



Ambivalent Sexism Explored: A Theoretical Examination of Gender Roles in The Silent Patient by Alex Michaelides

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Abstract

This article explores the portrayal of sexism in Michaelides's novel, *The Silent Patient*, using a gendered approach and drawing on Glick and Fiske's ambivalent sexism theory. This research aims to analyze the frequency and types of sexist depictions in the novel, particularly focusing on Hostile and Benevolent sexist attitudes. The analysis delves into the underlying dichotomy between Hostile and Benevolent attitudes towards the female characters, Alicia and Kathy. It also explores the contrasting representations of weakness and dependence associated with Alicia and Kathy, juxtaposed with the strength, resilience, and agency embodied by characters like Theo, Gabrielle, and the doctors at the Groove. Additionally, the prevalence of paternalism, gender differentiation, and heterosexuality as components of Hostile and Benevolent sexism is investigated to identify the dominant characteristic. By emphasizing the depiction of Hostile and Benevolent sexist attitudes, this research contributes to the ongoing efforts to challenge and dismantle gender stereotypes.

Keywords: ambivalent sexism, gender prejudice, benevolent sexism, hostile sexism, Alex Michaelides's *The Silent Patient*

1. Introduction

Sexism encompasses behaviors or ideologies that explicitly or overtly harm women, ranging from antagonistic attitudes of objectification and harassment to legitimizing inegalitarian gender roles and validating negative stereotypes of women. Glick and Fiske's theory of ambivalent sexism labels overt antipathy Hostile Sexism (HS), while Benevolent Sexism (BS) is more explicit and slowly poisonous. Alongside Glick and Fiske's two exemplifications of ambivalent sexist behavior of women, Morgan Brewington, Jana Hackathorn, and Velez (2022) agree that there are two notions of women's representation in the media—either "belonging on a pedestal or in the gutter, often referred to as the Madonna-whore dichotomy" (p. 1544). Therefore, both types are insidious because they communicate the same ideologies of men's dominance and women's incompetence but through different tools. By adopting Peter Glick

and Susan Fiske's concept of ambivalent sexism, this article examines bidimensional sexist attitudes toward the main female characters in the novel—Alicia and Kathy.

The significance of this study lies in the need to redefine societal structures and challenge gender roles, particularly regarding the marginalization of women. The research highlights the dangers of benevolent sexism, which is often overlooked due to its subtle nature. By using a gendered approach and drawing on ambivalent sexism theory, this study aims to challenge and dismantle gender stereotypes, promoting the redefinition of societal structures and the promotion of gender equality. Furthermore, the analysis of the portrayal of sexism in *The Silent Patient* contributes to the broader conversation surrounding women's experiences and the societal factors that influence gender roles on a global scale.

The Silent Patient tells the story of a famous painter, Alicia Berenson, in dual narratives. One evening, Alicia shoots her husband, Gabriel, five times and becomes silent. Her refusal to explain her motive creates a mystery that leads her to a forensic center. At this center, a psychotherapist, Theo Faber, attempts to unravel Alicia's motives, but the mystery of her silence challenges him. Alicia, however, speaks to him only twice in her diary and a painting. Before this, Theo discovers that his wife, Kathy, is cheating on him with a married man who turns out to be Gabriel, Alicia's husband. Theo decides to punish Gabriel by showing Alicia that Gabriel does not love her enough. From Alicia's diary, we learn that Theo is the man she had seen around her house and convinced her to murder Gabriel.

This article analyzes a gender-based prejudice involving a sexist evaluation of women that is seemingly positive. Ambivalent sexism helps to evaluate beliefs about women through two components: (HS) and (BS). The former is characterized by feelings of antipathy that lead to harassment, objectification, and prejudice against women. Thus, HS is characterized by aggressive and harmful attitudes toward women, who are perceived as emotional, dependent, and less intelligent. It maintains the dominant male role in society, meaning they can dictate how to think and behave to women.

On the other hand, BS is the sense of protective paternalism, meaning that women need to be protected by men, and complementary gender, in which men and women have contrasting but complementary characteristics; women are morally pure and weak, and men are competent and morally corruptible. Although BS appears rather pleasant, romantic, and proactive, it yields detrimental schemata of gender roles and generates traditional stereotypes of male dominance and justification for maintaining a patriarchal society. "Thus, benevolent sexism may be used to compensate for, or legitimate, hostile sexism ('I am not exploiting women; I love, protect, and provide for them')" (Glick & Fiske 1996, p. 492). Therefore, although HS seems more misogynistic than BS, both carry negative societal impacts that legitimize prejudice against women.

