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## A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night

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# A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night

## **Abstract**

This is a film review of *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night* (2014), directed by Ana Lily Amirpour.

## **Author Notes**

Jodi McDavid is an instructor in Folklore and Gender & Women's Studies at Cape Breton University. She earned her BA at St. Thomas University (New Brunswick) and her MA and PhD from Memorial University of Newfoundland. Her PhD dissertation was on anticlericalism in folk and popular culture. Her current research interests include vernacular religion, the folklore and folklife of children and adolescents, and gender and women's studies.

*A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night*

(2014)

Directed by Ana Lily Amirpour

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If the information that this is "the first Iranian vampire film" doesn't pique your interest, don't worry, there's more to this tale than a straightforward horror flick. Shot in

black and white cinematography, each shot is beautiful, reminiscent of both spaghetti westerns and Hitchcock at times, and making it an overall pleasure to watch.

The action takes place in "Bad City," a place with some post-industrial desolation and an almost blasé attitude about death, drugs and violence. In the first five minutes, the protagonist, a young man whose father is a drug addict, walks past a gully filled with bodies without so much as turning his head.

It is quickly established that Arash is a good son, holding a job and taking care of his father. But, pushed to steal due to his father's debt to the local drug dealer, it becomes clear that he is on a precipice, and potentially moving into a future path in petty crime.

It is at this point that he meets The Girl, a slight young woman, wearing black and white and religious head covering. When asked, "Are you religious or

something?," she replies, no; but religious or not, she is the moral core of the film. The Girl appears when people are about to be victimized.

Drug dealers, addicts, and prostitutes are judged harshly by her. Those with pure intents and morals are guided, not gently, but disturbingly, as she threatens them and tells them to remain good. Here we also see a vampire who is pensive, reflective, and feels guilty. She is beautiful and young in one minute, and old and wise the next. There is a virgin/whore dichotomy hinted at in her character; a woman who walks alone at night, and lives by herself, and brings men into her home. But we also only ever see her as chaste, a woman walking freely without fear, and aware of her power to instil it in others.

This would be an excellent film to show to university students, as the questions of morality it raises are good sources for discussion, the slight romance makes the film uplifting in parts, and the subtitles are not overwhelming. Scholars of popular culture might want to pair it with *Let the Right One In* (the European release).

—Jodi McDavid