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STYLISTICS EXPLORATION OF THE NOVEL "THE SILENT PATIENT" BY ALEX MACHAELIDES THROUGH PTSD

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ABSTRACT

This research is the stylistic analysis of Alex Michaelides' novel 'The Silent Patient'. The study's goal is to analyse the stylistic choices mainly the semantic deviation devices that appear markedly in order to explore the psychological complexity of the character Alicia. It focusses on how the unconventional use of language serve as a tool for illustrating the standard symptoms of PTSD according to DSM V. Additionally, what role does language play in conveying her struggle with PTSD and its effect on her relationship with her husband. This research utilized the theoretical framework of Leech and Short (2007) based on stylistic features. This research applied the qualitative-descriptive approach to provide an adequate description of the intentional use of figurative language. The analysis highlights the use of similes, metaphors, and other symbolic language as a window to her fragmented soul, her deep-seated emotions like fear, pity, anxiety, a sense of betrayal, hopelessness, suppression of emotions, and as a coping mechanism to escape from reality. Thus, her use of language enriched with figurative language is clearly is an illustration of her struggling with PTSD.

Keywords: Post Traumatic Stress disorder, Childhood trauma, Stylistics Analysis.

Introduction

According to the American Psychiatric Association (2023), PTSD is a neuropsychological disorder. It is characterised by prolonged and distressing thoughts and emotions associated with a traumatic incident, which persist even after the event has passed. Those diagnosed with posttraumatic stress may relive the trauma through flashbacks or dreams, experience negative alteration in thoughts and mood, actively avoid situations or individuals directly or indirectly related to the events, and experience hyperarousal or exaggerated startle. (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Additionally, this condition isn't just a temporary reaction to trauma; it's a long-

term mental health problem that can last for years if left untreated, making the problems in social interaction and maintaining healthy relationships.

PTSD may manifest in any age group of individuals who have either directly or indirectly witnessed a traumatic incident, such as a natural disaster, a severe car accident, a terrorist act, war or combat, rape, or childhood abuse. There is growing evidence that adults victimized by childhood trauma are most likely to develop post-traumatic stress disorder, which can significantly impact their mental health throughout their lives. In general, childhood trauma involves negative childhood memories in which a child grows up in an abusive and neglectful environment, experiencing a range of psychological suffering. For instance, a child may experience trauma if they endure physical, sexual, or emotional abuse; neglect; witness a parent or sibling's enduring abuse; deal with a mentally ill parent; or encounter another traumatic event in their life.

The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children estimates that the United Nations officially reports about half a million children as victims of mistreatment each year. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) defines child abuse as any behavior that hurts a child under the age of 18. It is defined as any act of harassment or violence, whether it be sexual, physical, or emotional mistreatment of children. Individuals of any age group, including adults, children, and even parents, can engage in this type of abuse.

Undoubtedly, the abusive and neglectful relationship of a parent with their child is the main cause of childhood trauma. Abusive behavior by parents refers to emotional abuse, encompassing the carer's failure to create a suitable and welcoming atmosphere as well as actions that negatively impact a child's emotional well-being, and growth. These acts encompass excessive restriction on a child, marginalization, disapproval, threats, discrimination, rejection, and other forms of nonphysical hostile behavior. Accordingly, parental neglect is common act where a parent fails to fulfill their responsibility to support their child's growth and well-being in one or more essential aspects, such as health, education, emotional development, nourishment, shelter, and safety. It is detrimental to the child's health, the growth of their individual development, their mental health, their ability to trust others, and ultimately their ability to develop relationships with others. Thus, such events can cause significant distress, which in turn can lead to the development of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Literature, described as an imitation of human life, uses language as a medium to convey a person's feelings, emotions, thoughts, imagination and encompasses extraordinary aspects of experience, in a written expression. One of the common forms of literature is a novel. Despite its classification as fiction, novels profoundly influence

readers by illuminating their everyday problems. Each novel uniquely reflects the author's imagination through well-crafted narration, exploring the challenges faced by an individual or the issues of contemporary society. There are many novels that captivated quite a lot of interest in reader by addressing their struggles. Alex Michaelides' debut novel, "The Silent Patient," is notable for its gripping plot that addresses one of the contemporary issues.

Michaelides was born in 1977 in Cyprus, where he was raised, and now resides in London. He has a M.A. in English literature from Trinity College, Cambridge University, as well as a M.A. degree in screenwriting from the American Film Institute located in Los Angeles. The Silent Patient, his debut novel, achieved the highest sales figure globally in 2019 and achieved a remarkable sales record in forty-nine countries. The book achieved the top position in the New York Times hardcover books category during its first week of release and secured the second position on Amazon.com's list of the best-selling novels in 2019. The book not only won the Best Thriller award but also secured the Goodreads Choice Award.

