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Monroe's Oversexualization through the Male Gaze in *Blonde*

MUHAMMAD DICKA MA'ARIEF ALYATALATTHAF
Universitas Indonesia, Indonesia

NATALIA FARADHETA PUTRI
Kalbis University, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

Blonde (2022), directed by Andrew Dominik, depicts the life of Marilyn Monroe from her childhood until her death. This film is adapted from Joyce Carol Oates' 2000 fictional novel of the same name, which also portrays Monroe's life. Released on Netflix, the film commemorates the 60th anniversary of the passing of the 'blonde bombshell'. However, the portrayal of Monroe in this film is highly exploitative, with the director engaging in an unethical oversexualization and fictionalization to an extreme degree. This study employs qualitative research methods, focusing on the film *Blonde* (2022), which has a total runtime of 2 hours, 47 minutes, and 28 seconds. The units of analysis in this research are individual scenes that exhibit oversexualization through visual, verbal, and narrative or plot elements. To identify the forms of oversexualization, Sara Mills' Critical Discourse Analysis (1995) is applied, examining the film at the word, phrase or sentence, and discourse level. Additionally, the Male Gaze Theory is utilized to uncover how oversexualization is enacted through visual language, assessed via camera gaze, male character gaze, and audience gaze. The findings reveal that oversexualization is manifested through visual and verbal representations of nudity and unnecessary nudity of the Monroe character, threesome fantasies, ass gazing, and the glorification of rape culture. Ideologically, this film has the potential to further entrench patriarchal ideology, increase female domination, and proliferate the objectification of women's bodies.

Keywords: *Blonde, critical discourse analysis, film, male gaze, oversexualization.*

INTRODUCTION

Marilyn Monroe is one of the most iconic celebrities in the world, embodying both positive and negative imagery. She is recognized as the epitome of global pop culture and has been dubbed "the world's number one sex symbol" (Vogue, 2023; Wehn, 2023). Every aspect of her life symbolizes the entertainment industry. Her name, voice, body, persona, attributes, behavior, and even her death have remained subjects of public fascination for six decades after her passing. Her story and character have been adapted into various forms of mass media, including fictional films, documentaries, TV shows, advertisements, music videos, songs, novels, comics, posters, magazines, paintings, pop art, and even video games. Unfortunately, Monroe's fame has not been accompanied by adequate storytelling from the mass media creators. Most portrayals of Monroe remain superficial, often exploiting her 'sex symbol' image for profit rather than providing a deeper, more respectful narrative.

This exploitation is evident in the film *Blonde* (2022), which is available on Netflix. Directed by Andrew Dominik, the film is adapted from Joyce Carol Oates' 2000 novel of the same name. *Blonde* is a biopic that has been fictionalized, blending real-life events with fictional elements to dramatize the storyline. In terms of success, the film has garnered

*Corresponding author: muhammad.dicka15@ui.ac.id
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significant acclaim, earning 13 prestigious nominations, including the Academy Award, Golden Globe Award, BAFTA Award, and Venice Film Festival Award. According to Variety (Sharf, 2022) *Blonde* received a 14-minute standing ovation at its premiere. However, the film portrays Monroe as a foolish, promiscuous, and scandalous woman. She is consistently depicted in an inhumane manner, with many aspects of her life either concealed or entirely omitted. *Blonde* has faced substantial criticism across various platforms, including news articles, blogs, online discussion forums, and social media. Some moviegoers on Twitter have expressed their discontent: *"when are they going to tell her real story?* #Blonde" (tweet by @jackthe1conx); *"then I can dismiss 'Blonde' as a film made to exploit a dead woman"* (tweet by @burberryskirt); and numerous other critiques.

This criticism is unsurprising given the reckless fictionalization of Monroe's biography. Firstly, the novel that serves as the basis for the film *Blonde* written by Joyce Carol Oates, is a fictional work that portrays Monroe's personal life and speculates on the possible experiences of celebrities in Hollywood. This significantly blurs the line between fiction and reality (Dosani, 2022). Secondly, director Andrew Dominik intensifies the fictionalization of Monroe's story by incorporating factually inaccurate events such as: oral sex with Mr. President (referring to the 35th President of the United States, John Fitzgerald Kennedy), a threesome with Charles Chaplin Jr. and Edward G. Robinson Jr., and Monroe's abortion scene (Gulla, 2022).

Director Andrew Dominik claims that he created *Blonde* to represent how Monroe's childhood trauma shaped her adult perceptions, depicting her as an extraordinarily self-destructive and unhappy person. However, the reception of the film suggests otherwise. Unlike other biopics that tell the 'true' story of a figure or provide a conclusion through an inspirational thesis, *Blonde* seems to lack meaning and purpose beyond exploitation. A journalist from The New York Times even described *Blonde* as *"[...] the latest necrophiliac entertainment to exploit her (Monroe)"* (Dargis, 2022). In response to the exploitation issue, Andrew Dominik remarked, *"which is kind of strange, because she's dead. The movie doesn't make any difference in one way or another"* (Wong, 2022).

