Supernaturalism as a Narrative Technique in "The Tempest" and "The Peony Pavilion"

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Abstract:

The paper endeavors to investigate the narrative technique of supernaturalism within dramatic narratives, focusing specifically on "The Tempest" and "The Peony Pavilion" as exemplary works. This paper adopts a structural analysis approach, selecting "The Tempest" and "The Peony Pavilion" as case studies due to their shared presentation on supernatural elements. Drawing on Todorov's classification, the paper characterizes both plays as fantastic/marvelous narratives where supernatural elements play a pivotal role. Through textual analysis and the application of the Greimas matrix, the research endeavors to elucidate how supernaturalism functions as a pivotal aspect of narrative construction, shaping plot development, character arcs, and thematic exploration. Furthermore, the analysis will investigate the broader cultural and literary significance of these supernatural motifs, considering their resonance within the respective socio-historical contexts of the works.Ultimately, the paper aims to elucidate the specific function of supernaturalism in shaping the form and themes of these two contemporary but cross-cultural cases of plays.

Keywords: Supernaturalism; Greimas' Matrix; plot devices; dramatic narratives

1. Introduction

As a means of cultural diplomacy between the UK and China, the 2016 quatercentenary commemorations of Tang Xianzu and William Shakespeare as „national poets" further canonized the works of both and endowed their works with complicated cultural symbolic meanings. Correspondingly, the comparative study between Shakespeare and Tang has also received increasing attention from both Chinese and non-Chinese scholars' realms. This comparative framework, initially advanced by Japanese sinologist Aoki Masahiro and subsequently elaborated upon by Chinese scholars, notably Zhao [1], centers on five key dimensions: the two writers' shared death in 1616, their canonical stature in literary history, inspirational sources, innovative contributions within their eras, and the intrinsic humanistic ethos embedded in their works. These extrinsic studies, in line with Wellek's definition of literature study, have yielded notable insights. For instance, Tan et al. contextualized Shakespeare and Tang within their contemporaneous environments, emphasizing historical and geographical factors alongside distinct theatrical traditions.

Nevertheless, intrinsic literary inquiries into this comparative paradigm remain both sparse and contentious. Scholars like Xia contend that juxtaposing Tang with Shakespeare risks the imposition of „forced similarity," potentially leading to an overly occidental perspective [1]. In response, proponents such as Kate McLuskie advocate for the comparison of the „literariness" of both writers, positing their works as viable subjects for the synchronous study of world literature [2]. In a similar vein, Fusini suggests a practical method for comparing specific elements and comedic modes in Tang and Shakespeare's plays, framing the endeavor within a universal perspective on literature. This paper would agree with Fusini's perspective, and by viewing Tang Xianzu and William Shakespeare as pivotal figures in their respective literary histories, a structural analysis of their texts will reveal patterns in semantics and textual structures, facilitating exploration of potential parallels in the literary expressions of distinct cultural lineages.

Adopting a structural analysis approach, this paper selects „The Tempest" and „The Peony Pavilion" as focal points due to their shared coexistence of ordinary and supernatural elements, with the latter serving as a common driving force in the plot dynamics. Drawing on Todorov's classification [3], both plays can be characterized as the narrative class of the fantastic/marvelous, wherein audience hesitation from supernatural plots in real-life settings constitutes a pivotal condition for the establishment of fantasy. This adoption is significant within the play scripts, facilitating

interactivity and providing ample spectacle to fulfill the visual demands of the audience. Consequently, supernaturalism assumes a crucial role as a narrative device within this context. Firstly, employing an approach rooted in textual analysis, this paper will delineate and categorize the supernatural elements within the works of Tang Xianzu and William Shakespeare, then examine the origins and cultural significance of these supernatural motifs, elucidating their adaptation as agents within the distinct literary contexts of the writers. Subsequently, from a structuralist perspective, the Greimas matrix will be applied to dissect the positioning of these motifs within the narrative structures of the two plays, revealing binary oppositions between the human and the supernatural realms and underscoring their narrative efficacy. Finally, the article aims to elucidate the specific function of supernaturalism in the form and themes of the play with the assistance of the matrix.

