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Eyes In The Text: Surveying The Ocular Aesthetic In Pat Barker's War Trilogy

James Hammond
University of Central Florida

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EYES IN THE TEXT: SURVEYING THE OCULAR AESTHETIC IN PAT BARKER'S WAR
TRILOGY

by

JAMES TODD HAMMOND
B.A Florida State University, 1998

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Masters of Arts in the Department of English in
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at the University of Central Florida
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ABSTRACT

In 1991, British novelist Patricia Barker published *Regeneration*, the first of three novels that portrayed the exploits of both factual and fictional characters during the darkest days of WWI. Barker's *Eye in the Door* (1993), followed by *The Ghost Road* (1995) for which she won the Booker Prize for Fiction, completed the series that explored the effects of combat on the human psyche. What emerges as a dominant feature of Barker's war novels is her depiction of the ocular sense. Reminiscent of Orwellianism, Barker's texts contain a seemingly ubiquitous ocular presence. For example, neurasthenic patients are scrutinized by army psychiatrists, objectors and subversives are spied upon or imprisoned so that their activities may be observed, and combatants are faced with the challenge of reconciling the horrifying events they have witnessed in combat.

This study investigates the role and importance of Pat Barker's depiction of eyes and visuality in her war trilogy. The overarching goal of the thesis is to examine Barker's aestheticized notion of ocularity. It is my aim to come to some conclusions about how vision / ocularity signal the emergence of a few central themes in the texts such as power relationships, objectification, exposure and the transgression of boundaries. The social and linguistic theories of Michael Foucault, Roland Barthes, Georges Bataille, Martin Jay and others who have addressed the themes of perception and ocular symbolism will be introduced into my discussion with the aim of providing a theoretic foundation to many of my assertions. Chapters will begin with an interpretation of a piece of theoretical writing by one of these authors followed by an analysis of Barker's texts that incorporates the major tenets of that theory. These tenets will serve as a basis to my discussion and it is my hope that, through the creative application of

theoretical writing, I will address a number of aspects of Barker's work, especially in relation to her ocular imagery, that that have thus far gone unexplored.

To Lisa,

“Is treasa dithis a’ dol thar àn àtha na fad’ o chèile.”

(Two shall stay together when crossing a ford.)

Tá mé chomh mór sin I ngrá leat,

J. Todd

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*Piling into the taxi I could only see the narrow eyes of the driver in the rear view mirror.
"Where to sir?" he asked, his eye and brow remained expressionless.
I answered confidently to the back of the man's head, not the mirror, "Craiglockhart War Hospital."*

*Looking beyond the window of the cab I saw Waverly Station in the distance.
Commuters were flooding from its underground terminal.
We didn't move.*

Becoming aware the drivers gaze, I realized that he had twisted in his seat, even going as far as to place his left arm behind it in order to see me more clearly. His mouth was slightly agape, his chin was nearly tucked in his collar and the angle of his face gave the appearance that he was looking down upon me from a great height-though we sat almost level.

*"Do you know where that is, Craiglockhart," I said. A pause, a nod and then, "Aye."
Satisfied, he turned back around and the cab lunged forward into traffic.*

*from, "Remembering Craiglockhart, A Journal"
James Hammond*

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INTRODUCTION

In 1991, British novelist Patricia Barker published *Regeneration*, the first of three novels that portrayed the exploits of both factual and fictional characters during the darkest days of WWI. Barker's *Eye in the Door* (1993), followed by *The Ghost Road* (1995) for which she won the Booker Prize for Fiction, completed the series that explored the effects of combat on the human psyche. The WWI Trilogy was a departure for Barker, who was known for her representations of working class women in her earlier novels including *Union Street* (1982), *Blow Your House Down* (1984) and *The Century's Daughter* (1986). What remains a consistent feature in Barker's prior works and her WWI Trilogy is her willingness to approach controversial and often taboo subjects including homosexuality, gratuitous crime, fratricide and the inhumanity of man's actions. Barker is not only concerned with the causes of behavior, but also man's responses, psychological or other, that are elicited in reaction to extreme circumstances. Writing novels that have been committed to exploring these themes has earned her a reputation of being an author who does not flinch in depicting what society considers unsettling or divisive.

Despite the constantly growing number of critical analyses dedicated to her work of ten novels, there are certain dimensions of Barker's writing, especially in regards to her WWI Trilogy, in which fundamental aspects have been conspicuously neglected. While literary analysis like Anne Whitehead's "Open to Suggestion: Hypnosis and History in Barker's Regeneration" and Peter Hitchcock's "Radical Writing" have provided an elucidation of some of Barker's methodology, a critical effort examining Barker's imagery in combination with the prevalent themes of her trilogy, has yet to materialize. While discussions of Barker's novels

frequently point to the author's tendency to blend history and fiction, criticisms typically focus on the superficialities of Barker's formula, seldom traveling deeper than an acknowledgement of the historical similarities, significance and literary relevance of characters like Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon. Current literary criticism has proved most deficient in its failure to subject Barker's aesthetics, themes and techniques to the same historical / critical attention as it has to her incorporation of factual characters, situations and locale.

What emerges, as one of the most dominant features of Barker's trilogy is her depiction of ocularity. The presence and power of eyes and the function of sight, in general, is a pervasive motif in Barker's war novels. Billy Prior's memory of finding an enucleated eye, and becoming transfixed by its gaze, is an introduction to a greater ocular aesthetic in the trilogy. Barker's novels are rich in ocular symbolism and eye metaphors. Characters marvel at detached eyes, combatants are witnesses to the tragic events, many like Prior, losing sight of themselves as a result of their experiences. Most of the traumatic events occur within the confines of the trenches, which are in and of themselves emblematic of the limitations of sight. In addition, subversives and prisoners are watched from hidden observation points, while army psychiatrists examine patients and attempt to persuade them to *see* the irrationality of their individual protests.

The depictions of sight are compounded by the experiences of combatant poets like Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen who serve as fictive characters in Barker's trilogy and historically shared their vision of war through their poetry. The figure of the eye is a privileged image in Barker's trilogy; it is symbolic of or associated with a range of sensations and occurrences including exposure, objectification, inner experience, change, the perpetuity of guilt, the existence of limits, and the transgression of boundaries. Visuality is crucial to the

construction of point of view in Barker's novels, though in some instances it appears to be an obstruction to certainty.

The overarching goal of this thesis is to examine Barker's aestheticized notion of ocularity. It is my aim to come some conclusions about how vision / ocularity signal the emergence of a few central themes in the texts such as power relationships, objectification, exposure and the transgression of boundaries. The social and linguistic theories of Michael Foucault, Roland Barthes, Georges Bataille, Martin Jay, and others who have addressed the themes of perception and ocular symbolism will be introduced into my discussion with the aim of providing a theoretic foundation to many of my assertions. Chapters will typically begin with an interpretation of a piece of theoretical writing by one of these authors followed by an analysis of Barker's texts that incorporates the major tenets of that theory. These tenets will serve as a basis to my discussion and it is my hope that, through the creative application of theoretical writing, I will address a number of aspects of Barker's work, especially in relation to her ocular imagery, that that have thus far gone unexplored.

CHAPTER ONE: THE PANOPTIC SCHEMA—SURVEILLANCE AND DISCIPLINARY
MECHANISMS IN BARKER’S WAR TRILOGY

Prior sat back against the wall. He was finding the eye in the door difficult to cope with. Facing it was intolerable, because you could never be sure if there were a human eye at the center of the painted eye. Sitting with his back to it was worse, since there’s nothing more alarming than being watched from behind. And when he sat sideways, he had the irritating impression of somebody perpetually trying to attract his attention. It tired him, and if it tired him after less than an hour, what must it have done to Beattie, who’d had to endure it for over a year? He noticed that the latrine bucket had been placed where it could be seen from the door (40).

*Pat Barker
The Eye in the Door*

Jeremy Bentham’s model penitentiary, as outlined in his 1791 treatise *Panopticon*, is described as “at the periphery, an annular building” of which at the center is a tower “pierced with wide windows that open onto the inner side of the ring” (Bentham 29). From the vantage point of the central tower, an inspector-whose presence and anonymity is preserved by venetian blinds- is able to gaze into the glass cells of the peripheric structure and supervise the penitentiary’s inmates at any or all times. The asymmetric design of the Panopticon apparatus prevents the observed from seeing and, likewise, the observers from being seen. The power of the Panopticon rests in this dissymmetry of vision or “non-reciprocal observation” (Jay 392). It “reverses the principles of the dungeon”; the incarcerated are no longer concealed in darkness and are instead bathed by light so that their movements are illuminated, visible to the scrutiny of others (Foucault 4). In contrast, the observers reside in darkness. The presence and identity of guardians and inspectors are hidden by a system of partitions and blinds that prohibit outside light from entering the tower observation post from which they gaze in upon the population. Bentham notes, “men of substance” should staff the tower: men, presumably who can be trusted

with the responsibility of authority. Fixed in their cells, “perfectly individualized and constantly visible,” the incarcerated must expect the surveillance of their actions to be discontinuous which, in turn, forces the inmate population into constant compliance (Foucault 4). Inmates become recipients of ocular control especially as it applies to a prisoner’s uncertainty of whether or not their actions are being monitored. To avoid punishment, the imprisoned are required to police their own behavior, the result of which is that the inmate is forced to bear the burden of his or her own subjugation. Philosopher and theorist Michael Foucault notes that this is “the major effect of the Panopticon: to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power” (Foucault 4). It was this unique power arrangement that prompted Foucault’s mediation of Bentham’s model in *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. In his chapter, entitled “Panopticism,” Foucault examines the hierarchy established by not only Bentham’s vision of the modern penitentiary, but any surveillance / control mechanism that resembles this panoptic schema.

Foucault notes the panoptic schema serves numerous functions including the ability to isolate and categorize subjects labeling inmates mad/sane, dangerous/harmless, or normal/abnormal. He argues that such “binary divisions” assist institutions in the facilitation of disciplinary controls including monitoring, regulating, and correcting abnormal behavior. Foucault also recognizes the Panopticon and other panoptic schemas as a “privileged place for experiments on men, and for analyzing with complete certainty the transformations that may be obtained from them” (6). This is because the environment of the Panopticon is static, controllable, and conducive to experimentation. It is very much like a laboratory capable of being used as a “machine to carry out experiments, to alter behavior, to train or correct individuals” (Foucault 6).

Foucault does not limit his discussion of Panopticism to the confines of the penitentiary. He asserts that Benthamite physics and the panoptic schema are capable of being expanded by arguing that, in the absence of an enclosed institution, “centers of observation may be disseminated throughout society” (10). Operating under the same principles as Bentham’s institutional design, the ocular network signifies an expansion of the field of vision. Although it sacrifices complete control over the environment, it does maximize the effectiveness of the panoptic schema by observing more individuals, this time from within the population. Like the Panopticon institution, the power of the panoptic network resides in non-reciprocal observation. Both are aimed at making society more effective, productive, and healthy by weeding out or isolating instigators of non-conformity, categorizing them, and correcting their behavior.

In chapter one, Foucault’s theories of Panopticism will provide the basis for my analysis of ocular power, surveillance and its relationship to authoritarian structures in Pat Barker’s War Trilogy. Barker’s novels exhibit panoptic scenarios resembling those proposed in Foucault’s analysis of Bentham’s penitentiary design. They include instances where characters are subjected to confinement, categorization, and a non-reciprocal observation by an authoritarian power. Episodes in Barker’s novels depicting a dissymmetry in vision signal a power differential. The dissymmetry occurs when the optical sense is manipulated to serve only the observer or, to invoke Jay’s terminology, “the information gather.” In an effort to establish connections between the themes of vision and power, I will be examining instances in which characters are subjected to a seemingly ubiquitous ocular presence and are reduced to what Foucault considers “objects of information” (4). Examples from Barker’s texts will include the confinement and inspection of inmates, the objectification of neurasthenic patients by physicians and review boards, and the observation of unsuspecting conspirators who are spied upon by

military functionaries. I have divided the chapter into two portions: the panoptic schema as it manifests in enclosed institutions and the panoptic network that operates beyond confinement. What has become evident in this analysis, and what may be Barker's contribution to the theme of the panoptic schema, is the role of the neurasthenic hospital Craiglockhart. Craiglockhart appears to be a new dimension of the panoptic schema; it neither fits, nor can be excluded from each of these categories and could be considered a new challenge to Foucault's principles and definitions of what constitutes a Panopticon apparatus. Craiglockhart and other military hospitals for neurasthenic patients provide the opportunity to discuss and apply another Foucaultian concept that was introduced in his earlier works *Madness and Civilization* and *Birth of the Clinic*. Foucault, who was still formulating his theories of vision especially as they pertained to modern medicine, labeled the observation of medical experimentation as the "careful gaze" (Jay 392). The clinical or "medical eye" still operated under the premise of non-reciprocal observation, yet as Jay explains, differed from the traditional "Cartesian privileging of internal vision at the cost of the actual senses and rejected its belief in a transcendent, ideal Spectator" (393). Influenced by Freud's added linguistic dimensions to the field of medicine, Foucault asserted that "psychoanalysis doubled the absolute observation of the watcher with the endless monologue of the person watched—thus preserving the old asylum structure of non-reciprocal observation but balancing it, in a non-symmetrical reciprocity, by the new structure of language without response" (250). Foucault's discussion of the "medical gaze" is applicable to episodes involving the medical experimentation of Dr. Yealland and the psychoanalytical procedures and W. H. Rivers in Barker's trilogy. It is yet another way to address her depictions of vision, ocular aesthetic, and its connection to authoritarian structures. As mentioned, Foucault recognizes the major effect of the Panopticon is to "induce in the inmate a state of conscious and

permanent visibility.” Barker capitalizes on slightly different terminology to articulate this sensation: *exposure*. Throughout the course of my discussion, I will be keying on episodes in Barker’s trilogy that illustrate the mental or physical exposure and the vulnerability sensed by characters when the personal, private or concealed is brought into the open.

Foucault reminds his readers in “Panopticism” that Bentham’s apparatus is both a “cruel and ingenious cage,” and while on the surface he appears to celebrate its potential as a disciplinary device, sub-textually he is acknowledging the dangers of surveillance, categorization and the asymmetrical power arrangement of a panopticsque environment. (6). Barker’s depiction of the panoptic schema is consistent with these assertions and her novels explore its threat to the individual and to society. As Barker demonstrates, the penetrating gaze whether disciplinary or medical, is as oppressive in practice as it is in theory. Based on Foucault’s analysis of Panopticism, Barker’s ocular aesthetic takes a decidedly anti-visual turn. Characters appear to inherently recognize Foucault’s warning about the panoptic schema specifically, that “visibility is a trap” (4). Barker’s characters acknowledge that being constantly spied upon, objectified, manipulated and deconstructed by a sovereign power that is obscured or secretive is the worst feature of authoritarian control.

A horse’s bit. Not an electrode, not a teaspoon. A bit. An instrument of control. Obviously he and Yealland were both in the business of controlling people. Each of them fitted young men back into the role of warrior, a role they had—however unconsciously—rejected (238).

