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“Being a Caged Child”:

A Psychoanalytical Study of Alicia Berenson and Theo

Faber in Alex Michaelides’ *The Silent Patient*(2019)

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to all the young individuals who have embraced academic validation as their coping mechanism, the ones who have confronted their psychological turmoil and traumas, transcending them to embrace their true selves and fulfill their potential. I would also dedicate this work to my dear Father, who is the one after Allah SWT, behind my success and willing to keep resisting, and to the one person who accompanied me throughout this journey. I express my heartfelt gratitude to my mother and siblings for being my unwavering pillars of support throughout my journey, their constant encouragement and belief in me have been invaluable. I would also like to extend my appreciation to my dearest friend Madjda, alongside all my college friends especially Maria and Dhikra, whom emotional support has been a constant source of strength for making this journey more manageable and enjoyable for me. I am immensely grateful to Mrs. Abbassi Houda, the teacher who ignited my passion for studying English and inspired me to pursue this path. Lastly, and with my heartfelt thanks to Mr. Benabdelrrezak and Ms. Hamed for their tenacious support and guidance throughout my journey.

Declaration of Integrity

I, Namane Maroua Malek, solemnly declare that the dissertation entitled “*Being a Caged Child*” : A Psychoanalytical Study of Alicia Berenson and Theo Faber in Alex Michaelides’ *the Silent Patient* submitted to the Department of the English language and Literature at Biskra University is entirely my own work, free from plagiarism, and has not been submitted to any other educational institution. I have appropriately acknowledged and cited all sources used, and I have conducted myself with academic integrity throughout the process. I understand the severe consequences of academic misconduct and affirm the authenticity of my dissertation.

NAMANE Maroua Malek

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Abstract

This dissertation offers an analytical examination of the concept of being a caged child covered in *the Silent Patient* novel. The main objective of this dissertation is to examine how the protagonists' relationships with their parents, during childhood impact their psychological development. Therefore, this dissertation explores the characters' relationships with the external world and their internal psychic worlds, through qualitative methods such as content analysis and textual analysis by applying psychoanalysis of Sigmund Freud, in addition to Donald Winnicott's concept of good enough mother and holding environment, and Wilfred Bion concept of containment under the scope of object relations theory. It investigates how early experiences and interactions influence the protagonists' psychological development, subsequent relationships, and behaviors. Similarly, the dissertation aims to unravel the reasons behind Alicia's silence following the accusation of her spouse's murder, and Theo's criminal aspect.

Keywords : Alex Michaelides, Childhood, Mental Health, Object relations, Parents, Psychoanalysis, Silence, *the Silent Patient*.

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General Introduction

Literature encompasses a diverse range of works including creative writings and factual accounts, that serve as a reflection of society while embracing aesthetic and artistic values. It establishes a deep connection between literature and humanity by reflecting the realities of human life, cultural norms, moral principles, traditions, and the experiences of people from various parts of the world. The essence of literature lies in its ability to convey an authentic portrayal of real life. Through its exploration of societal conditions, literature offers insights into the complexities and intricacies of human existence.

Within the realm of literature, different genres provide a platform for writers to express their ideas and thoughts in creative ways. These genres include short stories, poems, dramas, prose, and plays. Among them, the novel has emerged as a dominant form, with its increased popularity and the trend of novel writing. The novel, along with its shorter counterpart, the short story, captures precious images of human life and society.

In novels, a significant theme revolves around the protagonist, highlighting the conflicts and challenges faced by the character. This portrayal depicts the ups and downs experienced by the character throughout their journey. Whether the character is based on a real-life individual or is fictional, the writer delves into the depths of the human mind, portraying a chain of reactions that provides readers with insights into the complexities of human psychology. For instance, the works of Fyodor Dostoevsky, such as *Crime and Punishment* and *Notes from Underground*, delve into the depths of human psychology, delving into themes of guilt, morality, and the inner workings of the human mind. These novels provide profound insights into the psychological turmoil experienced by their characters, showcasing the impact of their thoughts and emotions on

their actions. Moreover, Virginia Woolf's novel *Mrs. Dalloway* is the prime example of psychological-thriller based novel of the twentieth century, where the stream-of-consciousness narrative technique is employed to depict the inner thoughts and perceptions of the characters. Through this psychological exploration, Woolf brings to light the complexities of human consciousness and the interplay between individual experience and societal pressures.

One notable example of a novel of contemporary literature that delves into psychological elements is *The Silent Patient* by Alex Michaelides. Published in 2019, the novel explores psychological thriller elements. Alex Michaelides, a Cypriot writer, brings his background as a screenwriter and his in-depth understanding of human psychology to create a gripping narrative. Having studied human psychology for three years and worked in a secure unit for young adults for two years, Michaelides draws upon his experiences to infuse the novel with psychological depth and complexity. Through such works, literature serves as a powerful medium for understanding and exploring the intricacies of the human psyche, providing readers with a deeper understanding of the psychological elements that shape men's lives and society. The novel revolves around the story of Alicia Berenson, an artist accused of murdering her spouse, Gabriel, in their London home. Alicia is found covered in blood, with Gabriel bound and shot multiple times. She remains silent throughout the investigation and is sent to a mental asylum due to her history of mental health problems. This mysterious silence captures public attention, and various psychotherapists attempt to understand Alicia's mental state. Forensic psychotherapist Theo Faber takes on Alicia's case and delves into her past to uncover the reasons behind the crime. The novel raises important questions about mental health issues and invites readers to explore the protagonist's psyche to understand the reason behind the leading events to the crime, and the psychological turmoil of the protagonists especially in regard to their parents.

The Silent Patient is selected as the focal point of examination in this study. It is chosen due to its compelling portrayal of the complex interplay between individuals' psychological states and their external relationships, particularly the impact of parental figures. This study endeavors to explore the concept of "*Being a Caged Child*" as depicted in *The Silent Patient*. The term "Caged Child" refers to the psychological state of feeling trapped, confined, or restricted within one's own internal world due to past experiences, traumatic events, or adverse relationships.

Therefore, the primary objective of this study is to analyze *The Silent Patient* and examine how parental figures and external relationships contribute to the formation of adults' psyche. Specifically, the focus is on understanding the profound impact of the abusive father figure and absent mother, which often leads to the development of severe mental health issues. This aspect of the study necessitates the application of the psychoanalytic approach, as it enables a comprehensive exploration of the unconscious mind, unresolved childhood conflicts, and the interplay between familial dynamics and psychological well-being.

By employing the psychoanalytic lens, this dissertation seeks to delve into the intricate layers of the protagonists' experiences, motivations, and behaviors, as portrayed in "The Silent Patient." The examination will shed light on how the absence of a father's figure influences the character's psychological development, shaping their perceptions, relationships, and overall mental health. Through a psychoanalytic perspective, the study aims to uncover the underlying psychological mechanisms that contribute to the character's struggles and unravel the complex interplay between their past experiences and present psychological state.

In addition to psychoanalysis, Donald Winnicott's concept of good enough mother and holding environment, and Wilfred Bion concept of containment under the scope of object

relations theory will be applied in this study. Object relations theory aims examining an individual's relationships with the external world and their internal psychic world. According to object relations theorists, the fundamental structure of the internal world is largely shaped during the early years of life. Childhood is regarded as the crucial period during which the psyche internalizes the relationships formed with individuals in the external world. This theoretical framework provides valuable insights into understanding how early experiences and interactions influence an individual's psychological development and their subsequent relationships and behaviors. By employing object relations theory, this study aims to shed light on the significance of these early relationships in shaping the individual's psyche and their subsequent mental and emotional well-being.

Additionally, this study aims to address the following key questions:

- To what extent does the psychological environment experienced by the protagonists during their childhood impact their mental health state and contribute to the caging of their inner child?
- How does the presence or absence of a mother figure shape the protagonists' subsequent relationships and psychological well-being?
- What are the factors that drive Alicia to choose silence as her response after being accused of her spouse's murder?

The first chapter of this study is dedicated to providing the theoretical background for the theories applied in the study. It aims to establish a strong foundation by discussing the key theoretical frameworks and concepts that form the basis of the research.

The chapter begins with an overview of psychoanalytic theory, highlighting its significance in understanding human behavior and mental processes. It delves into the works of influential

theorists such as Sigmund Freud, Winnicott, and Bion, discussing their contributions to psychoanalysis and their perspectives on the unconscious mind, and the role of early childhood experiences.

Furthermore, the second chapter of this study is dedicated to exploring the contextual aspects of the study. It delves into the outer surroundings and environments that shape the lives of the main characters, Alicia and Theo, and examines their impact on their psychological well-being. The chapter begins by providing a detailed background of Alicia's life, including her upbringing, family dynamics, and social environment. It explores the influence of her childhood experiences, relationships with family members, and any significant events or traumas that may have contributed to her current mental state. The chapter also examines the societal and cultural factors that may have affected Alicia's perception of herself and her place in the world. Similarly, the chapter delves into Theo's background, shedding light on his upbringing, family dynamics, and social context. It explores the role of his parents, particularly his relationship with his father, and how these early experiences may have shaped his beliefs, behaviors, and approach to relationships. The chapter also considers the societal and cultural influences that have impacted Theo's development and understanding of himself.

Similarly, the third chapter of this study is dedicated to the analysis of the data gathered, where the theoretical framework is applied to the context of the novel in order to explain the concept of the caged child. This chapter aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how the characters' experiences and psychological backgrounds align with the theoretical concepts discussed in the earlier chapters. The chapter delves into the significance of Alicia's silence following the accusation of her spouse's murder. It explores the psychological motivations behind her refusal to speak, drawing on psychoanalytic concepts such as repression,

trauma, and the unconscious mind. Through this analysis, the study seeks to provide insights into the deeper psychological processes and unresolved conflicts that may have led to Alicia's silence. Moreover, the chapter critically examines Theo's motivations for solving the case of Alicia and the potential implications for his own psychological well-being. It explores the dynamics of transference and countertransference, considering the possibility that Theo's involvement may be driven by unconscious motives or unresolved personal issues.

