

## Chapter 4

### TODOROV'S CONCEPT OF THE FANTASTIC

Todorov's most original contribution in literary studies is his work The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre. He is the first critic to distinguish between the genre of fantasy and that of the fantastic. He is also the only critic so far to have analyzed the narrative techniques and strategies of 'the fantastic' as a genre in structuralist terms.

The fantastic as Todorov speaks about it in his work is a genre in which the emphasis is laid on a simple fact, the identification of the reader with the character. This may sound simple, but it is necessary to go a little bit deeper to fully understand the meaning of this statement. If a person would like to find a story that would fit into the scheme of the fantastic, the first thing he/she needed to watch out for is the supernatural. Its presence is necessary because it is the source of the most important feature in the fantastic. Afterwards he/she would need to look how the protagonist reacts to the supernatural. The presence of such creatures as the devil, vampires or the living dead is very common in the examples that are used by Todorov. But it is not the presence of the supernatural that defines the fantastic. It is the protagonist and his/her reactions that form the distinctive characteristic of the genre. As a requirement for the fantastic to appear, the character must not be aware of the supernatural, thus creating a constant level of uncertainty inside the protagonist disabling his/her capability of creating a stable explanation. Todorov names this level of the uncertainty 'the hesitation.' Once the hesitation is present, the next step in the outline is to focus on the recipient of the hesitation, the reader.

According to Todorov the statement - "I nearly reached the point of believing"- may be used as a formula which sums up the spirit of the fantastic. He writes: Either total faith or total incredulity would lead the reader beyond the fantastic: it is 'the hesitation' which sustains its life.

There exist narratives which contain supernatural elements without the reader's ever questioning their nature, for he/she realizes that he/she is not to take them literally. If animals speak in a fable, doubt does not trouble the reader's mind: the reader knows that the words of the text are to be taken in another sense, which we call allegorical. The converse situation applies to poetry. A poetic text might sometimes be judged fantastic, provided the reader required poetry to be representative.

In a world which is indeed our world, the one we know....there occurs an event which cannot be explained by the laws of this same familiar world. The person who experiences the event must opt for one of two possible solutions: either he is the victim of an illusion of the senses, of a product of the imagination-- and the laws of the world then remain what they are; or else the event has indeed taken place, it is an integral part of reality--but then this reality is controlled by laws unknown to us.

(Todorov 1975: 25)

Thus, Todorov believes that the fantastic implies not only the existence of an uncanny event, which provokes a hesitation in the reader and the hero, but also a kind of reading, which can be for the moment defined negatively: it must be neither "poetic" nor "allegorical".

Todorov declares that the fantastic requires the fulfillment of three conditions. First, the text should be capable of convincing the reader to consider the world of the characters as a world of living persons. The reader must be unable to decide between a natural and a supernatural explanation of the events described in the text. Second, ideally the hesitation felt by reader may also be experienced by a character of the description. Third, the reader must adopt a certain attitude with regard to the text: he / she should reject allegorical as well as "poetic" interpretations of the text he /she is reading. In these three conditions all of them do not have equal significance. The text can be fantastic even if it fulfills first and third conditions only. Todorov says, however, that the second may not be fulfilled. However, most examples of this genre satisfy all three conditions of the fantastic text.

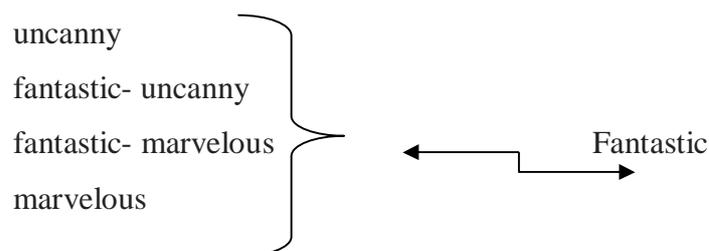
Todorov's formulation of the three conditions that make a text an example of the fantastic can be elaborated as follows. First, the text must oblige the reader to consider the world of the characters as a world of living persons and to hesitate between a natural or supernatural explanation of the events described. Second, this hesitation may also be experienced by a character; thus the reader's role is so to speak entrusted to a character, and at the same time the hesitation is represented, it becomes one of the themes of the work--in the case of naive reading, the actual reader identifies himself with the character. Third, the reader must adopt a certain attitude with regard to the text: he will reject allegorical as well as "poetic" interpretations.

The fantastic, as Todorov describes, lasts only as long as a certain hesitation: a hesitation common to reader and character, who must decide whether or not what they perceive derived from "reality" as it exists in the common opinion. When the reader finishes the text, the reader makes a decision even if the character does not; he/ she

opts for one solution or the other, and thereby emerges from the fantastic. If he/ she decides that the laws of reality is not affected and able to provide an explanation of the phenomena described in the given text one can say that the work belongs to another genre: the uncanny. If, on the contrary, the existing laws of nature are not able to provide an explanation of the phenomena described in the given text new laws of nature must be entertained to account for the phenomena, the reader enters the genre of the marvelous.

Thus, Todorov sounds the warning that the fantastic. The fantastic therefore leads a life full of dangers, and might evaporate at any moment. It seems to be located on the frontier of two genres, the marvelous and the uncanny, rather than to be an autonomous genre.

Todorov's concept of fantastic cannot be excluded from a scrutiny of either the marvelous or the uncanny, genres which it overlaps. These two neighbors of fantastic deserve a look here. It is not difficult to find that in each case, a transitory sub-genre appears: between the fantastic and the uncanny on one hand, between the fantastic and the marvelous on the other hand. These sub-genres include works that sustain the hesitation characteristic of the true fantastic for a long period, but that ultimately end in the marvelous or in the uncanny. Following diagram represents these sub-divisions:



In fantastic-uncanny that is a sub-genre events that seem supernatural throughout a story may be rationally explained at its end. If these events have long led the character and the reader alike to believe in an intervention of the supernatural, it is because they have an unaccustomed character. Criticism has described, and often condemned, this type under the label of "the supernatural explained."

In the uncanny, events are related which may be readily accounted for by the laws of reason, but which are, in one way or another, incredible, extraordinary, shocking, singular, disturbing or unexpected, and which thereby provoke in the character and in the reader a reaction similar to that which works of the fantastic have made familiar.

(Todorov 1975: 46)

In cases where the readers find themselves in the uncanny rather, in spite of themselves, in order to explain the fantastic- there may be found the uncanny in the pure state. In works that belong to this genre, events are related which may be readily accounted for by the laws of reason, but which are, in one way or another, incredible, extraordinary, shocking, singular, disturbing or unexpected, and which thereby provoke in the character and in the reader a reaction similar to that which works of the fantastic have made familiar. The definition is, as seen by now, broad and vague, but so is the genre which it describes: the uncanny is to a clearly delimited genre, unlike the fantastic. More precisely, it is limited on just one side, that of the fantastic; on the other, it dissolves into the general field of literature. The literature of horror in its pure state belongs to the uncanny. Thus, for Todorov

The uncanny, usually, realizes only one of the conditions of the fantastic: the description of certain reactions, especially of fear. It is uniquely linked to the sentiments of the characters and not to a material event defying reason.

(Todorov 1975: 47)

Some scholars consider the fantastic, the uncanny and the marvelous as types of horror literature. However, the definitions of the genre of horror differ. Many authors have tried to create a definition that would be able to completely distinguish and separate horror from the similar and close genres science fiction and thriller. However, they always encountered difficulties as the attributes that refer to one genre can be also found in the other one. To characterize horror as a genre that invokes tension in recipients is not accurate enough, as science fiction, thrillers; detective and crime stories initiate the feeling of suspense as well. The same is to be said about the emotion of fear or the display of blood, which are another attributes of horror production but can be found in the other mentioned genres, too.

In his work An Introduction to Studying Popular Culture, Dominic Strinati created the following definition that characterizes horror “as a genre that represents the need for suppression if the horror shown is interpreted as expressing uncomfortable and disturbing desires which need to be contained” (Strinati 82). And further he explains:

Horror is a varied genre that is hard to be defined by one single definition. And therefore the most accurate is the one that defines horror through each of its categories and its subgenres. Todorov distinguishes between three forms of horror as a genre: uncanny, marvelous and fantastic.

(Quoted in Strinati 83)

In the first category – the uncanny, the end of the story contains elements of supernatural, events that seem to be unreal, impossible or irrational, or events that

follow the laws of rational but are incredible, disturbing, unusual, shocking, unexpected or unique. The viewer/reader has an opportunity to explain them in their own way. Yet the laws of reality remain untouched. Examples of this category are the following films: *Taste of Fear* (1961), *Nightmare* (1964), *Psycho* (1960), or films that overlap with the genre of science fiction. Extraterrestrials can be inhuman but not unnatural; they represent the boundaries of human knowledge.

In the second category – the marvelous horror, seemingly irrational and incomprehensible phenomena can be explained only by accepting the second layer of reality – the supernatural while the story lasts. To explain the incomprehensible phenomena of the story we must accept “the new laws of nature”. Films of vampires, werewolves, living dead, demons etc represent this category.

The third category – the fantastic horror does not allow one clear explanations of the irrational; it offers him/her several alternatives. The viewer/reader can decide whether they will explain the phenomenon as the existence of the paranormal or as a hallucination of the main protagonist. The fantastic horror raises doubts and hesitation between the natural and supernatural alternative, which the recipient may (or may not) share with the character. Examples are film such as *Shining* (1980), *Cat People* (1942) *The Innocents* (1920) or *I Walked With a Zombie* (1943).

One of the basic characteristics of a horror is some typical archetypal characters: vampire, werewolf, zombie, monster, mad scientist, demon, ghost, eternal wanderer, serial killer, psychopath, bad child, possessed person, and antichrist. This genre is characterized by vigor, and therefore it is necessary to note that these are only just a few of the archetypes. Usually, they keep evolving along with the genre and new archetypal characters are created perpetually. Another of this genre's dominant

features is the environment in which the story is revolving. First, it may be a situation that these were places out of the modern world, such as cemetery, abandoned castle, gloomy forest, castle ruins, old house, etc. These are places intensively charged with mystery that have “their own lives”. This is also true for the modern environment that cuts its way into the modern horror. From the aspect of range we may differentiate between two forms: short story and novel. These two are standing against each other as opposites and which alternate in the various historical cycles.

The tradition of horror, unlike the gothic tradition, stems from the form of the short story that elaborates the horror motive in a shorter time, focuses on a smaller amount of characters and this way enables the reader to have a more detailed and more personal contact. On the contrary, a novel reflects a story of a longer time span and mostly focused on larger communities. With its range, it forces the recipient to interrupt the interpretation, which may be of harm in such an emotionally oriented genre. Apparently it seems that the horror of these days dominated by the form of a novel.

One of the notable contemporary theorists Rosemary Jackson approaches the interpretation of horror as repressive cultural schematizations. According to Rosemary particular themes are a manifestation of what the society suppresses by cultural conventions. These themes represent those phenomena, which the society considers unreal. Horror may be regarded as a form of expressing a disagreement with the political and social situation and anxieties of oppression and tyranny. The imagery created by a work of horror is aiming for the removal of repression and expansion of the frontiers of reality.

Another very common theme in horrors is the split personality, which can be found in such characters as Dr. Jekyll/Mr. Hyde (Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde by Robert Louis Stevenson), Dorian Gray (The Picture of Dorian Gray by Oscar Wilde) are creatures that are half human and half animal, or even are serial killers, who suffer with split personality syndrome. This motif of horror may be interpreted as an eternal conflict of good and evil, sense and instinct, human and inhuman. The fact is that a horror story does not always have a happy ending. Happy ending requires the good conquers above evil. Horror offer readers / audience a hypothesis about what could happen if the control was taken over by negative forces. By unhappy ending the horror give a kind of warning for the readers/ audience to act in good spirit.

