# Building a Secular Sepulchre: Horace Walpole and the Gothic Revival at Strawberry Hill

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Horace Walpole, author, collector, antiquarian, and member of Parliament, is frequently counted among the fathers of the Gothic Revival in England thanks to both his novel, *The Castle of Otranto*, and the construction of his neo-Gothic castle in Twickenham, Strawberry Hill, a project that occupied him from 1747 until the end of his life fifty years later (Figures 1-2).[1] While his design process is well documented,[2] his reasons for selecting the Gothic style—a style initially condemned by some of his contemporaries as barbaric—have remained unclear. Scholars have maintained that Walpole never explicitly stated why he decided to build a castle, instead attributing it either to the need for a fictive ancestral manor or to Walpole flightily adopting a new fashion.[3]

Yet in a letter of September 28, 1749, he wrote to his old school friend George Montagu, "Did I tell you that I have found a text in Deuteronomy to authorize my future battlements? '*When thou makest 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*.'"[4] While indeed providing a Biblical context for the renovations, the second half of this enigmatic passage has never been discussed. The first half addresses architectural detail, but the second half, playing on the term "house," is concerned instead with protecting one's lineage from judgment, an interpretation confirmed by multiple eighteenth-century biblical commentaries.[5] In his characteristically oblique fashion, by quoting this passage, Walpole expressed his lifelong loyalty to his famous father, Sir Robert Walpole, who had fallen from the figurative battlements: in a flurry of controversy, he had been forced to resign his position as Prime Minister. The "new house" was a way to protect the fallen member by enshrining his memory. The letter to Montagu—which also includes direct discussions of tomb architecture as model—provides an explicit statement of not only why Walpole was constructing a castle, but also why it was specifically a Gothic one.[6] Through an analysis of his written works and the precedent set by Gothic garden pavilions, Strawberry Hill can be read as a conflation of the sacred language associated with tomb architecture and the secular language of the garden, creating a secular sepulcher that commemorated his family's place in English history.

Any interpretation of his patronage and architectural projects hinges on an assessment of character: how seriously should Horace Walpole be taken? Scholarship has suffered from the scathing opinions of Macaulay, who portrayed Wal-

[1] Strawberry Hill has recently become a focus of scholarly attention due in part to an ongoing restoration. This has resulted in two major publications: Michael Snodin, ed., *Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill* (New Haven, CT: Lewis Walpole Library and Yale Center for British Art, 2009); and Anna Chalcraft and Judith Visconti, *Strawberry Hill: Horace Walpole's Gothic Castle* (London: Frances Lincoln, 2007).

[2] The seminal source for the progress of renovations at Strawberry Hill is W.S. Lewis, "The Genesis of Strawberry Hill," *Metropolitan Museum Studies* 5, no. 1 (1934): 57-92. See also Michael McCarthy, *The Origins of the Gothic Revival* (New Haven, CT: Published for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art by Yale University Press, 1987), which sheds important light on Walpole as a serious architectural influence in the eighteenth century instead of dismissing the project as one dictated by whimsy. Biographical sources for Walpole are extensive, but among the most helpful have been Martin Kallich, *Horace Walpole* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1971); and Morris Brownell, *The Prime Minister of Taste: A Portrait of Horace Walpole.* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001).

[3] Snodin, *Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill,* passim. In the most recent volume on Strawberry Hill, Snodin and his collaborators present a strong case for the interpretation of the project as a whole as a fictive ancestral manor and take Walpole seriously as a collector and patron. For a longer discussion of the need for an ancestral manor, see also S. Lang, "The Principles of the Gothic Revival in England," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 25, no. 4 (1966): 251; and Lewis "Genesis of Strawberry Hill," 57.

[4] W.S. Lewis, ed., *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1960-1983), 9:102-103.

