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CLIVE BARKER'S *HELLRAISER* MYTHOLOGY:
A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

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door
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INTRODUCTION

BIOGRAPHY AND WORK¹

The whole concept of *Hellraiser* stemmed from the imagination of Clive Barker, who had developed a taste for the bizarre and uncanny at a very early age. Born in Liverpool in 1952, his earliest memories are actually of his own traumatic caesarean birth. Barker's family had various connections with the sea, and it was his grandfather, a ship's cook, who brought him back souvenirs from his travels. One of these was a Chinese puzzle box, an object that would gain great significance in the *Hellraiser* mythology.

Barker read voraciously as a child, in particular the classics of Stoker, Shelley, Poe, Machen and M.R. James. However, it was a book on anatomy written by Andreas Vesalius, *De Humani Corporis Fabrica* (1543), that had a particular influence. Barker drew, wrote and painted in his bedroom, but it was at Quarry Bank School that his talents really became apparent. Barker started to put on performances of his own plays. Barker met Pinhead-to-be Doug Bradley and Peter Atkins (scriptwriter of *Hellraisers* II-V), together they formed the fringe theatre group 'The Dog Company'. After leaving Liverpool University with a BA in English literature, Barker and the Company went on tours giving performances of plays that Barker had penned. These plays had erotic, fantastic en horrific elements. Titles like *History of the Devil* (1980) already hinted at an obsession with all things hellish, something that later resurfaced in short stories Barker wrote to amuse his friends in the Company. These stories grew into the first volumes of his popular *Books of Blood*, published in 1984, and established him as a horror writer. Stephen King hailed Barker with the words "I have seen the future of

¹ For the biographical details, I have relied on Unknown. "Clive Barker." *ING for Man* Dec. 1999: n. pag. Web. 7 Aug. 2009. <http://www.svenlib.sandy.ru/clivebarker/inter/99_12_ign1.htm>; Kane, Paul. *The Hellraiser Films and their Legacy*. Jefferson, North Carolina, and London: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2006. Print.

horror and its name is Clive Barker." In the following year, Barker wrote his first novel, *The Damnation Game*, and the next three *Books of Blood*.

In 1986, Barker wrote *The Hellbound Heart*. It was written with the intention of making a film of it. After he had completed the novella, Barker adapted it into a screenplay, which he entitled *Hellraiser*. *The Hellbound Heart* was first published in 1986 in the *Night Visions* anthology series, but it was re-released as a standalone title in 1988 after the success of the film. In 2007, *The Hellbound Heart* was released for the first time as a standalone hardcover version in a 20th anniversary edition, which contained some of Barker's early sketches.

After *The Hellbound Heart*, Barker moved toward fantasy with some horror elements. In 1992, he wrote his first novel for children and young adults, *The Thief of Always*. In 2002 and 2004, the first two *Abarat* books were published. They are children's books, based on Barker's oil paintings. *Barker* is not only an author, but also a horror critic, director, producer and visual artist. He wrote the screenplay for *Hellraiser*, and also directed the film adaptation. The sequel, *Hellbound: Hellraiser II*, was directed by Tony Randel, but Barker was directly involved as Executive Producer. Barker now lives in California with his partner, the photographer David Armstrong, and their daughter Nicole.

Barker's writing style is characterized by the notion of hidden, fantastical worlds that exist side by side with our own, and the creation of complex mythologies. His kind of taboo is sexuality. Barker emphasizes the importance of the role of sexuality in his supernatural tales. He described sexuality as the role of the forbidden, as a means of power, as one of the bodily aspects. Barker's subjects also include mutilation, dissection and obsession.

Horror has long been considered a vulgar genre. The genre has attracted more critical attention during the past ten years though. Today one can read numerous academic texts on horror. Several critics have discussed the place of the film in the tradition of horror cinema. Some pointed out the Faustian elements of the film, others noted the influence of S&M

imagery. Paul Kane has written an insightful book on the *Hellraiser* films and their legacy. However, *The Hellbound Heart* is under-represented within literary discussion. Although *Hellraiser* received much critical attention, little interest has been paid to the rich and complex novella upon which the screenplay for the film was based.

I decided to discuss Barker's *Hellraiser* mythology from a literary point of view because of my interest in the horror genre and Barker's work in particular. The scarcity of critical work on the topic has driven me to settle on this topic too. Lloyd-Smith's introductory book on Gothic fiction, which Prof. Dr. Buelens used as a course book during his lectures on American Gothic Fiction in 2007-2008, provided a very interesting insight in the Gothic genre, the genre in which horror partly has its roots. The book contains a timeline listing literary works that have a gothic dimension. The introductory book on horror fiction, by Gina Wisker, contains a timeline listing works that contain elements of the horror genre. Neither of both introductory books mentions *The Hellbound Heart*. Wisker briefly mentions Barker and cites from his critical work only. Both books, however, were very useful in my discussion of Barker's story. By relating the *Hellraiser* mythology to some of the major themes in horror, as discussed by Wisker, I wish to show that Barker's novella earns its place in both timelines. This dissertation will allow the reader to gain some insight in Barker's new vision of horror. I will show Barker is a "new face of horror," but will at the same time nuance Stephen King's statement, by showing that Barker has been influenced by others.

As far as the *Hellraiser* mythology is concerned, I will discuss *The Hellbound Heart*, the film adaptation, *Hellraiser*, and its sequel, *Hellbound: Hellraiser II*. I will not go into the other sequels in the *Hellraiser* saga, as they violated the rules of Barker's mythology. Barker was not involved anymore in these sequels. I will henceforth be referring to the novel as THBH, and to the screenplays of the films as HR1 and HR 2.

As secondary sources, I mainly used Wisker's *Horror Fiction: An Introduction*, Kane's book on the films, and numerous articles from *Fangoria* magazines. The DVD releases of the films contain commentary tracks which were also useful as resource material. I also made use of *Clive Barker's Hellraiser – Concepts and Guidelines for a Horror Anthology Series from Epic Comics*, often referred to as the *Hellraiser Comics Bible*. This is a series of concepts and guidelines with regard to *Clive Barker's Hellraiser*.² It is a set of rules concerning the *Hellraiser* mythos, developed in 1989, in a session between Clive Barker, Archie Goodwin, Erik Saltzgeber, Phil Nutman and Daniel Chichester (who eventually wrote it down).

In the first chapter, I will discuss domestic horror as a genre and study how *The Hellbound Heart* relates to it. I will focus on the domestic setting and the relationships within the family, and explain how Barker depicts the Cotton family and their home as destabilizing. For this chapter I relied on Wisker and Kane. Wisker sums up several aspects that are inherent to the use of the house in domestic horror. Kane tackles the theme of the undermining of the family unit in his chapter on 'Cotton Family Values' (2006, 31-34), but in that chapter, he does not mention the relationship between Frank and Julia. Their relationship is intriguing, I think it is strange that he mentions the presence of S&M overtones in the story without delving deeper into the way Barker subverted the conventional relationship between Julia and her brother-in-law, when we know that we are talking about an adulterous relationship. I will show where the S&M overtones in their relationship creep in exactly. I will also look at how the other characters interact with each other. In this chapter I will also demonstrate how Barker produces a sense of the Uncanny.

In the second chapter, I will discuss how the film *Hellraiser* relates to and differs from slasher horror. Here I relied on Clover's essay "Her Body, Himself: Gender in the Slasher Film."

² A 64-page comic book horror anthology, published four times a year by Epic Comics. The comics contained short stories, with Clive Barker acting as a consultant.

In the third chapter, I will look at how the monster is represented in Barker's story. I will discuss the Cenobites and their origins. I will discuss what sets them apart from other monsters, and will show what they may symbolize. Barker problematizes the concept of good and evil. Perhaps Julia and Frank are the real monsters?

In the fourth chapter, I will point out the Faustian elements in the story. I will analyze the puzzle, the gateway to Hell, as a sublime, uncanny and Gothic object. I will also briefly discuss the pact-makers in the story.

In the final chapter, I will discuss the theme of body horror. I will show that Barker defamiliarizes Splatterpunk conventions, by looking at how he relates to this theme.

PLOT SUMMARY

Frank Cotton, a hedonist through and through, buys a mysterious, Chinese puzzle box, assuming it can open the doorway to ultimate pleasure. He has heard the box is a means to summon sensual demons who provide pleasure. He discovers that his definition of pleasure differs quite considerably from that of the invoked demons, the Cenobites. Upon solving the box, chains with hooks on the end tear into his body, and the Cenobites appear to rip him to pieces.

As the Cenobites vanish, taking their victim with them, we are introduced to Frank's brother Rory and sister-in-law Julia who are moving into the family home that has – unbeknownst to them – been used for these rituals. We soon discover Julia slept with Frank just before her wedding, and it is this connection that will inevitably lead to Frank's escape from Hell. While they are moving into the house, Larry cuts himself on a chisel and spills blood on the floorboards in the room where Frank met his end. This is enough to bring Frank back, partially, and his entreaty to Julia forces her to go out and lure victims to the house for him. When Rory's visiting friend Kirsty begins to suspect something is amiss, she follows Julia and

encounters a skinless Frank in the attic. She manages to escape from his clutches and steals the shiny gold box that seems so important to him.

When she collapses on the street, Kirsty is taken to hospital where she eventually solves the box and summons the Cenobites. Kirsty herself then strikes a bargain with the Cenobites, offering them Frank if they will let her go. Unfortunately she is too late, as Frank and Julia have murdered Rory, and now Frank is wearing his skin. When Kirsty returns, Frank pretends to be Rory, but he cannot fool the Cenobites. In the ensuing chaos, Frank murders Julia and stalks Kirsty, only to be taken back by the demons, the chains and hooks pulling him to pieces once more.

CHAPTER ONE: DOMESTIC HORROR

I.1 INTRODUCTION

Domestic horror locates the scene of horror within the family. It uses the location of the home because we like to think of this as a safe and familiar place. Domestic horror undercuts the complacent assumption that we are secure there, by exposing familiar locations as potential danger zones (Wisker 150). The family home becomes a site of horror precisely because on it depend our sense of comfort, security and familiarity. Undercutting these qualities is the stuff of horror (Wisker 152). Also the family and domestic relationships come under attack (Wisker 151). Discussing domestic horror, Wisker notes:

[It] exposes the contradictions and potential/real unpleasantness of domestic settings and relationships, of nuclear and extended families, of romance, marriage and parenting. It focuses in particular on the unsafe neighbourhood, the ostensibly loving but actually non-nurturing home as sites for horror. It re-represents parents, partners and children as variously deceptive, destructive, invasive, life-denying.

The house as an entrapment, monstrous parents or monstrous children and unsafe neighbourhoods are all features that indicate threats to our unsuspecting belief in domestic security. They undermine “the façade of order” and concentrate on what Wisker calls “the sickening flip side of ‘domestic bliss’” (151).

Clive Barker finds horror in the seemingly safest places (Wisker 4). In *Hellraiser*, his locations for horror are the domestic setting and the relationships within the dysfunctional Cotton family. Barker was not the first to use the theme of the undermining of the traditional family unit. In fact, family horror has long been a cinematic staple within the horror genre. Kane traces the concept back to American and British horror films of the 1960s and ‘70s, which already challenged family’s role of stability (2006, 31). Kane explains that earlier films from the ‘30s and ‘40s and some Hammer productions from the ‘50s showed a tendency to acknowledge “the moral supremacy of the nuclear family and all it stood for” (2006, 31). In these films, stable family units fought against external threats, such as the vampire, mummy or

werewolf. Kane notes that, by the '50s, horror films were also portraying internal threats, "the dangers from within", and connects this to fear of communism. He mentions two classic examples: *Invaders from Mars* and *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (2006, 31). Hitchcock's *Psycho*, which in Kane's view fully internalized the threat, was also "the first adult horror film Clive Barker ever saw," one that "had a huge impact on him" (2006, 31). Contrary to those from the '30s and '40s, horror films from the late '70s and '80s recognized the monster more as an internal threat, as a product of the dysfunctional family. Wisker uses the term "constriction in the family home" (151). Grant speaks of "the family's social creation of the serial killer monster" (173). Since that monster is our own product, it is very likely to return. With reference to the dysfunctional family in horror, Kane has stated:

the stalk and slash films of the late '70s and '80s depicted killers who had uneven upbringings: Jason from the *Friday the 13th* series had a psychotic mother, Michael Myers from *Halloween* was put in a secure psychiatric facility when he was young for killing his sister. Or else they targeted weak families, as Freddy Krueger does in *Nightmare on Elm Street*. (2006, 31)

The above-mentioned films showed that families and their homes are destabilizing. Domestic horror, however, does not necessarily threaten both domestic relationships and the complacent feelings of security within the home at the same time. In Romero's *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), a group of people hide in an old, secluded, Pennsylvania farmhouse, trying to ward off attacking zombies. They board up the house and soon discover they find themselves in a death trap. The horror comes from the situation of entrapment. The house becomes a confined location and cannot offer protection against the flesh-eating zombies. The film, which has been remade twice, does not challenge family's role of stability, simply because it is not about family life. One could argue that the real danger comes from within, as the horror lies in the lack of cooperation between the characters. They do not survive in the end because they do not work together. What the film implies then, is that human beings are not able to work together in extremely difficult times. *Night of the Living Dead* shows us external *and* internal

threats. The survivors fight amongst themselves, which means there is as much danger within as there is danger outside the house. Cooper's ghoul-bitten daughter, who is staying in the cellar, is another internal threat.

