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## The Origins of the Fantastic in Horace Walpole's Prefaces to *The Castle of Otranto*

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Widely considered the first Gothic novel, *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) is twice prefaced by an author who is aware of the risks he was taking in challenging the contemporary literary canon. Both texts lay out some of the Gothic particularities found not only in subsequent narratives of this kind, but also in fantastic tales, which will appear half a century later. The aim of this article is to track the origins of the fantastic in Horace Walpole's prefaces so as to understand it better and discuss its development and divergence from the Gothic. Theories on the Gothic novel and the fantastic are also examined.

Keywords: the fantastic; Gothic novel; Horace Walpole; *The Castle of Otranto*

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## Los orígenes de lo fantástico en los prefacios de Horace Walpole a *The Castle of Otranto*

Considerada la primera novela gótica, *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) cuenta con dos prefacios elaborados por un autor consciente de los riesgos que asumía al desafiar el canon literario de la época. Ambos textos exponen algunas de las particularidades góticas que se encuentran no solo en narrativas posteriores de este tipo, sino también en relatos fantásticos, que aparecerán medio siglo después. El objetivo de este artículo es rastrear los orígenes de lo fantástico en los prefacios de Horace Walpole para comprender mejor esta literatura y su desarrollo y diferencias con lo gótico. También se analizan las teorías sobre la novela gótica y lo fantástico.

Palabras clave: lo fantástico; novela gótica; Horace Walpole; *The Castle of Otranto*

## I. INTRODUCTION

There is widespread consensus among researchers that the fantastic originates with the birth of the Gothic novel and Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* in 1764.<sup>1</sup> This fact may make it difficult to differentiate the two. Although some scholars contend that the Gothic novel is to be understood as a subcategory of the fantastic (e.g., Moreno Paz 2015), others like López Santos (2009) see the Gothic novel and the fantastic as two different literary categories—the first being the predecessor of the latter, which departs from Gothic characteristics and develops them in its own way. This is the position this paper will discuss. The origins of the fantastic can be perceived at the advent of the Gothic novel, though its idiosyncratic features will not be clearly distinguishable at the outset. We can trace this back to *The Castle of Otranto* and in particular to the author's prefaces to it. As Kędra-Kardela states, departing from Genette's theory of literary interpretation (1997), the first preface (1764) can be understood as an attempt to incentivise the reader "to get the book read" and the second (1765) "to get the book read properly" (Kędra-Kardela 2018, 67; italics in the original). In the first instance, the author is concerned about the novelty of his text and the criticism it is likely to receive, and thus he prefers to conceal himself in the guise of a translator under another name. Due to the rapid and favourable reception of the work, in the second edition Walpole does not hesitate to reveal himself as the author of the work, along with his purpose. In addition, he changes the first subtitle "A Story" to "A Gothic Story." Nevertheless, it should be noted that the term *Gothic* referring to literature is already used in Hurd's *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* (1762).

This article examines Walpole's prefaces to show the burgeoning of the fantastic in their lines. To do this, I must first determine what differentiates the Gothic novel from the fantastic and then demonstrate that the fantastic is already noticeable in Walpole's prefaces. At the end, I summarise and present the results of my analysis.

## 2. THE GOTHIC NOVEL

In order to comprehend the nature of the Gothic novel we must trace its origins back to its naming. Bayer-Berenbaum explains that:

[t]he word *Gothic* originally referred to the Northern tribes that invaded Europe during the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries. The term was later applied by Renaissance critics to the style of architecture that flourished in the thirteenth century, because these critics thought

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<sup>1</sup> Scholars have agreed on this for a long time. See for instance Birkhead (1921, 3; 13), Carroll (1990, 4), though he hesitates later on (1990, 55), or Joshi (2012, 4). However, Roas claims that before Walpole's novel, two other Gothic works had been published, namely Tobias Smollett's *The Adventures of Ferdinand Count Fathom* (1753) and Thomas Leland's *Longsword, Earl of Salisbury* (1762) (2000, 65). Birkhead does not consider *Count Fathom* a Gothic novel, but rather a kind of *picaresque* that "anticipates the methods of Mrs. Radcliffe" and "the devices employed later in the tale of terror" (1921, 11; 15).

