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Here Still Be Dragons:

A Case for A Supernatural Reading of the Weird Canon

Diplomová práce

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Introduction

Since the publication of Tzvetan Todorov's *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (1970), a seminal work dealing with literature featuring phenomena which are seemingly odds with natural law, there has been an assumed relationship between the phenomena these texts put forth and the reaction they invoke. This is the relationship of causality, demanding that a presence of something that does not abide by natural law shall be experienced as such, a dictum that has been implicitly accepted by a majority proportion of scholarship that has followed in Todorov's wake. In this thesis, I aim to reassess this consensus and draw new conclusions which this reassessment might pose for the literary canon of weird fiction. Adopting the view of the fantastic as a mode of literature, I delimit the supernatural mode as its more restricted subcategory and take objection to the assumption of a causal relationship between the phenomenon and the experience it presents. Contrarily, I argue that the supernatural phenomenon and its experience are not governed by causality and instead manifest in a given text independently of one another.

Using this reassessment, I then consider the role the interrelated modes of the supernatural and the weird play in what is commonly referred to as weird fiction, a body of literature defined as either narrated in the weird mode or being a genre on the borders of sci-fi, fantasy and horror. Adopting the modal outlook, I argue against purely naturalistic reading of weird fiction in favor of a concurrence of these two modes. I predicate this concurrence precisely on the independence between the presence of a violation of natural law from a character point of view and its experience from character point of view. Specifically, I argue that these two modes present a violation of natural law, but contrast in and are distinguished by the experience of this violation they present. In the context of weird fiction, this entails a range of contrasting experiences derived from a single

violation of natural law, i.e. a concurrence of the modes. My reassessment of the causal relationship between the supernatural phenomenon and its experience thus allows for a radical reconceptualization of the weird canon as a body of hybrid texts which feature both the supernatural and the weird concurrently. This contrasts with the purely naturalistic interpretations of the weird fiction which see the violating phenomena as hailing from the natural world and which reject supernaturalist interpretations of the weird. I support my conclusions using data from three texts, “The Beast in the Cave” (written 1905, published 1918) by Howard Phillips Lovecraft (1890-1937), “The Inhabitant of the Lake” (1964) by Ramsey Campbell (1946-present) and the film *Clown* (2014) by Jon Watts (1981-present).

In chapter one, I review the wealth of critical attention to the concept of the fantastic and the supernatural spanning from the 1970s to the 2010s. The authors considered include Tzvetan Todorov, Brian Attebery, Rosemary Jackson, Farah Mendlesohn, Lubomír Doležel, Eric S. Rabkin, Jan Alber and Brian Richardson. I discuss their interpretation of the fantastic as being a violation of a particular standard of principles governing a particular world. I then group them into two traditions, the externalist tradition which sees this standard in the actual world and the internalist tradition which sees this standard in the storyworld. I further comment on the conflation between the concepts of the fantastic and the supernatural which permeates the field and I propose a solution to this conflation which I use in this thesis. Specifically, this sees the fantastic as two broader categories of violation and experience, whilst construing the supernatural as a violation and an experience of specifically natural law. Additionally, I consider the classification of the fantastic and the supernatural as either a mode or a genre, ultimately choosing the mode label, as it allows for a less restrictive application across many genres. Finally, I argue for the efficacy of

my reconceptualization of the phenomenon into a presence of a violation and its experience which are bi-directionally independent. This I demonstrate on “The Beast in the Cave” and *Clown*.

In chapter two, I consider what implications are posited for weird fiction by the reconceptualization of the supernatural into a mutually independent violation and experience. I firstly consider canon of weird fiction from an essentialist and literary historical perspective, drawing from scholars such as Mark Fisher, China Miéville, John Clute, S. T. Joshi, Emily Alder, Nancy H. Traill, Massimo Berrutti and others. Based on their insight, I present their composite definition of the weird as a mode of literature which involves phenomena unprecedented in western folklore. These phenomena are interpreted as natural and are thus challenging the understanding of natural law of those who see them, often leading to the experience of the collapse of understanding, madness, rejection and revulsion. Contrary to this definition and utilizing my notion of an independent violation and experience, I then argue that such an unprecedented phenomenon may not invoke rejection and revulsion, invoking the experience of the supernatural instead and thus being presented in the supernatural mode. In that regard, I argue against a purely naturalistic interpretations of the weird canon and for a hybrid interpretation which features one general violating phenomenon that concurrently invokes supernatural and weird experiences depending on the particular point of view. Finally, in chapter three, I place the primary texts I base my conclusions on in the broader context of the weird canon as discussed in chapter two. Two additional case studies are presented: “The Inhabitant of the Lake” and *Clown*.

Chapter One: Review of Literature Pertaining to the Fantastic and Methods

The fantastic as a concept is in its variability comparable to a kaleidoscope – the slightest change of perspective, the slightest alteration of the context in which it is supposed to be located and its qualitative makeup shifts. It has been looked upon from the standpoint of genre criticism, as a mode of narration or as a notion that is inherent to literary forms as alien to one another as sci-fi and folktales, to list just a fraction of the variability. Indeed, its forms are manifold, with a significant host of them being tinged with the supernatural, which has historically led to a conflation of the two terms in popular imagination – where there is the fantastic, there be dragons, our instinctive reaction dictates upon encountering the word. To shed some light on this elusive notion that is the fantastic in its broadest modal form and establish some meaningful distinction between it and the supernatural, I provide an overview of critical approaches to fantastic literature spanning from the late 1970s to the late 2010s.

Based on the findings of these theoretical approaches, I then somewhat radically conceptualize the phenomena the fantastic mode presents along two lines: a presence and an experience. The former construes the fantastic as the presence of a violation of a particular standard of rules or principles governing a particular world as understood by a particular character. Such a violation is signaled in a given text by a range of features. The latter construes the fantastic as the cognitive or emotional reaction which said violation of rules invokes in its observers. These reactions are again signaled in the text by a range of features. The particular point of view from which this violation is observed and experienced this study focuses on is the perspective of the *dramatis personae*, chiefly those of the narrator (the texts dealt with uniformly feature a character-narrator) and the character. Furthermore, pertaining to the distinction between the fantastic and the

supernatural, I delineate the latter as a restricted sub-category of the fantastic preoccupied exclusively with violations of the rules of nature.

Finally, I introduce a particular relation between the supernatural as presence of a violation and an experience, that being their mutual bi-directional independence. This relation has so far been under-researched, and its consideration allows for a reinterpretation of the texts this study deals with and which the current state of theory does not sufficiently account for. Mutual independence is construed as follows: the manifestation of the supernatural as experience is independent on the a priori manifestation of the supernatural in the text as presence and vice versa. What this entails is that a natural phenomenon may be experienced as supernatural, and conversely a supernatural phenomenon may be experienced as natural.

To summarize, the supernatural as a presence of a violation within a text does not necessitate the manifestation of an experience thereof. Conversely, the supernatural as experience too exists independently by default within a text, independent upon the pre-existence of the supernatural as presence. With the programme of this chapter outlined, I delve into the wealth of critical thought at hand.

1.1. Brian Attebery: The Mode, The Genre, The Formula

Formidable attempts to tackle the shifting notion of the fantastic have been made, with the most inclusive arguably being Brian Attebery's. Although he is not the first seminal critic who would concern himself with the fantastic, his conception of the notion in its broadest sense as a mode, its narrowest as a formula and a midline of the two, the genre, proves useful as a starting point in my research.

In its modal form, Attebery begins by the reforging of Frye's scale of modes¹ which increase in its mimetic character the lower one ventures upon it, with mimesis being the strive "to produce the impression of faithfulness to ordinary experience."² Attebery shifts this scale into a continuum, with the pure fantastic mode (or fantasy, as he calls it, nor to be mistaken with his more restrictive conceptualization of Fantasy as a genre) being its one pole and mimesis (or simply the non-fantastic) mode being the other.³ He stresses that these poles are not opposites and that they mutually support one another in any given text,⁴ but nonetheless they do contrast. Quite aptly, he then paraphrases this contrast: the non-fantastic mode of narrative as that "what is" and the fantastic mode as that "what isn't,"⁵ framing the fantastic as that which is somehow an affront to "what the author clearly believes to be natural law."⁶ This affront can range from "improbable, the implausible, the highly unlikely, and the as-yet-nonexistent"⁷ all the way to "sharper break with reality,"⁸ an extreme on the continuum which he deems a necessary structural element of the Fantasy genre,⁹ a class of texts bound by particular conventions the mode is unrestricted by. In terms of the formula, I shall not delve into detail, because its restrictive form lends itself more to the study of genre criticism and would impede the study of the fantastic as a mode.

Attebery's notion of this modal gradient of mimesis on the one end and the fantastic (or the non-mimetic) on the other still rings relevant today, dubbed by contemporary scholars to continuing to "be one of the most influential and useful approaches to that project."¹⁰ Furthermore,

¹ Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000), 51.

² Brian Attebery, *Strategies of Fantasy* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992), 3.

³ Attebery, *Strategies*, 3.

⁴ Attebery, *Strategies*, 3.

⁵ Attebery, *Strategies*, 3.

⁶ Attebery, *Strategies*, 14.

⁷ Attebery, *Strategies*, 15.

⁸ Attebery, *Strategies*, 15.

⁹ Attebery, *Strategies*, 15.

¹⁰ Helen Young, *Race and popular fantasy literature: Habits of whiteness* (Routledge, 2015), 2.

despite facing scrutiny for the vagueness with which it is used to categorize texts (particularly in the case of science fiction,)¹¹ his model of the so called fuzzy genre¹² has remained staple tool of classification in various fields of study ranging from children's literature¹³ to science-fiction.¹⁴ Still, there are deeper issues which undermine the applicability of his approach, and these mainly have to do with his conflation of the fantastic and the supernatural, a terminological problem pertinent to this thesis as well. A discussion of these is conducted by Patricia García in *Space and the postmodern fantastic in contemporary literature: The architectural void*, and I shall cover them in some detail in section 1.7.1, because they apply not only to Attebery but to other authors discussed in this chapter as well.

Regarding my reconceptualization of the fantastic as presenting independent violation and experience thereof, his modal continuum would then represent what I have dubbed the fantastic as a presence of a violation, and as I have alluded to, in this case it is the violation of a specific sort of law, the natural law. Attebery provides us with a gradient upon which this violation can be placed according to its severity. This is translated into his conception of the fantasy genre, which requires a sharper break, as opposed to the modal fantastic, which still includes said sharper break but subsumes lesser forms of affront as well.

In terms of the modal fantastic as an experience, Attebery is not as elaborate. He does, however, comment extensively on the emotional and cognitive properties of fantasy as a genre. These he deems to be wonder, or estrangement which it produces in a reader.¹⁵ He builds on the

¹¹ Rhys Williams, "Recognizing Cognition: On Suvin, Miéville, and the Utopian Impulse in the Contemporary Fantastic," *Science Fiction Studies* 41, no. 3 (2014): 619, <https://doi.org/10.5621/sciefictstud.41.3.0617>.

¹² Attebery, *Strategies*, 12.

¹³ Maria Sachiko Cecire, *Re-enchanted: the rise of children's fantasy literature in the twentieth century* (Minneapolis: Press University of Minnesota Press, 2019), 12.

¹⁴ John Rieder, *Science fiction and the mass cultural genre system* (Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2017), 18.

¹⁵ Attebery, *Strategies*, 16.

definitions of estrangements as put forward by Viktor Shklovsky and Berthold Brecht, claiming that the experience of estrangement “draws us away from the world we live in,”¹⁶ making once familiar objects seem “strange, distant from ourselves.”¹⁷ In terms of the cognitive reactions, he provides interpretative strategies which the dramatis personae employ when tackling an inexplicable phenomenon – the appeals to the megatexts of myth and science, the former of which is a staple of the genre of sci-fi and the latter of fantasy.¹⁸ Though Attebery does provide useful ideas regarding the fantastic as a violation of a given standard of natural law as well as the experiential cues which may identify it in a given text, his approach fails to provide answers for the seemingly independent behavior of the fantastic as a presence and as an experience, as shall be demonstrated in the discussion section of this chapter.

1.2. Tzvetan Todorov: The Pure Genre

An earlier, pioneer framework of a different yoke which works with the fantastic as a concept, but as a concept framed by the genres which employ it has been influentially propagated by Tzvetan Todorov. He presents a generic scale of the uncanny – the fantastic-uncanny – the (Todorovian) fantastic¹⁹ – the fantastic-marvelous – and the marvelous.²⁰ Like Attebery after him, he bases this scale on the violation of the standard of the actual world,²¹ but he rigidly uses the manner in which this violation transpires and is presented to delimit the boundaries of his genres. In his scale, the pure uncanny (a genre signified by a phenomenon readily explicable by reason but

¹⁶ Attebery, *Strategies*, 16.

¹⁷ Attebery, *Strategies*, 16.

¹⁸ Attebery, *Strategies*, 27.

¹⁹ To avoid unnecessary confusion, let us henceforth assume that whenever the term “the fantastic” is employed in this thesis, it is its modal form which is being referred to. In the case of Todorov’s rather specific category, let us employ the term “Todorovian.”

²⁰ Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, trans. Richard Howard (Cleveland, Ohio: The Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1973), 38.

²¹ Todorov, *A Structural Approach*, 41.

“in one way or another, incredible; extraordinary, shocking, singular, disturbing or unexpected”²² and the fantastic-uncanny (a seemingly supernatural phenomenon naturalistically explained over the course of the narrative)²³ texts culminate in an explanation of a phenomenon that is within the scope of natural laws of our actual world.²⁴ In contrast, the pure marvelous (a phenomenon which is patently in contradiction to the laws of nature and does not provoke the “hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event”²⁵ that the three classes of the fantastic do)²⁶ and the fantastic-marvelous (where a seemingly supernatural phenomenon is finally accepted as supernatural)²⁷ culminate in the affirmation of the existence of a phenomenon beyond the scope of nature’s laws. Finally, the pure fantastic does not make a final interpretation, instead remaining ambiguous between the two.²⁸

Zooming in on the fantastic triad, Todorov includes three conditions which ought to be fulfilled if a text is to be considered part of that genre. Number one is the presence of hesitation to accept whether there has transpired a violation of the natural law of the actual world. Number two seeks some reaction to this violation either from the reader or the character, who Todorov sees as a guide for the reader. Lastly, number three demands that the reader not interpret the text on a metaphoric level and take the phenomena within literally.²⁹

Disregarding number three which works purely with non-diegetic variables (the assumptions and moreover the interpretative approaches of the reader) which are beyond the scope of the tangible textual data and this study, I see in conditions number one and two the

²² Todorov, *A Structural Approach*, 46.

²³ Todorov, *A Structural Approach*, 44.

²⁴ Todorov, *A Structural Approach*, 26.

²⁵ Todorov, *A Structural Approach*, 25.

²⁶ Todorov, *A Structural Approach*, 54.

²⁷ Todorov, *A Structural Approach*, 52.

²⁸ Todorov, *A Structural Approach*, 44.

²⁹ Todorov, *A Structural Approach*, 31-32.

conceptualization of the fantastic as a presentation of a violation and its experience respectively. Crucially, conditions one and three are obligatory, while condition two, the experiential factor, is optional.³⁰ That is, violation must be present, but a reaction to it does not have to. These are then Todorov’s attempts to categorize the fantastic as a violation of a particular standard of natural law, the standard of the actual world. His generic scale is constructed based on whether this violation is absent and produces a reaction (the pure uncanny), whether it is merely presented (the pure marvelous) or whether it produces hesitation to accept the presence of violation (the fantastic triad).

In addition to conceptualizing the Todorovian fantastic as a presence of a violation (and the hesitation to accept it), Todorov provides us with some further ideas regarding the fantastic as an experience, both with regards to the reader and the dramatis personae. The pure marvelous is thus excluded, as it does not invoke a reaction by definition. As he says: the pure uncanny and the triad of the Todorovian fantastic (the fantastic-uncanny, Todorovian fantastic and the fantastic-marvelous) feature an experiential component, such as fear while “[t]he marvelous, by way of contrast, may be characterized by the mere presence of supernatural events, without implicating the reaction they provoke in the characters.”³¹ Combining this distinction with Todorov’s ideas on the fantastic as a presence of violation, I am given the following scale of genres:

	The pure uncanny	The fantastic-uncanny	Todorovian fantastic	The fantastic-marvelous	The pure marvelous
Presence of violation	No	Yes – explained	Yes – remains ambiguous at	Yes – accepted as supernatural	Yes

³⁰ Todorov, *A Structural Approach*, 32.

³¹ Todorov, *A Structural Approach*, 47.

		rationally at narrative terminus	narrative terminus	at narrative terminus	
Experiential component	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

Figure 1 – Distribution of a violating phenomenon and its experience across Todorov’s scale

Todorov’s scale remains a widely influential framework for the analysis of texts featuring non-mimetic elements and elements which produce his quintessential hesitation between the natural and supernatural.

While Todorov’s observations regarding the mechanism on which the fantastic operates (violation) and the experiences it may provoke are still relevant to an extent, several flaws have been noted. Attebery made the point that categorizing the concept as a genre limits it to a particular point in history,³² with Rosemary Jackson echoing this position³³ and further adding the limited focus on how the fantastic functions at the expense of questioning why fantastic narratives come to be.³⁴ I would further point out the problematic nature of his holistic approach towards the fantastic. By this is meant Todorov’s preoccupation with the overall interpretation of the phenomenon as pieced together from the entirety of the text as a basis for his categorization. While

³² Attebery, *Strategies*, 22.

³³ Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (London and New York: Routledge, 1981), 4.

³⁴ Jackson, *Subversion*, 3.

consistent, this view of the issue is reductive because it disregards instances of the text where the fantastic is present in accordance with his conception of it – that is, a violation of a particular standard of natural law which produces particular effects – in favor of the full picture which may yield a rational explanation.

The independent behavior of the fantastic as a presence and experience is not touched upon explicitly, a feature of his approach which seeks merely to identify textual cues by which to categorize texts into genres. Nonetheless, the table constructed with the presence and experience as different concepts shows us that there does seem to be asymmetry at play with regards to the pure uncanny and the pure marvelous by definition and with regards to the fantastic triad by optionality (the experiential factor may be present, but does not have to).³⁵ Furthermore, like with Attebery, his ideas pertaining to this textual data which determine the fantastic (here meant in its modal form, “that which is not”) as a presence of violation and as an experience, as exemplified by his conditions one and two, prove transcendental of his limiting generic approach and shall be useful in my attempts to identify the phenomenon.

Such is then Todorov’s outlook: a generic scale differentiated by the suggested presence of a natural law violation and the direction in which this presumed violation develops in the eyes of the reader. His genres variably require a particular kind of reaction to the phenomenon, the presence of the phenomenon itself or both in order to be classified under the genres he proposes. Whilst promising and influential in its provision of the definitions of the fantastic as some form of violation of natural law and the variety of experiential responses it may invoke, the generic approach constricts it from broader applicability in this thesis.

³⁵ Todorov, *A Structural Approach*, 32.

1.3. Rosemary Jackson: The Modal Fantastic as Desire

To address Todorov's perceived shortcomings, Jackson presents her own theory. Building upon Todorov's notions of the fantastic as something which seemingly violates the standard of natural law of the actual world and produces hesitation, she, like Attebery after her, embraces the fantastic as a mode, not a genre, which frees it from temporal and medial constraints.³⁶ The core claim of her theory then lies in the fantastic being seen as an expression of a particular absence in contemporary society which stems from its cultural constraints. Unlike Todorov or Attebery, Jackson works primarily with the fantastic as a modal form, which she in Attebery's vein conceptualizes as a manner of presenting something, looking at something.³⁷

In her view, this mode of literature presents phenomena which are seemingly at odds with the laws of nature of the actual world and ascribes a specific complex function to them, that is, the exploration of a particular social landscape through fantastic subversion and the fantastic fulfillment of a particular absence or loss which this social landscape exhibits. This fulfillment can be carried out as simple expression, which transpires when the lack does not posit an existential threat to the social landscape, or it can go even further and morph this expression into expulsion of the lack, which conversely happens when an existential threat is present.³⁸

Whilst her approach does venture to address the question regarding the presence of the fantastic and quite successfully so, it yet again fails to distinguish between the independent categories of the fantastic as a presence of a violation and as an experience, which renders her innovative approach reductionist in that regard. This then constitutes Jackson's theory. Adopting the notion of the fantastic as a mode presenting some presumed violation of natural law, she then

³⁶ Jackson, *Subversion*, 4.

³⁷ Jackson, *Subversion*, 4.

³⁸ Jackson, *Subversion*, 2.

discusses chiefly the social function that the presence of such violation in a text possesses. Given the focus of this thesis being precisely the nature of the fantastic mode, the supernatural mode and its relation to the weird canon, her approach thus proves of limited value.

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5 Farah Mendlesohn – The Fantastic as Movement

An admittedly novel approach to the taxonomy of texts which feature the fantastic has been put forward in Farah Mendlesohn's *Rhetorics of Fantasy* (2008). In an attempt to reconceptualize the fantasy genre, she concerns herself with a particular characteristic of the fantastic found within these texts. The specific conceptualization of the fantastic is adopted from Attebery and the like, that is, a mode presenting something at odds with the natural law of the actual world and experienced in distinct manner.

The particular characteristic she focuses on is how these phenomena enter the narrative. Crucially, she is interested purely with how this entrance transpires with respect to the reader: “[w]hat I am interested in is the reader’s relationship to the framework,”³⁹ with the particular framework being referred to here being the text displaying a specific manner of entrance of the fantastic. Furthermore, she explicitly states that she is “not discussing point of view.”⁴⁰ Following this path, she proposes that there are four essential types of text with respect to the movement of the fantastic.⁴¹ These are the portal-quest fantasy, the immersive fantasy, the intrusion fantasy and

³⁹ Farah Mendlesohn, *Rhetorics of Fantasy* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2008), xvii.

⁴⁰ Mendlesohn, *Rhetorics*, xvii.

⁴¹ Mendlesohn, *Rhetorics*, xiv.

the liminal fantasy.⁴² As she explains, in portal-quest,⁴³ we enter the fantastic fictional world; in intrusion, the fantastic enters the non-fantastic fictional world;⁴⁴ in immersive fantasy, we exist within a fantastic world which is presented as non-fantastic⁴⁵ and in liminal fantasy, “the magic hovers in the corner of our eye.”⁴⁶ With respect to the independent nature of the fantastic as presence and experience I champion, she again does not distinguish. Such is then Mendlesohn’s approach. Adopting the Atteberian conceptualization of the fantastic, she proposes a toolkit for description of the various venues through which it may enter the domain of the non-fantastic (that is, the natural) in a given narrative.

1.4. Lubomír Doležel: The Fantastic as a Mode yet again

Another rather formidable tackling of the issues of the fantastic has been undertaken by Lubomír Doležel’s theory of fictional semantics. Focusing not exclusively on the fantastic or the supernatural, Doležel proposes a framework for analysis and categorization of fictional worlds based on the manner in which they are constructed. To that end, he develops descriptive tools for the analysis of a number of features a given world is endowed with.

The first of these is the particular type of a fictional world. Doležel outlines three types: worlds of states, dynamic worlds, and multi-person worlds.⁴⁷ Doležel then pays notice to the entities which can inhabit these fictional worlds, among whom he classifies nature forces which are the source of no intentional action and agents which on the other hand are.⁴⁸ Besides intentionality, which divides actions based on whether they have pre-existing purpose,⁴⁹ Doležel

⁴² Mendlesohn, *Rhetorics*, xiv.

⁴³ Mendlesohn, *Rhetorics*, xiv.

⁴⁴ Mendlesohn, *Rhetorics*, xiv.

⁴⁵ Mendlesohn, *Rhetorics*, xiv.

⁴⁶ Mendlesohn, *Rhetorics*, xiv.

⁴⁷ Lubomír Doležel, *Heterocosmica* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 32.

⁴⁸ Doležel, *Heterocosmica*, 58.

⁴⁹ Doležel, *Heterocosmica*, 58.

further classifies actions on the basis of the motivational factors which facilitate them. Among these one finds drives,⁵⁰ emotions⁵¹ and cognition,⁵² whose mutual interaction Doležel uses to forge his typology of action modes.⁵³ On the topic of action, Doležel develops another typology of interactional modes which denote in what manner two given agents are engaged with one another. Among these modes he notes cooperation, subjugation, attempted subjugation, and conflict.⁵⁴

Action, both intentional and non-intentional, is further constricted by the limits of the particular world in which it takes place. This is tackled by yet another typology, that of the narrative modalities (alethic,⁵⁵ deontic,⁵⁶ epistemic⁵⁷ and axiological⁵⁸) which determine what constituents are allowed within the fictional world – this he dubs selection – and how their acting potential is limited, or formative operation.⁵⁹ For the purposes of this study, his narrative modalities are the most pertinent. Narrative modalities are to be understood as “global constraints”⁶⁰ which delimit what is permitted to enter a fictional world and how it is permitted to generate dynamism within it. Each of the four modalities has an operator which is inherent to every entity inhabiting the fictional world and each operator has three logical quantifiers, as demonstrated in Doležel’s useful table:

⁵⁰ Doležel, *Heterocosmica*, 64.

⁵¹ Doležel, *Heterocosmica*, 64.

⁵² Doležel, *Heterocosmica*, 65.

⁵³ Doležel, *Heterocosmica*, 71.

⁵⁴ Doležel, *Heterocosmica*, 105-109.

⁵⁵ Doležel, *Heterocosmica*, 115.

⁵⁶ Doležel, *Heterocosmica*, 121.

