

Walpole's Panelled Heraldic Apartment at Strawberry Hill

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Strawberry Hill, Horace Walpole's Gothic villa at Twickenham, was built over the course of three major campaigns between 1748 and 1776. As one of the most famous products of the Georgian Gothic Revival, the house, now under the care of the Strawberry Hill Trust, has justifiably been subject to repeated scrutiny by scholars: explored in studies devoted exclusively to the house, it has also been addressed also within the broader contexts of the Gothic Revival, Georgian architecture, design, literature and eighteenth-century medievalism.¹ Michael McCarthy's *Origins of the Gothic Revival* (1987), Michael Snodin's *Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill* (2009), Marion Harney's *Place-Making for the Imagination: Horace Walpole and Strawberry Hill* (2013), and my monograph, *Georgian Gothic: Medievalist Architecture, Interiors and Furniture* (2016), bring together new interpretations of and evidence concerning the house, its architecture, collections and imaginative connexions. Timothy Mowl, George Haggerty and Matthew Reeve have also framed Walpole and his architectural project to various degrees in terms of queer theory, regarding it and the buildings it immediately inspired as and the product of a queer family romance.² Kenneth Clark, who famously rejuvenated the

¹ Michael Alexander, *Medievalism: The Middle Ages in Modern England*, (New Haven, 2007), pp1, 4, 17, 68, 127, 208; Michael Hall, 'Introduction', in *Gothic Architecture and Its Meanings 1550–1830*, ed. Michael Hall (Reading, 2002), pp9, 13; Megan Aldrich, *Gothic Revival*, (London, 2005), esp. pp58–69; and Stephen Clarke, 'Horace Walpole's Architectural Taste', *1650–1850: Ideas, Aesthetics, and Inquiries in the Early Modern Era* 16 (2009), pp223–44.

² Timothy Mowl, *Horace Walpole: The Great Outsider*, (London, 1996), pp4, 6, 7, 33, 122; George E. Haggerty, *Men in Love: Masculinity and Sexuality in the Eighteenth Century*, (New York, 1999), pp152–74; George E.

study of the Gothic Revival in the early twentieth century, claimed as early as 1928 that 'Strawberry Hill has been studied as least as much as it deserves'.³ Wilmarth Sheldon Lewis, the indefatigable collector and executive editor of the magisterial Yale edition of *Horace Walpole's Correspondence* (1937–83), acquired almost every piece of Walpoliana in existence in the twentieth century, using much of it as the foundation for his important essay on Walpole's villa in 1934;⁴ his collection has been systematically surveyed and published by Michael McCarthy and Clive Wainwright in their respective monographs on the Gothic Revival and the Romantic interior.⁵ Given the rich and ever expanding corpus of work on Walpole and Strawberry Hill, it thus seems unlikely that significant new pieces of evidence concerning the most studied and written-about Gothic Revival building of its age can materialise, and can illustrate a significantly different interpretation of and engagement with medieval and historic aesthetics that articulate family pedigree.

Haggerty, 'Queering Horace Walpole', *Studies in English Literature 1500–1900* 46, no. 3 (2006), pp543–561; George E. Haggerty, 'Strawberry Hill: Friendship and Taste', in *Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill*, ed. Michael Snodin (London, 2009), pp75–85; Matthew Reeve, 'Gothic Architecture, Sexuality and License at Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill', *Art Bulletin* XCV, no. September (2013), pp411–39; Matthew Reeve, 'A Gothic Vatican of Greece and Rome': Horace Walpole, Strawberry Hill, and the Narratives of Gothic', in *Tributes to Pierre Du Prey: Architecture and the Classical Tradition, from Pliny to Posterity*, ed. Matthew Reeve (Turnhout, 2014), pp185–209. See also Matthew M. Reeve and Peter N. Lindfield, 'A Child of Strawberry': Thomas Barrett and Lee Priory, Kent', *The Burlington Magazine* 157, no. December (2015), p837.

³ Kenneth Clark, *The Gothic Revival: An Essay in the History of Taste*, (London, 1962), p46. This did not stop him from writing about the house in his monograph.