that the style had originated with the Goths. This architecture was held in low esteem during the Renaissance, and the word *Gothic* therefore developed pejorative connotations suggesting the uncouth, ugly, barbaric, or archaic. It implied the vast and the gloomy, and subsequently denoted anything medieval. Later the word indicated any period in history before the middle or even the end of the eighteenth century. *Gothic* loosely referred to anything old-fashioned or out of date. The ruins of Gothic cathedrals and castles were naturally termed *Gothic*, and soon any ruins—the process of decay itself—became associated with the Gothic as did wild landscapes and other mixtures of sublimity and terror. (1982, 19; italics in the original)

The Gothic novel was welcomed in like fashion, receiving negative criticism from its birth that endures in the present day. There are many similarities between Gothic art and the Gothic novel. Gothic architecture arose in the last centuries of the Middle Ages, the period in which the action of Gothic novels tends to be set. Catholicism is pervasive in this architecture that depicts biblical scenes, while Gothic narratives take place in religious or feudal buildings, churches and castles, and the dark side of religion plays an important role in them. An example of this is *The Monk*, published by M. Lewis in 1796. Gothic paintings are unequivocally discernible for their obscurity, which is in direct contrast to God's Beauty, portrayed through light, as well as strong emotions as in *The Descent from the Cross*, painted around 1435 by van der Weyden. This can also be observed in the Gothic novel, set in atmospheres where brightness and darkness are juxtaposed and stock figures, such as the knight or the *femme fatale*, act in the narrative in a way that might even seem histrionic nowadays.

One of the most commonplace features of the Gothic novel is not shared with Gothic art, namely supernatural events, that is, events that cannot be explained through the physical laws that rule our world—since they are literally over, “super,” nature.<sup>2</sup> Their inclusion is, as many researchers have noted, necessarily linked to the context in which the Gothic novel was born.<sup>3</sup> Its first work appeared soon after the second half of the eighteenth century began, and its major novels date from then until the decade of the 1820s—a period encompassing the Enlightenment. Rationalism was gaining force through the new discoveries and advances made in scientific and technological fields. It was also gaining momentum in the fields of philosophy and literature, leaving religion further and further behind. While English society was getting closer to the physical explanations of the world, it was at the same time further distancing itself from nature through urban expansion. Despite its progress, science was still unable to provide

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<sup>2</sup> For all etymological references of ancient Greek words, see Liddell and Scott (1996). For Latin terms, see Lewis and Short (1879).

<sup>3</sup> Since the list of academics who have discussed this is very long, we will just refer to Roas's convincing study on the matter that can be found in his *Tras los límites de lo real. Una definición de lo fantástico* (published in English in 2018 and entitled *Behind the Frontiers of the Real: A Definition of the Fantastic*), especially in the first chapter (2011, 11–42).

answers to humanity's greatest questions, like death. In letters, while neoclassical authors were emphasizing the didactic values of their texts based on updates—it was the age of the encyclopaedia—that could now reach a larger public thanks to technical advancements and increased literacy levels, the appearance of the Gothic novel showed that people still had an unsatisfied desire for the unknown, and this would result in the emergence of Romantic literature and the fantastic.<sup>4</sup>

Critics generally expressed disdain for these new writings because they did not adhere to the morality of the time—sexuality and violence are rampant in Gothic stories—nor to logic, and thus did not instruct. Despite this criticism, the Gothic novel rose to the top of the publishing market in the 1790s (Punter 1996, 7-8). By that time, the middle class was increasingly gaining access to education and culture, and thus to novels (Carson 2009, 262), something which would ultimately lead to the so-called 'Age of the Novel' during the English Victorian Era (1837-1901). This could have been a contributing factor in the novel being chosen as the vehicle of the Gothic, though other forms were also used, such as short stories published in journals (Roas 2000, 78), theatre—like Walpole's *The Mysterious Mother*, written between 1766 and 1768—and poetry—some examples might be found in Ossian or Edward Young's *Night-Thoughts* of 1742.<sup>5</sup> However, due to the extraordinary events that take place in Gothic texts and the need to develop these events, the Gothic tends toward *narrative*, and especially the *novelistic form*. The novel is more adept at accommodating an accumulation of mysteries in a "search for excess" (López Santos 2008, 191) that reaches its climax by banishing everything at the end of the story. In this sense, Harris notes that "[o]ften a new event or crisis will arrive before the current one is resolved, creating the effect of plot elements crashing hurriedly into each other" (2009, n. p.). On the contrary, the shortness of the short story eliminates the stacking structure too early, thus making it unsuitable for the Gothic. As for drama, some of the extraordinary occurrences in Gothic texts are probably near impossible to represent on stage. And with the exception of epics, poetry would be rather unsuited to the Gothic if we are to understand poetry as lyric, that is, as the nonfictional art of presenting things through words.

