

As you will certainly know and remember from the first half of this MOOC, 'Gothic literature' proliferated in the second half of the eighteenth century. The second edition of Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* (1765) acquired the subtitle of *A Gothic Story*. Clear themes emerge in the novel, including feudalism, inheritance, immorality, usurpation of title, and horror. The exact quality of the Castle of Otranto's architecture, however, is not described in any detail. Indeed, the castle is conspicuously absent, unlike, for example, the house in Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*. Nevertheless, a visual language developed to accompany such Gothic-themed works. Initially *Otranto* was not illustrated, however a series of plates for the sixth 1791 edition were engraved. They are, for the most part, simplistic in terms of form and spatial qualities, as you can see on screen now. There is, for example, no consistent attempt to address the castle's architecture beyond, of course, the inclusion of the pointed arch.

There is no attempt to depict Gothic horror, unlike in Philippe-Jacques de Loutherbourg's *Visitor to a Moonlit Churchyard* from 1790. De Loutherbourg's *Visitor* blends the comparatively sophisticated rendering of medieval architecture, seen in Sandby's watercolours, but simultaneously conveys an overt sense of horror: the visitor, sometimes referred to as a philosopher, is in front of a family tomb decorated with a Renaissance-style Christ. The contents of the tomb, however, is excavated and strewn in front of him: in particular skulls are strewn in a heap to his right. Equally disrespectful is the discarded top-slab from a tomb chest. Gesturing to this and looking at the Christ, the visitor articulates the scene's horror: a desecrated tomb. The painting's nightmarish quality is heightened by the full moon which casts the church's surviving wall and tracery into high relief. Praying upon the viewer's imagination, this painting evokes all of the horror essential to the Gothic literary imagination.

De Loutherbourg was not the only one to embrace architectural forms imaginatively in the Georgian Period. John Carter, the well-known polemical antiquary, in his illustration of *The Castle of Otranto* from 1790 depicts the castle's central courtyard as a fairy-tale like fictive arrangement of medieval buildings ranging from Norman to Perpendicular. This flourishing of architectural detail parallels the most widely circulated form of Gothic art reacting against, rather than embracing, horror: the antiquarian print. Based upon first-hand studies of the ruins, fragments and intact architecture and sculpture, artists such as Carter went to great lengths to record and publish visual records of Britain's architectural past. This was an overtly preservationist activity, and it rallied against that of the improvers who, like the premier architect in late Georgian period, James Wyatt, repaired, remodeled and reconfigured medieval buildings, including churches and cathedrals, on occasion to accommodate Georgian ceremony and ideas on vista.

Conflict between the 'improvers' and 'preservers' heightened the imperative to record medieval architecture, sculpture and fragments. The print offered a way to counteract, as much as possible, the horror of architectural improvements. This tension peaked with Wyatt's proposed election to the Society of Antiquaries of London. Carter

was one of the Fellows who attempted to block Wyatt's admission to the Society in 1797, precisely because of his Gothic works. This move succeeded, however Wyatt was admitted later the same year. It was Wyatt's improvements and use of inauthentic materials — patent cement and cast iron — which angered Carter in particular, and he argued it was the fellows' 'business to elect persons who preserved antiquities and not those who destroyed them'. Indeed, Carter criticised Wyatt's work at the House of Lords for being an 'august pile of brick-bats and stucco'. John Milner similarly argued that Wyatt

has destroyed, and is engaged at this very moment in destroying, the ancient sepulchres and monuments which we are associated, as far as in us lies, to protect — "You are not bound," cry the Wyattists, "to diseuse the conduct of our friend in his profession any more that of any other member." — "We are bound," the anti-Wyattists retort, "to consider the same, when, by admitting him into our number, we shall appear, in the face of our contemporaries and of all posterity, to sanction a system which tends to deprive us of the very subjects of our study, and the sources of our information. If we really do approve of the mode of proceeding which has been adopted at Salisbury cathedral, and which is now going on at Durham, we cease to be Antiquaries, and it will become us to consider under what new determination and regulations we shall meet in future."

Preservationist antiquaries, including Carter, did not simply publish zealous criticism of current architectural practice, but actively recorded and published surveys of buildings to preserve them. Engravings and prose, for the most part, went hand-in-hand to give readers a better understanding of these structures. Carter's role was draughtsman to the Society of Antiquaries of London — unofficially from 1780, semi-officially from 1784 and officially from 1792 — and his efforts can be seen in *The History of Croyland Abbey* (1783), *Sepulchral Monuments* (1786), *Ancient Sculpture and Painting*, (1780–94), *Vetusta Monumenta* (1789 and 1796) and *Ancient Architecture* (1795–1814). These volumes preserve buildings and relics, and they complement Carter's pro-Gothic and preservationist letters contained in both *The Builder's Magazine* (1774–8), and *The Gentleman's Magazine* (1797–1817).

These illustrations were not like de Louthebourg's atmospheric depiction of medieval architecture, but instead were exclusively documentary. Topographical works like Carter's were highly regarded outside the circle of the Society of Antiquaries. Horace Walpole and his 'Strawberry Committee', for example, used William Dugdale's *The History of St Paul's Cathedral in London from its Foundation* (1716 edition) and other prints to create the 'little Gothic castle' at Strawberry Hill in the mid-eighteenth century. Although Walpole and his friends examined extant medieval edifices in person whilst on tour, topographical works were used because 'the general disuse of Gothic

architecture, and the decay and alterations so frequently made in churches, give prints a chance of being the sole preservatives of that style' — the same reasons that plagued later antiquaries, including Carter.

The importance of recording medieval buildings to preserve them can, therefore, be seen throughout the eighteenth century.