⁴ W.S. Lewis, 'The Genesis of Strawberry Hill', *Metropolitan Museum Studies* 5, no. 1 (1934), pp57–92.

⁵ Michael McCarthy, *The Origins of the Gothic Revival*, (London, 1987), pp63–91; Clive Wainwright, *The Romantic Interior: The British Collector at Home, 1750–1850*, (London, 1989), pp70–107.

Undocumented and otherwise unknown manuscripts can, however, still come to light: in this case, a collection of previously uncatalogued loose papers in the Lewis Walpole Library, Farmington, Connecticut. These documents in Walpole's hand delineate a proposed though ultimately unrealised scheme for a panelled and heraldically-ornamented room that, given its armorial embellishment, could only make sense at Strawberry Hill.⁶ Along with a working drawing for this fugitive proposal on the same size stock, the manuscripts also include, in Walpole's hand, genealogical tables tracing his pedigree back to Catherine Parr and William Cecil, Lord Burleigh; Walpole's own quartered coat of arms, captioned 'My Arms' and inscribed with Walpole's heraldic monogram, HW, surrounded by cross-crosslets from his shield; the arms of Walpole's nephew, George, third Earl of Orford; and the 24 coats of arms making up the quarterings of Catherine Hastings, wife of Philip, first Earl of Chesterfield.⁷ Hastings' arms were of interest to Walpole not least because her quarterings comprise a significant number of noble and armigerous ancestors from his maternal line, and the revised marshalling of these quarters—moving the Nevil arms from the second to sixteenth position—reflects the manuscripts' nature as works-in-progress.⁸ This assemblage of fragmentary notes and working drawings on loose sheets confirms and underscores what we already know about the importance and relevance of heraldry, ancestry and pedigree to Walpole and Strawberry Hill, his

⁶ Farmington, Lewis Walpole Library, LWL MSS 1 Box 40 Folder 24. Walpole's design for the heraldic panelled room and the associated 41 coats of arms are on the same size paper.

⁷ Farmington, Lewis Walpole Library, LWL MSS 1 Box 40 Folder 25.

⁸ *Ibid.*

villa self-consciously styled as the ‘castle [...] of my ancestors’.⁹ The present essay addresses three folios from this group of papers that relate directly to the hitherto entirely unknown heraldic panelled room planned by Walpole.¹⁰

Much of the heraldry found at Strawberry Hill is drawn from Walpole’s paternal line—Walpole was tremendously proud of his father’s achievements that saw him rise from a minor member of the Norfolk gentry, he was known affectionately and critically as the Norfolk squire, to become a peer, Britain’s first Prime Minister, building an ostentatious country seat, Houghton Hall, Norfolk, that articulated his political significance, and amassing an important art collection.¹¹ The bias towards Sir Robert’s armigerous ancestors in the decorative schemes at Strawberry Hill ignores and displaces Walpole’s significantly more prestigious maternal ancestors,

⁹ Horace Walpole, *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole’s Correspondence*, ed. W.S. Lewis and Ralph S. Brown Jr, vol. 9, (London, 1941), p149; Lisa Ford, ‘Heraldry’, in *Horace Walpole’s Strawberry Hill*, ed. Michael Snodin (London, 2009), pp38–39; Peter N. Lindfield, ‘“Hung Round with the Helmets, Breast-Plates, and Swords of Our Ancestors”: Allusions to Chivalry in Eighteenth-Century Gothicism?’, in *Chivalry and the Vision of the Medieval Past*, ed. Barbara Gribling and Katie Stevenson (Woodbridge, 2016), pp77–80. Michael Snodin’s forthcoming essay addresses Strawberry Hill’s heraldry at length: Michael Snodin, ‘Signs and Signification: Heraldry at Strawberry Hill’, in *The Display of Arms: A Beiheft of the Coat of Arms*, ed. Fiona Robertson and Peter N. Lindfield (London, 2017), ppXXX–YYY. Not all of the arms at Strawberry Hill were ancestral; those in the house’s China Room chimneypiece, made in 1755, belonged to the four ‘principal persons who have inhabited Strawberry Hill’ since 1726, culminating with Walpole (Horace Walpole, *A Description of the Villa of Mr. Horace Walpole, the Youngest Son of Sir Robert Walpole Earl of Orford, at Strawberry-Hill, near Twickenham. With an Inventory of the Furniture, Pictures, Curiosities, &c.*, (Strawberry Hill, 1784), p6).

