

## Heraldic and Architectural Imagination: John Carter's Visualisation of *The Castle of Otranto*

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### Abstract

*Horace Walpole (1717–97) is well known for two important Gothic projects realised in mid eighteenth-century Britain: his villa, Strawberry Hill, Twickenham (1750–80); and The Castle of Otranto (1764), a Gothic novel. These two manifestations of Walpole's 'Gothic imagination' are frequently linked in critical literature on the Gothic Revival and medievalism more broadly; the relationship between Strawberry Hill, Otranto and manuscript illustrations visualising Otranto's narrative has, on the other hand, received far less attention. This article brings together a number of important and hitherto overlooked sources that help address this imbalance. In particular, it examines two large-scale watercolours by John Carter (1748–1817) that narrate some of Otranto's pivotal scenes, allowing critically overlooked subtleties in their iconographies to emerge. The work establishes how Carter's pre-existing interests — in particular, in Gothic architectural forms and heraldry — are harnessed to govern his representations of Otranto. These paintings, together with Carter's other illustrations, demonstrate Walpole's authorship of Otranto, expressed through codes hidden in plain sight. Unlike the frequently touted link between Strawberry Hill and Otranto in secondary criticism, Carter's illustrations, the argument reveals, does not explicitly make this connection.*

## John Carter and the Visualisation of *The Castle of Otranto*

Horace Walpole's novel, *The Castle of Otranto: A Story*, published on Christmas Eve 1764, is typically presented as the first 'Gothic novel'.<sup>1</sup> It was not until the second edition of *Otranto* (1765), however, that the work acquired the subtitle *A Gothic Story*: only then was it explicitly framed as a piece of 'Gothic' fiction. Walpole initially distanced himself from *Otranto*, instead presenting the narrative as a translation by William Marshall, Gent., from the 'original Italian of Onuphrio Muralto, Canon of the Church of St. Nicolas at Otranto'.<sup>2</sup> The novel's source, the Preface to the first edition tells us, was a work 'printed in Naples, in the black letter, in the year 1529', which was 'found in the library of an ancient catholic family in the north of England'.<sup>3</sup> Although apparently of sixteenth-century provenance, the work is dated by Walpole, in the guise of the translator, to the crusades — the 'darkest ages of Christianity; but the language and conduct have nothing that favours of barbarism'.<sup>4</sup> As if to obscure his authorship even further, Walpole did not have *The Castle of Otranto* produced at his private printing press at Strawberry Hill, a facility that he had set up in 1757.<sup>5</sup> It was, instead, published by Thomas Lowndes in London.

Walpole disclosed his deception, however, and acknowledged his authorship of *Otranto* in the Preface to the second edition published on 11 April 1765:

The favourable manner in which this little piece has been received by the public, calls upon the author to explain the grounds on which he composed it. But before he opens those motives, it is fit that he should ask pardon of his readers for having offered his work to them under the borrowed personage of a translator.<sup>6</sup>

Thereafter the novel has been connected frequently, and understandably, with Walpole's other notable Gothic 'output', his villa, or 'little Gothic castle' of his ancestors, Strawberry

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<sup>1</sup> BL Add. MS 70987, fol. 369. See Groom 2014, ix; Silver 2014, 11; Mack 2009, 8–9; Aldrich 2005, 58–9.

<sup>2</sup> Walpole 1764, title page.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, iii.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> See Clarke 2011.

<sup>6</sup> Walpole 1765b, xiii.

Hill, Twickenham (constructed and furnished 1747/8–80).<sup>7</sup> Indeed, Walpole himself seemed to have prompted this identification when, in the guise of the translator of the first edition of *Otranto* he writes that ‘the scene is undoubtedly laid in some real castle’.<sup>8</sup> Accordingly, Frances Burney (1752–1840), like many other visitors to the house after 1765, once Walpole’s authorship of *Otranto* was disclosed, found that the villa’s ‘unusually shaped apartments’ offered ‘striking recollections [...] of his Gothic Story of the Castle of Otranto’.<sup>9</sup> W.S. Lewis, the great collector of Walpoliana in Farmington, CT, and executive editor of the extensive 48-volume Yale edition of *Horace Walpole’s Correspondence* (1937–83), similarly repeats Walpole’s suggestion that *Otranto* was based upon a tangible structure:

the castle [of Otranto] itself, however, was Strawberry Hill, as Walpole repeatedly points out. In the first Preface to *The Castle of Otranto* [...] he says, “The scene is 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.”<sup>10</sup>

Lewis continues by suggesting that it is possible to identify some of the rooms in *Otranto* as those at Strawberry Hill:

The Gallery at Otranto is the Gallery at Strawberry Hill. 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”. Isabella’s chamber, “the watchet-coloured chamber,” is the Blue Bedchamber. The Armoury is the same in both castles and so is the “principal staircase”.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> The house is dealt with extensively in: Snodin 2009, 15–105; Wainwright 1989, 71–107; McCarthy 1987, 63–91 and Harney.

<sup>8</sup> Walpole 1764, viii.

<sup>9</sup> Barrett 1904, II, 483.

<sup>10</sup> Lewis 1934, 89.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. The analysis continues to p. 90.

