Foreword

As will become apparent, there have been some adjustments made to the Strife Journal since Issue Two. We hope the most discreet will prove to be the change in editorship: our thanks are due to Pablo de Orellana, who has stepped down after two issues’ toil at the helm, and we hope we can continue his excellent work.

Other modifications are more cosmetic, and hence perhaps more obvious. The font and formatting is slightly different, and we also have a new logo, aligning us with the blog (at www.strifeblog.org) and illustrating more clearly than ever how unified the Strife project is across blog and journal. As in the last issue, we have reprinted an extract from our online counterpart: the excellent five-part series on drone warfare entitled ‘The Good, The Bad, The Drones’, which was posted online over the course of April.

The other major change has been the revamping and expansion of the reviews section, thanks for which must go to my co-editor Nikolai Gourof. We have four reviews this issue, on texts ranging from early modern history to (post)modern political theory. Issue four will see this section expand further.

Of course, the skeleton of Strife Journal has been and remains its extended pieces, and there are four in this issue. Nikolai Gourof writes about Sergei Eisenstein’s Ivan The Terrible, and draws parallels between it and Stalin’s contemporary regime. Alexander Langer, meanwhile, draws attention to Church resistance against state oppression in Latin America. Langer speculates as to why the state responses to broadly similar resistance movements in Nicaragua and El Salvador took such different forms. Alexandra Gallovicova’s piece is another Strife first: it is split into two instalments, the first of which is printed here, the second of which will be published in Issue Four. In her first part, Gallovicova explores the idea of the ‘image’ in IR theory, and lays firm groundwork for the case study that will form her piece’s second instalment: French and British perceptions of Germany in the wake of its abstention from the UN Security Council vote on establishing a no-fly zone in Libya during the 2011 Libyan Civil War. Finally, Thomas Colley looks at propaganda in the Yugoslav conflict of the 1990s. Colley asks whether any of the lessons learnt then can be applied to the current crisis in Ukraine.

As always, many thanks are due to the department of War Studies at King’s College London, which has provided unceasing support. Special thanks are due to Dr Christine Cheng, Prof. Vivienne Jabri, Dr Oisin Tansey, Prof. Mats Berdal and Dr Kieran Mitton. Thanks are of course also owed to all the contributors to this issue, who have handled our editorial demands with grace and rapidity. We have continued with the peer-review model established in Issue 2, and we thank all our reviewers.

We are always on the lookout for interesting perspectives on conflict for both the journal and the blog; anyone interested in contributing is encouraged to pitch an idea or simply declare interest via email.

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### Book Reviews:

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There are some interesting parallels between Claire Jowitt’s book on the ‘culture of piracy’ and the latest of N.A.M. Rodger’s many pleas to his fellow historians to use the definitions and legal terms related to private violence at sea with greater care. We should certainly take heed of these exhortations, for if early modern naval historians can offer anything to the greater academic project of understanding modern warfare it should be insight into the complex interplay between private and public violence in the past. Yet, in ‘The Law and Language of Private Naval Warfare’ recently published in the *Mariner’s Mirror*, Rodger insists that imprecision and confusion in the use of language is the reason ‘it is so difficult to find a coherent analysis of piracy’.1 So law and language, it would appear, are the key themes to address for our collective academic redemption. For Jowitt, too, language and artistic representations in general are the subject, though it’s the language of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth-century literary world that interests her. Here, too, the relationship of language to the law is important. In a world in which jurists famously debated notions of *mare liberum* or *mare clausum*, for example, seaborne crime was a politically charged and illustrative literary device. On stage and in print, pirate characters debated their legal status and negotiated their private hierarchies and micro-societies. The very legal ambiguity of piracy itself made it a powerful vehicle for contemporary political commentary.

