Chapter Three
The Suffering Patients
This chapter is mainly concerned with the psychological analysis of the effects of war at both the battlefield and the home front. Soldiers suffer in the battlefield and civilians suffer at home front in Barker’s novels namely: *The Eye in the Door* and *The Ghost Road*. The chief targets of Barker’s intellectual criticism are political errors, insincerities and callous complacence for which the soldiers were being sacrificed in the war, which was evil and unjust. Barker used literature, particularly poetry of the war period, as well as historical research to criticize war and the conduct of doctors with ‘shell-shock’ patients.

The whole *Regeneration Trilogy* is a vivid reconstruction of a short historical period at the end of the First World War. Though the *Trilogy* is mainly concerned with the healing of psychologically injured soldiers, there are many other themes, which lie just below the surface. Important among these is the father-son relationship, which is reflected both in the relationship between Dr. Rivers and his patients and between the wounded officers and their men. Likewise, the question of class significantly intervenes in the fictional persona of Billy Prior. Homosexuality, too, is a theme, which is gradually developed during the course of the three books. The theme of pacifism is prominent in the second novel of *Trilogy*, *The Eye in the Door*. Almost all the First World War classics compare horrific situation of battlefield with the peaceful serenity of home front, but Barker’s *Regeneration Trilogy* compares horrible condition of battlefield with the equally chaotic situation at home front. This is what makes Barker different from other war writers. In the last novel of *Trilogy*, Barker combines psychology and anthropology to create damaging effects of war on human psyche. She compares Melanesian primitive tribe’s culture with civilized British culture and concludes that both the cultures are fundamentally same and equally engaged in the act of
war. Barker has also severely criticized church, family and school for creating background for war.

*The Regeneration Trilogy* received a great deal of publicity in part because of the prizes it was awarded. Second volume of *Trilogy, The Eye in the Door* won the Guardian Fiction Prize in 1993, while third volume, *The Ghost Road* received the Booker Prize in 1995. This prize not only attracted media’s attention but also encouraged an erroneous reading of Barker’s work. The *Regeneration Trilogy* powerfully revises the genre of historical fiction. Sharon Monteith observes that the issues in the *Regeneration Trilogy* were very much at the forefront of public consciousness in the debates taking place in relation to Gulf War Syndrome. It described a range of chronic illness that affected soldiers who had served in the Iraqi conflict in early 1991. Elaine Showlter controversially argued that Gulf War Syndrome was a form of hysteria, and its symptoms were remarkably similar to those of shell shock during the First World War. She believed that the condition was caused by the immobility and passivity of the troops stationed in the desert, and the “months of fearful anticipation” of being gassed or poised (Showlter, 1997: 141). Barker’s *Trilogy* comments indirectly on the contemporary conflict. Sharon Monteith points out that Barker’s emphasis on the psychological consequences of war reflects the debates about Gulf War Syndrome. The *Trilogy* powerfully indicates ‘The need to address society’s expectations of combatants’ (Monteith, 2002:55).

Barker is interested in how society inflicts psychic damage on men and women and in exploring the effects of violence upon the family and community. The readers are invited to reflect on how ideas about masculinity are profoundly altered by the experience of the First World War.
**The Eye in the Door:**

Barker blurs the distinction between facts and fiction. She blends real characters, Sassoon, Owen, Grave and Rivers with the fictitious character Billy Prior. *The Eye in the Door*, the second novel in *The Trilogy* represents the story not just of one man suffering from the trauma of war, but a generation condemned to the unending slaughter, and the agony of class and gender. This novel looks at some of the problems of non-combatants such as pacifists, particularly when their anti-war sentiments were pursued actively and thus appeared as a threat to the country. Most of the principal characters from the previous novel are re-introduced to create proper link but now both, the setting and the context are different. This novel depicts the pathetic conditions of women at home front, as how they suffered when the war was going on. *Regeneration* depicts the horrors of war in gruesome reality whereas the violence, malice and cruelty of this book are in many ways more frightening.

There has been a shift in the predominant themes; the concentration is no longer on the war in France but rather on the effects of trench warfare upon those who have returned wounded in mind or body; the sexual exploitation of women helps to highlight the problems of women in the society of that time. Billy Prior here faces the same dilemma, which Sassoon had to face in *Regeneration*, though for different reasons. He feels that the situation before war was different and now the situation at home front is different. He does not fit in the society. He thinks, it will be better if he goes and fights in the war. *The Eye in the Door* ends with him, making the decision that, despite of not believing in war and not trusting the Generals, he must go back. The title of the novel refers to the atmosphere of distrust, which the war generated, in which everyone felt that they were being spied upon. It also refers to the ghastly eyeball which precipitated Prior’s
breakdown and he experiences the added terror of the eye in the door surveying him in his dreams.

Barker digs deep into the themes, which she explored in *Regeneration*. Psychological treatment continues in the second novel of the *Trilogy* for suffering patients. The theme of class system also dominates the novel. Prior brings into limelight the class system at home front. Other important themes like homosexuality, condition of women, supporter versus pacifist, old generation versus new generation, role of imagination, anti-war protest etc. are explored in more detail. At the end of the novel, way is prepared for the third volume of the *Trilogy*.

*The Eye in the Door* is the second part of her *Regeneration Trilogy*. The book follows several soldiers who returned to England from the First World War, under the care of psychiatrist, Dr. Rivers. The main characters in the volume are Dr. Rivers and Billy Prior. The latter is almost recovered psychologically by the end of the first volume but he is not physically well enough to go back to the battlefield although he is able to work for the military on the home front. He is given a position with the Ministry of Munitions and assigned the job of dealing with pacifist groups. There was a reason, why Prior was given this particular assignment, it was because so many pacifists were part of his circle of longtime friends. His superiors believe that this will give him insight into finding and arresting them. There was no room for dissent in wartime England as far as those in charge were concerned. There was the hunt against homosexual, gay men and lesbians in England during the second half of the war.

An opportunistic politician seized the moment and published his claim that 47,000 people are suspected of homosexuality and planned to weaken the English forces. His claim was taken very seriously; anyone with even a remote connection
to anything suspicious was in danger of arrest; even soldiers like Prior and Sassoon who were decorated heroes. Billy Prior’s private encounters with women and men who were pacifists, objectors and homosexuals; conflict with his duties as a soldier and this causes fragmentation of his personality and breakdown. It forced him to consult the man who helped him before, an army psychiatrist, William Rivers. *The Eye in the Door* is a heart-rending study of the contradictions of war and of those forced to live through it. Prior is tormented by fugue states and blank spots in his memory which he seems to operate outside his own control. Prior is trapped between pacifism and patriotism, the lower class and upper class, hetero and homosexuality, madness and sanity, while never deciding he belongs to one side or the other. Prior’s sexual confusion allows Barker to dramatize a moment of mass hysteria recorded at a point of crisis towards the end of the war. The resulting climate of fear provides the book with its paranoiac title.

