



“Cruel and Unusual”

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War After Death Seminar

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[For a video excerpt from this talk, see:

<https://docs.google.com/a/buffalo.edu/file/d/0B5lpWNES62g8OFAwM2VMZDA0TTg/edit?pli=1>]

With your indulgence, let me begin with three epigraphs, three provocations about violence and death, three “things” or rather evocations of the strange vulnerability of a thingly otherness that haunts and transgresses the borders of life. I cannot pursue these thoughts here, at least not directly, but that I hope that they might offer sustenance, grim as it is, in the roundtable discussion that is to follow:

- 1) --In the 5th Session of the second volume of *The Beast and the Sovereign*, Derrida asks,

“The others, what is that?” His reply: “the other is what always might, one day, do something with me and my remains, make me into a thing, his or her thing However little I know about what the alterity of the other or the others means, I have to have presupposed that the other, the others, are precisely those who always might die after me, survive me, and have at their disposal what remains of me, my remains . . . (127, 126-7)

- 2) The next epigraph is from Levinas’s reflection on murder in an early essay, “Is Ontology Fundamental?” This is a position that he will reiterate in his 1961 masterwork, *Totality and Infinity*: “At the very moment when my power to kill realizes itself, the other has escaped me” (*Basic Philosophical Writings* 10).
- 3) And the last is from Heidegger’s *Introduction to Metaphysics* (it is the very sentence with which *The Beast and the Sovereign* concludes): “There is only one thing against which all violence-doing, violent action, violent activity immediately shatters. It is death. (*The Beast and the Sovereign* 290)

Steven Miller’s illuminating and arresting book, *War After Death: On Violence and Its Limits*, helps us grasp, as never before, why we need “to formulate more precise questions about the transformation of war at the heart of contemporary social and political life” (32) . . . although, to be fair to the book’s ambitious historical reach and high degree of conceptual rigour, that transformation, along with the cruelties and mayhem by which it is elementally characterized, is also very old, no doubt as old as warring violence itself. As Steven teaches us, war is never *not* in a condition of perpetual churn because it is always more and less than itself, constitutively inadequate to its own names, concepts, rhetorics, practices, and knowledges. In the wake of

Steven's book, we confront the possibility that the question, "Why war?," and the imperishable affirmation of critique and justice that it summons, may well also be a symptomatic displacement of a more troublesome query, troublesome because it takes us to the limits of thought, namely, "What is war?" What on earth will we have said and done in order *not* to ask that question or, and this amounts to the same thing, to answer it too quickly? For Steven, knowing or claiming to know ahead of time what the being-war of war *is* (and therefore what it is not, and what precedes or follows it) acts to obscure the discomfiting possibility that war does not have as its aim the death of the living other because, in all rigour, it is subtended by forces that may not have an aim and that are careless of aims—making these forces into a kind of conceptual vacuum that is so abhorrent that it finds itself instantly filled with compensatory and, one could say, *pacifying* fictions. Whatever war is, it is at war with itself even as it defends or asserts itself, but that auto-immune inhibition is from the start overwritten by what Steven calls, in the opening sentence of his book, and with a knowing and even exhausted irony that is worthy of Goya's captions, "the stories we tell ourselves about war" (1). *War after Death* is one of those stories, reminding us that this fine book is framed by the problematics it frames. (Speaking of stories we tell ourselves about war, don't get me started about *American Sniper*.) That makes the aesthetic and aesthetic objects—Goya's prints or Genet's texts, to name two especially generative subjects of Steven's analyses—uniquely suited to tarrying with the phenomena of war after death, for it is in the play of these fictions of the real that we allow ourselves to glimpse both violence at its limits and the work of the regulatory ideals by which violence is repeatedly and anxiously limited to the extinction of life. And insofar as war violence is answerable to the vicissitudes of the death drive, which is the never quiescent yet always withdrawn other-scene of war, as Steven persuasively

