Chapter Five
Memories of War: A Portrait of Destruction
**Double vision:**

Barker focuses on the evils of war in her each novel but every time from a different angle. She is the writer who sees the war from every angle. *Double vision* is Barker’s tenth novel, which returns with the same theme of war, but this time in completely contemporary and new setting. Barker is obsessed with war; she wanted to eradicate the evil of war from this world, which is the major cause of human suffering.

This book is about the atrocity of war and how, two men struggle to come to terms with it. The author has visited the war-crimes trial of Slobodan Milosevic in The Hague, and the novel poses question about the need to report atrocity, the price of not recording, and the role of the novelist. This novel interweaves the highly topical subject of how war is represented in the media. *Double vision* shows Pat Barker’s strengths and passions about novels. It shows intense psychological and moral responses to the affairs of the world; the evaluation of individual integrity; connections between local and international violence and appreciation for landscape. Like *Regeneration*, *Double vision* is a transfixing story about the personal consequences of wartime engagement and disengagement, and about the redemptive power of facing the truth. *Regeneration* onwards, Barker’s novels are dominated by male characters but in *Double vision*, she introduces complex women characters, reminding us of her first three books, which labeled her as a feminist writer.

*Double vision* is a thriller and at the same time, a deeply thoughtful consideration of how our lives are changed by sweeping historical tragedy and everyday act of violence. The Gulf War, War in Bosnia and the Middle East and the events of September 11, 2001 cast a dark shadow over this unsentimentally
redemptive tale. *Double vision* is about war, crime, murder, rape, love, hate, sex, artistry, creativity, photography, reporting, duplicity, anger, tenderness, inspiration. The most important thing it has is feeling and emotion, an ability to convey its characters’ innermost thoughts in an almost tactile manner. At time, Barker’s characters surprise even themselves. The novel is a series of relationship between four individuals, Ben and Kate, Stephen and Justine. The two men used to work together as a team. Stephen was a writer and Ben was a photographer. They have covered wars and conflicts throughout the world. Ben would always insist on getting that one last shot, the one that the eyeless onlooker would miss, the one, which conveys the true horror, the one whose horror might stir conscience. However, one day, in Afghanistan he pursued his perfectionist one shot too far. He was over-exposed to enemies, and was killed in an encounter. Stephen’s grief was unbearable which cannot be described. His partner’s death put him in limbo and he retired from the war. He suffered from debilitating flashbacks of his war experiences. Stephen came to stay with Robert (Stephen’s brother) and his family in the countryside of England, Stephen had hoped to heal his emotional war wounds living in peaceful and calm surrounding and complete writing a book about representation about war in a true sense.

Ben’s sculptor wife, Kate, is left both numb and destroyed by her loss, a loss that becomes everything for her. She takes a job of creating a giant Christ for a prime site in a churchyard. This, work of art helps her emotional wound, which she got in the form of her husband’s death. She gets a second blow in the form of accident, which left her arms damaged. Now she cannot complete project of Christ’s statue without the help of an assistant. Therefore, she hires a gardener named Peter, who is much more than a caretaker of roses. He is a mysterious person. He is a new version of Danny Miller of Barker’s previous novel *Border*
Crossing. Another character, Justine is vicar’s daughter. She was ready to go to the university but illness disrupted her plans. She joins the job in Stephen’s brother’s house specializing in caring for difficult and demanding children. Stephen lodges with his brother’s family in countryside but in a separate dwelling a hundred yards from the house. Stephen and Justine meet there. He is old enough to be her father but still they have illegal relationship. It develops because he was writing a book about war, in which Justine was interested. Their sexual encounters are both rich and surprising. Here Barker teases readers’ emotional reaction, to crystallize it but at the same time to keep it fluid which makes the story of Stephen and Justine exciting, exhilarating, contradictory, impossible and accepted.

Barker proves that whatever may be the ages, whatever their motives, whatever the consequences, people still need love, can sense its promise, can invite it, even when they know it could hurt, humiliate and destroy. Thus, Double vision is a complex story of how a group of friends and acquaintances interact with history, reality, and their hopes and fears in a small community in the northeast of England. Barker gives minute details of rural landscapes. Memories of war and its consequences haunt characters. Kate tries her level best to recover from her loss and the injuries she sustained in a serious auto accident. She throws herself into her work of sculpting a statue of Christ to recover from trauma. In an interview when asked to Barker:

Why is trauma your subject? She replied:

I’m not sure there is any obvious explanation. I think I’m attracted not to trauma but to the process of recovery from it, and if, like with a broken bone, people can heal stronger than if they had never had it. I’m also interested in the idea that trauma memories are recorded in an entirely different way than ordinary memories. They are recorded by a more primitive part of the brain… one of the reasons that recovery works is that you are transposing that memory to a higher part of the
brain so that language becomes a way of subduing it. (Dougherty Interview, 2004)

All the major characters suffer from trauma, Stephen from war trauma and his friend’s death, Kate from her husband’s death and her own car accident trauma and Justine from burglars’ attack in which she was seriously injured. Every character is trying to recover from trauma with the help of art. Stephen who is suffering from posttraumatic disorder decides to go to countryside in peaceful surrounding of rural area and write book on the subject of war and its representation, instead of going to a psychiatrist. Kate, after her husband’s death and her serious accident pours herself into sculpturing which seems to her therapeutic. Justine devotes herself as caretaker of Robert’s child and indulges in love making with Stephen.

Double vision takes modern war as its starting point. Stephen is haunted, as Sassoon and Owen were, by the image of war; but this war is a modern one. The set-up of the novel is very intriguing, part mystery, part meditation on violence, part love story. The protagonist of this novel, Stephen is drawn to a young girl called Justine, who is half of his age. The novel is fascinating, evocative, rich in detail and as clear on violence and war as her earlier one. When Maya Jaggi asks Barker about the title ‘Double vision’, Barker answers:

There are two main characters: a sculptor and a journalist. It’s their joint vision of a shared problem-how to represent the darker side of life without allowing that darkness to dominate either the finished product or their own lives. (Jaggi, Interview: 2003)

Double vision is about indefinite borders between the self and others, shared memories, and minds and the relationship between people. In Double Vision, Barker is concerned with ostensibly religious themes of salvation or redemption, the capacity of human beings to turn from evil to good. These themes are explored
in wholly secular contexts and ways, good and evil are understood in thoroughly historicist and humanist terms. Barker has gradually shifted her attention towards middleclass intellectuals and especially towards socially constructive behavior. All these characters are contrary to her earlier novels in which characters were lower class people. *Regeneration* onwards, gradually Barker has made her characters as social workers and the psychologists more and more central to her work. In the *Regeneration Trilogy*, Rivers, the psychologist is the central character and each of Barker’s three novels since then: *Another world*, *Border crossing* and *Double vision*, the central characters are middle class intellectuals. They are writers, artists, psychologists and social workers, who work to record, interpret or analyze, and more significantly, have been empowered with some form of authority to represent others. *Double Vision* continues to explore the same problems of representation, but in a very different setting and situations.

