Chapter Two

Regeneration: Psychological Treatment
Recent conflicts, global terrorism, renewed enthusiasm for the poetry of the First World War and the novels of authors such as Barker and Sebastian Faulks have re-awakened interest in war-related psychological trauma leading to a more thoughtful critical analysis of the psychological morbidity arising from the major wars of the 20th century. This historical re-appraisal presents more complex picture of war and has prompted a fascinating debate about the nature of PTSD (Post-traumatic stress disorder). The effect of trauma on the brain is recognized throughout history, whether he is a returning soldier from the Trojan War described in Homer’s *Iliad* or in the Vietnam of 1980’s.

**Psychological Terms:**

This chapter offers a brief analysis of the psychological terms like “shell shock”, “war neurosis”, etc., and further analyzes in detail Barker’s major text *Regeneration* in the light of psychological approach. The analysis of these terms will help for better understanding of Barker’s texts, which deal with the major theme of war and its psychological consequences. Barker’s major texts like *Regeneration, The Eye in the Door, The Ghost Road, Another World,* and *Border Crossing* are closely linked with the following terms.

**Shell shock:**

War is the most unnatural activity and it is terrifying. Soldiers were paralyzed with fear or run away if they could escape. There was double threat to the life of soldiers, first, being killed or wounded by the opponent; second, if the soldier denied killing then there was savage punishment from the authority. This double threat caused breakdown of many soldiers. They could not protest openly so they protested through their body. Only in the 20th century, this instinctive terror began to be seen as something other than treachery or seen perhaps as a form of
illness. During the First World War, many soldiers without any physical injury were psychologically disintegrated on the battlefield: shaking uncontrollably, unable to stand, speak or urinate. Both the parties in the First World War continued to procure their harsh disciplinary code, many soldiers were executed and many others were punished. In *A War of Nerves*, Ben Shepherd describes how, early in the war, one man, “Crying, shivering, and frightened that he was going blind” was taken to base hospital. There he was tended by Dr. C.S Myers, who coined the term “shell shock” for these helpless cases and began the awkward process by which the sufferers came to be seen as victims, and helped rather than punished. His word became a catchphrase of the age.

“Shell shock is a psychological disturbance caused by prolonged exposure to active warfare”. (Dictionary: 2001) It is also called as combat fatigue. Blindness, deafness, amnesia, paralysis, vomiting, hallucinations, impotence, uncontrollable twitching, inability to taste, smell or urinate, funny walks etc. are just some of the crushing psychosomatic symptoms that have afflicted soldiers during the era of modern warfare right from the First World War to Iraq and Afghan War. Over the last century, military medicine has coined a variety of terms to describe the psychological consequences of combat such as shell shock, war neurosis, effort syndrome, battle fatigue, acute combat stress, past traumatic stress disorder and gulf war syndrome. They all essentially describe the same phenomenon i.e. the human mind suffering from intolerable stress and the psychic pain of witnessing and committing dehumanizing acts. Initially, doctors dubbed the mysterious assortment of symptoms that gripped huge number of soldiers as “shell shock”. For a while, they assumed it was a physical condition; caused by the unprecedented intensity of bombardment enabled by all kinds of new invented explosives, before switching to a psychological diagnosis that painted shell shock
as a kind of male hysteria. Shell-shocked soldiers needed replenishing affection, as a small child needs to be praised and comforted after a particularly strenuous and exhausting activity. The poet Siegfried Sassoon described this strange process in the following way:

Shell shock, how many a brief bombardment had its long-delayed after-effect in the minds of these survivors, many of whom had looked at their companions and laughed while the inferno did its best to destroy them. Not then was their evil hour but now; now, in the sweating, suffocation of nightmare in paralysis of limbs, in the stammering of dislocated speech. Worst of all in the disintegration of those qualities through which they had been so gallant and selfless and uncomplaining... this, in the finer types of men, was the unspeakable tragedy of shell shock. (Sassoon, 1936: 136)

In the *Female Malady* (1987), Elian Showalter describes shell shock as ‘male hysteria’, ‘the masculine equivalent of disorder traditionally and linguistically associated with women’. (Showalter, 1987: ch-7) She argues that shell shock was caused by the powerlessness and loss of control experienced by soldiers in the trenches. ‘Men were silenced, immobilized, and forced, like women, to express their conflicts through the body’. (Showalter, 1987: 171) The result was a flight from the physical experience of the war into a condition of emotional trauma that, Showalter observes, was an expression of a feminine element in men’s nature that conflicted with Victorian understanding of appropriate masculinity. In case of the psychologically disabled, however, it was not disability that caused effeminacy, but feminine tendencies that led to disability. War also had the ability to mature men emotionally. Thomas Dixon and D.W. Griffith identified war experiences as key to the transitions they made from boyhood to manhood, such experiences could have the reverse effect on so many shell shocked soldiers who used to behave like children; so it was the job of psychiatrist to make them mature through their therapy. ‘The loss of control was key to contemporary understanding
of shell shock’, (Meyer 2004:195-210) self-control was thus one of the necessary skills that boys had to be taught before they could become mature men of character. For men to lose their self-control implied a return to childishness, a time before they had reached maturity. J. M. Winter in his analysis of 1903 Interdepartmental Commission on Physical Deterioration notes, ‘Unskilled laborers constituted the great majority of army recruits whose physical and mental “deficiencies” traced back to early childhood deprivation’. (Winter, 1996: 16) This deprivation led to stunted growth and mental immaturity, which haunted the medical evaluation of doctors and psychiatrist from 1914 onwards. Elliot G. Smith observes:

These men were quite capable and morally unassailable whose nervous system is positively unfitted for hardships and horrors of war. They have enthusiasm and the best of intentions, but this mental inspiration does not continue when the horrors and terrors come. Their inner strength rapidly decreases, and only requires an acute storm to break on the nervous system (Such as a bomb explosion or the death of comrades) for their self-control to vanish completely; and automatically their condition changes to what is popularly called hysteria. (1916: 853)

As per this condition, shell shock was a symptom of a more general emotional immaturity that identified men who suffered from it as inherently unsuitable for the masculine work of soldiering. However, ‘the battle of Somme in 1916 saw a turning point in British Medical discourses of shell shock’. (Sheppard, 2002: 853) ‘Medical officers were forced to turn their attention from the analysis of causation to the diagnosis of the ever more variable symptoms and prescription of treatment in order to stem the increasing levels of ‘Wastage’ from the front line’. (Shepard, 2002: 38) ‘Shell shock, both as a term and as a condition entered the public imagination with great rapidity’. (Ibid: 38) Much public interest was concentrated on the treatment of victims by government and society; the concept
also began to find its way into fiction about war. In books ranging from Mary Butt’s and Virginia Woolf’s modernist depictions of the lost generation in *Mrs. Dollway* to detective novels such as Dorothy L. Sayers’s *The Unpleasantness at the Bellona Club* (1928) and Ngaio Marsh’s *Enter a Murderer* (1935), shell shocked characters become important in British inter-war fiction. Shell shock became influential symbol of the long-term effects of war. James Hilton’s *Random Harvest*, Rebecca West’s *The Return of the soldier*, and Warwick Deeping’s *Kitty* are the best examples of the symptoms of shell shock and its treatment.

In the beginning of the First World War, mental disorder was common among soldiers. Victims of shell shock were often marked and labeled cowards by their peers, causing many to desert the army. Three hundred and six soldiers were executed and hundreds more were imprisoned for their apparent cowardliness, even the officers also come in the grip of epidemic shell shock. The ratio of shell shocked officers to shell shocked enlisted men was 1:6, with this shift, shell shock become recognized as a legitimate medical disorder, victims experienced anguish, anxiety and the inability to control their emotions. They were unable to separate their past from present. Psychologist, Karl Bimbaum observed that great weariness and profuse weeping were common even in strong men during the war. They were the psychological casualties, their problems were subconsciously developed such as the inability to walk, talk, see or hear. All these symptoms were beyond the patient’s control. Shell shock had devastating effects on the British Army. More than 80,000 cases of shell shock were treated during the First World War even after war majority of the victims suffered from symptoms of shell shock. In the post war period, many veterans still complained of frequent nightmares and hallucinations. More than 65,000 men remained in mental hospitals suffering from shell shock acquired during the war. In every military conflict since the First World War, shell shock has been a problem among combat forces. Throughout the
years, the disorder has been reclassified various times, with names including combat fatigue, war neurosis, neurasthenia and most recently it is known as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Although the terminology has changed, the disorder remains a threat to the mental and physical well-being of troops.

Ashley Gilbertson, a journalist who covered the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan from 2002 to 2008 commented that since 2001 more than two million soldiers have been cycled through Iraq and Afghanistan, men and women of many nationalities, but mainly American and British. One in five U.S., Iraq and Afghanistan veterans, 300,000 in total are returning home with psychological problems and PTSD, while almost 700 veterans are committing suicide each month. That is more that 8000 service members a year. This is the hidden cost of modern war. Though they do not get any physical injury, mental injury is no less horrifying than physical or may be more dangerous than physical injury. Physically injured men can speak, think and manage their life but mentally injured cannot enjoy such things, they become trouble and even burden for their families.

