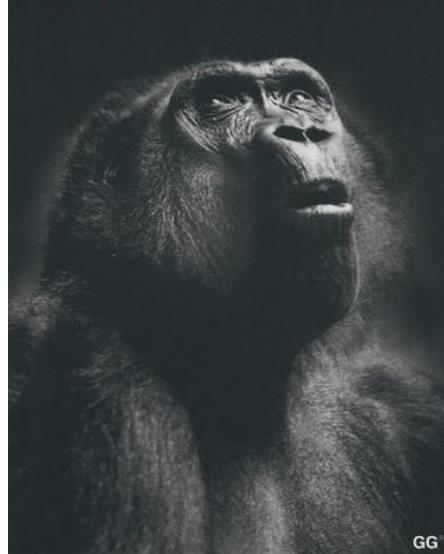


**Mirar** John Berger



## Mirar

*John Berger , Pilar Vázquez Cuesta (Translator)*

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# Mirar

*John Berger , Pilar Vázquez Cuesta (Translator)*

**Mirar** John Berger , Pilar Vázquez Cuesta (Translator)

La mirada incisiva de John Berger inaugura nuevos modos de ver donde la mirada hacia el arte y hacia la vida se confunden combinando un exhaustivo análisis que tiende a ser 'objetivo', entre materialista y purovisualista. El ojo de la cámara y el ojo del artista nos hablan del significado oculto en la mirada cotidiana con la que contemplamos paisajes, animales o personas queridas. En los lienzos de Millet, Courbet, Turner, Magritte y Bacon, Berger evoca experiencias que confunden el propio misterio que rodea al arte con nuestras propias vidas, paseando entre categorías literarias, del relato al ensayo, sin casi reparar en ello.

## Mirar Details

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## From Reader Review Mirar for online ebook

### **Daniel Wright says**

When explaining a work of art, Berger manages to be exquisitely precise and endlessly suggestive. His words somehow translate the visual beauty into beauty on the page, and leave the reader that same feeling of having glimpsed something unworldly and beyond explanation.

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### **Miss Lo Flipo says**

#### CARTA ABIERTA A JOHN BERGER.

Lo que más me gusta de leer tus ensayos, querido John Berger, es que eres exigente. Me pones deberes. Me obligas a usar diccionarios, acudir a Google o Wikipedia, me llenas la cabeza con información, nombres, imágenes. Muchas imágenes. Me obligas a prestarte atención y me alegra porque, ¿sabes?, consigues que conecte con el arte en sus diferentes vertientes; yo, que aunque lo disfruto de manera casi siempre irracional, con tu ayuda me vuelvo analítica. 'Mirar' es el segundo contacto que tenemos, pero te aseguro, John, que no será el último. Estoy dispuesta a leer tu bibliografía y a sacarme jugo con ella. Pienso lamentar tu muerte y agradecer tu legado para siempre.

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### **Indfusion says**

Well I bought this book for the photo essays, I loved it for all the essays. Very insightful and well-written, it, as good criticism does, made me feel my ignorance of that which I didn't know - which was a lot - and made me want to learn more. I should have read it before traveling Paris and Florence: I could have appreciated my museum visits all the more and learned where to look.

I will read his other art books as well.

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### **Adam says**

If you're new to Berger (or to the art world in general), I recommend skipping this and instead picking up "Ways of Seeing." That collection is far more accessible to a general audience.

"About Looking" is full of Berger's insightful and impressive commentary on art and photography. (And the collection "Uses of Photography" in this work is a good read for those who make their living behind the lens.) Where this edition fails, for me, is in its lack of illustrative plates. My knowledge of art history is limited, so when Berger cites a painting, I don't have an image stored in my memory to attach to his essay. I need to see what he's talking about.

And I have mixed feelings about the final essay, "Field." Berger's observations are right on, but I'm not sure I want the aesthetic experience of being in a field or witnessing the action in an adjacent field to be a

conscious experience; I would sooner experience it viscerally and intellectualize it only in retrospect.

Lysergius says

This is the second book by John Berger I have had the good fortune to read. A collection of essays dealing with a variety of issues related to the way in which humans observe the world. The book falls into three sections the largest, the last, dealing specifically with artistic perception.

## Carol Ciavonne says

I read John Berger's *Ways of Seeing* many years ago and retained the impression that it was a good book. Then recently, I read an article about him and decided to read more. So glad I did. He writes like a poet... with beauty and insight. I especially enjoyed 2 essays in the book: *Two Colmars*, in which he looks at the same altarpiece in visits 10 years apart, and sees his own changes. The second is *Fields*... which is not the same as the postmodern use of the word, but extends to it, while considering the reality of an actual field.

