

Twenty-Five Years of *Regeneration*: A Pat Barker Symposium

Saturday 15 October 2016, Durham University, 10.30 am – 5.00 pm

CALL FOR PAPERS

Twenty-five years after the publication of *Regeneration*, we invite proposals for papers on Pat Barker's formative work of First World War historical fiction, as well as on her wider oeuvre.

In 1991 *Regeneration* focused readers' attention onto a lesser-visited space of war, the psychiatric hospital, onto challenging narratives of trauma and sexuality, and onto the ideologies of a society struggling to negotiate the effects of a global and industrialised conflict.

This symposium will centre on discussion of how Barker's novel, followed by *The Eye in the Door* (1993) and *The Ghost Road* (1995), has tested and shaped perceptions of the First World War. Particularly relevant during the current centenary period are the trilogy's themes of memory and haunting, which resonate with questions of why the war remains such a prominent part of our culture, and how our views of it have been re-processed and revised.

Held in Barker's home city of Durham, the symposium will also address the portrayals of place in her novels. Initially known for her writing about women in the north east of England, the importance of her settings is undiminished in her later work – from Sarah Lumb's description of herself as 'what you'd call Geordie' in *Regeneration* to the exploration of London in the Blitz in Barker's most recent work, *Noonday* (2015).

We are delighted to announce that our keynote speaker will be Professor Sharon Monteith (The University of Nottingham), and that our guest Chair will be Dr Anne Whitehead (Newcastle University). Professor Monteith's *Pat Barker* (2002) was the first book on the award-winning novelist's work which she is updating for a new edition. She co-edited the first collection of critical essays on the writer, *Critical Perspectives on Pat Barker*, in 2005 and has interviewed Barker on a number of occasions, including publicly at Hay-on-Wye Literary Festival, the Nottingham Playhouse and at the Durham Book Festival on more than one occasion. Dr Whitehead, a pioneer in the field of trauma studies, has also interviewed Barker and has published extensively on her novels, for example in her monograph *Trauma Fiction* (2004).

The conference will be preceded by a public event on 14 October in Durham Cathedral on fiction and World War One, featuring Michael Morpurgo and Pat Barker.

We welcome proposals for twenty-minute papers on any of the following topics and on any other relevant areas:

- Changing literary interpretations of the First World War
- The development of the genre of historical fiction
- 'Bringing the past to life'
- Barker's themes and settings
- Trauma, hauntings, memory and remembrance
- Class, gender, and sexuality in Barker's work

Please send abstracts (maximum 250 words) by 31 July 2016 to Professor Simon James: patbarker2016@gmail.com

Our event is supported by the Department of English Studies, Durham University. You can find details of this symposium, as well as other similar activities, by following @READEnglish on Twitter.

Professor Simon J. James
Head of Department, Department of English Studies