THEMES REGENERATION

Speech and silence:
- The novel begins with Sassoon's declaration followed by Rivers and Bryce's conversation on how they can silence him. No need to physically silence him but more act on his consciousness → send him to a hospital for shell-shocked.
- Sassoon torn between his will to speak out the horror he witnessed and Graves' telling him to remain silent.
- Irony of Rivers' talking cure: encourages the patient to speak. He's the one who remains silent during these conversations ('strip of empathic wallpaper'). Proud of his technique but when brings Sassoon to point where he wants to go back to the front, questions his ability to avoid censorship.
- Silence as eloquent as speech. Many patients suffer from speaking difficulties: Owen stammers, Prior mute, Callan dumb... Can't speak out → body takes power of expression communicating its protest through non-verbal ways.
- Example of Callan: patient silenced by being given back his voice. Suffering to get back his voice but Yealland makes sure he doesn't listen to him when he talks → paradox.
- Rivers also silenced. Has experienced it with his father who never listened to him, only interested in words and not their meaning. Also silenced when he has to sign the form to get Sassoon back to the front.
- Frustration when the patients do not talk. Doctors like Yealland and Rivers' father are going to push the men hard, break them until they can talk. This way, they are silencing them.
- Speech confronted to silence with characters of Sassoon and Graves: Sassoon expresses his views about the war and admits his homosexuality whereas Graves is the contrary.
- Speech and silence also a conflict, with Prior: at the beginning, doesn't want to talk (mutism + when he writes “I DONT REMEMBER”). When recovers his voice, still not cooperative “I don't think talking helps” but in the end, accepts the doctor's treatment reluctantly.

Masculinity:
- Persistent silencing of men → feelings of disempowerment and helplessness. Masculinity = ability to dominate and control → nobody in novel is truly masculine. War itself responsible of this situation.
- Rivers' techniques to heal the patients is everything but manly: makes them talk and express their feelings, which is viewed as feminine during this period. It is through this emasculation that the patients are able to improve.
- WW1 = new rules of warfare which prohibit decisive actions. Condition of shell-shock = directly related to constant strain and tensions but men see it as shameful condition which make them less than a man: society's judgement very harsh.