

# Imagining the Undefined Castle in *The Castle of Otranto*: Engravings and Interpretations

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## **Abstract**

*The Castle of Otranto* was a pioneering work: the second edition is the first piece of literary work to include “a Gothic story” in its title, and it is frequently held up as the first in a long line of Gothic novels. Literary scholars have afforded it significant attention, but little has been written about *Otranto*’s range of engraved illustrations, first incorporated in the sixth, 1791, edition. This essay examines how the novel was visualised through Georgian engravings, and questions whether they present a castle that we can immediately recognise, to use Walpole’s phrase, as a “child of Strawberry [Hill]”, his Gothic villa.<sup>1</sup>

## **Résumé**

Le Château d’Otrante ouvre une nouvelle ère en littérature: la seconde édition du livre est le premier texte littéraire à inclure dans son titre la mention d’une “histoire gothique” et on le considère généralement comme le premier du genre. En dépit des nombreuses études savantes sur ce texte, on a peu écrit sur les gravures qui l’illustrent, et qui ont été rajoutées au texte en 1791, au moment de la sixième édition du livre. Le présent article analyse la manière dont le roman trouve une contrepartie visuelle dans les gravures géorgiennes et se demande si les images représentent un château que nous pourrions reconnaître, pour citer Walpole, comme un « enfant de Strawberry Hill », sa propre villa gothique.

## **Keywords**

Gothic Revival, Strawberry Hill, *The Castle of Otranto*, Gothic novel, Gothic imagination, book illustration, Gothic art, visual culture, architecture

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1 A “child of Strawberry” refers to Lee Priory, Kent, a house created by Walpole and James Wyatt for Thomas Barrett, and framed by Walpole as “child of Strawberry prettier than the parent”. See Walpole 1944 (vol. 12), 111 and Reeve and Lindfield, 836–842.

Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (published Christmas Eve 1764, though dated 1765) exhibits an extremely vibrant and visually charged narrative. Architecture and architectural spaces are found throughout the novel and provide the sometimes jarring contexts for the plot. Conrad, Manfred's only son and heir, is crushed to death in the castle's courtyard by the dilated helmet of Alfonso the Good transported from the funerary monument in the adjacent Church of St Nicholas (Walpole 2014, 18–21); gloomy subterranean passages are used by Isabella to escape her tyrannical father-in-law-to-be who, upon the death of Conrad, seeks her as his wife (Walpole 2014, 26); the sacred and implicitly “safe” Oratory is the setting for Frederic's unexpected meeting with the flesh-less spectre dressed in a hermit's cowl (Walpole 2014, 98); and, towards the end of the novel, the castle's wall is destroyed by the enlarged figure of Alfonso the Good (Walpole 2014, 103). Walpole's novel, consequently, offers plenty of scenes throughout the visually charged narrative for artists and engravers to depict.

## Presentation and description of architecture in *Otranto*

Unlike the later Gothic novels of Radcliffe *et al.*, and Jane Austen's parody of the genre in *Northanger Abbey* (December 1817, though dated 1818 and originally composed c.1798–99), *Otranto's* architectural spaces are not described in significant physical or aesthetic detail (see Austen, 81–2, 152). The novel does not contain, for example, the equivalent of Radcliffe's vivid rendition the ruined abbey in *The Romance of the Forest* (1791). Indeed, Radcliffe revels in architectural detail, telling us that the abbey's “lofty battlements, thickly enwreathed with ivy, were half demolished [... and] a Gothic gate, richly ornamented with fret-work, which opened into the main body of the edifice, but which was now obstructed with brush-wood, remained entire” (Radcliffe, 15). What we glean about Otranto's architecture, on the other hand, is vague at best (Reeve, 191, n. 36). Walpole only communicates architectural detail sufficient to set moods and create generalised contexts. Instead of describing the building's form and ornament, or, indeed, style – nowhere in the narrative is the building established as a Gothic edifice or with Gothic interiors (though this can be assumed as a possibility from the purported date of the narrative) – we are simply told that “the lower parts of the Castle”, for example, “are hollowed into several intricate cloisters” (Walpole 2014, 26). This only *implies* monastic-style architecture, but this is, nevertheless, an important deviation from formal castellated forms and structures.

Walpole likewise does not help us establish or explain the castle's internal geography: he tells us that the subterranean passage Isabella uses to escape Manfred is accessed from the foot of the principal staircase, but exactly how Isabella got from the staircase to the passage is not revealed (Walpole 2014, 26). His obfuscation of architectural form, style and context is amplified by inconsistent references to the religious foundation of St Nicholas adjacent to the castle: it is typically referred to as a church, but on one occasion it is presented as a cathedral and another as the great church connected to a monastery (Walpole 2014, 26, 99). John Carter's depiction of the death of Matilda, which takes place in the church of St Nicholas, fully embraces the architectural possibilities offered by its cathedral status, which in the relevant passage is described by Walpole as “the great church” (Walpole 2014, 99; Lindfield, 15–17). Such inconsistencies do not help the reader imagine the scenes with any consistency or precision. As such, there is no irrefutable way to read, visualise and imagine the castle, its context, or even form. Indeed, as suggested earlier, we can interpret it as both as a castellated monastery, or a military fortification proper. Carter's celebration of the castle at Otranto as an enormous structure (**Fig.12**) matches his strongly held belief in the superiority of Gothic architecture over “foreign” styles (Lewis Walpole

