

---

## THE FANTASTIC AND THE MODERN EXPERIENCE

Quincy Riordan, Montana Tech- Undergraduate Research Program, Montana Tech of the University of Montana, Butte MT. 59701

The genre of Fantastic literature deals with intersections of the natural and supernatural worlds. The fantastic experience is one of doubt, felt both by reader and protagonists as they attempt to reconcile a possible supernatural occurrence with the rules of the natural world. Cocteau's *Les Enfants Terribles*, examines the fantastic's role in the divide between childhood and adulthood, in which the fantastic and the natural worlds become the spheres of childhood and adulthood, respectively. Creative play allows children to fully experience the fantastic. However, the fantastic, like childhood, is fleeting and attempts to maintain it result in ostracism; the fantastic violates the accepted norms of the natural adult world. This research broadened the scope of research on the fantastic as a genre. Theories of the fantastic have been applied to literary texts written in the late 18th and 19th century, but have not been previously applied to modern texts, which go beyond the conventional fantastic experiences detailed in the works of Tzvetan Todorov and Rosemary Jackson. Todorov's definition of the fantastic classifies fantastic experiences themselves as brief, while Jackson's list of recurrent fantastic themes are best suited to works written before the establishment of the prevailing scientific paradigm. Modern literary perspective is rooted in psychological explanations for what was previously classified as fantastic. In modern literature, the fantastic's place as the divide between the "marvelous" and the "uncanny" is unsustainable and must be redefined so that modern fantastic experiences may occupy the spaces between freewheeling creativity and abnormal psychology.