



House of Psychotic Women: An Autobiographical Topography of Female Neurosis in Horror and Exploitation Films

Kier-la Janisse

Download now

Read Online ➔

House of Psychotic Women: An Autobiographical Topography of Female Neurosis in Horror and Exploitation Films

Kier-la Janisse

House of Psychotic Women: An Autobiographical Topography of Female Neurosis in Horror and Exploitation Films Kier-la Janisse

House of Psychotic Women is an autobiographical exploration of female neurosis in horror and exploitation films. Cinema is full of neurotic personalities, but few things are more transfixing than a woman losing her mind onscreen. Horror as a genre provides the most welcoming platform for these histrionics: crippling paranoia, desperate loneliness, masochistic death-wishes, dangerous obsessiveness, apocalyptic hysteria. Unlike her male counterpart - 'the eccentric' - the female neurotic lives a shamed existence, making these films those rare places where her destructive emotions get to play. Named after the U.S.-retitling of Carlos Aured's *The Blue Eyes of the Broken Doll*, *House of Psychotic Women* is an examination of these characters through a daringly personal autobiographical lens. Anecdotes and memories interweave with film history, criticism, trivia and confrontational imagery to create a reflective personal history and an examination of female madness, both onscreen and off. This sharply-designed book with a 32-page full-colour section is packed with rare stills, posters, pressbooks and artwork that combine with family photos and artifacts to form a titillating sensory overload, with a filmography that traverses the acclaimed and the obscure in equal measure. Films covered include *The Entity*, *The Corruption of Chris Miller*, *Singapore Sling*, *3 Women*, *Toys Are Not for Children*, *Repulsion*, *Let's Scare Jessica to Death*, *The Haunting of Julia*, *Secret Ceremony*, *Cutting Moments*, *Out of the Blue*, *Mademoiselle*, *The Piano Teacher*, *Possession*, *Antichrist* and hundreds more!

House of Psychotic Women: An Autobiographical Topography of Female Neurosis in Horror and Exploitation Films Details

Date : Published 2012 by FAB Press

ISBN :

Author : Kier-la Janisse

Format : Paperback 360 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Culture, Film, Horror, Feminism, Autobiography, Memoir

 [Download House of Psychotic Women: An Autobiographical Topograph ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online House of Psychotic Women: An Autobiographical Topogra ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online House of Psychotic Women: An Autobiographical Topography of Female Neurosis in Horror and Exploitation Films Kier-la Janisse

From Reader Review House of Psychotic Women: An Autobiographical Topography of Female Neurosis in Horror and Exploitation Films for online ebook

Robert says

Probably the one book that'll satisfy both horror/cult film fans and sociology/psychology majors... Most of the films discussed aren't the usual suspects; there's a lot of giallo, and the work of directors like Andrezej Zulawski are prominently featured. The most shocking thing of all, is the revelation of the darker side of Canada as the author talks about her past experiences.

Jason Coffman says

This is the kind of book I've been waiting my entire life for someone to write and had no idea until it actually existed. Kier-la Janisse writes about a wide variety of female-centered horror and exploitation films, from straight horror to "Born Innocent," tying in the experiences of the women in the films with incidents in her own life that were reflected in the films. This is often sad and uncomfortable territory, and extremely personal. It's a fascinating read, and I'd wholeheartedly recommend it to anyone interested genre film, the role of women in genre cinema, and the way that people engage with film on a deeply personal level.

