

© Sean Gaston. A much revised version of this paper, delivered at the Workshops in Political Theory, Fourth Annual Conference, Manchester Metropolitan University 3-5 September 2007, appears in *Derrida, Literature and War: Absence and the Chance of Meeting* (London & New York: Continuum, 2009), 90-116.

Thoughts for the Times on War

In 1799, responding to the unending revolutionary and Napoleonic wars that dominated his times, Schiller turned back to the Thirty Years War in his play *Wallenstein*. *Wallenstein* is in part ‘a study of a man betrayed by his delusions of historical destiny and his belief in his own power’, a theme that could be applied not least to Napoleon, and to our own times.¹ In May 2007, some four years into the war in Iraq and almost six years into the war of terror and the war on terror, I was fortunate to hear the distinguished writer, academic and politician Michael Ignatieff deliver the annual Isaiah Berlin lecture at Wolfson College, Oxford. Ignatieff is currently the Deputy Leader of the Canadian Liberal party, and in his lecture he returned to his academic work on Berlin to explore how difficult it is for politicians not to lose a ‘sense of reality’ in making political judgements.² Much as Berlin himself, Ignatieff seemed to oscillate between the ideals and the warnings of the Enlightenment and Counter Enlightenment as he hoped – in these times – for a political judgement that was both farsighted (ahead of its times) and commonsensical (anchored in the present demands of a

democratic state). And it is to his credit that Ignatieff never lost sight of how easy it is for politicians to lose sight of this elusive and necessary ‘sense of reality’.

While no doubt there are many grave differences between the thought of Isaiah Berlin and that of Jacques Derrida, there are perhaps also provisional meeting places, places that always lose their place, places that give their place to other. Derrida argued for an internationalism that both relied on and challenged and superseded the sovereignty of the nation state – his hope lay with the UN and unprecedented events such as the brief detention of Pinochet.³ But Derrida was also vitally concerned with the long traditional assumptions about the *sovereignty* of the individual, which should not be confused with the inexhaustible injunction to recognize the *singularity* of the individual.⁴ For Derrida, the sovereignty of the individual – which rests on a self-sufficient consciousness, self-consciousness, activity, capability and power – is already a form of good conscience that precludes an ethical relationship to the other, to others.⁵ Good conscience is the self-sustaining satisfaction of a moral intention or decision.

To put it in Ignatieff and Berlin’s terms, good conscience would be the profound loss of a ‘sense of reality’: it is the unavoidable blindness of moralism. If Tony Blair lost his ‘sense of reality’ in the lead up to and execution of the Iraq War, one could describe this an instance of the moralism of good conscience displacing the relentless anguish of political judgement. In Britain, if Margaret Thatcher attempted to change politics into a kind of economics in the name of a Conservative agenda, Blair was unable to extricate himself from this legacy when he changed politics into a popular morality founded on good conscience. The good conscience that effused the intervention in Kosovo 1999 – not least after the Srebrenica massacre in 1995 – and sustained opening of the war in Afghanistan in 2002, was the same good conscience that reduced all the missteps and catastrophes of the invasion of Iraq to Blair’s unassailable and absolute justification: ‘It’s simply the right thing to do’ (26 March

1999, on Yugoslavia) ⁶; ‘This is the time for this House, not just this government or indeed this Prime Minister, but for this House to give a lead, to show that we will stand up for what we know to be right’ (18 March 2003, debate on Iraq) ⁷; ‘Hand on heart, I did what I thought was right. I may have been wrong, that's your call. But believe one thing, if nothing else. I did what I thought was right for our country’ (11 May, 2007, resignation speech).⁸

The concept of moralism appeared in the late nineteenth century as a critique of morality displacing the imperatives of religion. ⁹ And whatever one thinks of this post Darwinian and pre Freudian conflict, it is founded on the important premise – which so troubled Kierkegaard – that morality and religion are not the same thing. ¹⁰ Moralism as a kind of political judgement introduces a moral *absolute* – that precludes what Derrida called the unavoidable politics of (the) institution, of a negotiation without rest. ¹¹ Blair’s last weary and anxious justification of his political misjudgement is telling: ‘Hand on heart, I did what I thought was right’. This placing of the hand on the heart is not only the most redolent symbol of American patriotism, of the pledge of allegiance to the flag, but also suggests that judgement can, ultimately, be founded on the an appeal to the authenticity of the heart. One can trace this call to the rightness of the feelings of the heart to Blair’s well-known speech on 31 August 1997, after the death of Princess Diana.