[5] Samuel D.D. Smith, *The Family Companion or, Annotations upon the Holy Bible: Together with the Lives, ... of Our Blessed Saviour and His Twelve Apostles*. ... (London, 1739), 239. This eighteenth-century gloss on the biblical passage explains the verse thus: "When a man built a *new House,* he was to surround it with a Battlement on the Roof, that there might be no Danger of any one's falling from thence, and staining the House with his *Blood*…Therefore the *Fence* or *Breast-Work* was to be set up, to prevent any Man's falling over, and to hinder any dreadful Mishap in the House, whereby the Owner, through Carelessness, might bring Judgment upon himself and House." Within the context of Walpole's family, this sense of preservation and avoiding judgment become particularly potent. The same text is found in a 1745 commentary by John Marchant as well, suggesting that it reflects a common interpretation.

[6] Earlier in the letter, Horace says, "I have just seen a collection of tombs like those you describe…All these are in a chapel of the church at Cheyney's, the seat of the first earls….I propose making a push and begging them of the Duke of Bedford; they would be excellent for Strawberry Castle." Later in the letter, he continues: "Now I have dipped you so deep in heraldry and genealogies, I shall beg you to step into the church of Stoke…I want an account of the tomb of the first

pole as an irrelevant and superficial dilettante.[7] More recent scholarship has discarded this outdated view and drawn attention to his keen eye and sharp mind. Horace was highly educated, well traveled, and well read, as evidenced by his extensive library inventory.[8] Like his father, he was a loyal member of the Whig party, which glorified personal liberty and constitutional government while curtailing the power of the Crown.[9] While he himself never sought the spotlight, he gave copious advice in private and published political pamphlets both anonymously and under his own name.

Horace's political life was shaped, in a large part, by his relationship to his controversial father, Sir Robert Walpole, to whom he felt perpetually indebted. His deep sense of family pride is visible in his own house through the prominent display of the family arms as well as in his own published works: his first project had been the *Aedes Walpolianae*, an inventory of the paintings owned by his father. In it, he not only established an image of his father as an elite connoisseur and gentleman, but also describes Sir Robert as an unrewarded Moses, "the 'slighted Patriot' who preserved Israel."[10] The preservation of his father's public image was echoed in his own political life: his only remarkable public act in Parliament was a defense of Sir Robert during the investigation prior to his resignation.[11] This was not merely the pride of a young man; in 1779, when Walpole was more than sixty and his father had been dead for more than thirty years, he still wrote of his idolatry of his father's memory.[12] Even as late as 1784, he identified himself in print as "Youngest Son of Sir Robert Walpole Earl of Orford" (Figure 3).[13]

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, English architectural tastes were dominated by classicizing examples drawing on the works of Andrea Palladio, such as the villa of Lord Burlington at Chiswick or even the Walpole residence at Houghton. Yet within a century, the architectural language of the Gothic style had become so nationalized that the new Houses of Parliament were built in it. It acquired significance as an expression of not only nationalistic sentiments, but more specifically, the political ideals of the Whig party. This connection was founded on the belief that the ancient Britons derived from Germanic, "Gothic" peoples, who were believed to be a fiercely independent people who practiced a model of mixed government comparable to the ideal balance between Parliament and Crown.[14] Political uprisings like the Jacobite rebellion in 1745 were terrifying to Walpole and other Whigs precisely because the insurgent Stuarts were seen as popish and catholic—foreign influences that would violate the ancient and honorable "Gothic" constitution.

In 1750, despite the beginnings of this growing rhetoric of national sentiment and ancient venerability, the Gothic was used primarily in two contexts: for tombs or other sacred architecture and for garden follies.[15] One of the first such follies, called Merlin's Cave, was built in 1733 by William Kent for Queen Caroline (Figure 4). It used a combination of Gothic architectural elements and historical wax tableaux of figures like Queen Elizabeth to tie the foreign, Hanoverian royal line to the local Authurian past.[16] Associations with the Arthurian legend indicate a further nod to the Gothic: for the eighteenth-century viewer, Gothic was not a specific term, but rather could refer to anything old or medieval. However, the pavilion—and the Gothic—quickly became a site subjected to the mockery of those who opposed the monarchy and the powerful Prime Minister. While Merlin had previously been seen as a mentor to King Arthur, by the eighteenth century, he had also taken on a more sinister

Earl of Huntingdon, an ancestor of mine who lies there." Sandwiching a justification of his castle between a discussion of tombs as models and a discussion of his own ancestry further supports my interpretation of this passage. Smith, *Yale Correspondence*, 9:102-103.

