

## REGARDING VIOLENCE IN PAT BARKER'S *DOUBLE VISION*

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Because the person in pain is ordinarily so bereft of the resources of speech, it is not surprising that the language for pain should sometimes be brought into being by those who are not themselves in pain but who speak *on behalf* of those who are.

Elaine Scarry (*The Body in Pain* 6)

*No se puede mirar.* One cannot look at this. *Yo lo vi.* I saw it. *Esto es lo verdadero.* This is the truth.

Francisco Goya, *The Disasters of War* (DV epigraph)

Francisco de Goya's testimony to trauma, *The Disasters of War* (1810–20), is conditioned by the paradox of bearing witness; it insists on its own horror, insists that that horror exceeds the viewer's empathic capacity, and insists that the generalised 'one' avert their gaze, while at the same time it swears to an individual act of seeing by the 'I', and by the eye, of the artist. As the epigraph to Pat Barker's novel *Double Vision* (2003), that paradox works at the novel's threshold, so that like Goya's work, *Double Vision* refuses the possibility of being read, and refuses to be read even while being read, even as it demands to be read. Both Goya's and Barker's work figures, that is, an ethical dilemma of tremendous contemporary importance: the representation of trauma and violence. These visual and literary texts consider not only what it means to see violence, but the ethical and social implications of the 're-representation', the repeated presentation, of physical and psychological pain. This essay is concerned with precisely this dilemma as it is considered in *Double Vision*, not only in terms of the various relationships between art and violence the novel posits, but the ways in which this arises as a dilemma for the novel itself. This essay argues that *Double Vision* is self-reflexively concerned with its own relationship to violence, with its own representation of violence, and with what art might be able to offer in this context beyond the possibility of redemption. I want to suggest that it is in that relationship that Goya's work describes, that relationship between seeing and demanding,

between vision and voice, that *Double Vision* figures the representation of violence as necessarily engaging the witness in a testimonial dialogue with the violent event itself. Art does not only mediate; just as Kate and Stephen notice the noise of Goya's paintings, suggesting that far from being silent images, 'they absolutely roar at you', I want, in this essay, to think about how *Double Vision* roars at the reader but also, and perhaps more importantly, about the way in which art demands that the witness roar back (*DV* 154). In other words, this essay suggests that *Double Vision* is perhaps most powerfully concerned, in this context, not only with representation but with reception: with response and with responsibility.

*Double Vision* demonstrates Barker's development of a multiplicitous vision within her writing: what Sharon Carson has called Barker's 'compound eye' (45). Her pre-1990 novels, for example, construct dialogic narratives of the lives of working-class women, and since then, her fiction has continued to figure a disturbing postmodern engagement with world-changing historical events. Her most recent three novels, in particular, as Elaine Showalter has recognised, are 'more self-reflexive and self-critical' — they explore the role of art and of the artist under the influence of terrifying global and personal traumas, embedded in the apparent security of the everyday. This, in *Double Vision*, includes the events of September 11, 2001, which Bruce B. Lawrence describes as 'the milestone of violence for the twenty-first century' (1). Barker's use of the Bakhtinian dialogic has been acknowledged (Hitchcock), but *Double Vision* figures a development of that earlier novelistic heteroglossia. That is, it seems to me that the task of *Double Vision* is not only to give voice to those marginalised by the dominant discourse, as was the case in Barker's earlier work, but to analyse the ways in which the artist sees and subsequently represents these communal voices and thus undertakes the responsibility of bearing witness. Kate, Stephen and Ben all struggle with the ethical representation of trauma and war so that *Double Vision*'s task seems to be to unpack such problems of representation and the role of the artist in communicating or bearing witness. But the novel does not romanticise the role of the artist, or the power of art to right the world's wrongs. Rather, the emphasis is on what is represented, on ways of seeing and embodying violence and trauma, and specifically, on methods of bearing witness to contemporary issues: the war in Afghanistan and Iraq, the Gulf War, and the events of September 11.