Glick and Fiske (1996) proposed that BS comprises three constructs: paternalism, gender differentiation, and heterosexuality. Each construct explains the underlying social conditions between men and women. First, paternalism is derived from paternal, defined as fatherly traits and manners of dealing with children. Thus, paternalism engages the connotation of dominant and protective control that legitimizes patriarchy and the need for a man as a provider and protector.

Second, gender differentiation presents a competitive contrast and a complementary differential construct. The former justifies male structural power, in which they oversee important institutions, while women serve as "looking-glasses," reflecting a man's achievements and power and ultimately enhancing his self-esteem (Glick & Fiske 1996, p. 493).

Similarly, complementary gender differentiation fosters schemata of women's traits that complement men's roles. For example, men work outside the home, whereas women work inside the home to maintain it for them. Third, heterosexuality, in the context of Glick and Fiske's (1996) constructs, refers to the belief that women manipulate men by sexual attraction to gain dominance over them, which leads to heterosexual hostility (494). Therefore, hostile and benevolent sexism entangles the orientation toward women and explains the means of perpetuating gender roles.

This article investigates the portrayal of sexism in *The Silent Patient* by Alex Michaelides. Through a gendered approach, the article calls on Peter Glick and Susan Fiske's ambivalent sexism theory to evaluate the frequency of sexist depictions. It assesses the occurrence of hostile and benevolent sexist attitudes and attempts to find the type of ambivalent sexism prevalent in the novel. This is explored through a textual analysis in which the researcher can connect elements of ambivalent sexism with sexist portrayals in Michaelides's novel.

The significance of the topic lies in the necessity to redefine societal structures and project alternative meanings to gender roles and the marginality of women. By bringing together structuralism and ambivalent sexism, the article provides insights that help clarify the binary opposition between men and women in a patriarchal structure. This article will call attention to the perils of benevolent sexism and will contribute to the process of investigating social factors that affect gender roles and women around the world.

Understanding the depiction of hostile and benevolent sexist attitudes is an integral part of eliminating stereotypes of gender roles. The article sheds light on *The Silent Patient* as a portrayal of social and organizational gender inequality to point out the innate inequality of its infrastructure. It focuses on women who suffer from forms of sexism as lurid as verbal and physical abuse or as subtle as protective and paternalistic behaviors.

The article provides answers to three research questions. The broad question examines how and where portrayals of ambivalent sexism are found in the novel. The first question focuses on how the novel is structured in underlying opposites, the binary opposition of hostile and benevolent attitudes towards Alicia and Kathy, to understand how representations of each sexist attitude differ. The second question reveals which side of the dichotomy the story is on, as it explains how Alicia and Kathy signify weakness and dependence. At the same time, Theo, Gabrielle, and the doctors at the Groove are referents of strength, resilience, and activeness.

The third question addresses the prevalence of paternalism, gender differentiation, and heterosexuality as constructs of HS and BS to investigate the most prevalent component. The final question traces the origins of hostility in association with parental relationships.

2. Literature Review

Brewington, Hackathorn, and Velez's article (2022) "Sexism, Actually? Analysis of Ambivalent Sexism in Popular Movies" conducted an archival analysis of the frequency of sexist portrayals in popular movies by using Ambivalent sexism. Brewington et al. counted occurrences of hostile, benevolent, and assaultive behaviors to analyze the difference in their prevalence across genres (action, drama, comedy, and fantasy) and years of movie release (from 1950 to 2010). Using archival analysis helped examine the social context and its changes, as the researchers expected benevolent sexism to occur more than hostile sexism based on their current cultural norms. Although the article sheds light on the importance of challenging familiar sexist narratives by investigating the provenance of ambivalent sexist behaviors (particularly hostility and benevolence), it neglects the three subcomponents of benevolent

sexism by Glick and Fiske. The application of the theory, therefore, permits a complete overview of benevolent sexism, and ambivalent sexism is thus underrepresented.

