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### THE POWER OF NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION: ANALYSIS OF ALICIA AS ALCESTIS IN ALEX MICHAELIDES' THE SILENT PATIENT

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#### **ABSTRACT**

This study aims to discuss the different forms of non-verbal communication, that the protagonist of the novel, Alicia adopts in order to communicate and the different reasons that become the cause of Alicia's silence. The qualitative method of research has been used and the data is analyzed through textual analysis and close reading method. The data is also collected through both primary and secondary sources. The results show that the importance of non-verbal communication is reflected in Alicia personality from her thoughts through her paintings, aggression, violence, gestures, facial expressions and suicidal thoughts. It is also concluded that a person often goes silent because of the betrayal and torture inflicted upon them by their beloved ones, which is also the reason behind the silence of Alcestis, Greek mythological figure. Alicia resembles Alcestis due to her silence and the same fate that they both share. Both of them are condemned to death by their beloved ones. It is concluded that when the emotions are piled up inside a human being constantly so, it all bursts out at once and one can often take revenge out of fear, love, hatred or out of misery. Moreover, silence does speak, but only if one pays attention to it. This study helps us to discuss the darkness and madness that resides within human thoughts and deeper interpretation of simple human gestures and actions adopted in daily life.

## INTRODUCTION

“But why does she not speak?” — Euripides, *Alcestis* (Michaelides, 2019, p. 06).

It is often believed that every individual communicates non-verbally while communicating verbally. When we talk, we show a great amount of facial expression and body movement. In today's world where technology has control over all of us, we communicate mostly through our phones rather than face to face. Maybe that's the reason why so many misunderstandings are created among people every day. Silence has always spoken thousands of words. As Martin Luther King (2012) puts it, no one will get to remember the simple words that were spoken by their enemy, but everyone for sure will remember the silence of their friends (King, 2012). The way we act is what makes the difference. Many people may say things that they do not mean but actions never lie. The way we act is natural and is the most trusted way among people. Many times, it seems better to be silent when we are aware that our words won't make any difference. Silence is very powerful but only if one pays attention to it. Silence is true wisdom's best reply (Euripides, 2016). The character of *Alcestis* by Euripides has a huge impact on the readers because of her silence. Her silence says everything that words cannot. She suffers and sacrifices. Her suffering is reflected in her silence. Many people struggle even in today's world just because their silence isn't understood in a better way.

### *Communication*

Communication is the most essential thing in our life. We are enabled to communicate our thoughts and feelings through the use of words. We simply say out loud whatever we feel. John Adair (2011) says communication is essentially the ability of one person to make contact with another and make himself or herself understood (Adair, 2011). Bovee (2020) says that in verbal communication we simply use words and grammar that allow us to express ourselves or transfer information through the use of language (Bovee, 2022).

### *Non-verbal Communication*

Non-verbal communication is used to show the emotions of an individual like happiness, sadness, anger, excitement, anxiety, and hope. It is not always effective or easy to interpret the non-verbal signals as they may differ from individual to individual and their meaning is not fixed, it differs. Its importance increases with the fact that most of the time it is not fake, the emotions are reflected on the face of the individual naturally. In verbal communication, the whole focus is on the words, while in nonverbal communication the whole body is involved. It is a more natural process as compared to verbal communication. Whenever we see something unpleasant so our facial expression says it before our words. When we are communicating and our nonverbal signals go hand in hand with whatever we are saying so it increases reliance, clarity, and bonding. If not then it produces mistrust, worry, and anxiety. J. A Hall (2001) says in non-verbal communication we can transfer or convey our thoughts, feelings, requirements, perspective, and purpose without using any words at all (Hall,

2001). Lesikar (2013) and Pettit (2022) say body movements, space, time, touch, voice patterns, color, layout, and design of surroundings, all these occur without the use of words and are known as non-verbal communication (Lesikar & Pettit, 2013 & 2022). Hanne Keiling (2019) and Kendra Cherry (2021) have discussed the types of non-verbal communication that are as follow:

### ***Facial Expressions***

Facial expressions are universal, the same throughout every culture. They are natural and say a lot about the feelings of an individual. The expressions like anger, shock, sadness, anxiety, stress, and frown are identical everywhere. Expressions convey more than any words possibly can. The first thing that is seen in communication is the expressions on the individual's face.

### ***Body Language and Posture***

The most effective of all, that helps in regulation of the non-verbal signals. A lot is perceived about an individual just by seeing the way they walk, sit and hold their head. It also includes one's posture, stance, and the movements one makes.

### ***Gestures***

One has to be very careful while using gestures to avoid any sort of misinterpretation. It is an important way to communicate meaning without words. It includes waving, pointing, and the use of hands while talking, without realizing it. The meaning of gestures differs from culture to culture.

### ***Eye Contact***

Eye contact is very important for communication. The way we look at someone when we are happy or when we are angry. Eye contact also shows one's interest in the conversation and the flow of communication is maintained. It also includes gazing, blinking, and a person's concentration. Constant eye contact is also taken as a sign of honesty and proves that the other person is worthy of trust.

### ***Voice***

The tone of voice determines a lot about a person. The pitch of voice, calm or loud shows our emotions, our anger, and calmness. It also indicates the sarcasm and confidence of an individual. It is not just the words that are uttered but also the way they are uttered. Similar sounds show one's interest and lack of interest in communication.

### ***Psychological Changes***

It determines one's feelings through body reactions. Whenever a person goes through some fear so they sweat or their heartbeat rises more often. When a person's nerves are calm so they are comfortable and easy. It tells a lot about the

comfort and discomfort that an individual goes through in the process (Keiling & Cherry, 2019 & 2021).

### ***Alex Michaelides***

Brandon King (2022) says that Alex Michaelides, the author of this debut novel *The Silent Patient* was born in 1977. He is a British-crypto writer. His father is Greek and his mother is English. He has a degree in English literature from Cambridge University.

This novel was released in 2019, as a psychological thriller and became New York Times bestseller. Michaelides has mental health issues due to which he is drawn towards mental health problems. He wants to heal himself and he often takes sessions and sees a therapist. It was after the sessions that he becomes interested in healing other people that are just like him. In this novel, the character, Theo also struggles with psychological issues due to which he is drawn toward becoming a therapist and also becomes one. Michaelides also studied psychotherapy and worked in a psychiatric unit for a couple of years but it was then that he learned way too much and certainly realized that he is more of a writer than a therapist.

He is also obsessed with Hitchcock and wants the novel to be full of suspense. He finds it fascinating to assume something else about the story but to find it ending up being something totally different. He says that he was always aware that he will end up writing about a psychiatry unit in order to reflect more on psychological issues and the treatment that comes along with it to heal people. Michaelides always wants the novel to be deep and influential. His friend once suggests to him that a film is what rushes the story but a novel is what slows down the story. Films are about contraction, keeping it short and limited while novels are expansion, much deep and more detailed. That is when Michaelides realizes that he wants to go for the novel. He wants to explore the idea as well as the thoughts inside the mind of the characters. Throughout the novel the narrator, Theo expresses his thoughts, and the protagonist, Alicia's thoughts are conveyed through her non-verbal communication.

