The Medievalism of Horace Walpole

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THE MEDIEVALISM OF HORACE WALPOLE

by

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CHAPTER I

THE REVIVAL OF MEDIEVAL INTEREST IN EIGHTEENTH CENTURY ENGLAND

An explanation of the purpose of this first chapter appears necessary. The subject of the thesis is the medievalism expressed in the life and interest of Horace Walpole. It would be utter presumption to try to give an adequate discussion of this topic without a unified knowledge of the social and aesthetic background from which he sprang. The first chapter, therefore, will endeavor to outline briefly the revival of interest in medieval art, architecture, and literature that characterized, in increasing degrees, the first sixty years of the century. With this discussion prefacing the main study, it will be possible to place Horace Walpole in the Gothic revival more accurately.

In a first cursory study of Horace Walpole, he appears as a sudden romantic luminary flashing on the classic stage of the eighteenth century. There is an obvious tendency to consider him as a sole enthusiast of ancient things appearing alone in the midst of his more stereotyped contemporaries. However, anyone the least familiar with history, no matter what its form—social, economic, religious, or aesthetic—will realize that most events occur as products of preceding causes or, at least, have been remotely prepared for before their culmination in a forceful manifestation. The purpose of this first chapter is to endeavor to trace as accurately as possible the influences which prepared the English people of 1760 to receive the "Gothic" of Horace Walpole.
When The Castle of Otranto was published on Christmas Eve 1764, Walpole hesitated to admit his authorship of it. Consequently, he published it under a pseudonym, and only after its success was assured did he venture to claim his brain child. The reason for his hesitation was that he feared the novelty of the work would bring derision upon its author. He did not realize that the England of the 1760's was prepared for such a tale. Even he had not sensed the growing taste for romantic mystery and terror that was actually present. As one student of the period declared, the people were ready to receive just such a story as The Castle of Otranto.

The publication of The Castle of Otranto in 1764 was not so bold an adventure as Walpole would have his readers believe. The age was ripe for the reception of the marvellous.

The present chapter aims to illustrate the statement of this last sentence. It will show how this tendency appeared and increased during the first sixty years of the eighteenth century.

The clarification of a few terms is necessary before proceeding with the discussion. One of the most frequently employed terms needed in any aesthetic study of the early eighteenth century is "Gothic". The so-called Gothic revival of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries took its seeds during the period of the present study. It is essential, therefore, that an accurate definition of the word be accepted.

Longueil has carefully traced the history of this word. Etymologically the term had its origin as a Germanic race-name. It was during the

classical Renaissance that it was first used as a critical term. The cathedrals, castles, and other buildings with which the Teutonic tribes replaced the structures destroyed during the migrations of the early Middle Ages were, quite naturally, designed to satisfy the Teutonic rather than the classical taste. To the Renaissance mind these buildings were dark and cramped in comparison with the stately measure of classic architecture. Consequently, when Renaissance students used the term "Gothic" it was one of reproach and even scorn because it referred to a product of an inferior civilization. In their minds "Gothic" was synonymous with "barbarous."

The Renaissance concept of the term continued into the eighteenth century. In Addison's Remarks on Italy, he speaks of Siena Cathedral as a "barbarous" building which could have been a masterpiece were it constructed according to proper rules. To him, as to the majority of his contemporaries anything Gothic was redolent of ignorance and savagery, qualities which were attributed to the Middle Ages by the traditional Renaissance view.

However, early in the century the rigid detestation of the term began to give way to a feeling of toleration. Pope, in his Preface to Shakespeare admits the strength and majesty of the Gothic, but laments its irregularity. An isolated and guarded remark such as this indicates, at least in his case, an inclination to admit, even reluctantly, the possibility of some beauty in Gothic. Such concessions became more frequent and more spontaneous as the century wore on. Too much stock, of course, should not be placed in a few isolated cases, but the fact remains that the severe and
exclusive condemnation of the term began to weaken.

The changing attitude toward the word "Gothic" was partially due to a reaction against the severe classicism of the early Renaissance. In architecture, as in literature, men began to look back to pre-renaissance times for satisfaction of their taste for variety and novelty. This turn toward the more proximate past brought medieval, and consequently Gothic, things into favor. The term, therefore, became one of respectability rather than contempt. The evolution was a slow one, but it was soon fostered by antiquarians who contributed a connotation of curiosity and interest to the term. Nor was the revived interest confined totally to a small select group of virtuosi. That it was a general trend is indicated on the authority of two of the arch-classicists of the period. Addison writes: "Were not I supported by so great an Authority* as that of Mr. Dryden, I should not venture to observe, That the Taste of our English Poets, as well as Readers, is extremely Gothick".2

The popularity of the term increased under the influence of a renewed interest in medieval architecture. During the first quarter of the century it carried three closely associated meanings, barbarous, medieval, and super-natural. The second definition, medieval, rapidly gained preeminence. When literary taste changed from rigidity and decorum to imagination, there


*Throughout this chapter the spelling and capitalization of the original articles will be retained.
was a corresponding shift from classical and pseudo-classical to medieval as a source of literary inspiration. Consequently, a new connotation was applied to "Gothic" and all other terms associated with the Middle Ages. The new attitude gained prominence during the eighteen forties with the popularity of the architectural experiments of Batty Langley and Sanderson Miller. It was not, however, until 1762, with the publication of Richard Hurd's *Letters on Chivalry and Romance*, that the word "Gothic" came into its own in the literary field.

The term, as used both by Hurd and Horace Walpole, is equal to medieval. In any discussion of the work of these men, it is necessary to keep in mind this special meaning of the word. "Gothic" and "medieval" are used interchangeably by these men, hence students of the period must accept the same equality of connotation. However, it is necessary to bear in mind that Hurd and Walpole used the term loosely to mean anything old. At times they go back only to pre-restoration days or the era of Elizabeth for examples of "medieval" objects or interests. The same lack of precision marks most other writings of the period. Consequently, it is necessary to determine the accurate meaning in each specific case. In general, however, throughout this discussion the terms "Gothic" and "medieval" will be used as synonyms unless otherwise specified.

With this clarification of purposes and terms it is possible to proceed with the study of the revival of Gothic or medieval interest during the first half of the eighteenth century. Some may contest the term revival on the grounds that there was always a taste for romantic antiquity
among Englishmen. Even granting this point, any conscientious student will have to admit that the taste for Gothic architecture in particular, and all Gothic art in general, was very much eclipsed by the pseudo-classical taste for ordered regularity. No less an authority than Charles Eastlake states: "If in the history of British art, there is one period more distinguished than another for the neglect of Gothic, it was certainly the middle of the eighteenth century."3 However, medieval architecture had one advantage over all other forms of art. The ruins and relics of Gothic Architecture were present in every part of England and were bound eventually to call attention to the civilization that produced them. It was a renewed interest in these architectural monuments that opened the way for medieval studies in literature and all other arts. Hence, it is not surprising that "the Gothic revival (in architecture) went hand in hand with the romantic movement in literature, if indeed it did not give it its original impulse."4

The study of causes in literary history, as in all history, leads one back along an interminable chain of causes and effects. One must of necessity put a limit somewhere. The purpose of this study was to determine the position of the Gothic literary revival as a cause of medieval interest among the great romantics. The temptation now is to analyze the causes of the Gothic decline and revival. A complete study of these would lead too

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far from the primary purpose of the present work. Therefore, only a few of the salient prior influences will be briefly summarized without any positive attempt to prove and illustrate each point.

One of the most potent reasons for the decline of Gothic art during the sixteenth and seventeenth century was the Protestant Revolution. The Gothic Cathedrals which adorned western Europe, as well as England, were inspired by the faith and imagination of Catholic centuries. When the source of inspiration was removed, it was but natural that the product would also decline. The reason that Gothic taste never totally died in England was that the real Catholic faith was not really killed. More than any other national church, that of England clung as much as possible to the externals of Catholic worship. Henry VIII wanted to be pope of the Church in England but was satisfied to keep the doctrine and practice of the Roman Church. This fact explains why elements of Gothic artistry persisted in the minds of the common Englishman. It also explains why the true Gothic declined. Just as Henry wanted to keep the externals of Catholicism, so also the forms of Gothic art were preserved, but the spirit had fled. Consequently, when the inner spring of inspiration dried up, the external manifestations were imperfect. "We feel that St. Paul's was raised to a very different God from the God which inspired Westminster Abbey. The spirit that inspired the builders of the latter had gone, never really to return."5

The following quotation is both a good summary of the condition of

5Lilian Dickins, and Mary Stanton, (Ed.) An Eighteenth Century Correspondence, New York, Duffield and Company, 1910, p. 262.
Gothic architecture and a proof of the foregoing statement that one of the earliest causes of the decline of medieval architecture was the Protestant Revolution.

The first check received to church building was, of course, the Reformation, which ended the days of that lavish expenditure when men alike insured their hereafter, and did penance for their sins by raising those magnificent buildings which are still the glory and pride of the country. With the decline of church building came the gradual disappearance of Gothic as a distinct style, though for a long time to come we find that the flood of classical ornament which came with the Renaissance was applied to the older constructions and forms. . . .

. . . Men still clung tenaciously to the style so intimately associated with their earlier faith. It was its dying struggle with that Puritanism to which the mystic beauty of the Gothic churches and cathedrals was but the symbol of a hated and evil doctrine.6

A further proof of this assumption can be garnered from no less an authority on the eighteenth century than Sir Leslie Stephen. Here the statement is not so clearly made, but the fact of the influence of the Protestant Revolution is apparent to anyone who realizes that one of the most powerful causes of the religious upheaval of the sixteenth century was a revolt against the authority of the Church of Rome. He says:

The first consequence of the breach with authority was an unreasonable contempt for the past. The modern philosopher who could spin all knowledge out of his own brain, the skeptic who had exploded the ancient dogmas, or the free thinker of any shade who rejoiced in the destruction of ecclesiastical tyranny, gloried in his conscious superiority to his forefathers. Whatever was old was absurd, and "Gothic", and epithet applied to all medieval art, philosophy, or social order, became

6 Ibid., pp. 260-61.
a simple term of contempt.\(^7\)

Another influence which contributed to the rise of the pseudo-classical taste in England was the Restoration. During the twenty odd years that the royalty of England resided in France, the normal romantic tendency of England declined. When the monarchy was reestablished in 1660, the influence of France on those who lived in exile during the interregnum became very pronounced. In many respects the French influence on English culture was more than usually apparent during the Restoration period. The royal and noble expatriates had become imbued with French customs and taste. Consequently, on their return, they brought in a stronger classical tendency than is normal in English taste. This new spirit naturally put the standards of the ancient classics above the romantic criterions associated with the Middle Ages. It has been said that "Gothic architecture and Charles I. died together."\(^8\) In the light of the Restoration this statement takes on greater importance.

The French influence is less important than that of the Protestant Reformation because it was felt, to a large extent, only by the upper strata of society whereas the religious upheaval touched all classes. English classicism always is more closely associated with a small select group than with the entire population. It is for this reason that classicism is often

\(^8\)Lilian Dickins and Mary Stanton, *op. cit.*, p. 261.
considered as a cult or fad of a small critical group. Havens cites this opinion as part of his proof that the vast bulk of English people has always been by choice romantic. The French influence must, however, still be recognized as one of the causes of the classical taste in England, and, consequently, one of the causes for the decline of Gothic.

One other reason for the decline of Gothic should be mentioned. Richard Hurd says that the Middle Ages never had a really great poet who could give adequate expression to their life and ideas. Such poets as Tasso and Spenser came too late and could not depict truthfully what was no longer believed. The best writers of Greece ennobled the culture of their era while it was flourishing, and they did so in works that are masterpieces of composition. Consequently, they so fixed the credit of Attic culture that changes of time and taste have never fully discredited it. On the other hand Gothic was disgraced at its inception by poor writers. Before better poets appeared on the scene a new system of manners had sprung up with the result that Gothic customs lost favor before they were ever adequately defended. Closely allied to this fact is a second. The Gothic manners of chivalry were associated with feudalism, and, when this political system disappeared, Gothic manners were no longer seen or understood. Because these customs were not existing, people began to consider them as romantic and unnatural.9

The foregoing paragraphs give three reasons for the decline of Gothic

taste between the middle of the seventeenth century and the first two decades of the eighteenth century.

A thoughtful analysis of the broad trends which have characterized English literature and English taste will convince one that the people of England are by choice romantic. Attempts to set up classical standards in art have been short-lived and limited to select groups. The people as a whole react more favorably to the romantic tendencies. It would be wrong to assume that the people of the Augustan era in England were really satisfied by the poetry of the period. They may have admired Pope's cleverness, but their desires were not satisfied. It was natural, then, that they would revolt against the ordered regularity of classic art and seek fulfillment of their innate tastes. One of the simplest ways to find romantic materials is to revert to the distant past.

The revival of medieval interest was fostered by the historical tendency of the eighteenth century. When students began to investigate the past, there arose a new interest in antiquarianism. The poet Gray planned a history of English poetry. His vague aspirations materialized in the historical work of another poet, Thomas Warton. On all sides a new interest in the minuter details of the past became apparent. Earlier antiquarians stored up rich sources of knowledge, but it was left to the students of the eighteenth century to investigate the minute points of language and customs. Their researches led to a revival of interest in the poetical compositions of earlier centuries. Of special interest in this study was the attention given to books printed in "black letter". It will
be remembered that Horace Walpole refers to just such a book in his preface to the first edition of *The Castle of Otranto*. The popular ballad was also recalled from oblivion to take its place in polite literature. During the classical epoch these poems were condemned for their "coarseness and vulgarity." With the change of taste came a change in attitude toward these same poems. They are now admired for their "artless simplicity".

It must be remembered that a return to the past is not the whole of romanticism; it is only one manifestation. This romantic tendency is not so much a reaction to present conditions as a manifestation of that deeper characteristic of the movement which is called "aspiration". It might be defined as a disdain for the present, which in the absence of creative genius, seeks in the past for relief from a commonplace world.

Even more important than the antiquarian movement was the change which came over the attitude toward nature. The reason that classic art was held in high esteem was that it was supposed to be a close imitation of nature. The Gothic revival was made possible by proving that the medieval style in architecture was really more in conformity with nature than the classical art. In other words, the supporters of Gothic ideas had, as it were, to steal the classicist's catchword and make it their own. Until they could prove that Gothic was more in conformity with nature, the proponents of the new movement could not hope for the acceptance of their theories.10

Classical art was considered more "natural" because it was more simple.

Gothic art was unnatural because it made use of too many details which were not necessary to the architectural construction of the building. The catch-word of classical criticism was "symmetry". This meant not only bilateral uniformity but also included the ideas expressed in Montesquieu's definition of the term. He defines symmetry as "The relations, proportions, and regularity of parts necessary to produce a beautiful whole." In other words it was a kind of regular simplicity and anything which opposed this certain unity of effect was inartistic. Basically this insistence on symmetry is very closely related to the classical insistence on the three unities in the drama.

The opposition to Gothic esthetic principles is voiced by Joseph Addison. He compares Gothic architects to poets who try to manifest their "wit" by introducing conceits in the form of elaborate metaphors or other ingenuities and complexities. He says referring to Boileau:

This is that natural Way of Writing, that Beautiful Simplicity, which we so much admire in the Compositions of the Ancients; and which no Body deviates from, but those who want Strength of Genius to make a Thought shine in its own natural Beauties. Poets who want this strength of Genius to give that Majestick Simplicity to Nature which we so much admire in the Works of the Ancients are forced to hunt after foreign Ornaments, and not to let any Piece of Wit of what kind soever escape them. I look upon those writers as Goths in Poetry, who, like those in Architecture, not being able to come up to the beautiful Simplicity of the old Greeks and Romans have endeavoured to supply its place with all the Extravagancies of an irregular Fancy.11

Addison here expresses the typical contemporary critical attitude, an

attitude which had to be changed before Gothic art in any form could gain favor. When men tired of the universal regularity of classic art, they sought refuge in outdoor, uncoifed life. It was then that Gothic architecture and art began to come into favor. When nature was studied in actuality rather than according to preconceived principles, it was found to lack the ordered simplicity of classical art. Outdoor nature was found to be composed of a multitude of details each individual in itself but all contributing to the general unity of effect. Gothic art was more closely allied to this, consequently, in increasing degrees, it was recognized as a truer imitation of nature than the classical mode. When this gradual change in attitude was accomplished, Gothic art was received with respect because it was more natural. The Gothicists stole the shibboleth of the classicists and thereby assured the success of their cause.

One of the earliest manifestations of the new interest in outdoor nature was that of rustic gardens. A somewhat queer hobby it may seem, but the fact remains that this interest helped to reestablish the vogue for Gothic architecture. Such gardens were in reality small parks belonging to one family. It was fashionable for wealthy men to build a wooded area on their property from which they and their friends could enjoy the "prosepot". In their first form these so-called gardens conformed to Pope's idea of "Nature still, but Nature methodized." It did not take long however, before the pendulum swung from ordered gardens to more rustic and, consequently, more natural parks. The romantic assumption that art must
have the qualities which distinguish the works of "Nature" soon gained acceptance. It must be remembered that now "natural" refers to the imitation of the irregularities of nature rather than the outmoded classical concept of the imitation of nature.

An interesting idea of the eighteenth century gardens can be gathered from the very serious work of Batty Langley entitled *New Principles of Gardening* (1739). The air of concern with which the author details each fine point in garden construction is amusing, but it is also important as showing the attitude of contemporary society. He introduces into his work the ideas of variety and pleasure, qualities which soon were to distinguish the Gothic efforts of English architects. Under the caption of "General Directions for Gardens", he mentions with particular emphasis that the views of gardens must be as extensive as possible. This is certainly a long step from the classical idea which held extensive views as a false application of art. Realizing the impossibility of having lengthy paths in all gardens, he makes allowance for a modification. He says that such walks as cannot be lengthened should terminate in "woods, forests, misshapen rocks, strange precipices, mountains, old ruins, or grand buildings". In this he has listed most of the "objects" that became such a source of interest to eighteenth century Gothic revivalists. There is here no longer any regard paid to the classical principles of regularity. If further proof of the new taste were needed, it could be found in another passage of his work in which he says:
The End and Design of a good Garden is to be both profitable and delightful: where in should be observed, that its Parts should be always presenting new Objects, which is a continual Entertainment to the Eye and raises a Pleasure of Imagination.\textsuperscript{12}

The number of orders for garden designs that were received by Batty Langley indicates that the rustic garden vogue was rapidly becoming the fancy of anyone who had the park space or the funds.

The desire for irregularity of design was also manifested by an interest in building grottoes within the gardens. These structures were attempts to imitate "rude nature" and to bring to the rustic garden an air of mystery and terror. In most cases the grotto was a crude structure purposely made to imitate the irregularity of unkept nature. Both gardens and grottoes served as places of retirement from the stilted artificiality of eighteenth century social life. The popularity of such solitudes is indicated by the large number of poems in \textit{Dodsley's Miscellany} in which direct reference is made to grottoes. A selection from one of these can be taken as representative of the characteristic attitude toward grottoes.

\begin{quote}
How sweet, how charming will appear this Grot,
When by your art to full perfection brought!
Here verdant plants, and blooming flow'rs will grow;
There bubbling currents through the shell work flow;
Here coral mix'd with shells of various dies,
There polish'd stone will charm our wond'ring eyes;
Delightful bow'r of bliss! secure retreat!
Fit for the Muses, and Statira's seat.\textsuperscript{13}
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{13}Dodsley's Miscellany, Vol. III, p. 143.
This appears under the title: "To a Lady, sent with a Present of Shells and Stones design'd for a Grotto", By J. S. Esq.

The frequency with which such passages occur throughout the six volumes of poems indicates the wide interest in such structures.

This brief discussion of gardens and grottoes is important in relation to the taste of the eighteenth century. Interest in such solitudes fostered the acceptance of irregularity as a recognized aesthetic principle. The artistic ideas developed and popularized in the constructions of gardens were generalized to apply to most forms of art, but to none more than to Gothic buildings. Rustic gardens and grottoes played a definitely important part in winning esteem for Gothic architecture. The recognized attributes of Gothic were now established as legitimate sources of pleasure. It was only a short step from the interest in grottoes to respect for the ruins and relics of the architectural masterpieces of an earlier era.

Gothic architecture stands as the culmination of the gradual change from classical to romantic standards of taste during the eighteenth century. It is difficult, in fact impossible, to determine just exactly when Gothic construction went out of favor and the classical came in. It is safe to say that in architecture Gothic was never totally dead. This is true for two reasons. In the first place, the classical influence was largely limited to urban centers and, consequently, had only slight effect on outlying districts. In these places Gothic held the popular fancy even in the most classical periods. In the second instance, the relics of Gothic architecture were always before the eyes of the people and were, therefore, never
entirely forgotten. This fact accounts for the revival of medieval taste taking its inception from Gothic buildings and only gradually working itself back into other art forms. Gothic architecture was eclipsed for a time by classical constructions but it never wholly died out. The new Gothic movement was as much a revival of interest in what was always present as a revival of ancient art forms.

Sir Leslie Stephens has said: "Walpole is almost the first modern Englishman who found out that our old Cathedrals were really beautiful". Exception may be taken to this statement. It requires little reflection to realize that if people of the present century are so sincerely and deeply moved by the sight of Salisbury or any other English Gothic Cathedral, that men of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries must have likewise experienced the beauty of such places. What appeals to man's aesthetic taste today certainly must have had some pleasurable effect on the Augustans. Even though the classical insistence on regularity of construction was so fashionable as to make an expression of admiration for Gothic a social blunder, it could not prevent the person from inwardly appreciating the charm of these buildings. Havens insists, and quite plausibly, that classical art never really satisfied the artistic cravings of Englishmen. They may have spoken of their love of classical art, because such was a sign of cultivated taste, but their inner desires tended toward more imaginative forms of art.

As strict a classicist as Joseph Addison could not control his natural interest in Gothic art. In his *Remarks on Italy* he mentions his visits to various Gothic Cathedrals. There is always an insistence that these are built according to false principles of construction. To him the classic rules are essential to true art. However, in his first unrestrained reactions he shows that there was a real attraction for him in Gothic buildings. He speaks of the Churches of Milan, Siena, and Pisa with an enthusiasm which belies his protestations of scorn for the barbarity of Gothic structure. In spite of all his efforts to uphold the classic standards of taste, he shows that he could not entirely repress his natural attractions toward medieval architecture.

If such an insistent Augustan as Addison was impelled to admit his admiration for this condemned form of art, how many more Englishmen must have felt a sincere attraction to the beauties of the medieval structures which are present in so many parts of England? Classical fashions may have repressed the manifestation of Gothic likes, but it could not prevent men from taking real aesthetic pleasure in these buildings.

Even before the close of the seventeenth century indications of interest in Gothic art began to appear. However, to trace these points in detail would be outside the scope of this chapter which is entitled "Revival of Medieval Interest in Eighteenth Century England". Expressions of admiration for Gothic appear during and after the first two decades of the eighteenth century. As early as 1717 at least one traveller found

(1912), pp. 297-324.
interest in medieval buildings. In a Journey Through England, Canterbury Cathedral is called, "One of the finest Gothick Buildings I ever met with".16 Seven years later, 1724, William Stukely writes of Gloucester Cathedral:

Nothing could ever have made me so much in love with Gothic Architecture (so called), and I judge for a gallery, library, or the like, 'tis the best manner of building, because the idea of it is taken from a walk of trees, whose branching heads are curiously imitated by the roof.17

The same author says of Litchfield Cathedral that it "is a very handsome pile... which appears very majestic half a mile off."18 He calls the priory church of Great Malvern: "Very large and beautiful, with admirable painted glass in all the windows."19 Of Gloucester he also writes: "From the tower which is very handsome, you have a most glorious prospect eastward thro' the choir finely vaulted at the top, and the lady's chappel to the east-window, which is very magnificent."20 Although the sources of these expressions are limited, the citations show a real appreciation for Gothic structure. They indicate, at any rate, that some men were interested in medieval architecture and, what is more important, they express their admiration without apology to classical standards.

