

NARRATIVES OF TRAUMA AND THE PRODUCTION  
OF TRAUMATIZED NARRATIVES AS CONTEXTS  
FOR PAT BARKER'S *REGENERATION* TRILOGY

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Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Leeds  
School of English

December 2003

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## Acknowledgments

I would like to express my deep appreciation to the following people who have contributed their support and encouragement: Dr. Murray McGillivray, Dr. Susan Rudy, Dr. Jeanne Perreault, Dean Pierre-Yves Mocquais and Vice-President Ronald Bond from the University of Calgary; the Wednesday Circle, Audrey Andrews, JoAnn McCaig, and Elaine Park; Ingrid Gunby; Katherine Zelinsky; Bertha Jackson; Doreen Macdonald Zaharuk; Peter Zaharuk, and especially to my supervisor, Dr. Lynette Hunter.

## Abstract

Narratives of trauma and the production of traumatized narratives as contexts for Pat Barker's *Regeneration* trilogy.

This thesis investigates the production of a progressively traumatized narrative, beginning with narrative repression in *Regeneration*, moving to narrative dissociation in *The Eye in the Door*, and ending with narrative trauma in *The Ghost Road*. Analysis of these texts reveals that the author's meticulous and extensive historical research brings questions of historicity to the fore, since in these novels, more research does not shore up the received narratives, rather it undoes them, leaving gaps in what had been a coherent narrative of the past. The author's innovative narrative structure embodies an early twentieth century trauma theory within itself, then uses that structure to repress its own trauma narratives. These repressed narratives constitute a subtext of unintegrated material that requires a creative act of witnessing on the part of the reader in order to fill the missing material in.

As each novel moves to encompass a higher level of trauma, the narrative structure becomes progressively tenuous. The individual trauma narratives repressed from *Regeneration* do not significantly threaten the empiric narrative; however, by *The Eye in the Door*, the social trauma of the two trials is barely contained by a badly dissociated narrative. By *The Ghost Road*, the narrative has split into two unconnected strands, each inflected with an allegory: Lewis Carroll's alternate worlds for Billy Prior's journey back to the front, and pre-war Melanesia for W.H.R. Rivers. Each of these allegories is a site of a British national trauma, Carroll signifying child abuse and Melanesia signifying the trauma of colonialism, and, by extension, Britain's post-imperial status. As the novel's narrative structure breaks up, visual artifacts of these cultural traumas are revealed, marking them as cultural trauma memories of still ongoing traumas.

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Doctor of Philosophy  
December 2003

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## Chapter 1

### W. H. R. Rivers, an introduction

William Halse Rivers Rivers had one of the most wide-ranging careers in western science (Langham 50). His friend and anthropological colleague, Charles Seligman, wrote that "perhaps no man has ever approached the investigation of the human mind by so many routes" (qtd. in Langham 51). Rivers was a physician, experimental psychologist, ethnologist, anthropologist, and finally a psychiatrist. When he died, he was preparing to stand for the general election of 1922. Ian Langham sees Rivers as an example of "role-hybridization," which he defines as a process

in which an individual, in moving from one profession or academic field to another, simultaneously relinquishes some of the attitudes and behaviours appropriate to the old role, and adapts some of the methods and techniques of the old role to the materials of the new one.

(Langham 51).

Typically, the role-hybrid begins in a "hard" scientific field, then moves towards disciplines that are "softer" and less scientific. In his various roles, however, Rivers never abandoned the theory that he and Henry Head proposed to explain the regeneration of nerves, published as "A Human Experiment in Nerve Division" in 1908. This hierarchical evolutionary theory influenced his writing and thinking until very near the end of his career, when he began to understand its implications for research and question its validity.

Rivers attended the University of London before entering St. Bartholomew's Hospital, which was one of three teaching hospitals attached to the University. He received his Bachelor of Medicine in 1886 and was the youngest graduate from Barts until recently (Slobodin 9). In 1887, he took a position as ship's surgeon, then tried private medical practice and a number of posts as resident physician at various hospitals. During his time at Barts and at the National Hospital for the Paralyzed and Epileptic, Rivers met two men who would become his mentors--the neurologist John Hughlings Jackson and the physiologist Michael Foster (Slobodin 11):

Jackson adapted [Herbert] Spencer's overarching theory in tracing an evolutionary hierarchy of the nervous centers, finding that from the lowest to highest centers there is increasing complexity, increasing specialization, and increasing interaction. . . . The most important of Jackson's Spencerian concepts in neurophysiology were those of integration and dissolution; integration accompanies and signalizes [sic] evolution . . . while dissolution is its reverse. In the individual, dissolution is "loss of control" by higher centers, or hyperactivity of lower ones. . . . Mental illness is dissolution, beginning in the highest of all nervous centers, "that is, in the anatomic substrata of consciousness" (Riese 1967:100). (Slobodin 12)

Jackson's ideas underpin all of Rivers's thinking from neurology to psychiatry and social anthropology. Not until the end of his career do we see Rivers questioning them.

In 1892, Rivers left the National Hospital and went to Germany to attend lectures in experimental psychology and psychiatry. Towards the end of his stay, he wrote in a diary that he had decided to "go in for insanity" and experimental psychology when he returned to England (Slobodin 13). At this time, experimental psychology placed great emphasis on empiricism and would have been considered a "hard" discipline. River's seduction into anthropology began when he signed on as experimental psychologist with A. C. Haddon's 1898 expedition to the Torres Straits, although he continued his work in experimental psychology until about 1910 (Langham 51). Following the first world war, Rivers's interests again shifted towards "softer" disciplines, and during this time he produced his works on mental illness (Langham 51). From 1906 to 1930, "Rivers' work was probably the most talked-about in academic anthropology" (Langham 50). Before Malinowski could make his mark, Rivers was recognized for his new approach to doing fieldwork. He was known for the development of the genealogical method, which gave "the confused and infant science of man a method" for uncovering the social organization of indigenous societies (50). A very conservative young man, Rivers was profoundly changed by his trips to Melanesia and by his experiences as a psychiatrist during the war when he treated both soldiers and officers for war trauma. Just before his sudden death in 1922, he was preparing to stand as a Labour Party candidate in the upcoming general election.

The following discussion is a review of Rivers's writings and is intended to provide an outline of the ideas that informed his work. It breaks down into five sections: in the first section, "Neurology," I use references provided in Barker's

author's note to critique the theory he and Head extrapolated from their nerve regeneration experiment. In a critique of the experiment, Jonathan Miller argues that social factors blinded Rivers and Head to obvious flaws in their formulation, undermining their theory at what they would have thought was its strongest point--the claim to a scientific truth that is detached, rational, and eternal. By implication, Barker is suggesting that Rivers's related theories that draw on this foundational theory are similarly flawed. The third section, "Psychiatry," includes Rivers's paper on "The Repression of War Experience" that furnishes Barker with case histories she can use to construct her critique of his theory and practice in *Regeneration*. It also reviews other articles relating to the war. In general, these articles provide Barker with background, some details of Rivers's life, and fill in the relationship between those directly involved in the war and a society at war. Here, the historical Rivers's expansion of his neurologically grounded hierarchy into what was then called sociology gives Barker an historical basis for shifting her image of trauma, the disembodied eye, onto the state in *The Eye in the Door*. In addition, I review Barker's use of Rivers's writing on Freud to demonstrate how his neurological theory influenced his formulation of concepts revised from Freud. The two works on dreams also show evidence of the same influence. The third section, "Interdisciplinary Work," groups works in which the same neurological theory informs Rivers's discussion of medicine in primitive cultures and medicine in society. The paper on cultural trauma in Melanesia directly informs Barker's version of Melanesia in *The Ghost Road*. The final paper in this section, the inaugural address to the British Psychological Association, marks a major shift in his thinking that emerged out of his

war experience, which called his previous thinking into doubt. The fourth section, "Anthropology and Ethnography," looks at Rivers's ethnography, *The Todas*, and establishes a connection between neurological theories about nerve regeneration and the genealogical method he devised to determine social organization in preliterate societies. The fifth and final section, "Autobiographical Writing," looks briefly at an unfinished document in which Rivers reveals his growing self-awareness that his hierarchy may be flawed, and that his own work is deeply indebted to his subconscious.

## **Neurology**

Although Rivers's career seems to be a series of unrelated phases, the "range of his researches included the normal and morbid functions of the nervous system, psychology in the widest sense of the term, and ethnology both practical and theoretical', as Henry Head observed; but Rivers considered all of his interests 'aspects of the same problem, the biological reaction of man to his environment'" (Kuklick "Fieldworkers" 168). The underlying coherence bringing the various phases of Rivers's career together originates in the famous nerve regeneration experiment he conducted with the distinguished neurologist, Henry Head, between 1903 and 1907. Head agreed to be a guinea-pig, so, with a surgeon's assistance and under anaesthesia, a nerve to Head's forearm and hand was severed, then the two ends brought back into proximity and sutured together. Over the next four and a half years, Head would journey from London to Cambridge where Rivers would test the return of sensation to his arm. As Jonathan Miller observes, the tests "involved a series of graduated

assaults on his skin" (74). Test tubes of warm and cold water would test temperature sensation, and bristles of varying thicknesses, cotton wool, and pins determined sensitivity to touch. Areas of returning sensitivity on Head's arm were mapped out and photographed each week (Miller 74).

Miller notes that recovery in the anaesthetized area was not from the edges towards the centre, as one might expect--"in the way in which a puddle dries up in the sun: the puddle of anaesthesia would get smaller and smaller until it returned to normal" (74). However, in Rivers's and Head's formulation of the process, recovery was in two distinct phases. Sensation in the first phase was distorted--Head's word was "extreme" (Miller 74). The threshold was higher; a stronger stimulus was needed before Head could report having felt anything. But, when the threshold was surpassed, the sensation was very painful, poorly localized, and radiated beyond the point of stimulus, and it also produced an unpleasant affect for Head (Miller 74). This phase, which was completely unlike normal sensation, did move from the outer edges to the middle. Over the next few months, the second phase began, "encroaching over the surface of this first phase like a varnish spread over a picture" (Miller 74). Gradually, over the months, fine discrimination to touch returned; Head could feel the cotton-wool as well as the bristles and pins. Sensation was well localized and graduated in keeping with the strength of the stimulus, and Head's subjective experience returned to normal. By the end of the experiment, Head reported "a more or less complete return to normal sensation" (Miller 74).

The first primitive phase, christened protopathic "from the Middle Greek word *protopathes*, meaning 'first affected,' seemed to be marked by an 'all-or-nothing'

aspect' . . . In short, the [anaesthetized] spots alone seemed incapable of producing sensations which were accurately localized and graduated in proportion to the intensity of the applied stimulus" (Langham 59). Rivers and Head dubbed the second, sensitive, accurate and normal phase, epicritic, from the Greek *epikritikos*, meaning determinative (Langham 59). From this, they extrapolated a theory accounting for their results. As Miller has noted,

the theory was in one sense an evolutionary theory. What they claim to have done was--to use a metaphor which Head himself did not use--open a manhole cover into the central nervous system and thereby observe a previous stage in the evolutionary development of the nervous system before it arrived at the human condition. (74)

They believed that the injury allowed them to observe an artificially created protopathic evolutionary stage. Behind their epicritic/protopathic hierarchy was a theory of evolution, but one bequeathed by the founder of modern clinical neurology, John Hughlings Jackson. Although Jackson's papers on his theory of the evolution and dissolution of the nervous system appeared forty years before Rivers and Head conducted their experiment, his ideas were still influential (Miller 74). From his study of post-traumatic epilepsy, tumours, and cerebral thrombosis, Jackson theorized that an earlier, emotional, irrational level of the nervous system emerged when the inhibition of the later, more sophisticated level was removed. Miller traces the theory from Rivers and Head to Jackson, and then to Herbert Spencer, "who defined life as the continuous adjustment of internal relations to external relations, and understood the nervous system as the governor of the organism, which co-ordinated its



component parts to serve the good of the whole" (Kuklick "Fieldworkers" 167).

Spencer's theory of the nervous system proposed a two-layered system, a duplex animal within each living creature. "There was the higher, well-integrated, organised animal at the summit of its own evolutionary branch, and within it an older, more incoherent animal which represented its ancient incapable ancestry" (Miller 74).

Rivers, however, was very familiar with Spencer's ideas even before he re-encountered them in Jackson. As a newly-qualified physician in 1887, Rivers travelled as a ship's surgeon to Japan and North America (Slobodin 10). His duties left him time to pursue his reading, which included Spencer's works (Kuklick "Fieldworkers" 167).<sup>1</sup>

According to Jonathan Miller, "clinical neurology as it is taught today in medical schools is still framed by Jackson's notions of evolution in the nervous system, with the results of damage to the nervous system seen as a gradual climbing down the evolutionary tree to the level just below the disease" (74).<sup>2</sup> Anatomically, when an animal is opened up, vestigial remnants of its evolutionary past can be discovered. Jackson held that when an animal is damaged so that its higher functions are impaired, an evolutionarily older animal emerges. As Miller argues, for this to work, the protopathic must remain in "an active but concealed condition, bound down and restrained by all that has developed subsequently" (75). Therefore, the higher epicritic function has to have a dual role: it must act as an inhibitor of the older system, as well as respond to stimuli from the outside world. And this hierarchical arrangement suggests that the nervous system performs two very different kinds of neurological function. The epicritic function is "excitatory" in Miller's terms,

responding to stimuli from the outside world (75). In addition, it has to inhibit the ancient "protopathic animal that crouched like a monster, like a dog beneath the skin" (75).

Miller proposes that the notion of a protopathic animal is absurd; any animal whose survival depended upon such inaccurate, crude, insensitive and incoherent responses to the outside world could not survive. Why, then, were Rivers and Head so willing to accept it (76)? Miller looks to social and historical factors for his reasons: when Jackson was writing, England had passed through a period of unrest during which riots and public disorder had unsettled intellectuals. Furthermore, it had not yet been 100 years since the French Revolution had demonstrated the destructive power of the mob. Miller quotes a passage from Jackson in which the metaphor of the mob is used to describe a nervous system of an organism whose higher functions have been damaged: "If the governing body of this country were destroyed suddenly, we should have two causes for lamentation. The loss of services of eminent men and the anarchy of the now uncontrolled people" (qtd. in Miller 76). Miller argues these ideas find their origin in a shared model of the structure of both society and of the individual. This evolutionary model was inherited from Darwin, and maintained "certain ideas about society as a structure dominated from the top by a refined elite, holding in restraint an incoherent raucous mob of savages" (76). In *The Eye in the Door*, Barker shows the persistence of their ideas into the last years of the war.

## Psychiatry

Rivers's paper "The Repression of War Experience" provides Barker with case histories for her traumatized officers in *Regeneration*. In his commentary on the case histories, Rivers explains that

many of the most trying and distressing symptoms from which the subjects of war neurosis suffer are not the necessary result of the strains and shocks to which they have been exposed in warfare, but are due to the attempt to banish from the mind distressing memories of warfare or painful affective states which have come into being as the result of their war experience. (173)

Repression, the attempt to push troubling memories from the mind, causes the symptoms, and facing the thoughts and memories of the experience will relieve the symptoms.

Rivers's definition of repression deviates from the Freudian definition, in that he distinguishes between "repression," which he defines as "the process whereby a person endeavours to thrust out of his memory some part of his mental content," and "suppression," which is "the state which ensues when, either through this process or by some other means, part of the mental content has become inaccessible to manifest consciousness" (175). Rivers does not consider repression itself to be pathological; it only becomes harmful when it "fails to adapt the individual to his environment" (173). Rivers believes that repression plays an essential part in the preparation of a soldier for war (173): "The training of a soldier is designed to adapt him to act calmly and methodically in the presence of events naturally calculated to arouse disturbing

emotions. His training is partly damped by familiarity, partly diverted into other channels" (173). In Rivers's terms, traumatized soldiers who have been trained in repression as a necessary part of their role find themselves in the contradictory position of having to violate that training in order to recover from their war neurosis.

Rivers understands repression to be operating on a social as well as a personal level for these officers, but does not pursue the implications that society's requirement that soldiers repress their traumas may serve a social end by the prolongation of the war. He comments that a patient's natural desire to put an unpleasant experience out of his conscious mind is often encouraged by family, friends, and many medical practitioners. He is also aware of the futility of trying to bring home the realities of life in the trenches to family and friends. Rivers describes two cases in which the cessation of repression was successful in relieving the soldiers of their symptoms, and two cases in which it was not.

One of Rivers's failures is the model for Barker's figure of Burns in *Regeneration*. Barker makes no changes to the version that Rivers himself provides. The case involves a

young officer who was flung down by the explosion of a shell so that his face struck the distended abdomen of a German several days dead, the impact of his fall rupturing the swollen corpse. Before he lost consciousness the patient had clearly realised his situation and knew that the substance which filled his mouth and produced the most horrible sensations of taste and smell was derived from the decomposed entrails of an enemy. When he came to himself he

vomited profusely and was much shaken, but carried on for several days, vomiting frequently and haunted by persistent images of taste and smell. (175)

Rivers's treatment often involved discovering some positive element to the trauma that he could turn into a consolation. For instance, a soldier who was grieving over the loss of a friend whom he had seen blown up in front of him was relieved by the thought that at least his death had been quick. But in this case, Rivers could find no "redeeming feature which [could] be used as a means of re-adjusting the attention, that . . . [would] make its contemplation endurable" (174). The patient's only relief was to leave the army and retreat to a pastoral life in the country.

Barker's version of this case grows out from the suggestion that Rivers's failure to cure his patients is a kind of narrative failure: there is simply no way to tell the story that would make it bearable. But Barker adds an understanding of the way dissociated trauma memories permeate a life in extraordinarily subtle ways. In *Regeneration*, Burns retreats to his parents' cottage in rural Suffolk. When Rivers visits him, he is immediately struck by the resemblance of this English countryside to France, a resemblance that seems lost on Burns. In this setting, Burns is finally able to face his trauma.

The second failure he reports is not really a failure of his treatment, since as long as Rivers could persuade the patient to follow his treatment, his symptoms improved. However, the patient rejected the treatment, and refused to talk about his experiences and express his grief. He preferred instead to go to a spa where he was treated with baths, massage and electricity, and where no one inquired about his state

of mind. He was eventually discharged. The patient received two significant secondary gains from his refusal to accept Rivers's treatment: he enjoyed attentive physical therapies in a very pleasant environment, and he forced his own discharge from the army as unsuited for any further service. In this case, repression proved adaptive, assuming that one of the factors causing his original symptoms was a desire to escape from the war. It got him what he wanted. Rivers here seems unaware of the implications of becoming well for these men; he does not consider the patients' awareness that their recovery means a certain return to France might affect the recovery itself. As Billy Prior trenchantly observes to the fictional Rivers, the life expectancy of an officer on the western front was three months.

For Rivers, the process of repression does not necessarily produce a state of suppression or dissociation, which he defines as a "splitting of consciousness" (175). In the cases he cites the memories were available and even intrusive, having the all-or-nothing quality of the protopathic. He notes that shock and illness can encourage dissociation, but he cannot be sure if voluntary repression can also be a factor, or to what extent it can be a factor. The case he cites in this discussion seems to have been one source for Barker's Billy Prior, and involves both the patient's repression of fears about his fitness to return to active service and a period of amnesia triggered by an incident, the details of which were never recovered. The patient in question was knocked unconscious by a shell explosion, and remembered nothing until he was led by his servant to a base, completely broken down. For months after his admission to hospital, he was subject to sudden, terrible depressions, which Rivers ascribed to the influence of some forgotten experience. Rivers finally discovered that the patient was

concealing a deep anxiety over his fitness to return to France, and was repressing these worries because he felt they were cowardly. Rivers was able to help the patient face these repressed fears, but the patient eventually lapsed into a state of chronic anxiety necessitating his discharge from military service. His submerged memory for the incident that triggered his breakdown was never recovered. Barker uses the gap in the history as her site for the central symbol of pathology in the trilogy--the disembodied eye.<sup>3</sup>

Rivers argues for the cessation of repression as the best explanation for his patients' improvement; however, he also considers three other possible explanations: catharsis, re-education, and faith and suggestion. Two of these models are indebted to narrative. Catharsis is borrowed from Aristotle's theory of tragedy, and re-education is the historical Rivers's way of describing the reprocessing of the experience with repeated narration. More difficult is separating the effects of what Rivers calls "faith and suggestion" from the effects of discontinuing repression. Rivers credits his own faith in the removal of repression as one reason for its success as a treatment. Although none of these factors can be eliminated, he is satisfied that they played only a secondary role, and that repression is still the key. In *Regeneration*, Willard seems to have come into being to dramatize the discomfort Barker catches in the historical Rivers's discussion of these different techniques. Faith and suggestion are non-rational, belonging to the protopathic realm of the human mind, and Rivers's ambivalence over all things protopathic means that he is reluctant to deal with these unpredictable areas. In this patient, however, Rivers confronts a man who seems to have no awareness of his own psychological processes, and his resistance to these

methods drives Rivers to "cure" him with faith and suggestion. Rivers successfully removes the symptoms, but Willard's conflicts remain completely repressed. In the last novel of the trilogy, *The Ghost Road*, his practice undergoes a sea-change. Initially fearful and suspicious of the protopathic, Rivers changes into a man who understands its power, and uses it to heal his patients.

Finally, a hint of a conflict of interest emerges when Rivers acknowledges that his job is not simply to restore his patients to health, but also to consider their ability to return to active military service. With one significant exception, the officers he treats are anxious to return to active service, so the conflict remains latent. Rivers's goals for the officers correspond to their own goals. Siegfried Sassoon, however, will cause Rivers to re-consider his unqualified support for the war (Slobodin 68). (He appears as "Patient B" in a chapter entitled "The 'Pacifist' Dream" from *Conflict and Dream*.) Barker uses elements of the historical Rivers's growing doubts about his previously unqualified support for the war to infuse the fictional version of their friendship with the kind of intensity it must have had to affect him so profoundly. Two other dreams recorded conflicts Barker has used directly in her fictional representation of him. They involved a project to give him an appointment with the Royal Flying Corps which would allow him to live in London.

Rivers published three other articles drawing directly on his experience treating traumatized soldiers and officers: "War-Neurosis and Military Training," "Wind-Up," and "Psychology and the War." In his discussion of the origins of the varying forms of war neurosis and the ways in which military training can help prevent them, Rivers explains that war neuroses arise from a conflict between the



instinct of self-preservation and the social codes which prohibit acting on this instinct during war. War neurosis affects officers and private soldiers differently; the physical symptoms of hysteria are more likely to affect soldiers, and the mental symptoms of anxiety-neurosis are more likely to affect officers. His reasoning is certainly class-ridden, drawing on a model that assigns the protopathic qualities to the lower classes. Here Prior's class revenge against Birtwhistle, the Cambridge don who referred to his working class lover from Leeds as the WC, comes to mind.<sup>4</sup> Rivers argues that the mental life of officers is more complex, making them less likely to choose the physical solution offered by hysteria, since they would not be satisfied with such a primitive solution. Barker's Prior mocks this notion in *Regeneration* as ridiculous, and the fictional Rivers's defense isn't very convincing. He argues that the conflict of an officer arises from acquired experience; it isn't a matter of simply personal safety as it is with private soldiers. The officers' conflict is between duty to their comrades, whose safety may depend on their command, and a sense of unfitness for this duty.

In his article "Wind-up", Rivers distinguishes between different kinds of fear, and identifies fear that is independent of danger as pathological, that is, protopathic.<sup>5</sup> Wind-up was a phrase used to soldiers to express fear without directly acknowledging it. Society views fear in soldiers, especially without a visible cause, as shameful. Treatment with re-education should acknowledge this, emphasizing that there is no reason for shame. This article provides Barker with another setting for Rivers. In *The Eye in the Door*, she is able to give some sense of his physical courage as he accompanies a traumatized pilot on a flight that was risky for them both. She captures

a sense of a man who is committed to the integrity of his ideas, and willing to risk his life for them.

"Psychology and the War" develops Rivers's belief that the war revealed collective human behaviour to be "sentiments resting upon instinctive trends and traditions founded on such trends" (253). Rivers's writing reveals him as a man who is confident and persistent in his intellectual life, applying himself to any problem that presents itself. Barker uses the following discussion in which the historical Rivers maps his neurological-psychological model onto social structures as justification for connecting her central image of pathology, the disembodied eye, to the surveillance of dissidents in *The Eye in the Door*. Rivers argues that the war brought into prominence an instinct even more powerful and more simple than sex, "which in times of peace provides the most potent agent on the mental conflicts upon which disorders of the mind depend" (253). Psychoneuroses are attempts to resolve conflicts between instincts and social controls of various kinds, instincts arising from the unconscious, protopathic region of the psyche, and the social controls from the epicritic. Dementia praecox, paranoia, compulsion-neurosis, hysterical conversion and hypochondriasis are some examples; however, voluntary or what Rivers calls "witting" repression is by far the commonest solution to conflicts aroused by the war. Threats from within figured in the nation's response to the war, or, in his neurological terms, the protopathic threatens to upset the epicritic:

It was the danger of the destruction of the social framework in which each one of us had his appointed place which acted as the stimulus to reawaken tendencies connected with the instinct of self-preservation.

Moreover, now that the danger from external enemies is over, there are large numbers of persons in whom the alteration in the internal social order which seems in all countries to be imminent is keeping their danger-signals in a state of tension while the fatigue and strain which few have escaped during the war is at the same time giving these aroused instinctive tendencies a wider scope than would otherwise be open to them. (255-56)

Since the war had ended, Rivers believed that social disorder akin to universal psychoneurosis was evident in many countries. He did not expect to find exact models of psychoneurosis in social life, but he did not expect to find analogues of them in society. In countries with a long history of autocratic rule or foreign domination, a social disorder like an acute psychosis appears. The historical Rivers articulates the wide-spread fear of social disruptions that provokes the surveillance of dissident British citizens most evident in *The Eye in the Door*.

In England, Rivers saw more than fatigue at work. He characterized the English as instinctive rather than intelligent politically. When faced with painful issues, English society chooses repression and closes its eyes to difficult situations. Rivers's solution in social terms was the same as in individual terms: self-knowledge and self-reliance. The article oddly ends with observations about industrial psychology and about childhood. Happiness, and to some extent health, are largely dependent on influences from childhood. "The life of a child is a long conflict between instinctive tendencies and forces brought to bear upon these tendencies by its elders, and many are coming to believe that character is largely determined by the

strategy and tactics of this conflict" (258). He concludes by stating that although mental sciences are underdeveloped in comparison with physical sciences, the general principles of treatment of psychoneuroses in individuals will also succeed in the treatment of analogical social disorders.

Although Rivers was fluent in German and had read Freud, he did not consider himself to be a psychoanalyst and, in the following publications, took issue with him in key areas: the sexual origin of neurosis, a psychology of the unconscious, and his theory of the interpretation of dreams. The articles and books discussed below appear to have influenced Barker's Rivers.

"Why is the 'Unconscious' Unconscious?" breaks down into three questions: why experience becomes unconscious, and why it remains in this state, and why it should surface in symptoms such as vague fears. Rivers characteristically draws on his model of the protopathic and the epicritic for explanation, and represents his ongoing attempt to map psychology onto neurology. Addressing the second question, Rivers proposes first that instincts are organically unified wholes. Therefore, if one part of them is incorporated into a more complex area of development, the rest will continue on in a dissociated state. The process of repression and the resulting state of suppression exactly correspond to inhibitory role of an intact epicritic function. His clinical example, a soldier with claustrophobia, also appears in a separate article, "A Case of Claustrophobia," where he uses it to demonstrate that the recollection of a forgotten childhood trauma can result in the disappearance of symptoms and the re-integration of the memory into the conscious personality. This article uses the case to take issue with Freud's emphasis on the sexual origin of neuroses. The patient's

symptoms had originally been interpreted sexually, and he had received treatment for stammering and generalized anxiety. Analysis failed to uncover any repressed sexual experience, and life in the trenches exacerbated the condition and led to his coming under Rivers's treatment for his war neurosis. This layering of traumas seems to be behind Barker's Billy Prior, whose war traumas are superimposed on a history of sexual and physical abuse in childhood.

Rivers acknowledges his debt to Freud in "Freud's Psychology of the Unconscious." Everyone has forgotten aspects of their experience, and these unconscious experiences influence conscious thoughts, feelings and actions. Forgetting is an active process requiring an explanation--it is not passive. Experience is banished from consciousness by a process Freud calls censorship. Rivers believed that suppressed experience can enter consciousness only when the normal control of the epicritic is weakened, for example, when the patient is under hypnosis or when asleep. (One of Prior's tasks at the front is to censor letters from the soldiers to their families, thereby preventing the reality of the front from entering the consciousness of those at home.) For Freud, suppressed experience, called complexes, produce bodily and mental disease. The war provided evidence that supports Freud's theory of forgetting, but minimalizes his theory of the sexual origin of functional nervous disorders. Rivers ends with a consideration of Freud's psychology of the unconscious as a partial truth, subject to the modifications that will come with research.

Rivers's two works on dreams are interesting for the way in which they re-organize the relationship between the individual's consciousness and the world that impinges upon it. His theory of dreams as set out in *Conflict and Dream* extrapolates

the hierarchical theory he developed from the nerve regeneration experiment into a revision of Freud's theory of dreams. Based on his own clinical experience and extensive analysis of his own dreams, Rivers's freedom in adapting Freud's dream theory indicates the fluidity of psychiatric practice at this time. Rivers was one of the people who introduced Freudian ideas to England, and he cites Freud's German texts in his own work. In his biography of Freud, Ernest Jones reports that in the years following the first world war, Freud was taken up in intellectual circles, and that something of a cult formed around him. In February 1919, the British Psychological Society was reorganized and a medical section was formed. Jones felt this section provided a much needed place for discussion between psychoanalysts and what he called "other medical psychologists" (487). Rivers, whom Jones refers to as a "distinguished anthropologist," was asked to be the first President (487), which is an indication of the respect he commanded even though he was not a psychoanalyst.

The historical Rivers accepted Freud's distinction between the manifest and latent content of dreams: "By Freud the features of the dream as experienced and related by the dreamer are spoken of as the manifest content, and this is only regarded as of interest in that it is held to be the expression of a deeper meaning, an expression of thoughts which Freud calls the latent content" (*Conflict* 3). Rivers used assumptions drawn from his epicritic/protopathic hierarchical model to revise Freud's concept of censorship. Rivers noted that in Freud's theory, the latent content becomes the manifest content by means of a process he called "distortion," and Rivers called "transformation." The process is necessary to counteract resistance to the latent content within the waking consciousness.

It is supposed that the manifest dream is an occurrence in which experience appears in the consciousness of sleep which has been banished from the consciousness of the waking life by processes of repression or suppression, and that the process of transformation is necessary in order to overcome a resistance to his [sic] appearance. Freud had given a metaphorical expression to this resistance by the use of the simile of the social process of censorship. He supposes that the experience kept out of the consciousness of waking life can only find access to the consciousness of sleep if it suffers such transformation or distortion that its real meaning will not be recognized by the sleeper. The feature of resistance thus presented to the direct and undisguised appearance of the latent content Freud calls censorship. (5)

Rivers believed that it is unnecessary to postulate such an agency (51). In his theory, dreams are regressive, expressive of infancy or an earlier stage of life than that at which the dream occurs (50), and therefore they are protopathic. For Rivers, the "disguise of the dream," the transformation of latent content into the manifest content of the remembered dream, "is a necessary consequence of the essential nature of the dream as the coming into being of an early form of mental functioning" (50).

In accordance with his epicritic/protopathic model, Rivers believed dreams differ according to the level of sleep at which they occurred. Dreams that occur during light sleep are more in keeping with the age of the dreamer and are also more easily recalled. In deep sleep, the upper levels of mental activity do not function; thus the dreams produced during this sleep are characteristic of very early life.

This view is a natural corollary of the scheme which I have put forward elsewhere, that the mind may be regarded as composed of a number of levels or strata comparable with the levels of neurological activity which are now widely held to furnish the best explanation of the mode of action of the nervous system. (90)

Rivers's neurological hierarchy has been reified here in geological stratification, which harks back to its Darwinian origins.

The historical Rivers rejected Freud's contention that the latent content is the fulfillment of the dreamer's wish. He saw it as too simple, and instead postulated "that the dream is the solution or attempted solution of a conflict which finds expression in ways characteristic of different levels of early experience" (17). He also believed that dreams arise out of the dreamer's current life situation, unless an event has triggered an old conflict from the dreamer's past (104). Rivers returned to his epicritic/protopathic hierarchy to characterize the latent content of dreams as having a protopathic "intense, explosive . . . 'all-or-nothing' affect" (78). Because of the regressive nature of sleep, Rivers thought the attempts to solve these conflicts were characteristic of much earlier stages of mental functioning.

The basis for Rivers's critique of the psychoanalytic theory of dreams is that all the dreams used to support the theory were obtained from patients undergoing psychoanalysis. Thus, they have been influenced by that theory of dreams, and so are contaminated by that theory, which invalidates them as raw material on which to construct a theory. But Rivers himself is guilty of the accusation he levels at Freud and Jung--that their theories are flawed because they are based on dreams of their own



patients while in analysis. Rivers also derived his thinking about dreams from his own dreams and those of his patients; however, he may have believed that his hierarchical revisions of Freud's theory exempted him from the problems he saw in Freud's theory, since he discouraged the transference psychoanalysis saw as necessary.

*Conflict and Dream* is remarkable for two further things: the sense, as Slobodin says, that Rivers was aware that his life was lacking in emotional satisfactions (58), and for a dream of his own he records as the "Pacifist Dream." In it, Rivers recounts a dream which he interprets as marking a shift in his sympathies from supporting war at all costs to negotiating a peaceful end, and acknowledges the influence of "B" whom Barker in her author's note identifies as Siegfried Sassoon. This dream and the discussion that follows it provides Barker with insight into the transformation Rivers experienced during the war.

### **Interdisciplinary Work**

In "Dreams and Primitive Culture," we see the hierarchical mechanisms of the psyche mapped onto social structures. In this monograph, Rivers characterizes the cultures of "rude peoples," whom he sees as representatives of earlier stages in the progress of humanity using the inherent characteristics of the manifest content of dreams. He must have reasoned that since primitive peoples are closer to instinct and therefore the unconscious, that the methods and language of dream analysis could explain them. Dramatization seen in dreams is present in these cultures, because of their preference for the concrete over the abstract. Symbolization is associated with

the importance of sensory images in these cultures. Condensation appears in the rites and customs of the "savage," since they are the product of a long historical chain of events. He also sees displacement, secondary elaboration, and disguise and censorship as elements of these societies. In this formulation, the nightmare, which is caused by the failure of the censor to control an overwhelming experience, has its social counterpart in revolution.

Rivers was seldom content to leave a subject in one discipline until he had extended its principles into his other areas of interest. The lectures entitled *Medicine, Magic and Religion*, delivered to the Royal College of Physicians in 1915 and 1916, were intended to demonstrate "the intimate relation of medicine with magic and religion among certain peoples who rank low in the scale of general culture" (48). In these lectures, Rivers revisits his work on Freud and seeks to integrate his anthropology with his psychiatry. Barker clearly has the historical Rivers's attitudes towards Melanesia and Melanesian medicine in mind in *The Ghost Road*. Rivers believes that the difference between Melanesian and Western European medicine is one of degree, not kind, and his evident and probably inevitable ethnocentrism does not prevent him from arguing that Melanesian medicine is rational, based on clearly formulated, if erroneous, ideas about disease. Their treatments are the logical consequences of their beliefs. Rivers understands the kind of magical medical practices he sees in Melanesia as a primitive version of Western medical practice. This raises the question of how he regards psychiatry, which has progressed until it has become differentiated from magic and religion, but which still has more in common with them than with disorders in the natural world.

In Rivers's view, psychiatry looks back to an earlier period in the evolution of Western medicine:

During the long period when medicine was occupied in substituting . . . material agents for the spiritual beings to which all disease was once ascribed, little if any room was left for agencies which come within the modern connotations of the mind. (121)

These spiritual beings might be ghosts, or might be like a soul which still resides inside a human body, but can leave it during sleep or a trance. Mind is not distinguished from spirit and treatment of these disorders is as if they were diseases of the mind, and treatment depends on the powers of faith and suggestion. Rivers believes that only since the mid-nineteenth century has the role of the mind as a cause of disease and as a factor in treatment been appreciated.

In his assessment of Freud's contribution to psychology, Rivers notes that as Freud's work came to focus more and more exclusively on sexual factors in the etiology of disease, he was increasingly rejected by the medical profession and the laity. Rivers believes Freud's great contribution was to postulate unconscious events and dispositions as the cause of changes in consciousness. This psychological determinism (which he sees corresponding to determinism in physical science) is important because it allows psychology to be seen as a science, moving it away from magic and religion. Rivers notes that the war produced functional nervous disorders on an unprecedented scale, and sees the Freudian mechanisms of suppression, conversion, defense-reaction, compromise-formation as adequate in explaining the disorders. However, he goes on to note "they lend no support to the exclusively sexual

origin of neurosis" (128). Rivers's rejection of Freud's theory here is behind the ease with which Barker handles the open closet her fictional Rivers inhabits. Ian Langham reports that "Rivers seems to have been the victim of severe sexual repression, and this problem seems to have been compounded by what one of his close friends interpreted as Rivers's own tendencies towards homosexuality" (52). Langham's discretion prevents him from disclosing "the source of the suggestion, which was advanced as a clear and confident statement of fact, that Rivers was a closeted homosexual. Nonetheless, this information seems far too important for the understanding of Rivers's scientific career to be entirely ignored" (340 n7).

