

# **Listening to the Voiceless: Briseis and Lavinia in Modern Fiction**

**Theshira Pather**

Submitted in fulfilment of the academic requirements for the degree of Masters in Classics, University  
of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban.

2020

Supervisor: Dr Elke Steinmeyer

## DECLARATION

I .....Theshira Pather..... declare that

(i) The research reported in this thesis, except where otherwise indicated, is my original research.

(ii) This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.

(iii) This thesis does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.

(iv) This thesis does not contain other persons' writing, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other researchers. Where other written sources have been quoted, then:

- a) their words have been re-written but the general information attributed to them has been referenced;
- b) where their exact words have been used, their writing has been placed inside quotation marks, and referenced.

(v) Where I have reproduced a journal publication of which I am an author, I have indicated in detail which part of the publication was actually written by myself alone and not by other authors, editors or others.

(vi) This thesis does not contain text, graphics or tables copied and pasted from the Internet, unless specifically acknowledged, and the source being detailed in the thesis and in the References sections.

Signed: .....THESHIRA PATHER.....

As the candidate's supervisor **I have**/ have not approved this thesis for submission.

Signed: .....ELKE STEINMEYER.....

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation would not have been possible without the help and guidance of my supervisor Dr Elke Steinmeyer. Her unwavering support, patience and encouragement greatly aided me in seeing this project to completion.

My thanks also especially to Prof. Johan Jacobs who not only provided me with many points of wisdom regarding *The Silence of the Girls*, but also for his kind advice regarding managing the writing process. To Dr Susan Haskins and Mr Michael Lambert, my thanks for providing advice on my initial MA proposal. Thanks must also be given to Ms Szerdi Nagy for bringing the novel *Lavinia* to my attention and for encouraging me to undertake research on the novel. To Mrs Aileen Bevis, who instilled a passion in me for ancient languages which set me on the path to completing this project. My thanks to Dr Adrian Ryan as well who kindly provided information regarding certain articles. Thanks also to the staff and postgraduate students in the Classics department, especially Nadia Inarmal, Saaliha Bassa and Nam Hee Ro. I would like to thank Nadia in particular for her constant love, support and encouragement throughout this entire degree and throughout our entire friendship. Without her, I would not have had the strength to complete this project.

To my parents, Aruna and Kalai, whom I cannot thank enough. They were the first to introduce me to history, myths and legends. For their unconditional love and support, I am eternally grateful. To my eldest sister, Santhiska, who always lifted me up when I fell down and who was always there when I needed her to be. To my brother-in-law, Ezekiel Ngitoria Lengaram, who never wavered in his faith in me and celebrated all of my victories, no matter how small. Asante sana.

And to my late sister, Rashalia, who passed away on the 8th of July 2020. She was a constant guiding light in my life who never once allowed me to doubt my own abilities and intelligence. Rashalia brought the novel *The Silence of the Girls* to my attention and sparked off this entire project. She is the angel on my shoulder, and I will always love and miss her.

## ABSTRACT

Research on female characters from ancient epic has steadily increased over the years and especially in recent times. Despite this, research on the female characters Briseis and Lavinia from Homer's *Iliad* and Vergil's *Aeneid*, and their reception in modern fiction, has been somewhat neglected in Classical scholarship. I will examine Homer's Briseis and Vergil's Lavinia, as well as their depictions in the modern novels *The Silence of the Girls* (2018) and *Lavinia* (2008) by authors Pat Barker and Ursula K. Le Guin respectively, focusing specifically on themes of objectification and subjectivity.

My examination will be aided and informed by two main theories, in addition to Reception Studies theory: Martha Nussbaum's theory concerning objectification and Monique Wittig's gender theory involving subjectivity, structure and personal pronouns. The main reason I believe this topic is important lies in the modern engagement with ancient texts, as evident in the modern works chosen for this dissertation. The works of ancient Greek and Roman authors, such as Homer and Vergil, have gripped the attention of audiences since they were created and have spawned hundreds of receptions. In more recent years, female authors have acted to create their own interpretations of these ancient works, focusing especially on marginalised or demonised women. These modern receptions involving a female-centric narrative are especially significant given the current social climate of feminist movements. The topic of this dissertation is therefore of importance as its focus on two marginalised female characters and themes of objectification and subjectivity may contribute to the ongoing discussions regarding the place of ancient texts and Classics as a discipline in modern society.

Chapter 1 will focus on Briseis from Homer's epic with Chapter 2 focusing on Briseis from Barker's novel, *The Silence of the Girls*, while Chapter 3 will focus solely on Lavinia from Vergil's epic with Chapter 4 focusing on Lavinia from Le Guin's novel, *Lavinia*. This dissertation will be my contribution to the scholarship on female characters in ancient Greek and Roman epics and their modern receptions.

## CONTENTS

<b>Introduction:</b> A Brief Overview, Theoretical Framework, Methodology and Literature Review.	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter 1:</b> Briseis: Homer's <i>Iliad</i>	<b>11</b>
<b>Chapter 2:</b> Briseis: Pat Barker's <i>The Silence of the Girls</i>	<b>44</b>
<b>Chapter 3:</b> Lavinia: Vergil's <i>Aeneid</i>	<b>86</b>
<b>Chapter 4:</b> Lavinia: Ursula K. Le Guin's <i>Lavinia</i>	<b>125</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>166</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>170</b>

## Introduction

It would be a fallacy to claim that female characters in Homeric and Vergilian epic literature are unimportant and superfluous figures. Many fictional women in Homer's *Iliad* and Vergil's *Aeneid* play pivotal roles in the respective epics: Helen serves as the *raison d'être* for the Trojan War,<sup>1</sup> Chryseis' capture, and Agamemnon's refusal to release her, result in a deadly plague which threatens to eliminate the entire Greek army, and the Sibyl is essential for Aeneas' descent into the underworld.<sup>2</sup> It is clear then that prominent female characters exist in the works of Homer and Vergil. It is my belief, however, that despite their apparent prominence, Homeric and Vergilian female characters are assigned exclusively supporting roles in the lives of the heroes; Helen is one of the most important women in the *Iliad*, but it is Achilles and Hector who are truly the primary characters.

In this dissertation, it is therefore my aim to examine, through a gendered lens, the Reception of two female characters from the epics of Homer and Vergil in modern fiction who, in my opinion, are essential but ultimately supporting characters in the respective works: Briseis and Lavinia. Central to my project is the examination of the manner in which each woman is objectified, how their subjectivities, and therefore voices, are denied in the ancient sources, and how these are treated in the modern works *The Silence of the Girls* (2018) by Pat Barker and *Lavinia* (2008) by Ursula K. Le Guin. This involves a comparative study between the ancient and modern works. Furthermore, I will also analyse how the main characters of each ancient epic, especially the heroes, aid or hinder the subjectivities and voices of each women, and how this is depicted in the modern works.

The two female characters which I will analyse both play essential roles in the lives of the heroes: Briseis is the main cause for Achilles' feud with Agamemnon and his withdrawal from battle (which has dire consequences for the Greeks), and Lavinia is Aeneas' final wife and is vital for the fulfilment of his destiny. Despite their obvious importance, however, Classical scholarship seems to have largely neglected the subjectivities and voices of these two female characters. Additionally, as argued earlier, the Reception of each woman in modern literature is extremely limited, and more

---

<sup>1</sup> Or at least this is the reasoning behind Agamemnon forming the Greek coalition, with him at the helm, to retrieve his brother's wife, Helen.

<sup>2</sup> See Nagy, 2009 (UKZN MA dissertation) for a detailed analysis of the importance of the Sibyl.

specifically, research has not been conducted on the Reception of Briseis in *The Silence of the Girls*, and there is limited Classical research on the Reception of Lavinia in Le Guin's novel *Lavinia*. To date, I have not found a comprehensive study on the possible objectification of the female characters Briseis and Lavinia, nor on their subjectivities and voices in the ancient sources and in modern fiction. It is my aim then to provide such an examination and shed a much needed light on the importance of the Reception of these characters.

Although the two female characters of my study appear in a number of other ancient sources, for the purpose of this dissertation, I will be focusing exclusively on the following sources: Homer's epic poem, the *Iliad*, and Vergil's epic poem, the *Aeneid*. I have chosen to focus primarily on Homer's and Vergil's epic works as they are of the same literary genre and similar approach. With regard to my selection of the two female characters, two main similarities may be drawn: firstly, both female characters are from ancient epic literature. Secondly, as mentioned before, both female characters play essential roles in the lives of their respective heroes, yet are marginalised in the ancient works.

My project is split into four chapters: Chapter One will concern Briseis from the *Iliad* with Chapter Two focusing on her depiction in the modern novel, *The Silence of the Girls*. Chapter Three will concern Lavinia from the *Aeneid*, and Chapter Four will be centred on her depiction in the modern novel, *Lavinia*. Throughout each chapter, I will discuss the following main issues: first, to examine the objectification of each female character in each epic, focusing specifically on who the objectifiers are and the manner in which they objectify each character, and whether this objectification is overcome in the modern novels. Second, to analyse how the use of language and the structure of both the ancient and modern works contribute to the formation of, or lack of, each woman's subjectivity, and therefore, 'voice'.

## Theoretical Framework and Methodology

My study which falls under Reception Studies, a sub-field in Classics, is a comparative study and will be conducted through a gendered lens, focusing on issues of objectification, subjectivity and voice. Due to this, my project will be informed by a number of theories focusing on Reception Studies, objectification, subjectivity, voice and comparative literature.

There are several different strands in the research area of Classical Reception: the Classical Tradition, *Rezeptionsgeschichte*, *Nachleben*, and Reception Studies. Lorna Hardwick in her influential text *Reception Studies* (2003) discusses these four approaches: Classical Tradition, Hardwick argues, as well as *Rezeptionsgeschichte* and *Nachleben*, examine how Classical culture has been conveyed through the years and focuses especially on how subsequent cultures are influenced by Classical antiquity. In addition, all three strands view this influence as a 'legacy'.<sup>3</sup> Reception Studies, on the other hand, is more concerned with a two-way approach to Classical culture and investigates not only what influence Classical culture has had on subsequent times, but also how modern adaptations of Classical times may raise questions or highlight previously hidden aspects of Classical antiquity.<sup>4</sup> Hardwick defines Reception Studies as being "concerned with investigating the routes by which a text has moved and the cultural focus which shaped or filtered the ways in which the text was regarded."<sup>5</sup> Hardwick further clarifies this:

"Reception studies therefore participate in the continuous dialogue between the past and the present and also require some 'lateral' dialogue in which crossing boundaries of place or language or genre is as important as crossing those of time. Reception studies, therefore, are concerned not only with individual texts and their relationship with one another but also with the broader cultural processes which shape and make up these relationships."<sup>6</sup>

My rationale therefore aligns most closely with Hardwick's definition of Reception Studies, as I am interested in both the manner in which the ancient works of Homer and Vergil have influenced the

---

<sup>3</sup> Hardwick, 2003: 2.

<sup>4</sup> Hardwick, 2003: 112.

<sup>5</sup> Hardwick, 2003: 4–5.

<sup>6</sup> Hardwick, 2003: 4–5.



modern works of Barker and Le Guin, as well as how the modern adaptations raise questions concerning objectification, subjectivity and the female voice with regard to the ancient texts.

Given the literary and comparative nature of my investigation, I will be employing a hermeneutical text-based method when reading and comparing texts, as defined by Michael Canaris: "...a group of approaches... which, while not denying the inescapable role and importance of the author, search for meaning in the written text itself."<sup>7</sup> My comparative method will be informed by Susan Bassnett's pivotal text *Comparative Literature: A Critical Introduction* (1993). Bassnett discusses the history of comparative studies and its many approaches in great detail, and goes on to explain that comparative studies involve the comparison of texts, usually across different cultures, and that "it is concerned with patterns of connection in literatures across both time and space."<sup>8</sup> Bassnett's explanation will therefore inform my comparison of the ancient epic works of Homer and Vergil with their modern adaptations.

In conjunction with my examination of all texts from a Reception Studies viewpoint, I will also employ two main gender theories: Martha Nussbaum's theory of objectification and Monique Wittig's theory concerning language, structure and subjectivity. Martha Nussbaum, in her article 'Objectification', describes the term objectification as "the seeing and/or treating of someone as an object" and argues that this occurs usually, but not always, in a sexual context.<sup>9</sup> Nussbaum goes on to say that sexual, and non-sexual, objectification of women is a crucial problem for most feminist thinkers as it prevents women from "full self-expression and self-determination — from...their humanity."<sup>10</sup> Objectification, according to Nussbaum, usually involves one or more of the following seven points. I have copied her layout exactly as follows:

1. Instrumentality: The objectifier treats the object as a tool of his or her purposes.
2. Denial of autonomy: The objectifier treats the object as lacking in autonomy and self-determination.
3. Inertness: The objectifier treats the object as lacking in agency, and perhaps also in activity.

---

<sup>7</sup> Canaris, 2017: 31.

<sup>8</sup> Bassnett, 1993: 1.

<sup>9</sup> Nussbaum, 1995: 251.

<sup>10</sup> Nussbaum, 1995: 250.

4. Fungibility: The objectifier treats the object as interchangeable (a) with other objects of the same type, and/or (b) with objects of other types.
5. Violability: The objectifier treats the object as lacking in boundary-integrity, as something that it is permissible to break up, smash, break into.
6. Ownership: The objectifier treats the object as something that is owned by another, can be bought or sold, etc.
7. Denial of subjectivity: The objectifier treats the object as something whose experience and feelings (if any) need not be taken into account.

The definitions of three of the points above, namely autonomy, agency (which is involved in inertness) and subjectivity, have been, and still are, frequent topics of debate, and I must clarify my own understanding of them before I continue. For the purpose of this project, I will use explanations of these terms as provided by the *Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (2005). First, autonomy, as explained by Richard Norman, is the ability to “be self-determining, to be in control of one’s own life”.<sup>11</sup> Second, Jennifer Hornsby defines an ‘agent’ as “(i) possessing a capacity to choose between options and (ii) being able to do what one chooses. Agency is then treated as a causal power.”<sup>12</sup> To have agency then, as I understand it, is to possess the ability to make choices, subsequently act upon that choice and therefore to be able to cause a certain action. Third, Robert Solomon states that subjectivity refers to an individual’s “particular perspective, feelings, beliefs and desires.”<sup>13</sup> I must note here that I believe that subjectivity is directly linked to having a ‘voice’, in that, in order for one to fully convey one’s own “particular perspective, feelings, beliefs and desires”, one must possess a voice.

To return to Nussbaum, objectification often involves a sense of competition, usually between men, over women who are viewed as fungible. There is also a certain sense of status attached to objectification, in the sense that women who are objectified are more desirable if they are skilled and talented. This, according to Nussbaum, is due to the fact that men who objectify women feel more accomplished when they are able to dominate a woman of high status.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> Norman, 2005: 72.

<sup>12</sup> Hornsby, 2005: 18.

<sup>13</sup> Solomon, 2005: 900.

<sup>14</sup> Nussbaum, 1995: 285.

Monique Wittig's theory concerning subjects of speech from her article 'The Mark of Gender' (1985) and Judith Butler's discussion of this same theory in her book *Gender Trouble* (2002) will further support my arguments. Adalaide Morris' thoughts on the use of language in fiction in her article 'First Persons Plural in Contemporary Feminist Fiction' (1992) will also add support to my examination of each female character. Wittig argues that "[l]anguage casts sheaves of reality upon the social body, stamping it and violently shaping it."<sup>15</sup> Gender in the English language, Wittig claims, takes place only in the personal pronoun as these are the only linguistic elements which "designate the locutors in discourse."<sup>16</sup> Personal pronouns, Wittig goes on to say, may appear to designate gender only in the third person (such as 'he' or 'she'), but the first person pronoun 'I' also implies a specific gender: the masculine. This is due to the apparent appropriation of the "abstract form, the general, the universal" by men, while women are forced to proclaim their gender in some way during their discourse. Men, therefore, are the assumed subjects of discourse while women have to make clear that they are female when initiating discourse.<sup>17</sup> In another essay, 'The Point of View: Universal or Particular' (1980), Wittig explains that there is only one true gender: the feminine, the so-called 'masculine' gender is in fact the general or the universal and is therefore assumed automatically to be the main locutor.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, Wittig claims that this gendering of language is detrimental to women as it "represents a measure of domination".<sup>19</sup>

Gender, through language, places restrictions upon women and attempts "to strip them of the most precious thing for a human being — subjectivity."<sup>20</sup> Wittig therefore argues that the use of the personal pronoun 'I' results in the reappropriation of language as a whole which is "according to linguists and philosophers...the supreme act of subjectivity, the advent of subjectivity into consciousness."<sup>21</sup> Wittig clarifies that language alone "gives everyone the same power of becoming

---

<sup>15</sup> Wittig, 1985: 78.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Wittig, 1985: 79-80.

<sup>18</sup> Wittig, 1980: 60.

<sup>19</sup> Wittig, 1985: 80.

<sup>20</sup> Wittig, 1985: 81.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

an absolute subject through its exercise” so that when the pronoun ‘I’ is used, the locutor naturally becomes the “absolute subject.”<sup>22</sup> But, Wittig continues, when gender is imposed through language and the androcentric nature of language robs women “of the authority of speech”, women are forced to “make their entrance in a crablike way, particularising themselves and apologising profusely.”<sup>23</sup>

Wittig concludes that women must become subjects “through the very exercise of language. For each time I say ‘I’, I reorganise the world from my point of view and through abstraction I lay claim to universality.”<sup>24</sup> Butler then argues that Wittig advises women “to assume the position of the authoritative, speaking subject...”<sup>25</sup> Through the use of language, Butler continues to explain, women can lay claim to subjectivity.<sup>26</sup> Wittig and Butler both argue then that, in order to affirm patriarchal resistance, women need to take control of speech and become the subjects (‘I’), not objects (‘she’ or ‘her’), of language. Furthermore, Adalaide Morris argues that narratives in which female protagonists follow a “gradual emergence of a unitary subjectivity” are usually “told in the autobiographical or pseudo-autobiographical first person singular.”<sup>27</sup> She continues to say that the use of ‘I’ “enacts the crucial feminist shift from "she" who is object to "I" who experience myself as subject.”<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> Wittig, 1985: 81.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Butler, 2002: 147.

<sup>26</sup> Butler, 2002: 149.

<sup>27</sup> Morris, 1992: 13.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

## Literature Review

The main critical text regarding Briseis which I will discuss here is Casey Dué's *Homeric Variations on a Lament by Briseis* (2002). In this book, Dué proposes that Briseis' role in the *Iliad* has been compressed, and that she must have possessed a much more expansive role in the larger epic tradition. Despite this compression, Dué argues that a careful examination of Briseis' character in the epic can reveal a much more complex character than initially thought. Dué suggests Briseis embodies three main roles throughout the epic: captive/prize, girl/daughter and wife, and draws several compelling connections between Briseis and Chryseis, Helen, Hecuba, and Andromache. Dué provides a detailed analysis of each role (one per chapter) and concludes that much detail regarding Briseis' character can be found if one examines both her character in the *Iliad* and the references to her character in the larger epic cycle. This text will be my main source of knowledge regarding Briseis as a female character and will provide the necessary context for my discussion regarding the objectification of Briseis in the *Iliad*.

There is only one critical text which briefly discusses *The Silence of the Girls: Homer's Daughters: Women's Responses to Homer in the Twentieth Century and Beyond* edited by Fiona Cox and Elena Theodorakopoulos (2019). The contributors of the text are renowned academics, all of whom aim to discuss the manner in which female writers have approached the works of Homer. Specifically, they discuss certain novels by female writers who have, in their adaptations of Homer's works, moved the attention from male heroes and male experiences to focusing rather on a woman, or women, and the female experience. Although Barker's novel is not one of the novels which is discussed in the book, Cox and Theodorakopoulos briefly mention it in the introduction of the text. They speak specifically of the manner in which Barker approaches a poignant scene from the *Iliad* where King Priam of Troy kisses Achilles' hands and asks for his son's body. Cox and Theodorakopoulos argue that Barker refocuses the *Iliad*'s narrative on the way the Trojan War affects the women involved, and in this case the women in question are largely the slaves of the men. Since Cox and Theodorakopoulos only very briefly discuss Barker's novel, they do not address, in detail, Barker's approach to Homer's Briseis. I will use their text to support my arguments regarding the manner in which Barker moves the suffering and experience of women, in particular of Briseis, to the forefront of the narrative.

Ruth Todd's article 'Lavinia Blushed' (1980) provides a highly detailed analysis of the vocabulary which Vergil uses to describe Lavinia, focusing especially on what implications may be made from these uses. Todd argues that the vocabulary which Vergil uses, especially the adjectives which are paired with Lavinia's name, place Lavinia in the role of an object. Todd then goes on to argue that the scene in which Lavinia blushes, while her mother begs Turnus not to fight, presents Lavinia as a colourful individual, whose feelings are finally shown, even if it is only temporary. Todd argues that Lavinia blushes at the thought of Aeneas as her future husband. While I agree that this scene places temporary focus on Lavinia and may reveal some of her feelings, I do not believe that this scene adequately allows Lavinia full subjectivity nor does it allow her to overcome her objectification. Todd's analysis of the vocabulary used by Vergil will support my argument regarding the objectification of Lavinia through language. I will then go on to discuss what effect this has on her voice and how, in Le Guin's novel, her objectification is overcome and her voice is expressed.

Sandra Lindow's 'Lavinia: A Woman Reinvents Herself in Fact and/or Fiction' (2009) discusses arguments made by Mary Field Belenky and Blythe McVicker Clinchy on the developmental process of "internal voices that are necessary for making moral choices" in her analysis of Lavinia's character.<sup>29</sup> Lindow argues that unlike Vergil's voiceless and timid depiction of her, Le Guin's Lavinia, "has a voice born out of adversity."<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, she discusses how Lavinia soon learns that she is merely an 'item' to be bargained over and instead of submitting, silently as her Vergilian counterpart did, Le Guin's Lavinia not only actively criticises her literary creator Vergil, during their mystical meetings, but also takes her narrative into her own hands. Lindow's arguments will support my own discussion of Lavinia's objectification, subjectivity and new-found voice, as well as her struggle against her mother's sexist attitude. I will also focus on how Lavinia's subjectivity and voice are encouraged by her relationships with Latinus, Aeneas and Silvius.

In general, Briseis as a female literary character in her own right, has been fairly neglected by Classical scholars, when compared to figures such as Helen and Medea. An even greater gap is found in scholarship centred on her Reception, with the exception of her portrayal in Wolfgang Petersen's movie *Troy* (2004), and there is only one critical text which very briefly discusses her depiction in Barker's *The Silence of the Girls* (2018). With regard to Lavinia in Vergil's *Aeneid*,

---

<sup>29</sup> Lindow, 2009: 222.

<sup>30</sup> Lindow, 2009: 224.

there are a small number of detailed readings on her character, but few centred on her Reception in Le Guin's novel. Regarding both Briseis and Lavinia, I have not found a comprehensive study centred on how each woman is objectified nor on whether each woman's voice and subjectivity is denied and/or encouraged in the ancient epics of Homer and Vergil. A study on how Barker and Le Guin have adapted the ancient characters of Briseis and Lavinia in their novels regarding themes of objectification, voice and subjectivity is also absent. My study therefore aims to fill these lacunae. As a result of these critical gaps, I will be relying, for a large part of my dissertation, on scholarly literature centred on the Classical authors' works.

## Chapter One

### Briseis: Homer's *Iliad*

This chapter is centred on the mythological female character Briseis from Homer's epic, the *Iliad*.<sup>31</sup> Briseis may be considered a marginal character in the epic, despite her pivotal role in the feud between Achilles and Agamemnon, due to the lack of information regarding her character and limited appearances in the epic. Homer barely describes Briseis' appearance except through the use of a few epic formulae, such as Βρισηΐδα καλλιπάρηον ('fair-cheeked Briseis'), which is often used by the poet when describing women of beauty and therefore does not grant Briseis any sort of unique descriptive feature.<sup>32</sup> Briseis speaks only once in the entire *Iliad*,<sup>33</sup> appears on three other occasions,<sup>34</sup> and is mentioned eight times by name.<sup>35</sup> When compared to the fact that Achilles is mentioned nineteen times and speaks eleven times in Book 1 alone, one can easily see that Briseis is not a prominent character in the epic. She is also referred to a number of times in different ways, and I will return to this in more detail in the course of this chapter. The main aim of my analysis of Briseis in Chapters One and Two is two-pronged: first, I aim to examine the objectification of Briseis in Homer's epic and whether this objectification is overcome in Barker's novel. Second, I aim to analyse how the use of language and the structure of both works contributes to the formation of, or lack of, Briseis' subjectivity, and therefore her 'voice'. Before I elaborate more on these themes of language, objectification and subjectivity, I will discuss in detail what is known about Briseis' character as she is depicted in Homer's epic in order to provide necessary context for my analysis.

---

<sup>31</sup> It must be noted that although Ovid is also an important literary source for the character of Briseis in his work *Heroides*, I have chosen to focus primarily on Homer's and Vergil's epic works as they are of the same literary genre and similar approach.

<sup>32</sup> For example, *Iliad*, 1.184. All translations are taken from Richmond Lattimore, 1951 unless stated otherwise.

<sup>33</sup> *Iliad*, 19. 287-300.

<sup>34</sup> *Iliad*, 1. 346-348, 19.243-246 and 24. 676.

<sup>35</sup> *Iliad*, 1. 184, 323, 336, 346; 2. 689; 9. 107; 19. 261; 24. 676.



Homer provides little information regarding Briseis' life prior to her role as Achilles' bedmate: she is the daughter of Briseus, as revealed by the use of the patronym κούρη Βρισηΐος ('daughter of Briseus'),<sup>36</sup> and she has three full brothers.<sup>37</sup> Briseis was also possibly married to King Mynes of Lyrnessus, who was killed along with her three brothers when Achilles sacked the city.<sup>38</sup> Aside from the above information, Homer provides no other facts about Briseis' past. Nevertheless, more details may be uncovered if one examines thoroughly her appearances and important references to her. Briseis first physically appears when she is taken from Achilles' camp by Agamemnon's heralds.<sup>39</sup> Due to Agamemnon's refusal to give his own bedmate Chryseis back to her father, the priest Chryses, Apollo strikes the Greek army with a plague. Achilles calls an assembly, and Agamemnon reluctantly and angrily agrees to return Chryseis, demanding one of his generals give up their bedmate to him. To spite Achilles who vocally challenged him, Agamemnon demands Briseis.<sup>40</sup> This leads to the destructive feud between Achilles and Agamemnon and Achilles' subsequent withdrawal from battle, an action which results in the deaths of numerous Greeks. In this first appearance, Briseis is described using the standard epic formula *Βρισηΐδα καλλιπάρηον*, and the only piece of information Homer provides is that Briseis did not want to leave Achilles' camp:

ἐκ δ' ἄγαγε κλισίης Βρισηΐδα καλλιπάρηον,  
 δῶκε δ' ἄγειν: τὸ δ' αὖτις ἵτην παρὰ νῆας Ἀχαιῶν:  
 ἥ δ' ἀέκουσ' ἅμα τοῖσι γυνὴ κίεν:...

"He led forth from the hut Briseis of the fair cheeks and gave her  
 to be taken away; and they walked back beside the ships of the Achaians,  
 and the woman all unwilling went with them still..."<sup>41</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> *Iliad*, 9. 132. My translation.

<sup>37</sup> *Iliad*, 19. 293.

<sup>38</sup> *Iliad*, 2. 689-690, 19. 60 and 291-296.

<sup>39</sup> *Iliad*, 1. 345-348.

<sup>40</sup> *Iliad*, 1. 105-138.

<sup>41</sup> *Iliad*, 1. 346-348. Trans. Richmond Lattimore, 1951

This reluctance on Briseis' part has been the subject of much debate, and some scholars argue that Briseis' reluctance was not because she loved Achilles, rather because she was forcibly removed "from an established situation with an established owner".<sup>42</sup> Another interpretation which has been suggested is the possibility that Briseis believes she will receive worse treatment in Agamemnon's camp than in Achilles'.<sup>43</sup> A third interpretation may have to do more with Patroclus than with Achilles. Briseis' lament, which I will discuss in the next section, reveals affection for Patroclus, and her bond with him could be the reason for her reluctance for leaving Achilles' camp.<sup>44</sup>

Briseis' second appearance is undoubtably her most important one as this is the only time Briseis speaks: her lament for Patroclus. Her lament consists of fourteen lines, a short speech when compared to speeches by Andromache or Helen who speak for longer and more often throughout the *Iliad*.<sup>45</sup> It is from this lament that the majority of information about Briseis may be gleaned:

Βρισηῖς δ' ἄρ' ἔπειτ' ἰκέλη χρυσέῃ Ἀφροδίτῃ,  
ὥς ἴδε Πάτροκλον δεδαῖγμένον ὀξεί χαλκῷ,  
ἀμφ' αὐτῷ χυμένη λίγ' ἐκώκυε, χερσὶ δ' ἄμυσσε  
στήθεά τ' ἡδ' ἀπαλὴν δειρὴν ἰδὲ καλὰ πρόσωπα. 285  
εἶπε δ' ἄρα κλαίουσα γυνὴ εἵκυῖα θεῇσι:  
'Πάτροκλέ μοι δειλῇ πλεῖστον κεχαρισμένε θυμῷ  
ζῶν μὲν σε ἔλειπον ἐγὼ κλισίηθεν ἰοῦσα,  
νῦν δέ σε τεθνηῶτα κιχάνομαι ὄρχαμε λαῶν  
ἄψ ἄνιοῦς': ὥς μοι δέχεται κακὸν ἐκ κακοῦ αἰεί. 290  
ἄνδρα μὲν ᾧ ἔδοσάν με πατὴρ καὶ πότνια μήτηρ  
εἶδον πρὸ πτόλιος δεδαῖγμένον ὀξεί χαλκῷ,  
τρεῖς τε κασιγνήτους, τοὺς μοι μία γείνατο μήτηρ,  
κηδεῖους, οἳ πάντες ὀλέθριον ἦμαρ ἐπέσπον.  
οὐδὲ μὲν οὐδέ μ' ἔασκες, ὅτ' ἄνδρ' ἐμὸν ὥκυς Ἀχιλλεὺς 295

<sup>42</sup> Fantuzzi, 2012: 117.

<sup>43</sup> Strauss, 2006: 106.

<sup>44</sup> Pulleyn, 2000 (*ad loc.*). My thanks to my external examiner for providing this reference.

<sup>45</sup> See, for example, *Iliad*, 6. 407-439, a speech by Andromache to Hector consisting of more than thirty lines.

ἔκτεινεν, πέρσεν δὲ πόλιν θείοιο Μύνητος,  
κλαίειν, ἀλλὰ μ' ἔφασκες Ἀχιλλῆος θείοιο  
κουριδίην ἄλογον θήσειν, ἄξειν τ' ἐνὶ νηυσὶν  
ἐς Φθίην, δαίσειν δὲ γάμον μετὰ Μυρμιδόνεσσι.  
τῷ σ' ἄμοτον κλαίω τεθνηότα μείλιχον αἰεΐ.' 300  
ὥς ἔφατο κλαίουσ', ἐπὶ δὲ στενάχοντο γυναῖκες  
Πάτροκλον πρόφασιν, σφῶν δ' αὐτῶν κήδε' ἐκάστη.

“And now, in the likeness of golden Aphrodite, Briseis  
when she saw Patroklos lying torn with sharp bronze, folding  
him in her arms cried shrilly above him and with her hands tore  
at her breasts and her soft throat and her beautiful forehead.  
The woman like the immortals mourning for him spoke to him:  
‘Patroklos, far most pleasing to my heart in its sorrows,  
I left you here alive when I went away from the shelter,  
but now I come back, lord of the people, to find you have fallen.  
So evil in my life takes over from evil forever.  
The husband on whom my father and honoured mother bestowed me  
I saw before my city lying torn with sharp bronze,  
and my three brothers, whom a single mother bore with me  
and who were close to me, all went on one day to destruction.  
And yet you would not let me, when swift Achilles had cut down  
my husband, and sacked the city of godlike Mynes, you would not  
let me sorrow, but said you would make me godlike Achilles’  
wedded lawful wife, that you would take me back in the ships  
to Phthia, and formalize my marriage among the Myrmidons.  
Therefore I weep your death without ceasing. You were kind always.’  
So she spoke, lamenting, and the women sorrowed around her  
grieving openly for Patroklos, but for her own sorrows each.”<sup>46</sup>

If one takes Briseis’ words in her lament to imply that she was married to King Mynes of Lyrnessus, some part of her life is revealed, and the audience is able to form a picture of her backstory as

---

<sup>46</sup> *Iliad*, 19. 282-302. Trans. Richmond Lattimore, 1951.

Homer tells it. In addition, it is important to consider the possibility that certain names of figures or places mentioned in the lament may have invoked a multitude of other tales for ancient audiences, for example, perhaps listeners of the *Iliad* recognised the name Mynes and were aware of related stories which would then add depth to Briseis' story and herself. This is harder or even impossible for modern readers to interpret but it is noteworthy to consider that "in these few lines Briseis can allude elliptically to her entire life history up to the present moment."<sup>47</sup> This is due to the numerous references Homer appears to make to other works which speak of Briseis, such as the *Cypria* or the *Aethiopis*, both works which have been lost but which are referred to by other authors.<sup>48</sup> Further details regarding Briseis' life prior to enslavement are implied from her speech: if she were married to King Mynes, Briseis is unlikely to have been lower-class but rather a daughter of another king or high-ranking noble. This implies that Briseis may be of a higher status than the other slave women in Achilles' camp, something which is further supported by her acting as a leader of the lamentation for Patroclus. It is unclear if she was ordered to perform the lament, and it is possible that she may have naturally assumed leadership due to her pre-slavery status. She could also have performed the lament as a result of her relationship with Patroclus and Achilles.<sup>49</sup>

Although Homer does not describe Briseis' physical features or skills, a comparison with those of Chryseis as described by Agamemnon may reveal the possible attributes of Briseis. Also, Achilles is among the higher ranking Greeks, and it is likely that his bedmate would have similar skills or attributes to those of the bedmates of other high-ranking Greeks. Agamemnon himself states that he prefers Chryseis to his own wife Clytemnestra due to her equal, possibly even, superior attributes:

...οὐνεκ' ἐγὼ κούρης Χρυσηΐδος ἀγλά' ἄποινα  
οὐκ ἔθελον δέξασθαι, ἐπεὶ πολὺ βούλομαι αὐτὴν  
οἴκοι ἔχειν· καὶ γάρ ῥα Κλυταιμνήστρης προβέβουλα  
κουριδίης ἀλόχου, ἐπεὶ οὐ ἔθέν ἐστι χερείων,  
οὐ δέμας οὐδὲ φυήν, οὐτ' ἄρ φρένας οὐτέ τι ἔργα. 115

"...because I for the sake of the girl Chryseis would not take

---

<sup>47</sup> Dué, 2002: 13-14.

<sup>48</sup> Dué, 2002: 12.

<sup>49</sup> Pilarski, 2006: 24.

the shining ransom; and indeed I wish greatly to have her  
in my own house; since I like her better than Klytaim[n]estra  
my own wife, for in truth she is no way inferior,  
neither in build nor stature nor wit, not in accomplishment.”<sup>50</sup>

If this is the case, Briseis most likely possesses similar characteristics of physical attractiveness, skills and wit. A few more similarities may be traced between Briseis and Chryseis, most obviously through the use of the metrical epithet ‘fair-cheeked’ and by the way the Greek men refer to them as ‘girls’ and ‘prizes’.<sup>51</sup> Another clear link is that both women are seen as causes of dissension. Furthermore, both women are “defined by their girlhood” and are often referred to by their father’s names.<sup>52</sup> It has also been suggested that the lexical similarity of the names Briseis and Chryseis “indicates the interchangeability of the two women in the operative system of exchange...”; both women are seen as interchangeable ‘objects’ by Agamemnon.<sup>53</sup> I will return to this point later.

Briseis is also connected to three other important women: Andromache, Helen and Hecabe. During her lament for Patroclus in Book 19, Briseis echoes Andromache’s speech to Hector in Book 6 and consequently sets up a connection between her lament and the future laments of Hecabe, Helen and Andromache when they mourn Hector in Book 24.<sup>54</sup> The most obvious similarity between Andromache’s speech and Briseis’ lament is that they both speak about the loss of their entire family. Andromache speaks about her loss twice: οὐδέ μοι ἔστι πατήρ καὶ πότνια μήτηρ. (“since I have no father, no honoured mother.”)<sup>55</sup> and οἱ δέ μοι ἑπτὰ κασίγνητοι ἔσαν ἐν μεγάροισιν οἳ μὲν πάντες ἰὼ κίον ἥματι Ἄϊδος εἴσω... (“And they who were my seven brothers in the great house all

---

<sup>50</sup> *Iliad*, 1. 111-115. Trans. Richmond Lattimore, 1951 (my correction)

<sup>51</sup> For example, see *Iliad*, 1. 126, 275, 120 and 178 for references to Chryseis and Briseis as ‘girl’ and ‘prize’ respectively, and see *Iliad*, 1.143 and 1. 184 for references to both women as ‘fair-cheeked’.

<sup>52</sup> Dué, 2002: 50.

<sup>53</sup> Staten, 1993: 342.

<sup>54</sup> Allen, 2007:149.

<sup>55</sup> *Iliad*, 6. 413. Trans. Richmond Lattimore, 1951.

went upon a single day down in to the house of the death god...”)<sup>56</sup>, which is similar to Briseis’ recounting of the deaths of her husband and brothers:

ἄνδρα μὲν ᾧ ἔδοσάν με πατὴρ καὶ πότνια μήτηρ  
εἶδον πρὸ πτόλιος δεδαϊγμένον ὄξεϊ χαλκῷ,  
τρεῖς τε κασιγνήτους, τοὺς μοι μία γείνατο μήτηρ,  
κηδεῖους, οἳ πάντες ὀλέθριον ἦμαρ ἐπέσπον.

“The husband on whom my father and honoured mother bestowed me  
I saw before my city lying torn with the sharp bronze,  
and my three brothers, whom a single mother bore with me  
and who were close to me, all went on one day to destruction.”<sup>57</sup>

They also each mourn the man upon whom they are dependent and who was kind to them in a foreign environment. Andromache beseeches Hector not to fight as he is her only family: Ἔκτορ ἀτὰρ σύ μοι ἔσσι πατὴρ καὶ πότνια μήτηρ ἡδὲ κασίγνητος, σὺ δέ μοι θαλερὸς παρακοίτης: (“Hector, thus you are father to me, and my honoured mother, you are my brother, and you it is who are my young husband.”)<sup>58</sup>

Similarly, Briseis mourns Patroclus as he was kind to her and promised future security in the form of marriage to Achilles:

οὐδὲ μὲν οὐδέ μ' ἔασκες, ὅτ' ἄνδρ' ἐμὸν ὤκυς Ἀχιλλεὺς 295  
ἔκτεινεν, πέρσεν δὲ πόλιν θείοιο Μύνητος,  
κλαίειν, ἀλλὰ μ' ἔφασκες Ἀχιλλῆος θείοιο  
κουριδίην ἄλογον θήσειν, ἄξειν τ' ἐνὶ νηυσὶν  
ἐς Φθίην, δαίσειν δὲ γάμον μετὰ Μυρμιδόνεσσι.  
τῷ σ' ἄμοτον κλαίω τεθνηότα μείλιχον αἰεὶ. 300

<sup>56</sup> *Iliad*, 6. 421-422. Trans. Richmond Lattimore, 1951.

<sup>57</sup> *Iliad*, 19. 291-294. Trans. Richmond Lattimore, 1951.

<sup>58</sup> *Iliad*, 6. 429-430. Trans. Richmond Lattimore, 1951.

"And yet you would not let me, when swift Achilleus had cut down my husband, and sacked the city of godlike Mynes, you would not let me sorrow, but said you would make me godlike Achilleus' wedded lawful wife, that you would take me back in the ships to Phthia, and formalize my marriage among the Myrmidons. Therefore I weep your death without ceasing. You were kind always."<sup>59</sup>

A third link between the two women is Achilles: both Briseis and Andromache lost their families because Achilles attacked their home cities. Andromache tells Hector that Achilles murdered her father Eëtion and her seven brothers, and even captured her mother before releasing her for ransom.<sup>60</sup> Briseis reveals that Achilles sacked her city and murdered her husband and three brothers.<sup>61</sup> Given then that Briseis' lament echoes that of Andromache's speech-cum-lament for Hector in Book 6, and that Patroclus promises to marry her to Achilles (with Achilles even considering her as a wife early on in the *Iliad*),<sup>62</sup> Briseis effectively is widowed three times:<sup>63</sup> first her own husband, then Patroclus, whom she was closest to, and finally Achilles.<sup>64</sup> This triple loss adds further depth to Briseis' character and increases the sympathy one may feel for her. Moreover, according to Allen, through the use of contextual similarities in the two widows' laments and similar lament formulae, "Homer emphasizes the losses of both women and the plight of all women" in wartimes and "connects Briseis to the most stable and loving couple in the *Iliad*, Hector and Andromache."<sup>65</sup>

Briseis is linked to Hecabe and Helen through three main elements: firstly, all three women mourn a man whom they consider dearest to them amongst all other men. Briseis addresses Patroclus in the

---

<sup>59</sup> *Iliad*, 19. 295-300. Trans. Richmond Lattimore, 1951.

<sup>60</sup> *Iliad*, 6. 414 and 6. 421-422.

<sup>61</sup> *Iliad*, 19. 291-296.

<sup>62</sup> *Iliad*, 9. 334-343.

<sup>63</sup> Although the third time is not shown in the actual *Iliad* but predicted by Hector as he is dying in Book 22. 358-360.

<sup>64</sup> Werner, 2008: 12.

<sup>65</sup> Allen, 2007: 151.

following way: Πάτροκλέ μοι δειλῇ πλεῖστον κεχαρισμένε θυμῷ... (“Patroklos, far most pleasing to my heart in its sorrows...”)<sup>66</sup>, clearly indicating her affection for him. In a very similar fashion, Hecabe and Helen proclaim that Hector was dearest to them above all other men, even Hecabe’s other sons: Ἕκτορ ἐμῷ θυμῷ πάντων πολὺ φίλτατε παίδων... (“Hector, of all my sons the dearest by far to my spirit...”) and Ἕκτορ ἐμῷ θυμῷ δαέρων πολὺ φίλτατε πάντων... (“Hector, of all my lords’ brothers dearest by far to my spirit...”) respectively.<sup>67</sup> Secondly, both Briseis and Helen mourn men who were notably kind to them; Patroclus, according to Briseis, was μείλιχον αἰεὶ (“You were kind always”)<sup>68</sup>, and Helen claims that Hector was not only kind to her but also defended her from those who sought to degrade her:

ἀλλ’ οὐ πω σεῦ ἄκουσα κακὸν ἔπος οὐδ’ ἀσύφηλον:

ἀλλ’ εἴ τίς με καὶ ἄλλος ἐνὶ μεγάροισιν ἐνίπτοι

δαέρων ἢ γαλόων ἢ εἰνατέρων εὐπέπλων,

ἢ ἐκυρὴ ἐκυρὸς δὲ πατὴρ ὧς ἥπιος αἰεὶ, 770

ἀλλὰ σὺ τὸν ἐπέεσσι παραιφάμενος κατέρυκες

σῇ τ’ ἀγανοφροσύνῃ καὶ σοῖς ἀγανοῖς ἐπέεσσι.

“...I have never heard a harsh saying from you, nor an insult.

No, but when another, one of my lord’s brothers or sisters, a fair-robed

wife of some brother, would say a harsh word to me in the palace,

or my lord’s mother...then you would speak and put them off and restrain them

by your own gentleness of heart and your gentle words.”<sup>69</sup>

Thirdly, Helen and Briseis are connected by their positions as ‘causes’ of conflict between men: Helen is the cause of the war between the Greeks and the Trojans, Briseis is the cause of conflict between Achilles and Agamemnon. Both women are prohibited from choosing their fate and are excluded from decisions regarding which man they belong to. Lastly, Briseis, Helen, Andromache and Hecabe are also structurally connected to each other through the narrative as they are “linked by

<sup>66</sup> *Iliad*, 19. 287. Trans. Richmond Lattimore, 1951.

<sup>67</sup> *Iliad*, 24. 748 and 24. 762. Trans. Richmond Lattimore, 1951.

<sup>68</sup> *Iliad*, 19. 300. Trans. Richmond Lattimore, 1951.

<sup>69</sup> *Iliad*, 24. 767-772. Trans. Richmond Lattimore, 1951.



their past and future life experiences<sup>70</sup>: each lost a husband in the war (although Priam and Paris do not die in the *Iliad*). In addition, Andromache, Hecabe and Briseis have been, or will be captive women. Therefore, upon closer inspection, Briseis appears to embody multiple roles at different times, due to her association with these female characters, which grants her character a certain sense of importance, although it must be noted that the importance assigned to other female characters such as Helen or Andromache is of a much larger degree.<sup>71</sup>

In order to fully engage with my analysis of Briseis in terms of her objectification, subjectivity and voice, I will briefly discuss the theories which support my arguments. Martha Nussbaum, in her article ‘Objectification’ provides the following definition for the term: “the seeing and/or treating of someone as an object” and argues that this occurs usually, but not always, in a sexual context.<sup>72</sup> Nussbaum goes on to say that sexual, and non-sexual, objectification of women is a crucial problem for most feminist thinkers as it prevents women from “full self-expression and self-determination — from...their humanity.”<sup>73</sup> Objectification, according to Nussbaum, usually involves one or more of the following seven points which she lays out in the following way:<sup>74</sup>

1. Instrumentality: The objectifier treats the object as a tool of his or her purposes.
2. Denial of autonomy: The objectifier treats the object as lacking in autonomy and self-determination.
3. Inertness: The objectifier treats the object as lacking in agency, and perhaps also in activity.
4. Fungibility: The objectifier treats the object as interchangeable (a) with other objects of the same type, and/or (b) with objects of other types.
5. Violability: The objectifier treats the object as lacking in boundary-integrity, as something that it is permissible to break up, smash, break into.
6. Ownership: The objectifier treats the object as something that is owned by another, can be bought or sold, etc.