The exploitation of Monroe's persona has been widely condemned. Ironically, the film *Blonde* was released on the 60th anniversary of her death. For six decades, Monroe has never been able to tell her 'true' story. Her narrative has always been embellished with fictionalization and oversexualization both in storytelling and on screen. Her life was continuously controlled by men, with all the films she starred in being directed by male directors. This resulted in all portrayals of her being seen from the perspective of the male gaze. Laura Mulvey defines the male gaze as how women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness [...] and signifies male desire (Mulvey et al., 2016). The scopophilia instinct (pleasure in looking at another person as an erotic object) drives directors to create films that satisfy the voyeuristic desires of primarily male audiences.

This study aims to examine how Marilyn Monroe's persona is oversexualized through the male gaze on screen and in the story, as well as the impact of oversexualization on the victim's image. Sara Mills' Critical Discourse Analysis (1995) is used to explore the discourse in *Blonde,* examining how feminists can conduct a gendered analysis focusing on the larger-scale structures at the discourse level.

LITERATURE REVIEW OR RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Sara Mills' Critical Discourse Analysis (1995)

Defining Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a complex task. Numerous scholars, researchers, academics, and linguists have provided different definitions with varying meanings and purposes. Norman Fairclough defines CDA as "ways of analyzing language which address its involvement in the workings of contemporary capitalist societies. The focus on capitalist societies is not only because capitalism is the dominant economic system internationally, but also because the character of the economic system affects all aspects of social life" (Fairclough, 2013). The social life referenced here includes the oppression of laborers and workers. Other forms include the capitalization of the media industry, commodification, spatialization, and structuration.

Another definition is provided by Theo van Leeuwen, who describes CDA as "semantic constructions of specific aspects of reality that serve the interests of particular historical and/or social contexts, as well as a semantic variety of language, a social dialect distinct in its semantics rather than in its phonology and lexicogrammar" (Catalano & Waugh, 2020). This framework is derived from the semantic concepts of Michel Foucault and Michael Halliday. Van Leeuwen extends discourse analysis beyond the linguistic aspect to include semiotics. He argues that discourse can subliminally represent social roles and identity.

However, Teun A. van Dijk posits that CDA not only examines text analysis but also the aspects of text production. He states that the objective of CDA is to determine why a text may conclude with certain topics. The process of producing text is commonly referred to as social cognition. Van Dijk divides discourse analysis into two levels: the micro level, which examines how messages are linked to interactions between journalists and politicians, how press releases are produced and distributed, and so forth; and the macro level, which examines how discourse is consumed and interpreted by the public and how public thought is influenced (Alyatalatthaf, 2021).

The global understanding of CDA can be summarized as follows: the forms of discourse present in all aspects of life have different meanings and purposes. Therefore, in interpreting discourse, one can use various approaches according to their methodological functions. Sara Mills, a linguist in feminist studies, argues that texts often depict women in oppressive, discriminatory, sexist, offensive, and patriarchal ways. She developed a discourse analysis methodology aimed at identifying sexism and gender bias in texts while raising awareness among readers (Maknun et al., 2023). Sara Mills' CDA, known as 'Feminist Stylistics', divides its analytical model into three levels:

Word Level Analysis

The analysis is conducted at the word level individually, rather than in conjunction with phrases or sentences. The primary focus is to investigate the use of sexist, gender-biased, or discriminatory words. Word-level analysis examines the following aspects: generic nouns, generic pronouns, women as the marked form, naming and androcentrism, the semantic derogation of women, terms of endearment and diminutives, euphemism, and taboo.

Phrase/Sentence Level Analysis

The analysis at the phrase or sentence level treats these elements as a cohesive unit. When analyzing individual words, we may not always discern their general meaning.

Phrase/sentence level analysis focuses on the following aspects: ready-made phrases, metaphor, jokes and humor, and transitivity choices.

Discourse Level Analysis

The analysis at the discourse level considers the text as a whole. The aim is to go beyond analyzing individual lexical items to examine the global narrative of the text. This allows us to identify general ideas about gender and ideology through textual patterns and structures. This level of analysis examines the following aspects: characters/roles, fragmentations, focalization, and schemata.

Male Gaze

The concept of the male gaze originated from Laura Mulvey's hypothesis regarding the presence of visual pleasure in narrative cinema. Psychoanalytic theory demonstrates how patriarchal culture has unconsciously permeated the structure of filmmaking. This theory is quite unique, as Mulvey relies more on psychological theories rather than film theories. She believes in certain human urges aimed at satisfying sexual pleasure, namely scopophilia (referred to by Mulvey from Sigmund Freud's "The Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality"), which means viewing someone or something as a source of sexual pleasure. Mulvey sees this in relation to the satisfaction of sexual pleasure from watching and objectifying the view (Mulvey et al., 2016).

