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The British as Art Collectors

CHARLES SEBAG-MONTEFIORE

This paper is based on an illustrated lecture given as The Beckford Society's Seventeenth Annual Lecture, delivered on Thursday 19 November 2013 at the Travellers Club, 106 Pall Mall, London SW1. The lecture focused on the book *The British as Art Collectors: From the Tudors to the Present*, a survey of collecting in Great Britain over five centuries, written jointly by my friend James Stourton and me.[1] The book contains over 350 pages and 383 colour illustrations, so inevitably this paper is a gallop through some four hundred years of British collecting to convey a flavour of this mighty subject.

No country on earth has such a strong and varied tradition of art collecting as Britain. Above all it reflects a relationship with the continent of Europe, in particular Italy, and to a lesser extent France and Holland. Part of the attraction of the story of British art collecting is its attachment to place: it was Mark Girouard who pointed out that 'the greatest patronage of the British was to architecture',[2] and it was from this as much as anything else that flowed the desire to collect.

Thomas Howard, 2nd Earl of Arundel, is the first heroic figure in the history of British collecting. The famous portrait by Mytens depicts Arundel in the first floor Sculpture Gallery at Arundel House and is one of the most celebrated of all collector portraits (National Portrait Gallery, London, on loan to Arundel Castle). In 1612 Arundel went to Antwerp and Brussels, where he was introduced to Rubens, who was later to paint both him and his redoubtable wife Alathea Talbot. He then headed south for Padua, returning home on the death of Prince Henry in November 1612. In 1613 he set out again with his wife, visiting

Milan, Vicenza, Venice and Rome with Inigo Jones. He bought pictures, books, manuscripts and prints, before continuing to Naples and then north to Florence. His agents went beyond Italy to Asia Minor in pursuit of marbles, and Arundel is the father of the long Anglo-Saxon tradition of collecting antiquities. Above all the Earl is remembered for his love affair with Italy; an affinity which would become the leitmotif of British collecting for the next two hundred years.

It was in 1617 that Arundel secured one of his greatest paintings, Sebastiano del Piombo's *Portrait of Ferry Carondelet with his Secretaries* (Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid). This was a picture that was a forerunner to and had an influence on English portraiture as a series of double portraits, starting with the Earl's friend *Lord Strafford and Sir Philip Mainwaring* painted by Van Dyck and, later, Reynolds's unfinished *Portrait of Rockingham and Burke*. But Italy was not the only string to his bow. Lord Arundel owned more works by Holbein than anyone before or since, including the portraits of *Christina of Denmark* and *Erasmus* (both National Gallery, London, the latter on loan from Lord Radnor). The taste for Holbein, which was part historical, part aesthetic, is the longest and most enduring taste in British collecting only equalled in intensity by that of Claude and Canaletto. Portraiture became the bedrock of British collecting.

By far the greatest collector amongst English monarchs was Charles I. His taste was developed by his mother, Anne of Denmark, and his elder brother, Prince Henry, but confirmed by his impetuous and doomed visit to Spain in 1623 to seek the hand of the Infanta. The King of Spain's painting collection was the best in Europe and provided a model of princely patronage and acquisition. It was the Titians that made the most impact on the young Prince of Wales and perhaps consolidated the preference for Venetian paintings that defined the taste of the so-called Whitehall Circle of collectors, who included the 1st Duke of Buckingham, the 1st Duke of Hamilton and the 4th Earl of Pembroke. Van Dyck, who painted the King, became a consistent favourite of British collectors, FIGURE 1.

Fig. 1. Anthony Van Dyck, *Charles I at the Hunt*, c. 1635, oil on canvas, Musée du Louvre.

Charles I is most celebrated for his purchase of the famous Gonzaga collection from Mantua, which brought him important works by not only by Correggio, Mantegna and Titian, but also a spectacular group of more recent paintings by the Carracci, Domenico Feti, Guido Reni and Caravaggio. His most important legacy to the Royal Collection is perhaps the set of Tapestry Cartoons designed by Raphael in 1515–16. The seven surviving cartoons are arguably the greatest High Renaissance works outside Italy. The King owned other major Italian paintings such as Leonardo da Vinci's *Saint John* (Musée du Louvre, Paris), Raphael's *St George and the Dragon* and Titian's *Portrait of the*

Doge Andrea Gritti (both National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.). His collection of northern artists could not rival his Italian works, but nevertheless contained Dürer's *Self-Portrait* (Museo del Prado, Madrid), Lucas Cranach's *Portraits of Johann and Anna Cuspinian* (both Oskar Reinhart Collection, Winterthur, Switzerland), pictures by Calvaert, Jan Breughel, Hercules Seghers, and two paintings by the young Rembrandt, a *Self-Portrait* (Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool) and a *Portrait of an Old Woman* (Royal Collection Trust).

The result of this brilliant burst of collecting by Charles I and the Whitehall Circle was that a visitor to London on the eve of the Civil War could have seen some of the finest pictures in the world all within a mile of the present National Gallery in Trafalgar Square. The mansions on the Strand included Suffolk House (shortly to be bought by Lord Northumberland and modernised as Northumberland House); York House (which still contained the Duke of Buckingham's collections 15 years after his assassination); Durham House (leased by the Bishop of Durham to the 4th Earl of Pembroke), Somerset House (which Charles I had given to Henrietta Maria); and Arundel House. Moving towards St James's Park, St. James's Palace contained some of the King's most magnificent pictures. On the other side of the park was Wallingford House (near the present Admiralty in Whitehall), home to the 1st Duke of Hamilton. Whitehall Palace, filled with great and famous pictures, stood opposite. Downstream at Blackfriars, Van Dyck's collection of important pictures by Titian remained untouched after his death in 1641. Outside London, the royal palaces of Greenwich, Richmond, Hampton Court, Nonsuch and Windsor Castle contained further treasures. However the consequence of the Civil War and the Commonwealth period was that these extraordinary collections were to be dispersed and the pictures distributed to new collections, mostly on the continent.

With the Restoration in 1660 Charles II's first instinct was not so much to collect art as to recover what had been lost during the Interregnum. The flavour of the new court was perhaps more French and Dutch than Italian. Landscapes were a dominant theme and Jan

Siberechts, a Flemish artist working in England from the 1670s typified this taste. Samuel Pepys, whose vast collection of about 10,000 prints survives at Magdalene College, Cambridge, particularly admired the illusionist *trompe l'oeil* painting of a *View Down a Corridor* by Samuel van Hoogstraten, a picture now at Dyrham Park, which with its Delftware, dark furniture and large paintings by Hondecoeter provides an atmospheric example of Restoration taste.

In eighteenth-century London most collections were aristocratic, but many of the most interesting were not, including that of Dr Richard Mead. He was a physician best remembered because in 1720 the French painter Antoine Watteau came to London to consult him and gave him two pictures, *Italian Comedians* (National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.) and another composition, now lost. Mead also owned Holbein's *Portrait of Erasmus*, formerly owned by Arundel, as noted above, and an unusually scholarly collection containing antique sculpture, Greek, Roman and British coins, gems, bronzes, miniatures, engravings and drawings.

Sir Hans Sloane, a collector of natural history and artefacts, personifies the intellectual curiosity of the early eighteenth century and its thirst for exploration, discovery, knowledge, measurement and classification. A successful and fashionable physician, his art collection contained not only specimens, 23,000 coins and medals and 50,000 books, prints and manuscripts, but also many works from beyond Europe, such as Egyptian, Assyrian, Chinese, Japanese and even Eskimo; the whole became the catalyst for the formation of the British Museum.

Sloane, who died in 1753, wished his collection to remain intact and his will directed that the entire collection be offered to the King for the nation for the sum of £20,000. This far-sighted legacy of Sloane created what have since become the British Museum, the British Library and the Natural History Museum. It was the first national museum in Britain and the first museum in the world founded by a democracy for its people. It was from the outset a universal museum of everything known to the European enlightenment both in the works of nature and

the works of man. Its foundation was the single most important cultural event of the 18th century in England.

One of the most striking and attractive episodes of British collecting is the Grand Tour, which began in the late seventeenth century and by the turn of the eighteenth century had become a well-established habit. The love affair with Italy developed into a systematic and revelatory process whereby young British men discovered art, architecture, manners and sex, free from parental control. These young men chose to identify with Ancient Rome and the reign of the emperor Augustus rather than the dull Hanoverian monarchy. The writings of Lord Shaftesbury had defined art and virtue as inseparable.

The seminal example of the creation of a great house and collection through the Grand Tour is Holkham Hall in Norfolk. Thomas Coke (1697–1759) was just 10 when he inherited great wealth and his life story was the creation of the house, park and collection. Between 1712 and 1718, he spent six years in Italy, where he bought pictures, manuscripts and printed books. Thirty years later, he spent large sums in Rome on paintings and sculpture to decorate his new house. Holkham was built around the art collection and the two are inseparable. I have mentioned that the main theme in British patronage was architecture,[3] and it is impossible to over-emphasise the connection between British collecting and architecture particularly in the eighteenth century, with its belief in the 'genius of the place'.

This unitary approach is exemplified by the Holkham Sculpture Gallery, for which Lord Leicester was concerned to fill specific niches. He created one of the earliest sculpture galleries in England but had difficulty in getting good material out of Italy. It may have been Lord Leicester's memory of the Salone di Poussin at the Palazzo Doria in Rome that inspired the Holkham Landscape Room, which included no fewer than six paintings by Claude Lorrain.

The conception of Holkham resembles that of a great work of art and it is Lord Leicester's totality of vision which commands our respect. It brought him little joy. Living on a huge building site, his son dead and his wife estranged, he wrote:

> ‘it is melancholy living to stand alone in one’s own Country. I look around, not a house to be seen but my own. I am Giant of Giant Castle and have ate up all my neighbours, my nearest neighbour is the King of Denmark.’

The bibulous and licentious nature of the Grand Tour is well expressed in two portraits by George Knapton of Sir Francis Dashwood, who was the moving spirit behind the creation of the Society of Dilettanti in 1732. Apart from self indulgence, the problem for the young Grand Tourists was one of supply. The papal export laws made it very difficult but in the middle of the eighteenth century the Italians tried to solve the problem by providing a special Grand Tour blend of contemporary art, represented by the view paintings of Canaletto and the portraits of Pompeo Batoni.

The founders of the Society of Dilettanti were mostly aristocrats, but also scholars and artists, whose main achievement lay in the publications it sponsored which encouraged a shift in interest towards Greek art. Its membership reads like a roll-call of great collectors for the next 100 years: Rockingham, Lansdowne, Townley, William Weddell, Sir William Hamilton, Richard Payne Knight and Sir Richard Worsley to name but a few. If the initial impulse at home was literary and social, events in Italy were stimulating this cult of antiquity: the discovery of Herculaneum in 1738, and of Pompeii a decade later. Reynolds painted the two well-known and large portrait groups between 1777 and 1779, which commemorate a meeting of the Society held on March 2, 1777 when Sir William Hamilton was introduced as a member (Society of Dilettanti, on loan to Brooks’s, London). Hamilton is depicted seated before a table on which stands a Greek vase from his collection and pointing to a volume of the magnificent folio catalogues of his first collection of Greek vases, which was bought by the British Museum in 1772.

Pompeo Batoni painted a portrait of William Weddell, the son of a York grocer, who inherited a stock market fortune and quickly assimilated into the landed classes. Aged 28, he went on his Grand Tour in

1764, stopping in Paris where he commissioned a set of Gobelins tapestries for a tapestry room at Newby Hall, Yorkshire and created his own Sculpture Gallery there, one of the most perfect such rooms to survive from the 18th century.

British collectors in the 18th century had an insatiable appetite for classical antiquities. The election of Pope Pius VI, whose long reign stretched from 1775 to 1799 opened the golden years of 'digging and dealing'. This was a response to the lack of supply. The British paid for the digs, the Pope provided the licenses, and they shared the results. One of the collectors who benefited from the increased supply was Charles Townley, who was painted by Zoffany in his London house, with an imaginary arrangement of his marbles. His collection was bought after his death in 1805 by the British Museum.

Whilst collectors were in thrall to the Grand Tour, William Hogarth, the champion bulldog of British art, roared with patriotic anger. He tore up the rule book and reinvented British painting. He hooked himself onto the Foundling Hospital, newly established by Thomas Coram, whom he painted in a benevolent masterpiece, which is the first great middle-class state portrait (Foundling Museum, London).

But Hogarth was roaring in vain. British collectors were enjoying the passion for view paintings of Venice. In 1740 the 4th Earl of Carlisle dispatched no fewer than seventeen of the artist's paintings to Castle Howard, Yorkshire and its Venetian Room once boasted fifteen paintings by or attributed to Canaletto. The pictures are no longer displayed there and some have since been sold, but the same effect can be enjoyed today in the Dining Room at Woburn Abbey, commissioned by the 4th Duke of Bedford, who visited Venice in 1731.

As early as 1707 the Society of Antiquaries was founded with the objective of studying 'such things as may Illustrate and Relate to the History of Great Britain'. The Grand Tourist travelled abroad but the antiquary stayed at home. The year of the Society's foundation was also that of the formal political union of England and Scotland and over the next century the question of British identity and history fuelled a publishing boom in topographical works and the emergence

of a pantheon of national culture exemplified by Shakespeare, Handel, and the novels of Sir Walter Scott.

As far as antiquarian collecting was concerned, few spectacularly valuable items were involved. Its chief motivation was to assemble knowledge and two principal strains can be distinguished, one primarily historical and sometimes patriotic in its interests, the other by nature broadly scientific, but during the eighteenth century the antiquarians produced one half genius in the form of Horace Walpole, creator of Strawberry Hill.

No collection was so bound to place as that of Strawberry Hill. Inside, as the historian Lord Macaulay wrote, 'every apartment is a museum; every piece of furniture is a curiosity'. Strawberry Hill was a palace of memories dedicated to Walpole's private imaginative world. Steeped in history, though often inaccurate, the house demonstrated how the past could be brought to life with historical eclecticism. Antique collecting as we know it today was born. Other antiquarian collectors we cover in the book include William Constable, Sir Walter Scott and George Lucy.

The most pervasive of all British tastes was for Claude. His paintings were collected on the Grand Tour, but many of his finest works only became available after the French Revolution when political and export restraints were loosened. One of the most beautiful was *The Enchanted Castle*, painted in 1664, which came from a famous French collection, that of Charles Vicomte de Calonne, a fascinating instance of a French collection sold in its entirety by auction in London in 1795. In the nineteenth century it passed successively into the collections of William Wells, a shipbuilder and harbour owner, and Lord Overstone, a banker, from whose descendant it was bought in 1981 by the National Gallery, London.

The French Revolution and its effects in both France and Italy brought unprecedented opportunities to British collectors between 1790 and 1815. Traditionally wealth had come from land ownership, but the Industrial Revolution was transforming financial opportunities. Combined with turmoil on the continent, the perfect conditions for

the acquisition of art were created. The beneficiaries of this bonanza included the 3rd Duke of Bridgewater, the 5th Earl of Carlisle and Viscount Fitzwilliam, who bequeathed his collections to his eponymous museum in Cambridge. It is difficult to consider Bridgewater's motives as anything but a clever speculative venture. He was a central figure in the syndicate that acquired the bulk of the Orléans collection, the finest private art collection in the world. From this great haul Bridgewater acquired three pictures by Raphael and five by Titian, including the *Three Ages of Man.* All these pictures and others were placed on loan in 1946 by the 6th Duke of Sutherland to the National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh, where they remain. However, Titian's *Venus Anadyomene* was acquired by the National Gallery of Scotland in 2003, and the same artist's *Diana and Actaeon* and its pendant *Diana and Callisto* were bought jointly by the National Galleries of London and Edinburgh in 2009 and 2012 respectively. Bridgewater also acquired seven works by Poussin, that comprised the second series of *The Seven Sacraments*, painted for Paul Fréart de Chantelou between 1644 and 1648, which are also on loan to the National Gallery of Scotland. The Duke of Bridgewater's grandson and heir, later 1st Earl of Ellesmere, commissioned Charles Barry to rebuild Bridgewater House, the grandest Italian palazzo in London, which was ready for occupation in the early 1850s. Its centre was its splendid picture gallery, an arrangement which survived in its setting until just before the start of the Second World War.

If the Duke of Bridgewater demonstrated a speculative detachment, William Beckford displayed a passionate discernment. He bought and commissioned art in equal measure and thought deeply how it should be displayed. He was as interested in decorative arts as in paintings and his taste looked forwards and backwards. Contemporary French taste was usually his point of departure: Boulle and Boulle revival, anything with *pietre dure* and above all lacquer. His full-length portrait by Romney at Upton House, Warwickshire, was given by the 2nd Lord Bearsted to the National Trust in 1948, together with the gift of the house and most of its collections.

Fig. 2. Giovanni Bellini, *The Agony in the Garden*, c. 1465, tempera on panel, National Gallery, London.

Beckford's paintings were outstanding and over 20 of them are today in the National Gallery, London. He had a preference for Italian pictures and was a pioneer collector of 'primitives': he owned Bellini's *Agony in the Garden*, which was acquired by the National Gallery, London, in 1863, FIGURE 2.'Everything depends on the way objects are placed, and where' wrote Beckford. The central task of his life was the construction of Fonthill Abbey and the arrangement of his collection in that dramatic setting. The grand drawing room at Fonthill was the repository of some of his most important treasures and represents many of Beckford's interests: a gothic over-mantel, neoclassical chairs, the Riesener roll-top bureau now in the Wallace Collection, a pair of Boulle neoclassical cabinets and an 'Egyptian marble' table on dolphin supports.

After the founding of the Royal Academy in 1768 more attention was given to works by British artists. One surviving collection formed from its exhibits in the early nineteenth century is the Soane Museum. Sir John Soane combined the collecting of antiquities and modern

English painting at his astonishing house-cum-museum. The Soane Museum marks a milestone in the slow transition from art as a purely private pleasure to a public resource. Up to this point all the privately founded museums in Britain were by childless collectors. In a dynastically minded age, family came first. Soane had two sons, whom he admittedly had fallen out with, but he allowed public purpose to override family interest.

The British elite have always been almost as fascinated by France as Italy. As Alexander Pope famously wrote: 'We conquer'd France, but felt our captive's charms, Her arts victorious triumph'd o'er our arms.' The decorative arts, above all, defined British francophile collecting which was given a huge impetus by the Prince Regent with the creation of Carlton House. Like Beckford, the Prince Regent's taste was simultaneously advanced and conservative. He bought up-to-the-minute Boulle revival pieces and also Riesener's Jewel Cabinet which Napoleon had rejected as too old fashioned.

The greatest monument to British francophilia is the Wallace Collection. It was the creation of three generations, the 3rd and 4th Marquesses of Hertford and Sir Richard Wallace. The key figure in the story is the 4th Marquess who followed his father's taste for old master paintings but was altogether exceptional in his passion for the French *ancien régime*. Lord Hertford, who enjoyed an immense income, bought old master paintings voraciously, including works by Rubens, Van Dyck, Rembrandt, Velazquez as well as French eighteenth-century masters. In 1865 in Paris he bought Fragonard's *The Swing*, the epitome of *ancien régime* prettiness, but this aspect of his taste caused him to miss opportunities: 'I only like pleasing pictures' he once wrote to his agent Samuel Mawson. With equal enthusiasm he bought French furniture and Sèvres porcelain, so that the Wallace Collection is the best surviving example of British nineteenth-century taste for *le dix-huitième siècle*.

The greatest collecting family of the nineteenth century, who equal or surpass the francophilia seen in the Wallace Collection, are the Rothschilds. The zenith of their taste is expressed in the two great

family houses in the vale of Aylesbury, Mentmore Towers and Waddesdon Manor. The opulence of the interiors was matched by the high quality of individual objects. At Waddesdon, Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild pioneered that taste for grand English portraits and French decorative arts which was later to flourish in America. Gobelins and Beauvais tapestries were set against eighteenth-century *boiseries.* Baron Ferdinand did not buy French paintings. It was portraits by Reynolds and Gainsborough and Dutch landscapes that hung above French royal furniture, embellished with superlative Sèvres.

