

HORACE WALPOLE AND THE NEW TASTE FOR GOTHIC

by

RONALD BARRY HATCH

B.A., University of British Columbia, 1963

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF

THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department

of

ENGLISH

We accept this thesis as conforming to the
required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

September, 1964

In presenting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of British Columbia, I agree that the Library shall make it freely available for reference and study. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the Head of my Department or by his representatives. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Department of English

The University of British Columbia,
Vancouver 8, Canada

Date 16 Sept 64

ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to examine Horace Walpole's contribution to the reawakening taste for Gothic in the eighteenth century and to relate his curiously ephemeral art forms to the broad historical development of the Gothic. No attempt has been made, except in an incidental way, to treat the initial flourishing of Gothic architecture; that the reader has at least a passing acquaintance with the architecture of the Middle Ages is assumed. Instead, the emphasis has been placed upon the Gothic survival of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; as Gothic architecture was virtually eclipsed during this period, many readers may feel that this emphasis is unwarranted. However, some study of the Gothic architecture in these two centuries is necessary in order to understand how and why the Gothic took the turn it did in the eighteenth century.

Chapter one is a collection of evidence to show that, despite opinion otherwise, Gothic architecture did survive as a potent force. Chapter two then proceeds to discuss Walpole's creation of Strawberry Hill and to show how the attitudes and skills of previous generations helped to mould its form. The conclusion reached is that Strawberry Hill, while Gothic in design, lacked most of the medieval Gothic spirit; that Walpole

was in fact using the Gothic for a new purpose.

Chapter three is again a collection of evidence, this time a survey of the prevailing trends in "Gothic" literature before Walpole. In a sense, chapter four is the culmination of this discussion of the Gothic, since here the attempt is made to show how Walpole's Gothic novel, The Castle of Otranto, was at once clearly in the earlier traditions of a classical interpretation of Gothic, and also a forerunner of an entirely new conception of Gothic. Walpole's influence upon later writers and his indebtedness to neo-Gothicizers is made clear by juxtaposing Walpole against the later school of Gothic novelists.

To avoid a repetitious summary, some attempt has been made to characterize the essential differences existing between Walpole's Gothic and that of medieval artists by linking Walpole's creations with the rococo. An equation of eighteenth century Gothic with the rococo is of course foolish, and this was never contemplated; rather, the hope was to show that much of the spirit which stimulated Walpole's artistry is also endemic to the rococo. The eighteenth century Gothic, in particular Walpole's contribution, was actually a Gothic-rococo.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	THE GOTHIC SURVIVAL	1
II	STRAWBERRY HILL	24
III	GOTHIC LITERATURE BEFORE WALPOLE . .	57
IV	HORACE WALPOLE AND THE GOTHIC NOVEL .	83
V	WALPOLE AND THE GOTHIC-ROCOCO	130
	A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY	151

I THE GOTHIC SURVIVAL

The term Gothic revival has become a common critical expression in the twentieth century and it may seem somewhat superfluous to undertake a study of the incipents of this revival. Yet, I think there is much to be gained in doing so. With the heavy emphasis which has been placed upon romanticism in these past years, the mid-eighteenth century has been extensively mined in the search for pre-romanticism in the works of Beattie, Thomson, Dyer and others. This concentration of attention on the "renaissance of wonder" has resulted in the belief that the Gothic revival began only after 1740 or 1750¹, about the time Walpole was Gothicizing his villa at Twickenham and Gray was doing his researches into Celtic and Scandinavian poetry. According to critics, Walpole was supposed to have begun a revolution in taste which turned back the spread of Palladian architecture and saved England from becoming completely overrun by the apostles of Jones. This is a delightful theory and supports wonderfully the romanticists' thesis that the return to a medieval architecture was one of the first signs

¹A. R. Humphreys, "The Literary Scene," in The Pelican Guide to English Literature, ed. Boris Ford (Harmondsworth, 1957), IV, 46.

of the century's repudiation of the neo-classical rules. In this way the romantic critic is able to use the Gothic revival as one of the foreshadowings of the coming release of emotion in the early nineteenth century which is found in the poetry of Wordsworth, Coleridge and Keats. The trouble with this theory is that it is a little too pat; for the theory to work one has to keep one's eyes closed to much that had been occurring steadily throughout the seventeenth and early eighteenth century. It is all very well to find restless moving energy and translucent spiritual light in the Gothic cathedrals, but to claim that the men of the eighteenth century turned to these qualities in Gothic architecture in revolt against the authority of Augustan rules seems to me to be at best only partially true.²

It seems obvious in this day and age when so much time has been spent studying the various art schools and the socio-economic causes which bring them into existence that, although Walpole was a remarkable man and had many social contacts among influential people, he was not so influential as to bring Gothic architecture back from the dead. Furthermore, no such revolution in taste is possible overnight; the climate of opinion must first be changed. The question before us is to discover what part Walpole did play in the Gothic revival and to determine who, if any, were his forerunners.

² See D. P. Varma, The Gothic Flame (London, 1957), p.22.

What were the conditions in England that made it possible for the Gothic of the Middle Ages to triumph over the classicism of men such as Wren and Burlington, who were the absolute executors of good taste?

The answer to these questions is somewhat surprising; a close scrutiny of the early eighteenth century reveals that the taste for Gothic was by no means extinct. Instead of creating a new interest in Gothic, I think it will be found that Walpole was actually fanning a smouldering flame of appreciation which had persisted from the last days of the flamboyant period.

One of the things often forgotten is that in England Gothic architecture survived as a growing art form longer than in any other country. When the beginning of the High Renaissance is hailed as beginning with Brunelleschi in the early fifteenth century it should be remembered that this applies only to Italy and not to England. The Italian Renaissance was not imported into England for another one hundred and fifty years. Although there were some bits and pieces of classical style which stole almost unperceived into English Tudor styles, it is not until the advent of Inigo Jones that the Renaissance in English architecture finally began. It should be remembered that the splendid nave of Ripon was begun as late as 1502 and not finished for another twenty years. This means, that for all practical purposes, Gothic was the only serious style of building for four hundred years (1150-1550), and if

one wishes to include Norman with the Gothic then this period is extended to five hundred years. It was only after about 1630 that the renaissance style firmly took hold. This is to say that for centuries the Gothic had been admired by the entire population of England. Such a heritage is not easily forgotten. Monuments of beauty such as Salisbury, Lincoln and Wells were dotted about the countryside and could not be dismissed or forgotten in a moment.

Apparently even the great classicist Inigo Jones was a Gothic enthusiast in his youth, and it was not until his second visit to Italy that he shook off his Gothic inheritance and succumbed to the style of Rome. Eastlake gives some importance to the date 1633, since it was in this year that "the first stone was laid for a Roman portico to one of the finest cathedrals of the Middle Ages, the tide of national taste may be said to have completely turned, and Gothic architecture, as a practicable art, received what was then no doubt supposed to be its death blow."³ Inigo Jones had begun restoration of the old St. Paul's in the classical style. As a footnote it is interesting to observe that some seventy years earlier, in 1561, when St. Paul's burned to the ground after a lightning storm, there had been no hesitation about rebuilding in the Gothic style and it was finished (minus the spire) by 1566. The reigning monarch, Queen Elizabeth, supplied some of the funds from her own pocket.

³ Charles L. Eastlake, A History of the Gothic Revival (London, 1872), p. 5.

So universal and so widely accepted was the Gothic style of building that it was not until the seventeenth century that a name was coined for it. Until then, in other words, Gothic had been the only type of architecture and had needed no name. The name "Gothic" as applied to architecture is one of those vague and ambivalent terms about which no scholar is sure of the first usage.⁴ Both the terms, English and Pointed, existed coevally with "Gothic" and it was by no means sure that "Gothic" would win out. The word Gothic originally comes from the Italian word gotica and was presumably brought to England in the wake of the flood of classical architecture. Gotica meant rude or barbarous and was applied by the enlightened Italians to anything that came out of the dark ages after the sack of Rome. Naturally enough, the medieval cathedrals with their pinnacles and plethora of sculpture and scroll work were gotica. In the early seventeenth century, then, all Gothic architecture, by the very meaning of the word Gothic, hung under sentence as being barbarous.

All through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, even up to the time of Ruskin in the nineteenth, the word Gothic had as one of its meanings, rudeness or boorishness. In the beginning this meaning was the primary one and Gothic became a word of fashion used to describe the unlettered. Willful was castigated thus when Millamant called him, "ah Rustick, ruder

⁴ For a short discussion see Kenneth Clark, The Gothic Revival (London, 1928), p. 16.

than Gothic."⁵ In the latter half of the eighteenth century, however, when Gothic architecture began to enjoy a vogue among some of the better parts of London society, this primary meaning of boorishness gradually was replaced and the word Gothic was often used simply to denote the particular style. Moreover, Gothic was no longer all rudeness and barbarity; many people were beginning to use it as an adjective of praise, even of the sublime.

All these changes were still to come, and in the seventeenth century Gothic architecture was still very much the underdog. As well as being condemned because of its very name, Gothic was also placed in a bad light as a result of its dubious past. Gothic was often condemned by false association and was in much the same position as a venerable widow whose family connections are cloaked in mystery. For instance, many including Wren, believed Gothic architecture to be derived from the "wicked Saracens." Nor was there a lack of knowledge only about medieval architecture, the Middle Ages as a whole were little better understood, and the general opinion was that they were times of ignorance and superstition. A great deal was known about the history of Greece and Rome but very little about that of England. Although men of fashion lived in ancient, medieval houses and country squires inhabited the fine Tudor mansions of their forefathers, they

⁵ Congreve, Way of the World, in Four Great Comedies of the Restoration, ed. B. Atkinson (New York, 1958), IV, 139.

understood very little about the styling of the architecture. Sir Henry Wotton in one of the earliest accounts of English architecture, Elements of Architecture (1624), severely criticizes the Gothic. "As for those arches which our artizans call of the third and fourth point; and the Tuscan writers di terzo and di quarto acuto, because they always concur in an acute Angle and doe springe from division of the Diameter into three, foure, or more parts at pleasure; I say such as these, both for the natural imbecility of the sharpe angle it selfe, and likewise for their very Uncomeliness, ought to be exiled from judicious eyes, and left to their first inventors, the Gothes or Lumbards, amongst other Reliques of that barbarous Age."⁶ Already, much under the influence of the Italians, Wotton measures the Gothic with classical precepts and of course finds the Gothic lacking. But what is important about this quotation is his error of accrediting the Gothic architecture to the Goths. This error was a natural and easy one for a people who knew little about the Middle Ages and even less about the origin of the cathedrals. Since the architecture was called Gothic, therefore ipso facto it must have been created by the Goths.

At the turn of the century, educated men such as John Evelyn believed that the Goths and Moors were responsible for forsaking the classical traditions and filling all of

6

Quoted from an exerpt in Eastlake, p. 14.

Africa and Asia "with Mountains of Stone... not worthy the name of architecture."⁷ Evelyn is an interesting example of a man who, when it came time to give his objective opinion of Gothic architecture, forthrightly and vehemently sent it to the devil, but who, in the privacy of his Diary often gave it a modicum of praise. The above quotation taken from Evelyn's work, An Account of Architects and Architecture (1706), is the opinion of a man who is consciously speaking to the man of taste of his day. Evelyn's own somewhat self-righteous character and his desire to appear well thought of amongst his peers led him to denigrate all Gothic architecture. The early parts of his Diary, on the other hand, show clearly that he did have an unprejudiced if somewhat faint admiration for the Gothic. Speaking of St. Paul's Cathedral he says, "it is a most intire magnificent piece of Gothic architecture. The skreene before the quire is of stone carv'd with flowers, running work and statues of the old Kings."⁸ There are many similar remarks about other cathedrals and one is led to believe that Evelyn, as did many others of his time, had two opinions of Gothic -- one to be used in published writings and the other to be held privately. The vested interests of classicism must have swayed many when a public pronouncement on the subject was

⁷Quoted from B. Sprague Allen, Tides In English Taste (London, 1937), II, 46.

⁸John Evelyn, Diary, ed. William Bray (London, 1818), p. 237.

required.

Many years and many theories were to pass before Gothic architecture was discovered to be not a product of the Goths at all, but a creation of the Normans (this new idea, however, did not take root in the minds of many people for decades after the discovery).

In 1747 the Langley brothers, Thomas and Batty, published their Gothic Architecture Improved; this work appears to be one of the first to state clearly that "Gothic," as applied to architecture, was a misnomer. However, their proposed correction is not that much better, since instead of placing the origin of Gothic architecture in France where it properly belonged, they placed it in England. Even more revealing was the date they gave to its first appearance -- some time during the first era of the Saxon occupation. They proposed the new name, Ancient Saxon, to replace the misnomer Gothic. Such books as the Langleys' resulted in a great deal of controversy over the correct origins of Gothic, but it was not until 1754 that Gray, in reply to a thesis by Warburton, finally solved the riddle in his essay on Norman Architecture.

The commonly held opinion that the men of taste in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries considered Gothic architecture to be an anathema is correct and well substantiated. Yet it must not be supposed that every person in England fell into this fashionable clique. Classical architecture may have been in vogue among many of the important

literary and artistic men of the day, but this by no means meant that there was no one who appreciated Gothic. As Sprague Allen has convincingly shown, there were always a great number of Englishmen who enjoyed the Gothic. The masses of yeomen and small landowners whose families had for centuries lived near the cathedrals of the bishops or who worshipped in parish churches older than their great grandfathers were never much influenced by the new architecture which came from Popish Rome. When Cromwell desecrated the English cathedrals, defacing their rich and ancient embellishments, there were many even among those who espoused the Puritan cause that resented vociferously this destruction of something genuinely English. Amongst the people, the old churches were as much a part of the landscape as their own farms. The Gothic had always been thought to be something of genuine English origin and there were many who resented the pillaging of what they considered to be an English achievement. Similarly, while the skills of Gothic masonry and building were soon forgotten in the cities, there were always masons in the countryside who could undertake simple restorations of the old churches. Countrymen kept as a source of pride the fact that they were able to build as their fathers had. When the time came in the mid-eighteenth century for a "revival" of Gothic these country builders were sought out and it was their influence which helped to promote a profound appreciation of Gothic.

Another type of person with a keen interest in medieval architecture was the antiquary. He was a man who liked to probe ruins, trace the heraldry of ancient families, and peruse old manuscripts for information interesting because it was old. This interest in the past is something common to all ages and one cannot claim it for any one period, yet it is true that after the Restoration this interest in the past was intensified and there were many people not normally involved with old books to be found searching out the secrets of the past. The reason for this is not hard to find. The twenty years from 1640 to 1660 had seen a king beheaded and a commonwealth established under puritan principles. During this troubled period, the web of history had been doubly entangled; with the advent of a comparative calm after the Restoration of Charles II, it was only natural for people to wish to delve back and sort out the events into a proper perspective. Antiquaries were to be found everywhere.

Yet, antiquaries are a curious breed and seem to thrive in any period. They are willing to write books even if they are not read. One such history that emerged during the Commonwealth but which did not begin to exert influence on amateur antiquaries until after the Restoration was a joint effort by Dugdale and Dodsworth. This was the Monasticon Anglicanum, the first volume of which appeared in 1655. This work was in Latin and dealt with the history and contents of monasteries. Dodsworth concentrated on those

in the north, leaving the southern churches to Dugdale. Although not a great success upon its first publication, this work soon achieved some fame and an English translation appeared in 1692. This history not only collected valuable information about the old monasteries, but as a result of the authors' enthusiasm, it inspired others to visit and take a more active interest in the Gothic abbeys. All through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries one reads glowing praises of the Monasticon and its wealth of information. A second book by Dugdale, History of St. Paul's Cathedral, has an especial interest for modern antiquaries and historians as it was completed in 1658, only eight years before St. Paul's was destroyed in the Great Fire. It traces St. Paul's through its early Gothic stages, and by its commentary on the Gothic, shows clearly that people such as Dugdale had a love for the old churches.

Another important scholar of about this time who added greatly to the stock of known history about Gothic architecture was Anthony à Wood. Wood was inspired upon first reading the Monasticon to do for Oxford a similar history to that which Dugdale had done for Warwickshire. Anthony was particularly well suited for the job as he had lived most of his life at Oxford and had taken a degree at Merton. His history was not the result of an affected interest in research, nor was it undertaken from a scholar's interest in past events, but from a passionate love of Oxford itself. As most of Oxford is in the Gothic style this means that he must have had a

real love for the Gothic. His major work, the Athenae Oxonienses, is a history of the famous people who attended Oxford; for this he had the help of a colleague who is now much more famous, John Aubrey. However, the work which most concerns us here is his notes for a projected history of the colleges of Oxford with some added comments on the city of Oxford itself. In this work Wood shows himself as having a keen appreciation of the Gothic style; the exacting scholarship is continually interspersed with laudatory comments on particular pieces of beauty. Speaking of St. Mary's Church he says, "the whole is remarkably airy and well lighted, and the Nave of it supported by two Rows of magnificent fluted Pillars in the Gothic Taste, which would have a most noble effect, viewed from the upper End of the church, was it not for the Number of Monuments, with which they are loaded on on every side. Over the W. End is a beautiful and grand Tower, with a Spire of 180 feet high, richly ornamented with Pinnacles, Niches and Statues and containin [sic] six remarkably large and tuneful Bells."⁹ This description shows clearly Wood's taste for the Gothic, and also indicates that he was not merely a snobbish antiquary who admires all things old. There is critical observation presented here and Wood is definitely interested in the aesthetics of the building as well as its age. He does not like the many monuments inside the church because they destroy the effect of the row of

⁹ Anthony à Wood, The Antient and Present State of the City of Oxford, ed. J. Peshall (London, 1773), p.54.

pillars. This is not the comment of an antiquary-mole looking only at the dust, but of a sensitive and intelligent person who is in sympathy with the architect's plan. It is particularly interesting to note his comment that St. Mary's is "well lighted" since it points up the fact that some, at least, could appreciate the Gothic lighting resulting from the stained glass. It would be senseless to go through and pick out all the eulogies which Wood bestows on Gothic Oxford, but one point that he makes is especially relevant to this study. In his opening paragraphs he extolls the many beauties of Oxford and amongst them is "the great Number of Strangers that continually visit us, and express their Satisfaction," and he adds that the many beauties of Oxford "conspire to render it the Delight and Ornament of the Kingdom, not to say, of the World."¹⁰ It seems that many people visited and enjoyed the beauties of Gothic Oxford. Classical architecture may have been stylish, but there were still many who did travel to see the Gothic.

Another convert to the Gothic was Ned Ward, the influential and tireless gazetteer. Ward was the publisher of many short-lived newspapers, among them the rhymed Hudibras Redivius and his masterpiece The London Spy (1698). Ward, as a man-about-town who appreciated Gothic architecture, is indicative that there were others, besides antiquaries, with an interest in the Gothic. As a burlesque writer and

¹⁰ Anthony \ Wood, p. 2.

something of a rake, Ward is about as far from the caricature of the pedant antiquary burning the midnight oil as it is possible to be. His reaction upon first seeing Westminster Abbey is that of an ingenuous sightseer genuinely struck by the beauties of the old building, "When we came in sight of this sacred edifice I could not behold the outside of the awful pile without rev'rance and amazement. It was rais'd to such a stupendous height, and beautified with such ornamental statues, that the bold strokes of excelling artists, whilst the building stands, will always remain visible. The whole seem'd to want nothing that could render it truly venerable." Amazement and awe at the magnitude of the building are writ large in Ward's exclamation. In this he is typical of his time, for these were just the qualities that were to impress men all through the eighteenth century, men such as Addison, Burke and Walpole. Ward could appreciate the size and beauty of Westminster without letting the ornaments bother him. This was something that a classicist such as Evelyn could not allow himself; Evelyn termed all such frivolous ornamentation "crinkle crankle" and hotly condemned it. Ward's next comment on Westminster indicates that there was also a taste for graveyard sentiments as early as the turn of the century. "We passed by that emblem of mortality, the charnel house, where poets, priests, pimps and porters lay their empty heads together, without envy or distinction...."¹¹ Oftentimes the gloom of the old churches, and their general state

¹¹ Edward Ward, The London Spy, ed. Kenneth Fenwick (London, 1958), pp. 144-145.

of decay lent a suitable setting to such moralizing on death.

Wren had spoken of Henry VII's Chapel in slighting terms as being "a piece of nice embroidery." Ward, however, is able to enjoy this fine piece of Flamboyant Gothic and does not let the intricacies of design bother him as they did the classicist. "We ascended some stone steps, which brought us to a chapel that may justly claim the admiration of the whole universe, such inimitable perfections are apparent in every part of the whole building, which looks so far exceeding human excellence that a man would think it was knit together by the fingers of angels, pursuant to the directions of Omnipotence."¹² This rather effulgent panegyric is hardly the usual racy style of Ward and seems to indicate that he was profoundly moved at the sight of the chapel.

No one is more of a modern than Ward; gossiping at the coffee houses, joking with indigent politicians, and frolicing in the bawdy houses, he is as up to date as any man. Yet standing in front of the Percy's old residence of Northumberland House he is moved to say, "I observ'd an ancient stone fabric, in the front of which I beheld, with satisfaction, the handwork of our forefathers, in whose sully'd antiquity I could discern much more beauty than my genius can discover in any modern building. 'What a thousand pities,' said I, 'is it that so noble a palace, which appears so magnificent and

¹²

Edward Ward, p. 145.

venerable, should not have the old hospitality continued within, answerable to its outward grandeur."¹³ Ward seems to be somewhat on his guard here, as if he knew that it would have been more correct to praise the classical architecture at the expense of Gothic, instead of praising Gothic. People out of step about matters of taste in the eighteenth century violated what amounted to a universal law and were castigated as primitives. His sentiments also echo those of the seventeenth century antiquaries who hated to see the grand old buildings fall into decay. Fifty years later when Horace Walpole, another man of the town, began to Gothicize Strawberry Hill, he was by no means reviving the Gothic from total darkness as has been commonly believed, but rather cultivating a taste which was already a part of Englishmen such as Ward and others. The Gothic revival of the mid-eighteenth century was only a revival for a certain segment of the population; for many it was simply an intensification of a Gothic survival.

It is often thought that there was no building done in the Gothic style after the Flamboyant period ended, and that Inigo Jones, Wren, Hawksmoore, Gibbs and the other classicists built only in the classical style. This is not true. The early work of Inigo Jones in the Gothic style has already been mentioned, and although none of his Gothic churches survive today there seems to be fairly good evidence

that he did build competently in the Gothic. However, there is yet another example. The great architect of St. Paul's, Christopher Wren, also worked in the Gothic style. Wren's definitive opinion of Gothic architecture is difficult to pinpoint. Many of his statements are vague, and others seem downright inconsistent. At any rate, he seems to have recognized that it was a valid style and tolerated it in spite of his own classical inclinations; his comments never show any great fondness for the style. "We now most esteem the Learning of the Augustan Age, yet, no question there were then many different styles in Oratory, and perhaps some as good as Cicero's. This is not said as any Inducement to Masons, or every Novice that can draw lines, to fall into crude Gothick Inventions, far from the good examples of the Ancients."¹⁴ It should be remembered also that Wren is a curious architect in that, although he worked mostly in the classical design, he never journeyed to Italy to see any of the great churches of Brunelleschi or Bernini. His conception of classical architecture was derived from looking at pictures or talking with people who had made the Grand Tour. Pictures can never have the same influence as the sight of the real buildings and perhaps this is part of the reason why Wren never shook off completely the Gothic influence. It should be remembered that Wren spent a great deal of his life repairing

¹⁴ Sir Christopher Wren, Parentalia, p. 289, quoted from Agnes E. Addison, Romanticism and the Gothic Revival (New York, 1938), pp. 22-23.