⁵⁷ Doležel, *Heterocosmica*, 126.

⁵⁸ Doležel, *Heterocosmica*, 123.

⁵⁹ Doležel, *Heterocosmica*, 113.

⁶⁰ Doležel, *Heterocosmica*, 113.

TABLE 2

Quantifiers	Operators			
	Alethic	Deontic	Axiological	Epistemic
E some	M possible	P permitted	G good	K known
~E none	~M impossible	~P prohibited	~G bad	~K unknown
~E~all	~M~ necessary	~P~ obligatory	~G~ indifferent	Ko believed

Figure 2 – Doležel’s Modalities – Lubomír Doležel, *Heterocosmica* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 114.

Both fictional worlds and the actual world are ruled by these four modalities. The actual world is an amalgam of these distinct modalities. Fictional worlds, on the other hand, may due to being constructs of the mind be either an amalgam of two or more modalities or they may allow one modality to assume a dominant position, suppressing the remaining three.⁶¹ A classification of fictional worlds using these modalities can readily be drawn. The proposed classification is twofold: worlds can be described with respect to the modalities which rule within them and with respect to the logical quantifiers they utilize.

Furthermore, apart from the distinct four modalities that may reign in a fictional world, the question of the logical quantifiers provides additional domain of classification within one distinct modality– the modality may be split in two renditions, with one possessing a distinct set of logical quantifiers and the other possessing a different set (for instance, a world which utilizes two alethic modalities with one possessing the quantifiers of the actual world and the other possessing conflicting quantifiers – the dyadic world of myth).⁶² When then a fictional world is ruled over by

⁶¹ Doležel, *Heterocosmica*, 114-115.

⁶² Doležel, *Heterocosmica*, 128.

one singular modality possessing one singular set of logical quantifiers, I speak of a modally homogenous world. If on the other hand, a fictional world combines two or more distinct modalities, combines one distinct modality in two renditions with each one possessing different distributions of logical quantifiers or utilizes a combination of these two scenarios, I speak of a modally heterogeneous world.

This would be the short overview of Doležel's particular approach: a descriptive toolkit enabling one to structurally classify a range of fictional worlds according to firm well-defined parameters. Not concerned with the fantastic per se, this toolkit nevertheless provides a venue for classification of fictional worlds that feature it. Such worlds are classified purely by a configuration of their operating principles contrastive to the actual world.

1.5. Eric S. Rabkin: The Diegetic Fantastic

Notably, all the theoreticians up to this point have sought the standard whose violation produces the presence of the fantastic – either in the form of its supernatural sub-category, as is the case with Todorov, Mendlesohn and Jackson, or encompassing all violations not exclusively of the natural law standard, as is the case with Attebery's mode – in the actual world. Eric S. Rabkin takes a strikingly different perspective on the standard from which both the fantastic and the supernatural springs. Rabkin, like Attebery, Jackson or Doležel, adopts the label of the mode. Unlike the preceding scholars however, Rabkin sees the standard against which the phenomena are to be judged intra-narratively – within the ground rules specific to each narrative.

His conception commands that “[e]very work of art sets up its own ground rules. The perspectives that the fantastic contradicts are perspectives legitimized by these internal ground rules.”⁶³ While he still accepts the extra-diegetic perspective of the reader firmly set within the

⁶³ Eric S. Rabkin, *The Fantastic in Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 4-5.

ground rules of the actual world which comes clashing with the ground rules of the narrative as productive of the fantastic,⁶⁴ he considers it a secondary one. The chief and primary source of the fantastic is the contradiction of the ground rules of the narrative, not the actual world. Through this act he elevates the internal perspective to the default position, forcing the reader to accept it if they wish to experience what the entities internal to the narrative (characters, narrators) do. This differs radically from the models previously mentioned, because though they do take the diegetic perspective into account to an extent, ultimately, the fantastic is determined in relation to the actual world, not the diegetic one. And as Rabkin explains, “[t]alking plants – and (Komodo) dragons for that matter – are not inherently fantastic; they become so when seen from a certain perspective,”⁶⁵ and this perspective is internal to the text, with the reader being required to adopt it.

To uncover which particular set of ground rules reigns within a narrative, he applies the notion of grapholects – dialects of writing which, regardless of what is said, vivify the perspectives of those who use them in those who read them.⁶⁶ Rabkin adopts this notion of a perspective codified in a particular dialect of language from Roland Barthes’s concept of *écriture*, which in its barest essentials proposes that any piece of language “must signify something other than its content,”⁶⁷ and that what it signifies is a specific persuasive power, choice or a belief of those who author it. Rabkin takes this very broad concept further. From the hosts of these perspectives, a set of ground rules according to which the narrative world operates can be extracted. By extension, whenever this set is violated, the fantastic or its affiliated categories may occur – “the fantastic contradicts perspectives.”⁶⁸ The fantastic in particular is then judged as a 180° reversal of these

⁶⁴ Rabkin, *The Fantastic*, 42.

⁶⁵ Rabkin, *The Fantastic*, 4.

⁶⁶ Rabkin, *The Fantastic*, 20.

⁶⁷ Roland Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero*, translated by Jonathan Cape Ltd (United States: Beacon Press, 1970), 1.

⁶⁸ Rabkin, *The Fantastic*, 4.

perspective-bound ground rules. Other experiences contingent on some degree of violation are the unexpected and the irrelevant.⁶⁹ To map this notion of reversal of ground rules, Rabkin proposes another scale of which the degree and frequency of reversal (in other words the narrative's fantasticity and the stability of its ground rules) are the chief criteria.⁷⁰

Though out of vogue comparatively to the scholars I have covered already, Rabkin's core concept of the fantastic being not the violation of the actual world standard but of a particular set of ground rules encoded in and vivified by a specific perspective is still relevant in contemporary discourse. The fantastic as a deviation from one's knowledge of how the world is known to operate has been for instance used to discuss the influence of classical literature on the modern fantasy genre,⁷¹ illustrating how "Rowling requires her readers not only to unlearn their Muggle perspective, but also to unlearn and revise their initial understanding of Hogwarts and wizardry, to see their limits and shortcomings."⁷²

Another application of this concept has been implemented by Jason Marc Harris, who uses it to structurally describe how the phenomenon of vampirism interacts with the skeptical perspective held by the characters in Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1872). Over the course of the novella, "[t]he medicinal rhetoric that both Carmilla's father and Dr. Hesselius use to combat preternatural perceptions does not successfully dispel either the cultural and psychological force of folklore, or the physical reality of the phenomena behind such beliefs."⁷³ In other words, the

⁶⁹ Rabkin, *The Fantastic*, 8.

⁷⁰ Rabkin, *The Fantastic*, 37.

⁷¹ Brett M. Rogers, "Hybrids and Homecomings in the *Odyssey* and *Alien Resurrection*," in *Classical traditions in modern fantasy*, eds. Brett M. Rogers and Benjamin Eldon Stevens (United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2017): 228.

⁷² Rogers, *modern fantasy*, 229-230.

⁷³ Jason Marc Harris, *Folklore and the fantastic in nineteenth-century British fiction* (United Kingdom: Routledge, 2016), 140.

ground rules as contained in the perspective are met with their reversal in the form of the events which befall Carmilla, the novel's titular protagonist.

All this considered, this then constitutes the fantastic as presence of a violation as per Rabkin: a mode which presents a violation of the intratextual, diegetic ground rules which may be extracted through proper analysis of the text's grapholect. In terms of the fantastic as experience, Rabkin provides some quite useful commentary. The chief sources of textual evidence for the fantastic in terms of experiential markers are character, narrator and the author signals.⁷⁴ Regarding the question of the fantastic contra supernatural, Similarly to Todorov's scale and Attebery's continuum, Rabkin's fantastic can be naturalized (explained as not contradicting the ground rules) or accepted as fantastic (accepted as breaking the ground rules⁷⁵). In Rabkin's case however, the scope deals not only with alethic constraints (i.e., the natural law standard) but also with deontic, epistemic and axiological constraints, thus aligning himself with the broader approach of Lubomír Doležel. Despite this somewhat recent critical attention, I do note that Rabkin's approach is indeed not a part of contemporary discourse upon the fantastic to the degree the scholars already covered are. Nevertheless, his idea of the fantastic being a violation of a particular perspective, or the ground rules encoded therein, is a concept that shall be echoed in the following section.

1.6. Contemporary Fantastic

The idea of the fantastic as mode presenting a phenomenon which violates a given standard of rules and the experience of this phenomenon has not dissipated since its tentative conception in the late 1970s. The concept remains the same, but the approaches which are used to manipulate with it have developed. One of these approaches is the collection of narratologists who cultivate

⁷⁴ Rabkin, *The Fantastic*, 24.

⁷⁵ Rabkin, *The Fantastic*, 64.

the now rather fashionable field of unnatural narratology. Among these one finds notable names such as Jan Alber, Brian Richardson, David Herman, Monika Fludernik and Henrik Skov Nielsen. I will provide detailed discussions of Alber and Richardson, as they are included in the dominant voices in the field right now and prove most pertinent to the aims of my thesis.

1.6.1. Jan Alber: The Unnatural Narrative

Alber puts forward the notion that “fictional narratives [is that they] do not only mimetically reproduce the world as we know it,”⁷⁶ crucially pointing out that many narrative worlds “confront us with bizarre storyworlds which are governed by principles that have very little to do with the real world around us.”⁷⁷ In that regard, he echoes Attebery’s notion that the mimetic and fantastic modes co-exist in any fictional narrative. Alber then uses the work of cognitive narratology to propose a model which enables readers to “make sense of unnatural scenarios”⁷⁸ which seem to be presented in the fantastic mode. Furthermore, the approach of unnatural narratology as a whole consequently seeks to describe the ways in which projected storyworlds deviate from real-world frames, and, in a second step, it then tries to interpret these “deviations.”⁷⁹

To define these deviations, or the unnatural, Alber uses Doležel’s insight and proposes that the unnatural “denotes physically impossible scenarios and events, that is, impossible by the known laws governing the physical world, as well as logically impossible ones, that is, impossible by accepted principles of logic.”⁸⁰ He further states that these are judged “gainst the foil of “natural” (real-world) cognitive frames and scripts that have to do with natural laws, logical

⁷⁶ Jan Alber, “Impossible Storyworlds and What to Do with Them.” *Storyworlds* 1, no. 1 (2009): 79.

⁷⁷ Alber, “Impossible Storyworlds,” 79.

⁷⁸ Alber, “Impossible Storyworlds,” 79.

⁷⁹ Jan Alber, Stefan Iversen, Henrik Skov Nielsen, and Brian Richardson, “Unnatural Narratives, Unnatural Narratology: Beyond Mimetic Models,” *Narrative* 18, no. 2 (2010): 116.

⁸⁰ Doležel, *Heterocosmica*, 116.

principles, and standard human limitations of knowledge and ability,”⁸¹ with cognitive frame being defined as “understandings of time, space, and other human beings”⁸²

He provides several examples of these physical impossibilities, with two focusing on the narrative parameters of the narrator and the character. I will outline those here, as my research focuses precisely on the supernatural from the point of view of these entities and so it is fruitful to see how unnatural narratology conceptualizes this scenario. In Philip Roth’s *The Breast* (1977), Alber identifies the unnatural in the transformation of the narrator Kepesh into a large mammary gland, a transformation which violates the actual world ground rules encoded in the cognitive frames of the reader.⁸³ In Harold Pinter’s play *Family Voices* (1981), he provides the letter writing corpse character as a prime example of the unnatural.⁸⁴ In both cases, it is evident that the unnatural as violation of the actual world natural law is seen from the point of view of the reader and is experienced as such likewise.

In that regard, he is operating in harmony with the approaches of Attebery and Todorov, who see the fantastic as a violation of the ground rules of our actual world and manifested within the reader. Similarly to Attebery’s gradient even, there is an apparent gradient to the impossibility the unnatural presents, proposing that “dimensions of unnaturalness can be measured by the degree to which they deviate from real world frames.”⁸⁵ Furthermore, like Attebery, Alber states that any instance of the unnatural is necessarily accompanied by what Shklovsky dubbed the effect of estrangement,⁸⁶ again echoing Attebery who too identifies it as a chief signal of the fantastic within

⁸¹ Jan Alber, *Unnatural Narrative: Impossible Worlds in Fiction and Drama* (University of Nebraska Press, 2016), 3.

⁸² Jan Alber, “Unnatural Narratology: The Systematic Study of Anti-Mimeticism,” *Literature Compass* 10, no. 4 (2013): 449, <https://doi.org/10.1111/lic3.12065>.

⁸³ Alber, *Fiction and Drama*, 5.

⁸⁴ Alber, *Fiction and Drama*, 6.

⁸⁵ Alber, “Impossible Storyworlds,” 80.

⁸⁶ Alber, “Impossible Storyworlds,” 80.

a text. Interestingly though, he makes it a point to state that “not all instances of estrangement involve the unnatural.”⁸⁷

Above all, it is clear that Alber is interested in “the question of what these impossibilities might mean to the readers.”⁸⁸ To that end, he champions the interdisciplinary approach of cognitive narratology, which combines the insight of cognitive psychology and narratology to establish how readers “make sense” of the unnatural (i.e. Alber’s physical impossibility against the foil of actual world frame) in a narrative.⁸⁹ Finally, with regards to my reconceptualization of the fantastic mode (and its subset, the supernatural) into the independent violation and the experience thereof, Alber does not seem to distinguish. In this, he follows in the critical praxis of criticism of fantastic literature beginning with Todorov. In line with the praxis, his unnatural is conceptualized both by the experiential reaction it produces and by the fact that it is a violation of some form of natural law, but these two features are not treated as independent entities.

1.6.2. Brian Richardson: The Non-Mimetic Narrative

A different categorial framework in the same vein is presented by Brian Richardson. In his widely cited article titled “Unnatural Narrative Theory,” he provides the following distinction between what he dubs non-mimetic, the mimetic and the anti-mimetic, terms which correspond to the terms supernatural, realist, and unnatural:

Unnatural fiction is different not only from mimetic fiction but also from what I call nonmimetic or nonnatural fiction. Nonmimetic narratives include conventional fairy tales, animal fables, ghost stories, and other kinds of fiction that invoke magical or supernatural elements. Such narratives employ consistent storyworlds and obey established generic conventions or, in some cases, merely

⁸⁷ Alber, “Impossible Storyworlds,” 80.

⁸⁸ Alber, *Fiction and Drama*, 5.

⁸⁹ Alber, *Fiction and Drama*, 3.

add a single supernatural component to an otherwise naturalistic world. By contrast, unnatural texts do not attempt to extend the boundaries of the mimetic, but rather play with the very conventions of mimesis.⁹⁰

He reiterates this definition numerous times, citing that the scope of his study are texts “that defy the presuppositions of nonfictional narratives, the practices of realism or other poetics that model themselves on nonfictional narratives, and that transcend the conventions of existing, established genres.”⁹¹ To understand his approach properly, it is crucial to note that the narratives he deals with do not have a stable set of ground rules which govern them, be they of the actual world or not. Indeed, “[i]n a mimetic or a nonmimetic world, a narrative audience believes that Rastignac lives in Paris and that there are functioning magic mirrors in the world of Snow White,”⁹² with the mimetic (i.e. governed by actual world natural law ground rules) and the non-mimetic (i.e. governed by non-actual world natural law ground rules) worlds having stable sets of ground rules by which they operate and which can be described and predicted. Instead, he is interested a type of narrative which requires the “partial belief in the fictional world and also sabotages that belief.”⁹³ Richardson’s critical focus would then seem to prove of limited value for the aims of my research. He does not focus on the supernatural, or the non-mimetic as he dubs it,⁹⁴ and like the rest of unnatural narratology, he is preoccupied with how the reader makes sense of the anti-mimetic he does focus on.⁹⁵

Nevertheless, he implicitly affirms both the concept of ground rules and of the supernatural being a phenomenon which violates these ground rules, more specifically their natural law subset.

⁹⁰ Brian Richardson, “Unnatural Narrative Theory,” *Style* 50, no. 4 (2016): 386.

⁹¹ Richardson, “Unnatural Narrative Theory,” 389.

⁹² Richardson, “Unnatural Narrative Theory,” 393.

⁹³ Richardson, “Unnatural Narrative Theory,” 393.

⁹⁴ Richardson, “Unnatural Narrative Theory,” 391.

⁹⁵ Richardson, “Unnatural Narrative Theory,” 391, 395.

Given that these two concepts form the chief focus of my research, that is, the independent nature between the supernatural as violation and experience thereof, it is hopeful that even this rather contemporary strain of research concerned with the supernatural uses them in the form that has remained essentially unaltered since Todorov and Rabkin in the 1970s. With specific regards to the distinction of the supernatural as violation and experience, Richardson, like the remainder of the unnatural narratology camp, does not distinguish the two.

1.7. The Fantastic and the Supernatural: A Distinction

Prior to delving into the relationship between the supernatural as presence and experience, the distinction between the fantastic and the supernatural needs to be addressed. It is evident that a large majority of the literature I review here treats the fantastic and the supernatural as identical concepts.

In terms of specifics, Attebery explicitly refers to “what the author clearly believes to be natural law”⁹⁶ when discussing the fantastic mode, and so does Todorov with his “natural and supernatural explanation of the events described”⁹⁷ while referring to his conditions of Todorovian fantastic as a genre. Same is the case with Mendlesohn and Jackson who have adopted this conception, as I have established. Lastly, unnatural narratology is rather explicit about the unnatural denoting physically impossible scenarios and events, that is, impossible by the known laws governing the physical world, as well as logically impossible ones, that is, impossible by accepted principles of logic.”⁹⁸ This gives rise to a number of problems, some of which are noted by Patricia García in her monograph *Space and the Postmodern Fantastic in Contemporary Literature* (2015). There, she outlines that equating the two concepts leads to a corpus of texts “so

⁹⁶ Attebery, *Strategies*, 14.

⁹⁷ Todorov, *A Structural Approach*, 33.

⁹⁸ Doležel, *Heterocosmica*, 116.

large in extent and wide in scope that the component works would bear very little in common at the level of structures, themes and effect,”⁹⁹ that the mimetic and non-mimetic dichotomy insufficiently accounts for the diversity of the texts classified as fantastic¹⁰⁰ and that it relies on the standard from which deviations are judged being a stable and context-independent entity,¹⁰¹ a theme I have already alluded to with my discussion of the intra and extratextual ground rules. Conversely, Doležel does not use the term fantastic at all, whilst Rabkin generalizes it to encompass any reversal of the rules which operate a given text.

For the purposes of this study, I propose a solution which would conceptualize the fantastic as a general category of which the supernatural is a more restricted manifestation. Adopting the four modalities of Doležel, a structural generalization of the alethic modality may be made which will provide a sufficient distinction between the fantastic and the supernatural for the purposes of this study. Quite simply, as the redistribution of logical quantifiers of the alethic modality distinguishes natural worlds from supernatural ones, so does the redistribution of logical quantifiers in the four modalities as a whole distinguish non-fantastic worlds from fantastic ones. Following this logic, the supernatural is then a subset of the fantastic and the fantastic is that which redistributes logical quantifiers with respect to the ones of the actual world. In conclusion, the fantastic can be conceptualized as a mode presenting something which diverges from the standard of the actual world, with the supernatural diverging specifically from its natural laws.

⁹⁹ Patricia García, *Space and the postmodern fantastic in contemporary literature: The architectural void* (United Kingdom: Routledge, 2015), 12.

¹⁰⁰ García, *Space*, 13.

¹⁰¹ García, *Space*, 13.

1.8. Discussion of the Critical Approaches

Within this critical landscape then, the fantastic mode has been a relational notion¹⁰² existing only side by side with the non-fantastic mode, which in turn is to be equated with the mimetic. The mode seems to present some violation of rules operating a given world and this violation is often experienced in a distinct manner. The source of non-fantastic, that is the ground rules which are to be violated, are to be found either externally in the actual world (as purported by Attebery, Doležel, Todorov, Jackson, Alber, Richardson and unnatural narratology as a whole; and Mendlesohn) or internally in a fictional narrative world (as purported by Rabkin). The ground rules themselves are apart from Doležel and Todorov not considered as an objective standard, but as a subjective, constructed understanding of how the world operates tied to a specific point of view and may be paraphrased as a perspective¹⁰³ (Rabkin), or a cognitive frame.¹⁰⁴ Based on this sourcing, I may readily divide the presented critical approaches into two dialectical camps – the externalists and the internalists. I base this characterization by modifying Robert Adams’s distinction of possible world ontologies, which presents two models: the possibilist and the actualist.¹⁰⁵

The actualist model relies on the actual world being “a standpoint outside the system of possible worlds from which judgments of actuality which are not world-relative may be made,”¹⁰⁶ while the possibilist one considers the actual world as being ontologically equal to other possible worlds.¹⁰⁷ Adopting this distinction, I observe two strains within the traditional and contemporary approaches towards the fantastic: the externalists take for the referential standard against which

¹⁰² Rabkin, *The Fantastic*, 28.

¹⁰³ Rabkin, *The Fantastic*, 4.

¹⁰⁴ Jan Alber, “Unnatural Narratology: The Systematic Study of Anti-Mimeticism,” *Literature Compass* 10, no. 4: 449, <https://doi.org/10.1111/lic3.12065>.

¹⁰⁵ Robert M. Adams, “Theories of Actuality,” in *The Possible and the actual: readings in the metaphysics of modality*, ed. Michael J. Loux (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1979), 194, 202.

¹⁰⁶ Adams, “Theories of Actuality,” 194, 202.

¹⁰⁷ Adams, “Theories of Actuality,” 194, 202.

phenomena are to be judged the actual world which we inhabit. In contrast, the internalists, as represented by Rabkin, find this standard in the ground rules of the fictional world, and judge any new phenomenon against those.

The fantastic phenomenon as a presence is then seen as the violation of this external referential standard of laws of the actual world (Doležel, Attebery, Alber's unnatural Todorov's fantastic-marvelous and marvelous¹⁰⁸) or conversely of the internal standard of laws of the specific narrative world (Rabkin). Zooming in on the question of the dichotomy of the natural and the supernatural, that is a subset of the fantastic and operates on a more restricted area (that of the alethic constraints) according to the same principles the fantastic does – if the pre-existent set of (in this case exclusively) alethic principles is violated, the supernatural is established. This violation is according to Doležel enabled by the through the redistribution of the Alethic M-operator. Regarding the fantastic phenomenon as an experience, the phenomenon is signaled within the text by appeals to the myth megatext if it is not accepted as constituting the ground rules (Attebery), along with expressions of perturbation and astonishment stemming from the character, the narrator, or the author (Rabkin), or the expressions of fear or awe (Todorov) which are connected to the particular violating phenomenon. This is then a rough overview of what the fantastic is in terms of a presence of a violation and its experience by observers, why the supernatural is its sub-category and how the two are signaled in the text.

The model insofar as describing the textual features for the identification of the fantastic and the supernatural as a presence and experience is quite the useful analytical tool, as it provides us with a wealth of these features pertaining to both these aspects of the fantastic. Where the significant lack inherent to these approaches arises however, is absence of attention paid the

¹⁰⁸ Todorov, *A Structural Approach*, 25.

independent behavior of the fantastic as a presence and experience. The frameworks presented seem to operate on the axiom that the presence of a violation of some (either diegetic or extra-diegetic) standard of natural law, which I have dubbed the fantastic as a presence, shall produce the experiential reaction of the protagonists within the text and the reader, or the fantastic as experience, that is, there is a one-directional causal relation between the presence and experience.

This axiom is revealed to be a mere assumption as discernable in the language the scholars aforementioned employ. Todorov's condition two, the reaction of the reader or the character who acts as a guideline for the reader, is optional.¹⁰⁹ Likewise, Rabkin's use of modal verbs regarding the three experience signals that it is not a rule that experience shall be present, but merely a guideline: "Each of these three types of signal *may* occur in any given work"¹¹⁰ (emphasis added). Jackson and Mendlesohn elude this issue, rather accepting this optionality as a rule and focusing on the social implications and movement of the fantastic respectively. Doležel likewise does not provide any commentary so as to the experiential reaction.

Unnatural narratology, on the other hand, presupposes the effect of estrangement if a violation is present. There exists a discussion on the degree to which this reaction should be considered as constituting the unnatural, as Alber himself writes in response to Richardson:

To my mind, Richardson puts too much emphasis on the potential effects of the unnatural on the reader. My own definition of the "unnatural" is based on textual features rather than readerly effects.¹¹¹

Nevertheless, they still presuppose that a textual feature of the unnatural will have certain experiential reaction.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ Todorov, *A Structural Approach*, 32.

¹¹⁰ Rabkin, *The Fantastic*, 24.

¹¹¹ Alber, *Fiction and Drama*, 14.

¹¹² Alber, "Impossible Storyworlds," 80.

The independent relation of the presence and experience is not delved into, or to paraphrase for brevity's sake, it seems one is able to clearly tell when the fantastic mode presents a violation and its experience, but not what the relationship between them is. The questions which remain elusive are the fantastic experience which the fantastic as a violation may or may not invoke and vice versa the ability of the fantastic as experience to occur even though violation has not occurred. The conclusions which I outline momentarily I hypothesize to be the case for the fantastic overall, but which I demonstrate with regards to its sub-category, the supernatural.

1.8.1. Presence and Experience through the Lense of the Supernatural

Having established the distinction between the two modes of the fantastic and the supernatural which shall be applied in this study, I move to the discussion of the supernatural as presence and experience. Crucially, it would seem that in the case of the supernatural, the interpreter is presumed to unquestioningly adhere to the (either external or internal standard) of natural laws when conducting their interpretation, which is then signaled by the textual features summarized in the preceding paragraph. This presupposition regarding the manner in which the interpreter approaches the phenomena at hand thus reduces them (be it the character, the narrator or the author) into an obedient piece of machinery whose purpose with respect to the interpretation is informed exclusively by a singular maxim – the adherence to the standard.