Library, Drawer 790.00.00.138dr++; Lindfield, 8–11; Frew, 315–19). It illustrates the unrestrained possibilities offered by Walpole's vague description of architecture in *Otranto* that actually facilitates imaginative and individual responses to the text (Reeve, 191). Carter, for example, emphasises and articulates the narrative's sublime components in his watercolours primarily through the architectural settings. The novel's protagonists and their actions, instead of the architecture, create and sustain feelings of shock and incredulity (especially in relation to “barbaric” and lineage-driven actions, as well as to Catholicism). The castle – the “set” – is, nevertheless, highly relevant to the narrative, even if not to the same extent as in Carter's watercolours.

Although the novel lacks a detailed architectural setting, Walpole somewhat surprisingly emphasises architecture's relevance to *Otranto* from the outset. In the guise of the novel's translator, William Marshal, Gent., he claims in the Preface to the first edition (1764) that the scenes are

undoubtedly 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. (Walpole 2014, 7)

Walpole also challenges readers to locate *Otranto's* sources: “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” (Walpole 2014, 7). The novel's foundation upon physical sources – the “real world” of buildings and texts – is emphasised from the start.



Fig. 1: Strawberry Hill, Twickenham, 2016. © Peter N. Lindfield.

## Otranto's architectural sources

As I have explored elsewhere, though it is worth restating the point here, *Otranto's* architectural source and inspiration relates to Walpole's acquisition of Chopp'd Straw Hall, Twickenham, and his subsequent remodelling and conversion of the structure into the Gothic "castle of my ancestors", Strawberry Hill, from 1747/8 (**Fig. 1**).<sup>2</sup> Strawberry Hill's genesis, a process that predates *Otranto's* by nearly two decades, is the novel's aesthetic fountainhead (Lindfield, 1–3; Walpole 2014, xxiii, xxxvi; and Bann, 121). Both are, after all, "Gothic" projects concerned with recreating the past for consumption in Georgian Britain. Nick Groom, in the Introduction to the latest edition of *The Castle of Otranto* (2014) writes that "the novel itself is packed with Strawberryisms, from the cloisters and dark passages to the metonymic projections of the funerary statue and Theodore's suggestive resemblance to Alfonso's portrait [. . .] Enigmatic archaeological discoveries", he continues, "such as the massive sabre are reported, and pictures – real pictures that Walpole had hanging in Strawberry – come to life" (Walpole 2014, xxxvi). Indeed, Walpole brings together the novel and his Gothic villa in *A Description of the Villa of Mr Horace Walpole* (1784) – it was, he writes at the end of the catalogue's Introduction, the "scene that inspired, the author of the Castle of Otranto" (Walpole 1784, iv).

In a well-known letter to William Cole (1714–1782) from 9 March 1765, Walpole recalls exactly how his Gothic villa spawned *Otranto* in early June 1764:

Your partiality to me and Strawberry have I hope included you to excuse the wildness of the story. You will even have found some traits to put you in mind of this place [...] 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 upper-most bannister of a great staircase I saw a gigantic hand in armour. (Walpole 1937 (vol. 1), 88)

A letter to Francis Seymour Conway, first Earl of Hertford, dated 8 June 1764, places Walpole at Strawberry Hill: it is around this date that *Otranto* was born from Walpole's purposed dream (Walpole 1974 (vol. 38), 399). The staircase referred to by Walpole in this letter to Cole must surely be that at Strawberry Hill (**Fig. 2**): his Arlington Street townhouse seems far less likely to have inspired a Gothic and romantic castle-like dream, and we know that Walpole was at Strawberry Hill around the time of this "incident".

Emerging from his bedroom onto the top floor landing of Strawberry Hill's staircase, Walpole would have gazed down towards the armoury (visible in **Fig. 2**) that, he wrote in 1753, "bespeaks the chivalry of the ancient lords of the castle" (Walpole 1941 (vol. 9), 150). This vaulted space contained suit armour and armorials belonging to his ancestors, including those of Walpole impaling Shorter, for his father and mother, and a number arms belonging to older ancestors with dates: Peter Fitzosbert (1275, for the date of his death); a Robsart shield in a garter (1443, apparently for Sir Terry Robsart); and Walpole impaling Crane for Sir Edward Walpole, Knight of the Bath (1660, though he was made a Knight of the Bath in 1661). Although an imagined space of his ancestors, it gave the impression of being part of an ancient castle, especially so as Walpole, according to a passage in his manuscript *Books of Materials*, connected architecture directly with the people or

<sup>2</sup> For Strawberry Hill, see Snodin; McCarthy, 63–91; and Guillery and Snodin, 102–128. See also Lindfield, 1–23.