The collecting of Spanish pictures – with the exception of Murillo – was virtually non-existent until the Peninsular War between 1808 and 1814. The arrival of British dealers in Spain during this period was to change that. El Greco's name is missing from most lists of British collections of Spanish art. The 1st Duke of Buckingham owned an El Greco in the 1630s, but after that virtually no other painting by this artist is recorded for 200 years in British collections. It was not until 1887 that the first painting by the artist entered the collection of the National Gallery: El Greco's *Christ Driving the Moneylenders from the Temple,* was the gift of J.C. Robinson, the first Director of the Victoria and Albert Museum. The small band of enthusiasts for Spanish painting included 1st Duke of Wellington, John Morritt of Rokeby Hall, William Bankes of Kingston Lacy, Richard Ford, Sir William Stirling Maxwell, Frank Hall Standish and John Bowes. The finest Goya in Britain was *The Forge*, owned successively by William Coningham and Henry Labouchère, 1st Lord Taunton, and since 1914 in the Frick Collection, New York.

The Dutch artist who began to dominate taste in the nineteenth century was Rembrandt. In 1811 the Prince Regent paid 5,000 guineas for *The Shipbuilder and his Wife* (Royal Collection Trust) and from the 1860s prices began to rise dramatically. The artist's *Woman Bathing in a Stream* was bequeathed in 1830 to the National Gallery, London, by the Rev. William Holwell Carr. The Victorians were initially nervous of Rembrandt, being aware of the attribution problems but as the century wore on, improved scholarship and strong German

and American interest in the 1880s confirmed the artist's pre-eminence. When the 1898 Rembrandt retrospective took place in Holland, the British were by far the largest overseas lenders with 40 works.

Nineteenth-century British fascination with Italy did not diminish, but it shifted its centre of gravity. Whereas in the previous century Grand Tourists regarded Rome as the zenith of a visit to Italy, now merchants, scholars and clergymen turned to Florence, with its Medieval and Renaissance art and history. The upheavals of the Napoleonic Wars precipitated the closure of a number of religious institutions which released a large number of paintings. The taste for early Italian art gathered strength throughout the nineteenth century and the rediscovery of Botticelli forms a leitmotif in this story. One of the greatest buyers of early Italian works was William Young Ottley who managed to buy Botticelli's only signed work, *The Mystic Nativity,* now in the National Gallery, London.

Royal approval no doubt influenced taste. Prince Albert admired early Italian art and formed an important collection, including works by Duccio and Gentile da Fabriano and the arrangement of the paintings in his Dressing Room in 1851 was recorded in a water colour dated March 1851 by James Roberts (Royal Collection Trust).

The Prince helped bring to fruition the great exhibition *Art Treasures of the United Kingdom* held at Manchester in 1857. This turned out to be the blockbuster exhibition of the nineteenth century. It revealed the astonishing riches amassed by British collectors and the list of lenders, headed by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert constituted a veritable *Who's Who* of British collecting. The catalogue listed 1,079 Old Masters with a further 689 British pictures, and almost 1,000 watercolours. The French critic Théophile Thoré thought that the exhibition was the equal of the Louvre. More than anything else the exhibition demonstrated the growing importance felt by art collectors to share their treasures with the public. Art was now recognised as an arm of education, not just for the artists but also for the general public. From this moment onwards public exhibition was to be a serious motivation for collectors.

The auction in 1882 of the extensive contents of Hamilton Palace, south of Glasgow, forms a watershed. Foreigners flocked to the sale, which comprised 2,213 lots and took seventeen days to complete. The auction signalled the end of the era of British domination of the art market caused by an increase of wealth in America and a decrease in Britain. Among the pictures sold were Van Dyck's *Portrait of Princess Henrietta of Lorraine* (Kenwood House, London), Rubens's *Daniel in the Lions' Den* (National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.) and Jacques Louis David's *Portrait of Napoleon in his Study at the Tuileries*, commissioned by the 10th Duke of Hamilton (National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.). In 1894 death duties were established and the abolition of the American tariff in 1910 provided the impetus for John Pierpont Morgan to move his collection to America, which may be taken as the symbolic moment when the baton passed across the Atlantic. The British slowly gave up general collecting.

One of the last general museums to be founded by a British collector was the Lady Lever Art Gallery at Port Sunlight by the soap manufacturer, the 1st Lord Leverhulme. The Museum is both educative and paternalistic. Its handsome Beaux Arts building occupies the centre of a model village of workers' houses in the Arts and Crafts style, an astonishing piece of social engineering. His collection comprises eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British paintings, splendid English furniture, Wedgwood pottery, Chinese porcelain and classical antiquities.

From the middle of the nineteenth century the phenomenon of the 'masterpiece' collection becomes evident. An example of a broad collection spanning several schools as well as the search for top paintings is provided by Edward Guinness, 1st Lord Iveagh. In July 1888 he paid £27,500 (with a Bol and a Cuyp thrown in) for Rembrandt's *Self Portrait* now at Kenwood House, London. His other great masterpiece was Vermeer's *Guitar Player*, also at Kenwood House, for which in April 1889 he had to pay only £1,050 even though the rediscovery of Vermeer was in full spate. Théophile Thoré's pioneering study of the artist came out in 1866. George Salting and Alfred Beit each managed

to buy a Vermeer but it was a taste that would particularly appeal to America, and that is where most of the artist's work went. It should be mentioned that Iveagh's real passion was for grand eighteenth-century British portraits and he possessed sixteen by Gainsborough, twenty-two by Romney and thirty-six by Reynolds. This was a taste that by now was vigorously active on both sides of the Atlantic.

The grip of the Royal Academy and the Establishment was challenged by the Aesthetic Movement, whose temple was the Grosvenor Gallery founded by Sir Coutts Lindsay in 1877 which prompted Sullivan's famous lines in *Patience*:

> a pallid and thin young man,
> a haggard and lank young man,
> a greenery yallery Grosvenor Gallery,
> foot in the grave, young man.

The greatest achievement of the Aesthetic movement was Whistler's *The Peacock Room*, painted in 1876–77 for Frederick Leyland, a Liverpool shipping magnate, for his London house at 49 Prince's Gate, London. In 1904 Charles Freer, the American railroad car manufacturer, bought it for his Detroit mansion, as he shared the Aesthetic movement's interest in combining Occident and Orient. The poet Swinburne ridiculed 'the fairyland of fans, the paradise of pipkins, the limbo of blue china, screens, pots, jars, and joss-houses.'

The British, in common with nearly everybody else except the Germans and the Americans, failed to understand the arrival of Impressionism. Those who did were at one remove from the London establishment. The most spectacular was an Irish old master dealer in London, Sir Hugh Lane, whose portrait was painted by Mancini. In 1904 Lane went to Paris and brought Renoir's *Les Parapluies*, and he went on to form an astonishing collection of Impressionist paintings, now shared between London and Dublin. His importance lies in the fact that he showed the British public what good Impressionists looked like and he inspired the Davies sisters and Samuel Courtauld to collect them. The first real foothold of Impressionism was the 1910 exhibition

Fig. 3. Edouard Manet, *Un Bar aux Folies-Bergère*, 1881–2, oil on canvas, Courtauld Institute, London.

of *Manet and the Post-Impressionists*, the brainchild of the brilliant critic Roger Fry whose advocacy did so much to make modern French art acceptable to the British public.

What the name Havemeyer is to America and Hansen to Denmark, so Courtauld is to Britain, our greatest collector of Impressionist painting. He was buying in the second generation which was easier intellectually but harder financially. With virtually every great Impressionist painting crossing the Atlantic, Courtauld stands out like a beacon in British collecting. The masterpiece of his collection is Manet's great painting, *Un Bar aux Folies-Bergère*, painted in 1881–2 and exhibited in 1882, the year before Manet's death. In 1926, it cost Courtauld a mighty £24,100, FIGURE 3.

By the 1930s a small group of British collectors, were patronising European contemporary artists for the first time since the nineteenth

century. Edward James built up one of the finest collections of Surrealism and Salvador Dali. Norman Parkinson's well-known photograph shows James and Igor Markevitch in the Tent Room at 35 Wimpole Street with Dali's *White Calm* and Picasso's *Femme Assise au Chapeau*. If Edward James collected Surrealism, Roland Penrose and Douglas Cooper formed the two seminal collections of Cubism and Picasso in the 1930s. Penrose formed a close friendship with Picasso, and owned several of his works including his *Three Dancers* of 1925 (acquired by the Tate in 1965). In the post-war world Picasso dominated the international collecting horizon everywhere except Britain. By then the British simply couldn't afford him.

In the immediate post-war era, the most interesting British collectors were a group of art historians who used their knowledge to form important collections. The central figure was Sir Denis Mahon, with his pioneering interest in Baroque paintings and in particular Guercino, a fascinating case of the conjunction of scholarship and collecting having a profound influence on taste.

In the 1950s British collecting began to look for the first time towards America, after having focused for 400 years on Continental Europe. But from the beginning of the twentieth century the influence of Africa, Japan and China challenged this tradition. Ted Power, whose fortune came from Murphy Radio Ltd, was the first collector to buy American art in quantity. He bought his first Rothko in 1956 followed by a group of Pollock, Still, De Kooning, Kline, Newman, Lichtenstein and Ronsenquist.

Collecting ancient artefacts and modern masters was a brilliant combination that André Breton had pioneered in Paris and Dominque de Menil did so effectively in America in her museum at Houston. Robert (always known as Bob) and Lisa Sainsbury brought this taste to Britain and gave their collection to the University of East Anglia at Norwich. He had the family grocery fortune behind him, but the collection was begun with modest sums of money. Lisa was brought up in France and as Bob put it 'the Rue de Seine was as natural to her as the Charing Cross Road was to me.' When Bob first saw the bust of Lisa which he

commissioned from Jacob Epstein, he said to the artist, perhaps rather pompously, "well, Jacob, I think you have a good likeness there" to which Epstein retorted, "look Bob, in a hundred years time no one will give a hoot whether it's a good likeness. All they will ask is, 'is it a good Epstein?'" Perhaps the most impressive aspect of the Sainsburys' collecting was their patronage of Francis Bacon. They acquired at least a dozen of his works before anybody else and he became a close friend. Bob guaranteed the artist's overdraft and it was said that the only time the artist ever behaved well was when he was with the Sainsburys.

The greatest change in the last fifty years in the London art world has been the way in which London transformed itself from the international centre of the art market in old master paintings to a city of contemporary art. There were many stepping stones in this process but the period between 1979 and 2000 is defined by the success of Charles Saatchi and the crowning appearance of Tate Modern. When Charles Saatchi opened his Boundary Road Gallery in 1983, London had seen nothing like it before – these were the days before Tate Modern. It became the focus of the London avant-garde. Interestingly Saatchi buys art only in order to show it: in that sense he is an impresario rather than a collector. He was the pioneer of the new world of the contemporary collector, whose focus is their *kunsthalle*.

At the turn of the new Millennium we saw a fascinating change in taste. No longer were people content with the soft focus surface charms of Impressionist painting and the world was looking for much tougher or challenging and less pretty art. It calls to mind Leger's battle cry that 'the pretty is the enemy of the beautiful.' This shock jock attitude to art was exemplified by Saatchi's art collection and the works of Damien Hirst and Tracy Emin. Her allegorical self portrait, the famous *Unmade Bed* (Saatchi Collection), underlines the seedy, scatological direction of British art in the 1990s.

I wrote an appendix about private collection catalogues, which were indispensible in both researching and writing the book. They tell us of the successive formation and dispersal of collections of pictures, drawings and other works of art by providing firm evidence of

ownership at a fixed date. A study of such catalogues is in effect a study of the history of collecting. In nearly four centuries, the best of their kind have metamorphosed from a simple inventory or hand-list into informative and well-illustrated works of scholarship, frequently handsomely printed at a private press. The eighteenth-century practice of visiting country houses, which created the need for portable guidebooks, stimulated the process. Somewhat surprisingly, the tradition of producing private collection catalogues is still alive: the reason is the public dimension which is attached to most of today's art collecting. Collectors feel a responsibility when owning works of art to make them available for exhibitions and scholarship: this has increasingly become an end in itself and websites play a growing role.

The reasons why men and women collect are, as Kenneth Clark pointed out, as obscure as why they fall in love. It is much easier to explain why they collect certain things and how they do it. Collectors come in all sorts: greedy, fastidious, collectors of sets, magpies, aesthetes and historians. Horace Walpole, for instance, meets all these descriptions. It is discrimination that counts. Great collectors like Horace Walpole and William Beckford had exceptional discrimination and expressed an artist's sense of the totality of their collections and the manner in which they unfolded from room to room. Collections usually begin with an aesthetic or emotional response to certain objects before the ordering or intellectual process takes over and the loose assemblage takes on a character of its own. Visitors to Fonthill Abbey were left in no doubt that the works of art came to life under the guiding intelligence that selected their companions and created their setting. Collecting is about art and the projection of identity. This paper seeks to chart the way in which the British have revealed themselves through their collecting, but it is the book which gives a more detailed analysis and, I hope, will bring pleasure as well.

1 Scala Books, 2012

2 M. Girouard, *The Treasure Houses of Britain: Five Hundred Years of Private Patronage and Art Collecting*, ed. G. Jackson-Stops, Yale University Press, 1985, 22–39

3 Idem.

Chapman's Caliph, or 'I Think My Hero Was a Sod'

GEOFFREY BLUM

On first looking into Guy Chapman's *Beckford*, a 1937 edition I had been lucky enough to snag some years ago, I was reminded that my copy had once belonged to D. G. Bunting, a reader at Jonathan Cape, the London firm that had published the book. Inscribed on the end-paper is Chapman's warm greeting 'To Daniel George in recognition of many felicities,' the date '10.iii.1937,' and a quote from Marcel Proust (1871–1922). Chapman himself would become a reader at Jonathan Cape, but not until later that same year. Bunting quite possibly was the person assigned to evaluate Chapman's manuscript: he was a friend, and he may well have facilitated the author's eventual employment at the firm. More to the point, he was somebody to whom Chapman felt he could vent his misgivings about William Beckford and the book.

The lines from Proust provide our first hint of trouble. Even without knowing that they are drawn from *Sodome et Gomorrhe,* the fourth volume of *À la recherche du temps perdu*—and Chapman provides the reference for us—we can't help but feel them levelled in attack:

> Ce qu'ils appelaient leur amour (et à quoi, en jouant sur le mot, ils avaient, par sens social, annexé tout ce que la poésie, la peinture, la musique, … ont pu ajouter à l'amour) découle non d'un idéal de beauté qu'ils ont élu, mais d'une maladie inguérissable.[1]

'What they called their love … springs … from an incurable malady' is direct enough without the additional reference to three of Beckford's greatest passions: poetry, painting, and music. The ellipsis removes

the two other items from Proust's list that Chapman must have felt did not apply to Beckford: chivalry and asceticism. Clearly he was tailoring the attack.

Laid into the front of the book is a letter that leaves little doubt which way the wind was blowing. It bears the same date and is short enough to quote here in full:

> Dear Bunting,
>
> I attach a volume of no importance but of considerable weight. I'm not very proud of it. I got too bogged in trying to explain the acceptable & the non-acceptable, & printed far too many documents. I only felt happy when I'd finished.
>
> Of course, (though I've said the opposite in the book), I think my hero was a sod, or better, ambidextrous. But at the same time, I'm pretty sure sexually subnormal & therefore given to sublimation. I wish I knew more Freud, but my only reading has been the Case-books which made me laugh.
>
> In any case, the book, & the protagonist are of no importance. As the only things worth reading are Vathek & the Episodes (the latter, I think, are really rather fine & have little flavour of age).
>
> Bless you.
>
> Yours,
>
> Guy Chapman
>
> My wife has insisted on having your ridiculous broadsheet framed.

Chapman knew. This letter clears him of any charge of blindness, though not the fault of turning a blind eye that Timothy Mowl decries in the chroniclers preceding his own biography sixty years later.

> All, to some degree or another, tried to air-brush over Beckford's sexual identity.... Chapman printed letters which proved a sexual involvement [with William Courtenay, 1768–1835], but then drew back in desperate moral revulsion.... Here I have to insist upon the obvious: Beckford was not a homosexual, he was a confident, active, self-aware bisexual, and that is a much richer and more confusing condition.[2]

Would it have softened Mowl to learn that Chapman agreed about the bisexuality? He might not have gone so far to as to call the Caliph self-aware but did consider him 'ambidextrous' and deem that condition 'better'—not richer, as we might have it in our LGBT-empowering age,[3] but more permissible at least in the moral context of the 1930s. He would certainly have concurred about the confusing part.

It's to Chapman's credit that he struggled as much as he did with this confusion. The quote from Proust makes it clear that he harboured some distaste, as does his later use of terms like 'guilt' and 'unpleasant traits';[4] but to say that he 'drew back in desperate moral revulsion' is an overstatement. Yes, he falls back on the idea of sublimation, but Beckford's whole life was an act of sublimation, of translating needs, greeds, and frustrations into artistic monuments. As with chemical sublimation, solid passion turned at times into gaseous posturing. In 1937 Chapman was sparing in his use of the term 'homosexual' but did air the word when confronting and then sidestepping the Powderham affair.[5] As his preface puts it, 'Too much has been printed both by Mr. [Lewis] Melville and Dr. [J. W.] Oliver to allow half measures; and in the, to my mind, vital consideration of the documents, the subject is unavoidable. It is here discussed only in relation to established facts....'[6]

Note that emphasis on documents and facts. For all the narrative zest of his writing—its dramatizing of events from the perspectives of Beckford, his cousin Louisa (1754–91), and the Begum[7]—Chapman was ever a conscientious researcher. On first engaging with Beckford around 1922, he devoured every work that he could lay his hands on. As managing editor of the fledgling publisher Chapman & Dodd, he bought the rights to Sir Frank T. Marzials' translation of *The Episodes,*[8] and brought it out in tandem with *Vathek* in the Abbey Classics reprint series.[9] Three years later, heading up his own small publishing house, he continued to read, was already planning a nine-volume collected edition, and had a first stab at consulting the archive of the Dukes of Hamilton. 'Obviously [the papers] needed time, much more time than I could give them at once.... I felt a strong wish to write his life.'[10] Alas,

the firm of Guy Chapman closed down after eighteen months. Over the next few years Chapman salvaged his efforts by producing attractive limited editions of *The Travel-Diaries* (Beckford's publications, not the actual journals which at that time Chapman had not seen), *Vathek* and *The Episodes* (the French texts of 1789), a manuscript scrap that he titled *The Vision* paired with *Liber Veritatis*, and—together with book collector John Hodgkin—*A Bibliography of William Beckford of Fonthill*, all for the London firm of Constable and Company.[11] Later he would snarl, 'I detest bibliography';[12] presumably Constable had made it part of the package, and his enthusiasm for the rest of the project carried him through.

Each of those volumes needed an introduction and notes. Perhaps because Beckford's travel books—'the jewels of his thought'[13]—were first up for publication, Chapman lavished the most attention there, prefacing them with a fifty-page 'Memoir' that is essentially his 1937 biography in embryo. We find the same close tracking of young Beckford's European itinerary with dates, places, and names of people met, in addition to a growing care to separate genuine correspondence from transcripts or letters composed purely for publication ('many of the letters printed in *Melville*[14] … are not original documents'). He even provided —isn't this carrying research a bit far?— a note explaining that Beckford's ancestral home was actually the third mansion erected in a series of Fonthills dating back to the Tudors.[15] It's also plain, despite the charm Chapman finds in his hero, that at this early stage he harboured no rose-colored illusions about the man, commenting: 'No genuinely amiable quality emerges from either his books or his letters….'[16] Only the topic of Powderham is given the widest possible berth, relegated to dismissals such as 'I myself believe him to have been overreachingly silly' and 'The actual question of Beckford's guilt or innocence appears to me intrinsically without interest.'[17] There's not a breath of the word 'homosexual,' merely 'the vice of which Beckford is accused.'[18] Nevertheless Chapman was up and running. In the short term, he busied himself catching errors in the 'Memoir' and publishing corrections promptly in the notes to *Liber Veritatis*.[19] Over the next

decade, he continued to dig and eventually came to realize the necessity of confronting the Courtenay scandal, at least to some extent.