¹⁰ Farmington, Lewis Walpole Library, LWL MSS 1 Box 40 Folder 24.

¹¹ This is articulated particularly well in Horace Walpole, *Ædes Walpoleanæ: Or, a Description of the Collection of Pictures at Houghton-Hall in Norfolk, the Seat of the Right Honourable Sir Robert Walpole, Earl of Orford*, 1747), ppiv–v.

those that are traced back to Edward I in the *Pedigree of Walpole to Explain the Portraits and Coats of Arms at Strawberry Hill* (1776).¹² Illustrative of this paternal bias are the 14 shields encircling Walpole's personally differentiated arms on the Library ceiling at Strawberry Hill:¹³ only three of these arms represent his mother's side of the family, two for Shorter and one for Isabella Birkett.¹⁴ And in the house's Armoury, a space, Walpole writes in 1753, that 'bespeaks the chivalry of the ancient lords of the castle',¹⁵ the arms were exclusively from his paternal line—Peter Fitzosbert (1275); a gartered Robsart shield (1443) for Sir Terry Robsart; Walpole's arms impaling Crane for Sir Edward Walpole (1660, although he was made a Knight of the Bath a year later); and Ralph Walpole Bishop of Norwich and Ely (1299, for his consecration at Ely). Also included in this collection of arms was one within a garter representing his parents: the arms of Sir Robert (Walpole, Fitzosbert, Robsart, Crane) impaled with Catherine Shorter's (1, 4, Shorter: *Or and Sable parted per saltire, a bordure counterchanged*; 2, 3, Shorter: *Sable, a Lion rampant or crowned argent, between 3 battleaxes proper*). But the heraldic ornament of the room shown in Walpole's drawing would have been very different from the executed schemes at

¹² Farmington, Lewis Walpole Library, 49 3582, pasted-in engraving. Walpole chose to not trace his mother's claimed lineage back to Cadwaladr, the seventh century King of Gwynedd, which is articulated in a manuscript pedigree produced on vellum after 1723 by Sir John Philipps, and of which Walpole was grateful to have when working on his own genealogical table in 1749; Farmington, Lewis Walpole Library, 49 2624. See his letter from 11 August 1749 to George Montagu, Walpole, *Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, vol. 9, p69.

¹³ For a discussion of Walpole's personal arms and its use in eighteenth-century visual culture, see Peter Nelson Lindfield, 'Heraldry and the Architectural Imagination: John Carter's Visualisation of *the Castle of Otranto*', *Antiquaries Journal* 96 (2016), pp15–18.

¹⁴ Farmington, Lewis Walpole Library, 49 2523, fol1.21.4.

¹⁵ Walpole, *Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, vol. 9, p150.

his Gothic villa that were surveyed and depicted by the antiquarian topographer John Carter in the 1780s.¹⁶

Across both sides of one sheet from this collection of manuscripts, Walpole delineates 41 coats of arms that, we can assume, were to be applied to the room's panelling: a select group are numbered, seven of these are painted on laid paper as if to draft the correct tinctures and metals, and John of Gaunt's arms impaling those of Catherine Swinford, which appears amongst these 41 arms, is represented as the panelled room's primary shield. Of these 41 coats of arms, the oldest are those of Edward III, inscribed 1327 for the year of his accession, and William Montacute, Earl of Salisbury, impaling Katherine Grandison, inscribed 1337 [1327] for the approximate date of their marriage. Unlike most of the realised heraldry throughout Strawberry Hill, only one of the armorials belonged to Walpole's paternal ancestors, that of Sir Terry Robsart whose arms is also represented in the Armoury. The manuscript scheme also includes Sir Robert's and Catherine Shorter's arms impaled, together with two shields belonging to Walpole's married siblings: Robert, second Earl of Orford, and Mary Rolle; and Mary Walpole and George, second Earl of Cholmondeley, which brought the largely medieval and seventeenth-century scheme up-to-date. Indeed, the multiple lines of pedigree connecting Walpole's mother to Edward III and William Montacute, Earl of Salisbury, are included in the scheme. The panelled room's form and heraldic decoration, as far as these documents reveal, would have celebrated almost exclusively Walpole's royal and aristocratic lineage through his mother. This satisfied fully Walpole's desire to fashion Strawberry Hill as the castle of his ancestors; his aesthetic and intellectual scheme would draw respect befitting his family's newly-acquired status. These