With its supernatural events, the Gothic novel builds up a mosaic of a secret about to be revealed. And, in fact, it will be eventually, but only after intricate plot

<sup>4</sup> The desire for the unknown is also manifested in many philosophers' interest in the sublime during the eighteenth century, starting with the translations of Longinus's *Περί Υψηλότητος* (*On the Sublime*)—especially that by William Smith in 1739—and reflected in works such as Addison's *The Pleasures of Imagination* of 1744, Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* of 1756 and Kant's *Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen* (*Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*) of 1764 and *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (*Critique of Judgement*) of 1790. The sublime—from the Latin "sub," *under*, and "limes," *the limit*—is something on the border between our world and the absolute. It provokes desire and dread at the same time and can be experienced in the observation of nature's colossal constructions, e.g. mountains, as well as those made by humans, like cathedrals, or in artistic expressions such as poetry. The English word "terrific" summarises this experience as it denotes the positive meaning of "great," but also connotes the negative of "terror."

<sup>5</sup> The dating of *The Mysterious Mother* is complicated. It was written between 1766 and 1768, widely available in 1791 and staged in 1821. For the first production of the play, see Worrall (2014).

developments which contribute to putting off the climax. When the mystery is solved, the story is over. In this way, we could argue that Gothic prose tends to *reality*, that is, to relief at the close of the book. This is made clear through the separation that the author establishes between the reader—both those who were contemporaries of the author and those of the modern day—and the narrated: the action is set at a different time, more specifically in the Middle Ages, in an ancient and rather uncommon place to live as far as the readers are concerned, such as a castle or a monastery, and the strange events are *outer* representations in which the readers do not believe, like ghosts. The readers might be afraid of the story, and drawn to it, but they are safe from its occurrences and can encounter or turn their back on them anytime they wish. Aikins's study "On the Pleasure Derived from Objects of Terror" (1792) considers this, stating that there is a desire to be witness without being directly involved with fear, for example while reading ghost stories (1792, 120).

By the end of the eighteenth century, the popularity of Gothic novels had, however, waned, since the style had become familiar to readers and thus increasingly failed to surprise them. In May 1798, its typical features were mockingly listed in the French journal *Spectateur du Nord* (*North Spectator*):

*Take*—An old castle, half of it ruinous.

A long gallery with a great many doors, some secret ones.

Three murdered bodies, quite fresh.

As many skeletons, in chests and presses.

An old woman, hanging by the neck; with her throat cut.

Assassins and desperadoes '*quant. suff.*'

Noise, whispers, and groans, threescore at least.

Mix them together, in the form of three volumes to be taken at any of the watering places, before going to bed. *PROBATUM EST.* (in Clery and Miles 2000, 183-84; italics in the original)<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The English version of this "recipe" was published anonymously in an article in *Terrorist Novel Writing* in 1798. In the original French: "— Un vieux château dont la moitié est en ruine;

— un long corridor, avec beaucoup de portes, dont plusieurs doivent être cachées;

— trois cadavres encore tout sanglants;

— trois squelettes bien emballés;

— une vieille femme pendue, avec quelques coups de poignard dans la gorge;

— des voleurs et bandits à discrétion;

— une dose suffisante de chuchotements, de gémissements étouffés et d'horribles fracas;

— tous ces ingrédients, bien mêlés et partagés en trois portions ou volumes, donnent une excellente mixture que tous ceux qui n'ont pas le sang noir pourront prendre dans leur bain immédiatement avant de se coucher. On en sentira le meilleur effet. *Probatum est*" (in Killen 1967, 13; italics in the original).

With this, the Gothic novel reached an end. Scarcely twenty years after that, the fantastic made its first appearances.