Films about domestic horror (e.g. *Psycho*, *House on Haunted Hill*, *The Omen*, *The Exorcist*, *Rosemary's Baby*) variously deal with the devil's offspring, broken families, unsafe neighbourhoods and invasion of the family home. Other examples of domestic horror in contemporary film are *Poltergeist*, *The Shining*, *The People Under The Stairs*, to name but a few. Horror writers as H. P. Lovecraft, Edgar Allen Poe, Stephen King, Angela Carter, and many other notable writers have incorporated domestic issues in their fictions. Barker is thus not the first to write a domestic horror story.

I.2 THE HOUSE

I.2.1 INTRODUCTION

The use of the house in Barker's domestic tale is relatively traditional. Barker, as others before him, replaced the Gothic horror castle with the domestic home space. As Wisker notes, domestic horror "takes the Gothic fascination with locations straight into our most intimate and personal spaces" (150). *The Hellbound Heart* is set in a closed, claustrophobic domestic environment. The domestic tragedy unfolds in a house, known as "number fifty-five, Lodovico Street" (THBH 49), in the London suburbs. In the film, the building is "an old, three storey, late Victorian house, with gaunt trees lining its overgrown garden" (HR1 1).

Rory wants to breathe new life into his stale marriage and moves with his wife Julia into the house on Lodovico Street. The house had belonged to the Cotton brothers' grandmother and has not been touched since she died. The house has been empty every since, and is going to be occupied again for the first time in many years. Julia does not much like the house. She is "less than persuaded" and feels it is "not quite what [she] expected" (THBH 17). On top of that, the house constantly reminds Julia of her brother-in-law, Frank:

[D]espite the change of domestic interiors, and the chance of a fresh start together, it seemed that events conspired to remind her again of Frank. (THBH 28)

As it happens, one of the neighbours makes mention of brother Frank, “referring in passing to the odd fellow who'd lived in the house for a few weeks the previous summer” (THBH 26). It is not just the gossip of the neighbour that brings him to mind. One day, when Julia is unpacking her personal belongings, she comes across wallets of Rory’s photographs (THBH 28). She finds pictures of the two brothers together. It reminds her that her husband looked dowdy, compared to Frank the exhibitionist who always dressed à la mode. When she sees Frank “in brilliant colour, clowning for the camera”, she feels herself blushing. (THBH 29) But with the blushes come tears of fury, as she realizes she had lost herself “lying on a bed of wedding lace, while Frank beset her neck with kisses” (THBH 29). In the film, Rory and Julia learn that Frank did indeed use the house as a hideaway as recently as a few months back through the evidence in both the kitchen and one of the bedrooms:

Besides clothes there's a lot else that speaks of its owner: bric-a-brac picked up in a lifetime of adventuring; handful of bullets; fragments of an erotic statue; coins and notes from a dozen countries. Amongst the stuff, some photographs. LARRY peers at them. One pictures a good-looking intense man in his mid to late thirties, in bed with a naked Chinese girl. (HR1 7-8)

The house is crammed with memories. Living in a house that will always remind Julia of Frank will not do her marriage much good.

1.2.2 THE ‘DAMP ROOM’

The couple move into Lodovico Street on Sunday. Julia checks the rooms to decide which one will serve as the master bedroom. The front room on the second floor is the largest room of the three upper rooms, but it has sealed blinds. The room is thus “chillier”, the air “stagnant” (THBH 23). “The room was hateful, she’d decided; it was stale, and its benighted walls clammy” (THBH 23). Julia walks towards the door and suddenly “the corners of the room seemed to creak, and the door slammed” (THBH 23). In the distance, she can hear church bells pealing for Evensong. During Julia’s presence in the room, the bell rolls on, “reverberating around the room” (THBH 23). The bell stops when she closes the door behind her and turns the

key in the lock. The chiming bell, reverberating around the room, is also figuratively an echo of the first chapter, in which the bell announces the arrival of the Cenobites in this realm:

So intent was Frank upon solving the puzzle of Lemarchand's box that he didn't hear the great *bell* begin to ring. (THBH 3, my italics – L. G.)

[...]

At some point in his labors, the *bell* had begun to ring—a steady somber tolling. He had not heard, at least not consciously. But when the puzzle was almost finished — the mirrored innards of the box unknotted — he became aware that his stomach churned so violently at *the sound of the bell* it might have been ringing half a lifetime.

[...]

There was no church in the city — however desperate for adherents — that would ring a summoning *bell* at such an hour. No. *The sound was coming from somewhere much more distant*, through the very door (as yet invisible) that Lemarchand's miraculous box had been constructed to open. (THBH 4, my italics – L. G.)

Despite her dislike for it, Julia starts going up to the room with the sealed blinds, where unbeknownst to her, Frank died. The room, still untouched, is a womb: “*Unentered*, indeed, except for these few visits of hers.” (THBH 30) Then the perspective shifts to internal focalization, and the metaphor is explicitly mentioned:

She wasn't sure why she went up; nor how to account for the odd assortment of feelings that beset her while there. But there was something about the dark interior which gave her comfort: it was *a womb of sorts; a dead woman's womb*. (THBH 30, my emphasis – L. G.)

It is as if Julia is drawn to the room by Frank's ghostly presence: “she seemed to hear the room call” (THBH 30). Her visiting the room is an adulterous act already. In fact, her penetrating into the room makes her feel guilty:

These sojourns made her feel oddly guilty, and she tried to stay away from the room when Rory was around. But it wasn't always possible. Sometimes her feet took her there without instructions so to do. (THBH 30)

Julia goes up to the room to sit in stillness, to think of Frank, and also her bad marriage:

‘No use,’ she murmured to herself, picturing the man at work downstairs. She didn't love him; no more than he, beneath his infatuation with her face, loved her. He chiselled in a world of his own; she suffered here, far removed from him.

The room is a womb where Julia's desire is brooding. It is here that Frank is brought to life again by a drop of blood. It is here that Julia helps Frank to restore him to his full physical form. It is in this room that the Cenobites appear, in the first chapter, and at the end of the

story. The room is also a tomb. It is the place where Frank died, where the blood of Julia's victims is shed, where Rory is killed and where Frank perishes again at the hands – or hooks to be precise – of the Cenobites.

Julia refers to the room as “the damp room” (THBH 33). Essays, reviews and books (including Kane's) seem to refer to the room as ‘the attic’. The “front room on the second floor,” as it is described in the novella (THBH 22), is an attic, but nowhere in the book, or the film, is this term used. The screenplay, however, refers to the room as the “Torture Room”.

I.2.3 INVASION OF SPACES

Domestic horror tells us the house and home are not safe, as they are threatened from within and without. In domestic horror, just like in the Gothic, invasion of the domestic space is often suggested by “a cracking of the secure fabric to reveal gaps, fissures, and leakages” (Wisker 151). What domestic horror does is transform what is recognized as real in order to expose what is feared and what is hidden (e.g. family secrets, secret desires). Explicating how domestic horror exposes what is feared and hidden, Rosemary Jackson notes that spatial descriptors become important. Spatial descriptors are

prepositional constructions[, adverbs or adjectives] which are used to introduce a fantastic realm [...]. ‘On the edge’, ‘through’, ‘beyond’, ‘between’, ‘at the back of’, ‘underneath’, [...] ‘topsy turvy’, ‘reversed’, ‘inverted’. (Jackson 65)

The notion of a fantastic realm beyond the real is enacted through the language of spatial descriptors. In domestic horror, the focus on spaces and architecture is also tied to the use of darkness and shadows, where darkness may symbolize evil, and shadows may indicate hidden secrets. With regard to domestic invasion, both methods are used in *The Hellbound Heart*.

The first scene of domestic invasion is the arrival of the Cenobites. Here, the wall in the ‘Torture Room’ splits open, allowing in what Frank secretly desires. The combination of darkness and illumination invokes a chiaroscuro atmosphere of the Gothic.

The bare bulb in the middle of the room *dimmed and brightened*, brightened and dimmed

again. [...] In the troughs between the chimes the *darkness* in the room became *utter*. [...] Then the bell would sound again, and the bulb *burn so strongly* it might never have faltered. [...] With each peal the bulb's *light was becoming more revelatory*. (THBH 6)

The “cracking of the secure fabric” reveals a fantastic realm ‘beyond’ the room.

By it, he saw the east *wall flayed*; saw the *brick* momentarily *lose solidity* and *blow away*; saw, in that same instant, the place *beyond* the room from which the bell's din was issuing. (THBH 6)

[...]

And then the wall was solid again, and the bell fell silent. The *bulb flickered out*. This time it went without a hope of rekindling. He stood in the *darkness*, and said nothing. [...] And then, *light*. It came from them: from the quartet of Cenobites who now, with the wall sealed behind them, occupied the room. (THBH 7)

Frank agrees to partake of the experiences the Cenobites offer. Just before he discovers a fresh definition of pleasure, he

turn[s] to see that the world *beyond* the *threshold* had disappeared, to be replaced by the same panic-filled *darkness* from which the members of the Order had stepped. (THBH 11, my italics – L. G.)

The second scene of domestic invasion³ is the one that describes the appearance, or apparition, of Frank’s spirit, suffering in the wall. Here the wall unfolds to reveal the hidden or, shall we say, hiding object of Julia’s adulterous desire. Because of the blood, Frank, locked away in his own hell, is able to make “frail, pitiful contact”, after which he is “once more eclipsed by brick and plaster” (THBH 42). The extract below serves well to illustrate the chiaroscuro concept and how Frank’s first appearance in the novella is described.

The *light* from the *shadeless* bulb on the landing *illuminated* the boards where Rory's blood had fallen, now so clean they might have been scrubbed. Beyond the reach of the *light*, the room bowed to *darkness*. (THBH 37, my italics – L. G.)

[...]

The wall was *alight*, or rather something *behind it* burned with a cold *luminescence* that *made the solid brick seem insubstantial stuff*. More; the wall seemed to be coming apart, segments of it shifting and dislocating like a magician's prop, oiled panels giving on to hidden boxes whose sides in turn collapsed to *reveal some further hiding place*. She watched fixedly, not daring to even blink for fear she miss some detail of this extraordinary sleight-of-hand, while pieces of the world came apart in front of her eyes. (THBH 38, my italics – L. G.)

[...]

The spectacle of the unfolding wall had now ceased entirely, and she saw something *flicker* across the brick, ragged enough to be *shadow* but too substantial.

³ Chapter 4, page 37 to 39, to be precise.

[...]

He was trapped somehow *between the sphere she occupied and some other place*: a place of bells and troubled *darkness*.

In domestic horror, the house is a place of confinement, seemingly safe, but threatened from within and without (Wisker 152). Teenage babysitters are brutally murdered in *Halloween*. The horror is brought into their homes. Though this classic film portrays the monster as a product of a dysfunctional family – and thus an internal threat -, the babysitters can only experience Michael Myers, the stalking monster, as an external threat in their defence against his invasion. Their purpose is to expel the monster. In *The Hellbound Heart*, and the film adaptation, there are two threats, and they are linked. Both are literally and figuratively internal threats. They are threats from within the house, leaking in through the cracks of the wall in the damp room. And they are dangers from within, rooted in desire.

