

THAT SORT OF DUPERY

In the catalogue of Tate Britain's *John Martin: Apocalypse* exhibition, Beckford is quoted by Michael J Campbell in the section on Martin as mezzotint maker as taking exception to being sent samples by the artist. 'Engaging to take in prints without limit, numbers without end, is a sort of take in I am resolved to keep off from. I have had quite enough of that sort of dupery – the Milton to wit and plenty beside'.

THE EPISODES OF VATHEK

Anyone wanting to compile a list of the main characters in *Vathek* would probably include, among others, Carathis, Nouronihar, Gulchenrouz and Eblis. However, when Dent published in 1963 its *Everyman's Dictionary of Literary Characters*, the first of its kind, none of these appeared. Instead, we meet Abou Taher Achmed, Alasi, Barkiarokh, Firouz (misspelt Firanz), Rondabah (misspelt Rondable), Shaban and Vathek. Each brief entry ended with 'Vathek, W. Beckford, 1786'. As most of these characters come from the *Episodes of Vathek* the compiler, William Freeman, must have confused this work with *Vathek*. In 1973 the dictionary was revised by Fred Urquhart, and again in 1991 by Martin Seymour-Smith, but in both of these entries from *The Episodes* reappear, almost unchanged.

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Items of Beckfordian interest are always welcome.



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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING SATURDAY 19 MAY 2011

FONTHILL, WILTSHIRE



AGENDA AND BOOKING FORM ENCLOSED

A BIGGER PICTURE

Visitors to David Hockney's *A Bigger Picture* exhibition at the Royal Academy (19 Jan – 9 April) will have seen the gallery devoted to his fascination with Claude Lorrain's *The Sermon on the Mount*.

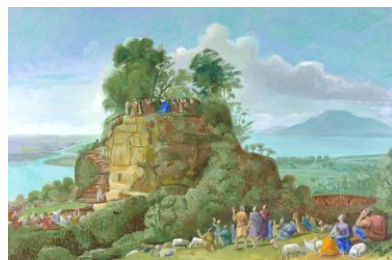


Sermon on the Mount from Claude's *Liber Veritatis*

Hockney discovered this work when visiting the Frick Collection in New York and subsequently researched the painting and related drawings, and digitally 'cleaned' the surface, which had darkened due to exposure to fire two centuries earlier when the picture belonged to Alderman William Beckford.

The Claude was one of several pictures damaged at Fonthill when fire broke out on February 13 1755. Several works from Hogarth's *The Harlot's Progress* possibly

perished, and another Claude, damaged at the time, of *Queen Esther* is now in the collection of the Earl of Leicester at Holkham.



Hockney's *Sermon on the Mount*

Included in the Royal Academy exhibition is Hockney's 30-canvas version of Claude's *Sermon* in which he transforms 'the subject into a monumental work, one 'message' of which is the artful depiction of space.

Much has been written about Claude's influence on landscape design in the eighteenth-century England. Is it too extreme to wonder whether Claude's painting influenced the Fonthill landscape.

FONTHILL SCHOOL

Fonthill School, East Grinstead has origins going back to a coaching establishment opened by the Rev Dr George Radcliffe in his rectory at St Edmund's Salisbury in 1808. When his son William Coxe Radcliffe was preferred to the living of Fonthill Gifford in 1840, he took his father's borders with him and the link with Fonthill began. After William's death his family had to leave the rectory and moved to a house in East Grinstead which they re-named Fonthill Lodge and re-established the school. Fonthill continues as a school to this day and has recently published *Fonthill; The Story of a School* (East Grinstead, 2011) which includes an early photograph of the William Coxe Radcliffe, his wife and twenty-five pupils and staff outside the Fonthill Rectory. Copies are available from The Secretary, The Fonthill Foundation, c/o Larch Cottage, Birchwood Grove Road, Burgess Hill RH15 0DL.

FONTHILL SPILL VASE



Woolley & Wallis, the Salisbury auctioneers sold on 6 March an English porcelain spill vase decorated with a view of Fonthill Abbey in a continuous landscape scene. 11.5cm. The base identifies the view 'FONTHILL ABBEY' and has a painted pattern number 3/866. A similar vase with the same pattern number, but slight variations in the figures and landscape was included in the *Builder of Towers* exhibition at Christie's in 1998.

BOOKS FROM BECKFORD'S LIBRARY

William Beckford's copy of Miguel de Cervantès *Don Quixote* (Madrid, 1780) in four volumes bound by Christian Kalthoeber sold for 46,350 EUR at Sotheby's Paris on 9 Nov 2011.

At Bonham's in New York on 18 October a presentation copy from William Harrison Ainsworth of his *The Tower of London: A Romance* (London, 1840) – inscribed 'William Beckford Esquire/From the Author' sold for \$7,750 (including buyer's premium).

A recent catalogue from the Wallingford antiquarian bookseller Christopher Edwards offered Beckford's copy of *The Works of Alexander Pope Esq.* in nine volumes (London, 1751) for £1,250. Beckford's signature is at the foot of the title page to volume I: 'William Beckford 1779'. Pasted into this volume is a ticket to the Fonthill Abbey sale 1823, when this set was presumably sold.

PICTURES AT AUCTION

A painting of *Charity* attributed to the circle of Raphael (oil on panel, with arched top) was sold at Sotheby's, New York for \$28,125.

