

Characterization in Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* and Asghar Farhadi's *The Salesman*: A Comparative Reading

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Abstract

The overarching argument of this article is that Willy, in Arthur Miller's *The Death of a Salesman* (1998), is portrayed both through Emad and the Old Man, and Linda is displayed by Rana and the Old Woman in Asghar Farhadi's *The Salesman* (2016). Drawing upon Linda Hutcheon's concept of "meme", the objective of this paper is to compare the characters of two masterpieces to discover how Farhadi adapts and creates them native to fit his local context. In order to fill the existing gap, examining the psychological development of the characters better illuminates the similarities and the differences between two different nations and unravels Farhadi's creativity in adapting Miller's play to the Iranian culture. By detaching himself from fidelity, Farhadi creates his own typical Iranian version of Miller's characters in a new culture in lieu of an accurate duplication, a change which is repetition without replication, as if Miller's characters were reborn with the same characteristics in another context.

Keywords: Arthur Miller, *Death of a Salesman*, Asghar Farhadi, *The Salesman*, Comparative Characterization.

Introduction

Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* (1998) portrays the twentieth-century American socio-cultural context. Likewise, as a reader, Asghar Farhadi (1972) interprets Miller's play in his own way, and as a creator or an adapter, he creates his own adaptation. On the one hand, he portrays the Iranian actors in the roles of the American characters while rehearsing and staging the play within the movie. On the other hand, he presents the similarities and differences between these two groups by showing the private lives of the actors, Emad and Rana. Thus, he does not solely mirror the play. Instead, he constructs and designs Iranian version of Willy and Linda in his own way. Farhadi does not intend to solely reproduce another American version of the play with Iranian characters in Iran; otherwise, his adaptation might have apparently been doomed to failure, because it would not appear to be as authentic and tangible to the

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audience. According to Hutcheon, “[n]ot only do these kinds of adaptations provide more details, especially about adapted characters’ inner lives, but in the process they also help foster audience/reader identification with those characters” (2013, 118). Therefore, by constructing Iranian versions of these characters who play the roles of Willy and Linda, he integrates Miller’s American characters into the new Iranian context. He has intertwined the characters of his story into those of the adapted text so as to exhibit the Iranian identity and Iranianize his adaptation for both knowing and unknowing audiences (Mirzaei 2018, 25). Yet, to the former, the interrelations between the characters of two nations are also portrayed, that people with mutual agonies and vulnerabilities may behave in the same way under similar circumstances, as “the adaptation and the adapted work merge in” these knowing “audiences’ understanding of their complex interrelations” (Hutcheon 2013, 117). By doing so, Farhadi, who is not preoccupied with the idea of fidelity, produces a creative and successful adaptation tangible for “both knowing and unknowing audiences” (Hutcheon 2013, 121). As an autonomous work, the movie is fascinating even for those who are unfamiliar with the play, yet as an adaptation, for those who are familiar with the adapted text, it gains profound layers of meaning.

Change is an “inevitable” element in the process of adaptation (Hutcheon 2013, 142). As a product, adaptation requires to be relevant to the demand of the new audience, even for those who are unfamiliar with the adapted text. Therefore, the adapter requires to adjust the prior text not only to the adaptation’s genre but also to the target setting and time. That is the principal reason why change, creativity, and intertextuality take priority, whereas fidelity or proximity to the adapted text is gradually losing its importance, “if ‘fidelity’ is invoked at all in adaptation studies, it is ... in the context of fan-culture loyalty rather than as a quality of adaptive strategies” (Hutcheon 2013, xxvi). Farhadi’s movie indeed include two adaptations. The first one is the play that Emad, Rana, and their friends are staging inside Farhadi’s movie. The other one is Farhadi’s story of Emad’s and Rana’s lives. Although in both adaptations there is change, the latter include the changes in setting and time to help us better re-contextualize the adapted text. This adaptation does not seek proximity to the adapted text and Farhadi is not preoccupied with the notion of fidelity. Thus, in the main plot, there is no twentieth-century Willy or Linda. Rather, he creatively reconstructs Miller’s characters as Emad/The Old Man and Rana/The Old Woman who are the twenty-first-century Iranian versions of both Willy and Linda. Farhadi adjusts Miller’s play to fit its new audience and makes his adaptation relevant to its new time and setting by revisiting the same themes yet constructing his own typical Iranian characters with Iranian names, appearance, and style. His adaptation builds an interwoven relationship between the characters of his movie and those of the adapted text. Characters can be transferred from one text to another by the process of adaptation. In each narrative text, the characters sow the seeds of imagination in the receivers’ mind by their psychological development that might stimulate the empathy of the receivers (Hutcheon 2013, 11). Thus, the characters play a pivotal role in constructing rhetorical and aesthetic effects of a given text. There is no simple one-to-one correspondence between Farhadi’s characters and those of the adapted text.

Drawing upon Linda Hutcheon’s concept of “meme”, the overarching argument of this paper is that the play’s characters are manifested by two characters in the movie. On the one hand, Willy, for instance,

is portrayed both by Emad and the Old Man, and Linda is displayed by Rana and the Old Woman. On the other hand, Babak, a friend of both Emad and Rana, who plays the role of Charley, indicates various dimensions of Charley, Biff, Happy, and Willy. The objective of this paper is to compare the multi-faceted characters of two masterpieces so as to discover how Farhadi adapts and makes them native to fit his local context and culture. This paper also aims at exposing the socio-cultural similarities and differences between two masterpieces as well as maintaining a mutual understanding for both sides. Characterization, as Jack Reams defines, is any deed by the author occurring within a literary work used to give description of a character (2015, 4). It is generally divided into direct and indirect characterization. Direct characterization is what the author explicitly tells to the reader, whereas Indirect characterization is what that is shown to the reader by the target source (Reams 2015, 4). In order to fill the existing gap, the thematic analysis of two masterpieces is not the primary concern of this study and the analysis of the multi-faceted characters will solely be given priority, because examining the psychological development of the characters will help us better understand the similarities and the differences between two foreign nations. We try to respond to two fundamental questions, namely: How does Farhadi's film adaptation indigenize Miller's *Death of a Salesman*? And, in what manner does Miller's play as a prior text influence Farhadi's creation?

