

Exploring the Effects of Electra Complex on the Character of Norma Jeane in the Movie *Blonde*: A Psychoanalytic Study

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Abstract

This article analysed Electra complex as a theme in the biopic of Marilyn Monroe named as “Blonde”, which is the adaptation of the novel written by Joyce Carlos Oates. The purpose of this article was to make the readers understand Electra Complex as a theme in the movie, and how Electra Complex affected the life of Norma Jeane as an ordinary individual and as a celebrity (Marilyn Monroe). The character of Norma Jeane losing the sense of reality and illusion in the movie has been analysed for that purpose. The researcher used the Qualitative analysis method and applied the psychoanalytic theory of Sigmund Freud and the psychosexual stages of human personality for the thematic analysis of the written script of the movie. The findings showed that Marilyn Monroe (Norma Jeane) was a victim of Electra Complex, which led her towards severe mental disorders, which became the cause of her death. This article also proved that it is important for the child to pass through the initial personality development stages successfully. Otherwise, the child in his/her adult life will not be able to function as a normal individual in his/her practical life.

Keywords: *Electra Complex, Marilyn Monroe, Norma Jeane, psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud*

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Doi: <https://doi.org/10.54692/jelle.2024.0602217>

Introduction

The human mind is so complex that it is important to have a variety of categories or mediums to understand how it works. This is why there is a wide range of genres or topics for literature and movies. Talking about the movie industry, every country has its own industry, representing myriad cultures, places, humans and much more. In this regard, the Hollywood industry dominates all other industries due to its versatility. Another reason for its worldwide popularity in the modern era is English dominance. It is the only language that has been spoken and understood as a common mode of communication all around the world. It has become a part of our lives (Rao, 2019).

The movies serve as a mirror to our society and human beings form societies by mutually interacting with one another (Hossain et al., 2014). Movies are now considered as one of the highest forms of art (Jameson, 2021), and so is the literature (Krishna, 2023),

which means all of the above-mentioned terms are connected to one another. Hence, to understand all these terms, it is important to understand the human mind and how it functions in terms of the environment and experiences. All of these things come under the study of "Psychoanalysis". The main idea of psychoanalysis is that the human mind comprises feelings, thoughts, desires and memories (Khatri, 2023). Human minds store all of these thoughts or memories from the environment and experiences (George, 2024). Different philosophers came up with different ideas and theories as per their own studies and experiences in the field of psychoanalysis. Still, Sigmund Freud is considered as "the Father of Psychoanalysis" in this regard (Nash, 2018). For this research, it is important to first understand the term "Electra Complex". This will help in understanding the character of Norma Jeane, how her mind develops in the movie, and the consequences she faces due to this complexity.

Statement of the Problem

This research aims to investigate the influence of Electra Complex on the character development of Norma Jeane in the movie *Blonde* through a psychoanalytic lens. The study seeks to explore how Norma Jeane's dynamic relationship with her mother results in her portrayal of Electra Complex traits, which as a result, influence her personality development, interpersonal relationships, behavioural patterns, identity crises, and mental health deterioration. Through an in-depth analysis of the characters' interactions and psychological struggles showcased in the movie, the research attempts to explain the complicated interchange between familial dynamics and the individual psyche under the light of Freudian theory.

Significance of the Study

This research paper will help readers understand Electra Complex and its influence on Norma Jeane's character development in the movie "Blonde". By applying psychoanalysis theory, the readers would be able to understand a complicated interplay between Norma's actions and thoughts, which would help in understanding an ordinary citizen. This research helps researchers and academia in the relevant field of film studies and helps them understand how one of the earliest Freudian theories is still relevant and can manifest in cinematic narratives. Exposing the complexities of Electra Complex within the context of Norma Jeane's life and her journey to become Marilyn Monroe not only offers a

deeper understanding of her character when she was alive in real life, but it also contributes to deeply understanding the issues related to gender identity crises, Western societal norms, modernity vs. values, ugly sight of media and complexities of human psyche depicted through the movie *Blonde*.

Research objectives

1. To explore the theme of Electra Complex in the movie “Blonde” by Andrew Dominik.
2. To analyse the character of Norma Jeane from childhood leading towards Marilyn Monroe as an adult.

Research Questions

1. What scenes or dialogues show the development of Electra Complex in the personality of Marilyn Monroe?
2. How does Electra Complex affect the life of Marilyn Monroe in the movie?

