Gothic Architecture, Sexuality, and License at Horace Walpole’s Strawberry Hill

Matthew M. Reeve

You will express yourself in your home whether you want to or not.—Elsie de Wolfe, *The House in Good Taste*, 1913

The New York interior designer’s famous proclamation might serve as a warning to all patrons of domestic architecture and interiors. Its admonitory message applies particularly to “eccentric” men of taste, such as Horace Walpole (1717–1797), whose life and home, the neo-Gothic villa called Strawberry Hill in Twickenham, near London, have been subject to sustained critical attention from his own day to the present. The house’s design and decoration emerged from close collaboration within his coterie of male friends between about 1747 and 1777, particularly the designers John Chute (1701–1776) and Richard Bentley (1708–1772), and a number of prominent architects, including Robert Adam (Fig. 1). Adopting the cheeky schoolboy moniker the “Strawberry Committee” or, latterly, the “Committee of Taste,” Walpole, Chute, and Bentley built a house that offered a profoundly new vision of the Gothic as an architectural style and a historical idiom. Encasing a small seventeenth-century house within several additions, Strawberry Hill’s fabric seems imprinted with an ancient architectural history, modeled on England’s heritage of late Gothic religious and seignorial architecture (Fig. 2). Emulating the stone construction of medieval Gothic architecture in plaster, wood, and papier-mâché and incorporating medieval spolia in stained glass and other media, the interiors and their furnishings perform a series of formal and material transpositions. In Walpole’s words, they “pretend . . . to be an observance of the costume of the Middle Ages, even in the furniture,” thus underlying his overtly ornamental and sensory interpretation of the Gothic (Figs. 3, 4).

But Strawberry Hill was more than simply a building project over which a famous patron and his friends lovingly obsessed. It was a complex, carefully constructed, and very public projection of Walpole himself, as Elsie de Wolfe intimates. Intrinsic to the house was the collection of art and objects that Walpole amassed for it throughout his life, many of which are medieval or allude to the medieval past as he understood it, including arms, armor, stained glass, *ars sacra*, and Tudor portraiture. Walpole promoted his home and collection as a major stop on the tourist route of London houses and advertised it in the first illustrated account of his physical self (“I am no poet, and my castle is of paper, and my castle and my attachment and I, shall soon vanish and be forgotten together!”). The symbiotic relationship between Walpole and Strawberry Hill was a dominant mythology of the house in the eighteenth century: a harshly partisan critique, for example, called it “a picture of the master’s mind” in which there was “nothing great,” however filled with “elegant knowledge” and presented with “superior polish and amusement.”

Critical inquiry on Strawberry Hill culminated in its recent and ongoing restoration, the 2009–10 exhibitions at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, and the Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, and the accompanying catalog published by Yale. With this in mind it might reasonably be asked whether Horace Walpole, Strawberry Hill, or his appraisal of the Gothic required further research at this point. Notably absent from the recent catalog, however, is consideration of the aesthetic consequences of Walpole’s sexuality and that of the “Committee of Taste”: what has been called their “shared sexual subjectivity” as it applied to art and architecture. This is notable, because considerable attention has been recently paid to the homoeroticism of Walpole’s letters, the interrelations of his homosocial companions, the language of epistolary exchange they shared, and the “queer” poetics of his literature—particularly his 1764–65 novel *The Castle of Otranto: A Gothic Story*. The aesthetic consequences of Walpole’s sexuality for the design of Strawberry Hill were hinted at in a few paragraphs of Timothy Mowl’s rich, if controversial, 1996 biography *Horace Walpole: The Great Outsider*, a book that is not cited in the recent catalog. In a few short paragraphs, Mowl discusses Walpole’s “homosexuality” as the ever-present but largely overlooked or ignored key to understanding his aesthetics. Walpole’s employment of the Gothic becomes a statement of his “high camp defiance of normal conventions,” thus emphasizing his denial of the Palladian idiom, which was employed in no less significant an architectural statement than his father’s estate at Houghton Hall, Norfolk, designed in 1722 by Colen Campbell (Fig. 6). As the “plaything” of the wayward son of Britain’s first prime minister (Sir Robert Walpole), Strawberry Hill becomes “a large Gothic closet to which Walpole could sometimes retire when he wished to express his true persona with intimate friends.” Mowl gives “cautious consideration” to the possibility that Gothic may have had a specific appeal for queer patrons and viewers in the eighteenth century as part of a “deliberate rebel counter-culture” and to Walpole and his circle of self-proclaimed “Goths” in particular. Mowl’s thesis has been criticized by historians of literature who...
rightly noted the inappropriate application of contemporary sexual categories and terminologies to the eighteenth century. But, to date, historians of architecture have not responded to his thesis, despite a wealth of criticism on the relation of gender and sexuality to domestic architecture in the early modern period.

Architecture and Sexuality

In returning to the complex relationship between architecture and sexuality at Strawberry Hill, I begin with the observation that the revival of the Gothic as a "new" mode of architectural design was paralleled and informed by new formulations of human sexuality that emerged in England around 1700. What were called the "modern styles" of architecture, embracing the new Gothic and Chinese styles (chinoiserie), constituted a self-conscious challenge to the authority of the antique mode and were characterized by Walpole as the new "liberty of taste." The "modern styles" in architecture and the decorative arts coincided with, and were informed by, the formation of a new category of male sexuality, which in some respects anticipates the modern category "homosexuality." Historians of sexuality broadly agree that this new category emerged in England in the years around 1700 that was defined by sexual desire by men for men, in contrast to earlier constructions of sexuality, structured by age (intergenerational sexuality) or by a more fluid bisexuality. The new, intersexual category was viewed as neither male nor female but a new, third sex, a categorization based in part on the perception of a mixture or corruption of genders: the adoption of "female" manners rendered males effeminate, a regular adjective for men of the third sex. The new codifications of sexuality were subjects within a broader debate about corporeality and the gender and propriety of form that significantly inflected critical writings on the human body and architecture and informed analogies between them.

As a new building type that progressively populated the suburbs of London throughout the eighteenth century, the villa was a focus for these critical debates. Built in the new Gothic or Chinese styles—or a perverse mixture of both—these buildings were critiqued in the popular press and in satiric prints. Signifying the "degeneracy of our national taste," the modern villa is pictured as a lamentable sign of the times that reflected greater social changes in the eighteenth century, namely, an aspiring nouveau riche class of patron, his affected and effeminized lifestyle, and the new forms of sexuality to which it was often related. All of these factors were positioned to contrast with the modes and manners of a "true" aristocracy from the generation preceding. Writing in the World in 1753, one author sardonically advises, "If one wished to see a coxcomb expose himself in the most effectual manner, one would advise him to build a villa; which is the chef d'oeuvre of modern impertinence, and the most conspicuous stage which folly can possibly mount to display herself to the world." Besides being a very public emblem of self-fashioning (or "exposure"), the villa is in particular a locus of novelty, an architecture that emblematizes the perceived degeneration and corruption of eighteenth-century life. It is the product of the coxcomb, a new category of narcissistic, effeminized masculinity, which included the "macaroni," fop, or dandy and men of the third sex. In this critical context, the modern villa becomes a product of, or
even analog for, modern male sexualities, including the third sex.¹⁹

Emerging as new “modes” in the eighteenth century, the Gothic style and the third sex were connected in the minds of some contemporary critics and patrons of architecture, and both were understood as new phenomena that threatened to undermine the social order, reversing long-standing value systems in British culture.²⁰ Although it has eluded architectural historians, the association of Walpole’s sexuality with his architectural tastes has a long history in critical accounts of Walpole’s life and oeuvre during his time and afterward, from George Hardinge’s 1813 ascription of the “whim and foppery” of Walpole’s architectural tastes as products of his “nature” (Hardinge’s emphasis) to Thomas Babington Macaulay’s caustically homophobic attack on Walpole’s “diseased and disorganized mind” (1833) that produced a “grotesque house [decorated] with pie-crust battlements.” Macaulay developed an elaborate analogy between the appar-
ent flimsiness of Strawberry Hill (and, thus, its character as a simulation) and Walpole’s physical and sexual self: in all of Walpole’s endeavors, according to Macaulay, Walpole wore “a mask within a mask,” but “his real tastes perpetually show themselves through the thin disguise.” Subsequently, the effeminacy or “queerness” of eighteenth-century “Rococo Gothic” (to use Kenneth Clark’s label) has been addressed in code, as in Chris Brooks’s view that during the eighteenth century Palladianism was “subverted by the naughty curves of the rococo style” or Michael Hall’s description of the “Gothick” idiom as “light, frivolous, witty, and even slightly naughty,” all epithets that were certainly applied to Walpole in his lifetime and afterward.

It might be said that the very formalist paradigms of English architectural history have worked against an understanding of Strawberry Hill’s sexual resonances. Architectural historians have pursued archaeological and stylistic analysis of the fabric or have focused on the prosopographical issues of the authorship of, or sources for, individual aspects of the house by the Strawberry Committee. Also, the place of Strawberry Hill as the fountainhead of the Gothic Revival has, from even before Charles Eastlake’s influential study (1872), tended to guide readings of it as a false start for the Gothic Revival, a “not Gothic enough” version of the archaeologically correct simulations of medieval design that began to be produced in the years around 1800. Positioning Strawberry Hill within a teleology of the Gothic Revival has served to reinforce constructions of its “whimsical theatricality,” its status as a clever if amateur play on the Gothic, almost by its very nature as being “early.” This has tended to divert critical attention from the house’s startling novelty, or “modernity,” as Walpole would have it. A further problem is the subject’s inherent interdisciplinarity. Strawberry Hill and Horace Walpole’s construction of the Gothic now belong equally to the disciplines of art and architectural history, the history of collections, literary studies (the Gothic novel), medievalism, and eighteenth-century studies in general. As students in these fields have long understood, Walpole was an interdisciplinary medievalist avant la lettre, whose mutually informing Gothic texts have a common temporal and thematic location in his historiography, and they demand to be treated as such.