**Death of safety:**

Technologies and new inventions have brought many changes in the society. These technologies have made even impossible things possible. These technologies have proved very useful for human beings but at the same time, if it is misused then it is capable of destroying the whole world, as the First World War and the Second World War witnessed. These modern technologies could be terribly destructive.

Now fear is very widespread, especially after 9/11, and there has been collapse of trust in people. After eight years of the publication of ‘*The Ghost Road*’, in *Double Vision*, Barker returns to the theme of war and its memories, which continue to haunt us. *Double vision* is set in the aftermath of 9/11. This date is frequently evoked in US and British political rhetoric as turning point in the world history. The successive images of two passenger airplanes smashing into the
sides of the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York, followed by the collapse of those towers into a billowing mushroom cloud of dust, smoke and debris, have supplanted the details of the events as such. Another important symbolic image is the gaping hole in the side of the pentagon building in Washington. All these images testified to the vulnerability of the United States, and to the Western World. These terrorist attacks brought anxiety that a similar attack would occur in other cities associated with globalization and Western Power. Just ten days after the 9/11 attacks President Bush addressed the US congress and announced that resolute action had to take the place of grief (Bush, 2001: B-4). Judith Butler rightly suggested that what followed in US attacks on Afghanistan and Iraq is the attempt to ‘banish [grief] in the name of the action with the power to restore the loss or return the world formerly was orderly’. (Butler, 2004:29-30) The process of grieving for the dead was substituted with a program for revenge. Afghanistan and Iraq were the victims of America as they were considered the centers of terrorism though later it was discovered that Iraq played no part in terrorism and no nuclear weapons were found in Iraq.

Two of the central characters of *Double vision*, Kate Frobisher and Stephen Sharkey were grieving for the loss of their husband and colleague respectively, Ben Frobisher is killed on assignment as war photographer in Afghanistan. After the death of his friend Stephen resigns from his job as a foreign correspondent to write a book about how war is represented in which he intends to include some of Ben’s disturbing photographs. Ben and Stephen had also worked in Bosnia together. Representation of the brutalities of war through media is important in the novel. In the beginning of novel, there is reference to the Gulf War of 1991, ‘The first War to appear on T.V. screens as a kind of son et lumiere display, the first
where the bombardment of enemy forces acquired the bloodless precision of a video game. (241)

Ben and Stephen were working together in New York on the day of 9/11 attacks, and they witnessed what happened there. When Stephen remembers the day’s events, he thinks of ‘images of shocked people covered in plaster dust (36). The images of dust-filled city are also described in the novel by other images of snow, fog, the whiteness of Kate’s studio and the impenetrable sea mist, which endangers Stephen and Justine in their boat trip to Holy Island, these images, symbolizes smock screen in which the reality cannot be represented clearly. Ben and Stephen were the spectacles of destruction and carnage. The society was shaken by violence, trauma and war. When, Stephen returns from war front to home front to take rest and refresh; he finds that even countryside is also full of random violence, he experiences burglar episode in which Justine is seriously injured.

Ben and Stephen have testified the primary human vulnerability in their work representing the terrors of war. After Burglars’ attack, Justine too knows that ‘she might feel happy again, but she would never again feel safe’. (254) When, Robin Dougherty in an interview asks Barker about Justine’s safety, Barker answers:

Q: One of the characters in the book who experiences trauma says she will never feel safe again.

A: I’m very interested in the way Justine reacts in this book. She is very robust in that she refuses to let (the traumatic event) define her… what I was interested in was that nothing in this book leads up to that (event). It’s a dangerous thing to do in fiction, because all these things are supposed to grow logically out of previous events. I become interested in the random accident, of someone being in the wrong place at the wrong time. There may be a political context, but from the
point of view of the victim, it is a completely random, unmeaning act. I wanted to grapple with the random act of violence. I come to the conclusion the (fiction) can’t. (Dougherty, Interview: 2004).

Now, in this modern age society is no safer place. We are not sure what will happen at the next moment. We don’t know from where death will come. People no more trust each other and even love is losing its sincerity. There is no love, trust and hope; there is death of safety. Fear is prevalent all over the world. Poor is afraid of rich, minority is afraid of majority, one country is afraid of another country.

**War and Journalism:**

Journalism is a major source of representation of war. Journalism and war are closely related. Whatever happens at the battlefield is represented by journalists. With modern technology and new inventions in the field of journalism like computer, internet, digital cameras etc; it is now possible to capture live battles on the T.V. screen. There is much advancement in electronic media as well as print media. The televised wars of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries have established the war correspondent as prominent cultural presence. Reporters’ memories and autobiographies are considered important and it has increased appearance of war correspondents in fictional representation. War correspondents are also important figures in popular television programs and movies.

Fictional representation of war emphasizes different facets: it exploits the aura of adventure and heroism with which the profession is endowed in popular perception. Individual correspondents are torn between professional ideals and the human values in which they believe. They are not only professional observers and commentators but also individuals positioned in scenarios of war that threaten their own lives and confront them with the mutilation and death of others. Many
journalists lose their life while collecting the authentic and live information from the battlefield. The practice of embedding reporters and the expectations of audience at the turn of the twenty first century to see correspondents live in the field has led to significant increase in casualties among war journalists all over the world. Barbara Korte recalls the phrase “journalism of attachment”, coined by B.B.C. correspondent Martin Bell:

[who] found it increasingly difficult to follow the “tradition of objective and dispassionate journalism” in which he had been trained and instead wished to practice “a journalism that is a war of the moral ground on which it operates, that cares as well as it knows and will not stand neutrally between good and evil, the victim and the oppressor. (Bell, 1998:102)

Contemporary war novels are interested precisely in this kind of journalism where journalists are torn between profession and morality. One can observe this interest already in earlier examples, such as Graham Green’s *The Quiet American* (1955). These fictions are distinguished by a particular attention to the correspondent’s exposure to human sufferings and pains that are psychological and physical, observed and self-experienced. In today’s ‘culture of spectatorship’ (Sontag, 2003:105) the confrontation with the suffering of other human beings is impossible to avoid and calls for some kind of reaction, even though people may be uncertain as to what reaction is appropriate:

Photographs of an atrocity may give rise to opposing responses. A call for peace. A cry for revenge. Or simply the bemused awareness continually restocked by photographic information, that terrible things happen. (Sontag, 2003:13)

Photographs, videos and pieces of writing are the images of human suffering, which forces not only individual but also international politics to react to the violation of human rights with interventionist warfare such intervention is
legitimized. Such intervention in cases of former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and Iraq—is a rhetoric that invokes humanitarian values, specifically the opposition of good versus evil. War reporters are professional spectators of worldwide atrocities, and they have to find ways of dealing with them according to their professional and non-professional ethics, constantly negotiating between the poles of ‘objective’ detachment and emotional attachment. War correspondents are thus at the center of an ethic debate which encompasses contemporary media culture and contemporary international politics, which also concerns every single individual exposed to the pain of people who are completely strangers to them.

