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Print ISSN: [3006-2497](#) Online ISSN: [3006-2500](#)Platform & Workflow by: [Open Journal Systems](#)<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18015201>**Persona, Trauma and Transformation in *The Silent Patient* and *Black Swan*: A Psychoanalytical Critique****Zill E Maryam**

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Corresponding Author Email: rahatbashir@umt.edu.pk**Abstract**

*The self is shaped not only by what is consciously expressed, but also by what remains silently carried within. This study explores the role of unconscious emotional memory and trauma in early development years on the psychological dynamics of the main characters, which eventually results in identity fragmentation and mental disintegration. This qualitative and interpretive research examines how *The Silent Patient* and *Black Swan* illustrate the development and transformation of persona, drawing parallels between the protagonists' psychological journeys and the theories of Bollas and Winnicott. It focuses how both works demonstrate the consequences of suppressing the authentic self in favor of societal expectations, leading to psychological distress and eventual breakdown. The investigation employs comparative textual analysis to address the similarities between the theoretical constructs of Bollas and Winnicott, especially the role played by early object relations in the development of personality and the process by which repressed emotional links are expressed in self-destructive actions. It is concluded that the two stories show the devastating effects of prioritizing societal norms over true self-expression, which leads to the creation of stiff defense mechanisms that make it impossible to experience a real relationship with emotions and become a person. Moreover the analysis reveals the paramount significance of bringing in seamless emotional experience with conscious identity, and points to the clinical relevance of identifying and expressing the unthought known in clinical work.*

Key Words: *Persona, Trauma, Transformation, Unconscious, False self***Introduction:**

The interaction between psychoanalytic and literary criticism can be used to derive very deep understandings of human condition, especially in cases of narratives dealing with the question of how trauma, identity construction and psyche change interact in a complex balance. This dissertation provides the extensive study of two interesting works of the contemporary time: a psychological thriller *The Silent Patient* (2019) by Alex Michaelides and a psychological horror *Black Swan* (2010) by Darren Aronofsky. Using the theoretical

contexts of the concept described by Christopher Bollas as the unthought known and the paradigm outlined by Donald Winnicott a contrasting self, which is the true self and false self, this study explores the way these two stories unveil the horrendous psychological effects of traumatic experience and how far people can go to preserve their true selves and at the same time annihilate the potential of true self-expression.

Bollas argues that “aspects of the unthought known – the primary repressed unconscious – will emerge during a psychoanalysis, as a mood, the aesthetic of a dream, or in our relation to the self as other” (Bollas: preface). Both the theories based on the preverbal and implicit knowledge and its influence on Behavior and relationships which reveals the emotional truths without words during psychotherapy. According to Bollas people maintain secret psychological experiences which produce deep behavioral and emotional impacts although they stay unexpressed. And as explained by Winnicott the ‘true self’ is actually the feeling of being real that requires maternal care to come to life, despite emerging from inherited potential (Bollas 19-23). While, the ‘false self’ arises in early object-relationships to protect true self. On the other hand, unthought known is the unconscious experience of self as Bollas states, “the unthought known constitutes the core of one’s being and will serve as the basis of subsequent infantile and childhood phantasy life” (Bollas 36).

This research comprises of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 3 and 16. SDG 3 stimulates good health and well-being and this study contributes to improving psychological well-being and access to mental health care. This investigation also underscores SDG 16 which encourages peace, justice and strong institutions and trauma in this study results from societal injustice about ending abuse, exploitation, and violence and equal access to justice. This research reveals that mental health (SDG 3) and justice (SDG 16) cannot be separated because trauma is usually caused by injustice and recovery cannot happen without psychological intervention and a systemic change.

The study evaluates the psychoanalytic aspects that illuminate the character transformations in *The Silent Patient* alongside *Black Swan*. The analysis examines how the unthought known framework influences protagonist conduct and selections and investigates how suppressed childhood experiences develop false self-pattern or destructive habits. Additionally, it rates the point of agreement and divergence between Winnicott and Bollas regarding how their theories explain character changes and mental collapse. Each individual has grown and developed in the context of family, that’s why family will always be central to a psychological analysis (Shabrang & Razh145). For example, according to object relations, a child’s parents are the first objects they differentiate and the hero of *Human Bondage* has witnessed his parent’s death. Even though object relations theory started with Freud and concepts like melancholia or grief, he also pointed the importance of several erotogenic zones in the developing personality structure. Object relations shift the concern to the object, and all libidinal strivings are objects seeking and the infant’s desire is for the mother or surrogate to the mother. Winnicott has nicely responded to this query, “how wrong patterns in childhood can influence future relationship (Winnicott 37-40)?” In both works, the main figure in developing the trauma is the mother. Alicia’s impression about her mother’s death and emotional neglect by her father in *The Silent Patient* and Nina’s controlling and enmeshed mother in *Black Swan* are responsible for their mental deterioration. Alicia perceives her mother’s death as an accident throughout her life but later she realizes that was suicide not the accident

