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Karen Patrick Knutsen

Reciprocal Haunting

Pat Barker's *Regeneration* Trilogy

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Abstract

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Pat Barker's fictional account of the Great War, *The Regeneration Trilogy*, completed in 1995, is considered to be her most important work to date and has captured the imagination of the reading public as well as attracting considerable scholarly attention. Although the trilogy appears to be written in the realistic style of the traditional historical novel, Barker approaches the past with certain preoccupations from 1990s Britain and rewrites the past as seen through these contemporary lenses. Consequently, the trilogy illustrates not only how the past returns to haunt the present, but also how the present reciprocally haunts perceptions of the past. The haunting quality of the trilogy is developed through an extensive, intricate pattern of intertextuality. This reciprocal haunting at times breaks the realistic framework of the narrative, giving rise to anachronisms.

This study offers a reading of trauma, class, gender and psychology as thematic areas where intertexts are activated, allowing Barker to revise and re-accentuate stories of the past. Drawing on Michel Foucault's concept of discourse and Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of dialogue, it focuses on the trilogy as an interactive link in an intertextual chain of communication about the Great War. Received versions of history are confirmed, expanded on and sometimes questioned. What is innovative about the trilogy is *how* Barker incorporates discursive formations not only from the Great War period, but from the whole twentieth century. The Great War is regenerated and transformed as it passes from one dialogic context to another. My reading shows that the trilogy presents social structures from different historical epochs through dialogism and diachronicity, making the present-day matrices of power and knowledge that continue to surround, determine and limit people's lives highly visible. *The Regeneration Trilogy* regenerates the past, simultaneously confirming Barker's claim that the historical novel can also be "a backdoor into the present".

Keywords: Pat Barker, *The Regeneration Trilogy*, class, gender, psychology, discourse, cultural trauma, dialogue, dialogism, power/knowledge, Michel Foucault, Mikhail Bakhtin, Raymond Williams, Cultural Materialism, New Historicism, shell shock, psychoanalysis, British literature 1900-1999

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Halden, September 2008

Karen Patrick Knutsen

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Introduction

‘History is never a judge but a dialogue between past and present. The answers change because the questions change, depending on our preoccupations.’ (Pat Barker, qtd. in Jaggi, “Dispatches”)

Reciprocal Haunting

This thesis offers a reading of trauma, class, gender and psychology as diachronic discourses in British writer Pat Barker’s fictional account of the Great War, *The Regeneration Trilogy*.¹ Furthermore, it focuses on dialogic aspects of the trilogy both as an autonomous work and as an interactive link in an intertextual chain of communication about the Great War. The trilogy re-accentuates the master narratives of history, while drawing extensively on canonized versions of the war: especially the semi-autobiographical memoirs and war poetry published by former soldiers.² At the same time Barker approaches the past with certain preoccupations from her own culture – 1990s Britain – and rewrites the past as seen through these contemporary lenses. All of Barker’s writing has shown a concern with how traumatic events become temporally dislocated. These events cannot be securely located in the past or consigned to history. Instead, there is a continual return of the repressed that produces effects in the present. In many ways the trilogy illustrates how the past returns to haunt the present, but also how the present reciprocally haunts our perceptions of the past.

In a recent study of Barker’s fiction, John Brannigan states that a majority of the essays on the trilogy have focused principally on three themes: history, gender and psychology (*Pat Barker* 168). He points out that the critics are now debating the significance of all of Barker’s novels “in terms of her representation of history, psychoanalytic ideas, war, violence, gender, identity and myth and are interested in analysing her novels from formal, theoretical, historiographic, political and biographical perspectives” (*Pat Barker* 169). However, Brannigan locates significant gaps in the critical response to Barker’s novels. One major gap is the lack of thorough discussion of writers, both earlier and contemporary, who have influenced her work. He mentions Michael Ross’s essay on D. H. Lawrence as intertext in Barker’s novels as one exception and

¹ The trilogy consists of *Regeneration* (1991), *The Eye in the Door* (1993), and *The Ghost Road* (1995). The three novels were published as one volume by Penguin in 1996. References to the trilogy in this thesis will refer to this edition and hereafter be abbreviated as *RT*.

² The trilogy also draws extensively on other texts concerned with the war: traditional historiography, medical literature on shell shock, critical studies of war literature, court proceedings, etc.

notes that a number of critics have cited other writers as sources of influence or analogy – e.g. Alice Walker, Virginia Woolf and Toni Morrison.³ In this thesis I hope to contribute to this discussion with a number of intertexts that are activated in the trilogy. In my analysis of how these intertexts are used I will draw on Michel Foucault’s concept of *discourse* and Mikhail Bakhtin’s notions of *dialogue* and the *dialogic*.

Since Barker rewrites and re-accentuates the past, the intertexts that appear in the text are particularly important. Here I will employ the terms intertext and intertextuality as Julia Kristeva does in *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1974) to denote the interdependence of literary texts. Her terms are extrapolated from Bakhtin’s notion of dialogue, which I will discuss in more detail below. Kristeva argues that a literary text is not an isolated phenomenon; it is made up of a mosaic of references to other texts, and each text involves the absorption and transformation of other texts. Her terms differ from the traditional notions of literary influence or allusion. The text that is “absorbed” is transformed in some way giving it new layers of meaning (59-60).⁴

I will begin by defining and discussing the terms discourse, dialogue and the dialogic, indicating how I apply them to Barker’s trilogy and establishing the theoretical grounding of this thesis. Thereafter I will give a brief overview of the trilogy, highlighting the way these terms come to the fore in each of the separate volumes. Finally, I outline the themes of the chapters to follow.

Discourse and Dialogue

Two central, closely related terms – “discourse” and “dialogue” – need clarification. As I have noted, the concept of discourse, as I use it in this thesis, is based on Michel Foucault’s work. The analysis of discourse is concerned with the interactive or dialogic properties of communication and I will therefore also be drawing on Mikhail Bakhtin’s notions of dialogue and the dialogic in his discussions of language and discourse in the novel. The theories of these two

³ Laurie Vickroy has discussed Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway* as an intertext in the trilogy (“A Legacy”). Likewise, Alistair Duckworth and Ronald Paul have addressed intertexts in the trilogy. A number of critics have found similarities between Barker’s working-class characters and themes and those in fiction by African American women. Barker says she has studied works by these writers; she has corresponded with Gloria Naylor and these women have definitely influenced her work (Perry, *Backtalk* 49).

⁴ Kristeva says that “texts presuppose several categories of narratives, either of the same period or written earlier, they appropriate the latter to themselves either to confirm or to reject them . . . As if these other narratives were an incitement to perform a deed that is the text itself” (9). She explains that intertextuality denotes the transposition of one or several sign systems into another but adds that she prefers the term *transposition* because it avoids the confusion caused by the banal sense of intertextuality as “study of sources” (60). Nevertheless, the term intertextuality has taken precedence in most critical discussions on this aspect of texts and I choose to use it rather than transposition.

thinkers facilitate two different, yet complementary approaches to working with intertextuality in the trilogy.

For Foucault, the relationship between language and social institutions is “discourse”. Discourses are rooted in social institutions and play a key role in relations of power. They are manifested as groups of statements (énoncés) that form a language for talking about or a way of representing knowledge about a particular topic at a particular historical moment. What is accepted as “truth”, “natural”, or “common sense” within a particular field in a society at a given time is in a sense crystallized in discourse. Discourses also consist of statements that limit what can be talked about, who can speak with authority, and what can be said within a particular institution, profession or discipline. The social world can thus be seen as comprising a range of discourses developed through and functioning around the institutions they are part of.⁵

There are also some wider forms of discourse which are not as explicitly or formally anchored within institutions, but which nevertheless exist and permeate most other discourses. Gender and class are examples of such wider discourses. These operate in ways that tend to privilege some groups and naturalize the subordination of others. In the trilogy we see for example how the professional discourse of psychology is not only patriarchally authoritative in its approach to treatment; it is also intertwined with discourses of class and gender. By using the word discourse, Foucault emphasizes the role of language as the vehicle of ideology. In his theories, the relationship between knowledge and power is always essential when we consider a particular discourse, and power circulates constantly at different levels within each. This aspect of power within discourses explains why some voices tend to become prescriptive or dominant. Authoritative voices gain control, and those without power are exiled to the margins. Analysing discourses brings up questions about who defines knowledge or truth, and how the power that is thus generated is used.

In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault develops the concept, explaining that “Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere” (93). He asks us to imagine “power without the king” (*History of Sexuality* 91) and not to “imagine a world of discourse divided between accepted discourse, or between the dominant discourse and the dominated one; but as a multiplicity of discursive elements that can come

⁵ Foucault’s theory of discourse is outlined in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. He also mapped out his ideas on discourse in a lecture entitled “L’ordre du discours”, delivered at the Collège de France on December 2, 1970. It is included as an appendix in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (215-37), entitled “The Discourse on Language”.

into play in various strategies” (100-01). In this sense, Foucault works against any single “centre” of authority and argues that every discourse is a site of serious discussion and ideological contention.⁶ In his histories of madness, sexuality, and punishment, Foucault looks at concrete examples of language used in specific areas of knowledge (e.g. medicine or criminology) at a particular time and place to trace how ideas develop and evolve and how they relate to the discourses at other times and in other places.⁷ In these studies he shows how discourses become ways of classifying and ordering, of defining and regulating – and how language operates in the interests of social institutions to construct people in certain ways. Although some strands of discourse do appear to be hegemonic – having a preponderant influence or authority – they must always be seen in relationship to other, competing strands of discourse. The discourse of gender, as espoused by the Suffragettes before the Great War, for example, resisted the patriarchal discourse of gender that was dominant at the time. And of course, within our present-day discourse of gender there are many on-going conversations, disagreements and factions.

The coexistence of multiple, competing perspectives within discourses through time helps to explain Foucault’s vision of a new way of conceiving of history. The discipline of history has often been perceived as monological – giving one, official view or “Grand Narrative”⁸ of a discourse at a particular point in time. Foucault explains that this type of history strives to be a total description that “draws all phenomena around a single centre – a principle, a meaning, a spirit, a world-view, an overall shape” (*Archaeology* 10). In contrast, his proposed general history does not aim for a totalizing view; it is concerned with “categories of discontinuity and difference, the notions of threshold, rupture and transformation, the descriptions of series and limits” (*Archaeology* 14). History thus becomes a “discursive practice”: a conventional system for making cultural meaning.

⁶ As I will discuss, Bakhtin shares these ideas. Furthermore, philosophers and theoreticians who are commonly labelled as postmodernist or poststructuralist such as Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes, Antonio Gramsci, Louis Althusser, Jean-François Lyotard or Edward Said are also associated with the tendency to work against the idea of any centre of authority.

⁷ E.g., in *Madness and Civilization* (1961) Foucault discusses how perceptions of mental illness and its treatment have changed through the ages; in *Discipline and Punish* (1975) he examines discourses surrounding the prison system and punishment in general, and in *The History of Sexuality* (1978) changing perceptions of sexuality, sexual deviation, etc. are examined.

⁸ Jean-François Lyotard introduced the term “Grand Narrative” or “metanarrative” in *The Postmodern Condition*, published in France in 1979, translated into English by Manchester UP in 1984. Grand Narratives are narratives which subordinate, organize and legitimate other narratives. They are overarching and totalizing frameworks which seek to tell universalist stories: Marxism, liberalism, or Christianity, for example. Lyotard contends that the “postmodern condition” is marked by a crisis in the status of knowledge which is expressed in an “incredulity towards metanarratives” (xxiv) of this kind.

Discursive practices involve the continuing formation and transformation of bodies of knowledge over time; they produce new forms of knowledge and thus play a major role in the dissemination of social power (Foucault, *Archaeology* 46-49). Foucault further qualifies the idea:

A discursive formation, then, does not play the role of a figure that arrests time and freezes it for decades or centuries; it determines a regularity proper to temporal processes; it presents the principle of articulation between a series of discursive events and other series of events, transformations, mutations, and processes. It is not an atemporal form, but a schema of correspondence between several temporal series. (*Archaeology* 74)

Focusing on discourses in terms of discursive formations thus highlights their diachronic nature. According to Foucault, historians cannot describe the past from an objective position outside history because their images of the past will always be structured and constituted by the limitations and desires of the present. Discussing Foucault's conception of historical analysis in the context of New Historicism and Cultural Materialism, Brannigan observes that it "requires and uses the tension between a time impossibly other for us to conceive, the time of discourse, and a time utterly incapable of being anything other than what we conceive, chronological time" (*New Historicism* 215). He concludes that "[w]hat this enables Foucault to do is analyse the past from the present without pretending that he has discovered the absolute real conditions of the past, and without conceding that we are trapped entirely in the self-image of the present" (215). In my view, the tension between the diachronicity of discourses and chronological time in the trilogy often produces an anachronistic "feel", and when this feeling arises it is often an indication that a new intertext is being activated. I shall return to this aspect in the following chapters. The trilogy cannot be reduced to a portrayal of crystallized, dominant discourses at one particular moment in time; instead we see divergent strands of discourse and discourses from different time periods interacting in the narrative, and this interaction is often brought out through intertextuality.

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault develops a central image – the Panopticon – to convey how ideology, and thus power, works in the modern state, drawing on the English philosopher Jeremy Bentham's proposed design from the 1780s for the ideal, utilitarian prison building. In a prison organized as a Panopticon (pan = all; opticon = observe) there is a central surveillance tower that gives guardians an overview of all of the cells – without being seen themselves. This creates a certain sense of omniscience; the prisoners feel as if

they are always being watched, and they start watching themselves and others, internalizing the rules of behaviour. In Foucault's use of the image, the modern state is an analogous surveillance system in which our behaviour *may* constantly be watched, compelling us in return to constantly watch the "abnormal" behaviour of ourselves and others. We are thus both the prisoner in the cell and the guard watching over others (*Discipline and Punish* 195-228). The image is useful in thinking about ideologies in society, ideologies of gender for example. Our gendered identities are under constant construction and surveillance, and thinking in terms of the Panopticon highlights how the social rules and norms regulating gender roles and sexuality are internalized. Several critics discuss the Panopticon as a recurring image in the trilogy, and I will return to their observations in my analysis.⁹

Like Foucault, Bakhtin is concerned with the "warring" social forces in societies, embodied in discourses. However, whereas Foucault envisions subjectivity as constituted entirely through discourse (*Archaeology* 94-95), Bakhtin is more interested in the agency of the individual and how ideology may be interactively negotiated through dialogue. Bakhtin argues that the subjectivity of the individual is developed through internal dialogues; the individual responds to external discourses, interrogating, agreeing and disagreeing with them in order to create individual understanding. This internal dialogization can at times take the form of a dialogue between an earlier and a later self (*The Dialogic* 427). In the trilogy we see how characters are influenced by the institutional and wider discourses surrounding them, but also how subjectivity is negotiated through internal and interactive dialogue.

As Matt Steinglass observes, Bakhtin's notion of "dialogue" has by far been his most influential concept in recent years ("International"). In *The Dialogic Imagination*, Bakhtin argues that dialogue is a distinctive feature of the novel because of the ability of the genre to present a plurality of forces and ideologies. This contrasts with other genres such as the epic or the lyric poem where monologic or utopian worldviews are presented.¹⁰ In this sense, the novel is a privileged genre, because it works against any totalizing worldview; it resists the establishment of any single authoritarian centre. Throughout the history of the genre of the novel, nearly all novels have shared this quality of pluralism and they can thus be read and discussed using Bakhtin's category. However, I interpret dialogism as a relative rather than an absolute category; there are degrees of dialogism, and some novels are obviously more dialogic

⁹ E.g., Brannigan in "History and Haunting" and Sharon Monteith in "We will remember".

¹⁰ Bakhtin discusses these generic differences in the first chapter of *The Dialogic Imagination*, "Epic and Novel" (3-40).

than others. Barker's work presents a wide spectre of characters, and she is a master of the art of free indirect discourse. This enables her to alternate focalization through a plurality of points of view.

As I have indicated, Bakhtin is particularly interested in how dialogue, and thereby discourse, functions in the novel. But rather than focusing on how the power play within discourses works to create a dominant view of a certain field of knowledge, he is concerned with how the different "voices" participating in literary narratives may influence and in a sense disrupt the authority of a single voice. Discourses then become "dialogic" rather than monologic. A central example is medical discourse – arising from and functioning within medical institutions – which tends to see itself as an ideal or theoretically monologic discourse. In the trilogy however, we see that medical discourse is much more complicated; though in all cases they are patriarchally authoritative, the different doctors portrayed show medical discourse moving in many different directions. There is an ongoing dialogue about what is true within the discourse and about who exercises powers of definition. Bakhtin's idea of the dialogic complements Foucault; rather than focusing on how ideology tends to become crystallized in dominant discourses, he focuses on the inherent plurality of dialogue and interaction as forms of meaning making both in the world and in literary texts.

In "The Problem of Speech Genres" Bakhtin develops his theory of dialogue and the dialogic further. His discussion shows that we must not reduce dialogue to a script-like interaction between two speakers; instead dialogue is embedded in social contexts, and writing is primarily a dialogue with the world. Bakhtin begins by establishing that the real basic unit of speech communication is not the sentence but the *utterance*. Utterances vary in terms of length, content, and structure, but all share a common structural feature as units of speech communication; they have clear-cut boundaries. The boundary of each concrete utterance is determined by a change of speaking subjects. Furthermore, "Any utterance is a link in a very complex organized chain of other utterances" (*Speech Genres* 69). An utterance is always a response to previous utterances and evokes and anticipates new responses. The speaker "presupposes not only the existence of the language system he is using, but also the existence of previous utterances – his own and others' – with which his given utterance enters into one kind of relation or another (builds on them,

polemicalizes with them, or simply presumes that they are already known to the listener)” (*Speech Genres* 69).¹¹

According to Bakhtin, a simple dialogue between two people at a particular time and place is an example of a primary utterance. However, utterances can range from just such a simple exchange to hugely complex, multi-volume novels or other literary and artistic forms of communication. Bakhtin explains that “The novel as a whole is an utterance just as rejoinders in everyday dialogue or private letters are [...] but unlike these, the novel is a secondary (complex) utterance” (*Speech Genres* 62). Secondary speech genres such as the novel are built up of primary speech genres which construct the utterance. Like an utterance in a simple dialogue, each work forms a link in an ongoing chain of speech or network of communication. According to Bakhtin, “Like the rejoinder in a dialogue, [the work] is related to other work-utterances: both those to which it responds and those that respond to it. At the same time, [...] it is separated from them by the absolute boundaries created by a change of speaking subjects” (*Speech Genres* 76). All our utterances, including the utterance of a novel or other creative work, are “filled with others’ words, varying degrees of ‘our-own-ness,’ varying degrees of awareness and detachment. These words of others carry with them their own expression, their own evaluative tone, which we assimilate, rework, and re-accentuate” (*Speech Genres* 89). In my analysis of Barker’s trilogy I address dialogism in this sense. How does the work, as an utterance, respond to preceding utterances – earlier literary and historical accounts of the Great War – and what active responsive understanding does it evoke?

However, the analysis of discourse is also concerned with the interactive or dialogic properties of communication both within and between utterances. An analysis must also address the simpler, primary speeches that construct the work as a whole. According to Bakhtin, “The vast majority of literary genres are secondary, complex genres composed of various transformed primary genres [...] As a rule, these secondary genres of complex cultural communication *play out* various forms of primary speech communication” (*Speech Genres* 98; italics in original). He goes on to explain that novels are typically dialogic (or polyphonic) when characters are allowed to speak in their

¹¹ Steinglass explains Bakhtin’s idea of the utterance as follows: “Bakhtin argues that every utterance – a wink, a book, a painting – is intended for a particular audience and therefore part of an ongoing dialogue, a shared social context” (“International”). He goes on to argue that this is the gist of Bakhtin’s argument with formalism and structuralism: “An utterance cannot be understood only with reference to its structure; it must be seen in the context of other utterances to which it responds” (“International”). Since I am using a Bakhtinian approach, I will draw on a number of different dialogical contexts to supplement my close reading of the trilogy.

own independent voices. In Bakhtin's words, we get "one point of view opposed to another, one evaluation opposed to another, one accent opposed to another" (*The Dialogic* 314). Consequently,

This interaction, this dialogic tension between two languages and two belief systems, permits authorial intentions to be realized in such a way that we can acutely sense their presence at every point in the work. The author is not to be found in the language of the narrator, nor in the normal literary language to which the story opposes itself [...] but rather, the author utilizes now one language, now another, in order to avoid giving himself up wholly to either of them; he makes use of this verbal give-and-take, this dialogue of languages at every point in his work, in order that he himself might remain as it were neutral with regard to language, a third party in a quarrel between two people (although he might be a *biased* third party). (*The Dialogic* 314; italics in original)

As we can see, Bakhtin's notion of dialogue establishes a very complex set of relationships between the author, narrator, and characters in a novel. Among other things, authorial intentions play a role in the production of meaning. Unlike the poststructuralists, Bakhtin does not declare the "death of the author", but neither does he give the author an absolute or authoritative position. The author's voice is just one of a plurality of voices in the dialogic novel. Furthermore, because novels are interactive links of communication with both other texts and the world they are also embedded in philosophical, economic, social and political contexts that produce meaning in the text. And as Steinglass observes, the interactive quality of dialogue means that the meaning of each statement and each utterance is transformed as it passes from one dialogic context to another ("International").

Novels which are highly dialogical, then, avoid the hierarchical organization of discourses; they thus work against totalizing or monologic accounts; there is no authoritative centre that produces one single meaning or interpretation. Barker's narrative includes many different voices. As well as those of career officers and others who saw themselves as fighting the Great War for Civilization, we hear the heroic, but disillusioned voices of characters based on the war poets, who along with many other combatants gave Britain today's received, literary version of the war as experienced by the cultural elite. In addition, we are introduced to accounts of the war which are taken from the medical and psychological literature of the day through a number of other characters. These historical voices have been heard before, but here they are supplemented by and compete with many other voices. We hear the stories of working-class men and women, pacifists, homosexuals, and other previously

marginalized groups. All of these voices are at times inscribed with present-day accents or concerns; they participate in diachronic discourse and interactive dialogue.

As Peter Hitchcock has observed, dialogic narratives should not simply be brushed off as more democratic or parliamentary forms of narrative, but should be seen as a form of resistance, dissent and struggle. He explains that Bakhtin's concept of polyphony does not create harmony, but dissonance. Analyzing social language will thus involve analyzing social struggle. In fact, "The more meaning is stabilized or centralized in the voices of the few, the more it becomes centripetal or monological in Bakhtin's conception", and furthermore, "The more dispersed, the more open linguistic exchange; the more the centrifugal impulse of language is emphasized, the more dialogical it becomes" (Hitchcock, *Dialogics* 5). For Hitchcock, Barker's earlier novels show "how storytelling itself constitutes a significant resistance ritual to history" (xviii).¹² Furthermore, "the continual contestation of meaning between participants or the performative attitudes of intersubjective exchange is at least partly what Bakhtin means by the dialogic" (Hitchcock, *Dialogics* 60). Dialogic narratives work against monolithic or totalizing explanations of history, and history thus becomes a matter of interpretation, not facts.¹³ I believe Hitchcock's view of dialogism also applies to the trilogy; there are many instances where voices challenge or resist monological versions of the war experience.

Barker's narrative approach is dialogic because she represents a multi-layered spectrum of possible views of trauma, class, gender and psychology. Some of these perspectives have formerly been disregarded or suppressed. Others reflect Barker's contemporary society and its attitudes; they have a retrospective quality. Due to her use of free indirect discourse, the voice of the narrator is often merged with the voices of the different characters, making it difficult to discern any monolithic or hierarchical organization of the discourses or dialogues. The trilogy takes previous historical and literary accounts of the Great War as its point of departure; it agrees with these versions on many points, but it also supplements them with oppositional or marginalized accounts. Furthermore, the narrative carries on an intertextual

¹² Hitchcock discusses the dialogic quality of Barker's writing style in her early work in *Dialogics of the Oppressed*. Margaretta Jolly has also offered Bakhtinian readings of Barker's work, connecting them to Bakhtin's concept of the carnivalesque.

¹³ Monteith argues that Barker's novels "are never totalizing accounts" and this is particularly obvious in the trilogy where Barker "explores the confluence of history and fiction, purposefully interleaving one with the other in a way that animates the former and politicizes the latter" (*Pat Barker* 108). It is the dialogic quality of Barker's writing that opens up for a conversation between different epochs.

dialogue with the canonized works of the Great War¹⁴ and other texts, and finally, it makes the dialogues between multiple pasts and presents audible. As Bakhtin explains:

Novelistic dialogue is pregnant with an endless multitude of dialogic confrontations [...] A dialogue of languages is a dialogue of social forces perceived not only in their static co-existence, but also as a dialogue of different times, epochs and days, a dialogue that is forever dying, living, being born: coexistence and becoming are here fused into an indissoluble concrete unity that is contradictory, multi-speeched and heterogeneous. (*The Dialogic* 365)

Raymond Williams introduces an analogous way of thinking about the dynamic social processes within cultures which illuminates what Bakhtin says about the coexistence of dialogues on different levels. Williams proposes the categories of residual, dominant, and emergent cultural processes. According to Williams, at any given moment in the process of culture there is a dominant culture, a culture emerging, and one that has passed but still leaves its residual marks on the current forms of culture (Williams 458-61). As in Foucault's idea of diverging strands of discourse, and Bakhtin's ideas of coexistence and becoming, these time categories overlap and exist simultaneously within cultures.

As I have indicated, I have chosen to focus on trauma, class, gender and psychology in this thesis. Thus, whereas the narrative unfolds chronologically and can be located within the period of the Great War, my focus is on diachronic discourses. They are not representative of one moment in history but involve changes and transformations in patterns of cultural experience through time. Within discourses, the past and the present are multiple and unstable. The Great War affected the discursive formations of trauma, class, gender and psychology in various ways, and the trilogy includes accounts of the discourses as they existed prior to, during and long after the war. There are thus temporal disjunctions in the narrative; it activates a network of discursive formations from different times and puts them into dialogue. Analysing discourses in the trilogy involves both close reading and contextualization on different levels. My analysis will shed light on the dialogic exchange between characters and ideas in the trilogy, but will also focus on

¹⁴ Michael Holquist points out that according to Bakhtin, "Canonization is that process that blurs heteroglossia, that is, that facilitates a naive, single-voiced reading. It is no accident that the novel – that heteroglot genre – has no canon; it is, however, like all artistic genres subject to the pressures of canonization, which on a primitive level is merely the compulsion to repeat" (Holquist in Bakhtin, *The Dialogic* 425). While repeating historical narratives, Barker expands and transforms them to accommodate new understanding and new knowledge.

changing accounts of the war through time and transformations within the discourses in question as contexts for Barker's narrative. As previously indicated, this focus will reveal a number of important intertexts ranging from biblical texts, Greek mythology, the Great War Canon and up to post-World War Two texts. Furthermore, it will enable me to relate the trilogy to social debates in Britain during the last two decades of the twentieth century. Before moving on to these dialogical contexts, I will give a brief overview of the trilogy as a point of departure for my analysis.

Overview of the Trilogy

The first volume of the trilogy, *Regeneration*, was published in 1991. The initial setting is a war hospital located outside Edinburgh; the year is 1917. Dr. William H. R. Rivers and other military doctors are treating officers for shell shock, and the setting and situation set the stage for the major thematic concerns of the trilogy as a whole. A central relationship in this volume is that between Dr. Rivers and the war poet and army officer Siegfried Sassoon, both characters based on historical figures around whom Barker constructs her fictional account of actual events. Sassoon has been sent to the war hospital to tone down the publicity surrounding his declaration against the war. The military is intent upon silencing Sassoon's protest and Rivers is charged with persuading his patient to recant on his declaration; in this sense he too intends to silence Sassoon's protest. Ironically, Rivers is also charged with *restoring* the speech of other patients suffering from mutism, stammering, and other psychosomatic symptoms, enabling them to return to active duty. As Brannigan points out, the mouth is thus a central trope in this volume; it functions as an instrument of both control and resistance ("History and Haunting" 106). The soldiers who cannot speak are also protesting, but through silence. Another central image in this volume is that of the scientific nerve regeneration experiment carried out by Dr. Rivers and his colleague Dr. Henry Head, which I will discuss in detail in Chapter Two.

The focus on psychosomatic symptoms in this volume ties in with a central academic intertext, Elaine Showalter's *The Female Malady* (1985), which Barker acknowledges in her author's note at the end of the book, along with Eric J. Leed's *No Man's Land: Combat and Identity in World War I* (1979). Showalter discusses the historical relationship between Sassoon and Rivers in her study, which traces the aetiology and history of hysteria. She argues that before the work of Sigmund Freud and Jean-Martin Charcot, hysterical symptoms were considered to be a "female malady". The word hysteria itself

comes from the Greek “hysterā”, or uterus, and hysterical symptoms were believed to be caused by a “wandering or rising womb”. Thus it was a condition seen as peculiar to women (Showalter, *The Female* 129-30). The work of Freud and Charcot, and the high incidence of hysterical symptoms in shell-shocked soldiers, however, triggered new discursive formations of mental illness. In *Regeneration*, the dialogue with this text and related texts on trauma and shell shock is expressed in the way the masculine is feminized and the feminine is masculinized, subverting the dominant discourse of trauma at the beginning of the war. This volume ends when Sassoon decides to return to active duty.

In *The Eye in the Door* (1993), according to Brannigan, the eye replaces the mouth as instrument of control and resistance and the Panopticon becomes this novel’s dominant image (“History and Haunting” 109). Barker shifts the focus from the relationship between Sassoon and Rivers to that between the officer Billy Prior, who has no historical antecedent, and Rivers. Although Prior has been discharged from Craiglockhart and is now working at the Ministry of Munitions, he is far from recovered from the psychological effects of shell shock. In fact his condition degenerates and he experiences fugue states. This problem is exacerbated because his work involves infiltrating groups of pacifists and strike organizers. Some of the members of these groups are acquaintances and friends from the working-class neighbourhood where he grew up. Keeping them under surveillance challenges his loyalties and increases his internal conflicts. These conflicts culminate in the psychological splitting of his personality and are accompanied by the activation of Robert L. Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* as intertext.

As the image of the Panopticon suggests, this volume of the trilogy develops into a Foucauldian social analysis. It explores how all forms of protest, non-conformity and “deviance” were perceived as threats and therefore kept under strict surveillance or punished by those in power. It also illustrates how dominant ideologies come to be internalized and how those who resist internalizing the norms are policed and coerced into conformity. *The Eye in the Door* differs from many of the received literary versions of the war due to the extent to which it gives voice to formerly marginalized figures: e.g., pacifists, women and homosexuals.

The final volume of the trilogy, *The Ghost Road* (1995), is divided primarily between the account of Prior’s return to the western front and Rivers’ reminiscences about his anthropological research in Melanesia. Here Rivers returns to his speculations about the relationship between the rational and the irrational, which is developed as the binary relationship between the *epicritic* and

the *protopathic* in the first volume in connection with the nerve regeneration experiment. According to Brannigan, in the trilogy as a whole, and in my opinion, in this volume in particular, Barker represents a “crisis in European modernity through tropes of displacement and temporal disjunction” (“History and Haunting” 113). This crisis illustrates a conflict between science, or rational thinking and ethics, which involves both faith and irrationality. I see the image of the ghost, and all images of haunting in the trilogy as expressions of the irrational aspects of life that science cannot encompass or explain. As the trilogy nears its conclusion, psychoanalysis is shown to be a “science” which tries to grapple with or dismiss the irrational; the success of this project proves dubious. A major relationship in *The Ghost Road* which develops the tropes of ghosts and haunting is that between Rivers and the Melanesian “witchdoctor” Njiru. The juxtaposition of the Great War with the head-hunting wars of Melanesia probes – and leaves open – the cross-cultural and trans-historical meanings of war.

Before concluding this section I would like to make a few observations on developments in the trilogy as a whole, drawing again on Bakhtin. As I have argued, Barker’s trilogy is highly dialogic, allowing a number of voices and ideological standpoints to be heard. Bakhtin reminds us that authorial intentions will also be voiced, refracted through the various voices of a narrative: “the refraction may be at times greater, at times lesser, and in some aspects of language there may be an almost complete fusion of voices” (*The Dialogic* 315). On this basis, I will occasionally draw on Barker’s statements in interviews on her intentions regarding the trilogy, considering her comments to be part of the interactive chain of communication.

In an interview with Alida Becker, Barker discusses the feminist perspective of her earlier novels and her new interest in male protagonists in the trilogy. In this connection she says: “Women were also central to the Regeneration books, even though they didn’t figure largely in them. *They are, together with Rivers, a sort of moral center*” (qtd. in Becker; my emphasis). The allocation of Rivers and the female characters as a “sort of moral centre” means that Barker sees these characters as playing important ideological roles in the trilogy.¹⁵ However, Peter Barham remarks in his psychological study of shell shock, *Forgotten Lunatics of the Great War* (2004) that “the historical Rivers’s convictions ran the other way and Pat Barker has infused the fictional Rivers in the moral imagination of her own gender and generation” (388, note 3). Those

¹⁵ Monteith also describes Rivers as the “psychological glue that holds Barker’s characters together” (“We will remember” 62). Furthermore, she sees Sarah Lumb and her friends as strategically and symbolically important: “They stand, like Rivers, as representatives of reasonable thinking” (63).

familiar with Richard Slobodin's biography of Rivers and with Rivers' psychological and anthropological writing can see that the fictional Rivers is skilfully modelled on the historical Rivers, but at times exceeds the confines of his historical context. In the trilogy, the dialogical interactions between Rivers and soldiers suffering from shell shock broach complicated questions on masculinity, gender, sexuality, religion and authoritarian power structures within British society before, during and after the Great War. His patients, especially Billy Prior and Siegfried Sassoon, are the catalysts of new hypotheses, reasoning and conclusions that are grounded in retrospective "feminist" awareness.

In the trilogy, Rivers is presented both as a marginalized and an authoritative character. He is marginal in his day due to his homosexuality and the fact that he is a non-combatant. Furthermore, his initial pro-war attitude as the novel opens make him seem marginal to many readers today who have e.g., internalized the anti-war views of most of the war poets and the later critics who have commented on their work. However, his position as a military doctor and his initial pro-war stance also make him an authoritative voice in the timeframe of the Great War. As the trilogy progresses, Rivers' interactions with patients, peers and friends challenge some mainstream ideologies. In many ways Barker's Rivers resembles a "deconstructionist", practicing the "hermeneutics of suspicion".¹⁶ He shows that ideas such as duty and patriotism, believed to be clear and pure, prove, on closer inspection, to be built upon old myths about the nature of reality. By penetrating official rhetoric, he turns old myths upside down and subverts the language of power. Likewise, the trilogy invites us to take a new look at the Great War and re-think the discourses under question.

In the course of the trilogy Rivers deconstructs the binary opposition between masculinity/femininity to reveal how these categories are socially constructed. He deconstructs his society's religion and exposes it as a pillar of authoritarian social control. He conveys present-day feminist views on shell shock and gender roles and his research in Melanesia provides a basis which allows him to deconstruct anthropology as the superimposition of the observer's view on the observed. Indeed, he questions the very grounds he stands upon as a psychologist when he understands that psychoanalysis can be a master narrative intent on enforcing social conformity. In short, through defamiliarization his views help us reconsider aspects of trauma, class, gender, and psychology that have been taken for granted. In the same fashion, Prior's

¹⁶ Deconstruction may be described as a method of critiquing western philosophy, showing that philosophical and literary texts often contain self-contradiction, ambiguity and gaps. The method can be a way of exposing the inherited power structures embedded in language. The strategy of deconstruction is associated with the thinking of Jacques Derrida and other postmodernists. See e.g., Derrida's "The Principle of Reason" for a fuller description of the concept.

marginalised working-class view and bisexual behaviour interrogate previous views of the war and the discourses in focus.

The female characters in the trilogy, with few exceptions, are working class. Barker has thus chosen to foreground their experience and to exclude the experiences of women from other class backgrounds.¹⁷ Women as a group have historically been marginalized in patriarchal society although the stories of some middle- and upper-class women's war experiences have been included in the historical record or documented in literature.¹⁸ Claire Tylee observes that when it comes to women's first-hand accounts and imaginative responses to the Great War, most were written by middle-class women. The main class difference these women were aware of was not between themselves and working-class women, but between "the 'Lady' of the upper-middle class, and the educated 'New Woman'" (Tylee, *The Great War* 16). Working-class women's experiences have thus previously not been given voice to the same extent; in the trilogy Barker dialogizes their experiences as well. Some of them are munitionettes in war factories. Others are involved in pacifist resistance movements. Thus the story of working-class women in the trilogy is not monologic; they participate in dialogues with each other and contest and/or ridicule the attitudes and beliefs of their society and their outsider status adds new dimensions to the stories of the war.

The overview and exemplifications of the plurality of voices in the trilogy above form a basis for the discussion of discourses and dialogism in the following chapters. In the final section below I give an overview of the major concerns of those chapters.

Chapter Overview

Bakhtin's notion of dialogue calls for the incorporation of a broad range of social and historical contexts in the interpretation of texts. Chapter One will therefore focus on a number of historical and critical contexts in relation to the trilogy. I will begin by discussing the historical approach of the Cultural Materialists and New Historicists as part of my theoretical grounding since I share a number of their reading and interpretive strategies. During the last

¹⁷ Exceptions are references to Lady Ottoline Morell and the inclusion of Ruth Head, a minor, middle-class character. Likewise, the middle-class Charles Manning at several points tells Rivers what his wife Jane thinks about current issues. Her views coincide with the views of present-day feminists.

¹⁸ E.g., Vera Brittain's *Testament of Youth* describes the experiences of a middle-class VAD, Helen Zenna Smith's *"Not so quiet": Stepdaughters of War* describes the experiences of an upper-class female ambulance driver on the Western Front, Rebecca West's *The Return of the Soldier* is about a shell-shocked soldier who returns to his family of upper-class women, and May W. Cannan's autobiography *Grey Ghosts and Voices* describes the work she did organizing hospitals in England and working as a secretary for British Intelligence in Paris.

decades of the twentieth century, received versions of Great War history were being questioned in numerous academic and literary works. Re-conceiving the history and literature of the war was thus topical when Barker was writing the trilogy. In the second section of Chapter One I will therefore trace transformations in consecutive configurations of Great War history. Thirdly, I will discuss the development and reception of the literary War Canon to shed light on the intertextual relationship between earlier literature and Barker's trilogy. I will conclude Chapter One by reviewing previous criticism of the trilogy as a present-day dialogical context, illustrating the interactive response that Barker's work has elicited.

Chapter Two will focus on trauma. There is a central focus on shell shock and the trauma of war throughout the trilogy. During the 1980s and 1990s, the concept of *cultural trauma* engaged historians. This notion has substantially influenced Barker's rendition of history in the trilogy; hence a central focus of the chapter will be the trope of regeneration, a trope which engages changing attitudes toward religious faith, patriarchy and generational conflict. The trope also activates a number of biblical, mythical, and canonical intertexts that help to explain the establishment of the Great War as a founding or cultural trauma in Britain. The cross-cultural focus of the trilogy developed in the Melanesian subtext also illustrates how imperialist ideology was undermined, exacerbating the cultural trauma.

The discourse of class is taken up in Chapter Three. During the Great War official propaganda attempted to downplay class conflicts and Barker thematizes this tendency in the trilogy. Mobilization had the effect of temporarily side-tracking the growing class conflicts and worker unrest of the day, and one of the myths of the Great War was that it united all the social classes throughout its duration in the effort to win the war (Brannigan, "History and Haunting" 96-97). However, when the trilogy opens in 1917, the temporary truce between the classes has broken down. Barker explicitly emphasizes the class conflicts that continued to exist during the Great War in spite of nationalistic rhetoric, thus problematizing the myth of social class unity. The diachronic nature of the discourse of class comes to the fore especially when we look at the intertexts related to class that Barker's narrative activates. These are primarily connected to Prior, who will therefore be central in my analysis of the discourse of class. The narrative also questions stereotypical, homogenizing literary representations of the working class. Barker's awareness of working-class conditions influences the way she portrays the relationships between different social classes in all of her fiction. The characters in the trilogy,

however, are from more varied social backgrounds than those in Barker's earlier fiction and allow her to work with the discourse of class in new ways.

Barker has been concerned with questions of gender and sexuality in all of her work. Her focus on transgressive sexuality in the trilogy exposes the hegemonic workings of compulsory heterosexuality and critiques patriarchal society. In Chapter Four I will treat gender roles and representations of sexuality in the trilogy. Barker draws indirectly on the on-going debates of the women's and gay liberation movements of the 1980s and 1990s; the narrative is deeply concerned with how gender roles are constructed and with issues of masculinities in particular. Changing family relationships and the rising threat of AIDS were causing concern in Britain and there was a return to "family values" in the rhetoric of both right and left wing politics when Barker was writing the trilogy. Barker's thematization of gender is interesting for a number of reasons; she highlights how present-day predicaments about gender/sex systems affect the way we engender stories of the past and the trilogy historicizes and makes visible the ideological matrices that shape today's discourses on gender.

Barker's narrative incorporates changing aspects of the public debates on psychology from the whole twentieth century. In Chapter Five I will show how her text draws on these debates and how it is situated within the changing historical contexts of trauma theory. The psychiatric label "Post Traumatic Stress Disorder" (PTSD) was established in the 1980s and was topical in accounting for the many suicides among veterans of the 1981-82 Falklands War, and in the controversy over the government's refusal to recognize what was termed the Gulf War Syndrome when Barker was writing the trilogy. These contemporary issues link up with her treatment of "shell shock", psychology in general, and psychoanalysis in particular in the trilogy. The discourse of psychology seems particularly important in the trilogy; the site of most of the action in the first volume, as I have noted, is a military hospital for soldiers suffering from psychiatric breakdown. Furthermore, many of the major conflicts and interactions between the characters are rooted in patient-psychologist relationships. The centrality of psychiatric institutions and psychological treatment lies at the heart of Barker's re-accentuation of the past; they form the node where all three discourses meet. For this reason, I will revisit the discourses of class and gender in the final chapter, showing how they permeate the discourse of psychology in the trilogy. Finally, I will focus on the gaze of the psychologist, relating it to Barker's Foucauldian social analysis.

In my concluding remarks, I will sum up my findings, explaining how the intertexts I discuss reaccentuate stories about the Great War. The

trilogy does not relate to the past as a kind of exotic other; instead of speaking *about* the dead, we have conversations *with* them. Barker *rewrites* “the expected World War I elegy” rather than *repeating* it (Lanone 259). Thematically, trauma, class, gender and psychology allow Barker to engage with both received and contemporary versions of the past. In this way the ongoing dialogue between multiple versions of the past and present becomes audible. Received versions of history are confirmed, expanded on and sometimes questioned. The Great War is regenerated and transformed as it passes from one dialogic context to another.

In an interview with Wera Reusch, Barker explains that the historical novel can be a “backdoor into the present” and that “you can sometimes deal with contemporary dilemmas in a way people are more open to because it is presented in this unfamiliar guys [sic]”. This means that “they don’t automatically know what they think about it, whereas if you are writing about a contemporary issue on the nose, sometimes all you do is activate peoples [sic] prejudices” (qtd. in Reusch). Barker’s focus on modern-day preoccupations helps readers recognize ways in which the past is always appropriated and re-written to illuminate the present. Readers may become conscious of the social assumptions that structure their own world when they are projected onto the past, and thus be able to reflect on the “naturalness” or “givenness” of these assumptions. The questions that Barker’s narrative formulates also become highly engaging in the form of collective memories returning to haunt British society. In another interview with Mark Sinker, however, Barker emphasizes that she also wanted to present the views of the war that actually existed in 1917. She says of the character Rivers, for example,

‘I think I was constantly saying, look there was a pro-war point of view. It’s so easy for us to think that Sassoon and Owen were right, because theirs has become the dominant view of the First World War. But there you are, the German army is in the middle of France, what are you going to do about it? You can’t just brush it aside. So I was certainly very keen in the novel *and* the film to have Rivers’ point of view put properly.’ (qtd. in Sinker 24)

These two quotes highlight the dialogic quality of Barker’s writing and demonstrate how the Great War becomes a site of reciprocal haunting in the trilogy. In the next chapter I will focus on a number of historical, social and critical contexts that are essential in my analysis of the trilogy.

CHAPTER ONE

Historical and Critical Contexts

The orthodox historical imagination fails to acknowledge that versions of the past are always recreated for the here and now, are always politically inflected, partial, and interested. (Nicholas Thomas 298)

Throughout her career, Pat Barker's fiction has demonstrated a recurrent concern with historical and historiographical questions; as Brannigan points out, "[t]he meanings of the past, and its implications for contemporary society are central concerns in all her novels" (*Pat Barker* 79).¹⁹ *The Regeneration Trilogy*, as I have argued, is an utterance in the ongoing dialogue about the history of the Great War. It is a response to previous utterances: historiographical accounts and debates, literary narratives, and the critical responses these utterances have elicited. Barker's trilogy joins the dialogue in various ways; it emulates and confirms certain previous utterances, it re-accentuates and supplements others, and in some cases it contests earlier versions of the history of the Great War. The trilogy itself has in turn evoked rejoinders in reviews, criticism and conference papers.

In this chapter I focus on a number of dialogic contexts that are important in my interpretation of the trilogy. I begin by discussing my theoretical approach to the subject of history in relation to the trilogy, before outlining various discursive formations of Great War history that are relevant for my analysis. Secondly, I describe the development and reception of the literary War Canon, pointing out a number of ways in which the trilogy engages dialogically with this context. Finally, I address a present-day context – the critical reception of the trilogy – by reviewing previous criticism.

History as Dialogical Context

In this thesis, I draw on the mode of critical/historical analysis pursued by Cultural Materialists and New Historicists, building on Foucault's theories of discourse, power and knowledge. These critics have questioned the traditional division between history and literature. They argue that history, like literature, is a form of narrative. The "emplotment" of this narrative involves the use of rhetorical tropes and will always be positioned within a genre of historical

¹⁹ Great War history has been particularly important in her work; it is central in *Liza's England*, *Another World* and in *Life Class*, as well as in the trilogy.

enquiry.²⁰ This re-conception of history “abandons any notions of history as direct mimesis, any belief in history as a mere imitation of events in the world – history as a reflection of an activity happening ‘out there’” (Davis and Schliefer 439). History is not what happened; it is the stories that are told about what happened. We only have access to the most basic facts of history, and the way these facts are interpreted and contextualized determines which stories will be told and which will be left out. There can thus be no adequate, totalizing explanation of the past.²¹ Because they believe all history is a matter of interpretation, Cultural Materialists and New Historicists are not as concerned about whether an account is factual – instead they want to discover what the account reveals about the political agendas and ideological conflicts of the culture that produced and read the account. From this perspective, Barker’s trilogy itself functions as a historical text which embodies conflicting discourses in her own culture during the last decades of the twentieth century. These discourses in turn interact with the historical discourses which circulated in earlier periods and can be seen as areas of particularly unstable ground or areas of negotiation and resistance. A critical analysis of these discourses involves going beyond the text itself to explore the social factors surrounding it. The text is influenced by these factors, and in turn influences and changes historical discourse itself through its reception and interpretation.²²

Whereas time is often represented as chronological in historical scholarship, in Barker’s trilogy, though the narrative unfolds chronologically, the discourse of history is diachronic; it illustrates continuing transformations in terms of who speaks about history, which subjects are included in the discourse, and what it is permissible to speak about through time. As Foucault indicates, discourses are rooted in social institutions and play a key role in relations of power. However, over time, power circulates – new speakers are heard – leading to new discursive formations. The trilogy gives voice to a mix of speakers who address residual, dominant and emergent judgements of the

²⁰ See for example Hayden White’s discussion of emplotment and the use of tropes and genres in the writing of history in *Figural Realism* (19-24).

²¹ Monteith notes that Barker read International History for her degree and later taught within this field. Her expertise in the field of economic and social history and her awareness of the uses of history in fiction mean that “her narrative techniques ensure that the mass destruction of the First World War is not lost to background and her poststructuralist intermeshing of the historical with the fictional ensures that imagined characters and historical figures originate out of the conditions of history” (*Pat Barker* 108).

²² Anne Whitehead, for example, observes that Barker’s narrative has already reshaped the reading of the past: “Miranda Seymour, in writing her 1995 biography of Robert Graves: *Life on the Edge*, based her portrayal of the character of Rivers on Barker’s fictional account” (“Open” 215). Whitehead argues that Barker’s construct was so powerful that Seymour revised her view of Rivers’ impact on Graves as a poet and concludes: “The power of the fictional narrative to transform and reconfigure the past is in evidence here” (215).

Great War, not only during the time period of the war itself, but also from the remaining decades of the twentieth century. It presents the meaning-making process as an open-ended social dialogue; strikingly different narratives attempt to make sense of the Great War. As I will discuss, Barker engages with a number of the narratives, e.g., both traditional and modernist historical discourses. According to Jay Winter, the former reflect the unalloyed patriotic feelings that people had in 1914 whereas the latter focus on the disillusionment with and rejection of traditional values and patriotic certainties that developed during and after the war (*Sites* 2-3). An overview of changing historical interpretations of the war can be helpful in exploring how Barker's narrative dialogically engages with both historical and contemporary attitudes toward the Great War.

Discursive Formations of Great War History

The trilogy opens in 1917 when the first patriotic fervour surrounding the war has ebbed out, and disillusionment is spreading. Some characters nevertheless continue to support the war effort in spite of their growing horror at what is going on. Ralph Anderson, Sassoon's fellow patient at Craiglockhart, for example, finds Sassoon's declaration against the war arrogant, especially "its totally outrageous assumption that everybody who disagreed with him was 'callous'. Do you think I'm callous? he wanted to ask. Do you think *Rivers* is callous?" (RT 79) Even towards the end of the trilogy, back at the front during the last weeks of the war, the officer Matthew Hallet continues – until his skull, eye and jaw are blown away – to support the war: "We *are* fighting for the legitimate interests of our own country. We *are* fighting in defence of Belgian neutrality. We *are* fighting for French independence. *We* aren't in Germany. They *are* in France" (RT 513-14). These traditional, patriotic attitudes, however, seem to be undermined in the trilogy by explicit statements and events as well as by the cynical attitudes of a large number of the other characters. Soldiers who have seen action at the front have lost their initial enthusiasm and will to fight and the divisions between people who have battlefield experience and those on the home front are growing noticeably wider. Furthermore, those characters who express patriotic attitudes are generally denigrated as lacking in intellect or reason; Hallet for example had been educated "to think as little as possible" (RT 513) and his father, a military man, continues to support the war effort even as he witnesses his son's horrible, drawn-out death from his wounds.

Just as perceptions of the war changed while it was going on, the way the war has been perceived has undergone successive transformations in its aftermath. Tracing different attitudes towards the Great War and how its history has been constructed at different times and by different nations, Jay Winter and Antoine Prost observe that history is in effect “a work in progress” (13). They postulate three successive configurations of history as regards the war. The first configuration was mainly concerned with military and diplomatic issues and there was a merging of actors, witnesses and historians. This configuration saw the war “from above”, excluding actual combatants.

The second configuration reversed the perspective of the first, substituting the point of view of soldiers and civilians for that of generals and diplomats. It was centred on social history and class issues and was complicated by the passage of time and the experience of World War II. It would take over ten years after the war had ended before the first soldiers’ stories were heard; the accounts of officers first appeared during the war books boom, which I will discuss in more detail below. Many of these combatants wrote with the intention of countering “official” histories and tearing down notions of honour and glory.²³ However, accounts of men in the ranks were not available until much later. In Britain it was not until 1972 that the Imperial War Museum started a project which aimed to collect the stories of working-class men and women during the Great War.²⁴ From the 1960s and on the question of similarities and differences between the two world wars became increasingly central matters. In France in the 1970s, the era of the witness began, mainly in connection with the traumas of the Second World War, and these concerns also spread to studies of trauma in relation to historical studies of the Great War in all the European countries.

Then, towards the end of the 1980s there was a new shift of emphasis, a third configuration – the cultural turn – in which the cultural aspects of history became central. There was a de-legitimization of the Marxist paradigm, with its focus on class and material concerns. The fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union led to a de-materialization of historical study. The end of the twentieth century and the end of the millennium led to a strong engagement with the subject of memory which

²³ Martin Löschnigg, however, notes that the demythologizing of the war inherent in these first-hand accounts paradoxically led to the creation of new myths (“...the novelist’s” 218), especially through the canonical war poets. As I will discuss, Barker contests the public image of the war poets created at this time and imagines some aspects of their stories and personalities that have been suppressed in their public personae.

²⁴ A number of books came out of this project and were published in the 1970s and 1980s: e.g., William Moore’s *The Thin Yellow Line* (1974), Malcolm Brown’s *Tommy Goes to War* (1978), and Max Arthur’s (ed.) *Forgotten Voices of the Great War* (1988).

created a sense of duty to remember the collective past. In Britain there was hectic activity; new exhibitions were opened and museums were constructed. Educational initiatives were launched to ensure that the war would not be forgotten as the last survivors died. Winter and Prost say this evolution led the public to consider the Great War as part of their patrimony, remaining very much alive because “it is also present in family memory, and in the interest of families in reading about the war, in seeing its history told on television and in films, and in visiting museums and battlefield sites” (28).

The development that Winter and Prost delineate illustrates the different discursive formations of Great War history since the war ended. Shifts in frameworks of thought and analysis have modified interpretations of the war:

During the interwar period, this conflict was seen as the last war; later on it became for some the first episode of a new Thirty Years War. Now it appears as the very foundation of a short, barbaric twentieth century, and those who survey this war have in mind both the monstrous Nazi genocide against the Jews and the enormity of Stalin’s crimes. Was it not the case that the war of 1914-18 was the first experiment in totalitarian war and mass death? In the interwar years, historians could not pose this question; now historians cannot avoid posing it. It is impossible to provide an answer to it through the history of battles, diplomatic history, or even social history. (Winter and Prost 29)

As these historians observe, historical studies do not simply repeat each other; instead they pose new questions and provide new answers for different audiences in different contexts.²⁵

When Barker was writing the trilogy in the 1990s there was a further reorientation of historical thinking about war in general; historians were now concerned with the historical anthropology of war (Winter and Prost 163). Here the term “war culture”, or “culture de guerre” has cropped up, “alluding to the mental furniture men and women draw on to make sense of their world

²⁵ It is interesting to note in this connection how Barker returns to this aspect of history in later novels. In *Another World*, for example, the historian Helen interviews Geordie Lucas about his Great War experience: “She tried to get Geordie to frame his war experience in terms of twentieth-century preoccupations. Gender. Definitions of masculinity. Homoeroticism. Homo-*what?* asked Geordie. Helen with her Oxford First. Geordie with his board-school education...” (83). Geordie was first allowed to speak about the horror of his war experience when he was an old man. His audience was not willing or ready to hear about this aspect of the war until then. Helen of course is interested in the same twentieth-century preoccupations that Barker takes up in the trilogy. However, these preoccupations seem irrelevant to Geordie. This intertextuality between Barker’s works suggests that she actually reflects upon criticism of her work and uses it to develop her themes in new novels. In her fiction, history is indeed a “work in progress”. Monteith et al. also note that “Barker shows that the ways in which we remember do not exist in a social vacuum. In *Another World* the 101-year-old veteran’s memory of the First World War is dictated by society and modified as ideological fashions change. Fiction which draws on the past is essentially paradoxical, simultaneously representing and rewriting history” (Monteith, Newman and Wheeler, 4).

at war” (Winter and Prost 164). The term is controversial, mainly because people object to its use in the singular and insist on its use in the plural – “cultures of war” – avoiding monolithic narratives and reflecting poststructuralist thinking in the avoidance of centres of power and grand narratives. The trilogy is indeed concerned with and in dialogue with all of these successive ways of thinking about the war. In the following section I will discuss *how* the trilogy engages with different discursive formations of history.

