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Faculty of Arts

HORACE WALPOLE
A N D
THE SOURCES OF
"THE CASTLE OF OTRANTO"

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... stop! my dear uncle Toby — stop! go not one foot farther into this thorny and bewildered track, — intricate are the steps! intricate are the mazes of this labyrinth! intricate are the troubles which the pursuit of this bewitching phantom KNOWLEDGE will bring upon thee. — O my uncle; — fly — fly, fly from it as from a serpent.
(Tristram Shandy, II, iii)

Curious persons, who have leisure to employ in such researches, may possibly discover in the Italian writers the foundation on which our author has built. If a catastrophe, at all resembling that which he describes, is believed to have given rise to his work, it will contribute to interest the reader, and will make The Castle of Otranto a still more moving story.
(Preface to the first edition of The Castle of Otranto)

List of abbreviations

Full title of books cited is given only the first time; short titles have normally been used for subsequent reference. The quotations from The Castle of Otranto are all taken from the Oxford edition of the novel (Horace Walpole, The Castle of Otranto, Oxford, 1964, edited by W. S. Lewis), but only reference to Prefaces or Chapters has been given. Since the Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence is still incomplete, references to Walpole's letters are usually given by correspondent's name and date, unless otherwise stated. When cited, the Yale Edition is abbreviated thus: Corr.. The following abbreviations have also been used throughout the thesis:

Works (The Works of Horatio Walpole, Earl of Orford, 1798, 5 vols., ed. M. Berry)

Descr. (A Description of the Villa of Horace Walpole ... at Strawberry-Hill, near Twickenham, 1774)

Mem. Geo. II. (Memoirs of the Reign of King George the Second, 2nd ed., 1847)

Mem. Geo. III. (Memoirs of the Reign of King George the Third, 2nd ed., 1894)

Hazen (A. T. Hazen, Catalogue of Horace Walpole's Library, New Haven, 1969, 3 vols.)

Smith (Horace Walpole Writer, Politician, and Connoisseur, Essays on the 250th Anniversary of Walpole's Birth, Edited by W. H. Smith, New Haven, 1967)

BM (British Museum)

Farmington (Mr. W. S. Lewis's private collection of Walpoliana at Farmington, Ind.)

H.W. (Horace Walpole: in notes or quotations)

Contents

List of illustrations

Summary of Thesis

Introduction

p. 1 I. Horace Walpole's love of romances goes back to the days of his youth at Eton and Cambridge. Later, showing little interest in "judgement" or "instruction" such as conceived by Richardson and his chiefest end being to innovate, that early love became his banner for "original" literature.

p. 9 II. The "Gothic Revival", including Walpole's case was not chiefly a literary phenomenon. Walpole's main contribution, however, was the different meaning he attributed to the word "Gothic": if Richard Hurd had already partially reversed its usual negative connotation, Walpole connected it to a modern and progressive concept of beauty.

p. 17 III. Walpole then was an innovator; yet, he was such entirely within his contemporary culture and therefore his idea of "Gothic" should be appreciated for what it meant in that precise context. He did not have a "Romantic" soul, at least in the later acceptation of the word, and his position was at the most one of detached and superior irony towards his age. Gothicism for him was not mere escape into reverie but active consciousness of being, just because so detached, fully within the common theatre of the century.

Chapter I

p. 27 I. Walpole's peculiar relationship with Italy has an important place in his imaginary world. One of the characterizing features of such a relationship is his early passion for the figure of Salvator Rosa, an artist whose personality he thought extraordinary and whose paintings had no doubt an influence on the visionary inclinations of his youth.

p. 42 II. Another figure that caught Walpole's fancy was that of Theodore of Neuhoff, the adventurer who for a short time became King of Corsica: he was then forced to abdicate,

went to England, was jailed for debt there and eventually died in misery. To some extent Walpole identified with the melancholy character of this "beggar-king"; he wrote an epitaph for his tomb and even kept some relics at Strawberry Hill. This explains the choice of "Theodore" as the name of the protagonist of The Castle of Otranto and some of the traits of Walpole's inspiration, as connected to his idea of "Fate".

p. 53 III. Walpole was acquainted with the story of "Ghismonda and Tancredi" in the Decameron through Hogarth's "Sigismunda", Dryden's version and Thomson's play, all of which in different degrees contributed towards a definition of a father figure in the novel combining power and lust. The theme of incest implicit in the source was fully developed by Walpole only in The Mysterious Mother, while in The Castle of Otranto the basic plot of Boccaccio emerges complicated into two daughter figures, Isabella and Matilda, and two father figures, Manfred and Frederic. This permits differentiated solutions, identifiable with two distinct climactic moments, importing the sacrifice of Matilda followed by the not contradictory survival of both the lover and the daughter figures.

p. 79 IV. Through Vasari, the Elizabethans or more recent sources Walpole was no stranger to the legendary bloody deeds of the Medici. He had a predilection for the figure of Bianca Capello, whose portrait hung in the Round Drawing Room at Strawberry Hill, and took a special interest in the story of her adventurous life. At one time Walpole planned writing the history of the Medici family; he eventually gave up this project, but The Castle of Otranto may be in a sense considered a partial and metaphoric realization of it. The character of Bianca in the novel, derived from that of Bianca Capello, has the important function ~~to~~ of relating the essential vision of the gigantic"hand in armour" which according to Walpole was his immediate source of inspiration through a dream he later described.

King Theodore, Sigismunda and Bianca Capello were certainly not the only starting--points for Walpole; as far as the character structure is concerned, however, around them in effect coagulated most of the complex visionary material of The Castle of Otranto.

Chapter II

p. 99 I. Sir John Vanbrugh is considered one of the fathers of the "Gothic Revival"; Walpole's dislike of him has a reason in the fact that his and Vanbrugh's imaginative sources were structurally different. The reversal of the narrative planes in The Castle of Otranto, with setting dominating over action, is also a demonstration of this difference. By setting ~~it~~ is not to be understood just "the darkened Italian palace" of the Elizabethans, a feature which characterized Gothic fiction only in a superficial way, but a new narrative technique which may be defined "architectural dimension" in literature.

p. 116 II. Stage-effects enchanted Walpole and their influence is felt throughout The Castle of Otranto which as a matter of fact proceeds along a sequence of unexpected coups-de-théâtre, an element reflecting Walpole's peculiar interest in technical innovations, not to be undervalued for its consequences.

p. 134 III. By a curious coincidence the real castle of Otranto was found to be a prison: when Walpole wrote the novel he did not know that, but the prison theme is the key to a correct understanding of The Castle of Otranto and of subsequent Gothic literature. Walpole's admiration for Piranesi is connected to such a theme, not only because of the relevant theatrical element in the Carceri, their impact on English culture and the close correspondence of imagery with his novel, but also for the intellectual framework which is behind the prison image as a metaphor of life. In both Walpole and Piranesi this framework is in fact reflected in solutions similar in structure and technique.

p. 162 IV. From Spenser Walpole extracted the idea of the labyrinth as related to the world of romance: the same idea was not foreign to Piranesi(though in a different context), very likely through an old allegorical text, the Hypnerotomachia Poliphili attributed to Francesco Colonna. Walpole owned a French translation of this text and, judging from the disposition of the books in Press L of the Main Library at Strawberry Hill, associated it with other fields of interest: the Decameron, the Medici, the theatre. Thus, apparently heterogeneous literary experiences and stratifications appear organized in a complex but integrated system of related visions that eventually found its expression in The Castle of Otranto.

Chapter III

p. 187 I. The most impressive figurative formation used by Walpole in his novel is undoubtedly the "fatal helmet", which, since classical reminiscences have a place in Walpole's imagery, there is reason to connect to the myth of Perseus, the hero whose famous statue by Cellini must have impressed the young intellectual when he visited Florence. Both Perseus and Medusa occur quite often in Walpole's Correspondence and in the decorative apparatus of Strawberry Hill and they were probably involved in the dream of horror that inspired the novel, also through indirect sources like Tiepolo's drawings or the Hypnerotomachia Poliphili. In The Castle of Otranto the myth of Perseus appears however transformed into the leading theme of Liberty triumphing over Tyranny.

p. 217 II. In connection with this, the tomb of Alfonso tends to become the ideal centre of the novel. The altar-tomb image from which it derives was later visually realized in the magnificent "shrine" displayed by Walpole in the curious pagan temple of the New Chapel at Strawberry Hill. As far as the novel is concerned this image appears to contain elements of a conception of Nature based on the sublimation of energy into abstract entity, Universal Spirit.

p. 244 III. The period 1764-67 marks a brief but significant change in Walpole's life, perhaps the most dramatic one. In 1764 General Conway, Walpole's cousin, incurred Royal displeasure for voting in Parliament against General Warrants; Walpole wrote a spirited pamphlet to defend him and on this occasion became actively involved in politics, which he had formerly despised. The Castle of Otranto was therefore written at a crucial stage in the evolution of his attitude towards reality, characterized by two contrasting aspects that now found full expression.

p. 255 IV. During the six months the novel was conceived, written, revised, set and printed Walpole's mind was to a great extent taken with a curious discovery of his, the original manuscript of the autobiography of Lord Edward Herbert of Cherbury. The character of this picaresques philosopher influenced his conception of the novel; in fact details of a print he included in his edition of Lord Herbert's Life (derived from an original miniature portrait by I. Oliver) are closely related to the imagery of The Castle of Otranto. There are also similarities between Lord Herbert's thought and the ideas indirectly expressed in the novel. Walpole compared Lord Herbert to Cellini, a parallel that throws light on the connection between the myth of Perseus and the prison theme in terms of visionary synthesis. The discovery of Lord Herbert's forgotten manuscript was then the occasion that fixed Walpole's early visions of youth on his present dramatic perception of reality.

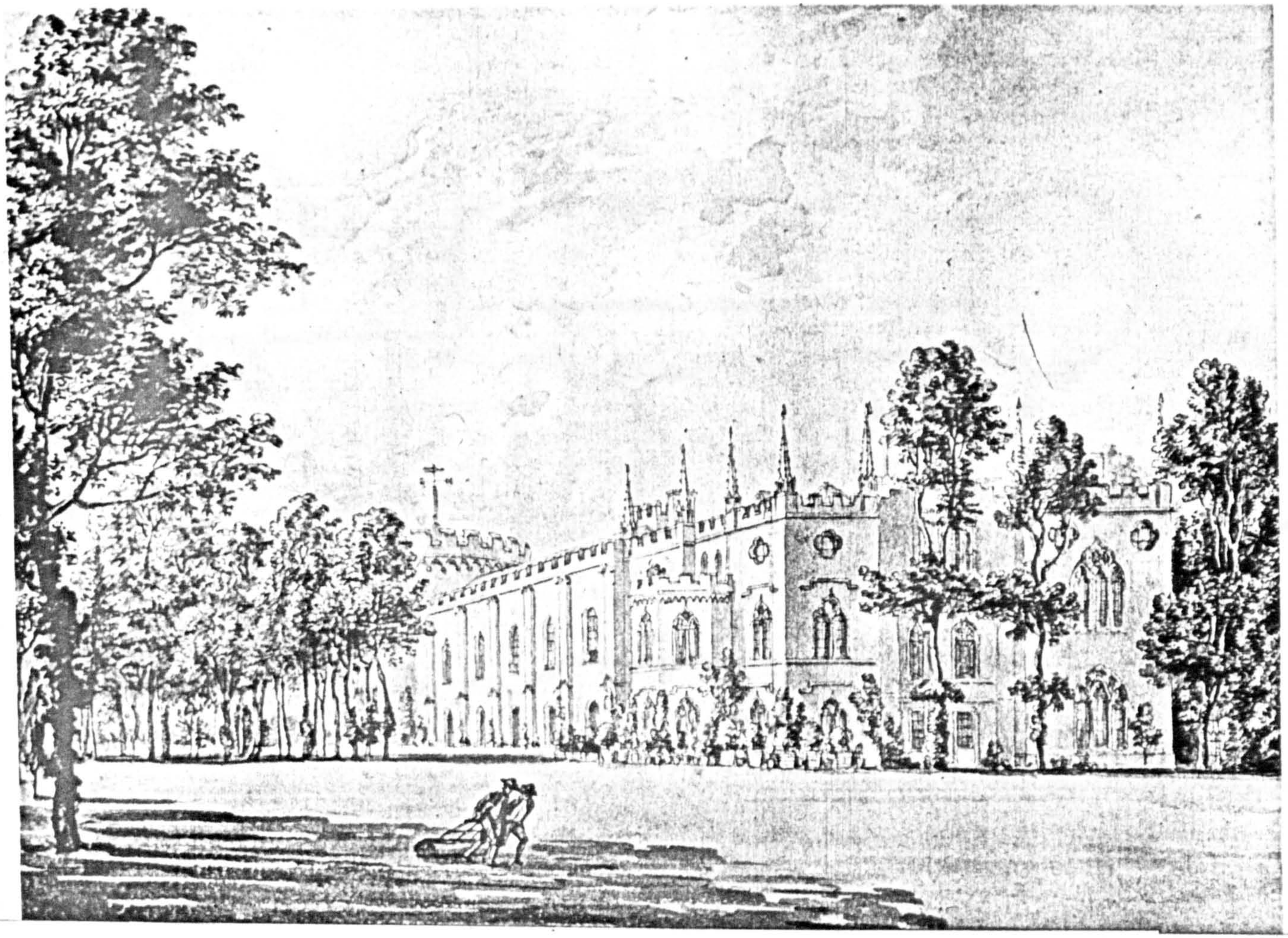
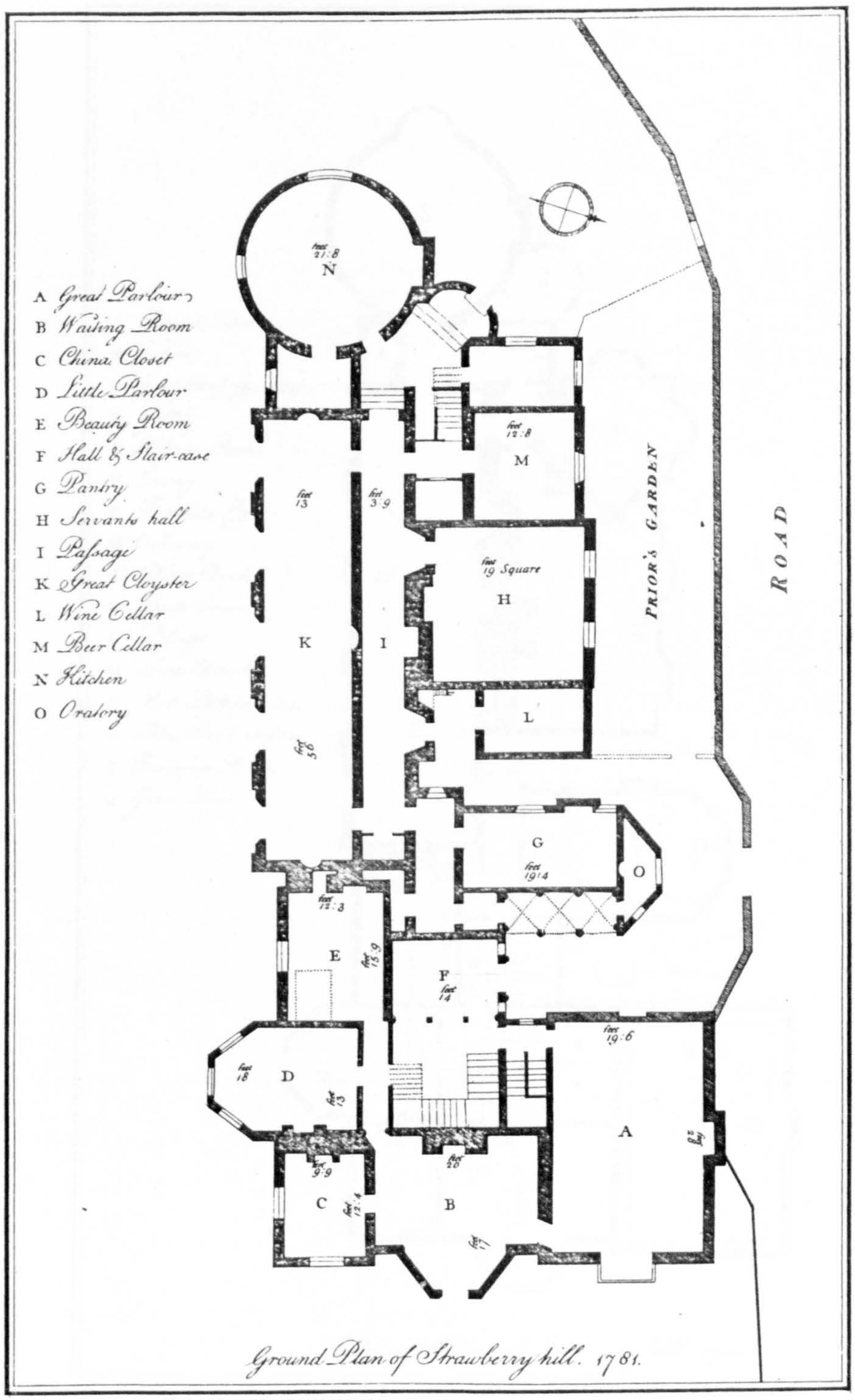
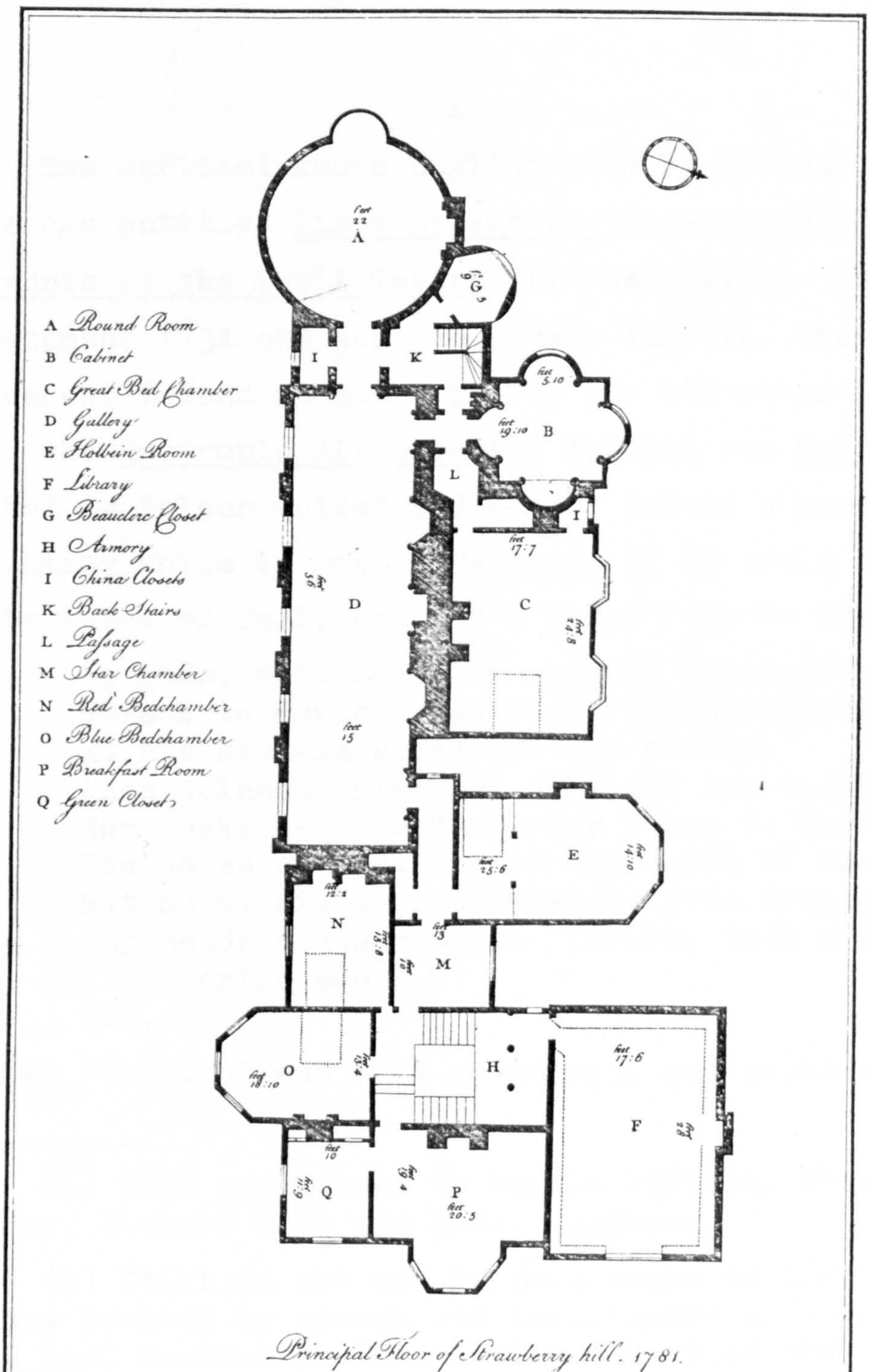


Plate I. View of Strawberry Hill from the South East.



Ground Plan of Strawberry hill. 1781.

Plate II.



Principal Floor of Strawberry hill. 1781.

Plate III.

INTRODUCTION

I

The earliest known English poem by Thomas Gray is one entitled Lines Spoken by the Ghost of John Dennis at the Devil Tavern. It was written in December 1734 and sent to Horace Walpole, Gray's dearest friend at Eton. There, for his companions of the Quadruple Alliance (1) Walpole was Celadon, that is "clear voice" (2) — and indeed a penetrating voice it must have been, if it could shake the gates of Hell, and set a ghost free to speak:

> Ye gods, that sway the regions under ground,
> Reveal to mortal view your realms profound;
> At his command admit the eye of day:
> When Celadon commands, what god can disobey?
> Nor seeks he your Tartarean fires to know,
> The house of torture and the abyss of woe;
> But happy fields and mansions free from pain,
> Gay meads and springing flowers, best please the gentle swain.
> (ll. 5-12)

Then "Celadon" was only seventeen, and excuses could

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(1) This was formed by Horace Walpole, Thomas Gray, Richard West and Thomas Ashton.

(2) Still in old age Walpole seems to have retained that quality in speech and intonation: a neighbour of his, General J. Fitzwilliam described the effect of his voice "like a shooting star or like Uriel gliding on a sunbeam" (cf. MS note bound in a copy of H.W.'s Essay on Modern Gardening, now at Farmington).

be made for this early trifling with ghosts, were we not so well acquainted with the later incantations of his maturity. The reading of Tom Jones did not cure Horace of his visions, though Fielding had been quite explicit about the dangers of any indulgence of the kind in a writer:

> The only supernatural agents which can in any manner be allowed to us moderns, are ghosts; but of these I would advise an author to be extremely sparing. These are indeed, like arsenic, and other dangerous drugs in physic, to be used with the utmost caution; nor would I advise the introduction of them at all in those works, or by those authors, to which, or to whom, a horse-laugh in the reader would be any great prejudice or mortification.
> (Tom Jones, VIII, i)

This might be one of the reasons of Walpole's dislike of Fielding and his "Bunter Muse" (3). He was often very rash in his censures, but it is obvious that Fielding's equivocal, if not restrictive, conception of romance could only irritate him (4). Horace's

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(3) Cf. Walpole's satirical poem The Parish Register of Twickenham, written about 1758:

> Where [i.e. Twickenham] Fielding met his bunter muse,
> And, as they quaff'd the fiery juice,
> Droll Nature stamp'd each lucky hit
> With inimaginable wit ...

Almost thirty years later Walpole was still critical of Fielding:

> Fielding ... having no idea of grace, is perpetually disgusting. His innkeepers and parsons are the grossest of their profession; and his gentlemen are awkward when they should be at their ease.
> (To Pinkerton, June 25, 1785)

(4) To say the truth, if the historian will

love of romances was deeply rooted in his imagination and early inclinations. When a boy of thirteen he seems to have purchased an old romance printed in 1575, which he later gave to the Rev. William Cole (5); a letter from his cousin Henry Seymour Conway proves that romances formed a large part, perhaps the largest, of Walpole's literary enthusiasms at Eton and Cambridge (6).

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confine himself to what really happened, and utterly reject any circumstance, which, though never so well attested, he must be well assured is false, he will sometimes fall into the marvellous, but never into the incredible. He will often raise the wonder and surprize of his reader, but never that incredulous hatred mentioned by Horace. It is by falling into fiction, therefore, that we generally offend against this rule, of deserting probability, which the historian seldom, if ever, quits, till he forsakes his character and commences a writer of romance.
(Tom Jones, VIII, i)

(5) Cf. Smith: A. T. Hazen, The earlier Owners of Walpole's Books, p. 173.

(6) Cf. Conway to Walpole, April 18, 1745:

... I remember you buried in romances and novels; I really believe you could have said all the Grand Cyrus's, the Cleopatra's, and Amadis's in the world by heart; nay, you carried your taste for it so far that not a Fairy Tale escaped you.

See also idem, October 25, 1743 and August 10, 1745.

Walpole's idea of romance was not however a complicated one; he did synthesize it quite clearly in one of his Detached Thoughts:

> History is a romance that is believed: romance, a history that is not believed — that is the difference between them. (Works, 4, p. 368, where the last clause is omitted)

Here the subjective and vague category of individual belief traces the dividing line between the regions of history and romance, a boundary indeed which Walpole's extravagance seldom took any notice of in his excursions. The result, even in the organized form of The Castle of Otranto, was too often one that Pamela, though something of a "gothic" heroine herself, would have sternly condemned: "And what is the instruction that can be gathered from such pieces, for the conduct of common life?" she would conclude with Richardson indeed (7). Walpole's kind invitation

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(7) ... there were very few novels and romances that my lady would permit me to read; and those I did, gave me no great pleasure; for either they dealt so much in the marvellous and improbable, or were so naturally inflaming to the passions, and so full of love and intrigue, that most of them seemed calculated to fire the imagination, rather than to inform the judgement. Titles and tournaments, breaking of spears in honour of a mistress, engaging with monsters, rambling in search of adventures, making unnatural difficulties, in order to shew the knight-errant's prowess in overcoming them, is all that is required to constitute the hero in

in the dedicatory sonnet of his novel

> The gentle maid, whose hapless tale
> These melancholy pages speak;
> Say, gracious lady, shall she fail
> To draw the tear adown thy cheek?
> ...

would not greatly affect Miss Byron either, that brilliant heroine of Sir Charles Grandison who often expressed herself in these terms:

> ... He was a poet; and I have heard my grandfather say, that to be a poet, requires a heated imagination, which often runs away with the judgement.
> (II, letter xi)

But Walpole was in fact little interested in "judgement", such as conceived by Richardson, nor was his declared purpose ~~was~~ "instruction for the conduct of common life". To him literature was independent and detached from immediate aims, other than the liberty of the individual visions from which he drew what he called just "a moving story".

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such pieces. And what principally distinguishes the character of the heroine is, when she is taught to consider her father's house as an enchanted castle, and her lover as the hero who is to dissolve the charm, and to set at liberty from one confinement, in order to put her into another, and, too probably, a worse: to instruct her how to climb walls, leap precipices, and do twenty other extravagant things, in order to shew the mad strength of a passion she ought to be ashamed of; to make parents and guardians pass for tyrants, the voice of reason to be drowned in that of

Of the three intentions that W. S. Lewis, the editor of the Yale Edition of Walpole's Correspondence and life-long student of Walpolian quiddity, sees as the constant of all the works by Walpole, it seems to me that the first, to innovate, was indeed the strongest, at least in The Castle of Otranto. Walpole himself in the "Preface to the Second Edition" of the novel, speaks of "the novelty of the attempt"; he was conscious that the story broke away from narrative tradition, as commonly received in the eighteenth century. He did conceal his identity in the first edition because he expected the work to probably arouse strong criticism from several quarters. It did not in fact, a circumstance that proves that "the novelty of the attempt" reflected a general and growing change in taste. Walpole hated conformity: when Mme de Bouffleurs, who had visited Strawberry Hill, remarked to Lady Holland "that it was not digne de la solidité anglaise", he commented "It made me laugh for a quater of an hour ... One must not build a Gothic house because the nation is solide. Perhaps as everything now in France must be à la grecque, she would have liked a hovel if it pretended to be built after Epictetus's ... " (8). Indeed he had other

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> indiscreet love, which exalts the other sex, and debases her own. And what is the instruction that can be gathered from such pieces, for the conduct of common life? (Pamela, II, letter cii)

(8) To Mann, December 20, 1764. When Walpole wrote this justly defending his villa he had already finished printing his "gothic story": only four days later, on Christmas Eve, The Castle of Otranto was officially published.

occasions to complain about the lack of originality of his contemporaries, particularly French, and their slavishness to fashion:

> The Duc de Nivernois called here t'other day in his way from Hampton Court; but as the most sensible French never have eyes to see anything, unless they see it every day, and see it in fashion, I cannot say he flattered me much, or was much struck with Strawberry. When I carried him into the Cabinet, which I have told you, is formed upon the idea of a Catholic chapel, he pulled off his hat, but perceiving his error, he said, 'Ce n'est pas une chapelle pourtant', and seemed a little displeased. (To Mann, April 30, 1763)

It is not surprising that in the same letter in which he ridiculed Mme de Bouffleurs' "solidité", Walpole also criticized a certain "English standard": " ... in my opinion a most woeful one; I mean the works of Richardson, who wrote those deplorably tedious lamentations, Clarissa and Sir Charles Grandison, which are pictures of high life as conceived by a bookseller, and romances as they would be spiritualized by a Methodist teacher ... ". Thus, just as the "style" of Strawberry Hill was to be an emblem of Walpole's reaction against established "fashion", the novel was deliberately conceived as a model of true "Original" literature — I think even Richardson's champion Edward Young would have

to admit it (9). As a matter of fact there was very little difference in the meaning Walpole attached to the two parallel creations of his life, Strawberry Hill and Otranto, for they always indeed appear as the two faces of a single vision, a vision that ruled his creative and "original" imagination. It never abandoned him completely; after visiting King's College Chapel at Cambridge in 1777, now an old man, he still said it "penetrated" him "with a visionary longing to be a monk in it" (10). And on the same Chapel, forty years before, then in the prime of his antiquary enthusiasms, he had written his first poem, Verses in Memory of King Henry the Sixth, Founder of King's College, Cambridge, the same he eventually placed at the beginning of the Works, where it acts like an inscription over them:

> 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 pensive 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,

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(9) Edward Young was the author of Conjectures on Original Composition. In a Letter to the Author of Sir Charles Grandison, 1759. Walpole on the other hand persistently stressed Richardson's lack of invention in that novel:

> I was so tired of sets of people getting together, and saying, 'Pray, Miss, with whom are you in love?' and of mighty young men that convert your Mr. M——'s in the twinkling of a sermon.
> (The Letters, Edinburgh, 1906, II, p. 364)

(10) To Cole, May 22, 1777.

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.
(H.W.'s notes:
(°) King Henry is buried obscurely at Windsor.
(+) This thought is copied from the inscription over sir Christopher Wren, who is buried under the dome of St. Paul, of which he was the architect "— si quaeras [sic] monumentum, suspice!".)

II

In a study on the sources of The Castle of Otranto, which this intends to be, I think that, in spite of Walpole's architectural inclinations, some attempt should be made at "methodizing the Vandal builder's hand", before going into more specific detail about the motives which determined the "inspiration". I mean it would be useful now to try and define the significance that vested the word gothic in the context of Walpole's imaginative system of reference. To this end it is here barely necessary to stress the importance of Kenneth Clark's The Gothic Revival (1928), a book that after nearly half a century is still a classic on the subject. The period which is relevant for us, the middle of the eighteenth century (between the date (1722) of the second edition of Dugdale and Dodsworth's Monasticum Anglicanum, an antiquarian work of 1655, and Buck's Antiquities and Venerable Remains, 1774) is described by Clark

as the intermediate phase marking the division between mere "survival" and revival of Gothic. It is a period, he says, characterized by a strong literary impulse, which precedes the properly antiquarian one:

> ... When antiquarianism reappears as a vital interest it is in the persons of Gray and Warton. Now Gray and Warton were poets. Their enthusiasm for Gothic springs from a literary impulse which first made itself felt as antiquarianism was beginning to decline. This literary impulse, if anything, can be called the true starting--point of the Gothic revival.
> (K. Clark, The Gothic Revival, London, 1928, pp. 23-24)

This is very true in terms of general historical perspective. When we come to Walpole's specific activity, however, and more particularly to The Castle of Otranto itself, I feel that the cadre of a too general "literary impulse" risks to blur and eventually fail to grasp the whole range of Walpole's cultural interests and implications. His architectural vagaries cannot be seen as merely "poetical": there is something more personal perhaps behind them, and it is not merely what his friends called monstrari digito praetereuntium (1).

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(1) Cf. George Williams ("Gilly") to George Selwyn:

> I can figure no being happier than Horry [i.e. H.W.]. Monstrari digito praetereuntium has been his whole aim. For this he has wrote, printed, and built.
> (George Selwyn and His Contemporaries, Jesse ed., I, p. 310)

In effect Walpole's main contribution was in the direction of a substantial change in the meaning of the word gothic. What we are nowadays naturally inclined to regard as "gothic" was not in the eighteenth century regularly understood in the same way. As late as 1775 Dr. Johnson's entry for the word in the Dictionary was "one not civilized, one deficient in general knowledge"; and this, as it has been pointed out (2), was the most widely-diffused meaning of the term in eighteenth century criticism. Even in sublunary conversation it was nearly the same: "O! more than Gothic ignorance" very appropriately Fielding put in Mrs. Western's mouth, quarrelling with her barbarous brother (3). It in fact went a long way back; an immediate antecedent is Dryden's usage: in 1695 he, whom Walpole claimed as a maternal great-uncle (4), unaware that

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(2) Cf. A. E. Longueil, "The Word 'Gothic' in 18th century criticism", Modern Languages Notes, 38, 1923; W. C. Holbrook, "The Adjective 'gothique' in the XVIII Century," ibid., 56, 1941; J. Haslag, "Gothic" in 17 und 18 Jahrhundert: eine wort- und ideengeschictliche Untersuchung, Köln, 1963.

(3) Cf. Tom Jones, VIII, iii. Fielding's admiration of ancient gothic architecture apparently only amounts to the well known description of Squire Allworthy's house:

> The Gothic stile of building could produce nothing nobler than Mr Allworthy's house. There was an air of grandeur in it that struck you with awe, and rivalled the beauties of the best Grecian architecture; and it was commodious within as venerable without. (Ibid., I, iv)

However, since Ralph Allen, the main original of Allworthy, lived at the heavily "classical" Prior Park near Bath, this description sounded a satirical one.

(4) He in fact appears to have been a first cousin twice removed of his (cf. W. S. Lewis, Horace Walpole, London, 1961, p. 187).

he was actually exiling his descendant from the Elysium of true taste, stated that "all that has nothing of the ancient gust is called a barbarous or Gothique manner". In an essay on the subject (5) E. S. de Beer actually starts from Vasari and explains that the negative connotation of this word was originally due to the anti-medieval reaction of the Italian classical school in early Renaissance. The ancient style of building was seen as backward, uncivilized and barbarous; it was to be rejected as being the product of foreign, German (according to the current expression then, gotica) influence (6). In time the word, losing this Italian connection, came to be used outside its proper context becoming a sort of war-cry of the seventeenth century classicists barricaded within their citadel of "golden rules". Boileau used it against the Italians, chiefly Ariosto and Tasso, and against all their followers' innovating "fureur gothique" (7).

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(5) E. S. de Beer, "Gothic: Origin and Diffusion of the Term", Journal of Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, 1943.

(6) After the Sack of Rome (1527) this attitude was in some cases so extreme that the classicist poet G. G. Trissino spent twenty years in writing an elaborate epic poem entitled, quite significantly, L'Italia liberata dai Gotti (1547).

(7) Cf. Le Lutrin, chant V. Also Pope in The Dunciad satirized the literary Goths of his time:

> Here swells the shelf with Ogleby the great,
> There, stamp'd with arms, Newcastle shines compleat,
> Here, all his suff'ring brotherhood retire,
> And 'scape the martyrdom of jakes and fire;
> A Gothic Vatican! of Greece and Rome
> Well-purg'd, and worthy Wesley, Watts, and Blome.
> (I, ll. 111-16)

Thus, perhaps against their own will, the "Moderns" became gothic. It is understandable that they gradually began to like it. One of the modern Vandals was a bishop, R. Hurd, who is well known for his influential Letters on Chivalry and Romance (1762), a strenuous defence of what usually passed for barbarous literature, Spenser, Tasso and Ariosto. This shows that Hurd too had a specific idea of "Gothic": whatever Boileau might think Ariosto, Tasso or Spenser were hardly gothic in any historical sense and Hurd in his work does not ~~practically~~ really tackle any author before Chaucer, who is also treated almost en passant. In fact Hurd appears to be concerned just with the category of the natural "freedom of fancy" which should be allowed to a writer. His idea of "Gothic" derived from a sincere enthusiasm and reminds me of the raptures which fired the imagination of William Huggins (8), the eccentric translator of Orlando Furioso (9) ~~that~~ who even raised "an hexagonal temple" to his Ariosto in his park, a temple distinguished by "Gothic Arches" (10).

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(8) The son of the old warden of Fleet Prison, who is also mentioned by Pope in his One Thousand Seven Hundred and Thirty Eight. A Dialogue Something like Horace (ll. 13-14).

(9) It was revised with G. Baretti's help and published in 1755.

(10) Over them Huggins inscribed these lines in Italian of his own making:

Per me se n'va l'incerto Viandante:
Qui non s'alberga un orribil Gigante,

Though acquainted with truly medieval architecture and literature, Hurd's real purpose was to show the great value of those works of art which seemed to be independent ~~from~~ of models and "rules". He actually succeeded in reversing the current meaning of "Gothic", for in proving the validity of un-classical, and therefore modern, art he in effect removed the negative implications of the word.

If we now consider this change of the situation by the middle of the century, I think ~~it will better appear~~ the relevance of Walpole's contribution, perhaps will appear greater than is generally credited him. Among his books at Eton there were two editions of Ovid's Metamorphoses and his acute imagination must have been early struck by the ~~same~~ very but line Giovanbattista Piranesi singled out for an inscription on one of the polemical designs in his Parere su l'Architettura (1765): "Rerumque novatrix Ex aliis alias reddit

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Né della Fata Alcina il bel Sembiante;
Castello non son io del Mago Atlante;
Ma, benché rozzon Cumulo, son posto
Pegno d'Amor verso il Divino Ariosto.
(Translation: Through me the uncertain traveller goes:/ here no dreadful giant lives,/ nor the fair semblance of the fairy Alcina dwells;/ I am not the magician Atlante's castle;/ but, though a rustic heap,/I am placed here/ as a token of love for the divine Ariosto.)

natura figuras" (11). The desire for novelty and originality, so typical of Walpole's literary attitudes, as in Piranesi, very likely had a classical origin; this is perhaps what made The Castle of Otranto so "influential" (12) in, though not compromising with, its own times. It must also be understood that when Walpole bought Strawberry Hill (1749) and decided he was "going to build a little Gothic castle there (13), he was not capriciously seized by a flaming mania for tombs and pinnacles. The dominant tone of his letters at that time on the contrary rather reflects a continuing inclination towards letting his fancy

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(11) Cf. Metamorphoses, XV. Inscriptions on other designs are equally indicative of Piranesi's ideas, which I think on this point coincided with Walpole's: "Aequum est vos cognoscere atque ignoscere quae veteres factitarunt si faciunt novi" (from Terence's Eunuchus); "Novitatem meam contemnunt, ego illorum ignaviam" (from Sallust's Bellum Iugurthinum). In his essay 'Piranesi's Parere su l'Architettura" (Journal of the Warburg Institute, II, 1938-39) Rudolph Wittkower comments (p. 153):

> Thus, Piranesi proclaims himself in favour of novelty, that is, of a free transformation as against a literal rendering of ancient models. His Parere represents the conscious transition from archaeology to imaginative art. Archaeological material now becomes a weapon in the hands of a revolutionary modernist.

(12) Cf. A. C. Baugh ed., A literary History of England, London, 1967 (2nd ed.) , p. 974, where on the other hand the critic also states that the novel's "medievalism became mere clap-trap".

(13) To Mann, January 10, 1750.

take its own natural turn and satisfy its curiosity. The same characterized the "Strawberry Committee" (14); it is true that they from the beginning worked with absolutely scholarly accuracy, but the real point for them was not passive "medievalism" — it was creating something which could be clearly seen to prescind from the established "Grecian" rules.

> ... Mr Chute and I are come hither for a day or two to inspect the progress of a Gothic staircase, which is so pretty and so small, that I am inclined to wrap it up and send it to you in my letter. As my castle is so diminutive, I give myself a Burlington-air, and say, that as Chiswick is a model of Grecian architecture, Strawberry Hill is to be so of Gothic.
>
> (To Mann, March 4, 1753)

contribution of

~~Also~~ Kenneth Clark in assessing the Strawberry Hill ~~contribution~~ to the Gothic Revival stresses the secondary rôle here played by pure "revivalism":

> For though Walpole's archaeological researches are a new feature in the revival, he uses them solely in accordance with the taste of the time. It is still the light and genteel in Gothic which appeals to him; and though a recess may be copied from a tomb of undoubted antiquity, by the time it is finished with gold network overlooking glass it will be as Rococo, as far from the spirit of the original, as Bentley's wildest designs.
>
> (Op. cit., pp. 69-70)

"Fancy" rather than any precise stylistic specification was the characteristic of Walpole's originality. At

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(14) It was formed by Walpole himself, John Chute and Richard Bentley; for many years it was responsible for the architectural planning of Strawberry Hill.

the end of his life, during which Strawberry Hill certainly took a great part of his genius, time and money, Walpole wrote "every true Goth must perceive that they [i.e. my rooms at Strawberry Hill] are more the works of fancy than imitation" (15). In this light, I think, we must place Walpole's more lasting achievement: his ruling passion was not a frivolous cult of the Middle Ages, not even the shadow of sincere literary inclinations or fevers, but the conscious and objective determination to transform the idea of "Gothic" from what he had received into a progressive and active aesthetic concept.

III

From his introduction to the 1811 Edinburgh edition of The Castle of Otranto (1) we are acquainted with Sir Walter Scott's early admiration for Walpole and the novel, the "wild interest of the story", its capacity to 'excite the passions of pity and fear". Later Scott even started a romance in imitation of Walpole's "with plenty of Border characters and supernatural incident [sic]", which he called Thomas the Rhymer and always liked: he included it, in its unfinished form;in the 1829 edition of his works. This

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(15) To Miss Berry, October 1794.

(1) Pp. iii-xxxvi.

positive attitude was by no means confined to Scott only among the Romantic generation, who generally regarded Walpole as a sort of forefather; Byron's ardent enthusiasm and defence of Walpole is another remarkable example of it (2). Much of course has been written about the rôle played by Walpole in anticipating Romantic ideas, subject matter and techniques. It cannot be denied that he was constantly preoccupied by the thought of posterity (though not necessarily contiguous posterity) nor that he affirmed "I have not written for this century which wants only cold reason" (3). On the other hand, I feel that it would not be accurate to overstress (as too many have) this polemical feature of his character, ~~as too often it happens to notice,~~ beyond what it really was: a chiefly personal self-assertion and confrontation with his age, the same which makes him sometimes appear so extreme or brings

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(2) In the "Preface" to Marino Faliero (1821) Byron wrote:

> It is the fashion to underrate Horace Walpole, firstly, because he was a nobleman, and secondly, because he was a gentleman; but to say nothing of the composition of his incomparable letters, and of the Castle of Otranto, he is the "Ultimus Romanorum", the author of the Mysterious Mother, a tragedy of the highest order, and not a puling love-play. He is the father of the first romance, and of the last tragedy in our language, and surely worthy of a higher place than any living writer, be he who he may.

(3) To Mme Du Deffand, March 13, 1767.

him to declare Dr. Johnson "a saucy Caliban"(4). It did not depend, as Macaulay wrote in his very ungenerous essay on him (1833), on Walpole being just "the most eccentric, the most artificial, the most fastidious, the most capricious of men". If his "eccentricity" or his "gothicism" are simply confined to the extravagance of a solitary odd gentleman we fall into the opposite mistake, that of restricting instead of widening Walpole's active presence on the eighteenth century scene. For Walpole was entirely within it.

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(4) There are several references of the same kind in the Correspondence and various amusing epithets that Walpole applied to Johnson ("Demogorgon" is one of them in: To Mason, February 5, 1781, in connection with the recently published Life of Gray: Johnson basically judged Gray trivial and dull, and he would probably also dislike Walpole's work in the same way). The relations of Walpole and Johnson are documented in Boswell's Life of Johnson, but Walpole himself gave a brief account of them in a letter to Mary Berry (May 26, 1791):

> ... Johnson's blind Toryism and known brutality kept me aloof, nor did I ever exchange a syllable with him; nay I do not think I ever was in a room with him six times in my days. The first time I think was at the Royal Academy. Sir Joshua said, 'Let me present Dr Goldsmith to you'; he did. 'Now I will present Dr Johnson to you.' — 'No,' said I, 'Sir Joshua, for Dr Goldsmith, pass — but you shall not present Dr Johnson to me.' ... After the Doctor's death, Burke, Sir Joshua Reynolds and Boswell sent an ambling circular letter to me begging subscriptions for a monument for him — the two last, I think impertinently, as they could but know my opinion and could not suppose I would contribute to a monument for one who had endeavoured, poor soul!, to degrade my friend's superlative poetry — I would not deign to write an answer, but sent down word by my footman, as I would have to parish officers with a brief, that I would not subscribe ...

Those who are acquainted with his letters find it difficult indeed to imagine interlocutors of his witty conversation who lacked "the cold and well disciplined merit of Addison, and even the sober and correct march of Pope" (5): he belonged to that world, to that culture, though the character he played was that of an innovator. His "gothicism" therefore is to be appreciated according to this precise context. He had as great concern for "taste" as he had for "fancy"; his idea of being a Goth was that of one who proved himself a better connoisseur than the mere swarming worshippers of "Grecian". "Is it true" he once asked Mann "what we see in the gazettes, that the Pantheon is tumbled down? Am I not a very Goth, who always thought it a dismal clumsy performance, and could never discover any beauty in a strange mass of light poured perpendicularly into a circle of obscurity?" (6) At the same time what linked him with the following generation was the sympathy for his instinctive independence of judgement, that made him "different" from most of his contemporaries. And there were also the shadows of the noble remains — it was a double umbilical cord, as subtle as the forgotten fretted walls and "untouched cloister" of Newstead Abbey, the same Byron sung in Don Juan (7).

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(5) Letters, Edinburgh, 1906, iii, p. 205.

(6) To Mann, December 8, 1756.

(7) Cf. Canto XIII, stanzas lix-lxvii (under the name of "Norman Abbey"). Newstead belonged to the Byrons; Walpole visited it in 1760 (cf. To Montague, September 1, 1760, and the Book of Materials for 1759).

If this is the context, it seems to me that a superficial approach to this question, such as a modern critic has taken in an important and recent study, is unjustifiable when the only serious discrimination considered appears to be sic et simpliciter "boredom":

> ... Littered with lifeless images and archaic conventions, Walpole's novel may still strike some as an act of irresponsible vandalism rather than creative literary experiment. He himself was sure only of his own boredom with the current state of English letters. And it is true that his novel proves him more adept at dismantling the old and presenting it in shambles than in building something truly new.
>
> That the source of much Gothic fiction was boredom rather than righteous anger or scorn or visionary commitment helps to explain its lack of focus and moral seriousness as a literary form. ...
>
> Boredom and confusion are genuine, and, in some eras more than others, common human responses. Though they do not tend to produce great works of art, they often produce interesting ones which clear the way for better things to come. Beneath the fakery and bombast of The Castle of Otranto there is an authentic impulse, which is to throw off the current platitudes and clichés of art in an effort to discover something new and hopefully better ...
>
> (Robert Kiely, The Romantic Novel in England, Harvard, 1972, pp. 41-42)

In his usual love for "barbarous" objects, Horace Walpole would have no doubt appreciated even this sample of truly Vandalic criticism; it would not have "bored" him. But, apart from this, I actually

it
think a useless effort to try to prove that, in spite of all his quickness of wit and unexhausted curiosity, Horace Walpole was a person capable of being "bored" at all. Baudelarian <u>ennui</u> is quite out of place with him: he did not have a Romantic soul, at least in the later acceptation of the word, and one must not confuse with unspecified boredom his conscious sense of detached and superior irony, or the equally conscious perception of the futility of human things, their abstract nature. It is a note that often takes the personal, intimate turn, but the attentive reader will find it constantly, as also variously, interspersed in his writings:

> ... I have long wished to be off the stage, and near three months ago notified my intention of coming into Parliament no more. I am still young enough to enjoy my liberty, without any formal austerity of retiring, and yet shall not be hovering over the scene, when it is no more decent to have done with it, unless one had the ambition of being an actor, which happily has never been my case. I never was more than prompter. Adieu!
> (To Mann, May 24, 1767)

This kind of recurrent low key is characteristic
which
of Walpole's orchestration, ~~that~~ may occasionally sound deeper tones:

> ... Life seems to me as if we were dancing on a sunny plain on the edge of a gloomy forest where we pass in a moment from glare to gloom and darkness ...
> (To Lady Ossory, July 12, 1778)

Such chords, I think, also help to clarify part of the basic pattern of that idea of "Gothic" we just

examined. In the eighteenth century the word, and the idea it expressed, naturally had a more comprehensive resonance than they may have today, so that their nature was a variable one. But Walpole always started from personal, deeply felt experience, and then referred it to his own difficult rapport with the age (8). Now, the form in which this process manifested itself was a visionary one.

> ... Visions, you know, have always been my pasture; and so far from growing old enough to quarrel with their emptiness, I almost think there is no wisdom comparable to that of exchanging what is called the realities of life for dreams. Old castles, old pictures, old histories, and the babble of old people make one live back into centuries that cannot disappoint one. One holds fast and surely what is past. The dead have exhausted their power of deceiving — one can trust Catherine of Medicis now. (To Montagu, January 5, 1766)

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(8) In his bedroom Walpole kept a print after his own portrait by Reynolds (1757); on the back of this print he copied a passage in Latin from de Thou's autobiography:

> In far distant times, one will look with wonder on the green turf that covers the grave where my ashes are buried, and will say: 'It was his lot to be born in a bed of down, blessed with ample means, with favour and resources surpassing those which nowadays all wonder at from their earliest years: the glories of his time, his natural ambition, and the fresh fame of his illustrious father, all gave grounds to hope that he would excel the example of his ancestors which he strove to imitate; yet, despite all this, he preferred to seek the obscure, easeful retreats of the Muses, to shun the rocks and storms of Court and to despise the insubstantial vanities that men contend for: he chose the ivy and the laurel that grow wild rather than the spoils of battle or triumphs that batten on a hungry peace.'

