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## **Beyond the Image: Marilyn Monroe, Shelley Winters, and The Method**

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Beyond the Image: Marilyn Monroe, Shelley Winters, and The Method

A Thesis by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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Beyond the Image: Marilyn Monroe, Shelley Winters, and The Method

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## ABSTRACT

### Beyond the Image: Marilyn Monroe, Shelley Winters, and The Method

by Emily K. Oliver

Sexist gossip for women and professional celebration for men is a longstanding, detrimental trend within popular culture, society, and film studies scholarship. While this tendency can be traced consistently throughout film history, it is particularly apparent within the discourse surrounding the transitional period of postwar Hollywood (1945 - 1960). Though frequently disassociated from one another for their seemingly oppositional contemporary legacies, Marilyn Monroe and Shelley Winters began their careers synonymously as studio-created 'blonde bombshell' archetypes. Monroe's and Winters' early acting credits represent severe industry illustrations of objectification and sexist tactics to utilize female bodies to sell performances. Following variable typecasting experiences and frustrating professional and physical exploitation, Monroe and Winters each attempted to expand their artistic integrity and industry respect by pursuing Method acting training. While this education dramatically improved their unique performance techniques and on-screen confidence, Marilyn Monroe's and Shelley Winters' legacies have still been disproportionally shaped by sexist gossip, their introductions as 'Hollywood blondes,' and their physical bodies. Through an exploration of the transformations in their performance styles and techniques before and after their Method training, and using Monroe's *The Seven Year Itch* (Wilder 1955) to *Bus Stop* (Logan 1956) and Winters' *A Double Life* (Cukor 1947), to *A Place in the Sun* (Stevens 1951) as case studies, this thesis aims to establish an alternative narrational legacy for Marilyn Monroe and Shelley Winters that is contingent on their transformational professional achievements and artistic influence.

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## Introduction

“In Hollywood, there is an old sexist saying: ‘If a man is aggressive, he’s dedicated; If a woman is assertive, she’s a b\*\*\*\*\*’ (Parish ix).

As James Robert Parish points out in his conventional consumer analysis of female stardom in *Hollywood Divas: the Good, the Bad, and the Fabulous* (2003), the reality of professional conditioning and the establishment of public persona in Hollywood has been comprehensively gendered since its early twentieth-century establishment. Despite the feminist tone of his acknowledgment of Hollywood’s sexism, the title of Parish’s book, as well as his preceding text *Hollywood Bad Boys: Loud, Fast, and Out of Control* (2002) (though largely non-academic in nature), highlight the archetypal societal perspectives surrounding the historical placement of men and women within the Hollywood star system. At first glance, his labeling of famous actors as “divas” or “bad boys” seems to be comedic and in good fun. However, when considering the overarching connotation associated with the term ‘diva’ as defined by Parish to be “demanding” and “temperamental,” this text serves as an example of the ways in which entertainment consumers and researchers have overwhelmingly exposed and sought to devour the “self-centered behavior” and general gossip of female stars in favor of their tangible technical contributions and achievements within the film industry (Parish ix).

Virginia Wright Wexman echoes this perspective in her work *Creating the Couple: Love, Marriage, and Hollywood Performance* (1993) by discussing the sexist ways in which film scholarship has tended to review and position the lives of famous Hollywood personalities. In her chapter The Love Goddess: Contradictions of Myth and Glamour, Wexman discusses the representation of Charles Boyer (1899 – 1978) and Ava Gardner (1922 – 1990) in their



biographies written by Larry Swindell and Roland Flamini, respectively. In her analysis, Wexman exposes the ways in which Swindell “stresses [Boyer’s] early theatrical ambitions and his disciplined approach to his craft.” At the same time, Flamini “emphasizes [Gardner’s] sexual escapades, her temperament, and her lack of professional responsibility and training” (Wexman, 134 - 135). Upon exploring Wexman’s work and throughout my research process for this thesis, I have discerned that her analysis of gender representation within the star studies genre of academia exponentially persists throughout a substantial portion of historical explorations of high-profile Hollywood figures. The tendency being, to seemingly disregard prominent female contributors from a professional standpoint for their associations with conventionally non-feminist or even anti-feminist institutions, models, and movements like that of the ‘blonde bombshell.’ Whereas sexist gossip for women and professional celebration for men represent an unfortunate trend in star studies discourses in general, it is particularly notorious throughout the transitional period of postwar Hollywood (1945 – 1960).

While it is important to note that these gender-based boundaries were placed on copious numbers of female actors throughout this time period, including Audrey Hepburn, Elizabeth Taylor, Doris Day, Kim Novak, Katherine Hepburn, Debbie Reynolds, Brigitte Bardot, and many others, the foundation of this thesis stems from two legendary ladies whose contemporary legacies have been disproportionately shaped by their career starts as ‘Hollywood blondes’ as well as the ways they decided to adhere to, and reject the persona throughout the progression of their careers. Frequently disassociated from one another for their seemingly oppositional contemporary legacies, Marilyn Monroe as the “ultimate symbol of sex” and Shelley Winters as “a self-absorbed kook with a love of food,” this project aims to reconnect the stars through an exploration of the individual factors that altered their career paths with a lens of professional and

artistic salutation (Parish 279). My goal in placing Marilyn Monroe and Shelley Winters in dialogue with one another is not only to emphasize how their individual artistic choices impacted their career paths, but also to establish a conversation surrounding the forgotten group of female actors that radically impacted contemporary performance through their adoption and utilization of Method acting and have been left out of the narrative due to their seemingly anti -Method professional reputations.<sup>1</sup> From Monroe's role as the vulnerable, dumb blonde archetype and Winters' legacy as an eccentric, gossip-spreading, and sexually adventurous, supporting character actress, it is my opinion that their shockingly entertaining lives have regularly undermined their genuine contributions to the art of screen acting.

While the romantic relationships, legendary rows, and scandalous gossip associated with the lives of famous actors provide an interesting context for defining aspects of their navigational career decisions, it is my firm belief that this overindulgence of gossip-based history has contemporarily reinforced the sexism experienced throughout the lives of Marilyn Monroe and Shelley Winters. As I will explore in-depth throughout the scholarly overview and introductory analysis portion of this text, I am incredibly disappointed in contemporary film scholarship for either frequently ignoring the achievements of female actors for her deterrence from societally accepted beauty (Shelley Winters), or providing such gendered recounts of career history that her technical achievements are outshined by her traumatic upbringing, destructive relationships with men, and an uncomfortable societal obsession with her physical image (Marilyn Monroe). Specifically, when considering the rich feminist work that has been released surrounding historically comparable topics and individuals.

Furthermore, given that this thesis's central goal is to highlight that Shelley Winters and Marilyn Monroe serve as fundamental historical figures and professional contributors within

postwar Hollywood records, this project's structure is based on comparative analysis. Following a scholarly review in which I analyze the formulation of their current literary reputations, an overview of how Marilyn Monroe and Shelley Winters initially accumulated and comparably managed their public star personas throughout their careers, and an exploration of Method acting as pertaining to Monroe and Winters, this thesis includes performance and textual analysis surrounding their respective performance growth, and the way their decisions to publicly adopt Method acting training under popular acting instructors (Lee Strasberg for Monroe and a combination of Strasberg and Stella Adler for Winters) contributed to the art of screen acting. Through an exploration of the transformations in their performance styles and techniques before and after their significant Method training, and using Monroe's *The Seven Year Itch* (Wilder 1955) to *Bus Stop* (Logan 1956) and Winters' *A Double Life* (Cukor 1947), to *A Place in the Sun* (Stevens 1951) as case studies, this project aims to establish an alternative narrational legacy for Marilyn Monroe and Shelley Winters. A legacy that is ingrained explicitly in their transformational professional achievements and significant artistic influence that credit them beyond their gossip-based images.

Equivalently, before diving into this paper's body, I would like to underscore that it is not the intention of this work to discourage or alienate discussions and celebrations surrounding noteworthy events throughout Marilyn Monroe's and Shelley Winters' personal lives (and other female actors). Instead, I put forward that their artistic and professional contributions to twentieth-century screen acting and Hollywood cinema are considerably more valuable than their physical images, gossip-worthy relationships, and level of adherence to beauty standards. By focusing on the progression of Marilyn Monroe's and Shelley Winters' careers, dedication to improving their crafts through their respective adoption and utilization of Method acting, as well

as how they personally and professionally contributed to the art of screen performance, I hope to eviscerate the perspective that the historical value of a female star lies in the juiciness of her gossip.

## **Methodology**

Throughout the preparation process for this project, even despite the research limitations caused by the global pandemic, I was able to access a substantial range of the significant published works surrounding the lives, careers, and Method-related mentions of Marilyn Monroe and Shelley Winters in film studies scholarship. In order to create a composed overview of the ways scholarly discourse associated with Monroe and Winters has defined their contemporary identities and portrayed their artistic contributions, as well as to explain my interventions and to provide initial support for my argument, this section is broken down into an exploration of the obtainable scholarship associated with Shelley Winters, followed by an overview of the accessible content pertaining to Marilyn Monroe.

Given that Shelley Winters' career spanned over five decades, included over one hundred acting credits, earned her four Academy Award nominations and two Academy Awards for Best Supporting Actress, the limited number of scholarly works and mentions associated with her career are surprisingly scant. To start, it is surprising to consider the fact that the majority of references associated with Winters' performances themselves refer to her solely as an accessory to the contributions of other actors, like Ronald Colman in *A Double Life*, Montgomery Clift, and Elizabeth Taylor in *A Place in the Sun*, and James Mason in *Lolita* (Kubrick 1962), among others. Her mentions in more extensive-based texts typically include a brief sentence or two to describe her character's name and her role in the film. This historical placement can be easily overlooked if readers are not intentionally looking for her mention. Examples of these minimal

acknowledgments can be located in Denise Mann's *Hollywood Independents: The Postwar Talent Takeover* (2008), Drew Casper's *Postwar Hollywood: 1946 – 1962* (2007), and Murray Pomerance's *American Cinema of the 1950s: Themes and Variations* (2005).<sup>2</sup> While these textual references do recognize Winters' presence in Hollywood, and occasionally a slice of gossip like her notorious feud with Frank Sinatra throughout the filming of *Meet Danny Wilson* (Pevney 1952), their overall lack of extensive commentary surrounding her roles unjustly diminish her overall contributions to the industry, and therefore consequently her professional legacy.

