

## Breaking the Silence of Homer's Women in Pat Barker's the Silence of The Girls

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### ABSTRACT

Since time immemorial, women have been silenced by patriarchal societies in most, if not all, cultures. Women voices are ignored, belittled, mocked, interrupted or shouted down. The aim of this study examines how the contemporary writer Pat Barker breaks the silence of Homer's women in her novel *The Silence of The Girl* (2018). A semantic interplay will be conducted with the themes in an attempt to show how Pat Barker's novel fit into the Greek context of the Trojan War. The Trojan War begins with the conflict between the kingdoms of Troy and Mycenaean Greece. Homer's *The Iliad*, a popular story in the mythological of ancient Greece, gives us the story from the perspective of the Greeks, whereas Pat Barker's new novel gives us the story from the perspective of the queen- turned slave Briseis. Pat Barker's, *The Silence of the Girls*, written in 2018, readdresses *The Iliad* to uncover the unvoiced tale of Achilles' captive, who is none other than Briseis. In the Greek saga, Briseis is the wife of King Mynes of Lyrnessus, an ally of Troy. Pat Barker as a Postmodernist writer, readdresses the Trojan War in his novel through the representation of World War One, with dominant ideologies. The novel illustrates not only how Briseis's has tolerated and survived her traumatic experiences, but also, how she has healed and composed her fragmented life together. Homer's poem prognosticates the fall of Troy, whereas Barker's novel begins with the fall Lyrnessus, Briseis' home that was destroyed by Achilles and his men. Hence, Pat Barker uses intertextuality in her novel, engages both the tradition of the great epic and the brutality of the contemporary world. She revives the Trojan War with graphic pictorial vividness by fictionalizing World War in her novel. Through her novel, she gives Briseis a voice, illuminates the passiveness of women and exposes the negative traits of a patriarchal society.

### 1. Introduction

'You know how European literature begins?' says the teacher in *The Human Stain*. 'With a quarrel. All European literature springs from a fight... And what are they quarrelling about? It's as basic as a barroom brawl. They are quarrelling over a woman. A girl, really. A girl stolen from her father. A girl abducted in a war.'

From *The Human Stain* by Philip Roth.

The introduction of Pat Barker's novel *The Silence of the Girls* starts with an epigraph from *The Human Stain* by Philip Roth. Philip Roth argues that all of European literature springs from a fight, and his novel is set in the midst of America's "culture wars." Similarly, Pat Barker's novel *The Silence of the Girls* is set at the very beginning of the twenty first century, adapts and appropriates *The Iliad* with World War I. Pat Barker is an English novelist born in Yorkshire, England, on 8<sup>th</sup> May 1943. She starts to write in her mid-twenties, and Angela Carter, a novelist, has encouraged her to pursue her career as a writer. Her early novels illustrate the struggling lives and conditions of women living in the north of England. Her first book, *Union Street* written in 1982, won the Fawcett Society Book Prize. She has been awarded a CBE in 2000. Her recent novels are *Toby's Room* (2012), *Returning to the First World War*, *Noonday* (2015) and *The Silence of the Girls* (2018). *The Silence of the Girls* is shortlisted for Costa Book Award for Best Novel and Women's Prize for Fiction.

In an interview with Pat Barker, Martha Greengrass writes that the novel, *The Silence of the Girls* is a dazzling re-imagining of *The Iliad*, as alleged by the miserable women of the Trojan War. Here, Barker relates for what reason she goes back to the mythology, who tells the stories and why it matters to her. In the interview, Pat Barker suggests many writers adapt the Greek epic and focus on the heroic spaces. What Pat Barker does in her novel is that, she manages in looking at the unheroic spaces in the epic that other writers have previously ignored. She says that most of the writers focus on the brilliant characters, 'Achilles and Agamemnon' throughout history, and that is what writers have been doing by adapting and appropriating *The Iliad*. For Pat Barker, it was the silence of the girls, the limitation placed by the patriarchal society, and, the fact that Briseis is being quarreled over by these two great distinguished men and yet the girl is tongue-tied. Briseis has no opinion; she has no power; and she has no voice. It was the urge to fill that vacuum that made her go back and start retelling the myth yet again.<sup>1</sup>

*The Silence of the Girls* gives her sufficient justification to portray that, even though the women are victims or exiled in the patriarchal society, they can shape identity. The novel's epigraph is taken from Philip Roth's novel *The Human Stain* that stresses the way in which 'European literature' begins with something as basic as a 'barroom brawl.' Pat Barker's *The Silence of the Girls* begins when the Greeks have sacked Lyrnessus and abducts women including Briseis, and these women are made slaves or concubines. Pat Barker retells *The Iliad* in her novel from the perspective of a female slave, Briseis, who is fought over by two Greek heroes, Achilles and Agamemnon. Pat Barker gives voice not only to Briseis but also to the other women of their conflict and plight.

