DOMESTIC BODIES IN HELL: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF GENDERED EMBODIMENT IN CLIVE BARKER'S HELLRAISER

by Matthew Sautman

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The interplay that occurs in the first *Hellraiser* film between gendered bodies, domestic spaces, and abjection—e.g., an affect based upon apprehension and revulsion (Kristeva 1)—provides a critique of traditional Western gender norms that synonymizes patriarchal-led households with the production of horror. Released in 1987, Clive Barker's *Hellraiser* remains one of the most significant horror films of its decade, introducing into a Transatlantic horror lexicon Pinhead and his fellow Cenobites, extradimensional beings the film describes as "Explorers in the further regions of experience. Demons to some. Angels to Others." Although *Hellraiser*, as a series, is notorious for its significant drop in quality following its first film— of the ten films in the series, the first *Hellraiser* is the only entry not to be rated as rotten on Rotten Tomatoes' aggregator— Clive Barker's original *Hellraiser*, an adaptation of his 1986 novella The Hellbound Heart, is a multilayered film that skirts the horror genre by focusing on a plot that forgoes the slasher formula prominent in horror cinema during Hellraiser's initial release in favor of a Gothic family drama.[1] As Doug Bradley, the actor who plays Pinhead in the first eight movies of the *Hellraiser* franchise, observes, *Hellraiser* "has elements of a slasher movie about it but it's not that… In a lot of ways *Hellraiser* is a Gothic horror film…. it's this family tragedy, family drama, with these things up in the attic, the bats in the belfry." Echoing Bradley, Barker remarks in the introduction to *Hellraiser Chronicles* that *Hellraiser* "is essentially 'Gothic' in tone," "a style of horror fiction which shuns pseudo-scientific or psychological explanations in favour of poetic or magical thinking" (12).

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Barker's definition of Gothic aesthetic is not ubiquitous amongst scholarly approaches to the Gothic mode. Per Nick Groom, Gothic as a signifier "risks being emptied or nullified as a meaningful term" because this signifier has evolved into "an umbrella term for transgression, marginalization, and 'otherness'" (xiv-xv). Jerold E. Hogle suggests that, since Gothic comes to signify such a wide range of implicit meanings, the Gothic should be understood as a "mode- a set of often-linked elements rather than a fixed genre" like Barker's definition of Gothic as a style of horror fiction suggests (3). Nonetheless, the emphasis Barker places on the Gothic in *Hellraiser's* narrative construction thus makes the body horror present in the film as indicative of a sociocultural critique of hegemonic gender norms that specifically highlights how domestic spaces that adhere to heteronormative patriarchal ontologies produce abject bodies. Kristeva famously links the abject with a sense of the Freudian uncanny, stating that the abject exists as "a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside, ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable" (1). Abject bodies, therefore, are not only non-normative bodies; abject bodies are bodies that challenge conventions upheld by a dominant culture regarding appropriate bodily functions and presentation.

Hellraiser: A Synopsis

Despite the fact that *Hellraiser's* cultural legacy heavily centers around Pinhead and his fellow Cenobites, *Hellraiser's* primary antagonist is Frank Cotton, played by both Sean Chapman and Oliver Smith. Chapman's Frank is a handsome, muscular, relatively young white man. At the outset of the film, he embodies a configuration of identities whose privileges (aesthetic beauty, able-bodiedness, race, youth, gender) directly emerge from his own body. Dissatisfied with the limited pleasures he derives from his own body, Frank obtains a puzzle box from Morocco called the "Lament Configuration" so that he may pursue "an experience beyond limits… pain and pleasure indivisible." Upon his return to his mother's house, where he is squatting without his family's knowledge, Frank summons the Cenobites using the puzzle box. The Cenobites, who the sequel Hellbound clarifies were once white Westerners, possess modified bodies: a grid of nails cover Pinhead's hairless head and the flesh around his nipples is missing; Chatterer's eyes are wired shut, his ears and nose missing, while the skin around his gums is pulled backwards, exposing his teeth at all times; hooks pierce the sides of Butterball's stomach, as the black frames of his sunglasses burrow into the sides of his face where his ears should be; and a nail pierces the nose of the uncreatively named Female Cenobite as a D-shaped wire bisects both of her cheeks and the gash in her neck.

