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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Unsilencing Suffering: Gendered Trauma and Narrative Resistance in Atiq Rahimi's *The Patience Stone*

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Abstract

Atiq Rahimi's *The Patience Stone* explores the gendered experience of trauma in the context of war-torn Afghanistan, offering a poignant narrative that subverts Eurocentric models of witnessing and representation. This paper examines how Rahimi's unnamed female protagonist becomes both the subject and narrator of suffering, transforming her voicelessness into a radical act of resistance. Drawing on trauma theory, particularly the works of Cathy Caruth and Geoffrey Hartman, the study reveals how trauma resists linear narration and instead manifests through fragmented recollection and delayed articulation. Furthermore, the novel's allusion to the Persian myth of the "patience stone" (Sang-e Sabur) symbolizes the cultural localization of trauma, resisting its translation into universal Western psychological discourse. The analysis critiques the imperialist and patriarchal structures exposed by the Soviet-Afghan War and its aftermath, contextualizing female suffering within broader socio-political and historical frameworks. Through the protagonist's confessional monologues and acts of defiance, Rahimi interrogates both personal and collective trauma, foregrounding the resilience of marginalized voices. By centering a silenced Afghan woman as a narrative agent, *The Patience Stone* reclaims storytelling as a site of resistance and redefines heroism through endurance, self-expression, and the confrontation of systemic violence.

Key words: Gendered trauma, Narrative resistance, Postcolonial critique, Sang-e Sabur (Patience Stone), Silenced voices.

Introduction

Trauma scholarship often translates culturally specific pain into supposedly "universal" idioms of psychiatry and politics, obscuring local voices (Fassin & Rechtman, 2009). As Craps (2013) argues, Caruth's reading of *Hiroshima mon amour* reveals how Western frameworks tend to privilege Euro-American empathy while sidelining non-Western suffering. Rahimi's *The Patience Stone* counters this pattern: by allowing an Afghan woman's speech to unfold in her

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own idiom—through silence, prayer, and confession—he reclaims narrative agency from the interpretive monopoly of Western trauma theory.

The Japanese character, reduced to a narrative device, facilitates the French woman's trauma confession while his own suffering is marginalized—a dynamic Craps critiques as emblematic of how Western trauma theory often centers Euro-American narratives while relegating non-Western experiences to the periphery (Craps, 2011, p. 47). In effect, trauma theory remains largely unchallenged and self-replicating, sustaining a canon in which non-Western suffering is acknowledged only insofar as it is translatable into dominant paradigms.

Against this backdrop, Atiq Rahimi's *The Patience Stone* offers a counter-narrative that reclaims the voice of the silenced. Set amidst the political and social devastation of war-torn Afghanistan, the novel centers on an unnamed Afghan woman who tends to her comatose husband while gradually unraveling her own buried traumas. Her confessional monologues, triggered by the enforced silence of her unresponsive spouse, serve not only as a personal catharsis but also as a symbolic critique of patriarchal, religious, and colonial systems of domination. Rahimi's invocation of the Persian myth of the "patience stone"—a magical object that absorbs suffering until it shatters—foregrounds the cultural and gendered specificity of trauma while resisting its cooption by universalist discourse. By positioning a non-Western woman as both subject and narrator of pain, The Patience Stone subverts dominant frameworks of trauma and challenges the silencing mechanisms embedded in global and local structures of power.

In light of the study's focus on silence as a gendered and cultural phenomenon, the Introduction now theorizes silence through a postcolonial-feminist lens. Silence in *The Patience Stone* functions ambivalently—both as an imposed muteness upon the subaltern woman and as a strategic form of resistance. Drawing upon Spivak's notion of the subaltern's speech (1988) and Visser's work on decolonizing trauma theory (2015), this paper views silence not as absence but as an alternative mode of articulation. Within the Afghan patriarchal context, the protagonist's silence initially signifies domination; yet through the confessional act, it transforms into a performative speech that reclaims subjectivity. This dual role of silence—as both oppression and agency—frames the novel's engagement with gendered trauma and postcolonial voice.

