



VCU

Virginia Commonwealth University
VCU Scholars Compass

English Publications

Dept. of English


1987

Essay review of *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* by W. J. T. Mitchell

David E. Latane

Virginia Commonwealth University, dlatane@vcu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/engl_pubs

 Part of the [Comparative Literature Commons](#), [English Language and Literature Commons](#), [Other Philosophy Commons](#), and the [Theory and Criticism Commons](#)

Joseph Childers, founder and editor of the short-lived *Critical Texts* journal that this appeared in has given permission for its placement here.

Downloaded from

https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/engl_pubs/8

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Dept. of English at VCU Scholars Compass. It has been accepted for inclusion in English Publications by an authorized administrator of VCU Scholars Compass. For more information, please contact libcompass@vcu.edu.

tion becomes the trace of an epistemological break of sorts, for now transgression need no longer be encoded as happening outside the Father's house; the transgressive function of the masquerade has been brought within doors. Inchbald has succeeded in writing a feminist novel independent of those same patriarchal canons of taste that lamed Burney's literary production.

Anyone familiar with *Clarissa's Ciphers* knows what a sensitive reader of literary texts Castle is. This book reinforces that impression. There is much to recommend in these readings, not least of which is their serious attempts to explore the effects of patriarchal structures on the individual psyche. The memory of female desire creating a place for itself is one that our culture attempts to repress again and again (and has been able to accomplish with remarkable and frustrating tenacity). Castle's case studies of transgression and utopia in socially symbolic discursive activity provide a welcome addition to existing studies of the eighteenth-century novel.

If Castle is to be faulted for anything in these final chapters it is her failure to come to terms with the eighteenth century's transformation of the carnival's "grotesque realism" and the virtual absence of humor in the novels. This lapse depends no doubt on the sentimental nature of the texts that Castle reads, texts which were more likely to evoke complacent tears than Bakhtin's revolutionary laughter. In this regard Castle would have done well to consider Mary Poovey's observation "that sentimental fiction often provided [women] with compensatory gratifications, ideal rewards, and ideal revenges, all of which discouraged them from seeking material changes in their actual position (*The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer* 38). To be sure this is a vexed point, for the compensatory gratifications of fantasy can lead to action and freedom. Nevertheless, Castle's work as a whole would be stronger if it considered more closely the relation between the eighteenth century's grave and psychologistic redaction of the carnivalesque and the theory of revolutionary laughter central to Bakhtin's work. Such a consideration might even amplify the practical social significance of the masquerade.

Near the end of Castle's work, the dominant tone is elegiac, suggesting in fact the author's own intimation that the masquerade's potential for revolutionary drama was limited. At a time when the ideology of patriarchal *politics* had already given way to the politics of consent, it is possible that the masquerade served simultaneously as a nostalgic recreation and attack upon a vulnerable and no longer effective *political* structure. It may also have been good business for an emergent entrepreneurial ele-

ment seeking to capitalize the unorganized license and anonymity of the city. Questions about the progressive nature of the event remain. To be effective, sexual politics and revolutionary action based on sexual politics require more than the idealism encoded in the phrase "will to power." Those having the price of admission to the masquerade may have had their pleasure, but it was a pleasure whose profits also went to the counting-house of the Father. And even if the exploitation of longings for license had unintended effects in the way it revealed the social character of the "natural" relations, it established a precedent for locating civilization's antidote in a mysterious and exotic no-where land, where individual desire--free at last from the claims of historical circumstance--realizes that its object and its gratification have been problematic only because of external forces directed against it. Castle's study needs a more complex and materialist social history of desire, but this absence does not diminish her very considerable contributions to practical feminist criticism applied to eighteenth-century narrative.

John P. Zomchick
University of Tennessee

W.J.T. Mitchell. *ICONOLOGY: IMAGE, TEXT, IDEOLOGY*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1986. x + 226 pp. \$20.00 hardcover.

The Bible begins with the creation of man in the image (similitude) of God, who is also defined as the word or logos; in Exodus, when Moses forbids the worshipping of graven images, he stems the tide of idolatry only by making the word visible as stone tablets, which are then hidden in the tabernacle. The study of iconology may now be in vogue, but few have approached the ideological relations between image and text with a full understanding of this paradoxical dialectic inscribed in our culture. We are all in love with images, and afraid of our love, convinced that whatever truth they image will be broken, hidden, or turn idolatrous beside the abstract rewards of the word. In an unabashedly idolatrous culture, iconophobia haunts the works of thinkers about imagery, though this is but one of the insights that Mitchell's *Iconology* provides.

