

3 Spectatorship, Power, and Knowledge

The world of images that we interact with on a daily basis is caught up in the power relations of the societies in which we live. We invest images with the power to incite emotions within us, and images are also elements within the power relations between human subjects, and between individuals and institutions. Just as images are both representations and producers of the ideologies of their time, they are also factors in relations of power. In Chapter 2, we examined the process of reception, in which actual viewers make meaning of images. In this chapter, we will look at the role of the spectator of the image, and the ways that the gaze—of images, *subjects*, and institutions—is a fundamental aspect of the practice of looking. This means shifting the focus from issues of reception to concepts of address. This distinction between address and reception is one between thinking about the ideal viewer of an image, and the potential real viewer who looks. Address refers to the way that an image constructs certain responses from an idealized viewer, whereas reception is about the ways in which actual viewers respond.¹ Both ways of examining images are incomplete in themselves, but can be seen to work together to understand what happens in the process of looking.

Psychoanalysis and the image spectator

Of all contemporary theories that can help us understand how viewers make meaning, *psychoanalytic theory* has addressed most directly the pleasure we derive from images, and the relationship between our desires and our visual world. We can have intense relationships with images precisely because of the power they have

both to give us pleasure and to allow us to articulate our desires through looking. Since the 1970s, film scholars have introduced a number of approaches to help us consider this process. One concept that has provided a particularly useful way to examine practices of looking is that of the *spectator*. Spectatorship theory emphasizes the role of the psyche—particularly the *unconscious*, desire, and fantasy—in the practice of looking. In this theory, the term “spectator” does not refer to a flesh-and-blood individual viewer or a member of a particular viewing audience, as we discussed in Chapter 2. Rather, when psychoanalytic theory talks of the spectator, it treats it as an “ideal subject.” In using this term, psychoanalytic theory abstracts from real audience members and the experience of a particular film to refer instead to a construction. Independent of individual identity, the spectator is socially constructed by the *cinematic apparatus* (the traditional social space of the cinema that includes a darkened theater, projector, film, sound) and by the *ideologies* that are a part of a given viewing situation. It can be said that particular films, targeted toward specific categories of viewers during particular periods (the genre of women’s films of the 1940s, for example) create and offer to their viewers an ideal *subject position*. For instance, there is an ideal spectator for the woman’s film regardless of how any particular viewer might make personal meaning of the film. Theories of spectatorship often give us the means to analyze the subject position constructed for and offered to viewers by a given film or set of media texts.

Althusser’s concept of *interpellation*, which we discussed in Chapter 2, helps to show us how viewers are made to recognize themselves and identify with the ideal subject offered by images. In addition, *semiotics*, which we discussed in Chapter 1, allows us to see the ways in which images can be understood as a language with *codes* and conventions that can be subject to textual analysis. Christian Metz and other French theorists who wrote about film in the 1970s generally described the process of spectatorship as follows: the viewer suspends disbelief in the fictional world of the film, identifies not only with specific characters in the film but more importantly with the film’s overall ideology through identification with the film’s narrative structure and visual point of view, and puts into play fantasy structures (such as an imagined ideal family) that derive from the viewer’s unconscious.

The concept of the unconscious is crucial to these theories. One of the fundamental elements of psychoanalysis lies in its demonstration of the existence and mode of operation of unconscious mental processes. According to

psychoanalytic theory, in order to function in our lives, we actively repress various desires, fears, memories, and fantasies. Hence, beneath our conscious, daily social interaction there exists a dynamic, active realm of forces of desire that is inaccessible to our rational and logical selves. The unconscious often motivates us in ways which we are unaware of, and, according to psychoanalysis, is active in our dreams.

Early theories of spectatorship were based on the psychoanalytic theories of Sigmund Freud, who is considered to be the founder of psychoanalysis and who worked in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in Vienna, and Jacques Lacan, a well-known French psychoanalyst who revised many of Freud's ideas in the mid to late twentieth century. Practices of looking are particularly central to Lacan's thinking about how humans come to develop as subjects. Lacan used the term "subject" rather than individual or human being to describe his object of inquiry. The subject of Lacan's study was not so much the individual but rather an entity he thought of as being constructed through the mechanisms of the unconscious, language, and desire. He was most concerned with how human beings come to imagine themselves as unique individuals even as they are given identity within the social structures of Western capitalism. The term "subject," then, carries within it the implication that individuality is a construction that takes place through ideology, language, and representation.

Film theorists used the work of Lacan, which emphasizes the role of desire in creating subjects, to explain the powerful lure of film images in our culture. For example, the well-known film theorists Jean-Louis Baudry and Christian Metz drew an analogy between the early process of a child's ego construction and the experience of film viewing, using Lacan's concept of the *mirror phase* of childhood development. According to Lacan, children go through a developmental stage at about 18 months that establishes fundamental aspects of their notion of selfhood and separateness from other human beings (primarily their mothers, on whom they are dependent for their needs). In the mirror phase, Lacan proposed, infants begin to establish their egos through the process of looking at a mirror body-image, which may be their own mirror image, their mother, or another figure. The infants recognize the mirror image to be both their selves and different. Although infants have no physical ability to grasp or control this mirror-image, it is thought that they fantasize having control and mastery over it. Looking and the ability to fantasize based on what they see is crucial to infants' sense of control and mastery (of the body in the image) in this scenario. The mirror phase, as described by Lacan, is an

important step in infants' recognition of themselves as autonomous beings with the potential ability to control their worlds.

This recognition of self and other comes at a stage of growth when the infant's intellectual growth outpaces its motor skills—the infant can imagine control over the body in the image, but cannot actually physically exert that control. The mirror phase thus provides infants with a sense of their existence as a separate body in relationship to another body, but it also provides a basis for alienation, since the process of image recognition involves a splitting between what they are physically capable of and what they see and imagine themselves to be (powerful, in control). There are two contradictory relationships here to the image—infants see that they and the image are the same, yet at the same time they see the image as an ideal (not the same). Hence, the mirror phase is also about recognition and misrecognition. While this concept may seem highly abstract if not far-fetched to some readers, who might want to argue that it has little to do with adult subjects watching films, it is important to see how it helps us to understand the very question of how we become subjects. It can provide a useful framework to understand the investment of tremendous power that viewers place in images, and the reasons why we can so easily read images as a kind of ideal.

