



## **Aesthetics of Dissent: A Critique of the ‘Averted Look’ in Ana Lily Amirpour’s *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night***

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**Abstract:** The ambiguous configuration of the vampire – as a literary and cultural trope – attests to their ability to engage with the shifting regimes of sociological anxieties and political frustrations. With the proliferation of countercultural discourses, the twenty-first century had witnessed a resurgence of cinematic vampires that pander to the changing sensibilities of a distinctly globalised population. The metaphor of the vampire has served as an index of gendered cultural representations and the (dis)ease surrounding it. Owing to its protean constitution, contemporary female auteurs have reappropriated the iconography of the vampire as a viable conduit to enact and enable alternate idioms of resistance. Drawing on Laura Mulvey’s formulation of the male gaze and Hamid Naficy’s theorisation of the Islamicate Gaze Theory (as it relates to the regional geopolitics of Iranian cinema), this paper attempts to read Ana Lily Amirpour’s *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night* (2014) as a critique of the semiotics of ‘averted look’, a theoretical framework that consolidates the efforts of the authoritative Iranian establishment to project Iranian women as desexualised presence on-screen. In doing so, this paper will demonstrate the role of inter-generic hybridity in activating a sense of solidarity that undercuts gendered cultural suppositions.

**Keywords:** Countercultural, Resistance, Gaze, Inter-generic, Hybridity.

### **Introduction**

Emblematic of all that is virtually nebulous, the ambiguous configuration of the vampire – as a literary and cultural trope – attests to their ability to engage with the shifting regimes of sociological anxieties and political frustrations. In contradistinction to the formulaic rigidity of the traditional monsters, the vampires betray a remarkable malleability that facilitates their seamless invasion into the cultural consciousness of the masses. With the proliferation of countercultural discourses, the twenty-first century had witnessed the resurgence of literary and cinematic vampires that pander to the changing sensibilities of a distinctly globalised population. The metaphor of the vampire has served as an index of gendered cultural representations and the (dis)ease surrounding it. Owing to its protean constitution, contemporary female auteurs have reappropriated the iconography of the vampire as a viable conduit to enact and enable alternate idioms of resistance. Drawing on Laura Mulvey’s formulation of the male gaze and Hamid Naficy’s theorisation of the Islamicate Gaze Theory (as it relates to the regional geopolitics and the visual grammar of Iranian cinema), this paper attempts to read Ana Lily Amirpour’s *A Girl Walks Home Alone At Night* (2014) as a critique of the semiotics of ‘averted look’, a theoretical framework that consolidates the efforts of the authoritative



Iranian establishment to project Iranian women as desexualised presence on-screen. In doing so, this paper will demonstrate the imperatives of the role of hybridity in activating a sense of solidarity that undercuts gendered cultural suppositions.

### **The Ontology of the Vampire: Reappraisals and Reappropriations**

Thriving on dichotomous discourses rampant in folkloristic tales, the figure of the witch has been mobilized to generate surreptitious social commentary. The vampire, in its various diverse as well as discordant incarnations, has exploited the universal fear of death and annihilation on the one hand and on the other, has replicated in the popular cultural imaginary as metaphors of latent human desire and deviant sexual fantasy. Emblematic of all that is virtually nebulous, the ambiguous configuration of the vampire – as a literary and cultural trope – attests to their ability to engage with the shifting regimes of sociological anxieties and political frustrations. Precariously wedged between its part-human and part non-human affiliations, the vampire occupies a liminal territory of operation. The notorious ubiquity of the vampire is often attributed to their power to traverse and overhaul the sanctity of borders and boundaries. In contradistinction to the formulaic rigidity of the traditional monsters, the vampires betray a remarkable malleability that facilitates their seamless invasion into the cultural consciousness of the masses. Nina Auerbach concedes to the transgenerational appeal of these predators by underscoring their potential for cultural re-invention. In her groundbreaking work, *Our Vampires, Ourselves*, Nina Auerbach contends,

Vampires are neither inhuman nor nonhuman nor all-too-human; they are simply more alive than they should be. Ghosts, werewolves, and manufactured monsters are relatively changeless, more aligned with eternity than with time; vampires blend into the changing cultures they inhabit. They inhere in our most intimate relationships; they are also hideous invaders of the normal. (Auerbach 6)

