

A Rough Night for Comedy: The Female Gaze Through the Feminist Carnavalesque



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Abstract

This paper explores the female gaze in *ROUGH NIGHT* through a psychoanalysis approach and the characteristics of the feminist carnivalesque. Because the male gaze sexualises and objectifies women's bodies for the pleasure of men, it is a phenomenon in films that is highly criticized by feminists and therefore this paper uses the male gaze to look at the construction of a female gaze. The film *ROUGH NIGHT* is set in a carnivalesque setting that is established in the first scene of the film and it shines through the rest of the film. This carnivalesque setting allows the film to challenge certain norms and values by emphasizing these issues through joking. The feminist carnivalesque characteristics that are discussed in this paper are *loud laughter*, *grotesque corporeality*, *inappropriate exhibitionism*, and *anti-classical displays of femininity*. For this analysis it is interesting to look at the cosmetic gaze in a way that the female body needs constant improvement. Hence, to look at the way the female gaze points out the female bodily (im)perfections. The genre of female friendship also plays an important role in female identification, because female behaviour towards each other in film mirrors female relationships of female spectators. The 'ideal self' in *ROUGH NIGHT* represents itself as a woman who is allowed to be imperfect and has the right to fight for her imperfect self. The female gaze in *ROUGH NIGHT* seems in some aspects to indeed be the reverse of the male gaze. However, it is more than that, because it is also redefining what the role of women in comedy should be.

Contents

Introduction.....4

Theoretical Framework

 Male Gaze.....5

 Narcissistic Gaze.....6

 Female comedy.....7

 Other Genres.....8

Method.....10

Analysis

 Carnavalesque Setting.....11

 The Gaze on the Stripper.....12

 The Cosmetic Gaze.....16

Conclusion.....18

Bibliography

Appendix I

Appendix II

Introduction

Men were having the experience of seeing our point of view. They were becoming an audience for the female gaze in the same way women have been the audience for the male gaze for centuries.

∞ Judy Chicago¹

Hollywood comedies have a long history of targeting men as their main audience. In these films, women are often the subject of laughter. They are either sexualised or they are portrayed in a way that shows a low intelligence. Nowadays, Hollywood comedies are also made by women and for women. They tend to reshape the idea of what comedy should be. An important way to look at representation in films is to look at the perspective or point of view that is portrayed in films. A term that is often used in film analysis and feminist theory is the term *male gaze*. The male gaze in films show the point of view of male spectators, either from the camera's point of view or from the spectator's, often looking at the female body as an object. In these films a power relation becomes visible between male and female, where male define how females should be represented. Consequently, the manner in which women identify with the women on screen in these films is then also influenced.

Currently, with more films made by women and for women, the aforementioned male gaze has changed a female gaze. Many academics argue that this gaze is the opposite of the male gaze. Hence, the camera's point of view and the spectator's point of view simply look at the male body as a sexualized object. In this paper I would like to explore the female gaze in *ROUGH NIGHT* to ascertain whether the female gaze can indeed either be considered the opposite of the male gaze or the female gaze in modern comedies rather functions as a re-identifying female representation in comedies. I therefore would like to pose the following question:

- How is the female gaze formed in the comedy *ROUGH NIGHT*?

To answer this question, I will explore the comedy aspect of the film and the notion of the male gaze. I therefore have to answer the following sub-questions:

- How does humour in the comedy functions in forming a female gaze and female identity?
- How does *ROUGH NIGHT* question and challenge the male gaze in forming a female gaze?

ROUGH NIGHT is a film directed by Lucia Aniello and it is about a bachelorette party gone wrong. Five friends leave for Miami for the weekend to celebrate Jess' bachelorette, but when a stripper is accidentally killed, they spend the night covering up what they have done. The film can also be put in the genre of female friendship comedy films, because it focuses on the friendship of these five women.

¹ Johanna Demetrakas, dirs. *Feminists: what were they thinking?*, Netflix, 2018, <https://www.netflix.com/watch/80216844>.

Theoretical Framework

Male Gaze

The film theorist Lauren Mulvey first coined the term male gaze in 1975. She argued that the Hollywood film industry has revolved around phallocentrism, an ideology that centres around the male erected sexual organ (the phallus).² When in film theory feminist academics discuss the male and female role in films, it was common to bring in Freud's theory of psychoanalysis. Mulvey also uses his theory to explain arguments of phallus centrism in the Hollywood film industry. She points to Freud's argument that women, on the one hand, have been castrated and are therefore incomplete beings who constantly look for their missing penis to make their body complete, which Freud calls penis envy. Men, on the other hand, fear to be castrated and women are their constant reminder of this fear. Professor of Visual Culture Anneke Smelik explains that men try to avert this fear in several ways.³ The first way is called sadism in which "the woman's body has to be controlled and inserted into the social order."⁴ A second way she mentions to avert this fear is called fetishism. These two aversions are also present in Hollywood films. The voyeuristic gaze, or the erotic gaze, is followed by the feeling of guilt and the object of the guilty must be punished. In film this punishment leads to an act of violence, usually rape or murder of a woman who previously has been physically admired. Fetishistic scopophilia, however, turns the female character into a fetish. Here the female beauty draws attention away from her difference and her 'otherness' and therefore making her reassuring instead of dangerous.

The male gaze is then explained by Mulvey again through psychoanalysis and through Freud's theory of scopophilia and the narcissistic gaze. Scopophilia, which can be linked to the previous mentioned fetishism, means deriving sexual pleasure from watching others when they are naked or engaged in sexual activity.⁵ In Mulvey's definition of scopophilia the subject does not need to be naked or engaged in sexual activity. According to her it "arises from pleasure in using another person as an object of sexual stimulation through sight." Therefore, she says in films the act of looking is already enough to gain pleasure. Mulvey describes how these theories becomes visible in film. She says:

Mainstream film neatly combined spectacle and narrative ... The presence of woman is an indispensable element of spectacle in normal narrative film, yet her visual presence tends to

² Laura Mulvey, "Visual pleasure and narrative cinema," *Feminisms: An anthology of literary theory and criticism* 2 (1997): 342.

