

Introduction to The Fantastic

The first 2 novels we are reading in this course can be classified as examples of **fantastic fiction**. To fully appreciate what the authors of these novels are trying to accomplish, it helps to incorporate the following terms into our analysis.

Reality Effect: The small details of person, place, and action that while contributing little or nothing to the narrative, give the story its atmosphere, making it feel real. It does not add to the plot to know that the character James Bond wears Egyptian cotton shirts, but it clearly does add considerably to our understanding of him...

(Taken from Oxford Reference:

<http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100407783>)

Flaubert's barometer, Michelet's little door finally say nothing but this: *We are the real...*
-Roland Barthes, "The Reality Effect," 1968, reprinted in *The Rustle of Language*

The Fantastic: The fantastic is defined as a moment of hesitation between belief and disbelief of the supernatural. It is a very fragile literary form, as it can all too easily swing from one side to the other. Only that suspension between the two makes the literature fantastic.

As theorist Tzvetan Todorov says in the book *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, "The fantastic occupies the duration of this uncertainty...The fantastic is that hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event" (Todorov 25).

(taken from Letter Pile:

<https://letterpile.com/misc/An-Overview-of-Tzvetan-Todorovs-Theory-of-the-Fantastic>)



"We didn't want to go, we didn't want to kill them, but its persistent silence and outstretched arms horrified and comforted us at the same time..."

1983, photographer unknown, presumed dead.

(caption attached to original Slenderman photo from 2009 Creepypasta Forum)

<http://slendermanrp.wikia.com/wiki/File:Nevermore-toys-slender-man-original-photo.jpg>