7 T.B. Macaulay, "Horace Walpole (October, 1833)," in *Miscellaneous Works of Lord Macaulay*, ed. Lady Trevelyan (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1880), 176-216.

8 Allen T. Hazen, *A Catalog of Horace Walpole's Library* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1969); W.S. Lewis, *Horace Walpole's Library* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958).

9 For discussions of Horace's political stances, see Archibald S. Foord, "'The Only Unadulterated Whig,'" in *Horace Walpole: Writer, Politician and Connoisseur*, ed. Warren Hunting Smith (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1967), 25-44.

10 Cited in Kallich, *Horace Walpole*, 68; Horace Walpole, *Aedes Walpolianae or, a Description of the Collection of Pictures at Houghton-Hall in Norfolk: The Seat of the Right Honorable Sir Robert Walpole, Earl of Orford* (London, 1747). The *Aedes* was reprinted several times through the 1740s and 1750s, corresponding with the conception and initial progress on Strawberry Hill.

11 R. W. Ketton-Cremer, *Horace Walpole: A Biography* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1964), 67.

12 Kallich, *Horace Walpole,* 20. Kallich notes that Walpole observed in 1745 that "all [his] interest and significance are buried in [his] father's grave."

13 Horace Walpole, *A Description of the Villa of Mr. Horace Walpole, Youngest Son of Sir Robert Walpole Earl of Orford, at Strawberry Hill near Twickenham, Middlesex, with an Inventory of the Furniture, Pictures, Curiosities, &c.* (Strawberry-Hill, UK: Thomas Kirgate, 1784), title page.

14 J. M. Frew, "Gothic is English: John Carter and the Revival of Gothic as England's National Style," *Art Bulletin* 64, no. 2 (June 1982): 317. Further discussions of the national rhetoric of the Gothic can be found in Samuel Kliger, "The 'Goths' in England: An Introduction to the Gothic Vogue in Eighteenth Century Aesthetic Discussion," *Modern Philology* 43, no. 2 (November 1945): 107-117; and Simon Bradley, "The Englishness of Gothic: Theories and Interpretations from William Gilpin to J.H. Parker," *Architectural History* 45 (2002): 325-346. See also Christine Gerrard, *The Patriot Opposition to Walpole: Politics, Poetry, and National Myth, 1725-1742* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994).

15 David Stewart, "Political Ruins: Gothic Sham Ruins and the '45," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 55, no. 4 (December 1996): 400-411.

16 Judith Colton, "Merlin's Cave and Queen Caroline: Garden Art as Political Propaganda," *Eighteenth Century Studies* 10, no. 1 (1976): 10.

aspect. In popular literature, Merlin was described as having been "begotten by a Daemon, called Incubus, upon the body of an English Lady…So that the public are puzzled and rightly cannot understand if he was a Man or a Devil, but by this last Account, he seems to have had the spice of both."[17] Tellingly, satires of Robert Walpole, printed in publications such as *The Gentleman's Magazine* or *The Craftsman,* present him as Merlin—a prophet-magician who betrayed the Crown and led the nation into misery.

Garden follies became a powerful site for such political commentary. In the gardens at Stowe, a popular destination during the eighteenth century, was The Temple of Liberty, built at the crest of a hill by James Gibbs (Figure 5).[18] Designed in 1741, it embodies a message glorifying individualism and constitutional monarchy. Engraved over the door was the phrase "I thank God that I am not a Roman," declaring the supremacy of the native Gothic style over the foreign classical style in both text and image.[19] The nationalizing rhetoric was not lost on contemporaries; William Gilpin, a writer of commentaries on garden architecture, compared the Gothic elements to a "generous patriot in his retirement."[20] Walpole himself loved the temple. He wrote in a letter to his friend John Chute, "I adore the Gothic building, which by some unusual inspiration Gibbs has made pure and beautiful and venerable."[21] The windows which Walpole went on to admire so much later in the letter were adorned with heraldry, providing a precedent for later renovations to his own house. Inside the temple were a series of sculptures of pagan gods, but it had also been the original home of eight of the sixteen busts which were later moved to the Temple of British Worthies, an arcade of classicizing niches glorifying notable figures drawn both from England's past and from current affairs.[22] Sir Robert's absence from the Temple of British Worthies is both conspicuous and unsurprising.

