



Barker, Clive (b. 1952)

by Craig Kaczorowski

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Clive Barker is perhaps best known as the writer and director of the modern classic horror film *Hellraiser* (1987), which spawned multiple sequels, and as the executive producer of the Oscar-winning film *Gods and Monsters* (1999), based on the Christopher Bram novel *Father of Frankenstein* (1995), about gay film director James Whale. However, Barker is also a prolific fiction writer, actor, playwright, painter, and illustrator, as well as a developer of comic books and computer games.

Barker's work often features gay, straight, and lesbian characters. While Barker commands a particularly loyal gay reading audience, to date he has had little success in placing positive gay characters into the world of his horror films.

Born in Liverpool, England, on October 5, 1952, the son of an Italian mother and Irish father, Barker moved to London at the age of 21. He became the founder, playwright, and director of a small theater group there.

When not working at the theater, Barker began writing short horror stories. These stories were eventually published as a three volume set entitled *The Books of Blood* (1984 and 1985), which brought him international fame at the age of 32 and inspired Stephen King to declare him "the future of horror."

The success of Barker's stories enabled him to begin writing and directing horror films. He debuted as a director in 1987 with *Hellraiser*, which was based on one of his novellas and featured a character popularly known as "Pinhead"--a needle-pierced demon. Barker went on to produce three sequels, *Hellbound: Hellraiser II* (1988); *Hellraiser III: Hell on Earth* (1992); and *Bloodline: Hellraiser IV* (1996).

He also produced the horror film *Candyman* (1992) and its sequel, *Candyman II: Farewell to the Flesh* (1995). Other, somewhat less successful films Barker worked on include *Rawhead Rex* (1986), *Nightbreed* (1990), and *Lord of Illusions* (1995).

He has also produced several made for television movies, some of which have been based on his stories, and has written others.

Barker is also the author of over a dozen novels. His early works in the genres of horror and suspense include such titles as *Weaveworld* (1987), *Cabal* (1989), and *Imajica* (1991). More recently, Barker has moved towards writing fantasy fiction, such as *Abarat* (2002).

In 1992, he wrote and illustrated *The Thief of Always*. Although marketed as a fable for all ages, *Thief* is really a children's book. Its hero is ten years old and the story, about the boy's visit to a land where each season passes in one day, is conveyed in simpler prose than that of Barker's adult books.

His later novels *Sacrament* (1996) and *Galilee* (1998) consider issues closer to Barker's life--gay sexuality,



A portrait of Clive Barker by Stathis Orphanos. Courtesy Stathis Orphanos. Image copyright © Stathis Orphanos. All Rights Reserved.

love, and the purpose of art.

Coldheart Canyon, published in 2001, distills motifs from nearly all of Barker's earlier writings. The novel's sophisticated merging of the fantastic and the real, as well as its central device--a room of painted tiles that come alive, luring mortals into the hell they depict--echo themes explored by Barker in his works of the late 1980s and early 1990s, books that sealed Barker's reputation as a writer of remarkable imagination.

Barker has also been the creative force behind a series of comic books published by Marvel Comics. His dark fantasy comics include *Razorline*, *Ectokid*, *Saint Sinner*, and *Hokum & Hex*, each of which debuted in 1993.

Barker currently resides in Los Angeles, with his lover, the photographer David Armstrong.

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About the Author

Craig Kaczorowski writes extensively on media, culture, and the arts. He holds an M.A. in English Language and Literature, with a focus on contemporary critical theory, from the University of Chicago. He comments on national media trends for two newspaper industry magazines.