This adherence of course will imperfect, because though there necessarily exists an objective standard of rules according to which a world operates as described by Doležel, the adherence to it is modified by the interpreter's limited knowledge of this (either external or internal) standard. Such imperfect adherence is apparent from the concept of cognitive frame utilized by unnatural narratology or from Rabkin's use of character specific perspective. To supply an example, an 18th century Scottish highlander would surely not construe a fighter jet as a natural

occurrence though it by all means is one with regards to the standard of the world he inhabits (which would in this case be the external standard of our actual world). Yet even when the knowledge is sufficient for an interpreter to identify a phenomenon as violating the standard, adherence is not always practiced and the fantastic as experience, through the textual markers as identified by the theoreticians aforementioned is not always present, as shall be demonstrated in the analysis section of this chapter. This is the independent nature of the two, the fantastic as a presence and experience, which I have alluded to. One exists independent of the other within a text and the contemporary approaches seem not account for this fact. This is the case glaringly so within the externalist camp and less conspicuously but ultimately nonetheless present in the camp of the internalists. Let us now elucidate why the externalist school fails where the internalist does not on the grounds of the limited vantage point of the interpreter (Rabkin's "perspective"/the cognitive frame used by unnatural narratology) and why even the internalist school suffers from the issue of inconsistent application, which is the concern of this study.

With regards to the former group, Attebery explicitly admits that "Faster-than-light travel" may be an impossibility, according to our understanding of physics, but the term itself has a scientific ring that justifies its use in science fiction,"¹¹³ further adding that "if scientific knowledge maybe flouted, scientific terminology reigns supreme, even in the most noncognitive space opera."¹¹⁴ Doing so, he acknowledges that the external standard of the natural laws of the actual world as understood by the reader (as discernable from the "our") may be disregarded and thus a phenomenon (in this case faster-than-light travel) which normally would violate it and be within the realm of the supernatural (Attebery's what the author would deem as against natural law) suddenly isn't and is presented as within the realm of the natural. Why this disregard for the

¹¹³ Attebery, *Strategies*, 107.

¹¹⁴ Attebery, *Strategies*, 107.

standard might be however, he does not elucidate, opting out instead to leave the problem be by saying that “It does not matter much if specific scientific references within the story are bogus, so long as the discourse is able to call upon the megatext.”¹¹⁵

This is curious because if a phenomenon is in violation of external standard of natural laws as we the readers construe them and yet it still can be rendered natural, a question arises – why is it so that elements in whose case a supernatural explanation would be completely justifiable are nonetheless naturalized using the language of science? If the supernatural truly is found in violation of what “the author clearly believes to be natural law,”¹¹⁶ the one is forced to conclude that George Lucas believes that the force in his Star Wars saga is a perfectly scientifically sound phenomenon, as he calls upon the scientific megatexts of Midichlorians – microscopic organisms dwelling in the force wielders blood which are the source of the ability – when venturing to explain it. Attebery’s model necessitates that I accept Lucas’s belief in the possibility of these marvelous microbes. That of course would be mode of interpretation based on sheer belief, for the author’s mind is inaccessible to us and yields no concrete textual evidence. Indeed, Attebery’s model in this case seems to rely on the unverifiable assumption that George Lucas takes Midichlorians as a phenomenon not violating his understanding of natural laws, which is in my view a substantial pitfall of his analysis. It would then seem that there is something operating beyond the external standard when it comes to the presence of the supernatural and one is compelled to ask the question what are the factors that lead to the presence of a scientific explanation as opposed to a supernatural one when the scientific one is knowingly impossible to the standard of the actual world.

Todorov, the next externalist thinker discussed, suffers from the same issue. His scale based on the (non)violation of external natural law accepted serves as a useful tool of

¹¹⁵ Attebery, *Strategies*, 107.

¹¹⁶ Attebery, *Strategies*, 14.

categorization but fails to account for instances when this standard is violated, this violation is by all accounts known to the reader or the author and yet the supernatural as an experience is not produced and naturalization transpires nonetheless. In short, it does not answer why the naturalistic explanation is present when the supernatural one is the one causally required. Same is the case with the converse situation: a violation has clearly not transpired, the protagonist or other interpreters in the text know it to be true and yet they nonetheless experience the phenomenon as if it were supernatural. The experience precedes and causes presence, or the presence precedes and causes experience.

Doležel elegantly avoids this problem area altogether by a priori excluding it from the scope of his theory, explaining that “[b]y using a modal criterion to distinguish natural and supernatural worlds, we avoid ontological commitment and subjective beliefs and skirt changes in scientific knowledge and interpretation of laws of nature.”¹¹⁷ While contrasting the objective laws of nature of the actual and fictional world does produce grounds for distinction, it, as Doležel says, bypasses the role of the interpreter of these laws and treats the fictional world not from their (intra-world) perspective but from the (external) vantage point of an all-seeing clinical eye. That is of course completely in line with Doležel’s aims to produce an objective taxonomy of modalities, but it, as Doležel himself points out, “changes in scientific knowledge and interpretation of laws of nature”¹¹⁸ are avoided and thus attempt to provide an explanation for the sorting of the phenomena encountered as conducted by the characters is not even undergone.

Apart from the issues which stem from using the point of view of the reader, the camp of unnatural narratology as represented by Alber, Richardson do not account for the independence of the violation and its experience either. In fact, the general sentiment would seem to be quite the

¹¹⁷ Doležel, *Heterocosmica*, 116.

¹¹⁸ Doležel, *Heterocosmica*, 116.

opposite, seeing that Alber explicitly states that any instance of the unnatural, which by his definition entails events and scenarios which violate the natural law of the actual world,¹¹⁹ must be accompanied by an experiential reaction of estrangement.¹²⁰

This issue of a text violating the external standard of natural laws and yet being presented as natural is partially accounted for by the internalists – though the fighter jet does not violate the readers’ knowledge of natural law of the actual world, it violates the highlander’s understanding of the natural ground rules of his world and hence permits a supernatural interpretation. By the same measure, Jean-Luc Picard does not fall to his knees in fantastic astonishment at the sight of a warp speed engine because according to his understanding of the standard, it is completely within its confines. The external standard as construed by the reader is replaced by the intra-textual interpreter’s understanding of the intra-textual ground rules and any and all judgements are made on its basis. This addresses Attebery’s, Todorov’s and unnatural narratology’s lack of explanation for the accepted disregard – the reader and their knowledge of the standard are of no consequence and the intra-textual entities’ knowledge of the ground rules reign supreme. The reader is thus reduced to a simple observer of someone else tackling something they do not understand. Nonetheless, the internalist camp still suffers from the issue of independence of the fantastic as a presence and experience. Though the internalist camp answers the pitfalls of the externalist by the introduction of intra-textual perspective which is to be found through the analysis of the text’s grapholect and which constitutes the standard of ground rules against what phenomena are to be judged with respect to whether they violate them or not, it fails to account for situations when the ground rules of natural law are sufficiently familiar to the interpreter, the ground rules are violated – that is, the supernatural as presence of violation manifests - and yet the supernatural as experience

¹¹⁹ Doležel, *Heterocosmica*, 116.

¹²⁰ Alber, “Impossible Storyworlds,” 80.

is not produced through the plethora of textual signals I have outlined and is instead naturalized within the text despite this violation.

And conversely, though no violation may be present, and this fact is known to the interpreter, they may still elect to see a phenomenon as supernatural in spite of this knowledge and produce the supernatural as experience. The violation of the standard, though known to the interpreter, does not necessarily produce the experience of the supernatural and vice versa. The presence and experience manifest independently: one may exist without the other in a given text. The gap inherent to both camps as outlined above is perhaps best demonstrated using a simple diagram:

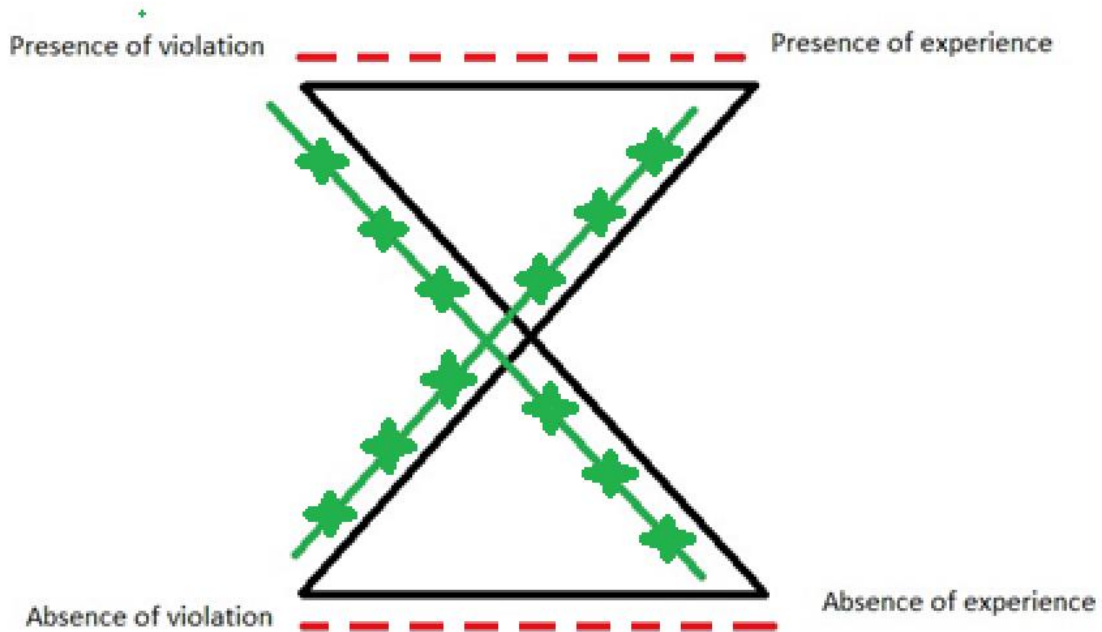


Figure 3 – Bi-directional Independence of the Presence of the Supernatural and its Experience

In it, I observe that the critical approaches so far have considered only the red axes, wherein a presence of violation of the ground rules causes the experience thereof and conversely the absence

of violation does not cause the presence of experience (and thus results in absence thereof). What my approach considers are the additional green diagonal axes, which deal with the presence of violation failing to cause the presence of experience thereof and conversely, the absence of violation nonetheless leading to the experience of one. The consideration of the green axes enables a reinterpretation of the texts this study considers and which the current approaches do not account for.

1.8. Lovecraft’s “The Beast in the Cave”: The Independence Demonstrated

1.8.1. The Method

Prior to delving into the individual case studies, the methodology that shall be utilized first need be established. As I have outlined, this thesis attempts to explain the independence of the supernatural as violation and the experience thereof from the character’s point of view as well as the implications this relation has for weird fiction. Before such an attempt may be undertaken, it needs to be concretely established whether the supernatural tied to a specific phenomenon is present within a text either as an experience, a violation, or both from the point of view of a particular character. Consequently, for such considerations to be made, the perspective¹²¹ or cognitive frame¹²² tied to these specific characters needs to be established. Otherwise, it is not possible to determine whether a phenomenon is natural or supernatural from their point of view. By extension, neither is it possible to begin the analysis of the independence of the two.

To that end, I propose a four-step method which aims first to select the particular phenomenon whose natural or supernatural status as presence and experience of a violation from the point of view of the character shall be considered. Second, it aims to establish the cognitive frames of

¹²¹ Rabkin, *The Fantastic*, 20.

¹²² Jan Alber, “Unnatural Narratology: The Systematic Study of Anti-Mimeticism,” *Literature Compass* 10, no. 4 (2013): 449, <https://doi.org/10.1111/lic3.12065>.

particular characters relating to the particular selected phenomenon. This shall be done by identifying the particular storyworld¹²³ the characters are native to through close reading and subsequently qualifying the cognitive frames this storyworld suggests by comments of the characters. Third, it aims to determine how the characters interpret these phenomena, that is whether the phenomena are violating their cognitive frame of natural law and whether this violation invokes an experiential reaction. Fourthly, it aims to group the instances of the supernatural as violation and experience into the following four groups.

1. Phenomenon that does not violate experienced as natural = natural accepted as natural
2. Phenomenon that violates experienced as supernatural = supernatural accepted as supernatural
3. Violation exists without experience thereof = the supernatural is naturalized
4. Phenomenon that does not violate experienced as supernatural = the natural is supernaturalized

The case studies in which this method is utilized entail texts falling into groups three and four and two. That is, a text where a violation does not invoke experience of the supernatural (*Clown*), a text where supernatural experience is invoked by a phenomenon that does not violate (“The Beast in the Cave”) and a text where a violation invokes an experience thereof (“The Inhabitant of the Lake”). Group number two shall be paid further attention in chapter two, where a variability of the experience is discussed in detail and conclusions about its influence on the presence of the supernatural in weird fiction are drawn. Having outlined the general structure of the method, I now move to the specifics of each individual step.

¹²³ David Herman, “Storyworld,” in *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, eds. David Herman, Manfred Jahn, and Marie-Laure Ryan (London: Routledge, 2005), 569-570.

Step one. The initial step that has to be undergone is the selection of the specific sort of phenomena that shall be examined with respect to their natural or supernatural status and the entity from whose point of view this status is determined. This is done at the analyst's digression and is not restricted by any factor, internal or external to the text. The subsequent steps, however, are restricted in their scope on the basis of the phenomenon that is being analyzed.

Step two. Once the phenomena to be analyzed have been selected, the intratextual natural law ground rules as understood by the interpreters relating specifically to them need to be firmly established. This is so that the examined phenomena may be categorized as either in operating in accordance with them or in violation of them. Furthermore, it will make it possible to consider the experiential reaction to them. This step needs to be prefaced by stating that the only supernatural this thesis deals with, either as a violation or an experience thereof, is the supernatural demonstrable by the features of a particular text. This has little bearing on the supernatural as violation, but crucially necessitates that the experience of this violation is found within the response of the character or the narrator, not the reader. It is imperative that the location of the experience is clearly stated, because though Alber and other representatives of unnatural narratology,¹²⁴ Rabkin,¹²⁵ Attebery,¹²⁶ Jackson¹²⁷ and others continue in the Todorovian¹²⁸ vein of focusing on the extratextual perspective of the reader as the vantage point from which the fantastic is present and experienced, I shall do no such thing, as one cannot assume what a reader might or might not do in response to the violations of the ground rules of the narrative and the scope of this thesis has no tools for gathering reader response data. Instead, I focus on the perspectives of the

¹²⁴ Alber, *Fiction and Drama*, 5.

¹²⁵ Rabkin, *The Fantastic*, 17.

¹²⁶ Attebery, *Strategies*, 16.

¹²⁷ Jackson, *Subversion*, 8.

¹²⁸ Todorov, *A Structural Approach*, 41, 55, 58.

dramatis personae, those being the characters and the narrator of a particular narrative world, so that I may understand what they consider the ground rules of the narrative world in which they exist. Doing so, I bypass the difficulties gathering data from readers that would support or disprove a claim regarding the experience of supernatural and have the opportunity to use a stable, extensive pool of textual data found precisely in those dramatis personae. This data pool allows to pinpoint demonstrably exactly when a violation occurs from their perspective and when a violation is experienced from their perspective.

Having settled this important caveat, I now introduce the two interconnected streams of evidence that determine the perspectives held by the characters from which the phenomena shall be interpreted: the narrative's storyworld and the qualifying commentary provided by the narrator and the characters. Let us first outline the justification for using the narrative's storyworld in establishing the character's perspectives or cognitive frames delimiting the natural law ground rules operating within the text. The externalists Todorov¹²⁹ and Attebery,¹³⁰ as well as Jackson¹³¹ and Mendlesohn see this standard in the actual world. As I have outlined already, some of them do seem to account for constraints historical development may impose on one's understanding of this standard,¹³² but all of them uniformly agree that it is the actual world from which violations are to be judged.

On the other hand, the sole internalist Rabkin claims that these ground rules are constituted by the text's grapholect, or a dialect of writing which vivifies the perspective of its user in the person who reads it.¹³³ Alber favors the term cognitive frame instead of perspective and he

¹²⁹ Todorov, *A Structural Approach*, 41.

¹³⁰ Attebery, *Strategies*, 15.

¹³¹ Jackson, *Subversion*, 8.

¹³² Attebery, *Strategies*, 28-29.

¹³³ Rabkin, *The Fantastic*, 20.

implicitly agrees with Rabkin that it is the cognitive frame – the “understandings of time, space, and other human beings”¹³⁴ by a particular entity – whose violation constitutes the supernatural (termed the non-mimetic in unnatural narratology¹³⁵). Unlike Rabkin, he operates with the notion that the cognitive frame is of the actual world, positioning himself towards the externalist camp.¹³⁶

The differences notwithstanding, if a phenomenon operates in a manner incompatible with how the character understands the natural law of the world they inhabit – with their perspective or a cognitive frame, the phenomenon is deemed a supernatural violation and may be signaled by various experiential markers, thus manifesting the supernatural as experience in my view. As I have stated, the purpose of this thesis is to examine the independence between the supernatural as violation and experience thereof from the point of view of the character and the implications this holds for the weird canon. Consequently, it is necessary to firmly establish the understanding of natural law by the character from whose point of view the phenomenon is categorized as violation and/or experienced as such.

Referring to my literature review, the externalists prove unsuitable to that end, because they consider the actual world natural law as the standard against which violations are judged. The actual world standard, of course, is not identical with the standard as understood by the character. The framework of unnatural narratology utilizes the concept of a cognitive frame, or the understanding of natural law by a specific individual and judges violations against that.¹³⁷ Yet their approach still considers the cognitive frame of the reader,¹³⁸ that is again on the actual world, and any judgements are based upon actual world natural law as a consequence.

¹³⁴ Alber, “Anti-Mimeticism,” 449.

¹³⁵ Brian Richardson, “Unnatural Narrative Theory,” *Style* 50, no. 4 (2016): 386. <https://doi.org/10.5325/style.50.4.0385>. 386

¹³⁶ Alber, “Anti-Mimeticism,” 449.

¹³⁷ Alber, “Anti-Mimeticism,” 449.

¹³⁸ Alber, “Anti-Mimeticism,” 449.

The internalist Rabkin does offer the concept of a text's grapholect as an encoding of the perspectives of its users which are vivified in its readers.¹³⁹ Though he still focuses on the supernatural experience from the vantage point of the reader,¹⁴⁰ he nevertheless does consider the ground rules a standard specific to a given text and judges any violations against this specific standard. Furthermore, his broad notion of a perspective seems to operate in a manner akin to the cognitive frame utilized by unnatural narratology, only in his case, this frame is intra-, not extratextual. In other words, it is the frame of the *dramatis personae*.

The notion of a character-specific, intratextual cognitive frame is in my view central to determining whether a phenomenon is a violation or not from the point of view of such character. As such, its acquisition is the chief concern of step two of my method. A problem arises with the acquisition of this intratextual, character-specific perspective. The only venue which points towards where such a cognitive frame might be extracted is Rabkin's grapholect, a concept exceedingly vaguely defined for any consistent application. Due to this fact, an alternate, more narrowly defined and thus more explicitly demonstrable textual characteristic has to be found. I posit that such characteristic which could yield the cognitive frames held by the character may be found in the storyworld in which the narrative takes place. The analysis of a given narrative's storyworld shall serve the same purpose as Rabkin's grapholect – the extraction of character-specific, intratextual cognitive frames which delimit the entity's understanding of the storyworld's natural law.

How can this be accomplished? David Herman defines a storyworld as “the surrounding context or environment” which embeds “existents, their attributes, and the actions and events in

¹³⁹ Rabkin, *The Fantastic*, 20.

¹⁴⁰ Rabkin, *The Fantastic*, 17.

which they are involved.”¹⁴¹ Alber notes that these correlate closely with the evocation of spatio-temporal parameters.¹⁴² I posit that by close reading of this surrounding spatial and temporal context which surrounds the characters, I will acquire what I call suggested cognitive frames of that particular storyworld. By a suggested cognitive frame, I mean a cognitive frame that is expected in a particular spatial and temporal setting, a particular storyworld. For instance, one can expect the seventeenth century notions on the spread of disease to form the cognitive frame of characters existing in a narrative set in the seventeenth century. Once this suggested cognitive frame is accepted by a given character in the text, then it becomes the cognitive frame native to that particular character. As such, the analyst is enabled to consider whether the particular phenomenon that particular character observes violates their cognitive frame and thus is supernatural from their point of view as well as to consider whether they react to it as if it were violating their cognitive frame. The process of qualification will be introduced in due time. For now, let us focus on how precisely the storyworld may provide one with a suggested cognitive frame. Having explained the reasoning for the close reading of the narrative’s storyworld, let us now outline what evidence is used to establish the storyworld and by extension the suggested cognitive frames. Specifically, those would be the temporal and spatial parameters of the storyworld.

For spatial parameters, this entails commentary narrowing down where the story is taking place and what is contained within it, or, what the perspectives which are suggested by the location are. Notably, only parameters related to the phenomena examined are mined for evidence, as they are the only relevant ones. For instance, a story set in Tolkien’s Middle Earth may have different

¹⁴¹ David Herman, “Storyworld,” in *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, eds. David Herman, Manfred Jahn, and Marie-Laure Ryan (London: Routledge, 2005), 569-570.

¹⁴² Jan Alber, Stefan Iversen, Henrik Skov Nielsen, and Brian Richardson, “Unnatural Narratives, Unnatural Narratology: Beyond Mimetic Models,” 116.

perspectives, or the ground rules, governing aging than a one on earth encoded, and these perspectives shall be communicated by the narrator. In Tolkien's case, hobbits and men do not age at a uniform tempo, this is accepted as a governing principle of the world the narrator presents by providing description of examples of this rule within the text.

Regarding temporal parameters, we shall focus on when the story is taking place, or, what the perspectives suggested by its temporal setting are. Again, only parameters related to the examined phenomena are considered. For instance, a story taking place in the late 17th century may carry with it different perspectives, or the ground rules, governing the spread of disease, attributing it to bad air rather than microbes. This shall again be evidenced by close reading the narrator's and characters' commentary: they shall give clues as to what the temporal setting of the narrative happens to be and by doing so, enable us to use this temporal setting to make an estimation of ground rules the narrative world operates by using the text itself as well as extratextual sources pertaining to the temporal setting in question. In the case of our hypothetical narrative, which would be critical texts dealing with the mechanisms of disease spread which were in vogue in the seventeenth century. I do acknowledge that this entails using extratextual sources but note that they need to be corroborated by what is present in the text.

Of course, as has been alluded to, the spatial and temporal parameters will not yield the narrator's and characters' perspectives by themselves. Narrators and characters often have access to some additional knowledge which enables them to avoid the conclusions the spatio-temporal parameters would have them believe. By the same measure, they may just as well lack this access and thus again hold different perspectives than those encoded in the spatio-temporal parameters. To provide an example, using our hypothetical seventeenth century narrative, a mad scientist may have easily discovered that it is in fact microbes who are responsible for disease and if this mad

scientist happens to be the narrator or a character, this is the governing rule they may ascribe to them instead of bad air. If that transpires, then the suggested cognitive frame does not become one they subscribe to. For that reason, the spatio-temporal parameters must be qualified by the narrator's or character's comments before they are accepted as evidence of the ground rules a narrative world operates from their particular point of view. In this study, these qualifying comments are of three kinds – affirmative, dismissive, and absent.

Prior to commenting upon those further, I wish to again emphasize that a narrator's qualification of a parameter will yield only the narrator's perspective and conversely, a character's qualification only the perspective of the character. This implies that in a given narrative world, there may exist several versions of ground rules each inherent to a particular character or a narrator. Determining whether something is in violation of these ground rules and whether this violation is experienced will then necessarily be limited to that particular entity and not the text as a whole. This entails that any instance of the supernatural, either as a violation or an experience, will be strictly limited to the point of view of one entity within the text.

Furthermore, not only are these perspectives entity-specific, but they are also specific to a particular point in narrative. The knowledge, and by extension the perspectives a character or certain types of narrators have access to is subject to development contingent on the progression of the narrative. Spatio-temporal parameters are not provided in bulk, rather, they are gradually revealed as the narrative develops. Necessarily then, so does the narrator or a character may qualify these parameters as they develop. From this follows that the perspectives which they hold, and which are derived from qualified spatio-temporal parameters will be also subject to development over the course of the narrative.