Given the psychoanalytic undertones within *The Silent Patient* some scholars have approached the novel from a psychoanalytic perspective. Roberts (2019) analyzes the novel through the lens of Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory, emphasizing the significance of repressed desires and the unconscious mind in shaping the characters' actions. Additionally, Mitchell (2020) explores the Oedipus complex as a potential driving force behind Alicia's actions, drawing parallels between her relationship with Gabriel and Freud's theories of sexuality and familial dynamics. Some critics have also examined the novel's narrative structure and literary techniques. Brown (2021) highlights the skillful use of dual perspectives, alternating between Alicia's present-day perspective and Theo Faber's investigation into the case. This technique adds depth to the storytelling and engages readers in uncovering the truth behind Alicia's silence. Furthermore, Adams (2020) explores the role of symbolism and the manipulation of readers' perceptions through clever misdirection, enhancing the suspense and intrigue of the narrative. Whereas, the novel has generated substantial discussion and analysis due to its recent publication. Scholars, critics, and readers have engaged in profound analysis of the novel, exploring its themes, psychological elements, and narrative intricacies.

Chapter One: Theoretical Framework

1 Introduction

Man is the outcome of his outer surroundings and inner components. his experience is molded through an intertwined inner and outer worlds. The definition of Man cannot be finalized without alluding to his inner self as to his outer surroundings. as John Milton stated, "The mind is its own place, and in itself can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven." (Book 1, Lines 254-55)–. Men's thoughts, attitudes, and perspectives shapes their perception of reality. The mind, regardless to the outer element of an experience, transcend external circumstances and demonstrates the inherent power individuals possess to create their own experiences through the lens of their inner selves.

This chapter, the theoretical background that underpins this study on the Silent Patient will be discussed. Aiming at analyzing the psychological intricacies of the story's protagonists, Alicia and Theo by employing the theories of psychoanalysis and object relations, Psychoanalysis allows to explore their individual psychological makeup, while object relations theory provides insights into their childhood experiences and their relationships with their parents. The simplified models of Freud's theories of the mind serve as a valuable tool in understanding the psyche and behavior of Alicia and Theo. Through this lens, one can unravel the layers of their personalities and gain deeper insights into the motivations driving their actions.

Additionally, the concepts of holding, the good enough mother, and containment, as offered by object relations theory, permit to discuss the psychological dynamics between the protagonists and their parents . These concepts help to analyze the parental figures in the story and shed light on how their influences shape the protagonists' development.

Combining these theoretical frameworks, offers a comprehensive interpretation of the Silent Patient. Specifically, through focusing on the concept of a "caged child" within the protagonists' psyches, that allows for a nuanced understanding of their psychological struggles.

Overall, this chapter serves as an essential foundation for the subsequent analysis of the thesis, emphasizing the significance of psychoanalysis and object relations theory in unraveling the complexities of the Silent Patient and providing a theoretical framework for the interpretations.

1.1 Psychoanalytic Theory

Psychoanalysis is a comprehensive psychological theory and therapeutic approach developed by Sigmund Freud. It focuses on understanding the structure of the mind, unconscious processes, and the influence of early experiences on the development of personality and behavior. According to the American Psychological Association, APA Dictionary of Psychology "Psychoanalysis is a method of investigating the mind and of treating mental and emotional disorders based on revealing and interpreting the unconscious thoughts and motivations underlying human behavior"(288). Therefore, the purpose of psychoanalysis is to bring unconscious thoughts and conflicts into conscious awareness, allowing individuals to gain insight, resolve internal conflicts, and achieve psychological growth.

However, psychoanalytic literary theory, or in other words psychological criticism, is the psychological study of characters in literary productions, through an analytical interpretive criticism. The psychoanalysis of literary production was introduced by Sigmund Freud, who believes that the psychanalysis of literary production does not differ from the interpretation of dreams. Psychoanalytic literary theory posits that characters in literature, like individuals in real life, are driven by unconscious motivations and desires that shape their thoughts, actions, and

relationships. It seeks to uncover these hidden psychological aspects and interpret their impact on the text.

1.1.1 Freudian Psychoanalysis

Freudian psychoanalysis refers to the psychological theories and therapeutic approach developed by the Austrian psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud . He is the first to found and develop psychoanalysis theory. In his early clinical experience as a neurologist, Freud was assigned to hysteria patients. During the era of the late nineteenth-century hysteria was considered an undefined medical condition that created a challenge to medical science, whereas, Freud did not only succeed in accommodating Hysteria, but he also succeeded in establishing the clinical foundations of psychoanalysis theory through observing and studying the hysterically distributed patients. “Freud’s chapter, *The Psychotherapy of Hysteria*, has gone down in history not only because of its historical value but also because in it, Freud lays the clinical and theoretical foundations of a new discipline: psychoanalysis, itself derived from the cathartic method” (Quinodoz 124).

Freudian psychoanalysis focuses on understanding the unconscious mind, the influence of early childhood experiences, and the dynamics of intrapsychic conflicts. It has had a significant impact on the field of psychology and continues to influence various aspects of psychotherapy and psychoanalytic thought. Freudian psychoanalysis has influenced not only the field of psychology but also other disciplines, including literature, art, and cultural studies.

The fundamental contributions of Freud are presented in analyzing the mind; he believes that the human psyche is the engine of his personality. Therefore, in his study of the human mind Freud suggests two models of the mind.

1.1.1.1 Three Layers Model of the Mind

Freud, from his extensive and condensed clinical experience, suggests that human behavior is presented from an instinctual drive. He argues that our actions are modulated by psychological forces that cannot be overly controlled. Accordingly, Freud proposes a model of the human mind that consists of three layers the conscious, the preconscious (or subconscious), and the unconscious. He makes use of the iceberg as a metaphor to illustrate his concept of the human mind. Thus, to him, the unconscious is similar to the larger portion of the iceberg; where it is hidden in the depth of the mind as how the larger portion of the iceberg is hidden in the depth of the water. The unconscious is where most of our psyche is held, and where our desires mainly sexual desires and impulses are hidden. Also, Freud sees that both the tip of the iceberg and the conscious as the visible parts of their kind. The conscious in his view is when the person is self-aware; it is part and layer of the mind where our desires are suppressed and our impulses are censored. Moreover, the preconscious is illustrated through the part that is in-between the larger part of the iceberg and the tip of the iceberg; because Freud defines the preconscious (or subconscious) as the dangling part of the mind. The preconscious is neither where the instincts exist nor where they are suppressed; it is associated with the memory when the mind is half conscious and half unconscious.

1.1.1.2 Tripartite Model of the Mind

Analogous to the three layers of the mind, Freud proposes a more structured model of the mind. In this model, he includes three agencies the **Id**, the **Ego**, and the **Super ego**. In this model, Freud dismisses any biological considerations, and he emphasizes only on a psychoanalytic point of view.

1.1.1.3 The Id Concept

According to Freud, the Id is the agency of the mind that is associated with the aforementioned unconscious. Freud claims that instinctual drives (libidinal), primarily the sexual and aggressive instincts are situated in the Id. These instincts are governed by the pleasure principle, which seeks to maximize pleasure and minimize tension or displeasure. The id functions on the basis of primary processes, which involve the discharge of tension through immediate gratification or fantasy. "The id becomes a psychological province that incorporates instinctual drive energies and everything else that is part of our phylogenetic inheritance" (Lapsley and Stey 5). Correspondingly, Freud suggests that the infant at his early development is all Id, his instinctive impulses modulate his behavior. Growing up the child shifts from a completely unconscious state of mind to a more prominent psyche that allows him to differentiate between what is allowed and what is not allowed according to the rules of his environment. Finally, the id operates through two primary instincts: the life instinct (Eros) and the death instinct (Thanatos). The life instinct drives the desire for self-preservation, pleasure, and reproduction. The death instinct represents aggressive and self-destructive tendencies, as well as a drive towards returning to an inanimate state.

1.1.1.4 The Ego Concept

The Ego is the second agency of the tripartite model of the mind. It is the agency that makes balance between the unconscious impulses of the Id and the conscious, rational thinking. The Ego is often described as the reality principle; it is partly conscious. Thus, it works at filtering the thoughts of the mind, what is rational and accepted is going to appear at the conscious level and what is instinctual is going to be held repressed in the unconscious. The Ego adjusts the human mind, it emphasizes on reducing the conflict between the repressed thought at the unconscious level and the self-censored, socially accepted thoughts at the conscious level.

The Ego is the mediator between the Id and the Super Ego. It keeps the balance between the other agencies through defense mechanisms such as repression, denial, projection, and sublimation. Defense mechanisms allow the ego to cope with internal conflicts by distorting or redirecting unacceptable impulses or thoughts in order to avoid any exhaustion or distribution at the level of the mind.

1.1.1.5 The Super Ego Concept

The Super Ego is the third and the final agency in the tripartite model of the mind. Freud associates the Super Ego with moral values and ethical principles that the individual may internalize from his cultural and social background or his life experience. Freud believes that the mind does not consist of the Super Ego at the early age of its development, it rather builds through the process of socialization, when the child adopt and learn values and rules that are dictated from his caregivers and the community he belongs to.