W.J.T. Mitchell's exploration of the discourse about the interrelation of the verbal and visual arts is both a theory of iconology and a critique of the way

theorists of the sister arts have engaged in sibling rivalries through the years from Edmund Burke to Nelson Goodman. His earlier collection of essays, *The Language of Images*, celebrates the "intensive, almost compulsive, collaboration" between artists of the word and artists of the image, but it is the hidden power of the rivalry, not the kinship bond, that fuels this inquiry:

Why does it matter what an image is? What is at stake in marking off or erasing the differences between images and words? What are the systems of power and canons of value--that is, the ideologies--that inform the answers to these questions and make them matters of polemical dispute rather than purely theoretical interest? (1)

This line of approach leads to a profound discussion (though, as Mitchell is well aware, "pure" theory is purely theoretical in praxis). Mitchell does not examine the use of icons or images, but the history and the historical particularity of the discourse about them; and, while the book remains steadfast to its theme, it also argues for a way of writing criticism that uses the concept of ideology itself in a dialectical way, mediating between a narrow "false consciousness" definition and a mushy pluralistic use of the term to neutrally define any system of consciousness or cultural value. In this respect, Mitchell, whose editing of *Critical Inquiry* has been under the aegis of "two cheers for pluralism," seems to be moving towards a more politically committed position. (But the most interesting part of the book is the third section, in which the discourse about the image turns back upon the concept of ideology itself in a critique, thoroughly historicized, of Marx's concepts ideology and commodity fetishism.)

In his opening chapter, Mitchell attempts to answer the question "What is an Image?" by looking at the range of traditional answers; what he discovers is our compulsive inability to talk about either words or images without asserting a theory that champions one over the other. But first a sense of how we habitually use the word must be established. There are five categories of imagery: Graphic (pictures, statues, designs), Optical (mirrors, projections), Perceptual (sense data, "species," appearances), Mental (dreams, memories, ideas, fantasmata), and Verbal (metaphors, descriptions). Four of these categories may be located, at present, in the institutionalized discourse of a particular discipline: art history (Graphic), physics (Optical), psychology (Mental), literary criticism

(Verbal). Perceptual imagery is the boundary, the point of collaboration as well as warfare between all disciplines (10). As Mitchell develops his argument, we see that the question of perceptual imagery is the site of the most overt ideological struggles because it also involves the definition of the "natural" way we "imagine" the world. Western man has given, for instance, artificial perspective the force of nature (Burke would perhaps call it second nature), and privileged the camera for its revelations of the truth of this nature. In a key statement about the historical progression of images, Mitchell reveals, perhaps, his own agenda--one that will not surprise readers who have read his excellent study of William Blake:

It is no wonder that the category of realistic, illusionistic, or naturalistic images has become the focus of a modern, secular idolatry linked with the ideology of Western science and rationalism, and that the hegemony of these images has generated iconoclastic reactions in art, psychology, philosophy, and poetics. The real miracle has been the successful resistance of pictorial artists to this idolatry, their insistence on continuing to show us more than meets the eye with whatever resources they can muster. (39-40)

More than meets the eye includes, I think, the spectre of Blake's vision behind the systematic analysis of discourse; Mitchell argues that through the struggle of (fallen) discourse on the contraries of word and image emerges a concept of nature that is dialectical (Blakean more than Marxian), and a recognition that "the redemption of the imagination lies in accepting the fact that we create much of our world out of the dialogue between verbal and pictorial representations" (46). Mitchell's restraint lies in not mentioning the English composite artist until page 95, and sparingly thereafter.

From the beginning, Mitchell suggests, images have been "not just a particular kind of sign, but something like an actor on the historical stage" (9); while occasional nods towards Byzantine Iconoclasm or the ancients remind us of the antiquity and seriousness of the issue, Mitchell chooses to have the curtain of this stage go up in the eighteenth century, with the theories of Burke and Lessing. But not without a quirk. The middle chapters, titled "Image versus Text: Figures of the Difference," work backwards from Nelson Goodman's concept of neutral description, to Ernst Gombrich's modified conventionalism, to (with a leap over the nineteenth century)

Lessing's *Laocoön*, and Edmund Burke's intertwining of aesthetics and reactionary politics.