The deeper he dug, the greater his frustration. His 1937 preface is peppered with phrases like 'hitherto unsuspected enigmas … separating the true from the false … curious conjectures … certain misapprehensions. No doubt I have made mistakes,' he admitted.[20] For him, Powderham was one thread in a larger chaos of source material that he attempted to untangle by quoting at length from numerous letters and grappling with their authenticity in a long appendix. As a result, the full biography reads less fluidly than the 1928 'Memoir.' In the process, he annoyed no less a personage than Jorge Luis Borges (1899–1986), who read the book several years later and damned it for not focusing instead on an analysis and appreciation of *Vathek*. 'The prologue that Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-1898) wrote for the 1876 edition abounds in felicitous observations,' Borges sniffed, and took a further swipe at Chapman by calling his bibliography 'laborious.'[21]

Perhaps that should have been the end of it. There's a weary note to Chapman's preface and more than a little suggestion that, having taken the biography as far as he could, he was relinquishing the quest to 'some future investigator of this curious life.'[22] He continued to read, however, and to fret about the Hamilton archive, still in the charge of Professor Herbert J. C. Grierson, who had given preferential access to another biographer,[23] and who suspected Chapman of being 'a crypto-homosexual.'[24] By 1952, when publisher Rupert Hart-Davis reprinted *Beckford*, little seems to have changed, and we find Chapman prefacing his second edition with much the same sentiment he bestowed on the first: 'Let me conclude by hoping that when more documents are available, someone will supersede this pioneer study … and produce the biography which is needed….'[25]

He hadn't long to wait. During the 1940s the Hamilton archive had fallen into the hands of Boyd Alexander, who had his own plans for research and publication. Hart-Davis quickly followed Chapman's reprint with two volumes of letters and journals edited by Alexander.[26] Then four years later, in 1962, the new Beckfordian produced his

own hefty study of the Caliph. 'This is not a biography,' he demurred in the preface, but the book certainly covered the necessary people, events, obsessions, and upsets in chronological order.[27] That still left one item in need of an overhaul. During one of his Parisian junkets, Chapman had scraped acquaintance with André Parreaux, and the two undertook to collaborate on a fresh bibliography. Meanwhile, correspondence from other scholars spanning the Middle East to the Middle West was pouring in. Beckford was not through with Chapman.

Indeed, there is a second letter laid into Bunting's book together with the first: two densely typed pages from Chapman on one sheet folded as if for mailing, but with no addressee, just the heading 'A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE WORKS OF WILLIAM BECKFORD OF FONTHILL.' Typos and autograph insertions mark it as a draft, while an internal reference dates it in or after November 1971. How it came to be there is a puzzle. It cannot have been meant for Bunting, who died in 1967; perhaps it was for one of his fellow readers at Jonathan Cape. Essentially an anti-prospectus, it begins 'I am afraid that the proposal in your letter just cannot be as assumed' and goes on to enumerate reasons for not preparing a new edition of the 1930 bibliography or, for that matter, a third edition of the biography. As a record of twenty years' final involvement, from the Parreaux project (ultimately aborted) to keeping close watch on the work of successor Beckfordians like Alexander, Robert J. Gemmett, and Roger Lonsdale, it deserves to be quoted in full and is found in the Appendix. It would be tempting to suppose that Bunting had loaned his book and Chapman mailed his draft to the same eager scholar; alternatively Bunting's widow might have returned the book with its 1937 letter to the author for sensitive or sentimental reasons, and in 1971 he simply stuck the typescript inside. Chapman himself was to die in six months and was occupied writing his own memoir, so he may not even have made a clean copy of his anti-prospectus. The memoir protests repeatedly that he had put William Beckford behind him.[28] The typescript shows otherwise.

That covers Chapman's career with the Caliph, but not the strength of his attachment. What was the pull exerted on him by this posturing, petulant, gifted, and glamorous rock star? 'No one in whom Beckford sinks his claws gets away without losing a drop or two of his blood in the encounter,' he wrote.[29] The image is suitably gothic, but it seems to me that Mowl has summed up the case more astutely: 'He has become an icon for men hovering nervously but knowingly, always very knowingly, on the edge of their own identities.'[30] That Chapman hovered is evident throughout his memoir, which presents islands of satisfaction, even great peacefulness—the latter generally spent reading or in the countryside—awash in self-doubt:

> I had no aptitude for it, none of the virtues the successful need … He wrote a lucid sensitive prose, better than anything I could do … I should have been undergoing the discipline I needed and preparing to follow a plainly marked track … another unjustifiable diversion … my fatuous existence … I began too late to get to the real vision … I have accomplished very little.[31]

That's just a sampling. Yet the troubled soul who wrote that could also declare:

> [O]ne should be ever on the alert … to seize the immediate relationship to oneself of a view, a gesture, a combination of musical notes, of colours. You may get it wrong, you may be wasting your time, probably in the eyes of the trained and self-assured you will be, but you will have something, something wholly real, and at times ravishing.[32]

Reading and researching Beckford, Chapman was ravished: here were passions and damage similar to his own. He, too, had passed a lonely childhood under the eye of a controlling mother and had nursed a preference for the company of men, whether at the Savile Club or in the trenches. He, too, read voraciously, adored opera, fine bindings, crumbling abbeys, untouched country, and European travel—and like the aging Beckford, he sighed for a vanishing way of life. Moreover, he

was a gifted writer who never quite disciplined his gifts into a steady output. Undeniably he was an outsider; always he was a survivor. Chapman was sharp enough to be fully aware of this dynamic:

> Almost without thought I was on his side.... I dare say I saw myself in his relationship with a violently emotional mother.... And, too, I have always detested the easy habit of assuming that any man who prefers men and is openly attached to his male friends is a homosexual.... Even in the older Beckford, singularly unlovable, ... I detected a disappointment and loneliness which made him more than a little pathetic to me.[33]

Channeling zests and crotchets, we both draw from Beckford and project ourselves into him. It's an almost vampiric attachment, claws and blood as Chapman put it, more than we'd give to William Blake (1757–1827) or even that arch-seducer Lord Byron (1788–1824). The young Benjamin Disraeli (1804–81), himself an orientalist and something of a loose cannon, was sufficiently struck to model his 'psychological autobiography' *Contarini Fleming* on events and scandals from the Caliph's life.[34] Beckford at least thought so, took it as a huge compliment, and read himself back into Disraeli: 'most proud I am to perceive that he is so strongly imbued with Vathek. The images it presents haunt him continually. The halls of Eblis, the thrones of the Solimans are for ever present to his mind's eye....'[35] Reading *Vathek* a century later, Borges projected his fascination with mazes, calling the author's life 'labyrinthine' and likening Eblis to the etchings of Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720–1778), 'mighty palaces which are also impenetrable labyrinths.'[36] Thirty years further down the line, spinning a novel around the sale of Fonthill Abbey, Aubrey Menen penned a bedroom scene for Beckford and Gregorio Franchi (1770–1828) with imagery he could easily have drawn from his own youthful escapades in Paris.[37] While he was at it, he threw in a raunchy pun on the name Farquhar.[38] Does it bear mention that all these men had formidable mothers?

Using almost clinical terms, Roger Lonsdale in 1970 pinned down the meaning of *Vathek* as 'a vehicle for the imaginative projection of

private fantasy and emotional turmoil.'[39] I would claim similar meaning for Beckford's life, both the sublimation it initially provided for its author, constantly composing and redrafting his events and emotions, and the discovery it now offers to legions of fans and chroniclers. This brings us back around to Chapman, his own turmoil, and the letter that began our inquiry. Since Mowl's phrase 'always very knowingly' carries a sexual frisson, let me say at once that I'm not attempting to out Guy Chapman. It's true that his autobiographical memoir extols the comradeship of the trenches rather warmly; true also that it includes homosexual references having nothing to do with Beckford.[40] Grappling with the Powderham tangle and the obstructions of Grierson—not to forget public prudery still battening thirty years after the fall of Oscar Wilde (1854–1900)—sensitized him to the issue of gender, so that as late as 1971 we find him snarling that Boyd Alexander 'is so far as I can make out interested in homosexualism and sodomy.'[41] In the memoir he struggles repeatedly to parse homosocial love from homosexual—'Can I find the right exact word for the kind of love I felt for a few men? … my love … is a third sort, sexless in the accepted meaning of the term.'[42] Almost with relief he lands on the following passage in a book of poems given him by Bunting. More than their connection at Jonathan Cape, it explains why in 1937 Daniel George was an apt recipient for the biography and the quote from Proust:

> But, take it from me
> The poor bloody infantry
> Were monks.
> By God! Now I come to think of it,
> We were homo-sexual in the loftiest sense
> With a love passing the love of women.[43]

In the long run Chapman has to be his own apologist. When he equates sublimation with subnormality or dismisses the charge of homosexuality by saying, 'Oh, don't be an ass,'[44] he loses us. When

he can set aside such insecurities and focus on what he calls the 'wholly real, and at times ravishing,' we realize the validity of strong emotions: his, Beckford's, and ours. Describing his feelings on discovering the French poet Jean-Paul de Dadelsen (1913–57), Chapman recalled thinking, 'This man is real, I must have him.'[45] Note that verb: not *read* him, but *have* him. The same urgent adoration characterizes his response to small French villages—'towns and streets as familiar to my sight and touch as a loved body'—and enables him one page later to channel Beckford's passion for Portugal: 'his love-affair with the scenery, the flowers, trees and fruits growing on this balcony thrown out over the Atlantic, and the shabby, slothful but kindly society which accepted him and made much of him.'[46] Chapman's widow Storm Jameson understood:

> What, I think, happened was that suddenly one of the many writers not of his own craft whom he read with absorbed closeness stepped forward and rested a hand on him. Not satisfied to go on re-reading the visitant's poems or memoirs or letters or plays, he set himself to read about the world he came from, the social and literary circles he had moved in, his friends, until these were as familiar to him as if he had moved in the same circles, known intimately the same men and women.[47]

There's a strong streak of consumption in what Jameson describes; certainly it was present in Beckford's voracious collecting of books, bibelots, and failed flirtations. Living in an age that treats art, music, even a day in the country as product, we may well see it that way at first. It should not be our only impression. Regardless of false starts and petty egotism, the sublimations pursued by William Beckford and channeled unsteadily by Guy Chapman involved a reaching for the sublime behind the circumstance. It's a Romantic impulse preached time and again by William Wordsworth (1770–1850), an attempt to extend oneself into something greater and more intense: 'Touch—for there is a spirit in the woods.'[48] Beckford spoke of it as a 'transient gleam' glimpsed through clouds.[49]

The last word properly belongs to Chapman; and here I think Mowl, despite his sneer about the Caliph's identity-challenged fans being 'the better-class antique dealers of life,'[50] might agree: 'One reads other writers, memorists, historians, quite as much to discover one's own convictions as to accept or combat theirs.'[51]

APPENDIX

'A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE WORKS OF WILLIAM BECKFORD OF FONTHILL

I am afraid that the proposal in your letter just cannot be as assumed.

1. Of the original edition, there were printed 500 copies. There was no royalty attached, but I was to receive, I rather think, the complete revenue after Constable's costs had been covered. Unhappily, a fire destroyed rather more than 150 copies (John Carter[52] had a big loss at the same time)[.] There was no re-print.

2. I have not, I think, any copy of the book except a file copy which I had interleaved and has a certain number of notes. There are also—and this is a snag—a number of corrections in the text, i.e. would need corrections in a new text.

3. All the above happened about forty years ago and things are different. In 1946 I met when I was in France one André Parreaux, who in 1934 had written a small book about Beckford in Portugal and who had been a prisoner of war in Germany since 1940. He was working on a thesis on Beckford for a Sorbonne doctorate. He after a spell as professor of 18th century English at Lille, got his degree at Paris and has held the same chair at the Sorbonne. He has also produced the fullest book on Beckford yet written, a thick royal 8vo. including a book-list. He had an advantage over my earlier effort that he got a short run at some of the unpublished pieces. During, however, the past dozen or so years, we somehow got together a new bibliography. He indeed produced some contemporary continental versions of Vathek and also worked on the text. In the end, I produced a joint effort. But the whole market had changed since then, become much more technical. Carter told me that

it was just not good enough with which I agree. This text *I now have here. It is free. Parreaux & I have let it go*[.][53]

4. I tried at least a couple of times to persuade someone to use Parreaux's and my text and produce a new bibliography, but these have all refused, including a man at Balliol who has been over Vathek but produced nothing more than a textual edition. *Dr. Roger Lonsdale of Balliol, in the Oxford paperbacks, 1970*

5. I have omitted the real snag as I see it. The Beckford Papers are possessed by the Hamilton (Dukes of), a cadet branch of the family, and the *control of the* papers are in the hands of Scottish lawyers[,] the Hamilton Estates Trust. During the war—none of us know how it happened, these were removed and entrusted to one Boyd Alexander who has kept them ever since (well above twenty years) and who calls himself the 'custodian' of the papers. (I have not seen the papers since 1938. Parreaux has had I think one day.) I have met this man once, and to be frank, I though[t] him incompetent and willing only to let us see things in the most difficult circumstances; he lives somewhere near Didcot. Also he is so far as I can make out interested in homosexualism and sodomy. He has written a life of Beckford and claims to have the manuscript of Redding['s] Life of Beckford, but he has never published it. Nor has he done any work, so far as I can discover, on the papers. *He also has done three books, an edition of the Portuguese travel diaries (very good) & two* [sic] *volumes of letters, very poor. He has also written a bad life*[.] (Veronica might know something about him; there existed in the nineties a talkative Dreyfusard or anti-Dreyfusard who, she told me, [w]as a distant relative of hers.)

6. The USA copyright as well as the British are free. The market I think to be better in USA than here. There is a man called Gemmett at a branch of New York University at Rochester, who is the only one I now know. *cf. T.L.S. of 5th Nov., Correspondence columns.*[54] All the other[s] are dead, especially the biggest collector, James T. Babb who is dead but left his collection to Yale of which he was the librarian. There is also a little French interest. If you know Carter, ask him about them.

7. If after all this, you still feel that something might come of it, let me hear from you. I don't want any money, but you might have to pay my bills if photography is needed. I rather forget what is in the University library here. Anyhow they have a X[e]rox and only charge one a 1/- a page.

8. As regards my old biography of B., it is a kind suggestion, but I rather think that Rupert Hart-Davis sold what remained to Granada, and that they took some time to clear off. But I'll think about it. The real trouble is that Beckford has been mishandle[d] from the moment that the trustees of the Hamilton Estates on the death of the duke in the early twenties handed the papers over to Grierson, who handed them over to Oliver who was given first run on I believe the cataloguing of the Hamilton Papers. Oliver took about ten years to produce a good but dull book with gaps owing to his pudeur, and I never had a real chance to operate.

As regards my first collaborator, he was John Hodgkin, who did no more than argue points with me, lent me various books, & died in the thirties leaving all his Beckford stuff to the Bodleian.'

1 Marcel Proust, *Sodome et Gomorrhe*, Paris: Éditions de la Nouvelle Revue Française, 1921, the lines inscribed by Guy Chapman with his presentation to Bunting.

2 Timothy Mowl, *William Beckford: Composing for Mozart*, London: John Murray, 1998, 2

3 The initialism for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender came into its current wide use in the 1990s.

4 Guy Chapman, *Beckford*, 2nd ed ., London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1952, 15

5 Guy Chapman, *Beckford*, London: Jonathan Cape, 1937, 188. 'The link is not, I believe, homosexual passion.... This might be taken to imply bisexuality. But to my mind the implication is wrong.'

6 Ibid., 14

7 Beckford liked to refer to his mother Maria (1724/5–98) using the feminine title for a high-ranking Muslim or the wife of a Bey.

8 William Beckford, *The Episodes of Vathek*, tr. Sir Frank T. Marzials, intro. Lewis Melville, London: Stephen Swift & Co., 1912

9 Chapman immersed himself in everything Beckford. William would have cringed to find his own books rubbing shoulders in the Abbey Classics series with his boorish cousin Peter's *Thoughts on Hunting*, London: Chapman & Dodd, 1923

10 Guy Chapman, *A Kind of Survivor*, London: Victor Gollancz, 1975, 109. The biographical urge was a recurring response of Chapman's to writers that fascinated him; previously he had roughed out a life of François Villon (Chapman, *Survivor*, 89). My thanks to Sidney Blackmore for pointing me toward this book.

11 Published in 1928, 1929, 1930, 1930. The limitation number of 1000 copies dropped in the final year to 750 for *The Vision* and 500 for the bibliography.

12 Chapman, *Survivor*, 120

13 Guy Chapman, 'Memoir' prefacing *The Travel-Diaries of William Beckford of Fonthill*, London: Constable and Company, 1928, 1:lvii

14 Lewis Melville, *The Life and Letters of William Beckford of Fonthill*, London: William Heinemann, 1910

15 Chapman, 'Memoir,' xxiii; xxxi, n. 2; lix, n. 1; xliv, n. 1

16 Ibid., lx

17 Ibid., x; xxxv, n. 5

18 Ibid., xxxvii, n. 5, continued from xxxv

19 Guy Chapman, Introduction to 'Liber Veritatis' in *The Vision/Liber Veritatis by William Beckford of Fonthill*, London: Constable and Company, 1930, xvi, xix, xxvi

20 Chapman, *Beckford* 1937, 13–14

21 Jorge Luis Borges, 'On William Beckford's *Vathek*,' *Selected Non-Fictions*, ed. Eliot Weinberger, New York: Viking Penguin, 1999, 237, 239. Borges also complained that Chapman's bibliography did not include Mallarmé's book; but Chapman's publication of the French *Vathek* in 1929 (London: Constable) shows him aware of that 1876 edition: he lists it on page x among 'Books Consulted.' Borges' essay was first published in 1943. If Chapman saw it, he in turn must have bridled at the aperçu that Beckford's original French text is unfaithful to Samuel Henley's (1740–1815) translation.

22 Chapman, *Beckford* 1937, 15

23 J.W. Oliver, whose *Life of William Beckford* was published in 1932 by Oxford University Press and re-issued by them in 1937, just two months after Chapman's book came out.

24 Chapman, *Survivor*, 121

25 Chapman, *Beckford* 1952, 16

26 Boyd Alexander, ed., *The Journal of William Beckford in Portugal and Spain 1787–1788*, London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1954; *Life at Fonthill 1807–1822 with Interludes in Paris and London from the Correspondence of William Beckford*, London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1957

27 Boyd Alexander, *England's Wealthiest Son: A Study of William Beckford*, London: Centaur Press, 1962, 1

28 'So far as I was concerned, the infection wore out many years ago … I am done with him … I had lost what remained of my concern for William Beckford … the ash of my concern for William Beckford….' Chapman, *Survivor*, 109, 110, 123, 272

29 Ibid., 109

30 Mowl, op. cit., 24

31 Chapman, *Survivor*, 104, 106, 133, 149, 204, 265, 285

32 Ibid., 285

33 Ibid., 122

34 Benjamin Disraeli, *Contarini Fleming: A Psychological Auto-Biography*, London: John Murray, 1832

35 William Beckford, letter to George Clarke, March 14, 1833, in *The Consummate Collector: William Beckford's letters to His Bookseller*, ed. Robert J. Gemmett, Norwich: Michael Russell, 2000, 186. This letter praises *The Wondrous Tale of Alroy*, which Disraeli published the year after *Contarini Fleming*.

36 Borges, op. cit., 237–8

37 Aubrey Menen, *Fonthill: A Comedy*, New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1974, 172–4. Compare with Menen, *The Space within the Heart*, London: Hamish Hamilton, 1970, 82

38 Menen, op. cit., 36

39 Roger Lonsdale, Introduction to William Beckford, *Vathek*, London: Oxford University Press, 1970, xxviii

40 See for instance his comments that the adjutant of his battalion was later 'broken on a homosexual charge,' that Alec Ross 'had never married, not because he shared Oscar Wilde's homosexual bent,' or the description of his lodgings in Schaffhausen as 'clearly a room for a seventeenth-century cardinal-bishop and his catamite.' Chapman, *Survivor*, 73, 98, 254

41 Appendix, item 5.

42 Chapman, *Survivor*, 75–6

43 Daniel George, *Tomorrow Will Be Different*, London: Pharos Publications, 1932, quoted in Chapman, *Survivor*, 76

44 Chapman, *Survivor*, 122

45 Ibid., 266

46 Ibid., 271–2

47 Margaret Storm Jameson, Preface to Chapman, *Survivor*, 14

48 William Wordsworth, "Nutting," *The Poems*, ed. John O. Hayden, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981, 369

49 William Beckford, "A Prayer," *The Transient Gleam: A Bouquet of Beckford's Poesy*, ed. Devendra P. Varma, Upton, Wirral: Aylesford Press, 1991, 31

50 Mowl, op. cit., 24

51 Chapman, *Survivor*, 279

52 John Waynflete Carter, the noted bibliographer and book collector.

53 Autograph insertions are indicated here in italics.

54 This turns out to be a letter to the editor from John Commander headed "Beckford Sales," *Times Literary Supplement*, November 5, 1971, 13:92. If I could as readily identify the Veronica mentioned in item 5, we might even run Chapman's correspondent to ground.

