

## WHAT TO KNOW about Kassia Krone



Kassia Krone is the author of *Hollywood's Monstrous Moms: Vilifying Mental Illness in Horror Films* and the co-author of *Yours in Filial Regard: The Civil War Letters of a Texas Family*. Her work also appears in *Mississippi Quarterly*. Her research interests include Southern literature, gothic literature, film, disability studies, digital humanities, epistolary studies, and women and gender studies. She received the W.A. Young Teaching Award for outstanding teaching

at Friends. *Wichita Business Journal* has recognized her for her work with DEI. She is the current chair of general education and co-chair of the Diversity Leadership Council at Friends. She serves on the Sigma Tau Delta Board as High Plains Regent and is the chapter advisor for Friends' local chapter: Alpha Theta Beta. She is the current sponsor of Friends University's The MEWS and English Club. She teaches a wide range of English courses in addition to general education classes at Friends University.

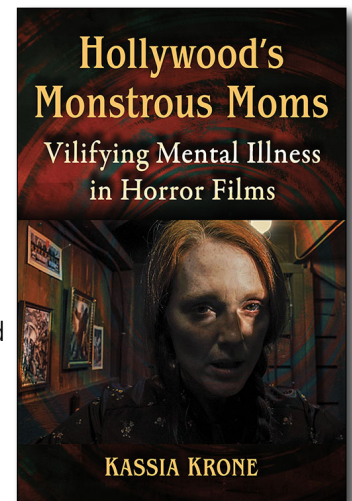
## QUESTIONS: *Hollywood's Monstrous Moms: Vilifying Mental Illness in Horror Films* (2024)

- How does Krone's engagement with the positionality of the mother as the object of horror in these films complicate Julia Kristeva's assertions that the abject is the moment a child is cast off from the mother? How does the position of the mother as abject speak to this?
- Is the defiance of the "Angel of the House" trope (51) a feminist impulse or a misogynistic tale? What examples can you think of from contemporary film?
- How do fan communities contribute to what Krone acknowledges as "raising awareness for mental or domestic abuse [which] may not be what the producers or directors intended at the time; even so, the characters' actions in these films support this concept" (68)? What particular films transform these characters into icons? Does such transformation, supported by fans, shift the advocacy work of the films?
- Are final girls a way of punishing more sexually promiscuous female characters and praising the actions of the character? Does this allow them to earn the way they kill "in extremely violent ways, using knives, guns,

machetes" (80)? Why are there no "final boys"?

As Krone notes "the struggle with perceived or literal disability is inherently a part of the formula that establishes the final girl or enduring woman" (107).

- Are there instances of these tropes where physical disability is integrated into this struggle?
- How does it alter the experience and depiction of these characters?
- Despite the rareness of MSP, why have "a plethora of films dedicated to the resurgence of this subject matter" (126) appeared in horror the past few years?



## LITERATURE AS PRAXIS

- How is the depiction of "cavernous spaces to symbolically represent the womb as a site of horror" (114) complicated by those spaces being used in films with Black mothers as the villains? Krone points out the systemic racism and violence that this community faces during the birthing process, as opposed to how it is depicted in horror films with white mothers as villains. Can you think of examples of this double standard?
- Krone investigates how race complicates the depictions of Black mothers in many horror films. What other lens, such as class or religion, of intersectionality can be used to complicate depictions of mentally ill mothers in films? Could your chapter organize a screening of a film that addresses these issues? What type of discussion would benefit the screening?
- Krone acknowledges how "horror is a fitting genre to continue discussions of PPD because most moms describe the anxiety they feel and intrusive thoughts they experience as nothing short of horrific" (164). What other experiences of horror that mothers experience could be explored in horror films to contribute to a developing landscape of films more readily engaged in women's experiences? Do horror films exploit women suffering from PPD? Can we find similarities in literature?
- Find a service project that assists Krone's mission to "generate further discussion...on the ways mental disability in particular is vilified in horror and how to rectify the problem." How can we contribute to more healthy discussions about women in literature and film?

## COMMUNITY RESOURCES

[American Psychological Association \(apa.org\)](#)  
[Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance](#)  
[Maternal Mental Health NOW](#)  
[Black Mamas Matter Alliance](#)  
[Black Women for Wellness](#)  
[American with Disabilities Act at ADA.gov](#)

## MAKING CONNECTIONS

- How can you apply Krone's lens, potentially, to mothers in other genre sites such as comedy movies?
- Speaking of genre, does Krone's statement that the horror genre "has a dark history of portraying disability as something to be feared, especially as it comes to mental illness," apply to the genre of melodrama?
- Poetry collections such as *When My Brother Was an Aztec* explore the complicated relationships in familial relationships and the haunting that creates—are movies just as apt to explore these relationships, or is there something that becomes complicated by the existence of a visual medium versus a written one alone?

## ADDITIONAL READINGS

Aaisha Alvi, *A Mom Like That: A Memoir of Postpartum Psychosis* (2024).  
Carol J. Clover: *Men, Women, and Chain Saws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film* (1992).  
Barbara Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* (2015).  
Jessica Gale Friesen, *This Will Not Break Me: My Personal Journey with Postpartum Depression* (2021).  
Adam Lowenstein: *Horror Film and Otherness* (2022).

### —articles

Kyle Christensen, "A Dynasty of Screams: Jamie Lee Curtis and the Reinterpretation of the Maternal Voice in *Scream Queens*."  
Charles E. Hicks, "The Hetaera's Monster: The Sublime Mother in the Slasher Film Genre."  
Mariliis Elizabeth Holzmann, "Melancholic Grief and the Psychic Experience of Reproductive Loss in Emma Tammi's *The Wind*" (2018)  
Hortense J. Spillers, "All the Things You Could Be by Now If Sigmund Freud's Wife Was Your Mother": Psychoanalysis and Race."  
Caitlin Still, "Abject Relations: Postmaternal Australia in *The Babadook*."

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