The novel not only figures an ethical debate concerning the representation of trauma and violence in a creative work by considering the patterns of this process for its artists — the sculptor, Kate; the

photographer, Ben; the journalist, Stephen; the author, Peter — but is itself one such work of art. Those internal debates, those internal dialogic relationships, are thus also figured by the novel itself in its engagement with and of the reader. It is ultimately in that engagement with the reader, the novel insists, where responsibility lies. The inclusion of a reading list in the ‘Author’s Note’ at the end of the novel thus not only situates the novel within a wider discourse on violence and representation, but works to endow responsibility upon the reader, a reader who can act. The present essay, then, seeks to extend the work of for example, John Brannigan, Sarah C.E. Ross, and Sharon Monteith and Nahem Yousaf, who have all noted the intersections of art, violence, and redemption in the novel and in Barker’s work more widely. For Monteith and Yousaf, for example, hope and despair are, in *Double Vision*, almost inextricable (297); for Ross and for Brannigan, too, the conclusions of this novel and of Barker’s earlier *Border Crossing* (2001) display what Brannigan terms a ‘cautious optimism’, and a ‘qualified’ sense of ‘happiness’ (151, 162), or what is for Ross an ‘always tempered’ consideration of ‘regeneration, redemption, resurrection’ (140). For these critics, and for Brannigan in particular, that tension between hope and despair, between redemption and violence, is a creative rather than a curative tension — what we might term, I think, a dialogic production of art (Brannigan 163). But it is precisely the ways in which this relationship underpins a creative production that in turn makes demands upon the audience or the reader, with which this essay is concerned. The essay will inflect an understanding of Barker’s writing as redemptive through a consideration of other ways in which *Double Vision* self-reflexively engages with the representation and the reception of psychological trauma and physical violence in art, in continuation of the exploration of the relationship between art and violence which Barker had already begun in her *Regeneration* trilogy (1991–95), and which she has since taken up again in her most recent novel, *Life Class* (2007).

*Double Vision* begins quietly: Kate Frobisher, an artist, already destroyed emotionally by the violent death of her husband, war photographer Ben, fills her days with sculpture and mourning. Barker jolts the narrative with Kate’s sudden car accident — the novel’s first act of violence — which leaves her frail and unable to work on her latest commission, a large sculpture of Christ; for this reason, she employs Peter Wingrave, the church gardener, to assist her. The novel’s second plotline — which forms one of its many figurations of a ‘double vision’ — focuses on Stephen Sharkey, a recently divorced foreign correspondent who has moved to Kate’s quiet village in order to write a book on representations of war. He too is mourning the death of Ben

Frobisher, with whom he had worked closely on several assignments — it was he who found Ben's corpse after he was shot by a sniper in Afghanistan. The two artists of *Double Vision*, both reeling from the same loss, and in whom global and personal traumas are entwined, thus provide a medium for the exploration of the creative representation and reception of terror, war, and destruction.

*Double Vision's* redemptive or regenerative strategies are perhaps most clearly displayed by the way in which all of the central characters are forced to create new lives from the remains of the old. In particular, Peter has been given a second chance, a second identity and the opportunity to redeem himself. Peter is recognisable as the latest incarnation of the murderous child seen in two of Barker's earlier novels, *Border Crossing* and *Another World* (1998). Peter's chillingly destructive past seems at first dichotomous with his idyllic creative present, his role as gardener and artist's assistant. His short stories, however, entwine the two: these textual creations confront Stephen with their disturbing visions of destruction. These stories have 'no moral centre', and it is this very 'ambiguity in the narrator's attitude to predator and prey...that [makes] the stories so unsettling' (*DV* 162). That lack of 'moral centre' suggests that the stories make no demand upon the reader; that Peter's texts, like Peter himself, are sociopathic, unable to anticipate (even blind to) the response of the other. No dialogue, no capacity for response, exists between Peter's texts and the reader. As Stephen recognises:

You bring everything you are, everything you've ever experienced, to that encounter with the sculpture, the painting, the words on the page. But behind the smoke the sibyl crouches, murmuring too low for you to catch the words, 'Ah, but I don't mean what you mean'. (*DV* 163)