By far the most significant and compelling interpretative
work on Walpole's conception of the Gothic—particularly as it relates to the history of sexuality—has been done by historians of literature, who have concentrated on relations between Walpole's architecture and historiography or between his Gothic architecture and literature. The study of Walpole's Gothic thus demands careful interdisciplinary synthesis that accommodates ideas and methodologies from disciplines outside the history of art.

Horace Walpole's "Gothic"

Strawberry Hill was only the most visible manifestation of Walpole's enthusiasm for the Gothic. Contemporary with the building of the house in the 1750s through the 1760s, Walpole was actively engaged with a reciprocal project of mythologizing the Gothic in his art criticism, letters, and literature as an architectural style and as a historical idiom. Strawberry Hill was an integral component of this developing conception of the Gothic, and its construction and decoration served as a performance of its various tropes.

Edward Edwards, *Staircase at Strawberry Hill Showing the Armoury*, 1784, pen and ink and wash, 8½ × 6½ in. (21.9 × 17.6 cm), from Walpole’s extra-illustrated copy of *A Description of the Villa of Mr. Horace Walpole*. The Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University, 49 3582 (artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by The Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University)

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Through his architecture and writing, Walpole actively reshaped the conception of the Gothic from a debased architectural style from a "middle age" in the tradition of Giorgio Vasari’s influential myth of the Gothic as a style of northern barbarians (popularized in England by John Evelyn, 1620–1706, and Christopher Wren, 1632–1723), to a privileged historical style fit for revival in the present. This movement involved a conscious reframing of the medieval past, a reversal of the values and historiographical conventions of contemporary Neoclassical art criticism. Most troubling to its contemporary audiences, the revival of the Gothic confronted the Enlightenment idea of historical progress and signaled something deeply disruptive to the conception of an "enlightened" present. As Susan Stewart has argued, eighteenth-century revivals of anachronistic forms (what she calls "distressed" forms) expose the "gap between past and present as a structure of desire. . . . We see the structure of desire as the structure of nostalgia; that is, the
Despite the prevalence of Gothic architecture across Walpole’s writings, he published only one statement of its history and meanings in his art criticism: his remarkable chapter “The State of Architecture to the End of the Reign of Henry VIII,” in his seminal art historical text Anecdotes of Painting in England (1762-71), which earned him the label “England’s Vasari.” Walpole’s construction of the Gothic period as a golden age of art and aesthetics that terminated with the reign of Henry VIII and the Dissolution of the Monasteries was an inheritance from Elizabethan and Stuart historians such as William Camden (1551-1623), John Stow (1525-1605), Henry Spelman (1562-1641) and, particularly, William Dugdale (1605-1686), whose work Walpole knew well. Walpole not only read and employed the wisdom of Dugdale’s texts (The Antiquities of Warwickshire, Monasticon Anglicanum, and The History of St. Paul’s Cathedral in London), but he was also to use Wenceslaus Hollar’s accompanying engravings as models for a number of Gothic installations (such as fireplaces and chapels) at Strawberry Hill, thereby “imprinting” (to use his verb) this vision of the Gothic on the interior of his home (see below and Figs. 16, 21). Writing in the wake of the Dissolution of the Monasteries, which saw the break with Rome and the rise of the Protestant Church of England, Dugdale and his contemporary antiquarians were, like Walpole and many of the “Goths” in his circle, sympathetic to the aesthetic and sensory character of Catholicism, even if few publicly confessed to be “Papists.” Considering the Dissolution to be an “unparalleled catastrophe” that “arrested the stream of English life” through the destruction of much of the nation’s heritage in religious art, they elided the Gothic with Catholicism as aesthetic/religious emblems of a glorious phase of English art and spirituality.

Emphasizing the aesthetic dimension of medieval Catholicism and minimizing its dogmatic aspects, Walpole transformed this Elizabethan-Stuart political narrative into Enlightenment art history by regarding the Gothic as a period of freedom, elegance, and ornamental extravagance that existed between two periods of repressive, ascetic classicism: the “Saxon,” or Romanesque, and the “Grecian,” or Neoclassical. For Walpole, the pointed arch, the signature feature of the Gothic for eighteenth-century commentators, is an “improvement” on the heavy, round-headed arches of the classical tradition. Walpole celebrates, as many would in the eighteenth century and beyond, the apparent “lawlessness” of the Gothic and its exemplification of artistic and social freedom, or “liberty,” as Walpole would have it. Framing the advent of classicism in sixteenth-century English architecture as a “reform” of Gothic, Henrician classicism is elided with broader social “reforms,” notably, the Dissolution of the Monasteries and the resulting destruction of much of England’s Gothic art. “Reform” in Walpole’s Anecdotes is figured as an oppressive force of traditional morality, which he compares to the physical frigidity of Siberia and the political tyranny of Nero. Signaling the end of “true Gothic,” which he implies is possible only in an environment of religious and social freedom, these reforms gave way to a mixed or “mongrel Gothic,” which continued until the final death of the style with the Puritan Revolution or English Civil War of the seventeenth century. These replaced an “Arbiter elegantarium” with a “Censor morum.” Leading to the present age of “enlightenment” (or “reform”), the classical or Neoclassical becomes an agent of social control and a model of aesthetic and corporeal repression. Walpole’s preference for the “unreformed,” libertarian character of the Gothic is decisively manifest in the style of his house and in its notation: his motto (borrowed from his namesake, the Roman poet Horace), painted on the library ceiling of Strawberry Hill, featured in his graphic works: Fari quae sentiat (“Say what one feels”) (Figs. 5, 7, 22).

Typical of the political contours of Walpole’s historiography, artistic style is a reflection of the political character of its period, leading to an integrated, moral reading of the history...
of art. Walpole broadly understood the Glorious Revolution of 1688 to signal a return to political and artistic freedom that allowed for the revival of Gothic architecture (despite the fact that the style would not be revived for a generation) and other arts such as landscape gardening. Informing Walpole’s writing was the Whig tradition of Gothic liberty, which located the freedom of Britons from monarchical absolutism in the “ancient Gothic constitution” of the Saxons that was confirmed in the signing of the Magna Carta. Walpole was to emphasize this association through the display of a copy of the Magna Carta and the death warrant of Charles I in his bedchamber at Strawberry Hill. He explored this trope in his letters to comic effect and not, perhaps, without double entendre: writing to his favorite cousin, Henry Seymour Conway (with whom he had a lengthy emotional and possible romantic attachment), in 1755, he speaks of “Strawberry Castle, where you know how I love to enjoy my liberty. I give myself the airs, in my nutshell, on an old baron.” Walpole does not define precisely what “liberty” means, but he hints at an aesthetic and possibly erotic subtext. This may justify Macaulay’s view that his political appraisal of the Gothic was double-edged: his “whiggism . . . was of a very harmless kind,” which he kept “as he kept the old spears and helmets at Strawberry Hill, merely for show.” The association of Gothic architecture with political freedom had been well established in a number of important Gothic building projects preceding Strawberry Hill, including William Kent’s Merlin’s Cave at Richmond (1736) and James Gibbs’s Gothic Temple of Liberty at Stowe (1741). Although couched within a familiar Whig pattern of history, Walpole developed the idea of Goth-
ic's liberty, or “freedom,” to extend beyond politics to embrace a wider range of sensory, erotic, and emotive states of being.

In Anecdotes of Painting, Walpole juxtaposed the emotional and libidinal “freedom” of Gothic architecture and its effect on the viewer with the rational appeal of classicism (“Grecian” architecture) to “sensibility” and “taste” in a number of antitheses:

It is difficult for the noblest Grecian temple to convey half so many impressions to the mind, as a cathedral does of the best Gothic taste. . . . the latter exhausted the knowledge of the passions in composing edifices whose pomp, mechanism, vaults, tombs, painted windows, gloom and perspectives infused such sensations of romantic devotion. . . . One must have taste to be sensible to the beauties of Grecian architecture; one only wants passions to feel Gothic.44

Gothic's appeal—both as a period and as a style—lies in its appeal to the senses and the imagination: it is a style of aesthetic excess, sensory enrichment, and libidinal pleasure in contrast to the purely intellectual attraction of classicism. Here, as elsewhere in his writings, Walpole's perceptions of architecture were guided by contemporary associationism: the triggering of a range of associations in the viewer's mind when gazing on a work of architecture.45 This inherently subjective interpretative apparatus—which locates pleasure within the individual rather than within the work of art—was manifestly central to Walpole's design and perception of architecture. He illustrates this through an elaborate comparison between St. Peter's in Rome and Westminster Abbey in London:

In St Peter's one is convinced that it was built by great princes—In Westminster-abbey, one thinks not of the builder; the religion of the place makes the first impression—and though stripped of its altars and shrines, it is nearer converting one to popery than all the regular pagodantry of Roman domes.46

Walpole thus alludes to the Gothic's apparent power to convert and persuade, something that is antithetical to classicism's oppressive adherence to formal “rules.” Able to “convert one to popery,” the Gothic thus appeals to an alternative erotic subjectivity. Walpole's friend Thomas Warton developed this parallel division of styles with erotic states of being in his 1782 poem “Verses on Reynolds's Painted Window at New-College.” He is enticed from his acceptable, “chaste” love of classicism by the Gothic’s “treacherous hand” that does not “spare the weakness of a lover's heart” for “ravished pleasures.”47 As literary critics have recently shown, eroticism and particularly illicit sexuality was a dominant motif of the Gothic and one that Horace Walpole was instrumental in shaping.48