¹⁶ Farmington, Lewis Walpole Library, 33 30 Copy 11 Folio, fol57; 49 3582.

maternal arms take precedence over his father's decidedly more pedestrian ancestors, though the shift towards his father's ancestors in the house's executed schemes, especially in the Library, the Armoury, and the State Apartment, almost certainly responds to Walpole's profound admiration for Sir Robert and his political, cultural and aesthetic achievements; after all, it was Sir Robert rather than his wife who propelled the family to the peerage.¹⁷

The panelled room's scheme is important for several reasons, most notably because there are precious few surviving designs by Walpole for his house, despite him generating and collaborating with designers and architects on proposals for Strawberry Hill's ornament and fixtures, including the pair of pierglasses and suite of eight black chairs for the Parlour, and the Round Room's chimneypiece based upon the shrine of St Edward the Confessor, Westminster Abbey.¹⁸ Walpole's fugitive design for the room is also significant because it is entirely unlike any other executed or proposed scheme for the house, and its historicist, Romantic character is not articulated by the otherwise inescapably Gothic and architectural fixtures and fittings used throughout the rest of Strawberry Hill, including chimneypieces, vaulting, windows, and furniture. The room's historical character is, instead, conveyed implicitly without the need for overt architectural ornament. It makes no architectural concession, for example, to Richard Bentley's dynamic chimneypieces that imaginatively recompose medieval forms to generate decidedly original Georgian

¹⁷ See Snodin, 'Signs and Signification', ppXXX-YYY.

¹⁸ For the chair, see Horace Walpole, *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, ed. W.S. Lewis, et al., vol. 35, (London, 1973), pp181-82; Walpole, *Description of the Villa*, p4. For the pierglasses, see: *ibid.* For the Round Room chimneypiece, see: *ibid.*, p53; Walpole, *Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, vol. 35, pp406-7.

interpretations of Gothic motifs, such as the Parlour's chimneypiece,¹⁹ or John Chute's largely rigorous antiquarian recreations of medieval exemplars, such as the Library's presses that he modelled upon one of the pulpitum doors at Old St Paul's Cathedral, London.²⁰ Walpole's proposal appears, therefore, to be an original creation on his part, one that embraces the simplicity and genuine antiquity of historical panelled rooms rather than the filigree encrustations and architectural motifs found throughout the majority of the house's public rooms, such as the Entrance and Staircase Hall's wallpaper modelled upon the tracery of Prince Arthur's Chantry Chapel, Worcester Cathedral.²¹

There is no information about the room beyond the drawing itself and the associated collection of 41 shields: Walpole does not title or date the sketch, and no mention of it is made in his correspondence; it is a phantom proposal for a room's scheme that, until now, we never knew existed. The door's central position in the drawing, assuming it reflects the house's physical constraints, can only refer to a select number of apartments, including the Round Room that terminates the house's first-floor State Apartment and was finished in 1771. Given that the Round Room was originally projected as the State Bedchamber,²² this armorial display and rich, historically-inspired wood panelling would not be entirely inappropriate to the room's presentation of the family's heritage and status; a similarly enthusiastic eighteenth-

¹⁹ Farmington, Lewis Walpole Library, 49 3585 Folio, fol32.

²⁰ Farmington, Lewis Walpole Library, 49 3490 Folio, fol5.

²¹ Walpole, *Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, vol. 35, pp150–51.

