

# Hub Magazine

SCIENCE FICTION HORROR FANTASY

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## EDITORIAL:

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by lee harris

SFX Magazine recently reached issue 200 - an astonishing accomplishment these days, when so many magazines seem to be making the move to online-only. Hub Magazine would like to wish Dave Bradley and his team of merry SFXers our hearty congratulations on a job well done!

In related news, a new SF Magazine has just started up online. This is not generally worthy of news, as this appears to happen on an hourly basis. What is noteworthy, however, is that Salon Futura is owned and managed by three-time Hugo Award-winner, Cheryl Morgan, so we're putting our money on it being one of the few that continue and thrive. Read (and watch) issue 1, here: [www.salonfutura.net](http://www.salonfutura.net)

And lastly, Hub Magazine is moving further into the digital age, with our first-ever podcast serial - *Marco and the Red Granny*. See our website for more info: [www.hubfiction.com](http://www.hubfiction.com)

Written by the mighty Mur Lafferty, and narrated by Devo Spice, with an introduction by our very own Alasdair Stuart, we're convinced you're going to enjoy it. So much so, we're presenting it free of charge, with contributions to the tip jar encouraged. If you like what you hear, feel free to drop a virtual coin or two into the pot at [REDGRANNY@hubfiction.com](mailto:REDGRANNY@hubfiction.com). 75% of the proceeds go to the author, with the remainder going to Hub to pay for hosting and PayPal processing fees.

Go. Listen. Enjoy. Donate.

Lee.



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# FICTION

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## The Traveller

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by steven ellis

From the window the woman watches as the time machine disappears.

*She'd been waiting for this moment. Once a target shows they have the ability to move through time the gloves come off.*

*Taking a phone from her pocket she dials a number, then, phone to her ear, she listens for a moment.*

*"Police," she says, "...there's been a murder."*

*She turns to look at the body lying on the kitchen floor.*

The world shifts and moves away from me, my entire body is being pulled towards a point somewhere behind my ribcage and I feel a sudden urge to pee. The sensation you get travelling through time is difficult to explain unless you've done it, imagine describing the colour blue to someone born blind, now imagine describing a glorious summer sunset to that same person, that's time travel. Not easy.

Scene change; I'm elsewhere; the same place, in a different time. November 23<sup>rd</sup> 1961. It's almost midnight, raining softly, the night dark and quiet. This place, this house has been in my family for generations, moving through time here is safe; I know the area like the back of my hand.

Getting to this point had started years earlier. I'd heard about a theory, a kind of temporal conundrum, it intrigued me. Now, I know I can be a little obsessive sometimes and I'm smart enough to be the first to admit it, but the thought of it wouldn't go away. I wanted to know what would happen, if it was even possible, what the effects would be. This idea stayed with me, grew in my mind until I had to do something about it. I was driven, twelve years of research, spending more money than was sensible, a rich family meant I could afford it and eventually, it was done. A working time machine.

Standing here now, in the past, years before my own birth, I thought I'd be nervous, but instead I feel a strange detached calm. It all looks subtly different, the tree in the garden is smaller, the one I played in, will play in, as a child. I guess people don't really notice the trees growing. The house looks the same at first glance; it's cleaner, neater, a little less rough around the edges. He's in there, alone in the house. I know exactly where. I can remember him telling me about this night, today he'd buried his first wife, he'd drank himself to sleep and woke up the following morning in the armchair by a long cold fire, he'll be there now, sleeping his grief away.

My feet crunch on the wet gravel as I walk to the front door. I let myself in with my own key. Inside, the house smells different, it looks different, I'm a stranger in a house I know so well. I move slowly through the darkened hallway until I reach the door I want. Through that door, point the gun and pull the trigger, kill him in his sleep, easy. Then we'll see what happens. I reach for the handle, turning it, the door opens easily and I slip inside the room. The fire is still burning. I can see the back of his head; he's sitting in the chair, facing the fireplace.

