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I'm No Angel: The Blonde in Fiction and Film (Cultural Frames, Framing Culture)

Ellen Tremper

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Have you ever wondered why there are so many "dumb blonde" jokes?always about women? Or how Ivanhoe's childhood love, the"flaxen Saxon" Rowena, morphed into Marilyn Monroe? Between that season in 1847 when readers encountered Becky Sharp playing the vengeful Clytemnestra?about to plunge a dagger into Agamemnon?and the sunny moment in 1932 when moviegoers watched Clark Gable plunge Jean Harlow's platinum-tressed head into a rain barrel, the playing field for women and men had leveled considerably. But how did the fairy-tale blonde, that placid, pliant girl, become the "tomato upstair," as Monroe styled herself in *The Seven Year Itch?*

In *I'm No Angel: The Blonde in Fiction and Film*, Ellen Tremper shows how, at its roots, the image of the blonde was remodeled by women writers in the nineteenth century and actors in the twentieth to keep pace with the changes in real women's lives. As she demonstrates, through these novels and performances, fair hair and its traditional attributes?patience, pliancy, endurance, and innocence?suffered a deliberate alienation, which both reflected and enhanced women's personal and social freedoms essential to the evolution of modernity. From fiction to film, the active, desiring, and sometimes difficult women who disobeyed, manipulated, and thwarted their fellow characters mimicked and furthered women's growing power in the world. The author concludes with an overview of the various roles of the blonde in film from the 1960s to the present and speculates about the possible end of blond dominance.

An engaging and lively read, *I'm No Angel* will appeal to a general audience interested in literary and cinematic representations of the blonde, as well as to scholars in Victorian, women's, and film studies.

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