17William Stukely, Itinerarium Curiosum, quoted in Dickins and Stanton, An Eighteenth Century Correspondence, p. 262.
18Ibid., p. 57.
19Ibid., p. 65.
20Ibid., as quoted in Havens, op. cit., pp. 319-320.
These early references are infrequent and very limited. The real surge of Gothic interest hit its crest in the 1740's and early 1750's. Two men were largely responsible for the popularity of Gothic during these years. They were Batty Langley and Sanderson Miller. In addition to designing many buildings in the new style, Langley wrote two books in which he defended Gothic architecture. He published two works of special importance to the present question: Ancient Architecture Restored and Improved by a Great Variety of Useful Designs, Entirely New, in the Gothic Mode for the Ornamentation of Buildings and Gardens, (1742) and Gothick Architecture Improved by Rules and Proportions (1747). In the latter he tried, with very little success, to codify the laws and rules of Gothic construction. His work shows a lack of understanding of true principles of taste, but he deserves honorable mention in any study of the aesthetic fashions of the eighteenth century. He did much to prepare for the rise of romantic medievalism. In addition to this, he was the first professional English architect to proclaim not only the propriety of Gothic, but also its superiority over classical architecture.21

Sanderson Miller stands near Batty Langley as one of the early professional advocates of the revived form. After he built his own little hermitage at Radway, he received many requests from rich land owners for designs of buildings for them. His letters published in 1910 show the esteem in which he was held by his contemporaries and also the large number

of plans which were requested. No matter how false and ridiculous his Gothic creations may appear to later generations, there is no denying that his plans satisfied the taste of the times. Statements of appreciation and requests are so numerous in his correspondence as to make this conclusion inevitable.

The designs of Langley and Miller were equally false in their principles of structure. In spite of this, both were immensely popular. An analysis of why this was true will go far toward a more complete understanding of the aesthetic taste of the eighteenth century.

In the first place, it is necessary to repeat that one of the prime factors in the revival of medieval architecture was the acceptance of the idea that Gothic was the most natural style. The classicists had defended their art as the imitation of nature, but the Gothic enthusiasts contrived to transfer the epithet to their own artistic creations. One of the most frequently recurring proofs of the Gothic imitation of nature is the resemblance between an isle in a Gothic cathedral and an avenue of trees. The intertwining of tree branches was often mentioned as the original inspiration for medieval cathedrals. This indicates, therefore, one of the first reasons Gothic became popular—it was more natural.

The second cause of the new interest rises as a counterforce to the classical fad of the Augustan era. In Gothic buildings men found a welcome relief from the monotony and sobriety of contemporary architecture. They likewise found escape from the dull affectation of eighteenth century life. The social life of the early eighteenth century was probably more
stilted and uninteresting than during any other period in English history. Consequently the landed and titled citizenry was glad to get away from urban life and enjoy the simpler and more congenial atmosphere of their country estates. Their rural manors became for them a sort of hermitage to which they could retire when the boredom of London life became oppressive.

For some, including, Walpole and later Beckford, (1796) their country homes were a source of escape even more romantic than that from urban life. The architectural creations of such men were the realizations of their imaginative escapes. In their seclusions they were free to dream of themselves as rich lords or powerful knights, or any other personage they might envy. Mr. Kenneth Clark has suggested that many of the buildings of the early revival were results of their owners' desires to dramatize themselves as monks, crusaders, or medieval barons. This would help to account for the somewhat sudden vogue of equipping country homes with battlements, cloisters, and colored windows. It would be much easier for a man to dream himself off into medieval times if he were surrounded with replicas of castles and cathedrals than if he were surrounded by unimaginative Doric pillars.22

This conclusion is based on the assumption that the people of the second quarter of the eighteenth century really gave themselves over to such fantastic dreams. It is difficult to understand how normal men could indulge in such amusements. However, the preserved correspondence of these

men bear out the assumption that they were prepared to indulge in such flights of imagination. This can be partially explained by recalling that the romantic movement was passing through its incipient stages and was, consequently, subject to the excess that marks the early development of almost all counter movements.

Before proceeding with this discussion, it is necessary to clarify the meaning of the three critical terms "picturesque," "sublime", and the "beautiful". These were the object of much discussion during the second half of the eighteenth century. In the minds of the common man the words stood for vague and confused ideas. Some critics, however, endeavored to make a distinction between the terms and tried to make each stand for a definite concept. In 1756, Edmund Burke published his essay on The Sublime and Beautiful. Twelve years later William Gilpin's Essay on Prints added to the discussion on the relation of these aesthetic ideas. Finally Sir Uvedale Price developed the subject in his Essays which were published in 1794.

In spite of all the discussion during this period and the criticism of succeeding students, the distinction between the terms is still vague. However, working definitions of sufficient accuracy can be obtained. In the first place the word "picturesque" must be mentioned. Gilpin uses the term to mean that which would look well in a picture.23 Price elaborates

on the definition. With him the implication is that the "picturesque" had to resemble art. He used it of scenes or groups of objects which were composed by man or Nature in accordance with the laws of romantic art.24 The word was very frequently used in descriptions of gardens and prospects. The connotation is, therefore, that the scene under consideration was like a picture or suitable for reproduction in art.

The word "sublime" came into prominence with the rise of the novel of terror. As generally used the word has the following meaning: "Sublimity is present when the poet describes concisely and movingly an object of grandeur which has deeply and warmly affected him."25 The term is ultimately one of strong emotional appeal. The emotion is derived from a scene of rugged and immense proportions with the important addition that it must inculcate a feeling of fear, pain, or astonishment in the beholder. It is in this sense that it was used in criticizing the Gothic novel.

Of the three terms, "beauty" remains the most vague. Burke gives the clearest idea of its meaning by the following contrast of it with the word "sublime".

Sublime objects are vast in their dimensions; beautiful ones comparatively small; beauty should be smooth and polished; the great, rugged and negligent; beauty should shun the right line, yet deviate from it insensibly; the great in many cases loves the right line, and when it

deviates, makes a strong deviation; beauty should not be obscure; the great ought to be dark and gloomy; beauty should be light and delicate; the great ought to be solid and even massive.26

These three definitions should enable the reader to comprehend more readily the ideas of the eighteenth century critics of the Gothic revival. The Gothic castle was more than a materialization of imaginative flights; it was the answer to the centuries' cravings for the "sublime". To the people of this century "sublime" objects were supposed to have an overpowering effect upon the beholder, filling him with fear and awe. This type of sublimity was usually the effect of towering masses and always implied great height. Gothic architecture with its vertical aspect contributed more to this effect than did the horizontal emphasis of classical buildings. This is due to the psychological effect of height in architecture. A lofty building will always convey a sense of overpowering majesty which is lacking in a low structure. The vertical aspect of structures becomes even more apparent after they fall into ruins. This explains why ruins and fragments were so much admired by the early Gothic revivalists. The vertical accent of Gothic buildings and ruins provided the beholder with a "thrill" he could not find in the horizontal lines of classical buildings. The emphasis on towering heights and vertical lines explains why the Perpendicular Gothic, with its buttresses, mouldings, and pillars all pointing upward, was the favored form of architecture during this

period. The more vertical the structural lines were the greater the sense of height, and, consequently, the more "sublime" was the effect produced. Gothic architecture became popular because it answered the current craving for sublimity with greater satisfaction than did the other styles.27

Closely associated with the sublimity of Gothic buildings was the sense of mystery. This is the product of gloom and darkness rather than of height. Another feature of medieval buildings supplied this element of gloom. Classical buildings were usually well lighted and left very little to the imagination. Gothic structures, on the other hand, were filled with shadows and mysterious vistas which might conceal anything exciting. The distant reaches of long aisles and great halls as well as the ceilings of high-vaulted rooms were often concealed in darkness. These characteristics afford ample play for the imagination and, therefore, satisfied another desire of the eighteenth century. The quality of gloom, indeed, is the one most frequently employed by the authors of the Gothic romances.

From the foregoing it is apparent that, when the Gothic style returned to favor, it was appreciated for secondary reasons and not for its inherent qualities. The buildings erected during this period show much more enthusiasm than discrimination. It is safe to say that every buildings of the early Gothic revival represents the style in its poorest structural form.

One of the most obvious differences between medieval and eighteenth century Gothic is in the type of building for which it was used. In

earlier times the style was used almost exclusively for cathedrals or other large public buildings. During the 1740's the effort was to adapt the style to small private buildings. In most cases the revived Gothic was used on small buildings intended to add variety to the landscape. Soon it came into favor for use in manorial buildings. In either case the buildings were much smaller than their prototypes, the medieval cathedrals.

The correspondence of Sanderson Miller indicates that he was called on as frequently to design stables and sheep-covers in Gothic as he was to draw plans for country homes. It is apparent that in this stage of the movement, buildings were valued more for their contribution to the picturesque quality of the landscape than for their structural details.

In many cases this desire to decorate the landscape led to laughable expedients. The buildings were considered as ornaments to nature and were sometimes so constructed as to give, from a distance, an appearance of a ruined castle. As long as the outside looked liked the remnants of an ancient castle, the builder was well satisfied. Another craze was the construction of shells of buildings. All the architect was required to do was to design the walls, parapets, and a "round tower". No regard was had to the interior. All the owner wanted was an "object" to decorate the "prospect". In these cases the sham castle was built some distance from the manorial living quarters and usually near the summit of a hill. Its purpose was to give the owner something to look at and something to whet his imagination.

A quotation from Sanderson Miller's letters will indicate the current state of the Gothic fad about the mid-eighteenth century. In 1749 his
friend George Lyttleton writes to him:

My Ld. [Hardwicke] agrees to your notion of having some firs before the walls. As the back view will be immediately closed by the wood there is no regard to be had to it, nor the the left side, from the house. As my Lord designs it nearly [sic] as an object he would have no staircase nor leads in any of the towers, but nearly the walls so built as to have the appearance of a ruined castle.28

Miller's own house at Radway won the admiration of Pococke, Bishop of Ossory, when he visited it in 1756. In his Tour Through England he thus describes Miller's creations at Edgehill:

September 1756: I came to Mr. Miller's house at Radway. This gentleman, who lives on his Estate, has a great genius for architecture, especially the Gothic. . . He has embellished his own house with Gothic architecture, and has made a fine lawn up the hill, with shady walks round it, up to the ruined Castle on Edgehill which he has built adjoining to the houses of some tenants. But he has erected a very noble round Tower which is entire, with a drawbridge, to which their is an ascent as by a ruine, and there is a very fine octagon Gothic room in it, with four windows and four niches, and some old painted glass in the windows. In one of these niches is to be placed Caractacus in chains, modelled, under Mr. Miller's directions, by a countryman of great genius now established in London. . .29

It is apparent that neither Miller nor Pococke saw anything inconsistent in having a classical statue in a niche in a Gothic castle.

It is obvious from these quotations that the buildings of the early

29Ibid., pp. 269-270.
Gothic revival were admired for almost everything except their structural qualities. This largely explains why so many creations of the period were so poorly done. It also accounts for the prevalence of the Perpendicular Gothic style, a style which is the most ornate and least structural of all Gothic forms.

This pseudo-Gothic revival of the eighteenth century is a curious chapter in the history of aesthetic taste. To later generations the seriousness with which Miller and Langley and their contemporaries took their architectural creations seems ridiculous. It seems impossible that men in their right minds could become so enthusiastic over sham replicas of a former age. However, it must be remembered that these men were living in the infancy of the romantic period and their creations, odd as they were represent a real effort to satisfy their inward yearning for the sublime, the beautiful, and the ancient. Just as The Castle of Otranto and other Gothic romances heralded the dawn of true romance so the pseudo-Gothic taste of the century sowed the first seeds which were to fructify in the more authentic admiration for scenery and for antiquity that appeared in the early nineteenth century. In this study some of the germinal ideas of the romantic movement are under observation, consequently, artistic creations must be appreciated for what they foreshow rather than for their intrinsic value.

The foregoing pages have endeavored to outline briefly the most obvious developments in aesthetic taste during the first half of the eighteenth century. Their purpose was to show that the people of England had been
prepared for the apparently sudden outbreak of medieval interests in the various works of Horace Walpole. Many of the topics discussed deserve more complete analysis but such a task would lead too far from the real purpose of this study. Most of these points have been mentioned for the purpose of showing their presence before Horace Walpole and Strawberry Hill came into prominence.

The preceding pages have indicated that the English aesthetic taste of the eighteenth century was definitely influenced by the Gothic or medieval element. It is further evident that this taste, present even in the most classical eras, was becoming increasingly important as the century approached its half way point. There now remains the one problem of determining how this general cultural taste affected the literature of the period between eighteen hundred and the publication of Horace Walpole's Gothic romance, The Castle of Otranto.

In the first place it is necessary to keep in mind that the first half of the century was predominantly classical in its literary manifestation. It is incorrect to conclude that, because a writer has one or two passages which savor of medieval inclinations, he is definitely romantic not classic. The purpose in citing quotations from certain early authors is to indicate that the medievalistic tendency was always present but was kept in a secondary place. Furthermore, there is no effort to be made to cite every work or every author wherein Gothic elements appear. The sole purpose of this section is to indicate the rising tide of Gothic favor which preceded Horace Walpole.
Occasional references in the writings of such arch-classicists as Addison and Pope show that even they were not entirely oblivious to the attractions of Gothic architecture or even of Gothic horror scenes. Citations of such occasional remarks in their works gives some credibility to the assumption that romantic interests were never totally extinct in England. However, it is necessary to bear in mind that these expressions are very exceptional and do not indicate any influence or basic tastes.

In Addison’s Remarks on Several Parts of Italy, published in 1705, the author on several occasions gives way to an expression of admiration for the beauties of the Gothic churches he describes. In almost every case the spontaneous glow of admiration is almost immediately checked by a reflection on the fact that these beauties are present in spite of the fact that the building is in the "barbarous" style of architecture. For example, after noting the beauties of Siena Cathedral he remarks that the building might have been a miracle of architecture had its designers "only been instructed in the right way."30 In every case where he is forced to admit the intrinsic beauty of a Gothic construction, he counters with an objection indicating the superiority of classical construction.

The same reluctance to concede unqualified approval to non-classical works is seen also in Pope’s Preface to Shakespeare. He admits the fact that Gothic possesses a certain strength and majesty but deplores and condemns the irregularity of it. A few lines in his poem Eloisa to Abelard, however, make use of a typical eighteenth century Gothic machinery.

30Joseph Addison, quoted in The Tale of Terror, E. Birkhead, pp. 16-17.
In these lone walls (their days eternal bound)
These moss-grown domes with spiry turrets crown'd
Where awful arches make a moon-day night,
And the dim windows shed a solemn light; 31

Here in the midst of Popean classicism is hidden a scene which could
easily be ascribed to the most typical of the early Gothic revivalists.

A few lines later he says:

But o'er the twilight graves and dusky caves,
Long-sounding aisles, and intermingled graves,
Black melancholy sits. . . "32

Here again his thoughts might be mistaken for those of one of the mid-century
pre-romantics.

Too much should not be made of these exceptions in Pope and Addison.
They merely indicate that even in the most severe of classical authors,
rays of romantic interest occasionally break forth.

The germs of a counter attack on the pseudo-classical position were
being sown even in the high tide of Augustan ascendancy. At least passing
reference must be made to one of these, the revival of interest in Spenser.
During the first quarter of the century the revival of interest in Spenser
gave impetus to the return of imagination to poetry and also gave a push
toward a revival of interest in medieval studies. In the field of criticism
this came to light in the work of John Hughes, the ranking Spenserian
scholar of the early eighteenth century. His conclusions are of interest
because they foreshadow the critical theories of Thomas Warton and Richard

32 Ibid., Lines 163-165.
Hurd of the mid-century. He maintains that the Faerie Queen would appear monstrous were it examined by the classical rules of epic poetry.

But as it is plain that the Author never designed it by those rules, I think it ought rather to be considered as a poem of a particular kind, describing in a series of Allegorical adventures or episodes, the most noted virtues and vices. To compare it ... with the models of Antiquity would be like drawing a parallel between the Roman and the Gothick architecture. In the first there is, doubtless, a more natural grandeur and simplicity; in the latter we find great mixtures of beauty and barbarism, yet assisted by the invention of inferior ornaments; and though the former is more majestick in the whole, the latter may be very surprising and agreeable in its parts.33

The importance of Hughes' work in the present consideration resides in the fact that he recognized the right of Gothic art to be judged on its own principles. He makes allowance for considering a work on its own merit irregardless of its approximation to classical standards. The acceptance of such an aesthetic principle was necessary before works in non-classical styles could hope for an appreciative acceptance.

In the field of poetry a renewed interest in nature, and in ruins of ancient buildings began to appear during the latter part of the first quarter of the century and increased in frequency and enthusiasm as the years went by. At first sight the association of nature and ruins may seem out of place, but the few quotations available show that in either subject the basic reason for its favor is the same. The nature which first

attracted attention was not the calm, meditative nature of Wordsworth, but nature in her severe and terrible manifestations. The rugged aspects first caught the poet's attention. Likewise, the most frequent source of inspiration in ruins was the gloom which was associated with the shadows of walls and crypts. The taste to which both nature and crumbling buildings appealed was, indeed, crude, but it was the same which later was to find romantic excitement in the Gothic tales of terror.

As early as 1716 an anonymous poem, "On Solitude", appeared in Jacob Tonson's collection popularly known as Dryden's Miscellany. The exact date of its composition is unknown, but the fact that the editors incorporated it in the Miscellany in 1716 indicates that they judged that the poem would interest the reading public. A selection from this poem will exemplify the quality of taste which it was intended to satisfy.

Oh how agreeable a Sight
These hanging Mountains do appear. . .
What pretty Desolations make
These Torrents Vagabond and Fierce,
Who in vast Heaps their Spring forsake
This solitary Vale to pierce? . . .
What Beauty is there in the sight
Of these old ruin'd Castle Walls.34

The verse structure is undeniably crude, but the poem reveals a certain amount of enthusiasm in the rough aspects of nature as well as an interest in ruins. These qualities, as well as its direct observation of nature, make it safe to classify it as a poem intimating a coming change in poetry.

This one isolated poem in itself is not sufficient evidence that it was an influential landmark in poetry. Its validity in the present discussion resides in the fact that it was published in an anthology which was intended to cater to popular reading taste. The fact of its inclusion by the editors indicates that they thought it had sales value. In other words they thought the reading public would be interested in such poetry.

Another poem of this early period forces its citation here. In David Mallet's poem "Excursion", published in 1726, all the machinery of Gothic poetry is combined into a description which might find place in any typical Gothic romance.

Behind me rises huge and awful Pile,
Sole on this blasted Heath, a Place of Tombs,
Waste, desolate, where Ruin dreary dwells,
Brooding o'er sightless swells, and crumbling Bones.
Ghostful He sits, & eyes with Steadfast Glare
The column grey with Moss, the falling Bust,
The Time-shook Arch, the monumental Stone,
Impaired, effac' d, & hastening into Dust,
Unfaithful to their charge of flattering fame,
All is dread Silence here, and undisturb'd,
Save where the Wind sighs and the wailing owl
Screams solitary to the mournful Moon,
Glimmering her western Ray through yonder Isle
Where the sad Spirit walks with shadowy Foot
His wonted Round, or lingers o'er his Grave.35

Scattered through the poems of James Thomson, Joseph Warton, and in even lesser degree, those of Lady Winchelsea are little details and brief descriptions which show Gothic interest. These details are almost negligible in proportion to each poet's total work, yet they show that such

35Kenneth Clark, op. cit., pp. 28-29.
points were gaining the attention of observant poets. In Thomson's *Seasons* (1726) occasional phrases like "superstitious horror", and "sadden'd grove", show promise of the coming interest in terror and horror. Similar details are found in Joseph Warton's *Enthusiast, or the Lover of Nature* and in some of the poems of Lady Winchelsea. In themselves these details are unimportant, but they indicate the presence of an interest which was to become more pronounced in a few years.

Other poems of the period show a like interest in the qualities that were later to become characteristic of Gothic poetry. The most valuable source of such material is the collection popularly known as *Dodsley's Miscellany*. Several of the poems contain lines which definitely foreshow the elements of Gothic poetry. The number of poems which show this interest is not great in proportion to the total in the collection, and they are limited to a comparatively small group of authors, but their value in the present consideration is not invalidated by these facts. No effort is being made to indicate the development of a strong and an important type of poetry; the purpose is merely to show that Gothic elements were present in English literature before the appearance of Walpole's *Castle of Otranto*. Even a cursory reading of Dodsley's Miscellany will establish this beyond doubt.

In the first volume of the collection two poems by a Mr. Dyer show a definite interest in the rustic beauty and terror of ancient ruins. His "Grongar Hill", written in 1726, shows a real interest in untamed nature.

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as well as an accuracy of observation uncommon in his time. His romantic musings are closed with classic moralisings, but his love for rugged nature and ivy-covered ruins is unmistakable. His "Ruins of Rome", 37 1740, is more definitely classic in tone, but his pleasure in the subterranean crypts and grottoes possesses a true note of joy in Gothic terror.

Other poems in the same volumes indicate a similar mixture of classic and Gothic handling. "Pehshurst", by a Mr. F. Coventry, 38 uses the relics in the hall of an ancient castle to conjure up romantic memories of the distant past. Again a Mr. Parrat in his "To the Honorable and Reverend F.C." tells his friend that the Muse took him "to views romantic":

The cliff
O'er hanging, sparkling brooks, and ruins grey; 39

Again it is a mixture of rough nature and ancient ruins. Mr. Mason's "Ode on Melancholy" has its "Abbey dank and lone" with ivy chains linking the mouldering stones, as well as its midnight gloom and thunder and

Thin Shiv'ring Ghosts from yawning charnels throng,
And glance with silent sweep the shaggy vaults along. 39a

These few examples culled from the brown pages of the 1758 edition indicate the use to which Gothic machinery was being put.

A last sample from the Miscellany demands a longer citation here. In

37 Ibid., pp. 220-240.
38 Ibid., Vol. IV, pp. 50-61.
39 Ibid., Vol. VI, p. 137.
39a Ibid., Vol. VI, p. 219.
Mr. Mason's "The Dowager" the word "Gothic" is used in the description of a ruined castle.

Where aged elms in many a goodly row
Give yearly shelter to the constant crow,
A mansion stands:--long since the pile was rais'd
Whose Gothic grandeur the rude hind amaz'd
For the rich ornament on ev'ry part,
Confess'd the founder's wealth, and workman's art:
Tho' as the range of the wide court we tread,
The broken arch now totters o'er the head;
And where of old rose high the social smoke,
Now swallows build, and lonely ravens croak.
Tho' Time, whose touch each beauty can deface,
Has torn from ev'ry tow'r the sculptur'd grace;
Tho' round each stone the sluggard ivy crawls,
Yet ancient state sits hov'ring on the walls.40

Here appear many of the characteristic interests of Gothic romance and that six years before the Castle of Otranto.

