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Wonderlands in Flesh and Blood

Gender, the body, its boundaries and their transgression in Clive Barker's *Imajica*

AVM

There is no excellent beauty that hath not
some strangeness in the proportion.

Sir Francis Bacon, *Of Beauty*

Preface

From the very beginning, the works of the British writer, director, painter and producer Clive Barker have become increasingly multifaceted.[1] Despite this, there is virtually no other motif that shapes Barker's Œuvre more than the body and corporeality. This becomes evident in portrayals of explicit violence, sex between all gender combinations, as well as humans and non-humans, and the composition of bizarre creatures. The body is deconstructed physically as well as mentally. Bodies transform (and are transformed) and sexual unions are taken literally when two bodies merge to become one. However, Barker's fiction is more than just "demystifying the body".[2] Even though the early anthology *The Books of Blood* was labelled 'splatterpunk,' the motif of corporeality has become more subtle and complex and cannot be reduced to simply 'sex and violence.' The body is increasingly involved in gender-related topics, self-discovery and growing-up. This is also reflected by the fact that Barker is now a successful author of children's novels as well.

This book focuses on the subject of the body and corporeality in Clive Barker's fantastique novel *Imajica* (1991), which is to date, excluding several novel cycles, the most detailed work in Barker's Œuvre. In particular, the boundaries of the body and their transgressions concerning *Leib* (physical body) and gender will be analysed.[3] Thus, emphasis will be placed on the body of the *Other* including gender categories[4] but also the monstrous, creatural, grotesque and carnivalesque which subverts what is considered as 'normal.' In addition, corporeal boundaries imply the maxims of perception. As a construct, these borders do not only limit the body to its surrounding but characterise a scene of encounter as well as confrontation and therefore generating an entity of communication. Other focal points will be the portrayal of physical violence, sexuality and death as well as the relationship between body, self concept and identity in *Imajica*. Finally, this book answers the body's utilisation in the novel. Given the complexity of the body as

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[1] In addition to fiction, film and fine arts, the name Clive Barker in the meantime adorns action figures (*Tortured Souls*, *Infernal Parade*), comics books (*Ectokid*, *Hokum & Hex*, *Saint Sinner*) computer/video games (*Undying*, *Jericho*) and even plush toys (*Jump Tribe*). Barker generally develops background storyline and characters. Admittedly, one could argue that this is rather successful marketing than artistic diversity.

[2] Douglas E. Winter, *Clive Barker. The Dark Fantastic. The Authorized Biography* (New York: Harper Collins, 2002).

[3] Within this book, the term *transgression* will not be restricted to the field of gender studies referring to a transgression of conventional gender boundaries but implies transgressing the physical body, too. Following this concept, transgression includes transformation (physical level) and transcendence (psychic level).

[4] Given the high amount of gender-related topics, *Imajica* is certainly worth a separate analysis, so that this book will focus on selected areas.

subject matter, it must be noted that the topic cannot be treated comprehensively within the scope of this book. The field of medical science and technology (like the combination of human and machine, the cyborg) is ignored, as is the immaterialness of the body in the digital worlds of the cyberspace. However, these subject areas are irrelevant for a critical analysis of *Imajica* or Barker's current works in general.

Although topics concerning the body have been discussed in a great wealth of publications in various academic fields, secondary literature focussing on Clive Barker's works is mostly limited to the *Books of Blood* and his debut as feature film director *Hellraiser*.[5] This book, which was originally written as a master's thesis in English studies in 2006, hopes to fill this gap to some extent. It takes a gender studies approach wherein gender is defined as „*historisch wandelbares, gesellschaftlich-kulturelles Phänomen*" [historically changeable, sociocultural phenomenon] and understood as pattern of hierarchies.[6] Both factors are relevant for Barker's *Imajica*. In addition, a psychoanalytic reading – actually analytic-psychological, since Barker's texts rather orientate towards Carl Gustav Jung's theories and symbolism – can be helpful.[7] Some reviews have chosen a biographical approach to establish a connection between Barker's homosexuality and the portrayal of gender roles in his works.[8] This book ignores such approaches.

'Body' will be treated as unit of *Leib* and soul or spirit, respectively. Furthermore, the term describes the „*Gebilde, in dem sich soziale Strukturen materialisieren*" [entity in which social structures manifest themselves] and generates the „*biologische Grundlage für die Unterscheidung der Menschen in zwei Geschlechter*" [biological base to distinguish two sexes],[9] including a differentiation between sex and gender. Regarding *Imajica*'s phantasmagorial content, the term body will not be restricted to humans but applied to the outer appearance of any character occurring in the

[5] In this book, 'Barkers work' generally refers to the artist's literary creations if not stated otherwise.

[6] Feldmann, Doris u. Schülting, Sabine: Gender Studies. Gender-Forschung. In: Metzler Lexikon Gender Studies. p. 143.

[7] Psychoanalytic readings are admittedly overrepresented in phantastic and horror fiction; they often leave a bitter aftertaste of an 'interpretation at all costs.'

[8] Apart from misconceiving a text's true potential, these approaches generally just document the omnipresence of gender-specific prejudices, de facto biographies excluded. Quite a few secondary literature texts cite Barker himself very often. In contrast, this book will distance from this approach to focus on *Imajica*'s text.

[9] Combrink, Claudia: Männlicher/weiblicher Körper. In: Metzler Lexikon Gender Studies. Geschlechterforschung. Ansätze. Personen. Grundbegriffe. Ed. by Renate Knoll. Stuttgart: Metzler 2002. p. 212.

novel. In addition, it is assumed that individuals do *have* bodies (subjective property) and *are* bodies (social object) at the same time.[10]

Chapter 1 discusses Barker's work in terms of literary genre, chapter 2 focuses on the body's ambivalence as origin of Barker's depiction of the body. The third chapter 'Celebration of the Imagination' gives an overview of Barker's works from the early plays to current novels such as the *Abarat* series for young adolescents and the recently published novella *Mister B. Gone*, to outline recurring motifs and to introduce the facets of corporeality in Barker's works. Chapter 4 introduces *Imajica* including a brief summary and a comment on the novel's significance in Barker's Œuvre. The critical analysis of the novel follows in chapter 5. Emphasis will be placed on the linguistic level, the 'body in words,' the metaphorisation of the city as body and portrayals of gender roles. Furthermore, Barker's bizarre creatures from the world of the *wunderbar Monströse* [wonderfully monstrous], the body between Eros and Thanatos, the relation of spirit to body as well as self and identity will be analysed. The conclusion, chapter 6, summarises and comments on the results discovered.

Now that we have dealed with the theory: Enjoy reading.

As you have probably figured out by now, the original version of this book was written in German. I never would have been able to translate this text without the help of Dr. Eric Dorfman and Bruce MacPherson. Cheers, mates. I would also like to thank Paul Kane as well as Phil and Sarah Stokes for their positive feedback and encouragement. Last but not least, heaps of thanks to everyone who has helped me with this book, no matter in which way. You can buy Wonderlands in Flesh and Blood. Gender the body, its boundaries and their transgression in Clive Barker's "Imajica" *from the publisher, AVM-Verlag, or from various online sources.* **www.wonderlands.jimdo.com**

Christian Daumann, March 2009

[10] cp. Schmidt, Günther: Identität und Body-Image. Die soziale Konstruktion des Körpers. Tübingen: Eberhard-Karls Universität, Diss. 2001. p. 43.

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1. The Dark Fantastic

In their 2004 compendium *The Gothic*, David Punter and Glennis Byron comment:

> It would not be entirely accurate to call him [Clive Barker] a sadistic writer, but clearly he has been concerned throughout his work with pain and the limits of pain, with what the human body can endure and with what humans can inflict upon each other."[11]

While this is true, it only gives a superficial impression of Barker's works which are certainly more profound than sex'n'violence trivia. Punter and Byron's description of Barker oversimplifies him as "one of Britain's best-known contemporary writers of popular horror fiction." [12] Therefore, Barker's reputation as horror novelist demands a brief discussion.

The horror genre and the (physical) body are mutually dependent. As a result, the horror genre is the only one named after its influence on the audience. With its intention to horrify and unsettle by exploiting our fears, horror is a genre of the body in terms of its motifs as well as an experience of one's physical self.[13] People entertain themselves by becoming scared to 'challenge' their mind and body ("Can I endure it?") or by adopting a voyeuristic, safe position to perceive fictional protagonists in horror.[14]

It cannot be denied that almost any of Barker's works contains elements of horror; the anthology *Books of Blood*, the novella *The Hellbound Heart* and the author's debut novel *The Damnation Game* are prominent representatives of the genre. Later works rather utilise the genre as a stylistic device.

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[11] Punter, David und Byron, Glennis: The Gothic. Oxford et al.: Blackwell Publishing 2004. p. 86.

[12] ibid. p. 85.

[13] In other respects, such a connection can be found in pornographic media at the utmost. Cp. Clover, Carol J.: Her Body, Himself. Gender in the Slasher Film. In: The Dread Difference. Gender and the Horror Film. Ed. by Barry Keith Grant. Austin : Univ. of Texas Press 1999. p. 69.

[14] This particularly applies to cinematic subgenres such us body horror, splatter or recent torture porn movies (e.g. the *Saw* series, 2004-2009) which focus on the portrayal of graphic violence – and the vulnerability of the body in pain. Here, the element of fear is replaced with means to create disgust and revulsion, hence to challenge the body's stamina. This facet is interesting since a huge audience watches these films just for their explicitness. Apart from the voyeuristic attraction of the forbidden from the safe side of the screen, it can be assumed that one appeal of watching graphic violence is to *not* be affected by it and, so to speak, to have a strong stomach ergo a tough body.

Horror fiction suffers from the negative connotation of pulp, which exclusively aims at satisfying prurient instincts. Such a definition is as superficial as simply labelling Barker a master of horror. More accurate is the description of fantastic literature which denies a fixed classification but helps to position Barker's works. Here, subgenres such as dark fantasy, the fantastique or fabulism – terms, Barker uses himself sometimes – have proven to be appropriate. Accordingly, Barker's biographer Douglas E. Winter characterises the artist as 'the dark fantastic' and, even further, as a 'modern mythmaker.'[15]

To rule out confusions and possible misinterpretations, some brief definitions of (literary) genres used in this book are provided at this point.

Fantasy/fantastic literature/the fantastique: collective term for genres in which laws of nature are overruled; supernatural elements occur frequently and dominate a work's storyline. Works of the fantastique touch the boundaries of several subgenres such as fantasy, horror and/or science fiction.

> They're [stories of fantastic literature] the tales of the collective tribe, the fundamental metaphors of confrontation with things that may devour us or may offer us transcendence, and may be offering both in the same moment. At its best, fantastic fiction creates an immensely sophisticated, metaphorical language about very human issues.[16]

In this context, a 'fantastic body' is a body that defies the laws of nature and which can abandon the physical boundaries of the flesh.

Horror fiction: texts which deal with the uncanny to cause feelings of terror, disgust and fear while they focus on these issues in terms of plot at the same time. Frequently generalised as „*selbstzweckhaft die Sensationsgier ihrer Konsumenten befriedigende Schundliteratur*" [trashy literature which only satisfies people's sensationalism as an end in itself].[17] The horror subject will be of interest since the genre has effectively influenced all of Barker's works so far.

Splatterpunk: subgenre of horror fiction, which gained popularity in the mid of the 1980s and owes its name to the splatter film and cyberpunk fiction.[18] Also born as a counter movement to 'cookie-cutter horror', splatterpunk breaks with conventional traditions of subtle, hidden horror. The genre is characterised by its

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[15] Winter, Douglas E.: Clive Barker. The Dark Fantastic. The Authorized Biography. New York: Harper Collins 2002.

[16] Strauss, Bob: The New King. In: Stephen King and Clive Barker. The Illustrated Guide to the Masters of the Macabre. Ed. by James Van Hise. Las Vegas: Pioneer Books 1990. p. 91.

[17] Schweikle, Irmgard: Horrorliteratur. In: Metzler Literaturlexikon. Begriffe und Definitionen. Ed. by Günther und Irmgard Schweikle. 2. überarbeitete Auflage. Stuttgart: Metzler 1990. p. 207.

[18] Allegedly, the term *Splatterpunk* was coined by David J. Schow during the World Fantasy Convention 1986.

hyperrealism and 'anatomical richness' when depicting scenes of violence and sexuality.[19] In its straightforwardness, frustration about society's bondages, social disparities and moral hypocrisy become apparent. Splatterpunk uses spectacle to bring up painful subjects, deconstructs the body by depicting it as flesh and asks: "What does it mean to be human? and what are the limits of human consciousness?"[20]

> Splatterpunk forces us to gaze at what we would feel more comfortable not seeing; it insists on the confrontation of the repressed and supressed. […] If there is any redemption for us in the late-twenty century, it can only come through the cathartic revelation and acceptance of the repressed.[21]

Splatterpunk could not completely establish itself as independent (sub)genre and remained a category on the margins but nevertheless entered the mainstream. An interesting article on splatterpunk in Barker's early works[22] is *There are no Limits: Splatterpunk, Clive Barker, and the Body in-extremis* by Jay McRoy (see bibliography).
Dark Fantasy: hybrid genre of horror and fantasy fiction as well as a subgenre of fantasy fiction in which elements of horror fiction are dominating. Components of fantasy fiction mostly refer to fanciful parallel and alternative universes; elements of horror fiction relate to dark, morbid tales and stress stylistic devices to create fear.

Shallow representatives of horror and fantasy fiction are often characterised by celebrating stereotypes. For example, women are generally nothing more than accessories or simply labelled saint, whore or Amazon without any further comment. Thus, the subliminal potential of fantastic literature is wasted or misused, respectively. With its capability to undermine 'reality,' the readership's perception can namely be sensitised to the 'Other' or even be made aware for 'alternative concepts' in the first place. Due to its mass compatibility for reasons of escapism, fantastic literature perhaps qualifies for establishing alternative realities in particular compared to other genres. „Dark fantasy reconnects readers to the body experienced in childhood as a radical openness to experience, and so become politically subversive."[23] *Imajica* makes use of this by opening multiple

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[19] cp. McRoy, Jay: There Are No Limits. Splatterpunk, Clive Barker and the Body *in-extremis*. In: Paradoxa. Studies in World Literary Genres 17 (2002). p. 130.
[20] Kern, Louis J.: American "Grand Guignol". Splatterpunk Gore, Sadean Morality and Socially Redemptive Violence. In: Journal of American Culture 19 (1996). p. 49.
[21] ibid. p. 57.
[22] It shall be noted that the author Barker rejects this classification due to a dislike for generalising genre tags.
[23] Badley, Linda: Writing Horror and the Body. The Fiction of Stephen King, Clive Barker and Anne Rice. Wesport: Greenwood Press 1996. p. 81.

perspectives on the body, which defy the idea of a fixed body. Likewise, this applies for horror fiction in general:

> It allows you to talk about death, insanity, sexual obsession, the failure of social systems, and the destruction of the nuclear family. You can subvert the status quo […]. And you can do that in a format which is very accessible, and people will pick it up […], and maybe not realize the subtext.[24]

This sensitisation is also possible vice versa when it does not promote the Other but propagandises the same clichés and stereotyped characters over and over again.

Still, Barker's works are associated with the horror genre even if recent publications like the *Abarat* series were rather books for children and young adults. Where does this classification come from? Reasons can be traced back to Barker's early works whose distinctive impact is still dominant to the present day. First, there are the ground-breaking and highly successful *Books of Blood* (1984 - 1985). Second, there is Stephen King's praise for these short stories ("I have seen the future of horror, and his name is Clive Barker"). [25] Third, there is Barker's acclaimed feature film directing debut *Hellraiser* (1987). This film in particular, without doubt primarily a horror or even splatter movie, is inseparably connected with the name Clive Barker and has become his quasi-trademark. In Germany, this phenomenon is strengthened by the fact that the movie was cut for its release due to its portrayal of violence which made the film, needless to say, even more popular.[26] The 'monsters' of the film, the cenobites (see chapter 3.3), became a part of popular culture and are considered icons of modern horror cinema.[27] Ironically, the novella on which the film is based seems to be one of the less popular works among Barker's readers.

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[24] Lupoff, Richard; Wolinsky, Richard u. Davidson, Lawrence: A Talk with the King. In: Stephen King and Clive Barker. The Illustrated Guide to the Masters of the Macabre II. Ed. by James Van Hise. Las Vegas: Pioneer Books 1992. p. 79.

[25] The quote's inflationary use for advertising purposes has almost reduced it to nothingness.

[26] The movie was actually placed on the 'index' and restricted for an adult audience since the film's content was considered harmful to minors. The original version of *Hellraiser* is still *indiziert* in Germany which means, among other things, it must not be sold to minors and it cannot be openly displayed or advertised.

[27] Since Barker had to sell the film distribution rights to the film studio in order to direct *Hellraiser*, the subject to this day was continued and virtually exploited with currently seven more or less tolerable sequels, which involved a general decline in quality. Therefore, Barker decided to bury his creation with dignity by writing a new novel (*The Scarlet Gospels*) yet to be released. Nevertheless, this will not protect the saga from the quite real hell of Hollywood. A *Hellraiser* remake or 'reinterpretation,' respectively, is scheduled for 2011. Although Barker is involved, it can be assumed that he rather intends a sort of damage control than retelling a story told more than twenty years ago.

Apart from traditional (fantastic) literary influences such as Shelley or Poe,[28] biblical motifs and, concerning Barker's graphic style, visual arts (e.g. Blake, Goya or Bosch) and naturally film (e.g. Cocteau, Disney) shape the artist's work. With its repertoire of dark prisons „*mit unerklärlichen Geschehnissen, Tod, Verfall [und] düster-erhabene[n] Landschaften*" [inexplicable incidents, death, decadence and gloomy-sublime landscapes], the Gothic fiction genre is reflected in Barker's works as well.[29] The artist's influences cannot and shall not be further discussed here. For interested readers, the above-mentioned biography *The Dark Fantastic* by Douglas E. Winter – still the most comprehensive work of secondary literature – and the official Barker website *Revelations (*www.clivebarker.info) are highly recommended.[30]

[28] Barker dedicated a play and a short story, respectively, to both of them with *Frankenstein in Love* and *New Murders in the Rue Morgue.*

[29] Seeber, Hans Ulrich: Der Schauerroman. In: Englische Literaturgeschichte. 3. erweiterte Auflage. Hrsg. von Hans Ulrich Seeber et al.: Stuttgart: Metzler 1999. p. 263.

[30] Revelations. The Official Clive Barker Resource.

2. Paradox of the Flesh

The paradox of the flesh ranks first in Barker's body worlds. A paradox we all experience right from the very beginning of our lives – and from the very beginning, it is a paradox of boundaries.

> The same nerve endings which make a touch from the beloved the best thing in life are also the nerve endings which will give us great agony […]. There is an ambiguity in the way that our bodies are built, and we learn this as children […] in a pre-sexual condition. We learn that our bodies are ambiguous, paradoxical in what they can provide us with.[31]

The body becomes mysterious as soon as it eludes our willpower and control; it leaves us in the dark about its physical capabilities. Only when we are sick and in pain, we know what it means to be healthy. On the one hand, the body is carrier of and projection screen for identity, the self. On the other hand, the body is an actor wearing a mask to veil its intentions and to slip into another skin. It frustrates us when the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak; it unsettles us when our desire triumphs over reason. Some feel imprisoned in the wrong body or wish to leave their corporeal boundaries behind. The body defines the social appearance and is even more defined by the latter.

People make sure of their bodies by exposing themselves to risks on purpose; they want to feel their bodies. They work out and decorate the body by piercing and tattooing it. People seek extreme situations to escape everyday life and to test and transcend the body's limits, be it by means of lust, fear, pain – or by lustful pain and painful lust.

The bodies that Clive Barker creates know about all these problems. They also know about our deeply hidden desires and fears by em*body*ing them. At the same time, they explore and map the body and challenge conventional mindsets of the 'norm.' In the place of the body as temple, which was bombastically demolished in the *Books of Blood*, a 'polymorphic-perverse playground' has been built where Barker's texts go wild.

[31] Lupoff; Wolinsky u. Davidson: A Talk with the King. In: Masters of the Macabre II. p. 81.

3. Celebration of the Imagination – a selection of Barker's Works

What is it sets Homer, Virgil
and Milton in so high a rank of art?
Why is the Bible more entertaining
and instructive than any other book?
Is it not because they are addressed
to the imagination, which is spiritual sensation,
and but immediately to the understanding or reason?

William Blake

Since they are still widely considered benchmarks of the author (see above) even if they do not exclusively represent Barker's body of work anymore, The *Books of Blood*, the novella *The Hellbound Heart*, and its film adaption *Hellraiser*, will be discussed here in detail. For a comprehensive overview of Barker's works, the above-mentioned biography *The Dark Fantastic* – it covers the complete works until the year 2000 – and the website *Revelations* can be recommended once more. An elaborate study ranging from Barker's early works to his second movie *Nightbreed* provides Linda Badley's *Writing Horror and the Body. The Fiction of Stephen King, Clive Barker and Ann Rice*. Readers particularly interested in *Hellraiser* should not miss Paul Kane's *The Hellraiser Films and their Legacy*, which is the most detailed and entertaining publication on the subject currently available (see bibliography for references).

3.1 Inhabiting Other Skins – early plays

They say he ate babies. Now don't look so shocked.
Eating babies is least of tonight's entertainments.

Clive Barker, *Frankenstein in Love*

Barker's literary ambitions begin as playwright. Early works such as *The History of the Devil or Scenes from a Pretended Life* (1980), *Frankenstein in Love or the Life of Death* (1981) or *Colossus* (1983), inspired by the paintings of Francisco José de Goyas y Lucientes, already feature the characteristic motifs to-be. First and foremost: The body and the flesh in a gloomy-cheerful world of demonic carnival, intoxicated between Eros and Thanatos, appetite, violence, pain and lust. The titles of the plays – punningly published as *Incarnations. Three Plays by Clive Barker* in 1995 – already refer to the topic of corporeality: The devil is a master of deception, an

actor playing various roles, wearing various skins.[32] The name of Frankenstein is inevitably connected with the artificial, man-made body and 'Colossus' evokes the picture of a giant body even if the reference to Goya is unknown. In addition, the plays' mise-en-scènes follow the tradition of the Grand Guignol theatre. The last-mentioned characteristics reflect those of horror fiction. "[H]orror is Carnival and rooted in transgression: norms are inverted, taboos acted out, and metamorphosis is celebrated".[33] Barker's early works also focus on evil and dark menaces which, in the end, do always originate from mankind itself. The would-be monsters are actually the better 'humans' and vice versa, a motif that recurred as basic concept in Barker's *Cabal* (1988).

Another important theme is the transgression of consisting anatomical, biological and gender-related borders. The audience meets "extraordinary creatures,[34] "cross-dressing pathologists"[35] and „insane mothers."[36] The plays celebrate the Other and toy with stereotyped (gender) role allocations. Aside from this, the desire for transgressing (corporeal) boundaries implies the longing for liberation. "In the fantasy realms of Clive Barker, liberations of many kinds – the body, the spirit, the longing for love – walk hand-in-hand with the threat of imprisonment, madness, mutilation and all manner of damnations."[37] Here, Faustian motifs can already be recognised, which occur in works such as *The Damnation Game* (1985), *The Hellbound Heart* (1986), *Hellraiser* or *Lord of Illusions* (1995). However, boundaries are nut just transgressed but they become increasingly ambivalent and converge.

> THE DEVIL: I've seen men and women in the throes of bubonic plague, lying beside each other on diseased blankets under a dirty lamp, suddenly overcome with passion for each other's bodies, sores notwithstanding. I've seen them grind their last moments away, grunting out their lives, then collapsing on to each other, dead. When that's the way most of you touch Heaven, if at all, how can you believe that I, who didn't make you, am more malicious than the God who did?[38]

Apart from mingling boundaries, the quote above also ironic-critically refers to the history of Christian or Catholic religion and its institution, whose patriarchal

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[32] cp. Barker, Clive: Incarnations. Three Plays by Clive Barker. New York: Harper Collins 1998. p. 245.
[33] Badley, Linda: Film, Horror, and the Body Fantastic.Westport: Greenwood Press 1995. p. 10.
[34] Barker, Clive: Frankenstein in Love ot the Life of Death. In: Incarnations. p. 179.
[35] ibid. S. 153.
[36] Barker, Clive: Colossus. In: Incarnations. p. 5.
[37] Strauss, B.: The New King. In: Masters of the Macabre. p. 91.
[38]Barker, Clive: The History of the Devil or Scenes from a Pretended Life. In: Incarnations. p. 317.

hierarchies of power will also be treated in later works and particularly in *Imajica*. Nevertheless, there is time for laughter, too. Plays like *The Secret Life of Cartoons* (1982, 1986) are characterised by a pitch black humour and more or less elaborate puns run through the texts. However, some members of the audience might be offended by certain scenes. For instance, in *The History of the Devil*, Christ asks the devil for a spectacular death because he has run out of stories and wants to retire:

> THE DEVIL: Crucifixion.
> CHRIST: Everyone gets that. They do it to sodomites these days. Half of Israel should be up there. Isn't there something they do in the East with hooks through the skin? Swing you round a pole on hooks? Takes days. And so unusual.[39]

Readers familiar with Barker will note the reference to hooks which also decorate the scenery in *Frankenstein in Love*: "Loops of colored lights hang over the space, mingling with bloody chains and butcher's hooks."[40] Hooks and chains later became recurring stylistic (torture) devices in Barker's works. Since *Hellraiser* (see chapter 3.3), they define the 'Barkeresque' inventory of hell.