The fictional correspondents in Double Vision undergo a development, which abandon a dominant attitude of witnessing war and becoming deeply affected by the reality of human suffering.

In Barker’s novel Double vision, Stephen Sharkey is a protagonist who has recently given up war reporting; he remains interested about the human cost of war. He wanted to write a book about war and its consequences. So, Stephen remembers the “son et limier” quality of television images from the Gulf War in 1991(241) and “sanitized” look of images from Kosovo. (131) He wonders about ethic consequences of such images that do not show the atrocity of war: “What happens to public opinion in democracies—traditionally reluctant to wage war—when the human cost of battle is invisible?” (241) Stephen Sharkey and Ben Frobisher worked together in Bosnia, Iraq and Afghanistan, capturing the atrocity of war in their art, Stephen in his war reporting and Ben in his photography. Unfortunately, Ben is killed in the war of Afghanistan while capturing photo. Stephen, after his colleague’s death retires from the war. He suffers from posttraumatic disorder; therefore, he goes to live with his brother Robert, in a rural
surrounding to heal from the psychological wound. While living in his brother’s house, he develops relationship with the young girl Justine.

Ben’s wife, Kate grieves her husband’s death. She is a sculpture. She has taken a project of sculpting a big statue of Christ. She devotes all her time for art, which saves her from the atrocity of war. She depicts human suffering in her art. The title Double Vision evokes visual and ethic perception. Pat Barker also widens the issue because her reporter not only faces atrocities of war, but also the moral challenge of violence in everyday life. Reporters are professionals who observe rather than feel. What has made Stephen Sharkey abandon the reporting of war is not only his friend’s death, Ben, who accompanied Stephen to many zones of war and terrorism before he was killed in Afghanistan, but also an earlier encounter in Bosnia. Stephen and Ben have both taken seriously the motive to go after truth in their images of war. One of their most troubling experiences comes from Sarajevo, when they were going back to their hotel late one night and literally stumble into ruined building. Hearing noises above, they investigate and find the corpse of a girl who was raped before she was killed.

Eyes wide open, skirt bunched up around her waist, the splayed thighs enclosing a blankness of blood and pain… She was waiting from him, that the way it felt. She had something to say him, but he had never managed to listen, or not in the right way (55)

Stephen is obviously moved by the sight of this body, whose face in particular makes a powerful ethical demand on him. Stephen pulls down the girl’s skirt and feels a strong impulse to “close the terrible eyes” (53). Later the nightmare caused by the experience is intensely physical and bring Stephen into close contact with the lifeless body: “Her head was beside his on the pillow, and when he rolled over on to his stomach, trying to get away from her, he found her body underneath him, as dry and insatiable as sand” (55). This description has
erotic undertones that enhance the intensity of Stephen’s recollection. The entire war zone is a crime scene. It has lasting impact on the mind of Stephen. Back in Britain, Stephen finds a photograph of the girl among Ben’s papers:

Obviously Ben had gone back the next morning, early before the police arrived, to get this photograph. He’d restored her skirt to its original position, up round her waist. It was shocking. Stephen was shocked on her behalf to see her exposed like this though, ethically, Ben had done nothing wrong. He hadn’t staged photograph. He’d simply restored the corpse to its original state. And yet it was difficult not to feel that the girl, spread-eagled like that had been violated twice (121).

Still empathizing with the victim after all these years Stephen finds this photo shocking and indecent. He finds himself in an ethical dilemma regarding the authenticity of this scene. With the violation of a woman’s body in civilian life, Stephen eventually also gives vent to his moral outrage. Such ethical uncertainty and instability is a common feature of Barker’s work.

Barker very skillfully presents that violence and crimes are not only present in the battlefield but also at the home front. Stephen retires from the terror of war with guilty memories to hide himself into a peaceful countryside but there also he finds violence randomly. Violence and the violation of bodies also occur in the apparent safety of Stephen’s ‘post-war’ refuge in England, for example, when his new girlfriend Justine is brutally beaten up by burglars. Stephen is obliged to watch the burglary helplessly from a spatial distance, but certainly not with emotional distance. Stephen finds himself connected with Justine. He almost kills one of the burglars, when he manages at last to come to Justine’s rescue. The blow, he delivers is not only directed at this specific man but it includes the perpetrators of all the violence Stephen had to witness in his professional career:
All the way down the hillside, he had flashbulbs exploding in his head. So many raped and tortured girls—he needed no imagination to picture what might be happening to Justine. It would not have surprised him to find her lying like a broken doll at the foot of the stairs, her skirt bunched up around her waist, her eye staring. Years of impacted rage had gone into the blow he’d aimed at the back of the burglar’s head. He’d meant to kill. (250)

Barker’s war correspondent, Stephen concludes that merely witnessing and reporting war and other atrocities is not enough. Human suffering must have consequences, and the representation of calamity must be able to arouse an ethical response. Ben makes the argument that war correspondents who witness war give the audience “raw material to make moral judgments” (227), whereas images like this are never simply pure information, never simply raw material. Those who see photograph will already possess a certain framework with which to interpret and give meaning to this particular situation: ideas regarding violence and war, good versus evil and so on. Ben always looked for images that would have impact on the viewer and he has died his own violent death while taking such a picture. Stephen is particularly stuck by two disturbing photographs of an execution in which the photographer has included himself not only with his sensitivity and with a point of view, but also with a trace of his own body.

Another [photograph] was of an execution. A man on his knees staring up at the men who are preparing to kill him. But Ben had included his own shadow in shot, reaching out across the dusty road. The shadow says I’m here. I’m holding the camera and that fact will determine what happen next… this wasn’t the first execution recorded on film, nor even first to be staged specially for the camera, but normally the photographer’s presence and its impact on events is not acknowledged. Here Ben exploited the convention. (123)

Against the conventions of professional news photography, Ben has decided to show his own shadow as a visible marker of his human involvement and his own
possible complicity in the killing. Ben has here created images that document an
atrocities and, at the same time, demonstrate the war reporter’s human involvement
in and attachment to what he reports. This is a reason for which Stephen will
include Ben’s war photography in the book that is going to be his final statement
about the representation of war. *Double vision* focuses on a contemporary debate
about the representation of war in image-dominated culture as well as a debate
about military intervention in conflicts that violate human rights. This type of
representation, though it is in the form of book, photograph or video have two
types of effects on human being: it may numb the spectator’s sensitivity or it may
arouse moral indignation and a wish to do something and put an end to atrocious
deeds. The correspondents in the novel *Double Vision* become aware of this
challenge: they step out of a professional habituation that expects them to function
predominantly as spectators. Instead, they become emotionally attached to what
they see and report.