and the harsh words by her father in which he clearly wished for Alicia's death instead of her mother leads her towards strong feeling of abandonment and worthlessness, as her father says after her mother death "Why didn't Alicia die instead" (Michaelides 271)? Nina's breakdown also roots in the oppressive behavior of her mother who makes sure that Nina's transformation into black swan is not an act of liberation but act of destruction. The researcher will derive insight into how the destructiveness of the unconscious mind can both make up large silent battles within Alicia and generate the potential for regeneration of life as human beings struggle to be resilient amid unfathomable pain.

Winnicott says that the relationships in the early stages of care giving are determinant in either promoting or hindering the development of the true self. In cases where these relations are poor, the false self emerges as a defensive mechanism that aims at safeguarding the true self against the outer threats. This defense may be simple adjustments to extreme pathology where the false self takes control of the consciousness and has little or no access to true feelings or creativity. The adult identity in the case of Alicia is developed in relation to the trauma of her early childhood, which halts her emotional growth. This silence acts as a defensive process, as well as a means of dissociation with the trauma, which leads to a loss of touch with the self in the face of the weight of what Bollas calls the unthought known. This study explores how the character of Alicia is created in reaction to trauma and how facing the unknown creates the process of psychological change. As Bollas explains, "In every human subject there is a continuous tension between the experience of self as a known object and as an unknown, shadowy presence" (Bollas 13).

In the same way, Black Swan also brings out the issue of identity and ambition through the psychological decline of Nina Sayers. The false self depicted by Winnicott in Nina is the clash that occurred between her true self and her personality that had been formed under the pressure of society and her mother. Her perfectionism, supported by a tyrannical artistic climate, holds an unresolved trauma that is in line with unthought known described by Bollas. As Bollas argues, "We are not only shaped by what we consciously remember, but also by the unthought known—the deeply internalized yet unarticulated experiences that influence our being" (16). The fact that Nina has been portraying the White and Black Swan is dramatizing an internal identity split that culminates into a psychological breakdown.

Research Aim:

The aim of this exploration is to identify and compare the psychological arcs of the protagonists of both the works *The Silent Patient* and *Black Swan* to find out how concepts of persona, identity and struggle are portrayed in these works.

1.1 Research Objectives:

- To investigate how unconscious emotional memory (the "unthought known") affects protagonist behaviors and choices within *The Silent Patient* and *Black Swan*.
- To evaluate how suppressed or unarticulated early experiences influence the characters' construction of a False Self or self-destructive behavior.
- To examine the ways in which the Winnicottian and Bollasian psychoanalytical theories are used to complement each other in defining the process of character development and psychological failure.

1.2 Research Significance:

The significance of this psychoanalytic approach to “The Silent Patient” and “Black Swan” shows how personas are built distorted and destroyed by the psychic processes that were not resolved and the psychological journeys of both the characters’ provide insights into the fragility of the human psyche. The study also adds to the debate concerning the strength of the various methods of treatment and the need to comprehend unconscious mechanisms in the management of the mind.

1.3 Research Questions:

1. How does the concept of the “unthought known” contribute to understanding the unconscious motivations of Alicia and Nina Black Swan?
2. How do both narratives depict the detrimental effects of blocking or suppressing initial emotional connections to others by using the concepts from Bollas’s and Winnicott’s interpretations?
3. How do the theoretical similarities of Winnicott and Bollas find reflection in the psychological unweaving of characters in The Silent Patient and Black Swan?

Chapter 2: Literature Review:

The Silent Patient and Black Swan are rich texts to analyze in the study of how trauma affects persona and transformation in psychoanalytical narratives. These writings reveal the complex relationships between childhood emotional abuse and eventual psychological growth, the disintegration of the self when social pressures think they are more important than being authentic. Relying on Wilfred Bion and Donald Winnicott theories, Alicia did not receive any form of emotional containment that is crucial for proper development of psyche (Hossain 319-324). The relationship that Bion refers to when he describes the “container-contained model” and the intuitive response of Winnicott when he speaks of the holding environment are employed to explain why all of Alicia distressing emotions were never reflected or processed to her in a nurturing way and how it contributed to her repression of feelings and her internal psychological disorder.