Walpole's elision of the Gothic with libidinal and emotional freedom has an important context in Enlightenment art historiography in which “freedom” is not solely or principally political in meaning but signifies a broader physical and cognitive condition. In this sense, Anecdotes of Painting can be compared to Johann Joachim Winckelmann's directly contemporary History of Ancient Art (1764), in which “freedom” operates as an elaborate and multifaceted euphemism to convey the values of artistic cultures of the past. Alex Potts and Whitney Davis have shown that Winckelmann's History coded his own homoerotic aisthesis behind or within the history of Greek art, in which freedom served as a perceived model of “social-sexual organization.”49 In his art historiography Walpole similarly explores the topos of the Gothic's liberty (or “freedom”) with a tinge of irony to implicate the aesthetic and the sexual. But if eroticism exists as one of the possible imbrications of meaning for the Gothic in the context of Walpole's “official” art history, the erotic aspect of the Gothic—as a broader historiographical idiom rather than as an architectural style—was displaced to his Gothic fiction. Most significant in this context is his contemporary 1764–65 novel The Castle of Otranto: A Gothic Story. Using the term “Gothic” for the first time to describe (and invigorate) a new literary tradition, Walpole invites cross-disciplinary study of his Gothic texts (although few architectural historians have followed his lead). Set in Italy during the twelfth or thirteenth century, the story begins after an ancient regicide when Manfred, the unofficial “prince” of Otranto, attempts to marry off his effeminate son Conrad to continue his family's hold on the principality. The plot unravels with the return of the rightful heir, Theodore, but not before, in what must be one of literature's great non sequiturs, Conrad is
Within the mechanics of associationism, the story provides fiction, the main protagonist in the novel was the Gothic crushed to death by a gigantic helmet that suddenly falls from the sky into the courtyard. Initiating a central trope of Gothic setting. The viewer, including John Carter's drawing The Entry of Frederick into the Castle of Otranto (Fig. 8), which hung in the Little Parlour. The novel was, as Walpole confirmed, an associationist response to Strawberry Hill, a fantasy of the Middle Ages inspired by his house's fictive Gothic interiors and collection. Within the mechanics of associationism, the story provides us with a useful guide to the kinds of things that Walpole imagined might take place within (or be normalized by) a Gothic setting.

Literary critics have shown that The Castle of Otranto and the eighteenth-century Gothic novel as a new literary mode thematized sexual alterity through transgressions of social and sexual binaries. For this reason incest, sexual violence, and same-sex desire feature centrally as "queer" reversals of established sexual decorum within the medievalizing narratives of the Gothic novel. Walpole claims to have written the novel in order to depict the constraints of contemporary culture (which certainly implicates sexuality), in which "the great resources of fancy have been dammed up, by a strict adherence to common life." As George Haggerty and others have argued, Otranto and its progeny in the Gothic genre relocate unsanctioned erotic fantasy from the eighteenth-century English present to a Catholic, medieval (and frequently foreign) past. Walpole's novel, of course, does not focus overtly on same-sex desire; rather, it is addressed in code. Centered around the perversions of male effeminacy and the threat of public exposure, Otranto has been understood as "a cipher for how the dynamics of contemporary homophobia operated in its movement towards denigrating both the feminine and the effete." Located within "the long labyrinth of darkness" of a Gothic castle, Walpole's Gothic architectures—the castle in Otranto and Strawberry Hill—introduced a trope of the Gothic in which architecture (the castle, the monastery, and so on) serves as the setting or repository for alternative social and sexual relations.

Walpole's construction of the Gothic enjoyed an important spiritual and political context in England's Catholic past or the Continent's Catholic present. Understood as a subversive "other" mode of spiritual and political allegiance within Protestant England that was anachronistic and/or decisively foreign, Catholicism and its perceived excesses were connected explicitly with sexual license. A rich satirical tradition across literature and prints in the eighteenth century puts lascivious monks and wayward nuns engaging in sexual acts within Gothic monasteries and castles (notably, "nun" had a double meaning as "prostitute" and "nunner" as "brothel" in the period). Catholicism and same-sex desire were especially "marked by a history of tropological substitution and interimplication" for contemporary audiences. Catholic Italy, considered "the Mother and Nurse of sodomy," was widely understood to have transformed the sexualities of aristocratic travelers during the grand tour (of whom Walpole and his friends were examples), thereby "importing" homosexuality into England. As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has argued, the artistic connoisseurship acquired by many gentlemen on the grand tour, tastes for foreign theatrical performance (notably the "Barbarous and Gothick" Italian opera), effeminacy, and an inclination toward Catholicism were features that clustered around an emerging concept of "homosexuality" for aristocratic men.

Although he referred to himself as a "Protestant Goth" and a strain of anti-Catholicism runs through his writing, a romantic appreciation of Catholicism and the aesthetic pompa of the Catholic rite nevertheless formed a part of Walpole's and the Strawberry Committee's aesthetic appreciation of Gothic art and architecture. "I like Popery as well as you, and have shown I do," Walpole claimed to his friend Rev. William Cole, "I like it as I like chivalry and romance. They all furnish one with ideas and visions which Presbyterianism does not. A Gothic church or convent fills one with romantic dreams." Walpole playfully allegorized Strawberry Hill as a Catholic shrine ("A Gothic Vatican of Greece and Rome," borrowing his wisdom from Alexander Pope's Dunciad), and he was clear that aspects of its interiors were intentional approximations of the splendor and "gauntness" of medieval Catholic art, with "all the glory of Popery." Here Walpole references the Tribune or "chapel" (Fig. 3)—a quasi-liturgical space that featured a collection of Catholic liturgical ornamenta (an altar, altarpiece, and candlesticks) beside a range of homoerotic objects such as a sculpture of Antinous, the famed lover of the emperor Hadrian, a "sleeping hermaphrodite between satyrs" (notably, "hermaphrodite" was a contemporary term to describe the third sex), and a miniature representing Ovid's Salmacis and Hermaphroditus—a central myth of sexual corruption—given to Walpole by his friend John Chute.

Erotic fascination with Catholicism was explored through performance and impersonation in Walpole's circle. Walpole, Chute, and George Montagu conducted a faux mass at the Vyne, Hampshire, with ancient mass books and incense, and had "a most Catholic enjoyment of the chapel there"; elsewhere, Walpole recounts dressing Conway in an old helmet found in a parish church in Hertfordshire, thereby relocating his erotic desire into the Catholic or Gothic past: "you can't imagine how it suited him, how antique and handsome he looked, you would have taken him for Rinaldo [from Torquato Tasso's Gerusalemme Liberata, 1581]." This context is significant for understanding Walpole's Gothic villa, which is composed of quotations from Catholic religious architecture, and his collection of artifacts, many of which derive from the Gothic/Catholic past. It also informs his coy naming of Strawberry Hill as an "abbey" (or "convent") of which he was the "abbot." Walpole's friend Richard (Dickie) Bate-man (of whom more will be said below) employed the same trope for his Gothic "Priory" at Old Windsor, and this trope would be reimagined by William Beckford as "abbot" of Fonthill Abbey a generation later. For Walpole and his circle (to paraphrase Ellis Hanson), beneath the cowl of Catholic monasticism was a cult of homoerotic community. Homoerotic cultures were not the only ones that exploited the monastic Catholic trope of the Gothic in the period. The
Gothic’s Catholic and particularly conventual associations served as a guise for the performance of overtly heterosexual license at the former Cistercian abbey at Medmenham and the estate at nearby West Wycombe (Buckinghamshire) under Sir Francis Dashwood in the 1750s and 1760s. The members of Dashwood’s “Hellfire club” indulged in their illicit, orgiastic exploits in Gothic guise as the “Medmenham monks,” under the cloak (literally) of a comic and anticlerical medievalism. The “mock celebration of the more ridiculous rites of the foreign religious orders among the Roman Catholics,” to cite one member’s description, extended to the company of “nuns” (prostitutes) to entertain the monks. Their sexual exploits took place in Gothic architectural settings, including the Cistercian monastery itself and the so-called Hellfire Caves at West Wycombe that were entered via a fictive Gothic church facade erected in 1752 (Fig. 9). The Medmenham monks remind us that the historiographical construction of the Gothic up to the reign of Henry VIII as a period of sexual freedom was not unique to Horace Walpole. On visiting Medmenham, Walpole noted that the chapter house featured a genealogy of the kings and queens of England, but the image of Henry VIII, who dissolved the monasteries, was deliberately erased, implying the continuation of a sexual tradition of “monastic” life. The comparisons with Strawberry Hill extend to the tongue-in-cheek motto employed throughout Medmenham, Fos ce que vouldras, or “Do what you will” (from François Rabelais’s Abbey of Thélème), an allusion to sexual liberty that echoes Walpole’s own Fari quae sentiat.

A “clear division between religious and secular motives” has been sensed in Walpole’s crypto-Catholicism, yet both of these features can be reconciled within his broader, erotic appraisal of Catholicism and the Catholic rite. As Patrick R. O’Malley has recently argued, Catholicism may itself have an important place in the development of modern British sexualities. As alternative and illicit identities within Protestant England, Catholicism and “homosexuality” not only shared common tropes of introspective investment, homosocial brotherhood, the sensory pleasure derived from the unveiled male form, and “the elaborate stagecraft of ritualism [in which] they celebrated the effeminate effusions of the dandy,” but Catholicism as a minoritized subjectivity may also have provided a model for the discourses that constructed a modern “queer” subjectivity epitomized by the “closet” (conveniently, the term “closet” shares a Latin root with the term “cloister”). O’Malley’s work may provide a useful model in which to understand the quasi-devotional appeal of the Gothic and its Catholic connotations for Walpole and his circle.

The broader, interdisciplinary perspective sketched out thus far illuminates the ethical and aesthetic agenda behind Walpole’s “revival” of the Gothic as an architectural style and the sexual/libidinal emotions that it signified. For Walpole, the Gothic represented a lost erotic past, characterized by freedom from sexual “norms” and freedom from artistic and sociopolitical stricture, two features that form part of a common approach to his aesthetics. Walpole’s Gothic becomes a discourse on modernity’s prehistory, and particularly on the aspects of human culture that have been lost or erased for modernity to be put into place. Although Walpole would be hesitant to admit it, his Gothic was very much an Enlightenment construct: his eroticized historiography of the Gothic was consistent with the contours of contemporary art historiography in general, in which aesthetic judgment and (homo)erotic desire, or artistic aisthèse and sexual aisthèse, were part of the same approach to the phenomenological world and can be paralleled in contemporary writings of Winckelmann, Joseph Addison, and others.