That resistance to any engagement with the witness is what figures the story's lack of a 'moral centre'. But moreover, it is the witness's failure to recognise the consequent disjunction between 'meaning' and interpretation which makes them, like Andrea (the character in Peter's story), not only 'complicit' in their own destruction, but in the (re)production of violence (163). Both the artist and the audience, *Double Vision* seems to suggest, are necessary elements in this ethical project of responsibility. This lack of 'moral centre' to Peter's stories echoes the behaviour of Stephen's nephew, Adam, who has been diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome, explained by Justine — Adam's

nanny and Stephen's lover — as 'a sort of difficulty in seeing other people as people' (83). In other words, both Adam and Peter appear to suffer from an inability to empathise, to put the self in the place of the other: to put into practice a double vision. In this way, Adam also mirrors Gareth from *Another World*, and Danny Miller from *Border Crossing*. Yet, the sunshine-filled painting Adam gives as a gift to Justine after she is attacked indicates the possibility that this cycle of recurring or regenerative evil might be broken, precisely because this work of art is designed to elicit a response — of determination, of inclusivity, and of course of joy — from its recipient.

Such a possibility, however, is always tempered; *Double Vision* is nowhere so resolutely optimistic as to suggest that art alone is redemptive in the face of trauma. A child's cheery image of sunshine and domesticity, 'the scene every child paints: a house with a smoking chimney, curtains at the windows, a tree in the garden, Mum, Dad, child, dog standing on the lawn, and behind them all, filling the whole sky, an enormous, round, golden sun', figures a parody of art that fails to paint the whole picture, that cannot include, in this household scene, the possibility of a 'meaningless, brutal, random eruption of violence' (254, 260). If, as Brannigan asserts, the way in which Peter and Adam 'serve to illustrate the ethical problems of failing to see others as others' is 'intimately connected with the ways in which the novel explores the problems of representing war, for Stephen's concern is precisely about when the image of war objectifies the other, and fails to represent the other as human', then it might be seen that it is the very difficulty of that struggle between the self and the other, the inside and the outside, the domestic and the 'brutal', the relationship between violence and redemption, that not only does Adam's painting figure, but that *Double Vision* posits in its consideration of the ethical processes inherent in art as a medium of communication (Brannigan 158).

Any consideration of redemption or regeneration across Barker's work is unsettled by such considerations of the role of the artist and the contemporary representation of trauma. Leo Bersani proposes that

...such apparently acceptable views of art's beneficently reconstructive function in culture depend on a devaluation of historical experience and of art. The catastrophes of history matter much less if they are somehow compensated for in art, and art itself gets reduced to a kind of superior patching function, is enslaved to those very materials to which it presumably imparts value. (Bersani 1)

What I want to suggest is that, in *Double Vision*, the purpose of the representation of violence is not to be a ‘patch’, to heal or to alleviate, as Justine believes. Rather, it seems to me that the artistic representation of violence in *Double Vision* seeks to introduce a dialogue between the violence and the witness. For example, engravings of Green Men cover the roof of the church in *Double Vision*, representing the punishment exacted on Celtic enemies: their heads were cut off and their mouths stuffed with green leaves. Kate says of these engravings: ‘A symbol of renewal, people said, but only because they didn’t look.... No, she thought...they were wonderfully done — some anonymous craftsman’s masterwork — but they were figures of utter ruin’ (*DV* 29). Kate recognises that considering this artwork as redemptive reduces its impact and overlooks the artist’s intentions for an unflinching representation of terror. *Double Vision* thus insists upon the importance of looking and of responding, so that we might move beyond the ‘devalu[ing]’ image of redemption or rebirth and instead face trauma (and, indeed, let it face us).

