

# Foley Effects in the Gothic Sound in *The Castle of Otranto*

John Bender  
Stanford University, USA

**Abstract** The insistence among later eighteenth-century critics of the Gothic novel that sound strongly marks the genre confirms the intuition that sounds in these works are meaningful. *The Castle of Otranto* is laden with the profusely sonic dimensions that start with the text's opening pages. The analogue in modern film of Foley effects resonates because these are sounds, applied post-production, that often are louder and more striking than real world sounds; similarly, film and the novel, unlike ordinary experience, can offer true silence. Walpole was experimenting with a new *written* technology of sound description, related to effects on the stage of his day. Such theatrical sounds form part of the historical background to the analogy with Foley effects in modern film. Walpole is pioneering a new kind of rendering of psycho-acoustic ambience in the novel, and also psycho-acoustically actuated action. He opens up modes of experience not found in fiction prior to this novel – both with the use of written sound effects, and also with the psychic introjection of these effects to produce terror and horror in the minds of fictional characters.

**Keywords** Foley effects. Psycho-acoustic ambience. Gothic Novel. Horace Walpole. The Castle of Otranto.

**Summary** 1 Introduction. – 2 Foley Effects. – 3 Sounds and Silences. – 4 A Lens Opening the Way of Hearing.



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Foley sound replaces and reinforces sound effects from a film production track and sweetens and enhances effects such as footfalls and cloth movement by dramatizing the smallest of sounds and turning them into significant sonic moments.<sup>1</sup>

## 1 Introduction

Noises were considered strong generic markers of the Gothic at the end of the eighteenth century. Modern critics have written about Gothic music yet, with a few exceptions, say little about other sound effects. But when periodicals of the time offered profiles of the Gothic, they insisted on sound. For instance, the *Spirit of the Public Journals* of 1798 sets forth a ‘recipe’ requiring “noises, whispers, and groans”, and demands in fact “three-score at least” of each (see “Terrorist Novel Writing”, 1798). Other profiles add wind, whistles, howls, rain, creaking doors, and clanking chains. The *Monthly Magazine* of 1797 specifies that castle doors must “grate tremendously; and there must be in every passage an echo, and as many reverberations as there are partitions”. In this magazine account, the wind “whistles, and then it shows how sound may be conveyed through the crevices of a Baron’s castle. Sometimes it *rushes*, and there is reason to believe the Baron’s great grandfather does not lie quiet in his grave”.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the works parodied in this way marked a high point of novelistic noise, as shown statistically in Holst Katsma’s study of “Loudness in the Novel” (Katsma 2017). He finds a decline in loud novelistic exclamations across the nineteenth century, with the heyday of the Gothic from about 1790-1810 registering as loud.

This eighteenth-century inclusion of sound as a marker of the Gothic works to confirm my intuition that sounds had been less than prominent in the earlier eighteenth-century novel. Conversely, when I open *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) with specific attention to sound effects, I am powerfully struck by the profusely sonic dimensions of the text’s initial episodes. And with eruptions of sound everywhere come also important, markedly noted silences. How is Walpole’s strategy in his short but powerfully innovative text to be understood?

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<sup>1</sup> My epigraph modestly rephrases and compresses a sentence from the published abstract of Wright 2014.

<sup>2</sup> See “The Terrorist System of Novel Writing” (1797, 103), which is signed “A Jacobin Novelist”. When they do discuss sound, critics of the Gothic focus mainly on music and voice. An exception is Archambault 2016. See also Katsma 2017; Sacido-Romero, Mieszkowski 2015; and van Elferen 2012. I owe these references and those to some to other Gothic novels to Anastasia Eccles, Marion Leclair and Justin Tackett. More broadly, for this paper, I am indebted to conversations with Jean Ma of the Department of Art and Art History at Stanford University.