## 2. Literature Review

This research breaks the silence of Homer's women in Pat Barker's novel *The Silence of the Girls*. It gives a voice to the silenced women. There are many studies that deal with Pat Barker, but few deal with this contemporary novel written in 2018. Bethanne Patrick, an author and editor writes in *The Washington Post* that *The Silence of the Girls* is a novel that allows those who were dismissed as girls- the women trapped in a celebrated chronicled war- to speak, to be heard, to bear witness. In doing so, Barker has once again written something surprising and expressive, that speaks to our times while describing those bygone days.

Another source related to this paper is an article entitled "Pat Barker's *The Silence of the Girls* and the State of Exception." In this article, Catherine Lanone (2020) elaborates that, *The Silence of the Girls* written in 2018 comes as a surprise, at the apex of World-War-One commemorations. She argues that rather than turning to *The Iliad*, Pat Barker has returned to the war archive. She adds that, Barker has adapted Homer's epic, and at the same time she has explored another aspect, that of the female captive: 'I was astonished by that silence. The eloquence of the men, the absolute silence of the women they are quarrelling about' (Barker 2019b, 17). In this article, Catherine Lanone also introduces Margaret Atwood's *Penelopiad* and Natalie Haynes' *A Thousand Ships*. Written in 2005 and 2019, *Penelopiad* focuses on Penelope's sacrificed maidens, and *A Thousand Ships* focuses on the many women involved- these two are retellings of the Trojan War from the perspectives of female characters.

A blog in Critical Essays entitled "*Fighting Muteness in Pat Barker's The Silence of the Girls*," Kat Solomon (Jan 2020) writes that, throughout the novel, the girls and women find support in one another, sharing news and ministering to the wounds inflicted during the course of their nightly duties. In the novel's concluding chapters, the captured women of Lyrnessus try to comfort the newly enslaved women of Troy, although they are again hapless to alter their fates. In a particularly cruel turn taken from Trojan Women, Agamemnon orders that Polyxena, Andromache's daughter, must be sacrificed on Achilles's tomb. Briseis with a brave heart accompanies the girl to her awful end, because, Briseis has promised Andromache to be on Polyxena's side till the end. When the Greek ships depart, Briseis hurries back to the tomb to remove the bindings and gags from Polyxena's corpse that were inserted before she was slain by the son of Achilles. It can't bring the girl back from the dead, but as a symbolic gesture it still matters—at least to Briseis. Of Polyxena, Barker writes, "The deep gash in her throat made her look as if she had two mouths, both silent."

In Kirkus review issued on July 15, 2018, it states that the novel, *The Silence of the Girls* opens as Achilles and his soldiers sack Lyrnessus, closing in on the women and children hiding in the citadel. Briseis, the local queen narrates their terrifying approach, who sees her husband and brothers slaughtered in front of her. She makes a fateful choice not to follow her cousin over the parapet to her death. She becomes instead Achilles' war trophy. Briseis calls herself "a disappointment...a skinny little thing, all hair and eyes and scarcely a curve in sight." Barker's innovation rests in the silenced female frame of reference, something she has woven masterfully into her *Regeneration* and *Life Class* trilogies about World War I. Here she gives Briseis a satirical voice; she likens herself as a mouse to Achilles' hawk. Even as the men boast and drink, and fight their way toward immortality, the camp women live outwardly by Barker's title.

<sup>1</sup> GreenGrass, Martha. (2019, April 29). The Waterstones Interview: Pat Barker on *The Silence of the Girls*. Available at: <https://www.waterstones.com/blog/the-interview-pat-barker-on-the-silence-of-the-girls>.

