

A M N A H A I D E R

Pat Barker's Liminal Figures of War Trauma: Mr. Hyde, Antiprosopon and the Cryptophore

History is conventionally conceived as a discourse based on verifiable facts. Pat Barker's war historical novels explore it through the different and unconventional lens of psychical wounds that manifest through bodily pain. Her *Regeneration* trilogy and the subsequent novel *Another World* (1998), convey the ground realities and the experiential truths of the Great War not in terms of facts and figures but through the symptoms of traumatized soldiers collapsing psychologically and physically in the midst of war. It is through the liminal characters of Billy Prior in *The Eye in the Door* (1993), Mathew Hallet in *The Ghost Road* (1995) and Geordie in *Another World* that Barker makes a profound statement about war trauma. When official discourses are discarded a space for neglected, at times, disputed discourses emerges. Michel de Certeau describes such an approach as "favouring the history of heresies rather than that of ecclesiastical institutions or of orthodoxies" (31). Barker delves into the personal trauma where all symptoms of war neurosis narrate a personal history. This history is in essence a "history of heresies", a history of marginality and liminality.

A "case of haunting" is to "start with the marginal, with what we normally exclude or banish, or, more commonly, with what we never even notice" asserts Avery Gordon (22). Barker's historical rendition builds this 'case of haunting' by drawing attention to the liminal figures created by war trauma. In this article Billy Prior, Mathew Hallet and Geordie will be examined as three such transitional figures in Barker's fiction who assert the need that to comprehend

any truth about the Great War one has to partake the outcast aspects that were “marginal”, “exclude[d]” or usually “banish[ed]” from the text of factual discourses. In this article I will demonstrate that this “case of haunting” is the very essence of liminality, as a condition beyond, a condition “neither here nor there” and a condition “betwixt and between the positions outlined by society, law and culture” during the Great War (Turner 95). The reality of these “threshold people” will be revealed as “necessarily ambiguous” as these characters “elude or slip through the network of classifications” operating during the war (Turner 95).

Studies on Liminality generally focus on defining liminality in conjunction with its counterpart ‘marginality’ with the latter signifying negative aspects and the former focusing on positive and creative aspects. Liminality has also emerged as a field of study in Cultural, Literary and Postcolonial studies, with special reference to issues of ethnicity and race, colonization and nationality, hybridity and identity, center and margin. In this article, however; I will study liminality in the context of war and History and show how different facets of liminality (as a phase, a transitional state, position) emerge in response to war trauma. Moreover, this article will show how liminal realities destabilize and deconstruct discourses of history, memory and narration in Barker’s war historical novels.

I will trace how from socially and culturally acceptable modes multiple expressions of liminality and estrangement arise. I will further explore how war trauma creates these liminal states as safety valves of survival and at times as positions of marginality and effacement. In addition, different forms and manifestations of the outsider will be outlined. Firstly, I will analyse the validity of using the Gothic motif of doubling in *The Eye in the Door* where the protagonist Billy Prior’s fugue states and dissociation find expression in the Mr. Hyde persona. Here liminality will be examined in relation to possession and ownership of the body and the subsequent Othering of the Self. Secondly, through Second Lt. Hallet’s transformation into the *antiprosopon* of the Greek mythology in *The Ghost Road* I will define a new threshold existence between the living and the dead: a seen/unseen and heard/unheard existence. Moreover, this new threshold existence is expostulated through the images of skulls. Barker introduces tropes of haunting and phantomalisation to undercut notions of history, witnessing and truth in *The Ghost Road*. Lastly, I will look at the character of Geordie in *Another World* as a cryptophore, the carrier of cryptic secrets, a psychoanalytical concept introduced by Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok. I will analyse how the narration of history is encrypted and by employing the detective novel investigation mode Barker compels the reader to demystify the cryptic secrets embedded within. Thus this

article will bring to light how war trauma creates new liminal thresholds and in-between states between the porous borders of the conscious and unconscious, between the known and the unknowable, and between the living and the dead.

i. Billy Prior's Gothic Hydian Persona

Wilfred Owen's poem "A Terre" traces the rebellion of the traumatized body of the soldier, which mirrors the body's protests that Barker outlines in the *Regeneration* trilogy.

Be careful; can't shake hands now; never shall.
Both arms have mutinied against me,—brutes.
My fingers fidget like ten idle brats. (Owen quoted in Blunden
ll. 2-4).