**War Neuroses:**

Although Sigmund Freud wrote a little about War Neurosis, the subject was taken up by his followers, which resulted in the publication of *Psycho-Analysis and War Neuroses* (1919). Freud wrote introduction of this book, in which he observed that neurosis is caused by a conflict between repressed libidinal impulses and the ‘ego instincts’ of self-preservation. Freud remarked:

In traumatic and war neurosis the human ego is defending itself from a danger which threatens it from without or which is embodied in a shape assumed by the ego itself. In the transference neuroses of the libido whose demands seems to it to be menacing. In both cases, the ego is afraid of being damaged- in the latter case by the libido and in
the former by external violence. It might indeed, be said that in the case of the war neuroses, in contrast to pure traumatic neuroses and in approximation to the transference neuroses, what is feared is nevertheless an internal enemy… We have a perfect right to describe repression, which lies at the basis of every neurosis, as a reaction to trauma-as an elementary traumatic neurosis. (Freud, 1919, SE17, P210)

Freud’s reference to the ‘internal enemy’ points out that what is feared in the conditions of trench warfare is not the actual danger, but the prospect of being overwhelmed by emotion (‘libido’), leading to a disintegration of the ego. Franklin D. Roosevelt’s aphorism at the time of great depression- ‘we have nothing to fear but fear itself’- expresses the same idea. Freud’s and his disciples’ interest, in war neurosis developed during the First World War. The psychoanalysts had an opportunity to observe and to monitor many patients presenting such distinctive symptoms as paralyses, tremors, recurring nightmares, the loss of sexual desire etc. all related to the experiences of war. The common cause of such symptoms was trauma, which acts by breaching the psychic apparatus, and which may appear either from outside (traumatic neurosis) or even from the inside (transference neurosis) of the subject. Generally, the symptoms appear after a clear interval and take hold as a defense against anxiety.

War neurosis is a psychological disorder resulting from the physical and mental stress of warfare. It is usually temporary but sometimes leads to permanent neurosis. It is also called as combat neurosis and combat fatigue. Sometime it is also referred to shell shock, though the symptoms are almost same but still there is a little difference. Shell shock is caused by the explosion of shell nearby, but war neurosis is caused by overall war and long exposure to war. Many patients have been suffering from trauma caused by frightening and dangerous accidents and exhibit severe disturbances in their mental life and in their nervous activity. Some psychiatrists consider traumatic cases as the organic diseases whereas physicians
regard it as functional disturbances. Medical opinions find it difficult to explain how such severe disturbances of mental function could occur without any visible injury to the organ.

War has created immense number of traumatic cases. The immediate cause of all war neuroses was an unconscious inclination in the soldier to withdraw from the demands, dangerous or outrageous to his feelings, made upon him by active service. Fear of losing his own life, opposition to the command to kill other people, rebellion against the ruthless suppression of his own personality by his superiors were the most important affective sources on which the inclination to escape from war was nourished. The emotional impulses, which made them to rebel against active service and drove them into illness, were operative in them, which they were not aware of. This insight into the cause of the war neuroses led to a method of treatment, which proved to be highly effective. For this purpose, painful electrical treatment was employed. This painful treatment introduced in the German Army for therapeutic purposes also spread in other countries. It did not aim at the patients’ recovery and restoration of patient for service. The physicians were themselves under military command and had their own personal dangers, the fear of loss of seniority or a charge of neglecting his duty, if they allowed themselves to be led by considerations other than those prescribed for them. The insoluble conflict between the claims of humanity, which normally carry decisive weight for a physician, and the demands of a national war was bound to confuse their activity. In the beginning, strong electric current treatment was considered effective but turned out afterward not to be lasting. Patients could repeat the neurosis afresh and have a relapse. The strength of the current and the severity of the rest of the treatment were very powerful. It was increased to an unbearable point in order to deprive war neurotics of the advantage they gained from their illness. There were
many deaths and suicides because of severe treatment. Another type of treatment invented by Freud known as psychotherapeutic or analytical, was very human in nature, which stressed on rest, talking and expression of war memory of patients. This method proved slow but very effective which is still followed in the mental hospitals.

**Military psychiatry and treatment of patients:**

Modern psychiatric hospitals are improved and developed form of older lunatic asylums. The development of the modern psychiatric hospitals has been taking place because of the rise of organized institutional psychiatry. The growth of psychiatric hospitals in the 19th century was remarkable. This growth was due to the growth of alienisms. The treatment of inmates in mental hospital was often brutal focused on containment and restrain. With successive waves of reform, modern psychiatric hospitals provide a primary emphasis on treatment, with the use of combination of psychiatric drugs and psychotherapy.

Military psychiatry is one of the branches of general psychiatry, which deals with the special mental problems of military persons only. It covers special aspects of psychiatry and mental disorders within the military context. Its aim is to keep as many serving personnel as possible fit for duty and to treat those disabled by psychiatric conditions and send these soldiers as early as possible for active service.

Two types of treatment were in practice in the First World War. One is Discipline Approach, characterized particularly by the work of the Canadian doctor, L.R. Yealland. The other was Analytic Therapy Approach, characterized by doctors such as W.H.R. Rivers, W. McDougall, C. Stanford Read, and C.S. Myers. The Discipline Approach was the most common method of treatment. It generally
employed the use of a milk diet, bromide, massage, and electrical shock. Electrical shock therapy has been seen as the most punitive end of the treatment spectrum. One of the jobs of psychiatrists and neurologist was to identify malingerers, fakers, lead-swingers. An apparent headache, feigned blindness, deafness or muteness with no detectable physical cause was among the many tricks, which soldiers used to avoid active service. As with men suspected of malingering, the patient was made more afraid of the hospital than of his life as a soldier. It was crucial that he should not experience the hospital as a pleasant place to be, since ideally he was to be persuaded to return to front line service voluntarily. Electric shocks were repeated endlessly by the doctor and the treatment lasted just long enough for the patient to ‘opt for healing’ rather than sickness and an extended stay in hospital- if he had not died in the meantime. It was made very clear to him that the horrendously painful treatment would not stop until he was able to leave hospital ‘healthy’. In other words, the soldier was given not just a physical shock but a mental shock as well, enabling the doctor, to put it mildly, to gain more influence over him, an additional advantage of this method. The doctor had a single task and should have a single aim in mind: to make as many ‘war hysterics’ as possible fit for active service as quickly as possible, any method which contributed to this was considered a good method. Geoffrey Hills acquired a reputation for being too kind hearted and received an order from higher authority not to send so many patients to the base hospitals. ‘He had to be reminded that, given the shortage of manpower, it was not his task to heal his patients but to get them back to the battle field as quickly as possible’. (Babington, 2003: 105)

It is important not to exaggerate the differences between doctors, whether patient- friendly versus army-friendly or analytical versus disciplinary. The fact that the methods used by disciplinary psychiatrists were based on animal
experimentation is sufficient to indicate that the use of electricity was not new. The school in which harsh, painful methods were employed had existed for some time, in civilian as well as military medicine. Both, disciplinary and analytical psychiatrists applied their treatment mainly for military, politics, and economic reasons rather than on medical and humanitarian grounds.

**Craiglockhart War Hospital and shell shock treatment:**

The study of Craiglockhart War Hospital will help to understand and analyze Barker’s *Regeneration Trilogy*, as almost all scenes (from *Regeneration* to *Ghost Road*) take place in Craiglockhart war hospital, which was open only for 28 months from October 1916 to March 1919. It was housed in a disused ‘hydropathical’ hotel or ‘hydro’ in the village of Saltford. The building still stands, today housing Edinburgh’s Napier University. Craiglockhart was set up to deal with the epidemic of psychological casualties created in muddy trenches of the First World War. Craiglockhart also has an important place in the development of British neuropsychiatry. The concept of a psychological stress resulting in physical symptoms was still relatively novel in this period. Some fundamental aspects of Freud’s ideas regarding repression and the unconscious helped to cope up with an epidemic of psychological casualties of the war and got greater acceptance and currency in the medical profession.

Major William Bryce, a local physician, was made commanding officer, William Halse Rivers, the hospital’s most celebrated member of staff, was transferred from his work at Moghull hospital to Craiglockhart War Hospital for shell shocked treatment and Arthur John Brock, an Edinburgh clinician and medical historian also worked in Craiglockhart. We have too little references about other staff members, of Craiglockhart. Following him, Professor William Brow played a
crucial role in establishing shell shock treatment centers behind the lines in France and Flanders. He remained there until the hospital was closed in March 1919. Brock played an important role in organizing many activities in the hospital for his patients with a means of helping themselves back to health; such activities were often based on the sports and entertainment facilities at the hospital. Brock’s most important tool, both to communicate his aims to the patients and also as a form of therapy in itself, was the hospital magazine the ‘Hydra’. The magazine was a means through which the patients could express and share their experiences, as well as learn about the hospital ethos and activities. Brock’s patient Wilfred Owen was the editor of this monthly periodical for a long time, and had published his first few poems within its pages. Owen did not begin writing war poetry until Craiglockhart. This was largely due to his budding friendship with Siegfried Sassoon and Brock’s encouragement, which helped him to cure. The most famous antiwar poem, ‘Dulce et decorum est’ was written at the hospital in 1917.

The admissions in the hospital and discharge summaries have survived, giving us an insight into the fate of the patients treated during the short life Craiglockhart’s, unavailable anywhere else. During the hospital’s 18 months existence, 1736 patients with shell shock were treated, of these, 735 seems discharged mentally unfit, 89 were recorded as had been given home service, 78 discharged to light duties, 141 were transferred to other units for further treatment and 758 in total were listed as had been returned to duty. Craiglockhart offers a fascinating window into the lives, experiences and desires of its patients and staff. This is well documented in Hydro. Craiglockhart gives us a unique perspective on the human experiences of war, as well as on the changing medical and psychiatric beliefs and practices of the early 20th century. The hospital fame is due to the finest poets of war: Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon. The hospital’s literary importance has been established by Sassoon’s memoirs The complete memoirs of
George Sherston, Stephen McDonald’s stage play, Not about Heroes, the fine novels of Pat Barker’s Regeneration Trilogy and a film version of the first novel of Regeneration Trilogy.

