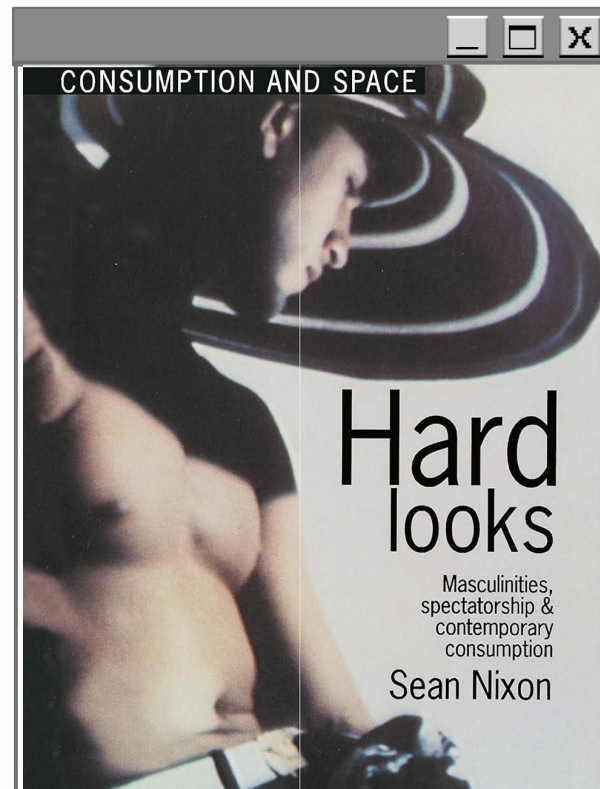


# Exhibiting Masculinity By Sean Nixon 2013

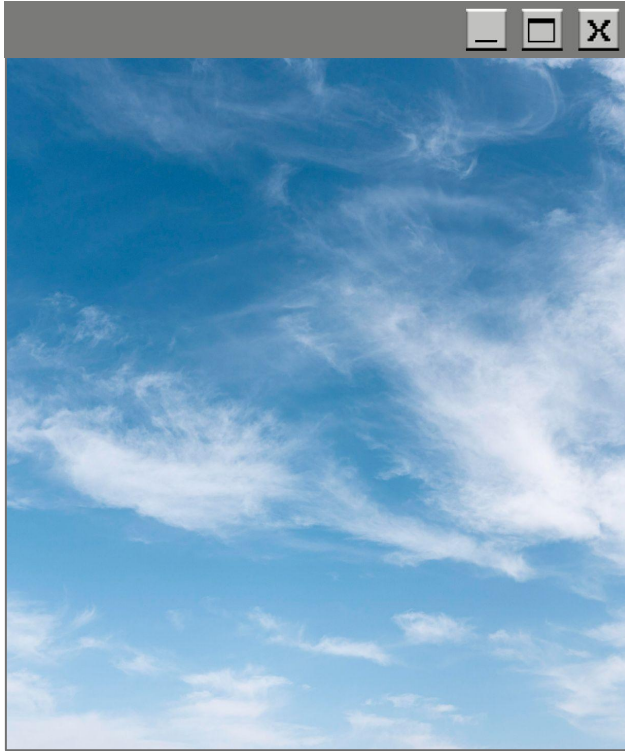
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## Main Idea:

Masculinity is not a fixed and unitary category... Rather, like all identities, masculinity is an invented category."

Sean Nixon's examination of 'new man' masculinity explores it as **a regime of representation**, focusing on three key sites of cultural circulation: **television advertising and press advertising, menswear shops, and popular magazines for men**; all these make a huge contribution or play an important role in popular culture and self-representations (and their commercial reflections in the UK).

Covers of LOADED MAGAZINE since 90s

"For men who should know better"



Warm up questions:

Is the representation of men and masculinity changing ? If so, how?

Is there a assumption about the spectator? Is so, how would you describe it?



What are the important factors in determining the dynamics of looking/“gaze” (looking relations)? Gender? Something else?

# A regime of representation



## Why representation matters

“Representation is the process by which members of a culture use language (broadly defined as any system which deploys signs, any signifying system) to produce meaning. Already this definition carries the important premise that things – objects, people, events, in the world – do not have in themselves any fixed, final or true meaning. It is us – in society, within human cultures – who make things mean, who signify.”

