

Moving Pictures: The Animated Portrait in *The Castle of Otranto* and the Post-Walpolean Gothic

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Abstract

This article departs from a well-known story behind the publication of Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*. As the author makes clear in his correspondence, the idea for "a gothic story" was inextricably linked with his architectural project at Strawberry Hill. However, rather than delving into the spatial parallels between Otranto and Strawberry Hill, the article addresses the implied presence of Walpole's gallery of portraits in the novel; in particular, it studies the narrative and ideological functions performed by the motif of the animated portrait in *The Castle of Otranto* as well as a number of post-Walpolean Gothic novels. By analysing both supernatural and metaphorical animation, the article argues that the animated portrait capitalises on the ideas and conventions central to the Gothic novel in general, such as the haunting presence of the past, doubling and desire for animation.

Résumé

Cet article a pour point de départ une histoire liée à la genèse éditoriale du Château d'Otrante. Comme l'auteur le signale dans sa correspondance, l'idée d'écrire une « histoire gothique » était inséparable du projet architectural à Strawberry Hill. Mais au lieu de creuser les parallélismes spatiaux entre Otrante et Strawberry Hill, cet article se penche sur la présence implicite de la galerie de portraits de Walpole dans le roman. Il étudie plus particulièrement les fonctions narratives et idéologiques du motif du portrait animé dans le roman et d'autres romans gothiques qui ont suivi Le Château d'Otrante. L'examen de l'animation surnaturelle et métaphorique permet d'avancer l'idée que le portrait animé étend les idées et conventions générales du genre gothique, comme par exemple la présence fantomatique du passé, le thème du double et le rêve de la mise en vie.

Keywords

Portrait, animation, uncanny, the Gothic



Fig. 1 Henry Cary, 1st Viscount Falkland. Marcus Geeraerts the Younger. Ca. 1603.
Oil on canvas. Sarah Campbell Blaffer Foundation, Houston.

The stories of the Gothic as a genre tend to begin with Horace Walpole's personal documents, pointing to an inextricable link between *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) and the architectural project of Strawberry Hill. Some of his letters, in which he openly admitted to the inspirational role of his "little gothic castle", and other writings, including *A Description of the Villa [...] at Strawberry Hill* (1774), gave way to contextualised readings of *Otranto* that compared the spatial project in the fiction with the actual estate and its holdings (see e.g. Ketton-Cremer, Harney). This being my starting point, I would like to shift attention from architecture to Walpole's transposition of one significant detail – a portrait exhibited in the gallery of Strawberry Hill.

An oft-quoted document shedding light on the writing of *Otranto* is Walpole's letter to his friend William Cole (9 March 1765), in which he identifies the origin of the literary project in a nightmare that he suffered in his Strawberry Hill villa. As he writes, he found himself in "an ancient castle", where he saw "a gigantic hand in armour" on top of "a great staircase". The dream, Walpole admits, was only natural for "a head filled like mine with gothic story". In the letter Walpole also draws attention to the said detail:

Your partiality to me and Strawberry have I hope inclined you to excuse the wildness of the story. You will even have found some traits to put you in mind of this place. When you read of the picture quitting its panel, did not you recollect the portrait of Lord Falkland all in white in my gallery?
(*Correspondence*, vol.1 88)

The inspirational role of the painting (**Fig. 1**) is also acknowledged in the 1784 edition of Walpole's *Description*, where he writes that "The idea of the picture walking out of its frame in the Castle of Otranto, was suggested by this portrait" (51).

I will concentrate in this essay on Walpole's imaginative transposition of the actual portrait from the gallery of Strawberry Hill in order to show that it contributed to the formation of one of the most enduring of Gothic motifs – the animated portrait, "a standard furnishing of the [Gothic] castle" (Ziolkowski 15) and "an almost mandatory tool of terror" (Frank 81 note 1). I will pay special attention to the role of such portraits in the Gothic, the meanings implied by them and the formative role played by Walpole's *Otranto*. I will argue that the motif of the animated portrait capitalises on the interrelationship of image and narrative in the Gothic, both by way of the implied narrative content behind the image (e.g. family history) and by virtue of its potential to become the micro-analogue of the Gothic narrative in general.

In his book on animation, Spyros Papapetros recognises the potential of the motif to raise wider concerns about the extra-artistic context:

While animation revives the ancient correspondences of analogical thinking between the microcosm of human artifacts and the macrocosm of universal affairs, it also reenergizes the world of polarities, the splitting of both natural and conceptual entities into oppositional pairs. Animated objects [...] not only represent but at times embody these polarities in their dynamically ambivalent behaviour. (x)

As this article will show, the animated portrait in the Gothic plays this very role: it negotiates the binaries of past and present, self and other, real and unreal, beyond the obvious entanglement with the issues of what belongs to animate and what to inanimate matter.