Manifesting symptoms such as flashbacks, negative self-view, aggressive behavior and social isolation, Alicia appears to have flashbacks, problems managing her emotions and pulls away from other people from the perspective of Complex Traumatic Stress Disorder (C-PTSD) (Pratiwi & Pramesti 14). According to their study, Alicia’s experiences in childhood as things like verbal and physical violence and the shameful betrayal of her husband are why her symptoms appear. According to Pratiwi and Pramesti, Alicia’s choice to not speak protects her from the intense emotions inside while helping her find control. Utilizing Alicia’s case study to highlight the attention of initial care givers, Sabdor Ferenczi’s and Freud’s theories with personalities that failed to develop positively beyond childhood abuse (Ashraf et al. 560). Ultimately, the article emphasizes that the novel illustrates how unhealed childhood trauma can distort one’s sense of identity and emotional responses, often leading to destructive outcomes in adulthood.

Discussing about the feelings that are subjugated and unintended, Alicia’s silence defends her from certain feelings which receive a Freudian explanation in terms of repressed feelings and the unconscious mind (Tourki & Mehaya 1). The experts say that Alicia’s silence helps her deal with intense emotional stress by reflecting and also hiding what she endured. The authors study how other characters react to Alicia not

speaking, revealing information about their minds and the way they perceive trauma. Analyzing people's expression after traumatic disorders, the way language is used and study semantic variations in the novel to show Alicia's psychological layers (Shoaib & Ali 730). There is a clear link presented in the research between symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and the way people write or talk about their experiences. They argue that the language of the novel gives insight into how its characters think which proves the importance of stylistics for portraying psychology in a real way.

Delving into the return of repressed trauma and its impacts on protagonists' behavior, the novel operates psychological and literary perspectives to express how Alicia's repressed trauma appears (Hayqal & Wahyuni 70). This article highlights that when Alicia's repressed memories come back, her constructed sense of self breaks down, revealing how little defense she has. The authors show that Alicia's experience demonstrates how old unresolved trauma sometimes leads people to behave in ways that make little sense, yet are full of emotion. By utilizing Jung's view of archetypes, these archetypes help to explain the way her psychological development is formed by common symbols (Safitri at el. 123). A key element they include is that Alicia's character includes a "Shadow," showing her secret worries and wishes and the "Innocent" or "Victim," representing her fragility and pain. The article uses this approach, seeing Alicia as representing an experience many people share, since her emotional trauma speaks to common human challenges like loss and searching for meaning.

Offering insights into the involvement of trauma and its long term effects, Alicia's silence as an important mode of communication instead of simply thinking of it as not speaking at all (Arain 37). Arain looks at how Alicia's artwork serves as a way for her to express ideas she finds difficult to say. The authors argue that Alicia's path to understanding herself is greatly influenced by silence. Shedding light on how intentions drive actions and emotions, the nature of character Theo Faber via Freud's theory of id and the ego with an explanation of how the character battles between instinctual desires and reason (Shoukat et al. 18). Discussing professional concerns in continuum of medical education, indirectly addresses psychoanalytic literature as the concerns presented in psychiatric practice, when considered from ethical and professional perspective which underlies relation between the patients and the therapist, can impact the therapeutic process and its outcomes (Daher-Nashif 95). The author points out teaching medical students literature can help them empathize think critically and reflect upon their practice.

Michaelides is praised by research for using thrillers to quietly point out that trauma can lead his characters to misinterpret their surroundings, their relationships and their own identity. Likewise, Çelik (1) explores the psychoanalytic reading of the Swan Queen story and its incursion into Nina's psyche examines what it means to be human and sometimes how difficult is only to discern illusion from reality in one's mind. Following another mode of Deleuzian analysis, one could consider structural transformation of Nina's persona as a 'becoming-swan' process despite the fact that she fails to embrace it as a creative discovery and undergoes psychological breakdown.

The analysis of the psychological aspects by focusing on the gender aspects and the horror that is inherent in the story and contributes to the construction of the film's dimension of gender and horror (Sengupta

& Chowdhury 85). They argue that the feeling of being lacking properly describes “desire” and Nina’s recognition and perfection is driven by this lack, as a result of which her madness shows the nature of unfulfilled desires. To these, Fadhila et al. adds the psychoanalytic perspective to explain the psychological stress and high-pressure art world that triggers Nina’s madness; the psychological breakdowns are analyzed by Freudian concepts (158). Additionally, Nina, the central figure of the film, fights to deconstruct the image of a pure and innocent ballerina and goes mad while trying to create the perfect performance.