Movies make a good use of this uncanny / horror genre now-a-days. Deirdre D. Johnston in an article titled “Adolescents’ Motivation for Viewing Graphic Horror” (Human Communication Research 1995 21- 4) categorized the audience / viewer of a horror / uncanny. According to Johnson, it is possible to differentiate between four motivational groups, which stimulate the audience / viewer to watch a film of horror / uncanny genre.

The first is *Gore watching* – this approach reflects the curiosity for physical violence and revenge. The viewer is interested in the way the victims are dying; he / she likes to see what they deserve. He / she likes the view of blood and gore. This audience / viewer is characterized by a low level of empathy, lowered levels of fear and increased desire for revenge.

The second is *Thrill watching* – the audience / viewer of this category is interested in the emotion of tension and excitement evoked by a horror / uncanny film. Typical features are high level of empathy and longing for adventures.

The third is *Independent watching* – These are independent audience / viewers who chose a particular role that assumes testing their own bravery and adulthood. They are described by a low level of dispositional empathy.

The fourth is *Problem watching* – The audience / viewer watches the horror because he / she feels abandoned, angry and he / she tries to avoid the problems of his / her mundane life. Audience / viewer seeks excitement in the suffering of others and often identifies himself / herself with the victim this way revealing his / her own powerlessness.

There are many theories about what drives readers, audience / viewer to these works, which are contradictive and unable to embrace the complete horror production but only some of the themes or subgenres, and which are related only to a particular limited category of recipients. Every horror / uncanny fan has their own reasons for seeking outputs that are full of deterrent elements and motives. Some want to experience what they are not allowed in real life. Some of these want to escape from the uncomfortable reality. Some are testing themselves by encountering horrors to test their character. Some increase their tolerance to fright and fear to avoid panic in dangerous real life situations. Many times the reader, audience / viewer cannot even explain or describe what drives him / her to seek outputs of horror production. Many of the readers, audience / viewers only know they enjoy them. However, there is always reason, but it might be hidden in the deepest corners of one's soul and mind which are hard to reach by a common human.

Fantastic-marvelous can be understood as the class of narratives that are presented as fantastic and that end with an acceptance of the supernatural. These are the narratives closest to the pure fantastic, for the latter, by the very fact that it

remains unexplained, irrationalized, suggests the existence of the supernatural. The frontier between the two will therefore be uncertain; nonetheless, the presence or absence of certain details will always allow one to decide.

The fantastic, as Todorov explains, lasts only as long as a certain hesitation: a hesitation common to reader and character, who must decide whether or not what they perceive derives from "reality" as it exists in the common opinion. At the story's end reader makes a decision even if the character does not; he/ she opts for one solution or the other, and thereby emerges from the fantastic. If the reader decides that the laws of reality remain intact and permit an explanation of the phenomena described, it may be said that the work belongs to another genre: the uncanny. If, on the contrary, the reader decides that new laws of nature must be entertained to account for the phenomena, reader enters the genre of the marvelous.

Todorov says that one may ask how valid a definition of genre may be if it permits a work to "change genre" by a simple sentence like: "At this moment, he awakened and saw the walls of his room . . ." But there is no reason not to think of the fantastic as an evanescent genre. Such a category, moreover, has nothing exceptional about it. The classic definition of the *present*, for example, describes it as a pure limit between the past and the future. The comparison is not gratuitous: the marvelous corresponds to an unknown phenomenon, never seen as yet, still to come – hence to a future; in the uncanny, one refers the inexplicable to known facts, to a previous experience, and thereby to the past. As for the fantastic itself, the hesitation which characterized it cannot be situated, by and large, except in the present. (42)

The fantastic requires, then, in order to be intelligent to be present within the text, the fulfillment of three conditions—related to different aspects of the text—in which the reader takes an active role.

The first one, being situated at the verbal aspect of the text, asks the reader to take the characters as live beings, giving them human form, and to wonder between a natural and a supernatural explanation of the events taking place. The second, linked to the syntactic and semantic aspect, needs this hesitation to be experienced by a character. The third one asks the reader to reject poetical and allegorical interpretations. The reader becomes, then, the most important element in the process:

At the story's end, the reader makes a decision even if the character does not; he opts for one solution or the other, and thereby emerges from the fantastic. If he decides that the laws of reality remain intact and permit an explanation of the phenomena described, we say that the work belongs to another genre: the uncanny. If, on the contrary, he decides that new laws of nature must be entertained to account for the phenomena, we enter the genre of the marvelous.

(Todorov 1975: 41)

Therefore, for Todorov the fantastic is a genre, but rather than being an autonomous one, it is situated on the frontier of two other genres: the marvelous and the uncanny. Todorov mentions, however, that it could evaporate any moment. It is possible to say that this definition lacks precision and is ambiguous, but Todorov argues that sometimes one can use such definitions to explain concepts difficult to understand as in the following: 'The classic definition of the present, for example, describes it as a pure limit between the past and the future'. (42)

Todorov also characterizes two sub-genres of the fantastic as the fantastic-uncanny and the fantastic-marvelous. Todorov represents these sub-divisions with this diagram: uncanny/ fantastic- uncanny / fantastic- marvelous/ marvelous (44). In the former sub-genre the events, which have been presented as supernatural throughout the history, receive a rational explanation at the end. As an example Todorov mentions The Saragossa Manuscript, in which the 'miracles' are rationally explained at the end of the narrative. In the latter, however, the work is presented as fantastic and it ends up accepting the supernatural. These types of works are the closest to the pure fantastic 'for the latter, by the very fact that it remains unexplained, unrationalized, suggests the existence of the supernatural' (52). Todorov takes as an example La Morte Amoureuse by Théophile Gautier.

The marvelous, in the pure state, just as in the case of the uncanny, has no distinct limits. But, in this case, supernatural events do not provoke any particular reaction neither in the characters, nor in the implicit reader. Nevertheless, there are several types of narrative in which the supernatural is justified. These are: the hyperbolic marvelous, the exotic marvelous, the instrumental marvelous and the scientific marvelous. Todorov maintains that we generally link the genre of the marvelous to that of the fairy tale: But as a matter of fact, the fairy tale is only one of the varieties of the marvelous, and the supernatural events in fairy tales provoke no surprise: neither a hundred years' sleep, nor a talking wolf, nor the magical gifts of the fairies (to cite only a few elements in Perrault's tales). What distinguishes the fairy tale is a certain kind of writing, not the status of the supernatural. (54)

It is pertinent to mention Angela Carter, because it is here where she belongs with her book The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories (1979)—a collection of short

stories. Carter had translated for Gollancz some of Perrault's tales in 1977. Two years later, she decided to rewrite the fairy-tales of Perrault and Madame Leprince de Beaumont. One of them, The Company of Wolves, was even adapted for the screen by Neil Jordán in The Company of Wolves in 1984. Precisely because Carter has rewritten them, they cannot be defined as fairy tales as such, and instead of being a variety of the marvelous, they could be taken as being closer to the uncanny as the events described in the narrative could provoke certain reactions in the reader, especially that of fear. They have become a twentieth century invention.

Here one is also faced with the problem of the work's unity. People take this unity as self-evident. They assert that a sacrilege has been committed when cuts are made. But matters are probably more complicated; it may not be forgotten that in school, where everyone's first, and decisive, experience of literature occurred, students read only "selected passages" or "extracts" from most works. A certain fetishism of the book survives both into a precious and motionless object and into a symbol of plenitude. This act of cutting it becomes an equivalent of castration.

If the reader decides to proceed by examining certain parts of the work in isolation, Todorov states that by temporarily omitting the end of the narrative the reader is able to include a much larger number of texts within the genre of the fantastic. The modern editions of The Saragossa Manuscript precisely confirm this: without its end, which resolves the hesitation, the book clearly belongs to the fantastic. Charles Nodier, one of the pioneers of the fantastic in of his tales, "Ines de lass Sierras." This text consists of two apparently equal parts, and the end of the first part leaves us in utter perplexity: the reader is at a loss to explain the strange

phenomena which occur; on the other hand, he/she is not as ready to admit the supernatural as he/she would to embrace the natural.

Yet it would be wrong to claim that the fantastic can exist only in a part of the work, for here are certain texts which sustain their ambiguity to the very end, i.e., even beyond the narrative itself. The book closed, but the ambiguity persists. Todorov gives example of Henry James' tale The Turn of the Screw, which does not permit us to determine finally whether ghosts haunt the old estate, or whether we are confronted by the hallucinations of a hysterical governess victimized by the disturbing atmosphere which surrounds her.

Todorov always considers uncanny and marvelous two neighbors of the fantastic. It can be noted that in each case, a transitory sub-genre appears: between the fantastic and the uncanny on the one hand, between the fantastic and the marvelous on the other. These characteristics of the true fantastic for a long period, but that ultimately end in the marvelous or in the uncanny. Todorov represents these subdivisions with the help following diagram:



The fantastic in its pure state is represented here by the median line separating the fantastic-uncanny from the fantastic marvelous. This line corresponds perfectly to the nature of the fantastic, a frontier between two adjacent realms.

Todorov first takes up fantastic-uncanny. In this sub-genre events that seem supernatural throughout a story receive a rational explanation at its end. If these events have long led the character and the reader alike to believe in an intervention of the supernatural, it is because they have an unaccustomed character. Criticism has

described, and often condemned, this type under the label of "the supernatural explained."

Doubt had been sustained up to this point between two poles: the existence of the supernatural and a series of rational explanation. Let us now enumerate the types of explanation that erode the case for the supernatural: first, accident or coincidence – for in the supernatural world, instead of chance there prevails what Todorov calls "pan determinism" (an explanation in terms of chance is what works against the supernatural in "Ines de las Sierras"); next, dreams (a solution proposed in *Le Diable Amoureux*); then the influence of drugs (Alfonso's dreams during the first night); tricks and prearranged apparitions (an essential solution in *The Saragossa Manuscript*); illusion of the senses (we shall find examples of this in Theophile Gautier's "La Morte Amoureuse" and John Dickson Carr's *The Burning Court*); and lastly madness, as in Hoffmann's "Princess Brambilla."

There are obviously two groups of "excuses" here which correspond to the oppositions real/imaginary and real/illusory. In the first group, there has been no supernatural occurrence, for nothing at all has actually occurred: what we imagined we saw was only the fruit of a deranged: what we imagined we saw was only the fruit of a deranged imagination (dream, madness, the influence of drugs). In the second group, the events indeed occurred, but they may be explained rationally (as coincidences, tricks, illusions).

It can be recalled that in the definitions of the fantastic cited above, the rational solution was decided as "completely stripped of internal probability" or as a loophole "small enough given in *The Saragossa Manuscript* is altogether improbable; supernatural solutions would have been, on the contrary, quite probable. The

coincidences are too artificial in Nodier's tale. As for The Saragossa Manuscript, its author does not even try to concoct a credible ending: the story of the treasure, of the hollow mountain, of the empire of the Gomelez is more incredible than that of the woman transformed into corpses! The probable is therefore not necessarily opposed to the fantastic: with submission to the genre; the *fantastic* refers to an ambiguous perception shared by the reader and one of the *probable* that "fantastic" reactions will occur.

In addition to such cases as these, where one may find himself/herself in the uncanny rather in spite of himself/herself – in order to explain the fantastic – there also exists the uncanny in the pre-state. In works that belong to this genre, events are related which may be readily accounted for by the laws of reason, but which are, in one way or another, incredible, extraordinary, shocking, singular, disturbing or unexpected, and which thereby provoke in the character and in the reader a reaction similar to that which works of the fantastic have made familiar. The definition is, as one may see, broad and vague, but so is the genre which it describes: the uncanny is not a clearly delimited genre, unlike the fantastic. More precisely, it is limited on just one side, that of the fantastic; on the other, it dissolves into the general field of literature.