The Gothic has a unique fascination with the body that has "mutinied", a mutiny against the natural order and the official systems and discourses of representation. Be it Count Dracula's undead body, or the unnatural body of Frankenstein's creature, or even Romantic vampire and shape shifting figures such as Coleridge's Geraldine or Keats' Lamia—abnormal/unnatural bodies crowd the Gothic literary landscape. These unnatural figures tap into the imaginative endeavor to quarantine the human body, that is, the normal and the natural body against contamination. David Punter asserts the paradoxical positioning of these "non-standardized" bodies as the "dialectic of monstrosity" where these are "shapes of the terrifying; but these shapes are also reassuring" (*Gothic Pathologies* 46). These foreign bodies inhabit the space beyond society and beyond the law. In their homeless, lawless and alien status they exhibit a freedom arising from unaccountability. The war enacts a similar Gothic tableau. On the battle front there is a clear demarcation between 'us' and 'them'. Paul Fussell traces this 'gross dichotomizing' as a condition fostered by the war, "We" are all here on this side; "the enemy" is over there. "We" are individuals with names and personal identities; "he" is a mere collective entity. We are visible; he is invisible. We are normal; he is grotesque. Our appurtenances are natural; his, bizarre' (75). In *The Eye in the Door* Barker explores how war trauma ironically internalizes these war-time external polarizations in the very body of the soldier, dividing the united, homogenous and stable "we" into the mutinied "he" and "I". Thus in Prior resides both his own stumbling and asthmatic self and his warrior, fearless Hydian double.

When the self becomes dispossessed of its own dwelling, the body of the returning soldier becomes *unheimlich* for the soldier, the owner thus becoming a tenuous tenant. The impact of war trauma manifests by forcing Prior to occupy a *limen* position, where he is psychologically crossing thresholds “betwixt and between” himself and his double. This dispossession is presented symbolically in one of Rivers’ dreams where men dissolve in the mud of Flanders and are created anew and begin striding towards England: “again the mud gathered itself into the shape of a man, faster and faster until it seemed the whole night was full of such creatures, creatures composed of Flanders mud and nothing else, moving their grotesque limbs in the direction of home” (Barker, *The Eye in the Door* 244). The body of the traumatized soldier is no longer the secure abode housing the consolidated, confident British self, rather it is a dislocated site contaminated by the mud of Flanders. The impact of trauma on the body becomes manifest not in physical wounds alone that Dr. Rivers’ characterizes as “crude reactions” of his patients; such as Sassoon’s stammering, Pugh’s twitches or Willard’s self-paralysis. During war these “crude reactions” act as a “solution to the conflict between instinctive tendencies connected with danger and the various controlling factors ... of duty” (Rivers 128). Rather trauma impacts psychologically as well by disinherit the body owner of its natural and biological inheritance through dissociation and fugue states as expressed through the Gothic ‘doubling’ motif. The *Regeneration* trilogy explores how dissociation creates two alternate modes of consciousness when a traumatic event occurs, the “terrible-in-big-black-inverted-commas thing” (*ED* 138). Dissociation thus is the body’s way of countering trauma, a way of suppressing certain abilities and enhancing others in order to survive.

The doubling motif is one of the characteristic trademarks of Gothic literature with iconic literary characters such as Dr Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, Victor Frankenstein and his creature, Dorian Gray and his aging painting, and even Edgar A. Poe’s William Wilson. Traditionally ‘doubling’ is rooted in the Gothic evil as the Other, yet recent criticism foregrounds the need for creation of a double as a mechanism of survival. David Punter and Glennis Byron trace the need for Gothic ‘monsters’ in eighteenth and nineteenth century Gothic fiction to highlight the crucial boundary between normal and abnormal, good and evil, moral and immoral to modern Gothic with its cultural shift to identification and sympathy in twentieth century (*The Gothic* 262). This ‘doubling’ alienates the self, as with the split and fragmentation in identity, a corresponding split over the rights and custody of the body occurs. In Prior’s case, Barker is able to skillfully negotiate and amalgamate both the traditional and modern associations of the Gothic double. Prior, with

his bisexuality, with his working class background and officer status, with friends both in the Military Intelligence and in the back streets of Salford, with a “foot on each side of the fence” (ED 111) remains a character not easily pigeonholed. This fluidity of character emerges from successfully inhabiting different worlds and allows for a traumatic doubling to occur later. *The Eye in the Door* presents the dramatic emergence of Prior’s “warrior double” (ED 245) who dispossesses Prior of complete claim over his body, actions and behavior. Here Prior’s body becomes a liminal portal, an interstitial channel through which Prior’s self and his double appears to travel with seamless mobility, thereby creating a “state of flux between two different states of being” (Nordin 7).