Additionally, aside from career profiles within James Robert Parish's *Hollywood Divas: the Good, the Bad and the Fabulous* (2003) and Aubrey Malone's *Hollywood's Second Sex: The Treatment of Women in the Film Industry* (2015), that primarily discuss Winters' as a blonde 'has been,' the only substantial professionally published biographical material I was able to locate surrounding the life and career of Shelley Winters was written by herself. While undeniably packed with fascinating information surrounding her life, relationships, industry interactions, film production memories, Method acting studies, and personal recounts of other legendary figures, *Shelley: Also Known as Shirley* (1980) and *Shelley II: The Middle of My Century* (1989) is not only tough to follow in terms of specific dates, times, and references, they are also told in a storytelling format solely from her perspective.<sup>3</sup> Without any way to directly check the specifics of some of her sources, and because she does not include a formal bibliography section in either text, the authenticity of certain situations, events, and stories have been rightfully called into question by reviewers. This lack of transparency indisputably diminishing some of her credibility as a historically accurate writer. Regardless of her recognized tendencies for a lapse in scholarly authority, when cross-referenced with primary materials and

peer-reviewed scholarship, Winters' biographies provide essential contributions to this project and her legacy in general.

Likewise, while the tremendous personal narratives included within both books are incredibly revealing and entertaining, Winters' decision to significantly privilege recounts of her personal and professional gossip over her technical industry achievements reinforces the sexist formula (as referenced by Wexman in my introduction) within star studies scholarship. For instance, in Chapter 19 of *Shelley: Also Known as Shirley* (1980), Shelley Winters provides a few pages of specific commentary surrounding the filming of *A Place in the Sun* (which at the time was still called *An American Tragedy*). Although this section is exceptionally noteworthy concerning Winters' career experiences and will be utilized throughout the textual analysis portion of this work, she spends the ancillary pages emphasizing the specifics of her affair with Burt Lancaster (Winters 276 – 287). Whilst undeniably increasing the chapter's entertainment and shock value (and seemingly establishing Winters' position as a sexually desirable star), it arguably diminishes her professionalism and reinforces the detrimental concept that her historical significance lies in her scandalous sexual adventures. My intervention within the Shelley Winters scholarly developed legacy is the insertion of primary materials to support her professional commentary within her biographies and the inclusion of an extensive textual analysis of two of her films, with her perspective rightfully positioned as the central figure of discussion.

As there is a relatively limited library of published work surrounding Shelley Winters' life and career, the scholarly conditions surrounding Marilyn Monroe's historical presence and professional identity are voluminous by comparison, depth, and widespread availability. From an extensive directory of biographies, memoirs, career spots within larger bodies of work, and photobooks, to journal articles, book chapters, theses, dissertations, as well as countless other

published works, Marilyn Monroe has served as one of the most frequently reviewed figures throughout Hollywood history. In fact, there are more than one hundred biographical texts dedicated to the existence of Marilyn Monroe available in the Amazon book collection alone. Written from a multitude of perspectives, and ranging levels of research credibility (from fan-based constructions to peer-reviewed scholarly works), in various languages, and throughout alternating periods in history – before and after certain primary archival materials were accessible to researchers – the saturation of the Marilyn Monroe biographical discourse can be incredibly overwhelming and challenging to decipher. This is especially true for individuals looking for straightforward, factual recounts of her life and career.

Whereas some biographies, including Barbara Leaming's *Marilyn Monroe* (2000), Charles Casillo's *Marilyn Monroe: The Private Life of a Public Icon* (2018), and Donald Spoto's *Marilyn Monroe: The Biography* (2001) are considered to be satisfactorily researched and credible in their positions (having received general endorsement and acceptance throughout the academic community), the overarching concentration of each of these texts remains largely ingrained in a gossip-based, and emotionally grounded history of Marilyn Monroe's life.<sup>4</sup> For example, despite the fact that her work describes significant professional events throughout Monroe's career: including the progression of her relationship with Method acting, experiences throughout the preparation and filming process of each of her films, as well as the establishment of her production company Marilyn Monroe Productions (MMP), Barbara Leaming describes her work as "a book that will make you think – and will break your heart." This is extremely problematic in terms of gender representation because it encourages readers to view Monroe through a lens of victimization despite her outstanding and dedicated career as a transformative performance artist.<sup>5</sup>

Notwithstanding the fact that Monroe's trauma undeniably impacted her career and should not go unmentioned, it is my perspective that recounts like Leaming's (though likely unintentional) depreciate her technical contributions and fundamentally omit her within discourse surrounding 'serious' actors. Nevertheless, it is essential to acknowledge that I will be using portions of the previously mentioned texts as a basis for components of my analysis (this is primarily due to the limited volume of primary research materials I was able to access due to the pandemic). Regardless of this, it is my fundamental opinion that the ways in which they substantially focus on her relationships, emotions, and traumatic experiences throughout her life reinforces Wexman's position surrounding gender stereotypes in star studies and thus undermines Monroe's legacy and contribution to screen acting.<sup>6</sup>

Equivalently, Marilyn Monroe – as a figure – receives numerous references throughout popular postwar Hollywood scholarship. With discussions ranging from brief references of her name to dedicated chapters surrounding her filmography and persona, it is clear that her presence within cinematic history is widely acknowledged, accepted, and anticipated. Regardless of this, I have noticed a significant trend in which her typical representation focuses on her position as the notorious “sexpot” and highlights the popularization and societal obsession with her physical body and image. While many scholars do acknowledge the frequency in which her image is “fetishized” through media as well as the scholarly work of their colleagues, additional commentary tends to reinforce her role as an archetype by emphasizing her relationships, trauma, or beauty (Pomerance 107).

In addition to Marilyn Monroe's frequent representation within general cinematic postwar scholarship (contrarily to Shelley Winters), her career has received some considerable attention through lenses of textual and theory-based analysis. Projects like Michelle Morgan's



*The Girl: Marilyn Monroe, The Seven Year Itch and the Birth of an Unlikely Feminist* (2018), and Amanda Konkle's *Some Kind of Mirror: Creating Marilyn Monroe* (2019) provide insightful, research-based commentary surrounding Monroe's filmography, work experiences, as well as the construction of her public persona. They have also assisted (Konkle especially) in facilitating an academic dialogue on Monroe's influence beyond her physical image. Morgan's and Konkle's work is crucial to this project in how it reviews and depicts Monroe's career through an emphasis on her perceptible professional influences on the film industry as well as the progression of her acting style and viewable talent. However, my intervention is to broaden their insightful analyses by including the career of Shelley Winters within this dialogue as a way to emphasize a group of type casted female actors whose attempts to increase their artistic integrity and industry respect through the adoption of Method acting have been neglected in scholarship. Equally, I am also intervening through my provision of direct textual analysis paralleling how her performances as The Girl in *The Seven Year Itch* and Cherie in *Bus Stop* disclose a severe transformation in her acting skills and performance confidence. My standpoint and contribution are distinctive because it directly contrasts her performances in *The Seven Year Itch* and *Bus Stop* alongside her Method training.

In supplement to the scholarship directly surrounding Marilyn Monroe and Shelley Winters' careers and lives, Method acting literature serves as a crucial ingredient within this work. Given that I am a film studies student and my familiarity with performance studies was relatively limited before I undertook this project, I utilized the work of numerous academically respected acting and performance scholars to establish my understanding of Method acting and its multifaceted history, as well as to investigate how they acknowledge the work of Shelley Winters, Marilyn Monroe, and female actors in general.<sup>7</sup> Throughout my research, I noticed that

incredibly informative books that foreground the historical development of the Group Theatre, the Actors Studio, the work of Lee Strasberg, Eliza Kazan, and Stella Adler, as well as the professional establishment and popularization of Method acting in the United States, frequently emphasize the work of male actors like Marlon Brando, Montgomery Clift, and James Dean, as inherently representative of early, noteworthy accounts of Method acting. In fact, Brando, Clift, and Dean films like *A Streetcar Named Desire* (Kazan 1951), *From Here to Eternity* (Zinnerman 1953), and *Rebel Without a Cause* (Ray 1955) are referenced within David Garfield's *A Players Place: The Story of the Actors Studio* (1984), Shelley Frome's *The Actors Studio: A History* (2001), and Steve Vinegard's *Method Actors: Three Generations of An American Acting Style* (1991) as examples of critical, revolutionary Method performances. While I do acknowledge the significant artistic contributions of Brando, Clift, and Dean, as well as the incredible performances depicted throughout each of the previously referenced films, the fact that no female performances were given the same consideration within works dedicated to **general** Method acting scholarship perpetuates a gendered trend in representation.<sup>8</sup>

Many of the texts reviewed for this project briefly mention Monroe's contemporary fame and attractiveness and overwhelmingly overlook Winters or mention her only in connection with Montgomery Clift. Aside from Rosemary Malague's *An Actress Prepares: Women and 'the Method'* (2002), which does not provide a substantial discussion regarding Winters, there is minimal academic discourse surrounding women and Method acting that does not investigate the practice solely from a feminist perspective.<sup>9</sup> I think this is a significant reason why Monroe and Winters are frequently omitted from female-focused Method scholarship.<sup>10</sup> Monroe and Winters do, however, receive brief mentions in Forster Hirsch's *A Method to Their Madness: The History of the Actors Studio* (1984), Amanda Konkle's chapter *The Actress and Her Method: Resisting*

*Playing “Marilyn Monroe”* (2019), and Cynthia Baron’s *Modern Acting: The Lost Chapter of American Film and Theatre* (2016). My research experience has left me with the perspective that few texts take female actors, including Monroe and Winters, genuinely in their transition as female Method actors.<sup>11</sup>

### **Monroe, Winters & the Evolution of Stardom**

Despite that Shelley Winters and Marilyn Monroe are not typically considered as relational Hollywood figures for their inherently alternative contemporary legacies, their corresponding beginnings into the postwar Hollywood film industry were relatively analogous. For both stars, their introductions as “Hollywood blondes” dramatically impacted their lifelong perceptions of and relationships with their stardom in general, as well as how they decided to navigate the succeeding portions of their careers. This section provides an overview into the ways in which Marilyn Monroe and Shelley Winters began their occupations within the industry as standard studio actors and the factors that lead to their accumulations of stardom. It synonymously provides a fundamental performance analysis of Marilyn Monroe and Shelley Winters’ performances prior to their **serious** Method training alongside an overview of the inspiring events and situational circumstances that motivated them to pursue this intensive acting training.<sup>12</sup> By critically analyzing Winters’ performance in *A Double Life* and Monroe’s preliminary, pre-Method rendition in *The Seven Year Itch*, I provide the foundational evaluation for what will determine the ways in which the Method training impacted their succeeding performances and respective industry reputations in *A Place in the Sun* and *Bus Stop*.

