

From Immanence to Becoming: Beauvoir, Nietzsche, and the Feminist Monologue in *The Patience Stone*

Chaker Abas, MA

Beirut Arab University, Lebanon

Doi: 10.19044/esipreprint.9.2025.p352

Approved: 22 September 2025

Posted: 24 September 2025

Copyright 2025 Author(s)

Under Creative Commons CC-BY 4.0

OPEN ACCESS

Cite As:

Abas, C. (2025). *From Immanence to Becoming: Beauvoir, Nietzsche, and the Feminist Monologue in The Patience Stone*. ESI Preprints.

<https://doi.org/10.19044/esipreprint.9.2025.p352>

Abstract

The article explores the feminist existentialist dimensions of Atiq Rahimi's *The Patience Stone* (2008), situating the unnamed female protagonist's radical monologue within a broader philosophical lineage that includes Simone de Beauvoir and Friedrich Nietzsche. Drawing on Beauvoir's *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (2004) and Nietzsche's *The Gay Science* (1974) the study frames the woman's struggle against immanence and patriarchal silencing as a philosophical revolt. Beauvoir's humanist existentialism provides a lens for understanding the protagonist's resistance to passive identity, while Nietzsche's concept of revaluation of values illuminates her defiant articulation of desire, trauma, and agency. The protagonist's transformation from passive to self-authoring entity echoes Nietzschean call to transcend herd morality and affirm the self through creative resistance. By bridging Beauvoir's ethics with Nietzsche's radical critique of moral normativity, this study argues that *The Patience Stone* stages a feminist revolt that is both existential and genealogical - dismantling inherited structures of meaning while forging new modes of becoming. Ultimately, enacts a philosophical drama of voice, vulnerability, and value creation in a context where silence has long been mistaken for virtue.

Keywords: Feminist existentialism, Beauvoir and Nietzsche, Afghan literature, gendered subjectivity, philosophical revolt

Introduction

In *The Patience Stone*, Atiq Rahimi crafts a sparse yet searing narrative centred on a nameless Afghan woman who, after years of being silenced by patriarchal and religious constraints, erupts in a confessional monologue to her comatose husband. This act of speech, though delivered in isolation and without any expectation of reply, becomes a philosophical rebellion against the structures that have rendered her invisible. This paper argues that the protagonist's speech act enacts a form of feminist existential resistance, as theorised by Simone de Beauvoir and Friedrich Nietzsche. Through her voice, she moves from immanence to transcendence, from object to subject, and from silence to authorship.

Beauvoir, in *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (1948), asserts that "to will oneself free is also to will others free" (p. 73). This ethical imperative underscores her belief that freedom is not an abstract ideal but a lived, relational condition - one that must be asserted through action, speech, and solidarity. In this respect, Rahimi's unnamed protagonist embodies this quest: her speech is not only therapeutic but transformative, a refusal to remain the "patience stone" that absorbs others' pain while erasing her own. Moreover, her confessions, desires, and transgressions somehow echo Beauvoir's insistence that "One is born, but rather becomes, a woman (1956, p. 273), transforming it into a call to revolt against passivity and imposed identity.

Nietzsche's influence, though less overt, is equally resonant in Rahimi's novel. His call for the *Umwertung aller Werte* - the "revaluation of all values" (2006, p. 118) - resonates in the protagonist's rejection of moral codes that have governed her body and voice. She speaks of sex, shame, and suffering without apology, dismantling the inherent norms that have dictated her existence. As Nietzsche writes in *Twilight of the Idols* (1997), "if you have your *why* for life, you can get by with almost any *how*" (p. 6), Rahimi's protagonist, in seeking her own "why," confronts the "how" of her life with brutal honesty and existential courage.

This study explores several key dimensions of this feminist existentialist reading. First, the protagonist's anonymity functions as a radical refusal of imposed identity. Second, the narrative's temporal disruption and non-linear memory reflect a lived, affective temporality that privileges emotional truth over chronological coherence. Third, the protagonist inhabits a space of abjection, speaking from the margins of cultural intelligibility.

Building on these foundations, the study explores several additional dimensions. It examines the role of speech as an ethical and ontological act, drawing on de Beauvoir's notion of ambiguity and Nietzsche's concept of creative resistance. The paper also analyses the protagonist's relationship to

her body - not as an object of male desire, but as a site of memory, pain, and eventually reclamation. It considers the novel's minimalist structure as a philosophical space where silence and voice, death and desire, converge. Crucially, the protagonist's confessional monologue unfolds a world stripped of divine intervention or metaphysical consolation, echoing Nietzsche's pronouncement of the "death of God" and the existential imperative to create meaning in the absence of transcendent authority. Her speech becomes a form of value-creation, oscillating between religious morality and ethical revolt that is grounded on lived experience. Ultimately, *The Patience Stone* is read not as a narrative of confession, but as a drama of becoming, where existential freedom is carved out of constraint, and feminist revolt is voiced in solitude.