I am utterly devastated. The whole of our country, all of us, will be in a state of shock and mourning. Diana was a wonderful, warm and compassionate person who people, not just in Britain, but throughout the world, loved and will mourn as a friend. Our thoughts and prayers are with her family, in particular with her two sons, and with all of the families bereaved in this quite appalling tragedy.

I feel like everyone else in this country today - utterly devastated. Our thoughts and prayers are with Princess Diana’s family - in particular her two

sons, two boys - our hearts go out to them. We are today a nation, in Britain, in a state of shock, in mourning, in grief that is so deeply painful for us.

She was a wonderful and warm human being. Though her own life was often sadly touched by tragedy, she touched the lives of so many others in Britain - throughout the world - with joy and with comfort. How many times shall we remember her, in how many different ways, with the sick, the dying, with children, with the needy, when, with just a look or a gesture that spoke so much more than words, she would reveal to all of us the depth of her compassion and her humanity. How difficult things were for her from time to time, surely we can only guess at - but the people everywhere, not just here in Britain but everywhere, they kept faith with Princess Diana, they liked her, they loved her, they regarded her as one of the people. She was the people's princess and that's how she will stay, how she will remain in our hearts and in our memories forever.¹²

Without in any way diminishing the shock at the death of Princess Diana, or of her exemplary acts of kindness and assistance towards the sick, the injured and the less fortunate, this speech – given only some three months into the first term of the New Labour government – is a remarkable evocation of a moralism in politics, of a public concept of sympathy and of a sympathizing public that can be addressed and persuaded by placing one's hand on one's heart: 'Hand on heart, I did what I thought was right'.

Long before Kant came to pathologically associate all misjudgment with a pathology of emotions, passions and sentiment, Bernard de Mandeville had argued in *The Fables of the Bees* (1714) that pity was 'no virtue', because to feel an immediate pity, compassion or sympathy was not the same as freely choosing to do a moral action.¹³ If I see a homeless man shivering on a cold street and I am moved to tears by his plight, this rush of fellow-feeling is not of the same moral order as the act of taking off my own coat and giving it to the

man. For Kant, the only alternative to this pathology of good conscience is the a priori idea of freedom. ‘Where there is no freedom’, Kant writes in the *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788), ‘the moral law would not be encountered at all in ourselves’. For Kant, far from the subjective, particular and contingent feelings of the heart, ‘the moral use of reason’ directs us to not ‘take everything supersensible as a fiction’. A critique of practical reason ‘furnishes reality to a supersensible object’, to the objective universal status of freedom, and charges us with the duty to use our will and to choose a moral action.¹⁴ Such an action of the will is not from the heart, but it will *always* be *right*. In other words, from the outset Kant prohibits all the contingent chances of a *rencontre* – the French word Derrida never ceased to underline and which catches at once all the chances of a chance meeting and the chance of a duel – from morality.¹⁵

For Derrida, there are always decisions, decisions from the impossible, that must be made at once, and rather than merely relying on a ‘sense of reality’ or the anchor of commonsense, these decisions must endure a kind of madness, a momentary ‘sense of unreality’ that both takes the (moral) decision away from the sovereignty of the individual and remains exposed to the risk, the risky chances, of taking a decision for good or ill.¹⁶ For Derrida, ethics can never avoid the chances of the *rencontre*, and he would probably include the concept of ethics within these chance meetings or duels. As Aristotle says, to begin to question philosophical tradition one would have to start with Socrates, who *uses* ethics to move philosophy from physics to metaphysics:

But when Socrates started to think about ethics and not at all about the whole of nature, but in ethics seeking universals and first seeing the importance of universals, by accepting him as such he thought that this could apply also to other things and not to the objects of perception. For a general definition was impossible of any sensible things, which were constantly changing.¹⁷

From Socrates to Kant, ethics itself becomes the possibility of a Prime Minister or a President calling for a war because ‘it’s simply the right thing to do’.

Given the most significant difference between Berlin and Derrida – the moral decision as a Kantian act of will and the ethical decision as impossible ordeal that takes the subject away from itself, from its inevitable good conscience (its self presence), gives itself to another, to the other – one can nonetheless be struck by some of the many different Berlins that can be taken from his remarkable collection of works. In the late paper ‘The Pursuit of the Ideal’ (1988), Berlin positions his thought as a reaction against ‘a Platonic ideal’:

In the first place that, as in the sciences, all genuine questions must have one true answer and one only, all the rest being necessarily errors; in the second place that there must be a dependable path towards the discovery of these truths; in the third place that the true answers, when found, must necessarily be compatible with one another and form a single whole, for one truth cannot be incompatible with another – that we knew a priori (5).