This was written only a year after the publication of The Castle of Otranto (9); but he often returned to the theme: "one ought to cultivate visions" he said (10). Walpole was so much a man of his own time that he perfectly understood all its stage-effects, saw through them and, because of this, could but play a sort of desperate hide and seek of dark visions with it. Eventually that ironical and melancholic rôle of prompter repeating the worn-out words from an old text became his permanent mask, and his most relevant contribution to the age, quite dramatically, came to consist in the impossibility of seeing it in any realistic way. Only the abstractions of his wild "dreams" emerged from the literary trap-door and to him "gothicism" was in fact the only way left to express the ferments of the times, reducing them to abstractions out of an imaginary past. It was not mere escape into rêverie, but active consciousness of being, just because so detached, fully within the common theatre of the century. But he too, like Richard Hurd on his Letters' title-page, might have inscribed with significant irony Tasso's lines from Aminta at the entrance of Strawberry Hill or on

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(9) From Paris, during his visit there; in a loose note of the same period in his "Paris Journals" (Du Deffand, V, pp. 357-58) we also read: Truth the source of unhappiness. Visions the only happiness ... [my italics]. Corr.,

(10) To Mann, September 18, 1777; cf. also id., April 17, 1776: "... Visions are the consolation of life; it is wise to indulge them, unless one builds on them as realities. Our dreams are at an end! ... ".

Otranto's frontispiece:

> ... ah fuggi,
> Fuggi quell'incantato alloggiamento.
> Quivi habitan le maghe, che incantando
> Fan traveder, e traudir ciascuno ... (11)

He knew that the charm would be short-lived and that the "Tartarean fires" would in turn triumph, as change of "fashion", over these "mansions free from pain" and also over all the vanities of his "gothic" dreams:

> — I sometimes dream, that one day or other somebody will stroll about poor Strawberry and talk of Lady Ossory — but alas! I am no poet, and my castle is of paper, and my castle and my attachment and I, shall soon vanish and be forgotten together!
> (To Lady Ossory, August 11, 1778)

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(11) (Translation: ... oh fly,/ fly that enchanted dwelling./ There live the fairies who by their charms/ mislead your eyes and ears ...)

CHAPTER I

I

"From a hamlet among the mountains of Savoy" in September 1739 Horace Walpole, then on the point of realizing the vague images which since infancy he had cherished and nourished among the extraordinary pictures of his famous father's great collection at Houghton (1), quite enthusiastically wrote:

> ... Precipices, mountains, torrents, wolves, ramblings, Salvator Rosa — the pomp of our park and the meekness of our palace! Here we are, the lonely lords of glorious desolate prospects ...
> (To Richard West, loc. cit.)

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(1) Houghton was the seat of the Walpoles; it contained one of the most sumptuous picture collection in England. When he was about twenty, Walpole catalogued the four hundred and thirty pictures in his father's various houses (cf. MS now in the Pierpont Morgan Library); ten years later he published his first book, Aedes Walpolianae (1747), which is a detailed description of the masterpieces in the Houghton collection. This work and Walpole's opinions are quite important in the history of eighteenth century taste:

> The preference for Italian art was shown by the Houghton collection (which Horace Walpole thought better seeing than most of those left in Italy) as by most others; though some Flemish and Dutch painters were highly valued, to Walpole's disgust. 'As for the Dutch painters, those drudging mimicks of nature's most uncomely coarseness, do not their earthen pots and brass kettles carry away prices only due to the sweet neatness of Albano, and to the attractive

He was not exaggerating forty-six years later when he said he remembered Florence "as if but yesterday" (2): the largest part of his tour was in fact spent in Italy and particularly in Florence, where he enjoyed the hospitality of his good friend Horace Mann. No doubt Italy and Florence left long lasting impressions in his mind. From the unfortunate and straining differences that then rose in his friendship with Thomas Gray, who had accompanied him in

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delicacy of Carlo Maratti?' And he exhibits the taste of his age: 'It was not so much want of genius in the Flemish masters, as want of having searched for something better ... Rottenhamer and Paul Bril, who travelled in Italy, contracted as pleasing a style as any of the Italian masters. Lord Orford's landscapes of the latter are very near as fine, as pure, and as genteel, as Claude's and Titian's.' One of the most vaunted glories of the Houghton collection was the Prodigal Son, by Salvator Rosa. There were three others by Salvator, two by Claude, and five by Gaspar Poussin. In 1799 Lord Orford sold the collection, which had cost Sir Robert Walpole over £ 100,000, to the Empress Catherine for £ 30,000, to Horace's despair (though if it had not been sold, it would have been destroyed by fire, soon after); but Horace owned a few pieces from it, and had also at Strawberry Hill landscapes by Gaspar, and Paul Bril, and a Salvator which Sir Horace Mann had given to him.
(Elizabeth Manwaring, Italian Landscape in Eighteenth Century England, London, 1925, p. 65)
The Salvator at Strawberry Hill was Jacob travelling from Laban: it hung in the Round Drawing Room next to the portrait of Bianca Capello, likewise a present from Mann.

(2) To Mann, February 2, 1785.

the trip (3), to the pleasing recollections of the new acquaintances made in Sir Horace Mann's circle, such as ingenious Dr. Cocchi (4) or lovely Signora Grifoni (5), were not to be easily forgotten; nor were the emotions of a mind sensible of the beauties of art and antiquity. That experience was therefore an important one for Horace; it was indeed preceded by those literary enthusiasms and expectations which must be regarded as the essential background of Walpole's mature sensibility. The letters witness such enthusiasms; In what for us is his earliest surviving letter, written when he still was at King's

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(3) Later Walpole acknowledged his responsibility in the affair, but the reasons were actually in a difference of interests; he wrote to Mason some time after Gray's death:

> We had not got to Calais before Gray was dissatisfied, for I was a boy, and he, though infinitely more a man, was not enough so to make allowances.
> (November 27, 1773)

They eventually quarrelled and separated, towards the end of the tour, probably at Reggio in May 1742 or shortly afterwards at Venice (cf. L. Whibley, "The foreign Tour of Gray and Walpole", Blackwood's Magazine, June 1939, p. 826).

(4) Dr. Cocchi was the personal physician and best friend of Horace Mann's in Florence. He remained a very good friend of Walpole's too: there are numerous references to him in the Correspondence with Mann. A very learned man, Cocchi read and spoke English fluently, along with seven other languages. Cocchi travelled in England where he also met Newton; though mainly a scientist, his interests were wide and included history and literature. Among his works are a Lettera intorno all'educazione e al genere di vita degli Inglesi and an essay on Milton's Paradise Lost.

(5) Walpole had met her at the Florentine Carnival and her likeness hung in his bedroom at Strawberry Hill.

College, he says:

> ... As I got farther into Virgil and Clelia, I found myself transported from Arcadia to the garden of Italy, and saw Windsor Castle in no otherview than Capitoli immobile saxum. I wish a Committee of the House of Commons may ever seem to be the Senate ...
>
> (To Montagu, May 6, 1736)

If we understand this particular psychological attitude, we can also think the modern critic justified in the assertion that "from the outset, Walpole's imagination had been captivated by Italy ... When Walpole crossed the Alps in 1739, he was entering an enchanted land for which his entire life had been a spiritual preparation — 'So, as the song says, we are in fair Italy!'" (6). Maybe conscious that those visions he now experienced would not resist long the impact ~~with~~ of reality he also pensively reflected: "When I leave Italy, I shall launch into a life, whose colour I fear, will have more of black than of white" (7). He and Gray had been the first to proclaim the glitter of the fascinating Herculaneum treasures in England (8). But he never went back to "fair Italy". Though he often promised himself and Mann to do so sometime,

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(6) Cf. Smith: W. H. Smith, 'Horatius Italicus', pp. 118-19 (the quotation is taken from: To West, November 11, 1739 NS). Walpole signed himself "Horatius Italicus" in a humorous message to Gray in 1735.

(7) To Ashton, May 28, 1740 OS.

(8) Cf. F. C. Roe, "Le Voyage de Gray et Walpole en Italie", Revue de Litterature Comparée, 6, 1926, p. 204.

he still preferred the gentle and distant epistolary contact to the inevitably traumatic confrontation with what he knew would never resemble the familiar system of images he had built around himself. Italy never ceased to be for him a sort of parallel dream, a link with the untouched visions of his youth, which gradually extended into the vast territory of fancy. And here the lightest suggestions would often bring the long buried images of forgotten myths and personages, the ghosts of their once sumptuous palaces, to light and life again.

Thus, apparently, Walpole's longing for his own imaginary world, an essential aspect of his personality, seems to identify quite closely with the Italian experience, to which he certainly attached a personal importance (9). It is also true that in the late eighteenth century Italy equally inspired a number of British travellers. About the time Walpole was completing the first draft of The Castle of Otranto, for example, the sights of Rome suggested to Edward Gibbon the first conception of his History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire; in fact he

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(9) I do not think, however, that emphatic statements of the type "I never was happy but there [i.e. Florence], have a million times repented returning to England, where I never was happy, nor expect to be" (To Mann, November 24, 1747 OS; similar reflections can be found in: id., June 29, 1741 NS; id., June 7, 1748 OS; id., May 23, 1754; id., December 20, 1768) have a serious relevance in this context.

himself tells us that:

> ...It was at Rome, on the 15th of October, 1764, as I sat musing amidst the ruins of the Capitol, while the barefooted friars were singing vespers in the Temple of Jupiter, that the idea of writing the decline and fall of the city first started to my mind.

It is a very natural reflection indeed. But to go back to Walpole now, I feel that his case should be somewhat distinguished from the generality. I mean it would not be very accurate to say that <u>The Castle of Otranto</u> originated solely from the direct impressions he received in Italy: in this sense, no source is immediately identifiable with them. A curious anecdote proves it: in 1786, over twenty years after the publication of the novel, Walpole was greatly surprised and amused by the drawing which Lady Craven brought to him from Italy, a drawing of "the real Castle of Otranto" (10) — Walpole had never suspected that a <u>real</u> Castle of Otranto existed! He wrote to William Hamilton in Naples to ask him to make inquiries about it, explaining that:

> When I wrote my fantastic tale I did not know that there existed, or ever had existed, a castle at that place, but looked into the map of Naples for a name, and adopted Otranto as well-sounding.
> (To Hamilton, January 17, 1788)

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(10) Walpole later had it engraved and inserted in the Italian <u>Bodoni Edition</u> of the novel (1791). He described it thus: <u>A view of the real Castle of Otranto on the eastern coast of the kingdom of Naples, a washed drawing taken on the spot on March 1785, by Mr. Revely</u> (cf. H.W.'s MS note in his copy of <u>Descr.</u>, p. 158).

A map then, not a precise impression, was the occasional source in this case (11). Between Walpole's return from Italy and the conception of The Castle of Otranto there are about twenty-three years. These years are important because during them Walpole chiefly applied himself to the creation of Strawberry Hill: this is the actual connection between experience and fancy, between recollections and visions — Strawberry Hill gave rise to Otranto. The "Preface to the First Edition" of the novel, in its suggestion that "the author had some certain building in his eye" hints precisely at Strawberry Hill. "You will even have found" Walpole wrote to Cole "some traits to put you in mind of this place. When you read of the picture quitting its panel, did you not recollect the portrait of Lord Falkland, all in white, in my gallery?". In his Description of Strawberry Hill (1774) Walpole explicitly called the villa "a very proper habitation of, as it was the scene that inspired, the author of The Castle of Otranto". There are a number of hints of the same kind in the letters and elsewhere, and the comparison between the novel and Strawberry Hill has also

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(11) Walpole owned the Atlas nouveau of Guillaume and Nicolas Sanson (n.d.), and Nicolas Châtelain's Atlas historique, Amsterdam , 1705-8 (cf. Hazen, nos. 533, 425). Considering Walpole's confessed method of choosing names, perhaps it would not be too much to say that the mere coincidence of the name Nicolas in both authors might have contributed to suggest the choice of "St. Nicholas" as the novel's patron saint. If it were so, than Walpole was twice lucky, for St. Nicholas is in fact the saint particularly venerated in the region concerned, Apulia.

been thoroughly and convincingly studied already (12). This therefore was Walpole's immediate source. But then, here is the point, Strawberry Hill in its turn echoed and realized the images and feelings of a deeply rooted relationship with Italy, which assumed various aspects in the creative imagination of the writer. The fantastic and historical characters that secretly populated his habitation, lurking from the dark corners of that extravagant collection it contained, gave Walpole a sense of security, an intimate ~~confidence~~ relation with his past and youth, which he had lost perhaps too soon and abruptly.

Shortly after young Horace's return from the Grand Tour Sir Robert Walpole, his father, resigned as Prime Minister, so ending one of the most astonishing political careers in British history — three years later, in 1745, a critical date, he died among dreadful sufferings; Horace recorded his last words on a slip of paper (13):

> 'Dear Horace, this lixivium has blown me up. It has tore me to pieces. The affair is over with me; that it may be short, Dr. Ranby, is all I desire. Give me more opium, knock me down. I expect nothing but to have ease. Dear Horace, if one must die, 'tis hard to die in pain.'
>
> 'Why do ye all stand round me! Are ye all waiting there because this is the last night?' ...

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(12) A thorough essay on the subject is W. S. Lewis, "The Genesis of Strawberry Hill", Metropolitan Museum Studies, V (part 1), 1934.

(13) Now at Farmington.

At first Horace applied himself to politics (14); it was an experience not remarkable for either enthusiasm or success, which ended with his complete disillusionment. But the fall of his father, who certainly represented for him an image of absolute and (whatever may have been Sir Robert's real position towards the end) unlimited power — a power that overshadowed and perhaps obsessed Horace's youth — must have had important psychological consequences on him (15). So did the decay that followed in the family. The fire that eventually destroyed Houghton, whose magnificent collection had already been sold by the irresponsible nephew, was bound to look in a way almost emblematic

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(14) In a MS Folio volume, now at Farmington, Horace Walpole transcribed eighteen political articles, which he, though publicly supporting the government, secretly contributed to two opposition weeklies during the period 1747-49. For more details see Smith: R. Sedgwick, Horace Walpole's Political Articles, 1747--49, pp. 45-55.

(15) There also were unpleasant experiences, like that he once recalled in his letter to Cole, June 14, 1769:

> There is another anecdote equally vulgar and void of truth: that my father, sitting in George's Coffee-House (I suppose Mr Shenstone thought that after he quitted his place, he went to coffee-houses to learn news) was asked to contribute to a figure of himself that was to be beheaded by the mob. I do remember something like it, but it happened to myself. I met a mob, just after my father was out in Hanover Square, and drove up to it to know what was the matter. They were carrying about a figure of my sister. This probably gave rise to the other story.

of the slow inescapable decline:

> Judge what I felt in finding it half a ruin, though the pictures, the glorious pictures, and furniture are in general admirably well preserved. All the rest is destruction and desolation! The two great staircases exposed to all weathers; every room in the wings rotting with wet; the ceiling of the gallery in danger; the chancel of the church unroofed; the water--house built by Lord Pembroke, tumbling down; the garden a common; the park half covered with nettles and weeds; the walls and pales in ruin; perpetuities of livings at the very gates sold; the interest at Lynn gone; mortgages swallowing the estate, and a debt of above forty thousand pounds heaped on those of my father and brother. A crew of banditti were harboured in the house, stables, town and every adjacent tenement ...
> (To Lady Ossory, September 1, 1773)

Of course it was not Horace's responsibility, but he naturally resented it. Seen in this light, Strawberry Hill came to represent for him the positive effort to create something which in a way reflected the old splendour. At the same time,the villa compensated many of his present frustrations by reflecting also the enthusiasm and imaginative fervour which distinguished his youth and the episode that crowned it, the Grand Tour. In the building of this private world the once dominant figure of his father was gradually removed leaving space to the growth of a personal, equally dominating, mythology.

One of the most striking features of Horace's first work, the Aedes Walpolianae, 1747; is the unconditional admiration for a painter, one he considered a genius worthy the comparison with Shakespeare, "great Salvator Rosa" (16). We have

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(16) The "Introduction" of the Aedes is very clear about Walpole's judgement of Salvator:

> The greatest Genius Naples ever produc'd resided generally at Rome; a Genius equal to any that City itself ever bore. This was the great Salvator Rosa. His Thoughts, his Expression, his Landscapes, his knowledge of the force of Shade, and his masterly management of Horror and Distress, have plac'd him in the first Class of Painters. In Lord Townshend's Belisarius, one sees a Majesty of Thought equal to Raphael, an Expression great as Poussin's. In Lord ORFORD's Prodigal Son is represented the extremity of Misery and low Nature; not soul and burlesque like Michael Angelo Caravaggio; nor minute, circumstantial and laborious like the Dutch Painters. One of them would have painted him eating Broth with a wooden Spoon, and have employed three days in finishing up the Bowl that held it. In the Story of the old man and his sons, one sees Drawing and a taste of Draperies equal to the best collected from the antique. Salvator was a Poet and an excellent Satirist. Here again was a union of those arts. His pictures contain the true genius and end of Satire. Tho' heighten'd and expressive as his Figures are, they still mean more than they speak. Pliny describ'd Salvator in the person of Timanthes: "In omnibus ejus operibus intelligitur plus semper quam pingitur." Does not the very pity and indignation which the figure of Belisarius excites, silently carry with it the severest Satire on Justinian? This great Master had a good Contemporary, who imitated

seen already that before the Grand Tour Horace's mind had been attracted by the marvellous world of pictures; in that world the adventurous and rebellious personality of Salvator, expressed by his life as well as his paintings, was for Walpole the central figure. Perhaps he liked to identify with him, whom he imagined rambling among the wilderness of the Alps and Apennines in search of rugged subjects for his sublime landscapes — looking at them he too was "the lord of those desolate prospects"! When in Italy, indeed he had the opportunity to picture himself in the wildest scenes, populated by sombre rebels to authority (the theme of the rebel, of the outcast—the Prodigal Son is another example of it— seems to be an important one in Salvator and in Walpole's imagination). Now, such a psychological ebullience behind Salvator's works was the closest link between Walpole's personality and his ideas about art — what made him boldly say that only Salvator could paint "up to the horror" of it (17). Gray too

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his manner very happily: It was Bourgognon, the Battle-Painter. There was a sort of Genius sometime before like Salvator's, but which for want of his strength of Mind, soon degenerated into capricious Wildness, and romantic Monstruousness. This was Pietro Testa. The comparison of these two, leads me to another between Salvator, and that great English Genius, Shakespear, of whom it was said, that he not only invented new Characters, but made a new Language for those Characters. His Caliban, and Salvator's Monster at the Duke of Rutland's, have every attribute which seem proper to those imaginary Species. (pp. xxvii-ix)

(17) He also said that Lady Diana Beauclerck's drawings for the incestuous subject of his Mysterious Mother, had "all Salvator's boldness in landscape"; once he compared Bentley, Strawberry's architect, to Salvator.

was in fact an enthusiastic admirer of Rosa's "terrible sublime" and during the Italian tour used to attribute to him things he had never done; his notes speak of pictures like "Aeneas and the Sybil, sacrificing to Pluto by torch light in the wood, the assistants in a fright", "Sigismonda, with the heart of Guiscardo before her", "Hannibal passing the Alps; the mountains rolling down rocks upon his army; elephants tumbling down the precipices".(18). These impressions were of course shared by Gray's travelling companion, Horace. The crucial point is the existence of a complex relationship among Walpole's appreciation of Salvator, the Italian experience and the Strawberry Hill synthesis. I think that Salvator's character may at this stage of our study be considered as the most representative aspect of such a relationship. It was the mysterious in Salvator that after all appealed to Walpole's creativeness, and the freedom he expressed in the choice of subject matter. There is a striking performance of Salvator's, "Witches and Charms", which, if Walpole had not come across it before, he must have admired at the Prestage's auction in 1761 or at its buyer's Lord

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(18) Cf. E. Manwaring, op. cit., p. 53, where the critic also rightly observes that:

> ... these paintings of 'Horrour ... and thrilling Fears' are reflected in the one scenic picture in <u>The Bard</u>:
>
> On a rock, whose haughty brow
> Frown o'er old Conway's foaming flood,
> Rob'd in the sable garb of woe,
> With haggard eyes, the Poet stood ...

Spencer afterwards (19). It echoes the lines of the dismal ode La strega by the same Salvator:

All'incanto, all'incanto
E chi non mosse il ciel, mova Acheronte.
Io vo' magici modi
Tentar, profane note
Erbe diverse, e nodi;
Ciò che arrestar può le celesti rote;
Mago circolo,
Onde gelide,
Pesci varij,
Acque chimiche,
Neri balsami,
Miste polveri,
Pietre mistiche,
Serpi e nottolæ,
Sangui putridi,
Molli viscere,
Secche Mùmmie,
Ossa e vermini ... (20)

The image of Salvator's strange character no doubt contributed to stimulate the visionary potentialities of Walpole, capable indeed of the most thrilling sensations, like those received, for example, when he discovered

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(19) It was a W. Hamilton's sale; the picture is still in the possession of Lord Spencer's heirs (cf. L. Salerno, Salvator Rosa, Milano, 1963, tav. X).

(20) (Translation: To the charm, to the charm/ and let him who does not move the heavens, move Acheron./ I want to try magic modes/ divers herbs and knots;/ whatever can stop the celestial spheres;/ Magic circle,/ icy waves,/ various fish,/ chemical waters,/ black balsams,/ mixed powders,/ mystical stones,/ snakes and owls,/ putrid bloods,/ flabby bowels,/ dried mummies,/ bones and worms ...) Two Italian editions of Rosa's Satires were published in England in 1787 and 1791, but no doubt Walpole was acquainted with them long before that.

Dr. Dee's lost Black Stone "The Devil's Looking-Glass" (21). And then, especially considering Salvator's unrestrained instinct for independent thought and original art, I think that there can be little doubt that Horace Walpole, since his youth and first emotions, had enrolled him too among those he later considered the truest "Goths".

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(21) This was one of the most curious pieces of the Strawberry Hill collection; Walpole obtained it from Lord Campbell. John Dee (1527-1608), although in fact an able mathematician and physicist, was for Walpole probably only the supposed original of Ben Johnson's Alchemist, who appears as such in Hudibras. Dee was also Queen Elizabeth's favourite and much consulted conjurer, and according to the tradition he owned this "Black Stone", a mysterious speculum which he used to call his spirits. Walpole relates its discovery in the following way:

> I insist that I have a talisman ... This winter I was again employed by Lord Frederic Campbell, for I am an absolute auctioneer, to do him the same service about his father's collection. Among other odd things he produced a round piece of shining black marble in a leathern case, as big as the crown of a hat, and asked me what that could possibly be? I screamed out, 'Oh Lord! I am the only man in England that can tell you: it is Dr Dee's black stone! ...
> (To Mann, March 24, 1771)

He proudly kept it at Strawberry among the other rarities: it was left in its original case on which Walpole pasted a label saying '... Kelly was Dr Dee's Associate and is mentioned with this very Stone in Hudibras ...' The passage concerned (Hudibras, 2, iii, 631 foll.) is: "Kelly did all his Feats upon/ The Devil's Looking-Glass, a stone,/ Where playing with him at Bo-peep,/ He solved all problems ne'er so deep." The "Black Stone", in fact a piece of obsidian, is now in the possession of the BM.

II

In defending the mentis gratissimus error that Dryden called "the fairy way of writing" Addison observed that it "is,indeed, more difficult than any other that depends on the poet's fancy, because he has no pattern to follow in it, and must work altogether out of his own invention"(1). If there was a pattern, it was Tasso's "quel che 'l bello e 'l caro accresce a l'opre,/ L'Arte che tutto fa nulla si scopre." (2): this was the sense implied by bishop Hurd when he spoke of the "unity of design" in Gothic (3). I think Walpole's opinion was closer to Addison's "for the English are naturally fanciful, and very often disposed by that gloominess and melancholy of temper, which is so frequent in our nation, to many wild notions and visions" (4). Addison treated dreams also in another essay, where he examined, among other things, what a modern psychologist would call "split personality":

> ... Were a man a king in his dreams, and a beggar awake, and dreamt as consequently and in as continued unbroken schemes as he

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(1) Cf. The Spectator, 419, July 1, 1712. Dryden's expression is in his "Dedication" of King Arthur, 1691.

(2) (Translation: What in a work increases beauty and charm/ [is that kind of] Art which, though creating all, in no way reveals itself) Gerusalemme Liberata, XVI, stanza ix.

(3) Op. cit., letter VIII.

(4) Op. cit., ibid.

> thinks when awake, whether he would be in reality a king or a beggar, or rather whether he would not be both?
> (Op. cit., 487, September 18, 1712) (5)

Among the young Walpole's books at Eton and Cambridge there was a complete set of The Spectator. Maybe it was unconscious reminiscence of observations such as I quoted that made him dream when only eighteen years old:

> ... How happy should I have been to have had a kingdom only for the pleasure of being driven from it, and living disguised in a humble vale!

These words are drawn from the same letter to George Montagu (the first letter of Walpole's we have) that I mentioned earlier in connection with Italy. They might sound like the naive commonplace of a young mind filled with Virgil and Arcadian illusions, but they in fact go beyond the boundaries of the mere juvenile emotions. If in his fanciful way of writing later Walpole indeed followed no pattern, there were also visions he particularly cherished, strange

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(5) The essay bears an epigraph from Petronius: -- cum prostrata sopore/ Urget membra quies, et mens sine pondere ludit. There are several interesting passages in it, as for instance:

> ... She [i.e. the soul during sleep] converses with numberless beings of her own raising. She is herself the theatre, the actor, and the beholder. This puts me in mind of a saying which I am infinitely pleasedwith, and which Plutarch ascribes to Heraclitus, "That all men, whilst they are awake, are in one common world; but that each of them, when he is asleep , is a world of his own" ...

personages which populated his dream world: we have seen already that the character of Salvator Rosa was an important one in this context. But it was by no means the only one; there were others that I think were equally influential, and I am going to examine them in this chapter. It seems to me that there was a sort of counterpart of Salvator's figure in Walpole's imagination. This is the figure of the errant king, the king who, as he says, has been driven from his kingdom and lives "disguised in a humble vale". We have to consider this aspect of Walpole's inspiration if we want to fully understand the nature of the character of young Theodore in The Castle of Otranto, the peasant who also, unknowingly, had been driven from his kingdom by Manfred. It is indeed no chance that the character is called Theodore. In his letters Walpole very often refers to the melancholy figure of a German adventurer, Theodore of Neuhoff, who for a short time (and by a curious coincidence just in 1736, at the time of Walpole's letter to Montagu) had become King of Corsica. When, due to internal rebellions in that island, Theodore lost his kingdom, Walpole must have been fascinated by the living image of that king without a kingdom, an errant king ... This of course had nothing to do with historical and objective considerations. When Mann wrote to him repeatedly criticizing Theodore's foolish conduct (6), Walpole was not in the least shaken in his feelings of sympathy

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(6) Cf. From Mann, June 8 and July 7, 1753.

for the unfortunate almost one-day monarch. He always in effect remained in the imagination of the writer on a quite separate plane from the realistic one of current politics.

In 1750 the fugitive Theodore was jailed for debt in the King's Bench Prison. Walpole later wrote an article pleading in his favour and asking sympathizers to contribute something for his release (7). He also suggested the idea of producing a play for the purpose of raising money, with an open invitation to Garrick:

> ... I have no doubt but the munificent managers of our theatres will gladly contribute their parts. The incomparable actor who so exquisitely touches the passions and distresses of self-dethroned Lear (a play which from some similitude of circumstances I should recommend for the benefit)

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(7) In The World, VIII, February 22, 1753 (cf. Works, 1, pp. 151-55). To this article Walpole added a "Supplement" after Theodore's death, containing details about his life:

> THEODORE ANTONY BARON NEWHOFF, more remarkable for being the only one of his profession (of adventurers) who ever obtained a crown, than for acquiring that of Corsica, was born at Metz about the year 1696, and after a variety of intrigues, scrapes, and escapes, in many parts of Europe, and after having attained and lost a throne, returned in 1748-9 to England, where he had been before about the year 1737. I saw him soon after his last arrival: he was a comely middle-sized man, very reserved, and affecting much dignity, which he acted in the lowest ebb of his fortunes, and coupled with the lowest shifts of his industry: an instance of the former appeared during his last residence at Florence, where being reduced to extreme poverty, some English

> will, I dare to say, willingly exert his irresistible talents in behalf of fallen majesty, and be a competitor with Louis Le Grand for the fame which results from the protection of exiled kings. How glorious will it be for him to have the King's-Bench as renowned for Garrick's generosity to king THEODORE, as the Savoy is for Edward the third's treatment of king John of France!

We have no evidence that this scheme ever materialized, but a dramatic performance "in behalf of fallen majesty" would ~~have~~ indeed have been an excellent commentary ~~indeed~~ on a typical attitude of mind of Walpole's — the same that many years later he illustrated with a significant epigram: "I have often said, this world is a comedy to those that think, a tragedy to those that feel" (8). Such an ironical register coincides in fact with the account Walpole gave of Theodore's death in 1756:

> He had just taken the benefit of the Act of Insolvency, and went to the old Bailey for that purpose: in order to [do] it, the person applying gives up all his effects to his creditors : his Majesty was asked what effects he had? He replied nothing but the kingdom of Corsica — and it is actually registered for the benefit of the creditors. You may get it intimated to the Pretender, that if he has in mind to heap titles upon the two or three medals that he wins, he has nothing to do but to pay king Theodore's debts, and he may have very good pretensions on Corsica. As soon

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gentlemen made a collection for and carried to him. Being apprised of their coming, and having only one chamber in a little miserable lodging, he squeezed his bed to one side, and placed a chair under the canopy, where he sat to receive the charity.

(8) Cf. To Lady Ossory, August 15, 1776.

as Theodore was at liberty, he took a chair and went to the Portuguese minister, but did not find him at home: not having a sixpence to pay, he prevailed on the chairmen to carry him to a taylor he knew in Soho, whom he prevailed upon to harbour him, but he fell sick the next day and died in three more.

(To Mann, January 17, 1757)

To some extent Walpole felt inclined to identify with Theodore of Corsica (9). After the death of the unfortunate king he bought the "Great Seal of Theodore King of Corsica", together with his discharge and capitulations: he kept them in the glass case in the Tribune at Strawberry Hill, between a portrait of Bianca Capello, one of Lord Falkland and "a Roman bulla of gold ... bought at Rome of Ficaroni [sic]" (10). He also owned a cinque soldi copper coin of Theodore of Corsica, which he classified as "rare" and placed in the rose-wood case in the Library, next to a "Copper medal of Lorenzo of Medici, who

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(9) Towards the end of his life Walpole found himself in what one is almost tempted to call a "Theodorian" situation, when he unexpectedly became the Fourth Earl of Orford, on which he commented thus:

EPITAPHIUM VIVI AUCTORIS. 1792.

An estate and an earldom at seventy four!
Had I sought them or wish'd them, 'twoud add one fear more,
That of making a countess when almost four-score.
But Fortune, who scatters her gifts out of season,
Though unkind to my limbs, has still left me my reason;
And whether she lowers or lifts me, I'll try
In the plain simple style I have liv'd in, to die;
For ambition too humble, for meanness too high.

(Works, 4, p. 407)

(10) Descr., p. 86. Walpole paid 4gns. for the Seal.

stabbed duke Alexander: the reverse copied from Brutus' medal with the cap of liberty between two daggers; the legend VIII Id. Jan" (11). There was a constant link between the image of that unhappy and errant adventurer and Walpole's general conception of life. It is not surprising therefore that he even wrote the following inscription and had it engraved on the tablet he placed by Theodore's grave (12):

Near this P l a c e is interred

T H E O D O R E K I N G O F C O R S I C A

Who died in this P a r i s h , December 11, 1756,
'Immediately after leaving the King's-Bench-Prison
By the Benefit of the Act of Insolvency;
In Consequence of which H E Registered
H I S K I N G D O M O F C O R S I C A
FOR THE USE OF HIS CREDITORS .

The G r a v e, great Teacher, to a Level brings
Heroes and Beggars, Galley-slaves and Kings.
But T h e o d o r e this moral learn'd, ere dead;
F a t e pour'd its Lessons on his <u>living</u> Head,
Bestow'd a K i n g d o m, and deny'd him B r e a d.

A few years later, when Walpole conceived <u>The Castle of Otranto</u> and chose <u>Theodore</u> as the hero's name, he must have been quite conscious of the connection between this character in the novel and his personal interest in the story of the striking personage of

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(11) <u>Ibid</u>., pp. 54-55.

(12) The inscription is copied in the "Supplement" to <u>The World</u>, loc. cit.; Walpole copied it also in his letter to Mann, September 29, 1757.

Theodore of Corsica (13). This connection probably revived in his mind at the time when a growing awareness of the passing from youth to maturity (14) might have increased Walpole's natural tendency to idealize his characters. Also the etymology of the name Theodore, "God's gift", must have played a relevant part in the choice,for it suits the story very well indeed: the young hero learns that he is the rightful prince of Otranto through the decisive intervention of heavenly agencies, and he becomes prince not through man, but from God. This is to be understood with the full implication of an entire dependence on Supernatural Powers, since here too Fate has the absolute dominion. The novel ends with the collapse of the Castle and the recognition of the young man by the ghost of his ancestor Alfonso; we have no way of knowing whether he will keep the kingdom that was bestowed on him, whether he will be happy and all shall be well or he too, like Hamlet, after the defeat of the tyrant and

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(13) This also because of the contrast between Theodore and Walpole himself: the former had indeed been "driven from his kingdom", but not lucky enough to enjoy a "living disguised in a humble vale!", which by 1757, when Strawberry Hill was finished, Walpole was doing already.

(14) ... Do not think it is pain that makes me give this low-spirited air to my letter. No, it is the prospect of what is to come, not the sensation of what is passing, that affects me. The loss of youth is melancholy enough... My health and spirits make me take but slight notice of the transition, and, under the persuasion of temperance being a talisman, I marched [sic] boldly on towards the descent of the hill...
(To Montagu, July 28, 1765)

the just revenge taken by the ghost, is doomed to perish. The character of Theodore is all fixed in that ambiguous moment of glory and destruction, triumph and misery, according to a conceptual frame-work which reveals the peculiar nature of Walpole's inspiration.

In this perspective the image of the beggar-king becomes one of the leading themes of the novel. If we go back to the beginning of The Castle of Otranto, we find that Walpole in introducing Theodore had such a theme in mind, vaguely connected, as in an imaginary picture of Salvator or one of Tiepolo's "Capricci", with the idea of the philosopher-magician:

> [Manfred] gravely pronounced that the young man was certainly a necromancer, and that till the church could take cognizance of the affair, he would have the magician, whom they had thus detected, kept prisoner under the helmet itself, which he ordered his attendants to raise, and place the young man under it; declaring he should be kept there without food, with which his own infernal art might furnish him.
>
> It was in vain for the youth to represent against this preposterous sentence: in vain did Manfred's friends endeavour to divert him from this savage and ill-grounded resolution. The generality were charmed with their lord's decision, which to their apprehensions carried great appearance of justice, as the magician was to be punished by the very instrument with which he had offended: nor were they struck with the least compunction at the probability of the youth being starved, for they firmly believed that by his diabolical skill he could easily supply himself with nutriment. (Chapter I)

Reading a passage like this one naturally thinks of other adventurers who had been charged with witchcraft and imprisonedd: Cellini, for example, or, in the eighteenth century, the famous Casanova, or Cagliostro... Like them Theodore had something of the Supernatural in himself, something that raised him from poverty to the dignity of a crown. Here I believe lies the explanation of the literary transformation of the real Theodore into the character of the novel — King Theodore was an adventurer whose fortunes, unlike Moll Flanders's, depended on "Fate". Personal rebellion against tyranny was not possible but through a Supernatural Will from above; and indeed for those who still may feel inclined to see a connection with Defoe, only a very vague expression of common stoicism could perhaps be traced comparing the attitude of the young peasant and the proud words of A Hymn to the Pillory (1703):

> Hail Hi'rogliphic State Machin,
> Contrivd to punish Fancy in:
> Men that are Men, in thee can feel no Pain,
> And all thy Insignificants Disdain ...

If in the novel Manfred in fact represents absolute and tyrannical power, the superstition and folly of the mob make quite clear that such a power cannot be eradicated through revolutionary action:

> ... Manfred, at this news, grew perfectly frantic; and, as if he sought a subject on which to vent the tempest within him, he rushed again on the young peasant, crying, Villain! monster! sorcerer! 'tis thou hast

> slain my son! The mob, who wanted some object within the scope of their capacities on whom they might discharge their bewildered reasonings, caught the words from the mouth of their lord, and re-echoed, Ay, ay, 'tis he, 'tis he: he has stolen the helmet from good Alfonso's tomb, and dashed out the brains of our young prince with it ... (Chapter I)

In this situation the only possible plane of realization of the hero is at the abstract level of Fate, for, if from this level of literary sublimation which The Castle of Otranto represents, we descend to the concrete reality of the source, we just find the desperate figure of a miserable man, reduced to be the Fool of his own regality in the horrors of the King's-Bench-Prison. He could be, and was, changed into a "heaven-born hero", but the price to be paid was the symbolical sacrifice of that system of certainties which in terms of personal, and perhaps unconscious, emotions Walpole must have identified with his own family background and difficult childhood (15). And symbolically such a

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(15) He [H.W.] was used to hearing people say that he could not possibly live. The "supposed necessary care of me", he wrote as an old man, "so engrossed the attention of my mother, that compassion and tenderness soon became extreme fondness." ... The skeptics asked, How could the red-faced, virile Robert Walpole have such a pale, epicene son? ... One can imagine pale, high-strung, very observant little Horace watching his engaging, ruthless, and adroit father from a distance, admiring his power and resenting his indifference to himself. The bustle of public business followed Robert Walpole wherever he went. ... He [H.W.] was much happier at Eton than at home ... Cambridge meant less to him. Being a Fellow Commoner

sacrifice opens the novel in a way that I think significant for us: the young prince Conrad, the son, is dead, "a homely youth, sickly, and of no promising disposition", crushed by a dark force above him. The world is out of joint again, the prophecy <u>That the castle and lordship of Otranto should pass from the present family, whenever the real owner should be grown too large to inhabit it</u> casts a longer shadow over the principality: "the princess Hippolita, without knowing what was the matter, but anxious for her son, swooned away ... Where is my son? A volley of voices replied, Oh, my lord! the prince! the prince! the helmet! the helmet!".

III

When in 1737 Lady Walpole died Horace was in the bloom of his youth and still at Cambridge; a few months later Sir Robert married his mistress, but the son was so awfully shaken by the loss of his mother that for some time they feared his health in serious danger. One does almost picture young Horace returning to the great paternal palace and finding it void of that dear presence he was so attached to, brooding on thoughts not too different ~~for~~ in sentiment from those later

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> at King's he could come and go as he pleased, and much of the time he spent with his mamma in London. They copied Watteau and Parmigianino together in water colours, no doubt laughing and chattering a great deal ...
> (W. S. Lewis, <u>H. Walpole</u>, pp. 11-16)

expressed in the lines that open his tragedy, The Mysterious Mother, with the words of Edmund's friend Florian:

> What awful silence! How these antique towers
> And vacant courts chill the suspended soul,
> Till expectation wears the cast of fear;
> And fear, half-ready to become devotion,
> Mumbles a kind-of mental orison,
> It knows not wherefore ...
> (I, i, 1-6)

We know that after the death of his mother Walpole's once rather active religious life (he even used to go and "pray with the prisoners at the Castle") withered away (1). W. S. Lewis rightly observed that the epitaph written by Horace for his mother's cenotaph in Westminster Abbey in 1740 (2) immediately follows

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(1) To this also greatly contributed the influence of Conyers Middleton, the University Librarian at Cambridge, a controversial deist author of a Free Inquiry into the Miraculous Powers, 1748, which aroused so much interest (and criticism) that Hume said it eclipsed his Philosophical Essays, published the same year.

(2) To the Memory / of / Catherine Lady Walpole, / Eldest Daughter of John Shorter, Esq: of Bybrook, in Kent, / and / First Wife of Sir Robert Walpole, afterwards Earl of Orford, / Horace, / Her youngest Son, / Consecrates this Monument. / She had beauty and wit / Without vice or vanity, / And cultivated the arts / Without affectation. / She was devout, Though without bigotry to any sect; / And was without prejudice to any party, / Though the Wife of a Minister, / Whose power she esteemed,(°) / But when She could employ it to benefit the miserable, / Or to reward the meritorious. / She loved a private life, / Though born to shine in public; / And was an ornament to Courts, / Untainted by them. / She died August 20, 1737.
(°) In an early draft Walpole had written "despised" instead.

the text of The Mysterious Mother in the edition of the Works arranged by the author before his death. Was it sheer chance? Walpole was quite conscious that the argument of the tragedy — incest between the Countess and her son Edmund — was too shocking to his contemporaries to be either performed or published (3). He wrote the tragedy for his private satisfaction, and that of a few intimates; he jealously kept the illustrations conceived for it by Lady Diana Beauclerc in a secret recess at Strawberry Hill, the so-called "Beauclerc Closet", especially designed for that function. But The Mysterious Mother, written in 1768, though the most complete literary realization of a probably long hidden passion of Walpole's, is not the only instance of it. As early as 1753 Walpole wrote about an episode concerning "the renowned NINON L'ENCLOS" and her son the "chevalier de VILLIERS", who not knowing she was his mother, fell in love with her, then in her fifty--sixth year of age:

> ... As the adventurous youth would have pushed his enterprises, she checked him, and, pointing to a clock, said, 'Rash boy, look there! At that hour, two and twenty years ago, I was delivered of you in this very bed!' It is a certain fact, that the unfortunate, abashed young man flew into the garden and fell upon his sword ...
>
> (The World, XXVIII, July 12, 1753)

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(3) Fanny Burney obtained a copy of the play from the Queen, who had read it, and was horrified by its subject (cf. A. S. Brandenburg, "The Theme of The Mysterious Mother", Modern Languages Quarterly, 10, 1949, pp. 464--74). Byron on the contrary, as we have already seen, highly appreciated The Mysterious Mother and thought it "the last tragedy in our language" (loc. cit.).

Besides The Mysterious Mother Walpole considered other subjects for tragedies, among which Don Carlos: "How many capital ingredients in that story! Tenderness, cruelty , heroism, policy, pity, terror!" he wrote, commenting on it (4) — of course, the passion treated by the story was also incestuous. All this shows that Walpole's creative sensibility was constantly aware of the possibilities of the literary treatment of incest. Perhaps it even went beyond that, into his interests in contemporary history. The story of the relationship between the "Princess Dowager" [sic in H.W.] Augusta and Lord Bute is due entirely to Walpole,and the manuscript of his now precious Memoirs of the Reign of George III (which, along with other important historical works of his, was never published but left for posterity in the mysterious "large wainscot chest" to be opened long after his death) (5), is introduced with a quotation from Horace typical of Walpole:

> Ilion, Ilion,
> Fatalis incestusque judex
> Et mulier peregrina vertit
> In pulverem!

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(4) To Jephson, February 1775.

(5) Walpole left instructions that after his death the key of the chest was to be deposited in the church at Houghton; where it would remain in the care of the vicar "with a solemn promise not to deliver the said key till the first Earl of Waldegrave that shall attain the age of thirty-five [later changed to twenty-five] years shall demand it."

"Incestus" referred to Paris of course meant "unchaste" for the Latin poet: the point is not that Walpole was merely attracted by the sound of the word, but that just as he attached it to Lord Bute (whom he hated and whose strong influence he and Lord Waldegrave ~~and him~~ believed the cause of much of the "insipidity" of the future King) (6), he also saw the origin of the ruin of the State and a Prince (like in Otranto) in an irregular sexual relationship. "Mulier peregrina" is Augusta, no doubt a negative figure too, like Bute, and a failure as a mother, but she is also Helen, and Helen is Beauty and Passion, she is Love and Sin, Destruction, at the same time.

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(6) Cf. Mem. Geo. III. in particular at III, i, p. 212. Walpole probably owed most of his information to Lord Waldegrave, the husband of his niece Maria and governor to George III from 1752 to 1756 — in his Memoirs that Walpole likely read in manuscript ~~Walpole~~ Waldegrave, says that since Frederic the Prince of Wales' death "the sagacity of the Princess Dowager has discovered other accomplishments [of Bute's], of which the Prince her husband may not perhaps have been the most competent judge" (cf. James, Earl of Waldegrave, Memoirs, 1821, pp. 38-39). J. Brooke (Horace Walpole and the Politics of the Early Years of the Reign of George III, in: Smith, pp. 3-23) sees in this story one of the leading themes of Walpole's Memoirs, at least in the first part of them: "The theme of the first part of Walpole's memoirs of King George III is how the young and inexperienced king, under the influence of his mother, a 'passionate, domineering woman,' and Lord Bute, 'a favourite without talents,' embarked on a plan to increase the prerogative." (op. cit., p. 10).

Lady Walpole too was a beautiful woman but for her Horace Walpole chose the allegorical figure of Modesty, as an ornament to the cenotaph in Westminster Abbey. I think this helps to understand most of the feminine characters in Walpole's works: in fact they all seem to be more or less in a dialectical relationship with the abstract idea of "modesty", and they generally are, at the same time, suffering victims and triumphant. This is certainly the case of all three major woman figures in The Castle of Otranto: Hippolita, Isabella and Matilda. They — and perhaps Walpole's attitude to another figure, that of Sigismunda which, as we shall now see, has a certain relevance in our discussion on the sources of the novel — may be influenced by the very common eighteenth century attitude towards art, both sentimental and didactic:

> The eighteenth century liked art to be instructive. Artists themselves accepted the requirement, which had often as corollary the notion that the greater the idea or action portrayed, the greater the picture or poem. From this belief there resulted such dead weights of versification as The Epigoniad and Leonidas, such pictures as Hogarth's Sigismunda, and those appalling acres of grandiosity by Barry and West. Jonathan Richardson helped to propagate this idea. "A picture," he says, "is useful to instruct and improve our mind, and to excite proper sentiments and reflections, as a history, a poem, a book of ethics, or divinity: the truth is, they mutually assist each other." ...
> (E. Manwaring, op. cit., p. 23)

Richardson's opinion is very indicative of a contemporary widespread frame of mind and to a great extent Walpole

shared it. He did not think however Hogarth's Sigismunda instructive or improving, but, on the contrary, excessively realistic. In effect he once thus commented on the picture:

> ... — Hogarth told me he had promised, if Mr Fox would sit as he liked, to make as good a picture as Vandyke or Rubens could. I was silent — 'Why now,' said he, 'you think this very vain, but why should not one speak truth?' This truth was uttered in the face of his own Sigismonda which is exactly a maudlin whore, tearing off the trinkets that her keeper had given her, to fling at his head. She has her father's picture in a bracelet on her arm, and her fingers are bloody with the heart, as if she had just bought a sheep's pluck in St. James's Market ... (To Montagu, May 5, 1761)

Richardson's opinion was that "A painter must ... form a model of perfection in his own mind which is not to be found in reality ..." (7). The figure of Sigismonda is important here because it is another example of Walpole's inclination to idealize characters. Now, in the passage I quoted Walpole shows himself not only to be well acquainted with her story, but also to have a very precise idea of what the proper representation of her character should be; he does not criticize the subject chosen by Hogarth but the painter's failure to grasp

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(7) Cf. Essay on the Theory of Painting, 1773 ed. (1715), p. 93. Walpole, who as we know already was opposed to the style of the Flemish and Dutch Schools in general, certainly agreed with Richardson's statement that "What gives the Italians ... the preference [i.e. over the Flemish and Dutch] is that they have not devoutly followed common nature, but raised and improved ... it ..." (ibid.).

the full significance of the story (8). The tragic fate of Sigismonda would be "instructive" only if treated by a man who had, again in Richardson's words, "the main qualities of a good historian, and ... the talents requisite to a good poet" (9). It was to be treated by a man capable of feeling the charming and delicate doubleness of her character, which in Hogarth's version seemed largely destroyed by melodrama. And the same doubleness of severity and naivety, courage and submission, passion and sacrifice Walpole indeed infused in the character of his gentle and modest Matilda.

The story of Sigismunda was quite well known in the eighteenth century: It is originally found in Boccaccio's Decameron (10), where the principal

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(8) Perhaps a term of comparison was the picture of Sigismunda Walpole and Gray had seen during their trip to Italy and greatly admired, believing it to be Salvator's. Walpole had seen also another picture of Sigismunda: describing the items sold at Sir Luke Schaub's auction, he mentioned that "a Sigismond called by Correggio, but certainly by Furoni [sic] his scholar, was bought in at upwards of 400" (to Mann, May 10, 1758); this has a connection with Hogarth, for the price fetched by this sale caused him to paint his own Sigismonda. The picture could be the same found by Waagen in the Newcastle Collection and by him equally attributed to Francesco Furini (cf. Waagen, Galleries ... in Great Britain, 1854-57, IV, p. 510).

(9) Op. cit., p. 10.