‘Contemporary historical literature’, argue Peter Middleton and Tim Woods, ‘has become an extremely active sphere of argument about history and the rediscovery of its elided potentialities, as well as an often highly conflicted struggle over what should be remembered and what forgotten’ (1). Yet what contemporary literature of memory wrests with seems to be a question of not merely *what* but *how* we should remember: *how* should the past be represented, made available for witnessing, and subsequently witnessed, and what happens in that act? *Double Vision* explores the shadowing of the present by the past and the persistent recurrence of traumatic images of war that strain against the apparent tranquillity of peacetime. Memories, in this novel, always threaten; they ‘[bulge] above the surface’, and ‘[build] behind the thin membrane of everyday life’ (*DV* 13, 89). *Double Vision*’s artists work through their own physical pain and memories of trauma in order to understand and permanently represent the pain of others. It is in this way that, as Monteith has noted, ‘Barker investigates the *effects* of memorialising, and it is not finally to monuments that Barker turns: many of her most profound and painful concerns are inscribed on the bodies of the living’ (55). For example, both Stephen and Kate are troubled by the irruption of traumatic memory at that vulnerable, liminal moment between waking and sleeping; indeed, their recognition of the way in which these memories press against their bodies and their daily lives may be one reason they seek to control or channel them through art, and it is perhaps because the novel’s artists are affected by and respond to trauma and violence in this way that their art makes such claims on its audience.

Moreover, the artist's own experience of trauma may be seen as a way of bridging the gap between the representer and the represented and thus of forging an intersection between personal memory and communal history. As a mediator between violence and representation, then, the task of the artist, *Double Vision* suggests, is to assist us to see; to cease to be blind or numb to the images with which we are bombarded in a media-saturated society, images and narratives which rely on shock to sell news.<sup>1</sup> If, as Stephen thinks, it is 'not true...that images lose their power with repetition, or not automatically true anyway', it is precisely that ability to repeatedly shock, he acknowledges, which figures the image's power and, moreover, its ethical function (*DV* 155). It is, then, not only vision, or bearing witness, of which *Double Vision* is concerned to emphasise the importance, but *revision*, the capacity to review and to respond over and over (Monteith and Yousaf 283, Brannigan 154). Not only must we look, acknowledge, bear witness to trauma but, *Double Vision* asserts, one role of the artist is to make us look, and look again, in a subsequent act of regarding which figures the ethical dilemma of representing violence: the simultaneity of the desire to resist the irruption and continuation of pain, and the need to represent accurately and to witness violence.

Yet the problem that the text and characters repeatedly come up against is the very impossibility of the representation of trauma and of pain; the impossibility for the artist to grasp and then to represent, to speak for, to bear witness to, the pain of another. As Elaine Scarry points out, 'when one speaks about "one's own physical pain" and about "another person's physical pain", one might almost appear to be speaking about two wholly distinct orders of events':

For the person whose pain it is, it is 'effortlessly' grasped (that is, even with the most heroic effort it cannot *not* be grasped); while for the person outside the sufferer's body, what is 'effortless' is *not* grasping it (it is easy to remain wholly unaware of its existence; even with effort, one may remain in doubt about its existence or may retain the astonishing freedom of denying its existence; and, finally, if with the best effort of sustained attention one successfully apprehends it, the aversiveness of the 'it' one apprehends will only be a shadowy fraction of the actual 'it'). So, for the person in pain, so incontestably and unnegotiably present is it that 'having pain' may come to be thought of as the most vibrant example of

what it is to ‘have certainty’, while for the other person it is so elusive that ‘hearing about pain’ may exist as the primary model of what it is ‘to have doubt’. Thus pain comes unsharably into our midst as at once that which cannot be denied and that which cannot be confirmed. (Scarry 4)

Scarry here touches on the tension at the heart of narratives of witness: the need for the ‘sufferer’ to share the ‘certainty’ or ‘truth’ of their pain, while simultaneously, it remains impossible for a person outside the experience to ever fully know that truth, to ever ‘grasp’ or to ‘apprehend’ that which evades understanding. What representations of violence and of trauma must negotiate is that which is ‘unsharable’, yet strangely sharable, recognisable: how is the pain of another best represented, best understood, best responded to? What is emphasised, in Scarry and in Barker, is ‘effort’. Witnessing, reading, is work, work which enables the production of meaning, the production of truth. *Double Vision*, I think, seeks to demonstrate, in form and in content, art’s demand for a listener, for a dialogic counterpart, as well as the need for that effort. The novel explores how we, like Adam, might seek to overcome the painful gap between self and other, the ‘suppression of difference’ which marks the ‘violence of representation’ (Armstrong and Tennenhouse 8).