The binary opposition view in patriarchal societies dictates that men are active while women are passive. Thus, traditionally, exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said connoted to-be-looked-at-ness (women are exhibited as sexual objects and passively become a 'spectacle'). The woman displayed has functioned on two levels: as an erotic object for the characters within the screen story and as an erotic object for the spectator within the auditorium, with a shifting tension between the looks on either side of the screen (Mulvey et al., 2016).

Male gaze works in cinema as a form of voyeurism that objectifies the woman's body and turns it into a passive spectacle. As a cinematic structure, male gaze combines a threefold look: 1) the camera; 2) the male character; 3) the audience (Mulvey et al., 2016; Smelik, 2016). Through the camera, we are presented with vulgar and erotic sexualized parts of the female body, objectified. Through the male character, we can see how the character looks at the woman, treats her, whether dominating or demeaning. Meanwhile, as the audience, we interpret and translate the entire scene and narrative of the male gaze conveyed through the camera and character. Audience reception will show how we consume cinema.

Oversexualization Celebrity in Entertainment Industry

Oversexualization or hyper sexualization, directed at a specific character, refers to sexual, vulgar, and erotic attribution from the media which often occurs excessively or is entirely unrelated to the intended narrative. This phenomenon commonly transpires in various media such as television, advertisements, magazines, comics, anime, social media, music videos, video games, and films, with the aim of boosting sales (Anciones-Anguita & Checa-Romero, 2024). Exploitation occurs through showcasing nudity, emphasizing women's body parts, vulgar poses and gestures (Anciones-Anguita & Checa-Romero, 2024), wearing revealing clothes (Prichard et al., 2023), ideal body image (Skowronski et al., 2022), adolescent exploitation, underage, and loli girl (Papageorgiou et al., 2023), using sounds and words

(Wehn, 2023), queer relationships exploitation (Annati & Ramsey, 2022) and in various other ways.

One of the most exploitative industries regarding oversexualization is the film industry. This behavior has persisted for a considerable period, dating back to at least 1924, as evidenced by the film "The Thief of Baghdad" (1924), where an actress appeared portraying half-naked, sensual, lascivious, and submissive character. Subsequent examples include the film "Sayonara" (1957), which depict fetishization of Asian women as an 'exotic' and docile companion. Following this, the film "Full Metal Jacket" (1987) showcased young female Asian sex workers teasing two American soldiers in broken English. Additionally, the film "The Handmaiden" (2016) shows a relationship of domination between mistress and servant. There are numerous other historical instances that cannot all be listed here.

Several celebrities have acknowledged experiencing oversexualization, including Megan Fox in the films "Transformers" (2007) and "Jennifer's Body" (2009), Scarlett Johansson in "Lost in Translation" (2003) and "Girl with the Pearl Earring" (2003), and Sydney Sweeney in the films "The Voyeurs" (2021) and "Immaculate" (2024) (Jason, 2022; Kendra, 2023; Meredith, 2024). All three have experienced oversexualization in terms of body exploitation, nudity, and underage relationships (Scarlett Johansson still 17 years old when filming "Lost in Translation"), in several countries the legal age of consent is 18 years old.

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted using a qualitative research method. Qualitative research consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials: case study, personal experience, introspection, life story, interview, artifacts, and cultural texts and productions, along with observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

The approach employed in this study is critical discourse analysis. Discourses may be defined as sets of statements that construct objects and an array of subject positions. Discourse analysis is concerned with understanding these processes of discursive construction and their social consequences (Flick, 2014). Critical discourse analysis is concerned with the ways in which institutional discourses are implicated in the maintenance of power relations within a society, such as relation between capitalism and society, patriarchy, racism, discrimination, and so on (Catalano & Waugh, 2020; Fairclough, 2013).

A film, as the object of the study, is analyzed within this paper. Mikos elaborates (Flick, 2014) that when film is used as the object of study, it examines textual structure through visual and interactive aspects with the audience. The unit of analysis may consist of individual scene or sequence in a film, complete film, or a group of films. The last of these can be assembled according to various criteria, for example all of a director's films or all thriller movies between 2000 and 2024. Determining an object for a concrete analysis coincides closely with the cognitive purpose.