The Super ego can be perceived under two parts, the Ego Ideal and the Conscience. The Ego Ideal is the part of the Super Ego that represents an individual's aspirations and desires for personal excellence "It is an agency that seeks to enforce the striving for perfection, as it holds out to the ego ideal standards and moralistic goals" (Lapsley and Stey 7). while the Conscience is the part that represents the internalized rules and prohibitions that an individual has learned. According to Freud, a well-functioning Super Ego can facilitate ethical and moral decision-making, while an excessively rigid or severe Super Ego can result in experiences of guilt, shame, and anxiety for an individual.

Object relations is a psychodynamic psychological theory developed by Freud's successors; beginning with the work of Melaine Klein who revises Freud's main concepts and contributions. She takes the first steps to study the unconscious and the development of the psyche in an environmental context. Whereas, the title *Object Relations Theory* is coined by one of the main theorists of object relations theory Fairbairn. In this respect, object relations theory refers to a psychology of the mind that attempts to study and analyze one's internal images, and residues vis-à-vis his relationships with real, external people. It provides a framework for understanding how early relational experiences impact an individual's psychological development, interpersonal patterns, and emotional well-being. It has influenced various areas of psychology, including psychotherapy, counseling, and developmental psychology.

“Object relations theory,” . . . , refers to attempts within psychoanalysis to answer these questions, that is, to confront the potentially confounding observation that people live simultaneously in an external and an internal world and that the relationship between the two ranges from the most fluid intermingling to the most rigid separation(Greenberg 51).

It is for fact that object relations theorists depart from Freud's concepts, whereas, unlike Freud, they tend to unbind infancy from sexual instincts. The relationship between an infant and the object is purely inherited and preordained to his environment.

To better understand and fully elaborate object relations theory, one should first understand the theory's components and key concepts. Therefore, we should define and introduce the nature of object, the self, and the relation between them.

2.1 The Object

Freud was the earliest to mention the notion of object in regard to psychology, in his “*Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*,”. He perceives the object as a person or part of persons that one relates to out of a sexual drive, wherefore the relation between the self and object is built by seeking gratification and satisfaction. The psychologist Greenberg recounts that “The object in its full technical sense first appears in Freud’s writings in the Three Essays. His first definition of the term is deceptively simple: “Let us call the person from whom sexual attraction proceeds the sexual object”(131). In contrast to Freud’s concept of the object, object relations theorists consider the object as another person that the infant usually relates to in his infancy; mainly the caregiver. They reject Freud’s association of the object with sexual context. They tend to divide the object into two entities, the internal object, and the external object. The internal object is a mental representation whether it is an image, memory, or a feeling relevant to another person, i.e., the representation a person assembles in his mind about another person. The external object is, therefore, the actual other whom we build the mental representations upon.

2.2 The self

In the context of psychoanalysis and its sub-theories, the self refers to one’s own mental representations of his own self. Despite being conscious or unconscious, the mental representations do not incorporate another person than the self; the self is an intimate entity. The mental representations and internal images of the self are not only visual representations but can also be kinesthetic, related to tangible feelings. As Freud states “it the self is first and foremost a bodily self” (26). Freud does not limit the self to abstract ideas, he widens the concept of the self by including the bodily self. Object relations theorists view the self as the fundamental component of the theory because the object cannot be defined separately from the self, and so the

self cannot be recognized without being differentiated from the object. The emphasis on analyzing the self leads to the establishment of a new branch of the theory called self-psychology.

2.3 Self-Object

Since object relations theory is the study of the self and object, it surely deals with the interaction between them. In studying the interactions between the self and object, object relations theorists combine and correlate the self and object, thus they create new concept that is the self-object. Gregory Hamilton explains the study the self-object as follows “Studies of fantasies have led to the conclusion that self- and object-representations do not exist independently but, rather, in relationships called object relations units”(343). The self and the object cannot be studied or defined independently because they cannot exist independently, the self is the object for another self.

Object relations theorists argue that when the self and object are fused and confused, the object relations unit is a symbiotic self-object. For instance, the relationship between the mother and the infant in his early days is referred to as symbiosis, because the infant cannot distinguish his self from that of his mother.

2.4 Winnicott's View on Child Development

Winnicott is one of the pioneers of object relations theory, his clinical experience with children marks a sense of uniqueness to his theories. Winnicott was a pediatrician at first then he shifts to psychoanalysis and became a psychoanalyst and object relations theorist. Similarly, most object relations theorists, Winnicott initiates his concepts by revising Freud's idea of sexual

and aggressive drives. Therefore, Winnicott suggests that human behavior and psychological makeup are controlled by organic factors not necessarily sexual ones. Accordingly, he puts that the infant's relationship with his caregiver, primarily with his mother, is natural and out of any sexual context. "A baby cannot exist alone but is essentially part of a relationship" (Winnicott 88). He describes the relationship between the infant and his mother as a total dependence, where the infant cannot be disentangled from maternal care. In this context, Winnicott introduces the concept of a good enough mother, and the holding environment.

2.4.1 Winnicott's Concept of Good Enough Mother

Winnicott coined the term good enough mother during his clinical experience. His therapy sessions with infants and mothers led him to question the role of the mother in the psychological development of her infant. Accordingly, Winnicott stresses on the importance of maternal care, claiming that the existence of a good enough mother preserves her child an emotional integration and independence from her in his adulthood. Winnicott perceives the good enough mother as the mother who provides a good enough environment for her child. He considers the mother as the most appropriate person to establish the psychological makeup¹ of her infant because the mother is the only person that can be put in the shoe of her child. "His view of human development is not based solely on internal structures but is rather based upon the interaction of the baby's innate qualities and the quality and consistency of maternal care he is provided".(Borg 13)

If the child does not get his maternal care at his early development, he will be stuck in his childhood during his adulthood. The good enough mother permits the child to have a sense of independency and separation.

¹The unique combination of psychological traits, characteristics, and processes that contribute to an individual's personality, behavior, and psychological functioning.

2.4.2 Winnicott on The Holding Environment

Winnicott believes that the concept of good enough mother and the holding environment are interrelated. According to him, the holding environment can be created only by a good enough mother. He perceives holding as more than the physical holding of the child, but also the mother's capacity to deal and regulate the infant's emotions. For instance, when the infant is sad or angry, the mother absorbs the emotions of the infant and modulates it to calm and happy emotions by talking or kissing her infant. When the infant is provided by a holding environment, he is also provided an Ego.

Winnicott takes a further step, yet a controversial one by applying the concept of holding environment in clinical therapy. He expects the therapist to cover the role of the mother in the therapy sessions. "This idea of analytic holding was lodged in a parental metaphor, a vision of a new, improved mother/father"(Slouchier 105). He argues that the therapist should hold, as a mother does, the patients in order to get access to his childhood experience. This approach is not really preferable by many therapists, whereas it is very affective that the therapist can easily dive into the unconscious mind of his patient.

2.5 Bion's Concept of Containment

valuable in the context of the psychological development of the infant . The British object relation theorist Bion emphasizes on the infant emotions and how the caregiver plays a fundamental role in helping the infant to understand and deal with his emotion

Bion developed withing containment concept a model referred to as the container and the contained model. He believes that containment is the action when the care giver takes discomfort and negative feeling of the infant and renders them to production actions. For instance, when the baby cries; the mother pick him up and tries to listen to him and calm him, in doing so, the mother is containing the infant. Therefore, the infant learns how to deal with his emotions by internalizing the process his mother done to contain him.

According to Bion the process of psychic development takes place during the infant's first relationship, i.e., his relationship with his caregiver who is usually the mother. Thus, he posits that the mother is the realization of the infant. At the first years, the infant is completely out of conscious, he is in his world of his phantasies . “ Bion sees the infant as psycho- logically viable, or potentially viable, only in a relationship with a thinking other”(Brooks 163). In contrast to Freud, Bion does not consider the unmature, unconscious psyche of the infant as something that would guide him or modulate him; He rather believes that the maternal psyche is what modulates and determines the development of the infant psyche.

Bion explains the container, who is the caregiver, as the alpha-function. The latter works at transforming the infant unconscious, unthinkable emotions to a senseful conscious emotions. This operation is called “ projective identification” (Bion 1962).

3 Object Relations Theory Sub-theories

One of the notable features of object relations theory is its recognition of the plurality and diversity of theorists who have contributed to its development. Influential theorists such as Melanie Klein, Donald Winnicott, Ronald Fairbairn, and Otto Kernberg have expanded upon the

core concepts and extended the theory in different directions. This diversity of perspectives has led to the emergence of sub-theories within object relations theory, including self-psychology and group psychology.

Self-psychology, developed by Heinz Kohut, focuses on the formation and maintenance of a healthy and cohesive self-structure. It emphasizes the significance of empathic attunement and mirroring in early relationships for the development of a stable sense of self. Self-psychology highlights the role of self-object needs and the importance of repairing self-object failures in therapeutic work. Group psychology, influenced by theorists like S.H. Foulkes and Wilfred Bion, examines the dynamics of group interactions and the impact of collective processes on individual psyches. It explores how individuals' internal object relations are manifested within group settings, providing insights into group dynamics, leadership, and group therapeutic interventions.

The application of object relations theory concepts in clinical practice, particularly in the context of working with children, has led to the development of effective treatment and therapy techniques. Therapists drawing from object relations theory often focus on understanding the client's internalized object relations and exploring how early relationships and experiences shape their current psychological functioning. Therapeutic techniques such as play therapy, art therapy, and the use of transitional objects are frequently employed to facilitate healing and growth in children.

Finally, object relations theorists have dissimilar tendencies toward the theory; nevertheless, they all emphasize on the early childhood interactions and the extent to which the latter may impact the personality in adulthood. Object relations theorists posit that the individual's infancy and interactions with family- the caregivers in the first place- shape the

psychological context of his adulthood. they consider infancy as the formative period of the individual, in which the psyche and personality are internalized as object relations in the mind from the relationship made with the external world.

