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Damsels of Distress: Analyzing Gender in Horror Movies from the 1960s and 1970s

A Thesis Submitted to

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in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Bachelor of Arts

in History/Secondary Education With Honors

Jenna Labbie

Spring 2019

The 1960s and 1970s were a time of immense change in the United States as clamorous social movements and subcultures pushed the boundaries of traditional society that became complacent after World War II while the conservative majority held tighter to their roots. However, the most memorable and progressive aspects of these decades, such as the Civil Rights movement, rock and roll, and flower children, represented a small minority of the overall American populace. The majority of Americans hunkered down and closed ranks, protecting themselves and their families from the impending threat of Communism and the loss of tradition. A horror movie renaissance arose that fed on the fears of Cold War America and reinforced the increased desire for comfort in tradition. Movers and shakers produced media that heavily represented women in new and complex ways, striking fears into the immutable majority and providing cautionary tales to women trying to move outside of the home and back into the work force. Horror movies give the most effective platform for analyzing the fears of Americans, especially when discussing gender.

The films discussed here are, in chronological order: *Psycho* (1960), *The Birds* (1963), *Rosemary's Baby* (1968), *The Exorcist* (1973), *Carrie* (1976), *The Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1978), and *Alien* (1979). All of these films were rated among the best horror films of all time according to lists and scores by Rotten Tomatoes.¹ Each of the films were made and credited to the United States during the 1960s and 1970s and chosen in part for the prominence of female characters. While all of these films have strong and complex female protagonists, they are an imperfect representation of the time because most movies did not have such strong representations of women. Most movies had one or

¹ Rotten Tomatoes, "150 Best Horror Movies of All Time," Rotten Tomatoes, accessed October 18, 2018, <https://editorial.rottentomatoes.com/guide/best-horror-movies-of-all-time>.

two female characters who were not typically important to the overall story. Romantic comedies and dramas are the exception.

This period of United States history is especially important for analyzing the representation of women because of the nascent second wave of feminism.² The first wave in the early twentieth century gave women the right to vote, but they still faced oppression in other ways that the second wave continued to address. The main concerns of the second wave that will be relevant here include gender roles, reproductive rights, rights in the workplace, and legal rights independent of the husband.³ In examining the reasons for these representations of women, the inception and ideologies of the second wave of feminism cannot be ignored. In Stephen King's book *Danse Macabre*, he explains that he, "was fully aware of what Women's Liberation implied for [him] and others of [his] sex."⁴ According to King, "[Carrie] is, in its more adult implications, an uneasy masculine shrinking from a future female equality."⁵ This quote showcases the effect that the women's movement during the 1960s and 1970s had on representations of women.

Second wave feminists comprised mainly of two camps, liberal and radical feminists.⁶ Radical feminists wanted the eradication of patriarchal structures that oppressed women, such as marriage and the family. They wanted more severe changes and did not mince words when explaining their agendas. Liberal feminists focused on

² Rory Cooke Dicker, "Second Wave Feminism: Seeking Liberation and Equality," in *A History of U.S. Feminisms* (Berkeley, CA: Seal Press, 2016), 58.

³ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁴ Stephen King, *Danse Macabre* (New York: Everest House, 1981), 171 quoted in Carol J. Clover, *Men, Women, and Chain Saws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film*, Princeton Classics ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 1997), 3-4.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Dicker, "Second Wave Feminism," 58.

altering these institutional structures and making them more progressive. Both camps agreed on main ideas, such as reproductive rights, access to childcare, identifying and discussing domestic violence, and creating equal opportunities for women in employment and in education.

Esteemed second wave feminist Betty Friedan published *The Feminine Mystique* in 1967 and explored gender roles and why women stay focused on the home.⁷ Several quotes in the book are from young women in college. One stated that she loved science since she was a child but quit studying bacteriology because she was getting too serious. She switched to home economics to better prepare for her future home and husband. Another stated that if you marry an ‘organization’ man, “you can’t be too educated.”⁸ She continues, saying that, “[the] wife is awfully important for the husband’s career [and] you can’t be too interested in art, or something like that.” Capable women with diverse interests chose to leave their own futures behind in favor of complacent, safe homemaking. The family and the entrenchment of traditional gender roles was one of, if not the, most important cultural aspect for Cold War Americans.