He grew up in Cyprus, a city that is full of Greek myths, an ancient city. He was obsessed with *Odyssey* and *Iliad* since he was 13 years old and *Alcestis* the Greek Heroine is something he finds to be extra ordinary. The story of her sacrificing herself and returning from death but also not uttering a single word is what excites him the most. He chooses to associate the silence of Alicia with that of *Alcestis* to make it an incredible story. Later on, the idea of making Alicia an artist is suggested by Uma, which completes the story in every aspect. The twists and the suspense make it an incredible story with the perfect characters (King, 2022).

### ***The Silent Patient***

The title itself justifies the power of non-verbal communication. The different ways, through which silence is expressed. Silence refers to the secrets and

thoughts held within an individual. The patient is someone who is not physically or mentally fit. *The*

*Silent Patient* refers to Alicia who is completely silent and doesn't find any reason to speak at all. Alicia's silence makes her a patient, a patient who does not speak a word yet she does communicate non-verbally. It also defines the way in which the patient views herself as Alcestis in the Greek Tragedy written by Euripides. The word Alcestis itself is derived from the Greek word Alkestis meaning the wife who dies for her husband, Admetus, and is later restored to him by Hercules.

"Alicia Berenson was thirty-three years old when she killed her husband." (Michaelides, 2019, p. 10).

Alicia Berenson, a thirty-three-year-old successful artist, shoots her husband five times in the face. Gabriel is also a successful artist; fashion photographer and they have been married for seven years. Now Alicia is charged with the death of her husband as the police arrived at the crime scene. Alicia does not seem in the right state of mind as blood is dripping from both her wrists. She does not speak a word for the next six years. After the trial, Alicia is sent to the Grove. Theo applies for a job at the grove as he is fascinated by Alicia and takes a vow to make her speak again. Meanwhile, Theo discovers that Christian is treating Alicia even before Gabriel's death, which leads him to discover more about Alicia's past. When Theo digs into Alicia's past he finds out about her mother's suicide and father's ignorance. He also visits Alicia's painting studio, where he finds the painting entitled Alcestis, the Greek heroine, who sacrifices her own life for her husband. Theo takes sessions with Alicia and reduces her medication, as she is highly sedated. Later on, Theo finally makes Alicia speak again and she tells him about the night of the incident. The next day she is induced with a heavy dose of morphine due to which Christian is blamed and arrested.

Everything that that Alicia goes through is revealed to the readers. When Alicia mentions that she is being watched by someone, it was Theo. Theo is also the one who reveals to Alicia about Gabriel's affair with Kathy, his wife. Theo is the one who manipulates Alicia and urges her to shoot Gabriel in the first place. He knows why she goes silent that is why he wants to be the one to make her speak again. When Theo feels that Alicia has recognized him so he is the one who gives her a heavy morphine dose in order to keep her sedated and not reveal the truth about him. Alicia also reveals aspects of her relationship with her husband and the fear that she feels from her brother-in-law, Max.

Alex Michaelides has emphasized the power of non-verbal communication. In this novel, he has highlighted different forms of communication, where Alicia speaks without the use of words. The protagonist, Alicia is a silent patient who has lost her verbal communication but she does communicate non-verbally. If people don't reply when you speak to them and never initiate conversation, you soon forget they're there

(Michaelides, 2019, p. 40). He highlights this to show the impact that words have. Individuals pay more attention to words rather than body language. When a person does not utter words, it is believed that the person is not speaking even though the person may communicate by other non-verbal means. Alicia uses different means to communicate throughout the novel. She uses her aggression to show her anger by attacking another patient and once her therapist. She even attacks herself to reflect upon her pain. She does suicide attempts twice. Her suicide attempt reflects upon the depth of her pain. She even tries to commit suicide when admitted in the grove. She does not speak a word but she does express her emotions. Most of her feelings are reflected in her paintings where she chooses to keep her fears to herself and the real face behind her destruction is also known through them.

Her personality reflects in one of her paintings; Alcestis, with whom she finds resemblance, the Greek heroine, due to her silence and self-sacrifice. Alcestis sacrifices her own life for her husband. She feels betrayed by her own husband. When she is bought back from her death, she chooses to remain silent. All of these show that Alicia wants to communicate but she finds a different way to do so. Michaelides emphasizes on this fact by saying Alicia's lips moved slowly, painfully; her voice cracked a little as it emerged, like a creaking gate that needed oiling (Michaelides, 2019, p. 238). Alicia wants to communicate but she finds it hard to speak, she wanted someone to understand her without the utterance of words, without saying anything out loud at all.

Remember, love that doesn't include honesty doesn't deserve to be called love (Michaelides, 2019, p. 97). Alicia's silence is induced by the betrayal that she is put through twice by her beloved ones. Betrayal and selfishness can also be the cause of one's silence. Theo says but that's what Alicia did for you. Her silence was like a mirror—reflecting yourself back at you. And it was often an ugly sight (Michaelides, 2019, p. 88). He sees himself in her. She is in need of help, just like he was, once. The novel also reflects Alicia's internal struggle. Michaelides says mental illness is precisely about a lack of this kind of integration- we end up losing contact with the unacceptable parts of ourselves (Michaelides, 2019, p. 37). Alicia's anger and rage were triggered by her childhood trauma. Rage, like fear, is reactive in nature (Michaelides, 2019, p. 124). She always fears betrayal from her husband, and the rage that she carries towards her father, all combine and come out at once. She reacts to it by killing her husband. No one is born evil (Michaelides, 2019, p. 123). Being evil is not in the blood, it's the circumstances that a person is put through in life that make them evil, and make them seek revenge upon their beloved ones. Alicia just wants to heal herself and she just wants to put an end to the constant pain that she is put through since her childhood.

### ***Statement of the Problem***

*The Silent Patient* is a masterpiece of Alex Michaelides. A lot of work has been done on this novel like concepts of containment, childhood development, silence from the lens of psychoanalytic critique, post-modernist critique, etc. Since no work has been done regarding the power of non-verbal communication in this novel. This research focuses on the power of non-verbal communication.

It reflects upon the different ways in which Alicia communicates without communicating verbally and the many reasons that can lead to her silence. The meaning of simple gestures, facial expressions, bodily movements, and the ways adopted to express her thoughts. The researchers specifically focus on the power of silence of a patient, Alicia, who does not utter a single word for the whole six years.

Therefore, essentially qualitative in nature, this paper aims to highlight: the reasons that turn Alicia into a silent patient, the ways through which Alicia expresses herself as a silent patient, and determine the reasons due to which Alicia entitles her own portrait as Alcestis. In order to do so, this study probes into the following research questions: What are the reasons that make Alicia the silent patient? How does Alicia express herself as a silent patient? and Why does Alicia entitle her own portrait as Alcestis?