4 Conclusion

This chapter is the illustration of the theoretical background of this research. The theories of choice ,to analyze *the Silent Patient*, are psychoanalysis and object relations theory. While psychoanalysis serves at the analysis of the psychological makeup of the protagonists- Alicia and Theo -, object relations theory serves at exploring the childhood experiences of the protagonists - Alicia and Theo – in relation to their parents. On one hand, through the simplification of Freud's models of the mind, the chosen characters psyche and behavior will be explained . On the other hand, by using the concepts of holding and the good enough mother along with the concept of containment the psychological make up the protagonists and their parents can be analyzed. Therefore, this interpretation on the caged child inside the protagonists' psyche is theoretically elaborated.

Chapter Two: Understanding the Contextual Factors.

“ There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you” (Maya Angelou).

1 Introduction

The early life experiences that human beings undergo in their childhood, such as attachment, parenting style, cultural and societal factors, and the cognitive development, play a primordial role in shaping adulthood, as they construct the basis of the individual’s personality, beliefs, and behaviors. Thus, the colors of individual's childhood depicts his Adulthood reality, especially on the psychological area. Therefore, the adult mental health state is the harvest of what was planted during his infancy. For instance, traumatic experiences, such as abuse, neglect, or exposure to violence, can increase the risk of mental health disorders, including anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder. whereas, if the infant lives during his childhood a positive experience, of nurturing and supportive family environment reflects in his mental health outcomes and his intimacy and self-esteem.

Accordingly, the author of *The Silent Patient*, emphasizes on giving a contextual foundations of Alicia Berenson and Theo Faber’s life, revealing how their respective traumas and unconscious desires shape their behavior and relationships. Hence, in order to fully comprehend the intricate psychological dynamics and underlying themes explored in the novel, it is crucial to delve into the broader contextual framework in which the story unfolds. This chapter serves as a comprehensive exploration of the protagonists’ childhood and adulthood aiming at

understanding their experiences and behaviors. By examining the contextual backdrop, a deeper insights into the profound impact of their upbringing, traumatic events, and societal influences on their psychological development will be gained.

In his novel *The Silent Patient*, Alex Michaelides attempts at exploring the psychological complexities of Alicia Berenson through linking events related to her childhood, and revealing their outcomes on her Adulthood. The novel follows Alicia's story as a successful painter who is married to Gabriel, a fashion photographer. Alicia's life undergoes a dramatic shift as she shoots her husband, and then retreats into silence .After the marriage that lasts for seven years approximately, Alicia Berenson, the successful painter suddenly finds herself accused of murdering her spouse, Gabriel. Without taking any further step in explaining or defending herself; Alicia remains silent and defenseless in front of all the accusations she received. Her selective mutism creates a blockage between her and the investigation that is held in her favor ,if she narrates what really happened during that day of the crime. Her silence in the trail leads her to be institutionalized at the Grove, a forensic psychiatric unit in North London instead of the prison. Psychologically, her mutism serves as a representation of her internal struggles and emotional pain.

2 Alicia's Mental Health State During her Adulthood

The mental health of Alicia can also be traced by following the events leading to the day when she mentally collapses, the day of the murder of Gabriel. Few months before the day of Gabriel's murder, Alicia was advised by him to express her pain or anger through writing, she is not known of being a good writer, she would rather express herself through painting than through language. Gabriel brought her a diary that she can return to whenever she feels like expressing her emotions, whereas she decides that she will write only the positive, happy, normal thoughts.

What she decides on to write in her diary gives a glimpse of her struggle with negative emotions, and to what extent she does not have the courage to face her repressed thoughts. “Through this diary motif, the readers can have an intimate glimpse of the information, facts, truths and history about Alicia”(Hossain 319). Ultimately, Alicia could not control what she should write in her diary because of the recurrent negative thoughts that she lives with; unconsciously she indicates a multitude of psychological complexities through her diaries.

Alicia’s adulthood is defined by feelings of guilt, grief, and psychological distress; she suffers from a verity of psychological disorders. One very noticeable psychological disorder symptom is her negative self-perception. Alicia unveils in her dairy that her decision of not having kids is not because as what she claimed that she disfavor having responsibility towards kids, whereas she considers her psychological state as unreliable to have kids. She perceives herself negatively and judged her mental instability instead of trying to seek therapy.

I don’t want to admit the truth to myself-that a huge part of my life is missing.

That I’ve denied I want children, pretending I have no interest in them, and that all I care about is my art. And it’s not true. It’s just an excuse – the truth is I’m scared to have kids. I am not be trusted with them (Michaelides150).

In a study published in the Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, researchers examined the relationship between negative self-views and self-esteem People who struggle with having a negative self-view may experience self-doubt, self-criticism, and a lack of confidence in their abilities and value as a person. They also tend to hold negative beliefs, thoughts, and judgments towards themselves; which result in a low self-esteem.

Moreover, Alicia struggles with an impulsive and aggressive behavior, she acts on her immediate desires or emotions without considering the potential long-term effects. The latter

may generate an aggressive behavior towards herself or others without being consciously aware. Alicia's first arrival at the Grove is tinged with a suicide scene "Alicia cut her arm with any object she could get. Alicia feels that she does not need help; she prefers death as the answer to the pain she is experiencing"(Pratiwi and Pramesti 136). Excessive impulsive and aggressive behavior without careful deliberation or therapy may conduct to an extreme actions such as suicide or a homicide. In the case of Alicia, she encounters both an action of homicide when she shot her husband multiple times, and an action of suicide of her attempt to end her life at the grove.

Alicia is considered as a socially distant and an isolated individual; she is not the type of person that would enjoy gatherings or meetings. She always feels paranoid and cannot really deal peacefully with strangers. Alicia is not portrayed as having any close friends within the story and Gabriel was her whole life. In spite of the fact that the paranoia and social isolation Alicia lives in, are of her choice or her fate; they indicate a glimpse of psychological disturbance. Alicia lives with emotional unrest characterized by anxiety, agitation and stress. Her social isolation and paranoia makes her resides within the confines of her own personal universe, and Gabriel was the only human being allowed in that universe. Alicia is severely attached to Gabriel; she perceives him as God / her savior, to the extent that she once portrayed him on cross, saying: "He saved me – like Jesus" (Michaelides 70). The unhealthy attachment Alicia has with her husband is the counter side of the attachment she had with her parents in her early years; therefore, when she got married to Gabriel, she felt loved for the first time. Alicia's attachment to Gabriel is a double burden, on one hand, that obsession worsen her social isolation and paranoia, and alter this attachment to obsession. On the other hand, the unhealthy attachment

patterns can lead to difficulties in forming and maintaining healthy connections, increased relationship conflict, and emotional distress.

2.1 Unveiling Alicia Berenson's Childhood: Exploring Her Early Life Experiences

As the story unfolds, the reader is gradually introduced to the thirty-three years old artist Alicia Berenson distant past and childhood memories aiming at explaining her mental health state and what triggers her to kill her spouse. Her psychological complexities did not emanate from nowhere; they are not born in the present they originate in her childhood experience. The childhood development of the individual significantly influences the shaping of their personality and identity in later stages of life. According to Csathó and Birkás, “There is a large body of evidence indicating that negative familial experiences, such as parental absence or parent-offspring conflict, affect behavioral, and neuroendocrine responses to stress” (3). Alicia’s mental health after her childhood is the accumulation of the experiences she went through in her early years.

Alicia lived through several difficulties during her childhood, her close environment that consists of her family, and caused the most of her psychological complexities. Following the flow of the events from Alicia’s childhood, it is evident that Alicia endured a traumatizing experiences that alter her personality . Instead of having a peaceful life with normal parents, Alicia , and at a very young age, survived a brutal accident; her mentally unstable mother brought her in the car planning to commit suicide. Although Alicia physically survived that suicidal scene of her mother, she never survived mentally. “It reminded me of another summer, hot like this one – the summer Mum died [. . .] In my memory that summer lasts forever”

(Michaelides 63). The accident engraved in the little infant's mind, Alicia grew up internalizing that event, not only for the reason that she saw her mother dying in front of her eyes, whereas because she heard her dad saying he wish Alicia died instead of her mom.

Furthermore, her father did not show any sympathetic affection towards her, he hate her in any way, and put all the blame on her as if she was the reason behind her mother's death. Coming of age, Alicia thought that she inherited the mental disturbances of her mother. She declares: "I'm terrified of myself— and of my mother in me. Is her madness in my blood? Is it? Am I going to—" (Michaelides 94).As an unfortunate fate, the little Alicia internalized a sense of guilt thinking that she was the reason behind her mom's death.

Alicia's struggle during her infancy proceeded from the struggle of her mother's absence, to the struggle of an abusive father. For her, "He was a mean bastard. The only person he ever cared about was auntie Eva. Uncle Vernon wasn't a good man"(Michaelides314). Alicia's father showed no love or affection towards her, whereas he provided emotional manipulation and exercised control over her life. The abuse she endures from her father left profound scars on her mental and emotional well-being. It shapes her perception of herself, relationships, and the world around her. Additionally, after the death of Alicia's mother her father committed suicide as well, this latter confirms to what extent the environment that Alicia lived in was complex and unstable. The suicide is presupposed as a tradition of her family, her parents were selfish and unreliable, they projected all their pain and psychological difficulties towards their child. "She was always highly unstable, but it was her father's suicide that did it. She never recovered"(Michaelides 347). Her father have not given any sense of care towards her, even though he knew that no one had left for her, he chose to end his pain, and to pass it gradually to her.