3.2 Finding Flesh Worthy to Use – *Books of Blood*

'There are lives lived for love,'
said Lichfield to his new company,
'and lives lived for art.
We happy band have chosen the latter persuasion.'
There was a ripple of applause amongst the actors.
'To you, who have never died, may I say:
welcome to the world!'

Clive Barker, *Sex, Death and Starshine*

In the short story collection called *The Books of Blood*, the body is literally exposed through the skin to the bone, to the core. The epigraph announces, admittedly slightly shallow and blatant: "Every body is a book of blood; / Wherever we're opened, we're red."[41] The body is turned into text, is made a book while the text becomes a body – word was flesh. The framework plot tells the story of a charlatan pretending to be a subject. Ironically, he becomes just that when the ghosts of the dead take their revenge and write their tales of woe on and in his body: A tongue-in-cheek reference to breaking the taboo which is actually to

[39] ibid. p. 297.
[40] Barker, C.: Frankenstein in Love. p. 155.
[41] Barker, Clive: Books of Blood. Volumes 1-3. London: Warner Books 2000. p. iii.

overwrite prescriptive limits. Bringing the introductory epigraph to mind, the act of reading becomes an act of wounding and opening the body – just like the charlatan's body is wounded by its in- and description through ghosts and narrator. Linda Badley emphasises the gender-related context:

> By bringing horror's psychoanalytic subtext (the female "wound") into the prominent position of text and the body, Barker changes the violent act of reading and writing the (female) body into the central problem of the series. Barker advertises the sadism of the text at the same time as he stresses its diagnostic necessity. Thus he makes his fictions "usefully dangerous" and useful for women. [42]

Following Badley's argumentation, the concept of the 'paternal author,' whose creativity brings life like his penis, is rejected.[43]

The actual short stories in the *Books of Blood* celebrate and stage the breaking of taboos: "Eros and Thanatos in a sado-masochistic dialogue."[44] Depictions are explicit and full of painstaking detail and thereby mirror influences of 'body horror' cinema.[45] "From their earliest pages, the Books of Blood demystify the body – and, when necessary, reduce it to meat – forcing the reader to admit to mortality and, indeed, to life in a food chain".[46] In this connection it shall be noted that the depiction of the body as flesh corresponds, beyond a similarity of names, to the Cyberpunk genre.[47] In the *Books of Blood*, the body opens and is opened; it is penetrated, massacred, transformed and redefined. Body parts revolt and take a life of themselves, ghost and undead appear; bodies change their sex, rot alive and become hypersexualised. Thus, these subjects reflect, on a literary level, the cinematic trends of the last years:

> Horror became a […] theater of cruelty specializing in representations of the human anatomy […] in disarray or deconstruction, in metamorphosis, invaded or engulfing, in sexual difference, monstrous otherness, or Dionysian ecstasy: the body fantastic [L. Badley on *The Exorcist*].[48]

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[42] Badley, L.: Writing Horror and the Body. p. 82f.
[43] cp. Gilbert, Sandra M. u. Gubar, Susan: The Madwoman in the Attic. The Women Writer and the Nineteenth-century Literary Imagination. New Haven et al.: Yale University Press 1984. p. 6.
[44] Badley, L.: Writing Horror and the Body. p. 13.
[45] Barker's works have been compared to the (early) films of David Cronenberg from the beginning.
[46] Winter, D. E.: The Dark Fantastic. p. 161.
[47] People without any technical body modification are called *meat*. In addition, the aesthetics of Cyberpunk generate and redefine corporeal boundaries. Cp. McRoy, Jay: There Are No Limits. p. 131.
[48] Badley, L.: Film, Horror, and the Body Fantastic. p. 26.

The idea of the body fantastic reveals a fascination for a colourful darkness of bizarre wonders, eroticism, the uncanny and macabre; bodies without limits. Barker's works are peopled with fabulous creatures which embody the dichotomy of allure and revulsion that characterises many of the artist's creations. This concept shall also be called the *wunderbar Monströse* [wonderfully monstrous] throughout this book – while Tzvetan Todorov would probably speak of perversities.[49] Later in *Imajica*, the wonderfully monstrous will be particularly reflected in the character of Kuttner Downd (see chapter 5.4.3).

The *Books of Blood* depict sexuality and instincts in a manner so rampant it reaches the burlesque – in *The Age of Desire* (*Books of Blood* Vol. 4) for instance, the drugged test subject of project 'Blind Boy' cannot help but gratify everyone and everything, and has sex with a hole in a wall. While traditional horror fiction and film handles sexuality in the subtext, the *Books of Blood* chose an explicitly graphic portrayal since the supposed subtext has become conventional. The short stories further on reinvent the body and its boundaries, too. The balance of the dichotomies between pleasure and pain as well as life and death is readjusted and interchanged. This will be one of the themes in the novella *The Hellbound Heart*. "[Clive Barker shares a] vision of the body as the true site of horror, in its transformation, mutilation, and pain, but also its beauty, for Barker's characters achieve what he clearly sees as a kind of transcendence, an escape from selfhood, through their pain […]." [50] However, a state of transcendence is not achieved merely by pain and corporeal transformation/metamorphosis but also by sexuality and by its combination with the former. The experience of the body in extreme situation becomes the key to self-awareness. Here, one might think of Freud's statement made in *Das Ich und das Es* [*The Ego and the Id*] saying that pain is a precondition for corporeal self-perception. The *Books of Blood*, however, rather comment sneeringly: "And Freud?; Viennese charlatan. What did the old opium-eater have to tell anyone?"[51] In this connection, Linda Badley shall be quoted once more. Although Badley admits that many elements of horror – and Barker's – fiction can be approached with Freud (such as the motifs of the doppelgänger and the Wolf Man, for instance), she emphasises that the horror genre cannot be interpreted as a simple product of repressed sexuality anymore: "[H]orror is driven by a much broader public anxiety about gender, mortality, and control than Freud could have anticipated [and] has more to do with the loss of what Foucault called Freud's

[49] Vgl. Todorov, Tzvetan: Einführung in die fantastische Literatur. München: Carl Hanser 1972. p. 124.
[50] Jones, Darryl: Horror. A Thematic History in Fiction and Film. London: Arnold 2002. p. 175.
[51] Barker, Clive: The Body Politic. Books of Blood Vol. 4. In: Books of Blood. Volumes 4-6. London: Warner Books 2001. p. 22.

'repressive hypothesis,' and the suppression of something else."[52] What remains are conceptions of alternative bodies and the depiction of their possible existence.

Quite a few stories in the *Books of Blood* finish with a character's death – even though this might not be final. Nevertheless, in the ultimate experience of death, characters often find salvation through cognition: a twisted happy ending. Due to the loss of the body and the feeling of pain, if not conceived as a sensual adventure which makes life perceptible in the first place, characters are empowered to gain an alternative self-perception. Their bodies might be wounded and scarred, or dead, but a reflection on the sense of being is not possible until then. When characters are finally overtaken by a 'definite' death, this happens with the character's certainty to have found this particular sense for which numberless living and 'normal' people desperately search their entire life in vain.

Under the short stories' skin, in the subtext, depictions of patriarchal power hierarchies, open-mindedness towards homosexual love, biting social and media criticism, and last but not least, a self-reflexive comment on the voyeuristic act of watching are concealed. It is striking that those stories which centre on a female protagonist encourage readers to reconsider and to rethink stereotyped gender-roles. "Barker […] used the metaphor of the body as text to explore technologies of gender and desire. Barker's stories […] imagine female subjectivity with remarkable, if varying, degrees of success; and attempt to overturn misogynistic horror clichés."[53] Needless to say, the *Books of Blood* can also be read simply for entertainment to engage in the comforting, voyeuristic chills of horror fiction. "There's no delight the equal of dread".[54] For all that, the *Books of Blood*'s explicit depictions of corporeal scenarios do not glorify violence but functionalise it to provoke and, to speak with Kristeva, to use it as abject to confront readers' egos with their limits.[55] The anthology belongs to the most analysed works of Barker, generally in connection with the horror genre, the Gothic Novel and the fantastique, but also increasingly in gender discourses.

> Barker revitalized the tale of terror [and] made it a vehicle for ideas, forcing a "reactionary" genre to take on taboos and open up to controversial issues: the politics of gender, feminism, male violence against women, homosexuality, AIDS, urban blight, Marxism, violence in the media, pornography, and censorship.[56]

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[52] Badley, L.: Writing Horror and the Body. p. 6.
[53] ibid. p. 83. See also p. 13 and p. 82, where Badley puts the *Books of Blood*, among other things, into context with the French Écriture Feminine.
[54] Barker, C.: Dread. Books of Blood Vol. 2. In: Books of Blood. Vol. 1-3. p. 1.
[55] cp. Heselhaus, Herrad: Abjektion. In: Metzler Lexikon Gender Studies. p. 1.
[56] Badley, L.: Writing Horror and the Body. p. 74.

Recent film adaptions of short stories such as *The Midnight Meat Train*[57] (2008) or *Book of Blood* (2008) demonstrate that the *Books of Blood* still air their dark fascination and have not lost their grim appeal. However, the *The Midnight Meat Train*, directed by Japanese genre connoisseur Ryuhei Kitamura, rather focusses on splatter and body horror than delivering a "satire of big city life and of social and political hypocrisy.[58]

In addition to the secondary literature previously mentioned, interested readers are referred to Gary Hoppenstand's *Clive Barker's Books of Blood. Imagination as Metaphor in the Books of Blood and Other Works* (see bibliography).

3.3 Dreams of a Pleasure Dome – *The Damnation Game*, *The Hellbound Heart* and *Hellraiser*

Thou traitor, Faustus, I arrest thy soul
For disobedience to my sovereign lord:
Revolt, or I'll in piece-meal tear thy flesh.

Christohper Marlowe, *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*

Both Barker's debut novel *The Damnation Game* (1985) and the novella *The Hellbound Heart* as well as its film adaption *Hellraiser* deal with the *Faust-Stoff*; it further on affects the short story *The Last Illusion* (*Books of Blood* Vol. 6) and its film adaption *Lord of Illusions* (Clive Barker, 1995). The texts mirror a fascination for definitions of evil, the perils of the flesh and the Faust-Stoff itself,[59] which Barker had already adapted in an experimental silent movie before (*The Forbidden*, 1975-1978).

Macho Man Frank Cotton is bored by his life and longs for the ultimate sexual experience. By solving the Lemarchand Configuration, a mysterious puzzle box which opens a door to another world, Frank hopes to achieve his stereotypical male fantasies. So he summons the inhabitants of this alternative world: "Cenobites, theologians of the order of the Gash."[60] Unlucky for Frank, the cenobites define pleasure in their very own way – and that is pain. The Faustian pact is not simply sealed with blood: Frank's body is torn apart. "They [the cenobites] had overdosed him on sensuality, until his mind teetered on madness,

[57] *Books of Blood* Vol. 1
[58] Hoppenstand, Gary: Clive Barker's Short Stories. Imagination as Metaphor in the Books of Blood and Other Works. Jefferson: McFarland&Company 1994. p. 47.
[59] cp. Winter, D. E.: The Dark Fantastic. p. 186.
[60] Barker, Clive: The Hellbound Heart. New York: Harper Collins 1991. p. 4.

then they'd initiated him into experiences that his nerves still convulsed to recall." [61] The body's sensorium surrenders and finally collapses. In this connection, some studies have argued that the depiction of exhausting physical and sexual boundaries going along with self-destruction symbolises the threat of AIDS. Besides, novella and film adaption have also been accused of condemning gender transgressions which, admittedly, seems unlikely. [62] By accident Frank finds a way to regain his body, or rather a new corpus. Now he needs blood to become whole again. Hence, there is a clear dichotomy of body and soul or *Leib* and spirit, respectively, given that the latter apparently survived the body's destruction and eventually represents the self. Consequently, the cenobites do not threaten with destroying the body – since it involves the sexual, erotic component – but with tearing the soul apart. The Faustian desire is explicitly sexually connoted and repeatedly acted out in a question-and-answer scheme in both novella and film adaption.[63] Furthermore, themes such as vampirism, the haunted house, alternative/parallel worlds and unraveling puzzles (Lemarchand Configuration) can be found in the works. In this context solving a riddle frequently opens portals to other worlds in Barker's fiction.[64]

Franks's brother Rory (Larry in the film adaption) moves his with his wife Julia into the house which Frank's disappearance – or rather his body's – leaves abandoned. Of course, the couple knows nothing about Frank's fate. This constellation marks the rebeginning of a love triangle. Frank had a brief sexual adventure with Julia who still longs for her manly brother-in-law. Rory is a feminised dreamer and not capable to satisfy the (sexual) needs of his wife, who is characterised as desirable and beautiful throughout the novella. For Rory, Julia is simply the "perfect hausfrau."[65] When Rory hurts himself and spills his blood in the room where his brother's body was destroyed, he actually enables Frank to return 'in the flesh' and escape the cenobites. Julia then finds Frank in a stadium of "corrupted flesh"[66] and decides to provide her former lover with blood. She becomes a man-eating femme fatale who lures her victims, rather fresh meat, with sex in her house and increasingly enjoys killing men for Frank. Julia adopts a perverted mother role since Frank cannot please her sexually yet: "She had made this man, or remade him, used her wit and her cunning to give him

[61] ibid. p. 62.
[62] cp. Sharrett, Christopher: The Horror Film in Neoconservative Culture. In: The Dread Difference. p. 261f. Even if Frank had intended to leave his fleshly body behind, the fact that it is destroyed is not a form of punishment in the cenobites' understanding.
[63] One of the first questions the cenobites ask Frank is "What do you want?" although they should know very well. The film opens with the question "What's your pleasure, Sir?"
[64] cp. *The Inhuman Condition* in *Books of Blood. Volume 4*, for instance. Here, a composition of knots on a string has to be solved literally.
[65] Barker, C.: The Hellbound Heart. p. 42.
[66] cp. ibid. p. 49.

substance. The thrill she felt, touching this too vulnerable body, was the thrill of ownership."[67] In this connection, one might also refer to the "*masochistische[n] Phantasma des enthäuteten Körpers*" [masochistic phantasm of the skinned body] which Claudia Benthien describes as disruption linked to the infant's imagination of a mutual skin with the first reference person.[68] However, Julia becomes more addicted to Frank the more he becomes (a) man again.

In his different states of regeneration, Frank resembles images in an anatomic science book; he becomes a walking wound. Again, the text plays with gender boundaries by giving Frank stereotypical female attributes: his body is soft, unprotected, wet and permanently vulnerable. However, it can be doubted that female sexuality (Julia) is at the same time exploited and doomed.[69] Playing with gender connotations correlates with the relation between lust and pain:

> [Frank] experiences a redefinition of eroticism that confounds his familiar notions of physical pleasure and explores the potentialities of the body in-extremis – an infinitely fluid, infinitely penetrating and penetratable body that, while collapsing the distinctions between "pleasure" and "pain," offers radical alternatives to the familiar binaries of male and female, straight and gay.[70]

Considering this background, an ironic comment concerning the male gaze is also interesting:

> It was human, she saw, or had been. But the body had been ripped apart and sewn together again with most of its pieces either missing or twisted and blackened as if in a furnace. There was an eye, gleaming at her, and the ladder of a spine, the vertebrae stripped of muscle, a few unrecognizable fragments of anatomy.[71]

Eventually, Frank only lacks a second skin to become whole again. Barker already visualised the skinned body in the silent movie *The Forbidden*. Here, angles skin the Faust character alive who, now liberated, reaches a state of transcendence. Supported by the black-and-white depiction, the scene carries a grotesque aesthetic quality. *Frankenstein in Love* also features characters who long for skin to become complete and finally human. In *The Hellbound Heart/Hellraiser*, the motif culminates. Besides the cenobites and particularly the iconic 'Pinhead,' the skinless Frank Cotton is probably one of the most famous impressions from Barker's (cinematic) works. Together, Julia and Frank murder Rory/Larry and

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[67] ibid. p. 98.
[68] Benthien, Claudia: Haut. Literaturgeschichte – Körperbilder – Grenzdiskurse. Reinbeck: Rowohlt Taschenbuch 2001. p. 14.
[69] cp. Sharrett, C.: The Horror Film in Neoconservative Culture. p. 261.
[70] McRoy, J.: There Are No Limits. p. 138.
[71] Barker, C.: The Hellbound Heart. p. 49.

take his skin. With the "usurped skin,"[72] Frank adopts his brother appearance *and* identity. However, the cenobites learn about Frank's escape and demand him back for punishment.

Barker's distinctive depictions of the wonderfully monstrous body visualised in appearance and *Gestalt* of the demons from the 'Order of the Gash,' skinless Frank and later the shapeshifters of the *Nightbreed* (see chapter 3.4) have become archetypal and inspired numerous (cinematic) copies.

> Frank had difficulty guessing the speaker's [a cenobite] gender with any certainty. Its clothes, some of them which were sewn *to* and *through* its skin, hid its private parts, and there was nothing in the dregs of its voice, or in its willfully disfigured features that offered the least clue. When it spoke, the hooks that transfixed the flaps of its eyes and were wed, by an intricate system of chains passed through flesh and bone alike, to similar hooks through the lower lip, were teased by the motion, exposing the glistening meat beneath. [Italics in original][73]

The cenobites' sexless bodies emblazed with wounds open up for the audience. Coming with butcher tools and wearing leather clothing resembling a priest's robe, the cenobites create a sadomasochistic projection surface and represent order as well as (sexual) desire. Anyhow, in contrast to the human protagonists, they are no monsters but eloquent, civilised demons acting upon a rightful basis representing order, not chaos. In addition, they only appear when summoned or better: when they are desired. Hooks and other sharp objects – which decorate, wound or decorate bodies with wounds – can often be found in Barker's works.[74] They become a tool for libidinous and controlled pain to reach transcendence but do also represent bonds. Besides, the hook is, mostly in form of a trident, weapon and sceptre oft the Christian devil. It does not come as a surprise that the hooks which penetrate the cenobites' bodies are not only jewellery but also tools the demons use to 'please' evocators and to punish apostates. When pierced through the body's skin, the hooks keep the body in tension, balance the sensation of lust and pain and thereby create a "*perverse[n] Zusammenhang von Schändung und Bindung […]; während das Messer […] die Grenzen von Ich und Welt öffnet, reißt der Haken sie ein*" [perverse combination of desecration and bonding; while the knife opens up the borders of the ego and the world, the hook rips these borders apart].[75] Hooks and chains have not only become a

[72] cp. Barker, C.: The Hellbound Heart. p. 147.
[73] ibid. p. 8.
[74] See also Strauss, B.: The New King. In: Masters of the Macabre. p. 91.
[75] Brittnacher, Hans Richard: Die Bilderwelt des phantastischen Schreckens. Die Verführungskraft des Horrors in Literatur und Film. In: Phantastik – Kult oder Kultur. Aspekte eines Phänomens in Kunst, Literatur und Film. Edited by Christine Ivanović, Jürgen Lehmann and Markus May. Stuttgart: Metzler 2003. p. 292f.

trademark of the cenobites but also of the *Hellraiser* movies in general.[76] Furthermore, the cenobites' use of hooks, the clattering of chains dangling clashing from the ceilings of dark rooms, created a stylistic device for the cinematic depiction of a dismal and threatening atmosphere as recently seen the *Saw* film series (2004-2009). Design of the cenobites and the graphically explicit depictions of the body in extremis play with the relation between seeing and showing. A nauseated "I don't want to see" rapidly becomes an exciting "Show me" when we cannot avert our eyes for reasons of forbidden curiosity: Voyeuristic desire is simply more tempting than disgust. So, like its predecessors, the novella/movie juggles with the conventions of the genre. Consequently, "We have so much sights to show you" is one of the heavily cited lines from the film adaption whose ambiguity is strengthened with regard to its cinematic medium.

Above all, the eroticism of the cenobites – they certainly exude a grotesque sex-appeal – and their bodies have to be considered. In this connection, it is worth to briefly consider the body in punk subculture, which shares more than a literal reference to the splatterpunk genre:

> Durch die Einbeziehung von Fetischen aus der Symbolwelt des Sadomasochismus inszeniert der Punk seinen Körper, und über seinen Körper sich selbst, als *nackt*, *leidend* und *triebhaft*. Halsbänder, Ketten und Nadeln setzen künstliche, auto-erotische Zeichen. Sie signalisieren nicht nur eine Selbstverstümmelung, sondern fragmentieren den Körper und lassen ihn dadurch, paradoxerweise, nackter erscheinen, als er ist. [By involving fetishes of sadomasochistic imagery, Punk subculture composes the body, and via the body itself, as nude, suffering and libidinous. Necklaces, chains and needles send out artificial, auto-erotic signs. These do not only signalise self-mutilation but fragment the body and, paradoxically, therefore make it appear more naked than it is. [italics in German original][77]

The cenobites, idolised as sex symbols in some cultures, can also be regarded in a similar context.[78] With their appearance, the cenobites also anticipated the pop-cultural body modifications trend of the nineties, when body piercing became socially acceptable. In this frame of reference, it will be relevant to discuss elsewhere if the wonderfully monstrous body does have aesthetic qualities. How else the considerable media presence of Lead Cenobite 'Pinhead,' whose nail-decorated face is baring his teeth on numerous posters, artworks and books, can be explained? Even the world-famous animated sitcom *The Simpsons* has granted

[76] The 'Candyman' from Barker's short story *The Forbidden* (Books of Blood. Volume 5) and the film adaption *Candyman* (Bernard Rose, 1992), shares this trademark in form of a hook hand.

[77] Bette, Karl-Heinrich: Körperspuren. Zur Semantik und Paradoxie moderner Körperlichkeit. Berlin: de Gruyter 1989. p. 126.

[78] cp. Iskra, Nicole: Pinhead persönlich. Interview mit Doug Bradley. In: Moviestar 30 (1997) Issue 7. p. 71f.

Pinhead a cameo appearance which documents the character's pop-cultural impact.[79]

The Hellbound Heart and *Hellraiser* leave a debatable image of men and male gender roles, respectively. Strictly speaking, there are no 'real men.' Frank is a chauvinistic womaniser and becomes the walking wound while his weakly brother Rory/Larry is incapable to satisfy his wife.[80]

3.4 Worlds within Worlds – Weaveworld, Cabal/Nightbreed, The Great and Secret Show and Everville

Some are born to sweet delight,
Some are born to endless night.

William Blake, *Auguries of Innocence*

Weaveworld (1987) for the first time breaks completely with the horror fiction tag and creates an imaginative parallel universe hidden in a carpet. Alternative fantasy worlds beyond elves and dwarves will define the plots of later works. Douglas E. Winter writes: "This fantasy of the reconciliation of the life of the body and the life of the mind would become integral to Barker's later work, reaching an apotheosis in Imajica (1991)."[81] These worlds, like the body, are characterised by the blurring of their borders. In *Weaveworld*, dark elements of the macabre still persist and moments of horror are still very graphic, but they do not dominate the text. Speaking genre-specific, horror, or Splatterpunk, has faded to dark fantasy. Admittedly, the novel follows a rather stereotyped good-vs-evil pattern, so that many readers might just scratch its surface, despite the novel's linguistic and visual finesse and creativity.[82]

The Great and Secret Show (1989) marks the first part of the up to now unfinished trilogy of *The Art*, followed by *Everville* (1994). The novels depict the fight for the dream sea Quiddity, which every human visits in birth, death and the moment of true love. The last-mentioned novels settled in the United States.

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[79] *The Simpsons* episode six, season six (Treehouse of Terror V), 1994.
[80] Interestingly, the Pinhead character of the film adaption – the novella clearly states the Cenobites' gender is dubious – appears to be the only likeable male protagonist. This is due to the actor Doug Bradley who primarily brings Pinhead to life with his characteristic deep voice.
[81] Winter, D. E.: The Dark Fantastic. p. 287.
82 cp. Joshi, S. T.: The Modern Weird Tale. A Critique of Horror Fiction. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company 2001. p. 124.

The novella *Cabal* (1988) and its film adaption *Nightbreed* (1990), directed by Barker, narrate the story of Aaron Boone, who is terrorised by horrible visions. His psychiatrist Dr. Decker talks him into believing to be the 'Calgary Killer,' who is actually Decker himself. After a suicide attempt, hospitalised Boone learns about Midian, the world of the 'Nightbreed,' fabulous creatures of the Other, shapeshifters and outcast monsters. While looking for the netherworld, Boone dies only to be reborn as Cabal, the Messiah of Midian. Following Boone, the police force and Decker also find out about Midian and instantly begin to hunt and murder the Nightbreed.

Once again, humans are the true villains in this „hymn to the monstrous"[83] while the Nightbreed represent repressed marginal groups victimised by social class, race or gender.[84] "Nightbreed are bodies in perpetual transformation; they emerge at the intersection of a plurality of cultural codings."[85]

3.5 Entering the Domus Mundi – *Sacrament* and *Galilee*

Living and dying, we feed the fire.