Rivers distinguished three agencies used by psychotherapists: self-knowledge, self-reliance and suggestion. In a therapeutic context, self-knowledge consists of unearthing unconscious protopathic experience, bringing it into epicritic consciousness, so that it no longer acted as a distinct force conflicting with the body of conscious experience. Self-knowledge also includes the re-interpretation of elements of conscious experience. Rivers sees that an appeal to the intellect, though secondary, is important:

success in treatment depends largely on the possibility of diverting the intellectual activity from a channel which is forcing it into an asocial or antisocial direction, and leading it into one which will again enable the patient to live in harmony with the society to which he belongs. (133)

Rivers has an optimistic view of the ease with which the intellect can cure disorders: "The patient only needs to be started on the right path, and his own intelligence will lead him back to health and happiness" (133). This, of course, masks the real and

impossible situations in which the fit between the individual and society will demand the sacrifice of the individual for the sake of society. Rivers sees avoidance as a major factor in the prolongation of neurotic symptoms caused by repression, yet he himself avoids facing up to the conflicts raised by his treatment of Sassoon and Prior.

By self-reliance, Rivers means encouraging the patient to actively resist avoiding those situations that provoke discomfort. Suggestion is "a process which belongs essentially to the instinctive side of mind" for Rivers (135-36), and he attributes its power to the fact that humanity has what he calls a "gregarious instinct" which enables members of a group to act for a common purpose. Rivers sees suggestion as a factor in all medical treatment, and also sees it coming into conflict with treatment based on self-knowledge. Rivers's uneasiness around protopathic qualities is again evident. He believes that even when hypnotism, which relies on the power of suggestion, succeeds in enabling patients to face up to previously repressed memories, the patient's "satisfaction and confidence must in some degree be tarnished by the knowledge that this result is due to the action of another person and not to his own activity" (137). In this way, Rivers disowns the protopathic agency as less than human. As what he calls a "mysterious agency," hypnosis further interrupts the treatment process in which the patient recovers through "knowledge of the conditions through which he was led astray" (138). However, hypnosis in the service of diagnosis presents no conflict with self-reliance, and is a more effective means of recovering lost experience than by the analysis of dreams using free association. Hypnotic treatment can sometimes be justified, but it is seldom necessary. Rivers's writing reveals a conflict over the process of transference: he holds that in therapy, no

factor is more important "than the atmosphere of hope and trust produced . . . by a skilful physician," yet he may come to rely on it too heavily and forget its conflict with the principle of self-reliance (139). The relationship between the fictional Rivers and Billy Prior is fraught with just such a conflict, exacerbated by Rivers's own lack of self-awareness of his role in promoting Prior's increasing dependence, even when Prior points it out to him.

The historical Rivers believes that all the principles he has set out for treatment of functional nervous disorders in individuals can be applied to society. The statesman is the physician of social disorders. Society is affected by what is under the surface to an even greater extent than an individual is affected by their unconscious. Rivers believes that social disorders are caused by factors in the history of the people. Rivers's thinking dovetails neatly with current thinking about trauma and history that sees what Cathy Caruth calls pathologies of history as indications of trauma. "Historical research and sociological reasoning" can uncover them. "These factors belong just as much to the unconscious of the folk-mind as the factors producing a neurosis or psychosis belong to the unconscious region of the individual mind" (141). The role of self-reliance is equally as important as that of self-knowledge. The action of suggestion is more inevitable and more powerful when dealing with social rather than individual disorders, and can be used for good or ill.

Rivers's paper "The Psychological Factor" documents a cultural trauma that affected the Melanesians due to the British ban on headhunting, and Barker imports Rivers's conclusions directly into *The Ghost Road*. The historical Rivers notes that there is no evidence to support the contention that the Melanesians were dying due to

faults in their own culture. He observes that the death rate is increasing due to new diseases, drugs and alcohol, and the introduction of firearms, while the birth-rate is falling for much more interesting reasons. Rivers's writing is characteristically formal and rather stiff, but, in this article, he is unusually scathing on the subject of European colonial arrogance with its ignorance of local customs. His kinship studies, with their exhaustively detailed genealogical charts, are invaluable in documenting the decline in population. On Eddystone, many factors that might potentially account for the decline in population can be ruled out: there were no missionaries; venereal disease existed, but was not a significant cause of deaths; no social poisons such as alcohol or drugs had been introduced; native dress and housing were still used; and there had been no emigration for labour. Yet, there had been a marked decline in the birth-rate and a resulting decrease in the population, which Rivers attributes directly to the loss of interest in life caused by the abolition of head-hunting. He saw that a head-hunting expedition, which might take a few weeks, could be the culmination of years of invested labour in building canoes, for example. Heads were also needed to appease ancestral ghosts. He thought these might be replaced with animal heads for ceremonial purposes, but this practice couldn't restore a sense of meaning to their lives.

The people say to themselves: "Why should we bring children into the world only to work for the white man?" Measures which, before the coming of the European, were used chiefly to prevent illegitimacy have become the instrument of racial suicide. (104)

Rivers's solutions, the use of pig heads and the substitution of canoe races, do not make as convincing reading as his condemnation of European practices, and one wonders if he really believed they would ever replace what had been taken away by British colonial administration. This article is remarkable for the sense of engagement and anger the typically detached Rivers displays. His affection for the Melanesians is also clearly evident.

After the war, Rivers's thinking took a turn towards childhood, unlike Freud who was rejected his earlier work on childhood trauma earlier in his career. In the inaugural address delivered to the British Psychological Association in 1919, a much changed Rivers repudiated his earlier faith in introspective psychology with its debt to philosophy, and his own beliefs in the experimental method as a means of generating useful knowledge. He stated that the preference for clarity of reasoning and precise definitions led introspective psychologists to pay too little attention to:

the subjects of instinct, feeling, and emotion, which are less susceptible to exact treatment. . . . Experimental psychology takes a place in relation to the observation of data derived from behaviour as important as that which is taken by the older introspective psychology in relation to the logical processes by which these data are utilised. (890)

The address then turns to "educational psychology," what we understand as developmental psychology, stating that too little attention has been paid to the fact that much of adult suffering has its roots in childhood trauma, and that close collaboration is needed between those who care for children and those who treat adult neurotics and psychotics.



## **Anthropology and ethnography**

The historical Rivers's ethnography *The Todas*, written from fieldwork conducted in the Nilgiri Hills region of southern India in 1901-02, still stands as a "classic" ethnography, according to Richard Slobodin, Rivers's biographer. Slobodin, himself an anthropologist, notes that for a long time, the book "was so well-known in the English-speaking world that its subjects were a standard reference among non-anthropologists" (28). Billy Prior knows the book. In one of his less successful attempts to bait Rivers into a confrontation, Prior surprises Rivers by referring to it. In 1971, Murray B. Emenau, a linguist, called *The Todas* "indispensable: still only to be supplemented rather than superceded" (qtd. in Slobodin 28).

The Todas had received the attention of anthropologists before Rivers. Descriptions of their practices of polyandry and polygamy would have had an erotic appeal for Western readers; nevertheless, Rivers felt that the body of literature extant on the Todas lacked scientific rigour. Rivers intended his book "to be a sample of [the] scientific method applied to the collection and recording of ethnographical facts" (qtd. in Slobodin 102). In *Social Organization*, Rivers writes that

Most of our knowledge of rude societies is derived from persons who have travelled or dwelt among savage or barbarous peoples, and have recorded what they have observed, but have employed no special methods of inquiry, and have no special knowledge of sociological theory. . . . It is only occasionally that we are given more than the scantiest record of social organization . . . because social organization, fundamental as it is . . . is unobtrusive. Its details only become

apparent as a result of definite inquiry, while exact knowledge is hardly possible without the use of special methods. (qtd. in Slobodin 102)

In response to this perceived lack, Rivers devised the genealogical method for determining social organization. Ian Langham interprets the genealogical method as grounded in the epicritic/protopathic neurological hierarchy that Rivers and Head devised to explain the results of their nerve regeneration experiment. Langham contends that the epicritic/protopathic hierarchy was likely present in their minds during the 1898 Torres Strait expedition and was certainly present afterwards. Therefore, when they came to do this experiment in 1903, the distinction between epicritic and protopathic sensation biased Head's reports of what he was feeling, and flowed over into his and Rivers's interpretation of the results. Since "epicritic" and "protopathic" encompass much more general psychological states and cognitive processes than the experiment laid out, "Rivers' fascination with aboriginal man may be described as arising from his desire to uncover the protopathic elements in humanity--to see beneath the epicritic veneer to 'the dog beneath the skin'" (Langham 75).

Langham argues that because Rivers believed that the protopathic is more accessible in "rude peoples" than in Western Europeans, he could use this process to discover "how pre-literate man manages to 'ground' the abstract in the concrete" (75). Langham describes Rivers's procedure for obtaining genealogies as comprising two stages: first Rivers assembled a family tree of his informant's relatives and ancestors.

Drawing his informant's attention to each name, Rivers then asked for the abstract term of relationship appropriate for that person (75). Rivers believed that

the relationship between an abstract kinship system and the prevailing social order, which the civilized intellectual can only appreciate entirely on the epicritic level and by rational means, is apprehended by preliterate man via a dual-level process. This process entails first grounding the kinship system in concrete genealogical fact, then using genealogies to ascend to the epicritically-ordered level of life in society. (Langham 78)

Langham asks: "what does Rivers's endorsement of the genealogical processes by which the epicritic is grounded in the protopathic, have to do with his commitment to fieldwork using genealogies as a means of subjecting his fieldwork, and the content of his anthropological theories, to epicritic control?" (78). Rivers and Head postulated that the epicritic related to the protopathic through fusion and suppression physiologically. That is, fusion allows for protopathic elements to merge with the epicritic and suppression keeps the more "indiscriminate" ones from being expressed (Langham 78). Therefore, according to Langham, these concepts explain Rivers's belief in the theoretical importance of social organization and also the part genealogies play in defining the social organization in preliterate societies.

Rivers devoted three ethnographic works to applying the genealogical method in the field. The first two are the fifth and sixth volumes of the *Reports of the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to the Torres Straits*, published in 1904 and 1906, and the third is *The Todas*, which arose from his fieldwork in the Nilgiri Hills

of southern India during 1902. In spite of the genealogical method, Rivers, however, was never able to grasp the kinship structure and social organization of Ambrym Island. Rivers assumed that indigenous people have no abstract conception of their own kinship structure is shown to be false; however, a former student, Bernard Deacon, untangled the system on Ambrym with help from his informants. On two occasions, without any prompting from Deacon, his informants drew complex diagrams, abstract representations that illustrated the functioning of their system (Langham 225; Slobodin 147, 147n).

Langham argues that "Rivers's pursuit of a method which he saw as scientific . . . [is] a statement of his intention to control his own protopathic urges by means of his epicritic faculties" (77). In other words, concentrating his attention on this dry-as-dust material kept him from investigating topics like witchcraft that are overtly and perhaps frighteningly protopathic. I would also add that an interest in the social regulation of sexual relations reveals an uneasiness, perhaps even a fear, of the power of the protopathic, once unleashed. Rivers surely never forgot that, as a closeted homosexual, his orientation could lead him into illegal acts (Langham 340, n7). Another very simple possible explanation exists for Rivers's fixation on genealogies as the key to social organization. In Rivers's own society, one's ancestors and kin determined the social organization; why should it not be so in a society less sophisticated and more protopathic than Britain?

Slipped in with Rivers's papers in the Haddon Collection at Cambridge, is a nonsense verse entitled "Anthropological Thoughts." It is an affectionate and mildly amusing look at Rivers as he alights from the missionary ship, the *Southern Cross*,

intent on questioning a woman about her kin. The author of this bit of doggerel is C. E. Fox, a missionary from San Cristoval who acted as Rivers's interpreter during his genealogical investigations while sailing on the Southern Cross.

"Now how", said he, "if I may ask

About your cousin's mother

Would she attempt the simple task

Of speaking of your brother?

Ah, yes, just so, but if she were

Your mother's uncle's sister

How would your cousin's sister's aunt

Address her when she kissed her?

Yes, that's the point I meant to add

Your nephew's cousin's father

If he an uncle's sister had

(And neither of the two were mad)

Would he respect her rather?

But if your father's cousin's niece

(His brother's cousin's mother)

Were married to your father's son

Would he be called your brother?

Indeed, now this if it be so

Is very interesting

And really should not be I think

The subject of jesting.

For if your mother's father's son

Were nephew to your mother

I really cannot understand

Why she should call him brother.

Alas, alas, for just before

The doctor's mind could grip her

A shout of laughter issued from

The cabin of the Skipper. (qtd. in Slobodin 43-44)

### **Autobiographical writing**

A major shift in Rivers's stance towards himself and his own work is evident in an unusual, unpublished manuscript held with his papers in the Haddon Archive at the Cambridge University Library. It is a typescript, partially edited in his barely legible handwriting, and apparently abandoned midstream. By internal evidence, it is possible to establish that he wrote it after 1912 because it refers to an article published

that year. Since it is the only unfinished manuscript in his papers, it seems that he was either working on it shortly before he died, or had been working on it earlier, and was intending to return to it. The object of the paper, as stated in the opening sentence, is

to try to lay bare the mechanism which underlies the production of scientific and literary work in [him]self. . . . It must be regarded in the light . . . of a medical case and I am fully aware that the comparison in this case is something more than a mere analogy and that there is much in the process I attempt to record which approach the pathological in character, if they do not definitely deserve this attribute. (1)

The striking anatomical and neurological language indicates that Rivers is embarking on a process of self-dissection, and a reconsideration of the value of the protopathic, previously disregarded as less than human. In a meticulous examination of the history behind the production of several pieces of work, Rivers establishes that the thinking behind his best work was already in progress when he awakens early in the morning, at three or four o'clock, and he suspects that the process has been going on subconsciously for some time. Rivers's new understanding that his best work is deeply indebted to his subconscious, and that it is aligned with pathology returns us to the image of the disembodied eye, except that here, the image is no longer someone else's trauma, but his own.

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 Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Rivers embarked on many other sea voyages after this first one. Slobodin reports that the trips were important for him, which must have been one of the factors that attracted him to Haddon's expedition. "Once, Kingsley Martin relates, Rivers spent a month on a cargo ship in midwinter, returning to England from the West Indies in company with Bernard Shaw. 'They spent many hours every day talking . . . Rivers described these conversations as the greatest treat of his life'" (qtd in Slobodin 10-11). Rivers also enjoyed holidays to the West Indies, twice; in the Canary Islands and Madeira, three times; and also travelled by sea to North America, Norway and Portugal (Slobodin 10).

<sup>2</sup> While investigating psychiatric literature on trauma and attachment, I came across the following passage in a very interesting article published in the *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*: "To understand neuropsychological development is to confront the fact that the brain is mutable, such that its structural organisation reflects the history of the organism" (P. Luu qtd. in Shore 11).

<sup>3</sup> Barker's source for this unusual trauma is a passage from Edmund Blunden's *Undertones of War* quoted in Paul Fussell's *The Great War and Modern Memory*. "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 paradoss 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?" (32).

<sup>4</sup> Barker may be having a quiet joke with these names. On 31 July 1913, Rivers attended a retirement dinner for Sir William Ridgway, a prominent Cambridge anthropologist. Also in attendance were A. C. Haddon and Charles Seligman, who had been on the 1898 Torres Straits expedition with him. The names of two other guests stand out: a Mr. Birtwistle, and, seated at the head table, a Professor Prior (Kuklick *Savage* 59).

<sup>5</sup>By pathological I mean anything referring to disease.



## Chapter 2

### War neurosis and post-traumatic stress disorder

The interdisciplinary nature of trauma studies draws researchers from psychology; neurobiology; psychoanalysis; psychiatry; history of medicine; the visual arts, including film; and finally literary criticism and theory. Two separate but related strands in contemporary trauma theory have influenced Barker's trilogy--psychiatry and literary theory and criticism. Specifically, Barker's shell-shocked officers show symptoms that are consistent with the contemporary psychiatric diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). More generally, the writings of the psychiatrist Bessel A. van der Kolk and the critic Cathy Caruth on traumatic memory and narrative memory explain the construction and disintegration of the trilogy's narrative structure.

Institutional medicine recognized PTSD as an official diagnosis with its entry into the third edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-III), published in 1980. DSM-III is a classification system based on lists of inclusive and exclusive criteria for approximately two hundred mental disorders (Young 94). Prior editions of the manual, the DSM-I and DSM-II, included only transient reactions to extreme stress, which are inappropriate for PTSD. The third edition of the manual describes PTSD with four broad categories: the occurrence of a traumatic event, re-experiencing of the event, symptoms of avoidance or emotional numbing, and heightened arousal states (Young 117).

The first criteria dealing with "the occurrence of a traumatic event" attempts to define the precipitating event independently from its effects, but fails because trauma is defined by its effects. The manual describes the traumatic event as one that is "outside the range of usual human experience," and "markedly distressing to almost anyone" (Young 117). The DSM-III states that a traumatized person "persistently" reexperiences the event in "recurrent distressing" recollections and dreams (Young 117). In his therapy with Rivers, Charles Manning painfully recalls the death of Scudder, a particularly inept soldier under his command. When Scudder becomes mired in a sinkhole and rescue attempts fail, Manning shoots him out of compassion, to save him from a slow and excruciating death by suffocation. Manning's first shot misses, so when the second shot comes, Scudder knows what is happening. Even though he shot Scudder to save him from a worse death, Manning cannot forget the incident or forgive himself for missing the first time.

Traumatized people may find themselves "acting or feeling as if the traumatic event were recurring," or they may experience "intense psychological distress when exposed to events that symbolize or resemble an aspect of the traumatic event" (Young 117). In literary terms, PTSD traps the traumatized person within an allegory; he or she has no choice but to interpret contemporary events as repeated occurrences of the original event. For example, in *Regeneration* Rivers's patient Burns was

thrown into the air by the explosion of a shell and . . . landed, head-first, on a German corpse, whose gas-filled belly had ruptured on contact. Before Burns lost consciousness, he'd had time to realize that

what filled his nose and mouth was decomposing human flesh. Now, whenever he tried to eat, that taste and smell recurred. (*Regeneration* 19)

All experiences of eating inevitably recall the original traumatic event, and Burns, who can't keep any food down, is in danger of starving himself. Thus, PTSD traps the traumatized within a repetitive, allegorical script that offers no escape, and no alternative ending.<sup>1</sup>

The traumatized use avoidance and numbing to lessen the emotional pain that comes with reliving the experience. They try to avoid thoughts, feelings, activities or situations that could remind them of the trauma, and can become amnesic for aspects of the precipitating event. This avoidance is accompanied by numbing and detachment, a lack of interest in activities they had enjoyed, a generalized dampening of all feeling and "a sense of a foreshortened future" (Young 117). Billy Prior, for example, cannot recall what happened between the time he picks up the eyeball from the trench floor and the time he arrived at the aid station. Paradoxically, although the traumatized limit their lives to avoid experiences that have the potential to trigger their trauma, they cannot prevent reexperiencing the event and all its distressing emotions. An event from the past, displaced from its chronologically appropriate site, haunts the present and threatens to rob the traumatized of the future as well. Even attending Oscar Wilde's *Salomé* isn't safe for Charles Manning. As Salomé reaches out for Iokanaan's head, Manning feels "an unexpected spasm of revulsion, not because the head was horrifying, but because it wasn't"; Wilde hadn't foreseen that there would be "people in the audience for whom severed heads were not necessarily

made of papier mâché" (*Eye* 78). The play bores Manning; not because "he thought the theme trivial or unworthy or out of date -- certainly not that -- but [because] the language was impossible for him. France had made it impossible" (*Eye* 78). In a literary understanding of ethnographic terms, PTSD is an allegorical disorder; thus Barker can translate this allegorical aspect of trauma into a literary allegory. In *Regeneration*, Barker employs specific individual allegories such as those I have just mentioned. By *The Ghost Road*, Barker's allegories are international in scope, and Melanesia becomes a possible allegory for Britain in the last months of the war.

The fourth criteria describes the symptoms of autonomic central nervous system arousal caused by the trauma.<sup>2</sup> A person with PTSD may experience insomnia, irritability, hypervigilance, distractibility, a tendency to startle easily, and "physiologic reactivity when the individual is exposed to events that symbolize or resemble the traumatic event" (Young 117). In *Regeneration*, Barker's description of Ralph Anderson, a surgeon dedicated to the pursuit of golf balls while at Craiglockhart, shows some of these symptoms. Anderson becomes phobic about blood after an error in judgment at the front causes the death of a French soldier. Because he had overlooked a serious wound while treating more superficial ones, he stood and watched helplessly while the man bled to death. Later, during a golf match with Sassoon, Anderson misses a crucial shot, a trivial error in judgment that nevertheless provokes him into picking up his club and threatening to batter Sassoon over the head with it. He manages to stop himself in time (*Regeneration* 85). The state of increased arousal that the original event produced has left its mark on the

body's physiology, which remains ready to respond as if it were the same thing that happened before.

### **Before PTSD: "war neurosis" during the first world war**

During the first world war, the Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC) distinguished between four kinds of war neurosis: "shell shock, hysteria, neurasthenia, and disordered action of the heart" (Young 50). In his account of the history of PTSD, Allan Young states that

[s]hell shock is the war's emblematic psychiatric disorder. The initial and most restrictive definition associated the disorder with three features: exposure to an etiological event sufficient to cause neurological damage, symptoms indicating the loss or impairment of functions of the central nervous system, and the presumption of organic changes that would be sufficient to connect such events to such symptoms. (50)

Shell shock was believed to be caused by the shock waves from an explosion that damaged the central nervous system. Nevertheless, when researchers attempted to identify these changes, their speculations about organic changes failed to be borne out by examination of the cerebro-spinal fluid.

Hysteria manifested itself as symptoms that involved "the partial or complete loss of control over sensory, perceptual, or motor function" (Young 51). Symptoms of hysteria include "paralyses, contractures, muscle rigidity; gait disorders involving the limbs, extremities and spine; seizures, tremors, spasms, tics," and many others

(Young 51). The RAMC believed that these diverse symptoms could result from central nervous system lesions, or some other abnormality, which would be determined through careful testing (Young 51).

Neurasthenia, or "nerve exhaustion," showed itself through a variety of symptoms: "anxiety, depression, emotional lability and irritability; difficulties sleeping, concentrating, and remembering" and many more similar problems (Young 52). Physicians believed neurasthenia was caused by prolonged periods of mental and physical stress. Symptoms of disordered action of the heart were abnormalities in heart rate, pulse, rhythm, blood pressure as well as shortness of breath, chest pain and exhaustion.<sup>3</sup> As a group, these disorders were considered "functional," which meant that the soldier's functioning was compromised in some important way, and the causes "might" be biological (Young 53). When physicians tried to isolate and identify the biological origins of these conditions, they failed. Apparently unwilling to relinquish their belief in organic causes for these various war neuroses, they then concluded that the causes were either invisible or submicroscopic (Young 53).

Throughout the trilogy, Barker filters historically accurate accounts of "war neurosis" through the current diagnostic category of post-traumatic stress disorder, indicating that she understands these two diagnostic categories to be identical. That is, PTSD is the current term for what Rivers and his psychiatric colleagues understood as "war neurosis." Barker's representation of war neurosis does not include any symptoms that are not part of the DSM-III's diagnosis of PTSD with the exception of hysterical symptoms, which remain as a separate diagnostic category in the DSM. For example, there are no instances of "disordered action of the heart" in the trilogy.

When Prior arrives at Craiglockhart, Rivers describes him as neuresthenic, but his history and symptoms fall in line with the current diagnosis of PTSD. Prior breaks down after picking up a human eye, the remains of one of his men after a direct hit by a German shell. Describing Prior's experience as a "markedly distressing" event that is beyond the scope of "usual human experience" is an understatement, although it certainly was not beyond the range of human experience in wartime (Young 117). Even after his discharge from Craiglockhart, Prior has nightmares in which grotesquely enlarged eyeballs threaten him. He also experiences intrusive thoughts about the incident. Looking at the peephole in a prison cell door during *The Eye in the Door* brings the incident back in all its sensory specificity: "For a moment he was back in France, looking at Towers's eyeball in the palm of his hand" (*Eye* 36). Prior's avoidance and numbing are apparent in his withdrawal from the Ropers and Mac, his childhood friends. Less apparent is his withdrawal from any activity that isn't connected to the war. In *The Eye in the Door*, the *agent provocateur* Lionel Spragge recalls seeing Prior and his father at a political meeting before the war. Prior had been speaking in support of the war, and his father was speaking against it. That kind of involvement seems far removed from the Prior of the trilogy where his "heightened arousal state" is evident in his insomnia and irritability. His sleep is so poor that he sometimes takes a second dose of bromide when the first doesn't work, even though Rivers has advised against it (*Eye* 195).

Contemporary theory holds that the symptoms of PTSD result from the inability of the brain to absorb and integrate traumatic experiences linguistically at the time of the trauma. Because the experience cannot be processed and comprehended

on a verbal level, the memory is stored on an iconic or somatosensory level, producing the symptoms of allegorical re-enactments, nightmares that exactly reproduce the traumatizing event, and flashbacks (van der Kolk "Intrusive" 172).

This recent thinking recuperates the work of Pierre Janet, who worked with the neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot at the Salpêtrière during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. According to Janet, "[n]arrative memory consists of mental constructs, which people use to make sense out of experience" ("Intrusive" 160).

Most familiar and predictable events are easily integrated into narrative memory; however,

frightening or novel experiences may not easily fit into existing cognitive schemas and either may be remembered with particular vividness or may totally resist integration. Under extreme conditions, existing meaning schemas may be entirely unable to accommodate frightening experiences, which causes the memory of these experiences to be stored differently and not be available for retrieval under ordinary conditions: it becomes dissociated from conscious awareness and voluntary control. (160)

Almost all memories are subject to change through reworking and rethinking in the light of subsequent experience. Trauma memories are the exception: Janet noted that they are "inflexible," and may become dissociated in the subconscious where they control current behaviour (160). Cathy Caruth points out that "[m]odern neurobiologists have in fact suggested that the unerring 'engraving' on the mind, the 'etching into the brain' of an event in trauma may be associated with its elision of its



normal encoding in memory" ("Recapturing" 153). Their work confirms Janet's belief that "traumatic recall remains insistent and unchanged to the precise extent that it has never, from the beginning, been fully integrated into understanding. . . . Not having been fully integrated as it occurred, the event cannot become, as Janet says, a 'narrative memory' that is integrated into a completed story of the past" (Caruth "Recapturing" 153).

In *Regeneration*, Rivers's comments about Siegfried Sassoon's writing and its relationship to his trauma show that for Barker, the verbal representation of trauma is therapeutic. Even though Rivers jokingly diagnoses Sassoon with an "*anti-war* neurosis," his symptoms indicate PTSD. He suffers from hallucinations and nightmares. On one occasion after lunch at his club, he dozes off on a park bench. When he "woke up, the pavement was covered with corpses. Old ones, new ones, black, green. . . . People were treading on their faces" (*Regeneration* 12). Sassoon is also subject to nocturnal visitations from an apparition he identifies as a former comrade named Orme. Sassoon's symptoms may be typical, but his response is not. As Rivers says, "[t]he typical patient, arriving at Craiglockhart, had usually been devoting considerable energy to the task of *forgetting* whatever traumatic events had precipitated his neurosis" (*Regeneration* 25-26). Sassoon, however, is determined

to remember [which] might well account for his early and rapid recovery. . . . Writing the poems had obviously been therapeutic. . . . [Rivers] thought that Sassoon's poetry and protest sprang from a single source, and each could be linked to his recovery from that terrible period of nightmares and hallucinations (*Regeneration* 26).

Barker suggests that Sassoon's poetry is therapeutic because he uses it to express events he would otherwise experience as PTSD. Her fictional Rivers believes that Sassoon coped with the war by splitting himself into two people, "the anti-war poet and pacifist [and] the bloodthirsty, efficient company commander" (*Eye* 233):

The dissociation couldn't be called pathological, since experience gained in one state was available to the other. Not just *available*: it was the serving officer's experience that furnished the raw material, the ammunition, if you liked, for the poems. (*Eye* 233)

Poetry allows Sassoon to integrate his experiences, whereas similarly traumatized officers like Prior who have no comparable outlet become more and more dissociated. Sassoon and Rivers come from the same class, and, over the course of the trilogy, Sassoon maintains his integrity, standing up to Rivers when he feels he has to confront him. Prior, on the other hand, confronts Rivers with more hostility but much less effectiveness, suggesting that psychological integration produces officers much less likely to go willingly into battles where their chances of survival are virtually nil. Prior dies in just such a battle.

Paradoxically, however, transforming a traumatic memory into a narrative memory can feel like a betrayal of the precise truth of the event for those who lived through it. Caruth observes that the events' meaning can come as much from the event's incomprehensibility as from "its brutal facts" ("Recapturing" 153). What is lost is "the force of its *affront to understanding*" (Caruth "Recapturing" 154). An event's incomprehensibility does not mean that it cannot be expressed; Claude Lanzmann, the director of *Shoah*, a film of Holocaust testimonies, "suggests that

historical truth may be transmitted in some cases through the refusal of a certain framework of understanding, a refusal that is also a creative act of listening" (Caruth "Recapturing" 154). As we shall see, Barker's trilogy does not betray the events; it refuses a "framework of understanding" by demonstrating the failure of empirical, scientific discourse to apprehend and express the experience of trauma.

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> I am using allegory in a reductive and ethnographic sense as "a 'symbolic narrative' in which the major features of the movement of the narrative are all held to refer symbolically to some action or situation" (Ashcroft 9).

<sup>2</sup> The autonomic nervous system controls functioning of the heart, lungs, blood vessels and internal organs. Under normal circumstances, it is not under conscious control.

<sup>3</sup> This syndrome was known by several other names: irritable heart, DaCosta's syndrome, valvular disease of the heart, and effort syndrome (Young 52).

## Chapter 3

Narrative repression in *Regeneration*

Pat Barker's *Regeneration*, the first novel of this trilogy that revisits and rewrites familiar British literary and historical narratives from the first world war, opens up these narratives to expose the ongoing repression of trauma. Barker draws her cases of "war neurosis" from the published writings of W.H.R. Rivers, the psychiatrist who becomes the central character of the novel. She then filters these cases through a narrative structure derived from institutional medical discourse and informed by the trauma theory developed by Rivers, as I previously discussed. *Regeneration* asks the reader to witness these traumas, to become "a companion on the eerie journey of testimony . . . who actually participates in the reliving and re-experiencing of the event" (Laub 62), yet Barker's rhetoric of repression frustrates the desire for a coherent narrative; it undermines received narratives, yet provides no others.

Barker embodies Rivers's hierarchical theory of nerve regeneration within an epicritic narrative structure, in which the narrator is detached, who reports facts and events with very little or no commentary, and whose narrative is strictly chronological. Barker then uses that structure to repress protopathic traumas. Barker appropriates her strictly chronological narrative structure from clinical medical notes. This strict chronological ordering is unable to accommodate the displaced experience of trauma, since, as Cathy Caruth notes, the pathology of trauma consists "in the structure of its experience or reception: the event is not assimilated or experienced

fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated possession of the one who experiences it. To be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or event" (4-5). A traumatic experience is one displaced from its chronology, repeatedly intruding itself into the present. Siegfried Sassoon's hallucinatory visions in which people tread on the faces of corpses covering the streets of Picadilly are certainly displaced in time. As I discussed previously, traumatic experience "cannot be organized on a linguistic level, and this failure to arrange the memory in words and symbols leaves it to be organized on a somatosensory or iconic level: as somatic sensations, behavioural re-enactments, nightmares, and flashbacks" like Sassoon's (van der Kolk "Flexibility" 172).

Rivers is not entirely unaware that his epicritic/protopathic hierarchy may contain inconsistencies and conflicts when applied to war trauma. Early in the novel, Rivers dreams that he is back in his rooms at St. John's College in Cambridge with Henry Head, mapping areas of hypersensitivity to pain on Head's forearm. Rivers is distressed at having to inflict pain on Head, who cries out each time his arm is pricked. Finally, Head leans over and says something that sounds like "Why don't you try it" (45), then cuts Rivers's arm with a scalpel. In his analysis of the dream, Rivers concludes that the meaning is found in a conflict between "the duty to continue the experiment and the reluctance to cause further pain" (47). He connects this conflict to conflicts in his waking life. He feels torn between his belief that the war must continue to be fought and his horror at the damage he sees in the traumatized soldiers he is treating. By encouraging patients to remember traumatic events, Rivers realizes he is inflicting pain with a treatment he knows to be unproven. He also

understands that by "advising his young patients to abandon the attempt at repression and to let themselves feel the pity and terror their war experience inevitably evoked, he [is] excavating the ground he [is standing] on" (48).

In drawing attention to Rivers's growing self-awareness of conflicts in his position, Barker also points to the conceptual blind spot in Rivers's theory that is still repressed from Rivers's own awareness. His theory maintains that the protopathic must be repressed by the epicritic; therefore, since trauma is protopathic, it must be repressed. Yet, as noted earlier, he also holds that the release of the repressed traumatic experience into consciousness is necessary to treat traumatic neuroses. The internal contradiction in Rivers's theory concerning the best treatment for trauma undermines his theory, excavating the ground on which he stands.

The traumatized soldiers comprise a catalogue of the historical Rivers's failures drawn from his article "The Repression of War Experience." Barker bases her character David Burns on one of these failures, and this narrative is the clearest example of the empiricist text's repressive force since it is the most graphic example of the embodiment of traumatic neuroses in the novel. As I have discussed previously, Burns was thrown into the air by an exploding shell, and landed face down on the decomposing body of a German soldier. Before losing consciousness, he became aware of the soldier's remains filling his mouth and throat. When Rivers sees him in Craiglockhart, Burns is unable to eat. He vomits every time he tries because he can not free himself of the tastes and smells of his experience. He has unremitting nightmares during which he relives the experience. Rivers can find no way to mitigate the extremity and senselessness of Burns's suffering. In spite of Rivers's best

efforts, Burns never recovers from his trauma and must be discharged to live as best he can in an isolated cottage, in an environment that looks remarkably like France. Not until Burns relives his trauma during a storm can he even begin to narrate his experience. After Rivers rescues him from nearly drowning in a moat surrounding a Martello tower, Burns finally but very obliquely begins to talk about his own experience in France by way of an allegory; he tries to make sense of the crucifixion of Christ.

Burns's choice of the Crucifixion as a suitable allegory for his experience may well be more literal than it first appears. Paul Fussell reports that a wide-spread rumour told of a captured Canadian soldier who was fixed to a cross with bayonets in front of his company. Sometimes the soldier was British, and sometimes a tree stood in for the cross. More to the point, perhaps, is the similarity of the Crucifixion to "Field Punishment No. 1," which was meted out by the British for minor infractions. "This consisted of being strapped or tied spread-eagled to some immobile object: a favorite was the large spoked wheel of a General Service Wagon. Max Plowman once inquired, 'Wouldn't the army do well to avoid punishments that remind men of the Crucifixion?'" (117-18). At one level, Burns is trying to make sense of his nation's torment of its own sons.

Although we know the details of the events that cause Burns's trauma, its complete narrated history is never fully apprehended in the text by Burns himself. As readers, we know more than Burns is able to say, and this gap between our knowledge and Burns's inability to relate the events impels us to try to imagine what is missing. As we begin to imaginatively construct the narrative that Burns is unable to say, we



confront the absolute impossibility of such a task. Even when the incident is further reduced to its component parts--the shell explosion that threw him into the air, the decomposing soldier, his attempts to clear his mouth and nose before becoming unconscious--each one of these is alone beyond imagining. Yet Burns is only one of hundreds of thousands of traumatized soldiers. If not even a small fragment of the war can be imagined, how can the suffering of whole battalions be imagined? By confronting readers with the refusal of their imaginations to reconstruct this one small event, Barker completely undermines the war as previously imagined by writers such as Paul Fussell in *The Great War and Modern Memory* and Samuel Hynes in *A War Imagined*, and assimilated on a grand scale by the British public.

### **Epicritic narrative structure**

Virtually without exception, the narration of events occurring within the hospital walls progresses as a series of hospital chart entries, each self-contained incident clearly separated from the preceding and following incident, and Barker's empirical narrator reports events as a detached observer. There are no chronological displacements or disruptions. When the narration moves outside the hospital walls, a more conventional narration takes over in which the narrator reports on the thoughts and feelings of the characters. Finding an example of Barker's epicritic narrative is as easy as opening the text. After Prior has spent about three weeks in sick bay, he has an interview with Rivers (77-80). The narrator, whose observations are indistinguishable from Rivers's, opens by noting that Prior has lost weight. The scene proceeds with dialogue, interspersed with brief narration that describes actions: "Prior

tipped the ash off his cigarette;" and "Rivers lowered his hand" (78). The narrator does allow himself to report Rivers's thoughts, but not Prior's. When Prior and Rivers reach an impasse, the narrator can only guess as to what Prior is thinking. Prior comments,

"You know, you once told me I had to win." He shook his head. "You're the one who has to win."

"This may come as a shock, Mr Prior, but I had been rather assuming we were on the same side."

Prior smiled. "This may come as a shock, Dr Rivers, but I had been *rather assuming* that we were not."

Silence. Rivers caught and held a sigh. "That does make the relationship of doctor and patient rather difficult."

Prior shrugged. Obviously he didn't think that was *his* problem. (80)

The scene ends short after with no commentary on what has happened. Barker's text is so stripped of narrative commentary in these sections that it almost reads like the script of a play.

Nevertheless, when the action moves outside the hospital walls, the narrator is less obtrusively observant, and devotes more attention to the characters' thoughts. Not long after this interview, Prior has escaped the hospital and is sitting in a sleazy pub, watching the lights play on his pint of beer. The narrator moves much more freely in time, telling the reader how Prior got here, what he was thinking, what he saw, even reporting on the smell of someone's steak frying, and so on. He meets a group of

women, among them Sarah Lumb who becomes his girlfriend. This section is so ordinary and comforting in a way, that it is jarring to start to read the next chapter, which opens with a meeting of the medical staff of Craiglockhart. In this scene, the narrator is back on duty, reporting the events with no commentary.

