

Claire Jowitt. *The Culture of Piracy, 1580–1630: English Literature and Seaborne Crime*.

Transculturalisms, 1400–1700. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2010. x + 232 pp. \$99.95. ISBN: 978-1-4094-0044-8.

Both scholarly studies and the popular imagination tend to focus primarily on the famous pirates who roamed the Caribbean in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Claire Jowitt's *The Culture of Piracy, 1580–1630* pushes this emphasis back into the Renaissance where the numbers and cultural significance of pirates were equally predominant.

In this first book-length exploration of the cultural representation of pirates in Renaissance England, Jowitt traces what she identifies as the “semantics” or “grammar” of piracy. Specifically, she examines historical and literary representations of pirates under three separate monarchs across a wide array of genres, including drama, prose romance, broadsheets and ballads, travel narratives, and poetry. Her study analyzes piracy and the construction of the pirate across a staggering number of writers from dramatists such as William Shakespeare, Thomas Heywood, Philip Massinger, and Robert Daborne to prose writers including Sir Philip Sidney, Lady Mary Wroth, and Richard Hakluyt. Situating these representations within both literary contexts, such as the influence of Heliodorus's *An Aethiopian History*, and within cultural contexts, such as ever-shifting Anglo-Spanish relations, she argues that “differing pirate typologies express and explore vital issues facing the nation, which are refashioned for changing circumstances, using the ideological coordinates and meanings associated with earlier pirate figures to position afresh new pirate characters” (16). Her book impressively demonstrates how these pirates cannot be dismissed as simple, disruptive, and criminal forces in the Renaissance. Most profoundly, her work illustrates that more than merely challenging or subverting Renaissance ideals and beliefs, these representations are also deployed to connect and reinforce Renaissance orthodoxies, including absolutism, patriarchy, nationalism, and Christian belief. Specifically, her examination articulates how these pirates played vital conceptual and actual roles in England's participation in the global economy as well as in the expansion and development of the English empire. Jowitt's expansive study illustrates how representations of piracy sail beyond commerce and empire to serve as barometers and metaphors for a wide variety of issues facing Renaissance England. These issues include contrasting monarchical policies toward piracy, class identity, mercantile nationalism, aristocratic quasi-chivalric values, foreign and domestic policies, valuation of direct action versus duplicity, generic developments in prose romance between epic patterns of behavior and romance values, sexuality and sexual conduct, religious identity, and influence of counsel on rulers.

This study's breadth is one of its primary strengths and its largest challenge. Jowitt divides her study into six chapters: two chapters on historical pirates (1, Purser and Clinton; 2, Francis Drake), two chapters on Elizabethan literary representations, and two chapters on Jacobean and Caroline literary representations. As a whole, the study demonstrates the pervasive implications of these representations

to Renaissance culture. She clearly demonstrates that we cannot isolate the pirate to the margins either conceptually or historically. However, the historical, generic, and conceptual divisions between these chapters are not as neat as it might seem. Her examinations of the historical pirates in chapters 1 and 2 include representations and narratives from Elizabethan, Jacobean, and Caroline contexts and many of the ideas explored in these two chapters resurface in the later chapters. Furthermore, while the two chapters focused on Elizabethan literature divide into romance (chapter 3) and drama (chapter 4), these divisions are not paralleled in the Jacobean and Caroline sections (chapter 5, for instance, reads both romance and drama while chapter 6 focuses on plays written, at least in part, by Massinger). Jowitt compensates for the potential confusion in distinguishing the arguments in this organization by ending each chapter with a conclusion that not only ties the chapters together, but connects the local argument to the book's larger project. In this way, she layers the argument to illustrate how later representations reworked the ideological and conceptual positionings of previous pirates.

Overall, Jowitt's work provides a needed, comprehensive, and coherent examination of the importance and relevancy of pirates as a cultural register of Renaissance issues extending well beyond the expected maritime, legal, and international discourses. It significantly contributes to our understanding of the complexity and nuance of piracy in the Renaissance and provides crucial insight into how the rhetoric of piracy participated in the negotiation of so many aspects of Renaissance culture.

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