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The material elements of writing have long been undervalued, and have been dismissed by recent historicizing trends in criticism; but analysis of these elements – sound, signature, letters – can transform our understanding of literary texts. In *Anti-Mimesis from Plato to Hitchcock* Tom Cohen shows how, in an era of representational criticism and cultural studies, the role of close reading has been overlooked. Arguing that much recent criticism has been caught in potentially regressive models of representation, Professor Cohen undertakes to counter this by rethinking the “materiality” of the text itself. Through a series of revealing new readings of the work of writers including Plato, Bakhtin, Poe, Whitman, and Conrad, Professor Cohen exposes the limitations of new historicism and neo-pragmatism, and demonstrates how “the materiality of language” operates to undo the representational models of meaning imposed by the literary canon.

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*Literature, Culture, Theory* 10



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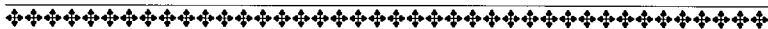
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# Anti-Mimesis from Plato to Hitchcock



**TOM COHEN**

*University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*



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*For "Mallie," goddess*

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“How good are the copies?”

“Almost perfect.”

“Then why do you want the originals? Collector’s vanity.”

“Changes, Mr. Snide, can only be effected by alterations in the *original*. The only thing not prerecorded in a prerecorded universe are the prerecordings themselves. The copies can only repeat themselves word for word. *A virus is a copy*. You can pretty it up, cut it up, scramble it – it will reassemble in the same form. Without being an idealist, I am reluctant to see the originals in the hands of the Countess de Gulpa, the Countess de Vile and the pickle factory ...”

William Burroughs, *Cities of the Red Night*

How might one free oneself from the cowardliness pressing upon social convictions of the present, subjugated as they are to reactive, mimetic, and regressive posturings?

Avital Ronell, *Crack Wars*

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