³ Anneke Smelik, "Lara Croft, Kill Bill and Feminist Film Studies," in *Doing Gender in Media, Art and Culture: A Comprehensive Guide to Gender Studies*. Milton: Routledge, 2017. Accessed February 24, 2020.

⁴ Smelik, "Lara Croft, Kill Bill and Feminist Film Studies," 197.

⁵ Lexico, "Scopophilia," accessed June 7 2020, <https://www.lexico.com/definition/scopophilia>.

*work against the development of a story line, to freeze the flow of action in moments of erotic contemplation. This alien presence then has to be integrated into cohesion with the narrative.*⁶

What Mulvey describes here is that the act of looking in film is emphasized and stimulated by pausing the narrative. In film this is often done by the effect of slow motion in which attention is drawn to the female body.

Because the male gaze sexualises and objectifies women's bodies for the pleasure of men, it is a phenomenon in films that is highly criticized by feminists. However, it raises questions about what the female gaze is or should be. Natalie Perfetti-Oates criticizes Mulvey on her male gaze theory by saying that she does not consider that the scopophilia gaze is also performed by women.⁷ According to her, the way men are portrayed in films by women is as much a social construct as the way women are portrayed in films by men. My study is too small to either confirm or reject her claim considering all modern Hollywood films created by women. However, I would like to make a start by looking at one comedy.

Narcissistic Gaze

The theory of phallogentrism revolves around the voyeuristic gaze, which leads to sadism, and the fetishist scopophilia, which glorifies the (fe)male body. The narcissistic gaze, on the other hand, is not about pleasure, but about identification. Smelik explains that the narcissistic gaze is more about wanting to be the other than to desire the other and says it is linked to Jacques Lacan's theory of the *mirror stage*.⁸ Film scholars, like Mulvey, see the screen on which the film is displayed as a mirror which shows the spectator their ideal self within the characters in the film. However, Smelik does see the narcissistic gaze as problematic, because in pop culture "identification leads to dissatisfaction with oneself instead of strengthening one's self-esteem."⁹ I would argue that this is only the case when the character in a film presents themselves as a figure of unrealistic perfection.

According to Bernadette Wegenstein the female's identity in film has often come from the cinematic approach towards cosmetic surgery. She therefore suggests replacing the notion of male gaze to the cosmetic gaze. She claims that "the cosmetic gaze is a way of perceiving our own and others' bodies as always requiring further modification to become complete."¹⁰ In the films she

⁶ Mulvey, 346.

⁷ Natalie Perfetti-Oates, "Chick Flicks and the Straight Female Gaze: Sexual Objectification and Sex Negativity in *New Moon*, *Forgetting Sarah Marshall*, *Magic Mike*, and *Fool's Gold*." *Absolute Erotic* (2015): 19.

⁸ Smelik, 200.

⁹ Smelik, 202.

¹⁰ Wegenstein, Bernadette. "Editing women: The Cosmetic Gaze and Cinema." In *The cosmetic gaze: body modification and construction of beauty*. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2012), 151.

analyses, in which all women undergo cosmetic surgery, she expresses her surprise that there is no question of women's original body being enough for the satisfaction of men that underlies the cinematic gaze. For my analysis I find it interesting to look at this cosmetic gaze as the female body that needs constant improvement, not as the female body that needs cosmetic surgery. Hence, to look at the way the female gaze points out the female bodily (im)perfections.

Female comedy

It is necessary to question representation of women in film when they are represented for the desire of men. Comedy is a good way to underline these unbalanced issues. According to Maggie Hennefeld "feminism has always had an uneasy relationship with comedy. Popular humour can be spectacularly violent, offensively profane, sexually objectifying, or, more routinely, aggressively normative."¹¹ This means that for women it is hard to establish a comedy that is both funny for male and female spectators while at the same time does not ridicule women. It is therefore important that women are represented in comedies in a way that is more relatable. Comedy, in a sense, can critically evaluate women's position in society. Yvonne Tasker writes: "comedy, as Kathleen Rowe suggests [...], does have a particular relationship to authority and to the transgression of social convention; comedy provides a space in which taboos can be addressed, made visible and also contained, negotiated."¹² It is then important to have comedies in which the position of women in western society can be challenged. This can be done with what Hennefeld calls *carnavalesque laughter*:

The feminist carnivalesque celebrates images of female excess – loud laughter, grotesque corporeality, inappropriate exhibitionism, and anti-classical displays of femininity – to defy sexist conventions and to assert women's entitlement to the exuberant pleasures of laughter and its liberating social potential.¹³

The feminist carnivalesque therefore provides a stage where binaries can be opposed and the normalized can be questioned. It is then interesting to look at how a comedy made by women use feminist carnivalesque to emphasize certain issues, think for example of slapstick humour.

¹¹ Maggie Hennefeld, *Specters of Slapstick & Silent Film Comediennes*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 6.

¹² Yvonne Tasker, "Acting Funny: Comedy and authority," in *Working girls: Gender and Sexuality in Popular Cinema* (London: Routledge, 1998), 163.

¹³ Maggie Hennefeld, *Specters of Slapstick & Silent Film Comediennes*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 11.

Other Genres

Just like many films, the film *ROUGH NIGHT* can fit into several genres. Most obvious, the film is a comedy, which I have discussed already. But the genres chick flick and female friendship can also be assigned to it. In chick flick films, according to Perfetti-Oates, sexual objectification is characterized by sex negativity. She claims that sexual objectification does not necessarily have the same role as the male gaze.¹⁴ A naked female body for a man is always sexual, a naked male body is not always sexual for women. It can show vulnerability and therefore relatability. Sexual objectivity in chick flick films can only be a tool for empowerment when object and subject are interchangeable. She gives the example of *Magic Mike*, in which Mike can only become a love interest for the female lead character after he quits his job as a stripper.¹⁵

Heidi Wildins focuses on the subgenre of female friendship movies.¹⁶ In this genre the relationship between male and female are less important than the relationships that the female characters have with each other. However, Yvonne Tasker says that “in narratives of heterosexual romance, female friendship is something to be left behind and, implicitly, to be grown out of.”¹⁷ Here she specifically aims at female friendship that tend to be a lesbian one. She claims that when a lesbian relationship develops in a film it either does not last or when it does, one of the lovers eventually dies.