Muhammed (2020) performed a linguistics analysis of Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, differentiating between sexism, gender, and sexuality. Using Sara Mills's three-level model of Sexism and Language, the researcher adopts only two levels to investigate the sexist views used in the novel: Overt sexism level and discourse analysis level. The former is tackled through misogynist speeches, insults, and names/ surnames, while the latter addresses sexist language concerning women's appearances. The researcher provides quotations from the novel that exemplify the two levels of sexism and emphasizes making "language a neutral tool that is used to serve both sexes equally" (Muhammed, 2020, p. 25). The article ultimately serves to understand social factors that affect gender roles. Nevertheless, its framework limits analysis wherein sexism is perceived through direct sexism towards the female characters. In other words, a different approach to the study could answer what originates these sexist notions. A structuralist approach to sexism, however, could investigate the cause of sexism that create the dichotomy between men and women and why certain features are given to each gender.

Studying the role of Ambivalent sexism on male characters has also been investigated. In "Portrayal of Ambivalent Sexism in Fernando's *Green is the Colour*. Rani (2019) conducted a content analysis to demonstrate the nature of gender and its consequences in Fernando's *Green is the Colour*. Through referring to the social role theory by Eagly and Wood, which indicates physical strength differences between men and women, men are led to believe that they maintain a powerful status over women. The article also highlights the portrayal of two aspects of benevolent sexism: paternalism and heterosexuality, while gender differentiation has not been mentioned in the analysis. Nevertheless, the significance of gender differentiation as an element of benevolence sexism aligns with the nature of structuralism and can therefore be thoroughly amplified in this article.

The *Silent Patient* has been investigated from a postmodern perspective through content analysis by Ashraf, Zaidi, and Aqeel (2020). The article adapts Lyotard's concept of mini-narrative to demonstrate how the novel challenges metanarratives and replaces metanarratives through mini-narratives of intertextuality, memory, and unconventional characterization. When analyzing the element of postmodern characterization, the researchers address the facet of characters who were victims in the story's composition and become victimizers at its end. Studying this factor from a feminist and structuralist perspective will carry insights that fill gaps in feminist and sexist studies.

The impact of childhood psych development on Alicia's relationship with her father has been investigated by Hossain (2021) in "Exploring the Concept of Containment, Childhood Development and Silence in Alex Michaelides's Novel, *The Silent Patient*: A Psychoanalytic Critique." By appropriating Bion and Winnicott's concepts of "container-contained" and "holding and holding environment" within a content analysis, the article sheds light on the resemblance between the nature of Alicia's husband's death as well as her father's. The article found that Alicia's uncontained childhood led to an unhealthy marital relationship with her husband did not allow her. While Hossain's article similarly addresses the origins of hostility in association with parental relationships, its psychoanalytic approach emphasizes the cause of Alicia's trauma yet fails to demonstrate the polarity between their life and death.

A textual analysis is followed from a structuralist perspective. This approach is a suitable method as it relies on an interpretation of underlying ideological and societal structures in the present time that is not apparent in the text (the novel). Lundy (2013) stated, "[structuralism] refused to explain social phenomena by deferring to the conscious statements of a speaking subject. At all times, what was of greater significance were the structural constants to which

such statements corresponded, in turn eliciting their true meaning" (p. 73). Therefore, a structuralist response aims at discovering the infrastructure of systems and general laws by unifying an image and its meaning, as they "are governed by laws of interdependence" (Harris, 1973, p. 293). Structuralism is helpful as it examines the binary opposition between masculinity and femininity and how they are viewed in organizational structures. Through this method, the researcher will illustrate the symbolic code identified by Ronald Barthes in his book *The Pleasure of the Text* for the interpretation of Michaelides's novel.

The symbolic code consists of contrasts and parallels, such as men and women, good and evil, or weak and strong, as fundamental elements of human processing and perceiving information (Barry, 2020). Following Lodge's attempt (1981) to combine new approaches with the original structuralism in *Working with Structuralism*, the narrative structure will be analyzed as sets of recurrent patterns where the researcher presents a series of contrasts, parallels, echoes, patterns, and reflections to arrange a binary structure of the novel in the sense of ambivalent sexism. This way, the article will answer how these structural elements differ in hostile and benevolent sexism.

Are there any resemblances/ contrasts in what members of each binary do? And most importantly, if we have a dual narrative, which narrator is more powerful? Are there parallels between the two narrators? Accordingly, a structuralist approach investigates elements as signifiers interpreted by their sets of contrasts, parallels, echoes, patterns, and reflections. To attempt a structuralist critique, the article will analyze five factors: Parallels in plot, Echoes in structure, Reflections/Repetitions in character/motive, Contrasts in situation/circumstance, and Patterns in language/imagery to interpret the novel and explore the underlying structure of depictions that are made.