Gothic buildings such as Salisbury and Westminster. Furthermore, he used this style for at least seven churches in London and much of the work he did at Oxford.

Eastlake devotes a good deal of space to Wren's seventeenth century Gothic, but reaches the conclusion that it is "crude and unsatisfactory."¹⁵ The reason for this appears to be that Wren made no attempt to follow the pure Gothic, but rather fused the Gothic with the classical, which for Eastlake, ruins the unity of the Gothic design. That Wren did do this can be seen in the Tom Tower at Christ Church, Oxford, where the lower section and large window have a good Gothic effect while the central octagonal tower with its rounded dome to match the two side turrets is classical in spirit. Moreover, although Wren kept the vertical axis of the Gothic in the minutiae of decoration around the windows, the heavy horizontal lintel of the gate and the horizontals on the tower break this axis abruptly.

Wren may not have been a pure Gothic artist, but at least he took the trouble and care to stay in the Gothic tradition of Oxford. He did not attempt to impose an entirely revolutionary classicism in the midst of the venerable colleges. It may have been that his chief interest was classical architecture, but he by no means held Gothic in such low esteem that he refused to use it. Wren is important in this discussion

of Gothic because his use of the Gothic shows that it was still a force to be reckoned with.

One of the most interesting men writing about Gothic architecture in the first quarter of the eighteenth century was Daniel Defoe. Defoe's chief claim to fame surely rests on his realistic writing. In both his novels and newspapers he has the uncanny ability to make everything he writes about so vivid that it seems even more than real. His singular, matter-of-fact narrating tone gives the impression that what is being presented is exactly and unequivocally the whole truth. Thus, in his work, A Tour Through England and Wales, it is of no little importance to us that Defoe made numerous comments on the cathedrals he visited. From this pragmatic businessman who refused to avert his eyes from anything, even the terrible miseries of a Moll Flanders, we would expect none of the equivocation of an Evelyn, only plain, honest opinion; this is what he gives us. For the most part, his comments are perfunctory enough. Of the cathedral at Ripon in Yorkshire he says, "here is a large collegiate church, and tho' it is not a bishoprick but a deanery only, in the diocess of York, yet it is a very handsome antient and venerable pile of building and shews itself a great way in the country."¹⁶

The church at Lichfield, however, is a different

¹⁶ Daniel Defoe, A Tour Through England and Wales, ed. G. D. H. Cole (London, 1928), II, 214.

matter, and when he comes to describe it there is an overflow of emotion. At first he merely contents himself with his usual short description. "The cathedral-church is one of the finest and most beautiful in England, especially for the outside, the form and figure of the building, the carv'd work'd, imagery, and the three beautiful spires; the like of which are not to be seen in one church, no not in Europe." Then, almost as if he cannot help himself, he bursts into a detailed description of the cathedral:

The church I say is indeed a most beautiful building; the west prospect of it is charming, the two spires on the corner towers being in themselves perfect beauties of architect [sic], in the old Gothic way of building, but made still more shining and glorious by a third spire, which rising from the main tower in the body of the church, surmounts the other two, and shews itself exactly between them.

It is not easy to describe the beauty of the west end; you enter by three large doors in the porch or portico, which is as broad as the whole front; the spaces between the doors are fill'd with carv'd work and imagery, no place being void, where (by the rules of architect) any ornament could be plac'd.

. . . .

The great window over the middle door is very large, and the pediment over it finely adorn'd, a large cross finishing the top of it; on either corner of the west front are two very fine towers, not unlike the two towers on the west end of St. Peter's Church at Westminster, only infinitely finer: Even with the battlement of the porch, and adjoining to the towers, are large pinnacles at the outer angles, and on the top of the towers are to each tower eight more, very beautiful and fine; between these pinnacles, on the top of each tower, rises a spire equal in height, in thickness, and in workmanship, but so beautiful no pen can describe them.¹⁷

Defoe is not one to ascribe false values in order just to invoke novelty of opinion. The fact that he appreciates Gothic is a simple matter of fact, and he relates it that way. He does not bother with concessions to the classicists; nor does he make any comment that his taste for Gothic was in any way extraordinary; he simply tells us how beautiful he feels the church at Litchfield to be.

There were many others like Defoe who espoused an interest in the Gothic. These people were not the arbiters of taste, nor were they often in a position to write voluminously about the Gothic, yet their influence was made felt all through the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Their opinions on architecture and their taste for the Gothic survived as a strong underground current, potentially able to sweep away Wren and his school. Often the signs of this strong current of taste go almost unnoticed, but every now and then small markers come to the surface indicating the strength and direction of the flow. Henry Fielding, steeped as he was in classical literature, still finds it quite fitting to make Squire Allworthy's home Gothic. "There was an air of grandeur in it that struck you with awe, and rivalled the beauties of the best Grecian architecture; and it was as commodious within as venerable without."¹⁸ That it is Allworthy's house Fielding made Gothic is indicative that he

¹⁸ Henry Fielding, Tom Jones, ed. George Sherburn (New York, 1950), I, iv, 8.

thought the style to be not only beautiful, but also appropriate for the best squire in the land. Allworthy, as his name indicates, is aristocratic, kind, and above all a man of common sense. For Fielding to make his house Gothic shows that he assumed his intelligent readers would regard it as good architecture.

Therefore, it seems reasonable to conclude from this evidence, that from the very beginning when the strict Palladianism of Inigo Jones dominated in the seventeenth century, down into the middle of the eighteenth century (Tom Jones was published in 1749) when Walpole, Gray and others "revived" the Gothic, there had always been a large number of people who appreciated Gothic. Dugdale, Wood, Ward, and Defoe are only a few of the more prominent. In the eighteenth century there was a wide acceptance of the Gothic, or what was then often called English architecture, and when Walpole began to "revive" the Gothic at Twickenham he was actually "reviving" an architecture which many people already enjoyed, an architecture which many regarded as the English architecture. Walpole did not revive Gothic; this was an impossibility, for it had never died. Instead, he made fashionable a pastiche of the Gothic. It is to this pastiche that we now turn.

II STRAWBERRY HILL

Six years after his return from the Grand Tour, Horace Walpole rented a small house in Twickenham on the banks of the Thames, a house which was destined to play a large role in the Gothic revival. To understand better this role it is necessary first to know something about the house; why Walpole wanted it; and the manner in which he went about turning it into a Gothic castle. Strawberry Hill as a finished product is comparatively unimportant. An insight into the real Strawberry Hill is gained only with an understanding of the spirit and history of Walpole's attempt at building a Gothic castle. Walpole discovered the house in the spring of 1747 while staying at Windsor and realized immediately that it was exactly what he needed. For some time before this he had been living at Arlington Street, London, and although he loved the people and the good conversation of the capital, he was feeling the necessity of getting away and putting down some roots in a country house with privacy. Situated on the Thames, and far more rural in the eighteenth century than it is today, Twickenham was the ideal location. The pleasures of Vauxhall and the opera were less than two hours drive by coach so that if the country did become dull and boring London was close at hand. The area was also fashionable; Pope had lived there until his death

three years before and Sir Godfrey Kneller was also a resident. Moreover, the place was filled with happy memories for Walpole, since in his youth he had spent a pleasant summer there with some Townshend relations. Memories were always important to Walpole. With all these features Twickenham was the ideal retreat for a man of taste from hot and sticky London.

For the past few years Walpole had been living a somewhat aimless life. His father had died only a few years before, and Walpole, as the youngest son, felt this loss deeply. Not that he didn't have friends; these Walpole never lacked; there were Gray, Montagu, the Duchess of Gloucester, Lady Townshend and all of fashionable London society to visit and be visited by. Yet, it was just about this time that Walpole was beginning to evolve his plans for a collection of historical anecdotes in the form of memoirs and letters. With these plans brewing, but nothing definite; much to be done, yet nothing accomplished, Walpole had need of a small country place to which he could retire and write the busy details of Georgian England.

The small house at Twickenham was ideal for this end. The first years passed uneventfully enough at the house, and aside from a few minor changes, Walpole was content to leave the house as it was. He had rented the house from Mrs. Chenevix, the famous toy woman, for the remaining two years of her lease; by the time the lease expired in 1749 he was

in love with the place and had decided to buy it outright. As it was owned by three minors, he had no little trouble in doing so, and eventually had to push a bill through Parliament. Being an M.P. and the son of Sir Robert had many advantages. Having bought the house, Walpole began to think about ways of personalizing it with his own individual stamp. His recent antiquarian studies into his family's past and his already mounting collection of old rarities may have led him to consider redoing the house in the Gothic style. The first intimation of these intentions is in a letter to Montagu. "Did I tell you that I have found a text in Deuteronomy to authorize my future battlements? 'When thou buildest a new house, then shalt thou make a battlement for thy roof, that thou bring not blood upon thy house if any man fall from thence.'"¹⁹ The future battlements along with pinnacles and Gothic windows were soon to come. This idea of Gothicizing the house must have cemented itself quickly in Walpole's mind; in January of the next year he was writing to his good friend Thomas Mann with a commission. "I am going to build a little Gothic castle at Strawberry Hill. If you can pick me up any fragments of old painted glass, arms or anything, I shall be excessively obliged to you."²⁰ Mann was, of course, in Florence at this time busy with his endless round of entertaining. The thought that his

¹⁹W. S. Lewis, Horace Walpole's Correspondence, To Montagu, September 28, 1749 (New Haven, 1937), IX, 102.

²⁰To Mann, January 10, 1750, ed. Lewis, XX, III.

friend was about to embark on the foolish scheme of turning a perfectly good house into a barbaric castle was too much for his Italian taste. In Florence, Gothic was still regarded as a product of northern barbarians. Northern influence on southern taste has always been slow. Mann replied, "I will use my utmost endeavours to execute your commission, though I am totally at a loss where to search for the fragments you want for your little Gothic Castle. Why will you make it Gothic? I know it is the taste at present, but I really am sorry for it. Basta, I may be mistaken -- mi pare però un gusto gotico!"²¹

Mann's comment that Gothic "is all the taste at present" is interesting because it shows how widespread the taste for Gothic in England must have been at the time when Walpole was searching for his stained glass. Even Mann, far off in Florence, did not regard Walpole as an innovator, but simply as an enthusiast in a modish style. At the same time as Walpole was rebuilding Strawberry Hill, Vauxhall, one of the most fashionable pleasure centres of London, was being erected in a fantastic mixture of Gothic, Chinese and rococo. Walpole was by no means alone in his taste for the Gothic. Nor is there any evidence that Walpole, himself, considered himself to be an innovator. If he had considered himself to be one of the avant-garde in his remodelling at Strawberry Hill, Walpole would have been the first to tell us. Yet,

²¹To Walpole, Feb. 13, 1750, ed. Lewis, XX, 119.

there is no mention of this either in his letters or in his Description of Strawberry Hill. When Walpole began to make his home into a Gothic castle he had no qualms at all; it was all very natural.

Strawberry Hill had a long evolution under Walpole's hands. The renovation began about 1750 and continued almost until the time of his death in 1797. It is important to note that the addition of rooms and battlements, and the expansion of the surrounding land from the original five to forty-nine acres, took place quite haphazardly. Walpole added to his Gothic villa as the whim struck him; there was no predetermined plan such as the old Gothic architects had used for the cathedrals. When the west wing was added, for example, a little cottage recently constructed had to be moved to make room. Furthermore, Walpole was adding to a house that was already built and his remodelling followed necessarily the lines of the existing structure.

Originally, the house had been built by the coachman of Lord Bradford. The commoners had called it Chopped Straw-Hall, hinting that the money to build it had been obtained by feeding the Lord's horses chopped straw instead of hay. The name Strawberry Hill Hall had been in some of the old leases and it was from this that Walpole took the name Strawberry Hill. It was a tiny house in the beginning, and in a letter to Mann, Walpole exclaimed that, "The house is

so small, that I can send it to you in a letter to look at."²² Ketton-Cremer describes this original house as being "a shapeless unsymmetrical building without any architectural interest."²³ From these beginnings Strawberry Hill evolved. It is a wonder in many ways that the house appealed to the aristocratic Walpole at all. But then, the little toy house had appealed to others besides Walpole; Colley Cibber and the son of the Duke of Chandos were two of the many famous tenants. The house had a most beautiful prospect, and it was perhaps the combination of house and grounds which won over so many people. In a letter to Conway, Walpole gave his now famous description of the house. "It is a little plaything-house that I got out of Mrs. Chenevix's shop, and is the prettiest bauble you ever saw. It is set in enamelled meadows, with filagree hedges:

A small Euphrates through the piece is roll'd,
And little finches wave their wings in gold.

Two delightful roads, that you would call dusty, supply me continually with coaches and chaises: barges as solemn as Barons of the Exchequer move under my window; Richmond Hill and Ham Walks bound my prospect; but, thank God! the Thames is between me and the Duchess of Queensberry. Dowagers as

²² Mrs. Paget Toynbee, ed. of Letters of Horace Walpole, To Mann, June 5, 1747 (Oxford 1903-1905), II, 278.

²³ R. W. Ketton-Cremer, A Biography of Horace Walpole (London, 1940), p. 125.

plenty as flounders inhabit all around, and Pope's ghost is just now skimming under my window by a most poetical moonlight. I have about land enough to keep such a farm as Noah's, when he set up in the ark with a pair of each kind"²⁴ From the very beginning, Walpole's new house was capable of inspiring him with visions, and this is what he required from all his possessions.

It might be thought, from the light and bantering tone of this letter, that Strawberry Hill was but a mere diversion in Walpole's crowded and somewhat eccentric social schedule. Nothing could be further from the truth. A great deal of thought and consideration went into the final decision to Gothicize the house; it was an important step, and such steps Walpole considered most carefully. He needed a snug and fashionable residence, yet one which had enough personality and colour to excite the imagination. In answer to a question of Mann's, Walpole gave his reasons for preferring the Gothic to the Grecian in his home. "The Grecian," he said, "is only proper for magnificent and public buildings. Columns and all their beautiful ornaments look ridiculous when crowded into a closet or a cheesecake-house. The variety is little, and admits no charming irregularities. I am almost as fond of the Sharawaggi, or Chinese want of symmetry, in buildings, as in grounds or gardens."²⁵ Gothic, Chinese, or

²⁴To Conway, June 8, 1747, ed. Toynbee, II, 279.

²⁵To Mann, Feb. 25, 1750, ed. Toynbee, II, 433.

perhaps even the rococo could have given Walpole that "variety" which he wanted in his home, a variety that would excite his fancy and keep his mind constantly turning upon something new. In England at this time all three were in style, and the fact that Gothic won out over the Chinese or rococo was probably due to his interest in genealogies, particularly that of his own family.

Walpole never advocated the Gothic as a style of architecture appropriate for public buildings. As an eighteenth century citizen steeped in the poetry of Pope and the architecture of Wren and Inigo Jones, he considered the Gothic fit only for "cheesecake" houses like his own. He would have had no sympathy for the huge spire that Wyatt raised at Fonthill for Beckford, and would have considered its collapse only poetic justice. As for his own home, he never entertained any notions of building another debt-ridden Houghton. Although his sinecures gave him ample to live on, and a little more besides, he was certainly not in a position to afford a palace with many servants such as that of the Duke of Chandos. Walpole fell in love with a toy house, and never considered it as being anything more than a toy. The vagaries of Gothic gave him a freedom of design which helped to give expression to facets of his own personality to which he otherwise dared not give credence.

Strawberry Hill was extremely important to Walpole

all through his life. In some ways it represented his alter ego. Melville, one of his biographers, speaks of it as "the be-all and end-all of his existence."²⁶ This is a little extreme, and somewhat unfair to Walpole, who valued his friendships at least as much as his house. I think Lewis best describes what Strawberry Hill meant to Walpole. "When we talk about Strawberry Hill," he said, "we are talking about Horace Walpole himself."²⁷ Into the remodelling of Strawberry Hill, Walpole threw himself body and soul. The result, a Gothic-rococo dream in which the different parts were continually shifting, was a mirror of Walpole's own personality.

It was only natural that Walpole should discuss his designs and plans for the new Strawberry Hill with his friends. From amongst the numerous people he consulted, two stand out as being the most important. These were John Chute and Richard Bentley. Chute loved Italy and classical design, but like Walpole he was bitten by the bug of genealogy and soon began to spend most of his time with the Gothic antiquity of England. He was a first-rate designer and soon had a good grasp of the elements of Gothic design from his study of plates such as those in Dugdale. As we shall see, he was responsible for some of the best work done at Strawberry. The more interesting of the two men from the point of view of their designing

²⁶ Lewis Melville, Horace Walpole (London, 1930), p. 98.

²⁷ W. S. Lewis, Horace Walpole (Washington, 1960), p. 101.

was Bentley, the son of the great administrator and classicist. Richard Mr. was not at all like his father, being fanciful, imaginative and indolent whereas his father had been learned and industrious. Bentley was Walpole's righthand man for many years and it is owing to his strange yet marvellously light-hearted designs that Strawberry Hill owes much of its rococo effect.

Chute, Bentley and Walpole made up what Walpole, in all seriousness, termed the Committee of Taste. These three made extensive trips across England to look at the Gothic of cathedrals and abbeys as well as spending many hours leafing through prints of old buildings in the search for appropriate designs. Experts on medievalism, such as Gray, were called in for advice on particular pieces, and no leaf was left unturned in the search for "venerable designs." The Committee took its work seriously and even the wild flights of fancy that Bentley made in his designs always had a model of genuine Gothic. Very self-righteously, perhaps, they considered their Gothic pure. Various other eighteenth century Gothic buildings, such as Lord Brooke's Warwick Castle and Sanderson Miller's church tower at Wroxton in Kent were thought to be mere false taste. The Langleys' idea, that Gothic designs could be improved by tempering them with the classical, was despised. The Committee's scheme was to copy designs from Gothic edifices all across England and integrate them into Strawberry Hill. Walpole believed that "the great delicacy and richness of Gothic ornament was exhausted on

small chapels, oratories, and tombs."²⁸ The difficulty with this technique was that, although the sculpture was copied carefully enough, the spirit which had inspired it was often left behind.

Walpole had great faith in Bentley as an artist and based his hopes of an elegantly exotic Strawberry chiefly on him. He always spoke most highly of his friend's artistic ability. To Zouch, he wrote, "I am so lucky as to live in the strictest friendship with Dr. Bentley's only son -- who to all the ornament of learning has the most amiable turn of mind, disposition and easy wit."²⁹ Some of Bentley's best artistry is expressed in the illustrations for Gray's poems which were first printed at Walpole's press. Kenneth Clark has described the drawings as being "Gothic-rococo," stressing the fact that although the stimulus may have been Gothic, Bentley's rococo imagination soon dominated. This same exuberance is seen in the staircase and hall which Bentley designed for the east wing. The exquisitely fragile staircase, with the antelopes on the banisters and the lighthearted tracery of the walls and landings is, critics agree, Strawberry's finest feature. Walpole's own description of this early venture into Gothic is indubitably the best. "Under two gloomy arches, you come to the hall and staircase, which

²⁸To Cole, August 11, 1769, ed. Lewis, I, 191.

²⁹To Zouch, January 12, 1759, ed. Lewis, XVI, 25.

it is impossible to describe to you, as it is the most particular and chief beauty of the castle. Imagine the walls covered with (I call it paper, but it is really paper painted in perspective to represent) Gothic fretwork: the lightest Gothic balustrade to the staircase, adorned with antelopes (our supporters) bearing shields; lean windows fattened with rich saints in painted glass, and a vestibule open with three arches on the landing place, and niches full of trophies of old coats of mail, Indian shields made of rhinoceros's hides, broadswords, quivers, long bows, arrows and spears...."³⁰

What with this elegant tracery, the light balustrade, slim antelopes, and old weapons, the total effect could not help but be one of lightness, almost gaiety. This, of course, is just the opposite to what the Gothic craftsmen of the Middle Ages had attempted. They too had been after the effect of lightness, but it was the lightness of serene beauty reaching up to God that they desired, not the laughing gaiety of the mock heroic. This accent on delicacy and elegance in the hallway and staircase which led to the principal rooms became the dominant note in Walpole's scheme for many years.

Bentley's frenetic imagination set the tone for much that was done at Strawberry. His rococo stylings appear even in the most unexpected places, such as in the iron work on a screen in the garden. The design for this screen was copied from the tomb of Roger Niger, Bishop of London in old St. Paul's. Chimney pieces were specialties at Strawberry Hill,

³⁰

To Mann, June, 1753, ed. Lewis, XX, 381.

and much time was spent choosing the most dramatic designs. The one on the north wall of the Library was done by Bentley, who effectively juxtaposed a design from a tomb in Canterbury and one at Westminster. Again the style is light and frivolous, reminiscent of the early stages of the French rococo.

Bentley continued to design for Walpole over a span of about eight to ten years, and even came to live at Strawberry Hill for a while. However, he often went for months at a time without doing a single design, and it was this indolence coupled with his own frivolous temperament which eventually caused a split with Walpole. He left in 1761 without ever doing the great masterpiece Walpole felt him capable of. The cause of their final quarrel is unknown, but it probably had something to do with Bentley's ill-natured wife. Walpole could not bear sour women; Bentley's wife he called Hecate.

The second member of the Committee was Chute, and it was he, with his modest but solidly Gothic designs, who often toned down the flamboyant Bentley. One of his best early pieces is the Gothic bookcase in the library. Much of the work done by the Committee would have been relatively easy since they had available a plethora of old tombs and monuments to copy. Bookcases, however, offered a problem; since there was nothing obvious that could be copied, they could easily have strayed and developed a wild, nightmarish Gothic. Bentley's designs for the bookcase had been dismissed for

this very reason; he had used the arched side doors into the choir at old St. Paul's but had turned them into a bepinnaled monster. Chute, on the other hand, used the same model, and yet the results he achieved were quite lovely. Widening the arch just a trifle to allow for more books, he was able to simulate the form of more conventional bookcases while keeping the simplicity and grand austerity of his model. The arches were made of light wood on hinges and could be swung out to allow books to be removed -- an idea that allowed Chute to keep the intricate fretwork of the originals without hindering the utility of the bookcase. Some of Chute's later additions are in an even purer Gothic style, and there is no doubt that his common sense was a great help in taming the rococo vagaries of Bentley.

