Iconoclasm has been generally avoided in art and cultural studies, and it’s often regarded from a negative point of view as ‘the destruction of images’. Except for particular cases such as the Byzantine studies on iconoclasm are quite recent. Dario Gamboni’s book *The destruction of Art: Iconoclasm and Vandalism since the French Revolution*¹ is considered one of the pioneers, together with conference publications such as *Negating the Image: Case Studies in Iconoclasm* (2005) or *Iconoclasm: Contested, Objects, Contested Terms* (2007)². However, the images and their power constitute one of the main topics for a better understanding of human societies and recent events demonstrate this, particularly in the killings in the French satirical weekly magazine Charlie Hebdo. This is one reason why this book, one of the most complete works on iconoclasm, is both so uncommon and relevant.

*Striking images* is especially remarkable because of the different geographical origins of their seventeen authors (coming from the United Kingdom, Ireland, France and the United States). Furthermore, their diverse fields of work are always related somewhat with iconoclasm but from different historical periods and disciplines. As is mentioned in the introduction, this book’s path is ‘beginning with an ancient sacred landscape and ending inside a museum conservation lab’³. The origin of this common project about iconoclasm, developed by a large group of researchers, is referred to both in the introduction and in the conclusions. From the bibliographical and conferences background to the Arts and Humanities Research Council project called ‘Iconoclasm Network’, a better understanding of the state of the issue and the motivations and methodologies of the research are presented.

The aim of this work is contributing to expanding studies in iconoclasm, being achieved from different approaches and from questioning the definition of ‘iconoclasm’ itself. Departing from a basic definition as ‘the act of consciously breaking images’, this work is systematically questioning and widening that meaning. Iconoclasm is thus studied in less known contexts as the Renaissance, the Enlightenment or the art collections in museums. In these contexts, the value and meaning of objects of study are revised, as well as their formal and contextual continuity. Iconoclasm discourse is thus applied to new kinds of objects and the term itself is used to define a conscious change in the object, altering its symbolic meaning but not necessarily destroying it. Iconoclasm is also interpreted as a power struggle. In that sense, Leslie Brubaker looks back to the Byzantine designation of the modern-named ‘iconoclasm’, which was ‘iconomachia’ (‘image struggle’), demonstrating that the term ‘iconoclast’ comes from modern times. There’s also a clear difference between the two concepts, being ‘iconomachy’ far less violent than ‘iconoclasm’.

The book is divided into thirteen chapters, ordered chronologically from chapters covering prehistoric iconoclasm to contemporary debates. The reader can thus examine situations from very distant cultures before facing actual debates, which might appeal more intensely to a personal subjective opinion.

After the introduction, Leslie Brubaker begins with a chapter dedicated to the Byzantine ‘iconomachia’. She depicts the new role of icons in the 7th century, and attempts to revise some topics framed by historians and Byzantinists about the conflict in the 8th and 9th centuries, primarily derived from the iconodules’ accounts. Henry Chapman and Benjamin Gearey move towards prehistoric times, firstly to underline the difficulties in detecting intentionality in the breaking of objects, but then pointing at two examples (deliberately broken swords and sacred forests) of iconoclasm in that age. Fabio Rambelli and Eric Reinders bring one Japanese case, a Buddha statue made in the seventh century but whose history will be developed until modern times, in order to consider cultural redefinition from the subsequent stages through which that image lived through. Megan E. O’Neil instead presents a case from the Classic Maya period, pointing out the reutilization and the maintenance

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services in images that had been defaced for reflecting the same travel of an image through various stages which don’t necessarily end in the iconoclast action.

Moving on to societies closer to the modern times, Anna M. Kim demystifies the Renaissance as a non-iconoclastic period, underlining the use of an ‘iconoclastic myth’ (in the sense of reminding the Catholic Church of the ancient destruction of pagan idols) as to dissuade new destructive attempts. A new, positive and ‘prophylactic’ sense is thus given to iconoclasm. Lauren Dudley moves to British early modern period and to ruins as a field requiring studies through the depiction of a ruinous landscape in the painting Allegorical Tomb of Lord Somers. This work of art is examined, bearing iconoclasm studies in mind, in its context of religious wars, the Glorious Revolution and the Enlightenment, finally giving to that broken architecture a new interpretation. Richard Clay’s chapter studies Saint Geneviève’s relics, the patron of the city of Paris, in the context of the French Revolution, observing how the meaning of the images surrounding the saint changed with political objectives, more than keeping a monolithic ideological message during the events. James Simpson’s essay on the Enlightenment Museum revises the role and precepts of these institutions to point at their role in ‘iconoclasm’s larger plot line’, showing that the Enlightenment attitude is both a result of an iconoclastic past (that of the wars of religion in Europe) and an iconoclasm movement itself, which is manifested in the iconoclast role of the museum institutions and in the running of the art market.

The last chapters are placed in contemporary situations and debates about iconoclasm. James Noyes’ reflections on 20th-century iconoclasm link concepts such as ‘total war’ or ‘totalitarian state’ with ‘total iconoclasm’ or ‘industrialized iconoclasm’, given the new massive industrial construction and destruction. Jamal J. Elias’ work on the 2001 Taliban attack over the Afghanistan Buddhas tries to contextualize that event by replacing simplistic explanations with a wider context of Islamic interpretations of religion and the local and global geopolitical strategies of the Taliban. Simon Baker focuses on examining the art works of contemporary artists, Jake and Dinos Chapman, who innovated Goya’s art pieces with modern additions, thus giving the chance to talk about collaborative art works and the resignification process of images. Simon Cane and Jonathan Ashley-Smith end the volume with an in-depth consideration of the role of conservation of art works, its critics and the consideration of preservation as an iconoclast act.
Striking Images represents a varied but usefully homogenous collection of works and reflections on a common topic: iconoclasm. From a wide variety of works, the common point of re-thinking definitions and limits for the concept ‘iconoclast’ makes this work appear quite uniform at the end. Step by step, iconoclasm is claimed as something more than the mere action of physically destroying images, and some chapters have provided some controversial episodes not always defined as ‘iconoclasts’. However, because of that wide expansion of the concept of ‘iconoclasm’ in this work, it should be necessary to redefine the concept of ‘iconoclasm’ from the opposite point: what is not ‘iconoclasm’? Is it possible to come up with a classification of the different kinds of iconoclasm? New contexts can also be studied with the tools provided, but these suggestions may be addressed in other future publications: the ambitious goals of this book have been covered, based on a not much studied topic – iconoclasm – in a huge and diverse collaborative work which has set new goals and aids for future researchers.

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