The works of more commonly known writers of the period also played a part in the preparation of English taste for the reception of Walpole's Gothic romance. The rise of romantic melancholy and the "grave yard school of poetry" prepared the reading public for the sombre and gloomy details of the Gothic romances. Thomas Warton's Pleasures of Melancholy demand special mention in this group because in addition to pensive melancholy his poem has its "hoarse and holsounds", "ruin'd seats", "twilight cells", "ruin'd abbey's moss-grown piles", all of which are premonitions of the macabre details of the Gothic romance.

The revival of antiquarian interest in such works as Macpherson's

40Ibid., VI, p. 221, lines 1-14.
Fragments of Ancient Poetry Translated from the Gaelic, Gray’s Norse Odes, Percy’s Reliques, and the Rowley Papers also contributed to the success of Walpole’s story. The last two, of course, followed the Castle of Otranto, but they, as well as the first two, are indicative of the interest in antiquity which became noticeable during the decade following 1760. It was not so much specific works as the general interest they represent that is important.

In addition to the trend in creative literature that has been outlined above, the critical thought of at least two men must be mentioned at this point. Thomas Warton accepted the classical principles of his contemporaries as his official public view on literature, but in his own private thought he had a strong penchant for antiquarianism. In one of his early comments he said:

We scarcely regret the loss of these proprieties 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.41

Had he made public avowal of this preference, he may have sped up the revival of medieval interest.

In 1762 appeared a work of far greater influence. Richard Hurd in his Letters on Chivalry and Romance uncompromisingly speaks in favor and defense of Gothic art. He goes so far as to say that Homer, had he lived

in feudal times would have found the Gothic manners far superior in poetic quality to anything he knew in Greece. The avowed purpose of his Letters is to prove "the pre-eminence of the Gothic manners and fictions, as adapted to the ends of poetry, above the classic."42

This critical defense, appearing as it did when men were growing weary of "an effete formalism",43 exerted a strong influence on the aesthetic thinking of the 1760's because his letters were widely read by contemporaries. Their critical value lies in their insistence on the right of Gothic art to be judged on its own principles.

In concluding this first chapter a word may be needed in defense of its length. The purpose was to indicate, as accurately as space would tolerate, that the rise of Gothic interest in all art, as well as in literature, did not break like thunder on a world of classical tranquillity. Horace Walpole's Gothic romance did not come as such a surprise as he thought it would. The English reading public had been prepared, even though unconsciously, to receive just such a story. The apparent diversion into grottoes, gardens, and architecture was necessary to show the principal influences that were gradually awakening in the minds of men a new interest in the art and life of the medieval epochs. Once more it is necessary to reiterate that the evidence produced was not intended to prove the presence of any elaborate movement; it merely indicates that mediav-42listic trends were present.

CHAPTER II
ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF WALPOLE'S MEDIEVALISM

The purpose of this second chapter is to ascertain as accurately as possible the extent and quality of Walpole's medievalistic tendencies. A very special problem stands in the way of reducing his Gothic interest to any semblance of logical order. His writings present a continual flow of changing ideas and attitudes. In order to arrive at an estimate of his true ideas, it is necessary to sift his various statements to try to separate his sincere assertions from those that were dictated by momentary expediency. It is possible to discover quotations from his writings to prove most contradictory attitudes. The task of the present chapter, therefore, will be to arrive at a valid evaluation of his medieval interests.

A word may be useful in defence of the work of this chapter. Why should one be interested in Walpole's artistic and architectural interests in a thesis in literary study? The answer is clear, He was a leader in the Gothic revival and the author of the prototype of the Gothic novel. Furthermore, his interest in past times helped open the way to the interest in the Middle Ages, an interest which was one of the characteristics of English romantic literature. A clear concept of his ideas will form a good foundation for understanding the interest in antiquity which originated largely with him, increased throughout the remainder of the century, and culminated in the romantic writers of the first half of the nineteenth century.
The plan of this chapter will be fourfold. In the first place, the principal sources of his medievalistic interests will be cited. Secondly, a brief chronological history of his "Gothic passion" will be traced. This will be followed by a critical evaluation of his ideas. Finally, a brief consideration of Strawberry Hill will be made. The purpose of this last is to study the most concrete example Walpole left of his fantastic Gothic dreams.

A very legitimate question might ask just how Walpole, a paragon of Augustan society, came to be so greatly interested in medieval things. Several sources may be mentioned. In the first place he had an extraordinary interest in his ancestors. His letters of 1748 indicate that he was already deeply interested in genealogical studies. Just when he undertook the task of tracing his ancestry is uncertain, but the tone of his letter to George Montagu on August 11, 1748 indicates that he was already deeply immersed in the subject.

I am arrived at great knowledge in the annals of the house of Vere, but though I have twisted and twined their genealogy and my own in a thousand ways, I cannot discover as I wished to do, that I am descended from them anyhow but from one of their Christian names; . . . but I have made a really curious discovery; the lady with the strange head-dress at Earl's Colne, which I mentioned to you, is certainly Lacerona, the Portuguese: for I have found in Rapin, from one of the old chronicles that Anne of Bohemia. . . But in this search I have crossed upon another descent, which I am taking great pains to verify, and that is a probability of my being descended from Chaucer. . .1

This conglomeration of leads within a few paragraphs indicates the enthusiasm with which he discussed such matters. More important than this, the quotation indicates that he had been engaged in the work for sometime and had previously discussed the matter with his friend. No beginner in the art would be so versed in cross references and supplied with so many cues.

His interest in genealogies was particularly active during the few years just before 1750. His letters make frequent references to his discoveries and problems. In one letter he says: "I have had at least a dozen great-great-grandfathers that came to untimely ends. All your virtuosos in heraldry are content that they had ancestors who lived five hundred years ago, no matter how they died." A few months later he writes to George Montagu:

Now I have dipped you so deep in heraldry and genealogies, I shall beg of you to step into the church of Stoke; I know it is not asking you to do a disagreeable thing to call there; I want an account of the tomb of the first Earl of Huntington, an ancestor of mine, who lies there. I asked Gray, but he could tell me little about it. You know how out of humour Gray has been about our diverting ourselves with pedigrees, which is at least as wise as making a serious point of haranguing against the study.

The interest which started near the mid-century continued throughout most of his life. As late as 1775 he wrote to the Rev. William Cole of thank him for a present "of a whole branch of most reputable ancestors, the Derehaughs."
This hobby of Walpole's was more important for what it led to than for its intrinsic merits. From the study of his ancestors, he was led into an interest in the buildings in which they lived and worshipped. His great attraction to antiquity and antiquarian objects can be accounted for as an outgrowth of his first love, heraldry.

Walpole's research into the annals of his forebearers gradually led him to an interest in their living conditions. It was but natural for a curious mind like his to go beyond the mere tracing of family lineage to a consideration of the novelties and curiosities of earlier times. From an interest in persons he turned to buildings and studied their historical and genealogical associations. He became more and more involved in the architectural remains of previous ages, but even then his references to famous castles include allusions to family portraits, heraldic emblems, and tombs just as much as the structural qualities of the places. It is safe to say that his antiquarian interest never totally divorced itself from his genealogical hobby.

Walpole's interest in antiquity appeared almost as early as his heraldic studies. In his early years he had spent much time at his father's home at Houghton. Here he had around him the collections of books and art that his father zealously accumulated, and it is beyond doubt that he did take interest in these collections. When he went on his grand tour in 1739, he was already somewhat familiar with art and antiquity. During his stay on the continent, the call to Italian social life became more urgent than his interest in artistic beauty. Although Gray spent most of his time in
museums, Walpole had cooled in his eagerness for the antique which now "pleases him calmly." Society at this time had greater attractions for him. A few years later, on one of his English tours, he expresses disappointment after his visit to Petworth because "the house and garden did not please our antiquarian spirit." From this time on he was confirmed in his love for the antique. It had survived its incipient weakness when it could take second place to social amusements.

One of his earliest interests along this line was collecting specimens of ancient "painted glass". As early as 1753 he asked his friend George Montagu to help him get a few specimens for his castle at Strawberry Hill. Even here he showed his characteristic defect. When he could not get the specimen he wanted, he was easily satisfied with a modern imitation of an ancient piece. However, in justice to Walpole, it must be stated that in his stained glass windows he was more than usually careful to get authentic relics.

In addition to his glass, Walpole's antiquarian propensity led him to collect all sorts of articles which, for the most part, are valuable only as curiosities. In the museum he formed at Strawberry Hill he collected everything and anything that claimed the merit of being quaint or beautiful. There is no organization or plan whatsoever. His museum more than anything else proves that he was not a scientific antiquarian but an amateur and virtuoso. Further it exemplifies the point that he was not interested in

5Letter 300, To George Montagu, August 26, 1749, Toynbee, II, p. 407.
any one period or type of art, but was concerned only with the object itself. As long as the specimen was beautiful or attractive he was interested no matter what style of art it might represent. This explains not only the heterogeneous nature of his museum but also his ability to become enthusiastic over a Grecian as well as a Gothic structure.

Although Walpole's interest was that of an amateur, his work won recognition. He was frequently consulted even by more professional collectors. In such cases he was usually more than anxious to give his opinions. In 1765 he wrote to Thomas Percy:

If it should ever lie within my slender power to assist your studies or inquiries, I hope, Sir, you will command me. I love the cause, I have a passion for antiquity and literary amusements, and though I much doubt whether I shall ever engage in them again, farther than for my own private entertainment, I shall always be glad to contribute my mite to any gentleman, whose abilities and taste demand, like yours, to be encouraged.6

At one period Walpole belonged to the Society of Antiquaries. He seems to have been satisfied with them for a time but later severed all connections. The reason for the break is not apparent, but he leaves no doubt about the scorn he had for that organization. To his antiquarian friend, William Cole, he wrote:

I had not heard of the painting you tell me of. As those boobies, the Society of Antiquaries, have gotten hold of it, I wonder their pity did not make them bury it again, as they did the clothes of Edward I. I have some notion that in Vertue's Mss. or somewhere

6Letter 1007, To Thomas Percy, February 5, 1765, Toynbee, VI, p. 183.
else, I don't know where, I have read of some ancient painting at the Rose Tavery. This I will tell you— but Mr. Gough is such a bear that I shall not tell him about it. That Society, when they are puzzled, have recourse to me; and that would be so often, that I shall not encourage them.7

His last boast, if true, would further substantiate his claim to be an authority on antiquarian subjects.

Walpole's interest in antiquity was one of the few that stayed with him throughout a major portion of his life. Its roots took shape in the midst of his father's collections at Houghton. Later his interest became more vital and continued so for many years. During the last twenty years of his life, his personal interest continued, but it was less active than during the mid period of his career.

Walpole never claimed to be a scientific student of antiquity. Always he was the amateur and virtuoso who took delight in ancient articles because of their own beauty rather than for their relationships with historical events. His zeal was too enthusiastic and volatile to be confined by scientific limitations. The articles he put into his museum were gathered miscellaneously and without regard to any definite plan. He was strictly an amateur in the art of collecting, but he possessed one of the most important qualities of the trade, an eminently good sense of taste. His collection was that of a real connoisseur.

In spite of all the charges of insincerity, lack of scientific learning, and over enthusiasm, Walpole did a real service to the antiquarian

cause. He helped to popularize it. He brought the study out of the murk of dusty research into the light of popular fancy. He lacked the powers necessary to initiate a new movement, but he could catch and intensify the new ideas and bring them into the limelight. This was his service to antiquarian research. The ideas and discoveries brought to light by the zealous study of more intense students he took and touched with his wit and graceful style and thereby brought them into popular demand. As usual, Walpole's contribution was not very deep, but it was, nevertheless, very important in the formation of popular interest in medievalistic study.

One of the outstanding results of Walpole's genealogical studies, as well as his collections of antique curiosities, was his interest in the architectural remains of England. His letters after July, 1748 make frequent references to the journeys he made to visit the ancient buildings in the country. In fact it became an annual affair for him to go on his Gothic pilgrimages.

His first trips began shortly after he took up his country residence near Twickenham. Frequently, when he was on his way to pay a visit, he would turn from his course in order to visit some ancient estate or ruined church. From these small beginnings developed his elaborate tours with John Chute. In the course of a few years these trips became one of the important events in each year's schedule. From impromptu detours they became carefully planned excursions that eventually led him to most of the well-known sites in England.

The scenes and events of his annual tours became popular subject
matter for his letters. Here he has recorded all the impressions, both favorable and unfavorable, that came to him on each visit. As usual, he shows a lack of scientific appreciation. He was pleased or disgruntled not because a site corresponded to any principles of architecture but solely on the merits of each individual edifice. He could wax just as enthusiastic over a Grecian column as over a Gothic arch provided that the piece impressed him as picturesque or beautiful in itself. Probably the best term for his appreciation of buildings would be "eclectic". If the individual piece was attractive, little cared he what style it represented.

The first thing Walpole mentioned on each visit was the grounds surrounding the structure. True to the taste of his period, as shown in the preceding chapter, was his interest in the "prospect". He favored a long unbroken view. In many cases he expresses his displeasure because the grounds are too cramped by surrounding woods or other obstacles. His description of his stop at Warwick is characteristic of what he considered proper qualities for castle grounds.

On my return, I saw Warwick, a pretty old town, small and thinly in habited, in the form of a cross. The castle is enchanting: the view pleased me more than I can express; the river Avon tumbles down a cascade at the foot of it. It is well laid out by one Brown... One sees what the prevalence of taste does... Little Brook, who would have chuckled to have been born in an age of clipt hedges and cockle-shell avenues, has submitted to let his garden and park be natural.8

On the other hand, he frequently found fault with the cramped condition of estates which lacked a pleasant view. For example, in speaking

8 Letter 334, To George Montagu, July 22, 1751, Toynbee, III, p. 66.
of Nugent's estate at Gosfield, he says:

It is extremely in fashion, but did not answer to me, though there are fine things about; but being situated in a country that is quite blocked up with hills upon hills, and even too much wood, it has not an inch of prospect. 9

In his descriptions of the externals of buildings, he is usually vague. He has a definite aversion for modernizations of old buildings. This is due to a point in his criticism which almost merits the title of a principle. He almost invariably condemns a mixture of styles. He has no particular liking for modern construction, and he becomes particularly violent when a venerable edifice is marred by repairs made according to modern designs. For the most part he dismisses the external qualities as being "venerable", or "quaint", or "nice". Seldom does he become more specific.

One of the most enthusiastic appraisals in all his letters is that of Netley Abbey. This is probably his most sincere statement of what he really liked. His enthusiasm was so great that for the moment he forgot all about Augustan propriety and the opinions of his more reserved contemporaries. His description deserves full quotation because it more than anything else gives an indication of what he appreciated.

But how shall I describe Netley to you? I can only by telling you that it is the spot in the world for which Mr. Chute and I wish. The ruins are vast, and retain fragments of beautiful fretted roofs pendent in the air, with all variety of Gothic patterns of windows wrapped round and round with ivy—many trees are sprouted up amongst the walls, and only want to be increased with cypresses! A hill rises above the

9Letter 276, To George Montagu, July 26, 1748, Ibid., II, 324-325.
abbey in a wood, in the very center, on the edge of the hill; on each side breaks in the view of the South­hampton sea, deep blue, glistening with silver and vessels; on one side terminated by Southampton, on the other by Calshot Castle; and the Isle of Wight rising above the opposite hills. In short, they are not the ruins of Netley, but of Paradise. --Oh! the purple abbots, what a spot had they chosen to slumber in.10

In his accounts of interiors of buildings Walpole's genealogical inclinations come again to the forefront. He describes various rooms in the structures he visited, but his interest always picks up when he describes the relics of former ages. Much to the consternation of petulant caretakers, he delighted in searching through all the closets and crannies in pursuit of notes of heraldry. Tombs and statues also claimed his special attention especially when they bore inscriptions pertaining to deceased nobility. Closely associated with his interest in tombs was his penchant for gloomy gateways and dungeons. His numerous letters prove that he was interested in almost everything about the castles except the buildings themselves. One of the stages in his Gothic education was that in which he found delight in buildings which fed the imagination with scenes of past ages. Old books and papers satisfied his interest and curiosity. All that a battle tower or abbey contained of history or legend aroused in him an imaginary picture of heroic or monastic ages. In these he found his true delight.

Another characteristic of his Gothic taste was his admiration for everything picturesque. As has already been indicated, one of his major

10Letter 441, To Richard Bentley, September 18, 1755, Toynbee, III, pp. 342-343.
interests was in articles and details that struck the eye. This interest, combined with the three already mentioned, accounts largely for his interest in Gothic details.

A noticeable fact in Walpole's criticism is that he especially appreciated the Perpendicular Gothic. This style, more recent than authentic Gothic, lacked the simplicity of earlier types and is characterized by elaborate ornamentation and use of details. Almost invariably it is this style which rouses Walpole to expressions of real enthusiasm. He never really loved Gothic architecture for its structural qualities but for its details, consequently he preferred the late, or Perpendicular Gothic, with its superabundance of ornamentation to the more sober productions of earlier modes. The late Gothic churches were characterized also by elaborate tombs, another of Walpole's special propensities.

If Walpole was attracted by the picturesque details in buildings, he was even more enthusiastic in his appreciation of picturesque natural scenery. He was one of the first in his generation to see the natural beauty in the English countryside. His descriptions of manor gardens, as previously shown, emphasize the picture qualities of the scenes he specially commends. One of the first indications of his special eye for the suggestive qualities in nature is found in his letter to his friend West during his visit to the Alps in 1739. In the midst of an otherwise dull letter he suddenly breaks out into an impassioned description of an Alpine scene. This shows not only his eye for the picturesque, but also his attraction for the rugged and severe aspects of nature, a quality character-
istic of the early Gothic revival.

The Road, West, the road! winding around a prodigious mountain, and surrounded with others, all shagged with hanging woods, obsoured with pines, or lost in clouds! Below a torrent breaking through cliffs, and tumbling through fragments of rocks! Sheets of cascades forcing their silver speed down channelled precipices, and hastening into the roughened river at the bottom! Now and then an old foot bridge, with a broken rail, a leaning cross, a cottage, or the ruin of an hermitage! This sounds too bombast and too romantic to one that has not seen it, too cold for one that has. If I could send you my letter post between two lovely tempests that echoed each other's wrath, you might have some idea of this noble roaring scene, as you were reading it. Almost on the summit, upon a fine verdure, but without any prospect, stands the Chartreuse.11

The four points discussed thus far in this chapter, his interest in genealogies, his penchant for antiquity, his annual Gothic pilgrimages, and finally his eye for picturesque details, help account for the great Gothic interest that became one of the principal motives in his life. The discussion shows that Walpole was prepared by temperament and education, both conscious and subconscious, to become the leading proponent of the new aesthetic ideas of the mid-eighteenth century. It was not surprising, then, that he undertook to Gothicize his country estate when he came to enlarge and improve it.

Walpole's interest in Gothic art started early in his career. While later interests in heraldry and antiquity did much to further his "Gothic passion", it must not be supposed that this was entirely an acquired interest. In several letters he refers to his inclination to visionary

escape from reality. In a note to his friend George Montagu he says that the fields at Eton were transformed by his imagination into countless scenes of past ages. At this time he mentions a fantastic idea that comes from his visionary day-dreams. "How happy should I have been to have had a kingdom only for the pleasure of being driven from it, and living disguised in an humble vale."12 This visionary escapist mood was not peculiar to his adolescent school days. In later years he found delight in imagining himself confined to his own Gothic castle and not daring to go forth except armed for battle. It is noticeable in the present consideration that whenever Walpole speaks of his visions there is some direct reference to ancient times. His tendency toward flights of imagination seems to have been purposely encouraged. As late as 1768, he wrote that "my system is always to live in a vision as much as I can".13 In another place he says:

"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."14

These confessions from the pen of Walpole himself, more than any other single factor, explain his extravagant flights of Gothic fancy. Such a quality is not acquired by education; it is innate.

13 Letter 1210, To George Montagu, April 15, 1768, Toynbee, VII, 180.
14 Letter 1084, To George Montagu, January 5, 1766, Toynbee, VI, 387-88.
It is not surprising, therefore, that long before he became engaged in scientific studies of the past, Walpole already had an eye for Gothic beauty. The first written indication of his appreciation for the ancient style of architecture is found in one of his early poems. His verses in memory of King Henry VI, published under the date of February 2, 1738, show unmistakable enthusiasm for the Gothic structure. The poem was inspired by a visit to King's College Chapel. Wound up in its laborious heroic couplets are references to "vaulted roofs," shooting columns," and "grandeur of the Gothic isle", all of which show that the author was aware of at least the most obvious artistic claims of Gothic architecture. The enthusiasm which colors these verses shows that the poet found real delight in contemplation of the beauties of this structure. The evident sincerity of the lines merits their reproduction here.

But say, what shrine? My eyes in vain require,
Th'engraven brass and monumental spire.
Henry knows none of these—above! around!
Behold where e'er this pensile quarry's found,
Or swelling into vaulted roofs its weight,
Or shooting columns into Gothic state,
Where e'er this fane extends its lofty frame,
Behold the monument to Henry's name!

When Henry bade this pompous temple rise,
Nor with presumption emulate the skies,
Art and Palladio had not reach'd the land,
Nor methodiz'd the Vandal builder's hand.
Wonders, unknown to rule, these piles disclose;
The walls, as if by inspiration, rose,
The edifice, continued by his care,
With equal pride had form'd the sumptuous square,
Had not the assassin disappointed part,
And stab'd the growing fabric in his heart.
More humble hands, but grateful to the mind,
That first the royal benefit design'd,
Renew the labour, reassume the stone,
And George's auspices the structure crown,
No lifeless pride the rising walls contain,
Neat without art, and regularly plain.
What tho' with pomp unequal sinks the pile
Beneath the grandeur of the Gothic isle;
What tho' the modern master's weaker hand
Unexecuted drops what Henry plann'd;
This for the sons of men is an abode,
But that the temple of the living God.  

After such an enthusiastic appreciation of Kind's College Chapel it is surprising to find Walpole so unresponsive to the monuments he found on his grand tour during the following year. His letters are noticeably lacking in references to the beauties of the French and Italian cathedrals that he must certainly have seen in the course of his two years on the continent. One explanation of this anomaly may be hazarded. His deep-seated bigotry toward the Roman Church may have caused him purposely to avoid the cathedrals or, at least, not to make mention of their beauty. His silence may also be due to his becoming so engrossed in the social life of Europe as to disregard all the really worth while scenes on his trip. Whatever the cause, the fact remains that where Gothic references are most expected, they are conspicuous by their absence.

After his return from Italy, he entered into his period of genealogical and antiquarian research which eventually led to his almost total application to Gothic interests. After 1750 his medieval studies ceased to be a hobby and became the controlling motive in his life. In 1752 he wrote of burying a manuscript "behind the wainscot of Mr. Bentley's house". The nonchalance with which this reference is introduced into his correspondence would

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indicate that Gothic was at that time a very familiar topic of conversation.

The high tide of Walpole's Gothic creative period produced his three most conspicuous works in this field: Strawberry Hill after 1750, The Castle of Otranto in 1764, and The Mysterious Mother in 1768. After 1770 his interest subsided into more tranquil veins. In his later years he was no longer an active apostle of the new aesthetic doctrine, but he kept up his private interest to the very end. In fact, it is fair to say that, after he once got himself engrossed in the subject, he never again lost interest in it. In all his varied and contradictory states of mind, his "Gothic passion" alone remained intact throughout the major portion of his life.

Before going into a detailed study of his first Gothic product, Strawberry Hill, it will be profitable to give some consideration to his ideas on Gothic architecture. Here, as in most other cases, his written statements are inconsistent and often quite contradictory. However, in his architectural ideas it is possible to arrive at a comparatively accurate estimate of his true appreciation.

