

The Transference of War-induced Trauma and the Collective Memory of Trauma in *Another World*¹

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Abstract Pat Barker, one of the most important contemporary British novelists, has been dedicating herself to the depiction of various kinds of trauma throughout her oeuvre. In her novel *Another World*, she explores how war-induced trauma is transferred from the older generation Geordie to the younger generation Nick. Through Barker's narration of the transference of war-induced trauma from one generation to the next, it can be seen that WWI has brought great sufferings to the British people who have been involved with the Great War and personal trauma engendered by it could lead to communal or collective memory of trauma of the whole nation.

Key words transference; war-induced trauma; collective memory of trauma

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Pat Barker is the author of 11 novels written within a span of 29 years. Although she is not a prolific writer, her oeuvre has earned her a high literary reputation and she “is situated among the most important novelists of the twentieth century

and into the twenty-first century in Britain” (Brannigan 2). By means of her pithy narration, Barker probes into the damage that individuals, communities, and, indeed, the British nation have suffered, showing her concern with the postwar British society. In spite of various settings of her stories — whether in the late-twentieth-century urban centers or in the trenches, war hospitals, or sanatoriums of the First World War, Barker concentrates her attention on the delineation of trauma invariably across her writing, which is summed up by Brannigan as, “one of the themes which runs throughout Barker’s oeuvre is the vulnerability of human society, and the vulnerability of human life” (9).

The Transference of War-induced Trauma in *Another World*

In her novel *Another World*, Barker explores her frequently-dwelt-on topic, war-induced trauma, and how such trauma is successfully transferred from the older generation Geordie, a WWI veteran, to the his grandson Nick who has never been to the battlefield.

Trauma, as Allan Young has remarked, “is a disease of time” (7). As time passes by, many things can be forgotten. However, trauma induced by wars can last forever even after those who have been to the battlefield pass away. War-induced trauma can be transferred from the older generation to the next through words, emotions and experience: “Transference of traumatic responses can continue for generations. Family relationships and the children of survivors are deeply affected by their parents’ experience, as manifested in depression, mistrust, and emotional constriction brought on by excessive parental suffering and attempts to control their children” (Vickroy 19). In *Another World*, the transmissibility of trauma from the older generation to the younger is well exemplified in the case of Geordie and Nick. Geordie, a 101-year-old veteran, goes to the First World War together with his own brother Harry, but returns alone. Upon his return to his home country, he has always been molested by the recurrent nightmares of seeing the horrifying and screaming mouth of his own severely-wounded brother Harry, into whose heart he stabs a knife to stop his pain. He repeats the nightmare even decades after the end of the war, especially on the verge of his death. To him, the effect of the Great War shows no sign of being laid to rest, especially when the screaming mouth of his dead brother keeps recurring to trouble him in his nightmare: “Harry disappears, bit by bit, like the Cheshire cat, until only the screaming mouth is left. Night after night he feels himself falling towards that mouth” (*Another World* 146). War-induced trauma is like the screaming mouth of Harry that is big enough to swallow him. The pain and torture engendered after killing his own brother with his own

hand and bearing witness to so many brutalities on the battlefield have become the murder-induced haunting in the present and an ever-lasting trauma in his memory that can never be erased.