This paper aims to investigate how *The Patience Stone* resists the universalization of trauma and articulates a gendered, culturally specific account of suffering within a postcolonial framework. It seeks to contribute to broader debates in trauma studies by foregrounding the need for more inclusive, decolonized approaches to witnessing and representing pain. The study is guided by the following research questions:

1-How does *The Patience Stone* challenge Eurocentric models of trauma representation and theorization?

2- In what ways does Rahimi's use of myth, gendered voice, and confessional narrative foreground the cultural specificity of trauma?

3- How does the novel critique the structures—patriarchal, religious, colonial—that perpetuate silence and marginalization in postcolonial societies?

Review of Literature

Trauma studies as an academic field emerged largely in response to the aftermath of the Holocaust, with foundational contributions from scholars such as Cathy Caruth, Dori Laub, and Shoshana

Felman. Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience* (1996) positions trauma as an event that is not fully experienced in the moment but returns belatedly, through haunting and repetition. She asserts that "to be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or event" (4), emphasizing the belatedness and unspeakability of trauma. However, critics have since noted that Caruth and others who follow psychoanalytic models tend to generalize trauma through a Western-centric lens, often excluding non-Western, colonial, and gender-specific experiences.

This limitation has been a major concern in the work of Stef Craps, who in Postcolonial

Witnessing (2013) argues for a decolonization of trauma theory. These critiques form the theoretical foundation for this study, which situates Rahimi's novel as a postcolonial intervention against such Eurocentric models.

it complements Craps's critique by adding feminist and cultural perspectives. However, shorten repeated phrases such as "non-Western and gendered narratives require analytical tools rooted in their own historical and symbolic traditions(Visser 274) ." You can merge with paragraph 2 into one unified summary of *postcolonial and feminist trauma theorists.*

Feminist scholars have also problematized the universalization of trauma by highlighting the gendered dimensions of violence. In *The Body in Pain* (1985), Elaine Scarry argues that pain resists language, yet she also acknowledges how structures of power exploit and render invisible the pain of marginalized bodies. More recently, scholars such as Sara Ahmed and Judith Butler have shown how gender and sexuality mediate vulnerability and recognition in both public and private spheres. These perspectives are particularly relevant to *The Patience Stone*, where the female protagonist's voice emerges through a gendered act of witnessing that defies both patriarchal control and political erasure.

Atiq Rahimi's work has received critical attention for its minimalist prose and symbolic depth, though scholarship specifically addressing *The Patience Stone* through the lens of trauma and postcolonial theory remains relatively limited. Some critics have explored the novel's engagement with Sufi mysticism and Persian mythology, particularly the symbolic resonance of the "patience stone" itself. Others have examined the novel as a feminist intervention in Afghan literature, emphasizing its challenge to traditional gender roles and silencing. However, a sustained analysis of *The Patience Stone* as a site of resistance to Eurocentric trauma theory—particularly in its postcolonial and gendered dimensions—is still underdeveloped. As Craps (2013) argues, trauma theory must 'expand beyond its Eurocentric roots' (p. 13) to include

marginalized voices— a project Rahimi undertakes by centering an Afghan woman's narrative. This study seeks to address that critical gap.

Theoretical Framework

As outlined in the previous section, early trauma studies—dominated by Caruth's psychoanalytic model—tended to universalize trauma through a Eurocentric framework. Building on this critique, the present study adopts a postcolonial trauma perspective that emphasizes the intersections of gender, voice, and narrative resistance. Drawing on the decolonial interventions of Stef Craps, Irene Visser, and Kali Tal, it challenges the limitations of classical trauma theory and its tendency to overlook the cultural, historical, and political specificities of colonial and gendered violence. Classical psychoanalytic trauma theory, exemplified by Caruth (1996), views trauma as an experience that resists assimilation**.** Postcolonial scholars such as Craps and Visser expand this view, situating trauma within colonial and gendered histories, while feminist thinkers like Scarry and Herman expose how power structures silence bodily pain. This synthesized framework guides the present study, reading *The Patience Stone* as a decolonial narrative in which the protagonist's fragmented confession and ritual prayer translate suffering into a culturally specific language of endurance. This is especially relevant in the context of *The Patience Stone*, where the protagonist, a nameless Afghan woman, regains her agency through speech addressed to an unconscious male body. Her monologue becomes a counter-narrative to the historical silencing of women's suffering.