Sean R. Silver also connects the building and novel, but suggests also that *Otranto* equally reciprocally influenced Walpole's villa. He writes that '*Otranto* was an experiment in the organization and display of Gothic artefacts that extends, and in some ways anticipates, ongoing work at Strawberry Hill'.<sup>12</sup>

The materiality and prevailing atmosphere of 'gloomth' at Strawberry Hill, together with its dynamic, 'active', architecture that imposes upon those who perceive it a range of transitory and contradictory experiences designed and 'curated' by Walpole and the 'Strawberry Committee', certainly had a hand in *Otranto*'s narrative.<sup>13</sup> The house and novel are, after all, both concerned with the Gothic past. Walpole had been working on Strawberry Hill for sixteen years before *Otranto* took shape and, given their shared interest in, and references to, medieval architecture and culture, it is perfectly reasonable to see the novel and house as symbiotic, though discrete, manifestations of Walpole's broad fascination with the Gothic past.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, their connection is suggested numerous times by Walpole himself. In a letter from 19 June 1774, for instance, he states that 'I am going to hang them [a pair of shields] by the beautiful armour of Francis I and they will certainly make me dream of another Castle of Otranto'.<sup>15</sup> Strawberry Hill's interior, he implies, could spawn another Gothic narrative.

Walpole also anchors *Otranto*'s genesis firmly at Strawberry Hill in a well-known letter to William Cole from 9 March 1765, in which he recalls the moment in early June 1764 that the novel was born:<sup>16</sup>

I HAD time to write but a short note with *The Castle of Otranto*, as your messenger called on me at four o'clock as I was going to dine abroad. 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

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<sup>12</sup> Sean R. Silver, p. 543.

<sup>13</sup> Walpole invented the word gloomth to refer to the feeling and environment of medieval Gothic architecture: 'one has a satisfaction of imprinting the gloomth of abbeys and cathedrals on one's house'. Lewis 1937–83, XX, 372: To Mann, 27 April 1753. For the Strawberry Committee see, Snodin 2009, pp. 80–1. In terms of active architecture, the claustrophobic and dark Trunk Ceiled Passage opens out into large and light Gallery.

<sup>14</sup> See Reeve 2014, 189–91. See also Snodin 2009, 80–1.

<sup>15</sup> Lewis 1937–83, XXXV, 421.

<sup>16</sup> Walpole's letter to Francis Seymour Conway, 1st Earl of Hertford, dated 8 June 1764 places Walpole at Strawberry Hill: it could be around this date that *Otranto* was born from Walpole's dream. HW Corr vol. 38, p. 399.

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.<sup>17</sup>

The staircase mentioned in this letter to Cole is, of course, that at Strawberry Hill: the Classically-styled Arlington Street townhouse could hardly be considered an ancient castle, or evoke such an associationist response. It may seem contradictory, however, to see in Strawberry Hill the ‘foundation’ of an ancient Gothic castle given that Walpole’s house was, after all, a modern, suburban villa. Walpole, nevertheless, considered and frequently referred to it in his correspondence as a castle — and an ancient one at that. Writing to George Montagu on 11 June 1753, for example, Walpole makes mention of the ‘castle I am building of my ancestors’; its newly-built nature notwithstanding.<sup>18</sup> The house’s historical nature and *faux* antiquity is developed further in an undated autograph addition by Walpole to one of his personal copies of *A Description of the Villa of Mr. Horace Walpole* (1774):

The year before the Gallery was built, a Stranger passing asked an old Farmer belonging to Mr Walpole, if Strawberryhill was not an old House! He replied, “yes, but my master designs to build one much older next year”.<sup>19</sup>

Thus, although Strawberry Hill was effectively a new and modern structure, it is not unreasonable and unprecedented for Walpole to consider and refer to it as an ancient castle.

In his *Description* Walpole also emphasises Strawberry Hill’s influence over *Otranto*’s narrative: ‘at least the prospect would recall the good humour of those who might be disposed to condemn the fantastic fabric, and to think it a very proper habitation of, as it was the scene that inspired, the author of the Castle of Otranto’.<sup>20</sup> This is what Nick Groom terms in his Introduction to the most recent edition of *The Castle of Otranto* (2014) as the ‘Strawberry factor’.<sup>21</sup> This ‘Strawberry factor’ was sufficiently powerful for Walpole, on

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., I, 88.

<sup>18</sup> Walpole 1840, III, 1.

<sup>19</sup> LWL, 49 2522, endpapers.

<sup>20</sup> Walpole 1784, iv.

<sup>21</sup> Groom 2014, xxxvi.

occasion, to refer to Strawberry Hill as ‘Otranto’, of which he was the ‘Master’, while Thomas Chatterton (1752–70), the author of the *Rowley Poems* (1777) whom Walpole later maligned, termed Walpole the ‘Baron of Otranto’.<sup>22</sup> A drawing by Lavinia Spencer (née Bingham), Countess Spencer (1762–1831), depicting ‘A young lady reading the Castle of Otranto to her companion; a gracefull and expressive drawing, done for a present to Mr. W.’ hung in the villa’s Red Bedchamber in 1784.<sup>23</sup> This scene not only reinforces the perceived relationship between Strawberry Hill and *Otranto* in the Georgian period, but also the predominantly female readership of Gothic novels that is equally recorded by James Gillray’s engraving, *Tales of Wonder* from 1802.<sup>24</sup>