Fig. 2: John Carter, *The Staircase at Strawberry Hill*, 1788, in 33 30 copy 11 Folio. Courtesy of the Lewis Walpole Library, Farmington, CT.

civilizations that created it: Gothic took him back to the medieval period and the “wars of York and Lancaster” (Lewis Walpole Library, 49 2615 Vol. 1, fol. 52).

Emphasising this connection between Strawberry Hill and *Otranto*, Frances Burney (1752–1840) found that the villa’s “unusually shaped apartments” offered “striking recollections [...] of his Gothic Story of the Castle of Otranto” (Barrett (vol. 2), 483). Much later, Wilmarth Sheldon Lewis, the collector of Walpoliana in Farmington, CT, and executive editor of the forty-eight-volume Yale edition of *Horace Walpole’s Correspondence* (1937–1983), similarly emphasises Strawberry Hill’s presence throughout *Otranto’s* narrative; he goes as far as to chart which rooms at Strawberry Hill appear in the novel (Lewis, 89–90). Lewis also claims, quite remarkably, that some of Strawberry Hill’s apartments are reused multiple times in the novel: “The ‘chamber on the right hand’ into which the spectator disappeared at the end of the Gallery and in which he lay down so disconcertingly was the Tribune. This is also the ‘gallery-chamber’ and ‘the great chamber’” (Lewis, 89). Although speculative, it is not unreasonable to assume that Strawberry Hill’s architecture and appearance would have directly influenced at least some readers’ engagement with and visualisation of the text.

A secondary, competing, visual narrative developed that challenged the Strawberryfication of *Otranto’s* identity. This became apparent in 1786 – just over two decades after the novel’s publication – and, according to Walpole’s letters, was serendipitous. In a letter from 27 November 1786 Walpole writes to Elizabeth Craven (1750–1828), Lady Craven, about a drawing (**Fig. 3**) she sent Walpole of the castle at Otranto, Italy, taken by the architect Willey Reveley (1760–1799), whilst on Grand Tour with the antiquary Sir Richard Worsley (1751–1805) in 1785:

I give your Ladyship a million of thanks for the drawing, which was really a very valuable gift to me. I did not even know that there was a Castle of Otranto. When the story was finished, I looked into the map of the kingdom of Naples for a well-sounding name, and that of Otranto was very sonorous. Nay, but the drawing is so satisfactory, that there are two small windows, one over another, and looking into the country that suit exactly the small chambers from one of which Matilda heard the young peasant singing beneath her. Judge how welcome this must be to the author; and thence judge, madam, how much you must have obliged him! (Walpole 1980 (vol. 42), 178)<sup>3</sup>

Should we believe the claim Walpole is making here? It seems strange, though hardly inconceivable, to write the novel then fill in the “blanks” left by this contextual omission. What does seem genuine, however, is Walpole’s surprise on learning of the “real” castle of Otranto.



Fig. 3: Willey Reveley, *The Castle at Otranto*, 1785, C.40.c.24. © Trustees of the British Museum.

Walpole’s satisfaction with Reveley’s drawing, however, was challenged by doubt over its authenticity: as he articulates in his above-quoted letter to Lady Craven, the castle seemed to possess too good a likeness to that presented in *Otranto*. His concern over the image’s authenticity was sufficient for him to write to Sir William Hamilton (1731–1803), Envoy Extraordinaire to the Spanish Court at Naples, on 17 January 1788 enquiring if Reveley’s depiction was a true and faithful record of the Italian castle:

I am ashamed to write to you, when it is only to trouble you with a trifling commission that interests nobody but myself – but indeed it will cost you no more than that of writing a couple of short letters. In a word, a person not long ago brought me from Italy a drawing of the real Castle of Otranto, and said that it had actually been taken on the spot in 1785.

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. Still, the

<sup>3</sup> The watercolour is in London, British Museum, 1927,0712.8, and a related, quarto-sized derivative is pasted into the front of Walpole’s personal copy of the second (1765) edition of *Otranto*: London, British Library, C.40.c.24.

drawing corresponds so very well with the circumstances of the narrative, that I cannot help suspecting the idea was conceived, or at least adapted to flatter the vanity of the author; and I do wish you would be so kind as to inform yourself, and then me, whether there is in fact such an actual castle — I will tell you why I wish to know, from more than personal curiosity. (Walpole 1973 (vol. 35), 435–436)

Just over a month later, Sir William replied, confirming the castle's existence: "You may be very sure that the Castle of Otranto does exist and 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" (Walpole 1973 (vol. 35), 438). Walpole's literary fabrication – it was, after all, presented in 1764 as a translation by William Marshal from the "Original Italian of Onuphrio Muralto, Canon of the Church of St Nicholas, at Otranto" (Walpole 2014, 2) – consequently emerged as a literary pendant to a physical entity in Italy. As Sir William writes, it is "not a castle in the air" unlike that in *Otranto* that was pieced together in Walpole's imagination.

