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'A fairy palace' and 'a desert of magnificence': Richard Cosway's 20 Stratford Place and William Beckford's Fonthill Abbey

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This paper is based on an illustrated lecture given at
The Beckford Society's Twenty-fourth Annual Lecture,
Delivered on Thursday 17 October 2019 at the
Travellers Club, 106 Pall Mall, London SW1

In the November 1822 issue of the *London Magazine* William Hazlitt, Figure 1, – the most brilliant essayist, literary and art critic in Regency Britain – published a devastating attack on the extravagant art collection of William Beckford, Figure 2, the fabulously wealthy aesthete, writer and recluse.[1] Beckford's collections of fine and decorative arts had been displayed recently and publicly for the first time for potential sale through auction by Christie's at his mysterious and hitherto virtually inaccessible Wiltshire stately home, Fonthill Abbey, which James Wyatt had built for him between 1797 and 1807 in the newly fashionable Gothick style to rival the nearby Salisbury Cathedral.

In this excoriating essay, which was republished in 1843 by Hazlitt's son William, in an edited volume of his father's *Criticisms on Art: and Sketches of the Picture Galleries of England*, the critic contrasts – to devastating effect – Beckford's soulless ordered collecting of luxurious objects, together with the fantastic imagination

Fig. 1. William Hazlitt, *Self-portrait,* 1802, oil on canvas.
© Maidstone Art Gallery and Museum [acc. no. BAL_MAI 46509].

Fig. 2. John Hoppner, *William Beckford*, c.1800, oil on canvas.
© Salford Museum and Art Gallery [acc. no. 1868-21].

displayed by the elderly collector and portraitist Richard Cosway, Figure 3, who lived for most of the last thirty years of his life at 20 Stratford Place, just off Oxford Street, from 1792 to 1820. The

Fig. 3. Richard Cosway, *Self-portrait*, c.1770, oil on canvas.
© Attingham Park, National Trust [acc. no. 609064].

critic's withering critical assault on Beckford's taste as a collector opens as follows:

> The old sarcasm – *Omne ignotum pro magnifico est* – cannot be justly applied here. FONTHILL ABBEY, after being enveloped in impenetrable mystery for a length of years, has been unexpectedly thrown open to the vulgar gaze, and has lost none of its reputation for magnificence – though, perhaps, its visionary glory, its classic renown, have vanished from the public mind for ever. It is, in a word, a desart [sic] of magnificence, a glittering waste of laborious idleness, a cathedral turned into a toy-shop, an immense Museum of all that is most curious and costly, and, at the same time, most worthless, in the productions of art and nature. Ships of pearl and seas of amber are scarce a fable here – a nautilus's shell surmounted with a gilt triumph of Neptune – tables of agate, cabinets of ebony, and precious stones, painted windows "shedding a gaudy, crimson light", satin borders, marble floors, and lamps of solid gold – Chinese pagodas and Persian tapestry – all the miniature splendour of Solomon's Temple is displayed to the view – whatever is far-fetched and dear-bought, rich in the materials, or rare and difficult in the workmanship – but scarce one genuine work of art, one solid proof of taste, one lofty relic of sentiment or imagination!

After extolling the imaginative expressive colour and lush bucolic energy of Titian's painted *poesie* – one of the critic's favourite artists (and whose work was not to be found at Fonthill Abbey) – Hazlitt continued his attack on the glittering effects of the objects of virtù displayed at Fonthill, and then on to Beckford himself:

> Any thing to get all this frippery, and finery, and tinsel, and glitter, and embossing, and system of tantalisation, and fret-work of the imagination out of our heads, and take one deep, long, oblivious draught of the romantic and marvellous, the thirst of which the fame of Fonthill Abbey has raised in us, but not satisfied! – Mr. Beckford has undoubtedly shown himself an industrious *bijoutier*,

> a prodigious virtuoso, an accomplished patron of unproductive labour, an enthusiastic collector of expensive trifles – the only proof of taste (to our thinking) he has shown in this collection is *his getting rid of it*. What splendour, what grace, what grandeur might he substitute in lieu of it! What a handwriting might be spread out upon the walls! What a spirit of poetry and philosophy might breathe there! What a solemn gloom, what gay vistas of fancy, like chequered light and shade, might genius, guided by art, shed around! The author of Vathek is a scholar; the proprietor of Fonthill has travelled abroad, and has seen all the finest remains of antiquity and boasted specimens of modern art. Why not lay his hands on some of these?

Hazlitt continued his critique of Beckford's lavish spending for the display at Fonthill of the most luxurious and exqusitely and exqusitely crafted objects of *vertu*, or decorative arts – Boulle furniture, oriental porcelain, silver-gilt cups, pietre dure caskets or Japan-lacquered cabinets – of the highest extravagance, dismissing them as mere 'toys'. The critic regards Beckford's obsession with the small scale, precious and the highly polished, combined with his extreme level of disposable wealth – derived from his father's extensive sugar plantations worked by slaves in Jamaica – as the source of his lack of true taste for the sublime and the beautiful.

In his essay Hazlitt even quoted some extracts from the 1822 Fonthill auction catalogue by James Christie II (though that sale was cancelled; a 37-day auction, organised by a rival auctioneer Mr. Phillips, took place the following year), to give some idea of the objects of vertu and minutely-painted cabinet paintings being offered for sale. There was Oriental porcelain, followed by bejewelled *objets d'art,* and then finally a selection of some of the smaller more detailed and highly-finished pictures. Hazlitt continued exasperatedly until he encountered a catalogue entry for 'A lady's portrait by Cosway', almost certainly a portrait miniature painted in watercolour on ivory:

> Who cares any thing about such frippery, time out of mind the stale ornaments of a pawnbroker's shop; or about old Breughel, or Stella, or Franks, or Lucas Cranach, or Netecher [Netscher], or Cosway? – But at that last name we pause, and must be excused if we consecrate to him a *petit souvenir* in our best manner: for he was Fancy's child. All other collectors are fools to him: they go about with painful anxiety to find out the realities: – he *said* he had them – and in a moment made them of the breath of his nostrils and the fumes of a lively imagination. His was the crucifix that Abelard prayed to – the original manuscript of the Rape of the Lock – the dagger with which Felton stabbed the Duke of Buckingham – the first finished sketch of the Jocunda – Titian's large colossal portrait of Peter Aretine – a mummy of some particular Egyptian king. Were the articles authentic? – no matter – his faith in them was true. What a fairy palace was his of specimens of art, antiquarianism and *virtù*, jumbled all together in the richest disorder, dusty, shadowy, obscure, with much left to the imagination (how different from the finical, polished, petty, perfect, modernised air of Fonthill!) and with copies of the old masters, cracked and damaged, which he touched and retouched with his own hand, and yet swore they were genuine, the pure originals!

After detailing the contents and interiors of Richard Cosway's grand four-story Adam-style town house at 20 Stratford Place, just off Oxford Street, Hazlitt continued his vivid memoir of the elderly, credulous and deeply imaginative artist himself who had died the previous year in 1821, in his eightieth year.

> He was gifted with a *second-sight* in such matters: he believed whatever was incredible. Happy mortal! Fancy bore sway in him, and so vivid were his impressions that they included the reality in them. The agreeable and the true with him were one. He believed in Swedenborgianism – he believed in animal magnetism – he has conversed with more than one person of the Trinity – he could talk with his lady at Mantua through some vehicle of sense, as we speak to a servant down stairs through an ear-pipe. – Richard Cosway

was not the man to flinch from an *ideal* proposition. Once at an Academy dinner, when some question was made, whether the story of Lambert's leap was true, he started up, and said it was, for he was the man that performed it; – he once assured us, that the knee-pan of James I at Whitehall was nine feet across (he had measured it in concert with Mr. Cipriani); he could read in the book of Revelations without spectacles, and foretold the return of Buonaparte from Elba and St. Helena. His wife, the most lady-like of English-women, being asked, in Paris, what sort of a man her husband was, answered, *Toujours riant, toujours gai*. This was true. He must have been of French extraction. His soul had the life of a bird; and such was the jauntiness of his air and manner that, to see him sit to have his half-boots laced on, you would fancy (with the help of a figure) that, instead of a little withered elderly gentleman, it was Venus attired by the Graces. His miniatures were not fashionable – they were fashion itself. When more than ninety he retired from his profession, and used to hold up his palsied right hand that had painted lords and ladies for the upwards of sixty years, and smiled, with unabated good humour, at the vanity of human wishes. Take him with all his faults and follies, "we scarce shall look upon his like again!"

This is a wonderfully vivid firsthand vignette of the elderly Cosway's spritely character and extarordinary collection of curiosities. Hazlitt was so enamoured of this pen portrait of Cosway that he had it published again again four years later.[2] Comparing Cosway's vivid and mystical imagination to that of a generation of elderly English artists with marked religious and spiritual inclinations – including the mystical poet and printmaker William Blake, the landscape oil painter Philippe Jacques de Loutherbourg, the neoclassical sculptor and designer John Flaxman, the watercolourist John Varley, and the line engraver William Sharp – Hazlitt added two further fantastical objects to Cosway's cabinet of curiosities, claiming to have seen 'the feather of a Phoenix' and 'a piece of Noah's ark'.[3]

Notwithstanding Hazlitt's rhetorical flights of fancy and literary

flourishes, it is worth examining the realities of what exactly is known about the relationship between William Beckford – wealthy aesthete, reclusive writer and voracious collector – and Richard Cosway, eighteen years older than Beckford, but a highly successful Regency society portraitist, eccentric Royal Academician and immersive connoisseur.

Richard Cosway (1742–1821), the son of a rural schoolmaster working in Tiverton, Devon, by sheer force of talent came to London in 1754 aged only twelve to be apprenticed to William Shipley, the founder of the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (later the Royal Society of Arts). During the later 1750s Cosway won many prizes for drawing, before establishing himself in 1760 as an accomplished and increasingly fashionable portraitist in oils, pencil drawings but mainly miniatures, painted in watercolour on ivory, which he exhibited throughout the 1760s at the Society of Artists and its rival the Free Society of Artists. In 1769 he enrolled as a student at the newly founded Royal Academy, was made an Associate in the following year, and then elected a full Academician in 1771. He showed his oil paintings there in the annual summer exhibitions until 1806, mainly his ambitious oil portraits, but also occasional history paintings, either religious in subject matter or erotic in their sensibility.

In 1776 he first portrayed Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, the influential society hostess, who became his first main patron, a relationship which continued until 1789. Nine years earlier in 1780 – probably thanks to an introduction from the Duchess – Cosway met and painted a portrait miniature of the eighteen-year-old George, Prince of Wales, later the Prince Regent and eventually King George IV. Cosway's miniatures of the Prince of Wales became intensely fashionable with their brilliant use of evanescent touches of watercolour painted onto translucent thin ivory plaques, all set in either gold mounts or bejewelled cases. Cosway painted intimate portraits of many of the Prince of Wales's brothers and sisters, as well as of the key women in his circle, including Mrs. Mary 'Perdita'

Robinson' from 1780, his morganatic wife Mrs. Fitzherbert from 1784, and his legal wife Caroline of Brunswick from the time of their marriage in 1797. Cosway was soon specialising in portraying members of the Prince's aristocratic circle, usually in fashionable miniatures, of which he painted around one thousand during his sixty-year-long career, but also around five hundred full-length portrait drawings, usually drawn with pencil and tinted with watercolour in the faces. Cosway also painted nearly one hundred oil portraits, a format for which his three most loyal and consistent patrons were Jacob Pleydell-Bouverie, 2nd Earl of Radnor from 1781 to 1812; George Spencer-Churchill, Marquess of Blandford and later 5th Duke of Marlborough, from around 1800 to 1819; and William Courtenay, 3rd Viscount Courtenay, later 9th Earl of Devon, from 1790 to 1812.

The diminutive and garrulous Cosway was ostentatious, flamboyant and eccentric, extremely well-connected socially, in addition to being an outstanding collector and connoissseur of Old Master paintings, drawings and prints, *objets d'art*, of vertu and curiosities. He was in essence a romantic antiquarian, and a credulous self-proclaimed magician and syncretic mystic, who had amassed an extensive and eclectic library of over two thousand volumes mainly devoted to religion and the occult sciences. Despite his differences in character with Beckford, Cosway had many common interests with him as a collector, connoisseur and as a romantic antiquarian. Nonetheless, Beckford was by temperament reclusive, solitary and sensitive, and often appeared – to those who didn't know him – as haughty and arrogant.