The impurity of the Gothic in Walpole's Strawberry Hill has alarmed critics. The fact that he allowed plump sofas, conversation pieces by Reynolds, and carved antelopes into his Gothic house strikes a false note for these purists. Yet Walpole anticipated these very criticisms in the preface to his own description of Strawberry Hill. "In truth, I did not mean to make my house so Gothic as to exclude convenience and modern refinements in luxury.... It was built to please my own taste, and in some degree to realise my own visions."³¹ It would have been impossible for Walpole to

³¹ "A Description of Strawberry Hill," in The Works of Horatio Walpole, Lord Orford (London, 1798), II, 397.

attempt to convert the small house of Mrs. Chenevix with its tiny rooms and Turkish sheep grazing on the lawns into a pure Gothic castle. Besides, it was Walpole's home, and for this he wanted the comforts of the eighteenth century, not the draughty windows of medieval castles. To suggest that Walpole failed in his Gothicizing because he allowed modern decorations and Gothic wallpaper is to miss the point entirely. Walpole was not building a medieval castle; he was Gothicizing a toy house.

Walpole began by remodelling a wooden house; he fully realized that he could not turn it into a stone castle. Such an idea is absurd and he never intended it. The house was designed to exhibit "specimens of Gothic architecture, as collected from standards in cathedrals and chapel-tombs" and to show "how they may be applied to chimney pieces, ceilings, windows, balustrades, loggias etc."³² Strawberry Hill was meant to be a piece of stage machinery, a setting which could create a Gothic impression. Just as the landscape gardeners used artificial ruins if the real ones were not available, so did Walpole use an artificial Gothic house in place of a real one. In the eighteenth century, art merged with nature to such a degree that arguments raged as to whether it was better to have nature look like art or to have art look like nature. In placing pinnacles and battlements around Strawberry Hill, Walpole was making the best of both worlds. He

³²"A Description of Strawberry Hill," in Works, II, 395.

had a house which was comfortable, which was in the modish Gothic style, and yet was the result of art, not nature.

It is only to be expected that as Walpole continued his studies into the Gothic his taste became progressively better. The first years of Gothicizing, roughly from 1750-1754, resulted in a rococo-Gothic with little similarity to the true Gothic of the Middle Ages. In 1760, when Walpole again began to add to the house, the resulting Gothic was generally purer, and had more of the spirit of the old builders. There are several reasons for this change, not all of which concern Walpole's own improved taste. First, the dismissal of Bentley allowed Chute to follow the old Gothic models more rigorously so that much of the rococo elements disappeared. Secondly, during this period Walpole was no longer merely redecorating the tiny rooms, but adding entirely new rooms. This meant that the Committee had more freedom in its choice of the size they wished the rooms to be. The new Gallery, for instance, was 55 by 13 feet -- by far the largest room. One of the primary problems that the Committee had to face in the older part of the house had been the smallness of the rooms. It was exceedingly difficult to employ the massive pillars, high vaulted ceilings, and expansive depth of the old Gothic cathedrals in a room which was only 8' by 8'. Much of the frippery of the early Gothic designs can be traced directly to the small scale on which they were forced to work. Now that the Committee was beginning

afresh and designing the rooms as well as the decorations, its hands were no longer as tied, and the results were better.

These new additions in the period following 1760 almost doubled the size of Strawberry Hill, turning it from a cheesecake house into a much longer and more impressive structure. The large round tower at the west end especially helped to give the building an appearance of solidity. Although Strawberry Hill never gained the massiveness of a Norman castle, at least it was no longer of toy shop proportions. At the end of his life Walpole could no longer have sent it off in a letter.

A third reason for the better Gothic was that at this time Walpole happened to be able to afford the larger additions. This may seem somewhat artificial in a discussion of architecture, but it must be remembered that Walpole did not have the money of a Beckford to erect Babylonian towers. As a private citizen, he was forced to work upon a small scale; there were no indulgences to pay for Strawberry Hill.

The principal rooms added in this second period of building were the Cloister, the Gallery, the Roundtower, the Tribune, and Great Bedchamber. Probably the purest piece of Gothic in all of Strawberry Hill was the Cloister designed by Chute. This was a genuine cloister, such as one might find in any abbey. Situated on the ground floor it led directly onto the lawn through five open Gothic arches which were complemented by five similar windows in the Gallery above.

Strong buttresses running up between the arches and continuing past the windows to the roof gave an effect of solidity and strength. This entire wall, with its Gothic windows and battlements at the top, running as it does into the bastion-like west tower, gives an excellent Gothic effect and could easily be taken for a wall from an old castle or abbey. The simplicity of the outside was carried into the inside of the Cloister where a shallow, arched roof and old Welsh chairs gave the impression that monks might still be found taking their daily walks. The whole is an excellent example of what the Gothic revival could produce at its best.

The Gallery, which is immediately above the Cloister, was intended to be the showpiece of Strawberry Hill. It was a showpiece, fairly enough, but it was anything but Gothic. When criticism is levelled against Walpole's Gothic, most often this is the room singled out for attack. The designing of the room has a curious history. The first drawings done by Bentley were quite modest and probably would have done admirably. However, Walpole ignored these and proceeded, with Chute's help, to design something which seems almost a caricature of Bentley's wildest dreams. The styling is most flamboyant, with all the intricate tracery of late Tudor being combined with the gilded ornaments of the gaudiest baroque. The ceiling was designed by Walpole himself, and was copied from one of the side aisles of Henry VII's Chapel at Westminster. All the elaborate fan-shaped masonry and

hanging pendants of this colourful Chapel are accentuated, and the ceiling is a mass of elaborately-spun tracery. The small alcoves along the north wall, which were copied from a tomb at Canterbury done in very austere perpendicular, were transformed by the addition of a series of C-and-S-shaped curves around the mouldings to enhance the exuberant ceiling.

The large door at the west end leading into the Round Tower was, however, more discreet. It is much more modest, being copied from St. Alban's, and if Walpole had continued with this style, all might yet have been well. But in the best tradition of Versailles he installed mirrors encircled with gold fretwork. When this gold was combined with crimson damask on the walls, the total effect was one of startling and fantastic colour. In one of his more irascible moments, Gray was to describe Strawberry Hill in terms of this room. "[Mr. Walpole] hurried home in the evening to his new Gallery, w^{ch} is all Gothicism, & gold, & crimson, & looking-glass."³³ Yet the room was designed to house some of the best of Walpole's collection and must have appeared quite splendid when decorated with his numerous busts and swords. Certainly Walpole thought the Gallery to be one of the main attractions of Strawberry Hill, and many of his eighteenth century friends agreed with him. However, just as the Cloister is indicative

³³ Correspondence of Thomas Gray, ed. Paget Toynbee and Leonard Whibley (Oxford, 1935), To Wharton, August 1763, II, 802.

of how close the Committee could approach the pure Gothic, the Gallery shows how often the effect was more of a burlesque.

The only other room which need be mentioned is the Tribune or Chapel. This Chapel was attached to the main building and should not be confused with a small brick out-building called by the same name. Walpole was especially pleased with this room and wrote many enthusiastic letters to his friend Cole suggesting that he come and take the service. "You shall be inaugurated in my chapel, which is much more venerable than your parish church, and has the genuine air of antiquity."³⁴ Although never very religious after the influence of Middleton in his early years, Walpole was becoming increasingly attached to Strawberry Hill and a chapel was necessary to complete his vision of a Gothic castle. The Chapel, to my way of thinking, is one of the most perfect rooms in the house. It is quite small, and actually square, although the numerous recesses in the walls give it the illusion of being circular. This illusion is aided by the design of the ceiling, which is copied from York Minster. The vaulting and tracery both lead up to a large yellow star in the middle, making the ceiling a scalloped dome. The windows are done with remnants of old stained-glass church windows to give a muted but rich ecclesiastical light. (Walpole collected so much stained glass in his travels that, although it was used in

³⁴To Cole, May 28, 1774, ed. Lewis, I, 328.

most of the windows at Strawberry Hill, there was still much left over). The Chapel was a trifle ornate, something which bothered Walpole; with his liberal Whig views he wished to stay as far away from Roman Catholicism as possible. In a letter to Montagu, Walpole explained how "the sable mass of the altar gives it a very sober air, for notwithstanding the solemnity of the painted windows, it had a gaudiness that was a little profane."³⁵

People often complained that the Chapel was overcrowded with bric à brac, that they could hardly see the walls for the pictures. This is symptomatic of what happened to many rooms in the house. Walpole's collection fairly pushed him out; at one point he complained that there was literally not one square inch left for anything else. In its earlier days, however, the Chapel must have been quite austere and ecclesiastical. Walpole tells the delightful story of how when the old Duc de Nivernais entered the Chapel he quickly pulled his hat off, then slapped it back on again when he perceived his mistake, saying "Ce n'est pas une chapelle pourtant." The old Duke was, Walpole tells us, "a little displeased."³⁶ Yet Walpole had no intention of poking fun at religion; such trouble arose only when people took his house of novelties a little too seriously. It is perhaps

³⁵ To Montagu, April 14, 1763, ed. Lewis, X, 64.

³⁶ To Mann, April 30, 1763, ed. Toynbee, V, 308.

ironic that Walpole's play-chapel is now a real chapel where Mass is said everyday under his large yellow star. Strawberry Hill is now Saint Mary's College, a school used for training priests.

Overcrowding was one of the big difficulties at Strawberry Hill; Walpole's collection seemed often about to swamp the house. For instance, the small chapel in the garden was expressly built to house two pieces of his collection, a painted window of Henry III's from Benhill, and Cavolino's Tomb of Capoccio from a church at Rome. The building of this additional chapel is significant, for it indicates the manner in which much of the building at Strawberry Hill was undertaken. Usually a house is built in a particular style to please the owner's aesthetic taste. Once the building is erected, then the decoration is chosen. Yet in many instances the rooms of Strawberry Hill were designed to utilize some particular pieces Walpole already had in his collection. It must always be remembered that as an antiquary, Walpole was principally a collector. His was one of the finest collections of miniatures and medals in all of England. His letters on antiquarian subjects are not so much discussions of the principles of Gothic, as they are queries and notes about miniatures and genealogies. Strawberry Hill was built to house a collection, not to demonstrate architectural principles. Or, as W. S. Lewis has so aptly said, "Strawberry Hill was an eighteenth-

century museum in which were displayed examples of Gothic detail -- in ways that would have made the original architects stare."³⁷

Walpole, it must be remembered, was not an architect; he was not interested in the principles of building evidenced in Strawberry Hill. The problem of stresses and strains, of building a house that would not fall down, was left to the builder, William Robinson, who was paid a mere twenty-five pounds for his mundane but essential part of the house. What Walpole wanted and what interested him was atmosphere; he wanted a house to which he could retire and let his fanciful thoughts wander about the Gothic rooms. It was enough if Strawberry Hill supplied the Gothic "gloomth" that Walpole wanted as a background for his collection; no plan or central axis for the building itself was necessary. The east end was finished by 1754; thereafter, as Walpole's collection expanded, more rooms and outbuildings were added in haphazard fashion until it was the "long, straggling, many-pinnacled building"³⁸ that Austin Dobson describes. Each room was a disparate entity with little or no architectural relation to the others. Each room contained its own visions.

Strawberry Hill was not good architecture, and the many critics who have sent it to the Devil for the last two

³⁷W. S. Lewis, Horace Walpole, p. 107.

³⁸Austin Dobson, Horace Walpole (London, 1910), p. 212.

hundred years have been quite correct in so doing. But then, Walpole always disclaimed that it was good architecture, maintaining that Strawberry Hill was no more than a whim to satisfy his own restless mind. Built as it was for this end, it worked marvellously well, and at the end of his life Walpole was even more deeply in love with his dream castle than when he had taken it out of Mrs. Chenevix's shop. If ever Walpole had a love, it was Strawberry Hill.

Something of Walpole's attitude towards Strawberry Hill can be gained if it is realized that his desire for a Gothic castle sprang from a literary rather than an architectural impulse. As Geoffrey Scott in his fascinating book The Architecture of Humanism³⁹ has so amply demonstrated, the entire Romantic Movement with its idealization of the past was basically literary in its conception. Even the first impulses of this movement at the turn of the century were notably literary. The themes of the new literature -- the interest in everything old, the desire for unlimited freedom, the pursuit of the untaught genius -- were all sought and found in Gothic architecture. When Walpole expresses an interest in Gothic architecture, his fascination results from these poetic values, rather than the architectural values of line, mass and space. The meaning of the architecture in terms of

³⁹ See especially chapters 2, 3 and 4.

literary motifs assumed primary importance rather than the architecture itself. This is not to deny that architecture, or any of the plastic arts for that matter, does not generally imply such literary values. But they should be only of secondary importance, not primary as Walpole made them. A Gothic cathedral with its many verticals seems to reach upwards, whereas a baroque church with strong horizontals will seem to push outwards with a lateral force. It is natural that different literary values are deduced from the different effects. But what happened in the mid-eighteenth century amongst Gothic enthusiasts such as Walpole and Gray was that the poetic values of the Gothic became the only thing they valued in this architecture. Gothic architecture was not studied as architecture, but for the values it seemed to represent. Thus, when Walpole differentiates between Gothic and classical architecture, the emphasis is always on the literary values they convey. "A Gothic cathedral strikes one like the enthusiasm of poetry; St. Paul's, like the good sense of prose."⁴⁰ Gothic was admired principally for its literary values well into the nineteenth century, and the greatest of all its apologists, Ruskin, used literary analogies to clinch his argument. In many ways Ruskin is seen to be a direct descendant of Walpole. Arguing that the pointed Gothic window was better than a square Renaissance window, Ruskin maintains,

⁴⁰
Works, IV, 368.

that because Nature formed leaves in a pointed manner, it is obvious that pointed windows are best:

Now then, I proceed to argue in this manner from what we see in the woods and fields around us; that as they are evidently meant for our delight, and as we always feel them to be beautiful, we may assume that the forms into which their leaves are cast are indeed types of beauty, not of extreme or perfect, but average beauty. And finding that they invariably terminate more or less in pointed arches, and not square-headed, I assert the pointed arch to be one of the forms most fitted for perpetual contemplation by the human mind....and that therefore, being both the strongest in structure, and a beautiful form (while the square-head is both weak in structure, and an ugly form), we are unwise ever to build in any other.⁴¹

Believing that Nature was a manifestation of God, and finding that the Gothic seemed to resemble Nature's designs, Ruskin deduced that Gothic was superior to Renaissance architecture. While Walpole never arrived at this conclusion, he did use the same sort of analogies. What was important for him, as for Ruskin, was not Gothic architecture but the fact that Gothic architecture was very similar to some of the models in Nature. Architectural terms -- mass, space, line -- were never used when Walpole talked about Gothic. Rather, he talked about the literary values of wildness, freedom, "gloomth," and terror, and these ideas, which he felt to be the essence of Gothic architecture, were the important features.

This search for literary values in Gothic

⁴¹ John Ruskin, Lectures on Architecture and Painting (London, 1907), p. 22.

architecture was only natural in the mid-eighteenth century. Classical architecture still held undisputed sway, and even Walpole makes it clear that Gothic is not suited for high-seriousness in art. Renaissance art was accepted as the proper representative of the time. Yet when Walpole and others wished to indulge their imaginations, when they wanted an architecture which was capable of producing visions, they turned to Gothic. As architecture, they believed the Renaissance style to be indubitably the best. But if one wanted not architecture but a stimulus for the imagination, then Gothic was superior.

With so many authentic pieces of Gothic architecture in England, it would not have been surprising if few people in England had bothered with Strawberry Hill. Yet Walpole's home did impress visitors and there were many who took Walpole's architecture seriously, believing that it was new and had something to offer to the times. They were, in fact, correct. Walpole's architecture was novel; and unwittingly he was allowing others to glimpse his visions. In the eyes of many, Strawberry Hill made Walpole an authority on Gothic architecture and he was often besieged with technical questions. For example, the Dean of Westminster asked Walpole to find an appropriate altar-piece for his choir. Walpole's design for utilizing the Market Cross at Chichester was not accepted, which in the opinion of many critics was a great misfortune. Although somewhat of a dilettante, Walpole

did have a surprisingly pure and accurate taste. Even though Strawberry Hill turned out to be more of a whimsy than anything else, Walpole's own artistic talents were not mean. As the Chichester Cross incident indicates, Walpole could blend his bold ideas into impressive art design.

As the building of Strawberry Hill progressed, more and more people flocked to see it. Walpole's friends were, of course, delighted with it. Kitty Clive overflowed with enthusiasm and Montagu danced with excitement. But in addition to his friends, many of the most influential people in the kingdom came to see the wonders of Strawberry. The Duke of York made a surprise visit in the early morning and Walpole received him at the door -- in nightcap and slippers. Lord Bath wrote two stanzas of poetry in praise of Strawberry (which were later filled out to a larger poem by Walpole and discreetly circulated), and people in general were quite taken by Strawberry. Gray, in a letter to Wharton, broke through his usual reserve to give it high praise. "I am glad you enter into the Spirit of Strawberry-Castle. it has a purity & propriety of Gothicism in it (with very few exceptions,) that I have not seen elsewhere."⁴² Although there were some who detested the Gothic architecture, and others who only smiled disdainfully at the oddities displayed, Strawberry Hill seemed to strike a responsive chord

⁴²To Wharton, Sept. 18, 1754, ed. Toynbee, I, 406-407.

in the hearts of most. This new Gothic, designed strictly for the owner's pleasure, was something people of the eighteenth century instinctively understood.

It was not many years before Walpole found he had more visitors than he wanted or could manage. With the door-bell ringing at all hours of the day, Walpole soon found himself hunted from room to room by strangers intent upon seeing Henry VIII's dagger and William III's spurs. Finally it became necessary to issue tickets to restrict the number of people on any one day. However, as these tickets were available to anyone who applied in advance, no one who wished to see the house was ever denied. During some months there was a party viewing the house every day. In more ways than one Strawberry Hill was like a museum; Walpole, as curator, loved nothing more than to take a group of his friends on the tour, and to open the locked closets which contained his most precious possessions. He delighted in showing his collection to interesting persons, but he hated the impertinent strangers who had no sense of the beautiful, and wanted to see only the curious. Such were taken around by the housekeeper.

Perhaps the reason for Strawberry Hill's popularity was that it had something for everyone: there was Gothic architecture in abundance to amaze the curious; the magnificent collection of coins, miniatures, and bronzes was a feast for any antiquary; and the social elite could gaze on the conversation pieces of Reynolds, discuss the portraits

of famous men such as Gray and Mann, or enjoy themselves in the ribald humour of Hogarth (Walpole had almost a complete set of Hogarth prints). Then, for the nature lover, or the person simply looking for a pastoral haunt of natural beauty, there was the garden. Strawberry Hill was famous for its acacias, lilacs, and jonquils.

Early in its development, Mann had asked whether the garden was also to be Gothic. "Gothic is merely architecture" Walpole replied, "and as one has a satisfaction in imprinting the gloomth of abbeys and cathedrals on one's house, so one's garden on the contrary is to be nothing but riant, and the gaiety of nature."⁴³ The comment, I think, is important because it shows that Walpole had no intention of turning everything at Strawberry Hill (What would a Gothic garden look like?) to Gothic.

The riant garden admirably suited the taste of the day. The formal French gardens, with their parterres and topiary art, had been out of style since the first quarter of the century, and a new concept in gardening, where the landscape resembled the wildness of nature, was evident everywhere. As has been stated before, Walpole wished Strawberry Hill to be a symbol; the styles he chose both in house and garden were chosen for the ideas and impressions they connoted. The grounds, composed of a long lawn, carefully planned waterfalls, groves with oaken benches, and browsing

⁴³To Mann, April 27, 1753, ed. Lewis, XX, 372.

Turkish sheep, were an artful manipulation of nature to give the effect of nature even more careless and free than in her natural condition. This idea was later to be carried to extremes by other landscapers who brought corn fields up to the very thresholds. Yet, the paradox is that this effect had to be carefully executed by a landscape artist so that nature only seemed to rule. The idea of making nature and art one was later taken to its logical conclusion in the cult of the picturesque promoted by Uvedale Price.

Walpole made use of his riant garden in the same way as his Gothic castle -- to create an impression. That art is to be used for the ideas connoted is found everywhere in Walpole's writing. In a description of Strawberry Hill, he said, "now you shall walk into the house. The bow-window below leads into a little parlour hung with stone-colour Gothic paper and Jackson's Venetian prints, which I could never endure while they pretended, infamous as they are, to be after Titian, etc. but when I gave them this air of barbarous bas-reliefs they succeeded to a miracle...."⁴⁴ In a similar spirit he wrote to Cole some twenty-five years later. "I like Popery, as well as you, and have shown I do. I like it as I do chivalry and romance. They all furnish one with ideas and visions, which Presbyterianism does not. A Gothic church or convent fill one with romantic dreams -- but for the mysterious, the Church in the abstract, it is

⁴⁴To Mann, June 12, 1753, ed. Lewis, XX, 380-381.

a jargon that means nothing or a great deal too much, and I reject it and its apostles from Athanasius to Bishop Keene" (my italics).⁴⁵ Strawberry Hill was built to conjure up visions, and in doing this it appealed to the century. Its plaster battlements, wooden towers and Gothic wallpaper had to be seen through the colouring of a powerful imagination before their inherent artificiality could be dismissed. "The solidity of enduring masonry, whether revealed in wall or pillar or buttress," said Sprague Allen, "is the masculine virtue of genuine Gothic architecture, but the unsubstantial construction and the complete neglect of the values of material at Strawberry Hill have deservedly gained it the reputation of a sham."⁴⁶ Certainly Strawberry Hill was a sham; Walpole never pretended it was not.

Critics such as Allen have tended to assume that Walpole ought to have built a proper Gothic castle; this is absurd. A sham is not always a failure. If a person wants a sham, and the sham fulfills his need, then the sham is a success. Furthermore, if the real thing could not have succeeded where the sham did, then the sham is a total success. The old Gothic churches had been built with the all-inclusive purpose of serving God. Their soaring spires, richly decorated windows, and awesome vaulted naves, all insisted upon

⁴⁵

To Cole, July 12, 1778, ed. Lewis, II, 100.

⁴⁶

Beverly Sprague Allen, Tides in English Taste (Cambridge, 1937), II, 76-77.

the necessity of man's life being related unequivocally to God. Walpole glimpsed this, and rejected it. His was an age that "thought too much" and such ideas were distasteful. Although Walpole could not accept the purpose of Gothic, the spell of the dark naves and rich choirs captured his imagination. These theatrical effects he annexed, and in so doing created an architecture which revelled in mystery for the sake of mystery. The weird magic of the old Gothic cathedrals became an end in itself at Strawberry Hill.

This was Walpole's chief contribution to the Gothic revival. He did not revive the Gothic, for it had never died. Instead, he imbued it with a new symbolism, a new set of literary values. After Walpole, the word Gothic takes on new connotations -- that of the mysterious and supernatural. Confiding to the aged Madame Du Deffand, Walpole said, "Enfin il faut s'enthousiasmer à de certaines visions, comme je fais, sans quoi tout est fade. Aussi ces songes arrivent-ils bien rarement; et ne sont que pour les élus."⁴⁷ Later artists were to catch the spirit of Walpole's endeavours at Strawberry Hill and undertake an art form that supplied visions for all.