Alix says

la femme hystérique

"It all started with Possession. Zulawski's film, formally speaking, is perfection – its deep blue hues, its labyrinthine locations, the hypnotic cinematography of Bruno Nuytten. But that's not what drew me to return to it again and again. There was something terrible in that film, a desperation I recognized in myself, in my inability to communicate effectively, and the frustration that would lead to despair, anger and hysteria."

this is the first paragraph of kier la-janisse's house of psychotic women, an autobiographical topography of female neurosis in horror and exploitation films. i've been meaning to write a review on this book for so long (i've started it, several times) but how do you explain to yourself that the representation of the damaged you see onscreen, mostly inside of horror narratives, is the one you relate the most?

as a woman, and a horror enthusiast, sometimes i feel the need to explain and defend myself for having such an intimate relationship with the genre. people often ask me, but what do you like about horror? why do you like seeing women go through such terrors? and yes, i used to ask myself the same question. why is it so reassuring to me to see women lose their minds onscreen?

i always find myself craving self-destruction and i wanted to know why, as a mentally ill woman, i wanted to understand this fascination for something that will devastate me completely. pop culture often reinforces stereotypes about mental illness, subjecting us to see ourselves as a terrifying public property, and it's scary and revolting; but what i've found in my obsession with female neurosis in horror was a way to cope with

my own neurosis, because this is what i know the most. horror shaped me as a person (since my childhood, my relationship with my dad, teen years, making friends, etc.) and it became a part of me, and to quote kier-la janisse, *"I stayed there because of something in myself. And that 'something' was decidedly female."*

3 women, alucarda, diabel, carrie, la novia ensangrentada, femina ridens, let's scare jessica to death. all these films bring me a deep sense of belonging, my own scarred psyche share something with these women - paranoia, desperate anxiety, apocalyptic hysteria; films that focus on the experience of being a woman and not being shamed for having such destructive emotions. i remember reading a blog post called **"horror movies are one of the few places women are told their fears are real"**, which it resonates deeply with me and the internalization of anxiety and guilt i sometimes feel for being a "crazy bitch." and that's where my personal appeal for extreme cinema comes from.

the unapologetic emotional excessiveness i find in isabelle adjani laughing and howling in a subway station, in françoise pascal suffocating her lover and dancing naked in a cemetery, in jeanne moreau as the "good woman" creating chaos in a small village, reflect on my own personal and interior experiences as someone who always felt one step away from darkness. *"Everything we see onscreen is a fiction that we are asked to believe, and we believe in it because we can find truth in that fiction."*

Robert says

The second I heard about this book I was intensely interested in reading it, but the hefty price tag was daunting. Then just a few weeks ago I saw that it had finally come out in a more affordable kindle version, so I was on it like the proverbial Duck on a Junebug. House of Psychotic Women is not an ideal book for digital reading—all those beautiful stills and all I have is this rudimentary B&W kindle, basically the E-reader equivalent of dial up—but then again, now that I've finished it I don't have to try to find room on my already bursting bookshelves for another oversized, fancy pants film book. Anyway, Panisse's personal, autobiographical approach to examining horror and exploitation films is wonderfully realized. This could have read as horribly self-indulgent oversharing but in her hands becomes the fascinating story of a woman from extremely dysfunctional origins making her way, despite a lot of daunting odds (at times it seems as though Panisse was the living embodiment of the kind of girls Linda Blair played in 70's TV movies like Sarah T: Portrait of a Teenage Alcoholic or Born Innocent). With the struggles she endured, it's no wonder she was so drawn to movies featuring Women on the Verge (or well past) Nervous Breakdowns in bona-fide classics like Rebecca, Cat People, and Marnie; cult faves like Let's Scare Jessica to Death and The Haunting of Julia; and obscurities like The Whip and the Body and Secret Ceremony. Panisse reminds us of the power of art—high, low, and everywhere in-between—to help us escape, to process, and sometimes transcend our life problems, issues, and concerns. She's an excellent, brave and honest writer, scholarly in a way, but never academic (really, you can only be so academic when writing about The Blood Splattered Bride or Love Me Deadly). Final score: 4 ½ out of 5; if you're at all interested in the type of films covered here you owe it to yourself to check this out, especially if you have a nice E-reader or feel expansive enough to drop some cash on the print version.

Willy Boy says

Excellent!