The striking images of “mouths” have been adopted by Barker in her later novels to symbolize trauma and horror at least three times. In *Regeneration*, she depicts for the first time the image of the mouth of a severely traumatized soldier Callan as he is being given the treatment of electroshock to be restored to speech. Callan has lost the ability to speak after being shell-shocked on the battlefield. When he is sent to the hospital to be cured of his aphasia, Dr. Yealland applies electroshock on him so as to force him to articulate a sound. The tortured “mouth” of the speechless Callan being treated by Dr. Yealland with the use of electroshock therapy lingers in Dr. Rivers’ nightmare and is referred to “an oral rape” by him (208): “He was in the electrical room, a pharyngeal electrode in his hand, a man’s open mouth in front of him ... For a second the dream was so real that he went on seeing the chair, the battery, the tortured mouth” (207). The image of Harry’s screaming mouth in *Another World* again becomes the symbol of trauma as it represents pain and sufferings of a dying man Harry after being severely wounded on the battlefield. For the rest of his life since his return, Geordie has been having the same nightmare and he always wakes up screaming. Worse than that, he used to wet himself in bed before he wakes up. His guilt of killing Harry seizes him and never makes him feel alleviated. Only before he dies does he manage to muster his courage to tell Nick, “I killed Harry” (*Regeneration* Trilogy 164). In her presentation of trauma in *Double Vision*, Barker uses for the third time the singularly disturbing images of mouths in Goya’s paintings to represent the carnage of war and an outraged conscience in the face of death and destruction. “Goya is depicted to be exemplary of an artist committed to the ethical representation of war and terror...The mouths in his paintings cry out to be heard, and produce a roar which cannot be ignored” (Brannigan 159). By choosing the paintings of Goya which have become testimonies of the horrors of wars, she wants to form a contrast between the terror of the carnage represented in Goya’s paintings and the terror of the wars the war reporter Stephen covers. The images of the mouths depicted in three novels, which symbolize man’s pain and trauma when confronted with wars, have become one arresting feature in Barker’s later fiction that cannot be ignored or forgotten. When people are in pain, they will cry out by instinct. By creating different “mouths” that have become the equivalents or synonyms of trauma, she successfully conveys both the physical and mental sufferings of her characters.

Barker not only employs the images of mouths to represent trauma, but also

applies the image of a mirror in *Another World* to symbolize the transference of trauma from one generation to the next. The transference of Geordie's trauma onto Nick is testified in the discovery of Geordie's shaving mirror in Nick's bathroom after the funeral. The mirror, which accompanies Geordie throughout the war and is subsequently used for shaving by him every morning, becomes part of Nick's inheritance from his grandfather. As a legacy of Geordie's object from the war that has been inherited by Nick after his grandfather's death, the mirror symbolizes the passing of war-induced trauma from the old to the young, as expressed by Whitehead in his book, "In the subtle movement of the mirror from Geordie's bathroom to Nick's, Barker symbolizes the transmission of Geordie's trauma to the next generation, so that his terrible secret continues to haunt and disturb the family line" (20).

The mirror, small as it is, serves as an indispensable object in conveying the trans-generational trauma among two generations. Throughout the novel, there have been quite a few descriptions of the mirror at three different stages. As a child, when Nick asks his grandfather to take down the mirror so that he can look into it, only to find that "the reflection that peered back at him was blurry, swollen, distorted by the irregularities in the metal, never the clear reflection you got in glass" (*Another World* 57). When his grandfather is lying in bed on the verge of death, Nick looks into the steel mirror and finds that "it doesn't reflect his face" (*Another World* 164). And immediately after the death of his grandfather, he walks slowly along to the bathroom and looks again into the mirror, finding himself estranged from the reflection: "the face that stares back at him is nothing like his own" (*Another World* 257). The description of the steel mirror at three vital periods is intended by Barker to reflect the ubiquity of trauma in both Geordie and Nick's life. When Nick is young, what he sees in the mirror is something blurry, swollen and distorted, which bespeaks that he cannot truly understand his grandfather's trauma as a child. He is not old enough to perceive the pain of coming back from the war. Even before and after his grandfather's death, Nick is still unable to see clearly his own reflection in the mirror, which symbolizes that he does not want to experience the same trauma as experienced by his grandfather. Nick's inability to see clearly his own reflection in the mirror and his failure to recognize his own image in the mirror suggest that the younger generation refuses to take over the burden of the traumatic past of the older generation as it is so hard and painful to shoulder.

To Geordie, the mirror is quite significant as it accompanies him from the war until his death, "The mirror had gone with him through France, but it couldn't have

