

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-46584-7 - Anti-Mimesis from Plato to Hitchcock

Tom Cohen

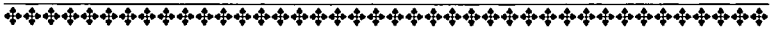
Frontmatter

[More information](#)

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.

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-46584-7 - Anti-Mimesis from Plato to Hitchcock
Tom Cohen
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Literature, Culture, Theory 10



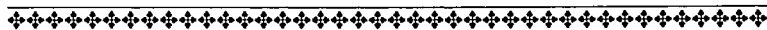
Anti-Mimesis from Plato to Hitchcock

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-46584-7 - Anti-Mimesis from Plato to Hitchcock

Tom Cohen

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Literature, Culture, Theory**General editors*RICHARD MACKSEY, *The Johns Hopkins University*and MICHAEL SPRINKER, *State University of New York at Stony Brook*

The Cambridge *Literature, Culture, Theory* series is dedicated to theoretical studies in the human sciences that have literature and culture as their object of enquiry. Acknowledging the contemporary expansion of cultural studies and the redefinitions of literature that this has entailed, the series includes not only original works of literary theory but also monographs and essay collections on topics and seminal figures from the long history of theoretical speculation on the arts and human communication generally. The concept of theory embraced in the series is broad, including not only the classical disciplines of poetics and rhetoric, but also those of aesthetics, psychoanalysis, semiotics, and other cognate sciences that have inflected the systematic study of literature during the past half century.

Titles published

Return to Freud: Jacques Lacan's dislocation of psychoanalysis

SAMUEL WEBER

(translated from the German by Michael Levine)

Wordsworth, dialogics, and the practice of criticism

DON H. BIALOSTOSKY

The subject of modernity

ANTHONY J. CASCARDI

Onomatopoeitics: theory of language and literature

JOSEPH GRAHAM

Parody: ancient, modern, and post-modern

MARGARET ROSE

The poetics of personification

JAMES PAXSON

Possible worlds in literary theory

RUTH RONEN

Critical conditions: postmodernity and the question of foundations

HORACE L. FAIRLAMB

Introduction to literary hermeneutics

PETER SZONDI

(translated from the German by Martha Woodmansee)

Anti-mimesis from Plato to Hitchcock

TOM COHEN

Cambridge University Press

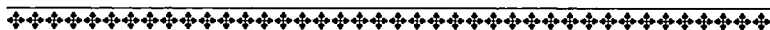
978-0-521-46584-7 - Anti-Mimesis from Plato to Hitchcock

Tom Cohen

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Anti-Mimesis from Plato to Hitchcock



TOM COHEN

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-46584-7 - Anti-Mimesis from Plato to Hitchcock

Tom Cohen

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Published by the Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge
 The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, CB2 1RP
 40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA
 10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, Melbourne 3166, Australia

© Cambridge University Press 1994

First published 1994

Printed in Great Britain at the University Press, Cambridge

*A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library**Library of Congress cataloging in publication data*

Cohen, Tom, 1953–

Anti-mimesis from Plato to Hitchcock / Tom Cohen

p. cm. – (Literature, culture, theory; 10)

Includes index.

ISBN 0 521 46013 1 (hardback) – ISBN 0 521 46584 2 (paperback)

1. Language and languages – Philosophy. 2. Criticism. I. Title.
II. Series.

P106.C593 1994

401 – dc20

93-43559

CIP

ISBN 0 521 46013 1 hardback

ISBN 0 521 46584 2 paperback

TAG

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-46584-7 - Anti-Mimesis from Plato to Hitchcock

Tom Cohen

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

For "Mallie," goddess

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-46584-7 - Anti-Mimesis from Plato to Hitchcock

Tom Cohen

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

"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*

Contents

Acknowledgments page xiii

Introduction: The legs of sense 1

Part I Dialogue and inscription

1. *Othello*, Bakhtin and the death(s) of dialogue 11

2. *P.s.*: Plato’s scene of reading in the *Protagoras* 45

Part II Parables of exteriority: materiality in “classic” American texts

3. Too legit to quit: the dubious genealogies of pragmatism 89

4. Poe’s *Foot d’Or*: ruinous rhyme and Nietzschean recurrence (sound) 105

5. Only the dead know Brooklyn ferry (voice) 127

6. The letters of the law: “Bartleby” as hypogrammatic romance (letters) 152

Part III Pre-posterous modernisms

7. Conrad’s fault (signature) 181

8. Miss Emily, *c’est moi*: the defacement of modernism in Faulkner (inscription and social form) 208

9. Hitchcock and the death of (Mr.) Memory (technology of the visible) 227

Coda Post-humanist reading 260

Index 265

The volume owes a number of debts that are difficult to trace. Of the ones that are apparent, I am particularly grateful to J. Hillis Miller as a reader whose clarity and support have been essential to me. In diverse ways, I want to thank: James Thompson and Trudier Harris for their friendship and intelligence; Johanna Prins for the timely gift of her company and critical brilliance; Betsy Dillon and Sarah Pelmas for their insightful response to earlier versions of the Hitchcock chapter; Christopher Diffie for his help and critical acumen; and William Schouppe for his helpful comments. In a special category, I want to thank Barbara Herrnstein Smith, whose generous criticism was decisive to the final form of at least one chapter. I also thank Tom Hadju and Andy Milburn for the stimulus of their rare energies, Michael Sprinker for his support and advice, and Dan Myerson for being himself. Finally, I am grateful to Professor Joseph Flora of the UNC English Department, Professor Ruel Tyson, and the Institute for the Arts and Humanities at UNC Chapel Hill for securing for me leave for this work.

Three of the chapters have appeared whole or in part previously: chapter five in *Arizona Quarterly* (Summer, 1993 [copyright of the Arizona Board of Regents]), chapter seven in *Rereading the New: A Backward Glance at Modernism*, edited by Kevin Dettmar (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), and chapter nine in *Qui Parle* (Fall, 1993), and I gratefully acknowledge permission to reprint.