

Truth, Time and Truce

Vakhtang Gomelauri

In *Peaky Blinders: The Immortal Man*, Tommy Shelby says to his sister: “I’ve got a war of me own, Ada. Inside of me head.”¹ The war has shifted into his head, returning as flashbacks and ghosts. It does not end. It repeats, and time stops for him.

History Beyond Trauma is a book that helped me to think about this in my work with refugees of war and their children, for whom the past remains present. Davoine and Gaudillière describe this as a disturbance of time itself: the arrow of time is broken, frozen, or reversed.² What is affected here is not only time, but history itself. These experiences cannot be placed in history.

It is the dimension of trust which trauma collapses, that which allows speech to function as promise and as law. When this dimension is lost, there is no longer a way to negotiate what has happened. History cannot be spoken, and time does not move.

It is here that Davoine and Gaudillière introduce the notion of a truce, drawing on Lacan’s example [from *The Instance of the Letter ...*] of “peace negotiations”³. Where trust is undone, there must be recourse to a truce to guarantee truth once again. A truce is not peace. It does not resolve the conflict; it makes it speakable. With a truce, time can begin to move again.

A truce does not occur on its own. Something has to be said to someone. As Lacan formulates in *Logical Time*, no one reaches truth except through others.⁴

In *The Instance of the Letter ...*, Lacan formalizes this through the example of peace negotiations. What is at stake in such negotiations is not located in either subject, but in a third place, the place of signifying convention, where speech can be taken in good faith.⁵ A truce can only be grounded in this place.

¹ *Peaky Blinders: The Immortal Man*, directed by Tom Harper, written by Steven Knight, Caryn Mandabach Productions, 2026.

² Davoine, F., & Gaudillière, J.-M., *History Beyond Trauma*, New York: Other Press, 2004, p. 78.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Lacan, J. *Logical Time and the Assertion of Anticipated Certainty*, in *Écrits*, trans. B. Fink, New York/London: Norton, 2006, p. 173.

⁵ Lacan, J., *The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious or Reason Since Freud*, in *Écrits*, trans. B. Fink, New York/London: Norton, 2006, p. 436.

The analytic situation makes such a place possible: something is said that shifts the subject's relation to what has happened, which Lacan names the moment to conclude, a cut in time in which the past can be spoken as history.

As Jacques-Alain Miller emphasizes, psychoanalysis does not place truth outside time, but in the moment that changes the subject's position.⁶ Truth is not eternal; it appears in time, in a moment.

Back to Shelby: the war does not end for him. The ghosts remain. And yet, at a certain point, something shifts. A truce is enough to act, even if it leads to death.

A truce does not resolve the war. It changes the subject's position in it. Without a truce, the past does not become past, even for an instant.

⁶ Miller, J.-A., *Introduction to the Erotics of Time*, trans. B.P. Fulks, *Lacanian Ink*, 24/25, Spring 2005, pp. 8-43.