From this philosophical inheritance, Berlin came to believe that ‘the notion of the perfect whole, the ultimate solution’ was ‘not merely unattainable – that is a truism – but conceptually incoherent’ (11). In *Glas* (1974), Derrida would extend this view and see the incoherence of the concept itself within the dream of Hegelian totality. For Berlin, in attempting to move away from the Platonic idea, it becomes apparent that there is an incompatibility and collision of “values” (7, 11). While Berlin still accepts that there is ‘a world of objective values’ or ‘ends that men pursue for their own sakes, to which other things are means’, he also recognises an unavoidable pluralism or ‘trade offs’ in which ‘rules, values, principles must yield to each other in varying degrees in specific situations’ (15).

As Ignatieff notes in his 1998 biography of Berlin, on 23 October 1997 Tony Blair wrote to Isaiah Berlin ‘about the future of the European left’ (298). Berlin did not reply, dying two weeks later on 7 November 1997. Perhaps if he had been able to reply, Berlin would have written to the prime minister of the uncertain future of the European left, and perhaps the prime minister would have appreciated Berlin’s view that one can promote and preserve ‘an uneasy equilibrium’ of ‘positive values’. He may have even accepted Berlin’s warning that this uneasy equilibrium is *always* uneasy, that it is ‘constantly threatened and in constant need of repair’ (16). But if the prime minister was able to take on board this uneasy but comforting pluralism, this quasi oscillating Enlightenment and Counter Enlightenment concept, it is doubtful that he could have understood the darker and more wayward, more uneasy, oscillations of political judgement – a *rencontre* that counters both the Enlightenment and its other – at the end of Berlin’s most famous of alternatives, ‘The Hedgehog and the Fox’ (1953), which leaves us ‘self-blinded’ by the *unbridgeable* gap between a ‘sense of reality’ and ‘any moral idea’:

Tolstoy’s sense of reality was until the end too devastating to be compatible with any moral idea which he was able to construct out of the fragments into which his intellect shivered the world, and he dedicated all of his vast strength of mind and will to the lifelong denial of this fact. At once insanely proud and filled with self-hatred, omniscient and doubting everything, cold and violently passionate, contemptuous and self-abasing, tormented and detached, surrounded by an adoring family, by devoted followers, by the admiration of the entire civilised world, and yet almost wholly isolated, he is the most tragic of the great writers, a desperate old man, beyond human aid, wandering self-blinded at Colonus (498).

Schiller opens his 1799 work with what appears to be a confirmation of the Hegelian harnessing of the negative. It is war alone that enables us to confront death and it is only by looking at ‘death in the face’ that one can be free. As a dragoon says in the first part of the trilogy of plays, *Wallenstein’s Camp*: ‘The soldier alone, of the whole human race, / Is free, for he can look death in the face’ (212). At the close of this opening part a first trooper then restates this unique privilege of the soldier, but he also introduces a slight equivocation:

Let your breasts rise and swell for the fight!
 Let us follow where youth’s rushing torrent leads,
 Come, away! while the spirit is bright.
 For if your own life you’re not willing to stake,
 That life will never be yours to make’ (214).

Rousing and calling his comrades to war, the trooper suggests that not only is war the greatest game of chance, the articulation of absolute chance (as George Osborne, the soon to be killed hero in Thackeray’s *Vanity Fair*, a ‘novel without a hero’, will say on his way to the battle of Waterloo), and the one place where chance has no chance, he also implies that the soldier on the way to battle has no life, no life that can be ‘made’: ‘For if your own life you’re not willing to stake / That life will never be yours to make’. The soldier on the way to the battle is either already dead (and is only waiting to become truly alive) or *risks* an unmade life, a life that cannot be made into something. Not yet arriving at the scene of absolute chance, the soldier is confronted with an unforgiving risk: risk a lifeless life or risk a life that cannot be made, a life that will be exposed perpetually to chance, to the interminable encounters of life.

On the one hand, Schiller’s first *and* last word (always somewhere in between) in the Prologue to *Wallenstein* has already attempted – belatedly – to foreclose these equivocations

on the eve or the dawn of battle. Don't worry about the risk of the unmade life, Schiller reassures his audience, an audience of soldiers, of combatants and non-combatants, of the battles that have been and the battles to come in the Napoleonic duel with the whole of Europe, 'For art, that shapes and limits all, will lead / All monstrous aberrations back to nature' (168). Literature will save us and save itself, it will shape and limit all, and most of all the unassailable risk of the unmade life as it marches, without hope, towards the absolute no chance of war.