Part of the fascination with cinema, according to Baudry, is that the darkened theater and the conditions of watching a mirror-like screen invite the viewer to regress to a childlike state. The viewer undergoes a temporary loss of ego as he or she identifies with the powerful position of apprehending the world on the screen, much as the infant apprehended the mirror image. The spectators' egos are built up through their illusory sense of owning the body on the film screen. It is important to emphasize that it is not the specific image of bodies on screen with which the viewer is thought to identify most significantly, but with the cinematic apparatus. The idea that the viewer is in a regressive mode is the aspect of psychoanalytic theory that has come under the most criticism, because it presents a definition of the spectator as existing in an infantile state, one that stands in contrast to the engaged viewer practices we discussed in Chapter 2.

In the late 1970s and 1980s, many feminist film theorists interested in the power of film images over viewers took up these theories and engaged in productive criticism of them in order to emphasize that the film viewer is not a singular, undifferentiated subject, but is already enculturated as either male or female. Hence, we cannot speak of a singular universal spectator because

viewing circumstances are influenced by the psychic structures that inform our formation as gendered subjects. This intervention in questions of desire and the image led to a focus on the gaze.

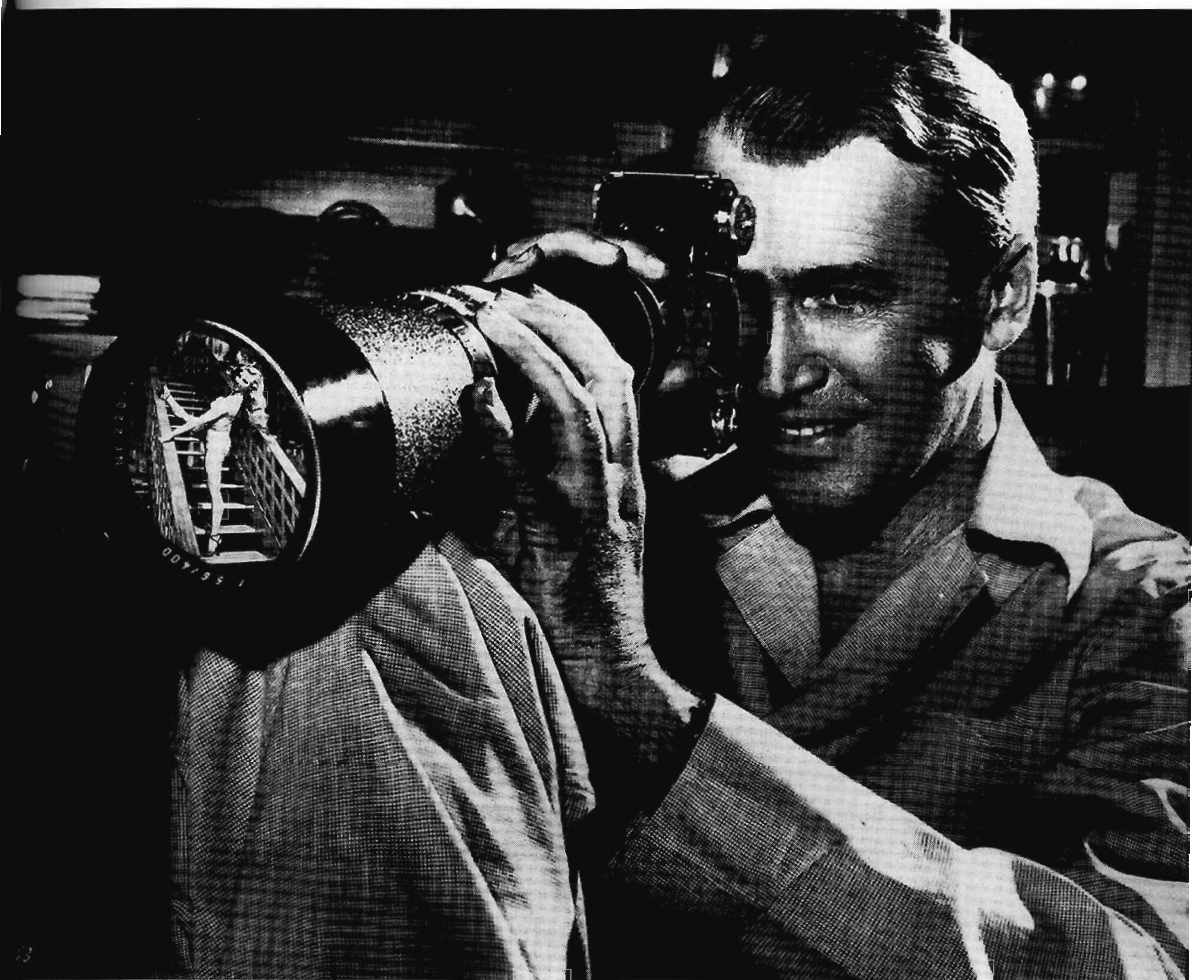
The gaze

Earlier we noted that Lacan considered practices of looking to be important processes in the formation of the subject. One of the terms he used to describe looking relations is the gaze (in French, *le regard*). In common parlance, to gaze is to look or stare, often with eagerness or desire. In much psychoanalytic film criticism, the gaze is not the act of looking itself, but the viewing relationship characteristic of a particular set of social circumstances. The concept of the gaze has been the focus of inquiry in both art history and film studies, with different emphases.