Definition of the Key Terms

Psychoanalysis: Psychoanalysis is a method and theory that explores the unconscious mind in order to unveil suppressed feelings and interpret deep-seated emotions and how they affect the brain’s working. The most commonly used techniques in psychoanalysis are dream analysis and free association. The primary beliefs related to psychoanalysis are that human beings possess unconscious thoughts, feelings, desires, and memories (McLeod, 2024).

Electra Complex: The Electra complex is a psychoanalytic term used to describe a girl’s sense of competition with her mother for the affection of her father. It is comparable to the Oedipus complex in males (Katunar, 2022).

Literature Review

Blonde (2022) is a biopic, direction and screenplay by Andrew Dominik and is an adaptation of the novel by James Carlos Oates in 2006. The movie stars some of the refined actors and fresh faces, including Ana de Armas as Marilyn Monroe, Julianne Nicholson as Gladys (her mother), Bobby Cannavale as Joe DiMaggio (the ex-athlete), Adrian Brody as Arther Miller (the playwright known for “The Death of a Salesman”), and many more. The

*Exploring the Effects of Electra Complex on the Character of Norma Jeane in the Movie Blonde:
A Psychoanalytic Study*

movie explores the life of one of the iconic actresses and singers of all times, Marilyn Monroe, as she struggles with her fame, relationships and identity in the glamorous filth of Hollywood. The narrative of the movie is non-linear, which portrays Monroe's war against the reality and illusion, love and acceptance, desires and societal pressures which ultimately becomes the cause of her sudden demise. The aesthetic visuals and the mesmerising acting of the performers seen in the movie leave the audience awestruck, giving an opportunity to rethink the people who might be suffering like Marilyn Monroe in one way or another.

The novel "Blonde" itself depicts the fictional life of Marilyn Monroe (where some of the life events are non-fictional as well), and the writer has "simply borrowed Monroe's destiny to write a novel". Many events of her actual life have been skipped. For example, Oates mentioned only one foster home out of all the foster homes where Marilyn lived. The mentioned one is fictional as well. The author herself mentions in the author's notes that she has picked some of the most symbolic events of her life (Kittle, 2008).

Hence, it proves that the movie is not the true depiction of the real-life Marilyn Monroe or the "Monroe" portrayed by Joyce Carlos as well. It is because the director is bound to cut down, omit or mould many chapters or events in order to concise the novel of 738 pages into an almost 3 hours movie (which is still quite a long runtime duration for a movie). Additionally, a director adds or improvises the storyline or the events as per his/her requirements to make it more of a unique and magical experience on the screens for the audience.

The movie was not a blockbuster hit. It did receive praise and backlash from critics and audiences at the same time. However, the director Andrew Dominik was not critical about the reviews, "Criticism only hurts if you agree with it, and I didn't really agree with any of it. I was expecting critical success and that no-one would see the film; Blonde was kind of the opposite. In America, they hated the movie. They were angry and outraged by the film – but a lot of people saw the film. I was kind of surprised by it." The director is of the view that reality must be shown just the way it is, but the audience wants to see things according to their opinions, emotions, and likings, despite the actual truth. He says, "They know every word of the story, and it brings them comfort; but I don't want to make bedtime stories." He further says, "What they said was that the movie exploited her – which was kind of strange, because she's dead. What they really mean is the film exploited their

memory or image of her – which is fair enough, it does. It's trying to take things that you're familiar with and turn the meaning of them inside out – that's what they don't like." In the end, Dominik says that a movie shows half of the truth- neither true nor false, "The reality is, most people see a movie on a TV screen anyway. The movie should work either way" (Dalton, 2022). Hence, in a sarcastic way, he defended the movie and the critics who gave bad reviews about his movie and hard work.

Although a significant amount of work is available on the theory of the Electra complex, the researchers have not yet attempted to conduct research work on the movie *Blonde*. Nevertheless, there are many review articles that mention the presence of Electra complex in the character of Norma Jeane. Through the articles that have been included in the literature review of this research work, the researcher will try to make the readers understand the theory and then will analyse the movie, especially the character of Norma Jeane, in the light of the theory.

Raza and Tahir (2019) have attempted to explore the Jungian theory of Electra Complex in the novel written by a Pakistani writer Kanza Javed named as *Ashes, Wine and Dust*. The researchers have tried to analyse the young female protagonist of the novel, Mariam Ameen, a father-fixated person for her paternal grandfather. Her hidden, unconscious desire for her grandfather is obvious because his grandfather play the role of a father figure in Mariam's life, who takes the position of her biological father immediately. Her infatuation towards his father-like Dadda can be seen even after his death. The researchers have analysed leitmotif of Parakneeti and the metaphorical journey of Mariam towards her grandfather's land-a journey towards self-discovery.