To summarize, the male gaze comes from a psychoanalysis of Freud’s theory of phallogentrism. Mulvey talks about the voyeuristic gaze, that leads to sadistic aversion of fear, and the fetishistic gaze, that makes the object into a fetish to distract the fear. The question is here if these two gazes are also performed by women in the same way. I would like to add sexual objectification through sex negativity discussed by Perfetti-Oates because it shows what role sexual objectivity plays in a chick flick film. Next to the scopophilia gaze, there is the narcissistic gaze, which rather than pleasure it is about identification. I particularly find it interesting to see if there is a connection between the female gaze and identification through the ‘ideal self’ on the one hand and identification through the cosmetic gaze on the other hand. The genre of female friendship also plays an important role in female identification, because female behaviour towards each other in film mirrors female relationships of female spectators. Finally, in comedies women can question social structures within the feminist carnivalesque world. Therefore, to define a female gaze it is interesting to see how *ROUGH NIGHT* uses the gaze in a carnivalesque setting. These tools should be able to help answer the questions, how does

¹⁴ Perfetti-Oates, 27.

¹⁵ Perfetti-Oates,

¹⁶ Heidi Wildins, “Girl Talk: The Postmodern Female Voice in Chick Flicks.” In *Talkies, Road Movies and Chick Flicks: Gender, Genre and Film Sound in American Cinema*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016, 151.

¹⁷ Yvonne Tasker, “Female Friendship: Melodrama, romance, feminism,” in *Working girls: Gender and Sexuality in Popular Cinema* (London: Routledge, 1998), 151.

humour in *ROUGH NIGHT* functions in forming a female gaze and female identity and how does it question and challenge the male gaze in forming a female gaze?

Method

To analyse the female gaze in the film *ROUGH NIGHT* I would like to use a psychoanalytic approach together with a genre study of comedy. It is not in my reach, however, to do a thorough research of comedy and apply it to my case study. Therefore, I will limit myself to the feminist carnivalesque characteristics, discussed by Hennefeld, of *loud laughter*, *grotesque corporeality*, *inappropriate exhibitionism*, and *anti-classical display of femininity*. In my analysis I will link these characteristics to both the scopophilia gaze and the narcissistic gaze.

To start my analysis, I have made a plot segmentation for a structured overview of the film (appendix I). This enables me to better explain the scenes that I will be discussing. Next, I have made an analysis diagram for the entire film. The diagram should give me an overview of how comedy is used to emphasize the elements that make up for a female gaze and what this female gaze looks like. From this diagram I have chosen three scenes in which I will take a closer look:

- 1a – Ping pong contest
- 4b – Stripper arrives (and dies)
- 8e – Jess saves her friends

Scene 4b can be divided further into three parts and in my analysis I will focus on the first part, where the stripper is performing, and the third part, in which the stripper died. In addition, scene 8e will only discuss the part that takes place on the second floor of the beach house.¹⁸ In scenes 1a, 4b and 8e I will observe how the four mentioned carnivalesque characteristics are presented in these scenes and how they connect to the scopophilia gaze and the narcissistic gaze. Specifically, these characteristics will be outlined with sadism, the fetishistic gaze, the 'ideal self', the cosmetic self and sexual objectification, and sex negativity.

As mentioned before, the main focus of the analyses will be on the feminist carnivalesque characteristics and how they connect to different elements concerning the gaze. One of these characteristics is *loud laughter*, which in this analysis for consistency I have connected to slapstick humour. Another characteristic is an *anti-classical display of femininity*. I would like to note that femininity is a problematic term in which certain connotations are ascribed. Since this term has been so often been criticized by feminist scholars, it is difficult to use in objectively in my analysis. To describe something has feminine, will be described from my understanding of the connotations that are currently present.

¹⁸ *Rough Night*, 01:24:52-1:26:52

Analysis

Carnavalesque Setting

The first scene of the film *ROUGH NIGHT* already takes the spectator into a carnivalesque setting. The camera follows a woman dressed as a devil as she walks through a house door into a sorority costume party. Students are known for finding their place in society, while dressing up creates a space to take on another identity. This setting creates a liminal space in which society's conventions are challenged, just like they are in a carnival, in a humorous way. In this scene all four characteristics of feminist carnivalesque are present.

One of the first things that stand out is the breast costume Frankie and Blair are wearing. Each of them wears one enlarged breast in a bra and when they stand together their costume is a complete set of breasts in a bra. This breast costume both is a grotesque corporeality and inappropriate exhibition. Firstly, as the grotesque corporeality suggests, they are shown out of proportion. The breasts themselves are comical in the way that it is unusual to see two people with a large ball under their t-shirt's. However, they also challenge the way men tend to stare at breasts by emphasizing this phenomenon of the fetishistic gaze. This is present when Alice throws her ball into the opponent's cup and Blair and Frankie excitedly jump up and down. A male student's eyes are locked onto the already enlarged breast that now draw extra attention by the movement the girls make (figure 1). Blair's reaction to this student, which is saying 'Dude!', points out that this is unwanted behaviour. So, the breasts do not only show grotesque corporeality, but also address an existing issue.



Figure 1 Still from segmentation 1a: Male student looks at enlarged breasts.

Secondly, the breasts are inappropriately exhibited in a setting that takes away the inappropriateness. When a woman walks on the street in only her bra on it would be considered inappropriate, but as a costume at this costume party it is ok. Even more, the male student who is competing against Jess and Alice is only wearing a male shoulder thong which is also accepted within this context. It is because the carnivalesque setting accepts this exhibitionism, it allows the breast costume to become a comical factor in this scene.