(Hall, 1997: 61)

Representations of masculinity in the media are key to understanding the way that ideas about masculinity operate and circulate within society.

# The process of subjectivization -

## From psychoanalysis to film theory

'**New man**' as the formation of a new subject position for men, related to the practices of **fashion**, **style**, and **individual consumption**.

How do we conceptualize the articulation of the 'new man' images with the masculinity of individual men?

### Foucault's conceptualization of subjectivity

**The subject and power:** Even though certain norms (that power subjects) set limits on individuals, certain forms of agency and individuality also exist.

# How power works upon the body:

01

Through mechanisms that do not necessarily depend on the individual's internalization or conscious awareness (**unconscious**).

02

Directly influence bodily attributes, such as posture, movements, and physical behaviors, effectively shaping conduct and physical expression through bodily practices.

03

**Critique:** Foucault's focus on discursive power and techniques of the self may marginalize or underestimate individual resistance and the complexity of subject formation beyond the framework of power relations.

# How to conceptualize the relationship between the 'new man' images and its spectators

Psychoanalysis - Identification, Scopophilia, Narcissism

**Freud:**

**Identification** – a desire to be the other person, destructive assimilating tendency/**split**

Object cathexis – a desire to have the other person, possessive proprietorial dimension

**Scopophilia** – A pleasure in looking, a component part of human sexuality.

**Narcissism** – The fascination with the human form → All together form the mechanism of identification (**unconscious**)

—> Oedipus Complex

A fixed sexual identity and sexual difference are always unstable and never completely achieved.



**Jacques Lacan:**

**Narcissistic identification** is the basis and prototype of all identification.

**Psychoanalysis's emphasis on the visual character** of the structures of identification contributes to analysis of cinematic representation in film theory.

The impact of representations upon individuals, especially the power of the visual for the consumers of visual culture.

&

Offers a gendered account of the processes of looking and identification.

# Theorizing the power of representation

## Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema (Mulvey, 1989)

- Use psychoanalysis to psychoanalyze cinema (cinema is a reflection of everyday life; what is seen on the screen is the content, but also the form of cinema itself).

- **Scopophilia**, drawing from psychoanalysis — the desire to look

The pleasure in looking (cinematic gaze):

- The look from camera to event or scene
- The look from the spectator to the screen action
- The looks between characters in the film story

→ Together produce the **split** in looking characteristic of Hollywood cinema:

**Active eye/male** and **passive object/female**

&

The look of the spectator is aligned with the male character

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A-n12IyVZ20&list=RDA-n12IyVZ20&start\\_radio=1](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A-n12IyVZ20&list=RDA-n12IyVZ20&start_radio=1)

### Discussion: !

Is there a fixed link between passivity and femininity, and between activity and masculinity? (Do women necessarily adopt a feminine spectator position, and men a masculine one?)

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# Extends:

Masculinity as spectacle (Neale, 1983)

## **Narcissistic identification with the protagonists:**

In male genre western films, the coding of masculinity (toughness, hardness, being in control...) offers the male spectator a fantasy of control and power.

→ Through representation, scopophilic drives and unconscious identifications set individuals within subject-positions

→ Maintains the power relations between men and women, reproduces positions of sexual difference and gender.

**Critique:** Underplays the differences within the femininity/masculinity categories (→ 'New man' imagery redrew relations between groups of men – gay- and straight-identified – through the codes of style and consumer spectatorship.)

# The problem with psychoanalysis and film theory

**Spectatorship in narrative cinema** — Is a fixed gaze within the environment of the cinema auditorium.

Difficult to square the differences between a **psychoanalytic** and a **Foucauldian** account of identity:

- Psychoanalysis privileges the acquisition of gender and sexual identity as the bedrock of identity.
- Other determinants (such as class) are sidelined.

→ While psychoanalysis looks at how people understand themselves and their desires, it often focuses mainly on the **unconscious mind**.

→ However, this view is limited. It ignores how **society, culture, and language** also shape identity.

→ Identity is shaped by both **internal feelings** and **external influences**, including social rules, cultural norms, and what psychoanalysis calls "**secondary processes**" (thoughts and feelings developed outside awareness).



# Techniques of the Self

Foucault: the subject is constituted both in the **symbolic system** (discourse) and in **real practices**.

