




The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre (A Volume in the CWRU Press Translations)

By Tzvetan Todorov

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In *The Fantastic*, Tzvetan Todorov seeks to examine both generic theory and a particular genre, moving back and forth between a poetics of the fantastic itself and a metapoetics or theory of theorizing, even as he suggest that one must, as a critic, move back and forth between theory and history, between idea and fact. His work on the fantastic is indeed about a historical phenomenon that we recognize, about specific works that we may read, but it is also about the use and abuse of generic theory.

As an essay in fictional poetics, *The Fantastic* is consciously structuralist in its approach to the generic subject. Todorov seeks linguistic bases for the structural features he notes in a variety of fantastic texts, including Potocki's *The Sargasso Manuscript*, Nerval's *Aurélia*, Balzac's *The Magic Skin*, the *Arabian Nights*, Cazotte's *Le Diable Amoureux*, Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*, and tales by E. T. A. Hoffman, Charles Perrault, Guy de Maupassant, Nicolai Gogol, and Edgar A. Poe.

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Editorial Review

Review

"This work is much more than what its title might imply to an American reader. It is not simply another 'formalist' categorizing of a particular literary genre. Todorov involves himself in a consideration of the concept of literary genre (with a perceptive critique of Northrop Frye), a detailed and perceptive discourse on 'the fantastic,' . . . and finally a philosophical-historical discussion of the relation of 'the fantastic' to literature itself. . . . This is an important work for anyone interested in criticism in general or in the criticism of fiction in particular."?Choice

"This, the first of Todorov's books to be translated into English (it was originally published in French in 1970), is brilliant. . . . Todorov's attempt to formulate a general theory for studying themes without subordinating literary theory to the social sciences makes this book indispensable to serious students of literature."?Library Journal

Language Notes

Text: English, French (translation)

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Esther Watson:

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Carol Wells:

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