I.2.4 THE UNCANNY

Domestic horror is closely related to the effect of the Uncanny, a master trope we find in much nineteenth century American Gothic literature. The effect is not easy to define unambiguously. In her online article on the Uncanny, Anneleen Masschelein has said that the concept of the Uncanny is somewhat intangible as “it expresses a subjective sentiment which cannot be captured in words, for the generality of language always in a way betrays the individuality of experience”. The notion is nonetheless explored in depth by Sigmund Freud in his influential essay “Das Unheimliche” in which he identified some of its features as coincidence, repetitions, the double motif, and the sense of the strange within the familiar, everything that should have been hidden but comes to light, as in the return of the repressed (Lloyd-Smith 176). In his essay, Freud begins his psychoanalytical interpretation with a lexicographic investigation, explaining the German term for the Uncanny, *das Unheimliche*. *Heim* is German for *home*. *Das Unheimliche* carries the meaning of home or homelessness and has been translated as *unhomely*. According to Lloyd-Smith, it can be understood as

“equivalent to the ‘domestic terror’ which so aptly describes much of the work of American Gothicists” (75). In Gothic novels dealing with the threat of domestic terror,

[t]he house, not the castle, becomes the site of the trauma; its terror deriving from the familiar inmates instead of some external threat, and its terror therefore what Poe called a terror of the soul, and not of Germany. (Lloyd-Smith 75)

Uncanny experiences that constitute internal threats are indeed more frightening than desolate landscapes or the monsters that are merely external threats. In describing the relationship between the Uncanny and domestic terror in nineteenth-century Gothic texts, Lloyd-Smith pretty much sums up what Barker’s tale of terror is about. In *The Hellbound Heart*, 55 Lodovico Street becomes the site of the trauma. The unspeakable terror derives from the socially repressed desires of the familiar inmates, and not from an external threat. Poe’s “terror of the soul” is apt to describe the obsessions of the human psyche, our darkest fears, and desires of the heart. In his guide on the *Hellraiser* saga for online selling site Amazon, Newby, an aficionado of Hellraiser lore, argues

the saga is about human desire, that impure lust of the heart that drives us to sacrifice. [...] In this story [*The Hellbound Heart*], it is Frank's desires and Julia's lust that outline the basic premise of the Hellraiser saga. [...] The desires of the heart are not always true, and usually come with a price. Neither Frank nor Julia [was] willing to pay the price, even though they thought they were.

In a 1987 interview in *Fangoria* magazine, Andrew Robinson, the actor who played the character of Larry (Rory in the novella), elaborated on the concept of the internal threat in *Hellraiser*:

I found the premise it [the script of *Hellraiser*] begins with interesting, something horror films don’t usually begin with: a family and its problems, and then the horror extends from that. (Nutman Sept. 1987, 20)

[...]

I feel *Hellraiser* is a different kind of picture from the average horror flick. The situations arise from the character’s intentions. (Nutman 1988, 60)

In the story, invasion in the domestic space produces a sense of the Uncanny as it suggests strangeness within the familiar. The Cenobites emerge from the wall in the damp, dark room, a

strange light surrounding them: “A fitful phosphorescence, like the glow of deep-sea fishes: blue, cold, charmless” (THBH 7). Frank had anticipated the arrival of the Cenobites, “planned with every wit he possessed this rending of the veil” (THBH 5). Despite his keen anticipation, his fear rises as the door opens to the pleasures of heaven or hell. When the strange and frightening creatures appear, Frank is “distressed to set eyes upon them” (THBH 7). The Cenobites are grotesquely unfamiliar, and yet real. Their appearance is uncanny, as is their fantastical world they are summoned from:

A world of birds was it? Vast black birds caught in perpetual tempest? That was all the sense he could make of the province from which—even now—the hierophants were coming—that it was in confusion, and full of brittle, broken things that rose and fell and filled the dark air with their fright. (THBH 6)

Frank is literally Julia’s hidden secret that comes to light after Rory’s blood is spilt on the floorboards, on “that Saturday, the day of the blood” (THBH 30). The blood gives him a glimpse of strength to make an uncanny apparition from the other side of the Schism, where he is suffering. After she slaughters her first victim with a knife – a hammer in the film due to censorship – to supply Frank, lingering in the wall, with blood, Julia expects the wall to “spit her lover from hiding” (THBH 60). Frank, who is called “the hidden thing” (THBH 63) by the narrator, is able to escape from his resting place in the wall because of the blood. He is only half-made though, and does not want anybody to see him like this. Frank keeps hiding in the damp room while his brother Rory is at home. The husband will never know about his wife’s terrible secret, hiding in the upper room.

Frank’s grotesque, half-made body and weak voice add to the uncanny aspects of his appearance. Frank is the familiar, made unfamiliar. *The Hellbound Heart* is not so much about the return of the past or of repressed memories, as it is about undying love and the return of loved ones. Traditionally, much domestic horror took the form of ghost stories, in which the return of departed loved ones was a popular theme (Wisker 161). Wisker has said that, in ghost stories, [g]hosts frequently return either for malevolent purposes or to continue alongside loved

ones, something represented as longed for but often literally consuming passion” (165). *The Hellbound Heart* is also a ghost story, one in which an unfaithful wife encounters the ghost of her dead lover, who is being chased by demonic creatures. Frank is not interested in Julia, he only needs her to return to this world, where he can continue his pursuit of pleasure.

I would like to stress that neither of the aforementioned experiences of domestic invasion are external threats. It is human desire that triggers the drama. Frank is being chased by his own demons. The Cenobites are summoned by Frank’s desire to “bring their ageless heads into a world” he experiences as one of “rain and failure” (THBH 5). As the narrator in the novella says:

They had to be summoned across the Schism. Without such an invitation they were left like dogs on the doorstep, scratching and scratching but unable to get in. (THBH 49)

It is Julia’s desire that enables Frank to return. She supplied the blood, needed to restore him to her. In *The Hellbound Heart*, the internal threats are lust, seduction, adultery and fratricide. Kirsty is chased inside the house by Frank the monster. In the film, Kirsty is the daughter of Larry. Her being chased inside the house by her monstrous uncle carries a suggestion of incestuous desire, a plot-theme that adds to the intensity of the atmosphere in *Hellraiser*.

Barker also uses the motif of the double, an experience integrated in Freud’s concept of the Uncanny. In the story, the motif is brought into play when Frank and Julia decide to get rid of Rory. They kill Rory to steal his skin so that Frank can disguise himself as Rory. Kirsty is unaware of this, even when she sees that

Rory looked much the worse for wear. There was dried blood on his face, and at his hairline. (THBH 112)

[...]

The wounds [Kirsty believed] Frank had inflicted looked more severe than [she] had first thought. His face was bruised in a dozen places, and the skin at his neck plowed up. (THBH 114)

She does sense, however, that something is wrong when Frank, disguised as her father, asks her to “[c]ome to daddy”, a phrase she could not possibly forget so easily after her first encounter

with Frank as the skinless monster, who had said the exact same words while chasing her (THBH 95).

The phrase didn't sound right out of Rory's mouth. [...] It wasn't Rory who was speaking to her. It was Frank. Somehow, it was Frank. [...] Rory's corpse was upstairs, left to lie in Frank's shunned bandaging. The usurped skin was now wed to his brother's body, the marriage sealed with the letting of blood. Yes! That was it. (THBH 115)

The theme of the double is intertextualized in *Hellbound: Hellraiser II*, in which Kirsty herself is dressed in the deceased Julia's skin to trick Dr. Channard (Sparks).

I.2.5 THE HOUSE IN *HELLRAISER*

Religious ornaments on the doorstep, a violent thunderstorm, the light/dark contrast, a corpse in the closet, rats, maggots and flies are all elements that contribute to the Gothic atmosphere in the film. The ending echoes the destruction of Poe's House of Usher in *The Fall of the House of Usher*, a key early text in domestic horror fiction. As Frank's body is torn apart by the Cenobites, Kirsty hears the house grinding around her (HR1 94B), its "walls creaking and groaning" (HR1 94). The screenplay says "[w]e are aware that the house is ready to fall" (HR1 95). As soon as they are done with Frank, the Cenobites come after Kirsty, who, by manipulating the box, is able to send the demons back to their realm. The Cenobites are "claimed by darkness, [their] image[s] spiralling away into ether (HR1 94B). They are "sucked away into nothingness, [their] scream[s] fading" (HR1 94B). The film's ending is in contrast with the one from the novella, where Kirsty leaves the house at a run, to look back and see that "[t]he house had not capitulated to the forces unleashed within. It stood now as quiet as a grave. No; *quieter*" (THBH 127). Also, in the novella, the Cenobites do not come after Kirsty when they are finished with Frank.

The link between the house and the family inhabiting it is more obvious in the film than in the novella. I agree with Wisker, who has said that "[t]he instability of the physical fabric of the family home reflects that of the relationships within the family" (152).

I.3 THE FAMILY

I.3.1 INTRODUCTION

In domestic horror, the family and domestic relationships are threatened as well. In the words of Wisker, “domestic horror exposes the contradictions and potential/real unpleasantness of domestic settings and relationships, nuclear and extended families, marriages and parenting” (152). Barker made the domestic horror in the story quite genuine. The Cotton family presents the ultimate family nightmare. Concerning the film’s scenario Barker has said:

I made it very, very clear what we’re making here – we’re making a drama, we’re making a very, very, very gross drama. There will be blood and guts, but it has to feel real. (Barker, qtd. in Kane 2008, 34)

According to Kane, the film’s domestic setting, the suburban environment, goes back to the black and white Kitchen Sink dramas of the late 1950s and 1960s such as *Look Back in Anger* and *A Taste of Honey* (2006, 31). With these, Kane argues, *Hellraiser* shares “a realism which helps immensely when it comes to suspension of disbelief” (2006, 31). Kane even calls the saga of the Cottons “pure British soap opera in the *Eastenders* mold”, but shows us there is a difference as he notes that Barker’s story is “a metaphor for what really goes on behind the net curtains in certain British households, and not just because of its S&M overtones” (2006, 31). The concentration on human situations within a family can be the reason why Barker himself has described his domestic story as “Ibsen with monsters,⁴” a family tragedy, a family drama.

The key to that drama is Julia’s relationships with Frank. “In matters of sex, people do stupid things,” maintains Barker (qtd. in Kane 2008, 34), “and in matters of desire, people do stupid things; they make stupid promises on their belief that... ‘I’ll love you forever.’ All that stuff.” In order to understand the story and how Barker subverts conventional roles, we will now take a look at the relationships between the family members. Julia is married to Rory. In the novella, Kirsty is a friend of Rory’s, and Frank is Rory’s black sheep brother. In *Hellraiser*,

⁴ “Under The Skin: Doug Bradley On Hellraiser.” DVD featurette. Anchor Bay. 2004.

Kirsty is the daughter of Larry (Rory from the novella) and Julia's stepdaughter, while Frank is Kirsty's uncle.

I.3.2 DOMESTIC RELATIONSHIPS

I.3.2.1 RORY – JULIA

Rory and Julia are man and wife, but theirs is not a happy marriage:

It was four years since she'd last stepped into a church: the day of her marriage to Rory, in fact. The thought of that day – or rather of the promise it had failed to fulfil – soured the moment. (THBH 22)

The bad relationship between them is also articulated in the original script for *Hellraiser*:

She [Julia] is beautiful, but her face betrays a barely buried unhappiness. Life has disappointed her too, of late: and LARRY has been a major part of their disappointment. (HR1 4)

In the script, their relationship is compared to the house in a simile:

What's between them is stale, like this house. (HR1 7)

Not only is their love/house “stale”, it is also on the brink of collapse, reminding us of Wisker's statement that “[t]he instability of the physical fabric of the family home reflects that of the relationships within the family” (152).

Barker's story brilliantly subverts conventional roles. Julia is Rory's wife, but there are times when she acts more like his mother. When Rory cuts his hand with a chisel, he seeks Julia out. He looks like he is about to pass out at the sight of his own blood. Here, Julia is the caring parent, taking Rory's hand in hers, getting ready to take him off to the hospital and quietly reassuring him by saying: “You'll be fine” (THBH 32). Not only does Julia adopt the roles of wife and mother, Rory also calls her “a perfect hausfrau” (THBH 33). The reader cannot fail to notice the irony in these roles. When Julia decides which room will be used as the master bedroom, she tells her disagreeing husband “*Mother* knows best”, smiling at him “with eyes whose lustre was *far from maternal*” (THBH 24, my italics – L. G.). Julia does not in the least develop motherly feelings for Rory. In fact, “[s]he wanted nothing that he could offer her,

except perhaps his absence” (THBH 33). She does indeed make “a perfect hausfrau”, tidying up “human dust, and fragments of dried flesh [...], [going] down on her haunches and collect[ing] them up diligently” after each murder. She is Rory’s adulterous wife, “his sweetheart, his honeybun-with her breasts new-washed, and a dead man in her arms” (THBH 61).

Julia had always thought she loved Rory, until she meets Frank. Two weeks before her wedding, she and Frank had sex. After this,

Julia often wondered if the subsequent deterioration of her relationship with Rory had not started there: with her thinking of Frank as she made love to his brother. (THBH 28)

In the novella, there are two more ‘love scenes’, in which Julia is again thinking of Frank while she is making love to Rory. The next two quotes show Barker undermining the conventional role of the happily married, faithful wife.

The only thing that sparked the least appetite in her, as she lay on the creaking bed with his bulk between her legs, was *closing her eyes and picturing Frank*, as he had been. More than once his name rose to her lips; each time she bit it back. Finally she opened her eyes to remind herself of the boorish truth. Rory was decorating her face with his kisses. Her cheeks crawled at his touch. *She would not be able to endure this too often, she realized. It was too much of an effort to play the acquiescent wife: her heart would burst.* Thus, lying beneath him while September’s breath brushed her face from the open window, she began to plot the getting of blood. (THBH 44, my italics – L. G.)