The philosophy of Nelson Goodman, with its emphasis on the multiplicity of "worlds"--an extreme form of conventionalism--provides a heuristic for an approach to the notion that either word or image is closer to "reality" or "nature." Goodman's project, similar to that of the semioticians, is to provide a value-free description of signification (and reference) that can then be applied to all the arts. But for Mitchell the semioticians run aground on the difference between verbal and visual image, as for instance in the debate over the nature of the photograph, in which they argue that it represents a message without a code. If visual images are valued for their more direct mimesis, photographs (if we accept them as a correct mirror of reality) must be the most truthful imagery. An arch-relativist must find in the photograph's apprehension a set of conventions as well; Goodman asserts that we acquire the ability to read photographs--just as we learn any other set of conventions (the grammar of our native tongue, for instance). But while Mitchell suspects that Goodman's pretensions to ideological neutrality and a disinterest in history and origins are disingenuous, he recognizes Goodman's thought as an enabling theory that allows discourse about sign types without ideologically loaded terms like "nature" or "real world." But there is another attraction. Given the absence of *the* world or reality, and the existence of worlds only as chosen, man's potent ability to choose worlds may override the determinist impact of modern scientific culture with its disguised ideological interest in explaining the truth about reality in measurable terms. Without the rhetorical flourishes that we associate with Romanticism, Goodman's conventionalism provides a philosophic basis for a neo-Romantic stance towards the world; it is a position from which one might argue the redemption of the imagination (vide *Jerusalem, Prometheus Unbound*). Goodman claims that convention is all: Mitchell hints (I read between the lines) that, to contradict Ezra Pound, *paradise may too be artificial*.

The chapter on Gombrich is titled "Nature and Convention"; painting, of course, is closer to the former, while poetry overtly proclaims its conventional status. The distinction dates back to Plato's *Cratylus*, and in this chapter Mitchell shows how Gombrich's theory has moved from a conventionalism that licensed a generation of explorers of the "language" of images to a more conservative position that preserves the platonic distinction, and prioritizes painting as closer to nature. The crux of the argument, though, concerns the definition of what carries

the force of nature within the admittedly conventional work of art: "'Nature,'" Mitchell sums up Gombrich's position, "is not antithetical to convention, but simply a figure for a certain special kind of convention. . . . 'Nature,' in this reading of Gombrich's argument, is only 'Second Nature,' not physical necessity" (83). Photographs assume the force of nature because they are easiest to "read"; they require no codes. In a continuum between the easy and the difficult, what shades most towards ease is natural. Mitchell admits that Gombrich might contest this reading, but he also charges that in making any distinction at all between natural and conventional signs Gombrich licenses as natural a historical formation, "an ideology associated with the rise of modern science and the emergence of capitalist economies in Western Europe" (90). Gombrich's position, we sense, is Burkean, though without Burke's admirably open ideological stance. Mitchell's essay makes the covert politics of any move towards "second nature" overt, for to think that images of any kind are natural, not conventional, is to equate them with the real/ideal (Mitchell concludes the chapter with a brilliant return to Plato) and thus commit idolatry by worshipping the signifier as the (transcendental?) signified: capitalism and its images, reified and theoretically justified, are second nature to us all. The ideologies associated with discourse about images become much clearer in theorists of the eighteenth century, and one of Mitchell's purposes in moving backwards, it seems, is to unmask the growth of our subtle attempts to disguise ideology in theories of art.

Lessing's centrality in discussions of the Sister Arts tradition cannot be denied; he is invoked by both Marxists and Christian Humanists, and Mitchell rightly probes why this should be so, with emphasis on the ramifications of Lessing's identification of poetry with time and painting with space for modern theory, including the lengthy debate between Joseph Frank, Frank Kermode, et al., on the topic of "spatial form" in literature. At this distance from Lessing it is a relatively easy task to discern the historical configurations and political concerns that shape his insistence on differentiating poetry from painting along such absolute lines; the categories of space-time that exist in all works of art are made figurative when they are separated, and with the *Laocoön*, we can see how these figurative categories are used to value literature, establish canons, and regulate genre in accordance with ideological concerns that extend beyond the borders of aesthetics. Lessing values poetry and fears the encroachment of painting because of national and historical concerns: miscegenation in the arts is akin to national and sexual mixing, and Les-

sing, in Mitchell's reading, identifies painting with women and with France, both subjects of apprehension for the German male. This reading has something about it of the tour-de-force; it is so convincing that, after we overcome an initial suspicion, it seems like something we have always known. The greater question then becomes, given these overt ideological concerns, why has Lessing's theory always carried so much weight with all parties? (Though, one might add, literary critics have traditionally exploited the *Laocoön*, while it is less frequently discussed by art historians.)