argues, there is another possibility to consider; that war after death, which is to say the advent of forms of violence that are indifferent to life and death, is antecedent to or in excess of the being-human of humanity. War is conventionally thought to be what is proper to “man,” along with a host of other competences—including speech, reason, laughter, lack, the capacity to mourn, lie or at least lie about lying, form contracts, commit crimes, endure or enjoy nakedness, behave cruelly for the sake of being cruel, or create insufferable university administrations. But what if war after death were a name for an unnameable inimicality—I do not say “instinct,” in deference to the precision of Freud’s language, his willingness to give thought over to the chance of a forceful negativity or surd that is neither nature or culture--that predates “man” and so is something that has *already* succeeded or survived him? –A strange thought, but one worth pursuing both in general and in the particular context of Steven’s book. Is the death drive appropriated to the *anthropos* to the extent that it is imagined to be for *us* and the becoming-belligerent or becoming-cruel of the human being, even if, strictly speaking, the radicality of the drive lies in its blankly not being *for* anything much less for those who call themselves “human”? One of the many questions Steven’s alert book raises is “whether psychoanalysis is or is not, through and through, an anthropology” (Derrida, “Psychoanalysis” 239).

Steven’s capacious argument brings to mind Jacques Derrida’s 2000 Paris Address to the States General of Psychoanalysis, in which the French philosopher makes a powerful case for the privileged role of psychoanalysis in thinking about the grotesque metastasis of the wars that are coming and that have always been coming. In particular, Derrida notes, as if he had Steven’s project in mind, psychoanalysis is uniquely equipped to address not only “the concept of cruelty, this obscure and enigmatic concept,” as he puts it, but also and more pressingly, “this irreducible

thing in the life of the animate being” that is “the possibility of cruelty” (“Psychoanalysis” 239; emphasis mine). Wars are at once more and less than wars inasmuch as they are activated by a cruelty that does not end in death, and by forms of violence that are themselves answerable to a remainder for which Derrida marshals the word, *thing*--a catachresis for an imperishable kernel around which the psychic life of power eddies. But what remains a rather remote abstraction in Derrida’s essay is vividly realized in Steven’s book, which explores the myriad manifestations of “the death blow” that “both strikes living being and the ‘inert symbol,’ the statue that each human being is even before being petrified in death” (41). War does not only render us into disposable things, as Kant rightly worries in *Toward Perpetual Peace*; it marks the point of our thingly exposure to forms of cruelty before death, our vulnerability to the mayhem that “bears witness to the emergence in war of a passage beyond force--and thus beyond the limits that the uses of force impose upon any violent conflict” (100). The phenomena of war after death reminds us that violence singularizes each of us as “a future dead person,” to recall something Carla Freccero repeatedly says of herself (“Theorizing” 184), a turn of phrase that makes legible not the exposure of life to death but of something more disturbing, namely the vulnerability of deadness to the vicissitudes of a now deeply troubled “life.”

When Derrida addresses the States General of Psychoanalysis both 9/11 and demolition of the Buddhas of Bamiyan, the twinned twin catastrophes with which Steven opens his book, are less than a year away. Derrida turns presciently to the grotesque mutation and mutability of war, and calls for attention to the unruly trembling--at once ancient and unprecedented--of war’s very concept. “If there is still war,” he remarks,

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.”

(“Psychoanalysis” 246)

Steven’s book certainly makes good on Derrida’s summons, answering his call for new “Thoughts for the Times on War and Death,” and then some, precisely by zeroing in on the permanent *untimeliness* and *unthinkable* of war, the ways in which it is *after* itself, both lagging behind itself and in pursuit of itself—a symptom, so to speak, of its imbrication in the death drive. As Steven lucidly brings out, it is not so much the state or sovereign power that monopolizes and polices war violence, an argument that Foucault, among others, makes, but death. Death restricts violence to killing, thereby precluding a consideration of the forms of extreme violence that are not only nonlethal but, more radically, *indifferent* to lethality and so, in a sense, beyond or otherwise than life and death. How then to take the measure of war, if there is still war, if there ever was war, that will always have broken with the naturalizing convention that war violence finds its aim and apogee in extinguishing life? War is conventionally said to end in death and to limit itself to death. To think war otherwise will not mean or only mean developing novel concepts of war but to think war *with* and *as* its others. It will mean thinking the “warlike” othernesses that preclude us from saying with any confidence where war’s boundaries stop or start, an indeterminacy that has for a long time triggered a frenzy of reiterated attempts precisely to inscribe those boundaries and to invest epistemological, political, ethical authority in their