Within the strictly chronological recording of incidents inside the hospital, the traumatized soldiers' symptoms disrupt the chronology of this epicritic narrative, since they insistently replay the past with their mimetic re-enactments of the traumatic moment. Barker encases these re-enactments within the chronological structure of the epicritic narrative, like vestigial anatomical remnants within the body of the text. Through the soldiers' re-enactments, flashbacks and nightmares, Barker represents the war in a series of miniatures. With their mimetic hysterical symptoms, each of Rivers's traumatized patients embodies and performs the episode from the war that traumatized them. Waiting in the hallway for his Board to begin, Sassoon watches Pugh, a Welshman with the "worst twitch [he] has ever seen, even in Craighlockhart" (206):

Pugh's [twitch] consisted of a violent sideways movement of the head, accompanied by a sound midway between a gasp and a scream. He did this approximately every thirty-five seconds. . . . Something Owen had told him about Pugh was hovering round the fringes of his mind. Yes, that was it. Some kind of freak accident, a hand grenade bouncing off the wire. Pugh had been picking bits of his platoon off his gas cape for an hour. (206)

Barker's decision to present the war in miniatures like Pugh's twitch should make it more not less manageable than the larger scope of conventional historical narration. In these symptoms, history is radically scaled-down to decontextualized and unnarrated bits of individual experience. As the repository of many officers who are living examples of this mimetic disorder, the hospital becomes a "living museum of tics and twitches" (206), in which extracts from the war are performed routinely by day and night, like multiple continuous film loops, tirelessly replaying the same events to an empty house. However, in these small, isolated, decontextualized and mundane wartime dramas, the events that brought these officers to the hospital become less not more comprehensible.

Barker's text represses all trauma narratives but one--Billy Prior's recovery of a human eyeball from the floor of a trench, all that remains of one of his men. Prior is a "temporary gentleman," a working class man from Salford who has risen into the officer ranks by virtue of native intelligence and longevity. He has survived for three years in an environment where officers led their men into battle and who had an average life span of three months. Prior's trauma occurs one morning as he is on first trench watch. He passes two of his men, Sawdon and Towers, engaged in a domestic scene, making tea over a fire of candle-ends. As he proceeds down the trench, these two men are blown to bits by a shell. All that is left is gobbets of flesh, and bits of bone. He manages to shovel what is left of his men into sandbags, then

glancing down, (he) found himself staring into an eye. Delicately, like somebody selecting a particularly choice morsel from a plate, he put his thumb and forefinger down through the duckboards. His fingers

touched the smooth surface and slid before they managed to get a hold. He got it out, transferred it to the palm of his hand, and held it out towards Logan. He could see his hand was shaking, but the shaking didn't seem to be anything to do with him. "What am I supposed to do with this gobstopper?" He saw Logan blink and knew he was afraid. At last, Logan reached out, grasped his shaking wrist, and tipped the eye into the bag. "Williams and me'll do the rest, sir. You go on back now." (103)

The eye, all that remains of Towers, literally stops Prior's gob; after one of his men leads him back to the casualty station, he is unable to speak from the trauma, and muteness remains his major symptom on his admission to Craiglockhart.

In *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, Cathy Caruth argues that trauma is a "pathology of history," and the "traumatized . . . carry an impossible history within them" ("Introduction" 5). In Prior's case, the history is not only his traumatic war experiences, but also the history of a traumatizing medical practice; the disembodied eye will come to represent both traumas. The eye is detached in two distinctly different ways. One represents the literal trauma of the war. Since the eye is all that remains of one of Prior's men, it is a literal clinical trauma for Prior who feels responsible for the event because he was their superior officer.

The second sense of detachment is symbolic. Since the advent of the anatomy theatre in the Renaissance (among other things), medical knowledge has been constituted visually, rather than narratively. Because Rivers's theory is responsible for repressing the soldier's trauma narratives, the eye comes to represent the empiricist

narrative's repression of trauma narratives. Barker next associates Rivers's medical ideology of detachment with the enemy; Towers had exceptionally blue eyes--they called him "the Hun" (106). Rivers recognizes the connection to his own role in the silencing of his patients' symptoms, which are their mute protests against the war. In his rooms after hypnotizing Prior, Rivers pulls down the lower lid to his own eye, and repeats Prior's last words before becoming mute: "'What am I supposed to do with this gob-stopper?' He released the lid. 'No need to think about that'" (106).

Sassoon's voice refuses to be silenced, since his has integrated his protopathic protest and rage into his poetry. *Regeneration* opens with an historical document: Rivers is a reading Siegfried Sassoon's statement of "willful defiance" that was recorded first as a diary entry, then published in the *Times* as "A Soldier's Declaration" (3). This protest has resulted in a military Board hearing. Sassoon's friend, Robert Graves, has influenced the military to attribute Sassoon's protest to a breakdown rather than pacifism, so that even before he arrives at Craiglockhart, his protest is pathologized. The novel ends with reference to another quotation from an historical document, Rivers's notation on Sassoon's hospital file: "Nov. 26, 1917. Discharged to duty" (250).

The novel charts the silencing of Sassoon's protest, from his public statement of outrage against the war to his silent acquiescence to military authority. By bracketing the text of the novel between references to these historical documents, Barker points conspicuously to repression thematically and structurally. The overarching movement from newspaper account to clinical medical record marks the pathologizing of public protest by the containment of that protopathic voice within a

medicalized narrative. Sassoon's protest becomes a symptom of his "nervous breakdown," what Rivers calls his "very powerful *anti-war* neurosis" (15).

Within the text, Barker foregrounds the repression of Sassoon's protest; it is overt and explicit, in contrast to the silencing of all the other trauma narratives but Prior's. Sassoon is a textualization of the experimental control that Rivers and Head built into their nerve regeneration experiment. Barker draws attention to this part of their experiment by giving her Rivers a dream in which Head cuts Rivers's arm with a scalpel. As noted earlier, Rivers interpreted the dream as expressing a conflict between "the duty to continue the experiment and the reluctance to cause further pain" (47). However, he goes on to reframe the dream in terms the historical Rivers had rejected--Freudian wish-fulfillment:

If wish fulfillment had been involved at all [in the dream], it was surely one of Henry's wishes that had been fulfilled. At the time of the nerve regeneration experiments, they'd done a series of control experiments on the glans penis, and Henry had frequently expressed the desire for a reciprocal application of ice cubes, bristles, near-boiling water and pins. (48)

Historically, Rivers and Head chose the glans penis because they saw it as "a part endowed with protopathic and deep sensibility only" ("Experiment" 389). Rivers's clinical familiarity with Head's penis does not mask the sexual aspect of their experiment, and the reification of Head's penis as the protopathic level of the nervous system emphasizes both their sense of its power, and the necessity for its control.

Sassoon's homosexuality is an open secret that Rivers knows is not to be included in his official medical report.<sup>1</sup> When he first interviews Sassoon for the admission report, he reassures him that he does not "usually include any . . . intimate details" (70). Sassoon replies,

"Probably just as well. My intimate details disqualify me from military service."

Rivers looked up and smiled. "I know." (70-71)

Since Sassoon has identified himself as beyond the borders of acceptable sexual (and legal) behaviour, he is a naturally occurring protopathic man, and Rivers's success in silencing him should be representative of the possibility of silencing all the other eruptions of the protopathic traumas in Rivers's soldier patients.

Rivers receives a surprise when he defends his decision to persuade Sassoon to return to the front during an informal case conference. When he is challenged by Brock (who was Wilfred Owen's psychiatrist), Rivers argues that Sassoon is mentally and physically healthy, and that "[i]t's his duty to go back, and it's my duty to see he does" (73). Brock challenges Rivers to defend his decision in terms of his hierarchical theory:

"*Grief* at the death of his friends. *Horror* at the slaughterhouse of everybody else's friends. It isn't clear to me why such emotions have to be ignored." (73)

Rivers tries to evade this direct challenge by responding in bland theoretical terms, but Brock will not let him go so easily. Rivers equivocates:



"I'm not saying they should be ignored. Only that they musn't be allowed to dominate."

"The protopathic must know its place?"

Rivers looked taken aback. "I wouldn't've put it quite like that."

"Why not? It's your word. And Sassoon does seem to be a remarkably protopathic young man. Doesn't he? I mean from what you say, it's 'all or nothing' all the time. Happy warrior one minute. Bitter pacifist the next."

"Precisely. He's completely inconsistent. And that's all the more reason to get him to argue the position -"

"Epicritically."

"*Rationally.*"

Brock raised his hands and sat back in his chair. "I hope you don't mind my playing devil's advocate?"

"Good heavens, no. The whole point of these meetings is to protect the patient."

Brock smiled, one of his rare, thin, unexpectedly charming smiles. "Is that what I was doing? I thought I was protecting you."

(73-74)

Since Rivers himself occupies the epicritic position in relation to the protopathic Sassoon, it would not have occurred to him that he needed protection. In this exchange, Brock points out that gaining control may not be without its problems for

Rivers, and that Rivers may be underestimating Sassoon's potential to exercise some influence over him that may challenge his beliefs. Historically, this certainly was the case; as I noted in an earlier chapter, the historical Rivers credits Sassoon with altering his views in support of the war.

In Sassoon, the experience of the "happy warrior" fuels the poetry of the "bitter pacifist." This integration of what Rivers would label protopathic and epicritic is the source of Sassoon's health, and his power. Rather than the hierarchical separation of emotion and reason, Sassoon presents Rivers with the powerful combination of a covert sexual temptation and the integration of emotion and reason. The expression of Sassoon's traumatic experiences escapes the repression of Barker's narration rigidly ordered by chronology because he refuses to acquiesce to the hierarchy that is associated with this organization. Literally and figuratively, Sassoon retains his voice.

In *Regeneration*, the repressive empiricist historical narrative that attends the image of the disembodied eye is destabilized and its authority undermined, yet no new authoritative narratives emerge to reassure the reader that the social turbulence that marked Britain during this war is safely in the past. *Regeneration* frustrates a desire for the story; it undoes received narratives, yet provides no others, inviting the reader to imagine what they might be. It suggests them with their absence. Barker's novel is a text about trauma. It tells us where to find the source of the repression, and who constitutes the enemy. Since the traumatic events repressed from the empiricist narrative never emerge except in symbolic form, textual trauma remains as a possibility. Prior's gobstopper is a silenced witness to trauma and to the empiricist

theory that mandates trauma's ongoing repression. In the end, this eye comes to represent the empiricist narrative's repression of all trauma narratives but its own.

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### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> "Open closet" is a term coined by Joseph Valente that is analogous to the open secret. An open secret is something that is known, but that we persist in treating as if it were unknown. The open closet functions in the same way; those inhabiting the closet behave as if their homosexuality was openly acknowledged, but never state it. Consequently, if inhabitants of the open closet never state their secret, they can disavow knowledge of it if necessary.

## Chapter 4

Narrative dissociation in *The Eye in the Door*

This chapter traces the morphological evolution of the disembodied eye from *Regeneration* into an instrument of state surveillance in *The Eye in the Door*. In this novel, the reader confronts a re-literalized eye that inaugurates a new regime of social trauma with its consequent repression, and under this new regime, Barker extends the associations of the literal trauma from *Regeneration* with two relocations, one geographic and one psychological. Geographically, she moves the site of trauma from the battlefields of France to Beattie Roper's cell door, where the painted eye around the peephole in the door, complete with "a veined iris, an eyewhite, eyelashes and a lid," is a literal instrument of state surveillance (36).<sup>1</sup> Psychologically, Barker transforms the disembodied eye into a state of internalized, unremitting self-surveillance for Billy Prior. During his first visit to Beattie Roper in Aylesbury Jail, Prior is so shaken by the eye in the cell door that he suffers a flashback:

For a moment, he was back in France, looking at Towers's eyeball in the palm of his hand. He blinked the image away. "That's horrible," he said, turning back to Beattie.

"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." (36)

In this moment, the re-literalized eye in the cell door imprisons the original unresolved trauma of the literal eye within the symbol of itself. The original trauma becomes encrypted, in both senses of the word: it is disguised beneath a symbol; and

it is hidden in a gothic sense of the word, as if in a crypt.<sup>2</sup> In this novel, all the characters are involved with surveillance, either as spies themselves, or as the objects of surveillance. Prior moves between these two positions; however, his unresolved trauma prevents him from reconciling these opposing roles, which Barker instantiates as "narrative dissociation."<sup>3</sup>

Barker's technique of narrative dissociation separates the characters and events into two distinct groups, each clustering around one of two trials drawn from the historical record: the trial of Beattie Roper and her family for plotting to kill the King, among others, and the libel trial of Noel Pemberton Billing, MP. The dissociated narrative discourse frustrates the reader's construction of an overarching trauma narrative that could pull together the common strands of social, political and intellectual dissent shared by the two trials. The following two sections examine Barker's representation of each of the trials to show that the sources for the trials cited by Barker point to a history of social abuse largely forgotten, if such representative cultural historians as Paul Fussell in *The Great War and Modern Memory* and Samuel Hynes in *A War Imagined* can be considered representative. The narrative dissociation between the two trials also reveals the influence of Rivers's epicritic/protopathic hierarchy on a social level; the epicritic trials repress the protopathic forces of dissent that threaten to disrupt the social order and undermine the war effort.

The next section of the chapter looks at the relationship between individual war trauma and the social trauma of surveillance in three of Rivers's patients, Charles Manning, Siegfried Sassoon and Billy Prior. All three inhabit an open closet with

Rivers, and all three share a history of significant trauma. However, Prior is the only one whose war trauma meshes with the ongoing social trauma; his original trauma is buried by his role as a spy. In the following section, *Conflict and Dream*, Rivers's doubts emerge in two nightmares that I discuss as critiques of his own dream theory. Prior also reports two dreams that critique Rivers's theory; not surprisingly, they do it more openly than his own. Finally, I consider Rivers and Prior as avatars of Oedipus who revise their Freudian predecessor, shifting the emphasis from the incestuous murderer to the abused child.

#### **Narrative dissociation<sup>4</sup>**

Except for short sections, *The Eye in the Door* takes place in London where the historical Rivers was transferred near the end of 1917 to take up an appointment as psychologist with the Royal Flying Corps; Barker's Rivers leaves Craiglockhart on 14 November. Barker cites Rivers's biographer, Richard Slobodin, who notes that the move from Edinburgh to London gave the historical Rivers a chance to attend lectures in anthropology at University College, and would also have allowed him to resume research with his old collaborator, Henry Head (66). The novel opens not long before the historical libel trial of Pemberton Billing began, on 30 May 1918, and ends shortly after 4 August 1918.

In narrative terms, *The Eye in the Door* is an elusive and complex representation of social trauma. Barker's discourse model is journalism, which, like clinical medical notes, depends on empirical observation and temporal regularity. Barker's journalistic model is entirely appropriate, since the press covered both trials

extensively. The articles that appeared in the press bear the same relationship to this novel as Rivers's and Head's published experiment does to *Regeneration*. The reporter is a detached observer, another disembodied eye, like Rivers and Head during their famous experiment. In *The Times's* articles about both trials, the reporters confine themselves only to what they saw and heard in court on that day, without context or background.<sup>5</sup> For example, on 30 May 1918, the opening day of the Billing's libel trial, *The Times's* article leads off with the cast of characters: the name of the defendant, Mr. Noel Pemberton Billing, MP; the names of those allegedly libeled, Miss Maud Allan and Mr. Jack Thomas Grein; and the names of various attorneys and the judge. The indictments are quoted, along with a reproduction of the paragraph from Billing's newspaper that occasioned the charges against him. The rest of the article is either a summary of the proceedings or verbatim dialogue. The daily reporting contains no analysis of the testimony and makes no gesture towards situating the events reported within a coherent overarching narrative.

In my earlier discussion of trauma theory, I presented Cathy Caruth's position that trauma is defined by its reception. Barker's representation of these social traumas follows Caruth by demonstrating their traumatic impact outward into society. Instead of representing the trials directly in the text, she situates them outside the text of the novel, and instead shows their repressive repercussions on those characters who are potentially vulnerable. The state deploys its power within the theatre of the courtroom, turning the proceedings into political show trials, object lessons for any others whose inclinations might tempt them to follow suit. The major figures in each of these trials, Maud Allan, and Pemberton Billing in the one, and Beattie Roper in



the other, are either missing from the novel or play minor roles. Instead, the story emerges through characters peripheral to the trials such as W.H.R. Rivers, Billy Prior, Siegfried Sassoon, and Charles Manning. Robert Ross, Wilde's literary executor, and Captain Harold Spencer, Billing's dedicated supporter, also have cameos.

Though the trials are absent, their facticity is evident in scenes of reading throughout the novel. Prior reads the trial depositions that were used to convict Beattie Roper; Rivers reads newspaper articles from *The Times* reporting Billing's libel trial, and Manning receives a trial transcript from this trial anonymously in the mail. Barker uses these documents to construct the public or official version of both trials within the novel: "The Cult of the Clitoris" (*Eye* 22), the article that precipitated the Billing trial, first appeared in the *Vigilante* on 16 February 1917 (Hoare 91); and "As I see it — the first 47,000" (152-55) had appeared in the *Imperialist* as "The Forty-Seven Thousand" (Hoare 57). Barker's Rivers reads Dr. Serell Cooke's testimony from the June 1, 1918 edition of *The Times*: "Asked what should be done with such people [homosexualists], Dr Serrel [sic] Cooke replied, 'They are monsters. They should be locked up (148).'" Barker has altered the words, but not the sense of *The Times's* verbatim reporting: Mr. Justice Darling asked Dr. Serell Cooke "Have you any opinion of where they [homosexualists] ought to be put? Yes, my Lord. Where? Locked up" (*Times* 1 June 1918 p. 4). Manning reads the transcript of Rex v. Pemberton Billing, which was sent to him anonymously. The Roper correspondence that Prior reads on the train is a slightly altered version of the Wheeldon correspondence stored in the Public Record Office in London, and was read into the record during the poison plot trial. Spragge's report of his role in the entrapment

scheme is a shortened version of the statement under oath given by one of the agents who entrapped Alice Wheeldon (44-46), Herbert John Walsh Booth (Public Record Office CRIMI 166 75683, p. 22-29).

The characters and events in the novel dissociate into two distinct groups; they cluster around either the poison plot trial or the libel trial. The relationship between Prior and Rivers is the only site where the two sets of characters and events come into proximity, and, as we will see, their relationship is the fault line along which the structure of the trilogy collapses. In Rivers's hierarchical terms, the subject of the poison plot trial is overtly protopathic because it emerges from an egalitarian branch of socialism among the lower classes, a branch that is rebellious and defiant in the face of established authority. The facts and consequences of this trial are focalized exclusively through Prior, since, as his name signifies, he is the representative of the protopathic or prior model in the text. Barker represents the Ropers and MacDowell only in meetings with Prior, or in the documents that Prior reads on the train to Manchester. Beattie Roper and her family appear in the text only within the context of Prior's activities as a spy, and their story is apprehended in the text solely to the extent that Prior's censoring consciousness will permit. However, the libel trial escapes censorship, because in the open closet inhabited by its main characters, this secret too can be known. In other words, although Barker consistently employs a third-person narrator throughout the novel, the inconsistency of focalization remains to reveal the repressive power of the hierarchical narrative. All narration related to Beattie Roper's poison plot trial is focalized through Prior; however, narration associated with Billing's libel trial is focalized through the character who is the

subject of the events reported. For example, when Charles Manning accompanies Robert Ross to the scandalous production of Wilde's *Salomé* that is at the centre of the libel trial, the events on stage remind him of his own trauma memories (77-80).

Barker does make one small but significant connection between the two trials that links sexual deviance with political dissent; although Wilde's family home was in London and Beattie Roper's is in Salford, each is on a "Tite Street" (Hoare 3; *Eye* 97).

Barker's imposition of a narrative structure drawn from journalism and informed by Rivers's epicritic/protopathic hierarchy frustrates the reader's construction of an overarching narrative encompassing both trials. Barker replicates the anonymity of *The Times's* correspondents with a blandly incurious narrator, devoid of character, who is frequently unable to grasp the significance of the events he observes and reports.<sup>6</sup> For instance, immediately after Prior's first fugue state, the narrator relates an incident that is puzzling for the reader but seemingly not for him. He reports that after the episode Prior returns to his office in the Ministry of Munitions. Hearing voices down the corridor, he looks out and sees Major Lode and an agent named Lionel Spragge engaged in an intense conversation. Spragge is the agent whose perjured testimony convicted Beattie Roper. After Spragge leaves, Lode comes into Prior's office to tell him that Spragge claimed to have received a job offer from Prior. Lode told Spragge that "there was nothing doing. Nappoo" (124). That is the end of the incident. Shortly afterwards, Prior leaves for the day but forgets his coat. It is raining heavily, so he returns to fetch it. Passing Lode's room, he hears "an unfamiliar voice say, 'Do you think he believed it?'" Lode replies "'Oh, I think so. I don't see why he shouldn't.'" (124). Prior doesn't know if the conversation is about

him or not, and neither does the reader. "He" could refer to himself, to Spragge, or to some other, unknown referant. The blank, incurious narrator does not notice the confusion created by gaps in his account.

The narrator also relates incidents during which Prior is going about his business in London only to be surprised by meeting Spragge, who clearly believes that they have made an appointment. A bewildered Prior cannot recall making these appointments (128). Once, on a daytime excursion with Sarah, Prior catches glimpses of Spragge, and correctly suspects that Major Lode has sent Spragge to follow him. Much later, when Prior finally forces Spragge to admit that he was acting under instruction from Major Lode, the narrator makes no connection back to the previous incidents of Prior's bewilderment (199). More generally, the narrator does not know what Prior does during his fugue states, nor does he seem aware of the resulting narrative incoherencies. He simply relates the events leading up to Prior's dissociative episodes and then his return to his normal conscious state. When Manning asks Prior what he does during his these episodes, Prior's response is oblique: "Nothing I don't have a tendency to do" (275), which nicely evades the question, since his activities range rather too widely to be able to draw any reliable conclusions from such an ambiguous admission.

Recovering material repressed from the text entails linking the context of the judicial social traumas with the causes of Prior's dissociative splitting by looking back through the reliteralized eye in the door to glimpse a more ancient trauma--the abuse of children. The following section reconstructs the narrative connections repressed from the novel and introduces a more detailed discussion of the trials.

### **The hidden history of social abuse**

The trials in *The Eye in the Door* together repress common strands of political, sexual and intellectual dissent in Britain during 1917 and 1918. Barker draws on historical sources for both trials: one has been virtually forgotten and the other is remembered either as a scandalous footnote to the trials of Oscar Wilde (see Hoare), or as an incident in the history of the representation of lesbian sexuality (see Medd). As the novel opens, one trial is in the recent past: Beattie Roper's conviction in the poison plot trial, based on the trial and conviction of Alice Wheeldon, her daughter and son-in-law in March 1917. The other trial is ongoing: a libel suit brought by the dancer Maud Allan against the Independent MP Noel Pemberton Billing. Taken together, the two trials were part of a concerted effort by the state to silence all internal opposition to its conduct of the war.

In *A War Imagined*, Samuel Hynes notes that by 1916, support for the war had waned and state control and censorship were on the increase. Amendments to the Defence of the Realm Act made it an offense to utter statements that might be perceived as intending to undermine the war effort (Hynes 145). Freedom of the press was curtailed, and conscription had begun. Surveillance against dissident groups increased because the government wanted to root out groups of people working against the war, and prevent them from forming networks of resistance. They were especially concerned about industrial unrest, since "workers resented the close ties between employers and the state and the intensification of exploitation in the effort to increase production for the war" (Rowbotham 118). Arthur MacManus

(and his fictional offspring, Patrick MacDowell) organized a strike in a munitions plant in Sheffield. Labour leaders were well aware that the government was employing spies and *agents provocateurs* to stir up unrest that would then be blamed on them. As part of the war on the home front, the trials enact Rivers's hierarchical theories in their very public repression of political dissent and sexual deviance, issues that his theory characterizes as protopathic.

Both trials were public spectacles at the time, attracting large crowds and the attention of the sensationalist popular press. In fact, Billing's libel trial was a public spectacle about a private spectacle, the performance of Wilde's *Salomé*. As public spectacles, the trials are the societal equivalent of the anatomy theatre where the dissected (and likely diseased) body was displayed for the education of medical students. In the latter months of the war, the trials dissected British society, exposing its disease for the general public to view, disease the war was meant to cure. Billing's libel trial was more than an act in the drama that is the afterlife of Oscar Wilde; it was part of the long history of persecution of homosexual activity that can be traced back at least to the early eighteenth century and continues to this day.<sup>7</sup> In 1917 and 1918, the trials repressed dissent; however, since then, they themselves have been largely forgotten. Barker takes her readers back into the moment of the trials, just prior to their repression from history.

As an indicator of scholarly trends, issues around gender currently attracts significantly more attention than class. For example, the MLA lists three books and four articles dealing with Maud Allan or Pemberton Billing.<sup>8</sup> The poison plot trial of Alice Wheeldon has attracted much less scholarly interest; *Friends of Alice Wheeldon*

by the feminist historian Sheila Rowbotham is the only work cited in either the history or sociology databases. It was, however, just as freighted with issues. By targeting Wheeldon and her family, the trial continued what Samuel Hynes calls "the wars before the war" (3). As Hynes notes, "A civil war, a sex war, and a class war: in the spring of 1914 these were all foreseen in England's immediate future, and with a kind of relish" (7). The common factor in these various voices of protest is the threat to the established (epicritic) order by lower class and feminist (protopathic) forces. Hynes notes that 1912 saw a long miners' strike as well as the beginning of the systematic smashing of London shop-windows by suffragists. This same year, the government failed to pass a Home Rule Bill for Ireland (6). By 1914, Ireland seemed close to a civil war, and suffragists had begun to burn houses, public buildings and churches. They slashed art works and rioted at Buckingham Palace. Union discontent and more labour unrest, with strikes among miners, in the building trades and in schools created a climate of social unrest, exacerbated by the threat of a general strike in the fall (6). The poison plot trial pulled together elements of all three wars.

### **The poison plot trial**

Barker drew heavily on *Friends of Alice Wheeldon* by the feminist historian Sheila Rowbotham for the story of the trial and conviction of Alice Wheeldon, the feminist activist who is her model for Beattie Roper ("Author's Note" 278). Although both writers hope to draw attention to a forgotten incident from Britain in 1917, their works occupy different sites on the trajectory of public forgetting and remembering. Rowbotham is known for her work on establishing the intellectual foundations of a

feminist socialist tradition. The historian Rosalyn Baxandall describes Rowbotham as "skeptical about the official version of the socialist past," which led her to explore "informal and friendship networks and groupings" in her research and writing ("Tribute" 154). Baxandall recalls that Rowbotham pieced Wheeldon's story together from a variety of sources: scraps in local newspapers, letters provided by relatives, and the memories of those who had known her (155). With *Friends of Alice Wheeldon*, Rowbotham recalls what has been forgotten about "the interconnections of socialism and feminism in the early years of this century" (120-21). She found that her "obsessive return to these connections . . . was strange to many people. They were amazed by the political interconnections which I and a few others had come to take for granted" (121). Rowbotham's observation indicates that these interconnections have disappeared from the received version of socialism and feminism in Edwardian Britain. The trial itself has certainly vanished from the British public memory. To take two standard cultural histories of Britain during the first world war, neither Paul Fussell's *The Great War and Modern Memory* nor Samuel Hynes's *A War Imagined* contains even a passing mention of Alice Wheeldon or her trial.

The structure of Rowbotham's book reflects her activism and her scholarly integrity. It comprises two separate works: the play, "Friends of Alice Wheeldon," and a meticulously researched historical essay, "Rebel Networks in the First World War." The play was very successful in production; Baxandall saw it in Sheffield where she witnessed many members of the audience in tears during the staging of Wheeldon's funeral (155). "Rebel Networks" complements the play with its research, and provides the historical context of her imaginative recreation of that place and



time. Unlike Barker, who makes Wheeldon peripheral to the action of her novel, Rowbotham places Wheeldon and her family in the center of the action, surrounding them with representatives of various socialist, pacifist and feminist groups. Her cast includes Wheeldon's son William; the Attorney General, F. E. Smith; a socialist suffragette from Glasgow; Arthur McManus, the model for Barker's MacDowell; a member of the Socialist Labour Party and shop steward from Glasgow; the socialist theoretician Willie Paul; John S. Clarke and his wife Sarah; two government informers; two policemen and a wounded soldier.

Rowbotham's "Introduction" summarizes the background to the trial and conviction of Alice Wheeldon, her daughter and son-in-law. Wheeldon was a lower-middle-class woman who lived in Derby with her daughter, Hettie. She ran a second-hand clothing business and Hettie taught Scripture in Ilkeston. They were suffragists, socialists, and part of a loosely organized network of pacifists actively involved in resistance to the war. Rowbotham describes this informal network as a "'rebel' milieu . . . eclectic, open to ideas, in favour of women's suffrage, [and] welcome to socialists of all kinds and suspicious of parliament – without dismissing it completely" (10). The world of politics in which Alice and Hettie Wheeldon lived was remote from the parliamentary Labour party; it was a world of working-class and lower-middle-class men and women, without formal education but engaged by current debates on socialist and feminist questions.<sup>9</sup>

Alice and Hettie Wheeldon were involved with the No Conscription Fellowship (NCF), a loose alliance of feminists, socialists, radical liberals and Christians opposed to conscription ("Rebel" 34). They were also part of a clandestine

network that aided men on the run by providing them with temporary shelter. Hettie was engaged to Arthur MacManus, a labour organizer and the model for Barker's MacDowell. They were able to help these men evade the authorities because Arthur MacManus was a fitter for the Cunard line in Liverpool, which was one end of a trans-Atlantic stream of radical seamen with links sympathetic to labour organizations like the Wobblies (International Workers of the World) in the United States.

McManus was active in helping James Connolly, the Irish rebel who led the 1916 Easter uprising. When Connolly visited Glasgow in 1915, he sought out his old Socialist Labour Party colleagues. When McManus found out that Connolly's journal, the *Irish Worker*, had been suppressed by the authorities, he arranged to have it secretly printed, and even smuggled issues into Ireland himself until he was caught (Challinor 127). In *The Eye in the Door*, Irish nationalism is on the extreme periphery of the poison plot trial. An unnamed Irish countess, one of the leaders of the Irish rebellion, is imprisoned with Beattie (28),<sup>10</sup> and one of Mac's letters to Hettie mentions his involvement in the transportation of men to Ireland (87).

As a refuge for deserters and conscientious objectors on the run from the police, the Wheeldon home was part of an informal network that helped these men evade the authorities. In December 1916, two men claiming to be conscientious objectors came to stay with them. The names they gave, "Alex Gordon" and "Herbert Booth," were false; they were spies sent by the intelligence unit of the Ministry of Munitions, the unit employing Billy Prior and Major Lode in the novel. "Alex Gordon" later claimed that Wheeldon was plotting to kill Lloyd George and Arthur Henderson, a Labour MP who supported the war. "Gordon," the model for Barker's

Lionel Spragge, entrapped Wheeldon with a lie and a promise; he told her that the detention camps holding conscientious objectors were guarded by dogs, and he promised to help with an escape plan if she would acquire some poison to kill the guard dogs. He knew that Wheeldon's son-in-law was a chemist, and that Wheeldon would ask him to mail her curare. Spragge informed the authorities of the plan, the mail was opened, and the arrests were made. Alice Wheeldon, her daughter, Winnie Mason and son-in-law Alfred Mason were convicted on the perjured evidence of "Gordon" and "Booth." "Gordon" didn't even appear at the trial; his deposition was read into the record. Wheeldon received a sentence of ten years; Alf Mason, seven years; and Winnie Mason, five years. As Rowbotham notes, "the political climate meant that the word of an absent *agent provocateur* was more respectable than the testimony of a socialist, feminist opponent to the war" (2). After the trial, "Gordon," whose real name was Francis W. Vivian, was paid £100 plus £5 in expenses and departed for South Africa (Challinor 58).

The political climate of Britain in 1917 made a fair trial impossible. The trial was scheduled for 6 March 1917. Although Alice Wheeldon and her family had been committed for trial for a month prior to this date, they did not have the financial resources to instruct counsel until the beginning of March. Rowbotham notes that though "money had been collected for the defence of the four people accused in the case, no barrister could be found who was willing to defend them until Dr Riza, a Persian, who possibly had difficulty getting cases, took it on" ("Rebel" 54-55). Socialists surmised that the legal establishment had succumbed to pressure from the state. On 2 March 1917, Dr. S. H. Riza applied to have the trial postponed until the

next sessions. The judge refused his request since the defendants had already agreed to March 6<sup>th</sup> on February 28<sup>th</sup>. That they did not have the benefit of counsel on February 28 and had since changed their minds did not deter the judge, Mr. Justice Low, from proceeding on schedule. Trying to appeal to a sense of fairness, Dr. Riza pointed out that the trial had been moved from Derby to London for the convenience of the prosecution and that "It was only fair to the prisoners that they have fair play" ("Alleged" *Times* 2 March, 1917 p. 4). But Mr. Justice Low was not moved, and the trial proceeded on schedule. In all likelihood, "the convenience of the prosecution" was a euphemism for greater ease of access for the press who turned into the sensational show trial the state desired.

From the outset, Mr. Justice Low questioned the accused as aggressively as the Attorney General and the prosecuting attorney. When Alice Wheeldon stated that a microbe might have been mentioned in the directions for using the poison, Mr. Justice Low attacked her story's credibility: "Does it now strike you as being a good thing to kill a dog with -- a fierce dog that you want to prevent attacking you? [Alice Wheeldon] -- No; it sounds ridiculous now." ("Poison" *Times*, 10 March 1917, p. 4). When she admitted that she had "repeatedly remarked that Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Henderson ought to be killed; in fact, she made them victims of her reproaches," Mr. Justice Low could not restrain himself: "Reproaches! They are more like threats" ("Poison" *Times*, 10 March 1917, p. 4). When the time came for the defense to address the jury, Dr. Riza delivered a passionate address:

He submitted that this was a scandalous, a vile and vindictive prosecution and most dangerous not only to these people, but to the

whole British public. . . . The employment of a mysterious secret Government agent was a most dangerous thing. . . . But wherever mysterious Government agents were introduced, somehow or other, it was only in those parts of the world that the most atrocious crimes took place. (4)

As if this rhetoric were not sufficiently extreme, and probably sensing that the judgment was a foregone conclusion, Dr. Riza made the following outrageous request:

He submitted that, the prosecution having failed to put Gordon (the agent whose perjured deposition was read into the record) into the box, the proper mode of trial for these people would be a trial by ordeal.

Mr. Justice Low. -- I am afraid that has been abolished.

Mr. Riza. -- That is why I submit it to the jury.

Mr. Justice Low. -- You cannot submit it to the jury.

Mr. Riza. -- I think it is my duty.

Mr. Justice Low. -- That the ladies should walk over hot ploughshares or something of that kind? Is that it?

Mr. Riza. -- I do suggest that, my Lord, in order that they may prove their innocence.

Mr. Justice Low. -- It is no use putting that. If you have anything serious to suggest I should like to hear it. ("Poison" *Times*, 12 March 1917, p. 3)

In spite of Dr. Riza's address to them, the jury took only half an hour to convict Alice Wheeldon, Winnie Mason and Alf Mason. Hettie Wheeldon was acquitted. When *The Eye in the Door* opens, this trial is over. It is slipping from memory, and for Barker the state's outrageous treatment of this family is less important than determining its motive for prosecuting them.

Rowbotham's essay "Rebel Networks in the First World War" speculates that the state's motive lies in its assumption that the same hierarchical relations that organize their lives apply equally to the dissident groups. Rowbotham notes that agents for the Ministry of Munitions failed to grasp the role that specific circumstances played in industrial discontent. They did not understand local labour history, and saw the strikes as the work of individuals, not groups ("Rebel" 44). Rowbotham believes that what distinguished Alice and Hettie Wheeldon from other rank-and-file pacifists was their personal connection to labour organizers who had come to the attention of the authorities who were investigating their possible role in organizing strikes in munitions plants. In other words, she thinks the authorities projected a hierarchy onto the pacifist movement that "gave them a much greater significance in the eyes of the authorities than local anti-war work would merit. For the government was most concerned to prevent any connection from developing between industrial militancy and opposition to the war" ("Rebel" 40). Barker incorporates Rowbotham's explanation into the novel. When Prior first visits Beattie in prison near the beginning of the novel, she tells him that when Spragge arrived at her house, he brought a letter of introduction from Mac (34). Echoing Rowbotham, Beattie finally concludes that Mac is the reason she was charged: "It was *Mac* he was after. *He* was the big fish"

(34). Spragge's report to the Ministry confirms her suspicions. Prior unearths the report and discovers that on 2 February 1917, Spragge was collecting information on different labour and pacifist organizations, in particular the Independent Labour Party and the No Conscription Fellowship. Under the direction of Major Lode, Spragge "was sent to Liverpool to make inquiries concerning one Patrick MacDowell" (44). Beattie and her family have been scooped up because, as Prior observes, Major Lode projects hierarchies onto non-hierarchical relationships. Lode is a product of his class; he had spent his entire life within hierarchical institutions, and cannot imagine that people might function otherwise:

It was all a great big chessboard to him. This rag-bag collection of Quakers, socialists, anarchists, suffragettes, syndicalists, Seventh Day Adventists and God knows who else was merely an elaborate disguise, behind which lurked the real anti-war movement, a secret, disciplined, highly efficient organization dedicated to the overthrow of the state. . . . And on the other side of the board, at the head of the opposing army, elusive, tenacious, dangerous: the Black King himself, Patrick MacDowell. (43)

Lode aims to capture the Black King, and the fate of a few pawns taken out in the course of the match is of no consequence to him. The Ropers are sacrificed for Major Lode's paranoid hierarchical fantasies, and the embodiment of his vision within the narrative structure forces the story of their persecution to the periphery.