'The Almost Innumerable Descents of the Owner and His Late Wife': William Beckford's Use of Heraldry at Fonthill Abbey

STEPHEN CLARKE

On Thursday 29 March 1804, the artist and diarist Joseph Farington (1747–1821) called on Benjamin West (1738–1820). West recounted how he had provided Beckford with a copy of Thomas Hope's *Observations* on James Wyatt's designs for Downing College, with its criticisms of Gothic design:

> Beckford stopped at His House to take the pamphlet which after dinner He read. He said Tom Hope was right in His remarks.—He said He felt the force of what He observed of the Abbey at Fonthill being a Gothic design ill placed within view of Salisbury Cathedral; but that He had a particular motive for it. The Gothic windows & compartments afforded him opportunities to blazon and introduce the arms of the various great families that did & had existed in Europe from which His daugtrs. are descended or to which they are allied.[1]

The heraldic windows at Fonthill Abbey were described by Clive Wainwright as the most extensive stained glass commission that had been carried out in a Gothic Revival building up to the 1820s.[2] But the windows, which glowed and sparkled with coats of arms and figures of knights and kings with their bearings, were but one element of the heraldic display of the Abbey. Room after room, gallery after gallery was adorned with armorial shields, and repeated use was made of heraldic crests and armorial motifs, on ceilings, carpets, furniture,

porcelain, metalwork, and even on the bindings of his books. The effect must have been overwhelming, but it was not universally convincing. The *Athenæum*, in a critical review of Cyrus Redding's *Memoirs of William Beckford* (1859) recorded how Beckford

> was the proudest of men, perpetually daring to assert that he was descended from John of Gaunt (no great triumph even if he proved it), on the mere foundation of his father, the lord Mayor, having purchased some property that had once been John of Gaunt's. The windows at Fonthill burned and glowed with heraldic lies, mere sham claims and suppositions founded on strained and twisted resemblances of names that proved nothing.[3]

The purpose of this paper is to examine something of that tension and duality.

The roots of Beckford's heraldic obsession are visible in his childhood. He recounted that at the age of ten he had been teased in his father's presence by being reminded of the low condition of some of his father's ancestors (including his great-great-grandfather, a shoemaker): 'As no small portion of the family pride seemed to have been infused into me with the blood of the Hamiltons, I by no means relished the thoughts of this plebeian descent. I fell into a violent rage.'[4] In a sense that rage never left him, and was transformed into a passion for genealogy, investigating the descent of his mother Maria (1724/5–98), granddaughter of the sixth earl of Abercorn, a branch of the Hamilton family. In addition, on her mother's side there was a cornucopia of ancestral connections, including the Protector Somerset, the Wentworths, Percys, Mortimers,and Plantagenets, both Edward III and Edward I, and the illustrious house of Latimer and the soldier and statesman William, first Lord Latimer (d. 1304). Added to this was the rich inheritance of Beckford's own wife, Lady Margaret Gordon (1762–86), daughter of the Earl of Aboyne. He was described in *Burke's Commoners* of 1834, under the entry for Beckford of Fonthill, as being 'descended, by numerous and direct lines, from the kings of Scotland,

through many of the greatest families of that kingdom, as well as through the principal sovereign houses of Europe.' Even his less-promising descent in the male Beckford line of adventurers and slave owners, which had been brought out of obscurity by his great-grand-father Colonel Peter Beckford (1643–1710), who became President of the Council and Lieutenant-Governor of Jamaica, had the attraction of Bathshua, Beckford's grandmother. She was the wife of Colonel Peter's son, who was the Speaker of the Jamaican House of Assembly. She was of the family of Hering, and claimed descent through the lines of Oxenbridge, Throckmorton, Nevil, Beauchamp, Le Despencer and Plantagenet, and so to the blood royal.

The additional element in this slightly insecure celebration of family lineage was the failure of Beckford's campaign in 1783–4 to secure a barony through Lord Chancellor Thurlow. This was foiled by the Powderham scandal; Guy Chapman records that the patent for the barony had already been prepared, but was cancelled two days after the scandal broke, when the news-sheets had already printed Beckford's name in the list of those ennobled. Beckford then pursued for over fifty years the barony that had been snatched from his grasp, his attempts becoming increasingly far-fetched. In 1825, seven years after his elder daughter had died, he demanded of his younger daughter that only if her husband the Duke of Hamilton obtained for him the longed-for barony would he increase the allowance of his elder daughter's children.[5]

The resultant combination of pride and anguished frustration was voiced most clearly in that most curious child of his obsession, *Liber Veritatis*, a hymn to bile and thwarted ambition. Published long after his death, its tone is remorselessly sardonic as it charts the ennoblement of industrialists, the knighthoods and baronetcies granted to mere professional men, and the achievement of actresses who in another generation would have been honoured with the rank of Ducal mistress, now aspiring to coronets of their own. For example, the Prime Minister Canning's mother, who had taken to the stage, was airily dismissed as 'a pleasing young Woman, whose maiden name, I must

confess, has glided from my memory,' while he sardonically congratulates 'our noble fair' for 'how willingly they have surmounted all aristocratic prejudices and without a shadow of interested motives joined hands with many and many a deserving commercial young man.'[6] He bemoaned the betrayal of ancient families in marrying into trade. Above all, he loathed the aspirations of the newly-minted aristocracy, the Peels, Burrells, Pleydell-Bouveries and Couttses, and above all these the Smithsons, sons of apothecaries, who had acquired by marriage and deed-poll the resounding name of Percy. As he recorded with contemptuous disbelief:

> few matrimonial events ever excited a broader stare of surprise (a more thorough conviction among the higher circles that it could never be forgotten) than the quite unexpected union of a Sir Hugh Smithson with the Lady Elizabeth Seymour, Heiress by her paternal grandmother of all the blood and what most think a great deal more essential, all the commanding, territorial possessions of the illustrious Percies. This Sir H. Smithson's arms were granted to his paternal great grandfather and his brother Bernard Smithson, apothecary: but to prepare becomingly for the splendid event of his most prosperous match Sir Hugh dropped his own scurvy scrap of blazonry in the first puddle, which in his joy he skipped over, abjured his plebeian name, borrowed My Lady's rich armorial petticoat to cover his nakedness, put off the old Adam and was born anew,—a Percy by act of parliament![7]

Coming from a commoner who numbered among his great-great-grandfathers a clothworker as well as a shoemaker, this may well sound bizarre. But Beckford was not unaware of the inner tension of his mixed heritage; he even celebrated Roger Maddock the shoemaker with a mock design for a wall cupboard for Fonthill, drawn for him by the Abbé Macquin (1756–1823) or the herald George Beltz (1774–1841), displaying the soles of a pair of shoes above the legend 'Peace to the Souls' and Maddock's initials. Maddock's wife Hannah Poole he believed despite her modest circumstances to be descended from the Poles, who married into the Plantagenets, but as he lamented 'the

glories of the Poles are so miserably tarnished, their cloth of gold so foully steeped in a torrent of plebeian filth, that scarce a ray of regal splendour remains.'[8]

Beckford conducted his genealogical campaign on two fronts, in his dealings with the College of Arms, and on the friezes and in the stained glass of Fonthill. His engagement with the College of Arms was initially through the Garter King of Arms Sir Isaac Heard (1730–1822), but latterly with Heard's secretary Beltz, who rose to become Lancaster herald. Both sets of correspondence are among the Beckford papers at the Bodleian, and the Heard correspondence includes two accounts rendered to Beckford, one for £693.4.4, for work carried out between 1784 and 1794, the other for £395.12.8, including £200 'Gratuity to Sir Isaac Heard for his trouble & attentions during the years 1796 1797 and 1798.'[9]

The records of the College of Arms and the bound volumes recording their grants show how this considerable expenditure was incurred, and show the evolution of the splendours of multiple quarterings that were Beckford's proud boast, FIGURE 1. The Beckford arms themselves essentially consisted of a chevron with an eagle at its apex, on a field vertically divided, red on the left, blue on the right, with three birds (martlets) in profile. In heraldic terms these are described as: per pale gules and azure on a chevron between three martlets argent or an eagle displayed sable. If one ignores the bordure (border), these can be seen in the first quartering (top left) of Figure 1. They had been granted in 1685 to another branch of the family—to William Beckford, son of Alderman Thomas Beckford.[10] William was the first cousin of our Beckford's great-grandfather, Colonel Peter Beckford, who made the family's fortunes in Jamaica. These are the arms that were adopted by the Jamaica branch of the family, and they appear on the wall monument to Colonel Peter and his son—also Peter (d. 1735), who was Speaker of the House of Assembly—in the church of St. Catherine's, in the county of Middlesex, Jamaica. Peter the Speaker's son was William (1709–70), Beckford's father, who came over to London at the age of fourteen, and rose to be Lord Mayor of London.

Fig. 1. William Beckford's Arms, as registered at the College of Arms in 1808.

In 1791 the College of Arms granted Beckford an augmentation of the arms that had been adopted by his great-grandfather in Jamaica. Beckford could call on the Hamilton connections that came from his mother, and was granted a tressure, a border round the arms that was associated with the royal house of Scotland, from whom the Hamiltons claimed descent; this is how the first quartering of arms in Figure 1 is shown. In 1793 he obtained confirmation that he was entitled to use of the arms of Hering from Bathsua, the wife of his grandfather Peter the Speaker. In 1798 he was granted as an augmentation (in addition to the Beckford family crest of a heron's head, holding a fish in its beak, the bec fort) the Hamilton crest (an oak tree above a coronet) charged with the arms of Latimer and a frame-saw, as through the Hamiltons and Mervyns (former Lords of Fonthill) he claimed descent from William first Lord Latimer, the motif from whose arms, the Latimer Cross, or cross fleury, was such a prominent part of the heraldic decoration at Fonthill. In 1808 his scheme of thirty quarterings, including both crests and the royal house of Scotland, was approved by the College, Figure 1, and then in 1810 'in consideration of such an extraordinary accumulation of Descents from Royal and illustrious Families' he was granted an augmentation to the bordure of a double rather than a single tressure (a double rather than a single red line, as shown on the arms of Scotland in the 17th quartering of Figure 1), a distinction more often reserved for Scottish royalty.[11]

All this made Beckford an active and valued customer of the Heralds, and his correspondence with Beltz, which stretches from 1800 to 1834, shows Beltz pursuing genealogical research, seeking connections, and tracing additional ancestors. The tone, when each new piece of the jigsaw is secured, can be jubilant. 'Rejoice with me for I have found the piece which I had lost' was Beltz's cry from Luke 15.9 when he found a link to the Coward family of Wells; an inspection of the Visitation of Somersetshire of 1672 produced the coat of Leigh ushered in by Watkins, which he noted 'opens a new Mine.' Establishment of descent from the Mervyns of Fonthill was particularly satisfying; Beltz applauded Beckford that 'To be a scion of so respectable a Stock,—to

be descended from John Mervyn, of whom such honourable mention is made in the munificent endowment of Margaret Lady Hungerford in 1470, & who was himself connected by Marriage with that noble Family,—is doubtless highly gratifying.' And in June 1807, in a letter that concluded triumphantly with a list of 40 quarterings, Beltz was able to announce that 'Some plague or other has, from day to day, frustrated my intention of acquainting you, that your descent from Roger de Quincy Earl of Winton, duly & authentically established, figures among our archives in all the more than chivalresque splendour of feudal Sovereignty. Such an assemblage, is in truth not easily to be matched in the Annals of Heraldry!'[12]

The correspondence becomes increasingly friendly and informal on Beltz's part, and records his visiting Fonthill, proposing meetings when Beckford was in London, and later assisting Beckford in the dealings with Bentley over the publication of Beckford's *Italy with Sketches of Spain and Portugal* (1834). At some points in the correspondence Beltz seems to participate in the Beckfordian fantasy, as where, battling with Scottish descents in 1805, he announces that he is 'unable to present the shield of Ross, in its resplendence, at the hallowed Portal of Fonthill—if I can hope at all for admission, I must owe it entirely to the noble & liberal Abbot's wonted indulgence.'[13] But the correspondence also, at least in the early years, shows evidence of financial dependence. On 30 December 1803 Beltz wrote to Beckford, explaining his financial embarrassment as a result of supporting an orphan family, and claiming that to resolve his finances he was proposing to take an office in one of the Leeward Islands—a step he could avoid were he able to obtain £250. Two days later the anxious Beckford, faced with the threat of losing his key genealogical researcher, sent him a note to be drawn on for £100, urging him 'Let me exhort you, my dear Sir, not to be too precipitate in wrecking yourself upon some stony Leeward Island—your Talents are [intended] for a better Latitude & the time perhaps is not far distant when they may be called with a very superior [?] service.' In 1804 Beltz asked Beckford for a loan of 1,000 guineas to enable him to purchase the position of Chester herald, and in 1809, in

response to some unknown assistance from Beckford that one strongly suspects was financial, he declared that 'All attempt to thank you were so feeble, so far short of an adequate expression of my feelings, that I shall not make it,' explaining how in his gratitude a tear had silently rolled into his pillow (Beckford endorsed the letter 'The Tear').[14]

Beltz has been described as a first-class scholar and genealogist, but it is hard to avoid wondering whether such issues might have had some influence on his objectivity.[15] He was certainly anxious to please Beckford, as when in 1810 he announced that 'As it is unquestionably, among all sublunary comforts, one of the most comfortable to verify a point which had been doubtful—but then more especially when the said point happens to be on the side we wish—I hasten to announce to you that, upon recourse to Wills & other Evidences, I have removed the difficulties thrown by some authorities into the Line of D'aubeney; and have thereby cleared your way to John of Gaunt thro' the following snug & delectable channel'—the descent of which he then sets out.[16] More than that it is not possible to speculate.

What is clear, though, is that Beckford's connections through his mother and his wife did open up genealogical possibilities of exceptional richness. Beltz, in one of the three articles on the heraldry of Fonthill that he contributed (probably at Beckford's instigation) to *The Gentleman's Magazine* in September to November 1822, reflected on one example of this display of heraldry at its most romantic—the case of Queen Mary of Gueldres (d. 1466), wife of King James II of Scotland, from whom both Beckford and his wife claimed descent. 'The lustre of the descent of Mary of Gueldres,' pronounced Beltz, 'can scarcely be credited, except by the patient Genealogist who has investigated the lines of her ancestry. Daughter of Arnolph II. Duke of Gueldres and Juliers, by Catharine of Cleves, the daughter of Mary of Burgundy, she reckoned among her lineal progenitors the Emperors of the East, of almost every dynasty, Czars of Muscovy, and the Sovereigns of almost every Imperial and Royal house in Europe!'[17]

In the first of those *Gentleman's Magazine* articles, Beltz explained

for those who had attended the great Fonthill auction view earlier that year the scheme of 'the Armorial ornaments which abound in the principal apartments, and which seemed to have escaped the notice of, or to have been little understood by the generality of observers.'[18] One suspects that while the scheme of armorial ornaments may not have been understood by many visitors, they were such a prominent element in the decoration of the Abbey and its contents that it is hard to imagine their passing unnoticed. There was even the contemporary *Fonthill: A Poem* by John Jefferson, published by Blandford in 1824, which celebrated how the 'Emblazon'd Quarterings grace the polish'd wood' and 'the gorgeous field / of each commemorative ample shield / Flames with the produce of heraldic fire.'[19] The scale of the heraldic decoration was surely unprecedented. There are some earlier examples of the decorative grouping of coats of arms, as in the barrel-vaulted ceiling of the Great Hall of Lacock Abbey, designed by Sanderson Miller (1716–80) in the 1750s with 45 shields displaying the arms of the owner's friends. There was also a curious contemporary example, the ceiling erected by the young William John Bankes (1786–1855) of Kingston Lacy in one of his rooms at Trinity College Cambridge; he transformed the room into a chapel, adorning the barrel-vaulted ceiling with escutcheons and supporting it with angel-headed bosses. But the scale of the heraldic scheme at Fonthill was wholly original, and the succession of series on series of coats of arms and repeated crests was dedicated strictly to the rich multiplicity of Beckford ancestors.

There were two fundamental elements to Beckford's heraldic display; programmatic series of shields illustrating a particular ancestral descent or grouping, and the decorative use of repeated patterns of armorial crests or badges in the interiors and their furnishing. We have three separate principal accounts of the display, being Beltz's articles of 1822 for *The Gentleman's Magazine*, John Rutter's *Delineations of Fonthill and its Abbey*, and John Britton's *Graphical and Literary Illustrations of Fonthill Abbey*, both from the following year. Rutter and Britton, both of whom were assisted by Beltz, also provide us with the engravings that give us a glimpse of the overall effect. Rutter has three

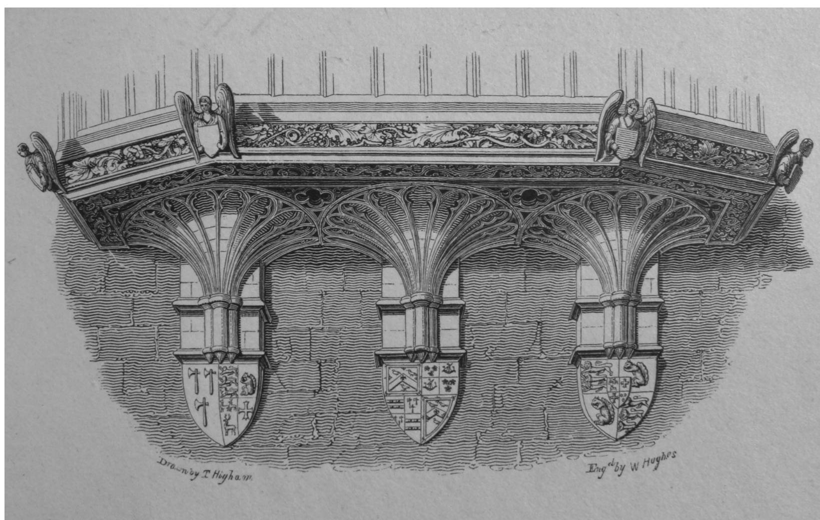

Fig. 2. 'Corbel of the South Oriel Window', wood engraving by W. Hughes after T. Higham, from John Rutter, *Delineations of Fonthill and its Abbey*, 1823, [66].

genealogical tables, whereas Britton has no less than nine, together with an engraved armorial title-page on which Beltz advised, but Rutter is sufficiently aware of the central role played by heraldry in the interior decoration to order his descriptions of rooms under the headings of Architecture, Furniture, Pictures, and Heraldry.

The exterior of the Abbey had its share of armorial embellishment, including in the lower part of the windows of the Lancaster State Bedroom, in the cornice of the South Arcade, and beneath the South and East Oriels. Beneath the South Oriel—the great window at the south end of St Michael's Gallery—were three shields, as shown in FIGURE 2. The centre shield was that of Beckford quartering Hamilton and Arran, Hall, and Coward; that on the left was Hall impaling Mervyn, Squire, Green, and Latimer; and that on the right was Mervyn quartering Squire with, on an escutcheon of pretence, Green, Latimer, and Basil. The East Oriel was more heavily decorated still. At its base were two angels bearing shields for Beckford and Gordon-Aboyne, with

between them Beckford's motto 'De Dieu tout.' Above these were six shields bearing alternately the arms of Beckford and Mervyn, present and former owners of Fonthill, while the panels of the upper part of the window bore the repeated crests and mottoes of Mervyn, Beckford, Hamilton, and Latimer. Rutter adapted this window and its heraldic display as a frame for an advertisement for his *Delineations* of Fonthill, FIGURE 3; it is not completely accurate as to the disposition of arms and crests, but shows clearly the prominence of the armorial decoration. It also describes the book as Rutter's 'History and Description of Fonthill Abbey,' reflecting the book's engraved title page, 'An Illustrated History and Description of Fonthill Abbey,' rather than the printed title of *Delineations of Fonthill and its Abbey*.

The great heraldic displays, meanwhile, were reserved for the interior of the Abbey. The Great Western Hall was equipped with a broad frieze beneath and supporting the rafters, on which were 76 emblazoned escutcheons, showing the several heiresses from whom Beckford derived quarterings. Britton supplemented his description of the Hall with a genealogical table 'The Principal Quarterings of William Beckford, Esq. in the Great Hall.' Mounting the stairs to the Octagon, the stained glass of the windows displayed Lancastrian roses embedded in quatrefoils of purple, bordered with gold. The arms of Latimer and Bellomont alternated in the spandrels of the lantern, while at the foot of the piers of the Nunnery arcades, on each face of the Octagon, were the arms of Latimer, Scotland, Saxon Kings, and Bellomont again.