The novel succeeds as both historical fiction and as sequel. Its greatest success, however, has to do with the insight it provides into its central doctor-patient-relationships, which was carried on from the first novel. Barker renders the pride and fierce shame, bewilderment, humiliation, fear and icy self-disgust of those young men who raised to venerate a concept of honor based on self-control, nevertheless broke down under the lunatic horror of trench warfare. She provides details that convey their vulnerability and need, even as their self-esteem demands that they resolutely deny both.

Rivers cures his patients to send them back to war that nearly destroy them in first place. His real role is not as a healer but a silencer of these men. He suspects that their symptoms like their nightmares and memory lapses, their inability to speak or move are protests of conscience and animal instinct. These thoughts equally divided Rivers against himself.
Barker develops valuable insights about the psychoanalytic process in *The Eye in the Door*. Prior’s deeply embedded conflicts begin to emerge in the opening paragraph of imagined violence, in which Prior acts out of unconscious impulses that psychoanalysis contrasts with remembering, as alternative “ways of bringing the past into present”. (Laplanche, 1973:4) Prior walks with a pretty girl named Myra by “formal beds” of flowers in Hyde Park. As he looks at these flowers, he loses control on his own conscious, takes an imaginary gun and fires at them considering troops of soldiers. “Billy Prior spends several moments setting up an enfilade, then, releasing his companion’s arm, seized an imaginary machine-gun and blasted the heads off the whole bloody lot of them” (3). Though these actions seem merely a joke, as Freud realized, jokes are like dreams, able to convey unconscious feelings. These actions suggest Prior’s extensive trench experiences.

Prior expresses intense hostility towards non-combatants, particularly women. Prior’s rejection of the female is accompanied by conscious preference for male, followed by his illicit sexual liaison with other officer, Charles Manning. Both, Prior and Manning enter in the house of Manning, Manning chooses the place to have sex in the maid’s room. He is well aware that Prior belongs to lower class. Prior is mockingly aware of being taken “to the servants’ quarter” (11-12). Feeling of class-consciousness and hostility continue through the sexual encounter.

**Suffering patients and psychoanalysis:**

J. Laplanche and J. B. Pontalis suggest:

The repressed seek ‘to return’ in the present, whether in the form of dreams, symptoms or acting-out… a thing which has not been understood inevitably reappears; like an unlade ghost, it cannot rest until the mystery has been solved and the spell broken.” (Laplanche, 1973: 48-49)
The Eye in the Door vividly depicts psychoanalysis in the form of interpretation of dream and through the process of reading and solving a mystery. A hallmark of the psychoanalytic process is the analyst and patient’s partnership in dream analysis. Prior recollects his dream, Rivers seeks to elicit his understanding of it through inquiries and minimal questions.

Rivers digs deep into the repressed thoughts and feelings of Prior through psychoanalysis. Rivers gradually come to the conclusion that Prior’s first, intensely emotional association with the detached eyeball of a soldier in his platoon, depicted in Regeneration stuck in his mind and threatened him throughout the novel. When Prior visits Beattie one of the pacifists in the prison cell, he sees an eye painted on the prison cell door which makes him feel that he is on the pacifists’ side against the prison-states. “Constant surveillance”, is represented by the eye that relentlessly stares at the pacifist-prisoner from his or her cell door (74-75). The eye, which he sees at prison cell, disturbs him deeply. The therapist thus elicits an interpretation, though Prior states it: that “eye” is the pun of the unconscious for “I”. In Prior’s view, this outrageously bad pun does indeed convey his conflict: “I hate what I [as “eye”] do” (74-75). The prison eye function as surveillance which Prior hates but actually he himself is performing the same function of surveillance as ‘eye’ that makes him more afraid as he said “I hate what I do”. Moreover, ‘the oval mirror on the back of Prior’s bedroom door reinforces the identification of the eye in the door with Prior, so that his nightmare image of stabbing the eye possibly conveys a desire to stop his own seeing’. (53, 58) The symbolism of the novel suggests the fact that the eye in the prison cell and Prior’s bedroom door outwardly symbolize constant surveillance and suspicious atmosphere in the novel. The ‘eye’ on the door also symbolizes working into the self and compelling the characters
like Prior and Dr. Rivers to make moral judgments, whether they are doing good work by contributing to the war or helping the authority for evil and unjust war.

The symbol has dual meaning. Dream analysis is a form of eye, which helps Dr. Rivers to look into the psyche of his patients, the innermost part of one’s identity. Another way to access the unconscious for Freud is the transference that occurs in the psychoanalytic relationship. The moment in which Rivers and Prior “exchange seats” both symbolize this transference and mark a deeper engagement of Rivers with his own buried impulses and problems, (136) followed by their changing places, and Prior’s unforgettably, camp parody of River’s manner, forcing the doctor to tell of his buried self while looking into a mirror. (136-37) Prior compels him to accept that he does not have clear memory of what actually horrific happened at the age of five. After repeated denials and stammering Rivers accepts it. As Prior says, “Whatever it was, you blinded yourself so you wouldn’t have to go on seeing it… you put your mind’s eye out” (136-39). Rivers rationalizations, hesitations and stammering all strongly convey the resistance that marks the emergence of something very deep and thus reveals River’s transference.

In Regeneration, it was Sassoon who causes Rivers to transfer and in The Eye in the Door, it was Prior who causes him to transfer. The process of transference is not easy as it is deeply rooted and inculcated in human nature from his or her childhood. Rivers belongs to upper class society in which the concepts of masculinity, class system, war, honor, authority, power etc. are inculcated so deeply that it is hardly possible for anyone to change it. This challenge is taken by Sassoon in Regeneration and Prior in The Eye in the Door. Both of them shake Rivers’s own concept of war, honor, masculinity, authority and power and compel him to change. He doubts his own work as a military doctor, which forces him
professionally to cure the patients and send them back to the front just to get them killed. After judging his own role, he feels frustrated thinking that he is contributing to the war, which is evil and unjust.

The mutual transference between Rivers and Prior, who mirror each-others’ self-blinding and need for self-acceptance, is clinched, perhaps, in Barker’s reworking of the symbolic imagery of hands and handwriting from Jekyll and Hyde. Rivers handwriting is so illegible that it is hardly possible for anyone to read, but Prior can read it easily through his insight. Prior observes that it is a way to hide the self, it is a kind of the graphic equivalent of a stammer, a written embodiment of what Rivers “couldn’t say” and “didn’t intend to write” (257). Rivers does not complete the investigation of his repressed problems from childhood. Prior, as his name implies, precedes his doctor in the psychoanalytic process that help Rivers to remember his past in *The Ghost Road*. The difference in their progress emerges in two sets of paired scenes that conclude *The Eye in the Door*. Barker’s novels focus on psychoanalysis, not as a theory but as ‘a live experience of relationships, dialogues, dream interpretation and hard work’ (275) and provides frequent reminders of the need to read psychoanalytically. *The Eye in the Door*, shows that this reading process starts from the understanding that unconscious feelings and indirect form of communication: dreams, slips of the tongue, hesitations, jokes, symbols, stammers, handwriting, symptoms, acting out, forgetting, silence and even memories or interpretations that try to screen out threatening knowledge. Barker helps us to understand the text. She helps us to know how to deconstruct and get meaning out of it. She also trains the reader to read the text from different perspectives.
Degeneration: the front and home front

