

Book reviews

Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution, by Lynn Hunt (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984).

Social interpretations of the French Revolution have been in crisis ever since the publication of Alfred Cobban's *Social Interpretation of the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964). Initially the crisis affected only the Marxist social interpretation that was Cobban's target, and that he and subsequent "revisionists," both Anglophone and Francophone, have successfully hacked to bits over the past twenty years. But, as Lynn Hunt points out, many of the critics themselves accepted the premise that to interpret the revolution meant to give "an account of social origins and outcomes" (5). Consequently, they have attempted to construct their own alternative social interpretations – none of which seems quite satisfactory. In this book, Hunt suggests that we shift our angle of vision more radically: that we leave questions of social origins and outcomes aside and examine the Revolution as a political process with an essentially political outcome: "the institution of a dramatically new political culture" (15).

This does not mean that Hunt has turned to old-fashioned political history. In fact, readers unfamiliar with the political events of the revolution will not find this book easy to follow: there is no exposition of the political phases and struggles of the revolution; neither the taking of the Bastille nor the insurrection of August 10 nor Lafayette nor Mirabeau appear in the text or index. Hunt's book is not a political history, but a synoptic essay on the Revolution's transformation of politics – both as culture and as social practice.

She begins with political culture, examining successively revolutionary rhetoric, political ritual, and radical imagery. For Hunt, the fundamental feature of the French Revolution was that it attempted a total break with the past. Unlike the American revolutionaries, who could hearken to the traditional "rights of Englishmen" and then to longstanding de facto American independence from the corruption of English politics, the French found no viable model in their past. Theirs was to be a new nation, founded not on precedents or prejudices but on nature and reason alone. They legitimated their revolution in a "mythic present," (27) a continually recreated moment of consensus that could no more be fixed than could the volatile events of the revolution itself. With all historical landmarks gone, with the sacred person of the king desecrated, authority came to rest in language itself. As François Furet has argued in *Penser la Révolution française* (Paris: Gallimard, 1978) political power was located not in a class or an institu-

tion, but in the claim to speak for an abstract and imaginary single national will. The incantatory invocation of nation, *patrie*, regeneration, or virtue projected a community of transparent unified Rousseauian citizens – and also implied as their negative counterpart an evil conspiracy of aristocrats who could only be influenced by terror. French revolutionary rhetoric created an inspiring but inherently unstable model of political community and political action.

Hunt shows how this combination of exaltation and suspicion gave rise to an unprecedented politicization of all of life. Everywhere new political symbolism was invented, imposed, and enforced. New forms of political practice – elections, demonstrations, festivals, surveillance, insurrection – were elaborated and multiplied. Modes of dress, the vocabulary of daily life, the reckoning of time, space, and quantity: all were to be transformed to create citizens out of slaves. Out of these multifarious practices, which were improvised as the flow of the revolution called them forth, a lasting repertoire of republican political tradition was fashioned – a repertoire on which the ubiquitous democratic republicanism of the modern world is based. Study of the linguistic and symbolic forms of revolutionary practice, Hunt demonstrates, is not merely a curious supplement to the study of real politics. Politics itself is symbolically constituted, more obviously and self-consciously in the French Revolution than ever before. Close attention to what she calls “the poetics of power” leads her to the core political transformations of the French Revolution.

This political culture was made and lived by political actors – not only the Parisian revolutionary leaders, but thousands of provincials who joined political clubs, wrote petitions, made speeches, and held revolutionary political office. The second half of Hunt’s book is concerned with the social characteristics of what she calls the “new political class” – those who espoused and made a profession of the democratic politics of the revolution. Her method in this portion of the book is radically different from the literary and symbolic analysis she employs to decode political culture. Here she relies above all on quantitative studies of regional voting patterns and of the occupational backgrounds of local and national office holders.

She finds that the most radical regions were poor, rural, largely illiterate areas in the south-west and center-west. The Parisian basin was consistently right-wing and the big cities – Paris, Lyon, Marseille, Bordeaux, Strasbourg – began on the left but had moved to the right by 1795. It was in the socially and geographically marginal regions that the new political culture took hold most firmly. She also argues that the men who filled the political and administrative posts of the revolutionary regimes were marginal. Outsiders of one sort or another were particularly attracted by the revolution’s radical rejection of all previous political practices, because such practices had had no place for them.