2. Identifying the Agents

2.1 Subjects and Objects as Interactive Complexity

In Greimas' semiotic matrix theory, the notion of the „actional unit" (agent) holds significant importance, referring to entities or forces capable of proactive action that influences the environment. Discussions revolving around actional units typically involve the principle of binary opposition, originating from a pair of opposing sememes. These opposing sememes are situated at the extremities of an axis, designated as the „semantic axis" by Greimas, thereby constituting the foundational structure of meaning [4]. It is posited that all meanings, or signified, are contingent upon their opposites and cannot exist independently. Each opposition delineates a semantic axis, collectively forming the domain within which meaning emerges. This domain encompasses the entirety of the valid space within which linguistic „value" is situated. From this point, as the assignment of the „value" of a subject as a signifier is given through relativity within a specific domain, thus the subject of the semiotic matrix may encompass either abstract concepts or specific objects within a text. The primary application of Greimas' semiotic matrix lies in the analysis of value judgments within sociological frameworks rather than literary domains. However, when employed for textual interpretation, the inherent flexibility in represented values permits the research subject to oscillate between abstract conceptualizations and concrete descriptions. This transition is facilitated by adherence to specific principles: concrete entities must serve as exemplars of abstract concepts or values, whereas abstract concepts or values must manifest tangibly [5, 6].

Hence, when undertaking textual analysis, looking for an actional unit and establishing the subject-object dichotomy emerges as a fundamental concept within a binary opposition framework. This dichotomy pertains to the relationship between an entity (subject) and the object it perceives, interacts with, or affects. The subject serves as the initiator or executor of actions, while the object is the entity that undergoes the effects of these actions or becomes the focal point of the subject's attention. Throughout this paper, the focus will primarily be on exploring the dynamic processes inherent within this binary opposition relation. These processes encapsulate not only the interactions, mutual influences, and changes occurring between the subject and object but also signify the inherent complexity of both the subject and object themselves as interactive systems. The semantic axis occupied by these entities often unveils the intricate nature of value judgments embedded within the text. Although many critiques of Greimas' matrices tend to designate the protagonists themselves as the subject, exploring their specific actions and desires, this paper contends that the two main characters—Du Liniang and Prospero—are deeply entangled with supernatural forces throughout the plot development. Therefore, supernatural elements—ghosts and magic—will serve as the subject of analysis. This approach not only provides a comprehensive comparative foundation but also avoids the oversimplification trap of interpreting a single character as a singular symbol of value.

2.2 Ghosts in The Peony Pavilion

In „The Peony Pavilion," the narrative unfolds with the female protagonist, Du Liniang, encountering the Lingnan scholar Liu Mengmei in a dream, ultimately succumbing to lovesickness and passing away. Subsequently, Liu's journey to the capital for the imperial examination coincides with his discovery of a self-portrait of Du Liniang buried in a garden. Captivated by her image, Liu eventually encounters the ghost of Du Liniang and, at great risk, proceeds to unearth her coffin. Through their union, Du Liniang is revived, yet formal acknowledgment of their marriage is withheld by her parents until Liu achieves success in the palace examination, leading to their eventual union. Throughout these plots, the audience is prompted to contemplate the authenticity of their perceptions vis-à-vis the presence of supernatural elements, particularly the existence of ghosts: Du Liniang initially transforms into a ghost due to illness, navigating between human habitation and the realms of the underworld before experiencing a revival through her partner's recognition. It can be seen from the plots that the narrative of „The Peony Pavilion" explores the portrayal of ghosts within the late Ming and early Qing dynasties, highlighting its symbolic signifi-

cance in representing existential lack and the redemptive power of sentiment amidst societal paradigms.

Significantly, „The Peony Pavilion" emerged within the cultural milieu of the late Ming and early Qing dynasties (1580-1700), a period characterized by a flourishing tradition of portraying ghosts in literature [7]. Within this context, spectral entities or ghosts are delineated not within the framework of „death" per se but rather as integral to the broader cosmological notion. This cosmology mainly refers to the equilibrium theory of yin and yang rooted in Taoist philosophy, where yin refers to the female/passive/negative principle in nature, while yang is the symbol of the male/active/positive principle. Concomitantly, the conceptualization of „ghosts" is juxtaposed against that of „humans," rooted in contemporaneous beliefs concerning the dynamic interplay of cosmic energies. In contemporary medical discourse pertaining to „ghosts," their existence is often construed as a form of „pathogenic external evil" [7], wherein the excessive „yin energy" inherent in ghosts may deplete the vital „yang energy" of the living, potentially precipitating illness or mortality. Consequently, ghosts are characterized as embodying a state of existential deficiency, denoting a lack of vital life force. In addition to the definitions derived from cosmological and medical perspectives, the existential lack attributed to the „ghosts" in the play is further accentuated by the gender attributes of Du Liniang. Within the socio-cultural fabric of late Ming and early Qing, her estrangement from her natal lineage and unresolved marital status contribute to her premature demise as a female ghost. Unable to integrate into or receive proper ancestral worship within the Confucian familial system, her plight symbolizes an incomplete social recognition within patriarchal structures.