²² Michael Snodin, *Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill*, (New Haven, 2009), p48.

century display of heraldry appears at Blickling Hall, Norfolk, for example.²³ The alternation of triglyphs and ogee quatrefoils in the room's projected cornice matches other Neoclassical-Gothic schemes found in fashionable design from the 1760s onwards. These include the suite of Gothic chairs supplied to Lord Muncaster in 1784 by Gillows that was modelled upon Plate XVII from Thomas Chippendale's *The Gentleman and Cabinet-Maker's Director* (1762), although the pattern was brought up-to-date with 1780s fashion by the inclusion of triglyphs between each quatrefoil on the seat rail.²⁴ Similar vertical fluting was woven into Edward Edwards' otherwise largely Gothic cabinet-on-stand, 'The Beauclerk Cabinet', 1783–84, to display, amongst other items, watercolours by Lady Diana Beauclerk, as well as lapis lazuli, agates, enamels, and Wedgwood bas reliefs.²⁵ Even Robert Adam's 1767 chimneypiece for the Round Room, modelled upon the Cosmati-mosaic encrusted surface of the shrine of St Edward the Confessor, Westminster Abbey, was a hybrid

²³ The tester beds in the State and Chinese Bedrooms at Blickling Hall perform a similarly ennobling and historicising function; whilst the State Bed's heraldry is Royal—the arms of George III appear on the back cloth, those of Queen Anne post-1707 are embroidered on the bedcover, and the crowned rose, crowned thistle, crowned *fleur-de-lys*, and crowned harp, along with the English and Scottish royal crests are incorporated into the valance—the Chinese Room's bed is decorated with familial arms. See Thomas Woodcock and John Martin Robinson, *Heraldry in National Trust Houses*, (London, 2000), pp50–51.

²⁴ Peter N. Lindfield, *Georgian Gothic: Medievalist Architecture, Furniture and Interiors, 1730–1840*, (Woodbridge, 2016), pp131–80, esp. pp173–74; Susan E. Stuart, 'Three Generations of Gothic Chairs by Gillows', *Furniture History* 32 (1996), pp33–45.

²⁵ Susan Odell Walker, 'An Ebony Cabinet Ornamented with Drawings by Lady Diana Beauclerk', in *Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill*, ed. Michael Snodin (New Haven, 2009), pp160–61; Walpole, *Description of the Villa*, p84.

of Classical and Gothic forms.²⁶ Two unrealised designs by Walpole for Round Room stools also demonstrate how Classical columns (based upon those from Abbot Islip's table tomb, Westminster Abbey),²⁷ William Kent-type vase legs,²⁸ and a fluted frieze could be incorporated into otherwise overtly Gothic furniture made towards the end of Strawberry Hill's construction and furnishing.²⁹ These stylistic similarities, and the progressively antiquarian character of Strawberry Hill's later apartments and façades, suggest that Walpole's drawing occurs later in the house's development.

Certain aspects of the room's design, however, resonate with forms employed at the outset of the house's creation, especially fittings and fixtures created by Richard Bentley, of which Walpole was subsequently critical: 'neither Mr. Bentley nor my workmen has *studied* the science [of Gothic], and [that...] my house therefore is but a sketch by beginners'.³⁰ Although the room's indisputably historic and antiquarian panelling is unlike any other known proposal for the house, the doorway's ogee head and the panels' oversized quatrefoils that encircle, frame and

²⁶ Walpole, *Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, vol. 35, pp406–7; Walpole, *Description of the Villa*, p53; Lindfield, *Georgian Gothic*, pp174–76.

²⁷ Walpole, *Description of the Villa*, p52, Lindfield, *Georgian Gothic*, p177. These columns inspired the legs of the two Farnese Gardens tables in the State Apartment.

²⁸ This form was incorporated into Thomas Courtenay Devenish's suite of 1762 benches and chairs for the State Apartment. See Walpole, *Description of the Villa*, p47; Horace Walpole, *Strawberry Hill Accounts: A Record of Expenditure in Building, Furnishing, &c.*, (Oxford, 1927), p10; Lindfield, *Georgian Gothic*, p174. For Kent's vase-legs, see William Kent and Inigo Jones, *Some Designs of Mr. Inigo Jones and Mr. Wm. Kent*, (London, 1744), pls 43, 47.