Methods

This study employed a qualitative, interpretive methodology grounded in feminist existentialist literary criticism. The primary subject of analysis was Atiq Rahimi's *The Patience Stone* (2008), examined in its English translation to ensure accessibility for an international scholarly audience. The research focused on the unnamed female protagonist's monologue, treating it as a philosophical site of resistance and transformation.

Textual analysis was conducted through close reading, with particular attention to narrative voice, thematic development, and rhetorical structure. The selection of theoretical works was based on their relevance to existentialist ethics, moral revaluation, and construction of agency under oppressive conditions.

No statistical methods were employed, as the research did not involve numerical data or empirical sampling. Instead, the analysis was mainly hermeneutic and genealogical, tracing philosophical concepts across texts and contexts. Secondary sources included peer-reviewed journal articles and monographs on feminist and existential theories as well as Afghan cultural studies, accessed through Scopus-indexed databases and university library holdings.

All interpretations were situated within a feminist existentialist lens, emphasising the intersection of gender, voice, and value creation in a sociopolitical context marked by immanence, patriarchal silencing, and the struggle for self-authorship.

Results

The analysis reveals that the unnamed female protagonist in *The Patience Stone* enacts a philosophical transformation from passive silence to active self-authorship. Her monologue disrupts patriarchal structures of

meaning by revaluating inherited moral norms, aligning with Nietzsche's concept of life-affirming revolt and Beauvoir's ethics of transcendence. The protagonist's articulation of trauma, desire, and agency demonstrates a feminist existential resistance to immanence, culminating in a radical definition of voice and value within a context of enforced silence. The novel thus stages a genealogical and existential drama that bridges humanist and post-moral philosophical traditions.

Discussion

In Rahimi's novel, the anonymity of the female protagonist operates as a deliberate existential strategy, rather than a mere narrative omission. Her namelessness aligns with Beauvoir's existential feminist framework, particularly the concept of woman as the "Other" in patriarchal societies. By withholding an anonymous identity, Rahimi allows the protagonist to emerge as a subject through speech and introspection rather than remain an object defined by familial or societal roles. This narrative choice foregrounds the woman's agency, enabling her to freely articulate trauma, desire, and resistance in a context that would otherwise silence her. In this sense, Shukla (2025) observes that the protagonist's anonymity is not a form of erasure but a mechanism of liberation, an opportunity to reconstruct selfhood through confession and care.

Furthermore, the existential function of anonymity also intersects with the psychological dimensions of trauma. Khan and Khan (2021) argue that the protagonist's namelessness reflects the unspeakable nature of her suffering, allowing her to narrate pain without the constraints of social labelling. In this sense, anonymity becomes a therapeutic space, a narrative strategy for healing and survival. Thus, the absence of a name somehow shields her from the reductive gaze of cultural expectations and offers a discursive field where she can confront the contradictions of existence. This also aligns with feminist literary traditions that use anonymity to resist patriarchal authorial subjectivity. Batchelor (2017) notes that women's writing has historically employed anonymity as a form of subversion, preserving the liberating potential of outsider status and challenging dominant models of identity and authorship.

From a philosophical standpoint, the protagonist's refusal of a fixed identity resonates with existentialist notions of ambiguity and freedom. Bornedal (2012), interpreting Beauvoir's existential feminism, emphasises the importance of resisting objectification and embracing the fluidity of selfhood. In *The Patience Stone*, the woman's anonymity thus becomes a gesture toward existential freedom - a refusal to be defined by her roles as wife, mother, or victim. Instead, she becomes a speaking subject, capable of naming her own experience and asserting her presence in a world that has

rendered her invisible. Therefore, this strategic anonymity functions as both a literary and philosophical device, enabling a radical reimagining of female agency in feminist and existential contexts.

Rahimi's novel unfolds in a fragmented, nonlinear fashion that reflects the protagonist's psychological and existential dislocation. Confined to a single room with her comatose husband, the unnamed woman's monologues are not structured by external events but by unpredictable surfacing of memory, trauma, and desire. Her recollections are triggered by silence, bodily sensations, and emotional ruptures rather than chronological cues. This temporal fluidity reflects Beauvoir's (2004) notion of ambiguity, where past, present, and future are not discrete categories but interwoven in the process of becoming. Beauvoir's (1948) words: "But the present is not a potential past; it is the moment of choice and action; we can not [sic] avoid living it through a project" (p. 76) emphasise that time is not a neutral container; it is constituted through action, choice, and engagement.

