

CHELMSFORD FILM CLUB

An independent film club based in Chelmsford

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The Patience Stone

2012 98 mins Rest of the World

Director: Atiq Rahimi

Cast: Golshifteh Farahini;
Hamid Djavadan;
Hassina Burgan;
Massi Mrowat



"The remarkable 82 years-old veteran of the cinema, Jean-Claude Carriere, has written a trenchant and vivid screenplay for an absorbing drama set ambiguously in Afghanistan, or in some other country in the end-game of a grim and soul-destroying war. Carriere has collaborated with director Atiq Rahimi, who wrote the original novel. Their movie is by turns mysterious, moving, shocking and explicit – and very different from the kind of opaque and quietist cinema one might expect."

So wrote Peter Bradshaw in the Guardian in December 2013. Mind you, I'm not so sure about what he means by the "quietist cinema one might expect"; there have been a number of unquiet, even disquieting, films set in war zones in recent years: 'Lebanon' and 'Armadillo' spring to mind, let alone 'Coriolanus'.

Farahani plays a beautiful but care-worn woman, obediently tending to her wounded husband, who is in a persistent vegetative state after being shot in the neck. In life, he was a cruel, tyrannical husband and his wife is sensing that, despite the crushing burden of caring for him, she has a euphoric kind of freedom in speaking her mind to his mute, unblinking quasi-corpse.

The man has become what ancient tradition called a 'patience stone': a mystical jewel to which all cares and worries can cathartically be confided. Could this be, for some, our 'imaginary friend', even a real friend if we are lucky, or possibly the professional therapist or counsellor if such can be afforded. The 'priest', possibly? Certainly, one inference to be drawn is that the woman, even in deepest poverty, can now emerge from her husband's shadow, from her silence, and find a voice of her own. The historian Mary Beard has only recently addressed this issue in a BBC 4 programme, 'Oh Do Shut Up', a repeat of her *London Review of Books* lecture, in which she shares her belief that women's voices have been silenced throughout history, starting with an example from The Odyssey when the young Telemachus tells Penelope: "Mother, go back up into your quarters...speech will be the business of men, all men and of me most of all."

The woman's candid story in this film is gripping: her sensuality and sexuality, together with defiant self-respect, powerfully uncoil. A film to be compared with Almodovar's 'Talk To Her' or, maybe, Dennis Potter's 'Brimstone and Treacle'. Its final moments have an overwhelming force.

Our next film:

A Hijacking will be shown on Wednesday 9 April, starting at 8pm