*Pat Barker
Regeneration*

Barker’s novels capture a period of immense cultural anxiety in Britain during WWI. While the British army is fighting for dominance on the Western Front, it is also attempting to maintain control at home by imprisoning dissenters, investigating anti-war activity, and

repressing subversive eruptions. In *The Eye in the Door*, Barker's second novel of her WWI Trilogy, readers are taken into Aylesbury Prison. Lt. Billy Prior, now working as an Intelligence officer for the Ministry of Munitions, is investigating a conspiracy attempt to murder Lloyd George. Shortly after entering the prison, images signifying the presence of a panoptic schema are recognizable as "A gloomy, massive building. Six rows of windows, small and close together, like little piggy eyes" (28). Prior's conversation with the wardress reveals the first evidence of non-reciprocal observation in the prison. He inquires about the separation of men and women, asking whether or not they can view each other in the prison yard, "...surely men can see the women when they exercise?" The wardress responds, "Oh, no... They can't see out of the windows. They're too high for that" (Eye 28).

The panoptic images are subtly linked to Prior's interaction with the wardress and, while door holding and small talk may be viewed as nothing more than cordiality, Prior acknowledges "she had her own power, after all, more absolute than any *he* possessed." The mention of the dissymmetry of power, in conjunction with vision and non-reciprocal observations, evidences that Barker is preparing her readers for more explicit examples of a panoptic schema. Images that signal Panopticism become more obvious as Prior finds "himself standing at the bottom of what felt like a pit...high walls were ringed with three tiers of iron landing. In the center of the pit sat a wardress who, simply by looking up, could observe every door" (29). Foucault recounts that a Panopticon is "subtly arranged so that an observer may see, at a glance, many different individuals" (8). Barker's pit is reminiscent of Bentham's "peripheric ring" and although it would appear slightly less oppressive compared to inspection towers, backlighting, and glass cells, Barker incorporates the added image of *the eye in the door* to make up for any visual deficiencies that have been compromised by its design.

Once entering Beattie Roper's cell, Prior finds himself looking at an "elaborately painted" eye on the interior of the door: "The peephole formed the pupil, but around this someone had taken the time and trouble to paint a veined iris, and eyewhite, eyelashes and a lid" (36). The eye in the door functions under the exact principles of the Panopticon; the inmate is isolated, atomized, and potentially observed at any or all times. Beattie has been denied of all her privacy and "even the latrine bucket had been placed where it could be seen from the door" (40). The painted eye is a substitute for Bentham's dark tower. The identity and presence of those wishing to observe Beattie is concealed by the door itself. Inspectors need only gaze through the peephole to monitor her behavior, which, according to the wardress, has been substandard; Beattie has been on hunger strike. The eye in the door becomes synonymous with the British government's effort to establish order and promote conformity among its citizens. It is emblematic of a standard, predominate ideology or social expectation of appropriate behavior while, simultaneously warning that deviations from the status quo are both observable and punishable. The eye in the door may be viewed not only as an extension of authority or an instrument of power but because the eye is always visible and always watching, it may also be considered an amplification of power.

Just as Bentham's Panopticon prison model exposed the lives of its inmates, the panoptic eye in Barker's novels is symbolic of a government's interest and ability to pry into the personal lives of characters and motivate them to adopt conventional values. This is especially true of another panoptic episode involving Beattie's son William Roper who is imprisoned at Wandsworth Detention Centre for refusing to serve. Prior imagines the scenario informs him of the details: "William, naked in his cell, watched constantly through the eye in the door, and beside him, on the stone floor, the uniform he'd refused to put on" (54). The uniform itself

becomes emblematic of conformity. It is the banner of the authoritative power symbolizing the de-emphasis of the individual and the reaffirmation of the establishment. The uniform also objectifies the individual. Correlations can be drawn between William's predicament of being forced to institutionalize himself and the women of Aylesbury Prison that are seen wearing identical gray smocks which made them look like "columns of moving metal" (29).

Attempts to disturb the dissymmetry of vision becomes a pervasive theme in Barker's War Trilogy. Moreover, efforts by characters to render dissymmetric visual arrangements ineffective demonstrate a challenge to authoritative power structures. Specifically, when Prior enters Beattie's cell he notices that she insists on keeping her eyes closed, at least until she recognizes his voice. This is presumably an indication of her defiance. Beattie is not expecting to see her life-long friend Billy Prior, only another military functionary whose uniform aligns him with the very power structure that has imprisoned her. Although many aspects of the panoptic schema are apparent in the prison and cell, it appears that Beattie, despite Bentham's hypothesis, has not resorted to policing the *self* to appease the authoritative power. Her strategy for defeating the penetrating gaze of the eye is to avoid its internalization, announcing "S not so bad long as it stays in the door." Tapping on the side of her head, Beattie adds, "You start worrying when it gets in here" (36). Consciously blocking the eye from one's psyche is, like the hunger strikes and an unwillingness to *look* at Prior, an effort to disrupt a dissymmetrical power arrangement that is dependent upon non-reciprocal vision. The difference in Beattie's case is that she appears to have upset in the process. By asserting the only power she has at her disposal, she closes her physical eyes and that of her psyche in order to sabotage the panoptic process. Though it may be passive, Beattie is protesting her imprisonment by her refusal to acknowledge her status as the neutralized and objectified subject. Instead of attempting to

reverse the observer / observed binary, a feat that in her situation is impossible because she cannot see beyond the door, she subverts the premises on which the panoptic schema is organized. This theme of neutralizing the power of the eye is an anti-visual feature in Barker's greater ocular aesthetic. I consider efforts by characters to render such dissymmetric visual arrangements ineffective as a challenge to authoritative power structures.

While Beattie resists the power of gaze, the one person that is incapable of this discipline is Lt. Prior. Unnerved by the presence of the eye in the door, the image triggers memories of France and the "uncanny" and "misleading emptiness of No Mans Land seen through a periscope" (Eye 30). The Western Front is a landscape where everyone is intently observing an adversary that is seldom, if ever, seen. Prior draws the correlation between of the panoptic schema of the prison to France because like the jail cell, the trenches signal immobility and a ceaseless observation by either one side or the other. Also similar is that each example represents the scenario that renders the eye ineffective. Martin Jay states that "the western front's interminable trench warfare created a bewildering landscape of indistinguishable, shadowy shapes, illuminated by lightning flashes of blinding intensity and then obscured by phantasmagoric, often gas-induced haze...the effect was visual disorientation" (212).

Another reason for Prior's sensitivity to the panoptic gaze of the eye in the door is that he associates it with the sensation of physical and mental of exposure. In a later conversation with W.H. Rivers, Prior recalls William lying "naked in his cell, stone floor, snow outside" with resentment. Prior is torn between sympathizing with William's treatment versus the even more unpleasant conditions British soldiers are forced to endure in France. Angered by his empathy, Prior announces to Rivers that although William's situation is unsettling he "*lost three men with frost-bite*" in No Man's Land (69). Prior appears divided about whether he should feel remorse

for William, an objector, or his fellow soldiers. He does seem to suggest that both parties were victimized. The eye has prompted a very disturbing realization with Prior; specifically that William's harsh treatment as a result of his protest, the most notable feature of which is his exposure, is strikingly similar to Prior's combat experience that lead to *his* eventual neurasthenic breakdown and which Rivers defines as a form of protest. Despite Prior's attempt to uphold the conduct and morals that his culture has deemed valuable, he and William's fate seemed to have comparable results. What is becoming evident with Prior is that he has been deeply influenced by the image of the eye in the door; it has instigated or, more appropriately, exposed *his* inner divisions about the war and his allegiance to his duties as a soldier and spy.

Another variation of the panoptic schema as it occurs in enclosed institutions is the experiments of Dr. Yealland at the Queen Square military hospital. Yealland was one of a number of physicians in London treating patients for psychoneuroses caused by the war. Unlike Rivers's more gentle approach of psychoanalysis, Yealland uses psychical restraint and electric shock treatment to *cure* patients. He is described as appearing authoritative and often taking a "God like tone" with his subjects (Reg. 226). One of his more *interesting* cases, a patient known as Pvt. Callan, has—in the doctor's opinion—resisted previous treatments. Callan's conspiratorial smiles signal his defiance. Rivers has requested permission to observe Yealland's methodology in his afternoon treatment session with Callan. In the electrical room in which the procedure is conducted, characteristics of the panoptic schema become evident: a bolted door, thick "wartime" blinds that create absolute darkness, and a "small circle of light" from the battery that charges the pharyngeal electrodes (229). Similar to Bentham's design, the presence of absolute power is indicated by darkness, secretiveness, or anonymity. Though there is nothing physically wrong with Callan, he has been rendered mute by his war experiences and it

Yealland's goal to force him to speak again. The interaction is assuredly one-sided; Yealland barks commands while applying electricity to Callan's throat and spine while Callan, restricted by straps around his feet and wrists, remains helpless in the chair. After a slight break Callan attempts to take the initiative by pointing to the "battery and then to his mouth, miming: *Get on with it,*" but Yealland replies "when the time comes for more electricity, your will be given it whether you want it or not" (231). This attempt to reverse or challenge the power arrangement shows similarities to Beattie blinding herself to the eye in the door. Unlike Beattie, however, Callan's attempt is unsuccessful. As mentioned in the introduction, the panoptic schema, as noted by Foucault, is a "privileged place for experiments" because it can be used as a laboratory. The dissymmetry of the power arrangement permits the authoritative force to exact complete control over the subject, and then monitor their progress. There are notable differences in the electrical room scene from a traditional panoptic schema. Because Callan is capable of seeing but not speaking, it would appear that language has taken the place of vision. Yealland reminds Callan of the dissymmetry of power by announcing that "*You must speak, but I shall not listen to anything you have to say*" (231).

The eye is present in the episode between Yealland and Callan and, although rather abstract, appears in form of the eerie and somewhat sinister circular green glow of the battery light. The battery itself is the source of power, which both serves and is being controlled by Yealland, the authoritative force. Foucault equates the Panopticon to a "machine that can carry out experiments" and, while the battery may be the origin of power in the electrical room it is not the machine that directs the current; rather, this title is reserved for Dr. Yealland. Rivers is unsettled by how calculating, indifferent, and emotionally detached Yealland seems as he dispenses the electricity. He is machine-like in his actions, automatic in the goal of correcting

the abnormal. Rivers later recounts that Yealland's callousness stems from his ability to disassociate himself from the pain that he was inflicting. In the scenario, it is clear that Yealland has taken the place of the Panopticon. Like the Panoptic tower, Yealland exacts power while remaining detached and is interested in Callan's progress only to the extent that the soldier submits to his mandates. Foucault refers to such a phenomena as it occurs in panoptic schemas as "fictitious relations" (6). Fictitious relations give the appearance of interaction in order to achieve complacency. Just as the eye in the door does not in itself ensure modified behavior in an inmate, the electric shocks are not the true cause of Callan's recovery of his speech. There is a level of theatrics involved in panoptic schemas, or what might be considered simulations of power. A huge painted eye in which "someone has taken the time and trouble to paint a veined iris, an eyewhite, eyelashes and lid on a door" at Aylesbury Prison is comparable to Dr. Yealland ostentatiously locking the door and placing the key in his pocket as he announces "*you must talk before you leave me*" (Reg. 230). Panoptic schemas rely on these 'smoke and mirror techniques' because, as previously mentioned, the effect of the Panopticon is to "induce in the inmate a state of consciousness" or awareness. For this to occur, the social standard must come between the individual and their desires. The law, rules or predominate ideology that dictates what is acceptable behavior must be internalized and, at least in part, adapted by the nonconforming subject.

There is significance in the statement that Yealland repeats during the procedure. He demands that Callan represent his "true self" by behaving like the "noble hero" that fought at numerous battles on the western front (Reg. 230). Yealland's comment insinuates that psychoneuroses, neurasthenia, or other sub-conscious protests are not a representation of the true self as such behavior is categorized as disruptive or counter-conventional. Thus, Yealland's shock

treatments are silencing Callan's rebellious actions. The doctor's demand for the representation of the "true self" is evidence that he is reconstructing Callan's views by bringing them back into alignment with the values of the status-quo: bravery, nobility, heroism. In short, Callan is being reformed under the watchful eye of an authoritarian power. The electrical room episode is a reminder that the values of an authoritarian power structure supercede those of the individual. Ocular imagery in the form of the circular battery light, in combination with an environment that features confinement and a dissymmetrical power arrangement, suggests that all the ingredients of a panoptic schema are present in Callan's treatment session.

Before discussing how the panoptic schema is capable of functioning beyond enclosed institutions or what Foucault identifies as panoptic networks, the importance of Craiglockhart must be examined, particularly its contribution to Barker's panoptic theme and how it meets the criteria of a panoptic apparatus while simultaneously defying this label. Craiglockhart is part mental asylum and part treatment center. Because it is something of an enigma, Craiglockhart presents new challenges to an examination of surveillance, power arrangements and its connection to vision in Barker's novels. Despite Craiglockhart's description as a "gloomy" and "cavernous" place, patients are not prisoners (9). There are no cells or confinement, electrical rooms or painted eyes. The patients are permitted and even encouraged to be physically active; golf, tennis, and excursions into Edinburgh are frequent. Craiglockhart is widely recognized as the place that Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen produced many of their best works. The publication of the hospital's literary journal entitled "The Hydra," of which Owen was the chief editor and Sassoon was a contributing author, is further evidence that physicians and staff were supportive of individual expression. Most remarkable is that many of the journal's submissions

contained poetry, essays and artwork capable of being construed as having anti-war or at the very least anti-establishment sentiment.

While Craiglockhart may be the most democratic institution I have discussed thus far, it still exhibits panoptic features. As noted, it is repeatedly described as a dark, ominous, and even oppressive place. Patients are required to maintain a level of military discipline including the wearing of uniforms and saluting to superiors. Similar to the other enclosed institutions, Craiglockhart and its inhabitants are removed from public view and isolated because of their illnesses. Hearings before review boards appear to demonstrate characteristics that are most consistent with a panoptic environment. For example, as Burns enters the board's room, he is unable to see the faces of the review committee "since they sat with their backs to the tall windows" (Reg. 132). This is certainly reminiscent of Bentham's anonymous and watchful dark tower of inspectors. Prior even goes as far as referring to the night staff as *spies* after they inform Rivers of his habitual nightmares that keep him up "walking the floor until two or three o'clock every morning" (67). Rivers's psychoanalysis treatment in many aspects also falls within the grounds of a panoptic schema. He too is an inspector, a military functionary that probes into the psyches of his patients and monitors their treatment. Prior detests being a patient because it is a position of powerlessness and his "hostility masks a vulnerability to authorities who want to pry into his traumatic war experience" via his unconscious (Vickroy 5). To combat Rivers's intrusive questions, Prior retaliates by firing questions back in an attempt to alter the dissymmetry of the power arrangement. He even goes as far as reading Rivers's theories in *The Todas* with the intent to better understand how he is being scrutinized. It is important to remember that Rivers's duty as a physician is not simply to assist patients using psychoanalysis; although his methods are more humane than Yealland's, the objective is the same: force his

neurasthenic patients to *see* the irrationality of their protests, to function efficiently, and to repair their injuries only as far as it makes them once again useful to the cause.