been sentiment that bound him to it, for he avoided everything else to do with the war” (*Another World* 57). It is a riddle why Geordie keeps only the mirror with him while avoids everything else to do with the war. He remains silent about his war experiences, especially about his extremely gut-wrenching memories of how he stabs to death his severely wounded brother: “As a young man just back from France, Geordie refused to talk about the war, and avoided all reminders of it... refused all questions. When obliged to speak stammered so badly he could barely make himself understood” (*Another World* 82). Geordie’s silence about his past reveals his agony of touching upon the topic of fighting in the war, and when he cannot avoid speaking about it, he chooses to stammer, which makes his words hard to be comprehended. It is clear that he does not want to be understood as he deliberately keeps his past a secret from others. He keeps silent about the war and even when he walks, he would walk a long way just to avoid the war monument. However, despite his attempt to forget about the war, he keeps the mirror with him until he dies. Here Barker deliberately employs the mirror to serve as a connection and junction between the traumas of two generations. As the mirror enters into the life of Nick after his grandfather’s death as a legacy from the latter, the trauma of the old is successfully grafted onto the young despite his refusal and resistance to perceive his grandfather’s trauma. He has never been prepared to accept what has been implanted into his memory by force, just as “he failed to prepare him for the annihilating abstractions of Thiepval” (*Another World* 72). It is interesting to learn that Barker, by writing about the solidity of the mirror, intends to imply the impossibility of trauma to be laid to rest: “it (the mirror) didn’t break. Granddad dropped it on the floor once, to show that it didn’t break” (*Another World* 72). Usually mirrors are easy to be broken. However, in the novel, the mirror cannot be broken even when it is deliberately dropped on the floor. The unbreakable mirror symbolizes the long-lasting power of trauma that refuses to be elided from the memories of the traumatized.

Through the image of the mirror being inherited by Nick after his grandfather’s death, Barker explores the significance of trans-generational war-induced trauma from the older generation to the younger, which has become a reality in the post-war British society. The transmission of trauma among generations is not only shown in her adoption of images, but also explicitly related by Barker in the novel. Before Nick feels his grandfather’s trauma, Nick finds it hard to communicate with him about the First World War. His main access to the war is through his visit to the war cemeteries in France with his grandfather, after which he is greatly affected by his grandfather’s shocking experiences at Thiepval. This very visit serves as a

direct vehicle for the transference of his grandfather's past trauma to him, where the traumatic memories are transplanted into him, "Geordie was attempting to graft his memories on to Nick — that's what the visit was about — and perhaps, in spite of Nick's resistance, he'd come close to succeeding" (*Another World* 74).

Although Nick has resisted keeping his grandfather company to France for many years, he has no reason to refuse it this time for if he doesn't go with his grandfather to the cemetery in France, probably there won't be any more chances as his grandfather is already 101 and is becoming older and weaker, "No time for a man of Geordie's age to be travelling, but they both knew this would be his last time, and that if they didn't seize the chance to go together then, they would never go at all. Granddad's last, Nick's first, visit" (*Another World* 72). Geordie's visit to the war cemeteries digs out something painful in him and it seems never possible for his trauma to be resolved, especially when he stands there looking up at his brother Harry's name, "his lips moved, causing Nick to wonder what could be left to say after so many years" (*Another World* 72). His seeing of his brother's name becomes the return of the repressed to his once traumatized mind. The past traumatic memories and haunting intrude into his present life like flood again, unstoppable, despite his unwillingness to relive it.

Geordie's reaction to the discovery of his brother's name on the cemetery monument is painful, similar to what Barker has expressed on her visit to the First World War grave sites in France, "Once you find and identify a name that is known to you, it opens the past in a different kind of way" (*On the Ghost Road*). The experience of seeing a familiar name on the cemetery monument is like peeling the scar off a newly-recovered wound. As the third generation of his grandfather, Nick's visit to France seems to be a continuation of the war-induced trauma of his grandfather. As he follows his grandfather, it seems that the trauma of his grandfather has been transferred to him, "Following in Geordie's footsteps, he walked across the grass and up the steps to the stone of sacrifice, feeling the weight of that experience heavy on the back of his neck" (*Another World* 73). Through the lines, it is easy to detect how Nick gradually perceives and understands his grandfather's trauma after his visit to the cemetery in France. His being forced to accept his grandfather's trauma is a heavy burden for him to shoulder. After Geordie dies, Nick continues to relive his grandfather's trauma for the rest of his life.