Here Hunt’s argument is too loose to be fully convincing. She presents some revealing anecdotes about genuinely marginal types – actors, recent migrants on

the make, or Jews and Protestants who had lacked all civil standing under the old regime. But alongside these cases, Hunt's statistics indicate the presence of hundreds of merchants, lawyers, shopkeepers, artisans, and, in the villages, substantial peasants who became officials of the revolutionary regimes. These men were "marginal" only in the sense that they had been shut out of political life under the old regime – not in the sense that Jews and actors were marginal, or that poor and illiterate regions of the south- and center-west were marginal. Nor did they constitute a "new political class" in any but the most reduced sense of the term "class." The officials of the new regime included a highly diverse collection of literate and moderately comfortable to wealthy citizens, few of whom had been or could have been active in public affairs before 1789. Hunt's "sociology of politics" finds little to distinguish the revolutionary officials from the rest of the population – except that the poor and illiterate were scarce, as were nobles and former holders of old regime offices. But what these chapters do demonstrate is no less important: that thousands of solid citizens of towns and villages all over France gained indelible experience in democratic politics during the decade of revolution. Their practice of politics was the crucial social basis for the formation and perpetuation of the new democratic political culture that Hunt describes in the first half of her book.

In spite of a certain conceptual imprecision in the chapters on the sociology of revolutionary politics, Hunt's book develops a convincing argument for the novelty of the Revolution. Her insistence that the Revolution must be seen above all as a political event, that its crucial product was democratic politics rather than bourgeois society or a rationalized state, and that the best way to understand the new politics is to examine its linguistic and symbolic matrix, is less original than she claims – not only Furet but Mona Ozouf, in *La fête révolutionnaire, 1789–1799* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976), made these points before Hunt. Where she differs from Furet and Ozouf is in her evaluation of the innovations. Hunt celebrates the new politics of the revolutionaries with the straightforward confidence of a pragmatic American radical democrat of the 1960s, while Furet and Ozouf retain the wary nervousness of disillusioned French ex-communists of the 1950s. Hunt's good sense nicely counterbalances the occasional hysteria of her French predecessors, reminding us that, after all, the principal legacy of the French Revolution has been democratic politics, not the Gulag. She has fashioned a thoughtful, distinctive, and provocative interpretation of the French Revolution.

William H. Sewell Jr.
University of Michigan

The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History
by Robert Darnton (New York: Basic Books, 1984).

In *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History*, Robert Darnton again displays the estimable gifts that have earned him a place among the finest practitioners of the historian's craft. His work has always been characterized by impressive and detailed archival research, spare and often elegant prose, and a willingness to confront the critical conceptual and methodological issues that underscore his work. *The Great Cat Massacre* is no exception, and in it Darnton engages some of the most profound questions regarding the relation between culture and society. Do ideas and cultural systems reflect economic and social variables? Does everything, in the phrase of Ernest Labrousse, "derive from the curve"? For decades many historians have structured their work on the assumption that cultural systems emerge from economic and social variables. Perhaps they do, but, as Darnton points out, this assumption may be false, because cultural attitudes and ideas have often changed drastically during periods of relative tranquility and remained static during times of upheaval.

Obviously Darnton does not seek, nor should we expect him to provide, a definitive answer to such sweeping questions. In *The Great Cat Massacre* he offers some suggestions for approaching the relation between culture and society and applies them to specific episodes in eighteenth-century French history, stating clearly that he intends his work to be a trial run, a preliminary attempt to explore several ways of understanding the relation between culture and society.

The suggestions that Darnton proposes are derived from anthropology. He believes that historians must recover the way that ordinary people made sense of the world with one particular caveat kept firmly in mind. Exploring the archives of the Old Regime even superficially, Darnton suggests, we will find the early modern Frenchmen are different. They do not think, act, or react, the way we do or the way we expect them to. They complain about toothaches, tell horrifying stories, and are obsessed with such things as braiding dung for display on manure heaps. We constantly need to be roused from a false sense of security about the past, to be administered severe doses of culture shock. What was proverbial wisdom to our ancestors is often completely opaque to us. When we encounter this opacity, says Darnton, we have located a valid point of entry into an alien culture and are closer to recovering it. If this culture can be retrieved, Darnton contends, we can stop straining to explain how texts reflect their social surroundings because these texts after all were composed and embedded in a world that was social and cultural at the same time.