The Dialogue with History

In *Literature and Memory*, Peter Middleton and Tim Woods note that “[c]ontemporary writers rely increasingly on scenes of recollection, witness and anamnesis to represent historicism in action – memory is assumed to be the making of history” (4-5). Postmodern writers are finding new ways of representing the past that integrate present-day understandings of memory, based on models of memory taken from both psychoanalysis (especially its theories of trauma) and cognitive psychology. These models of memory demonstrate “the complexity of the temporal and spatial locatability of the past” (9) and “have now become part of the ideology of history” (85).

In the trilogy, Middleton and Woods see that Barker uses the strategies of both autobiographical memory and traumatic memory. They explain that the former is typically linear; it is articulated through re-enactment in tangible locations of time and space and is deeply committed to the kind of realistic detail which convinces the reader that she is reliving the memory by reading the text (90). In contrast, trauma brings out the vicissitudes of memory. According to Middleton and Woods: “[t]rauma is assumed to be capable of standing for a non-linear relation to the past [...]” (103). This is because traumatic events are often temporally displaced; they are lived through, but only experienced belatedly due to the defence mechanism of repression.²⁶ Both these models of memory depend on the type of literary realism they are discussing and “the idea that the past is relivable in the form of vivid images and conversations located in time and space” (92). However, they go on to argue that Barker’s commitment to realistic detail is at times in tension with the “metamemory” of the trilogy: its thematic treatment of the theories and therapies of memory. The trilogy illustrates an intense awareness of late twentieth-century debates about memory, recovered memory and the history of research on memory which goes beyond its realistic framework. I see this

²⁶ Trauma will be central in Chapter Two where I will discuss the mechanisms of psychological trauma in general and the establishment of founding or cultural traumas in particular.

tension and the temporal displacements in the trilogy as not only pertaining to the thematization of memory and history, but also to the thematization of the discourses of class, gender and psychology. Furthermore, this tension and the appearance of anachronisms in the trilogy usually signal that a new intertext or dialogic context is being activated in the narrative.

The intertextuality that arises in the trilogy is a comment upon historical narratives in itself. The very fact, for example, that Barker has chosen to portray three of the most famous war poets as characters in the trilogy confirms that the trilogy is an ongoing dialogue with past versions of history. She obviously draws on war memoirs written by Siegfried Sassoon, Robert Graves, and Edmund Blunden, among others, in creating her fiction. These writers published their versions of the war ten years or more after it had ended, during the second configuration of Great War history that Winter and Prost describe, and their works comprise part of the literary war canon.

Because of its incorporation of different discursive formations of the war the trilogy has the quality of a palimpsest – Barker is “rewriting a past that was already rewritten” (Waugh 52). Discussing what he calls the “palimpsest imperative” in African American texts of the 1970s, Ashraf Rushdy explains that “[a] *palimpsest* is defined as either a parchment on which the original writing can be erased to provide a space for a second writing or a manuscript on which a later writing is written over an effaced earlier writing” (7).²⁷ Discussing a work in progress by Gail Jones where she uses the palimpsest as a literal figure, he points out that this conveys the idea of “having ‘new documents written over old ones,’ where sometimes the ‘old ones show through’” and “provides us with a fruitful metaphor for the intricate ways that contemporary lives and life stories are inscribed on parchments through which the slave past always shows” (8). We can thus speak of a kind of palimpsestic haunting in texts. In the trilogy, Barker’s contemporary consciousness also overwrites and re-accentuates the stories of the Great War. Earlier accounts are in a sense written over, but remain discernable. The image of the palimpsest is brought up at several points in the narrative. Prior, for example, thinks to himself: “The past is a palimpsest, [...] Early memories are always obscured by accumulations of later knowledge” (RT 264). In another scene, Rivers visits his

²⁷ Rushdy discusses a number of novels from the 1970s (e.g., Toni Morrison’s *BeLoved*) and argues that they tend to represent a contemporary subject whose present life is deeply affected by the past. These palimpsest narratives explore the primary issues of family and race and how these institutions were created and recreated by the generations of the past. Palimpsest narratives “constitute a response to those discourses exhibiting a historical amnesia about the enduring effects of past social systems” (33). In Barker’s narrative, in contrast, I am primarily interested in how contemporary preoccupations are projected onto or superimposed on narratives of the past.

patient Burns, who is staying in his parents' summer home by the sea. He sees Burns' collection of boyhood belongings in his bedroom – rocks, shells, boys' books, and children's games – and silently compares the room with a palimpsest indicative of personal history: "All these things must have been brought here, or collected here, summer by summer, and then outgrown, but never thrown away, so that the room had become a sort of palimpsest of the young life it contained" (RT 161). Just as the individual's memories are changed through experience, collective memory overwrites, changes, and supplements earlier versions of the past.

Another scene towards the end of the trilogy again brings out its palimpsestic quality. Prior and his troop are back at the front during the last weeks of the war. In quiet periods, they often sit and discuss the war and the politics that led up to it. One soldier, Potts, is angry with those who are making profits on the war and insists that it was "being fought to safeguard access to the oil-wells of Mesopotamia. It had nothing, absolutely *nothing* to do with Belgian neutrality, the rights of small nations or anything like that . . ." (RT 513). Prior rejects this hypothesis as a simple conspiracy theory and says that war is a "self-perpetuating system. Nobody benefits. Nobody's in control. Nobody knows how to stop" (513). These voices are hauntingly contemporary; similar arguments also circulated after the invasion of Kuwait and the ensuing Gulf War in 1991. We are reminded that the Great War was very much a colonial war; the wars at the end of the twentieth century illustrate the enduring afterlife of that war.

Brannigan mentions another example which illustrates the equivocal, palimpsestic quality of history in the trilogy. In a conversation between Wilfred Owen and Sassoon he notes that "Owen's experience of the war is filtered through its historical resonances, through notions of cyclical recurrence and repetition, while Sassoon sees the war through the postmodern lens of the future anterior" ("History and the Hauntological" 22). Owen says, "It's as if all other wars had somehow . . . distilled themselves into this war," and points out that the skulls buried in the walls of the trenches could have been the remains of ancient warriors rather than of comrades who had fallen in the early days of the Great War. Sassoon responds by sharing his own experience of temporal dislocation and says: "A hundred years from now they'll still be ploughing up skulls. I seemed to be in that time and looking back. I think I saw our ghosts" (RT 77). Sassoon's is a metafictional perspective, corresponding with the perspective of the reader. This seems to support Brannigan's point that in the trilogy, "history is experienced always as untimely,

as anachronistic. [...] time itself seems to become profoundly discontinuous and unstable. The war repeats itself in the time of other wars, churns up the dead of other centuries, and refuses to be contained in its present time” (22-23). It also supports my argument that the discourses in focus here are portrayed diachronically and dialogically.

Using the image of the palimpsest Barker draws attention to the layering effect of history, and like the African American writers of the 1970s makes the general political statement that historical events have enduring afterlives. As Rushdy points out, palimpsest narratives “generate different artistic and conceptual devices for making that point artistically” (6). Barker develops a palimpsest narrative that not only points to the enduring afterlife of the Great War in contemporary society, but also to how present-day understanding overwrites and changes our perception of the past. A closer look at the war canon itself reveals the perspective of combatants, approximately a decade after the war was over. Barker’s story is superimposed on their stories.

The Dialogue with the War Canon

The effort of historical memory lies in reconstruction: recording and interpreting fragments, and composing coherent narratives of past events. In the immediate aftermath of the Great War, there was a great need to justify the losses of the war. It had been “a war to end all wars”, and as Woodrow Wilson proclaimed, a war meant to “make the world safe for democracy.”²⁸ The survivors struggled to assimilate the traumatic events and losses into a normalized structure. Monuments, commemoration ceremonies and pilgrimages to the battlefields symbolically emphasized the necessity of sacrifice in gaining peace. However, there was also a ten-year, communal process in which the British, to a large extent, repressed the horrors of war and focused all their energy on returning life to “business as usual”. It was not until the late 1920s and early 1930s that the reticence about discussing the horrors of war and the war dead began to dissolve.

In the period from 1927 to 1933 there was a war books boom when most of the canonical war books were published.²⁹ Examples are Sassoon’s *Memoirs of a Foxhunting Man* (1928); Graves’s *Goodbye to All That* (1929); Edmund Blunden’s *Undertones of War* (1928); Frederic Manning’s *The*

²⁸ Wilson used this phrase in a speech on April 2, 1917 when he addressed the 65th American Congress on the need to join in the European war (Senate Document No. 5).

²⁹ Very few war books were published during the 1920s, and Leed interprets this as a sign of the repression of war experience. The 1920s were thus a “latency period”; the experience of war had been “too destructive of individual and collective selfhood [and] was ‘forgotten’ to be resurrected later in more ‘acceptable’ form” (Leed 191).

Middle Parts of Fortune (1929, now known as *Her Privates We*); Vera Brittain's *Testament of Youth* (1933) and Wilfred Owen's *Poems*, edited by Blunden (1930). These voices are now recognised as having defined the experience of the Great War (MacCallum-Stewart, "The Cause").³⁰

Before and during the early days of the war, official and popular views of the conflict were dominated by the pre-war ideals of courage, nobility and chivalry.³¹ These ideals were gradually replaced by the coda of the war poets, which denounced ideas of patriotism and militarism. Instead, a new ethos developed which is succinctly described by Samuel Hynes:

A brief sketch of that collective narrative of significance would go something like this: a generation of young men, their heads full of high abstractions like Honour, Glory, and England, went off to war to make the world safe for democracy. They were slaughtered in stupid battles planned by stupid generals. Those who survived were shocked, disillusioned and embittered by their war experiences, and saw that their real enemies were not the Germans, but the old men at home who had lied to them. They rejected the values of the society that had sent them to war, and in doing so separated their own generation from the past and from their cultural inheritance. (*A War Imagined* x)

As May Wedderburn Cannan explains: "A saying went round, 'Went to the war with Rupert Brooke and came home with Siegfried Sassoon'" (113).³² This version of the war sounds familiar to us today and has deeply influenced thinking about wars ever since. Most of the books were interpreted as pacifist in nature because they underlined the indisputable ugliness of war, even though the canonical war writers were definitely not pacifists. They were protesting about the way this particular war was being run, rather than against war in general. When these books were first published they met with massive protests;

³⁰ German writer Erich Maria Remarque's novel *All Quiet on the Western Front* was translated and available in English by 1929. It is thus often included in the war books boom.

³¹ In his study of popular literature before the Great War, *Mobilising the Novel: The Literature of Imperialism and the First World War*, Johan Höglund demonstrates how this literature, especially the so-called "invasion novels" contributed to anti-German sentiment and rallied the British war spirit. The pre-war ideals of courage, nobility and chivalry were closely tied to the imperialist ideology of the day. The literature was concerned with dealing with the expansion, administration and defence of the British Empire and expressed contemporary concern with the rise of Germany as an imperialist power, ongoing conflicts in British colonies and class and gender conflicts at home. He argues that this popular literature was one of the reasons why the British were prepared and eager to engage in the war in 1914.

³² Cannan greatly admired Sassoon as a poet, but disagreed with his opposition to the war. Cannan's autobiography, *Grey Ghosts and Voices*, was first published in 1976. Although she did war work both as a volunteer canteen worker in France and as a secretary in the British Intelligence service in Paris, she remained strictly a Tory and Church of England woman all of her life and believed the war had to be fought. She writes, "I had much admired some of Sassoon's verse but I was not coming home with him. Someone must go on writing for those who were still convinced of the right of the cause for which they had taken up arms" (113).

readers found them shockingly graphic and negative.³³ The so-called “War Books Controversy” erupted. Brigadier-General John Charteris, for example, argued in *The Times* on January 11, 1930:

War was bad and horrible, and no one who was in France would wish to see war again, but one could not help feeling a large measure of resentment as book after book came out showing the murky side of war and the bad side of human nature. ... Many men went through the War and came back ennobled by the fact that they had taken part in it and had put into actual practice towards their fellow men some of the finest instincts in human nature. (qtd. in Hynes, *A War* 450)

We see thus, that “[i]n the chorus of voices which have contributed to the history of the war, historians have not been alone” (Winter and Prost 3).

In terms of the differing discursive formations of history, it is important to remember that the British collective memory of the history of the Great War has been shaped to a great extent by the canonical war literature. This literature has in turn influenced modern views of the past. One of the seminal works on the literature of the Great War is Paul Fussell’s *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975). Sarah Cole argues that Fussell describes the literature of the war from a modernist point of view, emphasizing one of the major aspects of Modernism, namely disillusionment, in addition to irony, inexpressibility, and homoerotics. He interprets the war as characterized by a series of ironic disjunctions and argues that the literary legacy of the war has been extremely important in shaping present-day perceptions of the war. Fussell’s classic exposition of the war literature was at the head of the dominant tradition until fairly recently. Cole points out that although most of the critics agree with Fussell on major issues, many works questioning this modernist interpretation of the war were published just before or during the period when Barker was writing the trilogy (494).³⁴

In *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (1995), for example, Winter argues that what characterised the European reaction to the war was the attempt to interpret the events within *traditional* rather than modernist frames of reference. This traditional way of

³³ See Hynes, “The War Becomes Myth” in *A War Imagined* for a detailed depiction of how the literary and popular myths about the war developed (423-69).

³⁴ Cole lists notable examples of such critical works: Samuel Hynes’ *A War Imagined: The First World War and English Culture* (1990); Michael C. Adams’ *The Great Adventure: Male Desire and the Coming of World War I* (1991); and Adrian Caesar, *Taking it Like a Man: Suffering, Sexuality and the War Poets: Brooke, Sassoon, Owen and Graves* (1993). Shortly after the trilogy was completed, other scholarly works analysed the legacy of the war, for example Joanna Bourke’s *Dismembering the Male: Men’s Bodies, Britain and the Great War* (1996); and Jay Winter’s *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (1995). I refer to other topical books which take up the discourse of gender and the war in Chapter Four.

understanding the war, according to Winter, “entails what many modernists rejected: patriotic certainties, ‘high diction’ incorporating euphemisms about battle, ‘glory’, and the ‘hallowed dead’, in sum, the sentimentality and lies of wartime propaganda” (*Sites* 2). Winter does not see the cultural history of the war as a phase in the onward ascent of Modernism and argues that there was an overlap of languages and approaches between old and new, traditional and modern, conservative and iconoclastic which was apparent both during and after the war (3). Similarly, Barker’s trilogy illustrates the ongoing dialogue and exchange between traditional and modernist views of the war; these discourses co-exist in her narrative. Barker thematizes aspects of the canonical war literature in the trilogy through characterization, conflict and intertextuality. The role that this literature plays in shaping the understanding of the past thus merits special attention.

With reference to the literature of the Great War, Sharon Monteith explains that “it is primarily the soldier-poets who ensured that the generation of 1914 continued to be remembered throughout the twentieth century” (*Pat Barker* 53). She notes that they helped to mythologize the Great War in what has been called the literature of memory, pointing out that their writing combines memoir with history, fiction with facts and explores the war from within their own traumatic memories. Likewise, Winter and Prost point out that “Poets and novelists have been much more important than historians in shaping the British discursive field of remembrance of the Great War” (190). In fact, war poetry mattered much more in Britain than in other combatant countries.³⁵ Similarly, Esther MacCallum-Stewart argues that “[m]ost readers know the First World War not through a historical context, but instead ‘witness’ it through the lens of the war poets” (“The Cause”). She also quotes Jean Norton Cru, who wrote in 1929 that “[t]he public accepts ordinary novels as fiction, but takes war novels seriously, as if they were depositions” (“The Cause”).³⁶ As these critics point out, the war has largely been perceived through literature, and this has affected the way its history has been read and understood.

In *Heroes’ Twilight*, Bernard Bergonzi reminds readers that the memoirs and poetry written by combatants were often written as an act of

³⁵ Winter and Prost maintain that “Poetry as memory distilled is deep in the English romantic tradition and for this reason the doomed voices of Great War poets became part of the canon of remembrance in Britain in a way few poets’ voices did elsewhere” (178).

³⁶ In this connection the historian Richard Evans, who defends traditional or normative history, points out that “memoirs are notoriously unreliable even where they are giving eyewitness accounts of happenings in the past” (77). He goes on to quote an old Russian saying: “He lies like an eyewitness” to illustrate his point (77). His comments are illustrative of the poststructuralist debate on history as seen from the “old” historicist camp.

anamnesis – a preliminary case history of a medical or psychiatric patient: “to make experience clearer to their authors and to preserve the memory of what they had seen and undergone” (7). Anamnesis thus involves the formulation of *personal* memories in a narrative that helps the writer work through trauma; the story is subsequently passed on to others. And the writers – both combatants and non-combatants – who wrote about the war created their narratives by filtering them through earlier literary works.³⁷

For all these reasons, Barker’s choice of creating characters based on three of the canonical war poets – Sassoon, Owen and Graves – is apt; it opens for a dialogue with earlier versions of the war. As previously mentioned, Barker bases another major character on Dr. William H. R. Rivers – neurologist, anthropologist and army psychologist – who wrote about his treatment of shell-shocked soldiers in “The Repression of War Experience” (1917) and *Conflict and Dream* (1923).³⁸ The major physical setting of the first novel is Craiglockhart War Hospital outside Edinburgh.³⁹ Dr. Rivers is treating traumatized soldiers using Sigmund Freud’s “talking cure” – though he is not, strictly speaking, a Freudian.⁴⁰ Parts of the trilogy are set in London, in Scarborough, and ultimately in the trenches of the western front.

The depth and intricacy of intertextuality in the trilogy is indicated by the – partial – academic and historical documentation in author’s notes at the end of each volume. Barker also refers to the original manuscript of Owen’s “Anthem for Doomed Youth” in her author’s note on *Regeneration*. On this manuscript there are revisions and notes made by Sassoon which helped her to construct conversations between the two poets at Craiglockhart. More generally, it is obvious that the canonical and medical texts function as intertexts in the trilogy and activate a plethora of tropes from the Great War in

³⁷ Whitehead has a perceptive reading of how the war poets’ literary heritage was integrated into their own work. She shows how Sassoon’s description of seeing the ghost of the dead soldier Orme in *Sherston’s Progress* draws on Emily Brontë’s scene in *Wuthering Heights* where Lockwood is haunted by Cathy’s ghost. Then she traces the way these Victorian echoes are again folded into Barker’s narration of Sassoon’s dream in the trilogy (“Open” 209-11).

³⁸ These two scholarly texts actually function as intertexts in the trilogy; many of the characters, e.g., Burns, Anderson, Sassoon and Wansbeck, are based on the historical case studies Rivers describes, and Barker uses details from their battle experiences, symptoms and dreams which Rivers discusses.

³⁹ Craiglockhart was originally a hydropathic spa for wealthy patrons. It functioned as a war hospital and today is being rebuilt as a Great War Museum, as part of the campus of Napier University, Edinburgh. It will house some of the original manuscripts of the war poets. On a visit to Craiglockhart in 2004, my taxi driver told me that local people still refer to the Craiglockhart neighbourhood as “Happy Valley”, with reference to the traumatized soldiers who wandered the area during the war. In addition there was a workhouse in the vicinity at that time. To the locals it seemed like the inhabitants of both places must have been “happy”, excluded as they were from the everyday worries of life and “out of” the war. “Happy”, he reminded me, can also be synonymous with “loony”, implying insanity or mental instability.

⁴⁰ I will elaborate on Rivers’ departures from Freud in Chapter Four and Chapter Five.

the mind of the reader. Indeed, Barker incorporates a wide range of intertextual references in the trilogy; haunting voices from the British past that to some extent form part of the background of the majority of British citizens. This intertextuality reminds the reader of how both literature and art have contributed in significant ways in defining nationality and creating collective memory. Literature cannot be perceived as a passive reflection of “reality”; it is an active participant in the making of discourse.

By using historical figures and drawing on their memoirs and poetry, Barker reopens the canon of Great War literature for discussion. The soldier-poets provide a familiar frame of reference for the British reader. However, as Peter Childs points out: “Owen and Sassoon have been reductively positioned as anti-war poets who represented a turn in Western attitudes towards a range of issues from patriotism to violence” (Childs 78). I agree that Barker goes beyond this reductive view in the trilogy. These poets and other people who lived throughout the rest of the twentieth century had much more complicated and complex feelings about the war than those crystallized as dominant in relation to the war. In my view, Barker is faithful to biographical material about Sassoon and Owen and also relies on their literary works, diaries and letters as sources. Her fictional portrayal nevertheless allows her to creatively expand the psychology of these figures. In doing so she both perpetuates the heroic myths surrounding them and re-accentuates certain aspects that have been suppressed or forgotten.

In the trilogy, for example, Sassoon often comes across as immature, spoiled, and petulant, as well as heroic. The public interpretation of his “Soldier’s Declaration”, which opens *Regeneration*, as a pacifist document becomes rather suspect when we are reminded of his fame as bloodthirsty “Mad Jack” (RT 12) and when Dr. Brock describes him as “Happy warrior one minute. Bitter pacifist the next” (RT 67). The compassion he feels for the men he leads at the front is complicated by his contempt for and fear of his fellow patients at Craiglockhart. He patronizes Owen and eagerly accepts Rivers’ invitation to visit the Conservative Club in Edinburgh. Abruptly shifting loyalty, he fantasizes about joining the workers in a factory job in Sheffield because he wants to find out about ordinary people (RT 408). Barker’s Sassoon is more confused and much less heroic in stature than he is in common perceptions of the war poets. He keeps his distance from his shell-shocked fellow officers at Craiglockhart – only reluctantly accepting a fellow patient as a golf partner, and runs off to visit the Conservative Club or friends in Edinburgh whenever possible – in order to escape what Rivers tauntingly refers to as the

“degenerates, the loonies, the lead-swingers, the cowards...” (RT 415). He perceives the other officers in the hospital as weak and/or cowardly and is afraid of contagion through association.⁴¹

Likewise, Owen, the publicly celebrated “poet of pity” (at least since the 1960s), is also more complicated than his public image suggests.⁴² In a recent biography of Owen, Dominic Hibberd reveals how Owen’s brother Harold firmly controlled Owens’ posthumous public persona. As the reviewer John Knight comments, “Harold’s portrait of his older brother was more than a trifle coloured by what he perceived as the failures in his own life, his obsession with social class and his abiding fear that the public might discover that Wilfred was homosexual” (312). Hibberd relates how Harold Owen, when editing his brother’s *Collected Letters*, changed the wording of the official citation Owen received with the Military Cross. The original stated that he had “inflicted considerable losses on the enemy”, but Harold changed this to read that he “took a number of prisoners”. Harold apparently wanted his brother to appear less bloodthirsty; as Hibberd comments, “the great poet of pity could not be thought, could not even be imagined, to have won a medal by slaughtering Germans” (*WO: A New Biography* 350).

The trilogy also suggests that the image we have of the war poets is very much a retrospective construct. Barker includes, for example, some aspects of Owen’s personality which were previously suppressed by his brother such as his homosexuality and does not reduce him simply to “Saint Wilfred, poet of pity.”⁴³ In the trilogy, Prior remembers the battle in which Owen won his Military Cross as follows: “I saw [Owen] in the attack, caped and masked in blood, seize a machine-gun and turn it on its previous owners at point-blank range. Like killing fish in a bucket” (RT 544). This is of course Barker’s retrospective construct of the scene; according to Hibberd, Owen was vengeful because his servant, Jones, had just been killed, and Owen’s uniform was still soaked in Jones’ blood. In a letter to his mother, Owen described his experience in the battle where he won the MC as follows: “It passed the limits of my Abhorrence. I lost all my earthly faculties, and fought like an angel” (qtd.

⁴¹ Monteith argues that even though Barker draws her readers into her exploration of the war through figures we know or have at least heard of, she refuses to make either Sassoon or Owen representative of the Great War soldier (“We will remember” 58). I agree with her: each of the soldiers Barker describes has a special story and a unique individuality in spite of their common experiences.

⁴² Owen had only published five of his poems during his lifetime, and little of his private life was known for decades. Dominic Hibberd establishes that the Vietnam War changed all that; the image of the war poets that we have today is itself a construct influenced by the growing anti-war sentiment of the 1960s (*WO: A New Biography* 370).

⁴³ This is the epithet MacCallum-Stewart deprecatingly uses for Owen in her review of Hibberd’s biography on her virulently anti-Owen Internet blog, “Break of Day in the Trenches”.

in Hibberd, *W.O.: A New Biography* 348). Through Prior's eyes we see only pure blood-lust. The image of killing fish in a bucket ironically connects with Prior's description of how Matthew Hallet, a newly recruited officer, turns to him for advice and leadership: "It's very obvious that Hallet's adopted me. Like one of those little pilot fish or the terns for that matter. He thinks that because I've been out three times before I know what's going on" (*RT* 496). Hallet is another "fish in a bucket" – he is wounded and sent back to England where he dies in hospital, as I will discuss in Chapter Two.

In addition to re-accentuating the reductive public view of the war poets, Barker also decentres their narratives; characters who represent less well-known, silenced or marginalized views take centre stage and supplement (and/or contest) their versions of the war. The lesser known historical figure, Dr. Rivers,⁴⁴ is a central character throughout the trilogy, but in the second volume there is a shift of focus to the working-class characters, especially Prior. In *The Eye in the Door*, for example, Prior, who is a "temporary gentleman,"⁴⁵ resists the pastoral, idealized perception of England that can be found in some early war poetry:

One of the ways in which he felt different from his brother officers, one of the many, was that *their* England was a pastoral place: fields, streams, wooded valleys, medieval churches surrounded by ancient elms. They couldn't grasp that for him, and for the vast majority of the men, the Front, with its mechanization, its reduction of the individual to a cog in the machine, its blasted landscape, was not a contrast with the life they'd known at home, in Birmingham or Manchester or Glasgow or the Welsh pit villages, but a nightmarish culmination. (*RT* 307)⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Rivers was little known in the field of literary studies before the trilogy, but quite well-known in the fields of anthropology, neurology and psychology.

⁴⁵ In accordance with the class system in Britain, military officers were recruited from the middle and upper classes. Men in the ranks were working class. A "temporary gentleman" was a soldier from the ranks who was promoted and became an officer, or a working-class man who, by getting a secondary education was able to get a commission. It was understood that the officer's social standing was temporary – a man could only be a gentleman by birth. It was only the extreme pressures of war that allowed such an unheard of – though glaringly temporary – dismissal of predicated social differences.

⁴⁶ Ian F. W. Beckett discusses the different experiences soldiers had during the war, depending on their backgrounds: "Many soldiers were exposed to colleagues from widely differing backgrounds, and military service clearly broadened horizons. For working-class recruits, however, the army might not be far different from the regimentation of the factory, and one explanation for the maintenance of British morale on the Western Front is that men were used to the subordination and tedium commonplace in industrial society. [...] It could be argued, therefore, that the majority of soldiers would not have recognised the disillusionment said to have been experienced by those of literary sensitivities, who embarked upon war with high expectations in 1914" (Beckett 220). Prior, with his working-class background does not share the pastoral vision of England of his fellow officers, but neither does he accept the subordination and tedium of life at the front as Beckett claimed working-class soldiers did. Furthermore, Beckett does not discuss the men's emotional responses to the slaughter they witnessed and took part in, which Prior certainly does *not* accept. Ronald Paul also

Prior's thoughts bring to mind Rupert Brooke's patriotic sonnet of 1914, "The Soldier" which begins: "If I should die, think only this of me: / That there's some corner of a foreign field / That is forever England" (*Norton Anthology II* 1827). The poem, and others like it, is filled with images of the flowers, rivers, and sun of rural England. Prior's class-defined experience of England is different from the pastoral vision of Brooke and perhaps from the experience of the majority of his "brother officers" (RT 307) like Potts, Hallet or Sassoon who were recruited from the middle- and upper-middle classes, with their classical public school educations. These schools instilled high-Victorian imperial ideals of patriotism, duty and glory into their pupils. Against this background, the disillusionment that the later poetry of Sassoon and Owen expresses is perhaps different in kind than the disillusionment of the soldier in the ranks who has a bleaker point of departure.

Barker's strategy of highlighting previously marginalized or suppressed viewpoints resembles what Alan Sinfield refers to as "creative vandalism" in the interpretation or re-reading of canonical texts (Sinfield 22-23).⁴⁷ This involves "blatantly reworking the authoritative text[s] so that [they are] forced to yield, against the grain, explicitly oppositional kinds of understanding", and he adds that "This strategy confronts both the attitudes and the status that have accrued to the canon" (Sinfield 22). Barker's highlighting of marginalized characters like Prior and the munitionettes is an example of creative vandalism, and her use of Owen, as described above, shows how creative vandalism works both ways – it blatantly reworks previous texts to give a new view of this war poet. Similarly, Barker marginalizes the stories of the VADs (Voluntary Aid Detachments, or nursing assistants) in comparison to earlier war literature.

Sinfield uses the term "faultlines" to describe breaking points in texts which enable dissident reading, or reading against the grain. He explains that in interpreting texts he "seeks to discern the scope for dissident politics of class, race, gender and sexual orientation, both within texts and in their roles in cultures" (9-10).⁴⁸ According to Sinfield, we can respect canonical texts as attempts to comprehend and intervene in the world, but at the same time, we

discusses the pastoral tropes in canonical war literature and shows how the trilogy subverts these tropes ("In Pastoral Fields").

⁴⁷ Sinfield (a central figure in Cultural Materialism) credits Jonathan Dollimore for the coinage of this term. Both Sinfield and Dollimore are influenced by the work of Raymond Williams. Cultural Materialism is political in its approach to literature and often draws upon Marxist, feminist and other political theories in its analyses. Barker seems to employ similar techniques and strategies in the creation of her fiction.

⁴⁸ This description can be conceived of as the general aim of or the reading agenda of the Cultural Materialists.

may quarrel with them as “questionable constructions made by other people in other circumstances” (22). In the trilogy, as I have shown, Barker re-reads (and re-writes) the canon, and challenges certain earlier views of the past. In this way, she “asks the reader to step back from simple denunciations of war and aggression to understand the social, political, and economic circumstances that underpin individual and collective action” (Childs 78). In short, the trilogy reflects how history itself is constructed, re-invented and transformed through a myriad of differing perspectives.

Analyzing discourses can reveal problems and contribute to change, especially by making hidden power relations explicit. Barker’s trilogy reveals the co-occurrence of subordinate or oppositional forces within discourses alongside the dominant or hegemonic. As Foucault suggests, these discourses are sites of both negotiation and resistance. By studying the diachronic nature of these discourses we can see how Barker opens the text to a dissident reading of the past, a reading that highlights the ethics of historical memory in the present.

Previous Criticism

The various critical responses elicited by the trilogy comprise a present-day dialogical context; Barker published four novels in the 1980s,⁴⁹ but it was the trilogy, which was published to wide popular and critical acclaim and has sold over a million copies that established her as a major contemporary British writer.⁵⁰ The first novel was made into a feature film entitled *Regeneration*, directed by Gillies Mackinnon and released in 1996.⁵¹ The third novel, *The Ghost Road*, won the prestigious Booker Prize, and MacCallum-Stewart goes so far as to claim that the trilogy “arguably provide[s] the definitive construction of the Great War in literature in the 20th Century” (“The Problem”). She also points out that the trilogy has apparently been “seamlessly” assimilated into the canon of the literature of the Great War, having been included on literature lists for “A” level and higher education curricula both in the United Kingdom and

⁴⁹ These were: *Union Street* (1982); *Blow Your House Down* (1984); *The Century’s Daughter* (1986), reissued as *Liza’s England* in 1996; and *The Man Who Wasn’t There* (1989). Subsequent to the trilogy she has published *Another World* (1998); *Border Crossing* (2001); *Double Vision* (2003); and *Life Class* (2007).

⁵⁰ See Monteith’s *Pat Barker* for a comprehensive list of the awards won by each of the volumes of the trilogy (x). The trilogy was widely reviewed. See Becker; Brooke; Coles; Julian Evans; Gates; Hynes (“Among”); Karpen; Mosely; Parks; Pierpont; Jim Shepard; Ben Shephard; Sinkler; Tony Smith; Tonkin; Watkins; and Wilson for contemporary reviews.

⁵¹ A number of critics have written about the film adaptation of *Regeneration*, comparing it to the book and pointing out what has been left out or revised. E.g. Atfield; Nixon; Sara Martin; and Westman (“Generation”). These articles illustrate the amazing complexity of the first novel and how difficult it is to preserve all its thematic nuances when translating it into a different medium.

abroad. Karin Westman's publication of a reader's guide to *Regeneration* in 2001 – a book with the student reader in mind – supports this view.

Barker quickly became identified as a public expert on the Great War in Britain, hosting television programs on the subject and presenting the Armistice programs on BBC Knowledge in the year 2000. Moreover, several reviews and essays on the trilogy have appeared in psychological or psychoanalytic journals addressed mainly to practicing therapists.⁵² In addition, the first conference concentrating exclusively on Barker's work took place at the University of Hertfordshire on November 24th, 2006. It was arranged at the School of Humanities by Pat Wheeler as part of the Contemporary British and Irish Literary Landscapes series and attracted scholars from the U.K. and other parts of Europe, the U.S., and Australia.

A large number of critical essays and three book-length studies on Barker's work as a whole have been published to date. Sharon Monteith published a volume in the "Writers and their Work" series in 2002 which discusses all the novels up to *Border Crossing* (2001), outlining major themes and tracing connections between the different works; it is a comprehensive evaluation of Barker's work up to 2001. She describes Barker as an iconoclastic writer who attacks settled beliefs or institutions in her work and says that her popularity with the reading public is due to her willingness to take up challenging, controversial issues. Monteith sees a continuum of developing themes in Barker's work and refutes the view of several critics that the trilogy marks a departure from realist, women-centred fiction to historical novels centring on male protagonists. The chapter she devotes to the trilogy is called "We will remember them?: The Regeneration Trilogy" and takes up a number of the major themes in an excellent close reading.

Monteith went on to edit *Critical Perspectives on Pat Barker* (2005) in cooperation with Margaretta Jolly, Nahem Yousaf and Ronald Paul. This book is an anthology of essays that covers all of Barker's published novels up until 2003; the essays present a variety of different, often conflicting readings of Barker's work. The editors have not aimed at consensus, but rather have pointed out that the interest in and various approaches to the texts prove Barker's importance as a major contemporary writer. The fact that Barker's work elicits a number of conflicting responses confirms my dialogic interpretation of her work. In the anthology, there are six essays that focus on the trilogy.

⁵² E.g., Garland; Nickerson & Shea; Palmer; Parks; Tony Smith; and Vickroy ("Can the tide").

In his essay in *Critical Perspectives*, Ronald Paul compares Barker's war narrative to a selection of classic war novels written by men.⁵³ He does so in order to demonstrate how Barker rejects the pastoral tropes used in these novels. Paul contextualizes the binary opposition between the pastoral perception of England expressed by middle- and upper-class officers writing about the war and the vision of England as an urban wasteland shared by working-class men in the ranks who saw their role in the war as a continuation of their industrial exploitation. He argues that although Barker shares the basically naturalistic, semi-documentary approach of the earlier war narratives there are fundamental aesthetic differences between these earlier works and the trilogy; her radical (feminist) ideological perspective and subversion of traditional pastoral tropes bring out the "essentially patriarchal and class nature of the military conflict itself" (Paul 149). He finds that Barker rejects the stereotyped perception of the working class found in the major novels and propaganda of the Great War and subverts the pastoral tropes that projected false, idealized images of social relationships both at home and at the front. I will draw on Paul's essay in my discussion of class in Chapter Three. I agree with his assessment of the trilogy, but would like to expand on what I see as the dialogic and diachronic aspects of the trilogy in contrast to the perceived naturalistic and semi-documentary approach that Barker shares with the earlier war novelists. I will argue that Barker's intertexts are not limited solely to these earlier war narratives, but include a number of texts written prior to the war and long after these canonical novels.

In the critical anthology, Karin Westman takes a look at Gillies Mackinnon's film adaptation of *Regeneration*, pointing out how the filmed version screens out the issues of class, gender and cultural change that are so prominent in the novel; instead generational conflict becomes the central trope and produces a reductive version of the narrative. The film understandably conflates aspects of all three volumes of the trilogy, and although I agree with Westman that it cuts out important thematic issues, the film is interesting because it highlights the dialogic exchange between the canonical war literature, the public image of the war poets, and the trilogy in a number of ways.

⁵³ The texts he refers to are Henri Barbusse's *Under Fire* (1916), John Dos Passos' *Three Soldiers* (1921), Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1928), Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), and Frederic Manning's *The Middle Parts of Fortune* (1929). Paul also refers to other novels concerned with the war by two female authors, namely Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* and Rebecca West's *The Return of the Soldier* to point out how Barker also rejects the pastoral tropes surrounding the home front and depictions of shell shock as described in books written by non-combatants.

Sheryl Stevenson is represented in the volume through both an interview with Barker on the trilogy and an article with a perceptive reading of the psychoanalytic idea of transference that is developed using Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* as an intertext in *The Eye in the Door*. I expand on some of her ideas in Chapters Three and Five. In "Open to Suggestion: Hypnosis and History in the *Regeneration Trilogy*", Anne Whitehead is also interested in psychoanalytic aspects of the trilogy and relates the treatment of trauma, with its dependence on the restoration of memory, to the discourse of history. She focuses on the scene in the trilogy where Dr. Rivers hypnotises Prior to reveal the traumatic events he is repressing and relates it to the historical work done by Sigmund Freud, Dr. W. H. R. Rivers and Charles Myers. Dennis Brown combines the themes of psychoanalysis, gender and anthropology in his essay and argues for a reading of the trilogy as historiographic metafiction. He is particularly concerned with Barker's use of the psychoanalytic encounter with its transference and counter-transference and sees the whole trilogy as a tribute to the "talking cure" as a form of healing. His reading takes up a number of interesting aspects of psychoanalysis which I will build on in Chapter Five.

In the final essay on the trilogy in the critical anthology, Margaretta Jolly focuses on what she calls the "masculine maternal" and traces a continuing thematization of birth, regeneration, and the bodily in a number of Barker's works, including the trilogy. According to Jolly, in her earlier novels Barker showed how women's bodies were socially controlled, and she relates these social control mechanisms to the sacrifice of men's bodies during the Great War. Jolly claims that on the symbolic level the idea of "male mothering" is meant to counteract the masculine violence inherent in war, but that Barker's assessment of the national crisis ultimately remains pessimistic.⁵⁴ This is in line with my view of the polyphonic quality of the trilogy.

In "What is Prior? Working-Class Masculinity in Pat Barker's Trilogy" (2002), Peter Hitchcock argues powerfully that the trilogy does not treat the war as a watershed of change or a break in history in terms of class and gender but shows how pre-existent (or prior) social processes were accelerated by rather than initiated by the Great War. He sees that Barker's interest is not so much in the war itself as in the social processes that pre-existed the war and the change that continued after the war. His reading supports my view of the diachronic nature of the discourses in the trilogy.

⁵⁴ In an earlier essay, "After feminism", Jolly compares Barker's work with the work of Penelope Lively and places Barker in relation to the contemporary novel in Britain.

John Brannigan published a book-length study of Pat Barker's work in the "Contemporary British Novelists" series in 2005. Chapter Six, entitled "History and Haunting" covers the trilogy.⁵⁵ Brannigan gives an impressively detailed close reading of the trilogy, illustrating how each volume develops a central trope, furthering Barker's themes. He argues that Barker's primary project involves the demythologization of the Great War. Brannigan draws on Hitchcock's view that the trilogy is concerned with social processes that are not limited to the war itself. He agrees with him on this point but goes a step further, arguing that the trilogy maintains a tension between the Great War as an ideological watershed and the war as simply another event in a continuous process of social change (Brannigan 96-99). This creates temporal disjunctions in the narrative that explain its occasional anachronistic "feel" – and also explain why the characters caught up in the war experience their own lives as in a sense anachronistic or haunted. Thus, "Barker's trilogy [...] registers the displaced chrono-consciousness of the late twentieth century, for one paradoxical consequence of living in an age which defines itself as post-historical is that we are both free to be 'timeless', and we are condemned to live in everyone's past" (118).

In "Embodying Losses in Pat Barker's *Regeneration* Trilogy" (2005), Patricia E. Johnson also discusses Barker's focus on the bodily – the trilogy's "visceral approach to flesh" (311). She ascertains that the trilogy remembers war by dismembering it: "It strips away disembodied abstractions to reveal an eyeball, a head, pieces of flesh, reconnecting language and material substance" (317). This underlines the trilogy's emphasis on memory, and shows how it is in stark contrast with war memorials that erase the visceral and material under ceremonial words. Johnson goes on to describe the importance of the Melanesian subtext of the trilogy in this respect: "Melanesia breaks open modern abstractions that keep death and warfare at a distance with its visceral celebration of both" (311). I draw on her reading of the subtext in order to establish the dialogic relationship between Melanesian culture and modern European culture in the trilogy in Chapter Two.

In spite of the fact that the trilogy has attracted considerable critical and popular acclaim, and indeed even acquired near canonical status in some camps with its historical mixture of fact and fiction, it has also attracted a certain amount of negative criticism. Some reactions to the trilogy have clearly

⁵⁵ Brannigan published another essay on the trilogy called "Pat Barker's *Regeneration* Trilogy: History and the Hauntological Imagination" in Lane et al.'s book *Contemporary British Fiction* in 2003. Here he establishes many of the themes that he develops further in "History and Haunting". Brannigan's book *Pat Barker* also includes a chapter that gives a very useful, comprehensive overview of the critical work done on Barker's work up to 2005.

revealed that the discourse of history, especially Great War history, is a particularly emotive ideological battlefield.⁵⁶ Some of the reviewers and critics view the trilogy with suspicion.⁵⁷ They have complained that Barker doesn't get her facts right; the trilogy is riddled with anachronisms and twists the historical record.⁵⁸ One of these critics, Bernard Bergonzi, comments on how familiar the trilogy makes the past seem. Indirectly referring to L. P. Hartley's famous opening lines in *The Go-Between*, he says he reads the trilogy with admiration, but also with a sense of unease; he is provoked by the sense "that for this author the past is not all that foreign, one does not need to learn the language, and basically they do things there much as we do them here" ("*Regeneration*" 14). He points out however, that one of Barker's major concerns is relating present-day preoccupations to the past. Bergonzi also comments on the desire some readers have to read narratives nostalgically, through heroic recall and understands why these readers might find the trilogy disturbing.⁵⁹

In the same vein, Esther MacCallum-Stewart argues in "The Problem of Regenerating the Great War" that the *Regeneration Trilogy* has in fact been integrated into the war canon and that this "has produced a crucial point of conflict and disruption within the mythology of the Great War, arguably propelling it into a new realm of reinvention and myth making". She goes on to elucidate what she sees as "historicity faults" in the trilogy and says: "Barker wants to make important points about issues she feels have not been covered – in the same way that the war writers exaggerated and lied to make their point, Barker must rely on her readers assuming that the war writers speak the truth in order to enlarge upon their argument in a modern context" ("The Problem"). MacCallum-Stewart first complains that Barker does not adhere closely enough to the historical facts about the historical figures she uses, and then, self-contradictorily, criticizes Barker for basing her story on them at all because the trilogy thus perpetuates myths that in themselves falsify history.⁶⁰ The main

⁵⁶ During the first year of my fellowship I attended a doctoral summer school in Karlskrona, Sweden and met guest lecturers and seminar leaders from many different countries. In our discussions of our chosen dissertation projects, I was surprised by the vehement responses of some of the British lecturers to Barker's trilogy. One lecturer felt that it had "dragged the historical figures through the mud" in a disgusting, unnecessary way. Others were particularly offended by Barker's thematization of homosexuality, sexuality and gender in the trilogy and felt that it demeaned the heroes of the war and exposed a prurient vein of sensationalism.

⁵⁷ E.g., MacCallum-Stewart (2002); Jim Shepard (1994); or Claudia R. Pierpont (1995).

⁵⁸ E.g., Bergonzi in "*Regeneration*"; MacCallum-Stewart in "Female", "The Problem", "The Cause"; Pierpont in "Shell Shock", Ben Shepard in "Digging up the past".

⁵⁹ E.g., Bergonzi's chapter entitled "*Regeneration: Pat Barker's Trilogy*" in his book *War Poets and Other Subjects*. Hitchcock also comments on readers' desire to read war literature nostalgically in "What is Prior? Working-Class Masculinity in Pat Barker's Trilogy", even though he is much more positive about the trilogy than Bergonzi.

⁶⁰ MacCallum-Stewart also implies that Barker herself seems to be unaware that she is destabilizing myths, a claim which, in my opinion, is rather deprecating. However she modifies this view in later

problem with the trilogy, in her opinion, is not its mixture of history and fiction but the reception of the text as verbatim history by the reading public. “Barker has entered a realm where fiction and history are allowed to merge together. It is therefore no surprise that her trilogy has been afforded a historical importance that belies its recent publication” (“The Problem”).

Ben Shephard’s review of the trilogy in the *TLS*, entitled “Digging up the Past” (1996), is perhaps the most vitriolic attack on the trilogy in relation to history. He claims that Barker’s “exploration of ‘the contemporary codes of gender, class and sexuality’ is rooted in post-feminist pieties and the chic abstractions of modern historians, not in solid historical originals. Its tone is, nearly always, false” (“Digging”). The trilogy, in his opinion does, however, bring up interesting questions about “the novelist’s responsibility to the past” and the novelist’s relationship to the historian. Shephard’s main contention is that Barker selects her sources carefully in order to support her modern-day agenda, disregarding a number of sources on shell shock that would have made the trilogy more authentic (“Digging”).

Other critics also object to Barker’s feminist agenda, especially in connection with her use of Showalter’s interpretation of shell shock.⁶¹ Martin Löschnigg responds to Shephard’s review in his essay “...the novelist’s responsibility to the past” (1999), and agrees with many of his arguments. He, too, argues that Barker perpetuates a number of literary and academic myths about the war. She “largely subscribes to a view which regards the war as the immediate origin of a complete change of social and sexual paradigms”, “continues a mythification of shellshock victims and of the shellshocked ‘war poet’” and “endorses the conviction already expressed in first-hand accounts that the war created an unbridgeable gulf between combatants and non-combatants and that the front-line experience proved to be essentially incommunicable or non-narratable” (215). With regard to shell shock he says, along with Shephard, that Barker bases her story on what he calls the “feminist myth” of the Great War by drawing on Showalter’s and Leed’s versions of shell shock and trauma theory and continuing academic and literary myths of the Great War as the immediate origin of twentieth-century gender struggles (214). Part of this feminist myth, in his opinion, involves “a feminist view on male experience [because it] emphasiz[es] the ‘gendered’ aspects of shellshock” (221). He expands on this:

articles. Considering that MacCallum-Stewart claims that Prior survives the war, one must ask oneself how closely she had read the trilogy when she wrote her first article (“The Problem”) on the topic.

⁶¹ E.g. Bergonzi in “*Regeneration*”; Ben Shephard in “Digging up the past”.

Shellshock has attracted the attention of feminist critics, notably of Elaine Showalter, who have seen in it an expression of a crisis of masculinity, and, in a sense, of a reversal of gender-roles caused by the war. According to their view, [...] the confinement and passivity which trench warfare imposed upon soldiers reflected the confinement and passivity characteristic of lives of nineteenth-century women. (221)

He therefore believes that Barker's trilogy perpetuates a number of established myths about the war rather than demythologizing it, since "she provides a somewhat one-sided representation of the phenomenon of 'shellshock' which neglects the medical, military and social implications of shellshock in favour of a 'gendered' view" (215).

Barker does indeed follow Showalter's conception of shell shock fairly closely. I believe this gendered view, however, is only one of the voices or dialogues going on about shell shock and gender in the trilogy. Barker actually addresses the medical, military and social implications of shell shock in her narrative from a number of perspectives and through a number of voices, as I shall show in the following chapters. Finally, although her narrative illustrates that gender roles were in flux at this time, the inclusion of characters who are involved in the Suffragette Movement or who belong to Oscar Wilde's surviving social circle also suggests that the war was not the origin of change, but only one of many catalysts; the discourse of gender is diachronic.

Greg Harris also uses Showalter's discussion and interpretation of shell shock as a point of departure in his essay on compulsory masculinity in the trilogy (1998), along with other newer works on shell shock and masculinity (e.g., Bourke and Hynes). He argues that Barker's focus on the subjective experience of shell shock strategically separates men from masculinity, enabling her to examine how patriarchal constructions of masculinity prove oppressive and repressive not only for women, but also for men. He concludes that Barker's work "focuses not on the shells that exploded on the battlefield as much as on the men who imploded under the strains of living up to 'manly' ideals of self-control in the face of the senseless slaughter of trench warfare" ("Compulsory"). In contrast to Löschnigg, Harris finds these gender-centred explanations of shell shock fruitful in understanding both Barker's trilogy and the Great War, as I do.

In response to Löschnigg's claim, Laurie Vickroy argues that Barker's primary responsibility is to help contemporary readers understand the past. By using trauma paradigms from both the past and the present and by linking male and female trauma experience she helps her readers to gain access

to the soldiers' experiences and to recognize trauma as a collective experience (*Trauma* 2002; 238, note 14). In a later essay, Vickroy discusses trauma and shell shock by comparing Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* to the trilogy ("A Legacy" 2004). She is especially interested in the analogies between Septimus Warren Smith in Woolf's novel and Billy Prior in Barker's. In a third essay, Vickroy describes the trilogy as Barker's Foucauldian analysis of modern society; the mad, disobedient or nonconformist members of society are locked up or become outsiders ("Can the tide" 2002). She is particularly interested in how transgressive sexuality and carnivalesque subversion contribute to Barker's feminist revision of the history of the war.

Jennifer Shaddock is also interested in the discourse of gender in her strongly argued essay "Dreams of Melanesia: Masculinity and the Exorcism of War" (2006). In contrast to the aforementioned critics who write on gender from similar viewpoints, she focuses on the Melanesian material in *The Ghost Road* and argues that the cross-cultural insights it affords ultimately provide the vision and transformative power of the novel. Using the Melanesian material Shaddock reveals Barker's engagement with the connections between British imperialism and the construction of British manhood. In her reading, Rivers' dreams of Melanesia "form a bridge from his pre-war Melanesian studies to his current London practice in psychology and ultimately lead to his emotional transformation and ability to reject the war" (662). Her arguments highlight what I see as the internal dialogism in Rivers' development as a character in the trilogy.

In "Acts of Revision" (1995), Michael Ross traces the influence of D. H. Lawrence on Barker's work and mentions the conflict between the mismatched parents in *Sons and Lovers* as a model for the relationship between Billy Prior's parents in the trilogy. Ross points out that in using Lawrence, Barker never simply recycles or rehashes the emotional charge of the "lifted" texts; she creatively re-imagines them. In so doing, she also opens for a creative dialogue between Lawrence and contemporary women writers "for whom he appears, at first blush, to make a strange and unwelcoming bedfellow" (62). I find that Barker's revisions of Lawrence are particularly illuminating in terms of gender and class.

An essay which brings up some interesting points on the dialogic quality of the trilogy is Catherine Lanone's "Scattering the Seed of Abraham: the Motif of Sacrifice in Pat Barker's *Regeneration* and *The Ghost Road*" (1999). She establishes that World War One poetry is haunted by twisted or rewritten Christian motifs of sacrifice. Likewise, Barker takes the motifs as used by the

war poets and again transforms them. The trilogy for example becomes a link in the on-going dialogue on the meaning of the story of Abraham and Isaac. A number of other critics have also commented on the Melanesian subtext and the motif of sacrifice in the trilogy, demonstrating the power of Barker's narrative in eliciting a variety of rejoinders.⁶²

In their study of contemporary British and American historical literature *Literatures of Memory* (2000), Peter Middleton and Tim Woods discuss the relationship between the past, memory, and history as it is manifested in different literary genres. In Chapter Three, "Memory's realism" they discuss theories of memory, literary realism in historical literature and "metamemory" in *Regeneration* (81-113). I have mentioned their discussion of Barker's technique above. They see an intense awareness of late twentieth-century debates about memory, repression, recovered memory and the history of mnemonic research in the first volume of the trilogy which goes beyond its realistic timeframe. Their insights support my arguments about the diachronicity of the discourses in focus in this thesis.

Ankhi Mukherjee (2001) examines neurosis and narration in *Regeneration*. She too focuses on the psychoanalytic encounter and relates it to trauma theory. Drawing on a number of trauma theorists, she problematizes the difference between traumatic memory and narrative memory; whereas trauma by its very nature involves a lack or loss of memory, the ultimate goal of therapy is to put the story into words. The numerous instances of stammering, silences, and memory loss in Barker's novel are traumatic symptoms which illustrate the difficulty inherent in articulating past, traumatic events. Mukherjee reads *Regeneration* as "an allegory of the failure of the narrative project, which is at the same time, paradoxically its greatest success" (3). *Regeneration*, in her opinion, is "the story of the loss of the story" (3). However it is also "a narrative performance that both rearticulates and disarticulates the past as past" (8).

In his close reading of the first volume of the trilogy, C. Kenneth Pellow (2002) demonstrates how the greater part of the novel is composed of two-party encounters between characters who are both in conflict with each other and at the same time feel sympathy for each other. He cites the relationship between Rivers and Sassoon as the major relationship and argues that all the other relationships, by analogy, emphasize, clarify or amplify the issues that connect and/or divide these two characters. Pellow judges this

⁶² E.g., Vickroy, "A Legacy", Brannigan, "History and Haunting".

intricate structural pattern to be both dramatically and thematically functional. His arguments are also interesting in terms of dialogism in the trilogy.