Of Cosway's major patrons – apart from the Prince of Wales – William, 3rd Viscount Courtenay is the most interesting for his connections with Beckford. The aesthete became notorious in 1784 for his seduction and five-year-long obsession with 'Kitty', the nickname given by Beckford to the young teenager William Courtenay, as was discussed by Charlie Courtenay, Earl of Devon, in last year's Beckford Society lecture.[4] From 1790 to 1812

Courtenay commissioned a stream of oil portraits and miniatures of himself and members of his family, together with an altarpiece of 'The Supper at Emmaus', running up a bill of £1,602.81, which was finally settled by Lord Courtenay's agent to Maria Cosway, acting on her husband's behalf, in 1820. Courtenay sat to Cosway in 1790–91 for a remarkable coming-of-age portrait, where the sitter is shown wearing his splendid 'Vandyke' costume in black, trimmed with gold braid, and which still hangs in pride of place over the fireplace in the Music Room at Powderham Castle, a grand ballroom which had recently been commissioned by Courtenay from James Wyatt, Beckford's architect at Fonthill Abbey, and also a friend of Cosway's. Apart from the ambitious full-length from 1798 of three of Courtenay's older sisters – Lucy, Harriet and Caroline shown like the Three Graces, with Powderham Castle in the background – Cosway also painted in 1805 a remarkable seated triple portrait of three of Courtenay's younger sisters – Sophia, Louisa and Mathilda – for which the artist charged £265.10s. All three of these magnificent oil portraits are still on display at Powderham Castle.

Apart from their mutual connection with William Courtenay, another notable point of contact between Beckford and Cosway was their overlapping connections of Regency patrons, artists and architects. In 1807 Cosway planned to travel down from London with two of the sons of the fashionable architect James Wyatt, builder of the neo-Gothic Fonthill Abbey, to view the auction of the contents of Fonthill Splendens, the Palladian house below the Abbey by a lake, that had been built by Beckford's father, William, a prominent West Indies plantation owner and famous Lord Mayor of London. Cosway had also come down to Wiltshire to view the picture gallery of outstanding Old Master paintings at Longford Castle, the country house of Jacob Pleydell-Bouverie, 2nd Earl of Radnor. He was one of the three most significant aristocratic patrons of Cosway between 1781 and 1812, sitting for his own full-length portrait in oils, shown holding Wyatt's plan for remodelling the castle. Cosway also made portrait drawings and miniatures of

Radnor, who also commissioned the artist to paint animated oil portraits of all of his children.

Alongside these many portrait commissions Cosway simultaneously sold to the 2nd Earl of Radnor a number of Old Master paintings from his own collection of around five hundred pictures, including the highly significant work by Sebastiano del Piombo of *An Unknown Lady* – thought by Cosway to be by Raphael and depicting his mistress *La Fornarina*; a large Pieter Verhulst canvas after Rubens's in situ sketch of *A View of the Escorial Monastery*. Cosway had sold these works in 1791 by private contract sale from an exhibition at Schomberg House, his grand late seventeenth-century house on Pall Mall, in the central apartment of which the artist and his wife Maria lived and held their brilliant musical salons from 1784 to 1790.

As Cosway revealed in an undated letter to Lord Radnor in 1807, the artist was diverted from a visit to Longford Castle by an exceptionally rare invitation to stay at Fonthill Abbey as the personal guest of William Beckford and to view the collection with the owner, a visit that was to last ten days. This fascinating letter deserves to be quoted in full, as it sheds so much light on Cosway's intense reaction – marked by much emphatic underlinings – to his fellow collector Beckford's extraordinary treasures at Fonthill Abbey:[5]

> My Lord, … but on my arrival at Tisbury where Mr. Wyatt had provided Apartments for me, I found an invitation from Mr. B. to visit the Abbey. This opportunity (which I apprehended perhaps might never happen again under such advantageous circumstances) I cou'd not resist, and such a Wonderful accumulation of Treasures of every possible description in Books, Manuscripts, Prints, Books of Prints, Gems, Cameos, Carvings in Ivory, Ebony, the most rare Japan, China, &c, &c, &c, &c, &c of the highest Class and in the purest state of preservation, I believe clearly does not exist in Europe, & which can never be seen but by Mr. B. himself so that instead of three days to which time I had limited my stay

> from London, I was employ'd Ten Whole Days in examining what I believe to be a fiftieth part of the contents of the Abbey and I really think shou'd have remain'd there to this Hour, had I not been summon'd thence by Express from Town on very urgent business – thus was I depriv'd the very great gratification I had propos'd to myself in visiting Longford…

At the end of his letter to Lord Radnor, Cosway added a postscript containing a reference to the imminent sale by Beckford of the two celebrated classical landscapes – known as the Altieri Claudes, named after the Roman family and the family palazzo from where they had been bought in 1799, painted by Claude Gellée (called Lorrain), showing the *Arrival of Aeneas at Pallanteum* and *The Father of Psyche sacrificing at the Temple of Apollo*. Cosway was providing advanced intelligence of the forthcoming sale of these masterpieces, but evidently Lord Radnor was not tempted, mainly because he already had two very fine early Claude landscapes in his collection.

> NB: I have some reason to believe that Mr. B. will perhaps be induc'd to part with His Claud[e]s, as he has no Place where he can possibly hang them to advantage in the Abbey according to the Costum [custom] observed throughout the Building – and it wou'd be cruel to deprive the Public the gratification of seeing them in London, he is charm'd with yr. Lordship's [pair of paintings by Claude] as all who have ever seen them & know anything must be, but Alas they also, are fourscore miles from the Capitol.

Cosway's personal invitation from Beckford to stay at Fonthill Abbey was clearly a highly unusual event, since this was extended to only a very select group of sympathetic and imaginative artists – such as Benjamin West, whose large religious paintings and stained glass were commissioned by Beckford to decorate the Abbey, or J. M. W. Turner, who painted a number of impressive watercolours of Fonthill Abbey and it magnificent Park. A few celebrities were

also invited, such as most famously Admiral Lord Nelson and his mistress Lady Emma Hamillton to festivities in their honour in 1800. Beckford clearly respected Cosway as an artist, since he commissioned at least one miniature from him, probably of his wife Margaret, and valued his experience and advice as a collector, connoisseur and virtuoso. During his ten day long visit to Fonthill Abbey in 1807 Cosway made one extant pen and ink drawing of the West Front and Tower, which survives today in the collection of the Fondazione Maria Cosway at Lodi not far from Milan.

Returning to the 1822 essay on Fonthill Abbey, Hazlitt concluded his harsh critique with remarks in softer tone about some of the more interesting *objets d'art* and paintings as well as the landscape effects in the Park around the Abbey, though in truth it still feels like the essayist is damning Beckford's collecting activities with faint praise:

> After speaking of him [Cosway], we are ashamed to go back to Fonthill lest one drop of gall should fall from our pen. No, the rest will dip it in the milk of human kindness, and deliver all with charity. There are four or five very curious cabinets – a triple jewel cabinet of opaque, with panel of transparent amber, dazzles the eye like a temple of the New Jerusalem – the Nautilus's shell, with the triumph of Neptune and Amphitrite, is elegant, and the table on which it stands superb – the cups, vases, and sculptures, by Cellini, Berg, and John of Bologna, are as admirable as they are rare – the Berghem (a sea-port) is a fair specimen of that master – the Poulterer's Shop, by G. Douw, is passable – there are some middling Bassans – the Sibylla Libyca, of L. Caracci, is in the grand style of composition – there is a good copy of a head by Parmegiano – the painted windows in the centre of the Abbey have a surprising effect – the form of the building (which was raised by torch light) is fantastical, to say the least – and the grounds, which are extensive and fine in their situation, are laid out with the hand of a master. A quantity of coot, teal, and wild fowl sport in a crystal stream that winds along the park; and their dark brown coats, seen in the green shadows of the water, have a most picturesque effect. Upon the

> whole, if we were not much pleased by our excursion to Fonthill, we were very little disappointed; and the place altogether is consistent and characteristic.

Despite Hazlitt's final grudging respect for Beckford's achievements with his collecting of certain Old Master cabinet paintings and *objets d'art*, his essay's rhetorical counterpoint of the blast against the aesthetic emptiness of Beckford's supreme wealth and ostentatious magnificence, is contrasted with the vivid imagination of the artist-collector Cosway and his flights of fancy, epitomised by his cabinet of curiosities at 20 Stratford Place. Nonetheless in reality we know from Cosway's revealing letter of 1807 to the 2nd Earl of Radnor that the artist considered Beckford's collecting activities at Fonthill to be something of great wonder. Yet Cosway, ever the *marchand-amateur*, was not beyond taking the opportunity to help one of his key patrons Lord Radnor to acquire the Altieri Claudes, arguably the two greatest Old Master paintings that Beckford owned, if only briefly, for a few years at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Beckford's great neo-Gothic monastery-palace, Fonthill Abbey, only survived a few years beyond its sale by Beckford in 1822 to John Farquhar, a Scottish millionaire gunpowder manufacturer who had made his fortune in India, and that of its contents the following year in 1823. Then the hastily built tower collapsed and most of the remnants of the Abbey were demolished. Beckford relocated to Bath where he housed the best of his library in a town house in Lansdown Crescent, and also created another fine, smaller-scale tower on the hill at Lansdown overlooking the famous spa town, to house his choicest Old Master paintings and most exquisite *objets d'art*. After Beckford's death in 1844, most of these entered the legendary collections of his daughter Susan and his son-in-law, Alexander, 10th Duke of Hamilton, at Hamilton Palace, south-east of Glasgow. Due to coal-mining subsidence underneath Hamilton Palace these collections were mostly sold in a series of auctions in the two years following 1882. Other remaining Beckford and Hamilton treasures

were sold in 1919 and 1920, and they now grace art galleries and decorative arts museums around the world.[6]

Meanwhile Cosway, due to infirmity caused by a series of strokes in 1819–20 that left him unable to use his right arm and hand, moved out of 20 Stratford Place that year, and into a pleasant small cottage at 31 Edgware Road beyond the Western end of Oxford Street, Marble Arch and Hyde Park. On 4th July 1821, the artist died in his carriage, with his longstanding friend Mrs. Udney by his side. The artist's widow, Maria Cosway, had returned from Lodi to London four years previously to nurse her increasingly frail husband through his last years of life. After his death she organised in 1821 and 1822 with the auctioneer George Stanley a series of sales of her husband's extensive collections from 20 Stratford Place, including two sales of Old Master Pictures, a three day sale of his *objets d'art*, furniture and curiosities; a four day sale of his Old Master prints and drawings; and finally an eight day sale of his library of books and manuscripts. Maria Cosway used the healthy proceeds from these sales to re-found her famous girls' school at Lodi as the *Collegio delle Grazie*, under the auspices of the Catholic Vienna-based Institute of the English Women. In 1835 she was made a Baroness of the Austrian Empire. Maria Cosway took out to Lodi many of her husband's own drawings, which had been inspired by the Old Masters, and were greatly admired by Italian connoisseurs and visitors to the College. Maria also established a small gallery at her girls' school of some of her own paintings, some of those by her husband, in addition to a choice collection of Old Masters, a few of which remain there to this day. However, in neither the London auctions of the Cosway heirlooms or in the collection at Lodi is there a sign of the two additional curiosities which Hazlitt referred to in his 1826 essay 'On the Old Age of Artists', that he had remembered seeing at 20 Stratford Place before 1819, neither 'a feather of the Phoenix' nor 'a piece of Noah's Ark'.

1 William Hazlitt, 'Fonthill Abbey', *London Magazine*, November 1822, 350-8. *See also*: Stanley Jones, 'The Fonthill Abbey Pictures: Two Additions to the Hazlitt Canon', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtrauld Institutes*, vol. 41, 1978, 278-96; S. Jones, *Hazlitt: A Life, from Winterslow to Frith Street*, Oxford University Press, 1989, 346-7; *William Beckford 1760–1844: An Eye for the Magnificent*, exh. cat., New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000; Jon Millington, *William Beckford: A Bibliography*, Warminster: The Beckford Society, 2008, 88.

2 William Hazlitt, 'On the Old Age of Artists', *The Plain Speaker: opinions on books, men and things*, 2 vols., London, 1826, 207-27.

3 Stephen Lloyd (ed.), *Richard and Maria Cosway: Regency Artists of Taste and Fashion*, exh. cat., Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh, and National Portrait Gallery, London, 1995, 73-85; 130-3; *see also*: S. Lloyd, 'Portraits of William Beckford', *The Beckford Journal,* vol. 21, 2015, 39-48.

4 Charlie Courtenay [Earl of Devon], 'When Beckford came to stay: the emotional, aesthetic and literary impacts of a weekend at Powderham', *The Beckford Journal*, vol. 25, 2019, 5-35.

5 Archives of the Earls of Radnor (Pleydell-Bouverie family) of Longford Castle, Swindon and Wiltshire History Centre, Ms.1946/4/2B/4.

6 *See* Godfrey Evans's doctoral thesis and his many published articles on the 10th Duke of Hamilton as a collector.