Young soldiers walked across the battlefields of Gallipoli, the Somme, Loos, Ypres and Pschendaele and suffered the greatest loss of life. Each battle was futile, trench warfare had prolonged the struggle and men were living like troglodytes in a war zone and felt increasingly alienated from the home front. As Barker described in her Trilogy, home front was not less horrible than front. The trenches are named after London streets, and Britain’s urban landscapes are devastated by poverty and deprivation. When Prior visits Beattie Roper in Aylesbury prison in The Eye in the Door, the prison landings reminds him of the trenches he has so recently left behind: No Man’s land seen through periscope, an apparently empty landscape which in fact held thousands of men (30). During the war, those who registered as conscientious objectors were often imprisoned and some were killed, as Felicity Goodall has outlined in A Question of Conscience (Goodall, 1997: 76).

Barker explores the ideas and the ideals that motivated not only the well known pacifists like Bertrand Russell, Lady Ottoline Morell and Robert Ross, friends of Sassoon but the ordinary men and women to protest against the authority which was unjust. Contrary to the condition of pacifists at home were men at front those who opposed to kill were considered as ‘cowardice’ and frequently shot or punished severely. Barker showed in her novel that, in the trenches and in the prison, soldiers and war objectors were regulated by the same authoritarian system of surveillance. As Panopticon Michael Foucault describes the oppressive watchfulness inherent in the prison system, even when physical violence is not an immediate threat: ‘There is no need for arms, physical violence, material constrain. Just a gaze, a gaze which each individual under its weight will end by internalizing until each individual became self-regulating’ (Foucault, 1991: 113).
Rivers treats Prior, as he begins to experience fugue states that present Barker with the opportunity to pursue the ethical conflict Prior feels about his job in intelligence. Prior is disgusted by Spragge, a spy who is paid a bonus each time he ‘brings in’ a war objector. However, he is more disgusted by himself, so much that is causes him fugue states. Beattie Roper’s question, ‘Whose side are you on?’ is crucial. Barker depicts a divided country in which war propaganda has criminalized pacifists, socialists like Beattie, and homosexuals like Charles Manning. The pressure of Prior’s job and the guilt of betrayal result into the split personality. Through the second novel of Trilogy, The Eye in the Door, Barker showed the pathetic condition of home front, which was equally horrible and chaotic as the battlefield.

**The Ghost Road:**

*The Ghost Road* is the third novel of Trilogy. It is a story of war and struggle, both internally and externally. The whole Trilogy is well researched intertextuality from Rivers’s own many published works like *The Todas* and *Conflict and Dream*, Sassoon’s memories and war poems, Owen’s poetry, Sloboblin’s account of Rivers, lines from *The West Land*, Eric J. Leed’s book on the Great War or Elaine Showalter’s on hysteria and so forth. *The Ghost Road* chiefly alternates between the diaries Priors writes while preparing for one of the last, British offensives campaign, and Rivers’s recollections of pre-war anthropological expeditions to Melanesia. In *The Ghost Road*, Barker blends Rivers’s earlier anthropological experience with psychological treatment. The title, *The Ghost Road* refers to the road to France, which leads to the war. *Regeneration* ended with Sassoon’s return; this one begins with both Billy Prior and Wilfred Owen preparing for the Medical Board that they hope will return them to France. The title of the novel suggests the road, which is trudged by the men who fought and died in
France. It is the road of memories. These are the ghosts, which haunt even in the preceding novels of Barker, in the form of post trauma.

Sassoon, the protagonist of *Regeneration*, Prior, the protagonist of *The Eye in the Door*, are still significant characters but this is River’s book. Just as *The Eye in the Door* reveals the childhood memories of Prior, *The Ghost Road* reveals the childhood memories of Dr. Rivers. This novel is the most complex of the three novels; several levels of plot are in progress simultaneously. First, it depicts the continuation of war. Second, it deals with the Psychological treatment where Dr. Rivers gets cases that are more critical as war proceeds. Third, it shows that Rivers’s mind returns through flashbacks to his troubled childhood. Fourth, it deals with Rivers reminiscences, which takes him back to a period of his life, spent among the Melanesian tribes. Fifth, it describes the direct battlefield where Wilfred Owen, Billy Prior and most of their battalion from the Manchester Regiment die helplessly. Barker received Booker Prize for *The Ghost Road* in which she makes wonderful comparison between Melanesian tribe where head hunting is common practice and the civilized European culture where war is prevalent. Both the cultures are engaged in killing and destruction but the ways are different. *The Ghost Road* is the book where Barker blends psychology with anthropology to sever her attack on war and other notorious cultural practices.

By the end of the second novel *The Eye in the Door*, Billy Prior is almost cured from his mental wound, trench fever and a dual personality brought on by shell shock. In the third novel, *The Ghost Road*, Prior now has to go back and fight. As an example of war trauma, he is a living lab experiment, a test case for Rivers, who now watches as to see how his therapy will hold up. In the last novel Prior feels hopelessly alienated among civilians and returns to France with relief in this novel. As the war proceeds, Rivers gets patients that are more critical,
suffering from nervous disorders. Barker describes with humor and sensitivity the intellectual debates, the psychological developments and the sexual undertones of this masculine world. Nevertheless, Rivers embodies not only a modern psychological perspective but also a timeless moral dilemma, as he works for the army and cures his men in order to send them finally back to madness. There is a patient, Moffett, who lost all movements in his legs with the sound of guns and shells. He murdered a German prisoner in the war. He is now visited by his ghost together with the stretch of decomposing flesh. Rivers studies the case of Moffett and finds the way to treat Moffett’s hysterical paralysis by drawing circles around his legs. Each day the circle gets lower and lower towards his feet. The theory is that each day more and more of the leg above the drawn circle will have feeling.

This is potentially a fascinating area; one could read much more about these early theories and psychological treatment. Barker spends a lot of time flashing back to River’s pre-war experience as an anthropologist living among headhunters. The book has multiple plots developing simultaneously. At one side there is a horrible description of war through Prior’s dairy and on the other hand there is the description of Melanesian culture through River’s flashback. Once you are focused on the realities of trench-trauma, it is difficult to find yourself suddenly in the middle of the bush inspecting tribal courtship rituals of Melanesian people, the writer skillfully presents in alternate chapters of the novel. Barker uses the primitive world as a comparison with what happens to a more “civilized” society once war has blown the lid off. Prior does his level best to reverse the civilizing process, breaking one sexual taboo after another, as extreme conditions push his sadism to the fore, but still he remains too much a western man. Through the eyes of Billy Prior, the author presents a surprisingly unsentimental view of war. Though Barker avoids visual and sensational description of violence, yet there are
harrowing moments. Barker shows that, though the suffering of the First World War is well known, books on the subject still need to be written.

