

**EXPLORING CHILDHOOD TRAUMA IN  
ALEX MICHAELIDES'S *THE SILENT  
PATIENT* AND *THE MAIDENS*: A  
COGNITIVE POETICS ANALYSIS**

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**Exploring Childhood Trauma in Alex Michaelides's *The Silent Patient* and the *Maidens*: A Cognitive Poetics Analysis**

BY

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## ABSTRACT

*Title: Exploring Childhood Trauma in Alex Michaelides's The Silent Patient and The Maidens: A Cognitive Poetic Analysis*

This study explores childhood trauma, especially perpetrator trauma, and its delineation in the novels *The Silent Patient* and *The Maidens* by Alex Michaelides. This research focuses on the cognitive poetic analysis of the characters from the selected novels offering a multidimensional perspective on how readers process and engage with traumatic texts. In order to make sense of the trauma narratives, this research focuses on cognitive poetics strategies such as foregrounding, image schema and parabolic projection to delve into emotional, and aesthetic dimensions of trauma representation in literature which ultimately helps in understanding the pertinent reasons that turn childhood trauma into perpetrators' trauma. This study undertakes the psychoanalytical perspectives of Cathy Caruth and Leonard Shengold to explicate that trauma due to social disruption results in the 'Soul Murder' of the child that leads to the fragmentation of the soul and a loss of essential vitality and authenticity. The selected novels feature a diverse cast of characters from various backgrounds, each narrating the story, with certain events recounted from multiple viewpoints. This narrative strategy demands persistent cognitive engagement from readers as they grapple with the intricate and perplexing details emerging from the fictional world of the novel. Utilizing a cognitive framework in the analysis of the selected texts yields insights into the behavioral patterns of the characters experiencing trauma and the profound effects of abuse on their cognitive processes, consciousness, and sense of identity. Furthermore, this method provides a perspective on how the narrative actively involves readers cognitively, facilitating their understanding of the connection between personal trauma and its transformation into perpetrator trauma.

**Keywords:** *perpetrator trauma, cognitive poetics, childhood trauma, fragmentation, psychoanalytical perspectives, soul murder*

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## **DEDICATION**

To those worldwide who grapple with the aftermath of trauma, striving for resilience

May your wounds find healing soon

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Over View of the Study

This study examines the trauma narrative within Michaelides' novels, *The Silent Patient* and *The Maidens*, employing a cognitive narratological framework. The researcher explores the cognitive reactions evoked in readers by these novels. The argument put forth in this work emphasizes that the selected trauma narratives effectively portray the destructive impacts of trauma, on individual personalities through the utilization of multiple focalizations, polychronic narration, and the representation of inconsistent information. My primary focus is on examining the psychological aspects within Michaelides' novels to identify the presence of childhood trauma and its transformation in perpetrator trauma. This analysis is conducted through the lens of certain concepts from Cathy Caruth's trauma theory and specific aspects of Shengold's idea of 'Soul Murder'. To dissect the texts under consideration, I will employ the approach of cognitive poetics as outlined by Peter Stockwell. My qualitative research methodology involves a thorough exploration of the narrative along with character study within the selected novels.

Grasping the intricacies of childhood trauma necessitates a comprehensive approach that considers various dimensions, including psychological, sociological, and perspectives related to both neurobiology and behavior. In literature, numerous studies delve into the psychological impact and manifestation of characters' psychological makeup, often focusing on behavior and mental aspects. However, there remains a necessity to comprehend the fundamental reasons behind human behavior, recognizing it as a complex phenomenon. This study endeavors to explore the motivations underlying behavior, extending beyond the realms of trauma and brain functions, and positing connections to the more holistic dimensions of the heart and soul.

The present study, covering the above mentioned novels, aims at exploring the question that is there a relationship between past traumatic childhood experiences and how those children affected by trauma develop, behave, and act in their adulthood? Defining trauma proves to be a complex task as it lacks a singular, universally applicable description. The concept of trauma is subjective, holding varied meanings

for different individuals. This diversity also extends to the effects of trauma. However, a consensus can be reached on the notion that every human experience engages the brain, subsequently influencing the body's subsequent responses to analogous situations. It is crucial to investigate the interplay among these distinct elements like the brain, behavior, and learning, and how they mutually impact each other.

Trauma is often understood to be any unpleasant or upsetting experience; this includes things like natural disasters or major incidents of physical, psychological, or emotional abuse at the hands of other people. Adverse childhood experiences specifically concentrate on traumatic incidents involving interactions with individuals, whether directly happening to the child or witnessed by them. Examples of adverse childhood experiences include emotional or physical abuse, exposure to domestic violence, encountering parental substance abuse, and instances of parental separation or divorce. Throughout this work, the term "trauma" will be employed as a general descriptor for adverse childhood experiences, specifically referring to any form of physical, psychological, or emotional abuse that may result in developmental challenges in a child's memories, consequently influencing the child's behavioral responses and building relations.

Stress is a natural part of daily life, even though it's not a pleasant sensation. There exists a correlation between stress and these issues, despite the fact that stress is not regarded as a mental health illness in isolation. Maltreatment throughout childhood is regarded as a widespread health problem with far-reaching social, political, and financial effects. The trauma suffered as a young child can have long-term negative impacts and causes medical and psychological disorders that last a lifetime.

Childhood trauma is an enduring and distressing phenomenon that has far-reaching consequences on individuals and society as a whole. It encompasses a range of adverse experiences, such as physical, emotional, sexual abuse, neglect, loss, or witnessing violence. The impact of childhood trauma can shape a person's cognitive, emotional, and social development, often leaving lasting scars that extend well into adulthood.

Previous researches indicate that a substantial portion of the population has experienced some form of childhood trauma, with varying degrees of severity. The consequences of such experiences can manifest in a range of mental health issues,

including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, dissociation, and difficulties in forming and maintaining healthy relationships.

Understanding the complexities of childhood trauma requires a multidimensional approach that encompasses psychological, sociological, and neurobiological and behavioral perspectives. This thesis draws upon these interdisciplinary frameworks to analyze the causes, manifestations, and long-term presence of childhood trauma that make them perpetrators. By integrating theoretical insights and empirical evidence, we can gain a comprehensive understanding of the intricate interplay between childhood trauma, perpetrator trauma, and psychosocial well-being of traumatic people.

Childhood trauma is a distressing experience that can have profound and lasting effects on an individual's psyche and emotional well-being. It is a subject of great interest and concern in the fields of psychology, literature, and social sciences. Literature, in particular, serves as a powerful medium to delve into the intricate complexities of human experiences, offering valuable insights into the impact of trauma on the human mind. Literature, memoirs, and other artistic expressions serve as valuable sources that provide insight into the subjective experiences of trauma survivors. By incorporating these narratives into the analysis, we can deepen our understanding of the lived realities of those affected by childhood trauma and foster greater empathy and sensitivity in addressing their needs.

### *1.1.1 Childhood Trauma and Fiction Writers*

This study not only investigates the root causes of childhood trauma within a specific fictional context but also explores how childhood trauma undergoes a profound transformation, giving rise to a more intense form known as perpetrator trauma. The research delineates the consequential presence or evolution of childhood trauma, illustrating its role as a precursor to a heightened and more hazardous type of trauma.

The significance of childhood trauma particularly in English literature nowadays is profound and multi-faceted. Authors and readers alike recognize the importance of exploring and understanding the impact of childhood trauma as it reflects the complexities of human experiences and has a lasting influence on individuals' lives.

The portrayal of childhood trauma in literature serves several purposes and holds several key significances.

Childhood trauma in literature allows readers to gain a deeper understanding of the psychological and emotional consequences of such experiences. By presenting characters who have undergone trauma, the authors provide insights into the complexities of trauma's effects on mental health, relationships, and personal development. This understanding can foster empathy, awareness, and recognition of trauma's long-lasting impact.

Literature plays a vital role in representing and validating the experiences of individuals who have endured childhood trauma. By depicting characters with diverse backgrounds and traumas, literature acknowledges the range of traumatic experiences and provides a platform for those who have lived through similar situations to see their stories reflected and validated. A limited number of fictional works address the profound repercussions of childhood trauma, specifically exploring how such experiences can transform into a different type of trauma as individuals transition into adulthood. These traumas may compel individuals to engage in behaviors that are morally and socially unacceptable, leading to social awkwardness.

Childhood trauma is often associated with silence and repression. Literature becomes a means of breaking this silence by giving voice to the experiences of trauma survivors. By manifesting such stories of affected characters, literature encourages open conversations about trauma, dismantles stigmas, and promotes healing and resilience. Literature has the power to increase awareness about the prevalence and influence of childhood trauma on the personalities of traumatized characters, which can occasionally result in their becoming morally, ethically, and socially awkward entities or even perpetrators. Through narratives that explore systemic issues, such as abuse, neglect, or violence, the literature sheds light on the social factors that contribute to trauma. By highlighting these issues, literature can serve as a catalyst for societal change, advocacy, and the development of support systems for trauma survivors.

For both authors and readers, literature provides a form of catharsis and healing. Writing and reading about childhood trauma can be a therapeutic process, allowing individuals to confront their own experiences, gain insights, and find solace in shared

narratives. Literature offers a safe space for processing emotions, fostering resilience, and promoting personal growth.

In contemporary English literature, the significance of childhood trauma lies in its ability to address important societal issues, promote empathy, and contribute to the ongoing discourse surrounding mental health and well-being. By giving voice to the experiences of trauma survivors, literature plays a crucial role in fostering understanding, healing, and resilience in individuals and communities.

Heather Dye claims in her paper “The impact and long-term effects of childhood trauma” that there is a growing body of literature and rising proof that childhood trauma exposure has long-term effects (381). Trauma is defined by the American Psychiatric Association as a perceived event that raises feelings of fear, horror, and helplessness and poses a risk to physical harm, death, or bodily integrity. Exposure to traumatic events is common and does not regard gender, age, race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation as factors. These sensations may be the result of a single incident (acute) or recurring exposures (chronic). Abuse, violence, maltreatment, loss, misfortune, catastrophes, war, and other emotionally damaging experiences are examples of traumatic occurrences. Elements consistently linked to more severe consequences include an extended duration of abuse, the presence of force or violence, and the involvement of the father or father figure as the perpetrator (Scribano, Cummings, Berkowitz 601). Childhood trauma exposure has been linked to both child and adult psychopathology, including attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), depression, anxiety, and personality disorders. It has also been linked to a profound impact on cognitive, social, and emotional competencies and an elevated risk for chronic diseases (Enoch 26). According to Edwards, Holden, Felitti, and Anda, childhood trauma can have long-lasting detrimental impacts that can affect an adult (1453). As a result, many researches indicate that adults who suffered childhood trauma are more likely to have physical and psychological issues as adults.

Trauma is defined as a profound and jolting disruption of one's world, yet it does not equate to its complete obliteration. This description implies that the pain endured becomes deeply ingrained in the victim's subconscious. It can be characterized as a personal internal distress that has the capacity to overpower an individual both physically and mentally, all while eluding clear understanding by the affected person



(Goarzin 1). Geoffrey Hartman, a literary theorist, posits that trauma consists of two distinct traits. One of these traits involves a traumatic episode being "registered rather than experienced," implying that the individual affected is not consciously aware of it; instead, it directly embeds itself in the subconscious (Hartman 537). Alternatively, one can conceptualize it as a memory of the ordeal that manifests as a continuous reenactment within the psyche that has been either bypassed or significantly divided (dissociated) (Hartman 537). This illustrates the fragmented and necessarily delayed knowledge of the event brought on by the traumatized sufferer. Trauma is defined in its broadest sense as an overpowering experience of unexpected or catastrophic occurrences, when the body's reaction manifests as hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena that frequently appear later and repeatedly without control (Caruth 24).

According to a preponderance of empirical data, chronic childhood trauma is linked to high-risk behaviors, low cognitive skills, behavioral control challenges, interpersonal problems, limit setting, and unhealthy boundaries. Numerous research has shown that early childhood trauma and substance abuse/dependence are related. Trauma survivors are more likely to turn to drugs and alcohol as a coping mechanism for difficult conditions. According to research, some people rely on methods designed to calm their emotional reactions to stress. In an effort to self-medicate their painful memories and feelings connected to traumatic events and situations, trauma survivors frequently turn to substance use to "sedate or numb" the effects of traumatization (Dye 386)

Susannah Radstone claims in *Trauma Theory: Contexts, Politics, and Ethics* that Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience* is the book where the phrase "trauma theory" originally appeared. The work of Caruth, Felman, and Laub is cited by the author as "opening the Humanities to trauma" (9–10). These thinkers developed a number of innovative techniques to investigate how trauma is portrayed in literature. As literature encompasses both the explicit and the elusive, being grounded in both coherence and ambiguity, its significance in the examination of trauma becomes apparent. Language is used in literature to convey painful events.

The significance of events, experiences, and the unconscious mind throughout early childhood is highlighted by the psychoanalytic perspective on personality. Psychiatrist Sigmund

Freud formulated the theory of personality with the belief that concealed elements in the unconscious mind could be brought to light through various means, including dreams, imagination, free association, and verbal slips. This is particularly relevant to the analysis of the selected author's or characters' slips of the tongue. Understanding the narrative techniques employed by the writer to make the suggestive narrative pertinent to comprehending traumatic experiences, development, and presence, as exemplified in Alex Michaelides' works, proves to be a complex endeavor. This thesis utilizes cognitive poetics analysis to reveal the diverse narrative techniques employed by the author in portraying traumatic experiences, particularly in depicting childhood trauma.

### *1.1.2 Introduction to the Author and an Overview of the Selected Novels*

As this current study revolves around tracing the social construction of perpetrator trauma, I scrutinize the selected fictional narrative to explore the symbolic representation of childhood trauma in the background and its expression for a broader audience. To reinforce the credibility of the assertions put forth in this research regarding perpetrator trauma, relevant scholarly works and theoretical foundations of traumatized childhood reality are cited throughout the analysis. Commencing with a concise autobiography of the author and a brief introduction to the novel *The Silent Patient*, the study is initiated.

Michaelides was born on the tiny Mediterranean island of Cyprus to an English mother and a Greek-Cypriot father. He was lucky enough to grow up in a family of book lovers. Charles Dickens, Evelyn Waugh, Angela Carter, Margaret Atwood, Robert Graves, and Henry James are just a few of the renowned writers and philosophers who subsequently inspired him as a writer. His mother also accumulated a modest library. He inherited his mother's book collections along with the legacy of being taught to read. Paradoxically, he engaged in a fairly casual preparatory dialogue with the works that were not inherited from his mother. Around the age of eleven or twelve, Michaelides came onto his elder sister's assortment of Agatha Christie books.

He chose to read *And Then There Were None* despite his mother's dislike of crime fiction as he was captivated by the graphic covers right away. He was so engrossed in the book that he stayed up all night reading it, feeling both excited and scared. This experience left a lasting impression on him, and he became a lifelong fan of Christie's work. The following summer, while sitting on the beach, Michaelides read nothing but Agatha Christie novels, which he considers to be among his happiest memories.

The influence of Agatha Christie contributed extensively to make him into a reader and a writer. Michaelides has always been drawn to the structure of a whodunit; crime, investigation, and final twist which he finds satisfying and beautiful. He believes that mysteries bring order from disorder, as P.D. James once said. Michaelides knew from an early age that he wanted to write a book, and it had to be a psychological detective story like *The Silent Patient*. When he eventually wrote his debut novel, he aimed to recreate the same sense of magic and excitement that he felt while reading Agatha Christie's novels on the beach as a child.

Michaelides lived in Nicosia, Cyprus until he was eighteen. Greek culture, especially ancient tragedy and mythology, has had a significant impact on him. The Greek myths are an integral part of Cypriot culture. Every summer, the tragedies are performed, and Homer and the Greek tragedians are taught in schools, similar to how Shakespeare is taught in the UK or the US. Alex is grateful for his place of birth and education, as it provided him with an entire mythological world to explore as a writer. The Greek myths are full of violence, magic, and power. They are timeless tales of passion, heartbreak, love, and loss.

At the age of thirty-six, Michaelides decided to write a detective story he had been putting off for twenty years. However, he realized that he knew nothing about detectives but a lot about psychotherapists. So, he made his hero a psychotherapist and had him investigate a psychological crime. He drew inspiration from his main influences - Greek myths and Agatha Christie. Christie's novels are set in iconic enclosed locations, and so he set *The Silent Patient* in a psychiatric institute, partly because it was one of the few locations Christie never used. Michaelides' second novel, *The Maidens*, is also a psychological detective story about a series of murders at a

Cambridge college. It is situated in the “dark academia” genre, which romanticizes the pursuit of knowledge at old, elite institutions and incorporates a secret society.

### *1.1.3 A Brief Synopsis of The Silent Patient*

*The Silent Patient*, authored by Alex Michaelides, delves into the enigmatic life of Alicia Berenson, a skilled painter residing in London with apparent success and a devoted spouse. However, the tranquility of her existence shatters when her husband is discovered dead, and Alicia is found standing beside his lifeless body, having been shot multiple times. Subsequently, Alicia retreats into silence, earning her the moniker of the "silent patient" and placement within a psychiatric institution.

The narrative unfolds primarily through the perspective of Theo Faber, a psychotherapist consumed by the desire to penetrate Alicia's silence and unravel the truth behind the tragedy. Despite warnings and obstacles, Theo embarks on a relentless quest to uncover Alicia's past, unearthing buried secrets and unforeseen complexities that challenge his perceptions.

*The Silent Patient* intricately weaves themes of trauma, guilt, obsession, and the intricacies of the human psyche. Through a gripping plot and well-developed characters, the novel captivates readers, leading them on a journey filled with unexpected twists and a startling denouement.

### *1.1.4 A Brief Synopsis of The Maidens*

*The Maidens* is presented in the third person, narrated by Mariana Andros, a 36-year-old widow and lifelong book enthusiast who works as a group therapist. Mariana travels to Cambridge to investigate the murder of her niece Zoe's friend. The novel is structured into six parts, covering the initial inquiry and two subsequent murders. The Prologue introduces Edward Fosca, a professor suspected by Mariana, while an Epilogue offers a glimpse into the aftermath, revealing Zoe as the murderer. Intertwined are first-person narratives from the perspective of the actual killer, eventually disclosed to be Sebastian, Mariana's husband, who not only murdered her father but also conspired with Zoe to kill her.

Mariana is drawn deeper into the investigation in and discovers that she has been idealizing Zoe. A campus cleaner reveals that Zoe can be rude and suggests that

she is hiding something from her aunt, while Clarissa, a former professor of Mariana's, discloses that Zoe is a student of Edward's. Fred's obvious interest in Mariana and her increasing conviction of Edward's guilt intensify her emotional fragility. At the end of Part two, another body is found. The next section reveals that the second murder victim is another Maiden: Veronica. Mariana accepts a dinner invitation from Edward, whose attempt to seduce her unsettles her. At the end of Part three, she resolves to return to London to visit her supervisor, Ruth.

Mariana returns to London and meets with both Ruth and Theo, a fellow therapist. Both seem concerned about Mariana's emotional well-being and suggest that she is hiding something important from herself. Returning to Cambridge, Mariana sets up a group therapy session with the Maidens and Edward that goes poorly. Zoe seems to want nothing to do with it. A third victim is found: a Maiden called Serena.

Parts five and six move briskly through the final stages of the investigation. Mariana confronts Zoe, who admits that during her botched initiation into the Maidens, Edward gave her a spiked drink and sexually exploited her. She also reveals that a porter named Morris was blackmailing Edward, who was sleeping with his female students. Claiming to know where Edward hid the murder weapon, Zoe brings Mariana into a woodland, admits that she was having an affair with Sebastian and plotting with him to kill Mariana, and attacks her with the knife. Fred arrives and distracts Zoe but is critically injured in the process. Mariana phones the police, who take Zoe away. The Epilogue reveals that Fred is on the mend and Zoe is declared unfit for trial. Theo becomes Mariana's therapist and urges her to meet with her niece for the sake of both their healing processes. In the novel's final sentence, Mariana opens the door to Zoe's room, having agreed to see her.

Both novels present rich material for examining childhood trauma and perpetrator trauma due to their exploration of intricate psychological themes and character dynamics.

In *The Silent Patient*, Alicia Berenson, the central character, undergoes a traumatic event in her childhood that profoundly affects her mental state and behaviour as an adult. The novel delves into the consequences of childhood trauma on mental health and interpersonal connections, offering insights into how past experiences can

mold an individual's identity and behaviour. Furthermore, the portrayal of the perpetrator in the narrative provides an opportunity to analyse the genesis and repercussions of trauma-induced actions, shedding light on the interplay between personal history and present-day conduct.

Similarly, *The Maidens* explores the psychological aftermath of childhood trauma through key characters like Zoe and Sebastian. Their traumatic past influences their perceptions and decisions, leading them to confront hidden truths and grapple with their own history of trauma. Additionally, the novel delves into perpetrator trauma through its depiction of the antagonist's motivations and actions, providing a nuanced portrayal of the psychological effects of trauma on both victims and perpetrators.

Both novels offer compelling narratives that can serve as valuable case studies for researching childhood trauma and perpetrator trauma. Through meticulous analysis of the characters' experiences and behaviours, researchers can gain insights into the enduring impact of trauma on individuals and the complex dynamics within trauma-related narratives. Moreover, the psychological depth and complexity of these stories make them ideal subjects for exploring the intersection of trauma, identity, and interpersonal relationships in literature.

#### *1.1.5 Exploration of Trauma through Cognitive Poetics Approach*

This thesis, by employing a cognitive poetic analysis seeks to uncover the various cognitive poetic devices and techniques utilized to portray childhood trauma. The interdisciplinary field of cognitive poetics, which blends literary analysis and cognitive research, provides a distinctive viewpoint on comprehending the psychological effects of trauma in literature. We will acquire understanding of the author's portrayal of the lingering consequences of childhood trauma on the ideas, feelings, and actions of the characters through an analysis of narrative structure, character development, and language patterns.

Furthermore, this examination will explore the symbolic and metaphorical representations utilized by Michaelides, investigating how these poetic devices enhance the reader's comprehension of the characters' trauma. The analysis will scrutinize the utilization of imagery, motifs, and narrative perspectives to clarify the

intricacies and subtleties of childhood trauma and its expression in the characters' lives.

The significance of this study resides in its contribution to comprehending childhood trauma within the realm of literature. Through the analysis of these highly regarded novels, the research strives to uncover how literature can function as a tool for delving into and understanding more than just the psychological aftermath of traumatic events. The outcomes of this investigation hold the potential to offer valuable perspectives for mental health practitioners, literary scholars, and individuals interested in gaining a profound understanding of the intricate nature of trauma and its portrayal in fictional works.

In conclusion, this thesis attempts to use a cognitive poetic lens to undertake a thorough investigation of childhood trauma in *The Silent Patient* and *The Maidens*. By dissecting the narrative structure, characters, and cognitive poetic devices employed by the author, this research will unravel the intricate layers of trauma and its enduring impact on the human psyche. Ultimately, this exploration aims to contribute to the broader understanding of the representation and exploration of trauma in contemporary literature. Both novels deal with potentially triggering issues, including suicide, murder, mental/physical abuse, mental illness, and trauma. This in-depth examination of trauma aims to present a clear picture of the uneasy and traumatized characters' physical and psychological states. As a result, the fictional works selected for this study are relatively new, making it important to analyze them because there isn't much critical information on them. Due to its novelty and ability to offer a more in-depth critical analysis of the topic and the selected fiction, the current study can be seen as an effort to close this gap.

## **1.2 Thesis Statement**

The central proposition of my research project can be succinctly expressed through the following thesis statement:

The manifestation of trauma in fiction was just confined to the psychological makeup of the traumatized characters due to their social, familial and historical experiences. It cannot be ignored that the trauma narratives through the techniques of narration, characters' representation and language make other invisible factors visible through the presentation of the cognition of traumatized

characters. This thesis scrutinizes the linguistic and narrative strategies employed in selected fiction to elucidate the cognitive intricacies of trauma.