If „ghosts" are construed as a central concept and agent, an antithetical theme surfaces. This counterpoint is initially unveiled through a phrase in the opening of the play: „Love is of source unknown, yet it grows ever deeper. The living may die of it, by its power the dead live again. Love is not love at its fullest if one who lives is unwilling to die for it, or if it cannot restore to life one who has so died. Moreover, must the love that comes in a dream necessarily be unreal?" [8]. This title word elucidates the thematic significance of ghosts within the narrative framework, wherein the spectral entity symbolizes a state of existential lack engendered by protracted melancholy and emotional desolation; „life" thus emerges as an aspirational state synonymous with the replenishment of vital energies, facilitated by the redemptive agency of „love"—a conceptual construct that transcends conventional notions of romantic attachment to encompass a holistic spectrum of emotive experiences, emblematic of a counter-narrative vis-à-vis the instrumental rationality and earthly ambition

(功名) inherent in prevailing societal paradigms. In this context, a nuanced and intricate interplay exists among ghosts, "love", life, and death.

2.3 Magic in The Tempest

The primary plot of Shakespeare's „The Tempest" revisited, unfolds the tale of Prospero, the exiled Duke of Milan, who, having been deposed by his brother Antonio, retreats to a remote island with his daughter Miranda. Here, through the mastery of sorcery, he assumes dominion over the isle. Prospero orchestrates a tempest, drawing the King of Naples, Ferdinand, Antonio, and others to its island shores. With Ariel's assistance, Prospero plots revenge against his enemy while also arranging the marriage of Ferdinand to his daughter Miranda. Ultimately, Prospero reclaims his rightful position and relinquishes magic, opting to return to Milan. Throughout this process, supernatural elements, notably magic, play a significant role. Several postcolonial critiques of the play argue that Prospero's control over spirits and the island serves as a metaphor for colonial power, symbolically laden rather than conforming to definitions of the fantastical or supernatural [1]. However, this article contends that magic and the general actions of spellcasting performed by wizards and magicians are not just euphemisms for colonial behavior but also defy „common sense" within the context. The tempest conjured through magic transforms the island into a unique enclosed space, wherein various extraordinary occurrences are depicted from the perspective of the island's external visitors. For instance, Prospero employs magic to intimidate Sebastian and others and consistently controls inhuman creatures, Ariel and Caliban, to conduct his plans. It is noteworthy that Prospero's utilization of „magic" serves as a means to reclaim power in „The Tempest," but it also symbolizes an intermediary state within the narrative. For instance, characters such as Caliban, deemed as lacking humanity, undergo forced submission through Prospero's magic, leading to their rationalization and eventual assimilation into societal order. Paradoxically, Prospero's initial loss of power is attributed to an excessive obsession with magic studies, underscoring the dual nature of magic as both a tool for empowerment and a potential source of downfall.

Within the Elizabethan theatrical landscape, roles depicting wizards, enchanters, or magicians were not pervasive, yet they formed part of a rich tradition. Magicians were often portrayed either as charlatans or as practitioners of magic, as exemplified in works like „Dr. Faustus" and „Friar Bacon" [9]. In such contexts, magic transcended mere illusion, representing knowledge and science. In the Renaissance era, magic served as a metaphor for spatial measurement within religious discourse, emblematic of

rationality and intellectual advancement. For instance, in Marlowe's rendition of the Faustian legend, Faustus's insatiable pursuit of infinite knowledge leads him into the depths of the soul, symbolizing the boundless desires of the human spirit [9]. Similarly, Prospero can be likened to the archetype of the magician akin to Faustus, epitomizing the Renaissance ideal of the magician, wielding magic as a manifestation of surplus rationality and civilization. Through this lens, his character embodies the complexities inherent in the pursuit of knowledge and power, echoing the nuanced portrayal of magic in Elizabethan drama.