What's more, Barker skillfully represents the transmission of trauma from one generation to the next through the depiction of three cases of fratricide in *Another World*. The murder of his brother Harry by Geordie on the battlefield is

doubled in the later discovery of the murder in the Fanshawe family that takes place in the house, which Nick newly moves into. The uncovering of the painting of the Fanshawe family on the wall leads to the revelation of the murder of one toddler James by his half siblings Robert and Muriel who once live in the same house almost eighty years ago. The fratricide in the Fanshawe family parallels the subsequent one to befall Nick's youngest son Jasper by his half siblings Gareth and Miranda. Luckily enough, the fratricide in Nick's family is interrupted at the right moment and prevented from happening. The "coincidence" of similar fratricide that occurs in three families is by no means a coincidence in her novel. By relating on the three cases of fratricide that take place within a gap of eight decades apart, she implies the concomitance of trauma in the society and the possibility of trauma being transferred from the old to the young. The surfacing of Geordie's murder of Harry and the revelation of the Fanshawe murder together with the subsequent intended fratricide in Nick's family project that "Geordie's wartime legacy troublingly and painfully plays itself out in the present" (Whitehead 22). By drawing on the discourse of trauma, Barker reconfigures history as a site of traumatic haunting and suggests the pervasive influence of the unresolved effects of the past. As Whitehead holds, "Trans-generational haunting offers a powerful figure for writers who wish to explore the impact of traumatic events on those who were born after" (27). Barker's ingenious blending of three cases of fratricide in one novel powerfully dramatizes the notion of trans-generational haunting and trauma, and successfully represents the lasting effects of traumatic events that clearly do have a significant effect on those born later. The family secrets of the three families that are hidden or unresolved are passed later to the next generation and remain buried within them.

Another World is not the only novel in Barker's later fiction that dwells on the theme of the transference of war-induced trauma, there are quite a few that also touch upon the same theme and the theme is common in many other war novels, including some memoirs or novels on American Vietnam War or the Holocaust.

In the history of the First World War, it was common for trauma to be transferred among the combatants, "... shell shock was clustered in groups and fostered by weak command...trauma is once more marked by the now familiar mystery of transpersonal affective transmission" (Luckhurst 54). The transference of war-induced trauma can be also found in many soldiers and military doctors who appear in Barker's *Regeneration* trilogy, of whom the case of the military psychiatrist Rivers is the most typical. In treating his patients who suffer from shell shock, Rivers finds himself unable to dismiss the reality of their ghosts.

At the end of the trilogy, he also sees the ghost of the witch doctor Njiru in his hallucinations whom he meets in Melanesia, and it seems that he is marching on the “ghost road” like his patients as well. His contraction of the same traumatic symptom of having hallucinations can be demonstrated by MaCann’s theory on the transference of trauma: “Trauma is contagious. In the role of witness to disaster or atrocity, the therapist at times is emotionally overwhelmed. She experiences, to a lesser degree, the same terror, rage, and despair as the patient. The phenomenon is known as “traumatic countertransference” or “vicarious “traumatization” (McCann 131). And Herman’s statement also explains why Rivers is infected by the same traumatic symptoms as his patients do: “Hearing the patient’s trauma story is bound to revive any personal traumatic experiences that the therapist may have suffered in the past. She may also notice imagery associated with the patient’s story intruding into her own waking fantasies or dreams” (140). Another typical example of contracting war-induced trauma is Paul in *Life Class*, an art student who shows great enthusiasm as the other British civilians and joins in the war as a volunteer for the Belgian Red Cross, tending on the mutilated, dying soldiers from the front line. He has become an eyewitness of many disturbing scenes: “He went to one hospital where there were five hundred men lying on the straw, covered in piss and shit — some of them hadn’t had their wounds dressed in a fortnight. No anesthetics, no disinfectant, nothing. Whole place stank of gangrene” (*Life Glass* 119). Watching the severely wounded soldiers left to survive for themselves due to lack of drugs or medical services makes him feel grieved. His heart aches a lot whenever being exposed to scenes of bloody deaths. His trauma derives not only from bearing witness to the sufferings of the wounded men, but also from his reluctance and even resentment of watching the soldiers return to the front to be killed again after their recovery, “The staff resented having to nurse somebody back to health in order for him to be shot. Obviously, this might be the fate of many of the patients, but only on the battlefield” (*Life Glass* 158). The trauma of the soldiers is then transferred to Paul simply through his experience of bearing witness to their pain as he takes care of them as a volunteer.