The essay that follows partially answers the question. "Edmund Burke and the Politics of Sensibility" traces the way that Burke's treatment of the sublime, specifically the verbal sublime of cloudy, indeterminate language, becomes during the period of the French Revolution an overt tool in the counter-revolutionary struggle. Burke's conservatism attains its true strength, of course, only in opposition to the French rationalists, who found so many reasons for the new. In the *Enquiry into . . . the Sublime and the Beautiful*, however, the source of later political views is already evident in the critique of the "natural" modes of perception, in which the sublime (power, roughness) is allied with masculinity, and the beautiful (smoothness, softness) is feminine. Within the category of the sublime, however, there are two types: an imaginative sublime "controlled chiefly by visual and pictorial metaphors," and a secondary sublime which is "resolutely avisual, antipictorial, and employs the terminology of feeling, sympathy, and customary association or substitution" (140). Mitchell argues that Burke's critique of the French revolutionists insists upon the usurpation of power by "speculation"--that is, visual (painting) and feminine modes overthrowing proper masculine ones. Mitchell nicely shows the irony of Burke's iconophobia, however, by showing the reliance on verbal pictures in the aptly titled *Reflections* to scare readers into the reactionary camp. Paine's response, in turn, is a series of counter-pictures; Mitchell sums up the rhetorical situation:

At the level of rival images it may now be clear why war was inevitable, why only the appearance of discussion could go on. Both parties were caught up in the rhetoric of iconoclasm, the projection of false, mystifying self-images or "reflections," and the imputation of idolatry to the alien antagonist. (147)

Burke's eventful publication thus completes a journey from the ahistorical discourse of Goodman to the discourse that is history itself in Burke.

In the third part, "Image and Ideology," Mitchell considers the thread that links his disparate theorists: "the image as the site of a special power that must either be contained or exploited; the image, in short, as an idol or fetish" (151). Mitchell's view might be summarized by borrowing an appropriate image from the Preface to Marx's *The German Ideology*: all iconoclasts are sheep in wolves' clothing, like the Young Hegelians carrying within the seed of new manifestations of the thing they attack. The mode of ideological analysis that Mitchell has practiced--something congruous with but not a likeness of Jameson's practice in *The Political Unconscious*--is no exception: "Does it not also have constitutive figures and images, hypericons that control its picture of its own activities? What sort of status does it have in relation to the discursive practices it analyzes?" (159). The answers to these questions lie in the reification in Marxist theory of the images of ideology and the fetish, and Mitchell's quest is to make naked the historical basis of the concrete figures of Marxist thought.

Most users of the term "ideology," one might wager, would be unaware of any imagistic base to this abstract buzz word; the fetish, while denuded of much of its iconographic power and ethnological reference through years of Marxist and Freudian use, still calls to mind a picture. The "critical aim" of Mitchell's analysis is to show how the drift away from the concrete origin of the terms has crippled Marxist criticism, which has "made a fetish out of the concept of fetishism, and treated 'ideology' as an occasion for the elaboration of a new 'idealism'" (163). Marx's description of ideology--a strategic deployment in a battle with Idealism--relies on the analogy with the camera obscura; looking to the status of the budding photographic industry in the 1840s, Mitchell shows the strangeness of Marx's choice of the camera obscura as a polemical weapon to mock idealist philosophy, and the embarrassment the analogy has caused later Marxist champions of photography and cinema, who tend to regard it as a youthful error. Marx's concretization, Mitchell proposes, makes sense in the context of the 1840s, when photography was advertised as a rich man's toy that produced "fairy" pictures and "floating philosophical visions" (171-172); the inverted, transitory, phenomenon of the earlier camera obscura provides a perfect concretization for the regulated but illusory world of "ideology." Iconoclasm is the natural result of an understanding of ideology as an unreal visual phenomenon; suppressing the analogy, especially Marx's

understanding of the "historical process" as the driving force of the camera, leads to a misunderstanding of the equivocal place of ideology in Marx's thought, in which (implicitly) the camera obscura of Marx's own ideology is necessary to revert the image to its "real" form.