On the other hand, Schiller's trilogy is devoted to a man, Albrecht Eusebius von Wallenstein (1583-1634), who hesitates, who wavers at the threshold – always somewhere in between – of self delusion, betrayal and a visionary call for peace. And in the midst of war, before the battle, for Schiller it is perhaps this trilogy of self-deception, betrayal and a future vision of peace that makes the life of the soldier, of an audience of soldiers, unmakeable. It is within the chances of the chance meetings and duels, which as Derrida argued have already exceeded the oldest of demarcations between life and death, that one can begin to read Max Piccolomini's gnomic – and unanswerable, unmakeable – question: 'For if not war in war already ceases / When then shall peace be found?' (238). How or when, and most of all in the midst of a 'global war', in a war without frontiers, a war without end – be it 1799, 1807 or even 2007 – are we to decide when 'war in war' ceases, when the warlike ceasing of war shall allow us to find peace, if there is any? ¹⁸

Armed with the 'empty toys' of 'service and arms', Max Piccolomini will die caught between two fathers, two self-deceptions, two betrayals, and two visions of peace. Trapped between his own father, Octavio Piccolomini, who incites the assassination of Wallenstein, and Wallenstein, the father that he has made, Max Piccolomini has no chance. As Max makes his long way towards this battle, already dead and struggling with a life that cannot be made, he is tortured by the cul-de-sac of how free he has been not to be free. Fate, Schiller

argues in the many voices of his characters, the external, the supersensible, the objective, has taken on the insurmountable force of an inner prompting, a call of the heart that has pitiless certainty of a categorical imperative. ‘Our own heart’s prompting is the voice of fate’, Thekla says (285). ‘Hand on heart, I did what I thought was right’, the prime minister has said. Wallenstein, Commander of the Imperial forces, says: ‘Fate always wins, for our own hear within us / Imperiously furthers its design’ (346).

It is Wallenstein, already preempted by the title of the third part of the trilogy, *Wallenstein’s Death*, who – self-deceiver, betrayer and visionary – who recognizes that war is the impossible and urgent demand to end all chances and to take a side: ‘Duty with duty clashes. You must take sides, for war is breaking out’ (348). Max, indecisive, still vainly hoping for the chance meeting or duel that will liberate it him, and make him free from his freedom to be fated to follow his own inner promptings, can only reply: ‘War is a terror, like the scourge of heaven, / Yet it is good, our heaven-sent destiny’ (349). It is the sovereignty of heaven that assures that sovereignty of the individual to embrace the ‘good’ ‘terror’ of war as its ‘destiny’, its unavoidable – hand on heart – right to feel that it did right. In the end, the inevitable end of a death foretold, it is the voices of the murdered and murder, of the mirror images of the inner abyss and the outer necessity, that we are left with:

The thoughts and deeds of men, I tell you this,
Do not roll blindly like the waves of ocean.
The inner world, the microcosm, is
The deep eternal fountain of their motion. (356)

Man thinks that he is free to do his deeds,
But no! he is the plaything of a blind
Unheeding force, that fashions what was choice

Swiftly into grim necessity (432).

Some time in late 1800 or early 1801, Hegel wrote a short piece on *Wallenstein* which begins, as ever, with the ‘immediate impression’ that is waiting-to-be-refuted. ‘The immediate impression after the reading of *Wallenstein*’, Hegel writes, ‘is to fall silent in sadness over the downfall of a powerful man before a deaf and mute, dead fate’. The immediate impression is a falling silent before a silence, of falling in behind a fate that can neither hear, nor speak, a fate that is ‘dead’. And what, one almost immediately wonders, would be a listening, speaking and living fate? For Hegel, in the end, this war and this ‘dead fate’ can only take us to ‘the kingdom of nothingness’, to a death without reconciliation: ‘When the play ends, then all is finished, the kingdom of nothingness, of death has carried the day; it ends not as a theodicy’. Taking the prompts of command and decision, Hegel attempts to enmesh *Wallenstein* into the *Aufhebung* machine of indetermination-determination, of determining-determined, but in the end he cannot overcome ‘the kingdom of nothingness’: ‘Life against life; but only death rises up opposite life, and incredibly! abominably! death triumphs over life! This is not tragic, but terrible! This rips ... [the heart] to pieces, from this one cannot emerge with a lightened breast!’.¹⁹ Not tragic, but terrible, if Schiller’s play does not resist so much resist Hegelianism, it at least leaves us with a heavy and broken heart, a heart torn to pieces by war. ‘Hand on heart, I did what I thought was right’.