The link between Strawberry Hill and *Otranto*, based upon evidence from Walpole and his contemporaries, appears irrefutable. This article does not attempt to challenge the connection and direction(s) of influence between house and novel. Instead, it explores a small collection of remarkable and apparently unsolicited watercolours that depict scenes from *Otranto*. These paintings are mostly by John Carter, the well-known Georgian architectural draftsman and vocal supporter of medieval architecture; close attention to these images yields a nuanced reading of the relationship between Walpole, *Otranto*, medieval architecture, heraldry and Carter.<sup>25</sup> Instead of promoting *Otranto*’s commonly-held source as Strawberry Hill, Carter repeatedly, and occasionally *ad nauseam*, emphasises Walpole’s role as the novel’s creator. He also capitalises upon his and Walpole’s congruent interests in the form and visual language of Gothic architecture and heraldry to create bold artworks articulating the associationist powers of the medieval form. Importantly, and until now overlooked, Carter’s watercolours reveal an understanding of the coded language of heraldry, and he embraces this language to add extra layers of sophisticated meaning to his watercolours of *Otranto*.

Upon publication, *Otranto* lacked illustrations, and the first prints were not included until the sixth (1791) edition that was set and printed by Bodoni in Parma.<sup>26</sup> The six plates

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<sup>22</sup> LWL, 33 30 copy 6 Folio, fol. 97. The printed notice reads: ‘The Master of *Otranto* being in the Durance and not able to receive the Fairy BLANDINA in the Manner he wishes, has nevertheless ordered his Seneschal to deliver up the Keys of the Castle to her Hautesse; and all his Vassals will with pleasure obey her sovereign Commands’. For interpretation, see Reeve 2014, 189. For Chatterton, see Lewis 1937–83, II, 110.

<sup>23</sup> Description, p. 31. See Silver, 2009, p. 556.

<sup>24</sup> BL 745.a.6. See also XYZ

<sup>25</sup> For Carter see: Nurse 2011; Crook 2005; and Frew 1982.

<sup>26</sup> The plates, based upon drawings by Anne Millicent Clarke, depict: Isabell and Manfred (opposite p. 22); Theodore and Isabella (opposite p. 33); Theodore and Matilda (opposite p. 142); Theodore and Isabella

after drawings by Anne Millicent Clarke included in this edition are not particularly sophisticated, and offer only a basic, stage-like, two-dimensional rendering of the scenes' architectural contexts; instead, it was figures and their clothing and equipage that drew her attention (**Fig. 1**). Critical of such illustrations, Walpole wrote on 22 February 1796 to Bertie Greathead (1759–1826), praising four manuscript designs depicting scenes from *Otranto* by his son, Bertie Greathead Jr (c.1781–1804). Walpole recounts that

I have seen many drawings and prints made from my idle — I don't know what to call it, novel or romance — not one of them approached to any one of your son's four — a clear proof of which is, that none one of the rest satisfied the author's ideas — It is as strictly, and upon my honour, true, that your son's conception of some of the passions has improved them, and added more expression than I myself had formed in my own mind; for example, in the figure of the ghost in the chapel, to whose hollow sockets your son has given an air of reproachful anger, and to the whole turn of his person, dignity.<sup>27</sup>

As Walpole here concedes, illustration had the power to supplement and enrich scenes that had only been loosely sketched out in his literary imagination. In comparison with Clarke's illustrations, those by Bertie Greathead Jr are complex, and the architectural contexts are convincingly three dimensional (**Fig. 2**).<sup>28</sup> Significantly, the settings are influenced clearly by eighteenth-century domestic Gothic Revival architecture, though lacking in reference to specific spaces at Walpole's own Strawberry Hill.<sup>29</sup> Consequently, Greathead Jr's drawings are more modest — effectively cartoons for engraving — and relatable in comparison with those created by John Carter, who produced, by far, the largest, most important and ambitious illustrations to *The Castle of Otranto*.<sup>30</sup>

Under Richard Gough (1735–1809), Director of the Society of Antiquaries of London (1771–97), John Carter was employed from 1780 recording medieval architecture

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(opposite p. 146); Frederick, Theodore and Isabella (opposite p. 155); and Jerome and Hippolita (opposite p. 197). All page references relate to Walpole 1791.

<sup>27</sup> Lewis 1937–83, XLII, 430.

<sup>28</sup> They are bound into LWL, 49 3729.

<sup>29</sup> The domesticity of these illustrations will be considered in a larger essay considering *Otranto*'s extra-illustrations, which is currently in preparation by the author.

<sup>30</sup> For the most complete treatment of Carter see Crook 1995. See also Towshend 2014 and Nurse 2011.

and its fragments, and contributed significantly to Gough's *Sepulchral Monuments to Great Britain* (1786–96), which he acknowledged in the Preface to the first volume.<sup>31</sup> Carter had also been introduced to Walpole at this time, and in 1788 he was employed to record Strawberry Hill, including its interiors and a number of objects within Walpole's collection, such as the model of the shrine of St Thomas Becket (**Fig. 3**).<sup>32</sup> Describing his relationship with Walpole in his unpublished *Occurrences in the Life, and Memorandums Relating to the Professional Pursuits of J C F.A.S. Architect.*, Carter records that:<sup>33</sup>

