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# Paris and the Birth of the Modern Fantastic during the Nineteenth Century

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**Patricia Garcia,**
**"Paris and the Birth of the Modern Fantastic during the Nineteenth Century"**
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**Abstract**: In her article "Paris and the Birth of the Modern Fantastic during the Nineteenth Century" Patricia Garcia discusses the unprecedented growth of Europe's urban centers during the nineteenth century in relation to the realist novel and takes urban and literary Paris as a paradigm. However, nineteenth-century Paris was also to become the epicenter of another narrative form: the fantastic. Garcia's objective is to explore how the modern city fueled the development of the fantastic by combining the literary and urban angle: how do works of the fantastic write the city? What role does the modern city play in the emergence of the fantastic short story? Her argumentation is divided into two parts: the first explores how literature circulated in space while the second focuses on the representations of Paris in nineteenth-century fantastic fiction to demonstrate that with the acceleration of modernity, the fantastic became an urban form of expression.

**Patricia GARCIA**

## Paris and the Birth of the Modern Fantastic during the Nineteenth Century

The birth of Modernity was driven by a drastic reconfiguration of European metropolis during the nineteenth century. This unprecedented growth of Europe's urban centers has been studied in relation to literary patterns of the nineteenth-century realist novel, taking urban and literary Paris as a paradigm. The cultural histories of Walter Benjamin (*Passages*), Philippe Hamon (*Expositions*), Christopher Prendergast (*Paris and the Nineteenth Century*), Robert Alter (*Imagined Cities*), David Harvey (*Paris*), Anthony Vidler ("Reading the City"), Eric Hazan (*The Invention of Paris*), and Jean DeJean (*How Paris became Paris*), among others, have brought to light parallels between nineteenth-century Parisian architectural, urban, and literary models. These works are connected by a common recognition: the profound urban changes of the nineteenth century called for new ways of capturing city life in literature, new aesthetic languages and new ways of understanding the novel. Paris, as the city that offers some of the most radical urban and literary changes of the era, serves as a model case for these dynamics. During the period in question, both the city and the novel were to become objects of architectural exhibition and exposition (Hamon, *Expositions* 94-123). The nineteenth-century French novel thus provides a way of mapping the city. Correspondingly, the city acts as a literary work; walking its streets is a way of reading and exploring the (hi)stories of the metropolis. The above-mentioned critical works suggest that the paradigmatic genre to explore this phenomenon is the French realist novel; it provides extensive expositions-exhibitions of city life.

However, nineteenth-century Paris was also to become the epicenter of another narrative form, one that arose as a complement of or reaction to the predominant positivistic model of thought: the fantastic. Whereas the above-mentioned critical body of work deals with a canonical a corpus of realist novels (Balzac's *Le Père Goriot*, Hugo's *Les Misérables*, Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du mal* and *Le Spleen de Paris*, Flaubert's *L'Éducation sentimentale*, etc.), the emergent French literature of the fantastic during this period is rarely mentioned. And yet, in parallel with the supposed hegemony of the realist novel, the fantastic was to become one of the favorite forms of expression in nineteenth century Paris among authors such as Nodier, Nerval, Gautier, Merimée, Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, Lautréamont, and Maupassant.

It should be acknowledged that French criticism on the fantastic has paid due attention to the extraordinary cultural capital generated by Paris during the nineteenth century. The golden age of the French fantastic has been thoroughly examined by Pierre-Georges Castex (*Le Conte fantastique*), Jean-Baptiste Baronian (*Panorama de la littérature fantastique*), and Marcel Schneider (*Histoire de la littérature fantastique*). However, although these studies provide valuable insight into the historical and thematic evolution of this narrative form in France, they fail to give a detailed account of how the modern city fuelled the development of the fantastic with very few exceptions (Fournier Kiss, *La Ville européenne*). In sum, while urban theorists have neglected the fantastic, criticism on the fantastic has overlooked the importance of the city in the rise and development of this literary form. Therefore, while this article maintains nineteenth-century Paris as a case study, its central aim is to explore this void in urban and literary criticism by combining the literary and urban angles: how do works of the fantastic write the city? What role does the modern city play in the consolidation of the fantastic short story?

The approach taken in this article is geocritical, investigating the interactions between real spaces and literature. Following Bertrand Westphal's fundamental premise of geocritical analysis (*La Géocritique*), this article is divided into two parts: literature in space and space in literature. The first part explores how literature circulated in space, dealing with the various Parisian places that allowed for the consolidation of the French (and European) fantastic. This section establishes my first argument: the city (real, extratextual) played a central role in the rise of the literary form of the fantastic. The second part focuses on the representations and functions of Paris in nineteenth-century fantastic fiction. Three tropes have been chosen: the antiquary (2.1.), the revenant (2.2.), and the dark city (2.3.). It is not my intention to provide a revisited history of nineteenth-century French fantastic literature. Rather, the urban-literary analysis that follows presents the texts in question as case studies within the European fantastic – one has to remember that no other European tradition provided a greater variety of fantastic literature during the same century. This analysis thus leads to my second argument: the city, as literary trope, represents an important evolution away from the Romantic origins of the fantastic. During the nineteenth century, the fantastic began to be found in locations beyond haunted houses and remote castles. With the acceleration of Modernity, the fantastic migrated to the city. It became an urban form of expression. This was to have important structural, formal, and thematic implications for this narrative form that would transcend France and influence other authors of the fantastic throughout the twentieth century, an impact that can still be identified in contemporary fantastic texts, as the conclusion will show.