I argue here that Walpole was experimenting with a new *written* technology of sound description, related to effects on the stage of his day, but with printed words of narration replacing physically produced backstage noises. Such theatrical sounds form part of the historical background to my analogy with what are called ‘Foley effects’ in modern film. Such distinctive sounds lie at the heart of this paper. But, in contrast to physical effects in theatre, including those introduced during the mid-eighteenth century by the great actor David Garrick, Walpole is pioneering a new kind of rendering of psycho-acoustic ambience in the novel. And also psycho-acoustically actuated action. He opens up modes of experience that I do not find in fiction prior to this novel – both with the use of written sound effects, and with the psychic introjection of these effects to produce terror and horror in the minds of fictional characters. Walpole promotes his innovations in the two prefaces to *The Castle of Otranto*, where he says that he wants to put ordinary people into extraordinary situations. He also puts readers into extraordinary situations that depend upon an audio-textual bond.<sup>3</sup>

Readers may find my discussion here of Walpole’s novel in the context of modern film sound to be an anachronistic adventure, although the tradition of artificially produced sound effects stretches distantly into theatrical history and, even now, such noises are staged in live theatre or in cinema using long inherited devices like thunder sheets and wind machines. During the mid-eighteenth century, Garrick brought innovations in scenery, sound, and silence effects to his stage. For silence, he wrote in his advice to an actor about how to play Macbeth’s murder of King Duncan that he

should be seen in *every Limb*, and yet every *Member*, at that Instant, should seem *separated* from his *Body*, and his *Body* from his *Soul*: This is the Picture of a compleat *Regicide*, and as at that Time the *Orb below should be hush as death*; I hope I shall not be thought *minutely circumstantial*, if I should advise a *real Genius* to wear *Cork Heels* to his Shoes, as in this Scene he should seem to  *tread on Air*. (Garrick 1744, 9; italics in the original)<sup>4</sup>

Walpole’s own play *The Mysterious Mother* (1768) begins with the words, “What awful silence!” and goes from there to off-stage effects like a chapel bell, a choir’s singing, and a “violent storm of thunder

<sup>3</sup> On the theatrical background to *The Castle of Otranto*, see Brown 2005, 42-65.

<sup>4</sup> Garrick is possibly indulging here in a little sarcasm. It appears from a report of about a hundred years later that Garrick may have worn the cork soles to increase his height; see *The Players*, for May 12th, 1860 (Wisgast 1860, 1: 157); Hitchman 1881, 154, takes this view but offering no citation. Garrick indeed was short: see for instance Zofany 1768. On scenic effects, see Baugh 2007.

and lightning". We even get a debate over a real or imagined off-stage groan (Walpole 1768, 1, 33, 38, 43). Thus, I find that comparisons with what I may call the 'sound tradition', from eighteenth-century thunder sheets to Foley effects, bring the profusion of sounds and silences in Walpole's Gothic into sharp focus. Noise and silence in *The Castle of Otranto* take on fresh significance when analysed specifically within the frame of Foley sound, long the most prominent kind of auditory effect in film.

## 2 Foley Effects

Here, I am viewing Walpole as an unseen sound artist who generates sounds in prose, who calls attention to noises, and who, like the Foley artist, embraces silence as crucial in his spectrum of effects. Walpole's sounds, like those in films, are highly selective and, very importantly, more prominent – louder – than in real life.<sup>5</sup> They are not just sounds but artificial effects. He simulates a sense of real sonic experience using the unreal device of printed words.

What are Foley effects? They were named after Jack Foley, the early sound man who transferred the art of the auditory effect from radio to film. Like virtually all sound other than dialogue in film, sound effects are not recorded on set – because on-set ambience may be too dim or full of conflicting noises – but are superimposed later by the invisible hand of the Foley artist. Perhaps counterintuitively, these overlain Foley sounds often jump out as louder than they might in real life (tinkling ice in a drink) or may in a true sense be fake (frozen romaine lettuce for bone or head injuries).<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> See, for instance, "Hyper-real Sound", <http://www.filmsound.org/terminology/hyper-realistic.htm>, and "The Role of a Foley Artist", <https://bridgmansblog.wordpress.com/2016/01/15/the-role-of-a-foley-artist/>.