**Regeneration:**

Regeneration Trilogy comprises three novels: Regeneration, The Eye in the Door and The Ghost Road. They are a brilliant, moving and often terrifying evacuation of life of the First World War. Barker depicts the emotional, psychological and moral conflicts brought by the Great War.

Regeneration Trilogy is a result of Barker’s excessive research on war literature. Though she was labeled as Feminist writer due to her earlier works Union Street, Blow Your House Down, Liza’s England and The Man Who was not There which deal with the theme of working class women and their day to day life and its issues. From the beginning of her career in writing, Barker always wanted to write about the First World War because she was fascinated towards it. When asked to her, why she is interested in the First World War, she said that the First World War is the mother of all wars. The First World War has a deep impact on the life of Barker, though she was born at the time of the Second World War. Her grandfather had participated in the First World War and he was injured in the war. He had a bayonet wound scare on his stomach. Barker from her childhood wanted to know about the First World War but her grandfather was silent about it and only could tell about the First World War at the old age before dying. Pat Barker was herself ‘War Baby’ as she didn’t know about her father and was told by her mother that her father was RAF (Royal Air Force) man who was killed in the Second World War. Barker’s interest in the First World War led her to read the First World War poetry by Sassoon, Owen, Grave and others. Barker also read W.H.R.
Rivers’s *Conflict and Dream* (1923), she was familiar with W.H.R Rivers because of her husband who studied W.H.R. Rivers thoroughly. Several characters were real people in *Regeneration Trilogy*, who were well known in the field of science and literature. The real life Dr. W.H.R Rivers had a unique career; he had made important contribution to the three separate fields: medicine, anthropology and psychiatry. He performed a famous experiment on nerve regeneration with Dr. Henry Head in medicine; he was the founding father of British Social anthropology and contributed to psychiatry through his sensitive work with traumatized soldiers at Craiglockhart Hospital in Scotland. Barker draws on all three aspects of River’s work throughout the *Trilogy*. Another real life character is Dr. Lewis Yelland who was notorious for his inhuman electroshock therapy. Dr. Henry Head was also a real life character. Siegfried Sassoon, Wilfred Owen and Robert Graves were prominent real war poets.

Barker points out that the *Trilogy* is an attempt to convey something about war that does not get into the official accounts. Two things happen to soldiers in war; they are killed or they come back more or less all right. *Trilogy* focuses on the people who do come back but do not come back as normal men; they are either physically disabled or mentally traumatized. The focus of *Trilogy* is not the battlefields of the First World War but the psychological disturbances of the soldiers at the front and the efforts of psychiatrists to cure men who have suffered from shell shocks. The *Trilogy* has been recognized as an important contribution to the literature of war. It is set between July 1917 and early November 1918, just before Armistice was declared; it dramatizes the last year of the war through the experiences of Rivers and his relationship with the shell-shocked soldiers he treats.

In place of battle scenes, the *Trilogy* presents fragmented memories of battle through their effects on traumatized soldiers. The soldiers whom Rivers treats with
his talk therapy struggle to come to terms with repressed memories of the horrors they have witnessed. It explores the horrors of the Great War from an entirely new angle. Barker is perfectly an anti-war writer, from the first page of *Trilogy*, she explicitly rewrote earlier generation of antiwar literature, as written by Ernest Hemingway, Dalton Trumbo, or Wilfred Owen himself. Barker has referred to the First World War as a topic that is in danger of becoming ‘overdone’, but her own intervention into the subject provides the most sustained and challenging twentieth-century perspectives on the First World War literature. The *Regeneration Trilogy* was published at the time of the Gulf War. Barker animates what is abstruse about a war that almost no one now remembers clearly and brings into focus the old myths about masculinity and bravery in war. Barker shows that the instruments of war are not only bombs, guns, bullets, and bayonets but includes the psychological pressure under which the doomed youths live in the trenches and War Hospitals.

The first volume, *Regeneration*, focuses on the work of W.H.R. Rivers at the Craiglockhart War Hospital near Edinburgh and his attempts to restore or “regenerate” officers to send them to the front. The title actually refers to a series of experiments that Rivers conducted with Henry Head on nerve regeneration, but Barker elaborates the psychological therapies. River was Freud’s follower. He believed that the emergence of neurosis in the officers he treated was not the result of a single trauma but was part of an ongoing psychological struggle between an officer’s desire to forget the horrors of war and his traumatic memories’ insistence and repeated occurrence. The novel shows the physical and mental traumas inflicted by the war on the soldiers. Apart from battlefield trauma, the novel also addresses the civil wars in Britain, based on class, gender, father and son relationship, the sane and the insane, the soldiers and civilians. Men aspired to be
glorified from war and become heroes, but *Regeneration* effectively conveys that war was not a glorification, soldiers’ illusions were shattered as the horrible mental and physical sicknesses plugged them, caused many men to withdraw from the battlefield. G. B. Shaw’s play *Arms and the Man* is a fine example in which he divests the war from any glorification, and wants people to see and recognize “the true nature of war that is ludicrous and horrible”. (Shaw, 1961: 199) Bluntschli is the hero and the main exponent of realism in this play; having no illusions about the nature of war. He runs away from battlefield and hides himself in the civilian’s house. Feeling of guilt and shame haunted many of these soldiers as they came back from the war. Barker digs deep into the issues plaguing the soldiers at the front, which gives insight into the reasons why many soldiers were getting disillusioned and turning against the war. The war is brought to life by the flashbacks the soldiers experience in their nightmares as well as on their interaction with Dr. Rivers. Barker depicts realistic details of many horrible scenes. Throughout the novel, there is an insistence on physical suffering as well as on mental suffering.

The novel is multi-layered; the themes therefore range across many areas of society, highlighting cultural tensions brought to the surface by the war. First, it is about regeneration of traumatic soldiers. Second, it is about psychological treatment. It is concerned with the healing of psychologically damaged soldiers. There were two types of treatment first, analytical treatment i.e. the human approach for treating “shell shocked”. Dr. Rivers was using nerve regeneration while the other method was disciplinary which was inhuman like electroshock therapy; Dr. Yealland was notorious for such treatment. Third, it is about antiwar feelings and protest of the soldiers through their body. Fourth, it deals with duty versus morality. Fifth, it is about supporter versus pacifist. Sixth major theme deals
with the issue of feminization of men and manliness of female. Seventh and important theme of *Regeneration* deals with class system. Eighth important theme of novel is love between men i.e. homosexuality, which was, still a taboo during the First World War. Sassoon even in real life was described as latent homosexual. Initially, he thought that he only cared for his subordinates but later he developed deeper relationship. Nine, it is about older versus new generation and father son-relationship. Lastly, it is about imagination: constructive versus destructive. All the above-mentioned themes are explored and critically and clinically analyzed in the following chapter one by one.

**Regeneration process:**

The theme of regeneration dominates throughout the novel. The title of the novel originates in a medical experiment undertaken by Rivers and his friend Henry Head, in which they severed Head’s radial nerve, stitched the wound together again and then observed on its long drawn out recovery over five years. Symbolically, it refers to the damaged nerves of the soldiers and their gradual regeneration under the supervision of Dr. Rivers and the hospital staff. Another reference to regeneration is the mental improvement of the patients at Craiglockhart War Hospital. Regeneration in this case, refers to the gradual healing of the mind from war injuries. The theme of shell shock reflects the title of the novel as it can symbolize the reconstruction of the soldiers’ nerves, memories and their progress of healing. Dr. Rivers encourages his patients to express their memories of war so that they can heal their ‘nerves’. There are many soldiers with various problems suffering terribly in the hospital. Robert Burn, an emaciated man, has been unable to eat since a shell threw him into the gas-filled stomach of a German corpse. He imagines that his nose and mouth were filled with decomposed flesh and its smell made him unable to eat anything. Another patient, Anderson
was a surgeon, who is now terrified at the sight of blood, and is worried about resuming his civilian medical practice. Billy Prior is another young patient who is suffering from muteness. Rivers visits each patient one by one. He is emotionally tied to the welfare of his patients. His job is to regenerate the mentally crippled soldiers and make them fit and send them back to the front. The process of regeneration takes long time as Dr. Rivers follows human method of curing the patients, on the other hand Dr. L.R. Yealland follows inhuman method i.e. electroshock therapy. His patients are cured physically but they are emotionally wounded. The aim of both, Dr. Rivers and Dr. Yealland is the same. Both are curing the patients to send them to the front to be killed.

The third meaning of regeneration is Dr. Rivers’s regeneration of his values and beliefs. Even Rivers suffers to some extent, despite being away from the war, the hospital very much embodies the trenches, and it represents the soldiers who may not be physically battling, however, they are mentally fighting with their worse experiences. Dr. Rivers’s perspective on the issue of war gradually alters throughout the novel as he realizes that a man’s breakdown was a consequence of his war experiences rather then, his own innate weakness. He feels guilty that his treatment requires his patients to relive their terrible experiences and feels he is inflicting emotional pain on them. Yealland’s treatment is contrary to Rivers, which is far more brutal than Rivers. Barker highlights that the pain either emotional or physical is still dangerous and cruel to humanity. Rob Nixon asks Barker in the interview:

Q.: That’s the poignant heart of the book – that Rivers is curing these men, only to render them fitter for war.