Jan Stinchcomb says

Highly original and personal, this book combines memoir with an analysis of the horror film genre. It includes a beautiful image gallery and an excellent appendix "of horror and violent exploitation films that feature disturbed or neurotic women as primary or pivotal characters." If you grew up watching Creature Features, if you are still unable to look away when faced with representations of violence, you will want to add this book to your library.

Leftjab says

My very favorite film books typically exist in two categories: Either as analysis & lists of films I've yet to discover (Film as a Subversive Art, The World of Fantastic Films, Nightmare USA, etc) or as an in-depth behind-the-scenes mixture of anecdotes and remembrances (Easy Riders Raging Bulls, Pictures at a Revolution, Cronenberg on Cronenberg) which illuminate aspects of films I love and, in their own ways, make me love them more.

House of Psychotic Women is a completely unique film book in that it uses the films it studies as an almost psychological analysis of the life of its author - it really feels like a therapeutic exercise but also presents an answer to the oft-remarked question: "Why do you watch such bizarre/gross/disturbing movies?" The author's life is presented as a prime example of juvenile delinquency, borderline (and maybe not so borderline) mental illness, and the loneliness and despair (at times) of institutionalized and foster life. In other words, the author had it really tough for a while. It seemed to me that in these films she analyzes, she finds comfort in expressions of emotions and situations she had consciously and un/sub-consciously experienced. And of course, these films are among the most extreme in the world of disturbing cinema - Possession, Antichrist, In My Skin, Martyrs, The Woman - as well as the standard roll-call of genre & exploitation directors - Rollin, Fulci, Argento, Bava, Franco...

I'm just gonna say right off the bat that I was drawn to the book because of the films she chronicles. There is absolutely a common thread running from Cat People, Black Narcissus, Repulsion, Persona, and Red Desert to 3 Women, The Brood, and The Entity - (I almost guiltily admit to loving many of these films) but the crown jewel in her analysis (and a common recommendation to adventurous viewers when I worked at the video store) is her in-depth look at Andrej Zulawski's 1981 film Possession. Some times it felt to me that most of the movies in the book are stepping stones to Possession, that the author primarily wanted to express why such a strange and bonkers film means so much to her. I've seen Possession maybe 5 times in my life (originally the truncated american version while I was in high school, then several viewings when I worked at the video store, then finally a restored version on the big screen where I dragged two companions who approached the film with smug skepticism but walked out shaking their heads agreeing "that movie is bonkers.") - it is definitely the type of film that the scavenger cinephile seeks out - initially received with a collective "what?" when it first came out, its stature has grown as film (especially in the genre and independent film worlds) becomes blander and more calculated. There is nothing calculated about Possession. It is way, way out there. But why would someone respond to a film that is so unpleasant, that at times feels as if it is made by and starring mental patients?

In the author's case, the film finds that rare, strange place where the internal and external worlds of the

characters mix - that dreamland where unreality and reality are one in the same. There are doppelgangers, spastic fits, alien creatures, bleeding mouths - supernatural phenomena presented as part of the reality of the film. That simplistic question that dogs so many modern films "is it a dream or isn't it?" is thrown out the window: Of course it's a dream and it isn't. It doesn't matter. The film displays female neurosis in potentially the most realistically manner possible. Janisse treats these films seriously, as if their creators had secret knowledge of the inner working of the human heart and were trying to express that knowledge, and whether that expression was conscious or unconscious doesn't really matter.

So basically I loved the book. I related to the structure, and found that in the middle of all of this pain and extreme imagery, there are actually some instances of humor - a testament to the author's ability as a writer. The book feels loved - that some sanity was found in the process of its creation. That alone makes it a special exploration into cinephilia; the hidden gems unturned throughout its pages are just gravy on one tasty plate of mashed potatoes.

(And I guess the answer to why anyone would subject themselves to horror and extreme emotions, I'm reminded of David Bowie's last line in his Ziggy Stardust album: "You're NOT alone!")

