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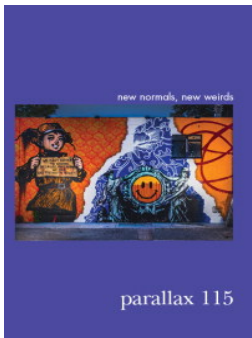
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New Normals, New Weirds: Contemporary Cultures and Politics of (Ab)Normality

Maria Boletsi , Florian Lippert , and Dimitris Soudias 

Idea(l)s of normality and normativity and notions of abnormality and deviance have long been elements of political power struggles, social discrimination and cultural controversies. These dynamics range from the racist naturalisation of white people as racially unmarked ‘normal individuals’ in physical anthropology¹ to the constitution of human abnormality with the development of penal and criminal psychiatry,² from the sexual revolution in the 1960s that set out to challenge the norms and taboos on sexuality³ to more recent manifestations of normalising exclusivist politics in the discourse of the ‘culture wars’.⁴ Since the dawn of modernity, the normal has also been a core preoccupation of artistic expression and aesthetic debates, especially by means of explicit turns *against* normalcy and towards the weird and the strange – from the defamiliarisation strategies of the early twentieth-century avant-gardes and the Russian formalists, who saw estrangement (*ostranenie*) as art’s main function,⁵ or Bertolt Brecht, whose ‘alienation effect’ (*Verfremdungseffekt*) sought to politicise theatrical aesthetics,⁶ to the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century genre of (what is now called Old) Weird fiction and its twenty-first-century revival in New Weird fiction, to mention just a few examples.

Historically, as Peter Cryle and Elizabeth Stephens gather in their influential book *Normality: A Critical Genealogy*, the word ‘normal’ first appeared in medicine as a specialist term and later claimed a place in physical anthropology in the mid-nineteenth century.⁷ Both discourses contributed to a racialised and ableist understanding of human difference and enabled the biologisation of normality, for example, in the context of eugenics, which labelled non-conformist human behaviour as ‘subnormal’, ‘sub-cultural’, socially ‘defective’, ‘deviant’ or ‘inefficient’, amongst other pejoratives.⁸ By the late 1800s, the term ‘normal’ had been taken up by statisticians, who reconceptualised it in quantitative terms as normal curve or normal distribution. In this context, the normal referred to a probability distribution where most data points of a certain kind tend to cluster towards the middle of the range. ‘Overall, *normal* remained a narrowly scientific term until well into the 20th century’, Cryle and Stephens point out, and the ‘meanings that now accrue around it in popular usage – the average, the typical, the ideal – came together [...] only around 1945’.⁹

Indeed, since the second half of the twentieth century, ideas and constructions of the (ab)normal have become widespread in popular culture, be it in the form of children's toys like the Barbie doll, which was launched as a representation of the ideal feminine body,¹⁰ or in fictional representations of disability as something to be 'overcome' for one to lead a 'normal' life.¹¹ Today, these constructions have become more ambivalent and contentious, thereby shifting expectations towards what is normal and, more importantly perhaps, calling into question the appropriateness of the binary normal versus abnormal.

The (New) Normal as Contested Territory

In political and economic discourses, government leaders and pundits have been explicit in their promises to restore normality in the aftermath of financial crises, climate emergencies, wars or the recent Covid-19 pandemic. The future-oriented term 'new normal' has been particularly popular in this regard amongst both policymakers and analysts. At the beginning of the millennium, the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights used the term 'new normal' to describe the re-configuration of security policies after 9/11 in the United States and elsewhere.¹² In 2004 the investor and venture capitalist Roger McNamee spoke of the 'new normal' as 'a time of great risk' in which new business opportunities were to be found.¹³ In the face of the 2008 financial crisis, the term was used, in turn, to depict the dramatic and serious transformations 'impacting collective perceptions and individual lifestyles'.¹⁴ Concerning the consequences of the crisis on the US economy, journalists Rich Miller and Matthew Benjamin predicted that the post-subprime economy would establish subpar growth as the new normal in the United States.¹⁵ Almost a decade later, during the Covid-19 pandemic, discourses about a 'new normal' that would mend a fraying social fabric intensified and diversified. Having undergone a massive contextual expansion, the 'new normal' could now include such different things as promises for better online education, smart energy transition or enhanced hygienic standards (for those parts of the world which can afford them) – but also the refamiliarisation with old (perceived) 'threats' in post-lockdown times, as in the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation's (Europol's) 'New Normal Safety Guide', which included ominous advice such as: 'You can go outside again. Criminals can too.'¹⁶