Literature Review

In *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, Dudley Andrew defines adaptation as "the appropriation of a meaning from a prior text" (2009, 373). He identifies three dimensions of the relationship between the movie and the text in a movie adaptation, namely "borrowing", "intersection", and "fidelity of transformation". Given "borrowing", the "appeal" of a text is the chief preoccupation, and "fertility", not "fidelity" (Andrew 2009, 374) is the touchstone of the success of the adaptation. Given "intersection", Andrew employs André Bazin's metaphor that identifies the adapted text with a "crystal chandelier", and the adaptation, that is to say, cinema with a "flashlight" (2009, 374). Thus, Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* (1998) and Asghar Farhadi's *The Salesman* (2016) become a "crystal chandelier" and "flashlight", respectively. Eventually, given "fidelity of transformation", the movie adaptation endeavors to "measure up to a literary adapted text" and the audience is willing "to make such a comparison" (Andrew 2009, 374).

In *Adaptation: From Text to Screen, Screen to Text*, Deborah Cartmell divides G. Wagner's adaptation to three categories, namely "transposition", "commentary", and "analogy". Given "Transposition", a literary text is altered as precisely as possible to a movie. Given "Commentary", the original is transferred, and ultimately, given "Analogy", the original text is utilized as a matter of departure (1999, 24). Asghar Farhadi's adaptation is apparently in harmony with the third one, that is "Analogy". Farhadi uses Miller's *Death of a Salesman* (1998) as a catalyst for his own story of Emad and Rana. His adaptation is not solely a precise transposition, or even a commentary in which the original is altered. Furthermore, Cartmell criticizes preoccupation with the ideas of proximity and fidelity to the original literary text and pivots on "intertextuality" of the adaptation as the principal objective that

informs us that there is indeed more than one text and author and emphasizes a plurality of meanings (1999, 28).

In *Adaptation and Appropriation*, Julie Sanders, akin to Deborah Cartmell (1999), insists on eliminating the “rigid concepts of fidelity or infidelity” for the sake of “creativity” (2016, 9) in the adaptation process. Sanders gives priority to “appropriation” over “adaptation” and postulates that adaptations and appropriations differ in how explicit their interrelationships with the source texts are, that appropriations are “less explicit, [and] more embedded” (2016, 3). Sanders emphasizes intertextuality as a crucial component of adaptation, because adaptations are created where at least two texts are intertwined and interrelated (2016, 22). Similarly, Sanders confirms that in adaptation studies, we ought to examine the “ongoing interactions” in lieu of searching for the “text’s closure to alternatives” (2016, 22). Sanders interchangeably uses the terms “appropriation” and “adaptation”, as each adaptation, to some extent, involves appropriation. Each adaptation is a new interpretation, that is a kind of appropriation in itself (2016, 22). Therefore, as adapters, authors appropriate the source texts and partly alter them for various reasons.

In *A Theory of Adaptation*, Linda Hutcheon differentiates between adaptation as a process and as a product (2013, 9). Hutcheon postulates that adaptation as a process is “the ability to repeat without copying, to embed difference in similarity, to be at once both self and other” (2013, 174). Hutcheon refers to three reasons of adaptation, namely “economic lures” (2013, 86), “cultural capital” (2013, 91), and “personal and political motives” (2013, 92). Commercial goals and success are inevitably crucial. In this respect, an adaptation is regarded as “a source of financial gain”. Adapters “look for safe bets with a ready audience”, which is the principal reason why a majority of “films are often made of Pulitzer Prize-winning books” (Hutcheon 2013, 87). On the one hand, “studios realize the name [of an adapted masterpiece] alone will sell the movie” (Hutcheon 2013, 88). On the other hand, “often a film version boosts sales of the novel” (Hutcheon 2013, 90). Therefore, it can be a win-win situation for both the author of the adapted text and the adapter. Hutcheon further alludes to “cultural capital” as another motive for adaptation. She opines, “one way to gain respectability or increase cultural capital is for an adaptation to be upwardly mobile” (2013, 91). Adaptations may also yearn to “benefit from their adapted works’ cultural cachet” (Hutcheon 2013, 91). This motive can involve the initial reason of adaptation. In better terms, by choosing a text with the higher cultural prestige, the adapter may gain not only the cultural capital of the adapted text but also its enthusiastic audience, and thus, a financial success. Eventually, Hutcheon refers to “personal and political motives” (2013, 92) as the ultimate cause for adaptation. On the one hand, given the personal motives, Hutcheon refers to adapting a text as a reverence, appreciation, or even a procedure to “supplant canonical cultural authority” (2013, 93). On the other hand, given the political motives, Hutcheon suggests that adaptations can vividly be utilized to get involved in “a large social or cultural critique” (2013, 94).