These two important points stated, let us now define the three types of qualifying comments. They are again acquired through close reading of the narrator and character commentary. If the narrator or a character affirms the perspectives encoded in either the spatial or temporal parameter of their narrative world, the perspective is considered to constitute a ground rule by which the narrative world operates. If a narrator or a character dismisses the perspective, it is considered not to constitute a ground rule. Finally, if a narrator or a character provides no commentary with regards to the perspectives encoded, the perspective is considered to constitute a ground rule. This I justify by the fact that without a narrator's or a character's comment, the spatio-temporal parameters have nothing to be qualified by and since it is qualification by which we exclude the perspectives encoded within them as constituting the ground rules, they by default must constitute them. Step three. Once the ground rules – i.e., the individual perspectives or cognitive frames defining the governing principles of a narrative world tied to a specific character – have been identified, we may scan the text for instances of the supernatural as a violation of these ground rules and the experience thereof. For clarity's sake, I shall once again provide the definitions of these two concepts prior to listing the evidence by which they are identified in a text. The supernatural as violation entails the description of a presence of a phenomenon in the text. This phenomenon is incompatible with the perspectives that constitute the natural law ground rules of that particular text. These perspectives are in turn derived from the spatio-temporal parameters and must be qualified by the interpreting entity. To sum up, the supernatural as violation is the authenticated presence of a phenomenon which violates the interpreter's cognitive frame. The supernatural as experience, on the other hand, entails the presence of specific reaction to a given phenomenon. This reaction is provided by the interpreter – the narrator or a character. The status of this phenomenon being reacted to is immaterial, it may be a violation, or it may not, the

supernatural as experience is defined purely by the domain of reaction. The supernatural as experience is present if the reaction categorizes the phenomenon as violating the perspectives which constitute the natural law ground rules inherent to the interpreter. In summary, the supernatural as experience is signaled by the interpreter's reaction to a given phenomenon which may or may not violate their cognitive frame.

Let us now consider the specific types of evidence that shall establish whether the supernatural as violation and experience respectively is present in a given text. With regards to textual signals of the supernatural as a violation, we pay attention to a single stream of evidence. This stream, as noted by Rabkin, is the presence of contrast.¹⁴³ Rabkin notes that the presence of contrast is again a conscious act on the part of the author,¹⁴⁴ which is a pure assumption not useful to the aims of our study in any way because it goes beyond the scope of the text. However, the contrast itself is a demonstrable structure present within the text, the purposiveness of its authorship notwithstanding. The notion of a contrast signaling a fantastic violation is used by a number of other theorists I have reviewed. Attebery, citing Katherin Hume, calls some demonstrable instance of a “departure from consensus reality”¹⁴⁵ a necessity of the fantastic, which in his view subsumes the supernatural. This departure present in a text will necessarily contrast with elements which do not present as a departure, elements which are non-fantastic. Likewise, Todorov relies on the presence of an element which is “apparently supernatural”¹⁴⁶ with regards to the natural law ground rules to establish his genres the of uncanny, the fantastic and the marvelous. These elements are again embedded in a world operated by a particular set of ground

¹⁴³ Rabkin, *The Fantastic*, 17.

¹⁴⁴ Rabkin, *The Fantastic*, 17.

¹⁴⁵ Hume 8, in Attebery 14-15

¹⁴⁶ Todorov, *A Structural Approach*, 25.

rules, which in the case of Todorov are the actual world natural law ground rules, and their presence is contrasted to them and to elements which do not violate them.

Even the critical approach of unnatural narratology seems to utilize contrast when determining what is unnatural, or non-mimetic,¹⁴⁷ which is how they label the supernatural. Alber posits that a phenomenon's unnatural status is the result of judging it „against the foil of “natural” (real-world) cognitive frames and scripts that have to do with natural laws, logical principles, and standard human limitations of knowledge and ability,”¹⁴⁸ clearly relying on the contrast which the presence of the phenomenon against the foil produces. Again, unnatural narratology relies on the actual world for their ground rules as I have established, but they nonetheless use the contrast they produce with phenomena which violate them to determine the unnatural. To summarize, a contrast produced by a phenomenon in violation of a particular set of natural law ground rules and of these ground rules seems to be accepted as a clear signal of the fantastic. Given that we have identified the various perspectives upon the text's natural law principles in the second step, we now may easily determine whether a phenomenon is within the scope of these principles or whether it violates them. Crucially, I again emphasize that this violation will necessarily be tied to the specific set of perspectives inherent to a specific character or narrator. The particular form of the contrast may be manifold, and they all depend on the specific nature of the examined phenomenon and the nature of the ground rules governing its behavior.

Invariably though, in every case, the contrast shall take the form of a description of phenomenon that is incompatible the character specific perspectives or cognitive frames that constitute the natural law ground rules derived from the spatio-temporal parameters, with the parameters being qualified by the affirming or absencing comments of the narrator or character.

¹⁴⁷ Richardson, “Unnatural Narrative Theory,” 386.

¹⁴⁸ Alber, *Fiction and Drama*, 3.

This will ensure that the phenomenon described is not merely a fancy of the observer but is there external to them. To provide an example, let us consider the authenticated description of a fire-breathing dragon in a narrative world spatially set in London and temporarily set in the twenty first century. Prior to, or even following the dragon's appearance in the text, the order is immaterial, the spatial parameters of London have been qualified by an absent comment of the narrator (they present the location as a fact). The temporal parameters have also been qualified by an absent comment. We can thus mine these parameters for the perspectives which constitute the ground rules, which in this case paint a narrator's perspective which disallows for the existence of a fire-breathing lizard. Nevertheless, the lizard is there and is authenticated. From this follows that the text contains a phenomenon – a dragon – which is incompatible, it is in diametral opposition, to the perspectives derived from the spatial and temporal parameters qualified by the narrator. The narrator is thus in the presence of something supernatural, insofar as their perspectives are concerned.

I now move to evidence for the supernatural as an experience. It takes the form of emotions and interpretive strategies. The first broad emotional response that signals the supernatural experience is disbelief by the interpreter in response to the phenomenon. In addition, I utilize several emotional signals noted by Todorov and Rabkin, respectively. Despite being representatives of competing camps of critical thought, in this particular case they do overlap, as shall become clear momentarily. From Rabkin we take proclamations of astonishment and perturbation by the character or narrator.¹⁴⁹ Todorov, speaking on fantastic-marvelous, notes expressions of astonishment as well, though he calls it awe, and complements them with expressions of fear.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ Rabkin, *The Fantastic*, 17.

¹⁵⁰ Todorov, *A Structural Approach*, 46.

Finally, with respective interpretative strategies, Attebery's appeals to megatexts¹⁵¹ too shall serve as a valuable evidentiary stream. In terms of hierarchy of these types of evidence, interpretative strategies are favored over emotional responses. Again, these forms of reaction do not constitute an experience by themselves. For that, they must be connected to a specific phenomenon. To again provide an example, let us use my hypothetical cockney dragon. The narrator qualified perspectives constituting natural law are those of the twenty first century and the south of England, and these do not permit the existence of dragons. If then, the narrator produces expressions of awe or fear, or provides explanations utilizing the megatext of myth (akin to proclamations such as "it is a magical creature") then they have experienced something as supernatural, insofar their perspectives are concerned.

These are then the first three rather complex steps of my method. Let us recount what they yield. Firstly, they yield the interpreter-specific perspectives constituting natural law ground rules pertaining to a specific type of phenomenon. Secondly, they yield the instances of this particular phenomenon in a text. Thirdly, they categorize these instances into two groups – the supernatural as violation of the interpreter-specific perspectives and as experience of this violation.

Step four of my method is comparatively rather straight forward and it consists of sorting all the instances of the supernatural as violation and experience into four categories.

1. Phenomenon that does not violate experienced as natural = natural accepted as natural
2. Phenomenon that violates experienced as supernatural = supernatural accepted as supernatural
3. Violation exists without experience thereof = the supernatural is naturalized

¹⁵¹ Attebery, *Strategies*, 107.

4. Phenomenon that does not violate experienced as supernatural = the natural is supernaturalized

The gap I outline in chapter one is apparent in points three and four and it is inconsistency between the supernatural as violation and as experience. A phenomenon may be demonstrably violating the interpreter specific perspectives and yet the interpreter may not produce the pertinent experiential signals and thus not experience the phenomenon as this supernatural violation. Furthermore, this gap shall serve as basis for the variability of experience invoked by violating phenomena in group two. This is then the method utilized in this thesis covered in detail. In the next section, the method shall be applied with the goal of identifying an example of point four in the representative text. Point three is covered later in section 3.1.

1.8.2. Case Study: “The Beast in the Cave” by H. P. Lovecraft (1905, published 1918)

To demonstrate the independence between the supernatural violation and experience more concretely, let us take a brief look at a text which features it. The text in question is Howard Phillips Lovecraft’s 1905 (published 1918) short story “The Beast in the Cave.” An earlier work of Lovecraft’s, it does not yet utilize the author’s body of invented mythology which begins to be prominently thematized following the publication of “The Call of Cthulhu” in 1928. This positions the text as fitting substrate for the demonstration of the independence between the supernatural violation and its experience because it bypasses the ambiguous status of said mythology, which is by some interpreted as supernatural and by others within the scope of natural laws which humankind has yet to discover. The phenomenon in the text is not sourced from this mythology, allowing us to focus on the mechanism which determines its interpretation in the text without needing to concern ourselves with the broader ambiguity the mythology posits.

In the story, the protagonist ventures into a cave on a guided tour and quickly becomes separated from his group. He finds himself in complete darkness. Before long, he begins to hear strange, terror inducing sounds which he ascribes to some cave dwelling creature. He soon determines that these sounds must be coming from some animal which too has ventured into the cave and is now intending to hunt him down.¹⁵² As the creature draws closer, the protagonist's first-person narration attempts to construct images regarding its form and the reasons as to why it is in the cave. He ruminates that the creature must be "be some unfortunate beast who had paid for its curiosity to investigate one of the entrances of the fearful grotto with a lifelong confinement in its interminable recesses,"¹⁵³ drawing parallels with a colony of consumptives who have dwelled in the cold cave to seek relief for their disease and had their bodies deteriorate into forms "awful"¹⁵⁴ and "ghastly"¹⁵⁵ with regards to its appearance. He is finally forced to confront the creature by chucking pieces of rock in what he perceives to be its location, managing to wound it.¹⁵⁶ Following its incapacitation, the protagonist rushes in what he thinks is the direction he came in and, to his great luck, encounters the tour guide who has been searching for him. Together, they venture to investigate the creature.¹⁵⁷ A most unnerving sight is then presented to them:

It appeared to be an anthropoid ape of large proportions, escaped, perhaps, from some itinerant menagerie.¹⁵⁸

Observing it in more detail, the protagonist then lists a whole inventory of curious physical features: the inclination of the creature's limbs which enable it to run on all four, extreme growth

¹⁵² Howard Phillips Lovecraft, "The Beast in the Cave," in *H.P. Lovecraft: The Fiction – Complete and Unabridged* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2008), 2-3.

¹⁵³ Lovecraft, "The Beast," 3.

¹⁵⁴ Lovecraft, "The Beast," 3.

¹⁵⁵ Lovecraft, "The Beast," 2.

¹⁵⁶ Lovecraft, "The Beast," 4.

¹⁵⁷ Lovecraft, "The Beast," 4.

¹⁵⁸ Lovecraft, "The Beast," 4.

of hair, nail like claws upon its hands, the hands themselves which he identifies as not prehensile, profound albinism, sunken jet-black eyes and lastly, the absence of iris.¹⁵⁹ Let us now comment on the protagonist's explanation of the uncommon phenomenon in the story – that is, the cave dwelling beast – and demonstrate the pitfalls of the externalist and internalist camps as outlined above using the method I have devised. Beginning with step one, I first choose the particular phenomenon whose natural or supernatural status and the resulting reactions I intend to analyze and the entity against whose cognitive frame the phenomenon is to be judged and who shall produce the experiential reaction I intend to analyze. For this particular short story, I elect the phenomenon of ontogenetic evolution which is observed in the cave dwelling creature as interpreted from the point of view of the first-person narrator who doubly serves as the protagonist.

With the phenomenon and the perspective from which it is interpreted established, I move to step two. This consists firstly of the analysis of the narrative's storyworld, specifically the temporal and spatial parameters which shall yield suggested cognitive frames. Secondly, it consists of determining whether these suggested cognitive frames are held by the interpreting entity – the narrator protagonist. This determination is done based on qualifying comments provided by the interpreting entity. The particular storyworld of "The Beast" is unequivocally the Mammoth Cave in south-central Kentucky. This is evidenced in the text numerous times by the character narrator's references to said Mammoth Cave¹⁶⁰ and to various other geographical markers, such as the Green River¹⁶¹ which flows through it. The temporal setting of the storyworld is more difficult to pinpoint, as the text does not give any explicit clues. Nevertheless, a rough estimate can be drawn, as the text does mention the "colony of consumptives"¹⁶² who used to inhabit the cave and notably

¹⁵⁹ Lovecraft, "The Beast," 4-5.

¹⁶⁰ Lovecraft, "The Beast," 1.

¹⁶¹ Lovecraft, "The Beast," 1.

¹⁶² Lovecraft, "The Beast," 1.

lacks any mention of electrical light. These two features allow for providing a range of years when the narrative may be set. The leftmost boundary is formed by huts of the consumptives, who did in fact live in the cave in the winter of 1842.¹⁶³ Seeking cure for their disease under the care of one Dr. Crogan,¹⁶⁴ they all perished in the end, leaving only their stone huts behind, huts upon whose presence the narrator remarks.¹⁶⁵ With the leftmost boundary set firmly in 1842, I now look rightward, towards the lack of electricity. First electric lights were installed in the Mammoth Cave in 1917, in the Cleaveland Avenue area of the cave.¹⁶⁶ The fact that the character narrator, so very desperate to locate any source of light in the darkness that engulfs him, fails to mention the electric lighting of Cleaveland Avenue either as a beacon, a symbol of safety or any other manner leads me to conclude that the electric lights have not yet been installed in the cave. Thus, 1917 is the rightmost boundary of when the narrative may be taking place.

The spatial and temporal parameters of the storyworld yield a suggested cognitive frame relating to the understanding of the phenomenon I am analyzing, that is, to ontogenetic evolution. The specific nature of this suggested cognitive frame as determined by the storyworld is that of evolutionary theories popular in the US in the late nineteenth to early twentieth century. Among these, the doctrine of the so-called Neo-Lamarckian evolutionary theory which postulates that evolution within an individual is possible and transpires as a result of environmental influence reigns supreme.

Having established what suggested cognitive frame upon ontogenetic evolution the storyworld yields, I now move to determine whether this frame is held by the character narrator.

¹⁶³ "Tuberculosis in Mammoth Cave," National Park Service.gov, Accessed February 4, 2024, <https://www.nps.gov/articles/tuberculosis-mammoth-cave.htm>.

¹⁶⁴ "Tuberculosis in Mammoth Cave," National Park Service.gov, Accessed February 4, 2024, <https://www.nps.gov/articles/tuberculosis-mammoth-cave.htm>.

¹⁶⁵ Lovecraft, "The Beast," 1.

¹⁶⁶ "Timeline," National Park Service.gov, Accessed February 4, 2024, <https://www.nps.gov/macal/learn/historyculture/timeline.htm>.

The affirmative is demonstrably the case. From the outset, the protagonist presents himself as a learned man, having lived “a life of philosophical study.”¹⁶⁷ This is of course a character type quite common for Lovecraft’s oeuvre – the dilettante who is well versed in either the scientific or cultural issues of their time, devoting much of their leisure to the pursuit of this knowledge. The specific nature of the protagonist’s knowledge can be glimpsed at when he and the tour guide shine light upon the cave dwelling beasts body. Whilst describing the creature’s physical form and hinting at possible explanations for it, he manifests a quintessentially neo-Lamarckian perspective. The cognitive frame suggested by the storyworld indeed seems to be one held by the character narrator whose point of view is the focus of this analysis.

With the cognitive frame held by the interpreter firmly established, I now move to step three of my method: the identification of the supernatural as violation of this frame and as experience of this violation. The phenomenon which shall be analyzed for violation and invocation of experience is once again ontogenetic evolution present in the cave dwelling beast. However, before I delve into the specific manner in which this phenomenon interacts with the character narrator’s cognitive frame and what sort of experience this interaction invokes, allow me to examine the tenets of neo-Lamarckism in more detail so that. The central thesis of neo-Lamarckism posits that “acceleration and retardation determine[d] the course of evolution.”¹⁶⁸ As Edward Pfeifer notes, this view was independently promulgated by a number of American neo-Lamarckians, the two most prominent ones being the paleontologists Alpheus Hyatt¹⁶⁹ and Edward

¹⁶⁷ Lovecraft, “The Beast,” 1.

¹⁶⁸ Edward Drinker Cope, *The Primary Factors of Organic Evolution* (London: Open Court, 1896), 8.

¹⁶⁹ Edward J. Pfeifer, “The Genesis of American Neo-Lamarckism,” *Isis* 56, no. 2 (1965): 156, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/227911>.

Drinker Cope.¹⁷⁰ In more concrete terms, this mechanism entails that over the course of its life, an organism is capable of producing what Cope called “growth force.”¹⁷¹

The purposeful distribution of this growth force by the organism within its body in response to environmental demands is responsible for physical change in said organism – “[b]y using a particular member [however] the animal might concentrate the force therein, with division of cells the result. This part of the animal would then become enlarged, though another might be stunted,”¹⁷² which echoes Lamarck’s law of use and disuse.¹⁷³ The changes acquired in this manner are then passed onto the offspring¹⁷⁴ – again an echo of Lamarck’s law of inheritance of acquired characteristics. Incorrectly citing the transformation of the larval stage of the axolotl newt into an adult as proof of the possibility of this abrupt physical change of genus within individual in response to environmental pressures, the neo-Lamarckians venture to project an entire host of explanations for the diversity in the animal, plant, and fungal kingdoms. These range from Alpheus S. Packard Jr.’s hypothesis that “creatures living in caves became blind through disuse of their eyes and then produced blind offspring”¹⁷⁵ to Cope’s notion that “environment governed animal movement, which led in turn to structural modification.”¹⁷⁶

I would be amiss not to notice the striking similarity between Packard’s and Cope’s theories and the concrete nature of the physical oddities found in the creature in the story. Indeed, it is evident that these precise nineteenth-century scientific perspectives as held by the character narrator are employed in the explanation of the creature’s form. The list of physical

¹⁷⁰ Pfeifer, “The Genesis,” 157.

¹⁷¹ Edward Drinker Cope, *The Origin of the Fittest* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1887), 17-18.

¹⁷² Pfeifer, “The Genesis,” 160.

¹⁷³ Jean Baptiste Pierre Antoine de Monet de Lamarck, *Zoological Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Eliott (London: Macmillan and Co., 1914), 93, 210.

¹⁷⁴ Pfeifer, “The Genesis,” 160.

¹⁷⁵ Pfeifer, “The Genesis,” 159.

¹⁷⁶ Pfeifer, “The Genesis,” 159.

transformations as they are mentioned in the text are attributed to its long life in the cave. The inclination of the creature's front limbs is the product of its stygian life of locomotive deprivation,¹⁷⁷ applying Cope's theory almost verbatim. The state of its eyes is explained in an identical manner: "[l]ike those of other cave denizens, they were deeply sunken in their orbits, and were entirely destitute of iris."¹⁷⁸ The narrator's comparison of the creature's eyes to other cave dwellers' clearly implies that they must have undergone a transformation in order to adapt to its new, lightless environment. The rest of its physical characteristics which the narrator notes are explained away in the same neo-Lamarckian vein. The supernatural as violation is absent. The experience thereof is absent as well: the fear the protagonist feels has to do with a wild animal which is hunting him down, not with a phenomenon which eludes the grasp of science.¹⁷⁹ Rabkin's internalist model thus fully accounts for the absence of the supernatural as presence of violation and as experience thereof (the presence of a violation of an intratextual standard of natural laws). With regards to the externalist camp, we need only to refer back to Attebery's failure to explain the use of the science megatext even when the external standard is violated – he simply does not venture to elucidate and neither do the rest of the externalists.

I now move onto step four of my method, that is, the identification of phenomena which are naturalized and supernaturalized. Up to this point in the story, at which the protagonist still thinks the creature to be an animal unfortunately lost in the cave, the Rabkin's perspective and the concept of cognitive frame accounts for the lack of presence of the supernatural as presence of violation. The ground rules by which the creature's visage is to abide by are those of neo-Lamarckism. The protagonist applies this perspective, producing an explanation that is firmly

¹⁷⁷ Lovecraft, "The Beast," 5.

¹⁷⁸ Lovecraft, "The Beast," 5.

¹⁷⁹ Lovecraft, "The Beast," 3-4.

within the limits of these ground rules. The textual signals which are associated with the experience of the supernatural are in turn absent – there are no mentions of wonder or awe apart from the brief shock at the first sight of the beast and the appeals are to the megatext of biology, not to magic. Nevertheless, the independence which I have alluded to manifests in the very last sentences of the story:

Then fear left, and wonder, awe, compassion, and reverence succeeded in its place, for the sounds uttered by the stricken figure that lay stretched out on the limestone had told us the awesome truth. The creature I had killed, the strange beast of the unfathomed cave was, or had at one time been, a MAN!!!¹⁸⁰

In the moment that the beast produces speech and is thus revealed to once having been a man who has succumbed to the terrible process of neo-Lamarckian evolution, awe, wonder and reverence are produced, clear textual markers of the supernatural experience as agreed upon by Attebery, Rabkin, Todorov and others who have adopted their ideas about the textual signals of the fantastic. The astonishment (or awe), a core emotion produced by the fantastic as the reviewed literature would seem to imply, is present only in this final section of the story. Feeling of awe is produced and the truth itself is qualified as awesome.

Based on the literature reviewed, one is inclined to reach the conclusion that this awe and wonder, tied explicitly to the creature, is the product of a supernatural violation of the standard. Yet, as has been established, this violation is not present in the text. What makes it so that the fantastic as experience is produced even though the fantastic as violation is lacking in the text? The current approaches do not seem to provide an answer.

¹⁸⁰ Lovecraft, “The Beast,” 5.

1.1. Chapter Conclusion

In conclusion, it is evident based on the material reviewed that the supernatural is a restricted sub-category of the fantastic mode and that it can be conceptualized as presenting the violation of some (internal or external) standard of natural law and the experience thereof. The violation itself seems to be marked by its contrast to the standard of natural law. The fact that this violation has occurred is on the other hand signaled by specific interpretative strategies by the personae within the text. These include awe, fear and appeals to myth. The current consensus suggests that it is the presence of violation which is causally linked to the experience of this violation. Furthermore, it is exclusively concerned with the reader as the interpreting entity, with character reactions serving merely as pointers for the reader and not evidence of the supernatural in its own right.

As I have demonstrated on the case of “The Beast in The Cave,” when considering the point of view of the dramatis personae, the presence and the experience manifest independently: the presence of experience may manifest without the violation, making it seem the interpreters witness a violation. Due to the fact then that the presence of the violation of the standard does not necessarily lead to the presence of the textual cues which would signal the emotional or cognitive experience of the supernatural and vice versa, I am forced to conclude that the presence of the violation of the standard and the experience which it invokes are mutually independent phenomena governed not by causality.

Chapter Two: The Weird Mode, its Core Features, and their Historical Development

In the first chapter, I have conducted the review of critical approaches concerned with fantastic literature, delimited a gap concerning textual aspects which these approaches uniformly fail to consider and finally demonstrated this gap on the short story “The Beast in the Cave” by H. P. Lovecraft. In this chapter, I outline the implications the independence of the experience and presence put forward by the supernatural mode which are posited for the mode’s role in weird fiction. To that end, I provide the necessary theoretical background relating to the canon of weird literature under which “The Beast” is subsumed, a form of literature which is agreed by contemporary criticism to be predominantly narrated in the so-called weird mode. I approach this theory overview from two vantage points: the essentialist, and the literary historical. In the former, I consider the consensus on the qualitative features which are inherent to weird texts as a monolith, while in the latter, I examine through which phases the weird mode and its qualitative makeup have developed since its inception.

A robust discussion of the features essential to the mode and specific to its various developmental stages enables me to consider whether the presence of the two processes of naturalization and supernaturalization – that is, the natural as presence invoking the supernatural as experience in the interpreter and vice versa – is inherent to the canon mode as a whole or tied to one specific phase in its development. Furthermore, it shall allow me to make the case for interpreting the canon as hybrid body of texts employing the weird and the supernatural modes concurrently, which is contrastive to the direction of contemporary criticism, where the role of the supernatural in the weird canon is understated.

For the essentialist vantage point, I identify three core features which distinguish the Weird from supernatural fiction: the dichotomy of the known and the unknown, the formal novelty of the unknown and the mental impact of the unknown. To discuss the dichotomy, I rely mainly on the late political and cultural theorist and writer Mark Fisher as well as the New Weird writer and literary critic China Miéville. I supplement these by insights from John Clute, S. T. Joshi, Carl Freedman, and Carl Sederholm. The formal novelty of weird phenomena is discussed using China Miéville and Robert O'Connor, proponents of the centrality of the tentacle motif in the weird, as well as Emily Alder. The mental impact is discussed utilizing Donald Burleson, Carl Sederholm, Robert O'Connor, and Eugene Thacker, with specific focus being placed upon the overlap and distinction between the experience of the supernatural and the weird.

Other contrasting and shared facets of the weird and the supernatural are considered as well, using insight from Fisher, the concept on the paranormal mode as represented by Nancy H. Traill, the analysis of the development of Lovecraft's representations of otherness by Massimo Berrutti and the discussion of Lovecraft's artificial mythology by Robert M. Price. Overall, Lovecraft's essay *Supernatural Horror in Literature* is used to frame the section, as it is a seminal work mapping the mode's history as well as influencing the mode's entire post-1920s development and as such, it discusses the features which have since been identified as staple of the mode. As for the literary historical treatment of the mode, I rely chiefly on the influential discussion article "Introduction: Old and New Weird" by Benjamin Noys and Timothy S. Murphy. In terms of scope, American and English examples are considered. With the programme of chapter two outlined, let us begin the exploration of the fascinating world of the weird.