Shelley Winters was born Shirley Schrift on August 18 in the year 1920 or 1922, “depending on whom you are asking” (Winters 10). After moving to Brooklyn, New York, early in her childhood from Illinois, Winters became obsessed with the art of theater and performance.

In fact, she spent most Wednesdays while she was enrolled in middle school and high school, skipping class to watch matinee performances at the local theater (Winters 27). Winters spent the rest of her childhood and her early teenage years looking to break into the business. After entering in a beauty contest at the local swimming pool and being crowned its victor, Winters “knew [she] had it in her” to be a star (Winters 40). As James Robert Parish notes, Winters was so confident in her impending stardom that “just some months before graduation,” Winters, who was still Shirley Schrift at the time, “quit school to become a dress model” (Parish 280). As stated in *Shelley: Also Known as Shirley* (1980), her personal assurance drove her to the point that she even attended the open audition casting call for the part of Scarlet O’Hara in *Gone with the Wind* (Fleming 1939). During this audition, Winters was first introduced to George Cukor (who would later direct her in *A Double Life*). Even though she was not cast in the film, Cukor “was the first person to treat [Winters] as if [she] was really an actress” and encouraged her to continue to pursue her dream (Winters 55). Following this interaction, Shelley Winters enrolled in her first drama studies program at New York’s The New School. During her time in school, Winters played minor parts on and off-Broadway and claimed that her minor role in *The Night Before Christmas* (Brent 1941) served as her gateway. Following her casting as Fifi in *Rosalinda* (Brentano 1942), Harry Cohn, the head of Colombia Pictures and creator of “Hollywood sex goddesses,” watched one of her performances and approached her to do a screen test (Winters 71). Following this test, Winters was immediately offered a contract with Colombia Pictures, moved to Los Angeles, and experienced her initial transformation into a blonde bombshell.

According to Winters, the process in which she was physically transformed into the ‘Hollywood blonde’ was an incredibly emotionally transformative experience as well. She says what started as a group of people putting “some kind of bleach on my hair to make it platinum”

to help increase her likelihood of becoming a star, changed her identity forever (Winters 88). “I looked in the mirror, and a gorgeous platinum blonde stared back. It wasn’t me, but she sure as hell looked sensational” (Winters 88). Sporting her newly transformed appearance, Winters was cast into a series of unmemorable bit parts as Secretary in *What a Woman!* (Cummings 1943), uncredited performer in *There’s Something About a Soldier* (Green 1943), Girl in *Cover Girl* (Vidor 1944), and Gloria Flynn in *Sailor’s Holiday* (Berke 1944). In 1944, however, unhappy with the minor roles, Winters secretly (and illegally) tested her opportunities outside of Columbia Pictures and auditioned for a role in *Knickerbocker Holiday* (Brown 1944) at United Artists. This was also when she first started experimenting with ‘serious’ acting training in Hollywood. After receiving her casting as Ulda Tienhoven in *Knickerbocker Holiday* (Brown 1944), Shelley Winters was forced to beg Harry Cohn to lend her to United Artists and consequently established her reputation as difficult throughout the industry. She was then dropped from Columbia Pictures within the next few years.<sup>13</sup>

Just before her dropped Columbia Pictures option, Winters managed to secure a few bit parts at surrounding studios, including as Princess in *Two Smart People* (Dassin 1946), Band Singer in *Susie Steps Out* (Le Borg 1946), Miss Holmbright in *New Orleans* (Lubin 1947) and a few others before receiving her official big break as the sexy blonde waitress, Pat Kroll in *A Double Life*. It was through this performance that she received her certified long-term-contract with Universal Studios, as well as her official placement as an up-and-coming Hollywood star. Just as Winters was beginning to achieve an initial sense of industry accreditation, another blonde bombshell, Marilyn Monroe, (arguably the most famous platinum sexpot in American film history) began her lengthy pursuit of Hollywood stardom.

Monroe was born Norma Jean Mortenson (later changed to Norma Jean Baker) on June 1, 1926, at the Los Angeles General Hospital in Los Angeles, California (Spoto 13). She experienced a challenging upbringing filled with physical, emotional, and sexual abuse. Monroe was cared for by various foster families and even resided in an orphanage throughout her childhood due to the fact that all of her immediate family were committed into psychiatric facilities throughout her childhood (Casillo 12 - 15). Marilyn Monroe, who was still Baker at the time, married James Dougherty in 1942 when she was sixteen years old “as a way to escape” the foster care system (Casillo 30). Just a few years into their marriage, James Dougherty joined the Merchant Marines and was sent to fight in World War II. Monroe (now Dougherty) worked at the Radio Plane Munitions Factory during this period, assembling planes and spraying them with fire retardant (Casillo 35). Through her work at the factory, she was photographed by David Conover of the military’s First Motion Picture Unit (FMPU) and was consequently given the opportunity to become a model of the war effort (Leaming 124). Even though FMPU did not use Monroe’s photos in their noteworthy campaigns, in 1945, she signed with Blue Book Modeling Agency and became a relatively well-known “photographer’s model” (Casillo 35). During her time at the agency, Monroe was advised into “straightening and lightening her hair” after being told that “a blonde would get more jobs” (Casillo 35). By 1946, Marilyn and Dougherty were divorced largely because he disapproved of the way her image was sexualized as a pinup model and consequently “demanded that [Marilyn Monroe] choose between him and her career” (Spoto 103).

It was throughout the same year as her first divorce that Monroe experienced her introductory affiliation with Hollywood. When “a friend of a friend” introduced Monroe to Helen Ainsworth, who was “a severe, two-hundred-pound agent familiarly known as Cupid,” she

was able to get her an introduction with Twentieth Century Fox's Ben Lyon (Spoto 110). Even though "nothing is known of this first meeting, nor [Monroe's] reading," she was subsequently requested to return for a screen test and was then offered "a standard contract without exclusions, exceptions or emendations" (Spoto 12). This was the same period that she officially changed her name to Marilyn Monroe.

Throughout her initial run with Twentieth Century Fox, Monroe's agent Harry Tipton secured her a few bit parts in the films *Scudda Hoo! Scudda Hay!* (Herbert 1948) and *Dangerous Years* (Pierson 1947), however, "based on the minimal work" she had been featured in, and because her name was not generating any profit, "the studio dropped her" option (Casillo 39). Following her first contract dropping, Monroe "discovered the Hollywood party circuit" and established a series of relationships with prominent industry executives, directors, screenwriters, and actors (Casillo 44). Here, she formed relationships with John and Lucille Carroll, who were prominent within the MGM community, and Joe Schenck of United Artists, who helped reconnect her within the industry by calling in a favor with Harry Cohn at Colombia Pictures (Spoto 133) (Casillo 46).<sup>14</sup> By March of 1948, Marilyn Monroe had signed a six-month contract with Colombia Pictures and shortly after received Natasha Lystess as her acting coach, had her hair bleached to platinum, and was cast as Peggy Martin in *Ladies of the Chorus* (Karlson 1948).<sup>15</sup> By the end of 1948, Monroe found herself without a contract and returned to modeling.<sup>16</sup> Monroe then independently appeared in small roles as Grunion's client in *Love Happy* (Miller 1949), Clara in *A Ticket to Tomahawk* (Sale 1950), Angela Phinlay in *Asphalt Jungle* (Huston 1950), and Miss Claudia Casswell in *All About Eve* (Mankeiwecz 1950) before being picked up again by Twentieth Century Fox. This time, the platinum, blonde bombshell

Monroe persona was established in full force, and in 1952, Marilyn Monroe was also named “Fastest Rising Star” by Photoplay Magazine (Hopper 22).

As Monroe and Winters were both seemingly handpicked by studio personnel for their respective calls to Hollywood, they were synonymously placed in a standardized training pattern that emphasized the industry tendency to formulize female stars for their relatively low-risk monetary benefits.<sup>17</sup> As executives had previously focused on creating the femme fatale, vamp, and girl-next-door personas for a guaranteed cash creator, Monroe and Winters entered Hollywood during a time in which the blonde bombshell persona was the central standardization. Monroe and Winters quickly underwent the aesthetic transformation processes for their blonde identities; they were synonymously educated in the verbal, mental, and technical requirements for “making it in Hollywood” as a blonde bombshell (Wexman 43). From frequenting the commissaries “diet meals,” repeated etiquette training, and lengthy exercise routines, to maintaining a full schedule (alongside time on set) of dance, speech, and acting lessons, the beginnings of their careers seemed to serve as considerable studio investments and both stars began their industry experiences full of hope.<sup>18</sup>

While Monroe’s and Winters’ introductory experiences at Colombia (Winters) and Twentieth Century Fox (Monroe) seemed to be setting them up for artistic achievement (because they served as their first professional screen performance coaching), they instead, however, fueled their corresponding establishments as sexualized archetypes. Winters describes the introductory “acting lessons” she received in Colombia to be “cockamamie” because the central goal was to encourage its actresses “to always be pretty for the camera” (Winters 93).<sup>19</sup> Konkle describes Monroe to have been equally dissatisfied by her Twentieth Century experience because it made her feel isolated and objectified (Konkle 110-13). By ingraining the concept that



professional monetary achievement could only be constituted through physical aesthetically focused performance, Monroe's and Winters' studio provided acting instruction helped to diminish their contemporary legacies by setting them up for objectification throughout the succession of their careers. While numerous films depict this sexualized personification within Shelley Winters' and Marilyn Monroe's early (pre-Method) filmographies, *A Double Life* and *The Seven Year Itch* serve as the productions that most represent an individualized starting point for their respective performance growth. From their distinctive experiences throughout each films' production process to their visual acting styles on-screen, reviewing Shelley Winters in *A Double Life* and Marilyn Monroe in *The Seven Year Itch* undoubtedly provides an interesting perspective of the professional placement of both stars before they undertook Method acting.

Even despite the sexist reputational implications experienced by Shelley Winters following her breakthrough performance as Pat Kroll in *A Double Life*, the film is inherently noteworthy for its role in establishing Winters as a recognizable figure in postwar Hollywood and for its foundational placement within her professional legacy, especially when comparing the evolution of her performing techniques in the five years between the release of *A Double Life* and her role as Alice Tripp in *A Place in the Sun*.<sup>20</sup> *A Double Life* was released on December 25, 1947, and was famously directed by George Cukor. The film is most notoriously remembered for its unique utilization of Shakespeare's *Othello* (Shakespeare 1603) in shaping its storyline and for its inclusion of Ronald Coleman's Oscar Award-winning performance. *A Double Life* embodies the elements of drama, darkness, and suspense typically found within the popular postwar film noir genre. It was overwhelmingly positively received by critics and was even described as "one of the year's outstanding pictures" in a 1948 issue of the *Los Angeles Times*.