Given the various (and contradictory) approaches to the fantastic, it is necessary first to determine the specific scope of the term as understood in this article. There are two main approaches: one regards the fantastic as a general term for any textual departure from realist conventions (for example, Rabkin, *The Fantastic*; Hume, *Fantasy*; Attebery, *Strategies*; Armitt, *Theorising*). The other approach conceives the fantastic as a specific form of the supernatural (Castex, *Le Conte fantastique*; Caillois, *Au Cœur*; Todorov, *Introduction*; Bessière, *Le Récit*; Roas, *Tras los límites*). In this second understanding of the fantastic, the impossible element irrupts in a realistic context, so that it transgresses and questions the laws of literary realism. The fantastic is influenced by folklore but originates in the mid-eighteenth century, in the Age of Rationalism, a historical moment of seculari-

zation and scientific Positivism. It develops together with Romanticism and the English Gothic novel and is marked by works by E.T.A. Hoffman, Mary Shelley, Edgar Allan Poe, Guy de Maupassant and Bram Stoker. Realism is therefore a premise of the fantastic: only by creating a realistic world can there be a transgression by a supernatural element. In the creation of realism, as Philippe Hamon reminds us, narrative space plays a central role: "As a rule architecture therefore conveniently guarantees a certain 'realistic effect' to any given literary work, for it provides fiction with a recognizable frame, anchor, or background that creates its verisimilitude" (*Expositions* 23; see also García, *Space*).

The fantastic arrived into Paris through the writings of E.T.A. Hoffmann. In 1830, his works were made available to the French population through an 'unfaithful' translation of his short stories collections *Phantasiestücke* and *Nachstücke*. They became *Contes fantastiques*, title chosen by Loève-Veimars and Renduel in 1830. This was the starting point of an increasing popularization of this literary form in Europe, with its epicenter in Paris during the nineteenth century. The arrival of Hoffmann's work in France provoked a reimagining of traditional Gothic tropes by giving the fantastic a mundane and more realistic dimension, both in its settings and its themes (Roas, *De la maravilla*). Hoffmann's particular style of writing the fantastic was to have an enormous impact on the French golden age generation. Some works explicitly render homage to the German author, in particular Gautier's fantastic work (e.g. "La Morte amoureouse," "Avatar," "Onuphrius ou les vexations fantastiques d'un admirateur d'Hoffmann"). *La Femme au collier de velours* (Dumas) features E.T.A. Hoffmann as the main character. In his essay "Le Fantastique," Maupassant states his admiration for the German author (Castex, *Le Conte fantastique* 42-56; Teichmann, *La fortune* and Gibson, *The Fantastic*).

The success of Hoffmann's fiction, and later of Poe's short stories, cannot be explained without further contextualization. As Castex notes (*Le Conte fantastique*, 25-41), Hoffmann's fiction arrived at a moment in which the fantastic was already beloved in French (popular) culture. Cazotte's *Le Diable amoureux* had appeared in 1772 and Nodier had already published a variety of fantastic texts (*Le Vampire* [1820]*, Smarra ou les Démons de la nuit* [1822]) that were well-received among readers. However, the true success of the fantastic was that, rather than remaining confined to the written page, its popular appeal spread through cultural and entertainment spaces ranging from the opera to *salons littéraires* and *soirées fantastiques*. Inaugurated by Robert-Houdin in 1845 in the Palais-Royal, the *soirées fantastiques* attracted many Parisian citizens to witness spectacles of magic (Figure 1) and to hear tales of the extraordinary projected via the *fantascope* (Figure 2).


Figure 1: *Soirées fantastiques de Robert Houdin: estampe/G. Doré*, 1854. Copyright: Public domain, Gallica, BnF.

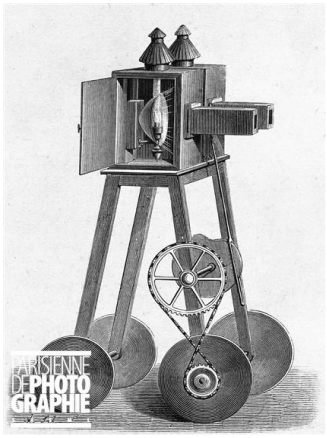


Figure 2: *Le "Fantascope" du physicien belge Etienne Gaspard Robert, dit Robertson, sorte de lanterne magique utilisée notamment au théâtre des Soirées-Fantastiques, à Paris, en1798*
Source: public domain. *Gallica, BnF*

The fantastic was also a visible form of expression in nineteenth-century opera programs, with the figure of the devil particularly beloved among audiences. *Le Diable amoureux* (Cazotte, a ballet in 1830), *Robert le Diable* (1831, with than 100 showings), *Les trois baisers du Diable* (Offenbach, Musard 1857) (Figure 3), and many operas inspired by Hoffmann's work (Figure 4) made the fantastic available to audiences who hadn't necessarily read Hoffmann's original or translated works.


