

in the hills the cities clive barker

in the hills the cities clive barker stands as a remarkable work within the realm of horror and dark fantasy literature. This short story, penned by the renowned British author Clive Barker, exemplifies his unique ability to blend vivid imagination with an unsettling narrative style. "In the Hills, the Cities" explores themes of power, transformation, and the mystical connection between human communities and the environment. Barker's story is often celebrated for its intense imagery and psychological depth, making it a significant piece for readers interested in horror fiction that transcends conventional boundaries. This article delves into the background of the story, its plot and themes, its place within Barker's oeuvre, and its impact on horror literature.

- Background and Author Overview
- Plot Summary of In the Hills, the Cities
- Themes and Symbolism
- Clive Barker's Writing Style and Influence
- Reception and Legacy

Background and Author Overview

Clive Barker: A Brief Biography

Clive Barker is a British writer, filmmaker, and visual artist, best known for his contributions to horror and dark fantasy genres. Emerging in the 1980s, Barker quickly gained recognition for his imaginative storytelling and rich, often grotesque imagery. His works frequently challenge traditional horror tropes by incorporating complex characters and exploring themes beyond mere fear, including transformation, identity, and the supernatural. Barker's influence extends beyond literature, impacting film, theater, and visual art.

Origin of In the Hills, the Cities

"In the Hills, the Cities" was first published in 1984 as part of Barker's acclaimed collection titled *Books of Blood*. The story exemplifies Barker's early style, blending mythic elements with visceral horror. It reflects Barker's fascination with the human body, communal identity, and the blending

of the natural with the supernatural. This story helped establish Barker's reputation as a master of modern horror.

Plot Summary of In the Hills, the Cities

Setting and Context

The story is set in the fictional region of Eastern Europe, where two neighboring villages harbor a mysterious and terrifying tradition. The environment is characterized by rolling hills and a somewhat mystical atmosphere, which Barker uses to underline the story's otherworldly tone. The rural setting plays a crucial role in enhancing the story's themes of communal identity and transformation.

Main Narrative

"In the Hills, the Cities" centers on an American visitor named John Heffernan who journeys to this remote area to investigate a strange phenomenon. He discovers that the villages engage in an ancient ritual where the inhabitants physically merge their bodies to form gigantic human constructs known as "cities." These living cities are used in ritualistic battles that symbolize the strength and unity of the communities. The story unfolds as Heffernan witnesses the terrifying and awe-inspiring spectacle, ultimately confronting the limits of human endurance, identity, and the cost of power.

Themes and Symbolism

Community and Collective Identity

A central theme in "In the Hills, the Cities Clive Barker" explores is the idea of collective identity and how individual boundaries dissolve to create a greater whole. The human cities represent a physical manifestation of community strength and unity, emphasizing that identity can be both collective and transformative.

Transformation and the Human Body

The story vividly depicts the human body's transformation into a colossal living structure. This metamorphosis symbolizes not only physical change but also psychological and societal transformation. Barker uses this theme to

question the limits of humanity and the potential for transcendence through unity and sacrifice.

Power and Ritual

Ritualistic power is another significant element, as the living cities are embodiments of ancient customs and spiritual force. The battles between these human cities serve as a metaphor for conflict, dominance, and the cyclical nature of power within and between communities.

Clive Barker's Writing Style and Influence

Visual and Sensory Language

Barker's prose is richly descriptive, often blending the grotesque with the sublime. His use of visual and sensory language immerses readers in a vivid, often unsettling world. In "In the Hills, the Cities," this style heightens the horror and awe inspired by the living cities, making the story both memorable and impactful.

Blending Horror with Fantasy

Barker's work frequently blurs the line between horror and fantasy, creating a hybrid genre that appeals to a broad audience. The story employs fantastical elements such as the human cities while maintaining a deeply disturbing and eerie atmosphere. This fusion has influenced many contemporary horror writers and filmmakers.

Legacy Within Horror Literature

"In the Hills, the Cities" is often cited as a prime example of Barker's unique contribution to horror literature. His ability to explore complex themes through imaginative and often disturbing imagery has inspired subsequent generations of writers. Barker's narrative techniques and thematic concerns continue to resonate within the genre.

Reception and Legacy

Critical Reception

Upon publication, "In the Hills, the Cities" received praise for its originality, narrative depth, and evocative imagery. Critics highlighted Barker's skill in crafting a story that is both terrifying and thought-provoking. The story remains a staple in discussions of modern horror literature and is included in many anthologies and academic studies.

Influence on Popular Culture

Beyond literary circles, the story has influenced various media forms, including film and visual arts. Its themes of communal identity and transformation have inspired adaptations and reinterpretations, underscoring the story's enduring relevance.