With a steady hand I take the gun from my pocket and moving towards the chair, I point it.

I get a strange sensation, hairs on my neck. Something's wrong. I pause, trying to figure it out. Then I see. His eyes are open, and in his hand he too holds a gun. He's looking straight at me, the glow from the fire lights his eyes.

He's waiting for me. This is wrong; it isn't supposed to be like this.

For a moment silence stretches between us, then he speaks.

"Not what you expected," he says, it's not a question. This is all wrong and he knows it, he knows what I expected, he knows he's changed it.

But how? How can he know?? I feel my cheeks redden. I can't find my voice.

I notice something, a detail, something I should have noticed straight away; the man I came here to kill has a beard, this man does not. This isn't the man I want. He looks at me as though I'm going to figure it out; I think he's waiting for the penny to drop.

And suddenly, it does. I find my voice, "No! This can't be possible!"

"Why not?" He asks, "You did it."

I don't want to believe it, even as I realise the truth; the man in the chair, this old man has my face, he's me, an older me. A me from the future.

"How?" I ask. Stupid question!

"You built the bloody time machine!" He says, smiling, "I'm you, I arrived here just before you did," he looks into the fire, "very strange, I have a memory of both sides of this conversation, very odd feeling I can tell you, but don't worry, you'll get there," he points to himself, "or here rather," he chuckles at his own joke.

"Why?" I ask, my voice a whisper.

"To stop you."

"But..."

"You know," he continues, his voice quiet, conversational, "I remember being a lot more sure of myself when I was young, you really are breaking some illusions here."

"Sorry," I say, weakly.

"Ohh, don't worry, it's quite a shock for you, I remember."

I nod my head, really need to get my thoughts together here, I take a deep breath and I realise what he's just said.

"Stop me? You're here to stop me?"

"Yes, I can't let you kill him, I've seen what happens afterwards. The consequences. Beyond today."

"But how?"

An alarm rings in my head. This makes no sense.

"If you stop me, whatever future you say you've seen won't happen, so how can you know about it?"

"You're smarter than this," he says.

"If I don't kill him, you won't see anything and you won't have to come back to stop me."

"Of course I'll have to come back to stop you, I did! I'm here," he says, "if I hadn't been sat here waiting you'd have done the deed and be long gone by now, so... You mustn't do it, you turn around and leave, then at some future time you'll come back, knowing that a future you stopped a younger you, you will at some point be in this chair stopping yourself from doing this."

He grins at me, as though he's making perfect sense, I run through what he'd said, all the tenses confusing me.

"Trust me," he says, "it makes perfect sense."

"It's a paradox isn't it?"

He laughs at that. "They all are," he says, "be patient, the future will get very interesting for you once you figure out the rules."

I stop to think, this is all so bizarre, being here, talking to an older me, the reason I came here, my mind struggles to get to grips with it all.

"Look," he says, "Time has trouble dealing with these things, if you make a mess of the timeline, it goes very bad for me... For you...us I mean, if this is allowed to happen, it causes a paradox, everything unravels and you'll find yourself in real trouble, I was lucky to find my way back here to stop you."

"But all the planning." I say, I already know that I won't carry out my plan, so why am I'm still fighting this? He's here to stop me, he says he did stop me, then I can't argue, he's me for Christ's sake, "You'd shoot me?" I ask, looking at his gun.

"Well... No, I don't remember getting shot," he admits, holding up the gun, "I knew you'd be armed, seemed like a good precaution," he looks at me, " and I remembered us both having guns."

"So... What happens now?" I ask this older me.

"Go home, forget this, it only causes trouble. I know you can think of safer uses for that machine."

"But I have to come back here, when I'm older, to stop me? When..." I search for the right words, "How long... When am I you?"

He pauses, thinking. "For you it'll be twenty seven years from now," he says, "I'm not sure it's important exactly what date you do it, as long as at some point that year you come back here, today and arrive before the younger me," he points at me, "that's you."

"Where's...?"