Horace Walpole, late Lord Orford, I must likewise number among my Patrons, and as far back as this year made a drawing for him, which occasionally I continued to do until his deceased. About the year I was introduced by the late R<sup>d</sup>. Bull Esq at Strawberry Hill to make for him a series of views, both external and internal, with [...] the decorations belonging thereto, with [...] curiosities, &c. &c. To accelerate this undertaking, Mr. Walpole afforded me every assistance and accommodation. Thus engaged I became acquainted with his right hand man, his chief help in all his purchasces of every description, and also familiar intercourse between him and Amateurs of the day.<sup>34</sup>

In 1790, Carter produced *The Entry of Frederick into the Castle of Otranto*, a large-scale watercolour (60.2 x 50.3 cm) of a scene taken directly out of Walpole's narrative (**Fig. 4**).<sup>35</sup> There is no evidence to suggest Walpole commissioned it specifically, though it is a natural extension to his delineations of Strawberry Hill: the novel, after all, was Walpole's other significant 'Gothic monument'. Walpole hung the watercolour in the Little Parlour at

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<sup>31</sup> See Nurse 2011, 218.

<sup>32</sup> Carter's finished watercolours are gathered together in LWL, 33 30 copy 11.

<sup>33</sup> Carter's misspelling of FSA on the title page to KCL, Leathes 7/4, vol. I, is representative of his poor grammar and style in general.

<sup>34</sup> KCL, Leathes 7/4, vol. I, fols 20r–20v.

<sup>35</sup> LWL, 790.00.00.138dr+. It is signed John Carter in<sup>t</sup>. del<sup>t</sup>. 1790. And a note on the back of the painting, in Carter's hand, repeats this and the painting's title.



Strawberry Hill, and in Carter's personal copy of the *Description* (1784) bequeathed by Walpole, Carter records that he '(Was paid for it 20 Guineas.)'<sup>36</sup>

This watercolour is unique among the known corpus of *Otranto* illustrations as no other traced work tackles this particular literary scene. Unlike Strawberry Hill's modest scale, and, indeed, that of the real castle of Otranto in Italy (Carter copied a watercolour of the 'real' Castle of Otranto in Italy from a drawing made by Mr Reveley (**Fig. 5**)), the architectural setting of *The Entry of Frederick* is vast.<sup>37</sup> Nine distinct structures ranging in style from Romanesque through to Perpendicular Gothic form three sides of Otranto's quadrangle. These buildings are clearly informed by Walpole's and Carter's shared understanding of, and interest in, the forms and details of medieval architecture. For Carter, this was manifest in the delineation of buildings and their details, whereas Walpole reproduced medieval architecture and ornament for domestic purposes, including modelling chimneypieces upon tomb canopies: the gabled-canopy (now removed) over the effigy of John of Eltham, Earl of Cornwall, in Westminster Abbey was the model for the chimneypiece at Strawberry Hill's Library, and the screen of Prince Arthur's tomb at Worcester Cathedral informed the Staircase's and Hall's wallpaper.<sup>38</sup>

Carter's sophisticated rendition of architecture in *The Entry of Frederick* clearly resonated with Walpole's passionate interest in the Gothic-architectural mode and its ability to draw wonder and inspire imagination:

It is difficult for the noblest Grecian temple to convey half so many impressions to the mind, as a cathedral does to the best Gothic taste — a proof of skill in the architects and of address in the priests who erected them. The latter exhausted their knowledge of the passions in composing edifices whose pomp, mechanism, vaults, tombs, painted windows, gloom and perspectives infused such sensations of romantic devotion; and they were happy in finding artists capable of executing

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<sup>36</sup> For a record of *The Entry of Frederick into the Castle of Otranto*, see Walpole 1784, 95. For Carter's note about payment for *The Entry of Frederick* see LWL, 33 30 copy 20, 95. Carter records that the *Description* was 'Bequeathed to me (J Carter) by the late Earl of Orford (Mr. Horace Walpole) (1815). Ibid., front fly-leaf.

<sup>37</sup> The watercolour is pasted into LWL, 33 30 copy 11 Folio.

<sup>38</sup> See Walpole 1784, which identifies the sources for the architectural ornament at Strawberry Hill when derived from Gothic monuments. See also Lindfield 2012, II, 339–417.

such machinery. One must have taste to be sensible of the beauties of Grecian architecture; one only wants passions to feel Gothic.<sup>39</sup>

Indeed, one of the reasons for Walpole's profound embrace of Gothic architecture and other historic relics was their ability to call to mind associations. As I have shown elsewhere, the medieval was intimately associated with the idea of chivalry, but the associative principles of Gothic architecture covered other historical facets:<sup>40</sup>

I believe this approbation [of Classical architecture] would in some measure flow from the Impossibility of not connecting with Grecian & Roman Architecture, the ideals of the Greeks & Romans, who invented & inhabited that kind of building. If (which but few have) one has any partiality to old Knights, Crusades, the Wars of York & Lancaster &c the prejudice in favour of Goth Grecian buildings, will be balanced.<sup>41</sup>

The power of association, cultivated in the eighteenth century by Walpole and, amongst other, Joseph Addison in his *Spectator* letters (1710–11), meant that architectural styles had meanings.<sup>42</sup> Gothic, as Alexander Gerard sternly phrased it, only satisfied those unfortunate enough not to possess 'enlargement of the mind': though it offered a fantastic repertoire of architectural form and ornament quite separate to everyday Georgian life and taste that resonated with 'old Knights, Crusades, the Wars of York & Lancaster'. Carter embraces the associative power of Gothic, and *The Entry of Frederick*, consequently, is an elaborate response to Walpole's novel: nowhere in the novel is the castle of Otranto referred to as a Gothic fabric (beyond in the first edition's preface where the 'translator' dates the narrative to between 1095 and 1243) and it is never presented (explicitly or implicitly) as a vast complex. These features, instead, arise from the novel's plot and as as Carter's and Walpole's shared regard for Britain's Gothic heritage.