**The Licentiousness of Gothic: Bodies and Buildings**

Although focused on the Gothic of the Middle Ages up to the reign of Henry VIII, Walpole’s theory also paved the way for a positive interpretation of the revival of the Gothic as a new style of eighteenth-century architecture. He addressed this directly, stating: “Gothic architecture, inflicted as a reproach on our ancient buildings in general by our ancestors who revived the Grecian taste, is now considered by a species of modern elegance” to be positioned against the values of the older, established, classical mode. Employing a biological metaphor, Gothic reenters eighteenth-century culture as a new “species,” characterized as “genteele” and with “grace” and “refinement.” Walpole suggests that the Gothic, or the “modern style,” is representative of the new modes in the eighteenth century (the “new liberties of taste”), which positions it among various new phenomena, including new modes of sexuality to which it is related.

But Walpole’s voice was one of many in the debate over new architectural styles. For traditionalist critics in Augustan England, the novelties of the effeminized, third-sex body and modern Gothic architecture signaled degenerations of models of ideal form, the first in the aristocratic gentleman and the second in Palladian classicism. This debate was epitomized in a posthumous critique titled simply “Strawberry Hill” (1818), in which an anonymous author interrogates the psychosexual origins of Walpole’s tastes in art and architecture and compares them with his father’s tastes for the Palladian at Houghton (Figs. 1, 6):

His father distinguished himself as a lover of the arts, by the Houghton collection... [Horace] Walpole may,
therefore, be supposed to have inherited a portion of that
taste which he cultivated, though in a less elevated course.
Nor shall we pretend to determine whether it proceeded
from the structure of his mind, the consequent habits of
his life, or his physical constitution, which was naturally
weak, that his pursuits, though not without taste and elegance, had little of masculine energy or mental capacious-
ness. If the catalogue of the Houghton pictures were com-
pared with that of the Strawberry Hill curiosities, the
minds of the two noble collectors would be distinctly
determined.*

Our author here reads Horace Walpole and his tastes for the
Gothic as weak, effeminized versions of Sir Robert Walpole
and his Neoclassical tastes at Houghton. Lacking "masculine
energy or mental capaciousness" and possessing a body that
was "naturally weak," Walpole is the subject of a common
homophobic trope of mental and physical degeneracy or
weakness as a code for homosexuality, the "consequent habits
of his life." In this reading, the apple had fallen too far from
the tree: Sir Robert's Palladianism at Houghton was conso-
nant with aristocracy, patriarchy, and the political and moral
authority of the British Empire, while his son's taste for the
Gothic become the product of his queerness, an aesthetic
and corporeal degeneration of his father's muscular Neoclas-
sical example.

Walpole’s appraisals of the Gothic, and those of his critics,
were informed by a lengthy and multivalent discourse on the
propriety and gender of architectural form initiated by the
Roman author Vitruvius, much of which was based on direct
analogy between architecture and the human body. Within
this essentially ethical discourse, the orders became figured
as human "types," and their deviations from canons of design
served as analogues for bodily deviations from established
modes of conduct. For the influential theorist John Shute
(d. 1563), for example, the muscularity of the Doric order
was compared with Hercules, since both possessed the virtue
of fortitude (Fig. 10), while for Henry Wotton the elaborate
Corinthian order is "lasciviously decked like a Courtesan," thus
interpreting the plastic enrichments of the capital as an
expression of the wantonness of the Corinthians (1624).*

Within this context, classicism served as a model of the ideal
aristocratic body based on the tenets of symmetry, propor-
tion, harmony, and decorum. As Inigo Jones famously stated,
classicism was to be "masculine and unaffected" in its exter-
nal propriety, a sentiment echoed throughout eighteenth-
century architectural theory. Bodies and buildings in the
classical mode were characterized by a decorous reduction in
exterior ornamentation, by corporeal control and architec-
tonic stability. Eliding morality with physical or decorative
restraint, the body-building analogy in the classical mode may
be understood as an episode in the formation of the English
"stiff upper lip."* The eighteenth century saw the introduction of a range of highly topical nuances in this discourse that were positive
reflections of the changing sexual climate. Writing in his text
The Polite Philosopher; or, An Essay on that Art which Makes a Man
Happy in Himself and Agreeable to Others (1734), James For-
rester argued that "Behaviour is like Architecture, the Sym-
metry of which pleases us so much, that we examine not into

its Parts, which if we did we should find much Nicety required
in forming such a structure." Forrester shifts from prose to
poetry to develop an elaborate comparison between the "po-
lite" human body and classicism, in particular, Inigo Jones's
Palladian Banqueting Hall in London.* Forrester's elabora-
tion of the Vitruvian analogy was a new theorization indebted
to eighteenth-century transformations in aesthetics. As An-
thony Vidler has shown, the early eighteenth century wit-
tnessed a revision to the Vitruvian analogy that advanced what he has called "a more extended bodily pro-
jection in architecture" inspired directly by the aesthetics of the sublime.* This shift is epitomized by Edmund Burke's
(1729–1797) replacement of the precise formal analogy be-
tween architecture and the human body with a complex
psychological analogy between architecture and the various
states of the body, both mental and physical, and, by exten-
sion, psychosexual.

The revival of the Gothic in the eighteenth century as an
architectural style demanded that it be located and rational-
ized within this tradition. Conceived of as an "other" to
classicism, the Gothic naturally assumed a range of associa-
tions related to femininity or sexual alterity.* In an impor-
tant passage evaluating the corporeality of the classical and
the Gothic, Walpole contrasts "the rational beauties of regu-
lar architecture [classicism], with the unrestrained licentiousness of that which is called Gothic. While Walpole employs the term "licentiousness" to describe physical and aesthetic freedom from moral censorship elsewhere in *Anecdotes of Painting,* his reference here is to an established topos of architectural theory in which the terms "licentiousness" and "license" formed part of an ethical critique of deviations from "proper" antique form. Although he wore his learning lightly, Walpole was an attentive student of architectural history, and he knew well that in the historiography of the Gothic, "licentiousness" was the most common pejorative employed in commentaries on the style by Wotton, John Evelyn, Christopher Wren, and others. They derided the Gothic as a "fantastical and licentious Manner of Building," focusing in particular on its ornamental character, defined by "crinkle-crankle," "not naked of gaudy sculpture, trite and busy carvings" and "not Worthy of the Name of Architecture." The deviations articulated by license were gendered as feminine or effeminate elaborations of or to "proper" antique form. Similar critiques were advanced by Englishmen about the foreign and equally deviant forms of the Continental Baroque. In the *Vitruvius Britannicus* of 1717, Colen Campbell raged against the effeminate ornamental excess of the Continental Baroque compared to the restraint of English classicism, calling it "affected and licentious," an art that "has endeavored to debauch Mankind with his odd and chimical beauties." For Campbell and for Walpole, the ornamental additions of the indigenous Gothic and the Continental Baroque not only were deviations from "ideal" form but they also amounted to a kind of effeminate drag: an ornamental perversion of the architectural body itself. Always the contrarian, Walpole appropriates license as a positive critique of the Gothic, thus turning this critical tradition on its head. In doing so, Walpole alluded to broader changes of taste and corporeality that extended beyond the sphere of architecture. It is not a coincidence that *license* and *licentiousness* were used contemporaneously to describe effeminate deviations from heteronormative male conduct, most conspicuously, homosexuality, in a range of cultural productions, from law to fashion and theatre. In theater as in architecture, theatricality and ornamental excess threatened established conceptions of decorum, raising the specter of sexual difference, sodomy, and queerness. Posing a fundamental challenge to Augustan aesthetics and its gendered paradigms, Walpole's "licentiousness" registered as a double entendre—a comment on bodies and/as buildings.

The elision of the licentious modern styles with the bodies and manners of the third sex is evidenced in a number of contemporary critiques of architecture. The house of Walpole's friend—and rival arbiter of taste—Dickie Bateman at nearby Old Windsor (the Priory) is a case in point. Rebuilt in the Gothic mode of Strawberry Hill from 1758 by Walpole's designers, Johann Heinrich Müntz and Richard Bentley, it was a statement of the Gothic as the dominant taste within Walpole's circle (Fig. 11). In two contemporary accounts, the character of the house is likened to a specific caricature of male homosexuality: the "fribble," which was satirized as a new sexual "type" in print and on the contemporary stage (Fig. 12). Defined by his attenuated domesticity, prissiness, and flamboyant manners, the fribble may be understood to anticipate the "queen" in contemporary constructions of homosexuality. In 1759 Lord Lyttelton characterized the fussy rococo hybridity of the house as "half Gothick, half attick, half Chinese and completely fribble," while in 1768 Mrs. Delany used the same term to convey the effect of the Gothic-Chinese library of the house (no longer extant): "his library is indeed as fribblish as himself, and so furnished with looking glass that had it the property of representing to him his inside as well as outside, it might read him a better lesson than he could find in his whole collection of books, and shew him his own insignificancy." Identifying the house with Bateman's own "fribblish ness," Lyttelton and Delany unam-
significantly, Walpole was also called a fribble and his tastes in architecture were labeled fribblish in a homophobic attack on Walpole’s affections for Gothic architecture and his “fribble tutor” in taste (perhaps Thomas Gray or Bateman himself).