The book is a psychological thriller that centers on the characters of Theo Faber, a psychotherapist, and Alicia Berenson, an artist. Alicia shoots her husband Gabriel five times in the head, then becomes completely mute over the years. The act of shooting her husband is the mystery throughout the novel that later unravelled through Alicia's diary entries. The novel's plot becomes increasingly captivating as the reader also learns about Alicia Berenson's past events through her diary entries. The diary also exposes her childhood, which was marked by trauma and distress. Her mother, an alcoholic, struggled with her own mental health, which negatively impacted her ability to nurture her daughter and maintain a meaningful relationship with her. Her upbringing was marked by emotional neglect, loneliness, a lack of affection, and a dangerous atmosphere due to her mother's unstable emotions. Moreover, one day, her mother attempted suicide by stabbing her car into a brick wall as a means of escape from her turbulent life. Alicia was sitting with her mother in the passenger seat when she hit the car, but she survived. Therefore, this accident left a deep scar, a feeling of unworthiness, and an emotional disturbance.

Furthermore, her father, who is expected to be Alicia's protector, wishes for his daughter to die instead of her wife. The fact that Alicia is alive instead of her wife makes Vernon angry and regretful; according to him, "Why did she have to die? Why did it have to be her? Why didn't Alicia die instead?" (Michaelides, 2019, p. 235). These words left a feeling of unworthiness and rejection from her father, which traumatized her throughout her life. Additionally, after the suicide of both her parents, her aunt, Lydia, who was supposed to be her only caretaker? She was very strict, authoritative, and cold-hearted, which further added to the feeling of unworthiness and lack of

affection. In her diary, Alicia showed her hatred toward her in words: "Facing Lydia was far scarier than facing loan sharks." (Michaelides, 2019) Thus, a distressing childhood incidents she endures due to a lack of secure attachment with her parents results in a severe psychological condition known as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) that later become a root cause of killing her husband.

Research Problem

Alicia's diary serves as a medium to convey her feelings, emotions, thoughts, and desires in written expression. It is a window to her fragmented soul, depressive feelings, repressive thoughts, and particularly the trauma she endured as a child. The novel has become the Centre of attention for multiple studies on the psychological aspects of her childhood trauma through PTSD. However, there is a noticeable gap in how language, especially in personal writings such as diary entries or journals in the novel, functions as a medium to reveal her struggling with mental trauma. Moreover, how her unconventional choice of words in her diary is not just the piece of writing but is an illustration of the symptoms of PTSD, providing a deep exploration of the intensity of psychological suffering due to her childhood experience. Furthermore, how the use of stylistic devices provides the insight of her struggling with maintaining a relationship with her husband and a reason for shooting him after seven years of apparently happily marriage. Therefore, the objective of this study is to examine how Alicia's stylistic choices in her diary entries shed light on her struggle with PTSD by exploring the relationship between language and psychological trauma.

Research Questions

- 1-What kinds of stylistic devices does Alex Michaelides employ in his novel "The Silent Patient" to delve into the psychological intricacies of Alicia Berenson?
2. How are stylistic devices used to illustrate Alicia Berenson's symptoms of PTSD?
3. What role does language play to convey her struggle with PTSD and its effect on her relationship with her husband?

Objective of the Research

1. How the language diary serves as a medium to convey her fragmented soul, depressive feelings, repressive thoughts, and particularly the trauma she endured as a child.
2. In what ways does language serve not only as a reflection of her thoughts and feelings but also as a coping mechanism to escape from negative thoughts, or simply unexpected reality?
3. How her use of language enriches with figurative language is an illustration of the symptoms of PTSD she is struggling with.

4. How the use of stylistic devices provides the insight of her struggling with maintaining a relationship with her husband and the reason for shooting him after seven years of happily married marriage.

This study is expected to contribute to the advancement of linguistics through the stylistic exploration of the novel. It will help students to understand the significance of figurative language and how writers employ different stylistic approaches to convey meaning formation. Moreover, this study contributes to establishing a bridge between linguistics and psychology in a way that patients suffering from mental trauma like PTSD can also manifest in language, not just through action. Additionally, it is expected to assist in analyzing the intentional use of figurative language in comprehending the underlying themes and hidden meaning. Furthermore, this study will inspire others to conduct research that delves deeper into character analysis, not only in poetic literature but also in prose forms like novels. To conclude, this study will contribute by providing a way to enhance public awareness and comprehension regarding psychological trauma resulting from childhood experiences, which is significant regarding the issue of mental health that impacts the lives of numerous individuals.

Literature Review

Trauma

"Trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being" (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), 2012, p. 2). Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which is inextricably linked with trauma, is in itself a profound public health burden. According to (Caruth, 1991) post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is characterized by an overwhelming experience of traumatic events, followed by an uncontrollable appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive behaviors. Individuals who develop PTSD are too frustrated to lead normal lives and reduced life course opportunities. (Zia-Ul-Haq, 2023).

