

NARRATIVE EXPERIMENTATION AND GENDER REPRESENTATION IN *HOW TO LOSE A GUY IN 10 DAYS*

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ABSTRACT. This article analyzes the social experiment conducted by the character Andie Anderson in the romantic comedy *How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days* (2003). Representing a smart, independent, and ambitious journalist at a prominent women's magazine, Andie initiates a structured behavioral experiment to document the exact psychological triggers and relationship faux pas that drive a man away during the initial courtship phase. This qualitative textual analysis aims to evaluate the media representation of female journalists, exploring how professional ambition and investigative practices are portrayed within popular cinematic narratives. Using a narrative and character-driven approach, the study investigates the interpersonal dynamics and power shifts that occur when Andie systematically manipulates her behavioral patterns around her subject, advertising executive Benjamin Barry. The findings indicate that while the narrative initially subverts traditional romantic comedy tropes by granting the female protagonist a high degree of professional and strategic agency, the execution of the experiment requires her to perform an exaggerated, hyper-dependent, and emotionally erratic caricature of femininity. Furthermore, the study traces the collapse of the objective research framework as genuine emotional intimacy develops, revealing how Hollywood narrative structures consistently prioritize traditional romantic resolution over female career autonomy.

Keywords: Character Portrayal, Female Journalist, *How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days*, Romance Tropes, Social Experiment

EKSPERIMENTASI NARATIF DAN REPRESENTASI GENDER DALAM *HOW TO LOSE A GUY IN 10 DAYS*

ABSTRAK. Artikel ini menganalisis eksperimen sosial yang dilakukan oleh karakter Andie Anderson dalam film komedi romantis *How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days* (2003). Sebagai sosok jurnalis yang cerdas, mandiri, dan ambisius di sebuah majalah wanita terkemuka, Andie memulai eksperimen perilaku terstruktur untuk mendokumentasikan pemicu psikologis serta kesalahan fatal dalam hubungan yang dapat membuat pria menjauh pada tahap awal pendekatan. Analisis tekstual kualitatif ini bertujuan untuk mengevaluasi representasi media terhadap jurnalis perempuan, serta menelaah bagaimana ambisi profesional dan praktik investigasi digambarkan dalam narasi sinematik populer. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan yang berfokus pada narasi dan karakter, studi ini mengkaji dinamika interpersonal dan pergeseran kuasa yang terjadi saat Andie secara sistematis memanipulasi pola perilakunya di hadapan subjek eksperimennya, seorang eksekutif periklanan bernama Benjamin Barry. Temuan studi menunjukkan bahwa meskipun narasi tersebut pada awalnya mendobrak pakem tradisional komedi romantis dengan memberikan otonomi profesional dan strategis yang besar kepada tokoh utama perempuan, pelaksanaan eksperimen itu justru menuntutnya untuk menampilkan karikatur feminitas yang berlebihan, sangat bergantung pada orang lain, dan memiliki emosi yang tidak stabil. Lebih jauh

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lagi, studi ini menelusuri runtuhnya kerangka penelitian yang objektif seiring tumbuhnya keintiman emosional yang tulus, yang pada akhirnya mengungkap bagaimana struktur naratif Hollywood secara konsisten lebih mengutamakan penyelesaian romantis tradisional dibandingkan otonomi karier perempuan.

Kata-kata kunci: Penggambaran Karakter, Jurnalis Perempuan, *How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days*, Trope Romansa, Eksperimen Sosial

INTRODUCTION

In the landscape of 2000s popular cinema, the romantic comedy genre underwent a significant structural and thematic shift, moving away from the earnest, earnest formulas of the 1990s toward more self-conscious, satirical, and meta-fictional narratives. A prime example of this transition is Donald Petrie's *How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days* (2003). The film follows Andie Anderson, an ambitious journalist at the fictional *Composure* magazine, who initiates a behavioral social experiment for an upcoming column. Her objective is to document the exact behavioral patterns and relational missteps that women perform to inadvertently drive men away during the initial courtship phase. By deliberately staging actions traditionally coded as "annoying" or hyper-dependent, Andie self-consciously plays a caricature of stereotypical femininity. This study examines the intersections of professional identity, character agency, and romantic relationship dynamics within 2000s romantic comedies, using a combined framework of genre studies and feminist cultural analysis.