2.1. The Essentialist Perspective: Core Features of the Weird

Like the fantastic, the weird is a rather slippery concept. Since the early 2010s,¹⁸¹ there exists an extensive debate upon its classification as either a genre or a mode,¹⁸² as well as upon the qualitative features which would be present uniformly across all its representatives. Indeed, the sheer versatility of the term saw Jeff and Ann Vandermeer to apply it in authors as distinct from one another as the Franz Kafka, the fantasy pioneer Lord Dunsany, and magical realists such as Joyce Carol Oates or Haruki Murakami in their now classic anthology *The Weird: A Compendium of Strange and Dark Stories* (2011).

Though slippery it may be, given that it is only the supernatural in relation to the character which forms the scope of this study, the identification of the mode's core features which pertain directly to this scope is quite manageable. In the following theoretical overview, I isolate three chief characteristics related to the supernatural from the character point of view which are present uniformly across the weird mode. In concrete terms, they consist of the dichotomy of the known and the unknown, the aspect of novelty this unknown possesses with respect to the motifs used in the precursors to the weird, that is gothic fiction, and the mental effect this unknown has upon the interpreter. It is a great fortune that none other than H. P. Lovecraft himself has touched upon these three features in *Supernatural Horror in Literature* already in 1927. Quite succinct, his conceptualization of the weird tale shall form the structure of this subsection:

The true weird tale has something more than secret murder, bloody bones, or a sheeted form clanking chains according to rule. A certain atmosphere of breathless and unexplainable dread of

¹⁸¹ M. John Harrison, "New Weird Discussions: The Creation of a Term," in *The New Weird*, eds. Ann and Jeff VanderMeer (San Francisco, CA: Tachyon Press, 2008), 317.

¹⁸² Roger Luckhurst, "The weird: a dis/orientation," *Textual Practice* 31, no. 6 (2017): 1045, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0950236X.2017.1358690>; Nick Freeman, "Weird realism," *Textual Practice* 31, no. 6 (2017): 1119, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0950236X.2017.1358691>; Mark Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie* (London: Repeater Books, 2016), 9.

outer, unknown forces must be present; and there must be a hint, expressed with a seriousness and portentousness becoming its subject, of that most terrible conception of the human brain—a malign and particular suspension or defeat of those fixed laws of Nature which are our only safeguard against the assaults of chaos and the daemons of unplumbed space.¹⁸³

Let us consider the first feature Lovecraft presents – the so-called “unknown forces”¹⁸⁴ seeping in from the “unplumbed space”¹⁸⁵ that assault and violate “fixed laws of nature”¹⁸⁶ – and develop it further with views from contemporary criticism. As is evident from his definition, Lovecraft takes the intrusion of a phenomenon which is incompatible with the human understanding of the laws of nature a central feature of the kind of tale he champions. Nowhere in his essays does he mention whether these “fixed laws of Nature”¹⁸⁷ are of the actual world or the storyworld. What he does affirm however, is that the phenomenon must violate these laws in the eyes of the interpreter, as these laws are explicitly said to be used by such interpreter as a “safeguard.”¹⁸⁸ Consequently, one may thus conclude that whether these laws are of the actual world or the storyworld notwithstanding, it is actually the understanding of these laws by the interpreter which is violated by his ominous “chaos and daemons.”¹⁸⁹ As such, Lovecraft seems to retroactively echo what Rabkin calls a perspective and what later becomes the concept of a cognitive frame and forms one of the central blocks of the school of Unnatural Narratology.

Lovecraft’s – and by extension the weird – characters (and presumably the readers, although that is beyond the scope of this study) thus have their “understandings of time, space, and

¹⁸³ H. P. Lovecraft, *Supernatural Horror in Literature: a Pulp-Lit Annotated Edition*, ed. Finn J.D. John. Corvallis (Oregon: Pulp-Lit Productions, 2016), 4-5.

¹⁸⁴ Lovecraft, *Supernatural Horror*, 4.

¹⁸⁵ Lovecraft, *Supernatural Horror*, 5.

¹⁸⁶ Lovecraft, *Supernatural Horror*, 5.

¹⁸⁷ Lovecraft, *Supernatural Horror*, 5.

¹⁸⁸ Lovecraft, *Supernatural Horror*, 5.

¹⁸⁹ Lovecraft, *Supernatural Horror*, 5.

other human beings”¹⁹⁰ tested by an onslaught of that dark seepage of the unknown and yet unplumbed. Such a transgression of the yet unexplored and subversive unto our notions regarding the world has since the publication of Lovecraft’s essay become a staple feature of these texts. John Clute, the prominent Canadian critic of fantasy literature, defines the weird as a term “used loosely to describe fantasy, supernatural fiction and horror tales embodying transgressive material.”¹⁹¹ Carl Freedman speaks of the “inflationary tendency”¹⁹² of these texts to paint “reality to be richer, larger, stranger, more complex, more surprising—and indeed, ‘weirder’—than common sense would suppose,”¹⁹³ a sentiment shared by S. T. Joshi, who notes the capacity of the weird for “refashioning of the reader’s view of the world.”¹⁹⁴ Similar is the case with China Miéville, the critic and author of the *Bas-Lag* trilogy, who sees the core feature of the weird in “awe, and its undermining of the quotidian.”¹⁹⁵

In structural terms, the process of this onslaught has been treated Mark Fisher, who applies the dichotomous model of the real externality¹⁹⁶ (a term adopted from Lovecraft¹⁹⁷) to describe it. Fisher sees the weird event essentially as the moment of contact of two structures of knowledge, one embedded in the other and at the same time unaware of it. Here I do need to note that Fisher does not actually explicitly characterize these structures as embedded in one another. Nevertheless, his conception requires embedding as a structural necessity, as shall become clear shortly.

¹⁹⁰ Jan Alber, “Unnatural Narratology: The Systematic Study of Anti-Mimeticism,” *Literature Compass* 10, no. 4 (2013): 449, <https://doi.org/10.1111/lic3.12065>.

¹⁹¹ John Clute, “Weird Fiction,” in *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*, eds. John Clute and John Grant (United Kingdom: Orbit Books, 1997), 1000.

¹⁹² Carl Freedman, “From Genre to Political Economy: Miéville’s *The City & The City* and Uneven Development,” *CR: The New Centennial Review* 13, no. 2 (2013): 14, <https://doi.org/10.14321/cnewcentrevi.13.2.0013>.

¹⁹³ Carl Freedman, “From Genre to Political Economy: Miéville’s *The City & The City* and Uneven Development,” *CR: The New Centennial Review* 13, no. 2 (2013): 14, <https://doi.org/10.14321/cnewcentrevi.13.2.0013>.

¹⁹⁴ S. T. Joshi, *The Weird Tale* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 118.

¹⁹⁵ China Miéville, “Weird Fiction,” in *The Routledge companion to science fiction*, eds. Mark Bould, Andrew M. Butler, Adam Roberts, and Sherryl Vint (London: Routledge, 2009), 510.

¹⁹⁶ Fisher, *The Weird and The Eerie*, 12.

¹⁹⁷ H. P. Lovecraft, S. T. Joshi, and David E. Schultz, “Letters to Farnsworth Wright,” *Lovecraft Annual*, no. 8 (2014): 7.

Furthermore, he does not provide any terminology these interacting structures. Taking the liberty to do so in his stead, I dub the embedded structure the Real and the subsuming structure in which the Real resides the Super-Real, with the Super-Real corresponding to the “real externality.”

In Fisher’s view then, the interpreter possesses the knowledge structure of the Real, which can be rephrased as the cognitive frame encompassing the natural law of their particular world. Crucially, this cognitive frame includes both phenomena that are possible as well as those which are not possible, which is clearly evident from Alber’s definition: the understanding of “of time, space, and other human beings”¹⁹⁸ entails what these objects are constituted by, from which necessarily follows what they are not constituted by and what is thus in violation of the cognitive frame. According to Fisher, whenever there is presented to the interpreter’s cognitive frame a phenomenon which does not invert the frame, but eludes the categories the cognitive frame consists of, then one may speak of the weird.¹⁹⁹ Very simply, what the interpreter sees should “not exist here,”²⁰⁰ yet it does and thus “the categories which we have up until now used to make sense of the world cannot be valid,”²⁰¹ which may according to Carl Sederholm lead permanent alterations of the “notions of self and the world.”²⁰² This is then what I dub the Super-Real: a phenomenon as of yet unencountered by the interpreter, inexplicable by the present state of their cognitive frame, yet nonetheless ontologically natural and thus demanding the demanding the alteration of said cognitive frame. A clear demonstration can be achieved by the following diagram:

¹⁹⁸Alber, “Anti-Mimeticism,” 1.

¹⁹⁹ Mark Fisher, *The Weird and The Eerie*, 12.

²⁰⁰ Mark Fisher, *The Weird and The Eerie*, 12.

²⁰¹ Mark Fisher, *The Weird and The Eerie*, 12.

²⁰² Carl Sederholm, “What Screams Are Made Of: Representing Cosmic Fear in H.P. Lovecraft’s ‘Pickman’s Model,’” in *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* 16, no. 4 (64) (2006): 336.

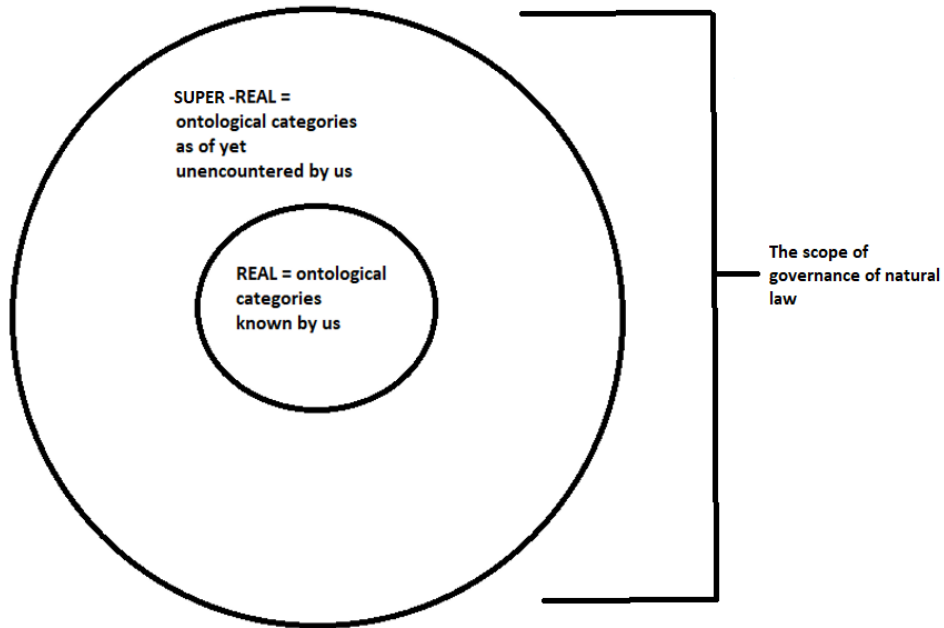


Figure 4 – A Visualization of Fisher’s Unary Ontological Frame as Employed in the Weird

Crucially, for Fisher, this structure assumes one all-encompassing standard of natural law.²⁰³ Both the Real and the Super-Real are subject to this natural law, both are constituents of the same ontology. Here comes the structural necessity of embedding I have alluded to. The distinction between the Real and the Super-Real phenomenon does not lie in the ontological status of the Real and the Super-Real, it lies in the scope of the interpreter’s knowledge over this overarching ontology. They possess a categorial framework (the cognitive frame) to describe and analyze various phenomena as natural (a constituent of natural ontology) within the bounds of the Real that is embedded in the Super-Real. Conversely, in the case of the Super-Real, they have yet to develop these categories for such judgements to be made – shall an expansion of the ontological categories known to us be made, or shall the Super-real phenomenon be expunged into the realm beyond natural law, into the supernatural Beyond the embedded ontology of the Real and Super-

²⁰³ Mark Fisher, *The Weird and The Eerie*, 12.

Real, Fisher sees the separate ontology of the supernatural. This essentially means that there is not an equivalence between the supernatural and the weird in Fisher's view,²⁰⁴ for the supernatural is the known already categorized as impossible, that is, a constituent of separate ontology, while the weird is an entirely new, yet unexplored phenomenon waiting to be categorized. He outlines this distinction in the following comparison:

Certainly, when it comes to fiction, the very generic recognizability of creatures such as vampires and werewolves disqualifies them from provoking any sensation of weirdness. There is a pre-existing lore, a set of protocols for interpreting and placing the vampire and the werewolf. In any case, these creatures are merely empirically monstrous; their appearance recombines elements from the natural world as we already understand it. At the same time, the *very fact that they are supernatural entities means that any strangeness they possess is now attributed to a realm beyond nature*. Compare this to a black hole: the bizarre ways in which it bends space and time are completely outside our common experience, and *yet a black hole belongs to the natural-material cosmos* — a cosmos which must therefore be much stranger than our ordinary experience can comprehend.²⁰⁵ (emphasis added)

While I do agree with this separation of the two, I must stress that the example he presents somewhat clouds it, as a black hole is an already established phenomenon firmly set in the sphere of the natural, or the Real and thus is not an optimal candidate for the categorial novelty the weird is supposed to be distinguished by. Furthermore, with regards to the supernatural specifically, it will become clear in the case studies of chapter three that the categorial novelty is not a determiner of an object being interpreted as weird (i.e. categorially new and beyond the scope of common

²⁰⁴ Mark Fisher, *The Weird and The Eerie*, 12.

²⁰⁵ Mark Fisher, *The Weird and The Eerie*, 12.

experience)²⁰⁶ and that even in a story which features these novel phenomena hailing from the Extra-Real, these features may and indeed are interpreted by the character's as either natural or supernatural at some point – that is, they are interpreted through the framework of the Real, either the language of myth or science. In summation then, weird phenomena seem to exist beyond the scope of our cognitive frame of natural law, but unlike the supernatural, they are part of the same natural ontology as that which lies in the scope of our cognitive frame. As such, they actively threaten to enter and alter this frame. This qualitatively distinguishes them from supernatural phenomena, which do not pose such a threat, as they are inert with respect to it.

I now move on the second feature of the weird Lovecraft touches upon in his quote, that of the categorial novelty of the unknown, and subsequently to what this novelty achieves. Lovecraft aptly notes that his kind of tale requires a source of dread different than “secret murder, bloody bones, or a sheeted form clanking chains according to rule,”²⁰⁷ demanding an “unexplainable dread of outer, unknown forces”²⁰⁸ instead. As is apparent, this unexplainable, unknown quality Lovecraft desires has already been somewhat covered by Fisher's model of the Real and the Super-Real. A weird tale must shun the pre-existing categories of monsters²⁰⁹ and inexplicable events in favor of ones which are unprecedented and resist labeling by conventional categorial frameworks. Miéville calls this quality of unprecedentedness the *abcanny*, claiming that “[t]he monsters of the *abcanny* are teratological expressions of that unrepresentable and unknowable, the evasive of meaning,”²¹⁰ that possess “shapes that ostentatiously evade symbolic decoding by being all shapes

²⁰⁶ Mark Fisher, *The Weird and The Eerie*, 13.

²⁰⁷ Lovecraft, *Supernatural Horror*, 4.

²⁰⁸ Lovecraft, *Supernatural Horror*, 4.

²⁰⁹ Here the term monster refers to the established concept championed by Noël Carroll in his monograph *The Philosophy of Horror, or Paradoxes of the Heart*. Details of this concept are not to be delved into, as they are irrelevant to the scope of this study.

²¹⁰ China Miéville, “On Monsters: Or, Nine or More (Monstrous) Not Cannies,” *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* 23, No. 3 (86) (2012): 381.

and no shapes.”²¹¹ Such are the monsters of the weird, the bloated, grub-like Great Old Ones of Lovecraft’s *At The Mountains of Madness*, the terrible winged crustacean behemoth Byatis of Ramsey Campbell’s “The Room in the Castle” or the formless undulating Shub-Niggurath, a beast coined by Lovecraft and now part of many post-Lovecraftian tale. A central part of this particular kind of monstrous unknown is the tentacle, a type of limb non-extant in European folklore²¹² and thus an ideal candidate for the neo-categorial unprecedentedness the weird tale is signified by.

Crucially, the categorial novelty of this sort of unknown seems to be employed to achieve a kind of pure defamiliarization, or alienation of the phenomenon’s interpreter from the world they inhabit. As Emily Alder writes in *Weird Fiction and Science at the Fin-de-Siècle* (2020), this enables the interpreter of such weird phenomena to acquire “radical new forms of knowledge—ecological, philosophical, and spiritual, for example—and model new sets of relations between selves and others,”²¹³ and to use these new forms of knowledge, this new expanded cognitive frame to “imagine the world differently.”²¹⁴ This starkly differs from the traditional concept of the uncanny phenomenon²¹⁵, whose impact Robert O’Connor, echoing Freud, describes as sensation created by the acknowledgement “that the object is simultaneously familiar, yet unfamiliar.”²¹⁶ The uncanny phenomenon by contrast “revels in the fact that it exists outside of our comprehension, either through being indescribable – completely uncategorisable in its construction – or explicit, violent rejection and repulsion,”²¹⁷ with the outside of the

²¹¹ China Miéville, “On Monsters: Or, Nine or More (Monstrous) Not Cannies,” *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* 23, No. 3 (86) (2012): 381.

²¹² China Miéville, “Weird Fiction,” 512.

²¹³ Emily Alder, *Weird Fiction and Science in the Fin de Siècle* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 3.

²¹⁴ Alder, *Weird Fiction and Science at the Fin-de-Siècle*, 32.

²¹⁵ Here the term uncanny does not refer to Todorov’s specific genre of literature, but rather to the psychoanalytic concept introduced by Freud in his essay “The Uncanny” (1919). Needless to say of course, Todorov’s generic uncanny is reliant on Freud’s concept, which it uses as a central building block.

²¹⁶ Robert O’Connor, “A Tentacular Teratology: The Uncanny Monstrous,” *Fantastika Journal* 6, no. 1 (2022): 58.

²¹⁷ Robert O’Connor, “A Tentacular Teratology: The Uncanny Monstrous,” *Fantastika Journal* 6, no. 1 (2022): 58.

comprehension being Fisher's Super-Real: not yet supernatural, not yet the Real, but waiting for categorization and at the same time resisting it.

To summarize, weird narratives seem to utilize phenomena which are categorially unprecedented to the paradigms of western folklore, but which are still under the same ontological umbrella as natural phenomena within the cognitive frame of natural law. Epitomized in the tentacle, such phenomena transgress upon the established cognitive frame and thus challenge the interpreter's understanding of natural law, a process often accompanied by rejection, revulsion, and maddening fear on the interpreter's end.

The mentions of the collapse of language, violent rejection and repulsion bring me to the mental impact the weird phenomenon is to have upon the experiencer. Lovecraft defines this particular impact as the "atmosphere of breathless and unexplainable dread,"²¹⁸ explaining that at the heart of any weird tale is "the fear of the unknown."²¹⁹ Designating this specific type of fear the "cosmic fear,"²²⁰ Lovecraft then continues to elucidate that a narrative in which "the horrors are finally explained away by natural means, is not a genuine tale of cosmic fear."²²¹ Novel and up to that point unencountered, uncategorized phenomena that hail from beyond our human cognitive frames then according to Lovecraft provoke a response of fright in the interpreter. Richard Burleson specifies this particular fright as having a "psychically ruinous"²²² effect on the interpreter's mind, a motif quite amply used in Lovecraft's oeuvre which is rife with characters being reduced to babbling idiots upon encountering something from beyond.

²¹⁸ Lovecraft, *Supernatural Horror*, 4.

²¹⁹ Lovecraft, *Supernatural Horror*, 1.

²²⁰ Lovecraft, *Supernatural Horror*, 1.
Lovecraft, *Supernatural Horror*, 5.

²²² Donald Richard Burleson, "On Lovecraft's Themes: Touching the Glass," in *An Epicure in the Terrible: A Centennial Anthology of Essays in Honor of H.P. Lovecraft*, eds. David E. Schultz and S. T. Joshi (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1991), 137.

Eugene Thacker aptly comments upon this particular sort of impact in his interpretation of Lovecraft's *At the Mountains of Madness* (1936). Over the course of the novel's plot, an expedition to the Antarctic reveals the massive, black ruins of a "cyclopean city, whose very existence throws human archaeological, geological, and biological knowledge into abeyance."²²³ The cognitive frame of the characters, or the present framework they employ to make sense of the world around them, is forced to explain something it does not possess the tools for. The city, nestled beyond the dark Antarctic peaks, poses an enigma to the understanding of natural law the characters have. So alien, so unprecedented it is that "senses are rendered absurd, language begins to falter, and thought becomes strangely equivalent to silence."²²⁴ Once again one sees the doom that springs from the character's cognitive frame being faced with something it cannot possibly account for, yet being forced to try nonetheless and consequently collapsing. Indeed, the weird phenomenon remains resistant to any attempts to categorize it, to incorporate it to our cognitive frame, and when such attempts persist, madness seems to ensue.

Importantly, this reason corroding fear seems to be but one of the possible responses a weird phenomenon might entice. As Miéville proposes, it is "awe, and it's undermining of the quotidian"²²⁵ which signifies the weird tale, even going as far as to locate the specific experience of awe in the numinous, a state of astonishment attributed by the German theologian and philosopher Rudolf Otto to one's realization of having encountered a supreme being.²²⁶ One is thus forced to conclude that the variety of possible responses to a contact with a weird phenomenon are as diverse as that of the supernatural. Profound, maddening fear may be the result, yet so can be the state of awe analogous to a religious experience. This multitude echoes the range of

²²³ Eugene Thacker, *Tentacles Longer Than Night: Horror of Philosophy* (UK: Zero Books, 2015), 111.

²²⁴ Thacker, *Tentacles*, 112.

²²⁵ China Miéville, "Weird Fiction," 510.

²²⁶ Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958), 12.

responses which constitute what I call the supernatural as experience, which too can consist of fear (Todorov), wonder and awe (Todorov, Attebery) or the broader feeling of estrangement tied to the presence of something that by accepted natural law should not be there (Alber, Richardson).

Nevertheless, it is evident that though there seems to be an overlap, it is not a complete one, as the specific response of revulsion, rejection as well as the madness would seem to be exclusive to the weird. To summarize, weird phenomena seem to produce a variety of reactions in the interpreter. These reactions range from fear to astonishment and as such, they show a partial overlap with the reactions the fantastic and related category of the supernatural are observed to provoke.

In a tentative conclusion, the weird mode seems to be signified by employing antagonist phenomena which are of the same ontological category as phenomena within the scope of one's cognitive frame of natural law. As such, they challenge this cognitive frame, demanding its expansion. Secondly, these phenomena assume a number of forms unprecedented in western folklore, with the motif of the tentacle being the overarching formal tendency. Thirdly, they seem to provoke a range of responses which partially overlap with what the fantastic and the related supernatural provoke, that is, fear and astonishment which fall under the more general estrangement. Additionally, they seem to provoke unique responses of collapse of cognition, madness, rejection and revulsion.

2.1.1 The Weird Interpreted from the Standpoint of the Supernatural

As it would seem so far, weird mode utilizes phenomena that are distinct from the ones employed in the narratives of the supernatural in their ontological status (which is shared with natural phenomena), the form they take and the reactions they invoke. Does this imply that the supernatural mode as such, presenting either the violation or the experience, is a category of no place in weird fiction? As I have put forward in chapter one, the supernatural violation and its

experience are independent concepts provided that the point of view of the character is considered. This specifically entails that a violation of a character's understanding of natural law does not causally lead to the experience of the supernatural. In this section, I expand this property of independence to weird fiction, demonstrating that a violating phenomenon may variably invoke the experience of the supernatural or the weird. Doing so, I illustrate that it is not the phenomenon itself, but the interpreter's reaction to such a phenomenon which differentiates the weird mode from the supernatural one.

Let us first compare the concepts of the supernatural and the weird as a presence of violation of one's understanding of natural law, paying specific attention to the point of view of the character. Structurally, both are beyond of the interpreter's cognitive frame of what constitutes natural law, or the Real. It is to be noted that the supernatural constitutes an accepted reversal of this frame, whereas the weird constitutes a novelty the frame is forced to attempt to incorporate. Be that as it may however, both the supernatural and the weird are still signified as phenomena that cannot be supported by the frame, that is, phenomena which go against what the cognitive frame encodes as possible according to natural law. The phenomenon's ontological status is immaterial - whether it operates according to natural law or not, it still exists beyond the scope of the understanding of this law as possessed by the interpreter. The weird challenges the cognitive frame, wishes to be admitted into it and as such, demands its alteration.²²⁷ The supernatural, on the other hand, is inert with respect to the frame, that is, it is comfortable in its status of an impossibility that violates the cognitive frame while at the same time not pushing for its alteration. The respective challenge and inertia, and by extension the judgement on the phenomenon's ontological status, are however not inherent to the phenomenon, they are derived from the character who

²²⁷ Sederholm, "Screams," 336.

observes it. The phenomena themselves are identical – they both exist beyond the confounds of the interpreter’s cognitive frame.

One is then forced to conclude that the weird and the supernatural as violation operate in an identical manner, as they are in essence both phenomena whose existence cannot be accounted for by the current state of knowledge of natural law of the interpreter, that is, their cognitive frame. From this follows that the weird and the supernatural as presence of violation are not to be structurally distinguished, as they operate in an identical manner in that regard: as a presence of violation of the interpreter’s cognitive frame. Where the distinction does seem to lie however, is in the manner these two types of phenomena manifest as experience. As I have outlined, the Weird, an ultimately natural phenomenon, challenges and desires to be let into the interpreter’s cognitive frame, which demonstrably tends to bring about certain forms of experiences – collapse of scientific comprehension,²²⁸ revulsion,²²⁹ rejection,²³⁰ awe, or madness-inducing fear.²³¹ On the other hand, the fantastic and the related supernatural is comfortable as a phenomenon beyond the cognitive frame and the natural ontology, and as such is said to invoke fear and awe as well.