The uncanny realize only one of the conditions of the fantastic: the description of certain reactions, especially of fear. It is uniquely linked to the sentiments of the characters and to a material event defying reason. The marvelous, by way of contrast, may be characterized by the mere presence of supernatural events, without implicating the reaction they provoke in the characters.

Poe's tale The Fall of the House of Usher is an instance of the uncanny bordering on the fantastic. The narrator of this tale arrives at the house one evening summoned by this friend Roderick Usher, who asks him to stay for a time. Usher is a hypersensitive, nervous creature who adores his sister, now seriously ill. When she dies some days later, the two friends, instead of burying her, leave her body in one of the vaults under the house. Several days pass. On a stormy night the two men are sitting in a room together, the narrator reading aloud an ancient tale of chivalry. The sounds that are described in the chronicle seem to correspond to the noises they hear in the house itself. At the end, Roderick Usher stands up and says, in a scarcely audible voice: "We have put her living in the tomb!" And, indeed, the door opens and the sister is seen standing on the threshold. Brother and sister rush into each other's arms, and fall dead. The narrator flees the house just in time to see it crumble into the envioning tarn.

Here the uncanny has two sources. The first is constituted by two coincidences (there are as many of these as in a work of the *supernatural explained*). Although the resurrection of Usher's sister and the fall of the house after the death of its inhabitants may appear supernatural, Poe has not failed to supply quite rational explanations for both events. Of the house, he writes: "Perhaps the eye of a scrutinizing observer might have discovered a barely perceptible fissure, which, extending from the roof of the building in the front made its way down the wall in a zig-zag direction until it became lost in the sullen waters of the tarn." And of Lady Madeline "Frequent although transient affections of a partially cataleptical character were the unusual diagnosis." Thus the supernatural explanation is mere suggestion and not obligatory for the reader to accept such suggestions.

The other series of elements that provoke the sense of the uncanny is not linked to the fantastic but to what one might call "an experience of limits," which characterizes the whole of Poe's *oeuvre*. Indeed, Baudelaire wrote of Poe: "No man has more magically described the *exceptions* of human life and of natural." Likewise Dostoievsky: "He almost always chooses the most exceptional reality, puts his character in the most exceptional situation, on the external or psychological level . . . ." (Poe, moreover, wrote a tale on this theme, a "meta-uncanny" tale entitled "The Angel of the Odd.") In The Fall of the House of Usher, it is the extremely morbid condition of the brother and sister which disturbs the reader. In other tales, scenes of cruelty delight in evil, and murder will provoke the same effect. The sentiment of the uncanny originates, then, in certain themes linked to more or less ancient taboos. If we grant that primal experience is constituted by transgression, we can accept Freud's theory as to the origin of the uncanny.

Todorov argues that Poe originated the detective story or murder mystery and this relationship is not a matter of change. It has often been remarked, moreover, that for the reading public, detective stories have in our time replaced ghost stories. Todorov considers the nature of this relationship, the murder mystery, in which the readers try to discover the identity of the criminal, is constructed in the following manner: on the one hand there are several easy solutions, initially tempting but turning out, one after another, to be false; on the other, there is an entirely out o be the only right one.

John Dickson Carr deserves a more extended scrutiny when the relation between detective stories and fantastic tales is being dealt. Among his books there is one in particular which raise the problem in an exemplary fashion, The Burning

Court. As in Ten Little Indians, we are confronted with an apparently insoluble problem: four men open a crypt in which a corpse had been placed a few days before; the crypt is empty, but it is not possible that anyone could have opened it in the meantime. Throughout the story, moreover, ghosts and supernatural phenomena are evoked. There is a witness to the crime that had taken place, and his witness asserts he has seen the murderess leave the victim's room, passing through the wall at a place where a door existed two hundred years earlier. Furthermore, one of the persons implicated in the case, a young woman, believes herself to be a witch, or more precisely, a poisoner (the murder was the result of poison) who belongs to a particular type of human beings, *the non-dead*: "Briefly, the non-dead are those persons – commonly woman – who have been condemned to death for the crime of poisoning, and whose bodies have been burnt at the stake, whether alive or dead," we learn later on. While leafing through a manuscript he has received from the publishing house that he works for, Stevens, the young woman's husband, happens on a photograph whose caption reads: Marie d' Aubrey: Guillotined for Murder, 1861.

The text continues: "He was looking at a photograph of his own wife." How could this young woman, some seventy years later, be the same person as a famous nineteenth-century poisoner, guillotined into the bargain? Quite simply, according to Stevens' wife, who is ready to assume responsibility for the present murder? A series of further coincidences seems to confirm the presence of the supernatural. Finally, a detective arrives, and everything begins to be explained. The woman who had been seen passing through the wall was an optical illusion caused by a mirror. The corpse had not vanished after all, but was cunningly concealed. Young Marie Stevens had nothing in common with a long-dead poisoner, though an effort had been made to make her believe that she had. The entire supernatural atmosphere had been created

by the murderer in order to confuse the case, to avert suspicion. The actual guilty parties are discovered, even if they are not successfully punished.

Then follows an epilogue, as a result of which The Burning Court emerges from the class of detective stories that simply evoke the supernatural, to join the ranks of the fantastic. We see Marie once again, in her house, thinking over the case; and the fantastic re-emerges. Marie asserts once again to the reader that she is indeed the poisoner, that the detective was in fact her friend who is not untrue, and that he has provided the entire rational explanation in order to save her.

According to Todorov if the reader moves to the *other* side of that median line which Todorov has called the fantastic, the reader finds himself in the fantastic marvelous, the class of narratives that are presented as fantastic and that end with an acceptance of the supernatural. These are the narratives closest to the pure fantastic, for the latter, by the very fact that it remains unexplained, unrationalized, suggests the existence of the supernatural. The frontier between the two will therefore be uncertain; nonetheless, the presence or absence of certain details will always allow us to decide.

Gautier's La Morte Amoureuse can serve as an example. This is the story of a monk named Romuald who on the day of his ordination falls in love with the courtesan Clarimonde. After several momentary encounters, Romuald was to be present at Clarimonde's deathbed. Clarimonde begins to appear in Romuald's dreams, dreams that have a strange property: instead of conforming to impressions of each passing day, they constitute a continuous narrative. In his dreams, Romuald no longer leads the austere life of a monk, but lives in Venice in continuous revelry

and at the same time he realizes that Clarimonde has been keeping herself alive by means of blood she sucks from him during the night. . .

The strangeness of the episode Clarimonde's supernatural [!] beauty, the phosphorescent lustre of her eyes, the burning touch of her hand, the confusion into which she had thrown me, the sudden change that had occurred in me – all of this clearly proved the presence of the Devil; and that silken hand was perhaps nothing but the glove in which he had clad his talons.

It might be the Devil, indeed, but it might also be chance and no more than that. The reader remains, then, up to this point in the fantastic in its pure state. At this moment there occurs an event which causes the narrative to swerve. Another monk, Serapion, learns (the reader does not know how) of Romuald's adventure. He leads the latter to the graveyard in which Clarimonde lies buried, unearths the coffin, opens it, and Clarimonde appears, looking just as she did on the day of her death, a drop of blood on her lips. Seized by pious rage, Serapion flings holy water on the corpse. "The wretched Clarimonde had no sooner been touched by the holy dew than her lovely body turned to dust; nothing was left but a shapeless mass of ashes and half-consumed bones." This entire scene, and in particular the metamorphosis of the corpse, cannot be explained by the laws of nature as they are generally acknowledged. The readers are here in the realm of the fantastic-marvelous.

There exists, finally, a form of the marvelous in the pure state which – just as in case of the uncanny in the pure state – has no distinct frontiers. In the case of the marvelous, supernatural elements provoke no particular reaction either in the characters or in the implicit reader. It is not an attitude toward the events described which characterizes the marvelous, but the nature of these events.

It can be noted, in passing, how arbitrary the old distinction was between form and content: the event, which traditionally belonged to "content," here becomes a "formal" element. The converse is also true: the stylistic (hence "formal") procedure of modalization can have, as it was seen in connection with *Aurelia*, a precise content.

Todorov again comes back to marvelous and explains that people generally link the genre of the marvelous to that of the fairy tale. But as a matter of fact, the fairy tale is only one of the varieties of the marvelous, and the supernatural events in fairy tales provoke no surprise: neither a hundred years' sleep, nor a talking wolf, nor the magical gifts of the fairies (to cite only a few elements in Perrault's tales). What is the status of the supernatural. Hoffmann's tales illustrate this difference perfectly: "The Nutcracker and the Mouse-king," "The Strange Child," and "The King's Bride" belong, by stylistic properties, to the fairy tale. "The Choice of a Bride," while preserving the same status with regard to the supernatural, is not a fairy tale at all. One would also have to characterize the Arabian Nights as marvelous tales rather than fairy tales (a subject which deserves a special study all its own).

In order to delimit the marvelous in the pure state, it is convenient to isolate it from several types of narrative in which the supernatural is somewhat justified. Todorov puts it as: One may take first of all of *hyperbolic marvelous*. In it, phenomena are supernatural only by virtue of their dimensions, which are superior to those that are familiar to people in general. Thus in the Arabian Nights, Sinbad the Sailor declares he has seen "fish one hundred and even two hundred fms long" or "serpents so great and so long that there was not one which could not have swallowed an elephant." But perhaps this is no more than a simple manner of speaking (we shall study this question when we deal with the poetic or allegorical interpretation of the

text); one might even say, adapting a proverb, that "fear has big eyes." In any case, this form of the supernatural does not do excessive violence to reason.

Quite close to above discussed *hyperbolic marvelous* is the second type of the marvelous is the *exotic marvelous*. In this type, supernatural events are reported without being presented as such. The implicit reader is supposed to be ignorant of the regions where the events take place, and consequently he has no reason for calling them into question. Sinbad's second voyage furnishes some excellent examples, such as the *roc*, a bird so tremendous that it concealed the sun and "one of whose legs . . . was as great as a great tree or trunk." Of course, this bird does not exist for contemporary zoology, but Sinbad's hearers were far from any such certainty and, five centuries later, Galland himself writes: "Marco Polo, in his travels, and Father Martini, in his History of China, speak of this bird," etc. This kind of hyperbolic discussion is quite usual to this genre. A little later, Sinbad similarly describes the rhinoceros, which however is well known to the reader:

There is, on the same island, a rhinoceros, a creature smaller than the elephant and larger than the buffalo: it bears a single horn upon its snout, about one ell long; this horn is solid and severed through the center, from one end to the face of a other. Upon it may be seen white lines which represent the face of a man. The rhinoceros attacks the elephant, pierces it with its horn through the belly, carries it off and bears it upon its head; but when the elephant's blood flows over its eyes and blinds it, the rhinoceros falls to the ground, and – what will amaze the reader [indeed], the roc comes and bears off both creatures in its talons, in order to feed its young upon their bodies.

(Quoted in Todorov 1975 55)

This skillful passage shows by mixing of natural and supernatural elements together the special character of the exotic marvelous. The mixture exists, of course, only for the modern reader; the narrator implicit in the tale situates everything on the same level.