One more source is that is related to the paper is by Anna Eklund, University Book Store, Seattle, WA. She argues in Indie Next List, September 2018: "The women in Homer's *Iliad* hardly ever speak; we are not privy to their thoughts, feelings, or anguish as expressed in their own words. Until now, *The Silence of the Girls* depicts moments of the Trojan War through the eyes of the female captives at the mercy of the men, who have slaughtered their husbands, fathers, brothers, and sons, as they carve out a space among themselves in their new lives, in the wake of war's devastation. The focus of Barker's novel is Briseis, through whose eyes we see, up close, the rift between Agamemnon and Achilles, the bond between Achilles and Patroclus, and the complex, beautiful support system the captured women weave together. Barker's novel is a masterpiece of resilience, determination, fury, healing, and complicated, completely human characters."

Hamish Hamilton in *Women's Prize for Fiction*, 2019, Reading Group Guide, writes that in the Trojan War, there is a significant woman, whose voice has been silent. Hamilton mentions Briseis, the queen, whose city is destroyed by the Greeks. He has butchered her husband and brothers and taken her as a slave. He questions the readers: Trapped in a world defined by men, can she survive to become the author of her own story?

Recommended by Sheila N. in Powells.com, Powell says Barker's retelling of *The Iliad* gives a voice to the powerless, who are made powerless by war. She adds that *The Silence of the Girls* will stand the test of time and illustrates what horrific ordeal of war and slavery can bring, and that the novel is suitable for the purpose.

Stephen Fry, British author and actor when dealing with the best Trojan War books writes, "It is worth remembering of course that Homer's *The Iliad* doesn't cover the causes of the War... the Apple Discord, the Judgement of Paris, abduction of Helen, birth of Achilles and so on- nor the end of the war. The action of *The Iliad* begins in the final year of the ten years siege of Troy and dramatizes the weeks that begin with the feud between Agamemnon and Achilles and end with the death of Hector."<sup>2</sup>

Accordingly, the novel *The Silence of the Girls* by Pat Barker has a very clear feminist message. The women of *The Iliad* were not allowed to define their womanhood. Their womanhood is the body that was treated as commodities in the male dominated society. Pat Barker illustrates the struggle of women to disentangle themselves from male-dominated narratives. A retelling of Homer's epic poem *The Iliad*, Pat Barker focusses Achilles' concubine, Briseis, and give voice to the women who were silenced.

### 3. Research Methodologies

In my research, I include close reading, comparing/ contrasting, interpreting the primary sources chosen for study. I offer to analyze the selected fictional works by Homer's *The Iliad* and Pat Barker's *The Silence of the Girls*, and examine how Pat Barker adapts and appropriates the Silenced Women in her novel and retrieve the tales of unvoiced women. The research starts by affirming the theoretical framework related to the dominant subject. It introduces the focal dimension related to the topic of the research. I support my findings from various sources, comprising of Primary and Secondary sources. Secondary sources are a broad spectrum of critical essay, journals, articles and reviews. The research ends with a concluding assertion on how Pat Barker adapts and appropriates Homer's women, gives voice to Briseis and expose the silenced women represented in *The Iliad*.

### 4. Discussion

*The Iliad* is a fascinating epic and has inspired many authors of all ages to produce a variety of creative and distinctive adaptations and appropriations. Many postmodern novelists adapt the retelling of the events of *The Iliad* from a different point of view. Many Contemporary writers have retold the stories set in a different time period, or in a different setting like Greg Tobin's *The Siege of Troy* (2004), Amanda Elyot's *The Memoirs of Helen of Troy* (2005), Francesca Petrizzo's *Memoirs of a Bitch* (2010), Theodor Kallifatides's *The Siege of Troy* (2019) and many more. Their narratives are either viewed through made up figures or through the eyes of one of the main characters to claim the Homeric account. Bakhtin, the Russian philosopher, literary critic and scholar, argues that adaptation is a way of looking at texts through inter determinations with other texts that all texts share to a greater or lesser degree, rather than a special kind of text that is uniquely inter determined.<sup>33</sup> Combining the skills as writers, Contemporary novelists adapt and bring the energy of contemporary language to this heroic epic and evokes the impact and nuance of *The Iliad*. In 2006, Linda Hutcheon writes an optimistic note in her work *A Theory of Adaptation*, that "The adaptive faculty is the ability to repeat without copying, to embed difference in similarity, to be at once both self and Other" (174).