Reinforcing Dudley Andrew’s (2009) viewpoint on adaptation, Hutcheon postulates that Farhadi’s movie adaptation is indeed an adaptation-within-adaptation (2013, 39). By employing play-within-movie technique, he constructs two adaptations of one work. The first one is the staging of the play by the

characters of the movie, for each staging of a play can be regarded as an adaptation “in its performance” (Hutcheon 2013, 39). The other one is the main plot of the movie that applies the story in the play to Emad's and Rana's real lives. Therefore, he has skillfully chosen those elements of the chandelier to be displayed in his adaptation that his characters, namely Emad and Rana, encounter in their lives. Both Hutcheon (2013) and Andrew (2009) state that interpretation and appropriation are components of adaptation, in which creativity is also emphasized. To employ Andrew's metaphor, the adapter takes a “flashlight” and illuminates specific elements of the adapted text and creatively re-introduces and re-presents the adapted text to the audience in his own way (2009, 374).

Hutcheon asserts, “what is involved in adapting can be a process of appropriation ... Therefore, adapters are first interpreters and then creators” (2013, 18). Hutcheon further opines, “change is inevitable” (2013, 142) in any adaptation. Reinforcing Cartmell's (1999) and Hutcheon's (2013) viewpoints on adaptation, Julie Sanders believes that “many adaptations, of novels ... contain further layers of transposition, relocating their source texts not just generically, but in cultural, geographic and temporal terms” (2016, 25), and “it is at the very point of infidelity or departure that the most creative acts of adaptation take place” (24). This is precisely the case with Farhadi's adaptation. Likewise, Hutcheon states, “[t]he adapted text, therefore, is not something to be reproduced, but rather something to be interpreted and recreated, often in a new medium ... for the adapter is an interpreter before becoming a creator” (2013, 84). Having an approximately different viewpoint with Dudley Andrew (2009), Deborah Cartmell stresses that adaptation categories are “limitless” (1999, 24).

Although the ideas of proximity and fidelity to the prior text are the crucial parameters for judging adaptations, adaptation scholars, such as Andrew (2009), Sanders (2016), and Hutcheon (2013), believe that they are not logical parameters for judging adaptations. Thus, adapters “take on this dual responsibility: to adapt another work and to make of it an autonomous creation” (Hutcheon 2013, 85). To Hutcheon, infidelity to a prior text does not make an adaptation unsuccessful, yet “a lack of the creativity and skill to make the text one's own and thus autonomous” (2013, 21) can make an adaptation unsuccessful.

Likewise, in “The Thousand-Faced Salesman: Revisiting Willy Loman in Tehran”, Kamran Ahmadgoli and Morteza Yazdanjoo explore the adaptability of the salesman “meme” in the early 20th-century Iran, concentrating on gender politics and the shattered relationships (2020, 372). Ahmadgoli and Yazdanjoo indicate that this adaptability reflects human fallibility and preoccupation with the social myths (2020, 372).

Naturally, in “Birth of a Salesman”, Morteza Yazdanjoo discovers the “intertextual dialogism” between the American literature and contemporary Iranian Cinema, emphasizing how the latter uses these works to construct national or gender identity (2022, 372). Reinforcing Louis Montrose's concept of “Cultural Materialism”, Yazdanjoo argues that literary texts are the synchronic artifacts influenced by the historical contexts, providing an intertextual avenue for understanding the historical texts (2022, 372).

Similarly, in “Taking *Death of a Salesman* to Tehran”, Howie Movshovitz postulates that Farhadi uses Miller's play, *Death of a Salesman*, with the specific and general significance, oscillating between

the actors' on-stage lives and their private lives, aiming to capture the tentativeness and uncertainty he sees in the Iranian society, similar to Willy Loman's oscillation between the reality and fantasies (2017).

The aforementioned scholars approve that change is an irrefutable element in adaptation. Change occurs for various reasons, such as the demand of the new audience, the adapter's ideas and viewpoints, and the new form of adaptation. These changes are not destructive, because faithfulness is not the principal issue any longer. Distancing from the notion of proximity and fidelity is indeed the other dimension of adaptation studies where the scholars' ideas meet. In better terms, adaptation studies as a discipline are preoccupied with examining the changes that occur in the target text, whether it is a novel, a film, a musical piece, or a portrait, and the mechanisms involved in the process of the transformation of the material from the source text to the adaptation.

Discussion

Emad and Willy

Both Willy and Emad play the role of a teacher or a leader. Emad is a high school Persian literature teacher, and Willy is a father endeavoring to lead or even order, and instruct his sons the virtuous manners and the ways for success. He is specifically concerned about Biff. For example, he remarks, "I'll see him [Biff] in the morning; I'll have a nice talk with him. I'll get him a job selling" (Miller 1998, 6); or he says to Ben, "sometimes I'm afraid that I'm not teaching them the right kind of—Ben, how should I teach them?" (36). Arguably, both Willy and Emad undergo a transformation. Willy is portrayed as a hospitable father in the past that can be regarded as flashbacks as we imagine in his hallucinations. When he returns from a trip, he tells his sons, "I wanna see ya. I got a surprise for you, boys" (16). He offers them "a punching bag" with "Gene Tunney's signature on it." His gift makes them so enthusiastic that Biff replies, "Gee, how'd you know we wanted a punching bag?" (17). Willy narrates to them about his trips and experiences. Biff narrates, "I'd love to go with you sometimes, Dad". Willy promises to take them with him "as soon as summer comes," and proceeds, "You, Hap and I, and I'll show you all the towns" (19). Willy was so cherished by his sons (Figure 1) that his wife, Linda, once said, "Few men are idolized by their children the way" (24) Willy is.