Owoh (2019), in a long essay, has attempted to examine the personality disorders in two movies. The researcher has applied the psychoanalysis theory of Sigmund Freud in order to trace the personality disorder in the characters that are under consideration for the study. For that purpose, the behavioural patterns, actions and dialogues have been deconstructed. They have also attempted to prove that through creativity, biological problems cannot only be detected but can also be resolved (pp.1-59).

Bharadwaj (2019) has attempted to explore the psyche of the protagonist of the novel "Cry the Peacock". 'Maya', as she is the victim of Electra Complex, becomes a psychoneurotic patient. Her father's fixation becomes the cause of her failed marriage. She

longs for love and affection on behalf of Gaurav; on the other hand, the prophecy of an astrologer keeps her uncomfortable. Throughout the novel, she has to get herself out of the world of fantasy and accept the world of reality (pp. 136-143).

Further, Fadila (2024) mentioned that *Blonde* has attempted to analyse different themes and aspects in the novel. The researcher has divided the research into five parts. The first part is a general overview of the author and the novel. Chapter one of part one deals with the analysis of the psychological condition of the protagonist and her alienation. He has also attempted to analyse the novel from Marxist perspective and how the modern man is the victim of alienation. Chapter two covers three stages of her life in which she struggles to maintain her family and career life. The protagonist has to suffer due to her Electra Complex in the later years of her life. Chapter three covers the dramatic representation by the author to show the alienation, dislocation and disillusionment of the protagonist. She tries to search her true self in the “mirrors of camera” but fails to do so. She gets stuck in the world of reality and her ideal world.

Theoretical Framework

The idea of Electra complex as a psychoanalytic theory was given by Sigmund Freud, who is considered one of the biggest names in psychology. According to him, as described by Carol and Carol (1993), there are ‘three structures of personality’: Id, Ego and Superego. Id is our unconscious “part of mind”. This is the only structure of personality that is present at the time of birth. It does not have anything to do with reality. It works on the ‘pleasure principle’. Freud calls it “a chaotic rumble of excitement” (p. 34). This stage works irrationally. When the desires increase tension within an individual, they start to show up in the form of dreams. Id takes the help of two processes to fulfil those desires. The first is the reflective act, in which the individual performs their first activity as early as they are exposed to ‘external stimuli’. In the primary process, Id tries to decrease its tension by imagining the object of pleasure. It is because it has no direct access to reality. This is when ‘Ego’ is developed. (Owoh, 2019)

Ego follows the “reality principle”. The individual is aware of their surroundings and the realities of life. This structure of personality acts as a mediator between the innate desires: the desires of the Id and the repression of the Superego. It works to “satisfy the demands” instead of threatening the survival instinct of an individual. This is called

“secondary process”. Conscious awareness of desires can be suppressed, but they start reviving in the form of dreams or through the tongue (Freudian slip). These desires start to expose themselves. Ego tries to prevent these desires from occurring. According to Freud, ego is established completely at age 2.

Lastly, the Superego is that stage or structure of personality in which the mind now understands moral values and knows how to behave appropriately. It is made possible through social interactions. It has all the good sense of “traditional values and ideals of society” taught to the child by his parents and others. All unfulfilled desires (relevant to the basic needs for survival, such as food, sex and murder) and forbidden thoughts that are stored in the Id have been suppressed and controlled by the superego’. Through this, the individual understands what behaviour is right and wrong to adopt. It becomes possible through the process of “identification”. This stage starts to develop from the age of 5-6, but it does not completely develop after “several years” have passed. Children are “motivated by love, fear and inspiration” at this stage. Hence, they derive their ideals through the inspirations or ideals of their own parents (pp. 432-434)

These structures are the basis of the psychosexual development of a child given by Freud, proving that a child’s sexual and aggressive approaches shape his proper development into an adult (Freud, 1953).

Through this concept, Freud derived the theory of the “Oedipus complex”, according to which boys around the age of 5 wish to have all the love of their mothers for themselves. In this way, they start to develop the emotion of jealousy towards their fathers and even an unintentional wish to murder them. He developed this concept after getting inspired by the story of King Oedipus, a masterpiece written by Sophocles (in which the king unintentionally kills his father and marries his mother) (Ahmed, 2012).