Before proceeding to a discussion of literary texts, I will first point out the "the uncanniness" of the animated portrait. Sigmund Freud's essay on "The Uncanny" develops and debates many of the ideas put forward by Ernst Jentsch in his 1906 "Zur Psychologie des Unheimlichen". One of those is the notion of animation, which Jentsch regards as a "factor in the origin of the uncanny", writing about the primal tendency in man to search for equivalents of "his own animate state" in the realm of the inanimate (12). He continues, saying that what provokes the feeling of the uncanny in particular is "a doubt as to the animate or inanimate state of things" (13). Freud refers to this observation linking it with Jentsch's earlier discussion of automata dolls, arguing that in this case the experience of the uncanny is not necessarily that of fear but that of an "infantile wish" for the inanimate object to come to life. Importantly, Freud points out that the juxtaposition of fear and desire here is not a "contradiction" but a "complication" (9). Elsewhere, he asserts that "it is in the highest degree uncanny when inanimate objects—a picture or a doll—come to life" (16). Inanimate objects coming to life were perhaps most memorably employed by M.R. James in his *Ghost Stories of an Antiquary* (1904), whereas in the early Gothic these are predominantly pictures that move or seem to move. As a matter of fact, painting, and especially portraiture, is essentially uncanny, as it tends to purposely vacillate between the two realms by means of such techniques as *trompe l'oeil* or an illusion of eye contact with the viewer.¹ In

1 Walter Scott in his "Prefatory Memoir to Walpole" regards it as a source of terror: "There are a few who have not felt at some period of their childhood a sort of terror from the manner in which the eye of an ancient portrait appears to fix that of the spectator from every point of view" (1811, xxix)

fact, Geeraerts' painting of Lord Falkland makes good use of these two techniques: if the penetrating look of the represented aristocrat draws attention, what can escape notice is the slightly forward position occupied by the left foot – it looks as if it is crossing the threshold of the frame. This use of *trompe l'oeil* corresponds to the painter's attempt to endow the image with a sense of movement by way of the falling glove in the centre.²

In this, the portrait in general, and Geeraerts' one in particular, affects the viewing subject by way of negotiating the subject-object binary and depriving the viewer from a feeling of safety enjoyed in the position of a detached observer. The animated portrait explores this inherent potential of this genre of painting; as Papapetros points out, animation, like the Freudian uncanny in general, problematises

an affinity with objects that is always contested. Objects and subjects appear as epigones of an *unfamiliar* kinship: they may now be closer than ever, yet their communication is stalled in the same typified roles of artifacts and users, images and spectators, or buildings and occupants. (viii)

The Gothic elaborates on this potential of the image, and the motif goes back to *The Castle of Otranto*. The starting point is a traditional subject-object arrangement, but the paradigm of animation (be it actual or metaphorically implied – I will account for both types in what follows) dissolves the pattern – the object transcends its limitations and poses a threat to the subject's dominant position.

Animation in general may be considered as a principle behind Walpole's literary project, which – to use Walpole's own uncanny metaphor – “grew on [his] hands” (*Correspondence*, vol.1 88). On a larger scale, Walpole brings to life his Gothic villa, and indeed the Castle of Otranto is depicted as a living entity, not only by the typical sounds it produces but also by the realisation of its self-destructive potential at the end of the narrative – a conclusion memorably reworked by Edgar Allan Poe in “The Fall of the House of Usher” (1839). Animation is also what underpins the eccentric realisation of the prophecy threatening the rule of the villainous Manfred: “*That the castle and lordship of Otranto should pass from the present family, whenever the real owner should be grown too large to inhabit it*” (17). The curse is beginning to materialise at the outset of the narrative, when a gigantic helmet falls out of nowhere and smashes Manfred's only heir Conrad on the day of his arranged marriage to the innocent heroine Isabella. The episode not only complicates the two basic layers of the plot – the story of inheritance (featuring Manfred's attempts to secure his unlawful ownership of Otranto) and the story of persecuted innocence (with Manfred's quasi-incestuous desire for his son's failed spouse) – but also uncannily confuses things when the helmet is recognised as the magnified copy of the one topping the statue of Alfonso, now found missing. Such incredible occurrences mark the subsequent stages of plot development as the separate elements of Alfonso's statue appear in gigantic dimensions (his foot and part of the leg, sabre and hand, respectively).

On the level of details, the animated object which carries the analogical narrative, aesthetic and ideological implications of the novel as a whole is the fictional equivalent of Geeraerts's painting – the portrait of Manfred's grandfather Ricardo exhibited in the gallery of the castle, alongside another portrait representing Alfonso the Good. When the portrait of Ricardo is first introduced, a direct link is established between the canvas and the

² *Trompe l'oeil* characterised the other elements of the Strawberry Hill project, too. These included the decoration of the stairs, painted wallpapers or faux carving of ceilings.