---

<sup>70</sup> Dué, 2002: 5.

<sup>71</sup> Dué, 2002: 5, 22, 42 and Allen, 2007: 149.

<sup>72</sup> Nussbaum, 1995: 251.

<sup>73</sup> Nussbaum, 1995: 250.

<sup>74</sup> Refer to the Introduction for a detailed definition of my understanding of points 2, 3 and 7 as well as the connection between subjectivity and voice.

7. Denial of subjectivity: The objectifier treats the object as something whose experience and feelings (if any) need not be taken into account.

To return to Nussbaum, objectification often involves a sense of competition, usually between men, over women who are viewed as fungible. There is also a certain sense of status attached to objectification, in the sense that the woman who is objectified is more desirable if she is skilled and talented. This, according to Nussbaum, is due to the fact that men who objectify women feel more accomplished when they are able to dominate a woman of high status. As an example, Nussbaum uses the magazine *Playboy*, which she argues promotes the competition between men over exchangeable, skilled women. She then compares this example with Homer's description of Agamemnon's offer to Achilles:

“It is not in that sense very different from the ancient Greek idea that the victorious warrior would be rewarded with seven tripods, ten talents of gold, twenty cauldrons, twelve horses, and seven women. Objectification means a certain sort of self-regarding display...that Agamemnon assures Achilles that the horses he is giving him are prize-winning racehorses and the women both beautiful and skilled in weaving.”<sup>75</sup>

Prior to her lament in Book 19, Briseis is voiceless. Her opinion on which man she belongs to is absent and inconsequential, her wants and fears are not acknowledged, and she is treated merely as an object to be passed between men who see her mainly as a status symbol. I have discussed Briseis' lament for Patroclus which reveals a woman who is more than a slave, someone who understands “her own experience as varied and complex”.<sup>76</sup> Despite this, I argue that Briseis is objectified in the *Iliad* and that, following Nussbaum's seven point system for objectification, all seven of these points are fulfilled. The most obvious points which are fulfilled are 2 (denial of autonomy) and 6 (ownership) due to Briseis' position as a slave. Her lack of autonomy is directly linked to her enslavement which intrinsically entails Briseis' lack of control over her life. Although monetary exchange was not involved in the capture of Briseis, as was common with slavery, she is clearly owned by the Greeks, specifically Achilles. Overall, point 1 is also fulfilled as, in her article,

---

<sup>75</sup> Nussbaum, 1995: 285.

<sup>76</sup> Herzog, 2018: no page.

Nussbaum adds that enslavement implies instrumentality, something which I believe is shown in Briseis' case.

I also propose that Achilles, and Agamemnon, view Briseis as inert (point 3), that is as lacking in agency (although not, I believe, in activity). As explained earlier, I understand agency to be the ability to make choices and act on a particular choice, something which Briseis appears to lack to a large extent. Briseis is denied any choice both in her forced transfer from Achilles to Agamemnon and when she is given back to Achilles. Furthermore, although she is technically the cause of the feud between Agamemnon and Achilles, she is not blamed for the feud nor the many deaths of the Greeks as a result of the feud. Achilles himself says that his anger is the reason for the deaths of many Greeks, and Agamemnon blames the gods for his decision to remove Briseis from Achilles.<sup>77</sup> This is perfectly logical as Briseis did not seduce either Agamemnon or Achilles and did not therefore have any influence in Agamemnon's decision to take her away, a decision Agamemnon made to dishonour Achilles and not because he desired Briseis. Despite this, it would have been very easy for either Achilles and Agamemnon to blame Briseis and turn their anger, and the anger of their men, against her. The fact that they do not blame Briseis could imply that they believe that Briseis lacks agency to cause a rift between them.

Points 1 (instrumentality), 4 (fungibility, i.e. being exchangeable), 5 (violability), and 7 (denial of subjectivity) are seen most clearly in instances in which Briseis is referred to as 'γέρας'. Briseis is called a 'γέρας' eleven times throughout the *Iliad*, with the vast majority of these instances occurring in Book 1. For example, in the following passage points 1, 4 and 7 are seen. Here, Achilles angrily rebukes Agamemnon for taking Briseis away from him, as he views her as an award for his military skill.

καὶ δὴ μοι γέρας αὐτὸς ἀφαιρήσεσθαι ἀπειλεῖς,  
ὃ ἔπι πολλὰ μόγησα, δόσαν δέ μοι υἷες Ἀχαιῶν.  
οὐ μὲν σοὶ ποτε ἴσον ἔχω γέρας ὅππότε Ἀχαιοὶ  
Τρώων ἐκπέρσωσ' εὖ ναιόμενον πτολίεθρον:  
ἀλλὰ τὸ μὲν πλεῖον πολυάϊκος πολέμοιο 165  
χεῖρες ἐμαὶ διέπουσ': ἀτὰρ ἦν ποτε δασμὸς ἵκηται,

---

<sup>77</sup> See *Iliad*, 19. 85-90.

σοὶ τὸ γέρας πολὺ μείζον, ἐγὼ δ' ὀλίγον τε φίλον τε  
ἔρχομαι ἔχων ἐπὶ νῆας, ἐπεὶ κε κάμω πολεμίζων.

“And now my prize you threaten in person to strip from me,  
for whom I laboured much, the gift of the sons of the Achaians.  
Never, when the Achaians sack some well-founded citadel  
of the Trojans, do I have a prize that is equal to your prize.  
Always the greater part of the painful fighting is the work of  
my hands; but when the time comes to distribute the booty  
yours is far the greater reward, and I with some small thing  
yet dear to me go back to my ships when I am weary with fighting.”<sup>78</sup>

Achilles also claims that, even though he has to face the worst aspects of battle, Agamemnon is the one to receive the best spoils of war. Achilles then goes on to say that his prizes do not measure up in value to Agamemnon's and he returns to his ships with ὀλίγον τε φίλον. Achilles places much emphasis on the fact that he earned Briseis through his skill on the battlefield: the Greeks gave her to him as reward for his hard labour.<sup>79</sup> This implies a type of instrumentality (point 1). Briseis is a symbol of Achilles' military prowess, and her purpose therefore is to be a physical embodiment of his status as a warrior. She is a 'tool' which Achilles uses to show off his fighting abilities, and therefore point 1 is fulfilled. Furthermore, Achilles finds it acceptable to compare her to Agamemnon's prize whom he claims, as stated above, is of a higher value than his own prize, Briseis. This shows that Achilles is treating Briseis as if she were fungible, that is, she is interchangeable with others like her, thereby fulfilling point 4. In the last clause of the passage, Achilles says that he returns to his ships with ὀλίγον τε φίλον ('some small and dear thing').<sup>80</sup> Both words are neuter, and therefore seem to refer to objects, however, I believe that Achilles is certainly including Briseis in this description of his share of the spoils of war. This shows that Achilles views Briseis as an object who lacks feelings. In fact, Achilles does not appear to consider Briseis'

---

<sup>78</sup> *Iliad*, 1. 161-168. Trans. Richmond Lattimore, 1951.

<sup>79</sup> See 1. 275-281 where Nestor, attempting to ease the feud between Achilles and Agamemnon, also mentions that Briseis is Achilles' reward from the Greeks. See also 16. 52-59 where Achilles again describes Briseis as being won by spear.

<sup>80</sup> My translation.

feelings or perspective in this passage at all, which fulfils point 7 (denial of subjectivity) on Nussbaum's list.

Another passage demonstrating the objectification of Briseis is in Book 1. 355-356, where Achilles calls out to his mother, Thetis, the reason for his sadness and anger. Here, points 1 (instrumentality) and 7 (denial of subjectivity) are demonstrated.

ἦ γάρ μ' Ἀτρεΐδης εὐρὺ κρείων Ἀγαμέμνων  
ἠτίμησεν: ἔλων γὰρ ἔχει γέρας αὐτὸς ἀπούρας.

“Now the son of Atreus, powerful Agamemnon,  
has dishonoured me, since he has taken away my prize and keeps it.”<sup>81</sup>

Achilles again refers to Briseis as ‘*γέρας*’ and perpetuates her instrumentality. Moreover, it must be noted that ‘*γέρας*’ is a noun in neuter gender and, in this case, the direct object of ‘*ἔλων*’, ‘*ἀπούρας*’ and ‘*ἔχει*’. As such, a strict translation of *ἔλων γὰρ ἔχει γέρας αὐτὸς ἀπούρας* may be “for taking the prize by the hand, he himself, having led **it** away, keeps **it**.”<sup>82</sup> Richmond Lattimore's translation, which I have quoted below in a footnote, also uses the word ‘it’ to refer to Briseis. Although the context of this extract may prompt one to change the translation to “taking the prize, he himself, having led **her** away, keeps **her**.”,<sup>83</sup> in strictly grammatical terms, the use of the neuter noun refers to something which is neither he nor she. Liddell & Scott provide the following meanings for ‘*γέρας*’: “gift of honour”, “privilege, prerogative”, “gift, present”, “reward”,<sup>84</sup> all words which seem to refer to objects. I argue further that the use of the word ‘*γέρας*’, instead of, for example ‘her’ or her actual name, allows for the possibility of a translation in which ‘it’ is used, thereby objectifying Briseis. As in the previous passage, Briseis is once again denied subjectivity. Achilles does not

---

<sup>81</sup> *Iliad*, 1. 355-356. Trans. Richmond Lattimore, 1951.

<sup>82</sup> My translation and emphasis.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>84</sup> Liddell & Scott, 1996: 345.

consider either Briseis' thoughts, feelings or perspective on the matter at all, but is instead solely focused on his own perspective.<sup>85</sup>

A more complicated case of objectification is present in Book 9. 334-345. In this passage, Achilles tells Odysseus and Nestor that Agamemnon has singled him out among the Greeks for punishment. Points 6 (ownership) and 7 (denial of subjectivity) are demonstrated here:

ἄλλα δ' ἀριστήεσσι δίδου γέρα καὶ βασιλεῦσι:  
τοῖσι μὲν ἔμπεδα κεῖται, ἐμεῦ δ' ἀπὸ μούνου Ἀχαιῶν 335  
εἵλετ', ἔχει δ' ἄλογον θυμαρέα: τῇ παριαύων  
τερπέσθω. τί δὲ δεῖ πολεμιζέμεναι Τρώεσσιν  
Ἀργείους; τί δὲ λαὸν ἀνήγαγεν ἐνθάδ' ἀγείρας  
Ἀτρεΐδης; ἦ οὐχ' Ἑλένης ἔνεκ' ἠϋκόμοιο;  
ἦ μοῦνοι φιλέουσ' ἀλόχους μερόπων ἀνθρώπων 340  
Ἀτρεΐδαι; ἐπεὶ ὅς τις ἀνὴρ ἀγαθὸς καὶ ἐχέφρων  
τὴν αὐτοῦ φιλέει καὶ κήδεται, ὥς καὶ ἐγὼ τὴν  
ἐκ θυμοῦ φίλεον δουρικτητὴν περ ἐοῦσαν.  
νῦν δ' ἐπεὶ ἐκ χειρῶν γέρας εἵλετο καὶ μ' ἀπάτησε  
μή μεν πειράτω εὖ εἰδότος; οὐδέ με πείσει. 345

“All the other prizes of honour he gave the great men and the princes  
are held fast by them, but from me alone of all the Achaians  
he has taken and keeps the bride of my heart. Let him lie beside her  
and be happy. Yet why must the Argives fight with the Trojans?  
And why was it the son of Atreus assembled and led here  
these people? Was it not for the sake of lovely-haired Helen?  
Are the sons of Atreus alone among mortal men the ones  
who love their wives? Since any who is a good man, and careful,  
loves her who is his own and cares for her, even as I now  
loved this one from my heart, though it was my spear that won her.  
Now that he deceived me and taken from my hands my prize of honour,

---

<sup>85</sup> See 1. 506-508 for a similar structure and analysis.

let him try no more. I know him well. He will not persuade me.”<sup>86</sup>

Here, Achilles again calls Briseis a ‘γέρας’ but a certain complexity is present in this passage as Achilles also refers to Briseis as ‘ἄλοχον θυμαρέα’ of which a possible translation may be ‘bride of my heart’, a translation which Lattimore gives as seen in the footnote below. This seems to indicate that Achilles has deeper feelings for Briseis than previously suggested in Book 1. It must be noted, however, that another translation of ἄλοχον is given by Liddell & Scott for this particular context: “leman, concubine”. The translation of ‘ἄλοχον θυμαρέα’ would therefore be “well-pleasing concubine” which, in my opinion, places Briseis in a position of lower status than if she were a wife. That being said, Achilles’ later comparison of Briseis with Helen when he says ‘ἢ οὐχ Ἑλένης ἔνεκ’ ἠὺκόμοιο; ἢ μούνοι φιλέουσ’ ἀλόχους μερόπων ἀνθρώπων Ἀτρεΐδαι;’ seems to imply that Achilles may consider Briseis as a wife. This, however, is something which I will discuss in more detail later. For now, I argue that, while Achilles does seem to have more complicated feelings for Briseis, he still objectifies her in certain ways. Firstly, he emphasises his ownership over her when he says ‘δουρικτητὴν περ ἐοῦσαν’. It is clear from this that Briseis had no choice in the matter and that Achilles believes that she belongs to him since he ‘earned’ her through his prowess in battle. Secondly, Briseis is once again denied subjectivity. Throughout the extract, Achilles focuses solely on his own perspective and emotions, and completely neglects any thoughts regarding Briseis’ experience. The fact that he once again refers to Briseis as ‘γέρας’ at the end of this extract seems to reinforce the idea that Achilles, despite whatever feelings he may have for her, considers her as an object which he owns.

The next passage demonstrates point 4 (fungibility, i.e. being exchangeable). After Odysseus and Nestor leave, Achilles lies down in his bed with another slave woman:

τῷ δ’ ἄρα παρκατέλεκτο γυνή, τὴν Λεσβόθεν ἦγε,  
Φόρβαντος θυγάτηρ Διομήδη καλλιπάρηος 665

“But Achilleus slept in the inward corner of the strong-built shelter,  
and a woman lay beside him, one he had taken from Lesbos,

---

<sup>86</sup> *Iliad*, 9. 334-345. Trans. Richmond Lattimore, 1951.

Phorbas' daughter, Diomed of the fair colouring.”<sup>87</sup>

Achilles temporarily replaces Briseis with Diomed but once Briseis is returned, he lies with her again. The fact that Achilles had a new bed partner shows that he considers Briseis as replaceable and therefore fungible. In addition, the epithet Homer uses to describe Diomed, ‘Διομήδη καλλιπάρηος’ (“fair-cheeked”)<sup>88</sup>, is the same epithet he attaches to Briseis as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. This further cements the notion that Briseis is seen as interchangeable with Diomed.

The next passage which I will analyse occurs in Book 19. Achilles and Agamemnon have reconciled after Patroclus' death, and Achilles gives a speech to the gathered Greeks. Here, points 5 (violability) and 7 (denial of subjectivity) are seen:

τὴν ὄφελ' ἐν νήεσσι κατακτάμεν Ἄρτεμις ἰῶ  
ἥματι τῷ ὅτ' ἐγὼν ἐλόμην Λυρνησσὸν ὀλέσσας: 60  
τὼ κ' οὐ τόσσοι Ἀχαιοὶ ὁδᾶξ ἔλον ἄσπετον οὔδας  
δυσμενέων ὑπὸ χερσὶν ἐμεῦ ἀπομηνίσαντος.

“I wish Artemis had killed her beside the ships with an arrow  
on that day when I destroyed Lyrnessos and took her.  
For thus not all these too many Achaians would have bitten  
the dust, by enemy hands, when I was away in my anger.”<sup>89</sup>

This passage suggests violability, that is, that Achilles, and the other Greeks, believe that it is acceptable to damage or abuse Briseis. One may argue that Achilles' wish is not a genuine one as it speaks of the past and cannot therefore be fulfilled. Further, after his speech, Achilles does not hurt Briseis at all; they lie peacefully together in his hut. Nevertheless, I believe that such a violent wish suggests the possibility that some abuse might have occurred towards Briseis or, at the very least,

---

<sup>87</sup> *Iliad*, 9. 664-665. Trans. Richmond Lattimore, 1951.

<sup>88</sup> My translation. It must be noted that Lattimore translates this, in this particular instance, as ‘Diomed of the fair colouring’ but, in other instances, translates it as ‘fair-cheeked’.

<sup>89</sup> *Iliad*, 19. 59-62. Trans. Richmond Lattimore, 1951.



the idea of abuse is seen as acceptable by Achilles and the Greeks. Briseis' feelings or perspective are also disregarded in this passage, thereby denying her subjectivity and fulfilling point 7.

Following Nussbaum's theory then, the objectification of Briseis fulfils all seven points. It must be noted that while Achilles and Agamemnon view Briseis as lacking in agency, thereby fulfilling point 3, Briseis is not truly robbed of agency, but rather possesses little. What little agency she has is seen in her lament for Patroclus in which she appears to make the choice to mourn for him and perform his lament; a decision seemingly of her own volition.

I believe that the objectification of Briseis is further emphasised through the language Homer uses to describe and refer to her. Monique Wittig's theory concerning subjects of speech from her article 'The Mark of Gender' (1985) and Judith Butler's discussion of this same theory in her book *Gender Trouble* (2002) will reinforce my arguments regarding Briseis. In addition, Adalaide Morris' thoughts on the use of language in fiction in her article 'First Persons Plural in Contemporary Feminist Fiction' (1992) will add further support to my examination of Barker's Briseis. Wittig argues that "[l]anguage casts sheaves of reality upon the social body, stamping it and violently shaping it."<sup>90</sup> Gender in the English language, Wittig claims, takes place only in the personal pronoun as these are the only linguistic elements which "designate the locutors in discourse."<sup>91</sup> Personal pronouns, Wittig goes on to say, may appear to only designate gender in the third-person (such as 'he' or 'she'), but the first-person pronoun 'I' also implies a specific gender: the masculine. This is due to the apparent appropriation of the "abstract form, the general, the universal" by men, while women are forced to proclaim their gender in some other way during their discourse. Men, therefore, are the assumed subjects of discourse while women have to make clear that they are female when initiating discourse.<sup>92</sup> In another essay, 'The Point of View: Universal or Particular' (1980), Wittig explains that there is only one true gender: the feminine, the so-called 'masculine' gender is in fact the general or the universal and is therefore assumed automatically to be the main locutor.<sup>93</sup> Furthermore, Wittig claims that this gendering of language is detrimental to

---

<sup>90</sup> Wittig, 1985: 78.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> Wittig, 1985: 79-80.

<sup>93</sup> Wittig, 1980: 60.

women as it “represents a measure of domination”.<sup>94</sup> Gender, through language, places restrictions upon women and attempts “to strip them of the most precious thing for a human being — subjectivity.”<sup>95</sup> Furthermore, she argues that the use of the personal pronoun ‘I’ results in the reappropriation of language as a whole which is “according to linguists and philosophers...the supreme act of subjectivity, the advent of subjectivity into consciousness.”<sup>96</sup> Wittig clarifies that language alone “gives everyone the same power of becoming an absolute subject through its exercise” so that when the pronoun ‘I’ is used, the locutor naturally becomes the “absolute subject.”<sup>97</sup> But, Wittig continues, when gender is imposed through language and the androcentric nature of language robs women “of the authority of speech”, women are forced to “make their entrance in a crablike way, particularising themselves and apologising profusely.”<sup>98</sup> Wittig concludes that women must become subjects “through the very exercise of language. For each time I say ‘I’, I reorganise the world from my point of view and through abstraction I lay claim to universality.”<sup>99</sup> Butler then argues that Wittig advises women “to assume the position of the authoritative, speaking subject...”<sup>100</sup> Through the use of language, Butler continues to explain, women can lay claim to subjectivity.<sup>101</sup> Wittig and Butler both argue then that, in order to affirm patriarchal resistance, women need to take control of speech and become the subjects (‘I’), not objects (‘she’ or ‘her’), of language. Adalaide Morris argues that narratives in which female protagonists follow a “gradual emergence of a unitary subjectivity” are usually “told in the autobiographical or pseudo-autobiographical first person singular.”<sup>102</sup> She continues to say that the

---

<sup>94</sup> Wittig, 1985: 80.

<sup>95</sup> Wittig, 1985: 81.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> Butler, 2002: 147.

<sup>101</sup> Butler, 2002: 149.

<sup>102</sup> Morris, 1992: 13.

use of 'I' "enacts the crucial feminist shift from "she" who is object to "I" who experience myself as subject."<sup>103</sup>

In the case of Briseis, Homer rarely uses personal pronouns when referring to her but often makes Briseis the grammatical object. I believe that this effects the assertions Wittig speaks of and therefore denies Briseis subjectivity. I will now examine some instances in which Briseis is mentioned by name, as well as her three appearances in order to examine how the use of grammar denies her subjectivity. The first time Briseis is referred to by name is in Book 1 when Agamemnon angrily threatens Achilles and tells him that since the god Apollo demanded the return of Agamemnon's bed slave Chryseis to her father, Agamemnon will then take Achilles' bed slave Briseis:

...ἀπειλήσω δέ τοι ὧδε:  
ὥς ἔμ' ἀφαιρεῖται Χρυσηΐδα Φοῖβος Ἀπόλλων,  
τὴν μὲν ἐγὼ σὺν νηϊ τ' ἐμῇ καὶ ἐμοῖς ἐτάροισι  
πέμψω, ἐγὼ δέ κ' ἄγω **Βρισηΐδα καλλιπάρηον**  
αὐτὸς ἰὼν κλισίην δὲ **τὸ σὸν γέρας**... 185

"But here is my threat to you.

Even as Phoibos Apollo is taking away my Chryseis.

I shall convey her back in my own ship, with my own  
followers; but I shall take **fair-cheeked Briseis,**  
**your prize**, I myself going to your shelter..."<sup>104</sup>

In this passage, Briseis is referred to as 'Βρισηΐδα καλλιπάρηον' which is grammatically the direct object (as shown by the use of the accusative case) of the verb 'ἄγω'; 'τὸ σὸν γέρας' in line 185 is in the accusative case as well. This places Briseis in the position of subordinate object. A few hundred lines later, Briseis is mentioned once again by Agamemnon as he orders his heralds to bring Briseis from Achilles' tent:

---

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>104</sup> *Iliad*, 1. 181-185. Trans. Richmond Lattimore, 1951.

...οὐδ' Ἀγαμέμνων  
 λῆγ' ἔριδος τὴν πρῶτον ἐπηπείλῃς Ἀχιλῆϊ,  
 ἀλλ' ὃ γε Ταλθύβιον τε καὶ Εὐρυβάτην προσέειπε... 320  
 ἔρχεσθον κλισίην Πηληϊάδεω Ἀχιλῆος·  
 χειρὸς ἐλόντ' ἀγέμεν **Βρισηΐδα καλλιπάρηον**·  
 εἰ δέ κε μὴ δώησιν ἐγὼ δέ κεν αὐτὸς ἔλωμαι  
 ἐλθὼν σὺν πλεόνεσσι: 325

“...But Agamemnon  
 did not give up his anger and the first threat he made to Achilles,  
 but to Talthymbios he gave his orders and Eurybates...  
 ‘Go now to the shelter of Peleus’ son Achilles, to bring back  
**Briseis of the fair cheeks** leading her by the hand.  
 And if he will not give her,  
 I must come in person to take her  
 with many men behind me...”<sup>105</sup>

Here, *Βρισηΐδα καλλιπάρηον* is again in the accusative case and is therefore the direct object of the verbs ‘ἐλόντ’ and ‘ἀγέμεν’, as well as the implied object of ‘δώησιν’ and ‘ἔλωμαι’. This grammatical structure robs Briseis of any subjectivity.

The next time Briseis is mentioned is when Achilles speaks to Agamemnon’s heralds:

...οὐ τί μοι ὑμμες ἐπαίτιοι ἀλλ' Ἀγαμέμνων, 335  
 ὃ σφῶϊ προΐει **Βρισηΐδος** εἵνεκα **κούρης**.  
 ἀλλ' ἄγε διογενὲς Πατρόκλεες ἔξαγε **κούρην**  
 καὶ σφῶϊν δὸς ἄγειν:

“...You are not to blame in my sight, but Agamemnon  
 who sent the two of you here for the sake of the **girl Briseis**.  
 Go then, illustrious Patroklos, and bring **the girl** forth

<sup>105</sup> *Iliad*, 1. 318-325. Trans. Richmond Lattimore, 1951.

Unlike in the first two instances, ‘Βρισηΐδος...κούρης’ is not the direct object in this passage as it is not in the accusative case. Instead, it is in the genitive case because ‘Βρισηΐδος...κούρης’ is dependent on the preposition ‘ἐννεκα’ which usually takes the genitive case. Nevertheless, Briseis is still not the subject in this extract and her status as a direct object returns with the verbs ‘ἔξαγε’, ‘δός’ and ‘ἄγειν’, which all govern the direct object ‘κούρην’ which, in this context, refers to Briseis.

ὧς φάτο, Πάτροκλος δὲ φίλῳ ἐπεπείθεθ' ἑταίρῳ, 345  
ἐκ δ' ἄγαγε κλισίης **Βρισηΐδα καλλιπάρηον**,  
δῶκε δ' ἄγειν· τὼ δ' αὖτις ἴτην παρὰ νῆας Ἀχαιῶν·  
**ἦ** δ' ἀέκουσ' ἅμα τοῖσι **γυνή** κίεν·

Once again, 'Βρισηΐδα καλλιπάρηον' is in the accusative case and is the direct object of the verb 'ἄγαγε' and the implied object of the verbs 'δῶκε' and 'ἄγειν'. Despite the last clause of this passage 'ἥ... γυνή' referring to Briseis in the nominative case (thereby making Briseis the grammatical subject of this clause), one cannot avoid the fact that there are a number of factors which still place her in a position of subordination. Firstly, Briseis is not named in this clause but is

<sup>107</sup> *Iliad*, 1. 345-348. Trans. Richmond Lattimore, 1951.

simply referred to as ‘ἥ... γυνή’, thereby not assigning any importance to her.<sup>108</sup> Secondly, the short clause does not reveal any detail regarding Briseis’ thoughts, emotions or own experience of the situation, outside of ‘ἀέκουσ’ (the implication of the latter which, as discussed earlier, is highly ambiguous and simply raises more questions about Briseis’ true thoughts). Thirdly, if one considers the overall context of this passage, Briseis is being led away by Patroclus and handed over, like some kind of exchangeable object, to Agamemnon’s men. These three factors, I believe, demonstrate that Briseis cannot be a true subject in this passage.

The next time Briseis is referred to by name is in Book 2 is when a petulant Achilles is at the Greek ships:

ἀλλ’ οἳ γ’ οὐ πολέμοιο δυσηχέος ἐμνώοντο:  
οὐ γὰρ ἔην ὅς τις σφιν ἐπὶ στίχας ἡγήσαιο:  
κεῖτο γὰρ ἐν νήεσσι ποδάρκης δῖος Ἀχιλλεὺς  
**κούρης** χωόμενος **Βρισηΐδος ἡὔκόμοιο**...

“But these took no thought now for the grim clamour of battle  
since he, swift-footed brilliant Achilleus, lay where the ships were,  
angered over the **girl of the lovely hair, Briseis**...”<sup>109</sup>

Briseis is referred to as ‘κούρης...Βρισηΐδος ἡὔκόμοιο’ in this instance which is in the genitive case, dependent on the participle ‘χωόμενος’; ‘ποδάρκης δῖος Ἀχιλλεὺς’ is in the nominative case and is therefore the obvious grammatical subject of this clause, thereby placing Briseis, once again, in the position of subordinate object.

Briseis is next mentioned in Book 9 when Nestor advises Agamemnon to reconcile with Achilles, and is once again a grammatical object in the passage:

---

<sup>108</sup> It must be noted, however, that the use of ‘ἥ... γυνή’ and not Briseis’ actual name is most likely due to *metri gratia*. All passages are subject to the metre of Homer’s poem (dactylic hexameter). As such, the positioning of Briseis’ name in a particular case, or the complete lack of her name, may often be due to *metri gratia*. Nevertheless, I believe that, combined with the other reasons which I propose in my argument, Briseis is still denied subjectivity.

<sup>109</sup> *Iliad*, 2. 686-689. Trans. Richmond Lattimore, 1951.

...οἷον ἐγὼ νοέω ἡμὲν πάλαι ἢ δ' ἔτι καὶ νῦν 105

ἐξ ἔτι τοῦ ὅτε διογενὲς **Βρισηΐδα κούρην**  
χωομένου Ἀχιλλῆος ἔβης κλισίῃθεν ἀπούρας  
οὐ τι καθ' ἡμέτερόν γε νόον...

σὺ δὲ σῶ μεγαλήτορι θυμῷ

εἵξας ἄνδρα φέριστον, ὃν ἀθάνατοί περ ἔτισαν, 110  
ἠτίμησας, ἐλὼν γὰρ ἔχεις **γέρας**:

“...I have in my mind either now or long before now  
ever since that day, illustrious, when you went from the shelter  
of angered Achilles, taking by force **the girl Briseis**  
against the will of the rest of us...  
but you, giving way to you proud heart's  
anger, dishonoured a great man, one whom the immortals  
honour, since you have taken his **prize** and keep it.”<sup>110</sup>

As before, ‘Βρισηΐδα κούρην’ is the direct object of the verb ‘ἀπούρας’, and also the implied object of the verbs ‘ἐλὼν’ and ‘ἔχεις’ due to the noun ‘γέρας’ in line 111, referring to Briseis.

Briseis is referred to by name twice in Book 19. The first time is also her second appearance, outside of her lament, in the epic in which she is brought back to Achilles’ tent on Agamemnon’s orders, along with several objects and other women as part of Agamemnon’s offer of reconciliation:

ἐπτα μὲν ἐκ κλισίης τρίποδας φέρον, οὓς οἱ ὑπέστη,  
αἶθωνας δὲ λέβητας ἐείκοσι, δώδεκα δ' ἵππους:  
ἐκ δ' ἄγον αἶψα γυναικας ἀμύμονα ἔργα ἰδυίας 245  
ἔπτ', ἀτὰρ ὀγδοάτην **Βρισηΐδα καλλιπάρην**.

“They brought back seven tripods from the shelter, those Agamemnon  
had promised, and twenty shining cauldrons, twelve horses. They brought back  
immediately the seven women the work of whose hands was

---

<sup>110</sup> *Iliad*, 9. 105-111. Trans. Richmond Lattimore, 1951.





The last reference to Briseis, and her last appearance in the *Iliad*, occurs in Book 24 when she is described as lying next to Achilles in his hut:

αὐτὰρ Ἀχιλλεὺς εὗδε मुखῷ κλισίης ἐϋπήκτου:  
τῷ δὲ **Βρισηῖς** παρελέξατο **καλλιπάρης**.

“...but Achilles slept in the inward corner of the strong-built shelter,  
and at his side lay Briseis of the fair colouring.”<sup>113</sup>

Here, Briseis is the subject of the last clause in which ‘Βρισηῖς... καλλιπάρης’ is the nominative subject of the verb ‘παρελέξατο’; and approximates a true subject: largely because her actual name is used in the nominative case, and also because it is clear that Briseis herself performs the action of lying next to Achilles. Nevertheless, one cannot avoid the fact that Briseis is still Achilles’ slave, that she was given back to him by Agamemnon as if she were an object to be traded and that she remains silent in this passage. Her perspective remains absent despite her grammatical subjectivity.

Following Wittig’s theory then, Briseis is unable to take control of discourse in this passage, nor in any of the passages discussed so far. One could argue, however, that Briseis’ lament, which I have shown earlier, reveals a complex character with multiple nuances, suggesting the possibility of Briseis being a subject in Homer’s narrative. An examination of grammatical usage in the lament also reveals that Briseis is often the grammatical subject in this lament. Below is highlighted in bold where Briseis is the grammatical subject, or implied subject, in the lament; however her true subjectivity is still absent:

**Βρισηῖς** δ’ ἄρ’ ἔπειτ’ **ικέλη** χρυσέη Ἀφροδίτῃ,  
ὥς **ἶδε** Πάτροκλον δεδαῖγμένον ὀξεί χαλκῷ,  
ἀμφ’ αὐτῷ **χυμένη** λίγ’ **ἐκώκυε**, χερσὶ δ’ **ἄμυσσε**  
στήθεά τ’ ἠδ’ ἀπαλὴν δειρὴν ἰδὲ καλὰ πρόσωπα. 285  
**εἶπε** δ’ ἄρα **κλαίουσα** γυνὴ **εἵκυῖα** θεῇσι:  
‘Πάτροκλέ μοι δειλῇ πλεῖστον κεχαρισμένε θυμῷ  
ζῶν μὲν σε **ἔλειπον** **ἐγὼ** κλισίῃθην **ιοῦσα**,  
νῦν δέ σε τεθνηῶτα **κιχάνομαι** ὄρχαμε λαῶν

<sup>113</sup> *Iliad*, 24. 675-676. Trans. Richmond Lattimore, 1951.

ἄψ ἄνιοῦς': ὥς μοι δέχεται κακὸν ἐκ κακοῦ αἰεί. 290

ἄνδρα μὲν ᾧ ἔδοσαν με πατὴρ καὶ πότνια μήτηρ

**εἶδον** πρὸ πτόλιος δεδαῖγμένον ὀξεῖ χαλκῷ,

τρεῖς τε κασιγνήτους, τοὺς μοι μία γείνατο μήτηρ,

κηδείους, οἳ πάντες ὀλέθριον ἦμαρ ἐπέσπον.

οὐδὲ μὲν οὐδέ μ' ἔασκες, ὅτ' ἄνδρ' ἐμὸν ὠκύς Ἀχιλλεὺς 295

ἔκτεινεν, πέρσεν δὲ πόλιν θείοιο Μύνητος,

κλαίειν, ἀλλὰ μ' ἔφασκες Ἀχιλλῆος θείοιο

κουριδίην ἄλογον θήσιν, ἄξιν τ' ἐνὶ νηυσὶν

ἔς Φθίην, δαίσειν δὲ γάμον μετὰ Μυρμιδόνεσσι.

τὼ σ' ἄμοτον **κλαίω** τεθνηότα μείλιχον αἰεί.' 300

ὥς **ἔφατο** κλαίουσ', ἐπὶ δὲ στενάχοντο γυναῖκες

Πάτροκλον πρόφασιν, σφῶν δ' αὐτῶν κήδε' ἐκάστη.

“And now, **in the likeness** of golden Aphrodite, **Briseis**

when **she saw** Patroklos lying torn with sharp bronze, **folding**

him in her arms **cried** shrilly above him and with her hands **tore**

at her breasts and her soft throat and her beautiful forehead.

The **woman like** the immortals **mourning** for him **spoke** to him:

‘Patroklos, far most pleasing to my heart in its sorrows,

**I left** you here alive **when I went away** from the shelter,

but now **I come back**, lord of the people, to find you have fallen.

So evil in my life takes over from evil forever.

The husband on whom my father and honoured mother bestowed me

**I saw** before my city lying torn with sharp bronze,

and my three brothers, whom a single mother bore with me

and who were close to me, all went on one day to destruction.

And yet you would not let me, when swift Achilles had cut down

my husband, and sacked the city of godlike Mynes, you would not

let me sorrow, but said you would make me godlike Achilles’

wedded lawful wife, that you would take me back in the ships

to Phthia, and formalize my marriage among the Myrmidons.

Therefore **I weep** your death without ceasing. You were kind always.’



ἄνδρα μὲν ᾧ ἔδοσαν **με** πατήρ καὶ πότνια μήτηρ  
 εἶδον πρὸ πτόλιος δεδαῖγμένον ὀξεί χαλκῷ,  
 τρεῖς τε κασιγνήτους, τούς μοι μία γείνατο μήτηρ,  
 κηδείους, οἳ πάντες ὀλέθριον ἦμαρ ἐπέσπον.  
 οὐδὲ μὲν οὐδέ **μ**’ ἔασκες, ὅτ’ ἄνδρ’ ἐμὸν ὤκυς Ἀχιλλεὺς     295  
 ἔκτεινεν, πέρσεν δὲ πόλιν θείοιο Μύνητος,  
 κλαίειν, ἀλλὰ **μ**’ ἔφασκες Ἀχιλλῆος θείοιο  
**κουριδίην ἄλοχον** θήσιν, ἄξιν τ’ ἐνὶ νηυσὶν  
 ἐς Φθίην, δαίσειν δὲ γάμον μετὰ Μυρμιδόνεσσι.  
 τὼ σ’ ἄμοτον κλαίω τεθνηότα μείλιχον αἰεί.’     300  
 ὧς ἔφατο κλαίουσ’, ἐπὶ δὲ στενάχοντο γυναῖκες  
 Πάτροκλον πρόφασιν, σφῶν δ’ αὐτῶν κήδε’ ἐκάστη.”

In line 291, the pronoun ‘**με**’, which refers to Briseis, is in the accusative case and is the direct object of the verb ‘ἔδοσαν’. In a similar fashion, in line 295 the accusative pronoun ‘**μ**’ refers to Briseis and is the direct object of the verb ‘ἔασκες’ and the infinitive ‘κλαίειν’. In line 297, Briseis is once again referred to in the accusative pronoun ‘**μ**’ and is the direct object of the verb ‘ἔφασκες’, as well as the direct object of the infinitives ‘θήσιν’ and ‘ἄξιν’. In line 298, ‘**κουριδίην ἄλοχον**’ agrees in case, gender and number (accusative, feminine and singular) with ‘**μ**’ in the previous line and therefore also refers to Briseis as the direct object. Although Briseis appears more often as grammatical subject than object in this passage, she still does not successfully become the locutor, and thus the subject of her speech. In accordance with Wittig, one’s understanding of the “androcentric framework” of Homer’s text involving “that of the male-authored male hero and the often subservient and minor female characters within epic”<sup>115</sup>, renders her a victim of “parrot speech (slaves echoing their master’s talk)”<sup>116</sup>. Also, in terms of Wittig’s theory of the universal (that is, the assumed subject), the androcentric nature of Homer’s text causes one to assume that the universal belongs to men, such as Agamemnon and Achilles, who are therefore the assumed subjects of the narrative, while the ‘other’ are the women who are subservient and clearly objects of the narrative. As such, Briseis, or any of the slave women, despite the use of the universal ‘I’, cannot “lay claim to universality”, as Wittig puts it, cannot become the subject(s) of the narrative.

<sup>115</sup> Nagy, 2009: 5.

<sup>116</sup> Wittig, 1985: 80.

Furthermore, I believe that one cannot help but remember that Briseis's frequent objectification throughout the epic by powerful and prominent men such as Agamemnon and Achilles reinforces her subordination and lack of subjectivity. The lament alone cannot imbue Briseis with true subjectivity. In addition, once her short lament is over, Briseis returns to being a silent figure; her thoughts, opinions and feelings shut off from the audience once more and her status as subordinate character reaffirmed.

In Briseis' relations with Achilles, their limited interactions and her restricted voice, make it difficult to determine her exact feelings. A modern audience could assume that she ought to feel some degree of hate as well as fear towards him and perhaps shame, since he murdered both her brothers and husband before enslaving and raping her. However, their relationship is more complex. Homer introduced Briseis as Achilles' prize, his proof of honour in war. It is clear that Achilles greatly values Briseis, but this value lies not only in her physical desirability but, more importantly, her position as status symbol. It is therefore a deep blow to Achilles' pride when Agamemnon publicly takes her away from him.<sup>117</sup> But is the relationship between Briseis and Achilles purely one of master and slave or winner and prize? It would perhaps be wrong to say that Achilles' rage was due only to Agamemnon's disregard for his pride as this would completely neglect any physical or emotional ties between Briseis and Achilles. It has been pointed out by some scholars that Achilles had several women belonging to him at the time of the feud and that therefore Agamemnon had a variety of prizes to choose from. Since Agamemnon is aware of Achilles' declarations of love and desire for Briseis, he decides to take Briseis specifically so as to humiliate and emasculate him.<sup>118</sup> Achilles does not try to hide his apparent love for Briseis, mentioning her during his speech to Odysseus and even calling her "ἄλοχον θυμαρέα",<sup>119</sup> comparing his loss to that of Menelaus' when Helen was taken.<sup>120</sup> As mentioned earlier, however, the alternative translation of "ἄλοχον" is "leman, concubine" which may still place Briseis in a subordinate position. Also, the seriousness of Achilles' claim of affection for Briseis is questionable: he declines to marry Agamemnon's daughter (part of the reconciliation deal Agamemnon offered) and though at first one assumes it is because he would rather take Briseis as his wife, Achilles soon clarifies that he would take a wife of his father's

---

<sup>117</sup> Greene, 2015: 113-114.

<sup>118</sup> Gottschall, 2008: 59-60.

<sup>119</sup> *Iliad*, 9. 336 ("bride of my heart").

<sup>120</sup> *Iliad*, 9. 335-344.

choosing.<sup>121</sup> Further, soon after Patroclus' death, Achilles publicly declares that he wishes Artemis had killed her when he sacked Lyrnessus, thus avoiding the death of many Greeks.<sup>122</sup> Clearly, his grief for Patroclus trumps whatever love he claimed to have had for Briseis, but he does not stop Agamemnon from bringing all the gifts promised in the initial rejected deal, including the return of Briseis. Although Achilles and Briseis are shown sleeping next to each other in his tent in their last appearance in Book 24, the audience is left unsure of Achilles' true feelings for Briseis. How then does Briseis view the relationship between herself and Achilles?

Briseis' lament indicates that Patroclus comforted her by assuring her marriage to Achilles: "...ἀλλά μ' ἔφασκες Ἀχιλλῆος θείοιο κουριδίην ἄλοχον θήσειν..." ("but said you would make me godlike Achilleus' wedded lawful wife..."),<sup>123</sup> however this does not imply that Briseis had any kind of romantic feelings towards Achilles. The assurance of marriage promises future security and stability, something which not many war slaves experience, and therefore it is understandable that this promise provides some comfort for Briseis. Indeed, it is highly unlikely that Briseis had any romantic feelings towards Achilles, despite their complex and emotional bond, as their relationship was initiated non-consensually and would have most likely have begun with her rape (an act which some men committed, and still do, during wartimes).<sup>124</sup> Regarding the issue of voice, Achilles does not seem to encourage Briseis' voice, and his objectification of her, as discussed earlier, most likely discouraged it. Moreover, there is no indication in Achilles' speeches or Briseis' lament that any kind of conversation occurred, nor do Achilles' proclamations of love imply that he ever engaged in conversation with her. Additionally, an examination of other master-slave relationships such as Agamemnon and Chryseis, Patroclus and his bedmate Iphis and Achilles and Diomedes (the woman who temporarily replaced Briseis), reveal that conversations between master and slave were absent. This discouragement of Briseis' voice therefore further emphasises Briseis' lack of subjectivity.

---

<sup>121</sup> Cavallini, 2015: 84.

<sup>122</sup> *Iliad*, 19. 55-62.

<sup>123</sup> *Iliad*, 19. 298. Trans. Richmond Lattimore, 1951.

<sup>124</sup> Gottschall, 2008: 79-80; see also *Iliad*, 2. 354-356 in which Nestor encourages the Greeks to each sleep the night with a Trojan wife in order to make their efforts to reclaim Helen worthwhile. It is most likely that Homer is implying the rape of the wives.

In contrast, Briseis seems to hold an affectionate and more positive relationship with Patroclus as shown by her lament. Firstly, Briseis begins her lament with the words “Πάτροκλέ μοι δειλῇ πλεῖστον κεχαρισμένε θυμῷ” (“Patroklos, far most pleasing to my heart in its sorrows”) which indicates obvious affection.<sup>125</sup> Secondly, Patroclus seems to like her enough to offer her security and stability: “ἀλλὰ μ’ ἔφασκες Ἀχιλλῆος θείοιο κουριδίην ἄλοχον θήσειν...” (“but said you would make me godlike Achilles’ wedded lawful wife...”)<sup>126</sup> Furthermore, as discussed before, the link between Andromache and Briseis creates parallels between herself and Patroclus, and Andromache and Hector, one of the most important and emotion-fuelled relationships in the *Iliad*, thereby emphasising the close bond Briseis and Patroclus shared. The last indication of Briseis’ affection towards Patroclus is once again found in her lament in Book 19 when she says “τὼ σ’ ἄμοτον κλαίω τεθνηότα μείλιχον αἰεῖ.” (“Therefore I weep your death without ceasing. You were kind always.”)<sup>127</sup> Briseis is not simply playing the role of mourner here or doing her duty, in fact, it is not her duty since she is not related by blood to Patroclus. Instead, Briseis mourns him because he was the one man amongst strangers and captors who was kind to her.<sup>128</sup> Given the above, what then can be deduced about Patroclus’ influence on Briseis’ voice? I believe that the positivity of their relationship when compared to Briseis’ relationship with Achilles would imply that Patroclus might have encouraged, or at the very least, did not actively restrict, Briseis’ voice. Although Homer never includes a dialogue between Patroclus and Briseis, an analysis of the grammar in line 295 of Book 19 indicates that conversations could have occurred since the “imperfect tense of ἔασκες coupled with the repetition of οὐδὲ μὲν οὐδέ μ' connotes frequency”.<sup>129</sup> This frequency then implies that Patroclus repeatedly promised Briseis that he would arrange the marriage between Achilles and herself, thus indicating the possibility of multiple conversations between Patroclus and her. I therefore argue that Patroclus could have actively engaged in conversation with Briseis, whether initiated by Briseis or himself, and thereby encouraged her voice. This therefore, following from Wittig’s theory, results in Patroclus’ encouragement of Briseis’ subjectivity; however, it must be

---

<sup>125</sup> *Iliad*, 19. 287. Trans. Richmond Lattimore, 1951.

<sup>126</sup> *Iliad*, 19. 297-298. Trans. Richmond Lattimore, 1951.

<sup>127</sup> *Iliad*, 19. 300. Trans. Richmond Lattimore, 1951.

<sup>128</sup> Skinner, 1982: 267.