Finally, the existing issue Blair is addressing also shows a scopophilia gaze followed by a subtle narcissistic gaze, because 'the ideal self' stands up for herself. Not once, but twice the student must be reminded that he shows unwanted behaviour. The second time he clearly gazes at the breast in an obsessive manner. The fact that Blair scolds the guy shows a reflection to the female spectator and it normalizes speaking out to harassment.

In this scene there is also an anti-classical display of femininity, which is emphasized by the carnivalesque setting of the costume party. Alice is dressed up as a princess in pink, already two fitting connotations of femininity. However, the way she looks does not "match" the way she acts. Alice shows signs of over drinking by not seeing straight and almost throwing up. When she gets nervous about throwing the last ball she says to Jess: "I'm sweating like crazy. I may look like a princess, but I smell like a peasant." Alice confirms this contradiction of femininity and anti-classical display of femininity here. It is this contradiction that makes it comical. A woman who is drunk is just sad, put the same woman in a princess costume and it becomes funny and can even be empowering, because it shows that even the princesses out there are not perfect. In this sense a drunken Alice in a pink princess costume is a subject of the narcissist gaze. The ideal self can be ideal even when it is imperfect sometimes.

Finally, this scene shows slapstick humour and therefore is prone for loud laughter. When Jess and Alice win the game, Jess want to get up on Alice's shoulder. But when she walks out of the room, Jess pumps her head on the doorframe and falls. This happens just after Jess shouts out "I'm the king of the world!" There are some interesting things happening in this moment. Slapstick humour is a sensitive subject for women, because according to Henefeld, "viewers express discomfort about laughing hysterically at even lighthearted images of women being beaten."¹⁹ However, just before Jess bumps her head and falls, she calls herself a "king" and not a "queen". Just for that temperate moment she switches role from female to male. To clarify, not just any man, but the "king of the world," which is a man in power. The slapstick then is not funny because she was the victim of pain, but in the role a man in power who became the victim of pain.

The Gaze on the Stripper

The carnivalesque setting of the first scene carries through the rest of the film. Although not in the sense of a costume party, the bachelorette party does provide a similar kind of carnivalesque setting in which the women 'dress up', among other things. As is tradition, the girls all wear sashes at one point. Bachelorette parties are also known to be events in which the person who will be married soon, is allowed to behave wild for the last time and therefore the film has this *what-happens-in Vegas-*

¹⁹ Henefeld, 1.

stays-in-Vegas atmosphere. It is because of this atmosphere that when the stripper dies by one of the girls' doing, the film can make it more comical.

This scene (segmentation 4b) starts by Blair answering the door after the bell rang. As soon Blair opens the door and sees a muscled man standing there, she assumes it is the stripper that was ordered before by Frankie. The stripper excuses himself to the bathroom, while the girls set up the stage for him. After he has done his act for Jess, Alice runs onto his lap and they fall over causing the stripper to bump his head and he dies. The friends try to reanimate him, but it does not work. In a state of chaos, the door rings again, this time for the pizza they have ordered. They are able to receive the pizza without the guy noticing something is wrong.

This scene can be divided by three parts. In the first part when the stripper arrives, there is this excitement and goofiness about the prospect of watching a stripper strip. In the second part, when the stripper dies, the scene becomes very dark which is emphasized by intensified music and by the showing of blood. The final part starts when Pippa turns off the dance music. Although the second part does still obtain comical remarks, in the third part the scene gradually increases comical puns, which lightens the intense situation. It is in the third part that the carnivalesque setting is used to show the spectator the comical aspect of the situation.

Division of segmentation 4b		
00:27:28 – 00:29:50	Stripper arrives	2 min 22 sec
00:29:50 – 00:30:52	Friends try to reanimate him	1 min 02 sec
00:30:52 – 00:34:27	Realization Stripper is dead	3 min 35 sec

The scopophilia gaze has a central role in the first part of this scene, which is occurring because there is a stripper performing. Pippa is saying to make some room and to set up the stage for him, which emphasizes the performance and the act of looking. However, the scopophilia gaze is present as soon as Blair opens the door and approves the man for his looks by saying: "Oh, not bad." Then when he enters the room Pippa and Jess are standing next to each other with a dreamy look in their eyes and saying 'hi' simultaneously. Finally, when he walks away to the bathroom all the girls follow him with their eyes. Hence, before he even starts stripping, the gaze is already present. The male character in this scene is therefor also objectified, not only because of the gaze, but it is also emphasized by the fact that he remains nameless and the girls keep referring to him as 'stripper'. In addition, they are talking about him while he is there as if he is not, making him irrelevant to participate in the conversation.

When the stripping starts the scopophilia gaze has changed into a fetishistic gaze, since the act of looking focusses more on the stripper getting naked. There is both inappropriate exhibition, the man is undressing his torso, and grotesque corporeality, his arms and torso are shown to be very muscular. These two elements are not meant to be funny in this scene. However, in a later scene, the stripper's grotesque corporeality loses its function as 'pleasure' and becomes more comical. This is made possible by using inappropriate exhibition in a different way. When Alice finds him staring at her and it creeps her out, she puts penis sunglasses on his face. His body then becomes a funny figure they move around from time to time. At some point he ends up in a sex swing that is situated in the house and is exhibited there (figure 2).



Figure 2: Still from segmentation 5d: Stripper is put into a sex swing.

The first part of this scene does show humour by contrasting the scopophilia gaze with anti-classical display of femininity, mostly in the form of dialogue. When Frankie tells the stripper that he can do whatever he wants to do with Jess, Alice screams out: "Fuck Her!" Because this is such a unwoman thing to say it does work as a comical effect. However, this outburst is received by the other friends as unappropriated. Later, when the stripper is approaching Jess, she starts talking to herself and mentions she is confused because he is turning her on, but at the same time she needs to pee. Although women are known for a small bladder, they are not known for needing to pee when they are turned on, at least not in film, because it would show a female's imperfection during the heat of the moment. Finally, when the stripper has undressed his torso Frankie shouts out: "Mansploitation, bitch! Yes!" which emphasizes the pleasure the women have for looking at the attractive man and shows that usually it is the woman who are 'exploited'.