**Masculinity:**

At the beginning of the First World War, it was an illusion to sacrifice bravely one’s life for the king and country, this was reinforced by a long-standing vocabulary and set of codes that suggested appropriate masculine behavior. Barker rewrites the masculine narrative of the First World War. At the time of the First World War, all signs of physical fear were interpreted as cowardice and pacifism, conscientious objection, desertion, or suicide was considered unmanly, men were forced, like women, to express their conflict through their bodies.

Many soldiers developed the symptoms of hysteria in the First World War because it “feminized the conscripts by taking away their sense of control” (Showalter, 1987: 173). Men were expected to take part in great adventures. Catherine Lanone observes that Barker focuses on the symptoms of shell shock such as paralysis, aphasia and nightmares, which were traditionally associated with the “feminine” disorder of hysteria, and there by explores ‘the way masculine’s identity too is distorted by patriarchal, phallocentric demands’ (Lanone, 1999: 259). In the war, men were mobilized into trenches and shell holes; the predominant experience of war was one of passivity. According to Rivers, the cause of shell shock and male hysteria was not sudden shock or exposure to violence but prolonged immobility, helplessness, and inactivity of the soldiers. According to him, mental disorder was more common among ordinary soldiers and rare among officers. The constriction of the trenches paralleled women’s prewar experiences; Rivers recognizes this in connection with symptoms of his patients with his sister’s hysteria, which results from her increasing confinement.
The Ghost Road takes place at the culmination of war in 1918. Rivers certainly and even Prior to an extent function within deep rooted nineteenth-century British ideology of masculinity a cultured belief system that inculcated Victorian boys into the variant roles necessary to the creation and preservation of the British empire. Barker’s feminist intervention into history makes it clear that if men are suffering from the pathological conditions of women in peacetime, it is because they are faced with the same experiences of powerlessness, helplessness and immobility, so that illness becomes the only available mode of protest. Rivers’s method of treatment challenges and reinforces received notions of masculinity. In Barker’s writing, the protopathic symbolizes the emotional, the sensual, the chaotic and the primitive, whereas the epicritic symbolizes the rational, the ordered, the cerebral, the objective and the civilized. For Rivers, the protopathic is a positive force. Rivers’s treatment employs emotional containment and his treatment both endorses and reinforces a traditional model of masculine behavior. He demands that his patients must admit their emotions into consciousness. Rivers implicit affirmation of a traditional model of masculinity is most clearly brought out in his treatment of Ian Moffet. While curing Moffet’s paralysis of the legs, Rivers deliberately shames him by drawing stocking on tops of his legs, which draw attention to the “feminine” nature of his hysterical symptom. Moffet clearly recognizes that Rivers aims to humiliate him, he observes, ‘You are consciously and deliberately destroying my self-respect’ (52). According to Rivers, Moffet’s self-respect can be restored by getting him back on his feet, not in remaining paralyzed. However, Rivers’s cure effectively denies Moffet’s means of protest, and the only recourse left to him is to attempt suicide, which he tries but fails to succeed.
Although Rivers recognizes the shortcomings of traditional models of masculinity, they are nevertheless deeply rooted in his own consciousness. As in his childhood while hair cut, he was afraid of scissors; his father threatened him showing his grandfather’s (William River’s) portraits who had not cried even when his leg was amputated. From that moment Rivers started stammering. Elaine Showalter calls the Great War ‘a crisis of masculinity and a trial of the Victorian masculine ideal’ (Showalter, 1985:171). Not only common soldiers but also the best British officers came home demonstrating the symptoms of male hysteria such as mutism, nightmares, depression, insomnia, blindness, emotional paralysis, dizziness etc.

England was forced to reassess its social Darwinian belief in the “natural” superiority of British men in war and conquest. Paul Fussell explains that soldiers entering the Great War lived up to a feudal code of masculinity and war that equated “obedience” with “bravery” and the ability “not to complain” with being “manly” (Fussell, 1975:22). British men had been taught that emotional repression was an essential aspect of masculinity, male hysteria was the body’s answer to the chronically intolerable conditions and enforced passivity of trench warfare. War neurosis was a psychic compromise between the British masculine ideals of duty, honor, and patriotism and the individuals’ instinct to survive. Rivers encouraged his patients to express their “unmanly” feelings during the psychiatric sessions as a part of process of healing. Rivers asked his patients to express their feelings, which were traditionally suppressed. The irony of the situation is that as soon as Rivers healed his patients from non-masculine behavior, he sent them back to the front in the mouth of death. Rivers sustains this paradox throughout the course of the war because of his deep commitment to the high British ethos of the masculine duty to protect England through military defense. However, by 1918 when the war’s
callous machinery seemed to show no sign of relenting, the dreams of Rivers’s like those of his patients started haunting him.

**Anthropology: primitive versus civilized**

*The Ghost Road*, like the two earlier novels of *Trilogy*, moves round the historical upper-middle class English scientist, Dr. Rivers. At a time when shell shock, or male hysteria, was routinely considered by medical establishment and the wider culture to be an effect of cowardice, Dr. Rivers revised contemporary Freudian concepts to theorize that shell shock was actually an unconscious response to the psychic repression of continuous war trauma. It is through Rivers’s repeated wartime memories and dreams about his 1908 expedition to Melanesia to study primitive kinship relationships as medical anthropologist that he ironically comes to understand the barbaric elements of his own inculcated ideology of British manhood’s war and civilization. His memories of Melanesia expedition arise during the stress of 1918 when the human cost of war failed to give any logical and rational reason for its continuation. His memories of expedition force him to assess and revise his own deeply internalized codes of British masculinity. These experiences enact and help him to resolve his increasing ambivalence about his institutional role as military psychologist and a supporter of war.

Barker powerfully dramatizes Rivers’s growing doubt concerning the justifiability of the war. Rivers’s anthropological travels and experiences surface in *The Ghost Road* to challenge the official view of the war. The conflict gets so critical in the novel that the psychiatrist is close to a nervous breakdown himself. In his feverish dreams, he remembers his anthropological research among headhunters in Melanesia, in order to chase away the awful spirits of the war.
However, the war continues and River’s patients die one by one at the front. In an interview with Stevenson, Barker says:

Stevenson: Along with therapy, another profession you write about is that of the anthropologist…

Barker: You know… Craiglockhart is a very dark building, with very narrow corridors ... So *Regeneration* is very claustrophobic, very tight, and the only escape is into nightmare and memory… I wanted to open it up in the third volume, to go right away from war and to get Rivers out of his chair, totally, as he had been getting more and more out over the trilogy. But I wanted to see him in a dramatically different role. He was an anthropologist before the war, before he was a person who treated these young men – that interested me… so I didn’t want to settle just for the irony of all these young men dying in a war to end all wars… I wanted to ask more difficult questions, which is to what extent are we intrinsically violent toward other groups? To what extent is it a part of our biology? (Stevenson, Interview, 2005:183)