<sup>129</sup> Dué, 2002: 75.

acknowledged that a scene in which Patroclus and Briseis engage in conversation simply does not exist in the *Iliad* and that my arguments are inferred from implications made from Briseis' lament.

Another element of the *Iliad* which I believe further emphasises Briseis' lack of voice is the manner in which she exits the narrative of the *Iliad*. After Briseis is given back to Achilles on Agamemnon's orders due to his reconciliation with Achilles, Briseis is described as lying next to Achilles in his hut, silent and nondescript:

“αὐτὰρ Ἀχιλλεὺς εὖδε μυχῶ κλισίης ἐϋπήκτου:  
τῷ δὲ Βρισηΐς παρελέξατο καλλιπάρηος.”

“but Achilleus slept in the inward corner of the strong-built shelter,  
and at his side lay Briseis of the fair colouring.”<sup>130</sup>

It is not known what becomes of Briseis at the end of the *Iliad*, nor is she mentioned in the *Odyssey* in any flashbacks. Her fate after Achilles' death is therefore ambiguous which, I believe, further emphasises the lack of her subjectivity, as her character is deemed unimportant and her feelings disregarded.

---

<sup>130</sup> *Iliad*, 24. 675-676. Trans. Richmond Lattimore, 1951.



## Chapter Two

### Briseis: Pat Barker's *The Silence of the Girls*

I will now turn to an investigation of *The Silence of the Girls* by Pat Barker in order to conduct my comparison between Homer's depiction and Barker's depiction of Briseis, beginning first with a brief biography of the modern author, Pat Barker. Pat Barker was born in Yorkshire, England in 1943 and completed her studies at the London School of Economics and Durham University. Barker's first novel, *Union Street*, was published in 1982, and some of her works have been adapted for stage and film. In 2000, Barker was awarded a CBE (Commander of the Order of the British Empire). Barker's works have been described as uncomfortable reading, tackling issues such as "prostitution, homosexuality, child rape, incest, mental illness, pacifism, war, and murder by minors" in a truthful if brutal manner.<sup>131</sup> Her characters are "far more complex and human than in the fiction of many other authors."<sup>132</sup> Barker's novels are often focused on wartime communities, such as her renowned *Regeneration* series (1991-1995) and *Double Vision* (1993), and she continues in a similar theme in her latest novel *The Silence of the Girls* (2018), focusing this time on female slave communities in the Greek camp during the Trojan War. Barker has no formal background in Classics and read the *Iliad* when she was already an established writer. The author revealed in an interview with Cressida Leyshon that the aspects which drew her to Homer's work were the "grandeur and power" and the "brutality of its battle scenes" but also "the compassion that illuminates even the darkest moments. Homer never lets anybody die unnamed or unacknowledged...The other thing that struck me was how silent the captured slave girls are, handed from one king to another like inanimate objects. I immediately wanted to give those girls a voice and "The Silence of the Girls" was the result."<sup>133</sup> My main aim in this section is to explore how Barker has changed Briseis' character from the *Iliad* and how she has given Briseis a voice, and therefore subjectivity, something which Barker herself speaks about in a separate interview with Martha Greengrass:

---

<sup>131</sup> Thursfield, 2013: no page. (URL: <https://literature.britishcouncil.org/writer/pat-barker>).

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>133</sup> Leyshon, 2019: no page.

“...this girl is being quarrelled over by these two great, distinguished, eloquent men and yet the girl herself says nothing. She has no opinion, she has no power, she has no voice. It was the urge to fill that vacuum that made me go back and start retelling the myth yet again.”<sup>134</sup>

Before I begin my analysis of Barker’s interpretation of Briseis, I will provide a brief summary of the novel and detail important changes, additions and omissions by the author regarding the characters, plot and events in order to provide necessary context to my analysis.

*The Silence of the Girls* begins with the fall of the city Lyrnessus at the hands of Achilles and his men. Briseis and the rest of the noble women are captured and taken to the Greek camp where Briseis is chosen by Achilles’ men to be his bed-slave. The external narrative plot then follows the trajectory of the *Iliad*: the plague caused by Agamemnon’s refusal to return Chryseis to her father, the feud between Achilles and Agamemnon and the resulting withdrawal of Achilles from battle when Agamemnon claims Briseis as his new bed-slave, Patroclus’ death, Achilles’ slaying of Hector and subsequent desecration of his body before being returned to his father Priam. The novel continues with Achilles’ death and the fall of Troy, and Briseis watches the captured Trojan women leave with their Greek masters before she herself leaves with her new husband Alcimus, one of Achilles’ chief aides. Throughout the book, Barker, through Briseis’ first-person narration, focuses on the internal narrative of the female slaves in the Greek camp. Briseis provides readers with her perspective of the war and fills in the gaps regarding what the slave women experience, feel and think about the Trojan War, its consequences and the male warriors.

Barker retains most of the original characters from the *Iliad* while introducing a few new names: Ritsa is a woman from Lyrnessus who is Briseis’ friend and serves as a direct connection for Briseis to her home city. Ritsa weaves in Agamemnon’s camp and is a motherly figure to Briseis. Ismene is a slave at Lyrnessus and was pregnant with King Mynes’ child, however she is most likely killed after the city is sacked. Maire is Briseis’ mother-in-law with whom she has a difficult and unkind relationship, aggravated by Briseis’ apparent inability to have a child with Mynes. This prompts Maire to begin negotiations for a concubine in order for Mynes to obtain an heir, however she is unable to complete the negotiation as she falls critically ill. During the siege, she requests a dagger from Briseis, likely killing herself before the Greek soldiers enter the palace. Arianna, Briseis’

---

<sup>134</sup> Greengrass, 2019: no page.

maternal cousin, is another invented character who throws herself off the top of the citadel minutes before the soldiers can capture them. Briseis also has a sister, Ianthe, who lives in Troy. Myron, a Greek man whom Briseis greatly dislikes due to his unpleasant manners, is in charge of the upkeep of Achilles' camp and is the first victim of the plague. Uza, the last character whom Barker has created, is Odysseus' prize. Barker has also taken characters from other ancient sources and worked them into her novel (remaining largely faithful to their original depictions): Tecmessa, originally from Sophocles' play *Ajax*, is Ajax's prize of honour and the mother of his son. Cassandra, who is a priestess to Apollo and has the gift of prophecy, is originally from the *Iliad* (although she is mentioned very briefly) and more famously from Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, is the daughter of Hecabe and Priam. Barker includes the myth regarding Apollo's curse on Cassandra which renders all her prophecies unbelievable. Polyxena, originally from Euripides' plays *The Women of Troy* and *Hecabe*, is a daughter of Priam and Hecabe and is sacrificed on Agamemnon's orders at the tomb of Achilles. Lastly, Pyrrhus is originally from Sophocles' tragedy *Philoctetes*, in which he is called Neoptolemus, and is referred to (although not by name) in Euripides' *The Women of Troy*. In Barker's novel, Pyrrhus is Achilles' son who arrives at the end of the Trojan War to claim Achilles' share of the war spoils and personally sacrifices Polyxena over his father's grave. Aside from the above-mentioned characters, Barker has remained faithful to the cast of characters Homer provided in his epic, although she has left out many auxiliary characters as they were unnecessary to the structure of the narrative. Importantly, the Trojans, aside from Priam, receive limited attention due to the novel being primarily from Briseis' perspective, whose movements are limited to the Greek camp and the parts of the battlefield she can describe. Lastly, the gods are mostly absent from the novel. While Barker in no way rejects the notion of gods, she limits their appearance to Thetis, necessary only because of Achilles, and a single mention of Apollo.

Barker also alters the narrative structure of the *Iliad*. Homer's epic begins a few weeks before the end of the war, starting with Chryses' plea for his daughter's return which subsequently leads to the feud between Agamemnon and Achilles. *The Silence of the Girls* begins with the fall of Lyrnessus as Barker has shifted the narrative focus from Achilles to Briseis. The second narrative change involves the ending of the novel. While the *Iliad* ends with the burial of Hector, Barker makes her own additions to the plot, as well as incorporating parts of two of Euripides' plays, *The Women of Troy* and *Hecabe*, and other myths surrounding the Trojan War for her ending. In her novel, Achilles returns Hector's body to Priam and negotiates a temporary truce to allow for the burial of Hector, as in the *Iliad*. The narrative then continues with Briseis finding out that she is pregnant with Achilles'

child.<sup>135</sup> After Achilles finds out, he has her married to one of his chief aides, Alcimus, as he knows that he will die soon and cannot therefore take care of Briseis or his child.<sup>136</sup> This is a complete invention by Barker as, according to existing ancient literature and myth, Briseis never has Achilles' child and is lost from the narrative once Achilles is killed. In the novel, Achilles is then killed by Paris who shoots him in the back with an arrow, an apparent deviation from the myths surrounding Achilles' death. Barker does make reference to these myths by having Briseis speak about the various ways Achilles is said to have died: a poisoned arrow or an arrow to the heel which was said to be the only vulnerable part of his body. Briseis dismisses both myths, insisting that Achilles was not invulnerable as she had seen all his battle scars.<sup>137</sup> Funeral games for Achilles are then conducted, and it is after this that direct references to Euripides' plays are found. In Barker's novel, Troy is eventually sacked after Achilles' funeral games are over, and the noble women of Troy are gathered into a hut, aside from Helen who is given a separate hut. A reference to Euripides' play *The Women of Troy* is found in the death of Hector's son whose fate is decided by the Greek kings. In *The Women of Troy*, Hector's son receives a burial only once Andromache has agreed not to protest against her son's death.<sup>138</sup> In Barker's novel, Briseis describes how she heard that Odysseus picked up the child by the ankles and threw him off the battlements of Troy. Alcimus then arrives with the body of Hector's son (here Pyrrhus grants his burial after Andromache begs him for it) and Hecabe oversees preparation for his burial.<sup>139</sup> Another reference to Euripides' plays, in this case *Hecabe*, is the sacrifice of Polyxena. In this play, Achilles' spirit demands the sacrifice of a Trojan maiden.<sup>140</sup> Agamemnon and the other kings agree to the sacrifice of Polyxena.<sup>141</sup> In Barker's novel, the appearance of Achilles' spirit is not included but rather it is Agamemnon who drunkenly demands the sacrifice out of fear of Achilles' wrath.<sup>142</sup> Barker then breaks away from all ancient sources with

---

<sup>135</sup> Barker, 2018: 294.

<sup>136</sup> Barker, 2018: 302-305.

<sup>137</sup> Barker, 2018: 308.

<sup>138</sup> Euripides, *The Women of Troy*, lines 719-738, trans. E. P. Coleridge (1891).

<sup>139</sup> Barker, 2018: 313, 319-321.

<sup>140</sup> Euripides, *The Women of Troy*, lines 105-116, trans. E. P. Coleridge (1891).

<sup>141</sup> Barker, 2018: 129-144.

<sup>142</sup> Barker, 2018: 310-311.

regard to Briseis' fate. In all the ancient sources, Briseis' fate remains ambiguous, but Barker ends her novel with Briseis leaving with Alkimus to Achilles' home in Phthia, where she will raise her child.<sup>143</sup>

Barker has greatly expanded the role of Briseis in her novel, taking her from the part of marginal character and placing her in the position of central protagonist and primary narrator. Barker has largely invented many scenes, interactions and dialogues for her novel but the foundation of Briseis' character has been taken from the lament for Patroclus. As Briseis narrates the story, her character grows and develops, revealing multiple characteristics which make her a complex and three-dimensional character. I argued earlier that the Homeric Briseis most likely had similar attributes to Chryseis (beauty, obedience and skill), given her status as a general's prize of honour. Barker's Briseis seems to possess and exhibit these same characteristics to a certain extent throughout the novel. Her beauty, as well as her youth, is implied soon after she is captured and taken from Lyrnessus to the Greek camp. Briseis, along with the other captured women, are lined up and inspected by two Greek men who separate them into different groups. Briseis is placed in a hut with one group whom she describes as "a much smaller group of very young women and girls, all pretty, all healthy-looking, a few with babies at their breasts."<sup>144</sup> Barker clearly also emphasises the fact that Briseis is placed with women who are most likely to be fertile as they are healthy, young and some are already mothers. Homer's Briseis appears to be barren as it is not mentioned anywhere that she has children, either from her marriage to Mynes or with Achilles. Briseis in Barker's novel also believes that she is barren as she is unable to have Mynes' children but ultimately falls pregnant with Achilles' child, thereby diverging from Homer. Barker's Briseis is also initially modest and appears to conform to her society's expectations of how a woman should act. However, while checking on her mother-in-law during the siege, she has to walk through the streets of Lyrnessus, something she would not ordinarily have done as a respectable married woman.<sup>145</sup> After she is enslaved by Achilles, Briseis walks along the beach and sees Chryseis' father, Chryses. He pauses and is shocked by her appearance, stammering over how he should address her. Briseis narrates that her manner of dress has changed now that she is enslaved: "...richly dressed, unveiled

---

<sup>143</sup> Barker, 2018: 323-324.

<sup>144</sup> Barker, 2018: 19.

<sup>145</sup> Barker, 2018: 3.

and out walking alone...”<sup>146</sup> There is no indication that Homer’s Briseis is dressed in any kind of revealing clothes, and it could be assumed that she retains her modest nature. Barker’s Briseis is also obedient to Achilles and the other Greeks, although this is largely out of fear. Furthermore, I argued that the Homeric Briseis would likely have performed duties such as weaving and managing the household. Barker illustrates this more explicitly than Homer and depicts Briseis serving Achilles and his men food and wine at dinner, overseeing the preparation of Achilles’ bath, and, when she is taken to Agamemnon’s camp, weaves with the other slave women.<sup>147</sup>

A detail which Barker does not demonstrate very clearly is Briseis’ connection with Hecabe and Andromache, a connection which I argued in the first half of this chapter can be seen in Homer’s epic. This is partly due to the fact that Barker did not write out Briseis’ lament in great detail, choosing rather to omit the actual spoken lament and to have Briseis narrate what occurred. Furthermore, Briseis’ words cannot connect her with Hecabe or Andromache as Barker does not include any speeches by either woman. However, Barker does form parallels between Briseis and Chryseis, and Briseis and Helen respectively.

Briseis and Chryseis are more distinctly differentiated by Barker. Although both women are causes of conflict and prizes of honour, as in Homer’s epic, Chryseis comes from a different background: prior to enslavement, due to her mother’s early death Barker’s Chryseis was the young mistress of her father’s house, and helped her father in the temple.<sup>148</sup> Briseis, on the other hand, was removed from her father’s house and married off to King Mynes at a young age.<sup>149</sup> Homer does not detail Chryseis’ background the way Barker does, and this therefore makes Briseis and Chryseis seem more similar than in Barker’s novel. Furthermore, while Homer uses the same epithet to describe both women, Barker gives them different appearances: Briseis describes herself as “a skinny little thing, all hair and eyes and scarcely a curve in sight.”<sup>150</sup> Chryseis however is described by Briseis as “lovely” and quiet, yet someone who possesses a “formidable reserve”, a description quite

---

<sup>146</sup> Barker, 2018: 58.

<sup>147</sup> Barker, 2018: 37, 52 and 121.

<sup>148</sup> Barker, 2018: 48.

<sup>149</sup> Barker, 2018: 7.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*

different from the one Briseis attaches to herself.<sup>151</sup> Barker then, through these small changes to their characters, makes each woman an individual person.

In comparison with Homer, Barker makes the links between Briseis and Helen more obvious and explicit. Briseis compares herself to Helen when she notices that the men eating with Agamemnon look at her with hostility: “I was no longer the outward and visible sign of Agamemnon’s power and Achilles’ humiliation. No, I’d become something altogether more sinister: I was the girl who’d caused the quarrel.”<sup>152</sup> Briseis then goes on to say “I was Helen now”.<sup>153</sup> Briseis narrates how she met Helen many times when she stayed in Troy as a young girl with her sister Ianthé. Briseis describes a legend regarding Helen’s weaving which claimed “that whenever Helen cut a thread in her weaving, a man died on the battlefield. She was responsible for every death.”<sup>154</sup> This is also a parallel between the two women: just as Helen is accused of being responsible for every Trojan death on the battlefield, so Briseis is accused, if somewhat silently, of every Greek death on the battlefield. Briseis speaks about the duel between Menelaus and Paris which was conducted in order to decide to whom Helen would belong and notes that “Helen wasn’t there. Nobody had bothered to tell her what was happening. So her fate was decided without her knowledge.”<sup>155</sup> Similarly, Briseis’ fate, towards the end of the book, is decided: Once Achilles finds out that Briseis is pregnant, he meets with Alcimus (whom I mentioned earlier as one of Achilles’ chief aides, an original character from Homer) and arranges for him to marry Briseis without her knowledge.<sup>156</sup>

Barker also introduces a number of other characteristics which are not present in Homer’s Briseis, or are not clearly depicted. Firstly, Barker’s Briseis, despite her young age, has a surprisingly good grasp of what the men in her world are like, and what their desires are. For example, she shows her understanding of men like Mynes and is aware of the promiscuity of men:

---

<sup>151</sup> Barker, 2018: 48.

<sup>152</sup> Barker, 2018: 123-124.

<sup>153</sup> Barker, 2018: 124.

<sup>154</sup> Barker, 2018: 129.

<sup>155</sup> Barker, 2018: 130-131.

<sup>156</sup> Barker, 2018: 304-305.

“So he [Mynes] was being married, far younger than men expect to marry, though no doubt he’d already worked his way round the palace women and thrown in a few stable lads for relish along the way.”<sup>157</sup>

Briseis also understands how the slave system works during wartime. For example, when Briseis and the other noble women are being marched into the Greek camp for selection, she pinches the girl next to her to tell her to stop crying.<sup>158</sup> Briseis knows that the men will choose only the most attractive women as bedmates for the Greek nobles, while the rest of the women will be forced into hard labour in the camp, victim to any soldier who wants them. Knowing this, she tries to stop the girl from crying so that she will look pretty enough to be chosen as bedmate.

Briseis also shows an incredibly strong will. This is demonstrated after Lyrnessus is sacked and the soldiers corner the royal women at the top of the citadel: despite knowing full well of her future as a sex slave in the Greek camp and the dangers she will face, Briseis faces Nestor and the Greek soldiers with regal countenance, something which Nestor also sees:

“Then a white-haired man walked forward and introduced himself as Nestor, King of Pylos. He bowed courteously and I thought that, probably for the last time in my life, somebody was looking at me and seeing Briseis, the queen.”<sup>159</sup>

Briseis is strong enough to hide her fear and grief from the Greeks, even while the women around her openly grieve, and despite seeing women raped and committing suicide in front of her.<sup>160</sup> Moreover, as the novel continues, Briseis slowly recovers from her initial shock, showing resilience despite the repeated rapes she is forced to endure from Achilles and, later on, Agamemnon.

Another characteristic which Barker’s Briseis often expresses, is kindness. For example, when Briseis and the other noble women are taken from Lyrnessus and placed in a hut in the Greek camp prior to being allotted, Briseis comforted a young girl: “One girl, no more than twelve or thirteen

---

<sup>157</sup> Barker, 2018: 7 (my addition).

<sup>158</sup> Barker, 2018: 19.

<sup>159</sup> Barker, 2018: 17.

<sup>160</sup> Barker, 2018: 16-17.



years old, began to cry...I rubbed her back and she pressed her hot, damp face into my side.”<sup>161</sup> Briseis was also kind to others; she comforts Chryseis at various instances, for example, “Chryseis...got as far as the door, then turned and ran back to me. ‘Briseis, I’m so sorry.’ ‘Don’t be, I’ll be alright. Go on, go.’”<sup>162</sup>

The last characteristic which Barker gives Briseis is a somewhat manipulative nature. After Patroclus is killed by Hector and his body is brought back to Achilles’ camp, Briseis falls to her knees and clasps his feet as she begins to mourn his death. This is very similar to Homer’s description of Briseis’s lament. However, instead of lamenting vocally, Barker has Briseis quarrel with her own thoughts. The ‘voice in her head’ accuses her of using her lament for Patroclus as an opportunity to ensure her marriage to Achilles:

*“But that’s not the whole truth, is it? You didn’t just ‘remember’ he’d promised to make Achilles marry you, you made bloody certain everybody else remembered it as well. Especially Achilles...You were trying to arrange your marriage.”*<sup>163</sup>

Briseis initially denies this, but then admits that perhaps she did partly use her lament for that purpose. However she earnestly claims that she is truly upset by Patroclus’ death: “I knelt at Patroclus’ feet and I knew I’d lost one of the dearest friends I ever had.”<sup>164</sup> Briseis then is willing to marry the man who has raped her repeatedly and murdered her family, just so she could be a person again: a wife and not a slave.<sup>165</sup> Briseis in Barker’s novel, then, is a character of multiple facets, more complicated than her Homeric counterpart.

Barker initially places Briseis in a position of subordination and subjects her to objectification. Following Nussbaum’s seven points of objectification, as listed in the first half of this chapter, Barker’s Briseis fulfils all seven points as Homer’s Briseis does: instrumentality (point 1), denial of

---

<sup>161</sup> Barker, 2018: 20.

<sup>162</sup> Barker, 2018: 60 and 100-101.

<sup>163</sup> Barker, 2018: 212-213.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>165</sup> Barker, 2018: 93.

autonomy (point 2), inertness (point 3), fungibility (point 4), violability (point 5), ownership (point 6) and denial of subjectivity (point 7). The key difference in Barker's novel, however, is that Briseis overcomes objectification and gains subjectivity in various ways as the narrative progresses. In order to demonstrate this, I will first examine how Barker's Briseis fulfils Nussbaum's points of objectification before discussing the manner in which Briseis gains subjectivity.

At the beginning of the novel, point 1 (instrumentality) is fulfilled on several occasions. One of the first of these instances occurs when Briseis describes how her husband, Mynes, realising that she was not going to produce an heir, lost interest in her and engaged in sexual intercourse with a slave woman:

“...but he did his best, every night for months, toiling between my less-than-voluptuous thighs as willingly as a carthorse in the shafts, but when no pregnancy resulted he quickly became bored and reverted to his first love: a woman who worked in the kitchens...”<sup>166</sup>

To Mynes then, Briseis was a tool to be used for the purpose of child-bearing. Her mother-in-law, Maire, also saw Briseis as a child-bearing tool and quickly scorned her when she failed to produce a child.<sup>167</sup> Achilles, however, sees her as an instrument of sexual satisfaction. During her first night as a slave, Achilles rapes her: “He fucked as quickly as he killed...he'd finished and rolled off me to sleep...”<sup>168</sup> Then later in the novel, Briseis describes Achilles' behaviour in bed as “brisk, efficient, matter-of-fact use of my body to get relief”.<sup>169</sup> Agamemnon also views Briseis in the same manner. After Agamemnon is forced to return Chryseis and takes Briseis from Achilles, he rapes Briseis and spits in her mouth, seemingly for his own pleasure.<sup>170</sup> Briseis is also viewed as an instrument of honour, as shown during her first night with Achilles:

---

<sup>166</sup> Barker, 2018: 7.

<sup>167</sup> Barker, 2018: 7-8.

<sup>168</sup> Barker, 2018: 28.

<sup>169</sup> Barker, 2018: 45.

<sup>170</sup> Barker, 2018: 119.

“If his prize of honour had been the armour of a great lord he wouldn’t have rested till he’d tried it out: lifted the shield, picked up the sword, assessed its length and weight, slashed it a few times through the air. That’s what he did to me. *He tried me out.*”<sup>171</sup>

Achilles wanted to affirm that his prize of honour was worthy of him and parades Briseis at his table:

“My only real duty was to wait on Achilles and his captains at dinner. So I was on public view...then I remembered that I was his prize of honour, his reward for killing sixty men in one day, so of course he wanted to show me off to his guests. Nobody wins a trophy and hides it at the back of a cupboard. You want it where it can be seen, so that other men will envy you.”<sup>172</sup>

After Agamemnon declares that he will take Briseis from Achilles, the other generals Odysseus, Ajax and Antilochus arrive at Achilles’ hut in an attempt to calm him. Nestor tries to explain to Achilles that Agamemnon, due to his status as commander of the Greeks, felt that he was entitled to Achilles’ prize. Achilles firmly disagrees:

“Achilles’ reply was surprisingly measured. ‘What he did today broke all the rules. I fought for that girl. The army gave her to me...’”<sup>173</sup> He then goes on to say that Agamemnon did not have “the right to take another man’s prize of honour. It doesn’t belong to him; he hasn’t *earnt* it.”<sup>174</sup>

It is clear from this that Achilles, at this point of the novel, sees Briseis as an object he can use to prove how much he labours on the battlefield, as in Homer’s epic. Once Briseis is taken by Agamemnon, she is forced to attend to him and his captains during dinner, as she did for Achilles. In this instance, Agamemnon is using Briseis to flaunt his power over Achilles and the other men, thereby fulfilling point 1 once more:

---

<sup>171</sup> Barker, 2018: 28.

<sup>172</sup> Barker, 2018: 37.

<sup>173</sup> Barker, 2018: 108.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*

“I was useful, I suppose; I served a particular purpose. Men carve meaning into women’s faces; messages addressed to other men. In Achilles’ compound, the message had been: *Look at her. My prize awarded by the army, proof that I am what I’ve always claimed to be: the greatest of the Greeks.* Here, in Agamemnon’s compound, it was: *Look at her, Achilles’ prize. I took her away from him just as I can take your prize away from you. I can take everything you have.*”<sup>175</sup>

Point 2 (denial of autonomy) is obvious in Barker’s novel, as it was in Homer’s epic. The mere fact that Briseis is a slave means that her autonomy is stripped away. This is also explained by Nussbaum in a section of her article dealing with slaves as objects in which she states that slavery implies both instrumentality and denial of autonomy.<sup>176</sup> This lack of control is emphasised in Barker’s novel, for instance by the fact that Briseis herself is aware that Achilles controls her life: after she is enslaved, Briseis is left in a small room next to Achilles’ bedroom where she waits until Achilles summons her. Briseis soon realises that the door is unlocked and that she could get out at any time. She also realises, however, that Achilles and his men know this: “At last, I got up and went to the door. It wasn’t locked. Well, of course it wasn’t locked, why would they bother? They knew I had nowhere to go.”<sup>177</sup> Briseis did not possess autonomy in their view.

Point 3 (inertness, i.e. lacking in agency) is present in the way Achilles and the other Greek men initially view Briseis. Achilles believes that Briseis has no choice, and therefore no agency, regarding her sexual interactions with him nor her other duties as a slave. Likewise, Agamemnon, when Briseis becomes his slave, does not think that Briseis has any other option but to do as he commands her. It is important to note here that, while Nussbaum also includes lack of activity in her definition of inertness, neither Homer’s Briseis nor Barker’s Briseis lack activity (this activity does not signify freedom). They are both capable of engaging in many activities, such as, in the case of Homer’s Briseis, mourning for Patroclus and, in the case of Barker’s Briseis, preparing Achilles’ bath or engaging in interaction with the other slave women; the men, however, know that she does not have agency.

---

<sup>175</sup> Barker, 2018: 120.

<sup>176</sup> Nussbaum, 1995: 264.

<sup>177</sup> Barker, 2018: 25.

Point 4 (fungibility, i.e. being exchangeable) is demonstrated by the manner in which Achilles and Agamemnon treat Briseis. After Briseis is taken away by Agamemnon's heralds, Achilles goes for a walk on the beach to clear his thoughts and contemplates the situation. Barker presents this scene using an external third-person narrator: "Well, worried or not, Patroclus is going to have to wait. He's not ready to go back yet, not ready to face the empty bed. Which needn't be empty — god knows, he's got plenty of girls."<sup>178</sup> Achilles argues that Briseis is replaceable, and therefore fungible, something which occurs in Homer's epic; however, as I will discuss later, Barker changes this in the latter part of her novel.

Violability, point 5 in Nussbaum's list, is more explicit in Barker's novel than in Homer's *Iliad* and is demonstrated a number of times. Firstly, in the beginning of the book, after Lyrnessus has fallen, Briseis and the other women are herded roughly onto the Greek ships "by men wielding the butt ends of their spears",<sup>179</sup> thereby indicating the men's disregard of, what Nussbaum calls, boundary-integrity of Briseis and the women.<sup>180</sup> Secondly, once Briseis and the women are taken from Lyrnessus by ship to the shores of Troy, they are inspected by some of the Greek men in an abusive and intrusive manner:

"We were lined up outside the huts and inspected. Two men, who never spoke except to each other, walked along the line of women, pulling a lip here, a lower eyelid there, prodding bellies, squeezing breasts, thrusting their hands between our legs."<sup>181</sup>

Thirdly, Briseis is abused and brutally beaten by Agamemnon after he takes her from Achilles' hut. As described above, Agamemnon, after raping Briseis, spits into her mouth which is an obvious abuse of boundary-integrity. Furthermore, after Agamemnon takes Briseis from Achilles, and the Greek side begins to suffer due to Achilles' absence, Agamemnon attempts to persuade Achilles to return to battle and sends Briseis with Odysseus to Achilles' hut as part of the persuasion attempt. When the attempt fails and Briseis returns to Agamemnon's hut, he viciously beats her up in an

---

<sup>178</sup> Barker, 2018: 117.

<sup>179</sup> Barker, 2018: 17.

<sup>180</sup> Nussbaum, 1995: 257.

<sup>181</sup> Barker, 2018: 19.

attempt to blame her for the failure, something which Patroclus notices the day afterwards: “As she lifted her head, he saw she had a split lip. Her face and neck were covered in bruises.”<sup>182</sup> It is clear, therefore, that Briseis is seen as violable by Agamemnon and some of the Greek men.

Point 6 on Nussbaum’s list, ownership, is obvious as Briseis’ role as a slave entails ownership. This is emphasised further by Achilles’ comments regarding how he earned her in battle, a scene which I described earlier.

Point 7 on Nussbaum’s list, denial of subjectivity, is also seen throughout Barker’s novel in the way some of the men neglect to acknowledge her feelings, thoughts or perspective. For example, when Agamemnon announces that he will take Briseis away from Achilles, Patroclus asks Achilles if he wishes to see Briseis: “Patroclus cleared his throat. ‘Would you like me to send for Briseis?’ ‘What for a farewell fuck?’ No, thanks.”<sup>183</sup> As in Homer’s work, Achilles seems to think only of himself and his own feelings and perspective, he does not bother to think about how Briseis may feel or how this change may affect her. Another instance occurs during the scene in which Agamemnon, realising that the Greeks need Achilles to fight in order to beat the Trojans, discusses with Odysseus and Nestor how best to persuade Achilles to rejoin the war. During the discussion, Odysseus wonders aloud whether Achilles will want Briseis back now that Agamemnon has slept with her: “‘If he still wants her,’ Odysseus said... ‘Well, isn’t she a bit shop-soiled? I’d have thought she was?’”<sup>184</sup> Agamemnon also tells Odysseus to take Briseis with her as a physical persuasion tactic: “‘Oh, and the girl,’ Agamemnon said. ‘Take her with you.’ He cupped both hands against his chest and hoisted them up. ‘Show him what he’s been missing.’”<sup>185</sup> Both of these comments are made in front of Briseis and indicate that both men believe that her feelings and opinions are non-existent or meaningless. They deny her any kind of subjectivity. Achilles also denies her subjectivity in the persuasion scene: Odysseus brings Briseis into the hut during his attempt to persuade Achilles to return to war and tells Achilles that Agamemnon is willing to swear that he did not ever touch Briseis. Achilles however replies in a brutal manner: “A moment later, he turned to Odysseus. ‘Tell

---

<sup>182</sup> Barker, 2018: 179.

<sup>183</sup> Barker, 2018: 102.

<sup>184</sup> Barker, 2018: 145.

<sup>185</sup> Barker, 2018: 146.

him he can fuck her till her back breaks. Why would I care?’”<sup>186</sup> Once again, this comment shows that Briseis’ subjectivity is denied as her feelings are not acknowledged or deemed, in any way, important.

All seven points of objectification, as set down by Nussbaum, are therefore present in Barker’s novel. I will now turn to the various ways in which, I believe, each of these seven points are overcome. In my opinion, one of the main ways Barker slowly rids Briseis of objectification is through her relationships with Achilles and Patroclus who both view Briseis, at varying points throughout the novel, as someone possessing subjectivity. I argued earlier that Achilles initially objectifies Briseis, along with Agamemnon and Odysseus, however, I believe that Achilles’ view of Briseis begins to change as the narrative progresses and, likewise, Briseis’ view of Achilles changes as their relationship progresses. I will now analyse their evolving relationship chronologically in order to determine which points of objectification are overcome.

At the start of the book it is clear that Briseis thinks of Achilles as a skilled but brutal warrior: “Great Achilles. Brilliant Achilles, shining Achilles, godlike Achilles...we called him ‘the butcher’.”<sup>187</sup> After she is captured and selected for Achilles, Briseis describes her rape at Achilles’ hands in an almost detached but powerful manner: “He wasn’t cruel...He fucked as quickly as he killed, and for me it was the same thing. Something died in me that night.”<sup>188</sup> She also pointed out that Achilles was simply ‘trying her out’ just like a warrior would try out prized armour he had won in battle.<sup>189</sup> It is important to note here that Briseis is not justifying Achilles’ actions, the tone of her narration is clear about that, but rather she is pointing out the cruel reality of her rape, something which Homer neglects completely. Throughout the novel, it is clear that Briseis dreads her nights with Achilles and initially greatly despises him. On his part, Achilles at first seems relatively indifferent towards her, objectifying her and treating her like any other sex-slave. However, their relationship changes when Briseis comes into the hut one evening smelling like seawater and which

---

<sup>186</sup> Barker, 2018: 156.

<sup>187</sup> Barker, 2018: 3. An interesting point to note here is that the German author Christa Wolf, in her novel *Kassandra* (1983), also describes Achilles in what may be considered negative terminology, using names such as the ‘beast’ or ‘brute’.

<sup>188</sup> Barker, 2018: 28.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*

eventually leads to the gradual reversal of point 1: several weeks into her enslavement, Briseis is no longer as detached to her ongoing rape as before but is now depressed and suicidal.<sup>190</sup> After she unsuccessfully tries to drown herself in the ocean, Briseis returns to the hut smelling of seawater, and Achilles, as he climbs into bed with her, reacts in an unexpected manner. His normally fast and efficient method to physically satisfy himself morphs into desperate and passionate sex. Yet, Achilles simultaneously expresses strange infantile desires, such as suckling her breasts as an infant would and lashing out when he does not receive any milk, much like a baby lashes out when it struggles to suckle:

“...this wasn’t a man making love to a woman — this was a starving baby...he pummelled my chest with his clenched fist and then, restraining himself, began stuffing wet strands of my hair into his mouth...he had that glazed, booby-drunk expression of a baby full of milk.”<sup>191</sup>

From then on, Achilles is constantly passionate and almost violently sexual in bed, no kinder than before: “...passion, but no tenderness...as if he hoped the next fuck would kill me.”<sup>192</sup> Achilles’ change in attitude towards Briseis is due to his association of Briseis with his mother, Thetis the sea goddess, and this is triggered when Briseis comes back smelling like the ocean. Patroclus also claims that Achilles is reminded of his mother when he sees Briseis.<sup>193</sup> Barker portrays a complicated relationship between Thetis and Achilles, seemingly both loving and harmful. Despite having been abandoned by Thetis at a young age, Achilles goes down to the sea every day in the hope that she will visit him, which she occasionally does. This need for his mother is converted into a bizarre desire for Briseis, a desire which, while being still very physical, now has a certain emotional connection. This new emotional connection enables Achilles to view Briseis as more than an instrument of sex or honour. Briseis is now unique to Achilles and, because of this, her sole purpose as an instrument begins to change, and point 1 (instrumentality) is overcome. Achilles himself (through third-person narration), after Briseis is taken away to Agamemnon, questions why

---

<sup>190</sup> Barker, 2018: 41.

<sup>191</sup> Barker, 2018: 42-44.

<sup>192</sup> Barker, 2018: 45.

<sup>193</sup> Barker, 2018: 92.



he misses her and tells himself that it is because Briseis was his prize, and that the pain of missing her is in fact his humiliation and not anything to do with his mother:

“And why? Because, one night, she came into his bed with the smell of sea-rot in her hair? Because her skin tastes of salt? Well if that’s all it takes, he can have the whole bloody lot of them thrown into the seas — they’ll all come back smelling of salt.”<sup>194</sup>

It is obvious to the reader however that Achilles is lying in an attempt to convince himself that he does not hold any emotional connection with Briseis, which has undoubtedly developed since this incident. This is further supported by his refusal to have sex with anyone else after she is taken away which leads to the overcoming of point 4 (fungibility, i.e. being exchangeable). Before he captured Briseis, he had another bedmate called Diomedes who was his favourite.<sup>195</sup> In the *Iliad*, Achilles brings Diomedes back into his bed when Agamemnon takes Briseis away, however, Barker changes this: Achilles only wants Briseis in his bed. It therefore seems as though Achilles has developed feelings for Briseis which are strong enough to reject other women. This demonstrates that Achilles no longer views Briseis as fungible as he finds himself unable to replace her with another woman. It is interesting to note that this complex aspect of their relationship is a complete invention by Barker and results in a different view of Achilles, his previously traditionally masculine and heroic persona somewhat dismantled by this ‘Freudian angle’.

In Part Three of the novel, after Patroclus dies and Achilles kills Hector, Briseis is summoned to Achilles’ room on the night of Patroclus’ burial. Achilles attempts to have sex with her but struggles to become aroused and eventually gives up, his grief for Patroclus not only preventing him from sleeping, eating and playing his lyre, but also leading to temporary sexual impotence. Briseis, out of fear of falling out of his favour, tries desperately to help, but is unsuccessful: “I didn’t care if another girl became the favourite. Only I thought the slave market had just moved a step closer...”<sup>196</sup> This image of a depressed, sexually impotent Achilles stands in direct contrast with the heroic, deeply masculine image Homer portrays in his epic. A significant change in their relationship occurs shortly afterwards as a result: two nights later, Briseis is surprised to hear that

---

<sup>194</sup> Barker, 2018: 117.

<sup>195</sup> Barker, 2018: 40.

<sup>196</sup> Barker, 2018: 239-240.

Achilles has summoned her once more to his room, however, she soon finds out that it is not sex which he requires:

“Dreading the night, I sat on the bed and waited. But when, eventually he stood up it wasn’t to get undressed but to fetch a pair of scissors...handed me the scissors and held up the hacked-off ends of his hair. ‘Here,’ he said. ‘See what you can do with that.’”<sup>197</sup>

Briseis obeys, shocked and uncomfortable with how intimate this interaction was: “A strange feeling, touching him like that; in a way, more intimate than sex. I didn’t like it...”<sup>198</sup> While she cuts his hair, an image flashes through her mind: “him lying on the floor in a pool of blood with the scissors sticking out of his neck... When I raised my head, I saw him watching me. ‘Go on,’ he said. ‘Why don’t you?’”<sup>199</sup> Briseis, however, knows that she will be brutally killed if she tries to harm Achilles and instead silently returns to her work. This interaction signifies that their relationship is evolving into something more intricate: Achilles now views her as someone who is capable of making choices (in this case, either to kill him or not), and someone who possesses feelings and thoughts, thereby overcoming both points 3 (inertness, i.e. lack of agency) and 7 (denial of subjectivity).

The next stage of their relationship is an important example of the reversal of point 7 (denial of subjectivity): after Patroclus is killed, Achilles rages across the battlefield and kills Hector. He then proceeds to drag Hector’s body several times around the walls of Troy, mutilating it until it was just a mangled mix of bones and flesh. However, Hector’s body repairs overnight, seemingly with divine help, while marks seem to appear on Achilles’ face to signify the damage he afflicted on Hector. This leads to a cycle of revenge and violence as Achilles continually mutilates Hector’s body. After some time, Priam manages to sneak into Achilles’ camp and asks for the body. Achilles reluctantly agrees. Although the duty of washing and preparing the dead for cremation usually belongs to the women, Achilles helps Briseis wash and prepare Hector’s body, much to her surprise,

---

<sup>197</sup> Barker, 2018: 251. Achilles had cut pieces of his hair off for Patroclus’ funeral. The loss of hair during a mourning period was part of the standard mourning procedure, although this was usually through one pulling at their hair during lamentation or while in distress. The use of scissors in Barker’s novel is therefore highly anachronistic.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>199</sup> Barker, 2018: 252.

and even sends Alcimus and Automedon (his heralds) away. While they wash Hector's body, Achilles begins a conversation with Briseis concerning the possibility of a ransom for Priam, claiming that the Trojans would give him anything he asked for. Briseis starts to object but stops herself, realising that she is speaking out of place as a slave, however Achilles tells her to speak her mind:

“‘How much do you think the Trojans would pay to get their king back?’...I just shook my head.

‘Anything. Absolutely *anything*.’

‘But you’ve already got...’

“He waited. ‘No, go on.’

‘You’ve already got a king’s ransom. For Hector.’”<sup>200</sup>

Achilles goes on to claim that he could hold Priam hostage and demand Helen for himself, which the Trojans would readily agree to due to their hatred for Helen and love for Priam. However Briseis argues that Achilles would not do so as she is aware that Achilles is conscientious of the courtesies owed to a guest. Achilles agrees. Briseis, aware that their conversation is unusual for a master-slave relationship, notices that something between them has changed: “After that, the work went on in silence, though the quality of the silence had changed.”<sup>201</sup> It can be seen here that by engaging Briseis in conversation, Achilles accords her a certain degree of subjectivity.

The next change in their relationship demonstrates the overcoming of points 2 (denial of autonomy), 3 (inertness, i.e lack of agency) and 7 (denial of subjectivity): once Hector's body is ready to be taken back to Troy, Briseis sneaks into Priam's cart while Achilles and Priam share a parting drink in the hut. She hopes that she would be able to escape to Troy and be with her sister Ianthe. However, Briseis soon decides to abandon this plan when she realises that her fate would be no better when Troy fell, which was certain now that Hector was dead, and that she would become a slave once again. Briseis returns to Achilles' hut where he is surprised to see her return, and she is equally surprised that he did not try to stop her from leaving. Briseis' actions in this scene demonstrate not only that she possesses agency and autonomy, in that she made certain choices and

---

<sup>200</sup> Barker, 2018: 273.

<sup>201</sup> Barker, 2018: 274.

attempted to gain control over her own life, but that Achilles now views her as possessing autonomy and agency as well. Achilles is surprised to see that Briseis willingly returned to the Greek camp, and to him, and asks her why she had returned: “Then he said, casually — only it wasn’t casual — ‘Why did you come back?’”<sup>202</sup> Briseis then wonders why he did not try to stop her from leaving: “He did know...but then I thought: *If you knew I was on the cart, why didn’t you stop me?*”<sup>203</sup> This implies that Achilles acknowledged that Briseis had made the choice to escape and, seemingly thinking outside of his own perspective, both accepted her decision to leave and wanted to know why she came back, indicating that he views her as having an individual perspective, that is, possessing subjectivity. Achilles then gestures to her to eat with him, and it becomes obvious that their relationship has evolved into a kind of companionship, one which seems to be moving closer to the relationship Briseis had with Patroclus: “We ate and drank in silence, but I sensed the atmosphere had changed...this was no longer, straightforwardly, a meeting of owner and slave. There was an element of choice.”<sup>204</sup>

In the following scene, points 5 (violability) and 6 (ownership) are overcome: during the eleven-day truce between the Greeks and the Trojans, Briseis tells Achilles that she is pregnant with his child, knowledge which she originally chose to keep from him (yet another example of Briseis’ agency), and this knowledge (Briseis is forced to tell him when he discovers her vomiting outside the hut) instantly forces him to question his previous desire for death in battle.<sup>205</sup> Achilles, however, is aware of his fated death, and arranges to have her married to Alcimus so that she would not be taken by a random soldier after he dies. He also finally shows her some kindness:

“‘It’s for the best. He’s a good man.’ And then, perhaps noticing how shocked I was, he relented a little, taking my chin between his thumb and forefinger and tilting my head. ‘He’ll be kind to you. and he’ll take care of the child.’”<sup>206</sup>

---

<sup>202</sup> Barker, 2018: 291.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>204</sup> Barker, 2018: 291-292.

<sup>205</sup> Barker, 2018: 297 and 302.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*

This seems to contradict his earlier rough sexual behaviour and may imply that he no longer views Briseis as something which he finds acceptable to abuse, that is, Briseis is no longer violable. Although, it is clear that this is largely because she is carrying his child, I believe that it also as a result of their evolving relationship. Achilles also orders Alcimus to take Briseis to his father's house in Phthia so that the child could grow up in the safety of his homeland.<sup>207</sup> In addition, by marrying her to Alcimus, Achilles technically frees her from slavery. Although Briseis is still expected to stay with Alcimus and go back to Achilles' homeland, she no longer is a slave and Achilles' ownership officially falls away. Barker's Achilles gives Briseis what her Homeric counterpart was denied: security and stability. Briseis knows this, and it appears as though both parties are aware of the gradual evolution of their relationship.

The following scene reveals the full extent of their evolved relationship and confirms the notion that Briseis is no longer seen as violable by Achilles. After Achilles' death, Briseis sits in their bedroom and suspects that Achilles' spirit is watching her from the underworld through the mirror behind her:

“...I was tempted to get up and throw a sheet over the mirror, because if ever a spirit was strong enough to make the journey back from Hades it was Achilles. But in the end I decided to leave it uncovered. Even if he did come back, I knew he wouldn't hurt me.”<sup>208</sup>

Through their interactions and conversations, a sense of trust and understanding had developed between them, something which was cemented by the conception of their child. This evolution of their relationship is due to Barker's inventions regarding a more vulnerable side of Achilles, such as his infantile desires and his sexual impotence, something only Briseis sees. I also argue that Patroclus' influence over Achilles, due to their intensely intimate and deep bond, prompts Achilles to view Briseis in a similar manner as Patroclus does (which I will discuss a bit later). This narrative journey through the relationship between Briseis and Achilles is completely neglected by Homer, and audiences of the *Iliad* are ignorant of Briseis' feelings and thoughts about Achilles. Barker, by inventing this complex, constantly evolving relationship, exposes her readers to the various nuances of their relationship, never avoiding the brutal reality of their master-slave relationship nor giving

---

<sup>207</sup> Barker, 2018: 302-308.