### 3. THE FANTASTIC

The nineteenth century is dominated by two opposing literary currents: on the one hand, and in line with Gothic tradition, the imagination and intuitive comprehension called for by Romanticism and interest in pseudosciences such as occultism or spiritualism; on the other, the trend towards Realism and knowledge based on logic promoted by the positivist natural sciences. Later on, and in the middle of both traditions, psychology and psychoanalysis emerge, sparking interest in academics and society as a whole. The fantastic at this point departs from Romanticism, embraces Realism and incorporates psychological theory. Rather than searching for answers in science, the fantastic posed questions as to the comprehension of reality. In concordance with some theorists (see Lehmann 2003, 29 or Viegnes 2006, 8) and despite its name, in this article the fantastic is not considered completely non-mimetic, but rather between somewhere between mimetic and non-mimetic—where we also find Realism—, since it is always based on a world that imitates ours into which abnormal phenomena are introduced that will unbalance the reality projected in the novel—and thus reality beyond the text. And like the Gothic, because of its imaginative element, the fantastic encountered, and continues to encounter today, both a positive and a negative reception among readers and critics alike.

Trying to define the fantastic is rather arduous, since a good number of theorists have devoted, and devote, themselves to it without any consensus having been reached.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps this is an indication of the fantastic's fluid character, which allows it to take different forms and adjust to the changes in literature throughout history. This paper, however, must make an attempt at definition in order to analyse its origins in Walpole's prefaces. The fantastic derives from "fantasy," which is in turn born from the verb *φαίνω*, "to shine, to bring to light," i.e., to let oneself be seen. From *φαίνω*, we derive the word *φαινόμενον*, "phenomenon," which means to manifest oneself. Ancient Greek also provides the noun *φαντασία*, "the power of re-presenting an object." Originally, then, fantasy meant to show oneself *again* to re-represent what has already been seen by the mind. It is translated into Latin as *phantasia* or *imaginatio*, "imagination," which is connected to "image," *imago*. The fact that all these terms revolve around vision is based on a comparison between vision and comprehension, the first being the most prominent sense and the latter the most remarkable of human capacities.

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<sup>7</sup> Since the appearance of Todorov's *Introduction à la littérature fantastique* (*The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*) of 1970, many attempts have been made to provide a definition of the fantastic. Some of the most important are to be found in Jackson's *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* of 1981, Brooke-Rose's *A Rhetoric of the Unreal: Studies in Narrative and Structure, especially of the Fantastic* of 1981 and Roas's *Tras los límites de lo real. Una definición de lo fantástico* of 2011.

This association made by the Greeks has been integrated into Western civilization, where we can still find words such as “un-cover” or “dis-close:” to remove what is covering the truth—*ἀλλήθεια*, “that which does not hide itself.” As well as with the sublime, much effort was dedicated to the study of fantasy and imagination during the eighteenth and nineteenth century, departing from Plato and Aristotle and taking as reference Coleridge’s distinction between *imagination* and *fancy*—the latter being an abbreviation of *fantasy* (Merriam Webster 2020)—in his famous *Biographia Literaria* (1817). There, the poet distinguishes between primary imagination, responsible for *repeating* the products of perception in the mind, secondary imagination, which creates new meanings from the things that have been perceived by the first, and fancy, i.e., the logical faculty that allows us to organize mental material such as memoirs (Coleridge 1817, 182-83).

Coleridge’s proposal influenced nineteenth-century thought and has endured to the modern day. It prefers and praises imagination, which transforms things that are unconsciously perceived into a logical or artistic product elevated by the labours of the mind. This is to the detriment of fantasy, which is usually linked to falsity, and regarded as a childish game because it alters and consequently distances reality. Consistent with substantial academic consensus—e.g. Jackson (1981) and Roas (2011)—in this article the fantastic is understood to be an artistic manifestation of something that, in one way or another, overturns the—intratextual—reality exposed in the text and reflects, at the same time, our—extratextual—world. Like fantasy, born from what we have seen and creating new visions, the intratextual reality establishes a necessary and constant debate with the extratextual reality because it derives from it. Thus, we should consider external reality to comprehend that of the text, that is, we should ask about the external reality itself. But we need to be careful: the ground becomes unstable when posing so fundamental a question—that is, what reality is—and it is inappropriate to take paths that come not from philology, but from philosophy. As “word lovers,” as philo-*logists*, we will search for the root meaning of the term. *Re-ality* is “what is relative to things”—from the Latin *res*, “thing”—i.e., what there is. We move in reality, among things, and we interact with it, with things. The reality in the text—which is *like* ours, but not the same—establishes the space where the figures develop. In the fantastic, the fictitious world is cracked by strange phenomena that cannot be explained in the context of the work’s reality. The manifestation of these events in the intratextual reality, which is so similar to ours, makes readers hesitate: if that happens there, maybe that could occur in the extratextual, that is to say, in our reality. This is what the fantastic pursues: to go *from the text outside*, touching the weak spots of our world through fiction, so that the logical rules from which we understand it and ourselves are left shaking. Other rules, unknown to us, seem to lay under it and to cross it.