Why In the Hills, the Cities Clive Barker Remains Relevant

The story's exploration of human connection, power, and transformation remains pertinent in contemporary discussions about society and identity. Barker's visionary approach ensures that "In the Hills, the Cities" continues to captivate readers and scholars alike, solidifying its place in the canon of horror fiction.

Key Elements of In the Hills, the Cities Clive Barker

- Setting in a remote, mystical region emphasizing isolation and tradition
- The concept of living human cities formed through ritualistic fusion
- The protagonist's outsider perspective providing a lens for the reader
- Exploration of themes such as collective identity, transformation, and power
- Barker's signature blend of horror and fantastical elements

Frequently Asked Questions

What is 'In the Hills, the Cities' by Clive Barker about?

'In the Hills, the Cities' is a short story by Clive Barker that explores a surreal and violent tradition where two neighboring cities are transformed into giant human figures and battle each other in a ritualistic war.

Who is the author of 'In the Hills, the Cities'?

The author of 'In the Hills, the Cities' is Clive Barker, a renowned British writer known for his horror and dark fantasy works.

What themes are explored in 'In the Hills, the Cities'?

The story explores themes such as tribalism, violence, the relationship between community and identity, and the surreal blending of human bodies with city landscapes.

Is 'In the Hills, the Cities' part of a larger collection?

Yes, 'In the Hills, the Cities' is included in Clive Barker's collection of short stories titled 'Books of Blood.'

What genre does 'In the Hills, the Cities' belong to?

'In the Hills, the Cities' is a horror and dark fantasy short story with elements of magical realism.

Has 'In the Hills, the Cities' been adapted into other media?

As of now, there are no widely known adaptations of 'In the Hills, the Cities' into films or other media, but it remains influential in horror literature circles.

What is the significance of the human-city giants in the story?

The human-city giants symbolize the collective identity and fierce rivalry of the two communities, highlighting themes of unity, conflict, and the physical manifestation of civic pride.

Where can I read 'In the Hills, the Cities' by Clive Barker?

You can find 'In the Hills, the Cities' in Clive Barker's 'Books of Blood' collection, available in bookstores, libraries, and various online platforms.

Additional Resources

1. *In the Hills, the Cities* by Clive Barker

This novella by Clive Barker explores the eerie and surreal traditions of two rival towns in Northern England, where colossal human figures are constructed from the bodies of hundreds of residents. The story delves into themes of community, violence, and the supernatural, blending horror with folklore. Barker's vivid imagination and atmospheric writing create a haunting and unforgettable narrative.

2. *The Books of Blood* by Clive Barker

A collection of short stories that established Barker as a master of horror fiction. The tales range from the grotesque to the fantastical, showcasing Barker's unique ability to blend horror with dark fantasy. Themes of transformation, otherworldly realms, and human cruelty are explored with visceral intensity.

3. *Hellbound Heart* by Clive Barker

The novella that inspired the Hellraiser film series, it tells the story of a mysterious puzzle box that opens a gateway to a hellish dimension inhabited by the Cenobites. The narrative examines themes of desire, pain, and the consequences of seeking forbidden pleasures. Barker's vivid descriptions and psychological depth make it a chilling and thought-provoking read.

4. *Weaveworld* by Clive Barker

A dark fantasy novel about a magical world woven into a carpet, hidden from the mundane world. The story follows a young man who must protect this secret realm from evil forces seeking to destroy it. Barker's intricate world-building and rich characters create an epic tale of good versus evil.

5. *Books of the Art* series by Clive Barker

This trilogy begins with "The Great and Secret Show" and weaves a complex narrative involving mystical arts, alternate realities, and a battle between cosmic forces. Barker explores themes of creation, destruction, and the power of imagination. The series is noted for its ambitious scope and mythic storytelling.

6. *The Thief of Always* by Clive Barker

A dark fantasy novel about a boy who discovers a magical house where every day is filled with endless delights, but soon realizes there is a sinister cost. The story examines childhood innocence, temptation, and the loss of innocence. Barker's storytelling is both enchanting and unsettling.

7. *Nightbreed* by Clive Barker

Originally titled "Cabal," this novel follows a young man who discovers a hidden city inhabited by monsters and outcasts. It explores themes of identity, acceptance, and the nature of monstrosity. Barker's narrative challenges conventional ideas of good and evil.

8. *Coldheart Canyon* by Clive Barker

A novel set in the eerie ruins of a Hollywood mansion, blending horror with dark fantasy and celebrity culture. The story unfolds through multiple perspectives, revealing secrets, curses, and supernatural occurrences. Barker's vivid prose and layered storytelling create a chilling atmosphere.

9. *Imagica* by Clive Barker

An expansive fantasy novel that follows a man's journey through a hidden magical world connected to our own. The narrative is rich with mythological elements, exploring themes of memory, identity, and the power of storytelling. Barker crafts a mesmerizing and complex tale that pushes the boundaries of fantasy literature.

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