Musico – William Beckford and the castrati

ANNE ALMOND

"Here I am breathing the soft air of Mount Edgcumbe standing upon the brink of a Cliff overlooking the Sea and singing *Notturnos* with Pacchierotti."[1]

In the summer of 1780 William Beckford went to the opera and heard the castrato (or 'musico' as they were called) Pacchierotti sing for the first time. It was a life changing experience. Gasparo Pacchierotti, the greatest singer of his age, was born in 1740 and had studied in Venice with the composer Ferdinando Bertoni. He was already famous across Italy before making his London debut, Figure 1. Hearing him would have been a euphoric moment for the soon to be 20 year old Beckford. Arriving in London in June, at the start of his Grand Tour, Beckford was just in time to witness the week-long Gordon riots, which excited him as he surveyed the violence with an artistic eye.

Pacchierotti, performing for the London season, had outfaced the rioters, leaving his name on his door and walking the streets while the anti-Catholic mob bayed for blood. Beckford's opera-loving contemporary Lord Mount Edgcumbe wrote of Pacchierotti:

> my decided taste for music, which (young as I was), I now began to love and to feel: for, in the season of 1778 and 1779, arrived Pacchierotti, decidedly, in my opinion, the most perfect singer it ever fell to my lot to hear.[2]

Fig. 1. Charles Bretherton, hand coloured satirical print of Sigr Pacchierotti, 1782. © British Museum.

Virtuoso – a singer[3]

Beckford was no stranger to music. He had been taught music theory, keyboard skills and singing from an early age,[4] and had taken part in amateur theatricals at Lord Chatham's home Burton Pynsent.[5] Thus, he was used to making his own music – both playing and composing – before being sent away to Calvinist Geneva where, as Dr. Burney said, "there was little music to be heard".

Happily, Geneva gave him access to many of the top European intelligentsia of the day, but he had to rely on home music making with Jean Huber, who was an accomplished musician and artist, and made many paintings, silhouettes and drawings of his friend Voltaire. Beckford also turned to nature (and possibly Huber's son) to fill up the emotional void. Setting the future course of his life he decided: "… [to] eat roast beef, swear, speak bad French, go to Lyons, and come back again with manly disorders … Such an Animal I am determined not to be!"[6]

Returning to England in 1779 he then went on a tour of English country houses where he met William Courtenay and fell deliriously in love. From early on love and music were intertwined. Wandering romantically around Fonthill, musing on potential love affairs, he found solace through nature and music, writing to his drawing master and confidante Alexander Cozens:

> Fonthill Decr. 29th, 1779.
> My cares have been a little while suspended – for I have been listening these several Evenings to plaintive Sicilian Airs. You can hardly believe what a melancholy has of late possessed me. My ideas of Happiness are at length very simple, for they consist alone in a secure retirement with the one I love. I have not spirits to write ten Lines – My only consolation is to hear Louisa and her Sister sing. Never could I have believed myself so entirely subdued by whom you solely are acquainted.[7]

All this meant he was well primed for the passion and tumult of the Italian opera that summer. The opera and its star were a revelation. Lord Mount Edgcumbe, FIGURE 2, recalled Pacchierotti:

> As an actor, with many disadvantages of person, for he was tall and awkward in his figure, and his features were plain, he was nevertheless forcible and impressive: for he felt warmly, had excellent judgment, and was an enthusiast in his profession. His recitative was inimitably fine, so that even those who did not

Fig. 2. Henry Bone, after unknown artist, *Lord Mount Edgcumbe*, 1799. © National Portrait Gallery, London.

> understand the language could not fail to comprehend, from his countenance, voice, and action, every sentiment he expressed.

He was renowned for his ability to engender extreme feeling in his audience. Famously, when singing in Bertoni's setting of *Artaserse* a few years later, he sang the line "*Eppur son innocents*!" The orchestra failed to come in. Asking the reason he was told "we are

all in tears". Several minutes passed before the players could recover themselves.[8] Lord Mount Edgcumbe continues:

> Pacchierotti's voice was an extensive soprano, full and sweet in the highest degree; his powers of execution were great, but he had far too good taste and too good sense to make a display of them where it would have been misapplied, confining it to one bravura song (*ariadi agilita*) in each opera, conscious that the chief delight of singing, and his own supreme excellence, lay in touching expression, and exquisite pathos.

… and so he worked his spell on William …

Beckford was entranced and made sure his Grand Tour would follow Pacchierotti to the Italian opera houses where he was due to perform. Once arrived in Italy Beckford engaged in another romantic escapade in Venice, ensuring he was emotionally fired up for the Lucca opera season. He wrote:

> Lucca, Oct. 1st, 1780
> I continue rambling all day about the Hills I have mentioned. Of an Evening I walk on the ramparts with Pacchierotti … Give me but a secure retirement with those I love, surround me with impervious forests and keep off the World: … 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, which breathes such exalted heroism, that, forgetting my peaceful schemes, I start up, grow restless, stride about and begin to form ambitious projects. 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 how 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 … Had I not hopes of hearing

> Pacchierotti again at Venice during the carnival this would not be my last epistle from Lucca. Adieu …[9]

Pacchierotti was singing in *Quinta Fabio* by his friend and main collaborator Bertoni. Beckford went ten times to the performances to "hear the embellishments". Attending repeat performances was not so strange. Dr. Charles Burney, the famous composer, musician, and musical historian wrote:

> His [Pacchierotti] extemporaneous flights and divisions were so new, that they at first were doubtful whether to blame or commend. But as the true criterion of merit in the arts, is to improve on examination, all persons of knowledge and feeling constantly experienced encreasing pleasure at each performance, however frequent the opportunities may have been of gratifying their wish to hear him.[10]

Lord Mount Edgcumbe agreed:

> Yet he was so thorough a musician that nothing came amiss to him; every style was to him equally easy, and he could sing, at first sight, all songs of the most opposite characters, not merely with the facility and correctness which a complete knowledge of music must give, but entering at once into the views of the composer, and giving them all the spirit and expression he had designed. Such was his genius in his embellishments and cadences, that their variety was inexhaustible. He could not sing a song twice in exactly the same way; yet never did he introduce an ornament that was not judicious, and appropriate to the composition.

Beckford expanded on his time spent with his idol in *Dreams, Waking Thoughts and Incidents.*

> Sometimes he [Pacchierotti] accompanies me in my excursions. … away we trotted … and stayed so late … that cold and hoarseness

were the consequence. Yesterday we made a tour of about thirty miles upon the highlands, and visited a variety of castles and palaces … Alcina could not have chosen a more romantic situation. Leaving our horses at the great gate … [we] entered an alley of oranges, and gathered ripe fruit from the trees. Whilst we were thus employed, the sun broke from the clouds, … a bower of vines … afforded us both shade and refreshment; I fell upon the clusters which formed our ceiling, like a native of the north, unused to such luxuriance … Between nine and ten we entered the gates of Lucca. Pacchierotti coughed, and half its inhabitants wished us at the devil.[11]

Intermezzo – an interlude

Castrati had been singing in Italian churches for many centuries, but their move to opera came with its creation in the 17th century, and the development of recitative to drive the drama forward. There were many reasons for this, including women not being allowed to perform in theatres and boys not having the emotional depth or voices that would last – due to them breaking. Low voices were also considered course and harsh. Castrati were men who had been castrated when young (reportedly by severing the ducts to the testicles which eventually shrivelled and disappeared) to preserve their adolescent voice. Dr. Burney recorded:

> Where these cruel operations are performed, and by whom, I never was able in my journey through Italy to discover, though it was one of my constant enquiries. M. De la Lande, however, was more fortunate, having asserted, positively, in his Voyage d'Italie, that there are shops at Naples with this inscription: Qui si castrano raggazzi; but I was not only utterly unable to see or hear of any such shops during my residence in that city, but was constantly told, both by the natives and English settled there that the laws against such a practice were so numerous and severe that it was never performed but with the utmost secrecy.[12]

Families usually claimed the operation was due to an accident when young, but being mostly poor, the possibility of fame, money

and celebrity for anyone showing a modicum of talent was both irresistible and a way out of poverty. Despite excommunication being the lot of anyone involved, during the 1780s more than 200 castrati were employed in churches in Rome, including the Pope's private chapel. Obviously the trade had not died out. Castrati sang as sopranos or contraltos, but with great physical power and amazing breath control. Doctor Burney records:

> though he [Pacchierotti] sung sotto voce under a bad cold in extreme severe weather, my pleasure was such as I had never experienced before. The natural tone of his voice is so interesting, sweet, and pathetic, that when he had a long note, or messa di voce, I never wished him to change it, or to do anything but swell, diminish, or prolong it in whatever way he pleased, to the utmost limits of his lungs.[13]

Castrati would sing male or female roles, and this gender fluidity in opera continued throughout the eighteenth century. For example, Goethe, who was a great fan, wrote in his *Italian Journey* (in the 1780s but not published until 1816): "the young men have studied the properties of the female sex in its being and behaviour; they know them thoroughly and reproduce them like an artist". Casanova took it a stage further: "… he had the waist of a nymph … you were madly in love before you realised it". Not everyone liked these developments. Alexander Pope wrote:

> No wonder then, when all was love and sport,
> The willing muses were debauched at court:
> On each enervate string they taught the note
> To pant, or tremble, through an eunuch's throat.[14]

Despite this, many castrati were sought after by women as lovers. Beckford noted Lady Mary Duncan "is more fond of [Pacchierotti] than a she-bear of its suckling" and Maria Cosway, the wife of the painter Richard Cosway, was linked with Pacchierotti's

contemporary, Luigi Marchesi, who had sung male and female roles around Europe. Maria Cosway was an accomplished artist and musician and staged concerts where she would sing and play alongside top Italian professionals such as Rubinelli, Tenducci and Marchesi.[15] "The charms of the fair Maria Cosway were so alluring in the eyes of Marchesi, on Saturday at the Opera," London's *Morning Post* declared, that between the acts, in full view of the audience, "he went into the same box with the seductive artist, and remained there in tender homage till his theatrical duties call him again to the stage".[16] Contemporary gossip asserted Maria had fallen in love with Marchesi and followed him to Italy in 1790, just after the birth of her daughter. However, this trip was more likely the result of serious post-natal depression.[17] She returned home in November 1794, but sadly her daughter died on 29 July 1796.

Castrati also had male lovers. Casanova mused: "Rome the holy city, which in this way forces every man to become a pederast, will not admit it, nor believe in the effects of an illusion which it does its best to arouse." Goethe recounts the atmosphere of the Roman Carnival "… young men dressed in the holiday attire of the women … They caress the men, allow themselves all familiarity with the women … persons the same as themselves, and for the rest do whatever humour, wit or wantonness suggest."[18] Beckford himself wrote: "Such musick – O Heaven, it breathes the very soul of voluptuous effeminacy."[19]

Virtu – talents

Beckford tore himself away from Lucca, arriving in Naples to stay with the cultured and musical Hamiltons. Here he found a sympathetic listener, musician and friend in the first Lady Hamilton. He poured out his heart in person and in later correspondence. Promising her he would avoid further romantic entanglements on his return to Venice, he was able to sublimate these in another wonderful opera season with Pacchierotti in the starring role. He

had by now become a major patron of Pacchierotti, persuading him to return to England to sing at Fonthill at his coming of age party in September and for Christmas 1781: "… beseeching you will not forget your promise of coming to Fonthill … relinquish your journey to Mantua – and return without delay to England."[20]

On his journey home he also met the great castrato Farinelli in Bologna, Figure 3. "All of a sudden I heard that famous voice … His modulation is still delightful and some of those thrilling tunes which raised such raptures in the year '35 have not yet entirely deserted him."[21] Farinelli, a pupil of Porpora, came to London in 1734, singing successfully in the rival company to Handel's. Beckford later renamed one of his Altieri Claudes 'The ship of Farinelli' because it reminded him of the air '*Son qual Nave*' (I am a ship) from Hasse's *Artaserse* sung by Farinelli in London in 1734.[22]

Fig. 3. Barolomeo Nazari, *Portrait of Farinelli*, 1734. © Royal College of Music, London.

Beckford returned to Fonthill to prepare for his birthday celebrations, writing to Lady Hamilton: "You have no idea to what a pitch my voice and expression has risen". Pacchierotti was joined for the occasion by two other leading opera castrati, Tenducci, and

Fig. 4. Thomas Gainsborough, *Giusto Ferdinando Tenducci*, c.1773.

Rauzzini who had composed a pastoral cantata for the occasion. *Il Tributo* was a tribute to Beckford's past and an exhortation to now take up his responsibilities for the future. Luckily it was sung in Italian.

Beckford wrote to Lady Hamilton: "[they] sung like superior beings … Burton played like one possessed, and all the world danced like demoniacs".[23] Not everyone agreed. His boyhood friend William Pitt wrote to his mother on 7th October "… that stupid Fete at Fonthill, which, take it all together, was, I think, as ill imagined, and as indifferently conducted, as anything of the sort need be …" [24]

Giusto Ferdinando Tenducci was born in 1736 and lived a colourful life, Figure 4. He came to London in 1758 reaching the height of his fame in Arne's 'Italian opera' in English *Artaxerxes,* in 1762. Dr. Burney wrote his performance "had a rapid effect upon the public taste, and stimulated to imitation all that were possessed of good ears and flexible voices". He gave the eight year old Mozart singing lessons, and in 1766 eloped with a young woman, which led to family reprisals and prison – rather like the plot of an opera or sentimental novel of the time. The Catholic church had forbidden castrati to marry as they could not reproduce. However, rumours that Tenducci had become a father were widely known at the time!