mysterious helmet in the yard (a link also reaffirmed later on). It happens when Manfred makes his scheme clear to Isabella and when the heroine protests against the desires of her tormentor: “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). Isabella interprets this as an intervention of heaven,³ and Manfred follows up in the same, though villainous, vein with the archetypal act of defiance – “Heaven nor hell shall impede my designs” – and at this moment the portrait of his grandfather is animated: “the portrait of his grandfather, which hung over the bench where they had been sitting, uttered a deep sigh and heaved its breast” (25). Isabella escapes, and Manfred fails to react unable to “keep his eyes from the picture, which began to move” (25). The ensuing scene deserves a longer quotation:

still looking backwards on the portrait, [...] he saw it quit its panel, and descend on the floor with a grave and melancholy air. Do I dream? [...] or are the devils themselves in league against me? Speak, infernal spectre! Or, if thou art my grandsire, why dost thou too conspire against thy wretched descendant, who too dearly pays for— Ere he could finish the sentence the vision sighed again, and made a sign to Manfred to follow him. Lead on! cried Manfred, I will follow thee to the gulph of perdition. The spectre marched sedately, but dejected, to the end of the gallery, and turned into a chamber on the right hand. Manfred accompanied him at a little distance, full of anxiety and horror, but resolved. As he would have entered the chamber, the door was clapped-to with violence by an invisible hand. [...] Since hell will not satisfy my curiosity, said Manfred, I will use the human means in my power for preserving my race; Isabella shall not escape me. (25)

This episode, as well as further mentions of this portrait and the one representing Alfonso, which I will take up in due course, draws attention to several issues central to Walpole’s Gothic story. On the strictly literary level, it reveals Shakespearean provenance, which should not surprise given Walpole’s prefatory invocation of the bard as his “model” (10). The scene also closes on what Walpole defines as the principal agenda behind the use of the supernatural – the reactions of the parties involved which help differentiate the attitudes of characters. While the innocent Isabella responds with a mere “Hark” (echoing Elizabethan drama) and leaves as quickly as possible, the villainous Manfred confronts the supernatural in a truly Faustian manner. On the narrative level, by virtue of being contrasted but also confusingly correlated with the gigantic parts of Alfonso’s animated statue,⁴ the portrait episode capitalises on Manfred’s unlawful ownership of Otranto and the quasi-incestuous means he is ready to take in order to secure it, in which he openly challenges the supernatural order. The villain is unable to “keep his eyes from the picture” seeing in it a representation of his ambitions and lust for power; a double standing for the qualities Manfred inherited from his grandfather, the usurper. His leaving the panel and thus the gallery, where the portrait is exhibited alongside the one of the rightful owner, is a gesture indicative of eventual failure – the portrait does not belong in the gallery just as Manfred does not

3 The plumes move again when Isabella’s father, Frederick, arrives at the castle bringing a gigantic sabre: “the sable plumes of the enchanted helmet [...] were tempestuously agitated, and nodded thrice, as if bowed by some invisible wearer” (55); “the plumes of the enchanted helmet agitated in the same extraordinary manner as before” (60). This is shortly after Manfred is openly addressed as “the usurper of Otranto” (56).

4 When Manfred’s servants enter the chamber they find a gigantic foot and part of a leg of Alfonso rather than the ghost of Manfred’s grandfather that has quitted the panel.

belong in the line of Otranto's rightful owners.

By way of contrast, a further dimension to the theme of the portrait is added when the servant Bianca is taunting her lady and Manfred's daughter Matilda with matrimonial issues. She describes a potentially perfect suitor with reference to the other significant portrait in *Otranto* – the one representing Alfonso – “which you [i.e. Matilda] sit and gaze at hours together”. To this Matilda replies: “Do not speak lightly of that picture [...] I know the adoration with which I look at that picture is uncommon—but I am not in love with a coloured pannel” (38). Matilda's quasi-erotic veneration for the picture may well represent the Freudian wish for animation mentioned above; a desire realised when the heroine first sees the living copy of the portrait – Theodore. Matilda notices a striking resemblance between him and Alfonso as depicted in the portrait: “Heavens! [...] do I dream? or is not that youth the exact resemblance of Alfonso's picture in the gallery?” (51). This hints at the latter's claim to Otranto, which is made clear when the peasant is recognised as the descendant of Alfonso and the only rightful heir. In a way, then, the supernatural animation of the portrait of Manfred's ancestor is doubled with a quasi-animation of the portrait of Alfonso, when Theodore is seen in true light – when wearing full armour he is literally taken by Manfred to be the animated Alfonso the Good. Theodore's identifications throughout the narrative are reaffirmed in the catastrophic finale, when the gigantic statue of Alfonso proclaims: “Behold in Theodore the true heir of Alfonso” (103). The phrasing “behold in” purposely implies a perception of a visual representation. The motif of the animated portrait is thus reduplicated by means of two complementary episodes which, on a larger scale, correspond to the intertwined narratives of the usurper losing the property and the hitherto unknown descendant regaining it.