Again, these experiences are crucially product of the interpreter, which in the case of this study is the character of the narrative. Like the supernatural as experience, they are not signified by the violating status of the phenomenon itself, but on the cognitive strategies and emotions invoked in the character towards its explanation and categorization. As such, they are separate from and arguably independent from the phenomenon which demonstrably violates the cognitive frame of the interpreter. As I have argued, these strategies and emotions, though showing overlap, are nonetheless the criterion which would seem to distinguish the weird from the supernatural.

²²⁸ O’Connor, “A Tentacular Teratology,” 58.

²²⁹ O’Connor, “A Tentacular Teratology,” 58.

²³⁰ O’Connor, “A Tentacular Teratology,” 58.

²³¹ Burleson, “On Lovecraft’s Themes: Touching the Glass,” 137.

That is, collapse of comprehension,²³² revulsion,²³³ rejection,²³⁴ and madness-inducing fear²³⁵ seems to be exclusive to the weird. The partiality of the overlap the weird and the supernatural respectively invoke may be accounted for by the different ontological frameworks these two concepts hail from. I have already discussed the unary ontology of the Real and Super-Real which Mark Fisher alludes to, and I shall now develop it further.

Doing so, I intend to establish that the transgressive nature of weird phenomena which is signified by madness-inducing fright, the collapse of comprehension, rejection and revulsion are singularly dependent on the interpreter and not the weird (that is natural) or supernatural ontological status of the inexplicable phenomenon. The implication of this is that the transgression and specific experiential reaction is a process ascribed by the interpreter to the phenomenon, and not its inherent quality. This suggests that the weird and the supernatural can be inspired by one and the same phenomenon which only needs to violate the interpreter's cognitive frame.

Let us firstly briefly introduce Traill's critical approach. A firm member of the externalist camp as I have defined it focusing on the reader's point of view, Traill writes that the latter part of the nineteenth century which saw a boom in development of natural sciences, "belief in the supernatural as a separate, superhuman territory was increasingly difficult to sustain."²³⁶ Consequently, the critical outlooks²³⁷ upon fantastic literature which categorize the phenomena as either complying with the actual world natural law (natural phenomena), violating it (supernatural phenomena) or being ambiguous (the Todorovian fantastic) are insufficient in accounting for the

²³² O'Connor, "A Tentacular Teratology," 58.

²³³ O'Connor, "A Tentacular Teratology," 58.

²³⁴ O'Connor, "A Tentacular Teratology," 58.

²³⁵ Burleson, "On Lovecraft's Themes: Touching the Glass," 137.

²³⁶ Traill, Nancy H. *Possible Worlds of the Fantastic: The Rise of the Paranormal in Literature* (Canada: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 34.

²³⁷ Here I refer to what I termed the externalist camp, that is, Attebery, Todorov, Jackson, Mendlesohn and Doležel, as well as the unnatural narratologists.

processes in the type of literature Traill considers. This is because in the texts she analyses (predominantly Turgenev and Maupassant), “the supernatural in its traditional, mythological sense and as practiced by spiritists”²³⁸ is abandoned, yet the phenomena which used to be experienced in this way by the characters in nineteenth-century gothic fiction and are now experienced from the vantage point of science are still in violation of the natural law as understood by the characters, that is, they are phenomena “that science cannot yet explain.”²³⁹

To tackle this pitfall, she employs Doležel’s framework of possible world semantics to construct five modes or which may at a given time govern the alethic status of a given storyworld, or what Doležel calls “global constraints.”²⁴⁰ Using Doležel’s conception of the alethic modality²⁴¹ as well as the distinction between modally homogenous and heterogenous worlds,²⁴² Traill frames the scope of her theory upon two kinds of such worlds: on the modally homogenous natural world, and the modally heterogenous world where the natural and supernatural domains coexist. The modally homogenous natural world, “has the same natural laws as does the actual world,”²⁴³ the supernatural worlds “violate the laws of the actual world”²⁴⁴ and the type of world in which these two domains coexist she dubs the fantastic world.²⁴⁵

She then introduces her four modes which according to her operate these two types of fictional worlds in a distinct manner. Her usage of the term mode is identical to the use of

²³⁸ Nancy H. Traill, “Fictional Worlds of the Fantastic,” *Style* 25, no. 2 (1991): 204. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42945902>.

²³⁹ Nancy H. Traill, “Fictional Worlds of the Fantastic,” *Style* 25, no. 2 (1991): 204. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42945902>.

²⁴⁰ Doležel, *Heterocosmica*, 113.

²⁴¹ Doležel, *Heterocosmica*, 32.

²⁴² Doležel, *Heterocosmica*, 128.

²⁴³ Raymond Bradley, and Norman Swartz, *Possible Worlds: An Introduction to Logic and Its Philosophy* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1979), 6.

²⁴⁴ Doležel, *Heterocosmica*, 34.

²⁴⁵ Nancy H. Traill, “Fictional Worlds of the Fantastic,” *Style* 25, no. 2 (1991): 199. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42945902>.

Rosemary Jackson, that is, it is a manner of presenting something²⁴⁶ and as such, it is “crossgeneric and transhistorical.”²⁴⁷ Let us now outline the chief characteristics of the individual modes and elucidate their applicability to the concept of weird fiction. In the authenticated mode, “two modally opposite domains, the natural and the supernatural”²⁴⁸ coexist in one world, both are authenticated²⁴⁹ and the “supernatural entities inhabit their own separate domain, but their exceptional powers allow them to enter and even exert influence in the natural domain.”²⁵⁰ This would correspond to Todorov’s genre of the fantastic-marvelous.

In the ambiguous mode, “the supernatural domain seems to be constructed in the fictional world, but the narrator (or protagonist-narrator) does not fully authenticate it,”²⁵¹ which leads to the hesitation of the reader.²⁵² This would correspond to the Todorovian fantastic, which is marked by the ambiguity persisting after narrative terminus.²⁵³ In the disauthenticated mode, the “supernatural domain is constructed, as in the authenticated mode, but ultimately disauthenticated and a natural causation assigned to the events.”²⁵⁴ This would correspond to Todorov’s fantastic-uncanny.

One may notice that so far, Traill’s typology is very much in the tradition of the externalist line of thought, as she herself says after all, “[t]he modes of the fantastic discussed so far—authenticated, ambiguous, and disauthenticated – all treat the supernatural as “otherworldly,” as distinct from the natural domain of the fictional world.”²⁵⁵ A shift which places her approach closer

²⁴⁶ Jackson, *Subversion*, 4.

²⁴⁷ Traill, “Fictional Worlds,” 199.

²⁴⁸ Traill, “Fictional Worlds,” 199.

²⁴⁹ Traill, “Fictional Worlds,” 199.

²⁵⁰ Traill, “Fictional Worlds,” 199.

²⁵¹ Traill, “Fictional Worlds,” 200.

²⁵² Traill, “Fictional Worlds,” 200.

²⁵³ Todorov, *A Structural Approach*, 44.

²⁵⁴ Traill, “Fictional Worlds,” 201.

²⁵⁵ Traill, “Fictional Worlds,” 202.

to the one of Mark Fisher and thus towards applicability for weird fiction is her fourth mode, the paranormal mode. In the paranormal mode, there transpires a “radical transformation of the alethic dichotomy of the fantastic.”²⁵⁶ The dual ontology of the supernatural and natural is replaced by a unary one, where the “supernatural lies concealed within the natural domain and is just as physically possible.”²⁵⁷ These paranormal phenomena like do not remain inert with respect to the natural domain like the supernatural does, but actively require its expansion.²⁵⁸ They are after all of the same ontological status as the natural, they are simply as of yet unencountered by the interpreter and thus do not comply with their understanding of this natural. This retroactively echoes Fisher’s model of the Super-Real and the embedded Real:

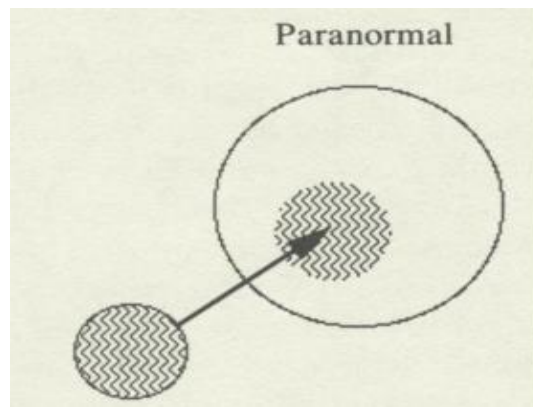


Figure 5 – Traill’s Illustration of the Paranormal Mode – Nancy H. Traill, “Fictional Worlds of the Fantastic,” *Style* 25, no. 2 (1991): 202. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42945902>.

More importantly, Traill’s conception presupposes that one phenomenon which seemingly violates the natural law,²⁵⁹ in other words what I call the supernatural as presence,²⁶⁰ may be interpreted both as

²⁵⁶ Traill, “Fictional Worlds,” 202.

²⁵⁷ Traill, “Fictional Worlds,” 202.

²⁵⁸ Traill, “Fictional Worlds,” 202.

²⁵⁹ Traill, “Fictional Worlds,” 202.

²⁶⁰ It need be duly noted that Traill of course considers only the actual world standard of natural law, but her model can be readily applied to the character point of view provided the standard is known.

paranormal – of the same ontology as the natural, or Fisher’s Real and requiring the expansion of this Real – and the supernatural – of a different ontology than the Real and remaining inert with respect to it. Traill proposes that the ability to interpret the phenomenon as paranormal is exclusive to “characters with exceptional perceptual capacities”²⁶¹ whose ability to access the domain of the unknown is “analogous to the microscope, which gives the scientist access to nature’s hidden microworld.”²⁶² This of course makes sense given the type of phenomena she considers: pyrokinesis, telekinesis and other abilities which are derived precisely from this exceptionality a character is endowed with. However, the propensity for a violating phenomenon to be interpreted as either natural and requiring alteration of the present understanding of natural law as consequence, or supernatural and remaining inert with respect to it, seems not exclusive to these internal phenomena Traill is preoccupied with.

According to Massimo Berrutti, Lovecraft’s oeuvre itself has undergone this precise transition from the natural contra supernatural world of dual ontology to the unary ontology of the Real and Super-Real²⁶³ which is tackled in Traill’s work. Focusing on Lovecraft’s treatment of otherness, Berrutti proposes that the violating phenomena are experienced through the subjective perception²⁶⁴ of the author’s characters, and that this perception transforms as Lovecraft’s writing develops chronologically. Consequently, Berrutti splits Lovecraft’s literary output into two macro-periods divided by the publication of “The Call of Cthulhu” (1928),²⁶⁵ noting that Lovecraft’s characters from the latter period abandon the dual ontology of the natural and the supernatural and adopt a unary ontological framework the likes of which Fisher and Traill discuss instead. This leads them “to consider the harbingers of

²⁶¹ Traill, “Fictional Worlds,” 202.

²⁶² Traill, “Fictional Worlds,” 202.

²⁶³ Massimo Berrutti, “Self, Other, and the Evolution of Lovecraft’s Treatment of Outsideness,” *Lovecraft Annual*, no. 3 (2009): 124.

²⁶⁴ Berrutti, “Self, Other,” 111.

²⁶⁵ Berrutti, “Self, Other,” 110.

outsideness no longer as supernatural deities, but as extraterrestrial beings, i.e., non-supernatural creatures, simply non-terrestrial ones.”²⁶⁶

And importantly, as Berrutti stresses, “it must be clear that what evolves is not outsideness in itself from the viewpoint of the forms and contents of its manifestation, but the perception of these forms and contents by the filtering subjectivity, whose evolution thus provokes an utter modification in the ways in which outsideness is made to signify.”²⁶⁷ He thus seems to affirm my claim that the violation as presence, remains stable in both periods. Conversely, it is the perception of this object, or the violation as experience, which undergoes a change from a dual to unary ontological view of the universe. This is in line with my argument that like the supernatural, the weird too must be conceptualized as a violation and its experience and that it is the form of this experience which distinguishes narratives of the supernatural from the weird, not the form of the violating phenomenon itself.

Vitaly, the shift from the experience of the supernatural to the experience of the weird is to be understood not in terms of displacement, but of addition. That is, the supernatural as experience remains an integral part of weird fiction even post “The Call of Cthulhu,” though its role is less pronounced. A prime example of this might be found in the worshippers of the so-called Old Ones in “The Call of Cthulhu” itself, where, according to Robert M. Price, “even characters who are most aware of the Old Ones cannot face the terrible human-minimizing implications of the existence of the overshadowing aliens and *take superstitious refuge in religion, deifying the Old Ones as gods who care about their human worshippers and will reward them*”²⁶⁸ (emphasis added). In this case, the Old Ones, a phenomenon which violates the cognitive frame of the worshippers, is experienced through the

²⁶⁶ Berrutti, “Self, Other,” 124.

²⁶⁷ Berrutti, “Self, Other,” 112.

²⁶⁸ Robert McNair Price, “Lovecraft’s “Artificial Mythology,” in *An Epicure in the Terrible: A Centennial Anthology of Essays in Honor of H.P. Lovecraft*, eds. David E. Schultz and S. T. Joshi (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1991), 249.

language of myth without invoking rejection, revulsion, or madness. In other words, the experience is of the supernatural, not the weird, both derived from the same object.

Same is the case with later examples of Lovecraftian weird fiction. In Ramsey Campbell's "The Inhabitant of the Lake," a terrible, Cthulhu-esque entity from beyond the Real called Glaaki launches an assault upon the cognitive frames of the characters. To avoid madness, the characters venture the way of the supernatural experience. Some approach Glaaki in the same manner the Old Ones are embraced, deifying him and thus perverting his destructive nature into one which cares for those who worship him. Others use old supernatural folklore to categorize him and his inexplicable influence. For instance, the malformation of the spine²⁶⁹ Glaaki brings about in his worshippers is explained away using the concept of the witch's mark and overall through appeals to the well-established mythology of witchcraft.²⁷⁰ It would seem evident then that Glaaki, like Lovecraft's cosmic entities, may be not experienced as weird, but as supernatural, leading me to argue for the analysis of supernatural phenomena as experience in weird fiction as a whole.

To summarize the relation of the supernatural phenomena to weird narratives, firstly, it would seem that like the supernatural mode, the weird presents two independent components: a presence of a violation of an interpreter's understanding of natural law and the experience of this perceived violation. Secondly, as violation, the weird phenomenon is structurally identical to the supernatural as violation in that it is in both cases a phenomenon which cannot be accounted for by the present state of knowledge of natural law of the interpreter, or what Rabkin calls a perspective and Alber a cognitive frame. Importantly, it is immaterial whether this cognitive frame is based in the natural law of the actual world of the storyworld, the structural similarity applies uniformly. There do seem to be formal differences between the weird and the supernatural as violation, with the former being categorially unprecedented

²⁶⁹ Ramsey Campbell, "The Inhabitant of the Lake," in *Cold Print* (UK: Grafton Books, 1987), 165.

²⁷⁰ Campbell, "The Inhabitant," 166.

and the latter utilizing pre-existing forms of Western folklore. I stress again however that structurally, they do not differ, which leads me to argue that they in fact may be the same phenomenon, which is evidenced by my analysis in 3.2.

Finally, there does seem to be a distinction in the weird and the supernatural as experience. The former is ontologically perceived to be part of the natural world, with the cognitive frame of the interpreter being unable to account for it as such. As a result, the weird phenomenon transgresses upon the interpreter's cognitive frame and demands to be incorporated, which often leads to attempted but failed comprehension,²⁷¹ rejection, revulsion, and maddening fear on the part of the interpreter, whose understanding of natural law is threatened. On the other hand, the latter is ontologically perceived to be not a part of the natural world, it is "beyond" and as such it is inert with respect to the interpreter's cognitive frame. Consequently, it does not demand to be incorporated, and is experienced through awe, fear, estrangement as well as appeals to myth.

2.2 The Literary Historical Perspective: Period Specific Features of the Weird

Having commented upon the features weird texts seem to be signified by as well as the role the supernatural experience assumes in them, I now move to a very brief discussion of this literary mode's historical development. I adopt the influential classification proposed by Benjamin Noys and Timothy S. Murphy, who divide the weird into three distinct periods: the Old Weird (1880-1940), the Weird Transition (1940-1980) and finally the New Weird, (1980-present). Here it need be noted that the authors construe the weird from the perspective of genre criticism, which brings with it certain pitfalls, among which I count the reductionism which it necessarily applies to these immensely hybrid texts. Nevertheless, for the purposes of my study, their periodization does prove useful, namely with regards to the general tendencies of the characters specific to each period.

²⁷¹ Thacker, *Tentacles*, 112.

Having outlined this periodization, let us now examine the chief characteristics that differentiate each phase as well as those which remain shared between them.

Old Weird (1880-1940). While Murphy and Noys note 1927, the year of publication of Lovecraft's "Supernatural Horror in Literature,"²⁷² as the event which saw the weird become its own separate literary form, they do emphasize that texts classifiable as this new form appear well before 1927. Adopting Borges's notes on Franz Kafka and our seeming ability to identify the eponymous Kafkaesque in literature written before he even picked up a pen,²⁷³ the authors extrapolate that the same precise process applies in the case of Lovecraft's innovations. Following this logic, they trace the roots of what would later bud into the blossom of Lovecraft's Cthulhu mythos to the 1880s.

In terms of thematic structure, this period of the weird is according to them distinguished by the reactionary rhetoric.²⁷⁴ Authors of this period see the encroaching modernity as something to be feared and conceptualize it as the other violently invading the self, an act which leads to the self's destruction, as signified by the death and madness which often befalls the protagonists of this period if they do not escape quite soon enough. In Lovecraft's materialist perspective, this "translates the avant-garde forms of modernity—futurism and the mathematical advances of non-Euclidean geometry underlying relativity theory—into objects of horror."²⁷⁵ In such narratives, the incomprehensible is met with the rejection and revulsion I have discussed in the previous section.

²⁷² Timothy S. Murphy and Benjamin Noys, "Introduction: Old and New Weird," *Genre* 49, no 2 (2016): 119, <https://doi.org/10.1215/00166928-3512285>.

²⁷³ Murphy and Noys, "Introduction: Old and New Weird," 120.

²⁷⁴ Murphy and Noys, "Introduction: Old and New Weird," 121.

²⁷⁵ Murphy and Noys, "Introduction: Old and New Weird," 121.

Transition Weird (1940-1980). Following Lovecraft's death in 1937, the weird enters a period of concurrent stagnation and migration. As the authors write, "[e]clipsed by science fiction and horror, the weird goes under other names, appears marginally, and in the explicit continuations of Lovecraft's work, in whatever media, is rarely innovative or successful."²⁷⁶ On the one hand, they note the strong tendency towards pastiche of Lovecraft which hampered the development of the genre proper.²⁷⁷ On the other, they describe a significant drift of weird conventions and motifs to primarily non-weird genres (such as American Minimalism)²⁷⁸ as well as their migration to new types of media (Ridley Scott's *Alien*, the output of David Cronenberg).²⁷⁹ As such, the weird of this period is quite volatile, ever-shifting and dispersed among many genres and media.

New Weird (1980-present). According to the authors, the New Weird may be characterized "as a new sensibility of welcoming the alien and the monstrous as sites of affirmation."²⁸⁰ Notwithstanding their overly reductive comments about Lovecraft's racism as being the source of the alien horrors he presents, they observe that "New Weird adopts a more radical politics that treats the alien, the hybrid, and the chaotic as subversions of the various normalizations of power and subjectivity"²⁸¹ Unlike the Old Weird, the new accepts the alterations the incomprehensible causes with open arms, as is for instance apparent on Miéville's grotesque creatures of *Bas Lag* living side by side with "regular" humans. Madness thus need not ensue, neither does revulsion and rejection. This is then a general overview of the development of weird literature from the vantage point of genre criticism. Starting as a mix of fantasy, sci-fi and horror which sees the incomprehensible as a threat, through the period of self-searching volatility and finally arriving at

²⁷⁶ Murphy and Noys, "Introduction: Old and New Weird," 124-125.

²⁷⁷ Murphy and Noys, "Introduction: Old and New Weird," 124.

²⁷⁸ Murphy and Noys, "Introduction: Old and New Weird," 123.

²⁷⁹ Murphy and Noys, "Introduction: Old and New Weird," 123-124.

²⁸⁰ Murphy and Noys, "Introduction: Old and New Weird," 125.

²⁸¹ Murphy and Noys, "Introduction: Old and New Weird," 125.

a re-examination of the rejective approach towards the incomprehensible and an adoption of an assimilatory perspective, the weird retains the core feature of the Super-Real throughout its history.

2.3. Chapter conclusion

In this chapter, I have considered the mode of weird fiction from two perspectives: essentialist and literary historical. Through the essentialist prism, I have identified several features that seem to be integral to the mode as a whole, those being the frame of a unary ontology it employs, the specific formal characteristics of the inexplicable phenomena it utilizes and the specific sort of reaction these phenomena are to invoke in the reader and the character. I have further commented upon the relation of the supernatural to weird narratives. There, utilizing my reconceptualization of the supernatural into two independent concepts of a violation and its experience, I demonstrate that the inexplicable phenomena of the weird are structurally akin to the supernatural as violation. In contrast, I argue that it is the interpreter's experience of this violation which signifies the phenomenon as either weird (i.e., Super-Real) or supernatural. Such a analysis points to the reinterpretation of weird fiction as a naturalistic mode into a multi-modal project in which the weird and the supernatural modes co-occur. This is a radical reinterpretation of contemporary scholarship, which decisively places weird phenomena into the realm of the natural and decries supernatural interpretations of the weird. With regards to the historical perspective, I identify three periods: the Old Weird, the Transition Period and the New Weird. These differ in their treatment of weird phenomena, but they crucially all still treat weird phenomena and thus my analysis of their presence and experience is possible in texts hailing from every one of these periods. The weird and its relation to the supernatural commented upon, let us delve into the remaining analyses.

Chapter 3 – The Remaining Case Studies

In chapter one, I have reconceptualized the supernatural as a presence of a violation and its experience and postulated that there is an independent relationship between them: one can manifest in a text without the other. In chapter two, I have hypothesized that this independence between the violation and its experience enables a supernatural reading of weird narratives, where one violating phenomenon can concurrently invoke an experience of the supernatural and the Weird. In this chapter, I demonstrate both the independence of the violation and its experience and the possibility of concurrent supernatural and weird reading it enables on three representative texts I have introduced in the previous section. Due to the reasons already mentioned, the analysis of “The Beast in the Cave” has already transpired in chapter one, and thus this chapter contains only the remaining two case studies: that of “The Inhabitant of the Lake” and that of *Clown*. With the plan of this chapter outlined, I delve into the analysis proper.

3.1. Overview of the Texts Analyzed in this Thesis.

Having introduced the mode of weird in terms of its essential and period specific features, I now find it pertinent to introduce the weird texts upon which the independence of the supernatural as a violation and its experience shall be demonstrated. Somewhat clumsily, I have already conducted the analysis of the first text, Lovecraft’s “Beast in the Cave” in chapter one prior, though I have done so consciously as to provide immediate textual evidence of the gaps in the theory I have reviewed in the first chapter. To rectify this, I retroactively comment on the precise place of “The Beast” in the weird cannon as covered in chapter two. Furthermore, I classify the following two analyzed texts – Ramsey Campbell’s short story “The Inhabitant of the Lake” (1964) and the film *Clown* (2014 Italy) written by Richard Ford and Jon Watt’s – in the same manner.

Let us begin with the chronologically earliest text. Written in 1905, “The Beast in the Cave” would fall into the early section of the Old Weird period. Pertaining to the question of ontology, the story features a singular ontological frame and the cave beast which forms the monster of the story is readily explicable by the neo-Lamarckian paradigm which the frame consists of. Initially, there are expressions of shock and disbelief tied to the sight of the beast which could be considered a transgression upon what the characters consider natural. However, these are only ephemeral and soon give way to a naturalistic explanation. This is apparent on the character narrator’s experiential reaction to the beast prior to it being revealed a devolved human: the language of science is successfully employed to explain it, thus affirming its concordance with the character narrator’s cognitive frame. Furthermore, no markers such as fear, revulsion or rejection are produced once this line of interpretation is employed. With respect to the transgressive nature of weird phenomena, the story thus passes only partially.

Developing the character reaction further, I have already mentioned that those associated with the weird exclusively – madness, revulsion or categorial rejection – are not produced in the character narrator. On the contrary, only awe and wonder are produced, and only once the human nature of the beast is revealed, all signs of the supernatural experience. In this regard, the story does not pass as weird. The story then seems to only partially exhibit the transgressive element and it does not exhibit the experiences of revulsion, rejection and madness which signify the weird. Nevertheless, the story does utilize a phenomenon formally unprecedented, and it does heavily employ conventions of sci-fi (the use of evolutionary theory to explain the beast). This distinguishes it from preceding tendencies in pre-1880 supernatural fiction and leads me to categorize it as an early example of weird fiction, or a precursor. As such, it is a prime candidate for analysis of the problem this thesis puts forward, as it will enable to establish that the process

of naturalization and supernaturalization has been a component of the weird from its very inception.