⁴⁷ To Madame Du Deffand, January 27, 1775, ed. Lewis, VI, 145.

III GOTHIC LITERATURE BEFORE WALPOLE

The fact that Walpole based his architectural conceits on a long if slight tradition of Gothic architecture gives rise to speculation about the influences on his dream romance, The Castle of Otranto. With the emphasis upon surrealism that exists in the twentieth century it has often been accepted that Walpole's novel marked a watershed in English literature and that it was principally Walpole's influence that gave rise to the entire Gothic school of artists. Actually, nothing could be further from the truth. In the first place, there has never been at any time amongst English writers a lack of appreciation for medieval writings. It is a well known fact that much of Shakespeare's material, such as the story of Lear, is drawn from medieval literature. As one moves even further from medieval times there is a constant series of so-called revivals of medieval themes. Milton, the major poet of the seventeenth century, for a long time meditated writing his epic on Arthur and the Round Table. Dryden retold some of the medieval tales and the foremost poet of the eighteenth century indulged in Gothic when he recreated the great love story of Peter Abelard. Clearly, if Alexander Pope, who is supposed to be the model neo-classical poet, can write a medieval romance, then it is not fair to say that this

strain of medievalism ever died out in England. Far from creating his dream of Gothic horrors out of thin air, Walpole was able to draw upon a tradition of medieval literature that existed side by side with the Augustan. Exactly what this tradition was and how it fitted into the Gallic taste of Pope and his followers will be the subject of this chapter.

One of the first signs that was to indicate this inclination for the rustic glories of the past was the interest in ballads that re-awakened in the eighteenth century. Beginning as an idle pastime with a group of cultured critics, this interest in the ballad soon grew to vast proportions until both England and the continent were swamped with collections of ballads -- both old and new. Even today this process of ballad-reviving can still be seen in the folk singers and jazz artists of our own coffeehouses. However, in 1718 when Addison, in his famous Spectator No. 70, gave his coffeehouse-readers a critique of the old ballad "Chevy Chase," it was none too certain that ballads deserved a place in criticism of high-seriousness. That Addison should deal with "Chevy Chase" might not seem strange at first, in view of the fact that the avowed purpose of the Spectator was to improve taste, and that Addison was later to do a series of papers on Milton and on aesthetics. Yet Addison was one of the foremost neo-classical critics, a model of restraint and conservatism, and for this exponent of culture to put the stamp of approval on a simple ballad from

the unlettered past shows clearly that, however tenuously, Gothic barbarisms were admitted within the pale. His reasons for admiring a ballad such as "Chevy Chase" are interesting. "I know nothing which more shews the essential and inherent Perfection of Simplicity of Thought, above that which I call the Gothick Manner in Writing, than this, that the first pleases all Kinds of Palates, and the latter only such as have formed to themselves a wrong artificial Taste upon little fanciful Authors and Writers of Epigram."⁴⁸ Addison is aware that many of his more refined readers may object to the poem because of its rusticity. He cautions his readers, "not to let the Simplicity of the stile, which one may well pardon in so old a poet, prejudice him against the Greatness of Thought."⁴⁹

This belief, that writers of the eighteenth century had reached a degree of perfection in both their poetry and prose never before attained in English history, accounts for Addison's reluctance to countenance the simple ballad style. What did appeal to Addison in the ballad was the "greatness" and "simplicity" of thought which he found in the sentiments expressed by the old poets. The fact that these old balladeers could reach down through centuries of time and still quicken the reader's interest in the same way that a Homer

⁴⁸ Joseph Addison, Spectator, No. 70, ed. Gregory Smith (New York, 1945), I, 215.

⁴⁹ Spectator, No. 70, p. 219.

or Virgil could, seemed truly amazing to Addison, and he was willing to discount any barbarisms of style to obtain the grandness of their thought. Today, with our more sophisticated theories of the interconnection of form and content, Addison's simple method of keeping the content and rejecting the form may seem a little naive, perhaps even facile. Yet for Addison, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, this simple solution was the natural answer. The fact that "Chevy Chase" pleased was indisputable. The form of the poem seemed atrocious; thus, the ideas and emotions were what excelled. Addison's explication of the poem is admirable in so far as it deals with the content but he ignores the form entirely. He shows how the author of "Chevy Chase" followed all the conventions of the greatest heroic poets and that many of the lines were actually allusive to lines of the Aeneid or Iliad. That "Chevy Chase" has Aeneid-like qualities makes it a great poem for Addison.

Addison's treatment of the ballad is indicative that in the very midst of the age of elegance simple but profound sentiments could impose their influence beyond the artificial bounds set by polite society. However, Addison's deft juggling of content and form, so that the content of the ballads could be praised while their form was ignored, shows clearly the precarious balance that medieval literature enjoyed at the beginning of the century. It was none too clear that the weight of the age of elegance might not be

thrown altogether on the necessities of form and the noble content of the Gothic poets be lost forever. Yet, as the Augustan age of Anne waned and attention shifted from the troubled social situation to a more relaxed Hanoverian reign under the guidance of Sir Robert Walpole, it was only natural that the emphasis in literature should shift from an urban to a rural setting. This change in taste caused the seeds that Addison had planted in his essay on the ballad to gradually bear fruit.

By the middle of the century, evidence of the increasing interest in medievalism was apparent in many aspects of life. The impetus for this movement, however, still remained with the learned and scholarly. There was an increasing awareness among the critics of literature that a reevaluation of the precepts for judging the old poetry was required. The person who is generally mentioned as a founder of this tradition is Samuel Johnson. Johnson was only too aware, as his criticism of Shakespeare indicates, of the need for an historical survey of the cultural milieu of poetry. Yet Johnson was by no means the first in this field and he admits his debt to others, such as the Wartons, especially Thomas Warton the younger.

Thomas Warton was professor of poetry at the University of Oxford, so it is appropriate that this learned man should be one of the principals in the development of scholarly research as an ingredient for the criticism of

poetry. The work which is of most concern to us here is his Observations on the Fairy Queen. In the first section of this book Warton takes a look at the poetic influences which helped to mould Spenser's poetry. He comes to the conclusion that the plan of the Fairy Queen, with its twelve books and twelve knights, is necessarily imperfect because the most prominent influence on Spenser was the Italian Ariosto, who wrote in a wild and highly romantic style. Therefore, since these poets were writing under the influence of rules far different from the classical rules "it is absurd to think of judging either Ariosto or Spenser by precepts which they did not attend to."⁵⁰ This doctrine had, of course, been found in most critics' bag of theory ever since the young Pope had written, "In every work regard the writer's end, / since none can compass more than they intend." Yet this precept had only rarely been carried into practice; it is to Warton's credit that he practised what he preached.

"If the Fairy Queen be destitute of that arrangement and oeconomy which epic severity requires, yet we scarcely regret the loss of these, while their place is so amply supplied by something which more powerfully attracts us: something which engages the affections, the feelings of the heart, rather than the cold approbation of the head."⁵¹

⁵⁰Thomas Warton, Observations on the Fairy Queen (London, 1807), I, 21.

⁵¹Thomas Warton, I, 23.

Such statements clearly show that Warton's sympathy is with Spenser and opposed to those earlier critics of the school of Rymer who had spurned medieval pageantry because it lacked classical form. Furthermore, Warton was not content with mere eulogizing, he was prepared to give a detailed historical survey of Spenser's sources. His chapter headings are indicative of this: "Of Spenser's Imitations from old romances;" "Of Spenser's use and abuse of ancient history and mythology;" "Of Spenser's Imitations from Chaucer." Thomas Warton had the scholarly erudition to open a new Spenser to his generation, and although his work may not rank high by modern standards, it was useful in helping to change the climate of opinion and to allow eighteenth century readers a more unbiased approach to Spenser.

Clearly the problem of form versus content is still inherent in Warton's treatment of Spenser. Granting that Spenser was a great poet, Warton was no longer willing to rest content with the pseudo-solution that he was great because of his content and that his form must be ignored. Warton went beyond this to hypothesize another school of poets (in opposition to the classicists), who also had a system of rules, but quite different from those of the Greeks. Unwilling to commit himself to any statement about the validity of these rules, Warton is seen still to be in the tradition of Addison and Pope, but in so far as he was willing to investigate Ariosto, Chaucer, and Spenser, he has moved beyond the narrow

view that the medieval ages were the "dark ages." Warton was attempting to pour old wine into new bottles. Searching for rules to substantiate the form of an Ariosto, he did not realize that such rules were antithetical to a form imposed by the imagination.

A few years after Warton published his work on the Fairy Queen another learned man produced a work on the Gothic literature. This was Richard Hurd, Bishop of Worcester for twenty-six years. His principal work, Letters on Chivalry and Romance, seems to have been much undervalued of late, yet its content and critical acumen indicate that it should rate a much higher place. Hurd appears to be an antiquary who was interested in the old romances not so much for their own poetic beauty but because of the light they threw on the customs and practices of the medieval times. Hurd's somewhat curious critical approach is revealed in Letter 4 when he informs his readers that, although his information has been derived from the old romances, he has not perused the "barbarous volumes" himself; he has instead, taken his materials second-hand from the Memoir of a French writer. Such a diffident approach may come as a shock at first, but it is entirely symptomatic of the direction in which the age was moving. Hurd was a classicist at heart, and would probably never have dreamed of reading the old barbarous romances. Yet as an historian and scholar in the wake of a long school of antiquaries, he could not resist exploring the Middle Ages

-- a tempting mine of curious and fantastic information.

Hurd's small book is important because it takes for granted the fact that there are at least two distinct schools, the Gothic and the Greek, and that both these schools are equally valid as objects of study. In his first letter he states, "The ages, we call barbarous, present us with many a subject of curious speculation. What, for instance, is more remarkable than the Gothic Chivalry?"⁵² Letter 2 calmly and in a matter-of-fact tone makes the very pertinent point that chivalry was the result of the feudal constitution. Hurd had no small appreciation of the Middle Ages. But it is in Letter 4 that Hurd begins what is to be a revolutionary analysis; he begins a comparison of Greek and Gothic conventions. Later, in Letter 6, he states, "So far as the heroic and Gothic manners are the same, the pictures of each, if well taken, must be equally entertaining. But I go further, and maintain that the circumstances, in which they differ, are clearly to the advantage of the Gothic designers."⁵³ This admission, two years before the publication of The Castle of Otranto, shows how far the age had moved away from the Gallicized Augustan taste in which the Greeks had held undisputed sway. Following his own empirical inclinations, Hurd compares the Gothic and classical conventions, the fairies of

⁵² Richard Hurd, Letters on Chivalry and Romance, ed. Edith J. Morley (London, 1911), p. 79.

⁵³ Richard Hurd, p. 107.

the romances and the gods of Olympus. His own opinion is that the romances have more poetic fire and are capable of sparking the imagination to greater heights than the more restrained classical myths. That this is all theory on Hurd's part, for he never read the romances, shows how deeply the older classical habits were still engrained. At his study desk, Hurd could admit that chivalry as an institution had more poetic fire, but when he adjourned to the fireplace he read the more cultivated Homer.

The Gothic was beginning to gain ground as a source of new ideas and customs, as a stimulus to the poetic fire, but classicists such as Hurd still refused to admit that this poetic fire was a fit substitute for the poetic form of Homer. Hurd's concession, that the fairies of chivalry might be better poetic materials than the gods of Olympus, clearly nudged the door open a little wider, and it was only a matter of time before poets and critics alike began to wave the banner of emotion and individual genius as a substitute for the refinement and polish of art. Hurd may have preferred to read Homer, but the tone and words he used to develop his analysis of Gothic literature were highly suggestive that form had already lost the battle against content. Almost in spite of himself, Hurd was drawn to speak on the opponent's side.

One of the most important influences which was to give impetus to the development of Gothic literature was the introduction of the concept of the sublime. With persons

such as Hurd stressing the fact that medieval chivalry abounded in poetic fire, the introduction of the literary sublime acted like flint on steel to spark the movement of emotional fervour in literature. It is fitting that in the best tradition of The Battle of the Books there should be two main progenitors of this new concept, one an ancient and the other a modern. The ancient was, of course, Longinus. In the middle decades of the eighteenth century he had a tremendous vogue, and his book, On the Sublime, was a portentous force in giving new direction to critical principles. Someone (and I cannot remember who), once alluded to Longinus as being a Trojan horse in a neo-classical camp. The acceptance of Longinus' book allowed the new ideas of poetical fire, wild grandeur, and enthusiasm to be admitted under the guise of classical propriety. What Longinus was mainly interested in doing in his book On the Sublime was to show the ways in which sublime effects in poetry could be achieved. From effects in poetry to the feelings of the individual was but a short jump, and the eighteenth century soon transferred Longinus' emphasis on the means of achieving the sublime effect to the effect itself. In a socially oriented literature where poetry gave expression to humanistic goals, Longinus' attention to intensity of feeling was sure to come like grapeshot, scattering the socio-political satirists and giving rise to a new generation.

Following Longinus' suggestion that two of the chief

sources of the sublime were the "faculty of grasping great conceptions" and "passion, strong and impetuous," poets were forced to turn from the towns and cities to find subjects capable of arousing the passions through great conceptions. In the visual arts, a new interest developed in the wild landscapes of Salvator Rosa and Poussin. Michaelangelo and Raphael became preferred for their noble conceptions before the more correct Rubens. In the early decades of the eighteenth century Gothic revival it was just these qualities of wonder, intensity of feeling, and power that attracted people to medieval art. The fact that by mid-century these qualities were given sanction by the authority of Longinus greatly eased the burden of explaining how they could be fitted into the classical framework.

It may seem strange that Longinus should be claimed as an important influence in the mid-eighteenth century when there had been an English translation made as early as 1652 by John Hall. The answer to this is fairly simple; in 1652 people were not ready to appreciate Longinus, especially from the hands of the unknown John Hall. The first translation to have any effect was not into English even, but into French by the important critic Boileau in 1674. It was not until much later, 1739, that John Smith did his influential translation which brought Longinus into the centre of critical attention in England.

The second person greatly to influence the concept of the sublime in England and to make it applicable to current thought was the modern, Edmund Burke. Burke's early work was of importance in several different ways in helping the Gothic to gain acceptance. The first is found in the approach that Burke took to the problem, that of the empiricist. To investigate the notion of the sublime, he consulted his own and his friends' reactions to objects that were purportedly sublime. From these "experiments" he was able to deduce the properties of the sublime. This may seem anything but revolutionary, since it follows directly along the well trodden path of English empiricism in the search for immutable Newtonian laws. Yet it was revolutionary, for Burke applied this empirical method psychologically to his own emotions, something which inevitably led to an analysis of the emotions. Secondly, he always stressed the fact that reason and judgment were only secondary and that the sublime and beautiful must influence the emotions directly. As an aesthetician he assumes the extreme position of sensationism. For him, "beauty is, for the greater part, some quality in bodies, acting mechanically upon the human mind by the intervention of the senses."⁵⁴ Such a position easily lends support and gives rise to an interest in the art of the Middle Ages which, all critics agreed, was designed to strike forcibly the imagination. Mrs. Thrale recognized this fact,

⁵⁴ Edmund Burke, A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful, ed. J. T. Boulton (London, 1958), section XII, 112.

and some years after the publication of the Enquiry, stated in a matter-of-fact tone, "I observed it was in Manners as in Architecture, the Gothick struck one most forcibly, the Grecian delighted one more sensibly. Tis the Sublime & beautiful of Burke over again."⁵⁵

Burke influenced the "Gothic" in still another and perhaps more important way. He constantly associates the sublime with terror. Previous to Burke, Addison and others had emphasized the relation between the huge and the sublime, but Burke was the first to capitalize on the notion that the sublime was caused principally by the terrible, the obscure, and the dangerous. "Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger,...is a source of the sublime."⁵⁶ Clearly this idea exerted a great influence on the Gothic novelists, especially Lewis and the later novelists of terror. It also had far-reaching effects on a later and greater aesthetician, Coleridge. Coleridge took Burke's idea and made it the central theme for his contributions to the Lyrical Ballads, thereby preserving the Gothic terror in a new form.

In the critical reviews of the day one can see that, although few people wholeheartedly agreed with the Enquiry, Burke's pungent style and positive assertions gave

⁵⁵ Thraliana (Oxford, 1951), I, 421.

⁵⁶ Enquiry, p. 39.

a severe jolt to the commonplaces of the usual aesthetics of "taste." By means of his self-analysis, Burke led the way in showing how much of the sublime was dependent upon the violent emotions of fear and terror. In his espousal of the idea that the sublime was not governed by reason but was solely dependent upon the imagination or upon the senses, he clearly marked out the exit that Walpole and later writers were to take in their escape from man and society to man and imagination.

Another possible influence upon the Gothic novelists was that of the graveyard poets who became very popular in the second quarter of the eighteenth century as a result of their qualified use of terror and melancholy. Since the Gothic novelists were later to exploit terror and melancholy also, an investigation of how the graveyard poets handled these emotions will be profitable. A curious fact about this poetry is that, although most of it is devoted to a discussion of death, the terrors of the tomb, and the ghastly horrors of man's life, these do not compose the central theme. Parnell's "Night Piece on Death," Young's The Complaint, Blair's The Grave, and Gray's Elegy are generally considered to be the best examples of this school, yet all these poems are mainly interested in depicting the transitoriness of man's life, the equality of man, and man's need for God's guidance. Young draws a comparison between his own poetry and that of Pope's in which he makes this

explicit, "Man too he sung: immortal man I sing."⁵⁷

The graveyard poets attempted lengthy descriptions of man's fickle fortune in this life and his uncertain destiny in the next in order to make the reader change his idle ways. These descriptions were meant to serve the same purpose as the Puritan preachers' account of Hell -- to terrify. Parnell's description of the voice from the tomb:

Now from yon black and funeral yew,
That bathes the charnel-house with dew,
Methinks I hear a voice begin;
(Ye ravens, cease your croaking din!
Ye tolling clocks, no time resound
O'er the long lake and midnight ground!)
It sends a peal of hollow groans,⁵⁸

obviously comes from a vision of death similar to that of Milton's figure who guards the gate of Hell. But death turns out to be not such a satanic figure after all; Parnell assures us that the image of grim death is only a product of fear and that actually death is "a port of calms." Once man realizes death is simply a release from life's tortures then the colours of death will no longer be black but white. The difficulty here is that Parnell explicates this idea intellectually without ever expressing it in poetic form. The

⁵⁷ Edward Young, The Complaint, or Night Thoughts on Life, Death, and Immortality, in Eighteenth Century Poetry and Prose, ed. Bredvold, McKillop, Whitney (New York, 1956), p. 520, line 452.

⁵⁸ Thomas Parnell, "A Night Piece on Death," in Eighteenth Century Poetry and Prose, p. 436, lines 53-59.

fact that death is "a state of ease" is told to us by the Miltonic figure lurking in the charnel house and speaking in a "peal of hollow groans." Poetically, this grim spectre of death is much more realistically expressed than the abstract intellectual idea of death being "a port of calms." Starting out to paint the black vision of mortal man's concept of death in order to induce the reader to forsake this life for the next, Parnell created such a vivid picture that he could not hope to create a Heaven that would appear nearly so real.

The poets were beginning to recognize the vast depths that are within the consciousness of man, and being frightened by the abyss flew to God for support. Yet they could not help but be fascinated by the new man who was revealed, and, trying to incorporate him into their poetry, found him too massive to be held within the tenuous form of the old sermon. The Puritan had a vivid concept of Heaven to counterbalance Hell, but in the eighteenth century the concepts of both Heaven and Hell had become weakened as a result of deism. What orthodox Heaven could Parnell offer that was sufficient to counterbalance the new insight into the awful depths of the unconscious?

Young seems dimly to recognize this new aspect of man when he says:

I tremble at myself
 And in myself am lost! At home a stranger,
 Thought wanders up and down, surprised, aghast,
 And wondering at her own: how reason reels! 59

Intellectually, Young had a message to convey in his poetry, that man must live for immortality and not for mortality. Poetically, he seems to have been unable to resist the temptation to paint the picture of man's vast consciousness in which both reason and imagination are but sport before the unknown and mysterious forces of his mind. Such passages refuse to be confined within the sermon form of the poem, and erupt in poetry for which the orthodox Christian Heaven is no longer an answer.

The problem of form versus content is again before us. Wishing to write of immortality, Young and Parnell found it impossible not to touch upon the strange dark voices they heard, not realizing that these very voices made a new conception of Heaven necessary. The graveyard poets were attempting to encompass a black vision of the world (what we would now call a Gothic vision) where death was not just a "port of calms" but a very real spectre of the mind. They found themselves more interested in this spectre than the older vision of Christianity in which they were attempting to encompass it. It is this vision of darkness which they express best poetically, and thus the form of their poems tends to break down. Inadvertently, the vision that they

⁵⁹ Edward Young, The Complaint, p. 513, lines 80-83.

held up only to condemn was so powerfully realized that the search for immortality came to be not a positive but a negative poetic truth. Immortality offered a retreat from this new vision of man; it was not a triumphant assertion.

Walpole and the later Gothic novelists took the conventions of the graveyard poetry -- the charnel house, the funeral yew, the shrieking owl, the ruins of an old church -- and incorporated them into an atmosphere of horror and mystery. Very rarely did they bother with the outward form of the graveyard poet's sermon. The massive factor was not the search for immortality but the vision of blackness.

One of the most insistent problems for the eighteenth century poet or novelist was this matter of form. One has only to look at the great number of different imitations attempted -- Miltonic verse, the Spenserian stanza, the ode, the song, the elegy -- to realize how central this problem is to an understanding of eighteenth century literary endeavours. This movement which turned to other cultures, especially primitive cultures, for inspiration is something which is continually happening, and it would be foolish to consider it endemic to the Gothic revival in England. One particular imitation, however, is particularly relevant to this study of the Gothic, the recreation of medieval poetry. The two poets in this connection who probably most influenced Walpole and later Gothic novelists are Gray and Macpherson.

Gray is an interesting example of the man who is an aristocratic Augustan in temperament, an extensive researcher into languages and literature, and a poet who is interested in working with the conventions of medieval literature. There seems to be no doubt in the minds of most literary historians that Gray was the most learned medievalist of the eighteenth century. As a result, it comes as no surprise to find he wrote the poem, "The Bard," with its many references to Cambria. The poem is a survey of early English history...seen through the eyes of a Welsh poet. This unique approach was made possible by Gray's studies in early Welsh and Scandinavian poetry. The content of "The Bard," the denunciation of Edward I by a wild Welsh poet, was truly revolutionary. Its form, however, was chosen from good classical stock; it is a Pindaric ode. The setting of the poem, "on a rock whose haughty brow / frowns o'er old Conway's foaming flood," and the description of the poet:

With haggard eyes the poet stood
 (Loose his beard and hoary hair
 Streamed, like a meteor, to the troubled air),
 And with a master's hand and prophet's fire
 Struck the deep sorrows of his lyre⁶⁰

combine to give the poem that intensity of expression which the eighteenth century so admired in Gothic art. But the stateliness and formal exactness of the Pindaric ode are antithetical to the spontaneity, lyricism, and primitive poetic

⁶⁰ Thomas Gray, "The Bard," in Eighteenth Century Poetry and Prose, p. 599, lines 18-22.

genius which the poem exalts. The result of this classical elaboration of the spontaneity of medievalism is a classical poem about medievalism. Medievalism is given an historical rather than a poetic treatment.