The truth-sayers are so deeply hated even when they do not constitute
a real threat to the established order. The reason lies, I believe, in that
by speaking the truth they mobilize the resistance of those who
repress it. To the latter, the truth is dangerous not only because it can
threaten their power but because it shakes their whole conscious
system of orientation, deprives them of their rationalization, and
might even force them to act differently. (Fromm, 1973: 233)

War correspondent’s engagement in war appears to be a special mark of
recent novels about war. They negotiate this issue with a particular attention to
human suffering. Some time media becomes puppets in the hands of dominant
power. They are allowed to represent only that which is allowed by dominant
power. Generally, war correspondents are not allowed to show true face of war.
This is the situation, which has torn them from within, and their morality is
questioned. Many times war correspondents retire from war with guilty memories
of witnessing war, its horror and prevalent crime in the battlefield, which cause them to suffer from posttraumatic disorder. Stephen suffers from the same dilemma; so, he decides to retire from the war and wants to write a book on the true representation of war.

**Front hell and home front hell:**

Barker sets her novel in a rural community, very different from the more familiar settings of urban dereliction in her previous novels, but it is clear from the beginning that the rural world depicted is not the pastoral antithesis of the urban. Barker’s characters are not at rest even when they retire from the war. They equally suffer at home front also. Rural community is equally fragile, equally vulnerable to larger social and political forces. Kate’s life is quiet meditative. She is deeply attuned to season and time of day:

> The weather turned colder, until one day, returning from her walk, she noticed that the big puddle immediately outside her front gate was filmed with ice, like a cataract dulling the pupil of an eye. She heated a bowl of soup, built up the fire and huddled over it, while outside the temperature dropped steadily, hour by hour, until a solitary brown oak leaf detaching itself from the tree fell onto the frost-hard ground with a crackle that echoed through the whole forest. (1-2)

The story opens in the dark days of winter. The stillness of the novel’s opening is quickly shattered by the several moments of horrific violence. Kate speeds up to pass a van while returning from the party one night, skids on a patch of black ice, and crashes her car in the woods. When she awakens in the hospital, she finds her neck in a brace and her arm immobilized. She was already late to complete her project, a statue of Christ for the local cathedral; she faces the prospect of months of physical rehabilitation. After her accident, she is in need of an assistant. She gets an assistant whose name is Peter Wingrave who turns out to
be an ex-convict who had committed murder as a child and shows disturbing signs of psychopathic behavior later in the novel. This is the quite isolated phobia and pressure of urban professional life. Barker describes rural landscape as degenerated as battlefield landscape. Stephen’s return to the rural landscape is described as follows:

A man gets off a train, looks at the sky and the surrounding fields, and then shoulder’s his kitbag and sets off from the station, trudging up half-known roads, unloading hell behind him, step by step.

It’s part of English mythology, that image of soldier returning, but it depends for its power on the existence of an unchanging countryside. Perhaps it had never been true, had only been a sentimental urban fantasy, or perhaps something deeper—some memory of the great forest: Sherwood, Arden. Certainly Stephen returned to find countryside in crises. Boarded up shops and cafes, empty fields, strips of yellow tape that nobody had bothered to remove the disinfectant mats that now lay at the entrance to every tourist attraction, bleached and are baking in the sun. (201)

It was considered that war combatants could unload hell behind them, washing of the filth and stench of war in the clean and still water of countryside but Barker portrays rural landscape as the scene of devastation, abandonment and crisis forcibly dispels this illusion. After the nationwide outbreak foot-and-mouth disease, the livestock upon which the farming community depends have been destroyed by government officials. The rural landscape where Stephens retires from the front hell considering it peaceful, calm and cool place but it becomes the scene of a failing marriage. Stephen’s marriage has broken as he retires from the war. His brother Robert’s marriage is also dying slowly and the dangerous episode of burglar in which Stephen’s new girlfriend was beaten and violated mercilessly show that home front is no less destructive and violent than home front. Rural
places here too are full of random violence as it was depicted in Barker’s earlier novel.

Kate reflects that Ben’s photographs of the English landscape are as dark as his war photographs. ‘Fenland, Water-land, brown tarns in gorse covered hills, show light, water light-all with the same brooding darkness in them… you always knew, looking at these empty fields, these miles of white sand with marram grass waving in the wind that somewhere, close at hand, but outside the frame, a murder had been committed’ (65).

Barker seems to follow opposite trend from all the major writers of war. Many writers make contrast between front war horrors; suffering and trauma with rural pastorals’ peaceful, idle and cool atmosphere to create emotional impact on the reader but for Barker both are hell. She thinks that war is not limited to battlefield but it is all pervasive and has adverse effects on living and even non living things. Barker thinks that battlefield is front hell and home is home front hell. She thinks that the whole society is at war and war must be eradicated from whole society.

**Representation of war through art:**

Irrespective of the cause, war has always adverse effects on human lives. There are different ways of representation of war but it becomes very difficult and even sometimes impossible to represent war in its true face, as there is always the threat of dominant power. Therefore, different ways of representation are used and the best way to represent war is art and the best example of how war is represented in art, is *Double Vision*. The role of the artist in this world of terror and vulnerability is the key focus. Art must bear witness to horror, even when that responsibility has to pay its own costs. In the novel, *Double Vision*, there are four
ways of representation of war through art: first, is journalism, in the form of war reporting; second is sculpture, in the form of the statue of Christ, third is creative writing in the form of Peter’s short stories and Ben’s photography. The goal of all these different forms of representation is to reveal truth; however, ‘the characters may be skeptical about the effects of being confronted with naked truth’. (119)

The protagonist Stephen was a war journalist who retires from the war. He returns to Britain and undertakes a job of completing a book on the topic how wars are represented, which will include photographs of his friends and colleague Ben Frobisher, who was killed in Afghanistan. Both these frontline journalists have become what Sheron Monteith and Nahem Yousaf call ‘martyrs for the truth’ (286). Stephen insists on making the effort to confront the truth of war directly in spite of resistance he will encounter, as he explains to Kate:

It’s that argument [Goya is] having with himself, all the time, between the ethical problems of showing the atrocities and yet the need to say, “Look, this is what happening”… there’s always this tension between wanting to show truth, and yet being skeptical about what the effects of showing it are going to be (119).

Goya was a great painter of the First World War. He witnessed the horrors of the Great War and portrayed them in his painting. Goya is depicted as an exemplary artist committed to the ethical representation of war and terror, whose paintings do justice to the paradox of the novel’s epigraph. Goya is an artist who represents war in its true face through his art. The faces in his paintings cry out to be heard, and produce a roar, which cannot be ignored. This is explicitly contrasted with the sanitized television images of war, which Stephen associates with the Gulf War of 1991. In Goya’s work, we witness the horrors of war, which draw us beyond despair. Goya was so much affected by war that Stephen remembers, Goya healed himself of his mental illness by ‘visiting circuses, fiestas, fairs, freak shows,
street markets, acrobatic displays, lunatic asylums, bear fights, public executions, any spectacle strong enough to still the shouting of the demons in his ear’. (195)

Goya’s own art was a product of his personal suffering as well as response to larger social forces; painted for himself. His most touching warning in Barker’s context is rendered in captions beneath the cumulative images of disasters of war; “No se puede mirror” (one cannot look), “Yo lo vi” (I saw this) and esto es lo verdadero” (it is the truth). Barker refers to Goya self-consciously through Stephen, the “Yo” or I who saw the raped and murdered girl, an emotive indictment of the West’s failure in Bosnia. War is represented by Goya through his paintings which has attracted the attention of Stephen who himself is trying to represent war through war reporting and writing about the true representation of war.