<sup>6</sup> On the basics of Foley sound, with the history that includes a list of Foley tricks for making seemingly real sound effects from strange materials (for instance, frozen romaine lettuce for bone or head injuries), see "Foley (filmmaking)" ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foley\\_\(filmmaking\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Foley_(filmmaking))) and Wright 2014. The film *Making Waves: The Art of Cinematic Sound* (2019) traces the shifts in cinematic sound production across time into the digital age, showing the history of Foley effects and their persistence even in present-day sound mixing, which is largely digital. The film is directed by Midge Costin, written by Bobette Buster, and produced by Ain't Heard Nothin' Yet Corporation and Goodmovies Entertainment. *Making Waves* concentrates on the sound revolution in film of the seventies. Walter Murch emerges as its central figure. His powerful innovations, linking film sound to emotion, are documented mainly online. See <http://www.filmsound.org/foley/> and <http://www.filmsound.org/murch/murch.htm>. For a Murch filmography see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walter\\_Murch](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walter_Murch). Note especially Murch 2000; also Murch, "Walter Murch", and Freer, "Walter Murch: A Conversation With the Legendary Sound Designer". Murch 2001 is about film editing, but also discusses principles that govern his work in sound.

The film sound theorist Michel Chion says that the “realist art” of cinema has “progressed only by [...] straining against its own principle through forceful doses of *un-realism*” (Chion 1994, 54). *The Castle of Otranto* illustrates this observation for the novel. Indeed, the novel in general produces its most striking effects by straining against the limitations of mere words on the page. For instance, dialogue, which everywhere appears in novels, is more suited to vocal representation than to writing on printed pages. The notably modern novelistic device of free indirect discourse works to escape these limits by using shifts of person and tense that do not occur in ordinary written or spoken language in order to project to readers the consciousness of fictional characters drawn in the limited medium of printed words. Such transparent access to the minds of others does not occur in lived life, where we must resort to guessing – mind reading – in order to know the thoughts of others. It is no accident that the sonic Walpole of *The Castle of Otranto* was the first British writer to employ sustained free indirect discourse in rendering mental states (Brown 2005, 32 and 34-41).

Foley sounds are made with real physical objects but disconnected from the real. They are simulations. Foley effects, like mechanistic off-stage sounds, achieve realism, but often by employing the not real. Sound engineers know well, for instance, that the crunch of cornstarch underfoot sounds more like snow than snow itself. This kind of realism, like others, does not equal the real but simulates it. In this sense, Foley effects imply an almost Gothic spectrality because they come out of nowhere. How do these sounds become so convincing? As Chion argues, Foley works because of an “Audio-Visual Contract” with the audience, underlain by the synergistic co-presence of image, sound, and audience. All the more so I am arguing when it comes to written sound in the Gothic novel (Chion 1994, 44).

### 3 Sounds and Silences

Foley effects have specific attributes that I am placing in tandem with sounds and silences in *The Castle of Otranto*. They are actual sounds overlain on the film track: sounds like clicking locks, creaking floorboards, clinking or breaking glass, folding sheet metal, or a television set in an adjacent or distant hotel room. Crucially, and with significance for *The Castle of Otranto*, Foley sounds most usually are louder than in ‘real’ life.

Silence, perhaps surprisingly, is part of sound effects because what we call silence in real life actually contains noise, and Foley puts that subtle noise of silence on film. Even in a remote spot on the globe, the sound of rustling leaves or faint insect noises hangs in the air. Background sounds like a turning lock in film then run on top of that

seeming but noisy silence – continually present as ‘atmosphere’ in most films – street noise, undifferentiated voices, fuzzy and far away sounds of a house or a hotel like door hinges or footsteps, a television or radio playing in a remote room or humming kitchen appliances. In Foley language, this is called ‘atmosphere’ or ‘atmos’. At the same time, a film is capable of a kind of total silence impossible in real life: the silence of a blank soundtrack. Such is all the more true of written narration in the novel, where silence, when it is declared, must be absolute – drained of all background noise, even of living breath.