Barker augments Rowbotham's analysis by suggesting an answer to a question that remained unanswered for Rowbotham, despite her careful research. Rowbotham

states that the reason "the British state [went] to so much trouble to imprison three individuals who were not central figures in the anti-war movement or the industrial unrest in the middle of the First World War" is a "mystery" to her in the end ("Forward," *Friends* 111). The most straightforward reason is political: the trial was to warn others involved in the anti-war movement. If Alice Wheeldon and her family could be prosecuted and convicted, anyone might be. Barker supports this motive; when Prior takes the file he has compiled on Beattie Roper to Charles Manning, he is hoping Manning will be able to use his connections to have her released. However, he is disappointed. Even though Manning can see for himself that Beattie was entrapped and convicted on perjured evidence, he points out that she was harbouring conscientious objectors, and the state will not let her go unpunished for this act of defiance. He tells Prior that the most likely outcome is that she will be freed quietly once the war is over (204), which is what happened to Wheeldon. She died a few months after her release, in February 1919, during an influenza epidemic (Rowbotham "Rebel" 82).

The second reason for the persecution of Alice Wheeldon and her family is more subtle and pervasive, and lies within the hierarchy of the British class system. The rhetoric of an editorial from *The Times*, published on 12 May 1917, the day following their conviction, is remarkable for the blatantly protopathic terms employed to characterize Alice Wheeldon and her family, and clearly demonstrates the way in which Rivers's hierarchy meshes perfectly with a social hierarchy of class. The editor repeatedly denigrates their intelligence: "Their conduct seemed so much like that of youths who buy revolvers and mean to be very wicked after the models set them in



the penny dreadfuls with which they are intoxicated" (9). The terms "youths" and "intoxicated" are both explicitly protopathic. While calling the poison plot "absurd," "a comedy," and a "practical joke," the editors assume that the story concocted by the spies represented a serious attempt to murder Lloyd George, presumably because the Wheeldons were not clever enough to conceive of a more effective one. Ironically, this "absurd" plot was concocted by the state's own agents. The author of the editorial resorts to sarcasm in his attack on the Wheeldons; they were "the *precious* Wheeldon family, with its *foul* language and *anarchical* opinions" (9, emphasis mine). The editors are playing rather loose with the facts: William Wheeldon, Alice's son, was an anarchist, but she was not. The editorial accurately predicts that family

will soon be forgotten. . . . But the case may be – indeed, ought to be – remembered as an instructive chapter in the psychology of hate; a lesson as to what it may come to if nursed and unrestrained. There comes a time when the appetite of hatred is not satisfied with words, however violent. It seeks, and will have, other food. (9)

When Barker uses a narrative structure intimately and profoundly informed by Rivers's hierarchy to repress the context and main players in the poison plot trial, she is indicating that the answer to Rowbotham's "mystery" lies in the hierarchical class structure, which conceived those on the lower rungs as protopathic, while those on the upper rungs are epicritic. Thus, the (epicritic) upper class repression of the (protopathic) lower class is naturalized and the Wheeldons' story is forgotten.

The interconnections between socialist, feminist and pacifist organizations so carefully recuperated by Rowbotham are all but absent from the novel, and Beattie

Roper's presence in the text appears to be almost incidental to the plot. Barker's relocation of the trial and its main actors to the novel's periphery textualizes the power of Rivers's protopathic/epicritic to doubly repress lower-class dissent. The hierarchy initially pushes the trial itself to the periphery, because the falsely obtained conviction discredits a judicial system that privileges the upper classes. Then the hierarchy erases the social and political web of connections existing around the main players in the trial, so that, without the narrative support provided by these connections, the trial is on the verge of disappearing from the novel with barely a ripple.

As previously noted, Alice Wheeldon's trial has been virtually forgotten, while Billing's libel trial, with its lurid and sordid details, has attracted recent critics, suggesting (not surprisingly) that current critical fashion tends to find sexual oppression more interesting than class oppression. The two trials seem to split hierarchically according to the class of the participants, with the poison plot trial occupying the protopathic pole and the libel trial occupying the epicritic pole. However, Barker demonstrates that the libel trial too expresses a protest against state repression, aligning it with the protopathic as well.

### **The libel trial of Noel Pemberton Billing, MP**

Like the poison plot trial, Barker draws on the historical record for the libel trial of Pemberton Billing. The dancer, Maud Allan, who "had become one of London's most famous and eroticized performers a decade earlier with her scantily-clad and sexually suggestive modern dance, 'The Vision of Salome'" (Medd 22), was starring in a production of Oscar Wilde's *Salomé*, produced for a private audience by

J. T. Grein. *Salomé* was Wilde's only play to be banned from public performance (Medd 22). Allan's intimate relationship with Margot Asquith, who was believed to be a sapphist, added to the scandalous potential of the production. Mounting the play itself was risky since public opinion was against Wilde, who embodied what Edmund Gosse called a "national decay," stemming from "indulgence of every sort," that the "sovereign disinfectant" of war was meant to cure (qtd. in Hynes 12). In his book about the trial, *Oscar Wilde's Last Stand*, Phillip Hoare also suggests that the proposed performance meant something far more devious and threatening to Billing. A foreigner, J. T. Grein, was producing a play by the convicted "pervert" Wilde, starring a woman who was rumoured to be involved in a lesbian relationship with Margot Asquith, the Liberal leader's wife (Hoare 90).

Allan launched a suit against the Independent MP Pemberton Billing after a short piece entitled "The Cult of the Clitoris" implying that she was a lesbian appeared in his paper, the *Vigilante* (*Eye* 279). Billing was a strange, obsessive, somewhat paranoid man, who had placed the piece hoping to provoke a suit that he could then use to publicize his various causes.<sup>11</sup> Billing was the leader of the Vigilante Society, whose aim was to encourage "purity" among those in public life. As Jodi Medd notes, the "Society was particularly dedicated to rooting out that 'mysterious influence'--the invisible German presence spreading moral degeneracy in England itself--'which was responsible,' Billing claimed, 'for all the British failures in the war'" (22). In the *Verbatim Report* of his trial, he claimed that

all the horrors of shells and gas and pestilence introduced by the Germans in their open warfare would have but a fraction of the effect

in exterminating the manhood of Britain as the plan by which they have already destroyed the first forty-seven thousand. . . . [I]t is a terrible thought to contemplate that the British Empire should fall as fell the great Empire of Rome, and the victor now, as then, should be the Hun. (qtd. in Medd 23).

In his weekly, the *Imperialist*, Billing attacked Jews, German music, pacifists, socialists, financiers and anyone else who he believed might undermine the cause of winning the war. On 26 January 1918, the *Imperialist* published an article entitled "The First 47,000," which Billing believed was the number of British men and women whose deviant sexual practices were known to the German Secret Service. Rivers reads the article in its entirety in one of the many scenes of reading in the novel (152-55). Billing reported that the names of the 47,000 were recorded in a Black Book that was to be used to blackmail them into betraying their country (Hynes 226). Billing apparently believed that homosexuality was the enemy's secret weapon, and that a "successful queer invasion of 'high politics'" threatened the nation (Medd 22). Medd quotes the *Verbatim Report* of Billing's trial (reprinted by the Vigilante Society) claiming that the black book provided instruction on "the propagation of evils which all decent men thought had perished in Sodom and Lesbia" in addition to recording the names of the 47,000 (22).

Allan's performance in *Salomé* gave Billing the excuse he was looking for to use the ghost of Oscar Wilde and Allan's alleged lesbian relationship with Margot Asquith to incite public opinion against the government. The judge was Lord Justice Darling, who had presided over one of Wilde's trials. After Billing's lover, Eileen

Villiers-Stuart, named Darling as one of "The First 47,000" in open court, he lost control of the proceedings, leaving Billing free to use the court to libel all Englishmen affiliated with Grein's production of *Salomé*. Lord Alfred Douglas created further disruption by using the trial to continue his personal attacks on Robert Ross, Wilde's literary executor. Barker notes that "after six days of chaos in the courtroom and hysteria in the newspapers, Pemberton Billing won the case and was carried shoulder-high through the cheering crowds that had gathered outside the Old Bailey" (280).

A second instance of spying is repressed from the novel because it was not reported in the newspapers read by characters in the novel (see *The Times* 30 May to 5 June 1918). By March 1918, Billing and some generals in the War Office discovered that Lloyd George's government was participating in secret peace talks with the Germans (Hoare 103). As Hoare relates, Billing and the generals were deeply opposed to any efforts to negotiate a peace, and hoped that a public campaign to smear the Prime Minister and his cabinet with accusations of sexual perversion would turn the public against the talks. The government retaliated with a farcical plot to ruin Billing politically; they hired a private detective, Eileen Villiers-Stuart, and instructed her to lure him into a male brothel. Their plan was to expose Billing to the sexual degradation of an elderly officer, and then to photograph him secretly, or arrange that he be "otherwise fatally compromised" (Hoare 107). Unfortunately for them, Villiers-Stuart was a double agent from the beginning. After the trial was over, Villiers-Stuart confessed that she

"was instructed on behalf of certain Political Associations [Lloyd George and the Conservative Central Office] in London in my capacity

of a private detective, to endeavour to entrap Mr Pemberton-Billing and to compromise him, with the object of damaging his character so as to put an end to his Parliamentary career." (qtd. in Hoare 107)

Before her involvement with the Conservative party, she had been hired by Maud Allan to discover how much Billing knew about her. When Villiers-Stuart embarked on this mission, she immediately fell under Billing's Messianic influence. As she was later to write in her post-trial statement:

"The outcome was that an interview was arranged between myself and Mr Pemberton-Billing, when he put before me his position, and the objects which the Vigilante Society was fighting for, and I was so impressed with his sincerity, and with the purity of his motives, which were entirely for the benefit of this country, that I decided to throw over my employer, and to give Mr Pemberton-Billing all the information in my possession for use in his defence." (qtd. in Hoare 107)

Uncovering material repressed from this trial reveals that the government is guilty of some of the same crimes that they convicted Alice Wheeldon and her family of committing. Billing was a threat because he knew that Villiers-Stuart had been recruited to spy for the government, and he also knew that some members of the governing elite did not confine themselves to heterosexual monogamous relationships. For example, Billing's political agent was Admiral Troubridge's son. By 1918, the lesbian relationship between Troubridge's wife, Una, and Radclyffe Hall was common knowledge (Hoare 122-23n).

Editorials following Billing's acquittal clearly intend to calm the public outpouring of support for Billing following his acquittal. The tone of the writing varies significantly from the tone of the commentary about the poison plot trial; the alarmist and threatened discourse has been replaced by calm reason (see *The Times*, 5 June 1918, p. 7). The editors accord Billing a measure of respect in spite of his unsubstantiated claims that 47,000 British men and women from the governing elite engaged in deviant sexual practices leaving them open to blackmail by the Germans. They acknowledge he has committed a "monstrous libel," but assume he is "honestly convinced" of his views, however misguided. The editors dismiss the possibility that the so-called "Black Book" exists; the police "would unquestionably have known of its existence" if it did. They acknowledge that the Germans probably "do possess some sort of record of the career, opinions, and relative value from their own standpoint, of most men and women in English public life," but they "are absolutely convinced that the state of affairs which it sought to represent is grossly exaggerated, limited to an infinitesimal section in *every class*, very largely the result of gossip and sheer thoughtlessness" (7, emphasis mine). In other words, the dangerous dissent expressed by the Wheeldons is confined to their class, but the deviance on display in Billing's trial belongs to all classes. That lower class sexual "deviants" would not be in a position to be usefully blackmailed seems not to have occurred to the editors. The "evil" that originated in "every class" becomes a call for "public men and women [to] realize that their responsibilities are not ended with their public functions," and to remind them that "*countless eyes* are watching their doings" (emphasis mine). The editorial invokes epicritic censorship to remind upper class readers that even they

cannot escape its surveillance. The editors understand the trial as a failure of the (epicritic) upper classes to control the naturally rebellious (protopathic) elements in the lower classes. Justice Darling is faulted for inconsistency and lack of seriousness:

He sometimes relaxed the rules of evidence and sometimes enforced them strictly. He permitted names to be mentioned without admitting the right of reply. Above all, it was emphatically an occasion for flippancies and joking of the kind which Mr. Justice Darling has made his own. (7)

The editorial thus shores up a class hierarchy destabilized by the war and argues for the necessity of surveillance to maintain the threatened superiority of the upper classes.

Rivers is treating three officers in *The Eye in the Door*, Charles Manning, Siegfried Sassoon and Billy Prior. Each of them is significantly traumatized, and although they all inhabit an open closet with Rivers, the social context for each of them is distinctly different. To follow Barker's imagery, each of them has a disembodied eye of his own and each of them is subject to the surveillance of the re-literalized eye, but Prior's lower class origins mean that he is the only one whose trauma is buried alive by the re-literalized eye.

### **Rivers's patients: Charles Manning, Siegfried Sassoon, and Billy Prior**

Like Prior, Manning returns to Britain traumatized from his battlefield experience; however, because this war trauma does not interact with the social trauma, it moves from his somatosensory and iconic memory into narrative. Early in



the novel, the police arrest Manning for soliciting sex from a young man, but his medal, wound, and social connections keep him from jail. Instead, the police send him to Rivers to be cured of his homosexual tendencies. A sympathetic Rivers puts him in the hospital, then concentrates on treating his war trauma that takes the form of panic attacks originating in a "sort of waking dream," "a line of men marching along duckboards wearing gas masks and capes" (167). This is a flashback, a replay of an incident in which Scudder, a particularly inept soldier under Manning's command, slips into a pit of sucking mud, and sinks up to his armpits. All rescue attempts fail. Rather than leaving Scudder to suffocate by inches, Manning determines that the only humane thing to do is to shoot him. His first shot misses, but the second time, when Scudder knows what is happening, he succeeds. Manning's men shun him after the incident.

The story of Scudder marks the only time in the trilogy that a trauma narrative is fully apprehended by the traumatized person, and also marks Rivers's only real cure. Rivers has no conflicts around Manning's recovery, as he does around Prior's treatment and prognosis. Manning's wounded knee means he is honourably out of the war for the duration. Since officially Rivers is supposed to be curing him of his sodomitical impulses, his recovery from his war trauma is beside the point from a judicial perspective. The story is also significant for Manning's characterization of Scudder as fatally flawed because "He couldn't . . . turn off the part of himself that minded" (170). The historical Rivers held that repression was necessary for a soldier to perform his duties (*Instinct* 185), but Scudder, who couldn't repress the part of him

that rebelled against the war and all it stands for, is literally repressed into the earth. However, this kind of repression is no longer necessary for Manning, as it is for Prior.

Manning is under surveillance; his sexual orientation, class, connections, and position at the Ministry of Munitions mark him as potentially blackmailable. After all, his double life is not a secret; he receives a copy of the newspaper clipping entitled "The Cult of the Clitoris" in the mail. Manning also arranges to attend *Salomé* with Robert Ross, Wilde's literary executor, and is unwilling to give up this old friendship to ward off trouble from Billing and his followers. Early on, shortly after he receives the clipping but before he tells Rivers about Scudder, Manning experiences a panic attack that links his war trauma with the threat posed by the clipping. He is on his way to visit Ross, when he suddenly finds himself

cowering on the pavement of Oxford Street as if a seventy-hour bombardment were going on. He pretended to look in a shop window, but he didn't see anything. The sensation was extraordinary, one of the worst attacks he'd ever had. Like being naked, high up on a ledge, somewhere, in full light, with beneath him only jeering voices and millions of eyes. (26)

Manning's position high on a ledge marks his upper class position, and his feeling that he is under surveillance from the masses. He is vulnerable to these attacks because he is still traumatized by the incident with Scudder. Much later, when this issue no longer troubles him, Manning is able to calmly tell Prior that he has received the transcript of *Rex v. Pemberton Billing*, sent by "a well-wisher" (272), and also to report that Captain Spencer, Billing's cohort, came to visit the Ministry and named

Robert Ross as a traitor (273). Because Manning's trauma does not mesh with the social context of the surveillance, his trauma can escape repression and be fully apprehended by the narrative.

Like Manning, Sassoon's trauma emerges into writing--in his case, his experiences as a "bloodthirsty, efficient company commander" fuel his pacifist poetry (233). In *Regeneration*, Rivers committed himself to silencing Sassoon's protest and convincing him to return to France. He succeeds, but Sassoon suffers a head wound, and is invalided back to England, confronting Rivers with the consequences of his silencing. Sassoon tells Rivers that he "started to unravel" from the dissociation required to survive at the Front. "I'd always coped with the situation by blocking out the killing side, cutting it off, and then suddenly one's brought face to face with the fact that no, actually, there's only one person there and that person is a potential killer of Huns" (231). Rivers knows that Sassoon survived by splitting himself in two, but believes that the "dissociation couldn't be called pathological because the experience gained in one state was available to the other" (233). Of course, this is the same dissociation that he noted in his research partner, Henry Head, and Sassoon's rebellion against the kind of enforced dissociation necessary for a soldier challenges Rivers's fundamental beliefs.

Rivers silences another of Sassoon's protopathic protests. He hopes to find out how the lower classes live by going to Sheffield and working in a factory. The author of *The Intermediate Sex*, Edward Carpenter, lives there. Sassoon has read the book and has been impressed by it; however Carpenter has a second less obvious significance that links him to the poison-plot trial. He was associated with an

egalitarian branch of socialism similar to Beattie Roper's, one of the strains of socialism that died out with the ascendancy of the centralizing Labour Party. Rivers silences this protest, as he had previously done to his soldier's declaration in *Regeneration*. He arranges for Sassoon to have another Medical Board after which he will move into a convalescent home. Sassoon tries to explain himself to a skeptical Rivers:

"I was happy most of the time, I suppose mainly because *I've succeeded in cutting off the part of me that hates it*" [emphasis added].  
 A faint smile. "Except when writing poems for the *Nation*. I was . . .  
 There's a book you ought to read. I'll try to dig it out, it says something to the effect that a man who makes up his mind to die takes leave of a good many things, and is, in some sense, *dead already*.  
 Well, I had made up my mind to die. What other solution was there for me" (222-23)

The silencing of Sassoon's protest and the successful repression of his objections to the war under the influence of transference have nearly lead to his death. "You made me love you" is playing on the ward gramophone when Rivers arrives to see Sassoon for the first time after his return to England. Barker uses this popular song to comment on the dangers of transference when the therapist disavows the process, even in the face of its obvious presence.

Rivers's doubts about the validity of his scientific hypothesis emerge in response to the questions raised by Sassoon. In spite of believing that the "epicritic grounded in the protopathic . . . [is] the ultimate expression of unity we persist in

regarding as the condition of perfect health," Rivers sees that most people "survive by cultivating internal divisions" (233). Sitting in the darkened hospital room beside a sleeping Sassoon, Rivers admits that Sassoon's most recent collapse could have been foreseen:

Night had turned the window into a black mirror. His face floated there, and behind it, Siegfried and the rumpled bed. If Siegfried's attempt at dissociation 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. But that was *his* problem. Siegfried need never be aware of it. (233)

Sassoon's writing gives him the strength to keep rebelling even under the gaze of this physician who still believes that he should repress his feelings about the war and do his duty by returning to the Front. Sassoon is under medical surveillance, but his trauma emerges in his own writing. His personal trauma is therefore protected from the social context which could force him to dissociate further and exacerbate the original trauma. His writing protects him from the kind of frightening dissociations that plague Billy Prior.

The text of *Regeneration* cannot apprehend Prior's trauma of the disembodied eye because that text embodies the ideology that caused the trauma in the first place. Thus Prior moves into the social context of the two trials with an unhealed trauma. Prior's personal connections to those peripherally affected by the social trauma of both trials mean that he is the only character who is in the position to integrate them into one overarching narrative of state surveillance and repression. However, the trials

that employ state-sponsored surveillance contain a prior, protopathic, trauma that also involves surveillance, defining the two levels of the encrypted eye within Prior's consciousness. The interaction of these two levels of trauma traps Prior, silencing him and immobilizing him between two equally powerful forces. Prior cannot integrate the two trials into a coherent narrative because his connection to each trial is fraught with conflict grounded in a class-based hierarchy, another manifestation of Rivers's epicritic/protopathic hierarchy. Specifically, his position vis-à-vis state surveillance and repression splits hierarchically in relation to each trial as a consequence of the encrypted eye within his consciousness.

Within the context of the poison-plot trial, Prior acts as an epicritic agent of the state, but concealed protopathically within this role is his subjection to that same surveillance. Prior's relationship to the Ropers and Mac is explicitly one of state-sanctioned surveillance, since he is interviewing Beattie and Hettie Roper to see if Mac can be found. The government considers Mac a subversive and wants to incarcerate him for organizing a munitions workers' strike in Sheffield. Prior is successful in his spying. The information he provides allows Lode to locate Mac and arrest him. Prior also becomes a double agent, spying against the Ministry itself.<sup>12</sup> To compile a dossier of Spragge's misdeeds, Prior needs to engage in self-surveillance, which in turn exacerbates his dissociative fugue states. Although Spragge technically works for Prior, he is also watching him. Spragge follows Prior and Sarah on a day outing, and later follows Prior home. Major Lode does not trust Prior, and he keeps an eye on him to make sure he does not betray the Ministry to his old friends.

As a social manifestation of the disembodied eye, the Ministry of Munitions, and especially the intelligence unit where Prior works, is another manifestation of the epicritic. Yet Barker shows that its construction of the anti-war movement is a fantasy. Prior's role as a spy for the Ministry makes him a representative of the agency responsible for surveillance of the various dissident groups opposed to the war. Lode believes Spragge's embellished and self-serving accounts as a spy, because, as Prior notes,

The poison plot fitted in very neatly with [Major Lode's] preconceptions about the anti-war movement. Not much grasp of reality in all this, Prior thought, on either side. [Prior] was used to thinking of politics in terms of conflicting interests, but what seemed to have happened here was less a conflict of interests than a disastrous meshing together of fantasies. (52)

Lode's tendency to project a hierarchy outward, transforming egalitarian social relations into hierarchical ones, is a model for the forces that shape the narrative structure of *The Eye in the Door*, since it mimics Rivers's own epicritic/protopathic hierarchy. Prior's role as an agent of textual repression transforms him into an agent of the epicritic and merges with his official role in the Ministry, where Lode has assigned him the task of censoring files.

Because Prior's acts of betrayal are repressed from his consciousness, the actual moment he betrays Mac is repressed from the text and is registered by the reader as another of Prior's amnesiac fugue states. Even after Prior comes to believe he must have betrayed Mac, the incident is never recovered into the text, and the

bland journalistic narrator does not comment on its absence. Prior betrays Mac during a period in which he is "tidying up" the files of the Ministry of Munitions, preparing them for a transfer to the War Office. This job gives Prior the opportunity to finish compiling his dossier on Spragge's misdeeds. Prior habitually takes lunch in a pub, reading the casualty lists in *The Times* over a pint of beer. One day, about four days into his file purge, he is shocked and sickened to see a familiar name. He cannot eat the rest of his meal, and finishes his beer intending to return to work. Then he finds himself

back at his desk. No interval. One second he was in the pub, the next sitting behind his desk. . . .

Three hours had passed since he broke for lunch, and of that he could account for perhaps twenty to twenty-five minutes. The rest was blank. (123)

When Prior returns to his normal state, he "was aware, somewhere on the fringes of his consciousness, that it was not 'a little disturbance'. Something catastrophic had happened" while he was in a dissociated state, but he does not know what it is (123). Neither does the reader until much later, since the narrator has no knowledge of Prior's activities when he is in a dissociated state. The police, who have been hunting Mac since the Sheffield strike, finally track him down and arrest him.

When Prior visits him in jail, Mac accuses him of being the informant who betrayed him, but Prior in all sincerity denies it. However, on the train back to London, he admits to himself that "it was *possible* he'd betrayed Mac. Or at any rate . . . it was impossible . . . to deny it" (255). Prior needs to know the truth, and since he



cannot know what his alternate self does, he visits Mac in jail one last time. When Mac tells him that he was responsible for providing the police with the information that led to his capture, and that his information came from a sergeant in Liverpool who was torturing him at the time, Prior is finally convinced because Mac has no reason to lie. "Though he still had no memory of doing it, he had betrayed Mac" (266). However, the actual moment of betrayal is never recovered into Prior's conscious memory or into the text.

Prior is trapped in a No Man's Land of his own—he can never return home, and a return to France means almost certain death. His experiences at the front have forever separated him from his past. He and Mac played together as children, and Mac took punishment Prior deserved because Prior's class superiority exempted him from responsibility for his pranks. Prior cannot reconcile his old loyalties to Mac and the Wheeldons with their pacifism, which he can only see as a betrayal of himself and his men. Prior persuades Hettie to arrange a meeting with Mac in the cattle pens, hoping to get more information on Spragge's activities as an *agent provocateur*. Mac offers him names, and Prior asks him to get the evidence in writing from the men Spragge tried to recruit. He persuades him that there is a chance that this information could make a difference: "There's a lot of questions being asked about the way spies are used in munition factories. Some of them are better at starting strikes than you are, Mac" (115). They part after Mac takes Prior's address so he can send him the material on the spies. On the way home in the dark, Prior stumbles into a trench dug by some children. Beyond the trench, they have created a No Man's Land. This landscape is a literalization of the metaphor of the home front, and is not so different

from the trench where Prior's men were blown up and where he bent down to pick up Towers's eyeball from between the duckboards.

Prior's fall into the trench marks a second, comic sexual fall that shows the pervasiveness of the power of the hierarchy to organize social relations. In this episode, Prior occupies the protopathic sexual pole of the hierarchy, and his father looks down from an epicritic vantage point. Prior is so unnerved by falling into the children's trench that he stops by his father's local for a drink where he meets Mrs. Thorpe and Mrs. Riley, neighbours from his childhood. He had encountered them earlier that evening on the street as they headed out to a night out at the pub, and Mrs. Riley made him a half-serious sexual offer. Prior owes his life to these two women. Just after his birth, his mother became ill and he was fed condensed milk, a diet responsible for the deaths of other babies on the street. These two women, each with their own first baby, had wet-nursed him until his mother was able to care for him again. Prior's evening of drinking with Mrs. Thorpe and Mrs. Riley contains echoes of this old connection, and indicates his powerful need for the reassurance of associations from a past where the bonds of community were a powerful force. Mrs. Riley's openly sexual appraisal of Prior has its desired end; on the way home, they stop under a bridge to have sex. As they begin their quasi-incestuous act, Prior's father, who has been out drinking as well, stops to urinate from the bridge. He watches them for a moment, but understandably fails to recognize the buttocks shining in the moonlight as belonging to his son. Like the stumble into the trench, this incident enacts the consequences of Rivers's epicritic/protopathic hierarchy transposed onto social relationships. It also embodies a critique of Rivers's theory. In this scene,

Mr. Prior occupies the epicritic pole, gazing down upon his son and Mrs. Riley who are engaged in a very protopathic act. However, his position reveals his ignorance: he cannot identify the couple below him as his son and Mrs. Riley. The epicritic, which should contain all knowledge, is here revealed as ignorant.

The unsettled social conditions of wartime threaten social hierarchies as well. Mrs. Riley and Mrs. Thorpe have done well since the war began, and Prior's father is outraged at their prosperity and freedom. Two married women going out for a drink together was, as Prior notes, "unheard of. No wonder the old bugger thought Armageddon had arrived" (96). Lobster tins have been spotted in Mrs. Riley's dustbin, and now, in place of the teeth like "blackened stumps" that "advertised their fecundity every time they opened their mouths," they have dentures of a "flashing whiteness" (95). From his own No Man's Land between the lines, Prior

would have given anything to have been simply, unequivocally, unambiguously pleased. But he passed too many houses with black-edged cards in the window, and to every name on the cards he could put a face. It seemed to him the streets were full of ghosts. . . . He was no more part of the life around him than one of those returning ghosts.

(97)

The experience of the war has divided him forever from the community of his youth. After his father's footsteps can be heard leaving the bridge, Prior "kissed [Mrs. Riley's] mouth, her nose, her hair, and then, lowering his head in pure delight, feeling every taboo in the whole fucking country crash round his ears, he sucked Mrs Riley's breasts" (118). Prior's evening with Mrs. Riley and Mrs. Thorpe doesn't re-establish

those old connections so much as give Prior an opportunity to use them to perform a final gesture of rebellion and defiance.

But rebellion and defiance cannot alter Prior's position as the only link between the two trials. This position finally drives him into episodes of frank dissociation. Rivers speculates that

Prior had created a state whose freedom from fear and pain was persistent, encapsulated, inaccessible to normal consciousness. Almost as if his mind had created a warrior double, a creature formed out of Flanders clay. . . . And he had brought it home with him. (245)

One day, the warrior double keeps Prior's appointment with Rivers. Rivers has never seen Prior in this dissociated state before. Prior knows nothing of the double's activity, but the double claims to know everything Prior knows, and is able to provide details of the abuse that was routine in Prior's family during his childhood. The double claims to have been born in a shell-hole after Prior was wounded and could not go on. In the course of probing into Prior's abusive family, Rivers discovers that Prior's ability to dissociate began in his childhood as a way of coping with his father's violence. Rivers tells Prior that remembering is not enough to "heal the split . . . there has to be a moment of . . . recognition. Acceptance" (249). Rivers's practice is to encourage his patients to integrate repressed material into their consciousness. However simple and straightforward this may sound, the process is complicated by Rivers's own rejection of the same material.

### *Conflict and Dream*

In the opening chapter, I presented a discussion of Rivers's theory of dreams that examined theoretical inconsistencies not considered by Rivers himself. In summary, the historical and fictional Rivers held that dreams are regressive, protopathic, and, rather than fulfilling wishes as Freud believed, represent attempted solutions to conflicts arising from everyday life. There are four dreams in the novel that express conflicts pertinent to Rivers--two of his own, and two of Prior's. As Rivers's theory predicts, their dreams do express conflicts present in the daily lives of the dreamers. However, when the conflicts expressed involve Prior's ongoing treatment and threaten the fictional Rivers by challenging his beliefs and practice, he deviates from his theory and misreads the dreams, turning the threat back on Prior himself.

The fictional Rivers's dreams indicate that he is aware that his epicritic/protopathic hierarchy is flawed, and that dissociation between the rational and the non-rational is not as benign as he originally believed. His first dream returns us to the anatomy theatre, and the visual foundations of medical knowledge derived from it. In this dream, the observed subject of medical surveillance seeks out the observer. Rivers dreams that his old collaborator, Henry Head, is standing over a corpse on a dissecting table. The corpse is naked, his head shaved in preparation for Head's drill. Rivers notices the corpse beginning to move, and tries to warn Head, but "Head can't, or won't, hear him." Then

the cadaver in all its naked, half-flayed horror rises from the table and pushes him back.

The corridor outside Rivers's room is empty, elongated, the floor polished and gleaming. Then the doors at the end flap open with a noise like the beating of wings and the cadaver bounds through, pads from door to door, sniffs, tries to locate him more by smell than sight. At last it finds the right door, advances on the bed, bends over him, thrusts its anatomical drawing of a face into his, as he struggles to wake up and remember where he is. (163)

The dream is a reversal of the scene from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* in which the first action of the newly "born" monster is to turn to his creator, Victor, who has collapsed insensibly on his bed, exhausted from the rigors of the "birth". This dream takes Rivers back to the origin of his model of medical and scientific knowledge, the anatomy theatre first used in the Renaissance to educate medical students. Freud, in the first of his *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, notes that

In medical training you are accustomed to *see* things. You see an anatomical preparation, the precipitate of a chemical reaction, the shortening of a muscle as a result of the stimulation of its nerves. Later on, patients are demonstrated before your senses—the symptoms of their illness, the products of the pathological process and even in many cases the agent of the disease in isolation. In the surgical departments you are witness to the active measures taken to bring help to patients. . . . Even in psychiatry the demonstration of patients with their altered facial expressions, their mode of speech and behaviour,

affords you plenty of observations which leave a deep impression on you. (40-41).

With the advent of the anatomy theatre, among other things, knowledge came to be based on what could be seen with the naked eye. In Barker's trilogy, visually constructed knowledge symbolized by the disembodied eye comes to represent a kind of empirical knowledge that Rivers characterizes as epicritic. Nightmares of cadavers who suddenly return to life are common among medical students during their course in anatomical dissection, even today (Winkler). The phrase "anatomical drawing" suggests that Rivers is thinking of the drawings of Vesalius from *De Humani Corporis Fabrica* in which the partially dissected corpse is a living and cooperative participant in the process of his own anatomization. Whether this dream corpse seeks revenge or recognition is unclear. Rivers is so frightened he wakes to avoid the confrontation.

Rivers begins to interpret the dream as soon as he wakes; however, he characteristically avoids confronting the corpse in his interpretation as adroitly as he did in the dream. He identifies the conflict in this dream as around his loyalty to Head, feeling that he has somehow betrayed him. In fact, his emerging doubts signal a departure from their theory that amounts to a betrayal. He recognizes the dissecting room in the dream as the one in the hospital where he trained. The incident that triggers the dream arises from Head's treatment of brain-injured soldiers like Lucas in this novel and Hallett in *The Ghost Road*. Head is conducting research trying to correlate specific anatomical damage with measurable cognitive deficits. He measures the soldiers' deficits with various language and computational tests, and then

maps their injuries onto the brains of cadavers. This is a materialist approach to mental processes; Head is hoping to identify anatomically the location of mental faculties. Watching Head with Lucas, Rivers notes that Head's empathy for his patient vanishes when he begins to consider the patient as a "technical problem" to be solved (146):

A necessary suspension, without which the practice of medical research, and indeed of medicine itself, would hardly be possible. . . . Head's dissociation was healthy because the researcher and the physician each had instant access to the experience of the other, and both had access to Head's experience in all other areas of his life. Prior's was pathological because areas of his conscious experience had become inaccessible to memory. What was interesting was why Head's dissociation didn't lead to the kind of split that had taken place in Prior. (146-47)

For Rivers, the conflict is between his loyalty to Head, whose name suggests the epicritic half of the epicritic/protopathic model they devised, and the beginnings of doubt that their model is flawed. If the model is flawed, then the premise on which virtually all of his other work is based comes under question, since it is drawn from this model. The implications of doubt mean that Rivers begins to question the "necessary suspension" he had assumed was essential to medical research. Prior had challenged it long ago, accusing Rivers of being merely "a strip of empathic wallpaper" (70). Head's dissociation doesn't seem as dangerous as Prior's, because the physician and researcher complement each other. They both occupy the epicritic pole



of the hierarchy, and neither one censors the other. However, Prior's split is not his choice, nor is the experience of one side of his self welcomed by the other. The social relations entangling Prior make the split absolutely necessary, and their hierarchical stability depends on the ignorance engendered by it.

Rivers's second dream follows the interview with Prior in which Prior's alternate persona appears. This warrior-double claims to have no father and to have been born two years previously in a shell-hole in France. He tells Rivers that when Prior was wounded and could not go on, he emerged because he is a superior fighter who is impervious to physical pain. Rivers's dream also reveals his awareness that he has been sending men back to fight who are on the "ghost road," when he treated them, and that their return is not voluntary. Once during the night "he woke and lay looking into the darkness, faintly amused that his identification with his patients should have reached the point where he dreamt *their* dreams rather than his own" (244). However, he is mistaken; this dream is a social re-staging of his own first dream. Instead of one corpse rising up, he now dreams of battalions of dead, rising from the ground, looking for home. The dream is infused with his hierarchy; the men emerging from the ground might be the first forms of life, rising from the primeval slime, making it very much *his* dream.

Rivers's dream opens in a battlefield, a wasteland of mud, craters and blasted trees:

He was entirely alone, until, with a puckering of the surface, a belch of foul vapours, the mud began to move, to gather itself together, to rise and stand before him in the shape of a man. A man who turned and

began striding towards England. He tried to call out, no, not that way, and the movement of his lips half woke him. But he sank down again, and again the mud gathered itself into the shape of a man, faster and faster until it seemed the whole night was full of such creatures, creatures composed of Flanders mud and nothing else, moving their grotesque limbs in the direction of home. (244)

These resurrected soldiers represent the injured who have returned to England and those who have died: Sassoon, who should be dead; Prior, whose second self claims to have been born in a shell-hole; and Scudder, the soldier whose death was due to his inability to dissociate, and who died in the sucking mud. The war and British society have silenced each of these men. Rivers tries to turn them away, to stop them from going home, but these "creatures" do not heed him. In his analysis of the dream, Rivers again is unable to see that it is in any way relevant to his theory. This is the return of the repressed on a grand scale, as if every soldier killed on these fields and left there to rot had experienced a reversal of death, and returned, for what? Rivers is afraid of the repercussions of the war on British society, although his fear is much less specific than Prior's. His dreams are informed by a generalized anxiety over simply confronting these protopathic figures who seem to be seeking mere acknowledgement or recognition, not revenge.

Prior's nightmares of being pursued by the symbol of the epicritic, the disembodied eye, clearly express his terror; in both dreams, the enormous disembodied eye has him trapped and prevents him from escaping.<sup>13</sup> These dreams express Prior's unconscious awareness that Rivers, the embodiment of the epicritic

eye, is maneuvering him into a position where his return to the front will be inevitable.

Prior's first dream brings together his trauma from the front with the social trauma of Britain's surveillance and imprisonment of its own citizens. In this dream, Prior is struggling to construct a coherent, overarching narrative that could link the two traumas. The dream occurs after Prior has been to see Beattie in jail for the first time, after Beattie tells him how Spragge was able to trap her. The visit is fraught with conflict for Prior: from loyalty, affection and a sense of justice, he wants to exonerate Beattie; however he does not support her pacifist activities, and feels that any sympathy for her or her son, who is in a detention camp, is a betrayal of his men. When Prior sees the painted eye "where no eye should have been," he has the traumatic flashback to Towers's eye in the palm of his hand (36). Later that day, back in his office at the Ministry, he confirms Beattie's allegation, and even extracts an admission from a down-at-the-heels Spragge that he received a bonus for Beattie's conviction.