*A Double Life* follows the ascending career of Tony John (Ronald Coleman) and his on-again-off-again romantic and professional relationship with his ex-wife Brita (Signe Hasso) as they are cast in a long-running theatrical production of Shakespeare's *Othello*. What begins as a joyous emotional and professional reconnection for Tony (Othello) and Brita (Desdemona) quickly turns dark as Tony begins to over immerse himself in his portrayal of Othello. From patronizing odd areas of the city and picking up a gorgeous blonde waitress (Shelley Winters) through Othello's lines, to accusing Brita of having an affair (even though they are not romantically involved at the time), and seeing apparitions and hearing voices comparable to the narration of his own-stage character, the destructive potential of Tony's progressing psychosis is increasingly highlighted throughout the development of the film.

Even though Shelley Winters' representation in *A Double Life* is relatively limited (especially when compared to Marilyn Monroe in *The Seven Year Itch*), her performance provides a workable benchmark for her acting style and professionalism before her serious undertaking of Method acting. From her physical appearance and general on-screen movement, to how she disconnectedly performs her character's dialogue and embodies a visibly recognizable level of self-consciousness, Shelley Winters as Pat Kroll serves as an undeniably fascinating evaluative tool for her succeeding performance growth and career progression.<sup>21</sup>

While Winters' introductory scene in *A Double Life* provides a glimpse into the fiery persona she is contemporarily known for - as her character wittingly responds to Tony's question surrounding the edibility of the restaurants' chicken cacciatore option with "It is your stomach" - the undeniable emphasis on her physicality through the preliminary shot sequence distinctively positions Pat Kroll as the film's token blonde sex pot.<sup>22</sup> From the soft mid shots and illuminating lighting, to the way the camera pans to expose her entire physique (in a way it does

not emphasize Brita or Tony), the objectification of her body dramatically shapes Winters' placement within the film and consequently within Hollywood at that point in her career.<sup>23</sup> From her tight waitress uniform and perfectly styled platinum hair to her flirtatious body language, sensual eye contact, and inviting dialogue, portraying Pat Kroll served as a prospect for Winters to prove herself as a physically attractive, financially profitable Hollywood starlet. The aestheticism of Winters' body is cinematically highlighted throughout the entirety of the performance, making it clear that she has been meticulously trained to use movement (and her looks) to improve her likability on screen. An example of this can be seen as Pat leans over the table to help Tony light his cigarette and to remind him of her previous profession as a masseuse and model. Pursing her lips, emphasizing her chest, and forwardly offering her phone number, Pat is seemingly tantalizing Tony (and spectators of the film) with her physical availability and desire for sex.<sup>24</sup>

In addition to highlighting her physical attractiveness through movement, Winters attempts to sell her sexiness through the delivery of her lines. After inviting Tony back to her apartment, changing in a tight-fitting crop top, and offering him "a coffee, or maybe a beer," her character attempts to coolly explain her affections for the man she has just met. Incontrovertibly awkward and slightly too loud, when Pat asks Tony – "do you like me too?" – it is clear that Winters is not overly confident in her on screen presence. The scene continues, and Winters can be seen frequently fluttering her eyes, clumsily walking around the room to look at herself in the mirror, and continuing to speak at an odd volume. After witnessing a moment of Tony's psychosis and professing distress with his "crazy talk," Pat proceeds to painfully initiate the romantic encounter.

Winters' lack of performance confidence is then highlighted as she tells Tony "not to talk at all" before pulling him in for a dramatic kiss. While Winters' performance in this scene is not inherently positive or negative in its technique, it merely emphasizes her lack of Method training and inability to connect with her character genuinely. This feeling is echoed in the scene in which her character is strangled to death. As Pat is being choked, Winters melodramatically falls backward in an unconvincing demise. Instead of embodying the terror felt by a woman facing strangulation, Winters' performance showcases a pretty starlet pretending to die for the camera.

Even despite its success in securing her critical film industry buzz and for creating the opportunity for another contract deal, Winters' performance in *A Double Life* publicly placed her in an unfortunate type-casting of "sexpot parts" including Myrtle Wilson in *The Great Gatsby* (Nugent 1949) and Frenchie Fontane in *Frenchie* (King 1950) (Winters 254). As referenced by Forster Hirsch in *A Method to Their Madness: The History of the Actors Studio* (1984), because Shelley Winters began her career as a "contract player imprisoned in roles that her nature chafed against" and since she was "too feisty to fit into the slots the Hollywood Studios had waiting" she was inherently unhappy with her studio experience from the introduction of her career (Hirsch 329). When describing her personal experiences trying to maintain her blonde bombshell image, Winters explains that because "all they wanted [her] to do was to look and act sexy," she had a challenging time adapting her performances (Winters 219). In order to try to maintain her position, Winters was "constantly dieting and taking sleeping pills because she was so hungry she could not sleep" and was consequently extremely unhappy with her career – despite her newfound fame and greater financial independence (Winters 304).

On top of the physical exploitations and stylistic demands, Shelley Winters felt that she was being limited in the casting department. Mainly because she felt there was an abundance of

roles she would have liked to perform and would have been right for, but “they were all given to Jean Arthur” and other more prominently established “serious” actresses (Winters 104). Winters describes her experience following *A Double Life* as “being held captive” by Harry Cohn and Columbia Pictures (Winters 104). Upon complaining to executives, it was suggested that Winters would receive more satisfactory roles if she were to “go practice dieting” at a greater level (Winters 93). In her second autobiography, Winters explains that the typecasting and unhealthy physical exploitation she experienced following *A Double Life* caused her to “dramatically shift” her style for subsequent roles like that of Alice Tripp in *A Place in the Sun*, Mrs Van Daan in *The Diary of Anne Frank* (Stevens 1959), and Belle Rosen in *The Poseidon Adventure* (Neame 1972) (Winters 255). While this undoubtedly provided her with greater artistic freedom, it also denied her the opportunity to perform as the ‘attractive leading lady,’ which limited her recognizability to audiences and consequently impacted her legacy.

While Shelley Winters’ status as a blonde bombshell does not regularly inhabit her current Hollywood reputation, Marilyn Monroe’s status as a blonde sexpot archetype has been consistently maintained and reinforced throughout her career. Because Monroe as a sexpot served as an intense financial profit for her studio as she became the epitome of sexual desirability throughout postwar Hollywood’s competition with television, her industry constructed identity was maintained even despite her desires and efforts to grow as an artist. By the time she was cast in *The Seven Year Itch*, Monroe had already established herself as an international icon with more than a dozen high-profile films to her name. However, the type of notoriety and wealth Monroe was receiving was integrally limiting to her identity as she felt the studio was objectifying her through the roles she was being offered. Her casting as The Girl in *The Seven Year Itch* pushed her desire for a reputational transformation over the edge and

consequently contributed to her decision to abandon her contractual obligations in favor of Method acting coaching. From her physical movement and line delivery, to the way she is physically presented in front of the camera, Marilyn Monroe's performance in *The Seven Year Itch* provides a compelling starting point for her pre and post Method training transformation. Equally, when considering how the film has established itself as one of Monroe's most recognizable appearances, its monumental impact on her legacy is incredibly relevant to this study.

*The Seven Year Itch* was released on June 5, 1955, and was written and directed by Billy Wilder.<sup>25</sup> Starring Monroe as The Girl and Tom Ewell as Richard Sherman (who had also starred in the play version), *The Seven Year Itch* is notorious for its comedic depiction of a man's declining interest (or sociological ability as claimed by Alfred Kinsey) to maintain monogamy after seven years of marriage. A concept that was frequently discussed by psychologists and throughout popular culture throughout the postwar era.<sup>26</sup> It is also contemporarily memorable for its unique narrational structure (in which Ewell's character speaks his thoughts as a plot-building tool), and its sexist representation of female identity through its depiction of The Girl. It was generally positively received by critics upon its release (excepting Monroe's performance) and generated a substantial revenue for Twentieth Century Fox – further amplifying the studio's desire to maintain Marilyn Monroe as its profitable blonde bombshell.

Even though her nameless character serves as a literal fantasy piece in Richard's personal journey, Monroe's image was utilized as a central advertising point for *The Seven Year Itch*. In posters, billboards, and magazine spots, Monroe's body (primarily photos from the windy white dress scene) was consistently utilized to increase ticket sales and reinforce her identity as a sex symbol. Capitalizing on her physical image and sex appeal, the film depicts The Girl as “the

ultimate embodiment of a married man's heinous heterosexual fantasies" – and because of the exact parallel with her professional identity – objectifies Monroe synonymously (Solomon 115).<sup>27</sup>

In addition to the objectification presented through the creation of her character, Monroe's performance style (comparably to Winters' in *A Double Life*) emphasizes her physical desirability through conscious movements and strategic vocal dictation. This style, which also dominates Monroe's performances in *How to Marry a Millionaire* (Negulesco 1953), *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (Hawks 1953), and *River of No Return* (Preminger 1954) serves as a primary starting point for her pre-Method position. As referenced by Bosley Crowther in his 1955 review for the *New York Times*, in *The Seven Year Itch* "Marilyn Monroe does not perform as a great actress; she performs as a great physique" (Crowther x1). From her meticulously shaped movement and physical representation within the film, to the way she disjointedly recites her lines and delivers a visibly disconnected performance, Marilyn Monroe as The Girl in *The Seven Year Itch* provides a timestamp within her transformative professional and artistic growth.