There are two sources in which his statements on this subject can be studied. The most authentic assertions are to be found in his Anecdotes of Painting. Here he spoke as an authority on art and gave his official public opinions. His letters are more self-contradictory because there he recorded his passing impressions and often varies his propositions according to the

16 Letter 352, To George Montagu, July 30, 1752, Toynbee, III, 108.
exigencies of time and place. These declarations might be called his unofficial manifestoes. A judicious balancing of his professional and amateur declarations, as found in his *Anecdotes of Painting and Letters* respectively, will produce a safe evaluation of his true position.

One confusing characteristic of Walpole's architectural taste is the ease with which he could wax eloquent over either a Gothic or a classic specimen. One day his letters might seem to indicate that he was so deeply immersed in Gothic admiration as to leave no possible room for any other interest. The following day's correspondence might just as enthusiastically praise a classic piece to the apparent exclusion of every other style. The explanation of this vacillation has been indicated earlier in the present chapter. Walpole was essentially eclectic in his artistic appreciation. He admired a given specimen because it struck him, at the moment, as picturesque or attractive. To him the scientific distinction of styles meant nothing; the aesthetic pleasure of the moment was everything.

This confusion of genres is excusable in his personal enthusiasms, but greater consistency should be expected in his efforts to arrive at learned conclusions on the subject. Nevertheless, the same vacillation is again present. In the *Anecdotes of Painting* the general tone shows that he considered the classic style the most acceptable. However, in the fourth volume of this work, when he came to the discussion of medieval architects, he shows a very sincere appreciation of Gothic as superior to the classic. Almost as soon as he declared himself, however, he countered with an apology to the Grecian style. An explanation of this contradiction seems imperative.
The most plausible interpretation of his favoring the classic over the Gothic in the Anecdotes seems to be that he considered himself as giving the official public statement of his artistic creed. Apparently he thought that a public avowal of his Gothic preferences at this time would draw upon him a double anathema. In the first place, he feared that he would be accused of lacking artistic taste; and, secondly, his statements might be interpreted as indicating a tendency toward Popery. These were two charges that he could not bring himself to risk. Briefly stated, he believed that the time was not yet ripe for a man of his social position to venture an appreciation of medieval art. Consequently the prevailing attitude in the Anecdotes of Painting favored the classic art and was merely condescending toward the Gothic.

In the fourth chapter of the Anecdotes he made his formal statement on medieval architects. Here for the moment he dropped his reserved attitude toward Gothic and gave not only on of the first real criticisms of the art but also one of the most enthusiastic. Let him speak for himself:

This Saxon style begins to be defined by flat and round arches, by some undulating zig-zags on certain old fabrics, and by a very few other characteristics, all evidences of barbarous and ignorant times. I do not wish to say simply that the round arch is a proof of ignorance; but being so natural, it is simply, when unaccompanied by any graceful ornament, a mark of a rude age -- if attended by misshapened and heavy decorations, a certain mark of it. The pointed arch, that peculiar of Gothic architecture, was certainly intended as an improvement on the circular, and the men who had not the happiness of light- ing on the simplicity and proportion of the Greek orders.

were however so lucky as to strike out a thousand graces and effects which rendered their buildings magnificent, yet genteel, vast yet light, venerable and picturesque. It is difficult for the noblest Grecian temple to convey half so many impressions to the mind, as a cathedral does of the best Gothic taste—a proof of skill in the architects and of address in the priests who erected them. The latter exhausted their knowledge of the passions in composing edifices whose pomp, mechanisms, vaults, tombs, painted windows, gloom and perspectives infused such sensations of romantic devotion; and they were happy in finding artists capable of executing such machinery. One must have taste to be sensible of the beauties of Grecian architecture; one only wants passions to feel Gothic. In St. Peter's one is convinced that it was built by great princes—in Westminster Abbey, one thinks not of the builder; the religion of the place makes the first impression; and though stripped of its altars and shrines, it is nearer to converting one to popery than all the regular pageantry of Roman domes. Gothic churches infuse superstition—Grecian admiration. The papal see amassed its wealth by Gothic cathedrals, and displays it in Grecian temples.18

This criticism of Gothic architecture is noteworthy for several reasons. In the first place, Walpole was probably the first man of consequence seriously to criticize Gothic as art during his period. For many years after the publication of The Anecdotes of Painting, Gothic architecture was considered more as a field for pedantic antiquarian research than as a practical architectural style. Walpole was, therefore, ahead of his time in making Gothic architecture a subject of artistic criticism. Secondly, he treated the subject with a seriousness that his contemporaries would use only for classic art. He went beyond other writers of his period in that he was not looking merely for novelties and surprises in the Gothic design. He was

singular in his treating Gothic as a serious architectural style and not a mere fad for ornamenting private gardens and pseudoruins. The third, and possibly the oddest, characteristic of his criticism is its emphasis on the superstitious. No matter how much Walpole admired the style, he never was able to get away from the idea that Gothic cathedrals were monkish creations to trap converts to Rome. His ingrained antipathy for the Roman Church discolored all his ideas of the Papacy and nurtured in him a fear of Catholicism as a cunning machination for ensnaring Englishmen into outmoded medieval superstitions. He never got away from this idea. His third feature is probably the one farthest from the comprehension of the twentieth century mind. No longer does the artistic critic associate pointed arches with sinister designs of Roman clergymen.

Fearful lest he had said too much in favor of the Gothic in the above quoted statement, Walpole came back in the very next paragraph to clarify his stand and reavow his admiration for the accepted classical art. Yet even here he defended the Gothic style.

I certainly do not mean by this little contrast to make any comparison between the rational beauties of regular architecture, and the unrestrained licentiousness of that which is called Gothic. Yet I am clear that the persons who executed the latter had much more knowledge of their art, more taste, more genius, and more propriety than we choose to imagine. There is a magic hardness in the execution of some of their works which would not have sustained themselves if dictated by mere caprice.19

No matter how energetically he might declaim in favor of the classic style, he failed to be convincing. He left the impression that he was merely making

19Ibid., p. 120.
a surface pretense of admiring what contemporary society considered acceptable while in the sincerity of his own mind he knew his real appreciation was for the more picturesque Gothic.

A decade before he issued the first volume of the Anecdotes of Painting, Walpole had privately declared the conflict within himself between what he really liked and what he prudently asserted as his public preference. He wrote in 1753:

The Grecian temple is glorious: this I openly worship: in the heretical corner of my heart I adore the Gothic building, which by some unusual inspiration Gibbs had made pure and venerable.20

Walpole's literary tastes were noticeably lacking in their appreciation of the rising spirit of romantic literature. He was very much in harmony with the current preference for the pseudo-classical spirit in literature. His own efforts to write poetry were usually done in the conventional heroic couplets. In his critical statements he also shows a marked conformity to the spirit of his age. Although he did, on occasion, speak favorably of Gray and Macpherson, his usually attitude was surprisingly opposed to the Romantic tendencies which were then beginning to appear. Yvon, one of the most serious students of Walpole, sums up the matter in the following terms:

It is worth noticing, however, that Walpole, gifted as he was with an unquestionable sense of the picturesque, and some imaginative and even emotional faculties, did not pay more attention to the rise of the Romantic school and the Renascence of Wonder, in the English poetry around him. His hard treatment of Thomson, and of Shenstone, his neglect of Collins and the Wartons, to say nothing of such poets as Parnell, Hammond, and
Somerville, is rather striking, and his neglect is all the more remarkable in view of his genuine and enthusiastic appreciation of Gray's poems.21

If there was any doubt left about what was his real preference, it was put to flight by his decision to Gothicize his villa at Strawberry Hill. From the moment of his resolution, Gothic became the controlling inspiration in his life. He became more and more engrossed in the improvement of his home until he fairly lived in an atmosphere impregnated with all the charm and gloom which constituted his concept of Gothic life.

A discussion of Walpole's medievalism must necessarily be woefully incomplete without an account of his "cheesecake house." In Strawberry Hill Walpole incarnated his dreams of Gothic structure. The very faults of his house reflect the fundamental errors of his own ideas. Here Walpole left the very best part of himself; here he demonstrated beyond all doubt what his true interests were. His letters might express various moods of appreciation, but he could not deny his sincere love for castellated architecture once he had put them into the semi-permanent construction of his dream castle.

Strawberry Hill Castle is important not only as a pivotal point in Walpole's every varying ideas, but as a prototype of the coming flood of medieval interest in England. Probably had Walpole done nothing more than

20Letter 373, To John Chute, August 4, 1753, Toynbee, III, 181.
create his Gothic castle, he would be remembered as one of the most important influences on the revival of medieval interest. In addition to this, Strawberry was the direct inspiration of his Castle of Otranto a story which merited for him the title of the founder of the Gothic novel. These points indicate the necessity for including a study of Strawberry Hill in any discussion of Walpole's medievalism.

Two years after his father's death Walpole first mentioned the "little new farm that I have taken just out of Twickenham." Here he planned to retire from the monotony of political life. Following this first mention of the place in the early summer of 1747, his letters abound in references to his toy house and his plans for its improvement. Apparently he was induced to take up residence in this place by the attractive "prospect" it afforded. Just after introducing the place in the above quoted letter, he continued:

... The prospect is as delightful as possible, commanding the river, the town, and Richmond Park; and, being situated on a hill, descends to the Thames through two or three little meadows, where I have some Turkish sheep and two cows, all studied in their colours for becoming the view.  

In addition to the attractive view which naturally satisfied his love of the picturesque, the house had an interesting history which must have appealed to his innate curiosity. It was first built about 1698 by a retired coachman of the Earl of Bradford. The neighbors commonly referred to

22Letter 253, To Horace Mann June 5, 1747, Toynbee II, p. 278.  
23Ibid., p. 278.
the place as Chopped-Straw-Hall on the assumption that the builder had saved money for it by starving his master's horses with chopped straw. Subsequently it harbored in turn an actor, Colley Cibber, a Bishop, a Marquis, and finally was taken over by a Mrs. Chenevix, a London toy-woman, from whom Walpole took the lease in May, 1747. At the expiration of the lease in 1748 Walpole secured a special act of Parliament to permit him to purchase the fee simple from the existing possessors. The special legal proceedings were necessary because the owners were still minors. In one of his letters Walpole complained of the inconvenience attached to the transaction, but he was eventually satisfied with the outcome. One point only remained to be settled; that was the matter of a name. He found the answer to this in looking over the old deeds of the property. In June 1748 he told his Florentine friend, Horace Mann: "You shall hear from Strawberry Hill, which I have found out in my lease is the old name of my house; so pray, never call it Twickenham again." 24

Once he attained full possession of the estate, Walpole launched his series of alterations which in the course of the next twenty years made his villa one of the centers of interest for royal and noble visitors. The early Gothic touches added to the house resulted from the deliberations of his "Committee of Taste" which was composed of John Chute, Richard Bentley, and himself. Each detail was carefully planned by the trio and put into execution under their supervision. Bentley's fantastic dreams were usually controlled by the more accurate plans of Chute who was, by far, the soundest

24Letter 272, To Horace Mann, June 7, 1748, Toynbee, II, p. 316.
student of Gothic architecture in the group. Although Walpole usually referred to the improvements he was making, it must be remembered that the plans were conceived and executed by the trio.

His correspondence with Horace Mann during the summer and autumn of 1748 was full of references to his work on the newly acquired property. He prided himself on his accomplishments as a country gentleman improving his garden and caring for his domestic animals. Of particular interest in his letters is his references to his terrace a necessary constituent in any eighteenth century garden.

> I have now about fourteen acres, and am making a terrace the whole breadth of my garden on the brow of a natural hill, with meadows at the foot, and commanding the river, the village, Richmond Hill, and the Park, and part of Kingston.25

More important in the present consideration are his statements with reference to the house itself. In his letter of June 7, 1748, he said:

> "I am now returning to my villa, where I have been making some alterations.26 This seems to be the first indication of the coming transformation of the place. Scarcely two months later he was already taking delight in the change.

> If I could let myself wish to see you in England, it would be to see you here: the little improvements I am making have really turned Strawberry Hill into a charming villa: Mr. Chute, I hope, will tell you how pleasant it is... .27

The nature of the improvements made during the summers of 1748 and

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26Letter 272, To Horace Mann, June 7, 1748, Toynbee, II, p. 316.
27Letter 277, To Horace Mann, Late July 1748, Toynbee, II, 329.
1749 is very obscure. Until the late summer of 1749 there are no indications of his Gothic ambitions. It seems probable that the earliest changes were strongly influenced by the memory of Italian structures visited during his continental tour of 1739-1741. However, toward the end of September 1749, he seemed to be definitely committed to Gothicising Strawberry Castle. In a letter to George Montagu during that month, he said:

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.²⁸ [Italics sic.]

The casualness with which this was introduced implies that the topic had already been discussed by them. George Montagu had visited Walpole during August. The above quotation evidently referred to one of their conversations during that time. In the same letter he mentioned his plan to beg some "beautiful arms in painted glass" from the Duke of Bedford. This is another indication of his Gothic intentions.

In early January of the following year he definitely committed himself to the project of making Strawberry Hill a Gothic castle. In a postscript to a letter to Mann he first used the word Gothic in reference to his project. Again he was looking for "painted Glass" to complement his medieval plans.

P.S. My Dear Sir, I must trouble you with a commission, which I don't know whether you can execute. 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.

I can't say that I remember any such things in Italy; but out of old chateaux, I imagine, one might get it cheap, if there is any. 29

The term Gothic from this date and throughout the next twenty years was the keynote of his activity. His ever increasing plans for the Gothicising of his castle became the main impetus in his life. Much of the improvement was accomplished by 1753, but his plans for enlargements continued for many years. Financial difficulties might delay the execution but they could not hinder the grandeur of his Gothic dreams.

By 1753 Strawberry Hill had been transformed from a nondescript building into a compact Gothic villa. The additions made by this time did not greatly alter the general dimensions of the place, but did add the appearance Walpole sought. The exterior was trimmed up with battlements, pinnacles, arched windows, and a small unassuming tower. The interior alterations consisted largely of Gothic trimmings added to chimney-places and window frames. The nature of these modifications indicates how superficial were the early Gothic additions to the original building. To the modern mind these efforts seem almost childish, but they did satisfy Walpole and many of his eighteenth century friends.

It is difficult to give an accurate word-picture of Strawberry Hill as it was in 1753 at the completion of the first series of improvements. The only first-hand description comes from the pen of Walpole himself. In his Description of Strawberry Hill he gave a detailed account of each room in which he mentioned not only the architectural properties but also all the

29 Letter 306, To Horace Mann, January 10, 1750, Toynbee, II, 423.
articles he had deposited in each. His account failed to give a general view of the castle and, consequently, left the reader with a confused impression of countless details with very little sense of unity or order.

In a letter to Horace Mann in 1753 he described his house as it was at that time. This description is typical of his confused and over detailed accounts. It does not convey too complete an idea of the building but certainly does show the typical Walpole. His lack of depth is clearly evident here in his description of his Gothic wallpaper and his collection of antiques. From this one quotation the reader is given a good idea of the quality of Walpole's architectural taste.

Now you shall walk into the house. The bow-window below leads into a little parlour hung with a stone-colour Gothic paper and Jackson's Venetial 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: it is impossible at first sight not to conclude that they contain the history of Attila or Tottila, done about the very aera. From hence, under two gloomy arches, you come to the hall and staircase which 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—all supposed to be taken by Sir Terry Robsarts in the holy wars.

But as none of this regards the enclosed drawing, I will pass to that. The room on the ground-floor nearest to you is a bedchamber, hung with yellow paper and prints, framed in a new manner, invented by Lord Cardigan; that is, with black and white borders printed. Over this
is Mr. Chute's bedchamber, hung with red in the same manner. The bow-window room one pair of stairs is not yet finished; but in the tower beyond it is the charming closet where I am now writing to you. It is hung with green paper and water-colour pictures; has two windows; the one in the drawing looks to the garden, the other to the beautiful prospect; and the top of each glotted with the richest painted glass of the arms of England, crimson roses, and twenty other pieces of green, purple, and historic bits. I must tell you, by the way, that the castle when finished, will have two and thirty windows enriched with painted glass. In this closet, which is Mr. Chute's College of Arms, are two presses with books of heraldry and antiquities, Madame Sevigne's Letters, and any French books that relate to her and her acquaintance. Out of this closet is the room where we always live, hung with a blue and white paper in stripes adorned with festoons, and a thousand plump chairs, couches, and luxurious settees covered with linen of the same pattern, and with a bow-window commanding the prospect, and gloomed with limes that shade half each window, already darkened with painted glass in chiaroscuro, set in deep blue glass. Under this room is a cool little hall, where we generally dine, hung with paper to imitate Dutch tiles.30

The additions made to the building after this came at intervals over a period of years. In 1758 he found himself engaged with his builders again "though this time to a very small extent; only the addition of a little cloister and bedchamber."31 At this time he was also planning to build a gallery, round tower, another cloister, and the famous chapel which meant so much to him. His ambitions were limited by the resources of his pocket-book consequently many of his dreams were delayed in execution.

30Letter 370, To Horace Mann, June 12, 1753, Toynbee, III, 165-68.
31Letter 590, To Horace Mann, September 9, 1758, Toynbee, IV, 185.
In April 1763 he announced to George Montagu that the chapel, the climax of his Gothic project, was nearly finished. Into this room he put the best of his creative genius. It was his purpose to give the chapel all the atmosphere of an authentic Catholic oratory. The imitation was good enough to deceive at least one of his visitors, the Duc de Nivernois, who momentarily, at least, conformed his attitude to the sanctity of the place. Although his visitor was somewhat piqued when he discovered the mistake, Walpole was highly flattered that his chapel was able to convey the impression of an authentic Catholic church.32

The last construction project mentioned in his correspondence was that of his new tower. A "round tower" was an essential part of all eighteenth century Gothic castles. Among the first additions in the 1753 series of alterations was one of these towers, but it was too small to satisfy the "abbot" of Strawberry Hill. His castle must have the distinction of a fine tower. The one built in 1776 was "a vast deal higher, but very little larger in diameter than an extinquisher";33 In spite of its limitations, he was satisfied with it. With the completion of this step Strawberry Hill was finally finished. Walpole's Gothic dreams were thus put into concrete form. Apparently he did no further building except by way of repairs. He is said to have outlived at least three sets of his lath and plaster

33Letter 1722, To William Mason, September 17, 1776, Toynbee.
parapets. This fact seems to indicate that his castle was in frequent need of repairs and replacements. The tower, however, marked the close of Walpole's inventive period. He had, at this time, spent almost thirty years transforming his little villa on the Thames.

Many students of the eighteenth century Gothic revival take delight in pointing out architectural errors, inconsistencies, and superficialities of Walpole's medieval reproductions. No one can deny that Strawberry Hill is full of defects, but that should not necessitate ridicule. To the better trained minds of the present, Walpole's Gothic may well appear to be preeminently false. However, justice demands that his accomplishments be judged in the light of the period which produced them. Most of his designs show a great advance over his contemporaries. Furthermore, Walpole's creations were in harmony with the medieval ideas current at his time and should be judged accordingly. A man's work is always largely conditioned by the thought of the period in which he lived.

Anyone who has studied Walpole in his letters would expect his architectural taste to be just what is found in Strawberry Hill. In everything he did, he was more interested in elaborate ornamentation than in the solid principles that must underlie an authentic piece of work. It was inevitable that Walpole would be more interested in the Gothic clothing of architecture than in the intricacies of scientific construction. His limited knowledge of basic principles was bound to lead him to the extremes of in congruity. His villa lacked order and consistency. He selected details for their secondary values--ancestral associations, picturesque
qualities, quaintness, and almost anything except their structural qualities. The necessary consequence is that Gothic details are crowded together with no apparent order or uniformity. Strawberry Hill is little more than a small manor-house decked out in Gothic clothing.

Walpole himself, at least in his public declarations, was inclined to admit the deficiencies of his architectural designs. For the most part these admissions seem to be examples of his concessions to the public opinion of men of "taste". He would rather admit the possibility of error than expose his Gothic dreams to the danger of public ridicule. He never claimed to have reached scientific correctness in his designs although in his inmost being he believed his medieval creations to be perfect. When he was alone in the midst of his tiny rooms, he often felt that he had successfully reincarnated the barbarism and gloom of medieval castles. Even in the company of visitors he was frequently vexed because they failed to share his enthusiasm for his wall paper bas-reliefs and gloomy entrances to various rooms. In his own mind he was well satisfied with what he had accomplished. Probably the best-founded criticism of Strawberry Hill is that the interior is too largely made up of imitations of medieval originals. He copied portions from the roof of Henry VII's chapel at Westminster for the roof of his own long gallery. Many of the rooms present details copied from designs on various tombs known to him. The large number of imitations included in the decorations of Strawberry Castle is probably due to Walpole's antiquarian studies. Likewise this characteristic of his house is a result of his eclecticism. He was so much engrossed with the artistic qualities
of the details that he lost sight of the inevitable incongruity which must result from collecting so many models indiscriminately. Eastlake's oft quoted criticism of Walpole's interior decorations is so pertinent that it demands citation here.

The interior, or rather that portion of it which Walpole designed is just what one might expect from a man who possessed a vague admiration for Gothic without the knowledge necessary for a proper adaptation of its features. Ceilings, screens, niches, etc., all are copied, or rather parodied, from existing examples, but with utter disregard for the original purpose of the design. To Lord Orford, Gothic was Gothic, and that sufficed. He would have turned an altar-slab into a hall table, or made a cupboard of a piscina, with the greatest complacency if it only served his purpose.34

In defense of Walpole it must be said that his imitations were made with greater care than would be expected. It is true that he usually studied the medieval original before designing the imitation. Furthermore, in his work he had the help of John Chute who was particularly strict in his fidelity to ancient models. The third member of the "Committee of Taste", Richard Bentley, was less exact but his wanderings were held in check by the more conservative Chute. Although Walpole deserved credit for the authenticity of his imitations, he showed little or no care in adapting them to their situation. Within one room he might have any combination of designs and styles of architecture. This again is indicative of his eye for details as well as his disregard for the consistency of the whole.

34Charles Eastlake, The Gothic Revival, p. 47.
One more charge must be brought against his imitations. He lacked the understanding of the principles of Gothic architecture necessary to catch the real spirit of medieval buildings. His copies were merely superficial reproductions of the externals of medieval originals. In company with most imitators he caught the picturesque detail but utterly failed to feel the real spirit which inspired the original artist. A worthwhile imitation can be produced only when the artist has become so imbued with the spirit of the original that he can work with freedom and originality and not as a servile copyist. To this perfection Walpole never attained. His details are reproductions of externals of medieval models but are devoid of motive principle.

One more point in Walpole's favor must be mentioned. His tastes were not stationary. The Gothic quality of his house improved with the years. Most of the ridicule of his lath and plaster battlements and similar superficial imitations can be leveled only at the oldest parts of his house. As years progressed his knowledge became more perfect. This is reflected in the later additions to Strawberry Hill, particularly in his chapel built in the early 1760's. The sections built later are also more spacious than the early parts although they are still very confined. The chapel was frequently mentioned by Walpole in his correspondence and always with a note of satisfaction. He could well be proud of it because it showed a medieval taste far superior to that of any of his contemporaries. Eastlake says: "The whole of the carving, and, indeed, the general design of the chapel, has been executed with more care and more attention to detail than one might
expect from such a period."