Next to the scopophilia gaze, this part also contains a narcissistic gaze in several ways. The theme of sticking up for yourself comes back in this scene. After the stripper sits on Jess and says: "I know you want it you little slut." Jess is appalled by his remark and 'rejects him', showing an active rather than a passive behaviour. This is showing the same message as in the first scene discussed. Namely, that 'the ideal self' may defend herself and normalizes to speak up against harassment when they are talked to in a disrespectful manner. Another interesting narcissistic gaze is performed by

Pippa. When she is enjoying the stripper's performance, she tells him: "Love her, make her feel special!" Pippa says this before the stripper 'insults' Jess and, therefore, it makes a lot more sense to the spectator why Jess reacts the way she does, because it contradicts Pippa's request. However, it also sets an example of how women have the right to be treated with the love and respect they deserve.

As mentioned, the third part of this scene has a darker tone because the stripper has just died. It is because of the carnivalesque setting that this part can be treated comically. One of the main figures who emphasizes this carnivalesque setting is Alice, because she is both the clown and the acrobat in this scene. Still in the first part, when Jess has put the stripper on the chair, Alice runs and jumps on the stripper acrobatically. This causes *loud laughter* because it turns into a slapstick humour move where they both fall over. In the third part Alice starts to rationalize the situation and says that it will resolve itself if they all keep "smiling more," and then she laughs uncomfortably. This clown like trait is finished with Alice getting rid of the drugs by sniffing the leftover cocaine. It causes her face to become 'painted' white, just like a clown's face is painted white.

However, Alice is not the only one who participates in this carnivalesque setting. Pippa gets angry at the chair and makes an acrobatic jump to kicks one of the legs, which is also an anti-classical display of femininity. In addition, when the girls move the body to hide for the pizza delivery guy, Jess slips over the stripper's blood causing again a slapstick situation. The whole situation becomes comical when the pizza guy rings the bell and Pippa stands in front of the door: "You guys, what are we gonna do? The house is made of glass. He can see in." The stripper then becomes an inappropriate exhibition not in the sense that he is naked, like it was in the previous part of the scene, but in the sense that he is dead and that he is at risk of being found. The friends move him behind the sofa and when Pippa eventually opens the door the four friends pose in front of the stripper to hide him.

As Perfetti-Oates argued earlier in this paper, sexual objectivity can be interchanged with sex negativity and therefore send a message of empowerment. This scene shows that the stripper is indeed sexual objectified. As shown above, he is an object of visual pleasure. In addition, the fact that he is not asked for his name alienates him as a character. However, this sexual objectification is followed by sex negativity. After the friends have enjoyed the stripper's performance, he dies in an accident. It is after he dies, that he becomes a subject of sexual interaction, which apart from touching was not the case when he was alive. He is later put into a sex swing, although no sexual acts are performed on him there. However, there is sexual interaction with the body in a later scene. In segmentation 5i the friends get the striper to the beach to dump the body in the sea, but when they arrive their neighbours come over to greet them. Pippa then starts a make out session with the body to hide that he is dead. In the example Perfetti-Oates gave, was that Mike in *Magic Mike* only became a love interest when he quit his stripping career. In *ROUGH NIGHT* the stripper ends his career by dying, which is a more comical

approach to allow a 'love interest' to happen. But interestingly, the stripper's body becomes absent in the film when the girls find out he turned out to be a criminal and therefore a 'fake stripper.' Finally, it is interesting to note that the death of the stripper is part of what was mentioned previously as *sadism*. The voyeuristic gaze, which happens in the first part of this scene, is followed by the death of the stripper.

The Cosmetic Gaze

In the final scene that will be discussed there is something very interesting happening. Leading up to this scene, two criminals have captured the friends, and one of the two goes upstairs to search the diamonds that the dead stripper had with him. Because Jess went up earlier to take a shower, she was not captured. However, she saw them tying her friends up from upstairs and flees back to the bedroom when she sees one of them coming up. The part that will be analysed starts when the criminal enters the bedroom. Here the spectator is confronted with an *anti-classical display of femininity*. In my experience of watching this scene I assumed Jess would take a passive role and find a place to hide, because this is what women usually do in films when they are being chase. However, when the criminal enters the bathroom, instead of hiding behind the bath curtain, Jess attacks the man from behind the door with hairspray and a hot hair straightener (figure 3). She therefore takes an active role instead of a passive one. Also note that Jess, like Alice in the first scene, in this scene is dressed in pink.



Figure 3 Still from segmentation 8e: Jess attacks criminal.

The scene challenges the notion that women often have a passive role in comedies during dangerous scenes, by using humour. It contrasts this *anti-classical display of femininity* with the typical feminine connotation of self-care. It is therefore playing with the cosmetic gaze to emphasize the female's rituals of self-improvement, because all products Jess uses to defend herself are female products. She uses hair spray as pepper spray and a hot hair straightener to disarm the bad guy from his gun. This enables her to take over the gun, point it at him and tells him to cuff himself to the sink.

She then uses silk-bare wax strips to put over his mouth. It is interesting to note that before she does that, she first rubs the strip on her thigh. For the spectator who have ever used those strips, it is common knowledge that the wax needs to warm up before it sticks properly. This feminine product then becomes something that can only be used by someone with this knowledge, which is mostly women. The act of rubbing this strip to her leg then becomes comical both because it looks silly for those who do not know why she is doing it, and because for those who do, it is recognizable. Finally, the female products that are used here for self-defence are in contrast of what usually is used as weapons and this contrast creates a setting for a humorous situation.

At the same time these female products that are used as weapons also create a narcissistic gaze. It shows that the 'ideal self' can use the tools that is given to her and therefore that women can be very creative in tough situations. Moreover, for the third time the film shows a woman defending herself from a man. This is emphasized by a point-of-view shot from Jess looking down to the kneeling criminal switching with a point-of-view shot from the criminal looking up. It therefore shows a power relation between the two in which Jess overpowered the bad guy. In this scene her active behaviour is therefore rewarded and through the narcissistic gaze that message is reflected to the spectator.