Moreover, the novel's lack of chronological order emphasises interiority over external plot, reinforcing the existential focus on consciousness and subjective experience. The protagonist's speech flows between memories of childhood, sexual trauma, religious uncertainty, and maternal exhaustion without linear progression. This structure resists the conventions of realist storytelling, which often rely on cause-and-effect logic and narrative closure. Instead, Rahimi's narrative mimics the disjointed rhythm of trauma and introspection. In this regard, Debuire (2023) notes that the novel portrays a fight between reality and imagination, where the protagonist's fragmented mind reflects her inner exile and existential rupture.

This resistance to linearity conforms with feminist critiques of patriarchal storytelling. Feminist theorists such as Luce Irigaray and Helene Cixous have long argued that traditional narrative structures - centred on climax, resolution, and teleological progression - reflect masculine logic and suppress feminine modes of expression. Beauvoir's existential feminism similarly rejects fixed identities and prescriptive narratives. In *The Second Sex*, she insists that woman's subjectivity must be understood as fluid, refusing to conform to a redemptive arc or moral resolution; her speech is not a confession seeking absolution but a process of existential articulation.

Additionally, the novel's temporal disruption reflects the philosophical implications of Nietzsche's concept of "the death of God." With the absence of divine authority, the protagonist must construct meaning from her own lived experience. Though the protagonist's memories do not cohere into a singular truth, they nevertheless oscillate between religious morality and ethical revolt. She defies God, compares her husband to God, and declares herself God's messenger. These moments reinforce the collapse

of metaphysical consolation and the emergence of speech as a form of value-creation. In this sense, Nietzsche writes, “The sea, our sea, lies open again; perhaps there has never yet been such an open sea” (1974, p. 280), suggesting that in the absence of divine order, the individual must navigate meaning through existential courage.

Julia Kristeva’s assertion that “and yet, from its place of banishment, the abject does not cease challenging its master” (1982, p. 2) encapsulates the disruptive power of marginalised voices to destabilise dominant structures. In Rahimi’s novel, the unnamed woman, who is rendered voiceless by patriarchal and political violence, occupies precisely this abject position. Her speech, directed at a husband in a vegetative state, becomes a radical act of resistance, challenging the symbolic order that has silenced her. This aligns with Nietzsche’s concept of the revaluation of values, which calls for the overturning of inherited moral systems and the creation of new values rooted in life. The woman’s confessions - her intimate secrets, desires, and traumas - redefine the moral landscape from within her abjection, rather than transgress cultural taboos. McNeal (2023) notes that Nietzsche’s critique of truth and morality offers fertile ground for feminist reinterpretation, enabling figures like Rahimi’s protagonist to enact existential transformation; her voice, once banished, becomes a site of a new ethical and ontological order, one that pulverises patriarchal sediment and affirms lived experience as the basis of meaning.

The struggle for voice and recognition has long been a central concern to feminist and existentialist thought. Simone Beauvoir, in *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (2004) emphasises that freedom is not a solitary abstraction but a relational process that requires engagement with others. Similarly, Nietzsche insists that freedom and self-realisation are not passive inheritance, but rather active, creative achievement forged in resistance to conformity and silencing forces. Nietzsche, in *The Gay Science* (1974), declares the death of God, not as a theological rupture but as a philosophical provocation: with the collapse of absolute values, individuals must become the authors of their own meaning. “Must we ourselves not become gods simply to appear worthy of it?” (p. 181) he asks, challenging readers to embrace the task, and possibility of self-creation.

Thus, in existentialist feminist thought, speech is not merely a communicative tool; it is an ontological assertion and an ethical act. Beauvoir (1948) argues that human existence is fundamentally ambiguous - i.e., each person is both subject and object, both free and constrained. Ethical action, according to Beauvoir, involves embracing this ambiguity and willing freedom not only for oneself but for others. She writes, “To will oneself free is also to will others free” (Beauvoir, 1948, p. 73), suggesting that speech,

particularly when it breaks imposed silence, is a form of ethical engagement. In this respect, the act of speaking becomes a refusal to remain the “Other.”

Nietzsche’s concept of creative resistance complements Beauvoir’s ethics by framing speech as a generative force that arises in opposition to silencing structures. In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche declares, “We philosophers and free spirits’ feel, when we hear news that “the old god is dead,” as if a new dawn shone on us... the sea, our sea, lies open again; perhaps there has never yet been such an “open sea”” (1974, p. 280). This metaphor of the open sea captures the ontological rupture that follows the collapse of inherited values, compelling individuals to create meaning through action and expression. Speech, in this sense, becomes a vessel of resistance, an act of self-creation that defies imposed norms and affirms existence.