Although the Cenobites destroy Frank's body, his consciousness lingers in the attic in a limbo state — unbeknownst to both the Cenobites and the Cotton family. Frank's ex-"lover" and sister-in-law, Julia,[2] played by Clare Higgins, is the first person to discover Frank in the Cotton house attic. Julia and her husband Larry Cotton, played by Andrew Robinson, move into the ancestral Cotton family home in order to start their lives anew, with Larry hoping that his daughter Kirsty, played by Ashley Laurence, will move in with them. Kirsty, in her first appearance in *Hellraiser*, insists that she will not move until after she finds a job in the area. The utopian promise the Cotton house provides Julia and her family is undermined by the film's 19-minute mark; however, once Larry bleeds directly over the spot where Frank's soul was disembodied from his corporeal form, Larry's blood catalyzes Frank's resurrection, a process Frank continues by feeding on men Julia brings him until Frank is eventually strong enough to subsume his brother's bodily and familial identity. The resurrected Frank is now played by Oliver Smith, whom the screen credits differentiate by attributing a new moniker to him, "Frank the Monster."

Frank's Two Bodies: the Privileged and the Abject

Clive Barker's decision to position Frank Cotton as *Hellraiser's* principal antagonist codifies Frank's body as implicitly more monstrous than the Cenobites' modified, disfigured bodies. Monstrous bodies, Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's theoretical framework of monstrosity suggests, can be read across eight kinds of identity: personal,

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national, cultural, economic, sexual, psychological, universal, [and] particular (193). This section is principally concerned with two of these identities: the sexual and cultural identities implied by Frank's monstrous embodiment. In previously published scholarship, I assert that Frank "represent[s] the systematic horrors perpetuated by colonialism — psychological abuse, incest, infidelity, rape, murder, and cannibalism, as a critique of colonialism's inherently destructive embodiment of capitalistic exploitative patriarchy that is present in the Western understanding of 'home' " (Sautman 84), but I do not address the film's feminist implications beyond references to patriarchy writ large. Nonetheless, the feminist implications of Frank's embodiment call attention to how male bodies acquire layers of meaning that conceal patriarchy's horrific nature.

Frank's body enables him to possess multiple social privileges. While numerous definitions of privilege exist across feminist, critical race, trans, queer, and disability discourses, as well as across their innumerable intersections, Tanya Titchkosky's definition of privilege seems especially pertinent to understanding Frank's body: the ability to belong to "the typically unmarked category of persons that are culturally positioned as expected [as members of the dominant culture], and thus taken as definitive human beings" (26). Placed in conversation with Cohen's terminology, Titchkosky's definition of privilege suggests that privilege emerges when particular markers of individual identity, for example, whiteness, maleness, and ablebodiedness, are misconstrued as universal by members of a given dominant culture. Bodies thus seemingly acquire their abject, monstrous qualities when particular elements of an individual person's identity do not coincide with the status quo. Frank, as a seemingly privileged person on screen, does not appear as explicitly monstrous in *Hellraiser* until after his resurrection begins. Prior to this resurrection, Barker does not provide viewers with a reason for them to perceive Frank as explicitly monstrous; viewers neither see Frank interact with anyone other than an Asian puzzle-box salesman in Morocco nor do viewers encounter any bodily signifiers that would otherwise suggest Frank is anyone other than a victim of the film's opening encounter. Based on a momentary scene in which viewers see Frank's makeshift bedroom, which includes multiple fetish statues and a suitcase filled with pictures of women normative American society considers as sexually appealing—some of whom appear naked in these photos performing BDSM—viewers may recognize Frank as a person with a strong libido, a characteristic that would be considered culturally taboo by mainstream American society during the Reagan administration. Yet Frank's association with explicit sexuality and "alternative" modes of sexual expression in this early moment provides minimal evidence that viewers need to understand that Frank's privileged body is inherently monstrous.

Frank's body becomes monstrous in the film once Barker links the resurrection of Frank's privileged body with the abject through body horror. Anne Elizabeth Moore argues that body horror emerges when "the known turns into the unknown, the normal becomes disfigured, the comforting emerges as truly terrifying" (xi). Although viewers likely first associate Frank's privileged body with body horror upon witnessing the Cenobites dismember him in the film's opening, the abject nature of Frank's dismemberment suggests the Cenobites', not Frank's, inherent monstrosity. Barker primes his viewers to perceive Frank as a victim, unless, perhaps, the viewers approach the film already knowing *Hellraiser's* overall plot and/or from a postcolonial lens that decodes Frank's involvement in Morocco as symbolic of colonization. Frank's body is not presented to viewers as explicitly monstrous until Larry's blood drips over the exact spot where Frank's body was eviscerated and fragmented. Larry's blood revitalizes Frank's heart. Frank's skeleton, brain, and sinew sprout from the floorboards once Larry and his family leave the attic. The resurrection scene presents Frank to viewers as an incomplete corpse, a skinless amalgamation of decayed muscle tissue and bone, a body so monstrous that the revitalized Frank consistently feels ashamed of this body, as evidenced through the multiple times he commands Julia, "Don't look at me."