Throughout the history of art, and in the contemporary world of film and advertising, images of women often have been presented in ways that emphasize their status as sexual beings or maternal figures. In 1975 filmmaker and writer Laura Mulvey published a groundbreaking essay about images of women in classical Hollywood cinema. This essay, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," used psychoanalysis to propose that the conventions of popular narrative cinema are structured by a patriarchal unconscious, positioning women represented in films as objects of a "male gaze." In other words, Mulvey argued that Hollywood cinema offered images geared toward male viewing pleasure, which she read within certain psychoanalytic paradigms including *scopophilia* and *voyeurism*. The concept of the gaze is fundamentally about the relationship of pleasure and images. In psychoanalysis, the term "scopophilia" refers to pleasure in looking, and *exhibitionism* in the pleasure of being looked at. Both of these terms acknowledge the ways in which reciprocal relationships of looking can be sources of pleasure. Voyeurism is the pleasure in looking while not being seen, and carries a more negative connotation of a powerful, if not sadistic, position. The idea of the camera as a mechanism for voyeurism has been often discussed, since, for instance, the position of viewers of cinema can be seen as voyeuristic—they sit in a darkened room, where they cannot be seen, in order to watch the film. In Mulvey's theory, the camera is used as a tool of voyeurism and sadism, disempowering those before its gaze. She and other theorists who pursued this line of thinking examined certain films of classic Hollywood cinema to demonstrate the power of the male gaze.

Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window* (1954) is a popular example of a film that is explicitly about gendered looking. The film's main protagonist is Jeffries (Jimmy Stewart), a photographer who has broken his leg and is temporarily confined to a wheelchair in his New York City apartment. Jeffries spends much of his time seated at a window that affords him a perfect view into the windows of the various people who live in the building across the way, where he believes he has witnessed evidence of a murder. *Rear Window* has been read by film theorists (including Mulvey) as a metaphor of the act of film viewing itself, with Jeffries standing in for the cinematic audience. Confined to a fixed position like the film viewer, his gaze is similarly voyeuristic in that he freely looks but is not

Alfred Hitchcock, *Rear Window*, 1954



seen by the objects of his gaze. Like characters in a movie, his neighbors are apparently unaware that this audience of one exists, much less that he has seen them up close in the intimate setting of their homes. The windows frame their actions just as the camera frames narrative action in a film, both determining and restricting what Jeffries can know about their lives, and generating in him a desire to see and know more. The studio advertising still pictured on the previous page shows us one of the objects of his interest, a dancer, captured in his lens. In the film, we see through his point of view as he observes his neighbors and tracks the movements of his girlfriend Lisa (Grace Kelly) as she becomes his mobile surrogate, his "private eye." Lisa steals up the fire escape across the way to search for murder clues in the off-screen space beyond the window frame that is off-limits to Jeffries and us, the film viewers.

Rear Window is a quintessential example of the male gaze in relationship to female objects of visual pleasure. Yet, as the example of Lisa's investigation suggests, the male gaze is not as controlling and powerful as some theorists have suggested. Jeffries gains power by looking, but he is emasculated by his confined state, and must rely on the eyes and legs of a woman to gain access to knowledge. The cinematic viewer, like Jeffries, is confined to a fixed seat and the field of vision offered by this position and the restricted framing of the scene. The gendered relations of power of the cinematic gaze are clearly quite complex. Indeed, not only is Jeffries frustrated in his attempts to know more, he is also punished for looking. Once Jeffries gets caught looking, he becomes vulnerable and trapped; the murderer comes looking for him. Clearly, male looking is not without its limitations and its consequences.

There are other examples in popular culture of more extreme and literal portrayals of the camera's gaze as a kind of violence. The cult film *Peeping Tom* (1960) makes literal the idea of the camera as a weapon of a voyeuristic male gaze. Director Michael Powell depicts a protagonist who turns his camera into an elaborate device that can kill women while filming them before a mirror, so that they witness their own terror. *Peeping Tom* renders explicit the idea that the gaze can be implicated in sadism, and is an example, albeit an extreme one, of the ways that cameras have been seen as weapons of *phallic* power. Powell's film is an extreme dramatization of another sort of fantasy about the power of vision, a fantasy in which the camera is imagined to grant direct sexualized power over life and death.

Whereas analysis of the gaze in cinema takes into account the context of



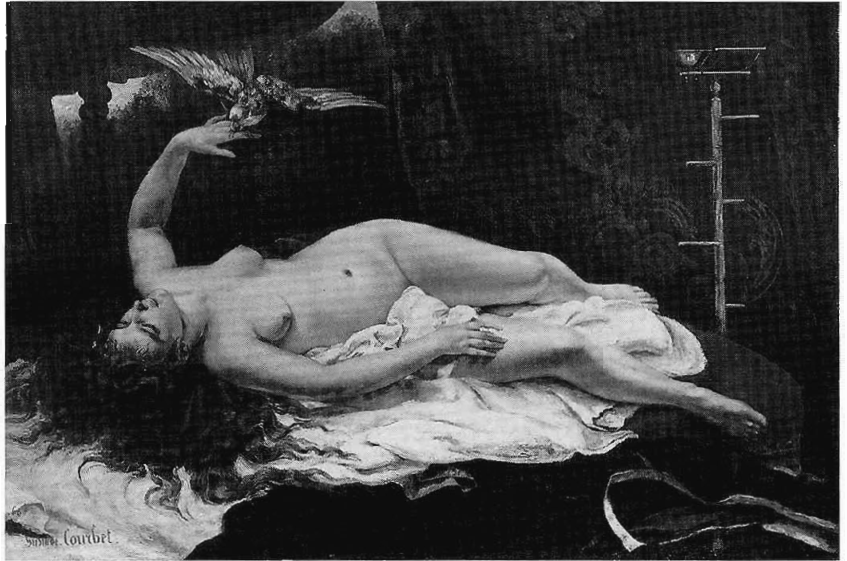
the audience sitting in a darkened theater, and the role of narrative and motion in viewer identification with the cinematic apparatus, concepts of the gaze in still images have concentrated more specifically on the different kinds of looks that an image can imply. In the history of art, the fact that paintings were geared toward male viewers had as much to do with the commerce of art as it did with the social roles and sexual stereotypes of men and women. Until quite recently, most collectors of art were men and the primary viewing audience of art was men. Since the owner of a painting was understood to be male, its spectator was also defined as such. In a typical depiction of a female nude, for instance, a woman is posed so that her body is on display for the viewer, who is implied to be male by the codes of the image. The female body is thus understood here in terms of form and allure, as an object before the viewer's gaze. There is a long tradition in art of defining the female nude as the project

Michael Powell, *Peep Tom*, 1960

and possession of the male artist. In these paintings, the men gaze upon the female figures as possessions. The women are the objects of the male gaze, and their returning looks are accorded no power in the image.