<sup>208</sup> Barker, 2018: 309.

Briseis or Achilles one-dimensional attitudes towards each other. Briseis' relationship with Achilles therefore aids in the overcoming of all seven points of objectification.

Briseis' relationship with Patroclus also aids the overcoming of her objectification and reclamation of subjectivity, and their relationship is far closer than Briseis' relationship with Achilles. Barker, for the most part, depicts Patroclus as Homer describes him: someone who is kind. When Briseis arrives in the Greek camp, Patroclus is the first and only man to be truly kind towards her, bringing her food and wine while she waits to be summoned by Achilles in the inner room, and introducing himself while simultaneously trying to reassure her. What is also significant is that Patroclus immediately uses her name when speaking with her, while the others mostly address her as 'You', 'Girl', or do not address her at all. Thus when Patroclus brings her food and water, the first word he utters is Briseis' name:

“A tall man — not Achilles — came into the room carrying a tray with food and wine. ‘Briseis?’ he said. I nodded. I didn’t feel like anything that might have a name. ‘Patroclus.’ He was pointing to his chest as he spoke...”<sup>209</sup>

Here, Briseis notes that she does not feel like something which has a name, implying that she herself does not feel as though she is a person. It is all the more important then that Patroclus immediately begins countering such a feeling by using her name when he speaks with her, and does so repeatedly. In all their future conversations, he consistently uses her name and avoids objectifying her where possible. Patroclus engages multiple times in conversation with Briseis and always listens to her rather than simply talk at her.<sup>210</sup> This, I believe, helps Briseis overcome point 1 (instrumentality) of her objectification.

Briseis also learns from Iphis that Patroclus is a kind man: “She knew she was lucky to have been given to Patroclus, who was always kind. I noticed how gentle he was with her...”<sup>211</sup> Unlike Achilles, who is brisk and brutally passionate and only somewhat kind (when he nears his own

---

<sup>209</sup> Barker, 2018: 23-24.

<sup>210</sup> See Barker, 2018: 70-73, 91-93, 160 and 179-181 for all the conversations which occur between Briseis and Patroclus.

<sup>211</sup> Barker, 2018: 39.

death), Patroclus seems to treat all the slave women kindly. Briseis is initially suspicious of Patroclus' kindness, but soon begins talking to him: "...I often, as my wariness started to wear off, talked to Patroclus...he found me crying and told me not to worry, he could make Achilles marry me."<sup>212</sup> Over their many conversations Briseis finds herself forming a bond with Patroclus, something which is strengthened by their association with Achilles. In the following scene, point 7 (denial of subjectivity) is overcome: during their first significant conversation, which occurs a short while after the start of the plague, Patroclus reveals that he is kind to her because he knows what it is like to lose everything and become Achilles' 'toy'. Briseis initially scorns the idea that Patroclus' position is the same as hers but soon finds out that it is more similar than she thought: Patroclus was essentially given to Achilles when he was exiled from his home, similar, if not with the same expectations, to the way she was given to Achilles.<sup>213</sup> Both Briseis and Patroclus were taken away from their homes and forced into an unequal relationship with Achilles. This scene demonstrates that Patroclus views Briseis as someone with subjectivity as he is able to see and understand her perspective and feelings.

Furthermore, Patroclus also attempts to persuade Achilles into reducing his objectification of Briseis by, for example, asking Briseis and Iphigeneia to join them in Achilles' room, and giving them sweet wine to drink, much to Achilles' surprise, thereby forcing Achilles to be in Briseis' presence without viewing her simply as a sexual object.<sup>214</sup> The overcoming of point 5 (violability) is seen when Patroclus challenges Achilles' authority for Briseis' sake: after Odysseus tries to persuade Achilles to rejoin the war, and Achilles brutally tells Odysseus that Agamemnon can abuse Briseis however he wants, Patroclus angrily chastises Achilles for treating Briseis harshly, indicating that he does not view Briseis as violable and that he wants Achilles to share the same view.

The last interaction between Patroclus and Briseis which I will discuss demonstrates the overcoming of points 2 (denial of autonomy) and 3 (inertness, i.e. lack of agency): this interaction is the last meeting between them before Patroclus dies in battle. The day after Odysseus' failed attempt to persuade Achilles to rejoin the war, Patroclus is surprised to see evidence of

---

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>213</sup> Barker, 2018: 71-72. Patroclus is exiled from his home after he murdered his friend in a fit of rage. When he arrives at Phthia, Achilles' father, Peleus, gives him no other choice but to be Achilles' companion.

<sup>214</sup> Barker, 2018: 54.

Agamemnon's abuse of Briseis: "...he saw she had a split lip. Her face and neck were covered in bruises...he could see the red veins in the whites of her eyes, the fingermarks still developing on her neck."<sup>215</sup> They then continue to heal wounded men together before having a more intimate interaction: "At one point, they...found themselves face to face with nothing to say. Or nothing that could be said. He reached out and gently touched her face. 'What's all this about?'" Patroclus then tries to encourage her, telling her that things will change for her or, if they do not, she must make changes herself: "'You'll get your chance. One day. And when you do grab it with both hands.'"<sup>216</sup> Here, Patroclus encourages both Briseis' agency and autonomy when he tells her to grab onto any chance to change her life.

I must note here that, despite the affection and even respect Patroclus has for Briseis, Patroclus does not try to do anything or suggest anything be done about the way women are treated in wartimes. Anna Carey, in her review for the *Irish Times*, notes that the men in Barker's novel normalise slavery, rape and other abuse:

"...these things aren't seen as right or wrong, they just are. The men are not all brutal – Briseis comes to genuinely care for the kindly Patroclus. But not even the most decent of them would ever consider challenging the system, or thinking it might need to be challenged."<sup>217</sup>

Although Patroclus cares about the slave women, as seen through his interactions with Briseis and Iphis, he does not actively challenge the practice of slavery or sex-trade which occurs during periods of war, partly due to his own subordination to Achilles and the other men. In his last interaction with Briseis, it is clear that Patroclus believes that there is something wrong with such a system, but the best he can do is to encourage Briseis to take whatever opportunity she can get to change her current life. In addition, Patroclus does not try to ensure a secure future for his own bed-slave, Iphis. Although he treats her kindly while he is alive, engaging in conversation with her and clearly sees her as a person, he fails to ensure her protection after his death. With his influence over Achilles, Patroclus could have easily asked Achilles to keep her safe or even possibly free her after

---

<sup>215</sup> Barker, 2018: 179.

<sup>216</sup> Barker, 2018: 181.

<sup>217</sup> Carey, 2018: no page.



his death. Yet he leaves no such instructions, abandoning Iphis whom Achilles makes a prize in one of Patroclus' funeral games, eventually awarding her to another soldier called Diomedes.<sup>218</sup> Clearly then, Patroclus, despite how kind he is, is unable or unwilling to actually try to challenge the system. Nevertheless, Barker's Patroclus does greatly resist the idea of objectifying Briseis and instead encourages the reclamation of her subjectivity. Patroclus regards Briseis as a person with thoughts, feelings and intellect, someone with whom he can relate and confide in, as shown by their conversations. Aside from Achilles and possibly Iphis, Briseis is the only other person with whom Patroclus shares his personal thoughts and feelings. Every interaction between Briseis and Patroclus is invented by Barker, the only moment which Barker takes from Homer is Briseis' lament for Patroclus, which Barker shortens and changes into an internal monologue by Briseis. Barker's changes and inventions to the relationship between Briseis and Patroclus aids in the overcoming of points 1 (instrumentality), 2 (denial of autonomy), 3 (inertness, i.e. lack of agency), 5 (violability) and 7 (denial of subjectivity).

Briseis' subjectivity (and voice) in Barker's novel is further emphasised by the manner in which Barker writes her novel and handles Briseis as a character. While Homer's Briseis speaks once and appears three times in the epic, Barker's Briseis is the primary narrator. Through the use of first-person narration, Briseis' voice is heard clearest by readers of the novel as she speaks directly to her audience. Additionally, Briseis narrates in the past tense and therefore holds the position of controlling narrator as she describes events as she remembers them, thereby allowing readers to view her perspective directly. In addition, turning now to Wittig's theory of language and subjectivity, I argue that the use of first-person narration allows Barker's Briseis to "lay claim to universality", that is subjectivity.<sup>219</sup> This is due to the fact that first-person narration entails the use of the personal pronoun 'I', the use of which may lead to one becoming the subject of a narrative.<sup>220</sup> I also argue that, since Barker's novel is presented from Briseis' own point of view and hardly shifts from her perspective, Briseis does not fall victim to "parrot speech" (an aspect of Wittig's theory which I mentioned earlier).<sup>221</sup>

---

<sup>218</sup> Barker, 2018: 236-237.

<sup>219</sup> Wittig, 1985: 81.

<sup>220</sup> Wittig, 1985: 80.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*

Barker splits her novel into three parts with Part One being entirely narrated by Briseis. Part Two and Three include third-person narration focusing on Achilles and Patroclus and switches between third and first person narration intermittently, however the majority of the plot is told from Briseis' perspective. This structure establishes Briseis (according to Wittig) as the locutor, the subject of the narrative, while the use of third-person sets up Achilles and Patroclus in the position of the 'other' and in subordinate roles. I believe that, by writing the entirety of Part One from the perspective of Briseis, readers of Barker's novel are able to 'hear' Briseis' voice as the main narrator and locutor, and that this is aided by the use of 'I'. Even though there is an abrupt switch to third-person narration which focuses on Achilles and Patroclus, albeit for a short time, readers of the novel are still accustomed to Briseis as the main locutor, and are therefore inclined to view Achilles and Patroclus as the subordinate characters. Also, Adalaide Morris argues that narratives in which female protagonists follow a "gradual emergence of a unitary subjectivity" are usually "told in the autobiographical or pseudo-autobiographical first person singular."<sup>222</sup> She continues to say that the use of 'I' "enacts the crucial feminist shift from "she" who is object to "I" who experience myself as subject."<sup>223</sup> In a sense then, Barker has reversed Homer's androcentric structure in which men such as Achilles, Agamemnon and Hector were the focus and seen as the primary and dominating characters while the women were minor and supporting figures. Briseis and the other slave women in Barker's novel are now the main figures and dominant voices.

Aside from placing her in the role of primary narrator, Barker gives Briseis a voice by inventing interactions between Briseis and the other slave women, thereby creating scenes in which she may be the subject of the narrative. Iphis, Patroclus' bed-slave, is the first woman Briseis interacts with in the camp. Briseis recounts that they spoke of many things, although never about their lives prior to enslavement; those lives were over now.<sup>224</sup> Briseis also converses with the other women, such as Hecamede, Uza, Chryseis and Tecmessa, all prizes of various men. All of the slave women Briseis encounters have different personalities and varying opinions about their masters. For example, during one meeting between the women, some time after Briseis' enslavement, Briseis describes the relationship between Uza and Odysseus as straightforwardly sexual, with Odysseus rambling

---

<sup>222</sup> Morris, 1992: 13.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>224</sup> Barker, 2018: 39.

nightly about his wife, Penelope.<sup>225</sup> In contrast, Tecmessa claims that she is in love with her master, Ajax, and he with her. Briseis is unable to understand Tecmessa's feelings but concludes that it is due to the fact that Tecmessa bore Ajax's son. However, despite Tecmessa's claim that Ajax loves her, she is unable to hide the physical abuse he often inflicts upon her, claiming that it is not Ajax's fault.<sup>226</sup> These descriptions reveal the different coping methods employed by the slave women in the Greek camp: Tecmessa appears to be in denial of her true situation as a sex slave while Uza has become desensitised. Briseis, through her interactions with these women, not only brings their previously neglected narratives to the forefront, but, through her first-person narration, is able to provide her own perspective on these women which, in turn, allows her to establish her own subjectivity.

Barker also alters Homer's narrative a number of times, an act which I believe gains Briseis the reader's full attention. This is supported by Barker herself who explains in the interview with Greengrass that Briseis' narration brings the female perspective, and hers in particular, of the war to light: "*The Silence of the Girls* is a woman's view of battle... It is very much an assertion of women's perspective and women's values."<sup>227</sup> I will now examine a selection of these scenes.

The first scene begins with Agamemnon's heralds who come to take Briseis away from Achilles' camp in Part One of the novel. Agamemnon, having previously sent Chryses, Chryseis' father, away, now agrees to return Chryseis in order to stop the plague which is killing his men. However, he demands that Briseis must become his new bedmate in order to punish Achilles for challenging his authority earlier. Achilles almost fights Agamemnon in the arena but instead withdraws from battle angrily. This scene is one of the first scenes in the *Iliad*, and Barker follows the narrative relatively accurately until the verbal exchange between Agamemnon and Achilles in the arena is over. In the *Iliad*, after their exchange is over, Agamemnon orders Odysseus to take Chryseis back to her father while Achilles retreats to his camp. The Greek men cleanse themselves in the sea and Agamemnon's heralds come to Achilles' camp to take Briseis away. Patroclus gives Briseis to the men, and Homer then continues to describe Achilles' anguish and grief as he prays to his mother,

---

<sup>225</sup> Barker, 2018: 45-51.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>227</sup> Greengrass, 2019: no page.

Thetis.<sup>228</sup> Barker, after the scene in the arena, breaks away from Homer's narrative and focuses on Briseis: after Agamemnon announces his intention to take her, Briseis, in shock, wanders aimlessly around the camp, noticing women with signs of physical abuse. She wonders if any of these women "had been one of Agamemnon's girls, one of those he'd tired of and thrown out of his huts?"<sup>229</sup> Unlike in the *Iliad*, Barker is very clear that the reason behind Briseis' reluctance to leave Achilles' camp is her fear regarding Agamemnon's rough treatment.<sup>230</sup> This is further supported by an earlier description of a battered Chryseis and stories of Agamemnon's brutal desire for anal sex.<sup>231</sup> Briseis, after saying goodbye to Chryseis, waits anxiously alone in the room assigned to Iphis and herself: "My hands were at my face, fingers trying to work the numb and rubbery flesh into a more acceptable expression..."<sup>232</sup> While she waits in the room, she watches Nestor and Antilochus visit Achilles in his hut through a gap in the door.<sup>233</sup> This scene in which Nestor speaks to Achilles is invented by Barker and further demonstrates the author's attempt to allow readers to see Briseis' point of view. Nestor attempts to persuade Achilles to return to the fight but Achilles stubbornly refuses, claiming that Agamemnon's position of power did not give him "the right to take another man's prize of honour. It doesn't belong to him'; he hasn't *earnt* it."<sup>234</sup> Briseis does not hear the rest of their conversation as her attention is fixed only on the last part of Achilles' sentence: "Honour, courage, loyalty, reputation — all those big words being bandied about — but for me there was only one word, one very small word: *it*. *It* doesn't belong to him, he hasn't *earnt it*."<sup>235</sup> Wittig's argument that women need to become the subjects of their own narratives may be applied here as, although Briseis does not speak, her narrative interrupts the dialogue between Achilles and Nestor with her own first-hand observation, situating her as the subject of the narrative and, as the subject, Briseis draws the readers' attention towards *her* story.

---

<sup>228</sup> *Iliad*, 1. 305-355.

<sup>229</sup> Barker, 2018: 101.

<sup>230</sup> This fear is realised when Agamemnon, aside from raping her (which is something she expected), forces her mouth open and spits into it, see Barker, 2018: 119.

<sup>231</sup> Barker, 2018: 48, 60 and 64.

<sup>232</sup> Barker, 2018: 100.

<sup>233</sup> Barker, 2018:107-109.

<sup>234</sup> Barker, 2018: 108.

<sup>235</sup> Barker, 2018: 109.

The next scene occurs when Machaon assigns Briseis to assist in the medical tent with him on Ritsa's request. Due to the increasing number of wounded (as a result of Achilles' withdrawal from battle), Ritsa struggles to help Machaon by herself and asks him to allow Briseis to help her. This is a complete invention by Barker and a particularly important one as, through helping in the medical tent, Briseis is able to regain some subjectivity. While she gains medical skills from Ritsa and Machaon, Briseis describes herself as feeling "safe for the first time" and happy since she was brought to the Greek camp.<sup>236</sup> Machaon also soon recognises that Briseis has a talent for medicine and begins earnestly teaching her, which contributes to the reclamation of herself as a person. Through healing others, Briseis is able to become more than just a slave: "...that belief took me a step further away from being just Achilles' bed-girl — or Agamemnon's spittoon."<sup>237</sup> In a way then, this is the first activity Briseis chooses to do, which also allows her to reclaim some degree of agency. The following extract from this scene especially highlights Briseis' claim to subjectivity:

"...**I** loved the work, **I** loved everything about it...**I** loved the pestle and mortar, **I** loved the smooth hollow of the cup, **I** loved the way the pestle fitted into the palm of **my** hand as if it had always been there. **I** loved the jars and dishes on the table in front of **me**, **I** loved the smell of fresh herbs...**I** lost **myself** in that work — and **I** found **myself** too."<sup>238</sup>

It is not simply the number of personal pronouns Barker uses ('I', 'my', 'me' and the emphatic 'myself') which allow a claim to subjectivity, but it is also the way Barker has used them. This extract is purely focused on Briseis, her thoughts, her emotions and her being. This is the only moment in the entire novel in which Briseis expresses her love for something and, perhaps more importantly, it is the first and only time she claims to have found herself. Prior to her enslavement, Briseis was Mynes' wife and queen of his city, and after her capture, she was Achilles' bed slave, and then Agamemnon's. Here, however, she is able to become a skilled individual, a person separate from the men around her.

---

<sup>236</sup> Barker, 2018: 137.

<sup>237</sup> Barker, 2018: 139-140.

<sup>238</sup> Barker, 2018: 139-140. My emphasis.

Another moment in which Barker reinforces Briseis' subjectivity is during the negotiations for Achilles to return to war. Briseis narrates the heated conversation between Agamemnon, Nestor and a wounded Odysseus as she attends to them during supper. Here again, Barker shifts the narrative from the quarrelling men to Briseis. When Agamemnon claims he did not have sex with Briseis, both Nestor and Odysseus turn to look at Briseis and, unlike in Homer's epic,<sup>239</sup> the readers are able to understand what Briseis feels about this: "I felt the blood rush to my face, but went on staring stubbornly at the floor."<sup>240</sup> As soon as the decision is made, Briseis rushes to get ready to leave with Odysseus, aided by Ritsa. Briseis' emotions are a mixture of disbelief, homesickness and shock: "Instead, I felt like a corpse on its way to burial. I was still refusing to hope".<sup>241</sup> This feeling is only intensified when she realises that the necklace Odysseus gives her to wear before they leave belonged to her dead mother.<sup>242</sup> Thereafter, when Odysseus leaves her outside the hut while they negotiate with Achilles, Briseis likens herself to "a tethered goat" as she waits to find out her fate. She desperately takes comfort in her mother's necklace and her memories of her.<sup>243</sup> Barker then temporarily breaks Briseis' narrative by switching to third-person narration while Odysseus relays Agamemnon's offer to Achilles. This scene occurs in the *Iliad*, and Homer describes how Nestor, Ajax and Odysseus go to Achilles and relay Agamemnon's proposal to which Achilles replies in a long, eloquent speech of more than a hundred lines, rejecting the proposal. Barker alters this slightly by including Briseis in the scene: Briseis is brought into the hut once Odysseus tells Achilles about Agamemnon's proposal. Achilles, however, declines as he realises from looking into Briseis' eyes that Agamemnon did actually have sex with her and roughly tells Odysseus that Agamemnon can "fuck her till her back breaks. Why would I care?"<sup>244</sup> Shortly afterwards, the narration switches back to Briseis and she describes how she felt when Odysseus dragged her into the hut: "It had all happened so quickly: hauled from darkness in to light, stripped of my veil, displayed barefaced like a whore in the marketplace..."<sup>245</sup> Later that evening, Agamemnon blames Briseis for the failed

---

<sup>239</sup> *Iliad*, 9. 114-161.

<sup>240</sup> Barker, 2018: 144-145.

<sup>241</sup> Barker, 2018: 148.

<sup>242</sup> Barker, 2018: 148.

<sup>243</sup> Barker, 2018: 150.

<sup>244</sup> Barker, 2018: 156.

<sup>245</sup> Barker, 2018: 159.

negotiation and brutally beats her. Once again, Wittig's theory may be applied here as Barker has taken an androcentric scene from an androcentric text and changed it to make Briseis, a woman, the subject of the narrative by having her describe her perspective, something which Homer completely neglects throughout his work. Furthermore, although the shift from first-person to third-person in the above-described scene may seem to detract from Briseis as the narrative subject, I believe that the opposite occurs: since Briseis is the primary narrator, readers of the novel follow the narrative as she tells it and remain focused on her despite the switch to third-person.

Another reason behind my assertion that Briseis is the subject of the narrative for the entire novel is due to the parallel Barker sets up between Helen and Briseis in Part Two of her novel: after Briseis becomes Agamemnon's bedmate, she is ordered to serve wine at Agamemnon's table. During one of the dinners, she remembers one of her visits to Troy when she was a young girl and recalls talking with Helen whom she had grown comfortable with. Briseis was amazed at Helen's tapestries of the war whenever she saw them and described Helen as more brilliant than all the other weavers she had known, including the renowned women from Lesbos. Her tapestries depicted the Greeks, the Trojans and the brutality of the war: "Hand-to-hand combat, men decapitated, gutted, skewered, filleted, disembowelled..."<sup>246</sup> Yet Briseis notes that Helen herself is never depicted in her own tapestries. It is only now that Briseis is more mature and experiencing the horrors of the war for herself that she truly understands: "...the tapestries were a way of fighting back...she wasn't in them, I know she deliberately made herself invisible, but in another way, perhaps the only way that matters, she was present in every stitch."<sup>247</sup> Briseis also believes that Helen was using the tapestries to take control of her own narrative: "those tapestries were a way of saying: I'm here. *Me*. A person, not just an object to be looked at and fought over."<sup>248</sup> Barker makes a clear parallel between Helen taking control of her narrative through tapestry and Briseis taking control of her story in this novel (a parallel which is further emphasised by their positions as captured women and causes of conflict). Barker, by making this parallel, embeds Briseis into every word of the novel just as Helen is present in every stitch.<sup>249</sup> Helen's absence from her own tapestry is also shown in Homer's *Iliad*

---

<sup>246</sup> Barker, 2018: 129.

<sup>247</sup> Barker, 2018: 130-131.

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>249</sup> My sincere gratitude to Professor Johan Jacobs for bringing this point to my attention, UKZN: 2019.

although it is not specifically noted, instead Homer emphasises her role as the cause of the war.<sup>250</sup> This is a good example of the androcentric nature of Homer's work which is then transformed into a female-centric narrative by Barker. Wittig's theory is once again relevant: Briseis takes control of a language previously appropriated by men and makes herself the subject of her own story, a 'universal' presence throughout the narrative.

Briseis also regains a certain degree of autonomy in a scene which occurs shortly after Achilles' death: Troy is sacked and the Greek ships are ready to leave. Alcimus, to whom she has been married as mentioned earlier, comes to fetch Briseis, who soon discovers that her position as Alcimus' bride (affirming a certain degree of autonomy). When she tries to see Achilles' burial mound before she leaves, she is stopped by a guard: "I started walking the other way...but one of the guards raised his spear..."<sup>251</sup> Another guard then shouts: "'*Oi!*...What do you think you're doing? That's Alcimus' *wife*.' And, immediately the spear was lowered."<sup>252</sup> As discussed earlier in my discussion regarding Briseis's relationship with Achilles, now that Briseis is married, she is no longer a slave to be passed from man-to-man, but a wife once more. Ultimately, Briseis still belongs to a man and would not be able to simply walk away, but now possesses the same degree of freedom available to any wife at the time.

On the last page of the novel, Briseis wonders what people would think of the Trojan War in the years to come and believes that they would prefer not to focus on the "massacres of men and boys, the enslavement of women and girls...a rape camp", but rather they would focus on the glory of Achilles or embellish a love story around him. The novel ends with Briseis claiming that "not so long ago, I tried to walk out of Achilles' story — and failed. Now, my own story can begin."<sup>253</sup> Briseis has at last accepted Achilles' role in her life and now believes in a future for herself. Although Briseis claims Achilles' story has ended and hers has begun, she can never truly be free of Achilles; the person who, however cruel or kind, wittingly or unwittingly, helped create her story. Moreover, their child (another invention by Barker which I mentioned earlier) will be a constant reminder of Achilles. The crucial point here, in my opinion, is that instead of Briseis being a part of

---

<sup>250</sup> See *Iliad*, 3. 125-128.

<sup>251</sup> Barker, 2018: 322.

<sup>252</sup> Barker, 2018: 322.

<sup>253</sup> Barker, 2018: 324.



Achilles' story, he is now a part of hers. Briseis has control over what part Achilles will play in her life and how his child will form a part of that. Briseis has become the true subject of her own narrative, has achieved full subjectivity, and finally has her own voice.

My discussion of Briseis' voice would be incomplete without analysing the issue of 'silence' in both the ancient and modern works. In the *Iliad*, Briseis, although she does speak, speaks once only and in far fewer lines than any of the men. Outside of her short lament, Briseis is a shadow in the epic, silent and flanked by men whose importance hides her from view. Similarly, the other captured women in the Greek camp are completely silent: Hecamede, captured from Tenedos, does not speak at all and is only seen once in the *Iliad*, serving Nestor, her master, and Machaon a medicinal drink.<sup>254</sup> Iphis, taken from Scyros and given to Patroclus as his bedmate, is also completely silent and is described in one line as lying next to Patroclus on his bed.<sup>255</sup> Lastly, Chryseis, seemingly crucial due to her role as the cause of dissension among the Greeks at the beginning of the *Iliad*, is also given a silent role, appearing once when Odysseus leads her to her father.<sup>256</sup> Among all the eloquent speeches of Achilles, Agamemnon and Odysseus, the slave women, two of whom play significant roles as causes of conflict, are largely voiceless. Another silence present in Homer's work is the lack of detail regarding the suffering and experiences of the captured women. While Homer does describe the suffering of Andromache, Helen and Hecabe in great detail, he neglects the captured women in the Greek camp. This is further emphasised by the time spent by Homer detailing the suffering of the Greek men, such as Achilles and many other soldiers on the battlefield.

The issue of silence is very important in Barker's novel, most obviously in the title *The Silence of the Girls*. Barker herself notes, in a Penguin podcast interview with Katy Brand that the element in the *Iliad* which caught her attention the most was the stark difference between the grand and long speeches of Achilles and Agamemnon and the largely silent slave women.<sup>257</sup> Barker's choice of title refers directly to the captured slave women in the Greek camp. Furthermore, Barker includes a quote by Philip Roth from his novel *The Human Stain* (2000) in her novel's epigraph which instantly demonstrates the importance of silence and sets up Barker's purpose in her novel. Roth's

---

<sup>254</sup> Homer, *Iliad*, 11.624-635.

<sup>255</sup> *Iliad*, 9. 667.

<sup>256</sup> *Iliad*, 1. 439-446.

<sup>257</sup> Brand, 2018: 2.41-2.58.

quote involves a character who speaks to his class and tells them that he believes that European literature begins with a quarrel between two great men over a girl:

“‘You know how European literature begins?’ he’d ask, after having taken the roll at the first class meeting. ‘With a quarrel. All of European literature springs from a fight.’ And then he picked up his copy of *The Iliad* and read to the class the opening lines: “‘Divine Muse, sing of the ruinous wrath of Achilles...Begin where they first quarrelled, Agamemnon the King of men, and great Achilles.’” And what are they quarrelling about, these two violent, mighty souls? 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.”<sup>258</sup>

Barker elaborates on this in the podcast with Brand, stating that “that’s how it begins if you’re a man, if you’re a woman it begins with silence. That’s the silence I was trying to fill in.”<sup>259</sup> In addition, I also argue that the silence in Barker’s novel is actually highlighted through Briseis’ first-person narration. While Briseis does hold a number of conversations throughout the novel, much of the novel is told using Briseis’ ‘inner’ voice, thereby allowing Briseis to tell her story while simultaneously emphasising her silence.

The issue of silence is also often actively addressed throughout the novel and this is most clearly seen in the way Barker uses songs to highlight differences between the male voice and the female voice. The first time Briseis mentions songs is after Patroclus invites her and Iphis to join Achilles and himself in the tent in the evenings before bed.<sup>260</sup> Achilles routinely plays his lyre and sings songs while Patroclus, Briseis and Iphis sit listening silently:

“The songs were all about deathless glory, heroes dying on the battlefield or (rather less often) returning home in triumph. Many of these songs I remembered from my own childhood...Perhaps, at that age, I thought all the stirring tales of courage and adventure

---

<sup>258</sup> Roth, 2000, quoted in Barker, 2018: no page (epigraph).

<sup>259</sup> Brand, 2018: 3.12-3.20

<sup>260</sup> Barker, 2018: 54.

were opening a door into my own future, though a few years later...the world began to close in around me and I realised the songs belonged to my brothers, not to me.”<sup>261</sup>

Although still a child, Briseis was forced to realise that the songs men sang excluded women completely. Wittig’s theory of gendered language and subjectivity is relevant here as this is a clear example of androcentric language: “deathless glory” and “tales of courage and adventure” are all words pertinent to a man’s life during Briseis’ time, while women are excluded from the battlefield and public places, and ordered to keep to their ‘proper place’ indoors. Another instance in which Barker demonstrates the silencing of women through language is in a scene in which Briseis is working in the medical tent, just after Patroclus has dressed up as Achilles and taken the Myrmidons into battle. A few lightly-wounded men bring news to the tent that Patroclus and the Myrmidons have pushed the Trojans back to the gates of the city, and this news causes the injured men in the tent to start singing with joy. Briseis describes them as singing “[m]arching songs, sentimental songs about mothers and home, romantic songs about wives and sweethearts and... songs about Helen.”<sup>262</sup> This is the second time in Barker’s novel that the Greek men are singing, the first time is during the dinner after Achilles sacks Lyrnessus, when the Myrmidons sing a song in a joking manner for Achilles as they tease him about wanting to leave early to have sex with Briseis.<sup>263</sup> By creating these scenes in which the men sing songs, Barker incorporates and refers to, to a certain extent, the fact that Homer’s epic was sung, and importantly that it was sung by male bards. Of particular importance, however, is the second song they sing in the medical tent about Helen. It is by far the most brutal of songs in the novel, involving violent rape:

*“The eyes, the hair, the tits, the lips  
That launched a thousand battleships...  
Fuck her standing,  
Fuck her lying,  
Cut her throat and fuck her dying.  
When she’s dead but not forgotten*

---

<sup>261</sup> Barker, 2018: 56-57.

<sup>262</sup> Barker, 2018: 201 (my addition).

<sup>263</sup> Barker, 2018: 26.

*Dig her up and fuck her rotten.”*<sup>264</sup>

While it is unlikely that the Greek soldiers would actually engage in necrophilic acts, the point that Barker spearheads in this scene is the manner in which men treat women as objects to be used and abused, and the way in which men use their words to silence women. The men sing of cutting Helen’s throat and then raping her, an act which clearly symbolises the removal of Helen’s ability to speak. This same act of silencing is seen in the last two lines of the song in which they sing of raping her when she’s dead and unable to say or do anything. Wittig’s theory can again be applied here: the Greek men, through their songs, oppress and silence women, once more taking control of and using language to further reinforce a woman’s subordinate role in society. An interesting comparison may be made here between this song and the song the men sing about Achilles. In this scene, the Myrmidons hit the table with their fists to create a beat and begin singing:

*“Why was he born so beautiful?*

*Why was he born at all?*

*He’s no fucking use to anyone!*

*He’s no fucking use at all!*

*He may be a joy to his mother,*

*But he’s a pain in the arsehole to me!”*<sup>265</sup>

Both songs are sung when the men are in high spirits and the tone of the songs may be taken to be a humorous one. However, while both songs use vulgar language, the atmosphere which is created during the song about Achilles is one of playfulness and a sense of brotherhood, while the song about Helen contains clear undertones of malice and the desire for violence. It is evident, therefore, that the song about Helen demonstrates a desire to subjugate and silence women.

In addition, Briseis herself briefly contemplates the issue of men silencing women during a scene in which Briseis speaks to Tecmessa while Ajax and Achilles play dice (a scene I addressed earlier). Tecmessa explains to Briseis that Ajax suffers from terrible nightmares but that, when she asks him

---

<sup>264</sup> Barker, 2018: 202 (own italics).

<sup>265</sup> Barker, 2018: 26 (own italics).

about it, he brushes her off and tells her that “*Silence becomes a woman*”.<sup>266</sup> Briseis then contemplates the fact that she did not know a single woman who had not been indoctrinated in this very belief during her life.<sup>267</sup> Through this interaction, Barker simultaneously raises the issue of men silencing women and counteracts this by giving Briseis and Tecmessa voices so as to discuss this very issue. In this same scene, Barker contrasts songs by men with songs by women: Briseis first describes how Alcimus and Automedon play the lyre and the double flute while singing, making Achilles the happiest he had been since Patroclus had died. The songs were once again about battles and courageous heroes, songs which did not include women. But Barker then follows this with a woman’s song. Briseis describes how the son of Tecmessa and Ajax son becomes restless and Tecmessa begins to sing a lullaby to him, one that Briseis recognises as a song her mother would sing to her brother. All the men soon stop what they are doing and listen to her singing, lulled in a similar way as the baby, into contented silence:

“As Tecmessa went on singing, the men gradually fell silent and listened...I looked around the group. There they were: battle-hardened fighters every one, listening to a slave sing a Trojan lullaby to her Greek baby. And suddenly I understood something...I thought: *We’re going to survive — our songs, our stories. They’ll never be able to forget us. Decades after the last man who fought at Troy is dead, their sons will remember the songs their Trojan mother sang to them. We’ll be in their dreams — and their worst nightmares too.*” <sup>268</sup>

Tecmessa’s songs include everyone: women, men and children. Her song, the last song in the novel, stands in direct contrast with all the previous songs sung by the soldiers. While the soldiers sang songs which celebrated victories and heroic exploits by men, and excluded and subjugated women, Tecmessa’s song is a sweet lullaby, calming all who heard it. Importantly, Briseis claims that Tecmessa’s songs, and similar songs sung by the captured women, will be remembered by everyone for many years after the war is over because their sons — the half-Greek, half-Trojan babies — will carry these same songs with them everywhere, perhaps even onto the battlefield, effectively rendering a woman’s voice omnipresent. This is already seen to a certain extent by Achilles’ relationship with his mother who, although a goddess, is still a woman whom Achilles carries

---

<sup>266</sup> Barker, 2018: 294.

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>268</sup> Barker, 2018: 295-296.

everywhere with him. Following this same idea, the sons of these enslaved women may pass their mother's songs, and thus their voices, on to their own children, ensuring that the songs of women survive. In this way then, Barker demonstrates that, while men have their epic songs which celebrate heroic adventures, women too have their epic songs in their own way.<sup>269</sup>

Barker makes another reference to the silence of women in a scene in Part Two of the novel, after Agamemnon has taken Briseis away from Achilles to serve as his prize and sex slave: Agamemnon rapes Briseis and spits a large glob of phlegm into her mouth. Briseis then staggers away and vomits in disgust. I believe that this is another reference to the enforced silence of Briseis by Agamemnon. By spitting in Briseis' mouth, Agamemnon literally prevents her from speaking and therefore acts to strip her of her voice. This also strips her of subjectivity as Agamemnon once again demonstrates that he does not view Briseis as possessing thoughts or feelings. After this act, he orders her to serve wine during his dinner every evening, much as she did when she was Achilles' slave. Briseis notes that Agamemnon hardly summoned her to his bed after that as he claimed that she was clearly inferior to Chryseis, prompting her to ponder why he still wanted her around during dinner:

“Why, you may ask, would he want me to do that, when he so obviously couldn't bear the sight of me? I was useful, I suppose; I served a particular purpose. Men carve meaning into women's faces; messages addressed to other men.”<sup>270</sup>

This, therefore, implies that women are seen as silent carriers for men's messages to one another. A particularly poignant reference to the silencing of women occurs near the end of the book, after Achilles dies and the city of Troy has fallen. As mentioned earlier, Agamemnon demands the sacrifice of Polyxena over the tomb of Achilles in fear of Achilles' spirit exacting revenge on him, something which the other generals think is ridiculous as Achilles is dead and there is no sign of his spirit. Hecamede is asked to accompany Polyxena to Achilles' tomb by Nestor, since Polyxena's mother and sisters are not allowed to go with her. Hecamede then asks Briseis to come with her as she is struggling to go alone. After they had led Polyxena to Achilles' tomb, Polyxena suddenly began to speak:

---

<sup>269</sup> Johan Jacobs *per litteras*

<sup>270</sup> Barker, 2018: 120.

“...Polyxena got up, staggered forward...and began to speak... Perhaps they thought she was going to curse them...because she’d got no further than Agamemnon’s name when a guard seized and held her while another forced a strip of black cloth between her teeth and knotted it tightly at the back of her head. Her arms were pulled behind her and bound at the wrists. Shorn and trussed like that, unable to speak, she began to scream deep down in her throat, the sound a bull will sometimes make before the sacrifice.”<sup>271</sup>

The gagging of Polyxena is an obvious demonstration of a woman being silenced, and the use of the bull analogy further emphasises the objectification of women in Briseis’ time. Barker then challenges this act of silencing in a scene at the end of the novel: once the captured Trojan women are allotted to the various Greek generals, Alcimus tells Briseis that they need to leave soon now that everything is over. Before she leaves however, Briseis walks up to Achilles’ tomb in an attempt to say goodbye to Achilles and Patroclus. Reaching the tomb she gently turns Polyxena over:

“Bracing myself, I rolled her over on to her back. The deep gash in her throat made her look as if she had two mouths, both silent. *Silence becomes a woman*...Slowly, because the knot at the back of her head was snarled in her hair, I worked the gag loose and took it out of her mouth.”<sup>272</sup>

By gagging and sacrificing Polyxena, the Greeks have rendered her forever silent, their violent act seemingly creating another mouth yet one which, like her actual mouth, is incapable of speech. The act of Briseis removing the gag from Polyxena’s mouth symbolises the release of Polyxena’s voice, an act which parallels the release of Briseis’ voice now that she is free.<sup>273</sup>

As mentioned earlier, I believe that the absence of detail regarding the suffering and experiences of the captured women in the Greek camp is another way of silencing women in Homer’s epic. Barker tackles this issue several times throughout the book by juxtaposing the suffering of men with the suffering of women. This is highlighted in the first few pages of the book when Briseis

---

<sup>271</sup> Barker, 2018: 317.

<sup>272</sup> Barker, 2018: 322.

<sup>273</sup> Johan Jacobs *per litteras*

contemplates the poor treatment she received from her mother-in-law. She likens her life with Maire to a war:

“...I looked at Queen Maire and knew I had a fight on my hands. Only it was not just one fight, it was a whole bloody war. By the time I was eighteen I was a veteran of many long and bitter campaigns. Mynes seemed entirely unaware...but then in my experience men are curiously blind to aggression in women. *They’re* the warriors, with their helmets and armour, their swords and spears, and they don’t seem to see our battles...”<sup>274</sup>

By making this militaristic comparison, Barker reveals the previously silent battles women engage in. Briseis fights Maire in an attempt to retain her voice and exert control over the household, much like men fight to gain control over a battlefield. Here Barker fulfils Wittig’s theory: Briseis takes androcentric words such as ‘war’, ‘aggression’ and ‘battles’ and uses it to describe her own experience, thereby taking control of language and placing herself in a world she was previously excluded from.

Another poignant comparison of the suffering of men and women occurs during the scene in which Priam arrives in Achilles’ camp. Priam wishes to retrieve the body of Hector whom Achilles had killed and mutilated multiple times in revenge for the death of Patroclus. Briseis listens to Priam begging Achilles for his son’s body, and here Barker directly references Homer’s Priam as Briseis hears him claim: “*I do what no man before me has ever done, I kiss the hands of the man who killed my son.*”<sup>275</sup> Briseis is astounded by Priam’s act but then finds herself thinking about her own position: “*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.*”<sup>276</sup> Juxtaposed in this way, the reader acknowledges the suffering of Priam but realises that Briseis, and captured women like her, suffer far greater and longer than any conquered king or soldier. Cox and Theodorakopoulos, editors of *Homer’s Daughters: Women’s Responses to Home in the Twentieth Century and Beyond* (2019), note that Barker adapts this powerful and renowned passage from Homer in such a way that readers are confronted with the harsh reality of sexual violence during war. They go on to say that “Briseis

---

<sup>274</sup> Barker, 2018: 7.

<sup>275</sup> Barker, 2018: 267.

<sup>276</sup> *Ibid.*



breaks the ‘silence of the girls’ to offer a distinctive and unbearably moving account of how war is experienced by women — by the mothers, and the wives, and slaves of the warring men.”<sup>277</sup> This is therefore even more significant for those readers who are familiar with Homer’s text as Barker has taken a passage, which has been regarded as one of the most powerful passages from the *Iliad*, and adapts it to a female-centred narrative, thereby making the suffering of Briseis and women in general the subject of the novel.

Nearing the end of Barker’s book, after Achilles’ dies and Troy has fallen, the Greeks place all the captured Trojan women in a hut and, prior to Polyxena’s sacrifice, Briseis and Hecamede bring them food and drink. Briseis reveals their abused appearances in her narration: “Priam’s widow, daughters and daughter-in-law...Hair stringy, faces bruised, eyes bloodshot, tunics torn...”<sup>278</sup> She goes on to describe how Andromache sits blank-faced and in shock, having just lost her son whom Odysseus threw from the walls of Troy, but must nevertheless endure rape from her new master, Pyrrhus that same night: “Her only child dead, and tonight she was expected to spread her legs for her new owner...the son of the the man who’d killed her husband.”<sup>279</sup> While Briseis gazes at her, Achilles’ lament rings in her head, and this sets up the comparison:

“As I looked at her, I heard again...the last notes of Achilles’ lament...an infestation rather than a song, and I resented it. Yes, the deaths of young men in battle is a tragedy — I’d lost four brothers, I didn’t need anybody to tell me that. A tragedy worthy of any number of laments — but theirs is not the worst fate. I looked at Andromache, who’d have to live the rest of her amputated life as a slave, and I thought: *We need a new song.*”<sup>280</sup>

Barker, through Briseis’ first-person narration, describes in detail the suffering of the Trojan women and then explicitly compares their suffering with that of the soldiers, including Achilles and Patroclus. The argument that death is better than slavery resonates throughout the book and is something which Polyxena herself claims in an attempt to comfort her mother in the above-

---

<sup>277</sup> Cox & Theodorakopoulos, 2019: 4.

<sup>278</sup> Barker, 2018: 312.

<sup>279</sup> Barker, 2018: 313.

<sup>280</sup> Barker, 2018: 313-314.

described scene.<sup>281</sup> Barker draws a special kind of attention to Briseis' final five words in the quote above: "*We need a new song*" which is a direct reference to the epic songs sung about the Trojan war. Homer sings of heroic battles, dramatic sacrifices by the male heroes and great losses, but the enslaved women in his epic exist as objects in a sex trade and, at most, as largely silent causes of conflict. Barker, through Briseis' narration, has provided a new song for Briseis and the other enslaved women, taking them away from the sidelines and placing them, instead of the male heroes, on the frontline of the plot. Barker once again aligns with Wittig's theory by reclaiming a once male-controlled language and using it to make Briseis and the other enslaved women subjects, instead of objects, of the narrative.

It is clear then that Briseis from Homer's *Iliad* is objectified by the men around her, particularly Agamemnon and Achilles and, while her lament reveals some emotions and perspective, she is unable to regain subjectivity due to the shortness of the lament and the androcentric nature of the text. Furthermore, Briseis' character is only mentioned in direct association with a man, and her own development as a character or relationships with others are absent from Homer's work. I have argued that Barker in her novel *The Silence of the Girls* presents the narrative of the war from a female perspective, specifically Briseis', revealing the brutality and harshness of the lives of the slave women and addressing their silence in Homer's epic. Barker addresses those issues which Homer, perhaps intentionally, neglects: Briseis' rape at the hands of Achilles, her constant fear over her precarious situation, the harsh treatment she must endure from Achilles and Agamemnon and the complex relationships she forms with Achilles and Patroclus. Although she remains faithful to Homer's text and places Briseis in a position of objectification, by changing and inventing interactions and conversations, Barker allows Briseis to overcome her objectification and gain subjectivity. Briseis' subjectivity is then further highlighted through the language and structure which Barker uses, such as the use of the personal pronoun 'I', Briseis' first-person narration and the auto-biographical structure of the novel (as explained by Morris). Barker gives her a voice which resonates clearly throughout the entire narrative and, by building her relationship with Achilles and Patroclus in different ways, Briseis' subjectivity and voice is encouraged, established and expressed throughout the novel.

---

<sup>281</sup> Barker, 2018: 314.

## Chapter Three

### Lavinia: Vergil's *Aeneid*

This chapter focuses on the mythological female character Lavinia from Vergil's epic, the *Aeneid*, and her reception in Ursula K. Le Guin's novel *Lavinia* (2008). As with Briseis in Chapter One, Lavinia may be seen as a marginal character even though she plays an essential role in the epic: Lavinia is Aeneas' second wife and the mother of his second son, and the matriarch of the Roman people. Moreover, even though the *Aeneid* (especially the latter half) focuses on Aeneas' attempts to found his city, it is Lavinia's own name which is used to name this very city: *Lavinium*.<sup>282</sup> Despite this importance, I argue that Lavinia is a secondary and minor character. Information regarding her character is found primarily in Vergil's epic, but Livy also mentions her as Aeneas' wife in his work *Ab Urbe Condita*. In his work, Lavinia is the mother of Ascanius who is only born after Aeneas founds Lavinium.<sup>283</sup> For the purpose of this project, however, I will focus exclusively on Vergil's *Aeneid* as Le Guin has based her novel on the epic.