In King Edward's Gallery, a celebration of the Order of the Garter, the heraldic scheme determined the design. Rutter explained that the Gallery 'has been designed for the purpose of commemorating the names of those individuals of Mr. Beckford's ancestry, who have been honoured with the illustrious knighthood of the garter. The number and rank of these persons, their historical and chivalrous fame, would add lustre to any genealogy.'[20] There was a portrait of Edward III over the chimney-piece and on either side three royal knights, the arms and badges of all seven of them being emblazoned on the windows oppo-

Fig. 3. 'East Oriel Window, Fonthill Abbey', adapted as an advertisement for Rutter's *Delineations of Fonthill and its Abbey*, 1823, wood engraving by W. Hughes.

site; then, in the frieze of the cornice, there were 72 gartered shields, from the owners of all of which Beckford claimed descent. The ceiling was covered with a repeated pattern of Latimer crosses and quatrefoils (the Hamilton badge), with a crimson carpet and curtains of purple and scarlet. Above, Beltz noted of the Lancaster State Bedroom, with its royal badges of the red rose and portcullis emblazoned alternately on the frieze, that 'The denomination of this apartment appears to have been justified by the almost innumerable descents of the Owner and of his late wife from Henry Earl of Lancaster, grandson of King Henry III.'[21]

Beyond King Edward's Gallery was a Vaulted Corridor, lined on either side with 19 shields showing the descents, on the east side, of Beckford and, on the west side, of his wife from Edward I. Beyond that, and beyond the Sanctuary with the Latimer cross woven in the carpet, the north wing concluded with the Oratory, dimly lit by the suspended lamp, also decorated with Latimer crosses, and by stained glass with fleurs-de-lis in gold on a purple ground.

Looking south from here down the great enfilade, beyond King Edward's Gallery and the Octagon was St Michael's Gallery, with an equally determined heraldic programme. The carpet was crimson, strewed with myriads of cinquefoils, and the curtains were scarlet and deep blue. The stained glass depicted heraldic achievements and effigies of saints and distinguished men. The great Oriel window at the south end showed, along with four fathers of the Church, shields giving Beckford's paternal connections. FIGURE 4 shows the southernmost of the windows on the east side of the Gallery, with images of the Venerable Bede and Roger Bacon, and one coat of arms above, with a selection of Beckford quarterings, and two below, both charged with Catesby quarterings; further coats of arms are visible in the Gothic plasterwork either side of the window. The Gallery's largely heraldic glass was by Francis Eginton (1736/7–1805), who in 1799 submitted a bill for £954.4s.[22] Eginton was assisted by Thomas Willement (1786–1871), who would go on to provide heraldic glass for the next generation at Windsor, Charlecote and elsewhere. There was a series

Fig. 4. 'Fonthill Abbey, Window &c in St Michael's Gallery', engraved by W. Havell & Son, drawn and etched by H. Shaw; from John Britton, *Graphical and Literary Illustrations of Fonthill Abbey*, 1823.

of shields held by angels on corbels supporting the vaulted roof and in the arcs-boutant showing Beckford's descent from the families of Seymour, of Mervyn, of Brune, Seymour, Zouche, Rohan, Coward and from William, first Lord Latimer. The royal tressure that the College of Arms had awarded to Beckford was worked in the borders of the curtains, and the Latimer cross and Hamilton cinquefoil appeared repeatedly on the furniture.

The rooms at the south end of the Abbey were also richly adorned. The Oak Parlour was illuminated by painted glass by Eginton after Hamilton depicting 12 kings and 12 knights, all but two of the knights with their bearings on their surcoats, while the windows of the Oak Library showed the arms of Latimer and Mervyn, with borders of Lancastrian roses. In the Eastern Transept, the border of the crimson curtains of the Great Dining Room was woven with the Latimer cross and the cinquefoil. However, the great unrealised project of the Eastern Transept was a proposed Baronial Hall to celebrate Magna Carta, with the armorial achievements of all the barons present, 'for it is a remarkable fact, that Mr. Beckford or his lady have deduced their direct descent from all the barons of whom any issue are remaining, and who are named by Matthew Paris, as assembled on that memorable occasion.'[23] Here, as in the other halls and galleries of that extraordinary edifice, Beckford intended himself as the focal point at which all these genealogical descents converge.

Probably more radical than the surfeit of arms was the repeated use of armorial badges as decorative motifs. 18th-century decorative display made increasing use of the full coat of arms, with supporters, motto and crest, but Beckford explored the decorative possibilities of patterns of heraldic badges. We have noted the pattern of Latimer crosses and cinquefoils on the ceiling of King Edward's Gallery and on the border of the curtains in the Great Dining Room, and of cinquefoils on the carpet of St Michael's Gallery—but Beckford did not limit such patterns to carpets and curtains. The Latimer cross and the cinquefoil in particular were used again and again on furniture, ceramics, and metalwork, as were such other badges as the martlet

(Beckford), the mullet and the crowned heart (both Douglas), and the squirrel (Mervyn). There was no obvious precedent for such imaginative uses as were made by Beckford, as with the silver-gilt tea service, now at the National Museums of Scotland, with all external surfaces patterned in geometric compartments containing alternating Latimer crosses and cinquefoils, or the Worcester cups and saucers patterned with Latimer crosses within elongated shields, or compartments of elongated martlets and cinquefoils, now at Brodick Castle.[24] Also at Brodick Castle are a pair of silver-gilt wall sconces bearing arms, motto (De Dieu Tout), and the Hamilton crest charged with the arms of Latimer that he had been granted in 1798.[25]

In addition, the Latimer cross in particular was used in the furniture designed for the Abbey, including the base that formed the support for the great Borghese table in King Edward's Gallery and the supporting small tables from that Gallery, as well as in the pair of large Renaissance Revival cabinets illustrated by both Britton and Rutter. The other great element in the appearance of Beckford's interiors was the bindings of his splendid library, estimated by Anthony Hobson (in what is still the best summary of Beckford's books) at about six thousand works; the spines bound by Kalthoeber and Lewis glowed with the ornaments of Latimer cross and quatrefoil in gilt.[26] Those two badges in particular were displayed with extravagant and ostentatious profuseness throughout the Abbey, on every conceivable surface and artefact, from stained glass to sugar tongs. The heraldic programme was as coherent as it was insistent.

This glory of emblazonments lasted but a few years. Beckford sold the Abbey in 1822 to clear his debts, and in 1825 the tower collapsed. Having moved to Bath, he did not in his building works there attempt to repeat the heraldic scheme, though in the ensuing decades, as the Gothic Revival gathered pace, others took up the challenge, and grand decorative schemes were to be devised at—for example—Charlecote, Arundel Castle, and Carlton Towers. In 1844 Henry Venn Lansdown (1804–60) inspected the Abbey ruins, and in the northern wing, which had been least damaged, found that in King Edward's Gallery the 'ceil-

ing of dark oak (and its ornaments in strong relief) is as fresh as if just painted, and the beautiful cornice round the four walls of this stately gallery is still preserved, with its three gilded mouldings, but the seventy-two emblazoned shields that formed an integral part of the frieze have been ruthlessly torn off.'[27] Those desecrated shields were symbolic. In 1879 the College of Arms disallowed ten of Beckford's thirty quarterings; it was established that his ancestress Helena, wife of Thomas de Quinci, was the daughter of the first wife of Alan, Lord of Galloway, not of his second wife Margaret of Scotland, through whom Beckford had claimed the royal arms of Scotland.[28] But by then Beckford had been dead for thirty-five years, and the Abbey, long disappeared, had receded into myth.

1 Kenneth Garlick and Andrew MacIntyre (eds.), *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979, vol. 6, 2283. Hope's paper was *Observations on the Plans and Elevations designed by James Wyatt, Architect, for Downing Collage, Cambridge; in a letter to Francis Annesley, Esq., M.P.*, London, 1804

2 Clive Wainwright, T*he Romantic Interior: The British Collector at Home 1750–1850*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989, 117

3 Cyrus Redding, *Fifty years' Recollections, Literary and Personal, with Observations on Men and Things*, London, 1858, reviewed in *The Athenæum Journal of English and Foreign Literature, Science, and the Fine Arts* 11 December 1858, 749–52, at 749

4 Boyd Alexander, *Life at Fonthill* 1807–1822, London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1957, 38

5 Guy Chapman (ed.), *The Vision and Liber Veritatis*, London: Constable and Company Limited, 1930, xviii and xxvi

6 Ibid., 114, 96

7 Ibid., 97

8 Alexander, *Life at Fonthill*, 39

9 Bodleian Library, MS. Beckford c. 32, ff. 8–12, 13–14

10 College of Arms, Grants 3, 281–2

11 College of Arms, Grants 17, 414; Grants 18, 162–3; Grants 20,

282–4; Norfolk 2, 176; Grants 25, 385–9

12 Letters Beltz to Beckford 22 June, 25 July and 5 June 1807, Bodleian Library, MS. Beckford c. 19, ff. 46–7, 48–9, and 43–4

13 Letter Beltz to Beckford 26 July 1805, Bodleian Library, MS. Beckford c. 19, ff. 28–9

14 Letters Beltz to Beckford 30 December 1803 (with reply 1 January 1804), 27 November 1804, and 16 February 1809, Bodleian Library, MS. Beckford c. 19, ff. 13–16, 21–2, and 58–9

15 *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* entry for George Frederick Beltz

16 Letter from Beltz to Beckford 22 August 1810, Bodleian Library, MS. Beckford, c. 19, f. 65

17 *The Gentleman's Magazine*, September 1822, 201–4, at 204. The later articles were in the issues for October 1822, 317–20, and November 1822, 409–14. John Britton, in his *Graphical and Literary Illustrations of Fonthill Abbey*, London, 1823, gave the descent of both Beckford and his wife from King James II and Queen Mary of Gueldres in his Table VI at page 56

18 *The Gentleman's Magazine*, September 1822, 201

19 Reprinted in Robert J. Gemmett, *Beckford's Fonthill: The Rise of a Romantic Icon*, Norwich: Michael Russell, 2003, 404–24, at 415

20 John Rutter, *Delineations of Fonthill and its Abbey*, Shaftesbury, 1823, 33

21 *The Gentleman's Magazine*, November 1822, 413

22 Gemmett, *Beckford's Fonthill*, 82

23 Britton, *Fonthill Abbey*, 51

24 See Bet McLeod,'Beckford and Heraldry', Derek E. Ostergard (ed.), *William Beckford, 1760–1844: An Eye for the Magnificent*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001, 320. See also catalogue entries by Christopher Hartop and Bet McLeod at 322–3, 325–6

25 Malcolm Baker, Timothy Schroder and E. Laird Clowes, *Beckford and Hamilton Silver from Brodick Castle*, London: Spink & Son Ltd, 1980, item B14 and colour plate

26 Anthony Hobson, 'William Beckford's Library', *Connoisseur*, CLI, April 1976, 298–305

27 Charlotte Lansdowne (ed.), *Recollections of the late William Beckford of Fonthill, Wilts and Lansdown, Bath*, Bath, 1893, 34–48, reprinted in Gemmett, Beckford's Fonthill, 372–81, at 378

28 Thomas Woodcock and John Martin Robinson, *The Oxford Guide to Heraldry*, Oxford New York Melbourne Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1988, 134

Beckford's Tales; Or, the Power of Musick

PIERRE DEGOTT

Even if certain musical events in Beckford's life are still shrouded in mystery – the exact nature of the five-year old child's alleged lessons from the hardly more mature Mozart (1756–1791) will probably remain forever conjectural –[1] the progress in knowledge of 18th-century musical aesthetics and practice has probably contributed to readjusting the critical response to Beckford's attitude to music. Indeed, the fairly condescending and disparaging comments from such critics as B. J. Maslen or J. W. Oliver, who in their time each deplored the writer's overly sensualist and emotional approach to music,[2] definitely hark back to the typical prejudices of bygone ages, not totally unlike some of those propagated in Beckford's own time.[3] Today, the modern definition of 18th-century sensibility, along with our improved understanding of the tenets of Italian *opera seria* and singing –intended precisely to stimulate the most varied passions and create an effect in the listener's soul – are an incentive for Beckfordian readers to reconsider judgments formerly made by critics whose minds and ears were obviously, and understandably, tuned to the predominantly Wagnerian musical ethos prevalent in the 1930s. The best example of those critics' warped perception of Beckford's musical leanings is certainly afforded by the occasional cantata *Il Tributo* by Venanzio Rauzzini (1746–1810),[4] performed, as every Beckfordian worth his salt will remember, on the day of Beckford's coming-of-age party by three of the most celebrated castrati in the history of singing. If, once again, Maslen's slightly sarcastic words are in sharp contrast with contemporary accounts of the event,[5] including Beckford's own report,[6] today's awareness of the rhetoric of libretto-writing and of the

conventions of 18th-century word-setting gives a fairly clear idea of what the musical piece may have been like in terms of musical structure. In an era which has produced such artistic monstrosities as the notorious three-tenor concerts of the late 20th century, many are those today who would give much to be given the chance to hear what is bound to have been an epitome of vocal refinement. In a similar vein, the recent works of Eric Darton and Maxwell Steer have also helped bring back Beckford's own skills as performer and composer into favour, past prejudices as noted before,[7] having given way to a more qualified, and no doubt better-argued, appreciation of Beckford's real musical talents.[8]

However, the present study is not going to address the issue of Beckford's musical tastes or talents, even though it may be central to the understanding of this ever-fascinating character. Here, Beckford's attitude to music will be analysed from a more literary stand-point, that is, principally from the way musical matters are referred to and used as literary themes in Beckford's works of fiction. After defining the special characteristics of Beckford's attitude to music, we will therefore examine what forms such as an attitude can take in the writer's major tales. In that respect, we will probe into the nature and the function of certain musical references and metaphors, before trying to assess the value of the musical act as such, at least as it is staged in Beckford's fiction. One of the main threads of this article will be provided by the legendary figure of Timotheus, Alexander the Great's court musician, who unobtrusively presides over Beckford's musical themes, thereby informing several aspects of the writer's exotic tales.

Beckford's ambivalent response to music, as first and foremost evinced in his letters, can also be traced to a certain extent in his works of fiction. Reading samples from his early correspondence, one is struck by the duality of the writer's attitude to sound, which itself is a reflection, or an extreme manifestation, of the theories of affects that permeated the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Whether music raises 'masculine' heroism in the listener,[9] or, as is particularly valid in the case of Beckford, 'effeminate' voluptuousness,[10] those two

extremes are nothing but the enactment, lived to the full, of the major theme of those poetical works celebrating the power of music over the listener's soul and psyche. Prominent among those Cecilian poems, Dryden's ode *Alexander's Feast; Or, the Power of Musick; an Ode in Honour of St Cecilia's Day* (1697) precisely depicts the influence exerted by the court musician Timotheus upon the emotions of his master Alexander the Great: inspiration of divinity, bacchanalian joy, martial zeal, pity, submissive love, revenge and destruction are thus alternately raised in the conqueror's ear, before the final intervention of divine Cecilia, the Christian provider of religious devotion. In the letter to Frances Burney (1752–1840) cited above, Beckford explicitly establishes the parallel between Timotheus's manipulation of the master of the world and his own submission to the power of music:

> Musick raises before me a host of phantoms which I pursue with eagerness. My blood thrills in my veins, its whole current is changed and agitated. I can no longer command myself, and whilst the frenzy lasts would be willingly devoted to destruction. These are perilous emotions and would lead me cruelly away. You see perfectly our modern Timotheus is my sovereign, and therefore as my friend advise him to change the louder tones of his harmony for such Arcadian measures as persuade to the enjoyment of a rural life.[11]

The very text of Rauzzini's pastoral cantata, at least in the English version that has come down to us, also points to the dichotomy between the masculine and the feminine veins of music, both options being embodied by the heroic figure of the late alderman Beckford on the one hand ('In Him Magnanimity was conspicuous, and virtuous Principles regulated the Affections of his heart – To his country he ever proved himself the true Patriot; to his family the affectionate Parent')[12] and by the more affectionate figure of the no less affectionately-called Begum on the other: 'In HER are united the most rare and exalted Sentiments that can adorn the human Heart. Her chief care has been to imprint these Sentiments in the Breast of her dear and only Son.'[13]

Incidentally, today's awareness of the conventions of word-setting puts the reader to no great trouble over imagining the kind of musical treatment such words are likely to have received in their time. As it happens, the text also points out that in case the 21-year-old youth has not clearly made his aesthetic and ethical choices between masculine ambition and heroism on the one hand, and feminine passivity and contemplation on the other, the meta-musical comments in the transitory passage preceding the reference to the 'dear youth''s mother are obviously meant to suggest that both possibilities are still open at this stage of his life: 'To his chaste Ear sweet Song (*whether in heroic or pastoral measure*) is equally acceptable.'[14]

Supposing the young man's choices were still unformed at this stage of his life, references to music in Beckford's tales and narratives seem however to give less ambiguous indications as to their writer's musical preferences. As every reader of Beckford's prose will have noticed, allusions to music and music-making literally abound throughout his works, whether they are meant to evoke Edenic harmony and amorous bliss on the one hand, or military din and infernal proceedings on the other. Quite unsurprisingly, pre-Adamic peacefulness and erotic dealings are best – and recurrently – represented by such usual ingredients as the song of either the nightingale, the turtledove or the lark[15] – not to mention that of the legendary leiki to be found in the story of Barkiarokh –,[16] but also by the singing of young virgins,[17] the soft playing of the lute,[18] or, another cliché used in order to represent the music of the spheres, the sound of mysterious 'unknown instruments.'[19] Conversely, the noise of martial agitation or hellish goings-on finds itself more ideally suited to the shrill sound of the trumpet or of other military and noisy instruments such as drums and tymbals,[20] to say nothing of the excruciatingly deafening bells of the valley of the Ginns in *Histoire du Prince Ahmed*.[21]

Again, the dichotomy between the martial and the erotic functions of music can be seen as the literary recreation of 17th- and 18th-century musical commonplaces, such as the one transcended in Dryden (1631–1700)'s first Cecilian ode, in which the poet, in accordance

with prevalent theories of the baroque age, relates the contrasted sounds of various instruments to several human moods:

> The trumpet's loud clangour
> Excites us to arms,
> With shrill notes of anger,
> And mortal alarms.
> The double, double, double beat
> Of the thund'ring drum
> Cries: 'Hark! the foes come;
> Charge, charge! 'Tis too late to retreat.'
> The soft complaining Flute
> In dying notes discovers
> The woes of hopeless lovers,
> Whose dirge is whisper'd by the warbling Lute.[22]

Another link with Dryden's thematisation of music is the ambiguity of the very act of the performance. Indeed, *Alexander's Feast* has often been read as Dryden's criticism of the treacherous influence of an art form likely to become, when placed in the wrong hands, a powerful and dangerous instrument of manipulation.[23] Beckford's tales are also replete with occurrences in which music is used to coax or drive people into behaving beyond their own volition. This is the case for instance of Princess Neubahar in *Histoire du Prince Ahmed*:

> Elles [Neubahar's jarias] n'ignorent pas que je n'aime point qu'on vienne interrompre mes promenades et n'osent s'approcher de moi, mais comme elles connaissent ma passion pour la musique, elles se rassemblent toutes dans la grande salle quand il se fait tard, où elles font un concert pour m'y attirer, ce qui leur réussit la plupart du temps.... Allons, vous vous amuserez à les entendre.[24]

At a later stage of the story, the eponymous hero finds himself attending a concert given by Emir Afshgar's court musician who, following the example of Timotheus, carries out a demonstration of both his evocative powers and his control over his listeners' emotions:

> Plus encore encouragé par l'effet que son chant avait sur eux que par leurs louanges, il se mit à faire différentes modulations et se plaisait à voir qu'il gouvernait les ressorts de leurs âmes et pouvait à son gré arrêter ou faire couler les fontaines de leurs yeux. Quand il eut bien exercé ses pouvoirs de la sorte, il quitta les accents tendres et le ton passionné et fit prendre à sa voix des inflexions plus tranquilles qui, se confondant avec le son doux qu'il tirait du luth, faisaient une vibration faible qui se perdait presque sur l'oreille.[25]