Foley effects are made with real objects but are distinct from the real. They are simulations and thus, always, to some degree spectral in their out-of-nowhere impact. They achieve realism but in film production they are disarticulated from the real. Foley is not just sounds but *effects*. Its sounds jump out from the subtle background vibrations of its humming silence, or even from the apparent visual frame of action because they are louder than the real – that clinking glass or that clicking lock tumbler would not command attention in everyday life.

Tod Browning, the director of *Dracula* (1931), perfectly understood the power of silence punctuated by sound effects, with no music. He had the benefit of sound by none other than Jack Foley himself. A leading film critic endorses this approach:

*Dracula* had no musical score when it was first released, apart from some fugitive strains of Swan Lake [...] Purists argue that Browning’s original decision was the best one – to enhance the horror by eerie sound effects instead of underlining it with music. (Ebert, “Dracula”)<sup>7</sup>

Browning was responding in part to technical limitations imposed at an early moment in film sound when, for instance, atmospheric effects were not possible within the single track then available; but the film caught an essential trait of the Gothic, with its reigning silences broken by specific Foley effects.

Robert Bresson noted that there was no silence in silent film. Cinematic silence became possible, said Bresson, only with the advent of sound in film: “The soundtrack invented silence” (Bresson 1986, 28). Profound silence is very rare in real life, if it exists at all, and perhaps rarer still in film, although Bresson often left sustained gaps in

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<sup>7</sup> The scholar Titas Petrikis (2014, 3) underlines the point: “*Dracula* (Browning 1931) belongs to the transitional period between silent and sound films. *Dracula*’s original soundtrack consists of only a few sonic elements: dialogue and incidental sound effects. Music is used only at the beginning and in the middle (one diegetic scene) of the film; there is no underscoring. The reasons for the ‘emptiness’ of the soundtrack are partly technological, partly cultural”.

his soundtracks, which seldom included the music that in most modern films bridges gaps between dialogue or sound effects. One powerful example of total silence in film, however, is at the end of Francis Ford Coppola's *The Godfather II* (1974). Walter Murch reminisces about his creation of this twenty-second instant:

One memorable scene [...] was the end of *Godfather II* [...] where Michael Corleone [...] is sitting by the lake. I dropped the soundtrack down to the atmos and then shut it down completely, which transmitted the interior emotions being felt by the character. (Murch, "Walter Murch: The Sound Film Man")

During Murch's twenty seconds of film silence, Michael is contemplating his order to kill his own brother, while viewing the very spot of the murder on Lake Tahoe.

Foley effects typically are louder than the sounds they represent would be in real life – the creaking door hinge, the clinking glasses, the key in the turning latch. These are made relatively loud to prevent our missing them in the audience, but they lead a double life, for they are background noises for the characters. The worlds of audience perception and those of characters are separate. Characters may not notice that ice clinks in their glasses or that a distant television set is playing. *We* may. Foley implicitly opens a gap between sound as perceived by the audience and by characters in the fiction. In another register, however, Foley can provide noises that frighten characters into action, or that actuate psychic process. The power of sound in cinema to actuate characters is obvious in horror films. We experience Walpole's version, for example, as *The Castle of Otranto's* Isabella flees through a tunnel beneath the castle:

An awful silence reigned throughout those subterraneous regions, except now and then some blasts of wind that shook the doors she had passed, and which grating on the rusty hinges, were re-echoed through that long labyrinth of darkness. Every murmur struck her with new terror;—yet more she dreaded to hear the wrathful voice of Manfred urging his domestics to pursue her. She trod as softly as impatience would give her leave,—yet frequently stopped and listened to hear if she was followed. In one of those moments she thought she heard a sigh. She shuddered, and recoiled a few paces. In a moment she thought she heard the step of some person. Her blood curdled; she concluded it was Manfred. Every suggestion that horror could inspire rushed into her mind. (Walpole 2014, 26)

Here a perfect reigning silence, artificially produced through novelistic discourse, is punctuated by noises both real and imagined, for novels can confer absolute silence in ways not found in real life or in

film. Silence, sound, and mind are fused. In a film of this scene, Foley would render each noise.