²⁹ Farmington, Lewis Walpole Library, LWL MSS Vol. 170, fol15.

³⁰ Horace Walpole, *The Works of Horatio Walpole, Earl of Orford*, vol. 5, (London, 1798), pp668–9.

Gothicise the arms, are, nevertheless, consistent with Strawberry Hill's exterior decoration from the first programme of remodelling (1748–54).³¹ As Johann Heinrich Müntz's 1758 *East View of Strawberry Hill Near Twickenham in Middlesex* demonstrates,³² the villa's eastern and southern façades are punctuated by quatrefoils, hipped ogee windows of the Venetian style and, just visible between the trees, ogee-headed fenestration in the Breakfast Room's bay window. These parallels with Walpole's design, especially the ogee-headed doorway that was not executed at the house, suggest the drawing's early place in the chronology of Strawberry Hill's evolution, especially so given that these highly decorative motifs do not find equal purchase in the house's subsequent expansion westwards between 1758 and 1762; the Gallery and Cloisters' windows have much more restrained four-centred arch heads.³³ These characteristics suggest that the proposal dates to the early 1750s. Indeed, the arms' quatrefoil framing matches that employed for the fourteen arms surrounding Walpole's personal shield at the centre of the Library

³¹ This design's Gothicisation of arms—placing them within quatrefoils—matches other decorative schemes from the 1750s, including the painted ceiling in James Gibbs' Temple of Liberty at Stowe, Buckinghamshire (Woodcock and Robinson, *Heraldry in National Trust Houses*, p171), and that applied to Sanderson Miller's barrel vault in the Entrance Hall at Lacock Abbey, Wiltshire, painted in 1756 (Lindfield, *Georgian Gothic*, pp88–89; Woodcock and Robinson, *Heraldry in National Trust Houses*, pp118–19). Walpole was full of praise for the Temple of Liberty in a 1753 letter to Richard Bentley: '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]'. Walpole, *Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, vol. 35, p77.

³² Farmington, Lewis Walpole Library, SH Views M92 No. 5.

³³ Farmington, Lewis Walpole Library, 49 3490 Box 1, fol1.

ceiling.³⁴ The panelled room's cornice, whilst corresponding with Neoclassical-Gothic ornament at the house introduced from the 1760s, is entirely consistent with forms and sources employed in the earliest Gothic part of the villa.

A close examination of Plate 36, *Chimney Piece at Mr. Pelham's at Esher*, from John Vardy's *Some Designs of Mr Inigo Jones and Mr Wm. Kent* (1744), reveals that the triglyph and ogee-quatrefoil feature in the entablature's frieze.³⁵ William Robinson followed Kent's Esher design when he created Strawberry Hill's Breakfast Room chimneypiece, though the model was suitably modified with the insertion of Walpole's family crest, the Saracen's head, under the central ogee arch. Although Walpole initially approved of William Kent's Gothic, especially at Esher—'Esher [Place] I have seen again twice [...] and I prefer it to all villas, even Southcote's; Kent is Kentissime there'³⁶—he later came to disapprove of the architect's recreation of medieval forms, and vehemently railed against his Gothic work:

Kent's genius was not universal, he has succeeded as ill in Gothic. The [screen of the Court of the] King's Bench at Westminster [Hall], and Mr.

³⁴ Walpole's 1754 proposal for the Library ceiling decoration, however, only sets the 14 arms within plain circles, suggesting that the quatrefoils were included by Bentley when he fleshed out the design. See: Farmington, Lewis Walpole Library, SH Views W218 No. 1; Walpole, *Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, vol. 35, p171.

³⁵ See John Harris, 'William Kent and Esher Place', *Studies in the History of Art* 25, Symposium Papers X: The Fashioning and Functioning of the British Country House (1989), pp13–26 and Lindfield, *Georgian Gothic*, pp60–67.

³⁶ Walpole, *Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, vol. 9, p71.