Atiq Rahimi’s *The Patience Stone* dramatizes this existential tension through the unnamed female protagonist, who begins the novel in silence, tending her comatose husband. Her resolution to speak - to narrate, reflect, and confess - marks a radical shift from object to subject. While the novel itself is sparse in overt philosophical exposition, Khaled Hosseini’s words, in the introduction of Rahimi’s novel, convey the protagonist’s voice as emblematic of Afghan women’s silenced suffering:

the ironclad rule of patriarchal, tribal law has long denied women their right to work, education, adequate healthcare, and personal independence - all of this made infinitely worse by three decades of war, displacement, and anarchy... For far too long, Afghan women have been faceless and voiceless... a savage indictment of war, the brutality of men, and the religious, marital, and cultural norms that continually assault Afghan women, leaving them with no recourse but absorb without a complaint, like a patience stone. (Hosseini, as cited in Rahimi, 2009, pp. ix-x)

Though not Rahimi’s own words, this depiction highlights the ethical weight of the protagonist’s speech; it is not solely cathartic but ontologically challenging.

Some scholars interpret the protagonist’s monologue as a form of ethical resistance. Suryani et. al (2023) analyses how Rahimi’s narrative teaches readers about sexist oppression, women’s solidarity, and the power to resist male cruelty, aligning with Beauvoir’s call for women to engage in endeavours to assert their autonomy and existential agency. In this sense, Nietzsche’s notion of resistance as an incentive for growth is echoed in the protagonist’s transformational power of speech. Other critics have underscored how Rahimi’s narrative “breaks the silence and speaks of the

wounding pain of one woman” (Yawari, 2020, p. 435), while simultaneously gesturing toward collective trauma and agency.

Rahimi’s protagonist, silenced by patriarchal structures and war trauma, begins to speak to her unconscious husband, transforming his silence into a space for radical self-expression. Once constrained by fear and cultural norms, her speech becomes a vehicle for existential emancipation. In the throes of speaking freely, the unnamed woman feels the heavy weight of the unspoken words. Feeling the urge to let words out, the protagonist punches her in the belly twice “As if to beat out the heavy word that has buried itself in her guts” (Rahimi, 2008, p. 18). Furthermore, she exhibits initial dependence on her comatose husband for financial support, her disappointment in his brothers and mother for abandoning her and her children. Alternatively, she turns to God and implores Him to help her: “Allah, help me!... and weeps” (Rahimi, 2008, p. 20). Her imploration turns into demanding when she says, “Bring him back to life, God!... After all, he fought in your name for so long. For jihad” (Rahimi, 2008, p. 21). Demanding transforms to defying when she says, “Prove that you exist, bring him back to life!” (Rahimi, 2008, p. 21); later on, the protagonist objects God’s will by saying, “Why doesn’t God send Ezrael, to finish you off once and for all?” (Rahimi, 2008, p. 68). Feeling that she is losing her faith, she declares, “My strength is deserting me, day by day. Just like my faith” (Rahimi, 2008, p. 57). Finally, upon reaching God’s last name, *Al-Sabur* (the Patient), she strikes a daring simile between her husband and God: “You hear, and do not speak. You see, and cannot be seen! Like God, you are patient, immobile” (Rahimi, 2008, p. 140), comparing herself to God’s messenger: “And I am your messenger! Your prophet! I am your voice! Your gaze! Your hands! I reveal you! *Al-Sabur!*” (Rahimi, 2008, p. 140).

The unnamed woman in Rahimi’s novel embodies the existential struggle for rebellious voice and recognition in a context saturated with patriarchal dominance, religious fatalism, and war trauma. On the one hand, the protagonist’s initial silence is not merely circumstantial; it reflects her initial fluctuation, leading to the throes of spitting out what she has always been afraid to utter. On the other hand, her speech to her comatose husband not only therapeutical and confessional but also representing a radical ethical act in order to reclaim her subjectivity and agency and challenge the structures that have silenced her. Moreover, punching her stomach is emblematic of existential anguish, dramatizing the tension between facticity and transcendence; her body, shaped by cultural and religious constraints, becomes the site of resistance and self-creation. This moment aligns with Nietzsche’s notion of creative resistance, where the collapse of inherited values compels individuals to forge meaning through defiance.

The protagonist's deteriorating relationship with God further illustrates this existential arc. Her imploration transforms into demand, then defiance and finally to negation. The regression reflects a Nietzschean rupture, where divine authority is no longer a source of comfort but a target of existential challenge. As her faith erodes, she begins to assert her own interpretive power, culminating in a daring theological inversion: "You hear, and do not speak... Like God, you are patient, immobile" (p. 140). Thus, by declaring herself to be God's messenger and voice, she reclaims the divine voice for herself, enacting what Beauvoir would call a project of situated freedom; one that embraces ambiguity, responsibility, and ethical transformation.