Throughout the entire *Aeneid*, Lavinia is silent and appears physically only four times.<sup>284</sup> She is mentioned eleven times by name,<sup>285</sup> and directly referred to nineteen times in other ways throughout the epic.<sup>286</sup> However, I believe that many of these references are indicative of a subordinate and adjunctive person. Todd (1980) notes that, before Book 7, Lavinia is referred to exclusively in conjunction with Aeneas' destiny, for instance in Book 2. 783 the ghost of Creusa, Aeneas' first wife, refers to Lavinia as "*regia coniunx*", not by name but simply as Aeneas' future royal wife, which places Lavinia in a position subordinate to Aeneas' destiny.<sup>287</sup> Moreover,

---

<sup>282</sup> Keith, 2000:50

<sup>283</sup> Livy, *Ab Urbe Condita*, 1. 11: "They founded a town, which Aeneas named Lavinium, after his wife. In a short time, moreover, there was a male scion of the new marriage, to whom his parents gave the name of Ascanius." trans. Foster, B. O. 1919.

<sup>284</sup> *Aeneid*, 7. 71-80, 11. 477-480, 12. 64-69 and 12. 604-607.

<sup>285</sup> *Aeneid*, 6. 764, 7. 71-77, 314, 359, 11. 479-480, 12. 17, 64-69, 80, 194, 605-606 and 12. 937.

<sup>286</sup> *Aeneid*, 2. 783, 7. 52, 54, 80, 96, 253, 268, 318, 319, 358, 360, 387, 389, 398, 11. 355 and 12. 27, 42, 70, 605.

<sup>287</sup> Todd, 1980: 27; *Aeneid*, 2. 783.

references made to the city of Lavinium, such as “*Laviniaque...litora*” in Book 1. 2, “*urbem et promissa Lavini moenia*” in Book 1. 258-259, “*ab...Lavini*” in Book 1. 270 and “*Lavinia...arva*” in Book 4. 236, are also indirect references to Lavinia which, once again, emphasise her subordination to Aeneas’ destiny. In stark contrast to Lavinia’s silence and few appearances, Aeneas, in Book 1 alone, speaks nine times and is mentioned twenty-nine times by name. As with Chapter One, my aim for this chapter has two main pathways: first, to examine the objectification of Lavinia in Vergil’s epic and whether this objectification is overcome in Le Guin’s novel. Second, to analyse how the use of language and the structure of each work contribute to the formation of, or denial of, Lavinia’s subjectivity, and therefore her ‘voice’. I will employ the same main theories as in Chapter One, namely Nussbaum’s theory of objectification and Wittig’s theory concerning language and subjectivity. In order to provide necessary context, I will now summarise what is known about Lavinia as she is depicted in Vergil’s *Aeneid* before moving on to my analysis.

The following passage in Book 7 provides some information about Lavinia:

<i>maius opus moveo. Rex arva Latinus et urbes</i>	45
<i>iam senior longa placidas in pace regebat.</i>	
<i>hunc Fauno et nympha genitum Laurente Marica</i>	
<i>accipimus; Fauno Picus pater, isque parentem</i>	
<i>te, Saturne, refert, tu sanguinis ultimus auctor.</i>	
<i>filius huic fato divum prolesque virilis</i>	50
<i>nulla fuit, primaque oriens erepta iuventa est.</i>	
<i>sola domum et tantas servabat filia sedes</i>	
<i>iam matura viro, iam plenis nubilis annis.</i>	
<i>multi illam magno e Latio totaque petebant</i>	
<i>Ausonia; petit ante alios pulcherrimus omnis</i>	55
<i>Turnus, avis atavisque potens, quem regia coniunx</i>	
<i>adiungi generum miro properabat amore;</i>	

“My labour’s greater too.

King Latinus had governed the tranquil	45
Farmlands and cities through years of prolonged peace. Now he was	
ageing.	

He was born Faunus's child by a Laurentine nymph named Marica,  
 So we are told. Now the father of Faunus was Picus, and he claimed  
 You, Saturn, fathered him and were ultimate source of his bloodline.  
 By gods' fate, though, Latinus had neither legitimate son nor 50  
 Any male stock. One rose; but was rooted out early in manhood.  
 Only a daughter sustained his home and position of power.  
 She was now ripe for a husband, now fully of age to be married.  
 Many a man from great Latium, indeed, from all over Ausonia,  
 Sued for her hand. And the loveliest suitor among them was  
 Turnus. 55  
 He'd strong ancestry backing his claim; and the queen of the Latins  
 Pushed to have him join the house as her son-in-law with quite amazing  
 Love."<sup>288</sup>

From the above passage it can be seen that Lavinia is the daughter of king Latinus of Latium, who has godly heritage from both his paternal and maternal side, thereby making Lavinia a direct descendant of the gods. Lavinia also had a brother at one point who seems to have died before reaching full manhood. Line 53 also implies that Lavinia is old enough to bear children, indicating that she is most likely twelve years old or older. Furthermore, Lavinia must possess good physical attributes as many suitors sought her hand in marriage, as indicated in line 54. The passage also introduces Turnus in line 55 who is "*pulcherrimus omnis*" and Lavinia's main suitor. He appears to be popular due to his ancestry and because Lavinia's mother, the "*regia coniunx*", is very eager to have him as a son-in-law. Lines 56-57 also introduce Lavinia's mother, although not by name. In addition, in a passage nearing the end of Book 6, Anchises, Aeneas' father, tells Aeneas that his future wife Lavinia will bear him a son, Silvius, whose descendants will be kings.<sup>289</sup> Lavinia's physical appearance is described only in Book 12 as having blond hair and rosy cheeks.<sup>290</sup>

---

<sup>288</sup> *Aeneid*, 7. 45-57. Trans. Frederick Ahl, 2007

<sup>289</sup> *Aeneid*, 6. 763-767.

<sup>290</sup> *Aeneid*, 12. 605-606.

For ease of reference, I will set out Nussbaum's seven points of objectification once more, as presented in Chapter One, which I will then use to demonstrate the objectification of Lavinia in the *Aeneid*:

1. Instrumentality: The objectifier treats the object as a tool of his or her purposes.
2. Denial of autonomy: The objectifier treats the object as lacking in autonomy and self-determination.<sup>291</sup>
3. Inertness: The objectifier treats the object as lacking in agency, and perhaps also in activity.<sup>292</sup>
4. Fungibility: The objectifier treats the object as interchangeable (a) with other objects of the same type, and/or (b) with objects of other types.
5. Violability: The objectifier treats the object as lacking in boundary-integrity, as something that it is permissible to break up, smash, break into.
6. Ownership: The objectifier treats the object as something that is owned by another, can be bought or sold, etc.
7. Denial of subjectivity: The objectifier treats the object as something whose experience and feelings (if any) need not be taken into account.<sup>293</sup>

Following these points of objectification then, I argue that the objectification of Lavinia fulfils points 1, 2, 3, 6 and 7: instrumentality, denial of autonomy, inertness, ownership and denial of subjectivity. It must be noted here that instrumentality and denial of subjectivity are the most prominent points regarding Lavinia's objectification. Proceeding in chronological order through the *Aeneid*, I will examine a selection of passages in which, I believe, these points of objectification can be seen most clearly.

---

<sup>291</sup> I understand autonomy to mean the ability to "be self-determining, to be in control of of one's own life", see Norman, 2005: 72.

<sup>292</sup> I understand an 'agent' as "(i) possessing a capacity to choose between options and (ii) being able to do what one chooses. Agency is then treated as a causal power." To have agency then is to possess the ability to make choices, subsequently act upon that choice and therefore to be able to cause a certain action, see Hornsby, 2005: 18.

<sup>293</sup> I understand subjectivity to refer to an individual's "particular perspective, feelings, beliefs and desires.", see Solomon, 2005: 900. I also argue that subjectivity is directly linked to having a 'voice', in that, in order for one to convey one's own "particular perspective, feelings, beliefs and desires", one must possess a voice.

The first selected passage occurs in Book 6, where Aeneas' father, Anchises, mentions Lavinia during Aeneas' trip to the underworld. I believe that point 1 (instrumentality) may be seen here: *Silvius... Lavinia coniunx educet silvis* ("Silvius...your wife, Lavinia, will rear him in the woods").<sup>294</sup> Lavinia is instantly connected with Aeneas via their son and nothing more is said about her. Anchises does not go into any detail about Lavinia herself or what kind of wife she may be, instead he spends the rest of his speech describing Aeneas' descendants, including Augustus himself. As a result, Lavinia is portrayed as an instrument to be used towards the fulfilment of Aeneas' destiny.

The next passage takes place in Book 7 where points 1 (instrumentality), 2 (denial of autonomy) and 7 (denial of subjectivity) may be seen. This scene is also Lavinia's first physical appearance. Lavinia is helping her father with a ritual when her hair catches fire, and it is proclaimed by the seers to be a divine portent:

*praeterea, castis adolet dum altaria taedis,  
et iuxta genitorem astat Lavinia virgo,  
visa (nefas) longis comprehendere crinibus ignem  
atque omnem ornatum flamma crepitante cremari,  
regalisque accensa comas, accensa coronam* 75  
*insignem gemmis; tum fumida lumine fulvo  
involvi ac totis Vulcanum spargere tectis.  
id vero horrendum ac visu mirabile ferri:  
namque fore inlustrum fama fatisque canebant  
ipsam, sed populo magnum portendere bellum.* 80

“Virgin Lavinia, standing alongside her father and kindling  
Fires on the altars with burning torches held in her chaste hands,  
Seemed, a bad sign from the gods, to catch the fire up in her trailing  
Tresses. Her headdress appeared to be wholly consumed by the  
crackling  
Flames. Royal hair was set blazing, her crown, with its jewelled

<sup>294</sup> *Aeneid*, 6. 763-767. Trans. Frederick Ahl, 2007.

insignia,

75

Blazing. Enshrouded with smoke, silhouetted in dull glare of orange,  
She, so it seemed, spread Vulcan's fire through the whole palace  
complex.

This was declared to be both a grim omen and marvellous vision:

Seers sang that she would shine in her fate and be famous in rumour.

But, for the people, a mighty war was the portent's prediction."<sup>295</sup>

80

In this scene, the seers declare that Lavinia's blazing hair is a portent of the gods,<sup>296</sup> yet the gods themselves do not speak directly with Lavinia, as they do with Aeneas and Turnus at other points in the epic. It appears then that the gods see Lavinia as an instrument to be used to convey their message to Latinus. Furthermore, Lavinia's autonomy is removed as she has no control over the fire which consumes her hair, and her lack of reaction to this incident further supports the notion that Lavinia herself does not believe that she can control the situation she finds herself in. In addition, Lavinia's silence throughout this scene, as well as her lack of physical reaction, indicates a lack of subjectivity as her perspective is absent.<sup>297</sup>

Lavinia is again objectified in a passage later on in Book 7 in which Latinus makes a crucial decision regarding Lavinia's life without her consent. In this passage, points 1 (instrumentality), 2 (denial of autonomy), 3 (inertness, i.e. lack of agency), 6 (ownership) and 7 (denial of subjectivity) are demonstrated:

*Talibus Ilionei dictis defixa Latinus*

*obtutu tenet ora soloque immobilis haeret* 250

*intentos volvens oculos. Nec purpura regem*

*picta movet nec sceptrum movent Priameia tantum,*

---

<sup>295</sup> *Aeneid*, 7. 71-80. Trans. Frederick Ahl, 2007.

<sup>296</sup> This is also an interesting parallel between Lavinia and two other women from epic literature: Helen and Dido. Keith (2000) explains that the divine portent is a destructive symbol as it foretells brutal war for the Latin people. The fire, Keith goes on to say, consuming Lavinia's hair may remind one of the flames which destroyed Troy due to Helen, and the flames from Dido's pyre which represent Carthage's destruction during the *Punic Wars* (Keith, 2000: 73).

<sup>297</sup> Woodworth, 1930: 179.



*quantum in conubio natae thalamoque moratur,  
 et veteris Fauni voluit sub pectore sortem,  
 hunc illum fatis externa ab sede profectum                      255  
 portendi generum paribusque in regna vocari  
 auspiciis, huic progeniem virtute futuram  
 egregiam et totum quae viribus occupet orbem...  
 vos contra regi mea nunc mandata referte.  
 Est mihi nata, viro gentis quam iungere nostrae  
 non patrio ex adyto sortes, non plurima caelo  
 monstra sinunt: generos externis adfore ab oris,                      270  
 hoc Latio restare canunt, qui sanguine nostrum  
 nomen in astra ferant. Hunc illum poscere fata  
 et reor et, siquid veri mens augurat, opto.*

“So Ilioneus speaks. But Latinus displays no reaction:

Unmoved, face lowered, focus fixed on the ground—though his  
 flashing 250

Eyes show a mind that’s at work. Neither tapestried purple nor Priam’s  
 Sceptre impel the king forward as strongly as thoughts of his daughter’s  
 Wedding and who she should marry are holding him back.

He’s unscrolling

Old Faunus’ prophecy deep in his heart as it flashes before him.

This is the man who, fates foretold, would set out from a foreign 255

Land and be summoned as son-in-law into his realm under  
 well-matched

Augural signs, and whose future descendants would show an  
 outstanding

Manliness, manage to seize and control the whole world with their  
 power.... ‘You’ll now convey my commands to your king, my counterproposal:

I have a daughter that my own father’s shrine, in predictions,

Will not permit me to wed to a man of our nation. And many

Omens from heaven agree. Our sons-in-law will, sing the prophets, 270

Come from a foreign shore. That is Latium’s lot. And they’ll carry

Our name in blood that runs high to the stars. I think this man's  
the person

Fate demands; and, if my mind reads omens correctly, he's my choice.'"<sup>298</sup>

Latinus wishes to fulfil the prophecy of his ancestors who have promised that his foreign son-in-law would bring great fame and glory to his (Latinus') descendants. As such, Lavinia is an instrument (point 1) which he may use in order to fulfil this prophecy.<sup>299</sup> Furthermore, Latinus makes the decision to marry Lavinia off to Aeneas without her consent, knowledge or presence, thereby stripping control away from her and denying her autonomy (point 2). In addition, Woodworth (1930) points out that Lavinia "had no freedom of choice" and that she "was quite literally in *manu patris*" until Latinus gave her in marriage to Aeneas, after which she would be under the control of her husband.<sup>300</sup> It is clear then that Lavinia is seen as lacking in agency (point 3) as Latinus does not present Lavinia with any choices regarding her suitors. Although Lavinia is not actually owned by anyone in that she was not sold, bought or enslaved, as Briseis was, I argue that a strong sense of ownership (point 6) is nevertheless exerted over her in this passage. Latinus' contemplation during this passage indicates that he is basing his choice of husband on which man will provide a more famed future for the Latins. Latinus chooses Aeneas as Lavinia's husband not just because the gods have told him of the marriage, but also because he realises that, if the prophecy is true, Lavinia's marriage with Aeneas will allow his (Latinus) name to be linked to the fame which Aeneas' descendants will obtain. Latinus then happily offers her hand to Aeneas, without asking for her consent as if she were an object to barter with which, in my opinion, demonstrates ownership over Lavinia.<sup>301</sup> Moreover, Latinus does not seem to consider at all what Lavinia thinks about their ancestor's prophecies, her suitors or a potential marriage to a foreign man, as he views her as lacking subjectivity (point 7).

---

<sup>298</sup> *Aeneid*, 7. 249-273. Trans. Frederick Ahl, 2007.

<sup>299</sup> *Aeneid*, 7. 255-258.

<sup>300</sup> Woodworth, 1930: 187.

<sup>301</sup> Byrne, 2012: 10. It must be noted that, in many ancient societies, including ancient Rome and ancient Greece, it was standard practice for parents to arrange marriages for their daughters (and even, in some cases, for their sons) without asking for their consent. As such, this is not strictly a gendered issue as even sons remain in the *potestas* of their fathers. Simply because it was standard practice at the time however, (and even if it is not a gendered issue), the fact remains that this practice resulted in fathers exerting ownership over their daughters.

The next two scenes demonstrate points 1 (instrumentality), 2 (denial of autonomy), 3 (inertness, i.e. lack of agency) and 7 (denial of subjectivity). In the first scene below, Amata, Lavinia's mother, expresses feelings of anger and distress over Latinus' decision to marry Lavinia to Aeneas:

*Exin Gorgoneis Allecto infecta venenis  
principio Latium et Laurentis tecta tyranni  
celsa petit tacitumque obsedit limen Amatae,  
quam super adventu Teucrum Turnique hymenaeis  
femineae ardentem curaeque iraeque coquebant.* 345

“Thus cued, Allecto set off, bathed foully in venom of Gorgons,  
First towards Latium, towards the high halls of the Laurentine tyrant.  
Once there, she settled herself at the silent door to Amata's  
Quarters. The ardently partisan queen had been boiling with anger,  
Racked by anxieties she, as a woman, felt over the Teucrians' 345  
Presence and Turnus's marriage.”<sup>302</sup>

Amata then confronts Latinus and accuses him of breaking his word with Turnus and not caring about Lavinia or herself:

*Exsulibusne datur ducenda Lavinia Teucris,  
O genitor, nec te miseret gnataeque tuique? 360  
Nec matris miseret, quam primo aquilone relinquet  
perfidus alta petens abducta virgine praedo?  
An non sic Phrygius penetrat Lacedaemona pastor  
Ledaeanque Helenam Troianas vexit ad urbes?  
Quid tua sancta fides, quid cura antiqua tuorum 365  
et consanguineo totiens data dextera Turno?*

“Exiles, Teucrians, are given Lavinia to take as their wedded  
Wife? Don't you feel sorry for her or yourself—you're her father!—

---

<sup>302</sup> *Aeneid*, 7. 341-345. Trans. Frederick Ahl, 2007.

and sorry

360

Too for her mother? He'll scoop up our girl on the first breath of  
north wind,

Leave me and head for his high sea's lair, this perfidious pirate!

Isn't this just how that Phrygian sheep-boy poked into Sparta,

Carrying Leda's Helen away to the cities of Troy's land?

What about your solemn word? And your old-time love for your  
family?

365

Didn't you pledge her to Turnus, our own blood, with many a  
handshake?"<sup>303</sup>

Amata's treatment of Lavinia demonstrates the notion of instrumentality as she uses her daughter as "an essential yet ancillary component" to satisfy her own desires regarding Turnus.<sup>304</sup> In the first passage, Vergil describes Amata as "*super adventu Teucrum Turnique hymenaeis...ardentem curaeque iraeque coquebant*".<sup>305</sup> There is no mention of concern over Lavinia's marriage, instead it is Turnus' marriage which is emphasised. It seems then that Turnus and *his* loss of marriage to Lavinia is what concerns Amata more than how the loss of marriage would impact on Lavinia or the people of Latium.<sup>306</sup> This notion that Amata is more concerned for Turnus than Lavinia is supported by Amata's passionate plea towards Turnus in Book 12 where she begs him not to fight Aeneas as she will not be able to live if he dies.<sup>307</sup> Lavinia is also denied autonomy by the mere fact that it is Amata who confronts Latinus and not Lavinia, indicating a lack of control on Lavinia's part over her own life. In addition, Lavinia is viewed as inert, lacking in agency, as Amata does not offer Lavinia any choice to contribute to the discussion between her parents. It is also implied that Amata

---

<sup>303</sup> *Aeneid*, 7. 359-366. Trans. Frederick Ahl, 2007.

<sup>304</sup> Todd, 1980: 28.

<sup>305</sup> *Aeneid*, 7. 344-345.

<sup>306</sup> Burke, 1976: 24.

<sup>307</sup> *Aeneid*, 12. 54-63.

denies Lavinia's subjectivity as she does not enquire how Lavinia feels or what her opinions are: she fails to ask for her perspective regarding Latinus' decision.<sup>308</sup>

The next scene, which is also from Book 7, describes Amata fleeing into the woods with Lavinia in order to delay her marriage to Aeneas. In this passage, points 1 (instrumentality), 2 (denial of autonomy), 3 (inertness, i.e. lack of agency) and 7 (denial of subjectivity) may be seen:

*Quin etiam in silvas, simulato numine Bacchi,* 385  
*maius adorta nefas maioremque orsa furorem*  
*evolat et natam frondosis montibus abdit,*  
*quo thalamum eripiat Teucris taedasque moretur,*  
*Euhoe Bacche, fremens, solum te virgine dignum*  
*vociferans, etenim mollis tibi sumere thyrsos,* 390  
*te lustrare choro, sacrum tibi pascere crinem.*

“She even runs out into the woodlands, pretending that Bacchus’ 385  
Spirit possesses her, rising to higher offence, raising madness  
Higher, concealing her child in the shelter of leaf-covered mountains,  
Robbing the Teucrians, she hoped, of their bride, and delaying the  
wedding.  
‘Evohé, Bacchus!’ she cried. ‘Only you’re good enough for this virgin!’  
Such was her shout. ‘It’s for you that she takes up the gentling  
thyrsus, 390  
Dances the ritual dance, and she lets her hair grow in your honour.’”<sup>309</sup>

As in the scene before, Lavinia is an instrument for Amata's own schemes as her mother's main reason behind their flight into the woods is to try and prevent Lavinia's marriage to Aeneas so that Lavinia can marry Turnus instead. Lavinia's autonomy and agency are also denied as Amata takes Lavinia out of the kingdom and hides her in the forest, taking full control of her life and seemingly

---

<sup>308</sup> Lavinia's objectification is possibly even worse here than when she is objectified by Turnus, for example, as it is not only another woman who is objectified her, but her own mother. It is then all the more significant when this same objectification is overcome later in the novel.

<sup>309</sup> *Aeneid*, 7. 385-391. Trans. Frederick Ahl, 2007.

failing to offer her any choice in the matter. Lavinia's lack of opinions, feelings or perspective regarding her current situation also indicate a denial of subjectivity. Lavinia is silent, and Amata does not ask Lavinia for her thoughts regarding their 'escape' from the city.

The next instance of Lavinia's objectification involves Lavinia's second appearance in the epic in which points 2 (denial of autonomy), 3 (inertness, i.e. lack of agency), and 7 (denial of subjectivity) are present. The scene occurs in Book 11 where Lavinia is taken, together with Amata to the citadel for their own safety as the Trojans and Latins engage in battle:

*Nec non ad templum summasque ad Palladis arces  
subvehitur magna matrum regina caterva  
dona ferens, iuxtaque comes Lavinia virgo,  
causa mali tanti, oculos deiecta decoros.* 480

"Further, the queen is conveyed to the heights of the citadel, Pallas' Temple, escorted by mothers massed in a huge group, and bringing Gifts for the goddess. And there at her side is the virgin Lavinia, Cause of this great disaster, her eyes so becomingly downcast."<sup>310</sup> 480

Lavinia is once again denied autonomy, as control over her movements is taken away from her, much like how her mother controlled her movements when she was taken to the woods. She is not given a choice in the matter nor are her opinions or perspective regarding the current situation acknowledged, thereby fulfilling points 3 (inertness, i.e. lack of agency) and 7 (denial of subjectivity) of Nussbaum's list. Her demeanour indicates only her modesty through the words "*oculos deiecta decoros*", and her silence reinforces her lack of subjectivity.

All of the points on Nussbaum's list which are applicable to Lavinia are present in the next scene, which is also Lavinia's third appearance in the epic. During this scene, Turnus addresses Latinus and passionately agrees to a duel with Aeneas, stating that either he will kill Aeneas or Aeneas will kill him and take Lavinia as his wife:

*Nulla mora in Turno; nihil est quod dicta retractent*

---

<sup>310</sup> *Aeneid*, 11. 477-480. Trans. Frederick Ahl, 2007.

*ignavi Aeneadae, nec quae pepigere recusent.*

*Congredior, fer sacra, pater, et concipe foedus.*

*Aut hac Dardanium dextra sub Tartara mittam,*

*desertorem Asiae (sedeant spectentque Latini),*

15

*et solus ferro crimen commune refellam,*

*aut habeat victos, cedat Lavinia coniunx.*

“Turnus won’t cause a delay. He won’t offer Aeneas’s cowards  
Pretexts for changing their words or reneging on terms they’ve  
regretted.

I’m on my way out to fight. Start the rites, old sire, draft the treaty.

Either I’ll send, with my hand, this deserter of Asia, this Dardan,

Down to the Pit of the Damned—and the Latins can sit down and  
watch while

15

My lone sword is refuting the charge of dishonour we all share;

Or you must share my defeat. And Lavinia must go as this man’s wife.”<sup>311</sup>

Here I believe that Turnus views Lavinia as a potential symbol, and therefore instrument (point 1), of his victory over the Trojans. He does not state anywhere that he does not wish Lavinia to marry Aeneas because he loves her or because he thinks Lavinia does not want to marry the Trojan. Instead, Turnus sees Lavinia as a potential prize which will be given to him if he wins the duel. Moreover, Turnus exerts control over her life by stating, without thought for Lavinia herself, that Lavinia will marry Aeneas if he himself loses, and implies that she would marry him if he were to win. Lavinia’s future is decided for her, and she is therefore stripped of autonomy (point 2). It also seems as though Lavinia is denied any choice, and thus agency (point 3), in the matter of the duel despite the fact that it is her future which Aeneas and Turnus would be fighting for, that is, ‘ownership’ of Lavinia. In my understanding, to own something is to possess it, and I believe that Turnus and Aeneas are fighting to possess Lavinia because, whoever possesses Lavinia, possesses the power to rule. This sense of ownership (point 6) is also reinforced by the fact that Lavinia is often referred to as *coniunx* when spoken of in connection with either Turnus or Aeneas.<sup>312</sup> Lavinia

---

<sup>311</sup> *Aeneid*, 12. 11-17. Trans. Frederick Ahl, 2007.

<sup>312</sup> See *Aeneid* 2. 783, 6. 764, 7. 314, 12. 17, 80, 937.

is always in the position of potential wife of either Aeneas or Turnus, and there is never a case where either man is referred to as the husband of Lavinia. The last point present in this passage is Lavinia's lack of subjectivity (point 7). Turnus does not consider or ask for Lavinia's thoughts or feelings at all, resulting in the absence of her voice.

The next passage is a slightly more complicated case of objectification and a scene which has been highly debated by many scholars. In this scene, Turnus declares that he will duel Aeneas for Lavinia's hand while Latinus tries to convince him against the idea, and Amata passionately begs him not to go through with his plan. Lavinia reacts by blushing and crying simultaneously. The points which are relevant here are 1 (instrumentality), 2 (denial of autonomy), 3 (inertness, i.e. lack of agency), and 7 (denial of subjectivity), although point 7 is slightly more complex than in any of the earlier examples, something which I will elaborate on below.

*At regina, nova pugnae conterrita sorte,  
flebat et ardentem generum monitura tenebat:* 55  
*Turne, per has ego te lacrimas, per siquis Amatae  
tangit honos animum (spes tu nunc una, senectae  
tu requies miserae, decus imperiumque Latini  
te penes, in te omnis domus inclinata recumbit).  
unum oro: desiste manum committere Teucris.* 60  
*Qui te cumque manent isto certamine casus,  
et me, Turne, manent: simul haec invisa relinquam  
lumina nec generum Aenean captiva videbo.  
Accepit vocem lacrimis Lavinia matris  
flagrantis perfusa genas, quoi plurimus ignem* 65  
*subiecit rubor et calefacta per ora cucurrit.  
Indum sanguineo veluti violaverit ostro  
siquis ebur, aut mixta rubent ubi lilia multa  
alba rosa: talis virgo dabat ore colores.  
Illum turbat amor, figitque in virgine vultus:* 70  
*ardet in arma magis paucisque adfatur Amatam*

“Now though, the queen who was weeping, distraught by the new



terms of combat,

Clung, herself ready to die, to her ardent son-in-law, pleading: 55

‘Turnus: by tears that I shed, by whatever regard for Amata  
Touches your spirit, I beg you. You’re my one hope now, this wretched  
Old woman’s haven. Latinus has status, has power just so long as  
You keep it up. Our whole house, as she sways, seeks repose on your  
bosom.

My one plea: don’t hazard your hand in a fight with the Teucrians. 60

Any disaster that’s waiting for you in this duel, awaits me  
Also. For, Turnus, when you leave the envious eye of the day’s light,  
I go. I won’t watch, chained, if my son-in-law must be Aeneas.’

Tears flowed over Lavinia’s fevered cheeks as she listened,  
Noting her mother’s appeal. An intense blush crimsoned her  
features, 65

Spreading its radiant warmth through her face with suffusions  
of fire.

As when the blood of the sea-mollusc violates Indian ivory’s  
Purenness, as lilies when set among roses erupt with a rubied  
Tinge to their whiteness, so the girl’s face gleamed changes of colour.

Love disturbs Turnus’ heart. He stares at the girl, full of longing. 70

Even more ardent for war, he adds a brief word to Amata.”<sup>313</sup>

Scholars have speculated and proposed a variety of reasons for Lavinia’s blush. Cairns (2005) has summarised the most popular theories which have been proposed, and I now present them as he did in his article:<sup>314</sup>

“Todd 1980, 27: ‘Lavinia blushed at the thought of Aeneas as a husband.’

Lyne 1989, 79-82 (repeating a view expressed in several earlier publications):

Lavinia blushes because she is in love with Turnus.

Cairns 1989, 153 n. 10: ‘The view...that she is in love with Turnus, seems to

---

<sup>313</sup> *Aeneid*, 12. 54-71. Trans. Frederick Ahl, 2007.

<sup>314</sup> Cairns, 2005: 196.

me fanciful.’; 159: ‘Lavinia...blushes...either at the thought of marriage with Aeneas, or at Turnus’ manifestation of love for her, or just out of embarrassment at being the object of attention.’

Tschiedel 1995: Lavinia’s blush shows her caught helplessly between the aspirations of her mother and of her father (and fate), but blaming herself nevertheless.

Fantham 1998, 147: ‘She blushes, surely, not at her mother’s behaviour, but to face her lover and know she is the prize of this contest.’

Lateiner 1998, 170: ‘Her unique blush expresses the conflict of familial and national pieties with personal inclinations. Vergil insinuates her shy love for Turnus and her embarrassment at her mother’s mention of marriage before Turnus.’

Lobe 1999: Virgil has deliberately left Lavinia’s blush ambiguous and so engages the reader more effectively.

Nelis 2001, 379: ‘The most obvious cause is the thought of Aeneas as her husband’; 380: ‘It is in the end impossible to say whether Lavinia blushes at the thought of Turnus, at the idea of Aeneas as husband, at being in the centre of such passions, at the thought of marriage itself, or whether she senses something excessive in her mother’s feelings for Turnus’; 4 381: ‘But could not *amor*, coming after Lavinia’s blush, refer to her feelings, her *amor*?’”

It is not my intention to attempt to refute any of these theories. Cairns himself argues that Lavinia blushes not because she is in love with anyone, but because her marriage is discussed openly before her and this embarrasses her as she is of modest nature.<sup>315</sup> I believe that a combination of these theories would most likely produce an accurate reason for Lavinia’s blush. Langlands (2006) argues that the act of blushing may also indicate to those who witness it a certain degree of “moral awareness”, and that other behaviours such as “averted or downcast eyes or silence” are “also described as the embodiment of *pudicitia*”, a concept relating to the socio-ethics of ancient Roman society.<sup>316</sup> This may therefore indicate to readers that Lavinia possesses some complexity as a character. While Lavinia’s blush has been the subject of much debate, the fact that she cries at the

---

<sup>315</sup> Cairns, 2005: 203.

<sup>316</sup> Langlands, 2006: 19

same time has not been discussed nearly as much by scholars. I believe that Vergil intended that readers focus more on Lavinia's blush than her tears as he describes her blush at great length.<sup>317</sup> Cairns (2005) suggests in a footnote that the lack of discussion may be due to the fact that there is a clear reason for her tears: "Her tears have received much less attention, probably because at least one ready explanation is available for them, namely that her mother has just threatened suicide (*Aen.* 12.62-3)."<sup>318</sup> I do not, however, wish to focus on the question of why Lavinia blushed and wept, but rather on the question of how Lavinia is objectified in this scene and whether a possibility existed for Lavinia to express her subjectivity.

Firstly, Lavinia is, I believe, treated as an instrument (point 1) in this scene by Turnus, in this case as an instrument for sexual satisfaction. Ahl provides a reasonably free translation of line 70 and translates the word *amor* as love. However, another translation of *amor* is provided by the *Oxford Latin Dictionary*: "Sexual passion".<sup>319</sup> If this is applied to the line, then a possible translation would be: "Sexual passion disturbed him, and he fixed his gaze on the virgin."<sup>320</sup> If *amor* is used in this sense, Turnus then sees Lavinia as a sexual instrument, which may be obtained and used if he wins her in his duel against Aeneas, therefore point 1 of Nussbaum's list is fulfilled. Secondly, once again Lavinia's life is being decided for her by Turnus, Amata and Latinus: Turnus wants to duel Aeneas, and the result of that duel will decide which man Lavinia must marry. Amata and Latinus, on the other hand, do not want Turnus to agree to the duel for reasons outside of their concern for Lavinia's life, yet if Turnus does not engage in the duel, Lavinia's life will also be greatly affected. Essentially, Lavinia's life is not her own to control, but is governed by others around her and, as such, she is denied autonomy: which demonstrates point 2. Thirdly, Lavinia is deemed inert by those around her. Neither Latinus, Amata nor Turnus present Lavinia with any choice regarding the duel or her potential husband and, as such, point 3 is presented here. With regard to point 7, Lavinia's subjectivity in this scene is slightly more complicated than in previous scenes. My reasoning for this is as follows: after Amata tearfully begs Turnus not to duel Aeneas, Lavinia blushes and cries simultaneously and Vergil uses six consecutive lines to describe her blush. This is the longest description of Lavinia in the entire *Aeneid* and some scholars have argued that this scene

---

<sup>317</sup> See lines 64-69 in the above quoted passage from Book 12.

<sup>318</sup> Cairns, 2005: 210.

<sup>319</sup> Glare (ed.), 2012: 133 (see *OLD* 1a).

<sup>320</sup> My translation.

allows readers to briefly gain insight into Lavinia's feelings and personality. For instance, Todd (1980) argues that this scene reveals "the innermost feelings of an individual, an eloquent and personal response to a deeply private emotion."<sup>321</sup> As such, since Lavinia's feelings are potentially revealed in these six lines, it may be argued that her subjectivity, which is an individual's "particular perspective, feelings, believes and desires",<sup>322</sup> is highlighted in this scene. Nevertheless, I argue against this and believe Lavinia's subjectivity here is more complex than in other scenes. While I agree that Lavinia displays more emotion in this scene than in others, I argue that her silence prevents one from understanding her true feelings and thoughts. In contrast with other female characters, such as Dido, Juno and Amata whose feelings, thoughts and perspectives are all presented clearly and verbally, Lavinia remains ambiguous. Furthermore, the lack of consensus among scholars supports the notion that it is unclear as to what Lavinia is responding to and why she responds in this manner. Even the reason behind Lavinia's tears are somewhat unclear as, although she may be crying from the suggestion of her mother's suicide, she may also, in my opinion, be crying at the thought of Turnus or Aeneas dying, the possibility of marrying Aeneas or even simply the fact that her people are at war. While Lavinia's blush and tears, as Todd has argued, place a new importance on Lavinia and draw the reader's attention to her, the passage is still too short, too ambiguous and lacking detail to establish a sense of subjectivity for Lavinia. Moreover, as soon as this small description of Lavinia is over, the attention immediately shifts back to Turnus, and his reaction is provided, once again, placing Lavinia in the position of object. Furthermore, her objectification throughout previous scenes nullifies any possible subjectivity in this short passage.

The next selected passage involves the terms of the duel between Aeneas and Turnus. Here, points 1 (instrumentality), 2 (denial of autonomy), 3 (inertness, i.e. lack of agency) and 7 (denial of subjectivity) are present. After several battles between the Trojans and the Latins, a duel is arranged between Aeneas and Turnus to decide the war and, ultimately, who is to marry Lavinia. Aeneas explains the terms of the duel and states that, if he is victorious, his people would build their own city near Latinus' city and that it would be named after Lavinia:

*non ego nec Teucris Italos parere iubebo*

*nec mihi regna peto: paribus se legibus ambae*

190

---

<sup>321</sup> Todd, 1980: 27.

<sup>322</sup> Solomon, 2005: 900.

*invictae gentes aeterna in foedera mittant.*

*Sacra deosque dabo; socer arma Latinus habeto,*

*imperium sollemne socer; mihi moenia Teucri*

*constituent, urbique dabit Lavinia nomen.*

“Too, I will not force Italians to live in subjection to Teucrians,  
I’m not in quest of a realm for myself. Both peoples, unconquered, 190  
Under identical laws, must submit to a treaty for all time.  
I’ll donate gods and their rites. As my father-in-law, let Latinus  
Keep both his forces and solemn command. For it’s Teucrians  
who’ll build  
My city walls; and Lavinia will give this community her name.”<sup>323</sup>

Aeneas, in my opinion, sees Lavinia as a necessary tool (point 1) to be used for the fulfilment of his destiny and legacy, in a similar fashion to how his father, Anchises, viewed Lavinia at the end of Book 6. Lavinia is not truly an individual in this passage, but rather something which enables an easier unification of the Trojan and Latin nations.<sup>324</sup> Lavinia is also denied autonomy (point 2) by Aeneas as his terms imply that he expects Lavinia to marry him if he wins the duel. As such, Aeneas would exert control over Lavinia’s life. Moreover, he does not allow Lavinia any choice (point 3) in the matter. In fact, Lavinia is not even present during this scene; her fate is decided without her. Aeneas does not appear to view Lavinia as possessing subjectivity (point 7). This is the first and only time Aeneas speaks about Lavinia and the first and only time he mentions her name. He does not say anything more about her nor are there any indications that he has spoken to her beforehand. Aeneas’ words regarding Lavinia also imply a lack of personal feeling towards her, and it is clear that he has no feelings of love, affection or even desire for his potential wife, but instead this arrangement is purely a political and practical one. All these factors therefore point towards Lavinia’s lack of subjectivity.

Lavinia’s last appearance also presents specific points regarding her objectification. The following scene occurs towards the end of Book 12, where Amata commits suicide by hanging and Lavinia

---

<sup>323</sup> *Aeneid*, 12. 189-194. Trans. Frederick Ahl, 2007.

<sup>324</sup> Todd, 1980: 28.

tears at her hair and face as she grieves for her mother. Points 3 (inertness, i.e. lack of agency) and 7 (denial of subjectivity) are present in this passage:

*Regina ut tectis venientem prospicit hostem,* 595  
*incessi muros, ignis ad tecta volare,*  
*nusquam acies contra Rutulas, nulla agmina Turni:*  
*infelix pugnae iuvenem in certamine credit*  
*exstinctum et, subito mentem turbata dolore,*  
*se causam clamat crimenque caputque malorum,* 600  
*multaque per maestum demens effata furorem*  
*purpureos moritura manu discindit amictus*  
*et nodum informis leti trabe nectit ab alta.*  
*Quam cladem miserae postquam accepere Latinae,*  
*filia prima manu flavos Lavinia crinis* 605  
*et roseas laniata genas, tum cetera circum*  
*turba furit: resonant late plangoribus aedes.*

“When, looking out from the palace, the queen sees the enemy  
coming, 595  
Walls being scaled, flames leaping from rooftop to rooftop, but nowhere  
Any Rutulian troops to oppose them, nor any of Turnus’s units,  
She, hopes unfulfilled, believes Turnus has perished in combat,  
And, her mind shattered by grief’s sudden upsurge of horror,  
Screams out that hers is the blame, she’s the cause, she’s the source  
of disaster, 600  
Mindlessly raving out torrents of words in the madness of sorrow,  
Rending her purple regalia with hands that will now end her life’s span:  
She’s slung a noose for a hideous death from a beam in the ceiling.  
Once this catastrophe’s known to the poor, sad women of Latium  
First to react is Lavinia, whose hand rips her own golden tresses, 605  
Tears at her rose-coloured cheeks. Then, around her, the rest of the  
household  
Riots in grief, the broad palace resounds with their throbbled

lamentations.”<sup>325</sup>

The presence of point 3, inertness, is a bit complicated in this scene. One could argue that Lavinia exerts her agency in this scene by choosing to mourn for her mother, however it would be extremely unusual if Lavinia did not mourn at all for her mother. As such, I do not believe that Lavinia possesses true agency here but is rather presented as conforming to possible social expectations. Lavinia’s subjectivity is also denied in this scene due to her total lack of voice even though her mother has just died. Although Lavinia grieves for her mother, Vergil does not allow her to grieve audibly. Perhaps Vergil assumes that his reader would understand that Lavinia is grieving aloud but he is, nevertheless, curiously non-explicit about this. This is especially odd when contrasted with the manner in which Amata has just grieved, for what she believes is the death of Turnus. Amata is allowed to scream and vocally proclaim that she blames herself for Turnus’ death, but Lavinia grieves physically, emotionally, yet silently. It may be argued that Lavinia’s silence is deliberate, perhaps to emphasise the extent of her shock at her mother’s sudden death; however given Vergil’s depictions of other grieving or distressed women who express their emotions vocally, such as Dido in Book 4, Euryalus’ mother in Book 9<sup>326</sup> and Amata in Book 12, as seen in the passage above, Lavinia’s silence seems to fall oddly out of Vergil’s pattern. Her silence is also further reinforced by the fact that the rest of the household mourns vocally, as indicated by “*resonant late plangoribus aedes*” which does not necessarily include Lavinia’s lamentations. In addition, Lavinia is not even allowed to provide a vocal lament for her mother; as Briseis was able to do for Patroclus. Once again, Lavinia is described only in two lines and then physically vanishes from the narrative and, although her name is mentioned by Turnus at the end of the epic, Lavinia herself does not appear again. Lavinia’s silence denies her subjectivity and therefore reinforces her objectification.

The two points of objectification which I do not believe Lavinia fulfils are fungibility (point 4) and violability (point 5). Lavinia is certainly not seen as fungible as both Aeneas and Turnus see Lavinia as the only woman who could be their bride. In order for Aeneas to fulfil the wishes of the gods and his destiny, he must build his city in Latium, and to do this, Aeneas has to marry Lavinia. Therefore, Lavinia is not fungible to him. Turnus, in a similar fashion, also views Lavinia as the only woman he could marry. For Turnus, marrying Lavinia is partly a matter of patriotism and partly a matter of

---

<sup>325</sup> *Aeneid*, 12. 595-607. Trans. Frederick Ahl, 2007.

<sup>326</sup> *Aeneid*, 9. 473-497: Euryalus’ mother grieves audibly for her son’s death and is given 17 lines to do so.

pride; Lavinia would not be allowed to marry a foreigner, therefore, in his view, Turnus must marry her. In addition, since Lavinia is their only living child, Latinus and Amata also do not view Lavinia as fungible. In terms of violability, nowhere in the epic is it indicated that Lavinia is viewed as violable. Neither Latinus, Amata, Turnus nor Aeneas state or imply that they view Lavinia as something or someone which may be harmed. Although both Turnus and Aeneas are often portrayed as very violent men on the battlefield, this violence is never directed at Lavinia, nor are there any indications that this view would change after marriage.

In a similar fashion to Chapter One, I will now apply Wittig's theory concerning subjects of speech to an analysis of Lavinia's character. I believe that the language Vergil uses in particular contexts emphasises both Lavinia's objectification and denial of her subjectivity. This analysis involves an investigation of the language Vergil uses, including specific grammar and vocabulary, in each instance in which Lavinia is directly described or referred to. In Chapter One, I argued that Briseis' objectification was emphasised by the manner in which Homer often placed her in the position of grammatical accusative object. Wittig argues that pronouns such as 'she' and 'her' deny a woman her subjectivity while the personal pronoun 'I' may recover subjectivity. I believe that Lavinia is also denied subjectivity in a similar manner. She is often referred to by personal pronouns and is placed in the position of grammatical accusative object a number of times. She is, however, also referred to in the nominative case and, in those instances, I believe that specific contexts as well as accompanying nouns still ensure the denial of subjectivity and the reinforcement of objectification. I will now examine some instances, beginning from Book 6 onwards and proceeding chronologically through them,<sup>327</sup> in which Lavinia is named and referred to.

The first reference to Lavinia which I will discuss occurs in Book 6, a passage which I have briefly mentioned earlier in this chapter, where the spirit of Anchises is describing the legacy of Aeneas:

*Ille, vides, pura iuvenis qui nititur hasta,*  
*proxuma sorte tenet lucis loca, primus ad auras*  
*aetherias Italo commixtus sanguine surget,*  
*Silvius, Albanum nomen, tua postuma proles,*  
*quem tibi longaevo serum **Lavinia coniunx***

<sup>327</sup> References made to Lavinia prior to Book 6 have already been mentioned on the first page of this Chapter.



*educet silvis regem regumque parentem,  
unde genus Longa nostrum dominabitur Alba.*

765

“That man, you see him, the youth who now leans on an as yet  
unblooded

760

Spear, is allotted the next place in line: he’s the first who’ll be rising

Up to the bright sky’s breezes. His blood will be partly Italian:

Silvius—“Woodsmen”, an Alban name. He’s your posthumous  
off spring,

Child of advanced old age. So your **wife, Lavinia**, will rear him,

Too late for you, in the woods, to be king and the father of more  
kings.

765

Our descendants, through him, will long be the masters of Alba.”<sup>328</sup>

Anchises refers to Lavinia by name in line 764 where “*Lavinia*” is in the nominative and is therefore the grammatical subject of the clause.<sup>329</sup> As such “*educet*” in line 765 is governed by “*Lavinia coniunx*”. Although Lavinia is the grammatical subject of this clause, there are two reasons why I believe she is still subordinated and lacking in true subjectivity. Firstly, Lavinia’s name is accompanied by the agreeing noun “*coniunx*” which, as in previous examples such as “*Laviniaque...litora*”, directly links her to Aeneas and his destiny. Lavinia is therefore not an individual but is adjunct to Aeneas. Secondly, the context of this passage demonstrates that the focus is not at all on Lavinia but rather on Aeneas’ legacy. Lavinia is just mentioned in passing, and it is clear that her role is purely that of Aeneas’ wife and the mother of his child.

---

<sup>328</sup> *Aeneid*, 6. 760-765. Trans. Frederick Ahl, 2007; my emphasis.