Andrew Bishop says

Despite the subtitle, this is not an academic treatise. Nor is it criticism as much as it is film appreciation. It is a personal account of her search for possible reasons for why she loves the films she loves. And they are some very interesting films which she effortlessly makes sound as fascinating to us as they are to her. There's not a dull page here and her enthusiasm is infectious. (Indeed, it spills over to the appendix of additional films which makes up the book's second half.) It's also an account of her tumultuous life that brought her obsessions found in these films to the surface. It's quite rough and she sounds very surprised to have survived at all. The descriptions of violence and abuse are not detailed too fully, but the emotional punch is there. She covers film classics from Hitchcock and Bava to giallo and obscurer fare from the '70s to contemporary shockers like *Trouble Every Day*, *Martyrs*, and *Antichrist*. It's eclectic in the best sense of the word and it flows very well. The chapters begin with the personal, shift to the films for an extended summary/running commentary, and stop half-way through the plot before too many spoilers by which time you're hooked. The films are arranged in psychological themes – her evocative chapter titles being another joy. Again, so many great films. I had no idea Altman explored territory similar to *3 Women* in other films of his. The themed narrative is one of the book's best ideas and the way the films are matched to it is quite impressive. Exposure to all these films was such a good opportunity. There's a very keen visual component as well. Excellent choice of pictures only increase the interest in the films. Despite some of the films' lurid content, violence and nudity are kept to a minimum in her choice of pictures. Her eye for poster art alone almost recommends the book by itself. There's an entire gallery of art which also serves as a good visual companion to the already careful choice of black and white photos scattered throughout the text. A book of wide range, voracious learning, and singular focus, I left with a greater appreciation of the films she championed and the way she chose to present them. A great tribute to horror cinema and how we find personal meaning within it.

Lydia Peever says

Both the light analysis of the films and the parallel story of the authors life were very interesting to me.

Many of these films I'd either attempted to watch and lost interest or have actively avoided. Hysterical women and 70s exploitation films are my least favourite things but I can appreciate where they fit in the film history and feminist history lexicon. Janisse presents the plots and her opinion (as well as her own story) plainly, and i like that approach.

Nate D says

This is great. Film theory encompassing a swath of psychologically heightened genre cinema that I've clearly been drawn to as well over the years (given how many of these films I've seen), all bound together by a kind of illustrative memoir the dovetails almost too well with themes. "Too well" would imply disbelief, "almost" grants this a harrowing conviction. An altogether great reference, as well, and lavishly laid out with stills, old promo art, etc.

SL says

I was fortunate enough to know and collaborate with Kier-la during her brief tenure in Austin. She is a remarkable woman, and this book is an utterly unique intermingling of her fascinating life story and her witty, scholarly and trenchant observations on the genre films she loves. Brilliant!

Kirk says

Kier-La Janisse has written a very singular overview of horror films, her subset being those with a focus on female neurosis, and combined it with a sort of autobiographical account of her life. Aside from some jarring transitions between the personal material and the cinematic analysis, this works remarkably well. Janisse is a Canadian film programmer and her lifelong devotion to horror is jaw-dropping in its comprehensiveness. Horror is probably my favorite genre but she has seen and absorbed hundreds I've barely heard of, or not at all. The odd structure of the book works because it's not about some trite "and this is how I got interested in horror", but rather uses various horror cinema as clues to her own dark family history and psychology. I don't say 'dark' lightly. The scariest things in this book aren't about movies.

Example 1

Kier-La's earliest memory is of waking up at night to a strange noise. She tries to investigate it; there's a flurry of shadows and noise, then her mother sweeping her up and telling her everything is going to be ok but sounding scared. It remains a vague, indistinct memory until years later an aunt explains what it means. A man broke into the apartment and was raping her mother when little Kier-La ran into the room. It was dark, and her mother convinced the attacker to leave and that no one had seen his face. He left. Her mother credited her daughter with saving her life. Alas, this did not foretell a strong mother-daughter relationship in years to come, for many unhappy reasons.