The portraits in *Otranto* have been given a relatively close critical attention, and apparently no reading of the novel has done without at least a cursory glance at the issue. Walpole's novel is discussed as a starting point for Theodore Ziolkowski's survey of the uses of the “haunted portrait” in the Gothic, though his argument about the gradual rationalisation of the motif raises doubts (78–148). The animated portrait was most extensively (and perhaps most influentially) discussed by Jerrold Hogle in a series of essays on what he terms “The Ghost of the Counterfeit”. Hogle argues that the fundamental trope in Gothic literature is the fake referent of the ghost; in other words, the ghost (as a literary sign) does not stand for any substance but rather its representation (i.e. another sign). This was the characteristic of the Gothic revival in general: such projects as Strawberry Hill were in fact inherently “fake”, as they derived not so much from authentically Gothic buildings but from circulating graphic representations. In *The Castle of Otranto*, Hogle writes, the episodes that embody the essence of the Gothic as “counterfeit” are the animated statue of Alfonso and the picture of Manfred's grandfather. Writing about the latter, and trying to account for the story of inheritance at the same time, Hogle remarks that the ghost is “the counterfeit of a counterfeit [i.e. visual representation] of a counterfeiter [i.e. usurper]” (1994, 28) to the effect that there is an absolute lack of substance behind representation. For Hogle the portrait is a starting point for a broadly contextualised discussion of the Gothic and the understanding of signs in Western culture. Even if my reading of *Otranto*'s portraits and their afterlife in Gothic literature pursues different objectives, I share Hogle's assumption that the animated portrait in *Otranto* is a micro-analogue to the Gothic project. In fact, if counterfeiting is taken as a discursive paradigm behind the Gothic genre, the portraits in *Otranto* assume a meta-pictorial dimension: the motif becomes a meta-commentary on Walpole's creative practices and a metonymy of the Gothic novel in general.

More recently, *Otranto*'s portraits have been analysed by Kamilla Elliott in her book-length study of portraiture in Gothic literature. Elliott's argument differs from Hogle's view that Walpole's novel elaborates on "the distance between subject and image". Instead, she claims that from the point of view of the theories of immanence (implying the subject's inherent, quasi-ghostly presence in the representation), the bond between the subject and the image is tightened, with "sign and substance as inhering in each other" (109). Elliott's main concern is the category of resemblance and its role in picture identification, and it is through resemblance, she argues, that the sign and substance are kept bound together. This results in a poetics of mirrors and multiplications:

The heir resembles the portrait; the portrait resembles the ancestor; the heir resembles the ancestor; the portrait identifies the ghost; the ghost identifies the heir; the portrait identifies the heir; the heir identifies the portrait as a true resemblance of the ancestor; the ghost identifies the portrait as a true representation of aristocratic origin and essence. (Elliott 110)

Even though from my perspective resemblance itself is not a central issue, I see a relationship between this category and that of animation. In *Otranto* Theodore's resemblance to the portrait of Alfonso creates an illusion of animation, and both Matilda and Manfred, when they marvel at the similarity, respond with an implied reference to the supernatural: "Do I dream?" and "What, is not that Alfonso?" (25), they ask, respectively.

In what follows, I would like to discuss several uses of the animated portrait in the post-Walpolean Gothic, treating them as elaborations on the potential meanings of the motif first carried in Walpole's work, assuming that in terms of genre and narrative, the animated portrait in *The Castle of Otranto* capitalises on the ideas and conventions central to the Gothic. I will focus on the paradigms of animating the past, doubling and desire for animation. The studied material will exemplify both supernatural and metaphorical animation, which two patterns stem from the portraits of Ricardo and Alfonso, respectively.

First of all, the portrait coming to life is by extension representative of the principle of animating the past in the first-wave Gothic (as opposed to Victorian or twentieth-century Gothic as a rule preoccupied with contemporaneous matters). The ghostly immanence of the picture representing an ancestor corresponds with the general project of illustrating the haunting presence of the past on literary (Shakespeare), aesthetic (Gothic revival), familial (inheritance) and political (class and nobility) levels. The effect is a state of not only ontological but also temporal confusions, in which there is no certitude as for what is inanimate or animate, past or present. Such is the poetics of Charles Robert Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), which offers a memorable deployment of the animated portrait.

The eponymous character is a Faustian figure who has entered into a pact with the devil in return for another 150 years of life. His story is gradually uncovered through several narratives making up the novel, but he is first introduced in the frame narrative, in Chapter 1, by means of a mysterious portrait functioning as a typical marker of lineage in the estate inherited by his descendant, the dying uncle of John Melmoth, who is thus about to come into the Melmoth seat. The presentation of the animated portrait is uncannily correlated with a meticulous description of the uncle dying, and the young John Melmoth finds himself in the realm of the in-between – when the living is dying and the inanimate becomes animated:

John's eyes were in a moment, and as if by magic, rivetted on a portrait that hung on the wall, and appeared, even to his untaught eye, far superior to the tribe of family pictures that are left to moulder on the walls of a family mansion. It represented a man of middle age. There was nothing remarkable in the costume, or in the countenance, but *the eyes*, John felt, were such as one feels they wish they had never seen, and feels they can never forget. (13–14)

Then, the uncle tells John more of the picture:

John, they say I am dying of this and that [...] but, John,' and his face looked hideously ghastly, 'I am dying of a fright. That man,' and he extended his meagre arm toward the closet, as if he was pointing to a living being; 'that man, I have good reason to know, is alive still [...] You will see him again, he is alive.' Then, sinking back on his bolster, he fell into a kind of sleep or stupor, his eyes still open, and fixed on John. (14)