The fullest way to demonstrate Foley effects in action would be for readers to watch the splendidly amusing video titled, "Track Stars. The Unseen Heroes of Movie Sound".<sup>8</sup> It shows a Foley sound stage in action on split screen with a recorded action scene of an indoor police chase. On the left, a very young security guard, alerted by clumsy noise from a break-in artist, chases him through offices, corridors, staircases, and some kind of manufacturing plant. The chase culminates in two brutal fist fights. On the right, two Foley artists use surprising gear and go through amazing contortions, to produce the sound effects essential to this film yet not recorded on set.<sup>9</sup>

We are treated to obvious analogue effects like tumbling trash cans, a door lock opened with a metal pick, a smashed board for a shattering table top and sticks for a destroyed wooden chair, a real bottle splintered to a parallel one, broken on the guard's head, and countless running footsteps by the two Foley performers - these even reflect the fatigue of the burglar's running steps toward the end. But other sounds are represented by objects remote from those evoked by the film. Steel pliers become a dropped gun, and a metal sheet stands in for a crash into the side of a large holding tank. The real fun begins with the two vigorous fist fights, during which blows to a raw leg of meat hanging on the Foley stage absorbs tough gut punches, while cabbages take the hits for other body parts - one cabbage smashed on the head of a Foley artist. Above all in these moments, the Foley production of realism through stand-in sounds that are more convincing than the real itself becomes obvious. "In real life", as Chion notes, "a punch does not necessarily make noise, even if it hurts someone" (Chion 1994, 60). Something real - that raw leg of lamb - stands in for something else that is real - the body punch - and projects a phantasmatic spectre of pain. This is a realist illusion produced by high artificiality through an alternate Foley stage reality that is factual.

Often, in *The Castle of Otranto*, crowds of people and servants make up background noise. By contrast, when Isabelle is alone in the castle's tunnel, with its novelistic total silence, every moment strikes her with new terror. In a film, the phrases "she thought she heard a sigh", and "she thought she heard the step of some person", might be spoken as dialogue, but more likely would emerge as sound effects in a spectral, perhaps echoey, Foley register different from that of the wind and other noises in the 'real' of the novel. This is a sound-

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<sup>8</sup> See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=00NaPcZ4EAs>.

<sup>9</sup> Sound Ideas is a company that produces and sells sound effects: <https://www.sound-ideas.com/Page/about-us.aspx>. The video I am describing appears on the website of Sound Ideas and also on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=00NaPcZ4EAs>.

intensive passage, with noises amplified by total darkness. Here, the sound effects are not just part of realism, they are psycho-acoustically present in the mind of the character. The text confirms this psychic effect, for it instantly moves into Isabelle's thoughts:

Every suggestion that horror could inspire rushed into her mind. She condemned her rash flight, which had thus exposed her to his rage in a place where her cries were not likely to draw any body to her assistance.—Yet the sound seemed not to come from behind.—If Manfred knew where she was, he must have followed her: she was still in one of the cloisters, and the steps she had heard were too distinct to proceed from the way she had come. Cheered with this reflection, and hoping to find a friend in whoever was not the prince; she was going to advance, when a door that stood a-jar, at some distance to the left, was opened gently. (Walpole 2014, 26-7)