The protagonist's speech ruptures cultural taboos and confronts abject experiences such as sexual traumas, bodily autonomy, and existential despair. Her voice, once abjected, becomes a site resistance and transformation. Furthermore, the protagonist's speech can be considered both an ethical and ontological act, enacting both Beauvoir's call to embrace ambiguity and Nietzsche's imperative to resist through creation. Her voice - once buried in silence - becomes a site of existential emancipation, defying God, patriarchy, and cultural fatalism to assert a new horizon of meaning.

In *The Patience Stone*, the protagonist's body is central to her lived experience, not simply as an object of male possession, but as a repository of memory and trauma. Throughout the novel, the unnamed woman recalls how her body has been disciplined by patriarchal violence. After being engaged and married in her groom's absence for three years, the protagonist comments on her first meeting with her husband: "You sat down next to me. As if we already knew each other... as if you were seeing me after just a brief absence or I were tawdry reward for your triumph!" (Rahimi, 2008, p. 61). Moreover, she recalls her first sexual encounter with her husband not as an act of intimacy but as one of fear and ignorance; she confesses that she has not been prepared for what would happen to her body and that nobody has explained anything to her. This testimony underscores how her body is not her own, but something appropriated by patriarchal structures and male desire. Such portrayal is reminiscent of Beauvoir's assertion in *The Second Sex* that women's position, with relation to men, have been relegated to the position of "the Other" (Beauvoir, 1949, p. 77), which is adjectival to the substantial objectivity of women in Afghan society. Thus, the protagonist's body is reduced to a productive and sexual tool within a system that denies her subjectivity.

At the same time, the unnamed woman's body becomes a repository of painful memories. Throughout the narrative, she recalls childbirth as an act of suffering, and she associates her scars, exhaustion, and silence with the long history of bodily domination she has endured. This makes clear how her

body becomes a vessel of her lived experiences and not simply a physical entity, aligning with Beauvoir's (1949) existentialist ontology that the body is not merely a biological destiny but a situation, a mode of existing in the world. In this respect, the protagonist, by recounting her memories, inscribes meaning upon her flesh, turning it into a witness of her oppression.

Yet, with the progression of the narrative, the protagonist's body becomes a site of reclamation. The more she speaks with her comatose husband, who becomes her patience stone, the more she transforms silence into articulation, echoing Friedrich Nietzsche's (1997) notion of creative resistance, which contends that he who has a why to live can bear almost any how. By speaking her bodily truth - pain, desires, and frustration - she produces a new "why" that is not formulated by patriarchal norms but forged by her own existential confrontation with various suffering moments of her life. Critics such as Shukla (2025) have noted that in Rahimi's novel, the female body becomes a battlefield where survival and agency are negotiated, reflecting the feminist existentialist notion that transcendence is possible even within conditions of extreme immanence.

In the latter half of the novel, the protagonist employs her body as a surviving tool when two militia men storm her house. Asked how she manages alone, she replies shamelessly, "I sell my body, as you sell your blood" (Rahimi, 2008, p. 85), knowing that telling the truth would likely lead to rape or death. The provocative comparison her feigned occupation and the militia men's violence reframes her response not as confession but as existential self-definition. According to Debuire (2023), the protagonist "feels powerful because she is able to push the man away with just words... feeling that she is able to fight against the oppressors in her own way" (p. 19). Her statement disrupts the silence imposed by patriarchal norms and reframes her body as a site of agency rather than shame. From a feminist existentialist perspective, this utterance signals her refusal to be passively defined by societal expectations, confirming Beauvoir's (2004) claim that a woman is not born, but becomes a woman. Thus, her decision to commodify her body cannot be considered as surrender but an existential, strategic, and survival manoeuvre to reclaim control in a world that has stripped her of her autonomy. She boldly confines to her unconscious husband that for men like those who have entered her house, "to rape a whore is not an achievement... Men like him are afraid of whores" (Rahimi, 2008, p. 87). She elaborates on the last point by saying that to when men have an affair with a prostitute, they do not dominate her body since it is an exchange affair - sex for money. She adds that it is she, the prostitute, who is the dominant one in this affair.