Across Barker’s later fiction, there is a doubling of characters and the theme of transference of war-induced trauma. The iconoclastic First World War combatant Billy Prior in the trilogy transforms into the 101-year-old veteran Geordie in *Another World*, then changes into the war reporter Stephen in *Double Vision* and finally evolves into Paul in *Life Class*. On these figures, war-related trauma continues from one person to the next, from one generation to the next, and from the First World War to the modern wars. The theme of war-induced trauma has

been repeated across the six novels, and many similar symptoms concomitant with trauma have been duplicated repeatedly. From the depiction of war-induced trauma across her later fiction, it is not difficult to see that trauma can be transferred among soldiers, from patients to doctors, from soldiers to volunteers, from those who have been to wars to those who stay at home and at last from generation to generation. Thus, it is possible that personal trauma engendered by wars could lead to communal or collective memory of trauma of the whole nation.

In the history of American Vietnam War, the transmission of trauma from the fathers to their children has been recorded in many memoirs. In Danielle Trussoni's memoir *Falling Through the Earth*, one of the *New York Times*' Ten Best Books of 2006, she provides a real picture of her father's unresolved trauma from Vietnam which results in his eccentric and abusive behavior. After the divorce of her parents in her early adolescence, she chooses to live with her unloving, unlovable, thoroughly unsympathetic father who always brings her to a local bar and drinks a lot to numb his traumatic mind. Young as she is, she shows understanding and perception of her father's inner pain after his terrible experience of being a volunteer tunnel rat in Vietnam: "I believed that the war had taken him from us. It was an amorphous monster that would grab hold and pull us into it, kicking and screaming. Vietnam claimed Dad's past, his future, his health, his dreams" (Trussoni 170). Danielle's father, like many other young American volunteers as tunnel rats, armed with little more than a pistol and a flashlight, has to crawl through booby traps and utter darkness, without knowing what will happen to them around the next corner as they try to clean out the systems they have discovered. Being constantly threatened with the imminent death that will come at any moment makes her father return with mental scars that never really heal.

As a devoted and considerate daughter, Danielle is able to perceive the inner trauma of her father which in turn is transferred to her as well. At last, with the help of a guide, her trip to Vietnam to experience what her father has gone through in the tunnels of Vietnam enables her to see through the enormous impact of trauma on all veterans and their children as well: "Although twenty thousand American children were orphaned by the war, it was only when I looked at my own life that I saw the hole that Vietnam created for all of us" (Trussoni 239-40). Through Danielle's own unspeakable experience as a child of a veteran who has been completely ruined by his disturbing experience in Vietnam, it is easy to discover that her father's trauma has been transmitted to her unconsciously. The trans-generational trauma between the two generations, holds Ryan, suggests that "many of the emotionally and psychologically damaged Vietnam veterans inflicted upon their progeny a

childhood at least as painful and empty as that endured by the children of the soldiers who never came home” (Ryan 73). The pain brought to the later generation by their returned veteran-fathers equals that by the dead ones. In a word, so long as the fathers join in the war, they will bring about almost the same sufferings to their children, whether they survive or die in the war.

The transference of war-induced trauma is not an exclusive experience to the families related to the First World War or the Vietnam War. Any family that has been involved in the wars cannot escape from such influence. In the research symposium on “Transmission of Trans-generational Trauma”, the study result reveals how Holocaust experiences may be unwittingly transmitted across generations: “Children’s minds can be unwittingly imprinted by the Holocaust experiences of prior generations ... Children’s own physiologies, sensations, feelings, behaviours and attitudes alternate between imbibing and rebelling against parents’ over-silent or over-loud responses. In either case they are drawn into their parents’ traumas, and are secondarily traumatized by them.”²

These researches concerned with Holocaust experiences also point out that massive traumas are often so unbearable that they are pushed out of awareness. “Traumas became untellable, unspeakable dark black holes. Yet no matter how hidden, physiological, emotional, behavioural, and attitudinal fragments, especially if triggered by circumstances reminiscent of the trauma, flooded into the visible world”.³ All these traumatic nightmares related to either World War I, the Vietnam War or Holocaust will inevitably lead to the tragic outcome of the transference of war-engendered trauma, although in different forms or symptoms.