<sup>329</sup> In a similar fashion to my discussion regarding Homer’s Briseis, it must be noted here that the case of Lavinia’s name in this passage (and indeed in some other passages as well) is subject also to the metre of Vergil’s poem (dactylic hexameter). As such, the positioning of Lavinia’s name in a particular case may often be due to *metri gratia*. Thus, Lavinia’s name, in this instance, must be in the nominative case in order to conform with the poetic metre. This applies to other passages as well. In a way, this may further reduce her subjectivity as Vergil does not make her the nominative subject in order to demonstrate that she is an active (authoritative speaking) subject, but simply because he is aligning with the metre. I must note here as well that it is not my intention to argue that either Vergil or Homer deliberately objectify or remove subjectivity from Lavinia or Briseis, rather I wish to argue that the ideas of objectification and subjectivity can be applied to these characters and that this is then reflected in the modern works.

In Book 7, Lavinia is mentioned more frequently, but largely in an impersonal manner and placed mainly in the role of “involuntary adjunct”.<sup>330</sup> The passage in Book 7 which describes Latinus and his heritage refers to Lavinia in the following manner:

*Sola domum et tantas servabat filia sedes,* 52  
*iam matura viro, iam plenis nubilis annis.*  
*Multi illam magno e Latio totaque petebant*  
*Ausonia. Petit ante alios pulcherrimus omnis* 55  
*Turnus...*

“Only a daughter sustained his home and position of power. 52  
 She was now ripe for a husband, now fully of age to be married.  
 Many a man from great Latium, indeed, from all over Ausonia,  
 Sued for her hand. And the loveliest suitor among them was  
 Turnus.”<sup>331</sup>

Here “*filia*” and its accompanying adjective “*sola*” in line 52 form the nominative subject of the clause and govern the verb “*servabat*” in the same line. Once again, however, Lavinia, despite being the implied grammatical subject, is denied subjectivity. Lavinia is not referred to by name but simply as “*filia*”, and this places her as adjunct to her father, in the same way that “*coniunx*” placed her as adjunct to Aeneas in the passage above.<sup>332</sup> Furthermore, the descriptive words “*iam matura viro*” in line 53 reinforce Lavinia’s role as a passive object who is now physically mature enough to be impregnated and cancels out any grammatical subjectivity she may have gained from the use of the nominative adjective “*nubilis*” which is used to describe her in the same line. This serves to emphasise the notion that her main purpose is to be a child-bearer, thereby stripping her of individuality and subjectivity. In addition, Lavinia is referred to by the pronoun “*illam*” in line 54 which, although it is not a personal pronoun, may still align with Wittig’s theory regarding personal

---

<sup>330</sup> Todd, 1980: 27-28.

<sup>331</sup> *Aeneid*, 7. 52-56. Trans. Frederick Ahl, 2007; my emphasis.  
 55

<sup>332</sup> Once again, it must be noted that this may simply be a case of *metri gratia*, however I still argue that the other factors which I have explained combined with the grammatical usage contribute to Lavinia’s denial of subjectivity.

pronouns. Wittig, as explained in Chapter One, argues that the use of the personal pronouns ‘she’ and ‘her’ set women up as objects instead of subjects of narratives, as the pronoun ‘I’ does. In the same manner, I argue that the pronoun “*illam*”, strictly meaning ‘that one’ but often translated as ‘she’, depending on the context, as Ahl does in his translation provided above, produces the same effect; “*illiam*” is also in the accusative and is the direct object of “*petebant*” in the same line and the implied object of “*Petit*” in line 55. I believe that the use of the pronoun “*illam*” in the accusative case places Lavinia in the position of object and not subject, and this therefore acts to strengthen the notion that Lavinia is presented in an adjunct role.

The next instance where Lavinia is mentioned is in the scene depicting Latinus and Lavinia worshipping at the altar together, which I have mentioned before. Her hair then catches fire and it is declared to be an omen by the priests:

<i>Praeterea, castis adolet dum altaria taedis</i>	71
<i>et iuxta genitorem adstat Lavinia virgo,</i>	
<i>visa (nefas) longis comprehendere crinibus ignem,</i>	
<i>atque omnem ornatum flamma crepitante cremari</i>	
<i>regalisque accensa comas, accensa coronam</i>	75
<i>insignem gemmis, tum fumida lumine fulvo</i>	
<i>involvi ac totis Vulcanum spargere tectis.</i>	
<i>Id vero horrendum ac visu mirabile ferri:</i>	
<i>namque fore inlustrem fama fatisque canebant</i>	
<i>ipsam, sed populo magnum portendere bellum.</i>	80

“**Virgin Lavinia**, standing **alongside** her father and kindling  
 Fires on the altars with burning torches held in her chaste hands,  
 Seemed, a bad sign from the gods, to catch the fire up in her trailing  
 Tresses. Her headdress appeared to be wholly consumed by the  
 crackling  
 Flames. Royal hair was set blazing, her crown, with its jewelled  
 insignia,  
 Blazing. Enshrouded with smoke, silhouetted in dull glare of orange,  
 She, so it seemed, spread Vulcan’s fire through the whole palace

75

complex.

This was declared to be both a grim omen and marvellous vision:

Seers sang that **she** would **shine** in her fate and be famous in rumour.

But, for the people, a mighty war was the portent's prediction."<sup>333</sup> 80

In this passage, Lavinia is referred to as "*iuxta...Lavinia virgo*" in line 72 which is in the nominative case and therefore the subject, and governs the verb "*adstat*". Once again, however, the agreeing noun "*virgo*" links her to her future function as Aeneas' wife and mother of his child. Furthermore, while Lavinia initially performs an action, in this case she is performing the task of worship while standing near her father, she is soon placed in a passive role when the fire catches onto her hair and she remains motionless, without any reaction to this event. Vergil portrays her as a "passive medium" for the portent which signals the beginning of Aeneas' reign.<sup>334</sup> By removing any reaction from Lavinia, Vergil depicts Lavinia as a silent, graceful and dutiful daughter, who accepts the portent passively.<sup>335</sup> Furthermore, following Wittig's theory, the use of the accusative pronoun "*ipsam*" in line 80, and the accusative adjective "*inlustrem*" in line 79 which describes Lavinia, places her in the position of grammatical object once again.

In the next passage, Lavinia is referred to as "*natam*": "*Ne pete conubiis **natam** sociare Latinis...*" ("Don't seek to marry your **daughter** within any Latin alliance...")<sup>336</sup>. Here "*natam*" is in the accusative case, and Lavinia is therefore referred to as the grammatical direct object upon which the infinitive "*sociare*" acts. There are eight other instances in which Lavinia is referred to as "*nata*", or a form of that: 7. 253, 268, 358, 387, 398; 11. 355; 12. 27 and 12.42. Of these eight instances, four instances include "*nata*" in the accusative form as a direct object<sup>337</sup> and, of the other instances, only one instance includes "*nata*" in the nominative form as subject.<sup>338</sup> I do not think that it is necessary to discuss each of the instances in which "*nata*" is in the accusative form as this

---

<sup>333</sup> *Aeneid*, 7. 71-80. Trans. Frederick Ahl, 2007; my emphasis.

<sup>334</sup> Todd, 1980: 28.

<sup>335</sup> Woodworth, 1930: 179.

<sup>336</sup> *Aeneid*, 7. 96. Trans. Frederick Ahl, 2007; my emphasis.

<sup>337</sup> *Aeneid*, 7. 387, 12. 27 and 12. 42.

<sup>338</sup> *Aeneid*, 7. 268.

argument has been demonstrated above and the rest of the cases follow the same pattern, however, the instance in which “*nata*” is in nominative form is one of interest: “*Est mihi nata, viro gentis quam iungere nostrae non patrio ex adyto sortes...*” (“I have a **daughter** that my own father’s shrine, in predictions, Will not permit me to wed to a man of our nation.”)<sup>339</sup> Lavinia is referred to as “*nata*” which is the subject of the clause and, by extension, Lavinia is the subject. However, I argue that the presence of the personal pronoun “*mihi*” in the dative case could prevent Lavinia from obtaining true subjectivity; “*mihi*” is a personal pronoun in the *dativus possessivus* which refers to Latinus and,<sup>340</sup> as such, these three words may imply a sense of possession or ‘ownership’ over Lavinia by her father, which aligns with the idea of the Roman *paterfamilias* (the male head of the household who decides upon marriages for his daughters or other female relatives in his house without needing to obtain consent).<sup>341</sup> This being said, one must acknowledge that Roman grammar itself cannot be used “as a tool for sexism” and therefore the *dativus possessivus* itself may not imply actual possession.<sup>342</sup> Nevertheless, given the context of Latinus’ relationship with Lavinia, the grammatical structure may potentially serve as a simple indicator for his ownership over her. In addition, the context of the passage makes clear, once again, that Lavinia is not the focus of attention as an individual: Latinus is focused completely on the marriage and on Lavinia’s potential suitor.

The next instance in which Lavinia is referred to occurs in Book 7. 313-320. Here Lavinia is named by the goddess Juno who wishes to set the war between the Trojans and the Latins into motion. While Juno does not speak to Lavinia in person, in that Lavinia is not present in this scene, Juno speaks as if she were speaking personally to Lavinia:

*Non dabitur regnis, esto, prohibere Latinis,*

*atque immota manet fatis Lavinia coniunx:*

*at trahere atque moras tantis licet addere rebus,* 315

*at licet amborum populos exscindere regum.*

*Hac gener atque socer coeant mercede suorum:*

---

<sup>339</sup> *Aeneid*, 7. 268-269. Trans. Frederick Ahl, 2007; my emphasis.

<sup>340</sup> Also known as Dative of Possession.

<sup>341</sup> Treggiari, 2005: 134.

<sup>342</sup> Corbeill, 2015:7

*sanguine Troiano et Rutulo dotabere, **virgo**,  
et Bellona manet **te** pronuba*

“Granted, I won’t be allowed to repel him from Latium’s kingdoms,  
And it’s **immovably** fixed in the fates that he’ll marry **Lavinia**.  
Yet . . . there is room to prolong and delay these momentous  
proceedings, 315  
Room to depopulate both kings’ ranks by tearing their roots out.  
Son-in-law, father-in-law, let them consummate union at this price  
Paid by their peoples. **Young bride**, you’ll receive both Rutulian  
and Trojan  
Dowries of blood. And Bellona awaits **you** as matron of honour.”<sup>343</sup>

Here, Lavinia is again referred to by name as “*Lavinia coniunx*” which is the nominative subject, along with the adjective “*immota*”. But there are several factors which counteract Lavinia’s grammatical subjectivity: firstly, as in Book 6. 764, the agreeing noun “*coniunx*” renders Lavinia adjunct to Aeneas and serves to move the attention away from her and towards Aeneas. Secondly, Juno also refers to Lavinia as “*virgo*” in line 318 which again links her to suitability for marriage and therefore to Aeneas. Thirdly, in line 319, “*te*” refers to Lavinia. It is in the accusative and is the direct object of “*manet*” which counteracts Lavinia’s previous position as subject.

The next instance in which Lavinia is referred to by name is by her mother in a scene in which Amata confronts Latinus. I discussed this scene earlier in full when applying Nussbaum’s theory of objectification and will therefore only quote the lines which I believe to be grammatically important for the application of Wittig’s theory:

*Exsulibusne datur **ducenda Lavinia** Teucris,  
O genitor, nec te miseret **gnataeque** tuique? 360  
Nec matris miseret, quam primo aquilone relinquet  
perfidus alta petens abducta **virgine** praedo?*

““Exiles, Teucrians, **are given Lavinia** to take as their wedded

---

<sup>343</sup> *Aeneid*, 7. 313-320. Trans. Frederick Ahl, 2007; my emphasis.

Wife? Don't you feel sorry for **her** or yourself—you're her father!—  
and sorry 360

Too for her mother? He'll scoop up **our girl** on the first breath of  
north wind,  
Leave me and head for his high sea's lair, this perfidious pirate!"<sup>344</sup>

In this passage, "*Lavinia*" in line 359 is the nominative subject of the clause, however the verb which is attached to "*Lavinia*" is "*datur*", a passive present verb. Moreover, although "*ducenda*" in line 359 is in the nominative case, it is a gerundive which is attached to "*Lavinia*" and, due to the passive nature of gerundives, serves to counteract Lavinia's grammatical subjectivity in this passage as "*datur*" does.<sup>345</sup> In addition, Lavinia is once again referred to as "*virgine*" which Ahl freely translates as "our girl" in footnote 332 below; however, a strict translation is actually "a maid, maiden, virgin" and therefore, as in 7. 313-320, Lavinia is once more in an adjunct position, her virginity and therefore readiness for marriage emphasised rather than her role as an individual. As such, this serves to negate her subjectivity. Another passage a few lines later demonstrates the same trend where Lavinia is referred to as a virgin and is therefore placed in an adjunct position:

*Euhoe Bacche, fremens, solum te **virgine** dignum*  
*vociferans, etenim mollis tibi sumere thyrsos,* 390  
*te lustrare choro, sacrum tibi pascere crinem.*

"“Evohé, Bacchus!’ she cried. ‘Only you’re good enough for this **virgin!**’  
Such was her shout. ‘It’s for you that she takes up the gentling  
thyrsus, 390  
Dances the ritual dance, and she lets her hair grow in your honour.’”<sup>346</sup>

The next reference to Lavinia is also her second appearance, a scene which I have previously quoted in full, however I will now only provide the extract which is necessary for my analysis:

---

<sup>344</sup> *Aeneid*, 7. 359-362. Trans. Frederick Ahl, 2007; my emphasis.

<sup>345</sup> Allen & Greenough, 2014: 500.

<sup>346</sup> *Aeneid*, 7. 389-391. Trans. Frederick Ahl, 2007; my emphasis.

*iuxtaque comes Lavinia virgo,  
causa mali tanti, oculos deiecta decoros.*

“And there at her side is the **virgin Lavinia**,  
**Cause** of this great disaster, her eyes so becomingly **downcast**.”<sup>347</sup>

This passage, once again, although presenting an instance in which Lavinia is the subject of the sentence as shown by “*comes Lavinia virgo*”, sees her subjectivity being undermined by her adjunctive position, which is implied by the inclusion of the descriptive word “*virgo*”. Furthermore, the actual description of Lavinia in this extract also serves to counteract her subjectivity where emphasis is laid on her being the “*causa mali tanti*” of the current conflict. Although “*causa*” and the participle “*deiecta*” which both refer to Lavinia is in the nominative case, the context in which these words are placed strongly imply that Lavinia is the object of this passage. The passage does not speak of Lavinia’s own experience of the conflict or focus on her as an individual, as such her subjectivity is lost.

The following reference to Lavinia occurs during Turnus’ speech to Latinus regarding the proposed duel between Aeneas and himself. This passage has also been discussed earlier when I presented Nussbaum’s theory:

*...et solus ferro crimen commune refellam,  
aut habeat victos, cedat Lavinia coniunx.*

“My lone sword is refuting the charge of dishonour we all share;  
Or you must share my defeat. And **Lavinia** must go as this man’s **wife**”<sup>348</sup>

Here again, Lavinia is placed in an adjunct position through the use of “*coniunx*” which, despite her position as nominative subject, diminishes her subjectivity. Furthermore, although the verb “*cedat*” in this passage is technically governed by “*Lavinia*”, the grammatical form of the verb is a present

---

<sup>347</sup> *Aeneid*, 11. 479-480. Trans. Frederick Ahl, 2007; my emphasis.

<sup>348</sup> *Aeneid*, 12. 16-17. Trans. Frederick Ahl, 2007; my emphasis.



third-person subjunctive known as a hortatory subjunctive, used in the manner of a command. Turnus is then exerting control over Lavinia and is thereby overriding her subjectivity.

In her third and most famous appearance, Lavinia blushes and cries when she witnesses her mother begging Turnus not to duel Aeneas. I have, as in the above example, quoted this scene in full before but it is necessary to do so once again for my analysis:

*Accepit vocem lacrimis **Lavinia** matris  
flagrantis perfusa genas, quoi plurimus ignem 65  
subiecit rubor et calefacta per ora cucurrit.  
Indum sanguineo veluti violaverit ostro  
siquis ebur, aut mixta rubent ubi lilia multa  
alba rosa: talis **virgo** dabat ore colores.  
Illum turbat amor, figitque in **virgine** voltus: 70*

“Tears flowed over **Lavinia**’s fevered cheeks as she listened,  
Noting her mother’s appeal. An intense blush crimsoned her  
features, 65  
Spreading its radiant warmth through her face with suffusions  
of fire.  
As when the blood of the sea-mollusc violates Indian ivory’s  
Pureness, as lilies when set among roses erupt with a rubied  
Tinge to their whiteness, so the **girl**’s face gleamed changes of colour.  
Love disturbs Turnus’ heart. He stares at the **girl**, full of longing.”<sup>349</sup> 70

In this passage, Lavinia is the grammatical subject as “*Lavinia*” is in the nominative and governs the verb “*accepit*”. As discussed previously during the section on objectification, this passage is more complicated than others in terms of subjectivity. Lavinia is referred to by name and, unlike many of the earlier passages, there is no accompanying noun which would place her in an adjunct position. Instead the short passage focuses on describing her physical reaction. Grammatically, Lavinia is the subject of the first clause in lines 64-65 and, due to the lack of an accompanying

---

<sup>349</sup> *Aeneid*, 12. 64-70. Trans. Frederick Ahl, 2007.

noun, I do not believe there is much room to argue against her position as subject of this particular clause. However, the second clause and subsequent lines allow for some discussion. In the second clause of line 65, Lavinia's role as grammatical subject is swiftly removed. Instead "*rubor*" becomes the nominative subject and therefore governs the verbs "*subiecit*" and "*cucurrit*". Furthermore, the use of "*virgo*" in line 69 and "*virgine*" in line 70 returns Lavinia once more to position of adjunct to Turnus. After the first clause in line 64, Lavinia shifts from a subject who actively reacts to her mother's words to an object who is being described as a blushing virgin. What is even more significant is the fact that line 70 places Lavinia firmly in the position of object as Turnus is described as gazing at her, gripped with "*amor*". From these observations then, I believe that Lavinia cannot achieve true subjectivity in this passage.

The next extract demonstrates an instance in which Lavinia is both the grammatical subject of the sentence and acted on by a verb:

*'...nostro dirimamus sanguine bellum,  
illo quaeratur coniunx Lavinia campo.'*

"Let's settle this war, you and I, with our own blood.

In this arena Lavinia's hand must be sought and contested."<sup>350</sup>

Here, "*coniunx Lavinia*" is the nominative subject, however the passive subjunctive verb "*quaeratur*" technically acts on "*coniunx Lavinia*". Once again, the accompanying noun "*coniunx*" places her in an adjunct position to both Aeneas and Turnus. This serves to support the notion that, while Lavinia is often the grammatical subject, she is still the object of the narrative overall.

The next reference is by Aeneas who mentions her for the first and only time. During his oath to Latinus, Aeneas speaks of Lavinia before the duel between himself and Turnus:

*Sacra deosque dabo; socer arma Latinus habeto,  
imperium sollemne socer; mihi moenia Teucri  
constituent, urbique dabit Lavinia nomen.*

193

---

<sup>350</sup> *Aeneid*, 12. 79-80. Trans. Frederick Ahl, 2007.

“I’ll donate gods and their rites. As my father-in-law, let Latinus  
 Keep both his forces and solemn command. For it’s Teucrians 130  
 who’ll build  
 My city walls; and **Lavinia** will give this community her name.”<sup>351</sup>

In this passage, Lavinia is grammatically the nominative subject, and it is noteworthy that Aeneas does not use any accompanying noun which would place her in an adjunctive position. There are, however, some aspects of this passage which nevertheless remove Lavinia’s subjectivity: although Lavinia indirectly gives her name to Aeneas’ city, she does not appear to give her consent for this at any point nor is she even present during this scene. As such, she cannot voice or otherwise indicate her affirmation of Aeneas’ words. Moreover, the context of the passage indicates that the focus is centred on Aeneas and what he plans to do if he were to win the duel, while Lavinia appears to be more of an afterthought to the conditions of the duel. As such, Lavinia does not possess true subjectivity.

The penultimate reference to Lavinia is also her last physical appearance in the epic which occurs during the scene in which Amata hangs herself. Once again, this is a scene which I have quoted in full previously and will therefore only quote the lines necessary for my present analysis:

*filia prima manu flavos Lavinia crinis* 605  
*et roseas laniata genas, tum cetera circum*  
*turba furit: resonant late plangoribus aedes.*  
*Hinc totam infelix volgatur fama per urbem.*  
*Demittunt mentes; it scissa veste Latinus,*  
*coniugis attonitus fatis urbisque ruina,* 610  
*canitiem immundo perfusam pulvere turpans.*

“**First** to react is **Lavinia**, whose hand rips her own golden tresses, 605  
**Tears** at her rose-coloured cheeks. Then, around her, the rest of the  
 household  
 Riots in grief, the broad palace resounds with their throbbled

<sup>351</sup> *Aeneid*, 12. 192-194. Trans. Frederick Ahl, 2007; my emphasis.

lamentations.

Rumour, fulfilment's foe, makes her death common news through  
the city.

Minds are depressed and Latinus, his garments in shreds, simply  
wanders,

Stunned into shock by the death of his wife and collapse of his city, 610

Fouling his whiteness of hair with the filth of the dust that he sprinkles.”<sup>352</sup>

In this passage, although Lavinia is the nominative subject of lines 605-606 as shown by “*filia prima*”, “*Lavinia*” and the nominative participle “*laniata*”, she is returned to her adjunctive position, this time adjunct to her mother, Amata, via the use of the agreeing noun “*filia*” (Ahl does not translate this, see footnote 340). Furthermore, Lavinia is only referred to in the first two lines of the passage, whereafter the focus shifts to the people of the city and Latinus. I believe that this shift in focus away from Lavinia also aids in stripping her of subjectivity.

The final reference to Lavinia occurs in the last few lines of the epic. Turnus is defeated by Aeneas and begs for his life, claiming that Aeneas has won:

‘...*Vicisti, et victum tendere palmas*  
*Ausonii videre; tua est Lavinia coniunx:*  
*ulterius ne tende odiis.*’

“You’ve won; the Ausonians have witnessed the  
vanquished

Reaching his hands out to make his appeal. Now **Lavinia’s**  
**your wife.**

Don’t press your hate any further.”<sup>353</sup>

Once again, “*Lavinia*” is the nominative subject and is also accompanied by “*coniunx*”, thereby rendering her adjunct to Aeneas and again denying her subjectivity. Here, however, her

---

<sup>352</sup> *Aeneid*, 12. 605-610. Trans. Frederick Ahl, 2007; my emphasis.

<sup>353</sup> *Aeneid*, 12. 936-938. Trans. Frederick Ahl, 2007; my emphasis.

objectification is reinforced as well through the use of the possessive pronoun “*tua*”. In a similar fashion to the example discussed with Latinus and his ‘ownership’ over Lavinia, through the use of the personal pronoun in *dativus possessivus*,<sup>354</sup> Turnus here implies that Aeneas is allowed to ‘own’ Lavinia now that he has won her in battle. It can therefore be seen that Lavinia is often objectified through the dual use of grammar and context.

I will now briefly discuss how Aeneas, Turnus, Amata and Latinus influence Lavinia’s voice. I mentioned earlier in this chapter that Aeneas mentions Lavinia once only during the entire *Aeneid* in Book 12, but never actually talks with or even sees her himself. Furthermore, Aeneas assumes that the victor will marry Lavinia. He does not inquire as to what Lavinia thinks about this proposition nor even requests to see her, and there are no indications that Aeneas has any kind of feelings of love, affection or even desire for her. In stark contrast to his relationship with Dido, Aeneas sees Lavinia purely as someone necessary for the founding of his city and continuation of his line. In terms of Lavinia, it is quite unclear as to the nature of her feelings or thoughts towards Aeneas. Some scholars have speculated that her blush in Book 12. 63-69 indicates her feelings towards the idea of Aeneas as her husband.<sup>355</sup> However, as mentioned before, Lavinia’s true thoughts and feelings are ambiguous, and one cannot definitively claim that she has any feelings at all for Aeneas. I do believe, however, that Aeneas, largely unintentionally, discourages Lavinia’s voice both through his objectification of her (as discussed earlier) and because of his attitude towards her. Aeneas shows a lack of regard for Lavinia’s own feelings and perspective, thereby denying her subjectivity, and makes no effort to obtain any sort of knowledge about her from Latinus. This, I argue, demonstrates that Aeneas discourages Lavinia’s voice.

In contrast, Turnus appears to have stronger feelings for Lavinia, although I argued earlier that his feelings are debatable. Turnus, like Aeneas, never speaks to Lavinia and sees her only once during the scene in which she blushes. He does, however, speak of her by name in three instances, all of which occur in the context of winning Lavinia as a wife.<sup>356</sup> Lavinia’s feelings towards Turnus have also interested a number of scholars, with most arguing that she loves Turnus, or at least has

---

<sup>354</sup> Once again, as in the previous argument regarding Latinus’ ownership over Lavinia, the Roman grammar itself does not imply objectification but, in conjunction with the context of the relationship between Turnus and Lavinia, it may indicate that Turnus believes Lavinia is an object to be owned.

<sup>355</sup> See, for example, Todd, 1980.

<sup>356</sup> *Aeneid*, 12. 17, 80 and 937.

feelings for him.<sup>357</sup> Lyne (1983) has drawn similarities between the way Lavinia's blush is described and the way Dido's love for Aeneas is described; in both cases analogies of fire and wounds are invoked which indicate love or erotic feeling.<sup>358</sup> I have argued, however, that Lavinia's feelings are ambiguous and one cannot truly know whether she loves Turnus or Aeneas, or neither, and this ambiguity is clear from the lack of consensus among scholars. In terms of how Turnus influences Lavinia's voice, I believe that, regardless of whatever feelings he has for Lavinia and *vice versa*, the passages in which he speaks of her demonstrate a certain discouragement of voice. As mentioned earlier, the three times in which Turnus mentions Lavinia by name all emphasise Lavinia's role as a wife. Turnus never speaks of Lavinia outside of this context. Moreover, he never holds any sort of conversation with her nor is there any evidence that he has done so at any point. Turnus never asks for her opinion nor does he ask Latinus what Lavinia thinks about him, Aeneas or any of the events which occur; (in this respect then, the treatment of Lavinia by Aeneas and Turnus align).

Amata's relationship with Lavinia initially seems to be the kind of relationship one would expect between mother and daughter. Amata expresses great concern over Lavinia's engagement to Aeneas and accuses Latinus of not thinking about Lavinia. However, this is soon complicated by Amata's possible feelings towards Turnus. Some scholars have proposed that Amata possessed a strange attraction towards Turnus. This is indicated in the following passage:

*Petit ante alios pulcherrimus omnis  
Turnus, avis atavisque potens, quem regia coniunx  
adiungi generum miro properabat amore;*

"And the loveliest suitor among them was

Turnus.

55

He'd strong ancestry backing his claim; and the queen of the Latins

Pushed to have him join the house as her son-in-law with quite amazing

Love."<sup>359</sup>

---

<sup>357</sup> See, for example, Lyne, 1983 and Lateiner, 1998.

<sup>358</sup> Lyne, 1983: 58-59.

<sup>359</sup> *Aeneid*, 7. 55-57. Trans. Frederick Ahl, 2007.

The pairing of the adjective “*miro*” with “*amore*” is quite strange and indicates a “strong attraction of Amata towards Turnus”, which prompts one to question her true motives for Turnus’ marriage to Lavinia.<sup>360</sup> With this in mind, one then questions whether Amata is truly upset for Lavinia over Latinus’ decision or whether she is more upset for herself. Amata’s feelings for Turnus seem to intensify once Latinus rejects Amata’s plea, causing her to become highly distraught. Amata soon flees away into the woods, taking Lavinia with her and effectively stripping her from the narrative until her return in Book 11.<sup>361</sup> Due to her actions, Amata removes Lavinia from ongoing events, denying her the opportunity to witness the war waged over her and preventing her from any further action until Book 11. In the passage regarding their escape into the forest, Amata is described as “*infelix*” (a word which is frequently used to describe Dido in Book 4 especially after the latter finds out that Aeneas is leaving her). This further suggests that Amata’s feelings for Turnus may be more than simply that of mother-in-law and son-in-law.<sup>362</sup> Amata’s most passionate display towards Turnus occurs in Book 12. 54-63 where she begs him not to engage Aeneas in a duel.<sup>363</sup> Here, Amata’s words and actions invoke the image of both Hecabe and Andromache from Homer’s *Iliad*:<sup>364</sup> Hecabe and Andromache begging Hector not to duel Achilles resembles the manner in which Amata begs Turnus not to duel Aeneas.<sup>365</sup> Moreover, Andromache, in her speech to Hector, claims that life would be worthless without him.<sup>366</sup> Amata, in a similar but more extreme fashion, states that she would not be able to live without Turnus. Amata’s relationship with Turnus therefore seems to be an intense, complicated “psychological relationship”.<sup>367</sup> The mere fact that she followed through on her claim and committed suicide demonstrates her passion and loyalty to Turnus, neither of which she showed towards Latinus or Lavinia (whom she leaves behind without

---

<sup>360</sup> Zarker, 1969: 3.

<sup>361</sup> Woodworth, 1930: 181.

<sup>362</sup> Zarker, 1969: 8.

<sup>363</sup> Burke, 1976: 24.

<sup>364</sup> Burke, 1976: 24. I must note that this is a natural comparison to make due to that fact that Vergil modelled the *Aeneid* on Homer’s epics.

<sup>365</sup> See *Iliad*, 22. 82-89 and 6. 407-439.

<sup>366</sup> *Iliad*, 6. 407-439.

<sup>367</sup> Zarker, 1969: 14.

a further thought).<sup>368</sup> I believe that Amata's complex and passionate feelings for Turnus, as well as her own behaviour towards her daughter, discourage Lavinia's voice: firstly, Amata, like Turnus and Aeneas, never spoke to Lavinia nor is it implied that she had. Secondly, her feelings for Turnus cause her to remove Lavinia from the narrative, effectively silencing her. Thirdly, Amata treats Lavinia as if she were a pawn in a game between herself and Latinus, which objectifies and discourages her voice.<sup>369</sup> I also propose that Amata's suicide, which occurs towards the end of Book 12, emphasises Lavinia's silence: in the second half of the *Aeneid*, Amata is one of several vocal woman, such as Juno, Camilla, Jurtuna and Allecto, three of which are deities and are therefore expected to be more vocal than human women; Amata speaks aloud four times in the epic, in stark contrast to the absolute silence of Lavinia. In all instances when Amata and Lavinia appear together, Amata speaks and Lavinia though present is silent, or potentially silenced by her mother's passionate speeches. Upon Amata's suicide, one may expect that Lavinia now has the chance to speak, even if just in lament for her previously vocal mother. Instead the action switches swiftly away from her and she does not herself physically return to the narrative (although she is mentioned by Turnus near the end of the epic). The *Aeneid* ends with Lavinia completely silent and physically absent after her mother's suicide. Amata's suicide thus signals Lavinia's permanent silence rather than the birth of her voice.

With regard to the relationship between Latinus and Lavinia, they appear together in one scene only, which occurs in Book 7, where they worship the gods together and her hair catches fire. Latinus is as non-responsive as his daughter and does not enquire of her wellbeing afterwards, nor does he elicit her thoughts on the portent. Latinus remains focused on what the priest proposes regarding the omen and then immediately leaves to hear the prophecy of Faunus.<sup>370</sup> As discussed in the section regarding the objectification of Lavinia, Latinus' concerns rest on whom Lavinia *should* marry not whom Lavinia *wants* to marry. Furthermore, once the terms of the duel are broken, and Amata commits suicide, Latinus falls completely into despair, neglects Lavinia, and appears to be uncaring of her now that his legacy is in peril.<sup>371</sup> Latinus, I believe, through his objectification and neglect of Lavinia, discourages Lavinia's voice.

---

<sup>368</sup> Burke, 1976: 26.

<sup>369</sup> Zarker, 1969: 18.

<sup>370</sup> *Aeneid*, 7. 81-103.

<sup>371</sup> *Aeneid*, 12. 609-611.



It is clear then, from the above arguments, that Lavinia is objectified by everyone around her, including her own parents, and denied subjectivity, her voice discouraged by all. Lavinia is often placed in a purely functional role, either as spouse, maiden or daughter, but never as an individual capable of choosing her own actions.<sup>372</sup> Since her introduction, Lavinia is “an object of desire, manipulation and destiny...acting, acted upon and causing action, but not of her own volition.”<sup>373</sup>

---

<sup>372</sup> Todd, 1980: 28.

<sup>373</sup> *Ibid.*

## Chapter Four

### Lavinia: Ursula K. Le Guin's novel *Lavinia*

I will now turn to an investigation of the reception of *Lavinia* in Ursula K. Le Guin's novel *Lavinia* (2008), beginning first with a short biographical description of Le Guin and her reasons behind writing the novel. Ursula K. Le Guin was born in Berkeley, California in 1929 to anthropologist Alfred Kroeber and writer Theodora Kroeber. She attended Radcliffe College and did graduate work at Columbia University. She then won a Fulbright grant to study in France from 1953-1954 in which time she met the historian Charles A. Le Guin and married him in 1953. Le Guin's first novel, *Rocannon's World*, was published in 1966 but her science fiction novel, *A Wizard of Earthsea* (1968), garnered her great critical acclaim,<sup>374</sup> and her next novel *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969) was lauded as "groundbreaking for its radical investigation of gender roles and its moral and literary complexity".<sup>375</sup> Her oeuvre eventually consisted of 23 novels, 12 volumes of short stories and novellas, 11 volumes of poetry, 13 children's books, eight collections of essays, and four volumes of translation involving translations from Spanish into English and a transliteration of Lao Tzu's *The Tao Te Ching* which was written in classical Chinese. Le Guin's major works have been translated into 42 languages and she has won numerous awards and honours including six Nebulas, nine Hugos and the National Book Foundation Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters, as well as being named a Living Legend by the Library of Congress (2000). Le Guin passed away due to poor health in 2018 at the age of eighty-eight.<sup>376</sup>

The themes of gender and morality which are first introduced in *The Left Hand of Darkness* also run through Le Guin's novel *Lavinia* (2008) where the narrative is focused on a woman, originally silent, who struggles through her own moral development.<sup>377</sup> Le Guin did not have any formal training in the subject of Classics as a whole but studied Latin sporadically throughout her academic career, something which she revealed in an interview with Lev Grossman:

---

<sup>374</sup> White, 1999: 2.

<sup>375</sup> The Ursula K. Le Guin Literary Trust (URL: <https://www.ursulakleguin.com/biography>).

<sup>376</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>377</sup> Lindow, 2009: 221.

“I learned a little Latin in high school, junior high, and then I quit. And I kind of learned it again for grad school, because I needed it for my doctorate. But I never got to read the poets. And I always wanted to, particularly Vergil, and I thought, I’m in my 70s, it’s now or never. So I went back and taught myself Latin all over and managed to start reading Vergil in Latin. Because it’s the only way to really read a poet, is in his own language.”<sup>378</sup>

Le Guin, in the same interview, goes on to describe her reason behind writing her novel as being her curiosity over the silent character, Lavinia:

“Just reading the *Aeneid*, and getting fascinated with the whole poem, but then finding this character that has no voice, and kind of wondering a little bit why Virgil, who’s good with women – look at Dido, and so on – why he didn’t do anything with her. And kind of realizing, it just wouldn’t fit in the structure of his poem. He couldn’t. He had to do the battles. But there she is, there’s a person who could be a character, obviously, and could be a strong one. She’s the mother of Rome. So I got thinking, what did she think about all this? They’re both of them being pushed around by oracles, and destiny, and we know what Aeneas thinks about it, but we don’t know what she thought.”<sup>379</sup>

In another interview with Paul Comeau, Le Guin went into more detail regarding what questions about Lavinia she wanted to answer:

“...I began thinking about her: who was she? What did she think about having to marry this foreigner? What was her life like, a king’s daughter in the Bronze Age in that part of Italy? She did what characters of novels do when they start coming to life in your mind. She was just there all the time.... As soon as I asked Lavinia to tell me about herself, she started right in, in her own voice—hence the first-person narrative. I just listened and wrote it down.”<sup>380</sup>

---

<sup>378</sup> Grossman, 2009: no page.

<sup>379</sup> Grossman, 2009: no page.

<sup>380</sup> Comeau, 2010: no page.

However, Le Guin herself does not believe that Vergil *actively* suppressed Lavinia's voice, but rather that he simply neglected to focus on her: "I don't see why he would suppress any voice, woman or man. He's different than most of the classic writers, in whom women's voices are suppressed. He simply doesn't seem to have much of that prejudice against women."<sup>381</sup> Le Guin's novel therefore is not intended to correct or severely criticise Vergil but rather to fill in the blanks which Vergil left regarding Lavinia's character.<sup>382</sup> Before I begin my analysis of Le Guin's interpretation of Lavinia, I will provide a brief summary of the novel and detail important changes, additions and omissions by the author regarding the characters, plot and events in order to provide necessary context to my analysis.

The narrative of *Lavinia* is presented in a non-chronological style from Lavinia's point of view and does not consist of chapters but rather of sections with each section beginning with a line in capital letters. Lindow (2009) comments on how the first part of these sections often indicates a temporary step "away from the events of Lavinia's narrative" which "allow her to comment specifically on her own moral and emotional development...the capitals work well to imply a mature and powerful voice...".<sup>383</sup> For most of the novel, the sections move between Lavinia's narration of her life before marriage and her narration of her marriage with Aeneas. The first few sections which focus on her youth reveal Lavinia's childhood, her relationship with her parents and with her friends and what her life in the palace was like. Le Guin's novel follows the exact same overarching plot of the second half of the *Aeneid*, beginning from Book 7: Lavinia's suitors arrive in Latium to court Lavinia and vie for her hand in marriage, the omen of the bees, the portent of war which involves Lavinia's hair catching aflame, Aeneas' arrival on the shores of Latium, Latinus' proposal that Aeneas marry Lavinia, the shooting of the deer, the war, the ritual in the forest, the duel, the breaking of the duel terms, the resulting battle and the death of Turnus. The novel then continues past the events of the *Aeneid* to Lavinia's marriage to Aeneas,<sup>384</sup> the establishment of Lavinium, the birth of their child, Silvius, the death of Aeneas, the kingship of Ascanius, the joint kingship of

---

<sup>381</sup> Grossman, 2009: no page.

<sup>382</sup> Grossman, 2009: no page; Le Guin, 2008: 275.

<sup>383</sup> Lindow, 2009: 222-223.

<sup>384</sup> It appears that the only source material actively used by Le Guin was Vergil's *Aeneid*. I was not able to find evidence for any other source material, and one must therefore assume that the events described by Le Guin after Turnus' death are not based on any ancient source material.

Silvius and Ascanius, the sole kingship of Silvius and the ‘fading’ of Lavinia.<sup>385</sup> All of these events, however, are told purely from Lavinia’s perspective, unlike the *Aeneid*, and Le Guin invents many details to expand Lavinia’s character. One of the more unusual elements of Le Guin’s novel is the inclusion of Vergil and Lavinia’s ability to speak with him. It is not my intention, however, to engage with this literary device, although I do believe that Lavinia’s encounter with Vergil provides her with an existential understanding of her own reality, and this aids in the recovery of her subjectivity (as elaborated upon later).

Le Guin retains all of the main characters from the *Aeneid* and introduces only three new characters of any importance. Maruna is Lavinia’s slave and most trusted friend whom she also considers a sister. She often accompanies Lavinia when she travels outside the palace. Vestina is Amata’s slave who is extremely devoted to the queen and equally adoring of Lavinia. Salica is Ascanius’ wife who features only towards the end of the novel. Le Guin has also made a few changes and additions to certain original characters from the *Aeneid*: Silvia, in the epic, is a Latin girl who is devoted to her pet stag and is extremely distressed when Ascanius shoots it during a hunt.<sup>386</sup> In Le Guin’s novel, Silvia holds the same role, however, she is also close friends with Lavinia until the war breaks out between the Latins and the Trojans. Her brother Almo is also a character from the *Aeneid* and, in Le Guin’s novel, is one of Lavinia’s suitors as well. Achates is one of Aeneas’ most loyal friends (although he does not feature much nor speak often in the epic) and, in the modern novel, is also in love with Aeneas. Le Guin also modifies the character of Turnus in that she makes him Amata’s nephew, whereas in the *Aeneid* Turnus does not appear to be related to Amata or Lavinia. Juturna, Turnus’ nymph sister from the *Aeneid*, also features in the novel, however, she is not divine but simply extremely devoted to her brother. In fact, it must be noted that Le Guin largely removes all gods and goddesses from her book, aside from the old powers of Latium such as Mother Tellus which is the earth, Ceres which is the grain and Vesta which is fire; however, these are not concrete beings but rather simply powers which Lavinia’s people worshipped. Unlike the Greek, and later Roman deities, these powers were not capable of love, hate or jealousy.<sup>387</sup> Le Guin herself explains, in the afterword of her novel, that she believed the interference of the deities, as in the works of

---

<sup>385</sup> Lavinia’s character in Le Guin’s novel is existentially complex. Lavinia claims that she cannot truly die as Vergil did not write enough life into her to allow her to die, hence Lavinia ‘fades’ out of existence as a physical person. I will not however be dealing with this complex literary device.

<sup>386</sup> *Aeneid*, 7. 483-499.

<sup>387</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 65.

Homer and Vergil, would not work in her novel.<sup>388</sup> Aside from these small changes to the characters, Le Guin is extremely faithful to both the plot, characters and setting of the *Aeneid*.

Although Le Guin herself does not call her novel a feminist revision of Vergil's *Aeneid*, her work does align with many feminist revisions of classical literature in terms of the structure of the novel. Byrne (2012) explains that feminist revisions of classical literature usually occur for two main reasons: firstly, the author wishes to place marginalised female characters in the role of main protagonist, thereby shifting the attention to the thoughts and actions of women and away from those of the male characters. Secondly, the author wishes to "give a voice to those who have traditionally been denied the power to speak".<sup>389</sup> Le Guin's novel seems to follow this approach as she expands Lavinia's marginal role from Vergil's epic and places her in the role of main narrator, which is evident from the constant use of first-person narration throughout the novel. Unlike Vergil's Lavinia, Le Guin's Lavinia has multiple, clearly expressed, characteristics which mature throughout the novel as Lavinia moves from unmarried girl to wife to finally grandmother towards the end of the novel. Vergil's Lavinia has few characteristics: beauty (presumably one of the main factors behind her many suitors), modesty (as seen when she walks with her eyes downcast), obedience (obeys whatever her parents wish of her) and chastity (she is referred to as a virgin multiple times). Le Guin's Lavinia herself, early on in the novel, describes her young self as possessing these same characteristics: "a girl, a king's daughter, a marriageable virgin, chaste, silent, obedient, ready to a man's will as a field in spring is ready for the plow."<sup>390</sup> As the novel progresses, however, Lavinia displays many more attributes which evolve as she progresses from a child to a young woman.

Le Guin's Lavinia is clearly intelligent, often shown in her conversations with or moments with other characters. For example, Lavinia is able to understand and keep up with the politics of her city and its relations with its neighbours, which form topics that Latinus discusses with her during their meetings together.<sup>391</sup> There is no indication in the *Aeneid* that Vergil's Lavinia has been exposed to or understands politics. Le Guin's Lavinia is mature enough to question certain conventions of her

---

<sup>388</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 275.

<sup>389</sup> Byrne, 2012: 7.

<sup>390</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 5.

<sup>391</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 7.

people, such as the need for girls to move to their husband's country upon marriage. She raises this issue during her first conversation with Vergil in the sacred grove of Albunea where he asks her if she favours any of her suitors.<sup>392</sup> Vergil's Lavinia does not appear to possess this level of maturity nor does she question the social conventions with which she has been raised. The Vergilian Lavinia is too obedient towards her parents and the customs of her people to broach such a matter.

Moreover, although Vergil does not describe his Lavinia as possessing *pietas* and only refers to Aeneas in that way, I believe that both his Lavinia and Le Guin's Lavinia possess and value *pietas* to a certain degree. For instance, in both works Lavinia is respectful towards her parents and devoted to her gods: in the epic, Lavinia's *pietas* is shown when she helps her father with his ritual, demonstrating both her devotion to the gods and respect towards her father. In Le Guin's novel, Lavinia's *pietas* is depicted in the same way: she helps Latinus perform rituals to their ancestors in the palace. Le Guin's Lavinia may in fact possess even more *pietas* than her Vergilian counterpart as she also assists Latinus with rituals outside the palace, such as in Albunea at the sacred spring.<sup>393</sup> Further, Lavinia also appears to have the ability to have divine vision, experiencing her first vision when she is twelve, in Albunea with her father, in which she meets her ancestor, Grandfather Picus who is in the form of a bird.<sup>394</sup> This, in my opinion, depicts Lavinia as someone who is highly devoted to her ancestors and her duty as a daughter.

Le Guin's Lavinia is also very loving and compassionate as shown through her interaction with her younger brothers, as well as the babies of slaves, her father and Aeneas. Lavinia described her brothers as "my dears, my dolls. I played with them and adored them."<sup>395</sup> When Amata takes her away to hide in the woods and perform rituals, Lavinia is very attentive towards the babies which have been brought there by their mothers, even though she herself is scared and traumatised by her mother's drunken behaviour and wild actions.<sup>396</sup> When she is able to return to the palace, she also helps comfort the wounded during the war while her mother either stays in her rooms or comes out

---

<sup>392</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 42.

<sup>393</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 27.

<sup>394</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 28-29.

<sup>395</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 6.

<sup>396</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 111; Lindow, 2009: 228.

only to see Turnus.<sup>397</sup> Lavinia is also loving and compassionate towards her father and is emotionally closer to him than her mother, a consequence of their abusive relationship which I will discuss later. Lavinia seeks physical comfort from her father, by holding his hand, after he tells her that Turnus had asked to be her suitor, a notion which Amata strongly approves.<sup>398</sup> Lavinia is extremely loving towards Aeneas and, in the scenes which jump forward to her time as his wife, Lavinia often holds him or is held by him.<sup>399</sup> In contrast, Vergil's Lavinia does not seem to show love or affection towards any particular person in the epic. Although Lavinia does mourn her mother's death, which implies that she holds some degree of care for her mother, Vergil's Lavinia does not seem to show the same degree of love and compassion which Le Guin's Lavinia shows.