*Double Vision* takes up Goya’s insistent cry, ‘[t]his is the truth’, along with the ethical debate of how this ‘truth’ might be shown — and of what such insistence on truth might produce. Stephen, especially, is preoccupied by Goya’s etchings of the Napoleonic Wars, collectively titled *The Disasters of War*. The purposes and problems of Stephen’s book on war photography and the ways in which Stephen sees Goya’s ideas to influence — to be ‘squatting all over’ — his work also point up their function for *Double Vision* (DV 57–58). Stephen says of Goya:

It’s that argument he’s having with himself, all the time, between the ethical problems of showing the atrocities and yet the need to say, ‘Look, this is what’s happening’...and I thought, My God, we’re still facing exactly the same problem. There’s always this tension between wanting to show the truth, and yet being sceptical about what the effects of showing it are going to be. (DV 119)

As the medium between the event and the audience, the artist is constantly required to make ethical decisions on what should be seen,

and indeed, how such horrors could be adequately conveyed. But perhaps more importantly, Goya and Barker are again concerned not only with the representation of ‘the truth’, but with the ‘effects of showing it’, with the ‘ethical problems’ not only of the art itself, but of an audience. As in Scarry’s discussion, it is the problem of truth and, indeed, of truthfulness, which recurs in *Double Vision*. If Goya’s art seeks to represent the horrors of war and trauma accurately, realistically, *truthfully*, that truthfulness is precisely a condition of the relation of a narrative to an audience. That is, as Slavoj Žižek has made clear, we must distinguish

...between (factual) truth and truthfulness: what renders a report of a raped woman (or any other narrative of a trauma) truthful is its very factual unreliability, its confusion, its inconsistency. If the victim were able to report on her painful and humiliating experience in a clear manner, with all the data arranged in a consistent order, this very quality would make us suspicious of its truth. (Žižek 3)

Truthfulness, the discourse or means of telling, must uphold, then, ‘(factual) truth’, or the story: form must underscore content in ethical acts of witnessing. The artist is not only tasked with making it possible for the audience or reader to *see* the act of violence, but for it to be *represented*, made present again, relived. As Scarry makes clear, ‘the most crucial fact about pain is *its presentness* and the most crucial fact about torture is that it *is happening*’ (9). Truthfulness thus exhibits the difficulty of moving beyond the traumatic event as it discursively renders the sense in which trauma is always and everywhere ‘now’. The ethical art of violence must therefore perform a continual (re)experiencing of the unspeakable traumatic event, difficult (even impossible) as that may be, and even though this may also mean the reinscription of violence in the world: ‘Art must bear witness to horror’, Brannigan asserts, ‘even when that responsibility brings its own costs’ (155).

*Life Class* continues to debate this ethical dilemma as it undertakes an analysis of ‘the ways in which the wounds of war are represented — or, more often, hidden’ (LC 248). The role of the war artist, believes the novel’s protagonist, Paul, is to show unflinchingly its atrocities. Fellow artist Elinor, however, disagrees; why, she asks, should a gallery include paintings of the war wounded?

‘Because it’s there. *They’re* there, the people, the men. And it’s not right their suffering should just be swept out of sight’.

‘I’d have thought it was even less right to put it on the wall of a public gallery. Can’t you imagine it? People peering at other people’s suffering and saying, “Oh my *dear*, how perfectly *dreadful!*” — and then moving on to the next picture. It would be just a freak show. An arty freak show’. (*LC* 175–76)

Elinor refuses to bear witness to the war, seeming to believe that to do so is to give in to the ‘bully’: ‘More than anything I resent the way the war takes over all our lives. It’s like a single bullying voice shouting all the other voices down’ (116). War, suggests Elinor, is monologic, opposing the dialogic discourse and novelistic heteroglossia upheld in, for example, Barker’s own art. But for Paul, to sweep aside the war is to sweep aside those for whom the war is a fundamental part of their voice; the war *is* their ‘something to say’. In this way, dialogism must necessarily include such artistic representations, must include all voices, even that of the ‘bully’. ‘Showing’, for Paul, does not mean the kind of exploitative performance (putting on a ‘show’, a ‘freak show’) Elinor anticipates, but rather suggests the ‘rightness’ of bearing witness to those men that are ‘there’ — to Scarry’s continuing ‘presentness’ or ‘happening’ of pain and violence.