Similarly Carl Gustav Jung (1913), a Swiss psychologist, coined the term “Electra Complex” based on the Greek myth of Electra and Agamemnon. Jung tried to fill the “theoretical” void left or created by his fellow psychologists. He derived a female version of Freud’s theory. In which there is a female child who has a subconscious sexual desire towards her father. This “unconscious attachment” originates at the age of 3-5. The daughter thinks unconsciously that the mother has castrated her because she competes as well. She has done this in order to “possess her father” (Raza et al., 2019).

Research Methodology

Research Design

The methodology used for this research is content analysis, the focusing on exploring the character of Norma Jeane in the movie “Blonde”. The analysis centres upon the concept of Oedipal stages suggested by Sigmund Freud while examining the theme of the Electra Complex.

Data Collection

The resource for the collection of data is the Internet. The researcher has studied and collected the data with the help of many research articles, essays, research papers, and journals. The movie was watched multiple times for the analysis, and the script was reviewed in order to gather the data. Through this, certain emotions of the characters, scenes and words in lines from the script were collected, which addressed the theme of Electra Complex in the character of Norma Jeane.

Data Analysis

The collected data was discussed in the light of the theory of Freud (1953) and the 5 stages of personality development in order to identify the problems that were faced by Norma Jeane during her Oedipal stages which later on emerged as Electra Complex in the personality of Norma Jeane, affecting her life and mental state simultaneously.

Findings and Discussion

The psychosexual stages of a child, which helped to understand the development of the personality of Norma Jeane and how, with the passage of time, Electra Complex became part of her personality in the adulthood. McLeod (2019) in his article explains 5 psychosexual stages. Oral stage, Anal stage, Phallic stage, Latency stage and Genital stage. But in the movie, it can be seen that director has shown these four stages in a non-sequential manner: the ‘oral’ stage (age 0-1) (which has not been shown in detail), the ‘phallic’ stage (age 3-5) and the ‘latency’ stage (age 6-12), and lastly the ‘genital’ stage (12-later). The movie entirely depends upon this stage.

In the 'oral' stage, the child fulfils his or her basic desires through the mouth in the form of food intake, sucking any object or the thumb, more specifically, the breasts. According to Freud, if the child develops the habit of satisfying his or her excessive “oral

needs” or gets frustrated for not being able to satisfy those needs, he or she may also develop the habit of excessive eating or smoking in his/her adult life. If the child passes this stage successfully, the child will develop a good habit of trusting others, but will not depend upon them entirely (McLeod, 2019).

In this movie it can be seen that the director has not shown all of these stages in a linear order. The movie is entirely based upon the adult life of Monroe. But it is important to discuss these stages in order to understand how did Norma develop the Electra Complex and what were the reasons? In the initial scenes, through the dialogues of Norma Jeane’s mother it can be seen that she did not treat her daughter in a careful manner. Although, she wants to love her, yet she ends up treating her like the ‘untouchable’ or a ‘stranger’ or a ‘disgrace’ at many occasions. There is a sense of hatred, sadness and pity in the dialogues:

So much excitement, now she’s exhausted. Her head lolls on her shoulders as mother walks her into the bedroom and lays her down on the sagging bed. Gladys tugs off her shoes and opens the top drawer of the bureau, to remove a towel to place beneath Norma Jeane’s head. GLADYS: Here, so you won’t drool on my pillow. (Gladys straightens, looks down into the empty drawer. (CUT TO A STRANGE LOW ANGLE; LOOKING UP AT GLADYS, FROM WITHIN). GLADYS: D’you remember, Norma Jeane, who used to sleep in here? In this drawer? Don’t you remember? (Norma Jeane shakes her sleepy head no). GLADYS: You! You, Norma Jeane! You used to sleep in this very drawer! We were so poor that this drawer was your crib. But it was good enough for us, wasn’t it?” (Oates, 2009, p. 5).

It seems like the mother wants to love her but she fails to do so. There are two reasons that have also been shown visually through the scenes: 1) It is because the mother thinks that the illegitimacy of her daughter is the reason why her husband left the two in a miserable condition. “She blames Norma for their abandonment” (Liu). 2) The juxtaposed scenes of her mother’s mood from being all happy and excited for Norma Jeane’s birthday to being rude and abusive towards her daughter shows the effects of the loss of her husband over her mental and emotional conditions. Somewhat she was trying to hide her actual emotions but this results in her mental deterioration. Later in the scenes, as the movie progresses, her mother has to go to the mental hospital.