Another characteristic of Lavinia is her resolute nature. She is not simply obedient and meek like her Vergilian counterpart but often asks for what she wants and is capable of presenting an argument to support herself if necessary. For example, Lavinia attempts to challenge the need for her marriage and, although she is forced into a compromise by her father, succeeds in winning herself some time to decide on a husband, demonstrating to her father that she possesses her own perspective of the situation.<sup>400</sup> In contrast, Vergil's Lavinia does not seem to question her father's choice of suitor at any point and remains silent at all times.

Le Guin's Lavinia also shows a higher level of maturity than her Vergilian counterpart. For instance, Lavinia is not quick to swoon over Turnus as the other women do,<sup>401</sup> instead she realises that she is not emotionally ready for a husband and, more importantly, she realises that Turnus is not actually interested in her personally, as shown by the following passage: "...while the suitors paraded through and drank their wine, and Turnus flattered my mother and laughed with my father and looked at me as the butcher looks at the cow."<sup>402</sup> Lavinia realises that Turnus does not love or care about her, but simply wants her so that he can use her to gain power and produce heirs. There is no

---

<sup>397</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 133.

<sup>398</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 23.

<sup>399</sup> For example, Le Guin, 2008: 26.

<sup>400</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 74.

<sup>401</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 20.

<sup>402</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 34.



indication in the epic that Vergil's Lavinia even contemplated Turnus' true intentions since she is completely silent and there were no physical gestures or movements to indicate such considerations. I believe then that, while Le Guin's Lavinia initially displays the same attributes which Vergil's Lavinia possesses, Le Guin's Lavinia evolves constantly as a character throughout the novel, revealing many more characteristics than her ancient counterpart.

Le Guin, like Barker in Chapter 1, depicts the objectification of her leading female character in her novel while simultaneously demonstrating how, in a variety of ways, this objectification is gradually overcome until, at the end of the novel, Lavinia completely sheds all objectification and achieves true freedom. In terms of Nussbaum's theory of objectification, Le Guin's Lavinia actually fulfils six of the seven points, one more point than Vergil's Lavinia: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6 and 7 (instrumentality, denial of autonomy, inertness, violability, ownership and denial of subjectivity).<sup>403</sup> I will proceed point-by-point through Nussbaum's list regarding Lavinia's objectification, providing context as necessary.

Point 1 (instrumentality) is demonstrated in the first few pages of Le Guin's novel where Lavinia is viewed as an instrument by her own mother: when Lavinia and her two younger brothers, Latinus (the younger) and Laurens, were children; they all fell ill, and she was the only survivor of the three children. The deaths of her sons drove their mother, Amata, mad, and she often lashed out at Lavinia both verbally and physically, as if she were to blame for surviving while her brothers did not. During one of these times, Amata scratches her nails down Lavinia's face, leaving deep cuts which Vestina, Amata's devoted slave, quickly cleans and treats, repeatedly stating that they would not scar, prompting Amata to state: "That's good."<sup>404</sup> I believe that Amata's words and behaviour imply that she is more concerned about her daughter's appearance than with her emotional and physical wellbeing. Amata is concerned about Lavinia's beauty as any damage to her body would harm her chances of obtaining a suitor and jeopardise Lavinia's marital chances. Amata bases Lavinia's worth on her ability to marry and produce male heirs, and therefore sees her as an

---

<sup>403</sup> In Chapter One, I argued that concepts of subjectivity and 'voice' were linked as I understand subjectivity to be the ability to express one's own opinions, feelings and perspective which, I believe, is most directly expressed through the use of one's voice. Therefore, when Lavinia possesses and expresses her subjectivity, she also expresses her voice.

<sup>404</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 6-8.

instrument to be used for child-bearing.<sup>405</sup> Amata also uses Lavinia as an instrument for her own personal desires regarding Turnus. Amata's affection and attachment to Turnus is clearly depicted throughout the novel, and Lavinia herself notes that Amata strongly desired Turnus' marriage to Lavinia, and her mother's scorn for other suitors.<sup>406</sup> In addition, Le Guin explicitly suggests that Amata has romantic feelings for Turnus, for example during the period in which Lavinia's suitors, including Turnus, arrive at Latium to present themselves to Latinus as possible husbands for his daughter, a scene which occurs long before Aeneas arrives in Latium. Lavinia describes her mother in the following way: "...while my mother Amata spurned and sneered and turned her back on honest men and wooed her sister's son, handsome blue-eyed Turnus."<sup>407</sup> Amata's main reason then for supporting Lavinia's marriage to Turnus seems not to be out of care for Lavinia or for the kingdom, but is rather due to her own attraction for him, something which was only hinted at in Vergil's epic. This suggests that Amata sees Lavinia as a tool which could be used to obtain what she desires.

Point 1 is seen again in Turnus' treatment of Lavinia, especially during the same period in which her suitors visit Latium. During one of the feasts at the palace, Lavinia describes herself as "dressed in white, the meek garlanded sacrifice" and notes that Turnus gazes at her "as the butcher looks at the cow."<sup>408</sup> Lavinia's description demonstrates that she is cognisant of the manner in which Turnus and the other suitors view her, namely, as a prized object in a transaction for power.

One of the first important instances demonstrating point 2 (denial of autonomy) can be seen after Lavinia's suitors have left for their respective kingdoms; Amata calls Lavinia to her room and, contrary to her usual behaviour, is remarkably affectionate and loving.<sup>409</sup> Amata tells Lavinia that Turnus has asked for her hand in marriage and that Latinus wanted to speak with her about this. Amata then repeatedly appears to emphasise that Lavinia has some control over who her future husband will be. She asks Lavinia which man she thinks would be best suited to take over rulership

---

<sup>405</sup> Lindow, 2009: 224.

<sup>406</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 32.

<sup>407</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 33.

<sup>408</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 34.

<sup>409</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 69.

from Latinus and tells her that Latinus would never go against her (Lavinia) wishes.<sup>410</sup> However, despite Amata's apparent claim that Lavinia has control over her future marriage, she soon begins to coerce Lavinia into choosing Turnus, though she does not use his name at first: "Among them all, all the young possibilities, there really is only one who is possible. Who is inevitable. Intended."<sup>411</sup> Amata is attempting to manipulate Lavinia into accepting Turnus as her husband. Moreover, Amata wishes to exert her own control over the matter by strongly asking whether she and Latinus should decide for Lavinia:

"Well, my dear, you need not tell me your choice; but you will have to tell your father — or let him choose for you.' I nodded. 'Do you wish us to choose for you?' The eagerness was strong in her voice. I could not speak."<sup>412</sup>

Amata's desire to control the issue regarding Lavinia's marriage is therefore a clear example of Lavinia's denial of autonomy by her mother. Shortly after Amata speaks to Lavinia, Latinus discusses the issue with Lavinia, who asks her father for five days in which to decide on a suitor. He agrees. Not long after this, however, during a ritual, Lavinia's hair catches fire and Latinus declares that it is a portent from the gods, a scene which occurs in the *Aeneid*. Lavinia then tells her father that, due to this portent, he must go to the sacred place at Albunea and ask the spirits to decide on a suitor for her, eventually resulting in the prophecy which states that Lavinia will marry a foreign man and not a man from Latium. After Amata hears this news, during the night she forces Lavinia to leave with her for the woods on the pretext of performing female-exclusive religious festivals:

"As I struggled awake I saw they were all my mother's women, not mine... I heard Amata's voice... 'If your father can give you away, I can take you away! Come on, now, we must be there at sunrise!'"<sup>413</sup>

Lavinia soon realises that her mother intends to give her to Turnus behind Latinus' back:

---

<sup>410</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 70.

<sup>411</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 71.

<sup>412</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>413</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 105.

“She kept me by her all night... But she had sent for Turnus — what if he came? What if she handed me over to him in a mock wedding, a real rape? What if he took me off to Ardea? There would be nothing, nothing I could do. At the thought my body went stiff, my hands clenched, and I hid my face in my arms. I had to get away from here. I had to find a way to escape.”<sup>414</sup>

This is a clear example of point 2 (denial of autonomy) on Nussbaum’s list of objectification: Amata does not ask for Lavinia’s consent and forces Lavinia to come with her. She takes control over Lavinia’s life and denies her autonomy. Amata’s escape into the woods occurs in the *Aeneid* but Le Guin elaborates on the scene by having Amata plan to marry Lavinia to Turnus in the woods and journey to Ardea with them. This change makes Lavinia’s lack of autonomy even more explicit than in the epic.

Lavinia is again denied autonomy much later in the novel by Aeneas’ son, Ascanius. As mentioned earlier, Le Guin’s novel follows the plot of the *Aeneid* up to the death of Turnus, which is where the epic ends. Le Guin then continues past this and describes many more events. After Turnus dies, Lavinia and Aeneas are married and establish their city, Lavinium. They have a son named Silvius and, although peace reigns, Aeneas is forced to face a few minor battles. Aeneas goes on to establish many treaties among the neighbouring peoples, including the Etruscans; however, while he is away attending to this, Lavinia and Ascanius find themselves often in conflict with each other. Lavinia finds Ascanius immature, and Ascanius is suspicious and jealous of Lavinia. Ascanius also seems to believe in the subordination of women, and Lavinia notes this on two separate occasions: first, during the war between the Latins and the Trojans, Lavinia hears from a Latin soldier that Aeneas left Latium to obtain the help of the Greek king Evander. After some time passes, Ascanius orders two Trojans, Euryalus and Nisus, to sneak out and bring Aeneas back, promising them many rewards if they complete this task, including the following to Euryalus: “twelve Latin matrons to use as he pleased.”<sup>415</sup> This clearly demonstrates Ascanius’ disregard and lack of respect for women. His words indicate that he views women as instruments to be used by men. The second occurs during Lavinia’s marriage to Aeneas. While Aeneas is away establishing treaties with the various Etruscan leaders, Lavinia speaks of Ascanius’ lack of respect for the Latin people and their culture, including their women: “He tended to look down on all things Latin, including our oracles and

---

<sup>414</sup> Le Guin, 2008:109.

<sup>415</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 135.

sacred places; and I heard him say that the best thing about the Greeks was that they knew how to keep women in their place.”<sup>416</sup> It seems then that Ascanius believes women are subordinate to men and should be controlled accordingly, and should be denied autonomy. Ascanius views Lavinia in a similar fashion, despite her role as his adoptive mother and queen. After four summers and four winters of their marriage together, Aeneas is killed during an ambush by a group of Rutulian men, prompting Latinus to crown Ascanius as co-ruler of Latium, as Aeneas was. Initially, Lavinia and Ascanius come to terms with their grief amicably but some time after Aeneas’ death, Ascanius moves permanently to Alba Longa, a city which he established earlier with the help of his father, taking Lavinia and Silvius with him. Ascanius does not consult with Lavinia prior to his decision nor does he ask for her consent to take her and Silvius with him. He exerts full control over her life and ignores how uncomfortable and purposeless the move makes her feel.<sup>417</sup> Through this action, Ascanius denies Lavinia autonomy, and therefore Nussbaum’s second point of objectification is fulfilled.

Point 3 (inertness, i.e. lack of agency) is demonstrated on multiple occasions. One instance occurs in a passage which I have discussed earlier regarding Amata’s attempts to strip Lavinia’s autonomy away: the scene in which Amata tries to make Lavinia agree to letting them choose a husband for her. In this instance, Amata forces her own choice onto Lavinia and therefore acts to deny Lavinia of agency. The next instance occurs a few days after this same conversation: after Lavinia asks for five days in which to decide on a suitor, Amata comes into Lavinia’s room on the fourth evening and angrily commands Lavinia to marry Turnus:

“...you will marry Turnus and be queen of Ardea. You don’t have to cower and whine about it... it’s a political marriage not a rape. There’s one thing a girl is good for, and that’s to be married well and you’re no different or better than any other girl... Say you will marry Turnus.’ she said. ‘Say you will!’ I said nothing. I could not.”<sup>418</sup>

---

<sup>416</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 203.

<sup>417</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 230.

<sup>418</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 78.

It is clear from this passage that Amata desires to remove Lavinia's agency.<sup>419</sup> Amata believes that her daughter should be inert and, in this regard, conforms to "conventional patriarchal prescriptions for women" when she tells Lavinia that a girl is only good for marriage in an attempt to make Lavinia agree to the marriage.<sup>420</sup> Lavinia is again deemed inert (thus having no choice) by her mother when Amata forces her to go with her into the woods, a scene which I examined earlier when I discussed Lavinia's lack of autonomy.

Lavinia is deemed inert towards the end of the novel by Ascanius. I mentioned earlier, during my discussion regarding Lavinia's denial of autonomy, that Ascanius did not trust Lavinia and takes her and Silvius with him to Alba Longa without her consent. Ascanius' mistrust in his step-mother begins to change due to both Lavinia's efforts to placate him and after a succession of successful and powerful victories against neighbouring enemies. These victories seem to result in a calming of Ascanius' attitude towards Lavinia's presence and he even begins engaging in some conversation with her. However, soon after these victories, Ascanius tells Lavinia that he will soon be married and that she would be free to return to Lavinium.<sup>421</sup> He then goes on to tell her that he will keep Silvius with him so as to take over his training, something which Lavinia is completely against as Latinus had advised her earlier not to allow Ascanius to train Silvius due to his hunger for war. Lavinia tells Ascanius that she will not let Silvius stay with him in Alba Longa, shocking Ascanius as he was not expecting resistance from her, assuming that she would do whatever he told her. This indicates that Ascanius does not view Lavinia as possessing true agency as he thought that she was incapable of making her own choices. Ascanius immediately reverts to his previous suspicious behaviour towards her and tells her to reconsider her actions:

"He could not bear contradiction; he did not have the strength that allows opposition... He knew now that he had been right to suspect me all along, all the years I had done his bidding, served his household, bowed my head and held my tongue. I was a woman, therefore never to be trusted, never obeyed. I must be disregarded, or defeated."<sup>422</sup>

---

<sup>419</sup> Amata denies Lavinia agency in the exact same fashion in another scene: after she takes Lavinia into the woods, Amata again demands that Lavinia marry Turnus and have his sons, Le Guin, 2008: 112-113.

<sup>420</sup> Byrne, 2012: 12.

<sup>421</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 236-238.

<sup>422</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 239.

Lavinia only obeyed Ascanius in order to avoid his unwarranted suspicion, but as soon as she attempted to exert her agency, Ascanius saw her as something which needed to be removed and silenced. As such, I believe that Ascanius views Lavinia as inert.

The next point on Nussbaum's list which is fulfilled is point 5: violability, that is, when the objectifier treats the object as something that is permissible to inflict harm upon. I argued in the first section of this chapter that I did not believe that Lavinia was seen as violable in the *Aeneid*. In Le Guin's novel, however, Amata deems Lavinia to be violable. This occurs in the first few pages of the novel: after Lavinia's brothers die from an illness, which Lavinia also contracted and recovered from, Amata begins emotionally and physically abusing Lavinia:

"She did not often speak to me, but if I annoyed her she would turn on me suddenly and tell me in a hard, flat voice that I was a fool, ugly, stupidly timid... Sometimes my presence drove her into actual frenzy. She would strike me or shake me till my head snapped back and forth. Once the fury drove her to tear at my face with her nails."<sup>423</sup>

Amata continues to treat Lavinia coldly throughout the novel, only occasionally expressing affection towards her when the subject of Turnus and Lavinia's marriage arose. She would, however, revert to her cold and abusive behaviour, particularly when Lavinia presented resistance to her wishes. For example, when Amata speaks to Lavinia about choosing a husband, a scene I have mentioned before regarding the denial of Lavinia's autonomy, she is surprisingly loving towards her, yet only a few days later when she realises that Lavinia does not wish to choose Turnus, Amata turns on her own daughter, aggressively demanding that she marry Turnus.<sup>424</sup> Amata is the only person to treat Lavinia as though she were violable.

The next point which is fulfilled is point 6 on Nussbaum's list: ownership. I believe that Turnus, Amata and Ascanius view Lavinia as an object to be owned. Ownership over Lavinia is demonstrated first by Turnus in a scene which occurs soon after Lavinia's conversation with her father regarding her marriage. After Amata confronts Lavinia and demands that she marry Turnus,

---

<sup>423</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 8.

<sup>424</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 78.

Lavinia soon comes to the realisation that, in order to prevent war, her only option is to marry Turnus:

“I saw that I must marry Turnus: it was inevitable. To accept another suitor would be to bring civil war into the kingdom. His agreement with the others meant nothing. Turnus had to compete, to win, to be master; he would never let another man have a woman he had claimed.”<sup>425</sup>

This, I believe, implies that Turnus exerts a certain degree of ownership over Lavinia. Even though Lavinia has multiple suitors, Turnus believes that he has the greatest claim over her, possibly due both to his connection with Amata and his own influence over the Latin people. Because of this sense of ownership, Turnus feels that it is acceptable to wage war over Lavinia’s hand if he is not chosen as her husband. Turnus again demonstrates his claim of ownership over Lavinia when he rallies the Latin people to wage war against the Trojans claiming that Lavinia is his “promised bride” and that Latinus was going to give her away to a foreign man,<sup>426</sup> despite the fact that Lavinia was never actually promised to him.

Furthermore, Amata, although she does not actually sell Lavinia to Turnus, treats Lavinia as an object which she owns and attempts to give her away to Turnus, despite Latinus’ decision to marry Lavinia to Aeneas. This is seen when Amata takes Lavinia into the woods, as mentioned earlier, and keeps her there as captive, surrounded by armed women, with the intention of handing her over to Turnus. Amata is stopped from carrying out her ‘transaction’ by Turnus who does not respond to her summons from the forest as he is aware of the dangerous consequences which would result from Amata’s actions. Lavinia then manages to escape from captivity and runs back to the city with Maruna, her slave.

Lavinia is again treated as an object to be owned towards the end of the novel, this time by Ascanius. After Lavinia asks Ascanius to let Silvius leave for Lavinium with her, Lavinia states that Ascanius had an unconscious sense ownership over her. Ascanius did not acknowledge the extent to which she served and obeyed him: “Ascanius had ruled my life for nearly ten years. I had done his

---

<sup>425</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 78.

<sup>426</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 123.



will not my own, and he had taken that for granted, as if I were a slave.”<sup>427</sup> Ascanius received and expected to continue receiving Lavinia’s subservience because of his unconscious ownership over her, thereby fulfilling point 6 on Nussbaum’s list of objectification.

The last point of objectification which is fulfilled is denial of subjectivity (point 7). Lavinia is denied subjectivity mainly by Amata, Turnus and Ascanius. The first important instance occurs near the beginning of the novel, when Turnus first comes to Latium: Turnus arrives in Latium to visit Lavinia’s parents when Lavinia is fifteen years old, three years before the other suitors come to court her. He dines with Lavinia and her parents but does not speak with her at all. After Turnus returns to his country Ardea, Latinus reveals to Amata and Lavinia that Turnus asked to be Lavinia’s suitor but that he turned him down on account of Lavinia’s young age.<sup>428</sup> I believe that this indicates that Turnus views Lavinia as lacking subjectivity: although he does not speak with Lavinia during his visit or asks Amata or Latinus anything about her or what she thinks, he wishes to be Lavinia’s suitor. In another scene, a bit later in the book, when all of Lavinia’s suitors including Turnus arrive in Latium to court Lavinia, Lavinia describes Turnus in the following manner: “Turnus in fact paid very little attention to me. He did not need to. It was my father he must persuade. My mother, of course was already wooed and won.”<sup>429</sup> Once again, Turnus does not view Lavinia as possessing subjectivity and deliberately does not engage in conversation with her, deeming it unnecessary and thereby discouraging her voice.

The next scene in which Lavinia is denied subjectivity is when Amata forces Lavinia to hide in the woods. I have discussed this scene earlier when examining Lavinia’s objectification with regard to denial of autonomy, agency and ownership. After Amata finds out that Latinus has rejected all of Lavinia’s suitors, including Turnus, due to his ancestor’s prophecy, she forces Lavinia to come with her into the woods. Amata conducts rituals and dances with her female servants, encouraging them to drink and celebrate. Some time afterwards, she calls Lavinia to her and tells her that she has sent for Turnus so that he can come to the woods and marry Lavinia, a notion which terrifies Lavinia (“What if she handed me over to him in a mock wedding, a real rape?”)<sup>430</sup> Amata makes these

---

<sup>427</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 239.

<sup>428</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 18-21.

<sup>429</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 49.

<sup>430</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 109.

marital arrangements without Lavinia's consent and does not ask her for her own thoughts, feelings or perspective on the matter. Amata simply enforces her own desires on Lavinia. A bit later during this same event, Amata becomes more forceful with Lavinia. Amata confronts her as Lavinia is comforting an upset infant, one of the many babies which were brought along: "Her face contorted as if she had toothache. 'He'll breed you,' she said. 'You can count on that. He's not like the old eunuch. He'll breed sons who live.'"<sup>431</sup> Here Amata completely disregards Lavinia's fear regarding her potential rape, and openly insults and disrespects Latinus, regardless of Lavinia's love and deep respect for her father. Amata is too focused on her own feelings to acknowledge Lavinia's feelings and therefore denies her daughter subjectivity, fulfilling point 7 on Nussbaum's list of objectification.

The next important scene which demonstrates the denial of Lavinia's subjectivity occurs near the last part of the novel after Aeneas' death. After Ascanius is crowned co-ruler by Latinus and takes Lavinia and Silvius with him to Alba Longa, Lavinia describes how she assumes the responsibility of running Ascanius' household, as she did in her father's city and in Lavinium for Aeneas. However, she notes that in Alba Longa, unlike in Latium and Lavinium, her presence was not wanted during any councils and dinners which were conducted by Ascanius and his men: "I would have attended councils and dinners with the men as I had done in my father's house and my husband's, but I was not wanted there."<sup>432</sup> Ascanius did not wish for Lavinia's advice, despite the knowledge and experience she would have undoubtedly gained from her time in Latium and Lavinium. Ascanius' choice to exclude Lavinia indicates that he disregarded her perspective, ignored her feelings and deemed her voice as unworthy of consideration. It is clear then that Ascanius does not view Lavinia as possessing subjectivity and point 7 on Nussbaum's list therefore applies in this instance.

Although Le Guin includes instances which indicate Lavinia's objectification, she makes significant changes to Lavinia's relationship with Latinus, Aeneas and Silvius, and Lavinia herself in order to overcome this objectification, resulting in the encouragement of her voice. I will follow Nussbaum's list, examining some instances in which, I believe, each point is most significantly overcome.

---

<sup>431</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 112.

<sup>432</sup> *Ibid.*

There are two important instances in which point 1 (instrumentality) is overcome. The first instance occurs shortly after Lavinia's hair catches fire, which is interpreted as an omen by Latinus. Lavinia comes to her father and asks to talk about her suitors. She asks her father to go to Albunea and ask the powers for advice regarding which suitor she should choose.<sup>433</sup> The crucial point to understand in this scene is that Lavinia, due to her prior conversations with Vergil, has realised that she is destined to marry Aeneas and, as such, already knows what the powers in Albunea will tell her father. Therefore, Lavinia prevents her own instrumentality in the following way: Turnus wished to use Lavinia as an instrument to ensure a gain of power. By marrying her, he could lay claim to the city of Laurentum and the rest of Latium. Amata wished to use Lavinia as an instrument to ensure that Turnus would be her son-in-law. By Lavinia asking her father to consult the powers in Albunea, Lavinia thwarts the plans of both Turnus and Amata and does not allow them to use her as an instrument. The second instance occurs during the passage in which Amata takes Lavinia to the woods and attempts to force her to stay there by making some of her women guard the area. Lavinia initially complies with her mother to perform her rituals and dances, until she could find an opportunity to escape. Maruna helps Lavinia escape out of the woods and they run back to the castle.<sup>434</sup> By escaping her mother's enforced captivity and thereby foiling her plan to marry her to Turnus, Lavinia prevents herself from being used as an instrument.

Point 2 (denial of autonomy) is overcome in two important instances. The first takes place during the oath-taking scene in which Aeneas swears to the terms of the duel between Turnus and himself. In Vergil's epic, Lavinia is not present in this scene, her fate is decided without her as she is deemed not important enough to be included. Le Guin changes this to include Lavinia as a prominent character in the scene who helps with the ritual. This is the first time Aeneas meets Lavinia and, as he recites the oath promising to rule with Latinus if he were to win the duel and to build his own city, he looks at Lavinia:

“‘With me come my gods, Latinus, my father-in-law, will keep his sword and his rule. My people will raise up a city. And Lavinia will give it her name.’ He looked directly at me as he

---

<sup>433</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 83.

<sup>434</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 114.

said that, not smiling, but with a brightness in his face and eyes. I looked back at him and nodded once, very slightly.”<sup>435</sup>

This, in my opinion, is a very significant scene in the novel as it demonstrates that Aeneas, although he has never spoken with Lavinia, in a way asks for her consent for this arrangement. In the epic, Aeneas does not ask what Lavinia thinks nor does he seem to care about her opinion. Here, Aeneas deliberately looks at her as he speaks, silently asking for her agreement which she gives just as wordlessly. This encourages Lavinia’s autonomy as Aeneas gives over some control to Lavinia by asking for her consent to their marriage.

The second instance occurs after Aeneas’ death. As previously mentioned, Ascanius takes Lavinia and Silvius with him to Alba Longa from whence — due to her fear of Silvius being trained in warmongering — she and her son escape. Upon their return to Lavinium, they exile themselves in the woods until Ascanius’ rule begins to crumble. Ascanius falls from power due to a combination of factors, including his inability to have children, the loss of his male lover Atys, conflict with his wife who eventually leaves him and the mysterious transfer of the statues of his father’s household gods from Alba Longa to Lavinium. Once Silvius comes of age, he unofficially assumes the throne at Lavinium and Ascanius becomes more of a secondary ruler, something which he accepts. After a few months of rulership, Silvius comes to his mother in the woods, as she had insisted on remaining in exile, and tells her that he thinks she should return to Lavinium:

“At the end of that summer he rode to the woodcutter’s house on his handsome chestnut stallion, and said to me, ‘Mother, I think you should come back to your city.’ I had been thinking the same thing, and merely nodded.”<sup>436</sup>

Silvius does not command his mother’s return but merely tells her what he thinks, knowing that she is of the same mind. Silvius helps her end her exile at a time when she is ready to do so, thereby allowing her to reclaim her old life in the city which she had built with Aeneas. This, I believe, allows Lavinia to achieve true and complete autonomy as she no longer is under any rulership. Lavinia acted to escape Ascanius’ rulership so as to regain her autonomy but, in doing so, she was

---

<sup>435</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 165.

<sup>436</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 269.

eventually forced into exile and therefore had to again sacrifice some of her autonomy. When Silvius suggests she returns, however, Lavinia does not return to live under her son's rulership as he does not exert any restrictions on her, instead she returns to her own home in Lavinium to live her *own* life.

There are two significant moments in which point 3 (inertness, i.e. lack of agency) is overcome. The first instance takes place six years before Lavinia's suitors arrive in Latium to court her. She is twelve years old, and Latinus takes her with him for the first time to the sacred place at Albunea. There, as they sleep, Lavinia has a vision in which a woodpecker (who is a representation of their ancestor Grandfather Picus) touches twice her eyes with its wings. As they go back home, Lavinia tells her father of the vision, and he believes that this means that Lavinia has been given a gift:

“‘But this time he touched your eyes with his wings.’ I nodded. We walked on a while. Latinus said, ‘Albunea is in his gift. He and the other powers of the woods. He has given you the freedom of it, daughter. He has opened your eyes to see.’ ‘May I come with you again?’ ‘You may come there when you choose, I think.’”<sup>437</sup>

Latinus tells Lavinia that she may choose when she wants to go to Albunea, indicating that he approves and encourages her agency. Furthermore, he states that Lavinia has been gifted a power from their ancestors which enhances the significance of Lavinia's agency. The second moment occurs shortly before Lavinia's hair catches fire during a ritual as a sign from the gods, and Turnus has sent a message to Latinus asking for Lavinia's hand in marriage. Latinus discusses this with Lavinia and asks her to choose a husband from her current suitors. Lavinia refuses to choose a suitor, confusing and worrying her father who was under the impression that she loved Turnus due to information given to him by Amata. Latinus tells Lavinia that he is able to reject all the suitors but asks her what she intends to do: “‘What do you want, what do you intend, Lavinia? You're eighteen. You cannot go on indefinitely as a maiden at home’ ‘I would rather be a Vestal than marry any of those men.’”<sup>438</sup> Latinus then tells Lavinia that she would have been able to become a Vestal if she had other sisters who could marry instead or a brother to take over the throne of Latium.

---

<sup>437</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 29-30.

<sup>438</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 74.

However, since Lavinia is his only surviving child, she is obliged to marry.<sup>439</sup> Lavinia then manages to bargain for five more days from her father, during which time she would choose a husband. Latinus agrees on the condition that she attends all the feasts given for the suitors.<sup>440</sup> If one had to take this passage out of context, it may appear as if Latinus is objectifying Lavinia, reducing her to a glorified object representative of his kingdom's power which must be traded with a man in exchange for the continuation of Latinus' legacy. This, I argue, is what is reflected in Vergil's *Aeneid*. However, because of the context provided by Le Guin up to this point, it is clear that Latinus does not objectify Lavinia. In fact, although he pressures Lavinia into making a choice, he himself admits that he is forced into this by their circumstances and, as royalty, they have a duty to ensure the continuation of their kingdom. Latinus is very clear that he would like Lavinia herself to choose a husband. He could very easily decide for Lavinia, as in Vergil's epic, yet he insists that she herself must make a choice.

Point 5 (violability) is overcome by Lavinia's own actions and there are two important instances of this. As discussed before, Lavinia was only viewed as violable by Amata, and the two moments which I will now discuss involve Lavinia acting in a manner which removes her from further abuse. The first moment takes place after Latinus' first council regarding the skirmishes between the Trojans and the Latins (which occur while Aeneas is away obtaining allies). After the council, Amata takes Lavinia's hand but Lavinia quickly wrenches it away as she is so accustomed to her mother being violent towards her:

“Amata took my hand. Without thought, as if her touch were ice or fire, I pulled my hand away from her and stood facing her, ready to fight or run if she tried to touch me again. She stood staring at me. ‘I won't hurt you,’ she said at last, almost childishly. ‘You have hurt me enough,’ I said. ‘What do you want?’”<sup>441</sup>

Despite Amata's claim that she will not hurt her daughter, Lavinia both physically and verbally conveys that she does not believe Amata and acts to prevent her mother from hurting her by, firstly, physically removing herself from her grip and, secondly, by telling her mother that she had hurt her

---

<sup>439</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>440</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 75.

<sup>441</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 151.

enough in the past. I believe that this results in the prevention of point 5. The second instance occurs after the terms of the duel between the Trojans and the Latins are broken on the battlefield. After the battle breaks out, and Latinus and Lavinia leave the battlefield, Amata confronts Lavinia and accuses Aeneas of breaking the terms of the duel even though it was actually Turnus' augur who did so. Lavinia stands up to her mother and realises that she is no longer afraid of her:

“She spoke to me with savage contempt: ‘So! that's how your great Trojan keeps a treaty!’ ‘He swore peace,’ I said... After what I had seen I had no fear to spare for her. I heard my voice ring out stronger than hers, I felt taller than her as I stood facing her.”<sup>442</sup>

Lavinia's own realisation that she no longer fears her mother allows, in my opinion, for the overcoming of point 5. By standing up to the person who views her as violable, Lavinia demonstrates that she no longer will allow Amata to abuse her and cannot therefore be viewed as violable any longer.

Point 6 (ownership) is also overcome through Lavinia's relationships with Latinus, Aeneas and Silvius. Unlike in the *Aeneid*, Le Guin's Latinus does not exert ownership over Lavinia in that he does not simply marry her off to Aeneas without consulting with her. Throughout the entire time before Lavinia's marriage, Latinus discusses the matter of marriage with his daughter, asking multiple times for her opinion, and for her to make a choice. It is Lavinia who ultimately ensures the marriage of her choice. In a similar fashion, Aeneas does not ever imply that he owns Lavinia and, as mentioned before, silently asks for Lavinia's consent to their marriage and, after they are married, does not exert any rules over her or treat her in any way as an owned object. In addition, Silvius follows his father's behaviour and does not treat his mother as something he owns, obeying and respecting her wishes and choices, including her wish to remain in Lavinium despite his move to Alba Longa after Ascanius abdicates. Unlike Ascanius, he does not force her as if she were a slave, but obeys her wishes despite his own wish to be with her.<sup>443</sup> Lavinia herself prevents ownership over her by escaping from her captivity in the woods. Also by escaping, Lavinia prevents her mother from giving her to Turnus as if she were an object Amata owned.

---

<sup>442</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 169.

<sup>443</sup> Le Guin 2008: 270.

Point 7 (denial of subjectivity) is overcome in general through the many conversations which Lavinia has with Latinus and Aeneas. Throughout the entire novel, Lavinia engages twelve times in conversation with Latinus and thirteen times with Aeneas. When one compares this with Lavinia's complete absence of a voice in Vergil's epic, it becomes evident that Lavinia's subjectivity and voice are encouraged by Latinus and Aeneas. There are also two significant moments in Le Guin's novel in which point 7 is overcome. The first moment takes place after the oath between the Trojans and Latins is broken by an auger from Ardea (who was prompted to do so by Turnus), and Aeneas eventually kills Turnus on the battlefield. Nine days pass before Aeneas receives an audience with Latinus. There, Aeneas presents Lavinia with a marriage gift and asks Latinus where Lavinium ought to be built. Latinus responds by saying that they should investigate the country to see where it would be best, however, Lavinia surprises them by stating exactly where it should be built:

“‘Down the coast,’ I said. My voice was still weak and hoarse. ‘On a hill, in a bend of the river that comes down from Albunea.’ They all looked at me. ‘I saw it there, the city,’ I said. ‘In a dream.’ Aeneas continued to gaze at me, and his face grew grave and intense. ‘I will build your city where you saw it built, Lavinia.’ he said.”<sup>444</sup>

Aeneas does not question Lavinia's dream nor does he indicate that he doubts her, instead he places full trust in Lavinia's belief regarding their city and immediately obeys her advice. Aeneas listens to her and demonstrates that he acknowledges and respects her feelings and perspective on this matter, clearly implying that he views her as possessing subjectivity.

The second instance occurs some time after Aeneas and Lavinia's marriage and the birth of their son, Silvius, Lavinia describes a scene in which she, Aeneas, Ascanius and some of the other Trojan captains and their Latin wives have dinner together, and Aeneas engages them in a discussion on virtue. In her narration, Lavinia notes that it is a Latin custom for men and women to eat together, something which some of the Trojans resisted at first but which Aeneas and his two most trusted captains, Achates and Serestus, took to quite naturally:

“‘So a man can prove his manhood only in war?’ he said meditatively. ‘A certain kind of manhood,’ Achates suggested. ‘Surely wisdom is as much a virtue as battle prowess?’ ‘But

---

<sup>444</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 181.



perhaps one that isn't limited to men,' I said. I will say here that the Trojans had not been used to including women in conversation, nor were any Greeks I ever met. For men and women to sit together at table and speak to as equals was our Latin custom... As queen, I could have my way in such matters. Some of the rougher Trojans needed a lesson in respect, in table manners, which they got both from Aeneas and from me. But others like Achates and Serestus took to this as to our other customs without any trouble."<sup>445</sup>

Here, Lavinia engages quite freely in discussion with Aeneas and the other men. She notes that she and Aeneas encouraged the Latin custom of men and woman sitting together at dinner, and Aeneas does not in any way discourage Lavinia from taking part in the discussion. Instead, he seems to view her participation in the same manner as that of Achates: perfectly normal and acceptable. This, I believe, greatly encourages Lavinia's subjectivity and voice as he helps provide a space in which her opinions on important matters may be heard and valued.

In the following section I will apply Wittig's theory of language and subjectivity, as I did in Chapter One, to my examination of Le Guin's novel in order to investigate how Lavinia's subjectivity and voice is demonstrated and highlighted. While Vergil's Lavinia is voiceless, Le Guin portrays Lavinia as a character with a voice which is "born out of adversity" and narrates with an emotional intensity which "gives her a deeper reality, moving her out of the realm of paper cut out stereotype".<sup>446</sup> Le Guin places Lavinia in the role of main narrator and though the use of first-person narration, which intrinsically involves the use of the personal pronoun 'I', she allows Lavinia to "lay claim to universality" and therefore to subjectivity. As such, Lavinia becomes the main locutor and subject of the narrative.<sup>447</sup> Le Guin uses Lavinia's first-person narration throughout her novel, allowing Lavinia to express her perspective of all events. Lavinia's voice is therefore the controlling and dominant voice throughout the novel, narrating in the past tense which allows her to exert control over the narrative. Le Guin herself explains her thought process behind this in a radio interview with Jacki Lyden:

---

<sup>445</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 215-216.

<sup>446</sup> Lindow, 2009: 223-224.

<sup>447</sup> Wittig, 1985: 80-81.

“Virgil's Lavinia is kind of, like, a stark figure. In the last six books of "The Aeneid," he's doing war. He's not doing love anymore. And she is kind of the stark maiden who has to marry the hero. And that's all he had time for in a sense with her. And yet knowing how well Virgil understood women and respect that he had for them, I felt that was not taking any liberties with Virgil for me to imagine who Lavinia really was and what she was like and what her life was like.”<sup>448</sup>

Le Guin then wished to take this neglected and marginal woman and expand her character, allowing her to narrate her perspective of the *Aeneid*. This approach to the structure of the novel in my opinion, clearly places Lavinia's subjectivity and voice at the forefront of the novel. Le Guin's novel also aligns with Morris' theory regarding female narrators, which I mentioned in Chapter One, in that Le Guin's use of the autobiographical first person singular, as Morris calls it, allows for the “gradual emergence of a unitary subjectivity”, that is, it allows Lavinia's subjectivity to emerge.<sup>449</sup> Moreover, the constant use of ‘I’ enables what Morris calls the “crucial feminist shift from "she" who is object to "I" who experience myself as subject”, therefore, Le Guin's novel changes Lavinia from object to subject in her novel. Aside from placing Lavinia in the role of sole narrator, Le Guin demonstrates and highlights Lavinia's subjectivity and voice by inserting Lavinia into scenes of narrative importance from the *Aeneid* and writing these scenes in such a way so as to make Lavinia an active, and often vocal, participant. I will now discuss some of these scenes, moving chronologically through them.

The first key scene in the *Aeneid* which Le Guin alters is a scene in the beginning of Book 7 involving the portent of bees. In this scene in the epic, bees swarm around a sacred tree in Latium, and it is declared a portent by a seer who predicts that a foreign army will arrive in Latium.<sup>450</sup> Immediately after this event, Lavinia's hair catches on fire, and this is also declared to be a portent from the gods: Lavinia will rise in fame but war is imminent for Latium.<sup>451</sup> In the scene involving the bee portent, Lavinia is not mentioned at all. She is then immediately introduced but is silent and seemingly motionless despite the fire consuming her hair. In Le Guin's novel, these scenes are

---

<sup>448</sup> Lyden, 2008: no page.

<sup>449</sup> Morris, 1992: 13.

<sup>450</sup> *Aeneid*, 7. 64-72.

<sup>451</sup> *Aeneid*, 7. 71-80.

temporally split with the bee scene taking place first, then a few other scenes occur before the scene involving Lavinia's portent. In the bee scene, Lavinia narrates the event from her perspective, describing how her two servants call her to come see the swarm of bees. Latinus then declares the meaning of the portent before immediately turning to Lavinia and calling her to discuss the issue of her future husband. Most obviously in this scene, Lavinia expresses her subjectivity by narrating the scene in the first-person. Le Guin then keeps the focus on Lavinia by having Lavinia converse with her father about her future husband. Lavinia exerts both her autonomy and agency by bargaining for five days to make her decision regarding a husband, a scene I discussed before, and the scene involving the second portent occurs thereafter. This scene stands in sharp contrast with Vergil's depiction as, instead of passively receiving the portent as her Vergilian counterpart does, Le Guin's Lavinia reacts actively and with vigour:

“There were voices crying, screaming — ‘Lavinia, Lavinia! her hair’s on fire —she’s burning —’ I put my hand to my head and felt a queer soft movement in the air about it. Sparks danced and leapt around me, and I smelled smoke...I turned and ran to the fountain pool under the laurel and threw myself down, my face in the water, my hair in the water.”<sup>452</sup>

This active reaction presents a much more colourful picture of Lavinia's character and acts to keep the focus on her, thereby situating her as the subject of the narrative, as Wittig puts it. Lavinia's perspective of the scene is clear here as she describes it herself, thereby allowing her to exert her subjectivity, and shows herself to be an active participant in the scene. Thereafter, Le Guin makes another change to Vergil's text: in the epic, after Lavinia's hair catches on fire and it is declared a portent, Latinus decides to go to Albunea in order to obtain advice from the ancestral spirits.<sup>453</sup> Le Guin changes this: due the second portent, Lavinia is the one to ask her father to go to Albunea for answers:

“‘But because of what happened this morning—the omen—I ask you not to ask me my choice, but instead to go to Albunea, and ask the powers there. Whatever they tell you, I will obey.’ As I spoke he looked up at me heavily from under his heavy grey-black

---

<sup>452</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 80.

<sup>453</sup> *Aeneid*, 7. 81-82.

eyebrows. He listened. When I had spoken, he thought for some while. At last he nodded once again.”<sup>454</sup>

Once again, Le Guin places the focus on Lavinia immediately after the portent scene. In Vergil’s epic, after the portent is declared, Lavinia physically disappears from the narrative until Book 11. Le Guin instead keeps the focus on Lavinia and has her use her voice to assert her subjectivity; Lavinia conveys her perspective of the current situation to her father, and he obeys her. In addition, Lavinia herself goes with Latinus to Albunea which, once again, makes her the focus and allows her to demonstrate her agency and autonomy (as she both chooses to go to Albunea and exerts control over her life by going there). I argue then that Lavinia assumes the “position of the authoritative, speaking subject” which Butler argues is a key point in Wittig’s argument, as she is able to use her voice to change her narrative by asking her father to go to Albunea.<sup>455</sup>

Another passage in the epic which is changed involves Aeneas arriving on the shores of Latium: Aeneas and his people relax in a part of the forest in Latium where they eat some bread and herbs, which they gathered nearby. Ascanius then jokes that they are eating their tables too, and Aeneas realises that his son’s words echo that of his father’s prediction which he had received from him during his journey in the underworld:

‘...*Salve fatis mihi debita tellus* 120  
*vosque,*” ait, “*O fidi Troiae salvete penates:*  
*hic domus, haec patria est. Genitor mihi talia namque*  
*(nunc repeto) Anchises fatorum arcana reliquit:*  
*cum te, nate, fames ignota ad litora vectum*  
*accisis coget dapibus consumere mensas,* 125  
*tum sperare domos defessus ibique memento*  
*prima locare manu molirique aggere tecta.*’

“...Instantly cried: ‘Hail, land owed me by the fates as a debt due, 120  
Hail to you too, Troy’s guardian gods, who have kept your

---

<sup>454</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 83.

<sup>455</sup> Butler, 2002: 147.

commitments!

This is my home and my homeland. It tallies with secrets my father

Left me, that talked about fate. I recall now the words of Anchises:

“Son, when you’re brought to an unknown coast, and when hunger  
compels you,

After you’ve eaten the scraps of your meal, to start eating your  
tables,

125

Then, though you’re weary, remember to hope for a home, to position

Your first houses there, with your own hand. And shield them with  
ramparts.”<sup>456</sup>

Aeneas enthusiastically declares that it is a sign from the gods that they had found their home. Lavinia is neither present in this scene nor does it seem that she was aware of what had happened when Aeneas first arrived on the shores of Latium. In Le Guin’s novel, Lavinia makes the decision to go into the forest so that she can see the Trojans and Aeneas, persuading Silvia, her friend, to go with her. This again demonstrates Lavinia’s agency as she makes the active choice to see the Trojans. They sneak up near to where the Trojan camp is, and Lavinia immediately sees Aeneas. She then narrates the scene, describing Ascanius’ words and Aeneas’ reaction.<sup>457</sup> This scene is important in the *Aeneid* as it represents the end of Aeneas’ journey to find the new home of the Trojans and signals the start of a new section of the epic in which Aeneas must now fight for the fulfilment of his destiny. By changing the narrative so that Lavinia narrates this scene, Le Guin places great importance on her character and strongly pins the reader’s focus on her. Lavinia is once again an active participant in this scene, unlike her absent ancient counterpart, and exerts her subjectivity by presenting the scene as it is seen through her eyes. Wittig’s theory applies here as, instead of focusing purely on Aeneas and his subjectivity, Le Guin focuses on Lavinia and her perspective of this scene. Furthermore, by including Lavinia in this scene, Le Guin changes the narrative of the *Aeneid* in order to allow Lavinia to retain some degree of control, and this is demonstrated further in a scene involving Drances, Latinus’ advisor, which occurs later on: Lavinia describes Drances as someone who views women as beings who have to be controlled:

---

<sup>456</sup> *Aeneid*, 7. 107-135. Trans. Frederick Ahl, 2007.

<sup>457</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 96-99.

“To him, my mother and I were unimportant persons in tactically important positions. We had to be managed. He saw women as he saw dogs or cattle, members of another species, to be taken into account only as they were useful or dangerous. He considered my mother dangerous, me negligible, except insofar as I might be made use of.”<sup>458</sup>

Drances comes to see Lavinia after the first few battles between the Trojans and the Latins and he animatedly heaps profuse praise on Aeneas, telling Lavinia that she “should have seen him as he said that—what a man he is—the man you're promised to!”<sup>459</sup> Lavinia then tells him that she has seen him, which shocks Drances and he stares at her as she goes on to describe Aeneas’ appearance and voice: “Drances continued to stare. The dog had talked.”<sup>460</sup> Lavinia is able to demonstrate to Drances that she possesses agency, as she herself chose to see Aeneas; autonomy, as she exerted control over when and how she would see Aeneas instead of passively waiting for her father to allow her to see him; and subjectivity as she provides her own perspective of Aeneas to Drances. This was only possible due to Le Guin’s alteration of Vergil’s narrative to include Lavinia in the scene involving Aeneas’ arrival, thereby allowing Lavinia to become the narrative subject.