Figure. 3: *Les trois Baisers du Diable opéra fantastique fan(J. Offenbach, P. Musard). 1857. Source: public domain. Gallica, BnF.*

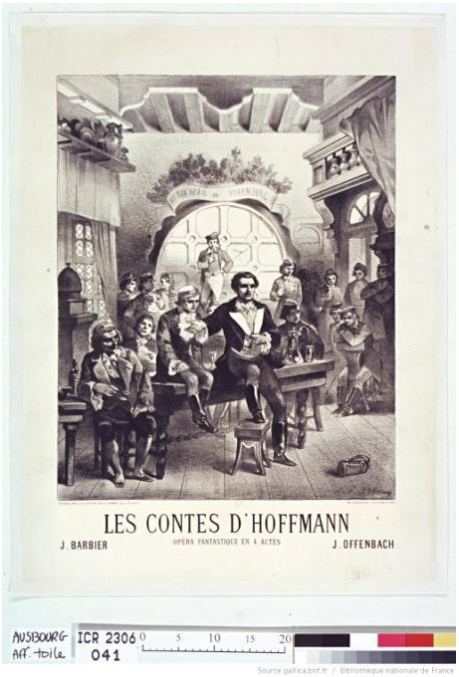


Figure 4*: Les Contes d'Hoffmann, opéra tastique en 4 actes. J. Barbier. J. Offenbach: [affiche] / L. d'Ausbourg. 1881.* Source: public domain. *Gallica, BnF.*

The Salon littéraire was another city space that was to be crucial in the dissemination of the fantastic. The most famous of these were the Hotel du Doyenné, the famous Hotel Pimodan de Lauzun (where Gautier, Baudelaire and Dumas experimented with opium and its effects on the psyche, as captured in the short story "Le Club des Hashischins"), and Nodier's Salon de l'Arsenal (Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal), where Hugo, Dumas and Berliotz (among others) met. This salon was also an iconic urban element in Dumas's *La Femme au collier de velours*. Apart from the operas and the *salons littéraries*, the list of Parisian cafés that inspired authors of the fantastic is long. A representative example is *Les Contes cruels* by Villier de l'Isle-Adam (Castex, "Le Paris" 21-32).

In addition to these physical spaces, the foundation of French periodicals and publishing presses during the nineteenth century provided space for French authors to publish their work. *Le Globe*, *La revue de Paris*, *La Chronique*, and *Revue des Deux Mondes* also played a key role in the diffusion of international authors in translation (Castex, *Le Conte fantastique* 66-67). The emergence of the fantastic as literary form cannot be understood without taking into account its unique historical moment. This was a moment of tension between a changing paradigm and the resistance to this change. This paradigmatic shift was directly associated with the drastic urban developments that were taking place. Those same developments were to have a direct impact on the literary fantastic.

On the one hand, Paris presented itself as the "Ville Lumière," a display case of modernity to be looked upon by the rest of the world. The city was progressively doing away with superstitious explanations of physical events and celebrating instead a scientific evolution and logical positivism. However, in parallel with the positivistic model of thought, the city was becoming a melting pot for the occult sciences, which captured the interest of the time in the dark, unknown dimension of the human mind. Occultism, spiritism, magnetism, and hypnosis were to pervade the Parisian scene, responding to a need to express a metaphysical anxiety that science failed to grasp.

Regarding the socio-urban dimension, at the end of the Napoleonic Empire in 1814, Paris was in the middle of a profound transformation. During the nineteenth century the city was to undergo an unprecedented urban makeover. The following list of examples is not exhaustive, yet it illustrates the urge to present Paris as a model of rationalization, transparency, and reason, as well as a triumph of scientific progress.


Figure 5: *Bec Auer, incandescence par Gaz-pétrole: [affiche].1895.* Source: public domain, Gallica, BnF.

Gas lamps made their appearance in the 1820s (Figure 5), introducing the practice of all-night lighting to Parisian streets. From the end of the eighteenth century onward the network of sewers was progressively cleaned and mapped, and the catacombs were opened to the public in 1809 with the intention of showing that the city was clean and structured. The city was mapped and partitioned. New forms of architecture – iron and glass – created the impression of transparency. The drastic restructuration works of Baron Haussmann, designed to modernize and rationalize Paris, limited the risk of revolt and were aimed at assuring public stability. Finally, the first Parisian bins were introduced in 1884 and contributed to the aim of reinforcing the impression of a sanitization and control of urban space.