Although the focus of this scene lies on the cosmetic gaze and the *anti-classical display of femininity*, the scene also contains slapstick humour and a brief inappropriate exhibition. The slapstick humour is the discussed part where Jess sprays hair spray in the criminal's eyes and crabs his arm with a har straightener. This *loud laughter* brings together the different elements that are discussed before. Jess surprises the spectator for putting on an active role, the 'weapons' she uses are unusual and the man she is attacking is a criminal and 'deserves' to be in pain. All these elements together strengthen the *loud laughter* that comes from it. There is also a brief inappropriate exhibition of one shot that shows the bachelorette basket Alice had brought on the trip. This basket mostly contains penis shaped objects, including the penis glasses that were put on the stripper's face before. It also includes fluffy handcuffs that are meant for sexual use. One of the characteristics of a carnival is that nothing is used as what it is meant for and it is this last scene shows that explicitly. This inappropriate exhibition of the sexual basket then becomes appropriate, because its function has changed for the good.

Conclusion

In this paper I have explored the female gaze in *ROUGH NIGHT* through a psychoanalysis approach and the characteristics of the feminist carnivalesque. This analysis was meant to answer the question: How is the female gaze formed in the comedy *ROUGH NIGHT*? But to answer this question I had two sub-questions, namely:

- How does humour in the comedy functions in forming a female gaze and female identity?
- How does *ROUGH NIGHT* question and challenge the male gaze in forming a female gaze?

The film *ROUGH NIGHT* is set in a carnivalesque setting that is established in the first scene and it shines through the other two scenes that I discussed. This carnivalesque setting allows the film to challenge certain norms and values by emphasizing these issues through joking.

The feminist carnivalesque characteristics I discussed in this paper were *loud laughter*, *grotesque corporeality*, *inappropriate exhibitionism*, and *anti-classical displays of femininity*. *Loud laughter*, in the form of slapstick humour was present in all three discussed scenes. Although Hennefeld argued that slapstick humour is a sensitive subject for women, it does appear repeatedly in the film. What the three scenes show, however, is that often men were included in the *loud laughter*. Jess fell after she temporarily verbally switched sexes, Alice falls with the male stripper and in the last scene the male criminal was the subject of slapstick humour. The one time with no direct involvement of a man is when Jess slips over the blood, but this is a minor slip without the cause of much pain. The slapstick humour then shows to be acceptable in this comedy, if it can be somehow related to the incapability of men.

In this analysis the *grotesque corporeality* was mainly used to show the fetishistic gaze. On the one hand, the enlarged breast in scene 1a criticized male behaviour of sexual objectifying breasts. In scene 4b the grotesque muscles, on the other hand, although a fetish gaze, was more accepted and even encouraged. However, the sexual objectification of the stripper was later followed by sex negativity because he was killed and exhibited as a figure of humour. The *grotesque corporeality* does seem to confirm that the female gaze is the opposite of the male gaze.

ROUGH NIGHT is full of inappropriate exhibition. In the three scenes it comes back mainly in the form of sexualized body parts: breasts, penises, the muscled male body. However, as I have explained that the setting of the film was carnivalesque, this inappropriateness has been made appropriate and therefore formed a setting for challenging current norms and values.

Finally, the *anti-classical display of femininity* in these three scenes show a serious critique on what it means to be a woman. It challenges the idea of how a woman should behave, because when there was an *anti-classical display of femininity*, it often was a woman who was showing more manly traits. It is humorous because the film does not meet the expectations of how women behave with the

way they looked. Alice and Jess both wear pink when they either act unflattering or are heroic. This characteristic also questions the female emotions they should display. In the film when the women 'act outside of their femininity', they sometimes showed aggressive behaviour. This was sometimes the cause of anger, but this did not have to be the case.

These four characteristics often were linked to the narcissistic gaze. Aforementioned that they questioned the role of females, how they act or how they should be represented, in comedies. Moreover, in all three the scenes a female character showed she stood up for herself, either verbally or physically. The 'ideal self' in *ROUGH NIGHT* represents itself as a woman who is allowed to be imperfect and has the right to fight for her imperfect self. The female gaze in *ROUGH NIGHT* seems in some aspects to indeed be the reverse of the male gaze. However, it is more than that, because it is also redefining what the role of women in comedy should be.

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Appendix 1

C. Credits

1. Past 2006

- a. Ping Pong contest
- b. Bedroom hang out

2. Ten Years Later

- a. Jess at work
- b. Jess and Pete at home
- c. Jess and Alice meet at airport
- d. Frankie's protest in park
- e. Blair says goodbye to son

3. Miami: Pre-Killing

- a. Friends meet at airport
- b. Getting keys from neighbors
- c. Getting settled
- d. Restaurant (enter Pippa)
- e. Partying
- f. Peter's Bachelor party

4. Beach House: Killing

- a. Camp Fire
- b. Stripper arrives (and dies)
- c. Pizza Break

5. Post-Killing

- a. Plan to buy burner phone
- b. Peter distressed after call with Jess
- c. Frankie and Blair gets burner phone
- d. Jess, Alice and Pippa moving the body
- e. Calling Uncle Jack
- f. Plan to dispose of the body
- g. Peter encouraged to drive to Miami
- h. Pete buys diapers
- i. Friends moving body to the beach
- j. Peter putting on diaper
- k. Friends dump the body

6. Friends tie up loose ends

- a. Seeing the camera
- b. Blair seducing neighbors
- c. Peter Driving
- d. Blair find out about fake cameras
- e. Back at house Cleaning
- f. Peter gets pulled over

7. Body disposal part II

- a. Body washes on beach
- b. Peter and agent
- c. Real Stripper arrives
- d. Peter gass station
- e. Putting Stripper on Bed
- f. Driving away with fake stripper
- g. Peter cleaning windshields
- h. Crashing car
- i. Peter gass station