Figure 1: The intruder/Willy is depicted as a father who has dedicated his entire life for his children

However, he gradually becomes hostile and irritable. He easily becomes furious. For example, when Linda purchases a new American cheese in lieu of the Swiss cheese he likes (6) or when he is playing

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cards with Charley (32) he becomes angry easily. Emad's character undergoes transformation akin to Willy. Initially, he is portrayed as a hospitable, patient teacher, and a caring neighbor. We can perceive how cordially and patiently he communicates with his students in the class. He instructs gravely, and at once, permits his students to have enjoyment and entertainment (Figure 2).

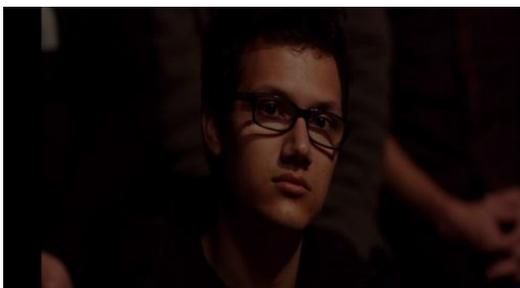


Figure 2: In theatre: Amin is watching the play with Emad acting as Willy

He is appreciated by his students, as one of them narrates, "I told her that you were my teacher, that we loved you, all the students loved you" (Farhadi 2016, 00:22:57 - 00:23:00). At the beginning of the movie, when he is called by his neighbors to abandon the collapsing apartment, Emad observes a crying little daughter at his door. He hugs and caresses her and tries to calm her down. He also assists a sick neighbor, Hossein, while everyone is escaping from the building. Rana even tries to discourage him from helping the sick neighbor, "Come, he can come by himself" (00:04:27). Yet, he does not pay attention to her and devotes himself to helping people. After the mysterious incident to his wife, Emad transforms into a vengeful and an impatient figure.



Figure 3: In class: Emad's students are watching "The Cow" foreshadowing the social pressure

This incident reminds the audience of *The Cow* (Figure 3), which is reflected in Farhadi's *The Salesman*. *The Cow* [*Gav*], is one of the pioneering adaptations in the movie industry by Dariush Mehrjui (Naficy 2011, 336). *The Cow* is narrated according to Gholam Hossein Saedi's story about Mash Hasan's unquenchable thirst to perceive himself as a cow once his amiable cow, his only possession and source of income, had unfortunately died while he was away. His neighbors tell him that it has run away. However, the villager is so fond of the cow that he cannot endure the thought of losing his cow, and gradually gets insane and thinks that he himself is the cow (Rezaie 2018, par. 28). One of Emad's students asks him how it is possible for a man to turn into a cow. Emad replies, "Gradually" (Farhadi 2016, 0:07:21). Thus, similar to both Willy and Mash Hassan, Emad gradually changes and turns into

another character, which reminds the audience of Willy's change. Willy and Emad also share a sense of guilt (Mirzaei 2018, 26). On the one hand, Willy feels guilty owing to his infidelity to his wife, "I'll make it all up to you Linda" (Miller 1998, 26). He is further ashamed of not being a virtuous father to his sons, "I got nothin' to give him, Charley, I'm clean, I'm clean" (29). Besides, he feels guilty for what he has done to Biff by his infidelity. When Bernard asks him what occurred in Boston that made Biff give up everything, "*he comes quickly, guiltily, to BERNARD*" (69) and "*looks at him as an intruder*" (72), for it was then and there in Boston that Biff recognized Willy's infidelity and quitted everything. On the other hand, Emad feels guilty and vulnerable for not being able to either rescue or assist his wife, and ultimately, for refuting her request to forgive the Old Man that apparently leads to the death of the Old Man. Therefore, when the ambulance arrives (Figure 4) and Rana accusingly looks at him, he cannot look at her and sorrowfully and regretfully looks down (Farhadi 2016, 01:59:33). The ultimate section of the movie expresses the intruder's fragility as he is carried on his son-in-law's back akin to a damaged victim or a sleeping infant (Piryaei 2019, 12).



Figure 4: The Intruder's vulnerability is portrayed at the end of the movie when carried by his son-in-law

Both Willy and Emad suffer from the death of their dreams (Mirzaei 2018, 27). Willy imagines prosperity and success. He narrates to his sons, "Someday I'll have my own business, and I'll never have to leave home any more" (Miller 1998, 19). Bigsby postulates that Willy "believes the promises that America made to itself—that in this greatest country on earth success is an inevitability" ("Introduction" xxv). Yet, he has an illusion of the American Dream as the "dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone" that promises "opportunity for each according to ability or achievement" (qtd. in Campbell 2012, 11). Nonetheless, Willy does not pay attention to his skills such as the mastery of the carpentry, because he regards it as inferior. He tells Biff, "Even your grandfather was better than a carpenter" (Miller 1998, 44). Resultantly, everything becomes vague and opaque. As Howard says to him, "this is no time for false pride, Willy" (63). Emad initially has a successful and tranquil marital life. He even imagines having children, "Careful what you say! There might be three of us soon" (Farhadi 2016, 00:14:53 - 00:14:57), yet, at the end, he loses everything (Figure 5). Both Willy and Emad yearn for an ideal life that the American Dream promises them, yet they finally become disappointed (Mirzaei 2018, 27).



Figure 5: Cracks on the wall foreshadowing Emad's and Rana's marital breakdown

The Old Man and Willy

Willy can also be compared to the Old Man, the driver of the pick-up truck, in the movie adaptation. Both of them have been married for thirty-five years (Piryaei 2019, 12). The old man's familial bonds are illuminated, for he is depicted as a father preoccupied with both his children's prosperity and his long-standing bond with his devoted and faithful wife (Figures 1 & 6).