The Trojan War was fought between the Anatolian city, Troy and its allies against a coalition of Greeks. The story of the Trojan War has progressed through many generations, inspiring artists and authors. The epic saga of the siege of Troy, which was

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<sup>2</sup> Fry, Stephen. (2020). The Best Trojan War Books: A review. <https://fivebooks.com/book/iliad-by-homer/>

<sup>3</sup> Cutchins, Dennis. (2017). *Bakhtin, Intertextuality, and Adaptation*. The oxford handbook of Adaptation Studies, Edited by Thomas Leitch. doi: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199331000.013.4.

written in the mid-8th Century BCE, is considered to be the earliest work in the Western literary tradition. Homer's *The Iliad* relates the siege of the city of Troy by Greeks and some of the remarkable events of the final weeks of the Trojan War. Pat Barker engages Intertextuality in her novel, by bringing both the epic tales of Homer and the brutality of today's world. Graham Allen illustrates in *Intertextuality* that 'literary texts' are built from system, codes, and tradition established by previous works of literature and derived from companion art form. Intertextuality theories illustrates that the meaning in one text can be acknowledged in connection to the other texts; but is interlinked with the prior tradition and the context in which it is produced. Allen adds that no work stands alone.

Any written language consists of signs and signifiers and holds out the promise of referentiality. Pat Barker's *The Silence of the Girls* plays with the elements of Intertextuality of *The Iliad* and has a very clear feminist message about the conflict and struggle for women. Through the eyes of the secondary female character Briseis, Pat Barker portrays women's experience of war and to disentangle themselves from male-chauvinistic narratives. Linda Hutcheon's in her work *A Theory of Adaptation*, provides a reason to value adaptation as cultural artifacts, and a holistic theory of analyzing adaptation. Linda Hutcheon argues that adaptations are not derivative or of inferior standard although they are derived from other texts; rather than using "original" or "source." Hutcheon suggests the term "adapted text" to refer to the text/s that an adaptation is "palimpsestic" i.e. stories that have changed over time, and that show evidence of change. They are repetitions of a familiar story, but not replications.

Barker's novel is one out of a million, as she gives a vivid pictorial description of World War One into the Trojan War. Bringing together an evocative wartime setting and relatable themes, Barker revives the Trojan War with the aftermath of war with sensory vividness, bringing the Renaissance era into the modern era and her experience of fictionalizing World War I archives.

#### **4.1 Adaptation of Homer's *The Iliad* in Pat Barker's *The Silence of the Girls*.**

*The Iliad* is an epic tale goes on nearly ten years led by Agamemnon and the Greek forces to siege the city of Troy. The war between the Greeks and the Troy starts with the elopement of Helen, wife of Menelaus of Sparta. Paris, son of king Priam of Troy, seduces Helen and steals her from her husband. Menelaus, Helen's jilted husband, persuades his brother Agamemnon, king of Mycenae, to lead a siege to reclaim Helen. Most of the Greek heroes Odysseus, Achilles etc. join Agamemnon to lay siege to Troy and demand Helen's return. In the meantime, the Greeks have captured Chryses, the daughter of Chryses, a priest of the Geek god Apollo. The Greeks are arguing about whether or not to return the Trojan captive of King Agamemnon, Chryses, to her father.

Agamemnon refuses because she is his war prize, and intimidates to ransom the girl to her father. Apollo gets offended and plagues them with a pestilence. Agamemnon in due course agrees to give her back, but in return he takes Briseis, Achilles's war-prize concubine. As mentioned earlier, Achilles has destroyed Briseis home, the wife of King Mynes of Lyrnessus and keeps her as a concubine for himself. One cannot practically take someone else's commodities because he is crippled by lust and greed. Briseis is a pawn and belongs to Achilles. By taking Briseis, Barker portrays Agamemnon, a powerful man grappling for supremacy. Feeling dishonored and infuriated, Achilles pulls himself back and his Myrmidon warriors from the Trojan War. What we see here is that, both Briseis and Helen's are the cause of dispute between two men that leads to brutal battle. However, women as a cause of all trouble is a common theme for this epic drama.

Pat Barker's novel is told by Briseis, the first-person narrator in the novel but in the final part, the narrative is in the third-person told from the point of view of Achilles. In *The Iliad*, terrible destruction is caused by male behavior that not only harms themselves but also the society as a whole, for example, Hector says in *The Iliad*, "War is men's business." Homer's women lack action; they are either enslaved or sacrificed and are given as war prizes because it was a society of male dominance over women.