Barker seemingly uses Frank's resurrection to subtly deconstruct patriarchy's relationship with the male body. Barker achieves this deconstruction by presenting

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Frank's privileged body in sequence with his abject body. Frank's privileged body, as a body that viewers likely codify as normative and reflective of Western hegemonic masculinity,[3] initially evades detection as a monstrous body. Although Frank's privileged body evades monstrous codification, a series of scenes depicting Frank's seduction of Julia following her engagement to Larry hint at Frank's inner monstrosity. In these scenes, Frank arrives at Julia's house uninvited, wearing a leather jacket and blue jeans. Even though Frank knows Julia is engaged to Larry— he tells Julia, "I came for the wedding" during her first on screen interaction with him— but nonetheless Frank strives to seduce Julia, as evidenced in the third of these scenes, when he remarks, "You going to let me kiss the bride?" as he cradles Julia's face in his hands. Julia shudders in this moment, injecting ambiguity into the scene regarding whether Julia consented to Frank's sexual advances. Once viewers witness Frank and Julia having sex atop her wedding dress in the final scenes of these flashbacks, Barker clarifies that, even if Frank possesses a privileged body, he also possesses a seemingly amoral character that values the pleasure he receives from other people's bodies more than hegemonic social mores. Viewers may not witness Frank's history with the other women whose pictures he kept on display in a suitcase by his mattress but Barker's decision to reveal Frank's sordid past with Julia after viewers have already been presented with Frank's past lovers suggests that Frank perceives women as bodies he can collect and conquer for his own pleasure. That Frank rebuilds himself from the bodies of men he consumes suggests that he also perceives male bodies with a similar transactional mindset.

Thus, Frank does not simply become monstrous once he possesses an abject body. His behavior towards women in *Hellraiser's* first twenty minutes suggests that Frank's privileged body is also a monstrous body, and that when a privileged male body internalizes patriarchal ideology, that body is as monstrous as an undead (dehumanized) body. The patriarchal body does not wish to gaze upon itself, yet the patriarchal body is more than willing to subjugate other bodies to a patriarch's given needs.

Larry's Skin: Patriarchal Shapeshifting in Domestic Spaces

Frank's relationship with his own skin provides insight into how his eventual appropriation of his brother Larry's skin and identity contribute to *Hellraiser's* critique of embodied patriarchy. Skin, Jack Halberstam notes in Skin Shows, "houses the body and it is figured in Gothic as the ultimate boundary, the material that divides the inside from the outside" (7). Frank's privileged body — his original skin — houses his abject body, a corpse-like body formed of deteriorating flesh, until his privileged body becomes irretrievable. Frank can rebuild himself from other men's bodies but Barker provides viewers no visual evidence that he can ever regain his original outer body.[4] The series of scenes depicting Frank's seduction of Julia, as well as his eventual betrayal of Julia during the film's climax, provide viewers with moments in Frank's character arc wherein the veils that obscure his inner identity— Frank's social-familial and erotic/romantic relationships, the sympathy viewers might initially attribute to Frank when they first see the Cenobites kill him— are pulled away, revealing that the body that comprises the core of his identity is the patriarchal body.

Frank's privileged body forms a barrier that conceals Frank's abject self. Rather than embodying a Cartesian mind-body split (120), Frank endures a body-body split, wherein one body — the abject body — more accurately reflects his true identity, while the other body — the privileged body — connotes how Frank's identity would commonly be perceived, as normative and potentially alluring. Without his outer skin, his privileged body, Frank requires a new body to conceal his abject self from the surrounding world. Consequently, if Frank wishes to pursue his seemingly abject patriarchal desires to subject women's bodies to his will, he must don a new outer body to conceal his abject self. As Donna Haraway asserts, "bodies are maps of power and identity" (115). Frank's true identity, the abject body, exposes the decay at the center of Frank's character, potentially undermining Frank's ability to coerce others underneath his power.