What is it that Prior can’t remember? What does he do in the fugue state? Who does he meet? These questions crowd the reader’s and Prior’s mind alike. A meeting is arranged with Spragge, a meeting is kept with Rivers, a fight is picked with Spragge, Mac is betrayed and arrested—yet Prior has no memory of these actions. While Rivers tries to minimize all these apprehensions that Prior’s memory lapses are causing him as merely ‘a difference in mood’ (ED 134), Prior fears escalate as “in the the the *other* state [he] might not be so *fucking* scrupulous” (ED 133). Prior’s mounting fears create an aura of intrigue and suspense that, “*Where unknown, there place monsters*” (ED 139). This state of uncertainty and anxiety is caused by the unfamiliar and the unknowable, of what lies beyond the acknowledged thresholds of consciousness. Moreover, this double is a traumatized persona which Robert J. Lifton in his interview with Cathy Caruth terms as “a traumatized self [...] a form of doubling in the traumatized person” (*Trauma Explorations* 137).

Rivers and the reader encounter Prior’s double only once, towards the end of *The Eye in the Door*, in the nineteenth chapter. This is during a therapy session for which the appointment is made in the normal state but carried out in the fugue state. This therapy session is essential as it reveals the nature of trauma psychologically and physically. Like the difference in Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde’s walk even Prior’s walk and that of his Hydian double is different. Prior during his last visit to Rivers had paused several times on the stairs because of asthma but the double has “an easy, light tread quite unlike his usual step” (ED 238). During the therapy session Prior’s double claims to be omniscient, an all knowing, all seeing alter-ego who “*sit[s] in*” (ED 238) and has complete access to Prior’s memory. However, while laying full claim to Prior’s body the double renounces any link to Prior himself. He refuses to use the possessive pronoun ‘I’ when referring to Prior and continue to address him contemptuously in third person: “he *is* sick”, “I honestly believe he’s getting worse”, “I’ll *kill* him” and “I’ve got him trained” (ED 239). This double who was

born two years ago “[i]n a shell-hole in France” (*ED* 240) stakes a claim on Prior’s body but not on his parents or his childhood friends. The claim on Prior’s body is better understood in terms of a parasite feeding on the host’s body and seems purely self-motivated.

John Brannigan dismisses Prior’s “demonic other” as an “exaggerated parody of an arch-villain” (104) who materializes to carry out unsavory intelligence tasks for the Ministry of Munitions. The double stands as the body’s survival mode during war, what Abraham and Torok refer to as “incorporation” or “preservative repression”. They define it as the “removal of an unbearable reality and its confinement to an inaccessible region of the psyche” (102). Prior’s double has qualities needed to survive war at the Front and the home front: “a state whose freedom from fear and pain was persistent, encapsulated, inaccessible to normal consciousness” (*ED* 245). This freedom from pain is brutally demonstrated by Prior’s double when he stubs his left hand with a cigar to prove a point to Rivers. Lifton terms it as “psychic numbing”, that is, a defense mechanism based on “cessation of feeling” (*Trauma Explorations* 136). Earlier Prior’s fears of this inherent brutality in his double are also centered on his hands as he relates to Rivers that while coming out of the ‘spells’ or fugue states “[he] looks at [his] hands because [he] half expects to see them covered in hair” (*ED* 134). The Gothic image pattern centered on hands as possessed or dispossessed, as potential evil-doers or helpless victims is evoked by Barker. Hands here act as metaphors for the active/passive, victim/victimizer in the doubling theme. Joanna Bourke similarly traces the ‘corporeal alterations’ made by war by quoting from the diary of Ralph Scott: “I looked at my great murderous maulers and wondered how they had evolved from the sensitive manicured fingers” (15). Thus the psychological transformations become manifest in corporeal alterations that are at times centered on the image of hands.

During the Great War fear was an emotion that metaphorically castrated the soldiers during war, challenge all notions of British manhood and thus need to be repressed at all costs. However the cost proves to be too high as this repression results in bodily dispossession and disempowerment. Byron and Punter point out how Gothic presents “most aggressively the range of *outré* emotions conventionally considered beyond the pale” (*The Gothic* 56). They identify incest, patricide, rage, familial dysfunction, even homoeroticism as the key social issues that inhabit Gothic spaces. Barker however, utilizes the Gothic in the *Regeneration* trilogy to expostulate key “*outré* emotions” of fear and terror of soldiers during the Great War and gives space to the variegated forms of war trauma inflicted on the body when such emotions accumulate and overpower. Thus Barker’s manipulation of the

Gothic motif allows for the impact of trauma and resultant liminality to coalesce, to show how estrangement was a crucial impact of war because “[i]n war men were “estranged” [...] one must take this estrangement literally; they were “made” strange to themselves” (Leeds 4).

2. Second Lt. Mathew Hallet as *Antiprosopon*

From psychological thresholds explored in *The Eye in the Door* Barker delves into metaphysical ones in *The Ghost Road*, the last novel in the trilogy. In the *Regeneration* trilogy skulls and corpses are a key motif through which Barker initiates a dialogue about ghostly haunting and about a “history of phantomalisation”. Jacques Derrida asserts that the “history of the ghost remains a history of phantomalization and the latter will indeed be a history of truth, a history of the becoming-true of fable, unless it is the reverse, a fabulation of truth, in any case a history of ghosts” (123). Barker explores the “history of truth” of the Great War in *The Ghost Road* by exploring the hidden realities of trauma as a “history of phantomalization” where at every step a dual process seems to be taking place: that is, the “history of becoming-true of fable” and contrarily, the “fabulation of truth”.