Thus, we have seen that men in *The Iliad* struggle with each other for status drawn primarily from women's physiques and pretty faces. Women are shown voiceless but they are not entirely silent. Homer's women speak and lament for their dead sons, dead fathers and husbands; grieve for the city of Troy and for their own freedom. During the war, Andromache, wife of Hector requests her Trojan husband not to fight Achilles and leave her and the infant son all by themselves. She tells her husband that if he gets caught, their child will be thrown like a catapult from the city walls and she will be made the concubine of the son of her husband's killer. But Hector claims that it will be a social humiliation if he does not fight and in order to avoid social humiliation as a battle-shirker before the Trojan men and women, he has to play his part as a warrior.

In the tale, Briseis, the wife of King Mynes of Lyrnessus, and Achilles fall in love with each other. Later Agamemnon takes Briseis from Achilles. As mentioned above, Achilles is enraged and refuses to fight for Agamemnon even after Agamemnon returns Briseis-untouched. Patroclus, Achilles' comrade and friend convinces Achilles to let him lead the Myrmidon army into battle. Patroclus wears Achilles' armor not sensing that he will be killed. When Achilles' wartime friend Patroclus is killed by Hector, Achilles' grief knows no bounds, and determines to get revenge.

Barker's novel follows the time scheme of *The Iliad*. The novel's epigraph is taken from Philip Roth's novel *The Human Stain*, stresses the way in which 'European literature' begins with something as basic as a 'barroom brawl'. The contemporary writer of the post-modern times, Pat Barker brings to life the heroes and the romance of the Bronze Age in the contemporary world with epic capturing readers in his novel *The Silence of the Girls*. Agamemnon's replacement of Briseis for Chryseis jeopardizes the body politic, which is a tyrannical decision. Like *The Iliad*, Barker's novel investigates the trauma and calamity from the viewpoint of Briseis, a secondary character in *The Iliad*. Emily Wilson, translator of *The Odyssey* writes "This is an important, powerful, memorable book that invites us to look differently not only at *The Iliad* but at our own ways of telling stories about the past and the present, and at how anger and hatred play out in our societies. The defeated go down in history and disappear, and their stories die with them. Barker's novel is an invitation to tell those forgotten stories, and to listen for voices silenced by history and power."<sup>4</sup>

Pat Barker starts her story a few months earlier unlike *The Iliad* which starts in the tenth year of the Trojan War. The Greeks are encircling and blockading the settlement of Lyrnessus, home of Briseis. Briseis is the daughter of Briseus, a priest of Apollo in the town of Lyrnessus. Lyrnessus is allied to Troy during the Trojan War, and as a result is captured by Achilles. Briseis watches the Greeks wipe the city, sees Achilles murder her husband and brothers. Briseis's old life is shattered when her city falls to the Greeks. She could not do anything but watch silently the wrath of the Greeks. She falls into the hands of the Greeks and is given to Achilles as his war prize. Captive women are slaves and are traded amongst the warriors but Briseis is taken as Achilles concubine.

From queen to captive, she is transmuted from a free woman to a concubine and is presented to the warrior Achilles as a prize of war. Briseis loses everything with the fall of Lyrnessus and she is taken as a concubine by Achilles and later by Agamemnon. She is conscious of being handed over to Agamemnon like an object and understands that women's bodies have been taken for guarantee sites of patriarchal control. She discovers that the Greeks blame her as the cause of the quarrel between the two leaders. Briseis comments, 'I could feel the same hostility, the same contempt beginning to gather around me. I was Helen now' (110).

On the same day, in the course of the Trojan War, innumerable women have been arrested and taken captives, and given to the warriors. In *The Iliad*, many other female characters fall into similar category such as Chryseis, Briseis, Hecuba and Andromache. They are like pawns that have been exchanged among powerful men. Briseis with her eyes dry she leaves Achilles for Agamemnon. She describes, "Achilles cried as I was taken away. He cried, I didn't." This sentence ends Part I, Briseis as a first person narrator and in Part II, narration starts from the perspective of Achilles, as he takes the readers to his determining fight with Hector, who killed Achilles' friend Patroclus.