putative stability. Here we might think of Kant's curious inability to say without equivocation that there is such a thing as an "unjust enemy," or rather his willingness, as if silently enduring a kind of conceptual psychosis, to say completely contradictory things about this phantasmatic creature, this supreme fiction, the enemy who is said *by right* to deserve death. The unjust enemy? Yes/no. Where else but in the region of the symptom and of the drives do we see such indecision about questions whose stakes could hardly be higher? The history of war, war that has happened and the wars to come, will have been a history of this scandal that arrives not belatedly and from afar but intimately and finally indistinguishably from "within" and from the beginning. "War," what a word! Like "death" in the phrase "death drive," war isn't so much referential as it is deferential, marking the utopic space of a delay or deferral in which it is also imagined to take place. We could say that war is always already the occasion of its "own" inhibition, except, again like the death drive (*like* the death drive, as if one could say such a thing, as if one could write "the death drive, for example," any more than "God, for example"), what we confront here is precisely the impossibility of possessing war, much less war's self-possession. *If there is still war*: it is the grim spectre of war's having come to an end, which is not the end of war, far from it, but instead the indicia of its limitless and originary self-surpassing, its violently uncontrollable escalation, proliferation, and differentiation that haunts Derrida's thinking, as it does Steven's. *If there is still war*: meaning, war's philosophemes have today and already out-lived themselves or perhaps arrived prematurely, either as anachronism or catachronism. A disorienting inability to determine what comes earlier or later flows from Steven's use of "after," like a tremor in time, as my friend Jacques Khalip points out. Is war still-born or still to be born? Is it possible, was it ever possible, to delimit war, its concepts, figures, and practices? Is it even possible today,

whenever that day takes place, to write a text that claims to be “on war,” as if war were but one concept to be analysed among many, and thus theoreticizable in the sense of being brought into view by a spectator-thinker that sees it for what it is and thus from a safe space? Even Clausewitz, whose title I of course recall here, could not and would not answer that question in the affirmative, spending a quarter of a century toiling on a text that would only be published, self-declaredly incomplete, posthumously. Like Goya’s *Disasters of War*, it might just as easily have never seen the light of day and not simply for, as it were, biographical reasons. If there is a lesson to learn from the death drive it is that inhibition is not necessarily negatively a matter of avoidance and censure but positively a way of being-in-the world, in a way analogous to Freud’s enormous insight that forgetting is not the opposite of remembering but a particular kind of remembering. Bearing witness *to* the advent of total war while also fighting *in* that war, Clausewitz grasps that there is no Archimedean point from which to gain a point of leverage on the subject matter that grasps him. The frame of war is not that there is no frame or that war is reducible to its frames (as Judith Butler argues) but that every frame is divisible from itself, making the phrase, “new discourse of war,” into a pleonasm (as Kant says of “perpetual peace”), since, in all rigour, discourses of war are always already new insofar as they are compelled repeatedly to confront what they do not and cannot know and cannot comprehend. “A new discourse is necessary,” Derrida nevertheless insists, as if giving voice to a command that feels like a law. The discourses of war are constitutively at war with themselves, mixing war’s deadly aim with its dark and self-proliferating life, as if the more that war brings itself to an end the more it postpones that end. As Mary Favret says of Europe around 1800, “The wars kept not being over” (“Napoleonic Wars” 4).

But we might just as easily say that “psychoanalysis has kept not being over,” and that reports of its withering or demise, so often pronounced in public and with such self-authorizing certainty by the officer corps of the war on thought, have been greatly exaggerated. Derrida notes that the transformation of war and the transformation of discourses about war, discourses that are, properly speaking, exquisitely attentive to question of the cruelty of war, go hand in hand with the transformation of psychoanalysis. Is that not in part what Steven’s book exemplifies? Derrida’s opening to thought, captured in his phrase, “If there is still war,” cannot be said without also saying something like “If there is still psychoanalysis,” meaning, psychoanalysis remains, but not necessarily as it characterizes itself or has been characterized by others. It might not survive but that does not necessarily mean that it comes to an end. As anyone who teaches or works with psychoanalytic thought—and I hardly need to be saying this here, at the gracious invitation of Tim Dean and the Center for the Study of Psychoanalysis and Culture—the work of Freud and his diverse legates can excite enormous cruelty and aggression, perhaps because their writings have so much to say about cruelty and aggression, and about the “thing” that is the condition of their possibility. Indeed, Derrida’s insistence that psychoanalysis is as irrepressible and necessary as it is vulnerable is what gives his address to the States General of Psychoanalysis its heady combination of urgency and poignancy. We might consider the possibility that among the inanimate objects of violence—in a world of war after death—has always been *thought*, the un-lived “thing” that is also thought. In any case, the generative impossibility of delimiting psychoanalysis, like the impossibility of delimiting war, joins the two phenomena in a kind of mortal combat. But they aren’t or aren’t only *against* each other, war being reduced to the resistant subject of psychoanalysis, and psychoanalysis marshalled to try to explain warring

violence, but are to be thought *with* one another, interminably mixed, today and tomorrow.