Hence, if one were to interpret magic as a dynamic intermediary symbol within the context of the play, it could be construed as the subject, emblematic of a quest to restore and maintain authority while facing the danger of addiction and self-isolation. The object, in turn, encompasses a spectrum of conspiracies and resistance movements aimed at disrupting the prevailing order in the isle and challenging Prospero's legitimacy. In this paradigm, the coexistence of legitimate identities, both within and beyond the confines of the isle, may serve as a rhetorical reinforcement of established norms and values. Meanwhile, adversaries emerge as entities beyond Prospero's sphere of control, even if they do not pose a challenge to the order of Prospero.

3. Greimas' Matrix Analysis of the Supernaturalism

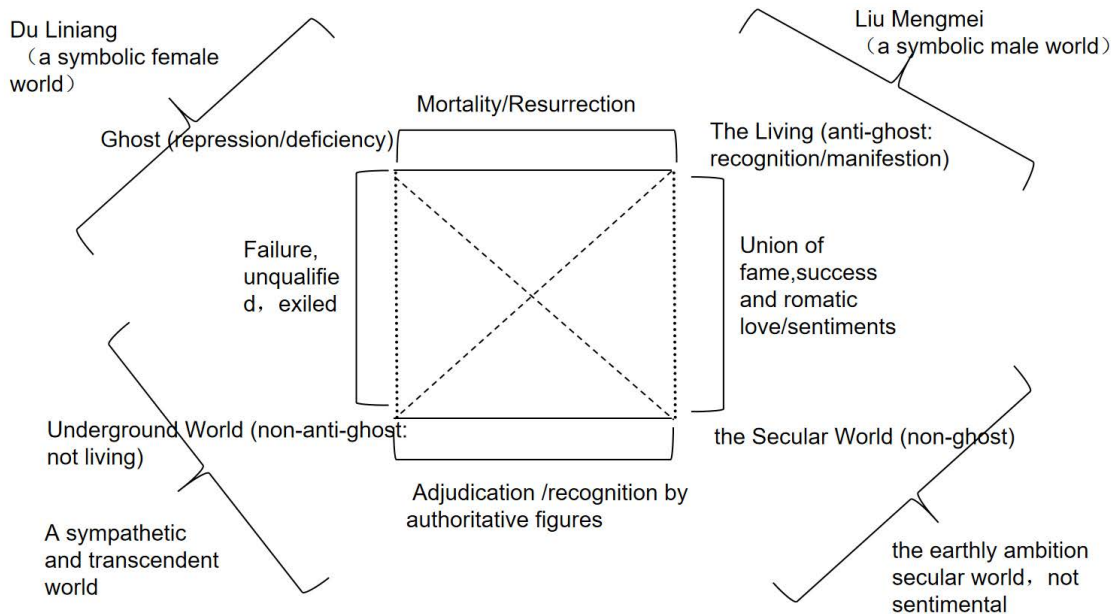### 3.1 Apply Greimas' Matrix on The Peony Pavilion

Fig. 1 Greimas' Matrix on the Peony Pavilion

Once the interrelations among subjects, objects, assistants, and adversaries are delineated, a schematic representation, as illustrated in Figure 1, can be inferred. Within „The Peony Pavilion," the presence of ghosts serves as a symbolic representation of the suppression of emotions and mortality, juxtaposed as an antithesis against "living" (生), which indicates the process of being manifested and recognized in a living world. The conversion of this antonymous relationship is determined by the situation of young couples. Ghosts are characterized by their existence outside the societal norms of the living—beyond the mortal realm—resulting in a contradictory relationship. Simultaneously, the nonliving realm, such as the underworld, inherently implies the existence of „ghosts."

Within this framework, three additional sets of antitheti- cal, contradictory, and implicit relationships are present: the contrast between the postmortem realm and the living secular world can also be interpreted as a fundamental opposition between yin and yang [10]. The transition between these opposites necessitates adjudication and recognition by authoritative figures. For instance, under the jurisdiction of the underworld judge, Du Liniang is permitted to transition from the underworld to the living world; conversely, the union of Liu and Du remains unrecognized by Du's parents until the Emperor acknowledges Liu's success in the imperial examination system, finally completing Du's resurrection. An additional layer of contradictory relationships emerges between the living and nonliving world: living figures, exemplified by Liu, harbor the potential for achievement and renown, there-

by establishing a connection with the realm that would be non-repressive. Furthermore, a reciprocal implication exists between the living characters and the living world: Liu's scholarly and professional accomplishments bolster the validation of his love sentiments, while adherence to prophetic dreams regarding his marriage secures his prosperity in the mortal realm. Prior to Liu achieving success and widespread recognition, the biases within the living world appear to impede his personal expression of romantic sentiments. He seemingly stands in opposition to the world of the living while being allied with the love for Du Liniang. However, in actuality, he is an individual who is both capable and responsible for reintegrating into the world of the living; his alliance with the living world is more steadfast than his bond within the realm of love.