"He's upstairs sleeping." He gestures towards the ceiling, " you'll have to move him, carry him up to bed. He's a bit drunk, easy to move." He grins, "then you get to have this conversation from my side."

I see a sudden sadness in his eyes, " you'd better go," he says, " I can't tell you anything else."

"But..."

"No," he says forcefully, as if knowing what I was going to say, he probably does know, more than I do myself, "we can't talk about anything else, it's dangerous, you'd better just leave now."

I nod my head and turn to open the door, I feel like I should be saying something.

"I know," he says, turning again to look into the fire, another smile crosses his lips, " don't worry about it... But of course you do, I remember I thought about it for weeks afterwards."

I raise my hand to wave, but feel foolish. He watches me silently as I turn and leave.

I walk back through the rain towards my time machine, my mind still racing, so many questions I wish I'd asked, I wonder what he meant about the future getting interesting, I guess I'll find out.

I set the dials for home, listening as the power slowly builds in the machine. I can see the window of the room I've just left, there's a faint flickering light there from the fire, I can see a shadow; maybe he's watching me. Upstairs, the window of my grandfather's bedroom is dark; he'll never know how close he came to death. I'll never know what would have happened if I'd have killed him before he ever met my grandmother.

The machine is ready, time to head for home. The future's waiting for me.

*From the window the woman watches as the time machine disappears.*

*"He's gone?" asks the man, still sat in the chair.*

*"Yeah, he's gone."*

*The man in the chair lets out a sigh, he reaches around the back of his head and pulls, the mask comes away easily, he's younger underneath.*

*Rubbing at the glue on his face, he looks at his partner.*

*"Next time, you get to play dress up."*

*The woman laughs.*

*"He was smarter than most. Nearly didn't buy it."*

*"Yeah, but they always end up believing, I mean, it's themselves, as if they'd lie to themselves."*

*"You left the body? It's all set up in his own time? He'll be dealt with?"*

*"I left the body. I called the police." She takes a small computer from her pocket; she hits a few buttons, then reads the screen. " They find the body in his kitchen, I created a faked history for the body as a research assistant, his fingerprints and DNA all over the corpse, the story goes that his prototype time machine didn't work, he lost his temper, killed the assistant in a rage, he's sentenced to thirty-five years, dies in prison, he won't bother us again."*

*"Ok, what else?"*

*"We've just got to put Granddad back down here."*

*"Right. Then where?"*

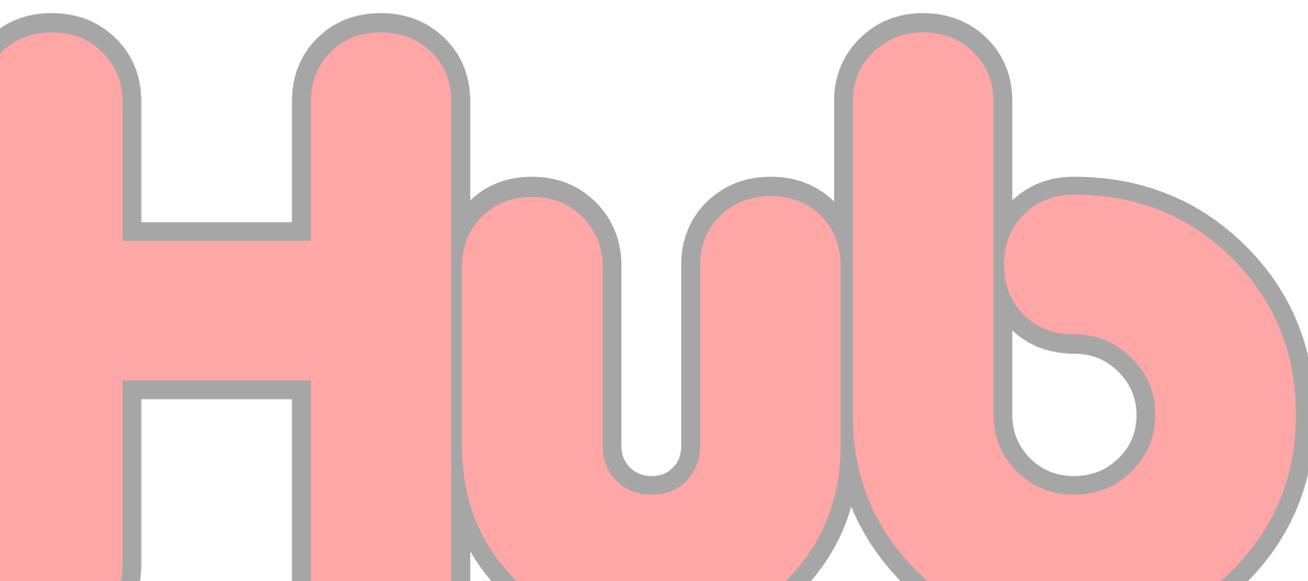
*"You mean when?" The woman checks her screen again. "Barcelona, 2012, same gig as this, another clown trying to kill a past relative before they have children, woman this time, Jacinta Perez, age 27, she's*