It soon turns out that Ahmed, Ali Ben Assan and Afshgar have been the victims of a treacherous trap, the performance of the musician Heidhrou being actually the product of a magical illusion meant to capture one of the three characters by lulling him to sleep. Parallels with Dryden's Timotheus, both in the nature of the two musicians' performances and in their physical position in the concert-room,[26] are an appropriate reminder of the pitfalls and seductiveness of such a powerful art. Essentially the same message is put forward in *Vathek*, where the reader is explicitly told about the potential dangers of Gulchenrouz's artistic talents:

> Il accordait sa douce voix avec le luth de la manière la plus attendrissante, et quand il chantait les amours de Meignoun ou de Leilah, ou de quelqu'autres amants infortunés de ces siècles antiques, les larmes baignaient imperceptiblement les joues de ses auditeurs. Ses vers (car comme Meignoun, il était poète), inspiraient une langueur et une mollesse bien dangereuses pour les femmes, qui toutes l'aimaient à la folie.[27]

Just as Dryden's *Alexander's Feast*, by opposing Timotheus's manipulative accents to St Cecilia's corrective strains, clearly posits the distinction between secular and sacred music, Beckford's novel also shows that music, when placed in the right hands – and as long as it is heard by the right ears…–, has the power to free, elevate and redeem the soul. In the last pages of *Vathek*, a benevolent genius uses his command of an 'unknown instrument' (surprisingly referred to as the flute in the English 1816 edition)[28] to bring back, in a final and fruitless attempt, Vathek and Nouronihar to the fold:

> Un des bons génies . . . commença à jouer sur un instrument inconnu, des airs dont la touchante mélodie pénétrait l'âme, réveillait les remords, et chassait toute pensée frivole. À ces sons si énergiques, le soleil se couvrit d'un sombre nuage, et les eaux de deux petits lacs, naturellement plus claires que le cristal, devinrent rouges comme du sang. Tous ceux qui composaient le pompeux cortège furent attirés, comme malgré eux, du côté de la colline; tous baissèrent les yeux, et restèrent consternés ; chacun se reprochait le mal qu'il avait fait. Le cœur battait à Dilara; et le chef des Eunuques, d'un air contrit, demandait pardon aux femmes de les avoir souvent tourmentées pour sa propre satisfaction.
>
> Vathek et Nouronihar, pâlissaient dans leur litière, et se regardant d'un œil hagard, se reprochaient à eux-mêmes, l'un, mille crimes des plus noirs; mille projets d'une ambition impie, et l'autre, la désolation de sa famille, et la perte de Gulchenrouz. Nouronihar croyait entendre dans cette fatale musique, les cris de son père expirant, et Vathek, les sanglots des cinquante enfants qu'il avait sacrifiés au Giaour.[29]

Beckford's ambivalent attitude to the power of music is probably best found in the initial pages of his 'Histoire des deux princes amis', a tale also rich in autobiographical connotations. If one remembers that Alasi's father deplores his heir's excessive taste for dancing and music-making – an indulgence supposedly incompatible with the duties of a youth of high birth, as Beckford himself must have heard many a time in his late teens – the hero's mother firmly believes in the improving faculty of these arts: 'Que votre Majesté se rassure sur le compte d'Alasi; sa bienfaisance naturelle lui sera conservée par ces arts mêmes dont vous craignez les effets. En portant la douceur dans son âme, ils préviendront en lui les fougues de la jeunesse et lui rendront l'amour et le bonheur de ses sujets.'[30] The narrator's own considerations, 'Quand la poésie et la musique me plongeaient dans une tendre mélancolie, je rendais la justice avec plus d'attention et plus d'affabilité',[31] appear as a bold statement obviously meant to reconcile the supposedly enervating and heroic aspects of music and as such, the young prince's words can be read as a hopeful corrective to the young Beckford's disillusioned comments on his own youthful infatuation:

> Music is ever my principal delight and comfort, and I am cruelly abused for loving it so well. Lord Morton reads me many a severe lecture upon this subject, and, waxing wiser and wiser, increaseth in stiffness every day. I fear I shall never be half so sapient nor good for anything in this world, but composing airs, building towers, forming gardens, collecting old Japan, and writing a journey to the moon.[32]

However that may be, the structure of the definitive edition of *Vathek* ensures that the reader knows full well, even before the beginning of Alasi's narration, to what dire straits such indulgently artistic temperaments usually lead.

Another characteristic of Beckford's use of music in his writing is the way musical allusions are mixed with references to the other senses. Every reader of Beckford's prose will no doubt remember the existence of the five palaces destined to the gratification of the senses in the opening pages of *Vathek*.[33] In that respect, one can also bear in mind the narrator's sensuous descriptions of the crystal caverns in *The Vision*.[34] In the same way, readers of Beckford's stories will recall the years of apprenticeship of two fictional painters, Watersouchy in *Biographical Memoirs of Extraordinary Painters* and Mehemed in 'L'Espledente', two artists for whom control over their practice seems to be mediated by their gradual initiation into the realm of music. Again, the Espledente's discovery of the 'plaintive Turkish strains' – incidentally 'warbled forth' and played on the lute by 'two Greek domestics' – and the painter's ensuing emotions – Mehemed is 'so thrilled so enraptured' that he 'burst into Tears' –, bear a certain degree of similitude with the power exerted by the Greek musician Timotheus's lyre-playing over the passions of Alexander the Great.[35]

Synaesthetic fusion is also the hallmark of *Recollections of an Excursion to the Monasteries of Alcobaça and Batalha*, where the many allusions to the pervasive presence of sound are constantly and consistently juxtaposed to references to sight, smell and taste (one can wonder what has become of touch in this essentially non-fictional work…), producing an orgy of delight of which the following passage is only a particularly appropriate example:

> After every comfort and ablution our pleasant retired chambers could afford, we partook of a delicious repast, and of all the blandishments which delicate dishes and iced sherbets could bestow on the willing palate. To these delights succeeded, on the part of the Lord Priors at least, a most comfortable nap, and then a stroll in the long-bowered alleys of the quinta; and then the evening perfume of orangeflowers and jasmine, and the evening song of birds, – music, also, from Franchi, accompanied on the guitar by two novices, who played from their heart and soul most ravishingly, – and then a dance of true oriental fervour, performed by a chosen band of the morisco-dressed processionists, who had been drawn down, not from heaven, like the Angel to St. Cecilia, but from the convent on the hill; where, I have little doubt, their freaks and gambols were sadly missed, and the temporary deprivation of such amusing frolics heartily regretted.[36]

Here, the ironical quotation from the final sections of Dryden's *Alexander's Feast* ('He [Timotheus] raised a mortal to the skies; / She [Cecilia] drew an angel down')[37] is yet another astute way of reconciling the kind of music performed by the young monks and their acolytes to the type of music a young English Protestant would have expected in such quarters, perhaps suggesting the narrowness of the line dividing secular and sacred types of music, at least when true sincerity and devotion are at stake, as is obviously the case in the present example.[38]

In such a context, where musical expression is, ironically or not, associated to the most spontaneous surges of life, it comes as no surprise that metaphors taken from the sphere of music are systematically resorted to in order to refer to the most basic form of human expression, i.e. speech. In that respect, one immediately recalls how the mothers' voices duplicate those of their husbands in the chasm scene from *Vathek*, thereby giving a new perspective to one of the most potentially heart-rending passages in the novel (the fifty innocent boys have just been pushed into the chasm): 'À ces mots, les pères des cinquante enfants se mirent à pousser des cris perçants, que les mères répétèrent d'une octave plus haut.'[39] Here, the theatrical artificiality resulting from such a musical rendition of human speech creates a slight ironic

distance which is quite in keeping with the general tone of Beckford's masterpiece, and is particularly efficient at this particular stage of the novel. Later in the text, the spectacular orchestration of Vathek's departure for Istakhar, which takes the form of the literal instrumentalisation of what remains of the mutes' and the tongueless negresses' voices, participates in the same kind of undefinable humour:

> Enfin, les clairons et les trompettes donnèrent, du sommet de la tour, le signal du départ; quoique parfaitement bien accordés, on crut entendre quelque dissonance; mais c'était Carathis qui chantait de maudites hymnes au Giaour, dont les négresses et les muets faisaient la basse continue sans articuler une parole.[40]

The comical incongruity of the metaphor of the thoroughbass, used to suggest the rumbles of the hapless creatures, is even more manifest when one has in mind the following passage from *Recollections*: 'The nightingales were singing in the recesses of woods impenetrable to the sun, and at the same time, I am sorry to add, frogs were croaking a deep thoroughbass to this enchanting melody.'[41]

Whether it originates from the animal, the human or the celestial realms, music shapes, structures, permeates and breathes life into God's creation, in total conformity with the opening lines of Dryden's *Song for St Cecilia's Day*: 'From harmony, from heav'nly harmony / This universal frame began.'[42] In such a context, it comes as no surprise that the announcement of the death of *Vathek*'s Nouronihar – even though it may be a temporary death…– is immediately followed by the ritual breaking of all instruments of music,[43] as if the termination of the world of sound were the necessary and inevitable corollary to the end of life. A few paragraphs further down, Gulchenrouz's awakening from his drug-induced sleep is aptly expressed in terms explicitly marking his re-connection to the realm of sound: 'Oui, dit-il, je respire, j'existe encore, j'entends des sons . . .'[44]

In Beckford's fiction, music is an innate art which inhabits every pore of God's creation, and which is to be heard in every possible

noise, even that of verbal signifiers occasionally stripped of their semantic value for the sole sake of their intrinsic musicality: 'I longed for the refreshing sea-breezes of my quinta on the banks of the Tagus; the very name of which (San Jose de Riba-mar) was music to my ears at this moment.'[45]

However, the ultimate musical metaphor can be found at the very core of the art of story-telling itself, fictionalised musical performances being repeatedly – although not systematically – presented as a figurative transposition of the narration process itself. As has previously been shown in the case of Gulchenrouz, singing and lute-playing in *Vathek* apparently go hand in hand with the very act of telling a story or reciting a poem.[46] The same remark is also valid for Beckford's 'Histoire d'Homaïouna' – a tale inserted in the episode devoted to the story of Barkiarokh –, where the young Peri, recently turned slave in the palace of Gulzara and Rezié, befriends the two princesses thanks to her story-telling abilities, combined once again with the vocal and instrumental accomplishments of the exceptionally gifted young woman: 'Je leur faisais des contes qui les divertissaient. Elles étaient transportées de plaisir quand je chantais et accompagnais ma voix mélodieuse sur le luth.'[47] Needless to say, the story-telling situation depicted in this scene reflects the own structure of the 'Histoire de Barkiarokh', composed of a vertiginous sequence of stories within stories.

Structural issues are also at stake in *Suite de contes arabes*, a collection of tales modelled on the structure of *Arabian Nights*, and fictionally generated by King Schahanazan's decision to set up a story-telling competition meant to provide him with the perfect wife. Not surprisingly, a musical metaphor is used to distinguish incompetent from stylish, harmonious and imaginative telling:

> Les rhétoriciens enseignaient les prétendantes à toiser leur style, les poètes essayaient de le rendre harmonieux. Enfin, tout le monde était occupé de cette grande affaire.

> Le Sultan se doutait bien de tout ce manège, mais il se flattait d'avoir le tact du sentiment assez fin pour distinguer la caqueterie (sic) empruntée du perroquet de la voix touchante et mélodieuse du rossignol.48

If it is only furtively broached in *Suite de contes arabes*, the question of narratorial disharmony is central at the end of *Histoire du Prince Ahmed*, where another kind of story-telling competition – highly informal this time – takes the grotesque form of an uproarious verbal battle between Ahmed, Ali Ben Hassan and Neubahar. In order to blame past events on him/herself, at the cost of his/her life, each participant is desperately trying to outscream his/her competitor so as to make his/her version of the story more prominent than the others':

> Les sifflements aigus et menaçants que font trois vents impétueux et contraires autour des montagnes de Diarbechir, ne sont pas plus bruyants que l'étaient Neubahar et les deux amis. Ils s'entendaient à peine et continuaient de parler ensemble avec une volubilité qui tenait du prodige. L'ordre de se taire que le roi leur avait cent fois répété, les remontrances des vizirs, rien n'y avait fait. Le bruit redoublait au contraire. Enfin, le bon monarque et ses sages conseillers prirent le parti de se boucher les oreilles, observant des yeux le moment où les combattants se rendraient de pure lassitude.
>
> Aussitôt que leurs lèvres ne remuèrent plus qu'avec lenteur, que leurs bras cessèrent de gesticuler, on jugea que l'orage finissait. On se hasarda d'écouter et on n'entendit plus que des accents rauques semblables aux croassements des grenouilles dans une soirée pluvieuse.[49]

The incongruity of the situation depicted here mainly derives from the outrageous exaggeration of the metaphors used to suggest the noise made by the three protagonists, which naturally is in sharp contrast with the fundamental nobility of their motivations. Later, after the arrival of the deus ex machina of the story, the restoration of general harmony is marked by a proper relation of the past events, this time entrusted to the sole, Timotheus-like, Ahmed: 'Il raconta d'une manière si naïve et si touchante ses propres aventures et celles de son

ami, que ses auditeurs tantôt éclataient de rire, tantôt tremblaient de crainte, et alternativement pleuraient de douleur et de joie.'[50]

Another example in which music and telling are combined is provided by Beckford's story 'The Genius of the Place', in which the narrator avowedly proposes to imitate the sound of the flute.[51] No doubt the melody he addresses to the skies eventually takes the shape of the tale subsequently made accessible to the reader.

A further interesting case of such artistic fusion can be found in 'L'Espledente', where the mesmerising musical sounds heard by Ferdinand in the final pages of Beckford's unfinished story miraculously give way to the reading voice of the protagonist's beloved Rosalia, caught in the act of recounting the epic adventures of 'Orlando' and 'Charlemain.' Here, the incompletion of Beckford's story seems to be redeemed by the vast potentialities of endless story-telling opened up by such an abrupt ending, as if the unheard embedded stories announced by the young girl in the final paragraph of 'L'Espledente' functioned as a textual substitute designed to make up for the sadly interrupted narrative: 'If you are not tired said she with the adventures of Orlando – [illegible] when the Moon rises – your station – under my window – & I [illegible] read as usual – The happy Ferdinand was almost…'[52] In such a case as this one, where abandoned threads are replaced by possible new developments, the unfinished story of Mehemed/Ferdinand seems to give way to the forever untold stories which, transmuted as they seem to be onto the musical plane, can only exist in the reader's dreams or imagination.

A similar case of such 'transgeneric fusion' – although not accidental this time – occurs at the end of Beckford's early tale *The Vision*, a narrative rich, as we have already seen, in instances of sensuous and emotional amalgamation. Incidentally, the narrator's mixed feelings at the early stage of his eerie adventure ('a strange mixture of pleasure and pain'; 'How sweet the pleasure of Ease after Labour')[53] are conveyed to the reader in terms that seem to be taken straight out of Dryden's *Alexander's Feast*: 'Sweet the pleasure, / Sweet is pleasure after pain.'[54]

The concert offered by Nouronihar in the final page of the tale seems to incorporate all the metaphorical and symbolic values of music hitherto mentioned. One can first see that whether the young woman's lute-playing fosters heroism, eroticism or religious fervour, sadness or delight, tranquillity or animation, Nouronihar immediately gains absolute control, after the fashion of Dryden's Timotheus, over the emotional affects of the young novice:

> Her dark Eyes sparkled with pleasure: she tripped lightly over the Pavement and snatching a Lute which hung on a branch of Crystal answered me with a Melody inspiring heroic Ideas and calming the more ignoble transports of the Mind. One moment her fingers running rapidly over the strings, awoke the most animating tones. Another Moment they scarcely were seen to move; for bowing over her Lute she seemed to pour forth her whole Soul in melancholy measures that stole into my heart filling it with a delightful sadness. As soon as she saw me dissolved into Softness she breathed a Strain of Fire which wrapt me into such enthusiastic extacies that I seemed to behold the Spirits of the Stars of which she sung, for her Song was of distant Worlds. At length consumed with the fervour of her Sensations she languidly sunk on the Carpet of Flowers and reclining upon me fell into a gentle repose Notwithstanding the profound Silence I observed and the care I took not to disturb her Slumbers she soon awoke and desired me to reach the Baskets and the Cristal Vases. They were placed before her and we refreshed ourselves with the Milk of Cocoas and the juices of a thousand fruits. Our Banquet ended, Nouronihar ran into the interior Grot and opening the Coffer returned with two large Volumes covered with mystic writings which she laid before me and seating herself by them began to explain their Contents.[55]

However, Nouronihar's concert seems to have another function than merely shaping the narrator's moods for his prospective spiritual initiation. The feast offered by the Persian girl – whether gastronomic, erotic, spiritual or simply musical – also appears as the only textual fulfilment of the previously made promise to apprise the young man of her past experiences: '. . . I will relate the History of a Life which tho'

short has experienced a variety of singular Situations. The reasons of my inhabiting the Center of the Earth . . . shall not be withheld from you.'[56] Incidentally, the narrator's previous, hitherto unanswered query about the young woman's mysterious circumstances explicitly associates story-telling and music-making: 'Shall I not listen to the history of thy wayward Fortunes and harken to the melody of thy Song!'[57] If Nouronihar's concert appears as the preliminaries to the young girl's final reading – obviously presented as the completion of the narrator's initiation – the 'two large Volumes' mentioned in the final sentence of the story may just as well be seen as the sole and silent provider of those elements of the diegesis which have remained verbally untold – namely the narrative of Nouranihar's story – and which only music seems to allow the narrator, and consequently the reader, to catch a glimpse of. Again, by titillating, and releasing the power of the listener's and/or the reader's imagination, music, as it is thematised in Beckford's fiction, and as it is also presented in Dryden's Cecilian poems, appears as the all-powerful art, the only art that can possibly suggest what cannot, or probably what need not, be told verbally. Here, the references to the art of music allow the narrator's spiritual initiation into the mysteries of Creation to be equated to the reader's artistic initiation into literary creation, and especially into the magical workings of the imagination.

The study of Beckford's treatment of music as a literary theme seems to transcend the duality recurrently expressed by the writer in his non-fictional works. One of the literary equivalents of the spell operated by this art can certainly be found in Beckford's own influence upon his readers' imagination. Beckford's famous words, often quoted to illustrate the writer's masochistic relationship to music ('Alas, it is very true – musick destroys me – and what is worse I love being destroyed'),[58] can also be used to suggest the depths, or the heights, of the flights of his imagination, as the lines directly preceding the previous quotation seem to indicate: 'No, let me be happy and flutter in the light – a few years longer. – Let me spread the wings of imagination a season.'[59]

While suffering in real life the curse of being an Alexander, manipulated by the strains of Timotheus, Beckford manages in his fictive works to revert the situation and, by adopting the right instrument and by tuning the strings of his metaphorical lyre, to become in turn a Timotheus. If writing fictional tales can be reduced to the art of generating, structuring and propagating lies – and Beckford's tales do occasionally raise the meta-fictional issue of story-telling used in order to deceive, to manipulate and to mislead… –,[60] never has the perfect homophony between the words 'liar' and 'lyre' been less fortuitous.