On the other hand, the experience of Modernity was also that of a loss of control. With an unprecedented wave of immigration from the countryside, the population of Paris doubled during the nineteenth century. The railway arrived in 1842 and was to radically transform the experience of movement, in what Harvey (*Paris* 49) calls the annihilation of space and time (Figure 6).


Figure 6. *Planche n° 9 de la série Les Chemins de fer. Honoré Daumier. 1843.* Source: public domain, BnF.

While urban spaces, associated with the fantastic imaginary, were progressively being opened to the public and thus 'cleared' of superstitious connotations – as, for example, with the tours of the catacombs for the bourgeoisie (Harvey, *Paris* 250)–the fantastic migrated to literature. This would lead to the most intense production of the fantastic that Europe had witnessed, a production that was particularly prolific between 1830 and 1850. It was during this particular historical moment that Gothic tropes ceased to dominate, as a fatigue with remote castles and decadent mansions, led to the city becoming the central setting for fantastic plots. The fantastic, a literary form that always needs a degree of realism in order for transgression to occur, was the product of the tension between two cities, between two experiences of modernity: the rational, enlightened Paris coexisted with a darker, unexplainable, and ungraspable metropolis.

The spatial tropes of the classic Romantic-Gothic fantastic follow a pattern that is very similar to the mythical schema of the hero. The hero who, is almost without exception masculine, leaves the comfort-zone of the everyday to deal with the unexpected. In order to encounter the unknown, ordinary space must be left behind. This pattern is also to be understood in relation to Edmund Burke's aesthetics of the Sublime (*A Philosophical Enquiry*), extremely influential at the time. Burke's theory is embodied in the Gothic enclave, which is primarily devoted to conveying an uncanny atmosphere. A particular space acts as the ideal medium in which the exceptional can be experienced. Isolation, decadence, symbolic projection of the character, catalyst of supreme sensitivity, these Gothic tropes had influenced a tradition of the fantastic in relation to spatiality, especially prominent during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Two of the most popular novels in this period serve as representative examples of this. Both *The Castle of Otranto* (Walpole), and *Manuscrit trouvé a Saragosse* (Potocki) displace if not always the character then at least the reader in *terra incognita*: labyrinthine chambers and catacombs of a remote medieval castle in the first case, and an abandoned inn in the desolate topographies of Sierra Morena in the second.

However, with the birth of the modern city this spatial schema was to change. In his *Expositions*, Philippe Hamon describes this shift as follows: "After 1850 the Romantic tourist, whose activities consisted of traveling, visiting, watching, marveling, wondering, defining, naming and commenting, would be replaced by comparable daily ventures of the boulevard flâneur and the exhibition-goer" (67). The city is a space that is seeking to be discovered; one can encounter the extraordinary in the city. This change in the role of city space was a process that took place during the nineteenth century and in the literary text certain tropes were to capture this progressive evolution into a modern–and thus urban–fantastic.

Some of the early fantastic incursions into the city can be found in texts such as *La Peau de chagrin* (Balzac 1831), and "Le Pied de momie" (Gautier 1840). These will be analyzed here through the lens of a common trope: the antique shop, a perfect example of the juxtaposition between tradition and modernity, presents reminiscences of a Romantic past in a modern urban setting.

*La Peau de chagrin* tells the story of a young man named Raphael who, after losing the last of his money, is determined to commit suicide by drowning himself in the Seine. On his way to do so, however, he is attracted by an antique shop. The mysterious shopkeeper therein offers him a skin of shagreen, which, he is told, will fulfill all his wishes and thus put an end to his miseries. However, each new wish will also cause this skin to shrink, indicating a corresponding shortening of the life of its owner.

Echoes of *Faust* (translated into French by Gérard de Nerval in 1828) and of *Meltmoth the Wanderer* (also translated into French in 1821) can be traced in this tale. The fantastic premise of the pact with the devil is captured in the motif of the 'doomed object'. In this case, the skin of shagreen is used as a means of expressing the philosophical and moralistic message that predominates in this work: man shouldn't try to exceed his limitations. Greed leads to misery and ultimately moral (and here also physical) death.

While the plot draws from a folkloric tradition that can be traced back to the wish-making pattern present, for example, in *1001 Nights*, narrative space is more innovative in this work. The entire action is set in 1830s Paris. Balzac employs a well-known technique to convey the effect of verisimilitude: detailed, real urban coordinates are provided. Raphael's itinerary is described in detail: the Palais-Royal, rue Saint-Honoré, chemin des Tuileries, le pont Royal, le quai Voltaire... Raphael is a classic nineteenth-century flâneur, an urban stroller who 'reads' and draws a map of the city while walking in it: "Il marcha d'un pas mélancolique le long des magasins, en examinant sans beaucoup d'interêt les échantillons de marchandises. Quand les boutiques lui manquèrent, il étudia le Louvre, l'Institut, les tours de Notre-Dame, celles du Palais, le Pont des Arts" (*La Peau* 22).