Gray also did translations of two Scandinavian poems, "The Fatal Sisters" and "The Descent of Odin." He translated both into a conventional tetrameter, rhyming one in couplets and the other in quatrains. No attempt was made to rework the horror of blood and gore into any sustained atmosphere of terror; he translated the poems as he might have translated poems by Horace. Whereas the Gothic novelists wished to capitalize on the terror inherent in the older heroic vision of the world, Gray was interested in the heroic vision itself. He was content to sit in his study and simply translate; he had no desire to use the older poetry for any ulterior motives.

Gray's poems probably influenced Walpole by giving moral support more than anything else. The very fact that his scholar-friend found the medieval stories interesting enough to translate and recreate would be helpful to Walpole when he was thinking of publishing his own version of Gothic tales. But whereas Gray was content to give a classical reproduction of the pagan literature, Walpole and the later Gothic novelists were not.

If what I am saying is correct, that the mid-eight-

teenth century literature is a literature in search of a form to express the new ideas inherent in medievalism, then surely one answer to this problem was found in the poetry of Macpherson. James Macpherson was a big, burly Scot, a graduate from Aberdeen University with an immense enthusiasm and respect for the romantic traditions of his native land. Home and Blair, devotees of Scottish literature, soon made the friendship of this fellow countryman, and finding in him the ideal qualities to promote the literature of Scotland, convinced him that he should supply stories of his country's chivalric past. Not long after this, Macpherson began to publish what were purported to be old Gaelic epics. It has never been shown conclusively to what extent Macpherson's "translations" were based upon surviving manuscripts, but scholars tend to take the view that most of his poetry was created from a slight oral tradition.

In 1760 Macpherson published Fragments of Ancient Poetry Collected in the Highlands of Scotland. Introduced as translations of Gaelic, these fragments were an instantaneous success not only in Scotland but in England as well. Considering that at this time England was in a very anti-Scots humour, the success of the Fragments is even more astounding. Macpherson was urged to find and translate more, and in 1762 the slightly bedazzled celebrity published Fingal: An Ancient Epic Poem in Six Books. The poems of Ossian, for

so they were styled in the collected edition, became the rage of the day, even sweeping across the Channel to take Europe by storm. Educated men such as Gray and Mason read and enjoyed Ossian; Napoleon carried a copy on his campaigns; and Goethe drew inspiration for his Werther from Ossian. With the publishing of Ossian, the medieval literatures and themes finally won whole-hearted acceptance.

Macpherson always claimed that he was going to produce the original manuscripts of his "translations," but of course he never did. This aroused the anger of some like Samuel Johnson who had to have the truth at all costs, and could not stand to see the public duped by a forger. For most people, however, it made little difference whether Ossian were genuine or not. They were willing to crown either Macpherson or Ossian with the wreaths due to original genius. Ossian was not read (and this can not be stressed too strongly), for its philological or historic interest, but because it appealed as poetry. Walpole and Gray enjoyed the poems because of their high romance and epic style -- for some of the same reasons as people in former days enjoyed the Iliad or the Brut. Macpherson had captured some of the mystery, the sense of wyrd, and the bleak loneliness of the Scottish heaths, and incorporated them into a poetic prose that was at once different and yet easily readable. He gave life to medieval lore, popularizing it in a form that the eighteenth century had been waiting for and could easily accept.

Ossian is important for this study of the Gothic because it shows that many people were willing to accept the "barbarisms" of medieval setting and style. Macpherson's rhythmic prose, with its Biblical quality and simplicity of structure, made it admirably suited for the medieval sentiments; and unlike Addison, Hurd or Warton, Macpherson plunged directly into his materials using the simplicity of form instead of depreciating it. He accepted the fact that he was writing Gaelic verse and did not try to distort it with a cover of classical reserve.

One of the factors of the Ossianic poetry which is not often enough noted is that it concentrates upon one aspect of pagan literature, melancholy, to the almost complete neglect of the great vitality and colour inherent in this literature. Macpherson wrote poetry about an age that had been dead for centuries, and the poet Ossian, his theme, is telling of an age even further removed. This technique of telling a story about a narrator telling a story creates a wonderfully melancholy situation in which the sadness of the ubi sunt theme is doubly impressed. Two major strains in the eighteenth century were those of primitivism and sentimentalism; Macpherson successfully combined the two in Ossian by creating a sentimental (or melancholy, if you prefer) version of the primitive.

This is not to denigrate Macpherson's achievement. It was a real achievement and he did write good poetry.

His description of Balclutha is a good example of what is meant when it is said Macpherson was writing about melancholy:

'Raise, ye bards,' said the mighty Fingal, 'the praise of unhappy Moina. Call her ghost, with your songs, to our hills, that she may rest with the fair of Morven, the sunbeams of other days, the delight of heroes of old. I have seen the walls of Balclutha, but they were desolate. The fire had resounded in the halls; and the voice of the people is heard no more.'⁶¹

Using the Gaelic traditions, Macpherson drew upon that feeling of sadness with which the poets mourned a passing age, and made this the centre of his poetry. As such, his poetry appealed marvellously to a century that was only too happy to sentimentalize over the loss of the snows of yesteryear.

The Ossianic poems, devoted as they were to descriptions of melancholy, left unexplored that rude, barbaric intensity which all men agreed was at the heart of Gothic art. Walpole described this attribute when he said that the Gothic had an "unrestrained licentiousness." No doubt these are strong words for a description of an art form, but the phrase "unrestrained licentiousness" does show how strongly the eighteenth century felt about their heritage. When Macpherson sentimentalized the primitive he was not dealing with this wild passion in the Gothic tradition, he was not dealing with

⁶¹ James Macpherson, "Carthou," Eighteenth Century Poetry and Prose, p. 762, lines 35-40.

the dark Gothic vision at all, but with the conventions of Pamela, Clarissa, or the drama of the day, applied to a medieval setting. Macpherson sentimentalized primitivism and primitivized the sentimental without ever dealing with the "unrestrained licentiousness" which was at the heart of the eighteenth century's conception of Gothic.

The Gothic aspects of medievalism were still left untouched after Macpherson, and it fell to the lot of Horace Walpole and later novelists to attempt to deal with this theme. Macpherson did show that the medieval could be developed within a form entirely its own. The Gothic novelists took up the task of developing the terror and horror inherent in the Gothic with a freedom of expression won for them by Ossian.

IV HORACE WALPOLE AND THE GOTHIC NOVEL

The year 1764 is an important date for historians of the novel since it was in this year that the first of the Gothic novels appeared. This novel which caused so much excitement throughout England at the time, and which has been a literary milestone ever since, was first published under the innocuous title of The Castle of Otranto, A Story. The title page stated that the story had been written by an Italian, Onuphrio Muralto, a Canon at St. Nicholas' church in Otranto. The translator was one William Marshall, Gentleman. As can be seen from the Translator's Preface, Marshall took great pains to present his readers with as many of the facts concerning the original manuscript as he, himself, was acquainted with. He sets the original date of the story sometime in the Middle Ages, between the years 1095 and 1243.

The preface with its detailed references and explanations certainly gives an air of credibility to the story and I would warrant that most modern readers, if they stumbled upon the book in a library, would be inclined to take William Marshall at face value. However, the men of letters in the eighteenth century were not so easily duped. The quarrel over Macpherson's "translations" perhaps had put them on their guard and left them wary of translators.

Rumours circulated about the possible identity of the author of this new and highly original romance, The Castle of Otranto; many eighteenth century people concluded that, since the author had done such a realistic job of making the Middle Ages come to life through his characterizations, he must be a noted medievalist. Thomas Gray was the most likely suspect; Gray denied his authorship vehemently.

At this point, while the issue of authorship was being hotly contested, and after the novel had won wide acceptance in the best circles, the true author decided it was time to come forward and take his bows. It was safe; this new type of romance had merited praise and not scorn. Horace Walpole stepped forward. However, unlike Macpherson and Chatterton, who deliberately attempted to make the public accept their poems as genuine medieval coin, Walpole never had this intention to be a forger. He hid under the guise of a translator to protect himself from the ridicule of the public in the event that his romance failed. The Castle of Otranto was a story from Walpole's own world of dreams and like any other person, Walpole did not want this dream-world violated and abused.

Walpole had been unsure whether to even publish the work or not and only after he had sought the advice of his friend Gray, and Gray had advised him to do so did he allow the work to be published. Then, after the work achieved popularity and there seemed to be no danger of making a fool

of himself, he decided to reveal his authorship. Writing to the Earl of Hertford, Walpole discussed The Castle of Otranto, "the success of which has, at last, brought me to own it, though the wildness of it made me terribly afraid; but it was comfortable to have it please so much, before any mortal suspected the author: indeed it met with too much honour, for at first it was universally believed to be Mr. Gray's."⁶²

The following year, after the five hundred copies of the first edition had been sold, the second edition appeared complete with a new preface in which Walpole announced to the world his authorship and gave his reasons for not originally publishing under his own name. "The favourable manner in which this little piece has been received by the public calls upon the author to explain the grounds on which he composed it. But before he opens those motives, it is fit that he should ask pardon of his readers for having offered his work to them under the borrowed personage of a translator. As diffidence of his own abilities, and the novelty of the attempt, were the sole inducements to assume that disguise, he flatters himself he shall appear excusable. He resigned his performance to the impartial judgment of the public, determined to let it perish in obscurity, if disapproved; not meaning to avow such a trifle, unless better

⁶²Letter to the Earl of Hertford, March 26, 1765, ed. Toynbee, VI, 205.

judges should pronounce that he might own it without a blush."⁶³

Turning now to the novel itself, we see, in addition to the new preface, another important alteration in the format of the second edition. The title of the work has been altered from The Castle of Otranto, A Story to The Castle of Otranto, A Gothic Story.

The insertion of this single word may seem a trifling matter at first, but it most assuredly is not. In the first place, it influenced titles of later romances such as Clara Reeve's The Old English Baron, a Gothic Tale and Dr. Nathan Drake's Henry Fitzowen, a Gothic Tale. Furthermore, literary historians have been led to apply this term Gothic to a vast number of novels written in the latter half of the eighteenth century, all of which deal to some extent in the mysterious or supernatural. In fact, the Gothic novels were so many and so popular that critics such as R. D. Mayo have pointed out that they form the very backbone of the world of fiction for perhaps a decade.⁶⁴

How did Walpole and his successors use this term Gothic in connection with literature? In a letter to Cole

⁶³Horace Walpole, The Castle of Otranto, the Preface to the second edition, in Shorter Novels of the 18th Century (London, 1930), Everyman's Library, p. 102.

⁶⁴R. D. Mayo, "How Long Was Gothic Fiction In Vogue?", Modern Language Notes, LVIII (January 1943), 58-64.

soon after his novel was published Walpole asked, "Shall I even confess to you what was the origin of this romance? I waked one morning in the beginning of last June from a dream, of which all I could recover was, that I had thought myself in an ancient castle (a very natural dream for a head filled like mine with Gothic story) and that on the uppermost bannister of a great staircase I saw a gigantic hand in armour."⁶⁵ This, coupled with his description of the story he gave to Cole a month earlier, "a profane work in the style of former centuries,"⁶⁶ would seem to indicate that a Gothic story was simply a story about the Middle Ages, or the times of the Goths. Further evidence that this is how the term Gothic was used with regard to novels is found in the preface to Clara Reeve's The Old English Baron. "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, at the same time it assumes a character and manner of its own that differs from both; it is distinguished by the appellation of a Gothic story, being a picture of Gothic times and manners."⁶⁷ That Walpole and the later Gothic novelists called their novels Gothic because they were

⁶⁵Letter to Cole, March 9, 1765, ed. Lewis, I, 88.

⁶⁶Letter to Cole, February 28, 1765, ed. Lewis, I, 85.

⁶⁷Seven Masterpieces of Gothic Horror, ed. Robert Donald Spector, Bantam Books (New York, 1963), p. 105.

set in Gothic (medieval) times does not deny that they chose the medieval because the weird and supernatural were part and parcel of this age. On the contrary, that they did so goes without argument. But the weird and supernatural had not yet been dissociated from the medieval and given the specific term Gothic. In later writings this term Gothic began to be associated principally with the mysterious until "Gothic" had as one of its primary meanings -- weird. For the later romantics, Byron and Shelley, The Castle of Otranto was Gothic because weird, not because set in Gothic times.

This is an important point and should not be slighted. For a modern reader "Gothic" is immediately associated with architecture and the question, "How do the Gothic novels compare with the Gothic cathedrals?" is inevitably asked. For most persons the word Gothic probably conjures up mental pictures of famous cathedrals, such as Salisbury and Notre Dame; this was not the case for people in the eighteenth century. "Gothic," as I have already pointed out, was not restricted merely to a type of art; but was a synonym for "medieval." This is not to say that men in the eighteenth century did not use the term Gothic to apply to cathedrals, or as O. E. Lovejoy maintains, that they were unsure which cathedrals were Gothic.⁶⁸ Early in the eighteenth century, John Evelyn, while in the midst of consigning to perdition

⁶⁸ O. E. Lovejoy, "The First Gothic Revival", in his book Essays In The History of Ideas (New York, 1948), pp. 136-165.

all works that deviated from the classical style, mentions just a few Gothic churches: "Westminster, Canterbury, Salisbury, Peterborow, Ely, Wells, Beverly, Lincoln, Gloucester, York, Durham and other Cathedrals and Minsters... at Amiens, Paris, Rouen, Tours, Lyons...."⁶⁹

Undoubtedly Evelyn knew Gothic cathedrals when he saw them, but the reason they were Gothic cathedrals was much more apparent to Evelyn than to us. They were Gothic because built by the Goths, hence built in Gothic times, and therefore Gothic. Once people discovered that the Goths did not build the cathedrals, the term Gothic began to lose its meaning, "of the Goths," until now this meaning has been entirely lost. What we must remember here is that when Walpole called his novel a Gothic novel he meant it had a medieval setting and peculiarities.

There is another point, already touched upon in chapter one, that should be mentioned again. "Gothic," besides being a synonym of "medieval," also had an underlayer of meanings -- of meanings denoting value. This was observed when it was pointed out that the derivation of "Gothic" is from gotica meaning boorish. From being initially a term of reproach, the word Gothic underwent many variations of meaning until in the mid-and late eighteenth century it was

⁶⁹ John Evelyn, An Account of Architects and Architecture (London, 1706), pp. 9-15. This passage was quoted from Sprague Allen's Tides in English Taste, II, 46, as Evelyn's book was unavailable.

a term with a whole raft of meanings. At one end was "boorish" and at the other, "sublime;" in between there were countless subtle variations. This wide range of meaning resulted from the changing attitude towards the Gothic (medieval) ages. Whether Walpole or any other eighteenth century writer is using it as an adjective of opprobrium or praise depends, therefore, almost solely upon context. Often, of course, "Gothic" was used with none of this underlayer of meaning, but simply to categorize the broad historical age.

What Walpole did not mean by "Gothic novel" was a weird or supernatural novel; such terms were not, as yet, synonyms for "Gothic." But what sort of connotations did Walpole have in mind when he chose the description "A Gothic Novel?" This question can best be answered by examining Walpole's attitude towards the Middle Ages as seen in his novel. About his attitude towards the Middle Ages in general, we are already somewhat familiar from the study of Strawberry Hill. The atmosphere of the Middle Ages was useful for producing exciting visions, but its art was altogether unacceptable in the more refined eighteenth century. A comment of his upon Gothic architecture is relevant here, "Gothic churches infuse superstition; Grecian, admiration."⁷⁰ The art of the Middle Ages Walpole neither praised nor blamed;

⁷⁰ Walpole, Anecdotes of Painting in England, ed. Lowndes (London), p. 70.

this art appealed to his emotions, not his reason. Because it did appeal emotionally, Walpole believed that no valid critical standard could be brought to bear against it, and thus dismissed it as being ipso facto not an important art form. Thus, when Walpole called his novel a Gothic novel, the word Gothic carried no tincture of either praise or blame. The novel was meant to be neither good nor bad, but simply to give impressions, feelings, and intuitions to the reader.

This attitude of Walpole's, that Gothic was not something to reason about but to feel, is one of the keys to understanding his intention in writing The Castle of Otranto. What particular intuitions and feelings Walpole was attempting to stimulate can best be understood when his novel is seen in relation to the eighteenth century's attitude towards the cathedrals. What people enjoyed most in these cathedrals was the vast amount of sculpture and intricate tracery on the walls and tombs. The seeming lack of unified design in all this complexity gave a feeling of wildness. As a result, "Gothic" came to have connotations of the irregular or chaotic, which in twentieth century terminology could best be expressed by "artistic anarchy." "Irregular" and "chaotic" soon became juxtaposed with "freedom," and "Gothic" actually came to be used to mean freedom in

political writings.⁷¹ These uses of the word Gothic are reflected in Strawberry Hill where the Gothic styling was chosen for the house and the riant for the garden, both to allow the imagination freedom. These impressions of freedom, irregularity, and even chaos were what Walpole was aiming for in The Castle of Otranto. The reader was supposed to intuit and experience from the form and expression the mystery and wildness that was inherent in the Gothic; Walpole did not want his readers to sit calmly down and logically apply critical maxims of praise and blame.

Does The Castle of Otranto substantiate this hypothesis that what Walpole wanted from a Gothic novel was irregularity, freedom, and mystery? It might be thought that the question could be answered simply by turning to the novels themselves and checking for similarities. The case is not so simple. Walpole makes it clear in his preface to the second edition that The Castle of Otranto is not meant to be only Gothic. "It was an attempt to blend the two kinds of romance: the ancient and the modern.... The author of the following pages thought it possible to reconcile the two kinds. Desirous of leaving the powers of fancy at liberty to expatiate through the boundless realms of invention, and thence of creating more interesting situations, he wished to conduct the mortal agents

⁷¹For an interesting account of this use of the word Gothic see Alfred E. Longueil, "The Word 'Gothic' in 18th Century Criticism," MLN, XXXVIII (1923), 453-460.

in his drama according to the rules of probability; in short, to make them think, speak, and act, as it might be supposed mere men and women would do in extraordinary positions."⁷² This combination of the two types of romance produces a hybrid from which it is impossible to determine at all times whether the novelist is choosing his materials from the ancient or modern periods. One suspects that, given how little was actually known about the Middle Ages, Walpole deliberately set his novel in those times to gain greater freedom of technique. This is not an altogether unknown device, for the Pre-Raphaelites were to do this almost a century later.

One interesting fact that indicates something of what the Gothic novelists required from the Gothic is that none of the novelists went to the medieval romances for their subject material. None of the famous heroes such as Sir Gawain or Sir Lancelot are mentioned. Nor are the three subjects of medieval times, the "matter of Britain," "matter of France," and "matter of Rome," touched upon. What remains of the medieval traditions that could be borrowed is the tone or spirit, so that the Gothic novelists must have borrowed this if they borrowed anything.

Of all the many aspects of this tone, critics most love to develop the notion that The Castle of Otranto is

⁷²The Castle of Otranto, p. 102.

somehow a forerunner of surrealistic art and that later Gothic novelists became even more surrealistic in their treatment of subject matter. Certainly there is some reason for regarding Gothic novelists as tending towards the surrealistic. It has already been mentioned that Walpole conceived his idea for The Castle of Otranto in a dream, a dream in which he saw the "gigantic hand in armour" that was so to frighten poor Bianca. Furthermore, upon awakening from his dream, Walpole immediately set about writing, and the result was a full-blown novel. It is said that he sketched the structure in eight days, and was up nights for the following two months writing until he could no longer hold a pen, and then falling into bed exhausted. M. G. Lewis was reported to have also run night into day when The Monk took possession of him. This type of writing, in which passion and intensity concurred, was the forte of the surrealists.

Mary Shelley's description of the birth of Frankenstein is perhaps worth repeating to give some idea of the force of such dreams. "Night waned upon this talk [between Byron and Shelley], and even the witching hour had gone by, before we retired to rest. When I placed my head on my pillow I did not sleep, nor could I be said to think. My imagination, unbidden, possessed and guided me, gifting the successive images that arose in my mind with a vividness far beyond the usual bounds of reverie. I saw with shut eyes,

but acute mental vision -- I saw the pale student of unhallowed arts kneeling beside the thing he had put together. I saw the hideous phantasm of a man stretched out, and then, on the working of some powerful engine, show signs of life, and stir with an uneasy half vital motion."⁷³ Frankenstein is not actually a close member of the Gothic novel in the tradition of Walpole, but it has many of the characteristics; the manner in which it was conceived will give some idea of why these novels failed to have a simple moulded form.

An anecdote that Walpole related to Madame Du Deffand lends support to the supposition that he had surrealistic leanings. Some five years after the publication of the novel, while on a visit to Trinity College, Cambridge, Walpole had wandered into the courtyard of Trinity, and to his astonishment...had found himself in his Otranto. Walpole must have drawn unconsciously upon his memory of Trinity to supply the features of Otranto; and for the shock of recognition to have been so great, he must have had an unusually acute mental image of Otranto. Taken with a grain of caution, this incident throws some light on the unconscious elements that played a role in the development of his novel. As if this example were not enough, recent evidence of Montague Summers has disclosed that there was a Principality of Otranto in Italy and a Prince of Otranto named Manfred

⁷³
Mary Shelley, Frankenstein, in Everyman's Library (New York, 1921), p. ix.

whose actions much resembled those of Walpole's *Manfred*. Is this a coincidence? or something else that Walpole had tucked away in his subconscious?

Whether The Castle of Otranto is surrealistic or not is a question that is more academic than useful. What is certain is that it does have many dream-like qualities. Philip Henderson, in his introduction to Shorter Novels of the 18th Century, has pointed out some of the reasons for this.⁷⁴ Probably the most important is the way in which Walpole makes use of the supernatural, the way the different parts of the dissevered giant seem to be floating through the novel and turning up at quite unexpected (and unprepared for) moments. The supernatural seem to have a life of its own, impinging upon the consciousness of the novelist whenever it pleases. The supernatural does not function as an integral, rationally constructed unit, but as an omniscient commentary imposed from outside the scheme of the novel. This role of the supernatural can be more clearly observed when it is realized that, if all the supernatural events were removed from The Castle of Otranto, there would still remain a fairly complete plot. The picture stepping down from the wall, the three drops of blood from Alfonso's statue, the giant sceptre, and the armoured hand are but pasteboard props which at moments mysteriously rise to the

⁷⁴Henderson, pp. 7-8.

surface of the story with a mystifying dream-like quality.