Given this history, we do not risk imposing contemporary sexual categories on Walpole’s villa by considering it a supremely defiant statement of architectural self-fashioning (or self-exposure, to paraphrase contemporary critiques). Walpole’s construction of Strawberry Hill as an “extended body,” to use Jill Campbell’s phrase—what he understood to be a complex projection of his sexual subjectivity—was challenged in 1764 with the publication of William Guthrie’s Reply to the Counter Address, which exposed Walpole’s love for his cousin Conway. This bitter attack criticized Walpole’s effeminacy (“by nature malish, by disposition female”) and equated him with a chimerical creature—a hermaphrodite. Writing in a fit of despair to Thomas Pitt, Walpole states, “You know the passion I have for Strawberry Hill, but trust me, at this moment I know I could with pleasure see it sold, if reduced to it by suffering for my country and its principles.” Walpole’s outing resulted in a radical if temporary “masculinization,” by which he devised to make himself “more manly” (Walpole’s words), which meant severing his ties to the subject of the 1764 critique, his “queer” or feminine self, which Walpole specifically connected to his Gothic villa. Not unlike the destruction of the castle at the climactic end of The Castle of Otranto, to which the letter has been compared, Walpole’s public outing deflates the fantasy of Strawberry Hill as a safely disguised projection of his erotic self, so much so that his “real” self and his architectural self became distanced from his newly masculinized self-image.

Parody, Replication, and Miniaturization at Strawberry Hill

We can no longer delay a focused analysis of the architecture of Strawberry Hill in the light of the argument presented thus far. As we turn to explore these ideas, it bears restating that, although conceived within the terms of an established building type, Strawberry Hill was stylistically and formally unique. Unlike previous experiments in the style that employed the Gothic as an ornamental vocabulary to adorn what were traditional Palladian structures, such as William Kent’s Esher Palace (which has been called Palladian Gothic), Strawberry Hill mirrors the additive, ramshackle building patterns of medieval architecture, with ornament of different periods and dates, seemingly disconnected spatial volumes, and varying floor levels. If not the first Gothic mansion in England, Walpole’s villa was the first domestic building to attempt to simulate the decorative and spatial effects of Gothic domestic architecture, thereby transforming Walpole’s villa into an elaborate medieval stage set. The house has often been considered a random mélange of Gothic ornament from different periods and places used out of its appropriate context, and it has been explained as a product of Walpole’s nonclassificatory and romantic rather than scholarly vision of the medieval past. To some extent this view is based on Walpole’s own flippant denigrations of his house as “a paper fabric” and “an assemblage of curious trifles.” But taking Walpole’s characterizations literally obscures what careful students of medieval architecture he and the “Committee” were: it is surely significant that some of the earliest meditations on the taxonomy and periodization of medieval architecture and ornament took place within their milieu.

As suggested above, Walpole’s appraisal of the Gothic as a “licentious” style was more than simply a revision of Neoclassical aesthetics: it was central to his aesthetic appreciation of architecture, and it can be understood as the very premise of the language of ornament at Strawberry Hill. As an example of “the new liberty of taste” or “the modern style,” Strawberry Hill’s modernity was manifest in its “licentious” appraisal of medieval buildings—the consciousness of an evident chasm between the forms of medieval Gothic and their replications in modern Gothic. Walpole and his circle addressed this directly in their written exchanges on the house. Gray coined the term “gothicism” to describe the house’s effects, articulating a sense of historical distance from the medieval past in modern Gothic. Walpole separates the interpretation of the common observer of Strawberry Hill from that of the “true Goth[s]” (that is, the “Committee”) when he notes that “every true Goth must perceive that they [the rooms of his house] are more the works of fancy than of imitation.” Analyzing Walpole’s idiomical Gothic, Charles Eastlake, in his foundational History of the Gothic Revival, noted that Walpole’s replication of Gothic forms at Strawberry Hill took the form of parody. “Parody” for Eastlake was a stick with which to beat the early statements of the Gothic Revival by Horace Walpole and Betty Langley, which, within his Victorian predilection for archaeologically correct replication, failed as inaccurate
simulations of medieval Gothic architecture. However biased, Eastlake's assessment was correct. Walpole left plenty of evidence that parody was a significant aspect of Strawberry Hill. For example, Walpole comically appropriates a doggerel passage from Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles* (1577), when he quips that Strawberry Hill was almost like the home of a medieval baron:

When I am in my castle of Bungey
Situate upon the river Wavenay
I ne care for the King of Cockney.\textsuperscript{112}

Historians of architecture have not, since Eastlake, been sufficiently attentive to the subversive humor of Strawberry Hill, its witty, parodic nature. Parody, however, was a dominant strain of Walpole's medievalism in general, as historians of his literature have recently shown, a point to which I shall return below.\textsuperscript{113}

For the moment it will suffice to point out that Walpole's licentious Gothic—the formal deviations of its ornamentation from its sources—implies radical aesthetic leaps from medieval Gothic to modern Gothic. Walpole's *Description* would seem to be an exposition or even a justification of this
approach, since it offers the reader or visitor explanatory notes on the origins of the ornament in the house, and thus on its status as a replication. For example, in the Holbein Room, "The chimney-piece, designed by Mr [Richard] Bentley, is chiefly taken from the tomb of archbishop Warham [1450-1532] at Canterbury." He deliberately fractures the "originality" of the house by pointing out that the fireplace stands in a chain of replications, from the medieval monument, to the recording and publication of the monument, the reproduction of specific formal aspects of the monument at Strawberry Hill (note Walpole states it is only "chiefly" taken from Warham’s tomb), and, finally, the engraving of the monument for the Description (Fig. 13). Archbishop Warham’s tomb was an appropriate choice for the Holbein Room, which was intended to be an early “period room” featuring objects that celebrated the sixteenth-century history of England. John Dart’s engraving in the History and Antiquities of the Cathedral Church of Canterbury (1726) provided the source for the two tiers of richly embellished Perpendicular niches executed in wood that flank the fireplace, but little else (Fig. 14). Bentley used the single row of niches on either side of the tomb, multiplied them by three, and set them within the form of semicircular turrets. The canopy work above the tomb is removed altogether and replaced with a repetitious frieze of Gothic arches to make space for a main image above the mantel, and the tomb is replaced by the fireplace. These alterations not only transgress and secularize the original functions of frequently sacred or commemorative objects derived from the medieval past but also imply deliberate material transgressions, as stone-built medieval Gothic is replicated in modern materials (plaster, woodwork, and paint). Walpole plays with the fictive materiality of his “paper house” when he jokes that a painted shield with the face of Medusa that hung in his “armoury” (Fig. 4) was “almost in too good taste ... to put my Gothic house to shame—I wish the Medusa could turn it into stone!”

The same relation between model and copy can be charted throughout the ornamentation at Strawberry Hill. In the ceiling of the Round Room (constructed by 1762), Walpole employed the Palladian architect Robert Adam to create one of the most dramatic statements of the Gothic (Fig. 15). As Walpole notes in his Description, the ceiling was “taken from a round window in old Saint Paul’s.” His source here was an engraving by Hollar in Dugdale’s History of St. Paul’s (the cathedral was destroyed by fire in 1666), from which he
derives the forms of the original thirteenth-century rose window in the north transept (Fig. 16). Employing the forms of the engraving, Walpole transposed the linear outlines of the rose window onto the ceiling in paint and plaster. Referencing neither a vault pattern nor a real rose window, Walpole uses Hollar’s engraving to endow the Round Room with elegant Gothic ornament that becomes almost completely reimagined and decontextualized. Adam’s 1766 drawing shows that yellow and brown were proposed for the main tracery and white for the minor tracery, while the inner lancets and quatrefoils were tricked out in light blue (Fig. 17). The greater lancets were pink, the large quatrefoils green, and the half quatrefoils around the circumference purple, thus simulating coloristic effects (if not the materials) of medieval stained glass. Similar transpositions are evidenced in the entrance hall at Strawberry Hill, where imitation blind Perpendicular tracery based on the chantry chapel of Prince Arthur at Worcester Cathedral constructed about 1502 was painted onto wallpaper after the designs of Bentley (Figs. 18, 19). The employment of a modern mode of mural decoration as a base for trompe l’œil representations of medieval stone tracery was surely what Walpole had in mind when he mentioned the “satisfaction of imprinting the gloomth of abbys and cathedrals on one’s house” in a famous letter to Horace Mann, cleverly merging “gloom” and “depth.” If the allusion to a medieval referent was at all significant in creating the staircase, wrapping the fictive tracery around the staircase walls created the effect of the medieval chantry chapel turned inside out. As Barrett Kalter has demonstrated, Gothic patterned wallpaper during the eighteenth century participated in a “commodification of nostalgia” for the medieval past in its popularization of Gothic ornament in a contemporary, even nouveau riche mode of interior decoration. It also indicates something of the multiple historicisms at play in Strawberry Hill, since wallpaper is a new object in an ancient style without a prototype.