Traditional gender roles assign the submissive and dependent role to women. Women are the weaker sex, they catch the vapors, faint on couches, and their main purpose is to make the husband’s life better and easier. A main point to focus on is their submission to men. This aspect of feminine gender roles has existed for centuries if not millennia. The typical bread-winning, emotionless man and the delicate homebody

⁷ Betty Friedan and Anna Quindlen, *The Feminine Mystique*, Reprint ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997).

⁸ *Ibid.*, 178-179.

woman comforted people who had faced terrors. Any man or woman who deviated from typical masculinity or femininity was unbalanced.⁹

Submission is a thing that is often forced in horror films. In *Rosemary's Baby*, Rosemary and Guy Woodhouse are a white picket fence type of family.¹⁰ Rosemary dresses fashionably and in feminine ways every day even when she is painfully housing the child of Satan inside of her. She is submissive to Guy until her health and the health of her baby come into question. She becomes suspicious of everyone around her, especially their elderly neighbors, the Casteverts. She questions Guy's decisions and his rulings on things until the point that she deceives him to go to a different doctor and tries to run away from him. Guy and the Casteverts subdue Rosemary by drugging, gaslighting, and isolating her. She tries several times to reach out to others, only to be deluded and distracted at every turn.

Carrie White's is another story of forced submission, not from a male figure but from her mother, Margaret.¹¹ Because Margaret is single, she is unbalanced and has to take on a more masculine role, which also leaves Carrie unbalanced and lacking in male figures. Carrie and her mother are both outcasts existing on the fringes of their community. Margaret is a divorcee whose husband left her. Carrie is abused by her mother and bullied by those around her. She can find no solace. In this way, she is similar to Rosemary. Their stories show that powerful women, in Carrie's case, and smart women, in Rosemary's case, are dangerous and need to be subdued.¹² Carrie is dangerous

⁹ "Psychiatry: The Wife Beater & His Wife," *Time Magazine*.

¹⁰ *Rosemary's Baby*, dir. Roman Polanski (1968; Paramount Pictures Corp. and William Castle Enterprises, Inc.)

¹¹ *Carrie* dir. Brian De Palms (1976; Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios Inc.)

¹² Polanski, *Rosemary's Baby*.

in a very literal sense, but Rosemary is dangerous in a different way. If she does not behave the way that Guy and the cult want her to, she jeopardizes Guy's career and the devious wishes of the cult.

Most Americans of marrying age during this period either fought in World War II themselves or knew someone who did. They had been surrounded by the narrative of the Red Scare and the imminent threat of nuclear attack or Communist takeover.¹³ Senator Joe McCarthy and his witch hunt for Communists and security breaches showed Americans that anyone could be a Communist and anyone outside of the norm was dangerous. This caused them to close ranks. This us versus them mentality kept them safe from an unseen and unpredictable threat that they had little to no control over. Average Americans were consistently worried that the people around them could be secretly an enemy of the state.

The most frightening part of the Red Scare and the McCarthy trials were the fact that these dangers could hide in plain sight.¹⁴ Those growing up and seeing the McCarthy trials could develop a sense of paranoia that could again be exploited by horror movie producers. In *The Exorcist*, an evil within essentially tears apart the sanity and safety of Regan, a little girl and the most vulnerable figure because she is young, female, and unable to protect herself.¹⁵ Also, she did not have a present father figure to provide stability in her life. Additionally, the entire narrative of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* is predicated on unseen and unknown enemies.¹⁶ The person that Elizabeth Driscoll wanted

¹³ Robert J. McMahon, *The Cold War: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 118-119.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ *The Exorcist* dir. William Friedkin, (1973; Warner Bros. and Hoya Productions Inc.)

¹⁶ *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* dir. Phillip Kaufman, (1978; Solofilm.)

to trust the most could become alien and dangerous to her. The invasion spread to her, her best friend, and her boyfriend. They became agents of this unknown force and lost their original selves entirely which is an excellent mirror to the deep-seated fears of the red menace. In *Alien*, the alien threat literally comes from inside its host, but another threat targets Ripley and the crew of the *Nostramo*.¹⁷ Ash is the science officer aboard the ship and is also secretly an android who is programmed to preserve the alien life form at any cost, especially at the cost of the crew's lives. When he reveals his identity and shows his true orders and endangers the crew, Ripley fights and defeats him. Ash also represents an unknown danger, lurking under the guise of normalcy and group dynamics.