In *The Great Cat Massacre* Darnton commences by exploring the lower strata. He first elucidates some aspects of the symbolic world of the peasantry through an examination of its fairy tales and then performs a similar exercise on a group of urban artisans by describing their participation in a brutal massacre of cats. Moving up the social scale in subsequent sections, Darnton examines the world

view of an eighteenth-century bourgeois and provides a consideration of several aspects of elite culture: the world view of a police inspector, epistemology in a key Enlightenment text, and finally, the response of selected readers to Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Heloise*.

The essay on the massacre of cats is the central piece of the collection and the point where Darnton joins most confidently theory and practice. It therefore should be examined with care. Darnton describes the wretched existence of a group of apprentices in a Paris print shop. Working long hours at demanding tasks, reduced to eating scraps from the master's table (some even rejected by the master's cats), the apprentices were relegated to a miserable existence. The apprentices were further tormented by a horde of alley cats who thrived in the printing district and howled all night on the roof above the apprentices' squalid quarters, making it impossible for them to get a decent night's sleep. To turn the tables on his oppressors, both human and feline, one of the apprentices began mimicking the cats' nocturnal antics on the roof outside of the master's bedroom. His performance was so convincing that the master ordered the apprentices to get rid of all the cats. The apprentices attended to this task with savage zeal. They attacked and clubbed every cat they could find and dumped sackloads of half-dead, bludgeoned cats in the courtyard of the print shop. Then, assembling all the workers, they conducted a mock trial and pronounced the cats guilty. After administering the last rites, they strung them up on an improvised gallows. At this point, roused by gales of laughter, the master intervened, angry only at the stoppage of work. Even he could not dampen the hilarity. For days afterward the scene was reenacted whenever the printers wanted to knock off for some amusement.

At this point Darnton believes that he has located opacity, that pivotal point of contact with an alien culture. "The whole episode of the cat massacre," he writes, "stood out as the most hilarious experience in Jerome's entire career. Yet it strikes the modern reader as unfunny, if not downright repulsive. Where is the humor in a group of grown men bleating like goats and banging with their tools while an adolescent reenacts the ritual slaughter of a defenseless animal? Our own inability to get the joke is an indication of the distance that separates us from the workers of preindustrial Europe. . . . Anthropologists have found that the best points of entry in an attempt to penetrate an alien culture can be those where it seems most opaque. When you realize that you are not getting something that is particularly meaningful to the natives, you can see where to grasp a foreign system of meaning in order to unravel it" (77–78).

Darnton admits that we cannot gauge the alienness of Old Regime culture from one example, and he is careful to remind us that the cat massacre may have been an isolated episode. But in worrying about its representativeness, Darnton has failed to perceive a greater problem. Even if we could demonstrate that the incident of the cat massacre was fairly representative, we would still not know how alien *ancien regime* culture is. Darnton has assumed that because we would have

been appalled by it while the apprentices found it hilarious, we have at last encountered that elusive opacity, the alienness of earlier culture. This comparison of our attitudes with the actions of the apprentices, however, is skewed because it is based on the juxtaposition of the intellectual elite of one culture against the lower or "mass" elements of another. If we compare the actions of the harassed apprentices with the attitudes of a modern, intellectual elite, say, that of Princeton University, naturally the contrast will appear as dramatic as Darnton presents it, the alienness as vivid as the presence of a backwoods hillbilly in one of Darnton's seminars. This contrast is misleading because, first, the cultural elite of the eighteenth century, including Voltaire and Diderot, would also have deplored the episode, and, second, we can encounter opacity in our own culture as well.

For example, the city of Huntington, West Virginia, in which I live, is a university town with a sizeable educated and civilized population. One of the city's principal attractions is a beautiful and elegant park, which serves as a center for family recreation, jogging, tennis, picnics, and other forms of leisurely activity. But the park is also plagued periodically by roving groups of teenagers, "rednecks," and others, who delight in chasing, trapping, torturing, and killing the relatively tame and trusting squirrels and chipmunks who also inhabit the park. And these people find these activities hilarious. It would be my guess that Huntington is by no means exceptional in this regard. Many American cities and rural areas have substantial populations of people who, out of arrogance, have an inclination toward violence, or out of dissatisfaction with some aspect of their existence, lash out at an element of their surroundings. They may go up in a tower with a rifle and start blasting, abuse their children, or beat their wives. Or, more germane to this inquiry, they may unleash their frustrations in a way that seems humorous to them: beating up a homosexual, terrorizing a woman, slashing tires, destroying an object or piece of property prized by someone else, or tormenting an animal. (I am not prepared to explain why some people find these things funny, but they do.) At this point opacity loses its reliability as an indicator of the alienness of a past culture because we encounter opacity in our own society, and there is no clear way to determine whether one event is more opaque to our culture than to its own, or if it is opaque merely to certain segments of our culture. Certainly distance exists between "us" (as long as we define ourselves as a modern, perhaps more "advanced," intellectual elite) and the workers of pre-industrial Europe, but there is often as much distance between us and elements of our own culture. One person's opacity may be another's transparency.

