

Famed author Dr. Seuss (a.k.a. Theodor Geisel) is known and loved for his whimsical children's stories such as *The Cat in the Hat* and *Fox in Socks*. Serious students of Seuss might be aware of his tendency to include profound moral commentary in his deceptively simple tales such as in *The Sneetches* (racial tolerance), *The Lorax* (environmental responsibility), and *The Butter Battle Book* (nuclear war). Few of Dr. Seuss' many fans, however, are aware of Ted Geisel's stint (1941-1943) as a World War II political cartoonist for New York's left wing newspaper, *PM*. This ignorance is exactly what Richard M. Minear, Professor of History at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, aims to change through his book, *Dr. Seuss Goes to War: The World War II Editorial Cartoons of Theodor Seuss Geisel*. Fortunately, throughout Minear's book, Dr. Seuss and his cartoons remain the star attraction. As in his later children's books, Dr. Seuss is a master manipulator of fantasy and humor in his war time cartoons, and, incidentally, also manages to build a solid and convincing case for his views against isolationism and American apathy prior to Pearl Harbor. In short, Dr. Seuss does what Dr. Seuss does best. He entertains while at the same time causing the reader to think. The America First Committee is transformed to ostriches with their heads in the sand, and President Franklin D. Roosevelt is elected an honorary member of the Society of Red Tape Cutters. An added bonus for the modern reader is the chance to visit with some old friends, as many of Dr. Seuss' characters in his children's classics originated in his cartoons. *Yertle the Turtle* as Adolf Hitler and *The Cat in the Hat* as the United States make appearances in the cartoons, as well as Horton from *Horton Hears a Who*. Dr. Seuss' genius, therefore, is evident throughout *Dr. Seuss Goes to War*. Less effective, however, is Richard Minear's contribution to the book. Analysis of the cartoons and their contribution to history is superficial. Frequently, the commentary only describes the cartoons- an unnecessary activity because Seuss' drawings are clear and self-explanatory. The reader could have learned almost as much from a simple picture book of Seuss' drawings, which, after all, would have been more in the Seussian tradition. Minear, a highly respected expert on the Japanese during World War II, did tentatively venture into history to explain some of Seuss' images. He demonstrates, for example, that the cartoonist frequently seemed to be one step ahead of history. One cartoon pictured Jews hanging in trees long before widespread recognition of the Nazi death camps. Yet, Minear goes too far in some speculations. He notes that Seuss was of German descent, and theorizes that this was a possible reason for the artist's less than viscous portrayal of Adolf Hitler. This theory does not ring true, however, upon even a superficial examination of the vast amount of anti-German Seuss material. A topic that Minear touched on, but **ould** benefit from much more careful analysis, is Dr. Seuss' portrayal of various groups during the war. Geisel, an outspoken advocate for civil rights on behalf of African Americans and Jews, is "oblivious of his own racist treatment of Japanese and Japanese Americans." Minear maintains that it is disturbing to realize that the Dr. Seuss who drew these cartoons is "the same Dr. Seuss we celebrate today for his imagination and tolerance and breadth of vision." Yet, he does not make any attempt at significant analysis for the reasons behind Dr. Seuss' actions. Of course, American attitudes toward Japanese Americans during the war were much harsher than toward German Americans. Is it so unbelievable that Dr. Seuss was the same way? Minear does not seem to know or care. A comparison with other political cartoonists of the day would have been a welcome discussion in regard to this subject. Other more practical issues also made *Dr. Seuss Goes to War* a disappointment. The organization of the book is poor. The reader is forced to flip erratically between pages and text to view cartoons at the appropriate times, and, more significantly, at least four easily noticeable mistakes occur in the book. Some cartoons and dates are carelessly mislabeled so that the cartoon the reader is reading about does not match the one viewed. Reading *Dr. Seuss Goes to War: The World War II Editorial Cartoons of Theodor Seuss Geisel* is, therefore, a frustrating experience. The reader is intrigued and entertained by the cartoons. There is a lot to learn from them, both about Dr. Seuss and about the war in general. Richard Minear's commentary, however, does not add significantly to the joy or to the learning experience. Perhaps he simply ventured too far from his area of expertise. "Dr. Seuss," Minear maintained, was "an innovator [who was] always pushing the envelope." Unfortunately, *Dr. Seuss Goes w War* does not match up to the good doctor's standards.

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