The notions of trauma have been constructed through the continuous history of development from the late nineteenth century to the present time. The official definition of PTSD has been formally introduced into the third edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III), published in 1980 with its historical background of the psychological condition. After the publication of this edition, the history of PTSD became the central question among the scholars. Some argue that PTSD is just the new term that is mostly relevant to military veterans characterized by traumatic memories, avoidance and emotional disturbance. However, many PTSD scholars believed that that the traumatic syndrome caused after the World

War I and II, which they referred to as "neurosis of war", "shell shock" "combat trauma," or "combat fatigue". So, different scholars started studies on PTSD and give the insights of the trauma and its effect on which lead the foundation for the further investigation. Following the studies on the PTSD, its criteria of diagnosis become more and more refined in DSM 5. During the twentieth first century, the researches gave a gateway to the further studies and add modification about it. It is studied that trauma come from any incident apart from the effect of war that could be from childhood trauma mainly due to sexual abuse, that had been repressed or dissociated.

In the postmodern era, the psychology of person become more and more under investigation. Indeed, literature is the imitation of human experiences that presents a witness of the incidents that are often remained unspoken and unopened. In literature novel become a powerful medium to effectively portray social issues in which narrator narrates one's exterior and interior mind of a person. It drew the attention to their audience to raise awareness to the contemporary issues with its fictionality. It uses language to display the inner world of the man. Margaret Atwood in her novel, *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), *Cat's Eye* (1988), and *The Robber Bride* (1993) explores trauma through her writings by presenting the protagonists of these novels who suffered from the traumatized past of the childhood and later in adulthood. The research conducted (Heidarizadeh, 2015) analyses these novels in which female experienced the pain and the sufferings due to their traumatized experiences from their childhood. Thus, the evidence suggests that in the contemporary society childhood bad experiences become a major factor to develop the PTSD.

In the novel of Alex Michaelides, "The Silent Patient," studied here, became an eye-catcher for millions of readers worldwide. The book is a psychological thriller enriched with the various psychological dimensions of multiple characters. It has been translated into over 50 languages. It raises awareness about the trauma faced by children in their childhood that later affects their adulthood. Alex Michaelides had a great interest in psychology, which played a significant role in his writings. In his twenties, while he was facing difficulty in his career, he was taking therapy, which later developed his interest in becoming a psychotherapist. He also worked part-time in a secure psychiatric community in North London to give sessions for teenagers. Later, this experience helped him to develop his debut novel as a psychological thriller and to become a recognized novelist.

Introduction of Novel

The book is a well-crafted psychological thriller that centers on the characters of Theo Faber, a psychotherapist, and Alicia Berenson, an artist. She fatally shoots her husband Gabriel five times and later remains completely mute. Theo, a psychotherapist, is determined to unravel the mystery behind Alicia's silence after the night of shooting

her husband, even six years after that incident. He expresses his desire to treat her and become a member of the Grove, where Alicia is receiving treatment. He conducts sessions with her to make her speak again and to know what happened that night and the reason behind shooting her husband five times.

As Theo works on her case, he learns about her previous traumatic experiences in her childhood. He attempts to alleviate her symptoms by decreasing her medication dosages, allowing her to resume painting, and seeking external support. As the story unfolds, it is revealed that Theo himself is involved in the mystery of shooting him. On the night of shooting Gabriel, he manipulates Alicia by confronting her about Gabriel's infidelity with his wife, Kathy. The harsh confrontation of the betrayer from her husband initially triggered Alicia to shoot him five times. But, in fact, the act itself is rooted in her childhood's unresolved issues and feelings of unworthiness due to mentally unstable parents, which was only triggered by the acknowledgment of the unfaithfulness of her husband too. At that moment, she felt completely trapped in her past trauma and lost herself when her husband urged Theo to save his own life instead of Alicia's life. In the same way when her father showed selfishness by wishing for Alicia's death instead of her wife. Theo, after knowing the reason behind her silence and her past trauma, makes himself responsible for the crime and wants to be the one to get her to talk again to lessen his guilt. But at the end of the novel he gives her a high dose of morphine to keep her silent when he senses that she has recognised him as a manipulator.

The novel ends with the scene when Chief Inspector Allen, who supervises Alicia's case, visits Theo at his home and discloses that he has discovered Alicia's last written diary, which unveils Theo's involvement in the crime. While the inspector reads the diary, Theo notices the falling snow and captures a snowflake on his tongue.