Venanzio Rauzzini was born in 1746 and sang in the Papal Chapel as a boy. Being very young and handsome he usually played the female role on stage. Everyone fell in love with him. He had sung in the first performance of Mozart's opera *Lucio Silla* and the composer's famous *Exultate Jubilate* was written for him. He was also a successful composer and teacher. He settled in Bath in 1787, Figure 5, entering into the city's musical life and entertained Haydn at his house in 1794. He died in 1810 and is buried at Bath Abbey.[25]

After three days of celebrations for thousands, a small party including Beckford, Pacchierotti, Lady Mary Duncan, Louisa Beckford and Burton, his travelling musician and harpsichordist, departed for Mount Edgcumbe House in Cornwall, Figure 6. William was in transports. He wrote to Lady Hamilton:

Fig. 5. Joseph Hutchkinson, *Venanzio Rauzzini with his dog Turk*, 1795.
© The Holburne Museum, Bath.

Mount Edgcumbe, Wed. Oct. 17th, 1781.
Here I am breathing the soft air of Mount Edgcumbe standing upon the brink of a Cliff overlooking the Sea and singing *Notturnos* with Pacchierotti. Innumerable Insects are humming about the Myrtles and Arbutus which hang on the steeps and are covered with blossoms.

I cannot help thinking myself in an Isle of the Atlantic Ocean – to which if we believe Pindar and his poetic Brethren the Souls of Heroes are transported. Here are the very paths I ran over two years ago – the pines against which I rested – the Bank where I stretched myself out and fell into one of my happy dreams. I have visited all my old haunts and paid my oblations at a Spring that I am certain is the result of Sylvanus. Would that you could see me bounding along the Terrace which hangs bold and free above the Ocean. You would almost apprehend I should trust myself to the Air and leap off the edge of the precipices.

We have been blessed today with a Sky of the purest Azure and soft breezes like those of Spring. I have been up and down and everywhere upon the Rocks. No creek, no Crevice, I believe have been left unexplored. You would delight in the picturesque fragments – the crooked pines and luxuriant shrubs amongst which I have passed my Day. Pacchierotti, as happy and enraptured as myself, does nothing but sing and thank Heaven that he has entered a Region so like his Native Italy.[26]

Fig. 6. William Tomkins, *Plymouth, Mount Edgcumbe, and Plymouth Sound, seen from Saltram*, c. 1770. © National Trust, Saltram.

This letter paints a picture of ecstatic happiness. Was one of the 'nocturnos' Beckford's own composition?[27] Lord Mount Edgcumbe believed Pacchierotti was at his best in private company:

> As a concert singer, and particularly in private society, he shone almost more than on the stage; for he sung with greater spirit in a small circle of friends, and was more gratified with their applause, than in a public concert room, or crowded theatre. I was in the habit of so hearing him most frequently, and having been intimately acquainted with him for many years, am enabled to speak thus minutely of his performance. On such occasions he would give way to his fancy, and seem almost inspired; and I have often seen his auditors, even those the least musical, moved to tears while he was singing.

Following the 'notorious' Christmas party which inspired *Vathek*, and at which the three castrati again sang, Beckford was busy writing, sitting for his portrait and going about in society. A guest at one of these parties, George Selwyn wrote: "He is the perfect master of music, but has a voice, either natural or feigned, of an eunuch."[28] At least it made a change from executions.[29]

Beckford also composed *Arcadian Pastoral* with his new friend Lady Craven. The operetta was performed by children who were supervised by the composer Bertoni. At the end of the performance, Pacchierotti, who was in the audience, joined in the finale. Beckford, as composer, was overwhelmed and wept.[30] Beckford returned to Europe, visiting Padua in June 1782, where:

> We have here a tolerable Opera composed by Sarti – Crescentini [one of the last great castrati] the first Singer, a slender Creature of eighteen, seems to possess a great deal of feeling; but the accents of Pacchierotti still vibrate in my ears and prevent their attending much to the others.[31]

He was also able to combine his love for music and nature, going to:

> Mirabello, a Country House which Algarotti had inhabited situated amongst the Euganean Hills … I soon found myself in the midst of my favourite hills, upon slopes covered with clover and shaded by Cherry Trees. We dined very comfortably in a strange Hall where I pitched my pianoforte, and sung the voluptuous airs of Bertoni's *Armida*. That Enchantress might have raised her Palace in this situation; and, had I been Rinaldo, I certainly should not very soon have abandoned it.[32]

Beckford is referring to Bertoni's opera *Armida Abbandonata,* written for Pacchierotti in the lead role as the hero Rinaldo, which premiered in Venice at Christmas 1780. Beckford would have attended a performance. Perhaps the aria manuscripts were given to him by the singer. Interestingly in *Italy* published 50 years later, he changes this to: "my friend's little wild-looking niece pitched her pianoforte, and sang." Beckford probably knew polymath Count Francesco Algarotti's 1755 *Essay on the Opera* – which was highly influential on opera reforms, plus his best seller *Newtonism for Ladies*.[33] Eventually leaving light-hearted Padua, he travelled on to Naples where disaster struck with Lady Hamilton and Burton dying within weeks of each other. The clouds were gathering.

Beckford married Lady Margaret Gordon in May 1783. Honeymooning abroad, they returned to England in the spring of 1784. Did Beckford go to hear Pacchierotti sing at the Handel centenary celebrations at the Pantheon before going to Powderham Castle in September?[34] If he did, it was for the last time. This fateful visit to Devon was to be his undoing. Whatever the truth, he was pursued in the press about his affair with Courtenay by a vitriolic Lord Loughborough – the greatest knave in the Kingdom.[35] Beckford's world was changed radically and irrevocably. So he began a more or less 10-year exile, losing his wife (after childbirth

Fig. 7. Unknown artist, *Gasparo Pacchierotti* c. 1790–1800, Villa Pacchierotti, Padua. © Alberto Zanatta.

– a not uncommon occurrence) in 1786 and his daughters to family guardianship. He wasn't able to hear Pacchierotti's final London performances with Haydn in 1791, Figure 7. Lord Mount Edgcumbe recalled:

> I have more than once heard him sing a cantata of Haydn's, called *Arianna a Naxos*, composed for a single voice with only a pianoforte accompaniment, and that was played by Haydn himself: it is needless to say the performance was perfect.

Pacchierotti returned to Italy. He eventually retired to his villa in Padua and died in 1821. Following the re-discovery of his grave, his remains were exhumed for scientific study in 2013.[36]

Fugue – a flight or pursuit

Beckford did hear the music of Haydn played in Lisbon however, by Gregorio Franchi, who was to be his long term lover, friend, assistant and musician. Arriving in Portugal in 1787, Beckford's personal journal of Portugal and Spain records many musical interludes. He made friends with the best castrati and composers in the church and opera. "[Went to church] and heard Lima's mass. All my musical acquaintance were employed – Rumi, Palomino, Ferracuti, Totti etc. Totti sang delightfully."[37]

Ansano Perracuti, "the first singer in the Queen's service" sang in the Royal Chapel and the opera. Totti was a contralto castrato and Palomino a court composer. Beckford engaged Jeronimo Francisco de Lima, the Queen's composer, to provide music in his house. "I was inspired with musical ideas, called for Lima and sung the 'Serene tornate pupille vezzose' of Sacchini in its native key, with so clear a voice that [she] suspects me to border at least upon a soprano and blesses God for the deep tones of her spouse..."[38] Beckford heard the two great tenors in Lisbon at that time, Joaquim de Olivera and Polycarpo da Silva, and was also regaled with stories of the time before the terrible Lisbon earthquake of 1755, when, for performances for the king, "60 horse and 200 soldiers used to appear at once on the stage … of Caffarelli's [the capricious rival castrato to Farinelli] triumphs."

Beckford devoted himself to attending mass, being greatly moved

by the music, particularly of Jommelli. For all his show he was more enchanted by the spectacle and the music than the religion. "When all holy acts were finished … I had some difficulty to stifle a laugh when I looked back … and saw so many boobies in hoods and cowls …"[39] Later in life he exclaimed about the Catholic church, "… [it] is the opera".[40] He also attended the theatre where only men could perform. In Voltaire's *Mérope* he heard:

> Two young fellows, one dressed as a girl and very becomingly, sung an enchanting [Brazilian] 'modinha' … the most voluptuous and bewitching music that ever existed … with an excess of rapture, and the soul panting to fly out of you and incorporate itself with the beloved object … I confess I am a slave to the 'modinhas'.[41]

Architecture and landscapes also enchanted Beckford. A visit to the Cork Convent: "… reminded me of the scenery of Mount Edgcumbe". Perhaps recalling happier times when in melancholy mood and more brightly when "I began imitating Pacchierotti" in Spain the following year. He continued his musical adventures in Spain, writing from Madrid: "I am quite wild with hearing Sequidillas & Fandangos." He visited the Turkish Ambassador in Farinelli's old apartments and intrigued with the Princess de Listenais, who "runs in my head" – rather like a song.

Canzone – a song

At long last he was able to return home, where he continued his writing and collecting and subsumed his passions into the physicality of building and planting at Fonthill. He continued going to the opera in London whenever he could, particularly to Cimarosa's *Matrimonia Segreta* and Mozart's *Don Giovanni* and *Marriage of Figaro*, taking the score with him.[42] He also visited the opera in Paris, where "they make a noise like a door on rusty hinges". He loved Sacchini's *Oedipe a Colone* however.[43]

The French had never gone in for Italian opera or the castrati. However, Napoleon was a great lover of both. Pacchierotti performed for him and he appointed Girolamo Crescentini, who Beckford had heard in Padua in 1782, as a performer and singing teacher to the imperial family from 1806 to 1812.[44] Beckford was in Paris during this period and may have heard him, once again, on the stage. In 1819 Beckford wrote: "[I'm told] in singing she [his daughter Susan] is supreme... the lessons she received from Crescentini … I'm most impatient to hear her."[45] Crescentini had returned to Bologna in 1813, to a position at the recently-founded Liceo Filarmonico. Susan, as Duchess of Hamilton, was made an honorary member of the music school in 1821. Crescentini's cantatas, both the manuscript and later published edition, are dedicated to her, Figure 8.[46]

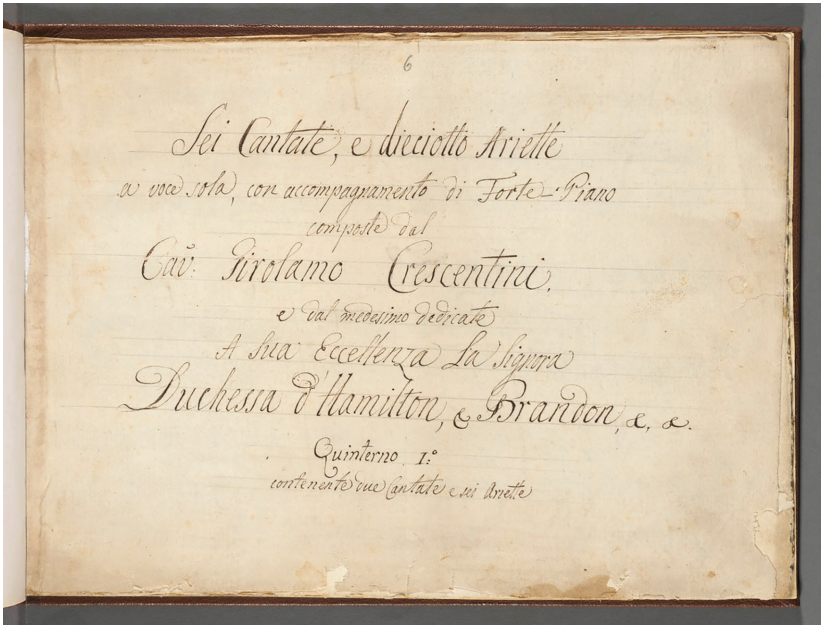

Fig. 8. Girolamo Crescentini, *Sei Cantate* manuscript, dedication to the Duchess of Hamilton & Brandon, 1820.
© Loeb Music Library, Harvard University.

Despite Napoleon's patronage, it was the French revolutionary and Napoleonic wars – destroying most of the musical conservatories – which caused the practice of castration for singing to die out. Musical taste was also changing. More emphasis was being given to comedy and drama than virtuoso and improvised singing, and tenor, baritone and bass male voices became fashionable. Women continued to sing as themselves and as men in 'trouser roles'.