Steven more than anyone I know has taught us to pay close attention to the difference between these prepositions, “with” and “against,” those small words that make us so unhappy.

Steven’s generative book is, among many other things, not only written out of and addressed to our dark times but also unusually tuned to current events. Let me point to an example. Among the many questions yet to be explored about the appalling killing of Corporal Nathan Cirillo, the unarmed Canadian army reservist who was murdered last year while standing guard at the National War Memorial in the heart of the Canada’s capital—a murder that has recently been singled out for praise by the Islamic State Group—is the significance of the fact that he was gunned down *where* he was: at a tomb. Miller’s book gives us a robust critical language with which to understand why it is at once difficult and obligatory to speak of such phenomena, which are not hidden or obscure but, quite to the contrary, vividly in sight and made to be seen while also the occasion for tremendous resistances to thought. Michael Zehaf-Bibeau, the shooter, chose a location that could not have been more surveilled, attention-getting, or over-determined. The attack was directed not only at Cirillo, who, so far as we can determine, represented an unjust enemy to his killer, but also at the war memorial itself, and, by association, the war dead who are honoured and remembered there . . . there where the restless ghosts of tens of thousands of soldiers are instructed to settle down and sleep the sleep of perpetual peace, and where generations of living Canadians have been commanded to mourn the dead and to remember war in very carefully prescribed ways. Zehaf-Bibeau’s murderous actions threatened momentarily to break a kind of spell cast over the land, beamed from the monolith outside the nearby seat of sovereign power, precisely the next and last stop in Zehaf-Bibeau’s rampage and

where he sought and met his own death. The fact that the war dead and their culturally sanctioned monuments require protection, however symbolic or ceremonial, evidences the non-living and un-lived vulnerability to violence that Zehaf-Bibeau's murderous actions exploited. Paradoxically, the ceremonial nature of that protection acts to cover-up the all too real power of symbolic forms of violence. As Steven says, we glimpse "the possibility that acts of violence are always both real and symbolic and that symbolic violence, far from being a lesser or token form of violence, is often the more horrific and bewildering" (25). That is the secret source of the murder's horror: not only that a deranged man had committed such an atrocious act but also the uncanny revelation that the dead and their chief memorial could be touched—without in fact being touched—by violence and that very little, almost nothing, stood between them and that force. But the frenzied media focus on the life and death of Corporal Cirillo acted to administer how Zehaf-Bibeau's actions were to be understood, i.e., as an act of violence committed against and exhausting itself in the killing of the Canadian soldier. The symbolic vulnerability of the dead turns out to have been as real as it was impossible to acknowledge, impossible to acknowledge *because real*.

I am tempted to describe the spectacle of Zehaf-Bibeau's performance as "Great deeds! With the dead!" But surely no one in their right mind could say such a scandalous thing about the man's murderous actions (and they are murders, not killings, we tell ourselves, so sure we are that what he did was not an act of war and that we know what war is), not even to ventriloquize the madness of Zehaf-Bibeau's motivations, his incapacity to distinguish greatness from ignominy, combat from homicide, courage from cowardliness. *Great deeds! With the dead!* is of course the caption for plate 39 of Goya's *Disasters of War*, for which Miller provides arguably

the most illuminating reading that we currently have, next to Ian Baucom's essay, "On Inimical Life." Both discussions move analyses of Goya's masterpiece well beyond the humanistic pieties of extant art historical criticism of the artist.