3. Analysis

❖ Parallel Narrative

Michaelides incorporates parallel plots from Alicia and Theo's point of view, where each narrative details the events that led to the main incident. Thus, the novel has a binary structure of contrasting parts: Theo is the first half, and Alicia is the other half. The first part is a framing narrative of the first-person account in which Theo provides critical information surrounding Alicia's story. In contrast, the second part is a story within a story in epistolary style from Alicia's point of view of the murder. Although both parts are divided into chapters with the same length, the difference in narrative pace and function of contextual events between the two halves is notable.

Theo's narrative of the novel is characterized by a rapid pace where he takes numerous actions to seek unanswered questions about the murder. Theo's narrative presents his activeness to find solutions for Alicia's silence and his constant desire to protect the female figures who adhere to masculine dominance and complementary gender differentiation. That is, the perception is that men must work actively to fulfill their restricted roles to complement women. This narrative technique reflects a benevolent sexist description of men as influential leaders who provide unsolicited help for women to direct their behavior. For example, Theo expresses a sense of alarm that prompted him to rescue Alicia from her life with Gabriel, "I felt increasingly sure I had to do something to help her. She was me, and I was her" (Michaelides 2019, p. 303). Thus, his style emphasizes control over the situation, with a clear vision of his plan reflected in a powerful writing technique. Theo's narrative, ultimately, performs a different function from Alicia's half.

By contrast, the narrative pace of Alicia's journals is more leisurely and ponderous; the topics she journals about are considerably lighter. Alicia tends to incorporate superficial matters such as the hot weather, rainy days, and her preferences for electric fans. This style endorses that women are warmer, lighter than men, and far less competent than the other sex. For this reason, Alicia's journals reinforce benevolent sexism as it communicates that women do not have to work outside the home but can choose an artistic path where she can paint inside their home and journals occasionally.

This narrative style suggests that women are weak and dependent on men, so a man must provide them with support and protection. Therefore, the parallel narrative of Theo and Alicia emphasizes benevolent sexism through complementary gender diffraction as they legitimize patriarchal ideology that further continues masculine dominance and disempowers women.

❖ Echo of Structure

An echo in structure is a sequence of moments or details the author wants the reader to compare and contrast. According to Zimmerman (2018), echoes offer a conceptual frame for analysis to allow the reader to link details to clarify what the author presents. In this way, echoing the conceptual frame of ambivalent sexism to Michaelides's *The Silent Patient* suggests that sexist features are meant to be associated and thought about in connection.

The first echo of Ambivalent sexism in structure is the story's main incident; it is the echo of Theo's and Alicia's antipathetic relationship with their fathers. Theo's father is presented as an antagonistic figure that imposes discomfort and lacks empathy, wherein his company becomes a burden on Theo and his mother. Theo's dark flashbacks from his childhood, where he is being verbally harassed and beaten by his father, illustrate the dismal circumstances of Theo's upbringing, "I had a sudden image of myself as a child. A little boy close to bursting with anxiety, holding in all my tears, all my pain; pacing endlessly, restless, scared; alone with the fears of my crazy father" (Michaelides, 2019, p. 191). Theo relates his current circumstances to his past, which shapes how he views himself in the present, "[w]hat better way for me to prove that my father was correct—that I'm worthless and unlovable" (p. 102). Theo's living a life with an echo of his father's hurt and abuse to him, he portrays it as, "that murky feeling of betrayal inside, the horrible hollow ache. . . it was about my father" (p. 102).

Similarly, Alicia experiences an antipathetic parental relationship that starts with her mother's suicidal car crash when Alicia is riding the same car. After her mother's death, Alicia overhears her father wishing she would have died instead of his wife. Theo and Alicia's struggle to feel their fathers' love emphasizes the binary opposition between their fathers' abuse of them. In addition, the first image that occurred to Alicia's mind when she murdered Gabriel is of her father, "all my dreams, shattered—leaving nothing, nothing. My father was right—I didn't deserve to live. I was—nothing. That's what Gabriel did to me" (Michaelides 2019, p. 311). The lack of empathy that Theo and Alicia's experience echoes a hostile attack on both characters by their fathers during a crucial time of their lives. This event affects Theo and Alicia's attitudes, shaping their perspectives of their marital relationships with Kathy and Gabriel.

The difference between Kathy's partners is another echo of ambivalent sexism, illuminating the heterosexual feature of benevolent sexism in Theo's relationship with Kathy. When Kathy and Theo met, they had to violate their previous relationships to be together. Both Kathy and Theo understand, thus, that they may not bear a sense of value to each other's commitment.