In the case of Barker, she is definitely also a victim of trans-generational trauma. Her step-grandfather and stepfather’s war-induced trauma has been unwittingly transmitted to her and has left such a far-reaching influence on her that she has been showing consistent interest in the Great War and the trauma arising out of it. From her first war novel *Regeneration* published in 1991 to her latest one *Life Class* launched in 2007, she has obtained a strong enthusiasm in the First World War. Through her novels, it can be detected that she has never escaped from the shadow of being brought up in a veteran’s family. The portraiture of the traumatic characters in her works is the very representation of her step-grandfather and stepfather, and the elaboration of the unspeakable trauma of her characters is indeed the real projection of that of her kinsmen. For her, war-induced trauma has been transferred from her father and grandfather’s generation to her and has left an inerasable scar on her, just as what she depicts in *Another World* the war-induced trauma has been transferred from Geordie to his grandson Nick.

Collective Memory of Trauma

If trauma is transmitted from individuals to the whole community and even the whole people, from one generation to the next, it constitutes the communal or collective memory of trauma for the whole nation. Neal has once argued, “A collective trauma grows out of the shared experience of a deplorable event that falls outside the range of ordinary human experiences...An extraordinary event becomes a national trauma under circumstances in which the social system is disrupted to such a magnitude that it commands the attention of all major subgroups of the population” (Neal 10). Veterans who come back from the trenches of two world wars, soldiers of the Vietnam War, survivors of the atomic bomb and the Holocaust all share a kind of visceral and often untranslatable and indecipherable memories of horror. Such traumatic experiences are not individual experiences, instead they are shared by a large number of people who are of a nation, or even of different nations and races. Although the experiences they share cannot be truly shared with others (at least not at the same level of understanding, and not with the same sense of recognition), trauma engendered by the wars cuts across ethnic lines and will never cease to surface so long as victims of the wars exist. Therefore, this kind of war-induced trauma becomes universal to all people who have been involved with them. Since trauma can be transmitted from one generation to the next through speech, behavior or emotions, from one historical era to the next through historical textbooks, literary works and records of various kinds, it becomes a communal trauma that remains in the collective memory of a people, a nation or even of the whole world.

The Great War is the first large-scale war that has claimed the lives of millions of people and has for the first time rendered such a disastrous impact not only physically but also mentally upon the people of that time and their later generation. As Michail remarks, “The popularity projected scale of the sacrifices experienced by the British during the Great War was reflected by the features attributed to the Western front: great numbers, great losses, extreme sacrifices in futile battles, and extreme material and psychological pressures in the trenches” (Meyer 244). After the end of it, the conflict of the Great War has taken shape in the collective memory of many European or Western people. Thus the war-engendered trauma of many individuals, including veterans or civilians whose relatives have died in the war, has been turned into that of a community, becoming a collective memory of trauma for the whole nation. Just as Luckhurst holds, “The Great War brought mass conscript armies into vast, static environments of near perpetual bombardment. Shell shock

therefore ‘defines for the first time...mass trauma’” (51).

Winter has expressed his own opinion on the power of trauma to generate a communal memory of trauma, “If traumas pose a special challenge to remembrance –and create special bonds among those who were there — they are definitely not unique in their power to generate a community of memory” (52). For some veterans, their traumatic experiences are just nightmares that return repeatedly to haunt them, so they are keen to leave them behind. As they feel unable to “react to the overwhelming pressure of public discourse”, they “chose to retreat to their private memories, accepting their exclusion from the collective memory of the war that was building up without their consent”. However, for others who want to “counteract that feeling of exclusion”, they chose to engage in “actions to incorporate their private memories into the broader collective memory” (Meyer 250).