### ***Significance of the Study***

This research focuses on the power of non-verbal communication as shown by Michaelides in his novel *The Silent Patient* which will help readers to understand the silence of the protagonist, Alicia, of this novel and how she communicates with everyone around her through her gestures, paintings and actions. Readers will not only get to know about the outer image of Alicia but also her inner thoughts. This research will also help readers to understand that why Alicia entitles her self-portrait as Alcestis.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### ***Non-verbal Communication***

Guan (2004) has defined Nonverbal communication as a process in which communicators use the natural features of their bodies to deliver information and express specific meaning instinctively to the other communicator (Guan,2004).

According to the book “Nonverbal Communication: Science and Applications” by David Matsumoto, Mark G. Frank and Hyi Sung Hwang (2012) non-verbal communication also include the environment and the context (Matsumoto, Frank, &

Hwang, 2012). Gareth R. Jones and Jennifer M. George in their book “Contemporary

Management” said that nonverbal communication is the encoding of messages using facial expressions, body language, and styles of dress (Jones & George, 2008). About non-verbal communication Stamatis (2011) says that our facial expressions, eye contact, tone of voice, body posture and gestures, and positioning within groups are sharing of non-verbal communication. The clothes we wear and how we keep ourselves, silence is also included in this (Stamatis, 2011).

## *Silence*

John Gale and Beatriz Sanchez (2006) in their article “The meaning and function of silence in psychotherapy with particular reference to a therapeutic community treatment program” say that silence, according to psychoanalysis, is protection or a symptom in response to a stimulus but it is something more than that, it is part of the language, that speaks much more than any words possibly can. It is therefore something far greater than any of these explanations could suggest (Gale & Sanchez, 2006). Cari Miller (2020) talked about Alicia’s silence. She said that the book is a thriller and from its very beginning it is a quest for the therapist to find out the reason behind Alicia's silence, why did she murder her husband? and why did she choose not to utter as much of a single word, in all those six years.? She does not proclaim to be innocent or guilty. Not a word of grief or despair. Not a word in her defense.

Not a word of joy or sorrow. Not a word, nothing. Only silence. (Miller, 2020). Suhad Daher-Nashif (2021) sheds light on the quote: “Unexpressed feelings will never fade away. They are only suppressed for a time being which later comes forth in uglier ways”, Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920). *The Silent Patient* novel, highlights this quote, just to remind the reader that a patient’s silence does not merely mean that the patient is empty or out of emotions or certainly does not have anything to say instead it is considered a very effective way of communication, where one may want to express their emotions and feelings through their actions or their screams. In other words, patients’ screams are not always heard. *The Silent Patient*, Alicia, uses different types of communication, beyond verbal communication. Silence is used as a tool for expressing feelings, attitudes, and needs in this novel and for the very same purpose, Alicia's silence is used. Alicia communicates non-verbally by smiling at the idea she loves, or when she wants to defend herself, she acts aggressively, also her distance from other individuals shows her level of comfort with that person

(Nashif, 2021). Mai Sarah and Asnani (2021) in their Journal “Stress in Alex Michaelides’ novel *The Silent Patient*” argue about the silence of Alicia that there is something she wants to say but she could not because of her trembling lips. She never says a word which shows the change in Alicia’s behavior that she became silent (Sarah & Asnani, 2021).

Furthermore, they also talk about her aggression, and Alicia's aggressive behavior can be seen in Grove’s canteen. When Elif accuses her of taking her seat, by hearing this accusation Alicia acts brutally and breaks her plate to cut Elif’s throat with its sharp edge. This behavior of Alicia is unacceptable and kept in isolation, this behavior of Alicia becomes evident that her actions are triggered by any threat, and she acts aggressively as her way to fight the threat. Further, they talk about Alicia's self harm and that negative actions like hurting oneself can be because of extreme mental stress, and any stress because of some trauma can drive someone towards self-harm.



Here in the novel *The Silent Patient* after the death of Gabriel, Alicia tries to kill herself (Sarah & Asnani, 2021).

### ***Emotional Needs***

Bianchini, Dallanegra, and O'Flaherty (2011) talk about the basic emotional needs of humans. That at times of despair when one can have a hand to hold on to and a shoulder to rely on. When the fact comes to light, that an individual's mind can only have a certain capacity to deal with mental suffering is insufficient, there is a certain desire to reach out for another helping hand to face and overcome the sufferings in the hope of a slight change (Bianchini, Dallanegra & O'Flaherty, 2011). Goodrich (2021) says there are way too many silent victims already, it's not merely because they don't want to be helped but in fact, they did ask for it but found no helping hand (Goodrich, 2021).

Evelyn Wong (2019) says that in our life when we feel that we are missing something so we seek and rely on external relationships. Rather than paying attention to the inward (ourselves) we focus on the outward (people) and in turn try our best to control the outcome as well. But only we never succeed in doing so. For it to work we need to be aware that it requires one to heal himself first rather than relying on others as it only attracts and results in unfulfilled relationships over and over again. As Theo comments about Alicia after meeting her, her silence was like a mirror – reflecting yourself to you. And it was often an ugly sight. Nothing could be truer (Wong, 2019).

### ***Childhood***

The protagonist of the novel *The Silent Patient*, Alicia has become silent, and almost for six years, she does not talk. Although she stopped talking at once her emotional needs are not been fulfilled since childhood as Winnicott (1947) argues that the childhood of a person has a great effect on His/her health when that person grows up (Winnicott, 1947).

T. T. Kypc (2020) in his research article “Depiction of trauma experienced in *The Silent Patient* by A. Michaelides” says that the novel depicts the painful trauma that is inflicted by the parents upon the children. The parent's toxic phrases can leave a huge impact on the mind of their children. Alicia also suffers due to the betrayal of her beloved ones. Once, when in a car accident her mother died, and Alicia suffered the ignorance and cruelty of her father. This cruelty and harsh words leave Alicia's psyche damaged and the signs can be seen when she becomes an adult. When she grows up, she starts painting and becomes a talented artist, she completes a painting and names it Alcestis, which portrays a lot about her character and her shared fate. Theo, her therapist talks about her traumatized experience of the past and says that your sense of self-worth would collapse, and the unpleasant feeling would be too heavy, too great to bear, and if that happens so you would just go with the flow, breathe it in and bury it alive. He further says that time will heal you when this time will pass so you would forget and let go of all the trauma that you have been through. However, it does not happen at times and one cannot let go of things easily, everything comes forth and all the suppressed feelings burst open. It does happen in Alicia's case

as well. The novel also arises our attention towards the fact that we need to be sympathetic towards other people in all ways. One can never know what the other person is going through. We need to pay attention to the hidden actions of the individuals around us. It teaches us to be kind in the wide world where all the people are crazy, but in all different ways (Kypc, 2020).

Mohammad Afzal Hussain (2021) in his journal “Exploring the Concept of Containment, Childhood Development, and Silence in Alex Michaelides’ novel —*The Silent Patient*” writes that Alicia was not silent because of any mental disorder but just because she faces betrayal by her beloved ones, and twice in her life. He also talks about

Alicia’s diary in the same journal, he writes that novel opens with Alicia’s diary epilogue through which readers can get an idea about the life history of Alicia, information, and truths. The diary of Alicia is also used as a tool of suspense and revelation in this novel. He referred to the mental state of Alicia that she is dealing with some negative thoughts. She cannot write those thoughts even in her diary. She is suppressing and hiding all her thoughts. The very start of her diary shows some repressed thoughts, her anxiety, dreams, and traumas. He also writes that betrayal, shocks, traumas, and feeling oneself worthless can make a person mute and can direct silence into them (Hussain, 2021).