The gardens at Stowe were owned by Lord Cobham, a gentleman whose career had been ruined after he clashed with Sir Robert Walpole over a wildly unpopular 1733 excise bill. As a result, Cobham was dismissed from his regiment and became part of a strong anti-Walpole clique bent on discrediting the powerful Prime Minister. Cobham chose to pursue this personal and political vendetta through his emblematic gardens at Stowe which embodied, as George Clarke calls it, "a political manifesto, traditional ideals of government being contrasted with the decadence of the Walpole administration."[23] The most potent condemnation was the Temple of Modern Virtue, no longer extant. A sham Gothic ruin, it showed the corruption and decay of the current day. This is contrasted with the adjacent Temple of Ancient Virtue where pristine classicism glorified those elements that Cobham felt the current administration lacked. In case the message of the two temples had been lost, next to the modern temple stood a decapitated statue—one that has always been understood to represent none other than Robert Walpole (Figure 6).[24] Gilpin describes the statue in his 1748 *Dialogue upon the Gardens at Stow* [*sic*]: "I can see nothing here to let me into its design, except this old gentleman; neither can I find anything extraordinary in him, except that he has met with a Fate that he is entirely deserving of, which is more than falls to the share of every worthless fellow."[25] Notably, Walpole comments in a letter to Chute about Stowe: "you may imagine I have some private reflections entertaining enough, not very communicable to the company….But I have no patience at building and planting a satire! Such is the temple of modern virtue in ruins!"[26]

Horace Walpole had a long-standing interest in gardening and knew Stowe well. Not only did he tour the homes and gardens of notable Englishmen and collect pamphlets on them, but he also wrote a text entitled *On the Modern Tastes in Gardening*, first published in 1771, but probably written as early as the 1750s,[27] that argues that modern garden design

[17] Caleb D' Anvers, "Merlin's Prophecy, with an Interpretation," in *Gentleman's Magazine*, 5 September 1735, 532-535. For futher discussion of the political associations, see Colton, "Merlin's Cave."

[18] *Stowe: A Description of the Magnificent House and Gardens of the Right Honourable Richard, Earl Temple, Viscount and Baron Cobham; Embellished with a General Plan of the Gardens, and Two Perspective Views of the South and North Fronts of the House* (London, 1762), 32. The description of the Gothic temple here indicates that there were seven Saxon deities sculpted by Rysbrack.

[19] George Bickham, *Stow: The Gardens of the Right Honourable the Lord Viscount Cobham* (Buckingham: B. Seeley, 1750), 22-23.

[20] William Gilpin, *A Dialogue upon the Gardens of the Right Honourable the Lord Viscount Cobham at Stow in Buckinghamshire* (London, 1748), 48.

[21] Walpole to John Chute, 4 August 1753, in Lewis, *Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, 35:77.

[22] John Dixon Hunt, "Emblem and Expressionism in the Eighteenth Century Landscape Garden," *Eighteenth Century Studies* 4, no. 3 (Spring 1971): 299: "For its construction in about 1735 Kent removed eight busts from a Gibbs building elsewhere in the garden and fitted them into this curiously naïve structure, designed to hold a further eight busts, which were added later. The message of these ranged figures is anti-Stuart, anti-Catholic, pro-British." There is a long medieval tradition of "worthies" in both English and French sources. The British Worthies included at Stowe were Alexander Pope, Thomas Gresham, Inigo Jones, John Milton, William Shakespeare, John Locke, Isaac Newton, Francis Bacon, King Alfred, Prince Edward, Queen Elizabeth I, King William III, Sir Walter Raleigh, Sir Francis Drake, John Hampden, and John Barnard.

[23] George Clarke, "Grecian Taste and Gothic Virtue: Lord Cobham's Gardening Programme and Its Iconography," *Apollo* 97 (June 1973): 568. See also Andrew Eburne, "Charles Bridgeman and the Gardens of the Robinocracy," *Garden History* 31, no. 2 (Winter 2003): 193-208.