Another way of representing war, which is used by Barker, is Ben’s war photography. Though Ben is not present in the novel, his war photography represents war in effective manner. Ben dies photographing the war in Afghanistan and, more precisely capturing an artistic image of the ruins of war, a line of wrecked tanks that looked in silhouette like a wave breaking. Ben scarified his life for art. Stephen exclaimed on seeing the image which Ben risked and lost his life to capture.

The difference between Ben’s last photograph and the others described in the novel is that here Ben risked his life for an image of ruins transformed into art, an image that acknowledges the despair of war wreckage at the same as it beholds the energy of a breaking wave. It is not only an apocalyptic image, a ‘vision of the world as it would be after the last human being had left’, but it is also the product of Ben’s capacity to see art in ruins, to find truth in an image of debris. Ben was
too much devoted to representation of war and photography. Many photographs show, Ben is sacrificing himself in more disturbing ways. Such as in the photograph of rape victim, Ben rearranges the girl’s body to the state that he and Stephen found her in an original state. In another instance, when Ben photographs an execution; ‘a man on his knees staring up at the men preparing to kill him—he includes his own shadow in the shot, and in the following shot in which the man lies dead’. (123) Ben figures his own complicity in the shot. The execution is happening for public display, and there he is, the dutiful photographer, putting it on display. Both Ben and Stephen are sometimes guilty of becoming too complicit in the atrocities and horrors they represent, and then their salvation is the capacity to find hope in the representation of terror. Barker has used Ben’s war photography as one of the major tool of true representation of war.

Peter’s stories also represent war in the novel, Double Vision, in a different way. Barker makes Peter, though mysterious, graduate in creative writing and intelligent person. He also publishes his writings. His stories deal with betrayal, brutality and murder. However, he himself is a new version of Barker’s earlier novel Border Crossing’s protagonist, Danny Miller, who at the age of ten killed an old woman called Lizzy Park. He is mysterious; he seems to have something to tell if we knew how to listen in the right way. Therefore, he represents the violence and war through his stories, which he has inherited from his ancestors as his father was military veteran.

Stephen’s war reporting, Ben’s photography, Goya’s painting and Peter’s creative stories are different ways of representation of war through art. Kate’s sculpture in the form of the project of Christ’s statue is also one of the major arts through which Kate is representing war. Kate’s assignment is to sculpt Christ, this
commission is full of resonance - not least, and it is an ironic reminder of that archetypal act of violence, the crucifixion.

Q. At the heart of the book is the sculpture that Kate is making of the resurrected Christ. It’s one of the primary visual images we have in Western art, and we sometimes don’t acknowledge that it’s rooted in violence.

A. I was interested in the particular influence of Christian representations of violence and suffering. [In Regeneration] Bill prior is surrounded in church by images of beautiful men all dying... I am interested in that. There is a strand in Western art, a sickly representation of physical suffering. Over the years it must have impacted badly on people, yet what can you do? Christianity was built on a man who was tortured to death in his early 30s. There’s no getting around that... I was quite conflicted about using the image of Christ to represent the human capacity to regenerate and leave the suffering behind. It excludes people, but I thought, in the end it’s such a central image of Western culture, it has a meaning whether or not the reader is Christian. (Dougherty, 2004)

The statue of the Christ is the reminder of sacrifice. Christ sacrificed his life for the welfare of society. His sacrifice represents violence, murder and injustice in the society. The contemporary society is also ravaged from the same evils.

Barker is very smart in representing war from different angles. She represents war from reporter’s point of view through Stephen; from creative writer’s point of view through Peter and from sculpture’s point of view through Kate. Barker proves that art is a powerful tool to represent war in effective manners. Barker is a social critic who uses different tools to represent war. Barker wanted to purge the society from the evils of war, violence, murder, poverty, injustice, class system etc.

Kate and Stephen heal from their different wounds; everyone copes with physical or psychic wounds or moral dilemmas. Justine, Stephen’s girlfriend learns
to distinguish between autonomy and fear of intimacy. Stephen’s brother Robert suffers from his dying marriage, Robert’s son Adam tries to create a place for himself in the wilderness, safe from classmate’s taunts about his Asperger’s syndrome. All the characters in the novel are suffering from one or the other trauma, but still movement is possible. Kate completes her sculpture; Stephen falls in love. However, their joy is restricted; it is short and dull.

*Double vision* is a literary book; it is a book of ideas. Kate’s meditations on her artwork are nuanced and profound, capturing and analyzing the process of creation. Her conversation with Stephen range broadly over the complex challenges of photography and journalism, of the moral responsibility of journalists, of the nature of representation. An interrogation of the violence that besets our contemporary world, whether from war, terrorism, accident or crime, is everywhere. Barker’s writing employs classic techniques of suspense, juxtaposing the calm rhythms of rural life with shocking outbreaks of violence, subtly injecting fear into quotidian events and animating the entire book with the mystery of Peter Wingrave’s secrets. Barker’s story is both terrifying and fascinating.

*Double vision* was written carefully and sparingly, it’s a story which begs to connect the wider world of warfare with the intimate lives of people far from a war zone. This novel is wider in geographical sense. There is mention of death in Afghanistan, death at Twin Towers, rape and murder in Bosnia, and a sobering vignette of the war Crimes Tribunal at The Hague. The novel suggests that if you have yourself witnessed this kind of terrible events it returns and haunts. Modern life in a supposedly peaceful country floats on the surface of equally unpleasant behavior, and the job of a war reporter deserves inspection for damage. Otherwise, nights are spent in nightmares and the irrepressible inhumanity. Wars affect people
directly as well as indirectly. Complete regeneration from such trauma is not possible. People can heal themselves up to certain extent only.

*Double vision* ends with the happy conclusion of Stephen and Justine’s love for each other, but it does not represent the full force of the novels treatment of the vulnerability and interconnectedness. This novel takes us to the disparate and notorious locations of recent world history like Baghdad, Afghanistan, New York, Sarajevo and The Hague. This novel implies connections between the ‘home front’ and the frontline, to trace a spectrum between the random eruption of violence in a rural setting in Northeast England and the more predictable campaigns of war and terror in some of the notorious lands of contemporary world history.