The picture once in the Borghese collection was sold in the Fonthill 1807 sale when it was described as 'Raphael – Charity and Nymph, an undoubted original picture, by the immortal Raphael' and sold for 105 guineas. It was later in the collection of Sir Thomas Lawrence and the Neeld family of Kelston Park and Grittleton House, Wiltshire.

Two church interiors showing a Gothic church by day and night by Pieter Neefs (1578-1656) were sold at Christie's, New York on 26 January for \$40,000. The paintings are recorded in the inventory made after Beckford's death as being in the Belvedere at Lansdown Tower. They were shown in the William Beckford exhibition in New York and London 2001/2002.

John Farquhar. Morrison engaged the architect J. B. Papworth to transform the house and park (including the demolition of a cloth factory at the southern end of the lake) with work beginning in 1832. Morrison increased the size of the estate by purchasing land 'which even William Beckford had failed to grasp'.

The Fonthill house was enlarged by the architect David Brandon from 1846 with the addition of a tower, portico and servants wing to create an Italianate mansion. James's second son Alfred (1821-1897) was given the estate at about this time. For Alfred, collecting was an addiction. He amassed portraits, medals and manuscripts of royalty and historical figures, including Beckford, Nelson and the Hamiltons. He owned 3,000 engraved portraits and over a thousand pieces of Chinese Imperial porcelain. His London house, 16 Carlton House Terrace, was lavishly decorated and furnished.

Professor Dakers brings the Morrison dynasty to life in a book which also adds substantially to our knowledge

of nineteenth century commerce, politics, art collecting and patronage. It marvellously illuminates a little known chapter of Fonthill's history.

Caroline Dakers also writes about the furniture and interior decoration schemes of James and Alfred Morrison in an article in *Furniture History*. Vol XLVI (2010).

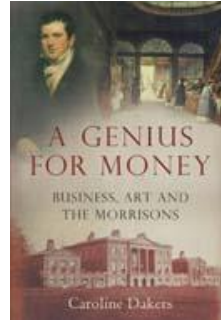
James made purchases at the Lansdown Tower sale of 1841 with the dealer William King acting for him. He acquired the oak cabinets formerly in the Edward III Gallery at Fonthill and a pair of 'sarcophagus headed coffer and stands of riga and pollard oak' and a console table of ebony and 'beef-woods' with slab of *Fior di Persico*. At Beckford's 1845 sale Morrison bought a magnificent Florentine mosaic table.

The article describes the decorative schemes undertaken by Owen Jones and Jackson & Graham at Fonthill House for Alfred Morrison, and has photographs of the saloon and music gallery.

MAGRITTE'S VATHEK

There have been numerous illustrated editions of *Vathek* over the years. A fascinating addition to depictions of Beckford's caliph is one by René Magritte in an autographed letter written in about 1944. This was sold at Sotheby's in Paris on 9 Nov 2011 for 39,150 EUR (including buyer's premium).

acquired a fortune unequalled in nineteenth century Britain.



A SULLEN DWARF

"When we wind the horn at the gate, will a sullen dwarf usher us in", said Isabel, "Like Beckford's at Fonthill or the castle of Joyous Gard in the Morte d'Arthur?"

[On arrival of Stourwater, seat of the industrialist Sir Magnus Donners.]

From Vol. 6 – *The Kindly Ones* (1962) of Anthony Powell's *Dance to the Music of Time* sequence

A GENIUS FOR MONEY

Caroline Dakers' *A Genius for Money: Business, Art and the Morrisons* (Yale University Press, 2011) tells the spectacular story of James Morrison (1789-1857) who through hard work and entrepreneurial brilliance,

Morrison the son of a village innkeeper was apprenticed to a London haberdasher and in time became 'the kingpin of textiles and the Napoleon of shopkeepers'. He invested in North American railways and was involved in global trade. He acquired great houses and estates, including Basildon Park and Islay and formed a substantial art collection, including objects purchased at Beckford's 1841, 1845 and 1848 sales.

In the summer of 1829 Morrison rented the Pavilion (the remaining wing of Fonthill Splendens) for his family, and in October 1836 agreed to buy the Fonthill Park estate from George Mortimer, nephew of

EMAIL ADDRESSES

If you would like to receive very occasional pieces of Beckfordian information by email, please advise the Secretary (see back cover) of your email address. Also, indicate if you would like to be added to the Beckford Tower Trust's mailing list.

BECKFORD'S TOWER

An exhibition at Beckford's Tower will celebrate the work of Leslie and Elizabeth Hilliard in saving and restoring the tower and establishing the Beckford Tower Trust. *Saving Beckford's Tower* runs from 7 April – 1 July.

Sidney Blackmore will give a talk on the Hilliards and their work on Wednesday 30 May at 6.00 pm.

The Tower is open from 7 April. Saturdays/Sundays and Bank Holidays 10.30am – 5.00pm

AGM 2012 AT FONTHILL

This year's AGM will be held at the Reading Room, Fonthill Bishop on Saturday 19 May, commencing at 11.30 am.

Following the death of Niel Rimington owner of the Fonthill Abbey estate, his executors felt it was important to ensure that access to Beckford's landscape was available to local visitors and special interest groups. As a result, special provisions were included when the estate was sold.

In the afternoon, members will have the opportunity of participating in guided walks around the landscape close to the remains of Beckford's Fonthill Abbey. We are very grateful to Mr and Mrs Stephen Morant the new owners of the estate for their help.

Agenda and booking form enclosed