The central figure in which all images of ghostly haunting, of corpses and skulls converge is that of Second Lt. Mathew Hallet. While looking at Hallet’s X-Ray, Rivers recalls his own visit to the skull houses in Melanesia a decade earlier. This scene underscores the great discrepancy between the civilized and the primitive world. A harmony exists in the latter that is built on respect and honour for the dead and a fear of the powers of spirits. Barker shows this discrepancy through juxtaposition of the past and present which converge seamlessly. This narrative fluidity is complemented by a blurring of boundaries between the living and the dead in both cultures where the physical acts of headhunting in one are mimed in the psychological headhunting in the other.

Rivers took the skull, aware of the immense honour that was being done to him, [...] He handed the skull back, with a slight inclination of his head, and for a moment their linked hands grasped it, each holding the object of highest value in the world.

The bullet caused gross damage to the left eye as it passed backwards in the direction of the temporal lobe. Left pupil fixed, cornea insensitive, eyelid droops, no movement of the globe except

downwards. Eye blind because of rupture of the choroid and atrophy of the optic nerve. (Barker, *The Ghost Road* 238-39)

The difference in value systems is shown through the timeless moment of recognition between Rivers and Njiru, the Melanesian shaman, “each holding the object of highest value in the world” to the italicized, mechanical medical explanation of Hallet’s “*globe*”. The latter description of Hallet’s injuries not only depersonalizes it by stripping it of any emotive content but unwittingly trivializes it by reducing the living, breathing reality of Hallet into medical jargon. It also shows how language is becoming increasingly severed from material substance during the Great War. This medical vernacular undercuts Prior’s earlier description of Hallet in all its horrific, yet material vividness: “I gestured to Lucas and he helped me turn him [Hallet] 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 the neck. One eye gone. A hole—I was going to say *in* his left cheek—where his left cheek had been” (*GR* 196). With only half a face, Hallet incorporates the visible/invisible, the absent/present dialectic of specters and revenants crowding the *Regeneration* trilogy. Elaine Scarry asserts that “injury must at some point be understood individually because pain, like all forms of sentience is experienced within, “happens” within, the body of the individual” (65). Phrases like “*Left pupil fixed, cornea insensitive*” or “*Eye blind because of rupture of the choroid and atrophy of the optic nerve*” lack this very individuality and whitewash human pain and injury from the discourse.

Hallet’s conversion has been termed as “a faceless Other, the individual identity that a face denotes stripped from him” by Jennifer Shaddock (655). But it is more than just a defamiliarization or depersonalization that has taken place here. In Melanesian terms, Hallet is *mate* already, that is, in a state where death is the appropriate outcome. Fatally wounded in war, Hallet becomes the linchpin between the living and the dead, the faceless and voiceless phantom who is not yet *mate ndapu*, that is, “die finish” (*GR* 153). As Turner says, “for me, liminality represents the midpoint of transition in a status-sequence between two positions” (237); in Hallet’s case it is a dual marginality, a “rite of passage” from seen to the unseen and from living to the dead.

Hallet’s threshold existence is an “oscillation between a *crisis of death* and the correlative *crisis of life*”, his story resides “between the story of the unbearable nature of an event and the story of the unbearable nature of its survival” (Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* 7). Caught in the quagmire of the “*crisis of living*” and “*crisis of dead*” Hallet is converted into the *antiprosopon* of Greek myth, the one who

gazes at the Gorgon and is turned to stone. Geoffrey Hartman in his analysis of the Holocaust adds another dimension to the figure of the *antiprosopon* as the 'one who has seen what cannot be seen without dying, and who himself becomes unseeable, "faceless" in the process (89-90). Here the Great War can be seen as the mighty Gorgon; to look into its eyes is to become forever changed or in the case of Hallet, become unseeable and "faceless", a repressed absence.

Hallet when stripped of his individuality becomes Everyman or rather No Man. While analyzing the "wartime aesthetics of the male body" Joanna Burke asserts, "[t]he male body was no more than the sum of its various parts and the dismembered man became Everyman" (16). Hallet, with only half a face, is every soldier whom the Great War neglected or forgot on the battlefield, buried or effaced in the medical reports. With the blown away side of his face turned away from his mother and his fiancé in the hospital, and a screen separating him from the civilian public in general in the hospital so they are "spared" the "worst" (GR 263), the process of the unseen, of evasion rather than confrontation has been initiated. Hal Foster asserts that "truth resides in the traumatic or abject subject, in the diseased or damaged body [...] this body is the evidentiary basis of important witnessing to truth" (166). But what happens to the "witnessing to truth" when a screen separates you from the "truth [that] resides in the traumatic or abject subject"? The "history of phantomalisation", that is, of the "fabulation of truth" commences.