Clive Barker, *Sacrament*

The novel *Sacrament* (1996) tells the story of Will Rabjohn's self-discovery. While his body is comatose due to an accident, his spirit travels to the past to be confronted again with the mysterious Jacob Steep. In its subplot, the novel covers the current threat of AIDS. *Sacrament* initially caused concerns among the publishers due to the overtly homosexual protagonist (Rabjohn) who might offend readers. Nevertheless, the novel has rather broadened the audience and might also have sensitised the one or other homophobic reader.

Galilee (1998), Barker's first novel featuring a first-person narrator, depicts the history of two family clans through time and society. The novel is highly metafictional to thematise the artistic process of storytelling. By reducing the fantastic elements, both *Sacrament* and *Galilee* focus increasingly on gender roles and their position in society regarding the body. "Barker argues convincingly against gender roles and stereotypes, as well as warning of the dangers of defining oneself through them".[86] Many critics consider these two novels Barker's best so far. This may be due to the fact that the fantastic genre is still

85 Winter, D. E.: The Dark Fantastic. p. 292.
[84] cp. McRoy, J.: There Are No Limits. p. 135.
[85] ibid. p. 143.
[86] Winter, D. E.: The Dark Fantastic. S. 419.

denied the status of intellectual literature and the reduced use of fantastic elements is regarded as a process of maturity or emancipation.

3.6 Monster Hollywood – *Coldheart Canyon*

'Give your soul to me,' a thousand stars.' said.
'I don't believe in souls,' she replied truthfully.
'Then give me what you give to the screen,
what everybody gives. Give me some love.'

Clive Barker, *Son of Celluloid*

After a failed plastic surgery, superstar Todd Pickett withdraws to a mansion in Coldheart Canyon to escape the media frenzy. Soon he realises that the place is haunted by the ghosts of Hollywood, the stars of past movie eras, and the mansion is actually a portal to hell. In the meantime, Pickett's biggest fan is looking for the vanished actor.

Coldheart Canyon (2001), subtitled *A Hollywood Ghost Story*, is a biting comment on the culture industry of Hollywood, satirising its celebrity cult. The topic of corporeality is obvious since nowhere else the (youthful) body is more propagated, made, transformed, celebrated or marketed than in the world of superficial appearances. *Coldheart Canyon* reflects the transitory nature of movie-glamour and takes grim pleasure in mocking its stars. The novel is by far Barker's most provocative work concerning the depiction of sexual obscenities which tend to border on absurdity, admittedly. Nevertheless, *Coldheart Canyon* is not just a haunted house story portraying a decadent society; it is also a story of emancipation as well as self-determination and considers how people cope with death.

3.7 Welcome to Neverland – *The Thief of Always* and *Abarat*

She asked where he lived. 'Second to the right,'
said Peter, 'and then straight on till morning.'

James Matthew Barrie, *Peter Pan*

With the modern fairy tales *The Thief of Always* (1992) and the *Abarat* series (since 2002), Barker for the first time addressed children and young adults, and furthermore illustrated his books.[87] While illustrations in *The Thief of Always*

[87] Barker had already illustrated the covers of the original *Books of Blood*.

loosely support the storyline, *Abarat* utilises images as stylistic device and therefore could even be called a picture-book. Both works follow traditional genre patterns; in form and content, analogies to the fantastic worlds of J. M. Barrie, Frank L. Baum, Lewis Carroll or Roald Dahl can be drawn. Hence, the books primarily deal with growing-up and self-discovery regarding the body subject matter. The wonderfully monstrous, represented by numerous fable creatures, gains a new graphic level due to the books' illustrations.

The short novel *The Thief of Always* tells about ten years old Harvey Swick who is lured by an odd creature into the Holiday House of Mr. Hood, who is actually the house itself. Here, every wish comes true and Harvey is happy to have escaped the daily grind. But with every day he spends in the Holiday House, one year elapses in the real world. Slowly, the boy discovers the dark secret that haunts the house.[88]

Abarat is based on a series of oil paintings by Barker, which were later given an elaborated written history. Accordingly, *Abarat* is to date literally the most colourful work of the artist. The first two episodes *Abarat* (2002) and *Abarat II: Days of Magic, Nights of War* (2005) narrate the adventures of sixteen years old Candy Quackenbusch who accidently enters the phantasmagorical world of the Abarat. Here, 25 islands in the sea Izabella represent the hours of a day. The 25th island, the time out of time, forms the archipelago's magical centre.[89] Barker plans to continue the story with three other books, making it a pentalogy.

3.8 Burn this Book – *Mister B. Gone*

> Without you these words would be black marks
> on white paper, closed up in the dark.
> I'd been locked up in solitary, talking to myself,
> probably saying the same things over and over:
> *Burn this book. Burn this book. Burn this Book.*
>
> Clive Barker, *Mister B. Gone*

With the playful short novel *Mister B. Gone* (2007) 'Mister B(arker)' published a deeply metanarrative text. Elements of horror fiction re-appear to an increasing degree but do only form the framework for the plot.

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[88] *The Thief of Always* has found its way into some school curriculums.

[89] Allegedly, the Walt Disney Company bought the film distribution rights without having read a single line of text. At contract conclusion, only the oil paintings existed. However, a possible film project and even a theme park attraction have been cancelled due to artistic differences.

First-person narrator – telling name – Jakabok Botch, a lesser, physically deformed demon who reminds of the Yattering in *The Yattering an Jack*,[90] tells his tale of woe. Just escaped from a Dante-like hell scenario, and from the fury of his father, Jakabok finds himself in the closing years of the 15th century and eventually ends up in the German city of Mainz. There, a certain Johannes Gutenberg currently works on a printing press with movable letters which will change the world. This causes a conflict between forces of heaven and hell; both want Gutenberg's invention for themselves. An unfortunate Jakabok witnesses a discussion between the two parties not intended for his ears and, as a consequence, is locked in a book. This book is the one readers are now holding in their hands.

More interesting than the plot about demons and angels, which, along with some moments of graphic violence, is responsible for the short novel's horror tag, is the text's metanarrative conception. Jakabo(o)k and the novella are identical which turns the demon into his own biography; narrated and narration time run parallel in parts. Already in the book's first sentence, Jakabok begs the reader to burn the book (and therewith terminating his existence). However, readers will not stop turning over the pages, of course. Jakabok gives in and tries to bait readers with his tale of woe and confessions, hoping to achieve what he desires in the end: A game of seduction between the protagonist and (implied) reader begins. During the subsequent progress of the plot, the demon becomes increasingly desperate. He insults readers and appeals to their sympathy, he threatens them but finally gives up. His last demand:

> Maybe you could help me, just a little? I've entertained you, haven't I? So do me this little kindness. Don't abandon me on a shelf somewhere, gathering dust, knowing I'm still inside, locked away in the darkness. Pass me on, please. It's not much to ask. Give me to someone you hate, somebody you'd be happy to hear had been cut to pieces the way a page is read.[91]

The short novel's metanarrative conception is not restricted to a direct addressing of the reader but also involves Jakaboks ambitions as author and his thoughts about the power of the written word. The way the text allows protagonist and reader to 'interact' furthermore reminds of Wolfgang Iser's concept of the implied reader, which states that readers fill the gaps any text contains to create meaning in the first place.[92]

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[90] *Books of Blood* Vol. 1.
[91] Barker, Clive: Mister B. Gone. Harper Collins: London 2007. p. 247.
[92] Vgl. Iser, Wolfgang: Der Akt des Lesens. Theorie ästhetischer Wirkung. 2. Aufl. München: Fink 1984.

Mister B. Gone owes its charm to the tense relation between first-person narrator and reader. The faster curious readers turn the pages, the more sympathy they feel for suffering Jakabok, although they cause his sorrows themselves. The text's criticism against the church as institution is also noticeable.

The subject matter of the body in *Mister B. Gone* is less expressed with regard to the physical body, even if the protagonist is disfigured and several creatures of the wonderfully monstrous appear. The topic rather focuses on Jakabok's transformed, written body as 'book of blood.' Apart from that, *Mister B. Gone* is a declaration of love to books and their media history.

3.9 Summary

The survey given above identifies some of the topics which coin Barker's (literary) work. In addition to the body and its boundaries as well as gender-related issues, Barker's stories tell about coexisting worlds, which are more or less accidentally discovered by the protagonists, where the author maps impressive, unrivalled imaginative scenarios. However, some of Barker's novels do not always benefit from this: The stories' plots tend to stagnate when the texts just focus on depicting colourful worlds of wonders. In connection with these coexisting worlds lie the motives of the protagonists who for the most are seeking for their self or a new self, respectively, and hope to find knowledge which they oftentimes gain after a (wondrous) journey. Furthermore, particularly the novels and children's books deal with definitions of evil and the never-ending fight between good and evil. In addition, Barker's works increasingly contain metanarrative elements.

4. Clive Barker's *Imajica*

The preceding chapter has already highlighted some facets of the body in Barker's work which can also be found in *Imajica*. First of all, some background information with regard to content and specific terminology is given for reasons of comprehensibility. Chapter 4.2 discusses *Imajica* in the context of Barker's works and briefly comments on the novel. For the sake of readability, the main protagonists are explained separately in the appendix (see chapter 8).

4.1 Content

Our world is just one of five *Dominions* of which the four ones unknown to us exist in a parallel universe: the Imajica. The 'Fifth' is separated from it by the *In Ovo*, a twilight zone or meta level inhabited by demons (*Oviates*) and the unfortunate who get lost there. According to the mythology established in the novel, the first humans separated the Fifth Dominion themselves because they were intimidated by the Imajica's original nature which is a circle. "They couldn't make their mark on what was above, but what was below could be divided, and owned and fought over. […] They lost themselves to territories and nations, all shaped by the other [the male] sex, of course, all named by them."[93] Only few people still know about the world's magical existence. These initiates include the *Maestros*, Imajica's magicians.

Every 200 years a unification of the Dominions is possible but all attempts failed so far. The last *Reconciliation* ended in devastation and death of those involved. Now, the *Tabula Rasa*, a group consisting of the descendants of the last Reconciliation's participants watches over the Fifth Dominion and fights any further rituals or the use of magic. In the meantime in the Imajica, the power-hungry *Autarch* tries to realise his dream of an everlasting city, and to establish a world empire. Fiercely he fights female cults which worship the original, female deities of the Imajica. The novel portrays three people, John Furie Zacharias/Gentle, Judith Odell and the *mystif* Pie'oh'pah,[94] who by travelling through the Dominions find individuation. In the process, they learn how strong they have always been involved with the Imajica.

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[93] Barker, Clive: Imajica. Special Overseas Edition. London: Fontana 1992. p. 976. In the following, text passages cited from the novel will be referred to as "Imajica" in the footnotes. All references cite the above-mentioned edition. *Imajica* in italics refers to the novel. Otherwise, it refers to the fictitious parallel universe.

[94] Pie is an androgynous shapeshifter with a third, but not intersexual, biological gender which changes according to the (unconciuous) desires of those who look at it.

The First Dominion is the refuge of the ultimate masculine, male, power-addicted god Hapexamendios.[95] Here, *the Unbeheld* hides in his city after he once travelled through the Dominions where he subdued, cast out or massacred the numerous, but disunited, goddesses. Hapexamendios is the product of male thirst for power, which made him strong enough to leave the Fifth Dominion to enter the First. "Hapexamendios came into the Dominions with a seductive idea: that wherever you went, whatever misfortune attended you, you needed only one name on your lips, one prayer, one altar, and you'd be in His care." [96] Hapexamendios brings man to the First Dominion – but also putative truth, uniformity as well as fixed patterns – and then builds his pompous city to glorify himself. In his city – he rather *is* the city – he waits for the Dominions' unification through his last son, the *Reconciliator*, after every preceding attempt failed. Eventually, the Reconciliation succeeds but the god, who regards love as a signal of weakness, only wants to destroy the Dominions.[97] Hapexamendios sends his fire to kill the hated mother of his son in the Fifth. However, the god does not know about the Imajica's circle nature and becomes the victim of his own violence. The new deities are goddesses, the saviour (Gentle) remains male.

4.2 *Imajica* in Barker's Œuvre

The brief synopsis demonstrates that the novel certainly contains genre clichés. Nevertheless, even if *Imajica* can be read for pure entertainment, the genre, as usually in Barker's fiction, is also functionalised to invite readers. Both elaborate language and narrative concept refuse the tag of light fiction. The novel depicts multiple, parallel plot lines, which are eventually interwoven, and repeatedly switches between them without loosing stringency. In doing so, the novel unfolds a mystic world with an own geography, society, culture and biota. Apart from subjects characteristically for Barker, the novel basically tells a love story and salvific history. *Imajica* is regarded as one of Barker's most popular and still one of his best novels. A collectible card game was released, to which the author contributed some illustrations.[98]

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[95] Hapex (Greek: hapax = once) – Amen – dios

[96] Imajica. p. 296f.

[97] Towards the novel's end, shortly before the Reconciliation, the character of Dowd muses about a possible threat posed by the unified Dominions: He mentions that the previous Reconciliators who failed might have *wanted* to fail to protect the Imajica against the influence of the father. Dowd provokingly remarks that 'Christos' maybe did not die for the sins of mankind, but for the sins of god.

[98] The novel also inspired unofficial role playing games such as *Imajica. The Unofficial Roleplay Game* (http://philippe.tromeur.free.fr/imajica.htm; website is no longer updated) and *Maganica* (website offline since October 2006).

> [A]midst its complex plot and huge cast of characters, Imajica is a feminist examination into the destructive power of a male-dominated society [emphasising] a setting framed by several differnet layers of dimensional reality […] and by an elaborate discussion of how imagination functions (as metaphor and as magical power).[99]

For its imaginativeness and variety, the novel received generally favourable reviews, while negative opinions blamed work and author for lacking conception with regard to plot and characters and accused the novel to wallow in violence and portrayals of the sexual act, if not perversities. At the same time, supporters appreciate particularly these scenarios which they do not consider as perverted but rather as dark eroticism.

> [I]majica (1991) is an invocation of magic and the imagination, an epic novel whose eerie and erotic enchantment resists the convenient labels by which fiction is marketed today. […] Barker slips the bonds of genre, mingling realism and the fantastique with the abandon of a consummate dreamer.[100]

Some critics lament the lack of explanation with regard to the use of magic, fable creatures and travelling between the Dominions. There is some merit to this criticism even though it seems a little bit vague and probably can be attributed to individual reviewers' reading frustration. For fantastique fiction does not aim at explaining but rather wants readers to experience imagination.

Imajica has also been criticised for its length. Some plot elements are only touched and then not deepened any further; the sheer amount of detail goes astray in the text. In this connection, Sunand Tryambak Joshi argues that Imajica is "beset with conceptual difficulties […] [a]nd its gargantuan length […] painfully emphasizes its diffuseness and lack of focus."[101] However, one wonders why S. T. Joshi reviews Barker's text at all since he more or less pans them except for *The Damnation Game* and a couple of short stories.

[99] Hoppenstand, Gary: Clive Barker's Short Stories. p. 34.
[100] Winter, D. E.: The Dark Fantastic. p. 329.
[101] Joshi, S. T.: The Modern Weird Tale. p. 128.

5. Translated Maps of the Flesh – the Body in *Imajica*

5.1 Word and Flesh – the Body in Words

> [T]he mind of passage was already working on this fresh text, preparing to translate and transport it.
>
> Clive Barker, *Imajica*

The novel *Imajica* is not only dealing with the body, it is steeped in it. Like it is common for Barker's works, the langugae per se repeatedly uses body metaphors: Character traits are "shed like a dead skin,"[102] the landscape is scarred,[103] thoughts are lost between brain and tongue,[104] or protagonists enter a building's bowels.[105] When characters pass the In Ovo to travel from the Fifth to another Dominion, they are translated in text and signs. Bodies fold up and vanish into a „glyph"of lines and colours to be recomposed when entering the physical world again. By this means, the novel combines corporeality and metafictionality. Judith experiences the beginning of her journey through the In Ovo as follows:

> The darkness behind her lids was suddenly brightened by gleaming lines, falling like meteors across her minds's eye. She lifted her lids again, but the spectacle came out of her skull, daubing Oscar's face with streaks of brightness. A dozen vivid hues picked out the furrows and creases of his skin; another dozen, the geology of bone beneath; and another, the lineaments of nerves and veins and vessels, to the tiniest detail. Then, as though the mind interpreting them had done with its literal translation and could now rise to poetry, the layered maps of the flesh simplified.[106]

The frequent use of the morpheme 'flesh' – a general feature of Barker's works – is striking.[107] However, emphasis it is not just placed on the 'flesh of the text *body*' but also on sensation. When a protagonist's is perception is described, the text frequently refers to the nervous system itself; it gets on the nerves in the positive sense. For example, nerves begin to cavort in the moment of shock.[108] The text opens up for the readership by opening the omnipresent body itself and showing its anatomy. The boundaries of the normally visible, physical body are

[102] Imajica. p. 324.
[103] ibid. p. 446.
[104] ibid. p. 92.
[105] ibid. p. 188.
[106] ibid. p. 462.
[107] In the edition used for this book, the word 'flesh' appears roughly every seven pages.
[108] Imajica. p. 204.

transgressed and turned inside out. The focus on nerves in general refers to a border as well since they act as an agent between inside and outside world when a stimulus is processed. Thus, the text depicts the subject matter of the body in an increasingly visual fashion. Considering the relationship between body and nervous system, Tristanne J. Connolly's observations in her study of William Blake's paintings and drawings are interesting.

> The exposed physical systems of Blake's graphic bodies, their muscles and fibres, have a contradictory significance: they can enable intimate connection through visual penetration and symphatetic uniting, yet they can also indicate the imprisonment of the human in the restriction and isolation of the body.[109]

Here, muscle fibres are equated with nerves which – by acting as an agent between spirit and body – connect people or prevent them from becoming a prisoner of their own flesh.[110] Even if the latter aspect only applies indirectly to the textual representation of the body in *Imajica*, a parallel can be drawn to the exposed body. Elsewhere, Conolly refers to Blake's skinless bodies.

> It was suggested that this omission […] indicates that the skin, and surfaces like that of the text, are really orifices by which to enter. Not only Blake's works, then, but also the bodies they depict are meant to be entered; their insides are meant to be visible, not made impenetrable by layers of skin."[111]

Likewise, this is true for the bodies in *Imajica* when these are portrayed 'to the nerve and bone.' However, the motif of skinlessness is omitted (see chapter 3.3 for the skinless body in *The Hellbound Heart/Hellraiser*).

5.2 Metaphorisation of the Body as City

My flesh is everywhere.
My flesh is the world,
and the world is My flesh.

Clive Barker, *Imajica*

Imajica's use of body metaphors particularly becomes evident in the portrayal of the city as body, ranging from the characters' perception to the the city as actual fleshly body. When Gentle leaves his body in a state of transcendence to travel

[109] Connolly, Tristanne J.: William Blake and the Body. New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2002. p. 65.
[110] ibid. p. 64.
[111] ibid. p. 32.

though the Dominions, he adjusts the environment he perceives to his familiar physical appearance; the body becomes the measure of all things.

> His mind spread to all compass points, and up, and down, to have the sum of the room. It was an easy space to grasp. Generations of prison poets had made the analogies for him, and he borrowed them freely. The walls were his body's limits, the door his mouth, the windows his eyes. Commonplace similitudes, taxing his power of comparison not a jot. He dissolved the boards, the plaster, the glass and all the thousand tiny details in the same lyric of confinement, and having made them part of him, broke their bounds to stray further afield. […] Once again, his body was the measure of all things. The cellar, his bowels; the roof, his scalp; the stairs, his spine. […] The whole city, he began to see, would be analogized to his flesh, bone and blood. And why should that be so surprising? When an architect turned his mind to the building of a city, where would he look for inspiration? To the flesh where he'd lived since birth. It was the first model for any creator. It was a school, and an eating-house and an abattoir and a church; it could be a prison and a brothel and bedlam.[112]

Here, the text shows the ambiguous conceptions of the body, ranging from prison to joybringer, and becomes self-referential when referring to the artistic act of creation. At the same time, the text again refers to itself by using the same formular as the architect who seeks inspiration in "the flesh where he'd lived since birth."

A conventional metaphorisation of the city is achieved with the depiction of Yzordderrex, *the* city of the Imajica and, at the same time, residence and instrument of power of the 'Autarch' Sartori. Yzordderrex is a conglomerate of Xanadu and Babylon, its sheer size generates a body reference considering its monstrous dimensions. The city becomes a belly, which evokes an image of devouring, and grotesque body which creates another border between body and world.[113]

> One of the writers had described Yzordderrex as a god […]. Yzordderrex was worthy of worship; and millions were daily performing the ultimate act of veneration, living on or within the body of their Lord. […] The daily traffic of workers who, having found no place of residence on the back or in the bowels of the city, commuted in and out daily […]. The crowd bore them [Gentle and his companions] forward, and they went unresisting where countless multitudes had gone before: into the belly of the city-god Yzordderex.[114]

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[112] Imajica. p. 1020.
[113] cp. Bakhtin, Mikhail: Rabelais und seine Welt. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp 1995. p. 359 [English translations by Helene Iswolsky from the English edition *Rabelais and his World*, Indiana University Press, 1984].
[114] Imajica. p. 448.

The city's body obvious sex characteristic is the gigantic 'Pivot Tower,' which dominates the face of the metropolis. Originally erected by the god Hapexamendios himself, the Autarch arranged to transport the tower to Yzordderrex which the population's majority interprets as a sign of his legitimate authority. The text does not bother to conceal the imagery: "Prayers were still uttered in the name of the Unbeheld, and blessings murmured in the forbidden names of the Goddesses, but Yzordderrex was the true Lord now, the Autarch its mind and the Pivot its phallus."[115] While Yzordderrex is only described as divine, the city that forms the First Dominion *is* actually (a) god. Here, Hapexamendios has urbanised himself to hide from the world (see chapter 4.1). Since Hapexamendios is the city, the text does not depict the city as body but describes the body as city.

The body's boundaries are abandoned in support of material objects. When Gentle enters the city of god, he expects to find his father Hapexamendios in flesh and blood and cannot recognise him at first:

> [H]e peered down the shadowy street ahead, looking for some sign, however vestigial, of the Unbeheld's whereabouts. There was no murmur; no motion. But his study was rewarded by the slow comprehension that his Father, for all his apparent absence, was in fact here in front of him; and to his left; and to his right, and above his head and beneath his feet. What were those gleaming folds at the windows, if they weren't skin?; what were those arches if they weren't bone?; what was this scarlet pavement, and this light-shot stone, if it wasn't flesh? There was pith and marrow here. There was tooth and lash and nail. The Nullianac hadn't been speaking of spirit when it had said that Hapexamendios was everywhere in this metropolis. This was the City of God; and God was the city.[116]

This 'flesh city' is put into perspective immediately since Gentle asks for his father's ontological state of being: "He'd [Gentle] crossed a continent and more to get here, and there'd been no part of it that was not made as these streets were made […]. And yet, for all its magnitude, what was His city? A trap of corporeality, and its architect its prisoner." When Hapexamendios eventually talks to his son, he equates city and his body: "*You've succeeded where all the others failed.* […] *And that service has earned you a place here*," the God said. '*In My city. In My heart.*" [italics in original][117] However, the city of god is a ghost town. While cities and their buildings generally shelter the body, Hapexamendios self-chosen exile is an empty and, ultimately, a hostile place. The city is the wet dream of a megalomaniac; Hapexamendios is the caricature of a god who in his arrogance has forgotten what it means to be a body of flesh, or to have a body, respectively.

[115] ibid. p. 441.
[116] ibid. p. 1066.
[117] ibid. p. 1067.

Thus, the god has also lost his understanding for what is essentially human. So Hapexamendios is confused when Gentle wishes to see his father's true face:

> *'You've seen My city,'* the Unbeheld replied. *'That's My face.'*
> 'There's no other? Really, Father? None?'
> '*Aren't you content with that?* Hapexamendios said. '*Isn't it perfect enough? Doesn't it shine?*'
> 'Too much, Father. It's too glorious.'
> '*How can a thing be too glorious?*'
> 'Part of me's human, Father, and that part's weak. I look at this city, and I'm agog. It's a masterwork – '
> *'Yes it is'*
> 'Genius'
> *'Yes it is'*
> 'But, Father, grant me a simpler sight. Show a glimpse of the face that made my face, so that I can know the part of me that's You.'[118]

Eventually, Hapexamendios agrees and transforms the city to flesh. Gentle is told to avert his eyes as if the god feels embarrassed about his nakedness. In contrast to the glorious but empty city, a grotesque body of a gigantic child is revealed:

> For all His scale, however, His form was ineptly made, as if He'd forgotten what it was like to be whole. His head was enormous, the shards of a thousand skulls claimed from the buildings to construct it, but so mismatched that the mind it was meant to shield was visible between the pieces, pulsing and flickering. One of His arms was vast, yet ended in a hand scarcely larger than Gentle's, while the other was wizened, but finished with fingers that had three dozen joints. His torso was another mass of misalliances, His innards cavorting in a cage of half a thousand ribs, His huge heart beating against a breastbone too weak, to contain it and already fractured. And below, at His groin, the strangest deformation: a sex He'd failed to conjure into a single organ, but which hung in rags, raw and useless.[119]

The patriarchal god is nothing more than an anatomical joke withered in his greed for megalomania. His body has been corrupted by the transgression into a material object; a regression is only possible within the scope of the grotesque. The chaotic body represents Hapexamendios' loss of humanity and order, which he propagated, as well as his disregard for versatility. The city of god, a theocracy ruling in the Imajica's First Dominion, presents a crippled body politic. Hapexamendios' death leaves the land devastated and putrefied. It is not until an intervention by the goddesses that the Dominion gains new fertility.