Monroe's introductory scene sets the tone for her representation throughout the progression of the film (and her career to that point in general) as being totally dependent on her sexual identity and role as the ultimate male fantasy. Her first appearance on screen begins with a shot of her curvaceous silhouette standing at the door. Here, it is immediately apparent that Monroe's body and physical appearance is the basis of The Girl's identity. After being buzzed into the building, The Girl sways inside and takes a four-second pause – clearly allowing Richard, and the audience, a moment to take in her physical image. When considering Monroe's performance in this scene and subsequently throughout the film, her studio training to emphasize attractiveness and desirability is inherently apparent. By pursing her lips and playfully informing

Richard of the “silly” predicament that caused her to buzz his door, Monroe seems to be physically reinforcing her own objectification. Her tone is nonthreatening and high-pitched, and her words are emphasized by her sensually pouted mouth. Following her flirty intro, The Girl’s eyes flutter as she flashes her notorious “Marilyn smile” before starting up the stairs (Konkle 5).<sup>28</sup>

Even in spite of her captivating beauty, Monroe’s lines are awkwardly timed and her character’s jokes (which received wildly positive reviews in the stage version) consistently miss the anticipated punchline sequence. Her innocence is unswervingly exposed and a self-consciousness radiates from her presence. This can be seen especially throughout Richard’s numerous fantasy sequences in which Monroe attempts to keep up with Ewell’s heavily dictated comedic presence. Following an uncomfortable tango sequence in which she attempts to portray a sensual fantasy with a comedic emphasis, Monroe awkwardly draws out her words and overexaggerates her movements. For instance, as she walks toward Richard in pursuit of his imagined romantic physical encounter, Monroe employs an innately peculiar voice and oddly delivers her dialogue through closed eyes. She also frantically rubs her neck and chest while simultaneously attempting to emulate physical comedic style that could only be described as pertaining to the slapstick variety. Likely because the creative vision of *The Girl* required Monroe to go beyond her studio training of relying on her attractiveness to sell a scene, her discomfort is characteristically apparent, and consequently discredits her performance.

Regardless of this, Monroe’s focus on providing a physically appealing performance continues throughout the film, reaching its pique during the infamous windy white dress sequence. The scene begins at the end of a night out as Richard and The Girl exit a local movie theater. Richard casually walks forward with his hand in his pocket. He converses with The Girl,



who, in standard pre Method Monroe style, flutters her eyes and purses her lips at the camera as she walks and talks about her spectatorial experience in the theater. Moments later, the pair reach a subway grate as a train below passes by, with The Girl immediately stopping to enjoy the "delicious" breeze beneath her legs. The camera subsequently pans down as if it were registering her body from head to toe. The film then cuts to The Girl delightfully giggling as Richard flirtatiously examines her body and asks if the breeze "cools the ankles." Monroe pauses (to allow the audience to take in her image again) before continuing with a high-pitched dialogue sequence. Her body's objectification is indisputable throughout this scene as the substance of her performance is clearly ingrained in the utilization of her physical image.

Monroe's frequent pauses, which provide viewers with the opportunity to acknowledge her physical presence, synonymously highlights her difficulty in disconnecting with her identity as Marilyn Monroe to transform into the specified individual she is attempting to portray. This inability to disconnect caused her performance to appear tired and redundant, which consequently attributed to a series of negative critical reviews. For example, Bosley Crowther describes Monroe's performance in *The Seven Year Itch* as "a passing example of a sexy, empty-headed dame" he had previously seen her embody in *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* and *How to Marry a Millionaire* (Crowther x1). Other critics echoed Crowther's perspective, with Pete Martin criticizing Monroe's tendency to "play the same character" film after film (Martin). Even though Monroe appears in more scenes throughout *The Seven Year Itch* than Winters does in *A Double Life*, I would argue that her performance serves to be exponentially more secondary for its intensive sexist undertones and the objectification of her body.

Although her roles in *All About Eve* (Mankiewicz 1950), *How to Marry a Millionaire* (Negulesco 1953), and *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (Hawks 1953) kickstarted her career, provided

her with a loyal fan base, and solidified her name as a profit guarantor for Twentieth Century Fox, the hyper-sexualized nature of each, established Marilyn Monroe as more of a “dumb blonde,” or a symbol of sex, than as a prestigious actress (Karin 1). Charles Casillo argues that Monroe’s casting as The Girl in *The Seven Year Itch* pressed her yearning for critical and public appreciation to the point of no return. According to Casillo, Monroe’s dissatisfaction and consequential refusal to work stemmed from her feeling that *The Seven Year Itch* utilized her solely for her physicality since she was “not even given a name” (Casillo 123). This unbearable treatment, in addition to the array of negative critical performance reviews, according to Thomas Pryor of the *New York Times*, led to Monroe’s subsequent suspension from Twentieth Century Fox.

Even though Winters and Monroe were experiencing established stardom following their performances in *A Double Life* and *The Seven Year Itch* – despite their alternating timelines – Winters and Monroe were equally dissatisfied with their blonde bombshell images and placements within the Hollywood studio system.<sup>29</sup> Their adverse experiences comparably inspired them to change their realities. Winters, opting to favor her stage acting prospects temporarily, decided to look for opportunities in New York where she was formally introduced to Method acting, Stella Adler, Lee Strasberg, and the Actor’s Studio.<sup>30</sup> Equally, following numerous suspensions for standing up against objectifying casting decisions, Monroe also found herself formally acquainted with New York’s Method acting scene.<sup>31</sup> Their performances as Pat Kroll in *A Double Life* and The Girl in *The Seven Year Itch* highlight their similar, studio-created acting styles that emphasized showcasing their beauty instead of providing thoughtful performances. Method acting instruction, however, connects the pair in their transformed performance abilities, confidence, and critical reputations in Hollywood.

## Shelley Winters, Marilyn Monroe, and Method

When contemplating the definition of Method acting for this particular text, it is essential to consider the fact that “the Method continues to evolve” and has “been reinterpreted by multiple generations” (Stroppell 112). Because of this, and because there is no definitive way to define Monroe or Winters’ total Method acting recipe – a lesson for lesson or moment to moment – for the purpose of this thesis, Method acting refers to performance based on the application of character development tools relating to Stanislavski’s System.<sup>32</sup> Method acting as a technique for this paper “combines work on the role, with an emphasis on researching and experiencing the character’s life, and work on the self [and] stresses the actor’s personal investment and commitment on memory, experience, and worldview” (Krasner 4).<sup>33</sup> Monroe and Winters both notably utilized controversial Affective Memory and Sense Memory exercises to improve their respective crafts, which further connects them in the context of this study.<sup>34</sup>

Hirsch describes Shelley Winters as a member of the "group of actresses who found refuge at the Actors Studio," experiencing sexist typecasting throughout the late 1940s and early 1950s (Hirsch 329).<sup>35</sup> Monroe, pursuing training at a later point in history (and her career), represents the mainstream popularization of Method acting in postwar Hollywood. Still, despite the altering timelines, their dedication to improving their acting styles is undeniably apparent within their respective performance transformations. Shelley Winters as Alice Tripp in *A Place in the Sun* and Marilyn Monroe as Cherie in *Bus Stop* showcases how Method acting training inspired visual adaptations in their utilization of movement, dictation of their lines, as well as their overall confidence as performers. By pursuing Method training, Monroe and Winters took their careers into their own hands and undeniably paved the way for other actresses to transform in the following decades.<sup>36</sup>

*A Place in the Sun* follows George Eastman's life (Montgomery Clift) as he despairingly pilots his rise to societal prominence and the repercussions of engaging in premarital sex with a local factory girl (Shelley Winters). Based on Theodore Dreiser's novel *An American Tragedy* (1925), *A Place in the Sun* hit theaters on August 14, 1951. Directed by George Stevens, the film is most notorious for its chilling depiction of America's criminal justice system. *A Place in the Sun* was overwhelmingly positively received by critics and was even named as the "best film of the year" by The National Board of Review in 1951 (*New York Times*). Representing the film noir style, *A Place in the Sun* showcases suspense, mystery, and romance.<sup>37</sup>

Shelley Winters' portrayal of Alice Tripp in *A Place in the Sun* showcases her incredible post-Method artistic and professional transformation. From her almost unrecognizable appearance and reformed movement style to how she confidently communicates her character's emotions on screen, Winters' performance represents significant improvements in terms of technique, confidence, and dictation. Her artistic growth achieved through her Method training landed Winters an Academy Award nomination for her performance in *A Place in the Sun* and redefined her placement in Hollywood. Her portrayal of Alice Tripp sufficiently removed her from the blonde bombshell typecasting and paved the way for supplemental, "artistically fulfilling" opportunities like *The Diary of Anne Frank*, *Lolita*, *Bloody Mama* (Corman 1970), and *The Poseidon Adventure* (Neame 1972).

When comparing Winters' initial onscreen appearance (and general placement within the world of the film) from *A Double Life* to *A Place in the Sun*, the lack of resemblance is almost overwhelming. From darkened hair and doughty clothing to her slumped body language and sultry expressions, the previously blonde sexpot image is scrupulously absent from Winters' persona from the beginning of her performance. In her first scene of substance, Alice slouches at

a busy movie theatre with one seat (on her left) separating her from George Eastman. Alice, clearly intrigued by the presence of an Eastman, smiles to herself as she positions her body away from the sailor sitting to her right. The pair, who are both thoughtfully isolated in their realities, politely exchange glances and giggles for the next few moments until George builds up the confidence to move closer. Following a beautifully awkward verbal exchange where Alice croaks “small world,” Alice and George watch the rest of the film soundlessly. Alice’s arms remain steadily placed on the armrests of her seat while her hands twirl the straps of her purse. She continues to nonchalantly look forward while sporadically tightening her jaw to indicate a subtle nervousness. Winters’ body language in this scene is incredibly thoughtful and realistic as she confidently embodies the reality of a nervous, young factory worker experiencing her first-ever romantic encounter.

When comparing her introduction as Alice to her preliminary placement as Pat, Winters’s body language has transitioned from the forced basis of her performance to a tool of connection between herself and her character. Alice and George leave the theater and walk down the street hand in hand toward Alice’s home. Subtle anxiety (established through Winters’ quick steps and darting eyes) prevails into the next scene. Through this sequence, the rest of the film (and contrarily to her previous performance), Winters utilizes her physical body and image as an additional component of her persona instead of as the basis of her characters’ identity. Therefore, allowing spectators to review Alice Tripp as an anxious and displaced young woman instead of as a character played by the famous movie star – Shelley Winters.

In addition to the visible transformation in her utilization of body language throughout her performance, Shelley Winters’ line delivery has profoundly evolved following her Method acting training. After making George aware of their unplanned pregnancy, Alice meets with a

local physician named Dr. Wyeland (Ian Wolfe) in hopes of securing an abortion. Following a series of anxious demographic questions and answers surrounding her age and the length of her pregnancy, Alice sits down to discuss her situation with her doctor. After she is probed about the “problem” associated with her visit, Alice pauses before stuttering, “well... it’s like this” and claims that her husband’s financial situation has caused them to seek support from a “good doctor” to help “...solve the problem...” of her pregnancy. Alice’s choppy murmuring continues as she dances around her actual request until Dr. Wyeland reminds her of the implications following the consummation of a marriage. During his explanation of conception, Alice interrupts Dr. Wyeland to sob quietly, “It’s not like that.... I haven’t got a husband.” Continuing to cry softly, Alice shakily pleads with Dr. Wyeland to “help [her] with [her] options.” The scene ends with Dr. Wyeland exclaiming that if termination is what she seeks, he “cannot help.” Winters’ line delivery throughout this scene, in my opinion, is her strongest throughout the film and provides substantial improvement from her previous performances. She recites her lines as if she were formulating them on the spot as Alice, and her subtle pauses for silent sobbing are eerily convincing. Throughout this scene, Winters’ cracking voice accurately depicts the desperation of a girl lacking options, and further emphasizes her technical improvement.