### 1.3 Research Questions

1. What are the reasons that develop the belatedness of childhood trauma and its manifestation in the selected fiction?
2. How does the narrative of both novels fail to solely depict the psychological makeup as the only reason for childhood trauma leading to the perpetrator's trauma in the selected texts?
3. How do the cognitive poetics strategies help in identifying the effects of childhood trauma resulting in perpetrators' trauma and its delineation in the selected novels?

### 1.4 Research Objectives

- To explore the reasons behind the belatedness of childhood trauma and its manifestation in the selected fiction.
- To analyze the psychological motives falling short in the narrative representation of childhood trauma transforming to perpetrator trauma among the characters in the selected novels.
- To apply cognitive poetics strategies such as foregrounding, image schemata and parabolic projection on the selected novels that delve into emotional, and spiritual dimensions of trauma representation for the readers in the novels.

### 1.5 Research Methodology

The current study, focuses on the analysis of trauma, which is an intrinsic and ongoing aspect of the world portrayed in the selected texts: *The Silent Patient* and *The Maidens*. Therefore, a qualitative paradigm will be used to conduct this research. As qualitative research is used to gather in-depth insights into a problem or generate new ideas for research so it will be appropriate to use this methodology to study and explore the relationship between childhood trauma and perpetrator trauma. The methods offered by qualitative research offer a possible explanation for why people's attitudes can change, and this is the subject of the current investigation.

Furthermore, the qualitative approach employed in the current study, characterized by its analytical and descriptive nature, contributes to the understanding



of the human psyche in response to endured pain and suffering. Cognitive poetics analysis serves as a research method in this study, utilizing Stockwell's Cognitive Poetics tools to investigate childhood and perpetrator trauma. Stockwell delves into the concept of macro and micro structures, emphasizing the interconnectedness of texts and how they mutually influence one another. The application of cognitive poetics in this study is driven by the researchers' intention to engage with trauma narratives, recognizing the imperative nature of this exploration for the thesis. He explores how texts leverage and interact with literary and non-cultural traditions, unveiling the processes through which meaning is constructed. Since the present research revolves around the trauma narrative that is complex in nature so for this reason cognitive poetics tools have been applied. The researcher assumes Stockwell's cognitive poetics analysis model as beneficial due to its provision of a comprehensive framework for scrutinizing the intricate interplay between language and readers' interpretation of literary texts. His approach promotes a critical analysis of the socio-ethical aspects of literature and deepens understanding of the complex interrelationship between text and society.

Following Gerard Genette's differentiation between 'story' and 'narrative,' this study defines 'story' as the content being conveyed and 'narrative' as the manner in which it is expressed. This distinction is grounded in the belief that examining narrative provides an interpretive framework for comprehending and analyzing the story. However, the interpretation of both story and narrative necessitates cognitive abilities that aid in making sense of the world, thereby establishing the foundation for the formation of story worlds in cognitive narratological studies.

Cognitive narratology has evolved through research in cognitive sciences, encompassing psychology, linguistics, and the philosophy of mind. In his article, "Storytelling and Sciences of Mind," David Herman contends that the common thread among research endeavors falling under cognitive narratology is the interconnection between narrative study and the examination of the mind. This interdisciplinary field investigates frameworks from various disciplines related to mind-related inquiry for narrative analysis. Additionally, it explores how insights derived from studying stories can contribute to cognitive science (327). The cognitive tools employed in this study to analyze the novels' narrative involve knowledge structures referred to as foregrounding and image schemas emerging into parabolic projection. Moreover, in the present study, the application of Stockwell's cognitive approach, is structured to bolster both the

methodological and conceptual frameworks. This approach is implemented with the intention of delivering a precise and comprehensive assessment of the selected literary works.

Cognitive poetics is a scholarly domain that assists researchers in literary studies by offering a thorough and principled method for reading and analyzing literature. It utilizes concepts from cognitive psychology and linguistics to explore how readers perceive and make sense of literary works. To provide a sound and reasoned explanation of literary meanings and effects, it is essential for scholars to understand the principles of cognitive linguistics and possess a systematic understanding of how language and communication function.

To justify the stance taken in this study, it was inadequate to simply rely on outdated language theories like Saussurean linguistics, incoherent pseudo-sciences like psychoanalysis, metaphorically poetic yet empty gestures like deconstruction, or to adopt momentarily fashionable paradigms from unrelated fields without genuine comprehension. Cognitive poetics facilitated a reconnection between literary scholarship and everyday readers, seemingly paradoxical because it aims to professionalize the discipline. To offer a sound and rational explanation of literary meanings and effects, one must grasp the principles of cognitive linguistics and possess a systematic understanding of language and communication (Harrison and Stockwell 1).

It is crucial to acknowledge that literature is an artistic endeavor in and of itself, and that reading and evaluating literature is influenced by societal perceptions of it. The literary work selected for this research also constitutes a phenomenon open to exploration, not confined solely to the text or the reader, but rather as a heteronymous entity involving the interaction between the two. Certain effects arising from literary reading are exceedingly subtle and subjective, challenging to articulate, and often exist at the most nuanced levels of conscious awareness or within the realm of the subconscious, with indirect or fleeting impacts. Therefore, it was insufficient to conduct this research using merely close reading, case studies, thematic analyses, or content analyses. As a result, cognitive poetics is referred to as "artful science," and Schema analyses, along with conceptual integration and foregrounding of literary reading emphasize the difficult fact that different readers use different sets of information to interact with the same text, leading to a variety of interpretations.

In addition, this study examines the portrayal of trauma and violence within the selected texts. The exploration of traumatic events in the study is facilitated by a comprehensive understanding of the distressing incidents conveyed through the narratives of the novels. This is apparent in the present research's focus on analyzing aspects that encompass the complex psychological and social dimensions influencing a victim's understanding of a traumatic incident. An analysis of childhood and perpetrator trauma has been presented through the integration of many contextual aspects, such as protagonists, places, timeframes, cultures, landscapes, and more, that influence the emotions and narratives portraying characters' traumatic experiences in selected texts.

## **1.6 Significance of the Study**

The novels under examination in this study possess the potential to evoke issues such as suicide, murder, mental and physical abuse, mental illness, and trauma. This in-depth exploration of trauma aims to vividly portray the distress and traumatized state of characters, both physically and psychologically, shedding light not only on the moral decline of society but also on potential strategies for mitigation of those readers who suffer that traumatic experience in their personal lives. They recognize their trauma by reading such kinds of narratives. The selected fictional works are relatively recent, making this research particularly significant due to the scarcity of existing critiques on them. Therefore, this study serves as an effort to fill this gap, offering original insights and a more comprehensive critical understanding of the social awareness surrounding childhood trauma and abuse, which can lead to soul murder and contribute to the moral degradation of society.

Alex Michaelides in his novels *The Silent Patient* and *The Maidens* portrays some traumatized characters causing sufferings in the society. Childhood trauma has been the subject of exploration and discourse in various critical, political, fictional, anthological, and scholarly works. The present research focuses on delineating the process of trauma implicated in the development of perpetrator trauma. It achieves this by scrutinizing symbolic depictions of the traumatic experiences of certain characters in the selected texts. This study aims to meticulously examine the psychology of these wrongdoers and discern patterns in their conduct. To depict the significance of childhood maltreatment and its effects on adult life, the selected fiction has been analyzed in the context of soul murder evolving into a murderer or perpetrator. The

current research helps readers and people know not only about the significance of children's mental health and its impact on their adult lives but also familiarize them with the dire consequences of soul murder. Hence, the ongoing research holds importance from both literary and social perspectives.

The impact of psychological constitution is indeed a significant catalyst, yet it does not stand as the primary determinant in the transformation of a trauma survivor into a criminal or perpetrator. This study underscores the profound role of the soul as a principal force in all psychological scenarios, asserting that the soul acts as the true agentic entity, irrespective of whether an individual is psychologically sound or traumatized. The assertion is that the soul possesses greater agency and resilience compared to the psychological makeup. It contends that if an individual's soul remains alive and intact, it will triumph over psychological injuries. On the other hand, mitigation becomes unrealistic if the soul dies.

The essence of this study is exemplified through a selection of fictional narratives. While acknowledging the undeniable influence of psychological or traumatic experiences as stimuli, this research posits that the soul assumes a more potent agentic role than the psychological constitution. The argument posits that an intact soul empowers the victim to overcome the ravages inflicted by trauma. However, if the soul gives in to the killing power of traumatic events, there is a much greater chance that the victim will become the murderer. The basic hypothesis of the study is supported by the observation of this theme occurrence in the novels under analysis.

Hence, the research endeavors to investigate the repercussions of soul murder on children and its impact on their mental well-being. This exploration is crucial as soul murder represents a severe form of abuse with enduring consequences for children's lives. By delving into this subject, the researcher aims to enhance comprehension of the dynamics of soul murder and its implications for children. The findings of this study can aid in identifying the factors that elevate the risk of soul murder and in formulating effective interventions for its prevention. Furthermore, the research contributes to the existing knowledge on childhood trauma, potentially enhancing the quality of life for children who have undergone soul murder experiences.

## **1.7 Delimitation**

The present study is delimited to an in-depth study of two novels *The Silent Patient* and *The Maidens*. The study examines two literary texts in the backdrop of the theoretical framework developed from *Unclaimed Experience- Trauma, Narrative and History* by Cathy Caruth and *Soul Murder* by Leonard Shengold. The analysis of the selected fiction is limited to using the specific methods of Stockwell's cognitive poetics, such as, foregrounding, and image schema parabolic projection.

## **1.8 Organization of the Study**

This document is divided into six chapters. In the first chapter, the researcher has introduced the topic of the research along with the problem statement and its significance. The research objectives and questions along with research methodology have also been discussed in the first chapter. The second chapter titled literature review is comprised of a literature review and a deeper insight into the variables. The third chapter describes Shengold and Cathy Caruth's trauma theory, its scope, and critique. An explanation and analysis of the theoretical framework have also been evaluated and the application of trauma theory has been discussed in detail. The fourth and fifth chapters are based on Michaeides's novel *The Silent Patient* and *The Maidens* in which the leading characters show their traumatized childhood hunting their adulthood through their memories, actions and speech. Conclusion and recommendations for future generations are presented in the final chapter. The last part of the study contains the references.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The following review of the literature analyses studies pertinent to the topic at hand to contextualize the current study and identify any gaps in the body of prior knowledge. Additionally, each portion of this chapter engages in a chronological study of trauma and examines the topic from its roots to its modern outlook in order to arrive at a cogent and simple comprehension regarding the field of trauma. The review of the literature begins with a synopsis of trauma theory and places the current study in relation to earlier studies. Subsequently, the study delves into the limitations observed in preceding research efforts before culminating in a discussion that highlights the disparities between the latest investigation and earlier scholarly work.

To grasp the contemporary concept and prospects of trauma investigation, this segment of the research seeks to elucidate the formerly dominant monolithic paradigm. This paradigm emphasized the notion that trauma was unspeakable and inexpressible during the period when individuals were victimized. The study explores the transformation from being recipients of trauma to becoming agents of trauma, elucidating how this shift alters individuals from innocent victims to perpetrators.

#### **2.1 Beginning of Trauma Theory**

The analysis of previous works in the following section endeavors to trace the evolution of trauma, starting from its initial clinical depiction to its integration with literary theory. This section underscores the history, progression, and evolution of trauma theory. To comprehend the conceptual framework of this study, it becomes imperative to delineate the origins of trauma theory. The current research delves into the political, social, and historical trajectories of trauma theory, elucidating its development. Furthermore, trauma research enables a nuanced exploration of literature, considering the psychological impact of traumatic experiences on the victim's mental state. It goes beyond this to encompass a range of literary aspects, including rhetorical techniques, cultural norms, and historical influences, while also recognizing the physical transformations experienced by victims. It is important to comprehend the term "trauma" in the first place. The term "trauma" originates from the Greek word "traumatizo," which meaning "wound." According to Garland this results in "a piercing

of the skin, a breaking of the bodily envelope" (9). The concept of bodily harm gradually broadened to encompass psychological harm as well. It is now recognized that even after a person has recovered from their physical wounds, psychological effects of a traumatic experience can persist.

Consequently, enduring traumatic incidents often manifest in a combination of physical and psychological symptoms, implying that these mental repercussions can be mentally taxing and may lead to the individual's mental breakdown or, in rare cases, physical deterioration if not promptly addressed. Child psychiatrist Lenore Terr asserts that "Psychic trauma occurs when an individual is externally assaulted by an abrupt, unforeseen, overwhelming, intense emotional impact or a sequence of impacts. Traumatic occurrences originate externally, but they swiftly assimilate into the individual's psyche." (1024). In Freud's work, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, trauma is defined as an outcome of a substantial breach in the protective barrier against stimuli. Freud elucidates that the essence of the shock is the actual damage to the molecular or even histological structure of the elements in the nervous system. The emphasis is placed on understanding the consequences on the mental organ resulting from the breach in the shield against stimuli and the subsequent challenges that ensue. (25).

The aforementioned assertion is supported by this definition of trauma. At first, trauma was associated with significant catastrophic events, but its status has since changed. It can be seen as a sophisticated paradigm of research that has permeated several fields, including literature, critical theory, history, and culture. As a result, it is possible to attribute the development of trauma theory to how people have responded to conversations about politics, ethics, memory, and literary representation. The discussion of these issues picked up steam in the 1990s, with a particular emphasis on the extreme forms of victimization and violence that reached new heights following the Second World War. In contrast to earlier examinations of trauma, the present study seeks to focus on literary pieces addressing psychological trauma, deceit, and the intricacies of the human psyche. It delves into the portrayal of the impact of traumatic experiences on fictional characters within regional narratives.

The inclusion of psychoanalysts such as Jean Charcot, Sigmund Freud, and Pierre Janet can be seen as an essential adjunct for gaining further insights into the origins of trauma. In her work, *The Female Malady*, Elaine Showalter characterized hysteria as a condition resulting from "defective heredity heightened by the biological

and social challenges of puberty." (130). Doctors in the 1880s noticed the emergence of unusual behavior, mostly in women, without any discernible cause. Hysteria was therefore once thought to be a trait linked to women's weakened constitutions. The primary responsibility of these psychoanalysts was to investigate the mental condition of these women, laying the groundwork for the establishment of the discipline of trauma studies. Other physicians were conducting trauma studies before Freud started his studies, therefore mentioning his innovations in this area would be insufficient without first mentioning his forebears. Among them is the French doctor Jean-Martin Charcot, who first discovered the link between trauma and mental illnesses while treating traumatized women. He was the first to come to the realization that the symptoms which his patients reported, such as convulsions, unexpected paralysis, loss of sensory input, and amnesia, could have psychological origins rather than physiological ones. Following Charcot, his pupil Pierre Janet developed this line of inquiry by looking at how the traumatic experiences of the patients under consideration altered their attitudes and psyches.

After Charcot and his pupil Pierre, Freud contributed to the development of the study of trauma. In his research on hysteria, Freud followed the lead of his mentor Charcot and adopted some of his ideas while placing a strong emphasis on historical events. In his book *Studies on Hysteria*, he made note of the fact that hysteria was the trigger for the phenomena of dissociation, which can be conceptualized as severing the victim's consciousness into two parts. The patient experiences hysterical attacks frequently, which are simply repetitions of earlier experiences. This revealed to Freud that the physical condition that the sufferer has previously experienced is actually repeated in the symptoms that go along with a hysterical outburst. By expressing their emotional distress and reenacting the horrific event from the past, the patients were able to feel more at ease (30). Later, Freud amended and rejected his conclusions. He eventually turned away from the "Seduction theory" that he had emphasized in *The Aetiology of Hysteria*. He came to the conclusion that the victim's traumatic background was not to blame for any of the hysterical symptoms, such as the feeling of being suffocated, mutism, and unexplained seizures. Instead of concentrating on creating trauma theory, Freud began to concentrate more on furthering theories on sexual evolution. Even though he may have changed his mind, there is no denying that he was a notable pioneer who established the framework for trauma studies in the future.



The onset of the World Wars amplified Freud's impact on the field of trauma research. With the advent of World War I, public attention shifted away from the subject of hysterical women, fostering ongoing advancements in trauma studies. In her book *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*, Judith Herman argues that individuals in the military exhibiting any form of weakness, whether physical or mental, faced societal rejection. Instead of receiving support, they were held responsible for their perceived incapacity. Consequently, the initiation of World War I marked the introduction of the concept of psychological "first aid" (20). It was developed to alleviate the symptoms that plagued soldiers suffering from "shell shock" syndrome, such as uncontrollably sobbing, yelling, memory loss, paralysis, and a general lack of reactivity. When soldiers near the front were treated for shellshock syndrome with psychological first aid, they were able to hide their trauma and immediately resume their duties. (20–21). In addition, PTSD was officially recognized as a traumatic phenomenon in 1980 and given the name Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. The American Psychological Association (APA) defines post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as a particular response to an event that falls outside the normal range of human experience and involves severe psycho-somatic and somatic disturbances.

In the course of these wars, medical professionals often greeted these soldiers with contempt, dismissing the notion of comprehending their trauma. W. H. R. Rivers stands out as an exemplar among doctors who demonstrated a supportive approach by attentively listening to their harrowing narratives and aiding them in overcoming their traumatic experiences. Siegfried Sassoon, the well-known war poet who was his most well-known patient, was persuaded to record his terrifying experiences from the front lines of combat (22). Sassoon asserted that the idea of writing about his experiences had been quite profitable for him as he worked on his memoirs and other heartfelt poetry. The connection between the traumatizing linguistic expressions consequently demonstrated a powerful capacity for healing (7). Literature is also a key resource for understanding the trauma phenomenon. A literary work that depicts trauma evokes the suffering of the sufferer through the story, forcing the reader to develop empathy for the victim. In the same way that psychology has its own viewpoint on consciousness, literature is accountable for giving a unique one. It is impossible to overlook the connections between psychology and literature. Although the methodologies of the two

disciplines may be different, both are involved in the interpretation process. The researcher can develop a creative understanding of consciousness through literary materials. They provide analysis for those aspects of events that society may overlook or deny, which brings trauma to the foreground (Balaev 19).

Beyond portraying trauma stemming from major events like the World Wars and others such as the Holocaust, post-colonialism, and black slavery, it is crucial not to overlook the impact of trauma on individuals, particularly women. The women's movement in the 1970s serves as an example of how trauma can transition from women's personal experiences into the public sphere. Such awakenings had two purposes: to provide psychiatric therapy to the victims and to prompt significant changes in societal thinking and laws. In addition, the first crisis rape institute opened its doors in 1971, and the psychological effects of domestic violence received increasing attention. Judith Herman's book *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* can be regarded in this context as a significant work that mapped the psychological investigation into trauma theory. Herman's work primarily focused on the issue of complicated PTSD, particularly as it related to those who had experienced sexual and domestic abuse. Referencing Herman's work is crucial for this inquiry even though it isn't literary in the traditional sense. Herman's work has a remarkable influence on literary studies concerning trauma. Furthermore, Herman's work might be connected to the multidisciplinary approach to trauma research highlighted by the current study.

It should not merely be reviewed based on instances with huge consequences if we want to understand trauma better. Trauma, on the other hand, can refer to everyday events that cause emotional instability. As highlighted in Judith Herman's previously mentioned work, the origins of trauma predominantly include natural disasters, poverty, religious discrimination, sexual assault, and various other forms of adversity. There are several authors who have accurately depicted these tragic events in their literary works. One such example is the writing of Nigerian author Buchi Emacheta. Her groundbreaking book *Joys of Motherhood*, which was released in 1979, chronicles the struggles of Nigerian mother Nnu Ego to survive in a patriarchal society. In her first marriage, Ego is unable to give birth to a child for her husband. As a result, she is exiled to Lagos, where she triumphantly bears children. With the start of World War II, her

life takes a turn for the worst once more as her husband and his family mercilessly reject her and her children.

Hanan al-Shaykh, a writer from Lebanon, is another author who concentrates on the representation of trauma in a typical environment. In her bildungsroman titled *The Story of Zahra*, the narrative revolves around the life of Zahra, spanning from her traumatized early years to her eventual demise.

Various evidences are used in a study on this Francesca Quigley book to shed light on Zahra's tragic experience. The transgenerational trauma that is depicted in Quigley's study, *The Orange and Navel: Trans generational Transmission of Trauma in Hanan al-Shaykh's The Story of Zahra*, is transmitted from Zahra's mother to Zahra herself via the course of many episodes in the book. The examination of two works in this research, which delves into the transmission of trauma across generations, holds significance for the current investigation's direction. Zahra undergoes traumatic experiences at various points in her life, including periods of confinement to her bed and hospitalization for an unidentified psychological condition. Her mother plays a significant role in the transfer of trauma to her daughter. Quigley utilizes an incident involving the location of Zahra's mother's abortion to support her argument. While Quigley suggests this scene highlights Zahra's unreliability as a narrator, it actually illustrates the striking similarity between Zahra's memory of the abortion and her mother's, both experiencing intense emotions of relief and disgust from terminating the child conceived through the abuse of their physical and mental tormentor. In contrast to this critique, which utilizes multiple character narratives to demonstrate how trauma is conveyed, the study is somewhat limited as it solely considers Zahra's perspective. In her research, Quigley employs the potent symbol of the orange and navel to represent the umbilical cord's role in uniting mother and child. As established by Quigley, trauma can be communicated from the mother to the kid in the same way that nutrients for the baby's survival are transmitted into the womb (42).

As outlined in the literature review, historical connections to trauma include events such as railway accidents, the hysteria observed in Freud's patients, shell shock experienced in various wars, and more. These occurrences contributed to the development of the psychoanalytic concept of PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) within the realm of biomedical psychiatry. The study of trauma gained momentum following the emergence of peace movements in the United States, feminist marches,

and the publication of traumatic wartime memoirs by Vietnam War veterans. Such occurrences sparked interest in the study of trauma, which is still common today. People's conceptions of the world have changed as a result of the constant destruction brought on by the combination of misery, conflict, technology, humanity, science, etc. Due to the combination of the humanities and sciences, trauma has spread in the realm of theory and intervention at the center of this. This supports the idea that, because to trauma's pervasive presence in all facets of existence, its transmission is not limited to the discourse of the arts and sciences but has instead created new channels for the daily discourse of people.

## **2.2 Trauma and its Emergence**

Trauma is described as the "radical and shocking interruption of the universe, but not its destruction" (Goldberg 137), which propounds that the anguish of the victim is forced into the victim's subconscious psyche. The term refers to an individualistic internal suffering that tends to overwhelm the sufferer both physically and mentally, all the while being elusive to them. Geoffrey Hartman, a literary theorist, argues that trauma comprises two traits that are distinct from one another. One of these may be considered a traumatic event, which is "registered rather than experienced". The victim remains unaware of it; instead, it directly infiltrates the subconscious. Alternatively, it can be seen as a form of a reminder of the encounter, manifesting as a continuous reenactment within the bypassed or severely split psyche (Hartman 537). This demonstrates the fragmented and inherently delayed awareness of the event experienced by the traumatized individual.

Additionally, Roger Luckhurst, a renowned trauma expert, notes in his book *The Trauma Question* that trauma can be seen as arising throughout the era of modernity while tracing the history of the concept of trauma. It has parallels from the period as "intrinsic ambivalences: progress and ruin, liberation and constraint, individualization and massification..."(20). Technology advancement and the battles that followed during the modern era created a life of doubt and uncertainty that propelled advancement in particular sectors like psychiatry, demonstrating the sense of displacement and loss that ravaged the psyche of the civilization. According to Judith Herman's book *Trauma and Recovery* (1992), the women's movement was the subject of most of the 1970s' trauma research. Further conversations about trauma related to domestic and sexual abuse of women, violence suffered by veterans of war, victims of

terrorism, etc. were sparked by this. The Nazi spread and nuclear wars were the main drivers of trauma studies in the 1960s and afterwards. However, the concept of trauma as a field of study may be traced back to the 1980s, when the term PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) replaced vague terms like uneasiness and shock. The massive act of inhumanity known as the Shoah serves as the central tenet of trauma theory. Trauma theorists like Dominik LaCapra, Cathy Caruth, and others emphasised the horrific nature of the Holocaust as a significant event of critique in trauma theory, which spurred additional development in the area of traumatic inquiry.