1 Cecil B. Oldman, 'Beckford and Mozart', *Music and Letters*, vol. 47, 1966, 110–5; Eric Darton, 'William Beckford and Music. 6. Beckford and Mozart', *The Beckford Journal*, vol. 3, Spring 1997, 40–4

2 [T]hroughout his wild oats period he preserved a saving interest in the arts, developing brilliant gifts . . ., if we are to accept his own valuation, as a musician'; 'He is for ever raving about "soft, voluptuous cadences", "plaintive airs" and "melodies vibrating in the ear", as though the emotional side of music were all that appealed to him' (Benjamin J. Maslen, 'Celebrities and Music. 11. William Beckford', *Musical Opinion*, May 1933, 691); see also: John W. Oliver, *The Life of William Beckford*, London: Oxford UP, 1932, 11 ('He never, however, seems to have conceived of [music] as an intellectual discipline, and as he grew into manhood, surrendered himself to a type of music which made a mere appeal to the senses, a music full of soft, voluptuous cadences and totally lacking in disciplined force and nervous industry'). Maslen and Oliver's prejudice is even reproduced in James Lees-Milne's otherwise most enlightening study: 'These [a reference to Beckford's letter to Lady Hamilton, April 2nd 1781] are the words of someone who may genuinely love music, but whose response to it is simply sensuous and uncerebral', James Lees-Milne, *William Beckford*, 1976, London: National Trust Classics, 1990, 16

3 '[W]hen he . . . so extravagantly and ridiculously addicted himself to music, all prospect of his becoming great or respectable was over', letter from Elizabeth Carter to Mrs Montague, quoted in Lees-Milne, op. cit., 29

4 For a musicological account of Rauzzini's contribution to Beckford's celebrations, *see*: Molly Sands, 'Venanzio Rauzzini – Singer, Composer, Traveller', *The Musical Times*, vol. 154, 1953, 109; Sheila Hodges, 'Venanzio Rauzzini: the First Master for Teaching in the Universe', *Music Review*, vol. 52, 1991, 19–20

5 'I have been unable to trace the music of this *quaint little one-act opera* (Author's emphasis)'; 'It is impossible to resist quoting a few lines of this classic',the English translation of the libretto, Maslen, op. cit., 692

6 For example, Beckford's letter to Lady Hamilton, October 14th, 1781, quoted in Lewis Melville, *The Life and Letters of William Beckford of Fonthill (Author of Vathek)*, London: Heinemann, 1910, 121–3

7 'As a player, I imagine he was one of those curious pianists one meets occasionally who are capable of extemporising to the astonishment and delight of the uninitiated, but for whom the printed page has still many secrets', Maslen, op. cit., 691; 'Although he appeared on this occasion [the composition of Lady Craven's opera *The Arcadian Pastoral* in 1782] in the *rôle* of composer, I suspect that his term 'adapting' more accurately describes his share of the effort', Ibid., 692; 'The … titillations Beckford derived from listening to performances do not induce the belief that his own singing and playing of the harpsichord were more than mediocre', Lees-Milne, op. cit., 16–17

8 Roger Fiske, *English Theatre Music in the Eighteenth-Century*, London: Oxford UP, 1973, 439–40 : Fiske strangely attributes the music of *Il Tributo* to Beckford himself; Brian Fothergill, *Beckford of Fonthill*, London: Faber and Faber, 1979, 27, 270, 298; Darton, 'William Beckford and Music', *Beckford Tower Trust Newsletter*, 1983, 4–8; Darton, 'William Beckford and Music. 7. The Singers', *The Beckford Journal*, vol. 5, Spring 1999, 43–8, remarks on Beckford's own singing; Darton, 'William Beckford and Music. 8. Publication and Performance of His Own Works', *The Beckford Journal*, vol. 6, Spring 2000, 29–34; *see also* William Beckford, *Complete Edition [of the Musical Works]*, ed. Maxwell Steer, Tisbury: Beckford Edition, 1998, i–x, 'William Beckford: The Role of Music in His Life'

9 *See* Beckford's famed letter to Frances Burney, September 22nd 1780: 'I care not a grain of Millet whether my name be engraven on marble or graces the annals of a Kingdom, not I…. If ever you see ambition

beginning to fire my bosom, quench the flame, and continually repeat that it is better to be meanly happy than illustriously miserable. I have never greater need to be reminded of this belief, than during some moments of Pacchierotti's declamation [Beckford is referring to a performance of Ferdinando Bertoni's *Quinto Fabio* given at Lucca], which breathes such exalted heroism, that, forgetting my peaceful schemes, I start up, grow restless, start about and begin to form ambitious projects', quoted in Melville, op. cit., 92; *see also* Beckford's letter to Pacchierotti, March 12th, 1781: 'Your musical conceptions are far too noble and transcendent for the corrupt, enervate Audiences of [*illegible]*.... Your song is of a loftier nature than that to which Italy for these many Ages has been accustomed. So touching a voice and so sublime a manner would have inspired a second Curtius to have cast himself into the Gulph, and another Regulus to have returned to certain Death for the welfare of his Country', quoted in Ibid., 104

10 'The night is spent in cafés and at the opera, where Bertoni's voluptuous music, supported by the artistry of the world's finest singer, makes me more than ever effeminate' (letter dated January 6th 1781, quoted in Boyd Alexander, *England's Wealthiest Son: A Study of William Beckford*, London: Centaur P, 1962, 78; see also Beckford's own words: 'the only sounds [Lady Hamilton's playing on the harpsichord or the piano-forte] which can sooth and tranquilize my mind', quoted in Melville, op. cit., 112. The ambivalence of Beckford's response to music can be summarized in Lady Hamilton's letter, addressed to Beckford on March 19th 1781: 'But keep to the heroic stile of Music, my dear friend. The other kind, tho' delightful, enervates you too much', quoted in Maslen, op. cit., 691

11 Quoted in Melville, op. cit., 92–93

12 Anon. trans., *Il Tributo: a Pastoral Cantata. From the Original Italian of Sig. Venanzio Rauzzini and Performed September the 29th , 1781, at Fonthill in the County of Wilts, on the Celebration of the Birth-Day of William Beckford, Esq.,* Salisbury: Collins and Johnson, 1781, quoted in Oliver, op. cit., 83

13 Idem.

14 Idem.

15 See for instance the passage from *Vathek* describing the paradise of the faithful: 'Là où le rossignol chantait la naissance de la rose, sa bien-aimée, et se plaignait en même temps de la courte durée de sa beauté;

tandis que la tourterelle gémissait d'avoir perdu des plaisirs plus réels, et que la vigilante alouette se bornait à saluer par ses chants la lumière bienfaisante qui ranime la nature. Là enfin, plus qu'en aucun endroit du monde, le gazouillement des oiseaux exprimait les diverses passions qui les inspiraient, comme si les excellents fruits, qu'ils becquetaient à plaisir, leur eussent donné une double énergie', Beckford, *Vathek et ses épisodes*, ed. Didier Girard, Paris: Corti, 2003, 22–3

16 Ibid., 239–352; for the song of the bulbul in 'Zulkaïs et Kalilah', 238

17 Ibid., 211

18 Ibid., 85, 114–5, 211 and passim; Beckford, *Histoire du Prince Ahmed*, ed. Girard, Paris: Corti, 1993, 18, 30, 86 and passim; *Suite de contes arabes*, ed. Girard, Paris: Corti, 1992, 64, 82

19 Beckford, *The Vision* 15 (I am using Didier Girard's transcription of the original manuscript, accessible on http://beckford.c18.net/wbthevision.html; the pagination of the manuscript has been followed); *Suite de contes arabes*, op. cit., 46, 'Histoire de Yao'. For a description of the music of the spheres, *see also* Beckford, 'The Transport of Pleasure', passim (Dick Claésson's transcription of the original manuscript is accessible on http://beckford.c18.net/wbtransportofpleasure.html

20 Beckford, *Vathek et ses épisodes* 62, 129, 139, 273, 288 and passim; *Suite de contes arabes* 53–56, 58, 219, 322–23 and passim; *L'Espledente et autres contes inédits*, ed. Girard , Paris: Corti, 2003, 163–64 ,'Histoire de Mazin'

21 Beckford, *Histoire du Prince Ahmed*, op. cit., 35, 61.

22 John Dryden, 'A Song for St Cecilia's Day', 1687, *A Selection*, ed. John Conaghan, London: Methuen, 1978, 161, stanzas 3, 4

23 Ruth Smith, "The Arguments and Contexts of Dryden's *Alexander's Feast*," *Studies in English Literature*, vol. 18, 1978, 465–90; 'Timotheus, Alexander, Semele and Handel', *The Handel Institute Newsletter*, vol. 14, no. 1, Spring 2003, 1–4

24 Beckford, *Histoire du Prince Ahmed*, op. cit., 89. ('They [Neubahar's jarias] know full well that I hate being disturbed in my walks, so they dare not come near me. But since they also know my passion for music, they all gather in the big hall at the end of the afternoon; they start playing music to

draw me in, which usually works.... Do come along! You'll enjoy listening to them.' [Author's translation]

25 Beckford, Ibid., 145: 'Encouraged more by the effect of his singing than by their praise, he started different modulations; he relished the fact that he could rule over the movements of their souls and that he had full command of the fountain of their eyes. When he had finished thus exerting his power, he relinquished his tender strains and impassioned tones and gave his voice peaceful inflexions which, allied to the soft sounds he drew from the lute, produced quiet vibrations that were hardly perceptible to the ear.' [Author's translation]

26 Compare for instance Dryden's 'Timotheus, placed on high / Amid the tuneful choir, / With flying fingers touched the lyre' (Dryden, op. cit., 186) with Beckford's version: 'Quand tout fut en ordre, Heidhrou, assis au milieu de la salle, commença à préluder et à chanter. Sa voix ... fit résonner la voûte de la salle, pendant que ses doigts touchaient le luth avec une légèreté mélodieuse qui faisait frissonner de plaisir', Beckford, *Histoire du Prince Ahmed*, op. cit., 144. 'When everyting was in order, Heidhrou, sitting in the middle of the hall, started playing and singing. His voice . . . resounded through the vault, while his fingers were touching the lute with a melodious nimbleness that sent shivers of pleasure down the spine.' [Author's translation]

27 Beckford, *Vathek et ses épisodes*, op. cit., 88. 'His sweet voice accompanied in the most enchanting manner; and, when he sang the loves of Megnoun and Leilah, or some unfortunate lovers of ancient days, tears insensibly overflowed the cheeks of his auditors. The verses he composed (for, like Megnoun, he, too, was a poet) inspired that unresisting languor, so frequently fatal to the female heart. The women all doated upon him' , Beckord, *Vathek*, 1816, ed. Roger Lonsdale, Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998, 65

28 Ibid., 103

29 Beckford, *Vathek et ses épisodes*, op. cit., 133–4. 'One of these beneficient Genii ... began to pour forth, from his flute, such airs of pathetic melody, as subdued the very soul; and, wakening remorse, drove, far from it, every frivolous fancy. At these energetic sounds , the sun hid himself beneath a gloomy cloud; and the waters of two little lakes, that were naturally clearer than crystal, became of a colour like blood. The

whole of this superb assembly was involuntarily drawn towards the declivity of the hill. With downcast eyes, they all stood abashed; each upbraiding himself with the evil he had done. The heart of Dilara palpitated; and the chief of the eunuchs, with a sign of contrition, implored pardon of the women, whom, for his own satisfaction, he had so often tormented. / Vathek and Nouronihar turned pale in their litter; and, regarding each other with haggard looks, reproached themselves – the one with a thousand of the blackest crimes; a thousand projects of impious ambition; – the other, with the desolation of her family; and the perdition of the admirable Gulchenrouz. Nouronihar persuaded herself that she heard, in the fatal music, the groans of her dying father; and Vathek, the sobs of the fifty children he had sacrificed to the Giaour', Beckord, *Vathek*, ed. Lonsdale, op. cit., 103–4

30 Beckford, *Vathek et ses épisodes*, op. cit., 150. 'Your Majesty need not worry about Alasi; his natural kindness will be preserved by those very arts whose effects you fear. In bringing gentleness to his soul, they will protect him from the hotheadedness of youth, and they will give him back the love and happiness of his subjects.' [Author's translation]

31 Idem. 'When poetry and music plunged me into a sweet melancholy, I dispensed justice with more attention and affability' [Author's translation]

32 Letter to Lady Hamilton, April 2nd 1781, quoted in Melville, op. cit., 105

33 Beckford, *Vathek et ses épisodes*, op. cit., 8–9

34 Beckford, *The Vision*, op. cit., 19–21

35 Beckford, 'L'Espledente', op. cit., 59 , using Dick Claésson's transcription of Beckford's manuscript, accessible on http://beckford.c18.net/wbesplendente18.html; *see also* Beckford, *Biographical Memoirs of Extraordinary Painters*, 1780, ed. Philip Ward, New York: Oleander P, 1977, 129, 150

36 Beckford, *Recollections of an Excursion to the Monasteries of Alcobaça and Batalha*, London: Bentley, 1835, 194–5. *See also* 87–8, 91, 93, 95, 106–9, 118–9 and passim

37 Dryden, op. cit., 190

38 See for instance the immediate and heartfelt outburst of religious fervour displayed by the populace in the directly preceding pages,

Beckford, *Recollections*, op. cit., 188–92. A different form of such sincerity is provided by the rendition of the 'tragedy of Donna Inez de Castro', *Recollections*, op. cit., 99–117, a combination of ludicrousness and sublimity that seems to foreshadow the performance of Donizetti's opera *Lucia di Lammermoor* in E. M. Forster's *Where Angels Fear to Tread*.

39 Beckford, *Vathek et ses épisodes*, op. cit., 42. 'At these words, the fathers of the fifty boys cried out aloud; the mothers repeated their exclamations an octave higher',Beckord, *Vathek*, ed. Lonsdale, op. cit., 28

40 Beckford, *Vathek et ses épisodes*, op. cit., 62. 'At length, the clarions and trumpets from the top of the tower, announced the prelude of departure. Though the instruments were in unison with each other, yet a singular dissonance was blended with their sounds. This proceeded from Carathis who was singing her direful orisons to the Giaour, whilst the negresses and mutes supplied thorough bass, without articulating a word', Beckord, *Vathek*, ed. Lonsdale, op. cit., 43

41 Beckford, *Recollections*, op. cit., 16

42 Dryden, op. cit., 160

43 Beckford, *Vathek et ses épisodes*, op. cit., 104

44 Ibid., 105. ''Yes', said he, 'I breathe again! Again do I exist! I hear sounds! …', Beckord, *Vathek*, ed. Lonsdale, op. cit., 78–9.

45 Beckford, *Recollections*, op. cit., 218

46 Beckford, *Vathek et ses épisodes*, op. cit., 88

47 Ibid., 272. 'I told them tales that entertained them. They were sent into raptures when I sang and accompanied the melody of my voice on the lute' [Author's translation]

48 Beckford, *Suite de contes arabes*, op. cit., 29–30. 'Rhetoricians taught the contestants how to check their style, poets tried to make it sound harmonious. In all, everybody was engaged in the proceedings. / The Sultan was aware of the little game, but he prided himself on having enough tact and judgment to tell the artificial cackling of the parrot from the moving and melodious song of the nightingale.' [Author's translation]

49 Beckford, *Histoire du Prince Ahmed*, op. cit., 181–2. 'Even the sharp, threatening hissing of three impetuous, contrary winds around the mountains of Diarbechir fails to match the noise made by Neubahar and the two friends. They could hardly hear one another, and they went on talking with astounding volubility. Neither the king's order to be silent,

repeated a hundred times, nor the viziers' reproof were to any avail. On the contrary, the noise kept on increasing. At last, the good monarch and his wise advisers decided to stop their ears, watching for the time when the fighters would wear themselves out and yield. / As soon as the movement of their lips slowed down, and when their gesticulations came to an end, it was decided that the storm would soon be over. When the listeners ventured to listen again, the only audible noise was a hoarse harsh sound like the croaking of a frog on a rainy night.' [Author's translation]

50 Ibid., 191

51 Beckford, *L'Espledente et autres contes inédits*, op. cit., 64–5

52 Ibid., 134, 'L'Espledente'

53 Beckford, *The Vision*, op. cit., 16

54 Dryden, op. cit., 187

55 Beckford, *The Vision*, op. cit., 87

56 Ibid., 49

57 Ibid., 72–3

58 An extract from a letter to Lady Hamilton, quoted in Melville, op. cit., 120. For Beckford's masochistic relation to music, *see* Lees-Milne, op. cit., 16–17 and Girard, *William Beckford: Terroriste au palais de la raison*, Paris: Corti, 1993, 64–5

59 Quoted in Melville, op. cit., 120.

60 See for instance Beckford, *Vathek et ses épisodes*, op. cit., 267, 295, 303–5, 309, 310; in *Suite de contes arabes*, the word 'contes' is even to be understood as 'lies': 'Voilà de beaux contes que vous me faîtes là': 'What nice tales [= lies] you are telling me,' [Author's translation] says the king, 254

A Collectors' Corner: aspects of the Beckford Legacy at Hamilton Palace

BET MCLEOD

As is known, the Beckford collection was inherited by Beckford's youngest daughter Susan, Duchess of Hamilton (1786–1859), wife of Alexander, 10th duke of Hamilton (1767–1852). After the sale at auction of some of the collection in Bath in 1845 and 1848,[1] there remained considerable quantities of Beckford's books, paintings and works of art that were retained by Susan. These were dispersed between the ducal seat at Hamilton Palace, Lanarkshire, and the various Hamilton properties in England. The Beckford collections arrived at Hamilton Palace and at Brodick Castle, a Hamilton shooting lodge on the Isle of Arran, at various stages between Beckford's death in 1844 and 1875, the last movement of the Hamilton collection from England. Through an examination of both textual and visual evidence found in the Hamilton archives, the Beckford legacy at Hamilton Palace is revealing itself, layer by layer, often in unexpected or what might be considered peripheral ways. This article addresses part of that legacy at the Palace.

The State Drawing Room, FIGURE 1, the principal room in the Tapestry Suite of State Rooms at the north-east corner of the Palace, was one among a series of rooms in the Palace taken by the well-known photographer Thomas Annan (1829–1887). The precise dating of the series of photographs of the interior of the Palace is still uncertain, but certain assumptions can now be made, however, from the evidence available. On 17 June 1881, Duncan Barr, the factor at Hamilton Palace, wrote to James A. Jamieson, the family solicitor in Edinburgh:

Fig. 1. The Sitting Room, Tapestry Rooms, Hamilton Palace, photograph Thomas Annan, c. 1881–2. ©University of Glasgow Special Collections.

> I am favoured with yours of yesterday as to photographing two pictures in Hamilton Palace. Mr. Thomas Annan formerly of Hamilton & now of Glasgow is the best man in this district and is well known as a first rate artist. I know of no-one who has done any work of that kind in the Palace. Mr. Annan's address is 153 Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow.[2]

This information would suggest that the photographs were taken at some time after this correspondence and prior to the removal of the contents for sale in London in June and July of 1882. The author would propose therefore, that Annan photographed the interiors of the Palace between the second half of 1881 and, more likely, the first half of 1882. What can also be asserted now is that the photographs were almost certainly commissioned by the Dowager Duchess, Princess Marie of Baden (1818–1888), widow of William, 11th Duke of Hamilton (1811–1863). Barr again wrote to Jamieson on 23 January 1884:

> Some years ago Mr Thomas Annan was employed to photograph certain apartments in the Palace for the Duchess Dowager. I have just learned that photographs are exposed for sale of apartments in the Palace of which a note is annexed. I connect this with Mr. Annan's being employed as above mentioned but am not certain that I am correct. [Attached: Note of Photographs: Hamilton Library, Picture Gallery, State Drawing Room, Grand Stair Case, Grand Entrance Hall, Duchess's Bedroom, Tribune].[3]

It is probable that this said commission for the photography was made to record the state of the Palace and its contents once the decision had been made by William, 12th Duke of Hamilton (1845–1895) to sell the collection. The sale took place at Christie's, London, between 17 June and 20 July 1882.

An analysis of the items in a detail of the photograph, FIGURE 2, shows certain aspects of the Beckford legacy, and rather more significantly, addresses the title of the article as it reveals a collectors' corner. This assertion is borne out in the following narrative, and is fully detailed in the Appendices. On the west wall of the Drawing Room is what the author would call, irreverently perhaps, but with all seriousness, a 'shrine' to Beckford, based on both the visual evidence and the textual evidence. The central clock cabinet was made by the workshop of Robert Hume & Son for the 10th duke. The cabinet has been much published, revealing interesting details as to the progress of the work and the communications between patron and supplier.[4] The clock cabinet as illustrated at Hamilton Palace was fitted with glazed doors, which were retained by the purchaser in 1882, Hugh Lupus Grosvenor, 1st Duke of Westminster, as can be seen in the 1932 image showing the cabinet at Eaton Hall.[5] The cabinet was sold in 1978, however, with 'antiqued' mirrored doors, which could have been fitted at any time between 1932 and 1978.[6] The pedestals referred to above have not, to this author's knowledge, been previously referred to in publications. What is significant and is here noted for the first time, is that of the items selected for display on the cabinet and the pedestals, all had previously belonged to Beckford.

Fig. 2. Detail of the Sitting Room, showing the Beckford items.