There is also a certain degree of categorization, or what Foucault would refer to as “labeling,” occurring at Craiglockhart, most notably the arm bands that patients are required to wear that signal their status as a neurasthenic. This invokes Foucault’s theories of binary divisions: mad/sane, dangerous/harmless, or normal/abnormal. Beyond appearances, however, it is important to remember that the purpose of Craiglockhart, both historically and in Barker’s trilogy, is to treat patients who, for one reason or another, are incapable of performing their military duties. There is the general consensus in Barker’s novels that neurasthenia is, although perhaps not consciously desired by those afflicted, a form of protest. Captain Rivers describes it as a way of preserving the self: “paralysis occurs because a man wants to save his life. He doesn’t want to go forward, and take part in some hopeless attack” (*Reg.* 112).

If the patients of Craiglockhart are, for a lack of a better word, *protesting* the war, then what can account for the degree of leniency at Craiglockhart? In other words, why is there not more evidence of a panoptic schema or at least one that is consistent with other enclosed institutions? Where is the confinement, security, surveillance, shock treatment, or the forced conformity that was so prevalent at Queens Station? After all, Pvt. Callan, like Lt. Prior also suffered from a neuropsychological disorder that rendered him mute. And what of Sassoon’s very public assertion in which he stated “he could now longer be a party” to the unjust cause? Is his declaration all that different than William’s Roper’s unwillingness to wear the uniform? Why was he not court-martialed, stripped, and tossed in a cold cell until he had conformed? In *The Times* article read by Rivers, Sassoon is described as “not being responsible for his actions” because he was suffering from a nervous breakdown. How can the discrepancy in attitudes be

explained? The difference appears to be that Craiglockhart is a military hospital designed specifically for officers. They, unlike their enlisted counterparts, are considered 'men of substance' and in Barker's novels at least, they are not forced to endure the same punishment, treatment, *curing* practices, or psychological disciplining as enlisted men, conscientious objectors, or pacifists. More plainly put, they are *company men* and in a culture that privileges the wealthy, educated, cultured and those perceived to be better conformed, they are less of a security risk. One notable exception about which Prior expresses concern in his first meeting with Rivers is class distinctions at the front. Prior is especially sensitive to these distinctions because he is an officer, yet one who has originated from a lower or working class background. Like Wilfred Owen, Prior has risen to the rank of an officer, not because he is privileged, but because there is a rare deficit of personnel.

These paradoxes are incorporated by Barker to illustrate the irrationality of traditional predominate ideologies and show that this logic does not withstand the realities of a modern war or modern era. Barker is demonstrating that herein lies the dangers of the Panopticon; with it comes corruptibility because such assured power arrangements are formulated on values or social norms that are not shared by all classes and, more importantly, are not endured. Vision and visuality become part of this paradigm when, as in the case of the Panopticon, they are wielded as a disciplinary mechanism by an authoritarian power. Craiglockhart appears to be the answer to what becomes a cultural question of what should be done with 'men of substance' when they breakdown, protest the war, refuse to fight? Craiglockhart is a central feature to Barker's novels, especially *Regeneration*, because it forces readers to draw comparisons between it, as 'treatment center for the psychologically wounded and privileged class,' to institutions like Queens Station or Aylesbury Prison, which constitute 'reformatories for conchies, shirkers,

pacifists and the disobedient lower class.’ Barker’s imagery, including her ocular aesthetic that is evident in the panoptic scenarios, suggests that the Panopticon and the values and norms that it symbolizes is a compromised apparatus. Craiglockhart is a reflection of the prejudices of British cultural inscriptions. It demonstrates that these attitudes persist, despite its irrationality even in a time of war.

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

*Pat Barker
The Eye in the Door*

For Foucault, Bentham’s vision of the Panopticon could be extended far beyond the limits of enclosed institutions. He notes that the panoptic schema, “without disappearing as such or losing any of its properties, was destined to spread through the social body and that its vocation was to become a generalized function” (8). As an example, Foucault cites similar schemas in England employed by monarchies as a method to enforce royal mandates and preserve “social disciplines” that would in turn guarantee continued hegemony (11). Royal functionaries monitored economic traffic and political activity, searched for criminals, rooted out subversionists, conducted urban surveillance and generally functioned as a police force. This ministry of magistrates and police officers was what Foucault refers to as an administrative machine: “all linked directly to the center of political sovereignty” and “organized in the form of the state apparatus” (11). To function efficiently, the administrators must be “cohesive with the entire social body” and this meant the police must “bear ‘over everything’: actions, behavior,

opinions—“those things of every moment... everything that happens” (11). They are not stationary and this lack of fixity grants them the flexibility to move about within society fulfilling their governmental duties. Although they often “circulate in a free state,” detached from the institutions, they are an extension of a disciplinary establishment aimed at monitoring and regulating behavior (Foucault 10).

The panoptic schema begins to emerge where it was understood, that in order to make society more visible, the observer, who in this case is an agent of the sovereign power, must be made invisible. The *secret agent* inconspicuously circulates within an unsuspecting population capitalizing on the Panopticon’s principle of visual dissymmetry. Because of his anonymity, the secret agent’s presence goes unnoticed; this is inconsequential, however, because everyone is potentially being observed at any moment and by anyone. Foucault imagines the scenario, noting that it must be a like a “faceless gaze that transformed the whole social body into a field of perception: thousands of eyes posted everywhere, mobile attentions ever on the alert for the hierarchized network” (11). Operating under the same principles as Bentham’s institutional design, the panoptic network signifies an expansion of the field of vision. It maximizes the effectiveness of the sovereign power and ocular sense by observing more individuals, this time from within the population. Evidence of such a panoptic network is found in Barker’s War Trilogy. In this portion of the chapter, I will discuss the panoptic network as it is exhibited in the spying activity of Billy Prior and his Ministry of Munitions Intelligence associates, including Major Lode and the informant Lionel Spragge. I will also address characteristics of W.H. Rivers’s behavior that suggest he too is party to the workings of a panoptic network. Operating beyond the limits of enclosed institutions, each of these characters qualifies as information collectors in an elaborate seeing machine.

Prior's initiation into secretly observing others begins while serving in France. As he explains to Sarah, the process of censoring the letters of his men to insure that they do not divulge any classified information often results in him reading very intimate details of his soldiers' relationships. Prior's commission entitles him to assume the position of the constant observer and his subordinates are the objectified. There are, of course, some striking similarities between the dichotomized inmates of Bentham's Panopticon and WWI infantry soldiers in the trenches. Each are confined to a small space, forced to conform to regulation and, as evidenced by Prior's admission that he censors the letters of his men, are monitored by authoritarian structures or extensions of this power. What is also a constant feature of each example is its goal of exposing the subject. Turning the exterior out, exposing or illuminating that which is secret is the ultimate goal of the Panoptic schema and this is capable of being fulfilled both inside and outside of enclosed institutions. Although Prior seems to demonstrate some sympathy for this intrusion, he is also energized by the experience. Gazing into the secret world of his subordinate's letters instills in Prior a sense of power. It seems to be the reassurance he has needed to convince himself that his commission and rise in status is a reality.

Metaphorically speaking, for once in his life, Prior is situated behind the eye. Because of this experience, his awareness and sensitivity towards all things ocular stems from his understanding of power. He has been the objectified subject and endured the scrutiny of review boards and army psychiatrists. As an officer working in the Ministry of Munitions, however, he is inducted into the network of power that scrutinizes others. His investigation into Hettie Roper's involvement in the infamous Lloyd George assassination plot places him in the position to conduct an interview with the unsuspecting woman. It is important to note here that Prior is selected for this assignment because, as a product of the lower or working class, he is regarded as

similar to the Ropers and their conspiring friends. Despite Prior's disgust with class differences, he represents a type of social chameleon able to alter his appearance, his accent, and behavior to become unnoticeable, or more accurately, one of the many. Prior embodies all the features of the inconspicuous de-institutionalized panoptic eye as he strikes out into the field and conducts interviews, observes suspected subversionists, gathers information on their activities and reports back to his superiors.

Prior constitutes what Foucault would recognize as a *network capillary*: an instrument of authority that acts as a conduit through which power flows to its source. Thus, Prior understands power; he knows how it can be applied and even manipulated for personal gain and, similar to the image of the eye, it is something he both fears and relishes. Prior's ambivalence on this subject, however, reflects the feelings of most people; power, authority, and control are beneficial to society as long as it is directed at others. Similarly, the eye does not appear as disarming when it is not fixed upon you.

CHAPTER TWO: MIGRATING OCULARITY / TRANSGRESSING RHETORIC: A
STRUCTURALIST READING OF BARKER'S METAPHORICAL EYE

I said 'Hallet' and for a second the 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 the neck. One eye gone. A hole—I was going to say in his left cheek—where his left cheek had been. Something was burning, casting an orange light into the sky, which reflected down on us. The farm that had been one of our reference points. The underside of the clouds was stained orange by the flames...a flare went up and everything paled in the trembling light (196).

*Pat Barker
The Ghost Road*

In 1928, French Dissident Surrealist Georges Bataille published a provocative and highly pornographic novella entitled Histoire de l'oeil. The text's aesthetics and transgressive eroticism have since garnered interpretation from numerous theorists including Roland Barthes, Michael Foucault, and Jacques Derrida. In Barthes' Structuralist reading entitled "Metaphor of the Eye," he considers Bataille's *Story of an Eye* a metaphoric composition that relies upon an image system in which the eye is the principle or seminal object. The image system consists of two separate yet intersecting series of signifiers.

Because the poem is an "exploration of virtual elements," various permutational objects are permitted to be substituted for the eye (French 8). Metaphorical extensions consisting of testicles, eggs, the sun, moon and milk saucers are affinitative objects (they are either globular or white) and are exchanged in place of the eye. Collectively they form the primary series of signifiers. Each is representative of an ocular station: a place where the eye is or could be. Bataille's metaphoric language establishes equivalence between the eye and its figure displacements. "Instead of pairing objects and actions according to the laws of traditional

kinship, Bataille dislocates the association by assigning each of its terms to different lines” (Barthes 244). Generally speaking, each signifier is bound up in a similar fate as the eye and its physics are governed by the same principles: testicles are capable of being enucleated, eggs can be ruptured, and the sun’s light can flow like tears. Barthes argues that, through metonymy and metaphor, these associations stretch the relationship between the primary object, the eye, and the affinitive objects to their most extreme inferences.

The image system is completed when the second series of signifiers is introduced. Characterized by fluidity, this series of metaphors is derived from the first. Vitreous fluid and its affinitive substances including tears, egg yolk, urine, semen, and light, symbolize the rupture of the eye and its permutational objects. Fluidity also appears to provide the medium for the eye to symbolically flow or migrate from one ocular station to the next. When the pair of extensions intersects, they form a cooperative metaphorical chain of permutational objects and fluid media.

In keeping with the structural approach, Barthes claims that the ability of the eye to vacillate in meaning, transforming from one figural form to the next, demonstrates a transgression of words in Bataille’s text. Words are flexible, fluid, and capable of symbolizing objects with which they have no traditional kinship. Barthes asserts that the terms of the metaphor “extend beyond their constitutive virtuality” (243). This is to say that Bataille’s words exceed their normal functions or the boundaries of their definitions: eyes are substituted for eggs, which are substituted for the sun, and so on. The result of the metonymic freedom is that the eye is both one object and many as it transgresses its traditional meanings and physical limits in exchange for other objects and their usages. While it is plausible to believe that the eye weeps, a broken egg runs, and the sunlight spreads, when the metaphorical extensions and metonymy are implemented, it becomes possible in Bataille’s text to break an eye or poke an egg out, or for the

sun to piss. Bataille critic Patrick Ffrench notes that the “play of associations transgress the usual functions and uses of words and objects, most significantly parts of the body” (7).

Enucleation becomes the focal point of Barthes’ Structuralist reading. He notes that the dialectical transgression of boundaries is initiated in Bataille’s text when the eye becomes exorbitated. The intact eye is emblematic of a border, its encasing, or eye socket, signifies a boundary. Once this limit has been exceeded, as in the case of enucleation, the borders of the eye are breached. The ruined architecture of the eye means that its properties are no longer divided, rather, *flow* freely, suggesting a transgression of limits. Barthes claims that the purpose of this image system is to demonstrate that, when the borders of the eye are disrupted, the world becomes disturbed and spilled onto itself, resulting in a transitioning sense of reality. Fluidity, as represented by various forms of liquidity (flowing, spitting, seminal emissions, blood, urine), signals an overflowing of boundaries, and depictions of transgressive acts through eroticism or perversity in Bataille’s novel mirror the disturbed borders of the eye and its free flowing vitreous fluid. Ffrench posits a similar analysis of *Histoire de l’oeil*, stating that fluidity as, demonstrated through the vocabulary of flowing, spitting, seminal emissions, urine, blood etc, signals the “liquefaction of reality” (97). In Bataille’s text, reality becomes liquefied, “the real flows,” and to travel a step further to include the theme of vision, “the real, as what is seen, flows” (Ffrench 96). The transgression of boundaries, as suggested by the rhetorical figure displacements, structurally anchor the actual episodes, acts, or displays of transgressive behavior. Barthes’ interpretation of Bataille’s work has been pivotal in structurally charting the migration of the eye and its variety of ocular inflections in the text as well as the “structural play of Bataille’s transgressive eroticism” (Ffrench 6).

Before moving on to a discussion of Barthes' Structural reading and how it is applicable to Barker's rhetoric, metaphoric associations and her ocular aesthetic as a whole, it is important to first review the principles and aims of Structuralism, its methodology, and likewise the limitations of this critical approach. French Structuralism, to which both Barthes and Foucault were contributors, accepts the Saussurean linguistic model and is aimed at detecting structural relations and linguistic patterns within the infrastructure of language. Practitioners of Structuralism are interested in examining systems of language and locating the *deep* or *imbedded* structures of discourse. Similar to Saussure's linguistic theory that distinguishes signs and signifiers that-when joined-point to a signification or meaning, French Structuralism identifies two interlocking elements, the message (*parole*) and the code (*langue*). Structuralist reading considers a text to contain a message. This message can only be understood by identifying the code. The code itself is an internalized and "formal structure of the language." The code consists of "certain semantic possibilities" that in turn "explain and validate the content of a message" (Guerin 337). Structuralist reading is essentially a "quest for a code" and its goal is to "specify the codes and conventions which make meanings possible" (Guerin 337). The author encodes a text and the Structuralist reader works to decode and chart this structural feature. The approach does have limitations and most structural theorists contend it falls short of interpreting a literary work. It can, however, determine how to "identify a work's characteristic features and perhaps how to perceive their likenesses to or differences from structure in other works" (Guerin 339).

There is the assumption in Structuralist readings that texts are codified, that an author has rearranged and embedded structural elements in a text to present a code. Much of the challenge of this approach exists in selecting literary works that contain a sophisticated enough narrative

technique or a sufficient quantity of enigmatic features that it would warrant a structural analysis. As Barthes demonstrates in his critical essay, "Metaphor of the Eye," Bataille's elaborate incorporation of ocular symbolism, affinitative forms, chains of displacement and rhetorical transgression in *Histoire de l'oeil* certainly qualifies the text for structural examination. It is my assertion that Barker's Trilogy also qualifies to be tested by the Structuralists' approach based on her extraordinary notion of ocularity in combination with an intricate system of ocular metaphors and associations. As mentioned, this approach will not provide insight into the text's historical merit, character development, or social contexts. Furthermore, a Structuralist reading is not expected to establish a "fixed code," serving as a structural "matrix or grid," that could incorporate all of Barker's ocular symbolism.