[118] ibid. p. 1068.
[119] ibid. p. 1070f.

5.3 The Imajica's a Circle – Body and Gender in *Imajica*

I'm a mystif; my name's Pie'oh'pah.
That much you know.
My gender you don't.

Clive Barker, *Imajica*

The impact of the body issue in *Imajica* should be obvious up to this point; the text presents *Bodies That Matter* and therefore also focuses on the portrayal of gender roles. In doing so, the novel frequently turns out to be a *Gender Trouble*maker. Of course, sex and gender are the decisive criteria for every*body* in our society. Apart from complexion and ethnical origin, no other features related to the body are more often differentiated, specified, discriminated, repressed, controlled or limited. *Imajica* is interesting in terms of the field of gender studies since the novel, among other things, tries to develop a myth which lays open the reasons for the historical oppression of women or the female, respectively, especially in religion. *Imajica* reflects and attacks the predominance of patriarchy and explores gender-specific role models. By means of the mystif Pie'oh'Pah, the text also deals with the transgression of alleged gender boundaries and questions the understanding of heterosexuality as being 'normal.'[120]

In the novel, the characters' sex and gender are generally determined by their body's biologic characteristics but without supporting heteronormativity or excluding performative gender roles. For gender is not a "*natürlich-ontologisch definierter Bereich, sondern stellt eine Kategorie menschlichen Seins dar, das von soziokulturellen, politischen und ökonomischen Einflüssen bestimmt ist* [naturally-ontologically defined field but a category of human being which is conditioned by sociocultural, political and economic influences]."[121] Nevertheless, apart from the character of Pie'oh'Pah, the novel is less interested in the definition of gender but rather deals with the established, stereotyped gender role models as well as the power structures involved.

[120] The online-encyclopedia Wikipedia originally described *Imajica* simply as fantasy novel. By and by, the novel's entry was added with information to content and references to topics such as god, love, sexuality, death and, eventually, gender. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imajica. Web page accessed: 13 March 09

[121] Tebben, Karin: Männer männlich? Zur Fragilität des „starken Geschlechts". In: Abschied vom Mythos Mann. Kulturelle Konzepte der Moderne. Ed. by Karin Tebben. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht 2002. p. 8

5.3.1 Of Goddesses, Mothers and Monsters – Women in *Imajica*

Hierarchies of power between the sexes, patriarchal aggression and female oppression were already covered in Barker's *Books of Blood*. In *Imajica*, too, misogynous tendencies are usually triggered by male hunger for power, (Christian) religion and, last but not least, male fear[122] and envy of the female. "In *Imajica*, the wonders of the heterocosmic worlds quite quickly give way to the realities of gender oppression, tyranny, and religious absolutism which, despite the fantastical permutations, are all too similar to the woes of contemporary society."[123] Besides the attempt to create a mythological background for these circumstances, *Imajica* depicts a proverbial battle of the sexes, which even reaches the realm of gods and goddesses, but sporadically fails to avoid certain stereotypes. The novel relies on the "*Faktizität eines historisch vor dem Patriarchat bestehenden Matriarchats* [facticity of a historical matriarchy which existed long before the patriarchat]"[124] and broadens scenarios which were already drafted in early short stories such as *The Skins of the Fathers*, *Rawhead Rex* and *The Madonna* (*Books of Blood* Vol. 2, 3 and 5).

> Women had always existed: they had lived, a species to themselves, with the demons. But they had wanted playmates: and together they had made men. What an error, what a cataclysmic miscalculation. Within mere eons, […] the women were made slaves, the demons killed or driven underground.[125]

In this context, however, demons are no menacing representatives of evil but again Barkeresque creatures of bizarre beauty which rather incorporate the original meaning of the 'daimon' as ambivalence entity of a divine level.[126] "In the utopia Barker imagines, both 'species' are sexually whole and embody a prehistoric version of pre-Oedipal polymorphous perversity."[127] *Imajica*'s creation myth portrays a fantastic-bucolic world without humans which is protected and ruled by numerous diverse goddesses who are, however, in conflict with each other. These goddesses are not limited to a symbolism of fertility but represent images of the ambivalent, archetypical 'Great Mother.'[128] Its manifestations

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[122] The novel mentions female cults which allegedly sacrifice men, eat testicles and spread pamphlets full of castration fantasies.

[123] Goh, R. B. H.: Consuming Spaces. p. 32.

[124] Schmid, Susanne: Göttin. In: Metzler Lexikon Gender Studies. p. 166.

[125] Barker, C.: The Skins of the Fathers. Books of Blood Vol. 2. In: Books of Blood. Vol. 1-3. p. 114.

[126] Cp. Diamond, Stephen A. (Ed.): The Psychology of Evil. Devils, Demons, and the Daimonic. In: Anger, Madness and the Daimonic. The Psychologoical Genesis of Violence, Evil, and Creativity. Hrsg. von Stephen A. Diamond. Albany: State University of NY Press 1996. p. 55-86.

[127] Badley, L.: Writing Horror and the Body. p. 99.

[128] In his concept of psychological archetypes, Swiss psychologist and founder of analytical psychology Carl Gustav Jung describes fundamental images, elements and patterns all humans

imply refuge and security but at the same time the mother figure or the female, respectively, is depicted as sovereign of the netherworld and castration-monster. With the arrival of Hapexamendios, the Imajica's gender trouble can begin. "*Die Mutter ist es, gegen die das hochragende Bauwerk der Politik und des Himmelskults von den Männern aufgerichtet wurde* [It is against the mother that men have erected their towering edifice of politics and sky-cult]."[129]

Apart from the fact the novel ends with the goddesses recapturing the Imajica – without portraying them as ruling authority – there are comparatively few female protagonists. Among them, only Judith can be considered a round character. This is, however, no coincidence since she forms a trio with the characters of Gentle and Pie'oh'pah.[130] In addition to Judith, there are just two well-developed female characters (Celestine and Quaisoir); others do have prominent short appearances at most. By varying the gender-specific perspective – the omniscient narrator for the most part takes the perspective of Gentle and Judith – the text avoids to be fixed to a single sex/gender and further balances the superior number of male characters. Judith in this regard acts as an important mediator since she relates with characters that represent the opposing groups (and sexes). At first sight, Judith 'Jude' Odell could be attributed with the worn-out stereotype of the 'self-confident young woman' but the character denies a characterisation according to a certain pattern, while Gentle, for example, can be categorised as womaniser at first.

At the beginning of the novel neither reader nor Judith know that she is the copy of another person, a clone, a creature out of the 'manmade womb.' This situation afterwards qualifies Jude's attitude towards Charles Estabrook and Oscar Godolphin; it is mainly her who reflects and criticises male behaviour.[131] The plot sets in with Estabrook's plan to kill Judith so that no other man can have her. Readers have to ask themselves why Judith married this man in the

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share in a collective unconscious independently from cultural heritage and history. As a set of characteristics, archetypes do only gain meaning when manifested: Here, the archetype of the Great Mother is represented by the goddesses. Cp. Jung's *Archetypen* or the well arranged glossary in Susan Rowland's *C.G. Jung and Literary Theory* (see bibliography).

[129] Paglia, Camille: Die Masken der Sexualität [Sexual Personae. Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson]. Berlin: Byblos 1992. p. 28.

[130] By making these characters the novel's protagonists, the text follows the poetics of the fictitious playwright Pluthero Quexos; his teachings are presented in the first lines of *Imajica*: "In any fiction, no matter how ambitious its scope or profound its theme, there was only ever room for three players." In doing so, the novel anticipates its plot already in the opening sentence and metanarratively refers to itself as a literary construct.

[131] There is also irony when Jude, for instance, assumes she will need a mother complex and a penis to enter the Imajica because only men (Oscar Godolphin and Gentle) seem to know the secret about it (*Imajica*, p. 235).

first place. She herself wonders how she could endure Estabrook's habits like his obsession with the jewellery he gives her to wear ("[A] blatant piece of power play").[132] After the situation between the two brothers escalates and Estabrook apparently dies as a consequence, Jude moves to Oscar Godolphin and begins a relationship with him. This also seems quite inconsistent until the novel explains about the ritual that ties Judith to the Godolphin clan.

Judith's development is emancipation and liberation from being an object to individualisation. Even if she possesses far more individual traits than the original Quaisoir, she remains a copy after the latter's death. It is her role as a mother that makes her real eventually: "I was a figment of the other Judith. […] I suppose I was living in a dream. But she's woken me, Gentle.' Jude kissed the baby's cheek. 'She's made me real. I was only a copy until her." So the reproduced bodies have produced an original. Here, the novel moves on shaky ground and is on the verge of declining in cliché and kitsch. One the one hand, Judith by her motherhood becomes 'real,' self-determined and remains authentic in terms of her characterisation; on the other hand, this gives the latent impression of limiting women to the mother role.[133] At the end of the novel, Judith has retreated in the former palace of the Autarch, which the goddesses have turned in an idyllic paradise (see below). When Gentle visits her to bid farewell, he meets Jude in an empty room where she sits on a chair, her bosom bare. Her child, who seems to possess a divine gift of omniscience, sits on her lap. The scene draws an image of Judith as (the) holy mother. After the conversation, she leaves with her new partner – a creature from the people who came out of the ocean. Here, less would have been more, perhaps.

Celestine and Quaisoir are also linked to the image of the mother, directly or indirectly. By adding the goddesses, one could argue that the mother ultimately is present throughout the whole novel: Judith becomes a mother; Celestine emerges as Gentle's mother. In contrast, it can be assumed that Quaisoir's motherhood or pregnancy, respectively, is to be prevented.[134] Furthermore, there is the circle structure of the Imajica and the play with the Ouroboros imagery (see chapter 5.5). The relationship between mother and child is portrayed in terms of both motherhood itself (Judith) and the mother role (Celestine). In her function as mother, Celestine is less significant for Gentle and Sartori but for the

[132] Imajica. p. 175.
[133] During their journey through the Imajica, Gentle and Pie meet Larumday Splendid and her son Efreet in the village of Beatrix, making Larumday a 'Mother Splendid.' If this idea is carried a little bit further, it is not to far from Beatrix to 'Beatrice' – Dante's ideal conception of a woman in the *Divine Comedy*. (*Imajica*, p. 246ff.).
[134] cp. Imajica. p. 639.

relation to Hapexamendios.[135] When she addresses him with 'my child,' the god loses his temper and fears to be close to the woman (Hapexamendios uses Sartori's body here). He sends his fire to destroy the 'whore' who has "tainted" his son with love, not knowing he will end his own life with it.[136]

Likewise, all of the three women possess supernatural bodies which defy the conventional boundaries of the body: Judith has telepathic abilities and can leave her body in a ghostlike state; Quaisoir and Celestine go through a transformation in rage. Their bodies grow appendages which they use for fighting and moving impressively over the ground (see also chapter 5.4). "[The appendages] were evidence of some facility in the other sex he [Gentle] had no real comprehension of; a remnant of crafts all but banished from the Reconciled Dominions by Hapexamendios."[137] The power of 'prehuman femaleness' figuratively lets them temporary become other species: The woman as monster or demon which can elude patriarchy's (body)control.[138] However, it has to be considered to what extent Quaisor can control her fantastic body herself since her powers for the first time appear after an attack, while Celestine can more or less freely use her abilities. The transformation correlates with the assumption that a female revolution against patriarchy is reflected in the demonic: "[I]n patriarchal culture, female speech and female 'presumption' – that is, angry revolt against male domination – are inextricable linked and inevitably daemonic."[139] The character of Clara, a former member of the Tabula Rasa who informs Judith about the walled in Celestine, mentions that women are in fact another species ("We're not another sex, Judith, we're another species.") and men, the 'destroyers,' their enemies.[140] Besides, the transformation subject also allows a reading in reference to body modification (e.g. tattoo, body piercing or scarification): "Women body modifiers have argued that modifying the body promotes symbolic rebellion, resistance, and self-transformation – that marking and transforming the body

[135] In terms of the relationship between Gentle and Celestine it shall be noted that Gentle gets used to his mother surprisingly fast. After he did not know about her existence for decades, his frequent use of 'mama' seems unlikely when he meets Celestine for the first time again. This also applies for Gentle's relation to his father. The change from the faker John Furie Zacharias to the Reconciliant willing to follows his father's work, is slightly too abrupt too be convincing.
[136] Imajica. p. 1075f.
[137] ibid. p. 867
[138] One might argue here that this confirms the definition of women as 'other' sex in terms of secondariness. Nevertheless, the transformations are caused by the power of the goddesses which are the original entities in the novel's creation myth. If any sex/gender was to be considered 'the other' at all, this would have to be the hu*man* being.
[139] Gilbert, Sandra M. u. Gubar, S.: The Madwoman in the Attic. p. 35.
[140] cp. Imajica. p. 411.

can symbolically 'reclaim' the body from its victimization and objectification in patriarchal culture."[141]

Both Quaisoir and Celestine use their powers only against men, and particularly against Dowd. Although he is not a human being, his character represents the male destroyer through most parts of the novel. Apart from her supernatural abilities, Quaisoir also uses her sexual body. She threatens a guard to accuse him of rape and later lures him with a promise to have sex in her chambers to kill him. The guard's death is not without irony because the man believes the phallic murder weapon to be a sex toy. Quaisoir's own tragedy is that her last resort lies in madness and hysteria although she has the power to revolt against male oppression.

The novel frequently alludes to the special bond between the women; their sisterhood can certainly be understood in feminist terms.[142] Only Celestine, the 'madwoman in the cellar,' initially rejects this sense of community. She condemns Judith for the child she has conceived with Sartori but her dislike is only a mask for her self-hatred, because Celestine is ashamed of her own sexual desire. In contrast, Judith is aware of her sexuality.

> Why was Celestine so eager to deny any other link between them but womanhood? […] From the beginning, Celestine had marked Jude out as a woman who stank of coitus. Why? Because she *too* stank of coitus. […] Celestine had also borne a baby for this dynasty of Gods and demigods. She too had been used and had never quite come to terms with the fact. When she raged against Jude, the tainted woman who would not concede her error in being sexual, in being fecund, she was raging against some fault in herself. And the nature of that fault? It wasn't difficult to guess, or to put words to. Celestine had asked a plain question. Now it was Jude's turn.
> 'Was it really rape?' she said. […]
> 'How was it then? Did He have His angels hold you down while He did the deed? No, I don't think so. You lay there and you let Him do what the hell He wanted, because it was going to make you into the bride of God and the mother of Christ […].
> 'That's why you despise me, isn't it?' Jude went on. 'That's why I'm the woman who stinks of coitus. Because I lay down with a piece of the same God that you did, and you don't like to be reminded of the fact.'
> Celestine suddenly shouted:
> '*Don't judge me, woman*!'
> 'Then don't you judge me! *Woman*. I did what I wanted with the man I wanted, and I'm carrying the consequences. You did the same. I'm not ashamed of it. You are. That's why we're not sisters, Celestine.' [Italics in original][143]

[141] Pitts, Victoria: In the Flesh. The Cultural Politics of Body Modification. New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2003. p. 49.
[142] cp. Gersdorf, Catrin: Sisterhood. In: Metzler Lexikon Gender Studies. p. 364.
[143] Imajica. p. 1015f.

In spite of their originality, the mentioned female characters also contain traits of a predictable spectrum of established patterns of the woman as monster, mother, saint, whore or madwoman. Nevertheless, the novel does not exploit these role models without comment but illustrates their backgrounds.[144] Since the characters and their developments are motivated by the plot, *Imajica* avoids getting lost in gender-specific stereotypes (except for Judith's ending). The text can use these patterns because it puts them into perspective by playing with them. Needless to say, this also applies for the male characters – monsters, destroyer versus femme fatale, are allowed to cause (gender) trouble on both sides. Nevertheless, except for Hapexamendios and his following of Nullianacs (see chapter 5.4), all monsters are conceived as tragic characters. "Barker addresses the mysterious internal powers of women in a manner which reveals a kind of covert sexism stemming, not necessarily from his own personal beliefs, but from this [suppression of the female by patriarchy] ancient tradition of animosity."[145] The novel's characterisation of women is also determined due to the history of the conventional fantasy genre where Barker misses powerful female characters: "The Problem is, in a genre which is full of phallic weapons and that kind of thing, it's important to establish female power and female potency, and the eroticism which comes with that. And it needn't all be 'goody-goody' stuff […]."[146] Of course, the text in particular utilises the monster subject to create dark scenarios of terror without directly implementing a gender-specific subtext.

The novel uses several patterns established throughout the history of gender-related motifs: the goddesses Tishalullé, Jokalaylau and Uma Umagammagi which follow the concept of the 'triple goddess' (Virgin, Mother and Crone),[147] represent nature and especially water, the element of fertility.[148] This applies both to their semiotic (glyph) and fleshly body. Tishalullé, the 'Cradle Lady,' is characterised by water in particular. The goddess forms 'The Cradle', a sea that can change its aggregate state from solid to fluid. On an island in the middle of

[144] Some might perhaps miss the virtuous woman, the 'angel in the house,' in this set of female clichés. Since the novel is aware of the different stereotypes, it neglects the most boring one. Nevertheless, *Imajica* indeed features (guardian) angels in form of the couple Clem and Taylor.
[145] Burns, Craig William: It's that Time of the Month: Representations of the Goddess in the Works of Clive Barker. In: Journal of Popular Culture 27 (Winter '93) Issue 3. p. 36.
[146] Dillo, Ste: Interview with Clive Barker. In: Clive Barker's Shadows of Eden. Ed. Von Stephen Jones. Lancaster, PA: Underworld-Miller 1991. p. 398 [originally published in the role-playing-magazine "Adventurer: Superior Fantasy & Science Fiction Magazine" (1987) by Mersey Leisure Publishing; publication stopped].
[147] cp. Pratt, Annis V.: Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction. In: Jungian Literary Criticism. Ed. by Richard P. Sugg. Evanston: Northwestern University Press 1992. p. 370.
[148] Thus, the magic item which enables Judith's telepathic abilities is a blue stone resembling an egg.

the sea, there is a psychiatric clinic for which the term 'lunatic asylum' is rather appropriate. For its inmates, the sea is an unconquerable obstacle. According to that, the female to some degree embraces and confines madness, which is ironically the trait that has been attributed to women throughout (literary)history again and again. The physical appearance of the goddess reminds of a creation of Swiss artist Hans Ruedi Giger:

> [Tishalullé's] face was Oriental in cast, and without a trace of color in cheek or lip or lash. […] Below its calm, Her body was another matter entirely. Her entire length was covered by what Jude at first took to be tattoos of some kind, following the sweep of Her anatomy. But the more she studied the woman - and she did so without embarrassment - the more she saw movement in these marks. They weren't *on* Her but *in* Her, thousands of tiny flaps opening and closing rhythmically. There were several shoals of them, she saw, each swept by independent waves of motion. One rose up from Her groin, where the inspiration of them all had its place; others swept down Her limbs, out to Her fingertips and toes, the motion of each shoal converging every ten or fifteen seconds, at which point a second substance seemed to spring from these slits, forming the Goddess afresh in front of Jude's astonished eyes. [Italics in original][149]

In contrast to their male opponent, the goddesses have not forgotten their fleshly body: "We haven't forgotten the flesh We had,' She said to Jude. 'We've known the frailties of your condition. We remember its pains and discomforts. We know what it is to be wounded: in the heart, in the head, in the womb." [150] Although the goddesses exist in a state of extracorporeal transcendence, they can still access and quasi regain a proper physical body. Even though it is perceived as both burden and prison, the reference to a vulnerable body marks a feeling of sympathy and community between the divine and earthly creatures. Hapexamendios, in contrast, has lost both body awareness and compassion. Thus, the female in this connection is also credited with emotionality but without confronting an alleged male rationality. Jokalaylau, the "Goddess of the High Snow," reminds of the monstrous, castrating mother:

> [H]er blazing eyes heavy-lidded, hovered there, Her hands crossed at the wrist, then turned back on themselves to knit their fingers. She was not, after all, such a terrifying sight. But sensing that Her face had been found, the Goddess responded with a sudden transformation. Her lush features were mummified in a heartbeat, the eyes sinking away, Her lips withering and retracting. Worms devoured the tongue that poked between Her teeth.[151]

While the other goddessees appear rather sober-minded, the character Jokalaylau

[149] Imajica. p. 995f.
[150] ibid. p. 997f.
[151] ibid. p. 996f.

represents a distinct hatred towards Hapexamendios and anything male since her followers had to suffer under the Unbeheld's atrocities in particular. Uma Umagammagis offers a paradox sight, and in terms of the triple mother incorporates the Crone:

> [She] was an ancient, Her body so withered it was almost sexless, Her hairless skull subtly elongated, Her tiny eyes so wreathed in creases they were barely more than gleams. But the beauty of Her glyph was here in this flesh: its ripples, its flickers, its ceaseless, effortless motion."[152]

By means of the glyph, the fleshly boundaries of the physical body are shaken off, whereas the body's semiotic structure draws an image of vitality.

The goddesses reveal the irony behind the upcoming Reconciliation: Gentle and the other (solely male) Maestros do not know that the Imajica forms a circle which will be reunited. Likewise, the men suffer from the delusion that Hapexamendios will bring unity to the Imajica.

> '[T]hey don't realize they're completing the circle. If they did, perhaps they'd think again.'
> 'Why?'
> 'Because the circle belongs to Our sex, not to theirs,' Jokalaylau put in.
> 'Not true,' Umagammagi said. 'It belongs to any mind that cares to conceive it.'
> 'Men are incapable of conceiving, sister,' Jokalaylau replied, 'Or hadn't You heard?'[153]

Barker already covered a variation of this topic in the above-mentioned short story *Rawhead Rex*. The titular character is a child-eating monster and patriarchal deity who hates anything female. In the end, he is defeated by a goddess, who was embedded in a stone. Here, the irony lies in the fact that the stone was hidden in an altar in a (Christian) church: "All this time, under the cloth and the cross, they'd bowed their heads to a goddess."[154] *Imajica* uses a similar ironical reference since Uma Umagammagi hid from Hapexamendios in the Pivot Tower, the phallus of the Unbeheld and the Autarch's symbol of power.

The Reconciliation is preceded by Yzordderrex's downfall. However, the goddesses foresee the inevitable begin with the city's redesign: Water breaks through the ground everywhere and turns the Autarch's Pivot Tower into a locus feminarum, which marks the final disentanglement from patriarchy. Apart from boys, the place is only inhabited by female individuals at first. The fact that

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[152] ibid. p. 997.
[153] ibid. p. 999f. Cp. the relation between 'In Ovo' and 'ovary' (Latin 'ovi' = egg) as well as the Latin phrase 'ab ovo usque ad mala' (meaning 'from first to last').
[154] Barker, C.: Rawhead Rex. Books of Blood. Vol. 3. In: Books of Blood Vol. 1-3. p. 79.

many of them move around topless could be interpreted as a symbol of fertility, femininity, freedom, and a sense of community among the women. This might be coherent in the novel's context; the scenarios' overall picture nevertheless can hardly escape the image of kitsch. One has to wonder if the aftertaste is rather bitter than sweet when, to put it bluntly, the now self-determined women in their temple apparently have only waited to bare their breasts and to receive attention. The text's "It's the women's turn" is too simple to be convincing. However, there is another interpretation. "The present models for women and men fail to furnish adequate opportunities for human development."[155] If patriarchy ends up in destruction (Hapexamendios) and a latent matriarchy can only evoke the image of an idyll and might even cause new hierarchies, the solution – surprise – must be reached by a consensus in form of unity and equality.[156] "The promise is that women and men might work together to create a system that provides equality to all and dominates no one".[157] Imajica, a new Utopia?

The healing power of the waters send by the goddesses also revitalises the First Dominion after Hapexamendios' death. The former divine and now rotting flesh is washed away to eventually create new life and the story literally becomes full circle. In this regard, reference shall be made to Camille Paglia's *Sexual Personae* where both birth and sexuality are interpreted in the context of liquidity. Water, representing life, is attributed to the female.[158] Likewise, Paglia at this point argues that "[t]here can be no active sexuality without surrender to nature and to liquidity, the realm of the mother." Hapexamendios denied this and became a passive, crippled body. His son holds another opinion, for example, when he explains the reasons for his desire to sleep with Judith.

> '[I]'ll forget who I am. Everything petty and particular will go out of me. My ambitions. My history. Everything. I'll be unmade. And that's when I'm closest to divinity. […] It's all One. […] It's just that women are where everything begins, and I like – how shall I put it? – to touch the source as often as possible.[159]

Apart from Sartori's arrogance, the quote indicates a recurring issue in Barker's works which is particularly interesting with regard to the body's boundaries: Male womb envy and a longing for the "backwards movement towards primeval

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[155] Sawyer, Jack: On Male Liberation. In: Feminism and Masculinities. Ed. von Peter F. Murphy. Oxford et al.: University Press 2004. p. 27.
[156] In a discussion shortly before the Reconciliation, Maestro Sartori and his followers argue about god's entity which in unison is conceived as both female and male. "For convenience, an It."(*Imajica*, p. 733).
[157] Sawyer, J.: On Male Liberation. p. 27.
[158] Paglia, C.: Die Masken der Sexualität. p. 365.
[159] Imajica. p. 735.

dissolution,"[160] the security in a mother's womb. Both areas implicate a transgression or a blurring of corporeal boundaries.