Fear of the unknown is a perfect thing for directors and producers of horror to exploit. In *The Exorcist*, they can also capitalize on the victimization of Regan because of her youth and gender.¹⁸ If Regan had been a young boy, or even an adult woman or man, there would be a lesser factor of pity. *The Exorcist* is a special case as well because of the morbid fascination and obsession associated with it.¹⁹ Hordes flocked to the theaters to watch *The Exorcist* and witness its spectacle. Its gruesome nature spread like wildfire, making it the second highest grossing R-rated horror film of all time.²⁰ Patrons stepped into the theater knowing, and often hoping that they would run out screaming or vomit their own pea soup. The film combined several of the main fears of the culture to create an undeniably terrifying experience for anyone. The movie opens with a scene from the

¹⁷ *Alien* dir. Ridley Scott (1979; Twentieth Century Fox.)

¹⁸ Nick Cull, "The Exorcist," *History Today* 50, no. 6 (May 2000), 49.

¹⁹ Andreas Killen, *1973 Nervous Breakdown Watergate, Warhol, and the Birth of Post-Sixties America* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2007), 31-32.

²⁰ Simon Thompson, "The 13 Highest-Grossing R-Rated Horror Movies of All Time," *Forbes Magazine*, October 8, 2018.

film that Regan's mother Chris is acting in.²¹ The scene is a protest at a college, easily mirroring the academic hotbeds for Civil Rights groups and protestors pushing for change. If change is a fear for a complacent culture, beginning a movie with a baseline of anxiety sets the stage quite well, never mind the fact that an obviously educated woman is leading the rally.²² Not only are independent and educated women a threat to traditional family values, they are also a threat to the longstanding supremacy given to men at birth.

Educated and independent women were, by existing, signs of change and progress. They symbolize a transition of power from the hands of men into a more unknown stage. Second wave feminists of both camps fought for equal opportunity in education and in the workplace.²³ Ensuring that women do not have a stable flow of income forces them to search for husbands with financial security and thus continues the cycle of creating a nuclear family. As long as women had no work and no education, they needed a husband and a family. Any sign that this cycle was losing its power or predictability was a sign of unwanted and unexpected change. Strong figures like Chris from *The Exorcist*, Ripley the warrior astronaut from *Alien*, and Elizabeth Driscoll the biologist from *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* are inarguably independent and educated.²⁴ They can simultaneously serve as foreboding glimpses into a future run by masculine, unnaturally strong women as well as punishing cautionary tales to women dreaming of something more.

Alfred Hitchcock's film *Psycho* is also an obvious cautionary tale. Marion Crane is sexual, selfish, and cunning enough to steal money from her boss, drive across the

²¹ Friedkin, *The Exorcist*.

²² Cull, "The Exorcist," 49.

²³ Dicker, "Second Wave Feminism," 58.

²⁴ Friedkin, *The Exorcist*; Scott, *Alien*; Kaufman, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*.

country, and not be caught.²⁵ She is most of the things that Americans in 1960, when the film premiered, feared for the future. It only makes sense that what follows is a creepy and voyeuristic murder scene in the hotel shower, complete with a hotel clerk with a heavy interest in taxidermy and the disappointment of his dead mother. Norman Bates is also a victim of women stepping outside their feminine and submissive nature. His mother Norma repressed his masculinity and condemned his sexuality, transforming him into a confused and sexually repressed killer. Norman is so controlled by his mother that even after he kills her, he preserves her remains and her memory by dressing in her clothes and speaking in her voice.²⁶ Norman is terrifying because he seems normal and unassuming until the big reveal. He is even scarier to women because he preys on them exclusively and especially when they are alone. Yet another knock against independent women.

Not only did women struggle to be independent in their real lives, female characters in these films also found dependence forced on them. In the films discussed here, almost every female character is introduced attached to a man in some way, typically in a romantic relationship, even when it is unnecessary. The relationship often has no narrative importance other than to show that the female characters are attached to male characters. Singular men are allowed to exist and play parts in the stories, but women enter in male and female pairs. This is especially true in *Psycho*, *The Birds*, and *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*.²⁷ Marion Crane is introduced alongside her boyfriend.²⁸

²⁵ *Psycho*, dir. Alfred Hitchcock (1960; Shamley Productions, Inc.)