### **2.3 Second Wave in Trauma Studies**

An integral aspect of the present research involves tracing the historical theorization of trauma studies, beginning with its scientific origins and progressing towards the gradual incorporation of literary elements to enhance the understanding of trauma. Investigations into trauma theory contribute to elucidating how characters in the selected novels articulate the trauma they have undergone. The intensity of agony experienced by victims of traumatic events is so overwhelming that they struggle to grasp it, reaching a point of paralysis where they find it challenging to process the experience and resume their normal lives.

One of the most well-known figures in trauma research who made a significant contribution to bridging the gap between the literary disciplines and the science of trauma studies is Cathy Caruth. Trauma theory attracted the attention of academics in the 1990s and steadily advanced in study. Caruth is renowned for being the top innovator in the field of trauma theory, having published two significant pieces of research about trauma studies. In her 1995 book *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, she emphasizes a clear and comprehensive introduction to the field of trauma theory. In her work, Caruth makes the argument that catastrophic loss is to blame for the victim's fractured perception of time. She contends that attributing the posttraumatic stress disorder that an individual is bound to experience solely to a specific traumatic event is inherently challenging. Instead, Caruth posits that trauma induces a distortion of the event, acquiring its haunting influence by altering the personal meanings associated with it. The event is not immediately assimilated or fully experienced at the time but is rather comprehended belatedly, exerting a repetitive hold on the individual who undergoes it. Essentially, to be traumatized is to be profoundly influenced and dominated by an image or event (4).

Additionally, Caruth describes her preference for the study of literature and literary techniques of analysis in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, another study of hers that looks at the structure of belated traumatic events. According to Caruth, literature gives us the power to testify about events that we can't always understand and creates new ways for us to understand things that might otherwise go unheard and unspoken. In her work, Caruth performs textual analyses on philosophical, literary, psychoanalytical, and cinematic texts. By closely examining these texts, Caruth illustrates that even though traumatic experiences possess an enigmatic nature, they still attain meaning. This implies that, despite being seemingly incomprehensible and unknowable, these incidents acquire significance when individuals discuss them and are listened to by others.

According to Caruth, who makes this claim at the opening of the book, trauma is more than simply a "simple illness of a wounded psyche: it is always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is otherwise unavailable" (4). This assertion made by her is comparable to the findings of the current study because both works selected for analysis demonstrate how the characters are free from the pathological restrictions brought on by traumatic events. Instead, the characters in question utilize their "voice" to articulate the pain and distress they undergo. Even when they opt for silence, it is a conscious decision rather than a result of pathology (4).

Shoshana Felman and Dori Luab can also be viewed as literary academics who, in addition to Caruth, opened the door for trauma theory to be studied in the humanities. Similar to her earlier work, Felman emphasizes the relevance of language as a response to traumatic experiences in her more recent book, *The Juridical Unconscious: Trials and Traumas in the Twentieth Century*. She carefully examines how literary language and literature vary from legal discourse. According to Felman, literature emphasizes the reality of horrific occurrences, even when that reality is indescribable. Although in the legal world this presents a barrier to finding closure, the victim is nonetheless ordered to recount and perform the extremely upsetting incident that is intended to bring about closure (146). According to Felman, a witness cannot vocally communicate in legal discourse when the witness is required to testify in accordance with the language of the legal system. According to Felman, literature includes any literary use of language that seeks to communicate a reality during a trial that the trial

itself is unable to express. It makes an effort to carefully listen and hear the indescribable truth of terrible phenomena that it repeatedly experiences but is unable to explain.

Felman argues that literature plays a crucial role during times of historical turmoil and difficulties because it serves as a means to uphold the concept of justice, akin to the legal system. Felman accurately articulates that literature embodies both the tangible aspects of reality and the boundless realm of language, resisting closure. In the context of a legal case, literature refuses to be neatly concluded, providing a space where trauma remains unresolved. Felman emphasizes that it is this refusal of trauma to be closed that allows literature to administer justice (8). To put it simply, Felman provides a nuanced understanding of the role of a witness and introduces an innovative literary analysis of pertinent historical cases and writings. In contrast, the current examination of trauma in this study exclusively relies on literary works.

In contrast to Felman, who reads trials in *The Juridical Unconsciousness: Trials and Traumas in the Twentieth Century* and uses poems and other forms of discourse in *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, the current study combines two purely literary and modern texts in an effort to advance the field of traumatic inquiry.

Two of the most well-known thinkers who made contributions to the field of trauma studies are Caruth and Felman. Their focus on exploring trauma within the framework of literature paved the way for future researchers, as their work seamlessly integrated the study of psychoanalysis, trauma, and literature. The links between trauma and diverse academic fields such as literature, sociology, psychiatry, and public health underscore the "privileged and paradoxical relationship to interdisciplinary studies." (Marder 1). The paradox speaks to the fact that trauma inquiry defies categorization and transcends its confines. Furthermore, Elissa Marder asserts in her article "Trauma and Literary Studies: Some Enabling Questions" that the literature field has contributed to the development of influential and well-known insight into trauma studies. Trauma theory has gained new understandings as a result of its impact on the study of literature (1). The current study, which can be seen as an effort to further the field of literary trauma scholarship, is also based on a critique of two literary novels.

To understand the development of trauma studies in the modern era, it is necessary to take into account fundamental issues like the reality of psychological trauma and the issue of how it is represented through language. Furthermore, this idea may be regarded as being holistically illustrated by the role memory plays in shaping both the cultural identity of the subject and their own personal identity. Beyond examining portrayals of violent incidents, psychoanalytic theories and alternative perspectives such as postcolonial, poststructural, and sociocultural frameworks also center on the repercussions for an individual's memory and identity. Trauma can be conceptualized as a disordered encounter that deeply influences the emotional well-being of the victim, shaping their perspective on the external world where they may physically dwell but mentally reject. The intricate psychological and social elements that substantially influence how a victim comprehends a traumatic experience are vital aspects to consider when delving into discussions about trauma. Language both shapes and is shaped by the traumatic event in significant ways. Trauma theory basically looks at how society and literature are portrayed from a rhetorical, psychological, and cultural perspective in stories and media. This requires understanding the numerous ways that traumatic events can impact the victim's identity, memory, and unconscious mind.

Two paradigms of research are presented in an overview of the development of trauma studies, and trauma theorists can conveniently branch out under each of these models. The first model was seen to be the conventional approach to trauma research, which mostly drew on Freud's ideas. The classic or Freudian model of trauma emphasizes the impact of the assault on the victim's psyche and how this interferes with and impairs the victim's ability to express what happened through language. Additionally, it alters their mental state and worsens how they perceive meaning. As a result, the traditional paradigm links the following concept with horrifying events: trauma makes the victim's suffering invisible. On the other hand, the later proposed pluralistic model of trauma research did not dispute the idea that trauma was unrepresentable or unspeakable. Instead, it focused on the idea that such a feature could be seen as one of many reactions to an extraordinary event rather than as the feature that defines it most clearly. This is consistent with the idea that literary fiction about trauma is predicated on how traumatic events have a tendency to alter the dynamic between the self and others. It accomplishes this by contesting the underlying moral and societal assumptions that are linked to certain surroundings. By focusing on the



physical setting where the trauma took place and examining it in relation to external and internal domains, there is a deep exploration of the barrier within oneself and others. This approach leads to a comprehensive understanding of the meaning and memory associated with the trauma. (Balaev 1).

Naomi Mandel's book *Against the Unspeakable: Complicity, the Holocaust, and Slavery in America* (2006) is regarded as a significant research that focuses on expanding trauma theory's conventional notion of speechlessness. She suggests that the "discursive production" of the unspeakable in trauma literature. By emphasizing the problems inherent in speech rather of examining the ethical obligations involved in such representations, it avoids moral accountability in the portrayal of suffering (4-5). As she notes that "silence and forgetting are as much a strategic and self-conscious gesture on the part of the subjugated as they are the product of the subjugating culture's demands and requirements" (172), she makes her position clear in her critical analysis of Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987). The argument made by Mandel in her writing is the same one made in this criticism since it also seeks to refute the concept that speechlessness is a characteristic that is inherently linked to traumatic experiences. The goal of the current study is to analyse how the strategy of silence is used in narration. This study, however, differs from Mandel's since she restricts her analysis to only illustrating the when, why, and how the word "unspeakable" is used. In contrast, the current critical approach can be seen as pluralistic in nature because it makes an effort to treat various reactions to traumatic situations by using various tactics.

Alan Gibbs' 2014 book *Contemporary American Trauma tales* delves deeply into the manifestation of trauma experiences in contemporary American fiction and non-fictional tales. Trauma has become the preeminent paradigm of study for contemporary American literature, according to Gibbs' assessment. This investigation offers evidence that the old trauma theory paradigm was commonly used, leading to clichéd and formulaic readings of texts, which supports the present criticism. Gibbs and contemporary research both reject the idea of studying trauma from a Freudian psychoanalytical approach. Instead, he applies theories from the field of narratology to analyse the literary techniques authors use to convey the effects of trauma. Metafiction is one such narrative innovation that the book examines, and reading one of the works included in the current study is one such example. Gibbs' assertion that "always come to the crank-turners, the little grey people who take the machines others have built and

just turn the crank, and little pellets of meta-fiction come out the other end" could be interpreted as a direct critique of the widespread formulaic approaches in trauma studies (135). While Gibbs' optimistic exploration of trauma through a modern paradigm holds significance, its scope is limited. It only looks at American literature, however the current study tries to broaden the focus by using such narrative techniques to literary fiction written by Cypriot British authors.

#### **2.4. Investigating Trauma Studies Progress in the Contemporary Era**

As the current study focuses on using ideas from Cathy Caruth and Leonard Shengold's works titled *Unclaimed Experience-Trauma, Narrative and History*, and *Soul Murder*, respectively, discussion of the recent advancements in trauma studies can be seen as relevant to the current research. Our understanding of trauma and its repercussions on people and communities has been significantly impacted by the Caruth notion of trauma, which was established by literary scholar Cathy Caruth. According to Caruth, traumatic experiences frequently go beyond what a person can understand and process at the time they happen. Instead, these events might be separated from or suppressed, only to reappear in the future as bothersome recollections, flashbacks, or nightmares. This knowledge casts doubt on the widely held belief that trauma is processed and dealt with right away, emphasizing the continuing and complicated nature of traumatized memory. This can be taken into account when reading the selected literature. According to the current study, this unique perspective of trauma offers an understanding that encourages diversity, encompasses everyone, and goes beyond the pathological examination of the concept of trauma. The concept of trauma used in the analysis that follows is derived from Leonard Shengold's book *Soul Murder: The Effects of Childhood Abuse and Deprivation*, which focuses on the profound psychological and emotional effects of severe and persistent early-life trauma, particularly when it comes to child abuse and neglect. This analysis serves to support this goal. Shengold focuses on the profound effects of severe and persistent early-life trauma, particularly related to child abuse and neglect. His work emphasizes the emotional and psychological wounds inflicted during childhood, which can have lasting consequences. While psychological wounds can indeed heal over time, Shengold suggests that certain traumas go deeper and wound the very essence of a person's soul. It is because soul is just like a delicate fabric, intricately woven during childhood. When

trauma occurs especially in the form of abuse or deprivation, it tears at this fabric. The damage inflicted on the soul becomes a scar that shapes the individual's psyche.

When a person experiences soul-level trauma during childhood, it leaves an indelible mark. This wounded soul seeks healing, but sometimes the process is incomplete. Unresolved pain, anger, and fear linger. As the individual grows, these unresolved wounds may manifest in harmful ways. The same soul that suffered becomes capable of perpetrating harm onto others. The transformation from victim to perpetrator isn't linear. It's a complex interplay of psychological factors. The wounded soul, seeking relief, may unconsciously replicate the trauma it endured. The cycle perpetuates itself sometimes across generations. The very damage inflicted upon the soul becomes a force that perpetuates harm.

One key aspect of Shengold's concept of trauma is the notion of "psychic retreat." He suggests that in order to cope with the overwhelming pain and helplessness caused by soul murder, individuals may retreat into internal psychological spaces or dissociative states as a means of self-protection. These retreats serve as a defense mechanism to shield the individual from the unbearable reality of their traumatic experiences. However, while these retreats may offer temporary relief, they can also limit emotional growth, interpersonal intimacy, and the capacity for genuine connection. The goal of this study is to use specific fictional works to illustrate the traumatizing situation of perpetrators.

Another work of substantial significance that supports and provides tools for the current study of trauma is *Cognitive Poetics: An Introduction* by Peter Stockwell. Although cognitive poetics does not explicitly focus on trauma as a central theme, it can be applied to the analysis of trauma narratives and contribute to our understanding of how trauma is represented and experienced in literature. Additionally, cognitive poetics recognizes the role of embodiment and empathy in literary reading. Trauma narratives often elicit emotional and empathic responses from readers, as they confront the suffering and vulnerability of the characters. Cognitive poetics can explore how literary techniques, such as vivid sensory descriptions and the manipulation of focalization and perspective, facilitate readers' emotional engagement with the traumatic experiences depicted in the text. Therefore, to provide a new perspective, the

current study uses the model presented by Peter Stockwell to explore the elements of trauma, on contemporary fiction by Cypriot British writers.

## **2.5 Discussion of Works Relevant to the Present Selected Fiction**

This study strives to address a specific gap in research by enhancing the comprehension of the childhood traumas encountered by individuals who, ultimately, became perpetrators. Because of this, the current study attempts to offer a fresh viewpoint by examining the traits of trauma as described by Cathy Caruth and Leonard Shengold using a brand-new model that is based on Peter Stockwell's methods and resources.

Furthermore, the analysis of the current critical study has attempted to cover some of the gaps in the study of traumatic inquiry, as was previously noted through the assessment of past research. The primary issue with the current trend is the dearth of critiques directed towards trauma offenders, particularly with regard to their personal trauma experiences, which have received much less attention than the extensive body of research on trauma victims. Even if it may be said that the spread of trauma is a topic that is no longer limited to a certain field. Instead, it can now be said that studying trauma is a part of the common conversation. Trauma discourse challenges preconceived notions about the world, how misery is expressed, cultural memory, and the individual self. With the help of the current study, an effort has been made to demonstrate that such dynamics have become stronger in various locations.

Understanding the connection between a person's personal traumatic experiences and their inclination to harm others is another area of research that needs to be explored. The intricate interplay between victimization and perpetration can be clarified and potential risk factors and pathways that contribute to abusive or destructive behaviour can be identified by looking into the trauma histories of perpetrators. Therefore, there is a need for research on efficient trauma-informed therapies created especially for trauma perpetrators. Developing and putting into practice therapies that deal with the underlying reasons of perpetration and support accountability, rehabilitation, and healing can be influenced by knowledge of the traumatic events that may underlie harmful behaviour.

Furthermore, the texts selected for this research haven't been the subject of many investigations. Despite the fact that the first text *The Silent Patient* has garnered

considerable popularity and praise, it has also sparked numerous debates, book club assessments, and literary critiques. However, as a subject for academic research, perpetrator trauma with respect to the selected fiction has not yet been the subject of any published research papers.

One study on *The Silent Patient* by Priyaa P. R. and Dr. Kanchana C. M. is based on the concept of defence mechanism. In contrast to the current research, which focuses on a thorough examination of childhood trauma, their analysis of the novel puts the character Alicia, who is identified as someone who uses displacement as a defence mechanism at different points in her life to express long-buried emotions, front and center. The goal of the essay “Exploring the defence mechanism of Alicia Berenson” in Alex Michaelides' book *The Silent Patient* is to examine the character's displacement, a defence mechanism that is based on Anna Freud's notion of defence mechanism through displacement. As Alicia acted violently while staying in The Grove, they tend to demonstrate how hazardous an over-reliance on displacement or any other form of defence may be. is a thorough examination of childhood trauma. When Alicia accused Gabriel of being abusive to her, she stabbed Elif, one of The Grove's aggressive nurses. This demonstrates that Alicia's brain is not ready to embrace the reality and that she is looking for a distraction to avoid it.

The above-mentioned work focuses on the individual experiences of the characters associated to home and how the memories of their trauma block their potential to grow positively, which is another difference between the present study and the prior research that can be seen. Additionally, their research examines this problem using the authors of the texts under discussion's skillful narrative creation. In contrast, the current critique analyses the psychological traumas and soul murder that the characters' experience that impact their lives in addition to delving into the subtleties of deception, the complexity of the human mind, and the psychological states of the characters through close narrative reading.

Another study, “A Postmodernist Critique of Michaelides' *The Silent Patient*”, examines how Jean-Francois Lyotard's idea of the postmodern situation is contextualized through a postmodern interpretation of the book. The study has identified a number of traits, including intertextuality, many tales, atypical characters, and postmodern psychological problems. It has been established that mini-narratives, especially in fiction, have taken the role of metanarratives in the postmodern era. One

such mini-narrative that links the book with other texts and calls into question its ultimate independence is intertextuality. Similarly, the author explores the use of powerful symbolism through the application of postmodern techniques in the novel. The utilization of a mininarrative comprising multiple stories serves to dissect the novel's themes, depicting both the sociological and psychological impacts of bullying, childhood abuse, parenting, mental anxiety and depression, marital conflicts, and social pressures on the characters' lives. The researchers in the aforementioned paper primarily focus on the symbolic representations within the novel, neglecting other perspectives in their analysis. Their examination of the characters lacks depth, as they accentuate the symbolic trends without delving into the profound psychological trauma experienced by the characters. In contrast, the current research strives to delve into the characters' trauma resulting from the loss of their souls, impacting both their physical and psychological well-being. To summarize, the prior study appears more centered on analyzing the abundant symbols in the text, while the present investigation takes a more pluralistic approach, aiming to underscore the characters' experienced trauma and other narrative innovations employed by the selected work's author.

A psychological thriller novel, a subgenre of thriller literature that focuses on the psychological and emotional aspects of the story and frequently incorporates suspense, mystery, and the exploration of the human mind, can be used to describe *The Maidens*, the second text in the current critical study. Again, there is a general lack of critical analysis available on thriller literature. In actuality, there are no published research papers pertaining to this material. However, some books and book reviews that are available online take into account trauma-related concerns and aid in comprehending the kind of loss and suffering that trauma victims experienced as a result of soul murder. This makes it easier to understand how the characters in the current critical study are feeling.

Due to the second text of the current investigation's relative newness, there are also far fewer critical analyses on it than there are on thriller literature as a whole. However, there are several reviews that can be found online that convincingly demonstrate how trauma may have a violent impact on people's life, eventually leading them to become perpetrators. In her review of *The Maidens*, Alice draws attention to the author's ability to produce a fictitious work that strives to depict the catastrophic upheaval that people are faced with after being mistreated as children.

In contrast, the texts utilized in the present study are fictional works that effectively portray trauma and conflict from the perspective of ordinary individuals, exploring their damaged psyche, homes, the suffering endured by successive generations of children, and the depiction of everyday life structured to present trauma in social and cultural reality, enhancing its relatability for readers. By illustrating the trauma experienced by a societal class that may not be impoverished or living in camps but still undergoes profound trauma-related effects, the analysis aims to bridge this gap. Consequently, the theoretical framework employed in this critical study is based on the principles theorized by Cathy Caruth and Leonard Shengold. This approach to examining the phenomenon of trauma can be viewed as broadening the theoretical horizons by emphasizing the analysis of trauma in literature from both a pathological and semiotic perspective, employing the tools of cognitive poetics as developed by Peter Stockwell. Trauma's devastation has an impact on a variety of enduringly shifting social and psychological factors. Trauma can occasionally render a person silent. This experience has the potential to occasionally realign consciousness in a way that avoids disease. The goal of the current study is to make the case that trauma in literature should be interpreted from the perspective of a theoretical fusion, allowing for understanding of these phenomena through many representations that go beyond the idea that trauma is just sick and indescribable.

Caruth's investigation primarily focuses on the psychological perspective of characters, employing fiction texts to analyze their psychological makeup. However, this approach lacks specific terminology or theories to explain the murderous actions of perpetrators. The psychological disutility of individuals cannot solely justify or infer the criminal or venturesome aspects resulting from trauma. While victims may develop passive, sensitive, depressed, or neurotic traits, criminal behaviors stem from more than just psychological factors. In cases where individuals, influenced by childhood trauma, engage in criminal activities or seek revenge, traditional literary and trauma theories fall short.

The existing psychological frameworks and trauma theories fail to adequately account for the concept of "soul murder," which suggests that immoral or wrongful actions stem from a deeper level than just the mind or psychology. This viewpoint suggests that the perpetrator's damaged soul, as depicted in the selected novels, serves as the root cause, a factor not explicitly considered in existing theories. Therefore, there

is a notable research gap in understanding how the distortion or fragmentation of the perpetrator's soul contributes to their behaviors, necessitating the integration of the soul murder perspective to bridge this gap in the psychological and trauma fiction domains.



## CHAPTER 3

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 3.1 Relevance of Trauma Theory to Literary Analysis

In his work *On Traumatic Knowledge and Literary Studies*, Geoffrey Hartman critically examines the relevance of trauma theory in the context of reading and practical criticism. He provides his own answer by suggesting that, despite the ongoing evolution of trauma theory, its enduring presence in the negative realm enables disruptions in language and the mind, contributing to the distinctive quality attributed to literature (58).

With the aid of literature, trauma theory thus offers forums for discussing the deformation and degradation of the mind, body, and language. Nonetheless, it enables an examination of such occurrences to provide victims with coping mechanisms, such as witnessing and the subsequent dialogue, to navigate their pain. The debate on how writing about horrifying experiences in literature compensates for the horror endured and facilitates potential closure is ongoing. This is a focal point of inquiry in trauma theory, which delves into how victims navigate their anguish and employ language to articulate or challenge their struggles, even when expressed in a detached manner. Literature, by portraying the fractured psyche of individuals through the use of figurative language, can thus be perceived as an extended strategy for managing traumatic situations. As Herman phrases “the conflict between the will to deny horrible events and the will to proclaim them aloud” (1). Even if literary works don't use figurative language, they nonetheless provide a platform for addressing such issues. In a similar vein, Hartman effectively communicates that in literature, as much as in life, the simplest event can resonate mysteriously, be invested with aura, and tend toward the symbolic (547). The symbolic reveals the relationship between literature and cognitive functioning in crucial domains like reference, subjectivity, and narration (547).

Hence, trauma theory provides pathways for examining the disruption and breakdown in the realms of the mind, body, and language, using literature as a medium. It enables the exploration of such incidents, offering victims coping mechanisms such as witnessing and subsequent discussions to manage their trauma. The question remains

uncertain regarding how writing about traumatic experiences in literature serves as compensation for the horror endured and the potential for subsequent closure. This is the focal point of exploration in trauma theory, delving into how victims navigate their pain and employ language to assert or question, even if done in a dissociative manner, the challenges they have faced.

The notions of Cathy Caruth and Leonard Shengold, Peter Stockwell have opted for the analysis of the selected fictional narratives. Their work titled *Unclaimed Experience- Trauma, Narrative and History* and *Soul Murder* respectively have been utilized in the present study. The analysis of the text and characters in the selected novels in the present research demands the application of critical approaches or tools. In this context, the utilization of cognitive poetics, developed by Peter Stockwell, stands out as the most fitting and valuable approach for text analysis. Through the application of cognitive poetics to comprehend perpetrator trauma, this research aims to provide an enriched understanding of the cognitive and emotional processes entangled in the portrayal and interpretation of such experiences.

Examining the cognitive and emotional processes involved in portraying and comprehending the harrowing experiences of offenders can be enriched through the perspective of cognitive poetics. While cognitive poetics is commonly employed to explore reader responses, it is equally valuable for investigating how trauma is depicted from the standpoint of the perpetrators themselves. The present study incorporates various tools and methodologies, including the utilization of Conceptual Integration. This tool allows for the reinterpretation of text by applying comprehension from diverse fields, illustrating how readers amalgamate different conceptual domains to generate novel meanings. Analyzing a text through conceptual blending involves identifying its core blends and examining how it interconnects various mental domains. Parabolic projection, as elucidated by Stockwell, occurs when a metaphor or simile in literature links two disparate concepts or domains, giving rise to new meanings.