5.3.2 They want some Holy Spirit inside them – Men in *Imajica*

A dying friend of Judith tells her of his dreams about his mother and that he wants to crawl back into her to be born all over again.[161] One of the Autarch's torture victims, in pain and drugged by a creature from the In Ovo, pictures himself in the womb – the clone Sartori envies him ("I never floated in a mother").[162] "Primeval dissolution" comes along with the idea of (corporeal) unity with the mother which implies peeling away the body's boundaries. When Gentle enters the inside of the Imajica at the end of the novel, he has achieved this state.

The text through Judith characterises men as the sex which worships fixedness.[163] This condition is applied to the body; hence, Gentle at one point thinks about getting rid of his penis if this will enable him to experience the mystif's third sex. The desire for leaving corporeal boundaries behind in this case is due to the spirit of (amorous) adventure. According to the novel, man's dilemma is that his body is sealed up and therefore confined. Therein, the character Chester Klein, for whom Gentle occasionally counterfeits artworks, also sees the origin of the church as institution.

> 'What is it about all you men' [Judith] found herself saying. 'You fall apart so easily.'
> 'That's because we're the more tragic of the sexes,' Chester returned. 'God, woman, can't you see how we *suffer*?'
> […]
> 'We're all sealed up,' Klein said, 'nothing can get in.'
> 'So are women. What the –'
> 'Women get *fucked*,' Klein interrupted, pronouncing the word with a drunken ripeness […].'
> 'So all men really want is to get fucked, is that it?' Jude said. 'Or are you just talking personally?'
> […]
> 'Not literally,' Klein spat back. 'You're not listening to me.' […] 'Why do you think man invented the Church, huh? *Huh*?'
> […]
> 'Men invented the Church so that they could bleed for Christ. So that they could be entered by the Holy Spirit. So that they could be saved from being sealed up.' [Italics in original][164]

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[160] Paglia, C.: Die Masken der Sexualität. p. 16.
[161] Imajica. p. 137.
[162] Imajica. p. 551.
[163] cp. ibid. p. 585.
[164] ibid. p. 170-171.

Even though Judith doubts this point of view, her 'sister' Quaisoir is convinced that men thirst for being possessed and for this reason maybe are frequently affected by possession:

> 'Sometimes,' she said,' when he [Autarch Sartori] was high on kreauchee, he'd talk about the Pivot as though he was married to it, and he was the wife. Even when we made love he'd talk that way. He'd say it was in him the way he was in me. [I]t was in his mind always. It's in every man's mind. […] [T]hey want to be *possessed*. […] They want some Holy Spirit inside them. [Italics in original][165]

Charles Estabrook feels in a similar fashion. While he's rather sexually indifferent, a mere sight of Judith gives him the same satisfaction as the sexual act itself: "The sight of her had pierced him, making her the enterer, had she but known it, and him the entered".[166] The conventional concept of active and passive sex so is mocked and undermined. Besides, the Estabrook character is used to demonstrate the pressure of a culturally fixed male gender role model. At the sight of Pie'on'pah's face, who has taken the shape of a man, Charles notices its beauty, although he would never admit that. "It wasn't dispassionate, but distressingly vulnerable; even (though Estabrook would never have breathed this aloud) beautiful."[167]

The motif of womb envy can be found in several of Barker's works.[168] In *Imajica*, the subject manifests itself in the creation of Judith's clone. According to the enthusiastic creator Gentle/Sartori, the copy will outmatch the original by far which implies that the (male) creation ritual prevails over (female) nature.[169] The Sartori clone on his part follows the 'old-fashioned' way. Pretending to be Gentle, he sleeps with Judith with the intention to impregnate her:

> 'You knew what you were doing?'
> 'I had my hopes.'
> 'And didn't I get a choice in the matter? I'm just a womb, am I?'
> 'That is not how it was.'
> 'A walking womb!'[170]

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[165] ibid. p. 684.
[166] ibid. p. 12.
[167] ibid. p. 16.
[168] The 'womb envy' by now can also be taken home. A series of action figures including background stories by Barker is available under the name "Clive Barker's Tortured Souls". The figure Talisac („The Surgeon of the Sacred Heart"), prototype of the mad scientist, has breeded a womb-like appendage on his body. www.spawn.com/features/torturedsouls/. Web page accessed 13 March 2009.
[169] Readers are reminded that Gentle makes a living from (art) forgery.
[170] Imajica. p. 853.

Nevertheless, Imajica's nature does not totally ignore the phantasm of the birth-giving man. When Gentle falls in the liquefied Cradle sea, a fish attaches itself in his belly – not in the head as it is assumed instantly – which Gentle later throws up in agony. Pie'oh'pah draws his conclusion:

> 'Now we know why they call this the Cradle,' it said.
> 'What do you mean?'
> 'Where else could a man give birth?'
> 'That wasn't birth,' Gentle said. 'Don't flatter it.'
> Maybe not to us,' Pie said. 'But who knows how children were made here in ancient times? Maybe the men immersed themselves, drank the water, let it grow –'[171]

However, womb envy at the same time correlates with male fear of both female fertility and their body of changeable forms. This again refers to the archetype of the Great Mother. "Fear of the archaic mother turns out to be essentially fear of her generative power. It is this power, a dreaded one, that patrilineal filiation has the burden of subdoing."[172] This fear is best described by Barker's *Rawhead Rex*, the "all-consuming phallus,"[173] who is a spiritual relative of Hapexamendios: "[T]he bleeding woman, her gaping hole eating seed and spitting children. It was life, that hole, that woman, it was endless fecundity. It terrified him."[174] "From a male perspective – and certainly that of Rawhead [and Hapexamendios] – the power of procreation endangers the norm, just as menstrual blood threatens the relationship between the sexes. It is impure, contaminating, a polluting object and yet also a sign of fertility and differentiation."[175]

While the three protagonists Judith, Gentle und Pie'oh'pah provide a gender-related equilibrium and thus correspond to the element of unity which the novel repeatedly emphasises, it shall be noted that male characters are distinctly overrepresented in *Imajica*. In a novel that condemns patriarchy and depicts a male god as usurper, the minority of female characters might seem astonishing at first. In doing so, the text however adopts more or less skilfully an intermediate position which illustrates male's dominance in society only to then relativise and partially expose it. Apart from this, the balance between the sexes is shifted since a new 'era of femininity' dawns after (the male) god's death.

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[171] Ebd. p. 387.
[172] Kristeva, Julia: Powers of Horror. An Essay on Abjection. New York: Columbia University Press 1982. p. 77.
[173] Winter, D. E.: The Dark Fantastic. p. 219.
[174] Barker, C.: Rawhead Rex. Books of Blood Vol. 3. In: Books of Blood. Vol. 1-3. p. 80.
[175] Winter, D. E.: The Dark Fantastic. p. 219. See also
Gilbert, Sandra M. u. Gubar, S.: The Madwoman in the Attic. p. 34.

Due to the superior number of male characters, the novel also offers a variety of diverse types of masculinity. In reference to a conventional image of men – a construct shaped by both culture and tradition, nowadays propagated by the media – it can be argued that there are no 'real' men in *Imajica*. Besides subtle depictions of male characters' feelings, the novel also uses shallow images, for example, when slim Gentle ('a gentle man') is supported by a muscle-bound woman. The novel dismisses the cliché-ridden image of the male hero which culminates in the death of the blinded patriarch Hapexamendios. Characters with stereotyped male traits (Gentle at the beginning) or egoistic power interests (Sartori) undergo change or are doomed.

At the plot's beginning, the protagonist John Furie Zacharias is a sex-obsessed womaniser, who thinks one can neither live too long nor sleep with too many women.[176] Judith at one point assumes he is too stupid to understand women;[177] Chester Klein advises Gentle to give up the fair sex[178] and characterises him as follows: "He's anaemic. He's only got enough blood for his brain and his prick. If he gets a hard-on, he can't remember his own name."[179] However, Gentle is also characterised by sexual openness and tolerance: "He loved sex too much to condemn any expression of lust, and though he'd discouraged the homosexual courtships he'd attracted, it was out of indifference not revulsion."[180] Later, Gentle falls in love with the mystif Pie'oh'pah and marries it.

The (sexual) relationship between them is certainly homoerotic but cannot be termed homosexual with regard to Pie's sex. In the course of their relationship, Gentle, unlike other observers, does not perceive it as man or woman but as person, as mystif. The significance of the body's sex recedes. No matter if readers decide for a latent homosexuality or engage with the mystif's third sex; both interpretations do not restrict the text in any way. The novel deserves to be given credit for not misusing the subject for finger-wagging or turning it into a farce, like it is still done in movie and television productions frequently. The novel's only reference explicitly relating to homosexual characters, the couple Clem and Taylor, concerns the fact that Judith appreciates them particularly because the two men are not interested in her sex. In contrast to all the other male characters in the novel, Clem and Taylor appear the most 'normal.' "However, Barker owes less to any militant Gay rights ideology than to the politics of the possible – the appeal to alternatives, imaginative pluralities not

[176] Imajica. p. 258.
[177] ibid. p. 21.
[178] ibid. p. 24.
[179] ibid. p. 171.
[180] ibid. p. 97.

necessarily realised or realisable 'in the flesh', the need and right to believe in metaphysical alterities."[181]

Given the portrayal of Hapexamendios, Sartori's megalomania and sadism[182] and the character of Dowd, men are depicted as destroyers who fight anything that deviates. Male characters also rather play the role of the villain but they also suffer more frequently from graphical violence. It seems like the novel does not cast a very positive light on the 'stronger sex.' This impression is put into perspective by the fall or death of the villains as well as by the positive developments of certain characters throughout the plot. In addition, (female) characters which generalise men as destroyers are put into question by other female protagonists; the novel rejects both extremes. Therefore, the text by no means negates manhood but denies common patterns which are undermined and exposed. Eventually, *Imajica* presents a heterogeneous image of men where 'male' is no synonym for 'masculine'.

5.3.3 The Age of Pie'oh'pah, perhaps

> The presumption of a binary gender system implicitly retains the belief in a mimetic relation of gender to sex whereby gender mirrors sex is otherwise restricted by it. When the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that man and masculine might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and woman and feminine a male body as easily as a female one.[183]

When depicting gender-related subjects, *Imajica*'s plot, of course, cannot help to fall back on binary sex categories and even highlights them in the context of the conflict between patriarchy and alleged matriarchy. However, even if gender belongings are concluded from biological criteria, the novel at no time suggests that sex and gender have to correspond to each other. Furthermore, *Imajica* never relies on heteronormativity and the preceding subchapter has demonstrated that the text does not treat attributes like 'male' and 'masculine' synonymously.

The novel plays with sexually defined border areas which culminate in the character of Pie'oh'pah. With regard to the Butler quote above, Pie represents a performative model for the "*Erzeugung von Geschlecht […] als Set wiederholter Akte.*"

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[181] Goh, Robbie B. H.: Consuming Spaces. Clive Barker, William Gibson and the Cultural Poetics of Postmodern Fantasy. In: Social Semiotics 10 (2000) Issue 1. p. 31.
[182] He blots out whole areas and enjoys plays which end with the death of the actors.
[183] Butler, Judith: Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity. 2nd Edition. New York et al: Routledge 1999. p. 10.

[creation of gender as a set of repeated acts/performances][184] The mystif becomes a symbolic figure for the transgression of corporeal boundaries in the context of sex and gender; it illustrates the cultural impact on gender roles and finally incorporates the novel's idea of unity in its person. At the beginning of the novel, the creature remains as myst(if)erious as its name.

> His mystif soul was sometimes too readily drawn to the ambiguities that mirrored his true self. But she [Theresa, a woman Pie takes care of] chastened him; reminded him that he'd taken a face and a function and, in this human sphere, a sex; that as far as she was concerned he belonged in the fixed world of children, dogs, and orange peel.[185]

In this passage, the mystif is still referred to with the masculine personal pronoun (Pie performs as man at this point) and not with the neuter form as later in the novel, after Pie has quasi revealed itself. In the first instance, the mystif's nature raises biological, philosophical and libidinous questions for Gentle.[186] Oscar Godolphin describes Judith the mystif as follows:

> '[A]s I understand it, they have no sexual identity, except as function of their partner's desire.'
> 'That sounds like Gentle's idea of paradise.'
> 'As long as you know what you want,' Oscar said. 'If you don't I daresay it could get very confusing.'
> […]
> 'My friend in Yzordderrex – Peccable - had a mistress for a while who'd been a madam. […] Anyway, she told me once that she'd employed a mystif for a while in her bordello, and it caused her no end of problems. She'd almost had to close her place, because of the reputation she got. You'd think a creature like that would make the ultimate whore, wouldn't you? But apparently a lot of customers just didn't want to see their desires made flesh.' He watched her as he spoke, a smile playing around his lips.
> 'I can't imagine why.'
> 'Maybe they were afraid of what they were.'[187]

Godolphin misjudges the mystif's nature. Although it adjusts to the (unconscious) sexual desire of others and can adopt a sex, it possesses its own sexual identity. Thus, the mystif combines the categories of *having*, *being* and *becoming* a gender.[188] The fear of a shocking surprise in form of a dream made flesh like mentioned in the preceding text passage reflects a society which is still coined by a heteronormative gender system where a deviation from the 'norm' scares people. The novel differs from this mindset and rejects it. Pie's sexual identity is to a certain extent charged with lust and does not conform to a

[184] Breger, Claudia: Performativität. In: Metzler Lexikon Gender Studies. p. 304.
[185] Imajica. p. 158.
[186] ibid. p. 210.
[187] ibid. p. 331f.
[188] cp. Butler, J.: Gender Trouble. p. 11 and 143.

culturally inscribed orientation; gender becomes a construct and literally turns into "corporeal style".[189]

The character of Pie'oh'pah furthermore illustrates, directly and indirectly, the cultural imprint by means of a binary gender system. Indirectly, because the text has to use it to depict Pie's third sex and, directly, since Gentle comes to a linguistic dead end when he tries to describe the mystif for the first time: "I don't know what I'd call you if I saw you in the street, but I'd turn my head. How's that?"[190] When Gentle obsessively attempts to paint the mystif after their first encounter – it has seduced him in the shape of Judith and Gentle witnesses the mystif's body transformation – he also finds himself confronted with difficulties:

> He had never studied anatomy very closely. The male body was of little aesthetic interest to him, and the female was so mutable, so much a function of its own motion, or that of light across it, that all static representation seemed to him doomed from the outset. But he wanted to represent a protean form now, however impossible; wanted to find a way to fix what he'd seen at the door of his hotel room, when Pie'oh'pah's many faces had been shuffled in front of him like cards in an illusionist's deck. If he could fix that sight, or even begin to do so, he might yet find a way of controlling the thing that had come to haunt him.
> He worked in a fair frenzy for two hours, making demands of the paint he'd never made before, plastering it on with palette knife and fingers, attempting to capture at least the shape and proportion of the thing's head and neck. He could see the image clearly enough in his mind's eye (since that night no two rememberings had been more than a minute apart), but even the most basic sketch eluded his hand.[191]

When Pie's sex is finally described, the text can only paraphrase and say what it is not: "It was neither phallic nor vaginal, but a third genital form entirely, fluttering at its groin like an agitated dove, and with every flutter reconfiguring its glistening heart, so that Gentle, mesmerized, found a fresh echo in each motion."[192] Accompanied by Gentle, Pie is generally perceived as woman ("the lady") and only sporadically as mystif. The priest who marries Gentle and Pie, Father Athanasius, is also irritated by Gentle's remark concerning Pie's sex, because it contradicts the cleric's opinion on gender relations:

> '[M]ay I remind you why a man marries? So that he can be made whole: by a woman.'
> 'Not this man,' Gentle said.
> 'Wasn't the mystif a woman to you?'
> 'Sometimes....'

[189] cp. ibid. p. 177.
[190] Imajica. p. 211.
[191] ibid. p. 118.
[192] ibid. p. 382.

> 'And when it wasn't?'
> 'It was neither man nor woman. It was bliss.'
> Athanasius looked intensely discomfited by this. 'That sounds profane to me,' he remarked.[193]

In Athanasius' disapproval another issue can be read out which is fundamentally anchored in modern society: No matter if an individual or its body has, is or lives a gender – it *must* possess a gender to *be*.

> The mark of gender appears to "qualify" bodies as human bodies; the moment in which an infant becomes humanized is when the question, "is it a boy or a girl?" is answered. Those bodily figures who do not fit into either gender fall outside the human, indeed, constitute the domain of the dehumanized and the abject against which the human itself is constituted.[194]

"To what extent does the body *come into being* in and through the mark(s) of gender?" [Italics in original][195] would certainly an interesting question to ask the mystif. The fact the novel introduces Pie as man affects its further characterisation insofar as the relation to Gentle – who by the way has no sexual interest in men – takes homoerotic traits even if the mystif is definitely not a man.[196]

The development of Gentle from womaniser to the mystif's spouse is a process of sensitisation and discovering the other, alternative. Gentle's change begins with his fascination for the unknown creature: "I tried to forget I'd ever set eyes on it. I was afraid of what it was stirring up in me. And then when that didn't work I tried to paint it out of my system. But it wouldn't go. Of course it wouldn't go. It was *part* of me by that time. [Italics in original]"[197] Gentle's experience can be compared to the 'Exotic Becomes Erotic' (EBE) theory established by the social psychologist Daryl J. Bem. It describes the development of a sexual orientation in childhood and suggests that individuals are sexually attracted to the gender which they perceive as different. This is not necessarily the opposite gender from the individual's perspective. A boy, for example, who is interested in activities rather enjoyed by girls and therefore spends more time with them, might later develop a sexual interest in male individuals. Since he is more used to the company of the 'other' gender, his own gender is seen as different. So the 'exotic' becomes erotic.[198]

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[193] ibid. p. 948.
[194] Butler, J.: Gender Trouble. p. 142.
[195] ibid. p. 13.
[196] However, in the above-mentioned collectible card game, Pie has rather male features.
[197] Imajica. p. 185.
[198] cp. Oerter, Rolf and Montada, Leo (Ed.): Entwicklungspsychologie. 5. vollst. überarbeitete Auflage. Weinheim et al: Beltz 2002. p. 284.

> 'I came on this journey to understand. How can I understand anything if all I look at is illusions?'
> 'Maybe that's all there is.'
> […]
> 'I'm not the reason we're in the Imajica. I'm not the puzzle you came to solve.'
> 'On the contrary,' Gentle said, a smile creeping into his voice. 'I think maybe you are the reason. And the puzzle. I think if we stayed here, locked up together, we could heal the Imajica from what's between us.'[199]

As already mentioned, the novel repeatedly falls back on the concept of unity. The mystif's third sex literally embodies this idea; the boundaries of its body become blurred in the context of gender to form a whole. This image reminds of the creation myth as told by Aristophanes, a comic playwright of ancient Athens. On the occasion of Plato's Symposium (about 380 BC), Aristophanes tells from humans as androgynous, spheric creatures which the god Zeus splits in half and thus creates the human need to search for a partner. Pie also comes into conflict with god when it visits Hapexamendios' city to wait for Gentle. The god refuses to release the creature because its gender equality would have no room in his patriarchal system of order.[200]

It was already referred to plot elements which can be approached with Carl Gustav Jung's analytic psychology. This also applies for Gentle and Pie's relationship if it is interpreted as Gentle's process of individuation which will finally lead to his self.[201] "The core Jungian process is built upon an erotic encounter with an Other where that Other can be another person (in sexual or platonic mode) or the Other gender in the unconscious or yet another image representing Otherness."[202]

Finally, a reference to the mythological figure Mercurius is worth considering in terms of Pie'oh'pah. Mercurius, who represents "one of the most fascinating and restless western sexual personae," might even be a literary ancestor of the mystif since Mercurius is "[t]he androgynous spirit of impersonation, the living embodiment of multiplicity of persona."[203] Like Pie, he leaves the boundaries of body and gender behind.

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[199] Imajica: p. 391.
[200] cp. Imajica. p. 1072f.
[201] Idividuation processes often involve changes/modifications of the body (e.g. circumcision).
[202] Rowland, Susan: C. G. Jung and Literary Theory. The Challenge from Fiction. London et al.: Macmillan Press LTD 1999. p.188.
[203] Paglia, C.: Die Masken der Sexualität. p. 249.

5.4 Carnival

Long live the new Flesh!

David Cronenberg, *Videodrome*

Barker's stories are full of hybrid human-animal beings, surrealistic-appearing creatures, erotic monsters and bizarrely shaped revenants. On the one hand, these characters are used for a colour- to artful and tantalising thrill, on the other hand, they represent everyone's desire to escape from daily routine and to leave the limits of the own body behind. "In the day, we are social creatures, but at night we descend to the dream world where nature reigns, where there is no law but sex, cruelty, and metamorphosis." [204] Of course, the transgression of corporeal boundaries, to break free from fleshly limits in form of the 'fantastic body is no unique feature of the creatures in Barker's works or *Imajica*, respectively. The especialness of the Nightbreed, cenobites, mystifs, nilotics[205] and all their Barkeresque relatives is their awareness of being a mirror for our fears and desires. "You call us monsters", a so-called monster tells a frightened human in the movie *Nightbreed*, "but when you dream, you dream off flying and changing…and living without death."[206] Linda Badley writes: "Monsters are our transgressive desires."[207]

The imaginative creatures in Barker's works are just as well representatives of the Other, marginal and oppressed. Their otherness draws the attention to the alleged 'normal' human who generally seems to be the true monster, threat and perversity, particularly in Barker's early works. "*Les monstres ne sont pas toujours ceux que l'on croit*". [208] In contrast, one will rarely meet traditional monstrosities following established patterns such as the werewolf or the vampire in Barker's works.[209] For classic monsters are again and again associated with a (sexual) subtext and thereby reduced. This is why Barker's monsters generally do not conceal their sexual reference; they are simply *other* creatures and agents of the dark.[210]

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[204] ibid. p. 14f.
[205] A creature from Barker's *Sacrament*.
[206] Dir: Clive Barker: *Nightbreed* (USA, 1990).
[207] Badley, L.: Writing Horror and the Body. p. xii.
[208] Schnabel, William: De l'hybridité temporelle en littérature fantastique. In: Les Cahiers du Gerf 7 (2000). p. 113.
[209] With the appearance of werewolves, only the short story *Twilight at the Towers* (*Books of Blood.* Vol 6) features a classic monster. However, they result from a special agent programme of the intelligence service.
[210] „We can take our werewolf with a touch of Freud or without. As long as he doesn't sport an erection (the werewolf, not Freud) as well as snout and tail, we can interpret the image

5.4.1 The wonderfully Monstrous – Imajica's Inhabitants

Imajica celebrates the body of the other in form of fanciful creatures which we could certainly meet in Hieronymus Bosch's *The Garden of Earthly Delights*. The novel itself draws the comparison to visual arts when the curtain is raised for *Imajica*'s body worlds:

> There had been nothing in his life to date, either waking or sleeping, to prepare him for this. He'd studied the masterworks of great imaginers – he'd painted a passable Goya, once, and sold an Ensor for a little fortune - but the difference between paint and reality was vast […].
> What seemed to be a three-legged child skipped across their path only to look back with a face wizened as a desert corpse, its third leg a tail. A woman sitting in a doorway, her hair being combed by her consort, drew her robes around her as Gentle looked her way, but not fast enough to conceal the fact that a second consort, with the skin of a herring and an eye that ran all the way around its skull, was kneeling in front of her, inscribing hieroglyphics on her belly with the sharpened heel of its hand. […]
> [A]n overfed gargoyle, bald but for an absurd wreath of oiled kiss curls, approached.
> He was finely dressed, his high black boots polished and his canary yellow jacket densely embroidered after what Gentle would come to know as the present Patashoquan fashion. A man much less showily garbed followed, an eye covered by a patch that trailed the tail feathers of a scarlet bird as if echoing the moment of his mutilation. On his shoulders he carried a woman in black, with silvery scales for skin and a cane in her tiny hands with which she tapped her mount's head to speed him on his way. Still farther behind came the oddest of the four.
> 'A Nullianac,' Gentle heard Pie murmur.
> He didn't need to ask if this was good news or bad. The creature was its own best advertisement, and it was selling harm. Its head resembled nothing so much as praying hands, the thumbs leading and tipped with lobster's eyes, the gap between the palms wide enough for the sky to be seen through it, but flickering, as arcs of energy passed from side to side. It was without question the ugliest living thing Gentle had ever seen.[211]

In the shape of the Nullianac, one of the novel's villainous characters enters the plot. All of the creatures, which seem to be exclusively male (females are not known), are connected and related to each other. They form Hapexamendios' following and act as his assasins. It is not surprising that their bodies do not show any evidence of birth, the connection to the mother:[212] "The Nullianac was naked, but there was neither sensuality nor vulnerability in that state. Its flesh was almost as bright as its fire, its form without visible means of procreation or evacuation; without hair, without nipples, without navel." [213] As the story unfolds, they become a symbol for the deathly male destroyer. Their heads in

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shorn of its sexual possibilities," Barker writes in the introduction "The Bare Bones" of Ramsey Campbell's *Scared Stiff*.

[211] Imajica. p. 212-213.

[212] cp. 'Nulli' (Latin: none) – anac.