Hallet's spectral visible/invisible liminal reality is reiterated in the heard/unheard one. Hallet's last words "*Shotvarfet*" which Rivers apparently understands and translates as "It's not worth it" (GR 274), like the whistling of the spirits in the ghost meeting at Ngea's hall, remain beyond general comprehension. It becomes a phantom cry, raised just before Hallet dies in the hospital room, with all the other patients joining, in support of it,

a wordless murmur from damaged brains and drooping mouths.
'*Shotvarfet. Shotvarfet.*'

'I can't stand much more of this,' Major Hallet said. (GR 274)

The words themselves, the torment behind them and the protest in them, remains unheard. Hallet's earlier idealistic defense of the war: "We *are* fighting for the legitimate interests of our own country. We *are* fighting in defence of Belgium neutrality. We *are* fighting for French independence" (GR 144) is now echoed by Hallet's father who desperately asserts, "Oh, it is worth it, it *is*" (GR 274) in order to justify his son's sacrifice of his life and his own sacrifice of his son in the name

of patriotism and heroism: hollow ideals of war. Thus the suffering and torment embedded in the phantom cry, “*Shotvarfet. Shotvarfet*” (GR 274) despite the clamour to be heard, remains unheard and unacknowledged as Major Hallet “can’t stand much more of this”. The collective incomprehensible cry of “damaged brains and drooping mouths” encapsulates the ‘crisis’ of bearing witness to “a history that nonetheless remains, as such, at once unspeakable and inarticulate—a history that can no longer be accounted for” (Felman & Laub xviii). Barker pays close attention to how the process of actively creating a “doctored” version of history for those at the Home Front during the Great War occurs and how notions of glory, heroism and sacrifice are sustained in face of “damaged brains and drooping mouths”.

As *antiprosopon* he is one of the forsaken casualties of war, unseen and unheard, a liminal reality hidden behind a screen. Gordon says, “[...] that which appears to be not there is often a seething presence, acting on and often meddling with taken-for-granted realities” (8). Hallet’s marginal reality disturbs the “taken-for-granted realities” of war and war-time principles. Thus the personal his-tory of the forsaken remains a “seething presence”, as these spectral soldiers travel alone on the ‘ghost road’ of history. Here history and its narration require an analysis of the threshold existence: a searching for and looking at the invisible areas, looking into the blind spots and murky shadows of history populated with “seething presence[s]”.

3. Geordie as Cryptophore

Another World explores trauma in the present context, the phantasmagoric resurrection of trauma-ridden memories, their irruption into the present, and their refusal to die. *Another World* in comparison to the *Regeneration* trilogy examines pain, trauma and violence situated around perpetrator/victim ambivalence. Clear-cut demarcations of victims of war neurosis that Pat Barker explored in the *Regeneration* trilogy are replaced in her subsequent novel following the trilogy, with a victim of war that might not be a victim at all. The silence, the unspoken past, the unsaid and the unknown evoke the narratological compulsion to decrypt the secrets, to uncover hidden truths and unlock psychological crypts. Barker in pursuit of this detection utilizes the crime fiction genre, especially the trans-historical crime fiction mode to uncover repressed narratives of history.

Geordie, the protagonist Nick’s grandfather, is a 101 year old Somme veteran who is dying of cancer but as the prospect of death looms nearer he starts to re-live the trauma of the Great War. It is the peculiar focus of the trauma that seems to shroud a much deeper memory, a much harsher truth. Repeatedly Nick remembers his grandfather hidden behind a screen of cigarette smoke: “Only Grandad, silent,

wreathed in blue cigarette, never changed; belonged only to one world” (Barker, *Another World* 54). And later recalling scenes from his childhood: “His body, stripped off in the garden—wound in his side—suggested questions. Why? How? What happened? Nick would ask, but there were no answers. The past was hidden, veiled in silence, like his grandfather’s head behind its screen of cigarette smoke” (*AW* 58). This “screen of cigarette smoke” is like a smokescreen that camouflages a deeper, cryptic silence, a murderous history of familial betrayal, shame and guilt that returns spectrally.