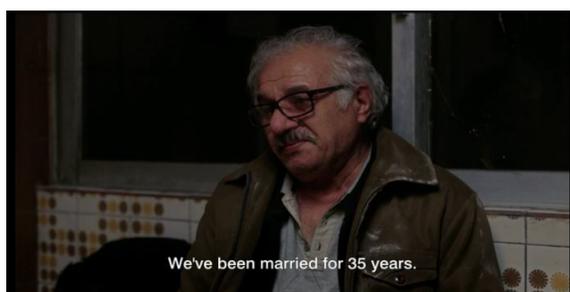


Figure 6: The intruder is portrayed as a husband who cherishes his long-term marriage

They are old salesmen, who are unable to provide for their families. Willy is old enough to be retired, yet after working for years, he is indeed expelled by his young boss, Howard, with the mere pretext that "business is business" (Miller 1998, 60). The old man is retired, yet he has to work as a salesman at night to afford his family. They both tell lies. Willy lies about his real social status and success in his job and indeed exaggerates everything. He is neither trustworthy nor faithful to Linda and his family (Mirzaei 2018, 28). When Biff observes Miss Francis in his hotel room, Willy tells him that she is a buyer. He retreats to telling lies to find a safe refuge for himself again. The Old Man also tells lies. When Emad doubts that it may have been the Old Man who entered his home, he asks him whether he has just changed phones or not. The Old Man does not admit, yet he has already changed phones, for his previous phone was left at Emad's house. Even when Emad finds out the truth and reveals it, the Old Man tries to save himself by telling big lies, as he did not know they had moved into that apartment, or that he did not enter the bathroom. Similar to Willy, the Old Man is not candid with his wife and family. Both of them incorporate the sense of guilt and are anxious of the exposure of their lies and infidelity. After his quarrel with Willy in the restaurant, Biff abandons him. When Biff returns home, Linda reprimands him. He approaches Willy in the yard and tries to reconcile with him. He asks Willy to forget about "whose fault it is or anything like that. [*He takes WILLY's arm.*] Let's just wrap it up, heh? Come

on in, we'll tell Mom." Although he is not precisely talking about Willy's infidelity, Willy feels guilty and anxious:

WILLY [*frozen, immobile, with guilt in his voice*]. No, I don't want to see her.

BIFF. Come on! [*He pulls again, and WILLY tries to pull away.*]

WILLY [*highly nervous*]. No, no, I don't want to see her.

BIFF [*tries to look into WILLY's face, as if to find the answer there*]. Why don't you want to see her?

WILLY [*more harshly now*]. Don't bother me, will you? (Miller 1998, 102)

Willy is extremely anxious of the exposure of his secret to Linda. There is a similar scene in Farhadi's movie, when the Old Man defenselessly begs Emad and Rana to allow him to go, "[to EMAD] I'm begging you . . . [*then to RANA*] Madam, forgive me, let me go, before they arrive . . . This woman has lived with me for 35 years" (Farhadi 2016, 01:44:37 - 01:45:25). Ultimately, Willy commits suicide. In Farhadi's movie, the Old Man apparently dies at the end even though it is not totally vivid what happens to him (Mirzaei 2018, 29).

Emad and Biff

Both Biff's and Emad's lives can be compared to each other. Similar to Emad, Biff yearns in vain for an ideal life abundant of peace, happiness, and prosperity (Mirzaei 2018, 29). Happy calls Biff "a poet" and "an idealistic", when he says that he has a strong interest in nature, and in working with his hands: "There's nothing more inspiring or—beautiful than the sight of a mare and a new colt", yet at once when he works on the farm, he is worried that this kind of job does not promise his future: "I suddenly get the feeling, my God, I'm not getting' anywhere! I oughta be makin' my future. That's when I come running home. And now, I get here, and I don't know what to do with myself" (Miller 1998, 11). Both Emad and Biff find out the truth. Biff knows his father's secret, and Emad notices the Old Man's secret and threatens him to expose it to his family. Therefore, they are both charged with spite and revenge. Biff is accused by his father: "I want you to know, on the train, in the mountains, in the valleys, wherever you go, that you cut down your life for spite!" (103). Likewise, Emad is reprimanded by his wife, "RANA. You're taking revenge. EMAD. I know what I'm doing" (Farhadi 2016, 01:43:30 - 01:43:35). Another experience shared by Biff and Emad is that their lives are ruined owing to someone else's misconduct and their own immoral choices. Observing Willy with another woman in his hotel room is the climax of Biff's life. The great delusional image he has created of his father inadvertently shatters. This incident disappoints both Biff's and Willy's hopes and expectations. Biff vaguely refers to what his father has committed:

BIFF. Because I know he's a fake and he doesn't like anybody around who knows!

LINDA. Why a fake? In what way? What do you mean?

BIFF. Just don't lay it all at my feet. It's between me and him—that's all I have to say. (Miller 1998, 42)

Yet, he never exposes Willy's secret. In Farhadi's *The Salesman*, what occurs to Emad's wife disappoints him. He is neither able to save nor defend her. He finds the guilty man and yearns to gratify his desire for vengeance by forcing him to encounter his family and feel shame and remorse owing to the old man's vicious deed (Mirzaei 2018, 30). Emad does not expose the old man's secret even though both of them have virtually led the salesmen to die (Figure 7).