*The Ghost Road* does fictional justice to the twentieth-century tension between psychology and social anthropology, which both Rivers and Freud in their different ways, tried to negotiate through and which has remained for many commentators to try in the early post modern period. Barker raised many questions in *Trilogy*, the question such as: Is the preeminent science of enlightenment modernity, psychoanalysis, capable of explaining and rationalizing all forms of psychic disturbance? And if the psychological problem is the failure to distinguish between real and imagined, as appears to be the case with many of Rivers’s patients, what happens when The ‘clear sight’ of psychoanalysis is itself problematical? Is war entirely a political and social issue, or is it rooted deeper in psychology? Is war regenerative, or is it wholly, inescapably traumatic? Is war historical or mythological, a matter of will or ritual? All these questions suggest philosophical as well as historical and social themes, many of them deriving from the early twentieth-century psychoanalysis and anthropology. Both the
psychoanalyst and the anthropologist were breaching the frontiers of modern knowledge, exploring and explaining what remained unknown. Barker’s protagonist of Trilogy is both psychoanalyst and anthropologist who is the representative of the new sciences, which emerged at the end of the nineteenth century. Rivers’s doubts about the claim to be civilized society, repeatedly prompted by the traumas of his patients and the memories of his time in Melanesia, find their link in Freud’s work.

Rivers seems certain that the ghosts who haunt his patients are not ‘real’, but he is nevertheless compelled to acknowledge that his patients are haunted. As in The Ghost Road, Wensbeck is visited in hospital by the ghost of the German prisoner he murdered, ‘who becomes visible, more and more decomposed with every visit’ (26). Rivers functions as a kind of surrogate rational reader, solving the mystery of his patients’ ghosts, hallucinations and nightmares, explaining the symptoms of psychic disturbance, as well as protest. He is the detective charged with finding the cause of symptoms presented to him. Rivers must distinguish between the irrational visions and healthy realities of his patients. Yet his own experiences of the haunting in Melanesia defy his attempts at rational explanation, and serve to disturb the stability of his distinctions between appearance and reality, illness and sanity, superstition and reason. If he must deal with effects of his patients’ haunted memories routinely, then Rivers cannot finally dismiss the reality of ghost either. Barker’s Trilogy represents the crisis of modern rationality. Rivers’s patients suffer from variety of speech impediments and hallucinations, which Rivers observes and cures. Rivers must teach his patients to see, to walk or to speak again, by encouraging them to put their repressed experiences into perspective, and to recover absent, traumatic memories through introspection.
The teleological narrative of historical progress, cultural superiority and technological prowess, which underpinned notions of European civilization, and which ultimately led to the “Great War’, produced the most savage, regressive and irrational conflict the world had yet known. The dead lying on the battlefield of France are witnessed by Rivers’s patients in the Trilogy and visit in the form of ghost in the nightmare making the life of patients fearful. The uncanny experiences represented in the Regeneration Trilogy are disturbing not just in their meanings for scientific and psychoanalytic claims to knowledge, but also in their implications for geopolitics of modernity.

The Ghost Road is peopled by ghosts. Rivers is haunted not by the many soldiers he has treated who have subsequently died, but by his memories and fever-induced dreams of his friendship with Njiru. These dreams form a bridge from his pre-war Melanesian studies to his current London practice in psychology and ultimately lead to his emotional transformation and ability to reject war. Near the end of war, Rivers is transferred from Craiglockhart to the Empire Hospital in London, where he treats the physically, rather than psychologically, wounded patients. Here, he begins to experience increasingly intense memories of his 1907-08 trips to Melanesia during which he stayed for three months with a tribe of former headhunters. There, he befriended his cultural counterpart, the witch doctor Njiru, who gradually revealed to him the secret rituals of a dying warrior society, juxtaposing Europe with its apparent anthropological opposite. Here, Barker gets a chance to compare both Melanesian as a primitive and European as a civilized culture. Through this comparison, she gets an extra-ordinary result; she could criticize civilized society showing that both the cultures are primarily the same and engaged in the act of killing and destruction.
As Rivers’s memories begin to take on a more and more visual from, he experiences the same haunting that had traumatized his patients. *The Ghost Road* shifts between Rivers’s memories of Melanesia and his present life in the wards of Empire Hospital; he is forced to come to terms with those memories and their relationship to the experience of war. On one occasion visiting his landlady’s rooms and watching her dead son’s portrait killed in the war on the mantelpiece that is surrounded by flowers and candlesticks, he is reminded of Melanesian skull houses. Be it brutality or compassionate gestures, Rivers finds more similarities than differences between both the cultures, especially the ease with which a population is willing to accept cultural constructions as real. He remarks:

A shrine. Not fundamentally different from the skull houses of Pa Na Gandu where he’d gone with Njiru. The same human impulse at work. Difficult to know what to make of these flashes of cross-cultural recognition. From a strictly professional point of view, they were almost meaningless, but then one didn’t have such experiences as a disembodied anthropological intelligence, but as a man, and as a man one had to make some kind of sense of them. (116-117).

In Melanesian culture, warriors’ skulls are kept in the skull house to remember them, in the same way in the European civilized culture warriors’ photos hang on the wall. In both situations, men die in the war and they are remembered through skull and photograph. From strict professional point of view, both are almost meaningless.

The native people of Melanesian in *The Ghost Road* are headhunters, but British colonial rule has banned headhunting in Melanesia. These tribes have however, prospered as headhunters, now that practice is forbidden because of this they have lost their will to live. Headhunting was in one sense, a fertility ritual since, after a headhunting raid, the people would feast and the girls offered themselves freely to the warriors. Once headhunting was banned, young men were
described as cooped sitting like old women, instead of being active, as they ought to have been, burning villages and taking heads. According to Rivers:

Head-hunting had to be banned, and yet the effects of banning it were everywhere apparent in the listlessness and lethargy of the people’s lives. Head hunting was what they had lived for. Though it might seem callous or frivolous to say so, head-hunting had been the most tremendous fun and without it life lost almost all its zest.

This was a people perishing from the absence of war. It showed in the genealogies, the decline in the birth rate from one generation to the next – the island’s population was less than half what it had been in Rinambesi’s [a village elder’s] youth. (207).

Barker here makes comparison between two cultures as this degeneration of the Melanesian culture through the emasculation of the warrior male is set in direct contrast to the threat to British culture by the emasculation of her soldiers through shell shock or male hysteria during the First World War. In the novel, Melanesia represents a masculine culture dying from lack of war, while in England, conversely, war itself threatens the potency of British manhood, as the authority is afraid of losing stock of heroes. Though, western readers consider these tribes as savage and uncivilized but at the core, they are similar. Rivers understands that the two cultures are in fact very similar; furthermore, he seems to understand that the institution of anthropology can be misused in much the same way as the institution of psychoanalysis.