That night, Prior has a nightmare that is so vivid and terrifying that it is more like an hallucination. The dream merges his trauma at the front with the surveillance at home by identifying Towers's eye with the eye in the cell door. In the nightmare, Prior sees "an eye not painted but very much alive" watching him from the door of his flat (58). He finds a paper knife, and lunges at the door, "stabbing the eye again and again, his naked body spattered with blood and some thick whitish fluid that did not drop but clung to his belly and quickly chilled" (58). He wakes to the sound of his own sobbing, lying on the floor with a knife in his hand. He is disgusted to find he

has ejaculated. In this dream, the process of symbolization that created the encrypted eye is reversed; the symbol regains its original literality, flooding Prior with the terror he felt at the time. However, a still earlier trauma is evident within the living eye in the blood and "thick whitish fluid" spattered on Prior's naked body. When Prior was eleven, his socially conscious mother sent him to the parish priest for "extra tuition" (138). She hoped that her bright son might escape the working-class fate of his parents. The priest raped Prior, initiating him into a long, abusive relationship never revealed to his parents.

In the context of this dream, the eye represents the class-based hierarchy that oppresses those on the lower rungs, and exacts payment from any who hope to escape them. Rivers asks Prior whose eye it is in the prison door. Prior first identifies it as Towers's eye, then recalls an association with Beattie Roper. When he picked up Towers's eye, he recalled the sweets he bought as a child in Beattie's shop: he said "What shall I do with this gob-stopper?" (69). However, Rivers unconsciously resists Prior's attempt to link the two traumas, foreclosing his interpretative options, and forcing him to identify the eye in the door with himself. Rivers asks, "When one eye reminded you of the other, was that just the obvious connection? I mean, because they were both eyes?" Prior shrugs, "I suppose so" (69). Rivers's response is a very loud silence. He is threatened by Prior's liminal awareness of himself as subject to a state repression since it could turn Prior's anger against Rivers himself, and prevent Prior from returning to the Front. Prior can never know that the real eye behind the eye in the door belongs to Rivers. If this were to happen, Rivers would have failed in his

duty to treat traumatized soldiers only to return them to fighting and almost certain death.

Rivers is not aware that Prior has a hidden motive for visiting Beattie in jail, and would doubtless disapprove of it if he did know. Therefore, when he corners Prior into identifying himself as the spy during this meeting, he is forcing him into an inherently contradictory identification. In that cell, Prior is spying *for* the Ministry and *against* the Ministry simultaneously. He is visiting Beattie on behalf of Major Lode to determine the location of his childhood companion, Patrick MacDowell. However, he is also spying against the Ministry, hoping to gather evidence to show that she was entrapped. Prior knows that this internal split is self-destructive, and characteristically tries to provoke Rivers with an outrageous pun revealing his fears: "'So,' Prior said in a disgusted singsong, jabbing with his index finger, "'eye' was stabbing myself in the 'I.' And God knows one wouldn't want a reputation for puns like that!" (75). However, Rivers will not be provoked. His response to this dream is to avoid dealing with the conflict the dream expresses, and to reinforce the transference that Prior already feels for him: both actions that are in direct contradiction to his theoretical principles. After Prior's pun on "eye" and "I," Rivers asks him how he feels about being the spy when he interviewed Beattie. Prior responds: "I hate what I do. And I suppose I probably felt I was in a false position. Well, obviously I did, I'd have to be mad not to" (75). Rivers's next move is telling. Instead of confronting Prior's conflict as his theory would have him do, he moves away. "I want you to do something for me," Rivers said, "I want you to write down any dreams you have that are as . . . as bad as this one. Just record them. Don't try to

interpret. And send them to me" (75). Avoiding the conflict allows Rivers to sidestep his responsibility for his part in it. Medicine in the service of a military cause loses any neutrality or independence it might have claimed in civilian life.

Rivers's theory relegates Prior's loyalties to the Ropers to the protopathic pole of his hierarchy due to their lower middle-class origins and his childhood. In his terms, repressing these feelings to serve the higher epicritic purpose of fighting for England is necessary and healthy for Prior. As an army captain, Rivers's role is to see that Prior does his duty, which sets Prior in conflict with his old friends. Prior's earlier transference to Rivers precludes him from openly confronting Rivers about his role in exacerbating these conflicts, which, paradoxically, increases the intensity of the powerfully ambivalent bond between them. Prior needs to protect Rivers. So, Prior represses the conflict and eventually dissociates so that activities he cannot perform himself are delegated to his dissociated self, the warrior double who came to life on the battlefield. Prior's dissociation is first psychological, then social.

Prior's second dream directly engages Rivers's theory, and once again Rivers fails to read it as a critique of his theory. In this dream, Prior is walking in the desert. As in the previous dream, an eye is blocking his escape.

"I was walking along a path in a kind of desert and straight ahead of me was an eyeball. Not this size." Prior's cheeks twitched like boiling porridge. "Huge. And alive. And it was directly in front of me and I knew this time it was going to get me." He smiled. "Do whatever it is eyeballs do. Fortunately there was a river running along beside the path, so I leapt into the river and I was all right." (133)

The dream expresses Prior's knowledge of Rivers's own dissociation on a literal and symbolic level: Rivers splits into "the river" and "the eye." The kindly doctor who offers his patients a safe refuge is "the river"; this identification is straightforward and uncomplicated because it is the image of Rivers that he himself accepts. As before, "the eye" embodies the threat Rivers poses for Prior. Since Rivers never acknowledges that he is in any way a threat to his patients, he forces Prior to repress his awareness that he could be a threat. In his relationship with Rivers, Prior can acknowledge only the benign "river" as representing his Rivers; he adopts the disavowed "eye" for himself. In his final meeting with Beattie Roper, Prior performs a gesture of self-accusation that cements this hierarchical division in his mind. He visits Mac in jail to confirm that he must have been the one who betrayed him to the police. After the visit ends, Prior stands at the cell door, waiting for the guard to come and let him out. He realizes that "the painted eye must be looking straight at his belt buckle. Surreptitiously, he put his finger into the hole until it touched cool glass. Towers's eye, he remembered, lying in the palm of his hand, had been warm" (265). The gesture also marks Prior as an avatar of Oedipus, as we shall see.

Prior's repression of the threatening Rivers originates in the intense sexualized transference and counter-transference that flows like an electric current between them. He is less comfortable than Sassoon with such a strong transference, and attacks Rivers verbally:

"But then I suppose all your patients jump into fucking rivers sooner or later, don't they?"

The antagonism was startling. They might have been back at Craiglockhart, at the beginning of Prior's treatment. "How did you feel about being in the river?"

"Fine. It sang to me, a sort of lullaby, it kept telling me I *was* all right—as long as I stayed in the river."

"You didn't feel you wanted to get out?"

"In the dream? No. Now, YES."

Rivers spread his hands. "Your coming here is entirely voluntary."

"With *that* degree of dependency? Of course it's not fucking voluntary." (133-34)

Prior's dream indicates that the source of the conflict arises from within Rivers's own theoretical ambivalence about transference. On the one hand, Rivers encourages it by creating an atmosphere of trust. On the other hand, he denies the power of its influence in his practice, depriving the patient of the opportunity to deal with it openly because it undermines his own principle of self-reliance. Prior's dream acts out the consequences of the theoretical conflict. In spite of his hostile outbursts, Prior never consciously identifies Rivers with the malevolent eye; his transference to Rivers means that he will repress any awareness of a threatening Rivers, because Rivers himself can't know this and Prior needs to protect him. So, for Prior, the eye comes to represent his own role as a government spy, and in this role, he becomes an agent of Rivers's own disavowed threatening self, a double for Rivers. Prior is apparently unique in his ability to decipher Rivers's handwriting.



Rivers and Prior don't discuss this nightmare, allowing Rivers to avoid acknowledging his role in creating Prior's conflict. Instead, Rivers suggests that Prior might recover his memories by using hypnosis. The conversation, like the dream, next turns to Rivers's own repressions. Rivers tells Prior about the event that caused him to lose his capacity to remember anything visually. The last building he can recall is the interior of a house in Brighton where he lived until he was five. He can recall everything about the house except the top floor, where he believes that something happened that was so traumatic he forgot it. "And in order to ensure that I forgot I suppressed not just the *one* memory, but the capacity to remember things visually at all" (137). Prior and Rivers switch roles, with Prior moving to take his place in Rivers's chair, and during the conversation that follows, Prior projects his own trauma into the gap in Rivers's memory of his own childhood. He tells Rivers that he was either raped or beaten on that top floor just before he discloses his own rape by a priest in a vicarage. Rivers's immediate response is to resist hearing this information: "It was on the tip of Rivers's tongue to say that no doubt Prior had been 'raped' in any number of places, but he managed to restrain himself" (137). Rivers silences Prior's expression of his trauma by simply denying the fact of the rape. Prior is asking Rivers to witness his trauma, but instead, Rivers silently shifts the focus from Prior the raped child to Prior the prostitute. In doing so, he obliterates Prior's history of sexual abuse, eliding the causal link between the abused and exploited child and the exploiting adult.

## Oedipus Re(du)x

The causal link between the abused child and the adult survivor acquires mythic status when Barker explicitly casts Rivers and Prior as Oedipal figures. When Prior unexpectedly assumes Rivers's role by sitting in his chair, he effectively overturns the epicritic/protopathic hierarchy that governs their therapeutic relationship, and corners Rivers into confronting his own repressed trauma. He forces Rivers to admit that he began to stammer immediately after the traumatic event occurred at the top of the stairs in his childhood house. When Rivers tries to deny a cause-and-effect relationship between the two events, Prior becomes exasperated:

"For God's *sake*. Whatever it was, you *blinded* yourself so you wouldn't have to go on seeing it."

"I wouldn't put it as dramatically as that."

"You destroyed your visual memory. You put your mind's eye *out*. Is that what happened, or isn't it?"

Rivers struggled with himself. Then said simply "Yes." (139)

In this typically charged exchange, Prior figures Rivers as a modern Oedipus, and the inheritor of his ruined eyes. When details of the repressed incident are finally revealed in *The Ghost Road*, we are not surprised to discover that it is an incident of symbolic castration.

Rivers has been to visit his neurasthenic, bed-ridden sister, Kath. She reminds him of a painting that had hung at the top of their stairs, and recalled that he habitually looked away as he passed by. The subject of the painting is a traumatic incident from the life of his uncle, William Rivers, for whom he had been named. Will Rivers was a

midshipman on the *Victory*, and had "shot the man who shot Lord Nelson," sustaining serious wounds to the mouth and leg (*Ghost* 94). As Kath reminds Rivers, the painting showed "Uncle William having his leg cut off. And there was somebody waiting with a sort of cauldron of hot tar ready to pour over the stump (93).

According to family legend, Will Rivers endured the amputation without once crying out. Will Rivers's symbolic castration thus becomes a lesson in the necessity of silent suffering for his namesake. Rivers remembers that, at eight or nine, he embarrassed his father by crying loudly because he was having his hair cut. His father tried to quiet him, but he only howled louder. As a last resort, his father slapped him on the leg. The adult Rivers speculates that "being shown the picture was a lesson? You don't behave like *that*, you behave like *this*. 'He didn't cry,' his father had said, holding him up. '*He didn't make a sound*'" (95).

As the bearer of the disembodied eye, Prior has returned Rivers's disowned visual sense to him by leading him back to see what it was he tried so hard to repress. Will Rivers endured the amputation of his leg without anaesthetic, and his namesake destroys his own visual memory so that he does not have to witness this act. Little wonder then, now that Rivers is in the position of sending men to their death, that he doesn't want to remember that primal scene of sacrifice. Rivers and Prior divide the figure of Oedipus between them along familiar hierarchical lines; Rivers's epicritic act of psychological de-oculation complements Prior's protopathic sexual encounter with Mrs. Riley, the woman who wet nursed him when his mother was ill. Prior's moment of rebellion with Mrs. Riley is not traumatic because it is not hidden, and causes neither of them harm. This revision shifts the traumatic trigger from incest to his

father's abuse. As avatars of Oedipus, Rivers and Prior together revise their Freudian precursor; instead of a man who lives out the fantasy of killing his father and marrying his mother, we see a traumatized man who re-enacts his father's homicidal abuse, matching the pierced ankles of his childhood with his own gouged eyes.

The unstable relationship of transference and counter-transference between Rivers and Prior finally ruptures over Rivers's failure to witness Prior's abuse, and the novel's narrative dissociation opens up to become a frankly traumatized narrative in *The Ghost Road*. Prior knows his demons, and although he is uncomfortable with his occasionally sadistic behaviour during sex, he faces the abuse in his past and lives with its consequences in his life. Because Rivers is more protected by his class and education, he does not come face to face with his protopathic self until *The Ghost Road*.

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 Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Barker is indebted to the feminist historian Sheila Rowbotham for this image. Rowbotham notes that the conditions in Aylesbury Jail were recorded because it held Constance Markiewicz, the Irish countess imprisoned for taking part in the Easter Rising. "In the centre of every cell door there was a carved and painted eye, with pupil, eyelashes and eyebrow. . . . The eye was worse than the harsh regime, according to both Constance and a friend she made in prison, a tough Irish woman nicknamed Chicago May" ("Rebel" 80-81).

<sup>2</sup> The figure of Agnes, the pregnant nun buried alive beneath the vaults of a convent in M.G. Lewis's *The Monk* comes to mind. The novel's extravagant sexual excesses of rape, incest and heterosexual lust effectively bury another theme: the pederastic monastic romance between Ambrosio, the monk, and Rosario, the novitiate and shape-shifting devil (see Tuite). In *Between Men*, Eve Sedgwick claims that "the Gothic was the first novelistic form in England to have close, relatively visible links to male homosexuality" (91). As we will see, Prior, the bearer of the encrypted trauma, has suffered through his own "romance" with Father Lawrence, an Anglican priest and pederastic rapist who was tutoring him.

<sup>3</sup> I have coined this term from the clinical sense of "dissociate," which describes a failure of mental integration such that one or more areas of consciousness become separated from normal consciousness and function independently as if an integrated whole.

<sup>4</sup> For another example of narrative dissociation in a novel about the construction of historical memory, see the Canadian novel *Bear*, by Marian Engel (1976). Lou, Engel's female protagonist, is a professional historian, an archivist, a keeper of textual memory, whose research on the history of a northern island leads her to interview a local man, Homer, the keeper of oral memory. As she constructs the region's history from documents, she systematically represses Homer's stories about female hardship and suffering from her account. These trauma narratives form a dissociated subtext to the main narrative. *Bear* is a traumatized narrative because these stories do not merge into one narrative of female endurance in a settler colony, nor with the main narrative dealing with Lou's relationship with the bear.

<sup>5</sup> See *The Times*, 1-11 March 1917, for the poison plot trial, and *The Times*, 30 May - 5 June 1918, for the libel trial.

<sup>6</sup> I will assume the narrator is male, since the narrator is associated with the epicritic values of detachment and rationality.

<sup>7</sup> See Randolph Trumbach: *Sex and the Gender Revolution, Vol. 1, Heterosexuality and the Third Gender in Enlightenment London*, University of Chicago Press, 1998, and Alan Bray, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England*, Gay Mens' Press, 1982.

<sup>8</sup> Michael Kettle, *Salomé's Last Veil: The Libel Case of the Century* (London: Granada Publishing, 1977); Felix Cherniavsky, *The Salomé Dancer* (Toronto:

McClelland & Stewart, 1991); Philip Hoare, *Oscar Wilde's Last Stand: Decadence, Conspiracy, and the Most Outrageous Trial of the Century* (New York: Arcade, 1998); Jennifer Travis, "Clits in Court: *Salomé*, Sodomy and the Lesbian 'Sadist,'" in *Lesbian Erotics*, ed. Karla Jay (New York: New York University Press, 1995); Lucy Bland, "Trial by Sexology?: Maud Allan, *Salomé*, and the 'Cult of the Clitoris' Case" in *Sexology in Culture*, ed. Lucy Bland and Laura Doan, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1998); Jodi Medd, "'The Cult of the Clitoris': Anatomy of a National Scandal," *Modernism/Modernity* 9:1 (2002) 21-49; and Amy Koritz, "Dancing the Orient for England: Maud Allan's 'The Vision of *Salomé*,'" *Theatre Journal* 46 (1994) 63-78.

<sup>9</sup>Rowbotham also wrote what Baxandall calls a "dramatic narrative," *The Life and Times of Mary Wollstonecraft*. Wollstonecraft's biography and her writings, particularly *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, are in the background of *Friends of Alice Wheeldon* (154).

<sup>10</sup>This would be Constance Markiewicz, in jail and doing hard labour for taking part in the Easter Rising (Rowbotham, "Rebel" 80). Rowbotham notes that Anne Marrecco's biography of the countess records a meeting with Wheeldon: "Once Constance met a Mrs Wheeldon in the passage who had been convicted (unjustly some thought) of an attempt to assassinate Lloyd George. Constance greeted her warmly saying, 'Oh I know you. You're in for trying to kill Lloyd George.' 'But I didn't,' protested Mrs Wheeldon, as she was hustled away from dangerous contact with the Irish rebel" ("Rebel" 81).

<sup>11</sup>Billing had no scruples about exploiting supporters with frankly delusional beliefs about him. Hoare reports that his espousal of "Christian values" caught the attention of Christian Scientists "who decided that he was 'the Saviour, Christ the King, come to redeem them at a moment of national peril'" (105). They feared that if he was convicted, he would not be able to fulfill his mission as Saviour. They selected a "serious lady in the movement," apparently very plain, to bear his child. Billing did his duty and she became pregnant just before the trial began (105). Soon after Billing's acquittal, this woman arrived on his doorstep with his infant in her arms. Billing found her tedious and sent her packing (213).

<sup>12</sup>Bayswater Road, the location of Prior's flat, is also home to George Smiley, the master spy of John Le Carré's cold war novels.

<sup>13</sup>This manifestation of the disembodied eye finds a precedent in an unusual surveillance device from a BBC television series called *The Prisoner*, which first aired in 1967. *The Guardian* described the series as "a unique mix of science fiction, action adventure, social satire and allegory" (Davies). Patrick McGoohan, who produced the series and wrote some of the episodes, plays a British secret agent who is kidnapped, drugged, and taken to a bizarrely cheery seaside prison colony called The Village. Here the inhabitants have no name, only a number, and are under constant visual surveillance. Anyone approaching the perimeter is pursued and brought back by a surveillance device that looks like a white weather-balloon. The balloon, known as Rover, is under the control of a fixed surveillance device that looks much like a disembodied eye on a stalk. McGoohan's character, now known only as

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Number 6, is repeatedly interrogated by a series of men, all identified as Number 2, who try to discover why he resigned. But he emphatically refuses to be "pushed, riled, stamped, indexed, briefed, debriefed or numbered" (Davies). Instead, he puts his energy into various escape plans and into trying to discover the identity of Number 1. During the last episode he succeeds; he gains his freedom when he discovers that he himself is Number 1. Apparently the suggestion that imprisonment can be an allegory for the self's entrapment within its own ideology was more than the British public was willing to tolerate. The last episode provoked such a hostile public response that McGoohan fled to Switzerland then to California where he still lives (Davies).

## Chapter 5

Allegory, ethnography and narrative trauma in *The Ghost Road*

"We couldn't go forward. We couldn't go back.  
We were pinned down. *We were dead before dying.*"<sup>1</sup>

**A haunting**

W. H. R. Rivers died very suddenly in Cambridge, on Sunday, June 4, 1922. Shortly after his death, his friend and colleague, the psychologist Sir Frederic Bartlett, recalled meeting Rivers while out for a walk the day before he died. On this Saturday of the Whitsuntide weekend, most were enjoying the especially fine weather. Rivers and Bartlett walked and talked together for a while, then parted. Sometime during the night alone in his rooms at St. John's College, Rivers developed a strangulated intestinal hernia. By the time he was discovered the following morning, it was too late to save him. His last official act was to sign the papers authorizing approval for a diploma in anthropology for a student from India (Slobodin 83n). As Bartlett passed St. John's College the following Monday morning, he noticed the flag was flying at half-mast in the spring sunshine. At the Porter's Lodge, he discovered that the flag was for Rivers:

Everything suddenly seemed silly. The sun shone, decorations were out, holiday makers were all over the place. There seemed no sense in it, for Rivers who was my friend and counsellor had gone, and I should see him no more (qtd. in Slobodin 83). A fortnight or so later I met him again, for the last time. I was in the College Combination Room, at the end of where the Council meetings are held. The table was set



for a meeting. All the members of Council were there but one. There was one vacant chair. Then he came in, alert and quick as usual. He went to the empty chair and sat down. He had no face. Nobody else knew him, but I knew him. I tried to say "Rivers! It's Dr. Rivers!" . . . Then I woke up. I was in bed, at home. It was pitch dark. For what seemed like several minutes I was absolutely sure that he was there, in the deep darkness, close to me. It was a dream. We had talked many times about death. He had said that if he should die before me, as seemed likely . . . he would try to get through to me. (qtd. in Slobodin 85)

Many years later, Bartlett wrote that "[t]here were two Rivers, the pre-War and the post-War; the pre-War whose ways of life and thought, whose hopes and fears not many people knew; [and] the post-War Rivers who was everywhere" (qtd. in Slobodin 47). Bartlett was not alone in believing he felt Rivers's presence after his death. In "Revisitation 1934, Dr. W. H. R. Rivers," Siegfried Sassoon writes "What voice revisits me this night? What face/To my heart's room returns?" (qtd. in Slobodin 62).

When the war began, Rivers enjoyed an international reputation as an eminent anthropologist and an experimental psychologist. He had recently been awarded the Gold Medal of the Royal Society. He had a broad and varied circle of friends, and he was respected by his colleagues and students alike. Arnold Bennett remembers undergraduates coming to see Rivers in his study

at nearly all hours to discuss the intellectual news of the day. . . .

His manner to young seekers after wisdom, and to young men who were prepared to teach him a thing or two, was divine. I have sat

aside on the sofa and listened to dozens of these interviews. They were touching, in the eager crudity of the visitors, the mature, suave, wide-sweeping sagacity and experience of the Director of Studies, and the fallacious but charming equality which the elder established and maintained between the two. (qtd. in Slobodin 78)

Nevertheless, his long-time friend, Sir Walter Langdon-Brown felt that "it was not until the war that Rivers found himself" (qtd in Slobodin 58). Langdon-Brown believed that Rivers discovered his skill in treating psychoneuroses in 1915, when he joined Maghull Hospital as a psychiatrist, "because he had to heal himself [so] that he could heal others. Anyhow his whole personality expanded as he grew to realize what was his true mission in life" (qtd. in Slobodin 58).

The spirit of W. H. R. Rivers *Road* as he was in the last years of his life haunts *The Ghost Road*. Barker's meticulous and exhaustive use of historical sources anchored *Regeneration* and *The Eye in the Door* firmly to actual events occurring in Britain during 1917 and 1918. Although Barker sets *The Ghost Road* explicitly in London and France during the last months of the war, the text seems to slip away from its moorings, and float away into some imaginary place and time. Barker achieves this textual effect in three ways. Initially, her use of flashbacks brings Rivers's memories of pre-war anthropological expeditions to Melanesia into his daily routine at the Empire Hospital and into his nightly dreams. She next connects the hospital to Billy Prior by employing a third-person narrator who figures his journey to the front in terms appropriated from Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass*. Finally, Barker connects these two protopathic worlds so that they seem to be the same place. If there is an historically specific reference point

for *The Ghost Road*, it is Oxbridge in 1898, the year that Rivers was seduced into anthropology by A. C. Haddon's expedition to Melanesia, and the year that the Rev. Charles L. Dodgson, Lewis Carroll, died.

### **Alfred Cort Haddon and the Cambridge Expedition to the Torres Strait (1898)**

Modern British social anthropology can date its origin to the Cambridge Expedition to the Torres Strait in 1898 headed by A. C. Haddon (Kuklick *Savage* 134). Before that, anthropology was dominated by "evolutionary titans, seated in armchairs, [who] culled ethnographic data from travel accounts to document their vision of the stages of creation of human cultural forms" (Stocking 71). In this era, there were men like T. H. Huxley, Francis Galton and E. B. Tylor who had travelled as young men, but they were the exception. Most members of the anthropological community supported the division of labour between collectors and theorists, some even holding that it resulted in superior scientific analysis, since the theorists' analytical objectivity was not compromised by any biases in the collecting.

Following the Torres Strait Expedition, "Haddon's argument that the anthropologist could understand 'native actions . . . from a native and not European point of view' only by direct observation of customs in context" became the generally accepted view (Kuklick "Fieldworkers" 159). After the British Association gave anthropology full section status in 1884, Tylor supported the establishment of a committee hoping to recruit qualified investigators and dispatch them to regions such as the wilds of the Canadian northwest to live among the Indians. One of them would be Franz Boas, a former physicist whose work marks the beginning of the empiric phase of the British ethnographic method, which depended on "the collection of data by academically

trained natural scientists defining themselves as anthropologists, and involved also in the formulation and evaluation of anthropological theory" (Stocking 74).

Alfred Cort Haddon, who would introduce Rivers to anthropology, was another recruit from the natural sciences. Haddon's formative experience as a biologist came during a six-month stay at the Naples Zoological Station in 1879, where biologists were encouraged to study living creatures within their natural habitats, rather than in the laboratory (Kuklick "Fieldworkers" 160). This marked the beginning of biology as a field science. Haddon's first trip to the Torres Straits in 1888 was as a marine zoologist intent on studying the coral reefs. Nevertheless, his plans changed after hearing some of the older missionized natives tell stories of their lives before the Europeans arrived, and he became determined to "salvage" what remained of a way of life he saw as on the verge of disappearing forever (Stocking 75). On his return to England, he consulted J. G. Frazer who pointed out that the molluscs of Melanesia would likely be there for researchers for some time, but that the customs and rituals disappearing from Melanesian society should be preserved before they had vanished from memory (Slobodin 19). Haddon's commitment to salvage ethnography inadvertently produces ethnographic documents, photographs and film that show the traumatic effects of British colonial policies on Melanesia.

In the late nineteenth century, the Torres Strait Islands exerted a fascination for researchers because their location, between two distinct biological, geographical and cultural zones of northern Australia and Papua New Guinea, made it ideal for testing theories in natural history, biology and ethnology ( Herle and Rouse 12). However, they were not ideal for studying "primitive" man, because the customs that Haddon wished to salvage were already slipping into the past. By the early

seventeenth century, outsiders had begun to arrive; the earliest known European contact is with the Spanish; Captain Luis Baez de Torres in 1606. Jeremy Beckett reports that their encounter with the Tudu Islanders was "traumatic": a man was shot and three women abducted (34). There are no records of any other European contact until the late eighteenth century, when the British established a colony at Port Jackson. The arrival of trepang<sup>2</sup> boats in the 1850s was accompanied by more violence; women were abducted and some men were recruited to work away from the Islands. By the 1860s, European presence was in greater evidence with the construction of facilities to repair boats and process the catch of commercial fishermen. In 1871, the London Missionary Society arrived, an event now "incorporated into Islanders' knowledge of their history as 'the coming of the light'" (Herle and Rouse 8). By the 1870s, the commercial exploitation of trepang and pearl shell for international markets brought a multi-ethnic mix of divers and traders into the area. As the Strait became important as a route to the Indies, trade with the indigenous population gradually took hold, although somewhat cautiously, since Islanders were known to kill castaways. The boats also brought in new and exotic diseases to the Islands (Beckett 35). In 1879, the Queensland government assumed control of the Strait, but delegated its administrative responsibilities to the London Missionary Society, who created a kind of Christian theocracy on the Islands, punishing Biblical sins like adultery, fornication and the breaking of the Sabbath (Beckett 37). In spite of these influences, Jeremy Beckett has argued that this contact did not significantly disrupt Melanesian society. "[I]f the appearance of creatures so radically different from themselves required explanation, this explanation had . . . to be 'encompassed' within the framework of vernacular understanding, since the

exchange of material goods was not matched by the exchange of meanings. As elsewhere in the Pacific, the Islanders at first took Europeans to be dead relatives returned and for some time referred to them by the words used for ghosts (Beckett 35). Thus, in one sense, Barker's "ghost road" is the road of British imperialism. The Islanders overturn the ethnographic hierarchy, figuring Europeans as their predecessors, even as the Europeans were convinced that the Islanders were their own evolutionary ancestors.

In their introduction to the centenary collection of essays commemorating this Expedition, Anita Herle and Sandra Rouse observe that it was conceived and mounted at a time when British anthropology was re-defining itself as a discipline. With affinities to both the arts and natural sciences, anthropology was seeking academic legitimacy, but lacked disciplinary boundaries and a common accepted methodology (Herle and Rouse 1). The expedition was to change all that. Haddon brought together a multidisciplinary team that re-defined the limits of anthropology at that time. He recruited experts in anthropogeography, ethnology, ethnomusicology, linguistics, psychology, physical anthropology and sociology (Herle and Rouse 3). Haddon and his multidisciplinary team spent about seven months in their researches, moving from island to island. As the team's ethnologist, Haddon wrote up accounts of local customs, sought out their decorative arts and recorded measurements of the islanders' physical characteristics. As one of three psychologists, Rivers conducted experiments on the visual perception of colour; however, once in the field, he devised the genealogical method, as we have seen in the first chapter. Other members of the team investigated tactile sensation, linguistics, and native medicine, and the group's photographer, Anthony Wilkin, recorded house construction techniques (Herle and

Rouse 3). The group generated a great deal of data, which was later compiled and published in six volumes as the *Reports of the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to the Torres Straits*. In addition to reports, the expedition collected many artifacts, field photographs, sound recordings on wax cylinders, drawings and sketches, as well as an ethnographic film. Rouse believes that the data collected by them became the "institutional 'capital'" anthropology needed to gain legitimacy within the academy.

When Haddon came to organize the 1898 expedition, he modeled it on the interdisciplinary marine exploring expeditions with which he was familiar (Stocking 76). Henrika Kuklick states that the Torres Strait Expedition was conceived as a "demonstration project," in which laboratory and field practice would be integrated in such a way as to "inspire anthropology to follow the lead of other natural history sciences, which had earlier abandoned the division of labour between collectors who toiled in the field and theorists who worked in libraries and laboratories" ("Fieldworkers" 160). The logistics of the expedition must have been extraordinary--six Europeans with their scientific gear and apparatus preparing for a stay of several months. It is on this trip that Rivers receives the terribly painful sunburn that Barker's Rivers relates in *The Ghost Road*. In formulating their approach, the expedition's members developed a methodology that borrowed natural science techniques and applied them to ethnology. The expedition's "emphasis on direct field research in the Torres Strait provided the basis for the development of intensive fieldwork as the essential methodology of anthropology--'the ethnographic method'" (Herle and Rouse 15).

The collection of volumes of dry data presented the team with a problem: how to write it up. Contemporary models for ethnographic writing could be found in

reports of the Bureau of American Ethnology and in Frank Cushing Hamilton's work on the Zuñi; however, there was as yet no generally accepted model for ethnographic texts (Beckett 24, 24n7). Although "Haddon saw the need to remind his readers that he had been there, the work is not organized around 'fieldwork experience', as were the great ethnographies of the mid-twentieth century. Nor, given the way the project had been conducted, could it have been, since the ethnography--in fact, scarcely integrated compilations--consisted primarily of information about a world that could no longer be observed" (Beckett 48). Thus, ethnographic discourse is yet another textualization of scientific empiricism that is associated with the disembodied eye.

In 1898, the year of the expedition, the British Empire was in its heyday, and "[a]nthropology was but one among a range of field sciences that benefited from colonialism in its development as an organized enterprise; when early fieldworkers journeyed to remote locations to record phenomena that were either unique or best observed there, they worked for preference in the relative security of those territories that seemed to be firmly fixed under colonial control--such as the Islands of the Torres Strait at the time of the Expedition" (Kuklick "Fieldworkers" 161). Haddon used government contacts made during his visit ten years earlier to gain the cooperation of local chiefs (Beckett 41). He wished to film ceremonies that had been banned by the London Missionary Society, which brought him into conflict with the indigenous pastors, Christian converts who had been directly involved in the destruction of sacred objects. With some effort, Haddon did manage to persuade Islanders to re-enact a ceremony so that he could film it. This event is considered the high point of the expedition and of his career (Beckett 41), and its significance as an artifact of cultural trauma will be discussed later.



Haddon had worked closely with the colonial administration during his first visit in 1888, and this infrastructure greatly aided his researches again in 1898. Herle and Rouse point out that colonial officials provided "access to information, transportation and accommodation as well as legitimizing the nature of their inquiries. European teachers, traders and missionaries acted as translators and intermediaries for the expedition. Its members, in effect part of the colonial infrastructure they encountered, were also critical of its impact on the local populations" (Herle and Rouse 13). Although published much later in 1922, Rivers's paper "The Psychological Factor" assesses the destructiveness of the British ban on headhunting and expresses his deep concern for the fate of Melanesian culture in the face of an ignorant and arrogant British colonial administration.

The research carried out by the expedition's psychologists, Rivers, C. S. Myers, and W. McDougall, was the first experimental investigation into the psychology of "racial differences" (Richards 136). By serving empiricist and imperial ends, the research represented "both the failure of certain high Victorian views of 'race' and the advent of a new Modernist discipline" (Richards 136). In his study of the expedition's research, Graham Richards writes that "[i]n the background lies the expedition's dual character as both representing and transcending a classical colonialist encounter between 'civilized' rulers and 'savage' subjects. This ambiguity pervades the *Reports* Vol. II, particularly in its constant oscillation between patronizingly 'racist' (as it now seems) attitudes towards the subjects and an equal tendency to confess the minimal nature of the 'racial' differences actually identified" (Richards 136-37). Richards goes on to say that "[t]he theoretical background was, essentially, Herbert Spencer's hypothesis . . . that 'primitives' surpassed 'civilized'

people in psychophysical performance because more energy remained devoted to this level in the former instead of being diverted to 'higher functions', a central tenet of late Victorian scientific racism" (137). However, in the *Reports* two pairs of competing imperatives are evident: "defence of the validity and the value of the findings versus diligently honest scientific reporting of the problems attending their acquisition; salvaging the Spencer hypothesis versus refuting exaggerated travellers' tales of animal-like 'savage' sensory virtuosity" (Richards 144). The expedition's members could hardly admit failure to their sponsors, so they wrote up their research as optimistically as possible, short of actual falsification. By 1904, Rivers had lost interest in any further research into race difference, regarding it as an illusion (Richards 149). Was the expedition racist? Inevitably, given the cultural racism expressed in contemporary science and in British imperialism. Richards, however, feels that "the Expedition's significance lies precisely in the productive implications of its own ambiguity" (136). That is, the debate around race-differences exposed the racism inherent in the question itself.

Rivers himself organized his next expedition to Melanesia, known as the Percy Sladen Trust Expedition (1907-08). Accompanied by two junior colleagues, Gerald C. Wheeler and Arthur M. Hocart, Rivers spent the better part of a year in the Western Solomons and in Fiji. Works published from this expedition include case studies drawn from Rivers's and Hocart's collaboration and Rivers's *The History of Melanesian Society*, based on his survey-work. Here Rivers "argued that specific historical experience rather than an evolutionary programme inherent in the human species, explained social structural change" (Kuklick, "Fieldworkers" 163n). Rivers and Hocart planned to collaborate on publications based on their research in the

Western Solomons, but the war intervened and the work as planned was never published. Hocart, however, did publish four substantial articles based on this intensive field-work: "The Cult of the Dead in Eddystone of the Solomons," Part I and II, in 1922; "Medicine and Witchcraft in Eddystone of the Solomons" in 1925; and "Warfare in Eddystone of the Solomons" in 1931. These articles are Barker's sources for the Melanesian ethnographic incidents and characters in *The Ghost Road*; however, Barker has fleshed them out from the bare sketches in Hocart's articles. In a sense, this novel shows a Rivers who might have written articles very different from his last writings, which are still very much influenced by his adherence to scientific empiricism.

### **Ethnographic allegory**

Throughout the trilogy, Barker adopts the post-colonial strategy of appropriating institutional discourses to critique the institutions with which they are associated. As we have seen, in *Regeneration* she appropriates medical discourse to expose the contradictions in Rivers's trauma theory, and in *The Eye in the Door* she uses journalism to reveal its inadequacy in documenting social trauma. Since *The Ghost Road* focuses on Rivers's anthropological memories, her choice of model must be ethnography. Post-colonial theory describes appropriation as "the ways in which post-colonial societies take over those aspects of the imperial culture--language, forms of writing, film, theatre, even modes of thought and argument such as rationalism, logic and analysis--that may be of use to them in articulating their own social and cultural identities" (Ashcroft et al. 19). Although the historical materiality of Barker's trilogy is specifically British, the institutional discourses she appropriates

have international currency, making the books familiar to non-British readers for whom the historical details will be unfamiliar.

Ashcroft et al. define ethnography as "that field of anthropological research based on direct observation of and reporting on a people's way of life" (85). Ethnography traditionally employs a two-stage methodology beginning with fieldwork during which the cultural anthropologist collects and records data. The second stage is "reportage, the production of a written description and analysis of the subject under study" (85). The ethnographic theorist James Clifford has argued at some length that ethnographic texts are (and have always been) allegorical. Before anthropology emerged as a science of both human and cultural phenomena, ethnographic writers employed biblical or classical allegories in their representations of Europe's others. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when anthropology was defining itself as a discipline, it constructed the cultures it studied "in a Darwinian way as stages in the 'development' of man, ideas that were clearly useful to colonial discourse in constructing a hierarchy of cultures" (Ashcroft et al. 83). Jeremy Beckett observes that within the "terms of the Expedition's ethnological agenda, which Haddon on one occasion had defined as 'a complete History of Man', the Islanders were representatives of an earlier stage of human development, as well as exemplary of various formative processes in human prehistory" (24).