Pelham's house at Esher [Place, Surrey], are proofs how little he conceived either the principles or graces of that architecture.³⁷

Walpole was equally derogatory of the plates in the 1751 edition of Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* that were based upon Kent's drawings that exhibit his personal reinterpretation and representation of Gothic forms:³⁸

The first volume of Spenser is published with prints designed by Kent; but the most execrable performance you ever beheld—the graving not worse than the drawing: awkward knights, scrambling Unas, hills tumbling down themselves, no variety of prospect³⁹

This derision arises from Kent's blending Gothic and Classical forms to create a type of Classical Gothic, as exemplified by his book illustrations, such as 'The Redcross Knight Introduced by Duessa to the House of Pride' for *The Faerie Queene*,⁴⁰ as well as his executed architecture, including at Esher Place. This Classical-Gothic style was subsequently formalised in print by Batty Langley's *Ancient Architecture: Restored and Improved* (1741–42),⁴¹ and was subject to even more criticism by

³⁷ Horace Walpole, *Anecdotes of Painting in England; with Some Account of the Principal Artists; and Notes on Other Arts; Collected by G. Vertue, and Now Digested from His MSS*, vol. 4, (London, 1771), p114.

³⁸ Kent's c.1730s preparatory designs for *The Faerie Queene* are at the Victoria and Albert Museum, and include: E.869-1928– E.895-1928.

³⁹ Walpole, *Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, vol. 9, p116.

⁴⁰ London, Victoria and Albert Museum, E.876-1928.

⁴¹ See Peter N. Lindfield, 'Serious Gothic and 'Doing the Ancient Buildings': Batty Langley's *Ancient Architecture* and *Principal Geometric Elevations*', *Architectural History* 57 (2014), pp141–55.

Walpole: he referred to it as ‘bastard Gothic’.⁴² Robinson’s chimneypiece in the Breakfast Room inevitably reminded Walpole that he once approved of Kent’s work, and his subsequent criticism of the architect’s work consequently impacted upon his assessment of chimneypiece as well: it and the room’s ‘windows are not truly gothic, but were designed by Mr. W. Robinson of the Board of Works, before there was any design of farther improvements to the house’.⁴³ At least a decade before Walpole found Kent’s medievalist work and Robinson’s chimneypiece fatally compromised, he appears to have not only subscribed to, but embraced directly, aspects of and motifs from Kent’s designs and incorporated them within his own otherwise antiquarian and historicist, non-architectural proposal for Strawberry Hill’s panelled room.⁴⁴ Kent’s personal style of Gothic clearly fell out of favour with Georgian Britain’s arch Gothicist. However, the selection and combination of Classical and Gothic motifs in Walpole’s design for the room reveals Kent’s more significant impact upon Strawberry Hill and Walpole himself than has previously been realised. Notwithstanding his criticism of Kent’s Gothic, Walpole later approved of Robert Adam’s chimneypiece for Strawberry Hill’s Round Room; although modelled upon the Cosmati-encrusted shrine of St Edward the Confessor, Adam, the most fashionable Neoclassical architect of the day ‘improved’ upon it: ‘Mr Adam had

⁴² Walpole, *Horace Walpole’s Correspondence*, vol. 35, p233.

⁴³ Walpole, *Description of the Villa*, p17.

⁴⁴ This parallels the copying and reconfiguration of motifs used in Kent’s York Minster pulpit, as illustrated in Vardy’s *Some Designs*, pl. 51, to guide the design of the Pomfret Cabinet. See Peter N. Lindfield, ‘The Countess of Pomfret’s Gothic Revival Furniture’, *The Georgian Group Journal* XXII (2014), pp77–94.

drawn me a design a little in that style, prettier it is true, and at half the price'.⁴⁵ Adam's 1766 designs for the house, unlike Kent's work, did not contravene Walpole's now cultivated interpretation of Gothic.