On the one hand, semantically speaking, the 'new normal' seems to imply future directionality towards the overcoming of the crisis at hand through an adjustment to a new situation. On the other hand, politicians have also looked to the past in order to propose a 'return' to normality. In the United Kingdom, for example, former Prime Minister Boris Johnson proclaimed a 'more significant return to normality' by Christmas 2020,¹⁷ only for his government to later on 'see a return towards normality in spring 2021'.¹⁸ Although such returns have been publicly contested, by, for example, artists such as Philip Wallisfurth, whose mural *We Can't Return to Normal* (2020) was



Figure 1. Philip Wallisfurth (Señor Schnu), *We Can't Return to Normal* (2020), mural, approx. 9 × 7 m. Urban Spree Gallery, Berlin (Revaler Straße 99). Photography: Lukas Stiller. The sign held by the figure on the left states (in capital letters): 'We can't return to normal because the normal we had was precisely the problem.'

created in response to 'the widespread desire to "return to normal"' as he experienced it in the German national context during the Covid-19 pandemic (Figure 1),¹⁹ the tensions arising between 'newness' and normality, and the temporal ambiguities arising from looking forward to a 'new normal' while also aiming to 'return to normality', are rarely addressed.

While both 'the new' and 'the return' involve a temporal dimension, upon closer inspection, they neither herald the end of the past nor the beginning of a (forward or backward looking) future. Instead, both tropes tell us a lot more about the disorientations, fears and desires people face in the present. Boris Groys remarks that 'the new' is often popularly associated 'with utopia as well as with hopes for a new beginning in history and a radical transformation of the conditions of human existence in the future'.²⁰ Yet, what we witness today with regard to the 'new normal' is often more reminiscent of endurance and neoliberal modes of resilience than of hope: where what is possible is reduced to what is assumed to be necessary, and where people are expected to take full responsibility for navigating and managing a precarious everyday life they have little influence over.²¹ The trope of the 'new normal' thereby ends up capturing not so much the prospect of overcoming a crisis but rather the normalisation and habituation of crisis itself – what Lauren Berlant has called 'crisis ordinariness': the experience of living in and through enduring crises and traumatic events that compel people to 'adapt' to them and to embed 'crisis' 'in the ordinary that unfolds in stories about navigating what's overwhelming'.²² At the same time, the return to normality has often been used as a restorative trope: the imaginary moving back to a

mythical point in the past – often prior to a period of sustained crisis – that, in fact, never existed.²³

The desire for a sense of ‘normality’ – for the comfort of the ‘normal’ and the ‘habitual’ in the face of intersecting crises and future uncertainty – is undeniable;²⁴ it is a desire that right-wing actors in particular have been striving to exploit. In the United States, libertarian commentator Ben Shapiro has claimed that ‘left cancel culture’ was intimidating and threatening people who were simply ‘craving any sense of normality’.²⁵ The cultural backlash under the second Trump presidency has frequently taken up this narrative, mobilising the language of threatened normality to frame political and cultural grievances. In Europe, populist and extreme right-wing parties have reinvigorated nativist discourse to appeal to cultural normativity and ‘a common sense Europe’ for the ‘common people’, but they have also presented themselves as ‘defenders’ of a ‘national normalcy’ *against* Europe (the European Union, that is).²⁶ A recent example is Germany’s far-right extremist party Alternative für Deutschland (AfD), which chose the slogan ‘*Deutschland, aber normal*’ (‘Germany, but normal’) during the 2021 federal election campaigns. In AfD’s discourse, ‘normalcy’ was equated with ‘protecting borders’, establishing ‘law and order’, and rolling back pluralist societal gains. By appealing to normality and nativism, the self-victimising rhetoric of right-wing and far-right actors has largely contributed to ‘normalizing vicious forms of culture war conflict that persecute different identities’ vis-à-vis such intersectional categories as class, sexuality, gender, race, ethnicity or ability.²⁷ Normalisation, in this sense, has been conceptualised as ‘a set of simultaneous or subsequent discursive strategies which gradually introduce and/or perpetuate in public discourse some new – and in most cases often uncivil or untrue – patterns of representing social actors, processes and issues’.²⁸

