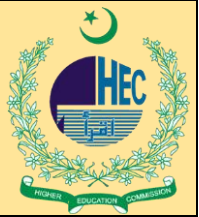




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Print ISSN: [3006-2497](#) Online ISSN: [3006-2500](#)Platform & Workflow by: [Open Journal Systems](#)<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.16950928>**A Critical Analysis of the Women Objectification in *the Silence of the Girls*****Naik Muhammad Kakar**

Visiting Lecturer at the Department of English Language and Literature, University of Loralai,  
Baluchistan, Pakistan.

[naikmuahmmad@gmail.com](mailto:naikmuahmmad@gmail.com)**ABSTRACT**

*This paper investigates Physical objectification of women is a social issue within all the developed and underdeveloped societies of the world as a whole, and they play various roles in society, which is multidimensional yet still seen as weak compared to the men. The women's objectification issue has continued to be a subject of research by different scholars in different parts of the world. In this study, novel *The Silence of the Girls* (2018) written by Pat Barker with the aim of highlighting inequalities and differences existing of the Trojan War. Moreover, it also explored how the same inequalities and injustices affected downtrodden women of the war. Objectification of a woman is one of those discriminations that women go through in a culture of society. This paper examines the objectification of women using the perspectives of female characters that have been chosen from the novel *The Silence of the Girls* (2018). In this paper, the theoretical frameworks of Martha Nussbaum is used to deduce the results of this study. The research results depict that female characters are subjected to objectification and act as objects that are acted upon by males in a male-dominated strata, in the war.*

**Keywords;** Objectification, Women, Inequalities, Male-domination, War, Discrimination.

**1. Introduction**

The act of oppressing women can also be found in the novel *The Silence of the Girls*. It is a novel written by a British, novelist and author, Pat Barker. His fiction has earned him numerous awards. Pat Barker published a novel titled *The Silence of the Girls* in (2018). A novel based on the events of the Iliad, and in particular, on the perspective of Briseis. It starts with the departure of the Greeks led by Achilles who sack Lyrnessus narrating the plundering and setting of the city ablaze, killing of men and carrying off of women including Briseis, the wife (who is still childless) of the Greek King Mynes. Then the Iliad deals with the conflict between Achilles and Agamemnon over Chryseis, the turning over of Briseis to Agamemnon out of revenge by Achilles followed by his refusal to fight, death of Patroclus followed by that of Hector and lastly death of Achilles. Briseis is the story teller mainly of the first person story. It is a narrative by Briseis, a woman whose eyes are keen, her suffering is repressed and she establishes links with fellow female slaves. Stories about how so many women were oppressed, women, who were turned into prostitutes, a slave, a nurse and an officer who cleaned up corpses and bloodied graves.

**1.1. The objectives of this research**

- To explore the subtle means of objectification of women

- To investigate all the ways through which women are marginalized by men in a war trodden society.

## 2. Literature Review

The section is dedicated to harsh opinions of different feminists of the objectification of women. A lot of feminists view objectification of women as the consequence of oppression that was occurring against women throughout the centuries. This is associated with the concept of objectification because when women are being used as means, they are treated as objects—properties that have no agency (Langton, 2004, p. 285). Sexual objectification is only one of the forms of gender oppression (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997, p. 174). Objectification of women and treating women as objects has been going on during the past many decades in the male-dominated society. Objectification is a concept that has been discussed and deliberated on by different feminist writers over the ages. Among them are the known writers Dworkin, MacKinnon, Kant, Nussbaum, and Langton. Women regard the objectification of women as dehumanization and humiliation of the female gender. Feminist interpretation of the current view of gender is held as an ideological framework that groups people into two categories of men and women on the basis of vertical relations of supremacy and subordination (Lazar, 2005, p. 7). Therefore, women are oppressed in a number of ways and means.