Attributing an early date to the panelled room's scheme appears to be confirmed by one of the coats of arms on the associated sheet of 41 shields: the impaled arms of 'Fr.[ancis] Ld Conway [and] Isabella Fitzroy'. Francis, Walpole's cousin, was created Viscount Beauchamp and Earl of Hertford on 3 August 1750, these titles having recently become extinct by the death of Algernon Seymour, seventh Duke of Somerset. After this elevation, Walpole's and Lord Hertford's correspondence acknowledges Francis' new rank:⁴⁶ it is inconceivable that he would have mis-inscribed his cousin's title on the page of arms, which suggests the scheme must date to before 3 August 1750. The drawing, given its early date, appears to be a speculative proposal for one of the house's reception rooms: the Hall; the Waiting Room; or the Little Parlour. A panelled and heraldically ornamented scheme would, of course, be entirely appropriate to such spaces, and would have lent an historic and noble character to the villa, very much along the lines of the Entrance Hall at Sir Walter Scott's house, Abbotsford, Roxburghshire, and as subsequently realised according to late 1840s medievalism by A.W.N. Pugin in the

⁴⁵ Walpole, *Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, vol. 35, pp406–7. See Peter N. Lindfield, 'A 'Classical Goth': Robert Adam's Engagement with Medieval Architecture', in *Robert Adam*, ed. Colin Thom (London, 2017), ppXXX–YYY.

⁴⁶ Horace Walpole, *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, ed. W.S. Lewis, et al., vol. 37, (London, 1937), p403.

Cromwell Hall at Chirk Castle, Wrexham.⁴⁷ Strawberry Hill's reception rooms were decorated ultimately with medieval-derived features, including chimneypieces and, in the case of the Entrance and Staircase Hall, a fretwork balustrade and *faux* tracery wallpaper. The Entrance and Staircase Hall's Jacobean-inspired newel post ornament—Walpole's antelope supporter—would have, however, resonated particularly well with the proposed panelling. The panelled and heraldically-ornamented scheme is not without precedent, for it parallels numerous other historic interiors such as the Servants' Hall (formerly known as the Winter Parlour) at Canons Ashby, Northamptonshire, as well as the great collegiate halls of Oxbridge, and the ceiling of the Duke Humfrey's Library, Oxford, c.1599.⁴⁸ Canons Ashby is a particularly relevant model for it was relevant to Walpole as Elizabeth, daughter of Erasmus Dryden of Canons Ashby, married James Philipps of Tregibbye, who was an ancestor of Walpole's through his maternal line; Philipps' arms were consequently incorporated into Sir Robert's and Catherine's impaled quarterings in the frontispiece to his copy of the 1784 *Description of the Villa*.⁴⁹

It is very rare that a new design for Strawberry Hill, especially one by Walpole, materialises. Its discovery is significant, particularly given the information it reveals about the direction Walpole was taking Strawberry Hill's interior aesthetic. It also demonstrates his early interest and research into the significantly more distinguished armigers on his mother's side of the family that were ultimately dispensed with in

⁴⁷ See Wainwright, *The Romantic Interior*, pp199–207. The arms in the Cromwell Hall were taken from a 1595 Myddelton pedigree. See: Woodcock and Robinson, *Heraldry in National Trust Houses*, pp64–66; Michael Hall, 'Chirk Castle', *Country Life* 16 July (1992), pp54–57; Christie's, *Chirk Castle*, (London, 2004), pp18–19.

⁴⁸ Stanley Gillam, *The Divinity School & Duke Humfrey's Library at Oxford*, (Oxford, 1998), p52.

⁴⁹ Farmington, Lewis Walpole Library, 49 2523, frontispiece.

favour of his far less impressive paternal armigerous ancestors; direct engagement with Kent's Gothic and the architect's potentially more significant influence over the house than is currently recognised; and a plan to create a suitably historic room professing the nobility of Walpole's ancestors, but without recourse to overwhelming Gothic embellishment found elsewhere at the house. Although ultimately unrealised, this proposal reflects Walpole's distinctly original and early engagement with historical interior aesthetics that contradicts what his gentleman architects forming the 'Strawberry Committee' proposed for the house around the same time. He may have never envisioned the increasingly sprawling and archaeologically-informed Gothic villa when he started to create Strawberry Hill, if his assessment of Robinson's Breakfast Room work is to be believed, but Walpole appears to have pursued a robust interest in antiquarian forms and heraldry almost from the start.