For Freud, author of ‘Thoughts for the Times on War and Death’ (*Zeitgemässes über Krieg und Tod*) (March – April 1915), Schiller was a writer who knew his parapraxes. In the second of his *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (delivered in October 1915), Freud signaled out *Wallenstein* as an example – the unique and singular that somehow demonstrates the common and general – of a ‘creative writer’ that has ‘made use of the slip of the tongue’

and ‘intends to bring something to our notice’ (62).²⁰ Freud goes on to quote from the second part of the trilogy, *The Piccolomini* (Act 1, Scene 5), when Octavio Piccolomini mistakenly refers to Wallenstein as ‘her’, after realizing that his son Max has gone over to the Duke’s side because he is in love with Thekla, Wallenstein’s daughter (239). It could be said that Wallenstein’s equivocal call for peace, which can never be untangled from his self-deception and betrayal, has also ‘feminized’ the commander-in-chief in the eyes of his lieutenant-general. To put it in Freud’s terms, what is Schiller trying to bring to our notice, and to the notice of his audience of soldiers past and soldiers future, with Octavio Piccolomini’s losing control of both his son and of his language? Perhaps that, contrary to his own Prologue (the first and last word to staunch the wound, to put the heart back together) and his near contemporary Hegel, in times of war neither language nor literature can save us, can stop the heart breaking into pieces (which cannot be re-collected by the *Aufhebung*), can escape the terrible collapse of all sovereignty in ‘the kingdom of nothingness’.

The temptation in times of war is to *make something* out of this unmakeable sovereignty, to put the *concept* of war to work, to turn it into a resource, a possibility, a truth or even an ethics. We must read Freud again, interminably. Writing in July 2000, before the apparent beginning of the war of and on terror in 2001, and thinking very much of the resistances of psychoanalysis and of the aftermath of the French Revolution that so troubled Schiller, Derrida called, urgently, to readers of Freud and beyond:

If there is still war, and for a long time yet, or in any case war’s cruelty, warlike, torturing, massively or subtly cruel aggression, it is no longer certain that the figure of war, and especially the difference between individual wars, civil wars, and national wars, still corresponds to concepts whose rigor is assured. A new discourse on war is necessary. We await today new “Thoughts for the Times on

War and Death” ... and a new “Why War?” ... or at least new readings of texts of this sort.²¹

In the first part of his essay from 1915, ‘The Disillusionment of the War’, Freud begins by recognizing first and foremost ‘the confusion of wartime’. In wartime, he writes, we are ‘too close’ to ‘great changes’ and can only rely on ‘one-sided information’. But then, almost like Thackeray before him, Freud suggests that psychoanalysis can only devote itself to ‘non-combatants’ and address their feelings of profound ‘disillusionment’ with humankind. For Freud, war can *tell us* something, it can speak to us: it can reveal a truth. Freud, that reader of *Wallenstein*, echoes Max Piccolomini’s hopeless belief that it is only in war that war can cease. War both causes confusion and bewilderment and it presents the occasion for a psychoanalytic truth that can make it easier in ‘one-sided’ world for the non-combatant ‘to find his bearings within himself’ (275). Freud ends the first part of his essay, begun in the confusion of the ‘one-sided information’ of wartime, by evoking ‘a little more truthfulness and honesty on all sides’, as if psychoanalysis – like Kantian interest of reason – can look at itself taking sides from the vantage point that is above all sides.

For Freud, the truth of war is that the unavoidable disillusionment of the non-combatant at the cruelty and barbarity of civilized white European men in civilized white European nations is itself an illusion. War, or the ‘disappointment’ that it *causes*, brings about ‘the destruction of an illusion’, namely that we are not all in fact driven by primitive, egotistical, and cruel instincts (280-281). Civilized society, which in Freud’s terms implies a society that is not in state of some kind of war (and one wonders how he can be so certain that there is at times when there are no wars, of any kind), relies on what is arguably a necessary ‘hypocrisy’ of civility and altruism (284). In other words, “war” (and one could perhaps here just as easily say “psychoanalysis”) *reveals* the self-deception of civility. However, contrary to what one might expect, Freud does not then associate these primitive instincts with a natural capacity

for deception. These instincts, he insists, ‘in themselves are neither good nor bad’ (281). While civilization is a lie, the primitive is beyond good and evil, truth and lies. One can respond in at least two ways to this truth beyond truth.

On the one hand, Freud believes that concept of war can be situated and contained within the psychoanalytical project. He places “war” within an economy of a disillusionment that reveals an illusion, a broken deception that shows us a truth and even leaves us with the hope of a general truthfulness. As Nietzsche had suggested in ‘On Truth and Lie in an Extra Moral Sense’ (1874), Freud’s use of the concept “war” reveals the *deception* of the revealing of a deception. ‘Every concept’, Nietzsche argued, ‘originates through our equating what is unequal’, of giving a general and universal quality to particular and contingent instances (218). Once asked what a realistic war movie would be like, the World War Two veteran and film director Samuel Fuller replied: deafening noises and blurred images. What ever war ‘is’, it cannot simply be given the assurance of a general or universal concept, nor – despite the claims of Deleuze and Guattari – can it be described as a concept that it *always* particular and contingent.