The almost certainly unexpected connection between the setting of Walpole's novel and castle at Otranto, if we believe Walpole's letters to Lady Craven and Sir William, became historical fact. In a particularly bold claim and patent re-writing of literary history – facilitated by the passage of time and Walpole's inability to counter the suggestion (he died in 1797) – an article published in *The Mirror* on 20 March 1830 frames

the celebrated Castle of Otranto as "an imposing object of considerable size. It owes all its reputation in England to the interesting romance of that name." This attractive fiction first appeared in the year 1765, and its great success led to the prolific school of the Radcliffe romance, and a vast variety of similar inventions. Horace Walpole, a man of exquisite taste in the fine arts, and above all a passionate admirer of Gothic architecture (of which his villa at Strawberry Hill is a proof), has not only taken the title of this romance from the Castle of Otranto, but has retained, with characteristic accuracy, the several portions of the building. (Bodleian Libraries, Douce W 243, front fly leaf)

The article even suggests that Mr Williams' depictions of the castle delineate the actual places where Walpole's narrative was set: he took "drawings of the castle from every point of view, not omitting the courtyard, where the gigantic helmet appeared" (Bodleian Libraries, Douce W 243, front fly leaf).

*Otranto*'s imagined architecture – a castle in the air – was connected directly to two quite different castles: Walpole's own sham Gothic "castle" of his ancestors, Strawberry Hill, and the "real" castle at Otranto. The novel's lack of architectural specificity meant that neither could be challenged as the "real" fabric. These two structures, as we have seen, were accepted and publicised as the architectural inspirations behind Walpole's novel. However, there was no rush on the part of Walpole or the various publishers to explore or establish these connections visually by the inclusion of plates in the novel. Indeed, *Otranto* remained unillustrated until the sixth (1791) edition set in Parma, Emilia-Romagna, Italy, by Bodoni, for J. Edwards, London. There are, perhaps, a number of reasons for this. In the Introduction to the first edition Walpole (as Marshal) recounts how the "following work was found in the library of an ancient catholic [*sic*] family in the north of England. It was printed at Naples, in the black letter, in the year 1529. How much sooner it was written does not appear" (Walpole 2014, 5). An unillustrated novel was hardly unusual in Georgian Britain, and its claimed pedigree may well have dispensed with the need to include illustrations. Also, Walpole would have required the services



of an artist and engraver to create and prepare the plates for publication: this would, potentially, have revealed him as the author. Walpole could have not commissioned anyone in his Strawberry Hill set with this task, such as Richard Bentley (who had already produced numerous book illustrations, including the Gothic frontispiece to Thomas Gray's *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* in 1753), as his pseudonymic ruse would have become apparent immediately.<sup>4</sup> This is, of course, very different from Thomas Chatterton's forgery of the "Rowley Poems" (1778) for which he established the visual identity of "the Storie of William Canynge" (Fig. 4) (Chatterton 1778, opposite 288).<sup>5</sup>

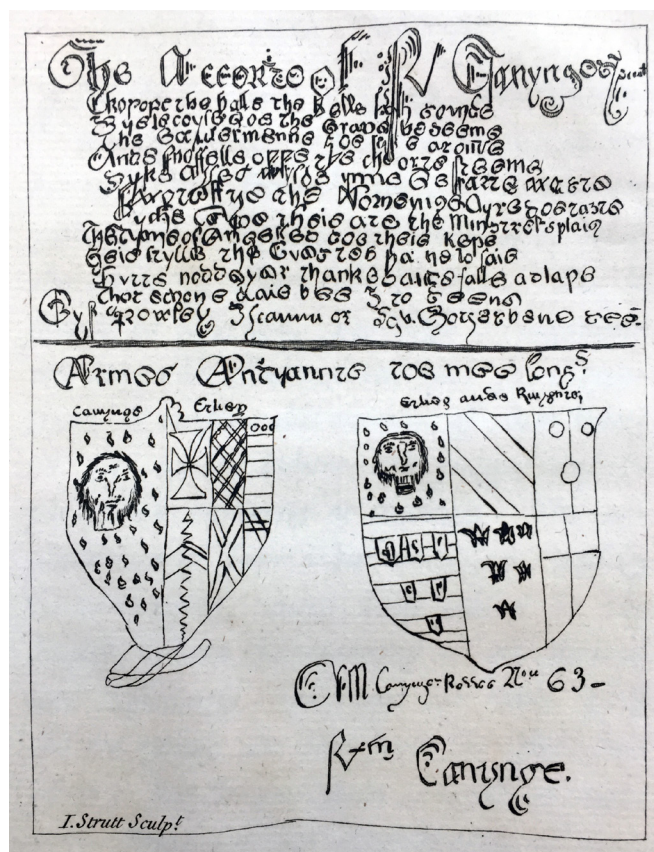


Fig. 4: Thomas Chatterton, illustration in *Poems, Supposed to Have Been Written at Bristol, by Thomas Rowley, and Others*, 1778.

Courtesy of the Lewis Walpole Library, Farmington, CT.