Strawberry Hill’s Gothic simulacra also indicate deliberate departures from the scale of medieval Gothic architecture. Throughout the house, Gothic ornament not only is taken out of context and reconstructed in new materials, but it is also re-created in an entirely different, and typically diminutive, scale. This is evident in a long list of objects, from the uses of medieval tombs for fireplaces to the design of furniture, such as William Hallett’s chairs of about 1755: carved in beech and painted black to simulate ebony, these chairs employ miniaturizations of Decorated fourteenth-century window tracery on their backs, based on a synthesis of monumental tracery designs by Walpole and Bentley (Fig. 20). As in furniture, so in cabinetry: taken from another engraving by Hollar in Dugdale’s History of St. Paul’s, the bookcases are wooden simulations of the thirteenth-century stone choir screen doors, referred to as “compressions of the choir screen at Old St Paul’s” (Figs. 7, 21). As Jill Campbell has recently pointed out, the miniaturization and transformation of monumental forms were central to Walpole’s design aesthetic and to the language of description he developed “with his friends and members of the ‘Committee’; “In much of Walpole’s correspondence, an aesthetics of ‘the miniature’... offers a highly-developed medium of connection among them, in the sociable tonalities of epistolary exchange and in the collaborative creation of a ‘castlet.’” Walpole regularly speaks of Strawberry Hill in diminutive terms as “a nutshell” or “a baby-house [dollhouse] full of playthings.” Shortly after acquiring the house from the famous toyshop owner Mrs. Chenevix, he compared it to an objet d’art: “It is a little plaything that I got out of Mrs Chenevix’s shop and is the prettiest bauble you ever saw.” The metaphors of the house as jewelry and therefore as a...
collectible, precious commodity of the upper classes (and particularly of women) can be traced through his letters, where, for example, "Strawberry" is "set in enameled meadows and filigree hedges, this small Euphrates is rolled, and little finches wave their wings of gold." When Walpole invited the medievalist Thomas Warton to Strawberry Hill, he mentioned "some miniatures of scenes of which I am pleased to find you love—cloisters, screens, round towers, and a printing house, all indeed of baby dimensions, would put you a little in mind of the age of Caxton [1415–1492]." Walpole’s miniaturizations of the house and of its ornament—his allegories of the house as collectible object or bauble—suggest not merely a shared language of description between writer and reader but a shared language based in effeminized reversals of normative male taste. Significantly, diminutiveness, or "the little manner"—art as personal commodity or ornament rather than art as monumental form—was regularly coded as female in eighteenth-century aesthetics, in contrast to the "Grand/Great Manner" of Neoclassicism. Alexander Pope, for example, critiqued these tastes as "those Bawbles most Ladies affect," while Lord Shaftesbury confirms: "Reason for this little manner, viz. cabinet-furniture, process-de-cabinet for ladies and the court. Ladies hate the great manner, love baby-sizes, toys, miniature." The homophobic satire The Pretty Gentlemen (1747) goes further still in aligning the tastes of the third sex with those of women, both of whom are disposed to "softer and more refined Studies; Furniture, Equipage, dress, the Tiring Room, and the Toy-shop." These gendered readings of scale and form help us to understand that in the miniaturized forms of Strawberry Hill and in the developed language of ekphrasis used to describe them, Walpole’s Gothic performs artistic and literary tropes of male effeminacy and of the third sex in particular. Considered in these terms, Walpole’s idiomatic appraisal of the Gothic maps rather neatly onto modern notions of camp, which have often enough been applied to his medievalism.
Indeed, his construction of "licentious" may be understood to have operated analogously with modern notions of camp. This is an issue that cannot be examined in depth here, but we may usefully consider, as Susan Sontag and others have done, Walpole's Strawberry Hill as a formative statement of camp, bound as it is to the origins of both modern sexualities and aesthetics. 128

"Queer Family Romance" at Strawberry Hill
An understanding of Walpole's sexuality and the nature of the bonds he shared with his circle also informs a reading of aspects of Strawberry Hill's collections and the strategies of their display. During Walpole's lifetime, and up until the dispersal of the contents of the house in a highly public sale in 1842, Strawberry Hill housed a burgeoning collection of artwork, objects, and curiosities that were cataloged in his own Description (1774, 1784). As Alicia Weisberg-Roberts has recently reminded us, a number of deliberate narrative and thematic trajectories, or "discursive trails," were constructed through the display of unique or "singular" objects (to use Walpole's term) at Strawberry Hill: literary (objects that reminded the viewer of the house's fictive "other," the castle of Otranto), antiquarian and nationalistic (as in the collection of objects connected with famous figures from British history, such as the hat of Cardinal Wolsey or the gloves of James I), and familial or genealogical (the construction of royal and family genealogies through the display of portraits, heraldry, and objects). 129 An overlooked aspect of Strawberry Hill and the collection that it was designed to house is its implicit and frequently explicit construction of diverse "familial" connections—articulating both Walpole's biological family and what may be called his "queer family" of homoerotically inclined friends—evident in the display of heraldry in stained glass, wall painting, on the house's fireplace mantels and furniture, and in the portraits that hung in the house in carefully structured family groups.

The genealogical displays of heraldry and portraiture at Strawberry Hill were integral components of the house and to what Walpole took to be "Gothic" about it. They were based in a specific conception of medieval architecture and the aristocratic family seat in particular that was filled with heraldic blazons and other emblems of family lineage. A passage in the Gentleman's Magazine of 1739 provides an established contemporary image: "Methinks there was something respectable in those old hospitable Gothick halls, hung round with the Helmets, Breast-Plates, and Swords of our Ancestors; I entered them with a Constitutional Sort of Reverence and look'd upon those arms with Gratitude, as the Terror of former Ministers and the Check of Kings." 130 But Walpole's construction was also indebted to his active antiquarian research into the history of his own family—the Walpoles on his father's side and the Shorters on his mother's. Glossing his own familial displays at Strawberry Hill, he often mused that he was building a new "family seat," a replacement of sorts of his father's former estate at Houghton (Sir Robert Walpole died in 1745, two years before the acquisition of Strawberry Hill). Writing to his friend George Montagu in 1753, Walpole called Strawberry Hill "the castle of my ancestors." He goes on to describe his armory
The use of the word “castle” is significant: in the eighteenth century, this term connoted ancient family seats and encouraged associative connections to England’s great ancestral mansions, an evocation of the perceived patriarchal structures of the Middle Ages.¹³²

There is, of course, much to recommend these views: Walpole and the “Committee” were actively interested in genealogy and heraldry as extensions of their antiquarian endeavor, and they employed Strawberry Hill as a setting to display and order their various emblems of collecting and genealogical research. But here, as in other aspects of Walpole’s appraisal of the Gothic, there was a subversive double edge that seems to question, if not substantially undermine, literal readings.¹³³ Studies of Walpole’s Gothic literature, what have been called his “family Romances”—The Castle of Otranto and The Mysterious Mother (1768)—have rightly interpreted these narratives as ciphers for Walpole’s complex family dynamics: in these narratives, sexual sin—particularly incest—consistently thwarts patterns of patriarchal succession as the fundamental mode of transmitting power between father and son. Domineering fathers are vanquished at the feet of sympathetic mothers.

When understood in the light of his sexuality, Walpole’s new “family seat” at Strawberry Hill appears to be encoded with a series of paradoxes. Strawberry Hill was an “ancient” Gothic family seat without a history. If it was intended to be the new “seat” of the Walpoles, then it was one that was self-consciously anathema in style and meaning to his father’s estate at Houghton, as numerous commentators have mentioned. Second, and perhaps more important, Strawberry Hill was the “family seat” of a resigned bachelor whose sexuality made it unlikely that he would produce heirs (as he and his circle manifestly understood).¹³⁶ These tensions between a patriarchal family seat and an alternative sexuality can be gleaned in the objects themselves and in the strategies of their display at Strawberry Hill. Indeed, Walpole’s “family seat” seems to hold competing genealogies: Walpole’s biological family—real and imagined—and his “queer family” of friends and associates. Working from Sigmund Freud’s 1909 essay “Family Romances,” which explores the child’s conscious remaking of his/her lineage during adolescence,¹³⁷ Whitney Davis defines queer family romance as “the witting (or even witty) invention of alternate inheritances by a person who finds himself or herself disoriented in the imprinted norms of the parental matrix.” Within queer art collections, queer family romance articulates “family resemblances among forms that allowed queer significances (homosexual or not) to emerge into visibility even when particular artifacts did not inherently possess a queer iconography,” and it “relays imaginations of a better social order, and possibly a radically different one.”¹³⁸

Walpole’s family romance is recognizable in the displays of heraldry at Strawberry Hill, reflecting his descent from the Walpole and Shorter lines. Complicating this picture, Walpole also introduced a third line of ancestry in the Robsart family. In his early genealogical research (what W. S. Lewis called “dredging the past for distinguished ancestors”), he discovered, presumably in William Musgrave’s 1738 Brief and True History of Sir Robert Walpole and His Family, the medieval relations of the Walpoles in the Robsarts, a significant Norfolk family.¹³⁹ Sir Terry Robsart was the maternal grandfather of John Walpole, Sir Robert’s great-great-grandfather, and the presence of these medieval relations serves to simultaneously emphasize and substantially replace Horace’s father’s presence in the home with an alternative family line. The Robsarts offered a number of distinguished ancestors, but Walpole focused particularly on the figure of Terry Robsart, a Knight of the Garter, whom he took to be a famed Crusader, a chivalric champion from the wars of Richard II. Willfully, perhaps, Walpole confused Terry Robsart (knighted 1483 and died 1496) with Sir John Robsart, who fought in the Saracen wars under Richard II (r. 1367–99). As often as not, Walpole referenced a fabled Crusader as a cipher for his father’s family in the figure of Terry Robsart.