²⁶ Barbara Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, Taylor, & Francis Group, 2015), 139-143.

²⁷ Hitchcock, *Psycho*; *The Birds* dir. Alfred Hitchcock (1963; Universal Studios.); Kaufman, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*.

²⁸ Hitchcock, *Psycho*.

Lila Crane goes with Marion's boyfriend to look for her. In *The Birds*, every female character has some sort of relationship with the only important male character, Mitch Brenner.²⁹ Female characters appear in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* paired with a male character, who sometimes is never even shown, and not on their own.

Attaching female characters to male characters takes away some of their agency and makes them more palatable for a more conservative or normative audience. It makes their independent, cunning, or violent personalities and tendencies more acceptable and in-line with the gender roles of the times. Committing to traditional gender roles and the nuclear family was yet another way to comfort Cold War Americans. These connections are important because they subconsciously reinforce women's place in the world as submissive to the men in their lives. The connections also take power away from these often-powerful characters by reminding the audience that she is not truly independent because she has to have ties to the male characters. On the other side, the masculinity of the male characters was reinforced by the forced submission of the female characters.

Family and the home were easily observable, likely defensible, and overall comfortable. The predictability inside a living room is manageable and the ideal is more achievable within the home than without. Also, having a close family provided you with people who could vouch for you. You can band together in your normalcy and know that you will not be accused of moving dangerously outside of acceptable social mores. The sanctuary of a family is worth defending and anything or anyone who would threaten the family is an enemy or at the very least untrustworthy.

²⁹ Hitchcock, *The Birds*.

The dissolution of the family was a threat on the forefront of the American mindset.³⁰ Structural and institutional rules were in place to keep women subservient and reliant on the men around them. Childcare was not widely available or affordable which made it less feasible for women to work outside of the home.³¹ Married women could get credit cards with their husband's permission but could not have their own credit scores. Single women had trouble being served at restaurants or getting apartments of their own. It became unrealistic if not impossible for women to be independent and single, but the home was not so safe either.

Women who faced domestic violence often had nowhere to turn.³² The term itself was not widespread and there were little to no shelters for survivors of domestic violence and abuse. Not to say that domestic violence did not exist, this is more telling of a firm tolerance or ignorance of what constitutes domestic violence, especially considering there was not even a term for it prior to the second wave. Women were expected to be subservient to their husbands and the men around them, which bred a sense of entitlement in men and especially the male head of the household. If a stressed husband needed to let out some steam and his nagging wife refused to let up, maybe violence benefitted both of them.³³ *Time Magazine* reported on a psychological study that reported that wife-beaters were usually, "shy, sexually ineffectual mother's boys," while their wives were, "aggressive, efficient, masculine and sexually frigid." Domestic violence, or, as the article puts it, 'wife beating' is a therapeutic way for couples who have switched masculine and feminine roles to return to tradition and what is natural. Women who took

³⁰ May, *Homeward Bound*, 6.

³¹ Dicker, "Second Wave Feminism," 57-58.

³² Ibid.

³³ "Psychiatry: The Wife Beater & His Wife," *Time Magazine*, February 25, 1964.

on more responsibility or more masculine roles in the family were the ones to blame for domestic violence. If they stuck to their traditional, natural roles they would have a happy and balanced marriage and their family would benefit from it. If not, then the family would suffer.

Domestic violence in the traditional and overt way is not so present in the films analyzed here because most of the leading female characters are unmarried. However, Rosemary faces a uniquely terrible situation with her husband Guy. Guy takes control of Rosemary's life by selling out her womb to the satanic cult across the hall.³⁴ Before her blasphemous pregnancy, Rosemary did not have a wholly-submissive role in her relationship with Guy, but when he took control of her reproductive functions, he asserted his dominance over her in the darkest way possible. Assertion of dominance reinforced his masculinity and the traditional role that men had in relationships. Guy's taking control assuages the fear of women gaining too much independence.