The image convention of depicting women as objects of the gaze and men

Jean-Désiré-Gustave
Courbet, *Woman with
a Parrot*, 1866

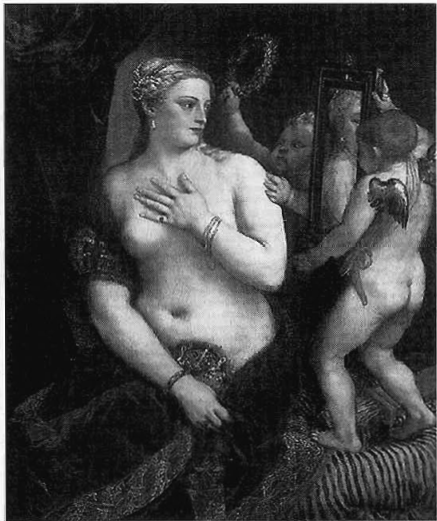
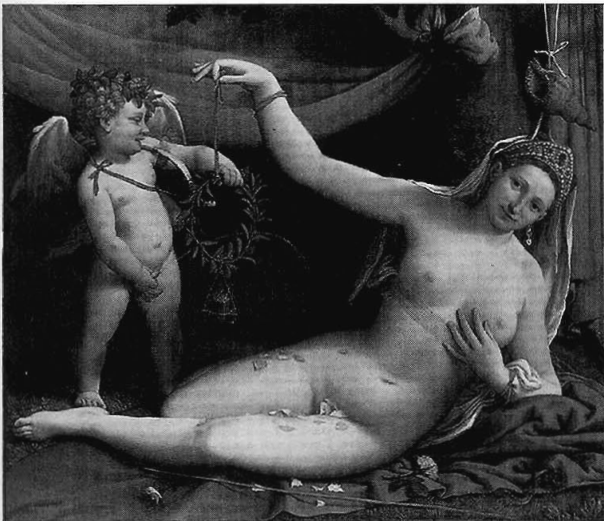


Jean-Léon Gérôme,
Pygmalion and Galatea,
late 1800s

as lookers continues to exist today, although in an image context that is considerably more complex. This convention has many cultural and social implications. In the classic Western tradition of images, which was dominant throughout the history of painting, men were depicted in action and women as objects to be looked at. John Berger wrote that in this history of images, “men act, women appear.”² Berger noted that the tradition of the nude in painting was almost exclusively about images of nude women who were presented for male viewers. Indeed, the women in these paintings were often turned away from the men depicted within the pictures toward the spectator. This way of viewing women thus defined them by their appearance, in essence their ability to be pleasing to look at, and this carries important weight in the context of contemporary image culture. The implication of a male gaze was often depicted quite literally in the history of painting with a woman whose body is turned toward the (presumably male) viewer, but whose head is turned to gaze into a mirror. This image convention has also been used extensively by advertisers.

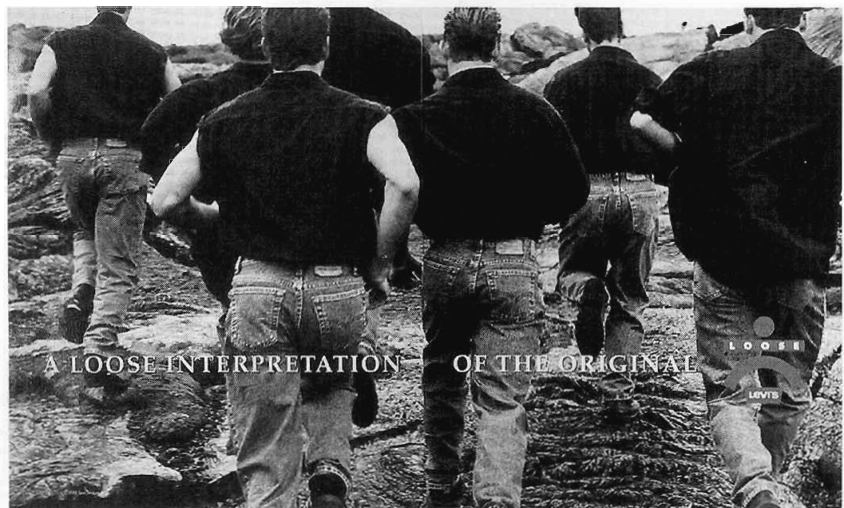
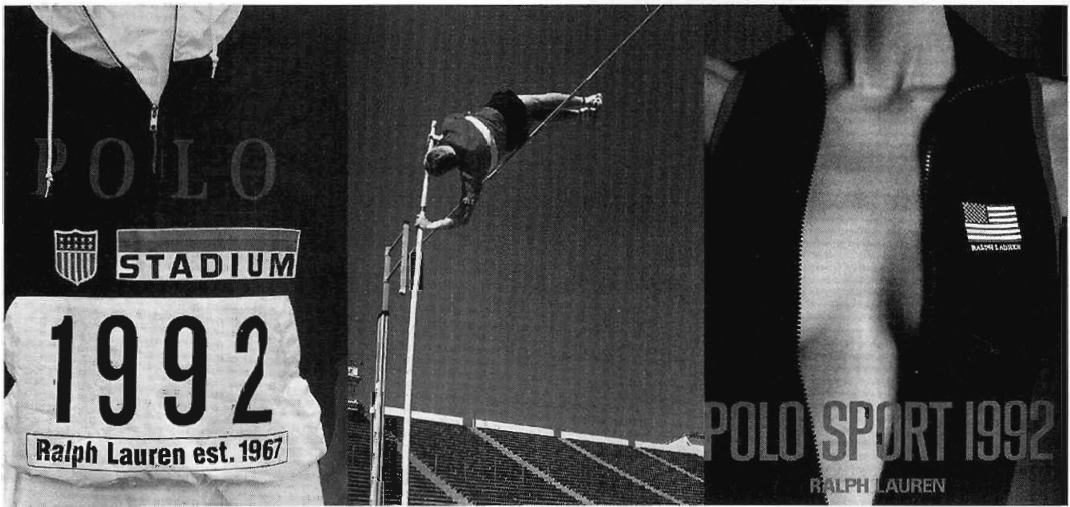
One of the primary elements of the concept of the gaze is a kind of split that viewers experience in looking at images. This is related to Lacan’s notion of the alienation that results from the split between seeing the image as oneself and also as an ideal—as both the same and not the same as oneself. This can also be understood as the split that results from being simultaneously the surveyor and the surveyed, in looking at oneself through the implied gaze of others. The split self of the viewer is always connected to the idea that the gaze is omnipresent.