Using Sigmund Freud’s theory of anxiety to inspect the types of anxiety caused by inner and outer circumstances such as Nina Sayers’ psychological problems (Haryanti 1). She refers to two main types: neurotic anxiety is caused by inner psychological difficulties and realistic anxiety comes from threats outside the person. She claims that Nina goes through both kinds of emotion throughout the course of the film. Extending Winnicott’s ideas, Christopher Bollas introduced the ‘unthought known’ that noted the involvement of unconscious processes into psychoanalytical relationships (Jemstedt 117).

One may place a Black Swan on the map of cinematic exploration of the dissociative identity disorder (DID), however, the character of Nina is not diagnosed with DID in the movie (Lantagne 645). The psychology of her trauma is simulated by a split of identities: naive, domineering White Swan in contrast to sexy, wild Black Swan. This duplicity is the evidence of an inner conflict between her artificial self-created to satisfy the outside world and repressed self full of desire, aggression, and independence. The psychological breakdown experienced by Nina can be regarded as both the effect of the external pressures put by the ballet world and a consequence of the developmental traumas caused by an enmeshed mother bond (Smith 421). Since Erica projects her personality and identity her possessiveness may be considered as the element of narcissistic and daughters often tend to internalize the wishes of a mother as opposed to themselves as a result of such maternal aspects (Chodorow 10). The visual hallucinations in Black Swan take cinematic form illustrating the trauma of Nina have been discuss by many scholars, as an approach to feministic psychoanalysis (Creed 172; Mulvey 6).

Geared towards workers, the cultural postmodernism and shows how Black Swan can be interpreted as a fairy tale for our narcissistic modern society (Landwehr1). The article states that Black Swan criticizes a situation in which people are judged by their image rather than their real self, leading Nina’s mental collapse. The psychological changes suffered by Nina Sayers have been scrutinized by using Freud’s theory (Nastiti & Sutandio 92). These authors argue that the stresses placed on Nina from her mind and from others cause her to break down mentally and act against herself, making her a victim of many forces. Nina’s characters development in the movie by using the theory of individuation as set out by Carl Jung (Suprpto 1). Suprpto points out that Nina’s growth over the film is an illustration of merging her known self with her unknown subconscious. Of note, in the study, the importance attached by Winnicott to the facilitating environment, as well as to the formation of true and false self, is seen to still influence current practice in the therapeutic fields, especially in the treatment of traumatized patients and those with personality disorders.

2.1 Research Gap:

There is theoretical gap in understanding the persona formation due to unconscious thought which leads to mental health stigma and addressing this gap will help extend identity theory by offering a more

comprehensive model for contemporary society. This research proclaims to fill the gap that lack of integrative studies that combine both Bollas' and Winnicott's theories in analyzing characters from *The Silent Patient* and *Black Swan* by directly comparing how psychoanalytic theories are depicted in literature versus film.

Theoretical Framework:

Persona is actually the strategic mask used for identity in public and it can be called "the public image for one's identity (Marshall & Barbour 1)." The persona according to Carl Jung, is the mask one wears on the outside that reaches the individual and the society (Jung 122). That the painting image of Alicia Berenson is a fac-simile of what Michael Rutschky defines as narcissistic camouflage on traumatic survivors such that, they become too adaptable to the external pressures (41). In the same sense, the role of ballet is also contrived to both the character of Nina Sayers and her director; according to Žižek, in the film of Aronofsky, ballet is the form of ideological choreography, the staging of the body that is reduced to a surface with no depth (88). Basically, people uses personas to impress the world or make new friends or hide the authentic personality and simply due to the societal pressure and norms.

It presupposes that trauma is the engagement with the event that is not yet taken in by the psyche that the soul is compelled into obsessive re-enactment until meaning can be created (Caruth 7). LaCapra contrasts acting-out to working-through, and makes it clear that un-integrated trauma promotes compulsive repetition, yet narrative articulation may trigger the healing (LaCapra 21). Both pieces have some kind of dramatization of the so-called acting-out: Alicia is silent, catatonic, and Nina hallucinate the chaotic destruction of her body.

This study aims to display the personas of the two protagonists and the trauma due to which they are forced to do such transformation. Ego distortion in terms of true and false self: In *The Maturation Processes and the Facilitating Environment* by Donald Winnicott defines 'personas' and *The Shadow of the Object: A psychoanalysis of the Unthought Known* by Christopher Bollas demonstrates the traumas responsible for transformation. *The Shadow of the Object* merges the elements of Freud's theory of unconscious thinking with the aspects of object relation theory which elucidates that repressed unconscious will surface as feeling, our relationship to self as others or aesthetics of dreams during the psychoanalysis (Bollas: Preface). While the *Ego Distortion in Terms of True and False Self* explicates the spontaneous desire shown by infant's gesture originates from false self which serves the purpose of concealing true self (Winnicott 140-150). As stated, "the True Self comes from the aliveness of the body tissues and the working of the body-functions, including the heart's action and breathing" (Winnicott 148).