Related Studies

Several scholars have examined and analyzed the novel through the various ways to explore the psychological complexities in the character of Alicia. One such approach is through the psychoanalytic lenses of Sigmund Freud. Psychoanalysis designed by Sigmund Freud, is a comprehensive psychological theory and the study of mind. The primary focus is on comprehending the unconscious mind, and how the experience of early life impact on the formation of one's personality and how to deal with mental instability. A research conducted by Malek (2023), explores the novel that how the behavior of parents and other external interactions influence the development of Alicia's psyche and their actions by viewing through the lenses of psychoanalytical theory. The research analyses how the individual psyche of Alicia's dual personalities is influenced by their past experiences of abandonment and emotional neglect by her childhood traumatic experiences , anger, depression, upbringing, relation with her

parents and the unconscious desires that shape her actions. Therefore, Alicia's aggressive actions are an apparent indication that her Id drives her thoughts (Malek, 2023)

Furthermore, another research conducted by Amelia Pratiwi & Tri Pramesti (2022), demonstrates the character Alicia Berenson in the novel of several signs and causes of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The main symptoms include such as flashback of her traumatic past, violent behavior toward oneself and other impulsive behavior of committing suicide without thinking of the consequences, negative self-perception, social isolation, trouble regulating emotions, and difficulties with relationships. These symptoms of PTSD are deeply ingrained due to her traumatic incidents during her childhood. So, these incidents mold Alicia's intricate mental condition and provide a deep story about the trauma that continues to affect her mental health. (Amelia Pratiwi & Tri Pramesti, 2022)

However, the present study uses stylistic analysis to investigate the intricate psychological aspects of the protagonist's traumatic history and the suffering of PTSD through her journal in the novel. This study employed the framework of stylistic analysis, specifically focusing on the technique of semantic deviation devices such as similes, metaphors, and personification, which could reveal hidden psychological issues through PTSD. Thus, this study examines how language is employed as a medium to convey the suffering of childhood trauma that led her to the victim of PTSD experienced by Alicia and her struggle to maintain a balanced relationship with her husband in the novel.

Chapter 2

Stylistics

Language plays an essential role in conveying the communicative purpose of human expressions, thoughts, and emotions. Finegan and Besnier define language (1989) as "language as a finite system of elements and principles that make it possible for the speaker to construct sentences to do a particular communicative job (qtd. in Ali, A. et al. 2024). For this purpose, the field of linguistics is formed to study a language. Linguistics, according to Al-Qudsy (2016), is the study of how people convey information through written or spoken forms using a variety of linguistic patterns depending on the speaker. (qtd in Ali, A. et al. 2024).). Thus, the study of language helps to understand "how humans produce words, produce sounds, and make sentences that dealt within the linguistics." (Mukhtar, 2023)

Style describes how language is employed in a particular setting by a certain person, for a specific purpose, and so forth. One of the subfields of linguistics is stylistics, which is the contemporary study of style. It originates from the art of poetics, especially in classical rhetoric, the ancient Greek scholars' practice of producing persuasive texts. It

became a separate discipline in the twentieth century, commonly employed in literary research to evaluate the quality and significance of a text. It is "simply defined as the (linguistic) study of style, which is how language is used" (Leech and Short, 2007). Thus, stylistic analysis reveals "how authors use various linguistic techniques to convey additional meanings in their writing." (Mukhtar, A. et. al 2023).

Wales (2001) explains the scope of stylistics, "The goal of most stylistics is not simply to describe the formal features of texts for their own sake, but in order to show their functional significance for the interpretation of text or to relate literary effects to linguistic 'causes' where these are felt to be relevant..." pp.437- (qtd in Macrae, 2016). Simpson 2004 explains that "due to the stylistic choices within the structure of a text, one can determine the function of the text, which also gives a gateway to its interpretation". (Ahmad, A. et al. 2023) Therefore, the primary objective of stylistics is to describe the process of interpretation and offer evidence for a specific perspective on the subject matter being examined.

Foregrounding

Foregrounding is one of the key concepts used in stylistics, when this term appears, we automatically associate it with stylistics. According to Leech and Short (1981) it is achieved due to the stylistic motivation. Leech (2014) in his book, "Language in literature; Style and Foregrounding" explains that "foregrounding comes from the semantic opposition of literal and figurative meaning; which demands that a linguistic form should be given something other than its normal (literal) interpretation." (p. 30). It demonstrates the creativity of the writer for the intended message for their audience that can be effectively expressed by the deviated norms of linguistics basic normative grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure. "It is achieved through linguistic deviation and linguistics parallelism". (Leech G., 1969, p. 50). Parallelism is the quantitative overuse of a language rule, whereas deviation is the breaking of a language rule.

On the other hand, deviation is the violation of the standards of language and it is the license of the writer in the literary text. It refers to the absence of automatic processing in a text. In his book, "Exploring the language of poems, plays, and prose" (1996), stylist Mick Short developed the argument that deviation might be created on various linguistics levels: discoursal, semantic, lexical, grammatical, Morphological, phonological, and graphological level. (pp. 36–58). As it is not possible to explore all these deviations at a time, this research aim is to explore the deviation at a semantic level and the interpretation of words or sentences that diverge from its literal or conventional meaning to create to explore the psychological complexity of Alicia.