If ideology as a concept provides a basis for attacking the idolatry of capitalist society, the fetish is a more powerful tool, making concrete and loathsome (within Western ethnocentric biases) the practices of commodity worship in capitalist society. Mitchell's question, though, concerns aesthetics: "Why is 'ideology,' with its shadows, projections, and reflections, the crucial notion in Marxist criticism of literature and art, while fetishes, which in at least one sense literally are works of art, generally have a minor and problematic function in Marxist aesthetics?" (186). The simple answer is that viewing art as a commodity (as a fetish) opens the gates to the most vulgar sort of Marxist criticism, a criticism that would regard Shakespeare's plays as false and workers' social realist art as true; Marx himself, of course, would shudder. Mitchell attempts to mediate between the images of camera obscura and fetish by reminding us that Marx's idea of "commodity" is a transformation of what seems "to be utterly ordinary and natural into something mysterious and complex" (188). The modern fetish is itself an ideological projection, and the "'fantastic forms' of the camera obscura and the 'objective characters' of fetishism, are not separable abstractions, but mutually sustaining aspects of a single dialectical process" (190).

Mitchell follows this statement with an account of the nineteenth-century sources for Marx's understanding of ancient fetishism; the force of the image can only be understood against the background of its paradoxical joining of the disgusting (sexual) fetish with the urbane "commodity" for nineteenth-century man, who finds no fetishistic magic in his commodity, and willingly favors iconoclastic attacks on fetishism. Marx's view of art, however, is a soft one that willingly allows for the very "aura" or mystery around the art object that he deconstructs in the commodity by picturing it as fetishistic. Aesthetics, then, is "Marx's blind spot" (202), and later Marxist critics have been forced to choose between the logic of Marx's mature thought--and the reduction of art to mere commodity--and Marx's stated views on aesthetics, which do not seem to be "Marxist" at all. Aestheticians are equally embarrassed by Marxism, since the historical confluence of "art" with "the media" makes the fetishistic nature of images apparent: "'Image-making' in advertising, propaganda, communications, and the arts has replaced the production

of hard commodities in the vanguard of advanced capitalist economies" (202). The dilemma, then, given the inevitability of keen Marxist (iconoclastic) criticism of the arts, is to instigate a dialectic that will salvage from this coming critique the valuable yet historically determined dialectic of the arts themselves. This sympathetic criticism must begin with the self-critical investigations of Marx's own tools, the images of ideology and fetish: "The essence of the dialectical image is its polyvalence--as object in the world, as representation, as analytic tool, as rhetorical device, as figure--most of all as Janus-faced emblem of our predicament, a mirror of history, and window beyond it" (205). Dialectic images, for Mitchell, situated within the mutually embarrassing realm of aesthetics, are also the opportunity for a real dialogue between western liberalism and Marxism--a "dialectical pluralism" like the contrary marriages of Blake's *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*.

"What is now proved was once only imagin'd." Blake's proverb may be a good place to begin coming to grips with the historical position of Mitchell's analysis. We are, it seems, at a threshold in criticism, one which, given the thoroughly discredited modes of Marxist aesthetics of the past, is all the more surprising: we are closing in on a genuine Marxist criticism that shows every sign of displacing formalist aesthetics and "Deconstruction" as a dominant theory. Mitchell's critique explores the road we must travel to make the coming critical era one of productive "dialectical pluralism" rather than reductive hegemony. It has never been easier to be an iconoclast, and in terms of visual arts it has never been easier to see art-as-commodity, or even commodity fetish. Any issue of *ArtNews* provides the proof, since it documents the feverish speculation in objects whose chief mysterious "aura" is fiduciary appreciation. Public faith in the currency of art fuels the creation of work that, ironically, is often openly parodic of primitive fetishes, accompanied by mumbo-jumbo (Marxist) artist's statements, or made not to last so as to defy its place as commodity. What is easy, as we have seen, assumes the force of Nature ("Where man is not nature is barren"), and it becomes more natural for critics to examine the modes of production and the ideology of artwork every day. But art itself, inscribed into the images that figure Marxist analysis, has its own dialectic, its own counter-analysis. Mitchell begins to "prove" a place for criticism by imagining, in *Iconology*, a criticism that understands the iconophobia that every critic inherits. His work is also a warning to critics to be careful not to emulate Blake's priests who lay their eggs of destruction on the fairest joys. The commo-

dious territory of aesthetics already provides a meeting ground for Marxism and liberalism; what is of more concern, however, is the more sacred turf of political power itself, where the idols of Capitalism and Marxism meet with little understanding of their mirrored idolatry, and little concern for either art or the discourse about art.

