

# Example of a critique of my week with marilyn movie review

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Michelle Williams becomes Marilyn Monroe in the film *My Week With Marilyn*. It is obvious that Williams spent hours studying both movie and news footage of Monroe. Williams perfectly portrays Monroe's voice, body language, and facial expressions. This film gives viewers a glimpse into Monroe's fragile ego. Monroe's low self-esteem causes her to be late on the movie set and influences who she chooses to have in her inner circle. The story is told from the perspective of the young Colin Clark. Clark was only twenty-three years old when he landed his first job in filmmaking as the third assistant director on the set of Monroe's film, *The Prince and the Showgirl*. The film *My Week With Marilyn* is based on a memoir released by Clark in 1995 called *The Prince, The Showgirl, and Me*. Through Clark's experiences on and off the set, viewers gain insight into Monroe, Lawrence Olivier, and Paula Strasberg.

Clark tells the story of how Monroe felt insecure and disliked by Olivier, her co-star in the movie. Olivier did not have patience for Monroe's tardiness or her method acting. Through method acting, Monroe could not appear on the set until she felt ready and understood her character's motivation for a scene. Olivier could be quite mean to Monroe.

Clark's storytelling gives viewers insight into the relationship between Monroe's acting coach, Paula Strasburg and Monroe herself. Strasburg and Monroe seemed to need each other. Monroe needed Strasburg to tell her she was a great actress and how to act each scene. Strasburg simply needed to be needed. Strasburg felt important when Monroe needed her insight into acting a scene.

In regards to acting, Williams captures the essence of Monroe from the

beginning of the film. When Williams comes down the steps of the airplane in London, her every facial expression, step, and gesture is pure Monroe. For this scene, if footage of the real Monroe and Williams as Monroe were played side by side, viewers would not be able to tell the difference.

Next, at the press conference scene where Monroe gives an interview regarding the upcoming movie, Williams captures the beauty, sexiness, and flirtatiousness of Monroe. Williams even has Monroe's voice down perfectly. When Williams, as Monroe, appears onset to film the first scenes of *The Prince and the Showgirl*, Williams shows viewers Monroe's insecurity as she gets scared and overwhelmed and runs off the set. In other scenes where Monroe is at home, Williams shows us Monroe's sense of fun and freedom. Monroe just wants to be loved.

Zoé Wanamaker, as acting coach Paula Strasburg, shows us how her identity was intertwined with Monroe's. Wanamaker is quite believable as she shows how much she loves Monroe but also caters to Monroe's ego. In one scene, Strasburg gets down on her knees in front of Monroe and worships her and thanks God that she found Monroe. This scene is a little disturbing as the attachment Strasburg has for Monroe seems unnatural.

Eddie Redmayne as Colin Clark is good at playing a young man who is vulnerable to the charms of Monroe. Clark seems sweet and innocent so he did not stand a chance of saying no to Monroe. When the real Monroe wanted something or someone, nobody said no to her. It is a joy to watch Redmayne through his journey with Monroe. It is obvious he does not believe any of this is happening. Redmayne does excellent work looking incredulous that he is actually meeting and becoming friends with Monroe. One example

is when he comes into Monroe's dressing room to bring her to the set and she comes out of the shower naked and wet. Monroe does not seem embarrassed. The look on Clark's face is priceless. He looks like he is seeing an angel.

The cinematographers use a great deal of shallow focus close ups on Monroe to show her beauty, flawless skin, and gorgeous blue eyes. Scenes with close ups on Monroe include when she is coming down the stairs of the airplane, private moments with Monroe and Clark at Monroe's home, and when Monroe gives interviews regarding her movie. These close ups show how much Williams looks and acts like Monroe.

Close ups are used at least twice for scenes with Olivier. These are the scenes when Olivier is giving a soliloquy to his mirror. Olivier repeats lines from his previous films when he is frustrated with Monroe. Repeating lines from movies that he feels were of better quality soothe his temper and remind himself how great an actor he is when he has better scripts and better costars.

Another cinematography effect used on Monroe is slow-motion sequences. When Monroe is walking down the steps of the airplane upon her arrival in London, the slow-motion effects are breath taking. The effect makes Monroe seem like a magical, mythical creature who cannot possibly be real because of her pure perfection. Her movements are sheer grace.