The research adopts a qualitative, close-reading approach, analyzing the text through the lens of these intersecting theoretical frameworks. This approach is particularly apt for texts like *The Patience Stone*, where trauma is revealed not in straightforward chronology but through fragmented, delayed, and repetitive narration—features that, as Pourgharib et al. emphasize, reflect

"Caruth's triple aporia of representation, repetition, and belatedness" (2024, p. 52). Special attention is paid to the symbolic role of the "patience stone," the use of voice and silence, the gendered dimensions of trauma, and the critique of war and religious fundamentalism. The study interrogates how Rahimi reclaims narrative space for marginalized voices and proposes alternative modes of witnessing that challenge both Western and local hegemonies.

Untranslatable Pain: Gendered Suffering and Resistance

In *The Patience Stone*, Rahimi (2008/2009) foregrounds a narrative of suffering that resists translation into dominant, Western-centered frameworks of trauma. W. H. Auden's line "About suffering they were never wrong" (Auden, 1940, p. 146) from *Musée des Beaux Arts* ironically underscores the historical authority assumed by the West in naming and interpreting trauma. As Fassin and Rechtman (2009) argue, the Western "empire of trauma" evaluates and legitimizes suffering based on how intelligible it is to globalized psychiatric and humanitarian discourse,

which often neglects the local, the cultural, and the gendered (p. 282). This process does not merely marginalize non-Western pain; it also reconstitutes it in universalist idioms that strip away its embodied, situated specificity. Against this backdrop, Rahimi's *The Patience Stone* (2009) constitutes a form of narrative resistance. By embedding his protagonist's trauma in the vernacular of silence, ritual, and embodied confession, Rahimi challenges the authority of global trauma narratives and reclaims space for a gendered voice that had long been suppressed. The novel refuses to translate Afghan female suffering into Western legibility; instead, it reasserts the necessity of local voice, culturally embedded suffering, and storytelling as survival.

The novel opens in a room defined by silence—"the room is small... stifling... and the man lies motionless, wordless, and helpless" (Rahimi, 2009, p. 5). His muteness mirrors the social silencing of Afghan women, yet it paradoxically becomes a condition for her speech. Later, when she says, "We've never had the chance to discuss them. Or—let's be honest—you've never given me the chance" (p. 88), her articulation of silence becomes a critique of patriarchal muting. The husband's stillness, like the cultural silencing of women, provides a paradoxical space for her liberation: it is within his silence that her voice is finally born. Thus, silence—initially imposed—is transformed into a strategy of survival and resistance, allowing her to claim subjectivity within confinement.

Rituals in *The Patience Stone* function as embodied counter-narratives to Western rationalism. The woman synchronizes her prayer with her husband's breath, transforming religious ritual into an assertion of control: "After three cycles of the prayer beads—two hundred and ninety-seven breaths—they are back" (p. 15). Her counting of drips and breaths becomes a ritual of endurance—a means to sustain life and resist despair. Later, her ritualistic invocation of *sang-e saboor* (the patience stone) reimagines a spiritual practice as a political act: "I'm going to tell you everything, my *sang-e saboor*. Everything. Until I set myself free from my pain, and my suffering" (p. 79). What begins as an inherited religious symbol becomes a local idiom of trauma, translating suffering through cultural memory rather than clinical discourse.