I need you," he said, raising his mouth to her ear. Once, half a lifetime ago, her heart had seemed to skip at such a profession. Now she knew better. Her heart was no acrobat; there was no tingle in the coils of her abdomen. Only the steady workings of her body. Breath drawn, blood circulated, food pulped and purged. Thinking of her anatomy thus, untainted by romanticism-as a collection of natural imperatives housed in muscle and bone-she found it easier to let him strip her blouse and put his face to her breasts. Her nerve endings dutifully responded to his tongue, but again, it was merely an anatomy lesson. She stood back in the dome of her skull, and was unmoved. [...] And at the end one moment became another, and she was lying on the bed with her wedding dress crushed beneath her, while a black and scarlet beast crept up between her legs to give her a sample of its love. (THBH 85-86)

Rory, who had “idolized her for as long as he could remember, dreaming of her by night and spending the days composing love-poems of wild ineptitude for her”, grows suspicious and thinks his relationship with Julia is all “doubt and dirt” (THBH 109). He still cherishes hope,

and misinterprets Julia's troubled look as a sign that there is a confession in the air (THBH 109).

I.3.2.2 KIRSTY – RORY/LARRY

In *The Hellbound Heart*, Kirsty is a friend of Rory's. The feeling of love and adoration she has for Rory is apparent throughout the novella:

She [Kirsty] would not have turned down the chance of his [Rory's] smile for a hundred Julias. [...] He [Rory] grinned at her, parading the ragged line of his front teeth that she [Kirsty] had first found so irresistible. (THBH 20)

In the film, Kirsty is the only daughter of Larry (Rory from the novella) and Julia's stepdaughter. Here, Kirsty also adores Larry. The affection she has for her father is mutual. One could argue that Kirsty has an Elektra complex, and that this is the reason why she is so jealous of Julia. The film, however, does not imply that there is anything sexual between Kirsty and her father. I would tend to agree with Kane, who believes that

[t]heirs is a different kind of love, with Larry transferring his devotion for his late wife onto Kirsty, while Kirsty is happy to play the archetypal Freudian Daddy's Girl. (Kane 2006, 33)

In my view, Kirsty is just looking for love and affection.

I.3.2.3 RORY – FRANK

Rory and Frank are brothers. The narrator in the novella says that they "were eighteen months apart in age, and had, as children, been inseparable" (THBH 26). But now,

[t]he brothers' paths had diverged considerably once they'd passed through adolescence, and Rory regretted it. Regretted still more the pain Frank's wild life-style had brought to their parents. (THBH 26)

Rory looks "dowdy" in comparison to his adventurous, extravagant brother (THBH 29). Frank is described as a "madman" (THBH 26), "the black sheep" (THBH 27). Despite their being inseparable during childhood, Rory had only mentioned Frank's name a couple of times during the years of his marriage to Julia (THBH 26). Two months before his wedding, "on an occasion of drunken reminiscing," Rory speaks at length about his brother. The tone of his telling is "a

mixture of revulsion and envy” (THBH 26). Rory’s melancholy talk immediately “piqued Julia’s curiosity” (THBH 26).

Frank’s statement “We’re brothers, under the skin” (THBH 76) foreshadows the act of fratricide in an almost perverse manner, as we know that Frank, with the help of Julia, kills his brother to ‘borrow’ his skin.

I.3.2.4 KIRSTY – JULIA

The narrator describes that Kirsty and Julia have little in common:

Julia the sweet, the beautiful, the winner of glances and kisses, and Kirsty the girl with the pale handshake, whose eyes were only ever as bright as Julia’s before or after tears. (THBH 20)

Kirsty and Julia do not have a good relationship. While they are waiting for Rory in the kitchen, the women twice attempt, and twice fail to start a conversation (THBH 20).

Kirsty envies Julia, who, she believes, has more attractive qualities.

She had long ago decided that life was unfair. [...] She surreptitiously watched Julia as she worked, and it seemed to Kirsty that the woman was incapable of ugliness. Every gesture – a stray hair brushed from the eyes with the back of the hand, dust blown from a favourite cup – all were infused with such effortless grace. Seeing it, she understood Rory’s dog-like adulation; and understanding it, despaired afresh. (THBH 20)

Her jealousy has much to do with her affection to Rory.

Though she tried very hard to keep the thought of his embracing Julia out of her mind, she could not. As she stared into the water, and it simmered and steamed and finally boiled, the same painful images of their pleasure came back and back. (HBH 21)

Julia has a strong dislike towards Kirsty. The narrator, adopting the viewpoint of Julia, tells us that Kirsty’s “dreamy, perpetually defeated manner set Julia’s teeth on edge” (THBH 19).

When Kirsty comes round to see Rory, who has just gone back for another van-load, Julia opens the door and “look[s] at her so strangely, as if faintly baffled by the fact she [Kirsty] hadn’t been smothered at birth” (HBH 20). Kane explains that Julia has her reasons to hate

Kirsty:

She [Kirsty] is her love rival not only for [Rory’s] affections – which she insists she doesn’t require anyway – but also Frank’s. Both men are attracted to Kirsty in different ways, and Julia can’t help but be resentful of her younger, apparently more attractive, adversary. (33)

That Julia insists she does not require Rory's affections is apparent in the quote below, in which Julia says to Kirsty:

You don't have to ask my permission, you know. He's a grown man. You two can do what the fuck you like. (THBH 72)

In *Hellraiser*, Julia is Kirsty's stepmother. We learn that Kirsty's real mother has died when the second removal man says that Kirsty has her mother's looks. "Her mother's dead," snaps Larry (HR1 15). Julia is the wicked stepmother from fairytales. This is referred to in *Hellbound*:

Hellraiser II, where Julia says

Oh, Kirsty. They didn't tell you, did they? I'm afraid they've changed the rules of the fairy tale; I'm no longer just the wicked step-mother. [...] Now I'm the Evil Queen. (HR2 45)

According to Kane, "Kirsty resents Julia for taking her own place as the woman of the household" (2006, 33). I believe this statement is not entirely true, because Kirsty is not really part of the household anymore. In the film, the Kirsty character is introduced via a telephone conversation with her father, and we learn that she has found a room (HR1 10). What Kane says, however, may have been the reason for Kirsty to start looking for her own room. I think we should consider the fact that Kirsty's mother is dead, and that Julia is Larry's second wife. Kirsty may as well resent Julia for taking her *mother's* place as the woman of the household. Also, her love and adoration for Larry may be the reason Kirsty resents her stepmother.

I.3.2.5 JULIA – FRANK

When Rory talks at length about his adventurous brother for the first time, Julia "[is] quickly seized by an unquenchable curiosity concerning this madman" (THBH 26). Then, the black sheep brother appears in the flesh, much to the liking of Julia, who "had succumbed to his charm within hours" (THBH 27). Julia falls for Frank's "beautiful desperation" (THBH 27).

There are a lot of S&M overtones in the way Frank and Julia interact. Although pain is often part of the S&M experience, it is not a necessary aspect in the search for pleasure. What lies at the core of sadomasochism is the idea of control, not pain (Weinberg and Kamel 20).

There is a power struggle in Julia and Frank's relationship. In the quote below, it is clear that Frank has dominant qualities, while Julia adopts a submissive role.

She thought of Frank's embraces, of his *roughness*, his *hardness*, of the *insistence* he had brought to bear upon her. What would she not give to have such insistence again? Perhaps it was possible. (THBH 43, my italics – L. G.)

Then Barker shifts the roles of S&M play. Julia takes on the role of the dominant mistress, enslaving her “pet”, Frank.

And if it were - if she could give him the sustenance he needed - would he not be grateful? *Would he not be her pet, docile or brutal at her least whim?* (THBH 43, my italics – L. G.)

In the quote below, Barker uses S&M imagery to describe Frank's dependence on Julia, but also to describe Frank's own hell, in which the notions of pain and pleasure are inverted.

Well, here he was. They could save each other, the way the poets promised lovers should. He was mystery, he was darkness, he was all she had dreamed of. And if she would only free him *he would service her* - oh yes - until her *pleasure* reached that threshold that, like all thresholds, was a place where the strong grew stronger, and the weak perished. *Pleasure was pain there, and vice versa.* And he knew it well enough to call it home. (THBH 50 – 51, my italics on the S&M imagery – L. G.)

The quote above shows that Julia has power over Frank, who needs her in order to be freed from the sadomasochistic hell he is in. At the same time, it shows the power Frank has over Julia. Frank knows that the sad and frustrated Julia wants to rekindle their affair. He contemplates a way to use her to his own advantage, and will trick her into believing they belong together. If Julia provides more blood, Frank will give her sexual pleasure. In Barker's story, sex and death are linked. Barker explains that “the link between sex and death has always been part of the genre – the classic format being a monster holding a girl in his arms” (qtd. in Jones 12). In providing Frank with victims, Julia acts like a mother: “she had work to do here: blood to spill and a mouth to feed” (THBH 68). After her second murder, Julia touches Frank's skinless body for the first time. Here, Julia is feeling a sense of power and control over Frank. Julia not only acts as a mother on whom Frank relied for his rebirth, she also becomes the creator of a slave she owns.

She had *made* this man, or *remade* him; used her wit and her cunning to give him substance. The thrill she felt, touching this too vulnerable body, was the thrill of ownership. (THBH 76, my underlining – L. G.)

Frank literally assumes a slave position, kneeling before his mistress.

Then *he was kneeling in front of her*. His unfinished hands were at her hips, then his mouth. Forsaking the dregs of her distaste, *she put her hand upon his head, and felt the hair - silken, like a baby's -* and the shell of his skull beneath. He had learned nothing of delicacy since last he'd held her. But despair had taught her the fine art of squeezing blood from stones; with time she would have love from this hateful thing, or know the reason why. (THBH 77, my italics – L. G.)

I.3.2.5.1 WEDDING SYMBOLS

Barker contorts the role of the wedding dress as symbol of virginal purity and innocence.

The wedding dress is a marriage symbol, in the story it becomes more a symbol of an adulterous relationship. Julia and Frank have sex in the bridal bed. Beneath them is the wedding dress, crushed under their weight (THBH 86).

She'd left Kirsty to her list-making or suchlike, and *taken Frank upstairs on the pretext of showing him the wedding dress*. That was how she remembered it - that he'd asked to see the dress - and she'd put the veil on, *laughing to think of herself in white*, and then *he'd been at her shoulder, lifting the veil*, and she'd laughed on, laughed and laughed, as though to test the strength of his purpose. He had not been cooled by her mirth however; nor had he wasted time with the niceties of a seduction. The smooth exterior gave way to cruder stuff almost immediately. *Their coupling had had in every regard but the matter of her acquiescence, all the aggression and the joylessness of rape*. (THBH 27, my italics – L. G.)

In his book *Magical Symbols of Love and Romance*, Richard Webster says that it is believed that the bridal veil was traditionally worn to hide the bride's beauty from evil spirits who might try to steal her away (38). This meant that the veil could not be lifted until after the bridegroom and bride had been declared man and wife (Webster 38). Frank is the evil spirit who has lifted the wedding veil, seduced Julia and who would have stolen her away, if only to enjoy his short-lived pleasures, had she not been engaged to his brother.

In other circumstances he might have snatched her from under her would-be husband's nose, but fraternal politics counseled otherwise. In a week or two he would have tired of her, and been left not only with a woman whose body was already an eyesore to him, but also a vengeful brother on his heels. It hadn't been worth the hassle.

Julia's encounter with this evil spirit will be disastrous for the success of her marriage. The bridal bed, in which Julia's imminent marriage is to be consummated, becomes an adulterous bed. The images of the bridal bed and wedding dress return in Julia's flashbacks, in which she thinks of her lovemaking with Frank.

She knew too, with perfect certainty, when her grip had first faltered. *Lying on a bed of wedding lace*, while Frank beset her neck with kisses. (THBH 29, my italics – L. G.)

[...]

[S]he was lying on the bed with *her wedding dress crushed beneath her*, while a black and scarlet beast crept up between her legs to give her a sample of its love. (THBH 86, my italics – L. G.)

After Frank has taken Rory's skin, we get the impression he and Julia have had sex again.

The door was answered by Julia. In her hand, a length of white lace. (THBH 111)

[...]

She led Kirsty through to the dining room. Rory [Frank wearing Rory's skin] was sitting at the table; there was a glass of spirits at his hand, a bottle beside it. Laid across an adjacent chair was Julia's wedding dress. The sight of it prompted recognition of the lace swath in her hand: it was the bride's veil. (THBH 112)

In a sense, Julia is also a victim in the story. She is misguided by Frank, who "simply didn't care enough to keep what he had" (THBH 46).

I.3.2.6 FRANK – KIRSTY

Frank sees Kirsty for the first time when he is staring through a hole in the blind, observing the visitor to the house. His lustful feelings for Kirsty are immediately evident.

