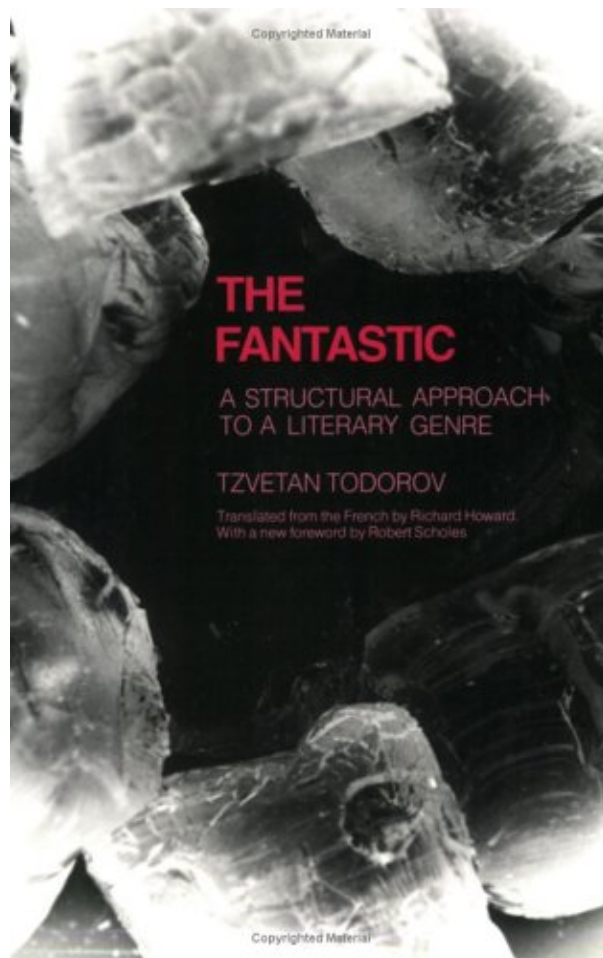
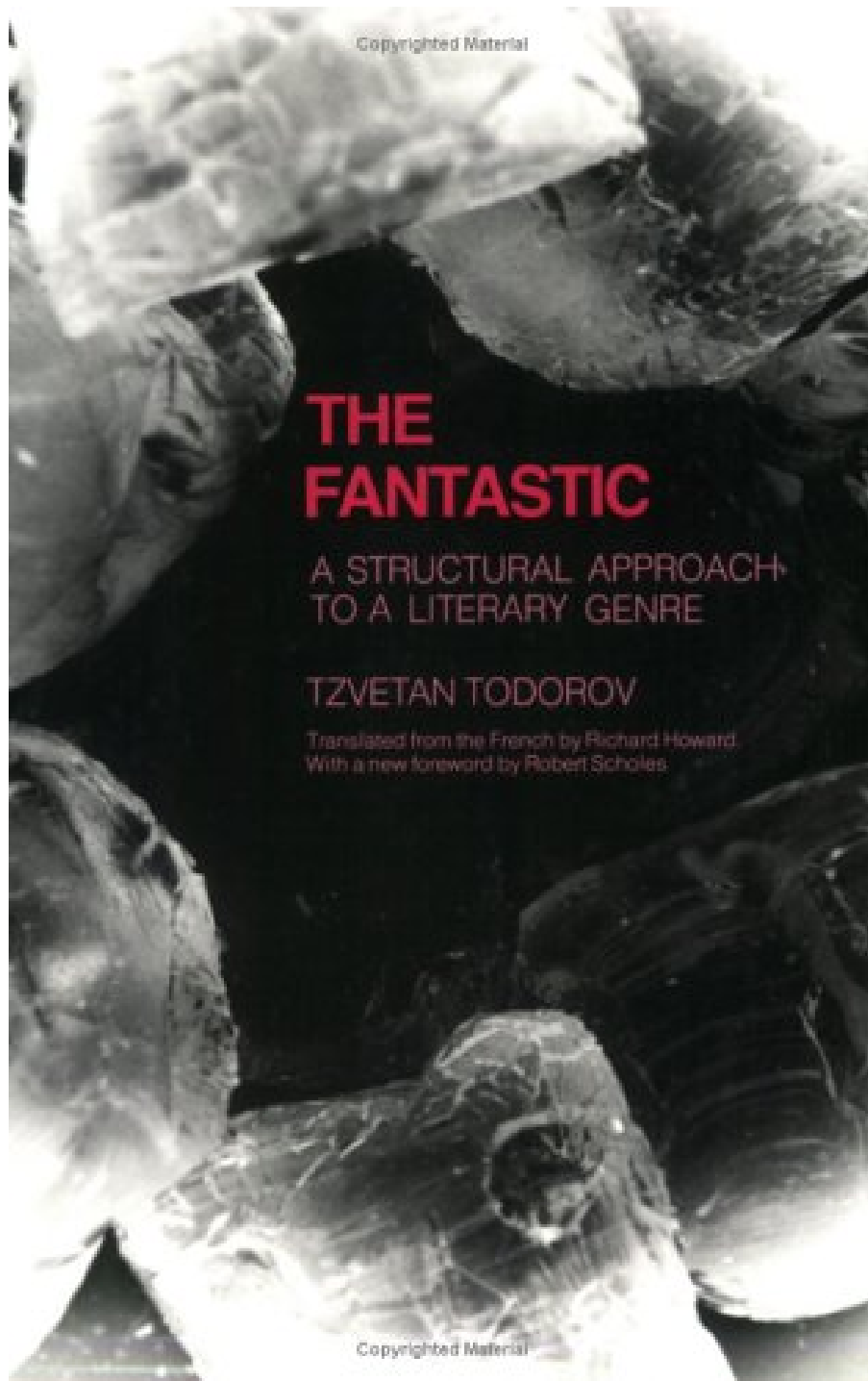


