happiness: A Biography of Rita Hayworth (1989). Source of the closing Rita Hayworth quote.
- Dolly Parton, Dolly on Dolly: Interviews and Encounters with Dolly Parton, edited by Randy L. Schmidt (2017). Dolly on Curly Putman writing "Dumb Blonde."
- Pamela Anderson, Love, Pamela (2023). Written with no co-writer.

Research

- Jay L. Zagorsky. “Are Blondes Really Dumb?” Economics Bulletin 36, no. 1 (2016): 401–410.
- Diana J. Kyle and Heike I. M. Mahler. “The Effects of Hair Color and Cosmetic Use on Perceptions of a Female’s Ability.” Psychology of Women Quarterly 20, no. 3 (1996): 447–455.
- Susan Weir and Margret Fine-Davis. “Dumb Blonde and Temperamental Redhead: The Effect of Hair Colour on Some Attributed Personality Characteristics of Women.” Irish Journal of Psychology 10 (1989): 11–19.
- Evgenia Dechter. “Physical Appearance and Earnings: Hair Color Matters.” Labour Economics 32 (2015): 15–26.
- David W. Johnston. “Physical Appearance and Wages: Do Blondes Have More Fun?” Economics Letters 108, no. 1 (2010): 10–12.
- Nathan A. Heflick and Jamie L. Goldenberg. “Objectifying Sarah Palin: Evidence That Objectification Causes Women to Be Perceived as Less Competent and Less Fully Human.” Journal of Experimental Social Psychology 45 (2009): 598–601. See also Heflick, Goldenberg, Cooper and Puvia, “From Women to Objects: Appearance Focus, Target Gender, and Perceptions of Warmth, Morality and Competence,” 47 (2011): 572–581.
- Madeline E. Heilman and Lois R. Saruwatari. “When Beauty Is Beastly: The Effects of Appearance and Sex on Evaluations of Job Applicants for Managerial and Nonmanagerial Jobs.” Organizational Behavior and Human Performance 23 (1979): 360–372.
- Harold Sigall and Nancy Ostrove. “Beautiful but Dangerous: Effects of Offender Attractiveness and Nature of the Crime on Juridic Judgment.” Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 31 (1975): 410–414.
- Leah D. Sheppard and Stefanie K. Johnson. “The Femme Fatale Effect: Attractiveness Is a Liability for Businesswomen’s Perceived Truthfulness, Trust, and Deservingness of Termination.” Sex Roles 81 (2019): 779–796.
- Susan Fiske, Amy Cuddy, Peter Glick and Jun Xu (2002), "A Model of (Often Mixed) Stereotype Content." The Stereotype Content Model: we judge people on warmth and competence.
- Peter Glick and Susan Fiske (1996), "The Ambivalent Sexism Inventory." Ambivalent sexism: the benevolent and hostile kinds travel together.

Articles and archives

- Jim Crow Museum, Ferris State University, "The Jezebel Stereotype."
- Smithsonian Magazine, "Model Arrangement." Marilyn Monroe, photographer Milton Greene, and Marilyn Monroe Productions.
- American Film Institute, "Dorothy Dandridge: AFI Catalog Spotlight."

- Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research, "Rita Hayworth Personal Name File." Her name change, hair dye, and electrolysis.
- Time, "32 Epic Moments in Reality-TV History" (2011). Jessica Simpson and the Chicken of the Sea.
- PA Media, "Paris Hilton says she hid behind 'dumb blonde' persona," via BreakingNews.ie.
- Modern Screen, September 1954. Source of Marilyn Monroe's "dumb blonde" quote.
- Larry King Live, CNN, September 30, 2005. Dolly Parton on being asked whether being called a dumb blonde offends her: "I know I'm not dumb and I know I'm not blonde."
- TCM, "Starring Judy Holliday." Fans asking her to talk like Billie Dawn, and playing dumb before the 1952 Senate subcommittee.
- Jewish Women's Archive, "Judy Holliday." Her childhood IQ score of 172.
- CBS News, "Goldie Hawn A Wallflower?" Asked whether she's a "ditzy dumb blonde."
- TheWrap, "Loni Anderson, Emmy- and Golden Globe-Nominated Star of 'WKRP in Cincinnati,' Dies at 79" (2025). She refused to play Jennifer as a dumb blonde.
- NPR, interview with Pamela Anderson (2023). "I wrote every word," and becoming "a cartoon character."
- Golden Globes, Pamela Anderson. Best Actress nomination for The Last Showgirl.

Studio history

- Tino Balio. Grand Design: Hollywood as a Modern Business Enterprise, 1930–1939. University of California Press, 1993.

Support resources

- 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (United States and territories). Call 988, text 988, or use the online chat.
- RAINN. National Sexual Assault Hotline and online support.