But art, Elinor insists, should address a chosen subject, that which is not, like the war, ‘passive’, ‘imposed on us from the outside’ (176, 244). Like Justine who, foreshadowing Elinor, refuses to watch, to ‘gawp’ at, the representations of violence paraded before her each night on the news — ‘with a lot of this there’s nothing anybody can do except gawp and say, “Ooh, isn’t it awful?” when really they don’t give a damn’ — for Elinor, it is ‘ignor[ing]’ the war, the interruption of pain, which represents an ethical choice in relation to her own human rights (*DV* 140, *LC* 176). In this way, Elinor’s refusal to connect or to come into dialogue with violence and war differs from the inability of *Double Vision*’s Adam and Peter to see ‘other people as people’. The only reason to regard violence, Justine and Elinor suggest, is in order to ‘do something’ about it; if participation cannot be positive or alleviatory, it should not be attempted at all. Any other kind of viewing, Susan Sontag has suggested, approaches voyeurism: ‘Perhaps the only people with the right to look at images of suffering of this extreme order are those who could do something to alleviate it — say, the surgeons at the military hospital where the photograph was taken — or those who could learn from it.

The rest of us are voyeurs, whether or not we mean to be' (37–38). It is, in fact, such insistence on detachment, '*the right not to be harassed...to remain at a safe distance from others*', which Žižek identifies as that which is insisted upon as 'the central human right in late-capitalist society' (35). Justine and Elinor figure this refusal to become a spectator of violence, to engage in the voyeurism of trauma and its visual reproduction, and demonstrate this distancing of violence from the realm of 'civilisation'. But even though Barker herself has noted that both *Double Vision* and *Life Class* are described by a 'much more overt than normal preoccupation with how things should be represented, with the ethics of representation, rather than the ethics of action', I want to suggest that the two are not so easily separated, and that it is, finally, to the 'ethics of action' that *Double Vision* turns ('Interview' 370). For example, Justine's refusal to engage with violence is manifested in another way when she balks at the detectives' discussion of 'your attacker' (*DV* 267). Such terms of ownership, she thinks, 'opened the door on to a small dark room, a space so cramped it could hold only two people, herself and her attacker' (267). But Justine's assertion of her 'right not to be harassed' ultimately undermines that detachment as even this demands dialogue with her attacker. That is, it is her consequent determination to look around that 'small dark room', in spite of the threat, 'Don't look. Don't turn round', that figures the kind of 'ethics of action' she and Elinor advocate (267). Most importantly, the novel seems to suggest that such action cannot be chosen, as Justine and Elinor seek to do. It is precisely such 'ethics of action', I think, which *Double Vision* ultimately demands of its characters and of the reader: an ethics of response, of responsibility, of 'doing something'.

In *Double Vision*, this crisis of responsibility is most powerfully explored in the context of the violent image which frequently returns to Stephen during the nightmares and flashbacks which characterise his Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. He and Ben had, in Sarajevo, discovered a young girl who had been raped and murdered, and Stephen is later horrified to discover that Ben had returned to photograph the girl in her original state:

He gaped at the print, unable to understand why it was there. Obviously Ben had gone back the next morning, early, before the police arrived, to get this photograph. He'd restored her skirt to its original position, up round her waist. It was shocking. Stephen was shocked on her behalf to see her exposed like this, though, ethically, Ben had done nothing wrong. He hadn't staged the

photograph. He'd simply restored the corpse to its original state. And yet it was difficult not to feel that the girl, spreadeagled like that, had been violated twice. (121)