Having outgrown its repulsive origin as the “immortal undead”, the vampire has sparked raging debates and controversies in its contemporary avatar by dominating the fictional realms of representation. (Piatti-Farnell 2). The production, consumption and dissemination of the vampire motif can be attributed to the revenant’s “detached and global mobility that has since become one of the hallmarks of its modernity.” (Cameron and Karpenko, 4). With the proliferation of countercultural discourses, the twenty-first century had witnessed the resurgence of literary and cinematic vampires that pander to the changing sensibilities of a distinctly globalised population. Suspicious of fixed ascriptions and rigid categorizations, contemporary reworkings have sought to recalibrate the critical fortunes of the vampire figure by disrupting structures of oppression which, in turn, govern meaning making process. The attendant relentlessness of globalization – coupled with the demands of technological expansion and consumer culture – have paved the way for a virulent explosion of vampire narratives within a distinctly twenty-first century version of Gothic framework. As Lorna Piatti-Farnell argues,

The over exposure of the vampire in contemporary media plays testament to the hyper-mediated nature of contemporary consumer culture, indulging in the fantasy of the forbidden,



while, simultaneously, establishing its presence through the heteronormalised context of the everyday. In this sense, the vampire is the archetypal figure of want and yearning, the lateral representation of latent desires made manifest through the framework of consumerism that is intrinsic to the mediated contexts of popular literature, television and film. (Piatti-Farnell 1)

The metaphor of the vampire has served as an index of gendered cultural representations and the (dis)ease surrounding it. The enduring legacy of the female vampire in various cinematic portrayals have relied on a carefully regimented concoction of fear around women's sexual agency and the patriarchal intent to tame non-conforming sexualities into submission. Antipodal to the suave and seductive male vampires, the classical female vampire is a voracious male predator – a radically invasive 'Other' whose existence is a perpetual threat to the symbolic patriarchal order. Linking the hypersexualised body of the female vampire to the cultural phobia around women's moral vulnerability and degenerative sexual appetite, the image of the female vampire seems to conflate sexual pleasure with sexual violence. Amanda Hobson addresses the existing gaps and fallacies in the androcentric model that has come to define the cultural contours of female sexuality. Hobson argues,

The vampire is a pre-eminently sexualized predator, who alternatively uses horrific violence and smooth seduction. The vampiress is a hypersexualised image that blends that violence and seduction with fears of the destructive beauty and charm of womanhood. In this manner, vampires of all genders are very similar in that they draw in their prey through seductive charm and violence, but ideas about the female body and womanhood amplify the fears surrounding female vampires and their sexuality. Beliefs about womanhood centre on a notion of idealized feminine weakness and passivity and one specific type of weakness: the purported moral weakness manifested through the voracious and destructive nature of female sexuality. The female vampire with her heightened physical strength and her longevity moves her firmly into the utterly uncontrollable category. She, therefore, embodies all of the cultural fears of women's sexuality; especially that is unquenchable and uncontained by male dominated institutions such as the Church, the family, and even the government. (Hobson 12)

Owing to its protean constitution, contemporary female auteurs have reappropriated the iconography of the vampire as a viable conduit to enact and enable alternate idioms of resistance. Identifying the vampire as agents of metamorphosis and social reformation, women directors have revitalized former vampire narratives by infusing them with "the disruptive powers of the erotic, centre-staging the vampire in a variety of forms." (Wisker 158). Twenty-first century cinematic ventures by women filmmakers have usurped the image of the female vampire as a conduit to activate critiques of social institutions that enforce gendered fixities. The practice of inter-generic hybridity has empowered women directors to unabashedly pursue the ideological mission of representing a vast continuum of gender non-conforming identities. Contemporary women's cinema includes "a questioning and denial of binary opposition between male and female in which the female is always weaker, and a challenge to the investment in heterosexuality and eternal romantic love ending in wedded bliss." (Wisker 160). Such radical revisions expand the horizons of intertextual exchange and encourage divergent readings and interpretations from a gender-based vantage point.



Inimical to the fundamental traits shared by the male and female vampire is their innate propensity to rupture. Theoretical scholarship on vampirism has incorporated recent developments from an array of disciplines to create an intersectional line of critical inquiry that probes into gendered depictions of vampires.