The protagonist's existential agency deepens further when she begins to receive visits from a shy young man, a war victim who is seeking comfort and intimacy. By making him believe that she is a prostitute, she creates a

relational space that transcends conventional morality standards and gender roles. Their encounters are not portrayed as romantic or transactional, but rather moments of mutual vulnerability and recognition. During one of their secret meetings, the young man stammers, “I ... want t-t-to ... s-s-speak ... t-t-to you” (Rahimi, 2008, p. 123), and confides to her his deepest secrets. Being an orphan, he has been kidnapped, forced to carry a Kalashnikov, tortured, and raped; his kidnapper “keeps that poor little boy for his own pleasure!” (p. 124). Thus, in this context, the protagonist exceeds being a passive listener to embody what Beauvoir (2004) terms as the ethics of ambiguity, in which freedom is realised not in isolation but through recognition of the Other. At this point, the young man somehow becomes the Other, who presumably feels ashamed of divulging to her his most intimate secrets; as a result of that, he spits in her face and quickly leaves the house. Moreover, by allowing the young man to articulate his traumatic experience, she affirms her subjectivity and transforms their clandestine relationship into a space of shared humanity. In existentialist terms, her decision to create the illusion of being a prostitute is less an act of deception than an assertion of creative freedom, echoing Nietzsche’s (1974) call for individuals to resist oppressive structures through imaginative revaluation of values.

This relational dynamic can also be read as a critique of patriarchal violence in Afghan society towards both sexes. The boy’s abduction and exploitation evoke the practice of “bacha bazi” (sexual enslavement of boys), a form of violence that strips children of their subjectivity and silences them (HRW, 2013). By giving voice to his suffering, the protagonist also disrupts the cycle of silence and opens a space of intersubjective recognition. Thus, both characters, in their shared vulnerability, embody Beauvoir’s conviction that freedom must be lived with and through others despite the risks and ambiguities that such encounters entail.

Interestingly, the protagonist’s relationship with the young stammering boy sharply contrasts with her experience with the unknown man who impregnates her, fathering her two daughters. On the one hand, her affair with the young man is a stratagem of survival, marked by mutual vulnerability and recognition. By this, Rahimi dramatizes an existentialist ethic of speech, where articulation of suffering becomes an act of rebellion and solidarity. On the other hand, the protagonist’s recollection of the unknown man who impregnates her is marked by radical asymmetry, silence, and erasure. As she recalls bitterly, “The man wasn’t allowed to talk to me or touch me... Both of us were very anxious, terrified” (Rahimi, 2008, p. 138), and on top of that, she is forced to sleep with her husband after this humiliating act. In this relationship, her body is reduced to its reproductive function, serving the patriarchal demand for offspring. Unlike her dialogues

with the young man, which foster intersubjectivity, the affair with the unknown man is deprived of choice, voice, and recognition.

Therefore, the contrast between the protagonist's two relationships stages two opposing possibilities of relationality under conditions of war and patriarchy. The anonymous sexual encounter somehow symbolises the oppressive structures Nietzsche critiques when he insists that individuals must resist forces that silence and diminish them. It embodies an existential denial, where the protagonist is treated as an object of male desire. On the other hand, her relationship with the stammering young man becomes an experiment of creative resistance, where she transforms a socially forbidden connection into a space of solidarity, self-expression, and ambiguous freedom. Obviously, Rahimi's narrative foregrounds speech as an act of rebellion in a world that thrives on silencing women. Thus, while one relationship embodies silence and subjugation, the other embodies dialogue and existential agency, underscoring a feminist existentialist insight that freedom is not merely individual but relational, negotiated in and through the Other.

The Patience Stone is constructed with a stark, minimalist structure that strips away narrative excess to foreground a single confined setting: a war-torn room, a comatose husband, and the voice of a woman who finally dares to speak. This spatial and narrative minimalism creates the perfect philosophical arena in which silence and voice, death and desire, converge. The husband's silence becomes both stimulating and liberating for the wife, a void that allows her voice to emerge. As Debuire (2023) observes, the novel's "inner exile" structure allows the protagonist to navigate between reality and imagination, turning the absence of dialogue into a space for radical introspection and existential confrontation. Somehow, this structural austerity does more than creating an atmosphere; it becomes a philosophical space, where the stillness of her husband embodies death-in-life, an absence that paradoxically enables the woman's voice to surface; she confesses, "I've been talking to you, getting angry with you, insulting you, telling you everything that I've kept hidden in my heart, and you not being able to reply, or do anything at all ... all of this has been soothing and comforting to me" (Rahimi, 2008, p. 74). The sparse setting thus highlights both the cathartic effect and the challenging aspect of the act of speech itself, making her voice resonate against the silence that has long defined her existence.

The woman's confessional monologues unfold a world void of divine intervention or metaphysical consolation. Her many prayers to God are met with silence, and her appeals grow increasingly defiant, reflecting Nietzsche's pronouncement of the "death of God," which signals the collapse of transcendent authority and the imperative to create meaning through human experience. In *The Gay Science* (1974), Nietzsche writes,

“God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him... Must we ourselves not become gods simply to appear worthy of it” (p. 181). The protagonist’s rejection of divine responsiveness mirrors an existential rupture, forcing her to confront the void and assert her own interpretive power, particularly when she deduces that her husband is God: “Look at you; you are God. You exist, and do not move” (Rahimi, 2008, p. 140). To her, both exist within her minimalist milieu, but are of no use despite her endless implorations for both of them to aid her.