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Larry represents a subordinate masculinity in *Hellraiser*. Whereas Frank's privileged body signals that he conforms to mainstream conventions of masculine American identity during the 1980s, Larry's body (pre-and post-skinning) reads as subordinate insofar as Barker neither codifies Larry according to the same leather jacket wearing, muscular, tan "bad boy" masculinity that Frank's privileged body embodies nor does Barker codify Larry as someone possessing a marginalized form of masculinity during the film's implicit 1987 setting, e.g. the masculinity possessed by transmen of any race and cisgender Black men.[5] Larry, as an able-bodied white male, possesses some of the same body-based privileges Frank possesses, yet Barker does not convey Larry with the same physical or sexual prowess that he attributes to Frank.

Larry appears older than Frank—a relatively unsurprising fact given that Andrew Robinson (the actor playing Larry) is nearly nineteen years older than Sean Chapman (Frank). Larry has a thinner, clean-shaven face that compliments the conservative style of dress he wears in the majority of the film: a button-up shirt paired with a belt and khakis. Larry's limited interactions with his daughter on screen, such as the phone conversation wherein Larry insists that there is "no need" for Kirsty to look for a job when he is willing to let her move in, suggests that Larry does not share Frank's reductionist approach to human bodies and identity, even if Larry's dismissal of Kirsty's desire to find work comes across as patronizing. Furthermore, Larry's struggle to carry the mattress upstairs, even with the help of male masculine movers, suggests that Larry's body is weaker than Frank's privileged body, a fact Barker reasserts twice: once the nail penetrates Larry's hand as he carries the mattress and again when Frank kills his brother offscreen prior to the film's climax. Larry may be an endearing father but his body is fragile. Larry's body does not connote the same power Barker codifies onto Frank's privileged body.

While these distinctions between both Frank's privileged body and Larry's body hint at Frank's desperateness to re-assume an identity capable of leaving the domestic space that is the Cotton family home, Frank's assumption of Larry's skin and subsequent identity utilizes body horror to further convey how patriarchy colonizes male bodies. As Anne Elizabeth Moore notes, "horror movies [commonly] exploit presumed bastions of comfort, universally held beliefs that, throughout the course of a film, we may come to understand are built on faulty or wholly false presumptions" (185). The presumptions Barker implicitly "exploits" through Frank's assumption of Larry's identity directly challenge the safety that domestic spaces overseen by male heads of households allegedly afford women. Larry may, as Julia remarks to Frank, know how to make his partner "very happy," just as he knows how to make his daughter feel safe, as evidenced by how Kirsty seeks solace from him after her first encounter with the Cenobites, yet that does not mean Larry cannot harbor an abject body concealed within his otherwise normative flesh.

Bodies such as Larry's do not immediately evoke horror. Barker codifies Frank's abject body and the Cenobites' modified bodies in a way that, to draw from Freud's definition of the uncanny, these explicitly abject bodies blur "the boundary between fantasy and reality" (150). That is, Frank's abject body and the Cenobites' modified bodies could never exist in the viewers' world as Barker presents them in film. Bodies cannot rebuild themselves by consuming the blood and organs of freshly killed men. Bodies cannot undergo the same levels of intense modification that the Cenobites embrace. Yet Larry's body is a body that viewers could encounter in their everyday life, if not in their own home. Larry's body represents a familiar kind of masculinity, what might jokingly be described as an "Every-Dad." Consequently, Barker appears to suggest that patriarchy has the capacity to render any male body abject — that just because a particular male body possesses fewer privileges than other male bodies, male bodies possessing a subordinate masculinity are not immune to hegemonic masculinity's patriarchal ideology. The skin of any endearing father may conceal a monstrous body.