In Chapter Two of his book *Contemporary Novelists: British Fiction Since 1970*, Peter Childs gives a short overview of Barker's works up to 2003, discussing major themes and motifs. He judges the trilogy to be Barker's major achievement to date. Like other critics, he highlights her treatment of the constructions and myths of femininity and masculinity seen against the backdrop of history and class. Childs argues that the trilogy cannot be read as a simple denunciation of war and aggression; the reader must also engage in an examination of the social, political, and economic circumstances that underpinned the way both individuals and the collective acted in this period of historical crisis. I agree that the social discourses of the Great War period are important in the trilogy, but I also argue that Barker draws on contemporary discourses in her re-accentuation of history.

Like Michael Ross, Alistair M. Duckworth (2004) is also concerned with "borrowings" in *Regeneration*. He discusses two scenes as intertexts, one taken from Robert Graves' *Goodbye to All That* and a second from Edmund Blunden's *Undertones of War*. These texts are included in the war canon and are semi-autobiographical literary accounts of the authors' war experiences. Duckworth says that *Regeneration* as a historical novel achieves some of its most authentic insights through the use of these intertexts. However, like Ross, he sees how Barker re-imagines these texts. Furthermore, this makes us aware of the fact that accounts consisting of "attested facts" are "already aesthetically shaped" (Duckworth 67).

In "The Novelist as an Agent of Collective Remembrance" (2007) Maria Holmgren Troy discusses the impact of the trilogy on contemporary collective remembrance of the Great War. As previously noted, this work established Barker's position as a major British writer and an expert on the war because of its popular and scholarly reception. Taking the trilogy as a point of departure and tracing the interaction between interviews with Barker and two of Barker's other novels which focus on the war – *Liza's England* and *Another World* – Troy analyzes how Barker "brings together her personal, family, and national past" (51) and becomes an agent of collective remembrance. Her arguments on trauma, "postmemory" and "wit(h)nessing" establish Barker's role as an agent of collective remembrance. Troy's arguments strengthen my discussion of Barker as a cultural carrier in the continuing construction of the Great War as a founding trauma of the British nation in Chapter Two.

As this critical overview shows, Barker's trilogy has elicited a great number of varied critical responses. All of the respondents refer to one or a combination of the discourses in focus in this thesis. My analysis and interpretation of the trilogy, in Bakhtinian terms, necessarily presupposes the existence of these previous utterances in addition to engaging with the other historical and intertextual contexts of the trilogy described in this chapter. Summing up the trilogy, Brannigan argues that it actually represents history as trauma, "the effects of which tend to manifest themselves in figures and tropes of haunting" (*Pat Barker* 116). His equation of history and trauma reflects the third configuration of history that Winter and Prost describe.

In many ways Barker's trilogy is revisionist; it focuses on things she felt had been left out of the official historical accounts of the war. The perspective of the war poets was the first onslaught on these accounts and, as I shall discuss, Barker supplements their stories with those of working-class characters and women. As this chapter has shown, the collective remembrance of the Great War in Britain has its own history; a history that is a "work in progress". The diachronicity and dialogism of *The Regeneration Trilogy* relate it to all wars in the twentieth century. Chapter Two will draw on the historical, literary, and critical dialogical contexts discussed above in order to shed light on the function of cultural trauma in the trilogy.

CHAPTER TWO

Cultural Trauma

'The past continues to haunt, influence, distort and occasionally redeem the present [...] The Somme is like the Holocaust: it revealed things we cannot come to terms with and cannot forget. It never becomes the past.' (Pat Barker, qtd. in Jaggi, "Dispatches")

Psychological trauma, according to Sigmund Freud, is caused by an event or events that are so overwhelming that they cannot be comprehended when they take place. Instead, they are blocked out of consciousness – or repressed – as if they had never happened; they are "missed" experiences.⁶³ Freud explains that repression is a normal psychological defence mechanism, but it is activated in an extreme form by traumatic events. Although repression temporarily blocks traumatic memories from consciousness, they nevertheless return to haunt trauma victims, generating anxiety and forcing them to repeat or re-live the traumatic events in one form or another: through compulsive, repetitive or self-defeating behaviour, for example (Freud, "Remembering" 147-56). The trauma victim thus becomes "stuck" in the past (Freud, "Beyond"; "Repeating").⁶⁴ In the trilogy, the patient Burns illustrates Freud's idea of the patient becoming stuck in the past; in France he was thrown by a shell blast face down into the belly of a decomposing corpse, filling his mouth and nostrils with rotting flesh. In the aftermath he develops anorexia. He cannot get rid of the smell of putrid flesh, and everything he tastes brings back the nauseating memory. He compulsively repeats the experience and is unable to work through it. Many of the other patients are also haunted by their battlefield memories; they are forced to live through them again and again rather than experiencing them as past events.

Trauma can be contagious and may be experienced by societies as well as by individuals, as the quote from Barker above indicates.⁶⁵ It can go beyond the individual victim to affect secondary witnesses and even those born

⁶³ Cathy Caruth explains this idea of missed experience as follows: "[...] trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature – the way it was precisely *not known* in the first instance – returns to haunt the survivor later on" (*Unclaimed Experience* 4). She takes Freud's discussion of Tasso's story of Tancred and Clorinda from *Gerusalemme Liberata* in "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" as her point of departure (1-9).

⁶⁴ In "Beyond the Pleasure Principle", Freud describes the traumatized patient as "obliged to *repeat* the repressed material as a contemporary experience instead of, as the physician would prefer to see, *remembering* it as something belonging to the past" (288).

⁶⁵ The aftermaths of the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the US and the tsunami catastrophe in Southeast Asia Christmas 2004 are obvious recent examples of societal, if not global, traumatisation.

after the event itself. In *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, Dominick LaCapra discusses historical events such as the Holocaust and the dropping of atomic bombs on Japanese cities near the end of World War Two and observes that such destructive and disorienting events often obtain an almost sublime or sacral quality (23).⁶⁶ He argues that this kind of event may even become a “founding trauma” which “paradoxically becomes the basis for collective or personal identity, or both”, and says that “[s]uch a trauma is typical of myths of origin and may perhaps be located in the more or less mythologized history of every people” (*Writing* 81). Furthermore, LaCapra argues, “[t]hose traumatized by extreme events, as well as those empathizing with them, may resist working through because of what might almost be termed a fidelity to trauma, a feeling that one must somehow keep faith with it” (*Writing* 22). Traumatic events must be remembered, in his opinion, because “[o]ne’s bond with the dead, [...] may invest trauma with value and make its reliving a painful but necessary commemoration or memorial to which one remains dedicated or at least bound” (*Writing* 22). In my opinion, the Great War may be considered to be one of the “founding” traumas in British history. The unprecedented loss of young lives made it an extreme event with the almost sublime or sacral quality that LaCapra describes.

The public concern with shell shock and the war neuroses during the Great War firmly established battlefield experiences as a species of trauma (Alexander, “Toward” 4) and these experiences and the treatment of shell-shocked soldiers are central concerns in the trilogy. However, as I have indicated, Barker also addresses trauma as a collective phenomenon: as part of a social and political process. This chapter will therefore focus on the concept of *cultural trauma* and how it is illustrated in the trilogy. I begin by explaining how cultural trauma is defined. Secondly, I explore the central trope of regeneration, showing how the *word* “regeneration,” in Bakhtinian terms, undergoes dialogization as it moves from one temporal context to another in relation to war and human sacrifice. Through this trope traditional and modernist interpretations of the war interact. The following two sections continue exploring this trope, showing how the central cultural presuppositions of institutionalized religious faith and patriarchy in Britain are undermined by war, leading to cultural trauma. Finally, I discuss the responses of some critics to Barker’s representation of cultural trauma in the trilogy.

⁶⁶ LaCapra is a historian whose major focus has been on the Holocaust and how it is represented in narratives. However, he also analyses the effects of trauma on literature, philosophy and literary theory. For a study of the effects of trauma on literature, see e.g., *History, Politics and the Novel* (1987).

Defining Cultural Trauma

During the last two decades of the twentieth century, the theory of cultural trauma was introduced in the discipline of sociology. In this study I draw on *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (2004), written by Jeffrey C. Alexander et al.⁶⁷ The authors of this volume share Foucault's social constructivist approach to discourse and argue that the understanding of history changes as different groups contend in interpreting and defining past events. Alexander points out that in interpreting past events, people continually use the language of trauma to explain things that have happened not only to them personally, but to the collectivities to which they belong ("Toward" 2). However, powerful commonsense understandings of trauma (which Alexander labels "lay trauma theory") have tended to distort scholarly approaches to the subject (2). Alexander argues that we must differentiate between individual trauma and collective trauma: "For traumas to emerge at the level of the collectivity, social crises must become cultural crises. Events are one thing, representations of these events quite another. [...] The gap between event and representation can be conceived as the 'trauma process'" (10-11). The notion of trauma is thus both promising and limiting. Theory and research at the psychological level can be fruitful for understanding at the cultural level; but Alexander and his co-authors believe that a more concise concept of trauma must first be developed for cultural analyses.

In "Psychological Trauma and Cultural Trauma", Neil J. Smelser begins by defining the concept of *cultural trauma* as follows: "a memory accepted and publicly given credence by a relevant membership group and evoking an event or situation which is (a) laden with negative affect, (b) represented as indelible, and (c) regarded as threatening a society's existence or violating one or more of its fundamental cultural presuppositions" (44). The event is believed to "undermine or overwhelm one or several essential ingredients of a culture or the culture as a whole" (Smelser 38). Barker's view of the Great War places it in the category of a cultural trauma: The war is laden with negative affect, cannot be forgotten, and as the trilogy shows, it leads to disillusionment with, and the rejection of, a number of the essential components of pre-war British culture. In the following discussion, as noted, I will mainly concentrate on how the trilogy portrays such essential ingredients as institutionalized religious faith and patriarchy being undermined by the war.

⁶⁷ This is a collection of articles on the subject of cultural trauma seen from a number of perspectives. My discussion of and use of the term is based primarily on the articles written by Alexander, Smelser and Eyerman. For a critique of theories of cultural trauma see Sundholm or Joas.

Smelser continues by distinguishing between psychological trauma which affects an individual and is rooted in personal memory, and cultural trauma, which is rooted in collective memory. The concept of collective memory complicates matters. It raises questions about who owns the memory, how it is defined, and how it is responded to. Smelser ascertains that “for this reason establishing a cultural trauma is a contested process; the collective memory of traumatic events becomes a commodity over which people fight and over which they generate their own positions” (qtd. in Kreisler). The meaning of a cultural trauma is thus the subject of contestation, negotiation, mediation and imaginative reconstruction. Indeed, a cultural trauma first becomes a trauma when it is framed in a narrative and defined as such. As Alexander underscores, “trauma is not something naturally existing; it is something constructed by society” (“Toward” 2).

It follows that a claim of traumatic cultural damage must be established through the efforts of “cultural carriers”; i.e. intellectuals, politicians, journalists and others. Different political groups may be divided as to whether a traumatic event actually occurred (historical contestation), what the event meant or how it should be interpreted (contestation over interpretation) and even what kind of feelings the event should arouse (affective contestation). Should people feel pride, guilt or rage? Once a historical memory has been established as a national cultural trauma its status must continuously and actively be sustained and reproduced if it is to retain that status (Smelser 38).

Alexander expands on the concept of carrier groups as follows: “Carrier groups may be elites, but they may also be denigrated and marginalized classes. [...] A carrier group can be generational, representing the perspectives and interests of a younger generation against an older one. It can be national, pitting one’s own nation against a putative enemy” (“Toward” 11). These groups can also be institutional; in this case, they represent “one particular social sector or organization against others in a fragmented and polarized social order” (11). Because the trilogy presents the past diachronically it traces the establishment and maintenance of the Great War as a cultural trauma; historical, interpretive and affective contestation is played out in the on-going dialogues between characters and in the use of intertexts. We see changes and transformations in the way the war is perceived that reflect how the war violated some of the fundamental cultural presuppositions of British society.

In Chapter One, we saw that poets, novelists, combatants and civilians who wrote about their war experiences were important in shaping the

collective memory of the war in British society. The process these writers went through demonstrates how personal trauma becomes cultural trauma. Their experiences were first acknowledged as traumatic when they were put into words, set down in narratives. The gap between the personal experience and its representation and reception marked the process of trauma creation. In short, the war poets were cultural carriers who helped to define the experience of the war in their society. The cumulative effect of the publication and reception of their personal narratives was to create a collective narrative which then became the basis of a cultural trauma in British society. The opposition between traditional and modernist views of the war discussed in Chapter One illustrates the interpretive and affective contestation that complicates the establishment of a cultural trauma, as described by Smelser. Furthermore, through the trilogy Barker herself becomes a cultural carrier through her interaction with other cultural carriers. Barker's trilogy is a new utterance; through her re-accentuation of the past she refocuses or sharpens collective memory, hence reframing the cultural trauma. In the following sections I look at some of the ways in which this is done.

The Trope of Regeneration

In the trilogy, one of the most obvious violations of fundamental British cultural presuppositions in the twentieth century involves the undermining of institutionalized patriarchal religion.⁶⁸ The title of the trilogy, *Regeneration*, introduces a central trope within the narrative that carries these cultural presuppositions and shows their transformation. It is a trope which has the capacity to imply different readings without ever satisfying us that one is more complete than the other. In the trilogy, the word "regeneration" undergoes dialogization; it traces a number of the different ways the word has been conceived of in relation to war, religion and human sacrifice.

Bakhtin observes that: "[i]f the central problem in poetic theory is the problem of the poetic symbol, then the central problem in prose theory is the problem of the double-voiced, internally dialogized word" (*The Dialogic* 330). Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson explain Bakhtin's idea of a word's dialogization as follows:

⁶⁸ Monteith ("We will remember"); Lanone ("Scattering the Seed of Abraham"); Dennis Brown ("Total War"); Johnson ("Embodying Losses"); Vickroy ("A Legacy"); Shaddock ("Dreams of Melanesia"); Westman ("Generation"); Brannigan ("History and Haunting") all discuss aspects of religious faith in the trilogy and I will draw on some of their arguments in what follows.

Words ‘remember’ earlier contexts, and so achieve a ‘stylistic aura,’ often misconceived as the word’s ‘connotations’ around a semantic center. This aura is, in fact, the effect of manifold voices that do not reduce to unity or yield a center. In using a word, speakers may intone the word so as to question the values present in its aura and the presuppositions of its earlier usage. In other words, the word may be ‘reaccentuated’ [...] As they accumulate and come to be shared, reaccentuations add to and alter the already-spoken-about quality of the word. This process is an essential factor in shaping a word’s evolution. (139)

In the following discussion I trace the way the word regeneration carries the “already-spoken-about” qualities of the word simultaneously with later reaccentuations, demonstrating its “evolution”. Cultural carriers from different groups and time periods have contending interpretations of what is meant by regeneration, and the various ways the word can be understood are important in Barker’s dialogic presentation of the Great War.

The word regeneration generally has positive connotations – it gives associations to healing and renewal. Yet, in horticultural terms, for example, regeneration involves the cutting back or rooting out of old growth in order to revivify a plant – one must destroy in order to preserve. In connection with this destructive aspect of regeneration, Hynes writes that in the late 1890s and early 1900s, there was a pervasive feeling that British society had grown soft; the moral decadence of the upper classes and the physical degeneracy of the working classes caused unease. The militant suffragette movement, worker agitation, and the tense situation in Ireland seemed to be symptoms of decline, and the war appeared to many to be just what was needed to reunite and rejuvenate the nation. War would purge Great Britain through violence, redeem the nation of its malaise and instigate regeneration (*A War* 12-23). Hynes quotes Edmund Gosse writing on the purgative effects of war in 1914: “War is the great scavenger of thought. It is the sovereign disinfectant, and its red stream of blood is the Condy’s Fluid that cleans out the stagnant pools and clotted channels of the intellect” (*A War* 12).

In the trilogy, Major Huntley, one of the doctors who participates on the medical boards that decide which soldiers are fit to be sent back to active duty, repeatedly reveals an obsession with both rose growing and “racial degeneracy” in the working-class recruits (*RT* 186-87, 214-17). Major Huntley expresses the ideas of the growing eugenicist movement of the day, mirroring Gosse’s desire for a weeding out or cleaning up of British society in order to rid it of inferior people and consequently inferior thought. With reference to Sassoon’s half-Jewish ancestry, Rivers remarks ironically to Sassoon after he has been passed as fit by the medical board: “Major Huntley thinks you have a

great future as a rose bush. Hybrid vigour” (RT 217). The disturbed patient Fothersgill also seems to see destruction as a necessity for the regeneration of mankind; he responds positively when Sassoon gives him the appalling casualty figures of the day: “Yes Sassoon, the Celestial Surgeon is at work upon humanity” (RT 166). This fascination with destruction is also expressed in a conversation between Rivers and Ruth Head who confesses a guilty secret to Rivers; she actually enjoys the air raids in London: “It’s a terrible thing to say, isn’t it? All that damage. People killed. And yet every time the siren goes, I feel this immense sense of exhilaration” (RT 146). The feeling is so powerful that she admits that she would even like to go out and run about in it: “I don’t of course. But I get this feeling that the ... *crust* of everything is starting to crack. Don’t you feel that?” (RT 146) Rivers, however, is not sure that they are going to like what they are bound to find under the crust.

Similarly, David Fromkin’s description of the socio-historical ramifications of the beginning of the twentieth century also reflects the destructive side of regeneration:

The greatest arms race the world had known was not only waged among mutually hostile nations, busily planning to destroy one another, but took place in a civilization in which it was widely believed that *only destruction could bring regeneration*. The prophet of the age was the powerfully eloquent, though unsystematic philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900). Nietzsche preached the values of the irrational. Though he was German, his message struck a chord in many countries. [...] Unfulfilled revolutions and revolutions betrayed had left Europe frustrated, and in a mood – following Nietzsche – to smash things. [...] It may be that the European sense of frustration – the sense of the stalemate in life, art, and politics – led to a violent sense of abandon, of letting go: a sense that the world ought to be blown up, and let the consequences be what they may. Europe’s Nietzschean mood seemed to play some sort of role in making the Great War possible. (39-40; my emphasis)

Fromkin’s analysis points out what some people believed had to happen *before* regeneration could take place: the destruction of the existing to provide room for the new. This destructive or “purgative” aspect of the idea of regeneration which was evident both before the outbreak of the Great War and in its aftermath, clearly collides with Rivers’ view in the trilogy and with prevalent conceptions of the term in the context of the late twentieth century, as Barker’s re-accentuation demonstrates.

The trilogy was published when Europe was celebrating the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II. It was made painfully obvious by the remembrance ceremonies in 1995 that the ranks of the veterans of the Great

War, and others, who lived through it, were quickly dwindling, and this meant that the collective memory of the war would be weakened.⁶⁹ However, the connections between the two wars seem to ensure that this does not happen; World War II is in fact sometimes even considered to be the continuation of Great War hostilities, necessitated by the failure of the Versailles Treaty.⁷⁰ The latter war, in contrast to the Great War, is often popularly perceived as a just and necessary war against Fascism – which was seen as a universal threat.⁷¹ In the latter half of the twentieth century, both wars, with all their horror, and the threat of nuclear holocaust during the Cold War that followed distanced most people from the belief in destruction as the basis of regeneration. As the historian George L. Mosse explains, with the first use of the atom bomb, and its integration into the arsenal of regular weapons, “[t]he fear of war, already great after both wars, was now magnified by a vision of universal death” (223). This influences our interpretation of the trilogy and Barker’s re-presentation of history, but although the work can be read as an overwhelmingly anti-war narrative, it contains historic undertows which take us back to attitudes which were prevalent in the past. There are some characters, for example Beattie Roper’s neighbours and some of the military doctors, who retain traditional, patriotic ideas about the war; they believe the war is necessary and heroic. Others, like the conscientious objector Patrick MacDowell and the Suffragettes Beattie and Hettie Roper, have opposed the war from the outset. Characters like Sassoon and Rivers who had initially supported the war gradually recognize the futility and horror of the slaughter.

The desire to regenerate the country through the *intentional* infliction of destruction, injury or death seems strangely perverted today. In Barker’s trilogy destructive agency is symbolically evoked. A recurring image related to the destructive aspect of regeneration in the trilogy involves a

⁶⁹ Indeed, the generation that lived through World War II was also dwindling, and this was perhaps a motivating factor for Barker in writing the trilogy. Both wars needed to be reaccentuated to sustain the cultural trauma and remind people of the ugliness and destruction of all wars.

⁷⁰ In his study *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars*, George L. Mosse cites Edwin Lutyens, a famous architect of British war memorials as predicting that in a hundred years 1914 and 1939 would be regarded as part of one war (221). Mosse also notes that “From the start of the Second World War it was a cliché of German propaganda that the war must be viewed as the last link in a chain which had started with the First World War, while in reality it represented a decisive break in that chain” (202). The feeling that the First World War had not ended at all was strongest in those nations where normalcy was slow to return (182).

⁷¹ See Shephard, *A War of Nerves*, for a discussion of how WWII has been socially sanctioned as “a good war”. Shephard cites the historian Michael Howard who said: “for most of those who took part in it, the Second World War had a great deal of point”. Shephard goes on to argue that “[w]hatever the murky obscurities of its beginning, the war’s apocalyptic ending – the liberation of the concentration camps, Hitler’s death pyre in Berlin, the Nuremberg trials – gave it for many the character of a moral crusade” (325, 327). Similarly, Bertrand Russell, an ardent pacifist during the Great War who is also mentioned as an influence on Sassoon in the trilogy, was reported as saying of WWII that the worst thing that Hitler ever did was to make war justifiable again.

neurological experiment carried out by Dr. Rivers and his colleague, Dr. Henry Head.⁷² They had a surgeon sever the nerves of Head's forearm and then re-suture the incision so they could observe and describe the excruciatingly painful process of healing and nerve regeneration. Tracing the process of regeneration in the experiment, Rivers and Head note two different stages. They call the first stage the "protopathic"; in this stage there is a high, but indiscriminate threshold of sensation. When blindfolded, Head is unable to pinpoint the location of a stimulus on his forearm which causes him severe pain. As time passes, a second phase arises which they call the "epicritic". During this phase, Head can perceive more graduated responses to pain and locate a stimulus more precisely. Nevertheless, with time they understand that the process of healing is never complete: an insight which negates the possibility of regeneration through destruction.

The more positive ideas of healing and renewal usually associated with regeneration are also central in the narrative, and the implications of biological or somatic healing are analogically transferred to the healing of psychic wounds, since Rivers is treating traumatized soldiers using psychoanalysis. This analogical relationship is made explicit when Rivers realizes that "Inevitably, as time went on, both words had acquired broader meanings, so that 'epicritic' came to stand for everything rational, ordered, cerebral, objective, while 'protopathic' referred to the emotional, sensual, the chaotic, the primitive" (RT 327-28). Rivers realizes that the experiment reflects his internal divisions, supplying him with a vocabulary in which to express them. It illustrates a kind of enlightenment binary that places him firmly in the time of the war.

Barker explains that the historical Rivers and Head also applied their theories about the epicritic and protopathic aspects of the nervous system to their society: "to the upper and lower classes, to men and women, to 'civilized' white people and 'uncivilized' brown people on the other side of the world" (qtd. in S. Stevenson, "With the Listener" 184). What she finds interesting about Rivers is that he did not remain wholeheartedly an advocate of the epicritic and the hierarchical structure of his society; instead he saw the protopathic as an essential aspect of creativity, even within science (184). This suggests that Barker sees him as gradually transcending the enlightenment binary typical of his day.

⁷² The character Dr. Henry Head is also based on a historical figure, and the experiment was documented in medical literature and journals of the day.

The trope of regeneration is thus initially anchored in this image of the nerve regeneration experiment carried out by Head and Rivers, grounding it in physicality and a scientific worldview. As the narrative progresses, however, the trope becomes increasingly entwined with abstract patriotic and religious ideas. A conflict ensues between the “epicritical” values of rational, scientific thought and the subjective, irrational, or “protopathic” values of religious faith. The iterant, visceral images of skulls, horrible wounds and severed body parts, connected both to the Great War and Melanesian society continue to dialogize the trope of regeneration in the trilogy. Rivers bridges these societies in the trilogy. The historical Rivers grew up as the son of an Anglican vicar, and his biography corresponds, as Dennis Brown notes, with “the advent of Darwinism and the growth of agnosticism [which] had much to do with the growing rift between Christianity and science. As ‘Social Darwinism’, the mood well transcended the spheres of biology and zoology” (189). Brown argues that “The sheer range of W. H. R. Rivers’s expertise and interests makes him an ideal figure to embody a transition from Victorian self-confidence to modernist doubt [...] and from the totalizing grand narratives of modernity to the ‘petit récits’ of postmodernism” (188). However, he thinks that “Barker does not make much of Rivers’s upbringing as an Anglican vicar’s son” (188). I believe, in contrast, that Rivers’s vicarage childhood, as it is recollected by the adult Rivers in the trilogy, is a pivotal example of how religious faith is undermined in the trilogy. It is an inherent aspect of the cultural trauma of the Great War which Barker conveys. She traces the conflict between science and religion through Rivers as his residual, boyhood belief is overwhelmed by his education, his training as a medical doctor and by the mutilation and suffering caused by the war that he witnesses.

Undermining Institutionalized Religious Faith

In *The Great War and Women’s Consciousness*, Tylee discusses the high-Victorian belief in the purgative and regenerative effects of war and says that Rupert Brooke was the poet who above all represented the glamour of war for the war generation; his poetry can be summed up in the “imperialist religion of self-sacrifice ‘For God, King and Country’” (77). The trilogy also takes up the idea of sacrifice as a prerequisite of regeneration. In one of his first therapy sessions with Dr. Rivers, Prior quotes from Lord Alfred Tennyson’s “The Charge of the Light Brigade”, a poem which memorializes a battle in the Crimean War and distils the high-Victorian, Christian ethos of self-sacrifice: “Stormed at with shot and shell,/Boldly they rode and well,/Into the jaws of death,/Into the

mouth of hell ...” (RT 61). Although he categorizes the poem as “rubbish”, Prior admits to Rivers that he was once in love with it. Like many other young men who had had the imperial adventure and heroism of war inculcated in them, it was perhaps one of the reasons why he had enlisted. However, after having been in the trenches, the falsity of such patriotic sentiment has been exposed:

‘Shall I tell you something about that charge? Just as it was about to start an officer saw three men smoking. He thought that was a bit too casual, so he confiscated their sabres and sent them into the charge unarmed. Two of them were killed. The one who survived was flogged the following day. The military mind doesn’t change much, does it? The same mind now orders men to be punished by tying them to a limber.’ Prior stretched his arms out. ‘Like this. Field punishment No. 1. “Crucifixion.” Even at the propaganda level can you imagine anybody being *stupid* enough to order *this*?’ (RT 61)

Prior’s disillusionment mirrors that of many of the war poets writing after Brooke’s death, among them Sassoon and Owen.

More generally, the motifs of bodily pain and human sacrifice – which Prior so vehemently turns against – tie in with central cultural myths within Indo-European history, the Judeo-Christian tradition and the myths of the Great War itself. In Europe, the residual, medieval worldview of the human body as merely a dispensable part of an immortal, collective body was opposed to the dominant, humanistic view of the body as individualized and mortal.⁷³ It is as if war, with its emphasis on the collective good of the nation reactivates a more primitive or “protopathic” way of viewing the human being. The medieval vision, taken in extremity overvalued death and the afterlife. Thus, the death of the individual was of little account; it was simply a sacrifice for the common good and thus regenerative.

Indo-European stories reveal the core of the Western masculine ethic. It is through the sacrifice of the warrior hero’s life that his community is regenerated (Blazina 22). This myth is incorporated in the Judeo-Christian tradition and reflected in the trilogy. For example, while on leave from Craiglockhart, Rivers attends a church service. His attention is drawn to stained glass windows portraying the Crucifixion and the Aqedah, the story of Abraham and Isaac. Rivers sees these two events as “the two bloody bargains on which a civilization claims to be based” (RT 133). He realizes that the price of acceptance in patriarchal society is high for the younger generation. This is

⁷³ Bakhtin explains this opposition in his discussion of grotesque realism and the concept of carnival in *Rabelais and His World*.

the deal, he thinks: “If you, who are young and strong, will obey me, who am old and weak, even to the extent of being prepared to sacrifice your life, then in the course of time you will peacefully inherit, and be able to exact the same obedience from your sons” (RT 133). We can trace the motif of sacrifice in several other scenes in the trilogy.

In one such scene, Sassoon and Owen discuss one of Sassoon’s early war poems, “The Redeemer”. In this poem Sassoon compares a weary soldier shouldering a load of planks to Christ, a comparison that Owen finds beautiful and compelling. However, Sassoon contradicts him:

‘Well, don’t you think it’s rather easily said? “I say that He was Christ”?’

‘You m-mean you d-didn’t m-mean it?’

‘Oh, I meant it. The book isn’t putting one point of view, it’s charting the – the *evolution* of a point of view. That’s probably the first poem that even attempts to look at the war realistically. And that one doesn’t go nearly far enough.’ He paused. ‘The fact is Christ isn’t on record as having lobbed many Mills bombs.’ (RT 75-76)

The biblical images of sacrifice that Barker uses – the Aqedah and the crucifixion – are contradictory in themselves when applied to war. Both images involve fathers who are willing to sacrifice sons, but unlike Isaac and Jesus, the soldiers are not blameless victims. They themselves are guilty of murder on the battlefield. As Owen puts it: “if I were going to call myself a Christian, I’d have to call myself a pacifist as well. I don’t think it’s possible to c-call yourself a C-Christian and... just leave out the awkward bits” (RT 76).

Barker’s use of the Aqedah activates Owen’s poem “The Parable of the Old Man and the Young” as intertext. Owen’s poem conjures up this biblical story, but changes its outcome with an ironic twist:

When lo! An angel called him out of heaven,
Saying, Lay not thy hand upon the lad,
Neither do anything to him. Behold,
A ram, caught in a thicket by its horns;
Offer the Ram of Pride instead of him.
But the old man would not so, but slew his son,

And half the seed of Europe, one by one. (Owen 42)⁷⁴

The biblical stories of the binding of Isaac and the crucifixion are both intertexts in the trilogy. In the dialogical context of the trilogy Rivers' contemplation of the stained-glass windows depicting these stories transforms them. They illustrate what Elaine Scarry has called "analogical verification", or "analogical substantiation": "when some central ideal or ideology or cultural construct has ceased to elicit a population's belief [...] – the sheer material factualness of the human body will be borrowed to lend that cultural construct the aura of 'realness' and 'certainty'" (14). During the Great War, injured or dead bodies helped to give facticity to unanchored cultural constructs such as religious faith, nationhood, masculinity, and England. Pain, injury and death thus made abstract ideas tangible (14). Scarry deplors the mechanism of analogical verification because it is used to justify war and torture. Barker's graphic portrayal of failed regeneration verifies that she, like Scarry, also deplors the mechanism.

Furthermore, the sacrificial motifs of the crucifixion and the Aqedah in the trilogy confirm and expand upon the earlier dialogue on religious motifs in the canonical war poetry. In "Scattering the Seeds of Abraham", Lanone argues that in the war poetry, the Aqedah was used "as a fitting parable for the apparent conspiracy of the old against the young, the story of Abraham becomes a *topos* of the period; the Biblical text meant to signify the end of human sacrifice was turned into the demand of a wanton God exacting his pound of flesh" (260). She goes on to argue that Barker rewrites this motif of sacrifice in various ways. A primary complication is that the officers are both representatives of the younger generation who are being sacrificed and "father figures" for the men they lead. Rivers recognizes that the "two bloody bargains" depicted in the church windows are cultural myths underlying British society. The congregation at the church service he is attending are mainly old men and women – while the young are dying in the trenches these people sing hymns: "God moves in a mysterious way / His wonders to perform... / Blind

⁷⁴ Barker incorporates a number of concrete images of squandered "seed" in the trilogy that can be seen in relation to Owen's final image. Ada Lumb warns Sarah about premarital sex, claiming that there is always a worker in the factories that make condoms with the express duty of putting pinholes in them (RT 171). She tells her daughter that "No man likes to think he's sliding in on another man's leavings" (RT 172), yet it is exactly this situation which titillates Billy when he has sex with the prostitute Elinor (RT 452). When Billy Prior and Sarah actually do have sex, the condom they use leaks, and he throws it into the fire, "a million or so Billies and Sarahs perishing in a gasp of flame" (RT 476). Prior also imagines the "German spunk" left inside the anus of a French farm boy with whom he has sex behind the lines and thinks: "Oh ye millions I embrace you, / This kiss is for the whole world..." (RT 574). All of these scenes, like Owen's image, dwell on the massive potential of future life that is literally squandered not only in the war but in the sex act itself.

unbelief is sure to err, / And scan His works in vain; / He is His own interpreter / And He will make it plain. Amen” (RT 133-34). Rivers thinks ironically, “The congregation, having renounced reason, looked rather the happier for it, and sat down to await the sermon” (RT 134). Whereas the congregation has “renounced reason”, Rivers has renounced the institutionalized religion of the church; in his view the fathers of Britain are ignoring God’s intercession – they, unlike Abraham, are intentionally sacrificing their sons as proof of their faith.

In this connection, Gill Plain describes a residual view of the Bible, with its myths and symbolism as the “Ur-text of social organisation” (19). In this view, the hierarchical organization of British society – from Monarch to government to the class system – seems to be justified by a belief in a natural order or divine right and demands blind belief. By incorporating this residual view and these biblical intertexts, Barker draws attention to the cultural contradictions that contribute to the acceptance of the war. The veritable scope of the sacrifice brings this blind belief under scrutiny. As Dennis Brown remarks, “the technological advances of Great War weaponry entailed a ‘burnt offering’ of millions of individuals” (198). In the trilogy, the questioning of these religious narratives so familiar in British society contributes to the creation of cultural trauma.

Barker develops the theme of the loss of faith further; she uses Prior to mirror and expand on Rivers’ contemplation of the religious symbolism in church artwork. In *The Ghost Road*, marching home from communal baths with his men, he thinks of his childhood church – Father Mackenzie’s church:

And behind every altar, blood, torture, death. St. John’s head on a platter, Salome offering it to Herodias, the women’s white arms a sort of cage around the severed head with its glazed eyes. Christ at the whipping block, his expression distinctly familiar. St. Sebastian hamming it up and my old friend St. Lawrence on his grid. Father Mackenzie’s voice booming from the vestry. He loved me, the poor sod, I really think he did. (RT 531-32)

Ironically, as a boy Prior was sexually abused by Father Mackenzie – he was “screwed over” – just as the soldiers are being exploited by the fathers of the nation. In his reverie, the passion of Christ is juxtaposed with the sexual sadism in the story of Salome and John the Baptist. This sadism is strengthened by the homosexual undertones that Oscar Wilde built into his “passion play” based on the biblical story. Wilde’s play, which I will discuss in more detail in Chapter

Three, permeates the narrative with images of paranoia and deceit. St. Sebastian, patron saint of soldiers along with St. George, was shot through with arrows, and St. Lawrence burned on a grid, again emphasizing the visceral sacrifices and martyrdom so quintessential to Christian iconography. Moreover, Jason Goldman points out that St. Sebastian has had a long-standing presence in queer artistic production; there was a homosexual cult of Saint Sebastian in the nineteenth century, and many gays and lesbians regard him as their patron saint today.⁷⁵ Prior thus equates religious belief with the abuse of power and with exploitation, just as Rivers does.

Undermining Patriarchy

The title *Regeneration*, as we have seen, thematizes not only the destructive or purgative implications of the word, but also brings generational conflict into focus. The motif of the sacrifice of the son is inherent in patriarchal society as illustrated in the story of Abraham and Isaac. As I have argued, this narrative is a founding story of the Judeo-Christian tradition, but Barker returns to the idea of the sacrifice of the son from other perspectives as well. In a sense she advances from Christian symbolism to the more modern-day, surrogate “religions” of anthropology and psychoanalysis. In this way she demonstrates how another essential ingredient of British culture that structured religious faith – patriarchy – came under attack during the Great War.

Rivers reflects on the story of Abraham and Isaac and contrasts it to sacrificial ritual on the island of Vao, where he had done anthropological research. On this island, an illegitimate boy was traditionally adopted by a leading man and brought up in his household. When he reached puberty,

he was given the honour, as befitted the son of a great man, of leading in the sacrificial pig, one of the huge-tusked boars in which the wealth of the people was measured. He was given new bracelets, new necklaces, a new penis wrapper and then, in front of the entire community, all of whom knew what was about to happen, he led the pig to the sacrificial stone, where his father waited with

⁷⁵ Goldman cites Richard A. Kayle: “contemporary gay men have seen in Sebastian at once a stunning advertisement for homosexual desire (indeed, a homoerotic ideal), and a prototypical portrait of a tortured closet case”. Goldman explains that “Sebastian’s supple, near-naked body; the wink-wink symbolism of the penetrating arrows; his thrown-back head expressing a mixture of pleasure and pain; and his inviting gaze all readily contribute to his homoerotic appeal”. However, he concludes that St. Sebastian’s entry into gay culture in the first place “most certainly invokes his origins as emblem of Christian Godliness and martyrdom” (cited in http://www.glbtc.com/arts/subjects_st_sebastian.html). It is interesting to note that Oscar Wilde, who haunts the trilogy due to his play *Salome* and its connection to the Pemberton Billing trial which I will discuss in Chapter Three, took the name Sebastian Melmoth in honour of the “penetrated” saint when he moved to France after his release from Reading Gaol.

upraised club. And, as the boy drew near, he brought the club down and crushed his son's skull. (RT 488-89)

Comparing this event with the story of Abraham and Isaac, Rivers decides that "The two events represented the difference between savagery and civilization, for in the second scenario the voice of God is about to forbid the sacrifice, and will be heeded" (RT 489). Rivers significantly remembers these stories as he bids Prior farewell when he is about to return to the front. Watching Prior disappear, he thinks that he has been thinking a lot about fathers and sons lately, but wishes this particular memory had chosen some other moment to re-surface. As a father figure, he – like the other fathers of the nation – has chosen to ignore God's revocation of his command; he is going to sacrifice his surrogate sons. Rivers thus understands that he and his nation have been reduced to savagery.

The trilogy continues the dialogue on the motifs of sacrifice and regeneration by juxtaposing Judeo-Christian religious ideas with a Greek myth, namely the story of Oedipus. Freud had of course employed the myth of Oedipus as an expression for a central paradigm of psychoanalysis; he used it as the constitutive trauma of male gendered identity. John Launer points out that both the Aqedah and *Oedipus Rex* contain fathers with murderous designs on their sons ("Fathers and Sons"). In the story of Oedipus, it is actually the father, Laius, who sets the tragedy in motion. He believes a prediction that his son will one day grow up to kill him and issues an order to have the baby boy set out on a mountain to die.⁷⁶ Ironically, Oedipus survives to unwittingly get his revenge. Whereas the Greek story illustrates the inescapability of fate, the story of the binding of Isaac is more ambiguous because it involves the exercise of free will. As Launer points out, some people consider Abraham's obedience to be exemplary because it demonstrates his utter trust in God's will. Others, in contrast, feel that Abraham's compliance with God's initial command is just as bad as if he had completed the act. Whereas the Hebrew story stresses that Abraham has a choice, the story of Oedipus suggests a more deterministic, Greek view of the universe, stressing a fate-based philosophy of life. According to this view, life is futile and tragic and death is the end of the line ("Fathers and Sons"). As I will show, Barker's activation of both these stories as intertexts and her description of sacrificial ritual in Melanesia underscore her

⁷⁶ Launer finds it striking that Freud chose to concentrate on Oedipus rather than Laius, and perhaps even odder that he did not concentrate on Abraham rather than Laius (Launer, 635 – 36).

dialogical approach to the subjects of generational conflict, Christian sacrifice, and patriarchy which have circulated in British society.

In contrast to the Aqedah or the Crucifixion, the myth of Oedipus transforms sacrifice into vengeful murder. Rather than fathers sacrificing sons, we are concerned with sons who wish to kill their fathers. Using the story of Oedipus as a metaphor for the dynamics of the triangular relationship between mother, father and child, Freud explained that the (male) child has an unconscious desire to get rid of, or metaphorically, to “kill” the father in order to have the mother for himself. The threat of punishment (or castration) gradually forces the child to accept the incest taboo, and analogically, all the other laws of society. If all goes well, the child internalizes the laws and becomes self-policing. The child represses its desire, and in this manner, social rules and regulations are passed on from one generation to another.⁷⁷ However, the desire to “kill the father” symbolically reappears in many types of transgressive behaviour; in social revolt or challenges to the normalized or naturalized bases of power in society.

The trilogy brings in the oedipal motif in terms of killing the father on several occasions. It is quite obviously an aspect of the hate and revulsion that Sassoon and Prior express towards the older generation, which is profiting from the war, and seems unaffected by the slaughter of the younger generation. Sassoon, on visiting the Conservative Club, takes in the portraits of elderly, be-whiskered Edinburgh worthies of the past and their present-day counterparts sitting around the room: “He listened to the rumble of their voices and felt a well-practised hatred begin to flow. [...] He was aware of something sexual in this anger. He looked at the cloth straining across their broad backs, at the folds of beef-pink skin that overlapped their collars, and thought, with uncharacteristic crudity, *When did you two last get it up?*” (RT 102). The sexual antagonism of the oedipal paradigm becomes overt in the generational conflict.

In one of their early sessions, when Sassoon is already comfortably settling into a surrogate father-son relationship with Rivers, he tells him about Julian Dadd, a painter who actually committed patricide rather than merely desiring to do so unconsciously. Dadd ““made a list of old men in power who deserved to die, and unfortunately – or or otherwise – his father’s name headed the list. He carried him for half a mile through Hyde Park and then drowned him in the Serpentine in full view of everybody on the banks”” (RT 32).

⁷⁷ Freud investigates how the child, while going through the different psycho-social stages, develops an unconscious and a superego, becoming a civilized and productive (as well as a correctly heterosexual) adult. See e.g., Freud’s “Three essays on the theory of sexuality” (1905); “The sexual enlightenment of children” (1906); “The dissolution of the oedipus complex” (1924); “The passing of the oedipus complex” (1924); and “The Ego and the Id” (1927).

Significantly, one of the reasons Sassoon was admitted to Craiglockhart was that Graves had told the medical board that he had threatened to assassinate Prime Minister Lloyd George – a father figure for the nation – information which he also imparts to Rivers (*RT* 30-31). Sassoon's threat, although he denied that he meant it seriously, must be seen in connection with his protest against the war, which in itself was an indictment of the older generation.⁷⁸ Obviously, those who are in power are responsible for the war aims and strategies, and thus implicated in the unprecedented slaughter of young men.

Analogically, Sassoon's protest is an oedipal revolt against the older generation and the dominant view of the war in his society. Furthermore, Sassoon's homosexuality emphasizes his refusal to accept patriarchal law, and thereby contribute to the reproduction of the hegemonic rules of a heterosexually gendered identity. The dominant discourse on gender and masculinity in his society, which I will discuss in more detail in Chapter Four, dictates that as a man he must either kill or be killed in war. But as Foucault reminds us,

Discourses are not once and for all subservient to power or raised up against it, any more than silences are. We must make allowances for the complex and unstable process whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling-block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. (*History of Sexuality* 100-01)

Sassoon's declaration is a point of resistance, which although it has no effect on the politics of the war, does in fact have an impact on individuals like Rivers. Historically, moreover, Sassoon's poetry and memoirs had a great impact on how the war was perceived. As I have argued, the works of the war poets were essential in the mediation of cultural trauma.

Furthermore, during the course of the narrative Rivers also comes to recognize the oedipal tendencies in his own character; these tendencies are closely related to his rejection of the Christian faith and thus indirectly to his rejection of patriarchy. He remembers that as a boy he had eavesdropped under his father's window while he was giving Charles Dodgson, who suffered from a paralytic stammer, a speech lesson. The speech lesson Dodgson was getting was full of the same advice Rivers himself was given to combat his own stammer. It was advice that did not work: "So he'd thought, sweeping away his father's life

⁷⁸ It is telling that the upper-class Sassoon is sent to a psychiatric hospital to recover after threatening to kill Lloyd George, whereas working-class Beattie Roper is sent to prison for the same threat. I will return to this in Chapter Three in my discussion of the discourse of class.

work in a single minute as twelve-year-old boys are apt to do” (RT 138). He cautiously raises his head above the window sill and sees his father’s back where he is sitting behind his desk: “He stared at the back of his neck, at the neck of the man whom he had, in a way, just killed, and he didn’t feel sad or guilty about it at all. He felt glad” (RT 138). Not long after the remembered incident, the young Rivers gave a talk on Darwin’s theory of evolution to the speech therapy group where his father presided. Since his father was a vicar, this was another challenge to his authority, because the young Rivers had suggested that Genesis was merely the creation myth of a Bronze Age people. Although his father was angry, the young Rivers felt internally triumphant. He had finally managed to get his father to listen to *what* he was saying rather than *how* he was saying it. In challenging his father he also challenged the Christian religion which he represents and the tenets of patriarchy that it builds on.

Rivers analyzes the parallels between the sacrifice found in Judeo-Christian religious myths and sacrificial rituals in Melanesia and what was going on in his society during the Great War, and, as Leed points out: “If there is a consensus upon what myths mean, it lies in the notion that myths mediate unpalatable cultural contradictions” (119). In a sense, they provide explanations for societal institutions and customs and why they must be respected. For Rivers, the war has exposed the primitive, mythical basis of his society’s thinking. His contemplation of the Aqedah – and his own violation of the contract – however, reveals his implication in the deaths of these young men. He functions as a father figure for his patients, and like Abraham is ready to sacrifice them by “healing” them so they can return to battle. But where Abraham listens to the Lord, Rivers, in fact, sends Sassoon and Prior back to active duty.

Rivers’ contemplation of and reflection on religious art discussed above demonstrates Bakhtin’s concept of internalized dialogue. Bakhtin explains that each individual’s consciousness is saturated with conflicting social values, other voices and the already said (*Speech Genres* 89). In novels this is demonstrated when characters carry on conversations with themselves on matters of great import over time; these are conversations between an earlier and a later self. Seen in connection with the carnage of the war, the Crucifixion, as portrayed in the stained glass windows of the church suddenly appears to Rivers to be “*The bargain*. [...] The one on which all patriarchal societies are founded” (133). The young are expected to be obedient and loyal; to be ready to sacrifice their lives for their fathers. In return, they will inherit the positions of power and be able to command the obedience of the next generation.

However, Rivers sees that the older generation is breaking the bargain and intentionally slaughtering their sons. Institutionalized religion is being used to justify human sacrifice. But these sons will not be spared or resurrected. Later, when he rescues Burns who comes close to drowning because he is so traumatized by his war experiences that he is unable to take care of himself, Rivers thinks: "*Nothing justifies this. Nothing nothing nothing*" (RT 160). We are thus given access to the internal dialogization of his thoughts as his attitudes toward and understanding of religion, patriarchy, and the war change and develop. Although his rationalizations and intellectual distancing should counteract the repetitive horrors of witnessing, he himself gradually realizes that he is exhibiting some of the symptoms of shell shock; as a secondary witness, he has been shell-shocked by the stories of his own patients.

As a doctor, Rivers' job is to alleviate pain and suffering and to promote healing. As an army captain, however, it is his duty to rehabilitate shell-shocked soldiers in order to return them to the front where they again risk death or injury. Although Rivers initially believes that the threat of German militarism must be dealt with once and for all to ensure peace for future generations, his interactions with his patients force him to question his own complicity in the continuation of the war. In the last pages of the trilogy, he is forced to witness the drawn-out death of the wounded soldier Hallet whom Prior has rescued from no-man's land. As Dennis Brown explains: "Prior is killed, but in a peculiar variation on the sacrificial exchange, has saved Hallet, thereby 'sending' him back to Rivers who tends him as he dies in the hospital" (191). Shaddock interprets Prior's intervention with Hallet as his "second message": a "test case" for Rivers' therapy (667). The first message was that his nerves were in perfect working order back at the front: "By which I mean that in my present situation the only sane thing to do is to run away, and I will not do it. Test passed?" (RT 577) Just as Rivers functions as Prior's surrogate father, Prior has "unwittingly become a surrogate father to this naïve youth, making Hallet the final link between three generations of tenuous adoptive father/son relationships developed in the course of the novel" (Shaddock 667).

During his treatment of Hallet, Rivers witnesses another father-son relationship. Hallet's father is "a middle-aged man, very erect, retired professional army, in uniform for the duration of the war" (RT 582). Rivers looks at the wounded soldier: "The whole left side of his face drooped. The exposed eye was sunk deep in his skull, open, though he didn't seem to be fully conscious. [...] The hernia cerebri pulsated, looking like some strange submarine form of life, the mouth of a sea anemone perhaps. The whole of the left side of

his body was useless” (RT 582). In the last minutes of his life, Hallet repeatedly whispers “*Shotvarfet. Shotvarfet.*” The cry is repeated, “Again and again, increasing in volume as he directed all his strength into the cry. His mother tried to soothe him, but he didn’t hear her” (RT 588). Rivers suddenly thinks that he understands Hallet’s garbled cry and interprets for the boy’s father: “He’s saying, ‘It’s not worth it’” (RT 588). Hallet’s father immediately contradicts Rivers: “‘Oh, it is worth it, it *is*,’ [...] The man was in agony. He hardly knew what he was saying” (RT 588). His response is protopathic; a cry of pain. But it is Hallet’s cry that is taken up and repeated by a chorus of wounded soldiers lying on the same ward, “A buzz of protest not against the cry, but in support of it, a wordless murmur from damaged brains and drooping mouths. ‘*Shotvarfet. Shotvarfet*’” (RT 588). Although Rivers thinks he has interpreted the dying soldier’s cry, there is no way of knowing whether his interpretation is correct or not; “Shotvarfet” thus seems to express the very *lack* of any meaning in war.

For the patriotic father, the sacrifice of his son must be inscribed with meaning – it must be regenerative for the nation – or his own loss will be intolerable. Meaning collapses as he storms away from his son’s deathbed. Rivers is no longer able to comply with the father’s insistence on sacrificial meaning. He simply closes the corpse’s remaining eye and records the time of death, seemingly unaffected. All the wounded soldiers on the ward have had the protopathic cultural and religious values of patriotism, self-sacrifice and heroism physically inscribed on their bodies in the form of wounds as a failed act of analogical substantiation. The grotesque realism of Hallet’s head wound brings home the gruesomeness and unacceptability of that inscription. Rivers realizes that the wilful destruction of Hallet’s nerves and tissues cannot lead to regeneration but only to wasteful death. Both the war and the patriarchal dictates of the “fathers” of the nation are indefensible.

In the *Ordo Salutis* (Order of Salvation)⁷⁹ of the Anglican faith, the soul must first be regenerated before it can be resurrected or glorified in Christ. In Rivers’ scientific world, the “soul” is extinguished with the body;

⁷⁹ The Order of Salvation involves a number of steps said to lead to man’s salvation and glorification (or resurrection in Christ). These steps are generally listed as: Effectual Call, Regeneration by the Spirit, Conversion through Faith, Justification by Faith, Adoption as Children, Sanctification, Perseverance and Glorification. There is contention among different faiths as to whether the steps are temporal or logical. In the Anglican Church the predominant orientation is that the steps are linear and chronological. One of the issues discussed among different faiths is whether regeneration comes before or after faith. In the Anglican Church, the Order of Salvation is officially Calvinistic, placing regeneration before faith. This is applicable to the trilogy because both Rivers and Wansbeck have lost faith in the possibility of regeneration as posited by institutionalized religion and this demonstrates the undermining of religious faith and contributes to cultural trauma. For a contrastive theological discussion of the Order of Salvation, see Snoeberger.

there can be no resurrection. In a therapy session, Rivers discusses religion and the belief in life after death with his patient Wansbeck, although he realizes that this is a difficult topic: “It was almost easier now to ask a man about his private life than to ask what beliefs he lived by. Before the war . . . but one must beware of attributing everything to the war. The change had started long before the war” (RT 561). Wansbeck says that he used to believe in it and was brought up religiously. He concludes that “I suppose one doesn’t like to have to admit it’s gone. Faith” (RT 561). For Rivers, Darwin’s *Origin of Species* started the process that made him a scientist and robbed him of his religious faith long before the war. What changed Wansbeck’s mind was the unburied corpses and buzzing flies in No Man’s Land; the concrete, visceral reality of rotting flesh has negated the possibility of belief in regeneration and redemption.

In Hallet’s death scene, we see again that Barker’s work is dialogic; it encompasses several independent voices, and thus differing versions of the traumatic events. It includes the voice of the patriotic father, but that voice drowns in the overwhelming cry of the wounded soldiers – chanting like the chorus of a Greek tragedy. And Rivers, who started out with a pro-war point of view gradually understands that nothing can justify the suffering he is seeing around him. Through the development of Rivers, the anti-war narrative dominates. In many ways he begins with the traditional view of the war as patriotic, heroic, and necessary, but then he gradually adopts the more modernist view, as described for example by Fussell. The dialogue between traditionalist and modernist views of the war is therefore brought out within a single character.

Cross-Cultural Trauma

Because the discourse of war in the trilogy is diachronic, we must go beyond the Great War itself to consider war as a recurring, or perhaps as an “anthropological” phenomenon. In an interview with Sheryl Stevenson, Barker explains that she didn’t want to turn the trilogy into a very simple antiwar message. She therefore juxtaposed Hallet’s death scene with Rivers’ memories from Melanesia. The British colonial power actually succeeded in abolishing war there by outlawing head-hunting:

‘And once you destroyed their capacity to wage war, you destroyed one of the mainsprings of their culture. So I didn’t want to settle just for the irony of all these young men dying in a war to end all war with the next war only twenty years away. I wanted to ask a more difficult question, which is, to what extent are we intrinsically violent towards other groups?’ (“With the Listener” 183)

This psychological/biological conundrum faced daily by the doctors at Craiglockhart ties in with the undermining of religious belief described in the trilogy. The Melanesians' capacity to wage war was closely linked to their religious beliefs and the sacrificial ritual of headhunting. Similarly, Britain's capacity to wage war was shaped by Christian ideals of altruism and self-sacrifice, with its medieval, dual destructive-creative core, embodied in the trope of regeneration. Although some of the poems of the war poets and a number of works of art created after the war attempted to resolve the Great War into a matter of resurrection and redemption,⁸⁰ Barker does not offer such consolation in her trilogy.