Both the theorists pay significant attention to how caregiving affects the emotional nature of the later infant and the adult. Whereas in Bollas' sense, the unconscious relates to an emotional knowledge that is known but not thought, Winnicott emphasizes how the individual 'behaves' to contain such unmet emotional needs. Both concepts are types of the Unknown, where the false self is a strategy in response to failed relationships and the unthought known is the feeling left behind as a result of early inter-subjective processes. Through the psychoanalytic theories of Unthought Known and False Self researchers can obtain vital knowledge about Alicia and Nina's psychological development. Their traumatic backgrounds have molded personas which they maintain through self-made personas intended to conceal their disturbing past experiences.

Research Methodology:

The investigation employs qualitative, interpretive research method to depict psychological variations due to the traumatic occurrences in *The Silent Patient* and *Black Swan*. Researchers using an interpretive approach aim to uncover meaning toward a better understanding of issues involved (Alvermann & Mallozzi 488). Furthermore, Walsham argued that interpretive methods of research start from the position that our knowledge of reality including the domain of human action is a social construction by human actors (320). The study adopts a **comparative case study approach**, analyzing *The Silent Patient*, a psychological thriller novel by Alex Michaelides, and *Black Swan*, a psychological horror film directed by Darren Aronofsky. This analysis work operates novel and film as primary texts. It delivers how the psychological deteriorated personalities of the characters formed in the fictional world of writers by mainly centering the investigation of persona. The False Self and Unthought Known represent different forms of the Unknown while the False Self emerges from relationship failures and the unthought known involves feelings resulting from early relational experiences. The scrutiny also conducts evolutionary comparison to evaluate the connection between how two main characters present and resolve their psychological dilemmas together with their interaction with psychoanalytic theories of Winnicott and Bollas.

Analysis and Discussion:

Echoes of Unthought:

Christopher Bollas established in his “unthought known” theory that humans store complex unconscious experiences that guide their actions although they exist outside the realm of conscious thought. Alex Michaelides reveals in *The Silent Patient* that Alicia Berenson carries mental and behavioral patterns shaped by unconscious memories which arose from traumatic childhood experiences and the behavior of initial care givers. The life changing trauma of witnessing her father desiring her death instead of her mother showed Alicia that she lacked worth in life and love. The problem of expressing her deep hurt became too much for Alicia to handle so she chose to remain silent before eventually turning violent.

Throughout the novel, Alicia’s diary entries and interactions reveal her struggle with these buried experiences: “I saw it now. I would never be safe. Never be loved. All my hopes, dashed—all my dreams, shattered—leaving nothing, nothing. My father was right—I didn’t deserve to live. I was—nothing” (Michaelides 326). These lines from Alicia’s diary exhibit that how her father’s rejection created an unsaid truth which shaped her inner beliefs about herself and her self-worth. “I didn’t kill Gabriel. Gabriel killed me. All I did was pulled the trigger” (Michaelides 326). According to Alicia, Gabriel’s betrayal has transformed into psychological death indicating she experienced extreme psychological reactions from buried previously untreated emotional wounds. Alicia reveals an unconscious belief about her value because it remains always at risk to be discarded through emotional abandonment just like her father’s rejection. The term of the unthought known as conceptualized by Christopher Bollas refers to those experiences booked somatically and never symbolic (201). It is the case of Gabriel betraying and murdering that causes Alicia to feel a dread over which she can find no release, neither in speech nor in painting: the trauma is merely pushed on to a myth, the death-and-return of the figure of Alcestis, which Alicia continually reproduces on the canvas. Bessel van derKolk insists that traumatic

memory is not engraved in a disposable area in the brain but in the amygdala, which are manifested through actions or imagery but not words (Kolk 178), and as with Alicia herself, the author conveys this illustrative devoid of the use of words. As stated: "How terrifying that must be for a child, how traumatizing—how your sense of self-worth would implode, and the pain would be too great, too huge to feel, so you'd swallow it, repress it, bury it" (Michaelides 272). This revelation demonstrates that Alicia's early life formed hidden memories which transformed into the "unthought known" that would affect her behavioral patterns. The conclusion made by Ashraf et al. regarding the unresolved childhood trauma as the cause of maladaptive coping mechanisms is not just an imaginary assumption made but made quite clear in the text itself.