Figure 7: Rana is playing Linda and grieving over Emad/Willy's dead body

Babak, Charley, Biff, and Happy

Babak is Emad's and Rana's friend. He plays the role of Miller's Charley. He tries to help Emad and Rana when they are needy and homeless, as Charley endeavors to help Willy and Linda when they are vulnerable. Yet, he is not as frank as Charley. Babak also reminds us of Biff and Happy. Similar to Biff and Happy, Babak is a single man who spends time flirting with women and he tells lies. Babak has had affairs with Aho, the prostitute. Quite shockingly, he tells Emad that he cannot accuse Aho according to what the neighbors gossip (Farhadi 2016, 00:49:48). Babak seems to be an honest man, yet through Aho's phone messages, Emad gradually finds out that not only does Babak know about Aho's job as a prostitute but he also has had an affair with her. It is obvious to see that Babak betrayed Emad's deep-rooted trust.

Rana, The Old Woman, and Linda

The characters of the two texts in question interrelate in an intricate way. Rana and the Old Woman portray Linda in the movie adaptation. They are all devoted, submissive, and calm. Linda is a subordinate housewife and mother. Biff tells Linda to "stop making excuses for him [Willy]! He always, always wiped the floor with you. Never had an ounce of respect for you" (Miller 1998, 40). Willy does not allow Linda to talk or convey her ideas at all. For example, when Linda wants to express herself, she is interrupted twice by Willy, "Will you let me finish?" (50). In another instance, he goes "*right through her speech*" (50) and does not permit her to talk. Yet, Linda is presented as:

Most often jovial, she has developed an iron repression of her exceptions to WILLY's behavior—she more than loves him, she admires him, as though his mercurial nature, his temper, his massive dreams and little cruelties, served her only as sharp reminders of the turbulent longings within him, longings which she shares but lacks the temperament to utter and follow to their end. (2)

As Miller shows, Linda always defends and supports Willy even though she is aware that he is not successful as he claims. Likewise, Rana is a true victim of the male-oriented society. As Emad endeavors to abandon traditions and probe the case of the sexual harassment from a modern dimension (Ganji 2020, 77), the neighbors unconsciously usher him to traditional norms (Figure 8). Such a social pressure is embodied by a scene from Daryush Mehrjuyi's *The Cow* screened in Emad's class (Ganji 2020, 78). Mash-Hassan is chained by a rope by the villagers who pretend to care about his health, yet they are indeed the principal cause of his insanity (Figure 3). Emad is deemed as a "destructive messiah" (Soyars 1974, 36) than a constructive one. Emad displays peculiarities of a destructive savior. He considers himself to be the ideal messiah, who as a liberator knows the truth and a prosperous life for his wife, Rana. However, he turns into a destructive messiah, because he ironically destroys what he tries to save in his pursuit for taking revenge in lieu of finding the pure truth about the attack case. A destructive messiah like Emad is an idealist who imposes unattainable truths on a victim like Rana. He internalizes his own personal beliefs that impose constraints on a scapegoat like Rana. This "prophet-hero" is indeed blinded by his own superficial idealisms (Soyars 1974, 8-9). A detrimental illusion is an idealistic truth that is imposed on Rana by her husband, Emad. This idealistic truth can reflect itself in a messiah, to such an extent, that he becomes subjective or "other-directed" (Ganji 2020, 77) than objective in his pursuit. He loses the very sight of the realities of life. Thus, the messiah alters from a benevolent figure to a hostile one, who was once preoccupied with his right and wrong. He becomes a rebel, denouncing the defined norms, leading himself and Rana into unfortunate circumstances over which they have little control (Soyars 1974, 36). This messiah turns into a messianic rebel, who is Farhadi's destructive messiah.



Figure 8: An instance of Emad's Other-Directedness

She is aware of the intricate and humiliating (Figure 9) procedures in her country and the way the Iranian women are treated in such cases labeled as rape or sexual abuse (Mirzaei 2018, 31). Nikkie Keddie, for instance, states that, in the 1936-1941 era, Reza Shah forcibly unveiled women. He promoted and enhanced women's public education, yet his civil laws chiefly codified Islamic ones, favoring men over women (2000, 405). That is why Rana even refuses to inform the police, "I don't want to tell what has happened to me, in front of the officers and other people" (Farhadi 2016, 00:45:00 - 00:45:07). Both Linda and the Old Woman are devoted and subservient housewives. They have been married for thirty-five years, yet their husbands cheat on them. They are unaware of the filthy secrets of their husbands and they unconditionally love them. The old woman, Esmat, tells: "This man is my whole life" (01:52:29).

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The old woman's ironic speech startles the audience in the movie adaptation (Figures 10 & 11). We can observe the old woman's concern and affection for her husband, who believes that he has become sick owing to strenuous and exhausting physical toil in his inherent yearning to financially and unconditionally support his family (Piryaei 2019, 12).



Figure 9: Portrayal of Emad's distrust in his wife, Rana



Figure 10: Rana is calmly encountering the salesman's crying wife



Figure 11: The salesman's wife appreciates her dying husband's dedication for working and supporting family

Ryan Farrar postulates that like Linda whose role is not cherished by Willy in the family structure, Rana's viewpoints and existence are overlooked in their family (2009, 45). Farrar further pinpoints, "When Linda stresses to Biff that 'attention must be paid' to Willy Loman, Linda presents a crux with her imperative since she is the one who actually desires attention" (2009, 46). Likewise, Rana's shattered honor is what requires care and attention, not Emad's arrogance that is defined by Iranian patriarchal, cultural customs and traditions (Ganji 2020, 64). Unlike Linda who "submits to the patriarchal society by staying at home and undertaking the task of managing the family's financial matters" (Farrar 2009, 46), Rana is an actress with a higher social prestige and position (Ganji 2020, 64). Willy who pretends to bestow care and attention on Linda cannot endure her sight (Farrar 2009, 46-47). Emad also regards Rana

as an opponent in his revenge adventure and indicates signs of emotional breakup with her. Besides, Rana alienates herself from her husband and does not feed Emad's ego unlike Linda who is trapped under Willy's shadow. Both Linda and Rana are desperately seeking a sense of belongingness and stability (Ganji 2020, 64).