The trilogy ends with Rivers, on the edge of sleep, hearing the voice of Njiru, the Melanesian "witchdoctor" chanting an invocation for exorcising evil, or "Ave", the destroyer of peoples through war and pestilence. "O Sumbi! O Gesese! O Palapoko! O Gorepoko! O you Ngengere at the root of the sky. Go down, depart ye" (RT 589). Rivers translates to himself: "*There is an end of men, an end of chiefs, an end of chiefs' wives, an end of chiefs' children – then go down and depart. Do not yearn for us, the fingerless, the crippled, the broken. Go down and depart, oh, oh, oh*" (RT 590). Dennis Brown reads Njiru's invocation as an exorcism of mourning which applies to all of Barker's characters and all the Great War dead. But he also sees it as the exorcism of mourning for "a cultural mindset that died on the battlefields of France ('never such innocence')" (199). It is the undermining or overwhelming of this cultural mindset that contributes to the cultural trauma of the Great War. Brown explains that "Just as the Melanesians are deprived of their spiritual mourning rites through the imposition of colonial morality, so have British soldiers and civilians alike had spiritual rites of burial undermined by scientific agnosticism" (197). The Melanesians no longer carry out their head-hunting ritual after the death of a chief, although they do capture a small boy.⁸¹ And, as Owen's poem "Anthem for Doomed Youth" confirms, there are no longer any "passing-bells" or "orisons" for soldiers killed in battle.

The Melanesian subtext and the ending of the trilogy have elicited a number of other, diverging responses from contemporary critics. Vickroy argues that the ending of the trilogy gestures toward ending cycles of violence,

⁸⁰ E.g., Sir Stanley Spencer's oil paintings "The Resurrection of the Soldiers" (1928-1929) and "Resurrection in Cookham", exhibited in the Sandram Memorial Chapel at Burghclere. For a discussion, see Joseph Phelan, "Love, Death and Resurrection: The Paintings of Stanley Spencer".

⁸¹ The description of what happened traditionally to illegitimate, adopted sons, however, makes this reader wonder about the future fate of this boy. Rivers is not sure that the Melanesians have completely given up their sacrificial rituals; though of course there is also the possibility of change – as there is with Rivers.

and maintains that Barker hopes “that humanity might one day free itself of the reoccurring aggressions and ideologies that have dominated human history” (“A Legacy” 49). Likewise, Shaddock reads the Melanesian subtext of the trilogy as eliciting hope; she argues that Rivers’ dreams of Melanesia are the site where he works through his own conflicted feelings about the war. As an officer and a doctor he is supporting the war effort. As a human being he feels compassion for the soldiers he is trying to heal, only to send to their deaths. Seeing the connections between the sacrificial rituals of Melanesian society and the Christian motifs of sacrifice in his own leads to his emotional transformation and enables him to reject the war (670-71).

In contrast to Vickroy and Shaddock, Lanone claims that the Melanesian subtext of the trilogy “becomes the apocryphal myth demanding sacrifice, strengthening the motif of Abraham” (266). Her view is pessimistic: “The battlefield becomes hell, [...] not because the soldiers die, but because they die meaninglessly. God has withdrawn. There is no meaning” (262). She concludes by saying: “The ghost road is also the road of belief, haunted by parables and metaphors which are subverted to provide hermeneutic models connoting moral, ontological and metaphysical loss, in a devastating betrayal of trust. The crisis shakes all grammar of interpretation [...]” (Lanone 267).

A fifth critic, Brannigan, reads the Melanesian subtext in yet another way: “In Melanesia, Rivers discovers that war, however morally decrepit, appears to have a regenerative function, and this serves to question whether the same ghastly idea might be true of the ‘Great War’” (“History and Haunting” 114). Rivers interprets the reduced fertility of the Melanesian tribes to be a psychological result of losing their sacrificial rituals; they have lost their zest for life. As the trilogy progresses Rivers becomes more and more convinced that nothing can justify the human carnage he is witnessing. As Shaddock notes, Rivers is progressive in his ability to cross cultures, but he nonetheless embodies the ideologies of his own culture. She concludes that his “painfully slow course through three novels towards some modicum of enlightenment about the war shows just how impermeable these ideologies can be, even when they are challenged by a highly intelligent and sensitive man” (671). Each of these critics argues succinctly; Barker’s trilogy elicits diverging responses in the on-going dialogue on the meaning of history and the understanding of the Great War. In my opinion, Barker broaches a number of questions about the possible meanings of war that remain unanswered. But even though the *why* of war remains enigmatic, the *what* and *how* of war are elucidated in the trilogy. She demonstrates how arbitrary ideals are reified,

making war possible, and, as I shall discuss in the following chapters, her Foucauldian social analysis demonstrates how the discourses of class, gender and psychology facilitate warfare.

Working through Trauma

Through dialogical writing and the juxtaposition of related scenes across time and across cultures *The Regeneration Trilogy* shows some of the fundamental cultural presuppositions of British society being threatened by the Great War. Alexander affirms that “[i]t is by constructing cultural traumas that social groups, national societies, and sometimes even entire civilizations not only cognitively identify the existence and source of human suffering but ‘take on board’ some significant responsibility for it” (“Toward” 1). The Great War was a traumatic event which resulted in a shattering break in consciousness and had belated effects, not only on individuals, but on British society as a whole. Because it is preserved in collective memory, the war continues to haunt British society. Perceptions of the past, as I have argued, change with present-day preoccupations and prevailing socio-historical frameworks or, to use Winter and Prost’s term, with changing configurations of history. Barker’s trilogy reframes the narrative of the Great War as cultural trauma, according to the current needs and interests of her generation. This is implied if we return to the symbolic nerve regeneration experiment.

Rivers notices that a triangle of skin between the thumb and forefinger of Head’s hand remains abnormally sensitive to temperature changes five years after the experiment took place: “He’d experimented on it for five years, after all, and even now could have traced on to the skin the outline of the remaining area of protopathic innervation – *for the process of regeneration is never complete*” (RT 330; my emphasis). Although Head’s nerve has been partially regenerated after physical trauma, it can never be the same nerve. Likewise, the cultural trauma of the war is upheld; and in Barker’s opinion it should be: “‘People still need to be told. We forget that there’s always a new generation that is idealistic, that doesn’t believe war is actually as chaotic and random and barbaric as it actually is’” (qtd. in Wendy Smith 48). The title of the third volume of the trilogy, *The Ghost Road*, suggests that a view of the war that existed prior to its commencement – that it would purge or regenerate society – was a fallacy. This makes the title of the first novel, and the title given to the trilogy as a whole – *Regeneration* – ironic. In spite of the many social transformations that were catalyzed or accelerated by the war, its traumatic

legacy continues to haunt British society, for Barker's brilliant dialogic re-accentuation images a process of regeneration that is not complete.

In the last pages of *The Ghost Road*, this haunting is underscored; we follow the Manchesters' march on the road to death. As in Edward Thomas' poem "Roads" we see that "Now all roads lead to France / And heavy is the tread of the living;" (90). The speaker in the poem senses ghosts all around him: "They keep me company / With their pattering, / Crowding the solitude / Of the loops over the downs," (90). Thomas, too died in 1917, but his ghostly images contribute to the intertextual haunting of Barker's text. After the battle at the Sambre-Oise canal, Prior, Owen and other soldiers lie dead on the banks of the canal, "eyes still open, limbs not yet decently arranged, for the stretcher-bearers have departed with the last of the wounded, and the dead are left alone" (RT 589). The sun rises, illuminating the corpses, "lending a rosy glow to skin from which the blood has fled," (RT 589) before we follow its rays across the English Channel, back to Rivers, who has just witnessed the death of Hallet. Sitting at the night nurses' station, trying hard to stay awake, he sees the ghost of Njiru, "not in any way ghostly, not in *fashion blong tomate*, but himself in every particular, advancing down the ward of the Empire Hospital, attended by his shadowy retinue, as Rivers had so often seen him on the coastal path on Eddystone" (RT 589-90). The trilogy confirms Thomas' haunting images of the dead, who "returning lightly dance" (90).

The Regeneration Trilogy illustrates the establishment as well as the reframing of a cultural trauma. Through a polyphony of voices we hear negotiation and contestation over the proper historical meaning to be assigned to the Great War. Through Rivers, the Judeo-Christian narratives of sacrifice – the Aqedah and the crucifixion – are compared to the sacrificial rituals of Melanesia; these were foundational stories of the respective cultures. By juxtaposing these stories with the ancient Greek oedipal myth adopted in Freud's modernist psychoanalysis Barker reveals all of these stories to be just that – the arbitrary stories cultures tell themselves to justify their beliefs, behaviour and institutions.

This chapter has mainly focused on the essential religious, patriarchal, and mythical ingredients underlying British culture that were undermined by the Great War, leading to cultural trauma. The next two chapters will examine the fundamental cultural presuppositions of class and gender which were also challenged during the war. Through the trilogy Barker depicts the transformations and changes taking place in these discourses, using discursive formations from the whole twentieth century.

CHAPTER THREE

The Discourse of Class

The army was “essentially the British working man in uniform.” (John Bourne, qtd. in Beckett 217)

Pat Barker has always been concerned with issues of class in her work. Much of her fame rests on her realistic portrayal of working-class communities, especially the women in these communities. The trilogy imaginatively expands the collective memory of the war as it is memorialized in many classical or canonical accounts by including working-, middle- and upper-class characters of both sexes and showing the markedly different material ways in which the war influenced their lives.⁸² Furthermore, it dialogizes the discourse of class by combining residual, dominant and emergent representations of class through intertextuality.

I will begin this chapter by briefly discussing working-class fiction as a context for the trilogy. Barker draws on the tradition of this genre, but develops it in new ways, as demonstrated in Paul’s “In Pastoral Fields”. In the major part of the chapter, I will concentrate on Prior, who can be read as a melange of fictional voices created prior to, during and long after the Great War. Through him we become aware of a kind of intertextual haunting in the trilogy. Prior interacts with a number of characters from distinctively different social backgrounds; it is through him Barker’s polyphonic vision of class is realized. Finally I will discuss how the dominant class discourse of paternalism comes under siege in the trilogy, interrogating the underlying corruption and deceit of the British class system and revealing its relationship to war.

Working-Class Fiction

Since Barker is often primarily perceived as a writer of working-class fiction, I will briefly discuss the characteristics of this particular genre and show how Barker develops it in new directions. As Jeremy Hawthorn suggests, it can be helpful to view working-class fiction as a distinct, but not a monolithic genre.

⁸² In spite of her revisionist expansion of Great War history to include depictions of working-class characters, Barker has been accused of disloyalty to her own working-class roots because of her depiction of “gentry” in the trilogy. Her response to such criticism is “You’re loyal to your vision of the world. The people who think [the trilogy] was a great departure have a problem with how they read literature: not for character and theme, but for surface – social background, region” (qtd. in Jaggi, “Dispatches”).

He believes it is necessary when categorizing a work as working-class fiction to go beyond the social origin of the author in order to consider a range of other factors, including the political-ideological impetus behind and within the text itself. In Hawthorn's opinion, working-class fiction can unlock a collective narrative voice; we see parallel passages and scenes in novels and short stories by different writers of working-class stories because they have a substantial basis in social reality. Such works use shared subject matter and story-telling traditions in order to represent experience, attitudes and realities which are particular to the working class. In the process they often involve a characteristic blend of celebration and criticism of that class. Furthermore, working-class fiction often illustrates the clash between two sets of rival values. Middle-class values include personal ambition, independence and upward social mobility, whereas the working class is associated with public and communal values and communal solidarity (Hawthorn, "Lawrence" 67-68).

In this connection, John Kirk, discussing aspects of class in Barker's early novels, sees "a persistent effort to create a collective experience and consciousness, rather than the individualistic one associated with the novel of middle-class life" ("Recovered" 608). Kirk thus chooses to emphasize the traditional communal solidarity attributed to the working class as an aspect of Barker's writing. In contrast to Kirk, Hitchcock focuses more on the dialogic aspects of the working-class communities Barker presents. He points out that already in her debut novel, *Union Street*, Barker's writing was highly dialogic and that in this novel "the omniscient narrator is a practitioner of one of Bakhtin's favourite arts, double-voiced discourse, an ability that allows the narrator to move in and out of the language of the sign community that is the focus of the story" (*Dialogics* 62).

Barker does draw on some shared subject matter and story-telling traditions from the genre of working-class fiction and often attempts to describe the collective experience of working-class communities; however, I believe, like Hitchcock, that the dialogic quality of her work is more important and innovative. Barker refuses to homogenize the working-class communities she presents the way traditional working-class novels have done; she chooses to avoid stereotypes in creating characters and does not adhere to a preconceived formula. As she argues, "fiction should assert recalcitrant, bloody-minded individuality; every other way of thinking about people demeans them" (qtd. in Jaggi, "Dispatches").⁸³ In Barker's novels we find a simultaneous inscription

⁸³ Although critical of Conservative politics, Barker does not subscribe to the myths of Old Labour, either. In an interview she explains, "I'm aware of the poetry of marching miners but also of them as the aristocrats of the working class: you don't have equivalent poetic imagery of women who are

and de-naturalization of both bourgeois and Marxist notions of class. Residual, dominant and emergent discourses of class from different epochs coexist in the trilogy, and although Barker borrows from the tradition of working-class fiction, she re-accentuates these older stories.

The discourse of class is dialogically expressed in the trilogy mainly through intertextuality. As I have argued, the canonical war poetry, memoirs and novels play a major role in the development of the discourses in focus in this thesis, along with a number of other intertexts. In this connection, the historian Ian F. W. Beckett reminds us that it should not be generally accepted that a small number of “well-known sensitive intellectual, or otherwise literary-minded officers like Siegfried Sassoon, Wilfred Owen [or] Robert Graves [...] were in any way representative of the armies as a whole” because “The British army was not one which universally carried Palgrave’s *The Golden Treasury* in its knapsacks, let alone the literary agent’s contract” (217). Barker includes the same classic war poets that Beckett mentions as characters in the trilogy as a point of reference for the reader. In contrast, through Prior some present-day preoccupations with the issues of class are broached and classic literary versions of the war are questioned, problematizing earlier historical representations of class. Whereas Rivers can be considered to be the central consciousness of the first volume of the trilogy, the working-class Prior, as his surname indicates, gradually takes precedence and becomes a central character in the following volumes.

In his comparison of Barker’s trilogy with a selection of classic war novels written by men, Paul points out that Barker shares their basically naturalistic, semi-documentary approach. However, there are many differences between their books and hers, especially in connection to her rejection of class stereotypes and pastoral tropes. With reference to William Empson’s seminal study *Some Versions of Pastoral* from 1935, Paul explains that working-class characters were often stereotypically portrayed according to two basic pastoral tropes; peasants and workers were either “passive victims of fate” or “wise fools who see further than their more educated masters” (148). This pastoral working-class stereotype and the pastoral differentiation between “high” and “low” sensibilities also recur in the classic war novels, and were surprisingly also adopted by writers of working-class fiction during later periods. Furthermore, pastoral tropes were used by war writers to contrast the horrors of the trenches

cleaners bringing up their kids alone; the Labour movement frequently ignored them. No one’s ever made a banner out of what they do” (qtd. in Jaggi, “Dispatches”). Barker thus sees gender issues as an integral aspect of class struggle. The working-class protagonists in her novels of the 1980s share many of the attitudes and problems of the working-class characters in the trilogy.

with the idyllic peace of home; the ravaged, muddy landscape of the battlefield is made even more horrendous when compared to retreats up in the mountains, down the river or on leave in country villages.

Paul reveals some of the typically pastoral limitations of the earlier war narratives while illuminating how Barker's insight into working-class life and the ideological workings of patriarchal society help her to bridge "the aesthetic gap between literature and the politics of gender and class by portraying the experience of men at war in a radically innovatory way" (160). In this way she avoids what Empson describes as the "essential trick of the old pastoral, which was felt to imply a beautiful relation between rich and poor" (qtd. in Paul 149). Paul sees Barker's technique of blurring the private and the public as "one of the prime, ideological focal points of the trilogy, where the complex psychology of the individual response to war is set clearly within a framework of warring social forces" (154). As I have argued, Barker's trilogy is dialogic and polyphonic; it is the depiction of a number of different *individual* responses to the pressures of social ideology that concerns her more than the ideologies per se, because it is primarily here that warring social forces are brought out. Using characters from distinctively different social backgrounds, the trilogy develops a truly polyphonic discussion of class. The alternating focalization of the trilogy through many different characters from different classes helps to develop the dialogic quality of the trilogy, but class is also internally dialogized, especially within the character Prior.

Prior Voices

Prior can be read as a mixture of literary characters created both prior to and after the Great War. These literary characters are borrowed and developed through allusion, displacement and appropriation. One example of his uncanny, hybrid nature is his resemblance to a literary character of World War Two: Kurt Vonnegut's Billy Pilgrim in *Slaughterhouse Five* (1969). Although Billy Pilgrim was created before Barker's Billy Prior, the Great War was *prior* to World War Two. Vonnegut's Billy Pilgrim mirrors his Great War counterpart and vice versa, suggesting both reciprocal haunting and the return of the repressed. Like Pilgrim, Prior is an (anti-)hero whose progress we follow. Prior exists in the nightmare world of the trenches and within his own traumatized psyche – and Pilgrim is lost in the bombed out ruins of Dresden and is later kidnapped by aliens. Both of these characters have, to use Vonnegut's expression, become

“unstuck in time”.⁸⁴ Pilgrim constantly jumps from past to future scenes in his life, never knowing which timeframe will be activated next. Prior is likewise forced to live in his past due to his traumatic childhood and battlefield experiences. He begins to experience fugue states; he is taken over by an alter-ego and loses his sense of time in a series of frightening blackouts.

Because Prior is “unstuck in time” Barker can use him both to explicitly thematize attitudes to class within the fictional timeframe of the narrative, and to implicitly critique both past and contemporary class assumptions, through intertextual references. In this sense, he becomes a pivotal figure in what Brannigan sees as Barker’s project of demythologizing the war, a view of the trilogy which I share. In terms of class, Brannigan explains that both the world wars have inaccurately been thought of as time periods in which class unity and the dissolution of social differences were prominent. In his opinion, the trilogy, in contrast, emphasizes the war as a continuation of pre-existing social processes (“History and Haunting” 96-97). Just as the war itself is haunted by the conflicts of prior social processes in the trilogy, present-day life is haunted by the traumas of the past as old wounds “leak into the present”.⁸⁵ Rather than presenting the Great War as simply an abrupt break with the past, the trilogy demonstrates the intensification of already existing social forces and conflicts and suggests that those forces continue to affect society today.

Another example of how Prior functions in the trilogy can be seen in the details of his psychiatric case. A scene from Edmund Blunden’s *Undertones of War* is activated as an intertext in this connection:

[...] a young and cheerful lance-corporal of ours was making some tea [in the trench] as I passed one warm afternoon. Wishing him a good tea, I went along three fire-bays; one shell dropped without warning behind me; I saw its smoke faint out, and I thought all was as lucky as it should be. Soon a cry from that place recalled me; the shell had burst all wrong. Its butting impression was black and stinking in the parados where three minutes ago the lance-corporal’s mess-tin was bubbling over a little flame. For him, how could the gobbets of blackening flesh, the earth-wall sotted with blood, with flesh, *the eye under the duckboard*, the pulpy bone be the only answer? (Blunden 46; my emphasis)⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Maria Holmgren Troy, who noted the probable use of Billy Pilgrim as an intertext, also suggests that Vonnegut’s description of Pilgrim as being “unstuck in time” is applicable to Prior as well (private conversation).

⁸⁵ This expression comes from Barker’s novel *Another World* (1998). Nick speaks of “the power of old wounds to leak into the present” when he witnesses how his grandfather Geordie is haunted by the traumatic memories of his service on the Western Front during his terminal illness. Geordie believes that the pain from the cancer that is killing him actually comes from an old bayonet wound.

⁸⁶ Duckworth relates Barker’s “borrowing” of Blunden’s scene to the Jungian concept of “cryptomnesia”, “that is, a memory that has become hidden or secret, so that one believes one has

Prior relates the story of his breakdown to Rivers under hypnosis. He too experiences seeing several of his men blown up in the trenches and while helping to clean up the trench is left holding the soldier Towers' blue eyeball in the palm of his hand. It is this dislocated eyeball, picked up from under the duckboard that is the final straw that triggers Prior's breakdown, leaving him mute with trauma, and which continues to haunt him when he has regained his speech.

As these examples show, Prior functions as a kind of spiritual medium as different, intertextual voices speak through him. Barker's play with different timeframes through these intertextual voices gives Prior a hybrid, time-traveller quality. The combination of characters based on historical figures and invented characters, along with the literary ghosts who speak through Prior leads to generic confusion, both installing and blurring the line between history and fiction.

Victorian Voices

Prior's function in the trilogy becomes more extensive in *The Eye in the Door* and part two of the final volume, *The Ghost Road*. In the latter volume, Barker changes her narrative strategy to include diary entries that Prior writes from 29 August 1918 until just before his death. This foregrounding of a seemingly unmediated, personal voice in diary form offers an alternative reading of the past to the diaries and memoirs of the middle- and upper-class war poets. However, Prior's voice also continues to reverberate dialogically with other literary voices. Noting how many of his fellow soldiers write each evening, some of them with the aspiration of becoming poets, Prior writes, "Why? you have to ask yourself. I think it's a way of claiming immunity. First-person narrators can't die, so as long as we keep telling the story of our own lives we're safe. Ha bloody fucking Ha" (RT 498).⁸⁷ Ironically, as his death comes nearer, Prior finds himself tearing out pages from the back of his diary to give to his

invented something which, in fact, one has merely forgotten" (67). He goes on to analyse how "gobbets" in Blunden's text becomes "gobstopper" in Barker's, allowing her to aesthetically shape the suppressed memory in a new direction. Duckworth argues that "Blunden's account contains a horror Barker does not include" (67), because the transformation of "gobbets" to "gob-stopper" conveys a grim form of humour. He explains that in "suppressed memories the migration of morphemes is not unusual; from gobbet to gob-stopper is not a large leap" (76). Duckworth suggests that Barker's borrowing of Blunden's scene is an example of cryptomnesia, but I prefer to see it as an intertext, as defined by Kristeva. The scene is reworked and transformed in the trilogy, adding something new. Furthermore, I feel the ghastly humour of the scene is as graphically horrific as that described in Blunden.

⁸⁷ This depiction of writing soldiers again emphasizes how our perceptions of the Great War are tied to literary accounts.

fellow soldiers for letter writing. These pages represent his disappearing future, given over to other voices and other stories.

On one of the opening pages of his diary he comments on his own infatuation with its thick, creamy pages and marbled covers and on his own literary pretensions: “Feel a great need at the moment to concentrate on small pleasures. If the whole of one’s life can be summoned up and held in the palm of one hand, *in the living moment*, then time means nothing. World without end, Amen” (RT 493). In the next line he condemns his own literary outburst, with its religious undertones: “Load of crap. Facts are what we need, man. Facts” (RT 493). Here he echoes Gradgrind in Dickens’ *Hard Times*, alerting us to the vagaries of the act of writing.⁸⁸ His self-reflexive, ironic discussion of the act of writing suggests that language is always spoken by someone, from somewhere for some purpose. His ejaculation “a load of crap” is directed at those who mindlessly mouth the platitudes of the religious establishment which is encouraging people to accept the war as God’s will. In contrast, Gradgrind’s mantra activates Dickens’ *Hard Times* as an important intertext on class in the trilogy.

In *Hard Times*, Dickens attacks the materialistic ideology of the middle class of his day. Through Gradgrind and Bounderby the middle class is shown to be driven by self-seeking, aggressive individualism. Dickens demonstrates how Victorian utilitarianism is a product of the middle class and how the working class suffers the harshest material consequences of an economic system built on this ideology. In contrast, the day-to-day running of Sleary’s horse-riding circus produces a very different ideology. Making a living depends on cooperation among the members of the circus and produces communal values that are far removed from those of Gradgrind or Bounderby, who is a striking parody of the much admired self-made man. In Gradgrind’s school, “the whole social system is a question of self-interest” (Dickens 214), as his pupil Bitzer reminds him.

In Dickens’ story, those who accept the middle-class values of a utilitarian system – Louisa, Tom, and Bitzer – are ultimately twisted and damaged by it (Eagleton and Pierce 43-45). Like these characters, Prior has adopted the ambition and aggressive individualism of the middle class to the degree that he is willing to sacrifice friends, family, and even himself on the altar of these values. Tired of getting nowhere in his job as a shipping clerk, he sees the military as a short cut to social advancement, even though it only offers

⁸⁸ Of course, he is also echoing the impetus of combatants who contrasted their own descriptions of “what it was really like” to be at the front with official accounts, written by politicians and military leaders.

him the option of being a temporary gentleman. Prior tells Rivers why he enlisted and is so eager to return to the front: “When all of this is over, people who didn’t go to France, or didn’t do well in France – people of my generation, I mean – aren’t going to count for anything. This is the Club to end all Clubs.” Rivers responds, “And you want to belong” and he replies, “Yes” (RT 120). Joining the “Club to end all Clubs” in the “War to end all Wars” exposes the extent to which Prior has embraced the ambition and individualism of the middle class and how he initially embraced high-Victorian imperialist ideals. It also partly explains the disdain and animosity he feels towards people like his father or Mac who have not adopted these values. Prior is not prepared to consider himself a *temporary* gentleman, but believes he will be able to advance socially, *if* he survives the war.

Prior’s hybrid voice functions as a link between different classes and, as the echoes from *Hard Times* illustrate, different eras, complicating and nuancing our understanding of history and identity as partly a product of the past. Although he comes from a working-class background, Prior is in social transit and is thus a figure who illustrates discontinuity. As a “temporary gentleman” he undermines the social and class categories of his day. He no longer belongs to the working class, but neither is he entirely accepted as an officer in the traditional, hierarchical organization of the army. Prior angrily says to Rivers, “Look, *you* might like to think it’s one big happy family out there, but it’s not. They *despise* each other” (RT 49). When Rivers asks whether Prior encountered any snobbery in the army because of his background he responds: “Yes. It’s made perfectly clear when you arrive that some people are more welcome than others. It helps if you’ve been to the right school. It helps if you hunt, it helps if your shirts are the right colour. Which is a *deep* shade of khaki, by the way” (RT 60).⁸⁹ He goes on to tell Rivers about the riding course he had to attend, where he was expected to ride bareback around a ring with his hands clasped behind his head to see whether his seat was “sticky”. For commissioned officers from the leisured classes like Sassoon, horsemanship was second nature. Prior is a far cry from Sassoon’s literary alter-ego, George Sherston, who brings along his own horse when he enlists and is able to afford and

⁸⁹ Sassoon relates the same detail about the required uniform shirt colour in *Memoirs of an Infantryman*. His semi-autobiographical protagonist, George Sherston, has the required school background, is a hunter and an expert equestrian, but still has to go through certain socialization or initiation rites when he enlists, suggesting that class was not the only decisive factor for a sense of belonging. However, if like Prior you are not of the class, then you are not *permitted* to go through those rituals in the same fashion – you will remain “temporary”. The scene where Sherston goes to the tailor’s to have his uniforms made echoes the earlier scene where he takes up hunting and has his hunting pinks and boots made at the same tailors in *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man*. In Ford M. Ford’s *Parade’s End* Christopher Tietjens, an upper-class Tory, also talks about needing to arrive in a proper uniform, so this must have been an important detail.

incorporate the sporting pleasures of fox-hunting and cricket playing in his professional life as a soldier (Sassoon, *Sherston's Progress*). However, Prior reassures Rivers that he didn't actually mind all the snobbery he met as an officer from a working-class background that much. Instead it is the public denial of the existence of such snobbery that angers him. It is public hypocrisy Prior criticizes rather than the class attitudes that he himself aspires to:

'The only thing that really makes me angry is when people at home say there are no class distinctions at the front. Ball-ocks. What you wear, what you eat. Where you sleep. What you carry. The men are pack animals.' He hesitated. 'You know the worst thing? What seemed to *me* the worst thing? I used to go to this café in Amiens and just across the road there was a brothel. The men used to queue out on to the street.' He looked at Rivers. 'They get two minutes.' (RT 61)

Prior's disgust over the class-marked brothels echoes the disgust expressed by both Graves and Sassoon in their fictionalized memoirs and illustrates how he sometimes shares the attitudes of his fellow officers.

In *The Eye in the Door*, Prior experiences fugue states – a Jekyll and Hyde division within himself – analogous to the split between the unconscious and conscious selves that Freud describes. Barker introduces Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* as an intertext with an introductory quote from the novel in this volume of the trilogy. The middle-class characters in *Jekyll and Hyde* have difficulty interpreting the character of Hyde. One of them, Utterson, exclaims that Hyde hardly seems human and that he might be "Something troglodytic, shall we say?" (R. L. Stevenson 40). Prior's alter-ego – an effective killing machine who feels no pain and no fear – claims to have been born in the trenches of France, suggesting that he sees himself as degenerating to an earlier, savage or more primitive form of being, rising up from a kind of primordial mire.⁹⁰ Ironically, in times of war, the primitive killing machine he has become is socially approved of; the troglodytic working-class man is a necessity. In his fugue state Prior despises the weaker, Jekyll-like side of himself and he has no qualms about betraying his former friends or engaging Spragge – the man who framed his surrogate mother Beattie Roper – to help him do so. Although Prior's alter-ego claims to have been born in the trenches, we later learn that his fugue states started at home when he was a child witnessing his father's brutal beatings of his mother. His childhood working-class environment thus resembles a battlefield; it is

⁹⁰ Fussell also envisages the trenches of the western front as a troglodyte world, sucking soldiers into the mire, in Chapter Two of his seminal work *The Great War and Modern Memory* (36-74).

reminiscent of the environment he meets in the trenches and calls for the same survival strategies.

In addition to this internal division, Prior's Christian name suggests a doubling with Dr. Rivers; Billy is the diminutive form of William, and class issues are embedded in the difference between the formal "William" as opposed to the more familiar, proletarian form of the name, "Billy". The Jekyll and Hyde division is thus not limited to the split within Prior manifested in the fugue state; Prior and Rivers constitute another, external, split or doubling as Sheryl Stevenson demonstrates in "The Uncanny Case of Dr. Rivers and Mr. Prior": a split that also reflects class differences.

Prior's working-class background and hostility complicate his therapy with the middle-class Dr. Rivers. Whereas Prior, like Mr. Hyde, acts out his sexual desires and anti-social impulses, Rivers, like Dr. Jekyll, struggles to contain his. Prior lives out his bisexuality, whereas Rivers is probably a closet homosexual who, like his colleague Head, is ironically expected to "cure sodomites" (RT 238). Showalter argues that the class issues in *Jekyll and Hyde* can be read in terms of "the late-nineteenth century upper-middle-class erotization of working-class men as the ideal homosexual object" (*Sexual* 111). There is indeed homoerotic tension between Rivers and Prior, but the *class* mechanisms revealed in their relationship are even more complicated, with *Jekyll and Hyde* functioning as an intertext.

The conflict between Jekyll and Hyde also sheds light on the class phobias of the late Victorian era. Stephen D. Arata demonstrates how Stevenson's novel articulates anxieties concerning degeneration, devolution, and "criminal man", pointing out "how snugly descriptions of criminal deviance fit with longstanding discourses of class in Great Britain" ("Sedulous Ape"). Popularized, "scientific" theories of degeneration,⁹¹ viewed the criminal as a throwback to humanity's savage past, and the contemporary reading public would have seen similarities between the atavistic criminal and Mr. Hyde since "Equating the criminal with atavism, and both with the lower classes, was a familiar gesture by the 1880s" ("Sedulous Ape"). Arata maintains that "In considering degeneration as a class discourse, however, we need to look up as well as down. Late-Victorian pathologists routinely argued that degeneration was as endemic to a decadent aristocracy as to a troglodytic proletariat" ("Sedulous Ape"). Arata surmises that Hyde can be read as "the embodiment

⁹¹ Arata refers to the theories of Cesare Lombroso summarized by his daughter Gina Lombroso Ferrero in *Criminal Man According to the Classification of Cesare Lombroso* from 1911 and Havelock Ellis's *The Criminal* from 1891. He claims that these new "scientific" accounts were mapped onto older, more familiar accounts of the urban poor from Mayhew onward ("Sedulous Ape").

of the degenerate prole, the decadent aristocrat, or the dissipated aesthete” and that “[i]n Edward Hyde, then, Stevenson created a figure who embodies a bourgeois readership’s worst fears about both a marauding and immoral underclass and a dissipated and immoral leisure class” (“Sedulous Ape”). In the trilogy Prior is working class, and his elevation to the state of temporary gentleman and socialization with members of the upper classes make him a hybrid character like Hyde.

A leisure class that is perceived as dissipated and immoral is also delineated in the trilogy through allusions to Oscar Wilde. He was of course a prime example of an aesthete who disrupted middle-class mores, and he haunts the trilogy through Maud Allan’s performance of his play *Salome* and the resulting Pemberton Billing trial, as well as through the members of his social circle, like Robert Ross, who survived him. In *The Ghost Road*, Prior has gained access to this privileged, upper-class circle through his acquaintance Charles Manning and even visits Ross in his lodgings in Half Moon Street in London. The address was famous for gatherings of artists and poets and notorious for harbouring homosexual activity and a decadent lifestyle. In the trilogy Half Moon Street is composed of Dorian Gray-like, leisured bachelors. On the surface they live respectable lives, but in reality they must resort to deceit and lies because society has criminalized their sexuality.

The trilogy sets up an image system that indirectly links characters and geographical settings to the decadent aesthetic movement of the 1890s through the use of the colour yellow. The venue of expression of this group was *The Yellow Book*.⁹² The writing as well as the illustrations in this journal often contained dual images of creation and decay and interpreted the aesthete as an artist marked by restlessness, spiritual confusion and what the bourgeoisie perceived as moral inversion. Oscar Wilde was associated with the group, and when Manning attends Allan’s performance of *Salome* he remembers that yellow and green was Wilde’s colour scheme (RT 280), but what it reminds him of is the typical yellow skin of the girls manufacturing munitions and the “stinking yellow mud of the salient” (RT 281). At his bomb-damaged home Manning opens the shutters, “letting in a flood of sickly yellow light” (RT 240), and there is “a curious tension about this yellow light, as if there might be thunder in the offing” (RT 244). Additionally on the Home Front, sunlight becomes “glutinous yellow sunlight”; the wind blowing across the Serpentine fumbles roses, “loosening red and yellow petals that lay on the dry soil or drifted across

⁹² *The Yellow Book* was published between 1894 and 1897 by Elkin Mathews and John Lane. It was edited by Henry Harland and illustrated by Aubrey Beardsley.

the paths” (RT 414) and the massive façade of Craiglockhart War Hospital is “yellow-grey” (RT 20). The light is described as “sickly”, the yellow skin of the munitionettes indicates that they are suffering from diseases of the liver caused by the poisons they are exposed to at work, and of course the yellow-grey façade of Craiglockhart encloses the soldiers suffering from the psychiatric disorders of war. Thus the colour yellow is gradually associated with images of disease and decay spreading across the home front.

In France there are “clumps of brilliant yellow cabbage weed, whose smell mimics gas so accurately” in the trenches (RT 94) in addition to the stinking yellow mud of the salient that Manning so vividly recalls. Prior recalls the “thick yellow stench” that comes off a battalion of men marching back from the line (RT 232) and prefers that smell to the sickening, self-satisfied, perfumed odour of the crowds in London when he is on leave at home. As Monteith points out, in the trilogy the trenches are everywhere at home. Aylesbury Prison reminds Prior of them, just as the top floor of Craiglockhart, with its long, windowless corridors eerily mimics trench life. After leaving a pub, Prior even falls into a mock trench dug by little boys, and the landscape outside Sarah Lumb’s lodging also brings memories of No Man’s Land to his mind. Ironically, the trenches on the Western Front are named after London streets, and “Britain’s urban landscapes, devastated by poverty and deprivation, are crystallized in the blasted terrain of the trenches” (Monteith, “We will remember” 59). Here we see how the trope of yellow applies mutually to the home front and the trenches on the western front.

The yellow imagery is even to be found in the empire; when Rivers and Njiru pay a nerve-racking visit to a cave infested with bats on Eddystone Island, Rivers’ torch projects “a weak sickly ring of yellow light” in the immense blackness. The thousands of bats lining the cave wall remind me of bloodsucking predators, carrying diseases. The British were sucking the resources out of their colonies, and as Rivers notes, they had also decimated the population of Melanesia by infecting the natives with the diseases of the British nursery (RT 503). Many of Rivers’ memories of his visit in Melanesia come in the shape of fever fantasies after he has caught the Spanish flu from a patient. This disease spread pandemically during the last year of the war, afflicting and killing both combatants and civilians.⁹³ The colour yellow is thus seen to convey images of disease, infestation and decay that spread from the home front to the battlefields in France and on to the empire itself, suggesting

⁹³ Ironically, the first incidences of the disease were registered in Kansas in the USA at training camps where soldiers were waiting to be transferred to Europe to fight in the war (Billings, <http://virus.stanford.edu/uda/>).

growing corruption and decay at all levels. The “yellow” signifying aspects of the “spiritual confusion” and “moral inversion” of peacetime and civilian life is the same yellow that permeates the images of war. Because yellow is part of Wilde’s colour scheme and was connected to the decadent ethos of *The Yellow Book*, the colour is linked to society’s criminalization and marginalization of homosexuals. Likewise, the colour yellow links the exploitation of working-class women in the dangerous munitions factories and the slaughter of working-class men on the European battlefield. Finally, this exploitation also shows the discourse of empire arising out of the discourse of class.

Like Hyde, Prior undergoes a socialization process under the auspices of a father figure; Hyde has Dr. Jekyll, whereas Prior has Dr. Rivers. Arata explains that “In order to assume his mentor-father’s position, [Hyde] must be indoctrinated in the codes of his class” (“Sedulous Ape”), but he adds that *Jekyll and Hyde* instead traces the gradual taming of Hyde into a murderous parody of bourgeois respectability. Whereas most critical accounts of Stevenson’s novel focus on the social and psychological pressures that lead Jekyll to become Hyde, Arata argues that Stevenson was just as concerned with the reverse transformation – the education of Hyde into a gentleman: “Hyde unquestionably develops over the course of the novel, which is to say he becomes more like the ‘respectable’ Jekyll, which in turn is to say he ‘degenerates’” (“Sedulous Ape”). The novel thus turns the discourse of atavism and criminality back on the bourgeoisie itself.

When Prior dies fighting at the Sambre-Oise canal in France alongside Wilfred Owen – another of Robert Ross’s visitors in Half Moon Street – the image of the dead soldier as the quintessentially innocent, sacrificial victim of war is problematized. Like Hyde, Prior embodies elements of both the degenerate prole and the morally dissipated upper classes. And as Hynes points out, before the war broke out and during its initial phase, a number of people believed that war was just what was needed to purge Britain of the physically degenerated members of the working class and morally decadent aristocrats; it would lead to regeneration (*A War* 12-23). The deaths of Prior and Owen in the trilogy, however, are shown to be the result of the pervasive corruption of society: a wasteful destruction of human life.

The idea of a physically degenerated working class, as I have argued, is also voiced in the trilogy by Major Huntley, one of the doctors participating in the medical board meetings with Dr. Rivers:

Rivers roused himself to take part in the conversation to find Major Huntley riding one of his hobby horses again. Racial degeneration this time. The falling

birth rate. The need to keep up what he called ‘the supply of heroes’. Did Rivers know that private soldiers were on average *five inches* shorter than their officers? And yet it was often the better type of woman who chose to limit the size of her family, while her feckless sisters bred the empire to destruction. (RT 186-87)⁹⁴

Prior is small – with narrow shoulders and a chest that is proportionally distorted, due to asthma and ill-health growing up in a working-class home. He is also bisexual, having had his first, coerced homosexual relationship as a boy with his parish priest, an emissary of the upper class; the inequalities in terms of diet and living standards and the exploitation of the class system have caused his bodily weakness and corrupted his moral sensibilities.

In *The Literature of Terror*, David Punter analyses *Jekyll and Hyde* in a chapter entitled “Gothic and Decadence”.⁹⁵ He feels that Hyde’s behaviour in Stevenson’s book can be seen as an urban version of “going native”, like Mr. Kurtz in Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*.⁹⁶ Prior has already gone a long way in adopting middle-class values as a “temporary gentleman” when he meets Rivers. His association with middle- and upper-class men has alerted him to the transgressive homosexuality that these classes authorize; that is what the parish priest, Charles Manning, and the other gentlemen he meets desire from him. At times he functions as Rivers’ Hyde, his “doppelganger”, and when he questions him about whether he had ever wanted to “fuck some of those headhunters of his” in Melanesia – in a sense asking him whether he had ever had a desire to go native – the motif of degeneration is taken to another level.⁹⁷ Prior seems to suspect that the transgressive sexuality that is cultivated in the British upper classes has been extended to the empire. It was often contrarily feared that the empire’s contact with the colonies could result in the empire’s people lapsing into barbarism. English imperialism had begun its decline and the nature of the difficulties encountered in the colonies was, according to Punter, “conditioned by the nature of the supremacy which had been asserted: not a simple racial supremacy, but one constantly seen as founded on moral superiority.” He goes

⁹⁴ For a discussion of the discourses of degeneracy and eugenics at the end of the 19th century and the first decades of the twentieth century, see Nikolas Rose, “Heredity and environment” in *The Psychological Complex* (62-89).

⁹⁵ The other novels Punter discusses are Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Wells’ *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, and Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*. Punter believes that “Jekyll’s difficulties are those of the benevolent imperialist: they are not at all to do with the political problem of sanctioning brute force, but with the maintenance of dignity under adverse circumstances” (3).

⁹⁶ Or similarly, Kurtz in Francis Ford Coppola’s Vietnam movie *Apocalypse Now*.

⁹⁷ Rivers discusses a section on sexual morality in his book *The Todas* with Prior. Prior asks about the natives, “Do they really go on like that?” Rivers answers “as austere as he knew how, ‘Their sexual lives are conducted along rather different lines from ours’” (RT 60). In fact, as Rivers’ biographer Slobodin explains, Rivers had found that the Todas comprised a community where there was almost no bar to sexual liason outside the incest category (Slobodin106).

on to ask, “If an empire based on a morality declines, what are the implications for the particular morality concerned?” (3)

Rivers sees Brennan, whom he meets on a steamer on one of his exploratory voyages in Melanesia, as “the logical end product of the process of free-fall – the splat on the pavement as it were” (RT 500). He has worked as a “blackbirder” – kidnapping and transporting natives to work on the plantations of Queensland, and brags about sexually abusing the female captives. He tells the story of an English missionary intent on saving the natives, even though they can’t understand a word he is saying: “And then he starts to get worried ‘cause they all come flocking round but he can’t get the buggers to kneel down. So down on his knees he goes. ‘What’s the word for this?’ Well *you* know and *I* know,’ Brennan said, turning to Rivers, ‘there’s only one thing *they* do kneeling down” (RT 501). Brennan mimics the clergyman, raising his arms, and “in an amazingly pure counter-tenor, sang, ‘Let us fuck”” (RT 501). Whereas institutionalized religion plays a part in the subjugation of the working classes at home, here its ideals and the predicated moral superiority of the colonizers are reduced to absurdity. After Prior wonders aloud whether Rivers had ever “fucked” any of the headhunters he had met in Melanesia, Rivers responds, “‘You’ve always made a lot of *noise* about stepping over the line, but you’ve never actually done it”” (RT 91). From then on, however, Prior seems to delight in stepping over the line. By associating with the aesthetes and dissipated leisured aristocracy in Half Moon Street and cultivating homosexual relationships he goes beyond the pale of bourgeois respectability.

The connection between moral degeneration and colonialism is also aptly illustrated in a letter Prior’s former sweetheart, Hettie Roper, sends to her mother. Hettie is a pacifist and is working as a teacher. She despairs over the health of her working-class pupils and is sickened by the headmaster’s rhetoric about war. He lectures the pupils on “Our glorious Empire” and “Our valiant lads” to a symphony of coughs and wheezes from the children. And then he goes on to impress on the pupils what Britain is fighting for. Hettie writes:

I really did think I was going to throw up then. Peace on earth to men of goodwill, and how we were all showing goodwill by blowing up the Jerries and saving gallant little Belgium. I tried to tell Standard Six what gallant little Belgium got up to in the Congo, but he soon put a stop to that. I told him I was only doing it to compare a *bad* colonial regime with the splendid record of our glorious Empire, but I don’t think he believed me. He doesn’t trust me further than he could throw me and that wouldn’t be far. (RT 285)

We are thus reminded that the Great War was very much a war about colonies and imperialism. And imperialism, with its “civilizing” mission is seen as a self-interested investment in power, just like the paternalism of the British class system.

Lawrentian Intertexts

Through his education Prior has been initiated into the value system of the middle class, but his roots are in the working-class community. He thus embodies what Kirk refers to as the “escapist theme” in working-class fiction (*Twentieth-century* 25).⁹⁸ He has in a sense been “educated out of” his original class; he is uprooted. Prior is both insider and outsider in both classes, and the clash between working-class collectivity and ambitious, middle-class individualism is a constant source of conflict within him; he is torn by a mixture of attraction and repulsion in relation to both classes.

Barker also questions the myth of working-class solidarity through Prior and other characters. Working-class solidarity is there and not there. During Prior’s childhood we learn that when his mother fell ill after his birth, other women in the community nursed him. When he was six and his mother was ill again, he was taken in and cared for by Beattie Roper. Yet, when Beattie protests against the war, she is totally excluded from her community. And Prior, having “escaped” his working-class background, is justly viewed with suspicion when he returns to the community to spy on anti-war activists.

In contrast, when Sassoon publicly protests against the war, his friends and fellow class members collude to protect him both from himself and from the war officials. Furthermore, Rivers invites him to be a guest at the Conservative Club in Edinburgh where he is a member and even introduces him into intellectual circles; he is invited to dine with the Astronomer Royal of Scotland. In this class context, Prior does not receive the same consideration, although he does become Rivers’ house guest in London at a later point, as part of his treatment.⁹⁹ Here the stereotypical values of the working class and the middle class, as summarized by Hawthorn, seem to be reversed. Barker focuses on class feelings and experiences, but also challenges myths and stereotypes.

⁹⁸ Men and women who revisit their original class environment often find themselves socially dislocated. Brannigan prefers Richard Hoggart’s term for this phenomenon. Hoggart described the educated working-class man or woman as the revisitor, uprooted and uneasy. Brannigan points out that the “revisitor” is a figure Barker features in a number of her novels, and says that her own background makes her a revisitor (*Pat Barker* 6).

⁹⁹ Prior ends up doing secretarial work for Rivers, typing out a manuscript, while he recuperates from a self-inflicted burn on the palm of his hand. Although a guest, he feels obliged to repay Rivers in some way, whereas Sassoon seems to accept Rivers’ hospitality as his right.

Many of the intertextual voices that are channelled through Prior, as I have noted, give him a time-traveller quality. However, Prior is in many ways recognizable as a credible figure from the early 1900s as well. Because Prior is in transit between social classes, I see parallels between him and another literary character, D. H. Lawrence's semi-autobiographical, literary alter-ego, Paul Morel in *Sons and Lovers* (1913). Lawrence was one of the first British writers who wrote about the working class and is definitely one of Barker's literary forebears.¹⁰⁰ Although Barker dislikes having the label "Lawrentian" applied to her work,¹⁰¹ I see Prior as a basically Lawrentian figure.

Like Paul Morel, Billy Prior comes from a family with a brutish, working-class father who beats his wife. Like Mrs. Morel, Mrs. Prior has genteel pretensions and has made it her life project to prevent her son from following in his father's footsteps and settling into working-class squalor.¹⁰² Like Morel, Prior suffers from poor health (notably from asthma, whereas Morel has several bouts of pneumonia which weaken his constitution) and has been coddled by his mother. Like Morel, Prior, encouraged by his mother, has gotten an education so that he can go beyond his working-class roots and obtain a white-collar, clerical position.

Morel despises his father for his brutality and is so attached to his mother that he is unable to establish satisfying relationships with other women when he becomes an adult.¹⁰³ In contrast, Prior is torn by a love-hate relationship with both of his parents, and acts out the traumas of his childhood in a disguised form. He feels compelled to protect his childhood surrogate mother, Beattie Roper, from Lionel Spragge, the spy who entrapped her (and uncannily resembles Prior's father), and he ends up attempting to kill Spragge.

¹⁰⁰ Both Lawrence himself and his literary creation Paul Morel exemplify the "escapist theme" as defined by Kirk.

¹⁰¹ Barker is quoted by Jaggi as claiming that being compared to Lawrence was "never a compliment". Although he was a brilliant example, he was also a warning: "He suddenly has a sentence of sociology and the prose goes dead." (qtd. in "Dispatches"). She perceives his voice as a middle-class mediator which results in a loss of empathy for the working-class characters he depicts. In her first novels she decided never to mix working- and middle-class characters. In *The Regeneration Trilogy* she departs from this principle. Ross discusses Lawrence as an intertext in the earlier novels; he draws parallels between *Sons and Lovers* in both *Union Street* and *The Eye in the Door*, before going on to discuss how *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love* appear as intertexts in *Blow Your House Down* and *The Century's Daughter*.

¹⁰² In "Lawrence and working-class fiction" Hawthorn points out that the familiar opening situation in *Sons and Lovers* – the "respectable" woman who falls for and marries an "ordinary" workman, and this situation as seen from the perspective of a sensitive son who becomes more and more conscious of the mismatch between his parents as he matures recurs in working-class fiction (74). Here we see that Barker, too, draws on the collective narrative voice, with parallel passages and scenes that Hawthorn describes.

¹⁰³ The similarities are rife: just as Paul's mother is jealous of Miriam and disapproves of Paul's romantic relationship with her, Billy's mother hates Hettie Roper when she and Billy start "walking out" together as teenagers (*RT* 291) and is not happy when she hears of his engagement to Sarah Lumb – a factory girl. She feels he could have done better.

Prior's bisexuality also indicates that the oedipal conflict remains unresolved, but unlike Sassoon, who in the trilogy prefers the sexual neutrality of Edward Carpenter's *The Intermediate Sex*, Prior's choice of sex partners seems to suggest even more transgressive behaviour, challenging the heterosexual matrix and power structures of his society.

Prior's class consciousness is curiously conflicted through his relationship with his parents. Mrs. Prior confides in Dr. Rivers:

'... the funny thing is our Billy's ...' She sought for a way of erasing the tell-tale "our" from the sentence and, not finding one, gave a little deprecatory laugh. 'All for "the common people", as he calls them. I said, "You mean your father?"' She laughed again. 'Oh, no, he didn't mean his father. I said, "But you know nothing about the common people. You've had nothing to do with them."' 'Do you know what he turned around and said? "Whose fault is that?"' (RT 54)

We see how Prior has been encouraged to leave the working class behind by his mother. His father, however, is proud of his working-class roots. He did not encourage his son to volunteer when the war broke out, believing that the working class was being exploited in "the bosses' war" (RT 433) and owed no allegiance to the oppressors. But Prior tells Dr. Rivers that his father is a bar-room socialist; "Beer and revolution go in, *piss* comes out" (RT 56). This denigrating comment questions the common myth of the working-class hero and illustrates how the tug-of-war between his parents has affected Prior.

Mrs. Prior is determined that her son should do well at school; Prior is highly aware of the privileged treatment he receives at school simply because his mother makes sure he is nicely dressed and does his lessons. Education was essential in any attempt to cross class boundaries, and Mrs. Prior has a clerical position in mind for her young son. In so doing, she is following up on a growing trend in British society at this time; John Carey discusses how the new possibilities opened up through universal education influenced British society in the early twentieth century. In this connection, he points out that the literary intelligentsia felt threatened by the spread of education; between 1880 and 1939 they were involved in an imaginative project of "rewriting the masses", influenced by various historical factors (Carey 46-70): "Prominent among these [historical factors] were the growth of the suburbs and the enormous increase in the number of white-collar workers, collectively designated as clerks" (46). Carey gives numerous examples of how the clerical class was perceived as a vulgar mass. They had received enough education to be promoted to white-collar jobs, and in so doing developed a taste for culture,

although not the “high culture” of the literary intelligentsia. They were often looked upon with disdain since they no longer showed proper deference and because they had cultural aspirations or pretensions. Many of them were like E. M. Forster’s Leonard Bast in *Howard’s End*, or Septimus Warren Smith in Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway*, with a genuine interest in bettering their minds through self-study and the perusal of classical literature.¹⁰⁴

Barker portrays Prior as both a shipping clerk and a reader, and we learn about his reading habits at Craiglockhart. In one of his typically confrontational therapy sessions, he surprises Rivers by using the term “negative transference” about the relationship between psychoanalyst and patient:

‘I see. A negative transference. Is *that* what you think we’ve got?’

‘I hope not.’ Rivers couldn’t altogether conceal his surprise. ‘Where did you learn that term?’

‘I can read.’

‘Well, yes, I know, but its – ’

‘Not popular science? No, but then neither is this.’

He reached for the book beside his bed and held it out to Rivers. Rivers found himself holding a copy of *The Todas*. He stared for a moment at his own name on the spine. He told himself there was no reason why Prior shouldn’t read one of his books, or all of them for that matter. There was no rational reason for him to feel uneasy. He handed the book back. ‘Wouldn’t you prefer something lighter? You are ill, after all.’ (RT 59)¹⁰⁵

Here Rivers applies the clerical stereotype to Prior; his response resembles Carey’s description of the way the intellectual elite responded to this growing group – with a sense of unease.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴ Incidentally, Bast is killed in a symbolic fashion in Forster’s novel during a fight with the younger Wilcox brandishing a large old German sword. Bast pulls a bookcase over him, causing a heart attack. See Vickroy’s “A Legacy of Pacifism” for an excellent comparison of Prior and Septimus Warren Smith which brings out further similarities between these two characters.

¹⁰⁵ *The Todas*, published in 1906 is a very thick volume in social anthropology and covers Rivers’ studies of the Toda people of India.

¹⁰⁶ Christopher Kent, discussing the work of Jane Austen, notes that H. F. Brett Smith, an Oxford tutor, served in World War I as an advisor in British hospitals. His special responsibility was the prescription of appropriate reading for the wounded; he recommended Austen’s novels to ‘severely shell-shocked’ soldiers (as qtd. in Claudia Johnson, “Austen Cults and Cultures” in *The Cambridge Companion to Jane Austen*. Eds. Copeland and McMaster. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997. (225, note 8). Austen’s novels of course present the old, ideal England, based on agrarian values and far from the horrors of war. The Napoleonic Wars that were the background for this society were generally overlooked, unless one counts the number of soldiers billeted in small villages and towns – soldiers who increased the excitement and complication of the romances Austen describes.