While Freud has gleaned from Nietzsche that ‘truths are illusions about which one has forgotten’, he has forgotten that ‘only through forgetfulness can man ever achieve the illusion of possessing a “truth” ’ (219, 218). Freud seems surprised in times of war by the ‘want of insight shown by the best intellects, their obduracy, their inaccessibility to the most forcible arguments and their uncritical credulity towards the most disputable assertions’, forgetting Nietzsche’s insistence that the *first* ‘effect of the intellect’ is the deceptive ‘evaluation of knowledge itself’ (216).

On the other hand, if Freud defines civilization (peace) as deception and the primitive instincts beneath beyond truth and lies (and beyond the civilized, peaceful, categories of peace and war), he *defines* war as deception. The concept of war may dispel the deception of

civilization, but war itself is also deception. War is founded on the practice of ‘deliberate lying and deception’ (279). War is what happens when the state not only encourages ‘the practice of lying and deception’ in its citizens, but when it also ‘treats them like children by an excess of secrecy and a censorship upon news and expressions of opinion which leaves the spirits of those whose intellects it thus suppresses defenceless against every unfavourable turn of events and every sinister rumour’ (276, 279). This double deception of the state in wartime, both making its citizens deceivers *and* deceiving them, Freud writes leaves ‘the citizen of the civilized world ... helpless in a world that has grown strange’ (280). Deceiving and deceived, defenceless, helpless, ‘in a world that has grown strange’ ... it is here at this limit of what war can tell us that Freud then turns *to* psychoanalysis, to its revelation, its truth ‘in the destruction of an illusion’.

As Derrida suggests ‘Psychoanalysis Searches the States of its Soul’ (2000), this indirect or oblique *turn* to psychoanalysis, to the revelation of an instinct and of science beyond good and evil, confronts psychoanalysis itself with the chances of the *rencontre* with ethics and politics. Psychoanalysis insists that it must resist the quick ethics of *either* good *or* evil and therefore, Derrida writes, ‘it must remain, as knowledge, within the neutrality of the undecidable’. It *from* this interminable ‘hesitation’, this ‘confused mental state’ – and Freud begins his wartime essay with ‘confusion’ – that psychoanalysis on war and at war with itself must endure the urgent and maddening ordeal of the responsible decision. Derrida writes:

To cross the line of decision, a leap that expels one outside of psychoanalytic knowledge as such is necessary. In this hiatus, I would say, the chance or risk of responsible decision is opened up, beyond all knowledge concerning the possible. Is that to say that there is no relation between psychoanalysis and ethics, law, or politics? No, there is, there must be an *indirect* and *discontinuous* consequence: to be sure, psychoanalysis as such does not produce or procure any ethics, any

law, any politics, but it belongs to responsibility, in these three domains, to take account of psychoanalytic knowledge. The task ... is to organise this taking account of psychoanalytic reason without reducing the heterogeneity, the leap into the undecidable, the beyond of the possible, which is the object of psychoanalytic knowledge and economy.²²

At the same time as it turns away or turns to itself as a resource for speak ‘to speak’, Freud’s text offers a critique of making judgments about one’s “own” war. Even in European wars, Freud writes, let alone wars beyond Europe, it seems that the concepts of ‘foreigner’ and ‘enemy’ can still be merged: war tells us that there is still a foreigner that is also an enemy in Europe – and beyond. This foreigner is both the enemy and ourselves, we civilized few, we optimists, who still see ourselves as ‘citizens of the civilized world’, who can still speak before and during a war of “doing the right thing” (277). As Freud asks, when it comes to thoughts for times on war and death, ‘at such a time who dares to set himself up as judge in his own cause?’ (279). Yet, we non-combatants still seem *surprised* by war, surprised that:

It disregards all the restrictions known as International Law, which in peace-time the states had bound themselves to observe; it ignores the prerogatives of the wounded and the medical service, the distinction between civil and military sections of the population, the claims of private property. It tramples in blind fury on all that comes in its way, as though there were to be no future and no peace among men after it is over (278-279).