Finally, not redemption or regeneration but self-preservation and adaptation count in *Double Vision*. Kate adopts the live without Ben. At the same time, she preserves herself against Pater Wingrave’s incursion into her life, if not into her art. Stephen discovers sexual regeneration and his relationship with Justine revives his interest in life following Ben’s death. *Double vision* explores the challenge of how to cope with terror of human vulnerability, while retaining the notion of ourselves as interdependent on others, and intimately connected with others even those who wish to harm us. The happy conclusion of Stephen and Justine’s relationship represents not a resolution to this challenge, but a determination that love too has its place in this newly exposed world of vulnerability and that love signifies the admission of the other into our lives in such a way as to transform us. *Double Vision* continues Barker’s concern with micro-narratives of human history and society, with the impact of the global on the local and with the possibilities of hope and redemption in a world mourning the loss of security and stability. However, in *Double Vision*, Barker works hard to maintain the possibility that, through love and art, we can continue to be creative beings, continue to bear
witness to hope and represent war effectively in this post-romantic and secular world.

*Double Vision* is the most positive novel Barker has written yet. Through this novel, Barker has proved that she can write effectively not only about the First World War but also even the most contemporary wars, such as Gulf war, 9/11, Bosnia War and Afghanistan War. She is very much obsessed with war, though it is the twentieth century or twenty first century. Another noteworthy point about her writing is that whenever she describes war, she writes with a new angel. All her novels, *Regeneration* onward circle around the war. Almost all the characters in the novel are haunted by the memories of war and they portray the picture of destruction through their art. Barker is fascinated with the representation of war through art, which she continues to explore even in her next novel *Life Class*.

**Life Class:**

Pat Barker is one of the most compelling of the current generation of British novelists, especially in her use of the novel as an instrument of social critique. She produces literature, which does not shy away from asking thorny questions, and refusing the doctrinaire of what goes wrong. Perhaps, no contemporary fiction writer has done more to dig deeper into the terrible destroying trench-based warfare and its physical, psychological and cultural consequences than Pat Barker. She admits that when she listen the words ‘the First World War’, she does sometimes groan. In the beginning of her career, she wrote novels about working class women in England. Then she created the astonishing *Regeneration Trilogy* (*Regeneration*, *The Eye in the Door* and *The Ghost Road*) winning the Booker and other prizes for her portrayal of traumatized and shell-shocked First World War veterans.
Lyden: we’re glad to have you. We are all fans, and I think everyone is wondering why First World War had such a terrific and compelling hold on your imagination.

Ms. Barker: I think it’s mainly because of the landscape, the landscape of that war, which was so desolate, and by the end, though, it stretches the French countryside and the Belgian countryside, where literally nothing grew, and there were no birds, of course there were no trees, and I think that has always seemed to me to be the essence not just of that war but potentially of all wars. I mean potentially, that landscape is a post-nuclear-Holocaust landscape. (Lyden, Interview: 2008)

As a writer, Barker was obsessed with the First World War period. Over the past decade, she has tried to distance herself from it by producing fiction set in the present day like *Another Word*, *Border Crossing* and *Double Vision*. But with her new novel *Life Class* (2007), she returns to the era of the First World War. Like its predecessors, *Life Class* follows the war through the eyes of artists, but this time, rather than poets; they are mostly painters and other visual artists. Barker explains why has she gone back to the First World War, that she was fascinated by the group of talented young artists like Christopher Nevinson, Mark Gertler, Paul Nash, Dora Carrington etc. at the Slade School of Art just before war. How these characters would react to the enormous event that took everybody’s individual lives is a question that excited Barker. She remarks that the people involved are all very different from those in *Regeneration Trilogy*. They are much younger and much more naïve. They are undamaged and unformed. They do not rebel against the war as Sassoon did in *Regeneration*, except the capacity for being shocked. Barker seems overpoweringly impelled to write not only about the First World War, but war itself. Her intense interest in this tremendously important event that is almost uniquely capable of revealing what human beings are capable of when put under supreme pressure is apparent everywhere in her fiction.
Barker combines both the domestic and the catastrophic effects of war in *Life Class*. It is set at the onset of England’s entry in the First World War. Once again, she takes the topic of representation of war through art, suffering patients, gender roles, class conflicts, and the nature of artistic vocation and incarnated them into fascinating, frequently troubled people. It starts with life class at the prestigious and real life Slade School of Fine Art in London and follows it’s protagonists to the Western Front and particularly the nightmarish shelling of the Belgian city Ypres. *Life class* is neither love story nor war story, it is rather about individuals struggling to find love, lust, justice and meaning in a war-torn world. Barker’s depiction of humanity at war is minute and comprehensible. This novel contains erotic scenes and love triangles. However, romances take a secondary place whereas war is the prime focus.

German soldiers destroyed the city of Ypres in the First World War, along with thousands of innocent lives, the famous Cloth Hall, a landmark of medieval Flemish architecture. Paul Fussell wrote in his book *The Great War and Modern Memory* that ruined masterpiece, served as an eloquent emblem of what happens when war collides with art. That same collision is central to Barker’s new novel, *Life Class*. Barker mourns the loss of great artists in the First World War.

The title *Life Class* refers to a course that characters in the novel are taking in a London Art School as Europe stumbles towards the First World War. The title also refers to the educational nature of characters’ experiences, the life class thrust upon them every day with its unforeseeable curriculum and its deadly final exam. The young characters whom Barker follows through school and into the horrors of battle must somehow figure out how to live amid the incongruity of beauty and carnage, art and destruction.
Pat Barker is the only writer, who writes about, before the war, during the war and after the war. Life Class depicts the life in England before and during the First World War. It is Barker’s best work since The Ghost Road. The three central characters in Life Class are students at the Slade School of Art in London, studying under the famous art teacher, Henry Tonks. In the spring of 1914 we meet a group of art students at the Slade School of Fine Art in London; middle class Elinor, Kit Neville and working class Paul Tarrant. There are complications of love, love affairs, class and idealism and lot of drinking at the Café Royal. Elinor is the charismatic center of love triangle, seems loosely based on Dora Carrington, the talented painter. Her suitor Neville seems loosely based on Christopher Nevinson an art student who served with the medical corps and later became known for his paintings of war. Elinor’s other suitor, Paul, in contrast, seems more like a fictional creation. Billy Prior of the Regeneration novel is the representative of the many Englishmen of his generation who found their lives and expectations turned upside down by the Great War. Henry Tonks was a real person, a doctor turned artist who, during and after the First World War, worked with a plastic surgeon to document the repair of soldiers mutilated faces. Here again, Barker shows her interest for mixing actual and invented individuals. Other real characters include the pacifist Lady Ottoline Morrell and the artist Augustus. However, in Life Class, Barker focuses more on the connection between war and art and vividly portrays the war’s devastation of nature as well as men.

