Controversial Images: Media Representations on the Edge. Eds. Feona Attwood, Vincent Campbell, Ian Q. Hunter and Sharon Lockyer. New York and London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. h/bk 292 pp. ISBN 978-0-230-28405-0. Price £55.00.

Split into four parts, the sixteen essays in *Controversial Images: Media Representations on the Edge* seek to address a variety of textually specific case-studies, examining images that have been considered shocking, disturbing and taboo-breaking. Arguing for the significance and temporality of the collection, the editors note that such an examination is "important for understanding media because it reveals the workings of censorship and regulation, the construction of social and sexual norms [...] and the limits and conventions of media forms and genres and how these are challenged and overturned" (1). Identifying an inextricable link between the media and moral panics of various sorts, this edited collection explores the complexities and nuances of the term controversy and attempts to theorize it in order to explore how "specific images, from 'video nasties' to snapshots from Abu Ghraib, have structured our understanding of the media's power, seductiveness and dangers" (1).

Considering various aspects of controversy such as "media effects," moral discourses, technologies, theories of obscenity and the abject and disgust, the eclectic range of material addressed begins with a section entitled "Controversy and Representation." The first four essays consider controversy in relation to mediated disruptions and/or manipulations of "reality." Meredith Jones's essay "Media-Bodies and Photoshop" begins by discussing the culturally powerful notion that "photography offers a direct link to the real" (19). Going on to consider the way in which image manipulating software, Photoshop, problematizes this understanding, Jones quickly identifies three examples, the first being a Photoshopped nude image of feminist philosopher Simone de Beauvoir that appeared in the French magazine *La Nouvel Observateur* in January 2008; the second a 2009 Photoshopped image of a female model for Ralph Fauren clothing with the anchoring caption "Dude, her head's bigger than her pelvis"; the third, a campaign for *Dove* beauty products which functions on the premise that while other products utilised "unreal" or Photoshopped images of women in their campaigns, *Dove* did not. The threads that

tie these three examples together are feminist, ethical and theoretical in terms of what Jones nominates as an "ongoing cultural reconfiguring of photography's connection to the real" (28). Chapter two, written by Catherine Collins and David Douglass, deals with the global controversy that resulted from the publication of twelve cartoons featuring the Prophet Muhammad in the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* in 2005. Considering multiple characterizations of the resulting crisis, the authors discuss both the perplexity and outrage of various respondents in terms of cultural clashes, pointing out the significance of the "fact that the [...] cartoons were bodily images" (37) and, further that "the nature of a visual artefact, is epistemic" (38). Highlighting traditions governing sacred images before discussing two dominant perspectives - the first, "based on traditions of Islam" and the second, grounded in "the political values of democracy" (44) the authors examine liminality in terms of freedom and free speech. The chapter concludes by suggesting further discussion in relation to the "composition of the images, their nuanced signification and text captions" (47). According to the authors, what is at stake here is the fact that when looking at visual imagery, its meaning is assumed to be manifest and this problematic assumption needs to be reconfigured. Chapter three focuses on Azis, a Bulgarian pop-folk performer who "built a reputation as a performer [...] with an unapologetic display of gender-bending homoeroticism" (53). The author, Kourtova, argues that "the performances and images of this flamboyant singer [.] provide a space that is a musi-cultural nexus, where the tensions of local and global, self and Other are articulated through chains of mimetic representations" (64). The fourth and strongest chapter of the grouping is Bruce Bennett's "X-Ray Visions: Photography, Propaganda and Guantánamo Bay." Identifying the prison itself as one of "the most symbolically dense sites of the 'war on terror'," the author suggests that images of the prison have "come to communicate not merely the technical processes by which the US military detains selected prisoners of war, but the relationship of the USA with the rest of the world, a visual rendering of power - cultural, imperial, military, legal and physical" (67). Bennett then goes on to discuss two of the most well-known photographs of supposed "enemy combatants" being held at Camp X-ray which show prisoners with "their hands bound, wearing face masks, eye masks, ear defenders, gloves and orange overalls [...] inside a wire-fenced compound" (68). The author concludes that the photographs

are controversial in that "they reveal a contradiction between values and action [...] how ways of seeing and interpreting images are circumscribed by and incorporated into an information system that reproduces unequal power relations" (80).