Lorenzo Lotto, *Venus and Cupid*, early 1500s
Titian, *Venus with a Mirror*, c.1555



Changing concepts of the gaze

Today, we are surrounded on a daily basis by images of fashion models whose looks conform to a rigid set of normative codes about beauty. The cultural practices of cosmetics, plastic surgery, dieting, fitness programs, and image management go hand in hand with an image culture that incites women, and increasingly men, to see themselves and their appearance as inadequate in some way and in need of improvement. Berger's dictum, "men act and women appear," still applies to



images today. However, in Euro-American cultures, the traditional roles of men and women are in upheaval, and women are increasingly socially defined by their work in addition to their appearance. In addition, men are increasingly subject to many of the codes of appearance management that were once considered to be exclusively female. While men have been portrayed through twentieth-century advertising images as men in action, whose rigid muscular frames and active poses counter their role as objects of the gaze, today they are increasingly shown in an array of poses that were previously understood as specifically feminine.

Image conventions have changed, and so have the ways of understanding traditional images. The theoretical concept of the male gaze has been rethought, in particular because of the ways in which it could not account for the pleasures of female viewers (except by seeing them as masochistic or as viewing "as men") or for the male figure as the object of the gaze. Mulvey's essay launched more than a decade of writing about modes of spectatorship. Mulvey herself revised her thinking about visual pleasure in an essay of 1981. Meanwhile, feminist critics have continued to mine the theories of sexual difference put forth by Freud and Lacan.³

Mary Ann Doane used psychoanalysis to theorize female spectators of films made specifically for women viewers, such as the genre of the woman's film of the 1940s (also known as "weepies"). Some theorists responded that gendered viewing relations are not fixed; viewers readily deploy fantasy to occupy the "wrong" gender position in their spectatorial relationships to films. For example, women can identify with the male position of mastery or exercise voyeuristic tendencies, and men can be looked upon with pleasure and desire. In the studio still on the next page, from the 1953 film *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, actress Jane Russell is the object of both the camera's gaze and that of the adoring male athletes (of the US Olympic team). Yet, the men are also on display and subject to the gaze of viewers. One could posit an array of viewer pleasures and analyses across gender and sexuality in looking at this image. Many contemporary films aim precisely to defy the conventions of looking in film, and present women's gazes with agency. For example, the 1991 film *Thelma & Louise* defies traditional formulas of the gaze, and shows the complexity of the power relations of looking. The film begins with a scene, shown on the next page, in which the two women take a photograph of themselves. Here, the women control the camera, belying the dominant view that women are objects not subjects of the gaze.

Howard Hawks,
*Gentlemen Prefer
Blondes*, 1953



Ridley Scott, *Thelma & Louise*, 1991



Yet another set of writers forwarded the view that we need to take into account the social and historical conditions of spectatorship. In the late 1980s and 1990s, film historians raised the question of how modes of spectatorship have been particular to historical and cultural contexts and audiences, and how the cinematic gaze intersects with the gaze that functions in other aspects of mass culture.⁴ Some film scholars turned to the techniques of social science to emphasize that we need to recognize that spectators are real people, and that audiences need to be studied to learn how they actually respond to film texts.⁵ Some authors launched inquiries into viewing pleasure and responses among particular audiences, such as black women viewers, to suggest that we cannot just assume that a gender binary determines the gaze on its own.⁶ The late 1980s and early 1990s saw the proposition put forth that we cannot assume male spectatorial positions are available only to men; men are not the only ones who can assume the position of a "male gaze" offered in a given film.⁷ Dominant viewing positions offered in film texts can be resisted by spectators who use texts to different ends, as in the case of black viewers who resist identification with the positions offered to black characters in so many films.⁸ The concept of appropriating the male gaze for transgressive female looking, or for lesbian pleasure, was also launched during this period.⁹ Judith Mayne emphasized the role of women directors in offering a different perspective than the male-directed films that dominated the studio era. Christine Holmlund and Patricia White have taken this focus on the director's role in shifting the gaze a step further. They suggest that we find a critique of the gaze of dominant cinema in films produced by lesbian directors who appropriate images of women and "re-stitch" them together in films that function as analyses of representations of women and sexuality.

One work that has become a classic of this genre is *Meeting of Two Queens*, a 1991 tape by Spanish video artist Cecilia Barriga. Barriga intercuts footage from films starring Greta Garbo and Marlene Dietrich, two stars whose representations were the subject of many written feminist analyses of the female image and the male gaze in the previous decades. The soundtrack is stripped from footage of these stars in their respective roles as queens (Garbo in *Queen Christina*, directed by Rouben Mamoulian in 1933, and Dietrich in *The Scarlet Empress*, directed by Josef von Sternberg in 1934) to construct new narrative scenarios in which the stars become the objects of one another's lesbian desires. Barriga's video realizes arguments put forth by some feminist film theorists about how viewers can enact lesbian desire through fantasies that

construct what they see on the screen in ways that do not conform to the dominant readings of films. As Patricia White notes, this film invites its viewers to weave these images into a fantasy narrative that runs counter to the preferred reading of the original films.