Carey also points out that clerks were despised for their weak physical stature. They had become narrow-shouldered and shallow-chested as a result of giving up the benefits of physical exercise inherent in the manual labour of their ancestors. Even when Prior is still mute, Rivers feels adverse about him – as if he can sense the man’s frustration and antagonism. He notes that Sister Rogers takes a dislike to this patient, something which is quite out of character for her. His first impression of Prior is relatively neutral: “Prior was lying on his bed, reading. He was a thin, fair-haired young man of twenty-two with high cheekbones, a short, blunt nose and a supercilious expression” (RT 38). However, when Prior is able to speak, Rivers’ perception changes: “A Northern accent, not ungrammatical, but with the vowel sounds distinctly flattened, and the faintest trace of sibilance. Hearing Prior’s voice for the first time had the curious effect of making him *look* different. Thinner, more defensive. And at the same time, a lot tougher. A little, spitting, sharp-boned alley cat” (RT 45).¹⁰⁷ This description is again reminiscent of Morel, who ends up fighting the estranged husband of his lover, Clara Dawes, even though the man is double his size. Morel later develops a confused feeling of comradeship with this man. At the same time, he is drawn to two women and inhibited by his feelings for his own overprotective mother. Prior’s sexual transgressiveness resembles Morel’s, although Barker, in line with 1990s openness about sexuality, makes his conflicts and sexual encounters more graphically explicit.

There is further Lawrentian intertextuality in a description of an encounter between Prior and Sarah Lumb, as the following passage illustrates:

Left alone, Prior bought two bunches of chrysanthemums, bronze and white, from the barrow near the entrance. They weren’t the flowers he would have chosen, but he wanted to give her something. He stood craning his head for the first sight of her. When she arrived, smiling and out of breath, he handed her the flowers, and then, on a sudden impulse, leant across and kissed her. The flowers, crushed between them, released their bitter, autumnal smell. (RT 145)

The use of the chrysanthemums echoes Lawrence’s short story “Odor of Chrysanthemums”. In this story, a married couple appears to be the prototypes of the mother and father in *Sons and Lovers* and the setting and conflicts of the short story are recognizable as the nucleus of the novel. Their troubled relationship mirrors that of the Morels, with a bitter wife with genteel

¹⁰⁷ A few pages later, it is noted that “Prior adopted a strangled version of the public school accent” (RT 48). Language thus becomes a class marker, and the fact that Prior’s version of an upper class accent is “strangled” suggests both intentional parody and discomfort with an accent that denies his individuality.

pretensions, and a disappointed man, driven to drink by the drudgery of working in the coal mines to eke out a subsistence living for himself and his growing family. He dies in an accident in the mine, and while washing his body for the wake, his wife realizes that she and he had been strangers to one another. What she thinks of as the “utter isolation of the human soul” denies the possibility of husband and wife ever becoming one flesh.¹⁰⁸

The chrysanthemums in the short story are connected with fertility when the wife attaches one to her apron over her stomach, which is rounding in pregnancy. Her young daughter thinks the flowers are beautiful, but for the mother, “It was chrysanthemums when I married him, and chrysanthemums when you were born, and the first time they ever brought him home drunk, he’d got brown chrysanthemums in his buttonhole” (Lawrence, “Odor” 2116). At the end of the story, a vase of chrysanthemums is turned over in the parlour when the dead man is carried in by his mates. Thus the symbol of the flower evolves and is ultimately associated with death and destruction. The relationship between Sarah Lumb and Prior in the trilogy is similarly doomed, as signalled by the “bitter autumnal smell” of the chrysanthemums. When Sarah writes to Prior to say that she is not pregnant as she had feared, he feels a twinge of regret as well as a sense of relief: “I ought to be delighted and of course I am, but that was not the first reaction. There was a split second of something else, before the relief set in” (RT 544). Their relationship cannot ultimately be fruitful in any way but can only end in separation and death.

Prior receives this letter from Sarah when he finally returns to the war in France in the final volume of the trilogy. In *The Ghost Road*, Prior, Owen, and their fellow officers stay in a war-ravaged, middle-class residential area near Amiens in France before going up the line for the final battles. When they reach the houses where they are to stay, Prior is startled by the intensity of his joy:

A joy perhaps not unconnected with the ruinous appearance of these houses. Solid bourgeois houses they must have been in peacetime, the homes of men making their way in the world, men who’d been sure that certain things would never change, and where were they now? Every house in the road was damaged, some ruined. The ruins stood out starkly, black jagged edges in the white gulf of moonlight. (RT 511)

¹⁰⁸ The husband suffocates when he is trapped alone in a branch of the coal mine while working overtime after his workmates have left. His is another “strangled” or silenced working-class voice in traditional history. Lawrence does not report any direct speech from this character in the short story itself, yet his life story speaks loudly in this piece of working-class fiction.

He is enchanted by the house he sleeps in, even though he sees it “bleeding quietly from its unstaunchable wound” where the plaster is leaking from the ceiling where a shell had struck; there is a “labyrinth of green pathways [that] led from garden to garden” and the paths are “overgrown with weeds, with flowers that had seeded themselves and become rank, with overgrown roses that snagged their sleeves and pulled them back” (RT 514). The joy Prior feels is “schadenfreude”, connected to the decay of this bourgeois neighbourhood; a joy in the damage that is visited upon others that has its base in his jealousy of the middle class. But the damaged houses reverberate with haunting echoes; during their last night at Amiens there is a great storm with high winds, thunder and lightning. After going to bed, Prior and Hallet are disturbed by a strange rumbling noise which they fear is the noise of the guns at the front line. However they soon understand that it is coming from upstairs. They go to investigate and find an old rocking-horse in the nursery, animated by drafts of wind pouring through the damaged house, “its rockers were grinding away on the bare wooden floor” (RT 519). The discovery is an anti-climax, but Prior lays awake all night long with that rumbling going on in his head.

This episode again has Lawrentian echoes related to the discourse of class. In “The Rocking-Horse Winner”, Lawrence tells the story of a young boy who dies riding his long outgrown rocking-horse in the family nursery in order to appease his family’s insatiable desire for more money:

And so the house came to be haunted by the unspoken phrase: *There must be more money! There must be more money!* The children could hear it all the time, though nobody said it aloud. They heard it at Christmas when the expensive and splendid toys filled the nursery. Behind the shining modern rocking horse, behind the smart doll’s-house, a voice would start whispering: ‘There *must* be more money! There *must* be more money!’ (299)

By riding the rocking-horse the boy is able to put himself into a trance where he learns the names of the horses that will win the races that he wages money on. But no matter how much money he wins, his mother is never satisfied. The rocking-horse symbolizes this mad race for money and material goods that characterizes a materialistic bourgeoisie. In Barker’s trilogy the rocking-horse continues to haunt the ruins of the neighbourhood even when the inhabitants are long gone. The rumbling noise of its rockers, which Prior confuses with the rumbling of the guns at the front, foreshadows the threat of a coming war between the classes.

The parallel passages, scenes and subject matter that Barker shares with Lawrence underline her literary grounding as a writer of working-class fiction. But the distinctive narrative voice of working-class fiction that Hawthorn describes is modulated, questioned and polyphonic in Barker's trilogy. We see that Prior no longer shares the public and communal values and communal solidarity perceived as typical of the working class in much of this literature, making him into an unusual working-class character. Instead, it is obvious that his mother has inculcated in him the personal ambition, independence and upward social mobility of the middle class. Consequently he feels hatred and disgust for those who continue to categorize him stereotypically as working class. Barker attacks the myth of the working-class hero through her portrayal of Prior's father, and as we shall see in Chapter Four, she nuances former stereotypical depictions of working-class females as either self-sacrificing mothers or non-descript girlfriends whose lives revolve around the male protagonists.

Her Privates We

The character Charles Manning activates new intertextual connections in the trilogy. He is introduced at the beginning of *The Eye in the Door* just after Prior has been jilted by Myra – a married woman with whom he has had a one-night stand. Prior is sexually frustrated and goes walking in a park in London where he meets Manning, and the two men start up a homosexual relationship.

Manning is an officer who has sustained a leg injury at the front and has been transferred to work back in London at the Ministry of Munitions, a euphemism for the Ministry of Intelligence, as Marie-Luise Kohlke points out (“Sexuality”). Ironically, his surname connects him with another writer from the Great War, Frederic Manning, who published one of the few fictional accounts of the war that centred on the experiences of the private soldier at the front rather than on the experiences of the subaltern or officer. Manning's novel was originally entitled *The Middle Parts of Fortune*, but was later changed to *Her Privates We*, and both titles allude to an exchange between Guildenstern, Rosencrantz and Prince Hamlet in Act 2, Scene 2 of Shakespeare's tragedy. Manning uses a quote from this scene as the first epigraph in his novel: “On Fortune's cap we are not the very button . . . Then you live about her waist, or in the middle of her favours? . . . ‘Faith, her privates we.” In this exchange, “privates” can mean Fortune's intimate friends or more lewdly, her private parts – her genitalia. In Frederic Manning's book privates of course refers primarily to private soldiers – the men in the ranks at the bottom of the military

hierarchy. The relationship between Charles Manning and Prior melds both the sexual and hierarchical, military connotations of privates. Both men are officers, but Prior suspects that “Manning might be one of those who cannot – simply cannot – let go sexually with a social equal” (RT 235). In Manning’s bomb-damaged, middle-class home, Prior therefore transforms himself into what Manning desires:

He took off his tie, tunic and shirt, and threw them over the back of a chair. Manning said nothing, simply watched. Prior ran his fingers through his cropped hair [...] He’d transformed himself into the sort of working-class boy Manning would think it was all right to fuck. A sort of seminal spittoon. And it worked. Manning’s eyes grew dark as his pupils flared. Bending over him, Prior put his hand between his legs, thinking he’d probably never felt a spurt of purer class antagonism than he felt at that moment. He roughened his accent. ‘A’ right?’ (RT 235)

Manning significantly chooses to take Prior up to the deserted maid’s room to have sex, again emphasizing social rank and the erotization of dominance.¹⁰⁹ Although the sexual relationship between Manning and Prior is the result of mutual consent, it illustrates how issues of social class and power impinge on even the most intimate relationships between these characters. As Kohlke remarks, “The sex-act re-inscribes rather than transcends social inequities and their resulting traumas, re-invoking Prior’s sex-abuse by a person of superior status, as well as his mother’s domestic abuse (via memory of her exploitation as a domestic)” (“Sexuality”).¹¹⁰ The cracked walls, leaking plaster and shrouded furniture in Manning’s family home and the photographs of his wife and sons hidden under the dust sheets suggest that there is “something rotten” or corrupt in middle-class Britain. This obvious material deterioration parallels Manning’s moral dissipation and deceit, making the home front strangely reminiscent of the battlefield. Prior, as we have seen, is soon to be billeted in a similar, bomb-damaged middle-class house outside Amiens in France, suggesting that this corruption is general all over Europe.

Before Prior returns to the front for his final tour of duty, he meets Manning in his “bachelor” apartment in Half Moon Street in London, the street where Robert Ross also lived and entertained friends, among them

¹⁰⁹ For a discussion of the erotization of dominance in modern society, see Christine E. Gudorf.

¹¹⁰ Kohlke explores the trope of sexuality in trauma literature in her article “Sexuality in Extremity: Trauma Literature, Violence, and Counter-Erotics”, using texts by D. M. Thomas, Arundhati Roy and Liana Badr in addition to the trilogy. In the case of *The Eye in the Door* she concludes that Barker’s rhetoric of sexuality “unmasks rather than conceals the material conditions that produce and perpetuate insidious gender, class, and sex-based trauma, as well as the public trauma of War” (“Sexuality”).

Sassoon and Owen. Manning explains that the London apartment is necessary because there are occasions when he works so late in the city that he cannot make it home to his wife and two sons for the night. Prior of course understands that the apartment is a necessity for a man who is forced to lead a double life.¹¹¹ Prior is also invited to visit Ross and meets some of his upper class friends in Half Moon Street. He later tells Rivers how one of these friends, a man called Birtwhistle, was stood up by his male lover, whom he referred to as one of the “W.C.’s” – a disdainful label for the working classes – who functioned as convenient water closets, or as Prior puts it, “seminal spittoons” for the upper classes.

Charles Manning’s surname thus expands the meaning of the relationship between the two men. The connection to the conversation in *Hamlet* carries connotations of intimate friendship and lewd sexuality. At the same time, the fact that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are sent to spy on Hamlet emphasizes deceit, intrigue and manipulation. The difference in rank between the prince and the two noblemen makes any true friendship or loyalty impossible, just as the relationship between Manning and Prior will remain exceedingly difficult (as I discuss below) permeated as it is by social inequality. By using *Her Privates We* as a description for the common soldier, Frederic Manning also focuses on how the men in the ranks were exploited, degraded and deceived during the Great War. Ironically, in Barker’s trilogy, Manning is also another of Rivers’ patients, supposedly sent to him to be cured of his homosexuality. Hence, Barker’s text shows degradation, exploitation and deception permeating relations on the home front as well as in the trenches.

Forster as Intertext

The relationship between Manning and Prior is also reminiscent of the relationships in Forster’s novel *Maurice* – a novel which was completed in 1914, but not published until 1971, after Forster’s death. The eponymous protagonist in this novel is from the suburban middle class. He attends a traditional public school and goes up to Cambridge, where he meets his first, platonic love, Clive Durham, a young heir from the country gentry. Durham’s country seat is falling into disrepair with a leaking roof and a lack of funds to set things straight.

¹¹¹ Indeed, this puts me in mind of Oscar Wilde’s characters Algernon Moncrieff and John (Ernest) Worthing in *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Algernon’s flat is located in Half-Moon Street although he spends much of his time “bunburying” in the country. Worthing is Jack at his country home and Ernest in the city. The motif of a deceitful, double life contains a homosexual undertext as well. As Dan Rebellato points out, the name Ernest “recalls the contemporary words for homosexuality ‘urning’ and ‘uranian’, and [...] by 1895 ‘earnest’ was a widespread code for homosexual. And certainly Wilde, as a married man, must have known better than most the value of being Ernest in town and Jack in the country” (Rebellato, Introduction to *The Importance of Being Earnest* xxv).

Manning's middle-class home has likewise been damaged, but by the bombing of London; it has cracked walls which leak plaster. Like Manning, Durham is attracted to a "social inferior". Maurice, who later becomes a stockbroker in London, is not the sort of man who would normally be welcomed into the homes of the leisured classes. Neither does he have the intellectual interests that Durham has.

The platonic relationship between Clive and Maurice crumbles when the former discovers that he is, after all, attracted to women and falls out of love with Maurice. Maurice later takes a new lover, Durham's gamekeeper Alec Scudder, who is thus *his* social inferior. The class and power aspects of homosexuality in the relationship between Manning and Prior explicitly parallel the experience of Maurice and Alec. Furthermore, in the trilogy, Manning is haunted by the memory of a man called Scudder, who was one of the men in the company he was leading at the front. He had suffered from shell shock and received shock treatment before being returned to the front. Scudder was inept as a soldier because he was unable to kill – Manning noted that even during bayonet practice he was unable to stab the sandbag that represented the enemy. He tries to desert several times, and Manning saves him from court martial, realizing he is on the verge of another breakdown. Finally, during a battle Scudder falls into a crater hole full of liquid mud and is unable to get out. Manning and some of his men try to pull him out, but find it is impossible, so Manning, as commanding officer, does what he judges to be the only humane thing – he shoots Scudder rather than having him drown slowly in the mire. Manning tells Rivers about Scudder while in hospital with anxiety attacks (RT 345-49). However, the first haunting memory Manning has of Scudder comes to him when he is attending Maud Allan's performance of Wilde's *Salome*.

Manning was bored. If he were honest [the play] meant nothing to him. He could see what Wilde was doing. He was attempting to convey the sense of a great passion constricted, poisoned, denied legitimate outlets, but none the less forced to the surface, expressed as destruction and cruelty because it could not be expressed as love. It was not that he thought the theme trivial or unworthy or out of date – certainly not that – but the language was impossible for him. France had made it impossible. (RT 280-81)

And then a sly, insinuating voice in his head asks "Where's Scudder? Where's Scudder? Where's – " (RT 281). Manning's guilt over having killed Scudder significantly re-emerges during Wilde's play. His "execution" of Scudder thus strangely melds with the sexually incited destruction and cruelty of the play.

In *Maurice*, Alec Scudder succumbs to Maurice's socially dominant power, giving up his chance of a new life and career in the Argentine. Although he does not literally sink in the mud of the trenches as Scudder does in the trilogy, his decision to stay with Maurice metaphorically drags him through the mud in the England of his day where homosexual relationships are a criminal offence. Staying with Maurice realistically means social ostracism, a metaphorical death.¹¹² Forster's novel explores sexuality and the erotization of power. The relationships between Maurice and his two lovers are influenced by class contingencies, just like the relationship between Manning and Prior.

Prior refuses to accept any simplified or romanticized version of class difference. At one point, Charles Manning offers him a safe job in England instead of returning to the front. Prior is insulted, thinking Manning believes he has only come to visit him in order to gain an advantage and that Manning is patronizing him or paying him off for "services rendered". However, this misunderstanding is soon cleared up, and Prior admits to Manning that "Class prejudice isn't any more admirable for being directed upwards" (*RT* 369). Because of these insights, his experience becomes for the reader a thought-provoking challenge both to the canonical accounts of the war poets, who were predominantly members of the cultural elite, and newer accounts which present the experience of the men in the ranks as a monolithic, working-class version of the Great War.¹¹³ Even though there is growing understanding and a true dialogue going on between these two characters, it is obvious that such inter-class friendships are difficult, due to the underlying social structures in British society. Likewise, these same social structures complicate the friendship between Prior and Rivers.

¹¹² Considering social conventions of the time, Forster gave *Maurice* a somewhat contrived "happy ending". Ariela Freedman comments that "The happy ending transgresses not only social conventions, but realist ones; the novel has to suppress the class differences that separate Alec and Maurice in order to provide for their reconciliation" (*Death* 54). In contrast, Barker never lets us forget the class differences that exist between Prior and Manning.

¹¹³ The tendency to generalize is common in history books even today. Although Beckett, writing in 2001, warns against generalizations on the war experience, he goes on himself to generalize about the working class during the Great War as follows: "There was a predisposition in British working-class popular culture which made light of hardship. It might be characterised either as phlegmatic acceptance of fate or sheer bloodymindedness, but was commonly observed with a sardonic, vulgar humour. A sense of community and social cohesiveness was well engrained through the shared experience of adversity and a spirit of mutual support epitomised by such organizations as the friendly societies. [...] Men were used to making life bearable and were well suited to the challenges of war, relying on civilian values and not those of the army to see them through" (Beckett 226-27). As we have seen, Barker does not generalize when presenting the working class. The solidarity that Beckett describes is there at times, but at other times, working-class characters are just as likely to exploit one another as are people from other classes. The exclusion of Beattie and Hettie Roper from the working class community is a case in point.

Critical Responses to Prior

The intricately hybrid nature of Prior that I have been discussing – developed through intertextuality – has perplexed some critics and been problematic for many reviewers. Jim Shepard, for example, describes Prior as follows:

Prior's essential condition, exacerbated by the war is to be always between worlds: he is 'neither fish nor fowl nor good red herring,'¹¹⁴ wearing down under the stress from swinging between pacifism and patriotism, the lower and the upper classes, hetero- and homosexuality, madness and sanity, while never feeling he belongs on one side or the other. ("Gentlemen in the Trenches")

I agree that Prior is indeed "between worlds" in the concrete senses that Shepard mentions, especially in connection to the discourse of class. His character, motivation and conflicts are the vehicle of expression for residual, dominant and emergent discourses on class.

Claudia Pierpont considers Prior to be a weak point in Barker's historical narrative. In her review of *The Ghost Road*, she argues that both Prior and Rivers too obviously become mouthpieces for "flat and schematic expositions of the author's social messages" ("Shell Shock"). She continues:

Still less credible is Billy's transformation from a bad boy with spelling problems to a young man who thinks 'the past is a palimpsest.' Mute with trauma when he first appears in 'Regeneration', Ms. Barker's 'alley cat' of an antihero comes to dominate the trilogy with a voice that is startlingly, bookishly articulate. Or does this objection reflect the very prejudices that Prior is meant to mock? ("Shell Shock")

Barker responds to Pierpont in a statement indicating that Pierpont does indeed not so much reveal a weakness in the trilogy, as she exposes instead her own, perhaps previously unacknowledged social assumptions about the working class, since Barker was well aware that "Owen and Sassoon thought they were speaking on behalf of the inarticulate soldier. But many people are assumed inarticulate only because nobody is prepared to listen" (qtd. in Jaggi, "Dispatches").

Bergonzi has also heard intertextual hauntings in Prior. He mentions an echo from a well-known passage in Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*. Prior thinks, "I remember standing by the bar and thinking that words didn't mean anything. Mons, Loos, the Somme, Arras, Verdun, Ypres" (RT

¹¹⁴ This description of Prior comes from Charles Manning in the trilogy.

579).¹¹⁵ Bergonzi conjectures that Barker is more interested in the mythopoetic rather than the historiographic aspects of the war:

she is more concerned in establishing a connection between the myth and certain preoccupations of the present time: gender roles [...] feminism, psychotherapy, false memory syndrome, the sexual abuse of children [...] Perhaps she believes, in the fashion of high modernist mythopoeia, that all wars, whether the First World War, the Second or the Vietnam War, are ultimately the same war. (“*Regeneration*” 14)

Yet he goes on to complain that although Prior is credible as a literary creation, he is not credible as a figure in the historical situation in which Barker presents him (“*Regeneration*” 8). Instead, he finds Prior to be more like the angry young men of the 50s in Britain or the American beats and hipsters of the 1950s and ‘60s. I too can see parallels between Prior’s situation and for example Joe Lampton’s in John Braine’s *Room at the Top* (1957) or Arthur Seaton’s in Allan Sillitoe’s *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1958).¹¹⁶ He shares the pent up sexual aggression, hatred of the bourgeoisie and upper classes and ambition of these two literary protagonists from a later historical era. Bergonzi argues that “Billy dominates the trilogy, but he does so like a visitant from the future in some work of science fiction or magic realism” (“*Regeneration*” 8). Bergonzi’s comment supports my comparison between Billy Prior and Billy Pilgrim, both of whom have become unstuck in time. The similarities between Prior and characters of working-class fiction of the fifties and sixties, characters from other Great War literature and traumatized soldiers like Billy Pilgrim in literature about World War II allow Barker to draw diachronically on the experiences of both class and war.

For Bergonzi, “The point is not that people could not have been bisexual or bitterly class-conscious eighty years ago, but that they could not have thought or spoken about these things in the terms that Barker gives to Billy” (“*Regeneration*” 8). One such example he mentions is Prior saying in a conversation with the imprisoned pacifist Beattie Roper, “I don’t see how you can derive that from a Marxist analysis” (RT 249), pointing out that Prior here

¹¹⁵ Hemingway’s passage reads: “There were many words that you could not stand to hear and finally only the names of places had dignity. Certain numbers were the same way and certain dates and these with the names of places were all you could say and have them mean anything. Abstract words such as glory, honour, courage, or hallow were obscene beside the concrete names of villages, the numbers of roads, the names of rivers, the numbers of regiments and the dates” (*A Farewell to Arms* 144).

¹¹⁶ In contrast, Brannigan claims that “Barker’s novels seem initially to share the formal or aesthetic conservatism of much working-class social realism, such as the novels of Allan Sillitoe, John Braine, or the early D. H. Lawrence, but this impression diminishes as her oeuvre expands into historical fiction” (*Pat Barker* 3).

is “handling the intellectual small change of 1968 rather than of 1918” since many of the words and expressions that he uses were not known at the time (“*Regeneration*” 9).¹¹⁷ In my opinion this is not problematic. These historical anachronisms actually underline the fact that Prior is a figure from our time as well as a figure from the period of the Great War. The intertexts that are activated highlight the diachronicity of the discourse of class in the trilogy, showing both continuities and transformations in patterns of cultural experience through time.¹¹⁸

Changing Class Relations

Paternalism was a dominant discourse on class at the outbreak of the war, a hegemonic ideology which inculcated the belief that some people were born to lead while others were meant to serve. A paternalistic system undertakes to supply the needs or regulate the conduct of those whom it controls and thus applies to matters affecting individuals both in their relationship to authority and to each other. This inculcated system is illustrated by the female warden at Aylesbury Prison where Prior visits Beattie Roper. She tells him that they have had a leader of the Irish rebellion in the prison: “An internal struggle, then she burst out, ‘She was a *countess*.’ Her face lit up with all the awe and deference of which the English working class is capable” (RT 246-47). In contrast, she describes Beattie Roper as “‘a different kettle of fish [...] Common as muck’” (RT 247). However, the industrial revolution, urbanization, and the resulting decline of agrarian society had already started challenging this ideology, and the Great War accelerated the deterioration of paternalism even more.

The trilogy traces how certain characters begin questioning paternalism as a hegemonic ideology as the war progresses. We learn for example that Prior’s girlfriend Sarah Lumb leaves her position as a house servant when she can no longer accept the restrictions and expectations of her employer. When a young man comes to tell her about the death of her first fiancé, her mistress scolds her for not having the tea ready. Sarah gives her a piece of her mind and walks out, no longer fearing the lack of a good reference – she can now pick and choose employment because of the factory jobs opening to women. Sarah’s mother is disappointed that Sarah is no longer willing to show proper deference in order to get what she sees as more fitting

¹¹⁷ Bergonzi mentions the words “sexy”, “goolies”, “brown hatter”, to “brown-nose” and “johnny” as a word for a condom (“*Regeneration*” 9).

¹¹⁸ Monteith argues, as I do, that Barker uses contemporary expressions “to ensure that the reader never loses sight of the fact that the meaning of the First World War persists and changes for each generation” (“We will remember” 69). The names of the places where battles took place will “continue to coexist with other markers of war – from each of the wars that have followed” (69).

employment: “You could’ve been a lady’s maid if you’d stuck in. That’s what gets me about you, you can put it on as well as anybody when you like, but it’s too much bloody bother” (RT 172). There is certainly no social deference left in either Sarah’s or Prior’s attitudes to their employers.

In contrast to Barker’s portrayal of diminishing belief in paternalism among some of her working-class characters, Beckett, discussing the war, argues that paternalism had a great influence on the behaviour of men in the ranks:

Working-class soldiers both accepted and expected the imposition of discipline because, in British society, deference, which was not regarded as subservience, was routinely extended by the working class to social superiors in return for paternalism. Paternalism tended to create something of a culture of dependency among British soldiers, but also mitigated the harsher aspects of the disciplinary code. (Beckett 225)

This myth of hierarchic class interaction is confronted directly in the trilogy; Prior muses that the men in the ranks are not dependent on their senior officers: “Most of the ‘devotion’ people talk about is from officers – *some* of the officers – to the men. I don’t myself see much sign that it’s reciprocated. If they trust anybody they trust the NCO’s, who’re older, for the most part, and come from the same background. But then I wasn’t born to the delusion that I’m responsible for them” (RT 533). However, the military hierarchy aims to mirror the predicated paternalism of the class system – even in the trenches the officers have servants. Sassoon discusses the qualities of a good military servant while having dinner with Rivers at the Conservative Club in Edinburgh, eyeing the young waiter’s prowess with the carving knife. He decides that he was “Very much the sort of man you’d pick as your servant” (RT 105), and when Rivers comments that the young man is rather good looking as well, Sassoon explains “I’m afraid that has to take second place. You look for skill with the bayonet first because he’s always on your left in the attack” (RT 105-06). Servants, it is insinuated, can be exploited sexually, but more importantly, in battle, a servant functions as a shield, protecting his master. Prior’s servant during his last tour of duty is suggestively called Longstaffe. He claims to have been a gentleman’s valet in civilian life, but later admits that the closest he has come to that profession was in an amateur stage production. Prior ironically thinks of him as a “phoney gentleman’s gentleman”, but quickly modifies this description to the “phoney gentleman of a phoney gentleman”, with reference to his own status as a temporary gentleman (RT 517). Longstaffe dies at Prior’s

side in a battle, even though he is only a “phoney gentleman’s gentleman”. Class barriers are confused due to the war; when “phoney gentlemen” can take on the privileges and responsibilities of “real” gentlemen, the naturalness of a paternalistic system is no longer apparent.

In *Fighting Different Wars: Experience, Memory, and the First World War in Britain*, Janet Watson argues that participants in the war tended to construct their experience, lived and remembered as either work or service, according to class belonging. Whereas middle- and upper-class women could afford to volunteer for unpaid “service”, working-class women were more likely to see their jobs as just another form of “work”, necessary for survival (Watson 3-6). The war simply offered more variety and sometimes better wages (Watson 8). In the trilogy, conditions in the munitions factory where Sarah Lumb and other working-class women work are dangerous, dreary and tiresome; the yellow-skinned, overall-clad women work twelve hour shifts with only short breaks to drink weak tea at trestle tables. One of the women, Lizzie, looks forward to being able to afford a set of false teeth on her temporarily high wages, and the others encourage her to go ahead. Madge says, “‘You want to stop talking about it, and go and do it. You can afford it. All this won’t last, you know.’ She jerked her thumb at the room full of overall-clad women. ‘It’s too good to last’” (RT 99). In contrast, the middle-class female ambulance driver whom Hettie Roper visits is thrilled by the chance she has to do her bit: “‘Short hair, breeches, driving an ambulance, all things she’d never been allowed to do in a million years. And suddenly she grabbed hold of me and she said, ‘Hettie, for women, this is the first day in the history of the world’” (RT 296).

The conversation between Madge and Lizzie above activates T. S. Eliot’s “The Wasteland” as an intertext in the trilogy.¹¹⁹ Barker’s text echoes the colloquial language of the pub scene in lines 139-71, which also involves a discussion of false teeth. The speaker in this section of Eliot’s poem says to Lil: “‘Now Albert’s coming back, make yourself a bit smart. / He’ll want to know what you done with that money he gave you / To get yourself some teeth. He did, I was there. / You have them all out, Lil, and get a nice set, / He said, I swear, I can’t bear to look at you” (Eliot 68). She insinuates that Albert, who has returned from the war, will grow tired of his unattractive wife and find someone else unless she fixes her appearance. Lil, however does not desire the attention of her husband; she has had five children and provoked an abortion when she was expecting the sixth. She blames those pregnancies for her loss of

¹¹⁹ Johan Höglund drew my attention to the similarity of these scenes in a discussion of an earlier version of this dissertation.

good looks and health. In Eliot's poem the women are drinking in a pub after the war is over, as the barkeeper's repeated reminders of closing time, "HURRY UP PLEASE IT'S TIME" indicate. At the beginning of Barker's trilogy, women were still banned from pubs; Prior has to take Sarah Lumb to a hotel when they want to have a drink together. There is also another notable difference; Lil has received money to fix her teeth from her husband, whereas Lizzie is earning her own money. Later in the novel, the subject of false teeth arises again when Prior visits his hometown while on leave and runs into two middle-aged women he recognizes from his childhood, Mrs. Thorpe and Mrs. Riley. Prior is surprised by their "incredible smiles": "There was a saying round here: for every child born a tooth lost, and certainly, before the war, Mrs. Thorpe and Mrs. Riley had advertised their fecundity every time they opened their mouths. Now, in place of gaps and blackened stumps was this even flashing whiteness" (RT 292). These women can now afford false teeth, and are now allowed to frequent pubs; they can afford to go out for a drink together. The condition of one's teeth is obviously a class marker; working-class women have a poorer diet, give birth to more children and cannot afford dental care. During the war these women had a chance to do something about this due to their temporarily high wages, but class differences persisted long after the war in this respect. This is obvious, for example in John Braine's *Room at the Top* where his post-World War Two, working-class protagonist Joe Lampton is ashamed of his teeth. He cannot help comparing his own decayed teeth and less than perfect smile with those of the upper-class Susan Brown and Jack Wales. In Eliot's, Barker's and Braine's texts the economic situation of working-class characters is underscored; wartime occupations are necessarily "work", rather than "service".

The difference between the way women from different classes conceive of the work they are doing is also apparent in the conflict between Sister Walters, a working-class woman who had trained as a nurse before the war and the women who were Voluntary Aid Detachments at the hospital where she works: "She hated the VADs, most of whom were girls of good family 'doing their bit'" (RT 342-43) and complains about them to Dr. Rivers. Nurse Walters comes from a large, working-class family who lived in the slums. Whereas she has trained as a nurse in order to make a living, these girls consider their work to be service to the nation. Nurse Walters is not the only one who speaks negatively of VADs; they are generally described by soldiers, working-class women and the doctors as giggling or inefficient, and as sexually promiscuous rather than prim and proper "angels". In one scene, for example,

a soldier called Marsden has stolen the trousers of his roommate. The American doctor Ruggles says of the roommate, ““You mean this guy’s running round the hospital bare-assed frightening the VAD’s?”” Dr. Bryce answers, ““No, he’s wearing his other breeches. And your idea of what might frighten a VAD is – ’ ‘Chivalrous,’ said Ruggles. ‘Naïve,’ said Bryce. ‘In the extreme’” (RT 66). Graves also suggests that Sassoon will have to fight off the VADs at Craiglockhart if he dares leave his door unlocked (RT 20). We see VADs as they are perceived by those around them, rather than hearing their stories. They haunt the trilogy precisely because their voices are absent.

The inequities of a paternalistic system became more and more obvious for example in the differentiated treatment of officers and private soldiers suffering from shell shock and the diverging punishments given to those who objected to the war, according to their class background. In the trilogy the latter is illustrated by the difference in the treatment of Sassoon and Beattie Roper. Sassoon is sent to a hospital for shell-shock victims for his declaration against the war and because he has threatened to kill Lloyd George. Here he is relatively free to come and go and spends his days playing golf and visiting friends. In contrast, the working-class Beattie Roper, who has also drunkenly threatened to kill Lloyd George and has harboured pacifists and deserters, is sent to the inhumane conditions of Aylesbury prison.¹²⁰ She is force-fed and mistreated, and Mac and William Roper – both working class – are tortured when they are imprisoned as well.

Soldiers from all classes were expected to sacrifice their lives. The system demanded subservience, but failed to give even the appearance of protection and support in return. Since paternalism and social deference obviously no longer functioned as they were supposed to (and perhaps never actually had), they started losing their hegemonic status. War propaganda proclaimed that there had been a coalition of classes through a citizens’ army; this led to a new sense of entitlement among the working class. The welfare of the “humblest citizen soldier commanded genuine attention in the public imagination” (Barham 4). Soldiers and their families began to see health care, family benefits and other welfare services as a “social wage” that they had earned in the service of their country (Barham 3) rather than as charity from those who were their “social betters”. In the trilogy it is the relationship

¹²⁰ Although there are several references to Bertrand Russell in the trilogy as an anti-war influence on Sassoon, Barker does not include the information that he, too, eventually served a prison sentence for his anti-war propaganda. This “creative vandalism” suggests that she wishes to emphasize the general point of how harshly working-class pacifists were treated compared to upper-class pacifists, who were tolerated or simply ignored for a much longer period of time. As with the VADS, Barker has a particular ideological perspective.

between Prior and Rivers that illustrates how the hegemonic idea of paternalism is losing its foothold. Craiglockhart, with its hierarchical military and medical power structure, reflects the system of social deference and paternalism in British society in general. At the same time, in its institutional elitism it resembles the public school system with its restricted membership.¹²¹ As a temporary gentleman Prior is an intruder in this system, who through his presence interrogates the hegemonic order.

Early in the narrative, Rivers explains to Prior that working-class soldiers who are shell-shocked almost unanimously present physical symptoms like paralysis or mutism, whereas middle- and upper-class officers tend to stammer; they are not affected to the same degree simply because their social standing gives them more self-confidence. He explains the differences as the result of the officers' superior education and more complex mental life. Prior's mutism seems to prove the logic of his explanation since he comes from a working-class background. Consequently, Peter Barham suggests that Barker's trilogy perpetuates class-biased descriptions of soldiers' mental life through the character Dr. Rivers. He adds that many scholars investigating the subject of shell shock during the Great War tend to take this class-biased view of the war neuroses at face value and accept the descriptions of the doctors:

Much has been made of Britain's integral divide between mute working-class soldiers and agitated but still voluble upper-class officers, between the traumatic hysterias of the rank and file which had either removed or distorted their capacity for speech, and the anxiety neuroses or neurasthenias of the officer class which had done little to diminish an infinite capacity to verbalize their remorse-ridden conflicts. (Barham 76)

He goes on to observe that "Some respected cultural historians have, rather surprisingly perhaps, taken this distinction at face value, treating it not so much as a representation of how members of one class imagined or believed they differed from another class, but as a no doubt flawed yet still broadly truthful account of a real state of affairs" (Barham 76). In the trilogy, however, Prior reacts to Rivers' explanation of the differences in symptoms according to class as if he had been stung: "Are you serious? You honestly believe that that *gaggle* of noodle-brained half-wits down there has a complex mental life? Oh, *Rivers*!" (RT 88). The fact that other middle-class officers are suffering from hysterical

¹²¹ In the trilogy Wilfred Owen embraces Craiglockhart almost as if it were a replacement for the public school education he had desired but could not afford to get. Whereas Sassoon hates the place and tries to get away as often as possible, Owen tells Prior that old Craiglockhartians should stick together when they return to the front (RT 555).

symptoms also undermines Rivers' thesis; Willard, for example is suffering from hysterical paralysis of the legs. Rivers' ideas about shell shock are thus challenged in the trilogy, in accordance with its dialogic format. Although Barker does repeat these ideas, both men's understanding of the differences between classes change; Rivers learns to "see" Prior as a complex, fellow human being,¹²² and Prior grows to respect Rivers' work as a doctor as something more than the simple imposition of class and medical authority on subordinates, but rather as a genuine effort to help other people back into combat.

Likewise, Barker suggests that attitudes toward and understanding of the war are not necessarily pre-determined by class identity. Two characters from diametrically opposed class backgrounds – Dr. Rivers and Prior's father – come to similar conclusions about paternalism and social deference in British society. When Prior decides to enlist in the army, his working-class father tells him, "time enough to do summat for the Empire when the Empire's done summat for you" (RT 52). He dismisses his son's patriotic fervour as misguided. Similarly, Rivers, with his upper-middle-class background – as both a doctor and an officer – comes to the conclusion that, "A society that devours its own young deserves no automatic or unquestioning allegiance" (RT 218). Both suggest that blind obedience to authority is no longer acceptable. The purpose of surfeiting personal power and freedom to a higher class or to state authorities is to ensure that one's needs are taken care of and that one is protected against barbarism and violence. Here, the fact that those who have power are subjecting the working class to violence reveals the true, exploitative nature of paternalism.

As Bergonzi's reference to Prior's talk of a Marxist analysis in his conversation with Beattie Roper indicates, there is an emergent Marxism that exists side by side with the paternalistic class discourse in the trilogy. Sitting in a cellar near the front only days before his death, Prior envisions the future as a continuation of the war in a sense that mirrors Marxist ideas of history as a perpetual struggle of classes:

But now I look round this cellar with the candles burning on the tables and our linked shadows leaping on the walls, and I realize there's another group of words that still mean something. Little words that trip through sentences

¹²² At one point Rivers realizes he is seeing Prior's public face for the first time: "At Craiglockhart he'd been aggressive and manipulative, but always from a position of comparative helplessness. At times he'd reminded Rivers of a toddler clinging to his father's sleeve in order to be able to deliver a harder kick on his shins. Now, briefly, he glimpsed the Prior other people saw: the Lodes, the Ropers, the Spragges, and it came as a shock. Prior was formidable" (RT 279).

unregarded: us, them, we, they, here, there. These are the words of power, and long after we're gone, they'll lie about in the language, like the unexploded grenades in these fields, and any one of them'll take your hand off. (RT 579)

Whereas the war creates a common enemy for all the British social classes – the Germans – the end of the war may well exacerbate the animosity between social classes – us and them – at home. The social struggles that had begun before the war will continue.¹²³

Hitchcock maintains that “[t]he conceit of ‘regeneration’ is clearly that it depends on something that has already been generated, overdetermined, produced” (“What is Prior?”). With reference to class, this claim is obviously substantiated. In this chapter I have discussed a number of intertexts that activate divergent strands of the discourse of class. The trilogy starts with the residual and dominant paternalistic attitudes of the Edwardian period, but it also includes emergent discourses on class; in this way it explores class diachronically. The intertextual haunting going on in the text juxtaposes these discourses on class.

We see the residual effects of utilitarianism where *Hard Times* functions as an intertext. We can read class through the lenses of Social Darwinism and theories of degeneration when *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* functions as an intertext, and can later connect class with aspects of colonialism and imperialism through echoes of Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*. Prior also activates Lawrentian texts relating to class; parallels between Prior and the protagonist of *Sons and Lovers* and other Lawrentian protagonists place him firmly within the working-class literary tradition, whereas parallels to Manning’s *Her Privates We* and Forster’s *Maurice* illustrate class conflicts. The focus on the lives of working-class women during the war demonstrates changes in class attitudes during this period and the various material ways in which women with different class backgrounds experienced war work. The dominant paternalistic discourse of class existing during the war is obvious in the trilogy, although it is under siege, and the Marxist references represent an emergent discourse on class. The trope of yellowness that runs throughout the trilogy, tying together the munitions factories and war profiteers of the home front with the exploited soldiers at the Western Front presents the war, in a fractal representation, as the result of corrupt and degenerate class relations. These relations stretch far beyond the British mainland, infecting the empire as well. In the following

¹²³ The “us” and “them” can also refer to combatants vs. non-combatants and anticipates another division that will exist when the soldiers return from the war. It can also refer to the future division between Britain and the continent.

chapter I will focus on residual, dominant and emergent discourses of gender, which, like discourses of class, play a major role in the trilogy and in the history of the Great War.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Discourse of Gender

In periods of cultural insecurity, when there are fears of regression and degeneration, the longing for strict border controls around the definition of gender [...] becomes especially intense. (Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy* 4)

During the last three decades of the twentieth century the feminist movement and societal changes led to a strong focus on issues of gender and sexuality in Great Britain and other western countries.¹²⁴ This focus is reflected in much of the critical discourse on literature about the Great War from the late 1980s; books about the war convey an avid interest in gender politics.¹²⁵ In *The Regeneration Trilogy* the past is similarly gendered; in the novels the gender/sex system in Britain during the first decades of the twentieth century is made visible and problematized in dialogue with the concerns of the 1990s.

“Gendering” is a process in which the content of what it means to be a woman or a man is culturally constructed. When one focuses on gendering as a dynamic process, dependent on time and space, it is possible to criticize established ideas on gender and sexuality and to formulate alternatives. With time, this can lead to changes within gender stereotypes themselves: we can thus speak of “re-gendering” or “un-gendering” (Grenholm 90-92). In this connection Barker points out that she wants to protest against the idea that feminist writing and feminism are exclusively about women: “I think it’s about the way in which gender stereotypes distort the personal development of both sexes and make people less creative and happy than they otherwise might be” (qtd. in Perry, “Going”). The trilogy, however, reveals that gender stereotypes

¹²⁴ During the 1990s when Barker was writing the trilogy new thinking on gender roles also began to affect international human rights legislation. At a doctoral seminar on gender studies held at Karlstad University in the autumn of 2005, for example, Sólveig Anna Bóasdóttir referred to a number of documents from the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Association for Sexuality (WAS), and the Pan-American Health Organization (PAH) and traced the development in thinking about gender and sexuality in these organizations from the 1970s and through to the first years of the 21st century. These documents move from a biological understanding of sexuality to a more social constructivist understanding with a strong focus on sexual rights.

¹²⁵ A seminal text in this connection was Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar’s *No Man’s Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth-Century, Vol. 2, Sexchanges*, 1989. They argue that the war released women from social and economic constraints and also describe that liberation as unproblematic; women developed a new, “amazonian” strength – a strength which is evident in women’s literature from the period (Gilbert and Gubar 259). Later critics have not been as confident about this liberation: see e.g. Bance, 1993; Bourke, 1996; Cole, 2001; Harris, 1998; Löschnigg, 1993, 1999; Macdonald, 1993; and Ouditt, 1994.

threaten more than the happiness of the individual; in the worst case scenario it is these stereotypes that actually make war possible.

The portrayal of gender in the trilogy is diachronic; it illustrates that gendering is a dynamic process. Sexual identity is neither biologically determined nor fixed, but is rather constantly being made and remade under changing historical circumstances. In this chapter, I will discuss gender roles and representations of sexuality in the trilogy in order to show what the work indicates about the social, political, and psychological operations of heterosexism during the Great War. I will trace different constructions of masculinity in the trilogy, focussing on homosociality and homoeroticism, and on the mechanisms that reinforce dominant constructions of gender. Secondly, I will show how Barker's focus on transgressive sexuality in various forms challenges the established institutional discourses on gender. Thirdly, I will discuss how feminine gender roles are affected by the war. Finally, my reading will show how the trilogy dialogically supplements the canonical war literature and illustrates the traditional hegemonic structures of power and sexuality in patriarchal society.

Before the Great War a number of emergent discourses on gender called for a change in the societal position of women. In the trilogy, Beattie and Hettie Roper are engaged in one of these emergent discourses; they are Suffragettes. However, dominant discourses on gender were diametrically opposed to women's rights. As Showalter notes, "The nineteenth century had cherished a belief in the separate spheres of femininity and masculinity that amounted almost to religious faith" (*Sexual* 7), and these beliefs were carried over into the twentieth century. Masculinity was associated with the public sphere, femininity with the private sphere. Another character in the trilogy, Sarah Lumb's mother Ada, voices these dominant views of gender. She strongly disapproves, for example, of voting rights for women: "It had pleased Almighty God, she said, to create the one sex visibly and unmistakably superior to the other, and that was all there was to be said about the matter" (*RT* 467). Throughout the trilogy, there is a multivalent discussion of what comprises masculinity and femininity and how changing historical circumstances influence gender stereotypes.

Today, according to Sharon Ouditt, British "culture continues to be structured by a division that polarises sex and gender practically, politically and psychologically, allocating nurturing and servicing tasks to women and competitive, aggressive tasks to men" (139). Again we can see how the historical novel can be a "backdoor into the present" (Barker qtd. in Reusch);

by focusing on these concerns Barker continues to deal with contemporary dilemmas.

Constructing Masculinity

In the trilogy, Barker takes traits traditionally perceived as quintessentially “feminine” in a patriarchal society – nurturing, passivity, hysteria, emotionalism, non-rationality – and uses them in the creation of male characters. The discourse of gender is particularly thematized in Dr. Rivers’ conversations with patients and his changing understanding of gender stereotypes. In treating soldiers with hysterical symptoms, Rivers recognizes the paradoxical fact that “this most brutal of conflicts should set up a relationship between officers and men that was domestic. Caring” (RT 97). Young officers speak about feeling like fathers to their men, yet the work they are carrying out is the work usually done by women: “Worrying about socks, boots, blisters, food, hot drinks. And that perpetually harried expression of theirs. Rivers had only ever seen that look in one other place: in the public wards of hospitals, on the faces of women who were bringing up large families on very low incomes ...” (RT 97). Furthermore, he reflects on the term “male mother” – a term he has heard, but dislikes – since it implies that “nurturing, even when done by a man, remains female, as if the ability were in some way borrowed, or even stolen from women – ” (RT 97). Rivers thereby questions the binary logic that supports the masculinity/femininity duality and essentialism in his society – the belief that men and women have “innate qualities” independent of the enculturation process. His insights are very important since, as Shaddock underlines, in the trilogy he “occupies the ultimate paternalistic position of the omnipotent healer, the objective, scientific cataloguer of knowledge, the active, dominant knower who studies and cures the fixed, subordinate known” (658). However, she adds, Rivers develops in the narrative and he “ironically comes to understand the barbaric elements of his own inculcated ideology of British manhood, war, and civilization” (657). The trilogy shows his paternalistic position being gradually undermined; his interactions with patients challenge his preconceived notions about the war, making him aware of his own authoritative position and his complicity with the powers that are perpetrating warfare.

Throughout the narrative, Dr. Rivers is conspicuously silent about his own sexuality. However, there is cumulative evidence in the trilogy that he is homosexual. Thinking about masculinity in British society, he concedes that although “feelings of tenderness for other men were natural and right”, repressing these feelings and indeed all emotions is considered to be the

essence of manliness. He himself is the product of the same social system as the soldiers he is treating and realizes that “[c]ertainly the rigorous repression of emotion and desire had been the constant theme of his adult life” (RT 44). In his anthropological field work in Melanesia he also understands how arbitrary the conventions of his society are in relation to gender roles and sexuality, but nothing changes when he returns to England. He explains to Henry Head that this is partly due to the sheer force of other people’s expectations: “‘*You* know you’re walking around with a mask on, and you desperately want to take it off and you can’t because everybody thinks it’s your face’” (RT 212). Even though he himself is a repressed homosexual, he inspires confidentiality in his homosexual and bisexual patients Sassoon, Prior and Manning, as if they intuitively know that he, too, is attracted to men. He finds Prior’s “jeering flirtatiousness” surprisingly difficult to handle at times (RT 275). And it becomes obvious as the narrative unfolds that Rivers falls in love with Sassoon. Ruth Head suspects that he is in love with Sassoon, but Dr. Head reminds his wife that Sassoon is a patient: “Ruth smiled and shook her head. ‘That’s not an answer.’ Head looked at her. ‘Yes, it is. It has to be’” (RT 386). It is not only the laws of society that force Rivers to repress his homosexuality; the doctor-patient relationship also stipulates that he must keep his distance.

Barker subversively uses Rivers’ “outsider” status as a homosexual to go against the grain and reflect on the constructedness of gender. A character who seems to haunt Rivers’ childhood memories, and indeed whose spectre haunts the entire trilogy, is Charles Dodgson, aka Lewis Carroll – author of *Alice in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass* (1871). He was a frequent guest in the Rivers household when Rivers was a boy. One of the first memories he has of Dodgson was perhaps the earliest catalyst to his thinking about gender roles and patriarchy in his society. At dinner one evening Dodgson confides to Mrs. Rivers that he loved all children, as long as they were girls. He adds, “‘*Boys are a mistake*’” (RT 444). Dodgson’s claim was extremely disturbing to the young Rivers, who up until then had automatically accepted the phallogocentric organization of Victorian society, a society in which the primacy of males was taken for granted. The allusions to Dodgson’s books and their author add images of inversion that help develop the themes of both trauma and gender in the trilogy.¹²⁶

¹²⁶ In a sense, trench warfare itself seems to mirror Alice’s descent into the rabbit-hole, into the inverted world of the mad-hatter. Hynes remarks that during the war the government was finally forced to acknowledge what had not been acknowledged before, namely the connection between war and madness. An estimated 80,000 shell-shock cases occurred in the British forces during the war, and the fact that the government set these men apart by sending them to special hospitals for

In the trilogy, Dodgson is particularly charmed by Rivers' youngest sister, Katherine. The historical Dodgson was infatuated with young, pre-adolescent girls and often took nude photographs of the young daughters of his friends. Dodgson's preoccupation with the bodily changes of puberty is reflected in the bodily distortions that Alice experiences in his books. What brings these memories of Dodgson back to Rivers is the crude copies of Tenniel's drawings from the storybooks used to decorate the hospital ward where he is working in London, a former children's ward now housing wounded soldiers. The drawings depict "Alice, tiny enough to swim in a sea of her own tears; Alice, unfolding like a telescope till she was nine feet tall; Alice grown so large her arm protruded from the window; and most strikingly, Alice with the serpent's neck, undulating above the trees" (RT 439). Rivers sees a connection between the distortions in the drawings of Alice and the symptoms of both his shell-shocked patients and his now middle-aged, invalid sister Katherine: "All those bodily transformations causing all of those problems. *But they solve them too.* Alice in HysteriaLand" (RT 442). The bodily distortions in the drawings mirror the neurotic symptoms in people resisting the gender expectations of their society. The symptoms he is seeing are not the result of individual pathology; they are caused by a society that prescribes strict gender roles for men and women.

Discussing sexuality and gender, Alan Bance points out that before the Great War, women had increasingly been given a "medicalized" identity based on the intrinsic pathology thought to characterize their sexuality (406-07). As the war progressed, however, the proliferating number of shell-shocked soldiers meant that men's identity was also medicalized, and "the construct of male identity was under close scrutiny as it had never been before" (Bance 419). Barker's adaptation of Showalter's interpretation of shell-shock in *The Female Malady* has been discussed by a number of critics (e.g., Monteith, Löschnigg, Bergonzi, Harris, MacCallum-Stewart). Reflecting Showalter's thesis, Rivers sums up his observations on the patients he is treating as follows: "Any explanation of war neurosis must account for the fact that this apparently intensely masculine life of war and danger and hardship had produced in men the same disorders that women suffered from in peace" (RT 196). The men have in a sense been "feminized" by their war experience. Instead of the active, assertive roles conventionally appropriate to men, trench warfare had

treatment was ample evidence that war as it was being fought could damage minds and alter personalities (Hynes, *A War* 187).

“mobilized [them] into holes in the ground that were so constricted that they could hardly move” (RT 98).

In treating the hysterical symptoms of soldiers suffering from shell shock, Rivers draws parallels between their situation and the “normal” situation of women, and the connection becomes particularly clear in relation to Katherine, whose whole life, in contrast to his own, “had been constriction into a smaller and smaller space” (RT 481). With no opportunity to travel, get an education or train for a profession she ends up living in a small house in Ramsgate, confined to her bed. Rivers reflects that “she was no more intrinsically neurasthenic than he was himself. But a good mind must have something to feed on, and hers, deprived of other nourishment, had fed on itself” (RT 481). Katherine’s degeneration is striking, contrasted with his early memories of her, running wild in the woods with twigs in her hair. The girl-child has been socialized into a woman, and that woman reduced to a neurasthenic, infantilized invalid: “She was sitting up in bed, faded brown hair tied back by a blue ribbon, a pink bed jacket draped around her shoulders. Blue and pink: the colours of the nursery” (RT 478).

In a further dialogical step, Rivers juxtaposes Katherine’s state to that of Emele, a Melanesian widow he had met while doing anthropological research. After her husband’s death, she is voluntarily locked inside a cage. Tribal custom dictated that she could not be released until the men had raided another village and returned with enemy heads, and the image of the woman cramped inside the enclosure erected inside her hut obsessed Rivers, “until he saw every other aspect of life on the island in the shadow of her imprisonment” (RT 538). Later Rivers dreams that Kath is inside that cage. Katherine and Emele, although from two very different cultures, both experience severe restrictions to their autonomy due to patriarchy and they both seem to have internalized the restrictions.

Rivers also realizes that his society’s socialization of young boys into men meant teaching them to repress their emotions: “They’d been trained to identify emotional repression as the essence of manliness” (RT 98). Young boys are expected to be active, assertive and autonomous. War training, although it encourages self-assertion and action in battle, demands an intensified repression of normal emotions. Sassoon castigates Rivers for encouraging his patients to know themselves and face up to their emotions: ““because out there they’re better off not having any. If people are going to have to kill, they need to be brought up to expect to have to do it. They need to be trained *not to care* because if you don’t ...” (RT 389). The fact that so many

soldiers are breaking down seems to him to mean that emotional repression has not been taken far enough: “Again and again he spoke of the need to train boys to kill; from earliest childhood, he said, they must be taught to expect nothing else and they must never be allowed to question what lies ahead” (RT 389). As Harris notes, Sassoon “had internalized the masculinist standards to the extent that he would hold up emotional repression as a value that one should strive to embody” (“Compulsory”). Without a construction of manliness based on the ideal of emotional repression, war would simply not be possible.