The first clue that the reader gets of this cryptic silence is at the beginning of the novel during a conversation between Nick and Geordie’s doctor, Dr Neil Shepherd. Nick relates to Dr Shepherd how Geordie, who is dying of cancer, believes that his pain is caused by a bayonet wound he had received eighty years earlier during the First World War. This confusion, Nick feels, has its origins in a painful memory of surviving the war in place of his brother and feeling that for their mother the “[w]rong one died” (*AW* 152) in the war. At his older brother Harry’s memorial service their mother had told Geordie, “It should have been you” (*AW* 152). Nick correlates this with Geordie’s recent resurrection of traumatic symptoms:

‘I think he needs to believe it’s the bayonet wound that’s killing him. I don’t pretend to understand it, but I don’t think it’s just confusion or ignorance. He wants to believe it.’

Dr. Shepherd: ‘Even after all this time?’ Nick pulls a face. ‘He seems to be getting closer to it, if anything. The nightmares are back.’ (*AW* 59)

After eighty years of silence, of seeming purgatorial peace, Geordie’s nights are ablaze in the same nightmares that he had experienced just after the war. The past, which had remained mute for nearly a century, is now speaking through the resurgence of traumatic symptoms. For Nick and in turn for the reader this resurgence after so many years of silence -the timing especially- acts as a “puzzle-element” found in detective fiction. This “puzzle-element” Rzepka asserts usually hints at “the presentation of a mystery as an ongoing problem for the reader to solve” (18). As Nick tries to unravel the mystery, the clues hint at missing pieces, the unseen and unknown behind the visible and the known:

There’s *something here* Nick can’t grasp. Grandad’s not a man of much formal education, [...] but he’s not stupid. His belief

that he's dying of this ancient wound may be strange, but it *isn't meaningless*. The bleeding bayonet wound's the physical equivalent of the eruption of memory that makes his nights dreadful. (*AW* 227, emphasis added)

This “bleeding bayonet wound” becomes an instance of what Felman terms as “*historical eye witnessing in the flesh*” (109), that is, experiencing history on the body, to learn on the body the lessons of history. Moreover this bayonet wound is a “metonymic clue” similar to those usually found in detective fiction by the detecting eye but whose presence is “interpretable by all observers sharing a common point of view” (Rzepka 18). The physical wound is a signifier of a further hidden mystery, the “*something here*”. It is a physiological key to unlock the psychological “crypt” that Geordie has buried within the core of silence for nearly a century. Abraham and Torok referring to the contents of the crypt assert how “[i]nexpressible mourning erects a secret tomb inside the subject ... the objectal correlative is buried alive in the crypt” (130). Thus the mystery deepens whether the “secret tomb” that is “buried alive” in Geordie the memory of Harry’s death that he seems to be reliving in his nightmares or is it their mother’s thoughtless grief-stricken remark whose wounding impact a century has not been able to erase? Or is it something worse, that Nick “can’t grasp” but only guess at? Thus the mind with its conscious and unconscious realms, its known and unknown terrains becomes a liminal space for the reader.

Only rare references are made to Harry even during all of Geordie’s interviews with Helen. While listening to one of the tapes Nick realizes Harry’s very absence as being a key issue: “Nick realizes suddenly—and there are thousands of [Geordie’s words] in this interview alone—orbit round a central silence, a dark star. And yet his nightmares, now, are not about ‘the war’. They’re about Harry. It’s Harry’s name he shouts out in the night” (*AW* 158). Thus in Harry, the “dark star” and the “central silence”, lays the ultimate secret to Geordie’s present pain. Harry is the “lost object” that Abraham and Torok define as “a painful reality, forever *denied*: the “gaping wound”” (142). Harry is the “gaping wound” marking Geordie’s psychological topography that a century of silent denial or repression has not been able to seal. Whether as a loved or hated sibling, or as their mother’s favourite, as the killed or murdered victim, the detective figure of Nick and reader alike do not know yet. Harry lies “buried *without legal burial place*” (142) deep within Geordie and is like a phantom now haunting Geordie’s nights. The severity of the resurgence of Geordie’s pain raises a key question for Nick: is Geordie merely grieving or is

all the silence and its noisy counterpoint in bodily bayonet pain a cover up for something more underhand? Here the 'secret' surrounding Harry, Geordie's refusal to discuss Harry during his interviews, hints at a trauma, at unresolved issues festering underneath silence, a silence that is now broken physiologically and psychologically. Harry thus represents the 'secret' trauma that Geordie holds entombed within, making Geordie a "cryptophore", that is, the carrier of cryptic secrets. This "bleeding bayonet wound" bleeds into this "in-between space" that is now opened up between Geordie's conscious and unconscious.

The dichotomy between the silent surfaces and the turbulent psychical interior is reinforced stylistically. Throughout the novel is dotted with the recurring image pattern of dead or dying nature submerging life. A case in point is the climbing rose bush that covers the front of Lob's Hill, Nick's new home, which has been covered with honeysuckle: "At some stage a honeysuckle's been trained over the lower branches, but now it's died back to form a huge ball of dead wood and leaves, defended by the sharp thorns of the rose" (*AW* 12). Here one sees nature miming Geordie's dilemma: the outer "huge ball of dead wood and leaves" cannot escape the pinching defense of "sharp thorns", of memories hidden under the surface.