The juxtaposing of different levels of prose throughout the novel makes any consistent perspective impossible, and aids this dream-like effect. The language of the narrator, for example, prepares the reader for a somewhat pompous and artificial interpretation of events. Such is the account of the events following the fatal stabbing:

Jerome on the other side comforted her [Matilda] with discourses of heaven; and holding a crucifix before her, which she bathed with innocent tears, prepared her for her passage to immortality. Manfred, plunged in the deepest affliction, followed the litter in despair.

(V, 188)

This is contrasted with the Shakespearian tone of Manfred's prose:

'Do I dream?' cried Manfred, returning, 'or are the devils themselves in league against me? Speak, infernal spectre! or, if thou art my grand-sire, why dost thou, too, conspire against thy wretched descendant, who too dearly pays for --.'

(I, 116)

Matilda's prose is different again from that of Manfred's:

I hope my dearest Isabella does not doubt her Matilda's friendship: I never beheld that youth until yesterday; he is almost a stranger to me: but as the surgeons have pronounced your father out of danger, you ought not to harbour uncharitable resentments against one, who, I am persuaded, did not know the marquis was related to you.

(IV, 169)

This difference of style is not merely a matter of particularizing different characters, but goes much deeper. In a novel,

one generally expects to find a fairly consistent style; it does not matter whether it is the high-blown rhetoric of Richardson, the realism of Defoe, or the mock heroic of Fielding, so long as the style is consistent. But in The Castle of Otranto, there is an admixture of the sweetness of Pamela and the naturalism of Moll Flanders which defies any attempt on the reader's part to assume either perspective. Constantly shifting from one style to another, The Castle of Otranto seems to resemble more the dream of a person in a half-sleeping state than the purposeful creation of a novelist. Always in the background are the sable plumes of the helmet swaying gently to and fro, a hypnotic reminder that this Otranto is not to be found on any geographic map.

This dream-like effect in The Castle of Otranto is not peculiar to this novel alone, but is found in many of the other Gothic novels as well. Lewis, in the opening of The Monk, crowds a series of mysterious happenings into the space of a few short pages. Leonella rudely pushes into a crowded church dragging the veiled beauty, Antonia; flirts outrageously with the cavaliers; and then announces that they have come to hear the "Man of Holiness" speak. Lorenzo, waiting in "the gothic obscurity" of the church, picks up a love note and finds it to be destined for his sister Agnes -- a nun. Burning with rage he fights with the unknown lover, only to find him an old schooldays' friend. And so, with this beginning, where good is inextricably mingled with evil, and light

with darkness, the novel proceeds with a dream-like inconsequence. Lewis's The Monk has been called a nightmare, and this is true in more senses than was intended.

Something of this same effect is evidenced in Maturin's Melmoth the Wanderer where the story is not composed of a single plot, but of a series of tales nested one inside the other like a set of Chinese boxes. With this type of structure, Maturin is able to comment upon the central theme -- the evils inherent in sects and factions -- from many different points of view. The same story is told over and over again, only with new characters and new situations. Whether it is Stanton being confined unjustly to Bedlam by the greed of a relative or Isidora's primeval innocence being corrupted by the malice of Christianity, the theme is the same. Through it all, stalks the grim spectre of Melmoth lending a somewhat tenuous link to the various tales. This series of nested tales can, of course, evince much more of the dream-like quality than can Walpole's simple tale with his sable plumes waving in the background. Yet both tales do have this similar dream-like tone, something which seems to be inevitable when a novelist attempts to handle Gothic elements within the framework of the real world.

The problems inherent in handling a Gothic vision of the world seem practically insoluble and even today

novelists such as Faulkner have no little trouble. The primary problem, as it seems to me, is how to express the feeling that Evil is at the centre of the world when dealing with a literary setting of ordinary everyday problems of man versus man. To express these forces of Evil the novelist has an overpowering urge (as witnessed by Poe, Hawthorne and Melville) to give them poetic expression in allegory (the tarn, the Black Man, the white whale). This tendency to allegorize man's feelings of helplessness before the Colossus, Evil, or to cast them into mysterious forces existing in the real world was present even in Walpole's novel. The mythic giant of Otranto, dismembered and experiencing violent growing pains, embodies a primal force of growth that will not be enslaved. To give this symbol some sort of imaginative realism and yet to mitigate the force of the giant's physical realism, Walpole consciously or unconsciously utilized a dream sequence. That Walpole was none too successful is obvious, but measured in terms of influence, Walpole was very successful, for this dream sequence was to become the major means of adapting the Gothic to the realistic. Later writers owe a large debt to Walpole for this technique of the dream.

The discussion in chapter three, where the Gothic literature before Walpole was investigated, becomes now relevant. If it is once clearly understood that Walpole was working within a well-founded tradition of Gothic literature, and that his novel The Castle of Otranto did not burst upon

the scene like Athena from the head of Zeus, then much of the dream quality and proto-surrealism can be explained historically. To ignore the fact that there were writers before Walpole, such as Macpherson, Parnell, Gray, Warton and Hurd, who had all handled the medieval in some form, and whose somewhat similar attitudes formed a tradition of which Walpole could not help but be aware is to ignore the largest influence of all upon Walpole -- history.

These precursors of Walpole went to great pains to accommodate the medieval to what they considered to be the classical ideal. For various reasons, they all felt that it was impossible to deal with the medieval without also dealing with the classical. Even Macpherson oriented his Gaelic tales so that they would appeal to the eighteenth century tradition of sentiment and melancholy. Melancholy, the more timid sentiments of pity and fear, and the inevitable display of tears, had all found ready acceptance, whereas the more powerful emotions inherent in the medieval vision had remained unacceptable. Somehow the tears and sentiment of Pamela fitted in with the eighteenth century's desire to deal with social problems and to ignore man's darker aspirations which were inimical to the social structure. When people like Hurd and Warton dealt with the medieval there was a tendency to search for rules that would explain the medieval "licentiousness" and thus enable them either to control the larger-than-life emotions or ignore them as being sound

and fury signifying nothing.

That Walpole's The Castle of Otranto has many of the same qualities as Richardson's Pamela is no surprise when one considers the tradition in which he was writing. Just as his precursors had turned to sentiment to ward off the dangerous "wildness" of the Gothic so did Walpole. Many of the characters in the two stories are almost identical. Manfred and Mr. B. are both essentially good men who have been turned into villains by their pride and lustful desires. Mr. B. pursues Pamela with all the craft at his disposal; similarly, Manfred attempts to seduce Isabella with all the force and wile he can manage. When provoked, both men turn into raging tyrants, calling down eternal destruction on the entire world as well as on the unfortunate maidens. Isabella and Pamela are virtually twins, both being young ladies of irreproachable character who will do anything for their parents, but nothing for their lovers. At the end of Pamela, Mr. B. finally marries Pamela after supposedly having a change of heart. This type of virtue (quite mercenary actually) is repeated at the end of Walpole's romance, when Theodore, after having grieved for Matilda for a suitable length of time, marries Isabella and settles down to indulge his melancholy with his amoretto's best friend. If Pamela is on the Index for false virtue so should The Castle of Otranto be for false loyalty.

Much of the plot also seems to be derived from

Pamela, for a large part of The Castle of Otranto is occupied with Manfred's pursuit of Isabella, notwithstanding that her capture has already been doomed to failure by the prophecy. Just as Mr. B. chases Pamela through hundreds of pages, down halls, over beds, and into closets, so does Manfred pursue Isabella around dark rooms, into Gothic chambers and through secret passages. In plot, in characterization, and even occasionally in tone the two novels are quite similar, clearly indicating Walpole's deep indebtedness to Richardson.

The similarities between the two novels must not be allowed to obscure the fact that there are dissimilarities. Walpole introduced the supernatural and the horrific, something completely absent from Richardson's work. But the very fact that it is possible to distinguish between Richardson's contribution and that of Walpole should indicate that Walpole did not create a synthesis of the two, but rather placed both objectively side by side. Walpole admitted to something like this when he stated in the preface that the novel was a conscious attempt "to blend the two kinds of romance: the ancient and the modern." Why he wanted the Gothic was to create "more interesting situations," but he did not want these "interesting situations" to interfere with the way his characters acted. His characters had to do what "mere men and women would do in extraordinary positions."⁷⁵

⁷⁵Castle of Otranto, p. 102.

Walpole's success in keeping these two strains, the miraculous and the realistic, distinct is given curious evidence in the successor to The Castle of Otranto. Clara Reeve, in the preface to The Old English Baron, tells her readers explicitly that she is writing a novel in imitation of Walpole's. Then, in her own words she gives the purpose of a romance, "The business of romance is, first, to excite the attention; and, secondly, to direct it to some useful, or at least innocent, end."⁷⁶ An inkling of how much she (and for that matter all of the Gothic novelists) was indebted to the novel of sentiment, and how much the Gothic novel is an offspring of the sentimentalists, can be gathered from her dedication of the novel to Samuel Richardson's daughter. This heavy accent upon the moral and the sparing use of the supernatural cannot be totally attributed to the genre, however. This would be foolish. Much of it is a result of Miss Reeve's own personality. Miss Reeve was already forty-eight years of age when her first novel appeared, and moreover, she was the spinster daughter of an Ipswich vicar. Yet even when these piquant facts are taken into account, much still remains to be learned about the Gothic novel from observing how Miss Reeve handles the new conventions of this hybrid romance. Speaking of Walpole's novel, she says, "The opening excites the attention very strongly; the conduct of the story is artful and judicious; the characters are admirably drawn and supported; the diction

⁷⁶Preface to The Old English Baron, p. 105.

polished and elegant; yet, with all these brilliant advantages, it palls upon the mind (though it does not upon the ear); and the reason is obvious, the machinery is so violent that it destroys the effect it is intended to excite. Had the story been kept within the utmost verge of probability, the effect had been preserved, without losing the least circumstance that excites or detains the attention."⁷⁷ This passage makes clear Miss Reeve's conservative position that the supernatural was not supposed to be used for its own sake; its role was to give an effect, to excite the fancy, but always in such a way as to help the progress of the story.

In her own Gothic novel, The Old English Baron, this is exactly what Miss Reeve tried to do. She introduces only one ghost, a very mild-mannered and quiet ghost who groans only occasionally. Some critics have said that her conservatism has resulted in the baby being thrown out with the bath water. Unlike Walpole, Miss Reeve ignores the possibility of keeping her readers in suspense and reveals early in the story that the orphaned Edmund is the true heir of Lovel and that the FitzOwens have a false deed to the castle. But to accuse Miss Reeve of a poor novel because of these is not quite fair; she did this purposely, and has relied for her effects entirely upon the portrayal of feudal times: the trial by contest, medieval armour, and the one sedate ghost.

⁷⁷ Preface to The Old English Baron, p. 106.

After Miss Reeve's severe criticisms of Walpole's technique, it is no wonder that Walpole did not like her novel. Writing in a letter to Mason, he had this to say about Miss Reeve's modified Gothic, "Have you seen The Old Baron, a Gothic story, professedly written in imitation of Otranto, but reduced to reason and probability! It is so probable, that any trial for murder at the Old Bailey would make a more interesting story.... This is a caput mortuum."⁷⁸ That Walpole, who had written most of his story in the short space of two months, writing at a white heat to capture the remnants of his strange dream-vision, would not like this sober, well-constructed story is easy to understand. Yet Walpole's criticisms are too severe; the story is a good one. The pace is undeniably slow and stately, as would befit a spinster of Miss Reeve's years, but the construction is well-balanced and the reader's interest never lags. Furthermore, the mysterious supernatural does fit into the structure and does have a suitably unnerving effect. Walpole objects because the story does not have enough of the mysterious, because it is too reasonable. He forgets that one of his own criteria for The Castle of Otranto is that what follows as a result of the supernatural must be reasonable. Miss Reeve has merely emphasized one of the qualities of The Castle of Otranto to the neglect of the other. Her primary concern is with the

⁷⁸Letter to Mason, April 8, 1778, ed. Lewis, XXVII, 381-382.

moral, with the reasonableness of the actions, and consequently she uses the supernatural as a means only of furthering these aims. Walpole forgot that this strong undercurrent of moralising was part of his own novel, and that a Gothic novel must be realistic as well as miraculous.

That Walpole did object, is important. His position was clearly with the avant-garde who maintained that the primary purpose of a Gothic novel was to excite the reader, was to infuse him with new thoughts, feelings and ideas. If a Gothic novel's only effect was to tingle the reader's spine, Walpole would have maintained that this "tingling" was still better than Miss Reeve's cold portrayal of chivalry. In the years following the publication of The Castle of Otranto the assumption that Gothic was tied to the weird and supernatural became prevalent, and persons like Miss Reeve who struck to the older notion that Gothic was to excite by its medieval pageantry were slowly but surely shifted to the right wing. Yet, in the beginning, in Walpole's novel, there was a clumsy balance created between the two, a balance which was never completely destroyed until the Gothic came back from Germany in the Sturm und Drang. Gray's reply to Walpole on the reaction of Cambridge to The Castle of Otranto when the identity of the author was still a secret is interesting, "It engages our attention here, makes some of us cry a little, and all in general afraid to

go to bed o'nights."⁷⁹ These are the two reactions inherent to Walpole's novel. The first is the melancholy and tears resulting from the sad death of Matilda, and the other is the horror and fear that results from the Gothic vision of an all-powerful fate fore-dooming man. The Castle of Otranto is a dividing line in the history of the novel; it has the opposites of the literature before and after: the melancholy and the horror; the realism and the supernatural; the moral and the amoral. Later Gothic novelists relied more and more upon terror alone, whereas Walpole combined it with a realistic (sentimental) portrayal of man as a social being.

Because the hallmarks of the Gothic novel are terror and the supernatural -- a result of Walpole's novel, -- a cursory look at the way Walpole presented this terror will be valuable. One of the first things that must strike a modern reader is that novelists have greatly improved their techniques for presenting terror. From the work of Walpole to the works of Poe, Melville, Wilde and the present day mystery thrillers is surely a long reach. The essential difference is that, with Walpole it is the actors in the novel who are terrified, whereas with Poe or Wilde, the reader as well as the actors is terrified. In The Castle of Otranto there is no attempt made to prepare the reader for the supernatural events. A huge helmet falls from the sky and kills Conrad. No explanation is attempted to convince

⁷⁹ Letter from Gray, December 30, 1764, ed. Lewis, XIV, 137.

the reader of this extraordinary occurrence. Walpole treats it quite matter-of-factly, and his description of the helmet makes one think that helmets fall from the sky every day in Walpole's world. Historically this can be explained; Walpole took the miracles of medieval romance, and without adapting them, applied them to an eighteenth century novel. Yet this historical explanation does not in any way forestall the fact that a helmet dropping from the skies with no explanation is a trifle odd..

Walpole's supernatural fails to affect modern readers because it has no depth of significance. The helmet is just a helmet enlarged to huge proportions. There is nothing of the archetypal about Walpole's helmet as there is about Melville's white whale; consequently, once the helmet has fallen and killed Conrad as it is supposed to do, nothing is left to affect us. To convince his readers that the falling helmet does cause terror, that the picture which steps down from its frame is horrifying, Walpole resorts to telling his readers that they are horrifying. Again and again Walpole repeats, "the company was struck with terror and amazement;"⁸⁰ the reader is never struck with terror and amazement.

Edith Birkhead divides the early Gothic novels into

⁸⁰The Castle of Otranto, p. 110.

three separate divisions.⁸¹ The first she entitles the Gothic romance; into this category are placed writers such as Sophia Lee, Horace Walpole, and Clara Reeve. The second is the novel of suspense, written by Mrs. Radcliffe; and the third is the novel of terror written by Lewis, Maturin, Scott, and Beckford. In doing this she points up an important fact, that the early Gothic novelists were not totally committed to terror. Lewis and Maturin were the first Gothic novelists to break away from the conventions of the sentimental to wholly explore the possibilities of terror. Even Lewis and Maturin were not true iconoclasts, since their sub-plots contain characters such as Agnes and Isidora who resemble the stock heroines of Richardson.

In order to exist side by side with the light and fragile plots of the sentimental novel the amount and depth of the supernatural had to be drastically curtailed. It would have been impossible for Walpole to introduce an allegory of the depth and significance of Hawthorne's scarlet A into his novel. Such a symbol could not possibly have blended with the Richardsonian type of character which he was portraying. In so many ways did Walpole shape the Gothic conventions -- the hero-tyrant, the disinherited youth, the persecuted maiden, the prophecy of doom, the themes of violent seduction and incest, the over-riding sense of destiny

⁸¹

Edith Birkhead, The Tale of Terror (London, 1921), pp. 16-91.

in which an old order is destroyed to make way for a new -- that it is impossible to think of any other person but Walpole as the father of the Gothic novel. But even though Walpole was the first to use many of these conventions, he did not extend or explore them fully; in The Castle of Otranto they remain only lightly sketched.

Walpole's ghosts are good examples of a Gothic convention which is little more than a pasteboard shell. Of all miraculous occurrences, ghosts are probably the most blood chilling. Not only are they visitors from an unknown world but they are also spectral remnants of this world. That they are at once omniscient harbingers, and yet harbingers that still have the taint of death about them, makes these ghosts ideal to frighten the wits out of any man. Walpole, however, uses them quite matter-of-factly, and in one place has Manfred even speak scoffingly of them, "'Sot!' cried Manfred in a rage, 'is it only a ghost, then, that thou hast seen?'" Diego replies, "I had rather have seen ten whole ghosts."⁸² Manfred and Diego both are more frightened by a giant than they are by a ghost. On Walpole's terms, ghosts are only messengers of fate and can do no harm, whereas a giant is something real and harmful. The fact that a giant is more horrific than a ghost says much about the reality and imaginative conception of Walpole's supernatural.

⁸² The Castle of Otranto, p. 123.

The central fact, so important in Walpole's handling of the supernatural, is that the supernatural is only a series of masks, empty masks, behind which the reader is never allowed to probe. The supernatural, the horrific, and the sublime are not yet given full creative embodiment, but merely act as stage props to fill out the setting. Miss Reeve realized this and made the supernatural even more of a prop than Walpole had ever intended. Walpole wanted the supernatural but he wanted a type of supernatural that would imply Beckford's riotous orgies without having to describe them. In the same way that the Gothic of Strawberry Hill was meant to create atmosphere, the Gothic of literature was meant to supply the necessary stimulus to grant the reader delicious glimpses of the dark sublime. By giving his story an irregular, dream-like sequence, and touching only briefly upon the miracles of the medieval romance, Walpole was able to achieve a tone that suggested imaginative freedom. He refused to accept the anarchy of a Beckford or Lewis, and imposed the structured walls of the novel of sentiment to make such a literary chaos impossible.

That Walpole was successful in keeping these two different sets of conventions can be shown by pointing out his one misjudgment. It has always seemed to me that one episode in the novel is patently out of place. This incident occurs in the last chapter when Frederic, entering the oratory in search of Hippolita, finds instead a figure

"absorbed in prayer." Frederic speaks: "Reverend father, I sought the Lady Hippolita." The figure answers:

'Hippolita! replied a hollow voice; 'comest thou to this castle to seek Hippolita?' And then the figure, turning slowly round, discovered to Frederic the fleshless jaws and empty sockets of a skeleton, wrapt in a hermit's cowl.⁸³

This passage, coming as it does near the end of a novel in which the most frightening incident has been that of a picture stepping down from a wall, always gives me a jolt. The reason is not far to seek. Here, Walpole indulged in a description of horror and consequently has given much greater imaginative depth to the hermit-ghost. This hermit-ghost is no longer pasteboard, but a representative out of the literature of a Lewis or a Hawthorne, and as such, has no place in a novel where horror is scarcely implied far less described. The failure of this one incident (or, if you will, the grand success), seems to emphasize how well Walpole succeeded in keeping the miraculous consonant with the sentimental.

It has been noted by many including Caroline Spurgeon, that Walpole deserves credit for the creation of the Byronic hero. While there is no denying this (consider Bianca's description of the ideal lover as having "large back eyes, a smooth white forehead and manly curling locks like jet"), I

⁸³
The Castle of Otranto, p. 185.

think it tends to ignore a far greater contribution on the part of Walpole -- the introduction of that over-riding sense of fate against which the Faustian man battles gloriously, but in vain. The black shadow of fate which hangs over Otranto is given shape in the opening scene when the villagers first mention the prophecy. This prophecy, "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," gives to Manfred's actions an ironic twist that prepares the reader for his final downfall. The entire family of Manfred is under judgment from this prophecy, and the certainty that the blow is to fall soon gives a sense of predestination to all that happens.

The Gothic novelists after Walpole seem to have one and all been influenced by this idea that man is fated to fall. Throughout their writing, there is maintained a sense of imminent change, that the old order is outworn and must give place to a new. Walpole's successors embodied this in the symbol of the ruined Gothic castle. No matter in what century the story is placed, the castle is either in an advanced state of decay or is proceeding rapidly to become so. One cannot help but feel that in the novels of Mrs. Radcliffe, who specialized in varnished landscape descriptions, the symbol is not profound, but surely when all the Gothic castles fall into ruin this is more than a coincidence. Consciously or unconsciously, the Gothic novelists were impressing into their

work the feeling that an old order had outlived its usefulness, and that something new must take its place. These novels seemed to imply, very much in Greek terms, that the gods were dissatisfied, that a new generation must be born.

In The Castle of Otranto, this idea of a new birth, or of a growth which springs from within the ruins of the old, is expressed most notably through the growth of the giant, Alphonso. While Manfred is pursuing Isabella and conjuring up insane schemes to save his claim to Otranto, the body of Alphonso is growing with a persistence that nothing can deny. From the beginning of the novel, everyone but Manfred has been aware that the prophecy must soon come true, that the dying tree must be supplanted by a new growth. As parts of Alphonso continue to appear throughout the castle it becomes more and more obvious that the rightful owner is already outgrowing the confines of the castle, and that the old order is on the verge of disintegration.

This idea that fate is producing a spontaneous growth is even more spectacularly employed in Walpole's drama, The Mysterious Mother. Bertrand Evans has called this drama "the first Gothic play."⁸⁴ A description of the plot alone will emphasize the pervading sense of fate. The play begins some sixteen years after the husband of the Countess (the

⁸⁴ Bertrand Evans, Gothic Drama from Walpole to Shelley (Berkeley, 1947), p. 31.

mysterious mother) had been killed in an accident. At the time, grief for her husband overwhelmed the Countess and left her emotionally distraught, but not so her son Edmund. Edmund, who had an appointment with a young lady of the night on the very eve his father was killed, decided to keep the assignation. Learning of this, the Countess decided to take the place of the young lady and reprimand her son when he came to keep the appointment. Somehow, her emotions got the better of her, and she failed to identify herself. Ashamed of her act, she exiled Edmund to a foreign land. Too late, the damage had been done, and in the fullness of time she gave birth to a daughter, Adeliza. Yet the story opens, centres about, and ends, not in this plot, but in Edmund's attempt to return to his mother. The reader is given only hints of the above plot, and even Edmund has only a faint inkling that his mother is hiding some horrible secret. The crux of the play is that Edmund, while trying to convince his mother to let him return, falls in love with Adeliza, and secretly marries her. As soon as the Countess discovers this, she is forced to uncover her secret. In a single devastating scene in which the play collapses into gasps of horror, all is revealed. In the ending of The Castle of Otranto, the castle crumbles before the dilated shape of Alphonso; in the ending of The Mysterious Mother the world crumbles as the Countess kills herself and the new bridegroom rushes off to suicide in battle.

