

Špela Pečjak

## Smrt Boga in Otrok – Shinigami Music Video

To orient oneself within a space shaped by loss is not to move toward proximity, but to be drawn further into distance. Home is no longer a place of shelter, but something strangely constituted precisely within emptiness, within pain, within what is missing. It is out of this tension that the music video *Shinigami* by the Slovenian music group SBO emerges. Its affective force does not arise from a story that could be reconstructed, but from the way it fuses visual and sonic language into an experience of loss. It does not narrate loss directly, instead, it distributes it across space, across the rhythm of images, across the restraint of bodies, and across a melancholic soundscape that does not merely accompany the image as background, but deepens it, stretches it, and suffocates it. The title, referring to Japanese gods of death, establishes death less as an event than as an atmosphere. A shadow of transience that hovers over the video.

At the center of the video is loss, not as a singular event or legible rupture, but rather it appears as the condition after the event, the one that still continues. *Shinigami* stages loss through residue. Static shots, obscured faces, empty interiors, and the sense that something absent still determines everything that remains. What has vanished persists as a trace, a ghost, a pressure.

Such loss is closer to nostalgia as rupture than as return. Svetlana Boym writes of reflective nostalgia as a mode of remembering that does not seek to rebuild the lost home, but instead lingers among its ruins. This is precisely what happens here. The past does not return as a clearly articulated memory, it does not arrive as a recoverable whole. It appears in flashes, in fragments, in quick fleeting images that do not possess the stability of reminiscence. Memory is no longer narrative, but incision. No longer a site of return, but a brief disturbance in the present. Time does not turn back, still less does it move forward. It settles into the present as its weight.

This is why the temporality of the video itself seems suspended. There is no development, no progression, no sense that the work is taking us anywhere. Everything happens within a single condensed present, within an extended moment unwilling to tip into the next. If Bakhtin's chronotope is the site where time and space merge into the organization of narrative, then in *Shinigami* that relation is tightened to the point of stillness. Time does not organize the event, it remains suspended in space. The video does not narrate stagnation, it stages it through its

formal structure. Nothing happens in the classical sense, and precisely for that reason everything happens: stasis, suspension, the impossibility of transition.

The visual language of the video is built from several key elements, the absence of gaze, the cold color palette, static framing, empty space, and the motif of the horse. These elements do not merely serve to shape an aesthetic image, they carry its affective structure. The gaze is almost always withdrawn. The protagonist does not look into the camera, does not establish contact, and is often turned away or submerged in a heavy kind of absence of his own. In film theory, the gaze is not simply an axis of looking, but a carrier of subjectivity, a possibility of relation, a way of establishing closeness. When that gaze withdraws, so too does the possibility of address. The viewer remains outside. Not as someone offered identification, but as someone witnessing something that will never be fully given to them. It is precisely in this withdrawal that the violence of the video lies. It does not bring us closer to pain, it keeps us at its threshold.

The color palette works in the same direction. Greys, bluish shades, dark tones. As if warmth had drained out of the images. As if the world had already begun to fade, weaken, empty itself out. Color here is not decoration, but the temperature of loss. It is a way in which space becomes emotionally organized. The same is true of the framing. Long, stable, often static shots generate tension not through speed, but through endurance. The camera moves gently, almost cautiously, as if it too was hesitating. The absence of dynamic editing does not offer relief, but instead holds the viewer within emptiness, within discomfort, within prolonged looking that offers no release. This is not empathy in any ordinary sense, but the discomfort of distance.

Space itself is equally important. The interiors in *Shinigami* are empty, almost sterile. They feel like spaces after something. For that reason, they can also be read through Foucault's notion of heterotopia, other spaces that simultaneously mirror and unsettle what we understand as ordinary, stable, or normative. Foucault famously describes the ship as the *heterotopia par excellence*, a place without a place, closed in on itself and yet exposed to infinity. Something similar happens here. The spaces do not orient the subject. They suspend orientation altogether. They function almost like the externalization of a psychic condition. A world that can no longer offer direction, only drift.

In *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Sara Ahmed understands pain not as a wholly internal, private state, but as something produced in relation to others and something that shapes the boundaries of the body. Pain is not something the subject simply has. It is something that orients them. Something that turns them away. Something that rearranges their relation to space, to

others, to the possibility of contact. This is precisely what happens in *Shinigami*. Pain is not sealed within the subject's interiority, it is spread across space. In the averted gaze, in the cold palette, in the sterile interiors, in the stillness of the scenes, in the ritualized images of the circle and the horse. Loss is therefore not merely a wound carried by an individual, but a way in which the relation between body, world, and other is reorganized. Pain becomes spatial. It becomes a form of the world.

The presence of suicide in the video can also be read, cautiously, through Camus's *Myth of Sisyphus*. Camus places suicide at the extreme edge of the question of meaning, where the human need for coherence collides with the silence of the world. In *Shinigami*, that collision is not spoken but staged. In the emptiness of space, in the suspension of time, in the disintegration of relation. Suicide therefore does not function here as a solution or philosophical statement. It appears as the condensation of existential hopelessness, as the point at which the world no longer offers an order into which pain can be absorbed.

What makes *Shinigami* so compelling is precisely that it refuses resolution. It refuses linear storytelling, clear explanation, and emotional closure. It speaks through delay, repetition, silence, and affect. It does not present loss as an event that can be identified and concluded. It presents loss as an ongoing reorganization of the world: a change in rhythm, gaze, intimacy, and spatial relation. Its power lies not in what it reveals, but in what it leaves unresolved.

For that reason, I wanted to approach the video less as a message than as an affective field. Less as a structure of signs than as a structure of feeling. What interested me was how the video operates exactly where it withdraws from explanation; how it materializes loss rather than simply representing it. How silence becomes density. How emptiness becomes meaningful. How the image begins to carry the weight of what is absent.

This analysis, then, is not an attempt to close the work into a single interpretation. It is an attempt to remain close to its rhythm, its coldness, its restraint. *Shinigami* does not ask to be fully decoded. It asks that we stay with it for a while. That we endure its silence. That we recognize there are works which do not speak in order to be explained, but in order to open within us a space where something remains unsaid—and is, for that very reason, real.

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