



FILM: **AN IMPOSSIBLE LOVE**

FDG RATING: 2.9 ☹️☹️☹️⬜⬜

Film Discussion Group (FDG) Scale is 1-5 (5 is best)

Catherine Corsini: *director/co-writer*
Virginie Efira: *actress, Rachel*
Niels Schneider: *actor, Philippe*

DATE: December 18, 2022

DISCUSSION SUMMARY: **AN IMPOSSIBLE LOVE**

The 2018 French film, *An Impossible Love*, is based on the 2015 novel by Christine Angot, whose personal experiences with emotional cruelty and abuse are the film's central themes. The film is narrated by Rachel's daughter who describes her mother when she was a shy young woman from a Jewish background in 1950s France, working as a secretary and living at home with her mum and sister, in a small provincial town. We see her at a dance, anxiously hoping handsome Philippe, a Parisian translator, will show up. She is infatuated by him. He is a bit older, wealthy, cultured, intellectual, confident, and deceitfully charming in his narcissistic, manipulative style. Rachel is vulnerable, lacks self esteem after a failed relationship and worries about being left on the shelf.

We are surprised that Philippe is so attentive to Rachel at the dance, but he is playing on her vulnerability although he says matter of fact, that he doesn't want commitment or marriage because he can't be tied down. She decided to accept the situation because she was passionately in love with him and he made her feel loved, at least superficially, when he was with her. Of course, he abandons Rachel as soon as she becomes pregnant. He moves to Germany, and marries another woman of his same status, after dismissing marriage to Rachel saying, "Of course, if you were rich I'd have considered it."

A few discussion participants said they were ready to reach out and strangle him by this point. But were also angry that Rachel didn't act on her instincts when she seemed to take a step back as Philippe said he didn't have time for a committed relationship.

Rachel dedicates herself to raising her daughter, Chantel, but is determined that her daughter know her father; that he at least acknowledge her. Philippe adamantly resists until Chantel is a teenager, who is enamored by his intellect and worldly knowledge, qualities her mother lacks. He finally acknowledges her, now that she is preparing for college, and invites her to spend weekends with him. The first time he goes to pick up Chantel and goes into her bedroom as she is packing her books while Rachel waits in the car, several of us felt chills knowing this was not a good situation.

While many other cinematic stories focus on the abusers, this film achingly reveals the emotional wounds, scars, and generational repercussions experienced by the victims. The films spans 40 years and three generations.

Deeply disturbing, choppy, unpleasant, too dark, disjointed, carelessly made, too long, tedious, and heavy handed were some of the negative comments. It was also, distracting that the mother's appearance doesn't age very much while four actresses played the part of Chantel at different ages. On the positive side, the acting was excellent. A couple discussion participants thought that the character studies were very insightful and powerful. Another commented on the raw subject of abuse and appreciated the treatment of such difficult and disturbing, content. We see how vulnerability can lead to a willingness to submit to power and control. And exploitation in the guise of love makes true love impossible.

We didn't have a lot of love for the film rating it a depleted 2.9 on our scale of 1 to 5. (5 is the best.)



See you at the movies!
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