Within this play, the symbolic meanings embodied by characters, or character archetypes, are not singular but rather intricate, comprising multiple layers of symbolic relationships [6]. For instance, Du Liniang occupies an intermediary position capable of transcending the realm of „ghosts" [11], yet within the contextual values presented in the text, such transcendence is conditional. Du Liniang epitomizes a character who struggles to articulate her sentiments. Her lovesickness stemmed from her exposure to poetic literature from her boudoir school and intensified amidst the ambiance of spring scenery. Her condition seemingly could only find solace through a successful union with her lover. However, the social constraints of the time precluded any avenue for women to pursue love freely, thus leading to her untimely demise and transformation into a ghost. The attributes associated with ghosts

afforded her a certain degree of liberation not attainable in the realm of the living, facilitating her reunion with her beloved. However, subsequent to the legitimate marriage of the young couple, the focus of conflict shifted to Du's spectral nature. The persistence of Du as a ghost posed an impediment to their formal marital recognition, rendering their relationship illicit and devoid of societal validation. As a result, she remains unrecognized by herself until her husband brings her legitimacy. Conversely, Liu possesses a foundational basis for acknowledgment of his male and scholarly identity. As a living and ideal lover, he first cured Du of his fatigue caused by lovesickness, and secondly, as a presence with sufficient credit in secular society, guaranteed Du's resurrection. He almost fully benefited from this process, in contrast to another play of the West Wing with a similar plot. Liu did not passionately pursue Du or respond to Du's romantic desire. On the contrary, what supported his love for Du was always Du's initiative and the prophecy that this relationship would lead him to secular success. These four symbolic elements collectively contribute to a nuanced matrix: the female domain governed by Confucian principles and the patriarchal sphere seem ostensibly harmonious but are fraught with dichotomous conflicts, lacking mutual comprehension. The symbolic female realm of sentimental expression is systematically suppressed, while the symbolic male realm exploits the female domain, viewing it as spoils of conquest, and integrates it back into the relentless pursuit of fame and success.

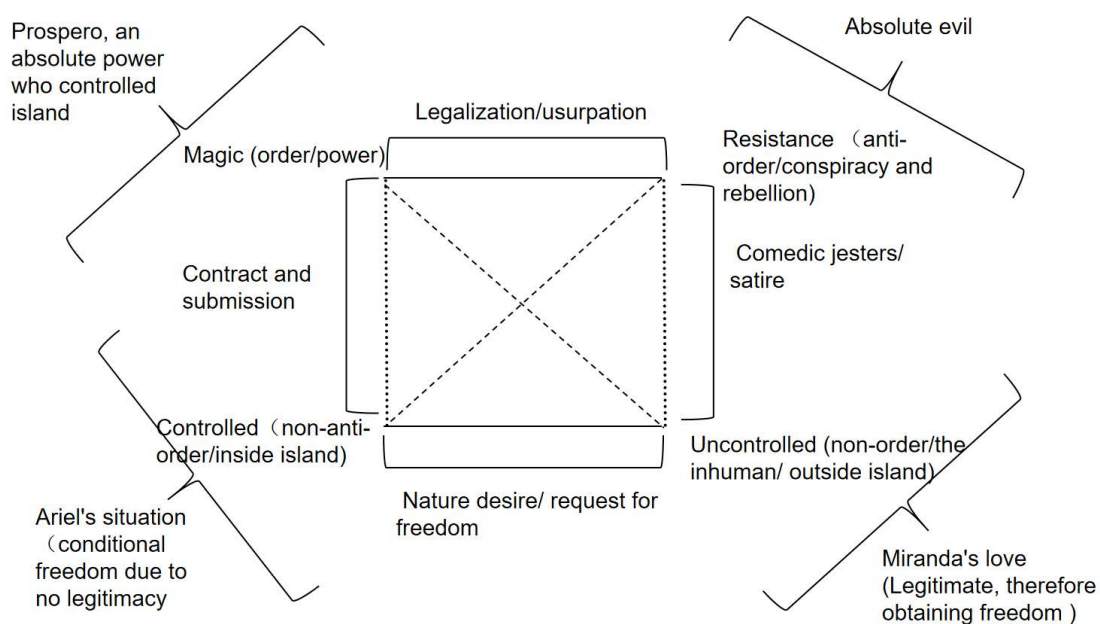## 3.2 Apply Greimas' Matrix on The Tempest