Foregrounding serves as another crucial approach in examining the emotional and aesthetic dimensions of trauma representation in novels. Literary works often contain elements that are perceived as more significant or pivotal than others, and while some of this perception is subjective, the cues within the text also play a vital role. For instance, in *The Silent Patient*, brief glimpses into the protagonist's childhood circumstances, including details about her parents, the associated costs, and the

perpetrator, are presented to readers. Interestingly, this information is abruptly abandoned after a few paragraphs, while the central plot elements of Alicia's life remain prominently featured through various narrative devices. Despite its fleeting nature, the background information adds a compelling texture that enhances the novel's realism.

Likewise, the exploration of the imaginative worlds constructed in readers' minds as they engage with literature is the focus of text-world theory. This theory examines how readers generate and modify mental representations of texts and how these representations influence the interpretation and comprehension of the material.

Another essential conceptual framework that enhances our understanding of the world is referred to as image schemata. As outlined by Stockwell, an analysis of the image schemata embedded in a literary piece can offer profound insights into the text's meaning. According to this perspective, readers interpret and grasp texts by drawing upon their existing knowledge and experiences. Upon encountering relevant information in a book, our mental frameworks, known as schemas, which organize our understanding of specific concepts or situations, may be triggered and applied.

Utilizing the fundamental tools, the selected literary texts will undergo analysis through the perspectives of Cathy Caruth and Leonard Shengold. Employing the mentioned strategies, as per Stockwell's approach, provides an enhanced understanding of how the text constructs meaning and engages the cognitive processes of the reader.

### **3.2 Different Dimensions of Childhood and Perpetrator Trauma**

Psychological Earlier theorists on trauma endorsed the notion that traumatic experiences are inherently illogical and resist easy articulation. The profound horror induced by such events makes it challenging for victims to grasp the gravity of the situation, rendering them incapable of expressing it coherently or even discussing it in an incoherent manner. Cathy Caruth delves into trauma theory to explore innovative perspectives in its ongoing discourse.

The argument is maintained in the piece titled *Unclaimed Experience- Trauma, Narrative, and History* that In the face of trauma, a widespread and perplexing experience, the exploration of both its incidence and the endeavor to comprehend it reveals the potential for a history that transcends mere reference. This implies a departure from simplistic models of experience and reference. The concept of trauma

facilitates a reconsideration of reference, emphasizing the capacity for history to emerge in situations where immediate comprehension may falter. Rather than eradicating history, this perspective seeks to reposition it within our understanding. (Caruth 24).

Contrary to popular assumption, mental trauma's highly paradoxical structure of indirectness is what causes the complex relationship between trauma and survival in this work, not the seeming direct and unmediated relationship between awareness and a life-threatening experience. Freud begins his examination of trauma by pointing out the "bewildering" fact that physical harm typically prevents the development of a neurosis and that psychological trauma does not always occur in direct correlation to the body's perception of a life threat (Caruth12).

Caruth also highlights how trauma and language are related. She said that the reason Freud resorted to literature was that these kinds of sensations and happenings could only be expressed in writing. Here, language serves as a sort of trauma treatment and is therapeutic.

Caruth defines trauma as the recapturing of the past in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. Trauma is not merely a document of the past; rather, it accurately captures the effects of an experience that is not fully acknowledged. What makes a painful experience unique is that it is more than just a recollection. It is essentially a horrible revisiting that can only occur endlessly in dreams, even though it seems like a recollection from the present. Freud asserts that individuals often assume that the persistent intrusion of a traumatic experience on a patient is evidence of the experience's intensity, suggesting that the patient is deeply fixated on the trauma. However, Freud notes that patients with traumatic neurosis do not necessarily spend a significant amount of their waking hours actively recalling memories of their accidents. In fact, he suggests that these individuals may be more preoccupied with attempting to avoid thinking about the traumatic event (Caruth 13).

This implies that the history that a flashback portrays is utterly unrepresentable in the present, when its precise representation and enactments are not fully acknowledged, or in the past, when it was not yet fully owned or lived. Because of this, an event's authenticity for someone who has experienced trauma depends not just on its

horrific details but also on the fact that it defies logic to explain why it happened. (Caruth, 13-15).

In a similar vein, Crauth's conventional trauma model views trauma as an event that fractures consciousness and prevents direct verbal expression. The paradigm suggests that the traumatic event permanently damages the mind, emphasizing the extent of suffering. Trauma is the term used to describe unassimilated events that fracture identity and endure beyond normal memory and narrative representation. According to the theory of trans-historical trauma, there is a way to link collective and individual traumatic experiences because of the fundamental or universal effects trauma has on consciousness and narrative recall. Trauma is believed to originate directly from dissociation or fragmentation. Because foregrounding helps us identify and analyze specific textual elements that are particularly striking or unusual, as well as understand how these elements contribute to the text's overall effect, it will be used to draw attention to historical aspects of the text.

The dissociation that follows a traumatic occurrence prevents the experience from being assigned a definite value since the mind is unable to comprehend and linguistically code the experience due to the extreme terror (Balaev 4). Despite the likelihood that the traumatic experience may remain undescribed or incompletely grasped, it inflicts harm on the individual by functioning akin to a tumor within consciousness. This traumatic experience exerts adverse effects on awareness and memory, often in a pathological manner, hindering the integration of the past into one's life narrative. This is why the Mental Space model, developed by Peter Stockwell, will be employed to examine the meanings conveyed by the text and its characters. This approach allows for the identification and analysis of the cognitive processes that form the basis of a reader's interpretation of a literary work. A more comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay among language, cognition, and meaning in literary texts can be achieved by discerning the mental spaces formed through language and various literary techniques. This perspective highlights the anguish induced by external influences that impact the inner workings of the mind, resulting in a lasting transformation of one's identity.

The assertion that profound experiences can disrupt both language and consciousness, causing lasting damage and requiring unique narrative structures, forms the basis for the critical emphasis on the inexpressibility of trauma. This traumatic

incident doesn't exist within the realm of everyday awareness; instead, it remains in a timeless and verbless state, just beyond comprehension, yet still inflicting pain on the mind. The peculiar absence but lingering presence of trauma in consciousness, its failure to integrate conventionally into memory and storytelling, creates a shadow that indirectly gestures towards the significance of trauma and the truth embedded in the past (Richter 163). The text will be analyzed using Peter Stockwell's text world theory and image schemata as a technique to investigate the ghostly presence of trauma in consciousness. The underlying cognitive mechanisms that influence our perception of language and meaning in literary works can be found using this method.

According to Caruth, trauma can only be identified in "the way it is precisely not known in the first instance returns to haunt the survivor later on" and is "not locatable in the simple violent or original event in the individual's past" (Caruth 4). In the perspectives of Freud and Lacan, trauma is viewed as the belated resurgence of repressed elements and a conspicuous absence that shapes one's experience. Trauma gives rise to a dual paradox in both language and consciousness, involving the conflicting necessity to comprehend the past while facing an inherent inability to achieve such understanding. Additionally, this paradox manifests in the trauma narrative, presenting a dual crisis marked by the tension between the fear of death and the struggle for survival (7). The researcher will use Conceptual Integration to examine the significance of trauma in the texts of the novels since, as Caruth claims, it is difficult to understand the meaning of the past. When it comes to text analysis, the conceptual Integration tool is useful because it makes it easier to identify the ways in which different conceptual domains are combined to provide novel and often unexpected interpretations. By examining how a writer integrates many domains in a text, the researcher will be able to comprehend the writer's objectives and the work's overall portrayal of trauma. Caruth asserts that traumatic experiences, extending beyond the psychological realm of distress, introduce a paradoxical nature. The act of witnessing a violent event directly might paradoxically result in an absolute inability to truly comprehend it. This immediacy, strangely enough, can manifest as a sense of delayed understanding (92). The impact of a traumatic experience on the mind differs from that of typical events, giving rise to a distinctive form of memory that resists conventional narrative interpretation. This distinct memory formation leads to an approximate recollection, yet it never reaches a state of absolute understanding.

Caruth also draws on a neurobiological perspective to explain how trauma impacts consciousness and memory. Psychiatrist Bessel van der Kolk, for example, argues that trauma elicits a universal neurobiological response known as "speechless terror," which prevents narrative recall in memory because the event cannot be "organized on a linguistic level" (Van der Kolk and Van der Hart 172). The notion that trauma is indescribable lends credence to the theory that trauma and dissociation are causally related. It also supports the idea that memory serves as a storehouse for experience, with traumatic memories being stored differently and being unable to be recollect normally due to their continued disconnection from awareness (160-163). Regular memory is characterized by the process of narrative recollection, a crucial element for the retention and integration of past experiences.

The alteration in traumatic memory, hindering an individual's understanding of the past, similarly impacts the operation of "historical memory" concerning collective or culturally distressing events. The absence of a sustained memory capacity would render it impossible for us to comprehend our identity and the functioning of the world. While some may perceive memory as an accurate record of events, akin to a camera or tape recorder, it is essential to recognize that memory operates as a neurobiological system, distinct from simple event recording devices. According to Milner, Squire, and Kandel, on the other hand, it represents the individual's interpretation of what happened. Since each person's experiences have an impact on their brain structure, Milner, Squire, and Kandel contend that each person has a unique brain structure. The brain's structure contains encoded information about each person's past (98). Diverse individuals encode experiences in distinct ways. For example, disparate family members might possess entirely different recollections of a shared incident. This divergence in encoding allows each person to capture and later recall an experience through their unique perspectives and filters.

Memory operates as an intricate mechanism that links neuronal patterns and triggers them to encode our perceptions of the external environment, encompassing our self-perception. Its purpose is to capture events in real-time, store those deemed significant, and retrieve them when deemed valuable or linked to other occurrences. In this manner, memory functions as a mechanism for accumulating experiences, utilizing them during interactions with both the external and internal worlds.

Caruth has also grounded her critical theory of trauma in terms of her notion of trauma's belatedness, the way it refuses to be neatly located within a specific time or place. Traumatic events often linger, haunting survivors long after the initial experience. The very nature of trauma lies in its delayed appearance, its insistence on addressing us beyond the boundaries of any single moment.

In her book *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, the author frequently cites Freud's definition of trauma from his essay, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* as:

It is not, like the wound of the body, a simple healable event, but rather an event... not locatable in simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature – the way it was precisely not known in the first instance – returns to haunt the survivor later on (Freud 4).

Therefore, trauma becomes the wound that clamors for attention, striving to communicate a reality or truth that would otherwise remain inaccessible. This truth, emerging belatedly and making its delayed presence felt, is not only tied to what is already known but also to what remains concealed within our actions and language.

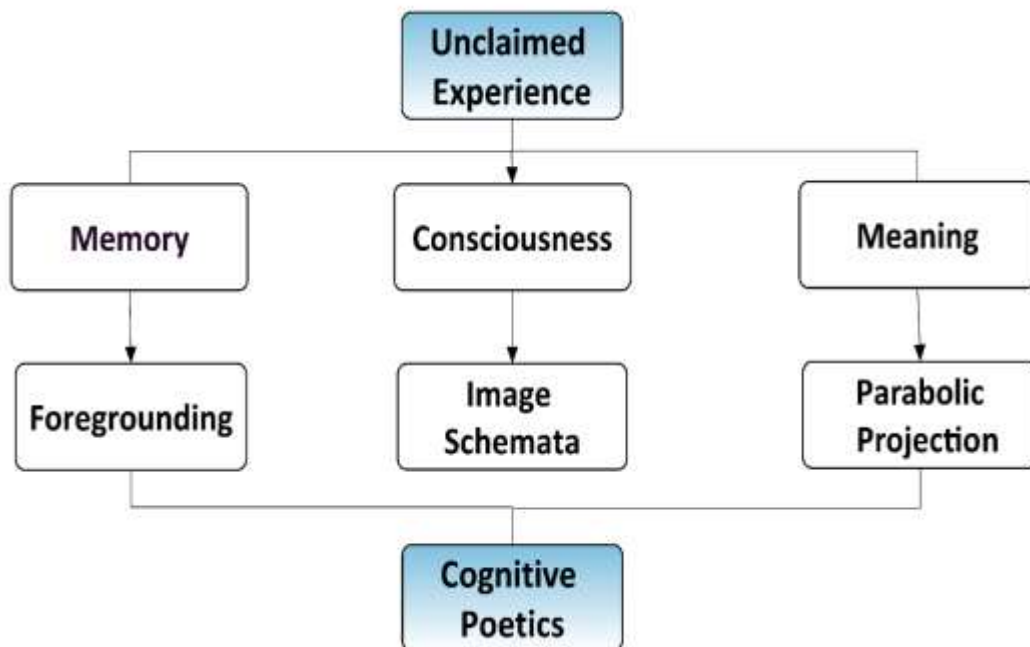


Figure 1: Description of Postulates Used in the Study



### 3.3 Soul Murder as an Extension of Trauma Studies

While there exist various viewpoints within the realm of trauma, the notions of defense mechanisms, memory, childhood abuse, and traumatic experiences are associated with the concept of "soul murder." Henrik Ibsen is acknowledged for popularizing this term, defining it as the "killing of the joy of life, or of the capacity for love, in another human being." Soul murder, according to Ibsen, involves a criminal and a victim, rather than being merely diagnostic. The repercussions of abuse and child neglect can be severe, but our comprehension of their prevalence, causes, effects, and treatments remains incomplete. The mistreatment of children by adults, rooted in inherent aspects of human nature such as intense aggression and hatred, can lead to soul murder (Shengold 55).

In his work *Soul Murder*, Leonard Shengold posits that trauma represents an experience that surpasses the threshold of tolerability. When an individual's capacity for joy and love is forcefully stripped away, it is termed as soul murder. To examine the soul-killing dynamics presented in the text through the use of metaphors, Peter Stockwell's foregrounding, image Schemas and parabolic projection approach will be employed in support of Shengold's perspective. These theoretical frameworks delve into the fundamental cognitive mechanisms shaping our perception and understanding of the world, often articulated through figurative language like metaphors and analogies. Shengold contends that survivors of abuse may perpetuate a cycle of mistreatment, either towards their own children or, in less tragic scenarios, grapple with internal conflicts stemming from their impulses to harm children. One of the gravest consequences of child abuse is the inclination to identify with the abusive parent or parental figure as a means of maintaining a connection with them. This inclination gives rise to a compulsive repetition of abusive experiences, taking on roles either as a masochist/victim or as a sadist/aggressor. The repercussions of the parents' transgressions reverberate through subsequent generations due to this pathological compulsion to relive traumatic events, perpetuating the cycle of child abuse. The intensely destructive force of anger, at times concealed in the unconscious and at other times surfacing into awareness, becomes a profoundly burdensome aspect for the abused child, directed either inwardly or outwardly toward oneself or others.

In *Soul Murder*, Shengold references E. M. Forster's exploration of the hindrance or blockage of empathetic, joyful, and loving capacities. Forster delves into

the incapacity to genuinely care about another person. Shangold suggests that both the cause and the consequence of soul murder may stem from this depletion of the soul. In the absence of psychic defenses that mitigate, suppress, or disavow emotions, children who experience abuse, neglect, and frustration might respond with the profound intensity of anger as described a rage that could potentially escalate to actual acts of violence (Caruth 44). Soul murder is the result of trauma brought on by the outside world, which overwhelms by flooding the mind with emotions. (Such a state may result from extreme deprivation.) The horrifying "too muchness" renders the infant incapable of reasoning or feeling since it compels them to adopt complex, disorienting defense mechanisms. There is a risk to the child's ability to maintain their mental representations of themselves, or sense of identity (Shangold 255).

In literature, the discussion of identities often revolves around the impact of traumatic experiences. When an individual's identity shifts from 'victim' to 'perpetrator' due to a specific traumatic event, it indicates a broader societal change in identity. Severe neglect or abuse over an extended period can lead to the soul's deterioration, causing significant disruptions in a child's development, self-perception, and ability to form healthy relationships. Shangold argues that the term "soul murder" encapsulates the profound damage inflicted upon an individual's core essence, resulting in a fragmentation of the self and a loss of essential vitality and authenticity.

Leonard Shengold is acknowledged for coining the term "soul murder," emphasizing the psychological damage suffered by individuals enduring severe neglect, abuse, or the dismissal of their essential needs for affection, attention, and validation. This concept explores the lasting impacts of such traumatic events on an individual's identity, self-image, and overall mental well-being. The concept of soul murder is particularly relevant to those who have experienced such traumas.

To comprehend the intricacies of soul murder and its repercussions, one can attempt to establish a connection between the endured pain and deprivation and the subsequent impact on the victims. This form of examination fosters an appreciation for the enigmatic and paradoxical workings of the mind and soul. Identifying soul murder is a crucial step in its treatment. Specific forms of parental dysfunction can suppress a child's sense of identity and emotional potential, particularly in experiencing joy, and it is imperative for psychotherapists to be cognizant of such dynamics. Through the capacity to embrace contradictions and navigate emotional ambiguity, the destructive

and self-destructive robotic persona has the potential to transform into a more humane and emotionally capable individual, aligning with Simone Weil's concept of love: the ability to recognize the existence of another human being as such. The responsibility of facilitating a psychic rebirth for the soul lies with the analyst.

Displacement is a psychological defense tactic that entails moving an unpleasant feeling from its initial source to a less hazardous one. Shengold saw it as an inadvertent distortion, one that altered the relative value of certain elements over others. Perhaps the most damaging result of child abuse is the urge to identify with the abusive parent or parent figure in order to cling to them. This leads to a compulsive need to relive the abuse events, both as the victim (increasing masochism) and as the tormentor (enhancing sadism). The child who experiences abuse often assumes that the abuser is responsible, even if they may not have felt bad for the offense. This guilt, which often takes the form of a desire for vengeance, is compounded by the rage the kid feels from identifying with the attacker and from sometimes feeling and acting on cruel and spiteful impulses. The psychological need to replay painful events is the reason why child maltreatment is handed down from one generation to the next. In Shengold's perspective, soul murder is perceived as a psychological mechanism involving displacement. To comprehend this concept, the cognitive poetics tool of mental space analysis will be employed. Mental space analysis proves especially beneficial in scrutinizing intricate or ambiguous texts like *The Silent Patient* and *The Maidens*, where the relationships among various textual elements are not readily apparent. Through the identification of the diverse mental spaces elicited by the text, we can initiate the process of unraveling the intricate network of connections that form the foundation of the text's meaning.

Expanding upon Shengold's theoretical concepts, Steele finds that a primary genetic indicator for parents engaging in child abuse is the compulsion to replicate their own experiences of neglected and abusive childhoods. Shengold posits that individuals who have endured early life marked by neglect and abuse are likely to perpetuate these patterns, treating their own children similarly. This circumstance creates ethical and moral dilemmas when caring for patients amid what is often the most significant crisis of their lives. The profound impact of these major trauma events extends not only to the individuals experiencing them but also significantly affects their personal and family lives.

This study looks at a range of psychological perspectives in an effort to understand the relevance of the broken emotions that underlie criminal activity, as well as the causes that precipitate trauma and soul murder. Additionally, it seeks to better understand the nature of criminal behavior by integrating criminological and psychological viewpoints. The deficiency in adequately incorporating the emotional, psychological, social, and cultural factors influencing human behavior has adversely impacted our understanding of criminal behavior and its underlying causes. The central thesis of the current study revolves around integrating psychological methodologies into established theories on perpetrator trauma and examining how these theories manifest in literary texts. By adopting a psychological approach that considers both the internal emotional realms of individuals and the social dynamics typically explored in the study of perpetrator trauma, this research advocates for a more seamless integration of psychological perspectives with conventional inquiries into the origins of criminal behavior. In conclusion, the evidence presented suggests that addressing trauma can be effectively approached through the fusion of these psychological viewpoints.

By employing few main characteristics of trauma theory; history, memory, fragmented consciousness and linguistic representation as theorized by Cathy Caruth meanwhile defence mechanism, child's sense of identity and the psychological rebirth of a soul, the researcher will explore *The Silent Patient* and *The Maidens* to prove how all these factors become the root cause of soul murder which make the victims turn into a murderer or perpetrator. The research applies the tools of Foregrounding, Image Schemata, and Parabolic Projection, which were developed by Peter Stockwell in Cognitive Poetics. These cognitive poetics tools offer a structured framework for examining the intricate interplay between language, cognition, and creativity within literary texts. Through their application, insights are gained into how writers utilize language to shape readers' perception of the world at a profound level. Furthermore, the study delves into how readers construct meaning through engagement with literary texts. Sensitivity is emphasized in approaching these concepts, recognizing that trauma is a nuanced and multifaceted phenomenon affecting individuals in various ways. Gaining insights into the ordeals of victims, like soul murder, and comprehending the traumatic effects on perpetrators, known as perpetrator trauma, can enhance our holistic understanding of the ramifications of trauma. Such insights can guide strategies for healing and prevention.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **CHILDHOOD TRAUMA'S INFLUENCE ON PERPETRATOR TRAUMA IN *THE SILENT PATIENT***

This chapter distinctively deals with analyzing the novel *The Silent Patient* by Ale Michaelides according to the cognitive poetics analysis tool that resonates with the theoretical framework selected for this study. The novel delineates a prevailing problem of the present times: mental health, deception, trauma, and obsession. The novel delves into the issues that are prevalent in contemporary society, such as mental health stigma and the scarcity of resources available to those who suffer from mental illnesses. It also examines the impact of childhood trauma on an individual's mental health and how it can result in a damaged social behavior. Additionally, the novel explores the theme of obsession and how it can compel people to commit heinous crimes. This chapter aims to answer the designed research questions in the three distinctive sections addressing the Manifestation of childhood trauma, the affects and reasons of the development of childhood trauma into perpetrator's trauma, cognitive poetics analysis to measure the effects of trauma narrative on the characters and readers.

#### **4.1 Childhood Trauma through Cognitive Poetics**

The comprehension and emotions of readers are consistently influenced by the narrative of trauma, both directly and indirectly. When the writing fails to openly and transparently convey the impacts and origins of the trauma, it often hinders readers from grasping and empathizing with the subject matter. In order to examine and decipher the causes behind the childhood trauma, its repercussions, and how it manifests itself in the text, this research employs cognitive poetics as a method for analysis that can aid readers in understanding those hidden signals. As in this novel the first-person narrative engages readers directly in Alicia's thoughts, creating a cognitive connection with her psychological state. According to Stockwell, one of the main functions of literature is to defamiliarise the subject matter, to estrange the reader from aspects of the world in order to present the world in a creative and newly-figured artistic way. This can even be seen as a means of identifying literariness itself.

In this context Stockwell talks about the impact of defamiliarization, or estrangement that it need not be understood exclusively as the effect of making

something absolutely strange, but also can be regarded as the effect of making a reader notice the object or medium of description in a way that is simply different in some subtle way from their prior experience. Put otherwise, defamiliarization might be only striking or apparent, but it can also be extremely alienating. This might imply that defamiliarization increases the reader's perception of texture while slowing down the reading experience. (Stockwell 35).

The examination of the manifestation of childhood trauma in *The Silent Patient* can be investigated through specific tools of Cognitive Poetics, such as foregrounding, image schema, and parabolic projection.

#### 4.1.1 Foregrounding

In the context of *The Silent Patient*, defamiliarization can be seen in the way the author presents the character of Alicia Berenson, who is initially portrayed as a victim but is later revealed to be a complex and flawed individual. The use of defamiliarization in this case serves to challenge the reader's assumptions and expectations about the character, creating a sense of tension and suspense. For example, the painting of the Alcestis, which is a self-portrait of Alicia, can be analyzed using the concept of "trapped" and "freedom" to convey the idea of being trapped inside one's own mind.

The self-portrait—it was important, somehow, I knew that, and understanding why would be central to unlocking this mystery. This painting was Alicia's sole communication, her only testimony. It was saying something (Michaelides 40).

This painting defamiliarizes the concept of self-portraiture by presenting the subject in an unusual and unsettling way, challenging the reader's expectations of what a self-portrait should be.