Here, starting with the words “Yet the sound seemed [...]”, is one of *The Castle of Otranto's* many innovative passages of psycho-narration. We find no incipit, such as “she considered”. The verbs shift to a conditional voice and then to the past perfect tense. The psycho-acoustic effects of Foley, enabled by an underlying audio-visual contract, parallel the rendering of mental states through psycho-narration in the novel, where a written technology that omits introductory phrases (e.g. “she considered”), includes shifts in verb tenses, and maintains third-person narration (with underlying first-person reference), projecting the illusion of entry into consciousness. This is the specialised grammar of free indirect discourse, which produces spectral entry into the mind of a character, and which Ann Banfield calls a written technology because it is analogous to the operation of sentient instruments like recording thermometers or barometers. Crucial, here, is the presence of sound effects to actuate or to render mental states.<sup>10</sup>

The single most famous image in *The Castle of Otranto* evokes silence and speechlessness as much as sound. Speechless astonishment is the rule in this opening scene, leaving aside the noise of “shrieks, horror, and surprise” from a crowd surrounding the mammoth helmet that has just crushed Conrad, the heir apparent. Returning from the scene, a servant of Manfred, the villain, “said nothing, but pointed to the court”. The princess Hippolita “swooned away”. The servant “made no answer, but continued pointing towards the court-yard”.

<sup>10</sup> Psycho-narration is Dorrit Cohn's term, see Cohn 1978, 21-57. See also Banfield 1987, and 1982. Free indirect discourse can be slippery in English because the language offers no distinct marker. In French, by contrast, the marker lies with a verb tense, the *imparfait*. For general discussion of the mode, see Fludernik 2009, 64-9, 78-85.

Manfred at first views “something that appeared to him only as a mountain of sable plumes”. And then,

But what a sight for a father’s eyes!—He beheld his child dashed to pieces, and almost buried under an enormous helmet, an hundred times more large than any casque ever made for human being, and shaded with a proportionable quantity of black feathers. (Walpole 2014, 18)

Those “proportionable” feathers remain silent, their rustling perhaps drowned out by shrieks. But the giant feathers soon return when the lascivious Manfred approaches Isabella, his dead son’s fiancée, with a transgressive marriage proposal. Here, and in the action to follow, we see how Walpole employs sound as the infrastructure of an episode:

At those words he seized the cold hand of Isabella, who was half-dead with fright and horror. She shrieked, and started from him. Manfred rose to pursue her; when the moon, which was now up, and gleamed in at the opposite casement, presented to his sight the plumes of the fatal helmet, which rose to the height of the windows, waving backwards and forwards in a tempestuous manner, and accompanied with a hollow and rustling sound. (24)

The giant feathers, rising to the windows on the main floor of the castle, now show great agitation and resound with threatening noise. The encounter resembles one in a play, with the window and feathers in recession and off-stage sound effects. The “hollow and rustling sound” is a kind of speech, warning Manfred away from his near-incestuous plan. Isabella translates the sound into words:

Isabella, who gathered courage from her situation, and who dreaded nothing so much as Manfred’s pursuit of his declaration, cried, Look, my lord! see Heaven itself declares against your impious intentions!—Heaven nor hell shall impede my designs, said Manfred, advancing again to seize the princess. (24-5)

The sound of a “deep sigh”, not vision, immediately motivates the next action: the scene of a portrait’s coming to life that anticipates countless moments in later Gothic novels, including Oscar Wilde’s modulation in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890):

At that instant the portrait of his grandfather, which hung over the bench where they had been sitting, uttered a deep sigh and heaved its breast. Isabella, whose back was turned to the picture, saw not the motion, nor knew whence the sound came, but started and said, Hark, my Lord! what sound was that? and at the same

time made towards the door. Manfred, distracted between the flight of Isabella, who had now reached the stairs, and inability to keep his eyes from the picture, which began to move, had however advanced some steps after her, still looking backwards on the portrait, when he saw it quit its pannel, and descend on the floor with a grave and melancholy air. (25)

The spectre remains silent, apart from a further sigh, relying only on gesture to lead Manfred onward in pursuit. Sound powerfully emerges here as a psycho-acoustic effect centred on the mind of Isabella and motivates her speech, along with the action to follow. The reinforcement of images by sound, and the more-than-the-sum-of-the-parts aspect in these scenes, exploits to the full the bond between text and audience that Chion calls the “audio-visual contract” (1994, xxvi).