In addition to Alicia's tumultuous childhood, another significant factor that contributes to her mental health struggles is her experience of sexual abuse. Alicia falls victim to the predatory actions of a trusted individual, causing further psychological damage and trauma. The details of this abuse and its profound impact on Alicia's well-being can be explored to shed light on the complexity of her character and the depth of her emotional scars. This dark chapter in Alicia's life sheds light on the insidious nature of sexual abuse and its long-lasting effects on survivors. Alicia internalizes this unfortunate event of her life into negative self-view and low self-esteem.

Furthermore, it is crucial to examine the lack of support and intervention that Alicia receives throughout her childhood. The absence of a nurturing and protective environment further exacerbates her vulnerability and impedes her ability to cope with the challenges she faces. After the death of her parents, Alicia moved to her relatives' house, where she was not really welcomed. Alicia's aunt Lydia Rose did not appreciate the idea of her living with them. Lydia Rose was not only cold and showed no sympathy toward Alicia, she was also harsh with Alicia. By all means, Alicia had never experienced any kind of love or containment during her early years; therefore, when she felt loved for the first time by Gabriel, she internalizes his love to obsession. The lack she lived through in her infancy is translated as unhealthy attachment to her husband during her adulthood.

Finally, the impact of Alicia's childhood on her adulthood is profound and far-reaching. The experiences she endured during her formative years have left an indelible mark on her psychological well-being and the way she navigates through life. As Alicia ventures into adulthood, the traumas she experienced continue to reverberate, affecting her behavior, decision-making, and overall well-being. The unresolved pain and unresolved emotions from her

childhood serve as an underlying current, contributing to her eventual act of violence against her husband. The impact of her childhood cannot be understated, as it serves as a lens through which her adult actions and motivations can be understood.

3 The Dual Portrayal of Theo Faber: His Journey from Childhood to Adulthood

Theo Faber is the second protagonist and the narrator of the novel. He is the forensic therapist who attempts to examine Alicia's case; Theo becomes fascinated with Alicia Berenson's silence. His interest in Alicia does not only serve his attempt of treating her silence; rather, his involvement goes deeper than mere professional curiosity. As the narrative unfolds, it becomes apparent that Theo harbors a personal agenda intertwined with Alicia's case. Theo is intricately involved in the murder of Gabriel, playing the role of an active accomplice. His actions and influence serve as catalysts, pushing Alicia to the point where she ultimately commits the act of killing her husband. Therefore, to understand Theo's motivations, it is necessary to explore his past and the psychological wounds that drive him.

3.1 Tracing The Young *Theo Faber*: Decoding the Childhood of a Multifaceted Persona

“Through Bronfenbrenner's theory it is clear that a child's development is based entirely on the surroundings they grew up in[...] the most detrimental influence to a child's growth is the volatility and unpredictability of family life that our economy has created” (Amuthavalli and Rajkumar 1316). The early years of Theo Faber shed light on the formative experiences and influences that shaped his character and set the stage for his journey in adulthood. His infancy does not differ much of that of Alicia's. Theo experienced a complicated dynamic with his parents that left a lasting impact on his emotional well-being. Growing up, Theo lived in a toxic environment and an abusive father. His infancy was marked by challenging circumstances, particularly in his relationship with his complex and tumultuous father. Theo the infant, suffered

from all kinds of abuse be it verbal or physical one. He went through childhood trauma, he hate his father and wished that he disappears. The only happy and normal events of his childhood was when his father goes on work trips. The little Theo was not allowed to play or to enjoy his infancy's experiences the other children, whereas he was treated brutally if he makes any noise "I'd breathe in the feathery air, freeing the bricks would swallow me up and I would disappear. But his hands would grab hold of me, dragged me out to my feet. The belt would be pulled off and whistled in the area before it struck; each successive blow knocking me sideways, burning my flash" (Michaelides17-18).

Along with the abusive father Theo lived with, he had a passive mother. Theo's mother, like Theo himself, became a victim of domestic violence at the hands of his father. Her silent endurance of the abuse was a survival mechanism, which was born out of fear and a desire to protect herself and her child. However, this passive response unintentionally reinforced the cycle of abuse within the household. Theo witnessed his mother's helplessness and learned that submission and powerlessness were the only ways to navigate difficult situations. This learned helplessness impacted his perception of power dynamics and relationships, shaping his approach to interpersonal interactions in later life. His mother's passivity constructed a lack of protection towards him. By failing to confront the abusive behavior and shield her child from harm, Theo's mother perpetuated the toxic environment they lived in. Without a sense of safety and protection, Theo was left vulnerable and deeply impacted by the ongoing abuse. The absence of intervention from his mother instilled feelings of abandonment and betrayal, further fueling Theo's struggle to trust and form healthy relationships in adulthood. The early years of Theo Faber's life were marred by the traumatic experiences and detrimental influences of his upbringing. The abusive father and passive mother created an environment of instability and

fear, leaving a lasting impact on Theo's personality. These early experiences set the stage for his journey in adulthood, shaping his character and influencing his approach to relationships.

Understanding the formative experiences of Theo Faber allows for a deeper comprehension of his struggles and the complexities that shape his actions and choices throughout *The Silent Patient*. As the story Theo Faber emerges as a complex and multidimensional character whose past experiences speaks about his present actions. Through his exploration of Alicia's childhood and his own personal journey, he endeavors to reconcile the traumas of the past and find a path towards healing and redemption. The interplay between Theo's own history and his quest to unlock Alicia's silence creates a gripping narrative that digs into the depths of human psychology, highlighting the profound impact of early experiences on one's psyche and the power of empathy, understanding, and self-reflection in the process of healing.

3.2 The Adult Theo Faber: Examining the Persona in his Adulthood

In the novel, Theo Faber's adulthood is a testament to the enduring impact of childhood experiences, showcasing the resilience of the human spirit and the transformative power of self-reflection. As he unravels the mysteries of Alicia's silence, he simultaneously confronts his own demons, ultimately forging a path towards healing, understanding, and perhaps even a sense of peace. One notable aspect of Theo's adulthood is his unwavering determination to understand and heal the psychological wounds of others. Working as a psychotherapist, Theo's chosen profession reflects his deep-seated desire to make sense of the complexities of the human mind and provide solace to those in need. His own experiences of abuse and trauma have instilled in him a compassionate understanding of the struggles faced by others, propelling him to actively engage in the process of healing. "I mean of course I wanted to help people. That was a secondary aim-particularly at the time I started training. The real motivation was purely selfish. I

was on quest to help myself. I believe the same is true for most people who go into mental health. We are drawn to this particular profession because we are damaged, we study psychology to heal ourselves.” (Michaelides, 16- 17). However, Theo's personal journey towards healing is far from complete. Despite his outward professionalism and commitment to his patients, he carries within him unresolved emotional turmoil and unresolved questions about his own past. The scars inflicted by his abusive father continue to haunt him, leaving an indelible imprint on his psyche.

Furthermore, Theo is in denial of his accompliceship of the murder of Gabriel; he unconsciously gives a justification of stalking Alicia and triggering her to kill her husband in the crime scene. According to Freud, denial is a coping mechanism that operates at an unconscious level, allowing individuals to protect themselves from distressing or threatening thoughts, feelings, or realities. Theo’s denial is an evidence of his psychological complexities. When Theo discovers his wife Kathy’s affair with Gabriel Berenson, he refused to believe or to blame her. “I would not let Kathy go. Instead, I would say nothing-...-Somehow, I’d forget. I’d bury it. I had no choice but to go on. I refuse to give into this; I refuse to breakdown and fall apart” (Michaelides161). Accordingly, with a sense of denial, Theo deeply internalizes an overwhelming obsession towards his wife Kathy. Just as Alicia perceives Gabriel as her deity, Theo views Kathy as his ultimate savior. Theo sees Kathy as his salvation and source of happiness, prior to encountering Kathy, he had never experienced genuine love or appreciation, leaving him emotionally starved. Consequently, his entire existence becomes intertwined with hers.

Regardless of the relationship toxic between him and his father, he could not separate his life experience from that of his father. Even after he leaves for collage and when his father is

finally, not around him, he could not resist the psychological aftermaths his father caused. “I did not know it then, but it was too late – I had internalized my father, introjected him, buried him deep in my conscious. No matter how far I ran, I carried him with me wherever I went.” (Michaelides 19). Theo, during his first years apart from his father, tries to cope by indulging in taking drugs and trying a variety of activities seeking freedom, whereas despite his desire for freedom, Theo Faber found himself unable to fully detach from the impact of his father. His father's presence and influence remained deeply ingrained within him, persisting even when he attempted to distance himself. The lasting imprint of his father proved infinite, preventing Theo from completely leaving him behind, regardless of his efforts. Additionally, Theo's internalization of his father's presence manifests in intrusive memories and flashbacks. Certain triggers or situations may evoke vivid recollections of the abuse he endured, causing him to relive the traumatic experiences and reinforcing the sense of being psychologically entangled with his father. It results in inner conflicts and inner critic. He may find himself engaging in self-blame, self-doubt, and self-criticism, mirroring the critical voice of his father. This inner conflict can hinder his self-esteem, self-worth, and overall sense of identity, making it difficult for him to break free from the psychological grip of his father.

The role of Theo's passive mother helps in shaping his personality as a distant, lonely adult. Her role does not provide any development of his character, but it rather hindered him from facing his father's abuse. He was left to navigate the toxic environment on his own. The absence of a motherly influence meant that Theo had limited opportunities to develop healthy coping mechanisms or assert himself against his father's mistreatment. Furthermore, the passive nature of Theo's mother indirectly reinforced the dominance and control exerted by his father. By failing to challenge or confront the abusive behavior, she contributed to the normalization of

such treatment within the household. This normalization, in turn, had long-lasting consequences on Theo's sense of self-worth and his ability to form healthy relationships in adulthood. His mother not only failed to protect him from his father's abuse but also displayed emotional neglect. She may have been physically present in his life, but her emotional unavailability left Theo feeling emotionally unsupported and isolated. The lack of affection, warmth, and nurturing from his father deprived him of the emotional connection and validation that children need to develop a healthy sense of self.

