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This publication has been edited with Open-source software OpenOffice and Gimp. We have used Garamond for our main-body text and titles and LHF New Trajan for the logo.

Cover page: Cavalry Battle (1600s) by Jan Martszen de Jonge, privately held.
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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Hegel, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Lacan, Derrida, Žižek, Butler: there is a long list of politically-minded modern and postmodern thinkers – by no means limited to these – who have turned to Greek tragedy, and specifically Sophocles’ *Antigone*, in order to inform or illustrate their own ideas. Whilst Bonnie Honig’s *Antigone, Interrupted* is therefore striding into crowded and contested ground, it does so not without an attempt at self-justification. Honig follows Jacques Lacan’s suggestion as to why the play might continue to excite our curiosity two-and-a-half thousand years after its first performance: ‘even if [we] are not aware of it, the latent fundamental image of Antigone forms part of [our] morality’. If this is so, she argues, then ‘Sophocles’ heroine forms latently part of our politics as well… abandoning Antigone is not something we are simply free to do’ (pp. 36-37).

We are, then, bound to this story, and in ways we cannot ignore. It is therefore no surprise that Honig begins by stressing her method as a ‘dramaturgical approach’: if *Antigone* is as important as Honig claims it is, then it must come first; we must look from the play to politics, not the other way round. This does not immediately promise to open up the discursive space that Honig requires – how much can have been left unsaid about this two-and-a-half thousand year-old text, after all? – but Honig develops a radical re-reading that enables her to reach unapologetically different conclusions to those offered by many of her predecessors.

Starting with a critique of Judith Butler’s reading of the play, Honig emphasises the importance of what Butler describes as ‘precariousness’ to her own understanding of Sophocles’ heroine. For all *Antigone’s* fragility, however, Honig insists that this does not preclude her from aiming at that most unfashionable of values in critical thought: sovereignty. Following Butler – and J. Peter Euben – Honig notes that in her rhetoric against Creon, Antigone adopts his register. She is therefore not directly opposed to Creon in a struggle between two incommensurable and absolute conceptions of right, as Hegel claimed. Nor, however, is she bound to him as the agent that can fulfil her pre-existing death wish, pæe Jacques Lacan. She is, rather, ‘a figure of both sovereignty and precariousness’ (p. 54).

This seems a dissonant combination, but Honig argues that such an analysis can help in the task of formulating what she terms ‘agonistic humanism’: a notion ‘that sees in mortality, suffering, sound, and vulnerability resources for some form of enacted if contestable universality, while also recognising these resources are variable and opaque in their significances, just like language’ (p. 19). Though Honig does not reference his work, agonistic humanism chimes with Michael Dillon’s insistence, following William Connolly, that the ontologically tragic nature of our social being requires the incorporation of agonism into our conception of democracy.

The ‘Interrupted’ of Honig’s title therefore not only refers to the interruptions central to the text as she sees it, but also describes the book’s purpose: to disrupt conventional, dominant readings of the play, to draw attention to the contrary possibilities it presents, and to enact a discursive and practical agonism that can participate in some interruption of its own.

It is here that Honig’s reading takes a turn for the left-field. Moving away from Butler, who,

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Honig says, ‘sees Antigone as an isolated, lone, suffering heroine, opposed to her sister and seeking glory for herself’ (p. 55), Honig instead focuses on Antigone in a situated, social sense. Her Antigone is characterised not by solitary heroism, intransigence or inward psychological turmoil, but by solidarity, expressed in part by her paradoxical insistence on both the equality of all as well as the singularity of Polynices, her unburied dead brother (p. 123). In a neat rhetorical twist, Honig argues that an analysis of an independent Antigone, mourning alone and plotting transgressive burial – a ‘politics of lamentation’ – in fact has the potential to become ‘a lamentation of politics’. Solitary mourning rejects sovereignty; it withdraws, and in so doing cannot enact the ‘agonistic humanism’ Honig sees at the core of her project. Antigone must therefore be embedded within a broader social context, and Honig demonstrates this tragic solidarity with reference to Antigone’s relationship with her sister, Ismene (p. 154).

It is here that Honig’s ‘dramaturgical approach’ begins to unravel slightly. Reading Antigone, Interrupted one gets a sense that Honig is reinterpreting Sophocles in order to bear upon her own pre-formed political project as much as she is attempting to draw lessons from the play; that she is hammering Antigone into a shape of her own choosing. Despite these suspicions, however, Antigone, Interrupted remains representative of an ambitious and persuasive political project and an important addition to the growing body of political theory that uses Greek tragedy as a platform.

Alister Wedderburn

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This is brave. Antigone and Ismene are not obviously in concert – indeed, Ismene outwardly refuses to help Antigone in her quest to bury her brother Polynices. Solidarity between the two sisters is a hidden thread of the text, and there is a reason why Hegel, Lacan and Butler all see Antigone as going it alone. However, Honig goes further than simply arguing on behalf of sororal camaraderie; she speculates that, despite her avowal not to help, Polynices’ first ‘burial’ might actually have been performed by Ismene in an expression of solidarity with her sister. This is a wildly ambitious reading of the text that has a number of pertinent and intriguing political implications; Honig’s subsequent discussion of forced choice and ethical agency is amongst the strongest sections of her book (pp. 177-181). However, for all this, it is not a hugely convincing piece of literary interpretation: it requires not only a speculative reading between the lines but also a fairly swift skim over some of the lines themselves (one thinks here of Ismene’s expression of horror at the thought of flouting Creon’s edict, for example). Honig does address these apparent dissonances, but this serves to make her reading appear rather convoluted and certainly wilful.