Equally, Winters’ portrayal of Alice Tripp exhibits an intensive increase in her performance confidence. As she appeared to be awkward and displaced throughout the majority of her screen time in *A Double Life*, Winters in *A Place in the Sun* takes control of her physical space as she confidently depicts the reality of her character. Even though the totality of Winters’ performance is polished and believable throughout the film, the scene in which Alice drowns is undeniably the most technically revealing. The lengthy sequence begins with Alice and George boarding a row boat and slowly paddling across the lake.<sup>38</sup> After a series of cuts in which

spectators are encouraged to notice the increasing distance and isolation of their travels, Alice discloses that she feels like “[they] are the only two people in the world,” emphasizing that she would be happy to “live in a little house, just big enough for the two of [them], or maybe even three.” George, clearly disgusted by the thought of spending his life with Alice refrains from engaging in the discussion. Alice, still blissfully unaware of her impending death continues to discuss their future which further endures George’s agitation. George’s frustration soon reaching its pique after Alice asks him to outline his perception of their future. While (falsely) indicating that he intends to stand by her, Alice is shown sitting still with a stone-like expression before calling him out for “wishing [she] was dead.” George exasperatingly deny her claims before standing up and destabilizing the vessel. Alice, then standing up to plead with her beloved causes the boat to capsize. Moments later George is seen exiting the water on his own.

Winters' conviction in this scene reveals an intense shift in performance confidence and technical abilities, especially when comparing it to the unconvincing demise in *A Double Life*. As Alice professes her fantasies to George as he paddles into isolation, Winters' expressions are full of hope and appreciation. Her words are spoken in a flirtatious tone, and George's admiration is at the center of her being. This admiration, however, quickly turns to discontent as her character realizes George's true feelings. The escalation of Alice's feelings are thoughtfully positioned by Winters, and her desperation for connection with her beloved makes the sequence difficult to digest. Winters' screams as she falls to her demise indicate the feelings associated with heartbreak, terror, and isolation, which, therefore, evokes a spectatorial sense of devastation that was nonexistent in her death sequence in *A Double Life*.

Shelley Winters’ performance as Alice Tripp in *A Place of the Sun* is drastically more technically polished than her portrayal of Pat Kroll in *A Double Life* because of her increased

performance confidence, line delivery, and body language utilization following her Method acting training. Her presence on screen feels inherently natural, and the profound connection between her and her character is representative of a transformative acting process. Even though Winters was not awarded the Academy Award for Best Actress in a Leading Role for her performance in *A Place in the Sun*, it is my opinion that it serves as one of the most significant transitional timestamps throughout her professional journey. Equally, while I agree with the overwhelmingly positive critical reviews of the film itself and Montgomery Clift's powerful performance, I am intensely frustrated with the tendency to deny Winters her rightful critical representation.

While Shelley Winters' transformation from blonde bombshell received relatively limited public discussion at the time, Marilyn Monroe's decision to avert from the typecasting through Method acting training facilitated a substantial media storm. Following her one-year hiatus from acting, the set of her 1956 feature *Bus Stop* was "buzzing with reporters and fans trying to get a glimpse of the new Marilyn Monroe" (Casillo 123). Monroe's casting in *Bus Stop* came as her distinctively displaced profitability began to profoundly impact Twentieth Century Fox's financial achievement plans for 1956. This situation, according to Casillo, required Darryl Zanuck, Twentieth Century Fox's leading executive, to change his attitude surrounding Marilyn Monroe and her suspension from the studio. To begin his renegotiation tactics, Zanuck purchased the rights to William Inge's successful Broadway play "as a way of tempting her back" with the guarantee of a "meaty part" (Casillo 115). This assurance, in combination with a substantial salary increase from a weekly check to "one hundred thousand dollars per film," as well as the promise of "directorial approval," provided Monroe with the desired expectancies for her return to Hollywood (Casillo 116).



*Bus Stop* is understood by critics to stray from many original points in Inge's play but was generally more favorably received than the stage version for its presentation of "humor that is richly realized" (Crowther 1).<sup>39</sup> It was distributed and financed by Twentieth Century Fox in conjunction with Marilyn Monroe Productions and was shot on location in Phoenix, Arizona, Sun Valley, Utah, and Sun Valley, Idaho. *Bus Stop* had a reasonably successful box office release with profits exceeding two million dollars throughout its opening run ("Bus Stop" 1).

*Bus Stop* follows the adventure of a simple-minded, misogynistic cowboy named Beauregard 'Bo' Decker (Don Murray) as he travels "for the second time in his life" from a rural ranch in Montana to ride in a rodeo in Phoenix, Arizona. Throughout his cross-country travels, Bo and his chaperon Virgil (Arthur O'Connell) discuss the prospects of him finding a life partner, with Bo exclaiming his intentions to locate her on the trip. Upon his arrival into town, Bo quickly encounters his "angel" at a Phoenix saloon and becomes encaptivated by her presence. Even though Cherie (Marilyn Monroe) and her role as a saloon dancer differentiate from the "plain old girl" Virgil had advised him to marry, Bo spends the film's supplementary portions attempting to force Cherie into a union.

From her character transformation process and alternative physical appearance to her improved movement style and line delivery, Marilyn Monroe's portrayal of Cherie in *Bus Stop* showcases her intense dedication to improving her craft and redefining her societal legacy through her Method acting training. This transformation is especially apparent when comparing her role in the film to her previous performance as The Girl in *The Seven Year Itch*. Monroe's stylistic revolution was overwhelmingly positively received by critics, with Bosley Crowther highlighting his perspective that through *Bus Stop*, "Marilyn Monroe [had] finally proven herself an actress" (1). Even though some may say that she was never officially able to abandon her

sexpot persona, Marilyn Monroe as Cherie provides a positioning of her artistry that indicates an alternative professional legacy.

Despite her difficulties with memorization and confidence, Monroe “improvised scenes and created her character as she saw fit for the first time in *Bus Stop*” (Konkle 10). Through her portrayal of Cherie, Monroe took (her version) of Method acting extremely seriously throughout all aspects of production.<sup>40</sup> As her on-screen colleagues utilized the standard industry approach of Classical Hollywood acting style, Monroe implemented Method to formulate Cherie’s character development. For instance, in order to cultivate Cherie’s Ozark’s accent, Monroe traveled to Missouri to connect with the locals. She also requested that she be able to “take a minute” between scenes to reestablish her emotional connection with Cherie (Leaming 210).

Monroe’s alternative physical appearance in *Bus Stop* is equally indicative of her artistic transformation as she opted to abandon the glamour typically associated with her image. Instead of relying on *costume* designers to construct “glamorous clothes suited for a Hollywood star” as she had for previous films, Monroe insisted on creating a more authentic image. As she prepared for her role, Monroe was seen “feverishly running through the racks of the costume department,” claiming that only she could be trusted to locate pieces suitable for her embodiment of Cherie. Furthermore, Monroe insisted on wearing “clownish, pearly white makeup and ratty unglamorous clothes” to prove to audiences, critics, and Twentieth Century Fox that she “was an actress who dictated her own performances” (Leaming 211) (Konkle 10). While costuming and makeup decisions are not *typically directly associated* with an actors’ performance style, it is imperative to consider Monroe’s previous negative reviews for “playing the same character” throughout the majority of her preceding performances and the ways she had previously relied on her physical body and image to ‘sell’ each scene. Her decision to change physically for *Bus Stop*

is especially noteworthy in the realm of her transformed identity because it showcases a character that extends beyond her super star identity. Monroe as Cherie serves as an exceptional character transformation because Monroe the actress is no longer visible in her performance for the first time. Instead, audiences are introduced to the reality of a displaced dancer chasing her big break.

Correspondingly, Marilyn Monroe's performance revolution can be seen in her transformed physicalization on screen.<sup>41</sup> Though this is consistently apparent throughout the majority of *Bus Stop*, her introductory scene most largely contrasts with her portrayal in *The Seven Year Itch*. Comparably to *The Girl*, Cherie is first shown as the object of a man's gaze; however, she is significantly less polished. Through her tired body language, she displays the physical symptoms associated with leading a challenging existence. Cherie, who is introduced while sitting on a windowsill exhaustedly fanning herself before being pushed and prodded by her manager, appears nothing like the Marilyn Monroe 1956 audiences might have anticipated seeing on screen. While discussing her life plans with fellow waitress Vera (Eileen Heckert), Monroe inelegantly places her hands on her head, distractedly rustles a map, and tiredly shimmies into a tattered costume. Monroe's body language profoundly exhibits her character's physical exhaustion and the feelings associated with intense personal and professional displacement. Her performance is ingrained in humanistic qualities like exhaustion and trauma and her physical endowment indicates an approachable vulnerability that would be inaccessible if she were to maintain her pre-Method blonde bombshell identity.

As her physicalization indicates a revolution in her performance, Monroe's use of dialogue also demonstrates an intense improvement in her acting abilities. As a direct contrast with her performance in *The Seven Year Itch*, Monroe's line pace throughout *Bus Stop* is

thoughtfully timed and appears to be significantly more natural in delivery. For instance, as her character denies Bo's proposal for the fifth time, and she exclaims "goodbye forever," her thoughtfully constructed Ozark's accent is present in full force. After refusing to accept her rejection, Bo proceeds to pull Cherie back by the tail of her costume physically. Monroe responds with an authentically frustrated and fearful tone as she screams, "you ain't got the manners they give a monkey! I hate you, and I despise you," before abruptly exiting the frame. Monroe's dialogue and pace in this sequence and throughout the rest of the film exhibits a sense of authenticity in timing, volume, and emotion that displays her Method acting training. Her utilization of past experiences of exploitation (and sexual abuse) for this scene (and beyond) showcases an artistic technique polished through Strasberg's Affective Memory exercises. Her employment of genuine, experienced emotion allows her to convey her character's powerful feelings through her lines convincingly.<sup>42</sup> This technique, in my opinion, serves as one of the most profound examples of Monroe's transformational performance journey and should be discussed more extensively in connection with her contemporary legacy.