John now finds himself experiencing extreme emotions – horror provoked by the sight of the dying uncle (“the contracted nostril, the glazed eye, the dropping jaw, the whole horrible apparatus of the *facies Hippocratica*”) and terror exuded by the mysterious and now animated picture: “he thought he saw the eyes of the portrait, on which his own was fixed, *move*” [emphasis in the original] (15). In the aftermath of the scene, the portrait's animation reaches its climax when John is visited by “a figure” – “the living original of the portrait” (16). Like Manfred, John proceeds to follow the sceptre but is called back by his uncle's agony. The uncle's final words are a hysterical reaction to the attempt by one of his servants to change his shirt: “They are robbing me,—robbing me in my last moments,—robbing a dying man [...] I shall die a beggar” (16). These words uttered in the context of the appearance of the ancestral ghost endow the episode with a metaphorical dimension of the story of inheritance and property. Confusingly, as Elliott points out (144), the ancestor “becomes his own usurper as well as the usurper of his heirs” rather than a wronged ghost taking vengeance. Elliott also offers a parallel reading of the portrait and the narrative in general (in which Melmoth's body continues to look the same for 150 years thus imitating the portrait), which implies that the episode of the animated portrait is, like in *Otranto*, a miniature analogue to the plot in general; an inherent meta-commentary. Finally, it is worth adding that the centrality of animation in *Melmoth* is also established by the very first epigraph in the novel – a quote from Shakespeare's *Henry VI*: “Alive again? Then show me where he is; I'll give a thousand pounds to look upon him” (7).

In the post-Walpolean Gothic animation was also employed without supernatural agency. And even if the portraits in such cases are not strictly speaking animated – that is, they do not move nor quit the panel – they allude to the motif by way of analogy, similar narrative and ideological functions or the observer's impressions, illusions, as well as emotional and at times physiological states. The first notable example of this kind can be found in Clara Reeve's *The Old English Baron* (1777–8). Subtitled “A Gothic Story”, the novel is openly meta-fictional and construed as a reworking of *Otranto*: “This Story is the literary offspring of the Castle of Otranto, written upon the same plan, with a design to unite the most attractive and interesting circumstances of the ancient Romance and modern Novel [...]” (2). Reeve recognises Walpole's novel to be in the end a rather successful blend of these two forms, but at the same time voices one fundamental reservation:

“the [supernatural] machinery is so violent, that it destroys the effect it is intended to excite” (3). She supports her claim with a list of excessively and ridiculously supernatural elements in the imitated model, among which are both the supersized elements of Alfonso’s animated statue and “a picture that walks out of its frame” (3). By defining her project as a direct response to Walpole’s and by listing selected episodes in his novel, Reeve enters into an intertextual game with the reader and conceptualises the reading process as a comparative endeavour.

Accordingly, the protagonist Edmund, like Theodore, is brought up as a peasant and gradually regains his social standing and rights to property. However, the supernatural agency of his ancestors is limited to mysterious sounds, as well as to Edmund’s dream of their ghostly visit. When he decides to spend a night in an allegedly haunted part of the castle, they made themselves known through Walpolean, though modified, episodes: the noise produced by falling armour (which leads Edmund and his companions to discover the chamber containing the bloody armour of the former master of the house) and the portraits of the late lord and lady, “turned with their faces to the wall” (45). Animation *sensu largo* takes an indirect form which corresponds both to the actual movement of Manfred’s grandfather and the uncanny resemblance of Theodore to the venerated portrait of Alfonso. As for movement, the usurper’s picture leaving the gallery in *Otranto* was a metaphor of his and Manfred’s misplacement in the line of the owners of the property; in other words, the episode “animated” the story of inheritance, just like the gigantic helmet in the first place. In a similar manner, though quite conversely, the portraits in *The Old English Baron* metaphorically regain their function (as markers of lawful ownership) when the servant Joseph “t[akes] the courage to turn them” (45). There is no supernatural agency in the portraits’ “animation”, but, nevertheless, they do exude an aura of ghostly immanence – Joseph needs “courage” to perform the simple task of turning the pictures. Once the past rulers are thus reinstated, Edmund and his companions are struck by the extraordinary resemblance of the protagonist to the pictures. The hero’s wonder at this is followed by a feeling of inspiration “with unusual courage” enabling him to explore the bloody chamber and thus initiate the quest for social ascension in a manner similar to that of Walpole’s Theodore: “if [heaven] permits, I will know who was my father before I am a day older” (46).

Another layer of meaning that Walpole ascribed to the animated portrait in *Otranto* was the idea of doubling – an idea that is, of course, related to the above-mentioned issues of past and ancestry. The portrait as a double is a reworking of the mirror motif that has a long history and a rich afterlife. If the portrait is animated, the mirror analogy is even closer, as the mirror reflection is, after all, a kind of animated portrait. It is also worth adding that in the essay on “The Uncanny” Freud discussed doubling immediately after commenting on animation. He does not establish a clear link between these paradigms, other than treating them both as uncanny, but I would venture to assume that there is one, especially when the double is physically identical to the subject, a spitting but also living image.

