

## Olmsted on Goldstein (2015)

Goldstein, Robert Justin, and Andrew M. Nedd, editors. *Political Censorship of the Visual Arts in Nineteenth-Century Europe: Arresting Images*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, pp. xvi + 270, ISBN 978-0-24870-0

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The strengths and weaknesses of this useful volume may stem from its origins in a conference organized by one of the editors, Robert Justin Goldstein. The strengths emerge most clearly in the volume's scope and the splendid richness of the bibliographic sections accompanying the five essays. Less satisfying is the forgivable but too sweeping insistence that "visual media were perceived as a greater threat than the printed word by European authorities" (7). Censorship so regarded necessarily entails awkward concessions like that which begins the very interesting essay by Catherine Horel: "It may seem inappropriate to address the problem of censorship in the visual arts in the Austro-Hungarian Empire after 1867, when the introduction of constitutional reforms meant that the authorities focused mainly on control of written material" (88). Such apologies might have been avoided by a slightly different introduction, since most of the essays try to map the censorship of visual culture (and not just visual "art") in relation to all cultural productions subject to political control. What the collection lacks in terms of theoretical reflection is, however, compensated by the abundance of largely new materials on the history of image censorship. The richly documented book concludes with thirty-three pages of illustrations in greyscale and seventeen more pages of bibliographical materials.

In "Irony, Derision, and Magical Wit: Censors as a Spur to Russian Abstract Art," Margaret Bridget Betz and Andrew M. Nedd trace struggles over the censorship of images, ranging from the popular *lubok* folk prints protesting the Napoleonic invasion of Russia to Futurist appropriations of *lubki* forms. The authors give an excellent account of the ways satirists negotiated the ever-changing censorship regulations. Betz and Nedd note that self-censorship was sometimes a factor and that occasionally, as during the Russo-Japanese War, censorship of images "seems to have been entirely successful" (14). Of particular interest is the history of little-known but influential caricature journals like *Bugbear*, *Spectator*, and *Machine-Gun* as well as the discussion of the confiscation of Natalia Goncharova's paintings.

Robert Justin Goldstein's essay, "France," encapsulates some of his earlier ground-breaking work on the censorship of political caricature. Goldstein enriches this material with brief accounts of the censorship of theatrical works, photography, and cinema. Despite the essay's gaps (barely a page on sculptures and painting), readers of *NCFS* will find tantalizing nuggets of information, such as: "Aside from printed materials, medallions, and miscellaneous objects, flags were perhaps the most censored objects of the Restoration (and succeeding periods)" (77).

In the book's third chapter, Catherine Horel describes the rise of satirical newspapers throughout the Austro-Hungarian Empire from 1867 to 1914. She shows the surprising differences and contestations among papers written for Hungarians, Croats, Serbs, Czechs, Slovenes, Italians, German-speaking Austrians, and Polish-speaking Galicians. Horel complicates the notion of caricature as crudely oppositional by demonstrating how "a great deal of racism" (110) infused the political caricatures. While a Viennese paper like the anti-Semitic *Kikeriki* offered images of Czechs and Slovenes as brutes and monsters, the Czech press gave its caricatured Germans the stereotypical traits of Jews (who seem in this instance and others to be a screen onto which nationalistic fears were projected). A brief but discriminating account of the scandal over Gustav Klimt's allegorical paintings concludes the chapter.

In their sixty-page essay, "Political Images and Censorship in Germany before 1914," Ursula E. Koch and Martin Loiperdinger provide a landmark history that marshals many sources as well as archival material. Tracking the censorship of images from 1524 to 1914, the authors scrutinize the expansions and contractions of state control after 1848. They also complicate our understanding of censorship by remarking how, in comparison to nearly 6,000 prosecutions of the press during Bismarck's regime, "the prosecution of visual media during the same period seems trifling" since satirical magazines were Bismarck's allies (152–53). Although journals like *Kladderadatsch* and *Simplicissimus* were sometimes censored, the proportion of shocking (but unpunished) caricatures to those condemned was surprisingly high (167, 176).

The book's last chapter by Antonello Negri and Marta Sironi, "Censorship of the Visual Arts in Italy 1815–1915" ultimately fulfills the introduction's claim for the greater attention of the censors to images rather than to words. From the burning of Canova's etchings (195) to the subterfuges employed in circulating portraits of Mazzini (198), the banning of cartoons thought to reference prostitution (205), and finally the combined efforts of the Vatican, state authorities and the general public to protest the cinema (208), the authors demonstrate the obsessions of the censors with the dangerous influence of images on a

highly illiterate audience. The study, mostly written by Sironi, makes good use of archival materials.

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