The aim here is to better understand how Barker is aestheticizing the image of the eye. This will be accomplished by examining the structural components of her rhetoric, and in particular, the use of metonym that permits words to transgress the limits of their meanings. While I believe there is no substitution for an informed reading producing interpretive theories along these lines, I do feel that an analysis of Barker's rhetorical construction/arrangement of an image system based on substitutive objects and affinitative terms constitutes a language pattern and can thereby be considered an embedded code. A Structuralist reading is an effective means of locating this code. It will also provide an entry point into an examination of Barker's extensive use of ocular metaphors such as doors, windows, periscopes, testicles, breasts, moon, and sun. Similar to Bataille's text, transgression appears to be occurring on two separate planes in Barker's trilogy; it can be located in both word selection, such as affinitative terms and transgressive rhetoric that tends to exceed the limits of its traditional meanings, and the pervasive theme of transgression as demonstrated through erotic episodes or what might be labeled

transgressive behavior. An analysis of Barker's ocular aesthetic should begin from the ground up and a Structuralist reading of her novels is the approach that best suits this strategy.

'I remembered it when I was in the cell with Beattie. I ...I actually saw it for a moment. Then later I remembered I used to go and buy gob-stoppers from Beattie's shop.' He paused. 'I don't know whether you remember, but when I picked up Tower's eye, I said, "What shall I do with this gob-stopper?"

'I remember.'

A long silence.

Rivers said slowly, 'When one eye reminded you of the other, was that just the obvious connection? I mean, because they were both eyes?' (69)

Pat Barker

The Eye in the Door

Similar to Bataille's text, Barker's Trilogy acknowledges the eye as the primary figure that generates a series of metaphors for itself along a chain of substitutive objects. The eye is the paradigm. The metaphorical extensions that are substituted for it exhibit double properties: they are both the same because they share characteristics with the eye, and different because they are assigned different names. Barker constructs a type of ocular nomenclature, a system of terms that have been arranged to signify the presence of eyes and the function of sight. Before moving on to the process of identifying the variations of the eye, it is important to answer the question of what precisely constitutes an ocular metaphor and how can they be categorized.

Objects that are substituted for the eye tend to be organized according to two sets of criteria. Objects that share a similarity in appearance or are consistent with the shape and physical features of the eye constitute one group of associations. They tend to be globular in dimension and white in color. Objects exhibiting rotundity such as candy, eggs, testicles, breasts, and the sun fall within this category. The second group of metaphorical extensions is slightly more complex. Rather than being categorized by appearance alone, they are grouped by

both appearance and function. Objects that demonstrate eye-like faculties such as door-eyes, peepholes, periscopes, eyeglasses, and windows are included in this category. They are what Barthes has deemed as a departure from traditional kinship. With few exceptions, these ocular substitutes assist the eye in the function of sight, and as a result, appear to be less of a stretch between the primary object and its affinitative figures. Beyond their function, however, this group's similarity to the eye is not based on the feature of globularity. The metaphorical extensions substituting the eye for doors, windows, periscopes etc., allows the eye to persist on flat surfaces rather than restricting them to ellipsoid shapes. This is an extremely important stretch of the ocular metaphor and Barker's transgressive rhetoric that will be addressed later in the discussion as it pertains to visibility and exposure. It is particularly applicable in the case of Lt. Prior who, aside from his encounters with the 'eye on the door' after returning to the front, describes the combat landscape as being as "bare as an eyeball" (Ghost 272).

Having established the two categories of ocular metaphors and their defining characteristics, it is important to enter into the discussion of the migration of the eye from one station to the next and how this movement constitutes rhetorical transgression. It might be said that Barker's migratory eye is formally introduced to the reader in the trenches when Billy Prior plucks it from underneath the duckboards. He examines it in the palm of his hand. Having been exorbitated, Pvt. Towers' non-functioning eye is relegated to the title of object. It is a specimen for Prior to study and speculate on how it came to be strewn on the trench floor, and to decide how to discard it. It instigates an anxiety in Prior, leaving an indelible mark on his psyche. Rivers hypothesizes that Prior is unable to remember the event because he has blinded his mind's eye, or memory, to the traumatic episode. The phenomenological explanation is that the eye has been assimilated, taken in by Prior's consciousness. The indicator that this migration has

occurred appears to be his comparison of the eye to one of his favorite candies: “What am I supposed to do with this gob-stopper” (*Reg.*106). White, globular and roughly the same size, gob-stoppers are the first in a series of affinitative objects that serve as a substitute for the eye in the trench.

Prior’s language insinuates ingestion and that the eye, albeit figuratively, is not discarded in the sandbag, rather, accompanies Prior beyond the trench to Craiglockhart. He will later declare that the eye, or the memory of it, is a talisman, a reminder of his experiences and where his loyalties lie. The eye’s ability to instigate anxiety in Prior’s psyche is reaffirmed when he encounters the giant painted eye on the door of Beattie’s cell. Upon seeing it, he immediately associates it with the eye in the trenches: “For a moment he was back in France, looking at Tower’s eyeball in the palm of my hand” (*Eye* 36). This language suggests the eye has undergone another migration from Prior’s psyche to the eye in the door. Likewise, the eye in the door might also be considered a projection of Prior’s psyche and, although it is obviously not Tower’s actual eye, this image is being thrown upon the door’s surface. The transition also demonstrates a change in the characteristics of the eye. It is no longer defined as a globular object, but a flat surfaced eye, the *eye in the door*, complete with a veined iris, eyewhite, lashes and a lid.

Barker’s imagery is evidence that the eye as an object has a range of mutability; it transverses from one classification (globular/white/non-visual) to another category (flat surface/visual function). Accompanying this imagery is figurative language containing words that signify double properties. To Prior, the door both is the same as the eye because it is an affinitative object, and simultaneously different because, as Barthes notes, it carries a different assigned name. While this observation could lead to a lengthy discussion about the subjectivity

of Prior's perception and how it may be an indicator of his psychological fitness, such an interpretation is not the focus of a Structural reading and is therefore irrelevant to this analysis.

The door, much like the eye, also functions as a portal or conduit through which sight can travel. Its frame represents a boundary. When Sarah Lumb mistakenly "crosses the threshold" into the amputee ward, she is brought face to face with the casualties of war that are seldom seen by public eyes: "she had to blink several times before she saw them, a row of figures in wheelchairs, but figures that were no longer the size and shapes of adult men. Trouser legs sewn short; empty sleeves pinned to jackets. One man had lost all his limbs" (*Reg.* 160). The sight of the limbless combatants makes her suddenly aware of the extent of what can be lost in the war. The most disturbing feature of the encounter is the return "blank stare" of the amputees. Punctuated by fear, they see themselves in their disfigured states, perhaps for the first time, through the eyes of Sarah, a "pretty girl." By stepping through the door, Sarah transgresses the boundaries of what a pretty girl like her should witness. In fact, the amputees have been moved to the rear of the building because they are an *eye sore* for a country that is unprepared to face the consequences of war. Here, the door of the amputee ward operates in the reverse of the eye in the door of Beattie's cell; Sarah is on the outside, observant, alert, and looking in at disfigurement and dysfunctionality. The door, like the eye, permits this perspective and it is one Sarah views with ambivalence, feeling both anger for a country that would hide away its wounded, and guilt for having been seen by them.

Other flat-surfaced substitutes for eyes include windows, such as the large rectangular windows of Asbury Prison, a feature Prior identifies as looking like "piggy eyes," as well as mirrors, or any object that permits a character to view and scrutinize his own reflection. Barker's motif of seeing the self from alternative vantages is often accentuated by the presence of mirrors

(*Eye* 28). The large oval mirror hanging on the interior door of Prior's apartment certainly qualifies as an affinitative object to the eye, especially given Prior's tendency to associate eyeballs with an eye painted door. Consequently, while having a nightmare, Prior mistakes the oval mirror for a giant eye and, in an attempt to blind the object, repeatedly stabs the mirror. Prior encounters yet another mirror, this time in the house of Robert Manning, where two mirrors are positioned in such a way they face each other. Reflected through the "opened door," he finds himself "staring down a long corridor of Priors" (*Eye* 10). This series of reflections, referred to by Manning as a "labyrinth of repeated figures," signals ocular displacement, a theme that will be addressed at length in chapter three. The migration of the eye from one location to another suggests that the eye is capable of occupying multiple stations. As the mirror reflects multiple Priors, Barker's transgressive rhetoric establishes continuity between substitutive objects. The effect is such that doors, windows, and mirrors can be substituted for the eye and are illustrative of sight. This equivalence maintains the presence of the eye even in the absence of the actual object.

A slightly more sophisticated version of the mirror, the periscope, could also be interpreted as a substitution for the eye. Comprised of a series of mirrors, it operates under the same principles of reflection yet its purpose is to view objects that are in an otherwise obstructed field of vision. Prior and Sassoon recount their experiences of gazing out across No Man's Land through the periscope. Sticking one's head above the parapet was a hazardous feat and, as an alternative to using the human eye, the periscope permitted the combatants to visually cross the distance and observe the enemy. Unfortunately sight, even as it occurs via periscope, reveals little in trench warfare. It would appear, at least in Sassoon's case, that the device was an

inadequate substitution for the eye, as he is later wounded in No Man's Land because he claims he just "wanted to see the other side" (*Eye* 231).

The majority of ocular migrations occur much more subtly in Barker's texts. More abstruse metaphorical associations come about when the ocular gaze becomes reciprocal. For example, Prior's psychiatric sessions with Rivers consist of countless incidents where the pair does not see "eye to eye" on a subject. I addressed this phenomenon in the previous chapter and interpreted it as an attempt by Prior to reconcile the dissymmetry of vision and power, but a structural analysis of ocular terms would suggest that the eye is traversing from one ocular station to another. Barker's imagery moves from one fixed mutual gaze to another and, paralleling the movement of the migrating eye, is rhetoric illustrating the interchange of one eye for another. The double meanings of words often point to the presence of double figures: mutual starring eyes, eye/doors, double mirrors, eyes/gob-stoppers, and other affinitative objects. All the metonymical associations transgressing the boundaries of their meanings result in a vertiginousness or confusion in Barker's novels over what or who is seeing and being seen. The vacillation that occurs between the observed/observer paradigm comes to fruition when Rivers finally forfeits his control of the treatment by trading places with Prior. Prior then becomes the objective medical eye, a station once occupied by Rivers, and proceeds to diagnosis Rivers' lack of visual memory, attributing the condition to his desire to blind himself to a traumatic episode.

As mentioned in the Panopticon chapter, the most disturbing feature of the painted eye is that it signifies constant or uninterrupted surveillance. It exposes even the most private of moments as demonstrated by the latrine bucket "placed where it could be seen from the door" (*Eye* 40). Once again, as in the case of the Panopticon, the theme of exposure becomes synonymous with visuality and the image of the eye. Through the interplay of these schemas,

images and their overlapping terminology, (Towers' eye, mind's eye, door's eye, Rivers' eyes) Barker's words exhibit a transgression beyond the limits of their traditional meanings. The eye in the door in the second novel is substituted for the eye in the trench in *Regeneration*. It has migrated with Prior because his psyche is the vehicle that carries the metaphorical eye. Despite the fact that the reader is informed when Prior is making these associations, Prior's emotional response is also an indicator of the certainty in which one eye is substituted for another. For Prior, the eye in the door *is* Towers' eye. Furthermore, Beattie's cell is consistent with conditions in the trenches where there is an overwhelming sensation of immobility, powerlessness, and constant observation. "Towers' eye" assumes a duplicitous meaning as well. The word tower, both as an architectural structure, and as the all seeing device at the center of the Panopticon, transgresses its meaning when given as a name of a fellow combatant. It is of course Towers' eye that is exorbitated, found by Prior, and figuratively carried in his psyche only to reappear on the eye/door to observe him spying on Beattie. The tower's/eye, like Towers' eye, is omnipresent and this association is made possible by Barker's transgressive and metonymic rhetoric that exceeds the limits of its designated meanings. Barthes refers to this migration of permutational objects as a "trajectory:" a path or pattern of movement that proves useful in constructing and arranging a code. In turn, this code connects images of the texts, bringing structural continuity to the trilogy as a whole.

In some instances, following the trajectory of the metaphorical eye in Barker's novels requires looking beyond windows, doors, and periscopes. Solar imagery is prevalent in the trilogy and the sun exhibits consistent features with both categories of affinitative objects. It is globular and white (at times) and likewise assists vision by providing clarity, dimension, and

perspective. Visuality is the most obvious connection between the two objects; both represent sources of illumination and their presence makes all activities visible and open to scrutiny. While Barker's method of substituting objects for the eye has dominated the discussion thus far, the introduction of the sun as a metaphorical extension provides the opportunity to begin introducing the second chain of signifiers that include liquidity and ultimately light. In doing so, the focus will shift from locating patterns of substitutions to examining the actual process of objects transforming from one form to the next. I will be answering the question, beyond the similar phenomenological qualities, how does the transition from object to object become rhetorically possible in Barker's trilogy?

As mentioned in the introduction, liquidity appears to provide the figurative medium for the exchange of substitutive forms. If, as I have proposed, the eye is symbolic of borders, limits, and fixity, then fluidity is the indicator that these borders have been ruined and transgressed. French notes of Bataille's text that "liquefaction is the movement of contiguity between the objects whose roundness signifies their being limited" and, given the numerous images of liquidity in Barker's novels and their linguistic proximity to the eye or its affinitative objects, a similar assertion could be made in regards to her rhetoric (95). Some, but not all, of the avatars of fluidity coincide with Prior's experiences. The term "rivers" carries a duplicitous meaning. It signifies both the character that observes Prior at Craiglockhart, who urges him to spill forth his memories of combat, and later designates the body of water that Prior jumps into to avoid the obstinate eye that pursues him in his nightmares. A river is also present in other pivotal scenes involving ocular substitutes and vision, the first of which is Prior being spied upon by the informant Spragge while crossing the river on the ferry. Secondly, Prior engages in taboo encounter with Mrs. Riley on the river-bank, an episode that happens to be witnessed by Prior's

father. Also, let us not forget that Prior sees himself die in the reflection of the water while crossing the Sombre Canal and that the attack became perilous because the Germans had flooded the surrounding area to prevent a British advance. While history provides Barker with the character of WH Rivers, the word's meaning is manipulated to signify other objects. Perhaps the scene that most conclusively illustrates both the substitution of the eye for an affinitive object and its correspondence with fluidity is that of Prior attacking the figure of the eye by stabbing the object with a paper knife.

The eye was watching him from the door. He shrank back
against the table, his hands groping behind him for the paper-knife.
His fingers closed round the hilt and he sprang at the door,
stabbing the eye again and again, his naked body spattered with
blood and some thick whitish fluid that did not drip but clung to
his belly, and quickly chilled. (*Eye* 58)

The "whitish fluid" that spews forth from the ruptured eye is a substance that is representative of vitreous fluid and is, therefore, a derivative of the primary object. There is a linguistic correspondence between it and the wetness in Prior's groin, an affinitive fluid of which is presumably a seminal emission. The scene depicts an intersection of the two metaphorical chains, the eye, and fluidity. Fluid substances establish a figurative correspondence between not only the eye in the door and the eye of Prior's psyche, but also the associations between the vitreous fluid of the eye and Prior's seminal emissions. The origin of each of these fluids stems from a substitutive object: the eye in the door and Prior's testicles. When describing scenes that depict ocular migrations, Barker tends to saturate her language with words that signal fluidity. The description of Prior's dram include terminology consistent with

metaphors of liquidity and/or a similar color to the eye: “sweating,” “clammy” “snow,” “ice,” “white opaque lines,” “frozen web,” “white glittered moonlight” (58). By incorporating images of liquidity, there is the suggestion that the eye does not erratically jump from one substitutive object to the next, rather, the transition is a fluid process. Requiring a medium, a lubricant, to facilitate the migration.