## The 1791 illustrations: Anne Millicent Clarke's visualisation of *Otranto*

The first engravings included in *Otranto* were drawn by Anne Millicent Clarke. They depict six scenes: Isabella and Manfred in front of the portrait of his grandfather quitting its frame (opposite p. 22) (Fig. 5) (Walpole 2014, 25); Theodore assisting Isabella's escape from Manfred via a trapdoor (opposite p. 33) (Fig. 6) (Walpole 2014, 28); Matilda, having equipped Theodore with armour from the castle, helps Theodore escape via the postern gate (opposite p. 142) (Fig. 7) (Walpole 2014, 68); Theodore coming across Isabella in the labyrinthine caves (that has more than a passing resemblance to crumbling grottoes like that in which Kent depicted Alexander Pope (Webber, 207–208; Trustees of the Chatsworth Settlement, Chatsworth House, 26,39)) close to Otranto (opposite p. 146) (Fig. 8) (Walpole 2014, 70); Theodore badly wounding Frederic

<sup>4</sup> This and the rest of Bentley's drawings can be seen in: Farmington, Lewis Walpole Library, Designs by Mr R. Bentley, for Six Poems by Mr T. Gray 49 3698, and the engravings in: Farmington, Lewis Walpole Library, 49 3582 Folio. See also Bann, 119–120.

<sup>5</sup> Some of Chatterton's material is preserved at Yale University: Farmington, Lewis Walpole Library, 49 3690.





Fig. 5: Anne Millicent Clarke, *Isabella and Manfred in front of the portrait of his grandfather quitting its frame*, *Castle of Otranto* 1791, Plate I, opp. p. 22, heightened with colour. Dunston B 1855. Courtesy of the Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford.



Fig. 6: Anne Millicent Clarke, *Theodore assisting Isabella's escape from Manfred via a trapdoor*, *Castle of Otranto* 1791, Plate II, opp. p. 33, heightened with colour. Dunston B 1855. Courtesy of the Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford.



Fig. 7: Anne Millicent Clarke, *Matilda, having equipped Theodore with armour from the Castle, helps Theodore escape the castle via the postern gate*, *Castle of Otranto* 1791, Plate III, opp. p. 142, heightened with colour. Dunston B 1855. Courtesy of the Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford.



Fig. 8: Anne Millicent Clarke, *Theodore coming across Isabella in the labyrinthine caves close to Otranto*, *Castle of Otranto* 1791, Plate IV, opp. p. 146, heightened with colour. Dunston B 1855. Courtesy of the Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford.



Fig. 9: Anne Millicent Clarke, *Theodore wounds Frederick badly whilst attempting to save Isabella from Manfred*, *Castle of Otranto* 1791, Plate V, opp. p. 155, heightened with colour. Dunston B 1855. Courtesy of the Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford.



Fig. 10: Anne Millicent Clarke, *Jerome, the Friar, speaking with Hippolita about her proposed separation from Manfred*, *Castle of Otranto* 1791, Plate VI, opp. p. 197, heightened with colour. Dunston B 1855. Courtesy of the Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford.





Fig. 11: Death of Conrad under the helmet of Alfonso the Good, Castle of Otranto 1824. Courtesy of the Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford.

whilst attempting to save Isabella from Manfred (opposite p. 155) (**Fig. 9**) (Walpole 2014, 73); and Jerome, the Friar, speaking with Hippolita about her proposed separation from Manfred (opposite p. 197) (**Fig. 10**) (Walpole 2014, 88). Clarke's choice of scenes leaves out a number of curious and important moments from the novel, such as Conrad's death under the helmet of Alfonso (as illustrated in the 1824 London edition) (**Fig. 11**) and Frederic's entry into the castle (as illustrated separately by John Carter (Lewis Walpole Library, Drawer 790.00.00.138dr++)) (**Fig. 12**), and most of the novel – pages 34 to 142 in the 1791 edition – is not illustrated. Clarke's plates, clustered towards the start and end of *Otranto*, effectively set the novel's visual language at the start and provide important contextual details towards the tail end. Her artistic energy was directed mostly towards the figures' costumes: especially the armour of Theodore and Frederic, the Manfred's plumage, and the white purity of Isabella's and Matilda's dresses.



Fig. 12: John Carter, Entry of Frederick into the Castle of Otranto, 1791. Drawer 790.00.00.138dr++. Courtesy of the Lewis Walpole Library, Farmington, CT.

Throughout, these plates provide important architectural commentaries that overtly establish what the novel implies: that the castle is a quasi-monastic, Gothic-esque structure that, notably, accords with the then current Georgian recreations of medieval architecture. The first plate (**Fig. 5**), *Isabella and Manfred*, sets the tone followed by the remaining engravings in the edition: the architectural context is important, but is subservient to the figures. Perspective is followed, but not rigorously, and architectural details are vague and overtly simplistic rather than precise and ornate. The casement referred to by Walpole in the novel, (Walpole 2014, 25) through which the plumes of the helmet that killed Conrad are visible in Plate I, do not appear to open, and Clarke's drawing presents the window as a simple Romanesque type. The window's painted glass, on the other hand, follows the Georgian preference for isolating heraldic imagery to the heads: the remainder of the window is clear to allow for uninterrupted picturesque prospects, as at Strawberry Hill and Fonthill Abbey, Wiltshire.<sup>6</sup> Wall decoration and furniture in this plate, as with the remainder of Clarke's illustrations, are equally vague and resonate with the perishingly small number of specifics offered in Walpole's narrative.