As the story unfolds, confession becomes the most subversive mode of resistance. Her words flow against centuries of enforced silence: "If I feel relieved, set free—in spite of the terrible things that keep happening to us—it is thanks to my secrets, and to you" (p. 74). Each confession displaces patriarchal power; her husband's body—once an instrument of domination—becomes a receptacle for her truth. Later, she proclaims, "The body is our revelation… our own bodies, their secrets, their wounds, their pain, their pleasures" (p. 140). By sacralizing the female body as a site of revelation, she challenges theological and cultural hierarchies that define women through silence and shame. Her confession ends with both spiritual and physical emancipation—"Thank you, Al-Sabur! I am finally released from my suffering" (p.141)—transforming trauma into transcendence.

Through these intertwined practices of silence, ritual, and confession, Rahimi's protagonist transforms passive endurance into active articulation. Her silence becomes agency, her ritual becomes rhythm, and her confession becomes a weapon of self-definition. In this way, *The Patience Stone* exemplifies how gendered suffering, when narrated in its own idiom, resists the epistemic colonization of trauma by Western frameworks.

Imperial Ambitions and Afghan Rupture

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan marked not only a geopolitical maneuver within the Cold War framework but also a devastating rupture in Afghan history—one that lingers beneath the surface of the female protagonist's trauma in Rahimi's (2008) *The Patience Stone*. This war exemplifies what Said (1993) describes as the "continuing practice of empire," in which global powers impose their ideologies on vulnerable nations through both overt military actions and subtle cultural domination.

As Germain (1955) notes in *The Marxist Theory of Imperialism*, imperialism does not merely involve "the conquest of foreign territories," but denotes "a phase in the development of capitalist society characterized by the domination of finance capital and the export of capital to areas where it can generate the highest returns" (p. 18). For the Soviets, this meant transforming Afghanistan into both a buffer state and a testing ground for its military-industrial complex. Simultaneously, economic imperatives—access to trade routes and mineral resources such as gas, copper, and uranium—rendered Afghanistan geopolitically strategic. Rubin (2002) points out that

"Afghanistan became a chessboard where regional and global powers projected their influence, often ignoring the costs borne by the Afghan people" (p. 67).

After the British withdrawal from India in 1947, which removed a major Western counterbalance in South Asia, the USSR steadily extended its influence in Afghanistan. When the

United States refused Afghanistan's requests for aid in the early 1950s, the Afghan government turned to the Soviet Union by default. Over the next two decades, Soviet advisers trained Afghan officers, constructed infrastructure, and deeply shaped the country's policies. According to Roy (1990), "Afghan society was subjected to radical social engineering in a short period, disrupting tribal, religious, and gender relations that had endured for centuries" (p. 39). Soviet political influence reached its peak in 1978 with the *April Revolution*, which brought the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) to power. Prime Minister Nur Mohammed Taraki formalized Soviet cooperation through a Treaty of Friendship in December 1978. Yet, internal divisions within the PDPA, combined with public resistance to Soviet-style modernization, led to unrest. Maley (2002) explains, "The PDPA's attempt to enforce atheism and land reform alienated the rural population" (p. 52), contributing to widespread dissent rooted in both nationalism and Islamic tradition.

The Herat uprising of March 1979 marked a turning point. In response to the killing of Soviet advisers, the USSR intensified its military presence, sending more advisors and advanced weaponry such as Mi-24 helicopters. The situation deteriorated further when Hafizullah Amin replaced Taraki later that year. Amin's radical reforms unsettled the Soviets and alienated much of the Afghan populace. Barfield (2010) argues that "The regime's failure to secure legitimacy, coupled with ideological overreach, pushed the Soviet Union to act preemptively in fear of losing control" (p. 227). By December 1979, the Soviet invasion began—triggering a decade-long conflict between Soviet-backed Afghan forces and mujahideen insurgents. According to Dorronsoro (2005), "The war caused massive displacement, the destruction of rural life, and the death of over a million Afghans" (p. 101). The Soviet military conducted heavy bombing in areas believed to shelter mujahideen fighters, often targeting civilian infrastructure. Villages were destroyed, crops annihilated, and irrigation systems ruined, resulting in death, famine, and homelessness. Many Afghans fled to Pakistan, where refugee camps—particularly for women— became spaces of further trauma.