The first item under review is the reduced bronze sculpture of the Laocoon, see Appendix 1 for full details. The bronze was one of Beckford's most cherished possessions, being bought back from the 1823 Fonthill Abbey sale and taken to Bath. Its importance for Beckford is emphasised by the fact that it was housed in Beckford's bedroom when the 1844 inventory after his death was compiled. It must also have been considered of great consequence by Susan, who retained it rather than consign it for sale. However, it is possible that it was the 10th duke who insisted upon its retention, as it is listed as being in the Duke's Cabinet in the documentation. When considering the parallels in taste between the 10th duke and Beckford, it is interesting to note that the reduced bronze is one of two Laocoon sculptures at Hamilton Palace, each of

which came from the Beckford collection. The second example is the full-scale casting that is visible in the view of the Dining Room at Hamilton Palace: this was acquired from the Stowe sale in 1848 by the 10th duke, having been previously acquired by the Duke of Buckingham from the 1823 Fonthill Abbey sale.[7]

In the photograph of the Drawing Room, the Laocoon can be seen flanked by a pair of gilt-metal mounted Chinese ceramic bowls under glass shades. These ceramics must have been of considerable significance to Beckford, as they, too, were bought back from the 1823 sale and subsequently transferred to Bath. It is most probable that they are the items illustrated on the sideboard at the right side of the Crimson Drawing Room at Lansdown Tower: as further corroboration, they are the only such items described as being on ormoulu stands as listed in the Drawing Room in the 1844 inventory. These are now at Brodick Castle, having never left the family possession, see Appendix 2.

The third item of interest is the maiolica flasks seen on the pedestals flanking the clock cabinet, see Appendix 3 for full archival references. These flasks had an impressive provenance prior to their acquisition by Beckford: they had belonged to Horace Walpole and were purchased by Beckford from the Strawberry Hill sale in 1842, where they were Lot fifty-three on the twenty-third day of the 1842 Sale, and which cost him £29.8s.[8] Unusually for ceramics, which often have limited descriptions, the flasks can be tracked through the successive inventories of Hamilton Palace by dint of their unusual form and the notation of the painted armorials.

The descriptions, and indeed the location detailed in 1852 and in 1876 correspond to the first known image of the flasks, that taken in situ in Hamilton Palace. An assessment of the image shows that one flask is somewhat round bellied, perhaps indicating a sagging during firing. Each flask has a dark coloured band around the body underneath the lower loops, and one also has the same kind of band underneath the top loops; these bands may have been applied later to mask damage and repair. The flasks are arranged in the photograph, probably deliberately, so that each presents a different face. Each

crowned armorial shield is charged with the arms of Medici and Lorraine in different arrangements. This image of the flasks is one of only a few instances whereby Beckford pieces can be identified in the photographs of Hamilton Palace: indeed, if it was not for the Strawberry Hill provenance, it would not be known that the flasks were Beckford's, for the 'Medici' provenance was clearly deemed more prestigious than his. The flasks are most likely those now in the Museo Internazionale delle Ceramiche, Faenza, and are attributed to Montelupo, late 16th century.[9]

Recent research has unearthed a new twist to the complex issue of identification of Beckford pieces in the Hamilton collections, and provides a hitherto unknown and unrecorded layer of provenance. The two items in question are Sèvres porcelain cups and saucers, one painted with a portrait of Mme de Maintenon and another with a portrait of Mme de Sévigné, full details of which can be found in Appendix 4.

The Sèvres archives record that a cup and saucer decorated en grisaille with a portrait of M de Sévigné was painted by Mlle Charrin, in March 1818, and was appraised at 600 francs.[10] Further details from the factory's sales room in Paris show that in May that same year it was sold to 'M. Watson Taylor'.[11] The Maintenon cup painted by Charrin was also sold that month, for 400 francs, but the purchaser is not recorded. George Watson Taylor (1771–1841) was one of the greatest collectors of the early nineteenth century. Himself the owner of sugar plantations in Jamaica, he inherited an immense fortune in 1815 through his wife's family, also sugar planters in the West Indies. As a connoisseur-collector, he built up a remarkable holding of furniture and paintings for his London town house and his magnificent country mansion, Erlestoke Park, that rivalled even the collections of George IV.[12] At Watson Taylor's sale in 1832, both the Sévigné cup and the Maintenon cup were recorded in full detail, the minutiae of which correspond exactly to the descriptions in the Beckford and Hamilton documentation.[13] There can be little doubt, therefore, that Beckford acquired these two choice items from the Watson Taylor sale: after

their retention by Susan, they subsequently passed into the Hamilton entail.

This hitherto unknown Watson Taylor provenance is an important discovery, linking, indeed interwining, as it does three of the greatest characters in the history of collecting in England during that period. We now know that Beckford purchased at the Watson Taylor sale of 1832, as did the 10th Duke of Hamilton.[14] Of additional interest is that all three collectors patronised Robert Hume Jnr for the production of hardstone-mounted furniture.[15]

To conclude this paper, we can now examine the contents of the clock cabinet, and it is from this study that the notion of a 'shrine' to Beckford can be amplified. The 1876 inventory reveals that only items belonging to Beckford, and quite a considerable number of those, were located on the shelves in the flanking sides to the clock section of the cabinet, FIGURE 3.[16] As noted at the beginning of this article, the Beckford items arrived at Hamilton Palace at various stages. To find an area in which to house the mass of items arriving from England would have caused difficulties in terms of both display and storage in a Palace already crammed with the collections amassed by the 10th Duke. The items chosen for display within the clock cabinet were all small in scale, as befitted a display cabinet, and made of two materials, hardstones and porcelain. The variety of subject matter, dates and place of manufacture are typical of Beckford's taste, and thanks to the existence of the photograph, and the fact that the doors were glazed and not mirror glazed, many individual items can be recognized.

The items are believed to have been placed in the clock cabinet after the 10th Duke's death in 1852, and it is most likely that the arrangement was carried out by Susan, to pay tribute in a tangible, and highly visible fashion, to her father. The tick in the left hand margin against the majority of items was inserted on the instruction of William (1845–1895), 12th Duke of Hamilton, to indicate which items were to be sold in the 1882 sale. Those items for which there is no tick are among the many Beckford items never to have left the family possession and which are at Brodick Castle.

(21)

Tapestry Rooms.

Sitting Room continued

Articles of Vertu in Ebony & Pietra Dura Cabinet.

✓ An Oval Blood Stone Cup, on Stand of the same mounted with Gold Enamelled 4½ in diameter 2 in high.

✓ A Green Jade Vase, mounted in gilt Metal foot & handles 4½ in high

✓ A Sea green China Vase with Storks, Flowers &c mounted. 5½ high.

✓ A Sevres China Chocolate Cup & Saucer richly gilt. A Medallion with Portrait of Madame de Maintenon.

✓ A Do do Portrait of Mme de Sevigne d'apres Petitot par Mlle Charrin.

An Egg Shell China Bason, paintings of figures &c 4½ in diam. 2½ in high

✓ A do do mounted in Silver gilt

✓ A small China Cup & Saucer Chocolate Ground with raised white Flowers, both lined with Silver gilt & engraved

✓ 2 Small Egg Shell China Cups & Saucers, pale blue, with flowers painted on white Medallions. Mounted

✓ A China Bason & Cover with Hawk & Foliage in gilt. Colours on a white Ground, the Bason & Cover both mounted in Silver gilt.

A Do do do

✓ An oval Green Agate Cup on Stand of the same mounted in Gold Enamelled 4½ in diam. 3 in high.

✓ A Sea green China Bottle, mounted in gilt Metal. 5½ in high

A very rare Japanese China Bason, black ground with dark green foliage, richly mounted & lined with Silver gilt and engraved with the Beckford Arms. 4½ in diam 2½ in high.

✓ A Japanese China Bason, Light brown groun painted with a variety of devices

A Do do do painted with flowers & Mounted in Silver Gilt. 5½ in. diam 3 in high.

✓ 2 Small Egg Shell China Cups & Saucers, the exterior plain Crimson the inside white, with raised coloured Flowers.

A Crucian Inkstand Sculptured to represent a Flower 4½ in high by 4 in. A Chinese Carved Wood Stand for do

The whole of the above from the Beckford Collection.

Fig. 3. 1876 Hamilton Palace Inventory, Tapestry Rooms, Sitting Room, 21. ©Duke of Hamilton.

APPENDIX 1: The Laocoon [present whereabouts unknown to the author]

1823: Fonthill Abbey Sale, Lot No. 1021: An Italian Bronze GROUP of the LAOCOON, on a rare and fine slab of Egyptian green granite, £97.13s

1844: Beckford Inventory, Book 1, 36, Mr Beckford's Bedroom: 'the Laocoon on Granite Plinth' [Annotated at left and right margin in pencil, 'Bank Strong Room'.]

1848: …Articles of Vertu… sent from Bath to Hamilton Palace: '1 September 1848: A Casting of the group Laocoon with a grey Porphyry Plinth (1 finger off)' [Annotated at right margin in ink, 'Duke's Cabinet']

1853: Hamilton Palace Fire Inventory, Tapestry Rooms, Sitting Room, 34: 'The Bronze Casting of the Laocoon on a Granite Base £80'

1876: Hamilton Palace Inventory, Tapestry Rooms, Sitting Room, 19: 'The Bronze Casting of the Lacoon on Granite plinth and Metal base'

1882: Hamilton Palace Sale, Lot No. 524: 'The Laocoon. A very fine reduced copy in bronze – on Egyptian granite plinth, mounted with ormolu', W. Boore, £850. 10s

APPENDIX 2: A Pair of Porcelain Bowls with Gilt Metal Mounts [National Trust for Scotland, Brodick Castle]

1822: Fonthill Abbey Sale, Day 10, Lot No. 15: 'Two Japan red ground and enamelled basons, on or-moulu stands, with goat's legs, foliage and busts'

1823: Fonthill Abbey Sale, Lot No. 70: 'Two Japan China basons of a very rare kind, mounted on or-moulu stand, £1.6s'
Illustrated: Willes Maddox, Views of Lansdown Tower, 1844, Crimson Drawing Room

1844: Beckford Inventory, Book 4, 74, Drawing Room, Tower, '2 Fine Enamelled China Basins on Ormolu Stands'

1848: …Articles of Vertu… sent from Bath to Hamilton Palace: '15 September 1848: 2 Beautiful Bowls (Crimson) with Ormolu Stands to them'

1852–3: Hamilton Palace Inventory, Sitting Room, 110, '2 Rare and very fine small China bowls & Ormoulu stands and glass shades over £50 Beckford collection'

1876: Hamilton Palace Inventory: Tapestry Rooms, Sitting Room, 19, '2 Japanese china Bowls, 8 ½ in diameter richly painted, mounted on gilt metal stands, the whole 7 in high Glass shades and stands' [Annotated at the left margin in pencil, 'Loan']

APPENDIX 3: The Walpole/Beckford/Hamilton 'Medici' Vases [Museo Internazionale delle Ceramiche, Faenza; Inv. Nos. 21232/c, 21233/c; Montelupo, late 16th century]

1784: Horace Walpole, A Description of the Villa of Mr Horace Walpole… at Strawberry Hill near Twickenham, Middlesex…, 'Two large bottles of Florentine fayence, with the arms of duke Ferdinand of Medici and his wife Christian of Lorrain', Round Drawing Room, 55

1842: Strawberry Hill Sale, Day 23, Lot 53, Hume, Berners-street, £29 8s.
'A pair of extremely rare and curious OLD RAPHAEL OR FAENZA WARE PILGRIM'S BOTTLES, on the centres of either side are painted the coats of arms of DUKE FERDINAND OF MEDICI, and of his wife CHRISTINA OF LORRAINE, with miniature Portraits, ornamented with grotesque figures.'

1844: Beckford Inventory, Book 2, 25: 'A Pair of Medici Raphael Bottles'
[Left margin, annotated in pencil, 'Hamilton']

1846: '…Articles of Vertu… from Bath to Hamilton Palace', 25 August 1846: '2 Antique Faenza or Majolica Bottles' [Left margin, annotated in pencil, 'OSRooms' [Old State Rooms]]

1852–53: Hamilton Palace Inventory, Sitting Room, 109: '2 rare Antique Maiolica Bottles on top of Do. [high antique and richly carved and gilt Pedestals on Dolphin shaped feet]'
[Right margin, annotated in ink: 'belonged to the Medici bottles family & were their Medecin bottles']

1876: Hamilton Palace Inventory, Sitting Room, 20, '2 Raffaele or Majolica Ware Bottles 14 " high painted with the Medici Arms, various figures, Heads, etc.'

1882: Hamilton Palace Sale, Lot 824, E. Joseph, £100 5s.
'PAIR OF PILGRIM BOTTLES, of Urbino ware, with the Medici arms, portraits and figures in medallions, and arabesques in colours on white ground'

APPENDIX 4: Two Sèvres porcelain cabinet cups and saucers, one painted with a portrait of Mme de Sévigné, one painted with a portrait of Mme de Maintenon [present whereabouts unknown to this author]

1817: Sèvres, Cité de la Céramique, Archives: Vv1, 84, 'une tasse et soucoupe jasmin 1ere fond d'or portrait de Mme de Maintenon par Mlle Charrin 355/400 fr, 9.4.1817'

1818: Sèvres, Cité de la Céramique, Archives : Vv1, 101, 'une tasse et soucoupe AB fond d'ornt en gris portrait de M de Sevigne par Mlle Charrin 516/600 fr, 11.3.1818'

1832: Erlestoke Park Sale, 9 July–1 August, Lot 13: Mme de Sévigné cup and saucer; Lot 22: Mme de Maintenon cup and saucer

1844: Beckford Inventory, Book 2, 23: 'Modern Sevré', '2 Cabinet Chocolate Cups portraits of M de Sevigne and M de Maintenon'

1848: '…China at Portman Square from Bath', […] 2 Seve Chocolate Cups & Saucers with Portraits

1876: Hamilton Palace Inventory, see Figure 3.

1882: Hamilton Palace Sale, Lot 1698, T. Laurie & Sons, £11.0.6
'A LARGE SÈVRES CUP AND SAUCER, gold ground, with ornaments in grisaille, painted with a portrait of Mme. de Maintenon in a medallion'.

1882: Hamilton Palace Sale, Lot 1699, T. Laurie & Sons, £13. 13s
'ANOTHER, WITH UPRIGHT HANDLE, musical trophies and flowers on gilt ground, painted with a portrait of Mme. de Sévigné, after Petitot, by Mlle. Charvin'

1 Sale, English and Son, 20–27 November 1845; Sale, English and Son, 24 June–2 July 1848

2 Hamilton Estate Papers, Letter Book 305, 816

3 Hamilton Archives: 2177/Bundle 1381

4 Gilbert Collection, on loan to the Victoria and Albert Museum, No. Gilbert.204–2008. See: Anna Maria Massinelli, *Hardstones: The Gilbert Collection*, London: Philip Wilson Publishers Ltd. 2000, Cat. no. 9, 49–50;

R. Freyberger, 'The Duke of Hamilton's Clock Cabinet', *Christie's International Magazine*, Vol. VIII, No. 6, 10–13

5 Christie's, London, 5 July 2012, Lot 12, 64

6 Christie's, London, 31 May 1978, Lot 35

7 1823 Fonthill Abbey Sale, Lot No. 1562, purchased by Phillips of behalf of the Duke of Buckingham for £771.15.0. This was subsequently Lot No. 733 in the 1848 Stowe sale, having been purchased by Hume for the Duke of Hamilton for £567.0.0. See Bet McLeod, 'Family Connections', *The Beckford Society Annual Lectures*, 2007–2010, 17

8 Bet McLeod, 'A Collector's Obsession', *APOLLO*, CLXXI, June 2010, 60–65

9 Inv. No. 21232/c, 21233/c, see: G. Bojani et al, *La Donazione Galeazzo Cora: Ceramiche dal Medioevo al XIX Secolo* (Florence: Fabbri Editori, 1985), 221, Fig. 558a–b; G. Cora, 'Sulla fabbrica di maioliche sorta in Pisa alla fine del '500', FAENZA, Vol. L, 1964, plate VI a and b. References provided by T.Wilson, personal communication, 15.12.2013

10 Sèvres Cité de la Céramique, Archives: Vv1, 101, 'une tasse et soucoupe AB fond d'ornt en gris portrait de Mme de Sevigne par Mlle Charrin, 516/600 fr, 11.3.1818'

11 Ibid.: Vz3, 115

12 H. Roberts, 'Quite Appropriate for Windsor Castle: George IV and George Watson Taylor', *Furniture History*
Society Journal, Vol. XXXVI, 2000, 115–137

13 G. Robins, …*Magnificent Assemblage*…*Erlestoke Park*, 9 July–1 August 1832, Lot 13: Sévigné; Lot 22: Maintenon

14 Among a number of items, the two pieces of Riesener lacquer furniture now at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Inv. 20.155.11

15 For an example of hardstone mounted furniture produced by Hume and sold from George Watson Taylor's collection, see the cabinet in the ownership of the Brooklyn Museum, on loan to the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

16 1876 Hamilton Palace Inventory, 21, Sitting Room, 'Articles of Vertu in Ebony & Pietra Dura Cabinet…'The whole of the above from the Beckford Collection'

Notes on Contributors

GEOFFREY BLUM is a California writer who straddles high culture and pop art. Primed for a professorship in Anglo-Irish literature, he instead became an authority on Disney cartoonist Carl Barks, the creator of Uncle Scrooge, Duckburg's wealthiest son. For fifteen years Blum was Associate Editor at Another Rainbow Publishing, penning comic-book scripts and helping to compile two editions of the *Carl Barks Library*, a mammoth collection of comics, history, interviews, animation art, and biography. Over the next fifteen he refined and augmented that work with fresh research, commentary, and page design, directing a deluxe Barks edition for Egmont Serieforlaget, Disney's publisher in Scandinavia. Non-Disney publications include reviews, bibliography, and poems. His interest in Beckford dates from an encounter with Vathek in 1973 and a visit to the Lansdown house and tower in 1988.

STEPHEN CLARKE is the author of *The Strawberry Hill Press & Its Printing House* (Lewis Walpole Library, 2011, distributed by Yale University Press). His article 'Beckford and Nimby Pamby: William Beckford's Notes in Horace Walpole's Works' appeared in the Spring 2014 issue of *The Book Collector*. He is a trustee of Strawberry Hill and of Dr. Johnson's House in Gough Square, a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, and an Honorary Fellow of the Department of English at the University of Liverpool.

PIERRE DEGOTT is Professor of English at the Université de Lorraine in Metz, where he mainly teaches eighteenth-century literature. His PhD. (now published at Éditions L'Harmattan) was a study on the themes and poetics of Handel's libretti for his English oratorios. His current research is on the following subjects: 1. Librettology, and more specifically the reflexivity of the sung text; 2. the representation of musical and operatic performances in Anglo-Saxon fiction; 3. opera and oratorio in translation. Even though his research covers all chronological eras concerned by operatic practise, from the late sixteenth to the twenty-first century, he mainly concentrates on eighteenth-century musical forms (opera, semi-opera, oratorio, odes, ballad-opera, musical plays…). In that area, he has published

over eighty academic articles and organised several conferences, mainly on musico-literary subjects. He is currently the Dean of the UFR Arts, Lettres et Langues in Metz.

BET MCLEOD is an independent decorative art historian and consultant. She has recently completed her PhD on the ceramics in the collections of the Dukes of Hamilton. She continues to work on Beckford's collections, and has published and lectured widely on this, and other topics.

CHARLES SEBAG-MONTEFIORE retired in December 2012 from a lifetime working in the financial sector in the City of London, but spent over forty years creating a library devoted to the study of the British as art collectors and to the provenance of paintings. It comprises privately printed and publicly published catalogues of private collections, auction sale catalogues and related manuscript material. This library is perhaps the largest of its kind in private hands and will ultimately pass to the National Gallery, London. He is the joint author of The British as Art Collectors: from the Tudors to the Present, (Scala, 2012), a survey on collecting in Great Britain over 500 years. His book on *A Dynasty of Dealers: John Smith and Successors 1801–1924* (Roxburghe Club, 2013), is a study of the art market in nineteenth century London for high-end Dutch and Flemish pictures, told through a collection of 564 unpublished letters between significant collectors of the day and a leading dealer. He is also the joint editor of *Brooks's 1764–2014: The Story of a Whig Club* (2013).

He was a Trustee of the Art Fund for 11 years (2000–11) and of the Samuel Courtauld Trust for 15 years (1992–2007). He is currently a Trustee of the National Gallery, London, and of The Wordsworth Trust, Joint Secretary of the Society of Dilettanti and Honorary Treasurer of several charities devoted to fine and applied art, museums and art galleries, books, libraries and conservation.