The watercolour's complex architectural setting responds also acknowledges Carter's occupation as an antiquary and architectural draftsman. It, for example, reproduces the clutter and omnipresent architectural surroundings of the frontispieces to his *Specimens of Ancient*

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<sup>39</sup> Walpole 1765a, 114–15

<sup>40</sup> ME ON CHIVALRY IN 18<sup>th</sup>-C Gothic!

<sup>41</sup> Farmington, Lewis Walpole Library, MS 49 2615 Vol. 1, fol. 52. This idea was also propagated by Walpole in his *Anecdotes of Painting*.

<sup>42</sup> See Hearney, esp. pp. 4–5.

*Sculpture and Painting* (1780–94), the first volume of which was dedicated to Walpole (Fig. 6): ‘Your kind Encouragement gives wings to my Ambition to continue their Publication, and under your Auspices, I have been able to bring to a Conclusion the first Volume’.<sup>43</sup> *The Entry of Frederick* whilst a bespoke artwork, is actually consistent with, and based upon appearance of, a Carter’s pre-existing canon *faux*-historical, associational, illustrations that are imaginative, yet shrewdly archaeological and architecturally-complex. The architectural sophistication and complexity of Carter’s *The Entry of Frederick* are thus not unprecedented in his *corpus*, and illustrates the sophisticated and overloaded aesthetic retuned by Carter’s associationist reconstructions of the past. In essence, Carter is using Walpole’s narrative to create more of his extraordinary, highly personal, representations of the past: it is indebted to Walpole, but what Carter achieves is certainly very different to Walpole’s villa and the objects accreted within it.

Carter’s choice to illustrate Frederick’s entry into Otranto, however, offered a unique opportunity, one not taken up by other artists, to define and delineate the most complete and complex display of chivalry and pomp in the whole of Walpole’s novel. The themes presented in the illustration — medieval architecture, chivalry, inheritance and usurpation of title and station — are at the heart of *Otranto*’s plot. Carter chose to realise a scene that Walpole imbued with abundant descriptive detail, although the architecture, as typical throughout *Otranto*, is not defined likewise. The passage in *Otranto*, of which Carter was clearly aware, identifies at least 374 characters in Frederick’s retinue, and it is worth quoting the text in full to contextualise Carter’s vivid rendition of the scene:

The prince, in the mean time, had passed into the court, and ordered the gates of the castle to be flung open for the reception of the stranger knight and his train. In a few minutes the cavalcade arrived. First came two harbingers with wands. Next a herald, followed by two pages and two trumpets. Then an hundred foot-guards. They were attended by as many horse. After them fifty guards. Footmen, clothed in scarlet and black, the colours of the knight. Then a led horse. Two heralds on each side of a gentleman on horseback bearing a banner with the arms of Vicenza and Otranto quarterly — a circumstance that much offended Manfred — but he stifled his resentment. Two more pages. The knight’s confessor telling his beads. Fifty more footmen, clad as before. Two knights habited in complete armour,

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<sup>43</sup> Carter 1780–94, I, i.

their beavers down, comrades to the principal knight. The 'squires of the two knights, carrying their shields and devices. The knight's own 'squire. An hundred gentlemen bearing an enormous sword, and seeming to faint under the weight of it. The knight himself on a chestnut steed, in complete armour, his lance in the rest, his face entirely concealed by his visor, which was surmounted by a large plume of scarlet and black feathers. Fifty foot-guards with drums and trumpets closed the procession, which wheeled off to the right and left to make room for the principal knight.

As soon as he approached the gate, he stopped; and the herald advancing, read again the words of the challenge. 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.<sup>44</sup>

The gigantic sword with its bearers (though far short of Walpole's one hundred), along with the heralds, knights, horses and attendant parts of the train are admirably illustrated by Carter. *En masse*, they convey fully the pomp and circumstance of the scene. And Manfred's affront to the scene — the usurpation of his station and title, Prince of Otranto — is equally captured. In particular, in the prospect behind Manfred's left shoulder we see the arms of Vicenza and Otranto quartered — indicating Frederick's apparently legitimate dominion over Manfred's castle and land (**Fig. 7**). Vicenza's arms, that of a golden Lion of St Mark (for Venice), is a natural choice on Carter's behalf, and Otranto's arms is a subtle modification of those of Naples under the Angevins. This corresponds with *Otranto's* setting and conceivably demonstrates Carter's researches into, and awareness of, the novel's purported age (the time of the crusades) and heraldry more broadly. Subverting this historical accuracy and his attention to detail, the architectural setting is not real: instead he at best loosely paraphrases building types and styles. The Perpendicular structure to the right responds to the western façades of Bath Abbey and Winchester Cathedral, whilst not being either in the fine detail, and the cross to the left is loosely based upon that at Winchester, though, once again, distinctive: none of these architectural models have anything to do with the novel. Additionally, this form of medieval Gothic postdates the supposed age of *Otranto*

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<sup>44</sup> Groom 2014, 60.

by a century, and, therefore is surprisingly anachronistic Carter's research into the scene's heraldry. This anachronism, however, does not contravene *Otranto's* narrative, and instead creates a striking High Gothic context that is consistent with his other elaborate associations scenes discussed here.