Domesticity Revised: Kirsty and Julia's Embodied Femininity

While Frank's overt sexuality and misogyny may lend the film to readings that are more in line with conservative attitudes towards sex during the 1970s and '80s in the

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slasher genre, this section suggests that a feminist critique of "hellish" trappings of domesticity emerges in *Hellraiser* through Frank's characterization as a monstrous patriarchal figure who destroys his family's ancestral home and familial bonds by imposing his desires upon female bodies. These bodies belong to Kirsty and Julia respectively. The Victorian-era dichotomy of angel in the house/monstrous woman that Gilbert and Gubar document in their paradigm-defining work Madwoman in the Attic remained viral in Western culture of this period (26-28). Mainstream films of this period, Susan Faludi documents, set women against women, depoliticizing women's anger by displaying women's personal depression instead, all of which were commonly "framed as morality tales in which the 'good mother' wins and the independent women gets punished" (113). Yet Barker seemingly utilizes the body horror Frank perpetuates by using both Kirsty and Julia to deconstruct the Hollywood-sanctioned angel in the house and monstrous-woman archetypes. Consequently, the proximity of Frank's, Kirsty's, and Julia's bodies map out how hegemonic masculinity augments feminine bodies. Furthermore, understanding how the angel-in-the-house and monstrous-woman archetypes inform Kirsty and Julia's respective characterization provides insight into how both women embody femininity. Neither primary female character perfectly adheres to these archetypes but traces of these archetypes are present in both women's characterizations.

Kirsty is a "final girl," a term that describes young adult women who survive horror films, usually due to their emotional "purity" and non-existent sexuality.[6] While Kirsty has a boyfriend in the film, Steve, their relationship is fairly tame. The viewer does not witness them participate in explicitly sexual behavior the way Frank, Julia, and Larry do. Consequently, Kirsty's implicit modesty brings her embodied gender more in line with the angel in the house, a woman "enshrined within her home… her husband's holy refuge from the blood and sweat that inevitably accompanies a 'life of significant action,' as well as, in her 'contemplative purity,' a living memento of the otherness of the divine" (24). Yet Kirsty cannot be fully reduced to the angel-in-the-house archetype. Barker shapes the film's narrative so that viewers understand that the house is not a place that brings Kirsty solace. Kirsty and Steve survive the film because they escape the Cotton family home before a vortex altogether erases the house from Kirsty's plane of existence. Kirsty attains salvation by actively rejecting the Cotton home as a sanctimonious space and asserting her bodily autonomy.

Julia, likewise, may be portrayed as a monstrous woman in the film, insofar as she is portrayed as both an adulteress and as a murderer, but the film portrays Julia in a nuanced manner that complicates how viewers may understand her embodied femininity. Barker shows that Julia is not an inherently monstrous woman. Rather, the monstrosity that Julia represents in the film is a byproduct of Frank's emotional manipulation. She is, in this sense, Frank's victim, a woman who reflects Gilbert and Gubar's archetypal monster only because her sense of morality has been skewed by patriarchy. Patriarchy's corrupting influence is altogether clearer in Hellbound, where Julia replaces Frank's role as the primary villain — she even emerges in the film with a skinless abject body — but Julia is characterized only as the archetypal monstrous woman, as she is highly sexual, manipulative, and murderous. When both films' treatments of Julia are paired side-by-side, the evolution of her character suggests that Julia starts to embody the monstrous woman archetype as a consequence of Frank's patriarchal influence.

The portrayal of Kirsty and Julia in the first *Hellraiser* may remain problematic insofar as their respective characterizations remain somewhat flat, yet their respective relationships with Frank, specifically their relationships with Frank's desires, challenge Western gender norms by implicitly calling attention to how patriarchy catalyzes *Hellraiser's* body horror. *Hellraiser* challenges these gender norms by providing a rejoinder to the angel-in-the-house archetype and an apologetic regarding the creation of monstrous women. Barker has made no explicit claims that *Hellraiser* is a feminist film. In fact, other aspects of the film, such as Barker's decision to name the only female Ceno-

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bite in the film “Female Cenobite,” suggest that *Hellraiser* is explicitly a film that is more interested in challenging hegemony in general rather than patriarchy in all of its forms. *Hellraiser* challenges both sides of the angel-in-the-house/monstrous-woman dichotomy, suggesting that the film is invested in a feminist understanding of body performativity,[7] and that hegemonic constructions of feminine bodies are shaped, at least in part, by masculine desires for control and pleasure.

Barker undermines the appeal of the angel-in-the-house archetype in *Hellraiser* through two noticeable ways: His decision to correlate Kirsty’s ability to survive the film with Kirsty’s ability to escape the Cotton family home, and his decision to have Kirsty endure harassment when she deliberately leads Frank — disguised in Larry’s skin — to his death in the Cotton house attic. Both decisions significantly disrupt the angel-in-the-house archetype through the “empty space” Barker presents in *Hellraiser.* As Katherine McKittrick suggests in her study of Black women’s cartographies, echoing sentiments made by Sylvia Wynter and Derrida before her,[8] empty spaces in texts merit close reading, as the speculation involved in this kind of analysis “can fill the empty space and recover the undocumented” (68).