Sexual violence towards women is not a new phenomenon. It has permeated women's lives for centuries if not millennia. Directors such as Alfred Hitchcock and Roman Polanski have a history of sexual assault.³⁵ Their movies heavily feature the torture, abuse, and gaslighting of women. Rosemary, in Polanski's film *Rosemary's Baby*, is raped, lied to, and isolated for the gain of her husband, Guy.³⁶ Rosemary goes through the wringer and has virtually no one to turn to and if she does, she is isolated again and again by Guy. In Hitchcock's *Psycho* and *The Birds*, women are largely the

³⁴ Polanski, *Rosemary's Baby*.

³⁵ "For Tippi Hedren, Hitchcock's Scares Came Off-Screen," interview by Scott Simon, *Weekend Edition Saturday*, transcript, NPR, November 5, 2016.; Frederik Pleitgen et al., "The Slow-Burning Polanski Saga," *BBC News*, September 28, 2009.

³⁶ Polanski, *Rosemary's Baby*.

only ones hurt by killers or birds.³⁷ There appears to be a sort of fascination with hurting women in the films of both these directors that is not so heavily present in the other films.

Outside of the film, Alfred Hitchcock stalked and assaulted actress Tippi Hedren who played Melanie Daniels in *The Birds*. She spoke about the experience in an interview when promoting her autobiography.³⁸ She stated that it was an awful experience, but she wanted to move on from it. In 1977, Roman Polanski was accused of having unlawful sex with a minor and a warrant was issued for his arrest in 1978.³⁹ He was never formally sentenced despite numerous counts of assault over several decades. The personalities, beliefs, and tendencies of these men are not isolated from their ability to create and direct movies. If they feel entitled enough to the attention and bodies of women to stalk them or have illegal sex with teenagers, then that will be reflected in their representation of women.

Due to the fact that these men felt safe, comfortable, and powerful enough to commit these crimes, it is understandable that other men with less power and fame felt the same. As previously mentioned, domestic violence was not a widely understood or discussed topic. Men grew to think that their actions were normal, even natural. Women were forced institutionally to be submissive and if they subverted this, seeing depictions of independent women being hurt or in danger would serve as a precautionary tale. Polanski's film *Rosemary's Baby* illustrates this forced submission. Even though Rosemary is overall a traditional and respectable housewife, she is intelligent and knows her own voice. This is at times threatening to the ultimate decisions and rule of Guy, her

³⁷ Hitchcock, *Psycho*.; Hitchcock, *The Birds*.

³⁸ "For Tippi Hedren, Hitchcock's Scares Came Off-Screen," interview by Scott Simon.

³⁹ "The Slow-Burning Polanski Saga," *BBC News*.

husband and thus the head of the house. These films show that media, created by men, can say more about the men who make them and the culture they live in than they say about the women in them.

Women's sexuality is also feared during this period. Second wave feminists in both camps lobbied for reproductive rights for women.⁴⁰ The landmark court case *Roe v. Wade* occurred during this period, along with the birth control revolution.⁴¹ Women were not only trying to take control of their futures but their bodies as well. Women are expected to be pure and virginal and this is reinforced by religion and media. Mother Mary, the matriarch of one of the most important families, was a virgin and therefore pure when she brought the son of God into existence. Purity is associated with goodness and femininity. It is not expected that men remain pure because their goodness is not associated with their sexuality. Having sex ruins a girl's purity, but having your period is also associated with being impure.

The opening scenes of *Carrie* show her having her first period.⁴² This is traumatic. Her mother, Margaret, never told her about getting a period or what it is. Carrie is in the shower in the school gym when she notices she is bleeding and starts to understandably freak out. When she goes home to confront Margaret, her mother punishes Carrie and assumes she has done something impure to cause her first period. She shuts Carrie in a cramped closet stuffed with religious artifacts and leaves her there. Not only does this show Margaret has a general misunderstanding of her own anatomy, it shows that Carrie's period has stained her clothes, her mind, and her soul. When Carrie

⁴⁰ Dicker, "Second Wave Feminism," 58.

⁴¹ Killen, *1973 Nervous Breakdown*, 132.

⁴² De Palma, *Carrie*.

becomes a murderous human roman candle at the end of the movie, she has been traumatized in so many ways a viewer cannot help but root for her. The pig's blood spilled on her marred her pristine white dress along with the only happy moment of her life, successfully mirroring the beginning of the movie that denotes her transition from a girl into a woman. This transition to a woman is also a loss of purity and innocence and the beginnings of being guilty for existing. Apart from Carrie's assumed but nonexistent sexuality, several women who received punishment were sexual. Marion Crane's first scene is in a hotel room with her boyfriend.⁴³ She is scantily clad and unafraid. She is punished for this when Norman kills her because he is attracted to her.