8. Finale: Arrival of the two bad guys

- a. Fight between girls and arrival 2 other guys
- b. Peter driving on Meth
- c. Showing the body
- d. Guys turn out to be bad
- e. Jess saves her friends

9. Wedding

- a. Pippa
- b. Alice
- c. Blair and Frankie
- d. Jess and work

E. End Credits

1. Neon light credits
2. Election Jess
3. Credits
4. Alice finds diamonds
5. Credits

Appendix II

Analysis Diagram *Rough Night*

	Seg. 1	Seg. 2	Seg. 3	Seg. 4	Seg. 5	Seg. 6	Seg. 7	Seg. 8	Seg. 9
Gaze									
Camera	Following woman "above the waist"	Zooming in on Jess, her campaign video.	In car camera, looking at Alice. Looking from sex chair to friends. Who is in the shot → friends are paired, Blair/Frankie, Alice/Jess, Jess/Pippa (Alice single) Slow motion, "male gaze" on Pippa	Looking at the scene from outside the house, while music is still playing. (Touch myself).	Point of view from the dead stripper. (not quite) Outside, covering windows. Looking into the garage. Jess shot from below, when suggesting to dump the body.		Looking at Peter's diaper (no face) while putting money in there. Looking at stripper's body.	POV Jess, from upstairs. POV Jess, aiming to shoot. Shot from strippers genitals and gun shooting from there.	
Picture making	Alice has a bunch of pictures hanging on the wall.		Selfie of Alice and Jess. (Blair and Frankie are left out.) Again, at slow motion			Making a sex-tape with neighbours. Picture of human 'friendipede'	Jess mentioning mug shot.	Jess uses selfie stick to hit guy.	Ending film with picture of five friends.

			(with selfie-stick) On dancefloor (all, with stick)						
Character	Guy staring at boob costume	Jess comes in, looks at sleeping Pete.	Blair spotting Franky first. Friends spotting neighbours (Blair's not looking). Neighbours looking at friends (lustful) Friends looking at sex swing. Alice looking straight in camera (pov Pippa) Performing (high school dance routine)	Friends looking at stripper as he walks to the bathroom. Pippa looking through peek hole. "He can see in" (Pippa talks about looking in)	Frankie is "fixated on [Blair's] nips" (nipples). Stripper "looking" straight at Alice. "Look at this ring" (diamond gaze??) Seen by a dog, dog barks. Neighbours see friends on beach, turn on the light.	Alice sees the camera of neighbours pointing at beach. All look at Blair to go to neighbours. Friends looking from balcony.	Let me see his dick real quick. Identifying guy with his dick. Pete gazing at filling station meth seller (POV). Looking for the phone.	Looking/finding diamonds. Knocked out stripper wakes up and sees Blair and freaks out: "I will not be your drug mule." Jess reading/looking at Alice's card, gazing at her thoughts. (Voice over Alice). Seeing intruders from upstairs. Alice seeing Jess with gun upstairs. Guy 2 looking at Jess' naked body when her robe opens.	Pippa and Alice look at each other from a distance to wave. They become friends. Guy who hit on Blair and Frankie was looking at them kissing.

								Guy seeing friends first and making himself known by ordering Jess to drop the gun. Pippa can't see what is happening the way she is tied.	
Topic									
w-w	For womankind "Wear a good bra, bungee jumping."	"I got my IUD taken out for Miami." "We'll be swimming in dick, girl."	"We'll be swimming in dick" "How do you look this flawless getting of a plain." – "Are you flirting with me." "Look at them, the magic is still there." "God, you smell so good" "She is delicious, I want that."	Self-waxing, if that is okay or not. "Don't judge sexwork Blair"	"I would never judge you for something like that."	Sex scene where Blair receives oral satisfaction from another woman. Also, sex sis brought into a different light because of trio and focus on female pleasure. Openness of using toilet in front of friends.	" <i>You are not your father's daughters, but mothers onto your own</i> " "You need to masturbate more, you seem like severely horny." Fight: Alice is lethally horny. Alice was coked up because Frankie	"Love you Frankie! I love you too."	

			<p>“You’re a goddess” Racist to call a Australian “Kiwi” Toast: “To me and Jess” Want to come to the bathroom? “Let’s get jess a stripper” “Now I use david cups” Alice suggests that pippa is there on work visa.</p>			<p>“She as so intuitive. She was inside me, and then she was outside me, and then she was me.”</p>	<p>bought drugs. Blair’s idea to get a stripper. Frankie is never to blame: live in a storage unit, saving the world. Blair’s a merciless asshole. Alice calls them both assholes. Pippa calls Alice a asshole for calling her Kiwi all the time. Alice finds out Jess had a bridal shower without inviting her. You monopolize my time and then you</p>		
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							<p>make me feel guilty for not spending enough time with you. “You have planned this weekend for yourself so you can post a bunch of photos and make it seem that your life is not that sad.” Pippa: “Jess that was really harsh” Jess wants to look cute for her mug shot.</p>		
w-m	“She has a name	“Wesson literally tweeted out a dick pic.” “I’m so sorry, I got stuck at the office.”	“[the marriage will] probably closed, tightly, tightly closed.”	“He’s gonna eat our faces.” About stripper “Happy boxingday.” “Manspoitation!”	“My water broke” (as a lie) Frankie saying a woman went to prison	Men should wear belts. How dare they don’t sink when we murder them.	This is obviously a rape cop. Alice calls Peter annoying.	Alice: “well, I’m not on my period” wink. I can wire you 50.000 dollars if you let us go. Not her beautiful face.	Rejecting a guy because she is on a date with someone else: No