Rodger and Jowitt both recognise that although the term ‘piracy’ is sometimes used synonymously with lawlessness and ostracism, this can be a trap. There was no neat distinction in the early modern period between the pirate outlaw and the law-abiding merchant trader. Jowitt’s tour through Elizabethan, Jacobean and Carolingian drama and literature makes this perfectly clear as she traces the ambiguity and mutability of representations of pirates. Sometimes they are villainous, sometimes heroic, but always complex. This is a valuable exercise in contextualisation, aimed directly against the eighteenth-century legacy of the pirate as *hostis humani generis*, a universal enemy of mankind. As a naval historian, Rodger’s ambition is also to contextualise piracy. Highlighting widespread definitional laxity on the part of his fellow historians is a way of attacking the common Weberian obsession with states, state-building, and national navies which simply reinforces a false, Manichean distinction between the outlawed pirate and the peaceful, legal merchant. It is indeed true that most historians are comfortable with an all too simple formula: there were pirates who were an abomination and firmly outside the law, privateers who were licensed by the state to

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conduct violence, and state-owned and run navies. Yet prior to the mid-seventeenth century, privateering in the form of commissions to attack named enemies of a state in times of war did not exist. Private violence at sea was a form of reprisal warfare, conducted and commissioned by a prince, at least notionally, to remedy a private injustice. Although it was done on an ever greater scale in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, to ignore the subtle difference, Rodger argues, is to risk overlooking the still essentially private and commercial nature of warfare at sea. The notion of ‘the state’ is, therefore, largely an anachronism the very use of which as a conceptual tool exaggerates the extent to which the pirate was a legal outsider. When Jowitt declares that her book ‘argues that Renaissance accounts of “pirates” show them as not always at odds with England’s international initiatives and activities, and [suggests] instead that they perform vital functions in the development of the nation’s role in the global economy’ (p. 8), she seems to be sharing common ground with Rodger.

Yet the similarities between Jowitt and Rodger appear to end there. For Rodger, it’s not just that pirates could at one and the same time be considered beyond the law and occasionally useful tools for English policy. Their violence was an everyday fact of life. The early modern world was one in which all traders were prepared to use violence, and those who might get labelled as pirates nevertheless necessarily participated in an economy with networks of commercial and even some legal and political support. Indeed Rodger directly criticises Jowitt, for her earlier work, in a way which perhaps illustrates the disciplinary difference between the historian and an historical literary critic. He accuses her, and others, of not recognising this mundane and pervasive reality of private commercial warfare and of ‘[preferring] to construct fantasies of pirates’ by imagining them to have revolutionary motives, raging against national and international political, economic, and cultural norms. Indeed in The Culture of Piracy, Jowitt claims, ‘it is important to consider the reasons for the widespread nature of Renaissance piracy. Is it a protest, a deliberate oppositional stance against a state or regime which they find unpalatable?’ In fact, she offers quite a convincing answer from the pen of a seventeenth-century observer. According to John Smith in his True Travels ... of 1630, it was simply a necessary reaction to harsh economic reality (p. 10). One suspects that Rodger would agree. Piracy was simply part of the normal state of commercial affairs and of endemic private commercial warfare.

Whilst it is true that historians have projected onto the world of pirates an extraordinary and confrontational agency that they did not have, to be fair to Jowitt, The Culture of Piracy is not a study of pirates themselves but of how they were represented as literary figures. And she reveals very effectively that it is not just modern historians who have manipulated the image of the pirate into a larger than life political challenge to the establishment; sometimes contemporary or near contemporary dramatists and writers did too. If this re-imagining of pirates was a fact of Elizabeth and Jacobean life then surely it must also be taken seriously by historians and not just left to literary scholars. In other words, if people at the time imagined pirates in radically different ways, it would be worth knowing how and why. For Jowitt, it is largely linked to the current political context of English imperial expansion. As she says, ‘England was attempting to increase and announce its presence within a global economy through a surge of new textual and actual activities’ and she highlights Richard Hakluyt’s work as an example of the former (p. 7). Yet it is possible to wonder for the latter if there is not some element of determinism at work. Of course there were ‘actual activities’ which spread English maritime strength and imperial reach, but the same spirit of determined historicising evident in Rodger’s anti-Weberianism does not seem to be reflected in Jowitt’s acceptance of what she calls England’s serious attempt ‘to establish express ambitions for an empire to rival that of Spain and Portugal in the West and the Ottomans in the East’ (p. 11). In this context, one of the benefits of the works of other historians, like, for example those of David Armitage, is that whilst these make clear that seafarers played a big role in developing the maritime identity of Britain

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2 Ibid., p. 7.
and of its future imperial role, Elizabethan concepts of empire were conservative, continental, and inward-looking. Whatever dramatic, heroic stories of English strength of arms at sea emerged from this period, it is hard to extrapolate from them a serious, sustained attempt to rival Portugal or Spain.