A.: Yes, he’s restoring them to something he hates. He acknowledges that he is doing what Yealland does. He’s doing more gently, and
more effectively in the long term, but that’s what he’s doing. (Nixon, 2004: 1-21)

**Psychological treatment:**

Rivers treatment of neurological illness was at that time revolutionary, it takes the central role in the novel, as Rivers struggles against his conscience to do his duty and to get officers such as Sassoon and Prior back to active service, he gains the confidence of most of his patients. Madness is a common theme in twentieth-century literature of resistance and institution of psychiatry serve the dominant power, treating patients who exhibit non-masculine behavior. In Craiglockhart Hospital, patients are “cured” of hysteria and shell shock. It functions as an institution where enemies of the state are confined and treated of their abnormality, and sent back out to the front line. The patients of Williams Rivers suffer terribly from psychological problems. They either stutter or are mute, they suffer from paralysis or continuous vomiting, hallucination and hysteria. Instead of treating them with the usual electric shock, Rivers treats them with conversations. Only a step-by-step remembrance of the horrors can in his opinion lead to healing. Barker’s *Trilogy* captures well the therapeutic techniques involved:

“Rivers watched him staring round the room.” You can’t bear to be safe, can you? ...
“If you maintain your protest, you can expect to spend the reminder of the war in a state of complete personal safety.”
Sassoon shifted in his seat. “I’m not responsible for other peoples’ decisions.”
“You don’t think you might find being safe while other people die rather difficult?”
A flash of anger, “Nobody else in this striking country seems to find it difficult. Expect I’ll learn to live with it. Like everybody else.”
(35-36)
Dr. River’s task is to heal perfectly sensible young men who protest through their bodies and minds against the horrors of the war only to return them to combat for the sake of Britain’s absurd war policies. As Sassoon’s case shows, men like Rivers were forced to contribute to war that had little to do with medicine, but much with repression of resistance. When Stevenson asked Barker about psychologist and patient relationship in an interview, she answered:

Barker: I’m fascinated by the balance between detachment and involvement that the therapist has to have, between compassion and analytical judgment, which is what I revere in Rivers: the combination of mental toughness with compassion. It seems the best that any human being can be is that combination… This same capacity for detachment for going home switching off and saying, that over, now I’m going to live my life is one of the characteristics of good doctor, because if they don’t do that, they’re of no use to anybody. (Interview, Stevenson: 183)

Barker’s whole Trilogy is a tribute to the “talking cure” as a form of healing which is now termed as “post-traumatic stress disorder” (PTSD) – as well as form of counseling for someone who is suffering from mental disorder. The most important thing in this process is the trust between the therapist and the patient and their successful negotiation. Craiglockhart was a hospital for officers only where the patients were spared the electrical shocks and other tortures, which were the usual form of treatment for sufferers of war neuroses. Instead, they were greeted with sympathy and interest and encouraged to discuss their problems – an approach which was pioneered by Freud in his treatment of hysteria of which ‘shell shock’ was a variant. ‘Dream interpretation and the discussion were the major tools of the treatment, Rivers methods were relatively liberal in the context of a hospital regime struggling to maintain demilitarized, non disciplinary forms of treatment’. (The Buckle, 1968: 28-36) Another method of treatment of war neuroses was disciplinary. Dr. L.R. Yealland was much known for this method, who worked at
The National Hospital, Queen Square, London. Compared to Rivers, we know relatively little about Yealland’s background, but his work is important because following Leeds’s analysis, ‘these two doctors are usually placed at opposite ends of the treatment spectrum-analytic versus punitive and disciplinary’. (Adrian, 1917: 867-72)

There are various forms of therapy, which become instrumental in combating shell shock and war neuroses. Rivers while treating his patients maintains a calm attitude rather than forget the horrific images and “to let themselves feel the pity and terror their war experience inevitable evoked” (98) to achieve his goal, Rivers, maintains a gentle therapeutic approach. Shell shock plays an important role in the development of *Regeneration*. It exposes readers to a world of madness conquered only by therapy. Rivers helps to bring the traumatized soldiers back to a reality where they can accept life and the duties that they must fulfill. The appearance of Freudian psychology in *Regeneration* helps to acknowledge the frailty of the human mind, body and soul. River’s use of psychology is a way to restore the delicate balance of life, giving renewal to a life thought hopeless by his possessor. Rivers is a psychoanalyst who believes in many theories and ideas of Freud. Rivers is able to help many of his patients to rebuild their lives and regain the balance that they lost by using psychoanalysis. Time after time, River faces critical cases; he uses Freudian methods to help psychoanalytic therapy, which is an important part of the novel *Regeneration*.

Another way in which soldiers were treated for psychological trauma was with hypnosis. Barker’s male patients find themselves able to embrace emotions rather than repress them by recovering these painful memories through hypnosis. Prior is one particular example of the need to alter masculine gender role in order to embrace emotions and be healed, a theme present in *Regeneration*. 
“We could try hypnosis now, if you liked.”
“now?”
“Yes, why not? It’s time we’re least likely to be interrupted.”
Prior’s eyes flickered round the room. He licked his lips. It’s odd, isn’t it?
When you said most people were frightened, I didn’t believe you.”
“What frightens them, “Rivers said carefully” is the belief that they’re putting themselves completely in the Therapist’s power. That he can make them do anything, even things they’d normally consider ridiculous or even immoral. But that isn’t true, you remain yourself throughout.” (91-92)

Rivers is hesitant to use hypnosis on Prior, claiming that he only uses it “as a last resort” (52) because it releases hidden thoughts and feelings. Rivers uses hypnosis at last and Prior begins to cry, allowing Rivers to see him consciously expressing emotions. The treatment of Prior through hypnosis allows the reader to see how traumatic the war was for the characters in the novel. Many traumatic experiences were found in a repressed memory, and hypnosis was an important tool in discovering the hidden memories. These repressed memories are the real cause of patients suffering. Hypnosis is the best way to unveil them and allow the patients to face the past.

Another form of therapy was Charlie Chaplin’s films. His films were seen as a form of therapy used to keep up the soldiers’ moral. His films helped to develop the theme of therapy that occurs throughout the novel. He helped boost the morale of the soldiers. Barker utilizes Chaplin as a cultural reference to show that good moral is needed to help the progress of the patients but true recovery takes more than just a film. Patients watched Charlie Chaplin’s humorous films to take them away from the problems that they had because they enjoyed his films. The Chaplin films made the patients laugh when times were bad for them. Barker shows that there is more to therapy then just laughing at a film. Chaplin’s film plays an important role in developing the theme in Regeneration. Without Chaplin’s
comedy, many of the patients at Craiglockhart war hospital would not have been able to overcome the war neurosis. Chaplin made them laugh when they were filled with horror, and he opened their minds, which were locked.

We are introduced to a war journal called the Hydra on page 84, which served as healing tool for the First World War soldiers. This journal contained articles, cartoons, poetry, letters, and other types of writing. Barker uses the Hydra in her novel to mark the healing power of writing in the lives of these men. Poetry therapy has been recognized as far back as the first songs chanted around the campfires of primitive people; therefore, poetry therapy has been used by numerous cultures since the beginning of language. Wilfred Owen was the editor of Hydra journal. Owen gained much progress in his writing at Craiglockhart, especially after his friendship with Sassoon. They edited each other’s writing while contributing to Hydra. After Owen’s encounter with Sassoon, he soon began writing about the war. Writing provides a safety net, a place where he can go and feel comfort, or as Owen says, “take refuge in” as if writing sheltered them from the madness of war. These words are written with heart, with emotion and with glory and are crafted by the artists, such as Sassoon, into a creative form. The poems produced by these men create feeling and pronounce statements of injustice:

For you our battles shine
With triumph half-divine;
And the glory of the dead
Kindles in each proud eye
But a curse is on my head,
That shall not be unsaid,
And the wounds in my heart are red,
For I have watched them die (25)

Barker creates a central theme for the novel, poetry as a therapy from the very beginning of the Regeneration. Their writing bring to the surface the physical
and mental hardships encountered by them. The soldiers could not protest openly against the authority, therefore, poetry was the best medium through which they could express their repressed feelings and emotions. Writing poetry helped the soldiers to heal faster.

River’s psychological method proved extraordinary as it gave good result. At the beginning of the novel, Billy Prior was suffering from muteness. River’s gentle method enabled him to come out of his mute state. Another patient, Willared was mysteriously paralyzed, although nothing was wrong with his spine. With Rivers’s effective treatment, Willared was able to stand and walk again. Interaction among the patients and the staff, friendships among the patients, River’s father-like relationship with his patients were all different types of therapies which Dr. Rivers used to cure his patients. The success of the various therapeutic methods presented in the novel proves how valuable therapy is to mental as well as physical recovery from shell shock. The novel shows that the world of madness could be conquered only by therapy.