THE FANTASTIC: A STRUCTURAL APPROACH TO A LITERARY GENRE BY TZVETAN TODOROV



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Review

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

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

Language Notes

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

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

- Sales Rank: #148890 in Books
- Published on: 1975-05-31
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.22" h x .52" w x 5.60" l, .60 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 190 pages

Review

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Most helpful customer reviews

33 of 34 people found the following review helpful.

Structuralist view of 'the fantastic'

By Steven Reynolds

Those interested in the structuralist criticism of the 1960s-70s will find the most joy here, with Todorov applying the rigorous structuralist stance to one of literature's most fascinating genres. His demolition of Northrop Frye's approach to 'genre' in Chapter 1 is still cogent after thirty years (and an amusing read in its own right), but it's Todorov's chapters on the 'themes of the fantastic', and his conclusion on its role in literature generally, which are most compelling. This is not, however, an easy read. As Robert Scholes notes in his foreword, "neither structuralism itself nor poetics in general is noted for its ability to charm readers." You don't say. Fortunately, Todorov uses many examples from well known fantastic texts - such as 'The Arabian Nights' and the works of Edgar Allan Poe - and also from lesser known French works which will have you rushing out to the antiquarian bookstore to hunt them down. You can accept or reject the structuralist position - but if nothing else, this book will open up a whole new world of 'fantastic' novels for you to enjoy.

35 of 38 people found the following review helpful.

What Todorov Means!

By M. Wegley

This book is a great achievement in criticism, but one should be warned that Todorov is not talking about elves and dragons when he uses the term "Fantastic." In this book Todorov advances his definition of the fantastic as a "hesitation" or inability to decide whether events in a narrative are natural or supernatural. Thus, the book deals more with straight supernatural fiction, than with what we usually think of as "fantasy" fiction. All in all, Todorov is insightful and his book is a great companion to anyone who enjoys French, English, or American supernatural fiction.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

Just great.

By Paulo José Cavalcanti Holanda

It provides a didactic systematization of the fantastic, by dividing it into the marvelous and the uncanny. This system of definition is of much help for researchers of literature, like myself, who sometimes get lost amidst so many prolix approaches. Definitely a must-have to gothic literature aficionados interested in a deeper understanding of authors such as Lovecraft and Poe.

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