The past, like a dormant volcano, had kept simmering in him as this other world, this other time erupts to become Geordie's living present, dislocating the linearity of time for him. At night he not only has nightmares about it but seems to relive scenes of agony; of life in the trenches, mistaking his daughter for a German soldier, reliving Harry's death. His past is his present: "I am in hell.' *Am*. It's the present tense that ambushes Nick now." (*AW* 255) Why "ambushes"? Perhaps because of the presentness of the past pain, it being not a thing of the past but a current wound of the soul. Geordie's present 'hell' is neither exclusively of the past nor of the present but a part of both temporal planes and paradoxically of neither. Derrida, while analyzing Hamlet's dilemma of "time is out of joint" draws attention to this peculiar quality of the "presentness" of the moment. He describes it as that which "lingers in this transitory passage [...] in the middle of what leaves and what arrives, at the articulation between what absents itself and what presents itself" (25). Barker negotiates the authenticity of the living reality of Geordie in this "transitory passage" which "sandwich[es]" his present reality. What "arrives" or "presents" itself to him is the past, technically an absence. The other, what "leaves" or "absents" itself is the present which, with the resurgence of the past, recedes from Geordie's consciousness. Thus the "lost object" buried within the cryptophore clamours to be found, to be acknowledged. Geordie can no longer consign it to another silence, to another world because his "past isn't over. It isn't even the past" (*AW* 241). Rather,

as Nick reminisces at Geordie's funeral, Geordie's inverted perception of time was a classic symptom of post-traumatic stress disorder: "Present tense, the tense in which his memories of the war went on happening [...] The present—remote, unreal; the past, in memory, nightmare, hallucination, re-enactment, becoming the present. 'I am in hell'" (*AW* 270).

Nick, as the detecting figure of this trans-historical crime fiction, by digging for clues to find the "lost object" firmly locked away in Geordie's crypt is partially successful. Only after Geordie's death does Helen, the historian who used to interview Geordie, let Nick listen to that one tape where Geordie had unlocked the secret that he had kept entombed throughout his life. The truth lies somewhere between, "I was proud of [Harry]" (*AW* 261) and "I was proud of him when I was a kid, some of the time. The rest of the time I hated him" (*AW* 264). Sibling rivalry and its tragic and even violent consequences is a key thematic concern in *Another World*. It is echoed in Nick's stepson Gareth's jealousy over his son Jasper and in the nineteenth century Fanshawe family tragedy, of two year old James Fanshawe's murder and his older step-siblings, Robert and Muriel Fanshawe's implication in it.

In a manner reminiscent of crime stories, the digging for clues sometimes leads to a false start or a misleading discovery that throws the investigating figure off the track. Nick feels while listening to the tape that all of Geordie's guilt was a lifetime of accumulation of superstitious guilt around one inconsequential instance. When his brother is about to go on a barb wire cutting night patrol with the rest of the team Geordie mistakenly slaps the wrong soldier on the shoulder to wish him good luck. "Is that all?" Nick thinks. One tiny incident magnified by a lifetime's guilt at having survived" (*AW* 262). Here Barker skillfully manipulates reader response as all the anticipation built up so far leads to this instant deflation as this "tiny incident" being the root cause of all the drama. She raises the anticipation with renewed force as Helen raises her hand to forestall any premature comment made by Nick. Helen's hand gesture points out that something more sinister is about to unfold.

Geordie relates that when the patrol comes back one soldier is missing. Only then does everyone realize that it is Geordie's brother Harry who can be heard screaming in the background. Geordie volunteers to go back and it is at this point that his memories start becoming unstable, "hallucinatory", as the real merges with the unreal. His tactile memory of rubbing cold mud on his face and on the backs of his hands is clear yet his visual memory of Harry's wounds has become "false":

Geordie: I don't remember the mud on my face, I feel it, it's cold, gritty. And I see everything like that until I get to Harry's wounds. And then what I see in my mind's eye is something like fatty meat coming out of a mincing machine. [...] I know what I remember seeing is false. It can't have been like that, and so the one thing I need to remember clearly, I can't. Nothing vague about it, you understand. It's as clear as this hand [...] only it's wrong. So how do I *know* I couldn't have got him back?

Helen: How do you know it wasn't murder?