The researchers are interested in analyzing the film *Blonde* (2022) directed by Andrew Dominik as the primary object of study, with a total duration of 2 hours 47 minutes and 28 seconds (time code = 2:47:28). This film was selected due to its extensive portrayal of oversexualization of the Marilyn Monroe character. The researcher operationalizes the concept of the Male Gaze by Laura Mulvey in examining the oversexualization of Monroe's

character. The units of analysis in this study consist of individual scenes that depict oversexualization in terms of visual, verbal, and narrative aspects of the film. Scenes will be analyzed based on three levels of analysis proposed by Sara Mills' Critical Discourse Analysis. Subsequently, in the discussion section, the researcher will elaborate on the potential impact of oversexualization on the cognitive processes of the audience.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The film *Blonde* (2022) narrates the life of Marilyn Monroe (Norma Jeane Mortenson) from childhood, portraying her upbringing as tumultuous; her parents' separation, her mother's mental instability, and a traumatic incident where her mother attempted to kill her, leading to her placement in an orphanage. Briefly, Monroe grew up aspiring to become a celebrity, starting as a magazine cover model, then attempting to audition for film roles, eventually reaching the pinnacle of her career. Along the way, she encountered famous individuals such as Charles Chaplin Jr. and Joe DiMaggio, who later became her husband. Despite her professional success, Monroe faced various challenges and scandals, including one involving the 35th President of the United States, John Fitzgerald Kennedy. She struggled with mental health issues, culminating in her depicted suicide by drug overdose at the end of the film. Throughout the narrative, Monroe is portrayed as oversexualized, evident in the visual, verbal, and narrative aspects of the film. The analysis elaborates the use the three levels of analysis: (a) Word Level Analysis, (b) Phrase/Sentence Level Analysis and (c) Discourse Level Analysis

Word Level Analysis

Sara Mills argues that language use is inherently sexist. Sexism can manifest in various ways, such as through sex-specific pronoun use, the misuse of generics, address terms, and the negative descriptions of females in a variety of texts (Mills, 1995). For instance, the pronoun "he" is often used generically, as in "The more education one attains, the better his occupation is likely to be". Professions such as professor, scientist, and engineer are commonly associated with males, whereas terms like nurse, model, and secretary are typically linked to females (Kanwal, 2023). Word-level analysis investigates the following aspects: generic nouns, generic pronouns, women as the marked form, naming and androcentrism, the semantic derogation of women, endearment and diminutives, euphemism, and taboo.

"Blonde"

Based on the investigation at the word level analysis, the term "blonde" is problematic in terms of naming and androcentrism. Cameron (Mills, 1995) argues that our language is highly sexist as it names and represents the world from a masculine viewpoint and aligns with stereotypical beliefs about the sexes, thus creating language with a strong androcentric bias. The label "blonde" frequently appears in all contexts related to Monroe, including the title of the film analyzed in this study. This label is highly biased and laden with sexist intentions and even insults. This labeling represents naming, while androcentrism occurs when the label "blonde" turns the labeled individual (in this case, Monroe) into the object of sexism from the labeller (the subject, in this case, men).

Semantically, "blonde" means having light-colored hair. However, connotatively, it carries the stereotype of being unintelligent (Bosse, 2022), leading to the term "dumb blonde", which literally means a foolish blonde (Castañon, 2023). Additionally, the term

"blonde bombshell" refers to an extremely attractive woman with blonde hair. Connotatively, this label carries sexual undertones, yet the person being labeled might not even realize it because they are perceived as blonde (and therefore foolish) (Smoljo, 2023). This stereotype does not apply to men, as the sexist and patriarchal world, along with language created from a masculine viewpoint, generates a cultural fetish around the term. Morosini (2020) notes that the blonde is, in modern-day patriarchy, often portrayed as the ideal woman. As a signifier the blonde is loaded: blondes have more fun, blondes are dumb, blondes are more sexually available, blondes are less capable, less serious, less complicated.

From the perspective of the male gaze, all attributes associated with the term "blonde" serve to degrade and sexualize Monroe's character. Message producers aim to institutionalize Monroe's image as a "dumb blonde" who is unaware of her sexualization. The film's plot heavily supports Monroe's sexualization. Her character is continuously ogled by lecherous male eyes (time codes subsequently abbreviated as TC 17:59, 28:24, 1:27:53). Her body is exposed without any narrative cohesion (TC 17:15, 39:53, 1:25:49, 1:53:25, 2:20:29, 2:22:12, 2:25:11, 2:36:00). At the film's end, Monroe is still depicted as foolish and powerless, being raped by Mr. Z (Darryl F. Zanuck) to secure a role in a film, groomed by Charles Chaplin Jr., subjected to domestic violence by Joe DiMaggio, and continuously subjected to misogynistic treatment until her last breath.

"Daddy"

The investigation at the word level analysis introduces a concept called endearments and diminutives, referring to certain endearment terms, which may well be used with affection, but can also be used to demean. There is a category of words which some men use to refer to their female partners which appear to be endearments, for example, "baby" implying an equivalence between women and small and powerless beings. The term "baby" is used by male characters to address Monroe. However, this research highlights a more intriguing aspect: Monroe's use of endearing terms "daddy" when addressing almost all male characters in the film *Blonde*. Thus, in this context, the concept of word level analysis shifts to endearments and augmentatives.

