

# **Pro patria mori**

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§1. ... *doulce et decorum est pro patria mori* ... Owen's words echo, now and then, on maybe the occasion of a remembrance, or during an anti-armaments protest, or when havoc and war have monopolized the news – as if the rest of the world is nowhere to be found, or ... worse, as if the rest of the world has, in an instance, become so absolute, that there is nothing to report or document about not even such perfection!

§2. Reporting, documenting and archiving the moment of death ... without giddiness in front of the gory spectacle, without involvement. Is this the philosopher or the historian? Nay, thus cold and distant can only be the journalist with the necessary detachment on grounds that *this* is the condition for giving surviving generations the opportunity to dissect and analyze event and circumstance, to find culprit and cause so as to seek atonement for the lives lost and the wrongs done.

§3. But instead of being grateful for the spared generations, for the surviving ... the prayers seek to count all the heroes war has proudly produced in excess!

§4. And *this* is what history replicates, albeit differently each time, in a Deleuzian repetition: *either come back as a hero or dead on your shield*; the Spartan maternal words, protective of land but *not* kin, ring as firm command and have *thus* resonated through the ages unchanged. War is but a logically non-contradictory Leibnizian opposition: to either bring victory to honor land and folk, or give life up for land and folk. The middle is excluded.

§5. The middle is the fault line ... no human's land, but *man's* land – or so it was. It is the stretch fought over for. Such is the place where no humans meet, but only arms and weapons ... no place where humans speak, but only noise and clatter.

§6. Cruel but expected irreducible choice, for *this* is what heightens death to become the sweetest of deaths!

§7. Sweet indeed, and contrary to what is often thought of, there are *no* sufficient reasons for giving life up!

§8. It is often expected that there should be sufficient reasons, or, at times, just causes for giving life up – land or folk or even ideals, are often deemed sufficient. They are the cause; they are the drive, as if their being or their deeds, or their inspiration condition an exchange, almost a transaction: that I would die *because of* that which land, folk and ideal have offered me, namely, the right to be.

§9. But these are not sufficient motives let alone reasons as such, for they have offered nothing: if my being is a right it is not a gift! Thus, my death is simply a gift; *it is the gift of life in death*.

§10. But how can I will such a gift? How can I will to offer life up for nothing in exchange? To will to offer death, to will to go to war, I need to ignore death, to depersonalize the fatal moment to deterritorialize the fatal bullet. In transcending death, death is not under my attention; the foe is, who ...when no longer a foe, will become a friend. Is this a paradox? Nay, a plain shift of focus!

§11. So if I ignore death, if death is not that which I am aware of or attentive to, how can I treat the other as worthy of dying? How can the other, my friend or kin, be signified as foe, therefore dehumanized and objectified and brought to death? If I ignore death, I simply cannot!

§12. Thus I must be *brought* to death. I must be convinced of the value of my gift.

§13. Such convincing requires Foucauldian docility. It is about putting my body in a state of numbness, where any volition to react becomes futile: in the quicksand of docility the epitome of any discourse on war is to confirm and convince that havoc and the destruction of the signified foe is right and true.

§14. Thus, because I ignore death, I am brought to death as *I am brought to believe* in the value of my gift.

§15. And here is the value of my gift: it is the only truth, the only meaning of life; to die so that land and kin can survive, to sacrifice my time for the time of my kin.

§16. I can thus imagine bravery and a reason to die for: I am thus carried to the fault line.

§17. But where I am thus sent to the fault line once, I am killed twice: by those who send me to the fault line and those who pull the trigger ... there where I have but one gift to offer I am twice solicited to give my life up.

§18. But if my gift is for land and kin, such gift is also my poison ... the venom my death spreads all around me defacing myself and my gift: if a hero, I am also disgrace.

§19. For this reason I want to find grace by *not* being a hero; I want exchange and not sacrifice; I want my time and that of my kin!

§20. Do wonder, however, even if I and my kin are spared, how many more times must the bell toll for the others?