4. Conclusion

exploring the contextual backdrop and understanding the profound influence of early experiences permits for a better equips to interpret the characters' motivations, actions, and relationships. This deeper understanding adds layers of complexity to the narrative, enriching the reading experience and inviting to reflect on the broader implications of childhood experiences on adult lives . Traumatic experiences endured in childhood, such as abuse, neglect, or exposure to violence, can have detrimental effects on an individual's mental well-being, increasing the likelihood of developing anxiety, depression, or post-traumatic stress disorder. Therefore, the contextual exploration of Alicia Berenson and Theo Faber's childhood and adulthood experiences in *The Silent Patient* provides valuable insights into the intricate interplay between past traumas, unconscious desires, and their present psychological states. examining the broader contextual framework of the novel. This exploration allows us to appreciate the complexities of human nature and the significant role that early experiences play in shaping an individual's psyche. Additionally, the intricate psychological dynamics and underlying themes explored by the author are unraveled to be used in the next chapter of the analysis.

Chapter Three

“Their Wings are clipped”: Exploring the Caged Birds Inner Worlds

“Unexpressed emotions will never die. They are buried alive, and will come forth later, in uglier ways” (Sigmund Freud).

1 Introduction

According to Freud, Man is controlled by his psychic; emotions that are not expressed or dealt with consciously do not simply disappear, but instead remain within the unconscious mind. These buried emotions can resurface in various ways, often manifesting in undesirable or unhealthy ways.

Freud believed that repressed emotions and unresolved conflicts from the past can influence an individual's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in the present. When emotions are not expressed or processed in a healthy manner, they can create psychological tension and distress. Over time, this unresolved emotional energy can find alternative outlets for expression, often resulting in disruptive or destructive behaviors. Hence, to fully comprehend the actions of Alicia and Theo, one should delve into their minds and personalities.

The following chapter presents an in-depth analysis of the psychological dimensions portrayed in the novel *The Silent Patient*. This chapter aims to delve into the complex inner side of the main characters, Alicia Berenson and Theo Faber. employing the frameworks of psychoanalysis and object relations theory allows to come up with valuable insights to the

characters' personalities, motivations, and behaviors, ultimately unraveling the intricacies of their psychological makeup.

Moreover, Psychoanalysis, pioneered by Sigmund Freud, provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the subconscious and conscious aspects of human behavior. Therefore, the examination of the characters' psyche, permits to explore the interplay between the id, ego, and superego. This analysis will shed light on the primal instincts, rational decision-making processes, and moral standards that drive Alicia and Theo's actions.

Furthermore, object relations theory, as a derivative of psychoanalysis allows us to explore the profound influence of early childhood experiences on individuals' adult lives. By examining the protagonists' relationships with their parents, a deeper understanding of how their upbringing and early attachment patterns have shaped their psychological development can be gained. The concepts of holding, the good enough mother, and containment will serve as invaluable tools in uncovering the emotional dynamics within Alicia and Theo's lives.

Finally, delving into the symbolism and themes present in the novel can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of Alicia and Theo. Symbolic elements, metaphors, and recurring motifs can offer insight into their subconscious desires, fears, and inner conflicts. Analyzing these symbolic representations within the context of their experiences can enrich our interpretation of their behaviors.

2 Alicia and Theo Personalities and Internal Dynamics

Based on what is mentioned in the previous chapter, it is evident that the behaviors of Alicia and Theo are influenced by external factors in their surroundings. However, their unconscious desires and motivations play a crucial role in shaping their actions and behaviors. Therefore, for a comprehensive understanding of their actions, it is required to conduct a deeper

exploration of their internal factors and personalities. By considering the interplay between external factors and internal dynamics, one can see the full image of their persona. Hence, analyzing their personalities, psychological makeup allows us to unravel the intricacies of their actions and decision-making processes.

2.1 Unveiling the Inner Turmoil of Alicia

Throughout the narrative, preceding the fateful day of the murder and Alicia's subsequent silence, one can recognize her tendency towards impulsive behavior. In the pages of her diary, she candidly confesses to the immense struggles she faced in managing her anger and overwhelming feelings of sadness. «I've been feeling depressed lately, about a few things. I thought I was doing a good job of hiding it, but he noticed—of course he did, he notices everything”(Michaelides08). Alicia unconsciously feels a sudden waves of sadness, because she could not overcome her brutal childhood experience. Instead of healing the negative feelings Alicia absorbed during her infancy, she repressed them in her unconscious mind as memories and these memories kept recurring in her life as dreams or flashbacks. “ I felt a sudden sadness and revulsion” (Michaelides 93). Whenever Alicia gets the flashbacks and memories, she seems to live and sense the same feelings and traumas. “I thought of my mother. Was she crazy? Is that why she did it? Why she strapped me into the passenger seat of her yellow mini and sped us toward that redbrick wall?...The same yellow as in my paint box. Now I hate that color—every time I use it, I think of death”(Michaelides 94). These recurring memories and emotional triggers serve as a constant reminder of the unresolved pain that Alicia carries within her. They act as barriers to her emotional well-being and contribute to her psychological struggles.

Alicia's impulsive behavior is a clear indication that her Id dominates her mind. As Freud states the impulsive behaviors originates from the Id. The impulsive behavior Alicia's struggle

with is Thanatos rather than Eros. Alicia unconsciously tends to engage in self-harm or inadvertently harm those around her. For instance, she confessed in her diary that sometimes she unconsciously gets the idea of hurting her husband “I hated seeing him so upset, looking at me with hurt eyes. I hate causing him pain—and yet sometimes I desperately want to hurt him, and I don’t know why” (Michaelides 178). That aggressive behavior doesn’t come to light only towards her husband, but it also shows with her Art gallery manager Mr. Jean Felix. She admits that she unconsciously would like to be cruel with him without any sense of guilt “I’d intended to break it to him more gently. But somehow, I was unable to stop myself. And the funny thing is, I wanted to hurt him. I wanted to be brutal”(Michaelides 243). Moreover, Alicia attempt to commit suicide in different areas of her life. Growing up, Alicia saw the people around her coping with their psychological problems by putting an end to their lives, therefore she normalized and reinforced the suicidal aspect of her psyche; in which her Id took control over the mature conscious part of her mind. “Otherwise, I’m in danger of ceasing to exist. Like I might disappear. Sometimes I wish I could disappear” (Michaelides 181).

Her ego, which typically acts as the rational and moderating force, seemed unable to exert deliberate control over the internal conflicts between her primal desires (the Id) and the moral conscience (the superego). The Id is dominating her mind and the superego is in inertia. She experienced isolation from society and lacked any form of moral guidance or ethical framework that could shape her conscience. Her parents, who were supposed to serve as her moral compass, were themselves morally and psychologically unstable. As a result, Alicia had limited self-control over her thoughts, particularly after enduring the brutal experiences she went through. Furthermore, her superego manifests only in the survivor guilt she felt after the death of her mother, and that sensation of guilt is insufficient to confront the impulsive drives of the Id.

“Apart from pity, there was another feeling, unnamable somehow—a kind of fear” (Michaelides 93).

This internal turmoil further illuminates the intricate psychological landscape of Alicia's character, revealing the profound inner struggles that ultimately contribute to the unfolding of the gripping events in *The Silent Patient*. In the days preceding the murder's day, Alicia felt that she is stalked and watched all the time through her house's glass walls by someone. She immediately told Gabriel whereas instead of trusting her, he suggests that she should see a therapist due to her history with paranoia disorder.

Gabriel held out his hand for mine—I wanted to slap it away or scratch it. I wanted to bite him or hit him, or throw over the table and scream, “You think crazy but I'm not crazy! I'm not, I'm not, I'm not!” (Michaelides 182).

Alicia when she sees the only man she loves and trusts questioning her mental well-being state triggers her unconscious desires that lays in her Id, and here the latter takes control of the mind and restrains the ego from making a balance between it and the conscious superego.

Additionally, this clash between Alicia's conscious and unconscious mind highlights the internal conflict she experiences. The Id does not only trigger her unconscious desires but also intensifies her struggle to maintain a sense of stability and control. The interplay between her conscious and unconscious desires adds another layer of complexity to Alicia's psychological makeup, further shaping her actions and decisions.

According to Freud, during early childhood, the individual's psyche is predominantly governed by the Id. The dominance of the Id in Alicia's psychological state implies that her inner child remains imprisoned within her. It is when certain stimuli or triggers activate past events that this inner child emerges, influencing her thoughts and behaviors. Thus, Alicia's impulsive

actions and emotional responses can be seen as manifestations of her inner child seeking expression and resolution.