### **Iranian Cinema: Contexts and Dispositions**

Post-revolutionary Iranian Cinema, after 1978-79, saw Iran at the confluence of a state sanctioned modernisation, the authoritarian regime of Islamist politics, geopolitical upheavals and competing global forces that demanded political ascendancy in Iran. These varying trajectories of turbulent movements shaped the production and mediation of Iranian cinema. Cinematic representations, aesthetics and conventions in Iran had been subject to the dictates of a totalitarian government that keep western importations in check while being invested in consolidating a distinctly Iranian perspective. Westernisation brought about a cultural turn that was in quest of a national cinema that attended to the sociological malaise intrinsic to Iran and encouraged an increased participation of women on screen and behind the camera. Iran had obtained its distinctive peculiarities by sustaining binaries that informed the construction of women's subjectivities on screen – modern/anti-modern, presence/absence, sexualisation/desexualisation. Women's predicament was constituted in contradictory terms – her demand for social validation was accepted partially and yet, parochial forces legitimised gender discrimination. Women's representation was mostly guided by a gendered polarisation between the sacred and the profane – a polarisation that was triggered by exploiting sexuality as a tool. Over sexualised cinematic representations of women, although meted out in a derogatory manner, signalled an emerging trend of sexual license and autonomy. In such a cultural ecosystem, women were identified as agents of moral decay and disintegration and hence, were rendered abject. Social reality and representation were often at loggerheads with each other, fuelling the need for varying perspectives that gave voice to women's precarious position in the social sphere. It is in this context that New Wave directors launched poetic meditations on Iranian society by appropriating the aesthetics of dissent.

### **The Semiotics of the Gaze: The Male Gaze, Islamicate Gaze theory and the Metaphor of the Veil**

Feminist psychoanalysis has been at the receiving end of severe backlash for their exaggerated emphasis on sexual difference, much to the exclusion of other kinds of difference. In their inability to account for historically contingent and culture specific categories of oppression, feminist psychoanalysis had often – rather unselfconsciously – advanced patriarchal objectives. Laura Mulvey's appropriation of Freudian psychoanalysis in her foundational article on feminist film criticism, entitled, *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, investigates the role of the formal visual machinery in the sexual objectification of women in classical Hollywood movies. Mulvey uses the Freudian notion of scopophilia and argues how the scopophilic privileges are reserved only for men. Mulvey's theorisation exemplifies how the male unconscious frames the dynamics of erotic pleasures that are involved in the act of looking. Mulvey's theorisation highlights a gendered splitting of desire:



In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its phantasy on to the female figure which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*. (Mulvey 838)

In response to the all-pervasive, assaultive male gaze, Hamid Naficy in Volume 4 of *A Social History of Iranian Cinema: The Globalizing Era* introduces the Islamicate Gaze Theory that refutes some of the fundamental assumptions that inform the canonical interpretation of the male gaze. Such a gaze, as Naficy argues, takes into account the contextual history of a region which is often outside the purview of Western critical canon. Often regarded as the “undertheorized engine of cinematic looking and storytelling in today’s Iran, and which is radically different from Western feminist gaze theory”, the Islamicate Gaze Theory is predicated on a dualistic and fragmented understanding of the self. (Naficy 106) According to the Islamicate Gaze Theory, this dualism produces an “apparent contradiction between an inner private self and an outer public self, both available to individuals simultaneously”. (Naficy 102) Naficy’s formulation is based on four suppositions. For Naficy, eyes are active and invasive organs that engenders sexually aggressive gaze. Women’s sexuality, codified as excessive, needs to be contained through appropriate acts of censorship to prevent moral corruption. Hence women’s mobility in public spaces must be curbed. Women’s exhibitionism, often leveraged by the thriving cultural industry, stimulates men’s urges. Male gaze directed at the unrestrained sexuality of the immodest woman was detrimental for men. Naficy approaches the idea of the gaze through the cultural filter of modesty by adding a third category of the masochistic gaze to the dyad of voyeuristic and narcissistic scopophilia. The masochistic gaze produces a pernicious effect on the man by reflecting back the male gaze – – this gaze enthralls the man and subjects him to humiliation and abjection, which, in turn, is the root of this masochistic pleasure. This masochistic gaze is “not only based on the overcathexis of sexuality in women but also on the direct link between vision and political and moral corruption.” (Naficy 107). Naficy proposes the need for ‘averted look’ for both men and women – a deflected form of looking that opposes direct eye contact. Naficy posits,

Like the ‘looking awry’ that Slavoj Zizek formulated, the averted look theorized here is anamorphic, as it makes the power relations at work in the game of veiling clearer: anamorphic looking is charged, and distorted, by the voyeuristic desires and anxieties of the lookers and by the regulations of the system of modesty. For this reason, the averted look tells us more about Iranian culture than the direct gaze. (Naficy 107)