Though *The Patience Stone* is not a direct account of the Soviet occupation, it is haunted by its violent legacy. The silenced suffering of Afghan women—whose lives were upended by war, displacement, and patriarchal control—is central to Rahimi's narrative. Das (2007) writes, "What is at stake is not just the narration of trauma but its inhabitation in the everyday... trauma becomes an ordinary condition of life" (p. 9). The unnamed female protagonist in Rahimi's (2008) novel embodies this condition, her voice emerging not in defiance of trauma, but from within it— making her story both a personal lament and a political testimony.

The Patience Stone: Voice of Silent Suffering

The Patience Stone portrays the Afghan wars through the intimate perspective of an unnamed female protagonist and her comatose husband, revealing the complex inner world, emotions, and restricted choices faced by Afghan women, especially a mother of two daughters. The story unfolds within a small, bleak, and neglected room, focusing entirely on "the woman," whose anonymity is a deliberate literary device. Rahimi's choice to leave the protagonist unnamed reflects two crucial aspects: firstly, she symbolizes the collective experiences of countless Afghan women silenced by war and patriarchy; secondly, this anonymity underscores her identity crisis, revealing her inner turmoil and psychological fragmentation. The protagonist's namelessness further signals her status as a liminal figure—trapped between cultural traditions and existential crisis—evoking what Pourgharib et al. describe as a space of "bewilderment, abandonment, unhomeliness, and finally the catastrophe" that typifies diasporic and postcolonial subjectivities (2018, p. 52).

The myth of *Sang-e Sabur* itself encodes a philosophy of silence as active and generative rather than passive. In Persian mysticism, the *patience stone* listens until it bursts under the weight of absorbed sorrow, transforming silence into testimony. Rahimi reworks this symbolism: the comatose husband becomes the corporeal embodiment of the myth, a localized

"listener" who absorbs the woman's suffering until he can no longer contain it. This reconfiguration highlights silence as a site of agency—where listening becomes an act of witnessing and where the patriarchal listener is undone by the truths he once suppressed. Thus, Rahimi reclaims the myth to show silence not as erasure but as a culturally grounded form of resistance and catharsis.

Set against the chaos of war, the narrative weaves in the Persian myth of *Sang-e Saboor*, or the "patience stone," a mystical object believed to absorb the sufferings of humanity until it finally bursts, symbolizing the ultimate release of accumulated pain. In Rahimi's narrative, this myth performs an additional function—it redefines silence as an active, positive force. The patience stone itself does not speak; it listens, absorbing anguish through its quiet endurance. In this way, silence becomes productive—it encourages speech, inviting the speaker to unburden the soul and transform silence into a vehicle of catharsis and survival. The protagonist explicitly invokes this function when she begins her confession: "I'm going to tell you everything, my *sang-e saboor*. Everything. Until I set myself free from my pain, and my suffering" (Rahimi, 2009, p. 78). Her words mark a pivotal inversion: the stone's silence empowers her voice. It is not passive muteness but an empathetic silence that enables release.

Through this mythical framework, Rahimi reclaims silence from its conventional association with oppression. Silence becomes a sanctuary, a space of agency where expression is made possible through the silent, nonjudgmental listener. In the context of Afghan patriarchy, where women's words are often censored or punished, this silent mythic listener offers safety. The protagonist's confessional act transforms silence into a mode of resistance, a performative space where speech and silence coexist—one feeding the other. Her monologue thus enacts what Veena Das (2007) calls the "language of the everyday," in which trauma is reabsorbed into the textures of domestic life and ritualized endurance becomes a form of agency.