More overtly Gothic scenes are presented in the 1791 edition's subsequent plates: II, *Theodore and Isabella* (**Fig. 6**); III, *Theodore and Matilda* (**Fig. 7**); and VI, *Jerome and Hippolita* (**Fig. 10**). Each of these illustrations includes obvious Gothic forms, particularly the pointed arch, expressly conveying the castle's character as a Gothic space beyond the terror enacted by Manfred and the other protagonists. As before, however, the scenes' architecture verges on the superficial and fails to give any convincing appearance of substance: this is the case with the arcading on plate II, the stage-like quality of the postern gate in plate III, and the elevation in plate VI. This last engraving is the most architecturally ambitious, although the fabric is unresolved and ambiguous: the vault respond appears to project on an internal buttress (implied by the tile pattern at floor level), but this profile is not expressed in the remaining elevation. The vault springing from the respond, along with the three-light window, reveal an understanding of medieval architectural forms and a lack of specific architectural and spatial knowledge. Throughout, Clarke's illustrations present the castle on a domestic scale – much like Strawberry Hill – with decoration that, in part, corresponds to the recreation of medieval forms in Georgian Gothic architecture. In spite of the connections made between Strawberry Hill and *Otranto* in the eighteenth century, *Otranto's* first plates omit this link. It is notable, of course, that Clarke decided to frame the castle as

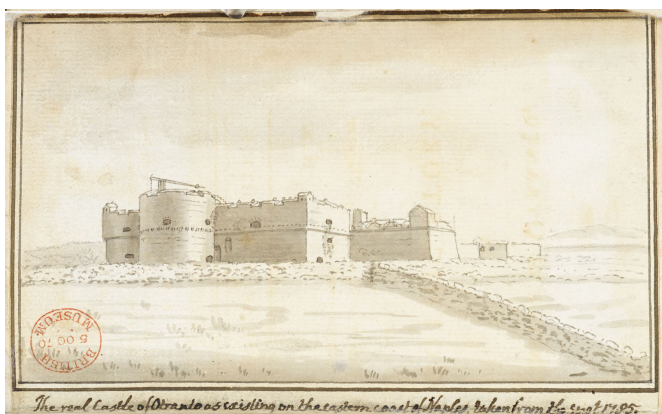


Fig. 13: Reproductions of Reveley's watercolour of the Castle at Otranto, see fig. 3, in Walpole's circle. Front fly-leaf of Walpole's personal copy of *Otranto*, C.40.c.24. © The British Library Board.



Fig. 14: Barlow after Reveley, *The Castle of Otranto from an original drawing, as it now exists, in the Kingdom of Naples, 1791.24 17 791P Copy 9*. Courtesy of the Lewis Walpole Library, Farmington, CT.

<sup>6</sup> Gallery at Strawberry Hill: Farmington, Lewis Walpole Library, 49 3582 Folio, and St Michael's Gallery, Fonthill Abbey: Rutter, pl. 9 and Wainwright, 126–127, 129–131.



a Gothic space despite Walpole never explicitly establishing this: his Gothic narrative consequently took place in a Gothic architectural context.

An additional two engravings of the castle often are found bound into the front of the 1791 edition of *Otranto* to supplement Clarke's "official" plates. The first (and most commonly included) is a reproduction by Barlow of Reveley's watercolour, now in the British Museum (**Fig. 3**), and of which a number of eighteenth-century copies exist in Walpole's collection and that of his circle (**Figs 13–14**) (British Museum, 1927,0712.8).<sup>7</sup> The engraving after Reveley's watercolour exists in at least two states: either captioned "The Castle of Otranto from an original drawing, as it now exists, in the Kingdom of Naples" (**Fig. 15**) (Lewis Walpole Library, 24 17 791p Copy 9), or without any text other than the engraver's name (Bodleian Libraries, Douce W 243; Lewis Walpole Library, 24 17 791p Copy 5). An additional lower-quality version without a caption and picturesque figures in the left foreground was also in circulation (**Fig. 16**) (Lewis Walpole Library, 24 17 791p Copy 9). Much like *The Mirror*'s subsequent and spurious claim that the narrative is set in the Italian castle, the inclusion of this plate implies a formalised relationship between the novel and its namesake.



Fig. 15: Barlow after Reveley, *The Castle of Otranto from an original drawing, as it now exists, in the Kingdom of Naples*, 1791.24 17 791P Copy 5. Courtesy of the Lewis Walpole Library, Farmington, CT.