Rivers researches the traditions, myths, habits, kinship relations and daily life in general of Melanesian tribes. Rivers observes that civilized norms, when imposed on the natives destroy the traditional rituals for dealing with death, and make things worse in the long run. For example, the widow of a deceased chief has the choice between tongo polo, a period of grieving, or ungi, suicide. Rivers asks ‘how one decides between the period of grieving and suicide, and is told that it is
up to the widow; she is free to choose’ (187). Both the choices are destructive and inhuman. The alternate to this in Melanesian culture is that the widow can only be liberated from ungi by the capture of a human head from a rival tribe, a practice currently forbidden by the British who control the region (170). Barker’s comparison of both cultures is impressive. In civilized European culture, soldiers those who refused to kill and fight were considered cowardice. They were severely punished or put in the mental hospitals. Therefore, there is a comparison between headhunting and grieving in Melanesian people with war and confinement in mental hospital in civilized European people. Barker not only makes comparison about war but also about medicine and treatment. For example, Rivers accompanies Njiru, the tribe’s medicine man, as he makes his rounds to visit his patients. One of the women complains of constipation. The native doctor explains to Rivers that this illness is caused because of troublemaking spirit of an octopus as he massages the woman’s abdomen while singing. Finally, he catches the spirit and throws it out of the door and the patient is indeed cured. Again, an observer would tend to dismiss this sort of superstitious practice of medicine; but the massage was useful, the song calmed the patient, and the belief in a spirit corresponded to the cultural context. Rivers realizes that primitive and modern therapies are equally valid and depend on the cultural context. Rivers as a civilized doctor also cures in the same manner but a more civilized way to his patients of shell shock and hysteria like Moffets who was paralyzed, Rivers draws circle around his legs lowering each day and finally, he is cured.

It is Njiru, the Melanesia “Witch doctor” on Eddystone Island in 1908, who has the most powerful physical and emotional impact on Rivers and his views of war. Both of them share most intimate experience in the Trilogy. Though their cultural background is different but still they share many common traits. Shaddock
has compiled an interesting list of the commonalities between Rivers and Njiru. As both are in position of authority, patriarchs, neither participates in the war mongering masculinity so highly valued in both the cultures:

Both Rivers and Njiru are middle-aged; both are accomplished healers... both have disabilities that have shaped their adult identities (Njiru has a severe spinal curvature and Rivers a paralytic stammer), and both, finally hold positions of great respect and authority within their own cultures. Perhaps as a consequence of these characteristics, both men are detached from the ordinary activities of men in their respective cultures – neither has family and both descend from distinguished warriors, neither participates in the military pursuits that define virility in their respective cultural contexts. (Shaddock, 2006: 656-74).

Most importantly, both of them observe and analyze emasculated dying culture, Melanesian culture because there is no war and European culture because of war. Melanesian headhunting societies needed a head to launch a new canoe or to bury a chief properly. Many other cultures gradually replaced human sacrifice with animal sacrifice and then with other rituals. War is a kind of ritual in which that substitution has never been made.

The story of Abraham and Isaac forms an important motif in the Regeneration Trilogy and registers the change in Rivers’s viewpoint. Barker invokes the story of sacrifice of Abraham and Isaac to foreground Rivers’s emerging consciousness of his complicity in the slaughter of the First World War. After passing, the medical test in the final scene Rivers asks Prior if he will serve as a subject to assess whether Rivers’s therapy can withstand the stress endured by soldiers re-entering the war zone. Prior agrees to take the test. As Rivers watches Prior leave, he remembers a Melanesian custom in which an illegitimate boy was adopted by a leading man who brought him up as his own. He is loved and cared for and when he reaches puberty, he is bestowed the honor of leading the sacrificial
pig ceremony, and then in front of the whole community who knew what was going to happen, the adoptive father crushed his son’s skull with a club. Rivers contrasts this ritual to the image of Abraham and Isaac on a stained glass window in his father’s church.

In one of his father’s churches, St. Faith’s, at Maidstone, the window to the left of the altar shows Abraham with the knife rose to slay his son, and, below the human figures a ram caught in the thicket by his horns. The two events represented the difference between savagery and civilization, for in the second scenario the voice of God is about to forbid the sacrifice, and will be heeded. He had knelt at that alter rail for years, Sunday after Sunday, receiving the chalice from his father’s hand (104).

Although Rivers finds it too dangerous to pursue these thoughts about father and son’s sacrifice, he touches the outer edge of an image that poet Wilfred Owen explores more fully in his bitter sonnet, The Parable of the Old Man and the Young. The poem employs the Abraham-Isaac story as a metaphor for the fathers and sons of the First World War. It shows that civilized Judeo-Christian Europe has moved beyond primitive human sacrifice, Owen’s poem concludes bitterly with Abraham’s refusal to obey the angel’s command: “but the old man would not do so, but slew his son, / And half the seed of Europe, one by one”. Although in many instances Western culture has abandoned primitive sacrifice, it has not only been retained in warfare but also brought to new levels of destructiveness and horror with modern weaponry, chemical gas and other new technologies. Rivers remembers sacrificial custom of Melanesia as he watches the disembodied head of Prior disappearing down the road, and signals his awareness that he himself occupies the position of the “father” who has betrayed and sacrificed his “sons”. Sassoon narrowly escapes death, while Prior and Owen die in a suicidal attack. Barker revises the story of Abraham and Isaac to demonstrate that western culture is characterized by barbarity and savagery.
Rivers is a border-crossover between two cultures. He had displayed his innate capacity for cross-cultural connections in his sudden understanding of cultural relativity. Sassoon in *Regeneration*, Prior in *The Eye in the door* and Njiru in *The Ghost Road* serve to transform River’s sense of himself, and his conception of war, science, psychology and modernity. The validity of social representations that support war and violence in general, is called into question. Headhunting is normalized and socialized in Melanesia. It is of course understood that these same natives are blind in much the same way to their own way of doing things. They consider their ideological position as normal, in the same way, even in the civilized society still there are many bad things which are normalized and socialized and we are too blind to see those bad things and do not strive hard to eradicate such evil practices from the society.