However, Theo's horrid reaction to Kathy's unfaithfulness to him reminds the reader of Kathy's past relationship, where her partner did not cause a state of harm or unsettlement to Theo or Kathy. Unlike Kathy's part partner, Theo obtains the benevolent sexist belief that

Kathy, as a woman, needs to be cherished, honored, and rescued from intruders such as Gabriel. Theo believes that Kathy manipulatively initiated the relationship with Gabriel, and he is thus urged to save her from this heterosexual intimacy as he is her protector.

Another notable echo of incidents between Theo and Kathy's past partner is when Theo's sense of attachment to Kathy intensifies, his psychological health drops, and he becomes again dependent on drugs to find ease. From an ambivalent sexist angle, heterosexual intimacy is exemplified in perceiving women as the better halves in relationships necessary for a man's success and well-being (Brewington 2022). Consequently, Theo's fixation on his relationship with Kathy is derived from his fear of collapsing, failing, and losing his welfare.

❖ **Repetitions of Ambivalent Sexism in Motif**

Protective paternalism is a recurring motif in Theo's interactions with Alicia and Kathy. This repetition of behavior establishes a constitution of paternalistic/ benevolent sexism that appears sincere and chivalrous rather than aggressive. However, the downside to this attitude is that it perpetuates negative stereotypes to keep women submissive and subservient to men (Brewington, 2022). Theo's protective paternalistic trait resonates with the assumption that asserts his strength and dominance over Alicia and Kathy. Even though none has solicited Theo's involvement in their lives, he appoints himself to this position to fulfill his role of a protector.

Starting with Alicia as the first victim, Theo forces his engagement in Alicia's life when he knows about Gabriel's infidelity. Although Theo does not know the nature of the couple's relationship, his urge to help Alicia displays his comportment of protective paternalism. "Perhaps I was wrong, assuming she knew nothing about the affair? Perhaps she did know. . . But somehow I didn't think so. She looked innocent" (Michaelides, 2019, p. 303). Theo believes that Alicia is incapable of perceiving her reality with Gabriel because, to Theo, she seems to hold feminine qualities of warmth and maternal love.

Similarly, as the second victim of this behavioral motif, Kathy deals with Theo's paternalistic views. Theo's reaction to Kathy's infidelity with Gabriel exemplifies the story's motif: Theo's sense of protective paternalism. Instead of confronting Kathy with their marital problem and finding a solution as equals, Theo isolates himself from his wife. He becomes haunted by a stream of aggressive thoughts on how to end Kathy's relationship with Gabriel, just as he did with Alicia. The result of Theo's motif has a more significant burden on Alicia and Kathy; Alicia becomes a murderer living in a forensic unit, while Kathy loses her artistic interests and falls into depression; "she's become quite withdrawn, depressed even. Her doctor wanted to put her on antidepressants, but I discouraged it" (Michaelides, 2019, p. 319). The problematic nature of paternalism is notable when Theo believes that he ought to rescue Alicia and Kathy when he invented their misery.

❖ **Contrasts of Ambivalent Sexism in Situations**

Contrast is a rhetorical device emphasizing the difference between two situations, characters, or motifs. A significant contrast in situations is depicted in Theo and Alicia's realization of their partners' extramarital affairs. The underlying paired opposite is particularly observable in the two characters' mental states during the affairs and their recognition of the matter. For instance, Theo becomes anxious and distressed when he finds Kathy's romantic emails to Gabriel. On the contrary, Alicia is unaware of her husband's lack of presence in the house and is consumed by her paintings. This dichotomy accentuates the benevolent sexist features of the situation through the notion of complementary gender differentiation that further legitimizes gender stereotypes.

Complementary gender differentiation is evident in the representation of Theo and Alicia's realization of their partners' extramarital affairs. From the first side of the contrast, Theo ascertains Kathy's infidelity independently when her personal computer is open to her email accounts, where her intimate messages to Gabriel appear. Subsequently, Theo becomes highly alarmed about Kathy's intentions with him that he starts following her around restaurants to check her companionships. Exposure to an outrageous reality has led Theo to track Gabriel's home in which he finds Alicia seemingly unaware of their marital problem, "[s]he looked innocent, as I had once looked. It was my duty to enlighten her. I could reveal the truth about the man she was living with, whose bed she shared. I had no choice. I had to help her" (Michaelides 2019, 303). Viewing Alicia from a distance, Theo maintains that she seems to foster positive traits that make her a romantic object that needs a rescuer.