As in the Gothic novel, the fantastic is characterized by supernatural events. Nevertheless, the fantastic places an emphasis not on external events, as the Gothic novel does, but on the *inner* concerns of humans, such as double personality or madness.

These phenomena reflect those in the extratextual reality. That does not mean that they have actually taken place in it, but rather that they *could*—they are *verisimilar*, i.e., “similar to the truth.” As Aristotle claims in *Περὶ ποιητικῆς* (*Poetics* 1451a, 36-38), “it does not correspond to the poet to say what has happened, but what could occur, that is, what is possible according to verisimilitude or necessity” (1974, 156-57; my translation).<sup>8</sup> And since they are not true, they take the form of fictions. But the fantastic narrators, who are often also the protagonists and have experienced or been told about the extraordinary occurrences, want to be believed and insist on the veracity of the happenings by using specific verbal formulations—e.g. appealing directly to the reader, using a spoken and thus spontaneous style as in legends—or by asserting that they or the people involved are not mad or in altered states of consciousness such as dreaming, or sometimes by adding an extra paragraph at the end of the story providing a rational resolution of the events. In this way the fantastic, like the Gothic, has a tendency towards *narrative* rather than other genres such as poetry or drama, where the inclusion of supernatural elements is difficult. The literary form of narrative shelters the fictionality required in the fantastic and the lineal character of this genre allows the action to play out. Moreover, the fantastic prefers the form of the *short story*—though it does not exclude the novel or the more recent flash fiction—because of its intensity: the short story is like an “*explosión de energía espiritual*” [“*explosion of spiritual energy*”; my translation], according to Cortázar (1994, 373; italics in the original), which shakes the reader. Neither the figures nor their development, nor the strange events themselves matters in the fantastic, rather it is the fact that these phenomena take place in a reality so similar to ours and to characters that are apparently like ourselves that is important in the fantastic.

What the protagonists and readers of the fantastic mostly experience is fear, though it is not a *sine qua non* condition in fantastic texts.<sup>9</sup> Readers’ reactions will likely vary according to the social and intellectual background of each individual, as well as to their expectations, and we can clearly observe the same in the characters’ behaviour. When confronted with the extraordinary events, they do not always react in fear—sometimes they simply have a strange feeling or even manifest indifference towards the events. In both cases, readers are affected by the characters’ responses—and by the events as well—reacting with “*extrañamiento*” [“a sensation of strangeness”; my translation] (Cortázar 1967b, 25; Campa 1991, 56; Roas 2011, 36). The abnormal phenomena are set in a world similar to ours, so we can empathise with its people when they are scared of or feel strangeness towards the supernatural events; but it is perhaps even more striking when figures do not react as we would expect. However, this feeling can, at best, only be maintained for a short period. Unlike the Gothic novel, which piles

<sup>8</sup> In the original: “ὅτι οὐ τὸ τὰ γενόμενα λέγειν, τοῦτο ποιητοῦ ἔργον ἐστίν, ἀλλ’ οἷα ἂν γένοιτο καὶ τὰ δυνατὰ κατὰ τὸ εἰκὸς ἢ τὸ ἀναγκαῖον.”

<sup>9</sup> Edgar Allan Poe noted the short story’s suitability for the insertion of terror, horror and passion, whereas he considered poetry better suited to beauty (1842, 298-300).



event on top of event until the grand finale, when everything concludes, the fantastic is characterized by one or a small number of occurrences that usually lead to an open ending. The mystery that is awoken in fantastic narratives is rarely solved; it remains a mystery—like the always-unanswered secret, such as death. Thus, after turning the last page, readers are not released from the effect of the fantastic and, conscious of the unresolved riddle that might also affect their world and themselves, they continue to feel the “sensation of strangeness.” They, as well as the protagonists in fantastic stories, are in their reality, in their presumably secure everyday lives, but the strange events and the possibility of them happening leads readers and/or characters “to find themselves not at home being at home”—that is, experiencing the “*Unheimliches*” [“uncanny”] according to Freud (1919). Though attached to a particular situation, this sentiment transforms people’s shared reality. Thus, adapting to its context, the fantastic, which is still being cultivated today, has not yet come to an end.