He had certainly set his eyes on more voluptuous creatures, but something about her lack of glamour engaged him. Such women were in his experience often more entertaining company than beauties like Julia. They could be flattered or bullied into acts the beauties would never countenance and be grateful for the attention. Perhaps she would come back, this woman. He hoped she would. (THBH 73)

Kirsty leaves the house, vexed by what she has seen:

She had little doubt of what was going on. The dripping raincoat, Julia's agitation - her flushed face, her sudden anger. She had a lover in the house. (THBH 72)

Seized by "a desire to know (to *see*) the mysteries the house held" (THBH 92), she decides to come back later and watch the house from a safe distance. When she hears a shout from within, she sneaks into the house to investigate what is going on. There she encounters Frank the

monster, who forcibly drags her into the damp room. The room is described as a womb/tomb, a sickening place of birth and resurrection.

Then she was being hauled into *the room from which the living and the dead had emerged. It smelled of soured milk and fresh meat.* When she was flung down the boards beneath her were *wet and warm.* Her belly wanted to turn inside out. She didn't fight the instinct, but retched up all that her stomach held. (THBH 95, my italics – L. G.)

Barker's domestic horror reminds us that the house is not a safe place, when Kirsty experiences the strange within the familiar.

Never - not even in her most witless fantasies - had she anticipated that the arena [of pursuit and assault] would be a room she had walked past a dozen times, in a house where she had been happy, while outside the day went on as ever, gray on gray. (THBH 96)

There are incestuous overtones in the way Frank advances Kirsty, even if the two are not related. Frank utters the incestuous invitation "Come to Daddy" (THBH 95). Then he "[closes] in on her, all pus and laughter, and – God help her – *desire*" (THBH 95), and touches her breast with "a vile finesse" (THBH 96). Frank tells her that "the agonies have to be endured" (THBH 97). As Kane points out, "he is referring to his time with the Cenobites, but also [to] the forbidden delight the pair of them could experience if only she'd stop struggling" (33). Near the end of the story, Frank pulls out a knife – that most phallic of symbols from many stalk and slash horror films – with which he aims to penetrate his victim. In *Hellraiser*, the incestuous overtones are even more obvious, as Frank is Kirsty's uncle.

CHAPTER TWO: SLASHER HORROR

II.1 INTRODUCTION

Horror films of the late '70s and '80s recognized the monster as a product of the dysfunctional family. '70s and '80s horror films dealing with domestic horror were commonly stalk and slash films. They depicted cannibals (*The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*) and stalking slasher killers (*A Nightmare on Elm Street*) who were mostly – as the name of the first slasher film, *Psycho*, already suggests - psychotic (*Friday the 13th*, *Halloween*). In her essay “Her Body, Himself: Gender in the Slasher Film”, Clover (1987) assumes that the slasher genre is typified by “a psycho killer who slashes to death a string of mostly female victims” (187). She concentrates on the phenomenon of what she calls the Final Girl. The Final Girl is the last girl (or woman) left alive to confront the killer in slasher horror. Slasher horror films all seem to about repressed male desire, in the form of the monster that kills teenage girls. As Clover puts it, the killer is “recognizably human and distinctly male; his fury is unmistakably sexual in both roots and expression; his victims are mostly women” (205). Several critics have pointed out the moralistic tone in slasher films, because the victims are mostly engaged in sex, or thinking about sex. According to Hutchings, it seems, however, that

the culpability of the victims lies not in their engaging in extramarital sex but rather in doing this when they should be guarding themselves against the killer. Ignorance, not sex, is the ‘sin’ that is being punished here. (93)

In this chapter, my aim is to show that *Hellraiser* has elements of the slasher film but does not follow the conventions of this genre.

II.2 THE KILLER

There are two killers in the story: Frank and Julia. Frank feeds off the victims Julia provides him, “his fingers entering the flesh either side of [their] neck vertebrae” (HR1 66). In these killings, there is no sexual fury as described by Clover, although the sexual connotation of the penetrating fingers is apparent. Near the end of the film we see Frank chasing his niece,

in an attempt to rape her. Here, Frank may represent repressed male desire, in the form of the stalking killer in Rory's skin.

However, Frank is not like the killers from slasher films. In slasher films, the principal villain is a serial killer. Hutchings noted that the serial killer, "the man who kills repeatedly, coldly, and with only minimal motivation" and "depopulate[s] [...] small towns, schools, and campsites" is "the "1980s monster par *excellence*" (91). Frank does indeed coldly kill a string of – not so innocent – married businessmen, but not with minimal motivation. His aim is not to punish them for their moral transgressions but to extract the blood from them in order to revive his body. He is not a killing machine that goes around chasing innocent people for their blood, even if he wants to be out there and have it all again.

The slasher killer, Hutchings notes, is "an altogether more anonymous, less individuated figure, his face – and by extension his mind – hidden by a mask" (92). Frank is unlike this mute, dispassionate type of killer. Frank only becomes the stalking monster when he and Kirsty meet, inside the house. When he chases Kirsty through the house, his attitude is that of a rapist. The book describes he has "vileness in mind" (THBH 97). His aim is penetration with his knife, or the more traditional penetration. Frank's desire involves a transgression of boundaries; he summons the supernatural to be able to indulge in pleasure beyond the limits. His character is in stark contrast with the slasher killer, who, as Hutchings pointed out, is "characterised by an absence of desire and feeling" (94).

The real killer in *Hellraiser* is not male, but female. Julia is the slasher killer who crushes her victims' skulls with a claw-hammer. In the book, Julia's weapon of choice is a knife.

She was already drawing the knife out, and plunging into him a second time, and now a third and a fourth. Indeed she lost count of the wounds she made, her attack lent venom by his refusal to lie down and die. (THBH 57)

In this case, the killer's only motive is to aid Frank's reconstruction, and not to punish adulterous men.

II.3 THE VICTIMS

The victims in slasher horror are typically innocent virgins who are about to engage in sex. Films depicting such victims are typically American, and have been made in the Puritan tradition in which these virgin victims are punished breaking the moral rules of society. In slasher horror, innocent boys and men, who get in the killer's way, also get murdered. The victims, lured to Julia's house on the promise of sex, are neither virginal, nor innocent. They are married men. The film is not about punishing them for their sins. Their deaths are just part of the plot.

II.4 THE FINAL GIRL

The Final Girl, the only (teenage) girl to survive, is typically a virginal girl, able to resist the vice of sexual desire. She symbolizes purity and moral strength. The first time we see Kirsty, she is portrayed as the typically innocent, virginal girl. She is depicted as virtuous and independent. Kane notes that she is "in soft focus, her face bathed in light like angel" (2006, 37). As the script says, she is "beautiful in an unpretentious way: a dream of a girl-next-door" (HR1 10). During the dream sequence, there are white feathers floating around her. The name Kirsty is Christ-like.

In his article "Hellraiser: Paranoid Knowledge and the Rhetorical Structure of the Splatterpunk Film," Douglas Sparks notes that

[t]he Final Girl, in contrast to the impotent or malicious adults around her, is constantly in tune with shifts in the state of the world and often perceives them before any of the other characters do. Kirsty, the Final Girl in *Hellraiser I and II*, is the only character able to perceive the evil nature of her stepmother, who has been seduced by Frank, her husband's undead brother who was sent to Hell after attempting to trick the Cenobites.

Sparks further demonstrates that the Final Girl is "consistently bland and nearly faceless" and that "[t]he faces of the Final Girls in *Friday the 13th*, *Halloween*, and other genre pictures are interchangeable". While I agree with the latter, I would argue that Kirsty is noticeably different

from the victim/heroine from previous slasher films, and for that reason not interchangeable with other Final Girls.

Sparks comments that the faceless, Final Girl is replaced in sequels. The Kirsty character does return in *Hellbound: Hellraiser II*. She is not merely virtuous. Firstly, the scene in which she wakes up from her nightmare (HR1 87) insinuates that she has slept with her boyfriend Steve. The Final Girl, Clover claims, is usually a “spunky enquirer into the terrible place” (qtd. in Kane 2006, 37), but never sexually active. Secondly, as Kane points out,

when Kirsty first arrives at the house on Lodovico Street, she sees statues of saints and Christ on the doorstep, cast out ready for Hell to enter. Her reaction is simply to smile, shrug, and walk in through the door. (37)

Thirdly, Kirsty’s behaviour is violent and calculated when she is threatened by danger. She swears, she literally fights off Frank’s advances, and negotiates with the Cenobites. Her appearance (dark haired, dressed in jeans) genders her as masculine. As a masculinised, sexually active figure, she transcends the stereotypical Final Girl as outlined by Clover.

The use of S&M elements is obvious when Kirsty is seeking revenge:

[S]he wasn’t frightened. [...] [S]he would have her revenge. She would find the thing that had torn her and tormented her, and make him feel the *powerlessness* which she had suffered. She would watch him squirm. More: she would *enjoy* it. *Pain* had made a *sadist* of her. (THBH 110, my italics – L. G.)

One could see *Hellraiser* as a slasher film, since it depicts slash and stalk killers and a Final Girl. Whether he meant to make a slasher film or just incorporate its main elements in his plot, Barker does not follow the rules of the slasher genre, as I have shown in this chapter. I believe he wanted to break these rules. In a discussion on censorship, held at The National Film Theatre in London back in 1988, Barker said

I’m no defender of stalk and slash as represented by *Friday the 13th* have sex and die pictures as they are aesthetically unattractive. (qtd. in A. Jones 12)

Doug Bradley, the actor who played the lead Cenobite, shares the same opinion as Barker.

Ever since then [1980, the time *Friday the 13th* came out], the majority of movies just seem to be about psychopaths slaughtering all-American teens. (qtd. in Nutman 1988, 38)

Bradley acknowledges the presence of slasher elements in *Hellraiser*. What sets *Hellraiser* apart from slasher films, he believes, is the introduction of the enigmatic Cenobites.

In a lot of ways, *Hellraiser* is of its time, and not of its time. It has elements of the slasher movie about it, but it is not that. It's principally not that, I think, because of the Cenobites, which brings in a whole other level to the film.⁵

The Cenobites will be part of the discussion in the following chapter.

⁵ "Under The Skin: Doug Bradley On Hellraiser." DVD featurette. Anchor Bay. 2004.

CHAPTER THREE: THE MONSTER

III.1 THE CENOBITES

III.1.1. INTRODUCTION

The Cenobites are interdimensional creatures or demons. “They are demons, true, but not in the typical sense of the word,” Kane explains (2006, 39). “They do not seek to bring about chaos; rather, theirs is an order of discipline” (Kane 2006, 39). They are described as “theologians of the Order of the Gash” (THBH 5). The term ‘gash’ already suggests that they are disfigured creatures. Frank is repulsed by their “corrugated flesh”, their “deformity” and their “self-evident frailty” (THBH 9).

The Cenobites are grotesque creatures. They are frightening to look at, yet they are fascinating. As the screenplay says,

[e]ach of them is horribly mutilated by systems of hooks and pins. The garments they wear are elaborately constructed to marry with their flesh, laced through skin in places, hooked into bone. The leader of this quartet has pins driven into his head at inch intervals. At his side, a woman whose neck is pinned open like a vivisection specimen. Accompanying them is a creature whose mouth is wired into a gaping rectangle - the exposed teeth sharpened to points, and a fat sweating monster whose eyes are covered by dark glasses.

Their peculiar power of attraction lies in what Barker has called their “repulsive glamour⁶”. The term ‘Cenobite’ is not a word Barker has invented. It dates back to the fifteenth century. *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary* defines a ‘cenobite’ as “a member of a religious group living together in a monastic community”. The term “theologian” also hints at their devoted manner in which they loyally obey their god Leviathan. The Cenobites are presented as enigmatic creatures. In terms of screen time, they are incidental characters. Their total screen time is seven minutes (Kane 2006, 40). The film provides virtually no information on the character of the lead demon. Bradley comments: “You never knew much about him, and that aspect gave the movie much of its mystique” (qtd. in Nutman 1989, 29). This character’s tale

⁶ “Resurrection.” *Hellraiser*. Dir. Clive Barker. New World Pictures, 1987. DVD featurette. Anchor Bay, 2004.

echoes the early scene in the film when Frank buys the Lament Configuration. In *Hellbound: Hellraiser II*, we learn that Pinhead was once a soldier.

