

Patricia Barker, *The Silence of the Girls*. New York: Penguin Random House, 2018. Pp. 325. Paper. \$16.95.

Patricia Barker, an award-winning author, introduces the untold story of women during the Trojan War through historical fiction. Barker shows that celebrated Ancient Greece and even storytellers like Homer withheld the history and impact of women. The women of these stories are rarely heard to be influential or impactful, their roles at times are too insignificant to include, leaving women out of the narrative. Barker re-examines the history that Homer told in *The Iliad*, to include the perspective of women and people such as Briseis, a woman who was related to royalty and found herself captured by Achilles and the Greeks. The author argues that voices from these women should be included in the poem *The Iliad*, and their positions are just as or even more significant than the well-known characters from the past.

Barker structures her book like the story of *The Iliad*. However, she chooses to expand on instances mortal women like Briseis played important roles. The novel's similarity to Homer's poem allows readers familiar with his work to follow along and understand pivotal moments. Nevertheless, the author's ability to maintain the familiar order of *The Iliad* does not take away from the necessary details to support Barker's argument. For example, Barker revisits the moment Agamemnon and Achilles have a dispute about Briseis. In Barker's version Achilles was disrespected by losing what was rightfully his. During this period women were considered prizes and for Agamemnon to take Achilles possession, showed he had no respect for the victorious leader. Barker understands that reader's interpretation of this moment is victim to the lack of detail Homer included. The author's reconfiguration of this moment allows the audience to gain a new perspective, which is Briseis has no say and although Achilles may feel disrespected, it does not compare when considering Briseis's lack of visibility.

Barker is well aware of her audience and structures her novel to allow readers to be connected to familiar moments. This novel is written for people who are familiar with *The Iliad* or at least familiar with Greek mythology. Some of her literature is a plot

twist and play on words, which should not be mistaken as coincidental. For example, Briseis explains the difficulties of being a woman in an identical pattern when compared to how the last king of Troy explains his difficulties of being a man and father. This approach shows that the author knows who her audience is, and she is focused on shedding light on other difficulties that are not mentioned in this novel. Readers who have read Homer's poem will understand that Barker does this to emphasize her argument again in a creative way.

Barker does an excellent job of allowing readers to re-evaluate the role of women in an ancient nearly three thousand-year old story. This literature relates to Ancient Greek history and provides a new perspective that educators may use to show students a new framework of re-telling the past. Historians should be mindful of the voiceless people involved, and this novel is an example of how to include their unwritten history. This book is evidence that new interpretations can provide a more detailed and conscious history.

Gilbert Wilson Gutierrez