The central thesis of this article is that *How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days* uses satirical gender-role reversal to critique modern relationship standards, but ultimately limits its progressive potential by forcing its career-driven female protagonist back into a conventional domestic resolution. While the narrative sets up a battle-of-the-sexes dynamic that mocks media-driven dating rules, it faces a significant internal contradiction. To achieve her professional goals, an independent woman

must perform an anti-feminist caricature, proving that the genre still struggles to depict female professional ambition without punishing it or neutralizing it through romance.

While existing scholarship widely addresses the formulaic nature of classical Hollywood romance, a critical research gap remains regarding how post-feminist workplace demands are negotiated against romantic expectations in early 2000s media-industry narratives. This research is necessary to explain how popular cinema from this period reflects the anxieties of young women trying to balance economic independence with traditional relationship milestones.

The transition from 1990s romantic comedies to those of the 2000s is marked by an increase in irony, parody, and self-referential humor. Where previous decades relied on sincere, destiny-driven plotlines, 2000s films frequently integrated cynical or manipulative premises—such as bets, corporate assignments, or hidden agendas—that actively acknowledged the clichés of the genre. Despite their reliance on these formulaic setups, these films achieved lasting cultural relevance by introducing highly independent, professionally driven female protagonists who openly challenged traditional domestic expectations.

For instance, Gary Winick's *13 Going on 30* (2004) mirrors this thematic shift through its protagonist, Jenna Rink. Like Andie Anderson, Jenna is portrayed as a successful, independent woman with strong career ambitions within the highly competitive women's magazine industry. Both texts reflect

a broader shift in popular culture where a female character's initial desires are tied to professional status, creative control, and financial independence, rather than the immediate pursuit of a marriage partner.

To understand the social impact of these narratives, we must examine how the genre interacts with real-world gender expectations. Sociological and psychological literature demonstrates that mass media continuously shapes how viewers understand love, intimacy, and social dynamics (Grindon, 2021). The thematic landscape of the 2000s romantic comedy frequently engaged with the shifting definitions of masculinity and femininity, reflecting broader debates about changing gender roles in contemporary society (Radner & Stringer, 2007).

Crucially, cultural context dictates how romantic love is expressed and understood, meaning that cinematic representations are never neutral; they are active products of their historical moment (Karandashev, 2016). Scholarship shows that mass media often constructs idealized, commercial perceptions of intimacy, which can lead women to internalize unrealistic expectations regarding their partners' behavior and commitment in real life (Zondorak & Cable, 2012). Conversely, these media products also instruct women on how they must modify their own behavior to remain desirable. Dowd et al. (2023) argue that media representations of female characters often divide women into restrictive categories of hyper-feminine compliance or aggressive masculinity, punishing characters who fail to maintain an ideal balance.

This study connects these perspectives to analyze how *to Lose a Guy in 10 Days* addresses these pressures. The film functions as a meta-commentary on the media's role in manufacturing relationship anxieties. By staging a gender-role reversal—where Andie acts as the strategic relationship saboteur and

her male counterpart, Benjamin Barry, tries to preserve the connection—the text satirizes the rigid dating checklists popularized by contemporary women's magazines.

The Institutional Constraints of Composure Magazine

The narrative conflict in *How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days* centers on the tension between female professional ambition and the demands of consumer capitalism. As an educated journalist at *Composure*, Andie Anderson wants to write substantive pieces on serious political, environmental, and socio-economic issues. However, she faces an industry reality where corporate media organizations prioritize ad revenue and consumerism, requiring her to produce light-hearted, superficial relationship advice.