In Barker’s later fiction on wars, she writes of the trauma sustained by many soldiers, military doctors, war journalists, volunteers and even civilians whose kinsmen die in the wars, and the building up of their trauma is turned into the collective memory of trauma of the whole British people during and after the war. In the *Regeneration* trilogy and *Life Class*, she elaborates on the wartime individual trauma of volunteers and soldiers who are serving and fighting for the national honor in the Great War, while in *Another World* and *Double Vision*, she dwells on the post-war individual trauma of the veteran Geordie and the war journalist Stephen. By taking two major characters Geordie and Stephen in the two novels as representatives, she alludes to the trauma of many other veterans and war journalists whose images and voices are excluded from her fiction, and implies that the combination of many individuals’ traumatic memories will eventually be turned into the collective memory of trauma. Just as Neal says, “The traumas of the past become ingrained in collective memories and provide reference points to draw upon when the need arises” (Neal 7). Through the creation of these characters and the depiction of their trauma, she successfully incorporates their private traumatic memories into the broader collective memory of trauma and universalizes the trauma of the whole nation.

The experiences of the First World War lead to a collective trauma shared by many from all participating countries. For many subsequent years, people mourn over the deceased, the missing, and the many disabled. Many combatants return with severe mental trauma. Many more return with few after-effects. The First World War has a lasting impact on social memory. Many British people consider the First World War to be a signaling of the end of Victorian England, and across

Europe many regard it as a significant turning point in history. When the war broke out, a generation of hot-blooded young men in Britain enlisted themselves in it, displaying a kind of unprecedented enthusiasm to fight for the glory of their nation, their heads full of high abstractions like Honour, Glory and England. In *Another World*, Geordie also expresses the same feeling, “There was men fought in that war who were struggling to keep a roof over their family’s heads. If you must know, I used to think some people remembered the dead so they could forget the living with a clear conscience” (*Another World* 155). However, their dreams and ideals were battered and smashed to pieces as they witnessed a vast number of innocent comrades-in-arms killed in stupid battles planned by impotent generals. Those who survived the bloody slaughter became shell-shocked, disillusioned and agonized by their war experiences. As a result, they started to reject the values of the society that had sent them to war and those old men at home who had lied to them and had preached to them about fighting to make the world safe for democracy. When they woke up from the nightmares of the war, they found themselves unable to make a smooth reentry into civilian life and continued to suffer from trauma, thus the wartime experiences were turned into collective trauma shared by almost all the veterans who had survived the war. Such feelings and emotion are shared by Geordie as well when he returns from the war: “That and the hypocrisy... I thought we’d been conned, love. (Laughs.) I knew we’d been conned” (*Another World* 155). For most people, the legacy of the First World War is still lingering, as Dan Todman writes at the beginning lines in his paper “Remembrance”, “The guns fell silent on 11 November 1918, but the minds and voices of those who had lived through the Great War did not. The scale of the war, and the damage it caused, demanded that it should be remembered”. Even for those who have lost their lives in the war, their voices should not be forgotten, “So too did the imagined voices of the dead, who, it seemed vital, must be rescued from the anonymity of total war by an effort of memory” (Howard 209).

Todman once remarks, “Remembrance is an issue for all post-war societies” (qtd. in Howard 209). The First World War has been over for nearly a century, and most of its veterans have all died out at the turn of the new century, thus few are left who can remember the war. However, remembrance persists in the minds of the people whose nations have been involved in the war. There is still a long way for them to go before time can heal their pains, for wars have posed problems of recollection and remembrance for those who have participated in or been to the war (like characters Geordie, Paul and Rivers in Barker’s works) or those who have not experienced it (like Nick). Like many veterans who return from the wars

remember their traumatic experiences until they die, Geordie has been haunted by his war experiences all his life. As the veterans influence their progeny and transfer their trauma to them consciously or unconsciously, which makes their personal experience a communal one, Geordie is “remembering a communal myth rather than a personal experience” (*Another World* 153).

The transference of war-induced trauma among generations makes it possible to turn many individuals’ personal trauma into the communal or collective trauma of a people or a nation, as has been explored by Barker in her later works. The collective remembrance will never fail to exist beyond the boundary of lived memory. Pages on the history books on the wars can be turned over to avoid remembrance of historical trauma, however, the communal or collective memory of trauma will, never, fail to exert its influence on the minds of the people ever involved with the wars and scarred by the lingering legacy.

Notes

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2. “Transmission of Trans-generational Trauma”, Part of Symposium “Intergenerational communication- working with Holocaust trauma’s legacy across three generations”. Web. 27th June 2006.
3. Ibid.

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