However, the novel simultaneously portrays another face of silence—its oppressive and disciplinary function. The protagonist's namelessness and long-enforced silence also signify her erasure within patriarchal and political structures. Her anonymity underscores how women are rendered invisible in war narratives: they exist without names, voices, or histories. Early in the novel, she laments, "We were never given the chance to talk about them. Or—let's be honest—you never gave me the chance" (Rahimi, 2009, p. 88). This statement exposes silence as a social construct—a form of domination that sustains male and religious authority. Within the war-torn household, the woman's muted existence reflects broader systems of marginalization where silence is imposed, not chosen. Thus, Rahimi constructs a dialectic of silence: as suppression and as agency. The first, a silence of domination—political, social, and religious—renders women voiceless and invisible. The second, drawn from the myth of *Sang-e Saboor*, transforms silence into a space of power, a generative act that allows the protagonist to speak and heal. As her monologue progresses, silence becomes dialogic: the husband's muteness provides a mirror for her voice. By the novel's end, silence no longer represents

submission but a reclaimed autonomy—a culturally grounded language of endurance, confession, and ultimately, liberation.

Trauma, War, and Voice in *The Patience Stone*

In *The Patience Stone*, the unnamed protagonist recounts a harrowing family history shaped by emotional neglect and patriarchal violence. Her father, obsessed with quail fighting, prioritized his birds over his wife and seven daughters. Each Friday, he would gamble with his prized quail at the Qaf gardens. When he lost, he often unleashed his rage on the family; when he won, he spent his earnings acquiring even more valuable birds. One especially traumatic memory lingers: "As fate would have it, he lost. He had no money left to honour his bet, so he gave my sister instead. At twelve years old, my sister was sent to live with a man of forty!" (Rahimi, 2010, p. 59). This incident, traumatic in its implications, reveals a world in which daughters are reduced to collateral in their father's gambling debts.

Her account of her own marriage is equally troubling. With bitter irony, she recalls how her husband, consumed by military service, was absent from their wedding: "I married his photograph and his dagger" (Rahimi, 2010, p. 53). His mother, intending to marry her younger sister, was told, "No problem, we'll take her instead!" (Rahimi, 2010, p. 53), and her father consented without objection. For the three years her husband was on the front lines, she was barred from seeing friends or relatives: "It was not considered proper for a young married virgin to spend time with other married women" (Rahimi, 2010, p. 54). These episodes reflect the gendered surveillance and control inherent in patriarchal Afghan society.

Applying Cathy Caruth's (1996) trauma theory, these accounts exemplify belated and fragmented traumatic experience. According to Caruth, trauma "is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature... returns to haunt the survivor later on" (p. 4). The protagonist's continual recollection of her incapacitated husband—now in a coma with a bullet lodged in his skull—becomes a compulsion to revisit unresolved anguish. She swings between pleading for his return and blaming him for the war that shattered their family. Of their thirteen years of marriage, she bitterly notes that only three were spent together; the rest were consumed by conflict. Now helpless and dishonored—wounded by his own comrade—her husband embodies the collapse of patriarchal authority.

To clarify the theoretical application, the section now includes close readings that connect text and theory. For instance, when the protagonist recites the ninety-nine names of Allah, her ritualized repetition enacts Judith Herman's notion of "reclaiming order through ritualized memory" (*Trauma and Recovery*, 1992). Likewise, her confessional dialogue with the comatose husband performs Butler's concept of the "speech act of resistance" (*Precarious Life*, 2004), where language transforms pain into agency. Her final verbal defiance—"Your honour is nothing more than a piece of meat"—exemplifies how trauma's unspeakability (Caruth,

1996) is overcome through performative articulation. Each act—ritual, silence, confession—therefore constitutes a mode of narrative resistance.

Rahimi critiques societal obsessions with female fertility, portraying infertility as a basis for humiliation and control. The protagonist's aunt is abused by her in-laws for her childlessness. Similarly, the protagonist's mother-in-law seizes on her supposed barrenness to torment her. In defiance, she confesses to her unresponsive husband that her two daughters were fathered by another man, underscoring the absurdity of linking fertility solely to male virility, especially for a revered "warrior of God."