During this ramble, it is the antique shop that draws Raphael's attention. Upon entry into the shop, the ghostly owner emerges from the shadows to offer him the doomed object. That this first encounter with the fantastic takes place in a very specific urban frame, is precisely the source of Raphael's surprise: "Cette vision avait lieu dans Paris, sur le quai Voltaire, au dix-neuvième siècle, temps et lieux où la magie devait être impossible" (*La Peau* 35). This reference to the impossibility of such an event taking place in Paris is crucial for the point argued in this article. It illustrates the transition of the fantastic into a frame in which it is not expected to be found and to which it does not belong: modern, rational Paris. A similar quote is found in Gautier's "Avatar": "Quant à la cause de l'état singulier où il se trouvait et qui mettait en défaut la science de la faculté, nous n'osons l'avouer, tellement la chose est *invraisemblable à Paris, au dix-neuvième siècle*, et nous laissons le soin de la dire à notre héros lui-même" (278-279, emphasis added).

The antiquary as trope comprises a synthesis of traditions. Hamon, who dedicates a section in his work to the role of antiquaries in modern Paris, argues his point by referring to Ruskin's dislike of nineteenth century architecture: "easily dismantled, repetitive, polyvalent and perpetually renewa-

ble, thereby losing any historical or geographical anchor and immune to the effects or the patina of time" (Hamon on Ruskin, *Expositions* 57). Hence the importance of antiquaries as a necessary anchor to history: antiquaries remain "both document and monument" (Hamon, *Expositions* 54). The space of the antiquary captures the two paradigms discussed in the first section: the antique shop is a fusion between past and present and it is as such described in Balzac's novel: "Tous les pays de la terre semblaient avoir apporté là quelque débris de leurs sciences, un échantillon de leurs arts," (*La Peau de chagrin* 24) "les fantasmagories de ce panorama du passé" (*Expositions* 32).

In terms of its significance in fantastic narratives, the antiquary is a space that demonstrates that it is not necessary to travel far to encounter the extraordinary. *Terra incognita* is brought to the heart of the city. In *La Peau de chagrin*, entering the antique shop is portrayed as a sort of premonitory rite of passage. Like the prototypical Gothic-Romantic protagonist, Raphael embarks onto a journey into the unknown by crossing the threshold. However, in this case the journey takes place within the city, through the various shelves and corners of the antiquary. The antiquary functions as a pocket of the fantastic within the city.

In Benjamin's writings, the modern city is characterized by the experience of boundaries and thresholds: "Nulle part – si ce n'est dans les rêves – il n'est possible d'avoir une expérience du phénomène de la limite aussi originaire que dans les villes. […] La limite traverse les rues; c'est un seuil; on entre dans un nouveau fief en faisant un pas dans le vide, comme si on avait franchi une marche qu'on ne voyait pas." (Benjamin, *Passages* 113).

The access to the antique shop is precisely this "step towards the void" that Benjamin evokes: this experience of the unknown spaces of the city will lead to a reevaluation of the boundaries of the self, which is the central theme of Balzac's novel.

Other texts written around the same time employ a similar trope. "Le Pied de momie" (1840) by Gautier, for example, also brings the fantastic to the city through the medium of a supernatural object (a mummified foot that had belonged to an Egyptian princess) purchased in a Parisian antique shop: "J'étais entré par d'désœuvrement chez un de ces marchands de curiosités dits marchands de bric-à-brac dans l'argot parisien. […] Le magasin de mon marchand de bric-à-brac était un véritable Capharnaüm; tous les siècles et tous les pays semblaient s'y être donné rendez-vous" ("Le Pied" 179).

"Omphale: La Tapisserie amoureuse, historie rococo" (1834) by the same author is another interesting case that gives a further illustration of the fantastic threshold within the city. This text is a perfect combination of the traditional and the modern fantastic. The decadent rococo-style, semi-abandoned house in which is found the fantastic tapestry of the title is as intriguing as the typically Gothic mansion of eighteenth-century fiction. The start of the story is thus dedicated to providing an extended description of the manner in which the protagonist accesses the house in order to create a similar uncanny atmosphere. "Les herbes avaient fait irruption dans les allées, qu'on avait peine à reconnaître, tant il y avait longtemps que le râteau ne s'y était promené" ("Omphale" 103-4). However, this mansion is not found in the remote countryside. It is instead located at the heart of the city: between rue des Tournelles and boulevard Saint-Antoine, to be precise.

As these works show, in the first half of the nineteenth century there was no longer a need to travel far to encounter the extraordinary; Paris was a city of thresholds where everything and anything could happen. A few years later another trope was to emerge that further developed the role of city as protagonist: the revenant arrived in Paris, exposing the problematic relationship between the city and its historical legacy.