Also evident is an allegorical tendency to locate the ethnographic subject within a predetermined narrative of western history. The representation of the ethnographic "other" as Darwinian precursor and as representing an earlier stage in human development clearly aligns itself with Rivers's hierarchy which figures "savage" peoples as protopathic. Clifford cites Father Lafitau's "famous comparison

(1724) of Native American customs with those of the ancient Hebrews and Egyptians [that] exemplifies an earlier tendency to map descriptions of the other onto conceptions of the '*premier temps*'" (101). Clifford argues that early scientific ethnographies create an allegorical register that can be theoretical, interpretative or explanatory (103); for example, he notes that "the allegory of salvage [has been] deeply ingrained" in ethnographic texts since Franz Boas's time (113). As we have seen, Haddon's 1898 Torres Strait Expedition certainly began with salvage in mind; his decision to leave zoology for anthropology was motivated by his conviction that he must salvage what he could of Melanesian culture before it disappeared (Herle and Rouse 3). Clifford, however, ignores the obvious Christian overtones also present in the salvage allegory. Imperialism hoped to save more than dying customs; it hoped to save souls as well.

Post-colonial theory holds that imperial control of the means of representation (more than the means of production) established the hegemony of imperial European powers; however, Barker suggests that more than the power of the imperial discourse, it is the hierarchical underpinnings of this discourse that have been the deciding factor (Ashcroft et al. 122). I am using imperialism here in Edward Said's sense to mean "the practice, theory and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory" (qtd. in Ashcroft et al. 122). From 1880, modern industrial powers pursued expansionist policies for their own political and economic advantage. Ashcroft et al. date the beginning of classical imperialism to "1885, when the Berlin Congo Conference ended and the 'scramble for Africa' got underway. . . . But the 'scramble' itself really began earlier, in 1879, when the rivalry between Britain and France became intense in West Africa, and intensified further in 1882, when Egypt

was occupied, and the Treaty of Brazza-Moroko initiated the struggle for the Congo. At the turn of the century, both European and American commentators enthusiastically advocated a policy of imperialism, because the idea of expansion could be seen, and was presented, in terms of the improvement of the lot of the 'barbaric nations'" (122-23). Although Clifford's discussion significantly identifies allegory as a rhetorical strategy employed by writers and readers of ethnography, his definitions and descriptions of allegory (from S. T. Coleridge to Paul de Man) are somewhat confusing, since he uses "allegory" to refer to a narrative structure, a writing practice, and a reading strategy interchangeably. Clifford maintains that, since the early twentieth century, scientific ethnographers have written allegorically, consciously establishing "a privileged allegorical register [they identified as]'theory,' 'interpretation,' or 'explanation'" (Clifford 103).

As I discussed in an earlier chapter, post-traumatic stress disorder manifests itself allegorically; any new event that triggers the affect of the traumatic event becomes a replay of that event for the traumatized person. The experience of PTSD is allegorical: the meaning of the new event always derives meaning and significance from the initial traumatizing event. Thus allegory becomes the ideal stance for the expression of post-traumatic stress disorder.

### **Narrative trauma**

Barker constructs a bifurcated narrative in *The Ghost Road* to contain the twin traumas of child abuse and colonialism. The dissociated narrative (from *The Eye in the Door*) splits into two discrete narrative trajectories: one follows Rivers as he treats traumatized officers at the Empire Hospital in London, and the other follows

Prior from Scarborough to London where he meets Rivers one last time before departing for the western front. Even when the reader knows a connection exists between the two trajectories, Barker represses it from the text. For instance, Prior sends Rivers letters from the front, and although Rivers mentions receiving them, the reader does not know what Prior wrote or what Rivers thinks about them. The only exception is Prior's final letter, which we read in its entirety (254).

This explicit level of narrative trauma divides the text into two hierarchically. Prior's narrative is a protopathic journey away from Britain and towards his death, and Rivers's narrative begins as an epicritic reconsideration of his treatment and his emerging doubts about the war, but ends in a dream vision that signifies his re-evaluation of his hierarchy. In the two months since the end of *The Eye in the Door*, Rivers has continued to treat Prior privately in his rooms, but the electricity that charged their previous meetings has vanished. Although Prior no longer dissociates into fugue states, he still has nightmares about the war. Rivers has no further interest in probing into Prior's conflicts, however, since he has done his duty to God and country by curing him. More to the point, it is to his advantage not to investigate them since the dreams implicate him in ways he is reluctant to admit. In relating one of his nightmares, Prior tries unsuccessfully to bait Rivers as he had done so often in the past by telling him that in the dream he saw

"the faces of the revolver targets--you know, horrible snarling baby-eating boche--turned into the faces of people I love. But only after I'd pulled the trigger, so there was nothing I could do about it. 'Fraid I killed you every time."

"Ah, so it isn't a *bad* nightmare, then?"

They smiled at each other. (98)

However, Prior's characteristic mix of hostility, affection and sexual seductiveness no longer engages Rivers. Prior's impossible conflict between loving Rivers and hating him is the inevitable result of his "cure," as we saw in the previous chapter. His love for Rivers was the basis for the transference between them, which made his recovery possible, and his recovery made his return to the front inevitable. His hatred has been repressed into murderous nightmares. In *The Eye in the Door*, the connection between Prior and Rivers was the only common ground shared by the narratives of the two trials. In *The Ghost Road*, with the connection between Prior and Rivers severed, the text divides into the two trajectories, each of which ends nearly simultaneously with Prior's death in France, and Hallet's death in the Empire Hospital in London.

This explicit narrative trauma is so apparent that it nearly succeeds in diverting the reader's attention from the more subtle narrative splitting marked by two allegories that are the textual manifestations of British national traumas. The Empire Hospital as the site of Rivers's medical practice suggests that the empire itself is diseased, and connects the suffering of the soldiers with the imperial trauma to Melanesian society.<sup>3</sup> The allegory in Prior's narrative trajectory initially seems to be distinct from the Melanesian allegory constructed by Rivers. The anonymous third-person narrator figures Prior's journey to the front through Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass*. This narrator's invocation of Carroll and his worlds identifies him with Rivers; that is, he uses the figure of Carroll in the same rhetorical fashion as Rivers, and ascribes to the hierarchy that informs virtually all of the historical Rivers's writing and these novels. While Prior writes his journal of observation, reflection and incident, the narrator assumes the privilege of ascribing



meaning to it--a paradigm borrowed from early anthropology. As a prisoner of allegory, Prior's fate is sealed; he is "dead before dying." Rivers, however, by moving consciously between the two allegorical registers, is in a position of knowledge that enables him to maintain control. When he does move inside the allegory, it is by choice, to protect himself from knowledge that will implicate him in ways he cannot accept.

### **Rivers as failed allegorist: Eddystone Island in the Empire Hospital**

As Rivers goes about his daily routine seeing traumatized soldiers in the hospital, his stance towards his memories of the pre-war anthropological expeditions to Melanesia creates an allegorical register that informs medicine, warfare and death in Britain. Ultimately, however, the network of allegorical correspondences between Britain and Eddystone Island resists the epicritic/protopathic allegory set up by the ethnographic relation between them. Instead of Melanesia as an "uncivilized" or "savage" evolutionary precursor of Britain, we see Britain as a more savage Melanesia. Rivers is aware of two registers of signification, and he moves between them sometimes consciously, sometimes unconsciously. At times, particularly during his treatment of traumatized officers, Rivers's awareness forces the two registers into proximity, collapsing the allegorical relation. At other times, Rivers seems to actively push the registers apart, re-enforcing the allegorical distance.

The culture of war is the common ground between Britain and Melanesia. While Britain endures the final year of a war that has lasted longer and has been more costly than anyone could have predicted, the inhabitants of Eddystone Island are perishing from the lack of their traditional methods of warfare. The British ban on

head-hunting has traumatized their culture; without the heads of their enemies, they cannot perform the rituals and ceremonies that give their lives meaning and coherence. This collapse of cultural systems is evident with Ngea's death.<sup>4</sup> Rivers is disturbed to see his widow, Emele, crouched in a small wooden enclosure, "knees bent up to her chin, in exactly the same position as the corpse of her husband" (161).<sup>5</sup> According to custom, she can be released only if a head is taken (170). However, if the Islanders mount a raid on a neighbouring island, the British Commissioner will hear about it. As Rivers points out, if that happens, "then you've got a gunboat off the coast, villages on fire, trees cut down, crops destroyed, pigs killed. Screaming women and children driven into the bush" (185). The British colonial administration is willing to kill more people to stop head-hunting than the Islanders would have killed in their ritual raids. Prevented from mounting a killing raid, they kidnap a small boy as a symbolic head. Although Rivers believes that "head-hunting had to be banned," he sees that

the effects of banning were everywhere apparent in the listlessness and lethargy of people's lives. Head-hunting was what they had lived for. . . . This was a people perishing from the absence of war. It showed in the genealogies, the decline in the birth rate from one generation to the next--the island's population was less than half what it had been and much of that decline was deliberate. (207)

The ban inflicts a cultural trauma on Eddystone that threatens the literal survival of the Islanders as surely as if a gunboat had opened fire on them. The gunboats and the "diseases of the English nursery: whooping cough, measles, diphtheria, chicken pox,

scarlet fever" were fatal (125). "And the mission boat carried them from island to island, station to station, remorselessly, year after year" (125).

In fact, the *Southern Cross* that carries Rivers and Hocart to Eddystone Island is a Noah's ark of British imperialism. Rivers and Hocart find themselves in the company of Brennan, a former "black-birder" who had made a living kidnapping natives to work on plantations in Queensland; Father Michael, "trailing behind him the atmosphere of the theological college he'd not long left behind--cups of cocoa and late-night discussions on chastity in other people's bedrooms" (120); and finally the captain, who makes a living transporting passengers and disease from island to island. The *Southern Cross* also transports those on whom the cultural trauma of colonialism has been most severe: a pathetic band of missionized natives in "cast-off European suits and floral-print dresses" (118). They are the dispossessed, "travelling from one station to the next, most of them from islands where the impact of western culture had been particularly devastating" (118).

Melanesian culture understands that disease and cultural devastation wrought by imperialism and colonialism are aspects of a Melanesian spirit called Ave.<sup>6</sup> Njiru informs Rivers that Ave

is both one spirit and many spirits. His mouth is long and filled with the blood of the men he devours. Kita and Mateana [spirits causing illness] are nothing beside him because they destroy only the individual, but Ave kills 'all people 'long house'. The broken rainbow belongs to him, and presages both epidemic disease and war. Ave is the destroyer of peoples. (268)

The fall of 1918 saw war and disease, a world-wide influenza pandemic that is believed to have originated in China and eventually killed between 20 and 40 million people. In the hospital Rivers and his patients are suffering from it: Rivers is running a high fever and Wansbeck is so ill, Rivers thinks he may die. Njiru teaches Rivers the words of the exorcism for Ave, perhaps so that Rivers will put it in his book, and the words will address the destructiveness of Ave emanating from the British colonial administration.<sup>7</sup>

Britain, however, has scant regard for the need to have a direct connection to the spirit world. In Melanesia, the extraordinary care devoted to the disposition of skulls, the elaborate funeral rites and ceremonies and the existence of a separate language for ghosts attests to the deep regard, even reverence, of the Islanders for the spirits of those who have died. In Britain, associations with the dead fall within the protopathic world of Ada Lumb. Ada's address on Melbourne Terrace associates her with other protopathic inhabitants of the Antipodes, as does her dress, a funereal black to mark her *faux* widowhood, and her occupation, dispensing patent medicines for the cure of venereal disease or the procuring of abortions. Ada enjoys a night out at "the spuggies."<sup>8</sup> Prior and Sarah accompany her, but the black comedy of exploitation and hysteria that Prior witnesses disgusts him, and he leaves after witnessing an exhibition of speaking in tongues, glossolalia. Ada, however, stays for the grand finale, a woman who has to be carried out after she collapses.

This scene stands in sharp contrast to a ceremony to mark the placing of Ngea's skull in the skull house.<sup>9</sup> Rivers's regard for Njiru elevates this similar event in a hierarchically superior position to Ada's evening at the spuggies. Rivers and Hocart have been invited to attend a ceremony following the death of a chief, Ngea.

Kundaite, who is officiating at the ceremony, is able to interpret the language of ghosts, and agrees to question the ghosts who come to take Ngea's ghost to its final home on Sonto.<sup>10</sup> As the ceremony begins, all except Rivers and Hocart hear the swish of canoe paddles marking the arrival of the ghosts. Then the ghosts begin to whistle. As interpreted by Kundaite, the ghosts ask questions about white men: Who are they? Why are they here? Were they as harmless as they seemed? Why did they want to hear the language of ghosts? (210). Finally, Kundaite reports that the Ngea's ghost has entered the room. His widow begins to wail, the room fills with whistles, as the ghost of his mother says she is taking him to the final home. Walking back to their tent, Rivers and Hocart realize that since Njiru hadn't been present, he was the likely source of the whistling. Years later, riding out the febrile visions caused by influenza, Rivers realizes the questions the ghosts asked were the questions the natives wanted answered. The ceremony provides the living with a genuine sense of continuity between themselves and their ancestors, and reassurance that when it is their turn, someone will be waiting for them in the spirit world. Furthermore, it is a forum in which questions vital to the survival of the group can be asked. Placing the questions in the mouths of the ghosts allows Kundaite and Njiru, who did the whistling, to ask the questions that need to be asked without the risk entailed in confronting Rivers and Hocart directly.

Rivers's capacity in his later medical work to collapse the hierarchical allegorical relation between Britain and Melanesia derives from a transformative experience in a cave filled with bats.<sup>11</sup> Since Rivers and Hocart have been intensely interested in beliefs about death and ghosts, as well as rites and ceremonies associated with funerals, Njiru agrees to take them to visit the cave, which is believed to be the

home of ghosts who have not departed for Sonto, the usual destination of spirits after death. The cave has an outer chamber, and a smaller, almost inaccessible inner chamber. As Hocart and the others examine drawings made by ghosts, Rivers and Njiru move into this inner chamber, leaving the main group in the outer area. Once inside this inner chamber, Rivers shines his torch on the walls, and discovers that they are alive with thousands, hundreds of thousands, of bats. Although they can hear talk and laughter coming from the outer chamber, "their isolation in this hot, fur-lined darkness was complete" (166). Rivers loses his grip on his torch, and it clatters "to the ground, where it continue[s] to shine, a *single yellow eye* focused on them in the darkness" (emphasis mine 166-67). This is the empiric eye, the symbol of all Rivers has held to be true, and once divested of it, he experiences a kind of rebirth:

The walls lifted off and came towards them. Rivers barely had time to see the beam of light become a tunnel filled with struggling shapes before he was enclosed in flapping squeaking screaming darkness, *blinded*, his skin shrinking from the contact that never came. (emphasis mine 167)

Having lost his detached scientific sight, Rivers connects with the protopathic earth.

In the midst of all the noise, he stands

with eyes closed, teeth clenched, senses so inundated they'd virtually ceased to exist, his mind shrunk to a single point of light. Keep still, he told himself, they won't touch you. And after that he didn't think at all but endured, a pillar of flesh that the soles of his feet connected to the earth, the bones of his skull vibrating to the bats' unvarying high-pitched scream. (167)

In this pre-war experience, Rivers finds himself stripped of scientific detachment, and driven into the protopathic regions of body and earth. Afterwards, he reflects that he felt "almost as if a rind had been pared off, [leaving him] naked, unshelled, lying in contact with the earth" (167). The experience also establishes a more transparent relationship with Njiru. "There had been *two* experiences in the cave," Rivers decides,

and he was quite certain Njiru shared in both. One was the reaching out to grasp each other's hands. But the other was a shrinking, no, no, not shrinking, a *compression* of identity into a single hard unassailable point: the point at which no further compromise is possible, where nothing remains except pure naked self-assertion. The right to be and to be *as one is*. (170)

Njiru's inheritance is head-hunting; through his grandfather and his grandmother, he is related to the most famous and ferocious of the head-hunting chiefs. Once Rivers can see Njiru for who he is, Njiru can answer "out of that hard core of identity, no longer concerned to evade questions or disguise his pride in the culture of his people" (170). Now that Rivers is stripped of the tyranny imposed by the single detached eye of scientific empiricism, Njiru can speak truly to him about the things he wants to know. He tells Rivers that the taking of a head is the only way to free Emele from her enclosure. Thus, the ban on head-hunting may paradoxically result in the death of an Islander unless a solution can be found that evades the ban.

## "Savage" medicine

Ethnographic representations of "savage" medicine would figure the indigenous medicine-man as ignorant in comparison with his European counterpart. Instead of representing Njiru as a protopathic version of Rivers, however, Barker has represented him as Rivers's Melanesian counterpart, almost a double. Both Rivers and Njiru are outsiders in their own society, Rivers because his sexual orientation is unacceptable, and Njiru because his spinal deformity means he cannot participate in most of the activities customary for men in that culture. Both are celibate, and both come from families with ancestral warrior heroes. In a way, too, Njiru does rounds on Eddystone, with Rivers as his medical student. Njiru is trying to teach him the meaning of *mate*, a word that the dictionaries translate as "dead." "Then and there [Rivers] received a tutorial, not unlike those he remembered from his student days in Barts. *Mate* did not mean dead, it designated a state of which death was the appropriate outcome" (134). Njiru is a good teacher. As Hallet lies dying in the Empire Hospital, Njiru's lesson comes back to Rivers: "*Mate*, would have been Njiru's word for this. . . . He would have seen Hallet as being, in every meaningful way, dead already, and his sole purpose would have been to hasten the moment of actual death: *mate ndapu*, die finish" (264).<sup>12</sup>

Although Rivers's daily hospital rounds filled with traumatized officers suggests that *The Ghost Road* is in part a reprise of *Regeneration*, Rivers's psychiatric practice has undergone a sea-change. He has incorporated Melanesian practices learned from Njiru, techniques that acknowledge the power of the protopathic to effect cures, indicating that Rivers's hierarchical model is collapsing. As a result, Rivers is having considerably more success curing his patients than he previously had.



For example, reason and autognosis have failed to convince Ian Moffet that the paralysis in his legs is, in Rivers's words, "pure hysteria, uncontaminated by malingering" (48). Moffett's case is simple and straightforward: on his first trip to the front, he suffers a "fainting fit" after hearing the noise of guns (20). His intense fear for his life conflicts with his obligation to fight, a conflict he resolves with hysterical paralysis. Moffett is a supercilious man who alienates Rivers by announcing that before the war he had been unable to bear even the sound of a champagne cork popping. Rivers believes that he must break Moffett's reliance on the hysterical paralysis to solve his conflict before a more rational approach would have any chance of curing him and returning him to the war. Rivers devises a treatment based on Njiru's practices. With charismatic certainty, he tells Moffett that he will cure his paralysis; he explains that he will draw stocking tops around the tops of his legs, beginning at the top of his thighs. Each day he will lower the lines a little, telling Moffett that sensation will return to his legs above the lines. As Rivers starts to draw on Moffett's thighs, he thinks that a "witch-doctor could do this, . . . and probably better than I can. Come to think of it, there was *one* person who'd have done it brilliantly," Njiru (49). Melanesian healing practices break Moffett's reliance on the paralysis to solve his conflict in a spectacular way, and the feeling to his legs is restored. Moffet reacts to the removal of his defense by drinking half a bottle of whiskey and slashing his wrists in the bathtub. In this instance, Rivers's awareness of two distinctly different medical practices brings the two systems together: first Rivers will use Njiru's ritual to break the symptom, then he will employ Western practices to treat the conflicts that caused Moffett's paralysis.

Telford-of-the-Pickled-Penis (as Rivers calls him) is another example of the collapse of the protopathic/epicritic hierarchy between Melanesia and Britain.

Although Major Telford has never been to Melanesia nor heard of the indigenous spirit called Ange Mate, he seems to be suffering from a bizarre disorder peculiar to men who have had sexual relations with her. Ange Mate is a Melanesian succubus, a powerful and angry spirit who lays in wait for a man to fall asleep on the beach.<sup>13</sup>

When she happens upon a man in this helpless state, she rapes him. Afterwards, the man suffers from many different complaints, including a missing penis. Telford believes that while he was in the hospital following a riding accident, one of the nurses amputated his penis, preserved it in a jar of formaldehyde, and stored it in the hospital basement. Rational questioning by Rivers yields a bizarre response. When he asks Telford what part of his anatomy he uses to urinate, he replies "M'cock, you stupid bugger, what do you pee out of?" (55). Diagnosing Telford as suffering from some version of an experience with Ange Mate, Rivers broaches the subject of his relations with women. He must have struck a nerve, because Telford rejects the suggestion out of hand, refusing to discuss the matter.

Rivers's patient Wansbeck suffers from a severe case of influenza in addition to "shell shock." Wansbeck killed a German prisoner with a bayonet. He had been in the line for twelve days and could think only that he needed to sleep and guarding this prisoner was stopping him. His war trauma takes the form of an apparition of this prisoner, standing silently by his bed every night. A thorough-going rationalist, Wansbeck believes that the apparition is "a projection of [his] own mind," not a ghost (226). Rivers's treatment integrates the Melanesian practice of speaking to ghosts into his treatment. First he determines Wansbeck's psychologically-informed explanation

for the phenomenon. Wansbeck agrees that the apparition is "the representation . . . of external standards that [he himself] believe[s] to be valid" (226). Recalling the night that the ghost of Ngea appeared to be accompanied to his final home by the other ghosts, Rivers directs Wansbeck to talk to the ghost. After Wansbeck leaves, Rivers speculates that "[a]t best, on such occasions, one became the conduit whereby one man's hard-won experience of self-healing was made available to another" (229).

Rivers collapses the expected allegorical relation between Britain and Melanesia when he practices medicine; however, when the allegorical relation involves him in a way that is threatening, he refuses to recognize its implications. Two culturally specific stories of sacrifice offer possible allegories for the literal level of signification around Prior's final visit to Rivers. One of these is a story from the island of Vao and the other is the story of Abraham and Isaac from Genesis 22:1-12. Rivers reflects that the difference between the two stories is the difference between "savagery and civilization," Vao, of course, representing savagery and the biblical story representing civilization. Rivers, however, does not accept that the similarity between the two stories marks them both as savage, and implicates him as one of the figures willing to sacrifice young men in war. Rivers rejects the "savage" story, implicitly accepting the "civilized" one, without acknowledging what that implies about himself. In addition, Barker's framing of River's reflections suggests that what he believes is civilization is actually savagery on a grander scale.

On Vao, when a bastard is born, a prominent man adopts him and treats him as a much-loved son. When the boy reaches puberty, he is ritually clothed and permitted to lead a boar to the sacrificial altar where his father awaits with a club in his hand. In front of the whole community who know what is about to happen, the father brings

the club down on his son's skull, killing him. This is the "savage" story. The "civilized" story is from Genesis 22:1-12. God calls on Abraham to sacrifice his only son, Isaac, as a burnt offering. Abraham proceeds to obey God without question. He builds an altar, and with knife in hand, approaches it with Isaac. When Isaac asks where they will get the lamb for the burnt offering, Abraham replies that God will provide the lamb himself. At the altar, Abraham binds Isaac, and prepares to sacrifice him in accordance with God's commands. As he raises his knife in the air, an angel appears with a message from God to stop the sacrifice; God has seen that Abraham fears him. Abraham then sees a ram caught by his horns in a thicket, and offers that instead. For Rivers, the two stories represent the difference between savagery and civilization because "the voice of God . . . forbid[s] the sacrifice, and will be heeded" (104). From Rivers's perspective, the story of Abraham's obedience demonstrates the natural justice and rightness of hierarchical authority since obeying it preserves this authority and saves Isaac, and also because it corresponds so closely to his own neurologically based epicritic/protopathic hierarchy. Without God's intervention, Isaac would be as dead as the little bastard child on Vao. Rivers is the foster father, but has convinced himself he is Abraham. Although Rivers is able to accept the collapse of his hierarchy when it comes to treating his patients, he is not yet able to consider the implications when they pose a more direct threat to him personally.

Each of these stories asks the reader to see the terms on which Rivers and Prior part allegorically. Since the likelihood of Prior's death in battle is so high as to be virtually a certainty, he could be considered a sacrifice, like Isaac. The "savage" story also fits with the details of Prior's biography. His own father disapproved of him joining up and wants nothing to do with him, so Rivers has become his surrogate

father, as he did to many of his patients. In the civilized story, Rivers assumes the role of Abraham, someone who believes in the fitness of hierarchical authority and obeys it whatever the cost. If the front is a sacrificial altar, then Rivers, as a representative of the state, does lead Prior back to a position where his life is in danger. In this allegory, Prior is Isaac.

Whether or not Prior is Isaac or the little bastard boy emerges from yet another allegory suggested by Rivers. Prior once told Rivers that the soldiers who return are "the *real* test cases" for his therapy, which gives Rivers an idea. He wants Prior to act as an anthropologist of the front, a participant-observer of himself and others like him. Prior would become his surrogate, his double, and his disembodied eye. Prior understands this task allegorically:

"You're giving me a football to kick across, aren't you? You remember that story? The Suffolk's kicking a football across No Man's Land when the whistles blew on the Somme? Bloody mad."

"No, the battle was mad. The football was sane. Whoever ordered them to do that was a very good psychologist."

"Ah!"

"But I know what you mean. It's become the kind of incident one can't take seriously any more. Only I'm not sure that's right, you see. I suppose what one *should* be asking is whether an ideal becomes invalid because the people holding it are betrayed."

"If holding it makes them into naïve idiots, *yes*." (102)

If the ideal in question is the rightness of hierarchical authority as vested in the British state, and if betrayal makes the ideal invalid as Rivers believes, then the deaths of Hallet and Prior invalidate the ideal, and their sacrifice is a savage story.

Hallet is something of a "naïve idiot" in Prior's view, "and had been well and expensively educated to think as little as possible" (143). He objects vehemently when Prior tells him that he doesn't think there is any rational justification for the war. Prior sees the war as "a self-perpetuating system. Nobody benefits. Nobody's in control. Nobody knows how to stop" (144). But Hallet cannot accept it:

"Look, all this just isn't *true*. You're -- no, not you -- *people* are letting themselves get demoralized because they're having to pay a higher price than they thought they were going to have to pay. But it doesn't alter the basic facts. We *are* fighting for the legitimate interests of our own country." (144)

Hallet pays a higher price than he could have imagined. He not only loses his life in a particularly gruesome way, he loses his conviction that his sacrifice is meaningful. His father, a career military officer, rejects his final message: "*Shotvarfet*;" it's not worth it (274). As Hallet is dying, the cry is taken up by the other brain-injured soldiers in the ward. Hallet's grotesque death from a head wound symbolizes the death of the epicritic ideal as well.

Prior's death at the Sambre-Oise canal is the inevitable culmination of a chain of betrayals by father-figures, his own father, Father Lawrence, Rivers, then the officers who planned and carried out this suicidal attack. Prior's company is ordered to assist in constructing a bridge across the canal. The much-decorated Colonel Marshall-of-the-Ten-Wounds protests in vain that trying to build "a bridge in the open

with the sort of fire we're likely to encounter is *impossible*. The whole operation's *insane*. The chances for success are *zero*" (252). Prior sees the battle plan as a miniature version of the strategy that resulted in the devastation of the Somme. He understands that the commanders "have tied us to the stake, we cannot fly, but bear-like we must fight the course" (271). As befitting the novel's primary agent of the protopathic, Prior's death is marked by a fall. A bullet strikes Prior as he is moving towards the canal:

There was no pain, more a spreading numbness that left his brain clear.  
 . . . He saw Owen die, his body lifted off the ground by bullets,  
 describing a slow arc in the air as it fell. It seemed to take forever to  
 fall, and Prior's consciousness filtered down with it. (273)

Death is the great leveler. Prior's death is in some way a reverse mirror image of Hallet's, and together they undermine Rivers's hierarchy. Hallet's body dies because his brain is injured; Prior's brain dies because his body cannot go on. Neither the epicritic brain nor the protopathic body can survive without the other.

The topographical details of this battle reify one of Prior's nightmares from *The Eye in the Door*, with a significant difference. In that dream, Prior is in the desert. An enormous eyeball threatens him, but he knows that he can jump into the river for safety. He is safe only as long as he stays in the river. Following Rivers's own theory, I previously interpreted the dream as Prior's attempt to resolve his conflict between two views of Rivers. "The river" represents the protecting doctor who cares for his patients, and "the eye" represents Rivers the military psychiatrist who is curing his patients only to return them to the front. During the battle by the banks of the Sambre-Oise canal, Prior and his men emerge "from beneath the shelter

of trees and out into the terrifying openness of the bank. As bare as an *eyeball*, no cover anywhere" (emphasis mine 272). They have been told by their superior officers that there is to be no retirement from the battlefield under any circumstances. A bullet hits him just as he is about to cross the water. He tries to move past the drainage ditches beside the canal, but the gas is too thick and he cannot reach his mask. The eyeball of Prior's nightmare from *The Eye in the Door*, his symbol for a threatening Rivers, has become the bank on which Prior dies. In his final moment of consciousness he "gazed at his reflection in the water, which broke and reformed and broke again as bullets hit the surface and then gradually, as the numbness spread, he ceased to see it" (273). The water, which in the dream had represented safety, now reflects his own death back to him, suggesting that the kindly Rivers from Prior's dream was an illusion.

Rivers's implication in Prior's death is also evident in Barker's use of an allegory of entrapment to frame the moment Prior leaves Rivers for the final time. As Prior prepares to go, Rivers admires his greatcoat. Prior responds as if he has been reading ethnology:

"So you should be at the price." Prior started to put it on. "Do you know you can get these with scarlet silk linings?"

"Army greatcoats?"

"Yes. Saw one in the Café Royal. On the back of one of my old intelligence colleagues. Quite a startling effect when he crossed his legs, *subtle*, you know, like a baboon's bottom. Apparently he's supposed to sit there and 'attract the attention of anti-war elements.'"

"Was he?"



"He was attracting attention. I don't know what their views on the war were." (102-03)

In the wake of Pemberton Billing's libel trial, the state continues to equate anti-war sentiments with homosexuality. Prior's entrapment, however, has been much more insidious and emerges from Barker's use of visual perspective to invoke the repressive power of the epicritic.

From his epicritic vantage point peeking through a crack in the curtains at an upstairs bedroom window, Rivers surreptitiously watches Prior leave, a "foreshortened [figure], running down the steps" (103). The reification of the epicritic/protopathic hierarchy in this scene dramatizes Prior's entrapment within the protopathic designation that foreshortens his life. Prior does not believe that he will survive this, his fourth trip to the front. When Rivers asks him to report back on the success or failure of his former patients, Prior's response is "I'll send you the half-time score" (102). He does not expect to survive to the end of the game. Watching him, Rivers cannot help recalling the two stories of sacrifice, but "he wished this particular memory had chosen another moment to return" (103). As the war nears its end, he is much less sure of himself and his belief in unquestioning loyalty and obedience to the authority of the state. He knows that the voice of God is not going to interfere in this sacrifice. This scene recalls a previous scene in which Prior's father stood looking down from a bridge and watched him having sex with Mrs. Riley. From Rivers's vantage point, Prior is "foreshortened, running down the steps" (103). As the ultimate textual representative of the epicritic, Rivers views the top of Prior's head, which appears larger than it should; Mr. Prior, as a textual representative of the protopathic,

had appropriately witnessed his son's buttocks, shining in the moonlight. Each of these men, one his father, the other his surrogate father, betray him.

### "Alice in HysteriaLand"

As Carroll's Alice falls down the rabbit hole, she wonders if she will fall through the centre of the earth and emerge in "The Antipathies"--where she will have to ask the name of the country: "Please, Ma'am, is this New Zealand or Australia" (5). Barker's allusion to Carroll's *Alice* books with their word play on Antipodes extends the protopathic associations from Carroll's physical inversion to the narrator's aversion for all things protopathic. Barker draws on the allegorical stance of ethnographers to create the narrator for Prior's trajectory, whose subtle and somewhat disguised allegory asks the reader to consider the events at the front in terms drawn from Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass*.<sup>14</sup> The *Alice* books are suggested most immediately by specific textual details that link the hospital to the battlefield. However, where Rivers consciously invokes Carroll's world, playing with the allusions, Prior is unaware that he is a prisoner of allegory.

The Empire Hospital becomes one of Carroll's alternate worlds when Rivers casts himself as the White Rabbit. "Quickly he ran downstairs and plunged into the warren of corridors, wondering if he'd have time to read the files on the new patients before the first of them arrived for his appointment" (24). He then constructs a fictitious case history of himself as the white rabbit:

An innocent young boy becomes aware that he is the object of an adult's abnormal affection. Put bluntly, the Rev. Charles Do-do-do-Dodgson can't keep his hands off him, *but* -- thanks to that gentleman's

formidable conscience -- nothing untoward occurs. The years pass, puberty arrives, friendship fades. In the adult life of that child no abnormality appears, except perhaps for a certain difficulty in integrating the sexual drive with the rest of the personality (What do you mean 'perhaps'? he asked himself), until, in middle age, the patient begins to suffer from the delusion that he is turning into an extremely large, eccentrically dressed white rabbit, forever running down corridors consulting its watch. What a case history. Pity it didn't happen, he thought, pushing the door of his consulting-room open, it would account for quite a lot. (24-25)

Rivers is an Orphic figure, moving into the psychological underworld of trauma to bring his soldiers back to the rational world. But he leads them back to another underworld when he cures them so they can return to the battlefield.

Rivers's conscious allegorizing connects the state's abuse of the soldiers to his own family's history with Lewis Carroll, the Reverend Charles Dodgson. Dodgson had received treatment for his stuttering from Rivers's father and had been a fairly frequent visitor to the historical Rivers's household; his diaries record about twenty visits between 1872 and 1877 (Slobodin 6). Dodgson amused the Rivers daughters by telling them stories, drawing pictures for them and going boating (Slobodin 6).

Barker's fictional account of Katharine's life-time of illness also comes directly from the historical record. Barker's Rivers notes that Katharine is "virtually bedridden . . . for much the same reasons as Moffet" (22). Barker, however, raises the specter of pedophilia with her Dodgson that is absent from Katharine's own child-like and affectionate memories of Carroll.<sup>15</sup> Barker's Rivers recalls that

At dinner one evening Mr Dodgson had leant across to mother and said, "I l-l-l-love all ch-ch-ch-ch"

"Train won't start," Charles [Rivers's brother] had whispered."

"Children, M-Mrs R-Rivers, as l-l-l-long as they're g-g-g-girls."

(26).

The ward housing the traumatized officers is a converted children's ward, replete with miniature sinks and copies of John Tenniel's famous illustrations of Carroll's Alice books on the wall: "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" (18). As Rivers treats Moffet for the hysterical paralysis of his legs, he sees these drawings

through a gap in the screens. . . . Suddenly, with Moffet's paralyzed leg clamped to his side as he closed the circle, Rivers saw the drawings not as an irrelevance, left over from the days when this had been a children's ward, but as cruelly, savagely appropriate. All those bodily transformations causing all those problems. *But they solved them too.*

Alice in Hysteriand. (23-24)

Prior's entrapment in an allegory of Carroll's work begins unobtrusively and builds gradually. On disembarking from the train in France, Prior and his men enter a world inflected with the pastoral and the fantastic. Their first night is spent in Amiens, billeted in what had been a solid bourgeois house before the war. But the war has transformed it. The two remaining pieces of furniture, a "vast carved oak sideboard" and "a child's painted rocking-horse" (recalling the rocking-horse-fly) suggest Lewis Carroll's world made real. This once substantial house and its neighbours sit in ruins,

amid an overgrown Looking-Glass Land, a "green jungle of a garden, sun-baked, humming with insects, the once formal flower-beds transformed into brambly tunnels in which hidden life rustled and burrowed" (142).

The suggestion of Carroll's alternate worlds is strengthened by the repeated references to roses, recalling the rose-tree at the entrance to the Queen's croquet-ground in *Alice in Wonderland* (66). The rose-tree bears white roses, but the gardeners have been instructed to paint them red. In the evenings, Prior and his men sit around a large table, set with candles and bowls of roses from the garden. During the day, they investigate

the back gardens, entering a world that nobody would have guessed at, from the comparative normality of the road.

A labyrinth of green pathways led from garden to garden, and they slipped from one to another, over broken walls or through splintered fences, skirting bramble-filled craters, brushing down paths overgrown with weeds, with flowers that had seeded themselves and become rank, with overgrown roses that snagged their sleeves and pulled them back. (245-46)

Men who had been billeted in the ruined houses before them had broken down the hedges and fences so they could move freely from one property to the next. The similarity to the countryside of Looking-Glass Land is striking; however, in this pastoral interlude, Prior and his men are not subject to the rules of chess (or war). After a conversation with a rose in the garden of live flowers, Alice looks out over the country and finds that it is

a most curious country. . . . There were a number of tiny little brooks running straight across it from side to side, and the ground between was divided up into squares by a number of little green hedges, that reached from brook to brook.

"I declare it's marked out just like a large chess-board!" Alice said at last. "There ought to be some men moving about somewhere--and so there are?" she added in a tone of delight, and her heart began to beat quick with excitement as she went on. "It's a great huge game of chess that's being played--all over the world--if this *is* the world at all, you know. (139)

Prior and his men are literal pawns under the command of officers willing to sacrifice them. Their next billet reminds Prior of the house in Amiens, with roses on the wallpaper of his room, and in the garden. From now until he emerges into the open at the Sambre-Oise canal, Prior lives an underground life in cellars and dugouts.

Carroll's vision and its influence on Barker extends beyond these details. Ronald Reichertz argues that Carroll's *Alice* books are informed by three topoi: "the antipodes (the world turned upside down), the looking-glass book, and dream vision" (19-20). Barker uses each of these topoi to assault the inequities of the class structure, the unacknowledged presence of child sexual abuse, and the devastation of colonialism. As I discussed in an earlier section, Melanesia is an Antipodean world, governed by Queensland at the time of Haddon's expedition. Thus the topos of the world turned upside down provides Barker with a common structural ground to connect life in the trenches with life on Eddystone Island--they are both Antipodean worlds. Reichertz comments on the "antique, widely distributed and protean device,"

connecting it to "specific social and political upheaval" and a "clearly developed political strain in which the topos creates a powerful subversive force that works to bring about actual social change" (37). The subversive force of this topos develops from the reader's realization that the front, Melanesia and childhood are all protopathic realms, and that the traumas inflicted on them arise from this hierarchically inferior position. The subversive force that accrues to this topos gathers force when linked with the second topos, the looking-glass book.