However, in 1825 the last great opera castrato Velluti, arrived in England. Beckford, now in Bath, commented: "Of all the singers we have never had the like of [great opera star Madame] Pasta – to hear her and Velutti, with his peacockish voice, is the perfection of sounds."[47] Giovanni Battista Velluti, was born in 1781 and made his opera debut in 1800. He sang for both Napoleon in 1810 and Rossini in 1814. Lord Mount Edgcumbe gave an account of his London debut:

> No singer of this description had appeared here for a quarter of a century, so that the greater part of those who formerly were delighted with Pacchierotti, Marchesi, &c. Were now no more, and a generation had sprung up who had never heard a voice of the sort, and were strongly prejudiced against it … The first note he uttered gave a shock of surprize, almost of disgust, to inexperienced ears, but his performance was listened to with attention and great applause throughout, with but few audible expressions of disapprobation speedily suppressed."[48]

Velutti was the last castrato to appear on the opera stage although castration still continued in parts of Italy until it was outlawed late in the nineteenth century. The last surviving castrato was Alessandro Moreschi: born in 1858, he sang for thirty years in the Sistine Chapel and made several recordings in 1902 and 1904.[49]

Vox Humana – the human voice

Beckford was a true lover of music, particularly the human voice, and his reaction to it was genuine and profound. Always a romantic at heart, he anticipated the Romantic Movement, where intense emotion was celebrated as an authentic response to the sublime and the beautiful. He realised early on: "Music is ever my principal delight and comfort, and I am cruelly abused for loving it so well."[50]

Throughout his life he enjoyed a range of performing arts, including theatre, instrumental and sung music, dance, melodrama and pantomime. But it was the Italian *opera seria* and the castrati who sang in it, that were his particular loves. The opera spoke to him on many levels: the beautiful music, virtuosic artistry, the emotions engendered and the gender and sexual fluidity – creating the world as he wanted it to be; where he felt personally comfortable and complete. "How tired I am of keeping a mask on my countenance. How tight it sticks – it makes me sore."[51]

Beckford used nature and landscape to explore and express his deepest feelings, but with music he was able to feel and experience them. Unlike any other stimulus, music floods most of the brain, lighting up memory and emotion and firing the pleasure centres.[52] Music inspired his imagination and gave an outlet to emotions he could not necessarily make public. Without understanding this, and listening to this music, we cannot completely know the man.[53]

1 Louis Melville, *The Life and Letters of William Beckford of Fonthill*, London: William Heinemann, 1910, 123.

2 Richard Edgcumbe, 2nd Earl Mount Edgcumbe, *Musical reminiscences of an old amateur chiefly respecting the Italian opera in England for fifty years, from 1773 to 1823*, 2nd ed., London: W. Clarke, 1827. All quotes from Section II 1778–1783, 23; Section III 1783–1785, 38, unless separately referenced. Original spellings and punctuation used throughout

3 The title and sub-headings from Charles Burney, *The Present State of Music in France and Italy: Or, the Journal of a Tour through those Countries, Undertaken to Collect Materials, for a General History of* Music, 2nd ed. corrected, London, 1773, 'Explication of the musical terms in foreign words', v., ff.

4 Eric Darton, 'William Beckford and Music. 2. His teachers?' *The Beckford Tower Trust Newsletter*, 1984, 4-5. Darton lays out the corroborative evidence for possibly a young Mozart, who lived near the Beckford's London home and William Benson Earl, organist at Salisbury Cathedral. More probably, John Nares, Master of the children of the Chapel Royal and a young Sir William Parsons, later Master of the King's Band.

5 Brian Fothergill, *Beckford of Fonthill*, London: Faber and Faber, 1979, 40.

6 Melville, op. cit., 32.

7 Ibid., 77-8.

8 Angus Heriot, *The Castrati in Opera*, London: Secker & Warburg, 1956. Reprinted in *History of Opera* series, London: Calder and Boyars, 1975, 170.

9 Melville, op. cit., 91-92. Timotheus was Alexander the Great's court composer, famed for shaping the emotions of his master through music, as told in Dryden's *Alexander's Feast: or the Power of Musick* written to celebrate Saint Cecilia's Day 1697. An adapted libretto was famously set by Handel. *See* Pierre Degott, 'Beckford's Tales; or the Power of Musick,' *The Beckford Journal*, vol. 20, 2014, 62-84.

10 Charles Burney, *A general history of music from the earliest ages to the present period*, London, 1789, vol. 4, 512.

11 William Beckford, *Dreams, Waking Thoughts and Incidents*, ed. Robert G. Gemmett, Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1971, 162-5.

12 Burney, op. cit., 43.

13 Ibid., 510

14 Alexander Pope, *Imitations of Horace, Book II, Ep I,* 151-4.

15 Stephen Lloyd, *Richard & Maria Cosway: Regency Artists of Taste and Fashion,* exh. cat., Edinburgh: Scottish National Portrait Gallery, 1995, 48.

16 Jon Kukla, *Mr. Jefferson's Women,* Knopf Doubleday, 2009. The article appeared in the *Morning Post*, 2 July 1788.

17 Lloyd, op. cit., 108.

18 Heriot, op. cit., 26, 54-5.

19 Timothy Mowl, *William Beckford, Composing for Mozart*, London: John Murray, 1998, 98.

20 Melville, op. cit., 103-4. Top opera stars were paid enormous sums of money to perform.

21 J.W. Oliver, *The Life of William Beckford*, London: Oxford University Press, 1932, 53.

22 Boyd Alexander, ed., *Life at Fonthill, 1807–1822*, Stroud: Nonsuch Publishing, 2006, 63, 75.

23 Fothergill, op. cit., 108-9.

24 William Hague, *William Pitt the Younger*, London: Harper Collins, 2004, 75.

25 Heriot, op. cit., 185,175. When Haydn stayed at Rauzzini's house, he saw a memorial to the singer's dog and composed the canon: 'Turk was a faithful dog and not a man'.

26 Melville, op. cit., 123.

27 Bodleian Library, Ms Beckford c 62/1, 3: 'Miscellaneous short compositions by Beckford, and sketches mainly in his hand, 1781-1803': fol. 5v rev., 'Notturno', duet, beg. 'Ah che da me lontana'; fol. 6 rev., sketch for the 'notturno' 23. Michael Maxwell Steer has edited Beckford's scores and written comprehensively on his compositions. http://msteer.co.uk/music/beckford/bindex.html [accessed 30.5.2020]. His performances of Beckford's works and the collected Portuguese music are available on: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL4sR1SXh8dH97mU7WRL5w-JXd0ZPDuzFZ

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL4sR1SXh8dH_ETCZmawEpyb_64upxsOKB
https://youtu.be/wGv5DuUkVNM
https://vimeo.com/70468689
[All accessed 30.5.2020].

28 Fothergill, op. cit., 116.

29 George Selwyn, a friend of Horace Walpole, loved the macabre. In her biography of the Lennox sisters, *The Aristocrats*, 1995. Stella Tillyard recounts Henry Fox's death bed quip. "If Mr Selwyn calls again, show him up. If I am alive I shall be glad to see him, and if I am dead, I am sure he will be delighted to see me."

30 Fothergill op. cit., 125

31 Melville op. cit., 154.

32 Beckford, *Dreams*, op. cit., 254.

33 Count Algarotti was the lover of both Lord Hervey – successful literary sparrer with Pope – and Frederick the Great, living many years at Sanssouci, as Voltaire had done. He accompanied the King to his coronation "like a royal mistress". *See* Tim Blanning, *Frederick the Great: King of Prussia,* 2015. Lord Hervey was also the lover of Stephen Fox, later 1st Earl of Ilchester. In his Portuguese journal Beckford records a dream of being at Redlynch, the Earl's family home, as a child, *see* n. 36, 181. Lord Hervey's nephew (through an illegitimate but acknowledged line) was Beckford's half sister Elizabeth's husband.

34 Charles Burney, *An Account of the Musical Performances in Westminster Abbey and the Pantheon May 26th 27th 29th on June 3rd and 5th 1784. In commemoration of Handel.* London: T Payne & Son; G Robinson, 1785. The celebrations were a year too early as they had forgotten about the change in the calendar in 1750.

35 Hague, op. cit., 466. This was the opinion of George III on hearing of his death.

36 Zanatta, A.et al. *Occupational markers and pathology of the castrato singer Gaspare Pacchierotti (1740–1821).* Sci. Rep.6, 28463; doi: 10.1038/srep28463 (2016), and *see* Figure 7. https://www.nature.com/articles/srep28463 [accessed 29.5.2020].

37 Boyd Alexander, ed., *The Journal of William Beckford in Portugal & Spain 1787–1788*, Stroud: Nonsuch Publishing, 2006, 103.

38 Ibid., 133. The aria is from Sacchini's opera *Erea e Lavinia*, premiered in London with Pacchierotti in 1779. Favourite songs from the opera were published alongside the libretto and other compilations.

39 Ibid., 67.

40 John Millington, ed., *Conversations with Beckford, Memoirs of William Beckford from the New Monthly Magazine 1844*. Warminster: The Beckford Society, 2014. no. v, 419.

41 Alexander, *Journal,* op. cit., 152.

42 Darton, op. cit.

43 Ibid.

44 Heriot, op. cit., 117, ff.

45 Alexander, *Life*, op. cit., 252.

46 Loeb Music Library, Harvard University.
https://blogs.harvard.edu/loebmusic/2013/07/10/newly-digitized-girolamo-crescentini-sei-cantate-e-diciotto-ariette/ [accessed 13.6.2020].

47 Millington, op. cit., no. iv, 220

48 Lord Mount Edgcumbe, op. cit., 159.

49 Nicholas Clapton, *Moreschi, the last castrato*, London: Haus Publishing, 2004. Some of Moreschi's recordings are available online, but modern historically-informed performances give a better indication of the castrati sound.

50 Melville, op. cit., 105.

51 Alexander, *Journal* op. cit., 38.

52 Alan Harvey, *Your brain on music*, Tedx Perth, You Tube, June 2018. For further work by this neuroscientist and musician, *see*: Alan Harvey: *Music, Evolution and the Harmony of Souls*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.

53 Written under Covid 19 lockdown, May/June 2020. There is much more I would like to explore, once things reopen safely, including the cuttings in the Beckford Archives at the Bodleian (opera and theatre are identified as principle subjects) and music at Powderham Castle.

Beckford's Queer Life and His Biographers

MALCOLM JACK

Every biographer of Beckford has to tackle the episode which became known as the 'Powderham Scandal' since, as one critic has put it, Beckford was a 'man who paid for his unconventional sexuality with a lifetime of ostracism.'[1] Most biographers have identified it as a turning point in their subject's life and they have implied, though not always stated, that it was the beginning of a decline in his fortunes both as an artist and as an *homme des affaires*. Nevertheless, the treatment of Beckford's homosexuality has often been opaque; something entered upon gingerly by his biographers in long epochs when such subjects were avoided, as E. M. Forster parodied in *Maurice,* even in discussions of ancient Greek culture in university tutorials. The gradual decline of Anglo-Saxon inhibitions in discussing sexuality has now come to fruition in trans-Atlantic literary criticism. At last it is possible to consider the Powderham incident in the context of a wider, and more subtle, understanding of Beckford as a man and artist. But let us first look at the history of the treatment of Beckford's homosexuality in the biographies.

Cyrus Redding, whose *Memoirs* are racy and unreliable, moves rapidly over the subject of what he calls Beckford's 'somewhat dissipated life.'[2] Redding who, of course, had known Beckford and published his recollections a generation after his friend's death, was in the business of revisionism. He was intent on countering the 'dark' reputation that Beckford had acquired in his own lifetime, a reputation which had attracted both Byron and Disraeli in their search for heterodox literary heroes. Redding, a sympathetic

biographer, was concerned with trying to convince his reader that Beckford's history, though 'striking and singular'[3] was one of achievement, particularly as a man of impressive knowledge and as a connoisseur. Although Redding is prepared to admit the wild side of Beckford's nature and to highlight his taste for all things Oriental,[4] he passes over the Powderham incident and Beckford's relationship with William Courtenay rather lightly.[5] It is not only Beckford who is not allowed to ruminate, but also Cyrus Redding's reader.