The novel also emphasizes the importance of being loved which is also Alicia's major childhood trauma, when her father curses her on her mother's death and wishes her to die instead of her mother. The deep declaration reveals Alicia's serious attachment dependence on Gabriel which may stem from insufficient emotional care in her childhood. "I suppose what scares me is giving in to the unknown" (Michaelides 66). The object of this verse stands for all of her unresolved past traumas. According to Bollas the knowledge of unconscious material stays threatening because patients have suppressed their memories but never clarified these experiences to them. "I didn't want to die" (Michaelides 20). Inner lifelessness occurs because she lacks the ability to express her painful emotions. Although she feels it emotionally she has not intellectually acknowledged this fact. "There's so much pain everywhere, and we just close our eyes to it. The truth is we're all scared. We're terrified of each other" (Michaelides 68). According to Bollas this collective emotion stems from early life experiences of emotional suffering or disregarding events that remained hidden from conscious thinking and verbal communication. "My only hope of survival, I realised, was to retreat – physically as well as psychically" (Michaelides 19). Through her silence Alicia possibly mirrored the speaker's subconscious psychological elements. The wish to silence Alicia demonstrates his subconscious wish to evade confronting the inner reality which confronts him. Although Daher-Nashif raises some ethical issues related to psychiatric practice, literature requires further long-term focus on the ability of helping professions to addict them to the trauma they purport to treat (95).

According to Christopher Bollas the unthought known represents internalized experiences and emotional understanding which influence human actions but remain inexpressible to awareness. Nina Sayers in *Black Swan* serves as an embodiment of the "unthought known" through how her conduct and hallucinations stem from repressed traumatic events combined with unresolved psychological requirements. Through her quest for excellence and dual presence as a White Swan and Black Swan Nina shows how she faces an inner struggle between her pure self and hidden passionate nature. "I just want to be perfect" (00:21:18). According to Bollas, this statement represents an "unthought known" which forms the basis of Nina's inner world without receiving proper investigation. The trauma Nina experiences is developmental in a combined sense; it is a swallowing mother, sexualization of work, and the exertion of grooming by the director. According to Silverman, the somatic flashbacks in the form of bodily hallucinations such as feathers, blood, doppelgangers prove for Nina as externalizing the pre-verbal terror (Silverman 134). The two texts therefore demonstrate the argument

by Herman that trauma disrupts the typification of memory into narratives and imposes silence into plain symptom or fractured form (Herman 51).

Nina develops a threatening perception of Lily which asserts through her imagined fights because she projects her hidden qualities onto others. She hallucinates Lily as a rival, a threat, even as a lover. These hallucinations are psychic dramatizations of her unconscious trying to symbolically integrate these forbidden parts. "I felt it. It was perfect" (01:47:50). The role metamorphosis signals that Nina surrendered her entire identity to untreated emotions which had remained subliminal to her self-awareness. It's a haunting embodiment of how art can carry psychic meaning that thought cannot yet contain. The experiences of Nina Sayers in *Black Swan* demonstrate the theory of "unthought known" because her unrecognized psychological material arises as behavioral manifestations and perceptual insights. Her life story shows how unconscious emotional knowledge fundamentally shapes both mental processes and physical behaviors. Shafran and Mansell appreciate the fact that clinical perfectionism is typically anxiety, depression and eating disorders but this relationship between perfectionism and pathology ought not to hide how institutions actively generate and cash in on perfectionistic dispositions to gain money and prestige (906). The paper demonstrates the importance of therapeutic interventions guided by trauma, another aim of SDG 3 to achieve access to mental health services that can, in the long run, prevent suffering and improve the well-being of individuals.

5.2 The Unraveling of Self:

The story of Alicia is one of inadequate integration of her false self with her true one, based on the trauma she experienced in her early years, emotional neglectfulness of her parents, and betrayal in her adult life. "He is, without a doubt, the love of my life. I love him so totally, completely, sometimes it threatens to overwhelm me" (Michaelides 2). Alicia develops her Fake Self through Gabriel by fitting herself completely to him yet she does not receive real emotional connections in return. Her complete dependability reveals the weakness of her authentic nature. "The painting was finished. I called it *Alcestis*" (Michaelides 12). Through creating art she finds one way to express herself authentically because her 'True Self' cannot fully appear any other way. The depiction of "*Alcestis*" through silent self-sacrifice resembles the current state of Alicia. Each part of herself functions differently with the 'False Self' performing a closing action while her 'True Self' experiences the loss of both personal suffering and general loneliness and grief.