The library at Strawberry Hill formed the setting for the grandest of Walpole’s genealogical displays (Fig. 7). The trompe l’ceil ceiling was a design by Walpole and Bentley, painted by Andien de Clermont in 1754. Walpole elaborates it in his Description:
In the middle is a shield of Walpole surrounded by quarters born by the family. At each end in a roundel is a knight on horseback, in the manner of ancient seals; that next to the window bears the arms of Fitz Osbert, the other of Robsart. At the four corners are shields, helmets, and mantles: on one shield is a large H, on another a W, semée of cross crosslets, in imitation of an ancient bearing of the Howards in Blomfield's Norfolk.*

The heraldic blazons and replications of sigillographic images of knights celebrated his medieval (and, as Walpole believed) Crusader ancestry, linking his arms and initials with the Fitz Osberys and the Robsarts (Fig. 22).* The devices of the Walpole arms and crest were dismantled and reemployed in a decorative frieze running along the top of the bookcases in alternating cross crosslets and Catherine wheels. Walpole was not above bold and deliberate invention in his display of family ancestry, such as the swords, shields, and armor in his “armory” on the staircase landing leading to his library, which he suggested were “all supposed to be taken by Sir Terry Robsart in the holy wars” (Walpole’s italics confirm the degree of artifice involved) (Fig. 4).* Positioned symmetrically above each of Chute’s imitation Gothic bookcases was a portrait set within a roundel and framed by a pointed arch (thirteen in total) celebrating the Shorter family—Walpole’s legitimate aristocratic lineage from his mother’s side. Framing this display of family lineage were stained-glass portraits of Charles I and II and the royal arms of England and a late fifteenth-century wedding portrait that Walpole took to be the marriage of King Henry VI (now attributed to an anonymous Flemish master and titled Marriage of a Saint).*

In the genealogical displays of the library, Walpole manifestly privileges his mother’s aristocratic line over his father’s “notoriously common” ancestry, the only belatedly knighted prime minister, Sir Robert Walpole. Emma Clery was no doubt correct to describe Strawberry Hill’s genealogical displays as “an ingenious form of revenge” on Walpole’s father.* A straightforward “family romance” in the Freudian sense can be detected in Walpole’s denigration of his father at Strawberry Hill (whose relatively common heritage was trumped by his mother’s aristocratic pedigree) and his promotion of the Shorter family. Walpole’s fragmentation of traditional patriarchal patterns has elsewhere been understood as a critique of the aristocratic order and of the sentimental bonds of the bourgeois family in contemporary England. Exposing the structures of this critique, Marcie Frank and others have shown that parody was central to the construction of Walpole’s Gothic “family romances.”* This observation helps to nuance the earlier point made about the parodic nature of Walpole’s architectural Gothic and suggests a broader, subversive conception of the Gothic as a historicist idiom as Walpole understood it.

Walpole’s unwriting of “family romance” in the display of the Strawberry Hill collection can also be sensed in the construction of alternative, “queer” genealogies in the house.
The images of “family romance” in the quasi-public and scholarly space of the library can be usefully contrasted with images of “queer family romance” in the more private spaces of the Round Room and the Blue Bedchamber (Figs. 15, 23). The Blue Bedchamber was reached on the route from the refectory to the library and was created in the same construction campaign. As Michael Snodin has recently proposed, its hang was “conceived as a complement” to the ancestral display in the library but it was a complement that alluded to biological and nonbiological forms of family. The hang comprised seven paintings by the society portraitist John Giles Eccardt (1720–1779) commissioned by Walpole between about 1746 and 1755. Over the Gothic fireplace (designed by Bentley) hung a posthumous image of Sir Robert Walpole and Catherine Shorter, his first wife, of about 1746, in a frame in the style of Grinling Gibbons of about 1680 (Fig. 24). Set in front of Houghton Hall, this portrait celebrated Walpole’s maternal and paternal ancestry and his parents’ shared legacy of Houghton, but it also implied an erasure of his father’s very public affair with a mistress—Maria Skerrett—whom he married very shortly after his wife’s death in 1738, much upsetting Horace. Also by Eccardt were images of Walpole’s half sister (born to Skerrett), Maria Walpole, and her husband, Charles Churchill. The remaining portraits in the room were related in one way or another to what has been called Walpole’s “erotic camaraderie”: Conway; the poet and playwright Sir Charles Hanbury Williams (who holds a copy of his play Isabella, or the Morning—a clever satire on the third sex featuring their mutual friend Dickie Bateman and other men in their circle); the scholar and poet Thomas Gray (Fig. 25), with whom Walpole had a youthful romantic liaison in the course of his grand tour; Bentley, a member of the Strawberry Committee (Fig. 26); and Walpole himself, positioned in front of Strawberry Hill (Fig. 27). With the exception of his parents’ portrait, all of the other paintings in the room participated in the current fashion of historicized family portraiture in which subjects appeared in the style of past masters and frequently in anachronistic costume. Walpole noted that Bentley’s, Gray’s, and his own portrait were modeled after the style of Anthony Van
Dyck, while Conway’s was based on that of Antoine Watteau and Maria Walpole’s on Peter Paul Rubens’s. This created what eighteenth-century observers would have understood as a “family portrait gallery,” notably, those attuned to grand displays of similar historicizing family portraits familiar from the country house tour. Emphasizing this continuity, Walpole framed each portrait (again, his parents’ portrait excepted) in black and gold frames “carved after those to Lombard’s prints from Van Dyck, but with emblems particular to each person.” Employing the technologies of contemporary family portraiture, Walpole’s hang in the Blue Bedchamber constituted a clever rethinking of the genealogical display in the library to express the familial bonds between himself and his intimate coterie: a queer family romance.

This was one of a number of potential displays of queer family romance at Strawberry Hill. Walpole’s Round Room held “Six curious and interesting sketches, drawn at Venice, Portraits of the Earl of Lincoln, Horace Walpole, John Chute, Joseph Spence, Mr Chaloner and Mr Whitesend [that is, Francis Whitehead, an intimate of Chute] by Rosalba [Carriera],” the prominent Venetian pastelist, which were made when Walpole and his friends were on the grand tour in 1741. Only the sketch of Chute now survives. In all likelihood these were the preparatory sketches for later pastels that hung at Houghton Hall and elsewhere. How these images were displayed is unclear, since they do not appear in Walpole’s 1774 or 1784 Description, but for Walpole and his circle these images recalled the heady days of his grand tour, a journey that resulted in his introduction to Chute, a split with Thomas Gray that would be later reconciled, and a renewed affair with his cousin Henry Fiennes-Clinton, 9th Earl of Lincoln. As George Rousseau suggests, “Walpole’s Grand Tour evolved to a large extent out of his homoerotic needs” and “virtually institutionalised [his] homosocial relationships.” Celebrating Walpole’s overlapping homosocial circles—his queer family—the groupings of portraits provide visual corollaries to his witty inventions of coterie labels, such as the “Strawberry Committee” and the “Quadruple Alliance” formed at Eton of Walpole, Gray, Richard West, and Thomas Ashton. It is significant that the men in Walpole’s circle hung similar galleries in their homes. In 1768 Bateman’s new Gothic dining room at Old Windsor held a gallery of his own “queer family” (Fig. 11), and Chute’s Gothic mansion at the Vyne, Hampshire, likewise featured a portrait collection celebrating the circle around Walpole, featuring Chute, Gray, Bentley, and Whitehead, what Maurice Howard has called “a true ‘Strawberry circle.’” These galleries demonstrate clever ways in which third-sex coteries were assimilated into the eighteenth-century domestic interior.

“Queer family romance” may also be a useful model for understanding the dissemination of architectural style among Walpole’s circle. As the paradigmatic statement of Gothic taste in England in the second half of the eighteenth century,
Strawberry Hill was mythologized by Walpole as a court of Gothic taste over which he presided as (self-appointed) ruler, and his friends (often fellow builders in the style) as courtiers. These men were responsible for building, designing, or advising on a long list of buildings in the Gothic style of Strawberry Hill, effectively popularizing the style. As we have seen, Walpole’s writings are full of (often tongue-in-cheek) allusions to the familial bonds he felt for his fellow “Goths” and for Strawberry Hill as a product of their shared efforts and tastes. Walpole extended this familial relationship to implicate the very houses built by his circle in the Strawberry Hill style. Walpole called Lee Priory in Kent (destroyed in 1954), built for Thomas Barrett (d. 1803) between 1785 and 1790 by the architect James Wyatt (1746–1813), “my Gothic child” and “a child of Strawberry, prettier than the parent,” thus positing a familial relationship between his own Strawberry Hill and the Gothic buildings built by his friends. Lee Priory had a “Strawberry Room” (now installed at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, Fig. 28) built in homage to Strawberry Hill; Walpole described it as “a delicious closet too, so flattering to me” and as “My closet” (Walpole’s emphasis). As Walpole would have it, Strawberry’s genealogy could be charted in terms of its architectural progeny—a growing “family” of buildings. Emphasizing this genealogy, Walpole kept and displayed images of buildings built in the Strawberry Hill style by his friends, including drawings of Chute’s house at the Vyne in his own bedroom, images of Chute’s work at Donnington Castle, Berkshire, in the Beauclerk Closet, and what may be identified as a drawing of Bateman’s Old Windsor in the Green Closet, forming a disparate “family” of Strawberry Hill Gothic buildings.

At Strawberry Hill, the idiomatic nature of patron and building manifestly put pressure on existing tenets of decorum and corporeality. These pressures, witnessed in style and comportment and in architecture and ornament, enact more fundamental changes in eighteenth-century aesthetics. A significant aspect of the “new sensibility” of the eighteenth century, what Neil Levine has called the rise of a subjective “narrative of the self in architecture, can be located in contemporary developments in human sexuality, and particularly in the rise of a new third sex of “homosexual” men. But however influential Strawberry Hill and related buildings were in shaping taste for the Gothic in eighteenth-century England, it would be reductive and inaccurate to assume that the perception of the Gothic shared by Walpole’s homosocial circle was necessarily that of others outside their milieu. While Mowl was correct to note that the Gothic was adopted by many patrons and designers seemingly of the third sex, from Walpole to Richard Payne Knight and William Beckford, among others, the Gothic and its significations—of femininity, of sexual license, of Catholicism—were capable of adapting and appealing to a range of alternative identities (sexual or otherwise) during the eighteenth century. The multivalence of the Gothic and of human sexuality advocates the suppler approach employed by cultural and literary historians who note that human sexuality, particularly alternative sexuality, was a central and exceptionally malleable trope of the Gothic during the eighteenth century and beyond. While the Gothic did not have a fixed sexual identity in the period, it is nonetheless significant that many of the changes in sexuality that took place in eighteenth-century England were explored or performed at sites of architecture or landscapes, or through their construction, with the Gothic featuring centrally. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, the theoretically rich and corporeally resonant (but safely nonrepresentational) sphere of architecture suggested it to eighteenth-century English culture as a place to debate and define new sexual and social norms in a way it had not been used before.