Fig. 2 Greimas' Matrix on the Tempest

As illustrated in Figure 2, in „The Tempest," magic serves as the tool of authority wielded by Prospero, enabling the establishment of absolute order. Successful employment of magic implies successful contractual relationships, countering various conspiracies and treacheries. However, the play also presents instances of resistance to order, including the usurpation plots of characters like Sebastian and Antonio, as well as direct declarations of rebellion by Caliban. Conversely, there exists a realm beyond magical control characterized by non-order. Some characters harbor desires for freedom, such as the inhuman creatures and the genuine love between Miranda and Ferdinand. These aspects of non-order may be deemed more irrational compared to Prospero's revenge scheme, representing the inner world of characters and their instinctual demands. Nonetheless, individuals like Ariel find themselves unable to resist Prospero's control, thus forming a realm of non-anti-order or controlled absolute order contained within the confines of magic.

Three other sets of antithetical, contradictory, and implicit relationships also exist within this matrix: for instance, the contrast between obedience and non-order essentially represents a dichotomy of controlled or uncontrolled states, shaping the reactions of characters under formidable authority and delineating limited realms of autonomy. Another set of contradictory relationships exists between compliance and resistance; for example, while Ariel acts entirely as a facilitator of Prospero's will, thereby enhancing his magical prowess to some extent, he also stands diametrically opposed to any form of rebellion. Finally, an implicit relationship exists between anti-order and non-order: within the play, Sebastian, alongside other conspirators scheming for power beyond the confines of the island, as well as Caliban, who harbors ambitions to disrupt the existing order and seize power within the island, assume roles akin to comedic jesters. If tragedy mirrors the actions of virtuous individuals and comedy mimics the behaviors of malevolence, then the presence of these disruptors serves as a portrayal and satire of folly and malevolence.

Once these six sets of constitutive relationships and semantic structures are identified, analysis can proceed using methods akin to those employed previously. The confluence of magic and the character of Prospero signifies the existence of an absolute and legitimate rule, with treachery that cannot be forcefully suppressed constituting an absolute ugliness and evil. Miranda's love, perhaps, can be situated between the order of the external world and the realm of desires; her emotions are constrained within the island but would attain significant legitimacy and freedom outside, free from her father's control. Indeed, Prospero's anxiety, as revealed earlier, manifests when Miranda rem-

inisces about „four or five women" who nurtured her in her youth, causing him discomfort as he prefers to portray himself as her sole teacher and the absolute source of her personal history [12]. There were „four or five women" in Miranda's memory that may symbolize the young girl's yearning for elements beyond the confines of the island. Ultimately, emotions realized only within the island are somewhat lamentable, as constituting not true freedom but rather conditional liberation. Just as Ariel remains unable to break free from the island's order, whether under Prospero's control or prior to it. Her choices are limited to either being sealed by Sycorax or bound by Prospero's contract [13]. A discernible matrix reveals a new thematic strand: the world outside an absolute control (which is considered rational and legal) harbors evil, while within such control, true freedom remains elusive. Ultimately, Prospero relinquishes magic and the obedient order it entails, embarking on the uncertainty of the external world.

4. Aesthetic Effect Created by the Humanities-Supernatural Binary Opposition

4.1 Supernaturalism as Metaphors with Enhancing Functions

Supernatural elements in literature often serve as metaphors, enriching the textual landscape by imbuing fixed and seemingly independent concepts with deeper thematic resonance. Ghosts and magic, as emblematic supernatural elements, symbolize intangible and complex dynamics within the narrative, functioning as metaphors that transcend mere appearances. From an analytical standpoint, supernatural elements fulfill two essential metaphorical functions: aesthetic and rhetorical [14]. These functions are interdependent facets of the same phenomenon. Aesthetically, these metaphors disrupt conventional language usage, engendering novel layers of meaning and expression. Through their symbolic potency, supernatural elements encapsulate a broader semantic axis. For instance, in „The Peony Pavilion," ostensibly antagonistic forces represent the dichotomy of life and death, as well as societal discord. However, by accentuating the protagonist Du Liniang's femininity through ghostly metaphors, a latent contradiction beneath the ostensibly happy conclusion is revealed. Similarly, in „The Tempest," while the primary conflict may appear rooted in themes of revenge and power, the metaphor of magic illuminates Prospero's apprehension regarding the erosion of his intellect and his inexorable aging process.