## **Conclusion**

As mentioned throughout the introduction of this thesis, my findings show that gender-based representation is exceptionally prevalent throughout film studies scholarship in general, but especially throughout the postwar Hollywood era. As James Robert Parish's *Hollywood Divas: the Good, the Bad, and the Fabulous* (2003) and *Hollywood Bad Boys: Loud, Fast, and Out of Control* (2002) provide blatant, almost comedic depictions of this sexist tendency – throughout the literature review portion of this work, I uncover an unfortunate reproduction of this trend in the majority of scholarship associated with Marilyn Monroe, Shelley Winters, and Method acting. While I do mention a series of exceptions that rightfully highlight the

professional contributions and industry achievements of Monroe and Winters, the fact that this representation is so limited in its length, density, and availability served as an essential inspiration for this project.

Following the literature review portion of this text and an overview of the comparable industry introductions and initial experiences in Hollywood as type-casted blonde bombshells of Shelley Winters and Marilyn Monroe, I provide a textual analysis of their introductory performances as Pat Kroll in *A Double Life* for Winters, and The Girl in *The Seven Year Itch* for Monroe as a benchmark for their respective performance capabilities and techniques during essential points in their careers. I then repeat this step after reviewing Method acting through the context of this project and in connection with Monroe and Winters' experiences, through the inclusion of performance reviews of Winters' portrayal of Alice Tripp in *A Place in the Sun* and Marilyn Monroe's performance of Cherie in *Bus Stop*. By utilizing coherent criteria in my review process of their pre and post-Method performance transformations like –physicalization, diction, character connection, and physical appearance, I provide a workable measurement for their performance growth, and outline, acknowledge, and challenge the aspects of Shelley Winters' and Marilyn Monroe's contemporary legacies that have been disproportionately shaped by patriarchal order and industry based sexism.

In conclusion, as a significant portion of this project stems from the review of secondary scholarship and textual analysis to formulate my findings, it is imperative to acknowledge the research limitations brought on by the global pandemic. Even though I was able to access a limited variety of essential primary sources through the Media History Digital Library and a helpful assortment of Leatherby Libraries' historical periodicals and databases, any following

versions of this project will include primary materials from collections at the Academy Film Archive, UCLA Film and Television Archive, and Texas Archive of the Moving Image.

## Notes

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1. By anti-Method professional reputations, I am referring to the repercussions associated with the common misinterpretation of Method acting as pertaining only to those specializing in dramatic genres, with specified training at the Actors Studio instead of as an applicable acting technique or “a pragmatic way of working to create both the interior life and the logical behavior of a character” that can be applied to all screen and stage performances (including musicals and comedies) and learned through general study (Garfield xi).
  2. It is important to mention that Keri Walsh’s latest book (available April 27, 2021) *Women, Method Acting, and the Hollywood Film* provides a thoughtful analysis of Shelley Winters’ Method acting journey and gendered representation in Hollywood. It is a complete exception in terms of the limited scholarship associated with Winters’ career beyond her gossip based image and the representation and experience of female actors in association with contemporary Method acting scholarship. Her work is closely related to this project in terms of textual analysis and primary sources. While undeniably relevant to the body of this work, because it was not publicly available during the time of my research and writing, Walsh’s text is not directly included in my work. This text will be integrated into any future versions of this project.
  3. *Shelley: Also Known as Shirley* (1980) has also been published as *Shelley Winters: Best of Times, Worst of Times* (1990).
  4. See Amanda Konkle’s *Marilyn Monroe: The Private Life of a Public Icon* and George Kouvaros’ *The Misfits and Icons of Postwar America*.

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5. Leaming's biography is intended for a public audience (and to sell copies) so it is worthwhile to note that the intention may not be to underscore her talent and acting contributions.
  6. It is essential to acknowledge that Monroe's experiences of trauma were central to her utilization of Method acting, mainly through Affective Memory. My statement here is not to diminish this fact. Instead, it highlights how scholars have focused on the trauma itself instead of its application to her performance style.
  7. The significant works in which my historical assessment of Method acting is based include: *Method Acting Reconsidered: Theory, Practice, Future* (2000) - David Krasner, *A Players Place: The Story of the Actors Studio* (1984) – David Garfield, *Method Actors: Three Generations of An American Acting Style* (1991) – Steve Vinegard, *The Actors Studio: A History* (2001) – Shelley Frome, *Acting with Adler* (2000) – Joanna Rotte, *On Method Acting* (1966) – Edward Dwight Easty, *An Actress Prepares: Women and 'the Method'* (2002) - Rosemary Malague, *A Method to Their Madness: The History of the Actors Studio* (1984) – Forster Hirsch, *Modern Acting: The Lost Chapter of American Film and Theatre* (2016) – Cynthia Baron.
  8. I use the phrase general Method acting scholarship here because there is no specification on the part of any of the authors that the texts are intentionally referencing the work of male actors.
  9. Again, Chapter 3 of Keri Walsh's forthcoming work *Women, Method Acting, and the Hollywood Film* (2021) is another exception to this lack in scholarship. In this chapter Walsh provides an interesting comparison of gender representation and experience within Method acting and Hollywood and utilizes Shelley Winters and Marlon Brando as a case



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study. As previously stated, Walsh's work is not included in the body of this work because it was not publicly available throughout my research and writing process.

10. When considering the 'feminist' perspective in Method acting discourse, it is important to review the concept that many scholars who identify as 'feminist' reject Method acting in totality for its gender based technical stylings. On this historical controversy, see Rosemary Malangue's *An Actress Prepares: Women and 'the Method'* (2002).
11. When considering the fact that the basis of my research is largely engrained in the analysis of secondary sources, textual analysis, and sources available digitally due to the research limitations caused by the international pandemic, it is imperative to also point out that should I continue to pursue this project at the doctoral level, I would include primary materials from collections at the Academy Film Archive, UCLA Film and Television Archive, and Texas Archive of the Moving Image.
12. I use the word 'serious' here because Shelley Winters had been involved in Method related acting training early in her career, but it wasn't until after her parts in *A Double Life* and *Frenchie* (King 1950) that she took substantial time to improve her craft (Winters 94 – 200).
13. Shelley Winters is very vague surrounding particular dates within her autobiography. However, I was able to fact check this timeline in Marilyn Preston's 1962 interview with Winters.
14. There is much written about Monroe's sexual escapades following her release from Twentieth Century, but because I focus on her professional career and emphasize the work of academic scholarship, I am not working with this corpus of literature.

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15. This contractual signing with Colombia serves as a key connector between Marilyn Monroe and Shelley Winters' relativity as introductory Hollywood blondes in the postwar era. The fact that they both received introductions from Colombia inarguably shaped their respective legacies from a lens of comparability.
  16. This is when she notoriously posed nude for Golden Dreams Pinup Calendar, which would later be featured in Playboy Magazine (Spoto 146-148).
  17. The phrase 'low risk monetary benefits' refers to the idea that the relatively low cost to educate and employ aspiring Hollywood stars provided intense monetary benefits for the studio when as few as one actor achieved stardom.
  18. Still, their weekly pay checks posed extremely minimal risks when considering the cost and deficit ratios being undertaken by the studios.
  19. See pages 94 – 97 of *Shelley: Also Known as Shirley* for a detailed recounting of Winters' perspectives of the acting training she received at Colombia Pictures.
  20. Following her performance as Pat Kroll in *A Double Life*, Winters experienced a series of "sexpot parts" including Myrtle Wilson in *The Great Gatsby* (Nugent 1949) and Frenchie Fontane in *Frenchie* (King 1950) (Winters 254). In her first autobiography, Winters explains that the typecasting she experienced following *A Double Life* caused her to "dramatically shift" her style for subsequent roles like that of Alice Tripp in *A Place in the Sun*, Mrs Van Daan in *The Diary of Anne Frank* (Stevens 1959), and Belle Rosen in *The Poseidon Adventure* (Neame 1972) (Winters 255). While this undoubtedly provided her with greater artistic freedom, it also denied her the opportunity to perform as the 'attractive leading lady,' and consequently limited her recognizability to audiences.

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21. As stated earlier, prior to her casting as Pat Kroll in *A Double Life*, Winters was feeling inherently limited by her casting prospects at Colombia which caused her to look outside of her studio for alternative opportunities. This decision highlights Winters' dedication to growing as an artist even though this is essentially her 'before piece,' it signifies her as a passionate performer willing to defy regulations for the sake of art, a characteristic has frequently caused her to have a reputation as difficult in Hollywood.
22. See Heta Hopper's 1948 feature *New 'Bombshell' Stars of Screen Discuss Their Thoughts, Ambitions* for a historical recounting of Shelley Winters' portrayal of Pat Kroll solidified her as one of "Hollywood's new blonde bombshells" (Hopper C1).
23. Examples of this emphasis of her physicality can be seen within her subsequent roles as Myrtle Wilson in *The Great Gatsby* (Nugent 1949), Coral in *South Sea Sinner* (Humberstone 1950), Peggy Dobbs in *He Ran All the Way* (Berry 1951), Kate Denney in *Behave Yourself!* (Beck 1951), and especially as Frenchie Fontane in Louis King's 1950 Western *Frenchie*.
24. Shelley had an extremely difficult time while shooting *A Double Life* due to her intense performance anxiety and professional insecurity. On her first day on set, what started with Cukor saying "Shelley this is a very simple scene. Ronnie is sitting at a table in the restaurant; you walk up, pour him a cup of coffee and hand him the menu. Then you lean over and pour him a glass of ice water while he looks at your bosom and face. Then take out a pad and pencil while he looks at the menu. Then he says the line: 'How's the chicken cacciatore?'" and you say, 'well it's your stomach' you know, just like the test" went terribly wrong (Winters 185). When discussing the scene, Winters says that they rehearsed for over an hour and then took "ninety six takes" (Winters 185). This, further

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emphasizing the way Method acting training subsequently improved her performance techniques and professionalism by providing her with the tools to improve her confidence on set.