Christine E. Gudorf argues that “in full blown patriarchies, the lives of women, children, slaves/servants and warriors are owned by the patriarchs, whose interests they serve” (161). The hysterical symptoms Rivers is treating resemble the reactions and coping mechanisms that were attributed to females in his day. Soldiers, like women, suffer from the absence of *bodyright*; they are deprived of the right to control their own bodies.¹²⁷ If they do not accept the terms of military conscription they can be imprisoned or even put to death. The army can test, treat and immunize soldiers’ bodies, send them from place to place without their consent, and punish them if they try to leave military service without permission from their superiors. They are required to wear uniforms and carry out obligatory salutes and responses to their commanding officers. The ultimate infringement on the bodyrights of soldiers is that they can be ordered to take part in action in which it is obvious from the very beginning that their lives must be sacrificed unhesitatingly (Gudorf 161-62).

Although the trilogy illustrates Showalter’s thesis about the similarities between shell-shocked soldiers and hysterical females through Dr. Rivers’ ruminations, I believe this gendered view is only one of the voices or dialogues going on about shell shock and gender in the trilogy. Barker supplements these ideas using other voices; she also addresses the medical, military and social implications of shell shock in her narrative from a number of perspectives. Her narrative depicts gender roles in flux at this time, but the inclusion of characters who are involved in the Suffragette Movement or who belong to Oscar Wilde’s surviving social circle also suggests that the war was not the origin of change, but only one of many catalysts – the discourse of gender is diachronic. In the trilogy, female hysteria seems to be the preserve of middle- and upper-class women like Katherine Rivers. Most of Barker’s working-class female characters, in contrast, are much more self-reliant or stoic,

¹²⁷ See Gudorf, 160-204, for a discussion of bodyright and how thinking about bodyright influenced the thinking of e.g. The World Health Organization during the 1990s.

although they too are limited by the strictures of patriarchal society. The narrative indirectly points to the fact that Freud's and Breuer's early studies of hysteria were carried out on middle- and upper-class women who could afford to pay for therapy and suggests that hysterical symptoms had to do with the measure of control one had over one's own life. Many of Barker's female working-class characters are single and not directly reliant on husbands or other male relatives for their livelihood. This gives them a certain freedom, although the dictates of the dominant gender discourses in society still determine and restrict their lives.

Homosociality: Male Bonding and Compulsory Heterosexuality

Although the trilogy depicts relationships between men and women, there is a stronger emphasis on the relationships *between men* during the Great War. Today the term homosociality is often used to describe relationships between men, especially those activities leading to male bonding. Such activities are associated with a pervasive homophobia in society. Furthermore, homosociality depends on implicit heterosexuality and the marginalization or even demonization of women. Homosociality also involves attraction between men, thus connecting the homosocial and the homosexual (Wahl, Holgersson and Höök 62). The term homosocial is particularly associated with the thought of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and her book *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (1985). She acknowledges that the term has occasionally been used before in history and the social sciences to describe social bonds between persons of the same sex (1). However, she introduces the idea that homosociality involves the sexual displacement of homosexual desire. Relations of interdependence and solidarity among men enable them to dominate women, yet the men who further patriarchy the most are also those who are, at least publicly, the most homophobic (3). Intimacy between men, because it implies homosexuality, thus demands the confirmation of heterosexuality in explicit ways.¹²⁸

In the trilogy, homosociality is particularly important within the organization of the military. With reference to organization studies, David Collinson and Jeff Hearn have noted that "The categories of men and masculinity are frequently central to analyses, yet they remain taken for granted, hidden, and unexamined. [...] They are frequently at the center of discourse but

¹²⁸ Holgersson gives the example of the modern-day practice in Swedish companies of men visiting sex clubs together, thereby publicly demonstrating their heterosexuality and distancing themselves from homosexuals (Wahl et al. 62). Similarly, in wartime, soldiers frequent brothels in order to confirm their heterosexuality. Wartime prostitution simultaneously emphasizes the denigration of women. In the trilogy, Prior tells Rivers about the soldiers queuing up at brothels in France (RT 61).

they are rarely the focus of interrogation” (3). Because men have been looked upon as the norm – as a gender neutral category – they have peculiarly been regarded as agendered or asexual, in contrast to women, who are defined primarily as carriers of gender. In the trilogy, seeing men as gendered subjects and examining relationships between men is central; the constraints on gender roles during the war led to one, monolithic form of masculinity shaped by the dictates of “compulsory heterosexuality”.¹²⁹ However, a number of competing discourses surrounding masculinity and the male body are nevertheless in circulation in the trilogy, reflecting the situation during the Great War.

In “Modernism, Male Intimacy, and the Great War”, Sarah Cole comments on the widely held view that during this period “male friendship provided the stable anchoring point for a world in crisis” (469). The bereaved male friend became an iconic figure of the war both in the canonical literature and in public memory. However, Cole argues that friendship on a one to one basis was made almost impossible because men were being wounded, transferred in and out of the front lines, or dying so that relationships were transient and difficult to maintain. The emphasis in the official discourse was therefore not on individual friendships, but rather on comradeship. Cole explains: “In the official rhetoric of the war, propagated by the General Staff, members of government and numerous civilian individuals and organizations, group solidarity – ordinarily expressed at the level of regiment or battalion – always takes precedence over individual friendships” (475). The group or corporate spirit was typically supposed to redeem the horrors of war; the transcendence that was traditionally associated with patriotic duty and Christian self-sacrifice was now transferred to comradeship (Cole 469).¹³⁰

In the trilogy personal friendship is gradually replaced by group solidarity. Sassoon mourns the loss of a close friend; his protest against the war, however, does not come directly after Gordon’s death. Instead he goes on a personal campaign of revenge, often exposing himself to unnecessary danger

¹²⁹ In *Gender Trouble* Judith Butler refers to the hegemonic position of heterosexuality in patriarchal societies as the “heterosexual matrix” or “compulsory heterosexuality”. (She adopts the latter term from Adrienne Rich). She refutes essentialism and defines both gender and sexuality as social constructions. Furthermore, both heterosexuality and homosexuality, in her view, are constructions because sexuality is as much a matter of performance as of individual choice or preference. Sexual identity is the effect of representation, and one’s identity is formed by the way one acts and the things one does. She adopts the Foucauldian view that humans are the sites of discourse and are constructed by discourse. Barker’s trilogy contains complicated questions about and reconfigurations of essentialist notions of gender. She brings up the same questions as those theorists – e.g., Butler – who see the concepts of gender, sexuality and biological sex as inextricably joined and constructed through language.

¹³⁰ Even today, Jeremy Paxman claims, “for all the lectures on tactics and technology, armies work by cultivating emotion – military training is about turning naturally selfish individuals into members of a team. To do so requires the development of an instinctive loyalty” (112).

and gaining the nick-name “Mad Jack” (RT 12). His immediate anger cools, and he is gradually forced to exchange personal intimacy for the official, prescribed comradeship in self-defence, as it were. But the growing casualty lists make him bitter and cause him to question the aims of the war. He no longer sees fighting as courageous; instead real courage means that one does not acquiesce with the continued killing. He argues with Graves on this issue, and the latter points out why so many officers, faced with this ethical dilemma, continue to fight:

‘Nobody’s asking you to change your opinions, or even to keep quiet about them, but you *agreed to serve*, and if you want the respect of the kind of people you’re trying to influence – the Bobbies and the Tommies – you’ve got to be seen to *keep your word*. They won’t understand if you turn round in the middle of the war and say “I’m sorry, I’ve changed my mind.” To them, that’s just bad form. They’ll say you’re not behaving like a gentleman – and that’s the worst thing they can say about anybody.’ (RT 176)

Cole observes that “The popular rhetoric surrounding masculinity – in relation to athleticism, house and school loyalty, patriotic and imperial sentiment – inevitably relied upon intense group identification, and this matrix of attitudes about manliness and loyalty to impersonal institutions found its logical culmination in the theater of war” (475-76). Sassoon, however, has understood that “bad form” and “gentlemanly behaviour” are just suicidal stupidity.¹³¹ He believes that the people who are keeping the war going do not care about the soldiers in the ranks. ““And they don’t let ‘gentlemanly behaviour’ stand in the way either when it comes to feathering their own nests”” (RT 176). Thus we see Graves acting as a mouthpiece for the popular rhetoric, while Sassoon denounces it. Later, however, Sassoon is convinced that he must return to the front after seeing the ghost of one of his men, Orme (RT 167). He feels obligated to support his men, and the corporate spirit sends him back to the front.

Furthermore, during the war there was increased fear that individual friendships might develop into something more physical, and this led to stricter policing of relationships among men. In a discussion with Sassoon, Rivers says: ““After all, in war, you’ve got this *enormous* emphasis on love between men – comradeship – and everybody approves. But at the same time

¹³¹ In a letter written to Robert Graves which is included in Sassoon’s diaries for 1915-1918, Sassoon writes, “O Robert, what ever will happen to end the war? It’s all very well for you to talk about ‘good form’ and acting like a ‘gentleman.’ To me that’s a very estimable form of suicidal stupidity and credulity. You admit that the people who sacrifice the troops are callous b.....s, and the same thing is happening in all countries (except some of Russia). If you had real courage you wouldn’t acquiesce as you do” (Diaries 192).

there's always this little niggle of anxiety. Is it the right *kind* of love? Well, one of the ways you make sure it's the right kind is to make it crystal clear what the penalties for the other kind are” (RT 181). Rivers warns Sassoon that he must be discreet about his homosexuality, as the atmosphere during the war is paranoid. It is bad enough that he has publicly protested against the war; ignoring the societal norm of compulsory heterosexuality will make him extra vulnerable to persecution.

Although Rivers teaches his patients not to repress their traumatic memories and to accept their feelings of fear, sorrow and horror if they want to regain their health, he simultaneously advises them to repress their sexuality, as he himself does. Harris points out that “[t]reating his patients has led Rivers to recognize the shortcomings of the emotionally sterile and hardened version of masculinity that, nevertheless, is deeply rooted in his own consciousness” (“Compulsory”). In Rivers’ thinking, the patients expressing and accepting their feelings of anxiety and fear will lead to an emotional catharsis that will “cure” them of their hysterical tendencies, restore their masculinity and enable them to return to the war. Homosexual feelings, on the other hand, are not exorcised so easily. Hynes suggests that “masculinity in 1918 was manifested in two ways – in heterosexuality, and in war” (*A War Imagined* 234). Consequently, individual male friendships, with their aura of homoeroticism, could not survive in the military organization or in the actual carnage of the trenches. Instead, survivor’s guilt and the pressure toward social conformity (with the accompanying insinuations of cowardice or malingering aimed at those who did not fight) sent many soldiers back to the front to support their men and share their suffering, but perhaps first and foremost in order to prove their masculinity. This is reflected in the trilogy; whereas Sassoon and Owen appear to be motivated by group solidarity, Prior seems to have other reasons for returning to the front. When he is restricted to home service after his first medical board at Craiglockhart, he is very upset; he cries and says to Rivers: “I’ll never know now, will I? About myself...” (RT 185). Here, Prior is more concerned with proving his own masculinity than with supporting his men.

Barker explores the spectrum of masculinity, from the homosocial through the homosexual to the homophobic in the trilogy. Characters like Rivers, Sassoon, and Graves are products of the public school system, and as Shaddock explains, these characters (and even Prior to a certain extent) function “within a still-intact nineteenth-century British ideology of masculinity, a cultural belief system that inculcated Victorian boys into the variant roles necessary to the creation and preservation of the British Empire” (659). She

notes how the heroic ideal was resuscitated and promoted in these schools and how they advocated organized sports as a way of developing team allegiance and physical superiority. Sir Robert Baden Powell's creation of the Boy Scouts in 1908 also aimed to teach British boys the skills and chivalric values of a colonial soldier (Shaddock 659). Paradoxically, the same public school education that aimed to produce hyper-masculine young men also focused on classical Greek and Roman literature, with its subversive, or at any rate confusing, allusions to homosexuality and love between men. The homosociality of the public school system with its romantic and homosexual undertones has not equipped men like Sassoon or Graves for the homophobia of the military and society in general.

Rivers and Sassoon discuss homosexual attraction, the ideas of Edward Carpenter's *The Intermediate Sex*, and Oscar Wilde's trial and indictment for homosexuality, among other topics related to sexuality. The blurring of gender roles which was going on at this time – women taking over men's work and the close relationships that developed between men due to the urgency of war – led to a kind of moral panic on the Home Front which affected both sexes. Military leaders saw working-class women and prostitutes as spreaders of venereal disease in towns where soldiers were billeted and tried to pass curfews to keep them off the streets. Under the auspices of the Defence of the Realm Act (DORA), Women Patrols were sent out to police the sexual behaviour of women.¹³² In *The Eye in the Door*, Prior loses out on a night of sex with Myra because a patrol has been nosing around in her neighbourhood and she is afraid of losing the family benefits she is entitled to through her soldier husband if she is reported (RT 230).

Many men felt threatened by women's recruitment into male preserves of the workforce (Watson 135). Prior's father comments on how young girls are earning more than he does; he sees the war as a Trojan horse, and predicts that after the war "The missus'll be going to work, and the man'll be sat at home minding the bairn. It's the end of craftsmanship" (RT 290-91). Likewise, Billy Prior feels out of touch with women: "They seemed to have changed so much during the war, to have expanded in all kinds of ways, whereas men over the same period had shrunk into smaller and smaller space" (RT 82-83). Charles Manning's wife Jane understands why men feel threatened

¹³² It is estimated that during the war over 2,000 Women's Patrols were organized, including over 400 in London. The major aim of the patrols was ostensibly to stop local women from becoming too friendly with the soldiers because the authorities believed that local girls would be corrupted by the soldiers ("Women's Patrols"). However, Hynes says that town councils and military leaders in England and Wales wanted women off the streets because they feared the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, incapacitating the soldiers (*A War* 89).

and analyzes the ambivalent public feelings surrounding the roles women are playing in the war and he sums up her thoughts as follows: “the ... *sentimentality* about the role women are playing – doing their bit and all that – really masks a deep-rooted fear that they’re getting out of line” (RT 337). The epidemic of shell shock that seems to be emasculating men and the empowerment of women through war work cause growing unease.

This unease culminates in the trilogy in the absurd moral panic of the Pemberton Billing trial. Captain Sherwood Spencer claims that the Germans have a black book containing the names of 47000 British homosexuals that will be used to blackmail these people into spying for them.¹³³ Furthermore, he accuses actress Maude Allan and those intending to see her performance in Oscar Wilde’s play *Salome* of being homosexuals and lesbians and thus potential traitors. Allan sues the MP Noel Pemberton Billing for libel when he prints these allegations in his right-wing newspaper. The trial is widely publicized and discussed; Sassoon tells Rivers that the troops were more interested in the scandal at home when they were fighting in the trenches than in what was going on around them (RT 382). Jane Manning sees the pillorying of Maud Allan as a way of teaching women a lesson: “Not just lesbians. *All* women. Just as Salome is presented as a strong woman by Wilde, and yet at the same time she has to be killed” (RT 337).¹³⁴ Charles Manning actually sees the play and meets the mentally deranged Captain Spencer in the men’s lavatory afterwards. Manning has received anonymous letters about Allan before the play. As a homosexual with a wife and children, and having been arrested for having homosexual relationships, he is understandably upset. The feeling of being under surveillance exacerbates his war-induced anxiety attacks.

As previously mentioned, the Panopticon forms the central trope of *The Eye in the Door*. The novel is rife with possibly paranoid images of spying

¹³³ Rivers first mentions the MP Pemberton Billing on page 181, and there are references to the trial throughout the trilogy.

¹³⁴ The same kind of misogyny is expressed in some of the war poetry by Sassoon and Owen, e.g., Sassoon’s ironic sonnet “Glory of Women” from 1917. “You love us when we’re heroes, home on leave,/Or wounded in a mentionable place./You worship decorations; you believe/That chivalry redeems the war’s disgrace./You make us shells. You listen with delight,/By tales of dirt and danger fondly thrilled./You crown our distant arduours while we fight,/And mourn our laurelled memories when we’re killed./You can’t believe that British troops ‘retire’/When hell’s last horror breaks them, and they run,/Trampling the terrible corpses – blind with blood./O German mother dreaming by the fire,/While you are knitting socks to send your son/His face is trodden deeper in the mud” (*The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, Vol. 2, 1833). Bergonzi explains this misogyny as follows: “The feeling of being alienated from the women at home, who were fixated in civilian ignorance and conventional heroic responses, was expressed by a number of writers who went through the war; they felt themselves thrown back on the deeper and more authentic camaraderie of their fellows in arms” (*War Poets* 102-03). In the trilogy, the writers Sassoon and Graves express resentment toward women, but we also see such resentment in Prior. Burns is also surprised when a girl in London gives him a white feather on the street because he is out of uniform. She is conditioned by conventional ideals of heroic behaviour and is unable to understand why he is not at the front.

and surveillance, and both the Women's Patrols and the Pemberton Billing trial supplement this imagery. Sonya O. Rose observes that moral panics often focus obsessively on sexuality and physical bodies as sources of social disorder, and the lack of sexual control has recurrently been imagined as symbolic of social decay and experienced as a threat. She refers to the Thatcherite campaign against homosexuality in the 1990s, when Barker was writing the trilogy, as an example of this type of moral panic (S. Rose 233). Fear of the spread of the AIDS virus contaminated other moral discourses concerned with sexual control; it can be associated with the campaign against single mothers, the accompanying cutting back of welfare benefits, and the welfare "scrounger" debate.¹³⁵ As Rose points out, "The deployment of sexuality in the construction of group and national identity tells a familiar story [...] because it has been told before. And each retelling, while having a unique historical resonance, still repeats the theme that unruly sexuality, however it may be defined, threatens social stability" (234). In the trilogy, open homophobia and women's policing of women ensure that socially accepted gender roles are not threatened by the increased fraternization between men in the military and the new roles women are playing in the war.

Barker draws on accounts of the trial in the trilogy to show psychologists being called on to give medical evidence on homosexuality at the Pemberton Billing trial: "this was the first time psychologists had been invited to pronounce in court on such a subject" (RT 339). The authority of the medical profession is thus drawn in to legitimize patriarchal strictures on sexuality. But at a dinner Rivers attends where the trial is discussed, the competence of the expert witness, Serrel Cooke, is ridiculed; he was "rambling on about monsters and hereditary degeneracy. The man's a joke" (RT 339-40). Rivers believes that Maud Allan is in the firing line almost by accident and that "The real targets [of the trial] were men who couldn't or wouldn't conform" (RT 340). Even as he is coming to this conclusion Rivers dialogically questions it by thinking "Unless he were suffering from the complaint Jane Manning had

¹³⁵ During the late 1980s and early 1990s, under the right-wing Thatcherite Conservative governments, there was a climate of intense media interest in homosexuality. The spread of the AIDS virus caused widespread fear and panic, much of which was directed at the homosexual and transgender communities. A controversial amendment to the United Kingdom's 1988 Local Government Act became law on May 24. It stated that a local authority "shall not intentionally promote homosexuality or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality" or "promote the teaching of any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship". The amendment was supported mainly by religious groups. However, it also united the disparate British homosexual rights movement in protest because Section 28 gave the impression that the government sanctioned homophobia; it equated homosexuality with paedophilia (http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1988/Ukgpa_en_5.htm). Barker's narrative brings these contemporary preoccupations to mind.

diagnosed, of being incapable of seeing his own sex as peripheral to anything” (RT 340). Barker depicts the trial as aimed to intimidate both men and women who were not conforming to the heterosexual matrix. Thus, in the trilogy, we see that the Pemberton Billing trial and the Women’s Patrols are mechanisms of prohibition brought to bear on sexuality in order to fulfil the ideological requirements of power during the war; compulsory heterosexuality is reinforced through open homophobia and the denigration of women.

Homoeroticism

Another facet of masculinity and gender roles which Barker addresses in the trilogy is homoeroticism. In his canonical critical work *The Great War and Modern Memory*, Fussell describes homoeroticism as an integral aspect of the literature of the Great War and discusses the relationship between sexuality and war in general.¹³⁶ The trilogy indirectly responds to Fussell’s work, again entering into dialogue with the war canon and the critical response which it elicited. Fussell uses the term homoeroticism to “imply a sublimated (i.e. ‘chaste’) form of temporary homosexuality” (272) and points out that this type of relationship resembled the friendships or infatuations, usually between an older and a younger boy, which frequently developed between boys of the upper and upper-middle classes who attended public schools. These relationships were often sentimental – the older boy was attracted to the younger boy due to his “faunish” good looks and vulnerability, and felt protective of him.¹³⁷ Fussell goes on to discuss elements of homoeroticism in particular works by Graves, Sassoon, and in more detail, by Owen. Furthermore, he points out that homoeroticism and a worship of male beauty seemed to be central in the popular imagination; the public was poignantly aware of the physical allure and vulnerability of all the young “lads” who were being sent off to battle.

In his analysis, Fussell remarks on the metamorphosis that the characteristic “pastoral” homoeroticism of the Great War seems to have gone through when we compare it with descriptions of sexuality in literature of the Second World War and after. Citing Thomas Pynchon’s *Gravity’s Rainbow* as an example, he claims that one of the most notable things about it is that it “depicts all modern sex as aggression, hatred, selfishness, and cynicism” (277). In Barker’s trilogy, the classic, pastoral homoeroticism expressed in Victorian

¹³⁶ Homoeroticism is the topic of the chapter entitled “Soldier Boys” (Fussell 270-309).

¹³⁷ Ouditt points out that Fussell “emphasised the tradition of homoeroticism that war perpetrated, while prohibiting homosexuality as permanent or natural” (193). Barker juxtaposes a number of differing views of homosexuality in the trilogy: social constructivist, essentialist, and homosexuality as a matter of personal choice.

and Edwardian literature co-exists with cynical, modern-day views of sexuality. There are allusions to the former in the feelings of love that Sassoon and Owen express for the soldiers they train and lead,¹³⁸ in Owen's idolization of Sassoon, and in the close relationships that develop between Rivers and the young soldiers he treats. But many scenes start out in the sentimental mode, only to be transformed into something more carnal. For example, Barker includes two incidences of the typical pastoral bathing scene of the British homoerotic tradition that Fussell discusses in "Soldiers Bathing" (299-309). Owen and Prior come across Hallet, bathing in a garden and the scene is conveyed through Prior's point of view:

Dappled light played across his body, lending it the illusion of fragility, the greenish tinge of ill-health, though he was as hard and sun-tanned as the rest of them. As they watched, not calling out a greeting as by now they should have done, he stepped out of his drawers and out of time, standing by the pool edge, thin, pale, his body where the uniform had hidden it starkly white. Sharp collar-bones, bluish shadows underneath. He was going to lie down in the overgrown goldfish pool with its white lilies and golden insects fumbling the pale flowers. His toes curled round the mossy edge as he gingerly lowered himself, gasping as the water hit his balls. (RT 515)

As in traditional homoerotic depictions, the sensuality and the vulnerability of the soldier's body are emphasized. But Prior's use of the word "balls" signals a new point of view; the image is transformed into something more overtly sexual. In this scene, Owen says in a tight voice, "'I'd be careful if I were you,' [...] 'I expect those fish are ravenous.'" And Prior thinks, "And not just the fish" (RT 515). And later, at the end of the trilogy when Hallet is wounded and dying, Barker describes his exposed brain as "looking like some strange submarine form of life, the mouth of a sea anemone perhaps" (RT 582), ironically connecting the water imagery in the two scenes through grotesque realism.

Prior also supervises his men at the front when they have provisional baths, and he reflects that the "soldiers' nakedness has a quality of pathos, not merely because the body is so obviously vulnerable, but because

¹³⁸ Hynes quotes Sassoon's diary from June 4, 1918 after his return to the front: "I am only here to look after some men", and Owen's letter to his mother where he writes "I came out in order to help these boys – directly by leading them as well as an officer can; indirectly, by watching their sufferings that I may speak of them as well as a pleader can" (*A War* 186). Hynes argues that these private statements are not significant because of what they suggest about the writers' sexual impulses; instead they express a change in the idea of soldier and officer: "rejecting killing as the definitive act, and substituting relationships based on gentler feelings: caring, leading, watching and pleading" (*A War* 186). In the trilogy, this corresponds to Rivers' analysis of the new, "nurturing" relationships that have developed between officers and their men in the trilogy.

they put on indignity and anonymity with their clothes” (RT 531). Although he recognizes this pathos, he is also aware of his own sexual attraction to these men but concludes that there is “Nothing to be done about it. I mean, I can scarcely trip about with downcast eyes like a maiden aunt at a leek show. But I feel uncomfortable, and I suspect most of the other officers don’t” (RT 531). In the case of Prior, the sentimentality of traditional (elitist) pastoral homoeroticism is once more stripped away to expose the more modern view of sexuality,¹³⁹ as expressed by Pyncheon. Prior sums up his feelings about watching bathing soldiers:

One of my problems with the baths is that I’m always dressed. Officers bathe separately. And . . . Well, it’s odd. One of the things I like sexually, one of the things I fantasize about, is simply being fully dressed with a naked lover, holding him or her from behind. And what I feel (apart from the obvious) is great tenderness – the sort of tenderness that depends on being more powerful, and that is really, I suppose, just the acceptable face of sadism. (RT 531)¹⁴⁰

Earlier in the narrative, at Craiglockhart, Prior awakens screaming from his nightmares of war, only to be even more disturbed by the fact that he has had nocturnal emissions during those nightmares. Describing what it feels like, climbing over the parapet and entering no-man’s land during battle, Prior tells Rivers that it feels “sexy” – like indecent exposure – with a rush of both danger and excitement.¹⁴¹ Similarly, Fussell maintains that “[t]he language of military attack – *assault, impact, thrust, penetration* – has always overlapped with that of sexual importunity” and that “[w]ar and sexuality are linked in more literal ways as well” (270). Barker’s depictions of sexuality emphasize this association between war and sex. The text explores the conundrum that Fussell describes: “On the one hand, sanctioned public mass murder. On the other, unlawful secret individual love. Again, severe dichotomy” (271).

Barker also highlights the erotization of war and violence by describing how Patrick MacDowall’s mother, a prostitute, offered free sex to all the young men who enlisted as a reward. Prior indulges in sex with his friend’s mother, as did many other men, even though they, unlike Prior, had not actually

¹³⁹ As mentioned in Chapter Two, Prior tells Rivers that men in the ranks get two minutes each in the brothels in France; there are separate brothels for officers (RT 66). This type of institutionalized, heterosexual sex thus appears to be authoritatively sanctioned and expresses a cynical view of sexuality. In terms of homosociality it is a way of denying homosexuality and denigrating women.

¹⁴⁰ The sadism Prior speaks of here is reminiscent of the situation in Lawrence’s “The Prussian Officer”. In this story, the officer’s suppressed homoerotic feelings find an outlet in the physical abuse of his orderly. The orderly, driven to desperation, ends up strangling the officer and then dying himself from the beatings he has been given, shock, thirst and hunger.

¹⁴¹ Martin Löschnigg points out that Barker’s use of the adjective “sexy” in this connection is anachronistic, since the word was first attested in 1925 (“...the writer’s responsibility” 222).

enlisted. In a cross-cultural parallel, Rivers thinks about how all the Melanesian women offered their bodies freely when the men of the tribe returned from their traditional head-hunting trips; they would wade out into the water and joyfully meet the boats. Ironically, when head-hunting was banned by the British imperial authorities, the birth-rate plunged, threatening the very survival of the tribe. Without violence and war, they have lost their zest for life and their interest in sex. As Monteith observes, Barker has been one of the few writers who has iconoclastically been willing to explore the allure of war for some people, and through Prior's confessions, juxtaposed with the Melanesian eroticization of violence she exposes war as an aphrodisiac ("We will remember" 73).

Prior is bisexual, and his transgressive¹⁴² sexual encounters are rendered in graphic, sexually explicit scenes. In a work that is rife with violent imagery, one particularly disturbing, recurrent image is that of the young Prior being physically abused by his parish priest: "I was raped in a vicarage once" he tells Rivers nonchalantly during a therapy session (*RT* 324). The scene reminds us of present-day scandals concerning sexual abuse within the church and goes far in explaining why Prior has become sexually aggressive, predatory and cynical. Prior was only eleven years old at the time, and the abuse continued on a regular basis for some time. He recalls the exploitation at different times in the narrative and the scene also creates a dialogue which contrasts the chaste, homoerotic desire expressed in poems by the canonical war poets with the reality of childhood sexual abuse. This is especially striking if one compares Owen's poem "Maundy Thursday" with the fate of Prior. In this poem, Owen describes a "server-lad" helping at a religious service, offering the silver crucifix to the worshippers to kiss and describing their various reactions to the ceremony. The end of the poem registers the speaker's physical attraction to the boy himself, rather than to the symbol of his faith: "Then I, too, knelt before that acolyte. / Above the crucifix I bent my head: / The Christ was thin, and cold, and very dead: / And yet I bowed, yea, kissed – my lips did cling / (I kissed the warm live hand that held the thing.)" Before the war, Owen was working as a lay-assistant to the vicar of Dunsden while he studied theology, and as Fussell points out, the poem registers "the tension he is beginning to feel between Establishment theology and homoerotic humanism" (287-88). The young Prior's experience with his local vicar stands in ironic contrast to Owen's

¹⁴² I term Prior's sexuality transgressive not simply because some of his relationships are homosexual, but also because Billy has sexual relationships that are considered taboo in the society of his day: premarital sex, sex with married women, homosexual sex, and even sex with an elderly woman who nursed him when he was an infant, a relationship that can thus be construed as incestuous.

homoerotic verse. Prior later started charging for sexual favours, “not so much resorting to prostitution as inventing it, for he knew of nobody else who got money that way. First Father Mackenzie. Then others” (RT 452).

Having been sexually exploited, Prior is hyperaware of the power play that goes on in sexual relationships. Discussing the brothels behind the lines, he tells Rivers that he never pays for sex – he doesn’t need to. As Kohlke points out, Prior becomes reluctant to pay for sex after his own exploitation because he implicitly recognizes that “society’s commodification of human relations ensures he already pays in other ways for his own and the community’s desires” and he comes to view his world in terms of a gigantic brothel (“Sexuality”). He tells Rivers about his relationship with Father Mackenzie: “I was receiving extra tuition” [...] “God, was I receiving extra tuition” [...] “Everything has to be paid for, doesn’t it?” (RT 324-25). Vickroy points out that Prior’s sex life emulates the social body (*Trauma* 199); it is based on exploitation. This emulation is symbolically reinforced by the fact that his employer, Military Intelligence, aka the Ministry of Munitions, is housed in the Hotel Metropole in London. The Metropole was the kind of hotel that attracted shady clientele who booked rooms on an hourly basis, the majority of guests not surprisingly registering under the name of Smith (Kohlke, “Sexuality”).

In all of Prior’s sexual encounters – with Sarah, Myra, Charles Manning, Mrs. Riley, Mrs. Macdonald, the prostitute Elinor (whom he does pay), Birtwhistle, and the young French boy on the Western Front – we see him manipulating to gain control, to be in charge of the sexual scenario. Furthermore, his behaviour illustrates the performative aspect of gender: in his encounters with lovers he consciously plays different roles, converting himself into a rough, working-class boy by ruffling his hair and provocatively rolling a cigarette between his lips to excite the upper-class Charles Manning, and recognizing the prostitute Elinor’s sexual tricks to speed up the customer, having used the same tricks himself. Prior realizes that power is something that circulates – it is not simply assigned to one group or gender – and even marginalized individuals have the possibility of asserting power in some form or another. When visiting Beattie Roper in prison, he is escorted by a wardress. The encounter between them illustrates his insight:

With very slightly exaggerated courtesy, Prior rose to his feet. Sad but true, that nothing puts a woman in her place more effectively than a chivalrous gesture performed in a certain manner. [...] He reached the door first and held it open. He wasn’t inclined to waste sympathy on her, this middle-aged, doughy-skinned woman. She had her own power, after all, more absolute than any *he* possessed.

If she were humiliated now, no doubt some clapped-out old whore would be made to pay. (RT 246)

Power constellations are thus seen to be very complicated within the discourse of gender. The same individual can be oppressed in one situation and oppressor in another. Above all, Barker shows that patriarchy involves a series of hierarchies between women, between men and between women and men in terms of class, social position and authority.¹⁴³ The fact that Prior has this insight inside a prison is significant; it again brings to mind the image of the Panopticon used by Foucault to convey the idea of how ideology, and thus power, works in the modern state. When Prior visits the prison, he finds himself embarrassingly to be the object of surveillance – the female prisoners tease and taunt him. The prison buildings themselves, with the peepholes in the doors, long corridors and the wardresses meld Bentham's original panoptical architectural design with Foucault's societal analysis, making us aware of the image in both its classical and analogous sense. As Beattie Roper says, referring to the painted eye enclosing the peephole in the door of her cell, "'S not so bad long as it stays in the door.' She tapped the side of her head. 'You start worrying when it gets in here'" (RT 252).

Images of Emasculation

Although war in the trilogy is shown as being highly dependent on a monolithic construct of compulsory heterosexuality and a construct of masculinity based on the repression of emotions, both of these constructs are repeatedly undermined by images of emasculation. These images range from actual physical emasculation, as in the soldier "with the hole between his legs" (RT 31) whom Sassoon remembers from an earlier hospitalization, to images of psychic wounds which have robbed men of their sense of manhood. Telford's psychic wounds, for example, are manifested in the hallucination that a nurse has cut off his penis and put it in a jar of formaldehyde (RT 460). Similarly, Rivers has blocked out a childhood memory involving a painting of his heroic ancestor, Uncle William, having his leg cut off after a sea battle in which he served with

¹⁴³ Jeffrey Hearn argues that "Patriarchal systems are based not only on men's domination over women, but also on some men's rule over other men through organizational hierarchies, by age, class, 'race', or other social divisions" (Hearn and Parkin 89). Hearn and Parkin also warn against using the term patriarchy monolithically, as it has meant different things at different historical times; patriarchy, capitalism and the nation-state are all sedimented historical frameworks that are necessary for understanding gender relations within contemporary society. It is therefore more correct to *speak* of "patriarchies" rather than "patriarchy" (Hearn and Parkin xii). Barker shows that there is also a power hierarchy between women.

Lord Nelson; the memory of this symbolic castration is so frightening that he totally suppresses his visual memory in order to forget it (RT 482-84).

Burns, another patient suffering from shell shock, takes a bus out into the countryside where he walks through mud, undresses and stands naked, surrounded by the carcasses of dead game: “He cupped his genitals in his hands, not because he was ashamed, but because they looked incongruous, they didn’t seem to belong to the rest of him” (RT 37). He no longer feels like a man, and this feeling is strengthened later when he is discharged from the army: “In London, Burns said, on his first trip out in civilian clothes, he’d been handed two white feathers” (RT 155). Young girls and women were in fact encouraged to publicly shame young men who did not enlist or wear a military uniform by giving them chicken feathers, a symbol of cowardice and emasculation.¹⁴⁴ They were thus complicit with the power structures that demanded an aggressive masculinity and defined being a warrior as the proper role of a man. After his discharge due to his psychiatric problems and anorexia, Burns chooses to avoid London and lives in his parents’ summer house on the coast. The locals “all remembered him in his uniform, in the first days and weeks of the war, and perhaps that mattered a great deal” (RT 155). Not wearing a uniform means not being a man.

Furthermore, emasculation is closely tied to what is termed effeminate behaviour. As I have noted, Barker’s narrative reflects Showalter’s theory of how trench warfare paradoxically provoked what was seen as an effeminate response to stress factors and restrictions. Men who adopted coping mechanisms that were perceived as quintessentially feminine were considered hysterical. Thus, having a nervous breakdown is symbolically emasculating. Prior, like many of the other patients, experiences the blue badge indicating that he is an inmate of Craiglockhart as a stigmatizing mark of cowardice since a majority of the officers serving on medical boards do not believe in shell shock and insinuate that these soldiers are shirking their duty. Many members of the local population see the blue badge as a mark of madness or hysteria and thus of effeminate behaviour.¹⁴⁵ Against the rules, Prior removes it before going into

¹⁴⁴ George Simmers explains that the term “white feather” came from cock-fighting and was a term used for human cowardice throughout the nineteenth century. He adds that “The OED dates the usage from 1795”. He refers to A. E. W. Mason’s book *The Four Feathers* (1902) about the Boer War as one of the first references to anyone presenting feathers as a sign of disapproval and relates it to the “considerable anxieties about the fitness of recruits for the British army, and the quality of British manliness” at this time. The act of presenting white feathers to men who were not in uniform was subversive in terms of gender stereotypes; it meant that girls and women were ignoring the rules of conventional behaviour at a time when conventions were strict: “not merely talking to strange men in the street, but assuming that a woman had the right to inform a man of his duty” (“White Feathers”).

¹⁴⁵ This blue badge of “cowardice” brings to mind Stephen Crane’s *The Red Badge of Courage*; a novel about the American Civil War. Whereas Crane’s “badge” refers to a bodily wound – ironically

town. Indeed, the very fact that shell-shocked soldiers are required to wear such a badge emphasizes society's need to categorize and marginalize these patients. Being hospitalized as a patient is also emasculating because the patient loses control of his fate and is subordinated to the medical authority of the doctors.

One officer in the trilogy, Ralph Anderson, has suffered a breakdown at the front while serving as a doctor in the Royal Army Medical Corps and has developed a fear of the sight of blood that totally incapacitates him. In the doctor-patient relationship, he is required to remember his dreams as part of his therapy. He relates a dream he has had to Rivers where he is naked, pursued by two orderlies and his father-in-law while approaching his wife and a group of ladies on a green lawn. His father-in-law threatens him with a stick entwined by a snake. Rivers interprets the snake and stick as representing the caduceus badge of the RAMC insignia and connects it to Anderson's fear of taking up medicine as a profession again. He ties it to the patient's anxiety as the family bread-winner. Being unable to support his wife and son is also emasculating (RT 26-30). Anderson's ironic comment on the dream reframes the problem: "I suppose it is *possible* someone might find being locked up in a loony bin a fairly *emasculating* experience?" (RT 27)

Sassoon seems to be doubly emasculated; he is hospitalized for what Rivers refers to as an "anti-war" neurosis rather than a war neurosis and is thus subjected to the authority of the doctors. Although he is no longer suffering from hallucinations or other symptoms of shellshock, his protest against the war is made impotent when he is incarcerated, declared mentally unstable. A man who refuses to conform and fight is silenced and loses all authority. Sassoon is not a pacifist and feels that having fought in the trenches, his protest is legitimate. Nevertheless, until he decides to return to active duty he shares a fate similar to that of the pacifists; he is incarcerated, silenced and emasculated for his refusal to conform and fight although he is not, like them, physically tortured.

The most prominent male pacifist in the trilogy, Prior's boyhood friend Patrick MacDowell, or "Mac", is the organizer of strikes in Sheffield munitions factories. During a secret meeting he argues with Prior about masculinity and bravery. Mac sees Prior, with his connection to working-class pacifists and his job in the Intelligence Unit as having "a foot on each side of the fence" and comments that it must be really quite nice, "Long as you don't mind what it's doing to your balls" (RT 304). Prior replies that Mac should

gotten while retreating – Barker's badge indicates classification as a psychiatric patient and thus emasculation.

worry about his own balls, and Mac interprets this as “‘Men fight, is that it?’” (304). Prior sees that it takes courage to be a pacifist, because they risk being beaten and tortured when imprisoned in the same way soldiers face the violence of battle. For Mac, “‘In the end moral and political truths have to be proved *on the body*, because this mass of nerve and muscle and blood is what we are’” (RT 305). It seems as if masculinity boils down to being able to take physical punishment; repressing fear and pain, whether the man is a soldier or a committed pacifist. However, Prior refutes this kind of analogical substantiation as misguided nonsense: “‘It comes quite close to saying that the willingness to suffer proves the rightness of the belief. But it *doesn't*. The most that it can ever prove is the believer’s sincerity. And not always that. Some people just like suffering’” (RT 305). As Harris notes, during the war, “‘Put simply, being a homosexual, being a pacifist, suffering a mental ‘breakdown’ were activities unbecoming to men’” (“Compulsory”). The trilogy thus paradoxically illustrates how both fighting and refusing to fight can lead to emasculation.

Patriarchal Psychoanalysis

The images of emasculation discussed above tie in with Freudian notions of “castrated” or passive womanhood. These notions in turn bolster the fiction of “phallic” masculinity. In the trilogy we see patients’ dread and repudiation of femininity in connection with shell shock. Furthermore, Dr. Rivers’ treatment of his patients draws to a certain extent on the emergent discourse of Freudian psychoanalysis although he is not strictly speaking a Freudian. Like Freud, he encourages patients to remember and talk about their traumatic experiences rather than repressing them. Patients are asked to remember and relate their dreams. He is also interested in learning about Sassoon’s and Prior’s childhood experiences and analyses his own and his sister’s experiences as well, reflecting Freud’s belief in the lasting significance of familial childhood experience for adult desires and discontents.

Psychoanalysis has largely informed our present-day understanding of gender, for better or for worse. It gives an account of the unconscious construction of sexual difference in early childhood. On the one hand this account seems to explain why these differences seem to be so absolute and immutable, but on the other Freud’s account of psychological development is potentially subversive; it stresses the unstable nature of sexed identity and shows why so many people fail to conform to social expectations concerning gender. Gayle Rubin explains her view of psychoanalysis in connection with

gender: “Psychoanalysis contains a unique set of concepts for understanding men, women, and sexuality. It is a theory of sexuality in human society. Most importantly, psychoanalysis provides a description of the mechanisms by which the sexes are divided and deformed, of how bisexual, androgynous infants are transformed into boys and girls” (Rubin 184-85).¹⁴⁶ Rubin believes that the psychoanalytic theory of gender acquisition, which posits the individual as initially androgynous, could have been the basis of a critique of sex roles. “Instead, the radical implications of Freud’s theory have been radically repressed” (Rubin 184).

In Barker’s narrative, we see how war upsets naturalized views of gender when young men are required to take on the role of nurturers and women leave their designated domestic sphere to take over men’s work on the home front. It is arguably through Barker’s use of the oedipal motif, both in character development and as part of the theme of the sacrifice of sons in order to purge and regenerate society which I discussed in Chapter Two, that the connection between psychoanalysis and gender becomes visible. Rubin explains: “The Oedipal complex is an apparatus for the production of sexual personality. It is a truism to say that societies will inculcate in their young the character traits appropriate to carrying on the business of society” (Rubin 189). In the trilogy, the business of society is war, and Barker illustrates how that society’s construction of masculinity aims to ensure the dutiful obedience of a generation of young men who become soldiers. In this perspective, psychoanalysis also provides a persuasive explanation for such phenomena as the treatment of conscientious objectors, pacifists and homosexuals and the mass hysteria of the Pemberton Billing trial.

Psychoanalysis also describes the “residue” left within the individual by the oedipal conflict – the child’s confrontation with the rules and regulations of sexuality as set down by the society into which it is born (Rubin 183).¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ Rubin is a feminist anthropologist who has written on a wide range of subjects, including anthropological theory, S/M sex, fetishism, the leather culture of the San Francisco gay community, and modern lesbian literature. In her “exegetic” reading of the class theories of Marx and Engels, the studies of kinship and family relations written by Claude Lévi-Strauss, and Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, Rubin points out that “Kinship is the culturalization of biological sexuality on the societal level; psychoanalysis describes the transformation of the biological sexuality of individuals as they are enculturated” (189).

¹⁴⁷ Using Lacanian psychoanalysis as her point of departure, Rubin explains that “the Oedipal crisis occurs when a child learns of the sexual rules embedded in the terms for family and relatives. The crisis begins when the child comprehends the system and his or her place in it; the crisis is resolved when the child accepts that place and accedes to it. Even if the child refuses its place, he or she cannot escape knowledge of it. Before the Oedipal phase, the sexuality of the child is labile and relatively unstructured. Each child contains all of the sexual possibilities available to human expression. But in any given society, only some of these possibilities will be expressed, while others will be constrained. When the child leaves the Oedipal phase, its libido and gender identity have been organized in conformity with the rules of the culture which is domesticating it” (189).

According to Rubin, practitioners of psychoanalysis have often perceived their mission to be the rehabilitation or repair of individuals who have gone off track en route to their “biologically determined” sexual identity by enforcing sexual conformity on unruly participants. Thus, “psychoanalysis has often become more than a theory of the mechanisms of the reproduction of sexual arrangements; it has become one of those mechanisms” (Rubin 184). In this sense, homosexuality is often viewed as the result of an unresolved oedipal conflict, and in clinical practice at the beginning of the twentieth century (and indeed, today as well) attempts were (are) made to “cure” homosexuals. In the trilogy, patients are referred to both Rivers and Head for this purpose. When Sassoon learns about these patients he is quite upset, because he feels that Rivers has not condemned homosexuality as abnormal in their discussions. Likewise, Prior is angered, having openly discussed his bisexuality with Rivers. The trilogy thus substantiates Rubin’s claim that psychoanalysis has become one of the mechanisms that reproduces the heterosexual matrix.

As a homosexual, Rivers is apparently in a double bind. At one point, he argues with Prior about the hypocrisy of “curing sodomites”. Rivers feels that homosexuals ought to be allowed to get on with their own lives rather than taking up the time of overworked doctors. However, as he reminds Prior, a man accused of having homosexual relationships risks two years’ hard labour in prison (RT 276). Barker thus dramatically reworks the Freudian scenarios in her writing to illustrate *social* rather than *individual* pathologies (Jolly, “After” 66). In the trilogy, sending men to be cured of their homosexuality falls in the same category as sending Sassoon to a psychiatric hospital for protesting against the war, an act which, as Robert Coles points out, was obviously a moral dodge for the military and for an entire culture: “To call such a person sick is, of course, to concentrate on the singular rather than the general – to call individuals crazy rather than regard a nation as gone mad” (“Secular”). Psychoanalysis is thus shown to be an integral part of a patriarchal society which marginalizes, punishes and incarcerates those who fail to follow its dictates.

Stepping Outside the Heterosexual Matrix

Rivers’ experience as an anthropologist also helps him to deconstruct the ideologies shoring up his society and for a short time to step outside the heterosexual matrix. On one of his trips to Eddystone Island, he sets about questioning the natives using a questionnaire he has devised. He is trying to find out about kinship relationships, and does so by asking them who they would share a guinea with if they had it. The natives answer, but after a while,

they turn the tables on him and ask him the same questions. All of his answers get a surprising response: hilarity. Describing the situation to Head, he says: “‘And suddenly I realized that *anything* I told them would have got the same response. I could’ve talked about sex, repression, guilt, fear – the whole sorry caboodle – and it would’ve got exactly the same response” (RT 212). He understood that their reactions to his society were neither more nor less valid than his to theirs: “‘And with that realization, the whole frame of social and moral rules that keeps individuals imprisoned – and sane – collapsed, and for a moment he was in the same position as these drifting, dispossessed people. A condition of absolute free-fall” (RT 500). He explains that “‘It was ... the *Great White God* dethroned, I suppose. Because we did, we quite unselfconsciously *assumed* we were the measure of all things” (RT 212).

Although he tells Head how free and relieved this experience had made him feel about his own sexuality, the feeling quickly disappeared when he was once again immersed in English society.¹⁴⁸ Because Rivers begins to question essentialism, he is open to his patients’ discussions of their sexuality and their insecurities about their own masculinity. When Sassoon confesses that he never felt “‘Any of the things you’re supposed to feel” (RT 50) when growing up and how relieved he was to read Carpenter’s book *The Intermediate Sex*, which espouses chaste homosexuality, Rivers comments that he doesn’t know how useful the concept of an intermediate sex is because “‘In the end nobody wants to be *neuter*” (RT 50).

Although Barker, through Rivers, leans towards the constructedness of gender, through other characters she also dialogically raises the question of choice when it comes to sexual preference. Graves, for example, tells Sassoon that a young man he had been romantically involved with at school has been arrested for soliciting. He adds:

‘It’s only fair to tell you that . . . since that happened my affections have been running in more normal channels. I’ve been writing to a girl called Nancy Nicholson. I really think you’ll like her. She’s great fun. The . . . only reason I’m telling you this is . . . I’d hate you to have any misconceptions. About me. I’d hate you to think I was homosexual *even in thought*. Even if it went no further.’ (RT 176)¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸ In his biography of Dr. Rivers, Slobodin sees Rivers’ ethnographic studies of the Todas, as pivotal in the development of his ideas (106). As I have noted earlier, like the historical Rivers, his studies enable the fictional Rivers to re-examine his concepts of gender relations and to consider the role of his own culture in the explanation of the culture he is studying.

¹⁴⁹ In *Goodbye to All That*, his semi-fictionalized autobiography, Graves writes “In English preparatory and public schools romance is necessarily homosexual. The opposite sex is despised and treated as something obscene. Many boys never recover from this perversion. For every one born homosexual, at least ten permanent pseudo-homosexuals are made by the public school

Again, the trilogy takes up alternative views of sexuality: is sexual preference something we choose, or is it innate? Sassoon seems to accept himself as innately homosexual – that is simply the way he is. Graves, in contrast, has *chosen* to direct his sexual interest towards a woman and to deny any homosexual attraction he may have felt in the past.¹⁵⁰ His emphasis on “more normal channels” and not being homosexual “*even in thought*”, simultaneously confirms the powerful dictates of compulsory heterosexuality and begs the question of choice.

Women and War

As I have noted, the most important female characters in the trilogy are working class. However, their experience of the war is far from uniform. It is significant that Sarah Lumb and her workmates are munitions workers rather than nurses, VADs or Land Army Workers.¹⁵¹ Women’s war experiences, as Ouditt points out, “were radically varied in terms of the work performed, the public recognition accorded to it, its political implications and its challenge to feminine identity” (3). Women within these different areas of employment were recruited from different social backgrounds. VADs were usually girls from middle or upper-class homes who wished to participate in the war effort, often without pay. Their engagement was often patriotic, but at times they also expressed a desire for adventure and getting away from the normative constrictions on girls’ lives at this time. In the trilogy, VADs are only mentioned peripherally, and usually from a dismissive point of view. After Burns has been sick in the mess hall, for example, two VADs help him change his clothes and sponge down his uniform. Tugging at the waistband of Burns’ trousers, which are far too big since he has lost so much weight, one of the girls comments “‘There’s room for two in there’ [...] ‘Have I to get in with you?’” before she realizes that Rivers has entered the room: “They hurried past Rivers, bursting into nervous giggles as they reached the end of the corridor” (RT 18). The dedication and efficiency conveyed in earlier texts depicting VADs is

system: nine of these ten as honourably chaste and sentimental as I was” (19). Here we see that sexual identity is conceived of as both innate or essential, as in “born homosexual” and constructed as in “pseudo-homosexuals” (or in Judith Butler’s term, performative, as in Prior).

¹⁵⁰ The historical Sassoon actually married and had a son after the war was over. The marriage, however, proved precarious.

¹⁵¹ Barker has used munitions workers as characters and imagery from munitions factories in two of her other books. In *Liza’s England* the eponymous female protagonist works in a munitions factory during the Great War. In the 1980s, when she is an octogenarian, she is attacked by juvenile delinquents in her condemned home in Thatcherite England and dies shortly thereafter. In *Another World*, the male protagonist and his family buy a house originally built by a man who made his fortune producing munitions during the Great War. The murderous sibling rivalry within the original family comes back to haunt the modern-day family inhabiting the house, suggesting that the violence of the past still affects present-day life.

missing due to Barker's "creative vandalism". In contrast to the canonical texts which focus on the lives and experiences of the VADs, presenting them as heroines, Barker's text blatantly marginalizes and diminishes these characters.

Nurses and VADs acquired an angel/nun image in keeping with earlier, Victorian images of woman as "the angel in the house",¹⁵² providing comfort and succour to men, and they were diligently policed, even when serving at the front (Ouditt 46). In contrast, agricultural and munitions workers threw away their stays and donned masculine garb – they left the family hearth and entered the public domain in order to "do their bit", many of them lured by high wages. These workers present the dominant images of the Great War's transgressive female forces. They departed from the idealized role of women as passive and in need of protection. After all, war propaganda often touted the idea that the war was being fought for the sake of women; they were to be protected from the German sexual aggression and atrocities that played such a central role in the propaganda (Ouditt 46-50).

Ouditt describes the perceived role of women during the war as follows: "It was women's duty to provide the (male) citizens of the future and to act as some sort of reservoir of moral value for the citizens of the present" (134). The perceived function of the ideal woman was thus not production, but reproduction – providing new soldiers to protect the mother country.¹⁵³ Land Workers were perceived as less transgressive than munitionettes, engaged as they were in producing food, and thus indirectly connected to woman's more traditional role as nurturer. Munitions workers, however, seemed particularly transgressive, because they were involved in the "masculine" activity of destruction. The work was dangerous, they were reputed to earn high wages, and the wares they manufactured were potentially murderous (Ouditt 3). Ironically, these women were also cut off from their proper, perceived function as mothers; TNT poisoning was a potent threat both to their current and their future, reproductive health. However, these aspects of the munitionette's work were subjected to official censorship in 1916 in order to enhance recruitment (Deborah Thom, cited in Noakes 667). The fact that Sarah does not become pregnant, despite having unsafe sex with Prior in the trilogy, foreshadows this

¹⁵² See Coventry Patmore's long poem "The Angel in the House," first published 1854-62 which developed the sentimental Victorian image of woman as angel. This ideal was later attacked for its oppressive effect on women's lives by feminist critics such as Virginia Woolf. She argued that in order to be able to write a woman must first kill the angel in the house. (See *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, Vol. 2, 1599-1601 for an extract of Patmore's poem.)

¹⁵³ Peggy Hamilton, a former munitionette, gives a poignant description of her paradoxical situation: "Every night I prayed for the safety of those dear to me who were at the front, and yet here I was working twelve hours a day towards the destruction of other people's loved ones. It was a terrible dilemma: indirectly I was responsible for death and misery" (qtd. in Ouditt 77). Rather than producing new soldiers, she was "producing" death.

barrenness. Working-class women's bodies are ironically just as expendable as those of soldiers in the ranks, even though the war is ostensibly being fought to protect women.

Janet Watson explains that "female wartime occupations can be placed along a spectrum of respectability, ranging from those that were consistent with cultural ideas about 'women's work' to those that disrupted gendered norms considerably". Furthermore, "All these expectations were, of course, mitigated by ideas about class position; what was considered appropriate for daughters of 'gentlemen' was not the same as for daughters of farmers or industrial workers" (105-06). Apart from Hettie Roper's fellow Suffragette who drives an ambulance, no women from the social elite are portrayed in Barker's trilogy as war workers. This is perhaps because she wants to tell the stories that have not been told – the stories of the nurses, VADs and ambulance drivers have already reached the reading public.¹⁵⁴ Barker thus supplements these earlier stories with the stories of the women producing munitions. The absence of nurses and VADs as central characters, as I have noted, emphasizes their marginalization in the narrative.