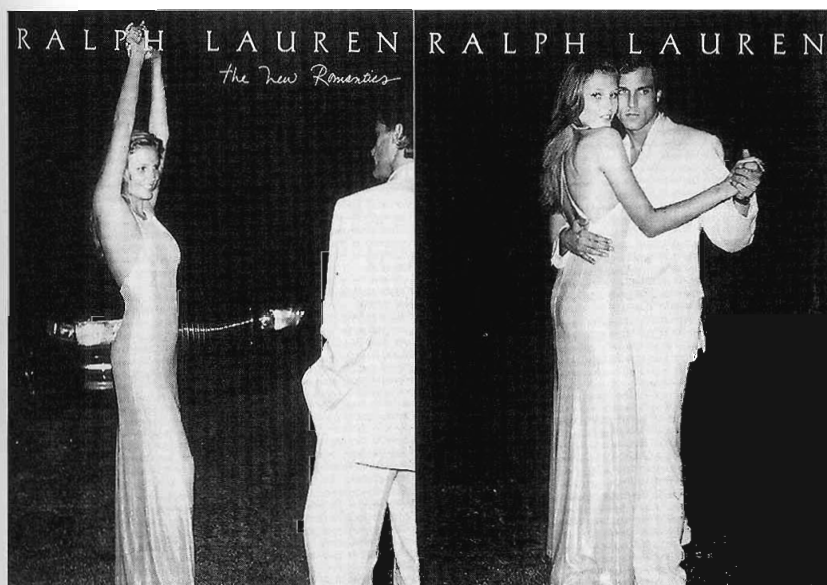
A video that takes further the idea of a media text functioning as critique and analysis of the gaze is *Badass Supermama* (1996) by Etang Inyang. Analyzed by film scholar Kelly Hankin, this tape offers a theoretical perspective on lesbian and black spectatorship by performing “celluloid surgery” on two classics of the blaxploitation genre of the 1970s, *Sheba, Baby* (William Girdler, 1975) and *Foxy Brown* (Jack Hill, 1974). Both films feature star Pam Grier, who experienced a rekindling of star status in the late 1990s with her starring role in Quentin Tarantino’s film *Jackie Brown* (1997). Inyang intercuts footage from these two 1970s feature hits with personal voiceover and superimposed footage of her own image. She comments, through voiceover and image, on her own involvement in fantasies and desires centering on the Pam Grier characters and the lesbian bar scenes in *Foxy Brown*. As Hankin explains, this film takes us through a critical analysis of the politics of the blaxploitation genre as it engages in issues of sexuality relative to race while also articulating these films through a reading position of black lesbian desire. This kind of resistant reading is enacted not just in critical writing or the voiceover, but through the images themselves.

Laura Mulvey’s essay and the subsequent debates were concurrent with a period during which feminism was fraught with debate about sexual depictions of women and pornography in particular. In 1983, Barnard College in New York hosted a conference on pornography that became a watershed in the debates about pornography. The conference featured women from two sides of an emerging divide: those feminists, represented in Woman Against Pornography, who were interested in banning what they regarded as demeaning representations of women; and those feminists who argued that this move would only result in the repression of sexual representation, including representations of resistant and alternative sexualities (such as lesbian-affirmative images and images of sadomasochism). The latter argument, which also fell within the realm of feminism, was that repression or censorship of any sexual images would always be turned against those putting forth alternative sexual identities through visual and textual media. Originally, these arguments rarely brought into play psychoanalytic theory. However, in 1989 film scholar Linda Williams published a groundbreaking book, *Hard Core*, that analyzed pornog-

raphy in a psychoanalytic mode in order to examine a variety of desires and *subject positions*. This work opened the way for feminist film scholars to engage in the broader feminist politics of pornography, and to offer more nuanced theories of the function of pornography in conjunction with readings of the perils of repressive mandates against “negative” images.

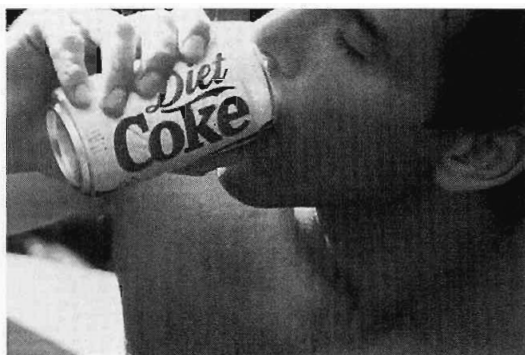
These changing views of scholarship, and the idea of what kinds of images were important objects of intellectual inquiry, have been paralleled by trends in image-making that reflect new concepts of gender and aesthetic conventions. Contemporary visual culture involves not only a highly complex array of images and spectators but also of gazes. There are in contemporary images, be they art, news, advertising, television, or film images, a broad array of gazes and implied viewers. Some may be voyeuristic, sadistic, or assaultive, others loving or passionate. Some gazes can be seen as policing, normalizing, or inspecting. Some images, such as the ad below, may subject both men and women to the gaze. Yet, it is also possible to see images that deflect a possessive gaze and gazes that are respectful and non-objectifying. It is thus central to the ways that the concept of the gaze has been rethought that we can think of many different kinds of gazes, each with a different relationship to power, and that these gazes are not seen strictly along the lines of male and female.

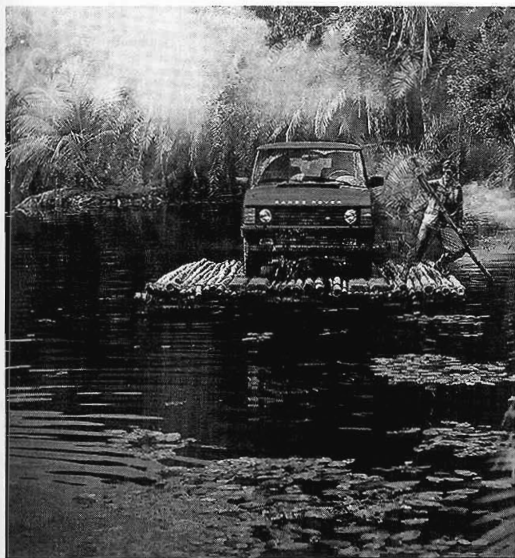
The desires that spectators have in looking and being looked at are caught



up in relationships of power. Traditionally, this meant that the spectator was always perceived to have more power than the object of the gaze (or person looked at), but the contemporary landscape of images shows that this is not always the case. In contemporary advertising, for instance, the idea of a powerful or disempowering gaze is often the source of a joke or counter gaze. In a much-discussed diet Coke television ad, a group of women office workers meet every day at 11:30 to gaze longingly on a muscled construction worker who takes a morning break by drinking a diet Coke. A humorous reversal of the stereotype of male construction workers ogling women on the street, the ad prompted a public discussion about what it means when women look at men with desire.