The motif of the beheaded figure – a revenant of the French revolution – was captured as lurking in the city of Paris in a long list of texts from the 1830s and 1840s. It is featured in "Smarra ou les demons de la nuit" (1821) by Nodier, and "Le Ministère public" (1832) by Charles Rabac. However, it was with Washington Irving's "The Adventure of a German Student" in *Tales of a Traveller* (1824), translated into French by Pétrus Borel as "Gottfried Wolfgang" in 1843, that this trope can be seen to generate a plot in its own right. It becomes the leitmotif of the short stories in *Les mille et un fantômes* (1849) and of the novel *La Femme au collier de velours* (1850), both by Alexandre Dumas (Baronian, Jean-Baptiste 78-81). These two works retain Romantic overtones inherited from Hoffmann and Nodier and show clear parallels with Irving's text.

Set in late eighteenth-century Paris, "The Adventures of a German Student" and *La Femme au collier de velours* capture the atmosphere of Paris under *La Terreur*. In both texts the protagonist – a German student in the first and E.T.A Hoffmann in the second – arrives to Paris in order to experience the city of Enlightenment. Instead, he is confronted with the horrors of the guillotine, venerated and celebrated by the Parisian crowds. Later that day the main character meets a strange woman and falls in love with her. She wears a distinct black necklace (to disguise her broken neck). The erotic encounter between the two at night is followed by the realization in the morning that she had been already dead – beheaded by the guillotine – when they met, a realization that in both texts leads to the protagonist falling into madness. In *Les mille et un fantômes* similar motifs recur: the Reign of Terror in Paris, unfair executions, and living heads or beheaded characters who come back to life to seek revenge or love.

In this group of texts, there is a typical fantastic motif that is worth examining: the revenant, a living ghost, a figure that brings the past back to the present. More specifically for these texts, this figure can be traced back to the legend of the headless horseman as featured in Irving's short story "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" (1820). However, there are two different dimensions that point to a more innovative treatment of this trope: the relevance of subjective experience and the role of the city.

Firstly, the perspective and experience of the foreigner is central. He is an innocent outsider who witnesses the city and the historical events taking place with some cultural distance. At the same time, towards the end of the stories his mental stability is called into question. Did he really spend the night with a beheaded woman? Can we trust the perspective of this narrator? Is he mentally reliable? These texts illustrate a change from a literary form where the supernatural was incarnated by an external source (a ghost, an object) to a fantastic that considers the mind of the individual as a potential source of the unknown (see Roas, *De la maravilla*). This form of the fantastic reflects the nineteenth century interest in human consciousness and it will find its true expression in the short stories of Maupassant (see section 2.3).

Secondly, these texts also capture a new geography: an urban setting that offers clear and verifiable historical information. *La Femme au collier de velours* offers very detailed descriptions of the city and city life, including the Opera as socializing space, the Palais-Royal as site of vice and prostitution, as well as specific coordinates that allow for the protagonist's path to be followed. However, while mapping should be a form of reference, a striking characteristic of this Paris is its impermanence. If memory is dependent upon inscribed or described places, as Hamon suggests (*Expositions* 3), then Dumas's Paris is in the process of eliminating its history. This is expressed through a constant changing of street names and the destruction of Parisian landmarks during this period. Paris seemed to be forgetting its history and its identity under the Reign of Terror: "Arsène prit la rue Royale, que l'on appelait à cette époque la rue de la Révolution, tourna à droite, dans la rue Saint-Honoré, que l'on appelait la rue Honoré tout court" (*La Femme* 220).

Furthermore, Paris is explicitly described as carnage, as a vortex. "Paris est Paris, c'est-à-dire une espèce de tourbillon où l'on perd la mémoire de toutes choses, au milieu du bruit que fait le monde en courant et la terre en tournant" (*La Femme* 46). There is a clear socio-political dimension in these texts rarely present in the traditional Gothic fantastic. The city is portrayed as a conflict between the past and the present. More specifically, Paris is represented as a city whose past was forcefully washed away by the revolution:"Hoffmann était l'homme des transitions brusques. Après la place de la Révolution et le peuple tumultueux groupé autour d'un échafaud, le ciel sombre et le sang, il lui fallait l'éclat des lustres, la foule joyeuse, les fleurs, la vie enfin" (148). "…ces temps de misère, d'exil, de terreurs et de proscriptions…" (202) "…les sinistres patrouilles, faites des geôliers du jour et des bourreaux du lendemain rôdaient comme des bêtes fauves, cherchant une proie quelconque…" (202). In Dumas's group of texts the motif of the urban revenant expresses a reaction against the effects of the revolution and a longing to recover the stability of the monarchy. Apart from this critical dimension, reviving the dead in literature is a way for Dumas to acknowledge and pay tribute to his literary masters: Nodier features in the first chapter of *La Femme au collier de velours* as the original narrator of the story to come, and Hoffmann is the main character of this novel.