It is important to note that the use of defamiliarization in *The Silent Patient* is not limited to Alicia's paintings. The novel as a whole can be seen as a defamiliarization of the psychological thriller genre, as it subverts many of the genre's conventions and expectations. The use of defamiliarization in this way serves to create a sense of unease and uncertainty, keeping the reader engaged and invested in the story. Similarly, Alicia Berenson's silence is a crucial aspect of the narrative and can be analyzed as a form of foregrounding which is one of the selected tools from the cognitive poetics in this study. The central mystery of Alicia's silence is foregrounded throughout the novel. This

deviation from typical communication norms prompts the readers to actively search for explanations which encourages cognitive engagement with the text.

Foregrounding, in literary analysis, refers to the deliberate emphasis on certain elements to draw attention and create significance. Alicia's silence serves as more than just a plot element and the author strategically highlights it as a key aspect to intellectually involve readers. This connection to the thread of trauma narrative explores how such stories transcend and convey the trauma to readers. The pervasive silence in the text becomes a prominent indicator of this trauma, allowing readers to experience it firsthand as they engage with the narrative. The novel begins with Alicia shooting her husband and then choosing to remain silent. This act of silence is immediately foregrounded, as it deviates from the anticipated response following a violent incident. The choice to refrain from speaking evolves into a key enigma that drives the progression of the narrative. Diverging from other characters who express themselves verbally, Alicia's silence emerges as a unique characteristic. The author emphasizes this distinction, elevating Alicia's lack of speech to a central element that commands notice. Readers are prompted to reflect on its significance. Readers are prompted to reflect on the importance of her silence, highlighting its prominence in the narrative. The climax of the novel also involves a revelation about Alicia's silence. The foregrounding of her silence throughout the story builds up to this moment, creating a cognitive impact when readers discover the truth. Similarly, throughout the novel, Theo Faber, the psychotherapist, attempts to unravel the reasons behind Alicia's violent act during therapy sessions. The focus on Alicia's refusal to speak becomes a foregrounded element in these sessions, prompting readers to question the motivations behind her silence and actively engage in the process of uncovering the truth plus in the context of this thesis the effects of childhood trauma which develops the perpetrators' trauma that will come in the later part of this analysis chapter.

That's how Caruth explores as the impact of trauma on consciousness and memory by incorporating a neurobiological viewpoint, drawing from the insights of psychiatrist Bessel van der Kolk. According to van der Kolk, the neurobiological response to trauma triggers a shared experience of "speechless terror," preventing the formation of narrative recall in memory due to the inability to organize the traumatic event on a linguistic level that is very evident in Alicia's case.

Another instance from the text involves Alicia's diary entries, which are presented to readers, offer glimpses into her thoughts and emotions. However, these entries intentionally avoid directly addressing the causes of her silence. This purposeful exclusion foregrounds her silence as an enduring mystery, prompting readers to analyze and speculate about the psychological factors at play.

Alicia never spoke again. Her enduring silence turned this story from a commonplace domestic tragedy into something far grander: a mystery, an enigma that gripped the headlines and captured the public imagination for months to come. Alicia remained silent—but she made one statement. A painting (12).

Her prolonged silence turned this story from a conventional domestic tragedy into a more significant phenomenon or an enigma that captured the media's attention and public's fascination for an extended period (Michaelides 12). Again in cognitive poetic perspective, it's widely acknowledged that negation serves as a prominent foregrounding element. This is because it compels our focus towards the subject being negated, making negation inherently captivating as it draws our attention (Stockwell 90).

Hence, *The Silent Patient* is a captivating scrutiny of the fine line between sanity and lunacy. Alex Michaelides explores the depths of the human mind, uncovering the effects of obsession and trauma. The text reveals that Alicia was orphaned at a very early age, and her childhood is mainly characterized by abandonment. During a visit to her parents' house where she had spent her childhood, Theo narrates about the house where Alicia had been born which can be regarded within given text as deviant from the co-text that has just gone faded. This is what Stockwell projects in deviance that a text often introduces a specific pattern, trope, or theme, embedding it in the reader's consciousness, only to later juxtapose it with contrasting elements, creating a more pronounced and impactful effect. Similarly Theo projects the importance of the place where Alicia spent the first eighteen years of her life. Within these walls her personality had been formed in the unique way and the root of her adult life, all causes and subsequent choices, were buried there which establishes a connection between her present circumstances and the childhood trauma she experienced in the past (140).



#### 4.1.2 Image Schema

The current study also uses another cognitive poetics tool that is image schema to explore childhood trauma in *The Silent Patient* by analyzing the images and metaphors used in the text. Image schemata are mental structures that help us understand abstract concepts by mapping them onto concrete, sensory experiences. By analyzing the image schemata used in the novel, the researcher gains insight into how the characters experience and cope with their trauma.

An illustration of an image schema in the novel involves the container schema, depicting the mind as a vessel containing thoughts, emotions, and memories. This schema holds particular significance in the context of childhood trauma, aiding readers in comprehending how traumatic experiences can become entrenched in the mind, exerting ongoing influence on an individual well beyond the actual occurrence. In *The Silent Patient*, Alicia Berenson's artistic works play a pivotal role in shaping the narrative. The narrator emphasizes that a discerning mind is necessary to grasp the enigmatic nature of Alicia's paintings. The term "The Gabriel" is employed by the author to suggest Alicia's suppressed inclination for harming her spouse, while "Voila" serves as a depiction of how her father extinguished Alicia's inner vitality (Michaelides 130). According to the author's perspective, Alicia utilizes the strokes of her brushes to articulate her intricate emotions on the canvas (Michaelides, 11). These paintings also act as an outlet for readers to delve into Alicia's character more profoundly. While endeavouring to convey her intricate emotions through art, she refrains from sharing irrational thoughts publicly. Nevertheless, her diary entries exhibit layers of complexity and intrigue, contributing to the overarching sense of mystery. Alicia's diary entries serve as a crucial counterpoint to Theo's narrative, occasionally challenging his portrayal of events and characters. The focal point of the novel revolves around the mystery of Alicia's silence, and her diary serves as windows into her past. This infusion of diary insights adds complexity and depth to the narrative, enriching the overall story. Through her diary, Alicia emerges as a passionate, intelligent, and determined individual who has diligently struggled to overcome a profoundly troubled childhood. The deaths of her father, ruled as a suicide, and her mother, in circumstances she suspects to be suicide, cast a heavy burden on Alicia, triggering deep anxiety as she grapples with personal struggles. Despite these challenges, Alicia finds profound joy in

her work and her relationship with Gabriel. Eagerly anticipating motherhood before his tragic murder, she fervently looks forward to the prospect.

Overall, Peter Stockwell's cognitive poetics tool of image schemata proved to be a useful lens through which the theme of childhood trauma in *The Silent Patient* has been explored. By analyzing the images and metaphors used in the text, the current research underlies a deep perception and understanding of the world presented in the novel.

Characters in narrative fiction can be thought of as cognitive beings that move either spatially or temporally within the story's landscape. As the novel progresses, they can also be assessed qualitatively as they evolve and acquire characteristics based on their apparent psychological growth (Stockwell 38). The current study aims to identify childhood trauma in the novel *The Silent Patient*, by analyzing the spatial and temporal experiences of the characters. For instance, to better comprehend Alicia Berenson's past, Theo Faber, her therapist goes back to her childhood home. Seeking to unravel the mysteries of Alicia's transformation into "a person capable of murder," he is searching for hints (Michaelides 123). The description of house is given as "a prison" and "a place of secrets and lies" from which Alicia was unable to escape. The trauma that Alicia went through as a youngster can be recognized using this schema of a house as a jail. Another spatial experience is explored in The Grove, the psychiatric facility where Alicia Berenson is held. It is also described as a "fortress" and a "prison" that is "designed to keep people in". This image schema of a fortress as a prison can be used to identify the trauma that Alicia experienced in her past and how it has affected her present.

Comparably, in light of temporal experiences, the narrative of *The Silent Patient* represents the intricacy of the human mind and the challenge of deciphering Alicia's silence using the picture schema of a maze. Theo describes the process of psychotherapy as "a journey through a labyrinth" and "a descent into the underworld". This image schema of a maze is also creates a connection between Alicia's traumatic experiences in her past and how it has affected her present. The image schema of a 'labyrinth' represents the complexity of the human mind and the difficulty of unraveling the mystery of Alicia's silence.

## 4.2 Perpetrator Trauma through Cognitive Poetics

Crime constitutes a deviation from societal norms as delineated in the criminal code. While on the surface, it may appear as a singular act, more often than not, it encompasses a sequence of intricate psychological decisions. The individual engaging in criminal behavior is frequently oblivious to these complexities, as they are shaped by unconscious factors. Each perpetrator is labeled as such due to the impact of unconscious forces operating within them.

Numerous sociological factors, such as dropping out of education, experiencing parental loss, and having a challenging childhood, can contribute to the development of negative character traits in an individual. Sociological criminology significantly influences the psychological aspects of criminal behavior. A substantial part of psychological criminology revolves around cognitions, encompassing beliefs, values, and thoughts linked to an individual's perceptions of their social environment and interactions with others. These cognitions are heavily influenced by sociological criminology, as the social strains an individual perceives compel them to make choices that may deviate from socially accepted norms and be deemed reprehensible.

The roots of antisocial or criminal behavior in adults often trace back to childhood, as each individual follows a unique developmental pathway. The family environment plays a crucial role in shaping children's behavior, with parental interactions serving as a significant risk factor for deviant behavior. Various parental practices, including child abuse, coercive interactions between parents, and parental rejection, are pivotal components in assessing the impact of parenting on intervention (Biglan et al. 257). All these parental practices and styles exert a profound influence on a child's psychology. Drawing from John Bowlby's attachment theory, early parent-child relations lay the foundation for the social relations of children in their later stages of life.

### 4.2.1 *Foregrounding*

According to Stockwell, the concept of figure and ground finds a clear parallel in literary criticism, specifically in the idea of foregrounding. In literary texts, some elements are typically perceived as more significant or prominent than others. In *The Silent Patient* Alicia's tragic past has been foregrounded which casts a disastrous impact on her mental, physical and social behavior that shapes her outer personality.

The story begins with Alicia's journal disclosing her clear mental health issues. She emphasizes her desire to produce a cheery record of ideas and images that inspire her artistically, with a focus on good, happy, and typical thoughts. She declares that only such thoughts would be allowed, excluding any considered "crazy".

This is going to be a joyful record of ideas and images that inspire me artistically, things that make a creative impact on me. I'm only going to write positive, happy, normal, thoughts. No crazy thoughts allowed (Michaelides 3).

Her demand that "no crazy thoughts allowed" implies that she finds it difficult to resist the belief that she is insane. Because of the epistolary style, the reader gets introduced to Alicia's character even though she is mute at the beginning of the story. Alicia's voice will also bring the story to a conclusive end by naming Theo in her journal where he claims that he is not the hero in this narrative. The focus is on Alicia Berenson's journey, so the starting point should be with her and the Alcestis (11).

The book discloses that on Theo's initial day at the Grove, he uncovers Alicia's distressing state. Opting to assist her as she seems significantly drowsy, he expresses, Alicia was in a state of disappearance, and there was no time to lose. She had gone missing, and his objective was to find her (29). As a result, he asks Professor Diomedes for permission to see Alicia for treatment. However, Diomedes views Alicia as an unresponsive patient, therefore he is completely despairing about her situation. Alicia decides not to speak because she has internalized a lack of faith in herself and in Theo as she yells at him that he is unable to assist her and he can hardly control himself. She calls him Stranger, Deceptive, Liar (72).

The novel illustrates that Alicia carries a profound sense of intense anger within her personality, manifesting on various occasions. When probed by Theo, her trauma resurfaces, and she becomes vindictive. In her diary, she candidly writes that she wanted to kill him, "kill or be killed". She attacked him aggressively, attempting to strangle him, scratch his eyes, and brutally bash his skull on the floor (72). Theo, acting as the conduit for Alicia's condition, observes abnormal reactions during her therapy sessions and attributes her present behavior to the enduring impact of a tragic childhood. Motivated to understand her, he unveils that after a devastating road accident claiming Alicia's mother's life, her father lamented, "My poor girl, my Eva...Why did she have to die? Why did it have to be her? Why didn't Alicia die instead?" (221).

Alicia, burdened by guilt, begins to blame herself for her mother's demise. In his book *Sigmund Freud*, Thurschwell comments on the same feeling of guilt as she states that the child's super-ego, or inner voice that prevents him from doing things he shouldn't do, is formed from the fear of the father's authority (48).

Steele, when discussing abusive parents, particularly those who experienced childhood abuse themselves, notes that the instances illustrate the profound entrenchment of the abuse pattern. The examples also suggest a compelling sense of correctness, if not moral certitude, associated with the replication of learned behavior from one's parents.

Being abused as a child leads to an enhancement of an unconscious need for punishment and to intense masochism which can exist alongside intense sadism in myriad individual mixtures. Later in life, these children, in a compulsion to repeat, turn to other people who are tormentors with the continuing delusive expectation that this time they will be loved (Soul murder 241).

Theo draws the same connection between Alicia's depression and that of her mother, Eva, noting that Alicia's diary also characterizes her mental state as somewhat similar to her mother's. The fact that both ladies made suicidal attempts to terminate their lives provides strong proof. Alicia was sitting next to Eva when the automobile smashed into a wall. In a similar vein, Alicia tries to cut her own wrists after killing her husband. In recounting her actions, she asserts that Gabriel was a traitor, and when confronted by the broken-hearted, she observed that Gabriel possessed eyes reminiscent of a tyrant, similar to her father's eyes. According to her narrative, she underscores the truth, stating that she didn't kill Gabriel. Rather he killed her. All she did was pull the trigger (Michaelides 263). These lines reveal the profound impact of her father's negative presence on her psyche, and in Gabriel, she perceives those traits, causing discomfort and unease.

Alicia's cousin Paul also reveals that Alicia's father, Vernon, had expressed a desire for her death in the car crash instead of Eva. He articulates that he has finally learnt why Alicia had been moved by Alcestis. Vernon Rose had psychologically doomed his daughter to death, just as Admetus had physically condemned Alcestis to death (214). Additionally, her experiences of childhood maltreatment resonate with Theo, prompting him to encourage Alicia to communicate. The narrative indicates that,

in subsequent sessions, she begins to share her thoughts more openly. Theo, however, feels uneasy and expresses concern, stating that they were breaking through every last boundary between therapist and patient (222).

Through a close examination of the text, it becomes apparent that in the initial session with Alicia, Theo astutely identifies her phobia and insecurities across various aspects of her life. Internally and externally, she exhibits signs of weakness, struggling even with the seasonal heat, prompting her to seek refuge in a cafe for cooler air. Theo exhibits insight by linking her fear to a remote past, specifically the car accident that occurred on July 18. Alicia's journal narrates the distressing incident in which her mother, Eva, grappled with psychotic issues and attempted suicide by deliberately crashing her car into a brick wall. Despite Eva's tragic demise, Alicia survives, yet the haunting memory lingers on through distressing flashbacks. Caruth states it as traumatic experience, beyond its psychological dimension of suffering, implies a paradox. The most direct observation of a violent event may manifest as an absolute inability to comprehend it. Paradoxically, immediacy may assume the form of belatedness or flashbacks. In *Unclaimed Experience*, she writes:

Traumatic experience, beyond the psychological dimension of suffering it involves, suggests a certain paradox: that the most direct seeing of a violent event may occur as an absolute inability to know it; that immediacy, paradoxically, may take the form of belatedness. The repetitions of the traumatic event—which remain unavailable to consciousness but intrude repeatedly on sight—thus suggest a larger relation to the event that extends beyond what can simply be seen or what can be known, and is inextricably tied up with the belatedness and incomprehensibility that remain at the heart of this repetitive seeing (Caruth 92).

Alicia harbors a fear that she might one day experience the same madness as her mother, a fear vividly portrayed when she paints Gabriel on the cross. In her diary, Alicia also expresses the profound love between her and her supportive husband, who encourages her passion for painting. Consequently, overwhelmed by guilt over her perceived act of killing her husband, she resorts to slitting her wrists. In her diary, reflecting on the situation, she notes that she used to believe it was suicide, but now she considers it attempted murder. She sometimes contemplates if she was the intended

victim, though she acknowledges that such thoughts may seem irrational. She acknowledges that the truth is everyone is scared, expressing her fear of herself and of the possibility of her mother's madness being in her blood (59). That is what Caruth believes that a reevaluation of reference is not geared towards eliminating history but rather towards relocating it within our comprehension. The aim is to precisely facilitate the emergence of history in areas where immediate understanding may fall short. This perspective underscores the significance of recognizing and reexamining the influence of past experiences on our present understanding (24).

The novel uncovers that, despite the apparent genuine love between Alicia and Gabriel, they frequently engage in conflicts. On one occasion, a heated discussion ensues between them regarding the notion of keeping a gun in the house. Alicia's diary articulates her profound fear of embracing motherhood, stemming from her childhood trauma, which has left her with a persistent belief that she cannot be a competent mother. Despite Gabriel's desire to have children, she is 'scared to have kids' and entertains doubts about potentially replicating her mother's behavior. She reveals a fear of not being trustworthy with them, particularly due to the presence of her mother's blood in her veins (Michaelides 110). Her phobic state of mind represents the negative effect as described by Freud. In "Traumatic Childhood and Adult Personality" Freud's notion is quoted that the adverse consequences of trauma function as a mechanism to prevent the recurrence of the forgotten event. In this regard, defensive reactions manifest in forms such as avoidance, inhibition, and the development of phobias. (Ashraf et al 656)

Within the diary, Alicia provides a detailed confession of her husband's murder, recounting how Theo coerced her into committing the act. Theo presented Gabriel with a choice: his own life or Alicia's. Gabriel opted for self-preservation, reminiscent of Alicia's childhood trauma when her father chose to sacrifice her for her mother's safety. Despite Theo sparing both of them in the present situation, the resurgence of this traumatic memory propels Alicia into a state of distress, leading her to cold-bloodedly kill her husband. While she confesses to the crime, Alicia also desires Theo to face consequences for manipulating her emotions. Every detail about Theo is laid bare in her diary, concealed just before succumbing to the effects of a lethal morphine injection.

To understand the macro structure, one of the most important first steps is to identify foregrounding, as Stockwell describes it, which may be achieved through narrative alienation. Michaelides, the author of the novel, accomplishes this by the narrator who appears as Alicia's therapist in the text. On the base of Alicia's journals, the reader is led by this narrator into the mental spaces of defamiliarization and alienation from the traditional narrative of inferring the main story. Interestingly, Theo's sporadic appearances help to solve the puzzle, which eventually causes the story within the text to become more refamiliarize (the mystery portion of the book).

#### *4.2.2 Image Schema*

In addition to employing the foregrounding technique of cognitive poetics to illustrate perpetrator trauma, vivid picture schema of Alicia's traumatic experiences, the mental canvas full of scenes of violence and loss, have also been used to evaluate the novel. The visuality of her text-world captivates readers and researchers alike, intensifying the cognitive impact of *Soul Murder*. Using the cognitive poetics tools of vivid image schemata by Peter Stockwell, the recurring images and metaphors in the text have been identified. These images and metaphors are analyzed to reveal the underlying themes and emotions in the story. For instance, a moth appears frequently throughout the text. Alicia Berenson, the main character, is an artist who self-portraits as a moth. During their counseling sessions, she and her partner often encounter the presence of the moth. The idea of picture schemata, which describes the mental models that underpin our perception of reality, may be used to this image analysis. One may see the moth picture as a metaphor for Alicia's wish to break away from her painful past and experience freedom.

An additional instance of a recurring image in the book involves the image of a maze. The narrative unfolds within the confines of a psychiatric institution named The Grove, depicted as a labyrinthine structure. Analyzing this imagery through the lens of spatialization, which explores how space is depicted in literature, the maze serves as a metaphor for the protagonist's psychological turmoil. The intricate corridors mirror her struggle to navigate the complex network of her thoughts and emotions. The Grove, functioning as a bustling mental hospital housing individuals grappling with various psychotic disorders, including Alicia and previously, Theo himself. Throughout an extended stay at The Grove, Alicia engages in psychotherapy facilitated by diligent



professionals from a forensic hospital, determined to coax her into revealing her reality. Despite their efforts, Alicia maintains her silence, driven by a profound sense of guilt since her trial and detention. The narrator unveils Alicia's life stories by accessing her personal diary, offering insights into her childhood experiences and her marital relationship with her husband. Similar to Alicia, Theo Faber undergoes a constant oscillation between portraying both positive and negative character traits, embodying the roles of hero and villain. In the concluding segment of the novel, it is disclosed that Theo begins shadowing his wife's lover, discovering the man's marital status, unbeknownst to his own wife. Theo continues surveilling the stranger's residence, ultimately devising a plan to expose the extramarital affair to the man's unsuspecting spouse. Maintaining his anonymity by donning a black mask and gloves, Theo infiltrates the woman's home. The deliberate delay in revealing this information until the final chapter serves to instill suspense and excitement in the readers. Theo's hypocritical nature comes to light as he ostensibly aids Alicia while simultaneously using this assistance to conceal his involvement in Gabriel's murder.

Towards the conclusion, Theo administers Alicia with morphine, inducing an artificial coma to prevent her from revealing his malevolent side to the world. After a few days, Alicia sustains an injury and is hospitalized. Theo, noticing signs on her arm indicative of a dangerous morphine dosage, becomes suspicious of Christian, who shared a significant history with Alicia during her time at The Grove. Theo entertains the possibility that Christian attempted to harm Alicia to protect a hidden secret. Upon engaging in textual analysis during his initial sessions with Alicia, Theo astutely identifies her phobias and insecurities linked to various aspects of her life. Alicia exhibits both internal and external vulnerability, evident in her struggle with seasonal heat, seeking refuge in a café for cooler air. Theo adeptly connects her phobia to a distant past, specifically a car accident. Alicia's diary, a repository of her confessions, details how Theo coerced her husband's demise. Given the choice between his life and Alicia's, Gabriel opts for self-preservation, echoing Alicia's childhood trauma when her father chose to save himself and her mother, Eva. Despite sparing both of them this time, the resurgence of childhood trauma plunges Alicia into anguish, compelling her to cold-bloodedly kill her husband. While confessing her crime, Alicia also desires Theo's punishment for manipulating her emotions. Every detail about Theo is disclosed in her diary, concealed before she succumbs to the lethal morphine injection.

In the end, Theo feigns collecting Alicia's belongings, concealing his genuine concern about her diary. Alicia's diary exposes Gabriel's extramarital affair with Theo's wife, Kathy. Motivated by revenge, Theo confronts Gabriel at his home, restraining him and compelling a life-or-death choice. Gabriel opts for self-preservation, prompting Theo to release Alicia. Armed with a gun, Alicia kills Gabriel. Her diary unveils Theo's complicity in Gabriel's murder, yet Theo attributes the act to Alicia's purportedly unstable mental health. Ultimately, Theo's self-preservation efforts are laid bare, revealing that his decision to work at The Grove was driven by a desire to eliminate any incriminating evidence against him. The role of Theo shifts from being a psychotherapist to a detective as Max says, "You sound more like a detective than a psychiatrist" (Micheades 128). To his astonishment, all of Alicia's family members, including Lydia Rose, her aunt, and Max, her brother-in-law, decline to cooperate with him on any matter. Undeterred, Theo attempts to elicit crucial information from Alicia's nurse, Yuri, who has been attending to her for the past six years. However, Yuri dismisses Theo's inquiries, suspecting that his interest in Alicia is driven by an attraction to her beauty rather than a genuine intent to help. Alicia faces further isolation after the murder incident, grappling with the harsh judgment of society. Not only have her immediate family members disowned her, but even the head of the psychiatric hospital has lost interest in her as a patient. Theo draws a sharp contrast between his wife, Kathy, and Alicia, stating,

It's hard to imagine two women more different than Kathy and Alicia. Kathy makes me think of light, warmth, color, and laughter. When I think of Alicia, I think only of depth, of darkness, of sadness (51).

Despite these differences, Theo maintains sympathy for Alicia and regards her differently. Another psychologist, Ruth, labels this forced exclusion and abandonment as the pain of not being loved (90).