The False Self structure inside Alicia collapses during Gabriel's deceitful actions thus opening the old childhood pain when her father wanted her dead instead of her mother. The analysis of silence as defensive mechanism by Tourki and Mehaya as applied to Alicia is consistent with Freudian theory since it is observed that the silence of Alicia assists her to cope with the high levels of emotional stress she was undergoing by reflecting on her past experiences and concealing them as well. "I didn't want to die. Not yet; not when I hadn't lived" (Michaelides 20). Deep down inside her a rare part of her 'True Self' exists but it remains hidden by abundant silence and sadness. The True Self endures damages due to its unseen, unworthy and voiceless condition.

When the False Self fragments completely it functions no longer. True Self remains inactive because it remains silent and expressed through artistic means. Nina's False Self is built around being the "good girl," the obedient daughter, and the perfect ballerina. Nina says, "I just want to be perfect" (00:21:13). Nina's entire

identity is based on perfectionism which is actually a hallmark of the False Self. Her need to please, to conform, suppresses her spontaneity. The process of transformation of Nina is a bodily metamorphosis. In feministic manner, both stories in a sense challenge patriarchal economics based on feudal solutions to girl-boy play or the feminine performance.

In one scene Nina says to her mother, “I’m not yours” (00:59:46)! This statement represents the rare moment of rebellion when Nina tries to break from her False Self, but it’s met with emotional violence.. The studies of maternal enmeshment presented by Smith and Chodorow are very elucidative especially when it comes to the internalization of the desires of a mother by the daughters compared to their own ones (10). Smith is right in noting that the result of the external forces imposed by the ballet world coupled with the effect of the developmental traumas, namely the enmeshed mother bond, are both causes of the psychological breakdown experienced by Nina (437). Both victim and perpetrator of the systems that deny her true self become mother, although sometimes the psychoanalytic emphasis on individual maternal failure clouds the structural forces.

Thomas invites Nina to deal with her False Self and be spontaneous. Thomas to Nina: “You have the White Swan down. But the Black Swan—it’s a hard fucking job to dance both” (00:20:47). Thomas identifies the division within her of the False Self as White Swan vs. Repressed True Self as Black Swan. Though, the term perfectionism that is explained by Casanova as a purely pathologic defense mechanism deserves a more sophisticated treatment (67). Though this explanation provides substantial psychological dynamics, there is a danger that it will shift all pathology to the individual and neglect the fact that toxic institutional cultures actively nurture and reward perfectionism.

Lily: “You could let go a little” (00:35:10). Lily is the True Self that is impulsive and expressive. Nina’s hallucinated night out with Lily represents a fantasy of liberation which shows Nina’s True Self experimenting with agency and pleasure. Her sexual hallucination with Lily is actually her unconscious desires, long buried; begin to surface which act as a metaphor for the True Self struggling for space. The Deleuzian interpretation of the transformation of Nina into the process of becoming-swan despite not grasping it as a creative discovery and experiencing psychological breakdown provided by Celik is an interesting alternative to outright pathologizing interpretations (12). The gendered interpretation of Sengupta and Chowdhury claims that the sense of deficitness is the best way to describe the desire and the perfection of Nina is achieved due to the lack, thanks to which her craziness demonstrates the character of unfulfilled desires (85). Such Lacanian interpretation of desire as constituted by lack makes the insatiable desire of the perfect Nina a structural and not a neurotic phenomenon.

At the end of the performance, bleeding from a self-inflicted wound, Nina whispers, “I was perfect” (01:47:50). In a short space, her True Self comes out, no longer guarded by the False Self. However, because her environment never allowed space for gradual development of the True Self, its emergence is too sudden, too overwhelming, and ultimately psychically and physically destructive. Winnicott cautioned that failure to live the True Self could result in violent outburst or it can be expressed as breakdown or even death. After her performance, such scholars as Suprpto consider this to be a successful integration of her True Self, a moment of true wholeness. This study identifies the importance of the fact that early injustices can influence the

development of Alicia and Nina as psychological entities and, subsequently, identify the need to create the equitable system of mental health support, emphasizing SDG 16, inclusive, peaceful, and just societies.