Hellraiser’s empty space implicitly reveals the feminist implications of Kirsty’s actions. During Kirsty’s final scene, when the Cotton house disappears from Kirsty’s plane of reality, leaving only the puzzle box in its place, Kirsty’s body transforms into a diasporic subject through the film’s empty space. Viewers can never confirm this fact, yet Kirsty appears permanently separated from her family and ancestral home. Kirsty’s family and the Cotton house in turn acquire ephemeral bodies, bodies that Kirsty could likely only reencounter through memory. In the process of becoming a diasporic subject, Kirsty’s body and subjectivity simultaneously evade the same erasure her family experiences; an angel in the house would not survive such an experience. Such a woman’s allegiance to domesticity would not be preserved in the historical record.

When Kirsty leads Frank into the attic where the Cenobites can attack him, *Hellraiser* undermines the appeal of the angel-in-the-house archetype through implicitly emphasizing the kind of abuse that a woman who submits to patriarchy can experience. Harassment is linked with the abject in this scene, as Frank’s pursuit of Kirsty synthesizes a model of pursuit commonplace in slasher movies with the patriarchal sexual abuse Frank directs towards his niece through remarks like, “Come to Daddy.” By framing Frank’s pursuit of Kirsty’s body as explicitly incestuous and implicitly sexually driven, Barker implicitly allows viewers to observe that blind subservience to a male figurehead based solely upon the privileges afforded to his masculine body is a horrific prospect.

Frank’s pursuit of Kirsty’s body conveys the familial nature of patriarchy, that patriarchy invades the home. Frank’s previously discussed assumption of Larry’s skin and identity conveys how patriarchy can assume the identity of people we share domestic spaces with, people whom we trust. The insidious nature of patriarchy combined with patriarchy’s ability to enter into domestic spaces suggests not only that domesticity cannot guarantee a woman’s safety, as is suggested in *Hellraiser’s* aforementioned ending, but also that it makes women’s bodies vulnerable to patriarchy. Only when Kirsty returns home does Frank pose a threat to her. Were Kirsty to resign herself to domesticity, that is, were Kirsty to obey her uncle, to become an angel in the house, Kirsty would experience a kind of social death, a term Orlando Patterson coins to describe a process of desocialization and depersonalization (38). While Patterson conceives of social death in response to systems of enslavement, the traditional gender norms informing the angel-of-the-house archetype, that “[t]he arts of pleasing men… are not only angelic characteristics… they are proper acts of a lady” (Gilbert and Gubar 24), suggest that women who concede to these norms experience a similar, though not equivalent, loss of social identity and power.[9]

Julia’s relationship with Frank further complicates *Hellraiser’s* rejection of oppressive feminine gender roles by complimenting the film’s rejoinder to the angel in the house with an apologetic for the monstrous woman. This apologetic credits the monstrous behavior of the so-called monstrous woman as a result of the influence patriarchy exerts over her. By submitting to the influence of patriar-

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chy on two separate occasions, Julia gradually transforms into a monstrous woman. These occasions are when Frank initially coerces Julia to sleep with him before her wedding to Larry, and when Frank uses the memory of that affair to persuade Julia to start luring men to him in the attic.

The coercion scene, which Barker conveys through the series of flashback scenes discussed in this essay's second section, depicts Frank arriving at Julia's house two weeks before she and Larry marry. It is raining when Frank arrives, and he asks to be let in. The moments that follow are flashes that are interspersed with the event that triggers Frank's resurrection — Larry's struggle to carry the mattress upstairs — but these flashes present Julia as a courteous woman who is trying to appease her brother-in-law only for Frank to manipulate her into satisfying his sexual urges. This point is made further apparent in the script itself in which Barker specifies that just before Frank and Julia sleep together, "FRANK takes hold of her. She doesn't resist him, though there is barely disguised fear on her face. He puts his hand inside her blouse." Julia's general compliance coupled with fear suggests that her identity as a monstrous woman is predicated on a previous identity as an angel in the house. By obeying patriarchy manifested through Frank, Julia's sense of ethics became compromised, making her vulnerable to further manipulation until she eventually reaches the point at which she not only murders innocent people to revitalize patriarchy's power, but also begins deriving pleasure from weaponizing her body and asserting her dominance over other men's bodies, as Barker implicitly communicates to his viewers when she smiles during one of these murders.