Carter also used the heraldry to great effect. He dots the arms of Otranto (Naples) across the painting, including on the entrance tower, the shield, banners and flags in the foreground, and the heralds' tabards and flags in the middle-ground. Carter's gestures, however, were not without error — the quartered arms of Vicenza and Otranto that enraged Manfred so much, depicted behind him and Isabella, shows the flag's reverse side; here, the arms appear as they would on the obverse, meaning that the Lion of St Mark is facing in the wrong direction. There is no firm explanation for this oversight: Carter may have simply made an error, which is unlikely given the effort expended planning and executing the watercolour's minute details, or, perhaps, it may be a subtle indication of Frederick's invalid claim to the title of Otranto, which is an important part of *Otranto's* narrative. Despite the uncertainty surrounding this heraldic component, the scene celebrates the forms, motifs and styles of medieval architecture that the 'heretical part' of Walpole's heart adored.<sup>45</sup> It also weaves in the heraldic details pertinent to *Otranto's* narrative, by which Walpole was fascinated, harnessing it at Strawberry Hill, as he did, to create a visual representation of his pedigree, particularly in the Armoury on the Staircase, and on the Library's ceiling.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, as indicated in the passage quoted above, heraldry certainly guided Frederick's reception by Manfred, the then apparent Prince of Otranto.

Aside for the style of architecture, the deployment of heraldry and the fact that Walpole purchased it and hung it in his Gothic villa, *The Entry of Frederick* has little to do with Strawberry Hill. And yet, two figures in the lower right-hand corner of this watercolour are particularly unusual, and serve to link the scene with the eighteenth century. The person directly behind Manfred and Isabella looks out confrontationally at the viewer, and the right-

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<sup>45</sup> Walpole suggested his appreciation of medieval architecture came from the heretical part of his heart in a letter to John Chute from 4 August 1753: 'in the heretical corner of my heart I adore Gothic buildings, which by some unusual inspiration Gibbs has made pure and beautiful and venerable. The style has a propensity to the Venetian or mosque-Gothic, and the great column near it makes the whole put one in mind the Place of St Mark. The windows are throughout consecrated with painted glass; most of it from the priory of Warwick, a present from that foolish [Mr Wise], who quarrelled with me for asking him if Lord Brook had planted much': Lewis 1937–83, XXXV, 77.

<sup>46</sup> LWL, SH Views W218 no. 1; LWL, SH Views Ed25; Snodin 2016; Snodin 2009, 38–9.

most man looks at a Page. The first is almost certainly a self-portrait of Carter in the tradition of past painters: the face correlates with that depicted in his self-portraiture (one produced with Sylvester Harding, c.1817, now in the collection of the British Museum, and another included in the frontispiece to his *Occurrences*), while his attribute — the beret and roll of paper — supports his identity as architect, draftsman and artist.<sup>47</sup> The second figure is almost certainly Walpole. The face and hair, quite distinct, like Carter's, from the remainder of the watercolour's caricature-like representations, matches Walpole's appearance as recorded by Carter in his *Three sketches of Horace Walpole in 1788* and other portraits.<sup>48</sup> Carter's self-portrait has previously been considered by Wilmarth Sheldon Lewis to be Walpole himself, which, in part, governed the price he was willing to pay to acquire the work from General Sir Henry Jackson in 1962: because of its 'Strawberry Hill provenance plus the HW portrait: and I do not think £500 is excessive'.<sup>49</sup> This letter does not identify Walpole within the crowd, however correspondence between Sir Owen Morshead and Lewis ten days earlier furnishes the essential information, including the portrait's 'discovery'. Morshead recounts that the General 'loathe[s] the whole notion of taking money for the drawing at all — which has acquired all the more value to me through ~~the~~ Mr. Lewis's discovery that the figure is H.W. himself'.<sup>50</sup> Importantly, Morshead found the General 'aglow at having just discovered [within the watercolour] a quite unmistakable Devil (with 2 horns) at the left right-hand margin, apparently glaring towards H.W.'. <sup>51</sup> Lewis later published this identification in his co-authored, 'Portraits of Horace Walpole' from 1968–70.<sup>52</sup> Walpole is almost certainly in the picture, however the figure to the left of the 'Devil', is, as argued here, most likely to be Carter, whose confrontational gaze announces the importance of his architectural genius and skill as a draftsman according to the established traditions in European art. Walpole, instead, is below and to the right of Carter: he is still present in the work, but his importance to the form and appearance of *The Entry of Frederick* is secondary to Carter's architectural vision. Despite being of secondary importance to Carter, Walpole is

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<sup>47</sup> BM, 1886,1012.534; KCL, Leathes 7/4 1.

<sup>48</sup> LWL, 33.3.