On another occasion, the director has visually represented the drawer scene. The scene has been represented in a form of a memory in a dream. Although the circumstances are different. Norma, now as Marilyn Monroe, gets pregnant for the first time with her lovers, Cass Chaplin and Eddy Robinson Jr. She gets happy and excited but a certain feeling haunts her when she meets her mother, who has been diagnosed with an unknown mental condition (it was believed to be Schizophrenia). She thinks that maybe she too would have inherited the same mental condition as well for when she asks that, "Is it inherited? DR. BENDER: Excuse me? NORMA JEANE: My mother's illness? Are you born with it in your blood?", the doctor remains speechless (Oates, 2009, p. 43).

She decides to abort the baby. She would be even on her way to the hospital but she knocks at the glass in the studio car, "Oh, hey! - I changed my mind, see? My mind is my own, to change. It is." But the scene immediately changes, and she is on the patient's bed. At this stage, she is unable to identify between what is reality and what is illusion. Her subconscious desires and thoughts start to merge with the reality. The doctors and nurses start to process of abortion, but she keeps on screaming, "Please don't! Won't you listen? (Oates, 2009, p. 46). But the doctors do not listen to her. In her sleep, she dreams;

ALONG A CORRIDOR ... Running barefoot, panting. "It's not too late!"
Up a flight of stairs. there's smoke, the door unlocked, so she pushes it
open: A familiar place... THE APARTMENT ON 848 HIGHLAND
AVENUE! ...though full of smoke! In the next room a muffled sound.
Yes.....GLADYS' BEDROOM. The bureau. The drawer she must open.
Tug, tug, tug, at last it opens! And there is "BABY", flailing his tiny hands
and feet, gasping for air. "Thank God! She's saved him!" Knock-knock-
Knocking. (Oates, 2009, p. 47).

This baby is Norma Jeane and as a baby, the whole dream can be interpreted as a struggle of Marilyn Monroe trying to save her true self or identity. It can also be taken as a subconscious desire of Marilyn Monroe who struggles to pacify a part of her own self. Also, she sees herself at her mother's apartment but instead of seeing her mother, she sees herself as Gladys (she sees herself as a mother figure), this indicates her longing for becoming a mother. It can also be seen that the 3rd speaker refers child as "him". It shows that Monroe desires to have a male child in order to fill the gap of a missing fatherly-figure

in her life.

Hence, it was obvious for Marilyn to become the victim of Electra Complex in her later stages. In fact, she adopts a “negative Electra complex” (Rivieccio, 2021). It is because her father was not present there at the very first place. She does not develop a sense of competition with her mother. Furthermore, from the very young age she starts to feel loveless and abandoned at the hands of her mother as well.

The absence of the visual representation of Norma Jeane’s ‘oral’ stage shows that she could not get a chance to fulfil her oral desires in early stages. Later in the movie, she does become an addict and starts to smoke excessively.

She calls almost all of her lovers and husbands as “daddy.” The song “Bye, Bye Baby” from *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* can be a connection to the abortions she has “in order to do the picture” but her main concern was that she fears that her mental illness might be inherited by her) (Ebiri, 2022). Norma tries to get “love and acceptance” through new image as Marilyn, with the help of which she explores the “intimate corners of her life”.

The absence of the ‘anal’ stage in the movie again shows that Norma Jeane did not develop a right sort of ‘Ego’. At this stage, where a child is trained to employ control over their bodily functions, Norma Jeane is unable to learn. It can be seen later in her adulthood. Sometimes she acts as a “flexible” and “tidy” adult. She dresses up elegantly and she has a good aesthetic sense. But on many occasions, she acts all “messy” and careless in her behavior. This can also give a hint of psychoneuroses. She fails to act like an adult (McLeod, 2019).

McLeod (2019) in his article explains the ‘phallic’ and the ‘latency’ stages. According to Freud, ‘phallic’ stage is “the most controversial stage”. In this stage, a child starts to develop sexual desires. In the context of the movie, since there is a female protagonist as a child, the girl unintentionally does develop a sort of an attraction towards her father. Unfortunately, her father is absent physically. As a birthday surprise, her mother shows her the portrait of her father:

(Norma Jeane looks to where Gladys is pointing. It is not a man: It is a picture of a man; hanging on the wall beside the bureau mirror).