Barker does more than seemingly indict patriarchy as the catalyzing force for transforming women into monstrous women in *Hellraiser*. The film suggests that patriarchy does not provide protection to monstrous women's bodies who serve the patriarchal status quo any more than patriarchy protects angels in the house. Instead, the monstrous woman's body, like the angel in the house's body, has a utility that patriarchy relies on to satisfy men's desires. When that utility runs out, such a woman becomes disposable, according to the patriarchy conveyed in *Hellraiser*. Barker conveys this in the film after Frank pursues Kirsty at knifepoint, during which Frank stabs Julia by mistake. Rather than tend to Julia's wounded body, Frank remarks that the attack was "nothing personal," before he consumes Julia the same way that he consumed all of the men Julia led to him. Julia the monstrous woman may experience power she can wield over men but her character arc suggests that whatever power Julia accessed outside the home, the domestic space, and specifically the domestic space underneath the jurisdiction of patriarchy, serves as a place where her power is made irrelevant by the patriarchal power that Frank possesses. Julia can never escape the fact that while she possesses a privileged body, her body always remains already marginalized. In this way, Julia's story arc fills empty space present in Kirsty's arc, as Julia's allows viewers to imagine more concretely how Kirsty's life would have played out had she resigned herself to Frank's desires.

The Significance of *Hellraiser's* Engendered Embodiment

Through a tripartite formation — Frank's positioning as patriarchal villain who assumes his brother's identity, Kirsty's positioning as someone who survives the threat of patriarchy by resisting the entrapments by which an angel in the house is confined, and Julia's transformation from an angel in the house into a monstrous woman who still perishes at the hands of patriarchy — *Hellraiser* appears to implicitly advocate a radical anti-hegemonic stance that traditional gender norms can be just as horrific as the non-traditional forms of gender performance carried out by the Cenobites. Whereas previous scholarship on *Hellraiser* by the likes of Aviva Briefel and Gavin F. Hurley suggests that Barker cultivates monstrosity amongst *Hellraiser's* antagonists through their indulgence of "intense experiences of pleasure and pain" (Briefel 17) or corruption that emerges via their "immoderate desire[s]" (Hurley 98), this essay asserts that monstrosity enters into the film through cultural systems that codify bodies with degrees of privilege in reference to a normative hegemonic identity.

Barker's portrayal of embodied gender closely and subtly resembles a utopian stance advocated by Samuel Delany

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and communicated by Jack Halberstam, that humanity has a collective need "to avoid nostalgia for what was and what has disappeared" (14). This is to say that Barker seemingly utilizes embodiment in the film to assert subtle political commentary about hegemonic culture's relationship with monstrosity in domestic spaces. [10] *Hellraiser* is not a text that emerged in a vacuum. Rather it premiered when the dominant culture of the United States was preoccupied with nostalgia. Nostalgia — the longing for particular bodies in particular spaces — occludes horror, enabling those who yearn to recreate the past to become subject to horror in the present without understanding the abject implications of their desires. When *Hellraiser* premiered in 1987, a backlash against feminism that "accuses the women's movement of creating a generation of unhappy single and childless women" inundated American culture (Faludi xxiii), a backlash that perpetuated a nostalgia for the patriarchal nuclear family and antiquated forms of feminine embodiment that consigns feminine bodies to domestic spaces. However, Barker shows *Hellraiser's* viewers that the hegemonic family formation exalted during the 1980's American backlash against feminism is seemingly incapable of ensuring familial prosperity, and that patriarchs have the capacity to transform any given domestic space into a private hell for anyone else who values their bodily autonomy. While Delany and Halberstam specifically consider nostalgia in relation to the creation of new spaces that evade the powers of hegemony, *Hellraiser* challenges nostalgia for traditional gender roles in domestic spaces, implicitly suggesting that counter-hegemonic paradigms for embodying gender are necessary to create non-oppressive domestic spaces. The father-led nuclear family of the past is inundated with abjection. But as I and other scholars continue to work with and deconstruct this film, there remains the possibility that *Hellraiser* might simultaneously suggest that whatever alternative kinds of embodiment exist, they too may be ripe with horror.

