The meaning of loneliness in “A Girl Walks Home Alone At Night”

By Timo Schmitz, Philosopher

This article is a continuation of my article “The meaning of Life and Death in ‘A Girl Walks Home Alone At Night’” (28 April 2017)

A topic which is very closely related to the image of death in the movie is loneliness. In fact, all characters suffer from loneliness. Hossein is lonely as his wife is dead. Although he has his son, his addiction makes him lonely and restricts the possibility of social interaction. As he continues to suffer more and more, he harasses Atti to get company. To fight his loneliness and social restrictions he consumes even more drugs, which he hypocrites as “medicine” and doesn’t see his addiction as such. Instead he regards himself to be an old, ill man. The drugs are a kind of cure for him, not of what he really mentally suffers, but for his loneliness.

Atti, the prostitute, suffers from loneliness as well, as she has given up all her dreams and gave up a future with family life to make money to survive somehow. Here again, loneliness is deeply associated to death. Saaed is lonely as he lives only for business, however, his business is very dirty and he finally loses his soul (the soul-death causes his killing as assumed in my previous article). Even Shaydah is lonely as she only knows how to party and has no stable ground. Although she is that high-class that she has all the wealth to be happy, she lacks of sociability and humanity. Furthermore, not only the characters are lonely, but the whole place is lonely. Bad City is set up somewhere in Iran, and as the name of the town already assumes, it is not a peaceful place. The mass grave intensifies this loneliness, as all people die anonymously and are left alone out of the town after death; the whole industry is lonely, it only works for itself, but no humans can be seen on the plants. The whole movie as black and white movie depicts this livelessness, by choosing to depict only achromatic colours, thus missing all the colours of life. Thus, loneliness is a kind of imprisonment, all people are caged.

Two characters have a special relation to loneliness. Arash, who is lonely since he has no real family anymore as his drug addict father only causes problems, and the unnamed girl who lives somewhere in a basement all alone. She has neither any friends nor any relatives that are
shown, and to all the people she appears, she’s an unknown person. However, she has one passion that makes her become alive: music. The trance during dancing shows her passionate soul and her heart, which is filled of true, pure love. This feeling of love is the opposite of loneliness, which is depicted on two levels: first, the relation towards Arash as such; second, the musical interaction with Arash. When she looks up to him and to his neck, she cannot bite him or harm him, instead the trance in which both live makes a oneness.

Thus, only love seems to be the cure for loneliness, since even the people on a party attended by Shaydah are lonely. They are that lonely, that Shaydah just regards everything to be a game when interacting with Arash.

The young boy has no friends, even he is very lonely, and the unnamed girl warns him not to become astray. She would probably have to kill him if he became soul-dead, but as a child, his soul is still innocent, however, Bad City is not a place of hope for keeping this innocence. Thus, innocence is the key between loneliness and love. No one in Bad City is innocent. Saeed is a brutal pimp, Shaydah lost the ground of reality and even intoxicates Arash, Arash however becomes a dealer and steals Shaydah’s earrings, Hossein is a drug addict psycho, Atti is just an object of exploitation without any respect for her body anymore, and the unnamed girl is a blood-thirsty murderer. And though no one is innocent, love overcomes all loneliness, even all the wrong-doing they have done. However, Hossein and Saaed have no way of controlling themselves anymore, they are not able to find love anymore.

However, through love, Arash and the girl are able to overcome their loneliness and escape the cage for a new life, where no one knows them, and thus as no one knows them, their social innocence might be restored.

**Film data:**

**A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night**  
Written and directed by Ana Lily Amirpour  
Produced by Justin Begnaud, Sina Sayyah, Elijah Wood  
Logan Pictures/ Spectre Vision/ VICE Films  
USA, 2014. Language: Farsi. 101 minutes.