Another passage in the *Aeneid* which Le Guin alters, details Latinus meeting with the Trojan ambassadors whom Aeneas sends to the palace. This is another crucial scene in the epic as it establishes the first peace treaty between the Latins and the Trojans. Aeneas’ men, led by the Trojan Ilioneus, present themselves to Latinus who asks why they have come to Latium. Ilioneus explains that divine fate instructed them to come to Latium and they present him with prized gifts. Latinus then relates the prophecy regarding Lavinia’s marriage and proposes that Aeneas should be her husband.<sup>461</sup> Lavinia, although mentioned, is not physically present in this scene and her fate is decided by her father without her consent nor with any prior discussion. In Le Guin’s novel, Lavinia acts to place herself into the scene, demonstrating her agency and autonomy once again: Lavinia, as Aeneas’ men entered the audience hall, enters at the same time through the royal apartments and stands behind her father’s throne, her presence initially unknown to Latinus. Lavinia then narrates the scene before her, commenting on Ilioneus’ respectful manners and her own father’s diplomatic

---

<sup>458</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 145.

<sup>459</sup> Le Guin 2008: 146.

<sup>460</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>461</sup> *Aeneid*, 7. 193-273.

skill. Latinus tells the Trojan men about the prophecy and, standing up to examine the gifts, sees Lavinia standing there witnessing the scene. Le Guin has Lavinia narrate this important scene from her perspective, allowing Lavinia to express her feelings about the situation immediately after the scene:

““To hear myself promised as part of a treaty, exchanged like a cup or a piece of clothing, might seem as deep an insult as could be offered to a human soul. But slaves and unmarried girls expect such insult, even those of us who have been allowed liberty enough to pretend we are free. My liberty has been great, and so I had dreaded its end. So long as it could end only with Turnus or the other suitors, I had felt that insult, that bondage awaiting me, the only possible outcome...I felt nothing of that entrapment now, that helpless shame. I felt the same certainty I had seen in my father’s eyes. Things were going as they should go, and in going with them I was free.”<sup>462</sup>

Lavinia notes the difference between being promised to Turnus and being promised to Aeneas as being trapped and being free. This, I believe, is due to the fact that she had discovered that Turnus lacked the one thing she valued above all else: *pietas*. Aeneas, on the other hand, possesses this,<sup>463</sup> and this largely influenced Lavinia to choose Aeneas. Byrne (2012) argues that Le Guin suggests that Lavinia’s choice to marry Aeneas coincides with the gods’ purpose.<sup>464</sup> I believe that, since Le Guin chose to exclude the Olympian gods from her novel, Lavinia is given more agency here and actively pushes for the alignment of her choice with that of the ancestors. I argue that Lavinia uses her voice and subjectivity to engineer, through her father, the marriage between herself and Aeneas which coincides neatly with the wishes of her ancestors and Aeneas’ gods. Shortly after this exchange between Latinus and the Trojan men, Lavinia makes a statement which I believe is a good example of Wittig’s theory regarding women taking control of speech and the personal pronoun ‘I’. After Lavinia narrates her feelings about the exchange, she says the following out loud:

---

<sup>462</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 102.

<sup>463</sup> Lavinia learnt many details about Aeneas, including those about his *pietas*, from her meetings with Vergil in the sacred place at Albunea, which I mentioned at the beginning of the chapter.

<sup>464</sup> Byrne, 2012: 15.

“‘I will marry him,’ I said in **my** heart, as **I** went through the rooms of the Regia. ‘I will make him **my** husband, and bring the gods of his house here to join with the gods of **mine**. I will bring him home.’”<sup>465</sup>

In this passage, Lavinia uses the personal pronoun ‘I’ both in her narration and aloud a total of five times and the pronouns ‘my’ and ‘mine’ three times. Lavinia uses these personal pronouns with conviction, something which is further secured through the use of the future tense, and there is a large degree of passion in her voice which allows the readers to understand clearly her feelings. I believe that the use of these personal pronouns coupled with her passionate tone demonstrate a good example of Lavinia taking control of the narrative which enables her to lay claim to subjectivity.

Another important passage in the *Aeneid* which Le Guin changes involves Amata’s confrontation with Latinus. In the *Aeneid*, Amata accuses Latinus of not caring about Lavinia or herself and declares that Aeneas will take Lavinia and run away from Latium with her. Latinus chooses to ignore her; Amata steals Lavinia away into the woods.<sup>466</sup> In Le Guin’s novel, Lavinia witnesses their discussion and tries to tell her mother that she was the one who told Latinus to ask the oracle about her future husband: “Catching up with Amata, I said, ‘Mother, he did as the oracle commanded, and as I myself asked him to do. Truly I did! This is how it must be. It will be all right!’”<sup>467</sup> Latinus then dismisses Amata’s claims that Turnus may be considered a foreigner and leaves. While Lavinia is not present during her parents’ confrontation in the epic, Lavinia in Le Guin’s novel directly involves herself, becoming an active participant and exerting her agency, by attempting to persuade her mother to accept her marriage. Lavinia’s inclusion in this scene ensures that readers of the novel are still focused on her and still view her as the subject of the narrative.

In the next passage, Le Guin makes a very crucial change to Vergil’s narrative. In the *Aeneid* where Amata hides Lavinia in the woods, Lavinia is not focused upon, in fact, she is not even referred to by name, instead Amata’s grief and wild invocation to Bacchus is described.<sup>468</sup> In Le Guin’s version, Lavinia describes the entire experience in great detail, her feelings clearly expressed to the

---

<sup>465</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 102 (my emphasis).

<sup>466</sup> *Aeneid*, 7. 357- 384.

<sup>467</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 103-105.

<sup>468</sup> *Aeneid*, 7. 385-403.



readers of the novel. Lavinia describes how Amata's female servants come into her room at night and wake her up, her mother entering afterwards and urging her to get up. She goes on to describe how her mother's rituals and the other women present made her feel "false, frightened, incredulous, scornful, and alone".<sup>469</sup> Lavinia's subjectivity is clearly expressed here as her perspective on the situation is shown and readers of the novel are easily exposed to her feelings. Furthermore, Le Guin, although describing Amata's actions and allowing her to be as vocal as in Vergil's epic, keeps the focus of the narrative on Lavinia throughout the entire passage. In addition, Le Guin alters Lavinia's reaction to her mother's 'kidnapping': while Vergil's Lavinia seemingly obeys her mother without protest and remains with her until they both return to the city, Le Guin's Lavinia escapes with Maruna from her enforced confinement:

"Without thought or pause I stood up softly and stepped among the sleeping women in that direction...I saw Gaia slumped asleep under the tree like a lump of darkness, her sword standing by her, its point stuck in the ground... We came to the southern gate in the bright early morning. It was shut and there were men guarding it."<sup>470</sup>

This modification of Vergil's writing by Le Guin provides a completely different view of Lavinia's character. Instead of the modest and silent maiden walking passively back to the city beside her mother, Le Guin's Lavinia actively escapes from the woods and takes control of her life, and thus control of her narrative. Lavinia becomes the subject of the narrative instead of the object. This change also allows Le Guin's Lavinia to continue narrating events from her perspective, such as Latinus' appeal to his people to not engage in war and the battles between the Trojans and Latins, both events which occur in the epic but are now seen through Lavinia's eyes. Furthermore, Lavinia's escape from the woods allows her to play a more active role in the narrative than Vergil's Lavinia, for instance, by helping the Latin men who are wounded in battle.<sup>471</sup> Unlike her Vergilian counterpart who is physically removed from the narrative by her mother in Book 7 and only reappears in Book 11, Lavinia is the sole narrator of events in Le Guin's novel and as such lays claim to subjectivity.

---

<sup>469</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 107.

<sup>470</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 114.

<sup>471</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 133.

The next scene in the *Aeneid* which Le Guin alters is where Latinus proposes to his council and Turnus that they make a peace treaty with the Trojans. Despite Latinus' efforts, his council and Turnus erupt into dissension. They are then interrupted by the Trojans who begin advancing on the city.<sup>472</sup> Lavinia is not present during this scene nor is it indicated anywhere that she is aware of these events. In Le Guin's novel, Lavinia witnesses this scene and, although she remains silent along with her mother and Turnus' sister, Juturna, she narrates the scene from her perspective. Furthermore, Le Guin makes a significant change to the scene immediately after this event. In the epic, Vergil describes how Latinus withdraws from his council once Turnus leaves to engage in battle with the Trojans. He then describes how trenches are built around the city and speaks of Amata and Lavinia being escorted back from the woods into the citadel.<sup>473</sup> Lavinia is silent, the "*causa mali tanti*".<sup>474</sup> In the novel, Lavinia is placed again in an active role. At her mother's suggestion, they go to the "the altar of the Lar Popularis" to perform a ritual in order to bolster the people's moral.<sup>475</sup> Although Amata is the queen, it is Lavinia who performs the ritual: "...but it was I who had stood with the king before this altar a hundred times, and it was I who knew and spoke the words he used to speak..."<sup>476</sup> I believe that this places her in the position of subject of the narrative and as the authoritative speaking subject. Although Amata is in a senior position to Lavinia, it is Lavinia who is the main focus of the passage and it is she who uses her voice which encourages the people of Latium. During the ritual, the city's people fall silent and listen to Lavinia, thus prompting her to describe her feelings in her narration:

"I felt flow into me from them a loving trustfulness, a flood of feeling that humbled my mind and yet gave me a sense of great and reliable support. I was their daughter, their pledge to the future, a powerless girl yet one who could speak for them to the great powers, a mere token for political barter yet also a sign of what was of true value to us all."<sup>477</sup>

---

<sup>472</sup> *Aeneid*, 11. 301-462.

<sup>473</sup> *Aeneid*, 11.301-476.

<sup>474</sup> *Aeneid*, 11. 479-480.

<sup>475</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 151.

<sup>476</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 151.

<sup>477</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 151-152.

In this passage, Lavinia herself speaks of her powerful voice and great value, despite her apparent lack of power and objectification.

The next key passage which Le Guin changes is the scene in which Lavinia blushes. As described earlier, in the epic, Turnus declares that he will duel Aeneas; Amata tearfully implores him not to fight and Lavinia blushes and cries at her mother's actions. Although she cries, Lavinia does not actually speak at any point throughout the entire scene, and Vergil focuses on her for a mere six lines, compared to the ten lines which are focused on Amata.<sup>478</sup> In Le Guin's novel, Lavinia exerts her agency by actively ensuring that she is present during the scene: Lavinia sees her mother proceeding to the council room and follows her there. Moreover, unlike the somewhat ambiguous depiction of Lavinia regarding her blush and tears, Le Guin's Lavinia is very clear about her feelings due to the first-person narration, and there is no mystery behind her reaction: "Hearing her begging, I blushed with shame till tears filled my own eyes. I felt the red blood color my face, my neck and breast and body. I could not move or speak."<sup>479</sup> Le Guin explicitly states in this scene that Amata's passionate pleas to Turnus and the manner in which she tries to hold him to her fills Lavinia with shame, making her blush and cry. By presenting this entire scene from Lavinia's point of view, Le Guin allows readers of her novel to focus completely on Lavinia and her perspective on the events happening around her, including the behaviour of her mother and Turnus. In addition, shortly afterwards, as in the epic, Turnus leaves to prepare for the duel but, unlike in the epic, the focus remains on Lavinia as she tells her father that she was attending to the wounded men when he questions why she has blood on her clothes. As such, readers of the novel are focused on Lavinia, and Wittig's theory is therefore applicable here.

Another key passage in the *Aeneid* which Le Guin makes changes to is the scene in which Latinus and Aeneas declare the terms of the duel between Turnus and Aeneas, a scene earlier described in my discussion regarding Lavinia's objectification. In the epic, Aeneas declares that if Turnus were to win the duel, he and his people would leave and never return to Latium. If, however, he were to win, he would rule together with Latinus under the same laws and would build his own city (to be named after Lavinia).<sup>480</sup> Lavinia is not present in this scene, her husband is to be decided without

---

<sup>478</sup> *Aeneid*, 12. 10-80.

<sup>479</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 159.

<sup>480</sup> *Aeneid*, 12. 161-194.

her consent, and she is not even allowed to agree to her name being used for Aeneas' city. In Le Guin's novel, Lavinia is given a much more active role: Lavinia herself chooses to be present during the duel, a decision which Latinus does not even question, and helps her father during the ritual for the oath. Aeneas then makes his oath and, as described earlier, silently asks Lavinia for her consent to his proposal of marriage and to the naming of his city, which she in turn silently gives.<sup>481</sup> Le Guin therefore alters Vergil's text so as to allow Lavinia to provide her perspective of, what I believe to be, a crucial scene from the epic and to take control over her own narrative to a large extent. Furthermore, in Le Guin's novel Lavinia remains the focus and subject of the narrative as the scene progresses: the oath between Aeneas and Latinus is quickly broken by Tolumnius, an auger loyal to Turnus, who kills a Trojan with a spear. The Trojans and Latins begin brutally attacking each other, and Lavinia describes the scene before her while she helps her father return to the city: "Then the world was filled with the enormous bewildering roar of men shouting, drawing weapons and clashing shields. Men rushed past me, this direction and that, shouldering me unseeing."<sup>482</sup> Lavinia, once inside the city, is then confronted by her mother who accuses Aeneas of breaking the treaty. Le Guin shifts the focus away from the battle towards Lavinia, choosing to keep the reader's attention on her and not the male-centred battle. This subverts the androcentric nature of Vergil's epic. Lavinia then defends Aeneas and stands up to her mother who retreats shaken into her room. This is another example of how Le Guin's changes to the scene help highlight Lavinia's subjectivity: because Lavinia was present during the oath scene, she is able to use her perspective to place herself in the position of authoritative, speaking subject. Her perspective enables her to refute Amata's claims regarding the breaking of the oath and this, I believe, gives her the ability to speak and act towards her mother with a sense of growing authority. Lavinia takes control of the narrative here by telling her mother what she witnessed and, in a way, overpowers Amata for the first time, thereby affirming her position as the subject of the narrative. Lavinia then orders her women to ready the palace for a siege.<sup>483</sup> This also stands in stark contrast with Vergil's epic where a crying Lavinia, after appearing in the council scene (Book 12), is seen again only at Amata's suicide in line 605, where she is silent and passive. Le Guin's Lavinia is assertive and becomes an authoritative, speaking subject.

---

<sup>481</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 163-165.

<sup>482</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 167.

<sup>483</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 168-170.

Le Guin alters another significant scene in the *Aeneid*: Amata's suicide. In the epic, as mentioned earlier, Lavinia mourns by silently tearing out her hair when she sees her mother hanging from a makeshift noose, while the rest of the palace grieve audibly.<sup>484</sup> Lavinia is given only two lines and then vanishes completely from the epic. In Le Guin's novel, Lavinia does not mourn her mother, unlike the other screaming women around her, but acts swiftly and efficiently:

"I saw Amata hanging from the noose she had made of twisted cloth and tied over a beam. Her feet were bare. Her long black hair hung down all round her face and body. Sicana and I pushed back the table under her and Sicana held her while I cut the cloth noose with my small knife... 'Wash her,' I commanded Sicana and the others, for she had soiled herself in her agony, and I could not bear for her body to be shamed. What I had to do was tell my father... I am not sure what I said. He stood a while. His face looked very tired and sad; he embraced me, and I held to him. I said, 'Come to her.'"<sup>485</sup>

Le Guin's Lavinia is calm in the face of her mother's suicide and quickly takes charge, ordering her female servants to wash Amata so as to preserve her mother's dignity. Perhaps the strained relationship between mother and daughter acted to prevent Lavinia from grieving properly for her mother, but what is of particular interest is the fact that Lavinia takes immediate action and is authoritative with her serving women and even, to a certain extent, with her own father. Furthermore, Le Guin does not shift the focus away from Lavinia in this scene as Vergil does. Readers of the novel remain focused on Lavinia as she takes her mother down, orders the washing of her mother, and comforts her father.

The next few scenes occur after Turnus' death and are therefore completely new inventions by Le Guin. I mentioned in the beginning of this chapter that Lavinia meets the spirit of Vergil in the sacred place at Albunea and he informs her of some of the events which are to take place in Latium, thereby giving her knowledge over the future. In a peculiar way, Lavinia becomes cognisant of the fact that she is a character in Vergil's poem. I will not deal with this complex writing device but I believe that Lavinia's existential understanding of her own reality is important in order to fully comprehend the following discussion. After Turnus dies and Le Guin's original narrative begins, the

---

<sup>484</sup> *Aeneid*, 12. 600-611.

<sup>485</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 173.

first scene which demonstrates Lavinia's subjectivity occurs immediately. In this passage, Lavinia ponders the fact that Vergil's story has come to an end, yet her story has not:

"But what am I to do now? I have lost my guide, my Vergil. I must go on by myself through all that is left after the end...I came to the centre of the maze following him. Now I must find my way back out alone."<sup>486</sup>

By continuing the story beyond Vergil's epic, Le Guin ensures that Lavinia truly embodies the role of, what Wittig calls, the main locutor, and is therefore able to lay claim to subjectivity more efficiently than before. The next scene which demonstrates Lavinia's subjectivity occurs after Aeneas' death. Lavinia contemplates how her position in her narrative has transformed:

"I remember Aeneas' words as I remember the poet's words. I remember every word because they are the fabric of my life, the warp I am woven on. All my life since Aeneas' death might seem a weaving torn out of the loom unfinished, a shapeless tangle of threads making nothing, but it is not so; for my mind returns as the shuttle returns always to the starting place, finding the pattern, going on with it. I was a spinner, not a weaver, but I have learned to weave."<sup>487</sup>

Now that Vergil's poem is finished and her story must still continue, Lavinia is now the weaver of tales, the poet who is able to take full control of her narrative and is therefore an authoritative speaking subject.

The last passage in which Lavinia is shown to be an authoritative speaking subject occurs a short while after Lavinia and Silvius take refuge in the forest near Latium. Lavinia decides to go to the sacred place at Albunea, the same place where she met the spirit of Vergil, in order to see whether she would obtain a vision from the powers there. She receives a dream in which she sees Silvius now grown up and hears a voice claiming that Silvius will live in the forest with her and that he will

---

<sup>486</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 173-174.

<sup>487</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 140-141. An interesting parallel of the 'weaving' analogy can be observed here in relation to Briseis/Helen in Barker's *The Silence of the Girls*.

become a king of kings.<sup>488</sup> This is the same vision which Anchises shows Aeneas in Vergil's epic when Aeneas is in the underworld. Lavinia then goes to Lavinium and addresses her people, stating what she saw in the dream and making clear her intention to obey the spirits, something which her people welcome with great joy. She then meets Achates from whom she commands compliance:

“‘My friend, I know Ascanius ordered you to bring Silvius to Alba Longa. As your queen, I ask you to obey me, leaving Silvius with me, letting the prophecy be fulfilled.’ He accepted that with a slow bow of his head...”<sup>489</sup>

Although Lavinia's authority is backed by religious conviction, I argue that this scene indicates Lavinia taking complete control of her narrative in such a manner that she successfully becomes the authoritative, speaking subject and lays claim to subjectivity, thereby demonstrating Wittig's theory regarding language and subjectivity.

The last four pages of Le Guin's novel focuses on Lavinia as an old woman and grandmother. Lavinia lives in the same house in which she lived with Aeneas and is the grandmother to four children. She describes how she and Maruna journeyed occasionally to Laurentum, Latinus' city, and Albunea, and how eventually Maruna grew sick and died. Some time later, Lavinia then journeys by herself to the forests of Albunea where she falls ill and narrates how she is now dying. She notes that her physical body is fading but she herself will never die because Vergil “did not sing me enough life to die. He only gave me immortality.”<sup>490</sup> Here we see Lavinia's existential awareness once more and readers of the novel realise that Lavinia is aware of her literary legacy. She goes on to describe how she ‘transforms’ into a bird of prey after her physical death, now able to fly where she wishes.<sup>491</sup> I believe that this is more of a metaphorical transformation and is intended to communicate to the reader that Lavinia as a ‘figure’ in literature lives on.

As in Chapter One, I will briefly address the issue of ‘silence’ in both the *Aeneid* and Le Guin's novel in order to complete my analysis of Lavinia's voice, objectification and subjectivity. In the

---

<sup>488</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 253.

<sup>489</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 256.

<sup>490</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 271.

<sup>491</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 272.

*Aeneid*, Lavinia is completely silent and her character is defined by one scene in which she, to a small degree, physically expresses herself. Furthermore, Lavinia's silence is accentuated by the prominent voices of the other primary female characters in the epic, such as Dido, Amata, Juno, Venus and even Camilla. What is also highly significant, in my opinion, is that Vergil, unlike Homer in the *Iliad*, takes the time to focus on the grief of female characters who may be considered less important than the female characters which I listed above. In the last section of Chapter One, I argued that the issue of silence was also present through the silence of the other slave women. In the *Aeneid*, Vergil does not silence less important female characters, for example, Euryalus' mother is given an entire vocal lament when she sees her son's impaled head being paraded before the Trojan camp.<sup>492</sup> I therefore argue that this further highlights Lavinia's silence.

The issue of 'silence' is carefully handled in Le Guin's novel and is presented in at least two different ways. Firstly, there are three important instances in which Lavinia chooses to remain silent: firstly, in the scene in which Amata comes to Lavinia's room in the evening, after Lavinia had asked for five days from her father in order to decide on a suitor, and demands that she marry Turnus, Lavinia chooses to remain silent.<sup>493</sup> Lavinia's decision (or choice) to remain silent allows her to avoid engaging "in her mother's patriarchal economy, which would entail the exchange of her virginity for a politically expedient alliance".<sup>494</sup> Lavinia's silence therefore empowers her and acts to protect "her integrity, presence and agency."<sup>495</sup> The second instance occurs where Lavinia tries to persuade Ascanius to let Silvius go back to Lavinium with her. After an unsuccessful attempt in which Lavinia kneels in supplication to Ascanius, she chooses to remain kneeling in silence even though Ascanius has refused her:

"I stayed kneeling some little while, silent. It was a deep and uncomfortable silence. His young courtiers were no friends of mine and most of them had no interest in Silvius, but most of them were Latins, and our people have a piety towards the bond of parent and child, as well as the

---

<sup>492</sup> *Aeneid*, 9. 474-497

<sup>493</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 78.

<sup>494</sup> Byrne, 2012: 12.

<sup>495</sup> *Ibid.*



habit of respect for the mother of a household. It was shocking to them to see me on my knees, more shocking to hear my stepson flatly refuse my plea.”<sup>496</sup>

In this passage, silence is used as a manipulative weapon which Lavinia wields with a moralistic mindset. By remaining silent in such a position with Ascanius’ peers still present, Lavinia gains the moral high ground over her step-son and actually exerts her agency. As in the previous passage, silence on Lavinia’s part allows her to retain her integrity and agency. Lavinia also chooses to remain silent during Silvius’ first council, a scene I mentioned earlier regarding Silvius’ encouragement of Lavinia’s subjectivity and voice. Lavinia chooses to remain silent so as not to shock Silvius’ captains who, like Ascanius, were not used to listening to a woman’s opinion or advice. Here again, Lavinia’s silence is not forced upon her but rather it is Lavinia herself who chooses to remain silent so as to prevent conflict or turmoil during her son’s first council. Lavinia is wise enough to understand the mindsets of the young captains and realises how best to act so as to ensure her son’s success as king. As such, I believe that Lavinia exercises great autonomy and agency as she is actually able to control, in part, her son’s success and is able to make choices which she deems to be correct.

The second way silence is presented in Le Guin’s novel is through the somewhat eerie silence of Turnus’ sister, Juturna. Juturna never speaks aloud in the novel, although Lavinia mentions that she does sometimes speak to her and Amata, but “in the barest civility, very softly, calling Amata aunt and me cousin, and sat listening to the council, a translucent grey veil over her head and shoulders”.<sup>497</sup> Lavinia also mentions a rumour that Juturna was raped as a child and, as a result, would not speak to any man except her brother.<sup>498</sup> This, in my opinion, demonstrates a powerful use of silence by Le Guin which acts as a kind of critical commentary on the subject of violence against women. With Juturna’s character, Le Guin provides an example of the violent repression of the female voice, a forced silence by the dominance of men.<sup>499</sup> Juturna is stripped of her voice and her

---

<sup>496</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 243.

<sup>497</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 149.

<sup>498</sup> Le Guin, 2008: 148.

<sup>499</sup> Although Le Guin does not explicitly say that Juturna was raped by a man, it is highly likely that this was the case given the frequency of rape of women by men in Roman times and through to present day.

subjectivity, and therefore stands in contrast to Lavinia who possesses an active voice and reclaims full subjectivity.

I believe that the above discussions and arguments sufficiently show that, in Vergil's *Aeneid*, Lavinia is objectified by her parents, Turnus and Aeneas, respectively, and is unable to lay claim to subjectivity or express her voice. In Le Guin's novel, Lavinia is also objectified at various times by Amata, Turnus and Ascanius but this objectification is overcome throughout the novel by Lavinia's own actions and through her respective relationships with Latinus, Aeneas and Silvius. Lavinia's subjectivity is highlighted through the language and structure which Le Guin uses, such as the use of the personal pronoun 'I', Lavinia's first-person narration and the auto-biographical structure of the novel which, as explained by Morris, allow for the development of one's subjectivity. Moreover, Le Guin makes several changes and additions to important scenes in Vergil's narrative which ensures that Lavinia is, and remains, the focus of the narrative, thereby allowing Lavinia to lay claim to subjectivity and express her voice. Le Guin's novel provides a powerful recreation of Lavinia's character and, when compared to how she is depicted in Vergil's epic, it is clear that, by the end of the novel, Lavinia achieves true subjectivity and freedom of voice.

## Conclusion

In this dissertation, I examined two ancient epics, namely the *Iliad* by the Greek poet Homer and the *Aeneid* by the Roman poet Vergil, and two modern novels, namely *The Silence of the Girls* by Pat Barker and *Lavinia* by Ursula K. Le Guin. The *Silence of the Girls* and *Lavinia* are modern receptions of the *Iliad* and the *Aeneid* respectively, and it was my overarching aim to compare the ancient works with the modern receptions with regard to two specific female characters, namely Briseis and Lavinia. Within this overarching aim, there were two further goals: first, to examine the objectification of Briseis and Lavinia in the ancient epics and the extent to which this objectification is overcome in the modern works. Second, to investigate the formation of, or lack of, each woman's subjectivity, and therefore 'voice', and how the use of language and the structure of both works contributes to this.

Using Martha Nussbaum's theory of objectification to first examine each woman in their respective ancient work, I established that both fulfilled the majority of Nussbaum's points of objectification, with Homer's Briseis fulfilling all seven points and Vergil's Lavinia fulfilling five. An examination of their modern counterparts revealed the incorporation of these points of objectification, however a crucial difference existed between the ancient and modern works: both Barker's Briseis and Le Guin's Lavinia overcome all the points of objectification relevant to them throughout each modern novel. This is accomplished largely through each woman's own actions and with their own voices, as well as via their relationships with certain characters; Achilles and Patroclus, regarding Briseis, and Aeneas, Latinus and Silvius, regarding Lavinia.

Monique Wittig's theory regarding subjectivity, structure and personal pronouns aided in my analysis of each woman's subjectivity and voice. Through a close reading of each ancient text, my examination uncovered the manner in which grammar used in the *Iliad* and the *Aeneid* contributed to the removal of each woman's subjectivity. This involved the extensive use of accusative direct objects and the lack of nominative personal pronouns when referring to each woman, the use of passive verbs, and context which clearly implied that each woman was not the focus or subject of the passage. Each work's structure also allowed for the diminished voice of Briseis, in the case of the *Iliad*, and the absent voice of Lavinia, in the case of the *Aeneid*, due to their limited physical appearances. Upon a close reading of each modern text, I established that the use of the personal pronoun 'I' throughout the majority of Barker's novel and the entirety of Le Guin's novel allowed

for the formation of each woman's full subjectivity and voice. In addition, both modern authors changed the narrative of the ancient works in such a way as to constantly position Briseis and Lavinia as focal characters and subjects. By keeping the focus on each female protagonist, Barker and Le Guin reverse the androcentric nature of each ancient narrative in their novels, resulting in the positioning of the male characters in supporting roles to the main female character. This therefore allowed each main female character to become the subject of their individual narratives.

Furthermore, the relationships between the main female characters and certain people were examined in both the ancient and modern works, specifically Briseis and her relationships with Achilles and Patroclus, and Lavinia and her relationships with Latinus, Amata, Aeneas, Turnus Ascanius and Silvius. The results of the examination revealed the following: in the case of Briseis in the *Iliad*, her relationship with Achilles discouraged her voice and subjectivity. This was due to the complete absence of conversation between them as well as his objectification of her. Regarding Briseis' relationship with Patroclus, it appears from my analysis that Patroclus may have encouraged Briseis' voice. I argued that during Briseis' speech, it is hinted at that Patroclus spoke to Briseis on more than one occasion, which would potentially result in the encouragement of her voice and subjectivity. In addition, Briseis seemed to be far more caring and fond of Patroclus than she was of Achilles and this may also contribute to the encouragement of her voice in Patroclus' presence. In Barker's novel, the physical aspect of Briseis' relationship with Achilles is greatly emphasised and is even seen as brutal on occasion, particularly in the first half of the novel. However, upon Patroclus' death, Achilles begins to engage in conversation with Briseis and spends time with her outside of their sexual activities, eventually resulting in some kind of relationship where Briseis has more freedom than before. Due to their evolving relationship, Briseis develops a voice and subjectivity throughout the novel, and Achilles' actions often result in the encouragement of her voice. Briseis' relationship with Patroclus in Barker's novel clearly aids her subjectivity and voice as Patroclus deliberately engages in conversation with her. He even encourages Achilles to view her as more than a sexual object by inviting her to sit with them in the evenings and admonishes Achilles when he disregards her.

In the case of Lavinia in the *Aeneid*, her relationship with her father, Latinus, and her mother, Amata resulted in the neglect of her subjectivity and voice as neither parent engaged in conversation with their daughter and both largely objectified her. Likewise, Aeneas did not speak with Lavinia at all nor did he request from her parents her opinion or to see her. He also objectified her to a certain

extent which, combined with their lack of conversation, stripped away her subjectivity and voice. In a similar fashion, Turnus also denies her subjectivity. Although Turnus did meet Lavinia and gazed upon her during the scene in which Lavinia blushes, he does not actually speak with her nor does he ask for her opinion or enquire after her feelings. His words and actions also result in Lavinia's objectification. In Le Guin's novel, Lavinia's subjectivity and voice are encouraged by Latinus, Aeneas and Silvius, and discouraged by Amata, Turnus and Ascanius. Latinus, Aeneas and Silvius act to make Lavinia the subject in most instances, engaging many times in conversation, and often follow her advice. They also aid in the overcoming of her objectification. Amata, Turnus and Ascanius objectify Lavinia in various ways and frequently attempt to remove her subjectivity and silence her voice.

The examination conducted in this dissertation shows that, although Briseis and Lavinia hold pivotal roles in the narratives of the *Iliad* and the *Aeneid* respectively, they also experience objectification, and their voices and subjectivity are largely neglected or completely removed. The modern receptions of each ancient epic largely reverse this and grant each woman as much subjectivity as possible while endeavouring to retain most of the ancient narrative.

There are a few ways in which this study may be taken further. Firstly, a direct comparison between Homer's Briseis and Vergil's Lavinia may be conducted in order to ascertain the differences and similarities between each woman's objectification and denial of subjectivity. Furthermore, societal perceptions of real women in the different times of each author may be of interest in order to examine whether the portrayals of Briseis and Lavinia were influenced by societal perceptions. Secondly, a similar comparison may be conducted between Barker's Briseis and Le Guin's Lavinia to investigate the differences and similarities between each modern author's approach to their receptions. The following questions are examples of what may be investigated within this comparison: to what extent does each author's background influence their individual receptions and how does this compare to each other? Is one reception more loyal to their ancient source than the other? To what extent does the literary 'specialisation' of each author (Barker's works lie mainly in wartime-focused narratives and Le Guin's in the genre of science-fiction or fantasy) influence each reception? Lastly, an examination may be conducted regarding what effect Barker's and Le Guin's novels, *The Silence of the Girls* and *Lavinia*, may have on one's perspective of and opinion on Homer's *Iliad* and Vergil's *Aeneid* with regard to the way in which the ancient authors approach

female characters. My discussions in this dissertation could therefore provide a basis for further examination of the above mentioned points.

## Bibliography

### Primary sources

Barker, P. (2018). *The Silence of the Girls*. London: Hamish Hamilton.

Euripides. (1891). *The Plays of Euripides*. Trans. Coleridge, E. London: George Bell and Sons.

Le Guin, U. K. (2008). *Lavinia*. New York: Marina Books.

Livy. (1919). *History of Rome, Vol. I, Books 1-2 (Loeb Classical Library: Latin Authors, Vol. 114)*. Trans. Foster, B. O. Warmington, E. H (Ed.). London: William Heinemann, LTD.

Homer. *Homeri Opera in five volumes*. (1920) Oxford, Oxford University Press. Accessed via the Perseus Digital Library (URL: <https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0133%3Abook%3D1%3Acard%3D1>)

Homer. (1951). *The Iliad of Homer*. Trans. Lattimore, R. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Vergil. *Bucolics, Aeneid, and Georgics Of Vergil*. (1900). Greenough, J. B. Boston. Ginn & Co. Accessed via Perseus Digital Library (URL: <https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.02.0055>).

Vergil. (2007). *The Aeneid*. Trans. Ahl, F. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

### Secondary sources

Arthur, M. B. (1981). 'The Divided World of Iliad VI'. *Women's Studies*. **8** (1-2): 21-46.

Allen, A. (2007). 'Briseis in Homer, Ovid, and Troy' in *Troy: From Homer's Iliad to Hollywood Epic* Winkler, M. M. (Ed.) Malden: Blackwell Publishing. 148-162.

Allen, J. H. & Greenough, J. B. (2006). *Allen and Greenough's New Latin Grammar*. Boston: Ginn and Company.

Bassnett, S. (1993). *Comparative Literature: A Critical Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Behr, F. D. (2014). 'Thinking Anew about Lavinia'. *Illinois Classical Studies*. **39**: 191-212.

Burke, P. F. (1976). 'Vergil's Amata'. *Vergilius*. **22**: 24-29.

Butler, J. (2002) (revised ed.) *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Taylor and Francis e-Library.

Byrne, D. (2012). 'Ursula K. Le Guin's Lavinia : A Dialogue with Classical Roman epic'. *English Academy Review*. **29** (2): 6-19.

Cairns, D. (2005) (Ed.) *Body Language in the Greek and Roman Worlds*. Wales: The Classical Press of Wales.

Cairns, F. (2005). 'Lavinia's Blush (Virgil Aeneid 12.64-70)' in *Body language in the Greek and Roman worlds*, Cairns, D. (Ed.) Wales: The Classical Press of Wales. 195-214.

Canaris, M.M. (2017). *Francis A. Sullivan, S. J. and Ecclesiological Hermeneutics: an Exercise in Faithful Creativity*. Leiden: Brill.

Cavallini, E. (2015). 'In the Footsteps of the Homeric Narrative: Anachronisms and Other Supposed Mistakes in Troy' in *Return to Troy: New Essays on the Hollywood Epic*, Winkler, M. M. (Ed.) Leiden: Brill. 65-85.

Cox, F & Theodorakopoulos, E. (2019) (Eds.) *Homer's Daughters: Women's Responses to Homer in the Twentieth Century and Beyond*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Corbeill, A. (2015). *Sexing the World: Grammatical Gender and Biological Sex in Ancient Rome*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Dué, C. (2007). 'Learning Lessons from the Trojan War: Briseis and the Theme of Force'. *College Literature*. **34** (2): 229-262.



Du , C. (2002). *Homeric Variations on a Lament by Briseis*. Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Erlich, R. D. (2008) ‘A Longish Note on Ursula K. Le Guin’s “Lavinia”’. *Science Fiction Studies*. **35** (2): 349-352.

Fantuzzi, M. (2012). *Achilles in Love: Intertextual Studies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Felson, N & Slatkin M. L. (2004). ‘Gender and Homeric Epic’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Homer*, Fowler, R. (Ed.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 91-114.

Finley, M. I. (2002). ‘The Silent Women of Rome’ in *Sexuality and Gender in the Classical World*, McClure, L. (Ed.) Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd. 147-162.

Foley, J.M. (2005) (Ed.) *A Companion to Ancient Epic*. Malden: Blackwell Pub.

Foley, H.P. (2005). ‘Women in Ancient Epic’ in *A Companion to Ancient Epic*, Foley, J. M. (Ed.) Malden: Blackwell Pub. 105-118.

Formicula, C. (2006). ‘Dark Visibility: Lavinia in the Aeneid’. *Vergilius*. **52**: 76-95.

Fowler, R. (2004) (Ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Homer*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Galinsky, K. (2005) (Ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Augustus*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Glare, P. G. W. (2012) (Ed.) *Oxford Latin Dictionary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gottschall, J. (2008). *The Rape of Troy: Evolution, Violence, and the World of Homer*. Cambridge: Cambridge University press.

- Greene, M. A. (2015). 'Homeric Heroes, Narcissistic Characters'. *Psychoanalytic Inquiry*. **35** (1): 101-116.
- Hardwick, L. (2003). *Reception Studies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Harrison, S. (2007) (Ed.) *A Companion to Latin Literature*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Hauser, E. (2016). *For the Most Beautiful*. London: Penguin Books.
- Haynes, N. (2019). *A Thousand Ships*. London: Pan Macmillan.
- Honderich, T. (2005) (Ed.) *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hornsby, J. (2005) 'Agent' in *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, Honderich, T (Ed.) New York: Oxford University Press. 18.
- James, S. L. & Dillon, S. (2012) (Eds.) *A Companion to Women in the Ancient World*. West Sussex: Blackwell Publishing.
- Joplin, P. K. (2002). 'The Voice of the Shuttle is Ours' in *Sexuality and Gender in the Classical World*, McClure, L. (Ed.) Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd. 259-292.
- Keith, A. M. (2000). *Engendering Rome: Women in Latin Epic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- King, H. (2002). 'Bound to Bleed: Artemis and Greek Women' in *Sexuality and Gender in the Classical World*, McClure, L. (Ed.) Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd. 77-97.
- Kirk, J. (1999) 'Recovered Perspectives: Gender, Class, and Memory in Pat Barker's Writing'. *Contemporary Literature*. **40** (4): 603-626.
- Koziak, B. (1999). 'Homeric Thumos: the Early History of Gender, Emotion, and Politics'. *The Journal of Politics*. **61** (4): 1068-1091.

- Langlands, R. (2006). *Sexual Morality in Ancient Rome*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lateiner, D. (1998). 'Blushes and Pallor in Ancient Fictions'. *Helios*. **25**: 163-89.
- Liddell, H. G & Scott, R. (1996) *A Greek-English Lexicon*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Lindow, S. J. (2009). 'Lavinia: a Woman Reinvents Herself in Fact and/or Fiction'. *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*. **20** (2): 221-237.
- Lyne, R. O. A. M. (1987). *Further Voices in Vergil's Aeneid*. New York: Clarendon Press.
- Lyne, R. O. A. M. (1983). 'Lavinia's Blush: Vergil, 'Aeneid' 12.64-70'. *Greece & Rome*. **30** (1): 55-64.
- Miller, M. (2018). *Circe*. New York: Little, Brown and Company
- Morris, A. (1992). 'First Persons Plural in Contemporary Feminist Fiction'. *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*. **11** (1): 11-29.
- Nagy, S. (2009). 'Girl Guides: Towards a Model of Female Guides in Ancient Epic'. Masters thesis. University of KwaZulu-Natal: Durban.
- Norman, R. J. (2005). 'Autonomy' in *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, Honderich, T (Ed.) New York: Oxford University Press. 71-71.
- Nussbaum, M. C. (1995). 'Objectification'. *Philosophy and Public Affairs*. **24** (4): 249-291.
- Perkell, C. (1999) (Ed.) *Reading Vergil's Aeneid*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Pilarski, A. C. (2006). 'Female Lamentation in the Iliad'. Masters thesis. University of Chicago: Chicago.
- Pomeroy, S. B. (1975). *Goddesses, Whores, Wives & Slaves*. London: Pimlico.

Pulleyn, S. (2000). *Iliad Book One*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Rea, J. A. (2010). “‘Pietas’ and Post-colonialism in Ursula K. Le Guin’s ‘Lavinia’”. *The Classical Outlook*. **87** (4): 126-131.

Rutledge, H. C. (1959). “‘Pieus Aeneas’: A Study of Vergil’s Portrait”. *Vergilius*. **33**: 14-20.

Skinner, M. B. (1982). ‘Briseis, the Trojan Women, and Erinna’. *The Classical World*. **75** (5):265-269.

Skinner, M. B. (2005). *Sexuality in Greek and Roman Culture*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Solomon, R. C. (2005). ‘Subjectivity’ in *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, Honderich, T. (Ed.) New York: Oxford University Press. 900.

Staten, H. (1993). ‘The Circulation of Bodies in the Iliad’. *New Literary History*. **24** (2): 339-361.

Strauss, B. S. (2006). *The Trojan War: a New History*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Taplin, O. (1986). ‘Homer’ in *The Oxford History of the Classical World*, Boardman, J, Griffin, J, Murray, O. (Eds.) Oxford: Oxford University Press. 50-77.

Todd, R. W. (1980). ‘Lavinia blushed.’ *Vergilius*. **26**: 27-33.

Treggiari, S. (2005). ‘Women in the Time of Augustus’ in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Augustus*, Galinsky, K. (Ed.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Werner, C. (2008). ‘Wives, Widows and Children: War Victims in Iliad Book II’. *L'Antiquité Classique*. **77**: 1-17.

White, D. (1999). *Dancing with Dragons: Ursula K. Le Guin and the Critics*. New York: Camden House.

Winkler, M. M. (2007) (Ed.) *Troy: From Homer's Iliad to Hollywood Epic*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing.

Winkler, M. M.(2007) (Ed.) *Return to Troy: New Essays on the Hollywood Epic*. Leiden: Brill

Wittig, M. (1992). *The Straight Mind and Other Essays*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Wittig, M. (1985). 'The Mark of Gender' in *The Straight Mind and Other Essays*, Boston: Beacon Press.

Wittig, M. (1980). 'The Point of View: Universal or Particular?' in *The Straight Mind and Other Essays*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Woodworth, D. C. (1930). 'Lavinia: an Interpretation'. *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*. **61**: 175-194.

Zarker, J. W. (1969). 'Amata: Vergil's Other Tragic Queen'. *Vergilius*. **15**: 2-24.

Newspaper articles, online interviews, book reviews, websites and other media

Brand, K. (2018). *The Penguin Podcast* [Podcast]. 5 December 2018.

URL: <https://www.listennotes.com/podcasts/the-penguin-podcast/pat-barker-with-katy-brand-82IdMuwbL7P/> (Last accessed: 28 December 2019)

Carey, A. (2018). 'The Silence of the Girls by Pat Barker: a Stunning New Novel'. Review of *The Silence of the Girls* by Pat Barker. *The Irish Times*.

URL: <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/the-silence-of-the-girls-by-pat-barker-a-stunning-new-novel-1.3609117> (Last accessed 23 November 2019)

Comeau, P. J. (2010). 'Verbal Dance: an Interview with Ursula K. Le Guin'. Interview with Ursula K. Le Guin. *Fifth Estate*.

URL: <https://www.fifthestate.org/archive/382-spring-2010/verbal-dance-interview-ursula-k-le-guin/> (Last accessed: 25 March 2020).

Greengrass, M. (2019). 'The Waterstones Interview: Pat Barker on The Silence of the Girls'.

Interview with Pat Barker. *Waterstones*.

URL: <https://www.waterstones.com/blog/the-interview-pat-barker-on-the-silence-of-the-girls> (Last accessed: 20 November 2019)

Grossman, L. (2009). 'An Interview with Ursula K. Le Guin'. Interview with Ursula K. Le Guin. *Time*.

URL: <http://techland.time.com/2009/05/11/an-interview-with-ursula-k-le-guin/> (Last accessed: 3 June 2019).

Herzog, R. (2018). 'Reading Consent into the Iliad: the Stakes of Writing from Briseis' Perspective'. Review of *The Silence of the Girls* by Pat Barker. *Eidolon*.

URL: <https://eidolon.pub/reading-consent-into-the-iliad-e2c42ae0b221> (Last accessed: 7 January 2019)

Hill, T. (2009). 'A Fantasist Who Lives in the Real World'. Review of *Lavinia* by Ursula K. Le Guin. *The Guardian*.

URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2009/jun/14/lavinia-ursula-le-guin-review> (Last accessed: 3 June 2019).

Leyshon, C. (2019). 'Pat Barker on Trauma and Myth'. Interview with Pat Barker. *The New Yorker*.

URL: <https://www.newyorker.com/books/this-week-in-fiction/pat-barker-04-15-19> (Last accessed: 3 June 2019).

Lyden, J. (2008). 'Novel Gives Roman Maiden her Moment in the Sun'. Interview with Ursula K. Le Guin. *NPR*.

URL: <https://www.npr.org/transcripts/89698554> (Last accessed 25 March 2020).

Thursfield, A. (2013). 'Pat Barker', Biographical and Critical Perspective. *British Council*.

URL: <https://literature.britishcouncil.org/writer/pat-barker> (Last accessed: 4 November 2019)

Wilson, E. (2018). 'The Silence of the Girls by Pat Barker Review – a Feminist Iliad'. Review on *The Silence of the Girls* by Pat Barker. *The Guardian*.

URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/aug/22/silence-of-the-girls-pat-barker-book-review-iliad> (Last accessed: 3 June 2019).