**ZaRi says**

**Trevor says**

One of the strangest things in life is the way that things you had never heard of only a couple of months before can suddenly appear everywhere. Now, while that is quite to be expected with, say, that K-Pop guy pretending to ride a horse, I'm more interested in things like the most famous article in this collection, *Why*

*Look At Animals?* I only really discovered Berger last year and his seminal work *Ways of Seeing*. Then my daughter was doing her honours year and was doing research into Japanese food and universal food taboos. A lot of her research involved the images used to advertise meat in Japan – essentially, lots of animals telling you just how delicious and nutritious they are. Remember that pig-like animal at the start of *The Restaurant at the End of the Universe* that was bred to want to be eaten? I've a feeling the Japanese might not quite get the rather uncomfortable joke involved in that chapter.

But suddenly this Berger article has been mentioned everywhere. I've seen it mentioned at least four or five times in the last six months. And rightly so, too, as it is a wonderful piece of writing.

He starts by saying that there was once a time when there was a symmetry in how we looked at animals and how animals looked at us. However, this symmetry was never really complete – as we have language and therefore self-consciousness. But language is an interesting thing too – there are many who claim that language is a consequence of metaphor – and that the first metaphors for humans were almost invariably animal metaphors. This is really interesting, as totems form some of our earliest art forms – cave paintings and wooden sculptures. The relationship between humans and animals was once something of remarkable significance and a person's totem animal said something fundamental about the person, something we would struggle to say today in any form. As he says repeatedly in his essay, there was a time when the boundaries between what is human and what is animal were almost impossible to separate.

Things tended to change after Descartes – this was due to the 'fact' that animals lacked souls, and so were incapable of thinking and therefore of having a true ground for their existence (his 'I think therefore I am'). This made animals merely machines. The continuation of this into Darwinian evolution – where, again, animals are too often seen as lower rungs on a ladder leading up to us – alienates them again from us. The industrial revolution is in large part a movement away from animals as 'companions' - as similar forms. They have become, instead, inputs. Factory farms being the clearest example of this. The horse behind the plough has an existence and a necessity, a reality, which simply doesn't exist for the caged chicken.

The only animals we have 'real' relationships with now are our pets – but pets are anything but real animals. We have made them into strange humans – mute and generally completely isolated from their own 'kind' – now they have no kind. Whatever they are they are not really animal, and yet, not really human either.

And then there is us – propped up in our cages, sitting in our offices. He quotes Taylor and his vision of a class of workers as being 'dumb as oxen'. As animals have become soulless in our brave new world, so have we.

But what is particularly interesting is that as animals have been moved more and more to the periphery of human existence, moved out of our day-to-day lives, they have been placed into zoos. This is the place where we go to look at animals now – but what is it that we see? Not really the animals. Generally, what we really see is a lethargic lump sleeping in a corner. Sure, the cages have become more realistic now than they were when this was written – but as good as the cages may become what you are not looking at is the animal. The animal can only be the animal in its environment. In zoos animals have become something quite other – like pets before them, they have become stripped of their real meaning.

This book would have been much harder to read in the days before google. Now when he mentions a painting or an artist I've never heard of before I can quickly google them and there is their work. This beats the crap out of the terrible black and white reproductions supplied here by Bloomsbury.

This year South Australia and then Canberra will be holding an exhibition of Turner's paintings. I'm pretty

excited. Somehow I'm going to get over to see the exhibition in one or other of these galleries. Anyway, there is a wonderful article here on Turner. He says that Turner's father was a barber and that that being a much more bloody occupation then, he claims that many of his paintings are about water turning to blood (a Biblical reference from Revelations) and links this too to his use of the palette knife – and when you think of his sunsets over water ...

There is an amazing discussion of his painting Snow Storm. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Wil...>

He was actually in a storm at sea just like this – not just in it, he actually had himself tied to a mast so as to be able to observe it. You know, like Ulysses. Turner may have been seriously up himself, but he sure could paint.

This is a short book and some of it was quite slow reading for me – I’m not as familiar with some of the artists as I should be – but this guy really can think. He caught me a few times with my ‘oh, yes, of course’ response - one of my favourite responses to any book. Lovely essays by a fascinating man.

**John Madera says**

John Berger's *About Looking* is a smart, impassioned, eloquent, and illuminating collection of essays. Highlights for me: the essay "Why Look at Animals," (a reread); the section on photography; and the essays on Francis Bacon, Giacometti, and Rodin. Suffused throughout is Berger's welcome Marxist humanism, reflected in his keen attention to and advocacy for the oppressed and otherwise marginalized.

## **Mohammad says**

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**Ellie says**

All essays in this collection are provoking insights on looking, in all its genres. I read it for the response essay to Susan Sontag's *On Photography* ("Uses of Photography"). However, the most interesting and original one turned out to be "Why Look at Animals?" - not just the cultural metaphors animals have been through the ages, but the act of looking at them. "Photographs of Agony", on the other hand, about photos of violence in the then-current war in Vietnam, reminded me of many discussions on the ethics of photographing violence today - and confirmed my feeling that we are bound to reinvent the wheel every decade...