- Through specific techniques or practices, subject-positions are inhabited by individuals (e.g., writing private diaries).

→ The body and mental capacities are the **product of practices**, not just self-representations.

→ Makes conceptualizing the process of **subjectivization** dynamic.

## Conceptualizing 'new man' imagery in relation to spectatorship and consumption:

By looking at

- Techniques of care, consumption, and leisure
- Practices of grooming, dressing, and shopping



# CONSUMPTION AND SPECTATORSHIP

- **Specific techniques of looking** – codes and techniques of looking associated with the 'new man' imagery

## Shop interiors

- **Practices:** Shopping, handling garments, trying on clothes, interacting with shop staff
- **Techniques:**
  - Design and display techniques of retailing
  - Design codes of menswear

→ These techniques **establish forms of spectatorship** for men

→ Help shape '**new man**' masculinity



Light Blue Regular Fit Stripe 100% Linen ...



Neutral Relaxed Fit Textured Stripe Dou...



Ecru/Blue Textured Check Short Sleeve ...

Discussion: !

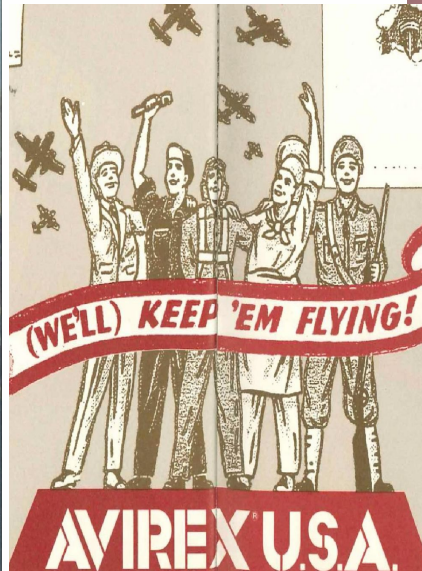
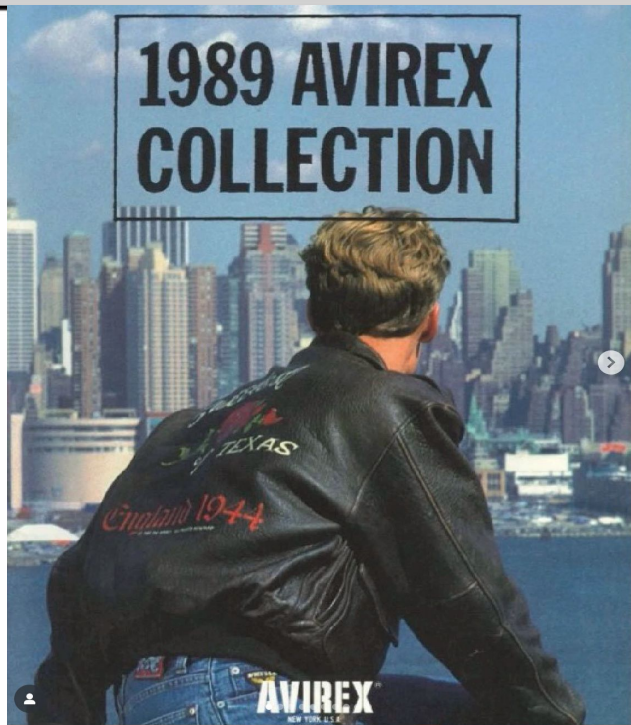
What particular masculine identities are being coded?  
What cultural values and meanings are conveyed through interior decoration, shop design, and display?

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| Opened April 2021



[https://www.instagram.com/p/DLcLmx\\_zwou/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==](https://www.instagram.com/p/DLcLmx_zwou/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igsh=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==) #avirex #nagoya #military 【AVIREX 名古屋店】NEW OPEN!!

Discussion: !

What particular masculine identities are being coded?  
What cultural values and meanings are conveyed through interior decoration, shop design, and display?

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# Essential Characteristics of the Forms of Spectatorship

The emergence of consumer culture since the mid-19th century:

- Rationalization and systematic organization of selling (department stores)
- Visual pleasure – arranging goods in displays (windows and inside stores)

→ **Looking** takes in the visual spectacle of displayed goods

→ **Visual characteristics** play an important part in consumer pleasure

# A New Consumer Subject - Spectatorial Subjectivity

## Narcissistic dimensions of spectatorship:

- An interrupted series of looks, rather than a fixed gaze
- Self-visualization by consumers

Contemporary forms of consumer spectatorship reflects that, the **regime of looking** was constructed crossed from the magazines to the spaces of retailing shops.