To gain the professional leverage needed to write serious pieces, Andie strikes a deal with her editor to produce a column based on an active dating experiment. She selects advertising executive Benjamin Barry as her subject, unaware that he has made a parallel corporate bet to make her fall in love with him in the same ten-day window. This dual deception drives the plot, forcing Andie into an erratic performance of dating clichés. Even as she tries to remain an objective investigator, she finds herself caught in the emotional realities of the relationship, illustrating the difficulty of separate professional ambition from traditional romantic expectations.

This study explores the social and cultural background of 2000s romantic comedies to evaluate how the genre shapes audience attitudes toward romantic relationships and gender norms. Additionally, this article examines how the representation of male and female characters in the genre reinforces or challenges traditional ideas about gender roles, offering a clearer understanding of how popular cinema manages female

independence in a commercial media landscape.

METHOD

This study utilizes a qualitative descriptive research design to evaluate gender representation and genre conventions in early-2000s popular cinema, focusing on Donald Petrie's romantic comedy *How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days* (2003). Primary data was gathered through the systematic observation of dialogue tracks, plot architecture, characterization arcs, and visual semiotics (such as costuming and framing). To unpack these texts, the study integrates five complementary frameworks: Laura Mulvey's (1975) male gaze theory to evaluate visual objectification; Judith Butler's (1990) gender performativity theory to decode the stylized repetition of acts; Rick Altman's (1984) genre theory to analyze semantic conventions and syntactic structures; Julia Kristeva's (1980) intertextuality theory to trace connections to contemporary films; and Stuart Hall's (1997) representation theory to examine how cultural meanings are actively constructed.

The analytical procedure followed a structured, four-stage pipeline to ensure empirical rigor. First, the film was screened repeatedly to build an exhaustive transcription log of key dialogue, physical actions, and visual compositions. Second, this raw data was subjected to thematic coding, categorizing fixed semantic icons (e.g., luxury settings, wardrobes) and deeper syntactic patterns (e.g., career-romance conflicts, emotional manipulation). Third, scenes meeting explicit criteria for ideological relevance—where a character negotiates power or enforces a stereotype—were critically interrogated using the integrated theoretical core. Finally, these results were compared against established macro-trends in 2000s romantic comedies to determine to what extent the text replicates traditional Hollywood

formulas or offers an entry point for progressive feminist critique.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Stuart Hall's (1997) representation theory asserts that mass media does not simply mirror the social world; instead, it uses a complex network of linguistic, visual, and narrative signs to actively produce cultural meaning. In *How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days* (2003), this process of meaning-making is applied to the modern female subject through a clear visual split between progressive independence and conservative conformity.

During the film's introductory sequence, the protagonist, Andie Anderson, is established within a fast-paced corporate office setting, rapidly typing a column at her desk while dressed in a sharp, structured work blazer and tailored trousers. This visual code is accompanied by a fast, energetic pop music track that reinforces her status as a competent, urban professional. This visual setup is supported by a sharp dialogue track: Andie: "*I wanna write about things that matter—like politics and the environment, poverty*" (00:04:12). Viewed through Hall's semiotic framework, this scene uses specific visual markers—the corporate blazer, the busy office, and the explicitly political dialogue—to signify an independent, career-driven woman. This presentation directly challenges mid-twentieth-century media tropes that limited female characters to the domestic sphere. By stating her desire to write about systemic issues like poverty and governance, Andie attempts to break free from the traditional constraints of the women's magazine industry, which historically funneled female writers into lifestyle topics like fashion and cosmetics.

However, this progressive representation is immediately limited by the film's post-feminist framework. While the narrative gives Andie professional status and

intellectual ambitions, it forces her to operate within a consumer-driven corporate environment that treats female empowerment as a lifestyle product. Her career success is framed not as a tool for structural social change, but as an individual pursuit that remains tied to a traditional romantic goal: finding a heterosexual partner. This tension reveals how early 2000s popular culture managed female independence, granting women access to corporate spaces while ensuring their ultimate goals aligned with conventional marriage and domestic life.