With all its defects and limitations Strawberry Hill did please at least one person, its builder. In many places in his letters he expresses the sincere satisfaction he experienced here. Shortly after taking over the place, he told Mann that it was the only place in England that satisfied him. In the early years at Strawberry, he found in it a relief from the commotion of London social and political life. After his Gothic transformation had progressed, he began to like the place for its own qualities. He frequently mentioned the joy he experienced in his Gothic solitude. In 1755 he told Conway of his pleasure in living in his castle.

I do not so much consider myself writing to Dublin Castle, as from Strawberry Castle, where you know how I love to enjoy my liberty. I give myself the airs, in my nutshell, of an old baron, and am tempted almost to say with an old Earl of Norfolk, who was a very free speaker at least, if he was not an excellent poet,

When I am in my castle of Bungey,
Situate upon the river Waveney,
I ne care for the King of Cockney.36

A few years later he told Mann that he found pleasure in his pilgrimages to English landmarks but was always delighted to return to his Gothic life at Strawberry.

I have great curiosity for seeing places, but I dispatch it soon, and am always impatient to be back with my own Woden and Thor, my own Gothic Lares.37

On several occasions, after visiting the country manors of friends, he

35Ibid., p. 49.
36Letter 443, To the Hon. Henry Seymour Conway, September 23, 1755, Toynbee, III, 346.
37Letter 706, To Horace Mann, August 28, 1760, Toynbee, IV, 420.
wrote disparagingly of his own castle, but this is merely another example of his affectation and insincere politeness. He would go to any extreme to flatter one who pleased him. These occasional attempts to exalt another's castle at the expense of his beloved Strawberry must be dismissed as part of his epistolary flattery. They do not represent his true opinion.

Strawberry Hill is more than a chosen solitude in Walpole's life; it is symbolic of the predominating motive of his career. He has been condemned as a man having no balance or center of gravity in his mental life, as one whose ideas deserve no serious consideration because they were too shallow and vacillating. In spite of all the contradictions in his opinions it is possible to find a few predominant traits in his character. For Walpole, his Gothic castle was no mere affectation, it was symbolic of his greatest interest in life. Other hobbies and interest crossed his way of life, but his little castle remained as the one absorbing interest, the pivot around which his life rotated. It gave a sense of unity to a life which is too often condemned as having been dissipated over so many subjects as to preclude any depth or balance. The reader of his letters cannot fail to realize that Walpole himself increasingly identified himself with his Gothic castle. Yvon briefly evaluates the importance of Strawberry Hill in the life of Walpole.

Strawberry Hill, c'est le symbole, la manifestation de l'esprit qui depuis longtemps a dominé la vie sentimentale, artistique ou intellectuelle de Walpole, et qui a présidé à la construction de cette habitation tant aimée, tant célèbre, C'est le goût, la curiosité du gothique.}

38 Paul Yvon, LaVie d'un Dilettante, op. cit., p. 488.
Strawberry Hill would long ago have been forgotten if it were no more than the fantastic play thing of Lord Orford. It was more. Even before his early constructions were completed, Walpole found his Gothic castle a center of popular interest. His own prominent position in English social and political life had much to do with the popularity of his villa. Had a less conspicuous person done the same thing his work might quite likely have passed unnoticed. With Walpole it was different. What he did was bound to attract the attention of curious socialites. Another important factor in accounting for the popularity of Strawberry Hill was its proximity to London.

Walpole first mentioned visitors to his castle in a letter written in May 1754. At that time his visitors seemed to be confined to a few choosed acquaintances. However, the news spread rapidly and in a short time Strawberry became a scene of interest to royal and common tourists alike. In September 1755, after detailing the curiosity of Princess Emily in prying even into the private parts of the house, he wrote: "In short, Strawberry Hill is the puppet-show of the times."39

During the early years he enjoyed the popularity of his castle. He found great delight in escorting his visitors through the various chambers and took great pride in explaining the various details of his collections. Eventually, however, he tired of this distraction, and craved for the solitude which he always enjoyed. In many of his later letters he complained of the intrusions on his privacy made by his countless hosts. By 1771

39 Letter 428, To Richard Bentley, June 10, 1755, Toynbee, III, 308.
he found it necessary to limit the number of visitors by issuing tickets in limited numbers to those who sought admission.

I enclose the ticket your Ladyship ordered, and as Mr. Fitzpatrick may wish to carry his children and some companion with him, I have made the order for five instead of four, and would have added another, but having lately had some disputes about sometimes giving a larger and sometimes a more contracted order, I am forced to confine the rule to four, or as near it as I can; my neighbours wanting to bring all their acquaintance, and taking it ill if they are refused and others indulged; and when your Ladyship comes amongst us, you will find we are a gossiping set of folks.40

This also shows that even after twenty years his Gothic invention was still very popular. No wonder he complained that outsiders in their demands forgot that Strawberry was a private house and not a public museum.

Strawberry Hill was more than admired; it was imitated. It is impossible to determine accurately how great was Walpole's influence on the construction of particular castles, but it is significant that after Strawberry Hill became open to the public many more Gothic castles came into existence. This is not to say that Walpole initiated the movement, for there were a few examples even before he started his, but it is safe to say that his influence popularized the fad.

In some cases it is possible to find proof of direct influence on specific imitations. Belhus, built by Lord Dacre about the time of the early alterations at Strawberry, was touched by Walpole's influence. Lord Dacre was a life-long acquaintance of Lord Orford, and, in 1754, Walpole, 40Letter 1357, To Countess of Upper Ossory, June 27, 1771, Toynbee, Vol. VIII, pp. 53-54.
John Chute, and George Montagu visited Belhus to examine it and offer suggestions. Lee Priory, the house of Thomas Barrett, derived its Gothic character from Walpole. He called it "A child of Strawberry prettier than the parent."41 In 1780, Sir Roger Newdigate Gothicised his house at Arbury. The fan vaulting of the dining room ceiling and the bookshelves in the library show definite resemblance to their counterparts at Strawberry Hill.42 As late as 1794 Walpole was consulted on a project for Gothicising Arundle Castle.

Walpole's influence on every Gothic castle built in the last decades of the eighteenth century was not as direct as in the cases cited, but he still deserves credit for creating the spirit that made such constructions acceptable to the public fancy. In his Description of Strawberry Hill Walpole credited himself with purposely endeavoring to show that Gothic designs could be adapted to domestic purposes. It seems improbable in view of the early developments of his castle that he conceived any such purpose until long after the work was completed. In several cases he showed an inclination to take credit for certain accomplishments only after the public acceptance of his ideas was assured. Whether he intended it or not, there is no denying that his Gothicisms at Strawberry Hill influenced the taste of his generation.

An effort to trace the influence of Strawberry Hill on each of the Gothic houses which were built during the late eighteenth and early

41 Letter 2943, To Mary Berry, August 27, 1789, Toynbee, XV, 309.
42 W. H. Smith, op. cit., p. 41.
nineteenth centuries would overburden this thesis with architectural
details. Such a study might from the nucleus for a separate discussion,
but, in the present consideration, it would lead too far afield from a
paper which aims to be primarily literary. The later Gothic revival,
especially with Pugin, was architecturally more authentic than was the
early revival with Walpole. The main purpose in discussing Walpole's
Gothic interest in buildings and kindred subjects was to prepare for a
consideration of his Gothic romance. The foregoing discussion leads
naturally to that problem at this point.
CHAPTER III

MEDIEVALISM IN THE CASTLE OF OTRANTO AND THE MYSTERIOUS MOTHER

The purpose of the present chapter is to see how Walpole's interest in medievalism was transferred into reality in his two pieces of creative work, The Castle of Otranto and his drama, The Mysterious Mother. In the preceding chapter consideration was given to Strawberry Hill as the architectural manifestation of his Gothic fancies; here interest will be focused on the expression of his medieval interests in the field of literature. His other writings, The Anecdotes of Painting and The Catalogue of Royal and Noble Authors, as well as his lesser works, need not be considered now because they are not essentially connected with his Gothic fads. Furthermore, they were intended for a more limited audience and have little historical value other than as curiosities. His Castle of Otranto and The Mysterious Mother are the real fruits of his penchant for the Middle Ages and exercised an influence on succeeding literary productions.

Although Walpole wrote only one novel, that piece merits study because of its influence on later works. Further, the history of his book introduces the student to an interesting aspect of this eighteenth century dilettante. The Castle of Otranto, it is true, is a minor work in the field of English fiction, but it contains potentialities which colored the popular romances for several succeeding decades. Like so many other minor works, Otranto, opens the view to important features of literary history that cannot be found so explicitly in many of the genuine masterpieces. In this study
emphasis will be put on the Gothic aspects of _The Castle of Otranto_ and will not necessarily attempt a complete critical analysis of the story.

To fully understand how Walpole could have written a romance in 1764 so much in opposition to the current taste for the realism of Smollett and Fielding, it is necessary to go into the biography of Walpole for that year. The year 1764, his forty-fifth, was a crisis in his life. Early in the year he had determined to sever his relations with the political life of London. He also sought relief from social obligations by retiring into the solitude of his Gothic castle. The political and social aspirations of his life had failed to materialize; he was totally dissatisfied with both. Thus far in his life he had been divided between two great motivating principles each in opposition to the other. In the first place, he had a secret desire for fame and public recognition, desires which led him to seek prominence in the political and social life of England. Antithetical to this driving power in life was his unmistakable penchant for a life of solitude. Prior to 1764 these two opposing motives alternately governed his life. After this critical year the former gave away almost exclusively to the latter.

It is safe to say that Horace Walpole in his forty-fifth year passed through a period of disillusionment. His ideal conception of life had received many shocks. He could not bring his personal aspirations into harmony with the reality he met in life. Politically and socially dissatisfied with life, he decided to retire to Strawberry Hill where he could indulge in the luxuries of existence in imagination divorced from the harder
aspects of the reality which he could not comprehend.

Another crisis was added to his already great mental disturbance. His cousin and dearly loved friend, Henry Seymour Conway, was dismissed from the honored service of the king early in 1764 because of his opposition to the court party in several debates. Walpole not only supported Conway's political stand, but offered half his fortune and the influence of his pen to regain his cousin's lost prestige. The money was refused, but Walpole entered upon a passionate defense of Conway that occupied most of his time from April to early summer. One of the most surprising features in Walpole's career was the personal earnestness with which he engaged himself to reestablish his friend. He was emotionally and nervously disturbed by the whole matter. It was in this mental condition, exhausted by political and personal tension, that Walpole entered on the summer of 1764.

The disappointments of his life led Walpole more and more to the realization of his own disgust with reality. More and more he became engrossed in his own thoughts and imaginings. His early habits of day-dreaming and living in "visions", as he called it, came back to him. During no part of his life was he for any length of time without occasional indulgences in his extraordinary propensity for dreams. In his letters he often mentioned his pleasure in dreaming of himself as living in distant times or places. Occasionally he even signed himself as baron or abbot of Strawberry. This escape tendency came into decided prominence with his increasing disgust with political and social life. More and more he seemed to have passed long hours in his Gothic castle abandoned to his thoughts. His
environment became an active influence on his mental life. It is easy to
guess from the subsequent writing of The Castle of Otranto that his ginger-
bread castle soon lost its plaster construction and became in his mind a
real medieval castle, and he, an old baron besieged by his enemies. The
bright and elegant rooms of his house assumed the grim and forbidding aspect
of more ancient days. It is not hard to imagine Walpole, thus engrossed
by day with the environment in which he sought solitude, dreaming by night
of the events which became in a few weeks his fantastic romance, The
Castle of Otranto.

Walpole himself, in a letter to William Cole in March 1765, said that
his Gothic tale was the fruit of a dream he had one night in early June
1764. From what has just been discussed the truth of his statement that
this was "a very natural dream for a head filled like mine with Gothic
story" is readily apparent. His statement of the origin of his story can be
accepted as essentially correct.

Your partiality to me and Strawberry have, I hope, inclined you to excuse the wildness of the story.
You will even have found some traits to put you in mind of this place. When you read of the picture quitting its panel, did not you recollect the portrait of Lord Falkland, all in white, in my gallery?
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 banister of a great staircase I saw a gigantic hand in armour. In the evening I sat down, and began to write, without knowing in the least what I intended to say or relate. The work grew on my hands, and I grew fond of it--add that I was very glad to think of anything, rather than politics--in short, I was so engrossed with
my tale, which I completed in less than two months, that one evening, I wrote from the time I had drunk my tea, about six o'clock, till half an hour after one in the morning, when my hand and fingers were so weary, that I could not hold the pen to finish the sentence, but left Matilda and Isabella talking, in the middle of a paragraph. You will laugh at my earnestness, but if I have amused you, by retracing with any fidelity the manners of ancient days, I am content, and give you leave to think me as idle as you please.

For two months following this now famous dream Walpole lived almost entirely in a world of fantasy. He put politics and personal worries aside, his letter writing decreased almost to nothing, and entertainment at Strawberry Hill ceased except for one special occasion. The writing of his romance became his sole occupation. Night after night he labored at feverish heat far into the early morning stopping only when physical fatigue prevented further writing. According to him, the story was finished after eight nights of strenuous writing. For two months he revised and corrected his manuscript until on August sixth he was satisfied that the romance was finished.

Walpole was much slower in making up his mind to publish his story. He still remembered the ridicule with which his beloved Strawberry Hill had been greeted in many quarters and was very reluctant to expose himself to a renewal of such abuse. Although he sometimes joked about his Gothic castle, as well as his romance, this was a thin covering of his inner feelings. He was very sensitive to the opinions of his contemporaries and would have preferred to leave his story remain unpublished rather than expose it to censorious criticism. The English novels of the period were very far from

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1Letter 1012, To Rev. William Cole, March 9, 1765, Toynbee, VI, p. 195.
the fantasy of The Castle of Otranto, and Walpole justly feared presenting his romance to a people who seemed satisfied with such authors as Richardson and Fielding.

However, after much thought, and on the advice of his friend Gray, he decided to publish. The Castle of Otranto was given to the public on Christmas Eve 1764. Even then he did not acknowledge his authorship but presented it as a translation lately found in a Catholic home in the North of England, the original of which he said had been published in Naples in 1529. The title page informed the reading public that the work had been "translated by William Marshall, Gent, from the original Italian of Onuphrio Muralto, Canon of the Church of St. Nicholas, Otranto." Thus anonymously launched, The Castle of Otranto caught the public fancy and the first edition of five hundred copies was exhausted in a very short time.

Walpole, needless to say, was delighted with the reception his Gothic romance received from the public. It is true, there was some adverse criticism from the literary periodicals of the time, but, on the whole, its popularity far outweighed the adverse comments of professional critics. Encouraged by its favor, Walpole was ready to acknowledge his authorship. He informed a few of his friends of his ownership of the tale, and, when a second edition was published on April 11, 1765, he publically admitted his responsibility for its creation. With the second edition he also published the preface in which he defended his anonymous first edition and explained his purpose in writing the story. The prefaces to the first two editions deserve consideration before a detailed study of the medievalism
of the story itself is undertaken.

The first edition was introduced by a "translators preface" in which Walpole briefly discussed the principles on which his romance was based. In the later preface, and in several of his letters, he gave his views on the story. However, the preface to the first edition is probably more reliable than his subsequent criticisms because here he was speaking anonymously and his views were uncolored by the influence of public opinion. A few of the points in this article, therefore, must be noticed.

Walpole apologized for the "air of the miraculous" which filled the story. He admitted that in his time belief in "miracles, visions, necromancy, dreams, and other preternatural events" was not widely accepted, but, at the time the story was supposed to have taken place, such phenomena was commonly established. He justified their inclusion in the story on the grounds that were they omitted the author "would not be faithful to the manners of the times." This is as sound a critical principle as Walpole ever wrote. A story to depict any epoch validly must include all the essential qualities and characteristics of that age. He concluded this critical paragraph with the statement that: "He [the author] is not bound to believe them [miracles, etc.] himself, but he must represent his actors as believing them." Here, unwittingly, he expressed the reason for one of the major deficiencies of his romance.

There is no doubt that Walpole depicted his actors as believing in the miracles and supernatural phenomena which play such a large part in the story.

Horace Walpole, The Castle of Otranto, (Oswald Doughty, editor) p. lxxi. All quotations from the story and the prefaces will refer to this edition unless otherwise stated.
but he himself did not believe in them. In this fact lies one of the weaknesses of the tale. Walpole could not give a true picture of the faith of his medieval actors because he failed, as in all else, to really comprehend the true spirit of medieval life. To Walpole the Middle Ages connoted Catholicism and everything Roman was hateful. It is true that his aversion was artfully concealed in the romance, but it did not fail to color his attitude. In his mind all the ceremonies and rites of the Catholic Church were superstitions. Consequently he treated the miraculous elements in the story in a way that implied that all such things are of a superstitious nature. Furthermore, his characters resign themselves to Divine Providence and inevitable fate with an equal facility and often within a short interval of time. The way the characters speak of the Divine Will in conjunction with a fatalistic acceptation of the intervention of unseen powers shows that the author made no distinction between the two. This was to be expected from a man who scoffed at the religion of his actors as a superstitious manipulation of Roman priests. An example of the commingling of these discordant elements is found in Manfred's speech before the unidentified Frederick. Speaking of Conrad's death he says: "Yes, sirs, fate has disposed of my son". A fourth of a page later in the same discourse, he says: "Whatever is the will of heaven, I submit". Similar incidents occur throughout the story with a frequency that precludes justification on the grounds of inadvertence. 

3Ibid., p. lxxii. 
4Ibid., p. lxxii. 
5Ibid., p. 55.
Walpole there was no great distinction between Christian faith and pagan fatalism, consequently his characters recognize no such distinction.

The foregoing discussion reveals one of the weaknesses of the story. Walpole made a serious effort to "be faithful to the manners of the times" but failed because of his own ignorance of the real spirit of the people he was trying to depict. His critical theory, above quoted from the original preface, is acceptable, but he arrived at only partial success in carrying his principle into practice.

The first preface also mentioned that terror is the author's principal engine, and he uses it to prevent "the story from ever languishing." It was this element that in a few years became the earmark of the Gothic romance. Although this element appeared a few years earlier in Smollett's 

| Adventure's of Ferdinand, Count Fathom and Thomas Leland's Longsword, Earl of Salisbury, an Historical Romance, it was Walpole who really restored terror to English literature. He made the horror element an important feature of his work, whereas, in Leland and Smollett, horror is largely incidental. It is not difficult to see why it would be an attractive condiment in a national literary diet surfeited with affected sentimentalism. It is the nature of all revolutions to go to opposite extremes from that which they aim to correct. This might be said of Walpole's use of terror. It was so antithetical to current novel technique that it was bound to gain attention as a reaction against sentimentalism. In this reaction his terror played a commendable part. It was a

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6 Ibid., p. lxxii
7 Ibid., p. lxxii.
jolt which eventually would help bring novel writing to greater sanity.

Walpole implied that he used terror in order to hold the reader's attention. In this he confessed his literary limitation. Terror is a legitimate device because it appeals to one of the fundamental passions of human beings, but artistically it is less perfect than other means because it is directed to one of the cruder emotions. Almost any literate person can enjoy the element of fear in his reading, but it takes a more cultivated taste to appreciate the finer emotional appeals of great literature. Conversely, an author who had to rely on instilling horror in order to keep the interest of his readers, acknowledges his own inability to work on the more refined elements of human emotional life. Walpole lacked the mental equipment to be a great novelist and, therefore, had to limit his efforts to the less perfect emotional appeal.

This fact also accounts for the decline of favor toward _The Castle of Otranto_ in modern times. The incidents in the story that kept Gray's university friends awake at night now are read without excessive excitement. The terror element, on which he relied to hold his reader's attention, no longer terrifies with the result that interest also lags. Few modern readers would become so engrossed in the story that they could not put it aside before finishing it. There are points in the story where interest does lag, but Walpole saved his tale from disaster by its brevity. Had he drawn the story out to greater lengths it would have made dull reading, but he was wise enough, or, perhaps, lucky enough, to keep it short so that even now it does not weigh too heavily on the reader.
The first preface also defended the structure of the story. In the first place, Walpole called attention to the fact that "There is no bombast, no similes, flowers, digressions, or unnecessary descriptions". Substantially this is a valid criticism of the romance. The style is noticeably direct and concise. The story moves along without undue interruption. In this it is saved from probable total oblivion because, had it been encumbered by needless digressions, it would have become unduly dull. Walpole's plot is not strong enough to support unnecessary delays. His decision to keep the diction direct was a fortunate one and gave some justification for his boast that, "Never is the reader's attention relaxed."9

However, the purity of style is not an unmitigated blessing. In his effort to hold the reader's attention, he lost one of the things he was trying to achieve, a vivid picture of medieval life. The story is singularly lacking in description. Even his biggest attempt in this line, the account of the cavalcade bearing the huge sword is little more than enumeration.10 The list of details shows that he had some knowledge of the customs of the times, but the lack of enthusiasm with which they are introduced shows that Walpole was unable to really see the Middle Ages in their full life and color. His meager efforts are colorless compared to the vivid descriptions of later authors, particularly Scott. Had Walpole been equal to the opportunity, he could have reproduced the beauty of medieval pagentry at this point. The combat between Theodore and Frederic at the mouth of the cavern11

8 Ibid., p. lxxii.
9 Ibid., p. lxxii.
10 Ibid., p. 51.
11 Ibid., p. 64.
was another chance to elaborate on a characteristic feature of medieval story. Here he had his gallant youth fighting an old knight in defense of a helpless damsel. What more desirable situation could an author want to show the life of medieval knights? Yet Walpole summarized the whole encounter in two lines. In these and similar details it becomes apparent that Walpole lacked the constructive imagination to really see the color of the Middle Ages. The superficial quality of his medievalistic interests is here apparent. Had he been able to vividly describe the scenes instead of enumerating them, he would have come much closer to fulfilling his plan of recreating medieval life. However, had he done that he would probably have been unable to hold the attention of his readers to the main course of action. Briefly stated Walpole was unequal to the task of coming a truthful picture of medieval life with an interesting handling of a plot situation.

In further discussion of the structure of his story Walpole hinted that he had aspirations of being a dramatist. With regard to The Castle of Otranto he said: "The rules of the drama are almost observed throughout the conduct of the piece". Some of the qualities of the story lend justification to this assertion. In the first place the book is divided into five chapters similar to the five acts of a tragedy. The time of the story is limited to three days, and the action is continually kept moving toward the catastrophe which is kept to the very end. Further, suspense is maintained by keeping the complications of the plot unresolved until the action of the story has been completed. His creation of suspense becomes melodramatic particularly in two incidents: the death of the holy hermit in Palestine
before he has finished the revelation of a very important secret to Frederic and in the death of Matilda which is almost identical. Walpole gave her dying words under circumstances most trying to the persons involved, as follows:

I would say something more", said Matilda struggling, "but it cannot be -- Isabella -- Theodore -- for my sake-- Oh!" -- she expired.13

That The Castle of Otranto contained the germs of a successful play was proved by the work of Robert Jephson, "an applauded dramatist of the day",14 who converted it into stage form about 1780. Walpole approved this move and, in spite of gout and attendant evils of old age, made frequent visits to Covent Garden to direct rehearsals. His interest in this project was the more remarkable in view of the fact that for some years past Walpole had almost completely severed his relations with the public. The Count of Narbonne, Jephson's version of the romance, was not without success. The new tragedy proved a veritable triumph. The play kept the stage for some forty years, and it certainly is not without merit. Kemble and Mrs. Siddons were more than once seen in the principal roles, which they acted with great power and success.15

One more point from the preface to the first edition demands consideration. In the last paragraph of this article he said:

The scene is undoubtedly laid in some real castle. The author seems frequently, without design, to describe particular parts. "The chamber", says he, "on the righthand; the door on the left-hand; the

12Ibid., p. lxxii.
13Ibid., p. 100.
14Montague Summers, The Gothic Quest, p. 185.
15Ibid., p. 185.
from the chapel to Conrad's apartment". These and other passages are strong presumptions that the author had some certain building in his eye.\textsuperscript{16}

This statement, made in the anonymous edition, took on new meaning as soon as Walpole admitted his authorship of the work. What castle would Walpole have in mind but his own Strawberry Hill? Later evidence from his writings lends credence to this assumption. In a letter to a friend ten years after the writing of his romance, he wrote: "Miss aikin has been here this morning (she is just married); she desired to see the Castle of Otranto; I let her see all the antiquities of it."\textsuperscript{17} This definitely refers to Strawberry Hill because the letter was dated from there. Brief as this statement is, it implied that in his mind the real and the imaginary castles were identical. In his preface to the "Description of the Villa of Mr. Horace Walpole at Strawberry Hill near Twickenham" he said that his home was a "very proper habitation, as it was the scene that inspired, the author of The Castle of Otranto."\textsuperscript{18} These statements, coupled with his account of the origin of the story quoted above from the letter to Rev. William Cole, justify the conclusion that Strawberry Hill was intimately connected with Walpole's imaginary castle.