Associating objects with their substitutes occurs subtly in Barker’s texts. It is more often than not an inconspicuous progression of events. The transition itself is a fluid process that coincidentally flows sub-textually throughout the trilogy, establishing continuity in the themes and images. As proposed in the early stages of this chapter, charting the eye’s migration begins with first locating the primary object and identifying substitutes. The presence of the second series of metaphors, marked by fluidity, signals the process of transition / substitution. The general breaking down of solid outlines in the text permits one object to transgress its borders and figuratively flow into the position of another. The vacillation of objects fluidly migrating from one position to the next creates the sensation of vertiginousness in Barker’s trilogy. Real objects, such as the eye, fluidly transitioning into more abstract or de-contextualized forms (suns, moons, windows, doors) give the impression of a certain connectedness between separate realms: dreams figuratively flow into the real, sexual desires flow into acts of violence, or experiences of war flow into erotic behavior. Intersecting chains of associations are the rhetorical foundation to Barker’s complex depiction of ocularity. Substitutions, associations, fluidity, and the flexibility of terms that transgress their meanings are deeply embedded structural elements of Barker’s novels. Most importantly, they are evidence that the ocular sense is aestheticized in her writing.

A pivotal scene in the trilogy, demonstrating the intersection of ocular substitutes and fluidity, is Prior’s erotic sexual encounter with Mrs. Riley, a woman who had suckled him as a

child when his mother was too ill to produce milk. The intersection of vision and the semantics of liquidity begin with Harry Prior, pausing on top of the bridge to urinate, gazes in “appreciation at the full moon” and then at, what he perceives to be, its reflection in the canal water (*Eye* 117). Harry comes to the realization that the image in the water, “bobbing up and down,” was not the moon at all, but the moonlight reflecting off a “male arse” on the canal bank (*Eye* 117). The images mark the appearance of a double figure made possible because the light from the moon is projected onto another receptive white surfaced object, that being Billy Prior’s moon, or arse. The light of the moon, superimposed onto the arse, establishes a correspondence or association between affinitative objects each white, globular, and capable of reflecting light. Associations in the metaphorical chain continue with the mention of other white globular objects like “golf balls,” which are presumably Billy’s testicles, and Mrs. Riley’s breasts. Semantics of liquidity also establish a chain of associations beginning with Mrs. Riley’s breast milk, then moving to Harry’s “jet of hot piss,” the canal water, and eventually moonlight, which appears to take on characteristics of fluidity. The superimposition of objects is a process made possible only by the projection of light.

Similar to fluids, light becomes the medium for the migration of affinitative objects from one ocular station to the next. Light is liquidity, and this association is reinforced again and again in Barker’s rhetoric. When Prior and Sarah are caught in the rainstorm on the beach, the scene is bathed in a “deepening yellow light” just before a flickering bolt of lightning illuminates their bodies (*Reg.* 129). This imagery is again present when the pair seeks shelter in the Palm House where there is an infusion of fluidity and light in the “damp cloth,” “wet hair” and “steamy, diffuse, white light that spreads over everything” (*Eye* 183). In this case, the theme of

vision is introduced when Prior's "eye registered on a familiar shape" which later turns out to be the spy/informant Lionel Spragge who is observing the couple's interaction.

Having established connections between the between globular objects (moon), liquidity and how light is capable of functioning like liquid, it is important to recognize another globular luminescent object and the original source of light, the sun and its solar imagery. Although numerous theories of sight/perception ranging from the Greek Icarus myth to the Enlightenment could be employed to establish a correlation between the eye and the sun, Barker simplifies the connection and in some instances substitutes the sun for the eye. For example, when Prior is back at the front conducting gas drills, upon looking into a fellow combatant's mask, he sees "huge insect eyes" and the reflection of "not one but two setting suns" (*Ghost* 182). Prior also recalls "watching the late afternoon sun glint on River's glasses" during one of their afternoon sessions (*Ghost* 214). In both of these examples, her figurative language permits one object, the image of the sun, to be superimposed for the eye. Similar to eyes, the sun is frequently depicted as exhibiting tension; the low hanging sun that "lingers, tense and swollen, then spills itself onto the water" is an image comparable to River's habitual eye-strain that causes him periodically to rub his eyes during treatment sessions (*Eye* 94). Perhaps because of its association with visuality, the sun, like the eye, is identified as having an oppressive quality in Barker's novels. The sun "crashes down" on Rivers while he is on the beach in Melanesia and silhouettes Sassoon when he ventures into No Man's Land to see the enemy (*Ghost* 205). The pair of objects are also linked in that each signals exposure. Barker's use of metonym permits the eye and sun to transgress their rhetorical meanings, often being supplemented for one another.

Similar to Barker's migratory eye, the sun is an object in flux: the orbital pattern is the sun's trajectory, its migrational path. To emphasize this incessant motion, Barker rarely depicts

the sun as ever being “at high.” Such a position would suggest that it is stagnate or stationary. Instead, she captures the sun’s progression through its relation to the horizon. As it is seen rising or setting, the sun’s movement is observable. The horizon serves as an indicator and assurance of the object’s circulation. The horizon is also emblematic of the eyelid. The sun that is half obscured by either smoke or the horizon signals the gradual closing of the solar eye and the darkness of night is emblematic of the solar socket. The dawn and the daybreak represent transitional states in Barker’s novels. They are accented by sunlight that is copper, amber, balmy, sticky, and seemingly clinging to all substances. The light signals a metamorphosis from one ocular station to the next.

In darkness, the eye persists in the form of the moon; aside from sharing the physical features of being both globular and white, it--like the sun--illuminates and permits vision to function. Surrounded by unlimited darkness, just as the eye is incased in its dark socket, the moon becomes a substitutive object. It operates much in the same way as a figure illusion, its light affirming the limitlessness of the dark sky. Moonlight is figured as a liquid that transgresses its own boundaries. White and luminescent, it bathes city streets, prison cells, beaches, and battlefields and blends these images into a single flowing version of reality.

CHAPTER THREE: BREACHING BOUNDARIES: THE TRANSGRESSION OF LIMIT AND SPACE

For its part, does transgression not exhaust its nature when it crosses the limit, knowing no other life beyond this point in time? And this point, this curious intersection of beings that have no other life beyond this moment where they totally exchange their beings, is it not also everything which overflows from it on all sides?(70)

*Michael Foucault
Preface to Transgression*

In chapter two, the term “linguistic transgression” is applied to words that transgress their traditional meanings and physical limits in exchange for other objects and their uses. The primary figure of the eye exceeds its normal function and the boundaries of its definition when it is substituted for affinitative forms like mirrors, testicles, the sun, or moon. The pattern or structural play is such that one object is metaphorically *slipping* into the position of another, and the rhetorical migration is permissible because of numerous avatars of fluidity. The plotting of the migrations of objects that transgress their traditional meanings and form gives rise to the question, do other objects in Barker’s novels demonstrate similar behavior? Could, for instance, characters demonstrate transgressive features? After all, a pervasive theme in the novels, as revealed in the panoptic scenarios, appears to be the defiance of labels that categorize individuals according to their function: combatants, objectors, physicians, subversives, laborers and lower class women.

While there are obvious differences between the migrating eye discussed in the structural linguistic model, and the transgression of characters in Barker’s texts, there are also similarities that should not be ignored. For instance, when Sassoon returns to the Front and is approached by his subordinate who at the time was reading *Counter Attack* and poses the question, “Are you the

same Sassoon?," the statement precipitates a crisis in Sassoon as to who he is and how he views himself (*Eye* 229.) Is he fearless Mad Jack, the spirited lobber of mill-bombs, brave combatant, and petitioning objector to the cause as demonstrated by his declaration? Or is he the Sassoon of English gentry, cricket player, poet? And what of characters like Billy Prior who claws his way up the social ladder from a family of laborers into a more dignified upper stratum by making rank while, ironically, always viewing himself from the lower class vantage? Like Sassoon, Prior is a character that fluctuates from one station to the next, all the while experiencing nostalgia, nightmares and fugue states that leave his sense of self as convoluted as his memory. Is Billy not a transitioning object: in effect, a substitution for himself who is transgressing limits of class, perceptions of reality and even sexuality as he *slips* from role to role as officer, neurasthenic, spy, prostitute and victim?

Having thus far determined that Barker's ocular symbolism and avatars of fluidity constitute a structural code, my focus will turn to examining the characters and situations surrounding the ocular symbolism. I will begin speculating on episodes of transgressive activity, their textual meaning, and how they complement the symbolism. This interpretative approach obviously benefits from the structural linguistic model proposed in the previous chapter in that ocular symbolism and representations of fluidity will serve as indicators of transgressive episodes and transgressing characters. Also, among my objectives will be the justification of the code; while, in and of itself, the structural code lends little to the textual meaning, its importance and contribution to an ocular aesthetic becomes evident when it is examined in relation to transgressive episodes

In order to establish a working definition of "transgression" and how it is relevant to literary interpretation, I will again turn to the works of theorist Michel Foucault. Foucault's

essay, entitled “A Preface to Transgression,” is a theoretical intersection of sorts between him and author/theorist Georges Bataille. Foucault was greatly influenced by Bataille’s work and served as both a contributor and editorial consultant for the journal *Critique*, a publication founded by his French contemporary. In “A Preface to Transgression,” Foucault employs the term as a tool to explore topics like self-awareness, perceptions of identity, sexuality, societal values, and power relations, along with the question of whether or not language is capable of representing reality. He dedicates a portion of his discussion to an exegesis of Bataille’s use of the ocular image and how the eye keeps its value in Bataille’s work as a figure of inner experience. It is also in this essay that Foucault attempts to give definition to the somewhat elusive term, transgression. He states “transgression is an action which involves the limit, that narrow zone of a line where it displays the flash of its passage; it is likely that transgression has its entire space in the line it crosses” (34). What is evident in Foucault’s description is that transgression denotes two elements, space and the existence of a limit. They are interdependent, and each of these elements appears to find itself in what it excludes. To illustrate this point Foucault draws the following comparison: “Perhaps it (transgression) is like a flash of lightning in the night which gives a dense and black intensity to the night it denies, owing to the dark the stark clarity of its manifestation” (Foucault 35). It has been my experience that reading and interpreting Foucault often requires adopting the method of his logic.

Considering Foucault’s definition appears to hinge on the idea of mutual exclusion, perhaps it is easier to think about Foucault’s concept of transgression in regards to what he claims it is not. Foucault notes that transgression does not “oppose one thing to another,” nor does it represent violence (35). He goes on further to argue that the transgressive contains nothing negative and should be “liberated from the scandalous or subversive” (35). For

Foucault, transgression is a process of exceeding limit, which, in turn, causes the affirmation of the limitlessness. Limit for Foucault has relative meaning dependant upon the transgression and the environment or space in which it occurs. In Barker's trilogy, limit appears to be a network of social structures that promote the conception of space and boundary in the form of culturally imposed divisions and categories. Bataille theorist Patrick Ffrench posits the belief that limit could be interpreted as a type of "cultural and philosophic architecture" (Ffrench 32). When the architecture is transgressed, the object or action earns the label of yet another named limit or category such as "taboo" or "insanity."

I have adopted many aspects of Foucault's definition for this project and, while his discussion establishes some guidelines as to what constitutes transgression, namely the elements of space and limit, I will be giving just as much consideration to another feature of transgression Foucault points to in his explanation-that of action. Aside from signifying a dimension with boundaries, transgression denotes an action: a coming into existence of some happenstance, occurrence, or activity. In Barker's novels, transgression is synonymous with motion and signals movement beyond a pre-ordained boundary. It is movement beyond a limit and evidences deterioration and the destabilization of solid outlines. While Foucault tends to depict transgression as an instantaneous explosive action, such as the case of his flash of lightning in the night sky, in Barker's trilogy, objects and characters transgressing borders or limitations often appear to be a subtler event. Much in the same way that language demonstrates a *slippage* from its mechanical models of meaning (eyes, windows, mirrors, etc.), characters in the novels fluidly transgress from one figural form to the next and become symbolic of functions or roles with which they have no traditional kinship.

Similar to the historical figure he is based upon, the character of William H.R. Rivers for example had not come up through the ranks of the Army Medical Corps. Prior to the war, Rivers gained distinction as an M.D. who had participated in anthropological expeditions and conducted studies in the field of experimental psychology. In 1916, his lectures and travels were put on hold when he was commissioned and then transferred to Craiglockhart War Hospital to treat neurasthenics. Introverted, introspective, and unaccustomed to military formalities, Rivers envisioned himself, above all things, to be researcher and scientist, and not the officer he had inadvertently become. His rank of Captain, a title that he reportedly loathed, was in actuality an honorary designation. Like many of the characters in Barker's trilogy, the new reality of his existence was such that he must assume a different role and fulfill a vastly different function. Barker's depiction of Rivers is that of a character who is torn between his desire to return to the research, abandoned because of the war, and his current responsibilities as an army psychiatrist. His memory, however, permits him to step outside of his current situation thereby transgressing these limitations. Rivers's recollection of his expeditions in Melanesia are a predominate feature of the trilogy and constitute a retrospective window into his past. The digressions create the impression that he is fluidly moving from experiences of the present to those of the past: *slipping* into a different role and a different world. The transgression enables Rivers to see himself again fulfilling the function of a researcher in an exotic far away space, Melanesia.

The question arises, why is the theme of transgression worthy of exploration in a war novel? How does it aid in facilitating a reader's understanding of the combatant's experience and what is its link to other peripheral themes in the trilogy like power relationships, psychological trauma, class distinction, and sexuality? Inherently, in war, boundaries must be breached. It is the objective of every campaign to transgress limits, to "break through the line"

and take hills, beachheads or bunkers. As noted by Foucault, the concept of transgression is inseparable from the elements of limit and space. A war novel is conducive to exploring the themes of transgression because space, limit, and the desire to exceed these boundaries are inherent to the adversarial design of warfare. Barker's novels represent a reflection of this architecture; they are organized in such a way that they mirror the properties of war. What this means is that, even though there are few scenes of battle in the trilogy, a reader is still able to experience the defining features of WWI: space, limitations, and also the inevitable transgression of these boundaries.

All wars, and especially the Great War, are defined by the Front. The Western Front consisted of a 400-mile dividing line that stretched from the North Sea to the Swiss boarder. It was divided into sections, and then further sub-divided into sectors, with the Belgians in the north the British in the center and the French occupying the territories to the south. The entire span of the Front was comprised of a subterranean network of trenches that nearly 12,000 miles on the Allied side alone. Finally, within each trench lay millions of individual dug outs, the small space where the infantry soldier ate, slept, fought and died. Unable to advance and not permitted to retreat, this space epitomized limitation. From his cramped and wet position, the soldier gazed out upon another area that he dare not go, No Man's Land. It was perhaps the most divisive feature of the war. The price paid for trespassing was death. No Man's Land was the focal point for the combatants who witnessed it, a public who imagined it, and the British command who, until 1918 were unable to transgress it.