Finally, the urban revenant also embodies a debate that was popular at the time in France. During *La Terreur*, audiences to beheadings sometimes declared that they had seen signs of life (blinking eyelids, moving lips) in the beheaded victims. The most popular case was that of Charlotte Corday in 1793 (it also features in *La Femme au collier de velours*), who allegedly roared with indignation when the executioner slapped her face once beheaded. The idea that executed heads could show signs of life – that is that the victim experiences pain even after his/her execution – spread amongst the population as well as in the literary domain, as we have seen. The procedure of guillotining as ideal medium started to be questioned based on the thesis of the consciousness of the beheaded head after guillotined (Chamayou, "The Debate"). This is captured in the aforementioned mid-nineteenth-century narratives of the fantastic by combining the motif of the revenant with the popular and unsettling thesis of the conscious head.

The motif of the living head migrated to the fantastic as a statement against the methods and ideology that reigned during *La Terreur*. Paris, city of revenants, thus called into question the key principles established by Dr. Joseph-Ignace Guillotin in his 1789 invention, principles of a supposedly clean, egalitarian, painless, and instantaneous death.

It was to revolutionary Paris (though with the safe temporal distance created by the passage of several decades after *La Terreur*) that the executed were to return in literature to expose injustice. The timely migration of the revenant to the city can be explained in conjunction with the concurrent restructuring that was taking place in the city. Between the 1830s and the 1850s certain measures were to radically change the popular appeal of the guillotine. The *Conseil d'Hygiène* had as its mission to clean the streets of Paris of blood ("que Paris ne soit désormais marqué par aucune flaque de sang," Castex, "Le Paris" 68). The guillotine was displaced to the more marginal Barrière Saint-Jacques, and the introduction of ether and anesthesia accentuated the fear of suffering. All these elements indicated a progressive dismissal of the spectacle of death: "un passé proche s'enfuit rapidement, devient incompréhensible à cause de sa cruauté" (Castex, "Le Paris" 68). With certain practices (e.g. popular beheadings) becoming taboo as a result of these attempts to purify space, the appearance in literature of the revenant became in turn a scandalous trope. This figure embodied the uncomfortable fact that the past cannot be erased in the manner of street names. The revenant always brings a problematic past to the present; it was central to the plot in order to remind the reader of the undeserved deaths that were inscribed in the city of Paris. The urban revival of the revenant was fundamentally a critique of how Paris was handling its cultural and historical legacy. The city was forced to deal with its own ghosts.

Haussmann's modernization of Paris followed the polis model of Classical Greece: *civitas, civilitas* and *humanitas*. By the end of the nineteenth century, Paris aimed to be seen world-wide as the Enlightened City embodying virtue—a clean, ordered, and well-functioning space with a proper sewage system, wide open spaces, a network of new boulevards and green parks, universal exhibitions, and

never-ending leisure activities. The literary works by Guy de Maupassant, set in late-nineteenth-century Paris, were to capture this new urbanism. Within the extensive fantastic production of Maupassant, "La Nuit" (1887) is an example that clearly embraces—while also criticizing—the consolidated Modernity of Haussmannian Paris. In this text the fantastic gains a subjective force that allows it to express the fears of the modern individual in this seemingly model city.

This short story is constructed around two clearly juxtaposed images of Paris: a bright city and a dark city. In the first part, the narrator goes for an evening walk around Paris. The reader can track his coordinates along the right bank of Paris: the boulevards, the shining cafés, the theatres, the Champs Elysées, the Arc de Triomphe, etc., until he enters the Bois de Boulogne. This first part of "La Nuit" is a celebration of Parisian nightlife, lived through its light. The various descriptions of the narrator's itinerary indulge in a catalogue of shining avenues and spaces of entertainment: "Tout était clair dans l'air léger, depuis les planètes jusqu'aux becs de gaz. Tant de feux brillaient là-haut et dans la ville que les ténèbres en semblaient lumineuses. Les nuits luisantes sont plus joyeuses que les grands jours de soleil...Sur le boulevard, les cafés flamboyaient; on riait, on passait, on buvait. (298)… les cafés-concerts semblaient des foyers d'incendie dans les feuillages. Les marronniers frottés de lumière jaune avaient l'air peints, un air d'arbres phosphorescents. Et les globes électriques, pareils à des lunes éclatantes" ("La Nuit" 298-9).

The Arc de Triomphe is an "avenue étoilée, allant vers Paris entre deux lignes de feux" ("La Nuit" 299). In the second part of the short story the protagonist begins on his way back home but finds himself confronted with another Paris. After leaving the Bois de Bologne he notices a drastic change. Now streets and cafes are disturbingly empty and silent. The rue Royale, Bastille, Place du Château-d'Eau, Faubourg Montmartre, Theatre Vaudeville, la Bourse, Les Halles… all the landmarks are now immersed in an impossible darkness: "Je la regarde s'épaissir, la grande ombre douce tombée du ciel: elle noie la ville, comme une onde insaisissable et impénétrable, elle cache, efface, détruit les couleurs, les formes, étreint les maisons, les êtres, les monuments de son imperceptible toucher… Les Halles étaient désertes, sans un bruit, sans un mouvement, sans une voiture, sans un home, sans une botte de légumes ou de fleurs. – Elles étaient vides, immobiles, abandonnées, mortes!" ("La Nuit" 297-98, 302). As can be observed in the last quote, this description of Paris is constructed in negative terms ("*sans*"). It is the city of emptiness. The fantastic is constituted here not by a presence but by an absence; there are no ghosts, revenants, magical objects, zombies, vampires, only a city without city life. The absence of the crucial elements of Modernity (light, noise, speed) generates a vacuum. Much like René Clair would capture in his short film "Paris qui dort" (1925) some decades later, "La Nuit" evokes a sort of anguish that emerges when modernity stops.