The novel seems to be divided into two parts. The first part deals with the civilian life in England before the First World War, the second part of the novel seems completely different from the earlier, in which Barker takes us from home front to the battlefield and hospital. We feel that there are two novels in one.
Life in England before the Great War:

When the novel begins, it seems that war is still just a distant rumor on the continent, and all the characters are pursuing a happy life in London. There are lots of late nights out, flirting and romantic intrigue, ruminating about art and aesthetics and the meaning of beauty and truth. Paul has brief, passionate affair with Teresa Halliday, who is stalked by her abusive husband. Teresa is a drama queen, desperate for attention. Paul is more attracted, however to a fellow student named Elinor Brooke, a doctor’s daughter, who is partly in love with Kit Neville, a successful senior student of Slade School of Fine Arts, who in turn is attracted towards Paul. Elinor apparently wishes to be no more than a friend with both of them. Neville is a privileged middle class boy who paints scenes of urban industrial life that are straight out of Paul’s working class background.

Class is a constant theme in the novel, spanning the book like a high-tension wire. Paul’s grandmother, a slum landlady, has left him enough money to go to the Slade. He thinks that becoming an artist is partly a way of escaping from suffering and pain. With Elinor and Neville, he enters the socially upward class. He compares working class people with the higher-class people. He is a man straddling between two worlds, through him Barker seems to suggest that social hierarchies are being blasted away, both by the self-conscious Bohemianism of the artists’ world and the leveling impact of the battlefield. Barker gives her character a deepening sense of meaninglessness. From the beginning of novel, Paul straggles to find a place somewhere more satisfying than his present station. He is perceptive, and through his eyes, Barker accurately portrays Britain as it was in those days.
The story’s romance is actually a love triangle, Paul and Kit vying for Elinor’s affections whereas the latter wonders whether she even wants love at all. Barker fully employs her descriptive powers in playing these three off against one another, conveying their desires, fears and frustrations. Elinor does not take interest in love and joins the England’s rising feminist sentiment and stakes out a lonely little patch of independence. Elinor is more complicated, although a gifted artist. She thanks to her gender, which enabled her to continue to work while, her male admirers were at the front. She is the character who fights for an equal life as a woman, to follow her own desires in ways that women had not been allowed to before. Her feminist resistance to marriage is apparent in the novel. She is determined to ignore the war as much as possible. We feel more empathy for Paul than Elinor as she does not have to face the horrors and distraction that Paul has to deal with. However, her wish to cling to beauty and normally, her rejection of the masculine attitude to war is appreciable. She criticizes war and seems to be the mouthpiece of Barker.

All these change with the commencement of war, which suddenly makes all their reveries about love and art seem childish and naïve. Paul ends up in Belgium working as a medic, tending to wounded, and Neville ends up in a nearby town, driving ambulances. Elinor alone remains committed to pursue her painting and ignore all news of the war. She visits Paul in a small Belgian town near the front where he is serving and the two promptly start discussing about the proper role of art in wartime. Paul argues for an art that would bear witness to the wounds of war while Elinor declares that art should only depict the things we choose to love not things imposed on us from the outside world.

Barker never sentimentalizes her three young protagonists in depicting the effects of the First World War. Although she writes effectively from their point of
view, communicating their hopes, fears and dreams. They emerge as rather selfish, unsympathetic individuals expect Lewis. All these characters have cultivated a certain emotional detachment in the service of their art. That detachment helps Paul and Neville survive the horrors they witness during the war, but it has also cut them off from genuine emotional connection with the society at home. The longer Paul remains in the battlefield and hospital, the greater becomes the distance between himself and home, and by the time he returns, Paul must confront the fact that life and love will never be same again as it was before the war.

**War and Painting:**

Pat Barker is very smart in the representation of war. She takes different branches of knowledge and arts to represent war and its consequences. In *Regeneration*, she takes poets and their poetries; in *The Eye in the Door*, pacifists and their point of view; in *The Ghost Road*, anthropology; in *Another World*, an old veteran; in *Double Vision*, Journalism and photography and in *Life Class*, she takes painting to represent war. The questions, she raises are serious and must be asked. If, as Hannah Arendt says that violence is mute, then the recurrent question from the working class novels and the *Regeneration Trilogy* to *Another World, Border Crossing, Double Vision* and most recent, *Life Class* is: how does one give voice to trauma that extends its battlefield into the individual and collective psyche, across divisions of public and private? This question of representation seems is asked in *Life Class*, what is the role of visual art at the time of war; an attempt is made here to represent the suffering of others. The trio artists (Elinor, Paul and Neville) each show the importance of painting in the time of war. They represent the pain of others and give voice to trauma.
Though from professional point of view, Neville thinks that the war is once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to paint, so he volunteers to drive a Red Cross ambulance, ‘the fastest way of getting close to the fighting’ (110), which earns him Elinor’s admiration as the only one “who keep going. Everybody else sit round and talked”(123) Neville also seems motivated by a desire to achieve something approaching truth and reality in representation, truth in the sense that Goya had in mind in “Los Disasters de la Guerra’- the Disasters of War which is already mentioned in Double Vision. Paul asks Neville about what he intends to paint near the front line, to which Neville replies ‘whatever there’ followed by a description of an aid station recorded by his father: “one hospital where there were five hundred men lying on straw, covered in piss and shit—some of them hadn’t had their wounds dressed in a fortnight. No anesthetics, no disinfectant, nothing, whole place sank of gangrene” (119). Though it was impossible to represent truth through his art, Neville tried his best to paint what was un-presentable, paint what was relevant to the times and most important he has shown the relevance of the artist to war and an artist as an agent of social evolution.

Neville is a masculine artist, a relevant social critic, participating in the war, his efforts fundamentally differs from Elinor’s militant pacifism, simply refusing to acknowledge war, a position that ultimately requires more courage to occupy, as pacifist voices are silenced more ruthlessly in a society at war as we have already seen in the preceding chapter in the Regeneration Trilogy. Paul shares much of Neville’s philosophy of painting what he sees and represents in painting. He volunteers as a hospital worker and ambulance driver, after declaring physically unfit for active service. Paul also wanted to prove that he is one of the good artists before Professor Tonks, who is both a surgeon and an artist, before whom Paul
feels his drawing to be “more than just a failure… a dishonest failure”. (5) Tonks criticizes Paul, not for lack of technical ability, but for his missing voice:

Most people who came here are bursting with something they want to say, and the trouble I have with some of them is that they can’t be bothered to learn the language to say it in, whereas with you it’s almost the opposite… I don’t get any feeling that they’re yours. You seem to have nothing to say. (29)

However, when Paul joins as an ambulance driver, he witnesses very horrible scenes. He has painted what he had actually seen and did in his day-to-day routine at military war hospital. After coming from the war, however, Paul finds that indeed he has something to say, ‘not simply as a painter but as an artist in belated response to Tonk’s question’ (30). Paul feels that he got a voice about which Professor Tonks was talking:

He’s painted the worst aspect of his duties as an orderly: infusing hydrogen peroxide or carbolic acid into a gangrenous wound. Though the figure by the bed, carrying out this unpleasant task, was by no means a self-protract. Indeed, it was so warped up in rubber and white cloth: gown, apron, cap, mask, gloves—ah. Yes, the all-important gloves—that it had no individual features. Its anonymity, alone, made it appear threatening…. A white-swaddled mummy intend on causing pain: the patient was nothing: merely a blob of tortured nerves. (203)

Paul’s painting seems to have come from another world to haunt him. He has found his voice, and has something to say about the horrors of war—there is nothing here of heroism or of pacifism, or of masculine camaraderie and the form, while realistic on one level, is also something else, an anonymous, generic, almost banal situation that borders on the universal and the abstract. War inflicts the pain, which is unbearable, and this pain is painted in the painting, which horrifies the painter himself. Paul feels genuinely threatened by his painting: “for long time he
hovered on the edge of sleep, dimly aware that the shrouded mummy in his painting had stepped out of the frame and was standing by his bed” (209). It shows that the representation has become real; war is encroaching into the normal everyday life of human.