[24] Stewart, "Political Ruins," 400.

[25] Gilpin, *Dialogue*, 21.

[26] Walpole to John Chute, 4 August 1753, in Lewis, *Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, 35:76. Walpole comments on multiple occasions about his visits to Stowe and has nothing positive to say: "Twice a day, we made a pilgrimage to almost every heathen temple in that province

was a direct result of a society flourishing under good (Gothic and English) government. Elsewhere, he wrote "at least it will show what a paradise was England while she retained her constitution—for perhaps it is no paradox to say that the reason why Taste in gardening was never discovered before the beginning of the present century is, that it was the result of all the happy combinations of an empire of freemen, an empire formed by trade, nor by a military and conquering spirit, maintained by the valour of an independent property, enjoying long tranquility after virtuous struggles and employing its opulence and good sense on the refinements of rational pleasure."[28] It is clear that gardens became a manifestation of political ideals for both Walpole and his contemporaries. In his view, however, using the garden as political satire was an abuse of the medium.

Despite his references to Strawberry Hill as his toy castle or a confection, Horace Walpole felt that the Gothic style had serious implications.[29] The Goths were, after all, the noble race who inspired the constitution—and, to quote Horace himself, "the Goths never built summerhouses or temples in a garden."[30] He once criticized a garden pavilion at Painshill for being merely an "unmeaning edifice,"[31] and wrote in a letter to Horace Mann that only architecture could be Gothic, not gardens.[32] The seriousness of the style is reiterated in his comments in the *Anecdotes of Painting*, where he insists that with the Gothic style, the viewer is aware not of the architect, but of the greater driving ideology behind the building.[33] This suggests that his architectural decisions at Strawberry Hill must be taken seriously, ruling out the possibility that he adopted the Gothic on a stylish whim. Strawberry Hill's renovation as a Gothic castle should be viewed as his way of reclaiming the Gothic style from the follies of the garden where it had been inappropriately used, as well as a way to re-enshrine his father's memory in a new Temple of British Worthies, dedicated to the national architectural style as well as English constitutional liberty as embodied by the Walpole family.

At every turn, the plans for the renovation of the house were dictated by Walpole himself, though a team of like-minded friends and antiquarians produced the actual designs. He would direct his "Committee of Taste" to specific textual and archaeological sources.[34] In his published *Description* of the house, he identified eleven different tombs as source material.[35] The tombs were located in places such as Westminster and Canterbury, famous sites of cultural memory for the nation and the Church of England. The use of tombs as sources has previously been written off as part of a romantic interest in what Walpole himself termed Gothic "gloomth," or at best, a way to provide what one scholar termed "reliable gothic ancestors for his architectural whimsicalities."[36] However, it can also be interpreted as part of a coherent plan of cultural appropriation: Walpole wove history and memory of the English past into his new secular cathedral. By combining the sacred language of historic tombs with the secular language of a domestic space, Walpole made his house a new cultural monument—one which he intended the public to visit, as they did the gardens at Stowe. His intent to create a public space is made evident through his newspaper advertisement for tickets to tour the house.

In addition to drawing on tombs in the design of the house, he used historical models such as the Queen's dressing room at Windsor, re-appropriated for use on the ceiling of the Holbein Chamber (Figure 7).[37] He filled his house with historical artifacts and curiosities, set side-by-side with family relics.[38] He utilized heraldry throughout his house, for example in the stained glass windows and on the ceiling of

that they call a garden…thank heaven that I am emerged from that Elysium and once more in a Christian country!" (Walpole to Conway 12 July 1770, in Lewis, *Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, 39:127). Also to Conway, 6 October 1785: "Three parts of the edifices in the garden are bad, they enrich that insipid country" (in Lewis, *Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, 39:436). In writing to Montagu, he laments: "Every acre [of Stowe] brings to one's mind some instance of parts or pedantry, of the taste of want of taste, of the ambition, or love of fame, or greatness…" (Walpole to Montagu, 7 July 1770, in Lewis, *Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, 10:310-315.)

27 Isabela W. U. Chase, *Horace Walpole: Gardenist; An Edition of Walpole's "The History of the Modern Taste in Gardening"* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press for University of Cincinnati, 1943), xix.