Meanwhile, ‘normie’ has become a popular insult and meme across the political spectrum and in a variety of contexts, from conspiracy theories to debates on humour and freedom of speech. When employed by the alt-right, ‘normie’ refers to ‘sage, mainstream people – presumably, the exact sorts who haven’t embraced the [alt-right] movement’.²⁹ Attempts from the other side of the political spectrum to deploy the ‘weird’ as a derogatory label for political opponents – such as Tim Walz calling Donald Trump ‘weird’ during the 2024 US presidential election campaign and later calling his behaviour ‘not normal’ in 2025 – have been less prominent.³⁰ Yet, these examples, too, are symptomatic of a broader trend in contemporary political rhetoric to mobilise vocabularies of normality and weirdness, even as the ground on which these categories rest is continuously shifting.

This points to the fact that today the ‘new normal’ is a ‘contested territory’ of ‘a future-oriented struggle over different visions from different perspectives’.³¹ Indeed, one cannot lose sight of the fact that for a large part of the world – many populations of the Global South, formerly colonised peoples, marginalised groups within societies of the Global North, migrants, refugees,

political dissidents in oppressive regimes, victims of climate change – the previous ‘normal’ that many (Western) people longed for during the Covid-19 pandemic was already abnormal, to say the least.³² “‘Normal’ has not worked for a majority of the world’s population, so why would it start working now?’, as Chime Asonye put it in a 2020 article for the World Economic Forum, entitled ‘There’s Nothing New about the New Normal’.³³ Ziauddin Sardar argues that the concept of the ‘new normal’ ‘provides a false sense of certainty in a time of deep uncertainty’, which often leads to a too facile treatment of the symptoms rather than to a consideration of the radical systemic change that is required to tackle the roots of uncertainty.³⁴

As the disorientating effects of overlapping crises intensify the experience of an ungraspable present and future, a stable experience of normality becomes almost untenable. The very popularity of the term ‘new normal’ testifies precisely to this constantly shifting ground of (perceived) normality and thus to people’s anxiety about a precarious present and uncertain future, especially in light of the climate emergency.

The (New) Weird: The Rise of a Marginalised Concept

Paradoxically, then, the phrase ‘new normal’ can be taken as a cipher of the weirdness of our times and as an anxious attempt to domesticate and scale down this weirdness. The domestication of unsettling phenomena under the banner of the ‘new normal’ can in some cases have far-reaching sociopolitical implications. Take, for example, recent references to a ‘new normal’ in the context of climate change and extreme or calamitous weather events.³⁵ Writing in the aftermath of the devastating wildfires in Australia in 2019–20, Lesley Head argues that this unprecedented catastrophe, which directly affected the majority of Australia’s human and nonhuman population, fostered ‘a moment of political potential’:

There is widespread distress at the deaths of more than a billion native animals. Rhetoric resisting the economic cost of transformation sounds hollow against estimates of the actual cost of the fires. Thousands have participated in demonstrations in what is usually a politically somnolent season. Although this catastrophe and seasonal dissonance could be a catalyst for necessary transformative change, they could just as easily be absorbed into a new normal.³⁶

In this argument, the ‘new normal’ trope emerges as an impediment to transformative change or, in Head’s words, as ‘a set of new stable conditions that we can get used to’, whereby ‘the accelerating change evident in climate models is ignored or rejected’.³⁷ The inadequacies and, at times, politically invalidating ramifications of the term ‘new normal’ when it comes to capturing highly volatile and disruptive situations have led many to turn to the ‘weird’ as a concept well suited for capturing disorientating experiences of

‘polycrisis’ in the twenty-first century.³⁸ This remarkable turn towards the ‘weird’ in different domains is the second central preoccupation of this special issue.