A potentially objectifying gaze can be deflected in an image, if the subject refuses to acknowledge it. For instance, in the diet Coke ad, the power of the women to gaze is thwarted by the man's refusal to acknowledge their presence. Part of the tradition of imaging men as objects of desire has involved particular codes of resisting the power of the gaze upon them. For instance, men have been traditionally depicted in action (such as this Range Rover ad), which negates attempts to objectify them because they are shown as powerfully within the frame. Hyper-muscled bodies, even if they are stationary, have the effect of connoting action and hence also work to give more power to the subject. In addition, men are often shown as either confronting the gaze or turning away from it. In this ad for Jockey underwear, five male fire fighters posed in Jockey underwear in a strategy of role reversal. The men, however, retain many of the image codes of the traditional male figure in their defiant stances and stares at the camera. These authoritative poses create a comic tension with the fact that they are standing in their underwear.





Sometimes you have to get out and push a Range Rover.

There are six adult things in this world that can quite capably stop a Range Rover on its tracks.

Active top pins. Back roads. And yes, ten feet of water.

Beyond these barriers, a Range Rover equipped with the V8 engine, fully articulated suspension system and permanent four-wheel drive are designed to respect your through equally

application of far less far-fetched, driving conditions.

From sheet and freezing rain to the extreme and beyond and anywhere



RANGE ROVER

In short, anything short of the impossible.

So why not call 1-800-FINE-1973 today for the dealer nearest you?

After all, for just under \$39,000, you too could be driving off in a Range Rover.

And considering all that it has to offer, would you really want to be up the creek in anything less?



THE PERFECT MACHINE FOR THE PERFECT MACHINE.



Nothing works quite like the human body. But there's one device that works quite well with it. The INTERPLAK® Home Plaque Removal Instrument. It was created for one simple reason — to power away plaque that can cause gingivitis and destroy perfectly healthy teeth and gums. In fact it's engineered to clean your teeth nearly plaque free, with gentle brushes that conform to the individual contours of your teeth and gums, rotating 1200 times a minute and reversing direction 40 times a second. No other toothbrush works quite like it. That's why INTERPLAK is the brand dental professionals recommend most. So if you're looking for a better way to care for your teeth, the answer should be perfectly obvious. For more information call Bausch & Lomb at 1-800-354-4031.

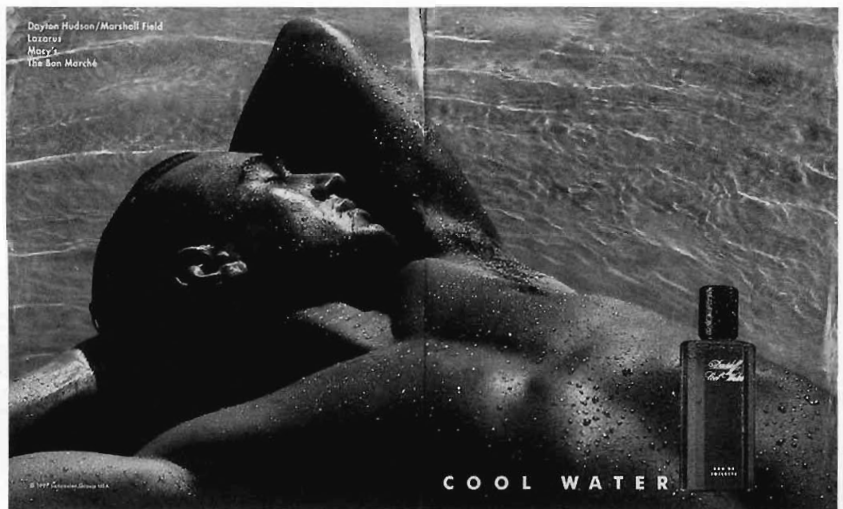
INTERPLAK



INTERPLAK® is the registered trademark of Bausch & Lomb Oral Care Division, 6701 Boro N.E. Lynn, ME 04401.

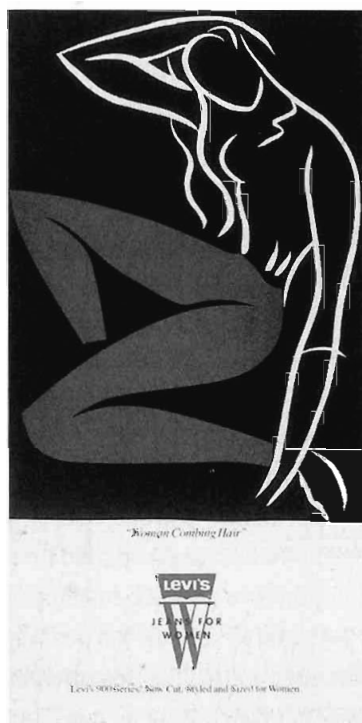


While many contemporary advertisements continue to sell products through traditional gender codes, by portraying women in demure, seductive poses for a possessive male gaze (such as this Guess? ad), other ads play off these traditions by reversing them and showing both the pleasure of looking at men as objects and the power of women in action. In this cologne ad, the male figure is posed in a state that is classically associated with female figures. He reclines with his body turned toward the camera, and we can see him as



object of beauty. Is he objectified by the camera's gaze? What kind of gaze does this image invoke? Can we say that it is a female gaze, one that defines men as looked upon by women? Or that the male figure continues to retain power before the gaze simply because of the conventions of the image with which we are familiar? Certainly it could be argued that this ad is selling an image of the sensitive, new man, who is confident enough in his masculinity to be the object of a desiring gaze.