Portrayal of female characters in literature is significantly shaped by gender inequality and injustice. “In the portrayal of society, the representation of women emerges as the most significant aspect for the writers of English fiction as part of feminism” (Ahmed, 2009, p. 90). “Indeed, conflicts over gender and class weave together the entirety of human history” (Mojab, 2015). “Socialism and feminism are two greatest movements today. The one aims to eradicate poverty, and the other to destroy servitude among women. Both are world movements. No matter, how backward the nation can be, you will find a revolutionist there preaching that poverty is unnecessary, and that a great organization is working to destroy private capital and to build a co-operative commonwealth. Furthermore, throughout western civilization, and even in the heart of the orient, you also find the woman revolutionist telling her enslaved sisters of the effort among women to attain their freedom, to gain the right to live, not according to men, but according to their own, conception of happiness and right” (Ovington, 1914, p.143).

“History has shown that men have always held all the concrete powers; from patriarchy’s earliest times they have deemed it useful to keep woman in a state of dependence; their codes were set up against her; she was thus, concretely established as the Other” (de Beauvoir, 2010, p.193). “Women as a class are those individuals who are viewed and treated as objects for the satisfaction of men’s desire. In short, women are the sexually objectified, men the objectifiers” (Haslanger, 2012, p.38). “Central to the establishment of social roles for both women and men is the commodification of women, who were the property of men until quite late in human history. Daughters could fetch a bride-price, or be sold as slaves. Later, with the emergence of class systems, lower-class women were often sexually exploited by upper-class men, and if the upper-class men were at the same time white colonial masters, a race dimension appears on top of the gender and class issue” (Majstorović & Lassen, 2011, p.2). “Not only female colonized bodies were the object of observation and control, but also working-class women’s bodies were the target of middle-class and state regulation in Victorian times” (Romero Ruiz, 2012, p.7). “Dehumanization is real. It happens in real life; it happens to stigmatized people. It has happened to us, to women. We say that women are objectified” (Dworkin, 1993). “Being a woman is similar

to being a man's property; a property that he can give to whom he wishes to" (Bari, 2014, p.11). "Feminist thought, moreover, has typically represented men's sexual objectification of women as not a trivial but a central problem in women's lives, and the opposition to it as at the very heart of feminist politics" (Nussbaum, 1995, p.250). "Taking the body as an object has always been a double-edged sword for feminists, for women have traditionally been defined as the body. Over the mind/body opposition that informs our thinking has been superimposed the male/female dichotomy, so that mind is associated with male and body with female" (Romero Ruiz, 2012, p.11).

"To objectify is to make into and treat something that is not an object as an object which can be used, manipulated, controlled, and known through its physical properties" (Calogero, 2012, p. 574). "Objectification occurs when a human being, through social means, is made less than human, turned into a thing or commodity, bought and sold" (Dworkin, 2000, p. 30-31). "Sexual objectification has a crucial relationship to male supremacy. Sexual objectification is not rooted in the natural order of things either; rather, sexual objectification is a habit that develops, because it has an important function in creating, maintaining, and expressing male supremacy" (Stoltenberg, 1989, p. 41). "To be sexually objectified means having a social meaning imposed on your being that defines you as to sexually used....and then using you that way" (Mackinnon, 1989, p. 327). "Sexual objectification occurs whenever a woman's body, body parts, or sexual function are separated out from her person, reduced to the status of mere instruments, or regarded as if they were capable of representing her" (Bartky, 1990, p. 35). The objectification theory proposed by Roberts and Fredrickson (1997) highlights the social and psychological impact of sexual objectification in a woman's life.

According to this theory, women of color encounter double objectification, because, they are not only sexually objectified, but racially as well. Due to sexual objectification, women also undergo self-objectification and start evaluating themselves according to the observer's eye and the society's beauty standards. However, the aim of the objectification theory by Roberts and Fredrickson is only limited to the psychological sufferings that a woman may face in a culture where her body is evaluated and objectified. "This phallogocentric system of thought creates a social structure in which men, positioned at the center as subjects, possess power whereas; women are not only deprived of agency but are marginalized as mere objects in social, political, economic and religious discourses" (Salam, 2011, p. 17). "While men were remembered for their bravery and war achievements, it was the women who were immortalized for their beauty, for their control over others through the objectification of their bodies such" (Balraj, 2015, p. 70). "Ah, but the mystery of man is of the mind...whereas that of the woman is of the body" (Atwood, 1976, p. 166).