The concise narrative featuring multiple stories dissects the novel's themes, illustrating the sociological and psychological repercussions of bullying, childhood abuse, parenting, mental anxiety, depression, marital conflicts, and social pressures on the characters' lives. Similarly, unconventional characters exhibit a blend of negative and positive personality traits, defying clear-cut categorizations as heroes or villains. The text adopts a mystery structure, compelling readers to piece together the events

leading to the protagonist's crime. This structural approach can be scrutinized using the concept of narrative framing, which delves into how stories are crafted and presented to the audience. Furthermore, the narrative introduces a myriad of intricate characters, each driven by unique motivations and desires. Examining these characters is connected to the idea of mind-modelling, which involves investigating how readers build mental spaces of characters by utilizing the information presented in the text.

The Bible speaks of a mysterious sin for which there is no forgiveness. I've never known before what that could be. Now I know. The great unforgivable sin is to murder the love in a human being. You abandoned the woman you loved! Me, me, me! It's a double murder you're guilty of! Murder of your own soul and of mine! You're the guilty one. You put to death all the natural joy in me (Shengol 3).

In his writings, Shengold addresses individuals who endure suffering not primarily due to unconscious fantasies of harsh and unloving parents, or having experienced seduction or beatings in childhood. Instead, these individuals recount stories of enduring beatings, torture, and sexual abuse inflicted by adults, often by their parents or parental figures. Their narratives of abuse and torment align closely with lines from Ibsen's "John Gabriel Borkman" (used as an epigraph to this chapter), where a character accuses Borkman of committing an unforgivable crime the murder of her soul. This crime is described as having extinguished her capacity for love and joy.

The combination of emotional deprivation and child abuse has deep and long-lasting effects on the victims; it activates certain defensive and structural changes that impede the victims' ability to fully and freely develop emotionally and intellectually and alters the basic fantasies that drive human behavior. In the novel under discussion, back at The Grove, Theo discovers that Alicia has attacked another patient with a paintbrush. Lazarus informs Theo that he can no longer provide counseling sessions for Alicia. Alicia's diary confirms Barbie's revelation to Theo about Alicia having a stalker in the weeks leading up to Gabriel's murder. Theo discovers from the diary that Alicia told Gabriel and her therapist whom he discovers to be Christian and who took cash payments for covert private treatment about the stalker. Sadly, she was not believed by either man. Anti-psychotic medicine recommended by Christian was not taken by Alicia because she was afraid it would make her more prone to an attack. Alicia notes

in her most recent journal post that her stalker is present in the home. Alicia receives her diary back from Theo.

Using the material from the journal, Theo confronts Christian and Alicia's family members and friends, including her aunt Lydia and cousin Paul Rose. From this, Theo infers that Alicia's childhood recollection of anything her father said led to her psychological demise and soul murder. It was at this pivotal moment that Alicia began to despise her father and gained the capacity for murder.

The truth comes out in Alicia's last journal post, which was written right before the morphine's effects were apparent. The moment Theo came at The Grove, Alicia had a sneaking suspicion that he was stalking her. Theo's response to her made-up story of the murderous night confirms her fears. Alicia still feels guilty about Gabriel's death, so she let Theo give him a fatal overdose. Theo had both Alicia and Gabriel detained the night of the murder. After that, he gave Gabriel an option: give himself up or let Alicia perish. Theo surged up into the air and left when Gabriel decided to live. Theo unintentionally resurrected the anguish of Alicia's idea that her father would have rather that she had died instead of her mother without realizing the impact. Alicia shot her husband to death because she was mentally and spiritually destroyed.

Alicia Berenson's self-portrait, *Alcestis*, is a recurring image that symbolizes the deep anguish betrayal may bring, as well as the difficulty in communicating that pain. Strangely enough, though, Alicia looked up to *Alcestis* as a role model for her own forced quiet, and she used the play as a way to communicate. "It's a painting about silence," claims Alicia's friend and gallerist Jean-Felix Martin, who suggests that Alicia's therapist Theo read the play the painting is based on in order for "you to understand." Alicia draws lessons in silence from Euripides's *Alcestis*, but she also utilizes her painting to make herself more understandable to others by shedding light on the reasons for her silence and the horrible betrayal that lies beneath it.

### **4.3 Parabolic Projection and Soul Murder**

Schematic knowledge is essentially organized or represented in idealized terms, featuring a level of abstraction that goes beyond the details present in individual sentences. Stockwell emphasizes the inquiry into how our comprehension of the overall essence of a story, including its narrative trajectory, is developed (140).

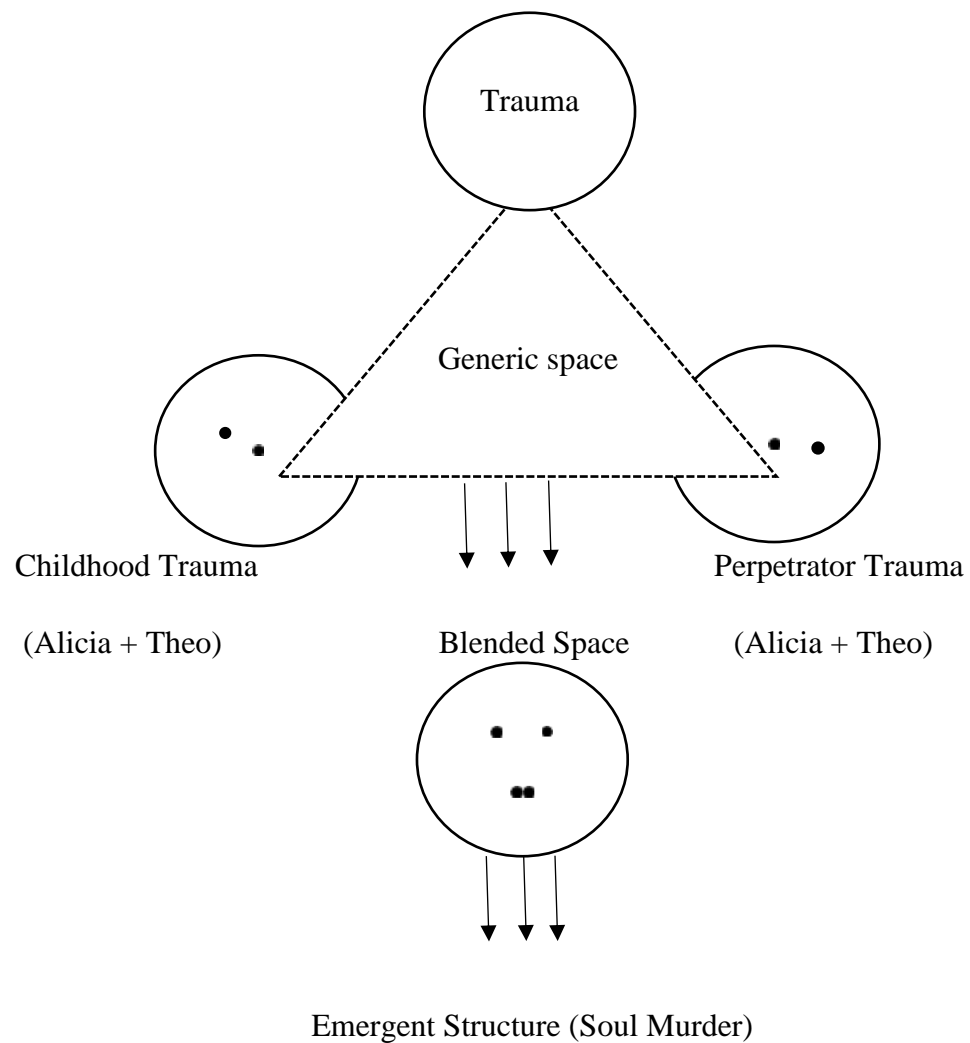


Figure 2: Conceptual Mapping in *The Silent Patient*

In the section titled "Blending and compression," Stockwell proposes that in a selected text, various cognitive poetics rules, such as foregrounding, defamiliarization, and refamiliarization, contribute to microstructures within the text. These microstructures, interacting through blending, create an image schema in the reader's mind. As a result, the text unveils a macrostructure that aids readers in deducing the meanings and progression of the narrative. At first, when a text is read, the small building blocks of information, known as microstructures, are organized into facts that tell us what happens in the text. Considering these details as discrete moments inside the narrative and then, using specific thinking techniques called macro rules, all the information collected from the text is grouped together to create a bigger, overall structure.

Starting with the textbase (the word-for-word processing over the course of a reading), a reader begins to construct a macrostructure even before completing the whole text. First, a microstructure of all of the propositions encountered through a reading is assembled into facts about what is happening in the text. Together, all the facts (which can be seen as local states of affairs in the world of the text) are assembled into a generalised macrostructure using the cognitive strategies termed as macrorules (Stockwell 151).

To grasp how these macro rules operate, the researcher tries to show the "emergent structure" by using a method called "parabolic projection" on the text. This means representing the text in a way that highlights its main shape or structure. The point of reflection is what transforms childhood trauma into perpetrator trauma, which is not just the traumatized past or incidents or the psychological makeup of the targeted person. This transformation extends beyond mere recollections of past traumatic incidents or the psychological composition of the afflicted individuals. According to Shengold's concept of soul murder, there exists a profound and pervasive impact that sets in motion a continuous cycle of trauma, transitioning from one phase to the subsequent stage of traumatic experiences.

The same concept of soul murder is reflected in the book *The Silent Patient* by Alicia's violent behavior after Theo, her therapist, offers assistance which is a representation of the emergence of murderous or wicked sentiments. At that moment, Alicia released her chokehold and dragged him away. She battled and writhed like a beast under a spell. She appeared "monstrous," more akin to a wild animal than a human (Michaelides 73). Even though Alicia was thirty-nine years old at the time, her persistent worry and confusion had caused her to lose the ability to discriminate between safe and insecure situations. Alicia was continually plagued by memories of the past, as though the traumatic experiences had never left her life. Alicia's inner state is unstable due to her deep wounds because her mental and psychological state is abnormal. There was injury to Alicia's inner side and her soul have long been restless as a result of traumatic experiences in her past. The soul murder she had suffered in her childhood, made her aggressive, wild, and vicious because she still feels the people around her are not friendly. The transformation from an innocent child, passionate, intelligent and strong-willed individual to "cold-blooded bitch", "a black widow", "a monster" (14) does not refer to a childhood trauma only rather it hints at the "psychic

infanticide” committed by Alicia’s father when he burst out lamenting his wife’s death that why did she have to pass away? Why had she got to be the one? “Why didn’t Alicia die instead?” (232).

It demonstrates the emotional impact of psychological injuries on children and how these effects can manifest in adulthood. It's an incredibly frightening and traumatic experience for a child hearing his father, the person he relies on for survival, expressing a desire for his demise. That is what lead Alicia to a collapse in self-worth. The pain resulted by soul murder becomes overwhelming, too immense to endure, prompting her to suppress, repress, and bury it deep within. As time passes, the connection to the origins of this trauma fades, dissociating from its roots, and eventually, it's forgotten. However, one day, all that accumulated hurt and anger erupts, much like fire directing that rage not towards her long-gone father but onto her husband, the man who took his place in her life. In a tragic turn, she end up shooting him multiple times in the head, without fully comprehending why (233). Von Feuerbach, in the *Soul Murder*, references it stating that the victim is unable to use his brain, reason, understand reality, or form opinions about it.

My historical references stress soul murder as a crime expressing man’s inhumanity to man. One human being uses power over another to crush his or her individuality, self-esteem, dignity. The capacity to feel deeply—joy, love, and even hate—is compromised or lost; there is (von Feuerbach describes it well) a stifling of the victim’s use of his mind, of the capacity to think clearly and to test and evaluate reality (Shengold 237).

The emergent structure, however, comes to a head with this revelation of Alicia’s psychic death which is narrated in the text as “Vernon’s crime... that’s when he killed Alicia” (231). A child implicitly trusts his or her father and mother as sources of protection. But in Alicia’s case, both of her parents betrayed her. Her mother abandoned her and may have even intended to kill her. Her father psychologically abandoned her, wishing her dead. Thus the narrative “I’ll never forget it. He killed me...Dad just killed me” depicted Alicia’s psychological death, a transformative childhood moment that resulted in her hatred of her father and in her subsequently being capable of murdering a man, Gabriel. Caruth, in this regard, emphasizes the "legacy of incomprehensibility" to emphasize how trauma continues to affect a person's comprehension and perception

of the incident. According to her, trauma frequently leaves victims with a persistent sense of bewilderment or incomprehensibility at the center of their experience, making it difficult for them to make sense of what happened. Understanding this contradictory link enables us to better understand the complexity of trauma, where the need for survival coexists with destructive elements, as well as the persistent challenge of completely understanding the traumatic experiences (Caruth 71).

According to Stockwell, "double-scope mapping" is the conceptual fusion of two narrative inputs that results in the formation of "emergent structure," all of which arise from a single generic space. The blended place that arises from two input spaces in *The Silent Patient* is soul murder. This study again uses the cognitive poetics lens to identify how the text of the novel provides the researcher with a blending space of "soul murder" through two input structures: perpetrator trauma and childhood trauma. According to Shengod, soul murder is a crime that demonstrates how victims can be cruel to one another and develop a tendency to reject intense emotions like love and happiness.

The same blend of two different spaces can be seen at work to connect the psychological impact of childhood and perpetrators trauma on the characters playing the leading role in *The Silent Patient*. The novel uses a variety of literary devices to create a sense of unease and tension, while this study focuses upon "conceptual integration" to depict pain and mental illness following childhoods marked by trauma and abuse. The researcher explores the concept of memory and how it can be distorted or repressed in traumatic situations. For example, the title of the novel itself is a form of conceptual integration, as it refers to the protagonist's silence and the idea of a patient in a psychiatric hospital. The blend of concepts contributes to the formation of an emerging structure that reflects the fragmentation of the soul. This mirrors not only the protagonist's own wounded part but also the elements of her mind that she has suppressed and intricately linked within her mental landscape. This macrostructure allows the researcher to contextualize the tragic events of the night she killed her husband.

Likewise, when Theo delves into his patient's early years, he likewise battles to overcome his own early traumas. Theo's father made him feel unworthy when he was a little child, and as an adult, he looks for the same feeling. He selects Kathy as his wife,



who gives him the impression that he is nothing, ugly, worthless, and useless. (Michaelides 89). Furthermore, Theo's early habits are repeated in even more subtle ways. For example, the book opens with a baby Theo collecting snowflakes on his tongue, and it closes with an adult Theo frantically attempting to do the same. The conceptual integration of Theo's past and memories are mapped together to create new meanings. For example, the concept of "trapped" and "freedom" can be used to analyze Theo's character. His past experiences of being trapped in his own mind with his father's abuse and his desire for freedom can be blended together to create a new meaning that is unique to him. Similarly, the concept of "pain" and "healing" can be used to analyze Theo's character. His past experiences of pain and his desire for healing can be blended together to create a unique meaning, the base of which lies on the concept of soul murder. According to Caruth's definition in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, that provides the foundation of this research's theoretical framework, trauma is the recapturing of the past. According to Caruth's theory of trauma and memory, a traumatic incident is not just something that happened in the past but also something that reoccurs frequently as symptoms like nightmares and flashbacks. She contends that trauma is an event that stays unclaimed and unassimilated rather than being completely integrated into conscious memory.

The way the novel is told from a first-person perspective reflects what forensic psychotherapist Theo Faber identifies as the main reasons for Alicia's silence after her husband's death. The story also reveals Theo Faber's background, including his identity, childhood, family, and his wife Kathy. Exploring Theo's early life, his connection with his father, and his family with Kathy lead the researcher to conclude that he is a male alter persona of Alicia. Theo grew up with a severely abusive father and a mother who couldn't shield him from the unpredictable and violent outbursts. Hoping to break free from his father's influence, Theo left home for college. However, he soon discovered that the emotional wounds inflicted by his father lingered, casting a lasting impact on his mental well-being. Despite the physical distance, the deep-seated anxieties stemming from his traumatic past immobilized Theo, making it challenging for him to form connections and escape the haunting shadows of his history.

It's only towards the end that the true extent of Theo's distortions becomes evident. The conclusion unveils his deliberate manipulation of the narrative to conceal his direct role in Gabriel's murder. This deceptive involvement in a murderous attempt

fits well with Caruth's paradigm, which contends that traumatic occurrences have an effect on survival that goes beyond just obvious and immediate threats (Caruth 73). The text suggests that the effects of trauma are more intricate and involve indirect elements. This indirectness adds a layer of complexity to understanding how trauma influences the survival instinct. Essentially, the text is highlighting that the relationship between trauma and survival is not as straightforward as it might seem, involving nuanced and indirect aspects within the realm of psychological trauma.

Despite initially thinking that his sessions with Ruth (his therapist) have helped him conquer his trauma, Theo easily relapses into negative thought patterns.

I thought of my father—I knew what he'd do in this situation. He'd murder the guy. Be a man, I could hear my father shouting. Toughen up. Was that what I should do? Kill him? (Michaeides 257)

His dependence on others, especially women like Ruth and Kathy, to rescue him indicates that his healing remains incomplete. In the final chapters, Theo reflects on the shortcomings of his attempts at addressing his issues through psychotherapy, raising the question of whether he might inherently possess an evil nature. Through Theo, the poetics of the macrostructure questions the possibility of fully overcoming childhood trauma which supports the stance taken in this study that it is more than a past trauma that Theo's pain goes beyond healing and steers the character in the direction of a murderous or evil mindset. What drives the victims to become killers is the evilness and lack of morality that died with their soul murder.

In this chapter, the researcher argues that the cognitive poetics analysis of *The Silent Patient* exhibits the imprints of early trauma, specifically trauma that both the victims and the perpetrators experienced. The parabolic projection emerged from the text substantiates the notion that both the protagonist and her therapist have fallen victim to soul murder. The character arcs of Theo and Alicia delves deeply into the issue of perpetrator trauma, which is closely connected to their childhood experiences of soul murder. The reappearance of "flashbacks" acts as a trigger, igniting their painful memories from the past.

Imagine it—hearing your father, the very person you depend up on for your survival, wishing you dead. How terrifying that must be for a child, how traumatizing... Over time you would lose contact with the origins of your

trauma, dissociate the roots of its cause, and forget. But one day, all the hurt and anger would burst forth, like fire from a dragon's belly—and you'd pick up a gun. You'd visit that rage not upon your father, who was dead and forgotten and out of reach—but upon your husband, the man who had taken his place in your life (273).

These lines serves to explain just why Alicia's childhood trauma could have led to her killing Gabriel. By putting Theo into "psychoanalyst mode," the narration allows the characters to connect the dots for the reader.

While applying Caruth's and Shengold's respective theoretical frameworks, this research found that the novel depicts that Alicia and Theo, as an adults who are focused more on the negative memories of childhood abuse. Consequently, both fail to develop into positive individuals. However, the narrative doesn't conclude at this point, rather their slaughtered souls fuel their need for vengeance, leading them to adopt a cruel and oppressive worldview. Therefore, they remained in the fog of gloomy childhood memories of abuse and turns into criminals or perpetrators of abuse.

## CHAPTER 5

### CHILDHOOD TRAUMA'S INFLUENCE ON PERPETRATOR TRAUMA IN *THE MAIDENS*

This chapter deals with the literary analysis of *The Maidens* in order to determine how far the novel represents the trauma of early childhood turning into a perpetrator and how well the cognitive poetics strategies such as foregrounding, image schemata and parabolic projection help in analyzing the emotional, and aesthetic dimensions of trauma representation in the novel.

#### 5.1 Childhood Trauma through Cognitive Poetics

Examining the expression of childhood trauma in *The Maidens* entails a comprehensive exploration of the narrative utilizing different tools from Cognitive Poetics. This includes evaluating elements such as foregrounding, image schema, and parabolic projection.

##### 5.1.1 Foregrounding

Highlighting elements within the text can be accomplished through various techniques, including but not limited to repetition, deviation, defamiliarization, unique naming, inventive descriptions, creative syntactic arrangements, puns, rhyme, alliteration, metrical emphasis, the employment of imaginative metaphor, and so forth (Stockwell, 44). The researcher intends to use foregrounding in the milieu of defamiliarisation as the narrative technique used by the author to complicate the reading experience of the readers and then the researcher will focus on what Stockwell posits as deviation from the main text to make an image schmeta where eventually defamiliarisation becomes the source of refamiliarization and meaning inferring practice for the readers.

To understand the macro structure, the first pertinent thing is to see foregrounding that according to Stockwell is achievable through the narrative estrangement which Michaelides as the writer of the novel achieves by introducing an unnamed narrator, who comes in the text seven times and takes the reader from the flight of inferring the main story (traditional narrative) to the mental spaces of estrangement and defamiliarisation but interestingly these coming and going of this

unnamed narrator helps in unveiling the mystery hence the text refamiliarise the narrative. In *Cognitive Poetics*, Stockwell defines it as:

Defamiliarisation, or estrangement, need not be understood exclusively as the effect of making something absolutely strange, but also can be regarded as the effect of making a reader notice the object or medium of description in a way that is simply different in some subtle way from their prior experience (33).

In the context of *The Maidens*, the current research implies the tool of foregrounding to identify patterns and themes that are related to childhood trauma. For example, the author uses repetition of certain memories to emphasize the traumatic experiences of few characters, and he uses deviation from the main narrative of the text to highlight the abnormality of the situation what Stockwell posits as “defamiliarisation”. By analyzing these patterns, the researcher gains insight into the psychological state of the characters and the impact of their traumatic childhood experiences on their lives. Sebastian reflects on all the tragedies he suffered as a child and these memories are blended with his present in the form of journals that turn out to be a letter in the last part of the novel. In one of the incidents in chapter five of part three when he shows his appearance as an unnamed narrator in the main text by his journal like postings of the past, where his father beats his mother and he being a child hears his father threaten to throw him just as he discards leftover meat in the backyard of their house, the child becomes terrified and experiences trauma that lasts a lifetime as depicted in the novel:

My mother would always run and hide while it went on, smuggling a bottle of vodka into the bathroom, into the shower, where she thought her tears couldn't be heard. And I would go to the furthest part of the farm, as far away as I could get. I'd cover my ears, but I still heard the screaming (Michaelides 138).

As a result, the child grows up to hate his father. It is in the chapter sixteen of part two of *The Maidens*, when parabolic projection unfolds, revealing the trajectory of Sebastian's thoughts and emotions. In the narrative told from a first-person perspective, he reflects on his early years, contemplating whether his destiny was predetermined during childhood. He recollects the challenges of growing up on a farm, where strenuous labour was a constant reality. The perpetual slaughtering of animals proved to be a source of distress for both the narrator and the mother, but her husband seemed

to “relish it.” When the narrator misbehaved, his father threatened to bury him in a pit of leftover animal parts, filling him with terror. Additionally, the narrator suggests the presence of both physical and mental abuse from his father, emphasizing a lack of protection from his mother. He characterizes his mother as having two sides, claiming there was “more than one of her” a term he also referred to himself in a prior journal like entry (Michaelides 162).

Caruth’s notion of trauma also provides a backdrop to this study here as she states that trauma is not just a simple violent or original event in an individual’s past. Instead, it is something that is identified in a way it is not known in the first instance and returns to haunt the survivor later on (Caruth, 4). This is portrayed by the 36-year-old group therapist Mariana, a London resident who has been a widow for more than a year. Her mother died shortly after giving birth, and she grew up motherless in a lonely house in Athens with a domineering father who according to Mariana was a real patriarch of the family sometimes acting as a king and sometimes rule as a dictator (Michealides, 17). This environment of her home where her father as a patriarch shapes her personality as a shy and socially awkward character who stays at the periphery and notices the world from the sidelines. It is illustrated within the narrative as:

Their house was always cold, even in sunny Greece. And there was an emptiness to it – a lack of warmth, physical and emotional. This was due in large part to Mariana’s father, who, although a remarkable man in many ways – good-looking, powerful, razor sharp – was also highly complicated. Mariana suspected he had been damaged beyond repair by his childhood (17).

Hence, she becomes an introvert and very passive personality where her solitude act as her companion and her escape to find solace was her books. She used to spend most of her time in the library which she inherited from her mother where she lives in a world that was informed and quite large but its vicinity was quite far from her social dealings and reality. In her case, traumatic childhood experiences are continuously reoccurring in her memories to have long-lasting effects on her mental and psychological health.