He was an English army officer in an unspecified place and time, though roughly in the Far East in the late '20s or early '30s. He was a very pucker Englishman, a public school-type who went straight into the army. He felt terribly out of place and unfulfilled because he was only there through family tradition. So from his sterile viewpoint, what he hears of the Lament box is very appealing. I see him alone in his Nissen hut trying to solve the puzzle – which he obviously does, and is transformed into Pinhead. (Bradley qtd. in Nutman 1989, 67)

The Cenobites invoke feelings of disgust and fascination, but also of sympathy. There are plenty of examples of monsters that one can feel sympathy for in horror fiction. One example would be Frankenstein's monster. They are, however, rarely as cruel as the Cenobites. One reason we sympathize with these brutal monsters, is because they are also victims. In *Hellbound: Hellraiser II*, we learn that the Cenobites were once human. In a 1989 interview with *Fangoria*, Doug Bradley said that Pinhead is "a character who, like Macbeth, has allowed his ambitions to run away from reality. Consequently, there is a touch of the tragic about him" (qtd. in Nutman 1989, 29). In his book *Behind the Mask of the Horror Actor*, Bradley writes that there is a "tremendous sense of melancholy" in the character he played; a sense of perpetual mourning for his lost humanity.

[I felt] [a] perpetual, unconscious grieving for the man he had once been, for a life and a face he couldn't even remember. And a frozen grief. I felt now that Pinhead existed in an emotional limbo where neither pain nor pleasure could touch him. A pretty good definition of Hell for me. (229)

Another reason we can sympathize with the Cenobites, is that they have both good and evil halves. As Freeland points out

He is "one of us," a person who crossed over to the other side through temptation when he was bored and tired of living. His good half, Captain Spenser, describes himself as having been a lost soul who explored forbidden pleasures. The fact is, Pinhead is smart. He is just about the only person who has managed to get away with sin and enjoy the Hellish "life." He is also truthful, even insightful--not just an agent of evil but an informant about it. [...] [H]e both reveals and punishes human monsters or evildoers. (121)

III.1.2. INFLUENCES

In a 1998 interview with ‘Dark Culture’ magazine *Carpe Noctem*, Barker explained that the design of the Cenobites was inspired by the punk movement, by Catholicism and by S&M elements. With regard to the punk influence, Barker had following to say:

Pinhead was created at a time when London, where I was living, was awash with people who had piercings, usually of a fairly crude variety, long before piercing had become the art form that it is now, and you could go down to central London and Piccadilly Circus and see people with mohawks and safety pins through their faces; it was a crude aesthetic and perhaps more interesting because of that. (qtd. in Dery 23)

In the interview, the author expressed his interest in the phenomenon of body modification.

Barker has called Pinhead “the Patron Saint of Piercing⁷”. Barker seems to have a flesh fetish.

His work reflects his keen interest in the way people choose to do something with “the meat”.

In his words, “one of the ways we choose to reinvest our flesh with significance is by transforming it” (qtd. in Dery 23).

The influence of Catholicism is evident. The Lead Cenobite wears priestly clothes, and speaks like a priest. He even acts like a priest, moving slowly, and telling Kirsty to “make him [Frank] *confess* himself” (THBH 108, my italics – L. G.).

In the first chapter, I have already shown that the S&M imagery is present in the way Julia and Frank interact with each other. The S&M elements that inspired Barker reflect his own interest in a phenomenon that was still a taboo area when he wrote the story. The S&M overtones are also obvious in the way the Cenobites are depicted. Barker sees them as “somasochists from beyond the grave” (qtd. in Nutman Sept. 1987). The Cenobites are metaphors of somasochism – a “head [...] tattooed with an intricate grid, and at every intersection of horizontal and vertical axes a jewelled pin driven through to the bone” (THBH 8); “scars that covered every inch of their bodies; the flesh cosmetically punctured” (THBH 7). Sparks says they are an “aestheticization of pain”; human, sexual pleasure is nothing in

⁷ See Barker’s foreword to *The Hellraiser Chronicles*.

comparison with their pleasures of pain. As the novella says, “[y]our most treasured depravity is child’s play beside the experiences [they] offer” (THBH 10).

III.1.3 WHAT MAKES THEM UNIQUE?

Before *Hellraiser* came along, demons on film were either large horned creatures (as in *Curse of the Demon*) or evil entities that possessed little girls and made their heads spin (*The Exorcist*) (Kane 30). In a 1989 interview with *Amazing Heroes*, Barker expressed his dislike towards contemporary monsters of the genre. In the quote below, he describes that the Cenobites differ from horror icon Freddy Krueger, because of their ‘repulsive glamour’.

The problems I have are with people like Freddy Krueger. I mean, he's just ugly. He's an ugly fuck and that's the full sum of it. [...] I do think the best monsters, for me, are creatures [that] collide with both of those traits [ugliness and elegance]. I mean, the Cenobites are in a perverse sense very elegant. And yet, in their own way, they're rather gross and disgusting. That kind of combination is what makes them interesting to me. What worked with Pinhead was that the image was both very repulsive and attractive at the same time." (qtd. in Maddox)

The Cenobites were also different in the way they acted. Pinhead’s priestly, powerful discourse is unique, compared to other 1980s monsters. He speaks with an educated, British accent. In his foreword to *The Hellraiser Chronicles*, Barker writes that Pinhead is “a monster who knows his Milton as well as he knows his de Sade”. As I have said in the chapter on slasher horror, most of the monsters in films of the 1980s were mute. To use Barker’s own words, “[s]ome were given to peppering their murderous sprees with bad puns, like the post-Craven Krueger.” “Pinhead,” Barker maintains, glided through his movie appearances dispensing pseudo-metaphysical insights with as much enthusiasm as he did hooks and gouges”. In this sense, Pinhead relates to Christopher Lee’s incarnation of an articulate Dracula.

Pinhead is unique because he is an androgynous monster, “the first guy in a skirt who ever scared anybody,” as Barker likes to say (qtd. in Dery 23).

III.1.4 WHAT DO THEY REPRESENT?

According to Hutchings, the Cenobites symbolize the return of the past. He says

they are

associated with a disturbance of the contemporary world brought on by past events, the consequences of which have not been worked through by that world. This historical weight upon the present manifests itself in a cracking of the surface of reality – with [...] walls opening up to reveal previously unseen spaces, spaces which carry a historical charge and from which the monsters themselves emerge. (101)

If we consider the Freudian notion that the monster is a projection of repressed consciousness, the Cenobites may represent our darkest desires. They may also be metaphors for our deepest fears.

Chatterer, with those wires pulling back his lips, revealing gums and teeth, crystallizes a very real anxiety about being eaten, possibly alive. [...] Butterball represents fear about gluttony [...]. The stitches used on his flesh could be seen again as phobia about the medical profession and operations, which combines nicely with the terror of going blind when you realize his eyes are stitched shut under those sunglasses. The Female Cenobite's vaginal gash in her throat is clearly a representation of man's fear of female sexuality. [...] As for Pinhead himself, he represents the greatest fear of both men and women, that of being penetrated against our will. He has been violated by the nails, not once, but dozens of times. And they remain there as a constant reminder of his defilement. (Kane 2006, 43-44)

The Order of the Gash is connected with the Cotton family structure. As Kane says,

it could be argued that they [the Cenobites in the film] form a family unit of their own, with the lead Cenobite as father, Female Cenobite as mother, and Chatterer and Butterball as the two siblings – mirroring Frank and Larry.

The Cenobites come from a supernatural world, demonically attached to our own. Barker has said that “the monster is part of the texture of our internal workings” and “has to be made peace with” (qtd. in Floyd).

The Cenobites can be seen as metaphors for sadomasochism. Dery writes they are

a “religious community” (the Cenobites and their human acolytes) devoted to the pursuit of what Michel Foucault - himself a habitu of San Francisco's S&M scene - called “limit experiences,” where ecstasy and agony melt into one [...].

Barker himself has said that he has “brought back the notion that this is an area where you can examine the limits of what you find sexual and maybe expand those limits” (qtd. in Dery 21-22). The Cenobites are “explorers in the further regions of experience,” (HR1 78) providing

these 'limit experiences' of pain that has become pleasure. They are "[d]emons to some" (HR1 78). And they are "[a]ngels to others" (HR1 78) who are ready to transgress the limits.

The "magnificent super-butchers"⁸ represent the concept of evil. But are they really evil?

Bradley feels

Pinhead, in a lot of ways, [...] is like an impartial judge. He doesn't have an opinion, whether what people are doing is good or bad. He just sits there like the demonic empire of Wimbledon, and keeps score⁹.

In a 1989 *Fangoria* interview on the topic of the Pinhead character, Bradley claimed he felt less and less like he was playing a monster, even when tearing people apart with chains.

None of what they do is malicious. Pinhead is someone who plays very much by the rules: 'You opened the box, we came.' The Cenobites are impartial judges of what's happening. There's a strict set of rules by which they act." (qtd. in Nutman 1989, 31)

III.2 THE REAL MONSTERS

III.2.1 INTRODUCTION

Barker's story problematizes the question of who are the real monsters. Floyd believes we are torn between our sympathy for Frank and Julia and our

disorientation at being encouraged to identify with the forces of evil. Refused any single organizing moral point of view, [we are] kept continually off-balance. (qtd. in Badley 97)

Frank and Julia are the real sources of evil. Cynthia Freeland feels that

Pinhead's evil is instructively different: he offers people their due rewards, pain justly deserved for transgressive behavior. Pinhead sees himself as the Anti-Christ; he is a Lucifer with the role of punisher rather than seducer into sin. He is always defeated but "the box" that calls him survives, and so will human evil. (332)

Barker's story is about human evil, "called into the "normal world" by humans who seek this evil, for one reason or another, and through them it is unleashed upon our society" (Smith).

III.2.2 FRANK

Frank wants to "redefine the parameters of sensation," to release himself from "the dull

⁸ "Resurrection." *Hellraiser*. Dir. Clive Barker. New World Pictures, 1987. DVD featurette. Anchor Bay, 2004.

⁹ "Under the Skin: Doug Bradley On Hellraiser." *Hellraiser*. Dir. Clive Barker. New World Pictures, 1987. DVD featurette. Anchor Bay, 2004.

round of desire, seduction and disappointment that ha[s] dogged him from late adolescence” (THBH 6). He summons the Cenobites, “providers of private hells” (Badley 96), expecting the “splendours they had access to” (THBH 8). As he discovers, pleasure and pain are indivisible for the Cenobites. “[H]is real error [is] the naïve belief that his definition of pleasure significantly overlap[s] with that of the Cenobites,” the novella describes (THBH 48). Frank is offered an overpowering sensational experience. He experiences Roderick Usher’s overacuteness of the senses, taken to the extreme, until he feels “close to exploding”. When the torment comes to an end, his body is ripped apart. Frank is able to partially return thanks to his dead sperm on the floorboards - “a meager keepsake of his essential self” (THBH 50) – and Rory’s blood spilt on the floor. In *Hellraiser*, Frank’s body is reconstructed from beneath the floorboards in a hideous resurrection scene. The beating heart beneath the floorboards of the attic is an image that reminds us of Poe’s *The Tell-Tale Heart*. Julia agrees to provide victims, so that Frank can revive his body.

Frank is referred to as “spirit” (THBH 58), “the beast” (THBH 93), “the thing” (THBH 94), but also explicitly as “monster” (THBH 93). Rory’s opinion about his brother suggests that Frank was already a monster before his stay in Hell. When she meets Frank two weeks before the wedding, Julia’s first impression is that “[t]here was little outward sign of the monster Rory had described” (THBH 27). After his resurrection, Frank is devoid of skin. When Julia sees him for the first time in this condition, she has to look away, because he “was a travesty. Not just of humanity, of life” (THBH 70). As Stefan Gullatz points out, Frank has been “demonized’ by his stay in hell and thus persists in an uncanny state 'between-two-deaths’”.

Frank is a hedonist. He is a “character who tastes early delights beyond his wildest imaginings but loses his soul in the process” (Dery 20). His character may metaphorically represent the unfortunate situation of gay men. Barker publicly revealed his homosexuality in 1995. In the same year, he said:

If we [gay men] have nothing to do but service our own pleasure - because society has taught us that's all we're worth and we're exiled from positions of authority from which we could actually shape society - then we just become hedonists. Eventually, despite how great it may look on Saturday night, come Monday morning there's just purposelessness. (qtd. in Isherwood)

Frank also represents a kind of vampire. In the novella, Frank is able to feed from an already dead victim, while he is still lingering in the wall.

It [the corpse] was being drained of every nutritious element, the body convulsing as its innards were sucked out, gases moaning in its bowels and throat, the skin desiccating in front of her startled eyes.

In the film, he penetrates his victims using his fingers to drain energy from them. Frank's dependence on the use of blood as a restorative is a nod towards the vampire mythology. Frank 'sucks' his victims dry of blood and of life to regenerate and restore his own broken body.

III.2.3 Julia

Julia agrees to bring victims to the house for Frank. The victims are described as sacrificial lambs:

'I'll lead,' she said. Meekly, he followed. (THBH 55)

[...]

He was trembling, poor lamb. Poor, bleatless lamb. (THBH 56)

Barker has been quoted as saying that Julia is the "Lady Macbeth" of the story (qtd. in Floyd).