Further proof of this can be determined on the ground of internal evidence. A detailed comparison of the two castles would diverge too far from the present study, but a few indications may be borrowed from those who have

\textsuperscript{16}The Castle of Otranto, op. cit., p. lxxiii.
\textsuperscript{17}Letter 1542, To Countess of Upper Ossory, June 14, 1774, Toynbee, IX, p.10.
already attempted such a parallel. W. S. Lewis, probably the outstanding living student of Horace Walpole, has shown how many of the rooms at Strawberry -- the gallery, chapel, blue-bed-chamber, the Holbein Chamber, and several lesser ones -- were in precisely the same relative positions in the castle of the story.19 Mehrotra cites several details to prove this parallelism. He found that the walls of the gallery in Walpole's house were lined with "chairs, settees, and long stools". In addition to this, special mention is made of the pictures on these same walls. At least in three separate instances in The Castle of Otranto similar fittings are mentioned. One of these instances will suffice to illustrate the point. In the scene where Isabella is fighting the unlawful plans of Manfred several portents warn him to forego his evil intentions. One of these was given thus:
"At that instant the portrait of his grandfather, which hung over the bench where they had been sitting, uttered a deep sigh and heaved its breast".20 The gallery at Strawberry terminated in two staircases of which the main one leads to the great cloister. In the story, Isabella fleeing from Manfred in the gallery, "continued her flight to the bottom of the principal staircase".21 Here she recalled "a subterraneous passage, which led from the vaults of the castle to the church of St. Nicholas".21 The author further states that "The lower part of the castle was hollowed into several intricate cloysters".22 One more instance will be added. In the plan of the house

20 The Castle of Otranto, op. cit., p. 10.
21 Ibid., p. 11.
22 Ibid., p. 12.
at Strawberry, the blue bed-chamber is said to be reached by going up one flight of the principal stairs and turning to the right. In the story the domestic Bianca said: "I was going by his Highnesses order to my lady Isabella's chamber; she lies in the watchet [blue] coloured chamber on the right hand, one pair of stairs".23 These citations afford proof for the statement that Strawberry Hill was one of the strongest inspirations for The Castle of Otranto. It formed the stage and the setting for Walpole's Gothic tale.

W.H. Smith declares emphatically that "It is incorrect, however, to infer that the castle of Otranto is Strawberry Hill."24 In proof of his point he shows several discrepancies between the two buildings. His facts are true but his conclusion is not valid. It is true that many features of the imaginary castle were never present in Strawberry, but this does not disprove the point that Walpole's Gothic house was the prime inspiration and kernel around which the visionary edifice took form. It is not to be argued that only one building inspired him during his writing. It is apparent that at the time of writing his head was full of architectural ideas gleaned from his various visits to English Gothic relics. To this was added the coloring of his own powerful imagination which furnished him with all the trappings and details he needed. It is safe to say that the castle in the story represented a crystallization of all his Gothic dreams and impressions. That

23 Ibid., p. 91.
24 W. H. Smith, Architecture in English Fiction, p. 79.
much of his idea came from his subconscious memory is proved by his own account of a visit to Trinity College Cambridge.

Cela m'arriva une fois après avoir écrit le Château d'Otrant. Deux ou trois ans après, j'allais à l'Université de Cambridge, où j'avais passé trois années de ma jeunesse. En entrant dans un des collèges, que j'avais entièrement oublié, je me trouvais précisément dans la cour de mon château. Les tours, les portes, la chapelle, la grande salle, tout y répondrait avec la plus grande exactitude. Enfin l'idée de ce collège m'était restée dans la tête sans y penser, et je m'en étais servi pour le plan de mon château sans m'en apercevoir; de sorte que je croyais entrer tout de bon dans celui d'Otrante.25

The logical conclusion from this discussion is that Strawberry Hill was the direct inspiration and core of Otranto to which was added the coloring of his own Gothic dreams and the impressions of other buildings stored in his subconscious memory.

Considerable attention is given to this point of the relationship between Strawberry Hill and the castle in the story because one of the starting points of this thesis was in the transference of interest in the Middle Ages as seen in archaeology and architecture to the same interest in the field of literature. Here the connection as accomplished by Walpole has been clearly found. This one isolated case is more important than may at first be apparent. "It is in providing these architectural properties, and in the themes suggested to his mind by association that Walpole struck out a new line and created something novel."26 As will be seen in the next

26Mehrotra, op. cit., p. 18.
chapter, Walpole prepared the way for and popularized the interest in the Middle Ages that a few years later became part of the romantic trend in English literature.

One point from the preface to the second edition must be considered before going into the Gothic details of the story. After apologizing for and explaining his motive for concealing his identity in the first edition, he explained the purpose he had in mind when writing the romance. The sincerity of his remark may be doubted because it is evident that the story was written with very little plan or previous consideration. The motives he gave were, most likely, after thoughts which came only when the success of his work had been assured by the rapid sale of the original edition. It is not difficult to see that Walpole would easily be led to assume some conscious purpose in his work after he had a touch of popular favor. He was always anxious to cut a figure in the public eye, and here was his chance to appear as an important literary personage. The justice of this conclusion is borne out by his complete change of position after the popularity of the first edition was assured. It is further substantiated by an understanding of his personality as revealed in his correspondence. There is still the possibility, however, that these motives were vaguely present before he wrote the book and were recalled and elaborated upon when he wished to court public recognition. Even if these motives preceded the composition, they were very secondary. The strongest probability is that he wrote the book for his own personal satisfaction and for little else.
Whatever the veracity of his stated position, his points considered as criticism of the book are interesting. The only part of the second preface that directly concerns the present study is the following. He wrote:

It was an attempt to blend the two kinds of Romance, the ancient and the modern. In the former all was imagination and improbability; in the latter, nature is always intended to be, and sometimes has been copied with success. Invention has not been wanting; but the great resources of fancy have been dammed up, by a strict adherence to common life.

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 then of creating more interesting situations, he wished to conduct the mortal agents 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. He had observed that in all inspired writings, the personages under the dispensation of miracles, and witnesses to the most stupendous phenomena, never lose sight of their human character: whereas in the productions of romantic story, an improbable event never fails to be attended by an absurd dialogue. The actors seem to lose their senses, the moment the laws of Nature have lost their tone.

According to Walpole's statement, his effort was to improve two kinds of writing. In the first place he thought that the old romances granted too much freedom to the imagination with the result that the works produced were too improbable and artificial. He sought to improve this by making his characters act as real men and women would in the given circumstances.

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He wanted to vivify the medieval matter and reproduce a picture of feudal life as it might have been lived by normal people. In his words, he wanted to transfer the natural handling of characters as employed in eighteenth century novels to the actors in a medieval romance. In the other half of his plan, he wanted to restore to novel writing the greatest amount of freedom of invention possible and to give full rein to the flow of fancy by the employment of the supernatural elements of the old romances. He believed that the current realism of Fielding and Smollett had become unbearably prosaic by always treating the stories as commonplace events devoid of any note of the marvellous or miraculous. "It was his object to unite the marvellous turn of incident, and imposing tone of chivalry, exhibited in the ancient romance, with the accurate exhibition of human character, and contrast of feelings and passions, which is, or ought to be, delineated in the modern novel."

Walpole's theory is an interesting one in the history of the English novel. It was one remedy for the defects then current with writers of new stories. The extent of his success in carrying the theory into practice is another matter. It was a comparatively easy task for Walpole to create the miraculous and superstitious elements in the story; these were common stock in his medieval thinking. However, when he came to the task of creating characters to fit into the story, he was confronted with a problem for which he was unprepared. Too much of his life had been spent in super-

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28Sir Walter Scott, intro., The Castle of Otranto, Published by Stokes, pp. xxx.
ficial observation of men and manners; he was not able to create characters with individuality. His actors are just types. As far as they go, however, his characters do take the supernatural events in their lives as though such things were to be expected. To that extent, at least, he was successful in carrying his theory into execution.

It is easy enough to point out the artistic limitations of *The Castle of Otranto*, but, in spite of its deficiencies, it remains a valuable book in the history of English literature. It is not for its own achievements that it is significant, but for the ideals and theories that it presented for later more capable writers. It contained within itself far-reaching ideas which were developed by others in the course of years. His words in the preface to the second edition were prophetic: "Yet if the new route he has struck out shall have paved a road for men of brighter talents, he shall own with pleasure and modesty, that he was sensible the plan was capable of receiving greater embellishments than his imagination or conduct of the passions could bestow on it".29 The final chapter of this paper will show how the road paved by Walpole was followed by brighter talents.

Walpole's most apparent effort was to recreate the atmosphere of the Middle Ages. He hoped to prepare his readers to accept what he considered characteristic of medieval life by reproducing minute details which would create the local color. The book presents a lengthy collection of details which were accepted by Walpole and many of his contemporaries as typical of

the Gothic machinery in the story, it is pertinent to consider the time setting. This was left exceedingly vague by Walpole. In the preface to the first edition he hinted that the tale took place during the period of the crusades (1095-1243). Other than this he did not specify. It must be recalled again that Walpole never clearly defined his idea of the time of the Middle Ages. He was too superficial to bother about such details. His interest was in the past and far be it from him to bother about how far past. In several instances he spoke of the time just before Elizabeth as part of the medieval period. However, in his romance he has vaguely in mind that he was dealing in the twelfth or early thirteenth century.

The most obvious piece of Gothic machinery used in the story was the Gothic castle. This is by far the most important because it represents his most conspicuous contribution to the art of novel writing. It is true that others had incorporated buildings into their romances, but, in these cases, the castle played a very minor part. With Walpole it became of prime importance. The castle at Otranto is the stage and background of the whole story. So important is the castle that many critics consider it as one of the characters in the tale. Beers goes so far as to say that, "It is the castle itself that is the hero of the book". Walpole was the first to employ a castle for its emotional effects.

Strange to say The Castle of Otranto contains no description of the building which plays such an important part. The reader is made conscious

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of its presence by brief remarks such as: "It is the wind swistling through the battlements in the tower above", 31 "She was going to open the casement, when they heard the bell ring at the postern-gate of the castle, which is on the right hand of the tower", 32 "And a brazen trumpet, which hung without the gate of the castle, was suddenly sounded". 33 As the story unrolls these frequently repeated references build up in the reader's mind a consciousness of the presence of the castle. Probably Walpole was fortunate in thus presenting his setting because the reader is given a vague indefiniteness suitable to the spirit of the story.

Walpole incorporated into his tale all his fantastic ideas of medieval castles. His building contained all the properties that were later used by the Gothic novelists. Isabella in her flight from Manfred is reminded, at the opportune moment, of the subterraneous passage from the castle to the church of St. Nicholas. She finds her way through dark and silent caverns with a burning torch conveniently placed where she could seize it in her flight. The only sound in the vaults was the frequent howling of the wind through the cloisters. While she was trying to open a heavy door, a blast of wind suddenly snuffed out her torch. She was plunged into utter darkness from which she was relieved by a dim ray of moonlight which shone directly on the handle of a trapdoor through which she escaped, with Theodore's help, to the church of St. Nicholas. Here are presented the most dramatic

31 The Castle of Otranto, op. cit., p. 25.
32 Ibid., p. 31.
33 Ibid., p. 45.
qualities of the castles found in Gothic novels. In this scene Walpole reached the limits of his Gothic dreams. Nothing could be more mysterious and fantastic than this passage which contained all the characteristics of the fictional Gothic castle—dark, wind-filled subterranean passages, mysterious noises, the ever present trapdoor, and the haze of moonlight streaming through the crags of ancient ruins.

It would be impossible to keep up this high emotional pitch throughout the entire narrative. In the remaining pages the presence of the castle was made less melodramatic. His allusions to the battlements and the towers of the castle are noteworthy. It will be recalled that these were elements of Strawberry Hill to which he gave special attention. One reference to the wind in the battlements of the tower has already been cited. Later Manfred ordered Theodore to be carried "To the top of the black tower"34 where he was to be strictly guarded. He was released only when Matilda "stole up to the black tower"35 and unbolted the door. In gratitude for his deliverance, Theodore begged "her permission to swear himself eternally her knight.--Ere the princess could reply, a clap of thunder was suddenly heard, that shook the battlements".36 Toward the end of the story the ramparts are again mentioned, but now in a more pleasant situation. Manfred's wife and daughter escape from the turmoil in their lives to enjoy the sunset. "Matilda waited on her mother to enjoy the freshness of

34 Ibid., p. 47.
35 Ibid., p. 58.
36 Ibid., p. 61.
the evening on the ramparts of the castle". Such references obviously were the fruit of Walpole's interest in battlements and towers, the first parts of the castle to win his attention when he came to Gothicize Strawberry Hill.

All the references combine to create a somber atmosphere around the castle. Unconsciously the castle grows on the mind of the reader and creates in him an unmistakeable realization of mystery and coming destruction. It is in this that Walpole has been an originator. He used the castle not merely as a scene in the story, but he drew on all the emotional appeal inherent in an ancient castle. True his use of this power is often weak, but he opened the way for later writers to exploit to their full capacity. Again Walpole's technique is not so important for what he achieved as for what he presented to the more skillful hands of his successors.

One of Walpole's most obvious attempts to catch the spirit of medieval life is seen in his efforts to recreate the religious life of the people. This view of the story has been given very slight consideration by students of Walpole although it is very apparent in the book. As a matter of statistics, Walpole directly alluded to points of Catholic faith and practice at least ninety three times in the course of his one hundred pages. This is at least twice as frequently as he employed any other single piece of Gothic machinery. Walpole's emphasis on the religious spirit

37Ibid., p. 94.
of his characters shows that he realized that the most important single influence on medieval life was the Catholic faith. His realization of this fact is one commendable criticism of his medieval studies. His apparent effort to treat this aspect of his story with reverence and sympathy is the more remarkable in view of his intense personal aversion for everything pertaining to the Church of Rome. In his letters he made no effort to conceal the bitterness of his feelings on this subject, but, in his romance, he succeeded admirably in concealing his personal animosity. This is not to imply that Walpole's handling of the religious element in the story was perfect. It would be impossible for a man as ignorant of Catholicism and as out of sympathy with it as he was to paint an authentic picture of medieval religious life. However, he deserves consideration for the seriousness of his attempt and for his realization of its relevance to the subject in hand.

It is impossible within the present limits to discuss fully the Catholic aspects of the story. However, a few points can be cited to indicate the nature of Walpole's treatment. In the first place, one of the most frequent dogmas referred to is that of Divine Providence. It is true that at times he did not make sufficient distinction between providence and blind fate, but, at least, his women characters always are ready to resign themselves to the Divine Will. Theodore was the first to mention the subject when he attributed his escape from the helmet as an act of Providence. When Frederic appears to be threatening the security of

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38 Ibid., p. 17.
Otranto Hippolita remarked: "Heaven does nothing in vain, mortals must receive its divine behests with lowliness and submission". Father Jerome in encouraging Hippolita to resign herself in the face of threatening evils spoke the following variation of Job's classic statement on resignation: "And thou, fond princess, contend not with the powers above; the Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away; bless his holy name, and submit to his decrees". Finally, when St. Nicholas and Alfonso appeared in the ruins of Otranto, "The beholders fell prostrate on their faces, acknowledging the divine will". These citations indicate the effort Walpole made to depict one outstanding characteristic of life guided by Catholic faith, a point which must have been intimate in medieval life.

Another very noticeable attempt to catch the religious spirit of his medieval characters is found in the expressions he put into their speech. The following are characteristic: "God rest his soul", "Bless me . . . St. Nicholas forgive me", "Blessed Mary . . . " "Reach me my beads", "May the saints guard thee", "Mother of God!" "So help me God, and his holy Trinity", "He is dying! . . . has nobody a crucifix about them?" The list could be lengthened, but this is sufficient to indicate the nature of the spontaneous speech of the people in the story. The variety of the invocations shows that Walpole was familiar with many aspects of Catholic

39Ibid., p. 69.
40Ibid., p. 83.
41Ibid., p. 101.
42Ibid., p. 18.
43Ibid., p. 25.
44Ibid., p. 27.
45Ibid., p. 27.
belief. The frequency of their repetition indicates that Walpole was conscious of the large part the Catholic faith played in the lives of its believers.

The most interesting and by far the most remarkable treatment of Catholicism appears in the discussion of the divorce question. Here Walpole revealed that he was familiar not only with the Church's teaching on the subject but also the function of Church courts in rendering decisions in specific cases. Manfred first mentioned the subject to Isabella when he revealed to her his plans of substituting for the deceased Conrad. In his passion for the beautiful maiden he imperiously declared that Hippolita was no longer his wife, "I divorce her from this hour". The first reason he gave Father Jerome for the divorce was the necessity of having an heir to preserve the family hold on Otranto. He wished Jerome to persuade Hippolita to consent to the dissolution of the marriage, "and to retire into a monastery". When he found the friar adamant in his defense of the princess and his adherence to the Church's inviolable law, Manfred changed his technique. Father Jerome's expostulation afforded him time to think up a new excuse. He began to have scruples about the legality of his union with Hippolita, a device used more than once by persons trying to evade the burden of the law. Manfred's pleading of his cause is a fine piece of

46 Ibid., p. 29.
47 Ibid., p. 44.
48 Ibid., p. 65.
49 Ibid., p. 65.
50 Ibid., pp. 9-10.
51 Ibid., p. 35.
writing.

I think her a saint; and wish it were for my soul's health to tie faster the knot that has united us—but alas! father, you know not the bitterness of my pangs! It is sometime that I have had scruples on the legality of our union: Hippolita is related to me in the fourth degree—it is true, we had a dispensation; but I have been informed that she had also been contracted to another. This it is that sits heavy at my heart, to this state of unlawful wedlock I impute the visitation that has fallen on me in the death of Conrad.  

Here are all the clever machinations of a selfish man seeking his own ends. The ideas of his relationship to his wife and the dispensation granted show that Walpole had some knowledge of the Church's marital regulations. In order to delay the proceedings Father Jerome persuaded him to put his case before the Church court. Manfred agreed to this although he bemoaned the delay.

The discussion of the divorce problem showed not only that Walpole was familiar with the teaching and practice of the Church but also appreciated the dependence of the faithful on its authority. One of his most successful attempts to recreate the atmosphere of medieval life resulted from his care to show the religious attitudes of his characters.

In his effort to recreate the air of the miraculous, Walpole went into the field of superstition. From the very beginning a feeling of mystery was created by the prophecy that "the castle and the Lordship of Otranto should pass from the present family, whenever the real owner should be grown too large to inhabit it."  

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52 Ibid., p. 37.
53 Ibid., p. 1.
past crime was influencing the present. The various evils visited upon the family tend to increase the feeling that a terrible catastrophe was about to fall upon the family. The sense of mystery was increased by the realization that the fate of the house was in some way connected with the picture of Alfonso in the hallway. The shaking of the plumes on the helmet, the large armour found in the gallery, the groans, and the thunder, all are received as portents of coming trouble. It may be questioned whether the emphasis put on superstition was a successful portrayal of medieval life. It is doubtful whether people who were guided by their religion could have entertained such beliefs. Walpole's mixture of superstitions and religious faith in the same persons is explainable. To him everything in Catholic dogma was a species of superstition. Apparently he made no distinction between religious faith and blind superstition. To that extent he failed to really interpret the Middle Ages.

One other element in The Castle of Otranto must be mentioned not because it has a real connection with the Middle Ages, but because Gothic novelists usually associated it with their Gothic castles. The element of horror or terror was treated by most of the Gothic novelists as an essential part of their equipment. Walpole was responsible for instituting its use. In The Castle of Otranto he used it on several occasions of which Isabella's terror in the subterranean passage, Frederic's apparition of the skeleton hermit, and the final destruction of the castle attended by the visions of St. Nicholas and Alfonso are the most noteworthy.

The above discussion of the Gothic machinery of The Castle of Otranto
gives a good idea of the nature of the story. It is not hard to see why such a tale has little interest to the reader of the twentieth century. Most of the extraordinary events are now laughable rather than terrifying. However, in the last half of the eighteenth century they seem to have won the favor of the reading public. It is also remarkable that Walpole was far from a master of the techniques he introduced. He barely scratched the surface of the possibilities he opened; he left their full development to his successors. Again, let it be repeated, Walpole's Gothic romance is not important for what it achieved as much as for the seeds it planted for later exploitation.

Walpole's other effort in the Gothic line of writing requires less consideration. The preface to the first edition of The Castle of Otranto hinted that Walpole had ideas in the dramatic field. Apparently his only effort to develop this inclination was made in the writing of his play The Mysterious Mother. On Christmas Day, 1766, he began writing his five act tragedy. Unlike his Gothic romance, this was not dashed off in the heat of sudden inspiration; its composition extended over fifteen months during which he also was engaged with politics, amusements, a visit to Paris, and the writing of his Historic Doubts on the Life and Reign of King Richard the Third. After several interruptions, the play was ready for publication on February 1, 1768. The book was unlike anything he or his contemporaries ever wrote. It shocked the moral feeling of eighteenth century England, and well it might, with its theme that even Walpole had to admit was so repulsive that "I never flattered myself that they [the scenes]
would be proper to appear on the stage". 54

The plot of *The Mysterious Mother* can be summarized briefly. The Countess of Narbonne effected an assignation with her son Edmund without his realizing who was his accomplice. The Countess raised Adeliza, her child by Edmund, as her ward. Edmund returned unexpectedly from foreign wars to which he had been exiled by his mother. In a short time he and Adeliza were ready for marriage. Neither suspected their close relationship. The crafty monk, Benedict, encouraged the union contrary to the best efforts of the Countess. When the marriage was accomplished, the Countess confessed her guilt and died by her own hand. Adeliza and Edmund realized their unwholesome condition and agreed to separate. She entered a nunnery, and he returned to the wars.

The plot germ came from a story concerning a confession made to John Tillotson, Archbishop of Canterbury, (1691-94). Walpole used the story substantially as he found it except that in the play the Countess revealed her crime to her son and his bride. In the original she was told by the Archbishop to conceal the fact from them because they were free from any criminal intention. Walpole also transferred the time from the end of the seventeenth century to the eve of the reformation and the scene to Narbonne in France. In a letter in 1768 he made the following commentary on the origin of the story.