In this context, Monroe appears to be positioned as the subject defining the object, as outlined in Sara Mills' concept of subject-object position (Maknun et al., 2023; Raslie et al., 2022). Unfortunately, Monroe's role as the subject only serves to degrade herself. The term "daddy" signifies a hierarchical relationship and reproduces asymmetric patriarchal power relations (Mills, 1995). Furthermore, this term also carries erotic connotations, as it is not only used for her husbands (James Dougherty, Joe DiMaggio, dan Arthur Miller) but also for Mr. Shinn (TC 18:06) who is merely a Hollywood talent agent introducing Monroe to Mr. Z. (Darryl F. Zanuck). This erotic term is also considered as an acknowledgment that the girl recognizes the dominant person (especially in bed), the girl wants to be dominated, teasing-call, it turns her on, it turns him on, she is into BDSM (Ved, 2024).

Phrase/Sentence Level Analysis

Phrases or sentences represent larger units than individual words. Sometimes, the meaning of a word can change when combined into a phrase or sentence. For instance, the word 'girl' can be neutral but may become sexist in specific contexts, such as when someone says to a boy, "Don't be such a girl" (Mills, 1995). The investigation of phrase or sentence level analysis

is conducted through the following aspects: ready-made phrases, metaphor, jokes and humor, and transitivity choices.

"Those photos. That's what you are. Meat."

Contextually, the above sentence is spoken by Joe DiMaggio after discovering that Monroe had been photographed naked before meeting him (TC 1:26:15). DiMaggio then vents his anger by slapping Monroe while saying *"Those photos. That's what you are. Meat."* Meat means the flesh or other edible parts of animals (usually domesticated cattle, swine, and sheep) used for food (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2024b). In the script, DiMaggio is noted to analogize people to animals on several occasions. In the scene where DiMaggio proposes to Monroe (TC 1:20:40), he says *"I just want to protect you from all these jackals."* A jackal is a carnivorous animal similar to a wolf, belonging to the canis genus. They are known as scavengers but are also adept hunters. Despite frequently hunting animals larger than themselves, jackals are considered cowardly and therefore always hunt in packs. This animal is renowned for being cunning, sly, and a trickster (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2024a; Pawar, 2024). DiMaggio refers to Charles Chaplin Jr. and Edward G. Robinson Jr. as "jackals" because, in *Blonde*, they are portrayed as a gay couple who deceive Monroe and exploit her for sexual purposes. Since DiMaggio made the remark about jackals, he has viewed Monroe as "meat" because, in his analogy, "jackals" prey on "meat".

In another scene, Monroe is also depicted as a woman who internalizes the objectification imposed on her. In the scene where Monroe is dragged to the hotel room of the 35th President of the United States, John Fitzgerald Kennedy (TC 2:12:23), she says: *"Am I meat to be delivered?"* Through this sentence, we can understand that the message producers have specific intentions in crafting the script, including the use of the two "meat" phrases mentioned above. To comprehend the message producers' analogy involving the two "meat" phrases, Sara Mills suggests the concept of metaphor. Although metaphor is an aspect of word-level analysis, she argues that metaphor conventionally operates at the phrase level rather than at the level of isolated words. Black (cited in Mills, 1995) mentioned that metaphors are better regarded as systems of belief than as individual things. Technically, metaphor is an instrument for drawing implications grounded in perceived analogies of structure between two subjects belonging to different domains. In the context of the two "meat" phrases, Monroe is analogized as a subject belonging to another domain, namely an entity called meat. Consequently, objectification occurs in the two scenes mentioned above because Monroe is perceived as an object by both DiMaggio and Monroe herself (internalized). This internalization is also emphasized by the message producers through the script and Monroe's character, depicting Monroe as a submissive, compliant, and a weak woman.

"Am I your good girl, daddy?"

In word level analysis, it was found that the word "daddy" is exploited to degrade, indicating the existence of hierarchical relationships and reproducing asymmetric patriarchal power relations, as well as sexualizing Monroe. Meanwhile, the sentence *"Am I your good girl, daddy?"* is an elaboration of the word "daddy" uttered by Monroe to Arthur Miller (TC 1:43:23). At first glance, this sentence may seem normal, spoken by a wife to her husband as an expression of endearment. However, in *Blonde*, the word "daddy" and its elaborate sentence always aims to degrade Monroe's character. Additionally, the phrase "good girl" is present in this sentence. Since childhood, Monroe has always been forced to be a "good girl"

by her mother (TC 11:07), her neighbors (TC 16:28), and several others without mentioning the term “good girl”. In essence, the message producers aim to degrade Monroe’s values, keeping her character small, obedient, and compliant. Recognizing the presence of ideological practices in the sentence above, the concepts of feminism and ideology in phrase or sentence level analysis are deemed appropriate to elaborate on the implied meanings.