going to kill her paternal grandmother."

"Amazing how many of these idiots try this. Paradoxes, eh?"

"Yeah, but we'll stop 'em all... We've got time."

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# REVIEWS

## Dante's Journey

reviewed by amanda rutter



by J C Moreno  
Star Publish  
rrp £14.21

A flash of light and Detective Joe Dante steps through. No longer on the cobblestone streets of 1961 Boston, Joe finds himself in a horrifying new world - Hell itself. Joe was in hot pursuit of his family's killer, drug lord Filippo Argenti, when both were killed, and isn't about to let a little thing like death slow him down. So, with a healthy dose of New England stubbornness and the help of a mysterious guide, Virgil DiMini, Joe must evade angry demons and search ever-lower through the rings of the original Dante's *Inferno* in hopes of finding justice for his wife and children. However, Joe will soon discover that behind every sin lies a secret and each secret revealed could land Joe in an eternity of hot water...

This book was a real surprise. The blurb on the back doesn't do the story within the pages justice, in my opinion, because this was an unusual and compelling tale of learning moral aspects of your own character, as well as a trip through the circles of Hell. We spend as much time on Dante's journey to inner peace and rediscovery of faith as we do on his actual journey through Hell.

The strengths of this novel are the writing, which is exuberant good fun, and the characterisation - every single one of those characters deserves to be in hell for their various misdemeanours, and yet Marino manages to make you empathise with them and understand how they could have committed their crimes. I liked the manner in which Marino described the various people Dante meets on his journey, and the fact that they come from all different periods in history, including future periods that he wouldn't be aware of, having died in 1961. This creates some comic interludes.

Just as an aside, I'm also impressed with Marino's level of research: not only are the circles of hell represented very much as in the original *Inferno*, but he knew that Joe Dante would have been able to see Bugs Bunny before his death in 1961, since Bugs was "born" in 1940! (yes, I like my cartoons!)

As mentioned, the scenes in hell were descriptive - energetic and horrific, by turn. For example: *"Without any kind of communication among them, all the iron demons started slashing simultaneously. My eyes still forced open, I watched as the sinners were systematically dismembered and disemboweled by the sword and axe-wielding demons.*

*'Listen to me,' a Nazi pleaded. 'You never listen to me. I was under orders, you understand. Under orders. Under orders!'*

*The demon ignored him, plunging his dagger-like fingers into the Nazi's gut."*

Despite the horror of some of these scenes, the humour in the novel is ever-present: snappy dialogue between Joe Dante and Argenti being key, as well as some rather slapstick moments:

*" 'Faster,' I sang out.  
'I am,' Argenti sang back.*

'Pull!'

'What? Are you pulling?'

'Yeah.'

'I was pushing.'

We both stared at each other for a moment, not knowing which one of us was the idiot."