Thus, despite his impressive and thoughtful attempt to probe more deeply into the relation between culture and society, Darnton has not succeeded in developing a new method for understanding the relation between culture and society. To describe an event of callous violence in one society, however fascinating or even representative, and superimpose it against the attitudes of a high culture of another society, proves little or nothing. The gap between the brutal and the sublime seems pronounced in any age. Undoubtedly this gap has been reduced since

the eighteenth century, but only an investigation of oceanic dimension will tell us how much. *The Great Cat Massacre* may be praised as a valuable and engaging attempt to understand an alien culture, but Darnton's use of opacity to seek that culture places us in a desert looking for an oasis that is not there.

William Palmer
Marshall University

Reading Althusser: An Essay on Structural Marxism, Steven B. Smith, (Cornell University Press, 1984).

One wants very much to like Steven Smith's introduction to the early work of French Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser. It is, after all, a readable book about books that are notoriously unreadable. Furthermore, it does a passable job of situating Althusser in the context of French philosophy during the early 1960s, and attempts throughout to compare Althusser's work with that of other writers in the Western Marxist tradition. Finally, despite the fact that he holds a view of Marx and Marxism considerably at odds with that of Althusser, Smith manages to avoid the obloquy and self-serving polemics that too often characterize Anglo-American discussion of the Althusserian School. Unfortunately, however, even-handedness and an accessible style are necessary but not sufficient conditions of good criticism and good popularization. In the final analysis, Smith's manual is disappointing in several important respects that undermine the book's usefulness both as a basic introduction and as a serious critique.

In the first place, the title is misleading. The book is neither a reading of Althusser's entire oeuvre, nor an essay on Structural Marxism as a whole, but rather a commentary on *For Marx* and Althusser's contribution to *Reading Capital*. Of course these books are undeniably important, basic texts of the Althusserian School, but they are now over twenty years old and have been superseded in several key areas by Althusser's own later work as well the work of others. They cannot be said to encompass even all of the major themes of Althusser's personal writings, let alone the equally important and intimately interconnected work of the School as a whole. The central problem for any commentary on Althusser is the relation of his early work to his later essays on ideology and philosophy (in *Lenin and Philosophy* and the as yet untranslated *Philosophie et Philosophie Spontanée des Savants*), and his own self-criticisms of *For Marx* and *Reading Capital* (in *Essays in Self-Criticism*), yet Smith explicitly refuses to take up this essential task. His references to Althusser's later writings are sparse and inconsequential. Such a lack of attention is ultimately fatal to any "reading" of Althusser's early texts, because the changes Althusser later introduced to his view of philosophy and the relation between philosophy and science are absolutely fundamental.

In *For Marx*, Althusser attempted to square the philosophical circle by establishing Marxist philosophy (Dialectical Materialism) as the independent arbiter and guarantor of the scientific nature of Marxist historical practice (Historical Materialism). That is to say, he tried to create an epistemology whose pronouncements would somehow have the authority of science. This effort, which Althusser later repudiated, confused philosophy with science (for Althusser science is understood as a conceptual discourse specifying and producing knowledge of a precise theoretical object). While Althusser never retracted this conception of science, he completely relocated it by eliminating the confusion of philosophy with science and thereby excluded epistemological problems from the scientific domain. In his later work, Althusser depicted epistemology as a sterile discourse or debate over already existing knowledge (for or against it) rather than a scientific discourse productive of knowledge itself. Philosophy, no longer the arbiter of the sciences, became an intermediate discursive field between ideology (the realm of subject-centered discourse) and science (the realm of object-centered discourse). Philosophy became more significant politically as a result of this reformulation. Given the highly charged, disruptive effect a science may have on the legitimation and reproduction of existing social relations, Althusser began to refer to philosophy as “class struggle in theory.” For the later Althusser, philosophy can never be innocent or objective. Rather than an “epistemological Marxism” (as Smith labels it), Althusser defended a Marxist concept of epistemology – that science is a social practice, that each science has its own internal epistemological criteria, and that these two propositions are being elaborated from within Historical Materialism and not from any “independent” philosophical perspective. From the point of view of Althusser’s later work, *For Marx* constitutes not a philosophical science of history but rather a philosophical defense of a Marxist history of science. The uninformed reader of Smith’s account, however, has no way of knowing this, or of knowing that the latter’s criticisms of *For Marx* are, for the most part, beside the point.