Meanwhile, Isabella, fleeing to the bottom of the principal staircase on her unknowing way to the scene in that subterraneous passage with which we began our discussion, stops to reflect on the moment in a brilliant passage of psycho-narration:

The gates of the castle she knew were locked, and guards placed in the court. Should she, as her heart prompted her, go and prepare Hippolita for the cruel destiny that awaited her, she did not doubt but Manfred would seek her there, and that his violence would incite him to double the injury he meditated, without leaving room for them to avoid the impetuosity of his passions. Delay might give him time to reflect on the horrid measures he had conceived, or produce some circumstance in her favour, if she could for that night, at least avoid his odious purpose. – Yet where conceal herself! How avoid the pursuit he would infallibly make throughout the castle? (26)

The shifts in verbal mode and tense that signal free indirect discourse allow the ghostly entry into consciousness that Walpole pioneers in tandem with his sustained use of sound effects; and, along with that, allow entry into Isabelle’s mind as she struggles to parse Manfred’s mental reflections. Walpole here is opening the kind of layered rendering of thought about thought usually assigned to much later novels.

Those memorable feathers, which wave proportionably atop the giant casque, became actors when their “hollow and rustling sound” interrupted Manfred’s assault on Isabella (24). They also vigorously intervene later as the novel unfolds. These sable plumes signal the novel’s deep structural interplay between sound and silence, which, as Bresson observes for film, became possible only within the domain of sound itself.

A prolonged episode, near the centre of *The Castle of Otranto*, illustrates both this interplay and the psychic effects that accompany it. Central is the terrifying knight whose huge company bears a gigantic sword and includes two troupes of footmen clad in scarlet and black. The arrival of this mysterious knight of the gigantic sabre is heralded by the sound of a “brazen trumpet, which hung without the gate of the castle” and, with it, “at that same instant the sable plumes on the enchanted helmet [...] were tempestuously agitated, and nodded thrice, as if bowed by some invisible wearer” (55). Manfred’s misgiven heart now pauses on beholding the tempestuous yet textually silent “plumage on the miraculous casque shaken in concert with the sounding of the brazen trumpet” (56). When Manfred questions these doings, a stage direction in brackets declares that now “the plumes were shaken with greater violence than before” (56). But do they rustle? The plumes may, it appears, be agitated, or even tempestuous, without accompanying sound. They hover at the margin between sound and silence.

A flood of narration unfolds during the several pages of print that intervene before the knight’s procession enters. We range from Father Jerome’s gaining pardon for his son Theodore, through the foreign herald’s twice declaring that Manfred is the “usurper of Otranto” (57), to a long passage in which Manfred ‘reflects’ on crucial points in the background of the history now unfolding for us as readers (57-8). Manfred works here as an internal reflector figure in the terms of modern narratology. Amidst further exposition, Father Jerome’s “mind”, like the plumes themselves, is “agitated by a thousand contrary passions” (58), and we get a long thought report as he works through the moment’s fraught implications for Hippolita, Theodore, and Isabella. At last, after confusion over their locations in the castle complex, and doubt about Hippolita’s possible death, the shifting scene returns to the pageantry accompanying the mysterious knight’s entry – his own helmet “surmounted by a large plume of scarlet and black feathers” (60).

This cavalcade, comprising by my count well over three hundred men and over one-hundred horses, centres on the one-hundred gentlemen who seem to “faint” under the weight of an “enormous” sword (60). Yet this potential orgy for the Foley artist is accompanied only by trumpets! No footsteps, no hooves, no groaning under the sword’s weight (the gentlemen are merely fainting). But a “tempest of wind” rises behind Manfred, who turns to behold “the plumes of the enchanted helmet agitated in the same extraordinary manner as before”, while the knight silently “stopped to gaze at the miraculous casque; and, kneeling down, seemed to pray inwardly for a few minutes” (60-1). The knight shakes his head, refusing Manfred’s request to disarm, while the “gigantic sword burst from [its] supporters, and, falling to the ground opposite to the helmet, remained im-

moveable" (61). Some silent magnetic force works to reunite these fragments of a gigantic statue, dismembered parts of which terrify the servants Diego and Bianca in the great chamber.