### **3. Data Collection**

This study has its data in the novel *The Silence of the Girls* (2018). We chose various women which are found in the anthology. The main female characters of the novel is pointed out and particular attention as it has been depicted in the selected novel.

### **4. Theoretical Framework**

This study is categorically qualitative in nature according to that objectification model that has been glorified by Martha Nussbaum. The extracts of the novel in the book titled *The Silence of the Girls* (2018). has been talked about in terms of the frame of reference of objectification.

### **5. Analysis and Discussion**

Martha Nussbaum is a distinguished philosopher and a feminist who developed a model on which it was possible to discuss the concept of objectification.

"I suggest that in all cases of objectification what is at issue is a question of treating one thing as another: One is treating as an object what is really not an object, what is, in fact, a human being" (Nussbaum, 1995, p. 256-257). She posits the following seven features of treating a person as a thing:

- |                    |                       |                 |                |
|--------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| 1. Instrumentality | 2. Denial of autonomy | 3. Inertness    | 4. Fungibility |
| 5. Violability     | 6. Ownership          | 7. Subjectivity |                |

### 5. 1. Instrumentality

The instrumentality concept is based on the premise that the objectifying dimension consists in the fact that the object is considered to be an implement of his or her aims (Nussbaum, 1995, p. 57).

*"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 down a lip here, a lower eyelid there, prodding bellies, squeezing breasts, thrusting their hands between our legs. I realized we were being assessed for distribution. A few of us were singled out and pushed into a particular hut while the others were led away. (Barker, 2018, p. 24)*

The above quotation is extracted out from the novel *The Silence of the Girls* (2018). It can be said that the text does exemplify that the text does cause the idea of instrumentality as being one of the aspects of objectification. Two men who are Greek warriors, they are powerful men who observe women to use them for their physical desires. Here, two Greek warriors objectify Briseis and slave women and reduce them to the status of an object.

### 5.2. Denial of Autonomy

Under the concept of denial of autonomy, it is assumed that the objectifier operates under the view that the objects do not have autonomy and self-determination (Nussbaum, 1995, p.57). *'Silence becomes a woman. (Barker, 2018 p, 251)*. The passage taken below is from the novel *The Silence of the Girls* (2018). Briseis is main character of the novel who gets used as a toy by the Greek warrior Achilles who takes her to his palace as a slave. The character of the Briseis in this novel is a play object or sex toy on the part of the male characters. The above text indicates that the girl Briseis has also been turned into an item. The suitor serves his purpose of elevating his position of power and male privilege and objectifies her as something that has no independence and freedom.

### 5. 3. Inertness

The second feature is that of inertness, wherein the objectifier takes the object as lacking agency, whereas Nussbaum refers to the object that is not only considered to be lacking activity but also lacks agency. This (Nussbaum, 1995, p. 57). Achilles by the mere fact that she has no family member and all are killed in the war, Achilles leads Briseis to believe that she is useless and worthless. This is an act in which Briseis cannot react to the inhuman acts of the Achilles and she speaks with a lower voice to Achilles and she cannot demand to be respected and be given a status equal to the status of Princes. Briseis states that

*"But then I thought Achilles would have many slaves, all with different functions: weaving, cooking, and preparing his bath, washing bed linen and clothes..." (Barker, 2018 p, 174)*

The character of Achilles appears to dominate over Briseis with his whims and fancies, not giving significance or time to her feelings, but instead, he treats Briseis like a piece of an object.

#### 5.4. Fungibility

Nussbaum articulated that Fungibility implies that the objectifier handles the object in a manner that it can be treated as (a) interchangeable with other objects of the same type and/or (b) with objects of other types (Nussbaum, 1995, p. 57). Briseis seeks solace in a sexual relation with Achilles, who is considered to be one of the Greek great warriors, has enslaved Briseis. The status of Briseis has become very troublesome when Agamemnon demanded Briseis from the Achilles and Achilles resisted because he does not want to offer his prize to anyone else.