(10) It is the First Novella on the Fourth Day.

characters are three: Ghismonda, Guiscardo (her lover) and Tancredi (her powerful father, the Prince of Salerno); Guiscardo, however, is only a half-figure, and the action is really based on the father-daughter relationship. The incest theme is not made explicit, but it is certainly suggested by the obsessive jealousy of Tancredi, who prevents Ghismonda from marrying and frequently visits her in her bedroom. This is how he discovers the secret affair between her and Guiscardo: sitting in the dark, unseen, behind his daughter's bed, he witnesses with horror the ardour of the two lovers' passion. Without saying anything to Ghismonda he orders Guiscardo to be strangled, and his heart to be plucked out; he then sends the heart to the lady in a golden bowl — she understands and, having poured poisoned water over it, she drinks from the bowl and thus dies. The story ends with the repentance and grief of Tancredi. No doubt Walpole knew the novella, for he owned three copies of the Decameron, including a French translation which very clearly he had obtained so as to be able to understand it completely (11). And of course he had read Dryden'd free version of the story,

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(11) Cf. Hazen, no. 943: Giovanni Boccaccio, Contes et nouvelles, traduction libre, Cologne, 1732, 2 vols.; ibid., no. 2070: id., Decamerone, ed. by V. Martinelli, London, 1762 (an interesting copy, because bought perhaps shortly before the composition of The Castle of Otranto); ibid., no. 2097: id., Il Decamerone, Amsterdam, 1679, 2 vols.

which is particularly interesting for us because of its incisive characterization, which Walpole must have appreciated — especially the dramatic chiaroscuro of the heroine's "Modesty and Pride":

> Short were her Marriage-Joys; for in the Prime
> Of Youth, her Lord expir'd before his time:
> And to her Father's Court, in little space
> Restor'd anew, she held a higher Place;
> More lov'd, and more exalted into Grace.
> This Princess fresh and young, and fair, and wise,
> The worshipp'd Idol of her Father's Eyes,
> Did all her Sex in ev'ry Grace exceed,
> And had more Wit beside than Women need.
>
> Youth, Health, and Ease, and most an amorous Mind,
> To second Nuptials had her Thoughts inclin'd:
> And former Joys had left a Secret sting behind.
> Her Sire left unsupply'd her only Want;
> And she, betwixt her Modesty and Pride,
> Her Wishes, which she could not help, would hide.
> (Sigismonda and Guiscardo, from Boccace, 1700, ll. 25-40)

A character of this sort would naturally raise a number of suggestions and responses in Walpole's mind. Leaving for the moment aside The Castle of Otranto, and the fact that there too we see Isabella deprived of her husband-to-be Conrad, in The Mysterious Mother the first cause of the Countess's loathsome sin is sexual eagerness contrasted with the death of her husband, a moral justification which, on a different plane, has an affinity with Sigismonda's excuse that "short were her marriage-joys":

> Countess. ...
> Ye know how fondly my luxurious fancy
> Doted upon my lord. For eighteen months
> An embassy detain'd him from my bed.
> A harbinger announc'd his near return.
> Love dress'd his image to my longing thoughts
> In all its warmest colours — but the morn,
> In which impatience grew almost to sickness,

Presented him a bloody corse before me.
I rav'd — The storm of disappointed passions
Assail'd my reason, fever'd all my blood. ...

Edmund. Swallow th'accursed sound!
Nor dare to say —

Countess. Yes, thou polluted son!
Grief, disappointment, opportunity,
Rais'd such a tumult in my madding blood,
I took the damsel's place; and while thy arms
Twin'd, to thy thinking, round another's waist,
Hear, hell, and tremble! — thou didst clasp thy mother!
(V, vi, ll. 39-65)

It is interesting to notice that there were several dramatizations of Sigismunda's story, an element, incidentally, which leads one to reflect on the dramatic nature of Walpole's inspiration. Some of these plays might have influenced Walpole before the composition of The Castle of Otranto: the most obvious is old Robert Wilmot's Tancred and Sigismunda, an Elizabethan work of 1591; but young Horace perhaps came also across Mrs. Centlivre's sentimental The Cruel Gift (1717). One dramatization came after The Castle of Otranto (and after The Mysterious Mother as well): it is The Father's Revenge by the Earl of Carlisle (1783), quite relevant for our study because it combines details from The Castle of Otranto with the original story, thus showing that a connection between the two plots not only could be imagined but also materially realized. Walpole's praise of this play (in this case along with Dr. Johnson's) further proves that he did not see such a connection as an arbitrary one. Here, as in

The Castle of Otranto, filial disobedience is openly expressed: like Matilda, Sigismunda rejects her father's choice, the hateful Manfred of Benevento, and secretly weds Guiscardo instead; but Guiscardo, though a foundling, turns out to be the rightful Prince of Salerno — a detail that is completely foreign to the Decameron and very likely derives from the plot of Walpole's novel, for Theodore too is a foundling later discovered to be the rightful Prince of Otranto. In Carlisle's version, however, Guiscardo, as in Boccaccio, must die: Tancred discovers the truth when it is too late, the youth has been killed and Sigismunda died of grief; he then resigns the usurped principality to the other tyrant that had been kept in store meanwhile, "Manfred of Benevento", whom Sigismunda had to marry in the first place (12).

Far more important than any other dramatization of the story is Thomson's Tancred and Sigismunda written in 1745 and first performed in 1752 with Garrick as Tancred, a production which Walpole in all probability had a chance to see, and therefore may to a considerable extent have influenced him. Thomson too altered the

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(12) Norman names became quite popular after Walpole; among the many "gothic" imitations of The Castle of Otranto, even in the anonymous tales of the magazines we find a feudal lord called "Manfredi", a man "enslaved to lust and revenge" (The Castle of Costanzo, 1784), or "Conrad", who with his "artful insinuations" attempts to usurp the fortune of the cousin Matilda, immured in a convent by the tyrannical father (The Friar's Tale, 1788).

~~the~~ story, and curiously exchanged the names: Tancred (who in Boccaccio is the Prince and father of Ghismonda) is here the foundling and lover; there is no Prince at the beginning of the play, the last king,"great Manfred", having apparently been dead a long time; but we have a powerful minister instead, Siffredi, who is also the father of Sigismunda; the play takes place in the kingdom of Sicily. An interesting difference with Walpole and Carlisle is that Tancred, the foundling figure, discovers that he is the rightful heir to the throne of Sicily almost immediately, that is at the beginning and not at the end of the play. Siffredi, who after the death of the king had adopted the boy (13), tells him that he is in fact the son of Manfred, thus playing here a part analogous to that played by father Jerome in The Castle of Otranto:

Siffredi. Hear him, immortal shades of his great Fathers!
thou, thou art he!

Tancred. Siffredi!

Siffredi. Tancred thou!
Thou art the man, of all the may thousands
That toil upon the bosom of this isle,
By heaven elected to command the rest,
To rule, protect them, and to make them happy.

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(13) This is related by Sigismunda at the beginning:
Sigismunda. ...
In Belmont's woods my father rear'd this youth.
Ah!Woods,for ever dear!where first my artless bosom learn'd
The sighs of love. He gives him out the son
Of an old friend, a baron of Apulia,
Who in the late crusade bravely fell ...
(op. cit., I, i)
It is remarkable here that Thomson's Manfred's place as a father should have been taken by "a baron of Apulia", the region also selected by Walpole as the theatre of his novel, and that he, like Alfonso, "in the late crusade bravely fell"; Walpole may have in fact been influenced by Thomson in his own choice of locality and historical background, bringing in a crusade as an important detail of it.

> Tancred. Manfred, my father! I the last support
> Of the fam'd Norman line, that awes the world?
> I, who, this morning, wandr'd forth an orphan
> Outcast of all but thee, my second father! ...
> (op. cit., I, i)

The correspondence between Tancred and Theodore is clear and it is reasonable to suppose that the first influenced the other. Or, they both developed in a similar way from the common source, namely Guiscardo in Boccaccio's story: like Guiscardo they are both the cause of the ruin of their mistresses, but unlike him they survive their mistresses and even succeed in establishing themselves as lawful princes, both apparently "elected by heaven" to rule. This survival is a substantial change from the Decameron and inverts the rôle of the character, for, as I said, Guiscardo is merely instrumental to Boccaccio, whereas Tancred and Theodore are the real protagonists of Thomson and Walpole's works. They are heroes, born to suffer even in the hour of their triumph, which is indeed a tragic triumph. In The Castle of Otranto Theodore will never recover from the loss of his dear Matilda and the dramatic sense of emptiness that seals the end of the novel; the same happens in Thomson's play for the curtain falls on the frantic questions Tancred, now king, asks himself from the desolate stage, where his "fresh and young, and fair, and wise" Sigismunda is but a bleeding lump at his feet:

> Tancred. What am I? Where?
> Sad, silent, all? The forms of dumb despair,
> Around some mournful tomb. What do I see?
> This soft abode of innocence and love
> Turn'd to the house of death! a place of horror!
> Ah,that poor corse,pale, pale; deform'd with murder!
> Is that my Sigismunda?
> (op. cit., V, ii)

Tyranny is defeated by the hero at the expense of love: something that did not quite happen in the Decameron and that shows that for Thomson ~~(as for Pope or Swift as well)~~ irrational passions and despotic power could not be represented without being necessarily defeated (14). On the other hand we also do find that the particular solutions provided by Thomson and Walpole in this respect are by no means identical, and there are differences which indeed balance Thomson's influence on Walpole. Thomson basically avoided showing the open struggle between the hero and the tyrant and invented a third figure, totally new, Osmond, who is the husband Sigismunda is forced to marry against her will (an echo of this in The Castle of Otranto might be Manfred's attempt to force Matilda to marry Frederic). Tancred is outraged and orders Osmond to be seized and imprisoned; the barons, however, get him out (there is a political struggle at Court going on at the same time): the enraged husband on finding the two lovers, Tancred

from Thomson's

(14) The attitude of Tory writers was different: they actually only complained that Sir Robert Walpole, "the tyrant" for them (cf. L. I. Bredvold, "The Gloom of the Tory Satirists" in: Pope and his Contemporaries: Essays Presented to George Sherburn, London, 1949, reprtd. in: Eighteenth-Century English Literature, ed. J. L. Clifford, New York, 1959), paid his own hacks. In a passage of his Life of Thomson Dr. Johnson says that "... a long course of opposition to Sir Robert Walpole had filled the nation with clamours for liberty, of which no man felt the want, and with care for liberty, which was not in danger. Thomson ... found or fancied so many evils arising from the tyranny of other governments, that he resolved to write a very long poem, in five parts, upon Liberty", for which, he continues, he was rewarded (Lives of the English Poets, Everyman's Ed., 2, pp.286-7

and Sigismunda, together, fights with Tancred and, when mortally wounded, for revenge stabs his wife (15). Now, with this stratagem Thomson saved the moral realism of the play, for the development of the plot to the end depends solely on the concrete choices and actions of the hero, nor is there any external, supernatural intervention. In The Castle of Otranto, on the contrary, Walpole, as we well know, made everything depend on Fate and Supernatural Forces, which determine the whole course of events. Thus, though the struggle between Manfred and Theodore is explicit and brought to its final consequences, it is nevertheless by necessity fought at an abstract and idealistic level — a significant evolution from Thomson.

The rapport between Thomson and Walpole in short chiefly concerns the influence on the characters of Theodore and Matilda. The father figure instead is not sufficiently treated by Thomson and for the discussion of its relevance in The Castle of Otranto we must shortly go back to the Decameron. Boccaccio conceived Tancredi, Ghismonda's father, as a sombre combination of power and lust: these aspects, however, are not explicit, but absorbed within the predominant characteristic which is a sort of sensuous cruelty. The gift of the golden bowl with Guiscardo's heart

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(15) This scene inspired Fuseli's "Tancred and Sigismunda" (1792).

strikes the reader as a gesture of barbaric and inconsiderate cruelty. In my view we find the same combination in Walpole's character study of Manfred, but here the stress is not on cruelty: the predominant characteristic of Manfred rather seems to be a kind of frenzy. The motivations in the two characters also differ. Tancredi has lost control of himself because of jealousy, Manfred because of pride; the former is afraid to lose his daughter, the latter his throne. And, though their typology is basically the same, they act according to the cause of their fear. Tancredi, once he has recognized in the young page Guiscardo the rival of his possessive affection for Ghismonda, with a cold and almost geometrical determination executes his revenge : "... He thought with the others' suffering to quench his own burning love and ordered the two who kept Guiscardo in custody to strangle him without noise on the next night, and, having plucked out his heart, to convey it to him; and they, as it had been ordered them, so they did ..." Tancredi may be said to lust in the preparation of revenge. Not so Manfred; his action is dictated by the sensation of danger and by the glaring obsession of power which sway him at the sight of Theodore:

> ... Thou shalt experience the wrath with which thou darest to trifle. Seize him, continued Manfred, and bind him — the first news the princess hears of her champion shall be, that he has lost his head for her sake. ... Bear him away in the court-yard, said Manfred; I will see his head this instant severed from his body. — Matilda fainted at hearing those words. Bianca shrieked, and cried, Help!

> help! the princess is dead! ... When he learned the meaning, he treated it as a womanish panic; and ordering Matilda to be carried to her apartment, he rushed into the court, and, calling for one of his guards, bade Theodore kneel down to receive the fatal blow.
> (Chapter II)

Power, then, the aspiration to an unlimited power, unrestrained by supernatural forces, is Manfred's ruling passion. The principal theme of the novel is consequently political, an aspect suggesting that Walpole's specific historical knowledge may have also played a part (16). On the other hand, the

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(16) A possible direct historical source has been stressed by A. Killen in Le Roman Terrifiant, Paris, 1915, p. 15:

> Le Manfred de Walpole comme le fils de Frédéric II est usurpateur. Ils portent également le titre de "prince d'Otrante". L'un a un neveu, Conrad, l'autre un fils du même nom. Si le Manfred de l'histoire italienne s'est emparé des possessions qui avaient appartenu à Frédéric II; de même le heros de Walpole, croit que l'heritier legitime d'Otrante est un certain Frédéric de Vicence. D'ailleurs cette partie du roman où Walpole raconte l'apparition inattendue de Frédéric de Vicence qu'on croyait mort dans la Palestine rapelle une légende concernant Frédéric II, répandue aprés la mort de l'empereur, qui disait-on, ne serait pas mort comme on le croyait, en 1250. "Dès 1259, dans le Sud de l'Italie, un ermite qui lui resemblait se fit passer pour lui, recruta des partisans, et fut accuelli par les barons de la Sicilie et de la Puille hostils à Manfred. Manfred s'en empara et le fit mettre à mort."
> (Lavisse, Histoire generale, II, p. 231)

Walpole owned a book of woodcuts with the effigies of the Kings of Naples commencing with Roger the Norman: E. Bacco, Effigie di tutti i re che han dominato il reame di Napoli, Napoli, 1602 (cf. Hazen, no. 3731). He also owned two copies of a rare and odd incunable:Manfredi,Liber de Homine,Bologna,1474.

introduction of such a theme, though to be regarded as mainly due to Walpole, does not diminish the relevance of the general framework, which is indeed quite close to the original source. The implicit sensual motif of Boccaccio's story is in my opinion maintained in The Castle of Otranto: it however appears complicated in a sort of subplot which, as we shall see, influences the narrative balance to a considerable degree. Apart from this, the important point to make here is that Walpole's transformation of his source into an original and integrated character type, namely the tyrant dominated by a frantic obsession for power, will remain one of the constant ingredients in the development of Gothic romance.

> Our bard, whose head is fill'd with Gothic fancies,
> And teems with ghosts and giants and romances,
> Intended to have kept your passions up,
> And sent you crying out your eyes, to sup ...
> (The Mysterious Mother, "Epilogue, to be spoken by Mrs. Clive", Works, 4, pp. 397-98)

These lines would well suit an"epilogue" to The Castle of Otranto:"to keep passions up" was certainly one of the intentions of Horace Walpole when he wrote his "gothic story" — tension is not allowed to fall for a moment, which indeed is a dramatic rather than narrative technique and may be applied, as in this case, only to a short piece. The result is one of accumulated tension with a strong drive towards the end and it is resolved into two major climaxes: one is the final collapse of the castle while the shape of Alfonso ascends to heaven, which is more specifically Walpole's

and coincides with the proper catharsis; the other is the tragic scene which immediately precedes this, that is when Manfred stabs to death his own daughter, and it has a depressive effect on the reader. The latter clearly derives from the more formal scheme of the source, effectively developing the idea of a violent father-daughter relationship that we have already found in the Decameron. Tancredi, though he did not intend so, kills his daughter: the same happens in a more immediate and direct way in The Castle of Otranto, for Manfred has the deliberate intention to murder one of the two lovers in secret encounter at the church of St. Nicholas:

> ... Gliding softly between the aisles, and guided by an imperfect gleam of moonshine that shone faintly through the illuminated windows, he stole towards the tomb of Alfonso, to which he was directed by indistinct whispers of the persons he sought. The first sounds he could distinguish were — Does it, alas, depend on me? Manfred will never permit our union. — No, this shall prevent it! cried the tyrant, drawing his dagger, and plunging it over the shoulder into the bosom of the person that spoke — Ah me, I am slain! cried Matilda sinking: Good heaven, receive my soul! — Savage, inhuman monster! What hast thou done? cried Theodore, rushing on him, and wrenching his dagger from him. — Stop, stop thy impious hand, cried Matilda; it is my father! — Manfred, waking as from a trance beat his breast, twisted his hands in his locks ...
> (Chapter V)

There follows a sentimental scene, also found in the Decameron (and in Thomson's Tancred and Sigismunda), in which the poor innocent victim forgives her

barbarous father:

> ... May heaven bless my father, and forgive him as I do! My lord, my gracious sire, dost thou forgive thy child? Indeed I came not hither to meet Theodore! I found him praying at this tomb, whither my mother sent me to intercede for thee, for her — Dearest father, bless your child, and say you forgive her. — Forgive thee! Murderous monster! cried Manfred — can assassins forgive? I took thee for Isabella; but heaven directed my bloody hand to the heart of my child! — Oh! Matilda — I cannot utter it — canst thou forgive the blindness of my rage? — I can, I do, and may heaven confirm it! said Matilda — ...
> (Chapter V)

We have here an anti-climax and a release of tension, justified by the immediately following climatic section which seals the conclusion of the novel: this part is necessary, for otherwise the destruction of Manfred's family would appear too harsh to the reader as an effect of Nemesis, and the tyrant's figure could be consequently interpreted as stoical and heroic. But Walpole was of course interested in showing the opposite and this is the reason why Manfred must be made guilty of the horrible crime of murdering his own daughter; the remorse of such a crime does also provide sufficient punishment to let Manfred survive in the end and lead a life of penance.

In The Castle of Otranto we therefore see both the parent and the child tied to a common fate of destruction, a factor which forms a sort of outer

frame around the basic plot utilized by Walpole, for it is clear that the meaning of the prophecy (and the overall significance of the novel depends on it) is that Manfred's race must be annihilated (17). This

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(17) Something that had happened a few years before the composition of the novel might have actually influenced Walpole's imagination. In 1757, the year of King Theodore's death, Horace Mann told Walpole the story of the tragical destruction of the family of the Comte de Richecourt, a very powerful man in Florence at the time. Mann described the shocking episode that concluded it: while the father is on his deathbed, the daughter is seized with the smallpox and dies in a few hours (cf. from Mann, January 15, 1757). Walpole knew Richecourt I think especially in connection with an unpleasant family circumstance: it was rumored in Florence that Lady Walpole, the wife of Robert, Second Earl of Orford (Horace's elder brother), a woman who lived an adventurous and dissolute life in Italy after the separation from her husband, had had two daughters from an illicit amour with Richecourt (cf. from Mann, February 24, 1781). When she died they had to hurry her burial because the body was too offensive to be kept any longer (cf. Mann to Sir W. Hamilton, January 16, 1781: BM Egerton MSS 2641, f. 119). The fate that befell Richecourt and his daughter must have occasioned Walpole to reflect. Again we have a father-daughter relationship connected to a fate of destruction, and also indirectly connected to what Walpole knew or imagined of the illicit sexual relationship between his sister-in-law and Richecourt.

These events, it is true, were not closely knit together; their relevance should not be overstressed. Yet I feel that the fate that befell Richecourt left an echo in Walpole's mind. "What a dreadful catastrophe is that of Richecourt's family! What a lesson for human grandeur! Florence, the scene of all his triumphs and haughtiness, is now the theatre of his misery and misfortunes!" (to Mann, February 13, 1757) he wrote then — a few years later he will also imagine Otranto as the scene of all Manfred's "triumphs and haughtiness, ... now the theatre of his misery and misfortunes!".

structural choice made Walpole necessarily operate some changes in the mechanism of the father-daughter relationship as he received it from his source. In order to better understand such changes we must take into account another important feminine character, that of Isabella, who in a sense stands as a sort of ~~Matilda's~~ for Matilda double. Manfred's admitted mistake when he says "I took thee for Isabella..." is significant. Isabella, the daughter of Frederic of Vicenza, the pretender to the Principality of Otranto, had grown up in Manfred's family like another daughter, whom the tyrant had planned to wed to his own son Conrad, so as to reinforce the family's claim to Otranto. Now, after Conrad's death, Manfred resolves to marry Isabella himself: this is the only hope left him to preserve the principality to his line. He says that the repudiation of his wife Hippolita is legitimate because "Hippolita is related to me in the fourth degree... to this state of unlawful wedlock I impute the visitation that has fallen me in the death of Conrad!". The interesting point here is that the already incestuous Manfred actually gloats on a person, Isabella, who not only was to be his daughter-in-law, but because of her upbringing represents almost a second daughter. In fact at one point of the story Isabella says to Matilda and Hippolita:

> ... — My father is too pious, too noble, interrupted Isabella, to command an impious deed. But should he command it, can a father enjoin a cursed act? I was contracted to the son [i.e. Conrad]; can I wed the father? — No, madam, no; force should not drag me to Manfred's hated bed. I loathe him, I abhor him: divine and human laws forbid. — And

> my friend, my dearest Matilda! would I wound her tender soul by injuring her adored mother? my own mother — I never have known another. ——— Oh! she is the mother of both! [i.e. of Matilda and Isabella] cried Matilda. Can we, can we, Isabella, adore her too much? My lovely children, said the touched Hippolita, your tenderness overpowers me — ...
> (Chapter IV)

If our purpose here were to reconstruct the visionary itinerary of Walpole's mind from the original inspiration to the novel as we see it, I think that in this case and with a reasonable degree of approximation we can say that his second step, from Sigismunda's story, was splitting the daughter figure into two distinct characters, Matilda and Isabella. Symmetry required a second father in the person of Frederic, who is another tyrant and in a sense Manfred's double. The complicated schemes of the latter include the marriage between his daughter Matilda and Frederic, so that it effectively turns out to be an exchange of daughters between the two princes:

> Manfred, in the mean time, had broken his purpose to Frederic, and proposed the double marriage. That weak prince, who had been struck with the charms of Matilda, listened but too eagerly to the offer. He forgot his enmity to Manfred, whom he saw but little hope of dispossessing by force; and flattering himself that no issue might succeed from the union of his daughter with the tyrant, he looked upon his own succession to the principality as facilitated by wedding Matilda. He made faint opposition to the proposal; affecting, for form only, not to acquiesce unless Hippolita should consent to the divorce. Manfred took that upon himself.
> (Chapter IV)

Limiting ourselves to examine the results, however, it is clear that in terms of structure Manfred and Frederic represent only two different aspects of a single image: they both identify with one basic characteristic, their unlimited lust of power.

In this context, the daughter figure and the theme of incest, implicit in the source, stand for the outer boundary of "Nature", a word dear to the enlightened ears of the eighteenth century. This boundary the tyrants transgress symbolically, thus negating the rational basis that justifies them as characters. Their act implies an entirely different system of relations which can only exist by the eradication of the father figure and its substitution: Theodore represents the new order and this, in my view, is the reason for his survival. Continuity must equally be reaffirmed through the partial survival of the daughter figure too, and here again we may see the advantage of the double rôle of Matilda and Isabella: apparently, like Sigismunda, Matilda dies — as a matter of fact she survives in the person of Isabella, whom she unites with Theodore:

> ... — Isabella, thou hast loved me; wot thou not supply my fondness to this dear, dear woman? [i.e. Hippolita] ... Where is my father? Forgive him, dearest mother — forgive him my death; it was an error — Oh! I had forgotten — Dearest mother, I vowed never to see Theodore more — Perhaps that has drawn down this calamity — but it was not intentional — can you pardon me? — Oh! wound not my agonizing soul! said Hippolita; thou never couldst offend me. — Alas she faints! Help! help! — I would say something more, said Matilda struggling, but it wonnot be — Isabella — Theodore — for my sake — oh! — She expired ...
> (Chapter V)

The sacrifice of Matilda is the sacrifice of youth, the dreams of youth and its certainties. Theodore repeatedly exclaims "I lived but in her, and will expire with her", but eventually he must accept the reality of death and will marry Isabella. Having lived through this crisis, however, we find ourselves on a higher plane, detached from concrete life, on a stage where a happy finale, tempered by melancholy, is still possible after all:

> The friar ceased. The disconsolate company retired to the remaining part of the castle. In the morning Manfred signed his abdication of the principality, with the approbation of Hippolita, and each took on them the habit of religion in the neighbouring convents. Frederic offered his daughter to the new prince, which Hippolita's tenderness for Isabella concurred to promote: but Theodore's grief was too fresh to admit the thought of another love; and it was not till after frequent discourses with Isabella, of his dear Matilda, that he was persuaded he could know no happiness but in the society of one with whom he could forever indulge the melancholy that had taken possession of his soul.
> (Chapter V: end)

In every sense, a perfect ending indeed; the guilty father and Hippolita (whose very name seems to bring incest to mind) disappear in penitence, while the honest father offers the purified daughter to the young hero, who, after some hesitation, forgives all. The unredeemable sin of incest, the implicit core of Sigismunda'a story, is solved here by Walpole through the final idealization of what in Hogarth's picture

appeared but as "a maudlin whore". At the same time the beggar-king has been restored by Fate to his throne. And "the melancholy that had taken possession of his soul" was perhaps of the same kind the young Horace in a painful way obscurely realized to have plunged into after that "dreadful catastrophe", the death of his own "gentle" mother.

IV

"Gothicly antique; lofty, gloomy and venerable" — this remark, so much in the style of Horace Walpole, was not made by him, nor has anything to do with Strawberry Hill. It belongs to John Boyle, Fifth Earl of Cork and Orrery, who applied it to the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence, a building generally found to be very moderately gothic, not so antique, less gloomy than it could be and almost a dwarf compared to more venerable buildings in that city. But it is important that so Boyle saw it in 1755 when he visited Florence. He was interested in Tuscan history, and dealing with this undoubtedly "Gothic" subject indeed justifies the gloomiest of visions. The early part of Boyle's work, his Epitome of the Revolutions of Tuscany (covering the period 1215-1510), was never published, but his letters dealing with the subsequent history of the Medici were. They were included in his Letters from Italy which appeared in 1773 and contributed to the revival of things Tuscan and

Italian in general to a considerable extent (1). These letters may be called truly "Gothic", since they chiefly delight in Medicean murders and other dark, scandalous crimes, a subject Boyle was as fond as most of the later Romantics. Perhaps Horace Walpole had never heard of Boyle and of his letters before 1773. If he had, this can have increased his curiosity about the Medici. Surely he was no stranger to their legendary bloody inclinations. Being for some time employed in writing a history of painting in England, the Anecdotes of Painting, begun in 1762, he was well acquainted with Boyle's main source, Vasari's Lives, which he must have consulted even earlier, when he planned writing a history of the Medici himself. Is it not a strange destiny indeed that Vasari, who had contributed so much to discredit the gothic style, should now be condemned, cruel contrappasso, to suffer that his gossip become the material of the visions of the new "Goths"? On the other hand he cannot be considered the only direct source; as far as Walpole is concerned we can trace easily other possible and equally notorious sources. The Medici of course were very popular with the Elizabethans: in Webster's White Devil, for example, is narrated the miserable end of Isabella de' Medici and her brother Francesco's revenge on Brachiano by means of a poisoned helmet (2).

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(1) Cf. R. Marshall, Italy in English Literature, 1755-1815, New York, 1934, pp. 40-45, 286-87.

(2) According to Boyle and Vasari, Brachiano killed Isabella because of suspected incest with her father, Cosimo de' Medici.

As a matter of fact, Walpole's imagination hardly required any prompter. His love for the ancient mysteries of the Medici was not of exactly the same nature that inspired some of his contemporaries (3); it was more personal and intimate, it did not require a lofty stage and rather preferred some secret recess of his soul. It was also an early love, a juvenile passion. I think that, had he had to choose among the old tragedies, he would have shown a preference for Middleton's Women beware Women, which treated the story of Bianca Capello. This is indeed a personage that he regarded with particular affection. One can almost picture him in some secret chamber of his imaginary world proudly exclaiming like another Leontio:

> Oh fair-ey'd Florence!
> Didst thou but know what a most matchless jewel
> Thou now art mistress of, a pride would take thee,
> Able to shoot destruction through the bloods
> Of all thy youthful sons; but 'tis great policy
> To keep choice treasures in obscurest places:
> ...
> Who could imagine now a gem were kept,
> Of that great value under this plain roof?
> (Women beware Women, L, ii, 161-72)

And under the "plain roof" of Strawberry Hill there was indeed "a gem" of great value for Walpole. This was the portrait of Bianca Capello by Vasari in the Round Drawing

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(3) For example, Lord Lyttelton who in his Dialogues of the Dead (1760) and New Dialogues of the Dead (1762) also treated the subject with an emphasis on the traditional gloomy atmosphere.

Room, at the end of the Gallery. Walpole had fallen in love with it back in the days of his visit to Florence in 1740, when he stayed at Horace Mann's. We probably would not know very much about this passion were it not for Mann's constant and mindful attachment to Walpole; in 1753 he sent him the precious present:

> ... It is an old acquaintance of yours, and once much admired by you, though not quite in the bloom of her wrinkles. In short, it is the portrait you so often went to see in Casa Vitelli of the Bianca Capello by Vassari [sic], to which, as your proxy, I have made love to [sic] a long while, and now own to you that I have been in possession of it some little time. It has hung in my bedchamber and reproached me indeed of infidelity, in depriving you of what I originally designed for you, but as I had determined to be honest at last I could not part with it too hastily...
> (From Mann, November 9, 1753)

Needless to say, Walpole was delighted with this, and the epitaph he appended to the picture, originally written in Latin for him by Gray (4), betrays his

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(4) Cf. From Gray, February 15, 1754:

> Bianca Capello,
> Veneta, adolescenti nupsit nobili Florentino, quem ideo a patre domo expulsum uxor sua opera diu sustentabat, donec Franciscus Mediceus M[agnus] Hetruriae Dux, mulieris forma captus eam in aulam perduxit, maritum ad summos honores extulit, qui potestate insolenter usus cum saepe in crimina incurrisset, saepe conjugis gratia (quam tamen asperius tractaverat) supplicium effugisset, novissime, sua manu hominem confodit. Bianca ducis clementiam implorante, juravit Franc[is]cus se de maritum poenas non sumpturum, sed nec de illis, qui eum ipsum occidissent. Quo audito, vir ab inimicis interfectus est. Viduam

enthusiasm for the lady and stern defence of her character:

> Bianca Capello,
> a Ven[e]tian [sic] lady, who having disobliged her family by marrying a Florentine banker, was reduced to maintain him by washing linen; Francis the great duke, saw, fell in love with, and made her his mistress, and her husband his minister: but the latter, after numberless tyrannies, for which she obtained his pardon, and after repeated ill usage of her, for which she pardoned him, having murdered a man, and being again protected by her, the great duke told her, that though he would remit her husband's punishment, he would pardon whoever should kill him. The relatives of the deceased murdered the assassin, and Francis married his widow Bianca, who was poisoned with him at a banquet by Cardinal Ferdinand, afterwards called the Great, brother and successor of duke Francis. (Descr., p. 75)

> Franciscus justum in matrimonium duxit. Hos ambos uno in convivio Ferdinandus Cardinalis, Fr[ancis]ci frater, veneno sustulit, ipse deinceps Hetrurie Dux, cognomento Maximus.

Gray's immediate source is not known, as there are several versions of the story. Actually the relationship between the Great Duke and Bianca was one of *the most notorious* ~~the~~ scandals ~~more talked about~~ in the age, especially after he married Giovanna d'Austria in 1565. Bonaventuri, Bianca's husband, was murdered in 1572, but the Great Duke did not marry his mistress until 1578, when the Duchess died: secretly at first, with great pomp afterwards. Bianca gradually acquired great influence at Court, her power only marred by her sterility, which she tried to cure. Eventually she also surrounded herself with witches; Francesco stabbed one of them to death. Their sudden death was certainly mysterious. That Ferdinand, preoccupied with the scandals and corruption of the couple wanted to put an end to their senseless conduct in State affairs is true. Medical official testimony however only states that Francesco and Bianca both died of chills and fever on the 19th and 20th of October 1587 (Cf. Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani).

When a few years later, in 1763, Walpole finished the "Tribune" (also called the Chapel), the hallowed shrine of his curious reliquaries (where were displayed Theodore's Great Seal, "Herodias with the head of the Baptist... Perseus and Andromeda... the Flora... the Medusa of Strozzi; the Perseus of ditto... and eight other heads..."), he also placed in it "a small head in oil, by Bronzino", again showing his dear Bianca Capello (5). By that time she undoubtedly had turned into one of the shining seraphim that glided along the gyres of his fancy. Among his books could be found oddities like the Feste nelle nozze del serenissimo Don Francesco Medici, Gran Duca di Toscana, et della serenissima Sua Consorte la Signora Bianca Cappello (6), an account of the sumptuous wedding by the bizarre Florentine poet Gualterotti, with coloured engravings, or the mysterious manuscript in Folio entitled Secret History of the House of Medici (7).

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(5) In his Memoirs of the Illustrious House of Medici, 1797 (of which there was a copy in the Library: cf. Hazen, no. 416) Mark Noble noted: "Time, the betrayer of falsehood and discoverer of truth, has restored Bianca to that reputation that she had been deprived for two centuries. Her beauteous form is again disclosed in all its purity. England boasts two likenesses of her; they are both at Strawberry Hill, the seat of the Earl of Orford ..." Although the date of publication is the year of Walpole's death and therefore the book itself is irrelevant for us, Noble's remarks show that he had visited Strawberry Hill and probably discussed with its old owner the figure of Bianca; his opinions are in fact very close to Walpole's ever vivid admiration for her.

(6) Firenze, 1579; cf. Hazen, no. 3773.

(7) Cf. Hazen, no. 3720.

Walpole's reply to Mann when he received that extraordinary present is one which is well known because of his description of serendipity:

> 'Her Serene Highness the Great Duchess Bianca Capello is arrived safe at a palace lately taken for her at Arlington Street: she has been much visited by the quality and gentry, and pleased universally by the graces of her person and comeliness of her deportment' — My dear child, this is the least that the newspapers would say of the charming Bianca ... .The head is painted equal to Titian, and, though done, I suppose after the clock had struck five and thirty, yet she retains a great share of beauty. I have bespoken a frame for her, with the grand ducal coronet at top; her story on a label at bottom, which Gray is to compose in Latin as short and expressive as Tacitus (one is lucky when one can bespeak and have executed such an inscription!) the Medici arms on one side, and the Capello's on the other. I must tell you a critical discovery of mine à propos: in an old book of Venetian arms (°), there are two coats of Capello, who from their name bear a hat, on one of them is added a flower-de-luce on a blue bell, which I am persuaded was given to the family by the Great Duke, in consideration of this alliance; the Medicis you know bore such a badge at the top of their own arms; this discovery I made by a talisman, which Mr Chute calls the sortes Walpolianae, by which I find everything I want à point nommé wherever I

(°) This is Le arme overo isegne di tutti li nobili... di Venetia, Venezia, 1578 (cf. Hazen, no. 2051).. On the twelfth page are two coats of arms of the Capello family: in one is a small gold fleur-de-lis opposite to which Walpole in fact pencilled a cross. Walpole also owned a book of ancient coins in the Medici collection: A. F. Gori, Museum Florentinum exhibens anticua numismata quae in regio thesauro magni ducis Etruriae adservantur, (vols. 1-4), Firenze, 1740-42, Folio.

> dip for it. This discovery indeed is almost of that kind which I call serendipity, a very expressive word, which as I have nothing better to tell you, I shall endeavour to explain to you: you will understand it better by the derivation than by the definition. I once read a silly fairy tale, called The Three Princes of Serendip (+): as their highnesses travelled, they were always making discoveries, by accidents and sagacity, of things they were not in quest of: for instance, one of them discovered that a mule blind of the right eye had travelled the same road lately, because the grass was eaten only on the left side, where it was worse than on the right — now, do you understand serendipity?
> (To Mann, January 28, 1754)

It seems to me that the relevance of this curious idea of serendipity, so typical of Walpole's odd intellectual inventiveness, should not be just confined to the mere consideration of his well-known antiquarian exercises. It involved a wider, and creative, activity of his mind, and, if one really wants to communicate with Walpole on the printed page, one has to accept the medium of serendipity in this more comprehensive sense. "Finding sources" is a game one can always openly play with Walpole; as a writer he always started as an expert player himself:

> ... The notes in his master set of Pope might have been written by a modern scholar bent upon finding "sources"; Walpole copied

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(+) This was a book in Press G of the Main Library at Strawberry Hill: Le voyage et les aventures des trois Princes de Serendip, translated from Persian [or, rather, adapted from the Italian of Christoforo Armeno] by Charles de Mailly, Amsterdam, 1721. On the same shelf (the seventh) stood: Pierre de Broissat, Histoire généalogique de la Maison de Medici, Lyons et Paris, 1620 (cf. Hazen, nos. 1237, 1244).

> out more than twenty passages from earlier authors that showed Pope's indebteness to them. He played this game as an amateur, without the joy of revelation in a learned journal ...
> (W. S. Lewis, H. Walpole, p. 28)

Such a "game" is important for us because it is revealing of the way the peculiar mechanism of Walpole's fancy actually worked. His curiosity proceeded by plunges and ingenious findings through the secret waters of forgotten things. His happy inventions consisted in bringing to the surface those images which were significant for him in two directions: on the historical plane, and on the personal, intimate one. And the more dubious, obscure the connection between the two, as in most cases, the more exciting the "game", as his unrestrained imagination began to pursue the wildest dreams of the past. "... Visions, you know, have always been my pasture ... One holds fast and surely what is past. The dead have exhausted their power of deceiving — one can trust Catherine of Medicis now..." (8) And indeed Walpole trusted his Bianca Capello. He could even boast at having met her walking out of Vasari's picture: a superb instance of "live" serendipity was his meeting "Madame Cappello" in London (9).

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(8) Corr., loc. cit.

(9) The wife of the former Venetian minister to the Pope (cf. to Mann, August 2, 1750 OS). Once, referring to her probable return to Rome, Mann wrote to Walpole "... I even foresee the end of exile and return into favour of your old pretty acquaintance, Madame Cappello" (July 7, 1758).

But, if it is true that Bianca Capello held a considerable and special place in Walpole's imagination, his interest in the House of Medici was not confined to her. He was fascinated by their history. When at Florence he had seen their last survivor, the Electress Palatine, and heard from Mann about her eccentric brother the Great Duke. When in 1796, less than a year before Walpole's death, William Roscoe sent him his two volumes of the Life of Lorenzo de' Medici, just published, Walpole's enthusiasm was so great that he wrote several letters to Roscoe to commend the work, and sent two drawings of Florentine coins in his collection: a demonstration of the constancy of his concern about the Medicis. In fact Roscoe accomplished something Walpole had once planned to do himself, as he told Mann in 1759:

> ... you will oblige me if at your leisure you will pick up for me all or any little historical tracts that relate to the House of Medici. I have some distant thoughts of writing their history, and at the peace may probably execute what you know I have long retained in my wish, another journey to Florence. Stosch I think had great collections relating to them; would they sell a separate part of his library? Could I get at any state-letters and papers there? Do think of this; I assure you I do.
> (To Mann, March 4, 1759)

Walpole seriously considered this plan (10); if it eventually did not materialize, it was not his fault

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(10) He proposed the same topic to Dalrymple (cf. to Dalrymple, March 29, 1759).

altogether — Mann's reply was hardly encouraging:

> I am always pleased with the most distant hint of your returning to Florence, but dare not flatter myself that you will ever put it in execution. The commission you give me preparatory to it, to collect materials for a history of the House of Medici, will be difficult to execute. Few of the dukes did anything of great note. The manuscripts that are in the hands of private people are of a vulgar nature, mostly obscene. ... And as to any state papers, this government has always discouraged the writing of the Medici history out of jealousy, and has not permitted them to be seen. Dr. Cocchi designed, however, doing it, but was always cramped in his circumstances. His son is very capable and as willing to do it, but lies under the same difficulties.
> (From Mann, April 7, 1759)

Walpole gave up the project: "... /I/ fear you are quite in the right about the history of the House of Medici — yet it is a pity it should not be written!" (11).

Many years later, when Galluzzi was about to publish his Istoria del Granducato di Toscana Walpole eagerly asked ~~te~~ Mann to ~~be~~ put him down for three sets of the work (for himself and two unnamed friends): shortly after receiving them he had already read through three of the five volumes(12). We may be quite sure he enjoyed them — in his old age they transported him back to that long cherished "journey to Florence" he wished he could bring himself to do "at the peace", but never did.

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(11) To Mann, May 10, 1759 (H.W.'s note: "It was afterwards written in five volumes in quarto, from authentic documents furnished by the Great Duke himself, and was published in 1782 /sic/": he refers here to Galluzzi's Istoria, which was however published in Florence in 1781).

(12) Cf. to Mann, December 28, 1781.

"At the peace" Walpole wrote The Castle of Otranto instead. The dark shades of Manfred's character, the gloomy atmosphere of the novel as a whole, to some extent reveal in what direction the most violent episodes in the history of the Medici worked on Walpole's fancy. It is not possible here to reconstruct the exact process by which Walpole aggregated the fragmentary and often unconscious Medicean materials into the organized form of the novel, and it probably would not reveal a great deal more than we know already. The real point for us is not whether or not the Palazzo Vecchio was at the back of Walpole's mind when he conceived Manfred's sinister habitation, but whether images and emotions connected with Walpole's early interest in the Medici were actively present within the visionary framework later developed in the novel. In this context it is relevant that Walpole's own collection of six different editions of The Castle of Otranto was placed in Press O of the Library in the Round Tower on the same shelf that contained a mysterious manuscript I have mentioned already, Secret History of the House of Medici (13). In the same library Press M contained Galluzzi's Istoria and Roscoe's Life of Lorenzo de' Medici, Press P Bacco's portraits of the Kings of Naples, Press Q

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(13) There were also two editions of Hans Holbein's "Todtentanz" (cf. Hazen, nos. 3715, 3717).

Gualterotti's illustrated poem for the nuptials of the Duke Francesco and Bianca Capello, Press R The Arno Miscellany and The Florence Miscellany (14), together with the poems of Lorenzo de' Medici edited by Roscoe (15). These are of course just secondary details interspersed in that long Labyrinth of Walpole's libraries. But here, in the Round Room, near his own editions of Otranto and the other Medicean hints, the fair Ariadne of his intimate imaginary maze was Bianca Capello. Her portrait by Vasari hung there: the beauty it discovered to Walpole's mind and dreams was a reassuring presence in a night of horrors. I believe there can be no doubt that she was one of the important character sources for The Castle of Otranto and one of the catalysts of Walpole's complicated system of imagination (16). As a matter of fact her presence in the novel appears disguised under her own name in the rôle of a chatty servant. "Bianca" is Matilda's maid, a circumstance more appropriate to "her serene highness" than it may seem at first: we know that before becoming Francesco's wife Bianca Capello spent many years "washing

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(14) Florence, 1784 and 1785: the first was sent by A. Ramsay, the painter, one of the contributors, who thought its poems the work of young W. Beckford (cf. to Mann, July 8, 1784); the other contained poems by Mrs. Piozzi (cf. Hazen, nos. 3803 and 3810).

(15) Liverpool, 1791; only twelve copies were printed.

(16) This of course does not mean that the portraits of Bianca Capello at Strawberry Hill were the sole connecting link with the novel. In Middleton's Women beware Women, for instance, we find that the story of Bianca Capello runs parallel with that of the incestuous passion between Hippolito and his niece Isabella, two characters whose names call for a very natural comparison with The Castle of Otranto.

linen". In effect the lively, saucy and witty Bianca of The Castle of Otranto — a strong contrast, in Walpole's intention, to the "pathetic" and the "dignified tone" of the rest of the Court.— is not too far away from the real temperament of the young Venetian and even of the more experienced (but always spontaneous) woman she later became.

The general texture of Bianca's character also reflects the contradictory emotions which must have been at the origin of Walpole's visionary perception of the dramatic figure of Bianca Capello. Her wit and naïveté, intelligence and gossip, her humour tinged with an inward and constant despair, the concern for little, everyday, vulgar things and the terror from the vague apprehension of the presence of the Supernatural among them, and even her comic traits are always mingled with a sense of insecurity and perhaps the acutest prefiguration of the near catastrophe:

> ... ——————— At that instant Bianca burst into the room, with a wildness in her look and gestures that spoke the utmost terror. Oh! my lord, my lord! cried she, we are all undone! It is come again! It is come again! — What is come again? cried Manfred amazed. — Oh! the hand! the giant! the hand! — Support me! I am terrified out of my senses, cried Bianca: I will not sleep in the castle to night. Where shall I go? My things may come after me to-morrow. — Would I had been content to wed Francesco! This comes of ambition! — What has terrified thee thus, young woman? said the marquis: thou art safe here; be not alarmed. Oh! your greatness is wonderfully good, said Bianca, but I dare not — No, pray let me go — I had rather leave every thing behind me, than stay another hour under this roof.
> (Chapter V)

"Would I had been content to wed Francesco! (17) This comes of ambition! ..." says Bianca. Such a deliberate coincidence of names shows that Walpole intended to give slight hints for the identification of the imaginative source of the character. Of course Walpole used only a very limited part of the potential narrative material related to the historical figure of Bianca Capello. This does not diminish the relevance of the interest he had taken in her for the general conception of The Castle of Otranto . There is a detail quite revealing in this respect. Walpole once confessed to Cole that the primary source of inspiration for the novel was a strange dream that he had had shortly before; it struck him so much that almost immediately he started writing the story. It is an important episode, and we shall examine it thoroughly in the second chapter. Here I just want to stress that in that dream Walpole says "on the uppermost bannister of a great staircase I saw a gigantic hand in armour" (18). Now, this "hand in armour" is in my opinion one of the indispensable factors of the novel's imagery. Bianca is connected with it: at the end of her long (and amusing) narration she reveals the true object of her terror:

> ... when I heard the clattering of armour, I was all in cold sweat — I looked up, and, if your greatness will believe me, I saw upon the uppermost banister of the great stairs a hand in armour as big, as big — I thought I should have swooned — I never stopped until I came hither — Would I were well out of this castle! (Chapter V)

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(17) Francesco is one of Manfred's guards; it is lardly ~~just~~ necessary to recall that his name is also the Great Duke's

(18) To Cole, March 9, 1765.

We know that the "castle" is in fact Strawberry Hill, and that "the great stairs" are the same as in the dream. In this quite dramatic section of the novel (we are approaching the end) Walpole came therefore to identify a deeply felt personal experience, which was also a creative experience, with the character of Bianca, and through her, with Bianca Capello, with his youthful dream of beauty and antiquity. There was also the other side of it,

> Now bless me from a blasting; I saw that now,
> Fearful for any woman's eye to look on;
> Infectious mists and mildews hang at's eyes:
> The weather of doomsday dwells upon him.
> Yet since mine honour's leprous, why should I
> Preserve that fair that caused the leprosy?
> Come poison all at once. —
> (Women beware Women, II, ii, 418-24)

It is true that these lines do not exactly correspond to Walpole's feelings. But they represent that side of Bianca's character which could be contrasted with the "serene" portrait at Strawberry Hill; and such a contrast produced a dramatic mixture which to a considerable extent I believe reflected in the novel in general. The figure of Bianca is representative of the complexity of emotions and suggestions that a vision could excite in Walpole's mind. She certainly touched deep into the recesses of his soul, attracted and terrified by its own dreams, at once the creator and prisoner of them.

This interpretation of the novel's character texture of course does not imply that all had come out of Walpole's mind strictly in the order used here for practical reasons. In fact it is difficult to believe that Walpole's visionary energy developed in any systematic way. "If I write tolerably, it must be at once; I can neither mend nor add" he said once (19), a fact which indicates how the most disparate personal and intellectual experiences of his could eventually converge on the written page. For example, in 1764, the year The Castle of Otranto was conceived and written, possibly just before the occurrence of the dreadful dream which inspired it, Walpole visited the annual exhibition of the Society of Artists. In the printed catalogue of this exhibition (20) Walpole marked a cross beside the name of "Mr. West". Benjamin West, then only twenty-six, exhibited there three pictures, two of which are describedas "Angelica and Medoro, an historical picture" and "It's companion, Cymon and Iphigenia". Now, though he did not like the execution of the pictures (21), the fact that Walpole saw them that year is rather interesting. In the novel Manfred "sacrifices" his daughter

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(19) To Gray, February 18, 1768.

(20) Now at Farmington.

(21) Beside them Walpole noted "These are much admired, but are very tawdry in the manner of Baroccio". At the bottom of the page there are also some biographical remarks on the young West.

Matilda in the church, and in a way that closely recalls ~~reminds of~~ Agamemnon's cruel sacrifice of Iphigenia; in Euripides's version of the myth she was in fact idealized by surviving it and being "transformed" in a way. The story of Angelica and Medoro, on the other hand, is one of unnatural love between a Christian and a heathen — a passion which is the first cause of Orlando's madness (22). The real point, however, is finding out to what extent in Walpole's imagination existed central figures around which he eventually did in effect aggregate such materials; in other terms, to what extent the interest in personages like King Theodore, Sigismunda or Bianca Capello determined the general character structure of The Castle of Otranto. In this sense, quite apart from any evaluation of its intrinsic aesthetic consistency, the novel can be understood and appreciated as a remarkable document of the way in which an eighteenth century mind, among the changing conflicts of the time, organized its imaginative and emotional resources in a literary context. For Walpole, the boy who had once pictured himself "living disguised in an humble vale", reality had with all probability lost its once solid coherence: it could be grasped just as mere vision, the extraordinary and intricate

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(22) Walpole was well acquainted with the poems of Ariosto and Tasso, which he probably read in the original when, together with Gray, he studied Italian at Cambridge under the guidance of Hieronimo Bartolomeo Piazza (cf. E. H. Thorne, "Italian Teachers and Teaching in Eighteenth Century England", English Miscellany, 9, 1958, p. 148).

palace of his fancy he had been long in search of and was to be finally caught by,

> "Quivi habitan le maghe, che incantando
> "Fan traveder e traudir ciascuno ...