According to Todorov third of the marvelous might be called the *instrumental marvelous*. Here one may find the gadgets, technological developments unrealized in the period described but, after all, quite possible. In the "Tale of Prince Ahmed" in the Arabian Nights, for instance, the marvelous instruments are, at the beginning: a flying carpet, an apple that cures diseases, and a "pipe" for seeing great distance; today, the helicopter, antibiotics, and binoculars, endowed with the same qualities, do not belong in any way to the marvelous. The same is true of the flying horse in the "Tale of the Magic Horse." Similarly in the case of the revolving stone in the "Tale of Ali Baba," one needs only think of recent espionage films in which a safe opens only when its owner's voice utters certain words. It must be distinguished these objects, products of human skill, from certain instruments that are often similar in appearance but whose origin is magical, and that serve to communicate with other worlds. Thus Aladdin's lamp and ring, or the horse in the "Third Calendar's Tale," are belong to a different kind of marvelous.

The "instrumental marvelous" brings the reader very close to what in nineteenth-century France was called the *scientific marvelous*. The scientific marvelous is now-a-days known as *science fiction*. Here the supernatural is explained in a rational manner, but according to laws which contemporary science does not acknowledge. In the high period of fantastic narratives, stories involving magnetism are characteristic of the scientific marvelous: magnetism "scientifically" explains

supernatural events, yet magnetism "scientifically" explains supernatural events, yet magnetism itself belongs to the supernatural. Contemporary science fiction obeys the same mechanism: these narratives, starting from irrational premises, link the "facts" they contain in a perfectly logical manner.

According to Todorov the threats incurred by the fantastic do not stop here. If one moves to another level, the one where the implicit reader questions not the nature of the events but that of the very text which describes them, he/she may find the existence of the fantastic threatened once again. He says that this will lead us to a new problem and, in order to solve it, we must specify the relations of the fantastic with two adjacent genres: "poetry and allegory". (Todorov 1975: 58) The articulation is more complex here than that which controlled the relations of the fantastic to the uncanny and the marvelous. First of all, because the genre which stands in opposition to poetry on the one hand, and on the other to allegory, is not the fantastic along but in each case a much larger grouping to which the fantastic belongs. Secondly because, unlike the uncanny and the marvelous, poetry and allegory do not stand in opposition to each other. Each stands in opposition to another genre, of which the fantastic is only a subdivision – another which is not the same in both cases. There is a need therefore study the two oppositions separately.

Usually modern literary critics are criticized for ignoring both fantasy and poetry; most especially they are accused of/ blamed for ignoring fantasy poetry. Patrick Murphy, in the forward to Poetic Fantastic suggests, "Recently, we have witnessed a beginning of critical acceptance of the fantastic with 'authorities' such as Robert Scholes, Tzvetan Todorov, and Theodore Ziolkowski (a past president of the Modern Language Association), writing on it. But discussion has been limited

primarily to prose" (Murphy xi). For some reason, there is still a strong opposition to the examination of fantastic literature in academia. In support of fantastic literature generally, there appear to be two reasons. Both of the reasons are related to fantastic's purpose of escape: The first is that fantastic literature is not worthy of attention because it is a genre embraced by the general populace. That is to say that our culture looks down with puritanical derision at anything designed and operating primarily to give pleasure. The second and opposite reason is summed up well by the following quote: "Given this resistance of fantasy, to narrow categorization and definition, it might seem self-defeating to attempt to produce a critical study which proposes to 'schematize' or 'theorize' about fantasy in literature and thereby to militate against escapism or a simple pleasure principle" (Jackson 2). So one must not attempt to examine fantastic literature either because it is 'escapist' literature that is unworthy of his/her attention or because it is 'escapist' literature that he/ she unworthy to examine.

Even with a recovery of critical acceptance of the fantastic generally, "the tendency remains in fantastic criticism to neglect its poetry and in mainstream poetry criticism to downplay the presence of the fantastic" (Murphy xvii) It seems a further examination of fantastic poetry is necessary. Apparently, there has been a consistent resistance by modern critics to the examination and explication of fantastic verse. With the venerable origin, function, and value of poetry, the continued refusal of modern critics to deal seriously with the fantastic can be nothing more than self-restraint.

This self-restraint is probably at least partly due to the fact that in fantastic poetry, a third reason comes in: the death of narrative verse. "People, it seems, tend to think of fantasy poems more often as high fantasy and as a closed historical genre [. .

.] such high fantasy verse is relatively rare" (Murphy forward xviii). Murphy goes on to argue (successfully, I believe) that such a characterization leaves out a large body of work that can, without a doubt, be considered fantastic; however, since it is my purpose to discuss poems that do, for the most part, fall into that category of high fantasy that finds its home most often in narrative verse, it is appropriate at this point to briefly examine the so-called death of narrative verse, its origins and its implications.

Todorov begins his discussion on Fantastic and its connection with poetry and allegory by starting an enquiry between poetry and fiction. He remarked at the start of this study that any opposition between two genres must be based on a structural property of the literary work. In this case the property in question is the very natural of discourse, which may or may not be representative. He suggests that the readers must employ this term "representative" with some caution sentences of everyday speech may be representative, for literature does not refer (in the strict sense of the verb) to anything outside itself. The events reported by a literary text are "literary events" and, like the characters, they are interior to the text. But to deny literature any representative aspect for this reason is to identify the reference with the referent, the aptitude to denote objects with the objects themselves. Further, the representative aspect prevails in a certain part of literature which it is convenient to designate by the term fiction, whereas poetry rejects this aptitude to evoke and represent (this opposition, moreover, tends to blur in twentieth-century literature). It is no accident if, in fiction, the terms commonly employed are: characters, action, atmosphere, etc., all of which also designate a non-textual reality. On the other hand, in poetry we are inclined to speak of rhymes, rhythm, rhetorical figures, etc. This opposition, like most of those found in literature, is not an all-or-nothing affair, but rather found in degree.

Without attempting a historical sketch of the problem here, it may be noted that this conception of poetry has not always been predominant. The controversy was particularly sharp with regard to figures of rhetoric: it was asked whether or not one was to make such figures into images, to shift that "a metaphor, to be a good one, must always be an image; it must be such that a painter might represent it with a brush. This naive requirement, which no poet has ever satisfied, has been contested ever since the eighteenth century.

Generally, poetic discourse is evidenced by many secondary properties that enable readers to know at once that in a specific text they must not look for the fantastic; rhymes, regular meter, emotive discourse, etc., dissuade them from doing so. There is not much risk of confusion now. Though certain prose texts require different levels of reading, to assert this Todorov turn to Aurelia once again: Most of the time, the dreams Nerval reports are to be read as fiction, and it is convenient for the reader to represent to himself what they describe as he reads. Here is an example of this type of dream:

A being of enormous size – man or woman, I don't know which – fluttered laboriously overhead and seemed to be struggling among thick clouds. Breath and strength failing, it fell at last in the center of the dark courtyard, catching and tearing its wings on the roofs and balconies as it fell.

(Todorov 1975 61)

This dream evokes a vision we must take as just that; we are indeed dealing with a supernatural event. Todorov quotes few lines from Les Me-Morables to highlight a different attitude towards the text.

From the depth of the silent shadows, two notes rang out, one low, the other shrill – and the eternal orb began to revolve there with. Blessed be thou, O first octave which began the divine hymn! From Sunday to Sunday, each day in your magical net. the mountains chant you to the valleys, the springs to the streams, the streams to the rivers, the rivers to the Ocean; the air vibrates and the light harmoniously dashes against the opening air vibrates and the light harmoniously dashes against the opening flowers. A sigh, a shudder of love emerges from the swollen heart of the earth, and the crown of stars circles in the infinite heavens, withdraws and returns, contracts and expands, and sows in the remote anther the seeds of new creations.

Todorov further explains that if one tries to transcend the words in order to reach the vision, they might be classified in the category of the supernatural; the octave which ensnares the days, the chant of the mountains, the earth's sigh, etc. One must not follow such a path: the phrases quoted require a poetic reading; they do not tend to describe an evoked world. Such is the paradox of literary language: it is precisely when words are employed in the figurative. These meaning may not be taken a literal one.

Thus we are led, by the path of rhetorical figures, to the other opposition which concerns us: the opposition between allegorical and literal meaning. The word literal employed here might have been used, in another sense, to designate the kind of reading we believe proper to poetry. We must be careful not to confuse the two usages: in one case, literal is being opposed to referential, descriptive, representative; in the other, the case that interests us here; literal meaning is being used in opposition of figurative meaning – that is, to what we are calling the allegorical sense.

Let us define allegory. As usual, there is no lack of earlier definitions, which vary from the narrowest to the most inclusive. Curiously, the broadest definition is also the most recent. Angus Fletcher defines it in his book *Allegory* as follows: "In the simplest themes, allegory says one thing and means another," Fletcher remarks at the opening of his book. All definitions are, as we know, arbitrary – but this one is anything but alluring: by its generality it transforms allegory into a carry-all, a super-figure.

At the other extreme occurs an equally modern, much more restrictive acceptance of the term, which we might summarize thus: allegory is a proposition with a double meaning, but whose literal meaning has been entirely effaced. Thus in the proverb: "The pitcher goes so often to the well that it is broken at last" – no one, or almost no one, thinks, upon hearing these words, of a pitcher, a well, or the action of breaking: we immediately grasp the allegorical meaning: to run too many risk is dangerous, etc. Thus understood, allegory has often been stigmatized by modern authors as contrary to literality.

Antiquity's notion of allegory will be more useful to us. Quintilian writes: "A continuous metaphor develops into allegory." In other words, an isolated metaphor indicates only a figurative manner of speaking; but if the metaphor is sustained, it reveals an intention to speak of something else besides the first object of the utterance. This definition is valuable because it is formal; it indicates the means by which we can identify allegory. If, for example, we speak first of the State as a ship, then Chief of State as a captain, we can say the nautical imagery affords an allegory of the State.

Let us recapitulate: first of all, allegory implies the existence of at least two meanings for the same words; according to some critics, the first meaning must disappear, while others require that the two be present together. Secondly, this double meaning is indicated in the work in an explicit fashion: it does not proceed from the reader's interpretation (whether arbitrary or not).

With the help of these two conclusions, let us return to the fantastic. If what we read describes a supernatural event, yet we take the words not in their literal meaning but in another sense which refers to nothing supernatural, there is no longer any space in which the fantastic can exist. There exists then a scale of literary sub-genres, between the fantastic (which belongs to that type of text which must be read literally) and pure allegory (which retains only the second, allegorical meaning): a scale constituted in terms of two factors, the explicit character of the indication and the disappearance of the first meaning.

Fable is the genre that comes closest to pure allegory, in which the first meaning of the words tends to be completely effaced. Fairy tales, which habitually include supernatural elements, sometimes approach fable – as in the case of certain tales by Perrault. Here allegorical meaning is more explicit to an extreme degree: we find it summarized, in the form of a few lines of verse, at the end of each tale. Consider "Riquet a la Horppe": this is the story of an intelligent but extremely ugly prince who can make persons of his choice as intelligent as himself, and of a lovely but stupid princess who has a similar gift with regard to beauty. The prince makes the princess intelligent; a year later, after many hesitations, the princess grants beauty to the prince. These are super-natural events; but within the tale itself, Perrault suggests that we are to take the words in an allegorical sense.

This princess had no sooner uttered these words, than Riquet a la Houppe seemed, to her eyes, the finest, shapeliest, and most agreeable man of the world she had ever seen. Some say it was not at all fairy's charms that had been at work, but that love alone produced this transformation. They say that the princess, having reflected upon her lover's perseverance, upon his discretion, and upon all the good qualities of his mind, no longer saw the deformity of his body nor the ugliness of his countenance; that his hump seemed to her no more than the posture of a man who shrugs his shoulders, and that what she had once called a posture which delighted her. These same people say that his squinting eyes seemed to her only all the more brilliant, and that in consequence their disorder appeared to her the sign of a violent passion; and that finally she regarded his huge red nose as having something martial and heroic about it.

One must add that the reader (real and not implicit, this time) is entitled not to concern himself with the allegorical meaning suggested by the text if he chooses to do so. This happens today with Perrault: the contemporary reader is struck by sexual symbolism rather than by the moral promulgated by the author.