The tension between independence and conformity becomes explicit during the execution of Andie's dating experiment. To document how women drive men away, she deliberately adopts an exaggerated, hyper-feminine role designed to overwhelm her partner, advertising executive Benjamin Barry. In a series of escalating comedic sequences, Andie brings custom-made throw pillows embroidered with their faces to his apartment, redecorates his personal space without permission, and invents baby names like "Benny Boo Boo" and "Andie Anderson Barry" (00:52:10).

Judith Butler's (1990) theory of gender performativity argues that gender is not a fixed internal essence, but a stylized repetition of social actions, clothing choices, and behaviors that are continuously performed to appear natural. Crucially, Butler suggests that because gender relies on this ongoing performance, it can be subverted through parodic and exaggerated iterations that expose its artificiality.

Andie's calculated performance of "excessive emotional dependency" acts as a literal demonstration of this subversion. By self-consciously executing a list of negative female stereotypes—clinging, boundary-crossing, and premature domestic obsession—she turns these naturalized cultural tropes into a calculated

parody. The humor works precisely because the audience knows her behavior is a strategic act designed to fulfill a magazine assignment. This performance exposes how media narratives routinely code women as irrational and hyper-focused on marriage, revealing these "authentic" relationship anxieties to be artificial social scripts rather than natural female traits.

While Andie carries out this parodic performance, Benjamin Barry's character undergoes a parallel transformation. Ben begins the film performing a rigid model of dominant, corporate masculinity, viewing courtship as an ego game to secure an advertising account. However, as the narrative progresses, his character experiences a process of emotional softening that is typical of Hollywood romantic heroes (Grindon, 2011). He cooks dinner for Andie, invites her to meet his family, and participates in domestic card games, trading his detached corporate persona for a vulnerable, romantic identity.

This interaction creates a complex gender dynamic: while Ben lets guard down to show authentic vulnerability, Andie continues to perform an inauthentic, exaggerated caricature of femininity. This dual performance reaches a crisis point during the diamond gala scene, where both characters realize they have been acting out artificial roles shaped by corporate and media expectations. When their hidden agendas are exposed, Ben yells: "*You wanted to lose a guy in ten days? Congratulations, you did it!*" (01:22:15). This confrontation emphasizes Butler's assertion that social identities are formed and undone through interpersonal conflicts. The scene demonstrates that both characters have been trapped within rigid commercial scripts, proving that when individuals perform identity solely to satisfy market demands, genuine human connection is sacrificed.

Rick Altman's (1984) film genre theory offers a useful dual framework for

understanding how *How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days* maintains this balance between critique and conformity, dividing film analysis into semantic and syntactic elements:

Semantically, the film utilizes the familiar visual markers of the early-2000s Hollywood romantic comedy. The setting is an idealized, high-wealth Manhattan landscape filled with corporate publishing offices, high-end athletic arenas, and luxury jewelry galas. The characters are styled in expensive, trendy wardrobes—typified by Andie’s silk yellow dress—and supported by an upbeat pop soundtrack. These semantic elements establish a comfortable, consumerist environment that builds immediate audience familiarity. These markers also reinforce traditional class and gender profiles, framing modern womanhood as an aspirational, highly glamorous consumer experience.

Syntactically, the film follows the strict narrative blueprint of the romantic comedy genre: Initial Deceptive Premise → Courtship/Conflict → Crisis of Exposure → Romantic Resolution. The film's plot is driven by a double deception—her magazine column and his advertising bet. This structure forces the characters into constant conflict, driving the comedy while moving them toward an inevitable emotional transformation. While the film's premise seems to offer a fresh perspective by parodying dating rules, its syntactic blueprint ensures it cannot escape the genre's conservative boundaries. The narrative structure requires that the deception dissolve into an honest confession, leading to a traditional happy ending on a New York highway. This structural pattern proves that while the genre can adapt to include independent, career-oriented characters, its underlying blueprint always steers them away from professional isolation and back toward long-term marriage arrangements.