Example 2

Kier-La buys at a yard sale a portrait of a girl in 19th century style and puts it near her bed so she can always see it. At night she convinces herself that she can see the girl's lips moving and would stare at it for hours.

She tells a friend about this, and the friend is so scared she refuses to come over anymore unless Kier-La gets rid of it, which she won't do. She invents a story that the girl drowned and her spirit is now trapped in the painting. She leaves candy and other gifts at the foot of the painting as an offering, but when none of these disappear she gets scared that the girl's rejected her and is going to steal her soul. She gets her mom to move the painting to the basement. Good call, Kier-La.

Example 3

Her mother had two unhappy marriages. During the second, after a particularly nasty argument, her mother went to a relative's empty house nearby. Awhile later they got a call, her mother had passed out drunk and a fire had started in the house. She nearly died of smoke inhalation. When she was brought home from the hospital: *the look on her face was horrifying. I had never seen her so full of spite and venom. My mother rarely swore, but on this day she had lost all sense of propriety. My greeting to her was met with, "You should have left me alone! Why couldn't you have let me die?! I was in heaven! YOU TOOK ME OUT OF HEAVEN! I FUCKING HATE ALL OF YOU!!!"*

Example 4

Inspired by the Farrah Fawcett movie *Extremities*, Kier-La invents a new game for her Barbie dolls and Jimmy Osmond doll. Barbie and friends would go off for a picnic in the country. Barbie wanders off alone, and Jimmy comes out from behind a bush and attacks and rapes Barbie. The end. No female revenge or miraculous escape. As Kier-La puts it, *I hadn't yet learned how rape can be used most effectively as a narrative tool—namely, as fuel.*

HORROR MOVIES AND MISOGYNY

I found the best way to read this was dipping in and out of it over a long period. If I read too much in one stretch, the movies discussed (at least the ones I haven't seen) would start to blur together. Janisse has a particular affinity for Italian giallo films, and I do not. (The book's title, *House of Psychotic Women*, is actually an alternate title for a giallo film called *The Blue Eyes of the Broken Doll*.) In fact I realized reading this that the likely reason I haven't seen very many giallo films is I don't want to (sounds obvious, but I had never articulated it in my mind). There is the occasional delirious triumph of style over substance like *Suspiria*, but in general I find this sub-genre too naked in its misogyny and too contemptuous of coherent narrative. Speaking of, in any serious book about horror cinema, misogyny can be the elephant in the room if not addressed. I came to respect Janisse's take on this. It really isn't a priority of what she wants to discuss, but she is admirably candid and never tries to either rationalize or sweep it under any rug. (Which often is the case elsewhere. I frequently read user reviews on IMDb, and it's amazing how reviewers will patiently explain how actually a particular flick isn't misogynist at all, other films might be, sure, but never the one presently being discussed, somehow. It's almost uncanny.) She discusses at length a Korean film called *Bad Man* (unseen by me, now and to the grave) which from her description sounds like one of the three or four most misogynist films ever made. And understand, Kier-La is defending the film. I can't imagine what a description would sound like from someone who disliked it. But this sort of honesty won me over.

I hesitate to try to sum up her ideas, the book does not lean toward the academic (and thank you for that) and it's not like she ties everything together with One Big Thesis. But essentially her fascination is with women in these films going out of their minds, dissociating, the internal or external factors that drive this, the coping mechanisms, the consequences for themselves and others. And she can zero in on this with a serrated precision. I don't always agree with her takes, but her insight frequently gives you another way of perceiving

these movies. Also, in case the above anecdotes give the wrong idea, while her personal relationships are apparently often volatile, her writing is very, um, Canadian, calm and analytical about often emotional material, self-effacing, with a dry and understated sensibility. I found that a nice contrast with the often grim matters being discussed.