Later, he only came to find there, grotesque <u>serendipity</u> again, his own towering nightmare of "the house of torture and the abyss of woe":

> ...
> I met a peasant, and enquir'd my way:
> The carle, not rude of speech, but like the tenant
> Of some night-haunted ruin, bore an aspect
> Of horror, worn to habitude. He bade
> God bless me; and pass'd on. I urg'd him farther:
> Good master, cried he, go not to the castle;
> There sorrow ever dwells and moping misery.
> I press'd him yet — None there, said he, are welcome ...
> (<u>The Mysterious Mother</u>, I, i)

CHAPTER II

I

One of the most intriguing elements of Walpole's "gothicness" is his ~~scarce~~ scant appreciation of Vanbrugh's architecture. Those who are acquainted with his works today generally feel that, of all baroque architects, Vanbrugh was the one who somehow anticipated the Gothic Revival: his own London Castle-house, built in 1717, is the clearest example of his introduction of external elements of medievalism in his style. On the other hand, Sir Joshua Reynolds, whom Walpole admired, praised Vanbrugh. He coupled him with Charles Perrault, equally misunderstood by his contemporaries (1). The parallel is a good one: had Boileau seen Vanbrugh's buildings, he would not have admired them; no doubt he would have given them the same kind of treatment that he reserved for George Scudéry's Alaric, a poem that in his judgement

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(1) In one of his discourses at the Royal Academy Reynolds expressed himself in these terms:

> ... To speak, then, of Vanbrugh in the language of a painter, he had originality of invention, he understood light and shadow, and had a great skill in composition ... His fate was that of the great Perrault; both were the objects of the petulant sarcasms of factious men of letters; and both have left some of the fairest ornaments which to this day decorate their several countries; the façade of the Louvre, Blenheim, and Castle Howard. (Discourse XIII)

Boileau attacked Perrault in the Art Poétique, IV:

> Dans Florence jadis vivait un Medecin
> Sçavant hableur, dit-on, et celebre assassin ...

undoubtedly very "gothique" (2):

> Un Auteur quelquefois trop plein de son objet
> Jamais sans l'épuiser n'abandonne un sujet.
> S'il rencontre un Palais, il m'en dépeint la face:
> Il me promene après de terrasse en terrasse.
> Icy s'offre un perron, là regne un corridor,
> Là ce balcon s'enferme en un balustre d'or;
> Il compte des plafonds les ronds et les oveles.
> Ce ne sont que Festons, ce ne sont qu'Astragales. (°)
> Je saute vingt feüillets pour en trouver la fin,
> Et je me sauve à peine au travers du jardin.
> Fuyez de ces auteurs l'abondance stérile,
> Et ne vous chargez point d'un detail inutile ...
> (Boileau's note: (°) vers de Scuderi)
> (Art Poétique, I)

If the romances of Mme de Scudéry, George's sister, represented the very early literary enthusiasms of Walpole's, it is also true that he had great esteem for Boileau. It is quite clear that he followed him as far as his criticism of Mannerism and Baroque was concerned. In his Anecdotes of Painting in England he wrote in fact that:

> ... What Pope said of his comedies, is much more applicable to his buildings —
> "How Van wants grace!"
> Grace! He wanted eyes, he wanted all ideas of proportion, convenience, propriety. He undertook vast designs, and composed heaps of littleness. The style of no age, no country, appears in his works; he broke through all rule, and compensated for it by no imagination. He seems to have hollowed quarries rather than to have built houses; and should his edifices, as they seem forced to do, outlast all record, what architecture will posterity think was that of their ancestors? The laughers, his contemporaries, said, that having been confined in the Bastile, he had drawn his notions of building from that fortified dungeon ...
> (op. cit., XVI)

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(2) Alaric ou Rome vaincue, 1654, in ten books (Walpole owned a copy of the book, which stood on the same shelf with a Histoire générale des Goths by Jornandes, 1603) (cf. Hazen, nos. 1050, 1032).

"The splendid palaces of the great are often no other that Newgate with the mask on" Fielding remarked once (3): but I do not think Walpole disliked this particular aspect of Vanbrugh achitecture after all. He would have accepted the general impression of Blenheim and Castle Howard as ~~being~~ "fortified dungeons" ~~in Blenheim or Castle Howard,~~ had they not been "baroque","chargées de détails inutiles". They really appeared to him as "heaps of littleness". This last expression is interesting, because it is clearly taken from Pope,who had equally criticized Vanbrugh (4), and shows that Walpole depended on him in this case, rather than on Boileau. And Pope is representative of an

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(3) Quoted in C. E. Jones, "The English Novel: a 'Critical' View, 1756-1785, II", Modern Languages Quarterly, 1948, p. 221.

(4) Pope visited Blenheim of which in one of his letters he says "I never saw so great a thing with so much littleness in it ... the whole is a most expensive absurdity; and the Duke of Shrewsbury gave a true character of it, when he said, it was a great Quarry of Stones above ground." (Correspondence of Alexander Pope, ed. by G. Sherburn, Oxford, 1956, 1, p. 432: "Pope to Mrs.——, [September 1717?]"). The same concept is repeated in the Fourth Moral Essay, where it is clear he is referring to Blenheim in:

> Lo, what huge heaps of littleness around!
> The whole, a labour'd quarry above ground ...
> (Epistle IV, ll. 109-10)

In the same poem he again criticized Vanbrugh in connection with Bubb Dodington ("Bubo"), for whom the architect had built both town and country houses (cf. l. 20); just a little above this there is also a hint concerning the Walpole family(ll. 17-18):

> Heaven visits with a taste the wealthy fool,
> And need no rod but Ripley with a rule.

Ripley was a carpenter who, having married one of Sir Robert Walpole's servants, was made Comptroller of the Board of Works; he was the architect of Houghton, the residence of Sir Robert, and of Wolterton, the house of his brother Horace.

intermediate phase. Taste indeed rapidly changed during the first half of the eighteenth century, and like Wren and Hawksmoor, Vanbrugh became unpopular even before his death. Then, when the first impulse of the reaction against him was spent, he gradually came back in fashion; some people of the young generation, Robert Adam among them, admired him for his "movement". Walpole did not go as far as Adam. Vanbrugh's grandeur and magnificence though "broke through all rule" yet "compensated for it by no imagination", and this was perhaps for him the main fault — the lack of "fancy". The style of Strawberry Hill makes an apparent contrast with that of a man whose epitaph dictated by witty Dr. Evans ~~sounded~~ was:

"Lie heavy on him, earth for he
"Laid many a heavy load on thee.

Walpole's "gothic" castle was all lightness and transparence (though not brought to the extremity later reached by William Beckford with Fonthill, which collapsed after a few years). That is exactly the reverse of Vanbrugh's severe and baroque architectural modes of expression, which in Walpole's mind indeed turned into accessory instruments, accidental forms of a substance literary at its roots. And this is in my opinion what, in spite of his ~~disgust for~~ dislike of conformity, makes Walpole seem to agree on principle with the taste of "men of taste"of his age.

In this light Walpole's imaginative sources appear to be quite independent from the development of Mannerist (and Baroque) taste: notwithstanding Bishop Hurd's admiration for it, Tasso's "éclatante folie" (5) was not the same as Walpole's idea of "fancy". For Walpole Tasso "had a thousand puerilities". The interesting factor in this divergence is that the structure of The Castle of Otranto is also explained by it. In the novel Walpole brought in the foreground what normally was left in the background, and exalted form over substance. In his Life of Walpole Scott remarked that Walpole is not interested in descriptions at all (6). This is very true, and in my opinion it depends on the simple fact that in The Castle of Otranto there is no consistent background capable of being described, but setting forms the whole texture upon which the

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(5) Again in Chant I of the Art Poétique Boileau warns:

Evitons ces exces. Laissons à l'Italie
De tous ces faux brillans l'éclatante folie ...

Boileau openly attacked Tasso and Ariosto (cf. ibid., Chant III) and in his Satire IX criticized those "sots de qualité" who preferred "le clinquant du Tasse, à tout l'or de Virgile"; Mme de Sevigné ironically reacted saying later that "Le clinquant du Tasse m'a charmée" (letter to her daughter, Juillet 23, 1677).

(6) Aversion towards descriptions was however part of the established contemporary taste as well. In his Laokoon (1766) G. E. Lessing remarked that: "Der männliche Pope sahe auf die malerischen Versuche seiner poetischen Kindheit mit grosser Geringschätzung zurück. Er verlangte ausdrücklich, daß wer den Namen eines Dichters nicht unwürdig führen wolle, der Schilderungssucht so früh wie möglich entsagen müsse, und erklärte ein bloß malendes Gedichte für ein Gastgebot auf lauter Brünen" and quoted from the Prologue to the Satires, v. 340:

That not in Fancy's maze he wander'd long
But stoop'd to Truth, and moraliz'd his song.

(Laokoon, XVII: G. E. Lessing, Werke, München, 1974, 6, p.114).

novel is based. I shall try to specify better what this actual reversal means in terms of narrative technique. The title of the novel, for instance, "The Castle of Otranto", is very indicative of such a reversal; it makes clear from the beginning that, more than any individual character, the relevant centre of the story is a building. This was part of a conscious choice; Walpole himself (disguised as "William Marshall", the translator) says:

> Though the machinery is invention, and the names of the actors imaginary, I cannot but believe that the groundwork of the story is founded on truth. The scene is laid in some real castle. The author seems frequently, without design, to describe particular parts. The chamber, says he, on the right hand; the door on the left hand; the distance from the chapel to Conrad's apartment: these and other passages are strong presumptions that the author had some certain building in his eye ...
> (Preface to the First Edition)

We have already seen that the "castle" is in fact Strawberry Hill; but to know, as we do, that "'The recess of the oriel window' into which Manfred drew Bianca is doubtless the passage into the Refectory" (7) indeed does not increase a great deal our critical understanding of the novel. When Walpole insisted on the fact that he "had some certain building in his eye", he just wanted to stress the non-secondary rôle played within the narrative framework by a precise element, setting, which traditionally had

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(7) W. S. Lewis, The Genesis..., p. 90.

been decorative, and anyhow accessory to the plot. In The Castle of Otranto it would be rather difficult to imagine how the plot itself could possibly function without the Castle, whereas it does not certainly require a great effort to admit that the "originality" of Sir Charles Grandison ~~consists not~~ does not consist in the details of the protagonist's habitation. Even in the most intense sentimental scenes of that novel setting is hardly anything more than a pleasant tapestry hung behind the liveliest conversation-pieces. And when the heroine is kidnapped by the villainous baronet and locked up in an isolated cottage where a cruel monk tries to perform the wedding ceremonies, the episode, though suggestive of Gothic liturgies to come, has nothing of the atmosphere of terror created by that typical feeling of constraint Walpole is such a master in conveying to the reader. With Richardson we feel moved for the heroine, and are shocked by the immoral behaviour of the scoundrel: but it could happen anywhere, and whether it be a cottage or a forest is not really significant to the action itself. Much the same happens in Fielding's novels; for Fielding too, though place and the town-country contrast are of course important with him, made little or no use of setting as an independent narrative element. It should be even more clear now why Walpole felt so attracted towards an artist like Salvator Rosa, who made such an extensive use of landscape and atmosphere. But Walpole went also beyond that, and it seems to me that his reversal of the traditional narrative planes, which indeed is the distinctive factor of his

gothicism when compared with either Baroque or Classicism, can be today positively regarded as a technical innovation of remarkable consequence for the subsequent development of the novel.

In one of the very first essays concerning the Gothic Novel (8) C. F. McIntyre suggested the derivation of gothicism from Jacobean horrors, and to confirm this thesis quoted a passage from Vernon Lee's interpretation of Webster, Ford and their contemporaries:

> "The world of these great poets is not the open world with its light and its air, its purifying storms and lightnings; it is the darkened Italian palace, with its wrought iron bars preventing escape; its embroidered carpets muffling the footsteps; its hidden, suddenly yawning trap-doors concealing masked ruffians; its garlands of poisoned flowers; its long suites of untenanted darkened rooms, through which the wretch is pursued by the half-crazed murderer; while below, in the cloistered court, the clanking armour and stamping horses, and above, in the carved and gilded hall, the viols and lutes and cornets make a cheery triumphant concert, and drown the cries of the victim."

Reading Vernon Lee's charming description, while surely relishing the intense delights of this imaginary Palace of Horrors, one also begins to feel uneasy with it if it is turned, as McIntyre proposes, into the natural background of Gothic Novels. As far as Walpole is

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(8) C. F. McIntyre,"Were the 'Gothic Novels' Gothic?", PMLA, 36, 1921, pp. 644-67.

concerned, it would not do, for Walpole's means of stirring horror are much simpler and cut down a lot of unnecessary blood. But even later and less sparing apprentices in Gothic, blood-curdling "Monk" Lewis, for instance, undoubtedly do not depend on this sort of background in any immediate way. In fact I do not believe "gothicism" can be thoroughly explained by the mere connection with"the later career of the Elizabethan villain-hero" (9). The influence of Elizabethan and Jacobean drama is certainly a major ingredient of these writers' cultural and imaginative background, but, in my view, it operates at a general level and not as a specific source of "gothicism". Apart from the apparent coincidence of a great number of details which it would be incorrect to call "gothic" and which are subsidiary to more central themes anyway, the dramatic essence of the greatest Elizabethan plays is the continuous inward moral debate, an ethical aspect almost totally absent from the great majority of Gothic Novels.

When we speak of gothicism in <u>The Castle of Otranto</u> I think we speak of a precise and distinctive element which permeates the novel and is quite visible in passages like this:

> — Yet where conceal herself! How avoid the pursuit he would infallibly make throughout the castle! As these thoughts

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(9) Idem, "The Later Career of the Elizabethan Villain-Hero", <u>PMLA</u>, 40, 1925, pp. 874-80.

> passed rapidly trough her mind, she recollected a subterraneous passage which led from the vaults of the church of saint Nicholas ... In this resolution, she seized a lamp that burned at the foot of the staircase, and hurried towards the secret passage.
> . The lower part of the castle was hollowed into several intricate cloisters; and it was not easy for one under so much anxiety to find the door that opened into the cavern. An awful silence reigned throughout those subterraneous regions, except now and then some blasts of wind that shook the doors she had passed, and which grating on the rusty hinges were re-echoed through that long labyrinth of darkness. Every murmur struck her with new terror; — yet more she dreaded to hear the wrathful voice of Manfred urging his domestics to pursue her. She trod as softly as impatience would give her leave, — yet frequently stopped and listened to hear if she was followed. In one of those moments she thought she heard a sigh. She shuddered, and recoiled a few paces. In a moment she thought she heard the step of some person ...
> (Chapter I)

Similar passages are obvious in other gothic novels and the reader of romantic literature is familiar with them. The point is that in <u>The Castle of Otranto</u> for the first time we find extensively applied that peculiar characteristic which prevails in most instances of the literary genre later called <u>romance</u>. In my opinion this is not (or not solely) the esthetizing nostalgia of the type celebrated by Vernon Lee, but the prominent rôle here assigned to <u>architectural framework</u> within the narrative structure.

This factor might be compared to the similar technique introduced into landscape painting by Salvator Rosa and Claude: in their pictures human figures are not important for themselves but as part of landscape. As E. W. Manwaring has stressed (10) Rosa, Claude and Poussin had a strong influence on the development of English taste in the eighteenth century: Thomson's poetry, for instance, is an illustration of how such a technique could be applied to literature. Walpole of course admired both Rosa and Thomson, a circumstance which clarifies the function of most of his stylistic choices. The rôle played by landscape in The Seasons is very close to that played by the castle in Walpole's novel. Indeed there are some differences too: we do not have in Walpole just a prevalence of ~~dilated~~ background over character and action, which in The Castle of Otranto are as important and independent as they were in earlier novels. Architectural framework does not become the sole protagonist, but it does become the aggregating component, the stylistic device on which most of the narrative tension depends.

That is quite clear in The Castle of Otranto and in fact later developed as a constant of "gothicism", as confirmed by countless examples in the works of its

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(10) Cf. Italian Landscape..., passim.

various practitioners (11). Architectural framework

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(11) When Jane Austen wrote her well known satyre of gothicism, Northanger Abbey (probably as early as 1794: cf. C. S. Eden, "The Composition of Northanger Abbey", Review of English Studies, XIX, 1968, pp. 279-87), she perfectly understood that the chief ingredient of this genre relied on the prominent rôle played by setting against action; and there she struck, intelligently concentrating her attack on that weak point, as contrasted with prevalent character structure:

> ... After a very short search you will discover a division in the tapestry so artfully constructed as to defy the minutest inspection, and opening it, a door will immediately appear — which door being only secured by massy bars and a padlock, you will, after a few efforts, succeed in opening, — and, with your lamp in your hand, will pass through it into a small vaulted room."
>
> "No, indeed; I should be too much frightened to do any such thing."
>
> "What! not when Dorothy has given you to understand that there is a secret subterraneous communication between your apartment and the chapel of St Anthony, scarcely two miles off — Could you shrink from so simple an adventure? No, no, you will proceed into this small vaulted room, and through this into several others, without perceiving anything very remarkable in either. In one perhaps there may be a dagger, in another a few drops of blood, and in a third the remains of some instrument of torture; but there being nothing in all this out of the common way, and your lamp being nearly exhausted, you will return towards your own apartment. In repassing through the small vaulted room, however, your eyes will be attracted towards a large, old-fashioned cabinet of ebony and gold, which, though narrowly examining the forniture before, you had passed unnoticed. Impelled

is typical, for instance, of the quite popular horror

> by an irresistible presentiment, you will eagerly advance to it, unlock its folding doors, and search into every drawer; — but for some time without discovering anything of importance — perhaps nothing but a considerable hoard of diamonds. At last, however, by touching a secret spring, an inner compartment will open — a roll of paper appears: you seize it — it contains many sheets of manuscript — you hasten with the precious treasure into your own chamber, but scarcely have you been able to decipher 'Oh! thou — whomsoever thou mayst be, into whose hands these memoirs of the wretched Matilda may fall' — when your lamp suddenly expires in the socket, and leaves you in total darkness."
> (Northanger Abbey, XX)

This is not the account of how the mysterious "Original Italian of Onuphrio Muralto" was discovered, nor is the frightened discoverer another antiquarian still in the apprenticeship: she is Catherine Morland, Jane Austen's would-be "gothic" heroine, and the "roll of paper", as everybody knows and Catherine to her shame, and the reader's amusement, eventually discovers in the famous climatic scene of the novel, is no more than "an inventory of linen" in each sheet whereof "shirts, stockings, cravats and waistcoats faced her". In her severe judgement at the end of the novel, Jane Austen insists on "nature", saying: " Charming as were all Mrs Radcliffe's works, and charming even as were the works of all her imitators, it was not in them perhaps that human nature at least in the midland counties of England, was to be looked for ...".
The point is that Walpole's (and Radcliffe's too) sublimated idea of "nature" was not concerned with Austen's psychological realism at all. Walpole, however, is not openly mentioned in the novel; Jane Austen actually intended satirizing just the excesses of minor gothic hacks. Her "canon" specifically condemns seven contemporary popular novels (most of them published by the notorious "Minerva Press"): Mrs'Parsons' Castle of Wolfenbach (1793)and The Mysterious Warning (1796), R. M. Roche's Clermont (1798), L. Flammenberg's

machines invented by the famous Mrs. Radcliffe:

> With light and hasty steps she passed through the long galleries, while the feeble glimmer of the lamp she carried only shewed the gloom around her, and the passing air threatened to extinguish it. The lonely silence, that reigned in this part of the castle, awed her; now and then, indeed she heard a faint peal of laughter rise from a remote part of the edifice, where the servants were assembled, but it was soon lost, and a kind of breathless stillness remained. As she passed the suite of rooms which she had visited in the morning, her eyes glanced fearfully on the door, and she almost fancied she heard murmuring sounds within, but she paused not a moment to enquire.
> (Ann Radcliffe, The Mysteries of Udolpho, Oxford, ed., 1970, II, vi, p. 253)

Much the same mechanism, of course subtler and more refined than here, is positively evident at later stages of gothic development as well. It is quite recognizable, for example, in the complex and mature fabric elaborated by Charles Maturin, whose technique and style, though more abstract and rarefied, are still conscious of architectural elements — in fact, passages like the following are very frequent in his Melmoth (1820):

> As they approached, in spite of the darkness of the night, the ruin began to assume a distinct and characteristic appearance, and Isidora's heart beat less fearfully, when

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The Necromancer: or the Tale of the Black Forest (translated from German by P. Teuthold, 1794), F. Lathom's The Midnight Bell (1798), Mrs Sleath's The Orphan of the Rhine (1798) and the Marquis of Grosse's Horrid Mysteries (translated from German by P. Will, 1796). On the subject in general see: M. Sadleir, "The Northanger Novels", English Association Pamphlet, 68, 1927, and of course Montague Summer's fundamental study The Gothic Quest, 1938.

she could ascertain, from the remains of the tower and spire, the vast Eastern window, and the crosses still visible on every ruined pinnacle and pediment, like religion triumphant amid grief and decay, that this had been a building destined for sacred purposes. A narrow path, that seemed to wind round the edifice, conducted them to a front which overlooked an extensive cemetery, at the extremity of which Melmoth pointed out to her an indistinct object, which he said was the hermitage, and to which he would hasten to intreat the hermit, who was also a priest, to unite them ...

At this moment they were ascending the fractured and rugged steps that led to the entrance of the chapel, now they passed under the dark and ivied porch, — now they entered the chapel, which, even in darkness, appeared to the eyes of Isidora ruinous and deserted. "He has not yet arrived," said Melmoth in a disturbed voice; "Wait there a moment." And Isidora, enfeebled by terror beyond the power of resistence, or even intreaty, saw him depart without an effort to detain him. Left thus alone, she glanced her eyes around, and a faint and watery moon-beam breaking at that moment trough the heavy clouds, threw its light on the objects around her. There was a window, but the stained glass of its compartments, broken and discoloured, held rare and precarious place between the fluted shafts of stone. Ivy and moss darkened the fragments of glass, and clung round the clustered pillars. Beneath were the remains of an altar and crucifix, but they seemed like the rude work of the first hands that had ever been employed on such subjects. There was also a marble vessel, that seemed designed to contain holy water, but it was empty, — and there was a stone bench, on which Isidora sunk down in weariness, but without hope of rest. Once or twice she looked up to the window, through which the moon beams fell, with that instinctive feeling of her former existence, that made companions of the elements, and of the beautiful and glorious family of heaven, under whose burning

> light she had once imagined the moon was her parent, and the stars her kindred. She gazed on the window still, like one who loved the light of nature, and drank health and truth from its beams, till a figure passing slowly but visibly before the pillared shafts, disclosed to her view the face of that ancient servant, whose features she remembered well. He seemed to regard her with a look, first of intent contemplation — then of compassion, — the figure then passed from before the ruined window, and a faint and wailing cry rung in the ears of Isidora as it disappeared.
> (Charles Maturin, Melmoth the Wanderer, Oxford ed., 1968, IV, xxiv, pp. 392-94)

It is not possible here to thoroughly examine the whole range of the various ways and degrees in which this typical attitude towards setting and atmosphere is realized by "gothic" authors: suffice it to say here that in the works of Beckford or Lewis, William Godwin or Mary Shelley and others, we do find much the same tendency, namely what we may call architectural dimension in literature. This was by no means new, but it became extremely popular towards the end of the eighteenth century (12), merging then into the

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(12) Cf. W. H. Smith, Architecture in English Fiction, New Haven, 1934, which is a study of the use of background in popular eighteenth century novels and romances; Smith says:

> When one remembers that Charlotte Smith alone described 28 buildings in her novels, and that The Italian mentions or describes 14 separate structures, and that the year 1798 witnessed the publication of at least 14 novels with architectural setting, one can form some idea of the vast increase in production which took place in these years [1788-1800].
> (op. cit., p. 137)

more complex Romantic movement, whereto it brought a considerable stylistic contribution. The connnection with the Romantics is too well known to be in any danger of being underrated; on the other hand we should avoid falling into that much abused cliché of criticism which enrols Walpole amongst the conscripts of the ghostly préromantique army. If ever any such a tribe existed, it is very likely that Walpole would have refused to join it. His subtle eighteenth century mind (13), which took such pains to draw the line between himself and Tasso, or Vanbrugh and other baroque "Goths", and, at the same time, attacked Classicism, was too independent, I feel, to quietly submit (had he had any choice) to the rôle of honorary paternity which the romantic Epigoni inscribed on The Castle of Otranto.

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(13) This is part of the "Portrait" of Walpole (Addition au Portrait, 30 Novembre 1966) written by his dear friend Mme Du Deffand:

> ... Vous êtes naturellement fort gay, mais vous êtes né fort sensible, et la sensibilité nuit souvent à la gaîté. Pour remediér à cet inconvenient vous cherchez de moyens extraordinaires pour vous occuper et vous amuser. Vous bâtissez des chateaux hétéroclites, vous élevez des monuments à un monarque (°) de brigands, vous jouez à la grande patience, etc. etc. Enfin, vous donnez dans des singularités qui rassemble un peu à la folie, et qui sont cependant un effet de votre raison.
>
> (°) H. W.'s note: Le roi Théodore.

(Corr., 8, Appendix 4, pp. 72-73).

II

Welch dunkel hier! would the occasional visitor exclaim when received by Walpole at Strawberry Hill for the first time:

> You first enter a small gloomy hall, paved with hexagon tyles, and lighted by two narrow windows ... This hall is united with the staircase, and both are hung with gothic paper... In the well of the staircase, by a cord of black and yellow, hangs a gothic lanthorn...
> (Descr., p. 4)

In this melancholy Carcere oscura one would perhaps let his fancy wonder and imagine Pope's

> Now glaring fiends, and snakes on rolling spires
> Pale spectres, gaping tombs, and purple fires:
> Now lakes of liquid gold, Elysian scenes,
> And crystal domes, and angels in machines.

Walpole called this Entrance Hall "the Paraclete". There, the wretched Matilda, had she survived the fury of her father, might perhaps be pictured in Walpole's mind to implore the tyrant in the words of fair Rosamond:

> Though I live wretched , let me live.
> In some deep dungeon let me lie,
> covered from every human eye,
> Banished the day, debarred the light;
> Where shades of everlasting night
> May this unhappy face disarm,
> And cast a veil o'er every charm...
> (Joseph Addison, Rosamond. An Opera, 1707, II; vi)

I think the first contact with Strawberry Hill was like entering a theatre. As a sort of live stage it almost seemed to have been set for the sympathetic observer to dream of winding staircases leading from the darkness of a cave up to Chismonda's apartment, as in fact it happens in the story narrated by Boccaccio

in the Decameron (1), or, plunging deeper into those "subterraneous regions" down the "long labyrinth of darkness" of the "hollowed" foundations of the prince's castle, imagined to represent the place where Theodore

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(1) Era allato al palagio del prenze una grotta cavata nel monte, di lunghissimi tempi davanti fatta, nella qual grotta dava alquanto lume uno spiraglio fatto per forza nel monte, il quale, per ciò che abbandonata era la grotta, quasi da pruni e da erbe di sopra natevi era riturato; e in questa grotta per una segreta scala, la quale in una delle camere terrene del palagio, la quale la donna teneva, si poteva andare, come che da un fortissimo uscio serrata fosse. Ed era sì fuori delle menti di tutti questa scala, per ciò che di grandissimi tempi davanti usata non s'era, che quasi niuno che ella vi fosse si ricordava; ma Amore, agli occhi del quale niuna cosa è sì segreta che non pervenga, l'avea nella memoria tornata alla innamorata donna.
(loc. cit.)
(Translation: Beside the prince's palace there was a cave dug into the mountain that had been made a long time before, which cave received considerable light from an artificial gap in the mountain that, since the cave was in fact abandoned, was almost blocked up by the overgrowth of balckthorns and grass; and this cave could be reached by a secret staircase, which was in one of the palace ground floor rooms, the same where the lady dwelled, but it was locked by an exceedingly strong door. This staircase was so far from anybody's mind, as it was indeed very long since it had been used at all, that almost nobody remembered it was there; but Love, from whose eyes nothing can be secret, had brought it back to the memory of the enamoured lady).

At Strawberry Hill there was in fact something that looked like a secret winding staircase: it led from the passage of the "Great Cloyster" up to the "Beauclerc Closet", Walpole's secret room.

and Isabella met for the first time:

> "... It gave her a kind of momentary joy to perceive an imperfect ray of clouded moonshine gleam from the roof of the vault, which seemed to be fallen in, and from whence hung a fragment of earth or building, she could not distinguish which, that appeared to have been crushed inwards. She advanced eagerly towards this chasm, when she discerned a human form standing close against the wall.
>
> She shrieked, believing it the ghost of her betrothed Conrad. The figure advancing, said in a submissive voice, Be not alarmed, lady; I will not injure you ... — Oh! said Isabella, hastily interrupting him, help me but to find a trap-door that must be hereabout, and it is the greatest service you can do me; for I have not a minute to lose. Saying these words she felt about on the pavement, and directed the stranger to search likewise for a smooth piece of brass inclosed in one of the stones. That, said she, is the lock, which opens with a spring, of which I know the secret ... Generous youth, said Isabella, how shall I ever requite — As she uttered these words, a ray of moonshine streaming through a cranny of the ruin above shone directly on the lock they sought — Oh, transport! said Isabella, here is the trap--door! and taking out a key, she touched the spring, which starting aside discovered an iron ring. Lift up the door, said the princess. The stranger obeyed; and beneath appeared some stone steps descending into a vault totally dark. We must go down here, said Isabella: follow me; dark and dismal as it is, we cannot miss our way ... Saying this, she descended the steps precipitately; and as the stranger hastened to follow her, he let the door slip out of his hands: it fell, and the spring closed over it. He tried in vain to open it, not having observed Isabella's method of touching the spring, nor had he many moments to make an essay ... (Chapter I)

From the Entrance Hall the visitor was then shown upstairs, along the great staircase and the trophies which we shall have occasion to examine later. The Gallery was perhaps the most scenic and also favourite part of the Castle; there could be admired most pieces of the collection, the picture of Villiers de Lisle Adam, the hero of Rhodes (2), and of similar odd personages, heroes including the one who suggested the ghost of Alfonso, as Walpole confessed to Cole in the letter where he told him about "the dream":

> ... 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 you not recollect the portrait of Lord Falkland all in white in my gallery?
> (loc. cit.)

And then of course there was the Tribune, or Chapel, the sacred "shrine" of Walpole's world of visions, the very "stage" of his intimate life.

At Strawberry Hill one indeed could not avoid being the subject of varying emotions, in a way that recalls Hume's concept of personal identity:

> The mind is a kind of theatre, where several perceptions successively make their appearance; pass, re-pass, glide away, and mingle in an infinite variety of postures and situations ...
> (A Treatise of Human Nature, 1739, 1, IV, vi)

In his Thoughts on Tragedy Walpole affirmed that "I love decorations whenever they produce unexpected

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(2) "Philip Villiers de Lisle Adam, the last grand master of Rhodes, which he defended two years against Soliman the Magnificent and a prodigious army: a head" (Descr., p. 71)

coups de théatre"(3); and maybe that was how much of the "decoration" of Strawberry Hill was conceived, to strike the imagination rather than to please the eye. Though he once said that operas bored him, Walpole kept in the Great Bedchamber Hogarth's original sketch for The Beggar's Opera. It is interesting to think that he liked to place the scene of a prison near his bed. We shall discuss this later, but here the relevant point to make is that Walpole was considerably interested in stage-effects. There is a set of enthusiastic letters to him from the young Gray describing the stage-effects of various performances (4); for example King Arthur by Dryden and Purcell:

> The enchanted part of the play is not machinery, but actual magic. The second scene is a British temple, enough to make one go back a thousand years and really be in ancient Britain. The songs are all churchmusic, and in every one Mrs Chambers sung the chief part, accompanied with Roarings, squallings and squekations dire.(°) ... Just after the scene opens, and shows a view of arched rocks covered with ice and snow to the end of the stage; between the arches are upon pedestals of snow eight images of old men and women frozen into statues, with icicles hanging about them and almost hid in frost ...
> (From Gray, January 3, 1736)

(°)"Gorgons, and Hydras and Chimeras dire"(Paradise Lost, II, 628

(3) Works, 2, p. 309.

(4) Handel's Atlanta is described by Gray on June 11, 1736; on October 6, 1736 he says of The Way of the World: "... the machine broke t'other night; the house was in amaze for above a minute, and I dare say a great many in the galleries thought it very dexterously performed, and that they screamed as naturally as heart could wish, till they found it was no jest, by their calling for surgeons ...".

No doubt machinery enchanted Walpole no less than Gray. I think that the influence of this inclination of Walpole's towards pure scenery is felt throughout <u>The Castle of Otranto</u> too. A scene like that between Isabella and Theodore down the vaults of the castle, for instance, in fact functions within an atmosphere which is perfectly theatrical: the narration, including the humorous element in it, is a sequence of visions that "pass, re-pass, glide away", while devices like the trap-door or the "cranny" above from subsidiary tend to become inherent to it.

> —— A clap of thunder at that instant shook the castle to its foundations; the earth rocked, and the clank of more than mortal armour was heard behind. Frederic and Jerome thought the last day was at hand. The latter, forcing Theodore along with them, rushed into the court. The moment Theodore appeared, the walls of the castle behind Manfred were thrown down with mighty force, and the form of Alfonso, dilated to an immense magnitude, appeared in the centre of the ruins. Behold in Theodore, the true heir of Alfonso! said the vision: and having pronounced those words, accompanied by a clap of thunder, it ascended solemnly towards heaven, where the clouds parting asunder, the form of saint Nicholas was seen; and receiving Alfonso's shade, they were soon wrapt from mortal eyes in a blaze of glory.
> (Chapter V)

This scene, the final scene in the novel, very clearly owes much to the contemporary taste for stage-effects; one almost thinks of the magnificent structures devised by Juvarra or the Bibienas, or of the more

dramatic scenes later designed by L. J. Desprez, like that for the last act of Voltaire's Semiramis. Just before his death, Walpole received from the elder Greatheed four drawings by his son from The Castle of Otranto: the subject of one of them is in fact the final catastrophe (5), and a comparison with current stage-sketches immediately reveals their close relationship. This is a demonstration that, still in the late eighteenth century, the novel found a type of response immediately related to the general reader's familiarity with theatrical expedients. In other terms, people had become accustomed to receive narrative contents as mainly visual and dramatic experiences. Very likely Walpole himself "saw" the scenes of his novel before writing them, and he saw them with a theatrical sensibility. Bishop Warburton was the first who remarked that "the plan of The Castle

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(5) See Plate IV.

Walpole liked the drawings and bound them in his copy of the Bodoni edition of the novel. He wrote to the elder Greatheed (February 22, 1796):

> I am so delighted and think myself so much honoured by having contributed to inspire young Mr Greatheed with such speaking conceptions, that you cannot be surprised, if after meditating for above two days on the pleasure they gave me, I cannot sit contented with a transient view, and with the bare recollection of every circumstance and attitude that struck me — and yet could I design at all like your son, I am certain that I could sketch out at least the disposition of every one of the four drawings, and of every one of the principal characters ...

The figures in Plate IV are derived largely from Raphael, The Blinding of Elymas and Heliodorus principally

Plate IV. One of B. Greatheed drawings for
The Castle of Otranto.

of Otranto was regularly a drama". Walpole denied this, yet the insistence on dialogue in the novel, the absence of purely descriptive passages, the typical climactic structure turning within the five chapters as within a five-act piece, the rhythmic rotation of the characters, all confirm that Warburton was right in his observation.

Walpole himself, after all, in both "Prefaces" made a large use of terms like "actors", "stage", "machinery" when referring to specific aspects of his work. He even openly states there that "the rules of drama are almost observed throughout the conduct of the piece". That he loved the theatre was no mystery: wherever he found himself he went to the play, in Paris, during his Italian tour, in the little towns near Strawberry Hill, even in fitted-up barns, or in the great houses of his friends. His library could boast one of the most complete collections of contemporary theatre, amounting, after his death, to some fifty-nine bound volumes which contained about five hundred and fifty different plays: the familiarity with which he often treats the subject in his letters suggests that he had read most of them. Now, all this shows that there was a link, and perhaps a quite conscious link, between Walpole's rich experience of drama and the inspiration of The Castle of Otranto, at least from the technical point of view. I do not think, however, that such a link is to be understood as mere uncritical transposition of external decorative elements. In an essay on Walpole's

interest in "the theatre of George III" C. B. Hogan reaches conclusions that, though I much approve their premises, do not find me in complete agreement:

> The Gothic absurdities of The Castle of Otranto are appendages. They are not really inside the story, but are affixed, true gargoyles, on the outside of it. The skeleton, the statue that has a nosebleed, the big helmet and the big sword, the apotheosis of Alfonso, even the Poe-esque annihilation of the castle itself — all these exist only for their own immediate effect. They startle everybody, even the reader, for the moment, but they are never a determining element in the real progress of the story. Nor is their reception by any of the characters in any way permanent or destructive.
>
> They are a bit like what the machinists and scene designers of the great Christmas pantomimes so endlessly popular in the eighteenth century and later were able to devise. These effects thrilled and terrified young and old alike who, two minutes later, were shouting with laughter at the sham battle between Harlequin and the Clown.
> (Smith: C. B. Hogan, The "Theatre of Geo. 3", p. 239)

Now, to say that the helmet, for instance, is a mere gargoyle and no determining element in the real progress of the story amounts, in my view, to actually disarming Walpole's novel of its necessary equipment — for, take the helmet away, what is there really left of The Castle of Otranto? Reversing Hogan's statement to say that "the real progress of the story" is nothing but an appendage, a bare convention, would no doubt be exaggerating the other way. But it must be accepted ~~the fact~~ that "gothic absurdities" are in effect the only "real" substance of the novel, which without them would indeed shrink down to a boring tale of about three pages. Thus, even the drops of blood from Alfonso's

nose (by the way, certainly a deliberately humorous ingredient) become very determining, in the sense that if you delete them, you also have to delete a whole scene along with them, and a rather spirited one in the building up of pressure towards the end. Of course all this was decoration and machinery, but it was so in a structural way, the way Walpole loved to "produce unexpected coups de théatre". And through an uninterrupted sequence of such coups the novel indeed proceeds. If Sterne, more courageously, made the choice of disintegrating narrative unity, Walpole attempted to reform it by transforming basic narrative techniques: in order to do that he thought of introducing those illusory devices which are not "appendages", but precisely what he calls "Terror, the author's principal engine" [my italics]. Here may come in the contribution of Burke's Enquiry, which indeed shows some coincidence with this from the theoretical point of view; and yet the connection with it is not so close and immediate, I think, not so effective as with the technical suggestions that Walpole derived from stagecraft illusions.

In 1781 The Castle of Otranto was actually made into a tragedy by a friend of Walpole's, Robert Jephson (to whom he addressed his Thoughts on Tragedy) ; it was called The Count of Narbonne and was performed with great success at Covent Garden. Walpole was satisfied with it, and reported to Jephson on the following day: "Indeed, I never saw a more unprejudiced

audience, nor more attention ... for effect, no play ever produced more tears " (6). He had personally co-operated in the production of the play, going to a great deal of trouble and even lending a costume from the collection at Strawberry Hill — he stressed his shattered nerves and gouty fingers in a letter written two days before the performance:

> I have been tumbling into trap-doors, seeing dresses tried on in the green room, and directing armour in the painting room, and all this with such a throbbing hand, that I was tempted to rest myself in Covent Garden Churchyard, and bilk both the great stage and the little one.
> (To Lady Ossory, November 15, 1781)

Indeed he was no stage designer or manager, but he saw life as a stage, "the great stage"; that was the natural way his imagination worked, setting in motion the huge, self-sufficient, back-stage machine of his visions and dreams. At Strawberry Hill he had surrounded himself with the permanent illusion of a scene confirmed by that melancholy maxim <u>there is no wisdom comparable to that of exchanging what is called the realities of life for dreams</u>...; there, he did exactly what he thought one ought to do — he cultivated his visions, he arranged them on the moving scenery of his life.

This attitude is of course reflected in <u>The Castle of Otranto</u> too. For Walpole in fact the novel ceased

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(6) To Jephson, November 18, 1781. Walpole thought the young Irish playwright "the only man capable of restoring and improving our stage"; <u>The Count of Narbonne</u> was considered by Miss Seward "our modern Macbeth" (Anna Seward, <u>Letters</u>, Edinburgh, 1811, ', p. 334).

to be a literary means of "representation". Instead, the"looking-glass" of personal identity became the intuitive theoretical support of the romance. For static and descriptive narration was substituted a sort of three-dimensional totally artificial setting wherein the reader's identity is in fact mechanically absorbed. In theatrical terms that is almost equivalent to the famous scèna per angolo devised by Ferdinando Bibiena (the founder of that extraordinary family of architects and scene painters who worked in all the major European Courts). The essential change concerned the traditional single axial perspective, which was displaced by a set of multiple perspectives, calculated from ideal vertices in the audience. This meant the transformation of inside-stage "backcloth" into a scenic space ideally extended to involve the whole theatre (7). Now, it seems to me that, though not quite so consciously, Horace Walpole was somehow moving in the same direction when he wrote The Castle of Otranto. There are in the novel short passages that not only look like stage-directions, but also seem conceived to give the reader what in fact might be regarded as a total and multiple view of a variety of scenic units:

> ... Manfred commanded him to be conducted to the postern-gate, and shut out from the castle: and he ordered some of his attendants to carry Theodore to the top of the black tower, and guard him strictly; scarce permitting the father and son to exchange a hasty embrace

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(7) Cf. Disegni teatrali dei Bibiena, a cura di M. T. Muraro e E. Povoledo, Venezia, 1970.

> at parting. He then withdrew to the hall, and, seating himself in princely state, ordered the herald to be admitted to his presence.
> (Chapter III)

A similar effect may be reached also in passages like the following, where sound is employed in order to convey the idea of a large perspective of vaults and arches through the Castle:

> While the prince was in this suspense, a confused noise of voices echoed through the distant vaults. As the sound approached, he distinguished the clamour of some of his domestics, whom he had dispersed through the castle in search of Isabella, calling out, Where is my lord? Where is the prince? Here I am, said Manfred, as they came nearer ...
> (Chapter I)

Theatrical suggestions appear here quite converted into properly prosaic means of expression. The architectural structures that the Bibienas brought on stage, the greatness of lofty halls or temples or monumental harbours or pleasure gardens certainly were part of Walpole's cultural background, and his familiarity with the theatre contributed to influence his mind and his way of writing. This process may have been less conscious than it appears at first to the modern reader. The really interesting result for us is that <u>The Castle of Otranto</u> used such stage techniques still remaining quite firm within the wake of the tradition of the Novel. Realism had in a way become impracticable: then stagecraft and illusion began to enter the room of the middle-class reader.

To some extent also this evolution of Walpole's from narrative models proceeded along the Serendip road (8). When in 1763 Walpole came to definitely arrange and catalogue his books, maybe sheer chance made him discover that on the same shelf, shelf seven in Prass G of the Main Library, he had placed almost side by side Le voyage et les aventures des trois Princes de Serendip, Pierre Broissat's Histoire généalogique de la Maison de Medici, and Gherardi's Le thêatre italien (9). All the Medicis and their murders, Francesco and Bianca, Cosimo and Isabella, were all there on the complex stage of his Italian theatre, some marvellous palace of Alcina contrived by the luxurious fancy of one Master of Revels for a private Court Commedia; all there to be discovered by the curiosity of his ever travelling Princes. The same Press G contained Riccoboni's Histoire du thêatre italien (Paris, 1728) and an old book entitled The Historie of Italie by one William Thomas, published in London in the year 1549 (10) — just twenty years after his own mysterious "Gothic Story translated by William Marshall" (11).

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(8) Walpole seemed used to reach extraordinary conclusions always through casual findings. When reading a book about Scotland (New Tour to Scotland and the Hebrides by Mrs. Pennant) he remarked for instance that "There is a beautiful cave called Fingal's, which proves that Nature loves Gothic architecture" (to Cole, May 28, 1774).

(9) Respectively published in Amsterdam, 1721, Lyons et Paris, 1620, Amsterdam, 1701 (cf. Hazen, nos. 1237, 1244, 1250).

(10) Cf. Hazen, nos. 1167, 1090.

(11) The "Preface to the First Edition" of The Castle of Otranto begins as saying that "The following work was

On the second shelf could also be found the story of

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found in the library of an ancient catholic family in the North of England. It was printed at Naples, in the black letter, in the year 1529". The reference to "an ancient catholic family" might be intentional: in Elizabethan times the Walpoles of Norfolk were all (except one) Catholic. They were persecuted. Among them was the illustrious martyr, the Blessed Father Henry Walpole (1559-95): he left England in 1582 to enter the Society of Jesus; when he came back on mission in 1593 he was arrested, brought to the Tower, atrociously tortured and eventually executed at York two years later by hanging, drawing and quartering. Walpole owned a copy of Father J. Cresswell's Histoire de la vie et ferme constance du père Henry Valpole (1597) (cf. Hazen, no. 3378) and had acquired a portrait of him, which hung in the Plaid Bedchamber at Strawberry Hill. More puzzling is the reference to the date "1529". The choice might have been suggested by the Peace of Cambrai and Treaty of Barcelona, both concluded in that year, which settled a long period of political crisis and established Imperial Rule in Italy, or even by some event relating to the history of his family. I think however that the explanation is of a different kind, and more typically Walpolian. In 1764, the year when the novel was actually written, Walpole was forty--seven years old. Now, if we multiply this figure by five we obtain a number (two hundred and thirthy-five) which subtracted from 1764 gives us 1529, that is precisely the date when, Walpole imagines, the "story" was printed. Indeed it looks very cabbalistic, but these games amused Walpole (he admired Dürer), and it must also be taken into account that The Castle of Otranto was the fifth major work to be published by Walpole (after the Aedes Walpolianae, 1747, Fugitive Pieces, 1758, A Catalogue of Royal and Noble Authors of England, 1758, Anectdotes of Painting in England, 1762-63 — all of which, but the first and the novel, were issued at Strawberry), and that Theodore is the Fifth Prince of Otranto counting from Alfonso the Good (that is , after the traitors Ricardo, his son and Manfred): the number five has therefore some importance in the novel, and it is also the number of the chapters into which it is subdivided (it is also possible to

The Trial of William Lord Byron (London,1765) (12), a cruel nobleman who had recently been beheaded for murdering a servant. It is a context altogether quite indicative of the large spectrum wherein Old castles, old pictures, old histories ... indeed consolidated into those abstract personal representations which would make one live back in centuries, that cannot disappoint one. Two other titles made it, as we shall see, even more complete and coherent: they were contiguous on shelf six, the tragedy Catilina by Crébillon (an author Walpole esteemed so much that he adopted a phrase from Le Sopha as an epigraph for his Hieroglyphic Tales: 'Schah Baham ne comprenoit jamais bien que le choses absurdes and hors de toute vraisemblance') and an odd anonymous book called Amusemens d'un Prisonnier (13).

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play another little trick with five in 1529: taking the first three figures,we have five minus one: four, five plus one: six, five plus two::seven, five plus one plus two: eight, which subtracted from nine, the last figure, is one — reading the results in reverse order we obtain 1764, the date of the novel. In addition to this it can be noticed that five minus one is four and nine minus two is seven: forty-seven, as I said, was Walpole's age in 1764). A further curious coincidence is that if we divide Walpole's age in 1764 by two we have twenty--three and a half, a figure that represents the age of the young Walpole at the peak of his enthusiasm during the Italian Tour, in February-March 1741, when he was still in Florence enjoing his last exhilarating Carnival. He was to leave the country in a few months: as we know, only a few months after he got back his father resigned. In a strange way The Castle of Otranto seemed to seal a symmetric cycle in Horace's life; no wonder that he might be tempted to assume these numbers as emblematic of an important transition in his life.

(12) Cf. Hazen, no. 1107 (and also: to Hertford, January 27, 1765; to Mann, February 11, 1765 and after).

(13) Both were published in Paris, in 12mo and almost on the same date: Crebillon's in 1749, the other in 1751; cf. Hazen, nos. 1174:1 and 1175.

III

Walpole was not easily satisfied by trivial illustrations of literary subjects. One wonders whom, among contemporary engravers, he would have chosen for a set of illustrations of The Castle of Otranto, if he did not even spare the Royal Academy, when commenting on the projected illustrated edition of Shakespeare (1):

> ... — but mercy on us! Our painters to design for Shakespeare! His commentators have not been more inadequate. Pray, who is to give an idea of Falstaffe, now Quin is dead? — and then Bartolozzi, who is only fit to engrave for the Pastor Fido, will be to give a pretty enamelled fan-mount of Macbeth! Salvator Rosa might, and Piranesi might dash out Duncan's Castle — but Lord help Alderman Boydell and the Royal Academy!
> (To Lady Ossory, December 15, 1786)

Who was then to "dash out" Manfred's Castle? No doubt Walpole would have been extremely difficult on this point. I do not think he would have even trusted Bentley or Lady Diana Beauclerc (2) with any such a

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(1) This edition was proposed by John and Josiah Boydell, with prints to be engraved by F. Bartolozzi (engraver to the King and original member of the Royal Academy) and others after pictures commissioned from Sir Joshua Reynolds and twelve more painters.

(2) Walpole had the highest esteem for both; he believed that Richard Bentley "alone of all mankind could unite the grace of Grecian architecture and the irregular lightness and solemnity of Gothic" (to Mann, October 24, 1758); "Lady Di" executed the drawings for The Mysterious Mother that he kept, as we know, in the "Beauclerc Closet": "Oh, such drawings! Guido's grace,

project. Had he had the courage to do it himself, I am convinced he would have sketched something like a towering Prison: it would have been a curious instance of serendipity again. When he made enquiries about the existence of the real "castle of Otranto", Sir William Hamilton reported to him from Naples:

> Dear Sir,
> You may be very sure that the Castle of Otranto does exist and it is not a castle in the air, for since I have been here some of the nobility of my acquaintance have been confined in it, and others of an inferior class are lately gone there ...
> (February 2, 1788)

That the castle of Otranto was found to be in effect a Prison seems to me a very revealing circumstance. The implicit leit-motiv of the novel is connected to the prison idea: "... King Theodore is in the King's Bench Prison" Walpole had written "I have desired Hogarth, to go and steal his picture for me ..." (3). The character of Theodore during almost the whole of the narration is that of a prisoner condemned to die.

Albano's children, Poussin's expression, Salvator's boldness in landscape, and Andrea Sacchi's simplicity of composition might perhaps have equalled them had they wrought all together very fine" (to Mason, February 18,1776

(3) To Mann, July 25, 1750 OS. In the same letter is mentioned David Rizzio: perhaps there was some subtle link in Walpole's mind between the tragical fate of the unfortunate secretary of Queen Mary of Scotland murdered by her Lairds in Holyrood Castle and the miserable figure of his own "beggar king". King Theodore's portrait by Hogarth, however, does not seem to have been executed, but Walpole owned another portrait of a similar subject: Sarah Malcolm in Newgate "drawn by Hogarth the day before her execution" (it hung in the Green Closet at Strawberry Hill).

And ~~"prisoners" are~~ in fact ~~also~~ Hippolita, Isabella, Matilda, ~~prisoners are indeed~~ and even the servants, even the people at large, are, one might say, prisoners too: ~~all~~ Manfred himself is a "prisoner", prisoner of his own Fate, which is symbolized here by the sombre structure of the Castle.