In *The Iliad*, fights are caused by women, men possess them because men are in control. The male domination is seen in both public and private spheres. Barker also illustrates how Polyxena, the youngest daughter of Priam and Hecuba is captured and gagged by the Greeks, and then at the end of the Trojan War, she is sacrificed on Achilles' tomb. The girl's gagged mouth evokes a horrifying image for the silenced voices that paints the terror and sorrow suffered by the victims of war. After Hector is killed, King Priam arrives to collect his son's body. He kisses his enemy's hands, the hands of Achilles, in exchange for Hector's body and remarks that he does what no man has done before, "the hands of the man who killed my son." Briseis, who does not have the power to resist, standing and watching, thinks: "And I do what countless women before me have been forced to do. I spread my legs for the man who killed my husband and my brothers."

Barker's novel illustrates the oppression, and exploitation of women, to liberate themselves from male-chauvinistic narratives. The novel has a clear cut feminist message. The endeavor to deliver Briseis with a happy ending is narrow, nevertheless, by retelling the story of Briseis, Pat Barker gives her a voice that was left unheard. The female characters' outrage seems a bit predictable, as when we hear Helen saying: "I'm here. Me. A person, not just an object to be looked at and fought over." Barker paints women as contemplative, diverse, versatile human beings and portrays the emotions of the wounded women, their loneliness, even when they are crying together. At the end of the novel, we see Polyxena, who tries to speak but is gagged, and can only utter muffled screams before her throat is slit (285), a visual image of putting a stop to women voices. Isolation and segregation of women are the major themes of *The Iliad* and *The Silence of the Girls*. Barker's novel is a postulation to the neglected and forgotten stories. Through Briseis, the readers get to listen for voices that are silenced by history and male dominated power. *The Silence of the Girls* is a novel that portrays the silenced and voiceless women, who were trapped in a

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<sup>4</sup> Emily Wilson. (2018, August 22). *The Silence of the Girls* by Pat Barker review – a feminist Iliad. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/aug/22/silence-of-the-girls-pat-barker-book-review-iliad>

historical war. Pat Barker introduces the listening skills that allow us to hear another's story, the story of Briseis, a secondary female character who neither got a chance speak, heard, nor to bear witness. Thus, Barker has presented something eternal that articulates to our present times while describing those bygone days.

Barker has adapted the First World War in her novel as the Trojan war of our times. Barker adorns the trauma of World War I in her novel to acquaint the readers the nine year-long, 'interminable war' (22). The battlefield is described as a site of animal slaughter that reminds No Man's Land: 'the once fertile plain so churned up with horses' hooves and chariot wheels it had become a wasteland in which nothing grew' (112). The fortified city of Troy that was once prosperous is now a barren land. Agamemnon has strengthened by the building walls and the channels paved with 'duckboards' (117), to protect his ships. Hundreds of men join their hands in the war together although, they are thickly caked in mud and manage to make headway against Troy. During the course of the war, many are wounded and many died. Briseis and the conflicted women takes part in nursing and tending the wounded. They listen for the crackling of infection, watch the impending death silently through violence, aggression, destruction caused by the men: all these elements are similar to war and its affects. Barker laminates the Trojan War with the horror of atrocities, by reflecting the language used for World War I in her novel, thus satirizing Homer's characterization of women in *The Iliad*.

During the siege of Troy and its aftermath, thousands of men and boys are butchered in city streets and homes, and the women and girls are led out either as slaves or as concubines. Pat Barker also illustrates the nature of female bodies that is also a different battlefield on which Homeric men seek for power, strive for status, and accomplish honor and wealth. Women were clearly viewed as commodities argues C. Brian Rose, Professor and gold medalist in Archaeology, in his publication.<sup>5</sup>

## 5. Conclusion

Women are the helpless victims of political violence during the Trojan War. Briseis, the protagonist is being objectified. Briseis is not a virgin, but it does not make any difference between the dispute of Agamemnon and Achilles. Women are subjugated; Men devalue the worth of women. Women are not allowed to fight in the war because of gender inequality. Barker has important messages on what war does to people of all nations and particularly to the "silent girls," because century's later women are often the victims with no voice and go unheard in places of conflicts. The novel has many themes of loss, despair, conflicts etc. and illustrates the darker periods of history. Pat Barker implies that in retelling this story there is some legacy for those who suffered. Briseis becomes the voice of collective memory, bringing back the tales of silenced women, both celebrated and forgotten ones. By adapting Homer, Barker has appropriated today's crisis with the past. Through trans- focalization, Pat Barker successfully integrates a Renaissance literary tradition of storytelling with a rewriting of a Contemporary fiction. While using the act of telling stories, Barker also gives a voice to a silenced historical person and allows the Homeric women to piece together the story of their lives.

## About the author

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