NORMA JEANE: Father? Norma Jean’s heart, so fluttery, like a

hummingbird's wings. NORMA JEANE: He- he's my f- father?
GLADYS Shh! Look. Your father. (Reverent silence as they
contemplate the man- in-the-picture-frame, the man-in-the-
photograph, the man-with-a-pencil-thin moustache- and-dark-soulful-
eyes) (Oates, 2009, p. 2).

But the mother's possessiveness towards the husband's photo-frame shows that maybe the mother also fears for the child to develop the attachment or attraction towards her father; "Gladys: His name is a beautiful name and it's an important name but it's a name I can't utter. (Gladys removes the photo from the wall and cradles it at Norma Jeane's eye-level). GLADYS Here. But, no - mustn't touch with sticky fingers. (Norma Jeane looks at the photo, from which a splintery light seems to be reflected)" (Oates, 2009, p. 2). At this stage, Norma has started to idealise her father. She finds the image of her father attractive.

Ebiri (2022) in his blog article says that the photo of his father, "a dashing figure with hat and mustache, hangs above Gladys's bed". Her mother tells young Norma Jeane that her father is a "big shot who lives in the Hollywood hills. Norma Jeane will have to spend the rest of her life of 36 years looking for "this man" in the picture, "both in the real world and through her relationships with men".

Also, the absence of her father does not make Norma "penis envy", instead she tries to find love in her mother. She idealises her mother and tries to seek love from her because she is also able to relate to her condition physically as well as emotionally. But her mother thinks that she is the ultimate reason for the absence of a male figure in her life. The fact that Norma is not a boy (through whom she could fulfill her desire for penis). The whole idea frustrates and haunts her. It can be seen that she tries to get rid of Norma by drowning her in the bathtub full of water.

Another point to be noticed is that her mother plays a major role in keeping Norma in giving a false hope. This is the reason why Norma creates an illusional world and thrives to make her illusion a reality. She says to Norma "So, your father. But it's our secret, Norma Jeane. Enough for you to know that he's away - for now. But he'll return one day soon. He's promised" (Blonde. pp.3). Her mother, while she is still sane, tries to meet her

husband, who is said to be a guy named Mortensen at the time of Norma Jeane's birth. However, he was not her father and later the child was baptised as Norma Jeane Baker (Summers pp. 6). Her mother makes her sit in the car and starts to drive towards "Fireballs roll down the Hollywood Hills like the wrath of Jehova". Where "other cars head in the opposite direction; downhill" (Oates, 2009, p. 5).

She keeps driving towards the burning woods. She keeps on scolding her although Norma is scared:

"GLADYS (shrill & fast) Don't look at me like that!.. Don't squint as if I'm going to crash this car in the next instant, you'll make yourself need glasses and that's the end for you! Stop squirming like a little snake needing to pee. NORMA JEANE Oh, Mother, what if the house burns down? I forgot my Tiger. GLADYS That Toy! You'd be fortunate if it did burn. It's a morbid attachment" (Oates, 2009, p. 6).

The police officers stop her on the way:

SHERIFF'S DEPUTY Where the hell do you think you're going?
GLADYS Home. I live at the top of Laurel Canyon and I have right to drive home, don't I? SHERIFF'S DEPUTY Where exactly? What's the address? GLADYS That's my business... GLADYS (calmly) We've been invited to a private residence at the very top of Laurel Canyon. The owner has a fireproof mansion. My daughter and I will be safe there. I can't say this man's name, officer, but it's a name you all know. A titan in the film industry. This little girl is his daughter. This is a city of sand and nothing will long endure but we're going (Oates, 2009, pp. 6-7).

But she could not convince the Sherrif to let her go. Hence, the last hope dies.

Both Norma Jeane and Gladys relate to each other and feel pity due to the absence of a male figure in their lives. But Norma suffers more in this case because she is

abandoned by her mother as well. In her rage and at the peak of her mental illness, she starts to curse Norma. She aggressively shakes her. Scared, Norma runs out of the apartment and rings the bell of the neighbor's apartment. For a time being, Norma finds

comfort from the neighbour's wife, Miss Flynn. But again, she has been kept in an illusion;

“Miss Flynn: Your Momma has been asking for you, Norma Jeane! The doctors say she's well enough to see you. Shall we go?” (Oates, 2009, p. 11). But, she has been taken to an orphanage.