David Latané
Virginia Commonwealth University

Neil Hertz. *THE END OF THE LINE: ESSAYS ON PSYCHOANALYSIS AND THE SUBLIME*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1985. 265 pp. \$25.00 hardcover.

Like much contemporary criticism, Neil Hertz's *The End of the Line* for the most part eschews marginal discourses. A collection of essays that does not rely on an introduction to establish the unity or continuity of the pieces that follow, it begins in modest fashion with a preface a single page in length, mostly detailing the previous appearances of these essays. All but one of this distinguished set has appeared elsewhere, as early as 1967 and as late as 1983. The sole newcomer is an afterward, aptly (and somewhat mysteriously) named "The End of the Line." I say mysteriously because the tone of the title is so elusive on first acquaintance. Is it playful, ominous, apocalyptic, despondent, triumphant--or is it merely an expression of fatigue?

That these essays span so many years provides an added source of interest. One can trace in them shifts in critical styles: from the humanistic pieties and pathos of "Wordsworth and the Tears of Adam" (1967) to the more recently fashionable ironies of many of the best pieces in the collection--e.g. "The Notion of Blockage in the Literature of the Sublime" (1978), "Recognizing Casaubon" (1979), and "Freud and the Sandman" (1983)--to the revival of historicism in "Medusa's Head" (1983). And yet to suggest that these essays are instances of critical styles or fashions seems to me grossly misleading. Many of them have a power similar to great fiction (Chekhov's stories, for instance) to linger in the mind. I do not mean to suggest that these essays are merely good stories. Or if they, like all essays, must be narrative fictions of a sort, they are meta-fictions: they tell the story of the impossibility of reaching the end of the narrative line of reading or interpreting texts.

The collection's avoidance (or postponement) of the expected totalizing gesture follows from its skepticism toward Sartre's "activity of totalizing" (62) in his biography of Flaubert, *L'Idiot de la famille*. As biographer, Sartre seeks to construct "a single, coherent and truthful account of a life" (61) out of a heterogeneous assortment of data ("socioeconomic, psychoanalytic, etc."), and to help himself do so he refers to Flaubert's neurological collapses near Pont l'Eveque, an event that led to his abandoning the study of law. Flaubert fictionalizes the event near the end of the 1845 *Sentimental Education*, where Jules' encounter with a hideous dog ostensibly marks his transformation into a serious artist. It is the importance of that moment of conversion in Sartre's own text that interests Hertz. "The conversion," he conjectures, "is meant to serve as that prior act of synthesis whose (real) existence underwrites the totalization Sartre aims at in his biography: the interpreter need no longer fear that he is faced with the merely tautological 'unity' of an individual life if that life has already caught up on its own threads and, in effect, totalized itself" (65).

The organization of Hertz's own text makes it abundantly clear that, unlike Sartre's, it has no illusions about the prospect of totalization. As we approach the "end of the line" of Hertz's book, anticipating the synthesis that we missed at the beginning, the text becomes fractured in curious ways. In the middle of the ninth and penultimate chapter, "Medusa's Head"--an exploration of representations of revolutionary violence as a sexual threat--we encounter an appendix that begins by referring to an exchange with a member of the audience, which occurred when the paper was first presented at Johns Hopkins. The chapter concludes in somewhat uncharacteristic historiographic fashion, pursuing (as an amateur historian, Hertz admits) the history of the revolutionary Phrygian cap through a multitude of texts and artifacts. Next comes a postscript added in 1985 and two more interlocutors, this time allowed to speak for themselves: Catherine Gallagher and Joel Fineman, whose responses are reprinted from the issue of *Representations* in which Hertz's essay first appeared. Neil Hertz responds, and then proceeds to his afterward, "The End of the Line." As the most theoretical text in the collection, it promises to synthesize the insights accumulated in the course of close and exhilarating encounters with a diverse group of texts (by "Longinus," Wordsworth, Flaubert, George Eliot, Hoffmann, Freud, the Cornell English Department, and others). But it is in one respect the least unified piece in the set. Unlike most of the other essays--readings of texts in which the pedagogical motive re-