Surprised by war, I turned ‘to share the transport’, but ‘oh, with whom’? Wordsworth’s poem, ‘Surprised by Joy’ (1812-1814), also written in the midst of war – and when is a poet

not a ‘war poet’? – at the very least tell us that as a certain kind of momentary, self-forgetting transient joy in the midst of war, when it comes to war there is nothing that war can tell us, nothing that will give us time to build systems of explanation and there is no one with whom we can share the transport. *We*, who divided across the globe, beyond the nation states, can never simply be defined as combatants or non-combatants, we can only be surprised in our solitude by the war that remains, as Hegel said, not tragic but terrible – and always unmakeable. War tells us nothing.

In the second part of his 1915 essay, ‘Our Attitudes Towards Death’, Freud concludes that war ‘compels us once more to be heroes who cannot believe in their own death’ (299). This failure of belief is caused primarily by the our inability ‘to imagine our own death’, but it also a product of Freud’s heroic conception of literature. He writes:

It is an inevitable result of all this that we should see in the world of fiction, in literature and in the theatre compensation for all that has been lost in life. There we still find people who know how to die – who, indeed, even manage to kill someone else. There alone too the condition can be fulfilled which makes it possible for us to reconcile ourselves with death: namely, that behind all the vicissitudes of life we should still be able to preserve a life intact (291).

Can Schiller’s *Wallenstein*, the end of which so disturbed Hegel, be described truly as ‘compensation for all that has been lost in life’? And can truly we ‘find people who know how to die’ or to kill in literature? Can literature ‘reconcile’ us with death, with thoughts for the times on war and death? Is this literature the work of peacetime or of war, and can one ever make such a clear-cut distinction?

For Freud, it seems that literature can save us from ‘the kingdom of nothingness’, and even give war something to say, give it a voice, a virtual compensation in which its listeners and

readers are assured that there is no chance of a *rencontre*, of the chance meetings or duels of literature putting the opposition between life and death in danger. He goes on write: ‘In the realm of fiction we find the plurality of lives which he need. We die with the hero with whom we have identified ourselves; yet we survive him, and our ready to die again just as safely with another hero’ (291). Beyond the question whether we readers can self-evidently *identify* ourselves with the central character of a work of fiction, one must also ask whether literature – even by 1915 – was populated with heroes? As we have seen, in 1847-1848, Thackery was already writing a ‘novel without a hero’, and if literature does not merely supply heroes for us to live on forever and bypass all the *rencontres* of wartime, which can never be reduced to *either* life *or* death, what then is the relation of literature to war, if there is one?

As one would expect, in his short essay ‘Guerre et littérature’, published in *L’Amitié* (1971) Blanchot offers neither compensation nor reconciliation in the relation between literature and war. Asked by a Polish journal to respond to the question, ‘Quelle est, selon vous, l’influence que la guerre a exercée, après 1945, sur la littérature?’, Blanchot responds ‘Je voudrais répondre brièvement’ (128). What is the relation between war and literature after 1945, perhaps even for today? First and foremost, it is one of brevity, of urgency, of speeds that literature (or something like it) can hardly tolerate. For Blanchot, this *demand* of speeds that is always too fast or too slow for the right speed, for the speeds to do the right thing in all *good conscience*, which Derrida would later call *une accélération affolante*, does not create a ‘rapport immédiat’, an assured meeting, between the literature of the day and World War Two.²³ In the fictions after 1945, and most of all after the *Shoah*, one finds ‘la confirmation accélérée de la crise fondamentale’, and for Blanchot when it comes to war, literature *follows*, it does not lead. It is *sans cap*, without heading.

War carries away literature, rushes it ahead of itself. And the war has not ended, it will not end: it is a war without end: 'dans la crise qui ne cesse de s'approfondir et que porte aussi la littérature selon son mode, la guerre est toujours présente et, d'une certaine manière, se poursuit' (128). After 1945, today even, the war that never ends is running after literature, harrying and chasing it *without rest*. Literature, the dead man running, can never stop. There is not enough time.

 NOTES

¹ F. J. Lamport, introduction to Friedrich Schiller, *The Robbers and Wallenstein*, trans. F. J. Lamport (London: Penguin, 1979), 12. All further references to *Wallenstein* will be cited in the text.

² Michael Ignatieff, 'Isaiah Berlin on Political Judgement: Theory versus Practice', the Isaiah Berlin Lecture, Delivered 24 May 2007 at Wolfson College, Oxford. See also, 'The Sense of Reality', and 'Political Judgement', in *The Sense of Reality*

³ Jacques Derrida and Elisabeth Roudinesco, *For What Tomorrow Dialogue*, trans. Jeff Fort (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004); 'The reason of the strongest (are there rogue states?),' in *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*, trans. Rachel Bowlby (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), pp. 1-114;

⁴ Jacques Derrida, 'Force of Law: "The Mystical Foundation of Authority",' in *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*, ed. Drucilla Cornell, Michael Rosenfeld, David Gray Carlson (New York: Routledge, 1992), 60.