### *Alicia’s Personality*

Ayesha Ashraf, Saba Zaidi, and Asim Aqeel (2020) in their research titled “A Postmodernist Critique of Michaelides’ *The Silent Patient* about non-verbal communication” say that Alicia on occasion seems like a non-talking object who knows how to communicate her feelings of rage and inner thoughts through her art and silence.

This novel also reveals her traumatic past, and how she suffered from her beloved ones. This suffering brings and causes great damage to her mental, physical, and social behavior that shapes and identifies her whole personality. She suffers mostly because of the blind trust that she has in her beloved ones due to which Jean- Felix suggests you’re way too trusting. The people around you ... you trust them. Don’t. Don’t trust them. As Theo Faber, her therapist, also comments that as I watched, I felt increasingly sure I had to do something to help her. She was deceived and wounded betrayed... I had no choice. I had to help her. They further say that the novel highlights the issues of mental health. Alicia suffers from mental illness. When she is held accountable by the Court for the murder of her husband, Gabriel, she chooses to remain silent and does not utter a word. She is guilty. Later on, she paints a portrait which she entitles Alcestis. The Greek heroine suffers the same way as Alicia does. They both share the same fate (Ashraf, Zaidi & Aqeel, 2020).

Weber and Mitchell (1995) say that unlike spoken and written, drawing provides us with contrasting perspectives on human-sense making because it can communicate what cannot be expressed in words (Weber & Mitchell, 1995). Dalley, Case, and Schaverian (1987) say that drawing can also be used as a tool for bringing out complex and poorly understood emotions into clarity and order

(Dalley, Case, & Schaverien, 1987). Brad Meltzer (2021) says that take a chance. *The Silent Patient* paints a wonderful painting, the one that crawls and soothes your soul. It is about to tell you a thrilling and exquisite story. So, just listen to it, indeed it is perhaps an amazing new voice (Meltzer, 2021).

### ***Euripides: Alcestis***

Mary Stieber (1998) in her journal article "Statuary in Euripides' "Alcestis" writes that one of the most intriguing of all silences in Greek drama is that of Alcestis. Alcestis sacrifices her own life for that of her husband. She thinks that killing herself will bring back her husband from death. Alicia also dies in a way because of her husband. She is held accountable for his death. Alcestis does not utter a single word afterward and nor does Alicia (Stieber, 1998). *The Silent Patient* does not speak but she finds a way to communicate. Alicia remains silent, not a single word uttered, but she does make one statement. It was a painting, a self-portrait. As the author of the novel Alex Michaelides (2019) in his novel writes that although she does not say anything about it, she does write one word in Greek at the bottom of the canvas: Alcestis (Michaelides, 2019). Global Social Sciences Review (2020) mentions that Paul talks about how Vernon, her father has wished that Alicia should have died instead of Eva, her mother. He states, now I understand why Alicia is so similar to Alcestis and why does she even strike a chord with her. Just the way Admetus damned Alcestis to die, so is Alicia, damned by her father to death (GSSR, 2020).

Many researchers have carried out their research on this novel, *The Silent Patient*, from many different perspectives like stress in this novel, exploring the concept of containment, childhood development, and silence from the lens of psychoanalytic critique. Researches from the lens of postmodernist critique and psychoanalysis of the characters have also been carried on in this novel. However, no work has been done on why Alicia became silent and why she paints a self-portrait, Alcestis. Also, there is no work regarding the power of the non-verbal communication of Alicia, present in this novel, *The Silent Patient*. This research greatly deals with non-verbal communication and how despite being silent Alicia still carries out communication. Readers still hear her silence and also see her as Alcestis. She was silent but speaking out louder than ever. As Richelle E. Goodrich (2018) says that always be conscious of your unspoken words, only a few folks understand how loud their expression can be (Goodrich, 2018).

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This section demonstrates how data has been collected and analyzed. It discusses the nature of the study and the approach being conducted. The research methodology has been carried out in such a way that was appropriate to answer the main questions of our research. The researcher has analyzed the text of the novel with logical arguments. The research paradigm is Qualitative and descriptive. There is no use of any statistics, figures, or tables for analysis. The qualitative method is greatly used for psychological aspects of human behavior and nature. Therefore, it tries to find out how and why (by analyzing the character's actions and major events) Alicia becomes silent and how she communicates non-verbally.

This research has used the technique of textual analysis. Xavier (2020) says that it is a technique used for describing, interpreting, and comprehending text (Xavier, 2020). It focuses on understanding the language, pictures, or any other symbol in the text to collect information about how people make sense of and communicate life and its experiences. Text from the novel is taken to support and explain the objectives of this research. The purpose of this technique is to analyze and interpret the text and find out the power of non-verbal communication.

This study also makes use of the Close reading method. Richard Nordquist (2019) says that the main goal of close reading is to unravel the text. Close reading is a deliberate, methodical perusal of a text. Close readers linger over individual words, verbal imagery, style cues, sentences, argument structures, paragraphs, and larger discursive units to examine their meaning on several levels (Nordquist, 2019). Alex Michaelides' novel *The Silent Patient* has been used as a primary source for data collection in this research. The secondary sources for this study are websites, journals, articles, research papers, etc.

## **ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

This section deals with the analysis and discussion of the text taken from the novel.

### ***Reasons behind Alicia's Silence***

Some of the reasons that lead to Alicia's silence are as follow:

#### ***Traumatizing Childhood***

"Is her madness in my blood?" (Michaelides, 2019, p. 58).

Alicia, a beautiful and innocent child does not get to have a perfect childhood. She goes through a traumatizing childhood. Eva isn't the very kind and caring mother, as she should have been. Alicia at times feels ignored and longs for her mother's attention. Eva isn't mentally stable and throughout her whole life, she struggles to keep her firm sanity. She is also struggling with some health issues as Eva is an alcoholic. She does not pay much attention to Alicia and spends her time smoking and drinking rather than fulfilling the emotional needs of her child. She has a sort of madness inside her due to her unresolved mental disorder, which leads her to take her own life to escape from the madness surrounding her. She commits suicide as she drives the car straight into the brick wall. Alicia resents her mother which initially leads her to hate her mother. As Winnicott (1947) says A mother's hate towards the baby, is what makes the baby hate the mother in return (Winnicott, 1947).

This tragic incident leaves a huge mark on Alicia's mind. She was just a child and was put through such a situation while her mother died right in front of her eyes. Alicia always questions herself what if her mother wanted to kill her as well? As she says I used to think it was suicide. Now I think it was attempted murder. Because I was in the car too, wasn't I? (Michaelides, 2019). Alicia was sitting next to her mother in the passenger seat and her mother was fully aware

of that but still, she decides to drive the car into the brick wall. This incident leaves Alicia thinking that her mother wanted her dead and did not care enough for the life of her child.