Allegorical meaning can appear with the same distinctness in work that is no longer fairy tales or fables, but "modern" tales. Daudet's "L'Homme a la Cerveille dor" illustrates this. The tale recounts the misfortunes of a man "whose brain was made of gold." this expression – "made of gold" – is used in the strict and not figurative sense of "excellent"; nonetheless, from the beginning of the tale, the author suggests that the right meaning is, precisely, the allegorical one. Thus: "I must confess that I was endowed with an intelligence that astonished people and concerning which only my parents and myself possesses the secret. Who would not have been intelligent with a

brain as rich as mine?" This golden brain repeatedly turns out to be its possessor's sole means of obtaining the money he or his family needs; and the story tells how the brain thus is gradually exhausted. Each time a chip of gold is removed from the brain, the author does not fail to suggest the "real" signification of such an act:

Here, a dreadful objection rose before me: this sliver I was going to tear from my brain – was it not a sliver of my own intelligence of which I was depriving myself? I had to have money: my brain was worth money, and indeed, I spent my brain . . . What most astonished me was the quantity of wealth my brain contained and the difficulty I had exhausting it [etc.]

In some type of allegory, the level of literal meaning has slight importance; the evident improbabilities do not matter, all our attention is focused on the allegory. It may be noted that narratives of this kind are not common today. These days explicit allegory is regarded as sub-literature.

Balzac's novel The Magic Skin affords an example. The supernatural element is the skin itself: first of all because of its extraordinary physical qualities (it resists all experiments to which it is subjected), and then, above all, by its magical powers over the life of its possessor. The skin bears an inscription which explains its power: it is at once an image of its owner's life (its surface corresponds to the length of this life) and a means for him to realize his desires; but each time his desires are fulfilled, the skin shrinks a little. The formal complexity of the image is noteworthy: the magic skin is a metaphor for life, a metonymy for desire, and it establishes a relation of inverse proportion between what it represents in the one case and in the other. (Todorov 1975, 67)

In Balzac's novel The Magic Skin several characters develop theories in which this same inverse relation appears between length of life and the realization of desires. For instance, the old antique-dealer who gives the skin to Raphael: " 'This,' he said in a strident tone, displaying the wild ass's skin, 'is will and power united. Here are your social ideas, your excessive desires, your dissipations, your murderous joys, your mortal sufferings.' " This same conception is also defended by Rastignac, friend, long before the skin makes its appearance in the story. According to Todorov, Rastignac maintains that instead of killing oneself quickly, one might more agreeably waste one's life on friend, is the queen of all deaths. Does it not rule even swift apoplexy, that pistol-shot which never misses? Orgies afford us every physical pleasure; are they not a kind of opium, the small change of opium?" Rastignac is really saying the same things as is signified by the magic skin: desire's realization leads to death. The allegorical meaning of the image is indirectly but clearly indicated.

Though there is a first level of allegory in The Magic Skin, the literal meaning is also apparent. The hesitation is the chief characteristic of the fantastic maintained in this novel. In this novel, this hesitation is located on the level of the literal meaning. The skin's discovery is prepared for by a description of the strange atmosphere prevailing in the old antique-dealer's shop; and subsequently, none of Raphael's desires is realized in an unlikely fashion. The banquet he requests had already been arranged by his friends; the money comes to him in the form of a legacy; the death of his adversary in a duel can be explained by the fear Rphael's own calm provokes; lastly, Raphael's own death is due, apparently, to phthisis and not to supernatural causes. Only the skin's extraordinary properties openly confirm the intervention of the marvelous. This case may be seen as an example in which the fantastic is absent not because of the failure to fulfill the first condition i.e. hesitation between the uncanny

and the marvelous but because of the failure to fulfill the third condition. This means that the fantastic is rubbed out by allegory. This allegory is indirectly indicated in this novel.

The allegory is indicated, especially by the simultaneous presence of two points of view, Count d' Athol's and the old servant Raymond's. Count believes and it seems that Villiers de l' Isle-Adam wants the reader to believe that by dint of love and will, the death can be vanquished. Beloved brought back to life. This idea is indirectly suggested many times over: Count d' Athol, indeed, lived utterly unaware of the death of his beloved! Count d' Athol believed that she was ever-present, so intimately was the young woman's form mingled with his own. . . . By this the negation of Death raised, ultimately, to an unknown power! It was as if death were playing hide-and-seek, like a children play. She felt she was so greatly loved! How natural it was . . . . Ah, Ideas are living beings! The count had shaped the form of his beloved out of the air, and this void had to be filled by the one being homogeneous to it, or else the Universe would collapse.

All these expressions clearly indicate the meaning of the supernatural event to come, Vera's resurrection. Which greatly weakens the fantastic, especially since the story begins by an abstract formula that relates it to the first group of allegories: "For love is strong as death, Solomon has said: yes, its mysterious power is unlimited." The entire narrative has the effect of being the illustration of an idea; and thus the fantastic receives a fatal blow.

Todorov quotes an example from "The Tale of the Lost Reflection" contained in Hoffmann's New Year's Eve. This is the story of a young German, Erasmus Spikher, who during a stay in Italy encounters a certain Giulietta with whom he falls

passionately in love, forgetting the wife and child waiting for him at home. When at last he must leave, the thought of separation throws him into despair, and the same is true for Giulietta: Giulietta clasped Erasmus more tightly to her breast and whispered: "Leave me your image reflected in this mirror, my love, it will never leave me." And when Erasmus seems to hesitate: "What! You will not even grant me this dream of yourself, as it gleams in the glass!" Giulietta exclaimed, "You who let swore you belonged to me body and soul! You will not even let your image remain with me and accompany me through this life, which will henceforth, I know it well, be without pleasure or love since you are abandoning me?" A torrent of tears flowed from her lovely black eyes. Then Erasmus exclaimed, in a transport of grief and love: "Must I leave you? Very well then, let my reflection be yours forever!"

Todorov takes up Poe's William Wilson for further exploration on the issue. He says that Poe's William Wilson offers a similar example, and apropos of the same theme, moreover. This is the story of a man persecuted by his own double. It is difficult to decide if this double is a flesh-and blood human being or if the author is offering a parable in which the so-called double is only a part of his personality, a sort of incarnation of his conscience. The latter interpretation is reinforced, in particular, by the utterly improbable resemblance of the two men. They were of the same name and of the same birth date. They had entered school on the same day. Their appearance and even their manner of carrying themselves were same. To explain the same Todorov gives an example of the scandal that took place at Oxford.

The cloak which I had worn was of a rare description of fur; how rare, how extravagantly costly, I shall not venture to say. Its fashion, too, was of my own fantastic invention. . . . When, therefore, Mr. Preston reached me that which he had

picked up upon the floor, and near the folding-doors of the apartment, it was with an astonishment nearly bordering upon terror that I perceived my own already hanging on my (where I had no doubt unwittingly placed it), and that the one presented to me was but its exact counterpart in every, in even the minutest possible particular. (Quoted in Todorov 1975 71)

The coincidence is, in the above quote, impossible— unless it is decided that there are perhaps not two cloaks but only one. The end of the story impels the reader toward an allegorical meaning. William Wilson provokes his double to a duel and wounds him mortally. Then "the other," staggering, speaks to him: You have conquered, and I yield. Yet henceforward art thou also dead – dead to the World, to Heaven, and to Hope!

Gogol's story "The Nose" constitutes a limit-case. This narrative does not observe the first condition of the fantastic, that hesitation between the real and the illusory or imaginary be present, and it is therefore situated from the start within the marvelous (a nose detaches itself from its owner's face and having become a person, leads an independent life; then it returns to its place). But several other properties of the text suggest a different perspective, more particularly that of allegory. The reader is thus given some reason to wonder if, elsewhere too, the nose might not have a different meaning from its literal one.

According to Todorov the world Gogol describes is not at all a world of the marvelous. It is, however, the life of Saint Petersburg down to its most mundane details, since the supernatural elements are therefore not here to evoke a universe different from this real world; the reader is tempted to search out an allegorical interpretation for them.

"The Nose" seems to create the problem of allegory in a two ways. The first is; it shows that one may produce the impression that there is an allegorical meaning even though there is, in fact, no allegorical meaning is present. The second is, in describing the metamorphoses of a nose, the narrator narrates the adventures of allegory itself.

To summarize: we have distinguished several degrees, from obvious allegory (Perrault, Daudet) to illusory allegory (Gogol), passing through indirect allegory (Balzac, Villiers de l' Isle-Adam) and "hesitating" allegory (Hoffmann, Poe). In each case, the fantastic is called into question. We must insist on the fact that we cannot speak of allegory unless we find explicit indications of it within the text. Otherwise, we shift to what is no more than a reader's interpretation; and at this point every literary text would be allegorical, for it is the characteristic factor of literature to be endlessly interpreted and reinterpreted by its readers.

(Todorov 1975: 73-74)

Todorov gives quite good importance to the themes that a work of fantastic may have. In this regard Todorov has not tried to interpret the themes, but solely to establish their presence. Rather than to seek to give an interpretation of desire as it is manifested in The Monk, for example, or of death in La Morte Amoureuse – as a thematic critic would have done – Todorov has been content to indicate their existence. The result is knowledge simultaneously more limited and less disputable.

Structure and meaning are considered as poetics and interpretation in Todorov's study of the themes. Every work possesses a structure, which is the articulation of elements derived from the different categories of literary discourse. The interpretive critic undertakes the task of evaluation of the work in a more

ambitious way. That of specifying the work's either scientific or "objective." Some interpretations may be considered more justified than others; but none can assert itself as the only right one. Poetics and criticism are therefore but instances of a more general opposition, between science and interpretation. This opposition, both terms of which, moreover, are equally worthy of interest, other activity permits the reader to keep them distinct.

Todorov considers perspective of poetics in genre study accidental. Genre represents, precisely, a configuration of literary properties, an inventory of options. Inclusion of a work in a genre may not teach anything as to its meaning. It merely permits one to establish the existence of a certain rule by which the work in question – and many others as well – are constructed.

Todorov has tried to undertake a study of themes which would place them on the same level of generality as poetic would place them on the same level of generality as poetic rhythms; with that end in view we have established two thematic systems without claiming thereby to give an interpretation of these themes, as they appear in each particular work. The point is restated here in order to avoid any misunderstanding with regard to the scope and ambitions of the present essay.

It is necessary to point out another possible error, with regard to the way in which literary images, as they have been identified up till now, are to be understood. In establishing our two networks of themes, we have put side by side certain abstract terms – sexuality, death – and certain concrete terms – the devil, vampires. In doing so, we have not tried to establish a relation of signification between the two groups such as: the devil means sex; the vampire means necrophilia but rather compatibility,

a co-presence. The meaning of an image is always richer and more complex than any such translation would suggest, and this for several reasons.

First of all, there are grounds for speaking of a polysemy of the images. Let us take, for instance, the theme (or image) of the double. It figures in many texts of fantastic literature; but in each particular work the double has a different meaning, which depends upon the relations that this theme sustains with others. Such significations can even be opposed to one another, as they are in Hoffmann and Maupassant. The double's appearance is a cause for joy in the works of the former: it is the victory of mind over matter. But in Maupassant, on the contrary, the double incarnates danger: it is the harbinger of threat and terror. Again, there are contrary meanings in Aurelia and The Saragossa Manuscript. In Nerval, the double's appearance signifies, among other things, a dawning isolation, a break with the world; in Potocki, quite the contrary, the doubling that is so frequent throughout the book becomes the means of a closer contact with others, of a more complete integration. Hence it is not surprising to find the image of the double in both thematic systems as we have established them: such an image may belong to different structures, and it may also have several meanings.