Campbell's "The Inhabitant of the Lake" (1964) which would chronologically fall in the Transition Weird, on the other hand quite clearly utilizes the staples which have been championed by Lovecraft in his post "The Call of Cthulhu" output. Though featuring the supernatural, it is primarily presented through a singular ontological frame which is invaded by an inexplicable cosmic being, this invasion provokes expressions of revulsion and rejection on the part of Kerney, one of the protagonists. Furthermore, the being in question is formally unprecedented: it is some form of an ungainly space slug, thus not an accepted part of Western folklore. Finally, there is the necessary failed attempt to scientifically comprehend the creature at the very end of the narrative, suggesting the naturalistic interpretation but failed explanation. In the majority of features, it thus mimics Lovecraft's Old Weird, even bordering on a pastiche in certain aspects, which leads me to classify it as a prime example of a consciously Lovecraftian weird tale of the Transition period.

Finally, Ford and Watts's *Clown* tentatively positions itself into the New Weird tradition. Featuring a clown beast as the antagonist invading upon the cognitive frames of the dramatic personae, the categorial unprecedentedness is satisfied, as a clown is as alien to Western folklore as Miéville's tentacle. Like the inhabitant "The Inhabitant," the film employs a dual ontology in the character of Karlsson and an unary one in the character of Kent, with the clown invoking appeals to myth in the former and challenging the validity of their cognitive frame in the latter. It is thus inert to Karlsson's frame, hovering in the domain of the supernatural subject to its own set of laws which are not natural and transgressive to Kent's, invading the natural domain rather drastically, possessing the protagonist and forcing him to accept the bodily transformation into a cannibalistic clown beast. Doing so, the protagonist is required to renegotiate his place in the

societal hierarchy: a man becomes a man-eater. As such, while clearly utilizing the supernatural, the film is in many a regard analogous to New Weird.

These are then the three texts I analyze in this thesis. In terms of literary history, each represents one of the respective developmental periods of weird fiction as proposed by Murphy and Noyes to varying degrees. “The Beast in the Cave” can be considered an early example of weird fiction not fully displaying all the conventions which would become a staple in the 1930s. “The Inhabitant of the Lake” seems firmly in the camp of post-Lovecraftian pastiches of the Transition period. Finally, *Clown*, whilst retaining the reactionary attitude of Old Weird to an extent, nevertheless shifts towards the assimilation of the incomprehensible and thus tentatively places itself in the New Weird Tradition. In terms of the essentialist perspective, all these texts display the features of weird I discuss in this chapter to varying degrees.

3.1 Case Study: *Clown*, Written by Richard Ford and Jon Watts, Directed by Watts (2014)

I have shown on the case of “The Beast” that a phenomenon knowingly not violating the character’s cognitive frame can nevertheless provoke an experience of the supernatural, demonstrating an independent relationship between the two concepts. In the following text, I consider the converse scenario: violation can fail to invoke the experience of the supernatural and be interpreted as conforming to the character’s cognitive frame. In this regard, it serves as further evidence for the reconceptualization of the supernatural into a violation and its experience which are mutually independent. In the analysis, I again provide a short summary which I then follow by the application of my method introduced in chapter one.

Prior to delving into the analysis, I need to address the fact that *Clown* is a film, a medium different to the other two texts I am analyzing. As such necessarily differs from the written medium in terms of how it is structured, how it presents information/objects and how it works with focalization; this is by no means an exhaustive list of distinctions. For the purposes of this thesis, I treat the film as an example of a trans-medial novella and thus apply the method in the same manner as with the short stories. However, I am aware that this might lead to a simplification and reduction of the finer points of the film medium for whose proper consideration an inherently written text-based method might not be prepared for. A further re-examination of the film thus might be a perspective goal for the future. Having clarified this point, I now move to the summary and analysis.

The film opens with Kent McKoy, a real estate agent, conducting some aesthetic improvements in a house whose sale he is orchestrating.²⁸² Kent's wife Meg suddenly calls him, saying that the party clown for his son Jack's birthday party taking place that day cannot arrive.²⁸³ Kent, being a good father, springs to rectify this disaster. As fortune would have it, the house's dead owner has a chest in the house. The chest produces²⁸⁴ just the thing he needs: an antique clown costume.²⁸⁵ Predictably, the costume is more than meets the eye. Following the successful birthday party, Kent finds out he cannot take it off.²⁸⁶ The wig has somehow fused to his scalp, and so has the rest of the garb with his skin. His predicament is crowned by the red nose which too seems to have taken a permanent residence upon his face.²⁸⁷ He unsuccessfully applies several

²⁸² *Clown*, directed by Jon Watts (Dimension Films, 2014), 2:04, <https://www.amazon.com/Clown-Laura-Allen/dp/B01GPPWJFW>.

²⁸³ *Clown*, 2:26.

²⁸⁴ *Clown*, 3:10.

²⁸⁵ *Clown*, 3:45.

²⁸⁶ *Clown*, 8:29.

²⁸⁷ *Clown*, 8:29 to 10:14.

methods to free himself,²⁸⁸ until he has the idea to call a number found of whom he presumes to be someone associated with the costume.²⁸⁹

The suit's previous owner, one Herbert Karlsson, answers his call.²⁹⁰ He brings good tidings to Kent – that is, that the inexplicable fusing is natural for such antique pieces and that the suit will come off – and invites him to his abode so as to assist in the process of shedding, for the lack of a better word.²⁹¹ There, Karlsson drugs Kent and reveals the horrible truth behind the costume. As he says, the garment is no ordinary costume at all, it is in fact the skin of an ancient Icelandic demon known as the Clöyne. According to legend, the demon inhabited frozen caverns high up in the Icelandic mountains, plaguing the locals during winter months and devouring their children, “one for every month of winter,” hence five in total.²⁹² Karlsson further reveals that once a person puts on the costume, the Clöyne slowly takes possession of the wearer.²⁹³ To prevent the monster from wreaking havoc, Karlsson intends to murder Kent.²⁹⁴

The narrative then continues in a rather cliché manner, with Kent escaping, initially contesting the influence the Clöyne has over him, until he eventually succumbs to hunger and has to negotiate in himself the fact that he has become a child devourer.²⁹⁵ He never accepts Karlsson's tales of myth, so the physical transformation transforms his understanding of natural law as well. His inevitable gory death concludes the demon's rampage. Still, the costume survives, portending the Clöyne's return.²⁹⁶ The summary provided, let us move to the analysis proper.

²⁸⁸ *Clown*, 8:29 to 10:14.

²⁸⁹ *Clown*, 18:23.

²⁹⁰ *Clown*, 19:35.

²⁹¹ *Clown*, 19:38.

²⁹² *Clown*, 22:11 to 22:46.

²⁹³ *Clown*, 24:22.

²⁹⁴ *Clown*, 24:22.

²⁹⁵ *Clown*, 44:44.

²⁹⁶ *Clown*, 1:35:07.

Step one. The phenomenon whose status of a violation and the reactions it provokes I analyze is the Clöyne costume and the various inexplicable effects it seems to have upon its wearer. The specific effect I consider is the fusion it enacts with its wearer's body. The particular point of view from which I analyze this is the one of Kent McKoy, as it is in him the independence of the violation and experience manifests.

Step two. Having selected the phenomenon and the character according to whose cognitive frame its status is considered, I move to the determination of the suggested cognitive frame derived from the storyworld of the film and the qualification of this suggested frame by Kent's commentary. In terms of spatial parameters, the film does not give a precise location, but it broadly seems to be North America. Temporal parameters are likewise not given directly, but based on a scene featuring a child playing the videogame *Halo* (2001),²⁹⁷ it is safe to say that the narrative is taking place in the twenty first century. Furthermore, Kent seems to be an upper middle-class, reasonably educated person with nothing suggesting a possession of forbidden knowledge – he essentially is an everyman. The suggested cognitive frame pertaining to one's hair, skin and nose becoming one with a costume is thus that of twenty-first century science. Kent's absence of any dismissive commentary to that suggestion leads me to conclude that he accepts this frame. I note that like "The Beast," I consider the state of the cognitive frame prior Kent's subjection to the fusion.

Step three. Let us now consider whether this costume presents as violation according to Kent' frame and what experience it invokes. Kent acquires the first signal that the costume is strange when he tries to take it off the morning following the party. When he cant free himself by

²⁹⁷ *Clown*, 59:47.

sheer strength,²⁹⁸ he reaches for a box cutter, which results in his wrist being slashed.²⁹⁹ This all is still explicable by natural law: his hand might have slipped and the costume might be too tight. What follows however crosses into the territory of a violation. He takes a fox-tail saw intended for cutting metal, wood, plastic and other hard materials.³⁰⁰ The saw is given a close-up shot in which Kent powers it up, showing its capabilities.³⁰¹ He inserts the saw blade between his neck and the costume and powers the tool in an attempt to cut through the cloth.³⁰² In two close-up shots lasting whole seven seconds altogether, the saw fails to damage the cloth³⁰³ until it finally snaps, the tip of its blade hitting the ground.³⁰⁴ A common cloth so resistant that it manages to be unscathed after seven seconds of being cut by a fox-tail saw while destroying said saw in the process is in clear contrast to the cognitive frame Kent holds. Importantly, all this is clearly known to Kent. The saw's failure is something beyond what he considers possible.

Another such scene transpires later, when his wife assists him in further attempts to free him from the costume. Pulling on the red clownish nose, it is torn off along with a good chunk of Kent's flesh, much to his painful crying.³⁰⁵ In the close-up of the remnants of his nose, one can clearly see the missing top layer. This is again in violation Kent's cognitive frame. In short, the costume and the effects it brings about presents beyond the shadow of a doubt as a violation of natural law as understood by him. If causality was the reigning relation between a violation and its experience, one would expect awe and fear, or estrangement from Kent. Curiously, the opposite is the case. It is true that initially, Kent experiences perplexion, unsuccessfully trying to use his

²⁹⁸ *Clown*, 8:28.

²⁹⁹ *Clown*, 9:22.

³⁰⁰ *Clown*, 9:43.

³⁰¹ *Clown*, 9:50.

³⁰² *Clown*, 10:05

³⁰³ *Clown*, 10:05 to 10:12.

³⁰⁴ *Clown*, 10:14.

³⁰⁵ *Clown*, 14:05.

cognitive frame to make sense of the strange costume.³⁰⁶ Once the call to Karlsson transpires, the man provides this explanation: “Ah, don’t worry. That happens all the time. The heat from your body can constrict the moisture trapped in those old fibers, makes it, uh... hard to get off.”³⁰⁷ Kent accepts this explanation without hesitation, saying “ (...) oh, that – that makes perfect sense. I thought... I thought I was going crazy.”³⁰⁸ Of course, the yarn is merely a ruse used to placate Kent in preparation of his murder. It is wholly insufficient to account for what has been happening to the real estate agent – the moisture trapped in the fibers hardly accounts for a saw for cutting metal breaking and his nose injury. Kent is aware of this insufficiency, as it was him who saw the saw’s destruction and him who suffered as the clown nose was plucked off. Nevertheless, he accepts Karlsson’s yarn, incorporating the strange costume into his cognitive frame on the grounds of his impossible explanation. A violation of natural law is thus naturalized by Kent; the experience of the supernatural or weird is not produced. This theme continues once Karlsson, under the threat of death by gunshot by Kent’s hand, reveals the true nature of the costume – that it is in fact the skin and hair of the Icelandic demon.³⁰⁹ In that he experiences the costume and supernatural, invoking the language of myth and even radiating an aura of fear, if one is to consider the tone of his voice. As I have demonstrated, out of all the options he is given, this supernatural explanation of the costume is the only one permissible from the point of view of Kent, given the effects the costume has been displaying. Yet he rejects this again, instead seeking a natural explanation in classifying Karlsson a mad-man and attributing the strangeness to him: “This – this maniac tried to kill me. The guy whose house it was that had the suit in it. Look, he thinks I’m a demon. Honey,

³⁰⁶ *Clown*, 12:14.

³⁰⁷ *Clown*, 19:14.

³⁰⁸ *Clown*, 19:21.

³⁰⁹ *Clown*, 25:17.

we have to go to the cops.”³¹⁰ The moisture trapped in fibers thus morphs into a mad-man’s evil scheme, both naturalistic explanations of the strange effects the suit has exhibited and both equally insufficient from Kent’s point of view. Nonetheless, he clings onto them for as long as he can. This crusade for naturalism on Kent’s part does not last the entirety of the narrative. As Clöyne takes control of him and the effects upon his mortal coil become even more drastic, he slowly accepts that the present state of his cognitive frame is insufficient and experiences the violation as weird. Nevertheless, for a portion of the story, there is a mismatch between the presence of a violation and its experience from Kent’s point of view.

In conclusion, *Clown* shows to demonstrate that a known violation of a cognitive frame of a particular character can still be incorporated into that cognitive frame and thus be experienced as natural. I take this as evidence for the complementary instance of the process of supernaturalization found in “The Beast.” That is, I take *Clown* as evidence for naturalization of the supernatural.

3.2. Case Study: “The Inhabitant of the Lake” by Ramsey Campbell (1964)

I have demonstrated on “The Beast in the Cave” that a phenomenon readily explicable by a character’s current understanding of natural law (i.e., their cognitive frame) may nonetheless produce an experience of the supernatural in said character. Conversely, I have demonstrated on *Clown* the exact opposite: a presence of violation of a character’s cognitive frame can nevertheless produce a naturalistic interpretation. The two analyses thus point to the independence of the

³¹⁰ *Clown*, 25:33 to 25:41.

presence of the supernatural and its experience, a reconceptualization I have been arguing for. In the following analysis of Ramsey Campbell's "The Inhabitant of the Lake" (1964), I consider the implications of this independence for the classification of the weird mode as a whole.

Specifically, because it features a supernatural experience alongside the experience of the weird which are both derived from the same violating phenomenon (Glaaki), the story serves to support the point I make in chapter two, that is, one violating phenomenon may provoke both the supernatural and weird experience depending on the particularities of the interpreter. In that regard, it serves as evidence that the supernatural indeed appears in weird fiction when the specific character point of view is considered. Having outlined my reasoning for the analysis of this particular story, I shall briefly place the story in the broader contexts of Campbell's creative output and subsequently delve into its analysis and interpretation.

First featured in Campbell's debut collection *The Inhabitant of the Lake and Less Welcome Tenants* (1964), the eponymous tale differs starkly from Lovecraft's early stories. Drawing on the gentleman's of Providence post "Call of Cthulhu" writing, it is along with a good portion of the Campbell's early work in many a regard a prime example of a weird tale, as it employs an array of Lovecraft's themes of cosmicism and inventions of artificial pantheons he began to utilize heavily after 1928, the year "The Call of Cthulhu" was published in *Weird Tales*. So prominent was Campbell's enamoration with this period of Lovecraft that it is not unreasonable to claim his early work borders on the pastiche at times. To that point, so much is said by the author himself, who in the introduction to the collection *Cold Print* (1985) admits to long having attempted to escape from Lovecraft's creative shadow.³¹¹ Though heavily inspired it may be, Campbell's early weird is nevertheless signified by a marked shift from Lovecraft's post "Call of Cthulhu" tales in

³¹¹ Ramsey Campbell, "Introduction," in *Cold Print* (UK: Grafton Books, 1987), 17.

that it features character's quite a bit more active in their defense against the onslaught of the unknown: whereas Lovecraft would reduce them to catatonia in the face of the incomprehensible cosmos, Campbell gives them hatchets ("The Inhabitant") or explosives ("The Room in the Castle") and bids them to fight.

This imitation and innovation are readily recognizable in the narrative in question. Taking place in the Severn valley,³¹² Campbell's very own fictitious Lovecraft Country where many of his narratives are set, "The Inhabitant of the Lake" concerns two friends, an artist Thomas Cartwright, and an office worker Alan Kerney. The plot entails Cartwright purchasing a home by lake in the vicinity of a Severn valley town of Brichester.³¹³ This home, one of several by the lakeside, is supposedly haunted and thus interests Cartwright, as his artistic work deals with the macabre.³¹⁴ After moving in, the narrative consists of epistolary segments through which Cartwright gives updates to Kerney on his artistry with the latter being tangled up by work in elsewhere. These letters are interlaid by Kerney's first-person narration, which later takes over the story.

Gradually, Cartwright reveals that he has found out from various sources that the lake is a former crater, a product of a great meteor that impacted the area in the deep past. Upon this meteor, there was a city, and in the city a vault, in which Glaaki, a monstrous being of cosmic fear and the source of the violation of natural law cognitive frames of the narrative, dwells.³¹⁵ Glaaki is trapped in the vault which now lies at the lake's bottom and desires to be free. To that end, he employs the ability to lure victims to its lake by the so-called "dream-pull."³¹⁶ He subsequently impales these

³¹² Campbell, "The Inhabitant," 143.

³¹³ Campbell, "The Inhabitant," 144.

³¹⁴ Campbell, "The Inhabitant," 143.

³¹⁵ Campbell, "The Inhabitant," 160-161.

³¹⁶ Campbell, "The Inhabitant," 166.

victims with a spine-like growth which covers its body.³¹⁷ The growth then detaches itself from Glaaki and pumps the victim full of some type of liquid, enabling the creature to dictate the victim's actions at a distance like one would do with a remote control toy car.³¹⁸ Following the act of pumping, the spine again detaches itself, this time from the victim, and leaves a mark which does not bleed. Cartwright relays that the Glaaki's slave-producing behavior has been aided since the 1800s by a local cult which takes the monster for their god, but it is evident the creature has been creating thralls in the described manner much earlier than that, citing ancient Egypt, Haiti and even early modern England ravaged by witch trials.³¹⁹

In a quintessentially Lovecraftian fashion, the story then develops into the predictable confrontation with the inexplicable – in this particular case with Glaaki – with the difference being the already noted rigorous defensive activity of the two protagonists, with Cartwright hacking at the lake inhabitant's extended spine with a hatchet, severing it off and dying in the process.³²⁰ Let us now employ my method to examine the story for phenomena as a violation and an experience of the supernatural from a character point of view. In terms of step one, "The Inhabitant" is rife with various phenomena of questionable status with respect to natural law, but the one on which I presently place my focus is the creature of Glaaki itself. I consider this phenomenon with respect to two separate cognitive frames: that of the Kerney that of the Glaaki cult. The decision to consider these two frames is motivated by the fact that both of these perspectives are treated to varying degrees in the story. The cult perspective is not of a specific individual member's, but a collective perspective shared by all the members of the cult. I justify this on the basis of the story presenting the cult as having a unified ideology with respect to the defining features of Glaaki, as represented

³¹⁷ Campbell, "The Inhabitant," 165.

³¹⁸ Campbell, "The Inhabitant," 165-166.

³¹⁹ Campbell, "The Inhabitant," 164-165.

³²⁰ Campbell, "The Inhabitant," 177.

by their quasi-gospel. Finally, as was the case with Lovecraft's "Beast" and Watts's *Clown*, I am dealing with the cognitive frames prior to the character's encounter with the violating phenomenon.

Regarding the second step, because the two cognitive frames hail from two different time periods nineteenth century England and modern England, two sets of spatiotemporal parameters are necessary for their determination. The spatial and temporal parameters of the storyworld for Kerney are quite evident, it is the fictitious Severn valley³²¹ in the autumn of 1960 (as per the letter dates).³²² Given Kerney's office worker, uneventful middle-class background, it is reasonable to expect that his cognitive frame might be informed by the notions of the science of the 1960s. With regards to the storyworld which suggests the cognitive frame of the Glaaki cult, we are given the temporal setting of 1800 to 1865 (the former being the founding of the cult and the latter the date of publication of the manuscript containing their beliefs, the quasi-gospel *Revelations of Glaaki*) and the spatial setting again being Severn valley.³²³ These two sets of spatiotemporal parameters yield the suggested cognitive frames of two different characters regarding the phenomenon I am analyzing, that is, the entity of the cosmic fear Glaaki. The yielded frames are for Kerney and for the cult member authoring a portion of the *Revelations*. Having established these suggested frames, I move onto determining whether they are held by the respective characters.

Kerney's suggested cognitive frame entails the boundaries of the natural science up to 1960, which certainly cannot account for a centuries old entity of "living, iridescent metal"³²⁴ from outer space which chemically creates thralls to do its bidding. This violating status of the phenomenon is affirmed by Kerney himself, who professes he intended to write Cartwright that

³²¹ Campbell, "The Inhabitant," 143.

³²² Campbell, "The Inhabitant," 150.

³²³ Campbell, "The Inhabitant," 165.

³²⁴ Campbell, "The Inhabitant," 164.

“before he [referring to Cartwright] had thought all this mere superstition, and that he had only discovered the proof of the superstitious beliefs of a few people.”³²⁵ Doing so, he clearly aims to ground Cartwright in reality, so to speak, and remind him that what he has found out is mere folk tales. He further echoes this sentiment by later qualifying Cartwright’s knowledge of Glaaki and the surrounding lore as “ravings”³²⁶ which are “not to be taken seriously.”³²⁷ In that regard, Kerney demonstrably accepts the suggested cognitive frame as his own – he subscribes to the notions of science of his time and approaches the legend of Glaaki skeptically.

With regards to the cognitive frame suggested for the cult, one possibility is the bounds of natural science of the early nineteenth century. This however seems to be dismissed to an extent by Cartwright’s description of the cult founder Thomas Lee and his posse of like-minded helpers:

Some people, they say, had ways of knowing there was something alive in the lake, but they didn’t know where it had fallen. One of these was Lee, but he *used things nobody else dared to touch to find its whereabouts*. He brought these other people down to the lake when he got to know what was in there.³²⁸ (emphasis added).

Lee’s use of these forbidden tools implies that his and his posse’s cognitive frame was broader, accepting as natural things some people would superstitiously banish as something supernatural. It is impossible to say how broader the budding cult’s cognitive frame was in the early 1800s, but it is quite certain that it was not broad enough to account for what they found at the lake. As Cartwright ponders:

³²⁵ Campbell, “The Inhabitant,” 167.

³²⁶ Campbell, “The Inhabitant,” 168.

³²⁷ Campbell, “The Inhabitant,” 168.

³²⁸ Campbell, “The Inhabitant,” 160.

As far as I can make out, Lee and his friends are supposed to have met with *more than they expected at the lake*. They became servants of what they awoke, and, people say, they're there yet."³²⁹ (emphasis added).

The quote clearly implies that the creature of Glaaki which was uncovered by Lee and his henchmen was beyond what they considered natural, beyond their cognitive frame. This organically brings me to step three, that is, the categorization of Glaaki as violation and experience thereof from the point of view of Kerney and the cult, respectively. As is apparent from the preceding paragraph, Glaaki demonstrably contrasts with what the budding cult considers to be natural. As such, it is to be considered a violation as I have construed it in chapter one. This violation then provokes a particular reaction in the cult. Cartwright paraphrases the cult's classification of Glaaki as a deity when describing the process of impalement: "It was the long, thin spines which are supposed to cover the body of their god Glaaki."³³⁰ To account for the second-hand account which might ascribe something to the cult's ideology which was not there in the first place, I provide a direct quotation from *Revelations* which also uses the term god when referring to knowledge Glaaki has revealed to the cult member: "their gods are many, and none dares interrupt the priests of Chig in their ritual, which lasts three years and a quarter, or puslt."³³¹ This deification thus marks that the violation of the cult's cognitive frame is experienced as something supernatural: a myth is appealed to, designating Glaaki as something which is not governed by the natural law of man. The cult thus experiences Glaaki as a supernatural deity.

Different is the case for Alan Kerney. The prospect of Glaaki too contrasts with Kerney's understanding of natural law, or his cognitive frame, as evident from his talks of raving relating to

³²⁹ Campbell, "The Inhabitant," 161.

³³⁰ Campbell, "The Inhabitant," 165.

³³¹ Campbell, "The Inhabitant," 165.

his friend Cartwright. In that regard, he is on the same boat as Lee's cult: Glaaki is something their respective cognitive frames cannot support. What distinguishes Kerney is the experience which is produced by his encounter with Glaaki. Unlike the appeals to a deity, and thus using the language of myth which delegates Glaaki to the domain of the supernatural, Kerney cannot bear the sight of the lake beast as it advances into the house which him and Cartwright have taken as a stronghold: "I could stand no more; I rushed into the first upstairs room and locked the door."³³² And then, after spending the night barricaded in an upstairs bedroom and passing through the area in which Glaaki entered and soiled with his presence, he is overcome with an urge to vomit.³³³ No awe, no appeals to myth, only rejection (as represented by his barricading himself) and revulsion (the vomitus) are provoked in Kerney by the presence of Glaaki. Furthermore, his concluding remarks explicitly paint how the current standard of scientific knowledge has failed, with the phenomenon (Glaaki's spine) still being accepted as natural,³³⁴ clearly painting the insufficiency and forced alteration of the current state of knowledge I have described in chapter two. Kerney thus demonstrably experiences the being as weird, or as something which is threatening his conception of natural world, his cognitive frame.

This brings me to step four of my method, the overall classification of the phenomena as violation and its experience. As I have demonstrated, both Kerney and the Lee cult see Glaaki as a phenomenon which violates their respective cognitive frames. Furthermore, experience of this violation is likewise present in both Kerney and the cult. Contrastively however, the cult experiences the violating Glaaki as something supernatural (inert to their cognitive frame), whereas Kerney experiences it as something weird (threatening an alteration of the frame).

³³² Campbell, "The Inhabitant," 177.

³³³ Campbell, "The Inhabitant," 177.

³³⁴ Campbell, "The Inhabitant," 178.