Deviation at Semantics Level

Semantic deviation refers to the departure from the intended meaning of a word, phrase, or sentence, resulting in ambiguity. According to Short, "semantic deviation refers to the meaning relation which is inconsistent in some way" (qtd in Ali. A, et al 2024). According to Leech, this absurdity could stimulate the reader's imagination to use more extensive figurative language and concepts. As it is impossible to separate the language code from the aesthetic value, as Leech and Short (2007) assert. Semantic deviation is employed not to convey a meaning in its true manner, but rather to confuse and alter the concept of something in order to achieve a particular goal. In linguistic semantics, due to the advanced studies by G. Lakoff (1987), R. Langacker (1987), A. Wierzbicka (1988) and others, there seen a shift in the mid-1980s with the fundamental concepts of the cognitive approach to language. According to the cognitive approach, the meanings of figurative language are influenced by speakers' understanding of the concepts they refer to. Therefore, the examination of these expression allows interpretation how idiomatic expressions serve as a conventional means of conceptualizing experience and play a significant role in the conceptual and narrative structure of a text.

To sum up, this study employed the framework of stylistic analysis, specifically focusing on the technique of semantic deviation devices such as similes, metaphors, and personification. Moreover, how these devices help to reveal Alicia's psychological complexity to illustrate her suffering from PTSD and her struggle with maintaining a healthy relationship with her husband in the novel *The Silent Patient*. Thus, this study examines how unconventional use of language is employed as a medium to convey the suffering of childhood trauma that led her to a victim of PTSD experienced by Alicia.

Research method

Nature of the Study

This section discusses the methodology employed for this search in accordance with the intended objectives. This research uses a qualitative approach as a method. As Hogan et al.(2009) defined qualitative approach is " a multifaceted approach that investigates culture, society and behaviors through an analysis and synthesis of people's words and actions. In simple terms, qualitative research focuses on investigating particular interpretations, feelings, and behaviors arising from individual interactions and relationships. Accordingly, the qualitative research is particularly well-suited to the research objectives. The case study of Alicia's experiences can be better understood through qualitative research methods, as they allow for a deeper exploration of her emotions and motivations. Thus, through a thorough examination

of the intricacies of her interactions and relationships, research can reveal the fundamental elements that contributed to her distress using stylistic framework.

Furthermore, this study employed a descriptive-qualitative approach to enhance specificity and clarity. This suggests that the analysis aim is to provide a thorough portrayal or illustration of the phenomenon. It is a compilation of phrases or descriptions pertaining to a research subject without the inclusion of specific mathematical or statistical computations. The descriptive approach focuses on issues or phenomena encountered during the study and identifies the facts by providing rational and suitable interpretations. Hence, according to these criteria, this research thoroughly investigated every incident that occurred while examining the novel, which consisted of the diary entries of Alicia in the novel "The Silent Patient". Thus, the research attempted to provide an adequate description, offering a logical and rational explanation of the author's intentional use of figurative language.

Data and Sampling

Data are the resources that researchers use to investigate a specific area. They serve as the foundation for analysis. The sampling technique that is selected for this qualitative research is purposive or selective sampling. Purposive sampling, or judgmental, is a qualitative research method that intentionally selects specific area of study or case study research design to collect data. The case studies often focus on small area of investigation and aim to investigate a real-life phenomenon, rather than making statistical assumptions about the larger population. This technique is employed to get deep and detailed information and to ensure that the sample sufficiently addresses the study questions.

This study records the data as diary entries or journal in the novel. The data encompasses the personal writings authored by the character Alicia. In this book, there are a few chapters for Alicia's diary, which serves as a suspenseful and revealing device. Through it, reader discovers Alicia's background and uncover other facts and truths. Thus, this research uses the diary entries of Alicia as a source of study to investigate the psychological complexity and the suffering while dealing with PTSD.

Procedure

This study employs textual analysis as a technique for collecting data, as the data consists of written text from the novel "The Silent Patient," which incorporates various forms of figurative language. Textual analysis is uses as a method to analyse data on how individuals interpret and understand the world. It is the process of comprehending the language and symbols used in texts in order to collect information. It provides an in-depth understanding of the narrative development and the intentional use of language to convey emotional and psychological complexities.

The main focus of the study is to analyse the figurative language, mainly the language that deviates from its literal meaning (semantic deviation) in the novel. This study employs textual analysis as a method for collecting data, as the data consists of written text from the novel "The Silent Patient," which incorporates various forms of figurative language. And finally, this study employs a descriptive qualitative methodology to thoroughly examine the interplay between stylistic components and the psyche of Alicia and narrative production in the novel "The Silent Patient, as utilized by the author, Alex Michaelides. By looking at figurative language like metaphor, simile, personification, it shows how the way semantic and stylistic elements are used in literature to makes the work more significant and conveys contextual meaning.