Walpole stages a comedy of desperate conversational gambits from a Manfred who frantically attempts to break the knight's silence, which is recorded in brackets like stage directions. This continues for some five pages until Manfred descends to "incoherent sentences" (65) as the knight at last speaks to demand the meaning of Isabella's flight from the castle. At this turning point, the word "silence" appears twice within four lines of text. In this sequence, at the core of *The Castle of Otranto*, Walpole puts sound - trumpets, the wind surrounding the plumes, and ultimate speech from the mysterious knight - into counterpoint with silence. From the vortex of this episode springs the true story of Manfred's usurpation of Otranto. The secret of silence is broken by the speech of truth.

#### 4 A Lens Opening the Way of Hearing

I might work through the entirety of *The Castle of Otranto* in this way, pointing out Foley effects and psycho-acoustic engagements, or even jump far ahead via the novels of Ann Radcliffe and others to the effects of wind in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847), or to the use of supernatural voices, real or imagined, in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland* (1798), and James Hogg's *Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824). Walpole set the paradigm for such effects, as we see if we return to that recipe from the *Spirit of the Public Journals* with which we began. That summa of Gothic effects, Matthew Lewis's *The Monk: A Romance* itself, which had appeared in 1796 just two years earlier than the recipe, might have been the basis of the recipe - and far more. For *The Monk* condenses the effects of the Gothic to the point of parody, as it became the most Gothic of the Gothics and embraced their extremes in ways that crystallise the genre. This concentration is no less true of sound effects than of those of plot, character, and setting. The final scene of *The Monk* presents a heady distillate of the effects Walpole pioneered. Once the hero Ambrosio is cast into the dungeon from which the devil alone can free him, we encounter: multiple silences, "gloomy" and otherwise, "repeated" loud bursts of thunder that shake the foundations of buildings and even the earth itself, chiming bells, abounding shrieks with which "Caves and Mountains rang", bolts and bars of a door that "grated heavily upon its iron hinges", rattling chains, a key turning in its lock, a roof that opens to the soaring daemon carrying Ambrosio aloft above "the wildness of surrounding scenery" where "the wind of night sighed hoarsely and mournfully" amidst "the shrill cry of mountain Eagles" that later will

tear at Ambrosio's flesh beside "a silent sluggish stream", and will dig "out his eye-balls with their crooked beaks [while] the winds in fury rent up rocks and forests" (Lewis 2008, 331-9). All of this would reduce the Foley artist to a frenzy. The 1972 film *Le Moine* hardly began to cover this range of sound and silence.<sup>11</sup>

I suggest that Foley effects in film can become a lens, a kind of optic, that, to mix metaphors, opens a way of hearing *The Castle of Otranto*. This opening points up the value of placing the arts in juxtaposition with one another. An awareness of and curiosity about Foley effects has caused me to consider this novel differently and quite firmly to underline Walpole's marked originality. When we say that he invented the Gothic novel, we say something remarkable, for very few genres in the arts have been created from scratch. But his invention seems now to have gone much further, for he opened a whole world of sound to the novel as a form, and shaped the previously fragmentary resources of psycho-narration into techniques for the narration of thought and of thought about thought - consciousness - in prose fiction that would become central to, for instance, Frances Burney and Jane Austen - themselves long treated as precursors of a central nineteenth-century mode of narration.

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<sup>11</sup> The film to which I refer, *Le Moine* (1972), based on the novel, was directed by Ado Kyrou, and written by Luis Buñuel and Jean-Claude Carrière. A later film by the same title (2011) was directed by Dominik Moll and written by him with Anne-Louise Trividic. This film employs a few Foley effects but largely relies on music.

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