Rivers’s experience in cave with Njiru is the transformative moment in his development that ultimately enables him to put his own acculturated mores in perspective and begin to integrate an alternative set of cultural beliefs and practices into both his medical practice and his personal life. As the war progresses, Rivers’s anxiety about his role is increased which is expressed through vivid dreams of Melanesia. His dreams bring Rivers outside the purely logical to a visionary, imagistic realm wherein he can feel and viscerally recognize his emerging conviction that, against all his social and professional training, war is in fact futile and wholly destructive. Rivers’s warrior son, Billy Prior forces Rivers final reassessment of his role in the war. Honoring his agreement to Rivers, Billy sends him “the half-time score”: “My nerves are in perfect working order. By which I mean that in my present situation, the only sane thing to do is to run away, and I will not do it. Test passed?” (254). The message carries very ironic meaning which is a slap on the face of Rivers forcing him to reconsider his role in the war. Here
passing test means being manly without complain, killing and being killed. In wartime England, Rivers has succeeded in preparing his surrogate son for the trauma of the front line of battle. In peacetime, job of a psychiatrist is to make his patients non-violent but in war, it is opposite of it. Dr. Rivers’s ideology about war is challenged by Prior. He sends second message to Rivers in the form of the twenty-year-old second lieutenant, Matthew Hallet who is physically handsome and emotionally vulnerable son of a patriotic military family, who believes fully in the legitimacy of the war. Hallet is young and it was his first tour to the France battlefield with Prior whose third tour to the front make him Hallet’s surrogate father. Hallet is the final link between the three generations of tenuous adoptive father-son relationships developed in the course of the novel. Hallet was severely wounded in a counter attack which Prior describes in his diary entry of 5th October, 1918 how he rescued him:

The gurgling led us to him... I got right up to his feet, and started checking his legs for wounds, nothing, but then I didn’t expect it. That sound only comes from a head wound. What made it marginally worse was that the side of head nearest me was untouched. His whole frame was shaking, his skin blue in the starlight as our skins were too, but his was the deep blue of shock. I said “Hallet” and for a second gurgling stopped. I gestured to Lucas and he helped me turn him further over on to his back, and we saw the wound. Brain exposed, a lot of blood, a lot of stuff not blood down the side of neck. One eye gone. A hole – I was going to say in his left cheek – where his left cheek had been. (195-96)

Hallet was almost dead and transported back to an English hospital where he was attended significantly by Rivers who thinks whether Prior knows Hallet but readers know that Hallet is a form of second and more honest message send back to Rivers. Rivers’s memory of the Melanesian, his expedition with Njiru to view the purification of one of the oldest skull houses on the island, surfaces as he views Hallet’s X-ray on the lighted screen in his office. The collection of skulls in the
skull house, generally considered by his own culture to be a barbaric rattling of bones, represents to Njiru’s culture a sacred temple of skulls that “contained the spirit, the tomate”, (238) of their ancestors. The movements back and forth from Rivers’s memory of Melanesia to that of his scientific training suggests that Rivers is struggling with two competing modes of viewing Hallet and his inevitable death; one spiritual and other empirical. By the end of the novel, Rivers achieves some kind of moral reckoning about his participation in the war.

Barker severs her attack on war at the end of the novel, when the faceless Hallet begins to cry out and won’t be soothed by his family, who continues to assert that his sacrifice is meaningful and glorious but it fails to sooth the patient. Rivers moves uncomfortably in and out of the screened space, he knows that there is nothing, he can do but wait for Hallet’s death. Through Hallet, all the patients of the ward, also Rivers and Hallet’s family, witness the most brutal reality of war. In the final pages of the novel, dawn breaks rosy pink, poet Wilfred Owen and Billy Prior are shot to death in France, Hallet dies amid a ghostly chant of his fellow patients, and Rivers suddenly remembers the words to the exorcism of the Melanesian spirit, Ave, that Njiru taught him years before. Njiru sees that Rivers understands only the material not the spiritual effect of the prayer. Rivers was so much enthralled by the denotative meaning of the prayer that the connotative meaning wholly escaped him. It is only now, in November 1918, after four years of war and Rivers’s recognition of his failings as a father, that he can intuitively understand the prayer in spiritual rather than intellectual terms. Hallet whispers repeatedly in an effort to be understood: “Shotverfet, Shotverfet”. His family cannot understand what Hallet was saying. Only Rivers recognizes the message delivered in agony from the trenches. Rivers translates Hallet’s indistinguishable cries: “he’s saying ‘It’s not worth it’” (274). The translation of “Shotverfet” into “it
is not worth it” is wholly Rivers’s interpretation; it is not clear that this is, in fact, what Hallet means to say. Nonetheless, the other patients break out in an echoing cry of protest in support of Hallet’s cry. “Shotverfet, Shotvarfet”. Rivers feels, a pressure building in his own throat as that single cry from the patients went on and on. He could not afterwards be sure that he had succeeded in keeping silent, or whether he too had joined in” (274-75).

It is not worth it to live in such a pain, it is not worth it to die in such a pain, and it is not worth it to die for nothing. The scream is addressed to the ward, the family, but mostly to Rivers. Hallet becomes a mere link, a signifier, the voice of Prior who brought him back to the trenches. The chant is not an abstract argument with logical conclusions in the tradition in which Rivers had been trained, but a visceral howl against the code of British masculinity, the glorious warrior ethic, that perpetuates war. Rivers did not stand back as a detached observer but he has seemingly been pulled into participation in the ritual exorcism, in a subjective, emotional, and spiritual emancipation. His dreams about Melanesia change his personality. *The Trilogy* closes with Rivers’s powerful vision of Njiru on the ward of the hospital calmly exorcising the spirit of Ave.

There is an end of men, an end of chiefs, an end of chieftains’ wives, an end of chiefs’ children – then go down and depart. Do not yearn for us, the fingerless, the crippled, the broken. Go down and depart, oh, oh (276).

This signals the return of his visual memories and suggests that he himself steps into mate (state of death) and joins the ghost dance of the dead, as he gives up his last belief in the justification of war. Rivers recognizes the connection between the death of the two cultures, the traditional Melanesian headhunters and pre- First World War Britain’s culture. The final vision represents Rivers’s unconscious resolution of his conflict about the war and men’s duty to the state.
The dead have strong influence on the living in the form of ghost, for it is Prior and Hallet, both now dead, who provide the final catalyst for Rivers spiritual epiphany and moral resolution of his conflict about the war. *The Ghost Road* is an attempt to come to terms with massive cultural destruction. It is also Rivers’s quest to understand these experiences as a man. Barker is an extraordinary writer who achieves the intensity of irony by comparing two cultures. She brings forth those aspects of war, which were not recorded by any other writer. She achieved great success because of her meticulous research in the field of war and psychology.

**The literature of Great War and the Regeneration Trilogy:**

Apart from Rebecca West’s *The Return of the Soldier* (1918), Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) and Pat Barker’s *Regeneration Trilogy* (1991-95), which deals with the traumatic domestic effects of shell shock, all the contemporary, classic novels of the Great War were written by men whose literary responses to war were conditioned by their own personal and first hand experiences of fighting in the frontline trenches. Critics appreciated Barker’s *Trilogy* as a work, which extended the artistic boundaries of the war novel. Although there is no reference to any of these Great War novels in the list of sources apart from Sassoon’s *Declaration Letter*, Owen’s poems and Dr. Rivers’s work, provided in her *Trilogy* but still they remain an obvious starting point for any critical appraisal of Barker’s work.

The most important aesthetic difference between Barker’s *Trilogy* and war classics are the concept of the pastoral. Within the context of class and ideology, the radical female vision of Barker’s *Trilogy* can be viewed as a conscious subversion of the postural conventions. The fundamental way in which, Barker’s *Trilogy* differs from most other Great War narrators is in the absence of any
pastoral link between the horrors of the trenches and the idealized images of life at home or behind the lines. In *The Eye in the Door*, Barker projects a view of the home front in Britain, a society both repressed and repressive. Billy Prior, the central working class character in the *Trilogy*, sees little difference between the exploitation of ordinary soldiers in the trenches and the oppression of their lives at home. In the *Trilogy*, Barker explodes the classless, pastoral England that was nostalgically evoked and celebrated in the prewar Georgian Poetry.