[213] Imajica. p. 1059.

form of praying hands are no sign of devoutness but mark the violent hand of god or Hapexamendios, respectively.[214] In this respect it is coherent that there are no female Nullianacs; in doing so, the text follows its own conception where the dominance of patriarchy or the lack of femininity eventually results in destruction.

The mystif Pie'oh'pah has already been described as a symbolic figure for the transgression of corporeal border areas. If the creature transforms, its fleshly boundaries become blurred in a quite graphically way. Gentle is both confused and fascinated when – assuming he is sleeping with Judith – he accidently watches Pie's body performance for the first time.

> Half concealed by shadow the woman was a mire of shifting forms - face blurred, body smeared, pulses of iridescence, slow now, passing from toes to head. The only fixable element in this flux was her eyes, which stared back at him mercilessly. […] The roiling forms of her face resolved themselves like pieces of a multifaceted jigsaw, turning and turning as they found their place, concealing countless other configurations - rare, wretched, bestial, dazzling-behind the shell of a congruous reality.[215]

Gentle will later describe Pie's body to a friend as wonderful; the body sensation caused in him by watching the mystif appears to be the only category to depict what he has witnessed. Gentle longs for the visual experience (that is why he tries to paint Pie) which is also reflected in the graphic style of the novel. "Stop looking, and see" could be one of *Imajica*'s maxims.[216]

Apart from Nullianacs and mystifs, the Imajica is populated by numerous other creatures, which in their diversity are only surpassed by their literary relatives from the *Abarat* archipelago. In the Dominions, bodies are covered with fur, disproportioned and differ from a 'normal' body in all imaginable ways. However, while many readers from of 'our Fifth' probably dream of another Dominion, the Imajica has embraced the mundane long ago:

> The natives [of L'Himby] had a physical peculiarity unique to the region: clusters of small crystalline growths, yellow and purple, on their heads, sometimes arranged like crowns or coxcombs but just as often erupting from the middle of the forehead or irregularly placed around the mouth. To Pie's knowledge, they had no particular function, but they were clearly viewed as a disfigurement by the sophisticates […].

[214] It is probably no coincidence that these creatures use phallic blades as weapons, provided that you want to make use of this reading.
[215] Imajica. p. 96.
[216] ibid. p. 298.

> 'It's grotesque,' Pie said […]. 'These people want to look like the models they see in the magazines from Patashoqua, and the stylists in Patashoqua have always looked to the Fifth for their inspiration.'[217]

A couple of creatures' entities are connected with the gender-related subjects of the plot, or result from it. For instance, *Voiders*, ambition- and wantless beings which Dowd uses for assassinations, are unwanted, cast out children whose mothers were punished with pregnancy:

> 'I've heard it said they're made of collective desire, but that's not true. They're revenge children. Got on women who were working the Way for themselves.'
> 'Working the Way isn't good?'
> 'Not for your sex [female], it isn't. It's strictly forbidden.'
> 'So somebody who breaks the law's made pregnant as revenge?'
> 'Exactly. You can't abort voiders, you see. They're stupid, but they fight, even in the womb. And killing something you gave birth to is strictly against the women's codes. So they pay to have the voiders thrown into the In Ovo. They can survive there longer than just about anything. They feed on whatever they can find, including each other. And eventually, if they're lucky, they get summoned by someone in this Dominion.'[218]

If Celestine or Quaisoir transform their bodies to become 'tentacle monsters,' this expansion of corporeal boundaries is certainly not coincidental. In spite of any obvious phallic interpretation – according to Freud, "*Vervielfältigung der Penissymbole bedeutet Kastration*" [duplication of penis symbols implies castration][219] – the appendages, which emanate from the women's bodies, extend like snakes; the body expands its influence and power.

> [Celestine's] flesh hadn't been chastened by incarceration, but looked lush, for all the marks upon it. The tendrils that clung to her body extolled her fluency, moving over her thighs and breasts and belly like unctuous snakes. Some clung to her head, and paid court at her honey lips; others lay between her legs in bliss.[220]

The snake creates a demonic image and recurs to the woman as ruler of the underworld "*aus der sie kriechend und als Schlange symbolisiert hervorkommt*" [which she leaves crawling and symbolised as snake].[221] The moment Gentle meets Celestine in her fantastic body and in her role as mother, the novel moves on Freudian ground, indeed: "Mothers can be fatal to their sons. […] She is Medusa, in

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[217] ibid. 361f.
[218] ibid. p. 283.
[219] Freud, Sigmund: Das Medusenhaupt. In: Gesammelte Werke. Band 17. Schriften aus dem Nachlass. 4. Auflage. Hrsg. von Anna Freud, E. Bibring, W. Hoffer, E. Kris u. O. Isakower. Frankfurt: Fischer 1966. p. 47.
[220] Imajica. p. 866. S. 47.
[221] Beauvoir, Simone de: Das andere Geschlecht. Sitte und Sexus der Frau. New translation. Hamburg: Rowohlt 1998. p. 96.

whom Freud sees the castrating and castrated female pubes. But Medusa's snaky hair is also the writhing vegetable growth of nature.'"[222] At the sight of his nude, libidinous mother, Gentle is shocked:

> She let the sheet she'd held to her bosom drop […] and Gentle's gaze took full account of her nakedness. The wounds she'd sustained in her struggles with Dowd and Sartori still marked her body, but they only served to prove her perfection, and although he knew the felony here, he couldn't stem his feelings. She […] opened her eyes. They found Gentle too quickly for him to conceal himself, and he felt a shock as their looks met, not just because she read his desire, but because he found the same in her face.
> 'Guard me,' he told [the angles at his back], his voice tremulous.
> Clem wrapped his arms around Gentle's shoulders.
> 'It's a woman, Maestro,' he murmured. 'Since when were you afraid of women?'
> 'Since always,' Gentle replied.
> […]
> She had not yet claimed her modesty from the floor, and as she approached him, he averted his eyes.
> 'Cover yourself, Mother,' he said. 'For God's sake, cover yourself.'[223]

Some creatures' erotic-sexual reference is also striking, as well as the degree of divergence from the ideal body image dominating our present society or the confrontation of diametrical development stages of the body – all of theses aspects are linked to border areas. For instance, there is a "man with the proportions of a foetus and the endowment of a donkey […]". [224] Concupiscentia (Latin: avarice, covetousness), Quaisoir's maid, is another prime example for the Barkeresque body zoo:

> She was naked, as always, her back a field of multi-coloured extremities each as agile as an ape's tail, her forelimbs withered and boneless things, bred to such vestigial condition over generations. Her large green eyes seeped constantly, the feathery fans to either side of her face dipping to brush the moisture from her rouged cheeks.[225]

The body becomes the wonderfully monstrous and enters the field of the grotesque and carnivalesque.

> In hybrid and grotesque bodies, the overall monstrous effect frequently results from a familiar human feature being subjected to strategies of exaggeration and distortion. […] [B]odies challenge drastically the visions of seamlessness, harmony and wholeness

[222] Paglia, C.: Die Masken der Sexualität. p. 28.
[223] Imajica. p. 986-988.
[224] Imajica. p. 245.
[225] Imajica. p. 470.

> advocated by classical aesthetics, veering instead towards the sprawling, plural and penetrable organism.[226]

Like the fantastic, the grotesque undermines valid forms and conventions. Carnival, literally bearing the reference to flesh (Latin: caro, carnis) in its name, presents the body in ecstasy and in terms of breaking the norm. The grotesque "is looking for that which protrudes from the body, all that seeks to go out beyond the body's confines" since the acts of the "bodily drama" take place in this area.

> Eating, drinking, defecation and other elimination (sweating, blowing of the nose, sneezing), as well as copulation, pregnancy, dismemberment, swallowing up by another body – all these acts are performed on the confines of the body and the outer world, or on the confines of the old an the new body. In all these events the beginning and the end of life are closely linked and interwoven.[227]

These body concepts are also capable to open people's eyes for alternative mindsets by sensitising the audience for the Other, or by illustrating the body's disunity. "Hybrid and grotesque bodies may help us rediscover an intuitive, albeit repressed, knowledge of life-sustaining energies."[228] The body's potential is expanded and made into an experience area full of possibilities which can transgress corporeal boundaries just because reality's everyday society constantly sticks to it. Like the protagonists' flesh is newly translated when travelling through the In Ovo, the body in *Imajica* is shaped, if not painted, in a new context according to Barker's motifs. "Could bodies open like flowers, and the seeds of an essential self fly from them the way his [Gentle's] mind told him they did? And could those same bodies be remade at the other end of the journey […]? So it seemed."[229] In addition to all the *other* creatures, human's 'normality' appears to be just one of possible alternatives. Hence, the novel's focus on the body is not limited to the creation of visual qualities.

Nevertheless, *Imajica*'s bodies are also utopian bodies which, considered in a derogative way, are nothing more than an instrument of escapism in a parallel universe created for them. In the context of the utopian body, it shall be referred to an essay by Georg Seeßlen for comparison. Although this essay rather deals with film, it can be used for an illustration of a critical – not to say ironic and almost arrogant – position. According to Seeßlen, the utopian body is again and again created for the same purposes such as scaring women (almost) to death

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[226] Cavallaro, Dani: The Gothic Vision. Three Centauries of Horror, Terror and Fear. London et al.: Continuum 2002. p. 193.
[227] Bakhtin, M.: Rabelais und seine Welt. p. 358-359.
[228] Cavallaro, D.: The Gothic Vision. p. 190.
[229] Imajica. p. 208.

and to usurp world supremacy.[230] This is only partly, if at all, true to *Imajica*. Further on, Seeßlen explains the dilemma of the utopian body which, on the one hand, transgresses the old body but, on the other hand, does not know what to do with it and therefore is doomed to failure. The utopian body is other people's utopia. Therein, it does hardly differ from Frankenstein's monster or from those humans who were created as counterparts by a god with a poor sense of humour.[231] *Imajica*'s body world is certainly not completely free from these observations, but also far from being as simple as Seeßlen explicates. In addition, it has already been mentioned that Barker's monsters know about this issue. Why not jump out of the skin every now and then?

In the context of the carnavalesque body, special attention has to be paid to the dark entities of the In Ovo, the Oviates. Being hybrids of beast and colossus, they are also sample bodies of the wonderfully monstrous. "Barker's work is full of hideous/beautiful monsters, grotesque arrangements of flesh presented as aesthetic artefacts."[232] When the Oviates make their appearance, terror and (graphic) violence dominate the novel; the bodies of their victims are reduced to meat, which is experienced by the participants of the failed reconciliation.

> Abelove, scrabbling at the ground in terror as an Oviate the size of a felled bull, but resembling something barely born, opened its toothless maw and drew him between its jaws with tongues the length of whips; McGann, losing his arm to a sleek dark animal that rippled as it ran but hauling himself away, his blood a scarlet fountain, while the thing was distracted by fresher meat; and […] poor Flores […] caught by two beasts whose skulls were as flat as spades and whose translucent skin had given Sartori a terrible glimpse of their victim's agony as his head was taken down the throat of one while his legs were devoured by the other. [Roxborough's] sister paid the most terrible price. She'd been fought over like a bone among hungry wolves, shrieking a prayer for deliverance as a trio of Oviates drew out her entrails and dabbled in her open skull. By the time the Maestro, with Pie'oh'pah's help, had raised sufficient feits to drive the entities back into the circle, she was dying in her own coils, thrashing like a fish half filleted by a hook.[233]

In the further course, elements of shock and disgust – "the corpse […] is the utmost of abjection"[234] – are shifted towards the uncanny when the victims themselves become wonderfully monstrous, a macabre enchantment. After their bodies are torn from their physical boundaries, they exist beyond this area. They

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[230] Seeßlen, Georg: Utopische Körper. Der Film. In: Utopische Körper. Visionen künftiger Körper in Geschichte, Kunst und Gesellschaft. Ed. by Kristiane Hasselmann, Sandra Schmidt und Cornelia Zumbusch. München: Fink 2004. p. 90.
[231] ibid. p. 88f.
[232] Jones, D.: Horror. p. 175.
[233] Imajica. p 738f.
[234] Kristeva, J.: Powers of Horror. p 4.

haunt Gentle in form of 'flesh ghosts' to take revenge on him (cp. chapter 5.4.2.2). Their bodies remind of the victims the 'American Werewolf' leaves behind (*An American Werewolf in London*, 1981) – they appear in the shape of their moment of death, representing a parody of the living. As border crossers between life and death, body and flesh, they become a parade of grotesque aesthetics. The audience can literally receive an impression of the characters' inner life.

> They appeared at its farthest edge, their viscera catching the gleam. What he'd taken to be Esther's skirt was a train of tissue, half flayed from her hip and thigh. She clutched it still, pulling it up around her, seeking to conceal her groin from him. Her decorum was absurd, but then perhaps his reputation as a womanizer had so swelled over the passage of the years that she believed he might be aroused by her, even in this appalling state. There was worse, however. Byam-Shaw was barely recognizable as a human being, and Bloxham's brother-in-law looked to have been chewed by tigers. […]
> [Abelove's] scalp had gone, and one of his eyes lolled on his cheek. When he lifted his arm to point his next accusation at Gentle, it was with the littlest finger, which was the only one remaining on that hand.[235]

Barker's fondness for hooks can also be found in *Imajica*. The Autarch appeases his people by giving out food through the 'saints,' actually two machines draped with meat.

> Trundling forward to fill the breadth of the gates was a fifteen-foot study in kitsch: a sculpted representation of Saints Creaze and Evendown, standing shoulder to shoulder, their arms stretched out towards the yearning crowd, while their eyes rolled in their carved sockets like those of carnival dummies, looking down on their flock as if affrighted by them one moment and up to heaven the next. […] They were clothed in their largesse: dressed in food from throat to foot. Coats of meat, still smoking from the ovens, covered their torsos; sausages hung in steaming loops around their necks and wrists; at their groins hung sacks heavy with bread, while the layers of their skirts were of fruit and fish.[236]

However, the saints are nothing more than sadistic torture instruments illustrating the peoples' dependence – the Autarch has hooked them.

> The saints were not without defense, however; there were penalties for the gluttonous. Hooks and spikes, expressly designed to wound, were set among the bountiful folds of skirts and coats. The devotees seemed not to care, but climbed up over the statues, disdainful of fruit and fish, in order to reach the steaks and sausages above. Some fell, doing themselves bloody mischief on the way down; others – scrambling over the victims – reached their goals with shrieks of glee […].[237]

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[235] Imajica. p 748.
[236] Ibid. p. 547f.
[237] ibid. p. 548.

5.4.2 Body and Violence

As expected, portrayals of violence are mainly used in the context of the novel's horror elements to create scare and disgust, but also thrill and frisson. *Imajica* does not limit its fanciful body images to their creation but also focuses on their destruction in equal measure.

> 'Horror fiction without violence doesn't do a great deal for me," [Barker says]. 'I think that death and wounding need to be in the air. You've got to get the reader on this ghost train ride, and there's got to be something vile at the end of it, or else why aren't you on the rollercoaster instead? And I like to be able to deliver the violence. There's never going to be any evasion. Whether it be sexual subject matter, whether it be violence, I'm going to show it as best I can.'[238]

Even though the share of violence is significantly reduced compared to earlier works, the depictions have not lost of their graphical, sometimes even sadistic impact. The body is pushed to its limit and not simply destroyed but unmade, unknitted. Just as the novel elaborately composes the body, it also undoes it:

> The man scrabbled at his eyes and nostrils, his legs giving out beneath him as the mites undid his system from the inside. He fell at Dowd's feet and rolled around in a fury of frustration, eventually putting his knife into his mouth and digging bloodily for the things that were unmaking him. The life went out of him as he was doing so, his hand dropping from his face, leaving the blade in his throat as though he'd choked upon it.[239]

Another example is Sartori's body which is nothing more than a fleshy fragment after being hit by Hapexamendios' blaze:

> It had been his undoing. The fire that had carried his mother to oblivion had seared every part of him. The ashes of his clothes had been fused with his blistered back, his hair singed from his scalp, his face cooked beyond tenderness. But like his brother, lying in ribbons below, he refused to give up life. His fingers clutched the boards; his lips still worked, baring teeth as bright as a death's - head smile. There was even power in his sinews. When his blood-filled eyes saw Jude he managed to push himself up, until his body rolled over onto its charred spine, and he used his agonies to fuel the hand that clutched at her, dragging her down beside him.[240]

The sometimes lustful interest in the wounded, opened body makes it appear fragile and evokes its vulnerability and finiteness. Naturally, the text also aims at the reader's own body feeling in the moment of shock to cause disgust or cathartic thrill.

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[238] Winter, Douglas E.: Give Me B Movies Or Give Me Death. In: Clive Barker's Shadows of Eden. p. 30.
[239] Imajica. p. 575.
[240] ibid. p. 1082.

When Gentle and his alter ego Sartori meet for their battle royale, the body's vulnerability is increased since Gentle is naked when he is attacked by his creation/son/brother.

> [A]s Gentle's eyes went to Sartori's broken hand, the other, whole and sharp, came at his flank. He glimpsed the blade and half turned to avoid it, but it found his arm, opening it to the bone from wrist to elbow. He dropped the stone, a rain of blood coming after, and as his palm went up to stem the flow Sartori entered the circle, slashing back and forth as he came. Defenseless, Gentle retreated before the blade and, arching back to avoid the cuts, lost his footing and went down beneath his attacker. One stab would have finished him there and then. But Sartori wanted intimacy. He straddled his brother's body and squatted down upon it, slashing at Gentle's arms as he attempted to ward off the *coup de grâce*. [Italics in original][241]

Violence is directed against men and women in equal measure. Consistently, the novel is not afraid of breaking taboos like violence against children, for instance:

> The force struck her [Huzzah – a girl Gentle takes care of] body at speed, but it didn't break her flesh, and for an instant he [Gentle] dared hope she had found some defense against it. But its hurt was more insidious than a bullet or a blow, its light spreading from the point of impact up to her face, where it entered by every means it could, and down to where its dispatcher's fingers had already pried. […] [H]e looked back at Huzzah, to see that it had eaten her away from the inside, and that she was flowing back along the line of her destroyer's gaze, into the chamber from which the stroke had been delivered. Even as he watched, her face collapsed, and her limbs, never substantial, decayed and went the same way.[242]

Unfortunately, it can be assumed that some readers might appreciate Barker's prose just because of the provovative portrayals of violence. However, it is untenable to accuse the novel of glorifying violence since the relevant depictions never end in themselves. The text does not take delight in violence but wants to unveil it, while also using it as stylistic device. The passage above, for instance, continues as follows:

> Huzzah had not quite gone. Small scraps of her skin and sinew, dropped when the Nullianac's claim upon her was cut short, moved here in the rot. None were recognizable; indeed, had they not been moving in the folds of her bloodied clothes he'd not even have known them as her flesh. He reached down to touch them, tears stinging his eyes, but before his fingers could make contact, what little life the scraps had owned went out.[243]

[241] ibid. p. 1049.
[242] ibid. p. 522f.
[243] ibid. p. 524.

The text here focuses on the protagonist's sorrow because of the girl's death and illustrates the cruelty of physical violence; this can hardly be called a glorification of the latter.

Gentle uses violence only in defence and he is devastated when his powers claim innocent victims. Characters that resort to violence and take a delight in it belong to *Imajica*'s villains. Nevertheless, it could be criticised that violence is accepted as a necessary evil even though its use is reflected and weighed carefully. "Barkers 'tear[ing] away the veil' is problematic when the very act of looking at the body as an object, according to some feminist theory, means dehumanizing the subject."[244] In contrast, there is the opinion that graphic violence has a liberating, cathartic effect.[245] S. T. Joshi accuses Barker snd his works of describing excessive violence "that serves no aesthetic purpose."[246] Apart from the fact that Joshi is generalising here, he indirectly justifies aesthetic violence but without defining it, and leaves a disputable impression given that he misses an "aesthetic purpose." Apparently, Joshi does not think much of Kant's definition of beauty as *interesseloses Wohlgefallen* ("desinterested pleasure"). Since an extensive analysis of the novel with regard to a possible aestheticisation of graphic violence and the wonderfully monstrous in general cannot be discussed within the scope of this book, the subject is summarised in the following excursus.

5.4.2.1 Violence, aesthetics and fantastic body

Imajica uses graphic violence as a visual stylistic device; it intends to provoke and shock but above all, the novel does not want to conceal anything from the reader. In this context, the novel is pursuing not so much an aesthetic merit as a cathartic effect. On the other hand, aesthetic qualities can be attributed to the grotesque beauty of the bodies of the wonderfully monstrous, which sometimes result from violence. The Imajica's fantastic bodies, for instance, can be examined with the 'aesthetics of the sublime' as described by French literary theorist and philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard. Here, the aesthetic experience is a body-feeling consisting of delight and dislike on the occasion of a boundary experience at the moment of 'now.' Since this takes part beyond the sensorium, it does not necessarily imply what is conventionally considered as 'beautiful.' Similar to other aesthetic theories (e.g. Adorno or Mukarovský), aesthetics emerge from breaking and violating standardising poetics, and by means of shock, since pleasure cannot be normalised. Works of art are not made but do evolve; they do not submit to prototypes, use mélanges that appear contradicting

[244] Badley, L.: Writing Horror and the Body. p. 82.
[245] This view, for instance, is held by supporters of splatter movies and computer/video games with violent contents.
[246] Joshi, S. T.: The Modern Weird Tale. p. 132.

at first glance, are characterised by their self-reflexivity and frequently portray the unportrayable to inspire reflections among the audience.

The aspects of the body-feeling when undergoing a boundary experience, breaking with the norm, self-reflexivity, and the portrayal of the unportrayable can be discovered in the novel's grotesque-beautiful fable creatures.[247] The Imajica's fantastic bodies are no artworks – but they are artistic. "[P]eople pay money to see ugly things, don't they?"[248]

5.4.2.2 Curiosities

In Barker's works, violence is frequently and particularly directed against the eyes. *Imajica* is no exception. Quaisoir is blinded, Pie wants the Autarch's eyes as trophy for a comrade, and Judith wants to know if Celestine tried to tear Hapexamensdios' eyes out when she was raped by the god. Gentle's eyes are threatened by the above-mentioned flesh ghosts who seek revenge for their fate.

> Gentle felt the wet flesh around him rise like a tide to claw him down. The fist gave up beating at his testicles and seized them instead. He screamed with pain, his clamour rising an octave as someone began to chew on his hamstrings. "Down!" he heard Esther screech. "Down!" Her noose had cut off all but the last squeak of breath. Choked, crushed, and devoured, he toppled, his head thrown back as he did so. They'd take his eyes, he knew, as soon as they could, and that would be the end of him. Even if he was saved by some miracle, it would be worthless if they'd taken his eyes.[249]

From this passage in *Imajica*, it is only a short journey to the Freudian Dominion of the uncanny:

> [S]ome children have a terrible fear of damaging or losing their eyes. Many retain this anxiety into adult life and fear no physical injury so much as one to the eye. And there is a common saying that one will 'guard something like the apple of one's eye'. The study of dreams, fantasies and myths has taught us also that anxiety about one's eyes, the fear of going blind, is quite often a substitute for the fear of castration.[250]

In this passage, *Imajica* breaks open this substitute function and the novel is probably aware of Freud's text when it says: "Unmanned, he could go on living;

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[247] cp. Lyotard, Jean-Francois: Anima Minima. In: Die Aktualität des Ästhetischen. Ed. by Wolfgang Welsch. München: 1993. p. 417-427 and
Das Erhabene und die Avantgarde. In: Merkur 38 (1984) Issue 424. p. 151-164.

[248] Barker, Clive: Abarat. Days of Magic, Nights of War. Barker, Clive: Abarat. Days of Magic, Nights of War. Harper Collins 2004. p. 55.

[249] Imajica. p. 751.

[250] Freud, Sigmund: Das Unheimliche. In: Gesammelte Werke. Band 12. Werke aus den Jahren 1917 – 1920. 3. Edition. Frankfurt/Main: S. Fischer 1966. p. 243 [The Uncanny. Translation by David McLintock. London et al: Penguin 2003. p. 139].

but not blind."[251] The protagonist does not seem to be seriously intimidated by the fear of castration – but it can be doubted that *potential* male readers think alike. However, for a novel that particularly emphasises a visual experience it is quite consistent when blindness is considered the most fatal punishment or threat. Nevertheless, *Imajica* often refers to male genitalia in a gender-related context. The first erotic advances between Judith and Oscar Godolphin reveal a 'curiosity.'