Theodore's position, of course, is the most explicit. From the beginning of the novel he is shown as entirely subject to Manfred's despotic power, and is in fact several times tried and condemned to die:

> Thou shalt experience the wrath with which thou darest to trifle. Seize him, continued Manfred, and bind him — the first news the princess hears of her champion shall be, that he has lost his head for her sake. (Chapter II)

We have already dealt with this: in the Decameron, which I indicated as one of the sources, through Thomson and others, Guiscardo is despatched even more immediately:

> Comandò adunque Tancredi che egli chetamente in alcuna camera di là entro guardato fosse, e così fu fatto ... pensò con gli altrui danni raffreddare il suo fervente amore, e comandò a' due che Guiscardo guardavano, che senza alcun romore lui la seguente notte strangolassono, e, tràttogli il cuore, a lui il recassero; li quali, così come loro era stato comandato, così operarono.
> (loc. cit.) (4)

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(4) (Translation: Tancred then commanded that he should be quietly guarded in one of the inner rooms, and so it was done ... he thought that by someone else's ruin he would quench his burning love, and commanded the two who guarded Guiscardo to silently strangle him the following night, and, having plucked out his heart, to bring it to him; and they, as it had been commanded, so they did.)

The tragic brevity here employed by Boccaccio is reminiscent of Sallust's treatment of the execution of Catiline's associates in the Tullianum (5). The idea of a dark dungeon was then functional and embodied in the story since its ~~fam~~ origins as a powerful instrument of dramatic imagery. Walpole too used it, but he enlarged its narrative space and I think changed its meaning, by turning a rather secondary detail into a full-scale structure: the gloomy shadow of the Castle which casts its dominating presence over the whole scene of the novel. Manfred's Castle cannot be seen but as a "Prison", the emblem of a constant counterpart of power, where power girdles itself necessarily. They are all, as I said, prisoners there, and Manfred's tyrannical frenzy, outside which he cannot step, is the most expressive manifestation of this idea that is behind the story — a dramatic state of fatal constraint, which is, in truly eighteenth century terms,

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(5) Postquam, ut dixi, senatus in Catonis sententiam discessit, consul optumum factu ratus noctem quae instabat antecapere, ne quid eo spatio novaretur, triumviros quae ad supplicium postulaban/tur/ parare iubet: ipse, prasidiis dispositis, Lentulum in carcerem deducit: idem fit ceteris per praetores. Est in carcere locus, quod Tullianum appellatur, ubi paulum ascenderis ad laevam, circiter duodecim pedes humi depressus; eum muniunt undique parietes atque insuper camera lapideis fornicibus iuncta; sed incultu, tenebris, odore foeda atque terribilis eius facies est. In eum locum postquam demissus est Lentulus, vindices rerum capitalium, quibus praeceptum erat, laqueo gulam fregere. Ita ille patricius ex gente clarissuma Corneliorum, qui consulare imperium Romae habuerat, dignum moribus factisque suis exitium vitae invenit. De Cethego, Statilio, Caeparío eodem modo supplicium sumptum est.
(De Catilinae Coniuratione Liber, LV)

the state of being locked out of reason and freedom:

> ... Do I dream? cried Manfred returning, or are the devils themselves in league against me? Speak, infernal spectre! Or, if thou art my grandsire, why dost thou conspire against thy wretched descendant, who too dearly pays for — Ere he could finish the sentence the vision sighed again, and made a sign to Manfred to follow him. Lead on! cried Manfred; I will follow thee to the gulph of perdition. The spectre marched sedately, but dejected, to the end of the gallery, and turned into a chamber on the right hand. Manfred accompanied him at a little distance, full of anxiety and horror, but resolved. As he would have entered the chamber, the door was clapped-to with violence by an invisible hand. The prince, collecting courage from this delay, would have forcibly burst open the door with his foot, but found it resisted his utmost efforts...
> (Chapter I)

Through the arches of the long gallery at Otranto (6) one would almost expect Verrete a cenaT ominously to resound. But Manfred is not a hero like Don Giovanni, nor is he at all concerned with Hamlet's ethical problems, in spite of the fact that, as it has been noticed, Walpole made large use here and elsewhere of his Shakespearian model. I think Shakespeare influenced not Walpole's treatment of Character, but his dramatic intuition in general. To remain with Hamlet here, for

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(6) The "gallery" and "chamber" mentioned here correspond to the Gallery and Tribune (or Chapel) at Strawberry Hill. These were of recent construction when the novel was written; in 1763 the Gallery had not been finished yet:

> ... The gallery is not advanced enough to give them [visitors] any idea at all ... but the cabinet [Tribune], and the glory of yellow glass at the top, which had a charming sun for a foil, did surmount their indifference.
> (To Montagu, May 17, 1763)

example, I feel that the straight metaphor "Danemark is a prison" had certainly a quite incisive influence on the overall conception of the novel. Otranto is in fact a coherent emblem of tyranny (like Elsinore, in a way), it is that house of torture, the abyss of woe from where men strive from the depths to reascend. In this towering prison of life, "full of anxiety and horror", along endless corridors and dark chambers, pale shades, their burning hearts in their hands, ascend unattainable dim staircases, towards a distant glimmer of light. Andthere also (again with Shakespearian echoes) floating in darkness words are overheard, unseen, through two open windows:

> ... They listened attentively, and in a few minutes thought they heard a person sing, but could not distinguish the words. ... Is anybody below? said the princess: if there is, speak. Yes, said an unknown voice. Who is it? said Matilda. A stranger, replied the voice. What stranger? said she; and how didst thou come there at this unusual hour, when all the gates of the castle are locked? I am not here willingly, answered the voice — but pardon me, lady, if I have disturbed your rest: I knew not that I was overheard. Sleep had forsaken me: I left a restless couch, and came to waste the irksome hours with gazing on the fair approach of morning, impatient to be dismissed from this castle .... I am indeed unhappy, said the stranger; and I know not what wealth is: but I do not complain of the lot which heaven has cast for me: I am young and healthy, and am not ashamed of owing my support to myself — yet think me not proud, or that I disdain your generous offers. I will remember you in my orisons ... — but oh, if a poor and worthless stranger may presume to beg a minute's audience farther — am I so happy? — the casement is not shut — might I venture

> to ask — Speak quickly, said Matilda; the morning dawns apace: should the labourers come into the fields and perceive us — What wouldst thou ask — I know not how — I know not if I dare, said the young stranger faltering ...
> (Chapter II)

This abstract world of Otranto had not a picturesque nature: Walpole would not have chosen Salvator to illustrate it. The early passion of the young Horace Walpole for "wild Salvator" had in time grown more reflective; it depended on judgement rather than instinct. Now, its natural development was the mature admiration for the sombre luxuriant visions of Piranesi, whom he in fact compared to Salvator:

> Piranesi has a sublime savageness in his engravings like Salvator Rosa. He sees Rome in its glory and in its decay, with the same eyes with which Salvator considered nature.
> (H.W.'s note in his Book of Materials, 1759, p. 148)

This was written a few years before the composition of The Castle of Otranto, but the writer's admiration for Piranesi continued over a long period of years, a circumstance which indicates his familiarity with the artist's works. It is just necessary here to recall the enthusiastic words on Piranesi Walpole inserted in the important "Advertisement" to the fourth volume of his Anecdotes of Painting in England (1771), where he extolled

> ... the sublime dreams of Piranesi, who seems to have conceived visions of Rome beyond what it boasted even in the meridian of its splendour. Savage as Salvator Rosa,

> fierce as Michael Angelo, and exhuberant as Rubens, he has imagined scenes that would startle geometry, and exhaust the Indies to realize. He piles palaces on bridges, and temples on palaces, and scales Heaven with mountains of edifices. Yet what taste in his boldness! what grandeur in his wildness! what labour and thought both in his rashness and details!

It is no chance that Walpole so warmly approved Piranesi's art. Like Walpole Piranesi was an antiquarian (in 1757 he was elected honorary member of the London Society of Antiquaries); he was in close contact with English travellers in Italy and a very good friend of Robert Adam, he therefore understood English contemporary taste; like Salvator Rosa he was a rebel in Walpole's imagination, and a genius of really "exhuberant" creativity. As a matter of fact in his artistic achievement Piranesi came very close to Walpole's parallel innovative effort in the literary field, closer indeed than Salvator. It has been proved that Ferdinando Bibiena's improvements in scene-painting and theatrical devices were the true starting point of Piranesi (7). He was certainly influenced by the

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(7) Many sketches by the Bibienas had been copied and had come into fashion as decorative pieces which were etched and printed to serve as textbooks for students of architecture, or simply for commercial purposes:

> ... Le frequenti repliche di uno stesso soggetto, in esemplari di accurata esecuzione e rifiniti nei particolari come gli "Atri" dell'Albertina e della fondazione Giorgio Cini, i "Teatri Sacri", o la serie inesauribile di "Prigioni", fanno pensare che le scenografie avessero anche un mercato indipendente dalla loro destinazione teatrale,

quite well known work Architetture e Prospettive (1740)

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che venissero ricercate e quindi replicate come "invenzioni" per incisioni, o fossero addirittura vendute come vedute decorative. E' improbabile che fossero i maestri ... ad eseguire le repliche, opera piuttosto degli aiuti, degli scolari e fra essi dei figli ancor giovani ...
(Disegni teatrali dei Bibiena, p. 102)
(Translation: The frequent repliche of the same subject, in specimens accurately executed and finished in detail like the "Halls" of the Albertina and of the Giorgio Cini Foundation, the "Sacred Pageants" or the inexhaustible series of "Prisons", make one think that the scene paintings had another market, independent from their original destination for the stage; that they were copied as "inventions" for etchings, or even sold as decorative views. It is unlikely that the masters ... did in fact personally execute such repliche, which were rather the task of assistants and pupils and, among these, of the masters' younger children ...)

Among the pupils who executed copies of the masters' drawings there might well have been the young Piranesi, during his short sojourn in Bologna, as reported by his biographer J. G. Legrand in the Notice historique (1799):

> Piranesi avait acquis à l'école de Ferdinand Galli, dit Bibiena, et des frères Valeriani, célèbres décorateurs, avait lesquels il avait peint aux théâtres de Venise et de Bologne, cette connaissance des lignes et des effets du théâtre qui lui faisait un jeu des compositions les plus grandes et les plus compliquées ...

Also Henri Focillon, who in general vindicates Piranesi's autonomy of invention, admits the active presence and influence of the scene-painters' example during the formative years of the artist:

> ... Panini et Bibiena, c'est indiscutable, sont familiers dans leurs projets avec ces effets de perspective décuplée et plongeante: c'est ainsi que se répercoute l'image d'une

by Giuseppe Bibiena (8), Ferdinand's famous son, and recent discoveries, quite coherently, prove that "Piranesi did, on occasion, make free copies of Juvara's stage-sets" (9).

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salle décorée de miroirs qui se font face. La toile de fond, continuant la ligne de fuite des fermes, rend possible les jeux d'illusion les plus ingénieux. Déià les peintres du décors italiens les avaient fait connaitre à toute l'Europe: depuis Torelli et Vigani, les maîtres du dix-septième siècle, et surtout à partir de Servandoni et de son fameux "Spectacle en décorations" dont Louis XV lui avait donné le privilège pour la Salle des Machines aux Tuileries, avec les décorateurs de l'opéra de Paris, de San Carlo et des théâtres de Vienne, cet art visait de plus en plus à la singularité des effets de perspective et au caractère colossal de l'architecture feinte ... Sans doute, dès son adolescence, Piranesi avait pu connaître l'immense production des décorateurs vénitiens, sans cesse occupés dans leurs sept théâtres à satisfaire les exigeances d'un public passionné pour ces sortes d'ouvrages. Sans doute les Prisons, dès leur première édition, qui n'est pas de beaucoup postérieure au séjour de l'artiste chez les Valeriani, sont d'un décorateur qui connait à fond les artifices de la perspective théâtrale et qui en joue en virtuose ...
(H. Focillon, Giovanni Battista Piranesi(1720-1778), Paris, 1928 (1918), pp. 183-84)

(8) See Plate V.

This work clearly inspired Piranesi's early Prima Parte di Architetture e Prospettive (1743). Giuseppe Galli Bibiena (1696-1756) followed his father to Vienna where he became principal theatrical architect and engineer to the Austrian Emperor; he was perhaps the most famous of the family.

(9) P. Murray, Piranesi and the Grandeur of Ancient Rome, London, 1971, p. 21.

A simple glance at any of the many Piranesian etchings makes one immediately realize to what extent stage-design technique influenced them. Such a theatrical component is in my view one of the reasons of Walpole's understanding and admiration of Piranesi. Indeed he could, and very successfully too, "dash out" Manfred Castle; in his proud imagination the sombre shadow of tyranny did find the most magnificent expressions "that would startle geometry, and exhaust the Indies to realize..."

The thousand or more dramatic pieces that constitute Piranesi's opera omnia should not be viewed just as an elegy on past grandeur; they are in effect an extraordinary sequence of scenes, an uninterrupted procession of magnificent historical pageants, in the way that romances too are, generally speaking, "historical pageants". In most of his etchings a ruin, a palace, a column jut out into our side of the picture-plane, aggressively projecting the perspective into our space. The spectator's imagination gets instinctively involved into the scene: the miniature stage is set in operation at his command for the mechanical production of an illusory world —sitting within the limited compass of a modest room, he lets his imagination expatiate among the great gyres of history. Now, the potentials of such a technique are maximised in the Carceri, where the "sublime savageness" of Piranesi turns into a night-mare of the individual and his visions, into the fierce metaphor of free imagination itself that "scales Heaven"

Bibiena S.C.M. Archit: Theatr: Princ: Inv. et del.

Plate V. A stage-set by G. Galli Bibiena (1740)

I.A. Pfeffel S.C.M. Chalcogr: sculpt: direx

and yet is fettered down to perpetual suffering, to anguish and despair. The importance of the Carceri was exaggerated by the Romantics at the expense of the rest of the artist's production, which is not less worthy and significant. But it is also true that the Carceri are the most original and independent creation of Piranesi, that it is easy to conceive them as a sort of manifesto of his art, because they objectively transform his personal interests into a work that, at the technical level, does clearly illustrate the changing aesthetic consciousness of the age. In this sense, I think, the Carceri are in a very close stylistic relationship with Walpole's efforts in the same direction in The Castle of Otranto.

To a considerable extent this relationship operates also in conceptual terms. Recently Maurizio Calvesi (10) has again stressed the relevance of the Carceri in the context of that unifying factor of Piranesi's creative activity: archaeological research leading to emotional forms of a peculiar visionary philosophy. A philogical passion in fact seems to have inspired the Carceri. According to Calvesi there is a precise source, a passage in Livy describing the ancient prison of the Mamertinum (Sallust's Tullianum is a particular dungeon at the bottom of the Mamertinum).

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(10) Cf. M. Calvesi, Giovanbattista e Francesco Piranesi, Exhibition Catalogue, Calcografia Nazionale, Roma, 1967-68.

Piranesi indeed gives strong clues to the identification of his sources, ~~as~~ in the three inscriptions which he added in the second state (1760) of Plate XVI of the Carceri (11), the last of the series, which are quotations from Livy. The remains of the Mamertinum, being still extant very likely formed the more direct source of inspiration, as the artist was usually oriented towards archaeological reconstruction. A mistake based on the wrong interpretation of another account of the place by Velleius Paterculus, apparently suggestive of a very complicated structure with bridges and arches connecting the several floors of the Mamertinum with the facing Capitoline Hill, would be the origin of the towering vaults imagined by Piranesi (one of the plates, Plate II, actually shows palaces resembling those of the Capitolium, visible through a great arch in the background). The theories of a philosopher he certainly knew and admired, Giovanbattista Vico, must have equally influenced the emblematic re-elaboration of the famous Roman prison. Piranesi turned to the visible remnants of past grandeur following Vico's dramatic vision of the ~~permanent~~ continuous rise and fall of civilizations; but now admiration turned into terror, and human life appeared to him against the pitiful backstage of perpetual bondage. Commenting on this aspect of the Carceri, which is also the most interesting for us and which Walpole I feel perfectly understood,

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(11) See Plate VI. The inscriptions are
(i) IMPIE/TATI/ET/MALIS/ARTIBUS. See p. 279 n. 25
(ii) AD TERRORE M / INCRESCEN/[SC. TIS] AUDACIAE. See Livy I, 3
(iii) INFAMIE SCELUSS/[SC. ARBO]RI INFELICI/SUSPE[SC NDE]
See Livy I 26.

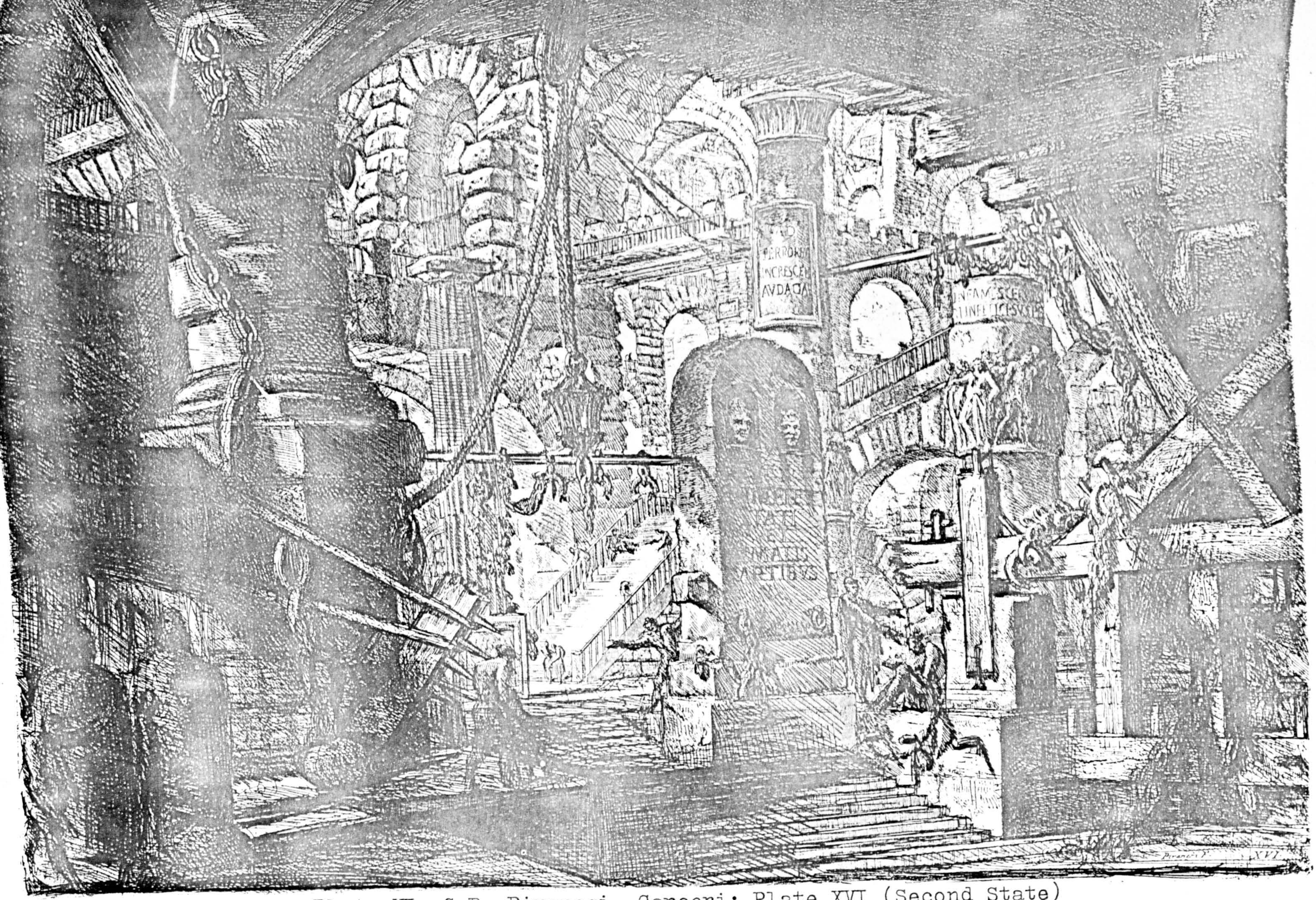

Plate VI. G.B. Piranesi, Carceri: Plate XVI (Second State)

Mario Praz has written:

> Ma con Piranesi tutto quello che l'Italia aveva avuto di civiltà, di sublimità di moli magnifiche, di gloria d'imperatori e di pontefici, di apparati festivi di gaie scenografie, di pompa funebri di solenni esequie, trovava il suo monumentale epitaffio. Le un tempo splendide fabbriche sono invase da melanconiche vegetazioni come le querce della Luisiana portan le gramaglie del musco spagnolo, e la polvere dei defunti Cesari è tutt'al più buona a tappare un buco contro il vuoto, e le aule dei palazzi delle Alcine e delle Armide su cui discendevano da artificiose macchine le divinità a cantar le lodi di principi munifici, son divenute volte opprimenti e spirali di tenebrose scale d'immense carceri, e il grappolo di curvi prigionieri che appare in una di esse, legati ai pali in una piattaforma sospesa, ricorda la titanica agonia dei prigioni di Michelangelo. Invero queste carceri paiono il retroscena, l'arsenale delle macchine di quello che fu il fastoso teatro, come se la scena d'Italia avesse rotato sul suo perno e mostrasse ora l'altro volto: volto di schiavitù, di rovina, di desolazione ...
> (Giovan Battista Piranesi. Le Carceri, Milano, 1975, p.14). (12)

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(12) (Translation: But, with Piranesi, everything Italy had had, civilizations, sublime masses of magnificent buildings, emperors' and pontiffs' glory, festive shows of merry pageants, funereal pomps of solemn exequies, now found its monumental epitaph. The once splendid structures are encroached upon by melancholy vegetations, like Louisiana oaks wearing the mournful attire of Spanish Moss, and the dust of the dead Caesars would at the most block up a crack against the vacuum, and the palace halls of the Alcinas and the Armidas to which the gods descended from artificial machines, singing in praise of munificent princes, have now turned into overwhelming vaults and spirals of staircases of immense dungeons, and the

The ultimate coherence of the Carceri is thus tied to an internal dialectical opposition, the visual terms of which are obsessively multiplied by Piranesi in patterns ad infinitum: an abstract and intellectual solution which is not far from the conceptual forms and emblems expressed in The Castle of Otranto. I feel that Piranesi too would have agreed with Walpole's statement that "there is no wisdom comparable to that of exchanging what is called the realities of life for dreams ...": the freedom of his fancy opened unlimited spaces of artistic creation, and made possible extraordinary visions of intact glory and shining immortality. And yet, there is the rub, what dreams may come when the artist has shuffled off the realities of life? Imagination mirrored itself in this subterraneous world, freedom was by freedom imprisoned, and dream lost in horror. Abstract sense having indeed now become the sole support of action, objective reality vanished and individual consciousness dwelled in this waste land of the future, this contradictory Eblis of the Carceri.

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cluster of bowed prisoners shown in one of them, tied to the stocks on an overhanging platform, reminds one of the titanic agony of Michelangelo's Prigioni. Indeed these prisons seem to be the backstage, the arsenal of the machines of that once sumptuous theatre, as if the stage of Italy had rotated on its pivot and showed now the other face: the face of slavery, of ruin, of desolation ...)

Students of Piranesi know that he always had a close relationship with the Inglesi. He was as intimate with his English friends, as fierce with his enemies ~~of~~ in the Acàdémie Française. The decoration of the Caffé degli Inglesi in Rome is only one of the proofs of Piranesi's familiarity with the circle of travelling or resident "milordi" there, to whom he dedicated several individual studies. A good friend of William Hamilton (Walpole's friend too) and Allan Ramsay, he had a great admiration for the young Robert Adam, whom he met in 1754-57; to him he dedicated his Campo Marzio in 1762 (13). Piranesi was therefore naturally popular in England and his Carceri in particular made no indifferent impact on English culture, from George Dance's project for Newgate to Sir John Soane's curious habitation, from Beckford and Coleridge to Aldous Huxley. His awful structures were compared to those, equally frightening, imagined by Ann Radcliffe and Maturin (14), and the close similarities between them and the Gothic Novel have been stressed several times (15). But to what extent did the Carceri represent a direct source of inspiration for Walpole?

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(13) The profiles of the two architects appear on the great dedicatory medallion of the work's frontispiece. In 1765 Adam executed a chimney piece for Lord Exeter at Burghleigh House after a study by Piranesi. On the relationship between the two artists see: I. Fleming, Robert Adam and His Circle in Edinburgh and Rome, London, 1962, pp. 136-92. Less fortunate was Piranesi's rapport with Lord Charlemont, with whom he eventually quarrelled over the deddication of his Antichità Romane (1756) (cf. L. Donati, "Giovan Battista Piranesi e Lord Charlemont", English Miscellany, 1, 1950, pp. 231-42.

(14) Cf. Th. Gautier, Victor Hugo, 1830, pp. 107-8.

(15) Cf. "Introductory Essay" by M. Praz in: Three Gothic Novels, London, pp. 7-34.

The answer to the question is not an easy one. On the other hand, in The Castle of Otranto the attentive reader does find a few clues which are quite revealing in this connection. Let us go back for a moment to the letter to Cole where, as we have seen already, Walpole speaks about the "origin" of the novel:

> Shall I even confess to you what was the origin of this romance? I waked one morning in the beginning of last June from a dream, of which all I could recover was, that I had thought myself in an ancient castle (a very natural dream for a head filled like mine with Gothic story) and that on the uppermost bannister of a great staircase I saw a gigantic hand in armour. In the evening I sat down and began to write, without knowing in the least what I intended to say or relate ...
> (loc. cit.)

The very image of the dream reappears in the novel, as we know, through the words of the frightened Bianca. "The great staircase" at Strawberry Hill, which is the same that inspired the dream and the novel, was one of "the chief beauties of the castle" as Walpole said describing it in 1753, the year it was completed:

> The hall and staircase [are] the 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 Robsart (°) in the holy wars.
(To Mann, June 12, 1753)
(°) H.W.'s note: An ancestor of Sir R/obert/ W/alpole/ who was Knight of the Garter. (16)

Now, an interesting detail in this passage is the attention Walpole dedicates to the "armoury" on the staircase and to his ancestor. The figure of the latter is not to be undervalued: though Horace Walpole knew that the "lordship" of Strawberry Hill would pass inevitably from the principal branch of his family (as he left no heir), I believe he kept on quite friendly terms with the ghost of "Sir Terry". Since his childhood he had heard the vague legends concerning his valour and his taking part in the Crusades. It was typical of Walpole to turn family mythology into the dramatic and nightmarish shape of Alfonso the Good, also of course a crusader. Like a Theodore grown lonely in his Castle, I imagine he felt somewhat protected and awed at the same time when he looked,

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(16) This apparently is a mistake of Walpole's: Sir Terry Robsart (d. 1496) was not Knight of the Garter, nor was he in the Crusades; Horace confused him with Sir John Robsart (1390-1450), either Terry's father or grandfather, who fought against the Saracens and was in fact made Knight of the Garter about 1417. The confusion maybe originated from W. Musgrave's Genuine Memoirs...of the family of the Walpoles, 1732, a book owned by the young Horace, which mentioned Sir John (cf. p. 21: "Sir John Robsart, Knight Banneret, and Knight of the most Noble Order of the Garter, famous for his surprizing Valour in several actions in France in the Reigns of Henry IV, V, and VI"), but not his connection with Terry: Walpole probably just exchanged their names.

as he went to bed upstairs every night, at those pieces of armour he had reverentially suspended. There appears to have been a period when he was almost obsessed with "armour" (17). Why should he not dream as he did? Yet, this is not quite the point. The point is the connection between the staircase and the helmet image, which is an essential one in The Castle of Otranto. The armoury of course contained also a large plumed helmet, overhanging the panoply in the centre. But in an interesting essay on "Piranesi's influence in England" J. Andersen remarked a few years ago of The Castle of Otranto that:

> ... the wildly disproportionate relationship between man and symbol is more like a Piranesi vision than like a real interior from the author's home ... In 1761 appeared Piranesi's second, revised edition of the Carceri, whose 1750 impression was already well known. In 1761 Walpole was working at his dictionary of engravers — English engraving but with a number of foreign references — published the following year; 1764 was the year of the dream, and in 1765 the novel appeared.
> (J. Andersen, "Giant Dreams. Piranesi's Influence in England", English Miscellany, 3, 1952, pp.49-60)

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(17) Walpole joked about this mania, saying he had even transmitted it to the servants:

> I believe I have mentioned having made a kind of armoury: my upper servent, who is as dull as his predecessor, whom you knew ... has had his head so filled with arms, that the other day, when a man brought home an old chimney-back, which I had bought for having belonged to Harry VII (°), he came running in, and said, "Sir, Sir! here is a man has brought some more armour!" ...
> (To Mann, October 6, 1753)
> (°) Walpole eventually placed it in the Great North Chamber.

Now, Andersen also pointed out that in both states of plate VII of the Carceri appear two gigantic plumed helmets on the sides of the great bannistered staircase that occupies the centre of the picture (18). He suggested that consequently "the hand in armour [of the dream] had been transformed [by Walpole] into a gigantic helmet found as a symbol of revenge in the courtyard of the usurper Manfred's castle". Andersen therefore indicates Piranesi as a source of imagery (or, rather, "symbolism") in relation to The Castle of Otranto.

But I cannot agree with Andersen when he speaks of "transformation" of the hand in armour of the dream into the supposed piranesian helmet appearing in the novel: if we accept this, Piranesi may be hardly considered a direct source, since we only have in effect little more than a bare coincidence of images. The hand of the dream, as we saw, occurs itself in Bianca's report. In my view there was no "transformation" at all. Moreover, in his letter to Cole Walpole says that he "could recover" only part of the dream. The fact that he remembered just a "gigantic hand" does not exclude that he actually had had the vision of a gigantic helmet and a gigantic sabre as well, or even of the full scale colossus in armour, which equally appears in the novel. These gigantic fragments are not specifically piranesian; Walpole's imagination might have also been influenced by Jacques Callot, for example. I mean that if we remain within the field of "imagery", it is difficult to define the terms of Walpole's relationship with Piranesi. My argument is that the central question

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(18) See Plate VII.

in this relationship is one of structure and not of imagery. It is of course relevant that certain isolated images are found both in Piranesi (the helmet is in fact a very frequent decorative motif with him) and The Castle of Otranto: yet, insisting only on this coincidence would lead us, as it does lead Andersen, to a merely "symbolic" interpretation of Walpole's novel. In his conclusions Andersen says:

> The genesis of The Castle of Otranto is not in itself of great importance, but here is a dream symbol [i.e. the helmet] at work among avowedly real people in fiction just after the middle of the 18th century — pre-eminently the age of reason.

Such an interpretation has severe limits in my view, for it restricts the relevance of the innovative effort of The Castle of Otranto to only one of the several elements that characterize it. But even this single element, what Andersen calls "the dream symbol", is hardly consistent with a thorough analysis of the text: Walpole nowhere appears to have a tendency to assign precise symbolic significance to images which, in the novel or elsewhere, are essentially justified by their "sublime" impact on the narrative plane. Images may have for him an emblematic significance, not a symbolic one. Nor can it be seriously maintained that he was not conscious of the symbols he created, because this means reading the text of The Castle of Otranto completely detached from the concrete cultural background which confirmed it as a representative literary synthesis — and we know that this was not, in simplistic terms, "the age of reason", but a very complex texture of varied tendencies, reflecting the

Plate VII. G. B. Piranesi, Carceri: Plate VIII (Second State)

gradual development of English society in a phase of rapid economic and social expansion. Walpole no doubt moved from realism to abstraction, but that cannot mean that he had already elaborated a system of literary equivalents of abstract ideas. The latter had for him the value of a vague dream, of a distant imaginary world, the world of the past where the contradictions of the present were artificially (and therefore artistically) resolved. And here is the common element that, as I said, joins Walpole and Piranesi together: their approach is one that takes into account the reader as an active subject and in effect involves him within an elaborate artificial atmosphere, in a dialectic rapport with it. In this conceptual framework technique, be it visual or strictly narrative, becomes the most important structural issue.

For this reason, it is certainly not by chance that the heterogeneous mixture of visions and images which Walpole's mind had distilled out of his historical and antiquarian passion, monuments and legends of curious personages that had acquired for him special importance over a number of years, suddenly precipitated in the catalysis of a dream and found their immediate organization in the texture of the novel. They all rest on a common centre, which is primarily structural and corresponds to the Castle-Prison mechanism. Thus, it was not just the irrational element in Piranesi, celebrated by the early and late Romantics, that I think really appealed to Walpole. He was attracted

by the internal coherence of thought and vision, by the daring expressions of his "wildness" combined with serious archaeological commitment. Like Salvator Rosa's,Piranesi's art had an esoteric origin (19): they basically tried to reflect in their pictures well defined concepts of their own, they penetrated deep inside the labyrinth of the Hieroglyphic State Machin by means of an imaginary experience. And into that profound dark and mysterious world Walpole saw coherently expressed the experience of his own life, the torment of his soul — a hollow stage, where all his heroes and heroines, Bianca Capello, King Theodore, Lord Herbert,and the dismal train of shades he had met sometimes, all recited their old stories, until their last dissolvence in the open space of dream.

IV

In the Main Library at Strawberry Hill Press B is for two reasons a particularly interesting section. The first is that the disposition of the books does not appear to be very coherent, ranging from Paradise Lost to The Painter's Voyage of Italy and Robinson Crusoe (1); the second reason is that it looks as if

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(19) Piranesi was a freemason and, as Calvesi has shown (op. cit.), his works are permeated by masonic imagery.

(1) There were two editions of Milton in this section (cf. Hazen, nos. 224, 317); Robinson Crusoe

Walpole tried to hide there volumes he pretended he disliked: for instance, "Kent's execrable edition" of The Faerie Queene, or Sterne's Tristram Shandy (2). There was also a curious book called Labyrinthe de Versailles, which, being by Charles Perrault, if he had any respect for his Boileau, he should equally dislike (3). But we know, at the same time, that Walpole loved Spenser, understood Sterne's mazy narrative experiments, and probably also had a secret admiration for "labyrinths", which Bishop Hurd I think ~~regarded as models of~~ would probably have connected with that "unity of design" he so vehemently defended as an essential category of "Gothic" (4).

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is in a late edition of 1785 (cf. ibid., no. 408). The other book is by G. Barri, published in translation in 1679 (cf. ibid., no. 324). In the same Press Walpole kept the remains of a set of Cassandra by La Calprenède, one of his favourite romances in his early years (cf. ibid., no. 367, vols. 3-5 only).

(2) Cf. ibid., nos. 323 and 356. The former was published in London in 1751, in three volumes in royal quarto, with drawings by W. Kent. Kent had also planned "bowers" at Esher (cf. "The bowers, the temples and the groves / That Kent has planned and Pelham loves...", from a poem by J. Dalton in Bell's Fugitive Poetry, II, 110), Gray's favourite, which also Walpole admired for in 1765 he described its "scenes transporting, the trees, lawns, concaves, all in the perfection in which the ghost of Kent would joy to see them...".

(3) Cf. Hazen, no. 301; the book was published in Paris in 1679.

(4) In his Letters on Chivalry and Romance (letter viii):

> ... it is an Unity of another sort, an unity resulting from the respect which a number of related actions have to one common purpose. In other words, It is an unity of design, and not of action.
>
> This Gothic method of design in poetry may be, in some sort, illustrated by what is called

We shall return to the Library later; let us remain now with gardening and go back to the same letter to William Cole in which Walpole confessed the origin of The Castle of Otranto. There we find another interesting passage: Walpole mentions his Strawberry Hill projects, and precisely one that must have quite occupied his mind at that time — the project for a "bower":

> My bower is determined, but not at all what it is to be. Though I write romances, I cannot tell how to build all that belongs to them. Madame Danois in the fairy tales used to tapestry them with jonquils, but as that furniture will not last above a fortnight in the year, I shall prefer something more huckaback. I have decided that the outside shall be treillage, which however I shall not commence, till I have again seen some of old Louis' old-fashioned galanteries at Versailles. Rosamond's bower, you and I and Tom Hearne know was a labyrinth, but as my territory will admit of a very short clue, I lay aside all thoughts of a mazy habitation; though a bower is very different from an arbour, and must have more chambers than one. In short, I both

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> the Gothic method of design in Gardening. A wood or grove cut into many separate avenues or glades was amongst the most favourite of the works of art, which our fathers attempted in this species of cultivation. These walks were distinct from each other, had, each, their several destination, and terminated on their own proper objects. Yet the whole was brought together and considered under one view by the relation which these various openings had, not to each other, but to their common and concurrent centre.

As information on medieval gardening was (and is) very scarc one gets the impresssion Hurd had in mind more Le Nôtre's Versailles than any precise gothic model.

> know and don't know what it should be. I
> am almost afraid I must go and read Spenser,
> and wade through his allegories and drawling
> stanzas to get at a picture.
> (loc. cit.)

The project suited Strawberry Hill very well, for to get access to the gardens and their precious Bower of Blisse,

> A place pickt out by choice of best aliue,
> That natures work by art can imitate ...
> (The Faerie Queene, II, xii, 42: 3-4)

one would have to wade anyhow through the castle, the author's own "mazy habitation". We may imagine that the actual task of the occasional visitor ~~of~~ to Strawberry was equal to that of Sir Guyon: by Walpole's "gouvernance, passing through perils great" of another Whirlepoole of decay:

> In which full many had with haplesse doole
> Been suncke, of whom no memorie did stay:
> Whose circled waters rapt with whirling sway,
> Like to a restlesse wheele, still running round,
> Did couet, as they passed by that way,
> To draw their boate within the utmost bound
> Of his wide Labyrinth, and then to haue them dround.
> (Ibid., 20: 3-9)

The source of this image, a garden surrounded by a labyrinth, was Tasso (5), but Spenser made the hero

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(5) Tondo è il ricco edificio, e nel più chiuso
Grembo di lui ch'è quasi centro al giro,
Un giardin v'ha ch'adorno è sovra l'uso
Di quanti più famosi unqua fioriro:
D'intorno inosservabile e confuso
Ordin di loggie i demon fabbri ordiro;
E tra le oblique vie di quel fallace
Ravvolgimento, impenetrabil giace.
(Gerusalemme Liberata, XVI, i)
(Translation: The rich building is round
and in its most secret / womb, almost the
centre of the circle, / there is a garden,
endowed above all comparison / with the

eventually destroy Acrasia's sinful place of delight. Walpole did almost the same — he eventually gave up even the idea of building a bower; perhaps he thought that such a bliss could not be turned into reality, that the visionary maze of his soul could not exist outside its proper dimensions and the exclusive domain of his Library. That distant parallel of his dear Bianca Capello, fair Rosamond, the charming mistress whom King Henry kept secluded in her "bower" (6), in Addison's opera, Rosamond, gets poisoned: she revives then only because "an opera must end happily". Sinister "Monk" Lewis imagined Ambrosio's rape of Antonia in the gloomy vaults of a macabre charnelhouse where she had been confined: "This sepulchre seems to me love's bower" Ambrosio exclaims. But I think Walpole was not just struck by the simple idea of a "bower". He must have felt at the same time attracted and terrified by the more comprehensive image of the inaccessible form of the labyrinth, as if it were the secret and immediate emblem of his most intimate world of dreams.

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most famous gardens which ever blossomed: / all around it the demon smiths forged / a concealed and confused structure of arched galleries; / thus, impenetrable, it lies within / the oblique ways of that intriguing maze.)

(6) This is described by R. Fabyan in his Chronicles:
... an howse of a wonder workynge, so that noo creature, man or woman, myght wyn to her, but if he were instructe by the kynge, or suche as were ryght secret wt hym, touchynge yt mater. This house, after some wryters, was named, labor intus [labyrinthus], or Deladus [Dedalus] werke, or howse, which is to mean, after moost exposytours, an howse wrought lyke unto a knot in a garden, called a mase [maze].
(Ed. H. Ellis, 1811, p. 277)

The labyrinth idea is also an element of Piranesi's Carceri. Their typical intricacies of bridges, galleries, staircases and dark secret doors are essentially variations on the labyrinth theme (7). I do not think, however,

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(7) Cf. O. Vogt-Gonkil, G. B. Piranesi. Carceri, Zurich, 1958, p. 45, where the characteristic element of Piranesi is indicated as movement or relation: for the minute personages appearing in the Carceri being prisoner is being "captive of repetition", never at rest, but always directed towards something, always passing from a "Ubergangs-Situation" to another, in a paradcxical"eternal moving along".

If "repetition" is the dominating aesthetical principle on which the Carceri are based, it seems to me that there might be a link between Piranesi's vocabulary and the ideological influence of the capitalist mode of production. Of course this cannot in any way be represented as a direct link, but the connection between Piranesi (an engraver, therefore an artist exemplarily tied to the middle class market) and middle class ideas is quite clear and well known. It is no chance that poems inspired by modern industry evoke visions very close to those we find in Piranesi; a good example is a poem by John Dalton entitled A descriptive Poem, addressed to two Ladies, at their Return from Viewing the Mines near Whitehéaven (1755), portion of which runs thus:

But on you move thro' ways less steep
To loftier chambers of the deep,
Whose jetty pillars seem to groan
Beneath a ponderous roof of stone.
Then with increasing wonder gaze
The dark inextricable maze,
Where cavern crossing cavern meets,
(City of subterraneous streets!) ...
Down to the cold and humid caves,
Where hissing fall the turbid waves.
Resounding deep thro' glimmering shades
The clank of chains your ear invades.
Thro' pits profound from distant day

that Walpole's interest in "mazy habitations" derived directly from Piranesi: its associations with the allegory of love appears to be much stronger, at least in those fragments where the author explicitly makes use of the labyrinth image as a narrative device.

Scarce travels down light's languid ray.
High on huge axis heav'd, above,
See ballanc'd beams unweary'd move! ...

This also helps to explain the social and economic reasons that were behind the striking change of taste exemplified by the popularity of the Gothic Novel. It is of course possible to follow such a trend well into the Romantic Movement, as the following passage by Wordsworth from the eighth book of The Excursion shows:

... an unnatural light
Prepared for never-resting Labour's eyes
Breaks from a many-windowed fabric huge;
And at the appointed hour a bell is heard,
Of harsher import than the curfew-knell
That spake the Norman Conqueror's stern behest —
A local summons to unceasing toil!
Disgorged are now the ministers of day;
And, as they issue from the illumined pile,
A fresh band meets them, at the crowded door —
And in the courts — and where the rumbling stream,
That turns the multitude of dizzy wheels,
Glares, like a troubled spirit, in its bed —
Among the rocks below. Men, maidens, youths,
Mother and little children, boys and girls,
Enter, and each the wonted task resumes
Within this temple, where is offered up
To Gain, the master-idol of the realm
Perpetual sacrifice.

The atmosphere of terror and constraint which we find in Piranesi's etchings, and in the Carceri in particular, thus is a first, perhaps still vague, realization of those elements (the idea of the tortured crowds that offer "perpetual sacrifice" within the dark temple of Power) which later appeared, as in this passage of typical romantic poetry, in an explicit and often exalted form.

As we have seen already, in The Castle of Otranto the basement of the castle consists of a labyrinth:

> The lower part of the castle was hollowed into several intricate cloisters; and it was not easy for one under so much anxiety to find the door that opened into the cavern. An awful silence reigned throughout those subterraneous regions, except now and then some blasts of wind that shook the doors she had passed, and which grating on the rusty hinges were re-echoed through the long labyrinth of darkness.
> (Chapter I)

It is here that Theodore and Isabella meet for the first time, and it is in another "labyrinth" that they meet again. In fact, when Matilda sets Theodore free from the prison where Manfred had confined him, she advises him to

> avoid the town ... and all the western side of the castle ... Yonder, behind that forest to the east is a chain of rocks, hollowed into a labyrinth of caverns that reach to the sea-coast ...

Theodore, equipped with "a full armour" Matilda has also given to him, reaches the place:

> ... He willingly indulged his curiosity in exploring the secret recesses of this labyrinth. He had not penetrated far before he thought he heard the steps of some person who seemed to retreat before him ... Drawing his sabre, he marched sedately onwards, still directing his steps as the imperfect rustling sound before him led the way ... and evidently gained on the person that fled; whose haste increasing, Theodore came up just as a woman fell breathless before him. He hasted to raise her... The lady recovering her spirits from his courteous demeanour, and gazing on her protector, said, Sure I have heard that voice before? — Not to my knowledge, replied Theodore, unless,as I conjecture,thou art the lady Isabella
> (Chapter III)

The two are thus reunited at last.

It is quite clear that the intricate vaults and arched passageways of the Carceri did not suggest to Walpole more than a very general image. But, here is the interesting factor in this question, they ~~might~~ may have reminded him of certain pictures in an old book he had no doubt perused: the Hypnerotomachia Poliphili attributed to Francesco Colonna. This ancient text was certainly known to Piranesi; it was published in Venice in 1499 (a very famous edition, especially remarkable for the fine ~~xylographies~~ woodcuts), and the young Piranesi, a Venetian himself, must have come across it when studying printing and engraving techniques. With its refined humanist and classical erudition, with its esoteric imagery, the Hypnerotomachia is exactly the type of book which would appeal to the young mind of the artist, an admirer of antiquity naturally inclined to esoteric speculations. The story narrated by Colonna is an allegory of human life. It consists of a long sequence of imaginary adventures, which the author, under the name of Polifilo, says occurred to him in the form of an extraordinary dream. At first he found himself in a wood, completely alone and lost, after coming out of which he eventually reached a marvellous stately palace decorated with magnificent works of art; while he was admiring these, suddenly he perceived the presence of a terrible dragon and was forced to run for his life through the principal door into the palace, but found himself once again lost in the intricacies of a dark labyrinth, forming the basement on which the same

enormous palace and the great pyramid surmounting it stood. After much anguish and terror Polifilo luckily gained his way out of the labyrinth and came into the inner garden of the palace (8): this was beautiful, and there were several monuments and temples of excellent architecture which could be seen in it. The young man was then introduced to the queen of the place, Eleutheria ("freedom"), and to her nymphs, among whom he found his true companion and love, the most beautiful Polia. To Polia in fact he dedicates his affections, and with this ends the dream and the romance — a chivalrous subject in its exterior form, that Bishop Hurd, had he come across it (and its minute disquisitions on gardening),would have certainly admired.

As a matter of fact the book is rather long and loaded with abstruse symbolism, generally drawing on Dante, Virgil and other very obvious literary sources. Colonna expands on a large number of cryptic, esoteric references which are indeed the heavy substance of the work; and yet, amidst all this congeries of scholarly matter, the narrative tension does not die out entirely. The reason for this is what might be called here the continuing "labyrinth theme". Throughout the whole book Polifilo is always proceeding on and on blindly lost in the intricacies of the wood (which is also defined as "labyrinth"), of the palace, and of the strange garden, always in perpetual movement;

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(8) See Plate VIII.

until the end, nothing really helps him, not even faith, and in the abstract world of his own inner self he is always running from unknown dangers, or attracted by mysterious objects, always hoping the final liberation will come. Of course, just like in The Castle of Otranto, as we and Colonna and Walpole know, it is "all a vision, all a dream" (9). But even in the most dramatic episode, when Polifilo fleeing from the dragon runs headlong into the darkness and terror of the palace, we are still aware that the force of the scene entirely depends on that one structural element, the "Labyrinth", an allegory of the individual struggling inside the meanders of the soul:

> Et sencia mora converse le spalle nella obscuritate intrando, alla presta fuga me commisi, referendo solicitamente per fugire, gli gia incitati piedi. Cum summa pernicitate iscio nelle interiore parte dil tenebroso loco acupedio penetrando, per diverse et oblique rivolutione et ambage di meati perfugendo. Ove fermamente tenia essere nella inextricabile fabrica del sagace Dedalo pervenuto, overo di Porsena continente tanti inexplicabili occorsi et ricorsi com frequente porte ad salire lo exito, et in quegli medesimi errori ritornare. Overo nella cubicolosa spelunca dil terrifico Cyclope, Et

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(9) A thousand fairy scenes appear,
Here a grove, a grotto here,
Here a rock, and here a stream,
Sweet delusion,
Gay confusion,
All a vision , all a dream!
(J. Addison, Rosamond. An Opera, 1707, II, ii)

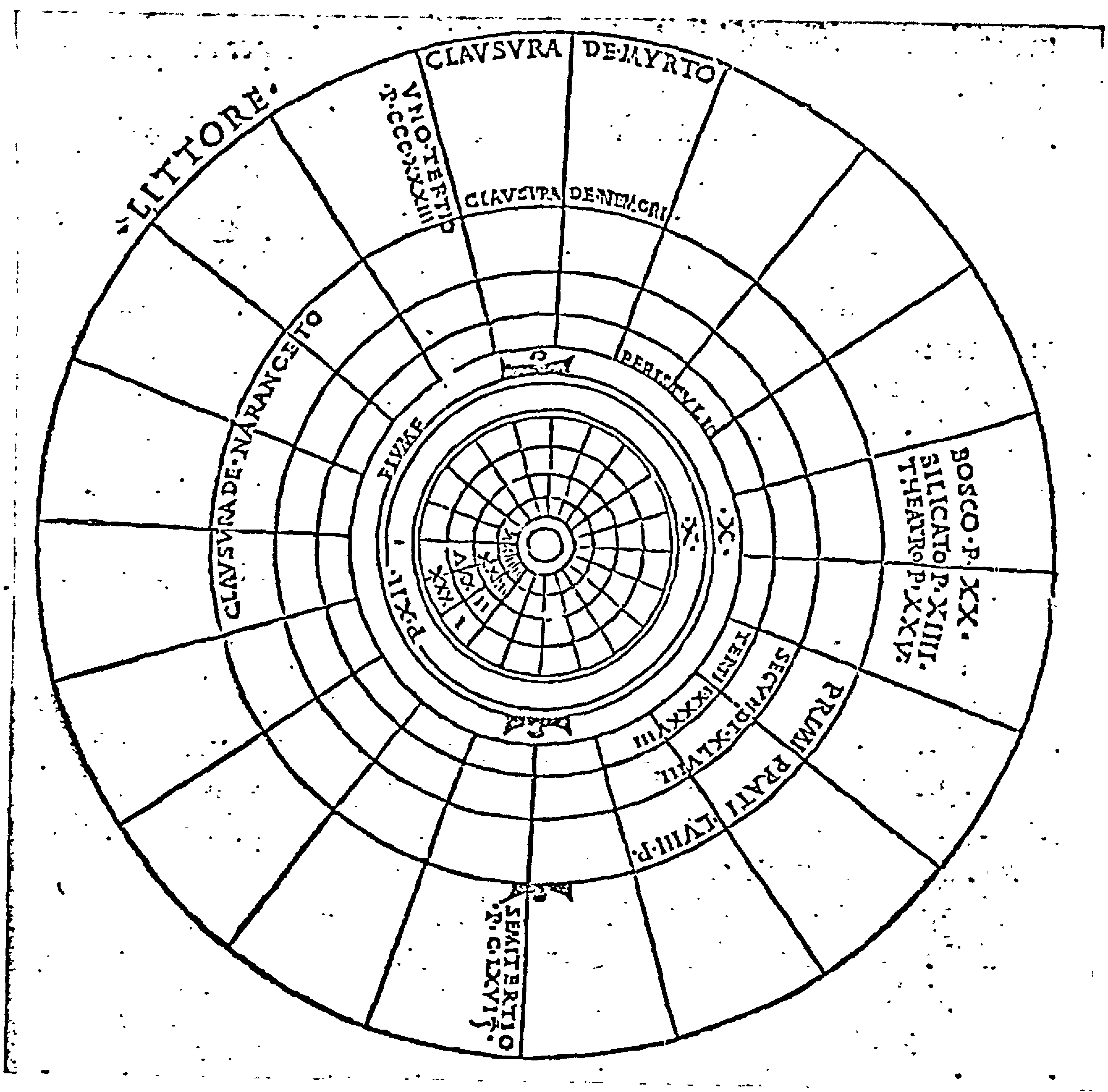

Plate VIII. <u>Hypnerotomachia Poliphili</u>: The Garden

nella tetra di furace Caco ... Et verso la porta volvendomi per mirare se li crudele et formidoloso dracone retro me venisse, la luce totalmente era expirata.

