

## Goldstein on O'Brien (2015)

O'Brien, Laura. *The Republican Line: Caricature and French Republican Identity, 1830–1852*. Manchester UP, Studies in Modern French History, 2015, pp. 296, 50 illustrations, ISBN 978-0-7190-8935-0

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The past twenty-five years have witnessed an explosion of works on nineteenth-century French caricature, much of it in English, and most of it focused, as author Laura O'Brien notes, on the July Monarchy, especially 1830–35. It was during these five years when impresario Charles Philipon founded and edited two of the most famous and influential journals in caricature history, *La Caricature* (1830–35) and *Le Charivari* (1832–1937). These two journals mercilessly and repeatedly depicted French King Louis-Philippe in the form of a pear ("poire" in French, a word also meaning "fathead"), in what was variously termed the "campaign of disrespect" and the "war of Philipon v. Phillippe," to the extent that the exiled Jewish-German writer Heinrich Heine wrote that "the glory from the [the king's] head hath passed away and men see in it but a pear."

Between the appearance of the present reviewer's *Censorship of Political Caricature in Nineteenth-Century France* (1989) and the work currently reviewed, the following have appeared (excluding the dozen or so books and exhibit catalogs on Daumier, the most famous of Philipon's cadre of extraordinary caricaturists, who were said to have "knives in their heads," published to commemorate his two-hundredth birthday bicentennial in 2008): the fine major exhibit catalog edited by Elise Kenny and John Merriman, *The Pear: Graphic Arts in the Golden Age of Caricature* (1991); David Kerr's excellent *Caricature and French Political Culture, 1830–1848* (2000); Sandy Petrey's *In the Court of the Pear King* (2005); Jean-Michel Renault's *Censure et caricatures: les images interdites et de combat de l'histoire de la presse en France et dans le monde* (2006; wonderfully illustrated but full of textural errors); Fabrice Erre's *Le Règne de la Poire: caricatures de l'esprit bourgeois de Louis-Philippe à nos jours* (2011); and Amy Wiese Forbes's *The Satiric Decade: Satire and the Rise of Republicanism in France, 1830–1840* (2010; sadly marred by academic jargon so dense as to make it virtually impenetrable).

So why is yet another book on nineteenth-century French caricature required? Because, as author O'Brien points out (13), in contrast to the intense focus on July Monarchy caricature, "work on political caricature and satire produced during the Second Republic [1848–52] is extremely scant." Her book provides a highly commendable remedy for this past scholarly omission, as it is well-informed, well-researched, well-organized, and highly readable.

O'Brien's first chapter provides an excellent summary of our existing knowledge about caricature and the July Monarchy, stressing its importance to the Republican opposition to Louis-Philippe, a weapon so formidable that the notorious 1835 September laws re-imposing prior censorship of caricature (abolished following the 1830 July Revolution which brought Louis-Philippe to the throne) were passed, as Philipon accurately pointed out in the September 8, 1835 final issue of *La Caricature*, "especially for us, to break our crayons and make it materially impossible to carry on the work which we have continued despite seizures without number, arrests without cause, crushing fines and jail terms [including for both Philipon and Daumier]."

In chapters two through four, O'Brien demonstrates how, in the wake of the 1848 February revolution which deposed Louis-Philippe and inaugurated the Second Republic, the two leading caricature journals, *Le Charivari* (no longer under Philipon's proprietorship) and Philipon's new *Le Journal pour rire* (1848–55), although freed from prior censorship in the revolution's wake, expressed their Republican orientations by devoting their energies to defending the new government and ridiculing its perceived enemies. These included both the Republican left, which pushed for greater social reforms (particularly the socialists, especially the so-called "utopians" and the followers of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, depicted as the "new barbarians") and the right (essentially members of the bourgeoisie frightened by the alleged left-wing excesses of the Republic); an emerging feminist movement was also targeted for good measure, especially in a series of stinging Daumier caricatures, known as "Les Bas-bleus."

In her last two chapters, O'Brien first very interestingly discusses several virtually forgotten right-wing (i.e. pro-Louis-Philippe and anti-Second Republic) caricature journals published between 1830 and 1852. She then closes with a discussion of the mainstream Republican caricature journals' attacks on the rising star of Louis Napoleon, Bonaparte's authoritarian nephew, elected president in 1848, who overthrew the Republic in his famous 1851 coup, soon followed by an 1852 plebiscite which endorsed his self-proclamation as Emperor Napoleon III and formally brought not only the Republic to its end, but also Republican caricature, which was once again subjected to prior censorship.

*The Republican Line* is an admirable book, which can be endorsed without reservation and read with great pleasure.

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