Collectively, the western front, its sections, trenches, dugouts, and No Man's Land constituted a network of limits. This same network serves as the model and metaphor for all other connotations of division, limit, space, and transgression in Barker's novels. Barker permits

a reader to experience the war the same way as her combatants. Neither they, nor we, can see the broad perspective, the strategizing, the maneuvering, or the full stage. What characters and readers share are a common perspective of the trench, its limitation and the threat of No Man's Land on the horizon. Because of this limit, characters are witnessing the war working contrary to its intended purpose. Sandbags filled for defense are instead a restraint. Every instrument used to slow the German advance is an obstacle to another's progress: the deeper, the trench the higher the barrier.

In his authoritative work *The Great War and Modern Memory*, WWI scholar Paul Fussell devotes an entire chapter to a discussion of limits, categories, and the vigorous polarization that occurred as a result of the Western Front. He argues that one of the legacies of the Great War was the evolving concept of "unambiguous division" and, although division was not always actual, it is this feature that persisted in the collective imagination (Fussell 80). This impart is the war that Barker and perhaps all post-Great War societies have inherited. The Western Front came to serve as a metaphor for all divisions and gross dichotomies. Fussell points to the language of the era as evidence: Tommies and the Hun, our and theirs, the invisibility and visibility, night and day, the familiar and foreign, us and "the other." He asserts that binaries simplified the vast, nebulous, and incommunicable war phenomenon. It gave war structure and simple distinction making oppositions absolute. Given the fact that the British experience at the Front evolved into a model, perhaps even a paradigm of separation and assignment, it is not surprising that this quality also becomes one of the overriding features of Barker's trilogy.

Binary divisions are also prevalent in the war trilogy with motifs and aesthetics frequently organized in relation to this theme. As mentioned in the Panopticon chapter, characters are defined and categorized as either lower or upper class, rational or insane, hetero or

homosexual, and combatants or pacifists. Does Barker's language suggest she is falling into what Fussel considers a simplified depiction of the war in order to make it communicable? And is her trilogy just another version of the Great War that the public has perpetuated in its imagination? The answer is no. Barker appears to construct binary divisions to specifically deny the credence of such organization; her characters habitually transgress their labels of designation. More importantly, this transgression does not always necessitate a contradiction of self. Take, for example, the seemingly incongruous actions of Siegfried Sassoon. Before the war, he is a poet and man of leisure. When the war breaks out he enlists, fights bravely in France and then protests against the continuation of the war in his "Soldier's Declaration," while still not considering himself a to be pacifist. After Craiglockhart, he returns to service having never retracted his protest. Lt. Prior, on the other hand, is of lower class, yet is a model officer turned neurasthenic who has homosexual liaisons when not with his fiancée. Even though Barker employs the theme of binary divisions in her war novels, these categories are not established for convenience or simplification. Binaries are constructed to illustrate that the individual is incapable of being systematized. They underscore the inability of a modern and mechanized society to normalize behavior while demonstrating its failure to account for the complex, mutational and resilient features of the identity.

Transgression is pivotal to the functioning of Barker's ocular aesthetic. In this chapter, I will be examining characters, instances and behavior that constitute transgressive actions. I will also demonstrate how this theme is linked to Barker's notion of ocularity. While in chapter two the structural approach isolated the figure of the eye and its tendency to transgress normal functions, boundaries and definitions via migration, in this chapter I will attach meaning to the ocular symbolism by examining instances in which characters witness themselves and others

exceeding limits and boundaries. What I have discovered about transgression in Barker's work is that it is not as esoteric a concept as Foucault suggests in his definition; it is, in fact, a very substantive and observable concept, capable of being located and examined in scenarios that exhibit a dissolution of solid outlines. This method of interpretation will permit me to address the overall role and importance of the transgressive theme.

Transgression manifests on many planes, beginning with Barker's tendency to blend historical facts or the exploits of actual individuals with those of fictitious characters and episodes. While this is a frequently debated aspect of Barker's writing, I consider the blending of these two elements to constitute a historical transgression: the presentation of characters in such a way that they transgress either their historical or fictive assignments and coexist so that a reader is able to experience or *see* them simultaneously. There will also be a discussion of the social changes the war has precipitated in regards to gender and class distinctions and the mixing or tearing down of preexisting categories. As a result of the war, there appears to be a deterioration of solid outlines. Limitations that posed such a formidable obstacle on the Front are being transcended by other means. Traditional gender roles, for example, have undergone a transformation. Women are at work, joining labor unions, carousing for entertainment, while men are strapped with the burden and limitations of trench warfare. Likewise, the social order of British culture appears to be in flux. After a discussion of pre-existing categories, I will turn my attention to the characters of the trilogy.

While some characters are cognizant of their transgression, others appear unaware that they are changing. This discussion will begin with an analysis of a prevalent phenomenon in the trilogy, the waking dream. I will also devote a significant portion of this chapter to addressing the theme of disassociation and association. Barker's depiction of disassociation is one of the

more interesting and enigmatic features of her writing, as well as being the most overlooked. It manifests in a number of forms including double vision, the division of self, and the acknowledgement of the shadowy and mysterious “other self.” Disassociation is a critical aspect of Barker’s notion of ocularity because it not only signals a transgression of limits, it is also signals of a type of binary vision: a double sightedness that traverses from one ocular station to another.

The past is a palimpsest, Prior thought. Early memories are always obscured by accumulations of later knowledge. He made himself walk to the counter again, this time remembering nothing but the moment, push his sweaty coin across the cool marble, and ask ‘What can I have for a ha’penny?’ (55)

*Pat Barker
The Eye in the Door*

Barker’s post-script in *Regeneration* states “fact and fiction are so interwoven in this book that it may help the reader to know what is historical and what is not” (251). She goes on to mention the historical individuals that inspired the fictional characters of her novels. Comments like these are an enticement to literary scholars, a dare of discovery to those who are anxious to call attention to the distinctions of fact and fiction. There has certainly been no lack of interest in this method considering that the majority of interpretation regarding Barker’s work, in one form or another, is concerned with the interplay of history and fiction. (See Ben Shephard “Digging Up the Past,” Anne Whitehead “Open to Suggestion: Hypnosis and History in Pat BARKER’S *Regeneration*”, Martin Loschnigg “The Novelist’s Responsibility to the Past: History, Myth, and the Narratives of Crisis in Pat Barker’s *Regeneration*”) Though insightful and well researched, these interpretations have left me wondering about the literary value of ornamenting novels with historical references? Most historical literary critics would counter argue that

historicising fiction provides background, texture, and actuality; realism is procured in a novel that exhibits roots in an era or the exploits of an actual person. While I agree with these assertions, I am not certain they apply to Barker's work primarily because I have never gotten the impression that Barker feels compelled to stay the course of realism. At the same time, the importance of history cannot be overlooked. Historical novel theorist Sue Peabody advocates a very different method of analyzing texts. In her work "Reading and Writing Historical Fiction," she subscribes to exploring the "liminal territory between fiction and non-fiction" in the historical novel (30). She adds that studying the historical novel requires "questioning the boundaries that separate history and fiction" (30). This means that interpretation should not just examine the points where history ends and fiction begins, but also how a novel (and history) benefits from this coalescence. Peabody suggests that history in the historical novel is not just for show, rather, when incorporated by creative and serious writers, history actually works towards the design of a text.

Keeping with Peabody's assessment, I think it is plausible that Barker's interests lie in thematicising history: organizing the historical and its players into a theme or structure and, in doing so, providing the continuity and cohesiveness that history inherently lacks. Rather than testing a fictional text versus a historical document, I am looking for the meaning behind historicization and its contribution to a unifying theme. While there are numerous methods for interpreting historical novels, my approach will address Barker's work in terms that are relevant to the themes of transgression and ocularity.

In the introduction, I made the assertion that the blending of history and fiction in Barker's novels constitutes historical transgression; that she folds historical figures and facts into a piece of fiction so that both may be experienced simultaneously by a reader. I also made the

claim that Barker's characters transgress their historical or fictive assignments. While Siegfried Sassoon, Wilfred Owen, and other historical figures occupy a place in time and history, their stations appear to become *fluid* as they transgress their respected periods and are presented anew in Barker's modern texts. Likewise, the placement of fictional characters in context with historical ones, suggests that they have become something less than fantasy. Barker's historical novel effectively blends history and fiction in such a way that the lines separating the two elements are blurred (hence the post-script). Fictive characters share space, words, and experiences with historical figures and this demonstrates a confluence or a *flowing* together of attributes and sources. I will be addressing two aspects of Barker's writing that are relevant to a discussion of ocularity and transgression, the first of which is the author's effort to illuminate events of the past. Second, I will discuss the importance of narrative point of view and how Barker's manipulation of point of view permits historical figures to transgress their historical stations.

Although there is an implication that Barker's characters are constructed in the spirit of the original figures and are based on historical accounts, which may even include events in their own writing, the accuracy of the re-construction remains highly speculative. What is perhaps more important than authenticity is that characters are given dimension, made observable and are employed to explore or explain some element of the past with the goal of illuminating a readership. In order to accomplish the feat of shedding light on history, Barker has arranged historical elements along thematic lines. She does not simply want to talk about the facts of history, rather, the consequences of historical events and how they have influenced the individual or a society as a whole.

It is no coincidence that Siegfried Sassoon's "Soldier's Declaration" prefaces the trilogy. His indictment of British leadership seems to resonate throughout the novels, in effect framing many of the events in the texts. In addition to accusing the British Government of "political errors" and "insincerities," he also calls into question the public's ability to imagine and realize combat. Sassoon suggests that if the public did or could understand combat, their "callous complacency" regarding the war would cease. With accusatory remarks, Sassoon is insinuating that both the public and governmental leadership have failed to acknowledge the realities of the conflict. The obstacle here, at least as it pertains to the general public, is one of visibility. The public cannot sympathize with combatants because they are not witnessing their plight. Complicating matters are the predominate Victorian perceptions of warfare that depict battle through stylized and highly censored rhetoric. The combination results in the war becoming unconscionable for those who do not experience it, who do not see it.

Barker reminds her audience that paralleling the Great War is a multitude of smaller wars like labor disputes, the hunt for subversionists, and persecution of homosexuals. Within these arenas there are smaller battles still; hidden within a society, they include conflicts that arise between classes, friends, families, lovers and within the individual psyche. With few exceptions, Barker passes on depicting the grand spectacle of the Great War and, instead, elects to illuminate these clandestine struggles. She educates an audience about the history of the Great War using very specific circumstances, most notably the portions of history least likely to be told, such as the existence of neurasthenic asylums and amputee wards, prisons and electric shock treatment centers. Touring the arcane, Barker takes a reader down the dark path of history with the aim of not only shedding light on these events, but also demonstrating their lasting effect. The result of this blend of history and fiction is that a reader becomes witness to either a

history that has been hidden or been purposefully ignored. Collectively, the trilogy seems to parallel the grievances predicated in Sassoon's declaration; that there has been a lack of deliberation on the repercussions of war and that society has failed to see the brutal realities of the colossal struggle. It is for this reason that the WWI poets are a central feature of the novels. Their words were the first accurate, honest depictions of the war as they witnessed first hand the violence of combat and life in the trenches. While the poetry of these authors served to criticize the indifference of the British public with sardonic humor while pitying the combatant's fate, they were also designed to inform and educate an audience as to the inhumanity of man's actions. One of the great legacies of the WWI poets is that they provided a window for the public to view the atrocities of war. Moreover, their work represents a mirror held up to the face of society allowing a government and the public to view the consequences of their own policies.

One of the ironies of historical novels is that they not only "illuminate" history but they also conceal it. Many theorists, including Roland Barthes and Hayden White, along with Peabody, have addressed this feature and attribute it to the competing goals of historians and novelists. While the historian aims to clarify the past with facts and events, historical novelists attempt to *show* a reader the past. Giving a reader a sense of the past means novelists often depart from historical facts. Fiction writers take liberties with the past to achieve their goals; this is evident in Barker's trilogy as she manipulates the point of view, in order to reflect historical events. Wilfred Owen's experiences, for example, are frequently expressed through the point of view of Lt. Prior. Shortly after Prior recovers his ability to speak at Craiglockhart, Rivers asks him what he was doing the day before he lost his memory. Prior's response and his description of his experience has a familiar ring to it: "standing up to my waist in war in a dugout in the middle of No Man's Land being bombed to buggery" (52). These comments closely resemble

Wilfred Owen's remarks about a similar incident, occurring on January 12, 1917, where he and twenty-five soldiers under his command manned an outpost in No Man's Land. In letters to his mother, Owen mentions the "low roofed stinking chamber" and the water that "tricked down the stairway and rose slowly above their knees" (Hibberd 214). Owen drew upon his experience in No Man's Land over a year after the episode when he drafted a poem entitled "The Sentry."

*Buffeting eyes and breath, snuffing the candles,
And thud! flump! thud! down the steep steps came thumping
And spushing in the flood, deluging muck,
The sentry's body; then, his rifle, handles
Of old Boche bombs, and mud in ruck on ruck.
We dredged it up, for dead, until he whined,
'O sir-my eyes,- I'm blind,- I'm blind,- I'm blind!'
Coaxing, I held a flame against his lids
And said if he could see the least blurred light
He was not blind; in time they'd get all right.
'I can't,' he sobbed. Eyeballs, huge-bulged like squids,
Watch my dreams still, - yet I forgot him there
In posting Next for duty, and sending a scout
To beg a stretcher somewhere, and flound'ring about
To other posts under the shrieking air.*

(qtd. in The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry, Ed. Jon Silkin 208-209)

“The Sentry,” perhaps more than Owen’s letters to home, becomes the inspiration for Barker’s description of Prior’s experience and, of course, images of flooding and ocularity. Additionally, the contrasts of light and darkness as the candles were extinguished along with the climactic event of the sentry being blinded, are all represented. There are other gross similarities between the two individuals made evident in the novels, that are pointed out in Dr. Campbell’s analysis of this historiazation: lower class origins, sensitive and over protective mother figures, dominant fathers, and that both served in the same company and regiment of the Manchesters. What is notable in this comparison are not the similarities between the two accounts, but that the experiences of Wilfred Owen are expressed through Lt. Prior’s point of view. The reader is receiving fragments of history specifically, through the point of view of the fictitious character, Billy Prior. Conversely, aspects of Owen’s actual life are concealed; as opposed to being associated with Owen many of these events are attributed to Prior and his experience in combat. In fact, Owen, despite being a significant figure of war, especially in regards to its literature, is often rendered invisible in Barker’s trilogy. The reader sees very little of him and what we are left with instead is a sense of his presence, his importance and of course his cry of pity.