At the same time, there are ads for female consumers that attempt to usurp the traditions of the male gaze. This ad replaces the female figure with an abstract cut-out, one evocative of the work of modern artist Henri Matisse. This abstraction does not allow a conventional gaze upon a woman as object. Rather, it shifts the focus from the figure to the clothing and the pose. In the Reebok ad on the next page, we see a woman in action, exercising in her apartment, oblivious to our gaze, and determined in her body movements. This ad targets its target audience (women who exercise and wear sport shoes) to identify with particular codes of self-empowerment (exercise, control of one's body, determination) and it uses text to back this up ("I believe that happy hour



"I believe"

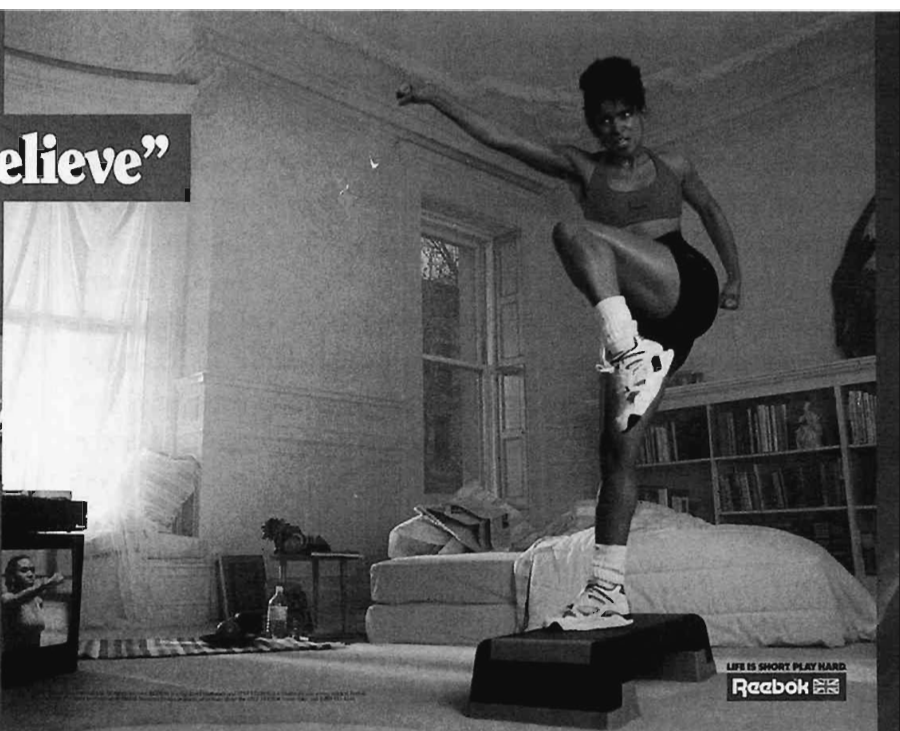
that happy hour
is at 6 a.m.

I believe I'd rather
bust a move than
bust a zipper.



The Aero Step Pro is light and
flexible enough for those Reebok®
but cushioned enough for everyday.

I believe a man
who wants some-
thing soft and
cuddly to hold
should buy
a teddy bear.



LIFE IS SHORT. PLAY HARD.
Reebok

is at 6 a.m. . . . I believe that a man who wants something soft and cuddly to hold should buy a teddy bear.”). Certainly, it is possible to see the ways in which the gaze still operates in this image, in that we are invited to assess this woman’s appearance in looking upon her. In addition, the ad’s emphasis on controlling one’s body and determining one’s life through the shaping of one’s body (here, replacing cosmetics with exercise to shape the body) replicates many of the traditional ideas of women’s worth being determined by their bodies. Yet, at the same time, this woman’s active stance and defiant words are resistant to the traditional power dynamic of the gaze.

These different ways of reading the gaze are related to contemporary theories of identity and subjectivity. The feminist theories of female spectatorship which we discussed opened up the way for a consideration of other identity categories to describe relationships to the image. As we have noted, the late 1980s and 1990s saw the development of a broad literature about black spectatorship and lesbian spectatorship. This work made a fundamental challenge to earlier film theory by questioning the usefulness of psychoanalytic theory.

Freud and Lacan's psychoanalytic theory took the binary categories of male and female as core elements in their theories of how subjects are formed. While critics writing about black spectatorship raised the point that this model did not account for the specificity of racial experience and identity formation, those writing about lesbian and gay spectatorship emphasized that Freud and Lacan's theories of subject formation could not adequately account for the specificity of gay, lesbian, and transgendered identities.

From feminist theories of female spectatorship forward, the idea of the subject as ideal rather than as a historically or socially specific being has come under serious scrutiny. One of the central tensions between older and current theories of film and media spectatorship is that between the construction of the ideal spectator and the recognition of the multiple subject positions and social contexts from which we view films. The concept of regressive cinematic viewers, who are encouraged to repress their identities and to identify with the screen has been replaced by a broader set of models about the multiplicity of gazes and looks that mediate power between viewers and objects of the gaze.

Discourse, the gaze, and the other

The concept of the gaze is not restricted to questions of subjectivity and spectators. There are also ways of thinking about institutional gazes, which have the capacity to establish relationships of power and to affect individuals within them. The work of French philosopher Michel Foucault is helpful in explaining both the institutional gaze and the relationship of images to power. Foucault wrote about an inspecting gaze and a normalizing gaze, both of which are enacted in social and institutional contexts through frameworks of power.

It is important to note the ways that images are not only factors in interpersonal power relationships, such as the relation between those who look and those who are gazed upon, but are also elements in the functioning of institutional power. Images can both exert power and act as instruments of power. Here, Foucault's concept of *discourse* is helpful to understand how such power systems work to define how things are understood and spoken about (and, by implication, represented in images) in a given society. The term "discourse" is usually used to describe passages of writing or speech, the act of talking about something. Foucault used the term more specifically. He was