Ideology, in this perspective, constitutes a sequence or collection of statements with certain conceptual connections. Similarly, language elements do not exist in isolation but rather gain significance when situated within broader ideological frameworks (Mills, 1995). The narrative of the “good girl” implies the representation of patriarchal ideology through the good girl syndrome, which refers to a person exhibiting behaviors or tendencies that may lead to people-pleasing behavior, seeking external validation, or striving to maintain a perfect image at all times. The notion that girls should be obedient, self-sacrificing, and consistently present themselves in a positive light has been idealized (Agnihotri, 2023). Highlighting the good girl syndrome in Monroe's character renders her increasingly vulnerable and powerless in the face of men. She consistently complies with the directives of men, and any defiance on her part results in consequences such as abandonment, punishment, and physical attacks.

Furthermore, the exploitation of the term “daddy” towards all the men who have been part of Monroe's life portrays her as ensnared in daddy issues. This concept, in essence, constitutes a gendered term, often devoid of empathy, that denotes the connection between relational challenges and less-than-ideal father figures (Lawrenz, 2022). Unfortunately, this terminology is often misappropriated for fetishistic purposes. Social media, television, and films frequently oversexualize this concept by portraying fantasies of sexual relationships between young female and adult or older male. This is also associated with Sigmund Freud's theory of the Electra Complex, which refers to a female child being overly sexually attached to male parents (Mustikaningrum, 2022). In *Blonde*, oversexualization through daddy issues is prominently displayed by how she addresses all the men around her as “daddy”, indicating her relationships with older men such as Mr. Shinn with male gaze exposing Monroe (TC 18:10) and the scene where Mr. Shinn touching Monroe’s thigh during her movie premiere (TC 20:24).

Discourse Level Analysis

The intention of this chapter is not to focus solely on content as if it were self-evident, but rather to perceive content, the substance of texts, as the outcome of negotiating textual elements, codes, and external forces that influence both the construction of the text and our interpretation of its meaning (Mills, 1995). Although discourse-level analysis is not considered part of stylistics (as it does not solely focus on linguistic factors but also encompasses the entire substance beyond the text such as images, videos, sound, etc.), discourse-level analysis can provide a global understanding of the overall linguistic aspects and broader structures of the text. Investigation into discourse-level analysis is conducted on the following aspects: characters/roles, fragmentations, focalization, and schemata.

Carter and Simpsons (cited in Mills, 1995) stated, “discourse analysis should be concerned not simply with micro-contexts of the effects of words across sentences or conversational turns but also with the macro-contexts of larger social patterns”. Therefore, at this level, the theory of the male gaze by Laura Mulvey is employed to assist in analyzing how oversexualization is depicted through visual elements. Meanwhile, the male gaze is

observed through the cinematic structure that combines a threefold look: camera, male character, and audience.

Nudity

Nudity is indeed not specifically prohibited, especially in films produced by production houses affiliated with the Motion Picture Association (MPA). Regulations regarding nudity are solely based on the Film Ratings System, which is categorized into G, PG, PG-13, R, and NC-17 (Motion Picture Association, 2024). Although not prohibited, excessive depiction of nudity can be considered exploitative behavior aimed at appealing to the audience (Matthes & Prieler, 2020). *Blonde* carries an NC-17 rating (no one 17 and under admitted). This implies that there are numerous instances of nudity and restricted content in the film. There are 10 scenes in Blonde that feature nudity, eight of which involve nudity by Monroe. Of the eight scenes, only two are contextually relevant to the story. The remaining six scenes fall under unnecessary nudity, which refers to nudity that lacks contextual relevance to the narrative (discussed in the following point). One of the scenes featuring Monroe's nudity occurs when Monroe and Charles Chaplin Jr. face the mirror while topless (TC 39:53-41:09).



Figure 1: Monroe and Chaplin Jr. naked scene (TC 39:53-41:09).

The male gaze is evident in how the male character gazed at Monroe's naked body while indulging in enjoyment. Additionally, the male gaze is also manifested through the camera, which is taken with a two-shot frame, capturing two characters in the shot. (Brown, 2016). This scene is also captured using a very slow zoom-in technique. The scene lasts for a considerable duration of 16 seconds, aiming to explicitly expose Monroe in a state of nudity. The slow zoom-in implies Edward G Robinson Jr. approaching Monroe and Chaplin Jr., as in this scene, the three of them are depicted engaging in a threesome sex activity.

Unnecessary Nudity

As previously discussed, there are several nude scenes that seem unrelated to the film's plot. For instance, the scene where Monroe is slapped by DiMaggio (TC 1:25:49-1:27:29) after he discovers that Monroe had posed nude for magazines, pin-ups, and calendars.