Let me conclude, then, by returning to the Spanish artist. Because Goya places himself at the heart of a demoniacally violent history through which we are still living, it is a question of letting not making the *Disasters* matter. When we observe the U.S. government condoning the torture of "unlawful combatants," Baucom concludes, "think Goya" ("Inimical" 188). But what can it mean today to *think* Goya, including the thought of "*the worst*," the Spanish artist's overdetermined figure for the relation of his thought to his own time? "Think Goya" . . . might this not have been a working subtitle for Steven's book? Now, the *Disasters* is a fiercely self-contesting text, roiling with difficulties, obscurities, and sudden shifts in visual styles. Its horizonless spaces, indeterminate historical referents, and refusal to align unproblematically with any of the belligerents that it depicts all contribute to the disorienting experience of occupying a dystopian world of ambient violence in which "one crime simply follows another" (Paulson 337). The engravings call out for an organizing logic that they cannot provide, as if narratively mirroring a war-world in which "there is no party innocent of the most horrific violence, no revolution whose coming...betokens the possibility of progress" ("Inimical" 182-3). What I want to emphasize is this: Goya did not publish the *Disasters* during his lifetime, an abstention that is mysterious to everyone except the historicists who say that he feared the displeasure of the restored monarchy. Perhaps Goya's desistance not as merely evasive or shrewd but "positively" intrinsic to the *Disasters* itself, the site of an inhibition that is indistinguishable from living-on. The fact that the engravings remained uncirculated and without meaning-to-be-circulated during

Goya's lifetime threads together life and work, wartime and the aesthetic, in ambiguous but mortalizing ways, and puts to us that, for a time, for the decade that they took to engrave, and for the remainder of his life, the inventor and then the keeper of the *Disasters* lived disastrously; that is, he experienced life alongside images of *the worst* in a condition of complex asociality, schooling himself, but always in the company of others, to live alone in the void of catastrophe, now, forever, without the ameliorative props that his public personae as royal court painter furnished. Goya releases his images by *refusing* them a "refuge in visibility" (Lippit 14) and in the visibly social. Perhaps this is what aesthetics starts to look like after the demise of expectations, during dark times when there are not only no prospects but also, more radically, no prospect for prospects, no way meaningfully to determine with any confidence whether history is moving forwards or backwards and thus whether the death of the enemy will bring war to an end. One could almost say that, under these conditions, when as a painter to the king, *one's eyes fail*, Goya chooses to see the disaster by *touching* it, feeling its unmistakable force, with all the grimy physicality that comes from labouring with acid and ink, paper and copper, hand and burin. This *tact* or recessiveness, this unuseability about the *Disasters*, reminds us that the political and the historical are irreducible to the publically declarative; but this negation and abstention is otherwise difficult to discern if your optic is calibrated to the legible and the social, the same optic, as it happens, through which sovereign power arbitrarily parses the difference between who lives, whose lives are worthy of protection and preservation, *and* those who are made to die--which is to say between those who remain discernable to the law and those who are deemed to be unworthy of discernability.

In their queerly inoperative status, designed for publication but unpublished, powerfully

executed but cached in a place of non-power, the series might then be treated as a kind of transitional object: that is, as something Goya cherished, *loved* even, in any case, something he worked *on* yet avoided working *through*, an object that he could and in fact needed to put or hold away from public consideration and consumption, not only shielding it from what Mieszkowski calls “the spectacle logic of war” (154) but also from being taken up by the reception histories into which his authorship was immersed and dispersed. The unusually ferocious use and abuse of the *Disasters* in recent years—perhaps most famously defaced by the British avant-garde artists, Dino and Jake Chapman (as well as converted into wallpaper, life-size dioramas, lego-sets, and so forth. See images below.) suggests that the engravings have become a transitional object for others as well, passionately attached *to* in the mode of being revisioned and knocked about, but always with the unwavering expectation that they *cannot* disappear, that they can somehow bear this treatment and that it is in their nature to do so. (It is also important to acknowledge the subtle ways in which the remarkable image by John O’Reilly that Jacques discusses is haunted by the spirit of Goya, an artist to whom O’Reilly has acknowledged a certain indebtedness.) We need to develop a better vocabulary to describe the curious animacy of these un-lived objects, these perdurable not-nothings that make nothing happen, whose living-on seems less or more than biopolitical in nature--unless of course that vocabulary is precisely what criticism is.

Steven’s close reading of the caption for plate 39 emboldens me to wager some remarks about the caption for plate 44. Among the strangest captions that Goya added to the engravings is perhaps the most ordinary one: *I saw it* or *I saw this*, he writes (*Yo lo vi*). Adding the phrase, *I saw it*, was in Goya’s time a banally familiar convention in poetry and engraving, meaning not, *I saw this with my own eyes* (Goya appears not actually to have seen most of the horrors that he

