

THE THEME OF WAR IN PAT BARKER'S NOVEL *THE GHOST ROAD*

The Ghost Road (1995) is the third novel in the *Regeneration Trilogy* by Pat Barker, which describes shell-shocked soldiers in the aftermath of World War I. This historical and anti-war novel was preceded by *Regeneration* (1991) and *The Eye in the Door* (1993). The three books share characters and settings, and include the crucial events that took place during World War I in England and on the battlefields of France, between 1914 and 1918. These novels are primarily associated with the theme of trauma and war.

The theme of war is realized through several characters. One of them is the fictional character Billy Prior, a working-class British army officer, who is diagnosed with what would today be recognized a psychic disturbance, or PTSD. Another one is the psychiatrist William Rivers whose pioneering work during World War I illustrated the damage that war inflicts on the psyche. He is also considered as the pioneer of the treatment of shell-shocked soldiers. These characters add to the elaboration of the theme through revealing different aspects of the war: Billy Prior lives through the immediate war experience, while the figure of Rivers serves to illuminate the war's detrimental effects on a personality.

Barker recreated the great psychological trauma brought by World War I to British soldiers in *The Ghost Road* (1995), shaping many "feminized" men, including Billy Prior. The author also uncovers the phenomenon described as shell shock, arguing that it was related to the social expectations of the masculine role in the war. However, many British soldiers failed to live up to this "heightened code of masculinity" since once they had been exposed to the intolerable circumstances of the trenches, they inevitably experienced emotions such as fear of death, grief and horror.

When Barker describes the soldiers' post-traumatic confusion about their sexual desire, the significance of war and the significance of individual existence, she constantly reminds us that we have to ponder over the consequence of the war. In conclusion, *The Ghost Road* (1995) represents the author's strong desire to eliminate the destructive social factors and think about the survival prospect of mankind. *The Ghost Road* (1995) also warns us that in the 21st century, we still need to stay away from war, and calling for peace is an eternal topic and responsibility for mankind.