The First World War novels of Hemingway, Dos Passes, Remarque, and West all portray fundamentally idealized pastoral elements which are completely absent in Barker’s *Trilogy*. While writing about experiences of the front line with Rivers’s recollections in Melanesia in *The Ghost Road*, it would have certainly tempted Barker to slip into a pastoral transition from images of the slow collapse of Western civilization on the battle fields of Europe to a contrastingly idyllic representation of noble savages in their South Seas paradise. However, Barker deliberately avoid it by turning the thematic focus on Rivers’s flashbacks into the patriarchal power structure of these communities, torn between the decline of their own primitive head-hunting culture and encroaching imperialism that is set upon its own frugally exploitive mission. Similarly, in *Regeneration*, the hospital at Craiglockhart, despite its peaceful rural surroundings, is from the outset never depicted as a pastoral heaven for the soldiers. On the contrary, it is depicted as the sheer gloomy, cavernous bulk of the place, provides Barker with on almost Gothic like setting in which to explore the ideological tensions of Rivers’s experimental treatment of his patients and the blood-filled nightmares of death and destruction that hunt them.

Despite the relative humanness of Rivers’s treatment, in the final analysis, Rivers’s fundamental support to war efforts keeps on sending young men to their
deaths. Barker’s *Trilogy* concludes, therefore, with a rejection of war that is neither aesthetic nor metaphysical, but from ideological impact, patriarchal structures have on the lives of ordinary people. Like Barker’s *Trilogy*, many classic writers of the First World War also create a strong disgust in the mind of the readers towards the horrors of trench welfare that are graphically depicted in the text. All the First World War classic fiction writers described actual battle and depicted lot of graphical picture to produce strong disgust in the mind of the readers but more notably, it is done more effectively in Barker’s *Trilogy* without graphical description of war. The First World War classic writers captured horrible and unimaginable pictures of war and compared it with idealized pastoral places like fields, streams, woods, valleys, medieval churches etc. They compared horrible war front with idealistic home front but Barker in her *Trilogy* represents both front (battlefield) and home front at war. Both are involved in the act of destruction and degeneration.

**Barker’s attack on Church, Family and School:**

Barker is a writer who studied war from different perspectives. She not only focuses on the effects of war on battlefield but also its effects on society in general. After her thorough research in the field of war, she could find out root causes of war and evil, which were prevalent in the society. There were many institutions in the society, which reinforced war, such as church, school and family. These institutions were fundamentally made for the welfare of society. However, unfortunately society itself exploited such institutions in time of crisis as well as in peacetime. Church, which assures moral and corporal discipline, fulfills the role of a formative institution. Greg Hurris says that ‘the church is the preeminent institution that sanctions blind faith’. (Harris, 1998: 302) People are powerfully influenced by the prevailing religious traditions and myths of the society to which
the person belongs and in which the person had been socialized. All the major
religions provide necessary ideological references regarding heroic behavior and
proper sexual orientation, which provide sacred examples to be put to use by the
dominant culture. In Barker’s Trilogy, the church is criticized as its ideology serve
the dominants, notably because of its hypocrisy and violent myths that it projects
into human history, myths like Jesus’s crucifixion, the beheading of John the
Baptist, and the story of Abraham and Isaac. In The Eye in the Door, the Fathers
Mackenzie and Lindsey are both hypocrites: Mackenzie ridicules those who try to
escape from doing their duty, (The Eye in the Door: 92) and Lindsey’s sermon is
on the theme of sacrifice (Ghost Road: 69). Both are, nevertheless, noncombatant.
Mackenzie sexually abused Billy Prior when Prior was a young boy. Lindsey is
also a homosexual. These priests represent the church, insist on conformity to
heroic norms, and on the personal sacrifice to those who fall under their influence,
but neither respect nor follow these very same cultural code.

In the First World War, Anglican Priests played a significant role in
effortlessly encouraging young men to enlist for military duty. Invoking God and country,
these priests spiritually led soldiers to the battlefront while they themselves
enjoyed the privilege of attending to religious duties in the safety of home, sitting
in church. In Trilogy, Rivers senses this hypocrisy and questions faith that asks
man to sacrifice his son to a larger, unknown force. They create a religious
conscience that provides the foundation for feelings of guilt and they use this
sentiment as a means of control and discipline. For example, the story of Abraham
and Isaac supports patriarchal authority, requiring obedience from the son. Rivers
considers the sacrifice of Isaac to be the contract on which civilization claims to be
founded. Rivers observes that in fact most of the sons inherit nothing since they are
dying in huge numbers on battlefields. In The Old Testament story, Abraham
ultimately does not kill Isaac, but in the real world, fathers are more than willing to sacrifice their sons. Through Wilfred Owen’s poem, *The Parable of the old Man and the Young*, Rivers gets insight about the rituals of sacrifice.

Burn’s father is in favor of war although his son is dying of anorexia, unable to eat after being thrown into the gas-filled belly of German corpse in *Regeneration*. In *The Ghost Road*, Hallet is hospitalized, as the left side of his head is blown away. He tells his family that the war is not worth the sacrifice, to which his father responds, “Oh, it is worth it, it is”. (*The Ghost Road*: 279) The institution of church and family invokes the patriarchal authority where priests and fathers respectively become agents of the dominant power. These fathers and surrogate fathers are not born with the idea that war is good but learn that war is necessary just through the influence of various ideological apparatuses, including family and church.

Barker is so severe in her criticism against war that she does not even spare the institution of school. In her *Trilogy*, she lashes the institution of school, as they often inculcate in the minds of pupil an image of glorious warfare, as an ideological instrument, much like the family and the church, the school supports the dominant power. It also plays an important role in the production of masculinity, codes of society. Pupils are forced to obey heroic, masculine norms and perform courageous tasks for their teachers, for their people and for their country. The ultimate goal of these sadistic teachers is to produce, in this all-male environment, subjects who are prepared to sacrifice their lives, apparently without fear, for abstractions like patriotism, honor, and courage, words that have lost their meaning according to Prior. The schools, after having exercised their influence on captive students for years, makes the army’s job much easier in terms of continuing the development of virility, of manufacturing heroes, even if there are
always some who resist like Sassoon in *Regeneration*. Billy Prior, a product of such a school, comes from working class, and has never, accepted the imposition of class distinction within the officer corps. He brutally mocks at the class distinction.

Barker in her *Trilogy* criticizes all the institutions and ideologies, which support war. Barker is a social reformer who wanted to remove the evil of war from the society. She is the first women novelist who researched so deep in the field of war and wrote novels on war, which appeal to the readers. Her aim is to make the society free from the evil of war. Her writing reflects all aspects of war and produces amazing novels, which challenge the dominant ideologies of the society.