Locating Walpole’s Gothic villa within the social and sexual contexts explored here, rather than within the style-based teleologies that have long characterized studies of the Gothic Revival, may usefully destabilize some of its dominant paradigms. It is worth stating a fundamental point too often overlooked in the study of Walpole’s oeuvre: his promotion of the Gothic was never intended to be anything other than a coterie taste and was not designed to initiate a full-scale “Gothic Revival” in architecture (even if he is often seen to be responsible for this). Ultimately, it was friendship among the men of Walpole’s circle (his “erotic camaraderie”) that provided the conduit for the dissemination of the “Strawberry Hill Gothic” style and for the future careers of his friends and designers. In this sense, Walpole’s construction of Strawberry Hill as a “court” of Gothic taste was apt. That the “queerness” of Strawberry Hill was sensed in early nineteenth-century critiques by some of the first Victorian Gothic Revivalists is of interest to us. Standing outside Walpole’s cultural milieu,
these critics discerned the subversive character of Strawberry Hill that diverged considerably from the archaeologically accurate simulations of the Gothic that they favored. This alone may help us to understand the partial erasure of the Strawberry Hill Gothic style from narratives of the nineteenth-century Gothic Revival, when the Gothic was transformed from a style of otherness to an ideal of religious nationalism at the hands of A. W. N. Pugin and his contemporaries.

Matthew M. Reeve is associate professor and Queen’s National Scholar at Queen’s University and a fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London. He has published extensively on medieval art and its modern reception, including most recently “Dickie Bateman and the Gothicization of Old Windsor,” Architectural History 56 (2013) [Department of Art History and Art Conservation, Queen’s University, Kingston, Ont., Can. K7L3N6, reevem@queensu.ca].

Notes

This paper is part of a broader book-length study of the architectural patronage of Horace Walpole and his circle now under way. Aspects of it were presented at the College Art Association Annual Conference in New York in 2013 and St Andrews, at the Lunar Dodd School for Art at the University of Athens, at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (the Rosemary Coffey Lecture), at the Eighteenth Century Studies meeting at the University of Toronto, Bowdoin College, Reed College, and Yale University. I am grateful to the organizers of these events and to the audiences for much helpful criticism, particularly Professors Tim Barringer, Patricia Brückmann, William Diebold, Anne Hedeman, Stephen Murray, Stephen Perkinson, Andrew Tallon, and Steffan van Telleringe. I am also grateful to Professors Pierre Du Prey, Ethan Matt Kassaie, Crystal Lake, Elizabeth Legge, Matilde Mattos, and Joanne Rees, and to Prof. John Roberts, who made one of my two anonymous referees for The Art Bulletin for valuable criticism on this paper. My greatest debt is to the remarkable staff of the Lewis Walpole Library at Yale University, where I was visiting fellow in 2009–10, for their sustained support.


5. For example, Walpole’s erotic attachment to the house is suggested in an unpublished poem in which he rejects female advances in preference for Strawberry Hill, now an unpaginated insertion in his own copy of the Description (Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University [hereafter LWL], MS 49 552): “In Eden’s lovely garden our grandmother Dame Eve / With an apple of the forest, Old Adam did deceive, / But had I been her husband, the / Pippin then had fail’d / And Strawberry, sweet strawberry alone / Shou’d have prevailed.”

6. Horace Walpole to Lady Osney, August 11, 1778, in Horace Walpole, The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole’s Correspondence, ed. Willmurt Sheldon Lewis et al., 48 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1937–83), vol. 33, 42–43 (hereafter HW Cor.). The paired posterity of Walpole and Strawberry Hill was a common refrain in Walpole’s writings. See, for example, the preface to the 1784 Description; and Walpole to Horace Mann, January 27, 1761, HW Cor., vol. 21, 471, and May 17, 1775, vol. 29, 103.


8. The singular exception is Haggerty, “Strawberry Hill: Friendship and Taste,” which deals primarily with Walpole’s letters rather than his appreciation of art and architecture. The lack of attention to these issues has been noted in reviews by Matthew M. Reeve, Antiquaries Journal 91 (2011): 390–92; and Timothy Mowl, Times Higher Education, March 18, 2010: “Its editor . . . seems so embarrassed by Walpole’s deviant sexual identity that, in his commissioning role, he has managed to airbrush out almost all accounts of Walpole’s wildly romantic love life, even though they would have explained both the inspiration behind the house and his choice of its contents.”


18. The Gothic Revival


51. For example, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's Between Men, 92) epitome, "the Gothic novel crystallized for English audiences the terms of a dialectic between male homosexuality and homophobia"; Haggerty, Queer Gothic; Campbell, "I Am No Giant!"; William Hughes and Andrew Smith, eds., Queering the Gothic (Manchester, U.K.: Manchester University Press, 2009); and Max Fincher, Queering the Gothic in the Romantic Age (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).


53. Haggerty, Queer Gothic. Recent thinking about the 1764 writing of The Castle of Otranto suggests that it was written in theublic writing of Walpole and his relationship with his cousin Henry Seymour Conway in the same year. Mowl, Horace Walpole, 182-86. See subsequently Max Fincher, "Guessing the Mould: Homosocial Signs and Identity in Horace Walpole's Castle of Otranto," Gothic Studies 5, no. 3 (2001): 220-45; and Campbell, "I Am No Giant!" for revisions of this thesis.


55. On the relation between Catholicism and same-sex desire in eighteenth-century Gothic writing, see Haggerty, Queer Gothic, 63-83; Dale Townsend, "Love in a Convent? Or, Gothic and the Perverse Father of Queer Enjoyment," in Hughes and Smith, Queering the Gothic, 11-35; and Maria Purves, The Gothic and Catholicism: Religion, Cultural Exchange and the Popular Novel, 1785-1829 (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2010).

56. See, for example, Monk of the Order of St. Francis, Nocturnal Revels or, The history of the King's Place, and other modern narratives: With the perusal of the most celebrated curiosities of this period, 2 vols. (London: 1747) and, for a recent discussion, Dominic Janes, "Ulysses Astartes: Sodomy in Pope's The Rape of the Caledis, or O the Roof Beaf of Old England (1748)," Oxford Art Journal 35, no. 1 (2012): 19-31. This tradition was the subject of a recent exhibition at the Lewis Walpole Library at Yale University. See the pamphlet by Misty G. Anderson, Sacred Saints, Lamenting Religious Deviance in Eighteenth-Century Britain (Farmington, Conn.: Lewis Walpole Library, 2011).


58. "Reasons for the Growth of Sodomy (1749)," reprinted in Ian McCor-


65. Ellis Hanson, Decadence and Catholicism (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), 7, 24-25.


70. Pauly Toombey, "Horace Walpole's Journals of Tours to Countries Sec. 8c," Walpole Society 16 (1928): 8-50, at 50; Lord, The Hell Fire Clubs, 101, 113; and Dashwood, The Dandys, 29.


72. The appeal of Catholicism is frequently addressed in Walpole's letters, and often not without some deliberate historical misinterpretations. For example, writing on May 22, 1777, of King's College Chapel, Cambridge, to his friend William Cole, he claimed that "its beauty penetrated me with a visionary longing to be a monk in it." HW Corr., vol. 2, 16.


74. This issue will be discussed at greater length in my forthcoming book.

75. Fletcher, "The Sims of the Fathers."


77. Walpole, Anecdotes of Painting, vol. 1, 194.

78. Ibid., 198.

79. It is not a coincidence that "elegance" and "refinement" of taste and manners were part of current characterizations of the third sex. For a 1747 satire of the parallel revival of effeminized "taste" and the third sex of "pretty gentlemen" after the Restoration, see Edmund Goldsmid, ed., The Pretty Gentlemen; or, Softness of Manners Vindicated (Edinburgh, 1885).

81. Homophobic tropes of physical and mental degeneracy were common in Walpole's posthumous critiques. See, for example, Jane Watts, "Contexting the Gothic: Fiction, Genre, and Cultural Conflict, 1764–1832" (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 22–23. See also Goldsmith, *The Pretty Gentlemen*, 18, for the connection of the "weak" tastes with "weak" bodies of men of the third sex.


87. Anthony Vidler, *Building of a Gothic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 217–40. Lord Lyttelton maintained that the "plain, manly, noble orders" in comparison with the "Gothic" style were "not only rational," but also "true to the effeminate elaborations in contemporary theater, hoping that the house may contribute its assistance to the advancement of morality, and to the reformation of the age"; Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility, 1760–1840*, 155. Broad discussions of the "corruptions of manners" by critics such as John Timney suggested that if England was to avoid Rome's fall from "manly pride" into the "effeminacy" and "vanity of the East,

88. For example, in an unpaginated insertion in Walpole's copy of the *Description*, 109.


152. For example, Walpole commissioned Joshua Reynolds to paint a group portrait called *Out of Town Party: A Conversation* (Bristol City Art Gallery, Bristol, U.K.) in 1759 featuring George Selwyn, George James Russell, and Richard Edgecumbe. This is illustrated in Stoddin, *Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill*, fig. 144. Bam ("Historicizing Horace," 126) considers this image of Walpole's friends "a testimony to the fact that Walpole wished such cultural bonds to be placed on record."


156. For Bateman's portrait gallery, see *MSS File 18*. It explores their conversion to Catholicism and the Gothicization of Old Windsor prior to Bentley's Gothicization from 1758. It is beyond the bounds of this article to explore fully the significances of queer family romance for Strawberry Hill. A fuller study would need to account for not only representations of Walpole's queer family but also the objects that they owned, collected, shared, bought, and gave to each other, as well as the significance that they had for Walpole in assembling his collection.


159. See Guest, "The Wanton Muse." Queer readings have also been advanced for aspects of the nineteenth-century Gothic Revival. See, for example, Douglas Shand-Tucci, *Besotted Bohemia*, 1881–1900 (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995), esp. 272–369. I am grateful to Sherry Lindquist for drawing Tucci's work to my attention.