Ma ritrovava dunque nelle caece viscere et devii meati dille umbrose caverne, et in maiore terrore et mortale erumne che Mercurio facendose Ibi, et Apolline in Threicia, et Diana in Cholomene avicula, et Pana in bina formatione, et in maiore spavento et exitio, del ursato Thrasileo latrone et in maiore angustie di Psyche et in piu laboriosi periculi dil asinato Lucio. Et quando egli sentiva il consilio degli latroni dil suo intento sencia alcuna consiliabile optione veramente ignaro et desperato ...
(Op. cit.) (10)

di quella di Oedipo, di Gyro, di Croeso, et di Perseo, et in maiore

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(10) (Translation: And without waiting I entered the darkness, giving myself up to a precipitous flight and pressing my already hasty feet to run faster, and, the greatest of evils, I found myself inside the inner part of the gloomy place, still unconsciously running through several intricate convolutions of passages and meanders. Wherefore I believed I had come into the inextricable building of the ingenious Daedalus, or that of Porsenna, containing so many mazy corridors knotted together, often ending in doors through which you hoped to find your way out, whereas they led you again into the same maze, that was like the many-chambered cave of the terrible Cyclops, or the dismal one of the thief Cacus ... And as I turned back towards where I had entered, in order to see whether the cruel and frightful dragon still pursued me, I perceived that all light was totally extinguished.

I therefore was in the gloomy bowels and ~~swerving winds~~ devious windings of the dark caverns, terrified by a more deadly anguish than that felt by Mercury when he was changed into an ibis, Apollo when he was exiled to Thrace, Diana when she was transformed into a dumb little bird, Pan when he assumed double form, Oedipus, Cyrus, Croesus and Perseus, and in more fear

As I said, it is quite clear that a great number of classical literary references are used in the work (11), but among them there is one in the passage I quoted that is particularly interesting: Colonna mentions not only Minos' Labyrinth, but Porsenna's as well, and in fact the latter rather than the former, seems closer to the description of the mysterious palace in the romance, as they are both characterized by the huge pyramidal structure surmounting the maze (12). Now, in his Antichità d'Albano (1762) Piranesi discusses at length Porsennna's tomb, in order to prove the existence of elaborate Italic, and precisely Etruscan architectural forms. The monument had been treated by Pliny as legendary (13), but Piranesi was equally

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of death than the robber Thrasileus wearing
the bear skin, in more anguish than Psyche,
in more frightful danger than Lucius changed
into an ass, when he, really helpless and
desperate, with no reasonable choice left,
heard the thieves determining his death ...)

(11) The principal model is clearly the Aeneid: immediately before the passage quoted above there is a long description of the main door of the palace, which Polifilo minutely observes, admiring the sculptures and in particular the bas-relief with the story of the Minotaur, the Labyrinth and Daedalus' flight from it. The source is naturally the sixth book, where Aeneas approaching the Sybil's cave tarries to observe the temple of Apollo and the sculptures on its door illustrating precisely the same myth: then Aeneas enters the dark cave "quo lati ducunt aditus centum, ostia centum..." The same episode, incidentally, was used by Tasso for his description of the palace of Armida (Canti XV-XVI).

(12) See Plate IX.

(13) Cf. Pliny, XXXVI, xiii. The passage was the common source of Colonna and Piranesi for the tomb of Porsenna. In it Pliny quite sceptically quotes

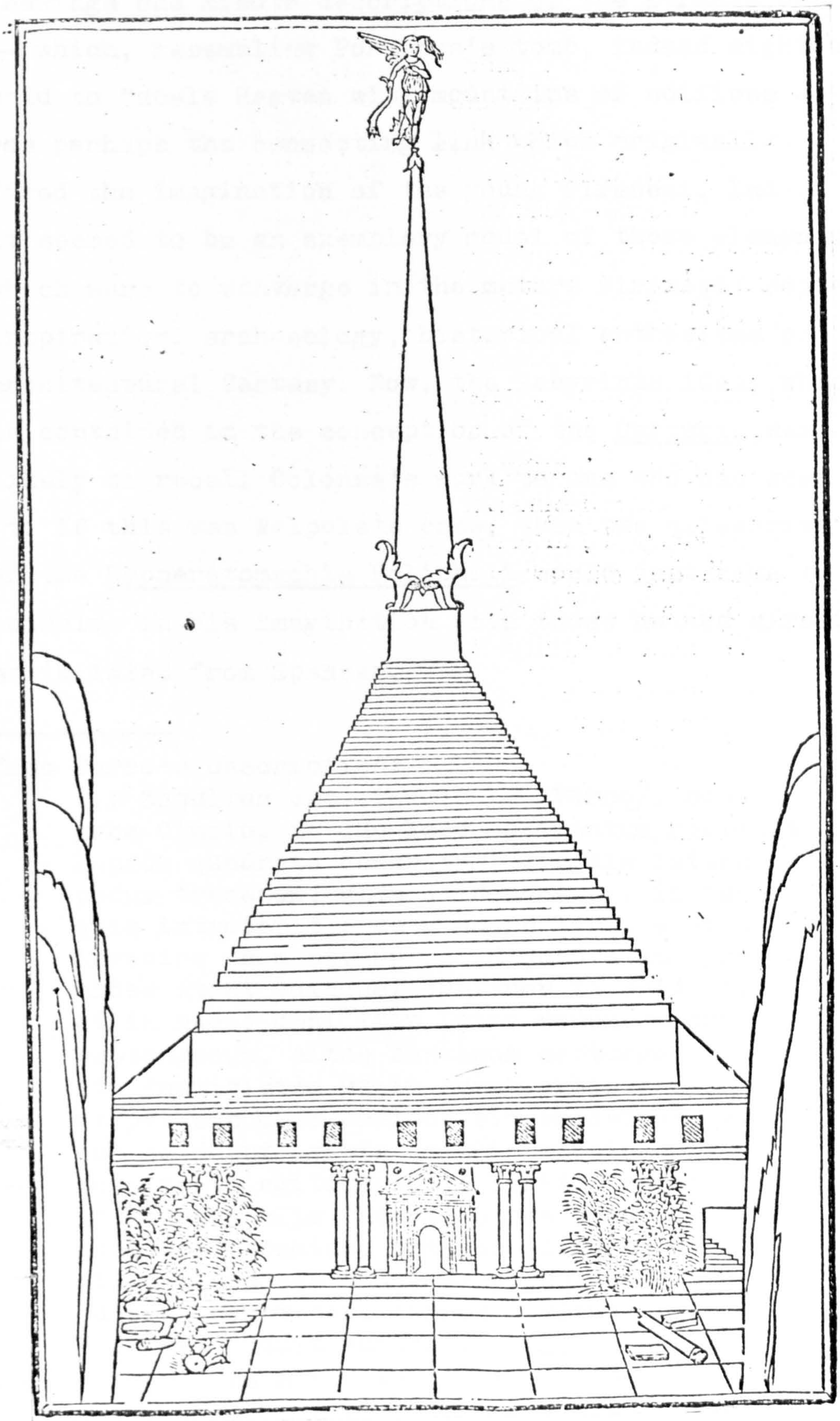

Plate IX. Hypnerotomachia Poliphili: The Palace

fascinated by its magnificence and ancient splendour. Thus the Hypnerotomachia Poliphili with its imaginary drawings and minute descriptions of the strange palace — which, resembling Porsenna's tomb, indeed might be said to "scale Heaven with mountains of edifices — was perhaps the connecting link which originally fired the imagination of the young Piranesi. Indeed it seemed to be an exemplary model of those elements which were to converge in the mature Piranesi: esoteric inspiration, archaeology, historical enthusiasm and architectural fantasy. Now, the labyrinth idea, which is contained in the conception of the Carceri, was likely to recall Colonna's work to one who had seen it. If this was Walpole's case, then the allegories of the Hypnerotomachia Poliphili would just come to coincide in his imagination with those he had already assimilated from Spenser.

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from Varro's description:

> ... Sepultus est, inquit [M. Varro], sub urbe Clusio, in quo loco monimentum reliquit lapide quadrato quadratum, singula latera pedum trecenum, alta quinquagenum; in qua quis introierit sine glomere lini, exitum invenire nequeat. Supra id quadratum pyramides stant quinque; quattuor in angulis, et in medio una; imae latae pedum quinum septuagenum, altae centenum septuagenum; ita fastigiatae ut in summo orbis aeneus et petasus unus omnibus sit impositus, ex quo pendeant exapta catenis tintinabula quae vento agitata longe sonitus referant ut Dodonae olim factum. Supra quem orbem quattuor pyramides insuper singulae stant altae pedum centenum. Supra quas uno solo quinque pyramides, quarum altitudinem Varronem puduit adicere... (L. Janus ed., Lipsiae, 1878)

Colonna's palace has a square base five stadia high, supporting a pyramid of 1410 steps, six stadia long at the side: on top, an immense obelisque, on which a winged nymph turns with the faintest breeze.

"Love in these labyrinths his slaves detains,
"And mighty hearts are held in slender chains...
(The Rape of the Lock, II, 23-24)

I think Horace Walpole too, like Belinda, nourished two locks: one was The Castle of Otranto, the other the labyrinth of his own library at Strawberry Hill. Was the Hypnerotomachia Poliphili, boring as it may be one of the "shining mazy ringlets" of either? Indeed there is a fair chance that Walpole was not insensible of the charms of that old book, which he owned in a French translation entitled Le tableau des riches inventions couverts du voile des feintes amoureuses (14). This volume stood in Press L of the Main Library, on the third shelf, and, if the library's curious arrangement to some extent corresponded to the complex fabric of Walpole's visions, certainly it was not an isolated fragment but, I would rather say, one of the rings of that imaginary chain. It is remarkable for instance that in the same Press L on the first shelf we find the book of Venetian Arms that I mentioned earlier in connection with Serendipity and Bianca Capello: the history of the Medici was thus another ring — on the third shelf again, very close to the Hypnerotomachia stood B. Baldini's Vita di Cosimo de' Medici (Firenze, 1578), on the sixth shelf was A. Mossi's Compendio della vita del Sig. Giovanni de' Medici (Firenze, 1608)

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(14) Edited by F. Beroalde de Verville and published in Paris in 1600: cf. Hazen, no. 2075.

curiously close to a Cronica Veneta (15). On the second shelf, among books treating mainly general history and cosmography, was placed a copy of Tasso's Gerusalemme liberata, an uncommon folio edition of 1735 which Walpole may have got during his Italian tour in 1739-40 (16). Shelf four was occupied by a large set of classics, shelf five contained, with other classics, Longinus' De Sublimitate (17). On the sixth shelf, beside the biography of Giovanni de' Medici were a set of Machiavelli's Opere, more Latin classics, two Italian translations of Pope and Steele, Italian language textbooks and, among other various Italian volumes, a copy of the Decameron (18). The seventh shelf contained another

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(15) Cf. Hazen: Baldini is no. 2068, Massi no. 2108, the Cronica Veneta (by P. A. Pacifico, Venice, 1736) no. 2109; on the third shelf also stood the Descrizione delle feste fatte nelle nozze de Principi di Toscana D. [Don] Cosimo de' Medici, e Maria Maddalena ... (Bologna, 1608) later moved to Press M: this is no. 2304.

(16) Cf. ibid., no. 2066.

(17) Cf. ibid., no. 2089: it was a Greek and Latin edition by Z. Pearce, London, 1732.

(18) Cf. ibid.: Machiavelli's Opere, in four volumes (The Hague, 1726) are no. 2105. The translations are: Il riccio rapito (from The Rape of the Lock, Firenze, 1739), a book that very likely Walpole got in Florence when there in 1739 (perhaps with two more books which stood next to it on the same shelf: G. Rigacci's Raccolta di varie canzoni ... A sua Eccellenza Mylady Walpole, Firenze 1739 and id., ...A Sua Eccellenza Mylady Sofia Farmor [sic], ibid., 1740: nos. 2111-12), and Gli amanti interni (from Steele's Conscious Lovers, translated by P. Rolli, London, 1724), nos. 2110, 2115. The edition of the Decameron, in two volumes (Amsterdam, 1679), is no. 2097.

set of classics: the eleventh volume was the collected works of Sallust and Walpole marked some crosses in Catiline's Conspiracy. In another volume of modern plays in Latin was included W. Hawkesworth's Labyrinthus: comoedia (London, 1636) and next to it stood an odd work by Caesar Longinus, Trinum magicum, sive secretorum magicorum opus (Frankfurt, 1630). On the same shelf were also Tasso's play Aminta and Guarini's Il pastor fido (19). Going back now to the third shelf, we find that the Hypnerotomachia Poliphili was the fifth volume on it, the third volume was the recent 1762 London edition of the Decameron (20): now, when Walpole got the latter did he think, in placing it so remarkably close to Colonna's work, of any connection between the two? If he did, it would be of some weight in the genesis of The Castle of Otranto, as with all probability it happened a short time before the conception of the novel. Maybe in his mind the happy conclusion of Polifilo's story tempered the miserable end of Guiscardo and Ghismonda. Between the two stood a volume (the fourth in the order) entitled Scena d'huomini illustri d'Italia (21),

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(19) Cf. ibid.: Sallust ~~'s book~~ (vol. XI of Brindley's Latin Classics) is no. 2120, Hawkesworth's Labyrinthus (in a single volume including four modern Latin plays in all) no. 2131, C. Longinus' Trinum magicum no. 2126, Tasso's Aminta (Utrecht, 1725) no., 2134, Guarini's Pastor fido (Amsterdam, n.d.) no. 2123 (the last two were placed contiguously on the shelf).

(20) Cf. ibid., no. 2070; it was edited by V. Martinelli.

(21) Cf. ibid., no. 2079: the book was by the Count G. Gualdo Priorato and published in Venice, 1659.

literally "pageant of illustrious Italians", which seems to suggest a theatrical vision of history: we know that Walpole in his imagination entertained a very similar one. Another book of the same kind in fact followed the Hypnerotomachia, Berni's Degli eroi della serenissima casa d'Este... (22) celebrating another dynasty famous, like the Medici, for its horrors. But the most relevant historical text here was indeed the Istoria civile del regno di Napoli, the masterpiece of Pietro Giannone (23), which certainly represented Walpole's main source of information for the historical background of The Castle of Otranto. Between Berni's book and the Istoria was placed a collection of Italian poems dedicated to Horace Mann (24). In my opinion this is an important reminder of the provenance of a large section of Walpole's interest in things Italian — the protracted friendship between the two was Walpole's strongest link with Italy and concretely resulted in a considerable number of books appearing here and on other shelves, not to speak of the precious pieces of information or equally valuable fragments of antiquity. The first volume on this same shelf was Dr. Cocchi's Dei bagni di Pisa (Firenze, 1750) (25), and I do not think it is just a coincidence. Dr. Cocchi, as we know already, was Mann's best friend; Walpole had

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(22) Cf. ibid., no. 2069, a small folio, published in Ferrara probably in 1640.

(23) Cf. ibid., no. 2078 (Naples, 1723, 4 vols.).

(24) Cf. ibid., no. 2077: T. Crudeli (La Fontaine's translator), Raccolta di poesie, Naples, 1746.

(25) Cf. ibid., no. 2074.

a great admiration for him, whom he occasionally wrote to; when he sent a work of his to Mann, he often included another copy "for Dr. Cocchi", and Cocchi sent him many of his books. It is quite possible, therefore, that Walpole had got this copy of the Hypnerotomachia Poliphili from Cocchi, a passionate bibliophile himself, or at Cocchi's suggestion (like Piranesi, Cocchi was a freemason and would be naturally interested in Colonna's esoteric symbology) — which ~~does~~ would also explain why the two books were placed so close together. Between them stood Veneroni's Dictionnaire Italien et François (26), which confirms the supposition that Walpole bought or received the Hypnerotomachia with the intention of reading and understanding it. Even if he did not actually read it, I think we can at least take for granted that he was vaguely acquainted with the story of Polifilo, for, being interested in the history of engraving, he had no doubt perused the many beautiful woodcuts that illustrated the contents in close detail. Among them, there was the striking structure of the palace and its dark, mysterious, labyrinth.

It is not in any of these particular fragments, however, that we can find the key element on which the structural genesis of The Castle of Otranto ultimately depended. The novel did not emerge from one single suggestion but from a complex system of widespread relations, connecting a quite large number of apparently heterogeneous literary experiences. Shelf three in Press L of the Main Library — with the Hypnerotomachia, the biography of Cosimo de' Medici, Giannone's ancient

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(26) Cf. ibid., no. 2083 (Paris, 1710).

history of the Kingdom of Naples — offers a fairly accurate representation of the principal turning points on which that system rotated. From the original project of writing the history of the House of Medici, as we have seen, Walpole came to concentrate instead on a famous and dark episode of the history of Naples: the rise to the throne of the usurper and bastard Manfred (the son of Bianca Lancia), who imposed himself as King of Naples at the death of the Emperor Frederic II in 1252, chasing out the rightful heir Conrad: a few years later Manfred was killed in battle by Charles of Anjou, summoned by the Pope to restore order, and Charles started a new dynasty of Kings of Naples. In this rational context, Colonna's work with its allegorical implications reflected Walpole's peculiar sensibility for that texture and atmosphere of romance which found more precise counterparts in Boccaccio's story of Sigismunda in one direction, and in Piranesi's daring and terrifying visions in the other. There was another volume on the same shelf which might have functioned as a further catalyst towards the final conjuring up of the novel. It is a strange religious book on miraculous apparitions in the Kingdom of Naples, Memorie storiche dell'apparitione delle Croci prodigiose (Napoli, 1661). "Miracles, visions, necromancy, dreams, and other preternatural events, are exploded now even from romances ...", wrote Walpole in the "Preface" of The Castle of Otranto (27), but perhaps he too, when

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(27) It is the "Preface to the First Edition", where, commenting on the mysterious story "printed at Naples", Walpole says: "It is not unlikely that an artful priest might endeavour to turn their own arms on the innovators; and might avail himself of his abilities as an author to confirm the populace in their ancient errors and superstitions...". The Memorie is by C. Calà (cf. Hazen, no. 2072).

entering his library alone, sometimes would be seized by the inner terror that

> ... I that was once in the Devil's Clutches, was held fast there as with a Charm, and had no Power to go without the Circle, till I was ingulph'd in Labyrinths of Trouble too great to get out at all ...
> (Moll Flanders, 1722, p. 212)

CHAPTER III

I

In his Epistle from Florence to Thomas Ashton written in the year 1740, a long poem inspired by ardent thoughts of liberty and hate of tyranny, the youngest son of Sir Robert Walpole, Horace, emblematically celebrated the triumph over the despot Richard III with these lines:

> Foil'd the assassin(°)king, in union blow
> The blended flowers on seventh HENRY's brow.
> Peace 'lights again on the forsaken strand,
> And banish'd plenty re-assumes the land.
> No nodding crest the crouching infant frights,
> No clarion rudely breaks the bride's delights;
> Reposing sabres seek their ancient place
> To bristle round a gaping(+)Gorgon's face.
> The weary'd arms grotesquely deck the wall,
> And tatter'd trophies fret the royal(/)hall.
> (Works, 1, p. 13)
> (H.W.'s notes: (°)Richard III; (+)Medusa's head in the armory at the Tower; (/)Westminster--hall)

Did Walpole remember the same lines when, twenty--four years later,he began to write The Castle of Otranto, or had he utterly forgotten them? In either case, it is a surprising coincidence indeed that so many years before even conceiving the novel some of its basic patterns of imagery appear in a way outlined already in Walpole's mind: the "nodding crest", the "clarion" of war, the "sabre", the "gaping Gorgon's face", images all more or less directly concerned with the fabric of the novel, were actually there since early youth. And indeed one only needs

to open The Castle of Otranto almost at random to find such patterns at work:

> ... What is it the tyrant would exact of thee? Is the princess safe from his power? Protect her, thou venerable old man! and let all his wrath fall on me. Jerome endeavoured to check the impetuosity of the youth; and ere Manfred could reply, the trampling of horses was heard, and a brazen trumpet, which hung without the gate of the castle, was suddenly sounded. At the same instant the sable plumes on the enchanted helmet, which still remained at the other end of the court, were tempestuously agitated, and nodded thrice, as if bowed by some invisible wearer.
> (Chapter II)

Thus Walpole describes the arrival of "the knight of the gigantic sabre" at Otranto, and when the "hundred gentlemen bearing an enormous sword, and seeming to faint under the weight of it" enter the Castle with the rest of the triumphal train, the tyrant is terrified at the sight:

> Manfred's eyes were fixed on the gigantic sword, and he scarce seemed to attend to the cartel: but his attention was soon diverted by a tempest of wind that rose behind him. He turned, and beheld the plumes of the enchanted helmet agitated in the same extraordinary manner as before.
> (Chapter III)

Here again the fatal helmet, undoubtedly the most impressive figurative formation in the novel, is conceived as the true dynamic centre of the scene, and one is tempted to append to like passages in the novel a remark which Alexander Pope made in

his"Preface" to the translation of the Iliad:

> We see the Motion of Hector's Plumes in the Epithet Κορυθαίολος, the Landscape of Mount Neritus in that of Ἑλνοσίφυλλος, and so of others; which particular Images would not have been insisted upon so long as to express them in a Description (tho' but of a single Line) without diverting the Reader too much from the principal Action or Figure ... (1)

But in The Castle of Otranto exactly the contrary happens: particular images have been insisted upon and they do divert the reader from the principal action — they become action themselves. Through these emblems of abstract sublimity Walpole came to forge the distant dreams of youth into a new and highly synthetic form of expression.

Certainly Horace Walpole did not retain much of the "sober and correct march of Pope", of that classical pregnancy of style so much praised in Homer. Mr. W. S. Lewis says The Castle of Otranto's "beginning was in the nature of automatic writing" (2).

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(1) Κορυθαίολος: "moving the helmet quickly"; in his translation Pope used various equivalents for clauses including this epithet, as "nods his Plumy Crest", or "his dreadful Plumage nodded". Ἑλνοσίφυλλος: "with quivering foliage". Further down in the "Preface" this is mentioned again: "... the epithet Ἑλνοσίφυλλος to a Mountain would appear little or ridiculous translated literally Leaf--shaking, but affords a majestic Idea in the Periphrasis: The lofty Mountain shakes his waving Woods."

(2) "Introduction" to The Castle of Otranto, Oxford, 1964, p. x̄.

His imagination seized with the image of the "plumed helmet", Walpole directly proceeded to expand it into the narrative form. And thus we have the passionate gothic scene which opens The Castle of Otranto, no doubt an expression of the immediate visionary method used by the writer:

> The servant, who had not staid long enough to have crossed the court to Conrad's apartment, came running back breathless, in a frantic manner, his eyes staring, and foaming at the mouth. He said nothing, but pointed to the court. The company were struck with terror and amazement ... The fellow made no answer, but continued pointing towards the court-yard; and at last, after repeated questions put to him, cried out, Oh, the helmet! the helmet! In the mean time some of the company had run into the court, from whence was heard a confused noise of shrieks, horror, and surprise ...
>
> The first thing that struck Manfred's eyes was a group of his servants endeavouring to raise something that appeared to him a mountain of sable plumes. He gazed without believing his sight. What are you doing? cried Manfred, wrathfully: Where is my son? A volley of voices replied, Oh, my lord! the prince! the prince! the helmet! the helmet! Shocked with these lamentable sounds, and dreading he knew not what, he advanced hastily — But what a sight for a father's eyes! — He beheld his child dashed to pieces, and almost buried under an enormous helmet, an hundred times more large than any casque ever made for human being, and shaded with a proportionable quantity of black feathers.
> (Chapter I)

There is nothing classical in a scene like this, no matter how that black "mountain of sable plumes" may remind us of mount Neritus "shaking his waving woods". We know that The Castle of Otranto was conceived as an "Original", as a demonstration of the coherence original composition could reach in terms of character, structure and imagery. And consequently this to a certain extent allowed the elaboration of different, "Gothic", poetics. W. S. Lewis also pointed out a detail which had escaped the observation of earlier commentators and is in my opinion very illuminating:

> His [i.e. H.W.'s] innovations joined to make a new kind of romance, a new form that he pointed up by adding an epigraph to the second edition:
>
> vanae fingentur species, tamen ut pes, et caput uni reddantur formae.
>
> HORACE.
>
> This is a paraphrase of lines 7-9 of De Arte Poetica:
>
> vanae fingentur species, ut nec pes nec caput uni reddatur formae,
>
> 'Idle fancies shall be shaped [like a sick man's dream] so that neither head nor foot can be assigned to a single shape.' Walpole's epigraph reverses Horace's meaning to say that 'nevertheless head and foot are assigned to a single shape' ... Although Walpole frequently misquoted and his Latin had grown rusty, I think that here he is deliberately altering a line more familiar in his day than in ours to emphasize the fitness of his fancies.
> (op. cit., pp.xii-xiii)

Now, the deliberate jeer at Boileau's sacred text is not so important here as the fact that Walpole coherently

appears to stress patterns rather than sources of imagery in original composition. The sources, for all that matters, may still be"classical" in the traditional sense. In other terms, polemically disagreeing with Richardson and his circle, Walpole would implicitly make "originality" consist in that "belonging to a single shape", in that "unity of design" praised by Bishop Hurd — in form rather than content. Such form in The Castle of Otranto, as we have remarked already, is not a realistic one anymore: on the contrary it is abstract and emblematic. Is it not, after all, the form of a ghost? To the spiritual, uncanny "shape" of Alfonso belong the vanae species of the several visionary attributes: the frightening dream of the "armoured hand" at first, then the victorious signs of the"gigantic sabre" and dismal "plumed helmet".

It should not appear contradictory then that part of the imagery used in The Castle of Otranto may be found originally connected to classical reminiscences. On the contrary, it was quite natural for a connoisseur like Walpole, almost one of those who were "continually importing ship loads of dead Christs, Holy Families, Medusas, and other dismal, dark subjects" (3) to be fascinated and influenced by pictures of ancient myths. A magical helmet is the determining factor in the myth of Perseus: aided by Hermes and Athena,

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(3) London Magazine, 1737, where this practice is denounced by an admirer of Sir James Thornhill.

Perseus obtained from the three Graeae the helmet of Hades which conferred invisibility and which enabled him to ~~win~~ defeat Medusa, together with Hermes' curved sword (and winged sandals) and Athena's shield; on the latter he later fixed the severed head of the monster. A connoisseur would be tempted to suggest that Walpole had seen the beautiful drawing attributed to Nicholas Poussin and showing the hero in the act of receiving the fatal helmet, around which turns the whole composition (4). But there is no need to go so far: while he was in Florence in 1739 Walpole undoubtedly admired the celebrated Perseus by Cellini that stands in the Loggia de' Lanzi just in front of the Palazzo Vecchio. Young Horace Walpole, who was acquainted with the myth, might have been struck by the curious connection between the magical helmet of Hades and the "gothic" structure of the Palace where the dark deeds of the Medici had been devised and consummated. And besides the Epistle from Florence to Thomas Ashton, which, as we have seen, contains an image of "gaping Gorgon's face" (just like that which Cellini's Perseus holds out in triumph), Walpole wrote another poem against oppressive tyranny, the Inscription for the neglected

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(4) Though inscribed "N. Poussin" this drawing was recognized by P. Rosenberg in 1970 as the work of J. Werner the Younger (1637-1710) (cf. E. von Knorre, Katalog Augsburg, Städtische Kunstsammlungen. Deutsche Barockgalerie, Augsburg, 1970, p. 195). It is now in the Staatliche Graphische Sammlung, Munchen. (no. 3160).

Column in the Place of St. Mark at Florence:

Escap'd: a(°)race, whose vanity ne'er rais'd
A monument, but when themselves IT prais'd,
Sacred to truth O! let this column rise,
Pure from false trophies and inscriptive lies!
Let no enslavers of their country here
In impudent relievo dare appear:
No pontiff by a ruin'd nation's blood
Lusting to aggrandize his bastard brood:
Be here no(/) Clement, (+)Alèxander seen,
No pois'ning(=)cardinal, or pois'ning(//)queen:
No Cosmo, or the bigot(//)duke, or(x)he
Great from the wounds of dying liberty,
No(‡)Lorrainer--------one lying arch(^)suffice
To tell his virtues and his victories:
Beneath his fost'ring eye how(::)commerce thriv'd,
Beneath his smile how drooping arts reviv'd:
Let IT relate, e'er since his rule begun,
Not what he has, but what he should have done.

Level with freedom, let this pillar mourn,
Nor rise, before the radiant bliss return;
Then tow'ring boldly to the skies proclaim
Whate'er shall be the patriot'hero's name,
Who, a new BRUTUS, shall his country free,
And, like a G O D, shall say, LET THERE BE LIBERTY!
(Works, 1, pp. 17-18)
(H.W.'s notes: (°)The family of Medici;
(/)Cardinal Julio de' Medici, afterwards
Clement VII; (+)Alexander, the first duke
of Florence, killed by Lorenzino de'Medici;
(=)Ferdinand the Great was first cardinal
and then became Great duke, by poisoning
his elder brother Francis I and his wife
Bianca Capello ; (//)Catherine of Medici,
wife of Henry II. king of France; (//)Cosmo
III.; (x)Cosmo the Great enslaved the repu-
blics of Florence and Siena; (‡)Francis II.
duke of Lorrain, which he gave up to France,
against the command of his mother, and the
petitions of all his subjects, and had Tuscany
in exchange; (^)The triumphal arch erected
to him without the porta San Gallo; (/:)Two
inscriptions over the lesser arches call him
"Restitutor Commercii, and Propagator Bona-
rum Artium," as his equestrian statue trampling
on Turks, on the summit, represents the victories
that he was designed to gain over that people,
when he received the command of the emperor's
armies, but was prevented by some fevers.)

I believe Walpole always felt somewhat proud about this early poem, in which he had so freely treated not only the Medici, but an "imperial head" too (5). It is an enthusiastic poem, with a great stress on the closing lines and the image of the "patriot hero", the "new Brutus" who "like a God, shall say, LET THERE BE LIBERTY!" It is not difficult to find what suggested this image to Walpole. A clue is in a way already contained in his note concerning "Alexander, the first duke of Florence"; in the rose-wood case in the Library at Strawberry Hill Walpole

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(5) Cf. To Mann, December 13, 1759: he meant Francis II. Walpole was shocked when Mann told him that the Florentines had eventually resolved to bury that venerable piece of Roman antiquity he had so reverentially treated in the poem:

> You will be as much surprised as I was about a month ago on hearing that that column was buried six feet underground to be out of the way. I can't tell how I came not to hear of it sooner, for this burial was performed two years ago... 'Buried!' said I, ''Tis the first time that was ever hidden in such a manner! It has had the fate of its pedestal, which was made use of rubbish [sic] for the foundation of that lying arch [at Porta San Gallo]; and both to be out of the way. The Marshal seemed struck with the reproach, though it was not his doing, when I observed to him what pains and expense the people were at, at Naples, Rome, and all other classic ground, to bring such things to light, and that the Goths themselves had never taken pains to bury them.
> (From Mann, November 10, 1759).

kept a "Copper medal of Lorenzo of Medici, who stabbed duke Alexander: the reverse copied from Brutus's medal with the cap of liberty between two daggers; the legend VIII Id. Jan. Very rare" (6). We know that after the assassination of his cousin, the Duke Alessandro, in 1537 Lorenzino repaired abroad and was acclaimed by his fellow-exiles as "the Tyrannicide", the "Tuscan Brutus"; verses and encomiums were composed in his honour (7). Would then Walpole secretly meditate to write a Lorenzaccio, like Musset's (8)? Perhaps he gave a thought to something like that when he acquired that coin, very probably in Florence. But, as we understand it, Walpole eventually abandoned the project of writing about the Medici, and wrote The Castle of Otranto instead: next to Lorenzo's coin he placed that "Coin of Theodore king of Corsica: rare" that I have had occasion to mention (9). After

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(6) Descr., p. 54.

(7) Cf. B. Varchi, Storia fiorentina, lib.XV.

(8) In this play (1834) Musset followed the popular version of the story: Lorenzino, the young hero, is represented as a secret revolutionary who has pledged himself to free Florence by killing its ruler. This does not correspond to historical truth, since the motives which determined the dissolute Lorenzino to murder the Duke were of a personal nature.

(9) Speaking about the character of Theodore; the quotation is from Descr., p. 54.

all Theodore of Neuhoff ~~was he not~~ was not another hero, elected by the Corsicans in rebellion against Genoese tyranny? The hero of The Castle of Otranto still retains in fact something of the demi-god image (his name, we observed, means exactly "gift of God"). All this had a precise significance: we must not forget that Horace Walpole was the proud son of a great Whig Prime Minister, that he proclaimed himself "the only unadulterated Whig" left in England and slept with a copy of the warrant for the execution of Charles I by the side of his bed. Now, in general he shows an imaginative inclination to associate power, the world of the Court and what belonged to it, with "Gorgons" (10); in his curious A fairy Tale. 1743, which he did not include in the Works but has recently been published (11), we in fact meet with the following description:

> He found seated under a canopy a large old lady of a frowning aspect with the head of a Medusa, and a wildness in her eyes, which out of respect to the course of enchantments in which he found himself engaged, he was willing to construe into looks of terrible divinity — He prostrated himself at the foot of the throne, not so much out of regard as fear — a hoarse voice bids him rise — when mollifying her snakes, and smiling ghastly, her Majesty pronounced

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(10) An example is in his letter to Mann, December 1, 1754: "... the Duke of Newcastle, who used to tremble at shadows, appears unterrified at Gorgons! if I should tell you in my next, that either of the Gorgons has kissed hands for secretary of state, only smile: snakes are as easily tamed as lap-dogs."

(11) Cf. Smith: Two Unpublished Fairy Tales by Horace Walpole, by A. D. Wallace, pp. 241-53 (the other tale is The Bird's Nest).

these awful sounds:

> "Prince, I am the fairy Buckinda. Thou art my grandson." (He bowed for her gracious acknŏledgment of him). "Wilt thou marry my Lord Hervey's daughter? ... you have seen this palace, and this Kingdom of Ducks — if you will marry her, it shall all be yours — If not you shall be transported to the obscurity from whence I have just drawn you ..."

Like the Hieroglyphic Tales this tale also is based on allusions to real personages, and Walpole himself explains in the detailed notes appended to the text:

> This is founded on a true story. The Duchess of Buckingham [Queen Buckinda], natural daughter to James II, by her first husband the Earl of Anglesea, had one daughter, married to the son of Sir Constantine Phipps ... The famous Lord Hervey, a little before his own and the Duchess's death, struck up a match between his eldest daughter, and the eldest Phipps [her grandson], whom her Grace intended for her heir, having before lost her only son the young Duke of Buckingham ...
>
> The first time Lord Hervey was introduced to the Duchess of Buckingham was on the 30th of January, and he found her sitting in state, herself and her women standing round her in close mourning for the martyrdom of her grandfather, Charles the First ...
>
> Her Grace generally wore tresses and a kind of robes. At Rome, whither she often went to see her brother the Pretender, she had all the honours done to a king's sister...
>
> She laboured extremely to engage Sir Robert Walpole to bring about the restoration of her brother ...

It is quite clear then that Walpole did not entirely depend on invention as a rule; in fact the images he used tended to pertain to a certain system of reference, even if, as in this case, they were the result of an instinctive choice. Of course the

Duchess of Buckingham is shown as Medusa here because she was an ugly and frightening old woman, but to Walpole's mind she also inevitably represented the Stuarts, the concept of absolute monarchy — in a word, the monster of tyranny which he detested. The two aspects thus coincided, and this is why the image of Medusa strikes us with its emblematic presence again. In this sense another illuminating coincidence indeed is that Walpole started the same tale in the following manner:

A fairy Tale. 1743.

> There is nothing casts greater lustre on the dawn of a hero's life, than his being brought up obscurely. The founder of the Roman Empire was educated by a simple shepherd, and the great Cyrus was suckled by a wolf. In our days we have seen the mighty Theodore(°)vault from behind a counter into a throne — and if other kings, his contemporaries make less figure in the lists of fame, it must **not** be ascribed so much to the want of merit in them, as to their want of a mean education.
> (H.W.'s note: (°)The Baron de Neuhoffe, who lived by his industry, and sundry metamorphoses, was at last chose by the Corsicans for their King, when they threw off the Genoese yoke.)

Such an exordium is naturally ironical; yet it leaves no doubt about the assimilation of the historical figure of Theodore within the general image of what I have indicated as the "new Brutus", the "Tyrannicide" in Walpole's visionary system. A similar assimilation concerned the idealized character of Lorenzino as wall. But then in front of the Palazzo Vecchio, that towering symbol of Medicean tyranny, Walpole had in

Cellini's statue of Perseus the coherent centre of the system: the figure of the young hero freeing the world from the foul monster, whose bleeding and gaping head he shows as perpetual memento, formed the perfect emblem of his ideals. And, when he conceived The Castle of Otranto he assigned a similar emblematic function to that "monumental helmet" and that "great sabre" which do carry the ultimate message of the "gothic story": like Hades' helmet and Hermes' curved sword they are the true attributes of the abstract form of "Liberty".

Walpole loved emblems, especially in book illustrations (12), and there is at least one instance of his use of Medusa's head in connection with the helmet and sword image. Four years before The Castle of Otranto, in 1760 the Strawberry Hill Press issued what is commonly called the "Strawberry Lucan", that is the **Pharsalia** edited by Richard Bentley. The illustration on the book title-page (13) consists of

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(12) A good example is a drawing by R. Bentley made about 1755 for the frontispiece of the Mem. Geo. II. (begun in 1751 and left unpublished), thus explained by Walpole himself: "The Author [H.W.], leaning on a globe of the world, between Heraclitus and Democritus, presents his book to the latter. In the landscape is a view of the Author's villa at Strawberry-Hill, near Twickenham , where the Memoires were chiefly written. At bottom is the date of the year [1751], with emblems, and the Author's arms and motto. The ivy over the mantle, that is lifted up and discovers a mask and caduceus, imply that time and history reveal what has been concealed."

(13) See Plate X.

M. ANNAEI LUCANI

PHARSALIA

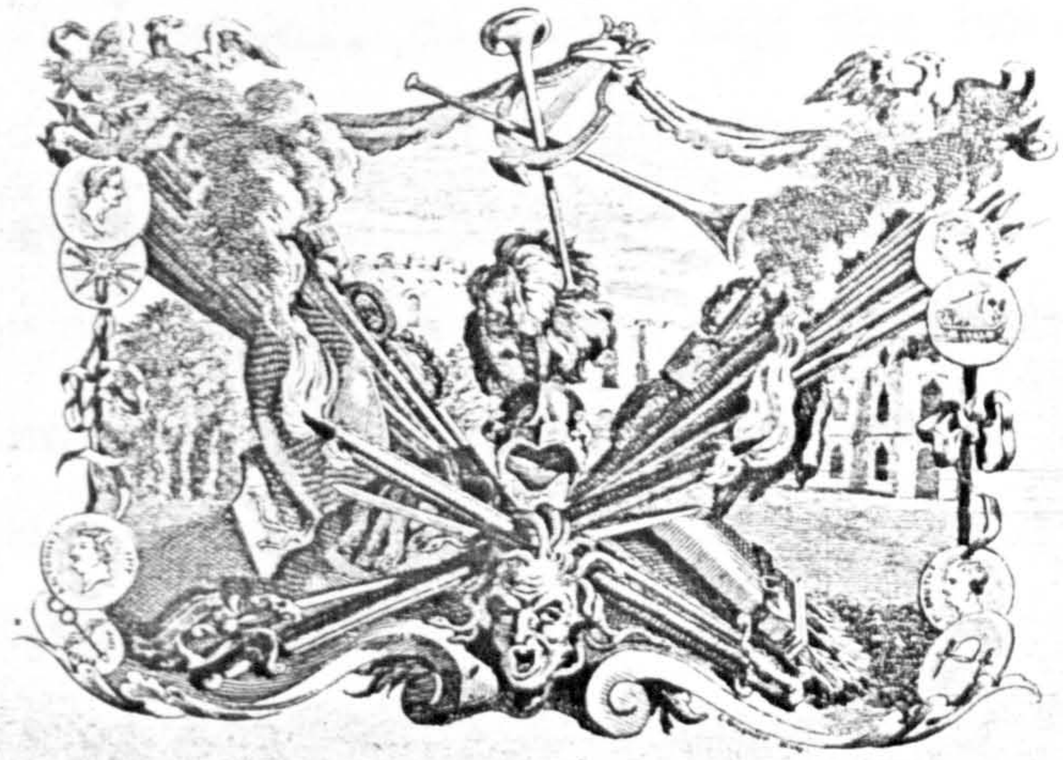
Cum Notis HUGONIS GROTII,

ET

RICHARDI BENTLEII.

Multa ſunt condonanda in opere poſtumo.

In Librum iv. Nota 641.



STRAWBERRY-HILL, Mpcclx.

Plate X. Title-page of the "Strawberry Lucan".

a picture with Strawberry Hill Castle in the background, against which is set a panoply with various weappns, insignia, eagles on both sides and torches, medals hanging in a frame-like fashion with trumpets in the middle. But the centre of this trophy, where the swords cross, is occupied by an enormous hollow helmet surmounted by heavy and impressive plumage, so that, in perspective, its crest appears higher than and almost towering above the upper battlements of the Castle. Here Plate VIII of Piranesi's Carceri (14) comes back to mind again; but there is a new element — immediately below the hollow helmet here is the ghastly and deformed face of Medusa, of dimensions exactly fitting the helmet's, as if it had been lifted for an instant, discovering the horrid snakes reaching and twisting about the gaping mask. This of course may echo the celebrated macabre episode in the sixth book of the poem, in which the hideous witch Erictho revives a mangled corpse by lashing it with serpents in order that it may prophesy to Sextus Pompeius the outcome of the battle — in the grisly words of the verse translation by Nicholas Rowe of 1718:

> Wroth was the hag at ling'ring Death's delay,
> And wonder'd Hell could dare to disobey;
> With curling Snakes the senseless Trunk she beats,
> And curses dire, at ev'ry lash repeats;
> With magic Numbers cleaves the groaning ground,
> And, thus, barks downwards to the Abyss profound.
> (ll. 1103-8)

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(14) Cf. my Plate VII above.

The episode was quite well known (15); this however does not entirely justify the configuration of the head of Medusa on the title-page, nor of the gigantic plumed helmet above it and against the battlements of the Castle. A further indication of the emblematic character of the picture is the clear presence on its lower right corner of "Brutus's medal with the cap of liberty between two daggers". I think all this suggests that the imagery structure developed in the novel was certainly formed in its relevant features much earlier, and that therefore The Castle of Otranto represented in actual terms "the realization of my dreams" for Walpole when he eventually came to synthesize them in a narrative form.

Was thus the image of Perseus equally at the back of Walpole's mind when he conceived the character of the hero, Theodore? There is a passage of a letter to Sir William Hamilton, written a few years later, by which it seems to me we get very close to what one might be tempted to call the definite answer to this question. It is a letter of thanks to Hamilton for the very extraordinary gift of three "gothic

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(15) A third edition of Rowe's translation was published in 1753, and the same episode was chosen even as the subject of a painting:

> When the short-lived British painter, John Mortimer — an exact contemporary of Fuseli — chose a classical theme, he preferred the very opposite of ideal beauty and perfect equilibrium. His "Sextus the Son of Pompey Applying to Erictho to Know the Fate of the Battle of Pharsalia", [was] exhibited at the Society of Artists in 1771...
> (R. Rosenblum, Transformations in Late 18th Century Art, Princeton, 1967, p. 11)

shields" he had just received:

> For fear of troubling you, dear Sir, with two letters instead of one, I waited for the arrival of the shields, before I thanked you for them — but it put my gratitude to pain, for I did not receive them till the day before yesterday. Now they are come, it will, which is very selfish, double my gratitude, for they are fine and most charming — nay, almost in too good taste, not to put my Gothic house to shame — I wish the Medusas could turn it to stone! In short I am exceedingly obliged to you; but though I have spared you one letter of my own, it will cost you another of yours, for you must tell me about them. The two that are painted, are in the great style of the best age; and by the Earl of Surry's shield in the Duke of Norfolk's possession, which is in the same manner as to the form and disposition, though not so bold, I should conclude they are by Polidoré (+), or of that school. Pray, satisfy me, and of the pedigree of the other too, which by the battlements on the building my house pretendes of its own family. I am going to hang them by the beautiful armour of Francis I (°) and they will certainly make me dream of another Castle of Otranto, or at least of a tournament more superb than Lord Stanley's <u>fête-champêtre</u>, though the latter cost half a million ...
> (To Hamilton, June 19, 1774)

(+) Polidoro Caldara (1500-1546), a pupil of Raphael, was active in Naples and Sicily after 1527; H.W. attributed one of the pictures at Houghton to him, an architectural phantasy in the Gallery: "... it is a kind of a Street with various Marble Palaces in Perspective, like the strada nuova at Genoa; the Buildings and Bass-reliefts are extremely fine, the latter especially are so like the Hand of Polydore, that I should rather think that this Picture is by this Master, rather than by Julio Roman, whose it is called." (<u>Aedes Walpolianae</u>, p. 271)

(°) As we shall see, H.W. thought it the work of Cellini.

The rest of the letter is not less interesting and we shall examine it shortly; but here all the relevance is due to the "gothic shields" which were painted with the head of Medusa, the head of Perseus and an "embattled tower" (16). The first is clearly visible in a print of the staircase (17): the head of Medusa

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(16) A MS note in Walpole's own copy of his Descr. (now at Farmington) describes them thus (pp. 31-32): "... Two shields, of leather, for tournaments, painted by Polidore. One has the head of Medusa, the other of Perseus. On the inside are battles in gold; they come out of the collection of the Commendatore Vittoria at Naples, and were sent to Mr. Walpole by Sir W. Hamilton, together with a third, which hangs on the opposite side of the staircase; it is of iron and seems to have been gilt. It represents the story of Curtius; but by an embattled tower in the background [it's probably not Roman', struck by H.W.] and a cannon on the border, is certainly not antique."

The battlements of Strawberry Hill are mentioned several times in the Corr. (cf. to Montagu, August 12, 1760 and July 22, 1761) even before their construction: "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 [Deut. xxii. 8, loosely quoted]."(To Montagu, September 28, 1749).

As to the shield painted with the head of Medusa, there is an amusing incident connected with it, thus related by Paget Toynbee: "... [H.W.] was sent for by the Princess Amelia to dine at Gunnersbury, and ...being weary, he 'gaped in the evening at the commerce-table', which did not escape the notice of the Princess. The latter a few days later paid a visit to Strawberry Hill — 'The moment the Princess came hither t'other morning and spied the shield with Medusa's head on the staircase, she said, 'Oh, now I see where you have learnt to yawn!'" (Strawberry Hill Accounts, Oxford, 1927, p. 64; cf. also to Lady Ossory, July 15, 1786).

(17) See Plate XI.