Data Analysis

Data 1:

We're into our fourth week of the heat wave, and it feels like an endurance test.....It reminded me of another summer, hot like this one—the summer Mum died—.....In my memory that summer lasts forever. (Michaelides, 2019, p. 54)

In this excerpt, the phrase "like an endurance test" demonstrates the use of simile. The intensity of a heat wave is compared to the endurance test. In a literal sense, the endurance test is a fitness evaluation to measure the sustained capacity of a person, machine, or system to withstand over a long period of time. A heat wave, on the other hand, is a naturally occurring climate phenomenon with high temperatures that typically occurs during specific months of the summer season. Thus, the use of simile intensifies the extreme nature of the climatic condition, leading to physical exhaustion and disturbance.

From a broader perspective, Alicia's choice of the word reflects her physical and psychological struggle, deeply rooted in her subconsciously reviving the heartbreaking memories triggered by the hot summer. The memory of a tragic incident when her mother, Eva, committed suicide by intentionally crashing her car into a brick wall. Alicia was in the passenger seat with her mother when she hit the car, but she survived. The sudden death of her mother left her in a state of shock. She did not overcome the shock, and moreover, she was also verbally abused by her father, Vernon. He was consumed by alcohol and overwhelmed by sorrow and grief due to death of her beloved wife and wished Alicia's 'death instead of her. The feelings of unworthiness, lack of affection, and betrayal by her parents left a deep wound on her on her soul. These repressed memories and feelings affect her psychological well-being and scars that she has not overcome, and it last forever in her mind.

Furthermore, this is a situation where patients with PTSD go into a flashback to a traumatic event in their life, through any kind of stimulus or any situation related to it. Thus, this use of simile indicates that Alicia is experiencing and suffering from mental

distress, and each heated summer acts as a stimulus to trigger her to go into a flashback of her past, which in turn causes her to feel physical and emotional discomfort.

Data 2:

Suddenly I caught sight of a homeless man, sitting by me on the pavement, staring at me. For some reason I couldn't stop thinking about the homeless man. Apart from pity, there was another feeling, unnamable somehow—a kind of fear. I pictured him as a baby in his mother's arms. Did she ever imagine her baby would end up crazy, dirty and stinking, huddled on the pavement, muttering obscenities? (Michaelides, 2019, p. 57 to 58)

In this excerpt, the phrase "as a baby" demonstrates the use of simile. In a literal sense, a baby is a very young child who is dependent on the care of parents. Alicia uses this figurative language to connect with her internal thoughts.

This expression of picturing him "as a baby" is used in an attempt to establish a common ground and psychological comparison between the sympathetic condition of a homeless man and her suffering as a child. When she wonders: "Did his mother ever imagined her baby would end up in such miserable and filthy condition? It is an indirect interrogation to her own mother whether she ever image Alicia would end up in such despair, depression and desolation.

Moreover, Alicia internal monologue of a series of questions deep rooted to her psychological disturbance due to her childhood trauma. She questions how her mother strapped the car into a brick wall without thinking about her while she was sitting with her in a car. Did her mother even consider her before taking such action, and how would she suffer throughout her life as a result? It illustrates how this scene triggers to shift a mood, along with feelings of fear, pity, and anxiety.

Furthermore, this is the same situation as with Alicia, in which the patients with PTSD are triggered by any external factors that they can relate to the trauma that causes them to evoke an exaggerated negative thought and shift into a mood with a mixed feeling of guilt, fear, horror, or shame. The use of a simile clearly illustrates that she is suffering from her childhood trauma, which has consistently regulated her state of mind and mood swing with negative thoughts.

Data 3:

He saved me like Jesus. May be that is what the painting is about....The first thing I ever noticed about Gabriel was the sparkle in his eyes—like a tiny diamond in each iris. But now for some reason I couldn't catch it. Maybe I'm just not skilled enough—or maybe Gabriel has something extra that can't be captured in paint. The eyes remained dead, lifeless. (Michaelides, 2019, pp. 60,62)

Alicia is an artist who paints to express herself. Due to her trauma, she has become so sensitive to sharing things with someone. To express herself, Alicia paints on the canvas or writes on a piece of paper. Alicia's painting is a manifestation of her internal thoughts, feelings, or desires that she is trying to suppress or hold within herself. She also uses painting to suppress her negative thoughts and sometimes to escape from reality. One day, she was trying to paint a portrait of Jesus. Upon completion, she suddenly realizes that, unintentionally, she painted Gabriel's portrait. This makes her compare him to Jesus.

In this excerpt, "like Jesus" serves as a simile. In Christian theology, Jesus is a messiah who saved humanity from sin, offering salvation, redemption, and hope to his followers. Alicia's comparison of Gabriel to Jesus implies that Gabriel plays a significant role in her life and a divine position in her mind and heart. This simile demonstrates her unconscious perception of Gabriel as a messiah figure—someone who has illuminated the darkness in her life and her associated hope from him. This also demonstrates her psychological and emotional dependency, obsessive attachment, and her view of him as a savior, just like Jesus.