On the other hand, Beauvoir’s *Ethics of Ambiguity* (2004) insists that ethical action must arise from the concrete situation of the subject, not from abstract moral codes. Beauvoir, by claiming that one cannot truly will oneself free without simultaneously willing freedom for others, underscores the relational dimension of existential ethics. In this sense, the protagonist’s monologue is not only a personal catharsis; it is an ethical revolt against the structures that have silenced her, framing her speech as a feminist pedagogy of resistance. Her voice emerging from silence, becomes a philosophical act of self-definition and ethical engagement.

This minimalist frame also dramatizes the tension between death and desire. On one side lies her husband’s body, which is described in minute details. On the other side emerges the woman’s suppressed sensuality and longing for recognition, which become evident in her confessions: “And that is why you’re still alive. Yes, you are alive for my sake, for the sake of my secrets” (Rahimi, 2008, p. 74). This juxtaposition of a dying, mute body with a speaking, desiring subject emphasises how life asserts itself precisely in proximity of death. As Nietzsche (1974) suggests, the awareness of mortality intensifies the need to create meaning, and this meaning, in Rahimi’s narrative, is created through the woman’s audacious speech. Furthermore, the absence of divine consolation reinforces this convergence. The protagonist’s lamentations, the husband’s muteness, and the war’s indifference further consolidate this convergence. In such a space, the protagonist’s speech becomes not only an act of survival but an act of value-creation in the Nietzschean sense. Clearly, the woman generates meaning through her lived experience without any metaphysical or personal support. In this sense, Beauvoir (1947) argues that freedom must be enacted within constraint; here, the minimalist setting of the novel represents the constraint against which the protagonist articulates her agency.

Thus, *The Patience Stone* demonstrates how form itself becomes a feminist existential philosophy. The minimalist structure does not simply reflect the woman’s world; it creates the condition for existential exploration. Moreover, silence is never just silence but the basis from which voice erupts. Similarly, death is never simply absence but the shadow that whets desire. Therefore, in compressing the narrative to its most elemental form, Rahimi

allows opposites to converge, turning the novel into a meditation on freedom, morality, and the fragile possibility of meaning. In a way, the convergence of silence and voice, death and desire, unfolds in a space stripped of metaphysical comfort, where the protagonist seeks to create meaning through speech, memory, and revolt, making her monologues both as an embodiment of Nietzsche's post-theistic imperative and Beauvoir's feminist ethics as well as site of philosophical and political resistance.

Reading *The Patience Stone* from feminist existentialist perspective reveals how the novel is not a diary of despair but a manifesto of emergence. The protagonist's voice, though forged in constraint and solitude, becomes a site of resistance, agency, and transformation. Her narrative is a drama of becoming, where existential freedom is not inherited but spoken into being. Though the premise may suggest a confessional structure, the narrative resists this reduction. The woman's speech is not a mere unburdening of intimate secrets; rather, it is a process of self-construction. Her voice, previously silenced by patriarchal norms and wartime trauma, emerges not to seek absolution but to assert existence, signalling a shift from relational confession to self-reflexive transformation. This dual address marks the beginning of her existential becoming.

The titular "patience stone," drawn from Persian folklore, becomes a potent metaphor for the husband's inert body - a receptacle for centuries of suppressed female pain. Rahimi, in his novel, introduces the mythical stone by describing it as "a magical stone... that one confides in, that absorbs all the words, all the secrets until one day it explodes" (Rahimi, 2008, p. 3). The patience stone is a mythical black stone believed to possess magical properties. It serves as a silent confessor, to which individuals pour out their secrets, sorrows, and suffering, and the stone absorbs all their pain. According to the legend, when the stone can no longer bear the weight of these confessions, it explodes. In the novel, the patience stone thus functions as a metaphor for emotional containment and catharsis; a sacred object that listens without judgement and eventually liberates the speaker through rupture.

In *The Patience Stone* (2008), Rahimi reimagines this folkloric symbol in a realist and feminist existentialist context. Initially, the woman herself functions as her husband's patience stone - absorbing his violence, silence, and neglect. However, over the course of the narrative, she reverses that metaphorical role and renders her husband's inert body to her patience stone. She confides to her "sang-e saboor" all her painful memories and traumatic experiences. The more she confides in her patience stone, the more concerned she becomes that it might explode under the weight of her revelations. This reversal is not merely symbolic; it marks a radical shift in agency. She has turned from being the vessel of endurance to the speaker of

truth, from passive receptacle to active subject. In this sense, the novel dramatizes a feminist existentialist reconfiguration of power; thus, it can be noticed how the woman not only exists in relation to her husband's silence; he exists as the silent witness to her becoming.