*"None of that gives him the right to take another man's prize of honor." He didn't deserve it, thus it doesn't belong to him. (Barker, 2018 p, 85).*

The above quote depicts that women is like prize which can be interchangeable. Briseis is not considered as human entity full of emotions and feelings, but she is considered as toy or anything else that can be changeable. Agamemnon was having a slave Chryseis with whom he fulfills his physical desires, but he has handed over Chryseis to her on her father's plea and demand for Briseis to fulfill his desires and have a slave like Chryseis. So, the interchangeable status of women show that they have the status of objet in the hands of male master.

#### 5.5. Violability

The idea behind 'Violability' is that "The objectifier treats the object as lacking in boundary-integrity, as something that it is permissible to break up, smash, break into" (Nussbaum, 1995, p. 57). The below excerpt depicts that how male master is exploiting and objectifying the subservient female character.

*"She only belongs to me and no one has a right to take my war prize, she was a reward that was given to me from the Greek army as a prize of my services." (Barker, 2018 p, 39).*

This conversation between Patroclus and Achilles shows that female has no sentential importance to men in this man made structure. Woman has been given the status of a thing, or joyful object. Women has no freedom and freewill in the society. This shows that female character lacks an integrity and worth and is reduced to the status of an object.

#### 5.6. Ownership

The idea of ownership assumes that "The objectifier treats the object as something that is owned by another, can be bought or sold, etc." (Nussbaum, 1995, p.57). The below extracts is borrowed in the Silence of the Girls. The character of Andromache portrays in the novel how women become so powerless that they become a tool or an object of lust, to be used by the men in order to satisfy the physical needs of the men.

*"The woman standing next to me said Andromache had just been told she'd been allocated to Pyrrhus, Achilles's son, the boy who'd killed Priam. Looking at her face, you could see how little it mattered to her. Less than an hour ago, Odysseus had picked up her small son by one of his chubby legs and hurled him from the battlements of Troy. Her only child dead, and tonight she was expected to spread her legs for her new owner, a pimply adolescent boy, the son of the man who'd killed her husband." ((Barker, 2018 p.266)*

The text reveals that a woman is being objectified by a male counterpart. Here, the character of Pyrrhus is the objectifier and Andromache is reduced to the status of an object.

#### 5.7. Subjectivity

Subjectivity as it relates to Nussbaum indicates the following: to the objectifier, the object is something whose experience and feelings (if they exist at all) do not need to be taken into account (Nussbaum, 1995, p. 57). Briseis needed a son, yet she was not able to give birth to a

child. It was this issue of being barren and an infertile woman that consumed her thoughts. She fell in love with Patroclus. Hence, she needs a child; thus, she asks Patroclus for a child.

*My entire life would have been different if I had given birth to a son. ((Barker, 2018, p. 7).*

The lines given below reveal the fact that her Achilles looks at her as a piece of an object and does not take into account her feelings and emotions. Briseis and Patroclus are in love but, Patroclus does not want to fertile her because she is the sex tool of the Achilles.

### Conclusion

The critical analysis of the text reveals that women are doing all the domestic chores and men use them to fulfil their bodily desires. Women are considered oppressed and submissive. They have no freedom and right of chose to live their lives according to their will whereas man has the power and authority to subjugate and oppress women in the society. Men are considered the symbol of power. Men are considered human beings whereas women are considered as an object or as toll.

Analysis of *The Silence of the Girl* (2018) reveals that women are subjugated and enslaved in a war between the Troy and Greeks. Briseis, the main character of the novel *The Silence of the Girl* (2018) demonstrates that she and many other women have been enslaved in during the war. Achilles the great commander of the war has enslaved Briseis a Princess and she has been used by Achilles for his bodily pleasure. Briseis has no importance than as sex toll. She is used as toy by Achilles to get his body pleasure. Once she was princess and now she is become no more than a plying object. Achilles is the objectifier and Briseis is the object. In the same way, Andromache has also used by Pyrrhus for his sexual desires and she has been owned by various men to fulfil their lust. Pyrrhus is the objectifier and Andromache is an object. Similarly, other female characters are also used for bodily pleasure by the warriors after they have enslaved. it is concluded that the features of objectification given by Martha Nussbaum is present in the novel *The Silence of the Girl* (2018) written by Pat Barker and objectification of women takes place during the war where women are enslaved in *The Silence of the Girl* (2018) Pat Barker.

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