

Taste of Cherry: An invigorating cinematic experience

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Having just had the opportunity to watch this film, I would like to add my comments to those of David Walsh. The film is certainly remarkable. Abbas Kiarostami has created an invigorating cinematic experience.

I found the cinematography stunning. The lingering pace of the film contrasts the turmoil and chaos of its themes and the complex panoply of ideas and emotions which it reflects and provokes.

The camera closely follows the central character of the film, Mr Badii, as he drives around Tehran trying to find someone to bury him once he has committed suicide. Through the windows of his car (Badii's eyes?), we see the conditions of life in present-day Iran. Men forced to stand by the roadside each day and offer their labour in the hope of finding employment. The ramshackle housing and deprivation. In the distance, the smart-looking apartment blocks that are being built by this army of dispossessed labour.

Time and again, Badii drives along a sinuous track which slides across the screen, rising high above the suburbs of Tehran, to the spot he has chosen as his last resting place. At night, he arrives at the place and the camera pans over the valley, revealing beautiful jewels of light from the houses and buildings below.

The film's use of sound is also worthy of comment. Firstly, there was no background music to indicate the characters' emotional states or underpin the action, challenging the viewers to make their own interpretation of the events we are witnessing. The experience of the soundtrack was somehow "heightened". That is, although the sounds were all entirely "natural"—half-heard snatches of conversations or children's games, radios and singing drifting in and out behind the action—somehow the visual images seemed to make the sound stand out even more acutely.

This interplay of sound and vision worked most

effectively for me in the scene where Mr Badii sits on the ground in a quarry. Everywhere is heat and dust. All around him there is the most frightful upheaval, huge machines devouring the rocks and spewing them out with a noise which sounds like a battle being fought by two unseen armies. Great trucks rumble ominously by and then disgorge their loads of stone and debris, unleashing an opaque cloud of dust which swirls around Badii, who sits at the eye of this visual and aural storm.

I thought this scene also indicated one element in understanding the events that had driven Badii to want to take his life. Is Kiarostami telling us that war is one of the factors that has brought Iran to the state it is in today and which feeds the spiritual torment of the film's central character?

There are, I am sure, many more themes to be discovered and explored in *Taste of Cherry*. It is refreshing to view a film that provides such a rich emotional and intellectual experience to digest.

I heartily agree with David Walsh's recommendation to go and see the film for yourself.

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