One dramatic use of cinematography occurs in a scene where Monroe simply wants to go shopping on the streets of London like any normal person.

Unfortunately for Monroe, she is recognized everywhere she goes. In this scene, photographers and crowds surround her. Monroe's movements slow down while the photographer's flash bulbs go off around her creating a strobe effect that produces the feeling that Monroe is in danger of being crushed by the crowds. The cameras catch glimpses of Monroe's face and it is clear she is terrified. Even the audience feels the terror and worries that Monroe will be injured.

One significant editing technique is used at the end of the film. Clark has just finished seeing the final cut of *The Prince and the Showgirl*. Then the film flash-forwards to a clip of Monroe singing at another event in a sparkly black dress. The intention of this flash-forward seems to indicate that Monroe went on to continue in other roles and other appearances. In addition, this flash-forward allowed Clark to do a short voice-over sound effect. He says that he liked Monroe's embrace. He also says that Monroe knew how to make others feel special and that was her gift to people.

Sound is used to great effect in this film. When Monroe comes down the steps of the airplane, the only sound is that of the flashbulbs going off and the distant roar of the crowd. This creates the effect of a mysterious Monroe with a public that adores her but does not really know her.

Another scene that uses sound is the scene where Monroe is practically mobbed on the street by photographers. Monroe does not speak. The only sounds are those of the photographers flashbulbs and questions from the photographers and the crowd. The effect is frightening.

An interesting note about sound in this film is that Williams does her own singing as Monroe. Williams does a decent job of sounding like the real Monroe both as a singer and with her speaking voice. The movie opens with a scene of Monroe singing in a gorgeous gold gown. During the film, Monroe sings in her role in *The Prince and the Showgirl* and in a bathtub scene. The last scene of the film is Monroe singing in a black dress at what appears to be an event that happens after *The Prince and the Showgirl*. Many younger viewers may not know that Monroe actually released some music albums during her career.

The style seems to be realistic as the story unfolds authentically and naturally. Viewers know the story is told from Clark's point of view but he does not control the events of the film or even the storytelling. Redmayne is directed as Clark so that he is important to the film and important to Monroe but he blends into the background, as he should in the role of a third assistant director.

Williams is directed so that she shines as Monroe. Director Simon Curtis is able to elicit performances from Williams that channel Monroe's vulnerability, insecurity, vitality, and sexuality.

Director Curtis is trying to create the feel of a documentary or biography. It seems that Curtis wants to involve the audience in the film. Curtis succeeds. Viewers feel as if they are in the film with the characters and experiencing what the characters are experiencing. The film is directed in such a way that the story comes across as entirely plausible. The cast is directed so that they

are completely credible in their roles. Curtis directs the film so that viewers become caught up in the story and wonder what will happen next. Viewers are drawn in to care about what happens to the characters.

The main character, Monroe, is a huge figure in society so for the purposes of this film, society influenced the film. Monroe is an American actress who had a huge impact on the American audience as well as audiences all over the world. Everywhere Monroe went, people recognized her. Even today, people want to know about Monroe. Without Monroe, there would have been no film called *My Week With Marilyn*. Even though Monroe died in 1962, the public is still hungry for new information, images, or videos of Monroe.

Monroe's movies are available on cable television and DVDs and millions of people around the world watch these movies. People who were not even alive during Monroe's lifetime know who she is and admire her work.

This film, *My Week With Marilyn*, may affect society as well. Perhaps teenagers and young adults will see this film and become interested in learning more about Monroe. Teenagers and young adults may have heard about Monroe but may have never seen her work. Even though the real Monroe is not in this film, Williams does such an incredible job of portraying Monroe that viewers of all ages may feel as if they are getting to know Monroe. Sales of Monroe movies and merchandise may increase because of this film.

This film fits best in the drama genre. A plot drives it. The main plot revolves around wondering how the relationship between Clark and Monroe will

develop. Viewers continue watching to see if Clark and Monroe remain as friends or become sexually involved. The sub-plot consists of wondering how the film *The Prince and the Showgirl* will develop. Viewers wonder whether the stars will get along. Viewers will also question whether Monroe is emotionally and physically able to complete the movie. Another question to be answered is how Monroe's performance will look on film after the film is completed.

