

Ten (2003)

Ten is an experimental and audacious movie that consists of 10 different chapters that are set in the front seat of a car. The driver is always the same and each chapter includes various different passengers that the driver Mania picks up which include her son Amin, her sister, a religious older woman and a prostitute who isn't even shown to the audience. The camera is always fixed within one still shot and the film feels similar to the style of a documentary or a handheld movie. When I first saw this film, I didn't know exactly how I felt about it. I thought it was a very interesting premise and its ideas were creative and provocative but I really couldn't determine if I liked the film or not. Over the last few days I started rethinking about its characters and conversations and I realized that I was appreciating the film much more.

I always came to the conclusion that the film was less about 'driving' or the 'road film' and more about the sexist laws of Iran. Mania is an attractive woman who was recently divorced and remarried and who we learn was forbid to divorce her husband unless she charged her husband with drug abuse; which her son Amin knows is not true. Besides her son Amin and of her ex-husband, most of the characters and the passengers in the story are female. In some ways the women that Mania picks up are comforting to her and each character gives her a life affirming conversation on love, loss and sadness with her not judging any of them but instead listening to them, understanding them and accepting them as other tragic females of Iranian society. The one scene that stands out as heartbreaking and most crucial is when one of the

women Mania picks up a second time removes her undergarment to reveal that she has a shaved head. Her removing the undergarment and revealing her shaved head that society forcibly told her she had to do is symbolic in what I believe what the film is really about; which is the oppression of the female sex within this hostile and sexist society in which the women have no rights and the men have far too many.

In the readings of Road Movies: New Direction and Intersections it is explained how Kiarostami's style in his films originates from several Western themes, and the style he is embracing in Ten is closer to Italian Neorealism. Vittorio De Sica's *The Bicycle Thieves* was one of the major films that influenced Kiarostami's cinematic and cultural criticism of Ten. In some ways *Bicycle Thieves* is as mobile as Ten in which Guido and his son Bruno go on foot to search for a bicycle that is greatly needed to keep a job so Guido can put food on his families table. In the readings it is also said that Kiarostami ties several of his themes towards the style of The French New Wave and New German Cinema and his film *A Taste of Cherry* is seen as a companion piece to Ten. *A Taste of Cherry* can also be looked at as a sort of road film in which a man named Mr. Badii is slowly driving his car in the dusty hills of Teheran approaching several men and offering if they could do a service for them which is to help him be successful in a suicide attempt. Like Ten this film can be seen not as the usual formulaic road film because the main characters in these stories drive around and around with no real destination in mind and the vehicle not getting from a point A to a point B.

Mania's son Amin is the real tragic character in the story of Ten, because you can see the way he talks down to his mom, and talks over her, and he clearly has no respect for his mother as the authority figure or as a human being. Thinking about this film more I realized how the character of young Amin seemed to be the angry repressive male in training, where when he

becomes an adult, not only will he be just like his father but he will be the male-dominant man that the Iranian society brings up. Ten is a wonderful and eye opening film on the harsh realities of the Iranian culture and its views on the repressed female society, and how these women do their best do not give up and not be a prisoner of their own repressed society.