28 Samuel Kliger, "Whig Aesthetics: A Phase of Eighteenth Century Taste," *English Literary History* 16, no. 2 (June 1949): 141.

29 In a letter to Conway of 8 June 1747, Walpole says that the house (before his renovations) "is a little plaything –house that I got out of Mrs. Chenevix's shop, and is the prettiest bauble you ever saw. It is set in enameled meadows with filigree hedges" (quoted in Lewis, "Genesis of Strawberry Hill"). While this has often been interpreted as whimsicality about the house, it more likely jokingly alludes to the previous owner, Mrs. Chenevix, who was a fashionable toy seller in Charing Cross. This interpretation is also put forth by Peter Guillery and Michael Snodin in "Strawberry Hill: Building and Site," *Architectural History* 38 (1995): 102-128.

30 Mavis Batey, "Horace Walpole as Modern Garden Historian," *Garden History* 19, no. 1 (1991): 1-11, refer to page 2.

31 Ibid.

32 Brian Fothergill, *The Strawberry Hill Set: Horace Walpole and His Circle* (London: Faber and Faber, 1983), 45.

33 Frew, "Gothic is English," 315.

34 McCarthy, *Origins of the Gothic Revival,* Chapter 2.

35 Walpole, *Description of the Villa*. The tombs used as models include: from Worcester: Prince Arthur; from Westminster: Thomas Ruthall, Bishop of Durham, John Eltham, Earl of Cornwall, Queen Eleanor, W. Dudley, Bishop of Durham; from Canterbury: Archbishop Warham, Thomas Duke of Clarence, Archbishop Bourchier; and other: Roger Niger, Bishop of London and Edmund Audley, Bishop of Salisbury.

36 Fothergill, *Strawberry Hill Set*, 63.

37 Lewis, "Genesis of Strawberry Hill," 75.

38 His inventory includes objects such as a tile from William the Conqueror's kitchen, a clock given to Anne Boleyn by Henry VIII, and

the library, where shields of both English Worthies and his own family were placed. He included not only the current Walpole arms, but also those of families loosely connected by marriage, in order to establish the nobility and antiquity, sometimes falsely, of the Walpole line.[39]

Strawberry Hill cannot be divorced from the textual materials produced by Walpole to mediate the experience of the visitor, and his political agenda can be seen throughout. As founder and owner of the Strawberry Hill Press, and himself a prolific writer, Walpole understood the power of the printed word and the ways in which it could mediate experience. In the middle of the century, there had been a significant shift in garden design that relocated meaning from the garden itself to texts. John Dixon Hunt sees the development of the garden in the eighteenth century as a shift from "emblematic" to "expressive." As he argues, this was a distinction already made at the time by writers such as Thomas Whately (1770) and Joseph Warton (1744).[40] In order for the space of the garden to be understood, it had to be "read." Stephen Bending carries this distinction further into the second half of the century, examining the shift from emblematic to expressive garden: "the landscape does not in fact lose its ability to be read as a coherent program; however rather than being found in the overt emblematic structuring of earlier gardens, the act of interpretation has been wrested from the owner of the gardens and relocated with the visitor, but a visitor now trained by literature in the 'correct' art of reading."[41] Meaning was no longer located implicitly in the garden, but in the viewer, who, before visiting, had already been conditioned and prepared by reading material such as William Mason's epic poem, *The English Garden*, which stresses the "political implications of altering landscape."[42] William Gilpin's 1748 text on Stowe, which takes the form of a conversation between two visitors, is another such text, establishing clear interpretations for the tableaux in the garden.