The looking-glass book, as defined by Reichertz, "uses narrative as an exemplary mirror that teaches through either positive models or admonishment" (53). He concludes his discussion by commenting that "the Alice books are united through what amounts to structural mirror imaging. The literary reversals that Carroll uses interplay with a number of instances of other reversals, all working together to suggest that the unity of the Alice books is at least partially the result of mirroring" (59). In *The Ghost Road*, Barker presents a Britain that is the mirror image of Melanesia. While British men are being lost on the battlefields of Europe, Melanesians are perishing from the ban on head-hunting. In Rivers's hierarchical terms, Barker is suggesting that aggression between nations needs to be acknowledged and allowed a controlled outlet in order for it to be managed. Head-hunting had a role in the culture that kept it from escalating into the kind of mass warfare Europe is experiencing. Britain is the imperial power, Melanesia is the colonized country.

Images of dispossessed missionized Melanesian families, moving from island to island, surely provide a corrective to imperial fantasies about the benefits of colonialism for the colonized. Death from the diseases of the English nursery, traders

who cheated them, slavery on Australian plantations, and the social consequences of the loss of their faith reflect the impact of British policies back to the British people. While British culture pushes the need to grieve to the cultural periphery, Melanesian ceremonies address people's need to acknowledge the loss that comes with death and make a place for remembering their ancestors in their culture. Once again, the value of what Rivers would call the protopathic aspect of culture is recognized. Repression of emotion produces the hysteria seen in the "spuggies;" expression of emotion through the community of established ceremonies is healing. Finally, "the English class system . . . in all its full, intricate horror" has no Melanesian counterpart (35). While it is clear that some members of Eddystone Island society have a special status, the exclusionary tactics of the English class system are nowhere in evidence. The Melanesian example suggests that special status for some like Njiru does not have to come at the expense of others.

The last of the three topoi Reichertz discusses is that of the dream vision. He identifies common features of the genre: "a narrator who falls asleep and experiences in dream the activities of the real people and/or personified abstractions presented in his narrative, a spring setting . . . and human or animal guides" (63). Dream visions begin with a prologue or framing fiction that introduces a "core narrative sequence" which is placed in a context (66). Further, the dreamer is in a distressed state, whether psychologically or physically, and the dream either provides an answer to this distress or suggests some other way of handling it (66).<sup>16</sup> Although the season is wrong, and Rivers has no animal guide (unless he can be considered his own guide as the white rabbit), he is certainly in some distress when he dreams. For the period of



the book dealing with flashbacks to Eddystone Island, Rivers is very ill with influenza.

Rivers contracts influenza just following Prior's departure for France. Prior and Rivers are doubles, so, structurally, this means that Barker can cross-cut Prior's journey to the front with Rivers's journey into the past, suggesting that in some profound way they are the same place. Rivers is too ill to eat, and comes home, taking to his bed, shivering with a fever. "Always, in a high fever, his visual memory returned, giving him a secret, obscurely shameful pleasure in being ill" (117). This fever allows the visual memories of his trip to Eddystone to surface, and on this first night, he recalls the boat trip, meeting Njiru, Ngea's death and the transformative experience in the cave filled with bats. When his landlady wakes him in the morning with tea, he feels as if he had "spent the entire night between hot, fur-lined walls and the fur had got onto his teeth" (168). When she leaves, he falls asleep again, and his dreams pick up where they left off--outside the cave. Each time Rivers falls back to sleep, his trip replays itself in the correct chronological sequence.

Rivers returns to the hospital before his influenza has run its course. Dreams of the skull houses on Eddystone merge with the realities of hospital rounds when he stands facing an x-ray of Matthew Hallet's shattered skull. Still feverish and exhausted from working thirty of the previous forty-eight hours, Rivers cannot prevent the past from intruding into his waking life. For Njiru and Rivers, the skull held that which each culture valued most highly--the spirit for Melanesia and the rational intellect for Rivers. Comparison is inevitable: Melanesian culture, which does not subscribe to any hierarchy similar to Rivers's preserves the skull; Western culture, which places the intellect above all else, enables its destruction. Njiru's final

appearance in the hospital ward after Hallet's death extends the dream vision to the borderland between sleep and wakefulness. Rivers has spent the night in a deathwatch by Hallet's bed:

Rivers, slumped at the night nurses' station, struggles to stay awake. On the edge of sleep he hears Njiru's voice, repeating the words of the exorcism of Ave.

*O Sumbi! O Gesese! O Palopoko! O Gorepoko! O you  
Ngengere at the root of the sky. Go down, depart ye.<sup>17</sup>*

And there, suddenly, not separate from the ward, 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, came Njiru. . . .

He bent over Rivers, staring into his face with those piercing hooded eyes. A long moment, and then the brown face, with its streaks of lime, faded into the light of the daytime ward. (276)

Njiru's appearance marks Rivers's final awareness that the principles behind his hierarchy are invalid. British medicine excludes knowledge and treatment not derived from the cold, hard facts of scientific empiricism, whereas Melanesian medicine incorporates practices whose efficacy depends on an acute awareness of the role that the non-rational world plays in sickness and healing. More than that, Njiru's appearance to Rivers is prophetic. This "war to end all wars" will be followed by approximately thirty regional wars in the interregnum between 1918 and 1939, and

nothing short of a global remedy will be required to address the political unrest of the early twentieth century.

### **Visual artifacts of cultural trauma**

The narrative structure of the trilogy progressively disintegrates in a manner implied by the tenets of contemporary trauma theory. That is, if unresolved severe traumas are stored as non-verbal, iconic, somatosensory memories, then their representation as unresolved traumas will be non-verbal as well. Furthermore, the narrative (as representative of narrative memory) should show evidence of deformation in keeping with the absence of these trauma memories. Given that Barker's theoretical framework is consistent with contemporary trauma theory, as her readers, we should expect to find visual images circling the research behind these texts in a fixed orbit. Following the implications of the text's theoretical subtext leads to Haddon's ethnographic film and Dodgson's photographs of young girls. These visual artifacts remain as cultural trauma memories signifying the ongoing traumas of colonialism and child abuse.

Both the photographs and the film are well-known; Dodgson's photographs are very familiar, especially the ones of Alice, which have circulated widely, and have received much critical attention, and Haddon's film seems to have been copied for commercial showings.<sup>18</sup> Since they are still traumatic for contemporary British society, the novels cannot incorporate them, or even refer to them directly. Rivers obliquely mentions Alice during a visit to his sister, Kath, who had also been a favourite of Carroll's, though he took no photographs of her. In Kath's album, he finds a photograph of, "a little girl in a white dress. Even in faded sepia it was

possible to tell what an exceptionally beautiful child she'd been" (89). This must be Alice. Although not so well known by the general public, Haddon's film from the 1898 Expedition "has received almost fetishist attention as 'the first piece' of ethnographic film made in the field" (Edwards 106n1). These photographic and filmic out-takes from the narrative text correspond to iconic trauma memories not yet integrated into the British public narrative memory.

From the outset, Haddon intended to film and photograph the traumatic effects of colonialism on Islander culture, concentrating on ceremonies, dances and customs that he believed were on the verge of vanishing from the culture. He wrote that

In many islands the natives are fast dying out, and in more they have become so modified by contact . . . [n]o one can deny that it is our bounden duty to record the physical characteristics, the handicrafts, the psychology, ceremonial observances and religious beliefs of vanishing peoples; this also is a work which in many cases can alone be accomplished by the present generation . . . The history of these things once gone can never be recovered. (qtd. in Edwards 109)

To fulfill their aim of observing and recording aspects of Islander culture threatened by colonialism, Haddon took a "stills camera, an Edison phonograph and a Lumière cine-camera" (de Bromhead 8). Haddon's diary records that he shot the film himself, with assistance from Anthony Wilkin, who was responsible for the expedition's still photography. While filming, the camera often jammed, spoiling the film. Chris Long and Pat Laughren report that the remaining four to five minutes "continue to surprise modern audiences with their high technical standard," however, "no screenings of the films by Haddon have been traced" (Long). These brief films, none longer than 70

seconds, shot on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> of September, 1898, show ceremonial dances and an exhibition of fire building (Long 36).<sup>19</sup> Haddon's films are the earliest extant Queensland films and the earliest film of the inhabitants of the Torres Strait Islands. And, because Haddon was able to film a visit by some visiting trepang fishermen, they are the earliest films of the Australian Aborigines. The six volume *Reports* barely mentions the films, except for enlargements of a few frames in volume six. Thus the film is also an out-take from the official version of the expedition's research.

Toni de Bromhead observes that the performances are staged for the camera to show each activity as clearly as possible. What is lacking, she feels, is a sense of the social context (8). From the perspective of trauma and its representation, this seems entirely appropriate. The social context for these ceremonies was destroyed by government, church and commerce. Thus, the lack of context in the film acknowledges the social reality, and gestures towards the colonialism that destroyed it. De Bromhead complains that "the cinematic choreography could still have been more interestingly done," and she "mourn[s] the lack of context and the lack of vitality which together reduce these scenes to a series of specimens in a way that reminds [her] of a Victorian butterfly collection--for all the movement inherent in dance and film, these scenes are equally dead" (9). Well, precisely. The politics around these performances, which were all staged for the camera, clearly reveal the operations of British colonialism. The film was shot on Mer, then known as Murray Island. After the Queensland government delegated its responsibilities to the London Missionary Society, it appointed indigenous chiefs who were instructed to perform their duties in co-operation with the mission (Beckett 37). Jeremy Beckett reports that this effectively gave the missionaries permission to wipe out the old cults, destroying

sacred objects, and banning the ceremonies and practices that threatened Christianity. Beckett writes that "over the preceding thirty years they had, through interventions of mission, government and commerce, discontinued many of their old practices--including those of particular interest to ethnology--in favour of wage labour and church-going" (25).

The arrival of missionaries brought infections, including a "great sickness," that undermined indigenous practices in a curious fashion that indicates the pervasiveness of the colonial presence. Charles Myers, Rivers's psychological colleague on the expedition, estimated that Sunday church attendance was about fifty, which would have meant that a significant number were resisting the influence of Christianity (Beckett 40). In an unpublished journal from the expedition, Myers wrote that

the natives only embraced Christianity because they thought that white men had more powerful zogo [powerful sacred objects] than any of their own . . . The early missionaries insisted on the burning of their Malu [a headdress used in a sacred dance] . . . Soon after doing this, a great sickness broke out, which was curiously attributed not to the burning of the old zogo, but to the power of the new zogo. (qtd. in Beckett 40)

Haddon speculated that fragments of the old ceremonies remained for some time after the missionaries believed they had been eradicated (Beckett 40). He was determined to film a re-enactment of the Malu-Bomai ceremonies which had never before been seen by Europeans, in spite of opposition from the Samoan pastor (Beckett 41). Although Haddon's desire to film these ceremonies received support from the

European magistrate and teacher, it occasioned conflict between the pastor for the London Missionary Society and the older men who wished to perform these ceremonies. Due to a shortage of British missionaries, the London Missionary Society relied on teachers and pastors from neighbouring Pacific Islands (Beckett 37). Their influence, not that of their European sponsors, affected the daily lives of Torres Strait Islanders, and Beckett reports they persecuted non-Christian religious practices more severely than their British patrons (37).

Haddon's efforts to persuade some of the men to perform the ceremony were fruitless until one of their contacts spoke in favour of the scientists at a meeting with prominent people from the church. Myers records that

Haddon, bent on getting what he wants, goes over to Ulag [village] and returns with the Malu drum, Wasikor . . . Rivers, Ray and Wilkin arrive, persuading every native on the way that the old time rites are going to be revived at Las. Soon after Bruce [the teacher] turns up having expressed himself similarly. Finally, when the Malu drum begins to sound, the impulse to have all work for Malu is irresistible. Even the most pious islanders succumb to the appeal, one by one they turn up on the scene (qtd. in Beckett 42).

Thus the film engages with an ongoing cultural trauma. Beckett speculates that the scientists' interest in the ceremonies kept them alive. A Queensland government report blamed Haddon's expedition for unrest in 1899, the year following their visit, and Beckett speculates that the re-enactment prevented the ceremony from slipping away so that, in 1915, when the Anglican church replaced the London Missionary society it could again be performed openly. Since then, a version of the dance has

been performed until the present day (Beckett 44-45). Beckett notes that the drum, Wasikor, which Haddon tried to buy, is still in use, and has been incorporated into church services on Christian holidays (45).<sup>20</sup>

### **The photographic legacy of Charles L. Dodgson<sup>1</sup>**

Charles Dodgson ordered his first camera in March 1865, just a month after he invented the name, Lewis Carroll, but nine years before he would publish his first *Alice* book (Nickel 11). Carroll initially became interested in photography as a pastime, something to divert him from academia, but by 1860 he had turned to it as an extra source of income and had distributed a list of 159 photographs for sale (Nickel 12). The economic independence that followed the publication of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* in 1865 allowed Carroll to return to amateur photography (Nickel 12). Over the next twenty-four years, he produced around three thousand negatives, becoming a well-known and popular figure in photographic circles (Nickel 12). Carroll seemed to find his own personal vision as a photographer around the same time he gained fame as the author of the *Alice* books. He was able to rent studio space on St. Aldates Street, and under a skylight, he could stage the carefully arranged allegorical photographs of little girls that now seem so disturbing (Nickel 19). Carroll would later move to larger rooms in Christ Church and construct a studio on the premises. In this trilogy that is so centrally concerned with the destruction wrought by the epicritic in all its manifestations, I found it teasing to read that Carroll's last studio was on the roof (Nickel 19).

After a conventional beginning with landscapes and other popular genres,



Carroll gravitated towards portraits of friends and family members (Nickel 16). By 1865, his photographs frequently involved "costumes, role-playing, and greater attention to staging" with prepubescent girls (Nickel 16). The art historian Lindsay Smith observes that the central question of Lewis Carroll scholarship concerns his relationships with these girls (369): "Regardless of whether it is his writing or his photographs they are addressing, critics commonly identify the figure of the little girl as an index either of Carroll's potential sexual 'deviance' or his irrefutable 'normality'" (369). Douglas R. Nickel is a case in point. In *Dreaming in Pictures*, his case study of the reception of Dodgson's photographs, Nickel comments that when viewed "through the filter of the modern age, Carroll's life and activities--his writings, his photography, his social relationships--all appear suspect, distorted by a post-mortem diagnosis that reduces his biography to deviancy and his creative works to symptoms" (11).

Nickel excuses Dodgson's attraction to them by explaining that he was influenced by the Victorian "cult of the child" that saw children as "unaffected by the corrupting effects of civilized values" (Nickel 57). Nickel mounts the specious argument that Dodgson could "pose his charges in adult roles, give them guns, daggers, and exotic costumes, even portray them as odalisques and half-dressed waifs, because he and most of his audience believed so emphatically in their total isolation from the implications of such postures" (66). That the children did not understand the sexual implications of their poses is irrelevant. The adults certainly understood them, and Dodgson must have had a great deal invested in them to risk public censure by taking them. Nickel claims that

it was precisely this investment in the possibility of absolute innocence that sanctioned the Victorian era's sentimental love affair with children in the nude. The sexless bodies of naked tykes adorned postcards and salon paintings alike, their forms appearing not as a sexual invitation but rather an emblem of incorruptibility. Dodgson's sporadic forays into this genre are wholly unexceptional. (66)

His photographs of the children of his Oxford colleagues "could hint at sensuality because they were thought free of sexuality. . . . Our own sense of propriety, of the ambiguity of the child as sexual entity, no longer tolerates this" (Nickel 66). Nickel again misses the point. The child's sexuality (or lack of) is not the issue; the issue is the (possibly) pedophilic vision of the photographer.<sup>21</sup>

Undoubtedly Carroll's most famous model is Alice Liddel, one of the daughters of the Dean of Christ Church, and the inspiration for *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*. Perhaps the most well-known photograph of this very beautiful child shows her as a beggar-maid (Gernsheim 63). In this photograph she stands against a wall, her feet are bare and her rag of a dress falls down over one shoulder; her left hand is on her hip and her right hand is cupped to receive alms. Her gaze is direct, and the position of her hand suggests that she isn't very serious about alms-collecting, but is play-acting, which of course she is. Another of Carroll's favourite models, Alexandra "Xie" Kitchin, appears as an odalisque in a series of three photographs, beginning when she was five. In the first photograph, Xie is reclining on a brocade settee, propped against a pillow that is nearly larger than she is. Her light-coloured dress looks incongruous against the brocade. Her knees are bent, one ankle crosses over the other, and her hands rest in her lap, one over the other. Her

limbs seem to have been arranged by the photographer, and she looks into the camera with doll-like eyes and an impassive face. In the second version, Xie looks to be about eight or nine. She wears a long-sleeved dress, stockings and shoes. There is a ribbon in her neat hair, tied in a bow. An open book rests in her lap, and her look at the camera seems to say that she wishes Dodgson had not interrupted her reading (Gernsheim 43). In the last photograph, a twelve or thirteen-year-old Xie reclines, apparently asleep, on the same settee. She wears nothing but a night-dress, which has slipped off her shoulders, not quite exposing her nipples. Her long, loose hair falls around her relaxed face. A slight, playful smile suggests she is dreaming something very pleasant and possibly forbidden. Taken together, these three photographs form a narrative. In the first, Xie doesn't know what is going on; she is like a posed doll. In the second, this game of posing seems an irritant, her provisional cooperation about to be withdrawn. By the third photograph, her she has been seduced into the process.

A photograph entitled "Irene MacDonald, autographed," dated July 1863, brings the two traumas of colonialism and child abuse together. It shows a typical little English girl surrounded with furs, imitating the "classic recumbent pose of the female nude" (Smith 387). There is the skin of a large cat in the foreground, and Irene leans against a table, her head propped up against another fur. Smith notes that "India shawls are draped over the upper part of her body and, crucially, the composition articulates a contrast between the white skin of her bare arms, shoulder and lower legs above the socks, together with [her] brightly lit face, and the clothed areas in between: the nightdress hitched up to reveal crossed legs, ankle-strap shoes alongside oriental signifiers of adornment" (378).

As Smith observes, "the critical desire to read Carroll's interest in little girls as residing in the pleasure of their company, their language, the symbolism of their wit, has especially eclipsed the visual emphasis of that 'interest', the visualization of the little girl as spectacle which, nevertheless, is the strongest, most persistent interest Carroll exhibits" (369). Consequently the details of his photographic sessions, especially as recorded in his notebooks, diaries and letters, have received very little attention. Smith believes that these sources reveal what was at stake for Dodgson (369). Smith believes that Dodgson's "masked allusions to sex [in the letters] are not attempts to gloss over the issue of sex but ruses to mask the fact that sex--at least as the parents might suspect it--is *not* the point" (375). Voyeurism is the point.

Dodgson's concern over the perception of his relationships with his child-friends led him to correspond with Lord Salisbury "about the well-known exposé in the *Pall Mall Gazette* of organized child prostitution and vice by the editor Thomas Stead (1849-1912). His two letters to the Prime Minister on the subject of Stead's revelations to this magazine . . . position historically and culturally Carroll's photographs of children within the sphere of larger issues of children's rights during the period" (372). Stead's articles resulted in a public protest which eventually lead to legislation to raise the age of consent to sixteen. Smith believes that Dodgson's letters reveal his "anxiety about the ways in which his relations with little girls might be construed at an historical moment when the realities of child abuse were being vividly exposed by the popular press" (373). Smith also maintains that Dodgson's public concern masks his "visual investment in little girls" (373). Thus Dodgson's photographs, even at the time of their production, were enmeshed in contemporary

debates around the age of consent, legislation regarding child prostitution, and ambiguously situated between sentimentality and pornography.

In her discussion of still photography and film from the 1898 expedition, Elizabeth Edwards writes that in many ways

the photograph defies history. In extracting a moment in apparent entirety from the flow of life, it defies the diachronic connections upon which the structures of history in the West have depended. But while it is "of" the past it is also "of" the present; it gives the impression of co-existent times. (108)

As artifacts of the past, Dodgson's photographs and Haddon's film express contemporary traumas. The fascination they continue to exert as well as their association with the sexual abuse of children and Britain's post-imperial status means that they are also "'of the present."

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 Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> This is from *Canada at War*, a Canadian Broadcasting Corporation documentary, broadcast on 19 October 2003; the speaker is a Canadian survivor of the disastrous Dieppe raid, 19 August 1942.

<sup>2</sup> Tre pang, also known as *bêche-de-mer*, is sea cucumber that has been boiled, smoked and dried for use as an ingredient in soup.

<sup>3</sup> The depth of Barker's research is evident in the veracity of her details. The historical Rivers actually did practice in the Empire Hospital for Officers in Vincent Square, Westminster, during 1918-19 (Slobodin 67).

<sup>4</sup> See A.M. Hocart, "The Cult of the Dead in Eddystone of the Solomons," 81-89.

<sup>5</sup> See A.M. Hocart, "The Cult of the Dead in Eddystone of the Solomons," 84-90.

<sup>6</sup> See A.M. Hocart, "The Cult of the Dead in Eddystone of the Solomons," 267-68.

<sup>7</sup> For A.M. Hocart's references to Njiru see the following: "Medicine and Witchcraft in Eddystone of the Solomons," 251, 252, 253; "The Cult of the Dead in Eddystone of the Solomons," 72, 79, 105, 107, 259, 268, 270, 271, 288, 299, and Figures 1 and 2.

<sup>8</sup> Lewis Carroll belonged to a spiritualist group, the Society for Psychical Research, from its inception and was also a member of the Ghost Society (Nickel 48).

<sup>9</sup> See A.M. Hocart, "The Cult of the Dead in Eddystone of the Solomons," 103.

<sup>10</sup> See A.M. Hocart, "The Cult of the Dead in Eddystone of the Solomons," 93-95.

<sup>11</sup> See A.M. Hocart, "The Cult of the Dead in Eddystone of the Solomons," 100-01.

<sup>12</sup> See A.M. Hocart, "The Cult of the Dead in Eddystone of the Solomons": "The word for death is *mate*, which means also sickness. Actual death is often expressed by *mate ndapu*, that is 'quite dead,' in pidgin, 'die finish'" (80).

<sup>13</sup> See A.M. Hocart, "The Cult of the Dead in Eddystone of the Solomons," 261-63.

<sup>14</sup> David Jones's *In Parenthesis* also uses Carrollian imagery for his vision of the trenches. See Part 5, "Squat Garlands for White Knights."

<sup>15</sup> See her very brief *Memories of Lewis Carroll*.

<sup>16</sup> This is virtually identical to the basic principle behind Rivers's dream theory--that dreams are the dreamer's attempt to solve conflicts present in everyday life.

<sup>17</sup> See A.M. Hocart, "The Cult of the Dead in Eddystone of the Solomons," 268.

<sup>18</sup> Long and Laughren discovered a reference in the film catalogue of the Warwick Trading Company that they believe refers to Haddon's work. It reads: "*Panorama of Thursday Island, the Headquarters of the Pearl Fishing Industry*. This little known island is very difficult of access, but from it the great majority of the largest and finest pearls are obtained. The view presented in the film embraces the jetty alongside which the sailing craft are moved as they return from the fishing grounds. In the background the conformation of the island is distinctly seen, whilst as the camera rotates a number of pearling cutters are seen lying at anchor in the estuary" ( qtd in Long).

<sup>19</sup> For information and stills from these films, see the Haddon website at Cambridge University, [http://www/isca.ox.ac.uk//haddon/HADD\\_home.html](http://www/isca.ox.ac.uk//haddon/HADD_home.html)

<sup>20</sup> See Appendix 2 for a filmography.

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<sup>21</sup> Since Barker filters early twentieth century Britain through late twentieth century ideas about trauma and abuse, I am using "pedophilic" here in its contemporary sense. While it could be argued that the experience of some viewers in an era that truly believed in the sexual innocence of children was different from our own, the experience of the children under this gaze is not necessarily qualitatively different. Lindsay Smith's examination of Carroll's correspondence certainly reveals his subjects need to be persuaded to remove their clothes for his nude photographs, and his anxiety over how his interest in these children is perceived by their parents, from whom he needed consent. The late-Victorian "cult of the child" would also have provided ideal cover for pedophiles, and, to my knowledge, adults whose preference is for sexual acts with children must have existed in late-Victorian England alongside the "cult of the child."

## Chapter 6

## Witnessing the trilogy

These are the scars  
that make us whole.

These are the scars  
that empty us  
into our lives.

Robert Kroetsch  
"The Poet's Mother"

**The eye in the jar**

One Sunday morning in the summer after I graduated from high school, I arrived at my summer job in the emergency ward of the local hospital, prepared for the usual morning routine. Sunday mornings were typically quiet. Few patients came in, and those who still remained from the night shift were either waiting for a transfer to a ward or hoping to go home. After report at shift change, the nurses moved into the coffee room to recover from Saturday night parties, and give their white oxfords their weekly polishing. While they drank coffee, my job was to clean the front desk and waiting room, and fetch them if they were needed.

Working in Emergency was my first job, and in the few weeks I had been working there, I had tried to adopt the cool detachment I saw in the doctors, nurses, and paramedics. After the nurses had finished their coffee, and I had finished



cleaning the front desk, I always headed into my work area in the back. Usually the area was completely cleaned up from the night shift, but that Sunday a human eyeball in a specimen jar remained, sitting conspicuously alone on the counter, probably the result of a Saturday night accident. The eye in the jar haunted me as I went about my chores, but not for the obvious reason. By this time, I was becoming accustomed to the sights, sounds and smells of an emergency ward. I was troubled because the label on the jar was blank. In a hierarchical institution like a hospital where people and parts of people must have a name and a history, that eye had neither. I needed to know what that eye had seen and how it had come to be left behind. Having seen it, I felt a responsibility to it, although at that time, I could not have said why or what that responsibility entailed.

I decided to ask the nurses what they knew about the eye, but they hadn't even noticed it back there. The night nurses had not thought the eye worth mentioning during report at shift change and the day shift did not ask them about it. Perhaps they were not even aware of its existence. After so long, I am not clear about these small details. I do know I finished my shift at three-thirty, and when I returned the next morning, the eye in the jar was gone. No one seemed to know where. The night nurses had not mentioned the eye before they went home, the day shift did not think to ask them about it. I was never able to find out anything more.

### **I-witnessing**

The psychiatrist Dori Laub has written that

[m]assive trauma precludes its registration; the observing and recording mechanisms of the human mind are temporarily knocked out, malfunction. The victim's narrative--the very process of bearing witness to massive trauma--does indeed begin with someone who testifies to an absence, to an event that has not yet come into existence, in spite of the overwhelming and compelling nature of the reality of its occurrence (57).

The process of witnessing demands that the witness have considerable self-awareness, because witnessing takes people into difficult places, and once committed to witnessing, the witness cannot back out.

As a witness to Barker's trilogy, (and other works that document trauma), I began with that summer job in the emergency department, and found myself back into my own early life encounters with trauma. As an infant, I suffered a third degree burn requiring a skin graft, and at seven, had polio. As traumas go, these are relatively minor; the skin graft healed well and the sequelae of the polio have been negligible, amounting to nothing more than a slight limp when I am tired. Of course, I have no memory of the burn and only very fragmentary memories of the polio, but their impact on the shape of my life has been profound. Although it wasn't until much later that I realized it, my job in an emergency department was no accident, and it began efforts at witnessing the effects of trauma on other lives, and through them, into my own forgotten early life experiences.

Because I have no memory of these events, I had to come to their existence through the experience of witnessing the trauma of others. After I graduated with my

English degree, I trained to manage hospital patient record departments, where I read patient records. Long before I encountered Derrida in graduate school, I learned the meaning of aporia as I tried to sort out blatant contradictions between doctors and nurses in the charts. To break the tedium of my job, I began to imagine these patient records as modernist novels, with multiple narrators and multiple points of view. Like Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*, these charts retold same story through different narrators, and very occasionally, if you read carefully, something like the outline of what the patient's version might have been would emerge from between the interstices of the different narrations. Years of reading these narrations of illness, with their absences, omissions, and outright lies in the service of institutionalized medicine, came back to me when I first read *Regeneration*.

Bearing a trauma that is beyond memory is deeply alienating. Survivors of unremembered trauma never know, in the way that they know other parts of their lives, what happened to them. Not to know what has happened to you means you do not know yourself. You deal with a legacy of unexplained fears, deep suspicions, and intense identification with the pain of others, without knowing where these aspects of yourself originate. You bear the difficult knowledge of what it is like to be broken, and experience the impossibility of speaking from that broken place, because the "I" is broken by the absence of knowledge. Traumatic knowledge is difficult knowledge, knowledge acquired through difficult circumstances. It is the kind that comes after surviving a trial--the kind that takes you to the limits of what you are, and past those limits. In some ways, the traumatized know that they are what other people don't want to know about or hear about. Laub writes that

The emergence of the narrative which is being listened to--and heard-- is, therefore, the process and the place wherein the cognizance, the "knowing" of the event is given birth to. The listener, therefore, is a party to the creation of knowledge *de novo*. The testimony to the trauma thus includes its hearer, who is, so to speak, the blank screen on which the event comes to be inscribed for the first time. (57)

The disjunction between the need of the traumatized for a witness, and the tendency of most people to defend themselves against knowing about trauma means that the traumatized often find that their attempts to secure a witness are rejected.

After I left hospital work, I was, for a time, a social worker in a pulp and paper mill town on Vancouver Island, and during that time, met a man who had yet to have a hearer who could give bring the "knowing" of the trauma of his life into the light. Whenever new soft-hearted social workers came into this office, one particular client always engaged their sympathies, a Métis man named Jerome Robinette. Jerome was in his mid-thirties when I knew him, short in stature and lean. He hardly spoke and did not drink to excess, which was unusual for someone who was permanently on the welfare rolls. Jerome had two interesting habits: he spent all his days walking around town, and once every six to eight weeks, he would become uncontrollably angry and break the window in the little hotel room that was his home. This had been happening so regularly for so long that the Ministry just paid to have the window or door fixed without a fuss. I took to driving by his room and checking on the condition of the window whenever I was in the area.

All the new workers tried to "rehabilitate" Jerome. He seemed so likable, so agreeable, but he always sabotaged our efforts to teach him some employable skill, like tree planting. He would obediently attend all the classes, and the instructor would see his passivity as an indication that he just needed a little push, and would oblige with praise and encouragement. But Jerome defeated us all. He simply refused to learn to become competent at any employable skill, would fail to get work, and would go back to walking around town and breaking his windows. I became frustrated, not so much with Jerome's behaviour but with not knowing why he did what he did-- where it came from. So I unearthed his old files and discovered that Jerome had been a "child in care" with the Ministry since he was very young. This means that he had been permanently taken away from his parents and put in foster care, but probably since he was Métis, he had not been adopted. Jerome had perhaps twenty or more foster home placements. I no longer recall the reasons for this number; it may have something to do with the reason he had gone into foster care in the first place. Jerome and his parents, along with a large number of brothers and sisters had lived on a float house in a long inlet that led from this town out to Barclay Sound on the west coast of Vancouver Island. One night, his alcoholic father dragged the children out of the house one by one and drowned them by holding their heads under the water. Jerome was the only one to escape, but his life afterwards was surrounded by that terrible silence. Now I know that he must have felt like he was drowning all the time. I hadn't heard this in his presence, in his story as I knew it. But I read something of it in his behaviour. Laub says that

the speakers about trauma on some level prefer silence so as to protect themselves from the fear of being listened to--and of listening to themselves. That while silence is defeat, it serves them both as a sanctuary and as a place of bondage. Silence is for them a fated exile, yet also a home, a destination, and a binding oath. To *not* return from this silence is rule rather than exception (58).

To my knowledge, Jerome never returned from the silence.

Laub writes that listeners "must *listen to and hear the silence*, speaking mutely both in silence and in speech, both from behind and from within the speech" (58). Barker's narrative techniques draw the reader's attention to progressively larger and more significant silences. In *Regeneration*, silence surrounds the fates of those who do not recover from their traumas, and is silent on the contradiction between the theoretical causes and treatment of trauma, and the fact that many of these officers are not cured by this theory. In *The Eye in the Door*, the silences contain all the repressed connections between the two trials that would allow them to be contained by one overarching narrative of repression. By *The Ghost Road*, the two historically realistic locations, the battlefield and the Empire Hospital, both seem to be surrounded by silences around the muted discourses of the twin traumas of child sexual abuse and colonialism. The textual silences indicate the ongoing repression of these traumas by contemporary British society.

Barker's texts ask readers to commit themselves to the construction of a narrative incorporating the traumatic silences within it. With Caruth and van der Kolk, Laub observes that "while the trauma uncannily returns in actual life, its reality

continues to elude the subject who lives in its grip and unwittingly undergoes its ceaseless repetitions and reenactments" (Felman and Laub 69). The only way to free the subject from this entrapment is

a therapeutic process--a process of constructing a narrative, of reconstructing a history and essentially of *re-externalizing the event*--has to be set in motion. This re-externalization of the event can occur and take effect only when one can articulate and *transmit* the story, literally transfer it to another outside oneself and then take it back again, inside. Telling thus entails a reassertion of the hegemony of reality and a re-externalization of the evil that affected and contaminated the trauma victim. (Felman and Laub 69)

When Barker presents the reader with an incomplete narrative, full of gaps and disconnections, she is asking the reader to reconstruct the history, and re-externalize the event that is missing. By elaborating the central symbol of the disembodied eye through the three novels of the trilogy, she invites the reader to connect the repeated imagery associated with the eye to the progressive deterioration of narrative coherence. She is transmitting a complicated story--that of these events repression from the national memory, and why they were repressed, and asking for them to be reclaimed, re-remembered.

Laub observes that "in psychoanalytic work with survivors, indeed, historical reality has to be reconstructed and reaffirmed before any other work can start" (Felman and Laub 69). Barker begins to reconstruct the historical reality with the visual artifacts of the traumas. The artifacts record the damage wrought by the

disembodied eye, and thus return the reader back to the beginning, to the moment Prior picks up that eyeball from the trench floor.

### **The writer as witness**

Pat Barker was born on 8 May 1943 in Thornaby-on-Tees near Middlesbrough. Her mother had been a WREN and her father a RAF pilot who did not survive the war. She spent her early life on a chicken farm with her mother, grandmother and grandfather, a first world war veteran who had been bayoneted. His healed wound reappears in the dying Geordie in *Border Crossing*. When Barker was seven, her mother married and moved out, leaving Barker behind in the care of her grandparents (Carson 45-46). Barker majored in international history at the London School of Economics and Political Science. After graduating, she taught for a time in Middlesbrough where she met her husband, David Barker, a zoology professor teaching at the University of Durham.

A course in creative writing taught by Angela Carter gave her "permission to write" in her own voice about the people and places she knew--working class women in the northeastern England (Carson 46). Barker states that her first novel, *Union Street*, stereotyped her as a "Northern, feminist and working-class" writer (qtd. in Carson 46). In *Union Street*, Barker develops a narrative mode called the "compound eye," which characterizes all her fiction until the trilogy (Carson 46). Essentially, this technique uses a series of limited omniscient narrators, each of whom knows the other, and whose narrations can supplement, qualify or contradict the narrations of the other characters. We also hear their unvoiced thoughts about themselves and others,



and, folded in, a third narrative level belonging to a narrator who comments on all that his happening. This "double-voiced" narration, shifts the reader into and out of the discourse world of the women of Union Street (Carson 47).<sup>1</sup> In the trilogy however, Barker abandons this compound eye for the single eye of scientific empiricism; however, her shift to the discourse of the disembodied eye has not attracted any similarly appreciative critical comment.

The world of these early novels is postindustrial northeast of England, an area blighted by the economic reverses that followed the first world war. Union Street "survives on the edge of demolition in a town full of rubble from other demolished streets" (Carson 48). Like all of Barker's novels, *Union Street* is historically specific; it is set during the coal miners' strike of 1973. The novel's gaze is uncompromising; the women suffer poverty, disease, pregnancy, unemployment and domestic abuse, with no hope of escape. Barker's interest in documenting the sexual abuse of children appears again with the rape of a young girl. As in the trilogy, the individual traumas nestle inside larger social traumas.

Barker's second novel, *Blow Your House Down*, deals more directly with trauma. Also set during the coal-miner's strike, it follows a group of prostitutes plying their trade as a serial killer, called the Ripper, murders and mutilates them. The novel is closely based on the case of Peter Sutcliffe, the Yorkshire Ripper, who killed and mutilated thirteen women between July 1975 and January 1982 (Carson 50). The novel also employs the compound eye to characterize this group of women; however, in this novel, Barker's narrative technique contributes to the sense of paranoia the women feel by creating an absence--the Ripper never appears in the text. Thus, the

women's lives are dominated and controlled by an absence, a trauma paradigm that will reappear again in *The Eye in the Door*, where Prior's actions in his normal conscious state are determined by his alternate self, whose actions Prior cannot remember.

Barker's next novel, *The Century's Daughter* (later renamed *Liza's England*), concerns two main characters: Liza Jarrett, the "sole remaining inhabitant of a street scheduled for demolition, " and Stephen, a young homosexual social worker whose job it is to persuade her to leave her condemned house (1). As she will do later in *The Ghost Road*, Barker uses the two narrative strands to embody two chronologies. Liza, who was born in 1900 at the exact moment the century began, looks back over the century. As Carson notes,

Liza bears witness to the community memory of working-class women  
Barker's work records. Liza may be modeled on Barker's own  
grandmother, who Barker says was a storyteller; by listening to her  
grandmother's memories, Barker "came to know [her] great-  
grandmother and even her mother as real people, even though their  
lives had left apparently no trace." (54)

Liza's narration witnesses the inexorable decline of England's northeast after the first world war; her husband loses his job in a failing economy. They are forced on the dole, and Liza has to gather coal to sell for food. Barker cross-cuts Liza's story with Stephen's story of a young man, alienated and repelled by the materialism around him. As a social worker, Stephen feels useless, and gives up any hope he may have for changing the lives of those he calls the "dole-queue wallahs . . . full of northern

macho and Newcastle brown" 71). Barker's concern to recover these lost stories, lost lives, seems to be destined for failure. Liza's England has been irrevocably changed by the loss of men in two world wars, and now Liza lives among the drug users, the young thugs and thieves who murder her in the end.