**Regeneration: an anti-war novel**

I believe the war is being deliberately prolonged by those who have the power to end it…. I have seen and endured the suffering of the troops, and I can no longer be a party to prolong these sufferings for end which I believe to be evil and unjust… on behalf of those who are suffering now I make this protest against the deception which is being practiced on them; also I believe that I may help to destroy the callous complacency with which the majority of those at home regard the continuance of agonies which they do not share and which they have not sufficient imagination to realize. (5)

The very beginning of the novel indicates that the novel is an antiwar novel. *Regeneration* begins with Sassoon’s protest against war, in July 1917. “A soldier’s Declaration”, a text in which he denounced the capricious destruction of human
life at the trenches and the unsoundness of the military strategies followed there, stating his alarm at the prolongation of the war, and the political errors that he felt were leading to the unnecessary sacrifice of soldiers’ lives. Sassoon believed that the war had become a senseless, prolonged massacre and being continued longer than was necessary, by those who had power to end it. The letter, “Soldier’s Declaration” was seen as unpatriotic and he was supposed to be court-martialed and imprisoned but because of his friend’s (Robert Grave’s) intervention, and Sassoon was experienced and decorated combat officer, authorities led him at Craiglockhart hospital instead of punishing him. Rivers realizes that the only way the army could justify Sassoon’s declaration would be to lock him up, regardless of what his mental state actually is. However, there was no evidence that Sassoon was indeed mentally ill. To lock Sassoon in mental hospital was the best option for authority to discredit his letter. If Sassoon is considered mentally ill, he will not be held responsible for his critical comment and further more his antiwar message can be more easily ignored.

Sassoon is the voice of reason in an abnormal society. He is courageous on both fronts: as a combat officer and a war protester. Rivers knows that Sassoon is completely sane and that his criticism about war is right yet, as military doctor, he insists that it is his duty to return to combat in France. Rivers is obliged to convince Sassoon to leave his protest and go back to front. Sassoon was the only person in the novel who protested directly without any disguise in the form of ‘A soldier’s declaration’ and become the threat for military. Many other soldiers were also protesting against the war. They were protesting in disguise, in the form of physical and psychological illness. Billy Prior is suffering from mute state. Mutism means these officers wanted to say something but they were forced to keep silent, silent against authority, silent against mass slaughter and horrors of the war.
Mutism symbolizes silence. Another patient, Willard is suffering from mysterious paralysis. This is also a kind of protest. However, there is no problem with his spine but still he cannot walk. When he asked Dr. Rivers why he cannot walk, Rivers made him realize that he cannot walk because he does not want to go back to front to fight and be killed. Another patient of River, Burn suffers from continuous vomiting and cannot eat anything as he thinks that he was thrown into the gas-filled belly and his mouth and nose was filled with the decomposed flesh of the German crops and from then whenever he eats something he remembers that smell and starts vomiting. Nightmare, hallucination and many other illnesses were simply the protest against the war as these people were not able to protest verbally, they protested through their bodies.

Another powerful anti-war scene was depicted by Barker, in which Bill Prior’s girl friend Sarah Lump visits the hospital with another friend. She misses the way and happens to enter in the tent where physically injured soldiers were kept:

She was still dazzled by the brightness of the light outside and the relative dimness of the interior, and so she had to blink several times before she saw them, a row of figures in wheelchairs, but figures that were no longer the size and shape of adult men. Trouser legs sewn short; empty sleeves pinned to Jackets. One man had lost all his limbs, and his face was so drained, so pale, he seemed to have left his blood in France as well. (142)

She is shocked to see so many injured soldiers. She becomes angry with authorities for hiding such a huge number of wounded soldiers from public. When she looks at them, they feel ashamed of themselves, as they are not full figures, they have lost one or the other part of their body. Even Sarah feels frustrated, she feels pity for them and even regrets for her sight, which made them ashamed of themselves. ‘The brightness of the light outside’ symbolizes the life of home front
and ‘interior dimness’ symbolizes war which is dark and mysterious. Those who are at home do not know the real cost of war and horrors of the war. Barker depicts the physical consequences of war. Her criticism of war is very bitter, of which the common people are unaware.

Another important anti-war theme in *Regeneration* is depicted through mutism, which functions as a symbolic manifestation of the disempowerment and helplessness the men feel. Both Prior and Callan are affected by mutism after extremely horrifying incidents. Rivers reasons that mutism might be caused by an inability to voice dissent or express opinion over any part of one’s own life. He notes that mutism occurs most often among regular soldiers, not officers, men who are entirely at the mercy of their commanders. Mutism, however, is in itself an assertion of power. Through silence, these men are disobeying those who have power over them. Dr. Rivers and Dr. Yealland handle mutism differently. The contrast between the methods of Dr. Rivers and Yealland emphasize the different approaches to the concept of healing, because the treatment of mental problems was in such an early phase when the war broke out, that psychiatrists were allowed to use the methods they invented to treat their patients. Electro-shock therapy was one method that was thought to be extraordinarily effective in “curing” shell shock. When Rivers witnesses Yealland’s method, he cannot help being alarmed at the pain Yealland eagerly inflicts upon his patients. Equally horrible is the arrogance and God-like behavior Yealland adopts. Just like in the war, Yealland’s patients are powerless to resist the torture being forced upon them, and Yealland makes them feel even more victimized by his powerful and superior attitude. Like many doctors of his time, Yealland cannot accept that there is something mentally wrong with the men.
Rivers sits in a corner and observes the method of Yealland. The room is dark and locked from in. Callan is brought in and strapped down to the chair. Rivers senses that the patient is frightened. Yealland attaches electrodes to the back of Callan's throat and continues to shock him repeatedly until he can utter a sound. He shocks Callan for over three hours. When it seems like the patient is falling asleep, Yealland makes him get up and walk around the room. Callan tries to escape, but he cannot get out of the door. It is locked from inside, and only Yealland has the key. Callan thinks of attacking Yealland, but decides against it, and he submits to more electric shocks. To Rivers, the shocks seem extremely strong. Yealland removes the electrodes from the back of Callan’s throat and applies them to the sides of his neck. Callan tries to speak honestly, but only the sound "ah" comes out. Eventually, after many more shocks, Callan is stammering words. Yealland makes him feel completely powerless, repeating to him: “You must speak, but I shall not listen to anything you have to say.” (203) Finally, Callan is able to speak in full sentences. Yealland lets Callan up, and Callan smiles at him. Yealland does not like Callan’s smile, so he makes him sit down again, applies electrodes to his lips, and shocks him. When he gets up again, he does not smile. At the end of the treatment, Callan must thank to Yealland for curing him.

Rivers sees that Yealland literally tortures his patients. For difficult cases, he applies hot metal plates to the throat, or even goes so far as to burn patient’s tongue with a cigarette. “Neither the doctor nor the patient leaves the room until the patient has spoken”. (229-233) Callan has no choice but to accept the treatment that the doctor has prescribed, with the full weight of institutional authority behind him. Though the goal is to make the patient speak, Yealland is not interested in listening: “Then Yealland added with great emphasis: You must speak, but I shall not listen to anything you have to say”. (231) Getting his voice back changes
nothing regarding his capacity for expression, because the authorities (those in power) refuse to listen. Whether he speaks or not, Callan is reduced to silence, his voice recuperated by “the legal and medical discourses that were deployed to frame, and contain, those who protested against the war…. Discursive structures which pretended to objectivity and neutrality were in reality both disciplinary and coercive”. (Whitehead, 2005: 551) The doctors reduce these patients to silence, because they fear the patient’s subversive attitude and its potential effects on their comrades, otherwise the stock of heroes will diminish even further.

Although Rivers does not agree Dr. Yealland’s inhuman treatment and the cruelty to which he is a witness, he realizes that he does more or less the same thing in his therapeutic approach:

Just as Yealland silenced the unconscious protest of his patients by removing the paralysis, the deafness, the blindness, the muteness that stood between them and the war, so, in an infinitely more gentle way, he [Rivers] silenced his patients; for the stammering, the nightmares, the tremors, the memory lapses, of officers were just as much unwitting protest as the grosser maladies of the men. (238)

At the end of the novel Rivers realizes that his views regarding war are changing. Rivers seems to entertain antiwar feelings.

**Duty versus morality:**

Morality never allows any human being to kill other human being but the duty of the soldier is to kill enemy or be killed for whatever reason. Dr. Rivers and Siegfried Sassoon are the main characters in *Regeneration*; they share a similar burden of duty versus morality. The idea of “duty” was a mainstay of cultural
values during the nineteenth century. It returned in full force with the onset of war in 1914, as recruiting posters urged all British citizens to fulfill their obligations to king and country, however, what if duty for one’s country came into conflict with morality. The letter “Finished with the war, a soldier’s Declaration” introduces the reader right away to the theme of duty versus morality. Sassoon questions his duty to his country, if that duty is at the expense of his fellow citizens who are dying and suffering in vast numbers each day. Rivers is sympathetic towards Sassoon’s political beliefs and conflicting duties, which arise from his paradoxical role as a military doctor: Rivers soon realizes that to acknowledge the sanity of Sassoon’s position means he must further question the sanity of his own support to the war. Sassoon’s case confuses Rivers’s views about duty and morality. It also requires Rivers to decide for himself how he feels about the war whether it is the duty of the nation to fight, even when there’s no end or gain in sight. Rivers becomes his own case study for the next several months, assessing the stress these conflicting duties play upon his life at Craiglockhart. Further meetings with Sassoon show Rivers that his difficulty will not be solved in being ‘neutral’ but in fulfilling his duty as a medical officer. River states his goals. “He’s a mentally and physically healthy man. It’s his duty to go back, and it’s my duty to see he does” (73), but in the privacy of his own thoughts, Rivers comes to different conclusions:

As soon as you accepted that, the man’s breakdown was a consequence of his war experience rather than of his own innate weakness, then inevitably war become the issue. And the therapy was a test, not only of the genuineness of the individual’s symptoms, but also of the validity of the demands of the war was making on him. Rivers had survived partly by suppressing his awareness of this. But then along came Sassoon and made the justifiability of the war a matter for constant open debate and that the suppression was not longer possible. (115-116).
Rivers feels that Sassoon’s view of the war is justified because he feels constant tension between his duty and morality. Keeping such conflicting thoughts to him, Rivers persuades Sassoon to accept the war. “You don’t think you might find being safe while other people die rather difficult?” (36) To go back to France means risk life. Sassoon willingly goes back to France, regardless of how he feels about the war. Rivers is left in a paradoxical situation whether he performed his duty or favored something immoral by letting Sassoon go back to France.