Geordie: Yes, that's it. Exactly that. (*AW* 265)

On this cryptic note Geordie's testimony ends, leaving behind only more questions. As Geordie's memory becomes unreliable and unstable—"it's wrong"—one wonders whether it is an unconscious repression on his part, a defence mechanism of the ego to protect himself from the incontestable knowledge that he had the power to save his brother's life and he didn't. Or whether sibling rivalry notwithstanding, his actions were not unforgivably reprehensible because the severity of Harry's wounds meant that he would not have survived and it was the kinder thing to kill him on the battlefield. Conversely, is it an unconscious repression because in that moment of killing Harry Geordie experienced an illicit joy or a satisfaction at killing a rival for their mother's affection? Thus making Harry the "lost object" precisely because the moment of his death/murder embodies the "memory of an idyll, experienced with a valuable object and yet for some reason unspeakable" (Abraham and Torok 141). Helen and Nick are left to make sense of the contents of the crypt, which despite being finally laid bare is not open to ultimate knowledge. The content of the crypt foregrounds more questions, invites plurality of interpretation from the detecting figure. Is it survivor's guilt, remorse for sibling rivalry or a murderer's misgivings that had plagued Geordie in the end? Cryptomimesis can be seen at work in the testimonial lacunae embedded in Geordie's final evidence, making *Another World* a "writing predicated upon encryption: the play of revelation and concealment" (Castricano 6). While revealing the bare facts of what happened and what plagued Geordie, the narrative simultaneously conceals the true motives, as the subject himself is unsure of whether he had committed murder or not.

This crime story inverts the traditional narrative practices of crime fiction. The search for clues ends, the crime is known, the culprit admits his act and gives taped evidence, yet despite all the evidence, the final testimony raises more questions

than answers. Thus is Geordie's crime an act of mercy (to relieve Harry from the pain), of murder or of duty (to silence the source whose screaming might alert the enemy to their patrol's location)? The final answer remains open to interpretation. The crypt with the "lost object" firmly locked away, remains in essence, beyond firm explication. Thus in Geordie liminality is a self-created condition for survival: "the innocent and the guilty, the murderer and the victim, lie together [...] side by side" (*AW* 278), as the Fanshawe brothers are buried together in the Fanshawe graveyard.

Geordie's individual story thus can be read as a microcosm for the postmodern questions undercutting the grand master narratives of History. Here Geordie's trench shaving mirror is an apt metonymic signifier of Geordie's personal story amidst the public ones. As a genuine relic from the trench world it is a source of fascination for Nick as a child, "Whenever Nick asked, Geordie took it down and let him look into it, but the reflection that peered back at him was blurry, swollen, distorted by the irregularities in the metal, never the clear reflection you got in glass. Only it didn't break" (*AW* 57). The shaving mirror offers a limited view of self, a "blurry, swollen, distorted" image and not a "clear reflection", yet unlike glass it is unbreakable. Like Geordie it survived for nearly a century and will continue to survive like Geordie's public accounts of the war in countless taped interviews and his speeches. The recorded evidence notwithstanding, his account of history in essence remains unfinished, "blurry, swollen, distorted", highlighting the gap between the public and the private histories. Barker's narratological proclivity towards absent presences in her war fiction dovetails with "history's witness[ing] the enlargement of the silent areas of its lacunae" (Certeau 39), especially when it is a history of trauma. This "enlargement" of the "silent areas" interestingly encompasses a history of the traumatized soldier who travels from the position of centrality to become a liminal outsider in his own eyes, in his own family. It is a history in transit not between the past and present alone, but between the seen/unseen, heard/unheard, present/absent and living/dead realities of war trauma.

Barker's narrative endeavour in her historical war novels is to give space to the forgotten discourses embedded in histories of the haunted. She explores how far one can see into the invisible spaces where the truth about the trauma-ridden realities exists. It is through Prior's spectral companion, through Hallett's ghostly transformation and through Geordie's psychical hauntings that Barker asks the "question of the *revenant*". Peter Buse and Andrew Stott find that the question of the *revenant* "neatly encapsulates [the] deconstructive concerns about the impossibility of conceptually solidifying the past" (11). Traumatic manifestations of pain and suffering in the Hydian double, the antiprosopon and the cryptophore

undermine the “solidifying” of the dominant discourses of History. She makes a key statement through these personal histories of the “threshold people”: to comprehend History is to acknowledge the “seething presences” of the soldiers, to experience their haunting moments of trauma and to re-read their personal stories as a “history of heresies”.

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AMNA HAIDER is currently pursuing her PhD in English in the University of Waterloo, Canada. She has been a Lecturer in Department of English at Kinnaird College for Women, Pakistan since 2007. She taught Post-Colonial, Feminist, Holocaust and Gothic Literature at the Masters and MPhil levels. She has been a Visiting Lecturer in Government College University and Beaconhouse National University, Lahore. In her MPhil research dissertation from University of Bristol, UK she examined the co-relation between Gothic and Trauma studies. Key authors of interest are Pat Barker, Doris Lessing, Günter Grass, Iris Murdoch, Margaret Atwood and Toni Morrison.