It was Stephen who had interfered with the scene, who touched the violated body, if only to endow her with dignity — Ben merely, as Stephen recognises, 'restored the corpse to its original state'. Yet what is so offensive to Stephen is that Ben has moved beyond the ostensibly objective role of the foreign correspondent, and become not simply a voyeur, but one who recreates, restages, the violent act. In Barker's narratives, this figures the difference between 'gawping' and 'gaping', between voyeurism and bearing witness to horror, in which, as Alison Sinclair says of Goya, the work shows the artist not as 'a witness exulting in the violence, but shocked by it' (78). For Stephen, Ben's restaged photograph means that he is no longer a spectator, one who represents violence, but one who is complicit in the violent act itself, as in the photograph which includes his own shadow, an image which 'says I'm here. I'm holding a camera and that fact will determine what happens next' (*DV* 123). But although it might be seen that representing violence, in this case, means that Ben has become a perpetrator, a 'disseminat[or]', complicit in the crime, it is also possible, I think, to identify in Ben's work not only an 'ethics of representation' but an 'ethics of action'.<sup>2</sup> The 'double vision' of Ben's eye and the lens of his camera means that Ben is at once artist and audience; he not only records the violent image, but is the first to respond to it, to engage with it, and those two acts 'will determine what happens next'. The camera thus not only becomes a tool for representation, but the surveying lens itself enables an ethical act; the camera thus becomes a doubled site of responsibility. But above all, Ben's photographs and, indeed, *Double Vision* itself, work as disseminators: partly and problematically, as Ben's photograph of the girl in Sarajevo makes clear, as disseminators of violence, and as Kate recognises, as disseminators of response — 'Photographs shock, terrify, arouse compassion, anger, even drive people to take action...it was impossible to feel anything as simple or as trivial as despair' (*DV* 152–53). But most importantly, the art in and of *Double Vision* works to disseminate responsibility.

This shift between the artist and the audience is also demonstrated when Kate is repeatedly required to imagine how her work will be viewed, made public, even lying on the floor to gain perspective (68–69). And the shift is made clear again when Stephen finds Ben's corpse, and lying beside him, sees what Ben had seen:

Nothing here but stones and rocks. But then Stephen looked up and saw them, the wrecked tanks. He'd been driven past them twenty times perhaps, but he hadn't spotted what Ben saw. From the bottom of the crater they looked like a wave breaking. A sun so white it might have been the moon hung in the sky behind them. (305)

'I want you to see what I see', says the artist, or witness. '*I saw it*'. The photographs and the novel urge us to move beyond the 'inability to feel', and to instead respond. Each of Goya's images, Sontag recognises, 'is an invitation to look, the caption, more often than not, insists on the difficulty of doing just that. A voice, presumably the artist's, badgers the viewer: can you bear to look at this?' (40). Ben's representations of violence, like Goya's, urge us, invite us, challenge us, to see what he has seen, to see through his eyes, through his lens, no matter how difficult that might be. It is not only his responsibility to 'speak *on behalf of* those who are in pain, Ben's photographs suggest, but our responsibility to see this, to bear witness, and to respond (Scarry 6). This is, I think, the notion *Double Vision* works towards. That is, Barker suggests, like Bersani, that art, that literature, should allow us to engage with the other, to recognise the importance of our own role in this dialogic relationship of representing and regarding, finally made explicit in the final line of dialogue in the novel, 'There... You see?' (*DV* 307). That final 'you' does not only figure an address from Stephen to Justine, but from the novel to the reader, and in the sense that it is structured as a question, this final imploration describes Sontag's 'invitation to look', an invitation which, left open, not only creates a space of response, but places that very responsibility in the hands of the reader.

Barker's novel *Double Vision* grapples with the ethics of representing violence, and explicitly debates the role of the artist as a correspondent, a 'human mediator' between violent events and those at home, as one who testifies to the truth of pain and of trauma, who leaves us in no doubt (Korte, 'Being Engaged' 442). Most importantly, as I have shown, this novel underscores the necessity and the responsibility of the witness as one who responds to the ethical demand of the artist, and who is, finally, urged to echo, 'I saw it'.

## NOTES

## Abbreviations

DV *Double Vision*

LC *Life Class*

<sup>1</sup> On this point, see especially Lawrence (2), Korte ('Touched by the Pain of Others' 184), and Sontag (20).

<sup>2</sup> In response to Stephen's assertion — 'There are plenty of good reasons for being a war correspondent. Witnessing. Giving people the raw material to make moral judgements' — Justine points out, 'But you said yourself, the witness turns into an audience, and then you're not witnessing any more, you're disseminating' (DV 227).

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