> [S]he sat down, taking hold of the waistband of his blood-stained shorts and easing them down while she kissed his belly. Suddenly bashful, he reached to stop her, but she pulled them down until his penis appeared. It was a curiosity. Only a little engorged, it had been deprived of its foreskin, which made its outlandishly bulbous, carmine head look even more inflamed than the wound in its wielder's side. The stem was very considerably thinner and paler, its length knotted with veins bearing blood to its crown. If it was this disproportion that embarrassed him he had no need, and to prove her pleasure she put her lips against the head.[252]

Oscar Godolphin is not alone with his curiosity among the male characters in the novel. Hapexamendios has just a useless fragment of flesh (see chapter 5.2) and Gentle's genital, according to Judith, "gives the lie to his name.[253] In this context, the novel also shows its grim humour when, for instance, a urinating man is surprised by a flood wave and, instead of saving himself by swimming, holds to his 'manhood' and drowns.[254] It has already been discussed that Barker's works freely display sexuality; this also applies for the portrayal of male genitals, which are frequently pictured in the artist's paintings, too.[255] Unless these depictions are not just narrative content in terms of Barker's visual style, the penis is increasingly perceived as a threatening body part; it is considered a synonym for (sexual) drive which causes loss of control of both reason and body. Hence, Rosengarten, one of the Autarch's generals and a misogynist, is characterised by his self-command because he has lost his manhood:

> [The Autarch's] musings were interrupted by Rosengarten, a name he'd bequeathed to the man in the spirit of irony, for a more infertile thing never walked. Piebald from a disease caught in the swamps of Loquiot in the throes of which he had unmanned himself, Rosengarten lived for duty. Among the generals, he was the only one who didn't sin with some excess against the austerity of these rooms. He spoke and moved

[251] Imajica. p. 751.
[252] ibid. p. 336.
[253] ibid. p. 180. "It was no great in size in this passive state, but it was pretty even so." – In *The Hellbound Heart*, Julia, the bored wife, derisively describes her husband's genital as "boastful plum," for instance.
[254] ibid. p. 969.
[255] Although the portrayal of female genitals is not concealed from readers in *Imajica* as well, this is presented far more discreet in terms of language.

> quietly; he didn't stink of perfumes; he never drank; he never ate kreauchee. He was a perfect emptiness, and the only man the Autarch completely trusted.[256]

With his arrangements for the new Reconciliation, Gentle, who once valued fleshly joys over anything else, begins to neglect the body in favour of the mind because he fears another failure:

> The beguilements of the flesh had no place in the work ahead of him. They'd brought the last Reconciliation to tragedy, and he would not allow them to lead him from his sanctified path by a single step. He looked down at his groin, disgusted with himself.
> 'Cut it off,' Little Ease [ein minderer Dämon] advised.
> If he could have done the deed without making an invalid of himself, he'd have done so there and then, and gladly. He had nothing but contempt for what rose between his legs. It was a hotheaded idiot, and he wanted rid of it.
> 'I can control it,' he replied.
> 'Famous last words,' the creature said.[257]

Regarding the maestro's imminent hubris, one cannot help to wonder how many doomed men Little Ease[258] has already witnessed.

When Gentle meets his clone for the first time, the distribution of power in context of the Reconciliation soon causes a conflict. As expected, allusions to male potency are targets for mockery and contempt:

> 'The Pivot trusts me.'
> That struck a tender place. Suddenly Sartori was shouting.
> 'Fuck the Pivot! Why should you be the Reconciler? Huh? Why? One hundred and fifty years I've ruled the Imajica. I know how to use power. You don't.'
> 'Is that what you want?' Gentle said, trailing the bait of that possibility. 'You want to be the Reconciler in my place?'
> 'I'm better equipped than you,' Sartori raged. 'All you're good for is sniffing after women.'
> 'And what are you? Impotent?'[259]

Gentle's mirror image confronts the Reconciler with his depraved past, his loss of control over the body, and describes the creation of Judiths's clone: a man's fantasy made to exceed the original, young and willing for eternity. The new

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[256] Imajica. p. 443f.
[257] ibid. p. 962.
[258] Small, somewhat quirky creatures or minor demons often appear in Barker's works to provide comic relief (Yattering in *The Yattering and Jack*, Little Ease, Jakabok Botch) or to serve as the protagonist's companion (Malingo in *Abarat*). They mostly do also have tragic traits.
[259] Imajica. p. 608-609.

Judith is a reversed Pandora – she does not bind men to her in love but is meant to be bound to them.[260]

> 'And what did the original think of this?'
> 'She didn't know. You drugged her, you took her up to the Meditation room in the house in Gamut Street, you lit a blazing fire, stripped her naked, and began the ritual. […] So there you were, sitting in the room with her, watching her perfection in the firelight, obsessing on her beauty. And eventually - half out of your mind with brandy - you made the biggest mistake of your life. You tore off your clothes, you stepped into the circle, and you did about everything a man can do to a woman, even though she was comatose, and you were hallucinating with fasting and drink. You didn't fuck her once, you did it over and over, as though you wanted to get up inside her. Over and over. Then you fell into a stupor at her side.'
> […]
> 'And you were the consequence.'
> 'I was. And let me tell you, it was quite a birth.'[261]

Finally, the male genitals are also focused when Father Athanasius, a fanatic devotee of the Virgin Mary, accuses Gentle of ruthlessness and blames him for the death of innocent victims:

> Can you resurrect them whith what's between your legs? Is that the trick of it? Can you fuck them back to life? […] Well, that's what you Maestros think, isn't it? You don't want to suffer, you just want the glory. You lay your rod on the land and the land bears fruit. That's what you think. But it doesn't work that way.'[262]

5.4.3 Death's put some strange Ideas in my Head – Kuttner Dowd

While Pie'oh'pah has been described as symbolic figure for the transgression of gender boundaries, the character of Kuttner Dowd represents a similar function for the wonderfully monstrous. In the course of the novels's plot, Dowd's body experiences continuous change which is less transformation than manipulation. Besides, he can alter his appearence due to his magic nature – Dowd "changes his face on occasion to conceal his longeivity from the withering human world"[263] – and his body is home for countless mites which he uses to attack his enemies. They leave his mouth and enter the bodies of his victims, who are eaten from the inside. Thus, the image of devouring to some extent is transferred from Dowd to the mites. The mouth, according to Bakhtin the part of the body most likely to appear grotesque, becomes a deathbringer in form of a perverted kiss of death. However, Dowd also has another quite mundane relation to his body: he

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[260] Frenzel, Elisabeth: Motive der Weltliteratur. Ein Lexikon dichtungsgeschichtlicher Längsschnitte. 5. revised and expanded edition. Stuttgart: Körner 1999. p. 512.
[261] Imajica. p. 609-611. The imminent negative image of Gentle as Maestro Sartori – he was not only a drunkard but also a rapist – is eclipsed by the plot device of his amnesia.
[262] ibd. p. 677.
[263] ibid. p. 65.

is an actor who plays human. In the following, Dowd's body development to the wonderfully monstrous is described and the character's reference to gender will be touched on briefly.[264]

With regard to the body, it is reasonably macabre that Dowd firstly becomes interesting when he is murdered. The graphic depiction of his death wallows in blood and disgust and uses a splatter movie imagery.

> [Oscar's] bulk put weight behind the blade, driving it first to the right, then to the left, encountering no obstruction from rib or breastbone. Nor was there blood; only a fluid the colour of brackish water, that dribbled from the wounds and ran across the table. Dowd's head thrashed to and fro as this indignity was visited upon him, only once raising his gaze to stare accusingly at Godolphin, who was too busy about this undoing to return the look. Despite protests from all sides he didn't halt his labors until the body before him had been opened from the navel to throat, and Dowd's thrashings had ceased. The stench from the carcass filled the chamber: a pungent mixture of sewage and vanilla.
>
> It drove two of the witnesses to the door, one of them Bloxham, whose nausea overtook him before he could reach the corridor. But his gaggings and moans didn't slow Godolphin by a beat.
>
> Without hesitation he plunged his arm into the open body and, rummaging there, pulled out a fistful of gut. It was a knotty mass of blue and black tissue-final proof of Dowd's inhumanity.[265]

Afterwards, Godolphin revives Dowd's dead body;[266] to avoid being recognised by the members of the Tabula Rasa, Dowd transforms it. His new image parallels a change in his personality; Dowd feels betrayed by Goldolphin and more and more becomes the villainous, traditional monster driven by vengefulness, hatred and desire. For this new role, the actor Dowd also choses appropriate stage clothes:

> Seeing the face he'd grown [Dowd] so used to soften and shift at the will of its possessor was one of the most distressing spectacles Oscar had set eyes upon. The face Dowd had finally fixed was *sans* mustache and eyebrows, the head sleeker than his other, and younger: the face that of an ideal National Socialist. Dowd must also have caught that echo, because he later bleached his hair and bought several new suits, all apricot but of a much severer cut than those he'd worn in his earlier incarnation. He sensed the instabilities ahead as well as Oscar; he felt the rot in the body politic and was readying himself for a New Austerity. [Italics in original][267]

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[264] For further information, see the appendix "Dramatis Personae."

[265] Imajica. p. 121f.

[266] Godolphin fears Dowd's wrath and offers to compensate him with anything he wishes for. Dowd demands to torture and kill Pie'oh'pah. Even if Dowd's motifs are not mentioned, it can be assumed that he envies the mystif and its body since it is the ultimate actor.

[267] Imajica. p. 167.

"[M]onsters had become victims and anti-heroes whose difference provoked empathy and fascination,"[268] Linda Badley writes about the creatures inhabiting the *Books of Blood* – this characterisation is also true for Dowd. His rampant behavior is part of this fascination. The more Dowd's body advances toward the grotesque, the more he gives in to his desire – he is intoxicated by the transgression of his corporeal boundaries.

A gender-related reference appears when Dowd meets Judith. He knows that Sartori once created Jude as Godolphin's playmate and regards her as rival and threat for Oscar's 'man's business.' By killing Clara, a former Tabula Rasa member who equates men with destroyers, Dowd confirms this mindset at first, even though he is not a human man. However, readers fall into a trap if they follow the naïve attribution and understand Dowd as women-hunting monster. His hatred towards 'the whores' ultimately results from violence used against him by men or his fathers, figuratively: Hapexamendios, *the* father, soon loses his interest in Dowd after the latter has served him by finding a woman who will be the mother for the god's true descendent; Dowd himelf has no mother. Moreover, Oscar Godolphin betrays Dowd's loyalty by exposing him in the staged murder and later lets a woman come between master and servant. Here, Dowd's tragedy begins since he eventually is just a castoff and outsider who fears for his existence.[269] However, he is definitely not innocent and his characterisation remains constantly ambivalent.

When Oscar and Judith open a gate to travel to the Imajica, Dowd disturbs the ritual and violently enters the portal. As a result, he is not completely retranslated on the other side and his body becomes corrupted. So Dowd takes the first step to the wonderfully monstrous:

> Though he'd escaped being turned inside out, his trespass had wounded him considerably. He looked as though he'd been dragged face down over a freshly graveled road, the skin on his face and hands shredded and the sinew beneath oozing the meager filth he had in his veins. The last time Jude had seen him bleed, the wound had been self-inflicted and he'd seemed to suffer scarcely at all; but not so now.[270]

While Dowd afterwards has overcome his 'assassination' relatively unharmed, he has now become a bloody revenant after all. "Horror monstrosities typically carry primarily the threat to pollute and infect, or they epitomize a repugnant

[268] Badley, L.: Writing Horror and the Body. p. xii.
[269] He particularly fears the Tabula Rasa's library which provides the knowledge to create and destroy his kind.
[270] Imajica. p. 498f.

and nauseating organicism."[271] Dowd's further development gives the novel a opportunity to celebrate the macabre and to reshape the creature's body constantly. It seems as Dowd's body only recovers to take another bizarre deformation. "[However,] confronting the pain and disgust of bodily existence is not a move to reject the body, but rather a step in the process of transforming the body."[272] At the end of fight with Quaisoir, Dowd is thrown in an abyss but again escapes death like the movie villain that never dies. However, his body suffers new modifications which turn Dowd into a grotesque appearence at last: shards of the Pivot Tower stuck in his body turning it in a patchwork of rock and wounds, forming an anatomical contradiction or a "splattered body" in the words of Jay McRoy: "[I]t is a body that rejects the idea of 'organism,' fixed borders, and totalizing systems, embracing instead its own 'monstrous' becoming, its own flexible multiplicity."[273]

Dowd's corporeal transformation parallels another change in his personality. When he eventually takes his revenge and kills (read: butchers) Godolphin, he also liberates himself – and Judith – from the bond to the Godolphin clan. "We don't belong to anybody any more. We're our inventions."[274] A common ground between the two characters is further evoked since both of them refer to their autonomy during the course of the novel.[275] Certainly, the two characters cannot be compared on the same level. Nevertheless, both women and monsters are often interpreted as victims of patriarchal hierarchies and (subliminal) incorporations of castration anxiety.[276] At least the first observation conforms to *Imajica*, the second one is exploited. For Dowd ignores the subtext and adds Oscar's 'curiosity' to his own by cutting Godolphin's penis off. This can certainly be understood, even if slightly blatant, as Dowd's liberation from his former master with severed penis as phallus – *"[n]ur als abgetrennter kann er zum Zeichen der Macht bzw. des Subjekts werden*" [only when severed it can become a symbol of power or the subject, respectively].[277] However, this passage is rather created for reasons of shock and deep black humour, even though in a similarly blatant way, admittedly. The last bit that remains of Godolphin is his 'curiosity' which was once the reason for Judith's creation, figuratively.

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[271] Morgan, Jack: The Biology of Horror. Gothic Literature and Film. Carbondale et al.: Southern Illinois Univ. Press 2002. p. 100.
[272] Connolly, T. J.: William Blake and the Body. p. 8f.
[273] McRoy, J.: There Are No Limits. p. 148.
[274] Imajica. p. 822.
[275] Dowd refers to this parallel even before Judith knows about her origins.
[276] Hollinger, Karen: The Monster as Woman. Two Generations of Cat People. In: The Dread Difference. p. 299.
[277] Bischoff, Doerte: Der Phallus zwischen Materialität und Bedeutung. In: Körperteile. Eine kulturelle Anatomie. Ed. by Claudia Benthien and Christoph Wulf. Reinbeck: Rowohlt 2001. p. 296.

Finally, even Dowd's boundless body comes to an end by the hands of the resurrected Celestine.

> Though the shards he carried were powerful, the flesh they were seated in was weak, and Celestine had exploited that frailty with the efficiency of a warrior. Half his face was missing, stripped to the bone, and his body was more unknitted than the corpse he'd left on the table above: his abdomen gaping, his limbs battered.[278]

Again, the aspect of undoing (unknitting) the body is implied. It consequently must end the transgression of corporeal boundaries since this process would or could otherwise continue forever, like in the grotesqe body. "[D]espite his legendary powers of recuperation he'd been unable to make good the damage done. He was unmasked to the bone."[279] At the end, Dowd feels closest to the person he initially encountered with scepticism and aversion: Judith. While his body has lost any refererence to humanity and is more meat than flesh, the 'actor chappie' departs his life with an absurd request for forgiveness. "[Judith] put her hand to touch him, and offer him what comfort she could, but before her fingers reached him, his breath stopped, and his eyes flickered closed. […] Against all reason, she felt a pang of loss at his passing."[280] We are left to muse about the winner of this conflict – monster or humanity?

In conclusion, the character of Kuttner Dowd is not only a wonderfully monstrous, grotesque body, but also a splattered body which is "an intensive and heterogenous body, a perpetually self-construction. It is a body that, more often than not, elicits fear, but is also a body that holds tremendous promise for those wishing to escape stifling cultural paradigms."[281]

5.5 The Body between Eros and Thanatos

> Bedrooms were only ever this hot for sickness or love,
> Gentle thought as Clem ushered him in;
> for the sweating out of obsession or contagion.
>
> Clive Barker, *Imajica*

The wonderfully monstrous has shown the body in extreme situations which cross and ignore corporeal boundaries to undermine the dictum oft he 'norm.' Likewise, *Imajica* treats sexuality which is far more related to the wonderfully

[278] ibid. p. 831.
[279] ibid. p. 919.
[280] ibid. p. 925
[281] McRoy, J.: There Are No Limits. p. 148.

monstrous than it might seem. For sexuality transforms the body, pushes it to its limits and beyond. Apart from birth and death, sex is one of the extremes a body can experience.

Sexuality is one the novel‘s fundamental elements which is not very surprsing, admittedly. More than anything else, this subject is related to the body, forms the origin of the gender discourse, and involves the idea of unity, which pervades the novel. Besides its graphic explicitness and the use of obscene language from time to time, the novel describes sexuality as transcendent power. Similar to passing the In Ovo, bodies in the act of sex are liberated from their boundaries and translated in a glyph, which might indicate an ontological essence. Its geometrical structure allows readers to immerse themselves in the text.

> [Judith] didn’t use the dark to reconfigure [Oscar]. The man pressing his face into her hair, and biting at her shoulder, wasn't – like the mystif he’d described – a reflection of imagined ideals. It was Oscar Godolphin, paunch, curiosity, and all. What she *did* reconfigure was herself, so that she became in her mind’s eye a glyph of sensation: a line dividing from the coil of her pierced core, up through her belly to the points of her breasts, then intersecting again at her nape, crossing and becoming woven spirals beneath the hood of her skull. Her imagination added a further refinement, inscribing a circle around this figure, which burned in the darkness behind her lips like a vision. Her rapture was perfected then: being an abstraction in his arms, yet pleasured like flesh. There was no greater luxury. [Italics im original][282]

Sexual unity seems to grant access to a higher level or a “central control system.”[283] In a ‘pillow book’ with erotic illustrations, Judith discovers the Imajicas’s ‘ars erotica:’

> Leafing through it [the book] she sincerely hoped the artist was locked up where he could not attempt to put these fantasies into practice. Human flesh was neither malleable nor protean enough to re-create what his brush and ink had set on the pages. There were couples intertwined like quarreling squid; others who seemed to have been blessed (or cursed) with organs and orifices of such strangeness and in such profusion they were barely recognizable as human. […] The first picture [of a double page of illustrations] showed a naked man and woman of perfectly normal appearance, the woman lying with her head on a pillow while the man knelt between her legs, applying his tongue to the underside of her foot. From that innocent beginning, a cannibalistic union ensued, the male beginning to devour the woman, starting with her legs, while his partner obliged him with the same act of devotion. Their antics defied both physics and physique, of course, but the artist had succeeded in rendering the act without grotesquerie, but rather in the manner of instructions for some extraordinary magical illusion.[284]

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[282] Imajica. p. 341.
[283] Bischoff, D.: Der Phallus zwischen Materialität und Bedeutung. p. 343.
[284] Imajica. p. 175f.

Apart from the emphasis on the bodily union which culminates in the actual sexual union of two bodies, the image of devouring, the "cannibalistic union," is worth considering.[285] The act of devouring initiates a process of disintegration to form wholeness. [286] In doing so, the entire body is made an erogenous zone while its boundaries are transgressed and removed. The picture of the two lovers in the quoted passage reminds of the Ouroboros: the image of the serpent/dragon swallowing its own tail to form a circle; a symbol for infinity and unification.[287] Thus, in addition to the character of Pie'oh'pah, the Imajica's circle structure or the subject of the mother, the novel features another element from Jungian imagery. Here, the Ouroboros represents a paradisiac, primal, infantile condition.

Later, Judith experiences the practices depicted in the 'pillow book', which she considered impossible, herself with Sartori. However, the required body transformation is rather a demanding meditation exercise and reminds of an ecstatic dream.[288]

> This was the substance of every moment, she realized: the body - never certain if the next lungful would be its last - hovering for a tiny time between cessation and continuance. And in that space out of time, between a breath expelled and another drawn, the miraculous was easy, because neither flesh nor reason had laid their edicts there. She felt his mouth open wide enough to encompass her toes and then, impossible as it was, slide her foot into his throat. He's going to swallow me, she thought, and the notion conjured once again the book she'd found in Estabrook's study, with its sequence of lovers enclosed in a circle of consumption. […] As she ran her palm across his flesh a delicate wave of change came with it, and his substance seemed to soften beneath her touch. […] She drew her head towards his feet and touched her lips to the substance of him. Then she was feeding; spreading her hunger around him like a mouth and closing her mind on his glistening skin. He shuddered as she took him in, and she felt the thrill of his pleasure as her own. He had already

[285] German idiom: *jemanden zum Fressen gerne haben* – to like someone so much, one could eat him/her. Moreover, we *devour* the books we like.
[286] The next step would be extinction on a state of transcendence, which and Gentle experience by entering the Imajica's inside at the end oft he novel.
[287] Eric Rucker Eddison's *The Worm Ouroboros* (1922) is considered one of the literary inspirations for *Imajia* and Barker's *Books of the Art* feature evil forces called the 'Iad Uroboros.' In this context, it is striking how *Imajica* resembles Michael Ende's *The Neverending Story* (*Die Unendliche Geschichte*, 1979): The novel is set in a parallel universe called 'Fantastica' ('Phantasien' in the German original; the German word 'Phantasie' means 'imagination') and also uses the Ouroboros symbol, here two serpents biting each others tail, as 'Auryn.'
[288] Remark: In chapter 5.3.3., Pie'oh'pah has been linked to the mythological figure Mercurius which is also associated with alchemy. The spiritual science knows a hermaphrodite called Rebis which is, among other things, depicted as incestuous brother and sister. The clones Judith and Sartori could be interpreted as their representations. This would add another reference to the union of the opposite (see also Paglia: *Masken der Sexualität*, p. 263).

> consumed her to the hips, but she quickly matched his appetite, taking his legs down into her, swallowing both his prick and the belly it lay hard against. She loved the excess of this, and its absurdity, their bodies defying physics and physique, or else making fresh proofs of both as the configuration closed upon itself.[289]

Pie and Gentle, by comparison, have sex the more "conventional" way:

> It gave him another breath, and another. He drank them all, eating the pleasure off its face in the moments between, the breath received as his prick was given. In this exchange they were both entered and enterer: a hint, perhaps, of the third way Pie had spoken of, the coupling between unfixed forces that could not occur until his manhood had been taken from him. Now, as he worked his prick against the warmth of the mystif's sex, the thought of relinquishing it in pursuit of another sensation seemed ludicrous. There could be nothing better than this; only different.[290]

The concept of an active and passive sex is abolished; sexuality is adressed in the plural. However, in spite of all transformations, the novel stresses to enjoy the pleasures of the own body: Gentle is aroused by seeing himself mirrored in Pie during intercourse;[291] likewise, Judith is not reluctant to look at Quaisoir, her clone, in the nude.

In a study on transgressions in fantastic literature, Annette Simonis notices a tendency to the "delimitation of the individual:"

> *Den Formen devianter Liebesverhältnisse oder Sexualbeziehungen korrespondieren in der literarischen Phantastik eine Reihe anderer Motive und Sujets aus dem Bereich der Entgrenzung des Individuums, wie etwa Metamorphose […] sowie die Überquerung räumlicher Grenzen in eine qualitativ andere […] Dimension der Wirklichkeit* [In literary fantasy, forms of deviant love affairs or sexual relationships correspond to several other motifs and subjects from the area of the individual's delimitation, such as metamorphosis and the crossing of spatial borders, to reach a qualitatively other dimension of reality].[292]

Altough this can be affirmed for *Imajica*, the novel soon defies Simonis' pattern since she decribes that deviant love affairs in fantastic fiction are usually considered abnormal in their social context and result in serious consequences for those involved; she further mentions that particularly homosexuality and love of a human to another creature are stigmatised.[293] Of course, Simonis only gives

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[289] Imajica. p. 774ff.
[290] ibid. p. 393.
[291] Ibid. p. 394.
[292] Simonis, Annette: Grenzüberschreitungen in der phantastischen Literatur. Einführung in die Theorie und Geschichte eines narrativen Genres. Heidelberg: Winter Universitätsverlag 2005. p. 164.
[293] ibid. p. 165.

a general definition but this reference illustrates how *Imajica*'s differs from other works of fantastic literature.

Corporeal boundaries and their trangression permanently balance between Eros and Thanatos. So far, death, or the dead body, has been discussed mostly in terms of the wonderfully monstrous, violence or horror scenarios. The novel certainly depicts death as spectacle to toy with the readers' fears by confronting them with their own mortality, but *Imajica* further explores the topic and deals with it. The novel portrays the feelings of the protagonists concerned on both sides, describes their sorrow, their loss and how they cope with it. Moreover, the novel tackles one of the saddest places where sexuality and death meet each other. "There are no dragons and gryphons [in *Imajica*], but the modern monstrosities of censorship and homelessness and AIDS."[294] At the novel's beginning, Judith and Gentle learn that their friend Taylor is dying of AIDS which *Imajica* only mentions as "the plague." Here, the novel does not need bizarre creatures and grotesque bodies to illustrate a far more terrifying, real monster. In this context, the term 'body horror' obtains a fairly new definition. As imaginative as the novel is as a whole, it nonetheless addreses the subject of AIDS seriously and sensitively; if the body is described in detail here, this is not done for the sake of fancy but to report. It is therefore remarkable that S. T. Joshi (who calls his chapter on Barker „Sex, Death, and Fantasy") mentions an "intimate connection between sex, violence, and death" in Barker's works and only alludes to fantastic elements in this connection. [295]

> Bedrooms were only ever this hot for sickness or love, Gentle thought as Clem ushered him in; for the sweating out of obsession or contagion. It didn't always work, of course, in either case, but at least in love failure had its satisfactions. […] He had to scan the room twice before his eyes settled on the bed in which Taylor lay, so nearly enveloped was it by the soulless attendants of modern death: an oxygen tank with its tubes and mask; a table loaded with dressings and towels; another, with a vomit bowl, bedpan, and towels; and beside them a third, carrying medication and ointments. In the midst of this panoply was the magnet that had drawn them here, who now seemed very like their prisoner. Taylor was propped up on plastic-covered pillows, with his eyes closed. He looked like an ancient. His hair was thin, his frame thinner still, the inner life of his body - bone, nerve, and vein - painfully visible through skin the color of his sheet. It was all Gentle could do not to turn and flee before the man's eyes flickered open. […] Taylor stirred, an irritated look on his face until his gaze found Gentle. […]
>
> He tried to reposition himself on the pillow, but the effort was beyond him. His breathing became instantly arduous, and he flinched at some discomfort the motion brought.[296]

[294] Winter, D. E.: The Dark Fantastic. p. 333.
[295] Joshi, S. T.: The Modern Weird Tale. p. 121f.
[296] Imajica. S. 181f.