<sup>49</sup> LWL, Morshead, Sir Owen and Lady — File 2, Evening 19 May 1762. General Jackson was the grandson of the Reverend Cholmondeley, who purchased the drawing at the Strawberry Hill Sale: day 22, lot 100, for £8 18s 6d.

<sup>50</sup> LWL, Morshead, Sir Owen and Lady — File 2, Evening 9 May 1762.

<sup>51</sup> LWL, Morshead, Sir Owen and Lady — File 2, Evening 9 May 1762.

<sup>52</sup> Adams, C.K. and Lewis, W.S. 'The Portraits of Horace Walpole', *The Walpole Society*, 42, 1970, 1–34.

still, nevertheless, intimately associated with the narrative — as indicated already it is one of the most prominent expressions of medieval spectacle included in *Otranto*. By including Walpole into the fabric of the scene, Carter demonstrates his responsibility for the novel: a literary work that he interprets and visualises. These portraits are, effectively, signatures that would have been instantly recognisable to Walpole, Carter and their circle of antiquarian friends: Carter's is more prominent because he converted Walpole's words to line, colour and shade.

Of course, this identification may appear hopeful and speculative — the hair, for example, is, after all, of a generically eighteenth-century style and form. However, Carter's second illustration of *Otranto* depicting the death of Matilda (**Fig. 8**), and the related frontispiece to *Specimens of Ancient Sculpture* (1780) (**Fig. 6**), suggest otherwise.<sup>53</sup> Walpole's personal coat of arms was differentiated from that of the Earl of Orford, *Or on a Fess between two Chevrons Sable three Crosses Crosslet of the Field*, by the addition of a sable mullet under the upper chevron's apex. He used it as the centrepiece to the heraldic scheme applied to the Library's ceiling at Strawberry Hill, and it was stamped on books' boards in his collection (**Fig. 9**). John Chute, one of the members of Walpole's Strawberry Committee whom he termed 'my Oracle of taste', also applied elements from the differentiated arms onto a proposed façade for the Cottage in the grounds of Strawberry Hill.<sup>54</sup> Carter similarly harnessed Walpole's personal arms, including them, together with the Saracen's head — the Walpole family crest — at the foot of tomb-chest in the frontispiece to the first volume of *Specimens of Ancient Sculpture* (1780) (**Fig. 10**). Carter's initial watercolour proposal for the frontispiece did not include Walpole's arms, but instead another, though visually related, coat mostly hidden behind figures.<sup>55</sup> Carter removed the figures obscuring the arms in the engraving, and by changing the armorial to Walpole's personal, differentiated, form, he visually reiterated the volume's dedication to Walpole, albeit simultaneously by suggesting that Walpole lived and died in medieval times.<sup>56</sup> Carter's

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<sup>53</sup> RIBA, SB52/5.

<sup>54</sup> Chute's design for the Cottage entranceway is in LWL, 49 3582.

<sup>55</sup> RIBA, SB52/6.

<sup>56</sup> Walpole did suggest, jokingly, that his 'medievalism', collection of objects amassed at Strawberry Hill and interest in the Gothic transported him back in time: 'I am deeper than ever in Gothic antiquities; I have bought a monk of Glastonbury's chair full of scraps of the psalms, and some seals of most reverend illegibility. I pass all my mornings in the thirteenth century, and my evenings with the century that is coming on. Adieu!'. Lewis 1937–83, XXXV, 106.

inclusion of a portrait of Walpole in *The Entry of Frederik* is consistent with this earlier engraving as a dedicatory signpost to the man himself.

The second monumental watercolour by Carter illustrating *Otranto* depicts the death of Matilda, and builds upon the imagery already considered, including *The Entry of Frederick* and the frontispiece to the first volume of *Specimens of Ancient Sculpture*.<sup>57</sup> Like the frontispiece, it includes Walpole's personally-distinguished arms. But instead of incorporating it once, Carter inserts it, on this occasion, in no fewer than seven places: above the high altar, at the end of the tomb and on its *prie dieu* in the foreground, on the Bible's front board, on a side altar, and on another two tombs in the background. Certainly, Walpole, and anyone familiar with Walpole's personal coat of arms, would have immediately understood this reference: Walpole's hand cannot be separated from the form, context and appearance of *Otranto*.

Carter, as with *The Entry of Frederick*, does not indicate Strawberry Hill's role in the narrative — none of the tombs illustrated here, for example, were appropriated by Walpole to create Strawberry Hill's interior, a fact of which Carter, having delineated the house's interior, would have, no doubt, be aware. Instead, the very fabric of *Otranto*'s physical manifestation is irrefutably Walpoleian. Matilda's murder in the Church of St Nicholas, adjacent to the Castle of Otranto, consequently takes place in what is effectively Walpole's private Gothic chapel-cum-cathedral realised on a scale grander than anything that Walpole ever achieved at Strawberry Hill, or, indeed, at any other houses, such as Lee Priory, Kent (1785), that emerged from Walpole's circle.<sup>58</sup> Walpole's arms is the most frequently displayed in the scene: Otranto's arms, for example, appears only five times in the illustration, and therefore is secondary to Walpole's own. It is, perhaps, a little ironic, however, that Carter decided to place Walpole's personal variation of his family arms on three separate tombs; the idea, nevertheless, is direct.