Ahoo and Miss Francis

In Miller's play, Miss Francis is the woman with whom Willy has a carnal affair. In Farhadi's adaptation, Ahoo is the prostitute woman with whom the Old Man has a sexual affair. Miss Francis is solely alluded to in Willy's hallucinations, yet she plays a pivotal role in other characters' lives. Visiting her in Willy's hotel room distorts Biff's idealistic image of his father. Biff gradually disobeys his father after that climactic moment:

WILLY [*grabbing for BIFF*]. I gave you an order!

BIFF. Don't touch me, you—liar!

WILLY. Apologize for that!

BIFF. You fake! You phony little fake! You fake! [*Overcome, he turns quickly and weeping fully goes out with his suitcase. WILLY is left on the floor on his knees.*]

WILLY. I gave you an order! Biff, come back here or I'll beat you! (Miller 1998, 95)

Quite shockingly, Ahoo is not seen at all. Her name merely is mentioned, yet she plays a key role. Her identity brings a considerable transformation in Emad's and Rana's lives. This hospitable and patient Persian literature teacher turns into an impatient revenge-seeker (Figure 12). The terms "justice-seeking spirit" and "fighting" are two remarkable peculiarities of Bozorg Alavi's masterpieces. Although Emad erases these terms from the whiteboard, his own superfluous justice-seeking and fighting spirit gradually destroy his own life, because they stimulate a conflict between Emad and Rana how to cope with the intruder (Ganji 2020, 75-76).

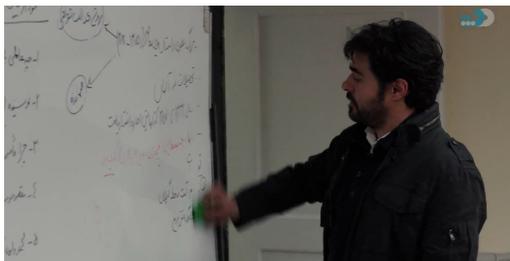


Figure 12: In the class: Bozorg Alavi's "justice-seeking spirit" and "fighting" are at odds with Emad's "superfluous justice-seeking" and "fighting spirit"

He checks the mobile phone of his student (Figure 13), listens to Ahoo's messages on the answering machine and finds out that Babak himself has had an affair with her, reads Ahoo's letters, and eventually, tries to find the intruder by himself.



Figure 13: The class scene: Amin observes Emad's harsh behavior with another student while checking his phone

Linda Hutcheon opines, "In the process of dramatization there is inevitably a certain amount of reaccentuation and refocusing of themes, characters, and plot" (2013, 49). Interestingly, in both masterpieces, the revealing scene is the bathroom. Miss Francis is concealing in the bathroom when Biff appears, and this secret is exposed to the audience through a flashback when Willy has his hallucinations in the bathroom of the restaurant. Given Farhadi's adaptation, Aho's real identity is revealed after the incident in the bathroom and everything gradually alters (Mirzaei 2018, 32-33). Rana and her husband, Emad, the intruder, and the neighbors stimulate a dread of humiliation, immodesty, and disgrace. For instance, after the attack scene, a neighbor tells Emad that such molesters ought to be driven around the city as a severe punishment and publicly shamed in the streets to intimidate the accused criminals (Piryaei 2019, 16). Rana is ashamed by the likelihood that a male neighbor found her naked body after the attack incident, and her husband reveals the truth to her. After being informed of the intruder's car is blocking another car in the garage, Rana is too reluctant to publicly report her excruciating trauma to neighbors in order to physically enter the intruder's car and drive it herself, despite the visible torture this proximity provokes (Figure 14).



Figure 14: Rana is manifested as a victim who feels ashamed of herself owing to being rescued naked by a male neighbor

Blakean Stages of Being

Emad's and Rana's personality development reminds us of the Blakean four stages of being, namely innocence, experience, organized or higher innocence, and self-absorption. The first stage indicates naivety and innocence. It is also called "Beulah" (Abjadian 2016, 213). Emad and Rana are initially manifested as innocent, caring, devoted, and hospitable figures. When they visit Babak's apartment for the first time, the first object that Rana observes is a cute cat. She kindly hugs it and shows it to Emad.

Emad also cares about his neighbors and students. He is hospitable, patient, and generous. Once, a woman sits next to Emad in a taxi. One of his students is also in that taxi. The woman first asks Emad to make some sufficient space for her by declaring, “would you mind not spreading out?” (Farhadi 2016, 00:09:25). Then, he asks the taxi driver to pull over so that she can change her seat with Amin, who is his student (Figure 15).