HORROR EXPRESS TO MS. 45

Janisse had me in her corner from the first pages when she mentions *Horror Express* being one of the first movies she ever saw (!) and how a character in that film she calls The Man With Green Eyes would haunt her dreams for years. *Horror Express* does not fit her sub-genre of female neurosis films and so is not discussed in depth, but it is one of my all-time favorite pulp B-horror flicks that I've probably seen six or eight times over the years. A Spanish film with Peter Cushing, Christopher Lee and a scene-stealing Telly Savalas that is just perfect in its low budget unpretentious efficiency and a genius narrative concept, cheesy title and all. A prime benefit of this book is just as a reference for dozens of films, obscure or not, that I can try to track down. When the last chapter finishes, you find there is still half the book to go. After the ten text chapters (I should add, very generously illustrated with pictures and poster art), the second half of the book is a detailed appendix, not only of the films already discussed, but many more that she didn't have room for in the text. To pick one random example, she discusses a British film from 1977 called *Prey*, about a troubled lesbian couple who are visited by a strange man who unbeknownst to them is actually an alien who's taken human form. I mean, what? Lesbian drama + an alien? Ok, it might well be terrible, but there was a time I would have walked over broken glass to see that, and I'd never heard of it.

Janisse is particularly engaged in discussing the rape-revenge sub-genre, and cites many examples. For her the pinnacle of these is Abel Ferrara's *Ms. 45*, a tough watch psychologically (though not explicitly graphic to the degree of many other such films) but one that thinks through the tropes of these films much further than most. I saw this many years ago, kind of liked it but didn't love it, but her analysis is interesting enough that maybe I should rewatch it.

...a rape scene is the single greatest justification for anything else in the film that follows—no matter how illogical, unbelievable, sadistic, misanthropic, graphic or tortuous. The audience will accept any direction the story takes because, culturally, rape is worse than death.

...it becomes apparent that watching these films, and writing about them, is an act of solidarity in and of itself; a provocative means of dispelling the threat their subject matter poses to us. I also think that my interest in them...is a vicarious means of revenge for what my mother experienced in front of me all those years ago.

THE LISTS

This is my own interpretation of what I think Ms. Janisse might consider some of the key films discussed, based on how passionately she engages with them. (Oh, and you might notice not every film is strictly speaking horror; Kier-La is flexible.)

Possession (truly one of the most bizarre and disturbing movies I've seen; Isabelle Adjani gives one of the most astonishing performances by anyone ever)

The Entity (about a woman sexually assaulted by a ghost; I know, sounds like a sleaze-fest, but it has a detached clinical tone and is actually rather compelling)

Martyrs (a despicable movie, pure torture porn; really, do not see this)

Ms. 45

A Gun for Jennifer

Defenceless: A Blood Symphony

May (a great movie about a sheltered woman who wants to connect, badly; highly recommended)

In My Skin

The Whip and the Body

Bad Guy

The Piano Teacher (says Kier-La: "I have so much love for (Isabelle Huppert's character) that it's hard to even describe"; says me: brrr....)

Szamanka

My own list of others discussed that I would particularly recommend:

Alice Sweet Alice

Audition (not for the squeamish)

Bedeveled (intense Korean revenge drama)

Cat People (probably my fav. horror flick of the '40s)

La Ceremonie (maybe Claude Chabrol's best)

The Devils (maybe Ken Russell's best)

Don't Look Now

Hard Candy (a heart of stone revenge flick, great stuff)

Inside (French extreme horror, not for the squeamish)

Let's Scare Jessica to Death (very flawed but good '70s horror with a great ending)

Phenomena (aka Creepers) (a giallo I liked with a very young Jennifer Connolly)

Red White and Blue (the rare extreme horror that's a great movie)

Séance on a Wet Afternoon (great British '60s drama, sad and mournful)

Sisters

Trilogy of Terror (the great Karen Black in 3 Richard Matheson stories; Zuni Fetish Doll!)