I also liked Marino's method of using flashbacks interspersed throughout the main body of the novel to show what really happened to Joe Dante in the time leading up to his death. This represented the idea that, until Dante had his epiphany in the ninth circle of hell, he is, in fact, a deeply unreliable narrator thanks to his hatred for Argenti. It was a neat trick.

On the whole, I enjoyed the book tremendously, although I do think the 'running time' was a little on the long side. There were flabby periods throughout that didn't add a great deal to the overall story - it just needed a little bit of tightening up. Also, the constant encounters with the demons became mighty repetitive at times, and I thought a couple of them could be cut with ease.

And Virgil annoyed me, purely because we weren't given enough hints on the way through about who he might be. I like to work out these little mysteries myself, and I either was not given enough to go on (in the early part of the story) or told outright (in the later part of the novel) - this could have been balanced a little better.

I am very glad I took a chance on this small press book. It was a fun read, with a warm heart and lots of lovely self-realisation. Joe Dante was a vibrant and realistic character and I enjoyed going on his journey. Recommended.

This review was originally published at [www.FloorToCeilingBooks.com](http://www.FloorToCeilingBooks.com) and [www.FantasyLiterature.com](http://www.FantasyLiterature.com)

## ***The Human Centipede (First Sequence)***

*reviewed by richard whittaker*



**Starring: Dieter Laser, Akihiro Kitamura, Ashley C. Williams, Ashlynn Yennie**  
**Written and directed by Tom Six**  
**Cert. 18, 92 mins.**

*Inch worm, inch worm  
Measuring the marigolds  
Could it be, stop and see  
How beautiful they are.*

The ultimate plaudit that can be given to *The Human Centipede (First Sequence)* is that there is already a porn spoof in production.

Think about that for a moment. That's a special tribute that is normally reserved for blockbusters, like *Good Will Hunting*, *Hannah Does Her Sisters* and *Shaving Ryan's Privates*. That a no-to-low budget horror flick that will barely ever be seen outside of the festival circuit has struck the popular imagination so viscerally that the porn industry (the ultimate barometer of purchasing power) has jumped on the band wagon ... well, that's something *The Stink of Flesh* never managed.

*Two and two are four  
Four and four are eight*

*Eight and eight are sixteen*  
*Sixteen and sixteen are thirty-two.*

What attracts audiences is a simple but stomach-churning idea. Deranged Teutonic doctor Heiter (Laser) has grown bored with his expertise in separating conjoined twins and become fascinated with reversing the process. So, what else to do except kidnap two American tourists (Williams and Yennie) and a Japanese driver (Kitamura), drag them down to his sterile laboratory and start sewing?

The film is a very organic development from writer/director Six's 2008 straight-to-hotel-cable-channel comedy *I Love Dries*: Again, there is a kidnapping for biological motivations, as a childless couple kidnaps a folk singer and ask him to impregnate the wife. What ends up getting swapped around in *Human Centipede* is far more distasteful than any minor celebrity's baby batter. Heiter's ambition is to bring order out of chaos by creating a single chain entity, ever expandable. If that means some graphic surgery and some even more disturbing images best left to the imagination, so be it.

In some ways, this is a gem of a film, not least because it transcends the simple indie-horror label. Writer/director Six's claim that the surgery is medically accurate is provocative, hubristic, intriguing and may cause arguments amongst devotees of the old Milton-Bradley game Operation (or fans of the on-line game Amateur Surgeon.) This is a neo-Frankenstein, a contemporary riff on the original Germanic surgical horror. Laser channels Peter Cushing's amoral take on the grave-robbing surgeon, equally pallid and aquiline, fascinated by humanity and convinced of its disposability. His elegant glass-and-steel house in the forest is the modern castle: All it lacks is a few good towers and lightning dancing across the roof, because it already has a great dungeon/laboratory.

Ultimately, it's Laser's performance that drives the film. Underneath that glacial reserve there is a seething mass of butcherous insanity that he keeps present without letting Heiter become a frothing-at-the-mouth lunatic. Acting as both protagonist and ring master, he torments and tortures the three-part beast of his creation, much as Six gleefully tortures the audience.