Scophylic pleasure is often aroused through the interplay of veiling and unveiling. Naficy argues that women, under the garb of anonymity which is provided by the veil, can manipulate men and gain considerable traction since the veil symbolically performs the function of covering and revealing. This interplay turns women into fetishised objects and implicates the gaze of men and women in a complex maze of gendered power relations. Naficy’s proposition of the Islamicate Gaze Theory acknowledges that veiling as a “social practice is not unidirectional” and that women’s gaze in post-Revolutionary Iran is more robust and expressive. (Naficy 109).



## **Of Vampire, Veil and Vengeance: Contextualising *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night***

Ana Lily Amirpour's Iranian Vampire Western *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night* (2014) transplants the contested ontology of the female vampire into a liberatory icon of cultural difference and feminist rage in post-revolutionary Iran. Amirpour's categorical repositioning of the female vampire vigilante within a matrix of transnational dispensations has garnered global accolades. Although Amirpour herself remains sceptical of feminist nomenclatures, scholars have deployed intersectional approaches to analyse the inherently feminist credo of the film. *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night* is an eclectic fusion of disparate practices and aesthetics of filmmaking. Amirpour references the classical inventory of cinematic vampires to reconfigure it to a politically conscious end. Shot in the industrial wastelands of U.S to represent the derelict suburbs of Iran, Amirpour consolidates her cross-cultural lineage with unwavering persistence. Amirpour's avenging heroine arguably shares a long-standing legacy with her cinematic antecedents but emerges, in this feminist manifesto, from the anonymity of the fictitious Bad City in order to dispense wild justice. Culturally mediated narratives of women's vilification validated masculinist angst pertaining to the fear of male castration and subsequent disempowerment. Amirpour strategically feminises Arash, the love interest of the Girl, to deconstruct the myth of the hypermasculine man—someone who is indoctrinated to safeguard women's interests and reinforce populist fantasies surrounding women's vulnerability and powerlessness. Toying with conventions intrinsic to the imagery of European female vampires and the Middle Eastern trajectory of women's emancipation, Amirpour's chador-clad vampire (referred to, in the movie, as the Girl) terrorizes abusive and exploitative men while fearlessly skateboarding the streets of the Iranian ghost town. Seeped in discrimination and spiritual bankruptcy of its inhabitants, Amirpour conceives of the Bad City as a gendered epicentre of treacherous patriarchal horrors where unsavoury men maltreat women, transgenders and prostitutes with unapologetic barbarity. Rooted in a cultural terrain that has engendered condemnation to be a natural response to the sexualized foreign 'Other', Amirpour alludes to the ethnic bias that was rampant in cinematic history since time immemorial. Inscribed onto the body of Amirpour's protagonist are interlaced discourses of gender, ethnicity, enslavement that the chador seems to disavow. Akin to a cape, the chador—often misconstrued as a marker of regressive stereotypes in the international imaginary—confers on the Girl (portrayed by Sheila Vand) an enchanting monstrosity that is at once endearing and frightening. Amirpour's strategic handling of the metaphor of veiling and unveiling, through the symbolic use of chador, has often been scrutinized by scholars like Barbara Creed as a potent instrument to undercut Western assumptions about veiled attires in non-Western communities. As Barbara Creed opines,

Amirpour's decision to garb the vampire in a chador is important in this context. As various critics have noted, the Islamophobia that was generated globally post-9/11 resulted in a wave of an anti-Islamic feeling that stigmatised the chador and hijab as signs of women's oppression. The figure of the Girl, wearing her chador, meting out justice to violent women, changes this dynamic. Her dress enhances her empowerment. (Creed 93)



## **The Politics of the Male Gaze and the “Averted Look”: Amirpour’s Critique in *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night***