Paul in the hospital is transformed into dedicated and highly competent caregiver who spends endless hours tending the appalling wounds of soldiers just off the battlefield and out of the operating room. Amputations, infections and gangrene are constant in his day. He and his colleagues must be unsentimental about the people they are treating. Here is Paul orienting Lewis, a newly arrived volunteer:

“You know the very young one who died?”
Paul frowned into the darkness. No, he couldn’t remember any of the three who’d died. Not their faces.
“Sister Byrd said he had gas gangrene, but I thought the Germans haven’t used gas?”
“They haven’t. It’s when tiny organisms in the soil get into wound, they produce gas.”
“And that’s the smell?”
“You get used to it… Look, there are three ways you can tell if its gas gangrene. One, the small. And then there is a kind of crackling under the skin. It’s… it’s quite hard to describe but you’ll know it once you’ve felt it. I’ll show you tomorrow if I get a chance.”
He was turning away as he spoke.
“And the third?”
“I’m sorry?”
“You said three things.”
“Did I, the third thing is they die.” (132)

Barker depicts how caregivers manage to break through this crust of detachment to achieve an intimacy and vitality they were lacking in their prewar life. Lewis is more idealistic than Paul and more open to forming personal connections to the patients he works with. Paul gradually forms a close friendship
with Lewis who is a Quaker, a pacifist like Elinor. Lewis does not develop the apparent indifference or detachment that affects and cause breakdown. He remains able to put a firm reassuring hand on the wrist of a man stoically enduring an agonizing pain and spends silent hours besides a suffering patient, leading comfort with his presence. Paul absorbs Lewis’s openness gradually. It is through Lewis’s eyes that Paul himself will see more clearly and will ultimately be able to connect with the pain of others, a pain that he no longer allows himself to recognize.

Paul describes his condition after living with Lewis that everything is new to him. Every impression of the hospital, the wounds, the gangrene, the amputated limbs stacked up outside as he says “so of course I started seeing it all again through his eyes, whereas most of the time I go around in a kind of dream state. Like being inside a rubber glove that covers all of you, not just your hand”. (P-147)

One of Paul’s cases was a child who had had both his arms blown off and then died. The surgeon on duty told Paul that the child’s mother had come to the hospital and smothered him to spare him a life of suffering. Paul admits that he can never forget the boy and his mother. Both Paul and Lewis are involved in another difficult case, of Goujet, who has attempted suicide by shooting himself in the head; ‘he can no longer speak, as much of the lower part of his face is missing, and he is only being treated so that he can later face the firing squad as an example to others’. (160,144) Lewis cares a great deal for Goujet’s suffering and sits with him every day until he gets scolded by Sister Byrd.

Goujet made serious efforts to communicate with Paul as well, giving him many sheets, all of which seem to contain senseless scribbling, though Paul suspects they are not meaningless, by the end of the shift, all the paper had been used up and only then did Goujet quite down seeming satisfied, his ‘text’ completed. As Paul goes off duty, ‘he tears up the bits of accumulated papers and
throws them to the wind, soon to be forced into the mud by ambulance wheel’ (162). Paul seems to become like Lewis who feels the pain of others “as if the pain had been his” (136). After Lewis is killed, Paul admits to Elinor and to himself that he loved him as a compassionate and kind person when it was too late.

Elinor, despite her refusal to war, takes a trip to the forbidden zone to meet Paul where she comes face to face with the truth of war, after the town is hit by artillery and bombardment:

In the centre were several bundles covered with rugs or blankets. At first she thought some families bombed out of their homes had rescued their possessions and covered them to keep them dry. She was almost standing over the bundles before she saw the feet sticking out of one covering, a hand out of another. Further on were other people lined up but not yet covered: a woman with a little dog in her arms, three other women two men and then, lying on the cold ground looking up at the sky with rain falling into their eyes, and do not blink or turn their head away. (190)

Even after witnessing such a horrible scene, Elinor doesn’t change her attitude and refuses to acknowledge war. Paul realizes the gulf that separates them in their philosophies of how to deal best with the horrors of war. Paul tries to convince Elinor that the war cannot simply be allowed to ‘pass by’, either as a crisis of humanity or as the proper subject for artistic representation. Elinor refuses to become part of the audience for the suffering of others, part of the ‘we’ that is supposed among the members of a nation, especially in the time of crisis like war. Elinor prefers not to collaborate in what she sees as voyeuristic activity, the spectacle of suffering, without offering any solutions to the endemic problem of war throughout human history—in effect, ‘putting hell on display without knowing, perhaps without caring, what to do about it’. (175-76) Like Siegfried Sassoon in Regeneration Trilogy, Paul also decides that he must go back to
fighting: “The sooner he was out there again the better, he thought. He didn’t belong here”. (247)

National myths come under pressure at the time of crisis. Social representations, according to Mascovici, ask the ‘Why?’ science tries to eliminate, and set up an interrogation of cause and effect: “Representations are based on saying: ‘No smoke without fire’… Thus saying is not a mere image but expresses a thought process, an imperative - the need to decode all the signs that occur in our social environment and which we cannot leave alone so long as their significance, the ‘hidden fire’, has not been located (Moscovici, 2001:55). All the artist characters in the novel are engaged in an effort to represent truth or Moscovici’s “hidden fire”. Male artists are trying to paint what they experience, the horrors of war, while Elinor a militant pacifist believes that if people simply refuse war, then war itself would disappear. Even if the violence is mute, the representation of violence need not to be, and it is here that Neville and Paul find their answer to the question of relevance. Voices that carry messages counter to notions of heroism, glory and honor will not often be heard, whether from Elinor, Lewis and other militant pacifists, or from artist like Neville and Paul, who make an honest effort to confront the myth of glorious warfare with something approaching truth, asking others to look at what is really happening.

One cannot think and imagine the way Barker represents the war. The way she represents war touches the heart and compels the readers to change their attitude regarding war. It also challenges the contemporary notion of war, myths, glories and heroism of war. As long as social critics, like Pat Barker will remain in the society, it would be difficult for warmongers to convince people for war. Barker is a writer who changes the mentality and ideology of the people who read her novels. The most important thing that Pat Barker did in all her novels is, she
has represented truth and reality. All her novels about war are beyond appreciation.