#### 4. THE ORIGINS OF THE FANTASTIC IN WALPOLE’S PREFACES TO *THE CASTLE OF OTRANTO*

As mentioned earlier, in the preface to the first edition of *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), the English novelist presents himself not as the author of the work, but as its translator. Walpole invents two personalities for the publication of his book: Onuphrio Muralto, the fictional original writer, and William Marshall, the presumed translator (Walpole 1765). He claims that the text was originally written in Italian, printed two centuries earlier and found in the north of England. Obscuring his identity reveals a sense of his insecurity in how the book might be received. And it is not because of its aesthetic value, but because of the content that Walpole fears the public response. He warns readers about the “preternatural events” that occur in the story—events that, by the 1700s, are no longer taken seriously, though they were “so established in those dark ages,” i.e., in medieval times. Due to their scepticism of the supernatural, readers who are Walpole’s contemporaries, he advises, should consider the text as “matter of entertainment” (2003, 60). As Harris (2009, n. p.) notes, Walpole approaches Horace’s poetic principle of pleasure as stated in *De arte poetica* 333–34 (*The Art of Poetry*): “Poets wish either to profit or to delight; or to deliver at once both the pleasures and the necessities of life” (Horace 1836).<sup>10</sup> With his words, our writer swims against the flow dictated by Neo-classicism, which aims to enrich the reader’s knowledge. Instead, *Otranto*’s moral is the “so remote [...] punishment” that “*the sins of fathers are visited on their children to the third and fourth generation*” (2003, 61; italics in the original). In parallel with this preface, however, he did not hesitate to reveal the intentions of his novel. In a letter to Madame du Deffand from 1767, he wrote:

<sup>10</sup> In the original: “aut prodesse volunt aut delectare poetae / aut simul et iucunda et idonea dicere vitae.”

[O]f all my works, this is the only one that pleases me; *I gave free rein to my imagination; visions and passions excited me. I did it despite the rules, the critiques and the philosophers*; and it seems to me that it is even more worth it. I am also convinced that in some time, when *taste* retakes its place, which is now occupied by philosophy, my poor *Castle* will find admirers: there are some now among us; I have just published the third edition. (Walpole 1973, 260; italics added; my translation)<sup>11</sup>

And, indeed, the new tendencies would fulfil Walpole's desire for the reestablishment of imagination in literature: first with Romanticism and then with the fantastic.

His requirement for imagination, i.e., for that part of a person that constantly escapes logic, would be accomplished by means of *terror*, which he considers to be “the author's principal engine” (Walpole 2003, 60). The focus of this feeling—terror—are the characters who, put in extraordinary situations, as explained in the second preface, will push their humanity to the limit (65). The first preface remarks that interwoven with terror is *pity* (60), one of the highest sentiments and, taken together they are responsible for Aristotelian *catharsis* in *Περὶ ποιητικῆς* 1449b (*Poetics*) portrayed in theater. The Gothic novels written and published after *Otranto* will also revolve around fear. Deriving from them, the fantastic, as already mentioned, will continue exploring this feeling without making it a necessary condition, but rather tending to induce *strangeness* in the *reader*—though not always in the characters—towards the unknown that will, at the same time, awaken a desire to be unveiled.

Another aspect that the fantastic will include later is implied in the last paragraph of the first preface. Like so many fantastic tales, the text ends by alluding to some kind of veracity at the base of the story: the castle is described in detail and must therefore have been real (Walpole 2003, 61-62). However, this conclusion might sound rather doubtful to us, since imagination can construct elaborate pictures that can later be reproduced in other minds through the words of the mind that originally created them. With the possible truth of the story that he suggests, Walpole creates the so-called “*hesitation effect*” that academics will take up after Todorov (2001, 29-36), i.e., the doubt that the readers and maybe the characters have in believing the extraordinary events or not. This constitutes what Penzoldt has called “the double climax” in fantastic stories; that is, the appearance of the extraordinary and its “necessary explanation.” However, Penzoldt points out, there is actually only one explanation, since the second is located outside the action and only contributes to emphasize the first in the reader by sowing doubt as to the possible in the impossible: “Only the knowledge of what is behind a manifestation conveys the full horror of it” (1952, 19). A clarification of the events is