Amirpour’s representation of the Girl destabilizes the superiority accorded to the male gaze while simultaneously underscoring the shortcomings of Naficy’s gaze theory to comprehensively engage with the broader politics of looking. Generically, it is the all-pervasive (male) gaze of the camera that facilitates the interplay of revealing and concealing. Amirpour deploys the shallow depth of field to activate a point of view that appears contrived, non-human. The vampiric disposition of the Girl is crystallised through this non-anthropomorphic gaze. The shallow depth of field uses a razor-sharp focus to single out characters by blurring the background – a technique that uproots the character from its immediate surroundings. This technique – materialised through close-ups and semi close-ups – coerces the spectator to align themselves with the camera’s point of view and by extension, with that of the female vampire. This alignment debunks the presupposition of an overbearing male gaze in the first place and becomes the source of feminist visual pleasure. Lurking surreptitiously as a spectral apparition and framed by the rear side window of Saeed’s car, the Girl becomes a witness to the vicious altercation between Saeed, an impetuous pimp and a prostitute named Atti, right at the onset of the film. The seduction scene in Saeed’s apartment attests to the invincible power of the Girl. The sexualised gaze of Saeed that attempts to reduce her to a fetishised object is returned by the Girl with unimaginable violence and ends in bloodbath. The shallow depth of focus signals towards a deception – by concentrating on the mise-en-scene of Saeed’s apartment, it negates the presence of a demanding gaze that has turned him into an object without his conscious knowledge. The Girl seeks vengeance on Saeed by biting off his fingers. After performing this symbolic castration as it were, she shoves his chopped finger and traces his lips with it in an ironic – and somewhat mimetic – reversal of his violation of Atti. This scene articulates a role reversal in which the Girl asserts absolute authority and power through which the male gaze is disciplined and subverted. In claiming narrative redemption for the disenfranchised victims of the Bad City, the Girl deconstructs the dissonances underlying the male gaze.

Traditional readings of the male gaze present the female on-screen as a passive receptacle of scopophilic desire. Amirpour plays with this imagery by positing her as a source of potential threat that generates castration anxiety in the male onlooker’s psyche. As Lindsey Decker opines,

The Girl, then, is a double threat of physical and psychological castration. We might also read the Girl via a Kristevan feminist psychoanalytic lens, as in Barbara Creed’s work. She could be seen, as female vampires often are, as a representation of voracious female sexual appetite, abject between her liminal state. (Decker 175)

Within the ambit of conventional vampire narratives, the Girl’s insatiable thirst for vengeance necessitates punitive measure to recastrate the female for her blatant transgressions. The concluding scene, with Arash and the Girl leaving the repressive hostility of the Bad City together, harbours the promise of transformative spaces that can accommodate her subjectivity and vulnerability.



Naficy's designation of the Islamicate Gaze Theory, within the cinematic periphery, offers an insight into the various configurations of looking in the context of post-revolutionary Iran. The 'averted look', in tandem with pre-ordained conditions of modesty, prioritises a regime that supports looking without any particular focus. Although it associates the discursive mechanics of veiling with a sense of autonomy by attaching a greater degree of premium to women's eyes and their gazes, it often leaves them bereft of individual subjectivities. Lindsey Decker identifies this to be a form of misplaced autonomy when she asserts,

Thus the woman's gaze in Iranian cinema is much more powerful than the passive or reactive gaze of the objectified victim conceived of by Western feminist psychoanalytic film criticism – but powerful in terms of expressivity, not in terms of the threat of lack or appropriated phallic power. (Decker 178)

The Girl's encounter with Saeed involves a direct, continuous and sustained eye contact, which is opposed to the averted look. Her piercing, almost dictatorial gaze dissolves and loses its ferocity when she stares into the camera. In doing so, the Girl foregrounds her sense of individualism and resists objectification. Saeed misconstrues her powerful gaze as one that will implicate him sexually to devious ends – an interpretation that is in sync with the patriarchal underpinnings of the Islamicate Gaze Theory. The Girl does not use the averted gaze to sexually manipulate Saeed but rather, to carry out her vengeance. In doing so, she challenges the registers of looking that this regime offers. Through the 'averted look', Amirpour's voyeuristic camerawork infuses the Girl's point of view with an indomitable sense of omnipotence, saving her from the onslaught of de-personalisation.

### **Towards Inter-generic Hybridity**

Amirpour's *A Girl Walks Home at Night* remains acutely cautious of the phallogentric overtones that underline disparate modalities of cinematic gazing and offers a critique of their innate prejudices. Amirpour's chador-clad vampire, thus, rehearses the need for a transnationally inflected gaze that is at once empathetic, but not disembodied. Transnational negotiations renounce the epistemological underpinnings of singular spatialities by operating between, beyond and within borders. Standing at the borderland between Iran and America, Amirpour's visualisation of the Bad City and the Girl becomes a condensed expression of a cosmopolitan liberalism that conflates a medley of demographic traditions and practices. Amirpour appropriates the aesthetics of inter-generic influences to open up conversations that destabilizes and subverts the epistemic hegemony of the 'averted look'. The Girl uses her hypnotic gaze not merely to retain a sense of individuality but also to safeguard the transgender and the prostitute – those seldom acknowledged to participate in the interplay of direct and 'averted' gaze. In accommodating the sexually marginalised occupants of the Bad City, Amirpour propounds the urgency for a gaze that recognises the interlocking mechanisms of oppression across and beyond boundaries.