It is Owen’s vision of the conflict that shines though in the accounts of Billy Prior. It has been my assertion that Barker’s historical novel effectively blends history and fiction in such a way that the lines separating the two elements are blurred. This constitutes an erosion of limits or boundaries. One way to view the relationship between Owen and Prior is that it operates similarly to a ground figure illusion: the production of more than one conceptual image from a single image. Figure illusions typically balance light and dark figures of two different images and the figure we see is typically darker than its background. Once both figures are discovered, a viewer is able to see both black and white images but cannot focus on the one to the exclusion

of the other. Another way of viewing the relationship between own and Prior is a slightly different version of the ground illusion called the ambiguous figure illusion, or “reversed figure.” In an ambiguous figure, a single image can be perceived in more than one way. It is intended to show two different faces connected by a confluent line. For example, the chin of one face merges with the features of another. Just as in the case of the traditional ground figure illusion, once a viewer witnesses both interpretations, it is impossible to remain focused on just one without the other one popping into your mind. Like the dark features of a ground illusion, Prior is the image we recognized first. While Prior is the central protagonist of the novels he is adjoined with the figure of Wilfred Owen. Like the figure illusion, a reader of Barker’s trilogy is presented with two confluent images, one shadowing the other. Both figuratively and literally speaking, Owen is the cause of Prior’s development, his shape, his dimension and this is because many aspects of the character of Prior have been constructed in the poet’s image. Again, similar to a ground illusion, the continuity between the two suggests a certain interdependence and, although each maintains his individual identity in the trilogy, there is a great deal of overlap. Both characters endured the same experiences in No Man’s Land, were convalesced to Craiglockhart, billeted in France and eventually advance to the Sambre Canal where, ironically, they collectively witness each other’s death. Barker incorporates specifics of Owen’s letters and poetry because they are, at least in part, a historical account of combat. The importance of Prior recalling Owen’s experiences implies that the two constitute a united image.

Though I admit the concept is somewhat esoteric, Owen and Prior’s shared experiences indicate a cohabitation of space. They operate as a unit and, in doing so, transgress any limit that would keep them from being regarded as completely separate: either strictly fictional or entirely historical. By design, the figure illusion challenges the flexibility of the mind in requiring it to

consider multiple images of which both stem from a primary image. Thus, the figure illusion is a different play on the theme of the substitutive objects and affinitive forms that were proposed in chapter two. Similarly, Barker's historical transgression, as evidenced in her manipulation of point of view, depicts a coalescence of characters, fictional and historical, and this challenges a reader to simultaneously consider the position of each. Just as in the case of the ground figure illusion, when a viewer/reader acknowledges both images and cannot focus on one to the exclusion of the other, it qualifies for inclusion into *seeing double*.

I prefaced my discussion of historical transgression, illumination, and concealment with a quote from Barker's novel in which Billy Prior compared the past to a palimpsest. I feel this concept is worthy of comment because, as noted earlier in this chapter, seeing or experiencing the past holds a special significance in Barker's trilogy. The notion that Barker's historical novel in and of itself constitutes a form of palimpsest has already been addressed in Dr. Campbell's research; however, I would like to add to this discussion by offering a decidedly visual slant to the analogy. A palimpsest, in many regards, is an ideal metaphor for the concepts of illumination and concealment. What must be remembered about a palimpsest is that it is a parchment from which writing has been partially erased at some point, usually long after the original was drafted, to make room for additional text composed in a different era. These multiple notations signal both an evolving historical record and permit multiple accounts of history to be viewed simultaneously in one document. In a palimpsest, a reader is able to see the past, alterations to this record and how these histories coincide. Of course, just as one account is made visible, other parts of a palimpsest are, as Prior states, obscured. In addition to representing a form of dialogue between historical accounts, the palimpsest is also symbolic of a

coalescence of history. Boundaries between these different models are transgressed as the versions merge to form a collective and cohesive document.

The palimpsest operates in much the same way as point of view in Barker's novels. Barker takes certain liberties with a text, such as the alterations of dates, names or theories, and the historical fragments are reorganized to create a product that retains features of the original, yet emerges as something decidedly anew. The accumulated layer of historical record adds dimension and complexity to this type of text and, in visual terms, represents a reflection of history that is superimposed upon a parchment. Likewise, the palimpsest points to the residual characteristics of history as reminder of a history's flexibility and fluidity: one account, or in Prior's case a specific memory of a past event, can resurface even though it has been erased or over written by later recollections. For Prior, the palimpsest is an indicator of accumulation. He is already recognized as being a character based on Wilfred Owen, but what is also true of Prior is that portions of his memory have been lost only to be re-written through hypnosis. Furthermore, the fugue states from which Prior suffers leave gaps in his experiences that, when learned about after the fact, forces him to return to his past and re-evaluate that which he thought he already knew. Prior, in many aspects, appears to embody the characteristics of a palimpsest. His past is undergoing incessant alterations and his memory is a work in progress that is constructed over different periods in time. All of these developments in Barker's trilogy suggest the mutability of history; that although we regard the past as being fixed, like the palimpsest, history is in actuality an evolving process that is subject to re-configuration and are not restrained by time.

I think it's the result of certain impulses rising to the surface in wartime, and having to be very formally disowned. Homosexuality, for instance. In war there's this enormous glorification of love between men, and yet at the same time it arouses anxiety. Is it the right kind of love?

Well, one way to make sure it's the right kind is to make public disapproval of the other thin crystal clear. And then there's the pleasure in killing—' (156).

*Pat Barker
The Eye in the Door*

To prepare the ground for a discussion of transgression as depicted in sexually explicit or erotic episodes in the trilogy, it is important to first address Barker's emphasis on the cultural changes occurring as a result of the war, especially in regards to its impact on traditional gender roles. Separate from the blending of fictional characters and the exploits of historical figures, there is another noteworthy form of historical transgression occurring in Barker's trilogy. The shift in the traditional roles of women, who because of war, have transitioned from being wives, fiancées, or homemakers to laborers, union members and suffrage activists signals a 'break' in the proverbial social mold. While the social structure depicted in these novels still generally constitutes masculine hegemony, there are certainly significant exceptions to the insistence of maintaining traditional models.

Barker seems to suggest that traditional roles are important as long as it is feasible to sustain their persistence. The war, however, has re-organized British society's social architecture. It is a catalyst for change and, where there were once definitive lines separating categorical roles, there is now flexibility. This transition exhibits a type of fluidity, as it resembles an ebb and flow of assignments and duties: the male work force leaves their jobs to fight in France and women are hired in their place. The results of these changes are twofold; first, women have very quickly become an essential part of the war effort and secondly, both their self-perception and how they are viewed by men has altered. Additionally, there is the general feeling among women in the novels that their new duties are a release from their often confining or even oppressive traditional duties. Characters like the Ropers, Mrs. Thorpe, and

Mrs. Riley along, with the munitions worker Sarah Lumb, serve as reminders that woman's role in society has been modified. It is interesting to note that although the Great War has precipitated a crisis for men, as they are either serving as combatants or attempting to escape conscription, the war has had the opposite effect on women. In contrast to pre-war years, women now find themselves working relatively high paying jobs and are, of course, benefiting from the rewards. Consequently, similarly to their male predecessors, they have joined labor groups and unions demanding equal pay and treatment by their government and employers. In short, women have been empowered and are experiencing new found freedoms that either did not exist or were forbidden prior to the war. I have interpreted the tearing down of pre-existing social categories as constituting a deterioration of solid outlines. This, of course, translates into a version of transgression and the analyses of specific episodes in the trilogy seem to support this assertion.

Prior's conversation with his mother in *The Eye in the Door* represents a convergence of not only the themes of transitioning gender roles, but also transgression and ocularity. Before leaving his parents' house, the talk turns to the topic of female roles and women's rights especially as they pertain to a neighbor, Mrs. Thorpe, who has recently become employed as a munitions factory worker. Because of her recent affluence, Thorpe is despised by Mr. Prior, who refers to the woman as a "mutton dressed up as a lamb" (93). What incenses Mr. Prior even more is her new false teeth. Able to now afford dentures, Mrs. Thorpe's blinding white smiles seem to sum up the many social changes that are occurring in the country: women working, assuming the roles previously held by men, becoming independent. Coinciding with this conversation is a very telling digression.

Billy Prior dips into his own past, recalling a conversation that he had years before with Hettie Roper, the subject of which was a "passionate, heated talk, about socialism, women's

rights, spiritualism, and Edward Carpenter's ideas on male comradeship" (94). Paralleling his reflection of the conversation is the memory of the beach where they walked: "All day he had been wanting to touch her, and had not dared do it. The sun lingered, tense and swollen, then spilled itself on the water" (96). As indicated by the narration, the beach scene is one of tension and awareness. It demonstrates that Prior feels there is a connection between the content of both his mother's and Hettie's discussion and the memory of his desire. These issues in some fashion appear to be co-mingling in Prior's psyche. Also, among the notable features of this passage is the ocular symbolism. The sun is an omnipresent, and perhaps even intrusive fixture, and its *lingering* is suggestive of its power to observe and expose. It is reminiscent of other lingering ocular substitutes in the novel such as mirrors, doors, and even the secret agent, Spragge. These associations working in combination with the fluidity of light is a prelude to the act of transgression that will invariably take place later that evening between Prior and Mrs. Riley.

As Prior strikes out into the street, he encounters none other than Mrs. Thorpe. Identified by her "lard white breasts the size of footballs," she is accompanied by Mrs. Riley (*Eye* 95). As Riley does her best to proposition Prior, while flashing her incredible white smiles, Prior recalls that both women had suckled him as a child when his mother was too ill to provide milk. Barker's repetition of the term "whiteness" is emblematic of a number of things. First, it is—as Prior's father noted—evidence of Mrs. Thorpe's new status and that she has transcended both her poverty stricken state and the oppressiveness that coincided with being a female in the early 20th century. Second, the flashing whiteness is reminiscent of Foucault's description of transgression and his comparison to its passage as a "flash of lightning." This term's proximity to other descriptions including "cries of delight," and "hugging and kissing" tends to suggest that the women who once suckled Prior now view him as a potential catch. Their interest in him is

presumably sexual. As noted in chapter two, the pattern appears as such that whiteness signals exposure, objectification, even power and it is not only located in the “white breasts” of Mrs. Thorpe but also the light/liquidity in the flash of whiteness.

What is occurring in this passage is a convergence of cooperative metaphorical chains of permutational objects and fluid media. All the figural displacements are present including light, as represented in the flashing white teeth and breasts. These displacements are consistent with the eye in that they are white and demonstrate rotundity. Furthermore, milk, which is of course a product of these round objects, is a substitution for vitreous fluid. In its entirety, the converging metaphorical assignments constitute the image system. They are all based upon the eye and, as predicted, eventually denote transgression, or the overflowing of boundaries. While the tendency is to begin drawing inferences as to whether or not breast feeding children that are not your own somehow constitutes transgression, a reader will not be forced to speculate very long. Before the end of the chapter Prior, and Mrs. Riley engage in sexual intercourse. Overt use of ocular substitutes and avatars of fluidity punctuate the scene. It signals a climax of sorts of the entire succession of images when Prior lowers “his head in pure delight, feeling every taboo in the whole fucking country crash round his ears” and, for a second time in his life, sucks Mrs. Riley’s breasts (*Eye* 118).

The encounter between Prior and Mrs. Riley raises the question of why must the pair’s interaction be regarded as transgressive? First, there are Oedipal implications to Prior’s behavior. Prior, to some extent, considers Mrs. Riley a type of surrogate mother. He exists because of her and reminds us that babies, who were frequently fed condensed milk as a substitute, “regularly died” (*Eye* 96). Because he views Mrs. Riley as a mother figure, Prior feels there are certain boundaries that should not be breached. Interestingly enough, Prior

acknowledges these boundaries and then celebrates their transgression. As demonstrated in his delight, Prior regards this transgression to be a victory over the culturally inscribed boundaries that would deem it wrong, inappropriate, or abnormal. He is euphoric about this turn of events for the very same reason we, as readers, find it discomfiting or taboo. Also, it was suggested in chapter two that transgression signaled a transitioning sense of reality. This holds true in Prior's case. By once again suckling the breast of Mrs. Riley, Prior's repetitive behavior constitutes him existing in both the past and present, as a child and adult, and as a son and lover. The breast as an ocular substitute symbolizes the source of displacement and like the eye/gob-stopper that he associates with Tower's eye, Prior cannot resist putting it in his mouth and thereby 'taking in' the traversing ocular affinitive.

'I'll be as frank as you like. I did have nightmares when I first got back from France. I don't have them now.'

'And the hallucinations?'

He found this more difficult. 'It was just that when I woke up, the nightmares didn't stop. So I used to see...' A deep breath. 'Corpses. Men with half their faces shot off, crawling across the floor' (12).

*Pat Barker
Regeneration*

Revisiting Patrick Ffrench's statement regarding avatars of fluidity and its function of signaling what he considers a "liquefaction of reality" (97). Images of fluidity operate both on a phenomenological and metatextual level in Bataille's *History of the Eye*. I have adopted and applied Ffrench's claims to Barker's texts along with his assertion that the transgressions of words, as they exceed or are substituted for their intended meaning, mirror episodes of transgressive behavior. Both words and actions signal a "breakdown of solid outlines" as they fluctuate in purpose and/or position. What Ffrench also notes of Bataille's novel is that the

oscillation of the eye from one form to another creates a sense of confusion or a “vertiginousness.” As mentioned in chapter two, I believe this concept is applicable to Barker’s work. What Ffrench appears to suggest is that sight is crucial in constructing reality and determining what is real or substantive. When the eye is displaced or confusedly mixed-up with other affinitive objects, perception becomes complicated. This sense of vertiginousness is represented in Barker’s trilogy by the employment of migrating ocular substitutes in conjunction with avatars of fluidity, the intersection of which implies a ruined architecture and seemingly disassociated experiences flowing together. Using Barker’s text as an example, Prior’s sexual liaison with Mrs. Riley illustrates a combination of experiences. Prior’s acknowledgement that the interaction is taboo suggests that his behavior represents a confluence of impressions, those of his infancy and adult life. The true reality, of course, is that there is nothing taboo in Mrs. Riley and Prior’s interaction and that viewing it as such is a matter of perception.

The trilogy presents numerous episodes that challenge both characters and readers alike to differentiate between what is real versus what is a construct of the imagination. Many of the characters’ experiences appear to be a compression of these two elements, and the line separating them is either blurred or non-existent. This is especially true of neurasthenics that suffer debilitating nightmares and hallucinations because of the war. Although these images do not exist outside of the mind, the sensory experiences are so severe or ‘lifelike’ that they become crippling. Complicating the division of nightmares and hallucinations from reality is the fact that most of the dreams and images are based on actual events. For example, one of Rivers’s patients, David Burns, is tormented by his memory of landing head first on a German corpse whose gas-filled belly had ruptured on impact expelling “decomposing human flesh into his

mouth and nose” (*Reg.* 19). Burns relives this experience nightly and awakes vomiting. Unable to keep food down, he resembles a “skin-and-bone casing for a tormented alimentary canal” (19).

Burn’s vivid dreams signal a moment of transgression. They suggest that his subconscious, containing the horrifying persistent images of the rupturing swollen corpse, is *spilling* over into his conscious mind. Burns’s acute visualization of the memory results in him living in both past and present, often simultaneously. Similarly, the dreams also represent a merger of two spaces: his memory in the trenches of the German dead and his current struggle to regain control and perspective on the event. Nearing the end of *Regeneration*, Burns’s transgression appears to climax in what might be regarded as a combination of a dream and hallucination. In a half-dreaming state from which he could not awake, Burns ventures out into the Suffolk marsh in pursuit of the Martellow tower surrounded by its ominous “dank high moat” (*Reg.* 171). The event, which coincidentally occurs during a violent North Sea storm, is detailed with numerous symbols of fluidity, including descriptions of “silver rain” and crashing waves that expel “blown spume” upon the faces of the characters. When Rivers finally locates Burns “huddled against the moat wall,” he is gazing up at the tower that has become visible in the moonlight and “gleamed white like the bones of a skull” (*Reg.* 179).