Barker's next book, *The Man Who Wasn't There*, has received little critical attention; however, is interesting for its use of film to represent the trauma of absence. Colin Harper is a twelve-year old boy who is confused about his sexual identity and curious about a father he never knew. He lives with his mother, and is shamed by a birth certificate that is the short version issued to illegitimate children. This short novel takes place in 1955 over three days in a town marked by reminders of the second world war. As Colin moves through this urban landscape, from school to movie theatre to beach, he imagines a vivid world inspired by the heroic war films. In his fantasy, his mother and her friend are members of the French resistance and Colin is the heroic Gaston, a twelve-year old British agent sent to France because of his command of the language. Colin is lost, with no role model he has only fantasies elaborated from war movies to fill the void that his father has left.

Barker's first post-trilogy novel, *Another World*, continues her diagnostic assessment of contemporary Britain. Trauma from the first world war haunts Geordie, 100 years old and dying of cancer. Geordie has a bayonet wound (like Barker's grandfather) and a guilty secret, an absence that has haunted him and now is preventing him from dying in peace. An historian with an interest in the first world war is interviewing him, testing her theory that veterans like Geordie rework their memories to fit contemporary notions of what is acceptable to remember. When she

tries to get Geordie to frame his memories in terms of late twentieth century intellectual trends like homoeroticism and definitions of masculinity, Geordie defeats her by feigning ignorance. Nick, Geordie's psychologist grandson, has his own theory about trauma memories; he believes that "Geordie's memories aren't malleable: they don't change to fit other people's perceptions of the war. On the contrary. Geordie's tragedy is that his memories are carved in granite" (86). Yet, as the events of *Another World* unfold, neither of these theories adequately explains the novel's gothic qualities.

Nick, his pregnant wife Fran, their two-year old son and stepchildren, have just moved into an old Victorian house they intend to renovate. Miranda and Gareth, their respective children from first marriages, do not inhabit a "brave new world," but are shadowed by tempests of violence. Miranda's mother has been committed to a mental institution, recalling *Wuthering Heights*, and the seriously disturbed Gareth, a frightening child of eleven who is addicted to violent video games, very nearly stones his little half-brother to death on a beach. Gareth hurls his stones from a cliff, which, Barker says, indicates that he "sees the child from above. From up there on the cliff, what he sees has some of the impersonality of video games. From there, his brother looks like a piglet, not a child. It's easy to dehumanize someone at that point" (Becker 35). He stops only because he sees a figure he believes to be Miranda, but, in a shift from realism into the fantastic, the figure seems to be a ghost. Barker returns to visual imagery to reveal old, unhealed trauma. During one hot, sticky afternoon, the family comes together to strip off the old wallpaper in the living room. They uncover a loathsome, hate-filled painting of the Fanshawes, who were the original inhabitants of

the house. They immediately recognize this family as an obscene caricature of themselves, painted by the son who would be Gareth's age. Nick's research into the Fanshawes uncovers the possibility that this boy has murdered his brother. At the end of the novel, when Gareth goes to live with his grandmother, his fate is uncertain; he could find a place for himself working with the computers he loves, or he could become a figure like the child murderer in Barker's next novel, *Border Crossing*. *Another World* came out just as Britain was obsessed with the Jamie Bulger case--the kidnapping and horrific murder of a two-year-old boy from a supermarket by two boys, aged ten and eleven. *Border Crossing* is even closer to the Bulger case.

In *Border Crossing*, Tom, a forensic psychologist, and his wife Lauren, are on the verge of separation. While walking along the banks of the Tyne, they see a man plunge into the freezing water. Tom jumps in and saves him. This young man has just been released from reform school. As a ten-year old, he had killed an old woman who lived on corn flakes and kept cats. Tom had done an assessment on him that recommended he be placed in custody. In her review, Gabriele Annan states that "you could read the book as a deliberate provocation--or even as an intervention on behalf of the young killers to be left in peace" (44), but Barker's revelation of Danny's character through interviews with Tom contradicts that assessment. Danny is good-looking, intelligent, charming, manipulative and utterly ruthless. At the reform school, he has learned to "pass." Late in the novel, after Danny has been released and moved to the south of England with a new identity, Tom sees him in a crowd of students at a university where he has been invited as a guest speaker. He blends in with the other students. Like *Another World*, this novel is haunted. Danny tells Tom

that the ghost of the old woman he killed has visited him and, in the last paragraph, Tom closes his eyes and sees with hallucinatory clarity an image of the old woman Danny killed.

The central question of *Double Vision* is how to represent war and collective trauma. Barker brings together the war in Afghanistan, 9/11, the foot and mouth epidemic, and the war crimes trial of Slobodan Milosevic, and again uses visual imagery to represent an ongoing trauma. Kate, a sculptor, crashes her car, and worries about being able to finish a commission, a huge statue of Christ. Her war photographer husband Ben had been killed, shot on a road in Afghanistan. A friend arrives to help assemble a book of his photographs in memory of Ben, while Kate deals with a mentally unstable assistant. In the end, all Ben's photographs are about war. As Kate looks at a peacetime photograph of sand dunes, she says that just past the dunes with their miles of grass waving in the wind, "somewhere close at hand, a murder has been committed." The double vision of the title is the ability to see this murder, even when it is not there.

The *Regeneration* trilogy marks a turning point in Barker's career. Prior to the trilogy, she concerned herself with individual traumas, the kind the rest of society tries contain and repress. Yet even in these early novels, the borders are permeable; the housewife attacked by the Ripper at the end of *Blow Your House Down* is evidence to the contrary. Her discovery of Rivers as a character led her to a wealth of historical material on trauma, but, much more significantly, she now had a theoretician whose thinking linked his neurology, psychology, and anthropology, which allowed her to produce the nested boxes of trauma that is the trilogy. Since the

trilogy, her writing continues to explore visual imagery as a vehicle for the expression of trauma. With *Another World*, and *Border Crossing*, she has produced texts that once more reach back to Victorian times as the source of contemporary British trauma. The more recent the traumatic event, the more difficult it is for society to repress what it fears, and fears it cannot contain.

### **The reviewers and critics as witnesses**

In the *Regeneration* trilogy, Barker has created a traumatized narrative, and the strategy for reading it. She points explicitly to her research, not so much to show what she has used, as to indicate what is missing from her texts. The following survey of Barker's readership is intended to gauge the public's ability or willingness to witness the traumas in her texts. My survey of the reviewers and critics indicates that the time has come to accept the fact of traumas from the First World War, but the British reviewers' blanket dismissal of the Melanesian material points to a defensiveness that effectively prevents any discussion of Britain as a post-imperial nation.

The reviews of *Regeneration* published in Britain generally praise the novel for its compassionate portraits of traumatized officers;<sup>2</sup> Peter Kemp finds them "sombre and brilliant." Her handling of the historical material raises no objections, and Mark Wormald notes her delicate handling of the "cultural and psychological processes by which our personalities are formed." Only two reviews (out of six) note any similarity with her previous work, in spite of a common acknowledgment that the war neuroses in the novel have much in common with female hysteria. The two

reviews that find fault do so, oddly, on grounds that contradict each other. Harriet Gilbert in *The New Statesman and Society* finds Barker too "nice" while Christopher Hawtree in *The Spectator* objects to a "crude" description "of the logistical problems encountered in copulating upon a tombstone." Gilbert seems not to have read carefully enough to note the insistence with which the officer's traumas interrupt the routine of the narration. Hawtree's objection is too frivolous to be taken seriously. Taken together, these responses seem to range from respectful to enthusiastic; however, none seem to have noticed her careful use of sources.

The two American responses to *Regeneration* are interesting for the expertise of the reviewers, indicating that the book was being presented to a narrower audience than the British reviews would have reached. A former military psychiatrist, Robert Coles, praises her use of historical sources, but is most interested in "the moral agony of the psychiatrist," in wartime. Interestingly, Coles sees Barker as contributing to a documentary tradition, a perceptive choice of words, given her use of medical notes as a discourse model. Samuel Hynes, the author of the well-known and respected *A War Imagined*, tries and fails to praise *Regeneration* in *The New York Times*. Hynes's review singles out the familiar figures of Siegfried Sassoon, Wilfred Owen and Rivers, and laments that Barker did not follow them back to France, which would have given her story its "natural closure." Admittedly, the end of *Regeneration* does feel too abrupt; but Hynes misses the point with his complaint. The book is not about the recognizable figures, but about those whose names have been forgotten. Hynes also patronizes Barker by praising her "plain writing," as if her writing in *Regeneration* were artless, and as if artlessness in fiction were a virtue.



*The Eye in the Door*, which won the Guardian Fiction Prize in 1993, received perceptive and enthusiastic reviews from the British press (with one exception).<sup>3</sup> Peter Kemp begins his review with the one of the first comments that catches something of the significance of the eye as a reality and a symbol for Barker: "This book seems to have germinated from an eyeball." Kemp also comments that Rivers "dual interests . . . neurologist and anthropologist, match [Barker's] twin fascination with individual psychodramas and patterns of communal behaviour." Dinah Birch adds her comment that "the authority of the eye, what it sees and what it imagines, has always mattered to Barker. A single gazing eye has brooded over her fiction from the first. 'Her one naked eye staring out like the eye of God' is what we remember of Beattie [not Roper], [the] raddled prostitute in retirement, in *Blow Your House Down*." Julia O'Faolain's "The Suffering Classes" elaborates on a geological metaphor to characterize the "fault-lines" threatening to crack open individuals and society, and, I will add, the narrative structure. In a novel "whose master theme is cracking-up. . . . Class is only one of the fault-lines along which [Prior's] consciousness is liable to crack. . . . "Painfully proud, Prior has suffered more, and his lively mind, riven by the cleavages afflicting society, embodies society's ordeal while remaining vividly particular." Writing in *The Guardian*, the newspaper whose political affiliations are mostly likely to be sympathetic to Barker, Phillip Hensher touches on Barker's integrity when it comes to rendering Rivers's ideas. He writes "*The Eye in the Door* continues [her] extraordinary voyage into the mentality of a historical moment. . . . It is a novel of ideas." Judy Cooke re-iterates Hensher's observations on the social reality of 1918, but adds the following comment on

Barker's method: "The fact that real people--Siegfried Sassoon, the psychologist William Rivers--are introduced alongside fictional characters may suggest that the book sets out to convince by a process of historical reconstruction. This is not its method; rather a sequence of bizarre events and surreal images jolts our imagination into a nightmare world." In this very short review, Cooke notices a key quality--that Barker works with disconnected events and imagery, which demands that the reader engage imaginatively with the text. Sue Gaisford's condescending review misses the significance of the opening sex scene between Manning and Prior, and she finds the mix of biography, fiction and history "awkward. . . . It is at its best when pure fiction takes over. The case histories of the invented characters have a convincing integrity that somehow fails when real people are involved." She doesn't specify which characters she thinks Barker has invented.

The two American reviews, while generally favourable, are less finely tuned to Barker's particular narrative frequency than the English reviews. An anonymous review in the *Publishers Weekly* sees the narrative as "simple," but singles out the events surrounding Pemberton Billing's trial for comment, an aspect of the book ignored by the English reviewers. Jim Shepard's review, in *The New York Times*, also mentions Billing's trial, drawing a pertinent comparison with the McCarthy witch-hunts of the 1950s in the United States.

The British reviews for *The Ghost Road* evince a fascinating ambivalence; on the one hand, although they are effusive in their praise for the novel, virtually all of them ignore the implications of the Melanesian material for Britain, as a post-imperial nation. I find both of these responses symptomatic of a defensiveness over Britain's

imperial past, since extravagantly praising the writing diverts the reader's attention from what is not being said about the Melanesian material. Peter Kemp's assessment is typical: "With *The Ghost Road*, [Barker] brings to a harrowing and heartening close a fictional enterprise that is a magnificent addition to our literature of war."

Peter Parker's review in the *TLS* is more astute and measured in its assessment, yet it too seems not to consider the Melanesian cultural traumas as in any way relevant to contemporary Britain. Lorna Sage, in *The London Review of Books*, observes that "Rivers's methods as a psychologist, probing the memory, bringing the past back, have an obvious affinity with Barker's methods as a novelist." For Sage, the Melanesian material is the catalyst for Rivers's insights about cultural relativism, nothing more.

The American response to *The Ghost Road* is lukewarm, given that it won the Booker Prize. Claudia Roth Pierpoint, writing in *The New York Times*, seems reluctant to commit herself; she spends most of the review describing Barker, her career and the novel. When she does criticize Barker, it is on grounds that the Melanesian sections are tedious and obvious: "We hardly need Rivers to remark on the 'flashes of cross-cultural recognition.'" She also finds Prior incredible as a character, noting that his voice here is extremely articulate, too much of a change for her. However, this is the first time Prior has had a voice of his own; in the previous novels, he emerged only in conversations with others. Lavinia Greenlaw, writing in the *New Republic*, is aware of Rivers's anthropological career, and certainly aware of the "uneasy coupling of colonialism and anthropology" in Rivers's day. Nevertheless, she does not consider the impact this coupling had on Britain. *Newsweek* reviewed

the book, giving it a "C." The reviewer, David Gates, complains that Barker has "milked" the parallels between the Melanesians and the war, and objects to the rare appearances of characters he recognizes, like Wilfred Owen. He also makes no mention of colonialism as an issue for Britain.

Three articles use the occasion of the Booker Prize to deal with the trilogy as a whole: Blake Morrison's "War Stories" in *The New Yorker*, Ben Shephard's "Digging Up the Past" in the *TLS*, and Rosemary Dinnage's "Death's Gray Land" in *The New York Review of Books*. Morrison's article takes the opportunity to introduce *New Yorker* readers to Barker, a writer who would almost certainly have been unfamiliar to most of them. He is generous and appreciative of her work; however, he misses the importance of Eddystone Island to the overall design of *The Ghost Road*. Rosemary Dinnage's long review article remarks on the Melanesian material as a counterpoint to the orgy of death in Europe, but nothing more. It seems that individual traumas such as those suffered by the soldiers on the battlefield can be comprehended, but the cultural trauma inflicted by the British on its colonies has yet to be recognized.

Ben Shephard, writing in the *TLS*, engages with Barker's particular kind of historicizing in an especially interesting and hostile way. He persistently reads features of her writing to characterize it in the most negative terms possible, because he refuses to consider that Barker may be documenting the first world war as a still unhealed wound in Britain. Thus, all her tactics to disrupt the pretense that this is a naïve recreation of 1917 anger him. He complains about her second-hand method, without considering that Barker's intent may be to acknowledge that we can no longer see the events of 1917-1918 without taking previous representations into account.

However, his greatest contempt is reserved for her "recruiting shell-shock to the age of Foucault and feminism" (13). He ends his tirade against her with a quote from Dick Diver in *Tender is the Night* meant to show what her characters lack. This quote from a novelist who never saw the front appears in A.J.P. Taylor's history of the first world war, and is quoted here as a superior response to the challenge that war poses for the novelist.

This western front business . . . took religion and years of plenty and tremendous sureties and the exact relation that existed between the classes. You had to have a whole-souled sentimental equipment going back further than you could remember. (13)

And herein lies the problem: Barker has taken away this writing, with the comforting patina of long familiarity, and she has not replaced it with anything as reassuring.

Although Barker has received reviews ranging from appreciative and enthusiastic to lukewarm and even hostile, no one writing about the trilogy has commented on its relevance to contemporary Britain. The Falkland's war brought post-traumatic stress disorder into contemporary Britain, yet no reviewer mentions it. Something of the hysterical homophobia of *The Eye in the Door* was repeated for me during the winter of 2000, when I was in Leeds. A Welsh MP, married with children, was "outed" after it was revealed that he had been cruising on Clapham Common. The story played for days in the media, from the tabloid press to *The Times*, and I couldn't help wondering about its affect on other gay men in similarly public positions. Of course, Ireland is still in political turmoil, and Northern Ireland still does not have Home Rule. The issue of child abuse raised by references to Carroll

has occasioned no comment, in spite of recent scandals involving pedophiles. Beattie Roper's brand of egalitarian socialism stood no chance of survival against the centralization and top-down hierarchical organization of the Labour Party. And finally, on a strictly anecdotal level, while I was in Leeds I found that my attempts to open up discussion around issues of post-colonialism and post-imperialism were usually rebuffed, with the exception of some other graduate students. If the reviews can be considered an indication of the willingness of the British public to witness these traumas, then it seems that they are unwilling. There is a certain comfort and security in a superficial engagement with traumas from the past; however, when the traumas move closer to home, as in Barker's more recent fiction, particularly *Double Vision*, then the reviewers' response is to push it away. The reviews that I have read to date have been decidedly mixed.

I have chosen to separate the articles from the reviews because they address a different audience. In 1997, Sharon Monteith published a short but appreciative review article in *Moderna Sprak* in which she observes that "it has taken far too long for the breadth and quality of [Barker's] work to be appreciated" (124). Six years, eight articles and one book chapter later, the situation has not significantly improved. All the articles noted here appeared in American literary journals with exception of Martin Löschnigg's "'... the novelist's responsibility to the past': History, Myth and the Narratives of Crisis in Pat Barker's *Regeneration* Trilogy (1991-1995)," which appeared in Austria, and Anna Grimshaw's "The Eye in the Door: Anthropology, Film and the Exploration of Interior Space," which appeared in *Rethinking Visual*

*Anthropology*.<sup>4</sup> Two articles choose to discuss the predictable topic of masculinity, and three deal with psychology, although just one deals directly with trauma.

Greg Harris's "Compulsory Masculinity, Britain, and the Great War: The Literary-Historical Work of Pat Barker" is much too broad, and for an article dealing with Barker's historical work, lacking in the kind of research that would make such a claim justifiable. Barker's work deserves more careful and carefully researched attention than Harris has given it. Oddly, too, the author overlooks the work done by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in *The Epistemology of the Closet*, which speaks to the panic that attends the enforced intimacy of men in wartime, and would have offered him an explanation for Billing's paranoia.

Peter Hitchcock's theoretically informed Marxist analysis of masculinity, "What is Prior? Working Class Masculinity in Pat Barker's Trilogy," is initially more promising. Hitchcock notes that her early writing "defamiliarized the platitudes and pieties that accompany representations of the English working class . . . by decentering the ideology of the working-class hero, he who has shouldered the burden of proletarian aspiration" (98), which begs the question of whose platitudes and pieties are on the line here. Hitchcock does catch something of the critical double bind Barker has experienced in the past: "Bluntly, when you write of women workers you are too realistic; when you write of a key moment in the history of masculinities you are not realistic enough (99)" Hitchcock, however, is prone to advancing his argument with unsupported assumptions such as "Barker believes in Rivers' theories of shell shock but not necessarily his conclusions (105)." On what grounds, one wonders, does he base this off-hand assessment of Barker's beliefs? And what

conclusions? Prior, he states, is anxious about his masculinity; Prior is very anxious about a number of things, but his masculinity is not among them. It may be that Hitchcock assumes that Prior's bisexuality automatically feminizes him, but that would be a homophobic argument, if that is indeed the argument Hitchcock is making. In addition, he claims that "reviewers bristle at the mention of Rivers' homosexuality" (115); however, he cites only one review in his bibliography, that of the very conservative Ben Shephard. He is dismissive and condescending to Barker, referring casually to her "Freudian predilections" and her "sometimes overbearingly Freudian narration" without considering that it might be her main character, Rivers, whose narration is so Freudian. Hitchcock is also prone to careless reading. He presents Beattie Roper in short hair and breeches, driving an ambulance during *The Eye in the Door*, when she is actually sitting in jail; (the passage he cites to support this actually refers to a friend of Hettie Roper [*Eye* 101]). This is not a small error. Beattie is important, because her imprisonment is a metonymy for all those pacifists and conscientious objectors that the novel's discourse excludes. In addition, much of Prior's activity throughout *The Eye in the Door* organized around his attempts to free her by exposing the government's use of falsified testimony against her; one of Prior's last acts is to visit Charles Manning on her behalf. Nevertheless, if readers allow for the article's deficiencies, its analysis of the conflicts around masculinity is useful.

The three articles that either deal with psychology in the novels, or take a psychological approach to them, are disappointing. Anne Whitehead, in "Open to Suggestion: Hypnosis and History in Pat Barker's *Regeneration*," incorrectly notes that Billy Prior's recovered trauma memory is fictional, and "the only point in the novel at



which the past is possessed as a form of knowledge" (689). Barker's source for Prior's trauma is a passage from Edmund Blunden's *Undertones of War* cited in Paul Fussell's *The Great War and Modern Memory* (32). Fussell cites the passage from Blunden as a representative example of a contrast produced by war which would seem false in art, and "which the art of memory organized into ironic little vignettes, satires of circumstance" (32). Irony multiplies. It is ironic, certainly, that Blunden's narrative is mentioned as fiction in an article which sets out to historicize Barker's sources.

However, a larger irony is at issue. Barker's incorporation of an incident cited in a text entitled *The Great War and Modern Memory* as a symbol of repression signals the repression of such incidents from the modern memory of the Great War. Ankhi Mukerjee's densely written Lacanian analysis, "Stammering to Story: Neurosis and Narration in Pat Barker's *Regeneration*," considers stammering as representative of all attempts to talk about trauma. Anne M. Wyatt-Brown, in "Headhunters and Victims of War: W.H.R. Rivers and Pat Barker," unconvincingly aligns the transference between Rivers and his patients with the transference that she sees between Barker and Rivers, an analysis which yields predictably transparent biographical conclusions.

Martin Löschnigg's article, "'... the novelist's responsibility to the past': History, Myth, and the Narratives of Crisis in Pat Barker's *Regeneration* Trilogy (1991-1995)," alone among critics and reviewers, claims that Barker "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). Löschnigg is unaware that the feminization that he attributes to Barker (and, before that, to Showalter), derives explicitly from Rivers's own writings.

Löschnigg also complains that Barker "'fails to 're-create the past in its own terms,' and the trilogy thereby 'raise[s] issues about the novelist's responsibility to the past and her relationship to the historian'" (222). I am not sure how to go about identifying what the terms of the past are, and, since Barker has a degree in history, it would seem to me that she is rather better equipped than most novelists to handle historical sources. Even more astoundingly, he writes that "Barker does not explore in any detail the resistance of the war experience to the narrative process, but in her discourse she seems to neutralize disruptive experience by amalgamating it into a coherent narrative itself" (227). I think it would be a challenge to find any other first world war novel that is as conscious of its own narrative process as any one of Barker's trilogy. Löschnigg's inability to find a workable critical approach to these texts is an extreme example of the difficulties that all the critics seem to have experienced in finding a way into her work.

The most intriguing and provocative writing on Barker to date has been from Anna Grimshaw, a visual anthropologist who has published two articles on Barker's work. In "*The Eye in the Door: Anthropology, Film, and the Exploration of Interior Space*," Grimshaw finds that Barker, "through the exercise of her creative imagination as a novelist, . . . is able to suggest some new and interesting questions in the early history of modern anthropology" (38-39). Grimshaw finds connections between Rivers and the filmmakers D.W. Griffith and Dziga Vertov, and argues that Rivers's anthropological modernism aligns him with the Cubists. In "*Anxious Visions: Rivers, Cubism and Anthropological Modernism*," Grimshaw refines her arguments, seeing Barker's trilogy inspiration for her project of "visualising anthropology." Although

Grimshaw's discussion isn't directly relevant to Barker's novels as novels, her discussion is immensely rich in associations, especially to the visual subtext of her work. Since Rivers's early work was on the physiology of the senses, especially vision, and his role in Haddon's Expedition was to test the perception of colour, I find Grimshaw's discussion full of possibilities for further inquiry.

Barker's choice of difficult material challenges her readers with material that requires witnessing, yet, there seems to be a near-universal unwillingness to confront Britain's imperial past. Grimshaw's articles, though stimulating and provocative, do not touch on the close connection between early anthropology and imperialism; however, given that related writing deals extensively with this, she may have felt no need to revisit that issue. Her articles are by far the most promising response, and represent a genuine witnessing in their imaginative engagement with Barker's work.

In working through the demands of Barker's novels, I stumbled upon a kind of witnessing that led me to much of the material that fills in the silences and absences in the trilogy. When I was beginning to think about how to approach *Regeneration*, an image came to mind that seemed to express something very important about the text. The image was geological; it was a cross-section of the earth's crust with a fault line running through it. Turning the implications of the image over in my mind eventually led me to understand that Rivers and Prior were a fault line, and the stratified layers around it represented the British class system. The image caught something about the nature of the instability between them, and the importance of their relationship for the narrative structure of the whole trilogy.

When I came to work on *The Eye in the Door*, I floundered for a long time. I seemed to have lost the ability to remember the book. After each re-reading, I was sure I had it fixed firmly in my mind. When I sat down to try to work with it, though, I repeatedly found that it had slipped away. After a very long time of trying to keep the events and characters straight, I hit upon another image from the natural world, this time from high school biology. I thought of a diagram of a one-celled animal dividing into two cells. In my imagination, the process was not yet complete; the two little animals were still joined by a band that tied them together, but their final separation was immanent. From this image, I determined that I was trying to remember the wrong things about the book. Instead of trying to remember what happened, I should have been trying to identify the poles that were pulling the narrative apart. Once I had grasped this, the book became clear, and I knew that my research should begin to look at the background to the two trials, what I had seen as two little animals in my image.

When the time came to work on *The Ghost Road*, I wasn't expecting to have any major difficulties. I had taught the book and felt that it was simpler in structure than *The Eye in the Door*. I was wrong. One day as I was working on the novel, I was rather surprised to find that an image came into my head that seemed to be unrelated to anything I had done so far on this chapter. It was another image from the natural world--a view of the earth from space as if from a spaceship. The earth is bathed in the brilliant sunshine, but my attention was drawn to the foreground of this image, to a small, seemingly dead planet in orbit around the earth. The dead planet had a sinister feel, but the earth seemed oblivious to its presence. I made a note of it,

then kept on with what I had been doing. The work was going well, and I didn't see a need to divert myself with trying to make sense of it. But it wouldn't let go. After I had determined that the narrative dissociation from *The Eye in the Door* had divided into two separate trajectories, I was looking for a way to talk about these two narrative trajectories as still in some way joined. On a hunch, I returned to the image. Once I recalled that Barker is familiar with contemporary thinking about traumatic memory, I realized that the apparently dead planet circling the earth away from the sun represented dissociated memories of traumas. This discovery led me to consider the importance of Haddon's film and some to look at recent research on Carroll's photographs.

The psychiatrist Dori Laub recognizes "three separate, distinct levels of witnessing within the Holocaust experience: the level of being a witness to oneself within the experience; the level of being a witness to the testimonies of others; and the level of being a witness to the process of witnessing" (Felman and Laub 75). I have adapted this paradigm to witness myself within the experience of trauma as I know it, through my own traumas, and through the traumas of others I encountered professionally. I have tried to learn to be a witness to the testimonies of others through my previous occupations and through reading, teaching and writing about trauma narratives. And finally, through this thesis, I have witnessed the process of witnessing.

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Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> James Kelman in *How Late it Was, How Late* also uses this double-voiced narration to great effect.

<sup>2</sup> By Stephen Wall, Mark Wormald, Justine Picardie and Peter Kemp.

<sup>3</sup> The favourable reviews are by Judy Cooke, Dinah Birch, Peter Kemp, Phillip Hensher and Julia O'Faolain. The critical review by Sue Gaisford was published in *The Independent*.

<sup>4</sup> Grimshaw revised her article, and published it again as "Anxious visions: Rivers, Cubism and Anthropological Modernism" in *The Ethnographers Eye: Ways of Seeing in Anthropology*.

## Conclusion

. . . May God us keep  
From single vision, and Newton's sleep!

William Blake  
"To Thomas Butts"

When I began this project, I knew the historical sources would be important, and expected to find a relatively simple incorporation of them into a fictional narrative. What I found was that in the case of little known figures, the use of sources was precise to the point where actual phrases were taken directly from archive material. Barker seemed to be saying that since their voices had never been included in the historical record, it was very important that they be accurate. Other uses of sources, such as Siegfried Sassoon's "A Soldier's Declaration" indicate that historical material was sometimes used to signal the received version, then Barker would supplement this familiar piece of information with dialogue or action that would offer a commentary on the received version. In this way, she was questioning the construction of historical narratives, perhaps suggesting that their construction and reconstruction should be an ongoing process, particularly when trauma is involved, and witnessing is required to bring the narrative into completeness.

I also expected that there would be an easy distinction between what was fictional and what historical, and this was true. However, this distinction in the end wasn't as important as I thought it would be. For example, Billy Prior was assembled, like Frankenstein, from bits and pieces of others. There are two sources in Rivers's

notes that might have gone into his creation, and, as I mentioned previously, the trauma is from Blunden. However, since Prior is introduced not necessarily as a realistic character, but at least partly to enact the protopathic role in Rivers's theory, then his ontological status within the text is different from the other characters, and his "reality" has to be judged differently. In his case, if he is faithful to his protopathic role as much as a historical character is faithful to the details of his or her life as they are known, then Prior is also "real."

I thought that I would find texts in which the trauma emerged verbally, through encounters with therapists and others, in ways that were consistent with what I had read of Bessel A. van der Kolk and Cathy Caruth. What I found were texts in which the trauma was not usually expressed verbally, indicating that these are unhealed traumas. In Barker's texts, most of the trauma emerges disruptively, as somatosensory re-enactments, which I recognized as the predicted expression for traumas not yet incorporated into narrative memory. I was, however, unprepared to deal with Barker's invention of the representation of collective trauma memories through visual artifacts. To my knowledge, this is unique to her writing.

I expected the research on the trilogy to be more directly about the war, and found that I had to understand that Barker's aims were more subtle than that. To begin to fill in the gaps that she left in her texts, I had to grasp something of the flavour and texture of the times. This entailed reading history, such as Ray Challinor's book on the history of British socialism; also Sheila Rowbotham's work on Alice Wheeldon; and Deborah Thom on the struggle for women's rights. It also drove



me into the newspaper archives to read *The Times* on the two trials from *The Eye in the Door*.

I also had to understand the relationship between the material she was asking me to uncover for myself, and the information that she provided. I found that often the material provided was more widely known than what I needed to know to fill in the gaps. Thus, Barker was asking me to consider the ways in which this new material that I was unearthing on my own altered my perception of the material I already knew. For example, I did know something of the scandalous production of *Salomé*, but I did not know think about the reactions of audience members like Manning, for whom severed heads are not necessarily stage props, nor did I know about the Pemberton Billing trial. Now that I do, the atmosphere of Britain during 1917-1918 has acquired a more homophobic cast.

When I began to work on the novels, I saw her narrative technique as relatively artless. It seemed to fit into her realist mode, but was peculiarly hard to characterize, like narrative Muzak, and I simply wrote it off as poor writing. It wasn't until quite a long way into the project that I realized that she was using an institutional voice. The voice is deceptive, it can convey authority that seems to come from nowhere specific because the identity of the voice is so hard to pin down. It is also very familiar; even readers who are not British have had some experience with that institutional voice at some time in their lives. Her narrative structure too seemed to be artless. Especially in *Regeneration*, which is the novel that is the most self-conscious of its narration in the trilogy, it seemed clumsy. I initially wondered if she was sticking too close to her sources, and didn't feel confident enough to move away from

them. It wasn't until I was trying to determine what it was about the narrative that was repressing the traumas that I felt I knew what she was doing by recreating that institutional discourse.

When I began, I expected to employ critical methods with which I was already familiar; this would include a rather eclectic mix of feminism, close reading, trauma theory and narratology. I had not yet discovered witnessing, and had only a loose hold on how significant trauma had been in my own life. I discovered that these alone were insufficient to cope with the traumatic material. In effect, employing these arms-length techniques would have had the effect of continuing the repression that is in the texts. After discovering witnessing as a critical response, for quite a long time I imagined that Barker's texts were deformed from some original whole text in which all that she had excluded there in its place, and I wrote with these whole texts in my mind.

Most interestingly, I think that I now recognize Barker's narrative strategies in other writers, and wonder if there is some larger paradigm at work here. Leslie Silko's Pueblo Indian novel *Ceremony* also features a central character traumatized from the war. This mixed-blood man, like Prior, is somewhat of an outcast, and his war trauma overlays pre-existing traumas of abandonment and identity. In *Ceremony*, the trauma is embodied within a text that splits between Indian and non-Indian discourses. As this man begins to heal his trauma with the help of a rather post-modern shaman, the textual split begins to resolve itself, and by the end of the novel, the split has completely healed. Its structure is a mirror image of Barker's. In Marian Engel's *Bear*, Lou, an archivist badly in need of a connection to powerful female

forbears heads north from Toronto to do some historical research. Lou is being sexually exploited by the Director of the research institute where she works, and is lost within herself. However, when she discovers the powerful stories of women's survival, she is unable to incorporate them into a narrative, and they remain as dissociated stories. Barker, however, seems more conscious and more in control of her narrative than either Silko or Engel. And Barker is the only writer to my knowledge to have discovered the use of visual artifacts.

I think that future research might explore two possibilities. The first would be to examine the circulation of the two sets of images from the end of *The Ghost Road* to see how they were viewed by the public. The second entirely different proposal would investigate narrative structural similarities in texts dealing with trauma. In particular, I would also be interested in exploring other writers' use of visual imagery to carry traumatic memory.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1

*The Eye in the Door* contains an allusion to another social abuse inflicted by the state that is unconnected to the trials: the poisoning of munitions workers by tri-nitro-toluene, TNT. Although it is certainly another instance of abuse by the state, it is absent from the text because it is not implicated in the dissociative processes that shape and define this narrative. Its absence indicates that the limits of repression generated by the trials extend only as far as the issues brought forth by the trials themselves.

TNT exposure was responsible for a long list of symptoms that were considered non-fatal, but could also cause potentially fatal toxic jaundice (Thom 125). Some of the early symptoms of exposure to TNT were “drowsiness, frontal headache, eczema, dermatitis, loss of appetite, gastritis, constipation, cyanosis, shortness of breath, vomiting, anaemia, palpitation, yellow or orange staining of the skin and hair, depression and a metallic taste in the mouth” (Thom 125). The non-lethal effects of TNT on the mostly female munitions workers is evident in the jaundiced skin and ginger hair of Prior’s girlfriend, Sarah Lumb and her friends (177). However, none of these women shows any of the symptoms of TNT poisoning, none die, and there is no mention of this issue by these women or by the narrator. Barker's omission of this particular state abuse indicates its omission from public knowledge.

Research by the feminist historians Deborah Thom and Antonia Ineson has uncovered collusion between physicians and the management of munitions plants that consciously placed the health of female munitions workers in jeopardy to insure a

steady supply of shells. The Ministry of Munitions had a direct role in the production of shells; it ran government factories and also provided assistance to the management of controlled factories (“TNT” 131). By 1915, the public began to realize that there was a connection between TNT and death from toxic jaundice among munitions workers (Thom 123). Public knowledge of the dangers of handling TNT caused difficulties for management in 1916, in spite of pay levels that were about five times more than a house servant's wages. Some women refused to work filling shells, and workers handling TNT disrupted production because of their fear of becoming ill. Absences due to illness were frequent. By 1916, both newspapers and medical publications were censoring information linking TNT and illness among munitions workers (Thom 125). At the first meeting of the TNT Advisory Committee in 1916, the Minutes state that doctors “should work hand in glove with the management, and should not pull a single girl out, except with the consent and approval of the Factory Management” (qtd. in Thom 128). The committee also recommended that “Doctors should be paid by the Factory Managements, otherwise the highest factor in the authority of the Management would be removed” (qtd. in Thom 128). Doctors treating these women were instructed not to ask questions; their job was to identify and separate those likely to go on to develop toxic jaundice from those whose symptoms were perceived to be less dangerous. The women who were believed to be in the most danger could then be re-assigned to tasks that would not involve TNT.

Charles Manning, who works for the Ministry of Munitions, sits on a health and safety committee, twice offers the job to Prior as a way of allowing him not return to the battlefield. The Ministry appointee, like the physicians, would work closely

with management to ensure that the workers stayed on the job. Thom and Ineson report that one staff member from the Ministry of Munitions did sit on their health and safety committee, so it seems that Prior was being offered job that would have placed him in a position of one of those exercising state abuse. Prior refuses Manning's offer, and he shows no knowledge of the trap that the job would have been for him. Manning, with his atrophied awareness of the inequities of class, shows no indication that the job is a problem for him, or that it might be a problem for Prior.

## Appendix 2

"(1) *Malu-Bomai Ceremony at Kiam* (shot c.6 September 1898) Three men in forest setting wearing leaf skirts; leading man wears the cardboard mask made for Haddon and last man holds a tailpiece. They dance in procession. Length 50 seconds at 16 f.p.s.

(2) *Murray Island: Islanders Dancing in Dari Headdress* (probably 6 September 1898) Three men in labalabas perform a processional dance on a beach. Camera jam occurs mid-shot and the dance re-commences. Length 70 seconds.

(3) *Murray Island: Islanders Dancing in Dari Headdress* (probably 6 September 1898) Unidentified dance, same camera position as (2), but with camera panned slightly to the right. Three men dancing in procession on a beach. Length 21 seconds.

(4) *Murray Island: Fire Making* (shot 5 September 1898) Three men -- Pasi, Sergeant and Mana -- sit cross-legged on the ground, twirling a stick between their palms bearing upon a wood block (drill method). Length 30 seconds.

(5) *Murray Island: Australian Aborigines Dancing "Shake-A-Leg" on Beach* (shot c.6 September 1898) Four visiting Australian Aborigines wearing labalabas clap, then dance, then clap again. A fifth man beats rhythm by hitting a long pole with a branch. Film in three sections with cuts separating them. Same locale as items (2) and (3). Length 70 seconds." (Long )

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