2.2 The Psychological Motives Behind Theo's Personality

Theo, the alter male persona of Alicia, undergoes a complex process of development and self-discovery throughout the novel. Theo's development takes shape through a series of internal conflicts and. As the story unfolds, he confronts his inner conflicts, confronts his past traumas, and explores his own psyche. This journey of development involves a deeper understanding of his desires, motivations, and the impact of his actions on others. Across the novel, Theo grapples with the conflicting forces of his primal sexual instinct (Eros) directed towards Kathy. Upon their first encounter at the club, Theo's primal desires surged within him, as his Id took hold of his thoughts and emotions. Despite being in a committed relationship with another woman, he found himself irresistibly captivated by Kathy's beauty. In her presence, he saw a reflection of his own desires, and his Id normalized and justified his intense attraction to her. The force of his sexual instinct overpowered his ability to exercise self-control, drawing him towards Kathy with an irresistible magnetic pull. "I do remember the first moment I saw Kathy. It was like an electric shock. I remember her long black hair, piercing green eyes, her mouth—she was beautiful, exquisite. An angel" (Michaelides 75). The obsession Theo developed towards Kathy since their first encounter served as the driving force behind the horrific planned crime. Discovering Kathy's affair with Gabriel ignited an overwhelming surge of anger within Theo, causing a dramatic shift in his primal instincts from the realm of desire (Eros) to the destructive impulse of death (Thanatos). In this altered state, Theo succumbed entirely to the unrestrained power of his Id, surrendering all control and giving in to the darkest aspects of his psyche. His Id took over the

other parts of his mind, he was unconsciously driven by his instinctual desires. “Leaving Kathy would be like tearing off a limb.... I wasn’t condemned to repeat the past.”

(Michaelides 161) The unresolved anger that Theo had suppressed since childhood resurfaced in his adult life, especially when he was triggered by the perceived loss of the person who truly cared for him. This intense emotional reaction stemmed from deep-rooted insecurities and fears that had remained buried within him. The pain of feeling abandoned and unloved as a child manifested itself in the form of anger and jealousy when he believed that the only person who genuinely loved him was being taken away by another man. This triggered a complex and tumultuous emotional response, overwhelming Theo and clouding his judgment.

Moreover, the dominance of Theo's Id over his superego became evident when his inner child, which had long been suppressed and caged, felt threatened once again. Despite his superego's attempts to maintain control and adhere to moral standards, the powerful and primal desires of his Id overwhelmed him. The unresolved traumas and emotional wounds from his past resurfaced, pushing Theo to trigger Alicia to commit the crime he had carefully planned. “I had no idea about Alicia’s history of instability. Had I known, I never would have pushed things so far”(Michaelides 329). However, following the act, his superego re-emerged, bringing with it a profound sense of guilt and self-loathing. This internal conflict led to a period of introspection and personal growth as Theo grappled with the consequences of his actions. It prompted him to reflect on his choices and work towards reformulating his identity, reconciling the conflicting aspects of his personality, and seeking redemption for the darkness that had consumed him.

I had no idea she would react like that. And when the story was all over the press and Alicia was on trial for murder, I felt a deep sense of personal responsibility, and the

desire to expiate my guilt and prove that I was not responsible for what had happened.

(Michaelides 329).

Driven by his ego, Theo made a calculated and rational decision according to his own mindset. Instead of confessing to the police, he chose to apply for admission to the Grove, utilizing his role as a psychotherapist to manipulate the situation. “I wanted to help her through the aftermath of the murder—help her understand what had happened, work through it—and be free”

(Michaelides 329) This decision underscores the dubious nature of his rational thinking. It reveals that Theo is willing to disregard the gravity of the crime he committed as long as he can be with his beloved Kathy. His past experiences have left him devoid of love, particularly during his childhood when his father held dislike for him and failed to provide proper care and affection. This lack of love and nurturing has shaped Theo's perspective on relationships and contributed to his desperate need for love and attachment. His actions highlight the profound impact of early experiences on one's emotional development and the lengths to which a person may go to fulfill their longing for love and acceptance.

3 Unfolding the Protagonists' Caged Child

"In every adult, there lurks a child — an eternal child, something that is always becoming, is never completed, and calls for unceasing care, attention, and education." —(Carl Young). In each adult, there exists an inner child—a part of our psyche that retains childlike qualities and characteristics. This inner child represents our innate capacity for growth, curiosity, creativity, and vulnerability. It symbolizes the potential for continuous personal development throughout our lives. However, when a child experiences trauma, such as abuse, neglect, or significant disruptions in their environment, their normal development can be disrupted. The trauma can disrupt the formation of a secure attachment with caregivers, impair their emotional

regulation, and hinder their ability to trust and form healthy relationships. As a result, the child may struggle with a distorted sense of self, low self-esteem, and difficulties in understanding and managing their emotions (Perry). Accordingly, the caged child withing Alicia and Theo is the result of the traumatic childhood experiences. Those caged children lacks containment and holding environment during their infancy; thus, they do not develop an emotional integration or independence from their care givers.

3.1 Alicia's Double Burden

In Alicia's case, she did not receive adequate containment and holding during her formative years. The death of her primary care giver, her mother have impacted her ability to develop emotional integration and independence. The absence of a secure and nurturing environment or according to Winnicott *the good Enough mother*, in her childhood have hindered her sense of self and her capacity to regulate her emotions effectively. According to object relations theory, if a child lacks the concept of the "object," which refers to the internal image of another person in the child's mind, their self-image can be significantly affected because that cannot come to terms of who they are and who the other is. In this context, the term "object" represents significant others, such as caregivers or primary attachment figures, who play a crucial role in the child's emotional development (kelland).

Moreover, As Bion stated, the concept of containment relies on the dynamic interplay between the container as the caregiver and the contained the child. The caregiver provides emotional containment by attuning to the child's needs, providing reassurance, and creating a safe and supportive environment. In turn, the child feels contained, protected, and able to explore and express their emotions within this secure relational context. However, in Alicia's case, the absence of a nurturing caregiver has hindered her ability to experience this sense of containment.

Without a reliable container, Alicia struggles to develop emotional regulation, trust in others, and form healthy relationships. Her early experiences of loss and abandonment have left her feeling insecure, emotionally vulnerable, and lacking a sense of stability. Therefore, her unhealthy attachment to Gabriel can be seen from the lens of lacking containment during infancy. Alicia considered Gabriel as her container, she saw herself and the world through him. “Gabriel is my whole world—and has been since the day we met. I’ll love him no matter what he does, or what happens....Until death do us part”(Michaelides 57). She internalized Gabriel as her father figure, seeking containment and emotional support from him. However, when he sentenced her to death, reminiscent of her father's past actions, it triggered her deeply buried anger.

The nature and dimension of betrayal and psychic homicide from her father and her husband may be different in some aspects but the implications and essence are identical.

In both the cases, Alicia’s containment has been shattered and breached (Hossain 323). This unexpected turn of events led her to shoot Gabriel, an action fueled by a mix of repressed emotions and a desperate attempt to assert control and protect herself. Deep within her subconscious, Alicia kept a silent and long-standing desire to exact vengeance upon her father, seeking retribution for the emotional destruction he had inflicted upon her. It was not solely Gabriel's affair with Theo's wife that drove Alicia to gruesomely murder him and subsequently render herself, the real reason is the recurrent of sentencing Alicia to death. “Gabriel was the second man to condemn Alicia to death; bringing up this original trauma was more than she could bear”(Michaelides 451). The container has always failed Alicia, leaving her at a psychic war between guilt and fear. Alicia’s parents or her husband were supposedly the ones who provide her with a holding environment through which she can translate her emotions and reflect her self-image, whereas they instead collapsed so did her inner self.

Furthermore, Alicia's silence can be explored through the lack of containment as well as holding environment, because linguistic behavior is one of the behaviors that develops from the healthy relationship with the caregiver, the container. Due to the lack of proper containment and a secure attachment with a caregiver, Alicia has not developed effective coping mechanisms for dealing with her negative emotions. Instead of relying on verbal communication, she often turns to painting as a means of expressing herself and conveying her inner thoughts and feelings. Thus, after the murder, instead of engaging in verbal communication and defending herself, Alicia chooses silence as her response. Whereas her silence said it all, her silence speaks volumes, resonating with unexpressed emotions. "Silence, I discover, is something you can actually hear" (Murakami 229). This choice reflects her difficulty in expressing herself through words due to the lack of containment and holding environment in her upbringing. Instead, she channels her emotions and experiences into her artwork. The painting of Alcestis, a figure from Greek mythology who sacrifices herself for her husband, Euripides, serves as a powerful symbol of Alicia's own inner turmoil and her willingness to bear the burden of guilt or punishment. Through her art, Alicia finds a way to communicate and convey her emotions, desires, and struggles that words alone cannot adequately express.

3.2 Theo Personality Between Containment and Obsession

As the psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott put it, "There is no such thing as a baby." The development of our personalities doesn't take place in isolation, but in relationship with others—we are shaped and completed by unseen, unremembered forces; namely, our parents." (Michaelides 18). Theo's early experiences during infancy parallel those of Alicia, despite the fact that his parents are alive. However, his mother played a passive role and was unable to provide the containment and sense of holding that Theo needed. "I asked my mother why my father was

always so angry with me, and she gave a despairing shrug and said, “How should I know?”(Michaelides 18). In their relationship, his father constantly disrupted the holding environment between Theo and his mother, creating an unstable and unpredictable environment for Theo's emotional development. This lack of consistent and nurturing care from his parents had a significant impact on Theo's psychological well-being and his ability to form secure attachments with his partner Kathy. The absence of a secure holding environment hindered his emotional integration and independence, leaving him with unresolved feelings and a sense of instability. These early experiences shaped Theo's perception of relationships and influenced his subsequent behaviors and interactions with others.

Theo's upbringing was marked by a chaotic dynamic between his parents, particularly his father's disruptive presence. While his mother was physically present, her passive role prevented her from providing the necessary emotional containment and support for Theo's healthy development. Instead, his father consistently disrupted the fragile holding environment that should have fostered a sense of security and stability. Theo's father's actions created an atmosphere of unpredictability and instability, leaving Theo without a reliable source of emotional guidance and protection “My father's unpredictable and arbitrary rages made any situation, no matter how benign, into a potential minefield.... his anger and set off a series of explosions from which there was no refuge.”(Michaelides 26). This lack of a consistent holding environment during his formative years had profound consequences for his psychological well-being. Without the nurturing and containment, he needed, Theo was unable to develop a strong sense of self and struggled to regulate his emotions effectively.