Smith’s selective focus on *For Marx* and *Reading Capital* results in another grave set of misleading criticisms and “straw man” arguments with regard to Althusser’s theory of ideology. Smith is correct to point out that Althusser tended to use this term in different ways for different purposes, but he is not at all clear on what those ways were because he has little sense of the significance of Althusser’s later work on ideology or how the concept of ideology figures in the overall problematic of the Althusserian School. In his early work Althusser used ideology to denote (1) a social practice – the domain of social subjects, their constitution as subjects, their practice or action as social agents (including the semantic aspect of language); (2) ideology as the “other” of a science – either absolutely false (a position discarded along with epistemology), or as a body of ideas, concepts, and problems that a science declares to be erroneous as part of its constitution as science; and (3) as the “other” of Marxism – those ideas, concepts, and problems that Marxism rejects as erroneous. The key to interpreting Althusser’s later work (and thus properly assessing *For Marx*), is to focus on how Althusser begins, albeit with considerable hesitation and lack of clarity, to differentiate be-

tween these three usages. Ideology in the third sense becomes a philosophical category, a position to be combatted to be sure, but one outside the production of historical knowledge. Ideology in the second sense becomes a concept of the history of science with no relevance to either “truth” or “falsehood.” Ideology in the first (or “strong”) sense, however, continues to be the basic, general concept and one of the basic social practices that, along with economics and politics, constitute human social formations, the theoretical object of historical science.

It is ideology in this most fundamental sense, barely mentioned in *For Marx* and *Reading Capital*, that dominates Althusser’s later work. Because Smith has little sense of this, he revives a series of well-known criticisms of *For Marx* and *Reading Capital* – that Althusser divorces theory from practice, that he refuses to discuss the relation between science and society, and that he fails to give attention to the phenomenon of human experience. Such criticisms are not only “old news,” they are aimed at straw men. Althusser has always insisted that there is no practice (including science) outside the domain of the subject and his concept of “interpellation” (the constitution of the human subject by reciprocal relations of recognition and regulation) is arguably, in conjunction with the work of Saussure and Lacan, one of the more interesting theories of human subjectivity since Freud. The Althusserian School (in works by Göran Therborn, Michel Pêcheux, and Ernesto Laclau) has elaborated a concept of ideology that purports to explain both the enabling power of ideology (the subject as social agent) and its power to dominate (the subject as subjugated). Smith gives the concept of interpellation a single brief mention and fails even to cite the work of Therborn, Pêcheux, Laclau – or Lacan for that matter in his bibliography. The fact that Althusser’s theory of ideology has given rise to an important body of literary criticism (by Pierre Macherey, Terry Eagleton, and Renée Balibar) will also remain unknown to Smith’s readers.

Equally questionable is Smith’s decision to exclude Etienne Balibar’s essay “The Basic Concepts of Historical Materialism,” which takes up over a third of *Reading Capital* (the English translation) and which has had a significant impact on both history and anthropology (inspiring works by Pierre-Philippe Rey, Barry Hindes and Paul Hirst, Maurice Godelier, and Claude Meillassoux among others). In this essay, Balibar attempts to work out the implications of the early Althusserian problematic with respect to problems of historical periodization and process and to elaborate the concept of the mode of production. Smith gives this seminal essay a mere page devoted exclusively to the definition of mode of production, and neglects even to mention that it comes from Balibar and not from Althusser himself.

Once again the problem is more than one of relative neglect. For Balibar, the concept of a mode of production is constituted by three elements (direct producers, means of production, and appropriators of surplus value) each doubly articulated by relations of the labor process and by relations of property. For Balibar these elements and relations are invariant concepts but they exist only

in their “combination,” that is to say, in their historically unique character. Smith, however, presents Balibar’s concept as if it were analogous to the “abstract formalism” of Lévi-Strauss (“the perpetual reshuffling of a fixed pack (of cards),” 180). This is misleading both as a result of the selective quotation Smith uses to support his position (he cites only the first part of a passage by Althusser that goes on to reject the charge of formalism), but even more so because Smith neglects to mention Balibar’s explicit refutation of the charge of “formalism.” According to Balibar, there is a radical opposition between his concept of “combination” and Lévi-Strauss’s conception of structure, which Balibar labels a “combinatory.” For Balibar, the Marxist “combination” differs absolutely from the structuralist “combinatory” because in the former, the elements are historically variable – the nature of the elements themselves is altered by their historically specific structure.