Beckford had to wait another seventy years for the next English biographer, J. W. Oliver, to return to the subject of his 'dissipation' for, with an extraordinarily defensive flourish, Lewis Melville, writing in the early twentieth century, had dismissed such 'rumours' out of hand.[6] Oliver, for his part is clearly disturbed by Beckford's thirst for the exotic and fantastic and 'his propensity to build castles in the air.'[7] He approaches his subject with a kind of schoolmasterly concern at how to manage a difficult, if brilliant, pupil who may become his own worst enemy. The language he uses to describe Beckford's first encounter with William Courtenay in 1779 warns us of what is coming, for their friendship is described as a 'strange, romantic affection,'[8] linked to, or resulting from, a 'morbid melancholia.'[9] Even worse (Oliver is writing in the last period of British Imperial pretensions) is the influence of 'abroad' as it is in Italy that Beckford was infected with 'Venetian rottenness'[10] and was over-influenced by the 'destructive effect of music.'[11] Oliver's judgement is harsh but an additional comment shows how his biographical judgement was clouded by his homophobia since, concluding that it is impossible to be sure of what happened at Powderham, he tellingly adds 'the details are unpleasant, complicated, and add little to what we know of Beckford's character.'[12]

Guy Chapman's biography came a generation after Oliver's, in the tense atmosphere of 1930s Britain. Although sympathetic to the fact that Beckford was framed by the Loughboroughs (Chapman is particularly struck by Charlotte's fury at being rejected as a lover by Beckford) he is still largely judgmental, echoing Oliver's very

word of the moral 'rottenness' at the core of things. After examining the 'welter of contradiction and concealment' in the account of Powderham,[13] Chapman comes to an even more extraordinary conclusion, which is to deny any homosexual aspect to Beckford's character.[14] He explains away all Beckford's male attachments (to Courtenay, to 'C' in Venice, to Pedro de Marialva and Franchi in Lisbon) as merely 'sentimental encounters' which in the next sentence turn into 'sentimental sodomy.'[15] According to Chapman, Beckford's life after the age of twenty was in fact 'sexless' and in that sense only, 'abnormal.'[16]

Chapman's bizarre conclusion was superseded by Boyd Alexander's work, which appeared in the 1960s. Boyd Alexander was more subtle in his approach to the 'baffling and contradictory' character of Beckford.[17] He understood the romantic leanings of the Rousseau-like wanderer, hinting at impotence (without revealing on what basis he makes the claim) and believed that Beckford's infatuation with Courtenay was sentimental rather than sexual. Boyd Alexander was convinced that Beckford's inhibitions would prevent him from engaging in homosexual behaviour. He relies on the dream-like quality of Beckford's letters to Franchi to conclude he was first and foremost a fantasist, an aesthete, so wrapped up in the idea of beauty that he was incapable of acting sexually.

When Brian Fothergill returned to the charge of misconduct in 1979, he too believed that Beckford had been lured into a trap at Powderham. Fothergill, like Chapman, is certain that Charlotte, Loughborough's wife, disappointed that her advances toward Beckford were ignored, joined her husband to hunt him down. That anything as seriously criminal as sodomy occurred seems to Fothergill to be highly improbable; it would have led to charges being laid at once. Nor, if Beckford had been guilty, could his family's behaviour be explained – he returned to Fonthill calmly and there was no immediate reaction from them. For Fothergill the explanation is again that the attachment was merely a sentimental one: Beckford had fallen in love with the image of an androgynous

boy/girl figure represented by Courtenay, but once married and emotionally secure, his interest in what he then saw as an effete and cloying young man, declined.[18] However, the damage was done: Loughborough's campaign of vilification in the press was so violent an onslaught that Beckford was mortally damaged by it.

Fothergill's somewhat understated portrait of Beckford as a bisexual became standard orthodoxy. In my own work on Beckford's time in Portugal I wanted to show that in the tolerant atmosphere of the Marialva household, he could at last come to terms with his own sexuality, if not with his estrangement from English society. Beckford's homosexual cavorting in Lisbon was conducted under the gaze of the Marialvas and others: they did not appear to censure him for his heterodox behaviour and this must have encouraged him in deciding to bring Franchi with him when he returned to Fonthill.[19]

Despite making Beckford's wayward proclivities central, Timothy Mowl in his sensational biography has not added significantly to the debate about his sexuality or how we should understand it. Indeed Mowl announces the subject of Beckford's bisexuality as if he has been the first to discover it and tries to attach the slur of paedophilia to him.[20] It has been left to others, notably Rictor Norton, George Haggerty and Andrew Elfenbein to provide a wider reading of eighteenth-century sexual behaviour in which to understand Beckford's homosexuality. This has been achieved to some extent, by departing from the narrowly biographical approach in favour of looking at Beckford's homosexuality in a wider context.

Rictor Norton's is the most salacious and amusing approach, consisting of a light-hearted treatment of Beckford as an ageing 'queen.' Although he agrees that the Powderham affair may have been invented, he has no doubt about the relationship between Courtenay and Beckford. Norton also takes account of Beckford's scrapbooks, records of homosexual scandals of his time, which he kept at Fonthill. His concern to keep a record of the homosexual

under-world of London and its 'molly houses' is a clear indication of his proclivities. [21]

This focus on Beckford's homosexuality has been put into even more convincing context in George Haggerty's book about eighteenth-century concepts of masculinity and sexuality.[22] One of Haggerty's main assertions is that applying the modern, binary distinction of heterosexual/homosexual to the period and to figures like Thomas Gray, Horace Walpole or Beckford, is an unhelpful anachronism. During the eighteenth century, gender and sexuality were fluid concepts: the idea of masculinity in particular, was much in flux. Haggerty traces, mainly in the English context, a love if not unnatural, then unconventional in the lives of the Man of Feeling, a creature endowed, perhaps over-endowed with a quality of heightened sensibility. His approach to Beckford's sexuality is radical: 'Beckford threatened to expose the very foundations of culture. His pederasty sings out in a voice that had never been heard before.'[23] First and foremost Haggerty divorces Beckford's sexuality from the sole notion of sodomy: rather his relationship with William Courtenay was a strong emotional one, near to modern homosexual romance which necessarily has physical expression. He might have taken his analysis further had he considered Beckford's relationship with Franchi, but he does not do so.

My last example of a more sophisticated approach is Andrew Elfenbein's essay in his *Prehistory of a Homosexual Role*. Elfenbein does not concern himself with the details of Powderham (he takes the fact of some explicit sexual act as read),[24] but instead portrays Beckford as a gay collector, *avant la lettre*, one who like Wilde's Dorian Gray, is entranced by beautiful things, whether vases or boys. He considers Beckford as consuming rather than as creative in his collecting (Elfenbein underestimates some of Beckford's own role in designing objects he commissioned) but even further, in *Vathek,* he exposes the pervasive homoeroticism in personal and commercial dealings 'that society would rather not acknowledge.'[25] Elfenbein deems him an iconoclast who cheerfully deals with incest,

necrophilia and paedophilia in his Arabian tales. We have indeed come a long way from the early, shadowy and fumbling treatment of Beckford's queer life.

1 A. Elfenbein, *Romantic Genius, The Prehistory of a Homosexual Role*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1999, 39

2 Cyrus Redding, *Memoirs of William Beckford,* 2 vols., London, 1859, 1:i/ii

3 Ibid., 2:54

4 For an account of Beckford's Orientalism, *see* L. Chatel, *William Beckford the elusive Orientalist*, Oxford: Oxford University Studies in the Enlightenment, Voltaire Foundation, 1996.

5 For a sketch of William Courtenay, *see* Charlie Courtenay, "When Beckford came to stay: the emotional, aesthetic and literary impact of a weekend at Powderham" *The Beckford Journal*, vol. 25, 2019, 5-35.

6 L. Melville, *The Life and Letters of William Beckford of Fonthill*, London: Heineman, 1910, 111

7 J. W. Oliver, *The Life of William Beckford*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1932, 30

8 Ibid., 33

9 Ibid., 35

10 Ibid., 43

11 Ibid., 45

12 Ibid., 94

13 Guy Chapman, *Beckford*, London: Jonathan Cape, 1937, 153

14 Ibid., 14

15 Ibid., 188

16 Idem.

17 Boyd Alexander, *England's Wealthiest Son*, London: Centaur Press, 1962, 1

18 Brian Fothergill, *Beckford of Fonthill*, London: Faber, 1979, 166

19 *See* Malcolm Jack, *An English Fidalgo*, New York: AMS Press, 1996.

20 *See* Timothy Mowl, *William Beckford*, London: John Murray, 2000.

21 Rictor Norton, "William Beckford, The fool of Fonthill" *Gay History and Literature*, 1999

22 George Haggerty, *Men in Love*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1999

23 Ibid., 140

24 Elfenbein, op.cit., 40

25 Ibid., 53. Kenneth Graham has uncovered the change in gender (from masculine to feminine) in 'Alasi', the first story of the *Episodes*. *See* Kenneth Graham, *Vathek with the Episodes of Vathek,* Ontario: Broadview, 2001 and William Beckford, *Vathek and the Episodes of Vathek*, Brighton: Edward Everett Root Publishers, 2019.

Dale Townshend, *Gothic Antiquity: History, Romance, and the Architectural Imagination, 1760–1840*

Oxford University Press, 2019, pp. xxvi, 405. ISBN 978-0-19-884566-9

A Review by STEPHEN CLARKE

> 'She goes with look enthusiastic
> To yonder edifice fantastic,
> Where fancy speaking from its trances
> Gives inspiration of romances.
> Here vot'ries crowd of all conditions
> To view the fleeting exhibitions;
> And, well as crazy brain permits
> Sketch down each vision as it flits:
> While deeper mysteries are brewing
> They see at first a gothic ruin.
> (This seems to be the rule of late.
> From which none dare to deviate) …'

So run the verses of *The Age: A Poem* (1810), satirising the author of Gothic fiction seeking her inspiration in a moonlit Gothic ruin, and mocking the formulaic nature of the genre. They are quoted in Dale Townshend's wide-ranging book, which seeks to provide a "sustained and closely historicized account of Gothic writing in relation to the broader Gothic Revival in architecture with which it was contemporary." The book is inter-disciplinary, embracing antiquarianism, the Gothic Revival in architecture, and Gothic fiction, taking the period from Horace Walpole's *The Castle of*

Otranto (1765) to A.W. Pugin's vision for re-building the Houses of Parliament some seventy years later. It does this by examining the "architectural imagination" as exercised in British culture during that period, the literary fascination with Gothic ruins and remains, and the way that the imaginative possibilities of Gothic architecture were exploited and interrogated by historians, architects, philosophers and writers.

Townshend notes how as early as 1711 Joseph Addison's *Spectator* Essay no. 110 described the fears induced by walking at night in the ruins of a Gothic abbey, with the croaking of ravens above and the mouldering graves below. Earlier than that, he mentions how antiquarians from William Camden to John Aubrey were lamenting the architectural destruction wrought by the dissolution of the monasteries, long before the revived interest in Gothic architecture. He picks his way through the literary antiquarian interest in mediaeval Britain displayed in works such as Richard Hurd's *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* (1762) and Thomas Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765), and draws a distinction between what he calls the "white Gothic" of the innocent re-imagining of chivalry, heroism, Magna Carta and the origins of British political liberties, against the Gothic of ignorance, superstition, and tyranny that was the stock-in-trade of Gothic novels that came to flood the market in the fifty years after *The Castle of Otranto*. White Gothic in this sense is pure nostalgia, as illustrated towards the end of Beckford's life by the Eglinton Tournament of 1839, when early Victorian gentlemen dressed up in armour with heraldic banners for three days of jousting and display before a huge crowd of onlookers – though Beckford's keen sense of the ridiculous would have relished the quagmire into which the Tournament descended when the Heavens opened and the site was flooded. But the Gothic with which Townshend is primarily concerned employs the dark forces of confinement, suspense, and patriarchal abuse, often played out in an architectural setting that enforces these themes, and his concern is to trace how this interplay

relates to and evolves from the way that Gothic buildings were perceived and understood.

Walpole is a pivotal figure here, both for the extensive influence of *Otranto* and his play *The Mysterious Mother* (1768), and for his equally influential creation of Strawberry Hill, "the castle (I am building) of my ancestors", which Townshend analyses illuminatingly and at length. It has to be said to a Beckfordian audience that Beckford does not receive such detailed attention. There is no room-by-room account of Fonthill Abbey and its impact on the beholder, or of Beckford's design aesthetic in its interiors. Rather, Townshend considers Beckford's complex and conflicted, not to say over-heated, architectural imagination in the associative reveries of his youth, and how these reveries were re-written and sanitised by him in the 1830s.

Townshend quotes the manuscript *Fragments of an English Tour* (1779), where Beckford is "seized" and "lost" in the darkened York Minster, "absorbed" and "transported … to those Regions inhabited by the Saints whose Images appeared glowing between every Arch and terminating every Aile". In Canterbury Cathedral, *en route* to his Grand Tour, Beckford fantasizes about ghosts and spectres and sepulchral voices admonishing him to worship the relics of Catholicism. In *Dreams, Waking Thoughts, and Incidents*, his responses to those monuments he visited are equally imaginative, reflecting on the "secret recesses of punishment" and "damp and gloomy caverns" beneath the Doge's Palace in Venice and the Pagan Gods restored to their niches at the Pantheon – and then recounting how he sat on a shattered frieze after seeing the Colosseum, lost in thoughts of triumphs and warriors and consuls.

