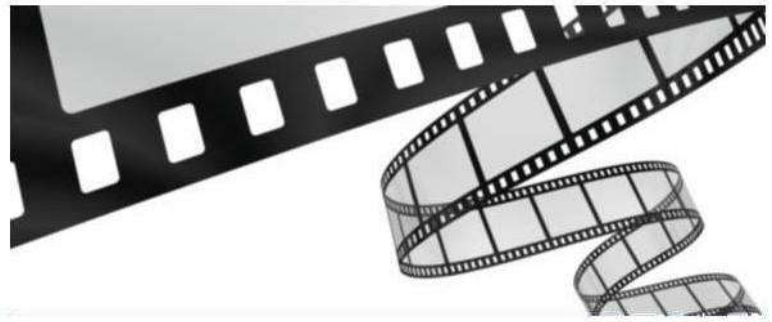


CHELMSFORD FILM CLUB

An Independent film society based in Chelmsford

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The Past

(France/Italy, 2013)

Running time: 130 minutes and 23 seconds

Written and directed by Asghar Farhadi

Cast: Bérénice Bejo (Marie); **Ali Mosaffa** (Ahmad); **Tahar Rahim** (Samir); **Pauline Burlet** (Lucie); **Elyes Aguis** (Fouad); **Jeanne Jestin** (Léa); **Sabrina Ouazani** (Naïma); **Babak Karimi** (Shahryar); **Valeria Cavalli** (Valeria)

The Iranian film-maker Asghar Farhadi has come to Cannes with an absorbing, fascinating if slightly contrived movie, a loss-of-love-triangle starring Bérénice Bejo, Ali Mosaffa and Tahar Rahim. A Frenchwoman, Marie (Bejo), is attempting to resolve difficulties with her Iranian husband, Ahmad (Mosaffa), from whom she has been long separated, and to make a fresh start with a new partner, Samir (Rahim). The film revisits some themes of Farhadi's breakthrough film *A Separation*, about the mortality of love, along with ideas about intimacy and domesticity in a world where the stepfamily is the norm. Here it is further supercharged with a grand tragic theme — the past and its pitiless grip on us. Farhadi shows the desperation and anger involved in trying to defy the past, to annul incorrect life-choices.

It is an intricate and often brilliant drama, with restrained and intelligent performances; there is an elegantly patterned mosaic of detail, unexpected plot turns, suspenseful twists and revelations. The narrative structure itself is perhaps a little over-determined; there is some melodrama in the tragedy, and the continued absence from the screen of one important character perhaps makes the final scene a little easy to guess. It is often rather like a stage-play, but interestingly and bracingly so. The continuing force and intelligence of Farhadi's film-making is compelling.

I wonder if Farhadi hasn't overloaded his film with an almost exotic abundance of detail and plot surprises, taking it to the limit of plausibility. But what a grippingly made picture it is, with real intellectual sinew, from the bravura opening scene – Marie picks Ahmad up at the airport, driving an unfamiliar car and backing out of her parking spot she almost has some kind of unexplained prang: a disaster which Farhadi cleverly follows with his opening title, *The Past*, with a windscreen-wiper motif. Backing out is dangerous; reversing is dangerous; the past is dangerous.

From Peter Bradshaw's review, *The Guardian*, Friday 17 May 2013

Our next screening: *The German Doctor/Wakolda*, Thursday 23 October at 8pm. Our quiz night is being held on Friday 28 November. Tickets will be on sale at the next screening (*The German Doctor/Wakolda*).