Another quality of genres is realistic characters, settings, and life situations. The characters are definitely realistic as they are based on people who really existed back in the 1960s when the film's action takes place. The setting is realistic as the action takes place in London and London is a real place. Real life situations are portrayed as Monroe, Olivier, and Clark really did work on the movie *The Prince and the Showgirl*.

One other quality of dramas is how the characters evolve and interact. Olivier evolved from being frustrated with Monroe to admiring her and her work. Monroe started out as highly insecure on the set but then she was able to compose herself and complete the film. She found her confidence along the way. The relationship between Monroe and Clark evolved from being complete strangers to being close friends. Monroe was able to relax and be herself around Clark. The friendship between Clark and Monroe is what helped Monroe to complete filming of *The Prince and the Showgirl*.

Film critics could argue that the subgenre of *My Week with Marilyn* is celebrity biopic. Biopics depict a real life person and explore either their



whole life or a certain period in their life. My Week With Marilyn is obviously based on a real person and it revolves around her experiences while filming The Prince and the Showgirl.

The approach to analyzing and interpreting this film has been that of one intended to inform and educate the audience about the film. One purpose of this review has been to share with the audience the pleasure and meaning of the film. It was a joy to watch Williams play Monroe. It was fun to see Monroe get to relax and romp around her estate outside of London.

Another purpose of this analysis is to introduce the audience to some of the language used in filmmaking and what that language means.

The overall textual themes of this film include overcoming drug and alcohol addiction, loss of innocence, exploring relationships, character development, and the burdens of fame. Monroe was addicted to drugs and alcohol. The drugs may not have been her fault. It seems the filmmakers pumped her full of drugs to get her to sleep and to get her to wake up in the morning. Mixing drugs of any kind with alcohol is life threatening. Monroe never did recover from her drug and alcohol addiction but she did pull herself together to complete the film.

Clark had never met anyone like Monroe before. He was shocked at how comfortable Monroe was with nudity. She let him see her naked in her dressing room and in the pond on her London estate. Clark had never been that free with his nudity. In a way, Clark lost his innocence because he overcame his modesty.

The film explored the relationship between Clark and Monroe. Viewers wanted to know how the relationship would develop. Viewers also wondered how Monroe would be able to stand Olivier's negative feelings toward her and her approach to work. Eventually, Olivier did soften in his attitude toward Monroe, which helped Monroe be able to complete the film. Olivier and Monroe may have never been close but they at least developed enough of a relationship to be able to work together.

It was enjoyable to watch Clark's character develop. He went from being the spoiled son of a rich family to literally begging for a job at Laurence Olivier's office. Clark camped out every day at Olivier's office before Olivier finally gave him a small assignment to find the actor Noel Coward's telephone number. Clark's career progressed from that point. Eventually he became third assistant director for *The Prince and the Showgirl*. Once on the set of the movie, he became a close confidant to Monroe and helped her make it through the filming of the movie.

The final textual theme, that of the burdens of fame, was clearly illustrated in this film. A huge crowd welcomed her at the airport when she first arrived in London. Photographers and fans mobbed Monroe on the street. Even the staff at the Windsor Castle was in awe of Monroe. Monroe was trapped by her fame. It affected her physical safety when she went out. It affected her emotionally because sometimes she felt she could not live up to the professional responsibilities she had in films. In addition, Monroe never knew when someone liked her for her or because she was Marilyn Monroe. That must be emotionally crippling.

Michelle Williams truly did become Marilyn Monroe in *My Week With Marilyn*. Williams showed viewers Monroe's emotional struggles, insecurities, vulnerabilities, and her struggle with alcohol and drugs. In addition, Williams showed us about Monroe's struggle to find someone to love her for her as well as Monroe's desire for a baby. Sometimes Monroe needed to escape from the pressures of being Marilyn Monroe, which is understandable. Williams showed viewers the playful side of Monroe when she was free to run around on her estate. Williams is to be commended for her portrayal of Monroe.

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