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Blonde Attitudes in Dolly Parton's Songs

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Introduction

“Why did the blonde stare at the orange juice can during 20 minutes? Because it said : concentrate”. This joke obviously makes everyone laugh and I must admit I a blonde-haired woman is not intelligent. The sociocultural cliché gave birth to a category of jokes called *blonde jokes* which rely on gender humour.

The field of study that focuses on examining the representation of the *feminine* in general and the blonde-haired woman in particular is called : feminist and gender studies. It is interesting to start the paper with a quotation from Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* (1949), a book which is often regarded as a major work of feminist philosophy. De Beauvoir argues that : “representation of the world, like the world itself, is the work of men ; they describe it from their own point of view, which they confuse with the absolute truth” (De Beauvoir 1949 :161).

For a long time, American popular culture portrayed women from a hegemonic masculine view point in a gender-biased and stereotyped way. have few economic opportunities beyond those that pay minimum wage (\$7.25 per hour). Under US modern capitalism of hegemonic corporations, women need to work 2 or 3 jobs, 24/7, 52 weeks a year, only to make ends meet. It seems that American women undergo double oppression in their country, first for their gender and second for being members of the working class.

The aim of this paper is to explore the double oppression of women by deconstructing the stereotyped representation of blondes in two songs of female country music singer Dolly Parton, “Dumb Blonde” (1967) and “9 to 5” (1980). To start with, let’s review the concept of the *blonde stereotype*.

1- On blonde

The term *stereotype* derives from the Greek words στερεός (*stereos*), ‘firm, solid’ and τύπος (*typos*), ‘impression’, which literally means ‘solid impression’. (Online Etymology Dictionary). Originally, It was a printing technique that was adopted by the brothers something conforming to a fixed or general pattern ; especially : a standardized mental picture that is held in common by members of a group and that represents an oversimplified opinion, prejudiced attitude, or uncritical judgment (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/>).

We assign individuals to groups on the basis of a single trait, such as skin, hair color, religion, gender, or a country. The following statements are examples of stereotypes :

- all Americans are cowboys.

viewed as stupid, childish and as less respect than people with dark hair. In her academic study entitled : *On Blondes*, Joanna Pittman makes a under the sun the whole day and developed fair hair. Dark hair Europeans considered fair hair persons as belonging to a lower class. The first dumb blonde in western history is the French courtesan Rosalie Duthé. She was a lady of the night

Diamonds Are a Girl's Best friend". Monroe epitomized the fragile and superficial blonde and became ultimately a tale of tragedy when she died

prematurely at age of 36 in 1962. We have also three film adaptations of Francis Scott Fitzgerald's novel *The Great Gatsby* (1925) in which the directors deliberately portray Daisy Buchanan as a dumb blonde goldigger. The films cast respectively three blonde haired actresses : Betty Field (1949), Mia Farrow (1974), and the bottle blonde (by using chemicals) Carey Mulligan (2013). However, we all know that there are no specific or detailed descriptions of Daisy in the novel. Fitzgerald did not choose to create literary portraits of her. He describes her in chapter 1 as

park *Dollywood* in addition to two dinner theaters : *Dolly Parton's Dixie Stampede* and *Pirates Voyage*. One final point, Dolly Parton is a blonde, and contrary to what has been said so far she is neither superficial nor dumb. Let's examine her first song "Dumb Blonde".

1- Blondes:

Being a new female country music singer who tries to achieve success in a music industry mainly controlled by men, Dolly Parton records her first studio album *Hello, I'm Dolly* in 1967. It is common for beginning artists to be inspired by their own lives. They identical" (Lejeune 1975 : 5). Dolly Parton is the singer, the narrator and the principle character. The album's cover art also contends the self-referential device with a picture of a smiling Dolly Parton who introduces herself with a personal statement to the public (see below).

blond ; don't think I'm dumb ; cause this dumb blond ain't nobody's fool" (Parton, 4-6). Colloquial language is a key feature in country music. This genre of popular music originated in Southern America, mainly in Georgia, Tennessee, and Texas. Some famous country music singers include : Jimmie R

jokes she ironically comments: "I'm not offended by all dumb blonde jokes because I know I'm not dumb and I also know that I'm not blonde" (Rhiannon Williams, 2013).

Even if American women overtype, there is obviously another issue that prevents them from empowering themselves regardless of their hair color. They work in hegemonic corporations that pay minimum wage. Besides, they are being harrassed in a male-dominated environment which does not make it easy for them to fully assert themselves. In the next section, we will go beyond the blonde stereotype and examine the social condition of women at work. The second song of Parton, "9 to 5", explores this aspect.

2- Female white-collar workers

Parton wrote “9 to 5” in 1980 for the

overtime to make ends meet. On top of that, they can be fired at the discretion of their employers at any moment because most of American states have adopted the *at-will employment* principle that allows the employers to lay off employees without having to such as: regular week-ends, working hours without shifts or overtime, paying bonuses, and career advancement.

The expression *9 to 5* means the 8 hours a day most Americans work for making a living. The term *white collar* was coined by American writer Upton Sinclair to refer to the white dress shirts of office workers.

“Workin’ 9 to 5, what a way to make a livin’ ; barely gettin’ by, it’s all takin’ and no givin’ ; they just use your mind and they never give you credit ; it’s enough to drive you crazy if you let it” (Parton, 9-16). Parton draws attention to the fact that millions of Americans including women struggle to get ahead. Single mothers with no education have no options ; they need to hold a low-wage job to make a living because otherwise they cannot pay their rent, their that in reality at least 20 million of American workers are in low-wage jobs with women making up two-thirds of the golbal workforce.[\(http://www.nwlc.org/\)](http://www.nwlc.org/)

In the early 1980s, holding a position as an office secretary for a woman was not a big deal. Basically, she needed to have a twelfth grade level (the last year of high school). Her administrative duties included typing out letters with a typerwriter, maintaining files and documents, and arranging business meetings. A secretary needed also to be pretty and if she were a blonde, it was quite likely she would be hired as a receptionist or as the boss’s secretary. “9 to 5 for service and devotion ; you would think that I would deserve a fair promotion ; want to secretaries.

In the ending lines of the song, Parton reveals that despite the fact women undergo harassment and stress in their work, the American economic system prevents them from empowering themselves as she sings : “It’s a rich man’s game no matter what they call it ; and you spend your life puttin’ money in his wallet” (45-48). There are further aspets in the song that can be analyzed but it is high time to conclude.

Conclusion

Dolly Parton adequately deconstructed There are thousands of blogs, websites, and social network profile pages which are dedicated to blonde jokes. Some blonde women celebrate their blondness and play with this singular trait. Everyone likes a little self-deprecating humour. We all laugh at dumb blonde jokes, but it does not necessarily mean we believe blondes are literally dumb.

More seriously, the main challenges facing American women nowadays are of an economic and social nature and concern the improvement of their living standard. The American woman will not be fully emancipated until she stops thinking about her existential condition in the working life. The federal government should force hegemonic corporations In chapter 23 entitled 'The coming revolt of the guards', he argues:

Perhaps, the guards of the coming revolt do not belong to the above category of middle class workers who according to Zinn are given 'small rewards'. Middle class workers enjoy a decent standard of living and they have no good reasons to be discontented with the system. The ones who are really concerned with bringing about a change are the jobless and the low paid workers. In these tough times, poor people democratically voice their outrage by protesting out in the streets. The guards are there. The discontent has already commenced with the Occupy Wall Street Movement in 2011.

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