### **Sil says**

Descubrí a Berger gracias a mi amiga Rosario. Me había contado una vez, hablando de las experiencias de mirar animales en África, que este libro tenía artículo sobre los animales en el zoológico. Coincidíamos en que mirar un animal en su "entorno supuestamente natural", te cambia mucho la percepción sobre los bichos y sobre la naturaleza en general.

El libro es maravilloso. Es el arte de mirar, pero reflexionado de una manera super poética, pausada y reposada. El primer artículo sobre el análisis visual de una foto que retrata un grupo de músicos de pueblo de ir a un baile... es realmente entrañable.

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### **Amari says**

I had some difficulty with the longer essays in the first section of the book, but strangely, I discovered (after limping through a few pages at a time, week after week) that I was reading the book with too-great attention. I needed to take it somehow less seriously in order to receive the intended content and not become mired in the individual sentences. I find many of Berger's provocative social statements very attractive -- and, in equal measure, tough. Even with my spotty knowledge of art history, I was able to gain significant insight into the artists discussed in the short essays. I was not terribly impressed by the long response to Sontag's *\_On Photography\_* (which book I found utterly maddening).

The only large problem I had with this book is that Vintage did a horrible, lousy job of reproducing the examples of photos and paintings. The pictures are so poor that they might as well not be there at all. One really cannot even make them out in most cases. I don't know what excuse there could be for this.

Overall, a very worthwhile read, and one that encouraged me to consider varying my style of reading in certain sorts of texts.

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### **sdw says**

Berger's book is a series of short essays (each originally published as a column in *New Society* ) examining the act of looking at visual culture. I picked this book up to assist in a project analyzing "the right to look" in several food studies texts. The first essay, suggested by the cover, engages the act of looking at Zoo animals and Berger's contention that zoo animals do not look back at us. This is the only essay I found really helpful for my project. I may have had a different experience of Berger's work had I read it for a different reason. Berger intervenes in studies of photography and art (painting, sculpture, etc) bringing a marxist frame to various acts of looking engaged at by artist and audience. I found myself most engaged when he discussed a subject I already knew something about (like Rodin). The essays are short and readable.

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### **Brynn says**

"All theories of ultimate origin are only ways of better defining what followed." (8)

"The photographic moment for Strand is a biographical or historic moment, whose duration is ideally

measured not by seconds but by its relation to a lifetime. Strand does not pursue an instant, but encourages a moment to arise as one might encourage a story to be told." (47)

"What served in place of the photograph; before the camera's invention? The expected answer is the engraving, the drawing, the painting. The more revealing answer might be: memory. What photographs do out there in space was previously done with reflection." (54)

"For the photographer this means thinking of her or himself not so much as a reporter to the rest of the world but, rather, as a recorder for those involved in the events photographed. The distinction is crucial." (62)

"The virtuoso performance of the oil painting assembles all aspects of the visible to conduct them to a single point: the point of view of the empirical onlooker. And it insists that such a view constitutes visibility itself. Graphic work, with its limited means, is more modest; it only claims a single aspect of visual experience, and therefore is adaptable to different uses." (85)

"Thus there is a close parallel between pictorial representations of space and the ways in which stories are told." (90)

"It would then be far less possible to localize his work, either geographically or historically: emotions are always more general than circumstances." (101)

"Thus each painting offers, not an instant view, a postcard, but an amalgam of visual experience, a sequence of memories." (104)

"A modern city, however, is not only a place, it is also in itself, long before it is painted, a series of images, a circuit of messages. A city teaches and conditions by its appearances, its facades and its plan." (104)

"Each window frames the locus of private or social activity. Each frame contains the sign of a lived experience. The triptych as a whole assembles the sum of these signs of experience, which are massed together according to a visible law of accumulation, brick upon brick, storey upon storey, window by window. The city has grown like a honeycomb: unlike a honeycomb each cell, each window looks different. Yet these differences, which must express individual memories, hopes, choices, despair, cancel each other out and each set is always replaceable." (105)

"No artist's work is reducible to *the* independent truth; like the artist's life - or yours or mine - the life's work constitutes its own valid or worthless truth. Explanations, analyses, interpretation, are no more than frames or lenses to help the spectator focus his attention more sharply on the work. The only justification for criticism is that it allows us to see more clearly." (141)

"No wonder that what Turner admired in painting was the ability to cast doubt, to throw into mystery. Rembrandt, he said admiringly, 'threw a mysterious doubt over the meanest piece of common.'" (152)

"There is nothing like alcohol for making one believe that the self one is presenting is one's true, up to now always hidden, self." (172)

"All art, which is based on a close observation of nature, eventually changes the way nature is seen. Either it confirms more strongly an already established way of seeing nature or it proposes a new way." (196)

"All events exist as definable events by virtue of their relation to other events." (204)