While the concept of the normal first developed in scientific contexts (medicine, mathematics, statistics) before entering general usage, the genealogy of the weird is rooted in fiction.³⁹ The semantics of the word ‘weird’ largely took shape through literature, from the ‘Weird Sisters’ of Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*, who personified the weird’s initial meaning as ‘fate’ and ‘prophecy’, to eighteenth-century Romantic poetry. Since the late nineteenth century, the term has become associated with a popular hybrid genre of speculative fiction that in the early twentieth century was hosted mainly in pulp magazines (such as *Weird Tales*), with H. P. Lovecraft as its main representative.⁴⁰ The genre estranged and broadened the ‘sense of reality’ of its time,⁴¹ showing it ‘to be richer, larger, stranger, more complex, more surprising [...] than common sense would suppose’.⁴² By the mid-twentieth century, the genre’s popularity had waned, but the concept of the weird regained valence in the twenty-first century, partly due to the increasing popularity of the genre of New Weird fiction, from which the weird infiltrated other domains beyond literature.⁴³ Examples of this infiltration include the strand of ‘weird realism’ in philosophy⁴⁴ as well as theorisations of the weird as a concept, mode or practice in cultural critique,⁴⁵ in ecocritical and posthumanist theory,⁴⁶ in geography,⁴⁷ and even in the natural sciences.⁴⁸ Furthermore, the recent ‘weird wave’ in Greek cinema,⁴⁹ the discourse of ‘global weirding’ in environmental debates that seeks to capture the incalculable consequences of environmental degradation,⁵⁰ and even recent uses of speculative-fiction methodologies in policymaking⁵¹ all testify to a renewed preoccupation with the weird, even though they may differ considerably in their theoretical and ideological premises and envisioned goals.

Alongside the twenty-first-century surge in mobilisations of the weird, we find scholarly preoccupations with related concepts, such as the *uncanny*,⁵² *eerie*,⁵³ *wild*,⁵⁴ *spectral*,⁵⁵ *queer*⁵⁶ or *utopian*.⁵⁷ These notions overlap with the weird at various points yet retain distinct functions – as illustrated, for example, in Patricia MacCormack’s contribution to this issue, which unravels the entanglement of the weird and the queer. Our decision to foreground the *weird* alongside the *normal* in this issue’s title is motivated by several considerations. First, in choosing the *weird* instead of, for instance, the *abnormal*, we resist foregrounding the ‘other’ of the normal as linguistically and conceptually dependent on the normal in a hierarchical binary, even though the *abnormal* is also part of the discussions in this issue (in, for example, Ellen Rutten’s contribution). The weird has its own genealogy, which is entangled with, but is also distinct from, that of the normal. Second, we observe a recent spike in the usage of the term ‘weird’ in English, which warrants attention. As noted in the contribution of Maria Boletsi and Dimitris Soudias in this issue, the acceleratory use of the term in the twenty-first century stands out in relation to the (also but less strikingly increased) use of related categories, such as *eerie* and *uncanny*.

Third, as also argued by Boletsi and Soudias in their contribution, the weird's multiformity, multivalence and broad extension distinguishes it from related concepts as well: the weird takes many grammatical forms (noun, adjective, adverb, verb) and has been used and studied as a *genre*, a *concept*, an *aesthetic category*, a *judgement*, a *mode* of being, thinking, reading and worlding,⁵⁸ a *form*,⁵⁹ a *mood*, an *atmosphere*, an *experience*, an *affect*,⁶⁰ a *cognitive frame*⁶¹ and a condition ('global weirding'). Its epistemological complexity and malleability, which, we contend, no other related term exhibits to this degree, makes it a fascinating counterpart to the normal, a promising theoretical tool and object of study, and a suitable overarching term for connecting diverse developments, theories and practices in various domains today.

Fourth, and perhaps most importantly, recent preoccupations with the weird in literary studies, art, cultural critique, philosophy, environmental humanities and posthumanist theory, amongst other fields, are inherently linked to a central pursuit in the current phase of the Anthropocene: the urgent need to devise new narrative frameworks to capture the complexity and fragile interconnectedness of our world and envision de-anthropocentric, more inclusive futures. The weird, it can be argued, is well suited for such transgressive, 'transscalar' thinking that can accommodate the human and the nonhuman, the big and the small, and that allows us 'to think across and with the multiple scales of temporality and spatiality, materiality and discourse, ontology and epistemology, race and politics'.⁶² As a hybrid generic category that integrates elements from several genres (gothic, horror, fantasy, science fiction, realism), the weird facilitates 'contact between incommensurable worlds': scales, genres, spatiotemporal orders, domains and disciplines.⁶³