McCarthy has noted that Walpole's letters to Horace Mann indicate that the use of the Gothic in gardens was directly related to his building plans, mapping ideas already common in a garden directly onto the house.[43] If the garden became a site mediated by texts, so, too, could the house. In addition to his own writings on gardens, Walpole collected precisely the kinds of didactic texts which scholars of the garden identify as those used to structure the viewing experience. It is through this lens that the 1774 publication of a description of his house must be viewed, a text which is half inventory and half description. Like gardens, Walpole's house must be viewed as a semi-public space where political ideologies of cultural memory and national pride were made manifest for the public, both through the architecture itself and through mediating texts. The *Description* begins with historical background, including previous owners of the land and individuals who had slept there. From the first page, Walpole makes it clear that his castle has a place in the history of the country: this location, if not this actual building, had housed bishops and dukes. The text goes on to describe a detailed path through the house, drawing attention to particularly significant sites of display. In every room, the attention of the visitor is directed to specific elements of both the architecture and the art collection with an emphasis on their historic origins. Above all, family ancestry and identity were stressed, and national heroes were enshrined. Morris Brownell draws attention to the fact that the majority of the paintings in Walpole's collection were portraits—and of those portraits, most of them were of Englishmen. Walpole himself wrote to Horace Mann that "I am indefatigable in collecting English portraits."[44] This obsession is particularly visible in the Gallery and Star Chambers, where Walpole displayed his portrait collection and miniatures, respectively (Figures 8-9). Walpole created in Strawberry Hill a showcase for portraits of those he had deemed British Worthies and communicated the identity and importance of these figures, relatives by blood and by national kinship, through the textual description provided to visitors. These texts suggest that the political nature of Strawberry Hill was not merely a passing fancy which prompted the initial design, but rather represented a unified lifelong ideology which was continually in the minds of its designer.

Through his correspondence and published works, it is possible to see Strawberry Hill as Walpole meant it to be seen. Witty and intentionally esoteric in his allusions, Walpole constructed a serious monument in his "toy house," dedicated to the Gothic history of constitutional liberty and the role played by his father in preserving what he regarded as a

Edward VI's crown (see *Description of the Villa*). Horace was crushed to have just missed out on purchasing Oliver Cromwell's nightcap at auction.

39 The Walpole arms are "Or, on a fess between two chevrons sable three crosses crosslet Or." Horace's personal arms have an added gold star at the "honour point" which indicates his position as a third son. The connection is also made that including the "Saracen" head which appears at the top is indicative of the family's (possibly fictive?) involvement in the Crusades. Chalcraft and Visconti, *Strawberry Hill,* 70. On the use of arms see, Lewis, "Genesis of Strawberry Hill," 70. Chief among these spurious relations were the Shorter and Robsart families. Walpole had dredged his relationship to the Robsarts out of the mists of history. To claim relation to "Sir John Robsart, knight banneret, and knight of the most noble order of the garter, famous for his surprising valour in several actions in France in the reigns of Henry IV, V and VI," was to establish the nobility and antiquity of the Walpole line and enhance the motivating theme of the building.

40 Hunt, "Emblem and Expressionism," 294.

41 Stephen Bending, "Re-Reading the Eighteenth-Century English Garden," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 55, no. 3 (Summer 1992): 380.

42 Ibid., 393.

43 McCarthy, *Origins of the Gothic Revival,* 63.

44 Brownell, *Prime Minister of Taste,* 97, quoting a letter to Horace Mann. While Brownell's work is critical in salvaging Walpole's reputation,

sacred form of government. By building a space reminiscent of a cathedral and that draws on tomb monuments as sites of cultural memory, he created a new secular space of worship, filling it not with images of saints and bishops but Prime Ministers and Kings, all of them British Worthies. Rather than an eccentric collector of baubles, Walpole's written texts and art collections allow us to see him as a dedicated son and patriot, enshrining both personal and national loyalties in a secular sepulcher built in what he perceived as the appropriate architectural style: the Gothic.

