



FILM: **THE SALESMAN**

FDG RATING: 3.2 ☺☺☺○○

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

Asghar Farhadi: *director*

Shahab Hosseini: *actor, Emad, also Willy Loman*

Taraneh Alidoosti: *actress, Rana, also Willy Loman's wife, Linda*

DATE: March 19, 2017

DISCUSSION SUMMARY: **THE SALESMAN**

Only a few of us caught the 2016 academy award winning foreign language film, *The Salesman*, by Asghar Farhadi, best known for his previous award winning film, *Separation*, about the cultural and emotional conflicts in contemporary Iranian families. An odd juxtaposition frames the story in latest film, *The Salesman*: It is a play within a play, or rather a play, (*Death of a Salesman* by Arthur Miller), within a movie about a young Persian married couple, Emad and Rana, who are performing Miller's work on stage in the local theater in Tehran. The two simultaneous plots invite us to observe the similarities in the themes of relationship obligations, loss of self-esteem, feelings of failure, revenge versus forgiveness, and the disintegration of a marriage.

When Emad and Rana flee their apartment because of a structural collapse, the cracks in their relationship begin. They stay in apartment suggested by another performer in the play, not knowing that the previous tenant was a prostitute. One night, while in the shower, Rana is assaulted by a male intruder and neighbors have to take her to the hospital. Rana is traumatized by the attack and Emad also feels his masculinity has been violated. Traditional Iranian cultural values tinge the emotional responses of this modern couple causing Rana to feel shame for what happened to her and Emad is obsessed with finding the intruder to inflict revenge while at the same time there is a hint of suspicion for his wife. As also happens in *Death of a Salesman*, we see the crumbling of a marriage and the self-loathing of Emad since he has failed to protect what was most important and sacred to him.

At the end when Rana sees that her intruder is a miserable elderly man who begs her for forgiveness, she no longer feels fear or animosity and demands that Emad gives up his own wish for revenge, going as far as threatening to leave Emad if he would mortally shame the old man by revealing to his family what he had done.

We sensed that we missed many underlying political and cultural messages and commentaries but still relished film's suspense. One reviewer expected more and was puzzled by some of the scenes. Another thought the connection between the play and the film was tenuous. But it did illustrate the director's overarching philosophy that "the similarities among people in different parts of the world far surpass their differences."

[An interesting side note is that Farhadi did not attend the 89th Academy Awards ceremony in protest of the U.S. Executive Order 13769 banning immigration of seven majority-Muslim countries. Iranian-American engineer, business woman (co-founder and chairwoman of Prodea Systems; co-founder and CEO of Telecom Technologies), Anousheh Ansari — the first Iranian to go to space — accepted the award for him at the ceremony and read his statement.]

We awarded the film a tenuous 3.2 (5 is the best on our scale of 1-5).



See you at the movies!

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[Film Discussion Group](#) (FDG) organizer