Indeed, culture, politics, economy, technology and science today increasingly harness speculative fiction, non-positivist epistemologies and tropes or aesthetics akin to the weird, in order to either address the strangeness of realities that others tag as a 'new normal' or seek alternative responses to ongoing crises. Many of these responses – which, in their contribution, Boletsi and Soudias scrutinise under the term 'weird turn' – put forward modes of resistance to the neoliberal governmentality of crisis and propose pathways towards more inclusive and just futures. Yet, others harbour reactionary and exclusionary worldviews and sustain neo-colonial practices and neoliberal capitalist rationalities. The weird, for example, is often co-opted as a buzzword by the market and entertainment industry or, in other cases, used to discriminate, dismiss and delegitimise deviant perspectives and alternatives. Therefore, we posit that neither the weird nor the normal are by definition 'positive' or 'negative' concepts: their performativity shifts through the various uses to which they are put. An important task for cultural studies scholars is, as we see it, to critically interrogate disparate mobilisations of both the weird and the (new) normal, in their distinct potentialities and ethico-political ramifications. We hope that this issue contributes to this effort.

Theorising the Normal and the Weird Today

While the normal, the abnormal and the weird have had long histories, in this special issue we argue that the current moment requires a renewed consideration of the makings and workings of the discursive fields of the normal and the weird. Intersecting crises and the complexity of global challenges, particularly the climate emergency, as well as the dizzying speed of technological developments, generate disorientating experiences of the present: in these volatile conditions, on unstable grounds, the pull both to the (new) normal and to the weird, and their interrelation, require critical attention. These notions are key to theorising and narrativising experiences of the present and to imagining the future. Which concepts and frameworks from cultural studies, literary studies, visual studies, philosophy, sociology, political science and related fields can help us observe, understand and theorise the shifting ground of the normal and the weird today, their contemporary expressions and their complicated relationships? What is the analytical value of distinguishing between, say, the weird and the uncanny, or the normal and the ordinary? In the face of today's ongoing crises, global inequalities and exclusionary practices, which emancipatory potentialities do mobilisations of both the normal and the weird open up? But also, which risks and problems do they generate?

In different ways and writing styles, the contributions in this issue attend to these questions, alternating between close readings of case studies and attempts to map and theorise larger trends vis-à-vis the normal, the weird and adjacent concepts such as the average and the imperfect. Exploring the interface of the normal and the weird demands interdisciplinary dialogues and experimentation with diverse methodological paths and styles of academic writing. Hence, empirically based studies, historical investigations, and programmatic and manifesto-like essays come together in this issue, at times complementing and at times challenging each other.

Deconstructing the Binary: Affirmation, Co-optation and Transformation

Despite these differences in style, our contributions share several core objectives concerning the normal and the weird. First, they attend to the manifold consequences of (framing something as) 'weird' and 'normal', and they suggest, at different levels, *deconstructions of the underlying binary*. Instead of trying to demarcate where the normal ends and the weird begins, we follow Judith Butler's stance that 'the point is not to find the right typology, but to understand where typological thinking falls apart'.⁶⁴ In scrutinising meaning-making about and through the normal and the weird, we acknowledge that both terms can produce normative effects. Yet, their ethico-political and epistemological content is neither objective nor universal; rather, it is historically contingent and context-bound. This also highlights the importance of attending to the spaces 'betwixt and between' the binary elements: the liminal, transitory and queer positions that question typological thinking.⁶⁵

Second, the contributions transgress the classical understanding of the normal as an affirmative force and the weird as its constitutive outside or its subversion. Today, claims relating to the normal can be based on a progressive understanding of equity and democracy that conceive normality as a liberatory force (for example, in Menno Hurenkamp and Jan Willem Duyvendak's contribution), while they can also serve as a mere facade for oppressive normativity or as a justification for cultural uniformism and exclusionary practices. The weird, in turn, may serve as a conceptual tool for critically subverting normative frameworks or for engendering 'alternative ways of thinking and being', both 'wonderful and terrifying', as well as new narratives for the present and the future.⁶⁶ But it can also be used as a fashionable signifier for quirkiness, for example, in Netflix productions or a marketing strategy for mainstream brands, arguably confirming Adorno's prognosis that the expanding culture industry would eventually incorporate its own critics.⁶⁷ In this vein, the articles in this special issue attend to the multiple meanings, uses, implications and affordances of the normal and the weird and their shifting performativity in culture and politics: as modes of affirmation, objects of co-optation and forces of transformation.