		Blair giving husband the finger.	“Frankie, do you have a tampon” to dispose of weird men.	“Love her! Make her feel special!” “A white dude is dead by the hands of a bunch of women”	because she shot a warning shot to her abusive husband.				
m-m		Driver giving Blair’s husband the finger.			“We have to have realistic attitudes toward sexual exclusivity.” “You’re a 6 and she’s a 20” “This is like the third girlfriend who has cheated on you.” – “Does your dick bend weird?” “Hey, I love you. Get her back”		Buying meth and sucking dick on filling station.		
m-w	“Stop making me horny and shoot.”	“People want to vote for someone	“What brings you to Miami? Business,	“I know you want it you little slut”	Pete talking with his friends about	Pete leaving numerous messages		Do you not like my dick? My mum said get locked	

		they can relate to. "I'm gonna go masturbate in the shower and go to sleep."	pleasure, the business of pleasure?" "This marriage, will it be open?"		troubles Jess.	into Jess' voicemail.		down as soon as possible. She loves you (against hate MIL myth)	
Comedy									
Kind	Slap stick, alice falls from shoulders. Jess eats a cheese chip out of Frankie's hair. Sexual, Vibrator turns on (twice) Drunk → College students pees in dorm room	"Yes, He said, "I'm sorry, wrong dick pic." Satire, Jess unflattering pause shot. "Tulem, give her back her kindle. Every f*ckin'day." (playground) Satire, Jess being happy Peter will go masturbate and sleep. Alice puts a penis	Drugs: "I have like half a pound of weed in my bra." Popping a champagne bottle at the airport. Word pun: "business, pleasure, the business of pleasure?" Toilet: "I'm gonna take a protest-dump." Penis bachelorette kit.	Language: "Do you have [snakes]" (snack) "It's kinda turning me on, but I really have to pee. It's so confusing." "I'll look it up on YouTube. It's showing an advert for toilet tissues." "I have some Advil, I'll go get it out of my bag." "Why don't you do something Blair! – I'm delegating." After taking drugs:	Slap stick: Peter almost, sort of fainting. Blair and Frankie wearing face mud masks as a disguise. Old couple: "I'm sick an tired of this shit." Slap stick: Pippa gets bitten by dog. Garage door not closing (technology)	Classic: "No way I'm doing it" next scene doing it humour. Friends watching Blair.	Matt Dillon in <i>Crash</i> . Everybody then understands. Looking at dick to identify the man. Alice preparing to give the stripper a "feet job". Peter stuck at filling station in his diaper. Putting a face cooling mask on the knocked-out stripper.	Friends hysterically hugging each other, awkward guys standing next to them. Blair has a huge glass of wine. Pippa screaming: "Tampon!" as a warning. Stripper guy fighting in thong. Guy 1 coming into room and is confused about the naked-ish stripper.	Guy crying at wedding. Using foam party as wedding venue. Stripper compliment s Alice's feet.

		<p>diadem on Jess' head</p>	<p>Sex swing in the walk-in closet. "Singer songwriter is the dream, party clown is the reality." "Stop being a stupid f*cking cunt and do a little cocaine." "It will mean so much to me, if we can do some cocaine together." (emotionally) Alice barfing on bar. David cups (as a guy making art with female menstruation blood)</p>	<p>"Someone tell me what to do, and I will do it, he?" Slap stick: Guy and Alice falling (not sure comedy though) Jess slipping in blood. Pippa: "Leave! – I was natural." Friends eating pizza after killing the stripper. "The foam party, shall I sell our passes?"</p>	<p>"Actually, we already moved him to a sex swing, your honour." (twice) "None of us can [get through the first episode of orange is the new black]" Slow motion on Peter and friend when getting diapers. Snoop dog on background. Weird sexual neighbours. "We're fluent in body language." Pet in a diaper. Peeing in</p>		<p>"I think he's fine. – Yeah, I think he's really fine." Word play. Can't masturbate in front of her cockatoo (metaphor?) . Friends+dead stripper together in small car. Peter gets offer: To buy meth and to suck a dick for money. Peter finds another guy who wants to buy meth and who want to suck someone's dick. Jess: "Self waxing is not weird! I don't appreciate</p>	<p>Jess attacking guy with a woman's product and a hair straightener. Using handcuffs (for play in bedroom) for handcuffing guy to sink. Using hair removal strips to tape his mouth. Jess hits guy in his genitals. "I said things I didn't mean. I think it was just the stress of killing a guy and then try to dispose his body." Stripper: wait, what? First making up, before helping to free them. Blair: Guys these ties really are</p>	
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			Slap stick: Alice falls on her back. Contrast Jess partying and “wild” wine tasting Peter.		the diaper when giving his friend a hug. Slap Stick: Pippa falling of water scooter. Walking funny after.		your body hair removal shaming” “Hey, he’s dead.” Sentimental card ending with, “issues with diary.”	starting to hurt. Peter drugged up, drives over bad guy says Spanish line he practiced and faints. Stripper saying, I want that. Slap stick: guys is run over; guy faints.	
Connection	Guy staring at boob costume instead of real boobs.	Unflattering still of Jess. Gender roles are reversed.	Man is creepy towards women, but has a wife who does the same (sharing the load) Slow motion of friends walking, unflattering-ish. Song, My Neck, My Back – Khia	“Fuck her! You, know, if it happens.”	The obviousness of Blair looking at breasts. Gender roles change as Pete is worried about marriage (shows insecurity). Putting Penis glasses on stripper.			Guy stops fighting because of loosening robe distraction.	Picture with friends as the End of the film, but the picture had to have a redo, so it delayed the End.

			as dance song						
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Analysis diagram End Credits

E	1	2	3
Neon lights	Wine glass Spreading legs Female hand and lipstick/tampon? Stripper lifting leg and shooting gun Thunder cloud and thunder Stripper with handcuffs Diamonds Surveillance camera Penis glasses Swimming in dick Watermotorcycle and hand in water Human friendipede Kissing women Crying astronaut?		
Gaze			Jess and Peter looking at Alice getting into her apartment. Pov from car.
w-w		Blair and Frankie come in the room clearly after intercourse somewhere secret. → Female pleasure	Living alone with nothing in the fridge (Bridget Jones diary style)
Comedy		Pippa singing about their adventure of killing a man and how it bonded their friendship. Singin in a room full of political people.	Still having the penis basket in clauset and snacking penis pasta. Alice finds diamonds in pasta and her reaction is to eat one raw penis pasta.

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