The feeling of not being loved never fades away. The lack of her mother's love follows Alicia in her adult life. After all these years, when Alicia marries Gabriel and becomes a successful artist, although, she could never convince herself for having any children. Whenever Gabriel talks about having children Alicia's response is always cold as she does not want to have any children. She believes that she is not fit to become a mother and fears that she too will end up being just like her mother, selfish and unable to love her children. As she says 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, 2019). Since Eva, suffered mental instability, Alicia always fears that she will carry the same madness in her blood as her mother does. She is afraid that she will put her children through all the pain that she was put through when she was a child. As Alicia is an artist, she once makes a painting and instead of putting Jesus on the cross, she realizes that she has painted Gabriel's head on the cross instead. She is surprised by her actions and felt sure that there was something wrong with her as she always fears going mad. Her mother's actions took away Alicia's childhood and leaves her with self-doubt that Alicia can never escape. She always feels that something is missing in her life and the sight of her mother committing suicide never seems to fade away. Alicia feels like she goes through the same trauma and pain over and over again. Due to her fears, Alicia does not believe herself to be completely sane and fears losing her sanity just like her mother does.

Paul: Why didn't Alicia die instead?

Theo: Why didn't Alicia die instead?

Paul: That's what he said (Michaelides, 2019, p. 235).

Alicia's father, Vernon is a caring and loving man who is in love with Eva. He marries her and loves her despite her illness. Vernon cannot bear to lose Eva but when Eva commits suicide, Vernon undergoes shock and despair. While he is suffering, he found out that Alicia has survived as she too was with her mother in the car and he resents this fact. He wishes for Alicia to have died instead of her mother. Alicia is just a child and she hears her father's words. Vernon does not realize it back then; he is not in his senses and is not aware of the words that he utters. Somehow Alicia knows exactly what he meant and this led to her killing. Not physically but psychologically.

Alicia feels that her presence is of no value to her father and she does not belong anywhere, anymore. Her father's toxic words swallow her and she cannot find the strength to fight the urge of betrayal and such infidelity from both her parents. She feels all the rage and anger consuming her but she does not let it out until it all bursts out later. Theo once mentions that Alicia says Dad just — killed me (Michaelides, 2019, p. 235). Alicia believes her father to be the reason behind her condition, her silence. His mere words that he utters while he is suffering, takes her childhood away from her. She feels betrayed by her father; the person closest to her. A parent's words can leave a huge impact on the child's psyche and often tends to leave its mark forever. Childhood is what shapes the

identity of the children and gives them a personality. No matter how much love a person receives it can never fill the gap that is left incomplete by the parents. Alicia was never a happy child and she always longed for the love and comfort of her parents. She suffers a lot due to her parents and later is raised by her aunt Lydia who tortures and torments her through the rest of her childhood. Alicia says that she will run at the very chance that she will ever get, from her aunt's home.

Later, when Vernon dies, by hanging himself. Alicia suffers a mental breakdown and for the first time, she tries to take her own life. She believes that she was not there for her father when he needed her the most. She feels that when her mother passed away, she didn't give her father all the love and attention that he needed. Due to this guilt and regret, she could not see herself, and the thought of letting her parents down leads her to take her own life. She does suicide attempts out of shame and guilt.

Her parent's attitude toward her depicts her childhood and the trauma that she is left to live with throughout her life. It leaves a huge impact on her psyche as she tries to take her own life, just like her mother did, just like her father did. She suffers and struggles with mental illness. She is suicidal.

### ***Betrayal of the Beloved***

Gabriel was the second man to condemn Alicia to death; bringing up this original trauma was more than she could bear—which is why she picked up the gun and visited her long-awaited revenge not upon her father, but upon her husband. As I suspected, the murder had much older, deeper origins than my actions. (Michaelides, 2019, p. 284)

Alicia is happily married to her husband Gabriel for seven long years. Gabriel is also an artist and a successful photographer. She loves him dearly but she always struggles with the thought of losing him someday. Since she was always deprived of her parent's love so she always longs for affection and acceptance from her spouse. Gabriel is a supportive husband. He loves her deeply and always supported her with her passion, painting. They both are successful and happily married to each other. Alicia at times feels that someone is spying on her. She tells Gabriel about the prying man but Gabriel assumes that it is all in her head. Due to this she also goes to therapy and takes sessions with Dr. West, where she lies about taking her medications to her therapist. Alicia fears that Gabriel won't believe her so she chooses to keep her fears to herself. She fears for her safety and decides not to leave the house for the whole three days. This shows that Alicia is not entirely stable and is seeing a therapist for her treatment. She is given medication that she refuses to take.

Meanwhile, she also feels that she should hide her concerns from her husband due to the fear that he may get irritable with her and may abandon her as her parents did. The fear of abandonment stays with Alicia and follows her. Alicia was deprived of fatherly protection and faced betrayal from her father. Due to this she longs and finds the fatherly figure in Gabriel. Gabriel protects her and provides her with the environment that she longs for since her childhood. This

all fades away when Alicia discovers the truth about Gabriel, that he is involved in a love affair with Kathy (Theo's wife). She is devastated. Alicia is warned by her friend, Jean-Felix when he tells her that you're way too trusting. The people around you ... you trust them. Don't. Don't trust them (Michaelides, 2019, p. 178). Alicia trusts and loves Gabriel too much. While she once says to Theo that's the truth. I didn't kill Gabriel. He killed me. All I did was pull the trigger (Michaelides, 2019, p. 281). Alicia describes her feelings towards Gabriel in these words. She feels that Gabriel killed her psychically if not physically. He takes her trust away and ruins their relationship, their marriage. On the day of his murder when Gabriel is inquired, that who should be killed first, he says: I don't want to die (Michaelides, 2019, p. 279).

This proves that he wants Alicia to die instead. He chooses for her to die just like her father did. She sees her father's betrayal in Gabriel. She feels used and she is tormented to die once again in place of someone else. Due to which she shoots him in the face. She kills him.

### *Alicia's Silence*

Alicia was discovered standing by the fireplace. Her white dress glowed ghostlike in the torchlight.... A gun was on the floor. Next to it, in the shadows, Gabriel was seated, motionless, bound to a chair with wire wrapped around his ankles and wrists. (Michaelides, 2019, p. 11)

It is the tragic night of Alicia's life. The night, that turns her whole world upside down. Theo says that a tormented, abused child can never take revenge in reality, as she is powerless and defenseless, but she can—and must—harbor vengeful fantasies in her imagination. Rage, like fear, is reactive. Something bad happened to Alicia, probably early in her childhood, to provoke the murderous impulses that emerged all those years later. Whatever the provocation, not everyone in this world would have picked up the gun and fired it point-blank into Gabriel's face—most people could not. That Alicia did so point to something disordered in her internal world (Michaelides, 2019, p. 124). She shoots Gabriel five times in the head without thinking about it twice. It is all the rage and anger that she has been piling up inside her since her childhood. Alicia feels all the rage consuming her when the feeling of betrayal overwhelms her once again. It is the childhood trauma, the urge to take revenge on her father for killing her. All that impulse comes rushing into her blood when she felt the same betrayal from Gabriel, another man whom she loves dearly, another man who she trusts the most in her life. As Dr. John K. Eshleman says the body responds to emotional stress in much the same way it responds to physical stress (Eshleman, 2020). She takes her father's revenge on her husband.