The Contributions

The first part of this issue broaches the discursive field of the *normal* and adjacent concepts (such as the *normative* and the *average*) in culture, politics and society. Sociologists Menno Hurenkamp and Jan Willem Duyvendak's article 'A Few Good Characteristics of the Ordinary' is, as the title suggests, a benevolent take on the ordinary and an exploration of both its liberatory and its regulatory qualities. Based on three cases of the 'new normal' – the 'Common Man' in the Netherlands, super-diversity, and the Covid-19 pandemic – the authors argue that debates around the 'new normal' reshape what is taken to be ordinary and show that appeals to normality operate through both exclusionary and inclusionary mechanisms – depending on whether normality is framed as a property of people or of situations.

The contribution by discourse theorist Jürgen Link harks back to the historical diversification and contemporary semantic ambiguities of the normal which we addressed above. Link revisits his established theoretical framework of 'normalism', arguing that we should treat the discursive field of normality as a specific historical constellation that has been evolving in data-processing societies over the last two centuries. Using contemporary examples from the financial crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic, Link demonstrates how rule-based normativity has been successively replaced by statistics-based normality in these societies, before relating this process to current practices of weirding.

Cultural studies scholar Florian Lippert attends to an adjacent concept of the normal, namely, 'the average'. Connecting to Link's observation that averages are often confounded with norms, Lippert dissects the cultural construction of 'average citizens' in election campaigns, media infotainment, and discourses about normality and normativity. After discussing the semantic complexity of 'average'-

related expressions in everyday language, Lippert extrapolates two historical key developments: the ‘culturalisation of averages’ as it developed since early conceptualisations of the arithmetic mean, and evolving practices of ‘cultural averaging’ since the nineteenth century. Building on various examples such as the notorious Dickinson–Belskie *Norma* model or ‘average citizen’ constructs purported by the European far right, Lippert reveals the cultural principles and pitfalls that structure our thinking in cultural averages.

The second part of this issue addresses the discursive, conceptual and affective field of the weird, along with related notions of the abnormal, the imperfect and the queer. Literary and cultural studies scholar Maria Boletsi and political sociologist Dimitris Soudias develop the claim that we are currently witnessing a ‘weird turn’ in various domains, not only across the humanities and social sciences but also in the arts, civil society and public culture. They approach the weird turn as a ‘spillover’ of practices, aesthetics and representational modes of weird and speculative fiction into seemingly unrelated fields, such as the natural sciences, economics or policy innovation. Exploring the weird turn, particularly in ecology and the economy, the authors trace the political desires involved in mobilisations of the weird without treating the weird turn as a priori affirmative or emancipatory. By teasing out the weird’s political, epistemological and ethical implications, Boletsi and Soudias argue that the weird turn fosters alternative frameworks for narrativising present realities and exploring how (weird) fiction can recalibrate our thinking about the present and the future. In so doing, the authors challenge the ‘new normal’ trope as one that domesticates the weird and betrays the waning of the political and cultural authority of the ‘normal’ today.

Literary and cultural studies scholar Ellen Rutten’s article ‘From Dreams of the Imperfect Child to Post-Soviet Glum Glam: A Short History of Anti-normative Body Aesthetics’ traces anti-normative rhetoric surrounding the human body. She shows how understandings of the (im)perfect are constantly renegotiated in the face of socio-technological shifts. Attending to discourses of normal and (im)perfect bodies of babies, children and adults through a range of cases drawn primarily from Western, Central and Eastern Europe – with additional examples from the United States and the United Kingdom – her analysis reveals the ways in which practices that critique normative body cultures subvert body perfectionism and intervene in public debates on the commodification of beauty, health and gender.

Finally, continental philosopher Patricia MacCormack explores the understanding of abnormal as weird and shows how the weird is a queer form of the expression of the self in various relations with the other. Building on queer death studies, weird fiction and the work of Deleuze and Guattari, amongst others, their essay examines the critical ethical dimension of the queer weird, by scrutinising how the weird challenges ‘the mythic phantasy of the template of the normal’ vis-à-vis heteronormativity, physical ability, race, sexuality and gender.

Moving across cultural, literary and visual studies, as well as philosophy, sociology and discourse theory, these contributions set up fruitful – albeit sometimes unlikely or, indeed, somewhat ‘weird’ – conversations amongst different disciplinary fields, traditions and writing styles. These conversations showcase that any engagement with the shifting, contested terrain of the normal and the weird today needs to take place on a transdisciplinary ground, on which different voices and perspectives test and challenge each other, and even write together towards novel questions, transdisciplinary configurations and horizons of inquiry.

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