Moreover, literature relies not solely on rhetorical devices but also on broader structural frameworks, notably genres. In the context of performative plays, conflicts necessitate

tangible manifestations for effective expression. Merely verbalizing characters' internal thoughts and emotions through monologues or voiceovers often lack the requisite dramatic effect. For instance, relying solely on recitations akin to „an Interrupted dream" to convey the profound emotional states of protagonists proves insufficient [15]. However, leveraging supernatural elements to materialize these emotions into potent forces that shape life and death imbues the narrative with heightened tension. In the thirty-second scene, „A Vow" [15], the moment when Liu discovers that his beloved is a ghost embodies a transient sense of horror, subsequently transitioning to the thirty-fifth scene, „Resurrection" [15], where Liu embarks on the suspenseful endeavor of excavating Du's grave. This narrative concretizes the intricacies within the romantic entanglement. Following the excavation, upon unveiling Du's remarkably preserved corpse and witnessing its prompt reanimation, a profound sense of astonishment permeates, effectively blurring the boundaries between the dreamlike realm and reality, thereby enriching the emotional texture of the narrative.

Additionally, the presence of magic underscores Prospero's vengeful resolve, as evidenced by his ability to conjure tempests that envelop the entire island. This use of metaphor aligns with Conrad's characterization as both „linguistic" and „aesthetic" [14], drawing upon established textual and folkloric traditions. By infusing these symbols with enhanced functionality derived from fantasy elements, the narrative not only captivates the audience but also elicits visual and emotional gratification.

4.2 Supernaturalism as Plot Devices: Fantastic Theory

Fantasy narratives thrive on maintaining a delicate balance between conviction and skepticism, harnessing the hesitation between common sense and fanaticism to engross readers. The presence of supernatural elements in literature relies on their liminal state, serving to heighten narrative tension. Throughout the preceding discourse, the play consistently underscores the theoretical underpinnings of fantasy. This elucidates the role of supernatural elements as pivotal plot devices: when events occur within the bounds of a familiar world yet defy conventional explanation, characters confronted with such occurrences are compelled to navigate between two potential interpretations—the events are either manifestations of sensory delusion or products of imagination, preserving the stability of known laws; or, alternatively, they signify genuine phenomena, albeit governed by enigmatic laws beyond comprehension. In essence, the fantasy narrative structure reconciles apparent illogicality with surface rationality [3]. In the analyzed plays, supernatural elements frequently

undergo transmutation across diverse domains, yet they persistently maintain contradictory attributes within thematic frameworks. Employing matrix analysis, it becomes evident that alongside pronounced conflicts between characters, there exists a juxtaposition between fields. Characters transitioning from non-ordinary fields fail to fully dissolve inherent contradictions; on the contrary, the existence of the other side has been ironically emphasized. For instance, Liu Mengmei's encounter with the phantom of Du Liniang in her dream remains unrealized, with the ghostly manifestation resembling a fleeting illusion, as if traversing a realm utterly distinct from human reality. Despite efforts to get everything back on track, the illusion was controlled by the Emperor's laws and returned to daily life. However, the Emperor's decree cannot dissolve the nature that Du Liniang metaphorically represents— the transcendental nature she embodies. Conversely, the posthumous journey of Du Liniang into the afterlife amplifies her supernatural attributes. The lyrics of the various ghosts gathered in the underworld also ironically prove their existence, but they are not accepted by the world of the living. Those experiences were not dissolved but were masked by the world of ritual order. Similarly, the crew and the king encounter illusions of elves playing tricks and various forms of intimidation on the island, ultimately reconciling through the restoration of outside-island political orders. Prospero's vengeance is realized, yet the island, a locus of magic, persists, tinged with a lingering sense of regret and disquiet. Miranda and Ferdinand's love blossoms outside the island, yet its inception lies in the ethereal melodies of the elves. The island maintains its existence as an antithetical realm to the external world while grappling with the faint echoes of magic-induced unease and remorse.

