



The Castle Of Otranto

Horace Walpole

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The Castle of Otranto is a 1764 novel by Horace Walpole. It is generally regarded as the first gothic novel, initiating a literary genre which would become extremely popular in the later 18th century and early 19th century, with authors such as Charles Maturin, Ann Radcliffe, Bram Stoker, Edgar Allan Poe and Daphne du Maurier. The Castle of Otranto tells the story of Manfred, lord of the castle, and his family. The book begins on the wedding-day of his sickly son Conrad and princess Isabella. Shortly before the wedding, however, Conrad is crushed to death by a gigantic helmet that falls on him from above. This inexplicable event is particularly ominous in light of an ancient prophecy "That the castle and lordship of Otranto should pass from the present family, whenever the real owner should be grown too large to inhabit it". Walpole then, by attempting to blend these two genres, creates something new – something truly "novel". He creates fantastic situations (helmets falling from the sky, walking portraits, etc.) and places supposedly real people into these situations and allows them to act in a "real" manner.

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