The Castle of Otranto explores the potential of doubling by way of multiplication and cross-pairings: Manfred against the portrait of his grandfather Ricardo, the two portraits against each other; Theodore against the portrait of Alfonso; Manfred against Theodore. These pairings capitalise on the central story of inheritance but are also informed ethically and psychologically. The two basic possibilities in terms of the subject’s position towards his or her double is repetition/reduplication or contrast (Faurholt). In the first case, the double is an almost identical alter ego and produces an uncanny effect by way of an extraordinary repetition; in

Otranto such is the case of Theodore and Alfonso, whose similarity is not only limited to physicality but also to inherent nobility. The paradigm of doubling as contrast informs the pairing of Manfred and Theodore as well as the portraits of their respective ancestors. As a rule, doubles as contrasts in the Gothic serve the purpose of embodying the uncontrollable repressed – the subject’s *shadow* on the loose. In Walpole’s novel, this is not necessarily the case from the perspective of Manfred, who sees in Theodore, and by extension in the portrait of Alfonso, an embodiment of his own aspirations that are impossible to realise. Stained by his ancestor’s criminal ambitions, he will never be a match for Theodore’s rightfulness and nobility. Conversely, though this perspective is not explicitly established in the narrative, Manfred may be seen as Theodore’s shadow, representing the uncontrolled passions and corruption the heroic protagonist has managed to keep at a distance throughout the narrative. However, the ambiguous ending featuring Theodore marrying Isabella solely on the grounds of her readiness to soothe his melancholy opens up the possibility of the other villainous and “Gothic” Theodore in the aftermath of the narrated events. The ghost of Manfred’s ancestor may leave the gallery for now, but nevertheless he remains a shadowy presence throughout; not least because of the curious link established between the ghost of Ricardo and the animated statue of Alfonso, concluded in the two becoming one, in a sense, when Manfred’s servants see parts of the statue in the chamber that the portrait ghost has entered before.

The most memorable example of the animated portrait endowing the narrative with ethical and psychological implications is the one in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde (1890), which illustrates the paradoxical nature of doubling by way of contrast in Gothic literature. As Gry Faurholt puts it, referring to Lacanian psychoanalysis, “I must other as ‘not-I’ that which is myself” (Faurholt). That said, it has its notable precursors in the first-wave Gothic. An unusual example can be found in Peter Will’s *The Victim of Magical Delusion* (1795), which was an adaptation of the German original by Cajetan Tschink (itself an imitation of Schiller’s *The Ghost-seer*), in which there is a scene featuring a king who sees his own portrait crash on the ground by the alleged intervention of an “invisible hand”. This, the narrator maintains, was meant as a “hint that a higher power had decreed the dethronement of the king” (vol.2 242). The portrait’s role as a memento of the fall of aristocratic rule is also indicated at the beginning of the novel, when the protagonist relates his stay in a typically Gothic castle decorated with literally “living” paintings – “worm-eaten half decayed pictures” (vol.1 5). The already-discussed episode from *Melmoth the Wanderer* elaborates on the paradigm of doubling, too: John Melmoth is confronted with the moving images of his awe-inspiring ancestors – the mysterious animated portrait from the seventeenth century and the dying body of his uncle, rendered as a word-painting representing the *facies Hippocratica*. The name “Melmoth” is reduplicated, thus warning the young Melmoth about the consequences of uncontrollable desires and the fatalism inscribed in the name.

The one aspect of Walpole’s portraits that seems to have enjoyed the richest afterlife is the indication of a desire for animation – a motif going back to mythology and one which Kamilla Elliott relates to iconophilia. Elliott already refers to this in the epigraph to her book, quoting Sophia Lee’s *The Recess* (1783–5). The book opens with the twins Matilda and Ellinor entertaining each other with stories inspired by the paintings that ornament one of the rooms in the house. At one point, they both cry: “Why do our hearts thus throb before inanimate canvas?” (8), which remark incites the ensuing story of family origins and inheritance. On the whole, the uses of the motif are versatile, and let us recall that the venerated portrait of Alfonso the Good in *Otranto* is not, strictly speaking, animated, and the quasi-involvement of the supernatural is limited to

Matilda's reaction on seeing Theodore. However, the uncanny feeling that there is more behind the inanimate canvas, even if the feeling does not materialise, is typically followed by an impression of animation: by way of mysterious sounds, illusion of movement or doubling by a living figure identical to the portrait.