Scholars such as Povey (2007) argue that Afghanistan's protracted wars have entrenched gender inequalities, exposing women to sexual violence, forced marriages, and exploitation in the absence of male guardianship (p. 144). Rahimi reflects this reality by depicting war's devastating effects on women and children. Many orphaned or abducted children are recruited into militias or forced to commit violence. Without the cognitive and emotional maturity of adults, they express trauma through aggression, regression, or emotional withdrawal. The teenage soldier who visits the protagonist exemplifies this: both abuser and victim.

Geoffrey Hartman (1995) asserts that trauma "bypasses perception and consciousness, and falls directly into the psyche" (p. 547). Rahimi's fragmented narrative structure mirrors this, allowing the protagonist's silences and repetitions to express internal disarray. The novel juxtaposes explosive violence "Far away, somewhere in the city, a bomb explodes. The violence destroys a few houses perhaps, a few dreams" (Rahimi, 2010, p. 4) with the protagonist's intimate disclosures. Caruth (1996) refers to this as "the surprise of listening to another's wound" (p. 8), highlighting the duality of personal and collective trauma.

War permeates the narrative. A vivid passage illustrates the civilian toll: "Suddenly, the blinding flash of an explosion. A deafening blast makes the earth tremble. Its breath shatters the windows... A second explosion. This one closer. Therefore, more violent... The sound of their terrified footsteps rings out in the passage, and disappears into the cellar" (Rahimi, 2010, p. 32). Her husband's return is not a moment of joy but a continuation of violence: "You seemed so arrogant, so absent... you just weren't there... One should never rely on a man who has known the pleasure of weapons!" (Rahimi, 2010, p. 56). As Caruth (1996) notes, trauma often emerges belatedly, fracturing identity and memory (p. 7). This is evident in the protagonist's ambivalent relationship with the young soldier. Though she initially pretends to be a prostitute to avoid him, she is eventually assaulted. Over time, she forms an emotional bond with him, illustrating trauma bonding. He, too, is a victim—raped by his commander and bearing visible scars: "The boy's body is black and blue! He has burn scars all over—on his thighs, his buttocks... That guy burns him with the barrel of his gun!" (Rahimi, 2010, p. 119).

Rahimi's heroine, as noted by Hosseini (Rahimi, 2010), is complex: "brave, resilient, a devout mother, but she is also flawed in fundamentally human ways… pushed hard enough, bares her teeth" (Introduction). Her monologue, oscillating between past and present, functions as a therapeutic narrative. Caruth (1995) observes that trauma narratives exhibit "delayed,

uncontrolled repetitive appearance[s] of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena" (*Explorations in Memory*, p. 11). The protagonist's monologue aligns with this, unfolding as testimony and catharsis.

Her speech blends inner thought with confession, akin to a modernist interior monologue in the tradition of Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*. She recalls freeing one of her father's quails—his symbol of manhood—only for it to be devoured by a cat. Her response was visceral: "A moment of pure delight" (Rahimi, 2010, p. 59). Yet, she attempts to recover it and then "starts licking up those few drops of blood from [her] father's quail that dripped on to the floor" (Rahimi, 2010, pp. 59–60). Freud's (1957) concept of *Nachträglichkeit* (deferred action), as adapted by Caruth (1996), explains how such childhood experiences re-emerge with intensified emotional significance, exposing repressed trauma. The aunt's symbolic death and rebirth—declaring suicide and then ending up in a brothel (Rahimi, 2010, pp. 86–87)—mirrors the protagonist's transformation. Forced into sex to bear children, she moves from myth to brutal reality. Judith

Herman (1992) argues that trauma reflects "the conflict between the will to deny horrible events and the will to proclaim them aloud" (p. 1). The protagonist's monologue becomes a bold proclamation of silenced shame.