The absence of a secure holding environment in Theo's early life left him with deep-rooted feelings of instability and a sense of being adrift. “In my case, I grew up feeling edgy,

afraid; anxious. This anxiety seemed to predate my existence and exist independently of me. But I suspect it originated in my relationship with my father, around whom I was never safe”

(Michaelides 18). This had a significant impact on his ability to form healthy attachments and navigate intimate relationships. The unresolved emotions from his childhood experiences influenced his perception of love and influenced his subsequent behaviors and choices.

Throughout the novel, Theo's developmental journey involves grappling with the effects of his disrupted holding environment. He must confront the emotional wounds left by his past and find ways to heal and integrate his fragmented sense of self. This process of self-discovery and healing becomes essential for Theo to overcome the negative influences of his early experiences and forge a path towards healthier relationships and a more balanced psychological state.

Moreover, Theo's profound lack of containment and holding during his formative years manifested in his intense obsession with his wife, Kathy. In her, he found a substitute for the nurturing and care he had longed for from a primary caregiver. She became the container for his unmet emotional needs, and he directed all his love and affection towards her. Theo's obsession with Kathy grew out of a desperate desire to fill the void left by the absence of emotional containment in his early life. She became the focal point of his hopes and dreams, the source of his satisfaction and love. He projected onto her the role of his caregiver, seeking from her the validation and emotional support he had never received. When Theo discovered Kathy's affair with Gabriel, it shattered the illusion he had created of her as the sole provider of his emotional fulfillment. However, he was unable to let go of the satisfaction and love he derived from their relationship. The fear of losing the only source of containment and holding in his life triggered a desperate need to maintain control and possessiveness over Kathy. Theo's inability to give up his attachment to Kathy stems from the deep-seated wounds of his childhood. His unresolved need

for containment and holding compels him to cling to her, even in the face of betrayal. The intense emotions that surge within him reflect the profound fear of being left emotionally uncontained once again. Theo's journey of self-discovery and the gradual realization that true healing and fulfillment cannot be found solely through external sources. It explores the depths of his obsession and the transformation he undergoes as he learns to confront and address the underlying wounds that drive his need for excessive containment and holding.

Additionally, Theo's internal struggles led him to pursue a career in psychology, aspiring to help others while seeking to heal his own emotional wounds. "The real motivation was purely selfish. I was on a quest to help myself. I believe the same is true for most people who go into mental health. We are drawn to this profession because we are damaged—we study psychology to heal ourselves"(Michaelides 25). his choice to study psychology was rooted in self-interest. He believes that many individuals who enter the mental health field are drawn to it precisely because they carry their own emotional scars, and they see the study and practice of psychology as a means to find solace and resolution for their own inner struggles. This realization underscores Theo's deep yearning for personal healing and highlights the intertwining of his professional aspirations with his own journey of self-recovery.

4 The Influence of the Past Experiences on The Protagonists Present

Fear prevents people from embracing healing because their entire sense of self revolves around the trauma they have endured. Stepping outside the boundaries of that trauma and exploring their true identity is an intimidating prospect. The enduring experiences of abandonment and emotional neglect in the lives of Theo and Alicia have profoundly influenced the dual nature of their personalities. Alicia seeks liberation through art, while Theo turns to psychology as a means of understanding and healing. These outlets become their refuge,

allowing their inner child, trapped and confined, to find expression. However, their unhealthy attachments and obsessions with others further engrave the presence of the caged child within them, intensifying its grip on their lives. As they struggle to prioritize their own well-being and self-discovery, the complexities of their past continue to shape and define their present identities. As they journey through the complexities of their intertwined lives, Theo and Alicia must grapple with the intertwined forces of their past and present. Their ongoing quest for self-discovery and healing is intertwined with the challenges of forging healthy attachments, developing a sense of self-worth, and learning to prioritize their own well-being. Only by confronting the depths of their inner selves and unraveling the intricacies of their past can they hope to find true liberation and embrace the fullness of their potential.

Alicia and Theo's existence is intricately tied to the consequences of an unhealthy parenting style characterized by emotional manipulation and a lack of nurturing support. Their personalities and behaviors bear the weight of these unresolved issues, manifesting in their struggles and emotional complexities. The absence of a secure holding environment during their formative years has left them yearning for the emotional containment and guidance that was sorely missing. The emotional manipulations they experienced have fostered a reliance on external validation and approval. Alicia and Theo's self-worth and identity have become intricately entwined with the opinions and judgments of others. This perpetual need for external validation can lead to a constant cycle of seeking approval, often at the expense of their own emotional well-being.

5 Conclusion

The analysis of the psychological dimensions portrayed in the novel *The Silent Patient* offers valuable insights into the complex inner worlds of the main characters, Alicia Berenson

and Theo Faber. Through the lenses of psychoanalysis and object relations theory, it is possible to delve into their personalities, motivations, and behaviors, unraveling the intricacies of their psychological makeup.

Understanding the subconscious and conscious aspects of human behavior by examining the interplay between the id, ego, and superego gives a deeper understanding of the primal instincts, rational decision-making processes, and moral standards that drive Alicia and Theo's actions. Probing their upbringing and early attachment patterns have gained insight into the caged child within them and emotional dynamics that have shaped their psychological development. The concepts of holding, the good enough mother and containment have proven to be invaluable tools in this exploration.

The Silent Patient has served as a captivating platform for this in-depth analysis, revealing the intricate connections between the caged child in the inner self and outer worlds, and highlighting the transformative power of self-awareness and understanding. By exploring the psychological depths of Alicia and Theo, it embarked on a journey of discovery, uncovering the complexities of the human psyche and the profound impact of one's past experiences on his present self.

General Conclusion

This study aims to analyze the novel and examine how parental figures and external relationships contribute to the formation of adults' psyche, focusing on the impact of an abusive father figure and an absent mother.

After having analyzed the novel, several significant conclusions can be drawn regarding the role of parents in shaping an individual's psychological makeup. *The Silent Patient* emerges as a novel that delves into the complexities of psychological difficulties stemming from the holding environment. The novel highlights the profound influence of early childhood experiences and parental dynamics on an individual's mental health and well-being. It underscores the impact of the holding environment, referring to the emotional and relational context in which a child develops, on the formation of one's inner world and psychological development. Moreover, the characters of Alicia and Theo serve as compelling examples, demonstrating how their childhood experiences and parental relationships have shaped their adult lives and contributed to their psychological struggles.

Additionally, the novel's exploration of psychological difficulties and the concept of the caged child resonates on a global level. The themes and issues raised in the story are not confined to a specific culture, ethnicity, or gender. They touch upon fundamental aspects of the human condition, such as the search for identity, the impact of past traumas, the complexities of relationships, and the universal need for psychological well-being.

By addressing these topics, *The Silent Patient* invites readers from diverse backgrounds to reflect on their own experiences and empathize with the challenges faced by the characters. It underscores the shared humanity that connects individuals across different walks of life

highlighting the universality of psychological struggles and the need for understanding and support. In essence, *The Silent Patient* serves as a powerful narrative that sheds light on the significance of parental influence and the broader psychological difficulties faced by individuals. It offers valuable insights into the universal aspects of the human experience, emphasizing the importance of empathy, awareness, and support in navigating the complexities of psychological well-being.

The first chapter provides the theoretical background of the study discussing the key concepts and frameworks of psychoanalytic theory and influential theorists' perspectives. The second chapter explores the contextual aspects of the study by examining the characters' backgrounds, upbringing, family dynamics, and social environments. This chapter considers the impact of these factors on their psychological well-being. The second chapter investigates the contextual aspects that shape the lives of the main characters, Alicia and Theo. The chapter offers a detailed background of Alicia's life, including her upbringing, family dynamics, and social environment. It explores the influence of her childhood experiences, relationships with family members, and any significant events or traumas that may have impacted her current mental state. The third and final chapter analyzes the data gathered applying the theoretical framework to the context of the novel. It explores the concept of the "Caged Child" and examines the psychological motivations behind Alicia's silence and Theo's involvement. This dissertation aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the characters' experiences and psychological backgrounds in light of the theoretical concepts discussed earlier.

Indeed, the *Silent Patient* is not exclusive for psychological exploration only. There is ample room for further exploration in various areas such as feminism, criminology, mythology, and a limitless number of themes and issues. These additional research avenues allow for a

deeper understanding and analysis of the novel, uncovering its multifaceted layers and exploring its broader implications.

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#1 *NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLER

THE
SILENT
PATIENT

ALEX
MICHAELIDES

"An unforgettable and Hollywood-bound-new thriller A mix of Hitchcockian suspense, Agatha Christie plotting, and Greek tragedy."- ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY

Alicia Berensons life is seemingly perfect. Until one night, when her husband, Gabriel, returns home late from work, and Alicia shoots him five times in the face and then never speaks another word. Alicia's refusal to talk, or give any kind of explanation, turns a domestic tragedy into a mystery that captures the public imagination. And she, the silent patient, is hidden away from the tabloids at the Grove, a secure psychiatric unit in North London.

Criminal psychotherapist Theo Faber is captivated by Alicia's story and jumps at the opportunity to work with her. His determination to get her to talk and unravel the mystery of why she shot her husband will take him down a path more unexpected and more terrifying than he ever imagined.



ALEX MICHAELIDES was born and raised in Cyprus. He has an M.A. in English literature from Trinity College, Cambridge University, and an M.A in screenwriting from the American Film institution in Los Angeles. His first novel, *The Silent Patient*, spent more than a year on the New York Times bestseller list and sold in a record-breaking fifty countries. He lives in London.