What Ever Happened to Baby Jane? (weirdly, everyone remembers this wrong; it's not camp, it's bleak and somber, and brilliant)

And finally, some great titles of movies I've never seen:

The Blue Eyes of the Broken Doll/ House of Psychotic Women

Can Go Through Skin

Don't Torture a Duckling

Four Flies on Grey Velvet

A Lizard in a Woman's Skin

A Night to Dismember

The Rats are Coming! The Werewolves are Here!

Paul S says

The always wonderful FAB Press does it again. Kier-la Janisse's book is part memoir, part examination of a number of horror and exploitation films with neurotic, often shamed female characters at their center. Having been a viewer and fan of many of these films for years, it was refreshing to read a female perspective on them. Janisse's writing is clear and easy to read, even when revealing some pretty harrowing details from a life that has clearly been, at times, a pretty rough road. The second half of the book is a compendium of films with female neurosis at the center (some of which are discussed in greater detail in the first half of the book.) Highly recommended for fans of exploitation films. We need more voices like this.

Pearce says

This is a highly idiosyncratic book combining film scholarship with autobiography, in which author Kier-la Janisse uses examples from horror movies involving "crazy" women to illustrate an account of her own turbulent life, particularly her relationship with her mother. Janisse is fearless in her self-examination, and often seems determined to portray herself in the most unflattering terms possible. Her writing is strong and blunt, and the autobiographical elements are fascinating. In addition, her knowledge of horror film history runs very deep and her critical faculties are extremely sharp, so that I found myself wanting to see every single movie she discussed.

House of Psychotic Women deserves to stand with Nightmare USA by Stephen Thrower as one of the best non-academic studies of the horror movie published in recent years. You may need to steel yourself before reading it because Janisse pulls no punches in depicting both real-life and cinematic violence, but if you have

a strong stomach and any interest at all in the genre, I recommend it very highly. Unlike most books in this category, it's one to read cover to cover.

Gustav says

Do you like Thriller: A Cruel Picture? Lizard in a Woman's Skin? Possession? Then you'll love this book! Kier-La Janisse's book is a product of Andrzej Zulawski's Possession's unabashed depiction of female breakdown and plain old weirdness and through Janisse's early introduction to (Horror Express) and obsession with horror movies as a way of life in coping with a rough upbringing. In so doing, she has followed this thread through her life and from the ground up, created a great book on a new genre: the psychotic, troubled woman movie. And there are a great many of them out there to discover! Rather than over-analyze with Freudian or Jungian terminology or use film-maker and theorist Laura Mulvey ad infinitum to talk of the injustices of the "male" gaze, thankfully she leaves this tired academic lens behind and gives us a more intimate side of herself and discusses the movies in very personal ways that take us into the mind rather than the surface of female/male psychological interactions. As the title indicates, her methodology is topographical and maps out the the relations rather than pushes some kind of idealist agenda. Also, given her experiences, La Janisse is realistic enough to know that it is not as clear-cut given the inherent messiness of life where socio-sexual relations are not always perfect or functional. Her anecdotes are honest and it takes guts to do so, but they never overwhelm the discussions of the movies. After reading her main section, am now slowly reading her appendix of films and savoring the experience. Any book she publishes in the future, I intend to pick up, because she is that good and has impeccable taste. Also, while she could have chosen common posters for the featured films, you can tell the care she took in finding, for example, great locandinas or posters that make for great eye candy - her aesthetics are spot on, and give you the feeling like you are reading a zine of the highest order and assembled with care, but in glorious book format. This is a great book on a series of underrated movies. Pick this up, great movies, lovely images and posters of the films and in-depth discussion. I expect to watch a lot of her recommendations in the future. Kier-La Janisse has been involved with organizing Canadian horror/cult movie conventions on her own, and is part of Fangoria. Her writing will draw you in and not let you go. A gem of a book.