Mr. Chute has found the subject of my tragedy, which I thought happened in Tillotson's time, in the Queen of Navarre's Tales; and what is very remarkable, I had

laid my plot at Narbonne and about the beginning of the Reformation, and it really did happen in Languedoc and in the time of Francis the First. Is not this singular?55

It is hard to explain why Walpole was so interested in this tale of incestuous passion. He did, however, see in it great tragic qualities and decided to dramatize it in spite of the repulsive character of the story. In the "Postscript to the Mysterious Mother" he discussed the choice of the subject.

The subject is so horrid, that I thought it would shock rather than give satisfaction to an audience. Still I found it so truly tragic in the two essential springs of terror and pity, that I could not resist the impulse of adapting it to the scene, though it never should be practicable to produce it there. I saw too that it would admit of great situations, of lofty characters, and of those sudden and unforeseen strokes, which have singular effect in operating a revolution in the passions, and in interesting the spectator. It was capable of furnishing, not only a contrast of characters, but a contrast of vice and virtue in the same character: and by laying the scene in what age and country I pleased, pictures of ancient manners might be drawn, and many allusions to historic events introduced to bring the action nearer to the imagination of the spectator.56

These comments are substantially a correct evaluation of the play although, as usual, his implication that it was deliberately selected in view of its potentialities may be questioned. In spite of his admission here of its unsuitableness for stage presentation, his occasional remarks in his letters show that he never entirely abandoned hope of seeing it produced.

His reference to creating "pictures of ancient manners" is redolent of The Castle of Otranto. Here, as in the romance, he made use of the Gothic

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55Letter 1218, To the Hon. Henry Seymour Conway, June 16, 1768, Toynbee,
setting. It is true that the time assigned to the play, just before the
reformation, is hardly medieval, but it will be recalled from previous
discussions that any distant time, even early modern, was ancient enough
for Walpole.

Like his previous work, The Mysterious Mother has its setting in a
castle. In the opening line he spoke of

"How these antique towers
And vacant courts chill the suspended soul." 57

Throughout the play passing references remind the reader that the scene is
laid within an ancient castle. However, the building does not play as
strong a role as its counterpart of Otranto. Probably the reason is that
here the plot is so much stronger that the attention is not diverted from
the story to the setting. Even more important, in the drama the castle
is used primarily as a setting and lacks the strong emotional appeal he
employed in the romance. There is little effort made to exploit the terror
and gloom of the Gothic castle as there was in the previous work. Enough
use is made of the castle, however, to clearly identify it with the Gothic
tradition he had launched in 1764.

Other evidences of medieval scenes are also present. For example, the
second scene of the fourth act opens with a procession of friars chanting
a funeral anthem for the abbess. The stage directions specify that the

VII, p. 199.
56Horace Walpole, op. cit., p. 125.
57The Mysterious Mother, Act I, Scene 1.
monks "advance slowly from a cloister". Again the use of this mechanism was far from its full development. It is treated in much briefer form and with less effort at medieval color than the entrance of the cavalcade in The Castle of Otranto.

Walpole also worked on the idea of mystery. It is very doubtful whether the Middle Ages were as mysterious as story writers would lead one to infer. This element is largely a fabrication grafted onto the picture of medieval life by writers who were not familiar with the true spirit of the age of which they wrote. Common sense would teach that the people of those ancient times led normal lives just as do the citizens of today. However, though it may be false to history, the air of the mysterious has been accepted in romantic literature as characteristic of the period. This fact was never truer than during the period of the Gothic novel.

Walpole's most apparent effort in reproducing the manners of the Middle Ages is seen in his depiction of mystery in the play. In several places allusions are made to mysterious apparitions. Under the porch of the abbey the specter of the dead master of the castle is said to dwell.

"Oh! father, but I dare not pass without you
By the church-porch. They say the count sits there,
With clotted locks, and eyes like burning stars."59

Later lightning strikes and destroys the cross erected to the old count. The monk, Martin, blames this on Florian who has drawn new storms on the already troubled court of Narbonne. Throughout the play there are whispers

58 Ibid., Act IV, Scene 2.
59 Ibid., Act II, Scene 2.
of new mysteries, of portents, and the date, September 20, has a fatal significance. By means of such devices, Walpole tried to create the air of mystery he believed proper to the Middle Ages. These events in the play have even less power to startle the reader than the similar devices in his romance.

In The Mysterious Mother Walpole gave a truer picture of his idea of medieval Catholicism than he did in his previous work. Here he made no apparent effort to conceal his ill-will. Things concerning the Church are invariably spoken of with a touch of ridicule. The speech of the characters is occasionally punctuated with such phrases as "Angels defend us", "heaven rest his soul", and others that reflect the influence of faith on the lives of individuals. There are references to the frequent alms and prayers of the Countess, to Masses for the deceased, and to the Sacraments, especially that of penance. These usually lack the ring of sincerity which was present with the characters at Otranto.

It is in the treatment of his monks that Walpole made his greatest affront on the Church. His two friars, Benedict and Martin, are depicted as crafty schemers working out their secret ambitions under the protection of the Church. This is seen in the dialogue between the two in Act One Scene Three where they discuss means of making the Countess divulge the secret that afflicts her life. Such phrases as the following show the spirit that animated the discourse. Benedict says: "Or soon, or late, a praying woman must become our spoil". 60 Again he says:

60Ibid., Act I, Scene 3.
"Oh! were I seated high as my ambition,  
I'd place this naked foot on necks of monarchs,  
And make them bow to creeds myself would laugh at."61

Martin enters into the same spirit and urges on the designs of Benedict. He says: "Win pow'r by craft; wear it with ostentation".62 Encouraging the self-seeking of his companion, he continues:

"Gain to the holy see this fair domain;  
A crimson bonnet may reward your toils,  
And the rich harvest prove at last your own."63

The satire becomes keener when Benedict rewards the wily plans of Martin by conferring on him the title "Thou true son of the Church!"64 A later dialogue associates the whole Church in the corruption of these two monks. Martin says:

"How many fathers of our holy church  
In Benedict I view."65

Benedict caps the situation with the following avowal:

"'Tis true the church owes Benedict some thanks.  
For her, I have forgot I am a man.  
For her each virtue from my breast I banish  
No laws I know but her prosperity;  
No country, but her boundless acquisitions.  
Who dares be true to country, king, or friend,  
If enemies to Rome, are Benedict's foes".66

Into the characters of the two friars, Walpole implanted all the evil with which her enemies are accustomed to condemn the medieval Church.

61Ibid.  
62Ibid.  
63Ibid.  
64Ibid.  
65Ibid., Act IV, Scene 1.  
66Ibid.
Walpole gave his personal sanction to his picture of medieval monks in the following declaration in the **Postscript to the Mysterious Mother**.

The villainy of Benedict was planned to divide the indignation of the audience, and to intercept some of it from the Countess. Nor will the blackness of his character appear extravagant, if we recall to mind the crimes committed by Catholic churchmen, when the reformation not only provoked their rage, but threatened them with total ruin.67

Some justification of his artistic motive, as expressed in the first sentence, is possible. The play would have been definitely overbalanced if the Countess alone bore all the iniquity of the story. By attracting some of the evil to Benedict, Walpole saved the Countess from almost certain rejection by respectable audiences.

Walpole's assertion that his monks are typical churchmen will not stand before more understanding criticism. While no one will deny that the clergy at times have exposed themselves to just censure, it is incorrect to assume that such charges should be made against the entire organization or even the majority of its members. Even the worldly monks of the Middle Ages, who get so much attention in literature, were not as deliberately and consciously wicked as Benedict and Martin; for the most part their faults were due to much less serious causes. Walpole's handling of the friars is, therefore, another example of his erroneous views on the medieval life he aimed to reproduce. In this case his misrepresentation was due not only to his superficial knowledge of the period but also to his complete lack of

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sympathy with the most influential institution of the era.

The same spirit colors the other allusions to Catholic things throughout the play. The references to confession and absolution, Edmund's remarks on his part of the Crusades, and the discussions on the women retreating to the convent, all are marked by the same air of ridicule. Certainly, as far as giving pictures of "ancient manners" is concerned, The Mysterious Mother could not possibly be successful. The picture Walpole gave of the Middle Ages was essentially false.

Critical opinion sees to agree that dramatically Walpole was more successful than most of his contemporaries. The story is too repulsive for stage presentation, but the structure of the play shows that he had more command of the dramatic technique than was common in his age. He gave himself credit for observing the unities. These are present in the play. The time is less than twelve hours, the place was shifted only once, from the castle platform to the garden within, and finally, the action moves toward the catastrophe with a minimum of delay. The plot is held together by increasing suspense gradually until its final revelation at the end. Walpole showed greater character development here than in The Castle of Otranto. In the earlier work the actors were for the most part types; here they take on considerable individuality. It is probably unfortunate that Walpole did not make better use of his dramatic ability. Had he produced several plays with the dramatic merit of The Mysterious Mother, but with more acceptable themes, he might have made a valuable contribution to the dramatic literature of the period.
In this chapter emphasis has been placed on the Gothic elements in Walpole's two efforts in creative literature. The purpose was to show how Walpole's medievalist interests, as seen in the preceding chapter, were transferred from architecture and antiquarianism to literature. In the next, and final, chapter attention will be focussed on the value of his contribution to the Gothic revival in particular and to English romanticism in general.
CHAPTER IV
EVALUATION OF WALPOLE’S INFLUENCE

Walpole’s Gothic romance was an important influence on the rise of medieval interest in English romantic literature. After him, the association of terror and mystery with old castles and abbeys became a noticeable part in the works of several English authors. It is impossible within the scope of the present paper to carry the study of his influence into full detail. However, in these last pages the salient features of his influence will be mentioned. A detailed account of the development of his Gothic technique in the works of Mrs. Radcliffe, Matthew Lewis, and other Gothic novelists would lead too far from the subject of this thesis. Likewise, Walpole’s contribution to the Romantic poets as well as to Pugin and Ruskin can but be indicated. The purpose of this thesis is to study the medievalism of Horace Walpole. Many points must of, necessity, be left open to future consideration.

The first point to consider is the immediate reception given to The Castle of Otranto. The foregoing study has indicated how far removed this romance was from the novels then popular. It is interesting to note the reception given to the initial edition of Walpole’s work. The letters he wrote during the early months of 1765 seem to indicate that the work was immensely popular. During the last week of January he wrote in a note accompanying a presentation of the book: "The enclosed novel is much in
vogue; the author is not known. In March he again referred to the popular reception afforded his work:

You have shown so much of what I fear I must call partiality to me, that I could not in conscience send you the trifle [The Castle of Otranto] that accompanies this till the unbiased public, which know not the author, told me that it was not quite unworthy of being offered to you. . . But I will not trouble you, Sir, at present with enlarging on my design, which I have fully explained in a preface prepared for a second edition, which the sale of the former makes me in a hurry to send out.

Ten days later in a letter to the Earl of Hertford he wrote that the success of the story had induced him to acknowledge his authorship. He said that:

"It was comfortable to have it please so much, before any mortal suspected the author." At this time he also declared that the first edition was completely sold. He accepted the fact that the story "was universally believed to be Mr. Gray's" as a compliment.

These statements indicate that the book was received with considerable appreciation. Just how many copies were sold is an uncertain matter. There were five hundred copies in the first publication but not all these were sold. Indications point to the fact that Walpole sent many gratuitous copies to his friends and to those whose admiration he coveted. In comparison with present-day novel sales, the number of copies of The Castle of Otranto was not large. In its day, however, it represented a greater sale.

1 Letter 1006, To Earl of Hertford, January 27, 1765, Toynbee, VI, p. 178.
2 Letter 1013, To Dr. [Joseph] Warton, March 16, 1765, Toynbee, VI, p. 199.
3 Letter 1015, To Earl of Hertford, March 26, 1765, Ibid., 204-205.
4 Ibid.
than a corresponding number would today.

Walpole was highly pleased with the favorable comments given his book by his numerous acquaintances. His correspondence would indicate that the approval was universal. However, he seemed to overlook the less favorable remarks of his friends and to have ignored almost completely the professional critics. At least one of his friends was not enthusiastic over the production. Gilly Williams wrote to George Selwyn on March 19, 1765:

Horry Walpole has now postponed his journey to Paris till May. How do you think he has employed that leisure which his political frenzy has allowed of? In writing a novel • • • and such a novel that no boarding school miss of thirteen could get through without yawning. It consists of ghosts and enchantments; pictures walk out of their frames, and are good company for half an hour together; helmets drop from the moon, and cover half the family. He says it was a dream, and I fancy one when he had some feverish disposition in him.5

Had Walpole been aware of this criticism or had he heeded it, he probably would not have been so exhuberant over the favor accorded his book. It seems reasonable to assume that a considerable proportion of his readers shared the views expressed by Williams. Nevertheless, it is futile to deny that the story enjoyed substantial popular approval. The fact that it went through three editions within two years is proof of its favor.

The reception by literary critics has always been marked by the same variation as that given by Walpole's friends. The book enjoys the distinction of being either highly praised or severely blamed. A conservative

blend of the two has been the exception rather than the rule. These extremes appeared even in the two anonymous reviews published during the first two months of 1765. The *Monthly Review* found the work worthy of praise:

> Those who can digest the absurdities of Gothic fiction, and bear with the machinery of ghosts and goblins, may hope, at least, for considerable entertainment from the performance before us: for it is written with no common pen; the language is accurate and elegant; the characters are highly finished; and the disquisitions into human manners, passions, and pursuits, indicate the keenest penetration, and the most perfect knowledge of mankind. . . However, as a work of genius, evincing great dramatic powers, and exhibiting fine views of nature, The Castle of Otranto, may still be read with pleasure. To give the Reader an analysis of the story, would be to introduce him to a company of skeletons; to refer him to the book will be to recommend him to an assemblage of beautiful pictures.6

The first part of this review finds merits in the story that a present day reader could scarcely experience. The early reviewer probably was so relieved to find something original in the field of novel writing that he was led to excessive praise. The characters no longer seem "highly finished" nor does the comprehension of human nature show the "keenest penetration". However, in view of what was usually found in the novels of the 1760's, this praise is explicable.

At the opposite extreme, the *Critical Review* found the story far from satisfactory.

The publication of any work, at this time in England composed of such rotten materials, is a phenomenon we

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cannot account for. That our readers may form some idea of the absurdity of its contents. 

We shall not affront our readers' understanding so much as to describe the other monstrosities of this story. The characters are well marked and the narrative kept up with surprising spirit and propriety.7

The two opinions just cited show the great divergence in public opinion which greeted Walpole's Gothic romance. Neither is a very accurate appraisal of the work. However, they show the great variation in opinion which is characteristic of criticisms of this book.

Probably the greatest weight of contemporary opinion was against The Castle of Otranto. Even those who praised it were not blind to its deficiencies. The story was too much opposed to the critical standards of the age to win the approval of professional reviewers. In the first place, fiction in general was not held in too high esteem. Any toleration granted to novels usually was based on their capacity to inculcate a moral principle. Walpole's story was written primarily for his own pleasure and in view of possible pleasure to his readers. He was not at all interested in teaching ethical living although in his preface he attempted to derive some such element. Both critics quoted above object to his moral, -- that the sins of the parents are visited upon the children to the third and fourth generation-- as useless and even unchristian. A book so out of keeping with contemporary trends could not hope to win critical approval.

The popularity of a book must be judged by two factors, at least:

the reception by critics and the reception by the reading public. In the second of these, Walpole's tale fared better than in the former. The fact that the public bought up three issues within two years is indicative of popular approval. Critics can rant all they want; if a book catches the public fancy, it will sell in spite of official opposition. Even better evidence of the favor of the reading public is afforded by the fact that the romance was run as a serial in the *Universal Magazine* during April, 1765. Editors at all times try to insert in their magazines those pieces which they hope will satisfy the taste of the average reader. The public approbation granted his work was sufficient to cause Walpole to overlook the censures of literary critics.

It must not be inferred from the foregoing that the popularity of *The Castle of Otranto* was something phenomenal. It was not. In spite of the inferences in Walpole's correspondence, the fact remains that most of the enthusiasm was confined to a comparatively small group of Walpole's personal friends. Furthermore, after the third issue, in 1766, the book dropped into obscurity. The next printing did not take place for sixteen years. If the romance was as popular as Walpole implied, it would hardly have suffered such a complete and extended eclipse.

Before opening a discussion on Walpole's influence on the Gothic romance it seems proper to insert here a brief survey of critical opinion of *The Castle of Otranto* from the eighteenth century to the present. No effort

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will be made to evaluate all Walpole's critics; a sampling of the most frequently quoted ones must suffice.

Robert Jephson's stage presentation of the tale, under the title of The Count of Narbonne, revived interest in the book. Naturally it was attended by some critical reaction. Two of the immediate reviews appeared in the same periodicals quoted above. Unfortunately, the reviewers remained anonymous so it is impossible to compare their statements of 1781 and 1782 with those of 1765. However, it may be noted in both cases that the criticisms are more reserved and conservative than in the first instance. It is noteworthy that both reviewers commend Walpole's work. These criticisms deserve more consideration than the early ones because they represent the opinions held almost twenty years after the publication of the book and not the excited conclusions drawn from first perusal of the story.

The Monthly Review was very conservative, but it indicated considerable esteem for Walpole and his book.

The tragedy is inscribed, with great propriety, to the Hon. Horace Walpole, not only as a distinguished patron and cultivator of literature, but as the avowed author of the singular story on which the drama itself is professedly founded. • • In many other particulars the fable is unsuccessfully traced from the novel, which almost everywhere rises superior, much superior to the drama!9

Strangely enough, the Critical Review which had been so harsh in 1765 now was quite clear in its approval. It speaks of the stage version as a tragedy which is "undoubtedly one of the best that has appeared for some

years". It calls *The Castle of Otranto* "Mr. Horace Walpole's celebrated novel or romance".\(^{10}\) It does, however, commend Jephson's decision to omit most of the marvellous incidents of the original as unsuited to the English stage.

Both these criticisms show that Walpole's Gothic story was much more acceptable to the critics in 1781 than it had originally been. This change in their official stand may have been due to the pressure of popular approval, but more probably it may be ascribed to the new literary views then coming into prominence.

The trend of critical approval continued throughout the remainder of the eighteenth and well into the nineteenth century. Bishop Warburton, a friend of Pope and for many years a public opponent of Walpole, spoke of the romance as a "masterpiece in the Fable", and a work capable of effecting the purpose of the ancient tragedy, "to purge the passions by pity and terror".\(^{11}\) In 1814 John Nichol commended the power of both *The Mysterious Mother* and *The Castle of Otranto*.\(^{12}\) The trend of critical approval was continued by Sir Walter Scott who wrote a lengthy memoir of Walpole and a serious study of his Gothic romance. In the course of the latter he devoted much space to the use of the supernatural in fiction. His conclusions justify Walpole's use as opposed to the modifications in the technique proposed by Mrs. Radcliffe.

Scott's enthusiastic appraisal of Walpole has been ascribed to his

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\(^{11}\) Quoted in Quarterly Review, Vol. CXLII (October 1876), p. 329.

interest in selling the new edition of *The Castle of Otranto* for which he wrote the introduction. In spite of the fact that much that Scott praised is no longer looked upon with the same favor, it is wrong to attribute his views to mercenary interests. He had a genuine interest in Walpole's work and had read his romance with interest. It is only fair to give Scott credit for being sincere in his appraisal although some of his views are no longer regarded as correct. The concluding lines of Scott's essay summarized his criticism of Walpole.

The applause due to chastity and precision of style, to a happy combination of supernatural agency with human interest, to a tone of feudal manners and language, sustained by characters strongly drawn and well discriminated, and to unity of action producing scenes alternately of interest and of grandeur;--the applause, in fine, which cannot be denied to him who can excite the passions of fear and of pity, must be awarded to the author of the *Castle of Otranto*.13

With the critics after Scott, Walpole did not fare so well. The early enthusiasm for him gave way to quite the opposite views. One of the most censorious criticisms came from the pen of Macaulay. For many years the views expressed in his essay stood in the way of any real comprehension of Walpole. At present Macaulay's views are generally discredited and almost ignored. It was the character of Walpole rather than his works that suffered most from his criticism. He condemned Walpole for his affectation and inconsistency, spoke of his character as a "mask within mask", and scorned his political views. It is apparent from his statements that Macaulay could see

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no good whatsoever in the personal qualities of the man. His conclusions indicate that he had only an imperfect knowledge of the personality of Walpole. That there is some truth in what he said no one can deny, but to anyone who has perused Walpole's letters at any length, Macaulay's statements reveal a very imperfect and superficial opinion of the man. Beneath the capricious side of his nature Walpole concealed many characteristics that Macaulay never fathomed. This is not to imply that Walpole was a man of unassailable personal qualities, for such he was not; but it is unfair to lay at his door all the charges made by Macaulay. His estimate is unjust.

In spite of his strictures on the character of Lord Orford, Macaulay had to admit that there was "irresistible charm" in his writings. He particularly referred to the innumerable letters which are universally commended for their pleasant qualities. His view that Walpole's charm consists in "amusing without exciting" is probably as accurate as any ever given. The few concessions he made to Walpole's literary merit are not sufficient, however, to balance the overdrawn condemnation of Walpole's personal characteristics.

Hazlitt's brief criticism of The Castle of Otranto is much sounder than Macaulay's very apparently biased statements. In a few lines he summarized the literary merits of Walpole's Gothic romance in a way that leaves little more to be said.

The Castle of Otranto (which is supposed to have led the way to this style of writing) is, to my notion dry, meagre, and without effect. It is done upon false principles of taste. The great hand and arm, which are thrust into the courtyard, and remain there all
day long, are the pasteboard machinery of a pantomime; they shock the senses and have no purchase upon the imagination. They are a matter-of-fact impossibility; a fixture, and no longer a phantom.\(^\text{14}\)

This brief paragraph ended for all time the unsound exaltation of Walpole's aesthetic merits as found in many of the early criticisms. The views here expressed are substantially those held by the generality of literary students today. The Castle of Otranto is no longer considered a masterful creation. Its interest now resides in its historical rather than its artistic value.

Within the present century the Castle of Otranto is regarded primarily as a work of historical interest. Its supposed intrinsic literary merits are no longer given serious consideration. The views of two modern editors of the story are characteristic of the twentieth century attitude. "So great a gulf is there between the taste of the late eighteenth and early twentieth century that it is now almost impossible, on its intrinsic merits alone, to take the Castle of Otranto seriously.\(^\text{15}\) The same idea is repeated in another introduction. "The first of these tales, the Castle of Otranto, is today somewhat difficult to take seriously. Its portentous mysteries and exaggerated terrors seem to us both cheap and trivial.\(^\text{16}\) Among the few devoted students of Walpole at the present time there is an occasional tendency to overestimate Walpole's importance. This can be accounted for by the fact that they have become so engrossed in their studies of him that they have temporarily, at least, lost sight of the true perspective. It is easy

\(^{14}\text{William Hazlitt, "The English Novelists", in Comic Writers, London, George Bell and Sons, 1889, pp. 171-172.}\)

\(^{15}\text{Caroline Spurgeon, Intro. The Castle of Otranto, p. VIII.}\)

\(^{16}\text{H. R. Steeves, Intro. Three Eighteenth Century Romances, New York, Charles}\)
enough to estimate Walpole's literary importance too highly. An example of this overbalanced admiration is present in one of the most recent, and also one of the most elaborate studies of the Gothic novel.

To The Castle of Otranto we owe nothing less than a revolution in public taste, and its influence is strong even at the present day. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that to Walpole's romance is due the ghost story and the novel, containing so much of the supernatural and occult, than which no forms of literature are now [1923] more common and applauded. The Castle of Otranto is, in fine, a notable landmark in the history of English taste and English literature.17

Very few contemporary students would go to this limit. Walpole's tale hardly merits credit for so much influence. The views expressed by Spurgeon and Steeves are more in conformity with current evaluations and are in closer harmony with the facts.