It is clear from these three illustrations that Carter was, simultaneously, informed, imaginative and visually articulate. His employment of heraldry, much like Walpole's interest in the subject matter, was fundamental to his realisation of *Otranto*'s narrative, and through this, he established *Otranto*'s relationship with Walpole. Heraldry is a coded language, and the clear and repeated use of Walpole's personal arms emphasised his status as

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<sup>57</sup> RIBA, SB52/5.

<sup>58</sup> See Reeve and Lindfield 2015 for a new revision of Lee Priory and its homage to Walpole and Strawberry Hill. For a more substantial genealogy Strawberry Hill's architectural 'offspring', see McCarthy 1978, 92–117, 171–9. See also Reeve 2013, 99–133.



the true author of the scenes realised by Carter. Carter's architectural quotations, such as the near-exact reproduction of the tomb of Aymer de Valance, Earl of Pembroke, Westminster Abbey, in the background of the *Death of Isabella* would have carried favour in Walpole's circle, and certainly corresponds with Walpole's own recycling of medieval tombs for domestic design purposes at Strawberry Hill. Carter's representation of scenes from *Otranto*, much like the frontispieces to *Specimens of Ancient Sculpture*, are hyperbolic and unnecessarily grand: while Walpole never indicates the castle's dimensions, he never implies that it is on the scale depicted in Carter's watercolours. The St Nicholas is generally referred to as a church, although, on one occasion, Walpole refers to it as a cathedral.<sup>59</sup> Carter certainly managed to capitalise upon this error in continuity, and the setting for *The Death of Matilda* was designed to impress: its form, decoration and atmosphere were certainly indebted to Carter's love and passionate defence of medieval architecture.

Curiously, just over a decade after Carter had completed these watercolours, and following the death of Walpole in 1797, he turned on the late fourth Earl of Orford, his one-time patron. Writing in *The Gentleman's Magazine* in 1801 under the heading of 'The Pursuits of Architectural Innovation', Carter spent the majority of the article critiquing Wren's work: for example the great modern monument of Classical architecture, St Paul's Cathedral, London, whose design 'in the *Corinthian* taste being then thought to "exceed the splendour and magnificence of the old cathedral when in its best state"'.<sup>60</sup> However, in the same piece, Carter turns to consider the contentious topic of 'Gothic architecture revived', a tendency, he continues, which has 'within these few years been banded about the kingdom, and some of its dregs we find foisted on our sight, as the fronts of the courts in Westminster hall' by William Kent.<sup>61</sup> Carter continues by claiming that:

This half-and-half," this "fire-and-water" mixture, this Gothic and Roman compound of all that is new and strange, may still further be pursued; and we, looking through comparisons perspective, may just take a glimpse at Strawberry-hill. And if a correspondent is to be believed in his account of the abbey at Fonthill [...] we may also there see this unaccountable combination carried to the utmost pitch of human

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<sup>59</sup> Walpole 1754, 17.

<sup>60</sup> Carter 1801, 415.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 417.

gratification; where we find “a noble Gothic arch” (if we are to judge from the annexed view) is but a “hole in the wall,” an “abbey” without an abbot.<sup>62</sup>

After Walpole’s death, Carter criticised Walpole’s Gothic villa, a house that he recorded in such painstaking detail in an extra-illustrated copy of the *Description of the Villa of Mr. Horace Walpole* (1784) thirteen years before. And yet, during Walpole’s lifetime, Carter was happy to accept the patronage of a fellow admirer of medieval architecture. Indeed, in a previously unknown record he made of the Chapel in the Woods in 1787, *Very slight View of the Gothic chapel, which contains the Shrine of Sr. in the garden at Strawberry Hill*, Carter overtly praises the grasp on medieval architecture: ‘(This Chapel was Copied and executed with the utmost nicety and truth in Portland stone from part of the Dudley chapel, in the choir of Salisbury Cathedral, by Mr. Gafere Mason, Westminster)’.<sup>63</sup> Like Walpole, who felt that Strawberry Hill as but ‘a sketch by beginners’, whose early parts had been designed and realised by his ‘workmen who had not studied the science [of Gothic design]’, Carter was certainly aware of Strawberry Hill’s flaws as a piece of Gothic design. He, nevertheless, appears pragmatic: Walpole was a friend and client who was equally enamoured with medieval, and alienating him was not prudent. Despite this later criticism, their shared passion for the medieval precipitated overtly reverential watercolours designed to recognise and flatter and Walpole’s role as author of *Otranto* and as a prominent supporter of the Gothic past.

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> BL add ms 29927, f. 123r.

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## **Bibliography**

### **Abbreviations**

- BL British Library, London.  
BM British Museum, London.  
KCL King's College Archives, London.  
LWL Lewis Walpole Library, Farmington, CT.  
RIBA Royal Institute of British Architects, London.  
SH Strawberry Hill.

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- BL, BL Add. MS 70987.  
BM, 1886,1012.534.

KCL, Leathes 7/4.  
LWL, 33 30 copy 11.  
LWL, 33 30 copy 6 Folio.  
LWL, 33 30 copy 20.  
LWL, 33.3.  
LWL, 49 2522.  
LWL, 49 3582.  
LWL, 49 3729.  
LWL, 790.00.00.138dr+  
LWL, SH Views Ed25.  
LWL, SH Views W218.  
RIBA, SB52.

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