**Supporter versus pacifist:**

At the time of the First World War, there was enthusiasm among civilians about war but still there were people who opposed war. Bertrand Russell, Lady Muriel and other were famous pacifists who opposed war openly from its beginning. Many soldiers and civilian after participating and witnessing the horrors and atrocities of war changed their views regarding war. Some people though contributing to war were secretly opposing it. Therefore, there were two groups of people, supporters and pacifists. People who were not allowed to rebel against their own country were considered as unpatriotic and enemies of their country. In the novel *Regeneration*, Sassoon was locked in the mental asylum for his opposition to war and for his letter ‘A soldier’s declaration’. Though Dr. Rivers agrees with the justifiability of his letter and is well aware that Sassoon is sane but he still persuades Sassoon to go back to front throughout the novel. The evening before Sassoon’s medical board, Sassoon and River discuss:

Rivers took the only available chair, and stretched out his legs towards the empty grate.

“Well, how do you feel about tomorrow?”
“Alright still nothing from war office?”
“No, I’m afraid not. You’ll just have to trust us.”
“Yes? You’re sure you don’t mean ‘them’?”
“You know I’ll go on doing anything I can for you.” (203)

Sassoon trusted Rivers from his first interview. Dr. Rivers was sympathetic towards Sassoon and agreed with his declaration but still he has to do his duty. Here ‘us’ indicates those people who are pacifist or opposed war directly or indirectly and ‘them’ indicates those people who are the supporters of war. The mute Billy Prior, a recent arrival, is certain that Rivers must be one of “them”. Rivers tries to correct him: “this may come as a shock Mr. Prior, but I had been rather assuming we were on the same side”. Prior responds with a smile: “this may come as a shock, Dr. Rivers, but I had been rather assuming that we were not” (80) Prior makes Rivers aware that there is thin line between being a doctor and being a patient. Though in the beginning of the novel Rivers seems to be supporter of war but by the end of the novel, he is much changed, his views regarding war changes as he says, “This justify nothing….” He starts to believe that war is unjust and it should be stopped.

**Old versus new generation/father-son relationship:**

The father-son relation is explored at several points in the novel. Many patients refer to Rivers as a father figure. About thirty years older than his youngest patient, Rivers represents the authority of the father for most men in his care. (34) It is through his compassion that the soldiers are able to “regenerate” the motif of the novel from which the title is taken.

Prior’s father is a working class father who wants to toughen up his son and hold him to his class’s origins. In part III, we learn the depth of River’s anger at his own father, a son’s anger that links him to Prior, another angry son. Rivers’s father represents the combined patriarchal authorities of family, education and church. Revisiting such memories of angry rebellion allows Rivers to realize that he has
become a “father,” an authority as his own father was to him. Rivers’s farther identifies his father as one of the many “fathers” of an older generation who are responsible for the horrors of the war. When he visits his family church, he depicts Biblical scenes on the stain-glass windows of his family church; Rivers reflects on the “two bloody bargains” the crucifixion of Christ and Abraham’s sacrifice of his son:

The two bloody bargains on which a civilization claims to be based. The bargain, Rivers thought looking at Abraham and Isaac. The one on which all-patriarchal societies are founded. If you who are young and strong, will obey me, who are old and weak, even to the extent of being prepared to sacrifice your life, then in the course of time you will peacefully inherit, and be able to exact the same obedience from your sons. Only we’re breaking the bargain, Rivers thought all over northern France, at this very moment, in trenches and dugouts and blooded shell-holes, the inheritor’s were dying, not one by one, while old men, and women of all ages, gathered together and sang hymns (149)

The failure of this bargain angers Rivers. The present fathers of society have failed to uphold the terms of this social contract, as so many young men die before they can inherit peace and power. The war has revealed the contract as inherently false when enacted on so large scale. In Abraham’s story, Isaac is spared, a tethered ram sacrificed in his place, supposedly symbolizing the end of human sacrifice so, too, God sacrifices his own son, Jesus, as the Bible says, so that his followers are redeemed from sin, but Jesus rises again from the dead. However, in war, there is no substitute or resurrection for the dead rotting in the blasted mud of the battlefields and a generation is being sacrificed like animals, with nothing to inherit. Slaughter rather than crucifixion, where the son is not simply abandoned but also sacrificed like an animal, is used as a fitting parable for the apparent conspiracy of the old against the young in the novel. Sassoon’s protest voices his
rebellion against the fathers of the nation, even if his own role as the father of his men ultimately compels him to go back to the front.

*Regeneration* ends on an extremely powerful scene in which Rivers is made to witness the methods of another doctor, Dr. Yealland who uses electric shock therapy. The scene is very horrible. The following night Rivers has a nightmare in which he sees himself raping the mouth of a deformed patient with a horse bite. When Rivers analysis his own dream, he realizes that he did not witness a doctor teaching a man to speak, but a torturer silencing a man. He also realizes that he also does the same thing but with human and gentler method with his patients like Sassoon, silencing their protest against the war. The novel ends on Rivers repressing his doubts and offering his beloved Sassoon to the altar of duty.

Rivers saw that he had reached Sassoon’s file. He reads through the admission report and the notes that followed it. There was nothing more he wanted to say that he could say. He drew the final page towards him and wrote Nov. 26, 1917 discharged to duty (250)

‘The pen has become the sacrificial knife, but no angel stays his hands’. (Derrida, 1995: 61)

**Feminization of men and manliness of female:**

*Regeneration* mainly looks at the male perspective; Barker includes a little but important female presence. Women’s involvement in war work in *Regeneration* shows the potential growth in women’s independence, but at the expense of restrictions placed on men while they were on the front lines of battle. Barker shows at various points, the social space that women occupy has generally expanded while the space that the men occupy has contracted into the trenches. Munitions (women factory workers) during the First World War took the places of
their husbands, fathers, and brothers as the men took up positions in the armed services.

Women working in munitions factories were mostly from lower class. They acquired some engineering skills that helped them in producing various weapons. These women found the pay in munitions factory much higher than the domestic jobs they left at the time of war. Their experience and reason for working in the factories allowed them to feel more distinguished than working in domesticated services, while men argued against women working in factories. The women were taking full strides to prove their strength and abilities while working under harsh and almost unbearable conditions. These women worked for long hours who were exposed to chemicals and explosives that caused dangerous health consequences. Barker introduces Sarah Lamb, Lizzy, Madge, and Betty as factory workers in order to show the experiences of the home front effort in the plot. Through these women characters, Barker introduces us to the monotonous, harsh conditions of the factory laborers and women’s desire to expand their economic status. They are less patriotic. They moved always from their family just to be free from family restriction, enjoy the independent life and earn better wages. They lived free life in boarding. Women lived life like a men, free and independent where as men lived life like women under the restriction of officers and authority at the front. Prior experiences restriction while Sarah grows increasingly independent in terms of her emotions. From the beginning, Sarah dominates their conversation. Her domination over communication proves she has gained independence and strength while working in the factory because males do not oppress her. On the contrary, Prior’s experience in the army restricted him from opening up to a woman with whom he eventually falls in love.
Sarah “worked in a factory… making detonators. Twelve-hour shifts, six days a week, but she liked the work… and it was well paid. ‘Fifty bob a week… [She] was earning ten bob before the war” (89) Sarah’s independence shows a significant growth of independence in many women during the war. These women wanted to change their social class and took efforts to further their independence. Karin Westman points out in her close reading of *Regeneration*, when women trespass on male territory. ‘They are expected to be more masculine and feminine to succeed – and they must be willing to cede their new freedom when the war is over’. (Westman, 2001: 44). Prior never explain to Sarah, what he has undergone in war. However, he also uses her as an object on which to vent his anger, precisely because she can never understand what he has endured. Women have “expanded”, in choice of occupation, increased wages and some freedom from the obligatory domestic duties of a wife and possibly a daughter.

On the contrary, at the time of the First World War men were asked to do passive roles as female. According to Rivers, the source of men’s war neurosis is therefore society’s compulsory masculinity coming into conflict with the logistics of trench warfare:

Mobilization, the Great Adventure – the real life equivalent of all the adventure stories they’d devoured as boys – consisted of crouching in a dugout, waiting to be killed. The war that had promised so much in a way of “manly” activity had actually delivered “feminine” passivity, and on a sale that their mothers and sisters are scarcely known. No wonder they broke down. (107-8)

According to Rivers, the parallels between the soldier’s hysteria during war and women’s hysteria during peace are all too clear: in both cases, “their relatively more confined lives gave them fewer opportunities of reacting to stress in active and constructive ways”. (22) Men’s breakdown was considered feminine and
because of it, they were ashamed. Soldiers were made feminine by their experiences. Their officers played maternal role and provided comfort and emotional support to them. The officers’ experiences indicate that motherhood is not only a biological role and even Rivers’s experiences confirm this analysis. Some patients assign him maternal role, which he must accept during the process of treatment. Rivers accepts it in order to help his patients. He listens and provides unconditional comfort to his patients, which are considered as ‘feminine’ and have maternal qualities. Yet these very qualities make him a successful figure of medical authority for his patients. The best method of treatment requires then, a redefinition of masculinity.