Figure 15: The taxi scene: Emad is being humiliated in the presence of his student, Amin

In the next scene, the student tells Emad that he has defended him against the woman. Emad assures him that once a man has brutally treated the woman in a taxi that she imagines all men are akin to the same abuser (Farhadi 2016, 00:23:13). Thus, he believes that this kind of bitter experience has changed the woman and her viewpoint. This scene indeed foreshadows what happens to Emad and Rana (Mirzaei 2018, 33). They transform into true victims in the second stage, defined by Abjadian as “the state of experience or generation identified with everyday material existence, the world of oppression, superstition, poverty, hostility, cruelty, prostitution, moral tyranny, selfishness, bloodshed, disease, fear, and the like” (2016, 213). The bitter experience and the excruciating agony manifested by the Old Man make them experience a transformation. They transform in various ways, as “[t]he experience imposes passivity on” (Abjadian 2016, 214) Rana first. She does not even agree to inform the police. Yet, she eventually finds her own way to the third stage, namely “the state of organized innocence or higher innocence.” She forgives the Old Man and also asks Emad to forgive him. She is “redeemed through the power hidden in [her] soul.” After arresting the intruder in their deserted previous apartment, Emad asks to find out why this apparently old and weak man has harassed his wife. The old man humbly steals his glances (Figure 16) and confesses, “*Vas-Vase Shodam*,” that is interpreted as “I was tempted.” The intruder’s claim portrays woman as a root of corruption. In better terms, the man stimulates the catalyst for his violence against the body of the same woman. In this manner, the original violence is rooted in the woman’s temptation that harasses the man in lieu of the man who brutally abuses the woman’s body with his own (Piryaei 2019, 10-11).

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Figure 16: The Intruder confesses to Rana that he was tempted to rape her



Figure 17: Emad is transforming into another Willy Loman

Nevertheless, Emad cannot find his own way to this stage (Figure 17). He is influenced by the bitter experience similar to the woman in the taxi. Therefore, he transforms into the fourth stage, namely “the state of self-absorption or Ulro” (Abjadian 2016, 213). Although he does not reveal the secret to the Old Man’s family, he leaves them in great shock and excruciating pain at the end. He does not forgive the Old Man and slaps him. This demanding situation that Emad creates for the Old Man apparently kills him. Emad indeed kills himself, his humanity, soul, and marital life (Mirzaei 2018, 34). In Miller’s play, given Blakean four stages, Willy and Happy reach the fourth stage, namely “the state of self-absorption or Ulro” (Abjadian 2016, 213). Similar to Willy, Happy is also unable to gain self-awareness or true understanding of his life and decides to follow his father’s lead. Yet, Biff reaches the third stage, namely “organized or higher innocence” and eventually finds himself. He liberates himself from alienation and artificial dreams. Linda tells Willy that Biff is “finding himself”, implying the fact that “he’s very lost.” Willy retorts, “not finding yourself at the age of thirty-four is a disgrace!” (Miller 1998, 5). Ironically, Willy has not found himself in his sixties yet. When he does, he cannot endure it; and as a result, he commits suicide (Figure 18).



Figure 18: Identity Crisis in Willy's personality

Conclusion

We scrutinized Arthur Miller's play, *Death of a Salesman* (1998), and its Iranian movie adaptation, *The Salesman* (2016), under the umbrella of comparative and adaptation studies. The characters of two masterpieces were compared for examining the profound layers of Farhadi's creativity in adapting and appropriating Miller's work to the Iranian culture. Given the characters, we demonstrated in detail that there was no simple one-to-one correspondence between Farhadi's characters and those of the adapted text. Their relationship was intricate. The characters of the play were represented by two characters in the movie, or vice versa. We compared Willy with Emad and the old Man, Biff with Emad, Linda with Rana and the old woman, Miss Francis with Ahoo, and Charley with Babak. Both Willy and Emad, for instance, had the role of a teacher/leader. Besides, they underwent a transformation throughout the story. Neither Willy nor the old man was honest with his family. They both suffered from a sense of guilt due to their infidelity. Both of them were old salesmen unable to provide for their families. However, they sought respect and were anxious of the revelation of their terrible secret. Linda, Rana, and the old woman were all devoted, calm, and supportive wives. While Linda was a subordinate housewife and mother, Rana was a victim of the patriarchal society. By detaching himself from the notion of fidelity, Farhadi created his own version of the American play in a new context and culture, a change which, as Hutcheon emphasizes it, is as much anticipated as the repetition (2013, 9). Thus, in Farhadi's masterpiece, there is "repetition without replication" (Hutcheon 2013, 7), for he utilized "different personal artistic filters" (Hutcheon 2013, 84) and reproduced Miller's play through an Iranian lens and mise-en-scene. He did not duplicate Miller's characters. Rather, he created his own typical Iranian versions of them. Through his tangible characterizations, the characters had an evolutionary transformation in lieu of the precise and accurate repetition as if Miller's characters were born again in another context with some of the same characteristics.

التوصيف في رواية (وفاة البائع) لآرثر ميلر و رواية (البائع) لأصغر فرهادي: قراءة مقارنة

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المخلص

الحجة الشاملة لهذا المقال هي أن ويلي، في فيلم وفاة بائع (١٩٩٨) لآرثر ميلر، تم تصويره من خلال عماد والرجل العجوز، وتمّ عرض ليندا من قبل رنا والمرأة العجوز في فيلم البائع (٢٠١٦) لأصغر فرهادي. الهدف من هذه الورقة هو مقارنة شخصيات تحفتين لاكتشاف كيف تكيف فرهادي وخلقهما ليتناسبا مع سياقه المحلي. ومن أجل سد هذه الفجوة، فإن فحص التطور النفسي للشخصيات يسلط الضوء بشكل أفضل على أوجه التشابه والاختلاف بين دولتين أجنبيتين، ويكشف إبداع فرهادي في تكيف مسرحية ميلر مع الثقافة الإيرانية. ومن خلال انفصاله عن الإخلاص، يخلق فرهادي نسخته الإيرانية النموذجية من شخصيات ميلر في ثقافة جديدة بدلاً من التكرار الدقيق، وهو التغيير الذي هو التكرار دون تكرار، وكأن شخصيات ميلر تولد من جديد بنفس الخصائص في سياق آخر.

الكلمات المفتاحية: آرثر ميلر، وفاة البائع، أصغر فرهادي، البائع، التوصيف المقارن.

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