In conclusion, it is evident on the case of “The Inhabitant of the Lake” that the creature of Glaaki violates the cognitive frames of the Thomas Lee cult and Alan Kerney and thus can be considered an example of a violation of the present understanding of natural law (a cognitive frame) as I have defined it in chapter one. Furthermore, this violation demonstrably provokes the supernatural as experience likewise defined in chapter one in the Lee cult and the weird experience in Alan Kerney. These experiences are signified by the cult members’ deification of Glaaki and Kerney’s vomitus and rejection through barricading, as well as his description of the failure of science. This contrasting experience of one singular violating phenomenon employed in the story thus serves to reinforce that a violation of a character’s understanding of what is possible according to natural law – their cognitive frame – can indeed provoke the experience of the supernatural in that character. Furthermore, it serves as evidence supporting my claim that the same violating phenomenon can invoke both a supernatural and a weird reaction, suggesting that the supernatural is a component of weird fiction that co-occurs with the Weird. Such analysis is possible due to my re-conceptualization of the supernatural into a presence of a violation and its experience whose mutual relationship is that of independence.

3.3. Chapter Conclusion

To summarize, I have argued on “The Beast in the Cave” that the known absence of a violation of natural law from the point of view of a particular character can invoke an experience of the supernatural in that particular character – the natural phenomenon is experienced as supernatural, and is thus presented in the supernatural mode. Furthermore, I have argued on the case of *Clown* that conversely, a known presence of a violation of natural law from the point of view of a particular character can lead to the experience of the natural in that particular character – the

violating phenomenon is experienced as natural and is thus presented in the mimetic mode. Lastly, I have argued on “The Inhabitant of the Lake” that one general violating phenomenon can invoke an experience of the supernatural and the weird, or the co-occurrence of two different modes. The form of the violating phenomenon does not seem to have a bearing on the range of experience it may invoke. That is, even a formally unprecedented violating phenomenon may invoke the supernatural, demonstrating a hybridity of the weird canon.

Discussion

As has been alluded to, the present state of the field staunchly argues against any supernatural readings of the weird, favoring a purely naturalist reading instead. The weird mode presents phenomena distinct from both in their form (Miéville’s motif of the tentacle),³³⁵ which unlike the phenomena of the supernatural is unprecedented in Western folklore, and the experience they invoke, which among other things involves the collapse of comprehension, rejection, and revulsion³³⁶ on the experiencer’s part. Such a reaction is supposedly the result of the forced expansion of experiencer’s understanding of natural law. This expansion is in turn caused precisely by the experiencer’s treatment of the weird phenomenon as natural, and hence requiring acceptance into a framework of knowledge which cannot support it in its present state.

As such, the weird mode differs from the supernatural mode, which supposedly presents phenomena drawing from Western folklore (vampires, ghosts, witches, and other such beings)³³⁷ and which ascribes a distinct experience to them. Such experience may involve fear, awe or appeals to mythology in an attempt to make sense of what the experiencer is seeing. Such phenomena do

³³⁵ China Miéville, “Weird Fiction,” 512.

³³⁶ O’Connor, “A Tentacular Teratology,” 58.

³³⁷ Mark Fisher, *The Weird and The Eerie*, 12.

not require the alteration of the experiencer's understanding of natural law, for they dwell beyond its domain and are governed by a set of laws distinct from the natural. There have been attempts to pinpoint where exactly the supernatural mode has been purportedly displaced by the weird mode,³³⁸ but the consensus states that the supernatural has no place in the weird canon.

In the preceding sections, I have argued against this dictum of displacement. I have demonstrated that a violation of one's understanding of natural law does not causally lead to an experience of this violation. Conversely, I have demonstrated that a phenomenon perfectly within the confines of one's knowledge of natural law might still be experienced as beyond these confines. These conclusions have been drawn following my analyses of H.P. Lovecraft's "The Beast in a Cave" and Jon Watts's film *Clown* and they have established that the presence of a violation and its experience are mutually independent. I have then mined this relationship of independence to reinterpret the weird and supernatural phenomenon and the distinct experiences they supposedly causally bring about.

Based on my research, I make the claim that whilst the weird phenomena do not draw from Western folklore unlike their supernatural antecedents, they are nevertheless still identical to these phenomena in terms of their place in the epistemology of the experiencer. Concretely, this entails that their form notwithstanding, both the weird tentacle and the supernatural ghost reside beyond the current state of natural knowledge, or the cognitive frame of the experiencer. In contrast to the current state of research, it would then appear that the formal unprecedentedness does not causally lead to the weird experience of rejection, revulsion, and madness. Indeed, a formally weird phenomenon may variably invoke both the supernatural and the weird experience across various individuals, a process I have demonstrated on Ramsey Campbell's short story "The Inhabitant of

³³⁸ A prime example would be Massimo Berrutti whom I have discussed at some length in chapter two

the Lake.” As such, there exists no distinction between the weird and the supernatural phenomenon with regards to the range of experience it might invoke. In other words, there is no weird and supernatural phenomenon, there is only the inexplicable, and it is the experiencer’s reaction to this inexplicable which classifies it as weird or supernatural. The weird and the supernatural modes present an epistemologically identical phenomenon located in the same place of the experiencer’s structure of knowledge and differ in the experience they ascribe to it. Consequently, it would then appear to be the case that the supernatural mode has not been displaced and remains concurrent with the weird mode across various developmental stages of weird fiction. Presently, I move to place these results in the broader context of contemporary research.

Michael Cisco’s recent study of the weird as a genre falls under the tendency of pure naturalism. Though he uses the term supernatural when referring to the experience of the inexplicable put forth in weird fiction, he maintains that this supernatural is a “kind of infinite experience that challenge assumptions about the nature of reality,” emphasizing that “[t]his is an experience *that does not involve any question of the existence of supernatural beings or the supernatural character of some effect or other*”³³⁹ (emphasis added). In that regard, his use of the term supernatural experience is very much aligned with the conception of the weird mode I have put forward in chapter two. This sees the weird as a mode presenting phenomena as-of-yet inexplicable by the current state of natural law which are experienced as natural by their observers and consequently require an expansion of their cognitive frame, or their understanding of natural law, often leading to collapse of comprehension and revulsion. Cisco’s notions of infinite experience and its challenge to one’s understanding of reality very much echo this definition. And as such, Cisco’s outlook explicitly argues against a supernaturalist reading of the weird in the sense

³³⁹ Michael Cisco, *Weird Fiction: A Genre Study* (Switzerland: Springer Nature, 2022), 34.

it has been construed in this thesis, i.e. a view of the weird canon in which the inexplicable phenomena are experienced concurrently as weird (i.e. demanding expansion of cognitive frame) and as supernatural (i.e. inert with respect to said frame).

Cisco's exclusionary policy towards the supernatural experience would seem to be invalidated by the data I have gathered. The lack of "existence of supernatural beings or the supernatural character of some effect or other"³⁴⁰ seems disproven precisely at the level of experience on the case of "The Inhabitant" where the creature of Glaaki is interpreted both as supernatural, or as exempt from natural law, and weird, or as-of-yet insupportable by natural law. My analysis would thus point to the expansion of Cisco's model to include the supernatural as well.

Emily Alder, whom I have mentioned to some capacity already, too rejects the possibility of the supernatural in weird fiction. Echoing Nancy Traill's explanation for the rise of the paranormal, Alder sees the impetus for the proliferation of the weird mode in the expansion of scientific knowledge in the late nineteenth century. Traill's conception sees the old frontier of the natural expand so much by the wake of the twentieth century that it consumes the realm of the beyond where the supernatural dwells. Alder affirms this for weird texts, saying that "[f]or "supernatural" to have any meaning, there must be a "natural" against which to define it, and in weird fiction, there is no distinction."³⁴¹ Doing so, Alder implicitly refers to the shift from dual to unary ontology Mark Fisher outlines *The Weird and the Eerie* and Massimo Berrutti observes in Lovecraft's canon.

She continues that, unlike the historically antecedent modes of fiction which do rely on this ontological dualism (such as the gothic), the weird mode "characterizes its "otherworldly

³⁴⁰ Michael Cisco, *Weird Fiction: A Genre Study* (Switzerland: Springer Nature, 2022), 34.

³⁴¹ Alder, *Weird Fiction and Science at the Fin-de-Siècle*, 8.

phenomena” as real, not supernatural.”³⁴² The dualism of the weird is thus not ontological, but epistemic and according to Alder, this is the dichotomy which pervades weird fiction. The natural and the supernatural are displaced by the known and the unknown, the Real and the Super-Real. While this might hold true globally, when one considers the specific character perspectives as this thesis has attempted, there does indeed appear to be a distinction. Some characters approach the inexplicable from the vantage point of unarism, seeing that which they do not comprehend as necessarily natural and consequently going at great lengths in attempts to make sense of it. Others retain the ontologically dual model of the world and are content in relegating the inexplicable to the realm of the supernatural, where they remain subject to their own laws and do not attack and disrupt the natural.

Similarly to Cisco then, Alder’s claim seems insufficient with regards to the data I have gathered. The supernatural experience of Glaaki by the Lee cult in “The Inhabitant” has been mentioned already, and Karlsson’s appeals to mythology when conceptualizing the clown beast in *Clown* might be added as well. In both instances a phenomenon which violates the present understanding of natural law as held by a character is experienced as supernatural, or beyond the scope of nature, and not weird, that is, natural but yet unexplained. As such, the supernatural mode is present in both texts. Furthermore, in concurrence with the supernatural experience, both the clown and Glaaki cause an expansion of the present state of knowledge of natural law accompanied by various expressions of revulsion and rejection in different characters. In that regard, the data would suggest that the weird and the supernatural modes indeed co-occur, which is contrary to the purely naturalist line of interpretation propagated by Cisco and Alder. Such sentiment is shared by

³⁴² Alder, *Weird Fiction and Science at the Fin-de-Siècle*, 10.

Mark Fisher, who has already been covered in extensive detail and who in his conception of the weird too disallows for any presence of the supernatural in weird fiction.

How might one then account for the demonstrable employment of the supernatural mode in weird fiction when current research does not seem consider it to any greater extent? A viable venue might lie in contrasting the function the weird mode is interpreted to have with that of supernatural. As Noys and Murphy have noted in their periodization, the treatment of the other in weird fiction has undergone a radical transformation since its inception. No longer a source of horror and rejection, the weird other of the New Weird is accepted and actively invited to transform the experiencer's cognitive frame.³⁴³ The fear of expansion which signified the Old Weird becomes a desired effect in the texts of the New Weird. Roger Luckhurst comments that as such, the weird becomes "a place for potentially radical disarticulations and reformulations of traditional binaries, starting with self and other, subject and object."³⁴⁴ Expansion and alteration of the experiencers' cognitive frames of what is natural does not invoke rejection, revulsion, and madness, but is instead welcome. The mind shattering antagonist of the Old Weird is become a promising monster, a notion coined by the eco-feminist critic Donna Haraway which reinterprets implications of monstrous hybridity as something to be embraced, not feared.³⁴⁵

In this context then, the weird mode has historically had an altering function with regards to the character, and this alteration was either railed against (the Old Weird) or more recently begun to be accepted (the New Weird). Notably, the dismissive attitude of the Old Weird is often accompanied by the destruction of the subject. Kerney's encounter with Glaaki leaves him ravaged

³⁴³ Murphy and Noys, "Introduction: Old and New Weird," 125.

³⁴⁴ Roger Luckhurst, "The weird: a dis/orientation," *Textual Practice* 31, no. 6 (2017): 1053, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0950236X.2017.1358690>

³⁴⁵ Roger Luckhurst, "The weird: a dis/orientation," *Textual Practice* 31, no. 6 (2017): 1060, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0950236X.2017.1358690>

by revulsion and shaken nerves, whilst Cartwright perishes. Many of Lovecraft's protagonists meet the same fate ("Dagon" (1919), "The Terrible Old Man" (1920) "The Colour out of Space" (1927) and many others). In contrast, where the weird experience leads to death and collapse of the experiencer, the supernatural protects them and allows them to continue existing under the yoke of the inexplicable. The Lee cult flourishes for decades after their initial contact with Glaaki, their conception of it fueled by mythology.

The supernatural mode of presentation has thus a preservative function with regards to the subject. This very much complements the line of thought purported by Traill, Fisher, Cisco, and Alder. While it is true that the old distinction between the natural and supernatural collapses in certain characters, it is retained in others. Those others who hold onto the ontologically dual model of the world are spared destruction in the narratives of the Old Weird. Those who do away with the distinction and embrace a unary ontology suffer doom. In the New Weird, this preservative function seems to have been partially taken up by the weird mode thanks to its historical transformation. No longer does the expansion of the subject's knowledge destroy it, it now alters it and broadens the possibilities of their manner of existing. Yet even in the New Weird we still see the preservation of the subject enacted through the supernatural mode. Karlsson in *Clown* delegates the monster into the realm of the supernatural, using the language of mythology when describing him. Doing so, his cognitive frame remains intact, not expanding and destroying him in the process as is the case with Kent whom the beast possesses.

In conclusion, it would seem that the supernatural mode indeed plays a vital role in weird fiction. This role complements that of the weird mode, offering a venue for the preservation of the subject where the weird leads to its unhinging and destruction. Even now that the weird mode has undergone transformations enabling it to preserve the subject as well through radical alteration,

the preservative function of the supernatural mode remains a part of weird fiction. This is of course merely a preliminary conclusion which would benefit from a larger sample size of primary texts.

Conclusion

The objective of this thesis was to consider the role the mode of the supernatural plays in the canon of weird fiction. Specifically, I argued that the purely naturalistic interpretation of the phenomena the texts of the canon utilize as antagonists is reductive, favoring a view of weird fiction as a class of texts utilizing the weird and the supernatural modes in concurrence. I reached this conclusion based on my comparison of the weird and the supernatural modes with respect to their contrasting presentations of an object which violates natural law and the experience of this violation by a particular character. This comparison would suggest that the two modes are not distinguished by the phenomenon they present, but by the experience they ascribe to it. As such, one phenomenon may invoke both the supernatural and the weird experience within one narrative, with the type of experienced being tied to the character point of view. Such analysis is in explicit contrast to contemporary views on weird fiction which argue for a naturalist interpretation of the phenomena it uses as antagonists, disregarding and backgrounding the descriptions of the supernatural in the process. When considering the character point of view, a re-interpretation of the canon which considers the supernatural and weird modes concurrently is necessary.

In chapter one, I considered a body of critical texts treating the fantastic in literature which span from the late 1970s to the early 2010s and include scholars such as Tzvetan Todorov, Brian Attebery, Rosemary Jackson, Farah Mendlesohn, Lubomír Doležal, Eric S. Rabkin, Jan Alber, Brian Richardson, and others. Based on their contributions, I have derived a partial consensus which sees the supernatural as a subcategory of the fantastic, which is a mode of narration presenting some violation of a norm and ascribing a particular experience to it. I have furthermore

derived the consensus on the definition of the supernatural, it being a violation of a particular standard of natural law of a particular world (either the actual or the storyworld) which causally invokes a specific experience in its observer, namely awe, fear and appeals to myth. I have then divided the wealth of approaches into two distinct schools: the internalist and the externalist, with the externalists taking the actual world as the standard from which violations are judged, and the internalists taking the storyworld.

Analyzing Howard Phillips Lovecraft's "The Beast in the Cave" (written 1905, published 1918) and Jon Watt's film *Clown* (2014), I then demonstrated the limits these two schools display in categorization of texts which feature an asymmetry in the presence of violation of natural law and its experience. In concrete terms, this entails that the causal relationship between a demonstrable violation of natural law from the point of view of a particular character and its experience by that same character does not hold. A demonstrably violating phenomenon may be experienced as natural and conversely, a demonstrably non-violating phenomenon may be experienced as supernatural. To rectify this gap and thus account for the asymmetry, I posit that this violation and its experience appear independently, with the independence being bi-directional. Doing so, I construe that a violation may be experienced as natural (*Clown*) or conversely a non-violation as supernatural ("The Beast"). The analysis was conducted using a method designated for the identification of the independent supernatural experience and violation in a given narrative. This method draws primarily from the narratological work of David Herman, Jan Alber and Brian Richardson as well as the critical outlooks upon the fantastic and the supernatural introduced in chapter one. The method was used uniformly for all three texts this thesis deals with.

In chapter two, I considered the implications of this independent relationship for the canon of weird literature. To that end, I have firstly commented on the qualitative makeup of the weird

mode which supposedly predominates the canon. Subsequently, I have discussed the inherent place of the supernatural mode in the weird canon concurrent to the weird mode, with the concurrence being predicated precisely on the independence. The overview of the weird mode has been conducted from two vantage points: the essentialist and the literary historical perspective. From the essentialist perspective, the weird mode presents phenomena formally unprecedented in Western folklore. These phenomena are in violation of the current state of knowledge of natural law, but which still demand to be understood as natural - the mode thus employs a unary ontology. As such, these phenomena invoke experiences of revulsion, rejection, collapse of cognition and madness. Moving to the literary historical perspective, drawing from Benjamin Noys and Timothy S. Murphy, I have adopted their three chief developmental stages of the weird, both as a body of texts and as a specific narrative mode. These include the Old Weird (1880-1940), the Transition Period (1940-1980) and the New Weird (1980-present). I have noted that whilst graduating towards an assimilationist policy as they have developed, the weird mode nevertheless uniformly works with the violation as such. Regarding the concurrence, drawing on the work of Nancy H. Traill, Massimo Berrutti and others, I have argued that the weird and the supernatural modes are not distinguished by the violating object, but by the reaction this violation invokes in its observer.

Finally, in chapter three, I provided two additional case studies to support my claims. Along with *Clown* which I have discussed already, this included a case study of “The Inhabitant of the Lake” on which the concurrence of the weird and the supernatural modes was demonstrated. In a tentative conclusion, by treating the violation and its experience as independent, a reinterpretation of the weird canon from a body of literature employing the purely naturalistic weird mode into a hybrid project utilizing the weird and the supernatural concurrently is necessary. Such hybridity

accounts for the wide range of experiences which are invoked by the inexplicable phenomena this canon employs as antagonists.

Resumé

Cílem této práce bylo posoudit, jakou roli hraje ve weird literatuře nadpřirozený modus. Vymezuji se proti čistě naturalistické interpretaci jevů přítomných ve weird literatuře. Místo toho upřednostňuji pohled na weird literaturu jako na soubor textů, které kombinují mody weird a nadpřirozena. K tomuto závěru jsem dospěl porovnáním modu weird a modu nadpřirozena s ohledem na způsob, jakým jsou tyto jevy prezentovány a jak je prožívá konkrétní postava. Tvrdím, že tyto prvky nelze odlišit podle samotného jevu, ale podle způsobu, jakým jej postava prožívá. To v praxi znamená, že stejný jev může vyvolat jak nadpřirozený, tak weird prožitek, a to v závislosti na úhlu pohledu konkrétní postavy. Má analýza se tedy odklání od současných přístupů k weird literatuře, které se zaměřují na naturalistickou interpretaci jevů a přehlížejí nadpřirozené prvky. Analyzuji weird literaturu skrze prizma prožitku konkrétní postavy a navrhuji její reinterpretaci jako souboru textů, které využívají jak jak weird modus, tak modus nadpřirozena.

V první kapitole jsem provedl rešerši odborných pramenů zabývajících se fantastickou literaturou. Výběr pramenů jsem omezil na roky 1970 až 2020. Má rešerše zahrnuje badatele a badatelky jako Tzvetan Todorov, Brian Attebery, Rosemary Jackson, Farah Mendlesohn, Lubomír Doležel, Eric S. Rabkin, Jan Alber, Brian Richardson a další. Napříč těmito texty jsem vyzoroval částečný konsenzus, který chápe fantastično jako modus prezentující určité porušení normy a nadpřirozeno chápe jako podkategorii fantastična. Definici nadpřirozena jsem rozvedl a tvrdím, že jde o porušení určité normy přírodních zákonů určitého světa (ať už reálného, nebo narativního), které kauzálně vyvolává u pozorovatele specifický prožitek, a to hrůzu či strach, případně také odkazy na mytologii. Tuto škálu přístupů jsem pak rozdělil do dvou skupin: internalisté a

externalisté. Externalisté berou jako měřítko podle něhož se porušení posuzuje svět aktuální a internalisté svět narativní.

Analýzou povídky Howarda Phillipse Lovecrafta „Zvíře v jeskyni“ (psané v roce 1905, vydané v roce 1918) a filmu Jona Wattse *Prokletý klaun* (2014) odhaluji limity, které oba přístupy vykazují při kategorizaci textů, ve kterých se vyskytuje asymetrie v přítomnosti porušení přirozeného zákona a jeho prožitku. Konkrétněji řečeno, ke kauzálnímu vztahu mezi prokazatelným porušením přírodního zákona a prožitkem tohoto porušení toutéž postavou v těchto textech nedochází. Abych tuto asymetrii vysvětlil, předpokládám, že porušení a jeho prožívání se vyskytují nezávisle na sobě, přičemž tato nezávislost je obousměrná. To znamená, že porušení může být vnímáno jako přirozené (jak je tomu v případě *Prokletého klauna*) nebo naopak neporušení jako nadpřirozené („Zvíře v jeskyni“). Analýza byla provedena pomocí metody, kterou jsem vypracoval za účelem identifikace jevu porušujícího přírodní zákony a prožitku tohoto porušení. Tato metoda vychází z naratologických prací Davida Hermana, Jana Albera a Briana Richardsona a z odborné práce na fantastična a nadpřirozena představeného v úvodní kapitole. Metoda byla aplikována jednotně na všechny tři texty, kterými se práce zabývá.

Ve druhé kapitole jsem se zaměřil na důsledky tohoto nezávislého vztahu pro weird literaturu. Nejprve jsem se vyjádřil ke kvalitativnímu složení weird modu, který je chápán jako dominantní narativní modus tohoto typu literatury. Poté jsem se zabýval souběžnou přítomností modu weird a nadpřirozena ve weird literatuře, jejich souběžnost jsem vysvětlil právě výše zmíněnou nezávislostí. Přehled weird modu byl proveden ze dvou perspektiv: esencialistické a literárně-historické. Z esencialistického hlediska představuje weird modus jevy v západním folkloru formálně bezprecedentní. Tyto jevy jsou v rozporu se současným stavem poznání přírodních zákonů, ale přesto vyžadují, aby byly chápány jako přirozené – využívají tedy unární

ontologii. Tyto jevy vyvolávají u pozorovatelů prožitek odporu, odmítnutí, rozkladu poznání a šílenství. Pokračoval jsem literárně-historickou perspektivou, vycházející z prací Benjamina Noyse a Timothyho S. Murphyho, kde jsem využil jejich vymezení třech hlavních vývojových fází weird literatury: Old Weird (1880-1940), Transition Period (1940-1980) a New Weird (1980-současnost). Poznamenal jsem, že i když v průběhu svého vývoje weird modus graduje směrem k asimilační politice, stále jednotně pracuje s jevem porušujícím chápání přírodních zákonů postavy.

Co se týče souběžnosti weird a nadpřirozeného modu, na základě prací Nancy H. Trillové, Massima Berruttiho a dalších jsem argumentoval, že mody weird a nadpřirozena nelze rozlišovat na základě přírodních zákonů rušícího jevu, který prezentují, ale na základě reakce, kterou toto porušení vyvolává u pozorovatele.

Ve třetí kapitole jsem pak vedle případové studie *Prokletého klauna*, o níž jsem již hovořil, uvedl případovou studii povídky „Obyvatel jezera“, na níž jsem demonstroval souběh weird a nadpřirozených modů. Na základě těchto třech studií jsem došel k předběžnému závěru, že tím, že se k porušení a jeho prožitku přistupuje jako k vzájemně nezávislým, je nutná reinterpretace kánonu weird ze souboru literatury využívajícího čistě naturalistický weird modus v hybridní projekt využívající weird a nadpřirozený modus současně. Tato hybridita vysvětluje širokou škálu prožitků, které vyvolávají nevysvětlitelné jevy, jež tento kánon využívá jako antagonisty.

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Anotace

Příjmení a jméno: Pastorek Jindřich

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Abstrakt

Tato práce se zabývá demonstrací nezávislého vztahu mezi přítomností nadpřirozeného jevu a prožitkem tohoto jevu z pokledu konkrétního interpretera. Tento nezávislý vztah následně využívá při interpretaci nadpřirozena ve weird fiction, což je modus literatury tradičně interpretován čistě naturalisticky. Definice nadpřirozena, kterou tato práce využívá, je čerpána z odkazu řady teoretiků a teoretiček od sedmdesátých let až po současnost. Definice weird fiction je strukturována na základě klíčových aspektů tohoto modu a jejich historických proměn. Práce se vymezuje proti čistě naturalistické interpretaci weird fiction a demonstruje, že tento typ literatury využívá kombinaci jak modu weird, tak modu nadpřirozeného. Charakter práce je v tomto čistě deskriptivní a systematizace a predikce distribuce těchto modů v kontextu kánonu weird literatury je vhodným tématem dalšího výzkumu.

Annotation

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Abstract

This work is concerned with demonstrating an independent relationship between the presence of a supernatural phenomenon and the experience of that phenomenon from the perspective of a particular interpreter. It then uses this independent relationship to interpret the supernatural in weird fiction, a mode of literature traditionally interpreted in a purely naturalistic manner. The definition of the supernatural used in this thesis is drawn from the legacy of a number of theorists from the 1970s to the present. The definition of weird fiction is structured around key aspects of the mod and their historical transformations. The thesis sets itself against a purely naturalistic interpretation of weird fiction and demonstrates that this type of literature uses a combination of both the weird and supernatural modes. The nature of the thesis is purely descriptive in this respect, and the systematization and prediction of the distribution of these modes across the canon is a suitable topic for further research.