“This is not a hospital. Where is the hospital? Where is Mother?... Miss Flynn: Please forgive me, Norma Jeane, there's no other place for you right now - your mother is sick, the doctors say she is very sick - she tried to hurt you, she can't be a mother to you just now - I can't be a mother to you just now...” (Oates, 2009, p. 13).

Her 'latency' stage, in which a child develops his/her 'Superego', fails to develop her personality (McLeod, 2024). Although, she does get a chance to “expand the social context” out of the circle of her immediate family. But the circumstances were not favourable. She does not get a proper environment in which she could develop new skills or attain knowledge about different things around her. She does not have an immediate family anymore. She fails to even adopt the values of her parents. This is the sign of familial disintegration as well, where her parents failed to give her love or raise her as a civilised child. This is what happens when a father abandons his family. The children have to suffer the most in this regard (Stephan. 2022). They suffer emotional damage and fail to grow as a normal and socially confident person.

It can be seen how Norma Jeane tries to resist and shows sort of an animalistic behaviour. This shows her mother's careless attitude towards her who failed to make her a decent child. On the other hand, this is the first sign of disillusionment which she will have to deal with later in the movie.

“Miss Flynn: Norma Jeane, please. Be a good girl please, Norma Jeane. Don't kick me, Norma Jeane!... NORMA JEANE: But I'm not an orphan! I have a mother! I have a father! My father lives in a big mansion in Beverly Hills! I'm not an orphan!” (Oates, 2009, p. 13).

At this stage, Norma Jeane has developed Electra Complex. The absence of her mother and she abandoning Norma Jeane deepens her desire to meet her father. Not only

for the sake of the fulfilment of her idealised or illusioned father-figure but to fill the void due to which her mother and she herself had to suffer.

Finally, Norma Jeane enters in her 'genital' stage, not as Norma Jeane but as Marilyn Monroe. At this stage, Norma has adopted a negative form of Electra complex. Although, it can be seen that she tries hard to get away from her past. But she fails to do so. By getting herself involved in the world of media, she does find a temporary escape but this illusion, this world of fantasy leads towards "her psychological dislocation" (Liu, 2007). But, somewhat she herself does not want to break her ties with the childhood. She wants to be loved and cared just like a child. "The commodity-image involves presenting her as a pitiable child, whose only interest is to return to the domestic sphere and discover the happy family life she never had. All she wants is to settle down 'like any girl' in her adult life." (Liu, 2007). She wants to fulfil her childhood desires. She still longs for paternal love and this is the reason why she visits her mother in the mental hospital. Again, she sympathises towards her mother, despite her ill-treatment towards her as a child. Yet, she does not get her love. In fact, she is reminded that she is just an illusion;

"GLADYS Where's my daughter! They said my daughter was coming. I don't know you. Who are you? Norma Jeane's stricken face. She doesn't know what to say." (Oates, 2009, p. 25).

Another point to be noticed is that she has chosen a wrong world for the quest of finding love and a "spiritual" and "biological" father (Liu, 2007). Due to the poor development of her brain during the psychosexual stages of life, she starts to look for fatherly love in her lovers and husbands. There are a number of times she refers her husbands /lovers as "Daddy". She even tries to behave like a good child only for the sake of love. "A caricature of a woman who calls almost every man in her life "daddy" (Ross, 2022).

"NORMA JEANE: Am I your good girl, Daddy? He laughs and kisses her. THE PLAYWRIGHT: You're my good girl, darling. My only love" (Oates, 2009, p. 72).

The more she craves for the paternal love and the more she expects that her lovers will satisfy her idealised fatherly image, the more she has to meet dissatisfied (Liu, 2007). Her failed marriages are the result of her constant shatter of her illusion.

*Exploring the Effects of Electra Complex on the Character of Norma Jeane in the Movie Blonde:
A Psychoanalytic Study*

“Every baby needs a Da-da-daddy/To keep her worry free. Every baby needs a da-da-daddy. But where’s the one for me?” (Oates, 2009, p. 112).

The illusion of letters from her father to her that kept an illusion or a false hope alive in order to act in the best manner. She is known as a “sex-pot”. and she even lets herself be harmed and used by many sexual predators just to find her father. She feels that something is wrong with her mental peace and sanity, yet for the sake of love and attention by her fans, she tries to stay sane. She has been constantly reminded that she is “beauty without brains”, yet she accepts everything (Kittle, 2008).