This is a hell of a calling card for Six, who has previously been unheard of outside of Holland but was a mainstay of the Dutch indie film making scene for much of the last decade. With his first real international release he reveals himself as a very unique film maker - part David Cronenberg, part William Castle, part John Waters. That's an interesting transition for a man that was previously best described as the Dutch Aki Kaurismäki - not much of a claim to fame, but accurate. With *Human Centipede* he has created something both atmospheric and innovative, arguably reminiscent of the gooey, gruesome pre-*Ringu* J-Horrors like *Evil Dead Trap* and *Mermaid in a Manhole*.

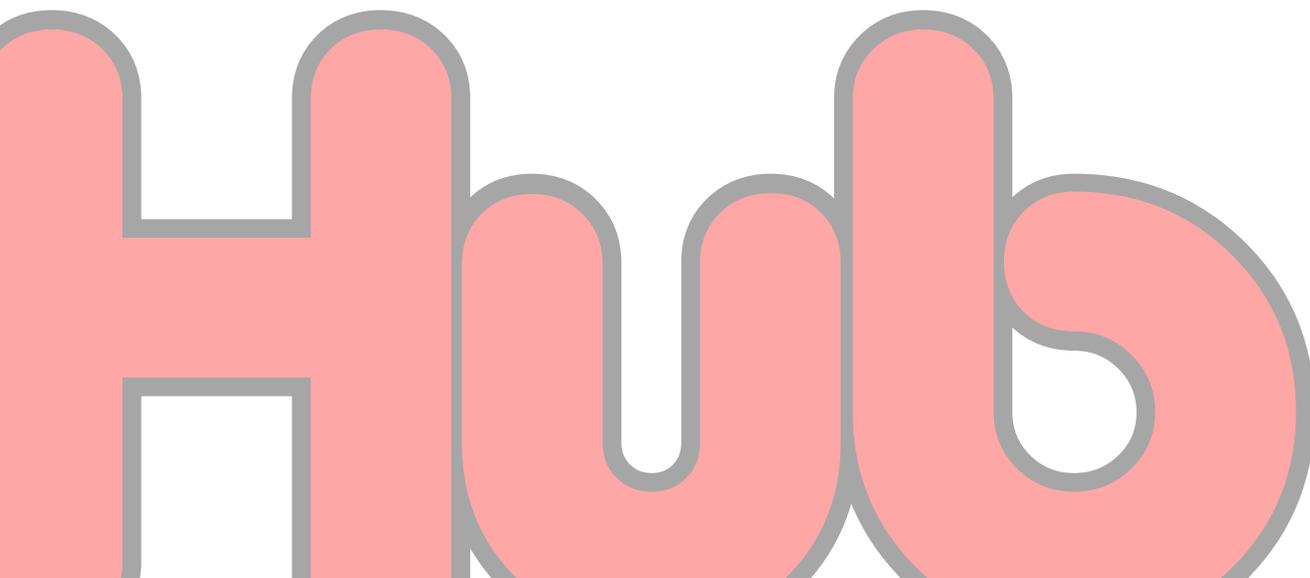
But, for all its successes, it's also far less than the sum of its parts. The idea of the story is fascinating, but the script is both over-long and under-developed. It's an ingenious concept to have the sole character that Heiter converses with for much of the film not speak a word of English, and it's a brilliant moment when Kitamura delivers a two-minute soliloquy in untranslated Japanese. But it's a moment that highlights the underlying flaw with the film. Six has produced a commentary on communication and language and how people interact, but it doesn't feel like the ideas are quite finished. Much of the run time is taken with beautifully but extremely slowly shot images of the centipede in the Dutch countryside, which look gorgeous but feel like padding, intended to make a one-hour teleplay into releasable feature.