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<sup>11</sup> In the original: “[...] de tous mes ouvrages c'est l'unique où je me suis plu; *j'ai laissé courir mon imagination; les visions et les passions m'échauffeient. Je l'ai fait en dépit des règles, des critiques, et des philosophes*; et il me semble qu'il n'en vaille que mieux. Je suis même persuadé qu'à quelque temps d'ici, quand *le goût* reprendra sa place, que la philosophie occupe, mon pauvre *Château* trouvera des admirateurs: il en a actuellement chez nous; j'en viens de donner la troisième édition.”

also to be found at *Otranto's* ending—namely, the family's past, the family now having paid its due to its current members. The tension that has increased throughout the story through the piling up of occurrences, together with the secret revolving around them, is now resolved. "Everything tends directly to the catastrophe. Never is the reader's attention relaxed," assures Walpole (2003, 60). The same tendency, which Poe (1842) applies to the short tale, will appear in the fantastic with two key differences: the story will not be composed of the mounting up of strange occurrences, but by just one (or a few) that will lead directly to the end; and instead of providing a reason for the occurrence(s), or even when apparently providing one, the strange events will never be completely resolved. And the reason for this is that the mystery is always, or could always be, part of the reader's reality, like the issue of death and the afterlife or subconscious conflicts and manifestations such as madness or dreams. In the fantastic, the unknown remains unknown.

Walpole renounces his anonymity in the second preface (1765), and even apologizes for not having done it in the first (65). The second preface puts the accent on his attempt at reproducing Shakespeare's techniques of paying close attention to the characters and of showing his novel as a combination of both seriousness and humour (66-70). But what is interesting here in relation to the fantastic, and as we have already mentioned, is that the novel is also presented as a combination of imagination and reason. His inclination towards a "collage composition" can already be found in the Horatian quotation on the title page, which states: "vanae / fingentur species, tamen ut pes, et caput uni / reddantur formae" (63), i.e., "vain images will be created, but in a manner that foot, and head are restored to one form" (my translation). But, as noted by Uden (2018, 47), even this is a mismatch, since the actual words from the Latin poet in his *Ars poetica* 5-7 (*Poetics*) are "vanae / fingentur species, ut nec pes nec caput uni / reddatur formae," that is, "vain images will be created, that neither foot nor head are restored to one form" (my translation). Walpole thus turns the verses around to mean precisely the contrary. "It was an attempt to blend the two kinds of romance, the ancient and the modern," states Walpole, arguing that the old "was imagination and improbability" (2003, 65): extraordinary events took place in romances, like in chivalry books, and their figures, especially in romantic stories, act unnaturally. They seem "to lose their senses, the moment the laws of nature have lost their tone" (66). Conversely, *romances* strive to imitate the observed world, "but the great resources of fancy have been dammed up, by a strict adherence to common life" (65). Wishing to mix both, that is, to show humanity itself *naturally* by making the characters "think, speak, and act, as it might be supposed mere men and women would do in extraordinary positions" (65), he created "a new species of romance"—the Gothic novel (70). The recipe is composed of the elements already mentioned: supernatural events confronting stock figures such as the villain or the knight errant so that their reactions are revealed. The emphasis is thus put on the characters' response to the destabilized reality they are experiencing, which tends to be embodied by pity and terror.

A similar intention to that of Walpole's blend is observable in Hoffmann's effort to collate the old—fairy tales and legends—and new *tales* to create his “Wirklichkeitsmärchen” [“reality fairy tales”] (Benz 1908, 142-48), his “Märchen aus der neuen Zeit” [“fairy tales from modernity”], as he called them.<sup>12</sup> In his stories, the German writer of fantastic narratives omits typical fairy tale expressions, such as “Once upon a time...,” and sets the stories in a specific time and place—often the now—in contrast to what is found in a remote past in the *Märchen* [“fairy tales”]. In addition, he develops complex characters, not the stereotyped ones we often find in traditional tales and, most importantly, he puts an emphasis on the characters' reactions. These characters live in a world similar to that of the reader, and thus the characters do not take the strange events for granted, since these are not expected to happen. The result of this was that the fantastic tale made, and makes, the individual confront the outer and inner world, and therefore the individual's own self. In Hoffmann's *Die Serapionsbrüder* [*The Serapion Brothers*] we read the following statement, which can be taken as a manifesto for the fantastic:

I mean that the base of the ladder to heaven that one wants to climb to reach higher regions must be fixed in life, so that everyone is capable of going up through it. If one finds oneself, always higher and higher, in a fantastic magic kingdom, one will believe that *this kingdom belongs to his life as well* and that it is actually the most wonderful part of it. (2001, 721; italics added; my translation)<sup>13</sup>

The fantastic will pick up the thread from here, penetrating characters and/or readers through fear. The point is that by seeing their world reflected in these tales, readers will question their own—external—reality. Their faith in the rationalism that perfused the eighteenth century will be shaken when the Gothic novel emerges, and will give birth to fantastic narrative in the nineteenth century, when traditionalism still pervaded. Whereas the Gothic claimed back the imagination for literature and united it with reason, the fantastic leans towards imagination in order to subvert reason. In this manner, the possibility of another different level to the one we live in, one just barely perceivable through imagination and so discarded and considered impossible from logic, is now given space not only in fantasy in our minds and fiction, but also in reality—in our world. Once the book is closed, the readers of the fantastic are not freed. Having turned the last page, the doubt about the firmness of intratextual *and* extratextual reality will inevitably arise. The impossible has now become possible, though its mystery remains. As such, the bases upon which the world was thought to exist tremble, and readers

<sup>12</sup> This was added as a subtitle to his *Der goldne Topf* [*The Golden Pot*] of 1814.

<sup>13</sup> In the original: “Ich meine, daß die Basis der Himmelsleiter, auf der man hinaufsteigen will in höhere Regionen, befestigt sein müsse im Leben, daß jeder nachzusteigen vermag. Befindet er sich dann, immer höher und höher hinaufgekllettert, in einem fantastischen Zauberreich, so wird er glauben, *dies Reich gehöre auch in sein Leben hinein* und sei eigentlich der wunderbar herrlichste Teil desselben.”

no longer feel at home there—they experience the *Unheimliches*. And as long as this sentiment can be evoked, as long as humans have still not discovered all the secrets of the world and themselves, the fantastic, adapting to its time, can plausibly endure.

## 5. CONCLUSION

After having studied the main characteristics of the Gothic novel and the fantastic, it was found that both incorporate supernatural events that generally cause fear in the characters themselves as well as, in some cases, the readers. The inclusion of the supernatural was a way to challenge the rationalism of the time, which excluded—and still excludes—the imagination from literary works and everyday life despite not having found answers to some crucial issues for humanity, such as death. The Gothic novel, on the one hand, does this by trying to reconcile reason and imagination. The fantastic, on the other, manifests that rationality alone fails to explain the unknown and that the imagination may be a more suitable means to approach it. In addition, the Gothic novel distances itself from its contemporary readers by setting the action in the Middle Ages and by presenting events, such as inanimate objects moving on their own, that tend to take place *outside* human beings, that is, outside their psyche. Conversely, the fantastic appeals directly to its readers as it develops in current time and includes unexplainable events that usually affect a character's *inside*—like madness.

The two prefaces written by Walpole for his *The Castle of Otranto* deal with the characteristics mentioned above and can thus be regarded as a first instance of what the fantastic will later become. There are two important points related to the fantastic in the prefaces. The first is the last paragraph of the first preface because it lends veracity to the story. This technique has also been applied in some fantastic stories as an attempt to augment the emotions—especially fear—that the readers might feel during the perusal of the text. The second and most remarkable of these points, included in the second preface, is the intention “to blend the two kinds of romance” (Walpole 2003, 65): the old—where imaginative and fantastic elements play a special role, though characters do not act in a way that would lead contemporary readers to empathise with them—and the new—which has a tendency towards realism, that is, the depiction of everyday life and therefore the inclusion of credible characters, but the exclusion of supernatural events. Although the Gothic novel attempts to do this, it will not be until the appearance of the fantastic that it will in fact be achieved, since fantastic narratives are set in a world similar to that of the readers and involve them in a direct way. While readers can get back to their life with relief after having read a Gothic novel, because it is set in remote times, they will probably have some difficulties in finding calm in their routine when they have finished a fantastic story as it reflects a space and a time so similar to their own. Thus, the fantastic will still accompany them even after having reached the end of the text, and it will make them question the reality to which they belong.

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