It is well known that in *Italy; With Sketches of Spain and Portugal* (1834) and *Recollections of an Excursion to the Monasteries of Alcobaça and Batalha* (1835) these imaginative extravagancies are stripped away. Townshend suggests that "the singularity of Beckford's architectural imagination … lies in his remarkable ability to cast up, imagine, and fashion architectural forms that, as

the early writings continuously assert, have no concrete existence in the physical, workaday world of reality at all". Fonthill Abbey as it evolved seems in its sublimity and its scale to have had only a tenuous connection to reality, and perhaps harks back to pieces such as "The Transport of Pleasure", Beckford's fantasy of 1777–78 as mentioned by Townshend that envisioned a hill-top Gothic tower beside an orientalised house. Compared to Fonthill Abbey, the far more modest proportions of the rooms at Lansdown Crescent and even the rooms at Lansdown Tower are neither unduly large, nor remotely Gothic. Townshend also points out how at Fonthill Beckford "exploited the Catholic associations of the Gothic to their limits" – the abuses of Catholicism, with its aura of gloom and ignorance and monkish abuse, being a recurrent theme in much Gothic fiction. As early as November 1798 Joseph Farington in his diary suggested that the Abbey was to be endowed, "& Cathedral Service to be performed in the most splendid manner that the Protestant religion will admit". As built, from the statue of St. Anthony above the doorway to the Great Western Hall, along the carefully managed progression from King Edward III's Gallery, through the Sanctuary to the shaded mystery of the Oratory with Rossi's statue of the Saint, Beckford manipulated scale and light to maximise the religious aura. As Townshend astutely points out, when in 1822 Beckford announced of the sale of Fonthill Abbey that "I am rid of the Holy Sepulchre, which no longer interested me since its profanation", he was to some extent using the word "profanation" in its strictly theological sense, reflecting not just on the vulgarity of the public attending the auction view, but the delicate aesthetic and sanctified interior whose spell was broken by their presence.

Townshend's principal concern is how the use of architectural imagination evolves in the Gothic fiction of the period, from *Otranto*, which has very limited architectural description; to Ann Radcliffe, who provided Gothic buildings with a new, highly coloured set of literary associations; to M. G. Lewis and the explicit sexual depravities of *The Monk*; and ultimately to the wonderful

incongruity of the topographically-founded novels of Jane Harvey, who provided her readers with essentially antiquarian footnotes on the history of the buildings in which her novels are set. Beckford owned at various times a good number of Gothic novels and romances, and raided them mercilessly when compiling *Modern Novel Writing* (1796) and *Azemia* (1797). In a masterly exposition in the Beckford Society Annual Lecture for 2010, Peter Sabor showed how these curious works not merely included numerous quotations from some of the more over-blown novels of the 1790s, but were actually constructed of a chain of such quotations, mostly given the gentlest twist to send them tumbling over into absurdity.

Sabor listed some of the novels listed in sale catalogues of Beckford's library, from the Leigh, Sotheby & Son auction of 1808, including such titles as *Montford Castle; or the Knight of the White Rose* and *Phantoms of the Cloister; or, The Mysterious Manuscript* (both 1795), to the Fonthill Abbey sale of 1823, which included a third edition of Ann Radcliffe's first novel, *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* (1799), and a 1796 edition of John Palmer's *The Haunted Cavern*. One title then sold that he does not mention is Charlotte Smith's *Ethelinde, or The Recluse of the Lake* (1789): a quick Google search for this book reveals the following summary from *goodreads* and *bookdepository*, which might serve as a default plot for almost any Gothic novel. It is described as:

> the story of the trials and tribulations of the lovely orphan Ethelinde, beloved both by the brave but impecunious Montgomery and by her guardian, the unhappily married Sir Edward Newenden, and pursued by the villainous schemes of the rake Davenant.

When Beckford's library was eventually sold as part of the Hamilton Palace sales of 1882–83, it included editions of Radcliffe's *Romance of the Forest* (1795), *The Italian* (1797), *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1799), and her *Journey through Holland* (1795), and Charlotte Smith's *The Old Manor House* (1793), *Wanderings of Warwick*

(1794) and *Montalbert* (1795) – all seven titles bound by Kalthœber. There were also M.G. Lewis's *The Monk* (1796) and *Tales of Wonder* (1801). Beckford was accordingly well placed to parody contemporary fiction, but as Sabor mentions, in its second edition (1798) *Azemia* opens with a strongly pathetic tale, "Edward and Ellen", and both first and second editions include a powerful Gothic fantasy of Beckford's own imagining, "Another Blue-Beard!", complete with an innocent young wife as victim, a demented and murderous husband and captor, a sadistic female upper servant, and a ghost carrying the corpse of her dead baby. They stand in stark contrast to the mockeries of the parodies by which they are surrounded.

Gothic Antiquity is essentially a literary study, but enriched by a clear understanding of the antiquarian engagement with the mediaeval past and its relics, and of the development of philosophical ideas of associationist aesthetics that together underpinned the rediscovery of the Gothic. It provides a detailed and useful summary of a substantial number of Gothic novels, their plots and their authors, and shows how the genre evolved from Walpole to Radcliffe and Charlotte Smith and Sophia Lee, on to 'Monk' Lewis and Charles Maturin and beyond.

Above all, it charts a sea-change in popular taste from the Augustan and classical certainties of the early eighteenth century, to an early nineteenth-century world where the head of a landed family might well re-build his seat in a Gothic style to demonstrate his family's antiquity (a successful City merchant might do the same to demonstrate his family's aspirations). The daughter of the house might well be entranced with the latest offering of the Minerva Press or some other Gothic romance, rather than reading Addison or Steele. When, in 1834, the Palace of Westminster burnt down, the father of the house would not have been offended at the proposal to build the new Houses of Parliament as a Gothic monument to the British constitution; and (if the family were sufficiently well-connected) when five years later the Earl of Eglinton invited

participants for his mediaeval tournament, the son of the house might well have donned some slightly ill-fitting armour and ridden off caparisoned with emblazoned trappings to try his skills at jousting. It was a complete revolution, which Townshend helps to illuminate.

A Succession of Unpremeditated Stages?

ERIC RATCLIFF

In his brief biography of William Beckford, James Lees-Milne, on the authority of the architect's son, imagines his hero inciting young Henry Goodridge to build his tower at Lansdown higher and higher, so that what appears to have begun as a plain Italian campanile topped with an arcaded belvidere above a bold cornice, came to be surmounted by a peculiar octangular crest on top of which stands what has long been recognised as a descendant of two Athenian monuments, the octangular Tower of the Winds and the Choragic Monument of Lysicrates.[1, 2]

The changes in apparent style that can be discerned as the eye ascends the tower, FIGURE 1, appear to bear out Lees-Milne's assertion that 'the tower rose to its 154 feet by a succession of unpremeditated stages' and 'the wonder is that the finished structure became the well-proportioned entity it is'.[3] Nothing so elaborate can possibly be unpremeditated, but there is plentiful evidence of changes of mind; the elaboration of the top of the tower distinguishes it from the many conventionally Italianate secular towers built in Britain and its sometime colonies in the surrounding decades, including that on Goodridge's own house.[4] In the absence of clear graphic or documentary evidence for the motivation of each addition, it is of interest to try to enter the minds of both architect and patron as they raised motif after motif against a Somerset sky. Contemporaneous accounts might gainsay some of the results of educated speculation based on examination of the existing building, but I believe the attempt to be worth making.

Fig. 1. The top of Beckford's Tower. © Eric Ratcliff.

William Beckford, at the age of eighty-three, both in his remarks and the sketch he made at the time, specifically dismissed Cyrus Redding's assumption that the Lansdown Tower was intended to represent that of Vathek. He explained his need for an elevated belvidere at Fonthill Abbey and then at Lansdown, claiming exceptional eyesight and being 'partial to glancing over a wide horizon'.[5] Beckford's sketch showed a tower topped with a round-arched octangular structure, presumably a gigantic belvidere, but at Lansdown, that amenity is several stages below the top, and although the culminating lantern is accessible, it was in the lower space that Beckford could comfortably sit and read, and contemplate the distant views.

The Caliph's tower was of 'phantastic' height; 'fifteen hundred stairs', and even John Rutter's misremembered eleven hundred, were unlikely until a century later, let alone the fifteen thousand reportedly given in Samuel Henley's first French editions of *Vathek*.[6] However, the 'phantasist' of 1786 proved to be a visionary in 1889: Eiffel's tower, we are told, has 1,665 steps.[7] Jon Millington has counted them, so we can know that the belvidere in Beckford's Lansdown Tower is attained by a mere 152 steps, with a further 53 to the top of the lantern.[8]

The discussion that follows will prove once again that a picture is worth a thousand words, but the purpose is to seek influences and precedents for the fascinating range of disparate features that make up the familiar whole.

The Roman Italianate 'Belvidere'

Following the features of the tower as they were built, we must proceed upwards, beginning with the plain ashlar shaft, square in plan on the outside with a cylindrical stairwell within, very like a lighthouse. The shafts and capitals of the balusters of the spiral staircase are cast as attenuated miniatures of the columns of the lantern atop the tower. On the outside, the harbinger of features

to come is the two slight projections, (*fasciae*), and an unemphatic moulding: the architrave of a Tuscan order, above them a featureless frieze, and then a massive cornice with greatly exaggerated and simplified mutules, alluding to both the Grecian and the Roman Doric, but lacking *guttae* underneath.

An Italian tower would be likely to have the cornice above the belvidere, but here the latter stands upon it, and the designer's problem would have been to cap that with something even more emphatic. If Goodridge's original intention was to build a semblance of an Italian campanile, the completion above this would have been a low-pitched pyramidal roof with widely overhanging eaves, as J. B. Papworth had recommended in his publications and Thomas Hope had achieved by 1818 at The Deepdene.[9] It is possible that the colossal cornice at Lansdown may have been intended to bear a narrow balcony accessible from the belvidere, as on Hope's tower.

The belvidere has tall, square-headed recesses sheltering round-arched windows, and in the lower parts there are heavy cast iron window-guards in what the nineteenth century, on the evidence of ancient wall-paintings and bas-reliefs, knew to be a Roman style, the saltire within the square. The 'architecture' hides in the recesses; mouldings around the arches end at impost mouldings above plain piers. Above the belvidere is another set of fasciae and a much weaker dentillated cornice, identifiably an Ionic entablature. The Orders, hinted at in the absence of columns, are 'correctly' placed in terms of the grammar of Classical architecture, Ionic above Tuscan.[10]

The overhanging roof was not to be; above the upper cornice there is a parapet-like structure made necessary by the arrangement whereby the tall belvidere windows could be opened by raising them into slots in the wall above. This structure has plain corner piers and recessed panels decorated in relief with a Grecian meander of fret or key pattern. This pattern might be regarded as a universal doodle of mankind that appeared as a decorative motif in ancient Chinese pottery and bronzes centuries before it appeared

in Greece.[11] It was applied as continuous bands in architecture influenced by the Grecian fashion from the late eighteenth century, and remained in the high Victorian decorative repertoire, becoming so familiar as to be readily ignored, but Goodridge's panels on the Tower are quite early examples of its more manneristic use. In this he appears to have been following John Soane who used a short stretch of key pattern to decorate an elongated panel in his design for the Lothbury Court façade of the Bank of England in 1799, and self-plagiarised this for the formal front added to his own Pitzhanger Manor at Ealing in 1803.[12] Soane made the meander symmetrical by changing the direction of the pattern in the middle, but Goodridge did not do this; his empanelled meanders are reversed on each of the four sides of the Tower. Above this 'attic' level, another miniature entablature supports a plain parapet with heavy block finials at the corners, decorated with roundels. Their massive masculinity, but not their form, makes the viewer think again of Soane.

A Baroque Octagon

After that, the fun starts. All so far is austere, more or less grammatical, and Roman, with the addition of a distant reminder of Greece in the rectilinear meanders. What comes next is highly manneristic, octangular in plan, beginning with two courses of plain banded rustication supporting an apparent balustrade with massive posts alternating with panels that include sets of narrow windows set deep in elongated recesses rounded at top and bottom. The coping supports heavy finials that, with optical assistance or eyesight as good as Beckford's, prove to be urns of curious design, Figure 2. Their bodies are boldly carved with what appear to be wilted lotus petals, as if columns like Nash's on the outside of the Brighton Pavilion had been candles burnt to the wick, and had shrivelled the petals at their bases, Figure 3. The development of eponyms is a sure sign of fame and originality; Soane's highly individual styles and mannerisms have given rise to no fewer than

Fig. 2. Two types of finials on Beckford' Tower. © Eric Ratcliff.

three: Soanian and Soanic, with disputed spelling, for designs resembling those of the master, and less reverently, Soaneish for more varied expressions of similar influence.[13] For reasons that lie in its totality and not in its details, it is difficult to avoid describing the

Fig. 3. The 'lotus' base of a column on Nash's Royal Pavilion, Brighton, details from an acquatint after A.C. Pugin 1826.
© Eric Ratcliff.

peculiar octangular structure between the parapet of the belvidere and the lantern as Soaneish. Soane devised classicising motifs that were as much divorced from historical precedent as Art Deco was to become over a century later. Prominent among these was the bewildering array of 'Soane's favourite blocky curved finials' (as Nikolaus Pevsner's associates described them); John Summerson had memorably christened them 'Soane's knobs'.[14, 15] It is possible to speculate that Goodridge and Beckford deliberately avoided imitation of these in the four corner finials atop the Belvidere by making them cubical, but sought to retain the innovative effect of mass.

