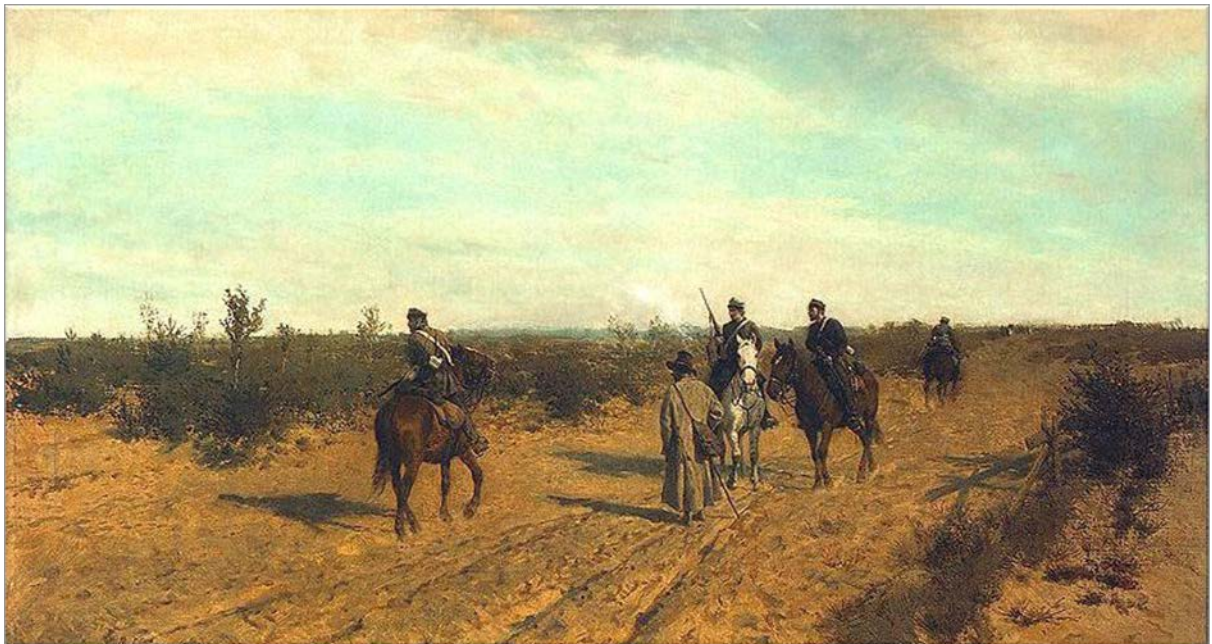


A Cover Story: Dialogue of Two Editors

James Crawford

I want you to imagine the Jesus College Common Room, Lent term 2008. The 3 fellows who normally dine are slumbering over the Madeira. The two editors, a naive positivist and a wily crit, remain awake, discussing their project, *The Cambridge Companion to International Law*. After extended discussion and many trade-offs the slate of writers has been selected – a bit like party-appointed arbitrators jockeying for a president, sixteen times. There remains the cover: what story will it tell? But the positivist is on home turf: he controls the overhead projector. The positivist presses the button and speaks:



Maksymilian Gierymski, *The Insurgent Picket* 1872

JRC: I want war. Remember the origins of our subject – War and Peace. *De Jure belli ac Pacis*. All our struggles are about the meaning of that “and”, that “ac”. And (warming to his task) here is one of the great war pictures of the 19th century – Maksymilian Gierymski’s “The Insurgent Picket”. And don’t you see

it is an allegory. You, Martti, have led the largest insurgency against international law since Emmanuel Kant. If anyone can picket you can. But look – the Crits are worried about being suddenly attacked from behind by the Positivists. There is palpable tension in the air –that is what our book is about.

MK replies: Don't be silly. The Positivists are too busy counting rules, or money. Your insurgent picket is a mere ideological construct, a nationalist in search of utopia and finding only a dusty steppe. I want real life, a village, somewhere peaceful.



Walter Langley, A Village Idyll 1888

JRC: I see: well here is a village idyll. Together with its avid consumers of international law... No doubt the couple leaning against the wall are discussing whether Hersch Lauterpacht can really be described as a Victorian. The seated gentleman is thinking about EU fisheries quotas. And the lady in the foreground is lamenting that *Eunomia* is out of print.

MK: Well, perhaps not a village like that: but a town then, real people!



LS Lowry, Coming Home from the Mill 1928

JRC: How about this? LS Lowry, *Coming Home from The Mill*. A bit too pedestrian for my taste. Why don't we have a picture of one of those crit parties you are always talking about and never inviting us to.



Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Luncheon of the Boating Party (1881)

Like this Renoir. Don't you think he's captured David so well, surveying the scene. And Philip, telling that nice girl the plot of his third novel. No international law is needed – neither at picnics, parties nor what follows. Give me war!



Edward Wadsworth, *Dazzle-ships in Drydock at Liverpool* (1919)

For example this. *Dazzle Ships in Drydock in Liverpool*, by the vorticist Edward Wadsworth. Now there's a war painting for you. A combination of modernism and warfare (but then you dislike both, I remember now). And think of the legal issues! *Ruses de guerre*. You will no doubt be familiar with *Annex to Hague Convention No. IV, 18 October 1907, embodying the Regulations Respecting Customs of War on Land.*, art. 23, para. (f).

MK: The Hague Regulations are beneath me! You are fixated on rules. I want the international lawyer flying free, unconstrained, his hair flowing in the wind. And at least, my dear colleague, I still have hair to flow!



Gino Severini, The cyclist (1956)

JRC: Touché. Or should I say toupee? Then how about this! Gino Severini's *Cyclist*.

MK: Ah, the cyclist en route from ideology to utopia! How splendid.

JRC: No, apparently from Paris to Dieppe. But now you're on to something. Severini painted wonderful war pictures. He says in his autobiography: "I could not express my idea of 'war' by painting battlefields littered with slaughtered bodies, streams of blood, and other such atrocities. My modern idea-image of war

came from the concentration of a few objects or forms taken from reality and compressed into “essences,” into “pure notion.”¹ So you have...



Gino Severini, Visual Synthesis of the Idea: “War” (1914)

Visual Synthesis of the Idea War – there’s essences for you.

¹ G Severini, *The Life of a Painter* (1995) 197.



Severini, Armoured Train in Action 1915

Or this one: *Armoured Train in Action*. “Pure notion.”!

MK (petulantly): I want a village!

JRC: Then a village you shall have. *Red Cross Train Passing through a Village*. Painted when Severini was living in the village of Igny, “surrounded by a vegetable garden”, on 4 francs a day, in 1915.²



Gino Severini, *Red Cross Train Passing a Village* (1915)

And so it was agreed. The post-modernist and the modernist were respectively content.

And there was, as far as covers go, peace in our time. The critic reached for the Madeira; the positivist for the remaining claret.

26 January 2012

² Ibid, 195.