Julia Kristeva’s (1980) theory of intertextuality posits that no cultural text exists in isolation; instead, every narrative functions as a mosaic of citations, absorbing and transforming patterns from a broader network of historical texts. In *How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days*, this intertextual connection is evident in how it structures its core plot, mirroring contemporary early-2000s romantic comedies such as Gil Junger’s *10 Things I Hate About You* (1999).

Narrative Stage	<i>How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days</i> (2003)	<i>10 Things I Hate About You</i> (1999)
The Deceptive Premise	Andie attempts to lose a man for a magazine article; Ben bets he can make a woman love him for a corporate contract.	Patrick is secretly paid by a peer to date Kat to circumvent her father's strict dating rules.
The Initial Encounter	The protagonists meet in a stylized social setting (a New York lounge bar) under hidden agendas.	The protagonists meet within a structured environment (a high school campus) under a secret agreement.
The Developing Intimacy	Genuine chemistry develops during a family trip, despite Andie's	Genuine emotional vulnerability emerges through shared creative interests, despite Kat's

	parodic behavior.	anti-social stance.
The Public Exposure	The hidden deceptions are exposed during a high-stakes corporate diamond gala, causing a public fight.	The monetary agreement is exposed at the high school prom, leading to immediate emotional estrangement.
The Public Declaration	Ben chases Andie's taxi down a highway, halting traffic to make a public confession of love.	Patrick purchases Kat a guitar using the bet money and confesses his love through a public musical performance.

Table 1: Comparative Narrative Structures

Syntactically, both films rely on a plot engine built on hidden motives and deception, using a secret arrangement to force two opposing personalities into close contact. In both texts, this manipulation creates comedic tension, but gradually shifts into genuine emotional vulnerability. The inevitable exposure of the secret occurs during a highly public event—the high school prom in *10 Things* and the corporate diamond gala in *How to Lose a Guy*—which triggers a major emotional crisis.

Finally, both narratives resolve this tension through a grand, public declaration of affection, where the male character risks public embarrassment to win back the female protagonist. This structural repetition proves that *How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days* is part of a larger intertextual network of contemporary films. Audiences familiar with this genre expect these stories to follow a specific arc: an initial

setup based on lies must eventually give way to emotional honesty, validating true love over personal or financial ambition.

While *How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days* gives its female protagonist significant narrative agency by casting her as an active, investigative journalist, the film's cinematography continues to function as an engine for the male gaze (Mulvey, 1975). This containment operates through two distinct layers of visual control that work together to structure the female body as a commercial commodity.

1. The Diegetic Gaze

The diegetic gaze operates within the film's story world, tracking how male characters look at female characters. This dynamic is central to the film's corporate plot: Ben's attraction to Andie is initially driven by his need to win a bet and secure a luxury diamond account. Within this narrative frame, his gaze treats her body as a strategic asset to advance his career. When they attend events together, he displays her on his arm to signal status and professional competence, matching his clients' commercial expectations.

2. The Spectatorial Gaze

The spectatorial gaze operates through the film's technical choices—including cinematography, camera framing, and editing—to position the movie theater audience as a heterosexual male subject, regardless of the viewer's actual gender identity. This visual tracking is clearly demonstrated during the diamond gala sequence. As Andie descends the staircase, the camera cuts to a slow-motion tracking shot that pans from her toes up to her head, emphasizing her form in a sleek yellow silk dress.

The camera focuses intently on the texture of the fabric, the movement of her hair, and the way the lighting hits her skin. This framing is designed to isolate her body as a

visual spectacle, pausing the narrative momentum to prioritize visual consumption.