Additionally, the phrase "like a tiny diamond" is used as a simile to compare the spark in Gabriel's eyes to that of a diamond. Once she has finished painting Gabriel's face and body, she attempts to paint his eyes, noticing a spark that reminds her of a diamond. Semantically, the comparison of human eyes with stones is two different things to compare with. A diamond is a rare and precious stone that holds immense value. On the other hand, figuratively, it is often taken as a sign of everlasting love, purity, and commitment. Alicia seeing the "Diamonds" in his eyes symbolizes the light of hope she has associated with Gabriel to have an ideal love, commitment, spirituality, and purity in their relationship. She also manifests her desire in her diary that sometimes she desperately wants "a kind of union between us—something that's bigger than me, bigger than us, beyond words—something holy." (Michaelides, p.58) However, while painting Gabriel's eyes, she couldn't capture the "spark" in his eye, and it remained "lifeless." The comparison of Gabriel's painted eyes to "dead" and "lifeless" serves as a metaphor. In a literal sense, "dead" and "lifeless" both convey the meaning of no longer alive or devoid of any emotions. The portrait of eyes cannot embody life, as it is just a painting on canvas. The reason why his eyes remained "dead" and "lifeless" could be understood in the context of Alicia's painting process. In her diary, she writes that when she deliberately decides to paint something and invests her conscious efforts in it, it never works out; it remains stillborn or dead. As she is "trying to control the outcome—no wonder nothing comes to life—because I'm not really reacting to what's going on in front of me. I need to open my eyes and look—and be aware of life as it is happening, not simply how I want it to be." (Michaelides, p.57).

In the context of the explanation of her lifeless painting, the denial of not responding to the reality associated with her relationship with Gabriel is the reason for his lifeless eyes on the paint. The denial of reality corresponds with the desired idealized relationship with Gabriel, which she portrays in her painting as "Jesus" and sees a "diamond" in his eyes. However, there is a huge gap between the idealized perception of Gabriel and the reality itself. Her admission of not capturing the diamond or the shine of his eyes symbolizes her subconscious realization that the diamond that she found in his eye is not for her. She is not accepting it, denying the possibility that she may not be skilled enough or that Gabriel has something extra to capture in the paint. Moreover, the denial of reality, as she manifests in her diary, is out of fear: "No wonder nothing comes to life" (Michaelides, 2019). As for Alicia, Gabriel is everything; she is so deeply emotionally and psychologically dependent on him. She has given him a divine position in her heart. She also expects him to have the same kind of relationship, but in reality, there is a huge gap between the idealised perception of him and the reality of their relationship. Therefore, the denial of reality is because she is afraid that it might shatter her imaginary perception of him. To sum up, the denial of reality in her relationship with Gabriel is the reason for capturing Gabriel's eyes as lifeless and dead. Her childhood trauma, where she experienced betrayal from her father and mother, is the root cause of this avoidance. This is one of the main symptoms of PTSD, where patients avoid any distressing situation that arouses a feeling or thought related to their past trauma. As a consequence, she is living with the imaginary perception of Gabriel in a denial of reality because she doesn't want to confront the betrayal she endured as a child, a trauma she still struggles to overcome.

Data 4:

I'm terrified of myself—and of my mother in me. Is her madness in my blood? Is it? Am I going to...? No. Stop. Stop— I'm not writing about that. I'm not. (Michaelides, 2019, p. 58)

In this excerpt, the highlighted sentence serves as metaphorical language. Alicia uses the term "madness" metaphorically to describe her mother's psychological instability and emotional disturbance. The phrase "in my blood" also used metaphorically to demonstrate Alicia's struggles with the fear of inheriting her mother's psychological illness.

Furthermore, a tragic past incident deeply roots Alicia's negative self-image about herself. At a very young age, the incident engraved into her memory left a scar on her heart and had an over-lasting impact on her mental health. Moreover, this incident has shaped her negative self-perception, leading her to struggle with the fear that her mother's mental illness may run into her and that she would repeat her mother's mistakes. This unresolved mental trauma with her mother is the reason for her

consistently negative perception of herself—that she doesn't deserve to have a child. As she confesses in her diary, "the truth is, I'm scared to have kids. I am not to be trusted with them. "Not with my mother's blood running through my veins" (Michaelides, 112). This psychological suffering is one of the symptoms of PTSD, in which the patient has a persistent negative belief or expectation towards themselves; if they relate any event or belief to their past.

Data 5:

Gabriel had sentenced me to death. The dead don't talk. (Michaelides, 2019, p. 280)

This excerpt is taken from the incident when Theo attacked their home to uncover the infidelity of Gabriel that he has been cheating on Alicia with his wife Kathy. He created a situation of death or life to show Gabriel's real face. He presented Gabriel with a situation where he had to make a choice between himself and Alicia. He chooses his own life, saying, "I don't want to die." Alicia's faith in his love shatters at this moment, leaving her feeling completely betrayed and rejected

In this excerpt the expression of "death" is used metaphorically in the context. The literal meaning of "death" is defined as the permanent cessation of all vital functions, or simply the end of life. In a literal sense, Gabriel's words did not condemn her to death. Gabriel is not in an official position to pronounce her to death sentence. Alicia employs a metaphor to express her feelings, that Gabriel's unexpected words and his betrayer evoke a sense of death or a loss of purpose in her life.