About the Author

Matthew Sautman is a Creative Writing MFA candidate at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, where he previously completed Masters of English programs in both Literature and Teaching of Writing. His research primarily centers around counterhegemonic discourses that emerge in popular culture. His most recent publications include "A Link Across Adventures: Literacy's Relevance to Time in The Legend of Zelda's Mythopoeia" in 2020's Mythopoeic Narrative in The Legend of Zelda and "When Orientalism Raises Hell: Puzzling through the Postcolonial Anxieties and Usages of Space in Clive Barker's Hellraiser" in 2019's Spaces and Places of Horror. When he is not working on scholarly work or spending time with his family, he teaches English at Alton High School.

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NOTES

[1] Noël Carroll outlines four elements that inform the plot structure of most, if not all, horror films: "onset" (which introduces the film's monster), discovery (where someone in the film learns about the monster's existence), confirmation (where the protagonist[s] have to persuade a group of people that the monster exists), and confrontation (99-101). Not every horror movie necessarily possesses all four of these elements per Carroll's taxonomy, but every horror movie utilizes a combination of some of these elements. Although Carroll's taxonomy is useful for understanding horror's repetitive story structures, Carol J. Clover's definition of the slasher film provides a clearer understanding of what the generic slasher formula looks like on film: a "story of a psychokiller who slashes to death a string of mostly female victims, one by one, until he is subdued or killed, usually by the one girl who has survived" (21).

[2] Media surrounding the Hellraiser franchise, such as the companion book The Hellraiser Chronicles, occasionally describe Julia as an "ex-lover," yet the apparent role coercion seems to play in forging their relationship onscreen implicitly suggests that this attribution is inappropriate, as Frank imposes himself onto Julia (17).

[3] Tim Carrigan, Bob Connell, and John Lee define hegemonic masculinity as "how particular groups of men inhabit positions of power and wealth, and how they legitimate and reproduce the social relationships that generate their dominance" (112).

[4] Frank's skin functions much as the metaphorical veils Anne Elizabeth Moore observes layering Chris Cleek's identity (played by Sean Bridgers) in Lucky McKee's 2011 film The Woman: society, respect, family, love; all of which conceal Cleek's true identity as "the patriarch" (32).

[5] This distinction between hegemonic, subordinate, and marginalized masculinity emerges from R.W. Connell's "The History of Masculinity" (248).

[6] Per Clover, the final girl is "the survivor… the one who encounters the mutilated bodies of her friends and perceives the full extent of the preceding horror and of her own peril; who is chased, cornered, wounded; whom we see scream, stagger, fall, rise, and scream again" (35).

[7] Judith Butler famously defines body performativity in Gender Trouble "as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self" (179). Butler revisits this concept in Undoing Gender, in which she further clarifies that, "performativity is not just about speech acts…the body gives rise to language, and that language carries bodily aims, and performs bodily deeds that are not always understood by those who use language to accomplish certain conscious aims" (198-199).

[8] Utilizing Derrida's conception of hauntology, a "logic of haunting" that analyzes spectral ephemera to deconstruct notions of spatial purpose and temporality (10), Sylvia Wynter's influential essay "Beyond Miranda's Meanings" focuses readers' attention on the significance absent bodies serve in postcolonial studies, specifically in reference to the presumably Black body of the witch Sycorax in Shakespeare's The Tempest. Wynter asserts Sycorax's unseen presence in the play reflects "the new secularizing schema by which the peoples of Western Europe legitimated their global expansion as well as their expropriation and their marginalization of all the Other population-groups of the globe" (117).

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[9] The comparison between patriarchy's dehumanization of women and enslavement traces at least as far back as the French Feminists, though their approach to the analogy is commonly problematic insofar as they generalize slavery without considering the unique abject forms endemic to chattel slavery. Simone de Beauvoir remarks, "woman has always been man's dependent, if not his slave" (48). Similarly, Annie Leclerc, uses the word "hero" in place of patriarch; she asserts, "That's what a hero is, a failure in life, an impotent in life, and one who takes his revenge by stealing, enslaving, pillaging, and insulting everything alive" (85).

[10] Barker's approach to political commentary in Hellraiser is fairly commonplace in Gothic cinema. As Elisabeth Bronfen observes, Gothic cinema "gives imaginary tangibility to what is physically absent. By addressing unresolved cultural concerns… Gothic cinema evokes a past in the name of a future where persistent fears might possibly be put to rest" (108).

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