For Burns and other neurasthenics, the nightmares and hallucinations are an intense visualization of the past. Rivers’s claim that neurasthenia is the result of repression and erosion takes on new meaning when placed in the context of transgression. Both the nerves of neurasthenics and the patient’s ability to limit the effect of traumatic experiences are deteriorating: specifically, patients are growing increasingly unable to secure or maintain a boundary between the realities of their past and those of the present. The episode in the marsh is fraught with disorientation and this chaos is coupled with the transitioning light as the moon

flows in and out of cloudbanks. The receding light, blown rain and crashing waves work to create visual disarrangement. The also underscore the previous images of liquidity, associated with Burns, such as incessant vomiting and the rupturing distended belly of the German corpse. What can be concluded from this *mélange* is that structure and order have been assailed. There has been an erosion of limits and this has resulted in the release of the repressed experiences in Burns's psyche. As if to drive this point home, the next morning as Rivers and Burns recover from the ordeal and casually eat breakfast "chasing the last dribbled egg yokes from their plates," Mrs. Burrell, the housekeeper takes a look at the disheveled pair and exclaims 'Cracked, did you?' (*Reg.* 181).

The waking-dreaming state that Burns experiences in Suffolk evolves into a prevalent theme in the trilogy. Prior, Manning, Sassoon, and Rivers all provide various descriptions of this phenomenon. Burns recounts that "he knew he was awake and yet...it [the corpse] was still there," is indicative of the bizarre, even uncanny blend of actual and imagined images (*Reg.* 180). It is Rivers's account of the waking-dream that is perhaps most notable to a discussion of ocularity. What is known of Rivers is that he suffers from an inability to visualize his memory, presumably because he has endured a traumatic event and has "blinded his mind's eye" so as not to recall the unsettling images. As a result, he is unable to visualize any aspect of his past, and only under two conditions does he have the power to *see* his previous experiences: when suffering from high fever and in the transitioning state between being awake and partially asleep. One such incident occurs shortly following Rivers's observation of Dr. Yealand's harsh tactics in the electrode room. Rivers' ability to "intensely visualize" the procedure from beginning to end later, while in a waking-dream state, provides some indication that his memory is an expression of transgression. It suggests that the limits or barriers normally imposed to restrict

visualization tend to erode in this transitioning state and, similar to other depictions of transgressive episodes, ocular symbolism is incorporated to illustrate the fluid movement of images from past to present. Several correlations can be drawn between Rivers's half-dream and the events that transpired in the electrode room. It is important to note that Rivers does not remember just any event in his history; he visually recalls a scene that incorporates the use of overt ocular symbolism and visual dissymmetry. As noted in the first chapter, Yealland's curing procedure constitutes a panoptic scenario, but what is also evident is that the doctor's prolonged shock treatment aims to gradually erode Callan's ability to resist conformity. Rivers' half-dream vision becomes a nexus of ocular symbolism and deteriorating limits. The shared imagery and themes establish a confluence between the two episodes. Not only are the two instances framed using ocular substitutes such as eyes, whiteness and the glowing "circular light around the battery," but also the *unlimited* ocular power depicted in the electrode room can be correlated with Rivers's inability to repress or *limit* his visual memory (*Reg.* 231). Each signifies a transgression of boundaries, the first being Yealland's obligatory insistence that Callan abandon his individual protest; later, albeit less forcibly, Rivers succumbs to visual memory, a power he has attempted to repress.

Siegfried had always coped with the war by being two people: the anti-war poet and pacifist; the bloodthirsty, efficient company commander. The dissociation couldn't be called pathological, since experience gained in one state was available: it was the serving officer's experience that furnished the raw material, the ammunition, if you liked, for the poems (233).

Pat Barker

The Eye in the Door

Following his exhausting session with Billy Prior, during which Rivers permits his patient to psychoanalyze him, the doctor reflects on the sense of loss he feels because of his inability to visualize his memories. Speculating upon his own past and behavior, Rivers suspects

that one of the lasting effects of this deficiency is that it “had occasioned a deep split” in his psyche, between the “rational, analytical cast of his mind and his emotions” (141). Just as Prior points out, in an effort to contend and adapt to the effects of a traumatic episode, Rivers both blinds himself to the event and divides, or sections-off, the portions of his memory that are too painful to contemplate. Consequently, the separation precipitates a deep internal division or what Rivers regards as a disassociation of personality.

Disassociation, inner-divisions, or emotional detachment are a common motif throughout the trilogy. They appear to take two distinct forms in Barker’s texts: that which is regarded as the healthy suspension of empathy, demonstrated in the treatments of either psychiatrists or physicians, and the pathological, as exhibited by the fugue states suffered by Lt. Prior. An example of a healthy form of disassociation would include Dr. Yealland’s eclectic shock treatment of Callan. Though Yealland inflicts considerable pain with the electrodes, he is unwavering in his objective and seemingly unmoved by Callan’s suffering. Methodical, even machine like in dispensing discomfort, Rivers notes that Yealland appears detached from the proceeding. Likewise, Dr. Head’s method of evaluating brain damaged combatants by inflicting similar wounds on cadavers, and then removing the top of the skull to analyze the trauma, requires a “suspension” of empathy.

Prior’s pathological disassociation stems from his inability to reconcile his behavior or experiences resulting in fugue states and the emergence of a malignant double. There are similarities, of course, between the healthy and pathological disassociations, most notably they are each employed as a way of contending with disturbing images and establishing a distance between the self and these stimuli. Disassociation, as Rivers describes the phenomenon, suggests that the personality or inner-self is a composition of parts. The psyche is capable of

limiting or repressing parts of the mind that feel emotion and attachment to other humans and, instead, express the rational, ordered or objective features of the personality. Some characters in Barker's trilogy, Dr. Head and Dr. Yealland included, appear to achieve a balance of these to distinct portions of the brain. They prevent themselves from becoming emotionally involved with their scientific experiments by rationalizing their often-cruel actions. For other characters, however, despite their attempts to disassociate themselves from their emotions, appear less successful at establishing distance or attaining a healthy balance. Rivers, for example, exhibits sincere empathy or *association* with other characters. In contrast to Dr. Yealland, while in the electrode room, Rivers identifies with Callan's struggle and is almost unable to continue watching the procedure. His admission that while observing "all the worst memories of his stammer came crowding into his mind," is particularly relevant because it evidences him, in effect, *seeing* himself in Callan's position: helpless, victimized and objectified. Rather than demonstrating detachment or disassociation, Rivers exhibits a connectedness to those he treats. Like his patients, he considers himself a victim or survivor of some traumatic event.

I believe that disassociation and association can be addressed in terms of visuality and that they are considered an expression of perspective, particularly as it pertains to how one views himself in relation to others. In an effort to explore this concept in Barker's novels, I have turned to the work of Arthur Frank who, in his text entitled *The Wounded Storyteller*, claims that our perspective of others originates through self-perception. Frank notes that notions of disassociation and association stem from viewing the corporeal body as either part of the cognitive self or separate from it, functioning as a disassociated unit. This, in short, translates into "do I *have* a body or *am* I a body" (Frank 33). As an example of disassociation, Frank describes a patient who has discovered mysterious inflammation in his lymph nodes and must

attend to his body on a daily basis. Above all, the subject resents the feeling of “having to be embodied” (33). This suggests that the patient *disassociates* his corporeal illness with his cognitive ‘I.’ In contrast, other individuals consider the body and mind to be unified or *associated* and that there can be no distinction between the corporeal and cognitive; they act in concert as one functioning unit.

Frank asserts that the same principles apply to what he regards as “other-relatedness” (35). This is a way of exploring and explaining the relationship between our bodies and other people. While some individuals may appear to inherently share emotions, sympathize, or identify with others, associative “empathic relations” tend to manifest in individuals who have experienced the same or a similar traumatic event. Frank notes that Albert Schweitzer, a survivor of WWI, considers this association to be a “brotherhood of those who bear the mark of pain” (35). He regards this “brotherhood” to constitute a *dyadic* body, stating that “dyadic relation is the recognition that even though the other is a body outside of mine, this other *has to do with me, as I with it*” (35). As it pertains to visuality, dyadic relations suggest that even though the *other* is separate, the bond that empathetic relations create suggest that they are perceived to be one in the same. Thus, Rivers is reminded of his stutter when Callan is being electrocuted because he both identifies and has experienced the painful and traumatic process of learning to speak under force and coercion.

Frank proposes that trauma “presents an opening to becoming a dyadic body” and interpret this opening or breach as permitting individuals to figuratively *flow* beyond the boundaries of their own bodies and associate with the bodies of others. The dyadic body also presents an occasion to unify the concepts of ocularity and transgression. If trauma presents a breach in limit, then visuality is the medium through which experience is shared and is able to

flow from one metaphorical space to another. Likewise, Rivers seeing himself from the perspective of Callan who is tormented because he could not formulate his vowels, is an indicator that an ocular station has again migrated. This matter of *perspective* may account for Rivers's kinder or gentler methods of treatment as well as giving new meaning to the panoptic concept that authoritative power is bound up or "locked in" to the same fate as the subjects they observe. Yealland's approach of punishing the corporeal body as a way of treating the mind is traumatic for Rivers because, in this scenario, given his dyadic tendencies, the pain would be self-inflicted.

Conversely, treating the mind in relatively peaceful psychiatric sessions as a way of altering behavior is more conducive to Rivers' dyadic relationships that he shares with other bodies. Given his tendency for association, it is predictable that some of the treatment that Rivers directs towards his patients will be re-directed upon himself. Prior concluding that Rivers must have been raped or beaten in his father's vicarage and that this has prompted the doctor to "blind his mind's eye," represents a type of *spilling* over of associated bodies. As a reminder, this scene is framed with Rivers' relinquishing control of the psychiatric session by allowing Prior to sit in his chair and begin asking questions about the doctor's past. The trading of places in the session equates to acting out of the associated relationship. Once seated in the doctor's chair, Prior caricaturizes Rivers by "resting his chin on his clasped hands" and deconstructing his past (*Eye* 137). Consequently, it is discovered, or at least suspected, that like Prior, Rivers has endured a similar traumatic event.

Rivers is not alone in experiencing dyadic relationships. It must be remembered that following his "Soldier's Declaration," Sassoon is sent to Craiglockhart and assigned to Rivers to be persuaded to return to combat, which equates to 'correcting' his perception of the war.

Though he never retracts his protest, what seems to be the deciding factor in Sassoon's willingness to return to service is his immense sympathy and association with his fellow combatants, along with the guilt of knowing he is out of harms way while they are suffering in the trenches.

Edging along the railing towards him, Prior became aware of the slowness in his movements, as if he were wading through glue. He saw himself, in his mind's eye, go up to the man, tap him on the shoulder, wait for him to turn, and the face that turned towards him... was his own (185).

*Pat Barker
The Eye in the Door*

While it may be concluded that association denotes migrating ocularity and transgression, dissociation also contains transgressive features. Prior's pathological disassociation referred to as fugue states manifests into a nearly complete division of his personality. Like Rivers's disassociation, Prior's inner division arises out of conflict. Whether it was witnessing his parents' "rows" as a child or experiencing a divided allegiance between his duties as an officer who is sent to spy upon his own people, Prior's inability to resolve his inner disputes precipitates a deep split in his psyche. He alternates between two distinct personalities: the formidable even violent, ambitious and unsympathetic Prior that he claims was born in the trenches, and the emotional, sensitive and weaker version that suffers from neurasthenia. Rather than comparing these two states of consciousness, it is more relevant to the themes of ocularity and transgression to focus on the actual transition from one state to the other.

Rivers suspects Prior's disassociation is a form of self-hypnosis. The states are consistent with other versions of disassociation in that it is a way to cope with unsettling events. It is suspected Prior had originally adopted his alternative consciousness as a way to contend with his parents' fights. Prior recalling that he *associated* the traumatic rows of his parents with the

“shine on the glass of the street lamp” is an important acknowledgement (248 *Eye*). The light from the lamp appears to not only be a trigger to the fugue states, but also establishes a relationship between his dividing personalities and images of light / liquidity. Similar to other episodes that depict transgression, the combination of ocular images and liquidity signal a deterioration of boundaries or a breach in limit. Once the metaphorical images that indicate Prior’s disassociated states are recognized, it is then possible to go back into the novels and locate the instances in which he fluidly moves from one state of consciousness to the alternative.

Continuity between these scenes is perhaps best constructed using Sara Lumb’s account of Prior’s behavior. The evening the couple spends in the Palm House is littered with images of ocularity and fluidity. An initial indicator that Prior is transitioning to his disassociated self is when Sara notes that he is distant and combative. The windows of the house are “misted up” and a “white light spreads over everything” (*Eye* 183). Adding to the ocular imagery, Prior notes that the atmosphere is oppressive and that he feels “exposed” (183). His sense of vulnerability turns out to be justified as he recognizes the image of the ministry spy, Spragge standing in “flood lit, white light of the dome” observing his movements (183). The converging ocular metaphors and images of fluidity climax with Prior tapping the man whom he believed was Spragge on the shoulder only to see his own face on the figure. Sara’s recognition that Prior is in “one of his moods” is an indication that his disposition has undergone some form of transition. Prior’s change to his disassociated self is marked by descriptions ocular images, like the gaze of Spragge who, consequently like Prior is a spy. These images are coupled with Prior feeling exposed, as if he is on display, and numerous avatars of fluidity. As with other episodes that depict transgression, Barker underscores her character’s transformation with fluid images and symbols of ocularity.

Prior coming face to face with himself, in effect *seeing* himself from beyond the limits of his body, is a further indication that both migrating ocularity and transgressive dyadic relationships are occurring. Later, Sara remarks that she recalls Prior behaving similarly when the couple made love on the beach. Upon a re-examination of this scene, it is discovered that many of same ocular and fluid images are present. Prior and Sara walk across the white sandy beach. The sun is past its height and a thunderstorm is closing in. The entire scene is bathed in a “yellow light” just before “lightening flickers,” illuminating Sara’s yellow skin and a few “splashes of rain” land on Prior’s upturned face (*Reg.* 130). Once again, just as in the case of Mrs. Riley and her “flashing white smiles,” the flickering lightning is symbolic of a victory over limits.

In addition to Prior being in a disassociated state, the beach scene marks the occasion where he is successful at cajoling Sara into making love. Coinciding with this activity is Prior’s memory of France and that, while “coming out of the line,” he and his companions would discuss their sexual experiences with women (*Reg.* 130). His ability to draw correlations between France and sex are well documented. Upon their first psychiatric session, Prior disclosed that going ‘over the top’ in an attack make him feel *sexy* (*Reg.* 78). This admission reveals that he often does not differentiate between impressions. Memories, images, and sensations are mixed and this suggests that any boundary that once existed, which would keep them separate, has deteriorated. Furthermore, both retiring from the line with his comrades and going over the top into No Man’s Land constituted a release: a sense of freedom and liberation from the restrictive and oppressive trenches. This same sense of release is demonstrated in Prior’s lovemaking and is, perhaps, why each is described in such a way that they signal an act of

transgression. Collectively, these episodes constitute an image pattern, which in turn serves to link other instances of transgression together.

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