4.3 Supernaturalism as Techniques in Dramatic Narratives

The processing of the fanatic often necessitates a shift in perspective, owing to the inherently ambiguous nature of supernatural elements themselves, which embody dual and opposing perspectives. Within dramatic narratives, this perspective shift frequently serves as a structural device to enhance dramatic tension through fundamental transformations in character fate and inner feelings, notably through the mechanisms of revealment and peripeteia [14].

Recognition, or revealment, denotes the transition from ignorance to knowledge, encompassing the protagonist's discovery of their own identity, interpersonal dynamics, or crucial facts. Conversely, reversal, or peripeteia, signifies a sudden plot reversal towards diametrically opposite outcomes, transitioning from adversity to prosperity or

vice versa. These techniques are commonly amalgamated to shape characters or articulate their psychological states. While these techniques may not be overtly manifested in character delineation within the analyzed plays, they are discernible within thematic undercurrents or the narrator's tone. Tang and Shakespeare, for instance, grapple with analogous thematic concerns. Tang endeavors to explore and elucidate a symbolic female realm of sentimental expression, delving into scenarios that transcend societal norms. However, after his imaginative forays, he acknowledges the imperative of order for validation, ultimately reconciling his narratives within the framework of societal conventions. Similarly, Shakespeare imbues his narrative with the motif of disillusionment. Prospero's gradual realization of the limitations of his rationality and power prompts him to employ all means at his disposal to secure a dignified position upon returning to the outside societal order. This narrative arc reflects a transformation in the narrator's perspective as characters confront the unreliability and inherent contradictions of the supernatural realm they pursue, necessitating a pivot towards diametrically opposed values for survival and legalization. This transformation often engenders a profound sense of disillusionment.

The shared thematic and creative motivations underpinning „The Tempest" and „The Peony Pavilion" are sufficient. According to records in John Dryden's version [16], „The Tempest" was performed at the Black Friar Theater in the second year of its writing year. At the same time, contrary to the prevailing view, „The Peony Pavilion" was also not created as a literary desk play: apart from Tang's written records, many rehearsal records of family and folk professional theater troupes [1] can prove that the performance of „the Peony Pavilion" is almost synchronized with the creation of its literary works. Therefore, both of the writers would be able to consider the nature of theatre in their design of performance. Furthermore, both plays exhibit elements of tragicomedy. It can be considered that while expressing the disillusionment of the theme, the author also reveals some understanding of drama - the stage is more consistent with supernatural attributes. In the relative realm of the real world, the disappearance of the fanatic sometimes accompanies the end of the plot. Beyond the interaction between characters, a hidden narrator engages in dialogue with the audience behind the stage, forming a thematic nested structure.

5. Conclusion

The paper examines the aesthetic effect of the humanities-supernatural binary opposition, discussing how supernatural elements like ghosts and magic function as metaphors in drama. This enriches the textual landscape by infusing fixed concepts with deeper thematic resonance, disrupting conventional language usage and enhancing the emotional texture of the narrative. This function is reflected in two main points: first, supernaturalism serves as plot devices, blurring the line between belief and skepticism for characters, heightening narrative tension, and reconciling apparent illogicality with surface rationality. Second, supernatural elements prompt a shift in perspective, embodying dual viewpoints and allowing for techniques like revealment and peripeteia to be introduced. The analysis utilizes the Greimasian matrix, a structuralist approach providing a broader perspective on shared thematic and creative motivations in the plays „The Tempest" and „The Peony Pavilion," both of which exhibit elements of tragicomedy and explore themes of disillusionment. The authors, aware of the theatrical context, seamlessly integrate supernatural attributes onto the stage, with their gradual disappearance often coinciding with the plot resolution. Additionally, thematic nested structures featuring hidden narrators engaging with the audience contribute to the intricate theatrical dynamics observed in these works.

The selection of these two plays as case studies follows a longstanding comparative tradition, aiming to identify patterns of supernatural elements within their cultural contexts and textual structures. The study suggests that by discerning these patterns, it may uncover underlying similarities in literary expression across different cultural systems. These resemblances could be further explored through comparative literature or new structuralism, addressing questions such as whether themes of disillusionment and audience preferences for the fantastical stem from similar societal backgrounds and how analogous literary devices persist and are absorbed into other stages or visual representations within their cultures. Looking ahead, a more comprehensive perspective may offer insights into addressing these inquiries on a broader scale.

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