The narrative of the novel interestingly shows how such characters always live in their past and their undesirable memories that continuously dish out the havoc of terror and trauma throughout their lives. They go back to those memories (a home that is not desirable) because they are always seeking the hearth (a desirable home) that they

always wanted and urged badly. The following description of Mariana's house recapturing her past is a perfect example of recalling memories that depict their impact on her present life. Even in Greece's sunshine, she portrays her home as perpetually chilly. Additionally, it lacked both physical and emotional warmth, leaving it empty. Mariana's father, who has been portrayed as a fantastic man in many aspects such as being attractive, strong, and razor-sharp was mostly to blame for this. Although Mariana had never met her father's parents and he had never mentioned them, she thought he had been irreparably harmed by his early years.

This research also analyzes the story as foregrounded in terms of repetition of certain words and images in the form of journal-entry-like chapters written by an unnamed person, who describes his childhood growing up with an abusive father on a farm. He talks about how one part of him is sane and calm and the other part of him is a bloodthirsty killer. He feels himself in his control. One moment he considers himself calm, and sane. The other moment his rage rises and feels bloodthirsty, mad, and someone who is continuously urging to seek revenge (31). The researcher here is delimiting to childhood trauma as the turning or emergence of perpetrators' trauma will be discussed in later part of this chapter.

By foregrounding the journal-like chapters by this unknown person who later on is revealed as the killer, it is proposed that when he was twelve, his mother finally planned to leave his father. However, when he realized she didn't intend to take him with her, he was filled with murderous hatred towards her. He wanted to be safe from his father in his childhood who he thought was a dangerous man.

A hint of the childhood trauma he experienced haunts his mind in the form of flashbacks that have been manifested through a certain recurrent recalling of different phrases and pictures that have a painful impact on his personality and he says that it burns within him like a little flame and this flame gets its oil when he recalls his father's growing argumentativeness, and his avoidance of his wrath (158). Hence this study explores themes of mental health and childhood trauma by the character of Sabastian (unnamed narrator) who is the best example of how the author foregrounds childhood trauma to create a complex character with a rich background story.

Moreover, this research analyzes childhood trauma depicted in the novel by utilizing the cognitive poetics approach of "deviation" which is a device of

foregrounding according to Stockwell. The pain Zoe experienced in relation to her parents' deaths and burial is not discussed directly; instead, the sole proof of her suffering comes from her memories of Sabastian and Mariana as her guardians. Hence it makes a bit strange for the readers to understand the real reason of Zoe's childhood traumatic experiences. It leaves an effect of defamiliarization for readers through deviation which exactly aligns with what Caruth posits in the backdrop of childhood trauma that the recurrent flashbacks and living in the past as in case of Zoe's recalling of her parents death make it profoundly referential that she lives in painful past through her memories. On the other hand from the narrative thread we see the defamiliarization and deviation that Stockwell projects in his idea of foregrounding. It is pertinent to see that why these things are important to infer the text of the novels in the broad canvas of what Stockwell calls "microstructure" and "macrostructures", the answer lies in the macro rules used by writer where it's a murder mystery and few traumatized character who act not according to the norm and conventional way makes it more baffling and strange and this is what we see from the technique of defamiliarization which is a device of foregrounding in cognitive poetics.

As a teenager, Zoe experienced depression and frequently had crying spells. She also had periods of low, emotionless moods that were so severe that she was too depressed to cry. Mariana (aunt and guardian of Zoe) found it more challenging to deal with these moods than the tears. During those years, it was difficult to reach Zoe, although her problems were hardly surprising given the traumatic loss of her parents at a young age. Similarly, Zoe constantly suffers through various traumatic situations one of which includes the death of her beloved guardian Sabastian.

Similarly, after chapter thirteen where the main story is knitting a complexity of conflicts about the investigation of the murder of Zoe, we see a journal like post of the unnamed narrator that again deviates the reader from the main plot. He starts with the story of his childhood trauma where he witnesses a very heated up fight between his father and mother on the conflict of keeping his favorite dog Rex. His father was reluctant to keep and feed two dogs but this unnamed narrator and his mother love the dog unconditionally. When his father threatens them to shoot the dog and his mother resists in the kitchen, his father leaves in anger and that moment of furiousness and rage leaves this kid (narrator) traumatized as he says that it was horrible to see your mother cry where "you feel powerless and impotent". Eventually his father shoots the dog which



leaves a very traumatizing impact on his personality on which he says, “that the sight of this dead animal had stained my life forever” (189). Here for a moment, the canvas of the narrative draws a kind of defamiliarization for the readers through this device of deviation as categorized by Stockwell under foregrounding.

The sense of defamiliarization that comes quite frequently due to these journal-like postings of the unnamed narrator’s story with the mainstream story not only complicates but also helps the reader to “refamiliarize” the macrostructure of the text that is not only unveiling of mystery. After chapter four of part two, there is again an appearance of this unnamed narrator who narrates his story of abusive childhood where his father was extremely “dangerous” as he was profusely argumentative. There is a story of his mother worrying about his future and safety and he remembers that word “safety” throughout his life, at one point he says he doesn’t feel safe even when he was even a grownup.

I don’t have an education, she’d say. I left school at fifteen. Promise me you won’t do the same. You need to be educated – that’s how to make money. That’s how to survive, how to be safe. I’ve never forgotten that. More than anything, I wanted to be safe. Even now, I still don’t feel safe. My father was a dangerous man, that’s why (158).

The fluctuation of the time in the narrative shows what Caruth says that rethinking and referring to that traumatic incident not only eliminate but recreates those histories in our memory and mind which is more frustrating and dangerous for a traumatic personality to come out of its whirlpool (24). The word “safe” is quite pertinent in this milieu here because from the lens of cognitive poetics we are focusing on the language and narrative pattern of the text and the word safe reveals that this unnamed narrator as a child is not safe. We see even Caruth says that there is a link between trauma and language and that is why Freud turned to literature because via literature such events and experiences can be described (12-13). So here we see that Michaelides is deviating and creating a sense of defamiliarization to make it refamiliarized again with the word “safe”.

### 5.1.2 Image Schema

The present study examines childhood trauma in *The Maidens* through an examination of the metaphors and imagery employed in the book, utilizing image schemata, another cognitive poetics method. Mental maps known as image schemata enable the researcher to make sense of abstract ideas by projecting them onto perceptible, sensory events. Image schemata being one of the key concepts in cognitive poetics refers to the mental structures that underlie readers' perception and understanding of the world.

In the context of childhood trauma, image schemas has been applied to identify patterns of thought and behaviour that are associated with traumatic experiences. For example, in the current research the image schema of containment has been used to understand how individuals in *The Maidens* who have experienced childhood trauma may feel trapped or confined by their past experiences. Sebastian as a traumatized protagonist depicts that very form of containment resulting in mental anguish expressed in the journals he wrote. The depiction is mirrored as:

I know I can remember if I try. But do I want to? I have a feeling it's something I tried very hard to forget. What is it I'm so afraid of? Is it my father? Do I still believe he will emerge from a trapdoor like a pantomime villain, and strike me down? (86)

He reflects back using the traumatic images like he had “a horrible feeling of recollection”, that he finds very hard to forget. He is still “afraid” of his father as if he will come out from a doorway like a “villain” from a pantomime and “strike” him down (Michaelides 85). The attention is here caught by a stylistically deviant feature that is the presence of several striking phrasal metaphors like “horrible feelings”, “afraid of father”, “villain”, “strike” etc that directly take the reader back to the past of the character where he finds himself a victim of child abuse.

Another example is of Mariana who as a therapist, one believes, would recognize something off about the relationship between Zoe and Sebastian. Michaelides tries to account for this by including the thread of certain image schemas in the story of Marianna's relationship with her own father and how she was blinded by love for him and thought his abuse was what love was. She thought of her childhood in Athens, and her father how as a child, she had adored him, this “handsome”, “clever”, “charismatic

man” who she worshipped and idealized. It took Mariana a long time to see that her father was not quite the man she thought he was. The revelation occurred when she was in her early twenties, after she graduated from Cambridge. She had begun therapy with Ruth, with the intention of addressing the loss of her mother, but found herself talking mainly about her father.

She felt compelled to convince Ruth what a wonderful man he was, how brilliant, how hardworking, how much he had sacrificed, raising two children on his own and how much he loved her. After several months of listening to Mariana, and saying very little one day Ruth finally interrupted. What she said was simple, direct, and devastating.

Ruth made the most delicate suggestion that Mariana was hiding the truth about her father. She felt compelled to challenge Mariana's evaluation of him as a devoted dad in light of what she had heard. According to Ruth, the man sounded "authoritarian," "cold," "emotionally unavailable," frequently "critical and highly unkind," and even "cruel." These characteristics have nothing to do with love. She awakes Mariana advising that she can't love someone if she is afraid of him (212). Mariana, however, reassured Ruth that she was mistaken to believe her father when she said, "He's difficult, but he loved her and she loved him too." The dominant image schema across the description here is one of containment. Within this conceptual framework, the progression of negative imagery can be observed as it moves from an initial position to the macrostructure towards a concluding state where the narrative encapsulates fragments of childhood trauma intertwined with memories.

Furthermore, Ruth, her therapist refers to it “a desire to be loved.” In the worst case scenario, it's a “pathological attachment” to a “narcissistic man”, a jumble of thankfulness, “fear”, anticipation, and “dutiful obedience” that has nothing to do with genuine love (212). In general, this mental space about their relationship underlies concept of involving not only the ideas of sacrifice, abuse, and trauma but also transformation and blurred identity. Hence, the analysis has focused on illuminating how figure and ground function as picture schemas at the thematic and macrostructure levels.

She had a hard time criticizing her father, so it would make sense that she wouldn't recognize Sebastian for what he was because she looked at him as she did her

father. Essentially, the figure of father becomes part of the ground. Mariana being paranoid uses filters to see people. According to Shengold, this kind of investigation cultivates respect for the mysterious, paradoxical operations of the mind and soul. As a psychological defense mechanism, displacement entails redirecting a negative emotion from its original source to a less threatening target. Shengold characterized it as an inadvertent distortion involving a shift in the significance of certain aspects relative to others. Stockwell adopts a similar perspective when he claims that image schemas are mental models that serve as fundamental templates for comprehending conceptual relationships that are frequently encountered. When Mariana calls Ruth, her supervisor and asks for help and probably enlightens her on what to do. She was thus prevented from seeing things clearly by the schemata she had grown to believe in. As she had a traumatic childhood, the impact of it had lasted a life time because there was no awareness of it and so it had been the cause of everything wrong that happened to her in her relations with her husband and niece Zoe. It supports Stockwell's theory of image schema that characters in narrative fiction move over the ground in two ways: either qualitatively as they develop and acquire features from their apparent psychological development, or geographically and chronologically as the story moves forward. For this reason, characters in narrative fiction may be thought of as cognitive figures (Stockwell 49). Image schemas of father's portrayal has been grounded as base to identify similar patterns in the text that relate to childhood trauma and to identify spatial metaphors that relate to feelings of disorientation or confusion in the present life of trauma survivor.

## **5.2 Cognitive Poetics Analysis of Perpetrator's Trauma**

The narrative of the *The Maidens* reveals the continuous struggle of the characters who suffer from childhood trauma throughout the story we see their memories haunt them in their present and the undesirable past remains poignant for them and shapes their personality as depressed and alienated. This is what Shengold posits that too much of the trauma is terrifying and it forces the child to engage in a large-scale confusing defense mechanism that impairs their ability to reason and feel. He outlines it stating that:

Soul murder results from trauma imposed from the world outside the mind that overwhelms by flooding the mental apparatus with feeling. (The same state can

be arrived at as a reaction to great deprivation.) The terrifying “too muchness” requires massive and mind-distorting defensive operations making for the child’s having to struggle in order to think and to feel. The child’s sense of identity (that is, the maintenance of mental representations of the self) is threatened (255).

This claim of Shengold gives rise to the inference of the perpetrator’s trauma endured and experienced by the characters in the course of this novel. In the above section of the same chapter where researcher picked up the journal-like posts of the unknown narrator to identify the reasons of this childhood trauma reveals also the reason of this evolution in the intensity and label of the trauma from childhood to perpetrator’s trauma.

In the first entry of the unknown narrator in the novel, he expresses his moods and feelings about himself when he tries to make up his childhood trauma by saying that he feels safe because he is a grown-up now and can deal with and understand the reasons and causes of his trauma but the narrative of the text reveals his traumatic personality turning into another kind of traumatized personality but this revelation for the readers doesn’t come directly. Michaelides presents this narrator's entry and past story in the journal posts where to analyze and identify him as a perpetrator becomes strange for the reader and again as the device of foregrounding as projected by Stockwell, the journal-like entry of his narrative reveals confusion for the readers. When the researcher here is using the word confusion here, it refers to the confusion to identify him as a victim or as a perpetrator. He says, he feels safe and suddenly felt calm and at peace as if a raging fever had abolished and the delirium burned itself out but the other part of him, the good part is rising with the dawn but then he realized the good part was gone and he is a single person gets split into two and he persistently says that he doesn’t want to be two people, he wants to be one person, a person who is whole and not sacred of his two folded sided but since he is traumatized personality and victim of childhood trauma so he had no choice other than to live in the box of two different personalities (Michaelides 85).

These words from the journal of killer manifest his struggle for defence mechanism. The development of this kind of vertical split in the mind, making for contradictory mental compartments of character and motivation shows confusion and that is present in all of us to some extent. Shengold believes this kind of intense and

striking characteristic of living in a shackle of two personalities mostly occur in those who have suffered child abuse or deprivation (Shengold, 147). The killer reveals a scrupulous honesty in his journal-like entries in the text of the novel. He is responsibly aware both of his hatred of others and of his hatred of himself. His idiosyncratic masochism is of the “honesty to a fault” which shows that he is affected by the trauma and knows about his fault (147).

The most important lines that show the existence of perpetrators’ trauma of this unknown narrator (Sabastian) are when he says that he was calm and sane when he was writing that journal like posting of the events related to his past and present and he says that he possess two of his sides one is calm and other is “bloodthirsty, mad, and seeking revenge” and in some instances the side which is blood thirsty makes him so restless that he wanted to take the life of someone but that killer (perpetrators side) remains imprisoned, locked up, sedated, and denied.

I am two people in one mind. Part of me keeps my secrets – he alone knows the truth – but he’s kept prisoner, locked up, sedated, denied a voice. He finds an outlet only when his jailer is momentarily distracted. When I am drunk, or falling asleep, he tries to speak. But it’s not easy. Communication comes in fits and starts – a coded escape plan from a POW camp (Michaelides 31).

He considers himself the jailor of his undesirable thoughts and says that those unwanted thoughts find their outlet when the conscious jailor (he himself in his consciousness) gets distracted so it shows that he is still in his adulthood enduring the trauma which we cannot label solely as childhood trauma and we cannot go directly to the conclusion that he was a criminal or the potential murderer that’s why researcher intends to see that how the narrative of the text unpacks this mystery and what dynamics of perpetrator’s trauma has been manifested in the novel and for the intended purpose the researcher aims to analyze the dynamics of perpetrator’s trauma through the same devices selected from Stockwell’s Cognitive Poetics as done before to analyze childhood trauma of the novel. Since the researcher wants not to highlight the psychological reasons behind the perpetrator’s trauma as stated in the objective of this study and wants to find out the new inference that becomes the cause of criminal activities and that is Shengold’s concept of “soul murder” so this part of the chapter will analyze the text with special focus on the instances revealing perpetrator’s trauma.

### 5.2.1 *Foregrounding*

Foregrounding, as described earlier, in a text can be accomplished through various techniques, including repetition, deviation, defamiliarization, syntactic structures, the incorporation of creative metaphors, and other similar strategies. (Stockwell, 44). The researcher here attempts to employ foregrounding within the context of defamiliarization, considering it as the narrative technique employed by the author to add complexity to the readers' experience. Subsequently, the focus will be on implementing Stockwell's concept of deviation from the main text to create a schemata image. Ultimately, the goal is to demonstrate how defamiliarization serves as a source for both refamiliarization and a practice of deriving meaning in a text.

In grasping the macro structure, a crucial initial step involves recognizing foregrounding, as outlined by Stockwell, which is attainable through narrative estrangement. Michaelides, the author of the novel, accomplishes this by the same unnamed narrator who appears in the form of journal like entries in the text. This narrator guides the reader from the conventional narrative of inferring the main story to the mental realms of estrangement and defamiliarization. Remarkably, the intermittent appearances of this unnamed narrator contribute to unraveling the mystery, ultimately leading to the refamiliarization (mystery solving part of the novel) of the narrative within the text.

When analyzing the perpetrator's trauma in *The Maidens*, the current study uses foregrounding as a method to identify themes and patterns related to traumatic experiences in childhood which set the base for some of the major characters turning into perpetrators. Specifically, the author utilizes the device of repetition to underscore the traumatic experiences of certain characters, emphasizing particular memories. Furthermore, the writer employs deviation from the primary narrative of the text to emphasize how unusual the circumstances are, which is aligned with Stockwell's idea of "defamiliarization."

The idea behind perpetrator trauma is that "perpetrators can experience their crimes as trauma" which is exactly happens in this novel too both the murderers are victims themselves and for them it is like giving sacrifices to satisfy their disturbed and distorted selves (god like position). Beschara Karam articulates similar concept in his article "The Representation of Perpetrator Trauma in Forgiveness" that the directive

and performative act of the atrocity or crime itself “causes a psychological injury to the perpetrator, which can result in adverse physical, social, or emotional consequences” or symptoms. The offender therefore experiences traumatic symptoms, similar to those of victims. These symptoms can include some, or all, of the following: intrusive and recurring flashbacks; avoidance of the places, people or activities of the original trauma, insomnia, nightmares, fear, paranoia and disassociations (Karam 5). With regard to the physical and psychical symptoms of those traumatized, perpetrators experiencing trauma appear to have the very same psychical symptoms that trauma victims experience. These include such symptoms as hallucinations, disorientation, unexplained bodily ailments, memory lapses, flashbacks, recurring symptoms and nightmares (7).

The current study, while analyzing the characters of *The Maidens*, proposes a new focus on trauma that is perpetrator trauma within the larger field of trauma and memory studies. The focus is clearly on the perpetrator, as opposed to that of the victim, and it shifts the analysis away from a victim’s testimony to that of the perpetrator’s confession. In parts six and seven of *The Maidens*, claiming to know where Edward hid the murder weapon, Zoe brings Mariana into a woodland, admits that she was having an affair with Sebastian and plotting with him to kill Mariana, and attacks her with the knife. Zoe, who blames Mariana for Sebastian’s death, chases her through the woodland “like an avenging Fury,” while Zoe describes herself “like Clytemnestra ... or Medea,” a woman capable of exacting vengeance on those who have wronged her (Michaelides 344-346). This final reference carries particular weight given the traumatic backstory nearly every major character in the novel possesses. Like the figures in the Greek and Jacobean revenge tragedies *The Maidens* references, characters like Zoe and Sebastian enact violence due to the violence of their pasts, thus perpetuating the cycle. This analysis is achieved by the uses of the deviance approach of foregrounding. The objective is achieved by deviating the characters' inclination to engage in criminal behavior away from their childhood experiences. It is delineated through Zoe articulating:

You framed him, Mariana. Sebastian said all I had to do was make you think I was afraid of Fosca. You did the rest. That was the funniest part of this whole performance: watching you play detective.’ She smiled. ‘You’re not the detective... You’re the victim (345).



According to Stockwell, deviation is also regarded as a crucial component of literariness, or at the very least, literary merit. Deviance can be viewed as either departing from the co-text that came before it in a particular text or as departing from other instances of discourse in the larger universe. In the example of Zoe above, the text is set up a particular pattern or theme of perpetrator trauma, establishing it in the reader's mind, so as to make a contrast with it later on that is all the more striking.

Chapters from a murderer's perspective, narrated in the first person, interrupt the otherwise third-person limited narrative of *The Maidens*. Later, readers learn that these chapters form a letter from Sebastian to Zoe. This passage marks the initial encounter between the readers and the killer. It is only at the conclusion of the novel that they discover this killer is not directly associated with the Cambridge killer. The letters thus provide a form of misdirection, as readers try to match the author of the letters with one of the characters whom Mariana interacts with.

I see I have become altogether a different person. It's a bit like being reborn, I suppose. But no ordinary birth – it's a metamorphosis. What emerges from the ashes is not a phoenix, but an uglier creature: deformed, incapable of flight, a predator using its claws to cut and rip (31).

In this framework, the speaker starts with reflecting on the irreversible nature of taking another person's life, acknowledging the transformation into a completely different individual. He compares this transformation to a kind of rebirth, but not just as an ordinary one, rather a metamorphosis. He observes that the result was an ugly beast rather than anything that resembled a "phoenix rising from the ashes". This deformed being lacked the ability to soar and instead functioned as a predator, utilizing its claws for cutting and ripping (Michaelides 26). The writer's portrayal of himself as "deformed," undergoing a metamorphosis rather than a rebirth, alludes to the disturbance of a natural and healthy cycle. That's the psychological rebirth that Shengold illustrates in the *Soul Murder*. In reflecting some of his patients he regarded them as victims of soul murder, who had managed to alter their false identity.

According to Shengold, children who have been subjected to torture and deprivation under conditions of complete dependency elicit a terrifying combination of helplessness and rage, feelings that the child must suppress in order to survive. The same feelings of suppressed fear, rage and hatred have been foregrounded in

Sabastian's past that turn him into a killer. The researcher using the tool of Foregrounding analyzed the journals by killer by highlighting the significant features of the text that are not immediately apparent. It is used to identify the author's intention, the themes, and the emotions conveyed in the portrayal of the killer. For instance, in dog killing episode, the hatred that he sensed for his father when he killed Rex recurs in his hatred for his mother for leaving him behind. Here once again, Mariana's passing remark at the start of the book, stating that Sebastian had distant relationships with both of his parents, echoes through this incident. Foregrounding enabled the researcher to make new connections and gain a deeper understanding of the text by highlighting the instances when it is deviated from the usual. Similarly, the recurrent instances of a journal-like narrative from the unnamed narrator create a sense of defamiliarization within the text. This not only adds complexity but also serves to assist in a process of "refamiliarization" with the macrostructure of the text.

### 5.2.2 *Image Schema*

The Image Schemata as described earlier developed by Peter Stockwell has been applied as tool to help identify the recurring patterns of images and metaphors in the text and to understand how they contribute to the meaning of the text. Early in the novel, Mariana goes to Zoe's campus residence and looks up at her through a stained-glass window, the small panes broke up Zoe's image, fracturing it into a jigsaw of diamond shapes (Michaelides 55). Mariana envisions rearranging the separate panes to form a new image of a fragile and endearing six-year-old Zoe. The window stands for how an image loses coherence when it is broken up into smaller parts.

The effect of the stained-glass window on Mariana's view of Zoe enacts a miniature version of the novel's overall construction. Michaelides's short, enjambed chapters break up scenes into moments, making it difficult for readers to retain continuity and grasp the whole picture coherently. The short chapters jar and dislocate the reader, replicating Mariana's emotional state.

Similarly, the heroes of ancient Greek mythology arguably exist above or outside of time, both in the sense of being timeless and in the details of their portrayal. Time functions as a motif in *The Maidens* in similar ways. Mariana does not lose her own life, but her delay facing the truth about Sebastian, Zoe, and herself allows Zoe to put Sebastian's plan into effect, kill three women, and almost kill Mariana and Fred.

References to moments and places being frozen in time also occur throughout the narrative. For example, when Morris brings Mariana's bags into her room, he remarks that St Christopher's is one of the places where time stands still, though descriptions of the school's aging walls and decaying statues play counterpoint (87). When Zoe informs Mariana that Edward did not write the letter she found in Zoe's stuffed zebra, "The sun suddenly goes behind a cloud, and time seems to slow to a crawl" (338). Mariana experiences heightened awareness of the world around her: She "can hear the first drops of rain, tapping at the stone windowsill in the folly, and an owl screeching somewhere in the distance" (338). Though not a simile, this elongation of time functions similarly to the analogies in Homer, casting a spotlight on the moment of revelation. It is important to notice that these events are chronologically ordered if one pays attention to the Mariana's mental state during the novel, although there is no evidence in the novel to indicate when and how exactly these events take place. This chronological order, however, can be of great help when it comes to analyzing the novel through 'Mental Spaces' and 'Image Schemas.' One should notice the repetition of all these events. There happens a lot that the image schema about her husband that links back to her father's portrayal in her mind is broken during her meeting with Ruth and her mind becomes full with a lot of new and strange things. For Mariana's father, money was a symbol of security. Mariana believes Sebastian felt the same. None of these blends would probably come into being for the readers, but there are more elements inside Mariana's mind than a reader's, and these elements like the depression wave come into being via the broken schemas that are activated along with the previous ones.