Moreover, the very notion of seeking a direct equation must be rejected, because each image always signifies others, in an infinite network of relations; and further, because it signifies itself: it is not transparent, but possesses a certain density. Otherwise, one should consider all images as allegories.

After having tried to make our procedure explicit, we must try to make its result intelligible. To do so, we must understand both the nature of the opposition of the two complexes of themes and what categories it brings into play. Let us first

return to the relations already sketched between these thematic systems and other more or less familiar organizations: this comparison may permit us to advance further into the nature of the opposition, to give it a more precise formulation yet there will thereby be some loss as to the certainty with which we might confirm our thesis. This is not just a matter of speaking: all that follows has a purely hypothetical character, and must be taken as such.

Another point common to the universe of childhood and the drug universe concerns sexuality. It will be recalled that the opposition which permitted us to establish the existence of two clusters of themes concerned, precisely, sexuality (in Louis Lambert). Sexuality (or more specifically, its common and elementary form) is excluded both from the drug world and from that of the mystics. The problem seems more complex with regard to childhood. The infant does not live in a world without desire; but his desire is first of all "autoerotic." the discovery which then ensues is that of desire oriented toward an object. The state of transcendence that is achieved through drugs (a transcendence sought by the mystics as well), and which we may describe as pan-erotic is itself a transformation of sexuality lacks an external object; in the latter, its object is the whole world; between the two is situated "normal" desire.

Now we come to the third analogy suggested in the course of our study of the "themes of the self": the one having to do with psychosis. Here again, the terrain is uncertain. We must rely on descriptions (of the psychotic world) made from the viewpoint of the "normal man." The behavior of the psychotic is evoked here not as a coherent system but as the negation of another system, as a deviation. When we speak of the "world of the schizophrenic" or the "world of the child," we are operating with no more than simulacra of these states, as they have been elaborated by the non-

schizophrenic adult. The schizophrenic, we are told, rejects communication and intersubjectivity. And this renunciation of language leads him to live in an eternal present. In the place of common language, he establishes a "private language" (which of course is a contradiction in terms, and hence an anti-language.). Words borrowed from the common lexicon receive new meanings, which the schizophrenic keeps individual: it is not simply a matter of varying the meaning of words, but of preventing words from effecting an automatic transmission of this meaning. "The schizophrenic," Kasanin writes, "has no intention of changing his method of uttering individual communication, and seems to take pleasure in the fact that you do not understand him." Language thus becomes a means of cutting oneself off from the world, contrary to its conventional mediating function.

The worlds of childhood, drugs, schizophrenia, and mysticism form, in each case, a paradigm to which the themes of the self-belong equally (which does not mean that important differences among them do not exist). Moreover, the relations among these terms, taken in pairs have often been remarked. Balzac wrote in Louis Lambert: "There are certain works by Jakob Boehme, Swedenborg, or Mme Guyon which when read carefully invoke fantasies as various as any dreams produced by opium." The world of the schizophrenic, further-more has often been compared with that of the infant. Finally, it is no accident that the mystic Swedenborg was a schizophrenic; nor that the use of certain powerful drugs can lead to psychotic states.

It would be tempting, at this point, to relate our second grouping, the "themes of the other," to that other great category of mental diseases: the neuroses. A superficial rapprochement might be based on the fact that the decisive role of sexuality and its variations in the second thematic system seems, in fact, to be

rediscovered in the neuroses: perversions, as has often been remarked since Freud, are the exact "negative" of the neuroses. We remain conscious of the risk of oversimplification that arises, here as before, as a consequence of these borrowed concepts. If we permit ourselves to establish certain convenient transitions between psychosis and schizophrenia, between neurosis and perversion, it is because we believe we are taking up a position on a high enough level of generality. Our assertions are admittedly approximate.

The relation becomes much more significant once we appeal to psychoanalytic theory in order to establish this typology. Here is how Freud approached the problem shortly after his second formulation of the structure of the psyche: "Neurosis is the result of a conflict between the ego and its id; whereas psychosis is the analogous result of a similar disturbance in the relations between the ego and the external world." In order to illustrate this opposition, Freud cites the following example:

A young woman who was in love her brother-in-law, and whose sister was dying, was horrified by the thought: "Now he is free and we can be married!" The instantaneous forgetting of this thought permitted the initiation of the process of repression which led to hysterical disturbances. Nonetheless it is interesting to see, in just a case, how neurosis tends to resolve the conflict. It takes into account the change in reality by repressing the satisfaction of the impulse, in this case, the love for the brother-in-law. A psychotic reaction would have denied the fact that the sister was dying.

We are here very close to our own division. We have seen that the "themes of the self" were based on a break in the limits between the psychic and the physical realms: to think that someone is not dead – to desire it on one hand, and to perceive

this same fact in reality on the other – are two phases of one and the same movement, and the transition between them is accomplished without difficulty. In the other key, the hysterical consequences of repressing love for the brother-in-law resemble those "excessive" acts linked to sexual desire that we have encountered in enumerating the "themes of the other."

But here a new danger arises. All these references may suggest that we are quite close to the so-called psychoanalytic school of criticism. In order to situate and differentiate more clearly our own position, we shall therefore briefly consider this critical approach. Two examples seem particularly appropriate here: the pages Freud himself devoted to the uncanny, and Penzoldt's book on the supernatural.

In Freud's study of the uncanny, we must acknowledge the double character of psychoanalytic investigation. It is as if psychoanalysis were at once a science of structures and a technique of interpretation. In the first case, it describes activity. In the second case, it reveals the ultimate meaning of the configurations so described. It answers both the question "how" and the question "what."

Here is an illustration of this second approach, in which the analyst's activity may be defined as a decoding: "Whenever a man dream, this place is familiar to me, I have been here before; we may interpret the place as being his mother's genitals or her body." The oneiric image here described is taken in isolation, independent of the mechanism of which it constitutes a part; on the other hand, we are given its meaning; this meaning is qualitatively different from the images themselves; the number of ultimate meanings is limited and immutable.

To many people the idea of being buried alive while appearing to be dead is the uncanny thing of all. And yet psychoanalysis has taught us that this terrifying fantasy is only the transformation of another fantasy which originally had nothing terrifying about it at all, but was on the contrary filled with a certain lustful pleasure – the fantasy, I mean, of intra-uterine existence.

Here we are again confronted with a translation: a certain phantasmal images have certain content. Yet there exists another attitude, in which the psycho-analyst no longer tends to decipher the ultimate meaning of an image, but rather seeks to link two images together. Analyzing Hoffmann's The Sandman, Freud writes: "This automaton (Olympia) can be nothing else than a personification of Nathaniel's feminine attitude toward his father during his infancy." The equation Freud establishes no longer links merely an image and a meaning (though it still does that), but links two textual elements: the doll Olympia and Nathaniel's childhood, both present in Hoffmann's tale. Thereby, Freud's remark enlightens us less as to the mechanism of this language, its internal functioning. In the first case, we might compare the psychoanalyst's activity to that of a translator; in the second, it is related to that of the linguist. Many examples of both types of activity can be found in The Interpretation of Dreams.

Of these two possible directions of inquiry, Todorov takes only one. The attitude of the translator is, as it have been said incompatible with reader's position with regard to literature – for we believe that literature means nothing but itself, and therefore that no "translation" is necessary. What is being attempted, on the other hand, is to describe the functioning of the literary mechanism (through it is true that is no fixed limit between translation and description. . .). It is in this sense that the

experience of psychoanalysis can be useful to us (psychoanalysis understood here as but one branch of semiotics). The reference to the structure of the psyche derives from this kind of borrowing; and the theoretic procedures of a Rene Girard may here be considered as exemplary.

When psychoanalysts have been concerned with literary works, they have not been content to describe them, on any level whatever. Beginning with Freud, they have always tended to consider literature as one means among others of penetrating the author's psyche. Literature is thus reduced to the rank of a simple symptom, and author constitutes the real object of study. Thus, after having described the organization of The Sandman, Freud indicates, without transition, what in the author may account for it: 'Hoffmann was the child of an unhappy marriage. When he was three, his father abandoned his small family and never returned to it,' etc. This attitude, frequently criticized subsequently, is no longer in fashion today; it is nonetheless necessary to specify the reasons for our rejection of it.

It is not enough to say, in fact we are interested in literature and in literature alone, and that we therefore reject any information as to the author's biography. Literature is always more than literature, and there are certainly cases in which the writer's biography stands in a relevant relation to his work. But in order to be usable, this relation must be given as one of the features of the work itself. Hoffmann, who was an unhappy child, describes the fears of childhood; but for this observation to have an explicative value, it must be proved either that all writers unhappy in childhood do the same, or that all descriptions of childhood fears are by writers whose childhood were unhappy. From all of which we must conclude that literary studies will gain more from psychoanalytic writings concerning the structures of the human

subject in general than from those dealing with literature. As often happens, the too-direct application of a method in a realm other than its own merely result in reiteration of the initial presuppositions.

The type of narration of a fantastic narrative depends on frame narration. As the fantastic stems from confusion which has the 'inner-framed, multi-level type of narration' as its source. In these narratives, there may be three kinds of internal frame within the external one: the fantastic dreams, the fantastic power of imagination and the fantastic super-natural events.

The strategy of dream narration is based on the presentation of dream phenomena. A fantastic dream enables the reader to like the 'different one' to the real one. Here, the fantastic involves an imaginary reality. Child characters generally try, in their dreams, to achieve their wishes, overcome their fears and solve their problems in a realistic way. Dreams thus become an experimental place. The use of imagination plays an important role in such narratives. On the level of reality and on the other narrative levels, the power of imagination is a leading factor and gives originality to the fantastic.

In the inner frames, the power of imagination is mostly used with the technique of estrangement. New, special, and surprising signs become functional, replacing general and familiar ones. As a literary genre, the fantastic promises an unexpected new world, which is first alien to its hero and to the reader. Therefore, at least two different universes intermingle and are alienated from each other.

Separation may be used as a narrative technique in the fantastic fiction. This is done in accordance with the content of the narration. In the fantastic fiction there are

five estrangement techniques; realist estrangement, surrealist estrangement, estrangement on the border between reality and fantasy, rational estrangement and stylistic estrangement. The pleasure emanating from the fantastic comes from the power of surprise created by the estrangement techniques, which are, in their turn, created by the supernatural narrative elements. The elements of supernatural narratives are developed according to the functional purpose of the signs and the perception of the receiver of the message. There are four participants (two inside, two outside the text) contributing to the formation of the fantastic text. Three of four are familiar ones: the author, the narrator and the personage.

In the fantastic narratives, narrators have important functions. Through explanations and interpretations in the outer frame, narrators prepare the fantastic background and thus direct the text and the reader. Generally, they take border roles, being a bridge between natural and supernatural. They provide possible passages between the narrative layers so as to make the fantastic manifest in the text. And at the same time they protect the reader from unnecessary confusion and prevent the fantastic from going beyond its purpose. Furthermore, they enable the reader to follow the figures easily and to identify with them.

The reader has a functional task in the fantastic narratives. The reading (cognition and reception) is performed step by step, first the superficial reading for general information, Then the deep reading comes, when the reader puts himself into the text and relates to it, creating a place for himself in the fantastic. This completes the fantastic process.

(Todorov, 1975: 87)

In the fantastic narratives, there is no limit on time and place. Generally, the events take place in at least two different worlds. The text may contain all sorts of abstract and concrete times and places from imaginary and dream worlds, based on the ones in the real world. Haas (1982) identifies some often using the fantastic times and places as follows: other great worlds, different times and places, dark and light mythological times and places, miniature worlds, technical times and places.