The dissolution of the family is repeatedly blamed on women. In the first wave of feminism, anti-suffragists argued that giving the women the right to vote would lead directly to suffering husbands and children.⁴⁴ During World War II, women entered the work force like never before. At the height of U.S. involvement in the war, 36% of women had paying jobs.⁴⁵ After the war ended and the men returned home, women were no longer needed as stand-ins for the men. They needed to return home and care for their families. Some women went willingly back to their previous positions as homemakers, while others resisted. Women who did not want to return to their traditional roles were forced to leave or fired. The end of World War II signified the return to more traditional

⁴³ Hitchcock, *Psycho*.

⁴⁴ "Suffragette Series No 11: I want to vote, but my wife won't let me," *The Suffrage Postcard Project*, accessed April 25, 2019, <https://thesuffragepostcardproject.omeka.net/items/show/5>

⁴⁵ Dicker, "Second Wave Feminism," 58.

gender roles and general expectations that were seen in the later 19th century, such as emulated in the Cult of Domesticity.⁴⁶

The Cult of Domesticity denotes a period of history when women became singularly focused on the home and in turn the home became the most important aspect of culture for late 19th century Americans.⁴⁷ Women were the moral backbone of society in the late 19th century and domesticity, and thus femininity, were more valued. This time period is important to mention because it is a distant enough time period that most Americans were too young to witness the events and could glorify or romanticize its culture. They could safely view the best parts of the period and ignore the warts.

In *The Exorcist*, Chris MacNeil is an accomplished actress and divorcee who does not feel the loss of a husband.⁴⁸ Her punishment is the pain inflicted on her daughter, which comes in the form of a demonic possession. This possession can also be interpreted as a sort of imaginary friend to take the place of a father figure and nuclear family structure.⁴⁹ The possession of Regan is a warning to all working mothers that their freedom comes at a price: the health and well-being of their children. Regan is just a little girl. She is an incredibly vulnerable character that represents those in need of protection. The children are worth fighting for and defending. They are the first to be affected by changes in gender roles and family dynamics. This narrative of the selfish working mother was not a new phenomenon, but it still held weight as people feared for the future of the American nuclear family.

⁴⁶ Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*, 20th Anniversary ed. (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2008).; Glenna Matthews, *Just a Housewife: The Rise and Fall of Domesticity in America*. (Cary: Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 1987), 6.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 36.

⁴⁸ Friedkin, *The Exorcist*.

⁴⁹ Cull, "The Exorcist," 49.

The renewed dedication to the family is reflected in the decreased average age of marriage that occurred during the 1950s.⁵⁰ Less people got divorced and more people got married and at younger ages. Women were encouraged to stay home and become mothers. The first wave feminists oversaw this change with some dismay. Not only did women move away from activism and feminism because of a desire for domestic bliss, but also to stave off calls of Communist.⁵¹ The Cold War United States so deeply feared Communist takeover that any person deemed out of the norm could be conceived as a Communist and therefore an enemy of the state and to their future.⁵² Feminists were often associated with troublemakers and thus being associated with feminism and the women's rights movements made you a target. The fearmongering spurred on by Senator Joe McCarthy's tireless hunt for Communists elevated this fear to a new level.

Safety, comfort, and predictability became the focus for Cold War Americans.⁵³ It only follows that horror movie creators can exploit their desire for normalcy and their tendency towards complacency. If the majority of Americans feared the dissolution of the family and condemned the women's movement, depicting broken families and violence inflicted on independent women would inspire gruesome interest in moviegoers. Demon possession, hidden alien invaders, and serial killers are terrifying to most but combined with the cultural fear of disappearing family structures, changing gender roles, and unseen Communist threats those fears compound into something incredible.

⁵⁰ May, *Homeward Bound*, 80; *Ibid.*, 7.

⁵¹ Dicker, "Second Wave of Feminism," 61.

⁵² McMahan, *The Cold War*, 118-119.

⁵³ Dicker, "Second Wave of Feminism," 61.

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