# Cultural Significance of 'New Man' Imagery

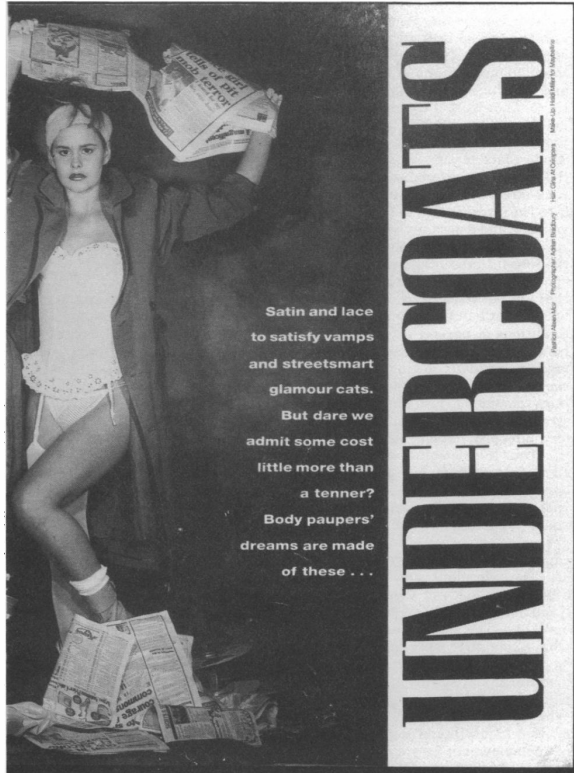
A Fuller Account of the Cultural Significance of 'New Man' Imagery must be located in the wider field of gender relations:

-Shifts in popular representations of femininity since the late 1980s :  
'street-wise' femininity- visual representations in women's magazines Just Seventeen and Mizz.

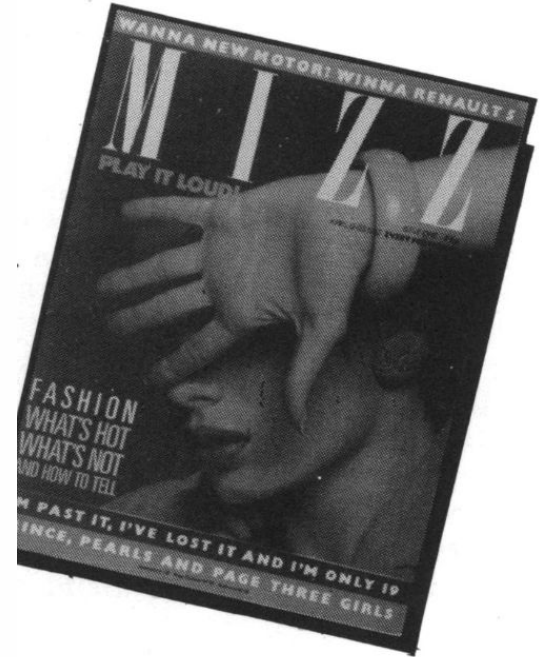
→ A more assertive, confident sense of independent femininity



*Etcetera* 2 May 1985:3.  
Art Throbs -Bouke de Vries.  
*Etcetera* 30 May 1985:46. Irene Shelley.



*Etcetera 21 March 1985. Passive sexuality or assertive strength?*



*Mizz 12 April 1986. The model controls who may gaze at her.*



A fuller account of the cultural significance of **new consumer pleasures for men**

-Shifts in popular representations of **gender and sexual identity** since the late 1980s:

The '**new lad**' culture promoted by *Loaded* magazine

→ Closed down the space of sexual ambivalence associated with the 'new man'

→ Paired with '**glamorous' femininity**' – updated discourse on sexualized representation of women

Loaded: Lads, Mags and Mayhem (BBC Documentary 2024)



### Conclusion

“The 'new man' images do not simply reflect changing masculinities being lived by groups of men, but play an active role in the process of change...”

These shifting forms of gender and sexual identity reveal the malleability of the social norms governing the way individuals in British society imagine and live out their identities as young men and women.”

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