In the film, we see she gets happier and more beautiful after each murder. We dislike her; she is the cold, wicked stepmother who commits murder. With Frank, however, Julia is portrayed as the loving mistress. Actually, she is also a victim, seduced by Frank and following her heart's desire. As Barker has said, "she's not committing murder in the way that Jason is in the Friday the 13th films commits murder - just for the sake of blood-letting - she's doing it for love. So there is a sympathetic quality about her" (qtd. in Floyd). Julia, "all passion consumed," (THBH 117) is accidentally stabbed by Frank, who "scarcely seemed to notice" as his eyes, "sh[ining] with horrendous appetite," were "on Kirsty once again" (THBH 118). Julia, appealing for help, receives the kiss of death, figuratively and literally.

Julia's appeals for help had diverted him [Frank] to where she lay, halfway between stairs and front door. He drew the knife from her side. She cried out in pain, and, as if to assist her, he went down on his haunches beside her body. She raised her arm to him, looking for tenderness. In response, he cupped his hand beneath her head, and drew her up toward him. As their faces came within inches of each other, Julia seemed to realize that Frank's intentions were far from honourable. She opened her mouth to scream, but he sealed her lips with his and began to feed.

At the end of the novella, Julia is the forsaken, blood-spattered bride. She is wearing her wedding dress, which emphasizes the mistakes she has made.

And there, in the middle of this domestic wasteland, sat a bride. By some extraordinary act of will, Julia had managed to put her wedding dress on, and secure her veil upon her head. Now she sat in the dirt, the dress besmirched. But she looked radiant nevertheless, more beautiful, indeed, for the fact of the ruin that surrounded her. (THBH 126)

In *Hellbound: Hellraiser II*, it is Julia who returns from the dead, and Channard who supplies her with victims.

Chapter Four: Deals with the Devil

IV.1 INTRODUCTION

When Barker's *Books of blood* were published in 1984, they had an enormous impact on the horror fiction scene, causing Stephen King to proclaim Barker at that year's World Fantasy Convention 'The Future of Horror'. The collection of stories contained monsters, humour and excessive gore. The *Books of Blood* also contained some of the seeds for *Hellraiser*. For instance, in *Midnight Meat Train* we get a series of brutal murders (just like Julia commits), in *The Forbidden* we are given an example of love stretching beyond death (like Julia and Frank's), then we have the appearance of demons in *The Yattering and Jack* as well as *Hell's Event*. But it was *The Inhuman Condition* with its knot puzzle opening a doorway to another dimension, and *In the Flesh*, which gives us a glimpse of realities existing alongside our own, that paved the way of delights to come.

Even more telling was Barker's first horror novel *The Damnation Game*, which drew upon one of his favourite stories: Christopher Marlowe's version of *The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus*. As Barker explains:

It was the idea of a man who wants more than life is able to give him; and in reaching, falls. In Goethe's version of *Faust* he's redeemed, but in Marlowe's version he's damned, he's torn to pieces – literally. At the end of Marlowe's version, the pieces of Faust's body are picked up from around the stage. (qtd. in Kane 2008, 30)

This proved to be the basic concept for the novella which *Hellraiser* started out as, *The Hellbound Heart*. Originally published in 1986 as part of the *Night Visions 3* anthology, this formed the skeleton for the screenplay of Barker's film.

Hell, I point out in *The Damnation Game*, is reimagined by each generation. So are the pacts and the pactmakers. But the story will survive any and all reworkings, however radical, because its roots are so strong. (Barker 1988)

At the heart of *Hellraiser* is the Faustian deal with the devil. The first few seconds of the film show a deal being made, Frank Cotton handing over money for the puzzle box that he thinks will bring him pleasures beyond this world.

IV.2 THE BOX

The box is called Lemarchand's box (THBH 46). It is a means for "those who had exhausted the trivial delights of the human condition" to "discover a fresh definition of joy," "a route to [...] paradise (THBH 46). The novella describes there are several of these "charts of the interface between the real and the realer still".

One such chart was in the vaults of the Vatican, hidden in code in a theological work unread since the Reformation. Another - in the form of an origami exercise, was reported to have been in the possession of the Marquis de Sade, who used it, while imprisoned in the Bastille, to barter with a guard for paper on which to write *The 120 Days of Sodom*. Yet another was made by a craftsman - a maker of singing birds - called Lemarchand, in the form of a musical box of such elaborate design a man might toy with it half a lifetime and never get inside. (THBH 46-47)

In the novella, Frank buys Lemarchand's device from a person named Kircher, who gives Frank instructions - "part pragmatic, part metaphysical" - to solve the box (THBH 47).

The box is a sublime, uncanny, Gothic object. It is a sublime object because the 'traveller' is fascinated by it, and consequently has a desire to open it. In the opening page of the novella, Frank is trying to solve the puzzle of Lemarchand's box. Here, the box is described as a sublime object.

[T]here simply seemed to be no way into it, no clue on any of its six black lacquered faces as to the whereabouts of the pressure points that would disengage one piece of this three-dimensional jigsaw from another. [...] Lemarchand, who had been in his time a maker of singing birds, had constructed the box so that opening it tripped a musical mechanism, which began to tinkle a short rondo of sublime banality. Encouraged by his success, Frank proceeded to work on the box feverishly, quickly finding fresh alignments of fluted slot and oiled peg which in their turn revealed further intricacies. And with each solution - each new half twist or pull - a further melodic element was brought into play - the tune counterpointed and developed until the initial caprice was all but lost in ornamentation. (THBH 3)

The puzzle box is described as a sublime object again when Kirsty, in the hospital, is trying to solve it.

A click, and suddenly one of the compartments was sliding out from beside its lacquered neighbours. Within, there was beauty. Polished surfaces which scintillated like the finest mother-of-pearl, coloured shadows seeming to move in the gloss. And there was music too; a simple tune emerged from the box, played on a mechanism that she could not yet see. Enchanted, she delved further. Though one piece had been removed, the rest did not come readily. Each segment presented a fresh challenge to fingers and mind, the victories rewarded with a further filigree added to the tune. (THBH 105)

The box is a puzzle. It requires the desire of someone to work at it in order to unlock its secrets (Smith)

Lemarchand's box is an uncanny object. It is not just a box, it is a puzzle that has the power to open a portal to another dimension, to a parallel world where the Cenobites reside. "To solve the puzzle is to travel," Kircher had said (THBH 47). The box "[is] not just the map of the road, but the road itself" (THBH 47). The box "contain[s] wonders" (THBH 3). It is a means to summon the Order of the Gash "from their experiments in the higher reaches of pleasure" (THBH 5). The road to pleasure is of course a road to suffering, as humans understand it.

Lemarchand's configuration is a Gothic object that may have several meanings. With regard to the Gothic object, Lloyd-Smith has said the following:

There is the suggestion of an occultist tradition in which certain objects may have unnatural powers; or alternatively there is a foretaste of a phenomenological encounter with the otherness of things in the world [...]. (73)

In Barker's story, the box is an object that has unnatural powers. "The box is a means to break the surface of the real," one of the Cenobites says (THBH 106). The Cenobites represent Otherness. Upon solving the box, one opens the doorway to Hell. Solving the box means making a deal with the Cenobites. There is "[n]o way to seal the Schism, until [they] take what's [theirs]" (THBH 106). In the film, Lemarchand's configuration is also called "the Lament Configuration" (HR1 2). A lament is "a nonnarrative poem expressing deep grief or sorrow over a personal loss" (Encyclopedia Britannica Online). In this way, the name 'Lament Configuration' is fitting, for it represents "the repeated tale of the destruction of the human soul at the hands of the servants of Hell" (Smith).

As Smith points out in his mythic analysis of *Hellraiser*, “[t]he tale of people stumbling onto an object that is a gateway to another dimension [...] was pioneered by pulp horror-fiction writer H. P. Lovecraft in the 1920's and 30's.” “Like the *Hellraiser* mythos,” Smith maintains, “individuals in the Lovecraftian mythos often knew little of the actual rewards or consequences of the rites they would perform.” The use of a box that unleashes evil on mankind can be traced back to Greek mythology. In Greek mythology, Pandora

had a jar which she was not to open under any circumstance. Impelled by her natural curiosity, Pandora opened the jar, and all evil contained escaped and spread over the earth. (Encyclopedia Mythica)

In the same way, Barker, just as Lovecraft, provided the characters in his story a means to both satisfy their curiosity and loose evil upon mankind.

IV.3. FRANK

Frank is bored with life. For him, life must be lived from one sensation to the next. He wants to go to the limits, and seeks ultimate physical pleasure. He wishes “[t]o experience beyond anything ever known” (HR1 101). Frank has heard the Cenobites can supply this kind of pleasure. He solves the puzzle box, prepared to pay the price and make a deal with the Cenobites.

He had turned his back on such dissatisfaction. If in doing so he had to interpret the signs these creatures brought him, *then that was the price of ambition. He was ready to pay it.* “Show me,” he said.
“There's no going back. You do understand that?”
“Show me.” (THBH 11, my italics – L. G.)

His bargain is Faustian in its nature. In exchange for himself, the Cenobites provide him the ultimate pleasure. The deal is a “mistaken marriage”, there is no pleasure, the demons only offer “pain without hope of release” (THBH 49).

The pleasure Frank seeks is the ultimate sexual experience in lust.

He had thought they would come with women, at least; oiled women, milked women; women shaved and muscled for the act of love: their lips perfumed, their thighs trembling to spread, their buttocks weighty, the way he liked them. He had expected sighs, and languid bodies spread on the floor underfoot like a living carpet; had expected

virgin whores whose every crevice was his for the asking and whose skills would press him - upward, upward – to undreamed-of ecstasies. The world would be forgotten in their arms. He would be exalted by his lust, instead of despised for it. (THBH 8-9)

Barker incorporates the emotional power of sexuality in his story, something which was often lacking in contemporary horror.

I want it to be what it is in Jacobean drama - a raw, dangerous, powerful force which influences our actions, makes us irrational, takes Apollo out of our lives and puts in Dionysus. It's very, very important for our health that we have that. The way that people are drawn to the emotional power that sexuality has, is a major part of how my characters proceed through their dramas; it's not the only driving force, but it is a driving force because it's *tied to a desire for revelation*, and *sexual revelation* is a necessary part of any revelation. (Barker, qtd. in Dery 22, my italics – L. G.)

Frank's desire is sexual revelation:

He had anticipated this moment [the arrival of the Cenobites] so keenly; planned with every wit he possessed this *rending of the veil*. [...] There was no time left for prevarication or regret. Besides, hadn't he risked both life and sanity to make this *unveiling* possible? (THBH 5, my italics – L. G.)

Frank wishes to transgress the boundaries of pleasure, to go to, and beyond, the limits of sensuality and sexual experience. At the end of the novel, when the Cenobites have their hooks in him, Frank is "*in extremis*." This term means "at the point of death" (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary). Frank's body is now in the 'furthest regions of experience', as the Cenobites would call it.

He was *in extremis*; hooked through in a dozen or more places, fresh wounds gouged in him even as she watched. Spreadeagled beneath the solitary bulb, body hauled to the limits of its endurance and beyond, he gave vent to shrieks that would have won pity from her [Kirsty], had she not learned better. [...] Then he came unsewn. (THBH 125, my underlining – L. G.)

IV.4 JULIA

Julia's desire is tabooed desire. She wants to have her brother-in-law as a lover. Julia makes a bargain with Frank the monster. If she lures men to the house to feed him, Frank will stay with Julia, or so he has her believe. Julia wants Frank back; she is aware that she is the adulterous wife. The relationship between her and Frank, Kane says, is "a warped bonding of a skinless man and a murderess. But just as pleasure and pain are indivisible for the Cenobites,

so, too, are love and desire for Julia and Frank” (2006, 29). Her pact with Rory is a loveless marriage (Kane 2006, 29). Her deal with the monster Frank might provide Julia sexual pleasure, but it also forces her to commit murder and will lead to her own death (Kane 2006, 29). Julia’s desire is first described in the novella as an “unquenchable curiosity” concerning her husband’s brother.

Was it the tone of Rory's telling, a mixture of revulsion and envy, that had so piqued Julia's curiosity? Whatever the reason, she had been quickly seized by an unquenchable curiosity concerning this madman. (THBH 26)

In *Hellbound: Hellraiser II*, Julia makes a bargain with the god Leviathan, in the depths of Hell. After forcing Channard into the Cenobite creation chamber, she says:

Why do you think I was allowed to go back? For YOU?
No, it wanted souls. And I brought you. (HR2 67)

IV.5 KIRSTY

In the hospital, Kirsty opens the puzzle box. Unlike Frank, however, she has not consciously summoned the Cenobites. She opened the box in ignorance. Despite her ignorance, the deal is that she must accompany the Cenobites she has invoked. She counters this with a deal of her own, offering the Cenobites Frank in exchange for herself.