The end of the fantastic narrative is not foreshadowed from the beginning. As the fictional text conveys an implicit plot, the sequence of events does not develop as expected. The fantastic development appears in various layers, which attract the reader's attention step by step. In general, the fictional structure of the fantastic occurs as follows: there is a digression at every layer from the outer-frame and at least one fantastic adventure in the inner frame, which turns back to the outer frame at the end.

In summarizing earlier the thematic typologies that have been proposed in various essays on the literature of the fantastic, Penzoldt is left to one side, as qualitatively different from the others. Indeed, whereas most authors classified the themes under rubrics such as vampire devil, witch, etc., Penzoldt suggests grouping them according to their psychological origin. This origin has a double locus: the collective unconscious and the individual unconscious. In the first case – in the collective unconscious – the thematic elements are lost in the night of time; they belong to all humanity, and the poet is merely more sensitive to them others, and thereby manages to externalize them. In the second case, we are dealing with personal and traumatizing experiences: a certain neurotic writer will project his symptoms into his work. This is particularly the case in one of Penzoldt's sub-genres which he calls the "pure horror tale." For the authors he links to it, "the fantastic tale is nothing but a

surfacing of disagreeable neurotic tendencies." But these tendencies are not always distinctly manifest outside whose writings may be explained by the puritanical education he had received: "Fortunately, in his life Machen was not a puritan at all. Robert Hillyer, who knew him well, tells us that he liked good wine, good company, good jokes, and that he led a perfectly friend and a perfect father," etc.

It has already been said why it is impossible to admit a typology based on the biography of authors. Penzoldt here affords this attitude, moreover, a counter-example. No sooner has he said that Machen's education explains his work than he finds himself obliged to add, "fortunately, the man Machen was quite different from the writer Machen. . . . Thus Machen lived the life of a normal man, whereas a part of his work becomes the expression of a terrible neurosis."

This rejection has a further motive. For a distinction to be valid in literature, it must be based on literary criteria, and not on the existence of psychological schools, each of which prevails in a certain field. The distinction between collective unconscious and individual unconscious, whether or not it is valid in psychology, has no a priori literary pertinence: the elements of the "collective unconscious" mingle freely with those of the "individual unconscious," according to the analyses of Penzoldt himself.

Now it is possible to return to the opposition of our two thematic complexes. It is possible, for instance, to find an analogy between certain social structures (or even certain political regimes) and the two network of themes. The opposition that Mauss sets up between religion and magic is very close to the one has been established between themes of the self and themes of the other. Religion tends toward metaphysics and is absorbed in the creation of ideal images, magic, through a

thousand fissures, emerges from the mystical life from which it draws its forces to mingle with profane life and to serve it. It tends to the concrete even as religion tends to the abstract.

It is clear now that other pair of terms which Todorov had introduced in speaking of themes of vision and of discourse. Once again, moreover, the literature of the fantastic has initiated its own theory: in Hoffmann, for instance, one finds a distinct consciousness of this opposition. He writes: "What are words? Nothing but word! Her heavenly gaze says more than all the languages in the world!" Or again: "You have seen the splendid sight which one might call the finest in the world, since it expresses so many deep feelings without the help of language." Hoffmann, an author whose tales exploit themes of the self, does not conceal his preference for vision, as opposed discourse. It must be added here that in another sense, the two thematic systems can be considered as equally linked to language. The "themes of vision" are based on a breakdown of the limit between psychic and physical; but one could reformulate this observation from the point of view of language. Here the themes of the self-cover, as we have seen, the possibility to breaking down the limit between literal and figurative meanings: the themes of the other are formed out of the relation established between two interlocutors, during their discourse.

The investigation of the fantastic has up till now been located within the genre. The attempt was made to produce an "immanent" study of the fantastic, to distinguish the categories by which it might be described, supported by internal necessities alone. A change in the perspective of this study is needed now.

Once the genre is constituted, we may consider it from the outside – from the viewpoint of literature in general, or even of social life – and ask our initial question

again, though in another form: no longer "what is the fantastic?" but "why is the fantastic?" The first question dealt with the structure of the genre; this second one deals with its functions. (Todorov 1975 158)

Now before looking at literary and social functions of the fantastic that Todorov dealt with it seems better to have an idea of his approach towards the purpose of literature in general. Todorov wrote an article titled 'What Is Literature For?' this article was published in a journal 'New Literary History' 38.1 (2007) 13-32. Though this is an autobiographical article and starts with a discussion of a critical analysis of the way literature is taught in French high schools these days and highlights the shortcomings of this method to the predominant conception of literature as a self-sufficient object without any relevant relationship to the surrounding world. This conception is also widespread outside of school among critics and even writers. The fact is literature helps the reader to better understand the world and lead more meaningful lives.

Like philosophy and like the humanities, literature is made of thought and knowledge about the psychic and social world in which we live. The reality that literature aims to understand is, simply—yet, at the same time, nothing is more complex—human experience. This is why we can say, rightly, that Dante or Cervantes teaches us at least as much about the human condition as even the greatest of sociologists or psychologists, and that there is no incompatibility between the first knowledge and the second. This is true of literature in general, but there are also specific differences. The thinkers of the past, those of the Enlightenment as well as those of the romantic era, tried to identify them. Let us recall their suggestions and add some others. (Todorov 2007: 25)

Literature helps the reader in improving his / her understanding of the human condition and transforms each of its readers inwardly. According to Todorov once this view is accepted it would have direct consequences for the writer's craft and for literary criticism. This consequence is equally valid for the way literature is taught today in schools. The analysis of works would no longer have as its goal illustrating concepts from some linguist or other, some theoretician or other of literature, and thus to present texts as the deployment of language and discourse; literary study would take as its aim to help us reach meaning—for we postulate that meaning, in turn, guides us toward a knowledge of the human, something important for everyone. More exactly, the study of literature directs the reader toward broader and broader concentric circles.

Literature must be understood here in its broadest sense, with awareness of the historically moveable boundaries of this concept. This requirement implies that we not take as dogma the worn-out postulate of the late romantics according to which the destiny of poetry has nothing in common with the gray background of "universal reporting" produced by ordinary language. Recognizing the true value of literature does not mean that we have to believe that "literature is the only true life" or that "everything in the world exists only for the purpose of making a book," a dogma that would exclude three quarters of humanity from "true life." (Todorov 2007: 31)

The answer to the question of the function of a fantastic work should not cross the boundaries set by the literature in general. It can bear on the fantastic, i.e., on a certain reaction to the supernatural; but it can also bear on the supernatural itself. Distinction between a literary function and a social function of the supernatural may

be established. The social function of a supernatural is taken up before the literary function of the same. Todorov begins his enquiry by quoting Peter Penzoldt.

We find the germ of an answer in a remark of Peter Penzoldt's: "for many authors, the supernatural was merely a pretext to describe things they would never have dared mention in realistic terms." We may doubt that supernatural events are merely pretexts; but there is certainly a degree of truth in this assertion: the fantastic permits us to cross certain frontiers that are inaccessible so long as we have no recourse to it. Summarizing the supernatural elements, as previously enumerated, we shall see the "other": incest, homosexuality, love for several persons at once, necrophilia, excessive sensuality. . . . It is as if we were reading a list of forbidden themes, established by some censor: each of these themes has often been banned as a matter of fact, and may still be so in our own day. The fantastic coloration, moreover, has not always saved works from the censor's severity: *The Monk*, for example, was forbidden when it was republished.

(Todorov 1975: 158)

Censorship on literature is a matter of culture and religion of the target readers. This also depends on the general faith of the readers and societies. Individual's psyche comes in each time he / she functions as reader or a writer. The penalization of certain acts by society provokes a penalization invoked in and by the individual himself, forbidding him to approach certain taboo themes. The fantastic may be treated as a means of combat against this kind of censorship.

If something is considered as taboo now- a- days the same act might have been considered normal in old times. This can be asserted that the qualitative difference between the personal possibilities of a nineteenth-century author and those of a

contemporary author bears certain differences. Todorov proposes to recall the devious means a Gautier had to employ in order to describe his character's necrophilia, the whole ambiguous business of vampirism. One need merely read, to indicate the distance, a page of Georges Bataille's Le Bleu du Ciel, which deals with the same perversion. Todorov quotes the answer given by the narrator when he was asked to explain himself.

"Only one thing happened to me: I spent a night in an apartment where an elderly woman had died – she was in her bed, just like anyone else, between two candles, her arms at her sides, but her hands not clasped. There was no one in the room during the night. At that moment I understood." "How?" "I wakened around three in the morning. I had an impulse to go into the room where the corpse was. I was terrified, but no matter how much I trembled, I stayed in front of that corpse. Finally I move, I was insane with anxiety; it happened quite separately, all by itself, just by watching," "Was the woman still attractive? "No, quite old and withered"

(Quoted in Todorov 159-160)

In twenty first century writers do not need to opt for this type of situations. There is no need today to resort to the devil in order to speak of an excessive sexual desire, and none to resort to vampires in order to designate the attraction exerted by corpses. Psychoanalysis and the literature which is directly or indirectly inspired by it deals with these matters in undisguised terms. The themes of fantastic literature have become and widely accepted as literally. The psychoanalyst's attitude here is analogous to that of the narrator of a fantastic tale in asserting that a causal relation exists between apparently unrelated facts.

There exist an interesting coincidence between the authors who nurture the supernatural and those who, within their works, are in particular concerned with the development of the action. This second types of authors are who seek above all to tell 'stories'. The fairy tale may in this regard be considered first and most stable form of narrative. Todorov takes up the Odyssey, and the Decameron, as the first to have different degrees or elements of the marvelous. They may also be treated among the greatest narratives of the past at least in western tradition.

Todorov moves to the narrative. He begins inquire briefly into the very nature of narrative. 'A narrative or story is any report of connected events, actual or imaginary, presented in a sequence of written or spoken words, or still or moving images'. {Oxford English Dictionary (online) "narrative"}

Todorov is among one of the most prominent writers on narrative technique. However, oral storytelling may be considered the most primitive method for sharing narratives. Narratives told in most people's childhood, are used to guide them on proper behavior, cultural history, formation of a communal identity, and values, as especially studied in anthropology today among traditional indigenous peoples. Narratives also act as "living" entities through cultural stories, as they are accepted on from generation to generation. Since the narrative storytelling is often left without explicit meanings, children act as participants in the storytelling process by delving deeper into the open-ended story and making their own interpretations.

The word "story" is usually considered as a synonym for "narrative". Narratives sometimes also are nested within other narratives, for example narratives told by an unreliable narrator (a character) typically found in noir fiction genre. An important part of narration is the narrative mode, the set of methods used to

communicate the narrative through a process narration. Along with exposition, argumentation, and description, narration, broadly defined, is one of four rhetorical modes of discourse. More narrowly defined, it is the fiction-writing mode whereby the narrator communicates directly to the reader.

The narrator of the narration is crucial for the way a work of fiction is perceived by the reader. There is a distinction between first-person and third-person narrative, which Gérard Genette calls to as homodiegetic and heterodiegetic narrative, respectively. A homodiegetic narrator describes own personal experiences as a character in the story. Such a narrator cannot know more about other characters than what their actions reveal. A heterodiegetic narrator, in contrast, describes the experiences of the characters that appear in the story. A narrative wherein events are seen through the eyes of a third-person internal focaliser is said to be figural. In some stories, the author may be omniscient and employ multiple points of view as well and comment on events as they occur.

