

Farshid Kazemi. *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night*

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REFERENCES

Farshid Kazemi. *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2021, 119 p. (*Devil's Advocates*). ISBN: 978-1800343948.

- 1 This book offers a number of useful insights into the titular 2014 vampire film, directed by the Iranian-American filmmaker Ana Lily Amirpour. While the film was shot in California and does not explicitly clarify the country of its setting (known only as 'Bad City, '), a number of signifiers suggest Iranian associations, most notably the vampire being a chador-clad woman and Persian dialogue. As Kazemi demonstrates convincingly, these associations provide fertile territory for analyzing the film in terms of its relationship to Iranian culture, although it has been officially banned in Iran. Indeed, one particularly notable feature of the book is a recurring engagement with a critique of the film by a state sponsored critic, which offers a too-infrequent use of Persian-language criticism in English-language scholarship and provides insight into some of the film's many aspects likely to have drawn the government's ire. Kazemi organizes the analysis into three chapters, each examining the film from a different angle: one on its relationship with the history of vampire cinema and the occult in Iranian culture, one on psychoanalysis, and one on German idealism (most notably Hegel). The first uses the connections to vampire films and Iranian occult practices to argue that the film exemplifies a post-2009 movement of local and diasporic filmmakers who use horror to critique the country's political environment. The second likewise discusses social context, but adds psychoanalytic concepts from Lacan and Freud to explore the film's depiction of female sexuality. In the third, Kazemi incorporates Hegel's readings of romantic love to interpret relationships between the central characters. Although Kazemi does not use these sections to support a clear

overarching argument, together they demonstrate contrasting and insightful perspectives on the film.

- 2 These various angles facilitate a thoughtful reading of a fascinating film. Throughout the book, Kazemi complements his extensive theoretical knowledge with detailed close reading of the film, which shows the relevance of Freud, Lacan, Hegel, and other theorists discussed to Amirpour's filmmaking. Kazemi does an impressive job of connecting the theorists and the film to the context of the repressiveness of the Islamic Republic, particularly with regards to female sexuality. Kazemi also reveals himself to be steeped in the history of vampire cinema, which provides helpful background knowledge for Amirpour's particular take on the subgenre. I recommend this book to students and scholars in film studies, particularly those with interests in psychoanalytic film theory and/or horror.

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