5.3 Parallel Journeys of Protagonists:

The main reason of taking both the characters is their compelling similarities as both are the artists in their own way and the trauma of their initial care givers which hit them so hard that they formed a false wall around them when the same trauma hit them back later in life. Alicia and Nina are presented as women of high functions and disciplined attitude whose subtly chained identity is bound to the staring eyes of another individual. Alicia has a profession of painting, and the feeling of being noticed is almost fully provided by the gaze of Gabriel as well as Nina is a dancing girl and relies on her place of employment, yet she is brought down to the level at which her mother keeps watch over her as well as receiving accolades on her performances by the director. Every story creates an abrupt rupture to reveal the shallowness of that self. Alicia is a woman who sees her husband cheat and then in a few hours he gets murdered. The shock destroys even language itself, she ceases to speak. Nina gets the double duty of Swan Queen. The pressure to be perfect is a factor that divides her into conflicting personalities. The same structural use, no Wall Street, is that of silence and hallucination as protecting walls about an imploding identity. The silence of Alicia, her painting of Alcestis repeatedly, and the use of her diary uniquely are the symptoms of Alicia. All that is Nina, who is picking her skin, doubles in the mirror, and seeing black feathers.

According to Winnicott, the two women lose their transitional space: neither can they now find reliable other to whom they could direct such raw feeling, and who could process it through herself: hence, the psyche generates corresponding tangible actions. The finales coerce a reunification of the split self, although results turn out differently: Alicia murders Gabriel in literal reality then, re-enacts the scene on canvas. Focusing on inside, when a reality is revealed by Theo, a final withdrawal, coma, through medication, is selected and, therefore, integration fails. Nina psychotically kills Lily, but in the process, the injury is on her. Back onstage she dances the Black Swan perfectly, then says, "I was perfect" (01:47:53) and apparently dies. This is a paradoxical moment of unity. Both protagonists do then start out inside repressing personalities that balk any unruly affect. Trauma is also known to make victims of the phenomenon what Dasein refers to as the over-regulation of affect as a means of keeping socially acceptable (57).

The texts consequently oppose the redemptive line thus familiar in trauma fiction; rather they enact what LaCapra (21) and others understand by the notion of acting-out, that is, difficult renewal of the event when working through is out of reach. Adding the novel to the movie, both of them by Michaelides and Aronofsky, propose the contention that the expression of true self-awareness, in a culture hungry to punish nonconformity of accepted images of femininity, is usually manifested through violence, be it psychic, symbolic, or actual. Their lesson is stern enough: that when the construction of a persona precedes the spontaneous gesture, any delayed appearance of the true self of the person is likely to come as disaster rather than as purgation.

Conclusion:

This study has aimed at an in-depth analysis of the complex psychological milieu of the characters of Alicia Berenson in the novel *The Silent Patient* by Alex Michaelides and Nina Sayers in the *Black Swan* film by Darren Aronofsky by using the theoretical concepts of the concepts of the unthought known by Christopher Bollas and Donald Winnicott on the true self/ false self dichotomy. The analysis provides deep reflections in regards to trauma, as the determinant element of the establishment of the identity, the effects of the suppression of emotions on personality development, and the disastrous power of retaining false selves to achieve perfection and to survive as personalities. They both present to the reader different symbolic versions of reality though different in their art forms as well as own scenarios, they turn out similar as they explore the psychological prison of women who by their own thoughts have ended up in prisons of such free will, but at the same time, they have fallen victims by failure of the environment through which they have failed to develop their self-true ways.

A combination of Winnicott and Bollas approaches shows overlapping and non-overlapping contributions to a comprehension of identity formation throughout these two psychological worlds. Both theorists share the view that early relational experience is critical in developing psychic structure while they differ in terms of how they think the early relational experience works and, more to the point, what can be a most effective treatment. With these differences and similarities in mind, the psychological development of the main characters in the stories can be analyzed in a better mental context and the tragedy of the lives of these characters can be understood well. The idea is especially useful as it helps to explain the fact that trauma is not merely recalled or forgotten, but instead the fabric of personality itself becomes impregnated with it and results in either perceptual or behavioral patterns that are much beyond the reach of conscious comprehension.

Their therapeutic implications and psychology of psychic change become the distinguishing factors. According to the framework proposed by Winnicott, there is a potential of restoring the true self as it is determined by the sufficient therapeutic holding and recognition, which means that proper relationships environment will help people to reconnect with their genuine selves and be able to foster the ability to pursue authentic intimacy. There is an optimistic ring to his idea of the therapeutic relationship as a place where the true self can come out unscathed, and perhaps hope of being able to heal even extreme false self organizations. The study argues psychological disturbance is relational and socially shaped; the protagonists' tragic self-destruction reflects unmet human needs for authenticity, connection, and love, becoming a heroic assertion of the true self.

Limitations:

1. The research attempts to use psychoanalysis as a method of interpretation, a subjective approach which may overlook on trauma and identity.
2. Furthermore, the discussion might simplify the psychological development and inappropriately consider the long-term knowledge or current knowledge of trauma and identity.

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