depicts), but instead functions as a promise of two things: first, *this happened, this event really took place*; and second, I am a “war spectator,” the one who can “create the illusion of being there when dreadful things happen” (Hughes 272). Mieszkowski would describe this as an example of “the Napoleonic war imaginary,” but to do so perhaps under-states the curious rhetorical substitution by which Goya’s signature is under-written. For *I saw it* is a kind of conjuring, the routing of authorship through its citation, and the invention of a seeing and imagining artistic subject that is imposed upon the blank anonymity—the *it happened*--of the disastrous event, an event, moreover, that that fictional “I” hails as the spectral ground of its own authority. Put simply, *I saw it* is made to stand as a proxy for *that which I didn’t see*, except *figuratively*, day for night. *I saw it* posits a world available to sight and knowledge, but draws attention to itself as a positing and little more. The insentient operation of rhetoric suggests that Goya is leaving traces of being present to the disaster in ways that are in excess of the imaginary and the phenomenological. Hidden in plain sight, Goya’s citation re-purposes an otherwise tired convention to register something new and very hard to say, namely the permeation of the artist by the worst---which is not quite the same thing as seeing it imaginatively as a spectator or testifying to it as a witness, although Goya was also caught up in the terrible labour of both of those practices. In its self-arresting brevity or inhibition, *I saw it* instead recalls something Michael Herr says about the experience of another disastrous war, that is, the disaster before Iraq and Afghanistan, before Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib: “*It just stayed stored there in your eyes*” (20), Herr writes, his stressed syllables slowing time down, as if one could have the experience of an unnamed catastrophe in Southeast Asia and not so much miss the meaning, as in the case of trauma, as be stuck *with* it or stuck *to* it, visually. –To experience or imagine not much more

than that, not much more than *that* happened *and I saw it*...and for now, forever, to hold those two things in one place, eyes wide shut. In its bareness or scarcity, *I saw it* is a declaration of adequation and just-enoughness, of a moment of sheer commensurateness with horror and terror, whatever this coming together might mean or come to mean. *I saw it* thus withholds itself in the way that Rei Terada observes in Keats, where she observes a form of looking that abstains from moving too quickly to what we are schooled normatively into wanting to think, namely, *I saw this, but I wish that I saw something else, something better* (296). *Nada*, Goya's grimmest inscription says, *That's what it says* or *It says (nothing)*, (*Nada. Ello lo dice*), as if trying to give the engraving over to a kind of anonymous stammering, "it says what it says," a nothing forever on the brink of something. Not *for* nothing did subsequent editors of Goya's engravings mutilate this inscription most of all, revising it to *Nada, we shall see* or *It will say (Ello dirá)*, the expectation of *meaning*, uninsurable as it is, so much more preferable to the scarcity of the predicament of sheer expectation. What would it mean then to say *I saw it*, and leave it at that, to experiment with the very idea of living that letting be among all the other ways that one lives with others? Would this be to abstain from the economization of war that sees violence exhaust itself in killing? The indeterminacy of the referent "it" redounds back upon the "I" who is posited as seeing, for it is possible that the pronoun refers to the engraving itself, and so functions as a prosopopoeia, an animating projection on the engraving that "sees" without ever knowing what it sees. What would it mean to see as the engraver or perhaps as the engraving sees, to store the worst for now, forever, to dwell with disaster but in an unknown because asocial, unproductive, untimely, and non-declarative way? In giving itself to be read rather than seen (writing perhaps being the most vivid instance of a non-mimetic image)...in giving itself to be read rather than

seen, *I see it* reminds us that in their mimetic aspect, Goya's images call for a moral judgment while also allowing for another form of judgment, if judgment is what it is, something closer to a "blank opening onto futurity," to remember a fine phrase from Tres Pyle. It goes without saying that that futurity includes us, on this wintry afternoon, contemplating scenes engraved by Goya's hands but not sent to us or meant for us, scenes without an addressee and scenes that, were it not for an accident of history, we could just as easily have *not seen*. What then can it mean to tarry with an image, to see and not to understand, to engrave and not to be printed, taken up, and consumed? One answer to that impossible question comes unbidden from a not entirely unexpected place, that is, from another artist who lives amid perpetual war brimming with the inimicalized life that the Peninsular Wars modelled, god help us. I'm reminded of the novelist, David Grossman, who wonders aloud about what it means to occupy the catastrophe of the war between Israel and the Palestinians, the war that saw his son, Uri, killed by an anti-tank rocket in Lebanon in 2006. Grossman stands still and that is the unknown way in which he still stands, now, forever: "I touch on grief and loss like one touching electricity with bare hands," he says, "yet I do not die. *I do not understand how this miracle works*" (np).

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