All critics now agree that it is the historical value of the story that deserves consideration. It is necessary here, then, to return to the last part of the eighteenth century and note the influence of The Castle of Otranto on the early Gothic novels.

The importance of Walpole's influence on the flood of Gothic novels that came into existence about 1780 is complicated by the fact that he was not the first to use many of the accepted Gothic techniques. Eleven years before his story appeared, Smollett published his Adventures of Ferdinand, Count Fathom, in which he employed many of the devices later incorporated into the tale of terror. However, his book did not seem to attract much

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Scribner's Sons, 1931, p. xi.

attention in its time. Smollett was primarily a realist and his works were considered from that angle, consequently his romanticism was overlooked. In 1762 appeared another book which employed much of Walpole's machinery. Longsword, Earl of Salisbury, an Historical Romance by Thomas Leland contained gallant chevaliers, villains, usurpers, perfidious monks, imprisoned heroines, and several other characteristics of the Gothic tales. Phelps speaks of Longsword as "the first modern romance of chivalry in the English language" and as "a forerunner of the great romances of Scott". These points are undoubtedly true, but for some reason Leland's story exercised very little influence in its day and is now almost unavailable. Walpole nowhere referred to this book so it is quite possible, though not certain, that he was not influenced by it. Although it is frequently mentioned as a forerunner of the type of story popularized by Scott, the latter never mentioned either Leland or his book. Another proof that Longsword wielded very little influence in the eighteenth century is the fact that it was not reprinted even once whereas The Castle of Otranto was published at least eighteen times before the end of the century. The conclusion to be drawn, therefore, is that although The Castle of Otranto was preceded by at least two similar works, it gave the real impetus to the vogue of the Gothic romance.

The double-faced reception of Walpole's story has already been pointed

18W. L. Phelps, Advance of the English Novel, New York, Dodd, Mead and Co., 1916, pp. 82-83.
out. However, the popularity of its original reception does not mean that there was a strong desire for a new type of fiction. The current realism was too strongly entrenched to yield immediately to a vogue for romance. It was not until 1777 twelve years after The Castle of Otranto that an imitation came into existence. Clara Reeve's Old English Baron coupled with Jephson's Count of Narbonne gave a new impetus to Walpole's story.

Clara Reeve was definitely indebted to Walpole for the inspiration of her story. In the preface she explicitly stated: "This story is the literary offspring of The Castle of Otranto, written upon the same plan..."\(^{20}\) Her story was written for the purpose of improving Walpole's technique, especially in the use of the marvellous. It was her plan to bring the extraordinary events within the "utmost verge of probability". The net result in her case was to remove almost entirely the sense of mystery from the tale. Even when she introduced supernatural incidents, she explained them away immediately with the result that the entire effect was lost. Her achievement was slight, but in the present consideration it was important as the first indication of Walpole's influence on the Gothic novel.

His supremacy remained unchallenged for twelve years after Clara Reeve's Old English Baron. In 1789 Ann Radcliffe brought out her story The Castle of Athlyn and Dunbayne which was followed by four other tales in the Gothic style during the next eight years. Her stories reflect the influence of both

\(^{20}\)Clara Reeve, "Preface to the Old English Baron", in The British Novelists, by Mrs. Barbauld, p. 3.
Walpole and Clara Reeve. The indications of Walpole's direct influence are less evident than they were in the Old English Baron. However, her stories are definitely in the tradition introduced by Walpole. Her castles have subterranean passages, trapdoors and the other trinkets of Gothic romance. His influence is most apparent in the characters in her tales. Her heroines resemble Isabella and Matilda, and her heroes recall the gallant Theodore of The Castle of Otranto. In her story, The Italian, she quoted several passages from The Mysterious Mother. It is evident, therefore, that she was acquainted with Walpole's works.

The greatest merit of her stories is their romantic atmosphere. In other techniques she was far from perfect, but she could develop in the reader a strong sense of the ancient times she aimed to portray. It was for this reason that she was so well known in the early nineteenth century. In fact, her popularity so overshadowed Walpole's that her name was usually associated with the Gothic romance while his was forgotten. Most subsequent Gothic novelists traced their inspiration to her rather than to the originator of the species.

It is even less easy to find indications of the direct influence of Walpole on the other Gothic novelists than for Clara Reeve and Mrs. Radcliffe. However, contemporary critical reviews indicate, that Walpole's contribution to the type was recognized in his time. In 1788 the Monthly Review in criticizing a new book "The Apparition, A Tale, by a Lady" said that "The writer is evidently of the Walpolian school . . . but the pupil is at many
removes behind the master". Two obituary notices in 1797 also recognized that Walpole's Gothic romance introduced a large following. The Gentleman's Magazine said:

The Castle of Otranto, a romance by this author . . . produced an agreeable exercise of the severer passions; but, as the archetype of all that miserable trash which now deluges the press, and is calculated to excite apprehension and surprise, without throwing new light upon life or nature, it may be regretted that the author ever presented it to the world.22

Another obituary repeated the same idea. In speaks of The Castle of Otranto as "an unique of the kind" which was, however, favorably received by the public. It further stated that "It has been . . . the prolific parent of a number of strange compositions". Three years later a footnote in a review repeated the same conclusion: "Horace Walpole . . . to whose Castle of Otranto we owe the introduction of the fantastic herd of Ghosts, Goblins, etc. into novels and romances". One more citation can be added to this collection. As late as 1808, in another footnote, Walpole's influence was acknowledged:

The spirit of enquiry which he introduced was rather frivolous, though pleasing, and his Otranto ghosts have propagated their species with unequalled fecundity. The spawn is in every novel shop.25

The above quotations prove beyond doubt that Walpole was recognized in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as the originator of the

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Gothic type of story. Each reviewer speaks of it as a recognized fact, a point which indicates that Walpole's claim was never seriously challenged during that time. Furthermore, the statements cover a period of twenty years. This shows that Walpole's recognition enjoyed considerable permanency. His position with regard to the Gothic novel has never been seriously challenged. There is only one conclusion possible from this weight of evidence: Walpole did make a direct contribution to the English novel in the form of the Gothic romance.

This does not mean that Walpole was the source of all the characteristics of the Gothic novel. As was pointed out in the first chapter, many of the details incorporated into the romances were used for similar effects before. Such works as Ossian and Percy's Reliques as well as many of the characteristics of the "graveyard poets" made a definite contribution to the Gothic novel. Walpole's importance is not decreased by this fact. It was he who first combined these details into a single story. Furthermore, many of the Gothic writers accepted Walpole's idea of medievalism; his concept of life in the Middle Ages was accepted without any effort to establish its validity. The Castle of Otranto provided the necessary model for the others to follow. Walpole was not really an innovator; he merely adapted many of the ideas then current and put them into the concrete form of his romance. He opened the way and set the pace for others to follow.

Walpole's influence on the writers of the English romantic period is harder to prove than that on his more immediate successors. The one great romantic always mentioned in connection with the medievalism of Walpole is
Sir Walter Scott. Scott's conception of the Middle Ages had many of the
deficiencies characteristic of Walpole's picture of the same age.

Ordinarily "Monk" Lewis and Mrs. Radcliffe are mentioned as the Gothic
novelists who influenced Scott. It is quite probable that they deserve
this distinction. However, Walpole is not to be overlooked. As in most other
things, here he played a comparatively minor part, but a role that had its
own importance. Scott's literary background was so varied that it would
be foolish to attempt to limit his inspiration to any individual or even
any group. Nevertheless, he showed a definite inclination toward the Gothic
school, especially in poetry. His relationship with the Gothic writers of
the late eighteenth century is more apparent in his early works than his
later ones, and also more clearly seen in his poetry than his prose. A few
lines from The Lay of the Last Minstrel show how completely he was in
harmony with the eighteenth century attitude toward ruined buildings. A
stanza from his description of Melrose Abbey contains typical characteristics
of eighteenth century romanticism.

If thou would'st view fair Melrose aright,
Go visit it by the pale moonlight:
For the gay beams of lightsome day
Gild, but to flout, the ruins grey.
When the broken arches are black in night,
And each shafted oriel glimmers white;
When the cold light's uncertain shower
Streams on the ruin'd central tower;
When buttress and buttress alternately,
Seamframed of ebon and ivory;
When silver edges the imagery,
And the scrolls that teach thee to live and die;
When distant Tweed is heard to rave
And the owlet to hoot o'er the dead man's grave,
Then go -- but go alone thw while--
Then view St. David's ruin'd pile;  
And, home returning, soothly swear,  
Was never scene so sad and fair.26

That is certainly the romantic approach to the appreciation of a medieval building.

There are indications that Scott was more directly influenced by Walpole than just to share in the same general movement with him. In his general preface to the Waverly series of novels he made a significant statement:

When from boyhood I was advancing to youth, a long illness threw me back on the kingdom of fiction... I was plunged into this great ocean of reading without compass or pilot. I may observe that about this time (now alas! thirty years since) I had nourished the ambitious desire of composing a tale of chivalry, which was to be in the style of The Castle of Otranto with plenty of border characters and supernatural incident.27

Several pages of a romance built on this plan are still preserved. Scott never finished the story, which was to be entitled Thomas the Rhymer, but the fragment extant shows that it was developing into a typical Gothic story. It would be gratifying to be able to follow up this lead with proofs that Scott was further influenced by Walpole. However, available evidence to prove such a statement is lacking. At the same time there is also no proof that Walpole did not further influence his work. The fact that after thirty years he still remembered The Castle of Otranto as one of his early inspirations is significant. It must have been recalled at intervals during that period of his life.

26Canto second, Stanza one.  
27Sir Walter Scott, Waverley or "Tis Sixty Years Since," General Preface to
On internal evidence, Freye quite conclusively proves the influence of several Gothic writers on Scott. A few bits of his evidence might be borrowed here to substantiate the present contention. For example, the following lines are strangely reminiscent of *The Castle of Otranto*:

He sought her yielded hand to clasp,
And a cold gauntlet met his grasp,
The phantom's sex was changed and gone
Upon its head a helmet shone
Slowly enlarged to giant size
With darken'd cheek and threatening eyes, . . .

This reference to the enlarged helmet cannot but recall the enormous casque which played such an important part in Walpole's Gothic tale. Freye also points out the similarity between parts of Scott's *Doom of Devorgail* and *The Castle of Otranto*. Among others he shows that the catastrophes in each are strikingly similar.

As previously stated, Scott was influenced by several of the Gothic novelists. The above quotations are not intended to prove that Walpole was the sole influence on Scott, but that he was certainly one of those from whom Scott derived some of his ideas. It would be easy to overestimate Walpole's influence. The safest conclusion is that Scott represented a fusion of many of the outstanding characteristics of late eighteenth century romanticism. Elements derived from several of the Gothic novelists were combined in the Waverly novels. "Toutefois l'indication de ces ressemblances ne manque pas d'intérêt et du moins montre Scott continuateur sinon

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29 Walter Freye, *Influence of Gothic Literature* on Scott, Rostock, H. Winterberg's, 1902, pp. 52-54.
imitateur de l'oeuvre de Walpole et de Radcliffe".30

It is impossible to prove that Walpole was a strong influence on any of the other writers in the Romantic Movement. Many of them present ideas that bear some resemblance to those found in Walpole, but there is no proof that he was influential in giving them such ideas. For example, Keats's The Eve of St. Agnes presented much of the machinery of dreams, mystery, and storm-racked castles that was found in Walpole and other eighteenth century romanticists, but is it not possible to prove that any individual author influenced Keats in this poem. Coleridge also made use of the emotional value of an old castle in his Christabel and his pleasure dome in "Kubla Khan" is a palace in a dream. These points show that Walpole's effort to make a medieval building a source of emotional reaction was a start along the right line. The method he used found more perfect fulfillment in the superior works of his successors.

Another important effort made by Walpole was to try to make the supernatural in his story appear natural. In his own case the result was not without fault, but he had a solid principle to work on. This is seen in Coleridge's Ancient Mariner. Here he tried to fulfill his part of the Lyrical Ballads agreement. His method was basically the same as Walpole's; he must make the supernatural seem natural. Coleridge's result is far superior to his predecessor's. Walpole lacked the literary genius to exploit

his own principle to its fullest implications. It is significant, however, that he struck on the right means to produce the effect he wished. It was up to more able writers to use the means to full advantage.

Although it is impossible to give Walpole credit for being an important influence on the romantics of the early nineteenth century, it is possible to hazard a few conclusions. Because of his social position Walpole's medieval experiments, both in architecture and literature, became popular during the last two decades of the eighteenth century. This popularity was instrumental in reviving interest in the Middle Ages as a source of artistic pleasure. It is true that the qualities most emphasized—the gloom of castles, mystery, and superstition—are not the authentic features of medieval life, but they are the ones that appealed to the romantic mood of the period. Walpole deserves credit for being instrumental in establishing this medieval setting. Had he not made public his Gothic experiments, it is quite possible that the romantic interest in antiquity would have been retarded or even curtailed. In "The Function of Criticism" Matthew Arnold makes the point that the work of the literary critic is to produce the intellectual atmosphere in which creative genius can function. Although he was not a critic, Walpole played just such a part in early nineteenth century romanticism. By popularizing medieval interest he helped to create the atmosphere in which the more talented romantic writers could operate. His importance consists in this, that he prepared the way for more capable men to follow and to improve.

There remains now only one problem to settle before closing this thesis,
that is to give a summary statement of Walpole's position in literary and aesthetic history. Most of the following ideas are not new; they have been used already either directly or implicitly. The points to be made have already been used in interpreting and evaluating Walpole's contribution to the present study. The remaining pages will be devoted to a critical estimate of Walpole's importance in English literary history.

A serious evaluation of Walpole's importance is complicated by the fact that he attempted to make light of his own work. Furthermore, there is nothing more apparent than his superficiality in everything he did. Even he admitted, even boasted, of his own trifling in everything he attempted to do. He wrote to a friend:

My pursuits have always been light and trifling and tended to nothing but my casual amusement; I will not say without a little vain ambition of showing some parts; but never with industry sufficient to make me apply to something solid. My studies if they could be called so, and my productions were alike desultory.31

What he said here applies to his antiquarian research into medievalism as well as his efforts to write works of literature. Everything he did was touched with the virtuosity of a confirmed dilettante. As far as literature was concerned, he was not a sincere romanticist, in fact, his inclination was often that of a confirmed classicist. He was never a conscious reformer in literature or art. One of the anomalies of literary history is the fact that, in spite of his superficialities and other obvious limitations,

31Letter 2703, To John Pinkerton, August 19, 1789, Toynbee, XIV, p. 192.
Walpole had a greater influence on the aesthetic taste of his time than many more serious and conscious reformers.

In the field of medieval study Walpole was much more discursive than Gray, Hurd, Percy, or the Wartons. While each of these was seriously engaged in the analysis of some phase of medieval interest, Walpole was leisurely studying the possibility of his royal or noble ancestry. His friend Gray was much better informed on medieval architecture, still it was Walpole who built a Gothic castle and by that propagated that style among the gentlemen of England. Hurd was the first to make a serious critical statement in defense of the Gothic taste in literature, yet it was Walpole who wrote a Gothic story that won popular approval. These other five are in all respects superior students of the Middle Ages, yet it is he who by his sham castle and his Gothic romance did more than they to restore interest in medieval art.

Why Walpole, rather than the profounder antiquarians, restored Gothic architecture and literature to public favor can be accounted for on two counts. In the first place, his special significance is due to the popular character of his work both in architecture and literature. Strawberry Hill was open to any one, and, as has been seen, large numbers visited it. Here they found evidence not only of antiquarian knowledge but also an insight into practical living convenience. Walpole's house was never so medieval that it precluded comfort. He showed that the artistry of ancient times could be combined with the ease of modern living. Such was bound to be more popular than a rigid adherence to medieval color at the expense of pleasant
living conditions. In much the same way *The Castle of Otranto* won public favor. It could be understood and appreciated by many who would never have Hurd's more learned *Letters on Chivalry and Romance*. Walpole's achievement in both architecture and literature appealed to popular favor.

In the second place, his importance was due to his social position. If some middle-class Englishman had built a place similar to Strawberry Hill, he would most likely have been ridiculed into oblivion. However, when Walpole, the paragon of English society, did the same thing he won the attention of fashionable society to his Gothic experiments. The fame of his house grew rapidly and was attended by a growing interest in Gothic architecture. Because he, who was recognized as an arbiter of taste and a man of rank, was interested in such experiments, Gothic soon ceased to be regarded as a middle-class craze. It became socially correct to be interested in sham castles and medieval antiques. In like manner, his social position partly explains why his story was read and imitated while Thomas Leland's *Longsword* fell into oblivion.

These two facts, the popularity of his work and his social position, account for the paradox that he, rather than the more serious students of the subject, gave the impetus to a revival of medieval interest. The fame of Strawberry Hill was an important factor in winning popular interest in his Gothic romance.

The influence of *The Castle of Otranto* on the literature of the last decades of the eighteenth century was due to profounder causes than Walpole's social position. Reader's were tiring of the realistic diet that had been
in vogue for such a long time. There was an inclination to turn toward the past to find new sources of literary interest. Furthermore, there was a growing movement against rules and restraints in favor of freer play for the imagination. The lure of the supposed mystery of the Middle Ages was a welcome relief from the realism of current novels. Such a spirit of disquietude and restlessness, coupled with the desire for something new, is most favorable to the exercise of a new influence. Under such a condition the power of a model can be very great. The revival of interest in The Castle of Otranto after 1777 came at an opportune time. Walpole's romance became the model for the new type of literature that the spirit of the age required. It became a guiding force in the sudden flux of Gothic stories which started to appear about 1780 and continued almost until the end of the century. It possessed the qualities needed to satisfy the growing desire for a new source of interest in fiction. Further, it contained in germinal form many potentialities that other writers could exploit.32

The popularity of Walpole's story, revived by Clara Reeve's Old English Baron after about ten years of comparative obscurity, was due to the fact that it satisfied the need for a change in novel interest. Walpole was not a conscious reformer, but his story came at just the opportune time to become the model for a new type of fiction. It became the prototype of a large number of stories which appeared during the last years of the eighteenth century.

32 Mehrotra, op. cit., p. 63.
Walpole's place in literary history is not a great one. He never took writing seriously enough to carve out for himself a niche among great authors. What work he did indicates that he possibly could have developed into a writer of considerable proportions. He apparently had the potentialities to do work superior to what he achieved, but he never took the care and the effort necessary to develop his own powers. If great literature could be dashed off at carefree speed, if easy writing made easy reading, then Walpole might have been able to reach some heights of literary perfection. His mood was too variable, his industry too intermittent to enable him to produce anything of superior merit. The fact that he holds a very minor, almost unknown, place in literature is due to his own lack of effort. He apparently had the ability to achieve lasting success, but he lacked the personal stability of character to put his talents to their full use.

In spite of his limitations Walpole deserves credit for making a very definite contribution to the history of the novel. His Castle of Otranto, with all its artistic limitations, contained potentialities which made it a source of inspiration for several decades to come. His story possessed, often in crude form, ideas which were consciously developed by later writers. That he was instrumental in bringing an age of reason back to romance is no small achievement. With his strange story he brought back to the English novel the Gothic castle and with it the sense of the marvellous, of the fantastic, and of mystery. The Castle of Otranto amounted to a new formula.

33Paul Yvon, op. cit., p. 618.
for novel writing that he achieved quite unknowingly but which, nevertheless, had far reaching influences. Walpole's story gave birth to the romances of Mrs. Radcliffe and the stories of other Gothic novelists all of which prepared the way for Scott's establishment of the historical novel. The long series of tales of terror and wonder, which includes the stories of Irving, Hawthorne, Poe, Stevenson, as well as more recent mystery and detective story writers, owes its origin, in large part, to Walpole's Gothic romance.

This is not to imply that Walpole was a great and powerful influence on the English novel. He was not. Nevertheless, in spite of his disregard for literary fame as well as his other deficiencies, he has left a mark on the history of the novel which will not be removed as long as men can react to suggestions of fear and terror.

One final evaluation must now be made. The major interest in this thesis has been focused on the medievalism of Horace Walpole. The quality of his Gothicism has been indicated in various places throughout the paper. Here the effort will be to get a composite summary of the characteristics of his interest in the Middle Ages.

In the first place Walpole's knowledge of the Middle Ages was far from correct. As in almost everything else, he merely dabbled in the more curious aspects of antiquity. He was interested not in what constituted the essential qualities of the period but in what satisfied his quest for the queer and the exotic. The pictures he gave of Gothic times indicate that he never seriously studied the period of which he wrote. While he knew very
little of the real Middle Ages, he was in contact with a spirit of a pseudo-
Middle Age which was more fictitious than real. He knew of the period in
the same manner as most of his contemporaries. His concept of medieval times
was a personal and purely imaginative evocation of the past. He looked
back to Gothic times through the vague mist of incomplete knowledge and saw
only its external forms of beauty, mystery, and dim grâdeur. He pictured
the Middle Ages as a distant and ancient place of escape from the prosaioness
of his own life.

Another defect in Walpole's medievalism, a defect shared by most of his
contemporaries, was that he was interested only in the external and super-
ficial characteristics. He was attracted to the accidents rather than to
the substance of the era. The scholastic philosophy, the pervasive spirit
of Catholic theology, the social organization of the time, all that consti-
tuted the reality of life to those who lived it, was missed by Walpole. He
say only the relics of Gothic art, the ceremonial of medieval religious life,
the charm and pageantry of its public demonstrations. Even in architecture
he disregarded the basic principles of construction and interested himself
only in the picturesque details that struck his fancy. Walpole failed to
realize that the aspects of the past which were romantic to him were, in
reality, the prosaic conditions of life for those who lived in those times.
To him a Gothic castle was a source of rich dreams of romantic gloom and
mystery, while to those who actually lived in them there was little of imag-

34Ibid., pp. 640 and 603-604.
inative charm. His idea of medieval life was fictitious because it was based on imagination rather than accurate observation.

The terms "Gothic" and "medieval" as used throughout this discussion of Walpole must not be taken as referring to the genuine Middle Ages. They must be understood as he used them, that is, they refer to a romantic and inaccurate concept of an idealized life in ancient times. Although Walpole himself, most likely, thought that his use of the terms was accurate, it is now apparent that he had a very imperfect and superficial idea of what they stood for.

Although Walpole's ideas of medievalism were very inaccurate, he played one very important role in the revival of Gothic interest. He was one of the first modern Englishmen to appreciate the beauty of Gothic cathedrals and by his writings and architectural experiments drew attention to these monuments of ancient art. More than one English cathedral owes its preservation to this revived appreciation. In the mid-eighteenth century many of the richest architectural remains in England were being hacked to pieces to furnish construction material for ordinary buildings. The renewed appreciation of Gothic cathedrals and abbeys as objects of artistic beauty saved many a medieval structure from total destruction. Walpole deserves credit for being instrumental in saving these monuments for posterity.

Just what then is Walpole's importance? He dabbled in art and dabbled in literature; his knowledge of both was inaccurate and superficial. His architectural and literary creations are equally imperfect. Yet in everything he did he managed to touch off some potential force which others could
bring to fruition. His architectural experiments, crude as they were, prepared the way for the more scientific Gothic revival of the nineteenth century. His Castle of Otranto opened the door to new fields of literary achievement. His special gift then, seems to have been that he could prepare the way for more careful successors. His achievements were slight, but their potentialities were great.
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