Ann Radcliffe's fictional debut, *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* from 1789, offers a skilful reinterpretation of the motif.⁵ Towards the end of the narrative, a love scene between the hero Alleyn and the heroine Mary is introduced by the latter's portrait:

In a gallery on the North side of the castle, which was filled with pictures of the family, hung a portrait of Mary. She was drawn in the dress which she wore on the day of the festival, when she was led by the Earl into the hall, and presented as the partner of Alleyn. The likeness was striking, and expressive of all the winning grace of the original. (92)

The painting inspires Alleyn's "melancholy musing", and the visual sensations are complemented by "the notes of sweet music" and the words of poetry. "Entranced in the sweet sounds", the hero walks towards the source until he perceives Mary through a door frame (94). For some time, the hero, "absorbed in mute admiration", observes the heroine "hanging over her lute", while she, in turn, is unaware of his presence (94). As the object of a one-sided gaze, Mary is metaphorically equated with the previously admired pictorial representation, and the door frame through which she is contemplated by Alleyn is by no means without significance. She not only metaphorically animates the previously venerated portrait but, in a sense, becomes an animated portrait herself. As for the description itself, which conventionally relies on the motifs of stasis and the observer's speechlessness, Radcliffe's word-painting becomes animated, too, through the heroine's voice and the sweet sounds.

A very complex deployment of the motif can be found in Matthew Gregory Lewis's infamous *The Monk* (1796). As a matter of fact, the connection between image and desire characterises the novel in general, and is aptly summarised by Jerrold Hogle:

It is not just that the abbot Ambrosio falls in lust with the picture of the Virgin in his cell *and* that the picture turns out to be a portrait of Matilda [...]. Ambrosio shifts his lustful desires from Matilda to Antonia only when he is "pursued . . . to his Cell . . . by Antonia's image" after hearing a petition from her in the Capuchin chapel, and that shift becomes an actual pursuit only after Matilda has shown him another image: "the scene" of Antonia undressing in a magic "mirror of polished steel". Don Raymond, in his turn within the novel's subplot, pursues the Agnes he loves first through the screen-figure of her mother, who views him as her lover all too readily, and then behind the image of the Bleeding Nun visualized in a "drawing" at the Castle of Lindenberg, the figure which finally appears to him as the "animated Corse" itself when he thinks he is fleeing Lindenberg with Agnes in a Bleeding-Nun disguise. (1997, 1)

Hogle follows up with an extensive discussion of the "fakery" of *The Monk*, as part of his "Ghost of the

⁵ I elaborate on this scene and the use of the arts in Radcliffe's novels in the chapter "Ann Radcliffe and the Sister Arts Ideal" (Lipski 3–20).

Counterfeit” project defining the core of the Gothic’s generic character. Nevertheless, the most memorable episode featuring an actual animated portrait takes place at the outset of the narrative, when the vain and hypocritical character of the universally idolised Ambrosio is revealed to the reader in the privacy of the monk’s cell. The scene opens with an extensive internal monologue in which Ambrosio is both pondering his own greatness and imagining the sexual temptations he will be inevitably exposed to as the favourite preacher and confessor of the “fairest and noblest Dames of Madrid” (32). His resolution not only violates his chastity vows but also blasphemously invokes the picture of Madonna in his cell:

I must accustom my eyes to Objects of temptation, and expose myself to the seduction of luxury and desire. Should I meet in that world which I am constrained to enter some lovely Female, lovely . . . as you, Madona . . . !’ As He said this, He fixed his eyes upon a picture of the Virgin, which was suspended opposite to him: This for two years had been the Object of his increasing wonder and adoration. He paused, and gazed upon it with delight. (32)

The monk resumes his monologue with an iconophiliac litany of stock elements typical of heroine sketches in the eighteenth-century novel:

‘What Beauty in that countenance!’ He continued after a silence of some minutes; ‘How graceful is the turn of that head! What sweetness, yet what majesty in her divine eyes! How softly her cheek reclines upon her hand! Can the Rose vie with the blush of that cheek? Can the Lily rival the whiteness of that hand? Oh! if such a Creature existed, and existed but for me! [...]’ (32)

Ambrosio now represses these thoughts and attempts to regain composure, trying to convince himself that rather than female charms, he venerates the painter’s skill and the represented divinity. Shortly after, however, the picture metaphorically comes to life when the monk is visited by Rosario, a young novice in the congregation, who is later on in the novel revealed to be the mysterious woman Matilda, herself claiming to have ordered the portrait to be painted after herself and sent to Ambrosio as a token of her desire: “What was his amazement at beholding the exact resemblance of his admired Madona? The same exquisite proportion of features, the same profusion of golden hair, the same rosy lips, heavenly eyes, and majesty of countenance adorned Matilda!” (63)

Before this is uncovered, Ambrosio is tempted in a dream where the figures of Matilda and the Virgin from the canvas are, as it were, united in leading the monk to perdition:

During his sleep his inflamed imagination had presented him with none but the most voluptuous objects. Matilda stood before him in his dreams, and his eyes again dwelt upon her naked breast. She repeated her protestations of eternal love, threw her arms round his neck, and loaded him with kisses: He returned them; He clasped her passionately to his bosom, and . . . the vision was dissolved. Sometimes his dreams presented the image of his favourite Madona, and He fancied that He was kneeling before her: As He offered up his vows to her, the eyes of the Figure seemed to beam on him with inexpressible sweetness. He pressed his lips to hers, and found them warm: The animated form

started from the Canvas, embraced him affectionately, and his senses were unable to support delight so exquisite. (53)