No explanation for the fantastic event is provided in Maupassant's short story. The protagonist just knows that entire city sleeps and that it will never awake, in a metaphor for his radical sense of isolation. This leads to the existentialist terror of a man alone with himself in a city and, ultimately, to an identification of the self with this empty, silent, dead city ("Mais depuis quand la nuit dure-t-elle?" "La Nuit" 298). The narrator's experience of crossing Paris serves as a representation of borderline states of mental stability. Unlike the doomed object in section 2.1. or the revenant in 2.2, Paris stops being a material entity and becomes instead an anxious state of mind. "La Nuit" offers a symbiosis between the fantastic and the city that allows for the exploration of human consciousness, one of the central themes of Maupassant's fiction. Solitude, often represented as interior spaces, is a constant theme in Maupassant's fantastic fiction. In contrast, the promenade is another frequent motif that acts as an antidote to this existential confinement: "Certes, la solitude est dangereuse pour les intelligences qui travaillent. Il nous faut, autour de nous, des hommes qui pensent et qui parlent. Quand nous sommes seuls longtemps, nous peuplons le vide de fantômes./ Je suis rentré à l'hôtel très gai par les boulevards" ("Le Horla" 270). "Je t'ai entraîné ce soir, à cette promenade, pour ne pas rentrer chez moi, parce que je souffre horriblement, maintenant, de la solitude de mon logement" ("La Solitude" 132). The fantastic for Maupassant is not an intrusion from the exterior. It is instead an excursion into the interior. The fantastic is to be found within human mind, "le surnaturel est sorti de nos âmes" (Maupassant, "Le Fantastique" 364).

This illustrates an important move towards the modern, urban fantastic. In a form of 'psychogeography,' the narrator identifies with the city: the city is his space, and it is himself. Paris is not the space of exotic objects and revenants. Paris is the individual "la nuit, que ma nuit bien-aimée, devenait lourde sur mon cœur" (Maupassant, "La Nuit" 299). The fantastic is generated from a confrontation with a loss: a loss of the sense of space, orientation, of no longer feeling at one with the surroundings. The sleeping city indicates a disjunction between the self and the modern city. Paris becomes a fantastic space, a modern monster that the citizen has to face, a space that the individual cannot run away from (he cannot leave the enchanted castle, as was the case in earlier forms of the fantastic), because it is the space that defines him.

This article has focused on socio-urban developments in the Paris of the nineteenth century fueled by the modernization of the city. The main goal has been to demonstrate that there is an important parallel between these urban changes and the literary fantastic. This connection can be seen in the range and treatment of themes, motifs, and tropes as well as in the generation of a new form of the fantastic that is closer than earlier forms to the everyday space of the individual and that also becomes increasingly urban in its focus. With the city becoming a source as much of fascination as of anxiety, there is no longer a need to travel to remote ancient castles to encounter the extraordinary. At the same time, the modern fantastic includes an important critical dimension that questions the relationship between the individual and his past, between his cultural legacy and his identity as a modern citizen.

Although the focus of this article has been literary production in the nineteenth century, the progressive "urbanization" of the fantastic continues today. To remain with the particular case of Paris in the literary fantastic, there has been a great variety of texts in the twentieth-and twenty first centuries in which Paris remains a central leitmotif in the fantastic narrative. The suburbs become a frequent trope, for example in "Autopista del Sur" by Julio Cortázar (1966), or in *La Maison qui glissait* by Jean-Pierre Andrevon (2010). Other works render homage to a specific Parisian neighborhood. *La Nuit des Halles* (1984), for example, offers a compilation of short stories each featuring a monster or fantastic creature that relates to a specific street or neighborhood in Paris. *Le Passe-muraille* written by Marcel Aymé in 1941 captures everyday life in the neighborhood of Montmartre, where mundane situations and characters lead to fantastic occurrences. The relevance of this literary work to the cultural legacy of Paris was acknowledged in 1986, when a square in Montmartre was named after the author. Furthermore, a statue of the protagonist of the first, eponymous, story of the collection—"Le Passe-muraille"—was embedded into one of the walls of the newly renamed square.

This event leads to a fact worth remembering in comparative studies of the relationship between urban space and literature. While it is evident that urban changes have had an impact on literature of the fantastic, as argued in this article, the example of Aymé also illustrates that sometimes the fantastic becomes the patrimony of the city in such a manner that it can in turn modify urban space.

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