In the trilogy, Sarah Lumb becomes involved with Prior. She is a working-class girl who has left her job as a housemaid to work in a munitions factory during the war. Although Sarah plays a seemingly small role, it is a role with great symbolic importance in terms of gender and the changing attitudes towards women during the Great War. As a "munitionette", she earns more than she ever could in service, and also enjoys the freedom of no longer having her employer supervising her both at work and on her off-hours. Prior meets her at a café drinking tea with her workmates while he is a patient at Craiglockhart. During their first encounter he learns that she has lost a sweetheart at the Battle of Loos. She is appalled by the fact that the gas that choked him to death was most likely produced in England in factories similar to the one she works in. Women are thus implicated in the suicidal violence of warfare.

Sarah's name itself emphasizes the ambivalence towards women's changing roles and the oppressed position of women in society. Her Christian

¹⁵⁴ E.g., Vera Brittain wrote about her experiences as a VAD. For a compelling story of a female ambulance driver's experiences, see Helen Zenna Smith's "*Not So Quiet . . .*": *Stepdaughters of War*. Helen Zenna Smith was a pseudonym for Evadne Price, who based her story on the war diaries of Winifred Young. The novel was originally meant to be a spoof on Remarque's *All Quiet* – seeing the war from the woman's point of view – commissioned by Remarque's publishers. But having read Remarque's book, Price chose to write a serious book. Janet Watson points out that women drivers during the war were primarily taken from the social elite. "Ambulance drivers had a reputation for being 'sporting' women, former tomboys" and they had a reputation for being "faster than their cars" (114). Evadne Price's text is an indication of a very different perspective.

name is biblical – Sarah was the wife of Abraham, the original patriarch, so to speak – who was notably barren into old age until she bore a son, Isaac, the son Abraham stood ready to sacrifice to his god until Jehova revealed the command to be a test of his faith and obedience. Through her name Sarah is firmly embedded within the societal system of patriarchy, but she also challenges it. Sarah is a paradoxical mix of innocence and complicity; she is appalled by the violence of the war while simultaneously providing the weaponry for it.

Visiting Sarah in her mother's home, Prior studies a photograph of her, together with her dead fiancé. He compares the image of the younger Sarah, the girl the dead man had known, with the Sarah he knows. She had previously looked happy, and slightly plump. In contrast, "What you noticed in Sarah now was the high rounded forehead, the prominent cheekbones, the bright, cool amused gaze. Always the sense of something being held back. He'd been looking all along at a face scoured out by grief, and he'd never known it till now" (*RT* 472). Prior cynically castigates himself for expecting Sarah to invest deep feelings in a relationship which is doomed from the beginning, especially after her earlier loss. One of the first casualties of the war is the romantic ideal. In a culture that gives priority to killing for men and loving for women, Sarah illustrates the typical female predicament during the Great War, a predicament which initiated an identity crisis for many women. Sarah loses two lovers during the war, and like most other women working in the war industry, she will have to relinquish her temporary societal importance as a war worker¹⁵⁵ when the war is over and return to a more restricted role, both economically and socially.

Monteith relates that by 1917 when the trilogy opens, munitionettes were producing 80 per cent of all weapons and shells; they were being killed in factory explosions and were suffering the effects of working with dangerous chemicals. They earned less than male workers doing the same work, but they nevertheless protested against the complacency among civilians that soldiers on leave also detected ("We will remember" 64). Furthermore, during the war, munitions workers were periodically stigmatized when weaponry turned out to be faulty, killing British soldiers rather than the enemy. They were believed to be more interested in earning bonuses by working quickly than in the quality of what they produced. They were also perceived as greedy (Watson

¹⁵⁵ Ouditt describes the intersection of two different agendas concerning women's position during the Great War: "if women wanted to help to win the war they were welcome to do so, but within the boundaries of conservative definitions of femininity and on the condition that any apparently radical change was merely temporary. If they were seeking independence or emancipation, the political picture became more fraught" (87).

127, 132-33, 136),¹⁵⁶ and some people believed that men were taken out of prioritized jobs and sent to the front to die because women were waiting to take over their jobs.¹⁵⁷ Since part of Sarah's work involves preparing detonators for bombs, she becomes a particularly ambiguous female figure in the trilogy; she is more closely associated with the angel of death than the angel in the house. Prior repeatedly notices and is fascinated by the coppery *halo* of hair encircling her own brown hair and her yellow, jaundiced skin, both results of the exposure to chemicals at work. Both colours suggest death – the red of blood and the yellow of disease – and the young couple tellingly have their first sexual encounter in a cemetery on top of a tombstone.

Although the war liberated some women from social and economic restraints, that liberation was conditional and temporary. In this sense, they resemble their male counterparts, the “temporary gentlemen”. Nevertheless, in the trilogy, “[t]he insidious rift between men's and women's experience of war stretches between them like a measureless wasteland” (Monteith, “We will remember” 63). The roles women were filling and the freedom they experienced caused unease in society and led to new restrictions on and a closer policing of their behaviour.

Essentialism and the Maternal Myth

During the war, Emmeline Pankhurst, one of the founders of the Suffragette Movement, remarked that “Bismarck boasted that Germany is a male nation. We do not want male nations” (qtd. in Hynes, *A War* 88). Hynes, however, argues that “a nation at war *is* a male nation; by supporting the war the Pankhursts had defected to the enemy in the women's war” (*A War* 88). Bismarck's comment can be construed either as affirming the essentially aggressive and destructive nature of the male or as the triumph of the German social construction of the male to fit the needs of the nation. Susan R. Grayzel explains the confusion surrounding views of gender identity during the war: “Rather than completely undermining specific assumptions about gender in each nation, the war, from its outset, paradoxically both expanded the range of

¹⁵⁶ Watson reports that the issue of women's wages in the munitions factories was at the centre of negative perceptions of the workers: “Women's earnings were not usually portrayed as payment for work performed. Instead, they were frequently considered excessive money being spent in a reckless manner on the women workers' bodies, with fur coats, lavish underclothes, and jewelry often given as examples of profligacy” (136). Patriotism and idealism were the only acceptable motivations for munitions work, according to Naomi Loughnan, a middle-class munitionette. Watson points out that Loughnan ignored the need for financial support that these women might have experienced, “effectively grouping them with war profiteers” (Watson 132).

¹⁵⁷ Women workers were considered “substitutes” or “dilutees”, pushing men out of lucrative jobs, even when they were in fact extra workers, taken in due to the increased demands of war (Deborah Thom, cited in Watson 135).

possibilities for women and curtailed them by, among other things, heightening the emphasis on motherhood as women's primary patriotic role and the core of their national identity" (3). Grayzel also observes that wartime rhetoric linked women with mothers and men with soldiers, thereby stressing the "naturalness" of these normative categories and "thus conveniently eclipsing other kinds of masculinity and femininity" (2).

The function of gender in wartime propaganda thus relied strongly on the ambiguous myth of motherhood, "a collective and universal trope invested with the symbolic power to activate a vast potentiality of latent political activity" (Ouditt 133). On the one hand, women were stereotypically presented as war's "other". As Rivers ruminates, nurturance was perceived of as an innately female quality, in absolute contrast to the aggressive and destructive drives cultivated in men in times of war. The most permanent image of woman was as the mother of the race: she was to function as an emblem of continuity and constancy. Much of the "home fires" mythology depended on this image. Women were thus banished to a subservient, domestic role, and were to be considered morally superior. War propaganda, especially in women's magazines, "emphasized the moral equity of women's subservience: loyalty to the country was thus equated with loyalty to the patriarchal order" (Ouditt 90). On the other hand, maternity was an aspect of womanhood which could also be used as grounds for radical pacifism, rejecting the barbarism and carnage of war. Paradoxically then, "Motherhood can stand for both idealism and its repressive opposite: the fight against the nation's enemies sorted women out into warrior mothers, servants of the state and radical pacifists" (Ouditt 133). In the trilogy, Barker presents mothers who demonstrate this ambiguous potentiality of maternity.

Sarah Lumb's mother Ada is one such ambivalent maternal figure. She is aware of the way patriarchy works and is intent upon milking the system for what she can get. She herself is determined, ruthless and independent. However, when struggling alone to bring up her two daughters, Cynthia and Sarah, she has encouraged all the opposite qualities: "Prettiness, pliability – at least the appearance of it – all the arts of pleasing. This was how women got on in the world, and Ada had made sure her daughters knew it" (*RT* 172). When they reach puberty, she even changes churches so that the girls can associate with a better class of young men. She primes them for marriage, even though she rejects the institution of marriage for herself. Jane Flax points out that "[e]ven the most 'independent' woman is still mutilated and deformed by the ideas and social relations that more deeply affect her less fortunate sisters"

(136). Ada inculcates her daughters with patriarchal values; women are men's possessions and dependent upon them, like parasites. At the same time she rejects the patriarchal grand narrative of married love and the double moral standard for women and men in her own life.

Ada criticizes Sarah for not marrying her boyfriend and says she has no sympathy for her when he dies. In her shop she sells mixtures said to cure venereal disease or provoke spontaneous abortions, profiting on the despair of others. Sarah loves her mother, but sees her for the hypocrite she is: "A dispiriting way to bring girls up [...] to make marriage the sole end of female existence, and yet deny that love between men and women was possible. Ada *did* deny it. In *her* world, men loved women as the fox loves the hare. And women loved men as the tapeworm loves the gut" (RT 173).

In public, Ada espouses the conservative values of her society and has the vicar come to tea. Prior realizes that "Respectability was Ada's god" (RT 466) even though he feels her speculative gaze on his crotch when he helps her hang up curtains. She lectures Sarah about the dangers of premarital sex and tries to make sure that she and Prior are never left alone, even though there is little evidence that she herself has refrained from extra-marital sex: there is no sign of a Mr. Lumb in the family. Since women ostensibly are men's possessions in patriarchal society, Sarah must not damage her saleability on the marriage market. In Foucault's (or Gramsci's) terms, Ada seems to be the dupe of a successful hegemony. Such hegemony expresses the interests of a dominant group, but it also manages to get a subordinate group to see these interests as "natural" or a matter of "common sense".

In contrast, Prior's mother seems to have internalized the values of patriarchal culture more thoroughly. She worships her son and is proud that Prior's education has paid off, enabling him to become an officer. With her genteel pretensions, this gives her personal gratification. Although she despises and intentionally provokes her husband, she is unwilling to break out of her brutal marriage, an act which would defy patriarchal norms. She is described as a "small upright woman" with a "carefully genteel voice" and "fading prettiness" (RT 53). During her conversation with Rivers she plays with her wedding ring, "pulling and pushing it over her swollen knuckle" (RT 53), an act suggesting her discomfort in her marriage. She simultaneously slanders and excuses her husband, and after speaking with both parents individually, Rivers says to the nurse, "'That was amazing. Do you know, I think they'd have said *anything?*'" (RT 54). It is as if Billy Prior were the centre of a gender war between husband and wife. Mr. Prior has tried to raise his son according to the

masculine values of the working-class, sending him out to face the boys who bullied him: “You’ve got to toughen ‘em up, you know, in our neighbourhood. If you lie down there’s plenty to walk over you” (RT 52). He believes his wife has made her son soft by protecting him and lets Rivers know what he feels about his son’s breakdown: “He’d get a damn sight more sympathy from me if he had a bullet up his arse” (RT 53).

Mr. Prior claims that his son isn’t thankful for what his wife has done to “better” him: “He should’ve stuck with his own. Except he can’t can he? That’s what she’s done to him. He’s neither fish nor fowl, and she’s too bloody daft to see it. But I tell you one person who *does* see it.’ He pointed to the ceiling. ‘Oh it’s all very lovey-dovey on the surface but underneath he doesn’t thank her for it” (RT 52-53). Both father and son at times cast Mrs. Prior as the stereotypical emasculating mother who feminizes her son to his detriment. Billy relates how she tried to keep him away from rough children, coddled him when he was ill and made sure that he grew up with different goals and aspirations than his father. In a sense Billy was the weapon she used against her own husband. On a visit home while on leave, he remembers the repetitive battles between his parents and realizes that he was not “above the battle”, but was its product: “*He* and *she* – elemental forces, almost devoid of personal characteristics – clawed each other in every cell of his body, and would do so until he died” (RT 289). Reviewing the relationship from an adult perspective he realizes that “It would be very easy, under the pretext of ‘even-handedness’, to slip too far the other way and blame the violence in the home not on his [father’s] brutality, but on her failure to manage it” (RT 289). Although she chafes under her gendered role, Mrs. Prior has accepted the values and norms of the middle-class she aspires to and is thus a prisoner of both gender and class.

Like Ada Lumb, Mrs. Prior works frantically to maintain a veneer of respectability and dignity. Only her son knows how she has repeatedly been beaten by her husband; she is reduced to being his possession. Since her husband does not enlist, she cannot even share the euphoria of a fellow victim of marital violence, the working-class Lizzie, who felt that “[p]eace broke out” on August 4th 1914 (RT 99) because the war relieved her of her abusive husband. Furthermore, Barker juxtaposes these incidents of marital abuse with the sale of Mali, a young girl in Melanesia. When she reaches the age of sexual maturity and has her first menstruation, her parents allow a young man and his friends to rape her repeatedly for a negotiated fee, following the custom of their society. Rivers and Hogarth hear her cries of terror and pain night after night

and can do nothing to intervene. Patriarchal societies, whether in Britain or Melanesia, are seen to give males unrestricted power over females in these cases. Ironically, Barker has Ada Lumb and Prior harmoniously sing a sentimental favourite of the pre-war period which underlines the commodification of women: “For her beauty was sold,/For an old man’s gold,/She’s just a bird in a gilded cage!” (RT 469).

Beattie Roper, like Ada, has been a self-reliant, working-class woman. She has three children, Winnie, Hettie, and William, whom she has raised on her own. In addition, she had taken in Billy Prior for a year when he was about six years old because his mother was ill with tuberculosis. Mrs. Prior despises Beattie, but has no choice in the matter. Unlike Ada, Beattie was active in the suffragette movement before the war and is actively against the war after it breaks out. As a pacifist she has harboured deserters, and drunkenly threatened to kill the Prime Minister. She is unable to hypocritically espouse the patriotic values of the status quo and ends up in prison for her beliefs, indicted for treason.

Beattie had been rooted in communal life before the war broke out, running a small shop. Prior thinks, “Oh, she’d been considered odd – any woman in Tite Street who worked for the suffragettes was odd. But she hadn’t been isolated. That came with the war” (RT 262). When war broke out, the people who lived in her neighbourhood were so anti-German that they slaughtered one woman’s little dog, simply because it was a dachshund, a German breed.

In that climate Beattie had found the courage to be a pacifist. People stopped going to the shop. If it hadn’t been for the allotment, the family would have starved. So many bricks came through the window they gave up having it mended and lived behind boards. Shit – canine and human – regularly plopped through the letter-box on to the carpet. In that isolation, in that semi-darkness, Beattie had sheltered deserters and later, after the passing of the Conscription Act, conscientious objectors who’d been refused exemption. (RT 262)

Unlike Ada Lumb or Mrs. Prior, Beattie Roper is thus politically conscious and actively resists patriarchal oppression. She consequently suffers punishment and incarceration for refusing to conform to hegemonic societal norms. By presenting three such different mothers, all from working-class backgrounds, Barker dialogically explores the maternal myths of the war, refuting essentialist definitions of motherhood. Furthermore, the focus in the trilogy on single mothers like Ada Lumb and Beattie Roper reflects what Showalter sees as part

of the new sexual system emerging in Barker's own day at the end of the twentieth century (*Sexual* 37). The number of single mothers and one-parent families has risen considerably, presenting new challenges to the welfare state and family politics in general.

A more subtle comment on maternity can be seen in the case of Betty, one of Sarah's fellow munitionettes. Finding herself pregnant, she tries to abort the foetus with a wire coat-hanger. At the hospital she is reprimanded by the doctor: "You should be ashamed of yourself [...] It's not just an inconvenience you've got in there,' [...] 'It's a human being'" (RT 179). The vacuity of the maternal myth is revealed through situational irony; the munitionettes are discussing Betty's plight while fitting machine-gun bullets into belts destined for the front. This scene shows that in war human life is cheap indeed, again reducing the myth of maternal sanctity to nonsense.

From a feminist perspective, "men and women are both prisoners of gender, although in highly differentiated but interrelated ways" (Flax 139). Relations between the sexes were changing before the war, but as Alan Bance has pointed out, war led to a regression to clear-cut sexual stereotypes. Since women could not fight, "[t]he protected role women were now thrust into generated in the minds of both sexes – and even feminists succumbed to the temptation – a regressive construct of femininity, as well as masculinity" (411). By the time the trilogy opens, in 1917, however, the initial wave of patriotism has subsided. We witness the characters' disillusionment, and the breakdown of social and sexual mores due to the urgency of war. Emergent discourses on gender enable them to question these regressive constructs. The trilogy depicts how the ruthless demands for conformity spread to all aspects of life, leading to strict polarized definitions of masculinity and femininity.

In all of Barker's work, Jolly recognizes an attempt to explain "*why* people continue to invest in unjust and limiting identities and systems" ("After Feminism" 60-61). The trilogy illustrates the pervasive influence of patriarchal ideology and the difficulties involved in resisting the internalization of its values and norms during the Great War.¹⁵⁸ Through *Rivers and Prior*, Barker shows us that the interpretive frameworks we use to understand the world, whether we use psychoanalysis, Marxism or other theoretical strategies, are themselves not free from the effects of gender and hence ultimately inhibit our understanding

¹⁵⁸ Toril Moi describes the difficulty of resisting demands for conformity as follows: "If, however, we accept with Freud that all human beings – even women – may internalize the standards of their oppressors, and that they may distressingly identify with their own persecutors, liberation can no longer be seen solely as the logical consequence of a rational exposure of the false beliefs on which patriarchal rule is based" (29).

(Flax 137). The trilogy thus presents a powerful critique of patriarchal ideology and exposes its complicity with war.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Discourse of Psychology

[T]he public and private worlds are inseparably connected ... the tyrannies and sensibilities of one are the tyrannies and sensibilities of the other. (Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas* 147)

Virginia Woolf's comment above is closely related to one of the feminist slogans of the twentieth century: "The personal is political". As I argued in the previous chapter, Barker's trilogy presents a powerful critique of patriarchal ideology, exposing how gender stereotypes in the worst case scenario can actually facilitate a nation's entry into war. The trilogy shows that psychological expertise can function in a similar way. Psychology is both an academic and an applied discipline, and as such comprises texts, theories, and networks of power relationships operating within a number of different fields and institutions. In *Governing the Soul*, for example, Nikolas Rose uses the term "psy" to refer to "the heterogeneous knowledges, forms of authority and practical techniques that constitute psychological expertise" and discusses how the discourse of psychology has been used to organize and administer groups in schools, reformatories, hospitals, prisons, courtrooms, and other arenas (viii). Throughout the trilogy Barker combines the discourse of psychology in general and, as we have seen, theories of psychological and cultural trauma in particular with the discourses of class and gender. What is innovative about the work is *how* she incorporates discursive formations not only from the Great War period, but from the whole twentieth century.

In *Trauma and Recovery* – a book recognized as a classic within the field of psychology and published in 1992 between the first two volumes of the trilogy – Judith Herman reviews the "forgotten" history of the study of psychological trauma in the twentieth century. She argues that knowledge on the subject demonstrates bouts of "intermittent amnesia" in which "periods of active investigation have alternated with periods of oblivion" (7). It is as if the lessons learned in one period are always swept away, to be rediscovered again and again, in new periods, under new circumstances. This, in her opinion, is because the subject of psychological trauma "provokes such intense controversy that it periodically becomes anathema" (Herman 7). She goes on to describe three periods in which understanding and knowledge of the subject developed phenomenally, only to be discredited or dismissed and then

forgotten in episodic amnesia. First, she focuses on “The Heroic Age of Hysteria” (1890s, early 1900s) before moving on to “The Traumatic Neuroses of War” (the two World Wars and the Vietnam War) and finally, “The Combat Neurosis of the Sex War” (from 1970 to the present day). Herman argues that our contemporary understanding of psychological trauma is actually a synthesis of the knowledge gained within these three different areas of investigation and brought into public consciousness during the twentieth century. In this chapter I will argue that Barker draws on this synthesis of knowledge in her thematization of psychology and psychological trauma, and that she relates it diachronically to the discourses of class and gender. As mentioned, the psychiatric hospital Craiglockhart is the major site of the first volume of the trilogy; it is here the psychological encounters between the characters begin. The discourse of psychology thus forms the node where the other discourses meet. I will therefore revisit each of the discourses discussed in the previous chapters to explore how they are related to this discourse. Finally, I will focus on the gaze of the psychologist in the trilogy and relate it to the trilogy’s Foucauldian social analysis.

In the first period that Herman describes, “The Heroic Age of Hysteria”, Sigmund Freud, Jean-Martin Charcot, Pierre Janet and others carried out intensive investigations of hysteria in female patients. Freud concluded that the strange symptoms of his hysterical patients were disguised communications about childhood sexual abuse. This knowledge, however, was beyond the limits of social credibility at the time and threatened to lead to his ostracism within the medical profession. Freud therefore recanted on this traumatic theory of hysteria. As Herman argues, this recantation is understandable since holding fast to his theory would have meant recognizing “the depths of sexual oppression of women and children” in a period when patriarchal values were hegemonic. At the time the nascent feminist movement was “the only potential source of intellectual validation and support for this position”, but the movement itself threatened the tenets of patriarchy – the very values that Freud cherished (Herman 10-20). As I will discuss below, Barker alludes to these earlier investigations into hysteria and brings up the subject of childhood sexual abuse in the case of Prior.

Discussing the traumatic neuroses of the Great War, Herman draws on the writings of Sassoon, Rivers and Dr. Lewis Yealland to describe the next developments in the understanding of psychological trauma. She sums up Rivers’ contribution as the establishment of two principles which would benefit American military psychiatrists in the next war; first the fact that any

man, no matter how brave, could break down if conditions were extreme enough, and second that the most effective motivating factor for soldiers was not patriotism or hatred of the enemy but the love and comradeship of soldiers for one another. Not long after the end of the war, however, medical interest in the subject of psychological trauma lapsed into oblivion, and many of the lessons of shell shock had to be re-learned during the Second World War. The Vietnam War led to new knowledge about the traumatic neuroses of war, but this time not from the military or medical establishment, but from the organized efforts of soldiers suffering from the long-term psychological effects of war in the 1970s. The experiences of these soldiers led to the first systematic, large-scale investigations of the after-effects of war and finally to the introduction of the diagnosis of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) as a category in the official manual of mental disorders of the American Psychiatric Association in 1980 (Herman 20-28). Most of the knowledge developed about traumatic disorders during the twentieth century thus revolved around the study of combat veterans. However, this was to change in the 1970s with the women's liberation movement in the United States and Europe.

During the last decades of the twentieth century, the knowledge gained through earlier studies of hysteria was reclaimed. According to Herman, through the feminist movement's documentation of pervasive sexual violence it was recognized "that the most common post-traumatic disorders are those not of men in war but of women in civilian life" (28). The initial paradigm for the study of the violence against women in private life was rape, and feminists "redefined rape as a method of political control, enforcing the subordination of women through terror" and as "a means of maintaining male power" (Herman 30). Herman explains that after 1980 when the concept of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder won legitimacy it became clear that "the psychological syndrome seen in survivors of rape, domestic battery, and incest was essentially the same as the syndrome seen in survivors of war" (32). Barker includes characters in the trilogy who have been subjected to domestic battery (Mrs. Prior and the munitionette Lizzie) and childhood sexual abuse (Prior) in addition to those suffering from the traumas of war.

In the trilogy, various configurations of Great War shell shock are juxtaposed to post-Vietnam War configurations of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and the trauma of sexual abuse, putting 1980s and early twentieth-century ideas of trauma and its treatment into dialogue. Prior again functions as the crux of diachronicity in this instance; he suffers from shell shock, but at the same time is marked by childhood sexual abuse by his family priest and life in a

dysfunctional family.¹⁵⁹ As Herman notes, the traumas of childhood, like the delayed effects of combat stress were both typically the foci of PTSD in the 1980s. The discourse of psychology in the trilogy is complicated further by the demarcations of class: it influences the types of treatment available for combat stress for officers and men in the ranks respectively, and the thinking of the psychologists who are expected to “cure” the radically increasing number of shell-shocked soldiers in Britain’s war hospitals. Preconceived notions about hysteria during this period also bring up questions of gender, and we see how gender stereotypes are revised as understanding of psychological disorders grows. Furthermore, the “therapeutic familialism”¹⁶⁰ of the post World War II era combines with certain aspects of PTSD in the trilogy. The focus on dysfunctional families and childhood sexual abuse goes beyond the historical locus of the Great War.

“Managing” the Population

In the course of the twentieth century, the discipline of psychology emerged as a body of knowledge, establishing itself as both a scientific discipline and as a profession and gaining widespread acceptability for its claims for truth (N. Rose, *Governing* ix). It seemed to provide governments that were increasingly concerned about managing their populations with a means of doing so. As the century proceeded, psychology gained increasing influence as a tool of governance within the modern welfare complex, especially within two areas where the population suddenly became highly visible: the new, universal education system and in the mobilization for the Great War (N. Rose, *Governing* vii-ix). In both cases, management was facilitated in conjunction with psychiatry. One of the major influences on the development of psychology and psychiatry was the Great War experience of shell shock (Howorth 225).

¹⁵⁹ In an interview with Sheryl Stevenson Barker explains that Prior’s fugue state in *The Eye in the Door* was based on the case of a black Vietnam War veteran. In the alternative state this veteran had a striking anesthesia which turned a large part of his body into a kind of “armour”. That state went back to his childhood when he had been attacked by a gang of white youths. “This other personality came and took over and took the pain. Ever since then, but particularly in Vietnam, when he was frightened or in danger or faced with physical pain, he would go into this other state, which was extremely violent” (“With the Listener” 184). This suggests that several different oppressive power situations and war situations function similarly and helps explain the diachronicity of the discourses in the trilogy.

¹⁶⁰ Nikolas Rose introduces this term in *Governing the Soul*. He argues that the popularization and dissemination of psychological theories on family dynamics and child psychology after World War II gave the state a strategy for government through the family. This strategy aimed to ward off under-population, juvenile delinquency, and social inefficiency. Socio-political interests worked to bind women to domesticity and motherhood and the language and evaluations of psychological authorities were internalized by individuals as norms and standards, making it easier for the state to maintain control over both individuals and collectivities (151-77). This explains why the control mechanisms of psychotherapy were so attractive to people in power and why they were encouraged.

Nikolas Rose points out that the problems, concepts, explanations, and techniques of psychology are intrinsically linked to its capacity to act as a kind of “how-to” in the government of conduct. During the twentieth century the state rapidly took this knowledge into use in order to shape, control, reform, steer or direct the behaviour of human beings, both individually and collectively (N. Rose, *Governing* ix). Rose’s analysis is Foucauldian, emphasizing the relationship between psychology, politics and the construction of the self. However, he reminds us that Foucault’s critique of power and social control does not rely on the idea of a simple hierarchy of domination and subordination. As mentioned earlier, many of the norms and standards with which we learn to govern ourselves are internalized due to the panoptical organization of society. The psychological narratives of regulation, measurement and normalisation which we are exposed to, passed down by psychological “experts”, become so internalized that they appear to come from within. The position of the professional psychologist as a “servant of power” is thus not as clear-cut as it may seem (N. Rose, *Governing* ix-x). Rose explains that these authorities “do not merely ‘serve power’ – they actively shape and transform the objects, techniques and ends of power” (*Governing* xxi). We see these transformations unfolding in Barker’s narrative as military psychologists learn more about the aetiology and treatment of mental disorders. Mobilization for the Great War, trench warfare, and the lack of proper medical screening and training due to mass army recruitment, presents a vast array of new problems reflected in the increasing number of shell shock victims. A major topic in the trilogy is how the horrors of war lead to psychological disorders among the soldiers. As Pierpont explains in her review of *Regeneration*: “Ms. Barker’s subject is the dawning, growing protest of the war’s insanity, expressed overtly through political defiance and unwittingly through the epidemic of ‘shell shock’ that fills the psychiatric wards where much of her story takes place” (“Shell-Shock”).

When Barker was writing the trilogy in the early 1990s, with the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II close at hand, there was great interest in psychological trauma, especially in connection with the Holocaust. Academics like Herman, Showalter and LaCapra researched the ways in which trauma, hysteria, and madness had been perceived and understood through history, from a variety of critical perspectives.¹⁶¹ The

¹⁶¹ Foucault’s pioneering work *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (1961) was of course a seminal work in this field which influenced writers in the last decades of the twentieth century. See for example Caruth’s *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995) and *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996); Showalter’s *The Female Malady* (1985) and

connections between psychological trauma and war were also topical in the aftermath of the Falklands War of 1982 and the first Gulf War in 1992. Many of the veterans of the Falklands War became victims of alcoholism and depression and felt that the British Ministry of Defence was ignoring the issue of PTSD in fear of financial reparations. The first Gulf War again drew media attention to the plight of veteran soldiers due to what was labelled the “Gulf War Syndrome”.

Vickroy outlines the development of trauma studies and the establishment of PTSD as a psychological diagnosis in the 1980s and 90s in the first chapter of *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Literature*: “The vast interdisciplinary work on trauma has begun to challenge what was once perceived by the medical establishment as individual pathology and has linked trauma to socio-political agendas and expectations” (18).¹⁶² In the early 1990s the focus on PTSD also brought about a renewed interest in the fate of shell-shocked soldiers who had been stigmatized as cowards and malingerers in the Great War.¹⁶³ Since the end of the Great War there has been a great deal of public concern that some of the soldiers who faced military courts martial for cowardice during the war had in fact been suffering from shell shock.¹⁶⁴

In this connection, MacCallum-Stewart discusses the “Shot at Dawn” narrative as a common literary device and potent narrative theme in fictional war narratives. She argues that its retelling has been consistent throughout the twentieth century. In her opinion, the repetitive use of the theme in fiction has encouraged the belief that such executions were commonplace, whereas in reality only a relatively small number of soldiers were executed, some of whom were guilty of serious crimes. However, the attitudes expressed in the “shot at dawn” narratives have altered substantially over time, reflecting changes in attitudes and beliefs. She refers to how the theme is taken up in a number of books about the war and in the popular “Blackadder” series on British television (“The Cause”). Prior anachronistically brings up the theme in his diary in a jocular way. He says that Owen is to be court-martialled:

Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle (1990). Ben Shephard's *A War of Nerves* gives an authoritative account of the diagnostic eras of the trauma of war: shell shock, battle fatigue and PTSD.

¹⁶² Vickroy also believes that reconsidering “trauma as a generalized and socialized phenomena, perhaps even a frequent experience in certain contexts, opens up possibilities of removing the stigmas or isolation attached to it, of changing attitudes, and initiating cooperative means of prevention” (*Trauma* 18). Barker's reconsideration of both the cultural and psychological traumas of the Great War has the same effect.

¹⁶³ This renewed interest may in part have been due to the publication and popularity of the first volume of Barker's trilogy.

¹⁶⁴ For a discussion of the 1990s debate on the execution of World War I soldiers suffering from shell shock, see Ben Shephard, *A War of Nerves* 67-71.

“Mainly because he speaks French better than anybody else and all the local girls make a bee-line for him, not just thanking him either, but actually *kissing* him” (RT 572). The officers who are jealous of Owen “are thoroughly fed up with him and have convened a subalterns’ court martial. Shot at dawn, I shouldn’t wonder” (RT 572). Although Prior is joking, his use of the phrase “shot at dawn” anachronistically repeats the theme. The absurdity of the “charges” against Owen reflects the absurdity of the whole courts martial procedure as it was viewed in the 1980s; soldiers who break down psychologically are just as “responsible” for their behaviour as Owen is for being physically attractive to the local girls. Prior has already commented on Owen’s homosexuality; we thus understand that he is not interested in the attention of these girls, underlining the situational irony.

The Independent, reporting Prime Minister John Major’s refusal in 1993 to grant posthumous pardons to soldiers executed during the Great War, noted that 312 British soldiers in the ranks had been executed for military offences ranging from desertion (245) and cowardice (17) to mutiny (3) and murder (30) when they could no longer cope with life in the trenches.¹⁶⁵ Major was reported as saying, “I have reflected long and hard but I have reached the conclusion that we cannot rewrite history by substituting our latter-day judgement for that of contemporaries, whatever we might think” (qtd. in Bellamy 3). The government’s decision, however, did not end the public debate on these wartime executions; instead it rekindled interest in understanding the psychological effects of combat on soldiers.¹⁶⁶ The threat of execution was believed to be an important control mechanism during the war; men were shot to “encourage the others” to do their duty. Like the Pemberton Billing trial, the Women’s Patrols and the imprisonment of those who objected to the war, war executions fall into the pattern of coercion that enabled the state to manage its population.

One of the transformations that Barker traces is how the dominant ideas about mental illness are changed as the Great War progresses. The shell-shock experience helped to break down the absolute distinction between the sane and the insane in British society. Previous theories invoking physiological mechanisms such as heredity and degeneration to explain mental illness were

¹⁶⁵ In his book *The Thin Yellow Line*, William Moore reports that 346 men were executed. His book traces the origins of military capital punishment and gives a detailed account of the courts martial procedures during the Great War (xii).

¹⁶⁶ As late as June, 2001, for example, a monumental statue commemorating all the soldiers executed for desertion during the Great War was unveiled in Lichfield, England. The statue portrays Herbert Burden, who belonged to the Northumberland Fusiliers. He was shot for desertion in 1917, aged 17. The monument, in white stone, portrays a soldier, larger than life, blindfolded and with his hands tied behind his back, awaiting the final bullet.

gradually eclipsed by psychological explanations. During the war there was an upsurge in the popularity of psychotherapeutic methods. The scope of psychiatry itself was expanded through its involvement with military discipline and human responsibility (Howorth 226).¹⁶⁷ Barker thematizes a number of different medical approaches to the war neuroses; the dialogue between residual, dominant and emergent discourses used to explain human behaviour comes to the fore in the way different doctors choose to treat shell-shocked soldiers. Some of their approaches synchronically reflect the actual treatments used during the war, whereas some of what goes on in the therapeutic relationship between doctors and patients diachronically reflects late twentieth-century psychological understanding. Again we see how Barker uses history as a “backdoor into the present”. As Peter W. Howorth argues, “Above all, acquaintance with the neuroses of war combined with currents in early 20th century experience to create the modern world: one familiar with Freudian ideas, in which psychiatry, psychology and talking therapies are called upon to explain, take responsibility for, and treat, ever wider areas of human life” (227). In the trilogy, the understanding gleaned from latter-day wars is juxtaposed to and interacts with the Great War lessons of shell shock.

In the year 2000, Drs. Edgar Jones and Simon Wessely came to the conclusion that “While post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and shell-shock undoubtedly have some elements in common, both disorders have been influenced by cultural forces, so that it may not be true to say that one is a precursor of the other” (“Shell-shock”). Furthermore, they argue that the lessons of shell shock are not the same as those of PTSD. Jones and Wessely emphasize the fact that the idea that any soldier, even those who were well led and highly trained, could break down in action, as it was presented by Dr. Rivers, was not generally accepted by the military authorities until World War II. *The Report of the War Office Committee of Enquiry into “Shell-Shock”* of 1922 actually concluded that “regular units with high morale were virtually immune from such disorders as shell-shock” (cited in Jones and Wessely, “Shell-shock”).¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁷ Howorth notes that the increased focus on psychiatry led directly to a change in the law relating to military insubordination. In 1930 the new Labour government removed the death penalty for desertion and cowardice. The lessons of shell shock also contributed to institutional changes such as the growth of out-patient clinics for mental patients and voluntary treatment in mental hospitals (227).

¹⁶⁸ After the war, the War Office set up a committee of enquiry into “shell-shock”. The committee published its report in 1922. Here they try to delimit the term shell-shock, discuss its causes, the different treatments used during the war and looked for ways of preventing or lessening the effects of shell shock in future wars. The *Report of the War Office Committee of Enquiry into “Shell-Shock”* is relevant to my study of the trilogy because the doctors who witnessed for the committee reported many of the insights that Barker presents about shell shock, although the report ultimately dismisses and represses them.

The historical Dr. Rivers was one of the psychologists called on by the War Office Committee to witness on shell shock and his treatment of traumatized soldiers (Great Britain, War Office Committee 55-58). Rivers and the other doctors testified forcefully and with authority about symptoms and treatment, yet the committee ended up dismissing much of the information they were given. It was as if the new knowledge gained about combat stress was conveniently shelved and not used again until World War II, confirming Herman's claim that there have been fits of "episodic amnesia" when it comes to understanding the aetiology of psychological trauma. Although the War Office Committee was privy to the new knowledge about shell shock that the psychologists of the Great War reported, they seem to have disregarded much of it in their conclusion. Barker has been criticized for conflating contemporary theories of PTSD with shell shock and for presenting several lay characters with extensive knowledge of psychoanalytic terminology.¹⁶⁹ In my opinion, this conflation underscores the dialogism of the trilogy.

Rivers discusses the causes of nervous breakdown with Prior: "You're thinking of breakdown as a reaction to a single traumatic event, but it's not like that. It's more of a matter of ... *erosion*. Weeks and months of stress in a situation where you can't get away from it" (RT 96). Prior says he hadn't thought of himself as the kind of man who breaks down, and Rivers answers: "I don't know that there is 'a kind of person who breaks down'. I imagine most of us could if the pressure were bad enough. I know I could" (RT 96). Whereas a majority of the doctors portrayed in the trilogy, like Rivers, treat acute cases of shell shock, we also follow Rivers as he treats a number of soldiers like Prior and Burns who suffer from more long-term psychiatric problems and his cases thus symptomatically resemble PTSD.

Throughout the twentieth century, as Herman points out, there was an intense, controversial focus on the psychological effects of war on soldiers. In the trilogy, army doctors and psychologists are invested with the knowledge and power to define who is normal or abnormal, who is fit for battle, and who is simply malingering. Prior tells Rivers: "They don't believe in shell-shock. You'd be surprised how many Medical Boards don't" (RT 486). Rivers is not surprised. When Sassoon is considered for admittance to

¹⁶⁹ Jaggi notes, for example that "*The Wall Street Journal* deemed *The Ghost Road* 'full of anachronism.' Others detected a 'post-Vietnam' gloss on war neuroses" ("Dispatches"). It is not accurate to polarize Barker's strategies in this way. As I have noted, Barker is using the genre of the historical novel in new ways; the seemingly anachronistic conflation of historical and modern-day understanding aims to trace social transformation. Barker's trilogy develops into implicit historiographical metafiction rather than adhering entirely to the traditional realism of the historical novel.

Craiglockhart, Rivers ironically exclaims: “Can you imagine what our dear Director of Medical Services is going to say, when he finds out we’re sheltering ‘conchies’ as well as cowards, shirkers, scrimshankers and degenerates?” (RT 6) The different doctors in the trilogy represent a number of diverging psychological schools, yet all have a common goal: returning as many shell-shocked soldiers as possible to the front to continue fighting the war. As I have indicated above, it becomes increasingly clear that in this sense, they have become the servants of the state. At the same time, doctors like Rivers, Brock and Head are helping to transform the way mental breakdown is perceived and treated in Britain. The discoveries that mental illness could be treated, and that early intervention was essential, marked great progress in psychiatry. Psychologists learned that patients who suffer breakdowns are not necessarily doomed to a life of insanity. In the trilogy, it is Sarah Lumb and other young women who recognize that the soldiers at Craiglockhart are simply suffering from a different kind of wound. Sarah disregards the blue badge the inmates are forced to wear on their tunics – which Prior perceives as stigmatizing – as immaterial (RT 112). The very fact that such a badge exists, however, is indicative of the military’s need to classify certain individuals as deviant or abnormal and to isolate them from the surrounding community.

The trilogy traces the on-going dialogue on psychology and different ways of understanding human behaviour. The juxtaposition of shell shock and contemporary understandings of PTSD which is so important in the trilogy is also evident in contemporary texts. The pardons that Major refused to give in 1993 to those executed for cowardice during the Great War were finally given by Tony Blair’s government in September 2006.¹⁷⁰ Contemporary understanding of PTSD was projected onto the historical victims of shell shock, influencing the public debate that led up to the government’s decision.

Individual vs. Social Pathology

The Great War, as has been noted, produced an unprecedented number of patients suffering from nervous disorders; a side-effect was the instigation of paradigmatic research on the treatment of trauma.¹⁷¹ At the beginning of the war, many doctors believed that the symptoms of shell shock had a physiological cause; close proximity to exploding shells could cause damage or change in the brain or other parts of the nervous system (Great Britain, War

¹⁷⁰ See “300 WWI soldiers receive pardons”.

¹⁷¹ Today there is a medical institution in Edinburgh called the Rivers Centre in honour of Dr. W. H. R. Rivers. It is a specialist traumatic stress clinic under the auspices of Lothian Primary Care, an NHS trust established in 1997.

Office Committee 4-5). Joanna Bourke believes that the early debate surrounding organic versus psychological interpretations of ill health reflects the competing interests within the medical profession for authority over the male body during the Great War (108-22), a debate which is illustrated in the trilogy through the on-going discussions between Drs. Rivers, Yealland, Bryce and Brock, among others.

It is important to remember that “shell shock” was a controversial diagnosis throughout the Great War and in its aftermath. Barker’s narrative provides the sceptical comments of both lay characters and medical officers on the diagnosis itself and on different methods of treatment. Describing the treatments available to shell-shocked soldiers during the Great War, Van der Hart et al. distinguish between symptomatic treatments and exploratory therapy: “The former included disciplinary techniques, persuasion, suggestions (eg., for hypnosis) [...] behavioral exercises, physiotherapy, hydrotherapy, gymnastics, manual work, faradism (the application of – often painful electric current to the afflicted body parts: one of the most popular treatment techniques), isolation and rest” (“Somatoform”). In contrast, exploratory techniques “consisted of uncovering traumatic experiences supposedly underlying the symptoms and letting the patient more or less relive these events. Advocates of this approach often used symptom-oriented techniques first” (“Somatoform”). The trilogy presents doctors practicing nearly all of these types of treatment. Rivers employs suggestion when he draws stockings on Moffet’s paralyzed legs (RT 456-62), a case which I will discuss in more depth below. He hopes to persuade Sassoon to give up his protest against the war through their therapy sessions. Furthermore, he uses hypnosis with Prior to help him recover suppressed memories (RT 91-96), and encourages a number of patients to remember rather than repress the traumatic experiences underlying their nightmares, loss of speech, and hallucinations.

Using exploratory therapy, Rivers gets the soldiers to talk about and work through their experiences. In his therapy sessions, we often see patients relating their dreams to him so that he can help them cope with the conflicts underlying their traumatic symptoms. His approach draws on the Freudian techniques of free association and dream analysis, although Rivers’ ideas about the causes of neurasthenia are quite different from those of Freud, particularly the Freudian emphasis on sexuality as underlying mental disorder.¹⁷²

¹⁷² The historical Rivers was a member of a minority in his profession with regard to the use of Freudian psychoanalysis. In his book *Instinct and the Unconscious*, he describes the situation in Britain: “At the beginning of the war the medical profession of this and other countries was divided into two sharply opposed groups; one, small in size, which accepted the general principles of Freud

This difference comes to the fore in his analysis of Anderson's dream discussed in Chapter Four above. Although Anderson is a medical doctor, his ideas are gleaned from popularizations of Freud's theories; he expects Rivers to interpret the stick and snake brandied as a weapon by his father-in-law in his dream as phallic symbols. Rivers, however, draws a more straightforward conclusion. Anderson's conflict is not of a sexual nature, but has to do with the practice of medicine. As mentioned earlier, in his more straight-forward interpretation, the stick and snake represent the caduceus badge of the RAMC (RT 26-30). Indirectly, however, the dream symbolism also refers to patriarchal power. The father-in-law is a figure who dictates the demands of masculinity; a man must work and support his family. He expects his son-in-law to return to the profession of medicine in order to do so.

Owen's therapist, Dr. Brock, uses occupational therapy. After showing Sassoon a poem he has written on the mythological figure Antaeus, Owen explains to Sassoon: "[Dr. Brock] thinks we – the patients – are *like* Antaeus in the sense that we've been ungrounded by the war. And the way back to health is to re-establish the link between oneself and the earth, but understanding 'earth' to mean society as well as nature. That's why we do surveys and things like that" (RT 110). Part of Owen's therapy involves editing *The Hydra* – Craiglockhart's literary newsletter – as well as writing papers on various assigned topics.

At a war hospital in London, Dr. Yealland, in contrast, employs a more punitive form of symptomatic treatment; he uses shock treatment on a soldier suffering from hysterical mutism to "persuade" him to speak (RT 201-05). His method is strikingly juxtaposed to Rivers' exploratory techniques. Rivers is invited to observe Yealland's experimental treatment. Yealland locks the soldier Callan in his darkened laboratory, placing electrodes on his throat. He then tells the patient that he will not be allowed to leave the room until he regains the ability to speak and thanks Yealland for his recovery. Rivers witnesses the pain, suffering and humiliation of the soldier and is sickened by what he perceives as a cruel, authoritarian treatment.¹⁷³ Later he dreams that he

[...] the other, comprising the vast majority of the profession, who not merely rejected the stress laid upon the sexual, but in setting this aside refused to attend to many features of Freud's scheme which could hardly have failed to appeal to them if they had been able dispassionately to face the situation" (3-4).

¹⁷³Lewis Yealland described his treatment of patients suffering from hysterical mutism in *Hysterical Disorders of Warfare*, in a form that corresponds *almost* verbatim to Barker's description. However, Barker omits the patient's joy at being cured which Yealland reports: "He became quite excited and said, 'Doctor, doctor, I am champion,' to which I replied, 'You are a hero.' He then said, 'Why did they not send me to you nine months ago?'" (15). Other patients cry with joy and beg to kiss his hand. The demonization of Yealland in Barker's description loses some of its sting after Rivers analyzes his dream. Again we see creative vandalism at work.

applies a horse's bit to a man's mouth in order to silence him. Through self-analysis, he recognizes his dream victim as Sassoon and understands that whereas Yealland "tortures" his patient to force him to speak he has been aiming to silence Sassoon's protest, albeit with what he perceives as more humane treatment. Although the means are different, the end is the same; the soldiers are coerced into conforming to social expectations and returning to the front. Language becomes connected with power; forcing people to speak when they have witnessed the unspeakable and silencing those who would protest keeps the war machinery going. Here Rivers understands that his "persuasive" therapy is also a tool of authority and repression – a perception that coincides with the arguments of many modern-day critics of "talking-cures".¹⁷⁴ Barker compares the extreme techniques used by Yealland with Rivers' methods in order to make a contrast. Although Yealland's method of treatment is appalling, his patient does in fact regain his speech. What is chilling is that Yealland actually dictates what the soldier is allowed to say. Here the emphasis is obviously on control and coercion rather than on recovery.

The coercive aspect of Rivers' brand of psychotherapy appears early in the trilogy. In the first volume, Dr. Rivers discusses Sassoon's case with the other doctors in a staff meeting. Dr. Brock asks Rivers what he is thinking of doing with Sassoon. Rivers answers that he will be having three sessions a week with him. The following conversation ensues between Brock and Rivers:

'Isn't that rather a lot? For someone – who according to you – has nothing wrong with him?'

'I shan't be able to persuade him to go back [to the front] in less than that.'

'Isn't there a case for leaving him alone?'

'No.'

'I mean, simply by *being* here he's discredited. Discredited, disgraced, *apparently* lied to by his best friend? I'd've thought there was a case for letting him be.'

'No, there's no case,' Rivers said. 'He's a mentally and physically healthy man. It's his *duty* to go back and it's *my* duty to see he goes.' (RT 67)

¹⁷⁴ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, for example, use the conceptual name Oedipus, as it is developed in Freud's thinking, as a cover-all term to describe the theories, processes and institutional structures that modern psychoanalysis uses to repress desire (*Anti-Oedipus* 1972). Stuart Sim sums up their view: "Psychoanalysis in this reading is an ideologically motivated activity, and Oedipus becomes symbolic of the authoritarianism (and even fascism) felt by the authors to be endemic to modern social existence" (329).

Clearly, Dr. Rivers' understanding of psychotherapy at this point in the trilogy involves coercion, although he has convinced himself that it involves persuasion – getting the patient to see the error of his ways. Even before he witnesses Yealland's electro-shock treatment and subsequently analyzes his own dream his views on treatment are undergoing change. He questions himself about the efficacy and justification of different types of treatment:

Every case posed implicit questions about the individual costs of the war, and never more so than in the run up to a round of Medical Boards, when the MOs had to decide which men were fit to return to duty. This would have been easier if he could have believed, as Lewis Yealland, for example, believed, that men who broke down were degenerates whose weakness would have caused them to break down, eventually, even in civilian life, but Rivers could see no evidence of that. The vast majority of his patients had no record of any mental trouble. (RT 104)

Comparing his beliefs with Yealland's, Rivers concludes: "And as soon as you accepted that the man's breakdown was a consequence of his war experience rather than of his own innate weakness, then inevitably the war became the issue" (RT 104). During the trilogy he becomes more and more aware of the fact that the therapy he provides has less to do with the needs of the patient than it has to do with the needs of the government. He realizes that he, too, is the servant of the powers that be. According to Monteith, Sassoon's return to France "is often seen [...] as defeat – defeat by therapy and by the framing of his anti-war protest as neurosis" ("We will remember" 56). The trilogy supports this view to a certain extent: the transference that occurs between Sassoon and Rivers means that Sassoon relates to his therapist as a son relates to his father. He returns to the front in order to please Rivers, whom he respects and admires.

Through the thematization of these different medical approaches to the war neuroses, the dialogue between different forms of treatment and different psychological approaches becomes highly audible. The trilogy repeats the conflict between the "moral" view of neurosis, which viewed the soldier's symptoms as "a failure of moral fibre"¹⁷⁵ and prescribed disciplinary treatments like Yealland's, and the "analytic" view, which saw symptoms as the result of the unconscious wishes of the soldier and thus outside his control. But rather

¹⁷⁵ In the Royal Air Force during the war, veteran pilots were sometimes publicly stripped of their wings for "LMF", or "lack of moral fibre". It was a humiliating punishment visited upon those who lost their nerve or performed less than satisfactorily after the strain of repeated missions. The label persisted during World War II, in spite of everything that had been learned about combat stress (Moore 40-43).

than simply demonizing one approach and supporting another, the trilogy, as I have argued, scrutinizes the implications of virtually all official psychiatric approaches, leading the reader inescapably to the central question of the legitimacy of the war itself.

The Complication of Class

It is important to remember that Craiglockhart, the major setting of the first volume, is a war hospital reserved for officers suffering from shell shock rather than for soldiers from the ranks. As Janet Oppenheim remarks, men in the ranks suffering from nervous disorders were more often than not sent to “lunatic” asylums, and “the perspective of class background and bias always intervened between middle-class doctors and working-class patients, inevitably casting a very different light on the suffering of the affluent and the impoverished” (qtd. in Barham 77).¹⁷⁶ As indicated previously, Rivers expresses these biases explicitly at the beginning of the trilogy. He tells Prior that officers, unlike private soldiers, seldom suffer from mutism, instead, they tend to stammer: “Mutism springs from a conflict between *wanting* to say something, and knowing that if you *do* say it the consequences will be disastrous. So you resolve it by making it physically impossible for yourself to speak. And for the private soldier the consequences are always going to be far worse than they would be for an officer” (RT 87). Furthermore, he says “All the physical symptoms: paralysis, blindness, deafness. They’re all common in private soldiers and rare in officers. It’s almost as if for the ... labouring classes illness *has* to be physical” (RT 87-88). According to Rivers, even the officers’ dreams are more elaborate than the dreams of the men.

Prior’s status as a temporary gentleman has not prevented him from developing symptoms perceived of as typical for the rank-and-file soldier; he suffers from hysterical mutism. But he is not willing to accept Rivers’ explanation. In his usual confrontational manner Prior points out that Rivers stammers although he has never been at the front. He thus simultaneously attacks Rivers’ logic and, indirectly, his class bias. Rivers claims that there is a difference between a neurasthenic stammer and a lifetime stammer; the latter might even be genetic. Prior sarcastically replies, “Now that is lucky isn’t it? Lucky for you, I mean. Because if your stammer *was* the same as theirs – you

¹⁷⁶ Barham elaborates as follows: “Officers were given special consideration and psychological treatments, alleged rank-and-file soldiers and their families, even while ordinary servicemen were being trundled off to lunatic asylums. Though in the field there were 30 men to an officer, as many as one in six shell shock cases were officers. To ordinary soldiers, ‘shell shock’ had all the appearances of a privileged diagnosis and treatment system in which patients were regarded as recoverable, while they themselves were more likely to be written off as ‘hopeless cases’” (4).

might actually have to sit down and work out what it is you've spent fifty years trying not to say" (RT 88).¹⁷⁷ As the relationship between Rivers and Prior develops, Rivers' class-biased preconceptions change. Although he expresses conservative class attitudes, he also becomes aware of some of those biases in himself as the trilogy progresses; he gradually recognizes that the mental life of a soldier from the working class can be just as complex as that of a man from a higher social class. Prior's case, as it develops, proves to be enormously complex; class becomes a central issue complicating the doctor-patient relationship between him and Dr. Rivers and Rivers' use of a treatment which draws on Freudian psychoanalytic theory complicates matters even further. As Peter Barry remarks, "Marxist criticism has also traditionally been opposed to psychoanalytic explanations of conduct, on the grounds that psychoanalysis falsely isolates individuals from the social structures in which they exist" (166). With Rivers, Barker does indeed express a traditional solution as he delves into Prior's childhood in order to explain his fugue states. However, Barker also uses imagery connected with Freud's theories on dreams to highlight the *social* causes of individual pathology.

As I have noted, Barker adopts Edmund Blunden's concrete, nightmarish image of the soldier blown to bits and of the dislocated eyeball under the duckboard in the creation of Prior's psychiatric case. Prior's experience was a memory that was so horrible that he blocked it out. When he recovers the memory through hypnotism he is seriously upset; he devalues the memory and doesn't think it is horrible at all – he has seen much worse in the trenches. The image of the eyeball, however, becomes the basis for a complicated series of dreams and waking images in Prior's mind. According to Freud, dreams are the fulfilment of wishes that have been repressed and disguised, often through the use of symbols.¹⁷⁸ The three primary mental

¹⁷⁷ Barham maintains that the historical Rivers, while a supposedly "progressive" military doctor, "was still operating within the consensus, enjoying his Freudian cake while upholding traditional class and gender values, subscribing to a hierarchical psychology in which a superior value was placed on officers over common soldiers, and psychiatric assessments were inextricably reflections of moral and social divisions" (4). Barker's Rivers certainly does express conservative class attitudes, but he also, as I have noted, becomes more conscious of his own biases, hence embodying an anachronistic perception of Rivers.

