

# THE FILTER, THE PENDULUM AND THE MIRROR: REMAPPING MODERN GREEK FANTASTIC LITERATURE

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## Abstract

Over the last decades, there has been a remarkable rise in the number and the diversity of critical texts and theoretical approaches to the literature of the Fantastic that could be divided into “two lines of thought” (Garcia, 2015): on the one hand, the concept of the Fantastic is perceived as an ahistorical umbrella term that includes any narration that transcends in some way the laws of nature and logic (Sandner, 2004). On the other hand, it is used to indicate a much narrower literary genre, that is born at the second half of the 18th century as a reaction to the dogmatic Enlightenment rationalism and is built on the disquieting intrusion of the supernatural into the everyday world or, according to Roas, “the conflict that arises from the coexistence of the *real* and the *impossible*” (2011, p. 45).

Adopting the latter theoretical approach to the Fantastic as a post-Enlightenment reflection on the limits of the real, this paper suggests a typology that divides the genre into three basic categories: 1) *Fantastic as a filter*: a modern and subversive rewriting of a supernatural tale in the context of a disenchanted world, which brings into question the established notion of reality; 2) *Fantastic as a pendulum*: an ambiguous narrative that oscillates between a supernatural and a rational explanation of the events, thus blurring the border between sanity and insanity; 3) *Fantastic as a mirror*: an allegory for the Otherness, which underlines the oppressive features of dominant discourses marginalizing anything that deviates from “normal”.

Based on this typology, I then proceed to a remapping of modern Greek fantastic literature focusing on three representative short stories of the end of the 19th century, which are approached, respectively, as prime examples of the three types of the Fantastic: Andreas Karkavitsas’ “The Yusuri” (1899), C. P. Cavafy’s “In the Light of Day” (1895-6?), and Alexandros Papadiamantis’ “The Witches” (1900). In this light, I conclude that the Fantastic functions as a lens that reveals a less known aspect of prominent modern Greek literary figures and unlocks new, alternative readings of their texts: Karkavitsas’ “The Yusuri” becomes an example of eco-fiction that transforms the legend’s haunted coral from a potential sailor’s feat into an autonomous, unclassifiable marine organism, and criticizes the instrumentalization of nature. Cavafy’s “In the Light of Day” is perceived as a fantastic variation of the literary flâneur, proposing a different mapping of the city and an alternative way of interacting with urban space. Finally, Papadiamantis’ “The Witches” turns into a deconstructive detective story that highlights the ideological aspect of the legends and reflects on the role of stereotypes in shaping public opinion.

## References

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## Brief bio

I am a Ph.D. student in Comparative Literature at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTH) and, in my dissertation under the supervision of Professor Emeritus Michalis Chrysanthopoulos, I explore the presence of the Fantastic in the modern Greek short story (1880-1930). During my doctoral studies, I have conducted a part of my dissertation at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona under the supervision of Prof. David Roas, with whom I co-edited an anthology of contemporary Spanish fantastic fiction, and at King's College London, under the supervision of Prof. Gonda Van Steen. Along with my Comparative Literature studies, since 2018, I am an undergraduate student at the Film Department of the AUTH, I have completed a postgraduate degree in screenwriting at the Escola de Cinema de Barcelona and I have worked as a screenwriter in short and feature film projects, including a documentary about the 19th-century forger Constantine Simonides, produced by Iraklis Mavroidis [*Dogtooth* (2009), *Apples* (2020)].