Alicia's use of the figurative expression "Gabriel had condemned me to death" effectively captures his severe emotional devastation and sudden heartbreak. Gabriel was the only person in her life whom she was so deeply in love with. For her, he was her whole world. As well as, he is the person whom she accepts as he was. Moreover, she positioned him as a Jesus in her heart. As a result, her unhealthy and obsessive attachment with him brought her to death.

Meanwhile, in the second line "death don't talk" is used as a personification to attribute the quality of talking to a dead person. This use of personification is the essence of the whole story and the revelation behind the Alicia's silence in several years after murdering his husband. The harsh confrontation of the betrayer from her husband left her in a complete lost state and she shoots him five times. On the other hand, the choice of not speaking reflects her intensity of the shock just after facing betrayal from her husband that makes her soul dead. And how can a dead person talk. And after shooting her husband she chooses silence over the years because there was no point to speak in her defense. As in Alicia point of view the actual murderer was not herself but her husband Gabriel. As she writes in her diary, "That's the truth. I didn't kill Gabriel. He killed me. All I did was pull the trigger" (Michaelides, p. 282)

In addition, the sense of worthlessness and betrayal from her husband that also triggers her to shoot him intensifies from her terrible experiences in her childhood. This present moment triggers a reexperience of her childhood trauma, which she has not overcome. When her father wished that, why couldn't Alicia die instead of her mother? Why didn't Alicia die instead? (Michaelides, 236). At that time, she used the same expression "Dad just killed me" (Michaelides, 2019, p. 236). Her psychological wound has not yet healed, and her husband's words have caused her to feel betrayed and rejected a second time, a feeling she found unbearable at the time. She feels emotionally, psychologically, and mentally shattered, just as she did when her father betrayed her. Her realization of her lack of love and her husband's betrayal led to a psychological breakdown, symbolising the end of her life. This was the end of life, with all hopes dashed, all dreams shattered, and nothing left.

Hence, the betrayal and the sense of unworthiness from her husband intensified her to psychological dead due to reexperience her past trauma and insecurities that she had experienced in her past. This is one of the main symptoms of PTSD in which patients revive their past trauma through any feelings, thoughts that they already go through. Thus, it is very evident that Alicia was suffering from PTSD.

Discussion and conclusion

Alicia's diary is a window to her fractured soul. She uses her diary entries as a medium to talk about psychological suffering, a fragmented self, and unresolved issues. Her use of language reflects her depressive feelings, unfulfilled desires, and repressed emotions. She uses language as a therapeutic tool to express her depressing thoughts, which she is not yet ready to share with others. Moreover, she uses language as a coping mechanism, a hidden escape from reality that she is not yet ready to confront directly. The emotionally charged metaphors and similes effectively illustrate her extremely depressive thoughts, despair, and pain as she struggles with her past.

Her use of a simile to contrast physical exhaustion with "endurance text" exemplifies the symptom of PTSD, where every event or situation she associates with her past trigger's memories of her traumatic past. Similarly, her comparison of the homeless man to the "baby" in his mother's arm highlights another symptom of PTSD, one that triggers negative thoughts and shifts her mood into fear, pity, and guilt. Moreover, her fear of inheriting her mother's behaviour through "Blood" and her fear of not having a child suggest a negative self-perception, which is one of the symptoms of PTSD. Therefore, Alicia employs stylistic devices, such as similes and metaphors, to draw comparisons between her current circumstances and unresolved past issues. This reflects her negative shift in cognition and mood as she relives her past trauma and attempts to avoid reality.

Furthermore, Alicia grapples with her past trauma, which serves as a primary factor in maintaining a balanced relationship with her husband. Because of her heartbreak memories, she is socially isolated, and her life revolves around her husband, Gabriel. She has fallen so deeply in love with him that she has adopted a heavenly position that mirrors her expectations of him. Her perception of him as "Jesus" and her description of his eye as a "diamond" may indicate a verbally unexpressed emotion. Moreover, due to the set of expectations, she is in denial of the reality that she also expresses in her diary in a hidden way. After seven years of living with an imaginary perception of Gabriel, she could not cope with the rejection she had already faced from her parents. That is the reason she finally shoots her husband after revealing his infidelity with Theo's wife and her reason for choosing silence. To conclude, Alicia's diary stylistic choices are a true reflection of her psychological complexity, revealing the depth of her trauma and showing how it shapes her thoughts, her mental peace, her emotional state, her relationships, and ultimately her actions.

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