The next section focuses more specifically on the ways in which the media frame events as controversial. Ertuğ Altınay's chapter discusses the bodily appearance of two Kurdish female suicide bombers who, when caught in the Republic of Turkey, were situated at the center of a media furor. Engaging with the issue of "how the dynamics of postcolonial modernization and nationalism [...] have shaped body politics in the country" (86), the author concludes with the interesting theory that "Kurdish women have been expected to learn Western modernity from Turks through a process of double-colonization" (96). Adam Stapleton's chapter deals with his experience of "border patrol" in which he recounts having four books featuring the work of artist Trevor Brown seized by Australian customs for the purpose of "protecting fictitious children." Discussing the issue of artistic challenges to "dominant notions of childhood innocence" (118), Stapleton suggests that "anxiety about images of children is part of a significant and developing crisis" (119). Chapter eight by Julian Petley focuses on cuts imposed on filmic texts by the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC). Discussing the protection of children, the concept of harm and the definition of obscenity, Petley provides a sound analysis concluding that the "main laws which the BBFC must take into consideration when classifying and censoring films [have] increased in recent years [meaning that] the government is heavily involved in the censorship process, albeit by proxy" (149).

Part three "Ethics and Aesthetics in Controversial Media" features chapters by Caroline Ruddell ("Cutting Edge: Violence and Body Horror in Anime"); Stephen Maddison (focusing on "extreme porn" and "what happens when porn is no longer pleasurable?" (172); and Steve Jones, who shows how "using 'porn' to describe horror implies something not just about the content of the images, but also about the viewers' interaction with them" (188). The final chapter in the section by Susanna Paasonen considers the grading or inner hierarchies of pornography. Addressing the lowest level of porn - human/animal relations or, bestiality - the author considers issues of humiliation, respectability, control, realism and responsibility before discussing the difficult issue of consent. She

concludes that "disturbingly, the desires and effects magnetized to [the animals] revolve very much around human sexuality" (212).

The fourth and final section of the collection "Engaging with Controversial Images" deals primarily with engagement frequently considered dangerous or harmful. Martin Barker discusses audience responses to *House on the Edge of the Park* (Ruggero Deodato, 1980), noting that they are much more intelligent, nuanced and generically aware than is often presumed. The next chapter by Julia Kennedy and Clarissa Smith discusses the attraction of the images posted on the website *Spankwire,* which is related to their shocking candidness and their fetishization of "pain, voyeurism and objectification" (241). They argue that "what we see in the reaction phenomenon are the ways in which audiences of body imagery use new technology to place themselves centre stage as both consumers and producers of sensation" (251). The penultimate chapter by Vincent Campbell explores controversial images in the videogame *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2.* In opposition to inspiring violence, Campbell argues that the interactivity required to successfully complete the game requires gamers to "reflect on the morality of their actions" (267). The final chapter of the book, Paul Brighton's "A Bad Taste Business," discusses controversial imagery in British television news journalism. Fundamentally, Brighton argues that the fluidity of what can be broadcast allows scope for new, challenging images to break through to public screens.

Challenging assumptions about media effects, highlighting moral panics, and pointing out the significance of discursive frameworks concerning representation, regulation, and aesthetics, the book makes a significant contribution to the study of media representations. One obvious gap in the collection is an analysis of controversial images on television, especially in television drama. Such an inclusion could have been fruitful considering the power of so-called "revolt/ing subjects" (Tyler) from shows such as *Shameless* (broadcast on Britain's Channel 4 from 2004-2013), which actively engage with recent moral panics regarding, for example, a "culture of worklessness." Overall however, this collection is an impressive one with the majority of chapters convincing in their arguments.

Controversial Images: Media Representations on the Edge is, in conclusion, a compelling and much needed media studies book that sets out what is at stake if we fail to analyze and critically consider edgy images.

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