This objectification is further reinforced by the high-end diamond advertisements that provide the backdrop for the scene. The camera frames Andie with tight close-ups that highlight the luxury jewelry on her neck, ears, and wrists, explicitly linking the female body to commercial wealth and consumerism. This visual layout aligns with Mulvey's (1975) assertion that classic Hollywood cinema regularly equates womanhood with commodified beauty.

Even though Andie drives the plot as an ambitious writer, the camera continues to position her body as a passive visual object. This dual gaze reveals a deep ideological contradiction within early 2000s romantic comedies: a film can feature a smart, independent female protagonist, but its visual style remains bound by patriarchal editing and framing choices that reduce her to a source of visual pleasure.

When evaluated beyond its surface narrative, *How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days* (2003) operates as a contested site of ideological struggle, balancing the subversion of heteronormative conventions with their eventual reinforcement. The film establishes a pair of seemingly autonomous, modern protagonists, yet contains their agency within a traditional gender framework governed by early 2000s social expectations. Stuart Hall's (1997) representation theory exposes this dynamic through the ambivalence built into Andie Anderson's character arc. Andie is introduced as an intellectually ambitious career woman trying to produce serious political journalism. However, to secure her professional advancement, she must spend the majority of the narrative performing a regressive caricature: the emotionally unstable, possessive "crazy woman in a relationship." This creates a deep contradiction where her professional liberation

is achieved only by performing a sexist cultural stereotype that frames needy women as relationship saboteurs.

This intentional caricature is best understood through Judith Butler's (1990) gender performativity theory. A common misinterpretation of Butler's framework assumes that gender is a voluntary theatrical performance that an individual can freely change or negotiate based on the situation. In contrast, Butler argues that gender is an ongoing, involuntary effect produced by a "stylized repetition of acts" that must cite historically established regulatory norms to remain socially legible.

Andie's experiment does not demonstrate a radical, consequence-free play with identity. Instead, her parody works precisely because she reproduces recognizable, pre-existing patriarchal tropes of excessive femininity. While her calculated performance exposes gender's constructed nature by showing that these desperate actions can be copied, it simultaneously reinforces the regulatory systems that make those stereotypes visible and damaging in popular culture. Her ironic detachment does not dissolve the stereotype; it re-entrenches it by using it as a central narrative punchline.

This ideological compromise is further complicated by the film's visual grammar. Although the script positions Andie as the strategic director of the experiment, Laura Mulvey's (1975) male gaze theory reveals how the cinematography constantly limits this narrative control. Throughout the film, the camera repeatedly isolates Andie's body, transforming her into a passive source of visual pleasure for the spectator.

This tracking is evident during the high-stakes diamond gala scene and her various performative attempts to look spoiled and sensual. Even when she acts demanding to push Ben away, the camera frames her through soft

lighting, slow-motion panning, and form-fitting wardrobes. This visual design keeps her safely contained within traditional patriarchal aesthetics, prioritizing her role as a beautiful object to be looked at over her role as an active, investigative journalist.

Intertextual Dialogues and Syntactic Parody

Using Rick Altman's (1984) genre theory alongside Julia Kristeva's (1980) intertextuality theory, the film can be analyzed as a self-aware text that actively engages with the conventions of late-1990s and early-2000s romantic comedies. Kristeva notes that no film operates in a cultural vacuum; rather, texts are built out of repetitions, modifications, and parodies of prior genre expectations. *How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days* participates in this intertextual network by directly referencing structural elements found in contemporary hits like *Notting Hill* (1999) and *10 Things I Hate About You* (1999).

The film establishes this dialogue by combining standard semantic iconography—such as bustling Manhattan streetscapes, upscale lofts, and glamorous, high-society parties—with a self-conscious syntactic structure. In *10 Things I Hate About You*, the narrative plot relies on a secret financial bet to force an anti-social female protagonist into a relationship. *How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days* parodies this trope by doubling the deception, creating a narrative where both characters have secret, competing corporate agendas.