Moreover, Rahimi's narrative structure echoes existentialist traditions, particularly those of Camus, Sartre, and Beauvoir, where freedom is forged in adversity. Accordingly, the protagonist's existential freedom is carved from the constraints of war, gender, and silence. Her words - "You know, the kind of fear that doesn't separate you from your desire, but instead arouses you, gives you wings, even though it may burn" (Rahimi, 2008, p. 34) - marks a rupture, a philosophical awakening that transcends religious, societal, and marital subjugation. The confined setting intensifies this drama of becoming, much like in Beckett's *Not I* or Sartre's *No Exit*, where space and silence amplify existential tension. Furthermore, Rahimi's choice to write in French, rather than Dari, further underscores the transgressive nature of the narrative, allowing to bypass cultural censorship and portray a woman who defies the archetypes of saintliness and submission.

Conclusions

The Patience Stone dramatises a feminist existential revolt through its protagonist's radical monologue, challenging patriarchal silencing and inherited moral norms. By engaging Beauvoir's ethics of ambiguity and Nietzsche's revaluation of values, the novel constructs a philosophical space where voice becomes a mode of resistance and self-authorship. The unnamed woman's transformation affirms that existential agency can emerge even within oppressive contexts, and that silence - when broken - can generate new modes of becoming. The message behind this article can be summarised by: Rahimi's narrative is not only literary but philosophical, staging a defiant reimagining of value, vulnerability, and voice through a distinctly feminist existential lens.

Conflict of Interest: The author reported no conflict of interest.

Data Availability: All data are included in the content of the paper.

Funding Statement: The author did not obtain any funding for this research.

References:

1. Batchelor, J. (2017). Anon, Pseud and 'By a Lady': The Spectre of Anonymity in Women's Literary History. In *Women's Writing, 1660–1830* (pp. 115–132). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-54382-0_6

2. Beckett, S. (1972). *Not I*. In *Collected Shorter Plays* (pp. 216–222). Grove Press.
3. Bornedal, P. (2012). *Existentialist Feminism: Simone de Beauvoir*. Academia.edu.
https://www.academia.edu/24617419/Existentialist_Feminism_Simone_de_Beauvoir
4. de Beauvoir, S. (2004). *The ethics of ambiguity* (B. Frechtman, Trans.). Citadel Press. (Original work published 1948)
5. Debuire, M. (2023). Representation of inner exile in *The Patience Stone*: Exposing the inner self and fight between reality and imagination. *Journal of English Studies in Arabia Felix*, 2(1), 10–22.
<https://doi.org/10.56540/jesaf.v2i1.35>
6. Human Rights Watch (HRW). (2013). *They have to give us work: Bacha bazi in Afghanistan*. HRW.
7. Khan, S. A., & Khan, M. U. (2021). Narrating the indescribable: Psycho-traumatic persona of "the woman" in Rahimi's *The Patience Stone*. *Liberal Arts and Social Sciences International Journal (LASSIJ)*, 5(1), 401–412. <https://doi.org/10.47264/idea.lassij/5.1.26>
8. Kristeva, J. (1982). *Powers of horror: An essay on abjection* (L. S. Roudiez, Trans.). Columbia University Press. (Original work published 1980)
9. Nietzsche, F. (1974). *The gay science* (W. Kaufmann, Trans.). Vintage Books. (Original work published 1882), p. 181
10. Rahimi, A. (2008). *The patience stone* (P. McLean, Trans.). Other Press. (Original work published 2008 as *Syngué sabour* by P.O.L. éditeur)
11. Sartre, J.-P. (1975). *No Exit* (S. Gilbert, Trans.). In *No Exit and Three Other Plays* (pp. 1–47). A.A. Knopf. (Original work published 1944)
12. Shukla, A. (2025). Survival, subjugation, and agency: The body as a battlefield in *The Patience Stone*. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Review Studies*
13. Suryani, S., Kurnia, F. D., & Retnaningdyah, P. (2023). Gender pedagogy: A feminist approach to teaching sexist, women solidarity, and power in *The Patience Stone*. *International Journal of Recent Educational Research*, 4(6), 710–731.
<https://doi.org/10.46245/ijorer.v4i6.416>
14. Yawari, A. W. (2020). The woman in the novel *The Patience Stone* (*Syngue Saboor*). *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, 10(2), 435–440.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.29322/IJSRP.10.02.2020.p9860>