Paul says to Theo, when he inquires about Alicia, that she wasn't right in the head (Michaelides, 2019, p. 231). This shows that from her very childhood she is experiencing anxiety and depression and needs help. After she kills her husband, she could not bear the loss and stand with herself in the room so she decides to slit her wrists instead as she believes that only death could do them apart. When the police arrive at the crime scene, they find out that she is standing as still as ice in complete darkness, with a white dress on, she is ghostly. She

tries to kill herself due to guilt and despair. This is the second time when she tried to commit suicide, in both cases because of the man that she loved the most which lead her to end her own life. Both times she did not die physically but she does die psychically.

After her husband's death, Alicia chooses to remain silent. She realizes that no matter how much she loves someone they will always betray her. Her father's betrayal urges her to kill him and her husband's betrayal makes her kill him. These are all the suppressed emotions that are left open to flow, all the rage, all the fear leading her to consume herself within herself. No matter what she does she cannot control her emotions. No matter whom she reaches out to, no one can help her. Only she can save herself from herself. Both her parents took their lives and she too tries to take her life, twice. She is suicidal. She is fearless to kill Gabriel. She does not utter a word after his death. Not in her defense, not a word. Complete silence consumes her. She does not speak for the next six years. The only way that will help her to stay sane in this insane world is to remain silent.

### ***Power of Non-verbal Communication***

The power of non-verbal communication can be determined from the following texts, where Alicia communicates without the use of words. She delivers her thoughts and ideas through her actions.

Quotation of Sigmund Freud from the novel *The Silent Patient* prefaces Part 2: "Unexpressed emotions will never die. They are buried alive, and will come forth later, in uglier ways" (Michaelides, 2019, p. 53).

It is said that when a person suppresses their emotions regarding a trauma or tragedy, these emotions never fade away. They always remain in that person's subconscious, which comes forth whenever they are induced again due to some point in their life later. The same happens in Alicia's case. The emotions that are left long ago unattended, come back all of a sudden in a shock and take the most of her. Theo, her therapist knows that something is wrong with Alicia. He knows she has a deep sadness and carries it inside her. She is present physically but mentally she is somewhere else; she is lost. He takes a vow to make her speak because he believes that only he can make her speak. As he says Alicia was lost. She was missing. And I intended to find her (Michaelides, 2019, p. 30). Alicia an abused child never seems to get rid of her childhood trauma which later on becomes the cause of another trauma in her adult life. One thing leads to another and the consequences follow along with it.

### ***Alicia's Paintings***

"When I think of Alicia, I think only of depth, of darkness, of sadness" (Michaelides, 2019, p. 52).

Theo says as Alicia is an artist. She speaks volumes without saying a word. She finds comfort and solemnness in painting. One does not need words to express themselves. Painting is used and considered the most effective way to express



oneself. Artist uses different colors, lines, shapes, and techniques to express their thoughts on a clean canvas or a piece of paper. Due to her childhood trauma, Alicia is a very deep and sensitive person. She finds words short and not quite enough to express her emotions and feelings, deep and dark that she carries inside her since her childhood. Whenever Alicia feels that she needs some space or wants an escape from the outside world, she chooses to paint. On a hot summer day Alicia makes a painting that says:

It's Gabriel. Incredible that I didn't see it before. Somehow, without intending to, I've put Gabriel up there instead. It's his face I've painted, his body. Isn't that insane? So, I must surrender to that—and do what the painting demands of me. (Michaelides, 2019, p. 56)

Alicia makes a painting of Jesus but when she is done, she realizes that something is wrong with the painting. After giving it a lot of thought she suddenly realizes that instead of putting Jesus on the cross, she has painted Gabriel's face on it. When an artist paints so he/she reflects all the thoughts and emotions that they have been trying to suppress or hold within themselves. Freud explains how the unconscious mind affects the conscious experience of living. Due to the complexity of internal conflict and desires, the human mind takes the course and becomes the reason for human actions. Fraser Hibbitt (2020) says whenever a desire or thought is suppressed or left unfulfilled, it lies in the subconscious and comes further or is reflected through human actions. (Hibbitt, 2020). This unintentional painting of Gabriel as Jesus shows the position that Gabriel holds in Alicia's mind; she considers him as her savior.

In her childhood, she felt betrayed and not loved by her parents but then she finds Gabriel. He saves her soul and makes her feel worthy of herself. It is because of Gabriel that Alicia finds her true talent and he protects her and loves her due to which he has the position of savior in Alicia's life. This is an unintentional position given to Gabriel by Alicia and now she feels that she has to surrender to that painting and fulfill its demand, which means the demands of Gabriel. As she says so I must surrender to that—and do what the painting demands of me (Michaelides, 2019). She feels bound and dependent on him because of all that he has ever given her, everything that her parents failed to provide her with.

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 cannot be captured in paint. The eyes remained dead, lifeless. I could feel myself getting annoyed. (Michaelides, 2019, p. 62)

One day Alicia asks Gabriel to sit in front of her as she wants to make his portrait. Gabriel agrees and Alicia paints. While doing so, she notices a spark in his eyes but despite trying so hard she is not able to catch up with that spark of his eyes in her painting. His eyes in the painting remain cold, emotionless, and dead. The reason why she is not able to paint that spark is that somehow, she unconsciously knows that this spark is not due to her. The livelihood, the happiness, or the color of life in his eyes is not due to her. She is not the sole

reason for his happiness; she is not that one person in his life. She feels that she isn't skilled enough or that she doesn't have what it takes to paint that spark. The eyes remained dead, lifeless. I could feel myself getting annoyed (Michaelides, 2019, p. 62). Since she is aware of the reality but she cannot bring herself to admit it. She doesn't want to accept whatever she feels at that moment. When she tries and is not able to get rid of this thought she becomes impatient and suddenly annoyed. It certainly shows that Alicia doesn't want to accept the thought of betrayal from her husband. She loves him and relies on him and not being able to catch the spark of his eyes in her painting, makes her restless.

Alicia had painted a redbrick building, a hospital—unmistakably the Grove. It was on fire, burning to the ground. Two figures were discernible on the fire escape. A man and a woman escaping the fire. The woman was unmistakably Alicia, her red hair the same color as the flames. I recognized the man as myself. I was carrying Alicia in my arms, holding her aloft while the fire licked at my ankles. (Michaelides, 2019, p. 171)

Jean-Felix, from Alicia's gallery, gives Theo Faber the idea that if you want to talk to Alicia or to communicate with her give her some brushes and paint then she will talk to you through her art and Theo does follow this advice. After providing a separate art room to Alicia, the nurses say that she spends most of her time painting and cares less about eating or sleeping at all. She also gets into a good mood whenever she paints.