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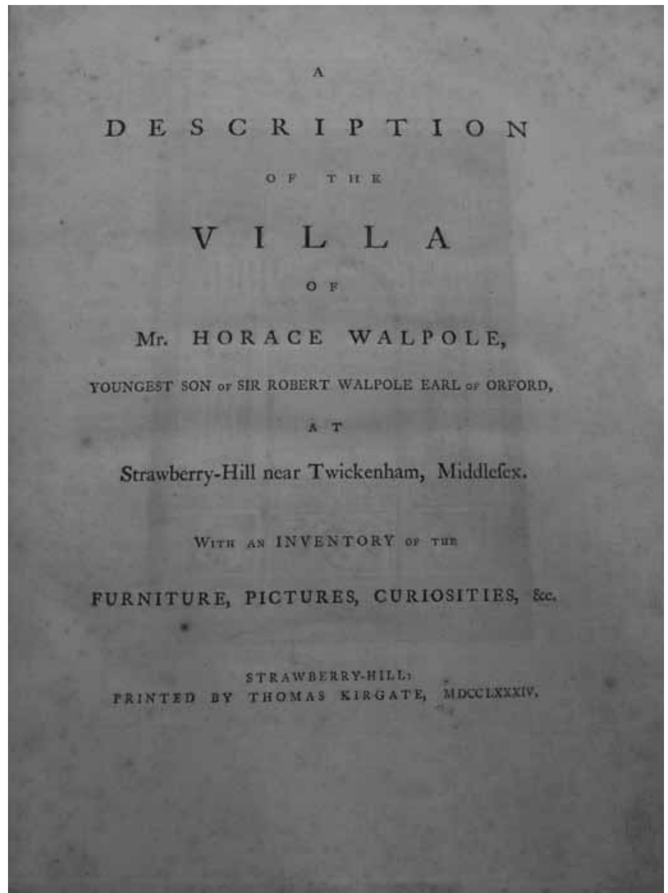
he could have carried further his point about collecting portraits and Walpole's political affiliations. For Brownell, the collecting of English portraits "had enormous value to Walpole in furnishing a Gothic house with stage scenery," but he does not fully pursue the political and ancestral implications of the collection.

Figure 1. Horace Walpole, Strawberry Hill from the South, Twickenham, England, 1747-1797; restored 2010. Photo credit: Robert Neuman.

Figure 2. The Battlements of Strawberry Hill, Twickenham, England. Photo credit: Amanda Weimer.

[*below*] Figure 3. Frontispiece and title page of *A Description of the Villa of Mr. Horace Walpole: Youngest Son of Sir Robert Walpole, Earl of Orford, at Strawberry-Hill near Twickenham, Middlesex; with an Inventory of the Furniture, Pictures, Curiosities, & c. Strawberry-Hill*, printed by T. Kirgate, 1781. Courtesy of Special Collections, Hillman Library, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.



A

DESCRIPTION

OF THE

VILLA

OF

Mr. HORACE WALPOLE,

YOUNGEST SON OF SIR ROBERT WALPOLE EARL OF ORFORD,

AT

Strawberry-Hill near Twickenham, Middlesex.

WITH AN INVENTORY OF THE

FURNITURE, PICTURES, CURIOSITIES, &c.

STRAWBERRY-HILL:
PRINTED BY THOMAS KIRGATE, MDCCLXXXIV.

[*above*] Figure 4. "The Section of Merlin's Cave in the Royal Gardens at Richmond" from *Some Designs of Mr. Inigo Jones and Mr. Wm Kent* (London: J. Vardy, 1744), plate 32. Courtesy of the Rare Books and Special Collections Division of the Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

Figure 5. B. Seeley, "The Gothic Temple," Plate V from *Stow: The Gardens of the Right Honourable the Lord Viscount Cobham* (Buckingham: B. Seeley, 1750). Courtesy of Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation, Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Figure 6. B. Seeley, "The Temple of Modern Virtue," and "The Temple of Antient Virtue," Plate IX from *Stow: The Gardens of the Right Honourable the Lord Viscount Cobham* (Buckingham: B. Seeley, 1750). Courtesy of Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation, Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

[*above*] Figure 7. Mantelpiece of the Holbein Room, November 2010. Photo credit: Saskia Beranek.

[*top right*] Figure 8. T. Morris, "The Gallery", from *A Description of the Villa of Mr. Horace Walpole: Youngest Son of Sir Robert Walpole, Earl of Orford, at Strawberry-Hill near Twickenham, Middlesex; with an Inventory of the Furniture, Pictures, Curiosities, etc. Strawberry-Hill*, printed by T. Kirgate, 1781. Courtesy of Special Collections, Hillman Library, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Figure 9. The Gallery at Strawberry Hill after restoration, 2011. Photo credit: Amanda Weimer.