**Class system:**

Barker shows that the instruments of war are not only bombs, bullets and bayonets but also psychological and emotional pressure under which the doomed youths lived in the trenches and war hospitals. She raises salient problems of communication across socially constructed boundaries. ‘Barker makes connections between mutism, hysteria and nightmares precipitated by the experience of war and the social values and cultures that pre-exist yet are fore grounded by this extreme situation’ (Ardis, 2001: 18-36). Barker explores detrimental presence of class distinction within the ranks of the British military and home front. The issue of class distinction is addressed specifically on pages 66 and 67 of the novel. The characters’ discussion reinforces Barker’s theme of the injustices of these class distinctions and the harm they cause on the war front. The British army itself was structured around class as aristocratic generals, middle class officers, and a working class ordinary people. Some soldiers played the role of servant and waited for officers of high-class, who enjoyed luxurious life and did not give attention towards grim condition of common soldiers. Due to high demand of soldiers the
number of officers were also increased some soldiers were called as ‘temporary gentlemen’. Prior’s discussion with Rivers highlights specific examples of “snobbery”, blatantly reveals the degree of class bias, and prejudices at the front. Prior also make it clear that those back home believe “there are no class distinctions at the front” (67), He informs Rivers that “What you wear, what you eat, where you sleep, what you carry?” (67) all contribute to the reinforcement of class distinction. However, Prior is second lieutenant, he is snubbed because of his social status. He points out class distinction within British culture and front as well as home front:

Prior’s face shut tight. “You mean, did I encounter any snobbery?”
“Yes.”
“Not more than I have here.”
Their eyes locked. Rivers said, “But did you encounter it?”
“Yes. It’s made perfectly clear when you arrive that some people are welcome than others. It helps if you hunt; it helps if your shirts are the right color. Which is a deep shade of khaki, by the way?”
In spite of himself, Rivers looked down at his shirt.
“Borderline,” said prior.
“And yours?”
“Not borderline. Nowhere near.” (66)

Prior has accurate knowledge of the military caste system implemented by Britain during the First World War. Officers like Sassoon were given special treatment for being Cambridge or Oxford educated men, as compared to ordinary treatment Prior receives because of his “temporary gentlemen” status which was given to recruit the shortage of officers. The value placed on officers of higher class in contrast to the disregard given for soldiers of lower social standing shows the snobbery within the British social structure, which is unjust. People from higher social standing misuse men from a lower social standing, is stated clearly by Sassoon in his declaration: “This war upon which I entered as a war of defense and
liberation, has now become a war of aggression and conquest… I have seen and endured the suffering of the troops, and I can no longer be a party to prolong these suffering for ends which I believe to be evil and unjust” (3). Sassoon rebels against those higher-class people, who for their selfish causes support war, that result in needless death and wasted energies on the battlefield. Rivers observes the difference between how he treats the officers for ‘shellshock’ symptoms with the gentle ‘talking cure’, and the way the common soldiers are treated brutally by Yealland.

Class distinctions are explored further through characters like Sarah and her friends at factory, Sarah’s mother, Prior’s Parents, and other patients at Craiglockhart. Barker’s inclusion of these characters’ experiences and their social standings within British Society reinforce her theme of the injustice of class distinctions and their damaging effects on human conditions. This type of caste distinction is not just limited to the soldiers but also common people in the society. British civilian population also perpetuated the caste system.

**Love between men (Homosexuality):**

Like hysteria, homosexuality was also considered as “abnormal” non-masculine and non-heroic behaviors that were severely attacked by society in the home-front war. The major problem described in Barker’s Trilogy is the Pemberton Billing Affair, the discovery of a list of 47,000 suspected homosexuals, and the fear of its propagation in a homophobic society, a society that considers itself threatened by nonconformity. Barker’s Trilogy targets homosexuality because of its non-conformity to the masculine ideal. Army reinforces team bonding, co-operative nature towards one another and encourages camaraderie
between men but at the same time, it is worried about too closeness and love beyond friendship:

After all, in war, you’ve got this enormous emphasis on love between men – comradeship – and everybody approves. But at the same time there is always this little niggle of anxiety. Is it the right kind of love? (204)

Team bonding and friendship among soldiers is good, as soldiers function well as a group, but such sentiment cannot be allowed to go too far; it is a feeling of deferred homosexuality that creates a sense of belonging to a group. ‘Homosexuality, according to the accepted definition of heroic virility, is abnormal if not mastered by action, and the control of sexuality is a priority in the time of war when sexual energy must be channeled and directed towards helping the national cause’. (Foucault, 1980: 57, 148) At the time of war, sexuality becomes a problem of bodily discipline, morally and socially. English parliament with the passage of criminal law amendment Bill, specifically outlawed all form of male homosexual expression in the late 19th century. There was negative attitude toward gay community before and after the First World War, and homosexuality was something to be ridiculed and scorned.

Starting from page number 54, the issue of homosexuality, continues throughout Barker’s *Regeneration*. It displays the conflict that many homosexuals have undergone in the First World War. “No aspect of human sexuality aroused greater anxiety during the [First World] war than homosexuality”. (56) The trenches provided an all-male environment, encouraging “intimate friendship between men… [furthering] the expression of male emotion” (57). However, once boundaries of decency and morality were crossed, punishment was quickly enforced and reputations were ruined. During the war, 22 officers and 270 soldiers were court-martialed for homosexual act in The British Army. Homosexuality was
viewed as a practice that would not be tolerated. Oscar Wilde is referred in *Regeneration* to emphasize the theme that homosexuals are completely capable of having friendship with other males apart from having romantic relationships.

In *Regeneration*, River’s knowledge of other cultures’ sexual practices and his unconventional theories about gender make him sympathetic to homosexuality in Britain. On page 53 of *Regeneration*, Sassoon reveals a precious secret: he is gay and his positive outlook on homosexuality as he says, Edward Carpenter’s the *Intermediate sex* saved him from despair. Although the secret could disqualify [him] for military service, he believes he should not be ashamed of it. Rivers warns him that “there’s nothing more despicable than using a man’s private life to discredit his views”, it is a common practice, and Sassoon had better be careful (55). Sassoon is currently a double threat to authority; making a Declaration against war and being a homosexual; therefore his future could be in danger. Putting these details in the novel, Barker shows the common conflict many homosexual males found themselves in during the First World War. They were torn between living the life they wished to live or the life society forces them to live.

Rivers is quite conventional in his preference to keep silent on the subject of homosexuality. The characters in *Regeneration* avoid discussing homosexuality by name; instead, they refer to it through indirect allusion, associations and jokes. Homosexuality was illegal in Britain from 1885 until 1967. The cultural climate of war precluded tolerating sexual acts, which might be privately acceptable during peacetime. Any tendencies towards homosexual love were condemned and often connected to other anti-social behavior: a man who questioned the war and espoused pacifism, for example, was labeled a “degenerate”, a common term for someone who expressed homosexual behavior. Pacifism and homosexuality were
considered as unacceptable while comradeship and heterosexuality were acceptable. Rivers suggests Sassoon to suppress homosexual behavior rather than express it; Rivers urges Sassoon not to show his pacific views too widely in London, where Sassoon is known as a friend of Robert Ross, who in turn was a friend of Oscar Wilde. The familiarity between Sassoon and Robert Graves could be read as homo-social, after learning that a friend, Peter, had been arrested for homosexuality, Robert Grave clearly declares that he is not homosexual even in thought. Men’s fear of being read as a homosexual or sexually deviant recurs throughout the novel, either through references to Freud or through jokes. The care Graves shows Sassoon by coming to visit him before he was sent to Craiglockhart is the first introduction to the theme of love between men. They are both compassionate and caring towards one another. Throughout *Regeneration*, numerous relationships contribute to the same theme of love between men. The relationship between Sassoon and the men in his division is one of the main reasons that Sassoon decides to go back to the front. He does not want to let down his men. This dedication, comradeship, and the love he has for them favor society because it engenders a better army overall.

Pat Barker emphasizes another loving relationship through Dr. Rivers and his patients. Rivers is an officer; he has a sort of fatherly and in some cases motherly-affection towards his patients. He listens to all of his patients and does whatever he can to help them recover. Another form of love between men is brotherly which is introduced through relationship between Sassoon and Owen. They have a great interest in poetry, which they share with each other, both of them oppose war, both of these men seem homosexuals but despite their sexual preference their relationship is a loving friendship. Sassoon offers Owen advice on his writings as an elder brother would do for his younger brother. Many loving
relationships formed between various characters make the theme of homosexuality more prominent in the novel.

**Imagination: constructive versus destructive**

Imagination is the gift of God to human beings. Human beings are considered as great among all living beings because of their power of imagination. Imagination has power to create and destroy. Imagination is like a double-edged sword that can be either destructive or constructive, depending on its use. The theme of imagination plays an important role in Pat Barker’s novel *Regeneration*, for many characters in the novel experience both the awful and inspired effects of the imagination. Imagination can be used for destructive purposes like warfare. The presence of the imagination was definitely evident in the designing of weaponry of the Great War, which effectively killed massive amount of people. There were many dangerous weapons like mustard gas, which brunt and blistered the bronchial tubes and lungs of its victims, causing them to choke to death in agony over the course of four or five weeks while strapped to beds. Other imaginative weapons include aerial bombardment, tanks and more effective machine guns and artillery, which were used for killing and maiming more and more people in ways that are more efficient. Because of these brutal means of warfare, many people argued that there was no such thing as a “Just War”, especially the First World War; it was considered as unjust war fought for whatever reasons. It is only through the evil imagination of man that these atrocities could happen.