Once she makes a painting, in that painting there is a building, the grove. A man and woman are running, they are trying to escape the fire. Although it is obvious that the man is Theo and he is holding the woman, Alicia in his arms and the Grove is on fire but somehow, it is not obvious whether Theo is saving Alicia from the fire or he is throwing her into the fire. As Theo mentions, I couldn't tell if I was depicted as rescuing Alicia—or about to throw her in the flames (Michaelides, 2019, p. 171). This painting is a clear description of what Alicia wants to communicate, the very person, Theo, who throws her into all this mess is now here to save her, and yet his intentions are not obvious whether he is saving Alicia or not. Alicia is silent but she is still communicating and this painting is very her way of communication. Theo is aware of all the things that happens in past and would have understood what Alicia is trying to say and that she has recognized him. Theo makes Alicia suffer and now he takes a vow to make her speak again. This leaves Alicia in utter confusion and wants to communicate with Theo through this painting. Theo does get the idea but he cannot let her expose him. He wants to silence her or else all the things that he has done will also be exposed. He induces her with morphine and blames Christian for it.

The bitch painted me. She painted me, without my knowledge or permission. I went to her exhibition—and there it was, hanging there. Vile, disgusting—an obscene mockery (Michaelides, 2019, p. 130).

Alicia once paints her aunt Lydia Rose in a very displeasing way. In this painting, Lydia is naked and laying in a small bed. Her weight is causing the bed to buckle. She is monstrously fat, with an eruption of flesh spilling over the

bed, striking the floor, and spreading around the room, waves of grey custard flowing and folding across the room. Her aunt Lydia is very angry with this disgusting painting. In this painting, Alicia has shown her dislike towards her aunt. Lydia is her father's sister and takes care of Paul and her but it is for sure that she does not like Alicia and is a strict aunt. She tortures Alicia and ruins her childhood. Paul also mentions once that Alicia wants to run from the house and she would do so if she ever gets the slightest chance. Alicia has shown her hatred towards her aunt through her art by painting her in a very disgusting way. It reflects upon her hatred towards Lydia.

### *Alicia's Actions and Gestures*

Alicia became violent—she smashed a plate and tried to slash Elif's throat with the jagged edge (Michaelides, 2019, p. 40).

Alicia at times tries to communicate through her body language, her actions, and her facial expressions. She reacts with a smile, aggression, sadness, or simply violence.

Once at the Grove's canteen, Alicia tries to cut Elif's throat with a jagged edge of a broken plate. It is said that Elif accuses Alicia of taking her seat and Alicia attacks her but when Theo asked Elif about the actual reason behind this fight she says that she only asks a question and Alicia attacks her. The question that Elif asks Alicia is whether her husband Gabriel deserved to be killed? Elif talks about the tragedy of Alicia's life due to which Alicia became silent, due to which her whole world shatters and she cannot bear whatever Elif is talking about. So, she breaks a plate and tries to cut Elif's throat with it. This is how she shows her anger. Despite being silent, she does communicate her feelings. She wants Elif to stop talking about the incident because she does not want to remember it. So, she simply attacks her by slitting her throat to shut her mouth.

“Don't forget she was highly suicidal when we first brought her here.”  
(Michaelides, 2019, p. 64).

Alicia is not mentally stable. At times when she does not feel her presence is of any value to the people around her, she would harm herself in ways. Theo sees that Alicia is not feeling anything, she is highly sedated due to which she is not able to give response to anything. Theo asks Diomedes to reduce Alicia's medicinal dose to make her able to think and feel. Diomedes agrees on doing so but he also warns Theo that she has suicidal tendencies. When she first came to the Grove, she was very suicidal, she harmed herself many times. Theo comes to know that when Alicia's father died by committing suicide, she also tried taking her life, and then she had to see a psychiatrist and here in the Grove, she tries to end her life several times as well, due to which the staff has to keep her under high dosage, to prevent her from harming herself. Alicia tries to take her life because she is not considering herself worthy of being alive, she is betrayed by her loved ones, twice and now she is not willing to live anymore, which is why she tries to kill herself. She wants to end the sadness and hopelessness that she lives with each day:

She threw herself toward me, hands outstretched like claws. I had no time to move or get out the way. She landed on top of me, knocking me off balance. We fell to the floor. The back of my head hit the wall with a thud. She bashed my head against the wall again and again, and started scratching, slapping, clawing—it took all my strength to throw her off. (Michaelides, 2019, p. 72)

When Theo takes the first therapy session with Alicia, she is highly sedated. Theo says to Diomedes that it feels like she is under six feet of water. Later on, her dosage is reduced and when Theo takes his next session with her, she stares at him, unblinkingly. This is the moment when she recognizes his eyes but is not sure and when Theo says to her that he wants to help her, he wants to help her to see clearly, these were the words that clear her doubt and she is sure at once that this person is the same man whose arrival completely changed her life. As she says he said the same words the exact same phrase he'd used at the house (Michaelides, 2019, p. 276). Out of frustration, she attacks him and knocks his head several times on the wall. Although she is not saying anything, not even justifying why she attacks Theo or why she becomes violent. All her rage that she has been holding against him comes forth somehow. She wants to hurt him, to make him feel the pain. She recognizes him and she wanted to make him pay.

But instead, she turned and marched to the door. She hammered on it with her fists (Michaelides, 2019, p. 87).

In the next session after being attacked by Alicia, Theo tries to communicate with her. He shows her the ring he is wearing and tells her that he is married and he loves his wife but sometimes a part of him also hates her and that a part of Alicia also hates Gabriel, in response to this Alicia nods her head, although it is very brief. Theo gets very thrilled by this and says again that she hates her husband and again there is a non-verbal response, she nods her head, her eyes seem to be burning with anger, and

Theo again says that you hate him or else you wouldn't have killed him. Alicia stands up suddenly and goes towards the door, she starts beating the door with her fists, and when Yuri opens the door with the key, she leaves the room suddenly. Alicia leaves the room and is angry because she does not hate her husband, she does not kill her husband out of hatred, she loves him. He is the center of her life. But when Theo says the same thing time and again, she leaves the room. She makes it clear by her actions that the death of her husband is not due to hatred, it is something more. It is due to betrayal and the revenge that she longed to take on her father. Although it is nonverbal, she does respond through her behavior and body language.

She was in her own world, bent over the table, examining her paints with a small smile (Michaelides, 2019, p. 170).

Alicia goes into her art room. When she is directed towards the room, she is still silent, she does not say a word, and nor does she seem to hear the bang of the door when Yuri leaves, she is lost in her world and she does show her likeness by a smile while examining the paints. This smile of her shows how much she likes the idea of her separate art room and how much she loves painting. In all

these years when she is doing nothing, nor does she respond to even a single question or situation, now here she is expressing her likeness with a smile and picking up the brushes and colors to paint. She is an artist and she loves to put her thoughts on a canvas rather than words. The paints are something she is familiar with, something she is good at. She feels safe.