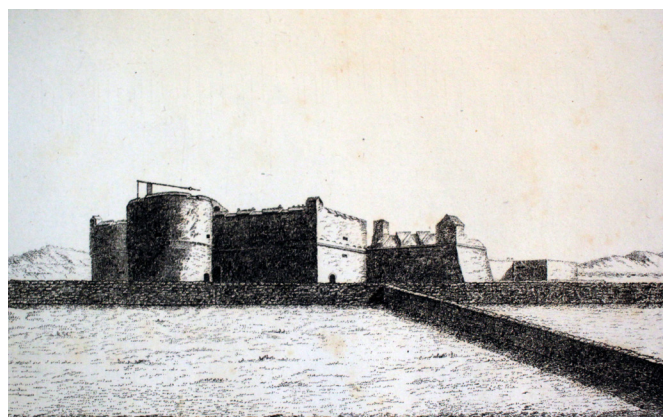


Fig. 16: Anonymous after Reveley, *The Castle of Otranto*, 1791?24 17 791P Copy 9. Courtesy of the Lewis Walpole Library, Farmington, CT.

A second representation of *Otranto*'s castle can also be found in some 1791 Parma editions of the novel (**Fig. 17**). It is known to have been intentionally included in the 1796 "new" edition of *Otranto* published by Jeffery and titled *The Castle* (Walpole 1796, xvi). This plate complements all of Clarke's illustrations that are retained in the 1796 edition (though her plates are retitled in Italian). Unlike Barlow's engraving depicting the castle at Otranto, the structure represented in this new plate by Medland is a castle in the air: its architecture is an imaginative conflation of square and round towers, curtain walls, a saucer dome and Gothic arcading. The plate also includes a pool-like moat, the Church of St Nicholas to the far left, and the processional entry of Frederic into the castle, a scene that John Carter reproduced with much more bravura and passion for medieval pomp (**Fig. 12**). This representation of the scene is quite unlike Carter's, not least as this plate shows the procession entering the castle from the outside and without the excessively decorative paraphernalia conveyed

<sup>7</sup> Reveley's watercolour was recreated twice in colour for Richard Bull and inserted into his copies of the first edition of *Otranto* and the second edition of *The Description of the Villa of Mr Horace Walpole* (1784), each with the following caption: 'South View of the Castle of Otranto with the Acroceraunian Mountains of Epirus in the Distance – copied from a Drawing made in March 1785 by Mr Reveley – given to Mr Walpole by lady Craven'. *Otranto*: Farmington, Lewis Walpole Library, 24 17 765 Copy 2; *Description*: Farmington, Lewis Walpole Library, 33 30 Copy 11 Folio.



with minute detail by Carter. Whilst the Reveley-derived plate ties *Otranto*'s visual narrative to a fixed point in Italy, this second illustration realises the Italian connection through imaginatively combined architectural forms that only an Italianate rather than immediately recognisable Gothic structures as found in Carter's and Clarke's work.



Fig. 17: Medland, *The Castle*, c.1796, heightened with colour. Dunston B 1855. Courtesy of the Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford.

## Further plates

New engravings included in subsequent editions of *Otranto* on the whole emphasise the Gothic character of the castle, but there is, once again, no attempt to recreate Strawberry Hill or the castle at Otranto. The earlier and often made connection between Strawberry Hill and *The Castle of Otranto* is repeatedly compromised by the illustrations and these plates suggest that this relationship only existed in visual terms to a select circle especially around Walpole. The title page plate for *Otranto* in *Cooke's Pocket Edition of Selected Novels* (1794) (**Fig. 18**) presents the most conspicuously Gothic environment, where Theodore conducts Isabella to safety via a trapdoor. Unlike Clarke's plate, this engraving creates a relatable Gothic space (especially due to the vaulting), crumbling into ruins. The other plate set in this edition depicts another escape: Theodore conducting Isabella to the cavern for safety (**Fig. 19**). Theodore's armour is very similar to that seen in Clarke's 1791 illustrations, but there is no attempt to render a particular Gothic scene. Certainly the most imaginative is the title-page illustration to the 1811 Edinburgh edition of *Otranto* (**Fig. 20**) where Alfonso's helmet and sword are presented in front of Otranto. Instead of being a vague Italian structure, the castle presented in the Edinburgh edition successfully evokes British castle architecture's form and ornament.

The 1794 Berlin edition of *Otranto*, in contrast, approaches the castle's architecture and interiors from a completely different direction. It contains four illustrations: Isabella and Manfred (**Fig. 21**) (the same scene tackled by Clarke where Manfred's grandfather quits the painting, but with more sculptural assurance and aplomb) (Walpole 2014, 25); the revelation of Theodore (**Fig. 22**) (Walpole 2014, 53); Theodore swearing to be Matilda's knight at the postern gate (**Fig. 23**) (Walpole 2014, 58); and Manfred's murder of Matilda (though not stabbing her from behind as specified by Walpole) before the tomb of Alfonso the Good (**Fig. 24**) (Walpole 2014, 99). The interior scenes (Isabella and Manfred, and the death of Matilda) are framed with Classical-





Fig. 18: Title-page illustration to Cooke's edition of *The Castle of Otranto* 1794. 24 17 794 Copy 1. Courtesy of the Lewis Walpole Library, Farmington, CT.

