



# His Other Half: Men Looking at Women Through Art

*Wendy Lesser*

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## His Other Half: Men Looking at Women Through Art Wendy Lesser

Wendy Lesser counters the reigning belief that male artists inevitably misrepresent women. She builds this case through inquiry into many unexpected and delightfully germane subjects - Marilyn Monroe's walk, for instance, or the dwarf manicurist Miss Mowcher in "David Copperfield", or the shoulder blades of Degas's bathers. Placing such particulars within the framework of Plato's myth of the divided beings and psychoanalytic concepts of narcissism, Lesser sets before us an art that responds to and even attempts to overcome division. By following a developmental, rather than historical, sequence, the book uncovers startling correspondences and fresh insights. It begins by considering Dickens, Lawrence, Harold Brodkey, Peter Handke, and John Berger on the subject of mothers; turns to Degas and the Victorian novelist George Gissing to examine the figure of woman alone, and then to Henry James and Alfred Hitchcock for their perspectives on the battle between the sexes; and then looks at the poetry of Randall Jarrell, the fashion photographs of Cecil Beaton, and the range of artworks inspired by Marilyn Monroe to investigate the central idea of woman as the artist's mirror and secret self. A chapter on Barbara Stanwyck returns us to an essential premise - that art transcends gender boundaries, that the masculine and the feminine coexist within each individual psyche.

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