“Frank Cotton,” she said. “Does the name mean anything to you? Frank Cotton.”
The Cenobite smiled.
“Oh yes. We know Frank.”
“He solved the box too, am I right?”
“He wanted pleasure, until we gave it to him. Then he squirmed.”
“If I took you to him...”
“He’s alive then?”
“Very much alive.”
“And you’re proposing what? That I take him back instead of you?” (THBH 108)

The Cenobites agree to the new bargain, but they also close their end of the deal with a threat (Kane 2006, 31). If Kirsty is “trying to squirm [her] way out of this,” they will tear her soul apart (THBH 108).

Kirsty’ is curious to open the box. Despite her ignorance of what mysteries the box holds, she examines the box with curiosity and fascination. Kirsty is intrigued by an object that gives

access to forbidden pleasures. It is as if she subconsciously summons the demons who provide pleasure. In this sense, her fiddling with the box can be seen as a reference to masturbation.

Female Cenobite:

Didn't open the box? And what was it last time? Didn't know what the box was. And yet we still keep finding each other, don't we?

[...]

Pinhead:

Oh, Kirsty; so *eager to play*, so *reluctant to admit it*. (HR2 56)

IV.6 CHANNARD

Hellbound: Hellraiser II focuses on Dr. Channard, a psychiatrist and neurosurgeon who runs the Channard Institute. Channard has a lust for knowledge. For him, the mind is everything. He believes that “the mind is a labyrinth” and is obsessed with “going further... tread[ing] the unexplored corridors in the hope of finding, ultimately, the final solution.” Channard demonstrates a desire for power, power over the human mind, through knowledge. As Sparks points out, “Channard is concerned with not merely understanding secrets but somehow getting through to and controlling the shadow world of forbidden knowledge.” In the original script, the doctor was named Malahide. Barker changed the name to Channard, after Dr. Christian Barnard, the first surgeon to perform a heart transplant (Kane 2006, 57). Barker also changed the original speech that Malahid (Channard) makes, to show the link between the labyrinthine recesses of the human mind and Hell's labyrinth. The rewritten speech goes:

[while operating a brain in front of a crowd of students] The mind is a labyrinth, ladies and gentlemen, a puzzle. And while the paths of the brain are plainly visible, its ways deceptively apparent, its destinations are unknown. Its secrets still secret. And, if we are honest, it is the lure of the labyrinth that draws us to our chosen field to unlock those secrets. Others have been here before us and have left us signs, but we, as explorers of the mind, must devote our lives and energies to going further to tread the unknown corridors in order to find ultimately, the final solution. We have to see, we have to know...¹⁰

As Kane says, “[i]t prefigures beautifully the unseen and unexplored corridors he will soon be venturing down in Hell” (2006, 70). Hell's labyrinth is meant as a visual representation of the

¹⁰ See *Hellbound: Hellraiser II*. Dir. Tony Randel. New World Pictures, 1988.

inner workings of the human mind (Smith). Channard want “to see”, he wants “to know” the true nature of the labyrinth. He does not know that his destination is the real labyrinth, of Hell.

Knowing that Julia has seen the Underworld, Channard brings her back from the other side. Julia emerges as a skinless monster from the mattress on which she died at the end of the first film. Channard provides her with bodies from his underground cells. Julia uses Channard to make her whole again, to provide her with skin, which is reminiscent of Frank’s actions in *Hellraiser*. The pact Channard makes with Julia is for her to be his guide on the journey to the outer regions of mental experience. Just like Frank before him, Channard gets much more than he bargained for. In fact, Julia is giving Channard what he always wanted. As Kane says, “[h]is own evil, manipulative nature is given an outlet in Hell and he can be the creature he always wanted to be – powerful, sadistic, unstoppable” (Kane 2006, 69). Julia forces Channard into the Cenobitization chamber. When he steps out, transformed into a Cenobite, he says himself: “To think I hesitated.”

The character of Dr. Channard has obviously been inspired by Marlowe’s Dr. Faustus. Both characters want to seek secret knowledge. Other obvious sources of inspiration are Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* and Robert Louis Stevenson’s Dr. Jekyll, both characters from books that Barker read as a child (Kane 2006, 77). Channard, just like Dr. Victor Frankenstein, is a ‘mad scientist’ who ‘creates’ the monster Julia by letting a patient slash himself open on her mattress. In the Cenobite creation chamber, Channard is transformed into a monster. But just like Jekyll, Channard is not able to control the monster that he has become. His end comes not through suicide, but because the power he held went to his head, which he ends up losing.

CHAPTER FIVE: BODY HORROR

V.1 INTRODUCTION

With his *Books of Blood*, Barker renewed the horror genre with a formula called Splatterpunk. According to Hoppenstand, Splatterpunk “blended a postmodern cultural rebellion against authority – as also seen in punk rock music of the early 1980s music in England – with a visceral and graphic depiction of violence” (408). Barker’s visceral horror made him famous. Splatterpunk is characterized by excess, graphic horror, ultraviolence. The tone is realistic and graphic, and the characters are marginalized, alienated anti-heroes. “Splatterpunks (derived from the term *cyberpunk* by David Schow in 1986),” Linda Badley claims, “drew their hard-boiled attitude, driving prose rhythms, and violent situations from heavy-metal, cyberfiction, and horror movies (2). The purpose of splatter prose was “revelation in the flesh” (Badley 2). This revelation in the flesh is also felt in *The Hellbound Heart*.

Wisker writes that body horror expresses fear of the body and the bodily functions (178). Barker’s fear has always been “the condition of being flesh and blood. Of minds to madness and flesh to wounding” (qtd. in Badley 7). His kind of horror plays on the fear of one’s body, and the vulnerability of our bodies. In *The Hellbound Heart*, the Cenobites represent bodily functions.

Their disfigurements call to mind basic physical human functions: the chattering Cenobite brings to mind involuntary processes like shivering and laughing the portly Cenobite reminds of our own physical hunger, the female Cenobite has a large vaginal gash in her throat [...], and the lead Cenobite is studded with pins in a grotesquely literal pastiche of sexual penetration.” (Collins 4)

Barker, however, defamiliarizes splatter conventions (Badley 97-98). There is no gore for gore’s sake. He emphasizes the body as a body in process, a body that undergoes transformation. Barker has said that he celebrates these “rearrangements of the flesh” (qtd. in Badley 98). He describes the body as “sitting together, growing old; our flesh minutely changing outside our control; our bodies responding to the alcohol we’re taking in; our organs,

for all we know, growing tumorous. The flesh can decide to get sick, to get upset, to make us desire (qtd. in Badley 98). To the Cenobites, our bodies are weak, frail, corrupt, unreliable and very mortal. Their way offers an exciting alternative to mortality if you know how to solve the puzzle box correctly. Each Cenobite has had their “flesh cosmetically punctured and sliced and infibulated” in some way (THBH 7). Barker’s work involves the human form being transfigured. Body modification is an allegory for the fear of transformation, which is a common theme in horror.

V.2 CENOBITIZATION

“Within the [Cenobite creation] chambers, flesh is removed and restructured, body parts taken apart and re-ordered,” the *Hellraiser* Comics Bible describes (Chichester 7). Here, Barker plays on our morbid fascination for body modification. The reshaping, refashioning and remoulding of flesh to maintain beauty, youthfulness and sensuality and ultimately, leading towards perfection and immortality is not a modern phenomena, but it reached endemic proportions in the twilight years of the twentieth century. The Cenobites are configured by the metaphysical hand of Leviathan. The restructuring of flesh goes together with the acquirement of a new mental function. As Collins says,

the physical mutilations and transformations in *Hellraiser* and *Hellbound* allow characters to reach new and unexplored truths within their mental makeup. As we see in the two ‘Cenobite making’ sequences in *Hellbound*, the destruction and transformation of the flesh appears to unleash the true nature of the mind contained within. [...] Pinhead can now directly apply the order and discipline of the British Army to the violent rending of wayward souls; Channard can apply the tools he once used to unravel the mysteries of the brain to unravel the brain, period. The newfound freedom of their flesh to mutate and be altered manifests itself in a freedom of the mind to act in a new, purer way. (6)

Or as Smith says,

[e]ach is given power by Leviathan that amplifies the evil intent or desire already inherent in the soul of the individual selected, and that person's outward appearance is also altered to more closely match that which is now found within.

Barker defamiliarizes our notion of the Cartesian mind/body split. The idea of a new flesh and an enhanced mental makeup was inspired by David Cronenberg’s work.

He [David Cronenberg] can show bizarre and often hideous changes that affect the body in graphic detail, but he can also attempt to convey more intangible features of the new flesh, such as its altered powers of perception or of emotional expression. (Freeland 63)

V.3 SKINLESSNESS

Barker seems to have a flesh fetish. The concept of flesh without skin, raw and unprotected; of a stripped, supersensitive state, haunts Barker's work with the enduring images in the *Hellraiser* pictures of the skinless, cigarette-smoking Frank and a skinless, seductive Julia defying popular convention that a walking corpse could only be distasteful rather than deeply erotic. Barker's concept of skinlessness can be seen as tearing away a veil.

The kind of horror I write is primarily interested in tearing away the veil. Confrontation, seen clearly. I'm trying to see what the wound means. And the only way... is to look at the wound" (qtd. in Badley 75).

Barker's subversive horror literally looks beneath the surface. The importance of what lies beneath the surface of things is symbolized by skinlessness. In my chapter on domestic horror, I have shown that the familiar is revealed to be deceptive. The deceptive nature of things is obvious when Barker uses the double motif. Frank is "the thing in Rory's face" (THBH 115). Skinlessness can also represent the postmodern notion of "fluidity of identity": "a body being freed by the removal of its misleading packaging" (Jordan). As the narrator in the novella comments, a skin is just a shell:

A skin was nothing. Pigs had skins; snakes had skins. They were knitted of dead cells, shed and grown and shed again. (THBH 122)

According to Fred Burke, Barker must have been a witness to autopsies. "[H]e has to have been there. I can't imagine any other way to have that sort of grim knowledge of the human body" (qtd. in Nutman 1989 25). In fact, it was a sixteenth-century book on anatomy, written by Andreas Vesalius, *De Humani Corporis Fabrica*, that had influenced Barker (Kane 2008, 30).

CONCLUSION

By considering different topics in each chapter, I hope to have shown the reader of this dissertation the diversity of Barker's *Hellraiser* mythology.

In the first chapter I have shown that Barker is not unique in using the house as the setting for a family horror story. Barker does, however, bring horror into 55 Lodovico Street via internal threats in the family. Here he deviates from what he calls bourgeois horror, domestic horror in which the monster must be cast out. The invading monsters are part of the characters, for they represent their deepest desires and darkest fears. In writing a story about human interaction, the human heart and its perverse pleasures, Barker is breaking the rules of what domestic horror can do. Barker uses the Uncanny to describe the internal threats. Not the place, but the characters are haunted. By a hedonistic hunger, by erotic forbidden fulfilment. I have shown that Barker's story is put in a Gothic setting. I have pointed out the power relationship between Frank and Julia, Kirsty's Electra complex and the incestuous overtones in the way Frank approaches Kirsty.

In the second chapter, I have shown that *Hellraiser* uses elements from the slasher film, without actually being this kind of film. I have shown that the slasher killer, the victim and the Final Girl are significantly different. Barker is breaking the rules of the slasher genre.

With regard to the motif of the monster, I have shown that Barker's Cenobites are unique in the genre. I have discussed their influences from S&M, Catholicism and the punk movement. The Cenobites are different from other contemporary monsters in the way they look and act. The Cenobites were once human, and Barker subverts our notions of good and evil. This invokes feelings of sympathy toward the demons. Barker's story is about human evil. The horror is rooted in human desire. Frank and Julia are the real monsters, although we may feel sympathy for them.

In the fourth chapter, I have shown that Barker's theme of the Faustian pact has its roots in literature. Barker re-tells the myths of Faustus and Pandora's box for his story about tormented souls. I have also discussed the pact-makers in the story.

In the final chapter, I have shown how Barker's story relates to the theme of body horror. Barker defamiliarizes Splatterpunk conventions by depicting the body as the source of painful pleasure, the body in transformation, and more importantly, the body without its skin.

Barker wants to break the rules of the genre. As the tag line of *Hellraiser* says, "there are no limits." Barker uses the conventions of horror, but at the same time he plays against stereotype. Barker wants to transgress. The damp room involves finding the limits of experience. The body and desire are pushed to the limits. The Cenobites transgress boundaries to in their search for pleasure. In closing, I would like to use a quote from Barker. The quote demonstrates Barker's use of imagination to go beyond the limits.

I want to be remembered as an imaginer, someone who used his imagination as a way to journey beyond the limits of self, beyond the limits of flesh and blood, beyond the limits of even perhaps life itself, in order to discover some sense of order in what appears to be a disordered universe. I'm using my imagination to find meaning, both for myself and, I hope, for my readers.¹¹

¹¹ Unknown. "People Online Appearance." 1998. Web. 7 Aug. 2009.
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