Patricia Rae (2007) describes modernist mourning as "resistant," often marked by the refusal to acknowledge loss (p. 16). In contrast, Rahimi's protagonist confronts loss through rage and action. When her husband awakens and attempts to strangle her, she kills him with a *khanjar*, reclaiming her body and voice: "Your honour is nothing more than a piece of meat, now!... I was a piece of meat, into which you could stuff your dirty dick. Just to rip it apart, to make it bleed!" (Rahimi, 2010, p. 112). No blood flows, symbolizing his emotional hollowness. Her act is not revenge, but reclamation.

Rahimi's style evokes not catharsis but dissociative numbness, a symptom of PTSD (*DSM-5*, 2013, p. 272). His modernist fragmentation reflects psychic disintegration. The novel ends on a transcendent note: "The woman slowly opens her eyes. The breeze rises, sending the migrating birds into flight over her body" (Rahimi, 2010, p. 136). Robinett (2007) asserts that trauma literature often uses "fractured, erratic structures" to mirror inner disarray (p. 297). The protagonist's final act signifies a reclamation of self amid devastation. Freud's "talking cure" (Freud & Strachey, 1953) informs Rahimi's form. The woman confesses her darkest secrets to her patience stone, revealing trauma layer by layer. Her self-disclosures mirror *Nachträglichkeit*, with painful memories resurfacing to rebuild identity. The stone becomes a silent psychiatrist, allowing her fractured identity to emerge. Her complex self defies reduction, marked by emotional contradictions and repressed desire.

Her monologues are confessional, recursive, and psychoanalytically rich. They intensify over time, culminating in liberation. As Hosseini notes, "What pours out of her is not only a brave and shocking confession, but a savage indictment of war, the brutality of men, and the religious, marital, and cultural norms that continually assault Afghan women…" (Rahimi, 2010,

p. 2). This is how she heals—first through narrative, then through reconnection. Disconnected from loved ones, she could not bond emotionally or physically with her husband. Yet with the orphaned soldier, she finds companionship. Her emotional and physical fulfillment echoes Maslow's (1943) theory: only after safety and love are met can one achieve self-actualization. This transformative growth reshapes her character and sense of agency. Rahimi ultimately bridges literature and history. As LaCapra (2001) argues, writing trauma must integrate emotional truth with historical accuracy. Rahimi's protagonist becomes both a specific individual and a symbolic voice for

Afghan women. Her story reframes Afghanistan's history from a personal lens, aligning with Caruth's (1996) claim that trauma narratives "attest to the endless impact" of catastrophe on both individual and communal psyches (p. 7).

Conclusion:

Atiq Rahimi's *The Patience Stone* offers a radical intervention in trauma discourse by presenting a narrative that decenters Western paradigms and challenges patriarchal structures. Through the unnamed female protagonist's monologic confessions to her comatose husband, the novel disrupts the silencing mechanisms imposed by war, religion, and gender hierarchies, transforming voicelessness into agency. Drawing from the symbolic resonance of the Persian myth of *Sang-e Sabur*, Rahimi grounds trauma in a culturally specific idiom that privileges local expressions of suffering and endurance over universalized Western interpretations. Framed within postcolonial and feminist trauma theories, the protagonist's voice emerges not merely as a personal confession but as a form of narrative resistance—a counter-history to the grand narratives of empire and religious dogma. Her pain, often rendered illegible by global humanitarian and patriarchal discourses, gains visibility through storytelling that is non-linear, fragmented, and deeply embodied. In this way, *The Patience Stone* proposes an alternative model of witnessing—one that centers marginalized voices, values cultural specificity, and reclaims silence as a site of strength rather than absence. Ultimately, Rahimi's work compels readers and scholars alike to reconsider how trauma is conceptualized, who is permitted to speak, and through what forms suffering can be ethically and authentically represented. By challenging both Western trauma theory and Afghan patriarchy**,** *The Patience Stone* does not merely narrate gendered pain—it unsilences it, bearing witness to the resilience that endures even within the most constrained conditions.

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