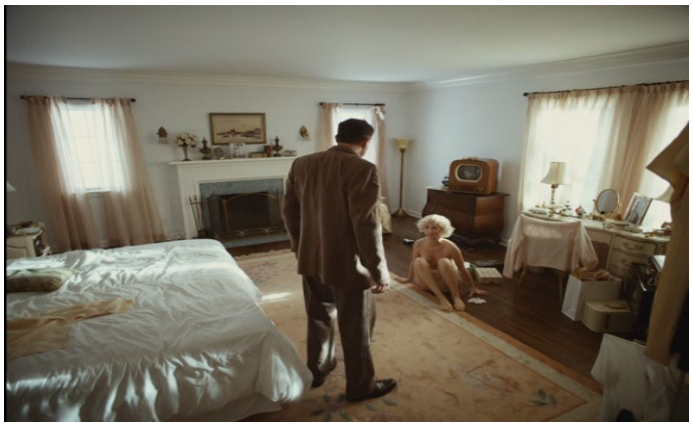


Figure 2: Monroe slapped by DiMaggio scene (TC 1:25:49-1:27:29)

This scene could have been depicted with Monroe fully clothed. However, the filmmakers chose to strip her. The male gaze in this scene is evident through the use of a medium shot that clearly shows Monroe. Additionally, the high angle shot conveys DiMaggio's dominance over Monroe's breasts (Brown, 2016). The use of "daddy" to address DiMaggio further reinforces the impression of dominance and degradation of Monroe.

Threesome Fantasy

This scene is a result of fictionalization, as the threesome incident was never proven in Monroe's life. While Chaplin Jr. and Robinson Jr. admitted to having romantic relationships with Monroe, there was no evidence of a throuple relationship (Biggs, 2022). This scene is oversexualized through three forms of male gaze: the camera, male characters, and audience. Technically, the scene is filmed using a medium close-up (MCU) frame, which typically captures from the top of the head to the waist. The purpose of the MCU is to showcase the characters' expressions and the details of how they are dressed (or not dressed) (Brown, 2016). The duration of this scene is also notably long, lasting almost five minutes (TC 41:19-46:04).



Figure 3: Monroe's threesome scene (TC 41:19-46:04).

The purpose is none other than to exploit the threesome sex scene that is fantasized and fictionalized. Male gaze by the male characters also contributes to the oversexualization of this scene. Both men are shown gazing at and manipulating Monroe's body as if she were a doll. From the audience's perspective, this scene is presented through two forms of visualization: the first is ordinary visual storytelling (TC 41:19-41:26), followed by visual

metaphor (TC 41:26-42:04), which is the ability of images to convey a meaning beyond their straightforward reality (Brown, 2016). Through visual metaphor, the audience is invited to partake in the fantasy during the threesome sex scene. Viewing scenes that contain pornographic content can stimulate an individual's scopophilia instinct, potentially leading them to engage in fantasy or even actions such as masturbation (von Andrian-Werburg et al., 2024).

Ass Gazing

In the opening scenes of the film, several instances of ass gazing (the act of sexually ogling a woman's buttocks) directed at Monroe are depicted. She is perceived merely as a woman with attractive buttocks by men, portrayed through the male gaze of the camera and male characters. For example, when Monroe walks towards Mr. Shinn (TC 17:59-18:04), all the men she passes gaze at her buttocks. Then, in the scene where Monroe is doing a screen test for the film "Don't Bother to Knock" (TC 28:16-28:27), director Baker does not see her as an actress, but rather as a sexual object by saying *"look at the ass on that little girl"*. In the subsequent scene during the shooting of the film "The Seven Year Itch" (TC 1:27:30-1:30:23), her skirt is lifted, and she is watched by hundreds of people, including the film crew, journalists, and other men at the location.



Figure 4: Monroe's skirt exposed scene (TC 1:27:30-1:30:23)

This scene exaggerates Monroe's famous pose, exploiting it by using various types of frames, ranging from full shot, medium shot, medium close-up, close-up, to extreme close-up on Monroe's private part. Repetition is also evident in the scene where Monroe's skirt is lifted, extending to a duration of approximately three minutes solely to expose Monroe's private parts and to show the lecherous and gleeful expressions of the hundreds of men witnessing Monroe's lifted skirt, revealing her underpants and buttocks.

Glorifying Rape Culture

The film amorally narrates that Monroe was raped by producer Mr. Z, attributed to Darryl F. Zanuck (Dargis, 2022). In fact, Monroe was historically never raped by a Hollywood producer (Summers, 2022). The portrayal of the rape scene is accentuated through the male gaze via the camera, explicitly showing the perpetrator's penis in a close-up shot (TC 1:07:28). Then, the process of how Monroe is raped is depicted (TC 1:07:28-1:07:48). This is certainly too detailed in portraying a rape scene.