That the film feels like it's one or two script polishes away from complete is one of the most frustrating elements: And because it is an cerebral satire rather than a simple gorefest, that's a bigger problem than it would be for a less ambitious movie. Six's claim to the intellectual rigor of anatomical accuracy cannot, alas, be extended to story logic. There are glaring continuity holes, not least in how the centipede gets from one scene to another. If Heiter is Frankenstein, he really should have an Igor - just for the heavy lifting. Instead, an audience that is paying attention will be left scratching its collective head. Again, that's a consequence of the under-developed script, and possibly Six will deal with those issues in his threatened sequel. However, he can't deal with the fact that there is an audible sigh of relief when half the cast

gets their mouths' sewn shut. Yennie and Williams are done no favors by yet another script that portrays American tourists as braindead: Much like the cast of *Hostel*, it's hard to care when anything bad happens to them. Again, less of a problem for a less intellectually ambitious movie, but it's just another point where it feels like Six has short changed his own ambition.

*Inchworm, inchworm*  
*Measuring the marigolds*  
*You and your arithmetic*  
*You'll probably go far*

*Human Centipede* will undoubtedly go down as a landmark in indie horror. Its mix of biological disgust and dry humor will spark discussion, and its central image is undoubtedly one of the most powerful in transgressive cinema since the chest burster in *Alien*. Yet somehow it never gets all its legs moving in the same direction.



# FEATURES

## Why You Should Read Clive Barker

by sharon ring

Will this be five hundred words of preaching to the converted? Surely everyone who reads genre fiction has read at least one Clive Barker book? I think, for anyone new to genre fiction, a stroll through some of Barker's work should be more or less compulsory.

Reading Barker seems to be a rite of passage. When I brought up the subject of Clive Barker and his *Books of Blood* on Twitter recently, I found myself in the midst of a lengthy conversation with several people. Most of us read the *Books of Blood* in our teens, the stories have stayed us, we can recall them with a hint of that original frisson of excitement and many of us still have our copies to hand, occasionally digging them out for yet another re-read.

The *Books of Blood* leapt into my world in the mid eighties when they were originally published. From the very first short story, *The Book of Blood*, I was caught up in each and every tale of good and evil, self-destruction, madness, depravity and transcendence. Barker wrote like no other writer I had come across at this point in my life. At the same time *The Books of Blood* were being devoured by horror fans, Barker's first novel, *The Damnation Game*, was published. Hailed as a Faustian novel, this was a quieter tale, though no less disturbing in its content and themes. One year later the novella, *The Hellbound Heart*, was published then filmed as the first *Hellraiser* movie, one of the most important pieces of modern cinematic horror.

Barker's shift towards fantasy was equally captivating. Blurring the lines between horror and fantasy gave books like *Weaveworld*, *Cabal*, *The Great and Secret Show* and *Imajica* a more unsettling edge, something I hadn't seen before in the more traditional fantasy fare. Gone were the quests, dwarves and elves; in came shifting Dominions, mutant creatures and distorted demons. When I read modern urban fantasy I constantly see nods in Barker's direction, making me wonder just how deeply embedded Barker's worlds have become in our imaginations.

Barker creates some of the richest, most complex fantasy worlds I have ever come across, worlds which exist alongside our own, and through which Barker's characters effortlessly navigate. And those characters, simultaneously beautiful and hideous: The Cenobites (*The Hellbound Heart*), Pie 'oh' Pah (*Imajica*), Mamoulian (*The Damnation Game*) and Candyman (*The Forbidden*). Hellish creations, deeply sexual and, more often than not, amoral rather than immoral, Barker's characters offer an otherworldly perception of the human condition, of the notions of pain and pleasure, the thrill of the forbidden.

Not just a writer, Barker has broader creative skills. He has directed and produced several movies, including: *Hellraiser*, as mentioned before; *Candyman*, from the short story, *The Forbidden*; and *Nightbreed*, based on *Cabal*. He's also an artist who illustrates many of his books, his sketches and paintings depicting the unparalleled weirdness of the stories.

To pass him by would be criminal, everyone should read Clive Barker.



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