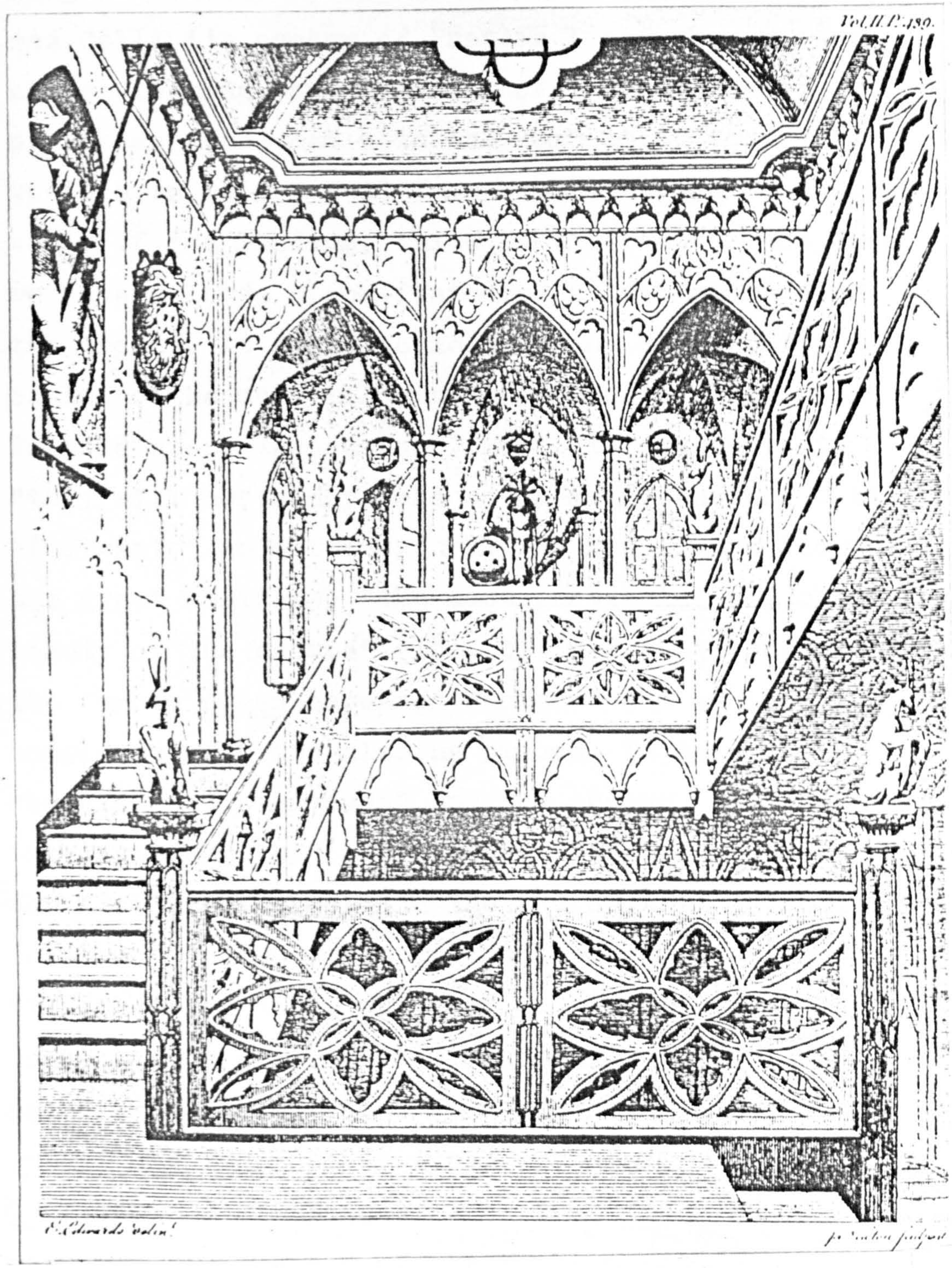

Plate XI. Great Staircase at Strawberry Hill.

hangs on the left, between the niche with the supposed Cellini's armour of Francis I and the armoury, almost looking down the well of the staircase; that of Perseus and that with the "embattled tower" (not visible in this print) face each other on the opposite walls of the landing, while in the centre, the armoury, we have a large black-feathered helmet surmounting the trophy. It seems to me that the disposition could not be more illuminating, and in its context Walpole's spontaneous and immediate remark that "they will certainly make me dream of another Castle of Otranto" is quite natural. He had always thought the great staircase "the most particular and chief beauty of the castle" (18), but now the scene of the famous dream appeared enriched and at last completed with its missing pieces. We have the "bannistered staircase" and the armour, the "embattled tower" and the heads of Perseus and Medusa, the feathered helmet and the swords, all fitting together to renew, now in the decorative apparatus of Strawberry Hill, what had originally been the vague vision of fleeting images and unconscious materializations — the same which to a considerable extent had found their expression in The Castle of Otranto. And at the centre of that dream which inspired the imagery of the novel might well have been just the nightmare of Medusa: the horrific image of what Shelley later called "the tempestuous

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(18) To Mann, June 12, 1753.

loveliness of terror" (19), the live snakes coiling and reaching on the proud head, like an oscillating "mountain of sable plumes".

If the emblem of the Medusa is the key to Walpole's imagery, then a wide variety of direct or indirect influences becomes possible. Piranesi often used the head of Medusa as a decorative element (for instance, in the Piazza Cavalieri di Malta in Rome, his only architectural realization together with the adjacent Chiesa del Priorato), but in connection, I think, with the more general image of the snake, adopted from Masonic symbolism. This is present in several works by Piranesi either as caduceus or more simply as snakes crawling out of some ancient ruin; it persistently appears in the early series of the Capricci (1744-45), which Calvesi has interpreted as complex Masonic allegories (20). Piranesi had just then been

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(19) ... 'Tis the tempestuous loveliness of terror;
For from the serpents gleams a brazen glare
Kindled by that inextricable error,
Which makes a thrilling vapour of the air
Become a [ ] and ever-shifting mirror
Of all the beauty and the terror there — ...

For a full discussion of this poem and of the image of Medusa in Romantic literature in general see "The Beauty of the Medusa" by Mario Praz in his The Romantic Agony, Oxford, 1970 (1933), pp. 23-52. Praz observes that "this glassy-eyed, severed female head, this horrible, fascinating Medusa, was to be the object of the dark loves of the Romantics and the Decadents throughout the whole of the century."

(20) Cf. op. cit., pp. 24-28.

active for some time in Tiepolo's workshop, and in fact Tiepolo's own "Capricci" are almost obsessively concerned with the same theme, though developed according to a different style. There constantly reappears, in particular in a large number of preparatory drawings, a typical pattern of imagery, which I would call the Pandora's Box pattern although there is no evidence that Tiepolo ever used the term. Through a set of variations this is regularly characterized by a vase from which a cluster of snakes is on the point of bursting forth or is actually crawling out: a sort of magician or philosopher points at the phenomenon with surprise and awe. Often there is also a youth standing by, perhaps an apprentice or initiate, and a crowd of variable size gathers around struck with terror and wonder(21).

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(21) George Knox in his Catalogue of the Tiepolo Drawings in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 1960, suggested that this theme may derive from an old book of proverbs, Niccolò Nelli's Proverbii, published in Venice in 1564, which is illustrated with woodcuts; one of them could in fact be seen as one of Tiepolo's sources:

> ... at the bottom left of the plate [in Nelli's book], an astrologer and a young man with a vase and a serpent issuing forth, with the verse: 'Chi se confida in que ch'apar di fuora/ Dentro vi trova il serpe ch'il divora' [translation: 'Who trusts the outward appearance,/ inside will find the serpent that will devour him]. This is the essential programme of [Tiepolo's] 'Scherzo' No. 5 for which again we have a fine study. It is interesting to note that in this drawing the vase and serpent appear to have been added as an afterthought, though in other studies where these elements occur, they form an integral part of the scheme.
> (p. 24)

One of the most complete examples of the kind is in my view the beautiful drawing La folla e i serpenti (22), and here among the several vases appears also a helmet and a shield with the head of Medusa on the right(23). One is reminded of the very similar scene at the beginning of The Castle of Otranto, where the bewildered Manfred and the crowd around him look in astonishment at the strange object which has suddenly revealed the presence of supernatural forces among them:

> The horror of the spectacle, the ignorance of all around how this misfortune happened, and, above all, the tremendous phaenomenon before him, took away the prince's speech. Yet this silence lasted longer than even grief could occasion. He fixed his eyes on what he wished in vain to believe a vision; and seemed less attentive to his loss, than buried in meditation on the stupendous object that had occasioned it. He touched, he examined the fatal casque; nor could even the bleeding mangled remains of the young prince divert the eyes of Manfred from the portent before him. (Chapter I)

In the novel Theodore is accused of being a "magician", and such a figure of "the magician" is always present in Tiepolo's compositions of the kind I mentioned.

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(22) Now in the Museo Civico at Trieste (ex-Sartorio collection);cf. G. Vigni, Disegni del Tiepolo, Padova, 1942, plate 25.

(23) The helmet is also a very frequent motif with Tiepolo and occurs in several studies for allegorical subjects (cf. G. Vigni, op. cit., plates 34-35), together with studies for vases (ibid., plates 36-53); "Gorgons with serpents" appear in three studies (ibid., plates 41-44).

The snake issuing from the vase does not seem to be a definitely negative emblem for the artist; perhaps it represents just the reverse of the theme of the Cornucopia, also a common one in his allegorical paintings (for the decoration of the Villa Loschi near Vicenza in 1734, for example). But I do not think Tiepolo was really concerned with negative or positive implications; rather than a moral lesson, the theme dramatically expressed the discovery of the Supernatural. Sometimes instead of the vase with snakes, the object of the discovery is a skeleton or the mouldering corpse of a hermit: a more traditional motif in this case ("Death gives audience"), also treated by Piranesi and derived from that of the "Sorrowing Philosopher", found in Salvator Rosa and popular with German Baroque painters (24). No doubt Walpole knew Tiepolo's work well, and if he had seen one of these drawings or "Capricci" he might have been impressed by it. But even without taking Tiepolo into account as a direct source,

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(24) An echo of this motif might be the analogous scene in Chapter IV of The Castle of Otranto:

> /Frederic/ instantly set out for the wood that had been marked in his dream. For three days he and his attendants had wandered in the forest without seeing a human form: but on the evening of the third they came to a cell, in which they found a venerable hermit in the agonies of death...

The episode then determines the discovery of the sabre:

> ... when we had committed the holy relics to the earth, we dug according to direction — But what was our astonishment, when about the depth of six feet we discovered an enormous sabre — the very weapon yonder in the court? ...

it is quite possible that the intuition of the dramatic value of a scene, in which a group of people is suddenly horrified by the unexpected manifestation of the Supernatural, had filtered through secondary impressions on Walpole's mind, so familiar with the works of Salvator Rosa, Piranesi and other artists who experimented with the theme.

On the other hand, other suggestions were possible. For example a gigantic head of Medusa is the chief ornament of the base of the huge pyramid surmounting the palace-labyrinth in the Hypnerotomachia Poliphili; it is accurately described in a long passage of the book, and an illustration shows it clearly. This might be one of the ways Walpole came eventually to reinforce the link between the image of Medusa and that of the young hero seeking, like Polifilo, love and liberty. In any case, however, I feel that such a connection was more likely to derive from the early emotions I indicated, rather than from later reflections, though the latter were certainly important in making the imagery of The Castle of Otranto more complex in its implications. Cellini's statue of Perseus, as I said, was very probably the first source, in the sense that it became the most expressive synthesis of a state of mind around which various impressions and experiences converged. During his stay in Florence in fact the same idea was echoed by other works of art he might have seen: the famous Medusa in the Uffizi Gallery

at one time attributed to Leonardo, or that by Verrocchio on a terracotta bust in armour(25), or the "Anima Dannata" by Michelangelo again at the Uffizi(26).

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(25) Now in the National Gallery, Washington.

(26) Cf. no. 60 E. It is the most important of the three drawings which, according to Vasari, Michelangelo presented to Gherardo Perini. A very similar drawing was made by Raphael in a preparatory study for the "School of Athens" (now at Oxford). Michelangelo then inserted an almost identical head in the "Last Judgement", behind Minos. L. Goldscheider (Michelangelo Drawings, London, 1951, p. 177) says that a possibly more correct designation of this drawing would be "La Furia", in connection with the idea of love-madness expressed by Ariosto in the Orlando Furioso (second edition: 1522, which is also the probable date of the drawing). It seems to me, however, that a different clue could be given by one of Michelangelo's most intriguing poems, sonnet X, where the image of Medusa is referred to the Pope, and therefore to the idea of tyrannical power (spiritual power perverted into temporal power). It is interesting to notice that here we again find the image of the helmet and the sword; in fact the sonnet starts with the quite dramatic movement indicating the corruption operated by war (desire of temporal power) on religion: chalices, says the artist, are transformed into "helmets and swords".

Qua si fa elmi di calici e spade
e 'l sangue di Cristo si vend' a giumelle,
e croce e spine son lance e rotelle,
e pur da Cristo pazïenzia cade. ...

S' i' ebbi ma' voglia a perder tesauro,
per ciò che qua opra da me è partita,
può quel nel manto che Medusa in Mauro ...

(Translation, according to the interpretation by E. N. Girardi in: Michelangiolo Buonarroti, Rime, Bari, 1960, p. 163: Here they make helmets and swords out of chalices / and Christ's blood is sold in great quantity, / the crosses and thorns become spears and shields, / and Christ himself loses his patience .... If ever I desired to be poor / this is the time, for here I am left with no work, / and the Pope can turn me into stone as Medusa did with Atlas ...)

In an unpublished jeu d'esprit, probably of 1740, entitled Some Fragments of a Journey to Italy (27) Walpole describes the Medusa in the Strozzi Collection at Rome, humorously admitting not to have seen it:

> The chief jewel of this noble cabinet [the Strozzi Collection], and which indeed has not its fellow in the world, is the Medusa, of which there are so many copies in England. The countenance is the most beautiful than can be imagined, that grecian beauty so often described by the poets. Her snakes add a lovely horror to her face, and set off the sweetness of her natural look, as I have heard, for I never saw it ...

All this, and more, may have lain dormant in Walpole's mind until the moment actually came that he "saw it", when the complex stratifications of his fantasy emerged to a mature and full expression. At the terminal point of such a process the image of Medusa presented itself as a personification of guilt in a desperate and self-accusing soul. An example of this is the end of The Mysterious Mother, when the Countess has already revealed the atrocious incest she had been guilty of and stabbed herself: she is now the visible emblem

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(27) It is now contained in Corr., 13-14, pp. 239--40. It includes another passage with the description of the "Septizonium Severi", one of the marvels Walpole did not see (he had a good excuse: it had been pulled down twenty years before). It is an interesting coincidence that Piranesi should also have been concerned with this famous monument: he mentioned it in the Antichità d'Albano in connection with Porsenna's tomb. Walpole, following Montfauçon conjecture, thought it had been "a Gothic structure".

of a monstrous reality from which Edmund, her son and, unknowingly, lover, cannot escape but by self-annihilation, as the play's closing lines, which he pronounces, make clear:

> I never must behold her! — never more
> Review this theatre of monstruous guilt!
> No; to th'embattled foe I will present
> This hated form — and welcome be the sabre
> That leaves no atom of it undefac'd.

The beauty of the Medusa had completed the full circle of Walpole's imagination, and then the Sabre, the emblem of divine vengeance restoring justice, was turned against the hero himself, for whom there is no hope of salvation. In The Castle of Otranto however the idea of a still possible "freedom" still retained the positive value of which both the helmet and sabre bear the full significance, as active attributes of a benevolent abstract and supernatural Order. And there is still a link between it and the demi-god, the "new Brutus", by whom, though through destruction,

> "Peace 'lights again on the forsaken strand,
> "And banish'd plenty re-assumes the land.

II

When in November 1781 The Count of Narbonne, the tragedy by Robert Jephson based on The Castle of Otranto was first produced in London, Walpole who actively participated in the production demanded, to Jephson's dismay, that the statue of Alfonso's tomb in the con-

cluding scene be recumbent. The playwright clearly had imagined the statue of Alfonso as Mozart (and Molière)conceived his convitato di pietra, almost stalking through the stage; but Walpole insisted: a statue standing by itself would obviously be upright; on a tomb, never. And Walpole indeed had quite an experience in tombs. ~~Custom had made it in him a property of easiness, and~~ Most of his antiquarian expertise in Gothic was naturally derived from sepulchral monuments — Strawberry Hill is a collection of famous tombs disguised as "chimney--pieces, ceilings, balustrades, loggias, etc. ..."(1). In the Holbein Room above the Oratory, for instance, the chimney-piece was inspired by the tomb of Archbishop Warham at Canterbury; the design of the "gothic fretwork" represented on the wallpaper in in the entrance hall and staircase derived from Prince Arthur's tomb in Worcester Cathedral. Again, the tombs of John Earl of Cornwall in Westminster Abbey and of Thomas Duke of Clarence at Canterbury merged to form the chimnay-piece in the Library. Walpole had also projected converting the Waiting-Room into a Gothic Columbarium: "... a Gothic Columbarium is a new thought of my own, of which I am fond, and going to execute one at Strawberry" (2);

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(1) Descr., p. 395.

(2) To Mann, November 20, 1757.

eventually he did not execute it, but there is a drawing by Bentley showing all the cubicles, urns and sepulchres that should have belonged to it. An earlier project of a Roman sarcophagus to decorate the garden(3) had however materialized, for after

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(3) The idea of the "sepulchral monument" placed in a Pleasure-Garden, in accordance with the classical theme of the "exemplum virtutis" was quite a familiar one with eighteenth century sensibility. Literary implications were strong. In his Conjectures on Original Composition Edward Young used precisely this image to introduce the reader to the subject of his work:

> A serious Thought standing single among many of a lighter nature, will sometimes strike the careless Wanderer after Amusement only, with useful Awe: as monumental Marbles scattered in a wide Pleasure-Garden (and such there are) will call to Recollection those who would never have sought it in a Church-yard--walk of mournful Yews.
>
> To One such Monument I may conduct you, in which is a hidden Lustre, like the sepulchral Lamps of old ...
>
> (op. cit., pp. 2-3)

Rousseau's tomb in the park of Ermenonville is a clear example of architectural imagery expressing literary substance:

> Isolated on an island of poplar trees, this classicizing tomb could be glimpsed from the shore as if it were a fragment of antique marble just visible within a landscape by Hubert Robert, who in fact participated in its design. The tomb's power to stimulate meditations upon the greatness of the man buried on this lonely island was attested to by the many late eighteenth century visitors who came to pay contemplative homage to Rousseau, a list that included ... an anonymous English visitor who, overcome by emotion, swam over to the tomb and wept upon it.
>
> (R. Rosenblum, op. cit., p. 117)

a year's search Mann eventually found what was needed:

> ... the pretty altar-tomb ... arrived here ... yesterday, and this morning churchyarded itself in the corner of my wood, where I hope it will remain till some future virtuoso shall dig it up and publish it in a collection of Roman antiquities in Britain.
> (To Mann, July 13, 1753)

There is therefore no extravagance if such a natural corollary of Gothic setting is directly assumed at narrative level too, within the imagery structure of The Castle of Otranto. In effect the tomb of Alfonso tends to become the ideal centre of the novel, and everything seems fatally to gravitate towards it as the emblem of impending Nemesis. Near the end action gradually concentrates under the dark shade of the monument:

> ... The injuries thou hast received from Manfred's race, said the friar, are beyond what thou canst conceive. — Reply not, but view this holy image! Beneath this marble monument rest the ashes of good Alfonso; a prince adorned with every virtue: the father of his people! the delight of mankind! Kneel headstrong boy, and list, while a father unfolds a tale of horror, that will expel every sentiment from thy soul, but sensations of sacred vengeance. — Alfonso! much injured prince! let thy unsatisfied shade sit awful on the troubled air, while these trembling lips — Ha! who comes there? — The most wretched of women, said Hippolita, entering the choir. Good father, art thou at leisure? — But why this kneeling youth? what means the horror imprinted on each countenance? why at this venerable tomb — Alas! hast thou seen aught? We were pouring forth our orisons to heaven, replied the friar with some

> confusion, to put an end to the woes of this deplorable province ...
>
> Madam, said Manfred, what business drew you hither? Why did you not await my return from the marquis? I came to implore a blessing on your councils, replied Hippolita. My councils do not need a friar's intervention, said Manfred — and of all men living is that hoary traitor the only one whom you delight to confer with? Profane prince! said Jerome: is it at the altar that thou choosest to insult the servants of the altar? — But, Manfred, thy impious schemes are known. Heaven and this virtuous lady know them. Nay frown not, prince. The church despises thy menaces. Her thunders will be heard above thy wrath ... Audacious rebel! said Manfred, endeavouring to conceal the awe with which the friar's words inspired him; dost thou presume to threaten thy lawful prince? Thou art no lawful prince, said Jerome; thou art no prince — ... As he spoke those words three drops of blood fell from the nose of Alfonso's statue.
> (Chapter IV)

This dismal image of supernatural revenge hankering in silence after its victim is no mere decorative element, nor an expedient strictly theatrical; it is there as an emblem which with its threatening significance dominates the scene — the tuba spreading its marvellous sound over this waste land, this deplorable province, awaiting Justice. This is also the place of the fatal sacrifice, Manfred's murder of his own child — here again Justice exacts its bloody prize:

> ... This man, almost breathless with the haste he had made, informed his lord, that Theodore and some lady from the castle were at that instant in private conference at the tomb of Alfonso in St. Nicholas's church ... Manfred, whose spirits were inflamed ... stole

> towards the tomb of Alfonso, to which he was directed by indistinct whispers of the persons he sought. The first sounds he could distinguish were — Does it, alas, depend on me? Manfred will never permit our union. — No, this shall prevent it! cried the tyrant, drawing his dagger, and plunging it over the shoulder into the bosom of the person that spoke ...
> (Chapter V)

The mechanism is inexorable; the race of tyrants must be extinguished: but the hero, the"new Brutus", who in the dream of Liberty of the young Walpole impersonated the classical rôle of the Vindicator, is absent here and Theodore has only a passive function in the story of revenge. It is very clear that change in society is possible exclusively through the growth and maturity of an abstract form of revolutionary energy accumulated — as it is stated in the prophecy at the beginning of the novel "That the castle and lordship of Otranto should pass from the present family, whenever the real owner should be <u>grown too large to inhabit it</u>" [my italics]. Thus all power over earthly things rests with that silent, firm emblem of the Supernatural represented by the gloomy monument of Alfonso, from where feudal static entity is eventually to emerge transformed into ideal and mobile value: " ... the walls of the castle behind Manfred were thrown down with a mighty force, and the form of Alfonso, <u>dilated to an immense magnitude</u> [my italics], appeared in the centre of the ruins ... accompanied by a clap of thunder, it ascended solemnly towards heaven, ... soon wrapt from mortal eyes in a blaze of glory". Blood and

suffering however remain within the sphere of reality, and blood, which, introducing a comical note by contrast, Walpole makes stream down the recumbent effigy of the "much-injured prince", is the sign of vengeance imprinted over this sacrificial altar. For — here is the synthesis in terms of imagery — something like an "altar-tomb" (that is an emblematic union of the ideas of the visible, pagan, sacrifice and the powers of the Uncanny) must have been present to Walpole's mind when he conceived the Monument of Alfonso; again, a classical theme transplanted into a Gothic dream of horror.

If Walpole's configuration of the altar-tomb image is still vague in the novel, there was a man who later helped him to realize the vision. The man is Sir William Hamilton, whom we have already seen busy ~~in~~ finding the shields of Polidore with the heads of Medusa and Perseus for his friend; but that is not the only thing he found for Strawberry Hill. Hamilton was also a friend of Piranesi and perhaps the most "cognoscente" of the Inglesi known at the time in Italy for being picture-mad and ruin-mad. Thus Mario Praz writes of him, commenting on one of Hamilton's most admired works, Campi Phlegraei, illustrated by P. Fabris:

> In margine a ogni scena tempestosa o tranquilla, appare la figuretta elegante d'un gentiluomo vestito di rosso, col tricorno e il bastone, spesso accompagnato da un altro vestito di turchino. Il signore vestito di rosso segna a dito la scena,

il compagno è in atto di disegnare. Così Hamilton e Fabris appaiono contro gli sfondi paradisiaci o infernali come Dante e Virgilio nel regno delle ombre. In una scena notturna rischiarata dalla sinistra luce del torrente di lava, Hamilton fa da guida alla famiglia reale col seguito, e si pensa a un episodio di Vathek del Beckford, nella sala sotterranea del demonio Eblis. (Gusto Neoclassico, Milano, 1974 (1940), p. 329)

(Translation: In the margin of each stormy or quiet scene appears the elegant silhouette of a gentleman dressed in red, with tricorn and walking-stick, often accompanied by another one dressed in deep blue. The man in red points to the scene, which his companion is engaged in drawing. Thus Hamilton and Fabris appear against those heavenly or infernal backgrounds, like Dante and Virgil in the Kingdom of the Shades. In one nocturnal scene lit up by the sinister blaze of the lava torrent, Hamilton is the guide of the royal family and its retinue, and one thinks of an episode from Beckford's Vathek, in the subterranean hall of the demon Eblis.)

Like Walpole then Hamilton was a lover of antiquity.(4), classical antiquity indeed, but this did not stop him from setting to himself the hard task of finding Gothic relics for Walpole in the land of Vasari. He succeeded in a way, for "Gothic" was after all a state of mind, and it may be no chance that in one of the curious letters accompanying his gothic gifts Hamilton mentioned Tasso, whose "éclatante folie" certainly is the most brilliant example of Italian

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(4) Hamilton was a Fellow of the Royal Society. He was also a member of the Society of Dilettanti and appears in the picture by Reynolds portraying the affiliates of that Society together with one of his splendid publications on ancient vases, resting on the table in the foreground.

barbarism:

> Dear Sir,
>
> Excuse the liberty I take in sending you a table made out of a Gothic Saracen mosaic that I got from a church at Salerno, and which accompanies the mosaic I had the pleasure of sending you from Rome. The stars in the middle were repaired at Naples with pieces of antique marble whose colours I thought would suit the rest, formerly I believe the circles were only of porphyry. Don't be scrupulous of accepting this trifle as I do assure you it cost me little. I have added a basso-rilievo, the portrait of Eleonora of the family d'Este who was Tasso's mistress, and which I thought might be acceptable to you ... When I was in Sicily at Girgenti in a Capuchins' convent, round the cloister I saw Gothic paintings much decayed by time. I thought the Italian explanation of the figures curious so had them transcribed for you ...
> (From Hamilton, March 5, 1771)

Walpole's visionary world was made of indirect associations, whose immediate significance is nevertheless always metaphoric. In this letter from Hamilton we have two odd references to Eleonora d'Este and to a cloister in an old Capuchin convent: instinctively Walpole placed Eleonora's portrait in the "Small Cloyster" designed by Bentley at the entrance of Strawberry Hill:

> ... Passing on the left, by a small cloyster, is the entrance to the house ... In this cloyster are three blue and white delft flower-pots; and a bas-relief head in marble, inscribed Dia Helianora; it is the portrait of the princess Eleonora d'Este, with whom Tasso was in love, and who was the cause of his misfortunes. It was sent to Mr. Walpole from Italy by sir W. Hamilton, minister at Naples ...
> (Descr., p. 3)

It was commonly believed that Tasso had been immured and chained in Sant'Anna Hospital in Ferrara by the Duke Alfonso II d'Este, jealous of the poet's love for his two sisters Eleonora and Lucrezia (5). This is what Walpole means when he says that Eleonora "was the cause of his /Tasso's/ misfortunes". Tasso too then, in Walpole's imagination, was a sort of "young hero", and as a matter of fact the story of his legendary relationship with Eleonora recalls a passage in The Castle of Otranto. When Manfred imprisons Theodore for the second time, he confines him in a room which is beneath Matilda's bedchamber; Bianca, hearing him below, at first believes it is a ghost and exclaims:

> ... Indeed ! Indeed! madam, said Bianca, half weeping with agony, I am sure I heard a voice. Does anybody lie in the chamber beneath? said the princess. Nobody has dared to lie there, answered Bianca, since the great astrologer that was your brother's tutor drowned himself. For certain, madam, his ghost and the young prince's are now met in the chamber below ...
> (Chapter II)

The "chamber below" has been identified by W. S. Lewis and it is precisely the "Little Cloyster" (6) , as

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(5) Alfonso's reasons for confining Tasso were actually political and not personal (cf. N. Sapegno; Compendio di storia della letteratura italiana, Firenze, 1964, 2, p. 186).

(6) See Plate XII. The 'Little Cloyster', however, being open, obviously could only be imagined as a chamber.

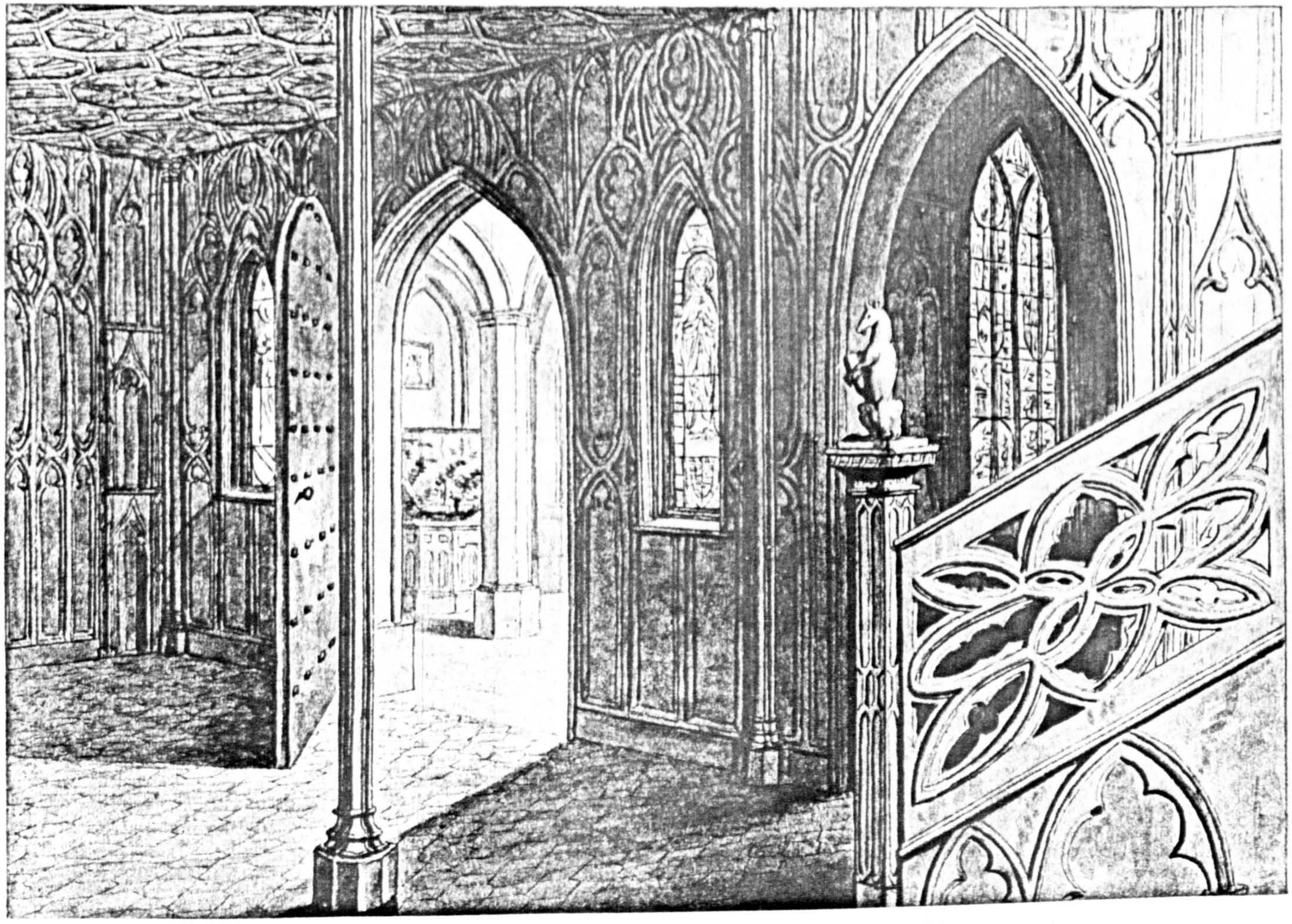

Plate XII. The Little Cloyster at Strawberry Hill.

the critic ingeniously explains:

> ... That Matilda's apartment is the Holbein Chamber seems certain from its position relative to "the postern gate", which is clearly the north entrance at Strawberry. ... "The little chamber beneath", where Theodore lay, would thus be the Little Cloister or the Oratory. Manfred speaks of it as "a small chamber on the stairs". Although close to the stairs, it is not "on" them, but the circumstance of its being the room where the great astrologer, Conrad's tutor, drowned himself lends color to the belief that it was the Little Cloister, for the lofty vase in which the pensive Selima, immortalized by Gray, was drowned was situated there ... It is not beyond the creative powers to transmute a cat named Selima into a great astrologer ... (The Genesis..., pp. 89-90)

We have already seen that the figure of the Astrologer or Magician was a frequent one in Tiepolo's "Capricci" (7). In most of them, I said, this mysterious character is accompanied by a pupil to whom he indicates the serpents reaching out of an ancient weird vase. Now, as Mr. Lewis observes, it was indeed on an ancient "lofty vase" in the Little Cloyster that in Gray's

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(7) According to J. Knox, op. cit., Tiepolo's inspiration for this particular figure could come again from Nelli's Proverbii:

> We may also observe in the Nelli engraving the figure of an astrologer with the words: 'Chi a' corsi de Pianeti attende e mira / Il tempo perde e poscia al fin sospira' /translation: Who attends and watches the courses of the planets / wastes his time and then in the end sighs/. These words may be appropriate perhaps to 'Scherzo' No. 20, 'Le Philosophe Seul' and well reflect the mood of many of these magical fantasies.

graceful words:

> "The pensive Selima reclined,
> "Gazed on the lake below.
> (Ode on the Death of a Favourite Cat, Drowned in a Tub of Gold Fishes, ll. 5-6)

And there too "the great astrologer" discovered Terror and Destruction to come for Manfred's family: in the darkness of the future a knowledge of reality carrying death down the same abyss:

> "The slippery verge her feet beguiled,
> "She tumbled headlong in.
> (Ibid., ll. 29-30)

"The hapless nymph with wonder saw ...": in that same Little Cloister Horace Walpole chose to hang the portrait of Eleonora d'Este which Hamilton had sent to him — the perfect place, it seems to me, to imagine again the scene between Theodore and Matilda:

> ... Sleep had forsaken me: I left a restless couch, and came to waste the irksome hours with gazing on the fair approach of morning, impatient to be dismissed from this Castle. Thy words and accents, said Matilda, are of a melancholy cast: if thou art unhappy, I pity thee. If poverty afflicts thee, let me know it; I will mention thee to the princess, whose beneficent soul ever melts for the stranger; and she will relieve thee. I am indeed unhappy, said the stranger; and I know not what wealth is ... I will remember you in my orisons, and will pray for a blessing on your gracious self and your noble mistress — ... but oh, if a poor and worthless stranger might presume to beg a minute's audience farther — am I so happy? — the casement is not shut — might I venture to ask ...
> (Chapter II)

Tasso had implored the princesses from the depth of his prison (8): the episode was quite well known and might have actually influenced Walpole. Walpole's intuition, however, consisted in making Matilda the innocent victim of an obscure mechanism above her,

> ... Soft you now,
> The fair Ophelia — Nymph in thy orison
> Be all my sins remembered.

In <u>The Castle of Otranto</u> this imaginative context is not really developed in emblematic terms; again then Hamilton's gift here contributed to give form to a mere dream — at the entrance of Strawberry Hill "Dia Helianora"'s effigy could be discerned in the shade of the Little Cloyster, at the opposite pole of the spendour of the Gods, still conscious of human woes and misery, her domain the motionless lake of despair. And perhaps under the bas-relief could be

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(8) In several poems addressed to them (Lucrezia and Eleonora) after 1579. In one of these, <u>Alle principesse d'Este</u>, the poet says for example:

> A voi parlo, che suore
> del grand'Alfonso invitto,
> avete onde sprezzar Giuno e Diana
> ...
> chiedo pietate omai;
> e s'a le mie svènture
> non vi piegate voi, chi lor si piega?
> Lasso! Chi per me prega
> ne le fortune avverse
> se voi mi séte sorde? ...
> (<u>Translation</u>: To you I speak, who, sisters / of the great unvanquished Alfonso, / have reason to scorn both Juno and Diana / ... I ask but pity now; / and if to my misfortunes / even you do not yield, who shall yield to them? / Alas! Who shall pray for me / in the adversities / if you are deaf to me? / ...)

It is a remarkable circumstance that names like Hippolito, Alfonso, Isabella, quite frequent with the d'Este, were chosen by Walpole for some of his characters.

inscribed the lines of the Introductory Sonnet to the novel:

> Oh! guard the marvels I relate
> Of fell ambition scourg'd by fate,
> From reason's peevish blame:
> Blest with thy smile, my dauntless sail
> I dare expand to fancy's gale,
> For sure thy smiles are fame.

It may be no chance that in the Description of Strawberry Hill from the curious illustration of the particulars of the vase in which Selima met her unhappy fate Walpole quite abruptly passes on to describe the "New Chapel" in the Garden, some five hundred yards away from the house (9). As a matter of fact there was also an immediate connection between the two, for actually the same man who executed the "beautiful front of Portland stone" for the New Chapel, "Mr. Gayfere of Westminster", also made two pedestals during the same period: on one of them, "in fine taste" and standing in the "Anti-Chapel [sic]", was "a head of saint John Baptist, alto relievo, in marble, ... the work of Donatello, and a present from sir Horace Mann" (10); on the other, the "Gothic carved pedestal", stood the vase in question formerly in the Small Cloyster. It may be only an accidental detail, but why did Walpole

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(9) Cf. Descr., p. 112.

(10) Cf. ibid., p. 113. See also: to Mann, February 17 and July 13, 1773. Thomas Gayfere (1720-1812) was appointed master-mason of Westminster about 1762.

eventually decide to move the vase to this extraordinary building, to which no doubt he attributed special significance?(11).In fact the "New Chapel" must not be confused with the "Chapel", also called Tribune or Cabinet, which was situated in the house, though they were both conceived as a kind of bizarre (almost blasphemous) temples. As we have seen the Chapel was already complete with a vast collection of typical Walpolian paraphernalia: in the small shrine above the fictitious altar (the "rose-wood cabinet") there were objects like "Herodias with the head of the Baptist ... Perseus and Andromeda ... the Medusa of Strozzi; the Perseus of ditto ... eight other heads ..." But the "New Chapel", erected at a much later date (12), was a magnificent separate building made just

> ... to receive two valuable pieces of antiquity, and which have been presents singularly lucky for me. They are the window from Bexhill with the portraits of Henry III and his Queen, procured for me

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(11) The pedestal was made in view of this new collocation (though they were temporarily placed in the Great Cloyster, cf. Descr., p. 112): cf. to Mason, July 29, 1773: "I have a pedestal making for the tub in which my cat was drowned: the first stanza of the ode to be written on it beginning thus — ''Twas on this lofty vase's side & c.'".

(12) Paget Toynbee observed that the date inscribed on the Chapel's door ("This Chapel was erected by Horace Walpole in the year 1771") is certainly erroneous, for we know from the Corr. that the foundations were not dug until May 1772 (cf. to Mason, May 9, 1772); the Chapel was thus begun in 1772 and not finished until June 1774 (cf. to Mann, June 8 and to Hamilton June 19, 1774). Cf. Strawberry Hill Accounts, p. 153; for the two pedestals and front of the New Chapel cf. ibid., p. 13.

> by Lord Ashburnham. The other, great part of the tomb of Capoccio, mentioned in my Anecdotes of Painting on the subject of the Confessor's shrine, and sent to me from Rome by Mr Hamilton, our minister at Naples. (To Cole, October 23, 1771)

Henry III, the son of King John, in 1265 defeated Simon de Monfort at Evesham: it was one of the celebrated episodes of the "struggle for the Charter" idealized in the eighteenth century (Walpole kept a copy of the Magna Carta on the other side of his bed, just like his Charles I's Warrant for Execution). The window from Bexhill was remarkable and Walpole had it engraved for the frontispiece of the Anecdotes of Painting (13). But even more precious was to him the other piece, which stood in the centre of the Chapel, the "tomb of Capoccio", as he called it: he believed it the work of the great Pietro Cavallini, Giotto's contemporary (14). He described it in the

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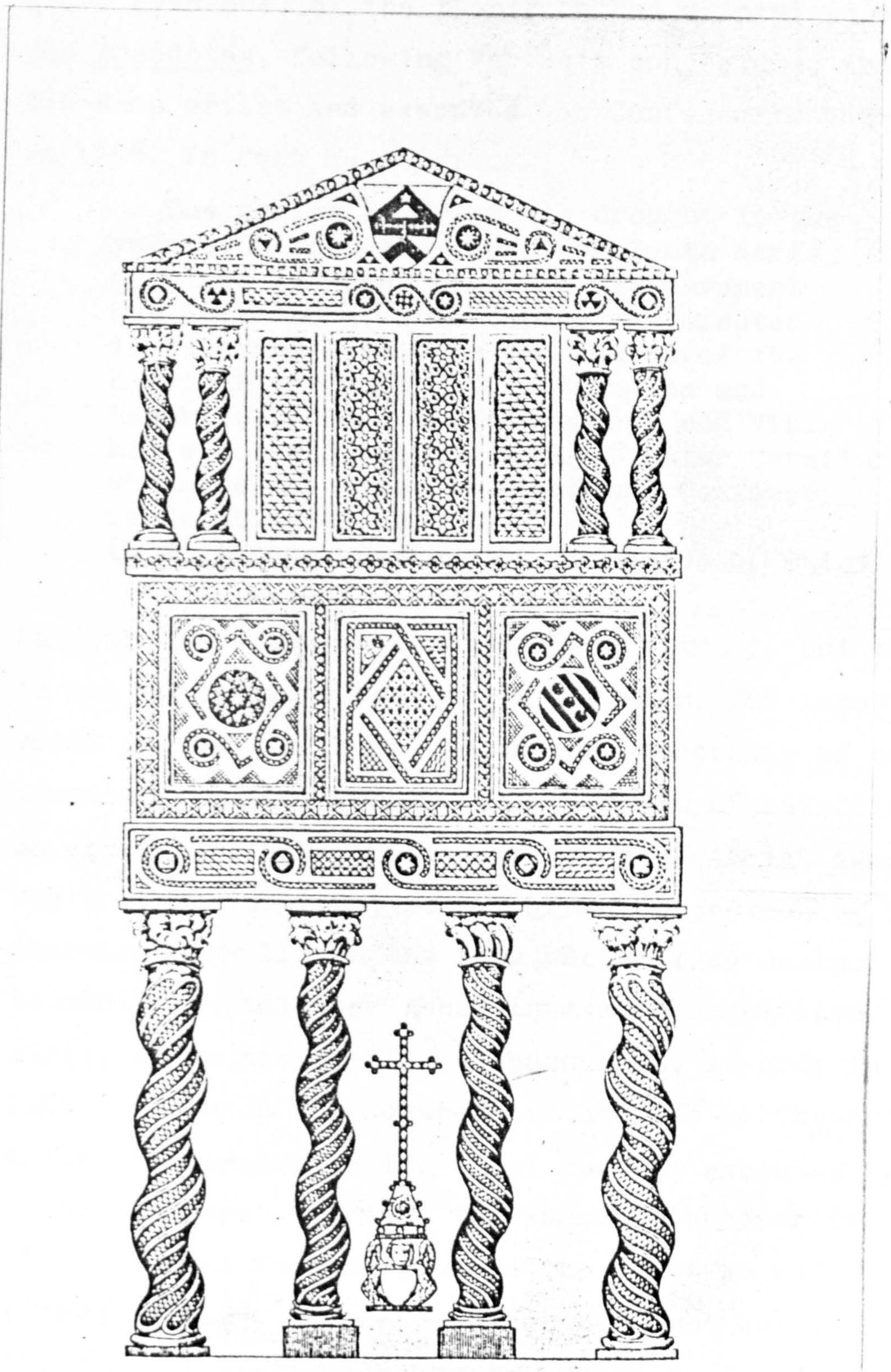
(13) The Inscription on the Chapel door says: The window was brought from the church of Bexhill in Sussex. The two principal figures are king Henry III. and Eleanor of Provence his queen, the only portraits of them extant. King Henry died in 1272, and we know of no painted glass more ancient than the reign of his father king John.

(14) There are no sepulchral monuments known to be Cavallini's. He was essentially a painter and the only works known to be undisputably his date from 1291 to 1316-20. The latest discoveries seem to lend credit to Walpole's assumption that the date of the artist's death was earlier than the commonly accepted 1344, so as to carry the birthdate also to an earlier period than 1259. We do not have any documented news about him after 1308, and today it seems that he died about 1325 in very old age, which would fix his birthdate about 1240 (cf. G. C. Argan, Storia dell'arte italiana, Firenze, 1969, 1, p. 359).

For the "tomb of Capoccio" see Plate XIII.



A Representation of the ANCIANT SHRINE in the Chapel at STRAWBERRY HILL.: Brought from Rome in the Year 1768. the Work of PETER CAVALINI, who made the Tomb of Edward the Confessor in Westminster Abbey. See Description of Strawberry Hill and the Anecdotes of Painting. Vol I. Lyson's Reverses Vol III & Pennant's London.

Drawn, Engraved & Publish'd, Nov 1 1798. by W Bowyer Engraver, Library Lane Noble Street.

Plate XIII. The Shrine of Capoccio.

Inscription for the Chapel as Cavallini's work, a further confirmation for him (in spite of chronological evidence) of the thesis he had maintained in the Anecdotes, following Vertue's conjecture, that the same artist had executed the Confessor's tomb in 1268. In fact he says:

> The shrine in front was brought in the year 1768 from the church of Santa Maria maggiore in Rome, when the new pavement was laid there. This shrine was erected in the year 1256 over the bodies of the holy martyrs Simplicius, Faustina and Beatrix, by John James Capoccio and Vinia his wife; and was the work of Peter Cavalini, who made the tomb of Edward the Confessor in Westminster-abbey(+).
> (H.W.'s note: (+)See the Anecdotes of Painting, vol. I. p. 17)

In both cases the attribution is arbitrary, but this is not so relevant here as it may seem. The important point is that the supposed common authorship of both monuments was for Walpole only a means of establishing an emblematic coherence, a unity which though imaginary was no less inspiring in his grand conception of the Chapel. Henry III is the king who in 1245 decided to rebuild Westminster Abbey in a more magnificent style, as we now see it, to honour St. Edward; in 1269 the church was consecrated and the Confessor's Monument represented its ideal centre, executed by one "Peter of Rome", as reads the inscription over it: "Hoc opus est factum, quod Petrus duxit in actum Romanus civis". The same "Peter of Rome" designed also the tomb of Henry III himself, which is in St. Edward's Chapel as well. Thus, if Capoccio's tomb too was really the work of the same artist, the synthesis of the

"New Chapel" acquired a much greater significance, in that, evoking the shades of the personages who had conceived the construction of Westminster Abbey, it realized in the context of Walpole's visions the ideal scene of a Gothic temple.

But the tomb of Capoccio in the "New Chapel" perhaps represented more than that. Again Hamilton's figure emerges as a prominent presence in Walpole's complex system of imagery: the tomb was a present of his, and certainly the most significant one at Strawberry Hill. Let us go back to the letter to Hamilton (June 19, 1774) which I mentioned earlier in connection with the passage concerned with the shields of Polidore with the heads of Medusa and Perseus. The letter continues thus:

> ... I am going to hang them [the shields] by the beautiful armour of Francis I and they will certainly make me dream of another Castle of Otranto, or at least of a tournament more superb than Lord Stanley's fête-champêtre, though the latter cost half a million. Indeed if gratitude was apt to colour one's dreams, I have so many monuments of your kindness and friendship, that my house and garden would make my sleep as agreeable as my waking hours. I should write another Gierusalemme for Eleonora d'Este, and pray for you in my new chapel, which is just finished, and where the shrine appears more gorgeous than the spoils
>
> — of Ormus and of Ind —
>
> I do not mean new Claremont, which is not half so magnificent.

A number of interesting points are present in this remarkable passage. I have already commented on the shields and their relation to the imagery of The Castle of Otranto — a relation which now appears enriched in a texture of several interwoven elements. A clear and distinct emphasis for instance is here given to the figures of Eleonora d'Este and Tasso. It is true that Walpole thought Tasso had "a thousand puerilities", but the comparison between himself and the Italian poet in this context implies the humorous consideration of that "gothique" poem, the Gerusalemme Liberata, and The Castle of Otranto as sort of parallel metaphors and"dreams". Certainly the Gerusalemme with its inflaming visions of unbridled fantasy had some influence on Walpole (15). The melancholy figure of Eleonora from the shade of the Little Cloister leads to the splendour of the New Chapel. And here

> ... the shrine appears more gorgeous than the spoils
> — of Ormus and of Ind — ...

There can be no doubt that these words interpret the visual realization of Alfonso's altar-tomb as Walpole had imagined it in The Castle of Otranto and saw it now in the glory of the tomb of Capoccio. The way the latter is introduced is very significant; Walpole quotes from Book II of Paradise Lost, the

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(15) We have already seen that a recent copy of the Gerusalemme Liberata (Urbino, 1735) stood in Press L of the Main Library, on the same shelf as the "Book of Venetian Arms" and just above the French translation of the Hypnerotomachia Poliphili and the Life of Cosimo de'Medici (loc. cit.).

famous opening passage:

> High on a Throne of Royal State, which far
> Outshone the wealth of Ormus and of Ind,
> Or where the gorgeous East with richest hand
> Show'rs on her Kings Barbaric Pearl and Gold,
> Satan exalted sat, by merit rais'd
> To that bad eminence; and from despair
> Thus high uplifted beyond hope, aspires
> Beyond thus high, insatiate to pursue
> Vain War with Heav'n, and by success untaught
> His proud imagination thus display'd.

The clue to a large part of Walpole's imaginative world is here: his literary roots very probably owed to Milton more than he realized, though it was the visual and architectural side of Milton's poetry rather than its style or inspiration that appealed to him in an immediate way (16). Reading the poem

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(16) The close relationship between eighteenth century culture and Milton's work is obvious (cf. R. D. Havens, The Influence of Milton on English Poetry, Cambridge, Mass., 1922). Hogarth was influenced by him and the original edition of his An Analysis of Beauty (1753) bears a curious illustration on the frontispiece: a serpentine line inscribed within a pyramid with the word v a r i e t y underneath and the quotation from Paradise Lost:

> So vary'd he, and of his tortuous train,
> Curl'd many a wanton wreath, in sight of Eve
> To lure her eye. —

(Hogarth's direct source was however P. Lomazzo's Trattato della Pittura, 1594, translated into English in 1598: cf. G. Melchiori, Michelangelo nel '700 Inglese, Roma, 1950, p. 19). Milton's influence on Walpole is clear, but also indirect. The Palace of Pandemonium is one example; another example might be the use of the Labyrinth image in connection

must have evoked in Walpole visions not too unlike the majestic scenes conceived by the romantic John Martin as illustrations of the same (17). Thus the

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with the Serpent:

So saying, through each Thicket Dank or Dry,
Like a black mist low creeping, he held on
His midnight search, where soonest he might find
The Serpent: him fast sleeping soon he found
In Labyrinth of many a round self-roll'd,
His head the midst, well stor'd with subtle wiles:
Not yet in horrid Shade or dismal Den,
Nor nocent yet, but on the grassy Herb
Fearless unfear'd he slept: in at his Mouth
The Devil enter'd ...