Alicia goaded into a frenzy, spinning round, raising her paintbrush ... and plunging it into Elif's eye (Michaelides, 2019, p. 182).

After Alicia is provided with a separate art room, she starts painting there. She always gets into a good mood whenever she paints. One day when she is in her art room Elif goes there and starts talking to Alicia, Elif even defaces Alicia's painting and writes slut on it but Alicia does not give any response. Later, when Elif says that Theo has a soft corner for her, he loves her, and that Alicia and Theo are sitting under a tree and kissing. These words enrage Alicia and she is triggered due to which she takes her paintbrush and pokes it into Elif's eye. This is Alicia's disapproval of whatever Elif is saying. Alicia knows that the person who destroyed her life is none other than Theo. She takes these words of Elif so bad that she attacks her. She wants to make Elif pay for visualizing something so pathetic that she tries to rid Elif of her eyesight. Her aggression towards Elif's choice of words determines her hatred towards Theo as well. She does not like Theo and even the thought of what Elif says makes her sick to her stomach.

### *Alicia's Self-portrait: Alcestis*

The painting was a self-portrait. She titled it in the bottom left-hand corner of the canvas, in light blue Greek lettering. One word: Alcestis (Michaelides, 2019, p. 12).

Alcestis, according to Greek mythology, a play written by Euripides, sacrifices her own life for that of her husband. Admetus, her husband is promised the gift of his life on one condition that someone else has to replace his life with their own. Admetus's parents refuse to do so due to which his loving wife Alcestis is willing to sacrifice her life for her husband and her husband allows so to happen. While Theo is trying to find the reason behind Alicia's silence, he finally figures it out as Paul tells him that I understood now why Alcestis had struck a chord with Alicia. Just as Admetus had physically condemned Alcestis to die, so had Vernon Rose psychologically condemned his daughter to death (Michaelides, 2019, p. 235). Alcestis dies in place of her husband, she is willing to die for him because of her unconditional love and she expects her husband to love her unconditionally, but she realizes that she is wrong when Admetus lets her die in his place, he does not stop it from happening. Likewise, Vernon condemns Alicia to death, he kills her psychologically and she is later killed by her husband as well.

Alicia finds a great resemblance with Alcestis because she too dies for her husband. When Gabriel is asked to choose between himself and his wife so, he chooses himself and is willing to let Alicia die instead. Likewise, When Alcestis is bought back from her death, she does not speak a word. She remains silent. The same happens with

Alicia. When she murders Gabriel, she goes mute. She does not utter a word afterward. It is not because she does not want to speak or she does not dare to do so, it also was not because she is not mentally stable but infect it is merely because of the trauma of betrayal that she goes through again and again. It is merely the deep shock that stopped her from saying a word out loud. Paulo Coelho (2017) puts it as if something happens once, it cannot be expected to happen again. But if something does happen twice then there for sure will be a third time as well (Coelho, 2017). Alicia goes through the trauma of her father's betrayal and has to go through the same trauma again because of her husband's betrayal. Alcestis also does not speak because of the guilt, the truth, that she is betrayed by her husband. Admetus kills Alcestis just like Gabriel kills Alicia. It is the purest and most tragic resemblance, where both the women sacrifice themselves, where both women suffer the same fate.

It is a hot summer's day when Alicia is on house arrest until her trial, for Gabriel's death. Usually, Alicia would take days and months to complete her paintings. She would think, pick the colors, the perfect patterns that are to be followed with the most dazzling brush strokes. She would paint with patience and care. But only this time she is in a rush. She seems to be in a much more hurry. It feels like she fears she will not complete her painting within its due time. She is an amazing artist. While she chooses not to speak verbally, she speaks through her painting, through her canvas. The feelings and emotions that she feels she cannot explain with words she chooses to explain them with colors. She makes a painting. A self-portrait.

As Theo explains it: the painting is depicting Alicia as she is standing in her studio in front of a canvas. She is at great ease. You will notice that she is naked. Her long hair strands fall loose on her bony shoulders, while her blue veins are visible beneath her pale skin. She is also holding a paintbrush and red color is dripping from the brush. However, I am not sure if the color is that of the paint or is it fresh blood?

She is standing still with a completely blank canvas and a completely blank expression. Just blank and completely mute. All she does is name the painting, Alcestis. But why does she name her portrait Alcestis? She does not die like Alcestis, her husband dies and she is alive, right? But what Alcestis goes through is exactly what Alicia goes through as well. She is betrayed by the people that are supposed to hold her. Vernon kills her. Gabriel kills her. She has enough of betrayal just like Alcestis did.

Her silence is induced by the continuous betrayal. She chooses silence over words. She is at war within herself and she chooses to save herself. Her silence speaks more than any words possibly can. Alicia titles her portrait as Alcestis because she wants to speak through her thoughts, not her words. She wants to communicate with someone who can see through her. Her deepest darkest thoughts need to be discovered that she keeps hidden beneath her silence. Both, Alicia and Alcestis are mere victims who suffer at the hands of their beloved ones. There is no medicine in the world to soothe or heal their wounds. Whenever, Alicia paints, she feels freedom crawling in her veins with every

short stroke of the paintbrush. She chooses to speak through her paintings. She speaks her thoughts through her actions, through her silence.

Alicia Berenson is a successful artist, yet she struggles with her sanity. Alicia is put through a lot in her childhood and the childhood traumas never seem to fade away. Her mother and father leave a mark on her psyche and she is also suicidal like her parents were. Later on, the fact that Alicia finds different ways to express her thoughts by using different means is discussed. She uses her paintings to convey her different thoughts towards people, she uses her aggression, her body language, and her anger to express the rage that she has been holding inside her since her childhood. Alicia naming her portrait as Alcestis is also highlighted to show how she resembles or finds resemblance with the Greek mythological figure, Alcestis, as they both share one single thing; silence. Alicia's sacrifice is the same as Alcestis's. Both women suffer at the hands of their beloveds. Alicia names herself as Alcestis.

### CONCLUSION

Through textual analysis of the novel *The Silent Patient* by Alex Michaelides, the researchers interpret the power of non-verbal communication i.e., silence. Alicia Berenson experiences six long years of silence, she does not say a word and the reasons behind her silence are her childhood traumas and betrayal at hands of her beloved. She had a miserable childhood and her parents' toxicity, makes her suffer from psychological conditions throughout her life. The researchers have highlighted her nonverbal communication in which she communicates her hidden or suppressed thoughts through her actions, her paintings, her aggression and her thoughts and feelings communicates whatever she is feeling inside. Her paintings reflect her love, hatred, suppressed emotions, insanity, and betrayal. It also reveals her fears, her past, her anger, and suicidal thoughts. She does not feel alive and wants to escape emotions and be cold. Her life experiences make her silent. Although she is silent, not saying anything but she is speaking more than ever, through her silence. She entitles her self-portrait as Alcestis, a Greek mythological figure because Alcestis is betrayed by her beloved ones and Alicia also suffers betrayal. They both suffer through the same trauma and just as Alcestis goes silent after the betrayal, Alicia also goes silent after the betrayal. Her silence is her biggest source of communication.

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