25. *The Seven Year Itch* is based on George Axelrod's play with the same name that premiered at the Fullerton Theatre in 1952.
26. See Amanda Konkle's chapter "*It's Kinda Personal and Embarrassing, Too*": *Monroe, the Kinsey Reports, and the Double Standard* for an analysis of the relationship between Monroe, *The Seven Year Itch*, and the Kinsey Reports.
27. Richard, while attempting to cover his tracks to an unanticipated visitor when The Girl spent the night, exclaims "Who is that blonde in the kitchen you may ask?" – "She could be anyone...maybe even Marilyn Monroe." This connection, clearly intended as a comedic anecdote, positions The Girl and Marilyn Monroe herself, as a generic representation of sex, adultery, and promiscuity.
28. A subsequent shot of Monroe's backside within her introduction in the film pans up as she continues to ascend the staircase. Spectators are provided with Richard's gaze as his eyes (and cracking neck) follow The Girl's body to her door.
29. It is important to mention that while Shelley Winters experienced Method training at an earlier date and place in her career than Marilyn Monroe, their comparable placements as Hollywood blondes at their time of training establishes their comparability for this study.
30. Shelley Winters had been interested in the concept of Method acting since exceptionally early on in her career. While she was watching Kazan's 1948 Broadway hit *Sundown Beach* (Kazan 1948), Winters' explains that she was so invested in the on stage performances that "as [she] watched the play [she] trembled" (Winters 196). Following

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the show, Winters went backstage to exchange pleasantries with Kazan (because her role in *A Double Life* had granted her some industry esteem). Kazan told her, “you have a good insight and sharp mind for catching the inner themes of the play” Winters saw this as inspiration to continue her studies and pursuit of Method acting (Winters 196). Kazan then invited Shelley Winters to be an official observer of the Actors Studio and explained, “the only requisite is that you work seriously on your body and experiment and expand your acting range” (Winters 197). Even though Shelley Winters was never an official member of the Actors Studio (likely partial causation for her being left out of some academic discourse), throughout her seven-year commute between New York and Los Angeles, she accumulated hundreds of hours of Actors Studio training (Winters 208). So much so, in fact, that she was awarded the honor of becoming an official moderator of the Actors Studio workshops later on in her career (Hirsch 170).

31. Following her negative experiences with *The Seven Year Itch*, “Marilyn Monroe was ripe for a proactive change” (Frome 123). Given her traumatic upbringing and reoccurring emotional distress throughout her career, Marilyn Monroe took to the theory of Method acting almost instantaneously. Throughout her studies with Lee Strasberg, Monroe explored the art of Method acting, or “the techniques crucial to the creation of a truthful performance” (Kouvaros 46). As written by George Kouvaros in his chapter *Absorption and the Method: The Iconography of Method Acting*, Strasberg’s program was created with the idea that “the only way for the actor to generate a sense of truth was by finding a way to use his or her own emotions as the basis for the performance” (Kouvaros 46). This technique that was based “on grounding a performance in the actor’s emotional life,” gained attention from postwar actors like Marlon Brando, Montgomery Clift, and Paul

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Newman because it “helped encapsulate a sense of unease to do with gender and social behavior prevalent in other areas of postwar life” (Kouvaros 46, 51). “By the mid 1950s, the Actors Studio was widely regarded as the American center for serious acting training, and many of Marilyn Monroe’s friends and colleagues (among them Shelley Winters and Elia Kazan) encouraged her to study with Strasberg” (Malague 63).

32. As referenced by Shelly Frome in *The Actors Studio: A History* (2001) Konstantin Stanislavski and his work at the Moscow Art Theatre during Russia’s Golden Age of theater is where the concept that is currently known as Method acting can be traced (Frome 13). The name Method acting was first publicly received in 1923 when Theatre Magazine released an article entitled “Stanislavski – The Man and His Methods” (Garfield 11). The Method acting system is based on The System, which is Stanislavski’s “intricate and multifarious collection of observations, revelations, and principles pertaining to the art of acting” with its central purpose that “the actor must learn to be private in public” (Malague 9)( Hirsch 136). It was brought to the United States by Richard Boleslavsky and Maria Ouspenskaya who “were enlisted to inspire talented American students and urge them to develop their skills at the highest and deepest levels” (Frome 16). Richard Boleslavsky, in 1923, founded the American Laboratory Theatre and taught alongside Maria Ouspenskaya. The pair brought “Stanislavski’s ideologies to New York actors” (Vinegard 5). These teachings were an incredibly big deal for the establishment and popularization of Method acting because at that time “for Americans, acting meant climbing toward stardom” instead of as an artistic tool or expression of one’s passion and their aim was to encourage, develop, and implant a similar cultural force to that of Russia in the United States (Vinegard 5) (Frome 16). Stella Adler and Lee

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Strasberg attended the American Laboratory Theatre, and in 1931 became founding members of the Groupe Theatre, which was “the first ensemble troupe in America, as well as the first theatrical organization to espouse what they believed to be Stanislavski’s System” (Vinegard 5). “The American version of Stanislavski’s forty years of analyzing and codifying role development from a psychologically realistic basis stems from the American Lab Theatre of the 1920s and its students who formed the Group Theatre in the 1930s” (Stroppell 112).

In the mid 1930s Stella Adler and Lee Strasberg worked together at the Group Theatre “which introduced the Method to Broadway audiences” (Vinegard xi). It wasn’t long, however, before the pair collided (Vinegard xi). According to Vinegard, the place of contention among Stella Adler and Lee Strasberg was “the relative value of the most controversial of all Method techniques, affective memory” which has also been referred to as emotional recall (Vinegard xii).

33. Stella Adler felt that Strasberg’s work “dwelled too much on the actors personal emotion” (Garfield 33). Lee Strasberg believed that the Private Moment integral to the “inner technique” and which is an acting tool that “released the actor from any obligation to a text or for that matter an audience” (Hirsch 137). Contrarily to Strasberg, Stella Adler believed that “Stanislavski emphasized the importance of actions and given circumstance” instead of affective memory and that “in each psychological action there is some physical element” (Garfield 33). After working with Stanislavski directly during an impromptu trip to Paris, Adler returned to the Group Theatre highlighting the ways in which Strasberg’s perception of the Method were wrong. This lead to irreparable strife and Strasberg consequently left in pursuit of other projects.

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Elia Kazan is one of the official founders of the Actors Studio and is arguably the director “most recognizable for popularizing Method acting on stage and on the screen” he was introduced to the fundamentals of Method “while serving as an apprentice for the Group Theatre in the summer of 1932. Kazan was both an eyewitness and participant of the development of the American Method” (Malague 43). The Actors Studio opened on October 5, 1947 under the direction of Elia Kazan, Cheryl Crawford and Robert Lewis. At the time, all students were professional actors that had to go through interviews and audiences. Kazan described the Actors Studio as an institution that would “promote common language so that [he ] could direct actors instead of coaching them.... So that they have a common vocabulary...” (Vinegard 93). Vinegard credits Kazan with “establishing the Method as the American acting style in the late forties and early fifties” (Vinegard 100). Lee Strasberg took over as head of the Actors Studio in 1951 and throughout his helm of the studio “the Method changed from a fresh new way of working, representing the best impulses of a restless postwar generation into a sacred calling” (Vinegard 101). Equally, it is essential to reference the controversial placement of Method acting within scholarship. Especially because “almost all Method teachers since have lined up on one side of the Strasberg- Adler debate” therefore, there is no particular constitution to what Method acting truly is (Vinegard xii). Because of this consistent controversy, within academic discourse “Method bashing is vogue” and is frequently strongly debated from the Adler or Strasberg perspective wholeheartedly (Krasner 6). Lee Strasberg was controversial because he would “do anything to make his students experience the true emotion” of their character (Malague 45). Especially his obsession with Affective Memory, and his insistence on its primary importance in the



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actors creative work was to become a “hallmark of his pedagogy and a source of enormous controversy over the years” (Garfield 16). Affective Memory is where the concept of ‘living the part’ comes from (Garfield 16). Strasberg’s continued practice of teaching Affective Memory has frequently (and justifiably) been viewed as manipulative and abusive. Particularly throughout the feminist scholarship community. Still, however, the purpose of this thesis is not to evaluate the rightness or wrongness of Lee Strasberg, Konstantin Stanislavski, Elia Kazan, Stella Adler, or any other prominent Method associated coaches, but to shine light on the transformative acting journeys of Marilyn Monroe and Shelley Winters.

34. Affective Memory is a series of exercises and techniques practiced by Method actors to utilize and channel personal, emotional, and traumatic experiences for their performances. It is a concept that emphasizes genuine experience. See Steve Vinegard’s *Method Actors: Three Generations of an American Acting Style* for a thorough explanation of Affective Memory.
35. Winters recounts her experience with Strasberg in *Shelley: Also Known as Shirley (1980)* “Lee Strasberg was now teaching at the Actors Studio. He taught me how to do an Affective Memory exercise, for which I must find a powerful traumatic experience in my life, remember the sensory details of that moment and with another section of my mind recall them as I acted. It became the most powerful tool I ever learned to use in acting” (Winters 208).
36. See Rosemary Malague’s *An Actress Prepares: Women and "the Method"* for a discussion of contemporary female Method actors.

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37. The film is also frequently used within film studies courses to showcase performance differentiations from classical acting through Elizabeth Taylor's portrayal of Angela Vickers and Montgomery Clift's Method utilization to portray the film's leading male star, George Eastman. While I do acknowledge that Clift's performance in the film does deserve critical acclimation, it is my perception that the tendency to leave Shelley Winters' portrayal of Alice Tripp out of the narrative (especially because she received an Academy Award nomination for the role) reinforces the sexist stereotypes mentioned throughout the introduction of this paper.
38. At this point in the film, viewers are aware of George's desire to rid himself of Alice. The pair rent the row boat after finding that the courthouse (where they planned to get married) is closed for Labor Day. George's decisions leading up to this moment are inherently sketchy, and, when rents the boat under a false name, the foreshadowing of Alice's death is heavily apparent.
39. *Bus Stop* was produced by Buddy Adler, who is also known for his work on other transitional Hollywood pictures like *From Here to Eternity* (Zinnerman 1953) and *Soldier of Fortune* (Dmytryk 1955).
40. Monroe had a tremendously hard time with Strasberg's "use yourself, your past, your pain" motto because of the traumatic circumstances of her childhood, however it is clear that she is using this in the *Bus Stop* in which Cherie (Marilyn Monroe) is explaining to Grace (Betty Field) about her difficult upbringing in the small Midwestern town where she was raised (Frome 122).
41. The term physicalization is utilized within Method acting discourse to describe the way an actor expresses their reality through physical movement.

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42. Monroe was nominated for a the Golden Globe for Best Performance by an Actress in a Leading Role – Comedy or Musical for her portrayal of Cherie, however, was beaten by Deborah Kerr for her performance in *The King and I* (Lang 1956).

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