Animation in *The Monk* then operates on several levels. First of all, the novel displays an inherent tension between the Walpolean supernatural and Reeve's and Radcliffe's rationalisation. Lewis seemingly embraces the latter mode, and the picture of Madonna is animated either metaphorically – through the appearance of Rosario/Matilda, the living double – or in a dream. On the other hand, as is revealed in the course of the narrative, Matilda's similarity to the picture of Madonna is an outcome of supernatural agency. In the resolution of the novel, when Satan is about to betray the monk, ignoring the previous arrangement, and let him fall from on high onto the rocks, Ambrosio learns about the extent of the demon's schemes taken up to lead him to perdition. Part of it was to be played by Matilda: "I observed your blind idolatry of the Madona's picture. I had a subordinate but crafty spirit assume a similar form, and you eagerly yielded to [her]" (337). Matilda is thus defined as a "crafty spirit" embodying the pictorial representation. Kamilla Elliott insightfully points out that this devilish scheme reverses the miracle of incarnation: "It returns the deified, transcendent Madonna back to flesh and makes the virgin mother a carnal whore" (Elliott 233). On the narrative and generic level, the animated portrait in *The Monk* not only fully exploits the potential of the motif as projected by the two pictures in *Otranto* but also endows it with a further dimension. The canvas is not animated by an immanently present ghostly being – as a rule the subject of the representation – but by a separate entity summoned by way of identification. Satan's scheme turns the divine project of incarnation upside down – a demon incarnates a form imitating the divine figure of Madonna – and this reversal is illustrative of the general message conveyed by the narrative: the reversal of the monk's proclaimed *imitatio Christi* into *imitatio diaboli*.

Finally, given the fact that literary anthologies and collections play a significant role in the processes of popularisation and standardisation, one vital example of the motif of an uncanny desire for animation comes from the 1800 edition of *Gothic Stories*, published in the form of a six-penny pamphlet by S. Fisher. The closing, one page-long story "Mary, a Fragment" features an unhappy lover pondering the loss of his beloved one. Henry's memories are kindled by the portrait he is contemplating:

He took up the portrait [...] and gazed intensely upon it, till the taper, suddenly burning brighter, discovered to him a phenomenon, he was no less terrified than surprised at. The eyes of the portrait moved; the features, from angelic smile, changed to a look of solemn sadness; a tear of sorrow stole down each cheek, and the bosom palpitated as with sighing. (*Gothic Stories*, 48)

The portrait becomes alive though its ghostly immanence is curiously separated from it, or perhaps reduplicated, when one hour later the protagonist is visited by the hideous and already decomposing un-dead body of his beloved Mary, who comes to take him with her so that they could enjoy "all the extasies of love" (48) in the charnel-house. There is clearly nothing intentional in this, but this short derivative story written at the turn of the century shows that there is a link between the Walpolean paradigm of portrait animation, central to first-wave Gothic as I have sought to demonstrate, and the stories of the un-dead, themselves variants on the motif of animation and further manifestations of the uncanny uncertainty about the animate or inanimate state of things. "Mary, a Fragment" seems to indicate a kind of continuity between Ricardo leaving the panel

in *Otranto*, the revived body in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, as well as late Romantic and Victorian stories of vampires.

Walpole's idea to animate the portraits in *Otranto* was then not only a frequently imitated motif in the decades to come, but the micro-analogue to the Gothic project in general. This relatively minor episode was endowed by Walpole with a number of complex implications which were then creatively deployed, modified or developed by the writers in his wake. I would then argue that the animation principle may be taken as an argument for a kind of continuity within the first-wave Gothic, despite the apparent distance separating the novelistic projects of Horace Walpole and, for example, Ann Radcliffe (see Watt). Visual culture does not inform these projects solely by way of meta-pictorial contexts and verbal sketches. The image becomes an actual presence in the form of objects drawing the reader's attention to the narrative and ideological issues central to the Gothic novel as a whole.⁶

Lynda Nead insightfully points out that Walpole's animated portrait would have contributed to the popularity of the so-called "haunted gallery"—a space of "cultural fantasy" which negotiated the strict dichotomies of stillness and motion, the animate and the inanimate. The haunted gallery was not only a far-reaching and popular fictional motif but also a concept affecting the practices of tourism and art appreciation – museum goers in the late eighteenth century would visit art galleries at night and would expect special magic effects produced by torchlight. Nead argues that the thrill of a possible picture animation was a response grounded in contemporary realities – when the gradual industrialisation endowed objects with motion: "Rather than making the states of motion and stillness absolute and distinct, industrialisation and machine production generated a discourse in which they were fluid and subject to thrilling visual uncertainties and transformations" (50). As I have demonstrated, the Gothic poetics of the in-between welcomed these fluid extremes, metonymically conceptualised by the animated portrait.

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⁶ I would like to thank Jerrold Hogle, Kamilla Elliott and James Watt for their insightful comments on an early draft of this article.

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