Figure 5 & 6: Monroe being raped & forced blow job scenes

The next similar scene was when Monroe is invited to the room of Mr. President, addressed to President John Fitzgerald Kennedy (2:13:34-2:18:12). Monroe was forced to engage in oral sex with Kennedy. This scene is also a fictionalized creation by director Andrew Dominik in oversexualizing Monroe; there is no concrete evidence that Kennedy ever had a sexual relationship with Monroe (Dargis, 2022; Summers, 2022). The male gaze is portrayed through the camera with close-up shots of Monroe's face during the oral sex, and through the audience with the depiction of scenes as if Monroe is being watched by the audience on a cinema's widescreen. Similar to nudity, the depiction of rape scenes is not specifically regulated in detail by the Motion Picture Association (MPA), thus film producers strive to include rape culture in their films for capital gain. However, scenes containing rape culture have the potential to inspire viewers to sexualize, be titillated by, or fantasize about sexual violence (Dethero, 2023). Ideologically, such depictions can further perpetuate patriarchal ideology, increase domination over women, and exacerbate the objectification of women's bodies. Producers should exercise greater discretion when creating films containing rape culture and sexual assault content and should empathize with women and survivors. This fictionalized portrayal represents a form of overexploitation and oversexualization at its worst. Discourse level analysis is presented in a table format:

Table 1: Sara Mills' discourse level analysis

Item	***Analysis***
Characters/roles	Female characters are more likely to be described in terms of their legs and parts of their bodies. Monroe in the film Blonde is described as a dumb blonde, blonde sexpot, sexy ass, meat, whore, dirty girl, dirty slut.
Fragmentation	Fragmentation of the female is therefore associated with male focalization - the female represented as an object, a collection of objects, for the male gaze. Monroe in the film Blonde is perceived as a sexual object, a girl with mental illness, a girl with daddy issues, not a talented actress, an actress with non-serious roles, an obedient baby.
Focalization	Position relative to the story, and degree of persistence. With regard to position relative to the story, focalization can be either external or internal to the story. Monroe describes herself, as seen in the narration using the word "I," but it is internalized by the male perspective.
Schemata	Large-scale frameworks of text. Monroe is depicted as a woman who has had family issues since childhood, suffers from daddy issues, is mentally sick, depicted as an obedient baby, a dumb blonde, and her entire life is dedicated to being a sexual object for men. There is no meaningful message conveyed by this film in various aspects.

CONCLUSION

Andrew Dominik's film *Blonde* has succeeded in oversexualizing the character of Marilyn Monroe precisely on the 60th anniversary of her death. Oversexualization was carried out for capitalistic purposes by stimulating the scopophilia instinct of the audience. The analysis of oversexualization was conducted using Sara Mills' Critical Discourse Analysis, observed through word level, phrase or sentence level, and discourse level analysis. The Male Gaze Theory was also employed to uncover how oversexualization is executed through visual language, obtained through camera gaze, male character gaze, and audience gaze. The final outcome of the research reveals that oversexualization is accomplished through the representation of nudity and unnecessary nudity of the Monroe character, threesome fantasies, ass gazing, and glorification of rape culture. Ideologically, this film could perpetuate patriarchal ideology, increase domination over women, and exacerbate the objectification of women's bodies. Producers should exercise greater discretion in creating films with content depicting rape culture and sexual assault, and show empathy towards women and survivors. This fictionalized depiction represents the worst form of overexploitation and oversexualization. Compared to Megan Fox, Scarlett Johansson, and Sydney Sweeney in their films, the oversexualization in *Blonde* tends to exploit in two ways, firstly, exploitation of the actress (Ana de Armas) who is often shown naked and helpless, secondly, exploitation of Marilyn Monroe's character who has always been exploited by mass media and pop culture as a "sex symbol" and "dumb blonde".

BIODATA

Muhammad Dicka Ma'arief Alyatalatthaf, S.I.Kom., M.I.Kom., is a lecturer in the Department of Applied Social Humanities (Vocational), Multimedia Broadcasting Study Program, Universitas Indonesia, Jawa Barat 16424, Indonesia. He is actively engaged in research in the field of mass media, particularly in gender and feminism studies, critical discourse analysis, and several other textual analysis. He also conducts research in the field of photography, which includes creating photographic works, analyzing photography, and photojournalism. Email: muhammad.dicka15@ui.ac.id

Natalia Faradheta Putri, S.Pd., M.App.Ling., is a lecturer in the Tourism Study Program, Kalbis University, Jakarta Timur 13210, Indonesia. With an educational background in linguistics, her research focuses on discourse analysis, Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), and sociolinguistics. Email: nfaradheta@gmail.com

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