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**REDIRECTING THE GAZE:  
THE WOMAN AND THE GLADIATOR ON TELEVISION IN THE TWENTY-FIRST  
CENTURY**

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ABSTRACT

Women's admiration for gladiators was documented by ancient writers, captured by nineteenth-century artists and brought to life by twentieth-century film makers. Across this tradition, female characters view the gladiator body, and have the opportunity to own the gaze, which, since Laura Mulvey's 'Visual pleasure and narrative cinema' has typically been seen as male. Through two twenty-first-century television series showcasing the gladiator body and its female admirers, *Spartacus: Blood and Sand* (2010) and *Bromans* (2017), we interrogate the female gaze anew. By examining moments of viewing across shows operating within different genre conventions (historical drama and competitive reality) we find that this gaze can be desiring, loving or hostile. The female gaze can thus be seen as empowering for women by giving female characters and participants agency in their personal relations. However, this agency is constrained by each series' narrative trajectory and moral coding and their privileging of monogamous heterosexual relationships. Reflecting the endpoint of contemporary post-feminist ideologies, *Spartacus* and *Bromans* ultimately leave power in the hands of the men.