Most narrators present their story from one of the following perspectives called narrative modes: first-person, or third-person limited or omniscient. Generally, a first-person narrator brings greater focus on the feelings, opinions, and perceptions of a particular character in a story, and on how the character views the world and the views of other characters. If the writer's intention is to get inside the world of a character, then it is a good choice, although a third-person limited narrator is an alternative that does not require the writer to reveal all that a first-person character would know. By contrast, a third-person omniscient narrator gives a panoramic view of the world of the story, looking into many characters and into the broader background of a story. A third-person omniscient narrator can be an animal or an

object, or it can be a more abstract instance that does not refer to itself. For stories in which the context and the views of many characters are important, a third-person narrator is a better choice. However, a third-person narrator does not need to be an omnipresent guide, but instead may merely be the protagonist referring to himself in the third person also known as third person limited narrator.

In The Second Calender's Tale: the calender finds himself in the princess' underground chamber; he might remain there as long as he likes, enjoying his companion and the delicate sweetmeats she serves him – but the tale would thereby perish. Fortunately there exists a ban, a rule: not to touch the genie's talisman. This is obviously what our hero will do at once; and the situation will thereby be all the more quickly modified in that the retributive figure is endowed with supernatural force: "No sooner was the talisman broken than the Palace shook on its very foundations. . . ." Or consider the "Third Calender's Tale": here the law is not to utter the name of God. By violating this law, the hero provokes the intervention of the supernatural: his boatman – "the man of bronze" – falls into the water. Later: the hero finds a horse that carries him up into the sky . . . Whereby the plot is amazingly advanced.

Each break in the stable situation is followed, in these examples, by a supernatural intervention. The marvelous element proves to be the narrative raw material which best fills this specific function: to afford a modification of the preceding situation and break the established equilibrium (or disequilibrium). It must be added that this modification can be caused other means; but they are less effective.

If the supernatural is habitually linked to the narrative of an action, it rarely appears in novels concerned only with psychological descriptions and analysis. The relation of the supernatural to narration is henceforth clear: every text in which the

supernatural occurs is a narrative, for the supernatural event first of all modifies a previous equilibrium – which is the very definition of narrative; but not every narrative includes supernatural elements, even though an affinity exists between them insofar as the supernatural achieves the narrative modification in the fastest manner.

It is apparent, how the social and the literary functions coincide: in both cases, we are concerned with a transgression of the law. Whether it is in social life or in narrative, the intervention of the supernatural element always constitutes a break in the system of pre-established rules, and in doing so finds its justification.

One may inquire now to the function of the fantastic itself. This question seems all the more interesting because whereas the supernatural and the genre which accepts it literally, the marvelous, have always existed in literature and are much in evidence today, the fantastic has had a relatively brief life span. It appeared in a systematic way around the end of the eighteenth century with Cazotte; a century later, one may find the last aesthetically satisfying examples of the genre in Maupassant's tales. We may encounter examples of the hesitation characteristic of the fantastic in other periods, but it is exceptional when this hesitation is thematized by the text itself. Is there a reason for this short span? Or again: why does the literature of the fantastic no longer exist?

In order to answer this question, we must examine more closely the categories which have permitted us to describe the fantastic. The reader and the hero, as we have seen, must decide if a certain event or phenomenon belongs to reality or to imagination, that is, must determine whether or not it is real. It is therefore the category of the real which has furnished a basis for our definition of the fantastic.

No sooner have we become aware of this fact, than we must come to a halt – amazed. By its very definition, literature bypasses the distinctions of the real and the imaginary, of what is and of what is not. One can say that it is to some degree because of literature and art that this distinction becomes impossible to sustain. The theoreticians of literature have said as much many times over. For example, Blanchot: "Art is and is not, real enough to become the path, too unreal to become an obstacle. Art is an as if." And Northrop Frye: "Literature, like mathematics, drives a wedge between the antithesis of being and non-being that is so important for discursive thought. . . . Hamlet and Falstaff neither exist nor do not exist."

Even more generally, literature contests any presence of dichotomy. It is of the very nature of language to parcel out what can be said into discontinuous fragments; a name, in that it selects one or several properties of the concept it constitutes, excludes all other properties and posits the antithesis: this and the contrary. Now literature exists by words; but its dialectical vocation is to say more than language says, to transcend verbal divisions. It is, within language, that which destroys the metaphysics inherent in all language. The nature of literary discourse is to go beyond – otherwise it would have no reason for being; literature is a kind of murderous weapon by which language commits suicide.

If certain events of a book's universe explicitly account for themselves as imaginary, they thereby contest the imaginary nature of the rest of the book. If a certain apparition is only the fruit of an overexcited imagination, then everything around it is real. Far from being a praise of the imaginary, then, the literature of the fantastic posits the majority of a text as belonging to reality – or, more specifically, as provoked by reality, like a name given to a pre-existing thing. The literature of the

fantastic leaves us with two notions: that of reality and that of literature, each as unsatisfactory as the other.

The nineteenth century transpired, it is true, in metaphysics of the real and the imaginary, and the literature of the fantastic is nothing but the bad conscience of this positivist era. But today, we can no longer believe in an immutable, external reality, nor in a literature which is merely the transcription of such a reality. Words have gained an autonomy which things have lost.

What has become of the narrative of the supernatural in the twentieth century? For the answer, Todorov turns to what is doubtless the most famous text that may be placed in this category: Kafka's "Metamorphosis." The supernatural event is reported here in the first sentence of the text: "As Gregor Samsa awoke one morning from uneasy dreams he found himself transformed in his bed into a gigantic insect. . . ." There are, subsequently, a few brief indications of a possible hesitation. Gregor at first thinks he is dreaming; but he is quickly convinced of the contrary. Nonetheless, he does not immediately stop seeking a rational explanation: we are told that he "looked forward eagerly to seeing this morning's delusions gradually fall away. That the change in his voice was nothing but the precursor of a severe chill, an occupational hazard to travelling salesmen, he had not the least possible doubt."

These succinct indications of hesitation are drowned in the general movement of the narrative, in which the most surprising thing is precisely the absence of surprise with regard to the unheard-of event that has befallen Gregor Samsa quite as in Gogol's "Nose" Gradually, Gregor accepts his situation as unusual but, after all, possible. When the chief clerk from his office comes to call for him, Gregor is so annoyed that he wonders "if something like what had happened to him today might someday

happen to the chief clerk; one really could not deny that it was possible." He begins to find a certain consolation in his new condition which liberates him from all responsibility and makes other concern themselves about him: "If they were horrified then the responsibility was no longer his and he could stay quiet. But if they took it calmly, then he had no reason either to be upset . . . ." Resignation then seizes him: he concludes "that he must lie low for the present and by exercising patience and the utmost consideration, help the family to bear the inconvenience he was bound to cause them in his present condition."

All these sentences seem to refer to a perfectly possible event – to a broken ankle for instance – and not to the metamorphosis of a man into a cockroach. Gregor gradually physically, by refusing human food and human pleasures; but also mentally: he can no longer trust his own judgment to determine if a cough is or is not human; when he suspects his sister of trying to remove a picture on which he likes to lie, he is ready to "fly in Grete's face."

The family's reaction follows an analogous development: first there is surprise but not hesitation; then comes the immediately declared hostility on the father's part. Even in the first scence, "pitilessly, Gregor's father drove him back, hissing and crying 'Shoo!' like a savage," and in thinking this over, Gregor admits to himself "that he had been aware from the very first day of his new life that his father believed only the severest measures suitable for dealing with him." His mother continues to love him, but she is quite powerless to help him.

As for his sister, early in the story the closest member of his family, her attitude changes to resignation, and at the end she has come to feel outright hatred. And here is how she summaries the feelings of the entire family when Gregor is close

to dying: "We must try to get rid of it. We've tried to look after it and to put up with it as far as is humanly possible, and I don't think anyone could reproach us in the slightest." If at first the metamorphosis of Gregor distressed his family, gradually it is discovered to have a positive effect: the others begin to work again they waken to life.

Leaning comfortably back in their seats, they canvassed their prospects for the future, and it appeared on closer inspection that these were not at all bad, for the jobs they had got, which do far they had never really discussed with each other, were all three admirable and likely to lead to better things later on. And the note on which the story ends is that "climax of the horrible," as Blanchot calls it, the sister's wakening to a new life: pleasure.

If this narrative is approached with the categories previously elaborated, it may be seen that it is sharply distinguished from the traditional fantastic stories. First of all, the uncanny event does not appear following a series of indirect indications, as the climax of a gradation: it is contained in the very first sentence. The fantastic started from a perfectly natural situation to reach its climax in the supernatural. "The Metamorphosis" starts from a supernatural event, and during the course of the narrative gives it an increasingly natural atmosphere – until at the end, the story has gone as far becomes useless: its function had been to prepare the way for the perception of the unheard-of event, and to characterize the transition from natural to supernatural. Here, it is a contrary movement which is described: that of adaptation, which follows the inexplicable event and which characterizes the transition from the supernatural to the natural. Hesitation and adaptation designate two symmetrical and converse processes.

Furthermore, it may be said that, because of the absence of hesitation, even of astonishment, and because of the presence of supernatural elements, we find ourselves in another familiar genre: the marvelous implies that we are plunged into a world whose laws are totally different from what they are in our own in consequence that the super natural events which occur are in no way disturbing. On the other hand in "The Metamorphosis," it is indeed a shocking, impossible event which concerns us, but it is an event which ends by becoming possible, paradoxically enough. In this sense, Kafka's narratives relate both to the marvelous and to the uncanny; they are the coincidence of two apparently incompatible genres. The supernatural is given, and yet it does not cease to seem inadmissible to reader.

At first glance we are tempted to attribute an allegorical meaning to "the Metamorphosis." But as soon as we try to make this meaning specific, we come up against a phenomenon very similar to one we observed with regard to Gogol's "Nose" the resemblance of the two narratives does not stop there as Victor Erlich has recently shown. One might certainly suggest several allegorical interpretations of the text; but the text itself offers no explicit indication which would confirm any one of them. It is often said of Kafka that his narratives must be read above all as narratives, on the literal level. The event described in "the Metamorphosis" is quite as real as any other literary event.

It must be noted here that the best science fiction texts are organized analogously. The initial data are supernatural: robots, extraterrestrial beings, whole interplanetary context. The narrative movement consists in obliging the reader to see how close these apparently marvelous elements are to us, to what degree they are present in our life. At the end, it shows us all that the most normal man has in

common with the animal's body to a human brain. At the end, it shows us all that the most normal man has in common with the animal. Another story begins with the description of an incredible organization which provides a service for "eliminating" undesirable persons. When the narrative ends, one realizes that such an idea is quite familiar. Here it is the reader who a supernatural event, he ends, by acknowledging its "naturalness".

In the fantastic, the uncanny or supernatural event was perceived against the background of what is considered normal and natural; the transgression of the laws of nature made us even more powerfully aware of them. Once again Todorov states that in Kafka, the supernatural event no longer provokes hesitation, for the world described is entirely bizarre, as abnormal as the very event to which it affords a background. We therefore find here (but in an inverted form) the problem of the literature of the fantastic – a literature which postulates the existence of the real, the normal, in order to attack it subsequently – but Kafka has managed to transcend this problem. His entire world obeys an organic logic, if not indeed a nightmare one, which no longer has anything to do with the real. / Even if a certain hesitation persists in the reader it ceases to affect the character; and identification, as we have previously noted it, is no longer possible. The Kafkaesque narrative abandons what we had said was the second condition of the fantastic and the one that more particularly characterizes the nineteenth century examples: the hesitation represented within the text.

From the foregoing it is obvious that Todorov's formulation of the differentiation of the fantastic has helped us understand literature in a distinctive manner. Todorov discovered an unresolved 'hesitation' at the heart of the 'pure'

fantastic between the 'marvellous' and the 'uncanny'. According to him, the first produces a supernatural and the second a natural explanation of fantastic events. But what is crucial is that this leads towards an innovative reading and interpretation of texts. Without Todorov's theorizing and conceptualization much of the meaning and effectiveness of these texts would have remained unrealized.