A delirious, extended threesome with Hollywood scions Charles Chaplin Jr. (Xavier Samuel) and Edward G. Robinson Jr. (Evan Williams); a physically abusive marriage to Joe DiMaggio (Bobby Cannavale); an emotionally codependent marriage to a brooding Arthur Miller (Adrien Brody). Each of these men lays a different kind of claim to her, illustrating the various forms of control and influence they exert over her life. The juniors explore her sexually. DiMaggio beats her mercilessly. Miller takes her words and puts them into his plays without telling her. Norma Jeane's search for a nonexistent father (Ebiri, 2022).

When the constant struggle starts to make her weak, the letters give her hope that her father is alive and loves her:

“Elderly voice: I will contact you again soon, Norma Jeane, in person. Look for me, my precious daughter, upon a special occasion in your life when both Daughter and Father can celebrate our long-denied love. Your Tearful Father” (Oates, 2009, p. 52).

She also hates the fact that people and her own father like her illusioned image that is presented on the screen instead of her true self as Norma Jeane:

“Elderly voice: I see your beautiful face often & wonder how you appear so untouched....” But in turn she simply says that that is not me whom you see on the screen (Oates, 2009, p. 53).

At the end, when she comes to know that all those letters were written to her by her first lover, her life shatters into many pieces. She was already lost. She had to

go through failed marriages; she had to go through controversies, she had to go through the loss of her children (through which she wanted to fill the void of her parents' love and her loveless childhood), and she became an addict. She started to hate the media attention. She still stayed alive through this all. She still was trying to pull everything together. But the reality about her father brings her world to an end. But it was too late: she was not anymore, a mentally stable person. She was alienated by her own reality and from the world. She became anti-social and failed to find peace. Her desires remain unfulfilled and she dies at the end. "She lurches around from pseudo-father to pseudo-father like a helpless naïf, searching for the deliverance that will never arrive." (Liu, 2007, p. 44).

Through her songs and her acting, she did try to express herself, but no one took her seriously because she acted like a carefree child. She was taken as a commodity. The only peace she could find was in her death.

Limitations of the Study

This study deals with just one theme, i.e. Electra complex in the movie in the light of Freudian's psychoanalytic theory. There are a number of themes, aspects and perspectives through which the movie can be, analysed, and left for future researchers to work upon. For example, disillusionment vs. reality, the ugly realities behind the glamorous world of the movie industry, familial integration and its effects, etc. The movie can also be analysed in light of film theories such as Adaptation theory, semiotic analysis, mise-en-scene analysis, and much more..

Conclusion

The Electra complex is a psychoanalytical concept that describes a girl's unconscious sexual desire for her father and competition with her mother. The Electra complex is a form of female Oedipus complex which occurs during the phallic stage of psychosexual development. In Andrew Dominik's "Blonde", the Electra complex is represented through the character of Marilyn Monroe. Monroe is represented as a young woman who is torn between her adoration for her father figure (the studio system/media) and her fear of her mother figure (the public's opinion of her). Her struggle to find a balance between her love and fear of these two entities is what drives the narrative of the film and the representation of the Electra complex.

*Exploring the Effects of Electra Complex on the Character of Norma Jeane in the Movie Blonde:
A Psychoanalytic Study*

Throughout the film, Monroe is seen as a victim of her father figure, the studio system, which has taken advantage of her and her talents for its own gain. Her father figure also represents an ideal that she is constantly striving for but never quite able to obtain. She is constantly seeking approval from the studio system and trying to please them in any way she can. At the same time, Monroe is also constantly trying to escape the public's opinion of her and the scrutiny that comes with being a celebrity.

This is represented by the mother figure in the film, which is the public's opinion of her. The public's opinion of Monroe is constantly changing, and she is never quite sure how they will react to her. This conflict between the father and mother figures in the film represents the Electra complex in "Blonde". Monroe is torn between her desire to please her father figure and her fear of her mother figure. She is constantly trying to find a balance between the two forces and yet is never quite able to do so. Monroe is ultimately unable to reconcile her conflicting emotions and finds herself stuck in a cycle of trying to please the studio and the public, only to fall in both endeavours. By exploring the Electra complex from Sigmund's point of view, Monroe's character in "Blonde" has been analysed. An insightful look into the struggles of young women and their relationship with their fathers and mothers has also been presented. The film shows the complexity of such relationships and how they can be difficult to navigate and reconcile.

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*Exploring the Effects of Electra Complex on the Character of Norma Jeane in the Movie Blonde:
A Psychoanalytic Study*

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