Sassoon concludes his *A Soldiers’ Declaration* with the hope that his words “may help to destroy the callous complacency with which the majority of those at home regard the continuance of agonies which they do not share, and which they
have not sufficient imagination to realize”. (3) People at home front fail to imagine the horrors of war; so, support the continuation of war. They do not think that war may be other than “official” publications. Imagination is a source of physical and emotional pain, yet it is also the source of empathy, of healing and of art. Imagination plays an important role in Regeneration. Sassoon asks the public to imagine the horrors of the war, in order to comprehend its destructive force. Prior remembers the effect that no man’s land had over his imagination. Owen also describes his imagination, as he sat in a trench whose sides were full of skulls. Rivers’s another patient, Burns, asks Rivers, “Do you know what Christ died of?” Rivers responds – “suffocation” – Burns continues.

That’s what I find so horrifying. Somebody had to imagine that death. I mean, just in order to invent it as a method for execution. Do you know that thing in the Bible? “The imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth?” I used to wonder why pick on that? Why his imagination? But it’s absolutely right. (183)

Barker makes us think that war itself is the result of human efforts and fruit of human mind. If it is possible for society to begin war and destruction, it also has ways to imagine to stop or to prevent killing, it must be possible for it to work for good. The constructive application of imagination is especially employed by Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon, who use poetry as “therapeutic” (26) and perhaps creative release in order to counteract the destructiveness of war. It is the imagination that could create beautiful, heartfelt words that can touch another human being and make them feel the same fear, anger and other emotions that the writer felt as he wrote it. Thus, poetry also helps Sassoon to overcome his own memories of awful war. Dr. Rivers clearly says that “Writing the poems had obviously been therapeutic” and so it had helped “account for his early and rapid recovery” from the horrors of the war (26). Without imagination, we would have less destruction, and no more modern weapons, which kill more and more people
in painful and horrible ways, however, without imagination; we also would have no poetry, no music and none of the beautiful things in human life. Rivers thought that Sassoon’s poetry and his protest sprang from a single source, “each could be linked to his recovery from that terrible period of nightmares and hallucinations”.

(26) The collaborative efforts of Sassoon and Owen further illustrate the benefits of the imagination, where one mind helps another communicate with an audience of readers. The imaginative acts of remembering and artistic creation become instead a collaborative task. Sassoon and Owen search for ways to make words communicate meaning in new ways, they modify Owen’s poem *Anthem for Doomed Youth*. The search for new combinations “Passing bells” for “minute-bells”, “The Guns” for “our guns” (141) River’s capacity for empathy rely upon his imaginative engagement with his patients’ experiences, but his method of treatment depends upon his patients’ ability to remember – an act which involves an imaginative creation of past events. The imagination works to heal the mind here, rather than cripple it. Imagination is a very powerful tool, which humans have been using from their very existence for various purposes. It is seen as both the salvation and destruction of man. Imagination is a source of good and evil. Its constructive and destructive nature can be traced throughout *Regeneration*.

**Regeneration: the war movie**

Pat Barker’s novel *Regeneration* was made into movie in 1997. The director Gillis Mackinnon and screenwriter Allan Scott chose to focus on the relationship between the older Dr. W.H.R. Rivers and three young patients at Craiglockhart War Hospital: Siegfried Sassoon, Wilfred Owen, and the fictional Billy Prior. However, the result is a very fine film that speaks of the psychological consequences of war. *Regeneration* (1997, 113 minutes) is not the cinematic embodiment of Barker’s *Regeneration* (Mackinnon: 1997). The producer uses
events from the third volume (*The Ghost Road*) also, the death of two main characters to achieve a proper sense of end. Barker uses three rather long books to reach the cathartic end of the *Trilogy*, while Mackinnon uses maximum from *Regeneration* and also refers to two other volumes (*The eye in the door* and *The Ghost Road*) to give proper ending to the movie, but he fails to achieve it fully. “What is lost in the film”, Stella Bruzzi writes, “is the meticulousness of Barker’s book.” The failure of *Regeneration* in the USA was conditioned by the coincidence of its release with Spielberg’s dramatic *Saving private Ryan*-2. Given the choice between a quality British Literacy adaptation and a quality Hollywood film, American audience preferred the latter.

Mackinnon and Scott emphasize the conflict between the old and the young. As a result, the themes of class and gender that shape the narrative of *Regeneration* are the very themes that mark the continuity of the novel with Barker’s earlier fictions muted on the screen. Barker’s novel shows men and women seeking regeneration from immense psychological pressures brought by war. It also focuses on the psychological treatment which Rivers applies on the suffering patients who are the psychological casualties of war but in the hands of Mackinnon and Scott, the novel becomes a film about the conflict between two generations of men, conflict enacted through war. The film resolves this conflict by ending with war by granting wisdom to the old through the sacrifices and experiences of the young. Generational conflict is certainly one of Barker’s themes in *Regeneration* novel such as regeneration, psychological treatment, anti-war protest, class system, and homosexuality. However, in *Regeneration* movie the producers suppressed other themes and highlighted the theme of older versus new generation.

The film *Regeneration*, in contrast to the novel, repeatedly focuses the cross-generational connections in order to emphasize its selected theme of
generational conflict. The film maintain single, omniscient point of view based primarily on visual cues in place of Barker’s shifting third person narrative and free indirect style. The film transposes and reassigns characters’ speeches; it alters the plot of the novel’s narrative and its ending; and finally, it erases an important narrative thread central to a novel about memory, regeneration, the power of imagination etc. The film *Regeneration* emphasizes a visual experience of Barker’s novel. While reading the novel, our focus remains on the characters’ emotions and not on the room they are in or the landscape outside their window. The film by contrast, revels in its recreation of hospital and grounds. The film recreates the world of Craiglockhart; plush carpets, dark gleaming woods, doors without locks, blankets and so on. Such visual cues do attract the attention of the viewer to the class privilege of Craiglockhart’s facilities as well as the year of the action of the novel (1917). The movie not only emphasizes the patients’ immediate surroundings but also their emotional experiences. It also depicts visual representations of the war from its beginning. In the Screenplay, it is Rivers, not Sassoon’s friend Robert Graves, who questions Sassoon’s pledge to his country and the contract, which he accepts in the form of military uniform, and compels him to go to the mental hospital instead of court-martial. Our sympathy for River’s character alters between the book and the film accordingly: in the film, we are more likely to feel sympathy for the position represented by the younger Sassoon and Prior, not by the older Rivers.

The film completely omitted River’s experiences in part 3 of Barker’s novel. The film’s audience does not return with Rivers to his childhood church or to his memories of struggling against his father’s faith, politics and enforced speech therapy. The film consequently sidesteps the shaping power of patriarchy within Rivers’s own life and his angry struggles against its authority. The novel provides
many opportunities for readers to observe Rivers analyzing his own troubled relationship to authority; we arrive at the end of the film without such context. Poetry is present in the film as a therapy, as for Owen, he is “cured”, by Sassoon’s teaching him to bring out his anguish about the war in the poems. Poetry is, of course the voicing of the complaints Rivers is trying to suppress; it is also opposite of the violent therapy based on electro-shocks; that the brutal Dr. Yealland uses to cure his patient’s mutism. War is more impressive in the film, where it is visualized in all its graphic violence.

Pat Barker’s novel is already an adaptation, for it transfers real life events and characters on to framework of literary fiction. Her poets are heavily indebted to Barker’s admiration of their texts. Mackinnon’s soldier-poets are twice filtered from reality. Still, the film will tempt many viewers to read the poems, the memories and the novels.

Both, the film and the novel push romance toward the homoerotic relationship between the officer-poets and their doctor. In the film, heterosexual love becomes the only satisfactory way to escape the trauma of war, especially when the scene of Prior and Sarah in bed is compared with Owen’s solitary figure, holding Sassoon’s picture and not his body. Indeed, the film carefully erases homosexuality from its dialogue or action until the end. The film *Regeneration* does not end, as the novel does, with Sassoon, Prior, and Owen’s discharge to duty but with the end of war. The film *Regeneration* thus tells an acceptable tale of youth suffering under the heavy hands of an older generation tied to honor and custom, an older generation of men unable to recognize or to act against the signs of its own ideological infirmities. Despite praising the high quality of the acting, the locations and the photography in Mackinnon’s film, Americans found *Regeneration* pale somewhat in comparison to its more spectacular Hollywood
counterpart, especially as regards the depiction of bodily destruction. Mackinnon’s adaptation of Barker’s *Regeneration* can only be truly appreciated by audience more inclined towards literary fiction than towards popular Hollywood movies.

We are forced to consider the paradoxes of war as we see young men, enlisting for the adventure and the glory, finds only cold, misery, death and worse than death maiming of mind and body. Rivers sends back the men to the trenches whom he had cared for and even loved to be killed. Based in part on historical events, Barker skillfully blends facts and fiction, science and literature, which not only raises questions about how to imagine the First World War, but also about the relationship between story and history and about the rights of the novelist to (re)write history for their readers. Barker’s choice of form, style, and blending of historical and fictional material set *Regeneration* apart from other modern novels about the Great War and earned it a place in a growing popular canon of contemporary historical fiction.