The Mysterious Mother is a play built totally around

suspense. All events are constructed to raise the reader's curiosity about, "What is this secret sin; this untold tale, that art cannot extract, nor penance cleanse?" Consequently, the play is one long foreshadowing of the coming catastrophe. Destiny has pronounced its ruling and nothing the Countess can do prevents the impetuous Edmund from returning to discover the secret. In a furious whirl of revelations the last scene makes clear to the audience and to Edmund that the sin was that of Oedipus, and the punishment, incest with a sister-daughter-wife. The primal taboo and offence against the father has been further compounded with the violation of sister-daughter. The first is a sin against nature; the second, against society. Edmund is completely and irrevocably damned. Walpole's flippant remark that, "I was desirous of striking a little out of the common road, and to introduce some novelty on our stage,"⁸⁵ has the ring of a jester who has just played Lear.

In the creation of this Gothic vision where man is pushed to the brink by fate, it is only natural that the emphasis should shift from Richardson's innocent maiden to the hero-villain. While keeping the theme of flight and pursuit, the Gothic novelist altered the central focus from the pursued to the pursuer. This is again reflected in tone; the sentimentalist was anxious to have his novels express the

⁸⁵
Works, I, 129.

primacy of light and redemption, of a virtue which if not always successful is at least triumphant. The Gothic novelist, on the other hand, was more interested in having his novels express the tone or mood of blackness and horror which is central to the chase itself. In the one, the novel looks forward to the new dawn, while in the other there is no new dawn. Nor is the black villain of Richardson wholly contemptible any longer; Manfred, Montoni, and Melmoth are raised above ordinary blackguards as a result of their noble passion. In this respect the novel of sentiment is basically bourgeois while that of the Gothic is aristocratic. The bourgeois respects the mores of society; the lofty aristocrat regards them as platitudes. The violence of the Gothic hero-villain is so great that he actually becomes a candidate for sympathy. There is a glimmering of the Faust in Manfred that was to haunt the pages of the later Gothic novels in the form of the Wandering Jew, Ahasuerus, or even Faust himself. The blackguard villainy of Lovelace has been transformed into the proud defiance of Melmoth.

Manfred touches upon these Faustian depths for but brief moments. Walpole seems never to have resolved the problem in his own mind whether Manfred was meant to be just a Lovelace violating a Clarissa or a Faust challenging the order of the cosmos. Standing before the spectre-picture Manfred bravely throws out his challenge, and through this derision achieves something of heroic stature. "Lead on!

I will follow thee to the gulf of perdition," Manfred triumphantly challenges.⁸⁶ No mean statement, this defiance echoes something of Hamlet's courage before his father's ghost. Manfred is afraid of the spectre, and yet still can defy it; this makes him great. Walpole describes this defiance well, "Manfred accompanied him at a little distance, full of anxiety and horror, but resolved." How finely that "but resolved" echoes upon the ear. This reckless impulse to defy both the spectres of earth and Heaven reminds one of the young but valorous Huck Finn who, in his attempt to save nigger Jim, cried, "All right, then I'll go to Hell." Manfred's Faustian qualities, as Leslie Fiedler has shown, have had a long and decisive influence upon American literature.⁸⁷ But whereas Manfred merely touches upon the surface of the Faustian ideal, later Gothic villains plunged to the depths. Ambrosio actually makes a pact with the Devil to earn his freedom from the Inquisitors, and Melmoth, in his various and prolonged wanderings, is a direct borrowing from the Wandering Jew. What was hinted at in Walpole -- the awful depth of Faust's soul -- became a stock convention with later Gothic novelists.

Gothic heroes, as Manfred so admirably illustrates,

⁸⁶The Castle of Otranto, p. 116.

⁸⁷Leslie Fiedler, Love and Death in the American Novel (New York, 1960), pp. 106-124.

are fraught with guilt and anxiety as a result of their self-imposed isolation in the ruins of an old and dying civilization. Not unnaturally, this guilt is most often associated with an offense by the father or against the father. Manfred's fall is a result of his grandfather poisoning Alphonso, and Edmund, in The Mysterious Mother, is the unknowing Oedipus. Even Miss Reeve's The Old English Baron has something of this, in that Walter Lovel, the villain, killed his brother and dispossessed the rightful heir, Edmund Lovel. The father image, as psychologists tell us, is imposed into the authoritarian mores and laws of society, and it is by challenging this authority that the Gothic villain begins his downward course. Frustrated and balked by the awareness of an inexorable fate pushing him on to isolation and then destruction, the Gothic villain lashes out in the attempt to destroy.

This desperate need for freedom which plunged the hero-villains into chaos, resulted in their lashing out against all sects and institutions. Walpole lightly touched upon this in The Castle of Otranto when Manfred makes his incensed attacks upon the good monk Jerome. By the time he came to write The Mysterious Mother some four years later (1768), the good Jerome has been transformed into the sly, malicious Benedict who marries Edmund and Adeliza for revenge. This scathing portrayal of the Catholic religion (generally presented in the times of the Inquisition) was developed

even more fully in Lewis's downright condemnation, which he expressed in his portrayals of wicked abbesses and corrupt priests. Even Mrs. Radcliffe, that gentle terrorist, throws some bricks at the Inquisition. It is in Maturin's Melmoth the Wanderer that this protest against social or religious institutions reaches its climax, for Maturin makes it his central theme. His idea of a good society was an Eve (not an Adam, since Adam needed Eve), alone on an island in the South Seas. This Eve, symbolized in Isidora the girl of nature, was alone able to subdue Melmoth. But even though Isidora remained impregnable to all attacks by individuals, she could not withstand the pressures of society. Maturin's final comment seems to be that, since all social strictures corrupt, the best thing would be anarchy or nihilism.

This anti-Catholicism, anti-aristocracy, anti-monarchy, and even anti-government resulted in the Gothic novel taking a strange turn. Reformers soon noted this spirit in the Gothic novel, and imbibing the atmosphere of a decadent order falling into ashes and dust, took over the Gothic conventions to help promote reform moves. Thus, the strange spectacle of Godwin writing Caleb Williams and filling it with his didactic ideas on social reform is one of the products of this Gothic spirit. Nor should this movement be regarded simply as the end result of a series of debilitated tricks of terror; Caleb Williams was published in 1794, one year before the publication of The Monk and twenty-four years before

Maturin's masterpiece. The image of fate heralding a new era of growth and destroying the decadence of the old could not help but appeal to a reformer such as Godwin, who needed all the support he could muster for his progressivism. Walpole, the anti-Hanoverian, and advocate of limited monarchy, had fostered even a spark of liberal democracy in his novel!

The Gothic novelists, in their refusal to accept the classicism of Aristotle's "mean," were ignoring his rules and warnings of how to avoid the abominable. In fact they stood Aristotle on his head by placing their emphasis not on "nothing in excess," but rather "nothing but excess." The poet," Aristotle said, "when imitating irascible or easy-tempered men or men who have such characters by having other qualities of this sort, ought to make them equitable as well, as for example the Achileus of Agathon and that of Homer."⁸⁸ Yet, this was directly antithetical to the Gothic novelist's central themes, and thus classicism (or at least Aristotle's version), was disregarded. Lewis is the prime example of how far they were willing to go in this search for the abominable. After having "The Man of Holiness" kill Antonia's mother Elvira, Lewis has him give Antonia a drugged potion and take her to the dungeon of the monastery. Here he attempts to delicately win the affections of the young girl "scarcely fifteen," and when this fails, brutally ravishes her. Upon

⁸⁸ Aristotle, Poetics, ed. Kenneth A. Telford (Chicago, 1961), paragraph 15, lines 12-15, 29.

hearing the guards coming to the rescue, Antonia screams; Ambrosio warns her to remain silent, and when she screams again, murders her. As if this were not enough, Lewis has Ambrosio then undertake a pact with the Devil to arrange his escape, a pact which was a swindle because the Devil knew Ambrosio was about to be freed. To climax this friendly little ending, the Devil then informs Ambrosio that Antonia was his sister and Elvira his mother. Murder, rape, and incest have been the results of Ambrosio's pride. The murder of the mother, the familiar sin against the father, is again compounded by incest with the sister. In derision of this puny mortal's attempts to play with the gods, the Devil then throws Ambrosio off a high mountain peak.

This search for the abominable could have no other end but in the Marquis de Sade.

To compare Walpole with de Sade would, of course, be ridiculous; Walpole would have shuddered at this as much as we. Yet, I think that Walpole may well have been at least partially responsible for de Sade. In a discussion of The Castle of Otranto Walpole observed that "it is not everybody that may in this country play the fool with impunity;"⁸⁹ as the Revolution of '89 was to show, Walpole was only too right. Realizing that he was risking all the sound principles dear to classicists by "striking a little out of the common road," Walpole always maintained that his

Gothicizing was "fit for nothing but the age in which it was written, an age in which much was known; that required only to be amused, nor cared whether its amusements were conformable to truth and the models of good sense; that could not be spoiled; was in no danger of being too credulous; and rather wanted to be brought back to imagination, than to be led astray by it...."⁹⁰ This was written in retrospect, some twenty years after publication of The Castle of Otranto, when perhaps Walpole was beginning to have some qualms. He severely criticized Hannah More for giving the novel to a poor woman whose head it made a "hurly-burly." Even before the "Reign of Terror" Walpole was having serious doubts about the results of his black Gothic.

A danger in studying Walpole's Gothic against the backdrop of later Gothic romances is that one tends to look back at Walpole's early effort and find more profundity and "wildness" in the depth of his Gothic vision than is actually there. It is forgotten that the later Fausts had much more fullness of imaginative conception than Walpole's Manfred. To illustrate something of Manfred's character, consider the savage twist Walpole gives to his picture of Manfred at the end of the novel, a twist that subverts Manfred from a Faust to an emasculated dotard.

This subversion is not always noticed, but definitely is implied in the altered wording of the prophecy. When

⁹⁰ Letter to Hannah More, November 13, 1784, ed. Lewis, XXXI, 221.

the plot is considered closely, it is realized that the first version of the prophecy offers no real explanation for Manfred's desperate haste to create an heir. The prophecy explains only that there is a curse on Manfred's line, and that eventually the line must fall to the rightful owner. Why does Manfred need an heir so desperately? There is always the reply that Manfred is growing older and will eventually be unable to father an heir, but such a reply seems totally inadequate to account for the intensity of Manfred's monomania. The answer becomes apparent as soon as it is observed that Manfred seems to lose Otranto against the direct wishes of the prophecy, since the full prophecy (revealed only at the end of the novel) states "that Ricardo's posterity should reign in Otranto, until the rightful owner should be grown too large to inhabit the castle, and as long as issue-male from Ricardo's loins should remain to enjoy it" (my italics).⁹¹ Manfred is an issue-male; why is he expelled? Manfred answers this question himself, "Alas! alas! nor male, nor female, except myself, remains of all his wretched race! I have done -- the woes of these three days speak the rest" (my italics again). Manfred's statement, "I have done," is ambiguous. It could mean either that Manfred has given up all hope, or it could mean that he is as good as dead -- being neither male nor female.

⁹¹The Castle of Otranto, p. 191.

⁹²The Castle of Otranto, p. 191.

The latter interpretation explains many inconsistencies. It explains why Manfred was in such great haste to marry Isabella; why he wished to marry only Isabella, and not some country wench who could easily have supplied him with an heir; why it is only Manfred who accuses Hippolita of being barren; and why Manfred so dislikes his daughter Matilda. Hippolita was not sterile; Manfred was!

If this is still doubted (and it should be), consider for a moment the effect of the first prophecy. This prophecy states only that Otranto will fall when the rightful owner shall have grown too large to inhabit the castle. The fact that Conrad is killed would seem to be of no great importance because the prophecy makes the fall of Otranto dependent only upon the rate of growth of the giant. Yet Manfred knows (and he alone knows) that the castle cannot fall as long as there is an issue-male of Ricardo's line living. That Manfred urgently needed another son, we can easily accept when the full prophecy is revealed. That the prophecy could not come true until Manfred dies must still seem certain. But Manfred, in his haste to marry Isabella, uncovers the secret. If Isabella is his only hope for preserving his claim, then it must be because he has given up hope of having children by any other woman. But this is impossible; therefore he must wish to marry Isabella not for an heir, but to preserve his own claim through marriage to the one whom he thinks is the rightful heir. After Conrad's

death, the only thing that prevents the giant bursting from the castle is Manfred; he is the last issue-male of Ricardo's. Only Manfred's death can allow the rightful owner to take possession, and this death is presented symbolically in the fatal stabbing of his daughter Matilda. Matilda's death ought to have mattered very little to Manfred, since throughout the novel he has shown an evident dislike for her. At one point, he even shouts, "Begone, I do not want a daughter." Matilda's death should have affected him even less than Conrad's, and that affected him little enough. Instead, just the opposite occurs; he despairs and the castle crumbles. What this means is that Matilda's death removed the last obstacle in the rightful owner's way; since the castle was to crumble only when the last issue-male died, therefore Matilda's death is Manfred's symbolic death (q.e.d.).

That Matilda is a symbolic aspect of Manfred has been inherent in the story from the beginning. Manfred's two children represent opposite sides of his personality -- the freshness and beauty of the feminine, and the decadence of the masculine. For Manfred, life lies in living this feminine role, in obeying the laws and mores; death results from pursuing the masculine role of power and ambition. Manfred refuses to live this feminine role; he does not turn over the kingdom to Isabella, who he believes is the rightful heir, but attempts to marry her to his sickly son. Manfred's dwindling virility

is again suggested in the very fact that his first child, a daughter, is strong and healthy, while his second, a boy, is weak and sick. His male part was castrated in the symbolic fall of the helmet, and he, himself, kills the female. Nothing is left of him after Matilda dies, and he has no option but to fall helpless into the mother-like arms of the church. Pressing this interpretation logically to its end, The Castle of Otranto becomes a psychological investigation into man's attempt to retain tyrannical power, his inevitable emasculation, and the resulting suicide of the anima.

This is definitely what is called a far-out interpretation, and I wish to make no rash assertions that Walpole intended this interpretation. Nor am I interested in making this interpretation a central part of my theme. Such an interpretation is false if not tempered with a whole host of other interpretations, since what has been done is to radically overstate the case by ignoring other conflicting facets of the novel. But a compelling interpretation, which completely ignored the blackness of the Gothic vision and which offered an alternative view of the Faustian Manfred, was necessary in order to make clear that Walpole had by no means sanctioned a full-blown Faust.

That Walpole's primary interest was with the blackness of the Gothic is clear, but his creation of this Gothic did not prevent a great deal of light, comedy, and the contradictory

from creeping in. The creation of The Castle of Otranto was not the result of a Gothic soul. Goethe described his Faust when he described the condition of his own soul in which two demons were fighting for possession. Walpole might have described The Castle of Otranto in similar terms, only with the two demons quietly resting side by side. The opposites had not yet begun to war.

There is no doubt that what Walpole created in The Castle of Otranto was the Gothic vision of fate and Faust. Yet unlike other authors who produced Fausts, Walpole's was meant only for "the age in which it was written." Feeling that the people of the mid-eighteenth century "needed to be amused," he produced a "frantic story" to conjure up visions. A notation in his "Paris Journal" some two years after publication of The Castle of Otranto sums up the spirit of this Gothic, "Truth the source of unhappiness. Visions, the only happiness."⁹³ The vision of Manfred scorning the gods was happiness; the truth that this Faust ended in remorse was unhappiness. Only one good Faust could exist -- the Faust of dreams.

⁹³
The Correspondence of Horace Walpole, ed. W. S. Lewis, VII, 357.

V WALPOLE AND THE GOTHIC-ROCOCO

There still remains to be answered the absurdly chronic question of whether the Gothic novels were really Gothic. Anyone who has attempted to cope with these fascinating novels will understand the compulsive force with which this question arises. In view of the fact that everyone who deals with the Gothic novels inevitably makes an attempt at answering the question, it is surprising to find that the answers given generally seem out-of-hand, and almost nonchalant. The reply that, "no, of course the Gothic novels were not Gothic," is as vexing as it is inadequate. In a stimulating paper with the provocative title, "were the Gothic novels Gothic?" Clara McIntyre makes a good beginning at giving an analysis of what is at stake, but soon dismisses the question as being just too ridiculous.⁹⁴ Most of her paper ends up being, not an investigation of whether the novels were Gothic, but whether they derived from the Elizabethan and Jacobean terror plays. The article itself is quite interesting, but it does not discuss whether the Gothic novels were Gothic, the original question. Probably what most vexes about her attitude is the assumption that the question of whether the Gothic novels were or were not Gothic is clearly defined,

⁹⁴ Clara McIntyre, PMLA, XXXVI (1921), 644-667.

and that a "yes," or "no," answer can be given. This is by no means the case.

What exactly is meant when it is asked whether the novels are Gothic? Gothic what? There is the early two dimensional painting, the animated sculpture, the soaring height of Salisbury's tower, the mystic lighting of stained glass, the tracery on the screens and tombs, the florid pendants of Henry VII's chapel, the austerity of the perpendicular in the nave at Canterbury, and the mesmeric complexity of the west facade at Milan from which to choose. In which of these is the essence of Gothic? Even if it is answered that each of these is but an aspect of the total meaning of Gothic, and that somehow a unifying spirit can be distilled from these different facets, the major problem still remains of finding whether this "essence" is applicable to the novels.

Unlike the terms baroque and mannerist which have become common literary terms only in the twentieth century, "Gothic" as a literary description was coined in the eighteenth century. Does the question "Were the Gothic novels Gothic," mean Gothic in the eighteenth century meaning of Gothic? In the twentieth century meaning? Or, in the real meaning (whatever this is) of Gothic? Nor is this problem totally academic, for if we are judge "with the same spirit that its author writ," we should not be looking for qualities of which the

Gothic novelist was unaware.

Tentatively, a few conclusions can be drawn. It has already been pointed out in a previous chapter that our conception of Gothic is more restricted than the eighteenth century's. What a person of the twentieth century tends to associate with Gothic are the great cathedrals, and the outstanding feature of these cathedrals is their obvious plan. From the very beginnings of Gothic when Abbot Suger designed the Abbey of St. Denis, the Gothic architects had had a conception of what a Gothic cathedral was supposed to be, and what effects it should have for the onlooker. To call Gothic, in its entirety, "irregular" would be blasphemy today. But what an eighteenth century person would be likely to associate with Gothic would be the houses, implements, general practices and superstitions of an ancient and mist-enshrouded period. A Gothic house, which would be a very old mansion (not necessarily of the Gothic times at all), would be large and rambling, with many rooms and added wings -- a hodge-podge.

A modern person tends to forget that there were other buildings besides cathedrals in the Middle Ages, and it was these other buildings, the castles and houses, which were more important because they were necessary for existence. Inevitably it is the castle that turns up in the Gothic novels, not the cathedrals. Of course, knowing little about the

Middle Ages, the writers of the eighteenth century tended to furnish the castles imaginatively with furniture appropriate to the eighteenth century, so that in some ways these castles are not actually the old medieval castles at all. On the other hand, whenever we are given descriptions of castles such as those in Mrs. Radcliffe's works, the effect achieved does simulate a medieval castle.

Gothic novelists were not violating the primary commands of Gothic architecture when they made their novels irregular and seemingly amorphous, but were actually in the spirit of the Gothic as found embodied in the old manors and castles which dotted England. Strawberry Hill substantiates this nicely. Sprague Allen comments that "Strawberry Hill is in the medieval fashion irregular both externally and internally. No attempt having been made to achieve coordinations of space by an axial plan and an arrangement of apartments en suite, the rooms are simply detached units having no real formal relationship. In going through the house one gets, as one does in many ancient buildings, a confused impression of a series of rooms connected haphazardly by narrow, unattractive passageways."⁹⁵ The similarity between the structural units of Strawberry Hill and the literary incidents of The Castle of Otranto should be obvious and striking. In spite of Walpole's profession, "There is no bombast, no similes,

⁹⁵ B. Sprague Allen, Tides in English Taste (Cambridge, 1937), II, 75.

flowers, degressions, or unnecessary descriptions. Everything tends directly to the catastrophe. Never is the reader's attention relaxed,"⁹⁶ the analysis of the incipient surrealism, the dream mood, and Manfred's vacillations shows clearly that the novel is asymmetrical. This asymmetry is even more evident in Lewis's The Monk where plot and subplot are intertwined into a Gordian knot, or in Mrs. Radcliffe's The Mysteries of Udolpho where the middle sections duplicate the flight and pursuit theme in a plethora of variations. The old "Gothic" buildings of England were formless in their construction, and in this sense of the Gothic all of the Gothic novelists seem to have captured the spirit.

To do justice to this subject, it should be mentioned again that it is dubious whether Walpole or any of his followers had any conscious intention of developing the material in this Gothic (irregular) manner. More than likely this feeling of irregularity stems from the very nature of the material handled. Nor should it be forgotten that much of it may be the result of incompetent craftsmanship. In 1764 the novel was still in its infancy; Walpole was helping to give it its very character.

Irregularity was not the only thing that the eighteenth century found in the Gothic. The new response to the

⁹⁶
The Castle of Otranto, Preface, p. 100.

Gothic was a result of its direct appeal to the imagination, and as has been pointed out, the Gothic came to embody gloom, terror, the impetuous madness of wild genius, and of course the black Gothic vision itself. The idea that the medieval times were barren in literature and the arts is only now being gradually dispelled; and in the eighteenth century nearly all educated people believed that the Middle Ages had been personified in the Inquisition -- the horrible result of substituting magic for reason. The darkness, magic, and emotional fervour of the eighteenth century Gothic are again reflected in the Gothic novels. The Gothic novelists did approximate closely their ideal of the Gothic. The important part of the question "Were the Gothic novels Gothic?" can thus be answered definitively, "yes."

The question of whether they approximated the twentieth century's ideal of the Gothic is now answered. Since our ideal is different from that of the eighteenth century's, therefore to that extent which the ideal differs will the Gothic novels not approximate it. Interestingly enough, modern writers of Gothic tales, such as Isak Dinesen, seem to approximate our ideal. Nor are the Gothic novels of Walpole, Lewis, and Maturin completely antithetical to the twentieth century's meaning of Gothic; a core of similarity does exist. H. W. Janson, commenting on the rapid spread of Gothic architecture from France to other countries, remarked that, "The ultimate

reason for the international victory of Gothic art seems to have been the extraordinary persuasive power of the style itself, its ability to kindle the imagination and to arouse religious feeling...."⁹⁷ Walpole and the later Gothickers were certainly attempting to kindle the imagination, only they substituted for religious feeling, simply feeling. Just as the stained glass windows of the great cathedrals turn the bright sunlight into a subtle mystical light, the Gothic novelists attempt to use the rich medieval magic to transform everyday actions into something mysterious and significant.

