



Men, Women, and Chain Saws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film

By Carol J. Clover

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Do the pleasures of horror movies really begin and end in sadism? So the public discussion of film assumes, and so film theory claims. Carol Clover argues, however, that these films work mainly to engage the viewer in the plight of the victim-hero, who suffers fright but rises to vanquish the forces of oppression.

Clover, a medievalist, had written extensively on the literature and culture of early northern Europe, especially the Old Norse sagas. From her expertise in formulaic narrative grew her interest in contemporary cinema, which is, after all, yet another form of oral storytelling. *Men, Women, and Chain Saws* investigated the appeal of horror cinema, in particular the phenomenal popularity of those "low" genres that feature female heroes and play to male audiences: slasher, occult, and rape-revenge films. Such genres seem to offer sadistic pleasure to their viewers, and not much else. Clover, however, argued the reverse: that these films are designed to align spectators not with the male tormentor, but with the female tormented--with the suffering, pain, and anguish that the "final girl," as Clover calls the victim-hero, endures before rising, finally, to vanquish her oppressor.

The book has found an avid readership from students of film theory to major Hollywood filmmakers, and the figure of the final girl has been taken up by a wide range of artists, inspiring not just filmmakers but also musicians and poets.

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Men, Women, and Chain Saws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film By Carol J. Clover Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #544336 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Princeton University Press
- Published on: 1993-03-22
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: .70" h x 6.00" w x 9.10" l, .85 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 276 pages

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Before *Men, Women, and Chain Saws*, most film critics assumed that horror (especially slasher) films entail a male viewer sadistically watching the plight of a female victim. Carol Clover argues convincingly that both male and female viewers not only identify with the victim, but experience, through the actions of the "final girl," a climactic moment of female power. As the *Boston Globe* writes, *Men, Women, and Chain Saws* "challenges simplistic assumptions about the relationship between gender and culture... [Clover] suggests that the 'low tradition' in horror movies possesses positive subversive potential, a space to explore gender ambiguity and transgress traditional boundaries of masculinity and femininity." Be forewarned, though: Clover addresses an academic audience, so her language can be heavy going.

Related title: *The Dread of Difference: Gender and the Horror Film* by Barry Keith Grant

From Publishers Weekly

Clover contends that contemporary horror films are not simply the misogynist fantasies that critics have made them out to be. Photos.

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From Library Journal

Can Friday the 13th (1980) be analyzed logically? Is a potboiler like Hell Night (1981) worth consideration? This examination of these and better splatter, occult, and rape-revenge films of the past three decades will stir discussion among informed, inveterate filmgoers as well as students of sociology and psychology. Clover (literature, Univ. of California) persuasively argues that identification with the "Final Girl"--she who triumphs over Jason/Michael/Leatherface--transcends any anti-female inclination the mostly young male audience might have during a movie's early stages. She also recognizes that exploitation films usually foreshadow the subject matter of mainstream cinema. This well-researched study is heartily recommended for academic libraries.

- Kim Holston, *American Inst. for Chartered Property Casualty Underwriters, Malvern, Pa.*

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Users Review

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This Men, Women, and Chain Saws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film book is not really ordinary book, you have after that it the world is in your hands. The benefit you obtain by reading this book is usually information inside this reserve incredible fresh, you will get info which is getting deeper a person read a lot of information you will get. This Men, Women, and Chain Saws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film without we realize teach the one who reading through it become critical in thinking and analyzing. Don't end up being worry Men, Women, and Chain Saws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film can bring if you are and not make your bag space or bookshelves' grow to be full because you can have it in your lovely laptop even phone. This Men, Women, and Chain Saws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film having great arrangement in word and also layout, so you will not sense uninterested in reading.

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