Amirpour's modern classic is an amalgamation of contending traditions of film practices – Italian spaghetti western, urban noir, Gothic sub-culture, Iranian New Wave, American horror – crafting a convergence that “enables the film to pose questions about cinema and gender that





culminate in a metacinematic feminist critique.”(Decker 171) Receptive to provocative and fluid formulations, Amirpour dislodges hackneyed Gothic trappings of the orthodox vampire narratives to manifest a figuratively defanged and chic rebel. Amirpour’s cosmopolitan ancestry – as an Iranian-American director – finds cinematic expression and extension in her intercultural aspirations. Amirpour resorts to postmodernist techniques of pastiche, pop iconography and monochromatic textures to add a hallucinatory effect, thereby internationalizing her vampire for a global audience. *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night* porters between borders, languages, time zones, and generic categorizations. The movie traverses chronological indices of space and time, producing a symphony of American and Middle Eastern soundtrack. Amirpour interweaves a rich tapestry of inter generic influences that destabilizes and subverts the hegemony of generic classifications. This hybridized space accommodates distinct and diverse voices of defiance and dissidence. Amirpour illustrates the fallacy of totalizing regimes that genderise genres to further their exclusivist goals. By preventing women’s foray into traditionally identified ‘masculine’ genres, female representation was curtailed to comply with gender roles that reaffirmed patriarchal injunctions. The unsteady assortment of multiple genres demystifies the essentialist conceptualization of gender binaries. Generic integration acknowledges gender as a performance and heterogeneity as a key modality of unrest. By proclaiming the need for generic instability, contemporary filmmakers endorse the need for an inclusivity that is predicated on choice and revolt. Barbara Creed correlates inter-generic hybridity and divergent ways of ‘looking’ with the fundamental lineaments of Feminist New Wave Cinema. Creed says,

A major characteristic of Feminist New Wave cinema is its richly inter-generic nature brought about by directors who aim to bring together their own mix of genres to create their own space—a feminist space—in which to explore the nature of the heroine’s revolt. Genre hybridity is central to Feminist New Wave Cinema. New Wave directors have re-evaluated horror and its fluid formations that enable it to pair with other genres, such as science fiction, the love story, historical drama, and the road movie, while retaining its power of subversive social critique and cutting-edge ability to undermine patriarchal ideology. (Creed 6)

The hybridised space of Amirpour’s *Bad City* is modelled on Iran as the primary referent. Hybridisation, through a convergence of disparate registers of spatialities, individualities and personalities, creates a space of belonging. This sense of solidarity enables interpersonal alliances based on mutual recognition and respect. The Girl’s attempt to eradicate patriarchal oppression is primarily aimed at constructing a community where women celebrate and support each other.

Amirpour’s cinema operates in these in-between spaces of rupture and contradiction where patriarchal dividend collapses. Generic instability offers greater flexibility for transcultural assimilations by creating a sense of solidarity that transcends the cartographies of gendered segregation. Aesthetically, thematically, and conceptually, Amirpour – through the globalised figure of the female vampire – opts for counter narratives that have transversal implications. Amirpour’s inter-generic transmigrations at the cinematic level reject the interpellation of women into pliant spectacles by promoting a dynamic subjectivity that is defiant and empathetic. The Girl’s



embodiment of a feminist rage—appropriated through newfangled dialectics of gazing—is Amirpour’s critique of the ‘averted look’ in the contemporary world of cultural globalisation.

## Conclusion

*A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night* can be interpreted as a crucial intervention in subverting the Eurocentric rhetoric of Western feminist psychoanalysis and the patriarchal sovereignty underlying Naficy’s notion of the averted look. Recognising how gaze in Iranian cinema remains imbricated with issues of women’s sexual agency and sexist discourses, Amirpour resorts to a feminist critique of the ‘averted look’, opting for an emergent space of solidarity through intercultural transactions.

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