Written by Jenny Wright
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[*Actress and sometime FANGORIA contributor Jenny Wright (PINK FLOYD: THE WALL, NEAR DARK, I MADMAN) had the unique chance to meet up with writer and subversive film oracle Kier-La Janisse in LA last week, to discuss her new book HOUSE OF PSYCHOTIC WOMEN. So moved was Wright by Kier-La's critically lauded book, that she penned this exclusive essay for us. Have a read…*]

HOUSE OF PSYCHOTIC WOMEN, the new confessional movie book written by Kier-La Janisse, recently inspired LA's Cinefamily Theater to run a screening series of films featured in the book. That's right, a festival of insanity, running all through February.

Kier-La was here to open the series with a personal introduction and to have a short discussion with a very excited audience. It was a wall-to-wall sold out show and I was there with them, listening to every word spoken about her fascinating, critically acclaimed book….

And happily, I was able to catch up with her briefly before the show at a pub down the street from the theater. I felt an instant connection with her, perhaps stemming from our similarly unstable pasts. Maybe it's because, ultimately, we both demand independence. Kier-La is very unassuming and is easy to like with her long dark street hair and a beautiful smile.

I immediately tell her that I am crazy about her book. And I am.

For me, it's as if she'd put all of my heroes together into one towering book. As I read it, I felt like I'd been waiting for someone to write this forever. A part of me was, in fact, so satisfied by it that I can now easily call it one of my favorite books.

While getting seated, I make a comment about how one must struggle to find your way to

freedom within your relationships and how I respected her acknowledgement of that in PSYCHOTIC WOMEN in talking about her relationship with her now ex-husband. We laugh as my boyfriend wanders away happily, to eat corned beef and cabbage at Canter's Deli.

Well, that was easy…

Her statements from the book hold true."Yes," she confirms she still assesses herself as "driven" and not the "party giving partner, planning for the future" type.

We are talking about her brief marriage and Kier-La looks at me and says "Maybe none of these women are neurotic at all, it's just that they have fallen through the crack between who they really are and who they think they are supposed to be." She smiles. I think she likes that analogy.

During the opening presentation of the series at the incredible Cinefamily, Kier-La makes some very interesting remarks about her process in writing the book itself. She reveals that only after years of collecting information, grappling with her own history, facing truths and living life was it time for it to be written. It took a better part of ten years to write and that it wasn't until she hit a very dark period in her life that she grasped onto the project, a life preserver of sorts, and swam it to success.

At one point in the disappointingly short discussion, Kier-La shakes her head and grins, echoing things she had said to me prior. "Maybe none of these women are crazy. Perhaps if they were to behave differently, in context to the movie, that would be real insanity." The audience laughs. They "get it." They like her.

She looks so young, it's hard to imagine the life she has lived through and then I look in the mirror and I see the same. The difference between the woman I once was and the woman I am now. I think many people can relate to that. I think it's more than just looking older, it's that there has been, for many of us, transformation. Kier-La's autobiography is about

transformation. Perhaps our fascination with neurotic women in general is their need to transform in some way.

A desperate need.

In the beginning of the book Kier-La writes,

“I wanted to explore neurotic characterizations comprehensively so I focused on what I know, namely films I watch align with my personal experience in that every woman I have ever met is completely crazy in one way or another.”

There has been good response to the book, although in my first few e mails Kier-La admitted that she has had disturbing messages. Well, it only seems befitting that a book that delves so deep into such dark matter will stir up some shit. But, it’s in the controversy that energy sparks and fire burns.

When I read HOUSE, I was completely taken by its authenticity and its natural momentum that can only come out of the energy of real passion. There is nothing contrived about this book. What an enormously brave thing to do in a world of commerce...

Kier-La reveals a hard life. With an alcoholic mother and a broken home, she became a woman who will make all the wrong choices that she would inevitably have been led to. It’s so well written you feel as though you are there watching every moment. You can feel the heart beat, the alienation and anger. Troubles with her identity follow her throughout her life; changing friends and attitudes through school, on a very regular basis, never really fitting in anywhere.

The pace and momentum in the book is reflected in the movie choices. As film itself was changing, Kier-La’s life changes as do the issues and styles of the films being made at that time, in both horror and exploitation and “legit” movies. Kier-La says in the book she prefers a “devastating” kind of movie, the point where the leading lady has been in some way ripped open and we can see inside her, perhaps even seeing ourselves….

Buy this book now.

HOUSE OF PSYCHOTIC WOMEN is on sale now. Cinefamily's incredible series runs all month. You can find its schedule here .