From the other side of the contrast, Alicia is presented with simplistic thinking, constantly consumed by her works, the weather, and occasional childhood flashbacks. For example, unlike Theo, Alicia had not realized any signs of infidelity nor questioned Gabriel's late working hours. According Good (2011) in "Ambivalent Sexism, Benevolent Sexism, Hostile Sexism," "the belief that women (who are warm, other-oriented, morally pure, and weak) and men (who are competent, independent, morally corruptible, and strong) have contrasting but complementary attributes (p. 136). Correspondingly, Theo's benevolent sexist perception of Alicia urges him to react to the situation to complement their gender differences.

❖ **Patterns of Ambivalent Sexism in Imagery**

Frequent viewing of patterns of images enforces a stronger connection between contextual ideas that uncovers evidence that can be used to argue for the primary claim. The story incorporates a pattern of literary imagery from Ancient Greek and the Elizabethan age; the two literary references are Euripides's Athenian play *Alcestis* and Shakespeare's tragedy *Othello*. The first image is of Alicia's self-portrait of the *Alcestis*, highlighting their similarities. Alicia and *Alcestis* were betrayed by their husbands and expressed their sorrow through silence. The second image is of the Shakespearean play *Othello* where Kathy performs as *Desdemona*, whose husband suspects her of adultery.

Referring to literary works as imageries that strongly imply Alicia and Kathy's innocence foregrounds the relation of a group's domination in the inferiority of the other group (men and women, respectively).

Alicia's self-portrait of the *Alcestis* is an important imagery representing the ambivalent characteristic of hostile heterosexual intimacy. Choosing to paint her secret to be presented in a gallery is Alicia's cry of anguish for people to understand how she reached this place. The imagery, accordingly, illustrates the complicated dichotomy between Alicia's innocence and guilt. Alicia is first presented as the purest, most innocent character in the novel, but by the end of the novel, she becomes a murderer, filled with anger and hurt. Like Alicia, the painting is, in fact, silent in its natural characteristics, yet it unfolds essential details through the parallels between the trajectory of Alicia and *Alcestis*'s lives. A reference to ancient imagery of betrayal in marital relationships emphasizes the deeply rooted hostility women have been enduring for ages.

Kathy's participation in *Othello* as *Desdemona* constitutes another imagery of hostile sexism that uncovers a possibly different interpretation of Kathy's story. Since the narrative does not include Kathy's account of her life but Theo's perspective, their story still needs to be completed. Referring to the story of *Othello*, thus, can help further the investigation of this novel. The play is about *Othello*, who falsely accuses his wife of being unfaithful, only to murder her out of jealousy. Assuming that Kathy's circumstances are like *Desdemona*, it is

possible to consider Theo's suspicions of Kathy to be untruthful and mere hallucinations as an effect of his habitual drug smoking. Theo illustrates his unstable mentality when he believes he saw Kathy with Gabriel, "[i]t was disorienting. From behind, from a distance, the man didn't look dissimilar to me—for a few seconds, I had a confused, out-of-body experience, convinced I was watching myself walking in the park with Kathy (Michaelides 2019, 242). Therefore, speculating Theo's narrative of Kathy's life raises polar aspects of ambivalence sexism: Theo's dominative paternalism in which he wants to control Kathy's life and limit her acquaintances, and his hostile heterosexual intimacy presented in accusing Kathy of infidelity, which further supports the sexist ambivalence characteristics of the novel.

4. Conclusion

This article identified two components of the ambivalent sexism theory in *The Silent Patient* by Alex Michaelides. The article investigated how the main female characters in the novel, Alicia and Kathy, are portrayed as direct victims of male dominance in social institutions through benevolent sexism and hostile sexism. The article adopted the concept of Glick and Fiske on ambivalent sexism to examine sexist attitudes. These images of adverse treatment of women are found to present antipathetic behaviors and manipulative behaviors that appear favorable from the surface. The article concluded that negative parental experiences in childhood fuel hostility against women and promote women's acceptance of sexist benevolence.

Through this analysis, it has become evident that sexism in literature goes beyond overt forms of discrimination and includes more subtle and insidious forms of oppression. The article highlighted the harmful ideologies that perpetuate gender inequality, objectification, and the marginalization of women. It also shed light on the dangers of benevolent sexism, which may appear innocuous but ultimately reinforces gender stereotypes and undermines women's agency.

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