By exaggerating this classic plot device, the film critiques the superficial checklists and commercial expectations popularized by early-2000s media. Yet, despite its satirical edge, the text complies with the strict syntactic requirements of the Hollywood romantic comedy. The narrative path still moves from a deceptive setup into a major emotional crisis, concluding with a grand public confession of love. This adherence to genre conventions proves that while the film modifies individual

semantic details, it leaves the conservative underlying formula intact, confirming that contemporary popular cinema rarely allows female independent narratives to bypass traditional domestic partnerships.

Benjamin Barry's character arc offers a useful parallel case study for evaluating how the text addresses gender stereotypes. Ben is initially presented as the archetype of hegemonic masculinity: a confident, career-driven advertising executive operating in a competitive corporate environment. However, his identity is deeply dependent on patriarchal social demands. This vulnerability is demonstrated during the introductory boardroom sequence, where his ability to secure a major diamond advertising account is tied directly to his ego and his capacity to seduce a woman. His boss and male colleagues challenge his authority, prompting him to make a high-stakes bet that he can force any woman to fall in love with him in ten days.

This plot setup reveals the anxieties underlying traditional masculinity: Ben's professional success and social status among peers are entirely dependent on his performative ability to dominate and emotionally manipulate women. When he encounters Andie's erratic behavior, his masculine control is disrupted. To win his bet, he is forced to tolerate actions that challenge his authority, including having his apartment redecorated and his favorite sports games interrupted. This pressure forces him into a process of emotional softening, requiring him to cook domestic dinners and invite Andie to his childhood home.

However, this transformation does not fully deconstruct hegemonic masculinity. While Ben learns to show vulnerability, his softening is used to make him a more appealing, empathetic romantic hero, validating his initial pursuit. When the mutual deceptions are exposed at the diamond gala, the narrative pivots to protect his

authority. Ultimately, the film concludes with Ben chasing Andie down a highway, using a classic display of physical assertion to halt her taxi and claim her as his partner. This resolution demonstrates the ongoing dilemma of early-2000s cinema: the narrative critiques the superficiality of traditional gender roles, but relies on those same heteronormative formulas to achieve an emotionally satisfying, market-friendly conclusion.

CONCLUSION

This study utilized a qualitative textual and visual analysis of Donald Petrie's *How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days* (2003) to re-evaluate gender representation and workplace dynamics in early 2000s cinema. By combining Stuart Hall's representation theory, Judith Butler's performativity, Laura Mulvey's male gaze, Rick Altman's genre theory, and Julia Kristeva's intertextuality, the research established a rigorous pipeline to decode the film's ideological layers. The findings demonstrate that while the film initially subverts genre clichés by granting the female protagonist narrative and strategic agency as an active social experimenter, its progressive potential is ultimately contained. To achieve her professional goals, Andie must perform a regressive, hyper-dependent caricature of femininity. Because this parodic performance relies on recognizable sexist tropes to remain intelligible and humorous to the audience, it re-entrenches the regulatory boundaries of patriarchal dating habits.

This study extends romantic comedy scholarship by uncovering a specific research gap regarding how early 2000s media-industry narratives manage post-feminist workplace demands alongside romantic expectations. While the narrative parodies media-driven relationship standards, the film's visual grammar routinely utilizes the diegetic and spectatorial male gaze to reduce the female form to a commodified spectacle. Ultimately, the

mandatory syntactic blueprint of the genre forces a traditional heteronormative ending on a highway, proving that mainstream cinema co-opted female ambition into a marketable lifestyle brand that prioritizes corporate profit over structural autonomy. While limited by its exclusive focus on a single, mainstream Hollywood product without real-world reception data, this analysis provides a valuable framework for future research to explore viewer resistance and alternative, independent genre resolutions.

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