There is a potential danger for Jowitt, therefore, of accepting a narrative of rising English imperial greatness, with piracy ‘used by Elizabeth proleptically as “the vanguard of the Empire”’ (p. 35). For example, the representation of the pirates Purser and Clinton, executed in 1583, reveals a certain ambiguity in the Elizabethan age. Though clearly presented as criminals, at their execution, Purser is first permitted to announce his value to the realm. The ‘faithlesse French’, he declares, will welcome his death for it leaves England without protection (p. 26). The same pirates appear in Jacobean drama, and Jowitt identifies a similar recognition of the pragmatic value of the pirates, but this time as a veiled critique of the reign of James I. ‘The celebration [of the pirate activities] as furthering the national interest – evident in the rewards bestowed (...) by the Queen at the end of the text (as she did with Drake on the quarterdeck of the The Golden Hind) might be seen as a plea for a less draconian and indiscriminate contemporary attitude to piracy’ (p. 34). The character of Elizabeth I is used here to celebrate nostalgically the role of the pirate, and such representations ‘implicitly challenge the [current] King’s authority and his policies in Europe’ (p. 36). James I, as Jowitt says, was much less tolerant of pirates than Elizabeth, preferring to pursue peaceful diplomatic and trade relations with other European powers. Thus a positive representation of pirates as brave and successful overseas, in many ways more successful than England itself, implies a critique of his policies. This is certainly plausible and interesting, yet one could be forgiven for wondering just how sharp the political barbs on such dramatic representations of pirates were. It seems as if this idea depends upon a presumed trajectory of natural national development based on seaborne violence and competitive imperial global reach animated by its champions through history and by the critics of those, like James I, who appear to deviate. If Rodger is correct that private commercial warfare was simply a fact of early modern economic life, then perhaps piracy’s political value as a literary device, as highlighted by Jovitt, is less obvious.

This is not to suggest that contemporary politics and culture did not affect representations of pirates, and Jowitt convincingly shows that indeed they did, as with treatments of Drake’s circumnavigation for example. Early ones, such as that by Richard Hakluyt the Younger in 1589, portray an active mercantile nationalism. Drake’s violence is treated ‘not as criminal activity, but as a standard aspect of early modern mercantile behaviour in disputed colonial regions’ (p. 49). Later, we are treated to a ‘gentlemen’’s’ Drake, as he becomes a celebration of aristocratic values. The suggestion is that as ‘gentlemen’ increasingly invested in joint stock companies early in the seventeenth century ‘this alteration is reflected in the ideational values and rhetoric shaping descriptions of piracy’ (p. 50). Less contentious is the claim that texts were manipulated to show English seafarers in a positive light and to reinforce the dark legend of the Spanish. That is as one would expect it to be. Yet Jovitt’s analysis is consistently subtle and more complex than this, and the conclusions challenging. For anyone with an interest in early modern piracy or the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century generally, it is a rewarding and worthy read. It also serves, to those of us who do not study literary texts, as a further reminder of the value of interdisciplinarity in the study of history or at least of the many different perspectives on the past that are available.

Again, this is not a book about pirates or piracy. It is about the literary treatment of pirates which ‘shows how piracy is culturally produced and disseminated’ (p. 14). Whilst the interactions between contemporary politics and

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this public manipulation of the image of pirates in literature are very sensitively evoked, there is still a world of real life piracy left for the historian to research. One could even say that the culture of piracy, that is to say of the pirates themselves, remains largely untouched. Both N.A.M. Rodger and Claire Jowitt, each in a very different way, provide us with a valuable reminder that in doing so we must be alert to the use of language, of our own and that of early modern society, and to its relation to the law as it relates to these outsiders who played such a central cultural and political role.

Finally, there are a couple of unusual features of the book which are perhaps not even worth mentioning. When Jowitt’s pirates meet their sticky ends, they are inevitably ‘hung’. I was always taught that only pictures are hung; people are hanged. Perhaps that’s no longer the convention. More significantly, there is also at times a slightly laboured, self-conscious feel to the organisation of the argument which is not helped by the curious habit of occasionally writing in the first person and referring in the text to the title of the book. ‘For the rest of The Culture of Piracy, my emphasis will be on...’, for example (p. 79). Clumsy perhaps, inelegant certainly, but these are not hanging offences.

Alan James

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