So spake the Enemy of Mankind, enclos'd
In Serpent, Inmate bad, and toward Eve
Address'd his way, not with indented wave,
Prone on the ground, as since, but on his rear,
Circular base of rising folds, that tow'r'd
Fold above fold a surging Maze, his head
Crested aloft, and Carbuncle his Eyes;
With burnisht Neck of verdant Gold, erect
Amidst his circling Spires, that on the grass
Floated redundant ...
(Book IX, 179-88, 494-513)

(17) These illustrations (1827) are particularly interesting for us because they were also partially inspired by scenes of urban industrial landscape, which undoubtedly is one of the unconscious ingredients of Gothic sensibility. F. D. Klingender thus describes Martin's illustration for the Palace of Pandemonium:

... Under Martin's hand the Palace of Pandemonium became a great rotunda, prophetically reminiscent of the Albert Hall and illuminated not by cressets fed by naphta and asphaltus but by coronas of flaring gas lights which Martin no doubt appropriated after a visit to the workings of the Thames Tunnel or borrowed from some cotton mill ... Satan himself is enthroned on a great stone seat poised on top of a vast sphere and resembling the seat occupied by Abraham Lincoln in Daniel Chester French's statue in Potomac Park.
(F. D. Klingender, Art and the Industrial Revolution, St. Albans, 1972 (1947), p. 108)

New Chapel and the tomb of Capoccio placed in its centre were the ultimate product of a process which had found a partial expression in Alfonso's Monument in the Church of St. Nicholas of The Castle of Otranto. The process was slow: at first, for instance, on receiving the shrine, Walpole thought of using its parts to make a chimney-piece in the Round Room, modelled on the Confessor's Monument, a project he had entertained for some time (18); eventually he changed his mind and decided to keep it together and build the New Chapel for it.

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(18) ... They [the parts of the shrine he had just received from Hamilton] are not only beautiful in themselves and well preserved, but the individual things I should have wished for, if I had known they existed... For this year past I have been projecting a chimney in imitation of the tomb of Edward the Confessor, and had partly given it up, on finding how enormously expensive it would be. Mr Adam had drawn me a design a little in that style, prettier it is true, and at half the price. I had actually agreed to have it executed in scagliola, but have just heard that the man complained he could not perform his compact for the money settled. Your obliging present is I am certain executed by the very person who made the Confessor's monument; and if the scagliola-man wishes to be off his bargain, I shall be glad; if not, still these materials will make me a beautiful chimney-piece. I again give you ten thousand thanks for them, dear Sir. I value them for themselves and much more for the person they come from.
(To Hamilton, September 22, 1768)

The original dream of Liberty, of a "New Brutus" freeing the world, which indeed appears as already declining in The Castle of Otranto, re-emerged at this late stage in a more abstract and coherent form — it had been transformed into the shining image off Lucifer, of his "proud imagination" barbarically projected over the immense riches, the absolute dominion over the whole world. It is the image of a grand Empire; and the beautiful shrine is ideally its centre, just as the Confessor's Monument is the ideal centre of Westminster Abbey — it symbolizes in other terms the energy that in sublime conflagration is to break Nature's boundaries and emerge as Universal Spirit:

> Energy is the only life, and is from the Body; and Reason is the bound or outward circumference of Energy.
> Energy is Eternal Delight
> (W. Blake, The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, Plate IV: "The voice of the Devil")

Walpole's conception of the Supernatural, though not so mature, yet moved in this direction. And that I think explains also the allusion to "New Claremont" in the letter. New Claremont was formerly the Duke of Newcastle's seat in Surrey; Robert Clive bought it, pulled down the house, and had a new one built from plans by Capability Brown. Walpole knew and greatly admired it (19). But Robert Clive was not

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(19) ... /New Claremont is/ most admirable... it has more good rooms than I ever saw in so small a compass, and is very convenient too ...
(H.W.'s Book of Materials, 1771, p. 184)

only the lord of New Claremont, he was also the great Conqueror, the new Alexander, the "heaven--born hero" as Pitt called him in the House of Commons, the very image of a power that had subdued "the wealth of Ormus and of Ind", the glory of the British Empire. It is very clear that if the splendid house of Clive "is not half so magnificent" by comparison to the New Chapel, the latter represented for Walpole (even just in a humorous way) the private symbol of that Supernatural radiance by which human actions and heroes were inspired. Over the tomb of the Confessor in Westminster Abbey were inscribed the words "omnibus insignis virtutum laudibus heros sanctus Edwardus": from there too, very oddly, would spring the mature Romantic hero, essentially different from the heroes of the ancient romances.

III

> ... It was yet more lasting reflection [sic] that I made on the futility of Politics. All my success and triumph in the preceding summer had lasted but five months. Conway was desirous to quit, and the Bedfords were to come into place. It determined me to busy myself no more in such delusive scenes. I had in the preceding winter notified to my constituents at Lynn, that I would serve no more in Parliament. The door was thus already favourably open to me. Mr Conway's resignation would leave me at liberty to have done with politics. I took my resolution to abandon them with

> the present Parliament — a happy determination, and which I never found one moment's cause to repent.
> (Mem. Geo. III., 3, p. 91)

These words, written by Horace Walpole in 1767, mark the end of a brief but significant period in his life, perhaps the most dramatic one — certainly the most productive from the creative point of view, as it saw the birth of both The Castle of Otranto and The Mysterious Mother within the narrow space of just over three years. But the same years, which, immediately following the end of the Seven Years War, saw a decisive political evolution within the Whig Party, witnessed also a temporary return of Walpole to politics after the prolonged disillusionment that had followed the death of his father (1) and before this final "determination" to abandon them definitively. With Pitt's decline and Bute's still

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(1) He wrote in 1759:

> Horace Walpole, without the least tincture of ambition, had a propensity to faction, and looked on the mischief of civil disturbances as on a lively amusement. Indignation at the persecution raised against his father, and prejudices contracted by himself, conspired with his natural impetuosity of temper to nourish this passion. But the coming into the world when the world was growing weary of faction, and some of the objects dying or being removed, against whom his warmth had been principally directed, maturity of reason and sparks of virtue exstinguished this culpable ardor. Balanced for a few years between right and wrong, happily for him virtue preponderated early enough to leave him some merit in the option. Arts, books, painting, architecture, antiquities, and those amiable employments of a tranquil life, to which in the warmest of his political hours he had been fondly addicted, assumed an entire empire over him.
> (Mem. Geo. III., 2, p. 170)

feared power behind the curtain, the principal problem for any Cabinet was that of leadership. The Grenville Administration soon deteriorated over the consequences of the Wilkes Affair, which set a divided opposition together under the banner of the defence of parliamentary privilege. Few Members of Parliament actually supported Wilkes, who at the cry of "Wilkes and Liberty" had become a mob hero, much of the sort of King Theodore; but it was difficult to convince the House of the utility of General Warrants, a practice that had lapsed since the days of Charles II and James II and now had been revived on purpose to convict Wilkes and his friends for seditious libel. General Warrants were seen as an iniquitous means of increasing the Prerogative, an attack against the independence of Parliament, and the result was that, in spite of his great influence, Grenville just escaped disaster by ten votes. Retaliation by the government was immediate, and as soon as the Session was over in April 1764 General Conway, Walpole's first cousin on his mother's side, was dismissed from the Bedchamber and the Colonelcy of the Royal Dragoons for having voted against the General Warrants. Walpole was personally involved in this: Conway, for whom he had sincere attachment and esteem and whose political career he always sought to further, had taken his advice in this question. He now felt obliged to publicly defend his friend. In two weeks he produced a pamphlet, <u>A Counter Address to the Public On the Late Dismission of a General Officer</u>, in which he generously and

ardently proclaimed Conway's innocence against the slanderous attacks of the scribblers. And here the "unadulterated Whig" came back in real passion:

> ... This is the first time we have seen it avowed in print, that total ruin was to be the portion of members of parliament who oppose administration. The galleys and the bowstring give an idea of firmness and decision in the expeditious governments of France and Turkey —— but English ears are ill--accustomed to such sounds, nor at a general election would it secure a majority to the court, if ministerial candidates acknowledged such a code. Even in eastern climes, bashaws meet with terrible reverses. A free nation, fresh from conquering in every quarter of the globe, will not easily submit to domestic vizirs, who of all men living can claim least merit from our success. ... Am I awake? Do I read right what is before me? Have members of parliament ever suffered themselves to be treated in this contemptuous and profligate style? Is the parliament of Great Britain so corrupt, so lost to shame, that it deserves to be told that its votes are to be intimidated in this manner? that the representatives of the people tremble when one of their body loses his employment, and become obsequious, compliant, slavish? ... (Works, 2, pp. 552-57)

This pamphlet is important for us not only as a direct document of Walpole's political feelings, but also because it was written at the same time The Castle of Otranto was conceived and drafted. General Conway was dismissed on the 19th of April 1764, in

June occurred the dream which prompted Walpole to write The Castle of Otranto, finished about six weeks later, on the 6th of August. The pamphlet was written in a fortnight and published only four days earlier, on the 2nd of August. Thus, between Conway's dismissal and the completion of the novel intervened just less than four months. It is something more than a coincidence, and W. S. Lewis thought of dating the composition of the pamphlet earlier, so as to make Walpole's psychological state one of the impulses that preceded and conditioned the drafting of The Castle of Otranto:

> The spring of 1764 had been particularly disillusioning ... Walpole defended Conway in a spirited pamphlet of fifteen thousand words ... finished perhaps on the date of the dream that launched him into The Castle of Otranto. As always when frustrated by politics, he escaped, fuming and ill, from the hatefulness of the present defeat into the security and joys of the past ... ("Introduction", pp. ix-x)

But the tone of A Counter Address to the Public, well structured and articulate in the argumentation, is not that of a man who "escaped, fuming and ill, from the hatefulness of the present defeat". General Conway's dismissal was not a defeat; it was a tactical move in the struggle that resulted in the victory of the opposition, in the formation of the Rockingham Administration, with Conway as Secretary of State. It was Walpole's "triumph". He now came back to politics with an enthusiasm that had long abandoned him. He now did not feel frustrated by politics, but on the contrary the circumstances

revived the "propensity to faction" of his youth. It was exciting and almost amusing: his pamphlet was not the result of depression or wrath, but a rather well-thought political move, balanced and to the point, though actually inspired by a sincere moral tension. In any case, Walpole had been since the beginning engaged in scheming with the opposition and did not work alone. Newcastle almost immediately after the dismissal asked him to forward to Conway a letter of his expressing "great concern", and on the 4th of May invited Conway with most of the opposition leaders to a dinner at Claremont (2). We also know that Walpole met Newcastle at a private meeting which had been planned for some time and took place at Claremont on the 4th of August, two days after the publication of the Counter Address to the Public and two days before completing The Castle of Otranto. I do not think therefore that over this period Walpole had been trying to"escape from the hatefulness of present defeat"; on the contrary, such contacts show that he sought an active involvement in politics and that the whole period was one of general excitement. Early in October Newcastle paid him a visit at Strawberry Hill. Eventually an agreement among the divided forces of the opposition, though laborious, materialized in the Rockingham Administration, continued by the subsequent Pitt Administration: in both General

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(2) Cf. G. L. Lam, Walpole and the Duke of Newcastle, in: Smith, pp. 78-81.

Conway played an important rôle as Leader of the Commons, and Secretary of State first for the Sathern then for for the Northern Department. Walpole had ~~reached~~ achieved what he wanted, "two considerable eras /i.e. the Rockingham and Pitt Administrations/ having taken their complexion from my councils" (3). But it is also true that this triumph did not last long; it was only a brief interval in Walpole's life, relevant for us mainly for its literary consequences. Conway resigned in December 1767; and that was the end of it. It left a mark, however, and I think J. Brooke gives the right judgement of the period:

> Walpole himself now comes to the front of the stage, a new and unfamiliar Walpole: the party politician, the parliamentary strategist, and at a critical stage in English domestic politics the adviser of the Prime Minister and of the Sovereign himself. For a brief period he played a key rôle, albeit largely behind the scenes, and his consequence should not be underrated. (Horace Walpole and the Politics of the Early Years of the Reign of George III, in: Smith, p. 15)

The Castle of Otranto was therefore written in coincidence with a crucial experience of Walpole's, a sort of watershed of two different attitudes towards reality which characterized his life: one was marked by a growing but not consolidated disillusionment, the other by the final determination "to busy myself no more in such delusive scenes".

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(3) Mem. Geo. III., 1, p. 319.

Between the two there is a temporary return to the beliefs and ideals of his youth. This phase is distinguished not by frustration and pessimism, which only can derive from a realistic attitude towards existence; I think the contrary is true, that it is a phase of a kind of individual optimism dominated by essentially idealistic tendencies. In this sense Walpole now did not seek mere escape into reverie; in actual fact, this is the time when he gave full expression to his visionary personality, the same that saw in the course of human events the immediate, material manifestation of a universal, abstract form of energy. The Castle of Otranto therefore was the literary representation of such a state of mind, as I believe the analysis of the imagery employed in the novel to some extent has shown. That Walpole's thoughts early in the summer of 1764 were all taken with images of heroes and prisons is suggested also by a letter where he writes:

> ... my Lord Clive could not conquer the Indies a second time without becoming a Knight of the Bath. This however I think will be but a short parenthesis, for I expect that heaven-born hero(°)to return from whence he came, instead of bringing hither all the Mogul's pearls and rubies...
>
> You have a new neighbour coming to you, Mr William Hamilton,(+)one of the King's equerries, who succeeds Sir James Gray at Naples. Hamilton is a friend of mine; is son of Lady Archibald, and was aide-de-camp to Mr Conway. He is picture mad, and will ruin himself in virtu-land...
>
> I have never heard of the present(=)you mention of the box of essences. The secrets of that prison-house do not easily transpire;

and the merit of any offering is generally assumed, I believe, by the officiating priests.
(To Mann, , June 8, 1764)
(H.W.'s notes: (°) Expression of Mr W. Pitt in the House of Commons on Lord Clive; (+) Younger son of Lord Archibald Hamilton. Lady Archibald was the supposed mistress of Frederic Prince of Wales; (=) A present from Sir Horace, I believe, to the Queen)

Even in an epistolary, direct context like this we may see reflected the reliefs and the peaks of Walpole's vast visionary territory. The image of the heaven-born hero, connected with Lord Clive and "all the Mogul's pearls and rubies", is an essential one, as we have seen, in the visionary texture of The Castle of Otranto: it was to re-appear ten years later in the letter to Hamilton concerning the New Chapel that has just been discussed here. One heaven--born race, a race of Giants would in the end triumph (4), a race of Empire-builders, and in the Great Bechamber at Strawberry Hill Walpole later decided

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(4) In the Works the text of The Castle of Otranto is followed by a humorous short piece entitled An Account of the Giants Lately Discovered, which actually is a satire about the Americans. It was first printed in 1766 and is interesting because of the connection of the image of the Giant with The Castle of Otranto; in fact Walpole says:

> ... Oh! if we could come at an heroic poem penned by a giant! We should see other images than our puny writers of romance have conceived; and little different from the cold(+)tale of a late notable author, who did not know better what to do with his giant than to make him grow till he shook his own castle about his own ears.
> (Works, 2, p. 102)
> (H.W.'s note: (+) The Castle of Otranto.)

to add:

> Two bas-reliefs of boys in wax on glass, designed and modelled by lady Diana Beauclerc, sister of George duke of Marlborough. On the back are written these lines:
>
> Tho taste and grace thro' all my limbs you see,
> And nature breathes her soft semplicity [sic],
> Me nor Praxiteles nor Phidias form'd;
> 'Twas Beauclerc's art the sweet creation warm'd,
> From Marlbro' sprung---We in one heav'n-born race
> Th'attemper'd rays of the same genius trace;
> As big with meteors from one cloud depart
> Majestic thunder and keen lightning's dart.
> H. W.
> (Descr., p. 138)

To such a "heaven-born race" is naturally opposed the image of State Power as a Prison: in the same passage of the letter quoted above Walpole speaks of the Court as a "prison-house". That Walpolethen in 1764 identified Royal Prerogative with the prison image, and therefore with repression,is not surprising: not just because he was adquainted with Piranesi's Carceri, but also because he was in the midst of that political struggle about General Warrants in which his cousin Conway had fallen a victim. Conway had even been paralleled to the accomplices of Catiline by the author of the pamphlet which Walpole directly attacked in his, saying:

> Is there an Englishman living who understands Latin, and does not see how applicable the following words are to this high offender [i.e. General Conway: Walpole is being ironical here] ? Equidem ego sic existumo omnes cruciatus minores quam facinora illorum esse; sed plerique mortales postrema meminere,et in hominibus impiis

> sceleris eorum obliti, de poenâ disserunt.
> The impious men alluded to by the historian [Sallust] were the accomplices of Catiline, and were put to death. Those were the men in whose story the author of the address fished for a sentence that might suit the criminality of General Conway.
> (Works, 2, pp. 551-2)

The Tullianum and its horrors had then naturally been associated with Conway's case in Walpole's mind. At the same time, the image of the prison-house was also linked to that of the altar, in the sense that Power naturally appeared the subject of a sort of mysterious sacramental order — which is the point of the ironical metaphor used in the letter:

> ... The secrets of that prison-house do not easily transpire; and the merit of any offering is generally assumed, I believe, by the officiating priests.

This too will eventually find its place in the grand conception of the new Chapel. But here, by one of the frequent strokes of Serendipity, which seems to be always at work with Walpole, the rising figure of William Hamilton appears between the two imaginative poles of the passage, as if all the future relationship and visionary brotherhood between Walpole and Hamilton were really to be expressed and start from this curious connection of Conway's picture-mad "aide-de-camp" with "virtu-land". It is true, of course, that all these are all only scattered hints; but I think they possibly are the more relevant to our discussion just because of the fluid and still unorganized form in which they manifest themselves. If Conway's misfortunes had

almost turned into reality the vague disconnected images of the prison, of the struggle for Liberty such as seen by Walpole early in the summer 1764, they were not yet the complete and uniform subject of the coherent imaginative synthesis that inspired The Castle of Otranto. One element was still missing; when Walpole, unconsciously I believe, connected it to the rest, the solution suddenly precipitated into the dramatic illumination of the dream.

IV

On the 30th of August 1764, when Walpole had already finished writing The Castle of Otranto and was probably revising it, he received a letter from George Montagu thanking him for his present of a rare book:

> ... indeed [says Montagu] I am in love with the charming couchant hero. I never saw so charming a figure so well graved, so sweet a romantic landscape — all Tasso, all Spencer, all truth, all honesty, all spirit, that I wonder not Old Bess patted his cheeks ... Your press every year is brought to bed of some lovely offspring, but this is the prettiest child of all.

The "couchant hero" is Lord Edward Herbert of Cherbury, the much admired seventeenth century philosopher and poet, elder brother of the better known George

Herbert (1). Horace Walpole had just found Lord Herbert's unpublished autobiography in a forgotten manuscript and printed it at his Strawberry Hill Press. In a letter to Montague that preceded and announced the gift Walpole gave a full account of the amusing manner in which he came into possession of the manuscript:

> I want to send you something from the Strawberry Press: tell me how I shall convey it. It is nothing less than the most curious book that ever yet set its foot in the world — I expect to hear you scream hither. If you don't, I shall be disappointed, for I have kept it as a most profound secret from you, till I was ready to surprise you with it — I knew your impatience, and would not let you have it piecemeal. It is the life of the great philosopher Lord Herbert, written by himself — now are you disappointed — well, read it — not the forty first pages, of which you will be sick — I will not anticipate it — but I will tell you the history. I found it a year ago at Lady Hertford's, to whom Lady Powis had lent it. I took it up, and soon threw it down again, as the dullest thing I ever saw. She persuaded me to take it home. My lady Waldegrave was here in all her grief — Gray and I read it to amuse her — we could not go on for laughing and screaming. I begged to have it to print — Lord Powis, sensible of the extravagance, refused. I insisted — he persisted. I told my lady Hertford, it was no matter, I would print it, I was determined ...
> (To Montagu, July 16, 1764)

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(1) Walpole included Lord Herbert of Cherbury in his A Catalogue of Royal and Noble Authors of England, 1758, where, among other things, he also mentions an "allegorical monument" erected by Herbert for himself in the church of Montgomery (cf. Works, 1, p. 364).

And eventually Walpole prevailed on Lord Powis. The book, The Life of Lord Herbert of Cherbury, Written by Himself, is very interesting for us, as it was printed between the 23rd of September 1763 and the 27th of January 1764, but not distributed until July 1764: this means that, although it had been ready for six months, Horace Walpole decided to release it only after he had started writing The Castle of Otranto in June. In fact during that summer of 1764 Walpole, while still attending to the novel, kept sending copies of Lord Herbert's Life to his friends, and this continued till December, by which time the book had aroused much curiosity and gossip in London (2). But the date of the first edition of

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(2) Only two hundred copies of the Life were printed, of which Walpole kept one hundred and gave the other half to Lord Powis, who probably also shared the expenses. Walpole sent all his copies to friends and in the Corr. from July 1764 there are many passages relating to the book (for instance in: to Zouch, July 1764; to Cole, July 16, July 21, August 29; from Cole, July 18, July 21; to Dalrymple, September; from Dalrymple, September 26). The short letter to Lincoln of August 6, accompanying the book, "a trifling tribute to my gratitude", is rather interesting as on the same day, the 6th of August, Walpole finished writing The Castle of Otranto and it is one of the very few letters written early in that month, as he must have been quite taken up with completing the novel then.

On December 16, while the novel was still in the press and just on the point of coming out, Walpole wrote to Montagu that "... The thing most in fashion is my edition of Lord Herbert's Life; people are mad after it — I believe, because only two hundred were printed ..."; Montagu confirmed this replying on December 23:

> You are in the right, all women in London are in love with Lord Herbert. I had literally three letters from Lady F.Burgoyne, Mrs Rice, and another lady, to beg I would borrow one of you. I have wrote for an answer I would lend them mine ... for I was sure you had given away all you had printed off.

The Castle of Otranto, another book which was to arouse much curiosity and gossip, is 25th of December 1764; therefore,during the six months the novel was conceived, written, revised, set and printed,Walpole's mind to some extent was also concerned about the fortune of this curious (but this time real) discovery. And there is reason to believe that the figure of Lord Herbert had a more lasting effect on his imagination.

Walpole thought he had found a model of his idea of chivalry and romance in the extraordinary character of Lord Herbert, and in his "Advertisement" to the Life he wrote that "His /Herbert's/ valour made him a hero ... as a knight, his chivalry was drawn from the purest founts of the Fairy Queen". This gay philosopher, the protagonist of innumerable duels, whose handsome face and wide reputation gained him the adoration of all the ladies of his acquaintance, was indeed a "don Quixote with the austere philosophy of Plato" (3), the very synthesis of the original picaresque figure and more recent idealistic imagination. Walpole wrote to Montagu again:

> ... I do not wonder that Sir Philip Sidney was the darling hero /of his age/, when Lord Herbert, who followed him so close and trod in his steps, is at this time of day within an ace of rivalling him ... (December 16, 1764)

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(3) Cf. G. Williams to G. Selwyn, September 29, 1764. Actually Walpole wrote in the "Advertisement" that the reader "will find, that the history of Don Quixote was the life of Plato ...".

Theodore's character in the novel was to some extentt inspired by such a synthesis. On the one hand he is the typical picaro, on the other he shows also the clear and noble traits of the hero. Phrases like "the valour that had so long smothered in his breast, broke forth at once" referring to Theodore strongly remind us of Lord Herbert's typical behaviour, and he too is undoubtedly "all Tasso, all Spencer, all truth, all honesty, all spirit". It is no wonder indeed that all women are in love with him. At one point in the novel Bianca, the shrewd and gossipy servant, betrays this feeling when questioned by Manfred:

> ... Lord! your highness is not jealous of young Theodore? said Bianca. — Jealous! No, no: why should I be jealous? Perhaps I mean to unite them — if I was sure Isabella would have no repugnance. — Repugnance! No, I'll warrant her, said Bianca: he is as comely a youth as ever trod on christian ground: we are all in love with him: there is not a soul in the castle but would be rejoiced to have him for our prince — ... (Chapter V)

Any explanation of the novel must contain this double nature of Walpole's inspiration, as reflecting the temporary psychological and cultural balance achieved by the writer at that time. The difficult compromise between tyrannical power and liberty, between the heroic and the picaresque, between the human and the supernatural was finally realized in this abstract, imaginary character, in this darling hero that is one of the symptoms of the growing detachment of the age from concrete reality.

There is more evidence of the close connection between Walpole's interest in Lord Herbert's Life and the conception of The Castle of Otranto. Walpole's editorial details are always significant (4) and the most interesting here is certainly the lovely engraving with the "charming couchant hero", in Montagu's words, which was prepared for the edition of the Life and prefixed to it (5). William Cole (great-grand-nephew of Lord Herbert) was so pleased with it that he asked Walpole for another:

> ... I hope you'll think me less impertinent when I am so bold as to beg you the favour ... to give me a print of Lord Herbert. I wish you had given us some little history of that print, which from its manner, shield and ornaments seems to be as romantic as the Life itself.
> (From Cole, August 2, 1764)

Walpole promised to send the print (6); he did not give any details about it, but from the inscription at the bottom, "Ja. Oliver pinx. ---- Ant. Walker sculp.", it is clear that it derives from the original miniature portrait (7) by the famous Isaac Oliver,

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(4) It might be of some interest that Walpole first used the small plate with the view of Strawberry Hill in 1764 (which then characterized all his editions) for the title-page of the Life (cf. Strawberry Hill Accounts, p. 128), as a further proof of the attention he dedicated to this book.

(5) See Plate XIV.

(6) Cf. to Cole, August 29, 1764.

(7) See my frontispiece.

Ja. Oliver pinx.

A. Walker fculp.

Edward Lord Herbert of Chirbury.

Plate XIV. Engraving by A. Walker after the portrait by I. Oliver.

painter of James I and most of the nobility of the time (8), still extant in the collection of the Earl of Powis where Walpole saw it. The engraver chosen to reproduce it, Anthony Walker, was also a clever artist "well known by his small book-illustrations, which were neatly executed from his own designs" (9). Walker died in May 1765 and therefore the execution of this print must have been one of his last works; it is indeed a fine one and no doubt it met the taste of its commissioner (10). The style of the portrait is rather unusual: Lord Herbert is represented recumbent, resting near a stream in a lovely forest. In the far distance is visible a shore, a sailing ship and, at the foot of a high mountain , the structure of a large Castle: details which incidentally do not greatly differ from the actual setting of The Castle of Otranto. A possible connection between this kind of background in the portrait and the character of Lord Herbert is a passage in the Life describing the palace and forest of the Duke of Montmorency at Chantilly, two wonders much admired by Herbert. It will be noticed that in this description the castle appears to be a quite intricate structure

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(8) Isaac Oliver (1556?-1617) was especially appreciated for his miniatures; Walpole deals with him in his Anecdotes of Painting (cf. pp. 176-83) and owned a series of miniature portraits of Sir K. Digby by Oliver. Among Oliver's best known works is a portrait of Sir Philip Sidney, formerly Dr. Mead's, then in the Royal collection at Windsor.

(9) Dictionary of National Biography. Walker was born in 1726.

(10) The Works naturally do not contain the Life of Lord Herbert, but Walpole was so fond of the print that he equally inserted it among the illustrations (cf. 1, p. 230).

and the forest is compared with a "labyrinth":

> ... a little River descending from some higher grounds in a Country which was almost all his own, and falling at last upon a Rock in the middle of the Valley, which to keep its way forwards, it must on one or other side thereof have declined. Some of the Ancestors of the Montmorencys to ease the River of this labour, made divers Channels through this Rock to give it a free passage, dividing the Rock by that means into little Islands, upon which he built a great strong Castle, joyned together with Bridges, and sumptuously furnished with Hangings of Silk and Gold, rare Pictures and Statues; all which Buildings united as I formerly told, were incompassed about with Water, which was paved with Stone ... yet nothing in my opinion added so much to the glory of this Castle as a Forest adjoining close to it, and upon a level with the House; for being of a very large extent and set thick both with tall Trees and Underwoods, the whole Forest which was replenished with wild Boar, Stag, and Roe-Deer, was cut out into long Walks every way ... they being cut with that Art, that they led to all the parts in the said Forest ...
>
> And there I cannot but remember the direction the Old Constable gave me to return to his Castle out of this admirable Labyrinth, telling me I shou'd look upon what side the Trees were roughest and hardest, which being found I might be confident that part stood Northward, which being observed I might easily find the East, as being on the right hand; and so guide my way home. (Op. cit., pp. 65-67)

The picture by Oliver may be seen as actually showing a moment of pause just after the long search "out of this admirable Labyrinth"", the Castle being well visible in the background through an opening in the forest. But there is a further detail in it of particular interest for us: behind the reclining figure of the pensive philosopher can be clearly seen a cuirass hanging from a near-by tree; at the foot of the same tree are two gauntlets, while a faceless attendant, standing opposite to the tree, holds a very large helmet "shaded with a proportionable quantity of black feathers" almost directly above them. Behind the squire there are two horses, one of which bears the same kind of tall plumage again on its head. Now, there can be no doubt that some link was established in Walpole's mind between this scene and the imagery of The Castle of Otranto: not only we find the same atmosphere, setting and actual Castle, the labyrinth of the forest, the pensive figure of the protagonist that, having read the novel one instinctively associates with Theodore, but — here is the main point — we can even see the two attributes of Alfonso, the "hands in armour" and the "magic helmet", in direct relationship with the presentation of the hero. Walpole must have been impressed by this picture when he saw it, very likely some time before he obtained from the Earl of Powis the permission to print Lord Herbert's Life. The association between the romantic figure of the adventurer and the enchanted atmosphere of the background was naturally of the kind that left a

mark on Walpole's imagination. How could he not be struck by the mysterious presence of the strange and great helmet suspended in the air with its incredible plumage, almost hovering above the great "hands in armor"? Though indirectly, we may find confirmation of this in the difference noticeable in the excellent reproduction by Walker, which are quite significant in this context. Walker chose to give more pre-eminence to the background: the Castle, for example, is far better distinguishable in the print. He also paid particular attention to the helmet and gauntlets: he enlarged their proportions, so that they look somewhat oversized when compared with the general perspective and indeed, one would say, gigantic. The feathers of the helmet are better drawn, are thicker and taller, and the helmet itself is of a different fashion and black, whereas in the original by Oliver it is white. The plumage on the horse's head is also taller and thicker; here Walker added a sort of Medusa's head in the centre which is not in Oliver. The eye of the observer is not immediately caught by the direction of Lord Herbert's look,which in the original is pointed towards us, for Walker represented this more romantically lost and absorbed. The result is that the major detail in the background with the helmet and gauntlets acquires in the print a greater significance, as one of the first objects to be noticed. In confronting Oliver's miniature and the reproduction Walpole certainly remarked the differences, and I think we may say he liked the picture the more for

them. In Walker's version he could see better reflected indeed, and in a way justified, his own visionary experience, from the gigantic hand in armour of the dream to the invention of the enchanted helmet in the novel.

The edition of Lord Herbert's Life is therefore quite relevant in relation to the genesis of The Castle of Otranto. It seems possible that the differences between miniature and engraving were the result of Walpole's directions to Walker after the dream in June when he says

> ... 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 ...
> (Loc. cit.)

Perhaps he already had some ideas. The figure of Alfonso was likewise suggested by a portrait:

> When you read of the picture quitting its panel, did you not recollect the portrait of Lord Falkland all in white in my gallery?
> (Ibid.)

Maybe in the dream Walpole confused the two portraits (11).

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(11) Sir Henry Cary, Lord Falkland (d. 1633) was a contemporary of Lord Herbert. He served in France and in the Low Countries, had literary interests and his character is likely to have been similar to Herbert's. Ben Jonson wrote a flattering epigram to him:

> That neither fame nor love might wanting be
> To greatness, Cary, I sing that and thee, ...
> Who, to upbraid the sloth of this our time,
> Dost valour make almost if not a crime. ...
> (Epigrams, "To Sir Henry Cary", ll. 1-2, 5-6)

The portrait owned by Walpole was presumably by Cornelius Jonson

The idea of a gigantic helmet and hand in armour may have been connected to the whole when he attentively examined Oliver's miniature and gave directions to Walker about the execution of this or that particular, discussing with the artist the relevance to give to the various details. If that is so, the basic imagery of The Castle of Otranto had directly caught Walpole's fancy before the time he stated he began writing the novel, that is during the period comprised between January and June 1764, when he chose to withold the Life already printed (maybe because of Walker's delay in producing the engraving desired). Did therefore Lord Herbert represent an intermediate stage in which the image of the hero we have already examined found a still imperfect expression? I think the relationship between the figure of Lord Herbert and The Castle of Otranto is more flexible than this, in the sense that, after the political crisis of the spring 1764, the Life of Lord Herbert, which had formerly attracted just his literary curiosity, began to assume a more definite significance for Walpole, even if only at an unconscious level. Thus, the picture with the "couchant hero" to some extent came to represent a sort of programme for the novel. In Herbert we can see already an anticipation of Theodore's character. And he appears lost in a distant dream of great deeds yet to come — he still wears a long sabre, and on his shoulder at the centre of the composition is a great shield on which we distinguish part of a flame ~~looking~~ like shape with the inscription MAGICA SYMPATHIAE. The enchanted ground

of The Castle of Otranto is already here with all its attributes, and reality appears implicitly filtered through individual character as manifestation of supernatural energy.

Lord Herbert of Cherbury is the author of a well known philosophical work entitled De Veritate (12), a remarkable anticipation of the theories of the Cambridge Platonists and considered the first purely metaphysical work by an Englishman. Concluding the narration of the Life Lord Herbert relates how, after long hesitation, the experience of a miraculous episode eventually resolved him to publish De Veritate:

> ... Being thus doubtfull in my Chamber, one fair day in the Summer, my Casement being open towards the South, the Sun shining clear and no Wind stirring, I took my book De Veritate in my Hand and kneeling on my Knees devoutly said these words;
>
> O Thou Eternal God, Author of the Light which now shines upon me, and Giver of all inward Illuminations, I do beseech Thee of thy infinite Goodness to pardon -

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(12) ... which was no sooner done, but that I communicated it to Hugo Grotius, that great Scholar, who having escaped his Prison in the Low Contreys, came into France, and was much welcomed by me and Monsieur Tieleners also, one of the greatest Scholars of his time, who after they had perused it, and given it more Commendations than is fit for me to repeat, exhorted me earnestly to print and publish it ...
(Life, pp. 169-70)

De Veritate was published in Latin at Paris in 1624: with its publication Lord Herbert concludes his autobiography, although he lived until 1648.

Hugo Grotius is the same "scholar" whose edition of Lucan, revised by Bentley, Horace Walpole printed.

a greater Request than a Sinner ought to make; I am not satisfied enough whether I shall publish this book De Veritate; if not I shall suppress it.

I had no sooner spoken these words, but a loud thô yet gentle Noise came from the Heavens (for it was like nothing on Earth) which did so comfort and cheer me, that I took my Petition a [sic] granted, and that I had the Sign I demanded, whereupon also I resolved to print my Book. This (how strange soever it may seem) I protest before the Eternal God is true, neither am I any way superstitiously deceived herein, since I did not only clearly hear the Noise, but in the serenest Skye that ever I saw, being without all Cloud, did to my thinking see the place from whence it came.
(Life, pp. 170-71)

This episode is rather important also in the context of Lord Herbert's thought: the new notion of "Revelation" is a central one in De Veritate and he "seems to understand by revelation some process or experience ... by which we become more than ordinarily certain of anything" (13). He goes as far as saying that every divine and happy sentiment that we feel within our conscience is a revelation, thus breaking from strict theology into naturalism and laying the basis for deism. Now Walpole, in moving away and in some measure reacting against deism, in my view

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(13) B. Willey, The Seventeenth Century Background, London, 1967, pp. 131-32. See also: id., "Lord Herbert of Cherbury, a Spiritual Quixote of the Seventeenth Century", Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association, 27, 1942, pp. 22-29.

came to revalue, though in a different sense the older meaning of Revelation, understood by him as inspiration; though moving in opposite directions, his and Lord Herbert's thought actually coincided on one point, at the ethical level — for both, I think, the justification of human action in fact came from above; in approximate terms, as Reason for Herbert, as Energy for Walpole. And, after all, was not Walpole's own dream a sort of "revelation" for him, one that would take the form of The Castle of Otranto as literary inspiration? I believe Walpole was in fact influenced by Lord Herbert's Life more than he was ready to admit — later, after the dream, he must have naturally connected his own experience with Herbert's "gentle noise from Heaven" (transformed in the novel into several weird signs from above and claps of thunder). Therefore, even if The Castle of Otranto cannot seriously be for us today much more than an old odd tale, it must have represented for Walpole the uppermost point reached by him in organizing a coherent system of thought.

Walpole placed his edition of Lord Herbert's Life in Press A of the Main Library (14), where were collected

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(14) Cf. Hazen, nos. 68-70. Besides Dr. Johnson's Dictionary, the Iliad and Aeneid in translation, Press A contained also Thomson's Seasons and Lyttelton's Dialogues of the Dead.

works of other philosophers (Shaftesbury, Berkeley, Bacon , Erasmus), works of King James I and Henry VIII's Assertio, Bishop Warburton's anonymcus A Critical and Philosophical Enquiry unto the Causes of Prodigies and Miracles. It is interesting to notice that there was also a curious title, The History of the Abdication of Victor Amadeus [King of Sardinia]. Later Walpole added a better known Italian history book, the same he had once planned to write but had been written, as we have seen, by Galluzzi, the Istoria del Granducato di Toscana, sotto il Governo della Casa Medici. Did Walpole somewhat how connect in his imagination the romantic figure of Lord Herbert with the scene of the Medici history? I do not think the connection was so direct, but we know with certainty that Walpole was acquainted with a Tuscan character he would naturally compare to Lord Herbert, as in fact he did once writing to the Earl of Strafford:

> Have you read the Life of Benvenuto Cellini, my Lord? I am angry with him for being more distracted and wrongheaded than my Lord Herbert. Till the revival of these two, I thought the present age had born the palm of absurdity from all its predecessors. But I find our contemporaries are quiet good folks, that only game till they hang themselves, and do not kill everybody they meet in the street. Who would have thought we were so reasonable? (To Strafford, June 20, 1771)

Benvenuto Cellini, the great Florentine creator of Perseus and contemporary of Bianca Capello, was the obvious match of the darling hero; indeed his "absurdity" quite outshone the performances of a modern Casanova or Cagliostro. When Walpole discovered

Lord Powis' manuscript with the Life of Lord Herbert he must have immediately thought of Benvenuto Cellini, as not many years before his friend Dr. Cocchi had similarly come across the manuscript of his "Life", which had been dictated by Cellini to a young apprentice and had remained practically unknown in the Biblioteca Laurenziana at Florence. He published the manuscript in 1728 with a dedication to Lord Richard Boyle (15) and wrote a preface of his own in a style Walpole then followed in the dedication to Lord Powis and "Advertisement" to his edition of Herbert's Life. Although there is no evidence that Walpole possessed a copy of that edition, it is very likely that he knew it and had discussed the subject with Mann or Cocchi himself when at Florence in 1739-40. In 1771 was published a translation by Thomas Nugent (16) and this is the

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(15) Vita di BENVENUTO CELLINI orefice e scultore fiorentino da lui medesimo scritta, nalla quale molte curiose particolarità si trovano appartenenti alle Arti e all'Istoria del suo tempo, tratta da un ottimo manoscritto, e dedicata all'eccellenza di Mylord Riccardo Boyle, ... Colonia [for Naples], 1728.

Walpole might have been reminded of this edition by the polemical publicity it got from Giuseppe Baretti, Dr. Johnson's friend, who had been living in London since 1751 and in 1769 was appointed Secretary for the Foreign Correspondence of the Royal Academy. Baretti was a fervent admirer of Cellini (and a little like him too); he thought the artist had not received adequate treatment from Cocchi who, in his opinion, had not enough stressed the originality of the pictureaque style in the Vita (cf. Frusta Letteraria, nos. 4, 15 novembre 1763 and 8, 15 gennaio 1764).

(16) Benvenuto Cellini, Life, written by himself and translated by Thomas Nugent, London, 1771, 2 vols.. The book stood in Press S of the Library in the Offices (cf. Hazen, no. 3181).

book Walpole refers to in his letter to Strafford; quite clearly he had just read it. The fact that he seems rather unemotional about it indicates he had a long time been acquainted with the character of "distracted and wrongheaded" Cellini, even if he had not materially read Cocchi's original edition in Italian. But undoubtedly the discovery and publication of a long-forgotten manuscript stimulated his antiquarian pride. Walpole in the letter stresses the "revival of these two", that is Cellini and Lord Herbert, implying also the parallel between Cocchi and himself, two typical antiquarians, both characterized by an ironical aloofness from the present age. The Castle of Otranto was drawn from the "Original Italian of Onuphrio Muralto ... found in the library of an ancient catholic family in the north of England". It was another discovery; this time the mysterious manuscript was in Walpole's inner world of visions, a "Life" written in the words of his own fancy.

Cellini too therefore had a place in Walpole's imagination. He was not absent from the domestic scene of Strawberry Hill. In the sumptuous Great North Bedchamber, the last room to be decorated, which completed the castle (17), Walpole placed

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(17) I found my new bedchamber finished, and it is so charming that I have lost all envy of Castle Howard ...
(To Montagu, August 24, 1772)
Walpole had just been visiting Castle Howard during a tour in the North of England.

the precious present Sir Horace Mann had sent to him, "a fine silver trunk to hold perfumes, with bas-reliefs; the top from Raphael's judgement of Paris: the work of Benvenuto Cellini. Bought out of the great duke's wardrobe" (18). He had not hesitated also to exchange some Roman medals with the Marquis of Rockingham for "a most beautiful silver bell, made for a pope by Benvenuto Cellini. It is covered all over in the highest relievo with antique masks, flies, grasshoppers, and other insects; the virgin and boy-angels at top, a wreathe of leaves at bottom. Nothing can exceed the taste of the whole design, or the delicate and natural representation of the insects: the wonderful execution makes almost every thing credible that He says of himself in his Life" (19). This was in the Tribune. But the most important and significant piece of all was the armour of Francis I, which Walpole also thought Cellini's. The position this armour held in Walpole's imagination is quite illuminating: he placed it in a niche on the staircase, near the armoury, with the shields of Polidore with the heads of Perseus and Medusa. Walpole was quite explicit about the significance of this armour for him in connection with The Castle of Otranto:

> I have the satisfaction of announcing to you the arrival of two great personages from France; one is Mademoiselle Heinel,

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(18) Descr., p. 107; it was "deposited in a new glazed closet" (cf. to Mann, August 29, 1772).

(19) Descr., p. 96.

> the famous dancer; the other, King Francis the First. In short, the armour of the latter is actually here, and in its niche, which I have had made for it on the staircase; and a very little stretch of the imagination will give it all the visionary dignity of the gigantic hand in armour that I dreamt of seeing on the balustrade of the staircase at Otranto. If this is not realizing one's dreams, I don't know what is.
>
> (To Lady Ossory, December 4, 1771)

And that Cellini in that armour had realized Walpole's dreams had been clear from the beginning of the complicated transaction for the purchase of the piece at Paris.-Mme Du Deffand, who was responsible for it, once wrote to Walpole that "... Ce bijou me paraît un peu cher, et ressemble beaucoup au casque du Château d'Otrante ..." (20). After the bargain was concluded (it cost him fifty Louis) Horace Walpole said "I myself expect a treasure to-morrow, a complete suit of armour of Francis the First ... It will make a great figure here at Otranto ...:"(21).

But the relationship between Walpole and Cellini is perhaps even more intimate, and therefore more difficult to define. Cellini was a visionary too. Not only was his life like an uninterrupted dream of scenes that were more the fruit of his wild fancy than the product of reality, but he said he often had visions of angels or devils and other

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(20) To Walpole, October 9, 1771.

(21) To Mann, November 18, 1771.

apparitions which marked the critical points of his picaresque existence. Most of such visions occurred in the period when he was a prisoner of the Pope in Castel S. Angelo, from where he escaped a first time but was taken again and secluded in the deepest dungeon for two years. The passage in the Life narrating the escape from the prison is a very popular one: Walpole certainly was acquainted with it and it must have left a long lasting impression on his mind, together with the long and horrible description of the gruesome subterraneous dungeon where the prisoner had been condemned to lie. The influence on his imagination may not have been however so direct, but transmitted, as always with him, through a visual medium. Walpole knew Piranesi's etchings showing Castel S. Angelo, and was no doubt impressed by a particularly striking one of 1756 showing "The foundations of the Mausoleum Hadrianum", which has been called "the quintessence of Piranesi" (22). This was produced between the first and the second edition of the Carceri and in

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(22) R. Murray, Piranesi and the Grandeur of Ancient Rome, London, 1971, p. 46. Murray thus describes it:

> It is a large plate, representing nothing but huge masses of masonry with a few tiny figures — one hardly notices the minute figures balanced on the outcrop at the upper right corner. The cyclopean masonry is in decay, but because of this the skeletal forms are revealed in all their awe-inspiring strength ...

(Ibid.)

fact represents the outside view of those awful "prisons" of Castel S. Angelo as Piranesi imagined them, in the same gigantic scale as the rest of the Carceri. Among the sources of inspiration of the latter I feel Castel S. Angelo must actually have been an important one because of its massive, dark structure suggesting the very image of Papal oppression. Piranesi was certainly acquainted with the story of Cellini's escape and, a somewhat Cellini-like character himself, he had also probably read the Vita(23). Did Cellini inspire him too? As a Venetian, drawing the foundations of the Castle, Piranesi must have thought of the terrible dungeons of the Piombi where Casanova, a Venetian and Freemason like himself, had just been confined. When Casanova escaped from the Piombi in a way that is legendary and made him known all over Europe, even by Walpole (24), the

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(23) The first biographer of Piranesi, Ludovico Bianconi, who knew the artist personally, compared him to Cellini:

> Chi potesse scrivere con libertà, e decenza la vita tumultuosa di Giambattista Piranesi farebbe un libro non meno gustoso nè meno ghiotto di quella che di se stesso scrisse il famoso Benvenuto Cellini ...
> ("Elogio Storico del Cavaliere Giambattista Piranesi celebre antiquario e incisore di Roma", Antologia, 34, February 1779)
> (Translation: He whom liberty and decency could allow to write the tumultuous life of Giambattista Piranesi would produce a book which for relish and sauciness would not be inferior to the Life of the famous Benvenuto Cellini, written by himself ...)

(24) In Walpole's Book of Materials, 1759 there

comparison with Cellini must have been immediate and maybe this was the occasional event which suggested to Piranesi to reissue the Carceri in a modified state (25).

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is a reference to Casanova: "sheets of Zuccarelli, Servandoni, v. Gerg in a coll. of Pamphlets in my library, class B. shelf 6. n. 12. Casanova born in England; ib.". Casanova knew Sir Horace Mann whose elegance and hospitality he noted in his journal:

> ... A quel pranzo, conobbi il cavaliere Mann, residente d'Inghilterra, idolo di Firenze, uomo ricco, amabile e gran dilettante di belle arti e pieno di gusto. Invitato, andai a fargli visita il giorno seguente. La sua casa aveva un bel giardino. In quell'abitazione, ch'egli stesso s'era arredata, i mobili, i quadri, i libri scelti con cura, rivelavano l'uomo geniale ... Aproposito di somiglianze, il cavaliere Mann ci fece vedere ritratti in miniatura di sorprendente bellezza.
>
> (G. Casanova, Storia della mia vita (originally written in French, 1798), VII, 8: from the text edited by C. Cordiè, Roma, 1961, 3, p. 128).
>
> (Translation: ... At that dinner I met the chevalier Mann, resident /Minister/ of England, the idol of Florence, a rich and good-natured man, great amateur of Fine Arts, and a complete man of taste. Being invited, I went and paid him a visit on the following day. His house had a beautiful garden: such a home, which he had personally furnished, in the furniture, the pictures, the well-chosen books, indeed revealed the man of genius ... Talking about likenesses, the chevalier Mann showed us miniature portraits of surprising beauty.)

(25) Casanova was arrested in Venice in 1755 and tried and condemned by the Great Inquisitor of the Republic for the crimes of impiety, witbhcraft and freemasonry. In plate XVI of the Carceri, the last one concluding the cycle, Piranesi in 1760, redrawing it completely, added a well visible detail in the foreground, bearing the inscription IMPIETATI ET

Cellini after all praised the prison as the master of life and virtue (26); Piranesi extended this maxim to a universal consideration of history — each stratum or cycle a step forward over the perpertual debris and ruins of human suffering, a higher flight in the spiral staircase leading to the ultimate light of liberation. And this had also been the vision and ideal of the young Horace Walpole.

MALIS ARTIBUS, which is a literal translation of two of the three crimes Casanova had been charged with. The third, unmentioned, is obviously Freemasonry: above the inscription there are two Roman heads which could hint at Casanova and Piranesi, united there by the common ideals of brotherhood.

(26) Cf. Cellini's Capitolo, a long poem in dantesque tercets which symbolically stands between the two sections into which the Vita is divided. Part of it runs thus:

Buon per colui che lungo tempo iace
'n una scura prigion, e pò' alfin n'esca:
sa ragionar di guerra, triegua e pace.

Gli è forza che ogni cosa gli riesca;
chè quella fa l'uom sì di virtù pieno
che 'l cervel non gli fa poi la moresca.

Tu mi potresti dir: -Quelli anni a' è meno.-
E' non è 'l ver, chè la t'insegna un modo
ch'empier te ne può' poi 'l petto e 'l seno ...

(Translation: Lucky is the man who lies in a dark prison for a good long time and then eventually comes out: he is the master of war, truce or peace.

Anything he tries he must needs succeed; for prison will bestow such a talent on a man that his brain will never dance the brawl thereafter.

And yet you'll say: 'Why, he lost those years'. And it is not true, for prison teaches you so well that you may fill your breast and wit [or:'bosom'] with its lèssons ...)

Then, in the years of his maturity, such a message, now more dramatically centred on the critical relationship between the individual and reality, acquired a greater value for Walpole. It reached not only the complex surface of his imaginative sensitiveness, but also its deeper motivations. Walpole, it is true, often tended to let his mind wander from the principal object of speculation; he had engaged in too many enterprises:

> I have Conway-papers to sort; I have Lives of the Painters to write; I have my prints to paste, my house to build, and everything in the world to tell posterity. —— How am I to find time for all this? (To Conway, June 28, 1760)

But the discovery of the forgotten manuscript of Lord Herbert's Life was perhaps the occasion to fix the early visions of youth on present experience, to draw a synthesis of his eccentric interests and of his life. This time his imagination would not travel too far before the emblem of the great helmet and iron hands we see in the engraving of the "couchant hero" transformed itself into the nightmare of the heroic decapitation of Medusa and finally into the central vision of horror that inspired the novel:

> He beheld his child dashed to pieces, and almost buried under an enormous helmet, an hundred times more large than any casque ever made for human being, and shaded with a proportionable quantity of black feathers.

Walpole's originality consisted in combining those images and recollections in such a way that the

black helmet in fact became an ambiguous and fascinating presence: on one side it was the image of the prison, the Castle itself under which Theodore seemed at first condemned to die, on the other side it represented the liberating power of the Supernatural through the "principal engine" of History — it was Perseus's magic helmet.

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