After contemplating the close relationship between sexuality and death, the novel accompanies Taylor and his decaying, vanishing body. Only his spirit remains.

5.6 A School in which the Soul Learned Flight – Body and Spirit

> We look at our bodies and we see them
> putrefying around our living minds
> and we know, finally, that the enemy is our flesh.
> The body is a prison and must be escaped
> by metaphysics, or changed
> by wit and knife and courage.
>
> Clive Barker, Frankenstein in Love

A good portion of Barker's works like *Imajica* deals with the relationship between body and spirit in some way or the other. There are reincarnations, manifestations of the spirit, bodies are perceived as trap, or characters come to the conclusion that they are tired of their body. The entities of body and soul in this context are considered as given and are not specifically defined.[297] In order to simplify matters, body and spirit/soul are understood as physical and spiritual part of an individual in the following to avoid drowning in the philosophical questions of the mind-body dichotomy.

Imajica suggests *having* a body and *being* a spirit. Of course, both areas influence each other but also feature independent characteristics. "His [Gentle] body and his mind were about different businesses. The former, freed from conscious instruction, breathed, rolled, sweated and digested. The latter went dreaming."[298] *Imajica* depicts the soul as the entity which dominates the body but it still remains a side note compared to the novel's focus on the body and only refers to its boundaries in the end: If these are overcome, the spirit's entity can be approached in a state of transcendence like the one reached by sex, for instance (see chapter 5.5). In contrast to the different facets of the body, the novel's concept of the soul is rather conventional. While the body is literally taken to pieces and recomposed, the soul is spared for the most part. Hence, although *Imajica* considers the spirit superior to the body, the novel focuses on the latter. A simple explanation lies in the fact that the body is physical and therefore easier to comprehend and describe. Bodies can be created, souls can not. If the novel

[297] Magic in *Imajica* links both areas: Gentle is able to use his spit and breath (body) as weapon which is called 'pneuma' (Ancient Greek: breath, spirit) so it can be assumed that the soul is the essence of magic. In Barker's *Abarat*, magic works in a similar way.
[298] Imajica. p. 90.

reduces bodies to signs (glyph), it tries to grasp and portray an indiviual's spiritual energy or the soul.

> In Barker's later work it is certainly suggested that the mind controls the body and that therefore the horrors of the mind surpass those of the body. But, firstly, we are still dealing with a human perspective and, secondly, there is still vastly more harm done to the characters' bodies than to their minds or spirits or imaginations.[299]

Due to its carnality, the body is vulnerable, tangible and perceptible whereas the spirit remains abstraction and mystery. Thus, elements of horror fiction in particular make use of the anxiety for the body by means of variation, transformation or destruction – and by giving it a life of its own. In the context of the horror novel, Colin Manlove remarks that "it is written i[n] a consumerist and intensely materialistic [age], in which the health of the body is glorified: and now the thing to be dreaded, and therefore exploited, is more often the destruction of flesh than of mind and spirit."[300]

If *Imajica* refers to the spirit in relation to body, the latter is perveived as a fleshly prison at times. Thus, the novel follows Platon's concept of the soul rather than Foucault's, for instance, who desribes the soul as an instrument of political anatomy or, respectively, as prison for the body.[301] However, the body is also experienced as bringer of joy since it gives lust.

> 'Magic's our means to […] Revelation,' the Maestro said, 'while we're still in our flesh.'
> 'And is it your opinion that we are *given* that Revelation?' Roxborough replied. 'Or are we stealing it?'
> 'We were born to know as much as we *can* know.'
> 'We were born to suffer in our flesh,' Roxborough said.
> 'You may suffer, I don't.'
> The reply won a guffaw from McGann.
> 'The flesh isn't punishment,' the Maestro said. 'It's there for joy. But it also marks the place where we end and the rest of Creation begins. Or so we believe. It's our illusion, of course.' [Italics in original][302]

If characters leave their body in a state of transcendence, the novel again deals with a transgression of corporeal boundaries. In the following passage, Gentle projects his spirit and considers his body redundant.

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[299] Joshi, S. T.: The Modern Weird Tale. p. 130.
[300] Manlove, Colin: The Fantasy Literature of England. London et al.: Macmillan Press LTD 1999. p. 112.
[301] Foucault, Michel: Überwachen und Strafen. Die Geburt des Gefängnisses. 2nd edition. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp 1977. p. 42.
[302] Imajica. p. 732.

> The conventional life of the senses was redundant in this place, and for Gentle being here was like a dream in which he was knowing but unknown, potent but unfixed. He didn't mourn the body he'd left in Gamut Street. If he never inhabited it again it would be no loss, he thought. He had a far finer condition here, like a figure in some exquisite equation that could neither be removed nor reduced but was all it had to be – no more, no less – to change the sum of things.[303]

In contrast, Judith desires to return to/in her body as soon as her sensory perception is affected (here by a library); she longs for her body as a medium for experience and to feel the physical world: "It made her want to be flesh again, instead of a roving mind. To walk here. To touch the books, the bricks; to smell the air."[304]

The relationship between spirit and body naturally also evokes the fear of losing control over one's body[305] which *Imajica* uses to create horror or to describe the consequences of an overwhelming, shocking experience.[306]

In the following passage, Sartori (clone) refers to his birth as incarnation of the soul (apparently, a soul can be man-made or created by magic in the Imajica) which illustrates its superiority over the body: "People say they don't remember the moment they came into the world, but I do. I remember opening my eyes in the circle […] and these rains of matter coming down on me, congealing around my spirit. Becoming bone. Becoming flesh."[307] The clone comes unfinished into the world and sees the light of day as Barkeresque anatomy lesson. The soul may precede and dominate the body and be an entity's ontological essence, but it is still the body that the audience keeps in mind while reading the novel.

The relevance of the soul also becomes evident in cases where the horror of its absence is described. This is a standard example for the uncanny in terms of Freud.[308] After Oscar Godolphin has killed Dowd's body, he reanimates the creature. Even if the novel does not dwell on a soulless Dowd, Godolphin's terror speaks volumes: "I've made a terrible error, Oscar thought. I've brought

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[303] ibid. p. 1039.
[304] ibid. p. 194.
[305] The loss of control over the body Barker already depicted quite visually in his short story *The Body Politic* (*Books of Blood*.Vol. 4), in which the hands of the protagonist call for revolution against his body.
[306]Characters in Barker's fiction quite often lose control over their body concerning that they are literally 'scared shitless.' In *Imajica*, Gentle is advised to not leave his body alone for too long while projecting his spirit, since he might easily soil his pants otherwise.
[307] Imajica. p. 611.
[308] cp. Freud, Sigmund: Das Unheimliche. p. 237ff. Dowd is descibed like a puppet at first which confirms the reference to 'The Uncanny' with regard to Freud's analysis of inanimate objects like dolls.

back the body, but the soul's gone out of him."[309] Although Dowd is not human (anymore), the soul still acts as an indicator for humaneness.

For the relation between spirit and dead body, the novel offers two noticeable examples: After Gentle has fallen in the Cradle Sea, he is comatose and declared dead. He rescues himself with his mind by imagining an erotic scenario, which is perveived by the mystif. In Taylor's case (see chapter 5.5), the soul outlives the body. He appears to his lover Clem and enters his body until the death of Hapexamendios allows the deceased to find eternal peace in the First Dominion ("The dead are being called home").[310] Taylor then leaves his partner forever: "The pain of losing his lover's physical body had been acute enough, but losing the spirit that had so miraculously returned to him was immeasurably worse."[311]

In summary, the body remains an adventure playground but is also an obstacle for the spirit on its way to a mystical merging with the world, which Gentle achieves at the end of the novel by entering the Imajica's inside. Hence, the spirit finally dominates the body. Why does the book then neglect the spirit in favour oft he body? While the novel can experiment with the body and its boundaries just because the body is defined by them, and in this context is forced into social roles models and discourses of power, the soul remains a mystery for *Imajica* as well. By means of the fantastic body, the text tries to find its own way to approach the phenomenon; it ignores physical limits and hopes to find an answer beyond the carnal body. Thus, the novel is well advised to focus on the body. Nevertheless, the spirit prevails in the end for it is also imagination, an 'Imajica' on its own.

5.7 Body, Self and Identity

Let me see you stripped down to the bone.

Depeche Mode, *Stripped*

Identity is inescapably connected with the body: Its appearance affects self-perception and the body can be made a medium for identity the way it is fashioned and presented.[312] The body generally appears as prerequisite for the

[309] Imajica. p. 152.
[310] ibid. S. 1133.
[311] ibid.
[312] For reasons of simplicity, identity in this book is understood as the combination of self-concept (self-perception), personality (traits) and distinctive features (age, name, appearance, etc.) of an individual.

possibility of human existence. It is instrument of action as well as medium for experience and perception; it can be social, medical and artisitc object and, as stated previously, is used to present identity.[313]

Thus far, body transformations/modifications have been desribed in terms of the transgression of corporeal boundaries. In this context, changes in personality or the self-concept often paralleled physical changes of the body.[314] The character Dowd can be considered the prime example for this process. Almost every character in the novel finds a new self throughout the plot – mostly in accordance with physical change: Corporeal boundaries are shaken off (cp. the idea of the body as trap) to break off from the exemplary body of society.

The twofold body is another alternative. Todorov remarks that in fantastic fiction "a character will readily be multiplied. We all experience ourselves *as if* we were several persons – here the impression will be incarnated on the level of *physical* reality. [Italics in original]"[315] The confrontation between Gentle and Sartori is indirectly foreshadowed at the beginning of the novel. Gentle, the art faker, admits that he needs women as a living mirror to confirm his qualities as lover but, at the same time, he hopes to liberate himself from this role. "More, he lived in hope that one such mirror would find something behind his looks only another pair of eyes could see: some undiscovered self that would free him being Gentle."[316] The subject of the Doppelgänger, which expresses a "projection of identity problems,"[317] is particularly interesting with regard Sartori and Gentle. However, Sartori is no real Mr. Hyde since he is a duplicate and not just a double. The clone is not restricted to the original's evil side; he even complains about the greed for power and the arrogance he has inherited from his original, Maestro Sartori.[318] However, the Sartori clone still acts as antagonist and Gentle's Jungian shadow, which illustrates the protagonist's dark traits and represents his potential for evil.[319]

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[313] cp. Schmidt, G.: Identität und Body-Image. p. 43.
[314] This idea is quite common, actually. For example, a lot of people first of all alter their haircut if they want to change their appearance, which is the surface of identity.
[315] Todorov, T.: Einführung in die fantastische Literatur. p. 105 [Translation by Richard Howard from the English edition *The Fantastic. A Structural Approach to A Literary Genre.* Ithaca, New Yoork: Cornell University Press 1975. p. 116].
[316] Imajica. p. 22.
[317] Schwarcz, Chava Eva: Der Doppelgänger in der Literatur. Spiegelung, Gegensatz, Ergänzung. In: Doppelgänger. Von endlosen Spielarten eines Phänomens. Ed. by Ingrid Fichtner. Berm et al.: Haupt 1999. p. 14.
[318] Of course, he can also (mis)use this character traits to justify his violent actions.
[319] see Jung, Carl Gustav: Archetypen. München: Dt. Taschenbuchverlag 2001.

Imajica toys around with adopted identities (Sartori clone), disguised or wrong identities – in Gentle's case this is emphasised by the fact he is a faker – and newly obtained identities In addition, the novel deals with Gentle's sexual identity.[320]

> Barker's dialogues of gender suggest that within conventional constructions, we are all misshapen fragments of whole people, or at best halves searching for the missing possible Other. We are all seeking to re-image our present selves. Sexual metamorphosis is often positively self-transcending.[321]

While in society the body generally is the primary medium of identity, which is constantly decorated to proudly present one's individual identity, the characters in *Imajica* do not care very much about their appearance. They simply look good, average or bad, making it part of their identity. Nevertheless, Gentle does present his body in a certain way: "As ever, he'd left the bathroom door wide open. There was no bodily function, to the most fundamental, he'd ever shown the least embarassment about […]."[322]

Gentle's journey into the Imajica is not only related to identity in terms of his quest for his self. Ultmately, he is searching for his/a father which is, according to Elisabeth Frenzel, a motif of imminent self-fulfilment.[323]

[320] According to Camille Paglia, sexuality for men is is a fight for identity (*Masken der Sexualität*, p. 27).
[321] Badley, L.: Writing Horror and the Body. p. 94.
[322] Imajica. p. 179f.
[323] cp. Frenzel, E.: Motive der Weltliteratur. p. 754.

6. Conclusion

> Sometimes it seemed to be a kind
> of encyclopedia of possibilities;
> an A to Z of things wonderful and strange,
> brimming, overspilling itself in its eagerness
> to be All and Everything and More Than Everything.
>
> Clive Barker, *Abarat. Days of Magic, Nights of War*

Clive Barker's novel *Imajica* drafts the body as stimulus, thought-provoking discourse and stylistic device. It celebrates the body, illustrates patriarchal power hierarchies, and presents a body in carnival by means of the wonderfully monstrous. In this context, the novel constantly crosses the social, gender and physical boundaries of the body, to sensitise readers for the Other and to question what is conventionally considered to be 'normal' – the novel aims at depicting the Other simply as an alternative, equal possibility. Consequently, the novel opposes a predetermined concept of the body like it is publicised in the media or by cultural traditions, for instance, and can therefore contribute to the comprehension of the Other not as boundary but as an alternative, equal option which is open for everyone. For example, the love affair between Pie and Gentle might motivate homophobic readers to reconsider same-sex relationships. In addition, the novel's fantastic background supports the reader's willingness to engage with the Other and to rethink the conventional.

The body becomes a wonderfully monstrous adventure playground without limits, an erogenuous zone and an experience which embraces otherness. The novel knows no taboos but also runs the risk of drifting into trivialities when it repeats itself. However, *Imajica* does not explain why bodies frequently experience transformations, which might frustrate some readers. For all that, the novel has studied the body's anatomy well enough to convince with both fantastic and worldly portrayals; Imajica does not turn to the fantastic to be blind for reality.

In addition, Barker's novel evokes an (utopian) idea of an equal world without onesided gender superiority which, however, fails to avoid some clichés and elements of kitsch at times. Nevertheless, *Imajica* argues against stereotyped gender roles and overacts, exposes and satirises them. In terms of the conflict between women and men, the novel, however, uses a rather naive sex segregation on the surface, since it only focuses on characteristics of the body. Hence, *Imajica* also mirrors the patriarchal patterns it attacks.

The novel generally tries to describe both sexes as ambivalent and self-determined. With the character of the mystif, gender boundaries become blurred

and performative. In addition, Pie'oh'pah opens up new perspectives on a sexuality in terms of lust and thus objects an alleged norm of heterosexuality. Hence, corporeal boundaries are considered as both restriction and stage for potential self-fulfilment. The novel becomes problematic at the end for it depicts femaleness prevailing over maleness in a way that again falls into fixed gender roles (Judith as woman) or loses itself in the woman-fertility analogy. How would the novel consider an infertile woman?

Although it is set in fantsy world, *Imajica* – like most of Barker' works – is not simply an escapist novel; it confronts readers with thought-provoking contents and intends to deliver an entertaining read at the same time. In the context of all the gaps the novel offers for interpretation, it should not be forgotten that *Imajica* praises imagination already in its title and is not least interested in the fun of reading. Originating from a genre that is often smiled at, this novel can self-confidently return a smile, while a large number of literary works simply gloat about their artistic merit.

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8. Appendix: Dramatis Personae

In the following, the three protagonists and selected minor characters are introduced to avoid explanations when the relevant character is mentioned in the text.

John Furie Zacharias, called Gentle: Art faker and womaniser who can only rememeber the last five years of his life. In the course of the plot, he learns about his origin: Actually, he is Sartori, a Maestro, and the son of the god Hapexamendios, whose decendants also include Jesus Christ. Being the Reconciler, Sartori/Gentle's duty was to heal and therefore unify the Dominions. After the ritual fails, the Maestro asks his confidant Pie'oh'pah to take his memory away and then drifts though the centuries until he is accidently contronted with his past. Gentle visits the Dominions, falls in love with the mystif Pie'oh'pah, of which he also cannot remember, and marries it. During his voyage, Gentle experiences the unrest in the Imajica, learns about his role and has to face his clone, which he once created himself by accident. The clone in the form of the Autarch rules over the Second Dominion and tries to conquer the Imajica. In the final conflict between the 'brothers' or father/creator and son/creature, respectively, Pie is wounded. After Gentle has regained his memory completely, he obsessively pursues his function as Reconciler, meets his father and witnesses the latter's downfall coming along with the Imajica's unification. In the city of god, Gentle locates the mystif he believed to have lost. Together, they enter the Imajica's inside to reach an apotheotic place of genesis.

Judith Odell: Former lover of Gentle and the wife of Charles Estabrook at the beginning of the novel. After the latters's assumed death, 'Jude' begins an affair with his brother Oscar Godolphin who offers her access to the Imajica. Similar to Gentle, she suffers from memory loss. "Judith is born not of flesh, but magic: she is a simulacrum, a twin created in centuries past to satisfy the urges of competing lovers."[324] These lovers are Maestro Sartori and Joshua Godolphin – the magic ritual ties the man-made Judith forever to Godolphin's desdendants, who die in the course of the novel's plot, though. The 'original' lives under the name Quaisoir as the Autarch's wife in the Second Dominion. Judith by magic gains telepathic abilities and thereby finds Gentle's mother who was walled in for centuries. Later, Judith travels though the Dominions and meets her counterpart, with which she can interact telepathically, and the Imajica's goddesses. The deities reveal the secret of the Five Dominions to Jude and make her a mediator between the opposing parties. With the Dowd, who becomes her companion while travelling through the Imajica, Judith is in a bizarre love-hate relationship.

[324] Winter, D. E.: The Dark Fantastic. p. 330.

Back in the Fifth Dominion, Jude has an affair with Sartori (clone) she mistakes for Gentle and has a baby with him. After the Imajica is unified and Sartori is dead, Judith and her new born daugher withdraw to the Second Dominion.

Pie'oh'pah: Mystif of the *Eurhetemec* tribe, who lived in the First Dominion to protect the spirits of the dead until the god Hapexamendios cast them out. Pie is an androgynous shapeshifter with a third – but not intersexual – sex which appears to observers as male or female according to their (unconscious) desires. Like the hermaphrodite (which Pie is *not*) described by S. de Beauvoir, the mystif is not both man and woman but neither man nor woman.[325] Once, Pie was trapped in the In Ovo while it was about to leave the Imajica, and then summoned by Maestro Sartori/Gentle to soon become his close companion. After the Reconciliation fails, Pie erases the memory of the Maestro, who it loves. Though the centuries, Pie – "nobody and nothing"[326] – lives as body for money and assassin. As the latter, the mystif is introduced in the plot. Charles Estabrook hires it to kill Judith Odell which eventually leads to an encounter between Pie and Gentle. The mystif can escape a scuffle and later seduces Gentle in the shape of Judith. Gentle's initial hostility towards Pie soon gives way to fascination; after he has learned about the Dominions, he demands to be taken to the Imajica. After centuries, Pie returns home and becomes Gentle's guide and partner. In a fight with the Autarch, it is mortally wounded but can escape to the First Dominion. There, it enters the *Erasure*, becomes imprisoned in Hapexamendios' essence and is freed when the god dies. Together with Gentle, it enters the Imajica's inside.

Sartori (Doppelgänger/clone): During the creation of Judith, her defenseless 'original' is raped by a drunken Maestro Sartori/Gentle who then falls asleep in the magic circle used for the ritual. So he is duplicated as well. When the double learns that he is just an 'accident,' he turns away from his father in hate. He sabotages the Reconciliation, adopts the name Sartori and in his role as Autarch becomes the Imajica's despot. He hunts female cults since he fears a possible revolt, and more and more estranges himselfself from his wife Quaisoir, the original Judith. After he has encountered Gentle, he wants to ally with him to concquer the Dominions. For Gentle is not interested because he wants to unite the Imajica, Sartori rebels against his creator, escapes from his doomed palace and adopts Gentle's identity in the Fifth Dominion to make new plans. There, he meets Judith, has a child with her and becomes obsessed with destroying the work of his brother. The Sartori clone dies in Hapexamendios's blaze after he has found solace in the arms of his 'mother' (Celestine) eventually.

[325] Beauvoir, S. de: Das andere Geschlecht. p. 24.
[326] Imajica. p. 81.

Celestine: Mother of Maestro Sartori/Gentle. Celestine was once kidnapped by Down on behalf of Hapexamendios, who demands a mother for his descendants. The god rapes and impregnates her;[327] the divine 'encounter' leaves Celestine powerful but also menacing. She reveals to be the mother of god's son to Thomas Roxborough, founder of the Tabula Rasa, who fears her power and therefore has her walled in. She is freed by Judith Odell centuries later. Celestine dies in Hapexamendios' blaze after provoking his attack - she knows the god will destroy himself with it.

Quaisoir (original Judith): Judith, described as the most desirable woman of England, is loved by Maestro Sartori and Joshua Godolphin. However, both men want to possess her. Godolphin fears that Judith will succumb to Sartori's seduction arts and therefore agrees to the Maestro's suggestion to clone her by magic. Judith, of course, is never asked but drugged to perform the ritual. Judith leaves the Fifth Domininon to become Quaisoir, a woman infamous for the mass executions arranged by her. Later, she develops a fanatic yearning for salvation and goes on a quest for 'Christos' to ask for forgiveness. In the *Annex* of the Autarch's palace, she comes across the 'madwomen' who affect and alter Quaisoir's body. When she meets her counterpart from the Fifth, Quaisoir considers it a divine coincidence and decides to escape from the palace where the Autarch had kept her more or less as a prisoner. On her way, she is blinded, meets Dowd and mistakes him for the 'man of sorrows.' Dowd tries to kill her but Quaisoir survives and unleashes her powers, which result from the encounter with the 'madwomen,' for the first time. She eventually dies, now a hysterical madwoman herself, from falling rocks when the Autach's palace collapses – Gentle comes running to rescue her but Quaisoir thinks he is Sartori and fears he might take Judith from her.

Charles Estabrook and Oscar Godolphin: The descendents of Joshua Godolphin, a participant of the last Reconciliation, are Brothers who fight the traditional fraternal strife. Both know about the Imajica. The fragile Charles has abandoned the name Godolphin and distances himself from magic while Oscar is proud and self-confident, and a Tabula Rasa member. Nevertheless, he constantly betrays his fellow members since he uses magic and travels between the Dominions.

Estabrook hires the assassin Pie'oh'pah to kill his wife Judith Odell, who lives separated, because Charles cannot bear that someone else could posses her. He soon regrets his decision and asks Judith's ex-lover Gentle to stop the assassin. As compensation, Charles offers Judith to take to the Imajica. During their preparations, they encounter Oscar. In a fight, Godolphin apparently kills

[327] Her impregnation with the semen of a hanged criminal reminds of the mandrake myth.

Estabrook. Charles, seriously injured, withdraws to the Second Dominion where he dies eventually.
Judith moves in with Oscar and awakes the suspicion of Dowd, which grows when Godolphin starts a relationship with her. Oscar is finally willing to satisfy Judith's wish to travel to the Imajica. The required ritual is disturbed by Dowd. As a result, he travels to the Dominions with Judith instead of Godolphin – Oscar later follows but cannot find them. Back in the Fifth, he has the vision of a dark future and fears the end of the world; he barricades at home. It is not until Judith visits him after her return that he is willing to act. Together, they want to free Celestine form the Tabula Rasa's building where Dowd is waiting for Godolphin to kill him. The last Godolphin is sadistically butchered by his former servant.

Kuttner Dowd:

> Sitting in the cold gloom, Dowd began to weep quietly, which was an experience as far beyond his true emotional capacity as cold was beyond his nerve-endings. But he'd trained himself in the craft of grief with the same commitment to feigning humanity as he has learning to shiver; his tutor, the Bard; *Lear* his favourite lesson. [Italics in original][328]

Kuttner Dowd: Magic creature and actually an actor who was once ordered by Hapexamendios to find a bride and mother from the Fifth for the god's descendants. At the sight of god Dowd almost goes mad and therefore cannot defend himself when he is summoned by Joshua Godolphin and forever bound to the Godolphins family. He eventually becomes the loyal servant of Oscar Godolphin who, however, betrays Dowd to protect himself. Godolphin brings the creature back to life - the 'new' Dowd hates him. He feels cheated and hurt because he could not play his 'death scene' by himself. Dowd becomes the evil monster driven by dark desires and pursues only his own interests. Apart from being the demonic villain, Dowd is also a contemplative observer and cynical commentator on the plot's margins. Dowd's assumption concerning god's true intentions challenges the whole Reconciliation. Dowd travels the Imajica together with Judith, is thrown into an abyss by Quaisoir but escapes due to fragments of the Pivot Tower, which unite with his body and stimulate it. The 'actor chappie' returns as grotesque hybrid body to the Fifth, murders Oscar Godolphin and witnesses the resurrection of Celestine who finally kills him. Considering his personality, Dowd, who always stays an actor, is certainly the most interesting character in the novel.

[328] ibid. p. 120