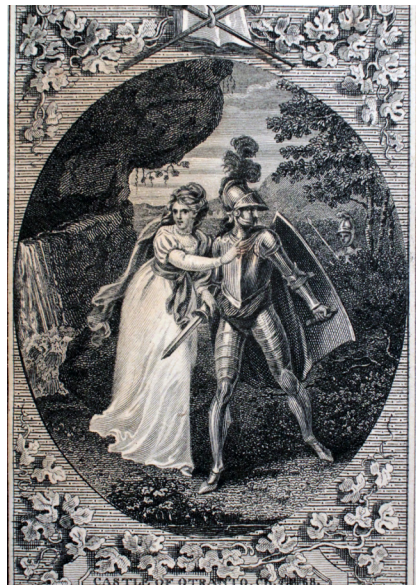


Fig. 19: Saundres, Theodore Conducting Isabella to the Cavern to Protect Her from the Fury of Manfred. 1794. From Cooke's edition of *The Castle of Otranto* 1794. 24 17 794 Copy 1. Courtesy of the Lewis Walpole Library, Farmington, CT.

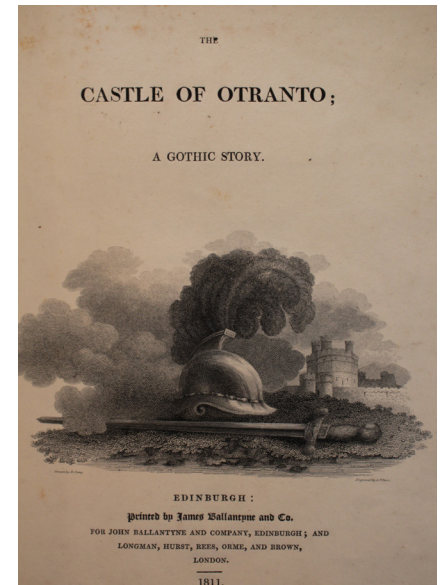


Fig. 20: Title-page illustration to the Edinburgh edition of *The Castle of Otranto* 1811. 24 17 811. Courtesy of the Lewis Walpole Library, Farmington, CT.



Fig. 21: Johann Willhelm Meil, *Isabella and Manfred*, plate I from the Berlin edition of *The Castle of Otranto* 1794. Courtesy of the Lewis Walpole Library, Farmington, CT.



Fig. 22: Johann Willhelm Meil, *the Revelation of Theodore*, plate II from the Berlin edition of *The Castle of Otranto* 1794. Courtesy of the Lewis Walpole Library, Farmington, CT.



Fig. 23: Johann Willhelm Meil, *Theodore swearing to be Matilda's knight at the postern gate*, plate III from the Berlin edition of *The Castle of Otranto* 1794. Courtesy of the Lewis Walpole Library, Farmington, CT.



style architecture which is never mentioned or implied in the narrative, the postern gate lacks any noticeable concession to Gothic architecture, and Theodore's revelation takes place in front of a Romanesque castle. The Berlin edition engravings drawn by Johann Willhelm Meil consequently fail to respond to the architectural precedents set by the earlier engravings considered here and the widespread and acknowledged connection between Walpole's villa and the novel. Despite this variety, the majority of *Otranto*'s engravings establish that the first Gothic novel labeled a Gothic story was framed by illustrators as a Gothic structure with Gothic interiors. Moreover, the novel's inescapable connection to the "real" castle of Otranto had little impact on its illustrations, save frontispieces. Certainly one explanation for this variety is, as already suggested, the lack of architectural description throughout the novel.



Fig. 24: Johann Willhelm Meil, *Manfred's murder of Matilda before the tomb of Alfonso the Great*, plate IV from the Berlin edition of *The Castle of Otranto* 1794. Courtesy of the Lewis Walpole Library, Farmington, CT.

## Coda

Walpole failed to specify aspects of the castle's form, internal geography, appearance and style in *Otranto*. Numerous conflicting and contradictory visual narratives developed in the Georgian period because of this. Even though the plates considered here present quite different styles of architectural imagination – ranging from a grotto-like subterranean cave through to a Gothic oratory and church and even a Classically-style interior – it is clear that the engravings all illustrate the castle on a modest domestic scale and according to contemporary Georgian fashions. What emerges strongly from these plates is how Strawberry Hill and the "real" Castle of Otranto did not materially impact the visualization of Walpole's narrative in the published engravings despite their repeatedly acknowledged connection in the Georgian period. This is significant as it fundamentally challenges the established and widely accepted interpretation of *Otranto* as a literary manifestation of Walpole's

status as a gentleman architect and designer. Numerous authors have seen Strawberry Hill's presence in the narrative, but this was certainly not realised in the engraved plates.

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