Something of the perpendicular axis of the Gothic cathedrals, of their straining after height and sublimity, and of their restless energy directed Heavenwards is also mirrored in the Gothic novels. The novels emphasize the supernatural; they embody, in the mystic conventions of feudal times, the restlessness of their authors' own search for the Grail. The glamour and lushness of the novelist's use of medieval trappings might also be seen to reflect the Gothic artist's love of detailed complexity. Yet these analogies are by no means always direct, and often they can be applied only in the most oblique manner. An obvious reason why the Gothic novels cannot be paralleled directly with the cathedrals is that the novels are, at best, only second-rate melodramatic flights of fancy, while the cathedrals are among the finest achievements of man.

⁹⁷ H. W. Janson, History of Art (New York, 1962), p. 241.

The question of whether the Gothic novels were Gothic should now be seen to be quite complex, with no simple answers possible. If by "Gothic" is meant "eighteenth century Gothic" then the novelists did closely approximate this ideal. But if "Gothic" is to mean "twentieth century Gothic," then the answer will depend upon which aspects of the four hundred year old Gothic art school are selected. Nor should one forget that Walpole and the later Gothic novelists gave an entirely new meaning to Gothic -- weirdness. If it had not been for the Gothic novelists an important part of our meaning of the word Gothic would be missing. To have a modern condemn the Gothic novelists for not being more Gothic is ridiculous beyond words, since our use of this very word Gothic would have been impossible without Walpole and his compeers.

While still on this subject of the relationship between literature and the arts, it might be fun to look for a moment, but only a moment, at the notion that eighteenth century Gothic was similar to the rococo. Many critics of Strawberry Hill have pointed out that Walpole's Gothic is actually a rococo-Gothic. Is there any foundation for believing the novels to be a rococo-Gothic also? What must be pointed out first is that the rococo of Strawberry Hill has no affiliation with the French school of the rococo. This is important. Glancing at Strawberry Hill and then at a rococo building such as the Monastery of Melk or "Die Wies," one can immediately see that there is an enormous difference between

them. What is meant by saying that Strawberry Hill is rococo-like is not that it belongs to the rococo school, but that it has some qualities or embodies some of the same purposes of the rococo. Janson, commenting on Strawberry Hill, remarks that "despite its studied irregularity, the rambling structure has dainty, flat surfaces that remind us strongly of Robert Adam; the interior looks almost as if fretted with lace-paper doilies. This playfulness, so free of dogma, gives Strawberry Hill its special charm."⁹⁸ Keeping these comments about Strawberry Hill in mind, let us glance now at the characteristics of the rococo.

The rococo is defined in A Dictionary of Art and Artists as "basically a style of interior decoration, and consists principally in the use of C scrolls and counter curves...and asymmetrical arrangements of curves in panelling and elsewhere. The characteristics of small curves, prettiness, and gaiety can also be found in painting and sculpture of the period...."⁹⁹ This description is closely analogous to Janson's description of Strawberry Hill. The asymmetry or irregularity is something which is always commented upon at Strawberry Hill. Similarly, the prettiness and gaiety, the spirit of fun which built, and is embodied in, Strawberry Hill is also expressed. Janson's comment, that it is the

⁹⁸History of Art, p. 461.

⁹⁹Peter and Linda Murray, A Dictionary of Art and Artists (Harmondsworth, 1959), p. 277.

playfulness of Strawberry Hill that gives it "its special charm," is equally applicable to the rococo with its refinement and charm. Furthermore, the rococo is to be found almost wholly on the interiors of buildings; the exteriors of rococo buildings are generally quite plain. This is again reflected at Strawberry where the outside of the house is sombre while the interior is overwhelmingly filled with decorations. The Gallery, designed by Walpole himself, with its red damask, glass mirrors, statuary, gold gilding and curving fretwork, is decidedly similar to the rococo.

Agnes Addison, an historian of the Romantic Movement, has an interesting comment to make about the rococo. In her opinion, the main feature of the rococo is that it is "avowedly artificial."¹⁰⁰ This I think is the key to tying the rococo qualities of Strawberry Hill to those of The Castle of Otranto. Both are "avowedly artificial." In this sense the novel and house are similar to the artificial ruins that Sanderson Miller and Kent built to satisfy the picturesque cravings of the wealthy patrons of landscapes. Strawberry Hill and The Castle of Otranto were created to give novelty and a new expression of feeling to "an age in which much was known." Both of these Gothic creations attempted to create, through their "studied irregularity," a more imaginative state of mind. Neither was meant to be a unified imaginative art form, but

¹⁰⁰

Romanticism and the Gothic Revival, p. 15.

✓ rather a stimulus which could result in the production of such art forms.

Certainly there is something rococo, something half playful, half frivolous, in the way Walpole combined the Gothic with the sentimental. For a modern reader The Castle of Otranto cannot be taken seriously; the pasteboard stage machinery and dream-like tone often make the novel more of a reverie than a serious attempt at moving the hidden strings of pity and fear. Manfred as a raving old man and Theodore as a child Werther have as much affinity with mimes and puppets as they do with the later Fausts of Maturin and Goethe. Walpole himself spoke of The Castle of Otranto as being a fantasy, and when Manfred is compared to Milton's Satan, possibly we agree with him. Yet this novel was not just an idle fantasy; Walpole in his more reflective moments admitted to having written it to sway an age which "wanted to be brought back to imagination." The rococo is also something of a daydream, for it took the grand designs, the strong axes of the baroque and wound them into long playful S-curves -- sensual and earthly. The baroque's emphasis on God's will was twisted to emphasize man's will. Rococo art, through its very artificiality, was attempting a serious purpose -- to turn man's vision to the sensuous delights of this world. Walpole took the grand tragedy of the Elizabethans, the sublime of the Gothic, and mixed them with a little of the sentimental...all to create feelings and visions. His adventures into the world of

architecture and literature were avowedly artificial, and the result of this rococo sensibility was the creation of the Gothic-rococo.

Wyllie Sypher maintains that the chief rococo writer in England was Alexander Pope, and seems to feel that when Pope died so did the rococo. If this were true one would expect to find little rococo influence after the middle of the century, and to classify Walpole's work as having a rococo spirit would hardly be appropriate. I do not wish to quarrel with such a noted authority, but there seems to be some evidence to show that the rococo did not die with Pope. Even if we ignore completely the question of Pope as rococo, serious problems of dating still remain. The Murrays mention that the rococo was at its peak in France about 1730, but the consummate flourishing of the rococo in southern Germany and Austria came later, surviving until 1770 or even 1780. England, always a little behind in absorbing art forms, could expect to have rococo influences up until at least 1770. In fact, Sprague Allen's analysis of the rococo in England bears this out. Allen shows that the rococo was most influential as a style in England from about 1740-1780. Alexander Pope died in 1744! The rococo, far from being dead when Walpole was building Strawberry Hill, was very much alive, and probably influenced Walpole a great deal.

For the most part, English speaking peoples have

been anti-rococo and a tradition has grown up that the gilded extravaganzas were vulgar, indecent, and as art -- decadent. There is perhaps something antithetical to the English temperament in this resplendent Catholic art, an art that the Murrays, significantly enough, have called "absurdly beautiful." However, despite this reluctance on the part of the English to accept whole-heartedly the rococo (the Murrays say definitely that "England did not take to the rococo"), Sprague Allen has shown that it enjoyed a much larger popularity in the mid-eighteenth century than most people realize. "The evidence of the influence of the rococo in England is abundant and various -- far greater, indeed, than one would infer from those English writers who are always inclined to slight the presence of foreign elements in the native style."¹⁰¹ Allen is able to support this statement by pointing to actual examples of rococo art, such as portions of Vauxhall, the ceiling of the Bodleian Library at Oxford, Christ Church Library, the London Museum, the Foundling Hospital, and the interior of Chesterfield House. In showing how widely the rococo was accepted by the upper classes, he makes the important point that fashionable clothing of the day was deeply indebted to rococo designs. Clothing, the most ephemeral of all objets d'art, is often the most responsive to shifting tastes. Even if one wishes to

¹⁰¹
Tides in English Taste, p. 102.

object that the rococo was never popular with the large masses of English people, that as an ersatz fad it affected only a fashionable clique; this does not matter. The only point I wish to make is that the rococo's gay delight in "asymmetry, movement, variety, freedom, and spontaneity" was definitely felt in mid-eighteenth century England.

With Walpole so intent on asymmetry, studied irregularity, and freedom of expression, one is surprised to find that he was not more of an advocate of the Chinese, Indian, and Venetian whimsies that were sweeping London in the middle of the century. For a while Walpole was, indeed, swept up in this mélange of taste and seems to have admired all equally. His comment to Mann, that he "was almost as fond of the Sharawaggi or Chinese want of symmetry,"¹⁰² quoted in an earlier chapter, gives the impression that possibly some Chinese styling might be added to the Gothic battlements for a little relish. However, this comment was made in 1750, very early in his Gothicizing; a few years later Walpole is discovered to be a bitter opponent of the Venetian, the chinoiserie, and all the frills of rococo. Only Gothic irregularity was deemed legitimate.

To say that chinoiserie and the rococo became too exotic for Walpole, and to leave the problem there, begs the

¹⁰²See I, 29.

question, for it was exactly the qualities of asymmetry and tyranny of rule that appealed to Walpole. Chinoiserie and the rococo do not seem to be more exotic than the "gloom" of mist-enshrouded ancient England. Originally Walpole had been an avid fan of the exotic, and had even made designs for summer houses in the Chinese style. Why did Walpole suddenly lose faith in the Chinese styling but remain faithful to the Gothic?

The answer is lodged in an adjective the eighteenth century loved to apply to the Gothic, "venerable." The Venetian, the chinoiserie, and the arabesque of the rococo were all completely new styles, and while they did have the asymmetry that the avant-garde wanted, this asymmetry became rather frightening without traditions. No one knew anything about the Chinese style, what it represented, or what were its origins. W. S. Lewis has recently suggested that chinoiserie may even have been a hoax perpetrated by Temple as a means of satirizing the new French styles.¹⁰³ With this uncertain atmosphere surrounding the transplanted styles, to commission a house in the Chinese style was as reckless as to become an enthusiast of the Wesleyan movement. Venetian and chinoiserie violated the classical principles of repose and decorum just as the Gothic did, but unlike the Gothic these foreign styles had no appeal other than to the imagination.

¹⁰³W. S. Lewis, Horace Walpole, p. 102.

Art without principles came dangerously close to artistic nihilism.

This difficulty of reconciling the wildness of Gothic with the canon of good taste is not just any ordinary dispute about what constitutes the beautiful, but is the crux of a dilemma that was inherent in eighteenth century aesthetics. The dilemma was how to distinguish between the value of art forms which had no rational justification other than a vivid appeal to the imagination. Scenery art, or art that had no intrinsic merits of its own, was obviously to be deplored. Yet how could one distinguish between Salisbury and Fonthill when the only measurement was the individual's impressions? It would not do to say that Salisbury was better than Fonthill because Salisbury had the greater emotional appeal, since it was none too clear that Fonthill might not actually appeal more. Both appealed to the emotions and both were characterized by wildness of form; there seemed no way of distinguishing between the two short of an arbitrary standard.

Another aspect of this same problem was debated by Hume and Burke in their essays on the nature of taste. Largely as a result of the consequent clarification of what constitutes taste, the "wildness" of the Gothic became recognized as a valuable contribution to art. Burke had believed that it was possible to find an absolute standard

of taste through an investigation of the fixed laws by which beautiful objects affect the mind. Once the empirical scientist discovered which art forms do cause the sensation of beauty, the problem was solved. To decide which man has the more correct taste, the man who likes Gothic or the man who likes Grecian, all that would have to be done is to inquire (scientifically of course), which of the two had the more correct reasons for liking what he did. This approach left Gothic dead, since all men agreed that what interested them about the Gothic was not its functional aspect or the inter-relation of its separate parts, but its wildness.

However, in 1757 the skeptic, David Hume, in his essay, "Of the Standard of Taste," proposed a reevaluation of taste. Any absolute standard of taste was, in Hume's opinion, impossible. This strong stand was mitigated slightly by his insistence that many possible tests existed to help make a relative standard at least approximate the absolute. One of these tests was the test of time. While not that revolutionary, Hume's skepticism about taste offered the "venerable" Gothic a chance for respectability. Gothic had been the way of building in England from 1150-1550, and since this popularity had never completely died even when the Renaissance styling of Inigo Jones, Wren, and Van Brugh had been at its height, the implication was (using Hume's test), that while not necessarily good, Gothic could no longer be condemned out-of-hand as being bad.

This need of an historical tradition partially explains why eighteenth century enthusiasts of the Gothic tended to load it with adjectives such as "venerable," "antient," "antique," "genteel," and "traditional." Walpole himself often uses these adjectives, "[the Gothic buildings were] magnificent, yet genteel, vast, yet light, venerable and picturesque."¹⁰⁴ The venerable Gothic was able to give Walpole a security that rococo and chinoiserie could not.

In turning to the past for the styling of both his home and his novel, Walpole was of course reflecting his antiquarian tastes for genealogy and objets d'art, but this reliance on the past reflects something deeper, something in which both the eighteenth century so-called classicists and the early nineteenth century romantics came firmly to believe. The past was gone, never to be recovered; it could hurt no one, and consequently it offered to visionaries a secure harbour against a world of storms. Walpole learned this early in life:

Visions, you know, have always been my pasture; and so far from growing old enough to quarrel with their emptiness, I almost think there is no wisdom comparable to that of exchanging what is called the realities of life for dreams. Old castles, old pictures, old histories, and the babble of old people make one live back into centuries that cannot disappoint one. One holds fast and surely what is past. The dead

¹⁰⁴ Anecdotes of Painting, ed. Lowndes, p. 70.

have exhausted their power of deceiving,
one can trust Catherine de Medicis now.¹⁰⁵

No matter how progressive Walpole might seem with his advanced tastes at Strawberry Hill and his reputation for being the first Gothic novelist, this return to the past was not true progressivism. Walpole was turning the clock back in time to find an art form that was exhilarating, safe...and inapplicable to society.

It would not be difficult to take what would be almost an ethical stand against Walpole and condemn him for dabbling in kitsch -- purposeless art with no intrinsic value. Some critics have done this, pointing to The Castle of Otranto as being the forerunner of the Marquis de Sade's works and to Strawberry Hill as the impulse for Beckford's theatrical Fonthill Abbey. Yet I think Walpole's position can be defended on purely artistic terms; his work has many redeeming qualities, qualities which are totally inimical to the moneyed dramatics of a Beckford and the pornography of a de Sade.

The first of these is that he is totally representative of his time. If you condemn Walpole, you condemn an entire period. Although being representative is not usually thought of as a particularly personal quality, the fact that Walpole was not consciously attempting an artistic upheaval

¹⁰⁵Letter to Montagu, January 5, 1766, ed. Lewis, X, 192.

does point up an endearing quality -- his modesty. Strawberry Hill was never intended to be anything more than a house, and as a house it served admirably. Fonthill, with its two hundred and seventy-six foot tower and rooms one hundred and twenty feet high, was a monstrosity. Glamorous though Fonthill was, and even though as scenery it gave the eighteenth century everything it wanted in the way of excitement and drama, Fonthill utterly failed in suggesting the warmth and cheerfulness inherent in a modest home such as Strawberry.

Coupled with Walpole's modesty is a sincerity of purpose that cannot help but please. At Strawberry Hill he tried his best to imitate the Gothic carefully, and steadfastly refused to mix this Gothic with classical forms just to save face. Near the end of his life when more was known about Gothic, and his own taste had become purified, he ruefully admitted that "every true Goth must perceive that they [the rooms] are more the works of fancy than of imitation."¹⁰⁶ It was not from lack of effort that the Gothic at Strawberry was impure, but from insufficient knowledge of what constituted pure Gothic. The Castle of Otranto also has a ring of sincerity. In the effort to fuse the old and the new of literature, no attempt was made to indulge in perversions such as those of the later de Sade or to paint the chaos of

¹⁰⁶ Letter to Mary Berry, October 17, 1794, ed. Lewis, XII, 137.

Beckford's Giaours and Solimans. The supernatural was utilized modestly in the hopes of merely suggesting what Beckford or de Sade were later to magnify.

As has been pointed out before, one of the nicest of Walpole's qualities is that undefinable playfulness which is characteristic of his works. This comic vein is particularly attractive in his letters and in Strawberry Hill, but The Castle of Otranto does not lack it either. The servants making fun of the principals, mocking the high sensibility of Matilda and the tyranny of Manfred, allow a glimpse of a genial author refusing to paint everyone black or white.

Finally, and perhaps most important of all, is the fact that Walpole's creations were a part of himself. If Strawberry Hill and The Castle of Otranto do not have a thoroughgoing unity of imaginative conception, Walpole is not to be blamed; his mind was not given to making such syntheses. The dark satanic world of the Fausts and the genial gay world of the rococo both were part of his personality. It is to his credit that instead of ignoring one and exalting the other, or attempting a superficial synthesis of the two, he made the lion to lie down with the lamb so that posterity could enjoy both the bleakness of the Gothic and the gaiety of the rococo, the twofold division of the world that had so enchanted Horace Walpole.

A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Addison, Agnes E. Romanticism and the Gothic Revival. Philadelphia, 1938.
- Addison, Joseph and Steele, Richard. The Spectator, ed. Gregory Smith. 4 vols. London, 1907.
- Allen, Beverly Sprague. Tides in English Taste. 2 vols. Cambridge, 1937.
- Aristotle. Poetics, ed. Kenneth A. Telford. Chicago, 1961.
- Austin, Jane. Northanger Abbey. New York, 1959.
- Baker, Ernest A. The History of the English Novel, V. London, 1924-1939.
- Beckford, William. Vathek, in Shorter Novels of the Eighteenth Century, ed. Philip Henderson. London, 1930.
- Birkhead, Edith. The Tale of Terror. London, 1921.
- Burke, Edmund. A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful, ed. J. T. Boulton. London, 1958.
- Carritt, E. F. Philosophies of Beauty. Oxford, 1931.
- Clark, Kenneth. The Gothic Revival. London, 1928.
- Cobb, Gerald. The Old Churches of London. London, 1942.
- Defoe, Daniel. A Tour Through England and Wales, ed. G. D. H. Cole. 2 vols. London, 1928.
- Dinesen, Isak. Seven Gothic Tales. New York, 1934.
- . Winter's Tales. New York, 1961.
- Dobson, Austin. Horace Walpole a Memoir. London, 1910.
- Eastlake, Charles L. A History of the Gothic Revival. London, 1872.
- Eighteenth Century Poetry and Prose, ed. Louis Bredvold, Allan McKillop, Lois Whitney. New York, 1956.

- Evans, Bertrand. Gothic Drama from Walpole to Shelley. Berkeley, 1947.
- Evelyn, John. Memoirs of John Evelyn, ed. William Bray. London, 1818.
- Fiedler, Leslie A. Love and Death in the American Novel. New York, 1960.
- Fielding, Henry. The History of Tom Jones, ed. George Sherburn. New York, 1950.
- Ford, Boris. From Dryden to Johnson in The Pelican to English Literature. London, 1957.
- Gray, Thomas. Correspondence of Thomas Gray, ed. Paget Toynbee and Leonard Whibley. 3 vols. Oxford, 1935.
- Harvey, John. English Cathedrals. London, 1961.
- Henderson, Philip. Shorter Novels of the 18th Century. London, 1930.
- Hume, David. "Of the Standard of Taste," in Essays Moral, Political and Literary, ed. T. H. Green and T. H. Grose. London, 1912.
- Janson, H. W. History of Art. New York, 1962.
- Ketton-Cremer, R. W. Horace Walpole. London, 1940.
- Lewis, Mathew Gregory. Mistrust, in Seven Masterpieces of Gothic Horror, ed. Donald Spector. New York, 1963.
- _____. The Monk. London, 1960.
- Lewis, Wilmarth Sheldon. Horace Walpole. Washington, 1960.
- McIntyre, Clara. "Were the Gothic Novels Gothic?" PMLA, XXXVI (1921), 644-667.
- Marshall, Henry Rutgers. The Beautiful. London, 1924.
- Maturin, Charles Robert. Melmoth the Wanderer. Lincoln, 1961.
- Mayo, R. D. "How Long was Gothic Fiction in Vogue?" MLN, LVIII (January, 1943), 58-64.
- Melville, Lewis. Horace Walpole A Biographical Study. London, 1930.

- Murray, Peter and Linda. A Dictionary of Art and Artists. Harmondsworth, 1959.
- Panofsky, Erwin. Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism. Cleveland, 1957.
- Parker, John H. ABC of Gothic Architecture. Oxford, 1900.
- Percy, Thomas. Reliques of Ancient English Poetry, ed. J. V. Pritchard. 2 vols. London, 1892.
- Piozzi, Mrs. Hester. Thraliana, ed. Katharine C. Balderston. 2 vols. Oxford, 1951.
- Poe, Edgar Allan. "The Fall of the House of Usher," in Seven Masterpieces of Gothic Horror. New York, 1963.
- Radcliffe, Ann. The Mysteries of Udolpho. 2 vols. London, 1931.
- Reeve, Clara. The Old English Baron, in Seven Masterpieces of Gothic Horror. New York, 1963.
- Ruskin, John. Lectures on Architecture and Painting. London, 1907.
- . The Seven Lamps of Architecture. London, 1907.
- Sade, Marquis de. The Crimes of Love. New York, 1964.
- Scott, Geoffrey. The Architecture of Humanism. London, 1961.
- Scott, Sir Walter. "Introduction to The Castle of Otranto," in The Castle of Otranto, ed. Caroline Spurgeon. London, 1930.
- Shelley, Mary W. Frankenstein. London, 1921.
- . The Heir of Mondolfo, in Seven Masterpieces of Gothic Horror. New York, 1963.
- Smethurst, A. F. The Pictorial History of Salisbury Cathedral. London, 1963.
- Stuart, Dorothy Margaret. Horace Walpole. London, 1927.
- Sypher, Wylie. Rococo to Cubism in Art and Literature. New York, 1963.
- Varma, Davendra P. The Gothic Flame. London, 1957.

Walpole, Horace. Anecdotes of Painting in England, ed.
Lowndes. London, N.D. .

_____. Letters of Horace Walpole, ed. Mrs. Paget
Toynbee. 16 vols. Oxford, 1903-1905.

_____. Horace Walpole's Correspondence, ed.
W.S. Lewis and A. Doyle Wallace. New Haven, 1937-.

_____. The Works of Horatio Walpole, Lord
Orford. 5 vols. London, 1798.

Ward, Edward. The London Spy, ed. Kenneth Fenwick. London,
1955.

Wood, Anthony à. The Antient and Present State of the City
of Oxford, ed. J. Peshall. London, 1773.