¹⁷⁸ Whitehead reminds us that Freud revised his thinking on the function of dreams after the war. In 1920 he wrote "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" as a direct response to his experience of treating soldiers with battle nightmares. These dreams could in no way be re-construed as "wish fulfilment". He argued thus that the nightmare of the war neurosis demonstrated a compulsion to repeat traumatic events. The soldier no longer remembers the event as something belonging to the past, but repeats it as contemporary experience ("Open" 208). In the trilogy, Rivers combines both approaches to dreams – they are sometimes interpreted as simple wish fulfilment, at other times they are obviously repetitions of distressing events that the patient is consciously repressing while awake but no longer has control over while sleeping. In relation to memory, Whitehead sees that the patient, instead of regaining a repressed memory as a subject, becomes an object possessed by the

activities the mind goes through in dream-work are the “condensation” of elements, the “displacement” of elements in terms of allusion and emphasis, and the “representation” or transmission of elements into many different images or symbols, often of a sexual nature (Freud, *The Interpretation*). Holding the eyeball in the palm of his hand, Prior had asked, “What am I supposed to do with this gob-stopper?” (RT 93-94). The metaphor ties in directly with his traumatic muteness through condensation; it is as if his mouth had been stopped with a piece of candy so large that he could no longer speak.¹⁷⁹ The image then goes through displacement as “the eye in the door” in Beattie Roper’s prison cell: “He found himself looking at an elaborately painted eye. The peephole formed the pupil, but around this someone had taken the time and trouble to paint a veined iris, an eyewhite, eyelashes and a lid” (RT 252). Prior finds this eye where no eye should have been very disturbing: “For a moment he was back in France, looking at Towers’s eyeball in the palm of his hand” (RT 252).

Prior gradually relates the disturbing scrutiny of that painted eye to his own job of surveillance, spying on his former friends for the Ministry of Munitions. The grotesque, living eye in the door returns in his nightmare and he finds himself up, in the middle of the night, stabbing the door of his room with a knife. Rivers helps him find the connection: “‘So,’ Prior said in a disgusted singsong, jabbing with his index finger, ‘eye’ was stabbing myself in the I” (RT 279). Prior understands that he was symbolically punishing himself for his own treachery towards his former friends. The nightmares and fugue states that he endures are not so much caused by individual pathology – they are caused by a society gone mad with the paranoid need to police members who do not conform, using Prior as its “eye”. Prior’s insight is an extraordinarily vivid example of the internalization of values generated by the eye in the door; it illustrates the Panopticon in its full, Foucauldian sense. He has internalized the hegemonic values of his society in relation to the on-going war and become an instrument of surveillance, monitoring both his own life and the lives of others for conformity to those values.

Prior’s mental life certainly challenges Rivers’ pre-conceived notions about the relative imaginative complexity of upper-class contra working-class soldiers. Prior is nevertheless disappointed in himself, even though Rivers reassures him that *anybody* can break down if the situation is

memory: “the detective story, or the mastery of the past through a process of interpretation, has become a ghost story, in which the spectres of the past persistently haunt the present” (206).

¹⁷⁹ Duckworth explains that a “gobstopper” is a type of British boiled sweet for children, which is about the size of a boy’s marble, or an eyeball (67). In the US it is familiarly a “jawbreaker”.

difficult enough (RT 96). In contrast, the historical Rivers *did* believe, like many of his colleagues, that some men *were* more likely than others to break down, due to an innate weakness of character. And that weakness of character was more likely to be found in men from the working class than in their “betters”.¹⁸⁰ However, in the trilogy, Rivers, to a certain extent, transcends the contemporary, naturalized view of class differences in connection with shell shock and psychology through his dialogic relationship with Prior.

Recovering Memories

In “The *Regeneration* Trilogy: Total War, Masculinities, Anthropology, and the Talking Cure”, Dennis Brown focuses on the way Rivers adapts Freud’s psychotherapeutic practice, with its mechanisms of transference and counter-transference, to the needs of his patients, “without any doctrinaire adherence to Freud’s questionable system of ideas” (189). He argues that the trilogy captures the therapeutic techniques involved in a number of different scenes, including the one just discussed. He sees the trilogy as a veritable tribute to the “talking cure”. In contrast, Middleton and Woods believe that *Regeneration* is much more sceptical to and critical of psychoanalytic therapy as a cure able to free patients of the damaging effects of trauma. They point out that even though Prior, after Rivers hypnotizes him, recovers the repressed memory of finding Towers’ eyeball under the duckboard, relives the emotions and fits the recovered memory into his past, the “cure” proves to be only temporary: “Subsequent events, especially in the second volume of the trilogy [...] where he develops a second personality and blanks out for periods of time, bear out [Prior’s] suspicion that the therapy has not worked” (97). Like Middleton and Woods, I find that although the narrative up to this point “could be a textbook demonstration of Freud and Breuer’s account of the aetiology of hysteria” (96), Barker also illuminates a number of the discontents with psychotherapeutic techniques both in the past and the present. Middleton and Woods are right in noting the utter failure of “the talking cure”. And, the relationships between Rivers and his patients, for example, bring up the disagreements about childhood sexual abuse as an underlying cause of psychological maladjustment;

¹⁸⁰ Whitehead notes that Rivers worked at Maghull Military hospital, which specialized in the treatment of the regular soldier in 1915 before transferring to Craiglockhart. Subsequently he worked for the Royal Flying Corps at Hampstead in London. He thus had experience treating soldiers from both the working class and the middle and upper classes (“Open” 206). In the trilogy Prior is the only soldier with a working-class background that he works with. As a temporary gentleman Prior confuses the binary opposition between working-class and middle-class soldiers in Rivers’ mind and becomes the catalyst of new understanding.

his sessions with Prior thematize the issue of false memory syndrome, an issue that created great controversy in the latter decades of the twentieth century.

It is clear that Freud's theories continued to occupy a significant place in the public imagination even as the century drew to a close. Karl Figlio notes in 2004, for example, that nearly 100 years since its publication, Freud's foundational work *The Interpretation of Dreams* was ranked as 423 out of the top 100,000 best-selling books according to orders on Amazon UK (88).¹⁸¹ However, he claims that the significance of Freud in the public imagination was "shadowed by an antagonism to psychoanalysis which is expressed in the discourse of enlightened debate over its scientific status" (Figlio 88). During the 1990s, one could read about "Freud-bashing" (Lear), the "Freud Wars" (Wintle), and the "Assault on Freud" (Gray 38-41). In a feature article on the status of psychoanalysis in *Time* on 29 November 1993, for example, Paul Gray discusses the assault on Freud. His assessment of the continuing significance of Freud's ideas is in agreement with Figlio's; he points out that Freud's metaphors for the mental life have swept across the globe and become something "very close to common knowledge" (Gray 37). However, he goes on to discuss how a confluence of developments has raised doubts about the validity of both Freud's theories and the efficacy of the vast array of therapies derived from them.

One of these developments was the proliferation in the 1980s and 1990s, particularly in the US, of so-called "recovered memory" cases which were being taken to court. In such cases, patients, guided by therapists with varying credentials, had "recovered" memories of childhood sexual abuse or even participation in infant sacrifice rituals and had gone on to sue for the prosecution of those they believe had assaulted them.¹⁸² The debates between those who claim that the testimonies of the alleged victims must always be believed and those who believe such memories can, unintentionally, be planted by the therapeutic situation itself have been clamorous and highly publicized. Barker takes up this aspect of psychotherapy in the relationship between Prior and Dr. Rivers. As Rivers explains to Prior: "You must be wary of filling the

¹⁸¹ Figlio also refers to a survey in the *New Scientist* recording hits on the Internet search engine Google. Here, "Freud ranked above Einstein, Nobel, Galileo, Rutherford and Hertz, but also less arcane figures including Mozart and Picasso, and with 2.58 million hits, not far behind Darwin (2.81 million) and even Elvis (3.08 million) and Madonna (3.26). And Jung, leader of the main alternative current of depth psychology ranked just behind Freud (2.53 million)" (102).

¹⁸² Middleton and Woods describe another controversial area of recovered memories in the last decades of the twentieth century, namely memories of alien abductions which patients have recovered in therapy. Prior speaks of his amnesia as "missing time" in his memory, and Middleton and Woods point out that "missing time" is a "symptom widely invoked by the alien abductees" (97-98). The analogy they draw here strengthens my comparison of Billy Prior and Billy Pilgrim in Chapter Two. Pilgrim, as I have noted has been repeatedly abducted by aliens.

gaps in your memory with ... monsters. I think we all tend to do it. As soon as we're left with a blank, we start projecting our worst fears on to it. It's a bit like the guide for medieval map-makers, isn't it? *Where unknown, there place monsters*" (RT 325). Furthermore, he is at first reluctant to use hypnosis to help Prior recover his repressed memories, and describes how the therapist can influence the patient:

'You see, one of the things people who believe in ... the extensive use of hypnosis claim – well, they don't even claim it, they assume it – is that memories recovered in that way are genuine memories. But they're very often from the therapist. Because one's constantly making suggestions, and the ones you're not aware of making – not conscious of – are by far the most powerful. And that's dangerous because most therapists are interested in dissociated states and so they – unconsciously of course – encourage the patient further down that path. And one can't avoid doing it. Even if one excludes everything else, there's still the enlargement of the pupils of the eyes.' (RT 322)

Rivers thus obviously understands the power he wields over the patient through suggestion, and this in turn demonstrates the patriarchal authority of the psychotherapist, a factor I shall also expand upon later in my discussion of Rivers' treatment of Moffet.

Rivers finds sessions with Prior extremely fatiguing, mainly because of Prior's confrontational attitude and his desire for a dialogue rather than a monologue. He systematically challenges Rivers' authority. Rivers sees their relationship as embodying the tensions of a father – son relationship, but unlike Sassoon, Prior does not accept Rivers as his "father-confessor" (RT 387), but instead resents him, seeing him as a piece of "empathetic wallpaper". Prior complains, "All the questions from *you*, all the answers from me. Why can't it be both ways?" (RT 47) As Monteith remarks, "Prior, in many ways, has stalked Rivers across their numerous therapy sessions [...] Prior notices what Rivers can usually hide and, like Prior, Rivers has not fully faced his demons" ("We will remember" 72-73). At one point in the narrative (RT 323-28), they go into a kind of role-play, physically exchanging places; Prior becomes the therapist, Rivers the patient, in an attempt to discover why Rivers lost his visual memory around the age of five. Sheryl Stevenson describes this reversal of roles as opening for a new form of therapy – a therapy that is dialogic. Both doctor and patient learn something about themselves and each other from the experiment, through the mechanisms of transference and counter-transference and by working through resistances ("The Uncanny" 220).

Although this may be the case, what also comes out in this scene is a kind of Freudian flirtation; Rivers has been delving into Prior's childhood memories and has learned about how his father beat his mother. When they change places, Prior also reveals that as a young child he had been sexually abused by his parish priest – and his memories of exploitation are by no means repressed – they are indelible. There is no need for hypnosis or therapy to recover the humiliating and frightening experience. Prior “pays Rivers back” by insinuating, in his impromptu role as therapist, that Rivers lost his visual memory because he had been physically assaulted as a young child: “‘You were raped.’ Prior said. ‘Or beaten’” (RT 324). Rivers is shocked and tells Prior that such a thing could not have happened in his father's vicarage. Using the Freudian logic that he has picked up from Rivers, Prior says that the memory must have been so traumatic that Rivers *blinded* himself so he wouldn't have to go on seeing it. “‘You destroyed your visual memory. You put your mind's eye out’” (RT 325). Rivers protests that what seems frightening and terrible to a child of five wouldn't seem terrible or even particularly important to an adult. Prior responds, “‘And equally things happen to children which are genuinely terrible. And would be recognized as terrible by *anybody* at *any* age’” (RT 325).¹⁸³

Prior's argument carries with it a present-day criticism of Freud's theories. Initially, as Herman notes, and as I have discussed earlier, Freud believed that many of the neurotic female patients he was treating were ill due to the repercussions of childhood sexual abuse. Later he abandoned this theory and replaced it with his seduction theory – the remembered abuse was a false memory and merely reflected the child's own confused sexual desires. As Lynne Segal explains, Freud can thus be held responsible both for the historical denial of the nature and significance of memories of child abuse and for contemporary presumptions about its prevalence: “Whether seen as shrouding it in secrecy, or flaunted as fashionable fiction, Freud is to blame both for the cultural disavowal *and* the professional ratification of child sexual abuse” (122-23). Barker's use of psychotherapeutic discourse thus reflects the ambiguous position held by Freudian psychoanalysis both at the beginning and at the end of the twentieth century.

In an interview with Monteith, Barker admits that although therapists are ubiquitous in many of her works,¹⁸⁴ she is very critical of therapy:

¹⁸³ Barker says that “‘Prior reacts very much as I think a modern therapist would and assumes there was either violent abuse or sexual abuse. [...] Rivers is an Edwardian in the way he thinks about this, in spite of being influenced by Freud, and Prior is much closer to the modern framework that we have’” (qtd. in S. Stevenson, “With the Listener” 176-77).

¹⁸⁴ E.g., Nick is a psychology professor in *Another World*, and Tom Seymour is a child psychologist in *Border Crossing*.

‘I thought I was sceptical but I think there is a profound distrust on my part. While I admire the people who perform therapy well, there isn’t an awful lot of evidence for its success, except for brief courses of cognitive therapy where once you understand the principles, it is possible to perform a kind of autotherapy whereby one challenges oneself and one’s own behavioural tendencies. On the other hand, I do believe in psychiatry for serious mental illness; I don’t believe in therapy for unhappiness.’ (qtd. in “Pat Barker” 22)

This statement and the trilogy itself emphasize the ambivalence surrounding psychotherapy in the 1980s and 1990s. Whereas Dennis Brown, as I noted earlier, describes the trilogy as “a tribute to the ‘talking cure’ as a form of healing for what is now termed ‘post-traumatic stress disorder’ – as well as for someone simply angry and confused” (190), he also sees that “the realities with which the trilogy is concerned exceed the resources of psychology and social anthropology, as academically understood. They verge on the uncanny” (197). Psychological theories and psychotherapy are not a panacea in the trilogy.

Hysteria and Shell Shock

As mentioned in the Introduction and in previous criticism of the trilogy, Barker draws on Showalter’s gendered discussion of hysteria. Her argument on hysteria is conveyed in the trilogy when Dr. Rivers is treating Moffet, a patient suffering from hysterical paralysis of the legs. Rivers understands why the term “shell shock” appeals more to Moffet than “hysteria”: “It did at least sound appropriately male” (RT 456). Since Moffet tells Rivers that the word hysteria derives from the Greek word for womb, expressing both understanding and scepticism, Rivers decides that the problem with Moffet is that he is too intelligent to accept the simple diagnosis of hysterical paralysis: “Hysterical symptoms of this gross kind – paralysis, deafness, blindness, muteness – occurred quite frequently in the aftermath of trauma but they normally lingered only in those who were either uneducated or frankly stupid. Moffet was neither” (RT 456-57). Ironically, Rivers “heals” Moffet by humiliating him; he draws imaginary stocking tops on his legs with a pen, telling him that he will gradually roll down the stockings by drawing lower lines each day and that Moffet will slowly regain feeling in his legs in the “uncovered” area. By insinuating – through the use of feminine stockings – that Moffet is not behaving like a man, Rivers forces him to give up the hysterical symptoms that are his defence. This incident illustrates the authority of the doctor and the dynamics of suggestion in the relationship between doctor and patient. It also illustrates the potential power of the therapist, who in this case has magically

“feminized” the patient. When Moffet is “cured” of his hysterical symptoms and thus stripped of his defences, he tries to commit suicide. Rivers understands that his strategy has failed with Moffet because he has used his power over the patient wrongly: “A witch doctor could do this [...] better than I can” (RT 457), he concludes.

In spite of the view of hysteria as feminine, the number of soldiers suffering from hysterical symptoms proliferated. The terms “neurasthenic” and “war neurosis” were coined to replace the stigmatizing, effeminate term “hysteria” to describe the various symptoms in soldiers. Nevertheless, in spite of the new terms, a soldier suffering combat stress during the early days of the war was usually looked upon as a malingerer, or at worst, a coward. Bourke relates this standpoint to general attitudes to masculinity at the time: “Under the discipline of psychology, neurasthenia came to be treated as though it were a disease of the ‘will’, rather than of ‘nerve force’. This had important ramifications for the mentally ill as it made men increasingly blameworthy for their own illnesses” (117). Furthermore, Bourke notes that conventional cures which stressed the need for rest were discontinued; they would encourage laziness, and this was ultimately destructive of manliness (117).

Psychologists who drew on psychoanalytic theories, however, did help to change the way hysteria was perceived. According to Showalter, psychoanalysis represented a considerable advance over the moralism and biological determinism of Darwinian psychiatry as it was understood and practiced in the early twentieth century. In the Freudian model, she explains, “masculinity and femininity were not simply biological imperatives that naturally shaped male and female personalities, but rather cultural constructs” (*The Female* 161). Psychoanalysis was not moralistic. Instead of judging the hysteric as weak or bad, practitioners interpreted the hysterical symptoms as the product of unconscious conflicts beyond the patient’s control (Showalter, *The Female* 161-62). Rivers interprets the hysterical symptoms in soldiers he is treating as the result not of sexual conflicts, but of a conflict between the instinctual need to run away from danger and the socially constructed expectation that a man must repress fear and continue to fight.¹⁸⁵ As he tells

¹⁸⁵ In *Instinct and the Unconscious* the historical Rivers wrote that “a frequent form of conflict by which the neuroses of war are produced is that between the re-awakened instinct of danger with its accompaniment of fear and the ordinary standard of our social life that fear is disgraceful. There is no doubt that this conflict has often been solved during the war by the spontaneous reassertion of the mechanisms of suppression so that the fear and its associated tendencies to certain lines of behaviour have been again put into abeyance” (121). In contrast, he saw that the majority of the neuroses that doctors met in patients in civilian practice depend on a “failure of balance between the less simple sexual instinct and the very complex social forces by which this instinct is normally

Willard, another patient suffering from hysterical paraplegia, “‘It’s true paralysis occurs because a man wants to save his life. He doesn’t want to go forward, and take part in some hopeless attack. *But neither is he prepared to run away*” (RT 101). Willard’s paralysis is not a cowardly, immoral response. As Rivers explains: “‘Paralysis is no use to a coward, Mr. Willard. A coward needs his legs” (RT 101). The problem stems not from the man, but from the intolerable situation he is placed in – the pathology is social rather than individual.

Another, unnamed doctor in the trilogy who seems to rely on Freud’s theories continues to look for the sexual nature of unconscious conflict. Rivers’ patient Wansbeck had killed a German prisoner he was responsible for with a bayonet when he was nearing a breakdown after twelve days up the line. He is arrested for murder but later hospitalized. In hospital he suffers from recurring olfactory hallucinations. He is haunted by the smell of rotting corpses, along with the ghost of the German soldier he killed. At one point in his hospitalization, Wansbeck shares a room with a wounded soldier, and has an irrational fear of being left alone with the helpless man; he is afraid that he will murder Jessop. He tells Rivers: “‘You know when I told the doctor about not wanting to be left alone with Jessop, he said, ‘How long have you suffered from homosexual impulses?’” (RT 446). Wansbeck angrily explains: “‘I didn’t want to *fuck* him, I wanted to *kill* him” (RT 446). He is secure in the belief that Rivers finds the other doctor’s question just as ridiculous as he does.

Earlier in the narrative, Rivers explains the strict Freudian view of the war neurosis to Charles Manning: “‘Basically, they believe the experience of an all-male environment, with a high level of emotional intensity, together with the experience of battle, arouses homosexual and sadistic impulses that are normally repressed” (RT 338). In vulnerable men, where this repression is strongest, there is an increased risk of breakdown. In this connection, Sedgwick argues that Freud’s discussion of the case of Dr. Schreber in “Psycho-Analytic Notes on an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia (Dementia Paranoides)”¹⁸⁶ led to this vulgar explanation of paranoia as the result of the repression of homosexual desire. Sedgwick ties this to her concept of homosocial desire with its secular, psychologized homophobia, as discussed in Chapter Four (“The Beast” 244-45). Rivers never actually tells Manning whether he agrees with this theory or not; he wants to hear *his* opinion. Instead they end up discussing Sassoon’s poem “The Kiss” about the bayonet – a poem

controlled” (*Instinct* 120). So in a sense, he both disagreed with and supported Freud’s theories about the causes of neurotic behaviour.

¹⁸⁶ *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. London: Hogarth Press, (1953-73), 12: 143-77.

“crawling with sexual ambiguities” – and bayonet training in general (RT 338). On the one hand, fighting with bayonets is inculcated as a “proper” or “manly” form of war. On the other hand, the enemy is dehumanized in this training, and in order to destroy the body of another man in hand to hand combat, the soldier must be able to draw on this homophobic hatred.

It took time before psychotherapeutic theories about unconscious conflicts changed the way neurasthenia was perceived. Onno Van der Hart et al. (2000) observe that “Eventually, the view that these disorders were essentially psychogenic disorders – to which organic factors could contribute – became dominant. The issue of cowardice or malingering was never satisfactorily resolved, however” (“Somatoform”). And this masculinist issue, as we have seen, was very closely tied to dominant gender stereotypes during the Great War.

The Gaze of the Psychologist

As previously discussed, the Panopticon is a central trope in *The Regeneration Trilogy*, brought out through images of spying, surveillance, and looking. The images of Towers’ eyeball in Prior’s hand and the painted eye in the door of Beattie Roper’s prison cell help to develop the trope. Another, more subtle image of the Panopticon in the trilogy is the gaze of the psychologist. As Nikolas Rose argues, the discipline of psychology and the knowledge it produced as it developed and became formalized during the twentieth century was soon harnessed as a tool of governance within the developing modern welfare complex (*Governing* 213-28). When mobilization for the Great War started, the discipline of psychology was still very much a rudimentary science. However, mass mobilization and the rapid recruitment of voluntary troops, followed by conscription opened a veritable experimental laboratory for psychologists. Soldiers had not been tested for suitability or even “normality”, and the conditions they were placed in were extreme. The result, as previously noted, was an epidemic of shell shock requiring psychological treatment. This in turn helped to expand the psychological narratives of regulation, measurement and normalisation that have become increasingly important ever since. Foucault described “the medical gaze”; a panoptical, controlling gaze that scrutinized individuals, looking for signs of abnormality and conformity, and closely related to these psychological narratives in *Discipline and Punish* and *Birth of the Clinic*.

The concept of the gaze was popularized in the rise of postmodern philosophy and social theory in the 1960s by French intellectuals

and others. In connection with film studies and feminist theory, for example, Laura Mulvey introduces the concept of the gaze as a symptom of power asymmetry and hypothesizes about what she calls “the male gaze”.¹⁸⁷ In her argument, and within feminist theory, analysing this asymmetrical gaze is a means of exhibiting an unequal power relationship; that is, the male imposes a gaze upon the female who is *defined* by that gaze. The male gaze turns women into objects. In the trilogy, the medical gaze of the psychologist similarly demonstrates the asymmetry of power; the doctors decide who is ill and who is malingering, who is fit for duty and who is unfit. Here too, the gaze is objectifying. But the power of the gaze is also challenged; the power wielded by psychologists and doctors comes under scrutiny. Prior, for example, inverts the power of the gaze when he “pries” into Rivers’ psyche, studying, measuring and evaluating him.

In a brilliantly conceptualized scene, Barker draws our attention to the gaze of the psychologist. Rivers studies the way his colleague Henry Head focuses on a patient they are testing: “Rivers noticed Head looking at the shrapnel wound on Lucas’s shaved scalp, and knew he was thinking about the technical problems of duplicating this on the skull of the cadaver they’d been working on that morning” (RT 329). Rivers thus steps outside his role as doctor to observe the relationship between doctor and patient and becomes aware of the divided medical gaze; it is both objectifying and empathetic. In this scene, we witness the psychologist from a slightly different angle, doing academic research. Head’s primary concern is not with healing Lucas; instead he hopes to learn which areas of the brain correspond to which capabilities: “Head measured the dimensions of the wound on the living patient, then traced the outline on to the skull of a cadaver, drilled holes at regular intervals around the outline, and introduced a blue dye into the holes” (RT 329). What fascinates Rivers is how Head alternates between scientifically and dispassionately studying his patient, empathetically smiling and encouraging him, and again suspending his empathy and becoming remote and withdrawn. In an interview with Stevenson, Barker describes this “capacity for ‘compartmentalization’” which reveals the “double face of medicine” (181). The medical gaze is asymmetrical, signifying a psychological relationship of power. The gazer in this sense is superior to the object of the gaze. Barker goes on to speak of the “‘professional detachment issue – that you can only maintain absolute professional detachment easily if you think that what’s happening on the other

¹⁸⁷ Mulvey explains in “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” (1973) that she is appropriating psychoanalytic theory as a political weapon to “demonstrat[e] the way the unconscious of patriarchal society has structured film form” (422).

side of the desk is not something to do with you; it's something that happens to *them*" (qtd. in S. Stevenson, "With the Listener" 181). When it comes to the therapist, she believes that there must be a balance between compassion and analytical judgement. She says it is this balance, "the combination of mental toughness and compassion" that she reveres in the historical Rivers and tries to portray in the trilogy ("With the Listener" 181). However, in the trilogy it seems that Rivers is at times unable to maintain this balance; he himself becomes traumatized by his own patients, losing his mental toughness. Similarly, at times the deliberate coercion of patients to conform and return to duty shows a lack of compassion.

Rivers relates the mental compartmentalization so necessary for scientific study to the state of mental suspension a soldier must achieve in order to kill, and from there associates it with the morbid dissociation that has begun to afflict Prior. Rivers sees Head's dissociation as healthy, even though he, like Prior splits into two different people; he is both researcher and physician, but both parts of his personality have instant access to each other. Likewise, the soldier who consciously suspends his compassion for and identification with other human beings in order to function in battle is "healthy". In contrast, when Prior is in a fugue state his alter-ego knows all about Billy, yet Prior remembers nothing of what has happened when he comes to himself again. This is what makes his splitting pathological, in Rivers' analysis (RT 330).

Barker opens the second volume of the trilogy with a quote from Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*: "It was on the moral side, and in my own person, that I learned to recognize the thorough and primitive duality of man; I saw that, of the two natures that contended in the field of my consciousness, even if I could rightly be said to be either, it was only because I was radically both . . ." (qtd. in RT 226). This quote prepares the reader for an examination of both the psychopathological and normal splitting of the personality.¹⁸⁸ The split Jekyll/Hyde character implicitly refers to Freud's theories of the unconscious, the role of conflict in shaping identity and the gaze of the psychologist/psychoanalyst in understanding pathology or abnormality.

In psychology, dissociated experiences are not integrated into the usual sense of the self, resulting in discontinuities in conscious awareness.

¹⁸⁸ In her introduction to *Sexual Anarchy*, Showalter compares socio-cultural trends at the turn of the 19th century with trends running up to the millennium and finds many similarities. One phenomenon she observes is the return of turn-of-the-century characters who have become part of our cultural mythology: Dracula, Dorian Grey, and of course, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. "Like Dracula, they are the undead of the *fin de siècle*, legendary creations who never stay at rest and whose myths have been rewritten and revisioned in our time" (15). Here again we see how Barker's trilogy is haunted by the past through intertextuality.

Furthermore, people who have experienced traumatic conflicts as children are at risk when it comes to developing dissociation in reaction to later trauma.¹⁸⁹ Whitehead argues that “in writing the *Regeneration* trilogy, Barker developed the insight that psychological splitting, or dissociation, can either be pathological or adaptive” (“The Past” 145). This is illustrated in the scene discussed above where Rivers observes Head observing Lucas. Because Rivers labels the behaviour of Head and that of the well-functioning soldier as “normal” but that of Prior as “abnormal”, the objectifying and classifying gaze of the psychologist becomes particularly obvious. However, Prior’s actual case complicates Rivers’ simple classification.

In contrast to Head’s “normal” dissociation, in pathological dissociation areas of consciousness become inaccessible to memory. This is what happens to Prior. Certain visual stimuli, usually light reflections, can transport him into a fugue state, transforming him into an alter-ego that acts on its own. The splitting of his personality is foreshadowed through mirror imagery. At several points in the story he observes his reflection in a mirror which faces another mirror, producing a profusion of Priors. Visiting Manning, for example, Prior sees that: “Everything was under dust-sheets except the tall mirror that reflected, through the open door, the mirror in the hall. Prior found himself staring down a long corridor of Priors, some with their backs to him, none more obviously real than the rest” (RT 234). Prior experiences his fugue states as memory loss; his alter-ego knows all about him, but Prior knows nothing about what happens when he is thus “possessed”. Rivers explains this psychological splitting partly as the result of Prior’s traumatic childhood living in a dysfunctional family, and partly as the result of the extreme repression needed as a soldier to cope with the traumatic events of war. Prior is afraid he will be a coward and run; at the same time, he desperately wants to prove himself a hero. The conflict is resolved through dissociation; his alter-ego, who can feel no pain or fear, takes over in the trenches. In this sense, the mechanism is ironically *adaptive*. Prior is able to do what is expected of him. However, when his alter-ego continues to emerge off the battlefield, his behaviour is classified as pathological. Rivers understands that the strategy Prior learned to use as a child – putting himself into a dissociative state by going “into the shine on the glass” of the barometer at the top of the stairs when his father abused his mother (RT 401) – was the same strategy he used to survive in

¹⁸⁹ This description of dissociation is taken from the website of The International Society for the Study of Dissociation. They give the following sources for their definition: Anderson and Alexander 1996; Frey, 2001; International Society for the Study of Dissociation 2002; Maldonado, Butler, and Spiegel 2002; Paascuzzi and Webber 1997; Rauschenberger and Lynn 1995; Simeon et al. 2001; Steinberg et al. 1990 and 1993.

the trenches. Prior's case builds a powerful tie between the abuse of patriarchal power both in peace and in war; his father abuses his mother and frightens Prior, and the parish priest sexually abuses him. When he is an adult the abuse of power continues; patriarchal society demands that he conform and serve as a soldier, and when he is not healthy enough for the front he is enlisted into policing others who do not conform. The psychologist's simple demarcation of adaptive and pathological dissociation proves too simple, and the pervasive abuses of patriarchal power become more obvious.

Furthermore, Rivers' authoritative gaze is challenged in his treatment of Prior, who constantly demands a relationship that is mutual, rather than one way. Prior inadvertently learns that Rivers suffers – ironically, considering the importance of seeing and observing for the psychologist – from a lack of visual memory; he cannot picture visual things in his mind's eye.¹⁹⁰ Turning the tables on him Prior challenges Rivers to analyze himself in order to understand his stammer and lack of visual memory, simultaneously insinuating that Rivers is just as neurotic as he is. Like the good psychologist he is, Rivers continues to interpret his own dreams and reactions in order to differentiate between his own problems and those of his patients. He takes up Prior's challenge, and gradually remembers being chastised by his father as a young child after crying about having his hair cut. His father lifts him up to look at a painting of an illustrious ancestor who bears the same name as Rivers himself, an officer who fought with Admiral Nelson. The painting portrayed this man having his leg amputated after a sea battle. Rivers' father slaps his son's leg and reprimands him – surely he could suffer through a haircut when his ancestor was so brave that he reportedly made no sound at all while undergoing amputation? Symbolically, this episode represents the fear of castration that hangs over the son in the oedipal stage and forces him to obey his father and internalize the rules of masculine behaviour in patriarchal society. Rivers believes that as a child he had experienced the reprimand as so threatening that it forced him to repress all visual memories, in particular the gruesome painting connected with this threat. Barker again shows that what cannot be spoken can be expressed through neurotic or hysterical somatic symptoms. Prior has thus upset the asymmetric power of the therapeutic relationship by demanding reciprocity and the reversal of the authoritative psychological gaze. Here, Rivers' "eye" becomes an "I", mirroring Prior's nightmare where he stabbed the eye in the door. Rivers is no longer the observer, but an object of

¹⁹⁰ The historical Rivers describes his lack of visual memory in Chapter Two of *Instinct and the Unconscious*, 11-13.

observation. An explicit tie between childhood abuse and adult trauma caused by the patriarch is underlined by juxtaposing the childhood memories of both Prior and his therapist, suggesting that the patriarchal abuse of power – and the resulting dissociative suppression – is pervasive in both peacetime and in war.

Another incident where Rivers becomes the object of self-examination is in his treatment of the pilot Dundas, who has suddenly begun suffering from blackouts when flying. In order to observe Dundas, Rivers must fly with him in the fighter plane: “Like every other man who sits in the observer’s seat, he was entirely dependent on his pilot” (RT 270). During the flight, Dundas loses control of the plane at several points, sending it into a spin. When they finally land, Rivers’ legs are trembling and he is “angry, ashamed and inclined to pretend he’d been less frightened than he knew he had been” (RT 272). Forced to observe his own reaction, he notes that “He was doing exactly what he told his patients not to do: repressing the awareness of fear”, and he later confesses to Head that he seems to “be suffering from terminal stiff upper lip” (RT 272). The lesson he learned in his father’s grip continues to hold him in its sway.

By inverting the psychologist’s gaze in scenes such as this, Barker emphasizes the self-understanding and self-analysis necessary in the therapist’s psyche if he is to be able to develop the compassion and empathy that is just as essential to the therapeutic alliance as the scientific observation and classification of symptoms. In the character Rivers she shows us a therapist who learns that the gaze can be mutual or reciprocal, and more importantly, that the gaze must be trained onto the self as well as trained on the other. Rivers is recurrently portrayed as taking off his glasses or rubbing his eyes when he glides from one mode of seeing to another, but also when he goes from being scientific to being personal.¹⁹¹ When Sassoon is wounded and returns from the front again, Rivers visits him in hospital. He thinks: “If Siegfried’s attempt at dissociation [as “happy warrior” and anti-war poet] had failed, so had his own. He was finding it difficult to be both involved and objective, to turn steadily on Siegfried both sides of medicine’s split face” (RT 391). But he concludes that this is *his* problem, and that he must keep it hidden from his patient. Patriarchal society demands that he, as a man and as a physician, must

¹⁹¹ Eg. in the scene where Prior confronts Rivers about his success rate with patients. “I mean obviously this face your emotions, own up to fear, let yourself feel grief ... works wonders. *Here.*’ Prior came closer. Bent over him. ‘But what about *there*? Or do they just go mad quicker?’” (RT 370). Rivers gives him a scientific answer which rebuffs Prior, but then takes off his glasses and gets personal: “What I was going to say is I think perhaps you should think about coming into hospital” (RT 371). There are numerous other scenes where Rivers removes his glasses or rubs his eyes, reflecting the suspension of the psychological gaze and the turn to the personal, reciprocal gaze.

repress his emotions; he is not allowed to express fear, love or even compassion. Not only does he repress his emotions, he represses the fact that he shares the same problems his patients struggle with.

Several critics have commented on the unorthodoxy of Rivers' treatment of his patients, seen from today's point of view (e.g., Garland). Establishing personal, social relationships with patients, as Rivers does with Sassoon and Prior, and even visiting a patient in his home for a weekend stay as with Burns would be absolutely unacceptable practices, considering the contract between patient and therapist regarding the use of power today. Herman explains that "[t]he patient enters therapy in need of help and care. By virtue of this fact, she voluntarily submits herself to an unequal relationship in which the therapist has superior status and power" (134).¹⁹² Furthermore, the therapist must constantly remind him- or herself that the purpose of therapy is to foster the recovery of the patient, never to advance a personal agenda. At times, however, the character Rivers demonstrates an acute awareness of the power dynamics of the patient-therapist relationship. He knows, for example, that he must not let Sassoon discover the depths of his feelings for him. At the same time his moral and emotional engagement is absolutely necessary in the therapeutic relationship.

Rivers also learns more about the role of the physician by comparing his practice with that of his acquaintance, the "witch-doctor" Njiru in Melanesia. When he "cures" Moffet of hysterical paralysis through suggestion, Rivers is reminded of how Njiru cured the widow Namboko Taru of constipation by massaging her stomach, drawing out and throwing away an invisible octopus which he explains is the source of her discomfort. At Rivers' request, Njiru repeats the treatment on him afterwards. However, he does not end the treatment with the ritual exorcism of the octopus. When Rivers asks why he has left out that bit, Njiru explains it is because Rivers, unlike Namboko Taru, is not constipated, and there is thus no octopus residing in his intestines. Rivers has learned that the treatment must be tailor-made for the ailment – there is no universal remedy or cure. But the most important thing he learns comes through his observation of the doctor-patient relationship from the patient's perspective: "Once again that curious hypnotic effect, a sense of being totally focused on, totally cared for. Njiru was a good doctor, however many octopi he located in the colon" (RT 458-59). Here the gaze is totally focused, but also conveys total *care*. Yet even Njiru's compassionate care is tied up with

¹⁹² Herman discusses the dynamics of the patient-therapist relationship in contemporary practice in *Trauma and Recovery* (133-54). Both transference and countertransference complicate the relationship and influence the balance of power.

power: “On Eddystone, [Njiru’s] power rested primarily on the number of spirits he controlled. The people made no distinction between knowledge and power, either in their own language or in pidgin” (RT 505). Thus Foucault’s analysis of the objectifying medical gaze proves to have a cross-cultural application in the trilogy.

The Limits of Psychology

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the psychiatric casualties of war were barely acknowledged, and still less treated. But as Jones and Wessely underscore, by mid-century, as a result of the lessons learned in the First and Second World Wars, psychiatric casualties were recognized as an important and inevitable feature of modern warfare, and the numbers of soldiers who will succumb to psychiatric disorders can be predicated on the basis of battle intensity (“Psychiatric”). Having studied the changing understanding and treatment of combat stress, or shell shock, comparatively in connection with the Boer War, the two World Wars and more recent conflicts such as the Korean and Vietnam wars, they compare it with the situation during World War I: “The First World War saw a greater appreciation of the stress of warfare, such that doctors became increasingly alert to psychiatric symptoms and soldiers were better able to interpret their own responses to traumatic situations” (“Psychiatric”). However, “Such understanding remained at an early stage and judgements continued to be clouded by Edwardian notions of courage and duty” (“Psychiatric”). Their study (and other medical studies of shell shock) points to cultural factors, notably “notions of courage and duty” underlying psychological breakdown. Barker, too, focuses on cultural factors. She uses a gendered approach, takes class into consideration, and explores the various treatments available to the soldiers.

On the one hand, Barker’s narrative uses psychology and psychotherapy as an integral interpretive gloss. On the other, it ultimately bursts out of or transcends any psychological framework, reflecting the scepticism that has been the constant companion of the discourse throughout the twentieth century. In the narrative, Sassoon and Owen appear to benefit more from writing poetry and reading it to each other than from any kind of talking cure. Prior is only able to recall his traumatic battle experiences after Rivers hypnotises him, but recovering his missing memory and experiencing the emotions the traumatic events involve does not prevent him from developing further pathological symptoms; it is not, as I have mentioned, a cathartic experience. And the soldier Burns remains outside the realm of therapy –

talking will never relieve him of the gross, invasive memories of war that have led to the disintegration of his personality.

Most importantly, in the trilogy psychotherapy is exposed as a metanarrative tied up with power and authority; it is an exercise in social control whose major objective is to make the patient conform to an authoritarian social order. By observing Yealland's treatment of the mute soldier Callan, through Prior's demands for a therapeutical relationship that is dialogical, and particularly through his realization that he has "silenced" Sassoon's warranted protest against the war Rivers gradually understands how his power as healer is complicated by his role as a "servant of power". The juxtaposition of the authoritative abuses of the psychotherapists with the patriarchal abuses of society both in peacetime and in war makes this power play explicit. Prior's fugue state foregrounds a parallel between child abuse and the battlefield which cannot be dismissed.

Back at the front, Prior writes in his diary: "We are Craiglockhart's success stories. *Look at us*. We don't remember, we don't feel, we don't think – at least not beyond the confines of what's needed to do the job. By any proper civilized standard [...] we are objects of horror. But our nerves are completely steady. And we are still alive" (RT 545). Here Prior makes the same sort of meta-observation about his profession as a soldier as Rivers makes about Head's ability to compartmentalize as a doctor. In conjunction with the war, the science of psychology has created monsters, both by enabling traumatized men to go on functioning as soldiers and by enabling psychologists to function as the servants of patriarchal power. These "servants of power" must necessarily accept the soldier's murderous work as normal or natural. Both the soldiers and the doctors have thus become horrors. As Barker points out: "It's no accident that when people think about medicine or they think about science, they typically think about them with overinflated hopes and overinflated fears, and the figures that come to mind are doubles: Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Frankenstein and his monster" (qtd. in S. Stevenson, "With the Listener" 181). The trilogy ends with the deaths of Prior and Owen in another hopeless battle only a week before the Armistice. The scientific discourse of psychology used as a tool for preparing soldiers for war is declared morally bankrupt and undermined in the trilogy, just like the cultural presuppositions of religious faith, patriarchy, and class. As Herman points out, "[p]sychological trauma is an affliction of the powerless" (33). The abuse of authoritative patriarchal power leads to trauma, and, as Leed concludes, "[w]ar neurosis, like neurosis in peacetime, was a flight from an intolerable, destructive reality through illness"

(164). It is not the individual who needs treatment, but a pathological society that facilitates destruction on such an unprecedented scale.

Concluding Remarks

In this thesis I have used Foucault's concept of discourse and Bakhtin's notion of dialogue in order to explore how different intertexts are activated in *The Regeneration Trilogy*. I have chosen to concentrate on the discourses of class, gender and psychology in my analysis because they comprise central thematic concerns in the work. Pat Barker, while focusing on the first decades of the twentieth century in her narrative, was writing in the 1990s: at the *fin de siècle* and, perhaps more importantly, at the end of the millennium. Showalter argues that such transitional eras "are more intensely experienced, more emotionally fraught, more weighted with symbolic and historical meaning, because we invest them with the metaphors of death and rebirth that we project onto the final decades and years of a century" (*Sexual* 2-3). The diachronicity and dialogism of the trilogy mean that Barker takes the metaphors of death usually associated with the *end* of a century or era and projects them onto the early years of the twentieth century, hence subverting the expected metaphors of rebirth. The preoccupations of 1990s Britain coexist with the concerns of the century as a whole because, as Hynes explains, "Our world begins with that war" (*A War* 469). As a cultural carrier, Barker re-accentuates the history of the Great War with its unprecedented slaughter. The trilogy's central trope of regeneration, with its dual destructive-creative implications, reproduces and reframes cultural trauma. As a representation it becomes part of the on-going process constituting the historical experience of the Great War.

In Chapter One, I focused on a number of historical and critical dialogical contexts as a basis for my reading. As noted, several critics have commented on anachronisms and historicity faults in the novels and claim that Barker distorts the "historical" record. In contrast, Monteith argues that "[t]racing Barker's historical framework source by source provides a sense of how meticulous she is in including observations from published records but delimits the extent to which the novels turn on the imagination" ("We will remember" 70). Accordingly, my own research has shown how closely Barker follows written sources. Some of the conversations she constructs are taken almost verbatim from letters and memoirs written by the combatants and the casebooks and research of the doctors. However, it is Barker's re-accentuation of these sources that gives us new perspectives and revitalizes history. As I have shown, reading the trilogy diachronically can, to a certain degree, counter the criticism of those who want to read it as "normative history" and be a corrective to those members of the reading public who read the narrative as

verbatim history. The trilogy presents history as a palimpsest, connecting it to the contemporary debate on the nature of history and illustrating a number of discursive formations through time. As Cultural Materialists and New Historicists argue, “history” is always a matter of telling a story about the past, using other texts as intertexts. Furthermore, the interactive quality of dialogue means that statements or utterances change as they pass from one dialogic context to another. This is obvious in Barker’s use of the canonical war writers. By repeating, supplementing, and questioning their stories she gives us an alternative reading of the canonical texts that invites us to re-think the attitudes and status that have accrued to the canon and challenges any monolithic view of history. Thinking in terms of diachronic discourse also reveals how concerned the text is with the present, and how Barker projects present-day preoccupations and existential anxieties onto the past. This is particularly evident in her treatment of gender where essentialist and social constructivist understandings coexist, and psychology, where recovered memory syndrome and fears about the coercive abuses of power come to the fore. Nevertheless, Barker’s strategy of defamiliarization helps her avoid becoming trapped in the dominant discourses of the present.¹⁹³ Present-day preoccupations are juxtaposed with the stories of the war passed down from generation to generation. A different set of causes and effects emerges, demonstrating how the past never remains the past. The trilogy becomes a site of reciprocal haunting.

Trauma is a central subject of the trilogy as a whole; all the characters’ lives are affected by the war in some way. The soldiers being treated at Craiglockhart exemplify Freud’s definition of trauma; they are obliged to *repeat* the terrible experiences they have been through rather than remembering the events as something belonging to the past. Their bodies continue to react with symptoms of fear, even though they are safe. But Barker goes beyond the individual symptoms of trauma in the trilogy to portray how the Great War became a *cultural trauma*, affecting Britain as a nation not only in the past, but

¹⁹³ In *Remembering the Past in Contemporary African American Fiction*, Keith Byerman discusses how major contemporary African American narrative artists have chosen to focus their literary efforts on the black past; historical fiction has become the dominant mode in their work. He argues that the very choice of history as subject “is determined by authors’ experiences of the recent past and present. But the connection is primarily indirect and metaphoric” (2). These writers, he says, “have undertaken to speak to, through, and beyond ‘race’ through stories of different eras from our own. This displacement allows both defamiliarization and reinvention of the meanings of black experience. The refusal to make direct connections reflects a resistance to incorporation within the dominant discourse. Stories that seem to be ‘only’ about slavery or the Jazz Age cannot so easily be reduced to current discursive practice” (2). Barker uses a similar strategy in her thematization of the discourses in focus in this thesis; the historical novel becomes a backdoor into the present that allows her to speak indirectly and metaphorically about our life today without getting bogged down in contemporary debates.

also in the present. The war cannot be forgotten; it never becomes the past. The idea of cultural trauma engaged historians during the last decades of the twentieth century; they saw that extreme historical events were “missed” experiences that had to be re-worked in narratives over time, both in personal and collective memory. Barker’s text takes up these narratives, “regenerating” the Great War. In Chapter Two I focused on the trope of regeneration, showing how the word is dialogized; its meaning changes as it moves from one dialogical context to another. Before and in the early days of the war, regeneration was sometimes associated with the need to destroy in order to revivify society. In the trilogy, through the nerve regeneration experiment, this is revealed as a fallacy. Destruction cannot lead to regeneration, but only to wasteful death. The trope also activates a number of intertexts closely related to the cultural presuppositions of institutionalized religion and patriarchy in British society. Two central biblical texts, the Aqedah and the crucifixion are activated and transformed. Owen’s poem “The Parable of the Old Man and the Young” and Sassoon’s “The Redeemer” demonstrate how the War Poets saw these biblical stories being used to justify the human sacrifice demanded by war. Barker confirms their understanding, but also complicates it by focusing on father and son relationships in more detail. The relationships between Abraham and Isaac in the Aqedah and between God and Jesus in the crucifixion are juxtaposed with the relationship between Laius and Oedipus in *Oedipus Rex* and the surrogate father-son relationships in the trilogy, questioning the legitimacy of both institutionalized religion and patriarchal power. Using the trope of regeneration and activating these intertexts, the trilogy shows how these fundamental cultural presuppositions underlying British society are overwhelmed by the Great War, leading to cultural trauma.

In terms of the discourse of class, the trilogy is haunted by intertexts that show the pervasive ways in which class produces social and psychological realities. The Great War challenged class presuppositions, and just as Rivers and other characters have to re-think the knowledge about class differences circulating in their day, the reader is made aware of how presuppositions and prejudices continue to exist and determine social realities today. The diachronic nature of the discourse of class is brought out through intertexts that illuminate residual, dominant and emergent ideas about class. Dickens’ *Hard Times* is activated through Prior’s diary, reminding us of the dangers of individualism and grasping materialism, associated with the growing Victorian middle class. In contrast, a number of Lawrentian intertexts help to root Prior in his working-class background and demonstrate the “escapist

theme” in working-class literature. Stevenson’s *Jekyll and Hyde* activates Social Darwinism and theories of degeneration as ways of viewing class, alongside the eugenicist arguments of the early twentieth century that Major Huntley voices in the trilogy. The relationships between Prior and Manning and Prior and Rivers demonstrate class prejudices and how these complicate friendships across class boundaries. Here, Frederic Manning’s *Her Privates We* and Forster’s *Maurice* shed light on these aspects of class. In the trilogy we see the dominant ideology of paternalism coming under siege, and through the stories of the munitionettes and other war workers learn how some middle- and upper-class people considered their contribution to the war effort to be “service” whereas a majority of working-class people saw it as “work”; demonstrating how their realities are class-defined. The paternalist discourse of imperial ideology also arises out of the discourse of class through the trope of yellowness; we see images of disease and corruption spreading from the home front to the western front and on to Melanesia. Furthermore, an emergent discourse – Marxism – is visible, as Bergonzi points out, in Prior’s discussion with Beattie Roper in Aylesbury Prison.

The discourse of gender in the trilogy, discussed in Chapter Four, highlights the process of “gendering”, showing how women and men are culturally constructed as gendered subjects. The trilogy emphasizes that gendering is a dynamic process; sexual identity is constantly being made and remade under changing historical circumstances. In my analysis I have concentrated on what the work shows about the social, political and psychological operations of heterosexism during the Great War. Barker presents a powerful critique of patriarchal ideology and its complicity with war, providing insights that are also applicable to the discourse of gender today. Discursive formations determine and constrain the forms of knowledge and the types of “normality” that are acceptable at any given historical moment and constitute historically dominant ways of controlling and preserving social relations of exploitation. Through her use of the Panopticon – materialized in images of looking and surveillance – Barker shows how characters learn to police themselves through constant self-monitoring. Furthermore, we see how those who do not conform – homosexuals, pacifists and others – are classified as deviant cases. Such classification produces the norms and obscures the operation of power in society. The country needs warriors, and the dictates of compulsory heterosexuality help leaders meet this need. However the country also needs women temporarily as workers in jobs usually reserved for men, complicating gender roles. The Pemberton Billing trial demonstrates how men

who refuse to conform to the heterosexual matrix are put under surveillance, and the Women's Patrols show how women police one another, making sure their new freedom does not enable them to wander too far outside accepted norms for female behaviour. Furthermore, the trilogy subverts the homoeroticism of the canonical war poetry, transforming the chaste love described by Fussell into images of emasculation and exploitation.

The discourse of psychology in the trilogy, when read diachronically and dialogically, proves to be closely related to the discourses of class and gender and also incorporates discursive formations from the whole twentieth century. As I have argued, the military doctors portrayed in the novels illustrate the position of the professional psychologist as both a "servant of power" and as an actor who actively shapes and transforms the objects, techniques and ends of power. The knowledge gained about combat stress and mental disorders during the Great War has had a lasting impact on the discipline of psychology throughout the twentieth century, although it has been periodically repressed or forgotten. Furthermore, because Prior suffered sexual abuse as a child, the similarities between the victims of abuse and the victims of war become obvious, reflecting psychological knowledge gained in the late twentieth century. The modern-day debate on recovered memories is brought out in this connection, along with the continuing worries about the manipulative and coercive effects of psychological treatment and the ways governments use the discourse of psychology to manage their populations.

In the trilogy power circulates; everyone is caught in a panoptical system whether they exercise power or are subordinated to it. Reading dialogically we see how the discourse of psychology is continuously woven into a chain of speech communication by one speaker's responsive position relative to another's. However, internal dialogization "frees" them temporarily from panoptical surveillance. Following the thoughts of Rivers, for example, as he sorts through the contradictions of the psychologist's role reveals the human capacity for social agency that can lead to social transformation. Here the dialogue is between an earlier and a later self; although Rivers initially feels that the war is necessary, his experiences lead him to condemn it as an indefensible waste of human life. In this character we thus see the conflict between traditional and modernist views of the Great War. We see how characters can become actively involved in the creation of meaning in their society and in the shaping of its future.

In 2007, twelve years after the trilogy was completed, Barker published another novel, *Life Class*, where, as Penelope Lively observes, she

“returns to her old stamping ground of the Great War, site of the Regeneration trilogy” (“Art of Darkness”). This novel focuses on young artists who become volunteers in front-line hospitals, and Lively comments that it is almost as if Barker has unfinished business to attend to with regard to the war. This suggests that the dialogue on the Great War remains open for Barker. The trilogy is simply one link in the long chain of communication about the war. During the twelve years that had passed since Barker finished the trilogy, views of the war had also changed. Writing about the Great War in 2007 was thus not the same as writing about it in 1992, as the posthumous pardons in 2007 of soldiers executed for cowardice during the war indicates. Furthermore, we were no longer living at a *fin de siècle*. In short, a new dialogic context arose, and the war had to be re-imagined. Barker’s continuing thematization of the Great War again underlines its indelible quality for her generation and illustrates her role as an agent of collective remembrance (Troy 51).

To conclude, my reading has shown that the trilogy presents social structures from different historical epochs through dialogism and the diachronicity of discourses. Simultaneously, it makes the present-day matrices of power and knowledge that continue to surround, determine and limit people’s lives highly visible. Barker’s re-accentuation of the discourses of class, gender and psychology therefore relates in symptomatic, critical, and possibly transformative ways to socio-cultural developments in Great Britain today.

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Reciprocal Haunting

Pat Barker's fictional account of the Great War, *The Regeneration Trilogy*, completed in 1995, won wide popular and critical acclaim and established her as a major contemporary British writer. Although the trilogy appears to be written in the realistic style of the traditional historical novel, Barker approaches the past with certain preoccupations from 1990s Britain and rewrites the past as seen through these contemporary lenses. Consequently, the trilogy conveys a sense of reciprocal haunting; the past returns to haunt the present, but the present also haunts Barker's vision of the past. This haunting quality is developed through an extensive, intricate pattern of intertextuality.

This study offers a reading of trauma, class, gender and psychology as thematic areas where intertexts are activated, allowing Barker to revise and re-accentuate stories of the past. Drawing on Michel Foucault's concept of discourse and Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of dialogue, it focuses on the trilogy as an interactive link in an intertextual chain of communication about the Great War. My reading shows that the trilogy presents social structures from different historical epochs through dialogism and diachronicity, making the present-day matrices of power and knowledge that continue to determine people's lives highly visible. *The Regeneration Trilogy* regenerates the past, simultaneously confirming Barker's claim that the historical novel can also be "a backdoor into the present".