About the real problem of Balibar’s analysis, the tension between structure and process, and the later attempts of the Althusserians to resolve it, Smith has little to say. This is unfortunate since the incompatibility of terms of structural determination and reproduction on the one hand (structural causality, determination in the last instance, overdetermination, etc.), and terms of historical conflict and change on the other (contradiction, relative autonomy, class struggle, etc.), is surely the major weakness of *Reading Capital*.

Similar criticisms might well be made regarding Smith’s exclusion of the political theory of Althusser, Nicos Poulantzas, Therborn, and Laclau (especially curious because Smith himself is an assistant professor of political science). Such a criticism would be justified if for no other reason than that Smith has chosen to subtitle his book an essay on Structural Marxism. However, unlike the previously cited work, the political theory has less direct relevance to Smith’s chosen subjects, *For Marx* and *Reading Capital*, and its absence is therefore less important. As for the rest, it simply will not do, as Smith attempts, to gainsay his sins of omission by means of a disclaimer in a preface. While it is certainly legitimate to focus on *For Marx* and *Reading Capital*, it is disingenuous, to say the least, to exclude material that is directly relevant to an adequate, up-to-date understanding of these texts.

If Smith chooses to ignore Althusser’s later work as well as the work of the Althusserian School as a whole, it appears to be to make room for a plethora of references to the history of Western philosophy. Indeed, Smith presents Althusser’s early work as if it were little more than an eclectic collage of philosophers as diverse as Kant, Descartes, Hegel, Parsons, Kuhn, Freud, Oakeshott, Merleau-Ponty, Spinoza, Winch, Durkheim, Mannheim, Weber, Marx, Wittgenstein, and Bachelard. For Smith, understanding Althusser is less a matter of reading than a matter of cross-referencing. Of course this method is occasionally illuminating and appropriate (Spinoza, Bachelard, Marx), but more often than not it is misleading, calling up a host of associations in the read-

er's mind that are real obstacles to understanding the coherence and integrity of Althusser's thought. The cross-referencing method can be not only misleading (Althusser as a Hegelian, as a functionalist, as a Durkheimian), it is sometimes contradictory (Althusser is a neo-Kantian Cartesian on page 98 and a neo-Hegelian critic of Kant and Descartes on page 111), and often confusing ("But if Althusser has given his Marxism a Durkheimian twist, he has also given his Durkheim a Freudian turn," 132). Names that one would expect to find in the cross-referencing scheme, names such as Cavailles, Lenin, Lacan, Gramsci, Derrida, Mao, are often unaccountably missing, while dubious references to Winch, Oakshott, and others abound. Smith's attempt to use Hegel as an introduction to Althusser's view of the autonomy of science (111–114) may make an interesting point about Hegel, but it shows a surprising ignorance of Althusser's links to French philosophy of science (the autonomy of the concept of Cavailles), as well as surprising indifference to Althusser's deep antipathy to Hegelian philosophy. Smith comes closer to the mark when he finally cites Spinoza (121), whom the Althusserians view as the major philosophical precursor of Marx and the original source of whatever insights Hegel may have had. But Smith seems unaware of the important and potentially illuminating relation that the Althusserians see between Spinoza and Hegel (the subject of an interesting book by Macherey, *Hegel ou Spinoza*, not cited in Smith's bibliography).

In summation, despite an engaging style and an admirable clarity of language, Smith's book is fatally flawed by errors of omission and commission and by a simplicity that on occasion exceeds the bounds set by the task of popularization. Even if one were willing to accept all of its faults and self-imposed restrictions, there remains an insurmountable gap between the methodological assumptions of *Reading Althusser* and those of *Reading Capital*. The gulf between the two is perhaps too great to be bridged by the synoptic conventions of an introductory primer, although I am not convinced of this. Smith's book everywhere lacks a sense of the whole of Althusser's work, how each piece fits (or was intended to fit) into an overall "problematic." The result is a patchwork organizational structure determined not by contours of Althusser's thought but by the exigencies of Smith's own traditional view of the history of ideas (which Althusser never ceased to deplore). Smith's reading of Althusser shares little with Althusser's reading of Marx besides the empty shell of a common verb.

Robert Resch
University of California, Davis