Mariana ends up with a messed up brain as the new image schemas are generated one after the other, to the point that she cannot think or decide properly. The schemas are erased, as soon as they come to life, by the new ones and the blends start destroying the inputs. The cognitive theories lay bare the mind of a character who is trapped inside a world he cannot make sense of. No matter how vague this world is, Mariana's mind appears unable to process this world, as it represent everything as 'weird,' even if they are not weird after all.

Mariana's husband Sebastian is already dead when the novel begins, but his life story is learned through his interspersed first-person narrative. In the first one, he announces that he is a killer, which may lead readers to assume that the letter writer is the killer of the Maidens. Only much later does it emerge that the person he killed was

Mariana's father, not the women though he had a hand in plotting their deaths. Sebastian's cruelty and violence appear to stem from the severe abuse he experienced as a child, making him one of several characters locked in a cycle of trauma and abuse.

He kept on perceiving his mother's presence in the background, observing as his father subjected him to torment. Questions arose within him. Why didn't she intervene? Why didn't she safeguard him? Why didn't she instill in him the belief that he was worthy of protection? While she had stood up for Rex, holding a knife to his father's chest and threatening him, she had never done the same for him. A fiery anger and rising rage welled up within him, an awareness that it was wrong and that he should restrain it before it overwhelmed him. Despite this knowledge, he chose to fan the flames, and as a result, he felt consumed by the burning emotions (216).

He strategically positions images like "tortured" alongside "protect" to construct a mental space where he experiences a sense of insecurity and lack of safety. Likewise, the impactful images such as "a fire burning," "a rising anger," "a rage," "the flames," and "burned," employed by the unnamed individual initially portrayed as a villain but later revealed as Sebastian, serve as a connection, bringing forth the manifestation of perpetrator trauma rooted in childhood experiences.

In one of his journal entry, Sebastian describes his feelings and thoughts as "terrified" when his father "threatens" to bury him alive if he betrays his secrets. He used to envision the scenario of being "buried alive in the pit", with the surrounding area filled with decaying carcasses, squirming with maggots, worms, and other flesh-eating creatures. This would make him shiver with fear. Even in his adulthood, the thought of it still makes him shudder. These moments of fear and grief are represented using a parabolic curve, which would show the intensity of the victim's emotion rising and then falling again over time. However, the pulverization of the soul does not conclude solely with his childhood rather it integrates the traumatized childhood with an evolving perpetrator who turned to "violent fantasies" and for whom "death" becomes "a big interest" after his favourite dog is killed by his father. At a very young age, witnessing the lifeless body of his pet left an indelible mark on his life and he learned to hate (190).

When he is nearly twelve, his mother suggested they needed a younger dog to replace Rex in shepherding. In response, his father suggested shooting Rex so they

didn't have to care for two dogs. His mother had refused to let him, causing a fight until his mother finally managed to threaten his father with a knife to stop him. After his father walked out, he had told his mother that "I'll kill him for you". Then, they heard a gunshot, and he went outside to see Rex dead outside. Instead of crying, he simply learned "how to hate". As time passed, he would imagine and act out terrible things, including making himself bleed. After Sebastian died in that accident, Zoe decided to carry out Sebastian's plan to murder Mariana in order to get his hands on her fortune. Zoe had previously told Sebastian about the Maidens at school and it gave him the idea for the plan.

The plan involved framing Fosca for a series of murders, beginning with Tara's. Zoe planted the postcards and underlined the passages in his books. He also planted some hairs from Tara's head behind Fosca's wardrobe, which the police haven't found yet ("but they will"). Zoe then drew Mariana into the investigation and got her to try to convince the police it was Fosca. Zoe while making an attempt to murder Mariana, ended up surviving the knife wound, but attempted suicide multiple times and had a psychotic breakdown. Deemed unfit to stand trial, she's now a patient at the Grove under the care of Theo, who ended up applying for the job there. Theo reveals that Zoe was unwell, mentally and psychologically and she was acting as a proxy for Sebastian. *The Maidens* is Michaelides's quest through the human mind. Using the theories brought forward regarding the cognitive processes of mind, like mental spaces and image schemas, the current research traces the path Michaelides takes towards innocence to violence resulting in murderous madness.

### **5.3 Parabolic Projection and Soul Murder**

Schematic knowledge is fundamentally structured or depicted in ideal terms, characterized by a level of abstraction that moves away from the information found in individual sentences. Stockwell stresses upon the idea that how does our sense of the overall gist of a story, its narrative arc, come to be constructed? (140).

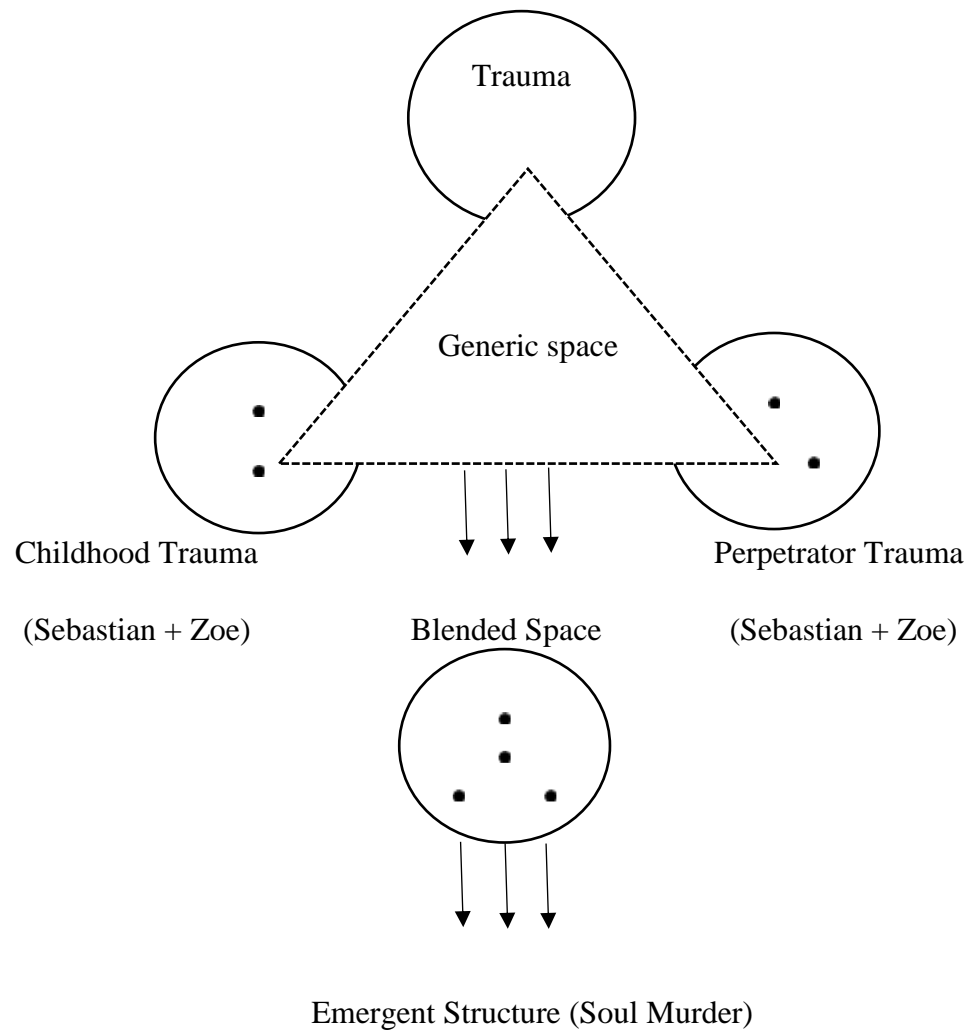


Figure 3: Conceptual Mapping in *The Maidens*

In the chapter “Blending and compression” Stockwell suggests about the text that how microstructures coming from different cognitive poetics rules like in the study we have selected foregrounding, defamiliarization and refamiliarization creates a kind of image schema in the mind of the readers and text reveals a macrostructure that helps the reader to infer the meanings and proceeding of the text. Initially, the microstructure of all propositions encountered during reading is organized into facts that describe the occurrences in the text. All the information gathered from the text, which are like individual events in the story, is grouped using certain thinking techniques called macro rules to form an overall structure. To understand the working of macro rules, the researcher aims to reflect the “emergent structure” through a “parabolic projection” of the text.

To highlight how these macro rules support the emergent structure that in this study's case is "soul murder" of the characters in both the phases of their childhood and perpetrators stage of trauma, point of reflection is what turns childhood trauma into perpetrator trauma that are not just the traumatized past or incidents or the psychological makeup of the targeted person but there is an immense level of soul murder as posits by Shengold which initiates the whole continuing process of trauma from one phase to another stage of trauma.

The same aspect of soul murder reflects in the novel *The Maidens* when the development of murderous or villainous feelings is depicted in the words of Sebastian, "I banish all pity from my heart" (159) and at another place he swears to "never forgive" his father revealing his evil plan to "kill" him in order to take revenge for abusing him and his mother (189-190). In this context, the impact on the victim's psyche extends beyond the trauma narrative, as trauma might render the individual passive or phobic. While trauma could lead to depression or a sense of helplessness, the victim's proclivity for violence becomes the focal point of the current study specifically, the murder of his soul. This soul-deep harm goes beyond haunting memories and it fosters deep-seated hatred and triggers him to undergo a metamorphosis in which "the good part" of him gets vanished (190). So the blend of Sebastian's journey from his 'part that doesn't want to hurt people' to the "villain" who is "full of hate and anger" is central to the notion of parable. The conceptual content of emerging structure that is 'soul murder' takes on a life of its own and becomes apparent here. Caruth describes it as the intricate link between trauma and survival which doesn't stem from a clear and straightforward connection between awareness and life-threatening experiences. Rather, it emerges from the paradoxical and indirect structure inherent in mental trauma, where the effects are not straightforward and may not be immediately apparent (12).

However, the irony is that the impact of soul murder doesn't end there but it goes on in the form of an act of massive violence or moral crime which again perturbs the victims and hence becomes another level of trauma that Michaelides' text *The Maidens* projects as perpetrator's trauma in the case of unnamed narrator (Sabastain) and Zoe. The perpetrator's trauma of Sabastain transfers to Zoe's tendency to murder people in the text. So when the researcher says that it does not end on the perpetrator's trauma there researcher refers to the transference of one's trauma to another character who becomes the murderer too. Shengold's viewpoint also establishes a connection here

that a murdered soul often perpetuates a cycle, with victims becoming potential abusers or struggling with conflicting impulses. One harmful consequence is the compulsion to identify with the abusive parent, leading to a repetition of traumatic experiences across generations. This cycle contributes to the transference of abuse from one person to another. Additionally, abused and traumatized individuals may grapple with intense, sometimes unconscious, self-directed or outward hatred, further burdening their perverted souls. In the text under discussion, the narration of the killer's journal entries reveals how the trajectory of Sabastian's thoughts and emotions develop in a parabolic way. Hence, the "parabolic projection" emerging from mapping between the narrative and its meaning lies in the concept of soul murder that sets the base for a range of psychological issues, including anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD, maladaptive coping mechanisms, traumatic transference, self-harm, and aggression. The conceptual integration is also apparent in the narrative, where one mental space driven by the desire to "feel safe," is mapped with another input space depicting the same victim consumed by anger, aiming to seek "revenge" and deciding to "act out cruel, horribly violent death scenes: agonised poisonings, brutal stabbings, butchery and disembowelment" (190).

Stockwell posits the idea of 'double-scope mapping' which is formed by the conceptual integration of two narrative inputs resulting in the form of "emergent structure", this all emerges from a common generic space (143). In the context of *The Maiden*, the blended space emerging from two input spaces is soul murder. This study strategically defines how the text of *The Maidens* gives us a blending space of "soul murder" through two input structures (childhood trauma and perpetrator trauma) as defined above by the lens of cognitive poetics. Shengod who defines it as a crime that shows how the victims of soul murder can be cruel to each other and they build the tendency to abolish strong emotions, such as love, happiness, etc. The sufferer is unable to utilize his intellect, think rationally, comprehend reality, or make judgments about it, as described by von Feuerbach (254).

The same blend of two different spaces can be seen at work to connect the psychological impact of childhood and perpetrators trauma on the characters playing the leading role in *The Maidens*. For example, the concept of "innocence" is blended with "violence" to create a new meaning that highlights the loss of innocence due to traumatic experiences. In Zoe's case, the mental space of Zoe's past can be blended



with the mental space of her present to create a complex and traumatic personality. The macrostructure narrative illustrates that Zoe had a troubled past but she was able to move past her sadness and experienced depression less frequently as she grew older. It is demonstrated that she was able to concentrate on her education and that she ended her adolescent in far better form than she had begun (Michaeides 56).

The contrast to that, however, is shown in the microstructure of the text, when it is revealed that as a teenager, Zoe had an unstable love involvement with Mariana's late husband Sebastian, which ended abruptly when he passed away. The two started this relationship when Zoe was just fifteen-year old. This blending of past and present experiences has a significant impact on Zoe's life and adds to her complex personality. This supports the emerging structure that suggests her repressed or murdered soul is the main reason behind the broken sense of connection she feels after losing her parents, a link that is further strengthened by Sebastian's death. She expressed that when he died, it felt as if she had been stabbed in the guts. She admitted to not knowing how to cope with the overwhelming anger and pain. However the narration reveals that one day she gained understanding and clarity. At that moment, she realized that she had to fulfill Sebastian's plan for her, just as Sebastian had desired. It became the last meaningful action she could undertake for Sebastian, intending to honor his "memory" and seek "revenge" (279). Here the narrative is delineating the fact that Zoe as a killer was not just a psychopath who took a delight in hurting or killing others. Rather the murderer is described as a "merciless monster" who uses other human beings as if they were broken toys to be smashed to bits. Moral deterioration and her "suffering soul," which indicates that she was also in anguish, are the causes behind this "violence and horror" (184). The text's microstructure reveals that "the depth of the wound," "cut on their throats," and the bodies of the murdered girls presented as "to dazzle" and "to blind with horror" weren't the result of a psychotic killer acting out of uncontrollably violent rage, but rather were the result of a methodical and deliberate attempt (152, 208). The notion has been established that childhood is a reactive experience, which means that one needs to first experience empathy from his parents or other primary caregivers before he can feel empathy for another human being.

According to Caruth, what makes a painful experience remarkable is that it is not just a memory, it feels like a distressing reliving of the past, almost as if the memory is happening again in the present. For someone who went through a traumatic

experience, the importance of an event is not just in its distressing facts, but also in how its existence goes beyond rational explanation (Caruth, 13-15). In Zoe's case, the substitute parents were not strong enough to keep the docility of her conscience and immoral feelings away, nor loving enough to dilute the girl's own repressed rage and immorality. She had tried to feel as much as possible to relax her emotional sphincter but her basic emotional structure was now deficient, and the intensity of the pressure of her immoral feelings was too much for her. There was not enough love to transcend or to neutralize the hatred, and there was too much danger of losing control to be able to express her intense destructive urges in words or actions. Similarly, the man who actually planned to kill those maidens was once a little boy, a boy who was shown no empathy, no kindness. He had suffered horribly and transferred his villainous attributes to Zoe successfully because her morality was likewise undermined by her soul's murder. Both the characters intention to kill others is basically an extension of their souls murder. By considering the abusers as the victims, the researcher is able to take a more logical approach to support the emergent structure of the analysis discussed as soul murder.

Shengold, in his work *Soul Murder*, reinforces and provides further detail on the common observation that individuals who have endured trauma and abuse during childhood often perpetuate the cycle and transfer their intense rage and suppressed trauma to others. They also struggle with strong impulses of pain and pleasure, intense anger, and a strong need to repeat the hurtful experiences they went through, playing both the victim and the perpetrator (Shengold 40). As the narrative of the text also suggests Zoe is also a victim as evaluated by Theo, her therapist that on some level she was a victim too. This is how Mariana envisages her "a small, frightened girl of six" and Mariana wonders where "that beautiful, innocent child" went (331). What happened to her? What had been done to that child? What did she endure right under Mariana's nose, in the shadows, in the wings, just behind the scenes? Mariana realized that she had failed Zoe. She had failed to protect her (287). Mariana's thoughts about Zoe also reflects the element of soul murder behind her devilish act of killing. And later on the mental spaces of Zoe during her therapy reveals to Theo that actually Sebastian, a soul murdered killer tried to kill Mariana. Zoe was merely his proxy and a puppet. She was entirely controlled by "brilliant, beautiful" plan, which according to

Sebastian “involves blood and sacrifice” to unite them (329). Nevertheless, the ideas of sacrifice, abuse, and trauma can also be seen blended together throughout the novel.

The above analysis also suggests that experiencing trauma during childhood may initially foster a feeling of omnipotence, but this sense of invincibility gets diminished as the individual becomes aware of their own limitations over time. Through these textual incidents we see that how the narrative of the text manifests the blending of past and present, innocence and violence, victimization and perpetration to turn the meanings of the words and the worlds into a new comprehension that is the soul murder which is exactly what Stockwell says about parabolic projection in the chapter *Blending and Compression*. The analysis of *The Maidens* through the selective cognitive poetics strategies also suggests that merely understanding the psychological idea of trauma is insufficient for researching and determining how childhood trauma contributes to perpetrator trauma. Rather, the poetics of cognitive analysis opens up a new way to investigate why trauma victims commit evil deeds. It's not just a matter of the characters' psychological makeup, as psychological deficiencies can also lead to aggressive behavior, disruptive behaviors, difficulties forming stable and healthy attachments to caregivers, and problems affecting the child's sense of security. When a victim reaches the point where he becomes a criminal and even a murderer, it indicates that there is something immoral within their sub conscious that motivates them to attempt a crime known as soul murder.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

The exploration of the impact of childhood trauma, particularly how it leads to trauma in individuals who later become perpetrators, has been thoroughly examined in the earlier chapters, particularly concerning the emotional and spiritual dimensions. The study endeavors to elucidate the research questions outlined in the introductory chapter. An analysis of two fictional narratives titled, *The Silent Patient* and *The Maidens* is done through the conceptual lens of Cathy Caruth and Leonard Shengod which highlights childhood and perpetrator trauma in order to accomplish a diverse and extended understanding of trauma stimulus.

The research is aimed to examine the shift of violence within trauma narrative fiction using cognitive poetics analysis. The focus is on understanding the development of characters who transform from being victims of violence to becoming perpetrators themselves. These individuals initially experienced trauma but ultimately transformed into entities capable of inflicting harm. The researcher analyzed the traumatic portrayal of violent perpetrators in the selected fiction and other than the psychological reasons assumed for the violent behavior. It also brought to light that psychological injuries are not the only reasons that turn a trauma victim into a perpetrator.

#### 6.1 Findings of the Study

In this chapter, I contend that the marks of childhood trauma emerge, persist and change the innocent characters into the violent perpetrators in *The Silent Patient* and *The Maidens*. The pertinent need to explore the stage when these innocent children (traumatic characters) receive the abuse and violence in their childhood, there is an intense silence, a kind of denial and unrecognition of trauma that these characters don't recognize themselves that has been explored by the narrative of both the novels in this study.

The research brings forth the agentic presence of the soul and its overriding position that intersects with the psychological makeup of the traumatic characters presented in the novels. The researcher claims that it is not only the psychological play of childhood trauma that turns these characters into violent murderers, though the

researcher has not denied the role of childhood trauma as the stimulus but explored a more controlling stimulus which is the murder of the innocent self, death of inside, murder of the soul. This study posits a response to the problem statement, asserting that if the soul of any traumatic person is intact, they have a fair chance to heal their trauma but if their soul is murdered then the prospects for recovery and improvement become markedly diminished.

The cognitive poetics study of the text proves that the leading characters in both novels are victims of soul murder. The theme of childhood trauma leading to perpetrator trauma of the characters is tied to their soul murder in the early years of their lives and “flashbacks” ignite their traumatic memory of the past.

The current investigation examined the primary characters in the selected texts, exploring their literary portrayal of the sociological and psychological repercussions of soul murder and childhood trauma. The study illustrated how the entwining of these elements gives rise to a dual and intricate personality, showcasing the destructive impact of abuse. Consequently, by applying Caruth and Shengold’s respective theoretical frameworks, this research found that the novels depict how a character can display the negative effects of abuse by ending up vicious and evil in his actions.

Having examined the symbolic portrayal of disorienting events and the ensuing sufferings experienced by trauma victims in the selected narratives, it can be deduced that the author adeptly captures the traumatizing reality of perpetrators, which can be considered an extension of soul murder. Cognitive poetics analysis of these novels asserts that a parable goes beyond a straightforward, one-to-one metaphorical connection between the narrative and its meaning. It expands and represents the story by incorporating broader elements, utilizing concepts from various cognitive domains. This method facilitated a more intricate exploration of meaning, encouraging readers to delve into the narrative within a broader context that extends beyond the immediate plot and characters. The analysis section of the study demonstrates that both the selected narratives effectively identify the individuals subjected to traumatic pain, delineate the nature of the pain and harrowing trauma inflicted upon these characters during their formative years, assign responsibility for the trauma, and establish the connection between trauma victims and the individuals who later become criminals. Therefore, it can be rightly asserted that a successful process of meaning-making has been achieved

through the utilization of cognitive poetics approaches, as evidenced by the examination of the selected texts. This addresses the initial research question, which centers on investigating how the selected texts construct a compelling framework for childhood and perpetrator trauma through the application of cognitive poetics tools.

The significance of the soul murder perspective conveyed in the narration of the selected text is emphasized and understood by means of the second research question in conjunction with the third research question. The discussions in the fourth and fifth chapters substantiate the assertion that the human mind, personality, and psyche bear the impact of abusive practices and the destruction of the soul, sustaining the wounds and sufferings of trauma victims. The inflicted trauma, which they cannot articulate or give voice to, extends beyond the development of complexes or heightened sensitivity. Instead, suppressed trauma fosters feelings of rage and revenge, transforming the victims into perpetrators. This harm resulting from trauma and abuse not only affects their emotions and psyche but also inflicts damage on their soul, leading to a deterioration of morality in these characters.

To wrap up my research, I've provided a succinct overview of trauma (both childhood and perpetrator), emphasizing its importance and connection to the prevalently traumatic circumstances in the literature we're talking about. My research questions have been clearly answered, and I have also articulated the conclusion (parabolic projection) of this study after demonstrating the connection between these investigations and the ensuing debates.

## **6.2 Recommendations**

Since a literary text may be interpreted in multiple ways, the selected novels can be studied through various other theoretical lenses. For example, the current research aims to address the prevalent presence of trauma and its consequences in the analysis of the selected text. Although the study is dedicated to thoroughly exploring the pervasive theme of trauma and its implications within the context of the selected literary work, there may be limitations in providing a completely genuine critical interpretation of the novel.

Furthermore, future researchers have the opportunity to investigate the feminist elements present in these novels, considering that feminism constitutes a significant

and integral aspect associated with British culture. African, Asian, and Arab women are frequently portrayed as being oppressed and having a smaller population than men. Such an Orientalist perspective falls short of giving a whole picture. Since both of the novels related to this study have characters that are primarily female and are set in British settings, the researchers in future can attempt to challenge this common stereotype by focusing on the horrific experiences these women have in their unique culture and how such horrors of patriarchy murder their souls. Thus, a comparative feminist analysis can be done to examine the individual traumas of English women, from male and female perspectives.

Since the present study has exclusively employed three cognitive poetics devices for the analysis of the selected traumatic fiction, there exist numerous other models and approaches outlined by Stockwell that researchers can utilize to delve into the same novels.

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