Carol J. Clover. *Men, Women, and Chain Saws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015. Pp. 280. Paper $19.95.

Carol J. Clover, Professor of Film Studies, Rhetoric Language, and Scandinavian Mythology at the University of California, Berkeley, argues that by the late 1960s, horror films began to include portrayals of strong female characters. Since its introduction to the big screen, the horror movie genre has established certain tropes: the victimized girl, or the hyper-sexualized teen killed at the start of the film. Women have often played the role of the damsel, sexualized victim, or the femme fatale in media. However, Clover's extensive research and background in film introduces readers to a new type of female lead and offers an unconventional depiction of women in horror. Her sources draw from feminist film critics and historians and challenge the notion of the typical "horror flick" as a male-centered drama.

The book is organized into four thematic sections that illustrate the transformation of women's roles in horror cinema. Clover first examines slasher films, a sub-genre where the victims are usually young adults, pursued by villains frozen in their mental development. Here she proposes the theory of the "Final Girl." Throughout the history of horror films, women are typically cast as "the victim." In the 1960s, filmmakers introduced a female protagonist who was intelligent, masculine, and resourceful. Citing examples like Lila Crane in Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) and Laurie Strode in *Halloween* (1978), this particular character gained popularity by the end of the 1960s. Both women embodied an essence of survival and succeeded against the killers. Clover explains that the women's equality movement of the late 1960s–1970s had significant influence on the direction of film. The women's movement, the entry of women into the work place, and the rise of divorce and female-headed households redefined popular understandings of women and shaped portrayals in the genre.

The next two sections explore the development of female characters in possession and meta-horror films but does not match the depth of sources in the previous chapters. In analyzing Linda

Blair's portrayal of Regan in *The Exorcist* (1973), Clover relies too heavily on secondary analysis from critics and not her own work. The final chapter traces changes in narratives of rape and revenge films and connects the experiences of victims in the films to real life rape cases. Over time, the female characters fight back in these films, instead of succumbing to their predator.

Horror films often capture the darkest parts of history and reflect certain anxieties of the world, and film theorists argue that women in horror films mirror their real social, economic, and political position. Clover believes that women in horror films are no longer the victim, the person killed, or the individual vilified. This book offers an examination and new analysis of the various sub-genres of horror and the depictions of men and women in film. Historians interested in film, gender studies, and mass media should consider *Men, Women, and Chain Saws* as part of their reading.

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