⁵ Jacques Derrida, 'Psychoanalysis Searches the States of Its Soul: The Impossible Beyond of a Sovereign Cruelty (Address to the States General of Psychanalysis)', in *Without Alibi*, ed. and trans. Peggy Kamuf (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 242-244, 250-252.

⁶ 'Prime Minister Tony Blair has said that the reasons for committing British servicemen and women to air strikes against Yugoslavia are "crystal clear". In an address to the nation, the prime minister appealed to the whole country to back the action, saying "barbarity cannot be allowed to defeat justice". "It's simply the right thing to do," he said. To fail to intervene would, he said, "show unpardonable weakness and dereliction - that is not the tradition of Britain" ', 26 March 1999 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/304871.stm>

⁷ ‘Tell our allies that at the very moment of action, at the very moment when they need our determination that Britain faltered. I will not be party to such a course. This is not the time to falter. This is the time for this House, not just this government or indeed this Prime Minister, but for this House to give a lead, to show that we will stand up for what we know to be right, to show that we will confront the tyrannies and dictatorships and terrorists who put our way of life at risk, to show at the moment of decision that we have the courage to do the right thing. I beg to move the motion’, 18 March 2003 <http://www.number10.gov.uk/output/Page3294.asp>

⁸ ‘Turning to Iraq, he said: "Removing Saddam and his sons from power, as with removing the Taliban, was over with relative ease, but the blowback since, from global terrorism and those elements that support it, has been fierce and unrelenting and costly. And for many it simply isn't and can't be worth it. For me, I think we must see it through." He added: "I was, and remain, as a person and as a prime minister, an optimist. Politics may be the art of the possible; but at least in life, give the impossible a go. Hand on heart, I did what I thought was right. I may have been wrong, that's your call. But believe one thing, if nothing else. I did what I thought was right for our country." ’, 11 May 2007 <http://politics.guardian.co.uk/tonyblair/story/0,,2077273,00.html>

⁹ Moralism OED refs

¹⁰ Soren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling / Repetition*, ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983).

¹¹ Jacques Derrida, ‘Negotiations’, in Negotiations: Interventions and Interviews 1971-2001, trans. Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 11-40.

¹² 31 August 1997, <http://www.number-10.gov.uk/output/Page1050.asp>

¹³ Bernard de Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees*

¹⁴ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, in *Practical Philosophy*, trans. Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 140-141.

¹⁵ Derrida Jacques ‘Mes chances: Au rendez-vous de quelques stéréophonies épicuriennes’, in *Psyché: inventions de l’autre*, 2 vols (Paris: Galilée, 1987-2003), II: 354, 358-359, 374. I have attempted to explore this in a forthcoming article, ‘Derrida and the Chances of the *Rencontre*’.

¹⁶ See, for example, Jacques Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, trans. George Collins (London: Routledge, 1997); *Adieu: To Emmanuel Levinas*, trans. Anne Pascale-Brault and Michael Naas (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999). I have tried to address this in, ‘The Ruins of Disinterest’, in *Derrida and Disinterest* (London: Continuum, 2005), 1-18.

¹⁷ Aristotle, *The Metaphysics*, trans. Hugh Lawson-Tancred (London: Penguin, 2004), 23-34 (Alpha 6, 987b).

¹⁸ On Schiller’s ambivalent relation to the war of his times, see Elisabeth Krimmer, ‘Transcendental soldiers: Warfare in Schiller’s *Wallenstein* and *Die Jungfrau von Orleans*’ *Eighteenth Century Fiction* 19 (2006): 99-121.

¹⁹ G. W. F. Hegel, ‘On Wallenstein’, trans. Ido Geiger, *Idealist Studies* 35 2/3 (2005): 196-197. See also, Stephen D. Martinson’s review of Dieter Borchmeyer, *Macht und Melancholie: Schillers Wallenstein* (Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum, 1988), in *German Studies Review* 13 (1990): 151-153.

²⁰ He had first referred to this reading of *Wallenstein* in 1901 in the *Psychopathology of Everyday Life*

²¹ ‘Psychoanalysis Searches the States of its Soul’, 246.

²² ‘Psychoanalysis Searches the States of its Soul’, 273.

²³ Jacques Derrida, ‘The animal that therefore I am (more to follow),’ trans. David Wills *Critical Inquiry* 28 (2002): 369-418; ‘L’Animal Que Donc Je Suis (à Suivre),’ in *L’animal*

autobiographique: Autour de Jacques Derrida, sous la direction de Marie-Louise Mallet

(Paris: Galilée, 1999), pp. 251-301.