In the octagon at Lansdown Tower, there is no direct imitation of Soane's work, but the angular peculiarities, the excessive piers and the heavy finials all suggest a degree of awareness of some of his less-formal designs. The most beguiling accidental affinity is with a minor work of Soane that was under construction at the same time as Beckford's Tower, the triangular Stone Lodge at Pell Wall in Staffordshire, Figure 4. This is not typical of Soane's work,

Fig. 4. Joseph Michael Gandy, *View of the lodge at Pellwall House*, 9 September 1828, watercolour. The triangular Stone Lodge at Pell Wall was designed by John Soane, who commissioned this 'topographical drawing' as a record of the completed building. © Sir John Soane's Museum, London, SM Volume 61/17 (32).

and probably represents a stylistic experiment with a subordinate building, but it could hardly have originated with anyone else at the time. Goodridge is unlikely to have been aware of it, but the connexion is not impossible. The main house at Pell Wall was designed in 1822 and completed in 1826, and Soane commissioned John Michael Gandy to make record renderings of his other buildings on the estate, including the lodge; Soane's daybooks confirm that Gandy was there in September 1828.[16] In an informal building, Soane has allowed himself to experiment with a number of motifs, and the result is more like a building of Vanbrugh's time than of the Regency, as John Morley has noticed.[17] Resemblances between the perforated parapets and the structure below the lantern

at Beckford's Tower are striking, and the angular oddities and perhaps the presence of a lantern enhance the impression. The urn finials at Lansdown are certainly redolent of a century before their time.[18]

Is the peculiar octagon a product of direct influence or of the *zeitgeist*? We cannot know, but it does stand as an early example of a transition that was taking place, not so much one of style as of character: mouldings and decorative details were becoming heavier, openings taller, ceilings higher; elegant restraint was giving place to worthy solidity over much of Europe and the whole Anglophone world.

The Grecian and Gilded Lantern

The lantern that culminates the Tower is generally recognised as alluding to the Choragic Monument of Lysicrates, raised in Athens in the fourth century BC, the survivor of a series of monuments placed along the way to the Dionysian Theatre on the slope below the Acropolis, each commemorating the triumph of a choir in the Dionysian contests, the Athenian equivalent of an eisteddfod. This monument was preserved because of its engagement in the wall of a French Capuchin convent built in 1669, and it was in that condition that it was seen by grand tourists of the generation that rediscovered Greece, Figure 5.[19] Goodridge would most probably have known it from the pristine image in Stuart and Revett's *Antiquities of Athens* which shows the cylindrical structure with conjectural details added, standing on a square plinth of comparable height.[20] The cylindrical part of the Monument was decorated with six Corinthian half-columns: it is held to be the earliest building entirely of the Corinthian Order, and to be the first to display it externally; the Order first appeared inside temples in the mid-fourth century BC.[21] The Monument also represents very early use of half-columns as mere decoration and not as free-standing structural components.

Goodridge's lantern on Beckford's Tower alludes to the Choragic

Fig. 5. Charles Meryon, *Entrée du couvent des Capucins Français à Athènes*, etching, from Laborde's *Athènes au XVe, XVIe et XVIIe siècles,* Paris 1854. © National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne.

Monument, but has eight free-standing columns with palm capitals instead of six engaged Corinthian half-columns, is octagonal in plan instead of circular, and stands on a plainer octangular base instead of a square plinth. The low-pitched roof of the Choragic Monument is a single piece of marble supporting an elaborate finial that appears to have been an overblown Corinthian capital bursting from a ringed and fluted pillar, and in its weathered state now presents rather like a bunch of the Prince Regent's heraldic feathers. Goodridge crested his elaborated cornice with a fringe of small *antefixes*, steepened his octangular iron roof, and made it culminate in a very different finial.

The Grecian precedent for an octangular structure was the *Horologium* or Tower of the Winds, also in Athens, an astylar tower of the first century BC that formerly contained a water-clock. It was also shown as if restored in Stuart and Revett's *Antiquities of Athens*.[22] Sir Christopher Wren, Nicholas Hawksmoor, James Gibbs and their contemporaries had, possibly following less sophisticated Dutch precedents, made an art form of devising church steeples from Classical elements, but these were insufficiently 'chaste' for the new 'Grecian' fashion, and the architects who followed it faced the difficulty that Greek temples did not have steeples. The two small Athenian structures provided the basis for a range of solutions.

Goodridge's reinterpretation of the Choragic Monument as an octangular structure with free-standing columns with palm capitals was precedented by the tower of St Pancras New Church in London, designed by William and Henry William Inwood, father and son, under construction from in 1819 to 1822, Figure 6.[23] In their design for the tower, the Inwoods placed two octangular derivatives of the Choragic Monument one above the other, and capped them with an astylar stage derived from the Horologium. The cylindrical body of the Monument was replaced by octangular cores, the eight columns of both stages were made free-standing, and the capitals changed from Corinthian to peculiar composite leaf forms of the Inwoods' own devising.

Unlike the Doric, Ionic and Corinthian Orders, codified by

Fig. 6. After Thomas Hosmer Shepherd, *St Pancras New Church*, engraving, detail, London 1827. © Eric Ratcliff.

the Roman architect Marcus Vitruvius Pollio in the first century AD and again by Alberti in the fifteenth century, Grecian palm capitals never formed part of an Order. Some writers refer to them as 'Pergamene', following the geographical naming of the Orders, but in ancient examples their origins and details are various. The shafts of the columns are unfluted, the leaves variously formed, sometimes arranged in a single whorl and sometimes in two. When such columns appear in reproduction, some observers mistakenly identify their origin as Egyptian, particularly because of the form of the capitals.

For Goodridge and his contemporaries, the advantage of Pergamene or 'palm' capitals was that they are indisputably Grecian,

but have a circular abacus, so that there are no awkward corners of a Doric, Ionic or Corinthian abacus to stick out below the angles of an octangular entablature. At St Pancras, the Inwoods sought to overcome this difficulty by means of polygonal abaci, but the result still looks awkward. Goodridge used simple palm capitals and dispensed with visible abaci altogether. The capitals are combined with fluted shafts, and the flutes are not stopped below the capital, as they are on Ionic and Corinthian columns, but meet with a neck of leaflets and visually continue into the leaves of the capital.

The octangular core of the lantern faces the openings between the columns with a series of five square recessed panels on each face; on one side these include a door giving access to the outside. Above these, hidden by day in the shadow of the entablature, are small rectangular windows framed and crossed with Roman saltires; they were the ultimate openings for William Beckford's searching 'glance'.

Feux de Joie

Above the elegant colonnade of the lantern and its architrave of two fasciae and a moulding, all semblance of Roman rectitude or Grecian 'chastity' is abandoned. The frieze is of cast iron open work, an alternating chain of linked rings and batons, and the cornice is dentillated, all of this emphasised by gilding. The cornice carries a crest of skeletal antefixes that look as if they should display anthemions, but appear to have maple leaves instead, although Jon Millington assures us that they are intended to be acanthus; anthemions do appear in the frieze inside the belvidere.[24] The antefixes are clearly suggested by aedicular features in ancient paintings, and they have been donated in the engraving of the Choragic Monument in Stuart and Revett. They largely conceal the roof of panels with radiating spear-head motifs between ridges decorated with scrolling foliage of almost oriental liveliness; some had survived in stone on the roof of the ancient Monument, to

be pictorially 'restored' by Stuart and Revett, but their gilded descendants might put us in mind of the dragons that once decorated the many roofs of Sir William Chambers' Pagoda at Kew.

The finial has a series of antepenultimate flourishes, like the ending of a Beethoven symphony, as if the composer was reluctant to bring the work to an end. A whorl of acanthus leaves supports an attenuated whorl that echoes the plainer column capitals, and this in turn supports a matching urn. The acanthus leaf makes its sole appearance on the Tower in this feature, a gesture to the ancients and to the crest on its Athenian ancestor. It also provides ancillary evidence of the influence of the Inwoods' steeple on Goodrich and Beckford, for the leaf capitals used there combine the acanthus and the plainer stiff-leaf palm, although not in wholly separate whorls. On the urn stands another attenuated one, and from this emerges the culminating gilded ball.

The 'unpremeditated stages' have been continued in miniature to the very top. One can imagine Goodridge producing sketch after sketch until the profile looked satisfactory, and it would be piquant to imagine Beckford looking over his shoulder and perhaps making sketches himself.

Beckford's Tower must sum itself up: it is Williamane Italianate; Grecian but far removed from the Doric Revival; Roman but not Georgian; English Baroque with perhaps a touch of Soane; Regency high-style and Proto-Victorian, all in combination and in succession.[25] One thing it is not: Gothic.

1 James Lees-Milne, *William Beckford,* Montclair, New Jersey: Allanheld & Schram, 979, 79. Lees-Milne did not give a written source for the direct quotation he uses, but it would appear to have come from Alfred Samuel Goodridge's memoir, *RIBA Sessional Papers 1864–1865.*

2 'Belvedere' is spelt with a middle 'e' in current English, French and Italian, but as 'belvidere' in writings contemporaneous with the Tower; Jon Millington has appropriately used this Latinate form, probably alternate in nineteenth century Italian, in his guides, and it will be retained here.

3 Lees-Milne, *op. cit.*, 79.

4 Montebello, Bathwick Hill, completed 1832: *see* Tim Mowl, 'A Taste for Towers', *Country Life*, vol. CLXXXI, no. 40 (1987), 52-155.

5 Cyrus Redding, 'Recollections of the Author of 'Vathek', *The New Monthly Magazine,* 71, no. 282 (1844), 149.

6 William Beckford, *Vathek,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970, 4; Penguin Classics, 1995, 31; Peter N. Lindfield and Dale Townsend, in Caroline Dakers (ed.), *Fonthill Recovered: A Cultural History,* London: UCL Press, 2018, 285, citing John Rutter, *Delineations of Fonthill*, 1823.

7 David I. Harvie, *Eiffel: The Genius Who Reinvented Himself,* Stroud: Sutton, 2004, 26, gives 1,665 steps. Françoise Sagan, *La sentinelle de Paris,* Paris: Robert Laffont, 988 gives 1,710 steps. Perhaps people lose count.

8 Jon Millington, *Beckford's Tower,* guide, 4th ed., 1983, 2, 3; illustrated guide, 7th ed., 2002, 6, 7.

9 John Buonarotti Papworth, plate, 'Residence of an Artist', *Rural Residences,* London, 1818. These picturesque 'Italian' ideas came via France, e.g. plate, '*Petit Maison de Maitre*', J. C. Krafft, *Recueil d'architecture civile,* Paris, c. 1808.

10 To limit confusion, I have embraced the practice of capitalising the word 'Order' when referring to one of the Classical Orders as codified by Vitruvius in the first century AD and Alberti and others in the sixth century AD.

11 The key pattern appeared on bronze vessels from the Tsan Dynasty, eleventh century BC, and on Grecian 'geometric' craters of the eighth century BC.

12 Soane was not knighted until 1832.

13 *Soanian*: e.g. Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: London except the Cities of London and Westminster,* 1st ed., London: Harmondsworth, 1952, 272, 389; David Watkin, *The Buildings of Britain: Regency,* London: Barrie & Jenkins, 67.
Soanean: e.g. John Betjeman, 'Cheltenham', *First and Last Loves,* London: John Murray, 1952, 17.
Soanic: e.g. John Summerson, *Georgian London,* London: Harmondsworth, 1962, pl. 42; 988, 287.
Soaneic: Howard Colvin: *A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1600–1840,* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 3rd ed. 1995, 906.
Soaneish: The chief suspect is Nikolaus Pevsner, somewhere in his *Buildings of England* series.

14 Bridget Cherry, Charles O'Brien and Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: London 5: East,* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005, 552. The phrase does not appear in Pevsner's original (1952) entry on St John's, Bethnal Green, so it is probably posthumous to him.

15 John Summerson, *Georgian London,* London: Harmondsworth, 1952, 211; London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1988, 204.

16 Giles Worsley, 'Pell Wall Hall, Staffordshire', *Country Life*, vol. CLXXXII, no. 14, April 1988, 136. Sir John Soane's Museum records a date of 9 September 1828.

17 John Morley, *Regency Design 1790–1840,* London: Zwemmer, 1991, 148.

18 See, for example, Vanbrugh's grotesque urns on the bridge at Stowe, formerly on a Sleeping Parlour (Temple of Sleep) designed in 1725.

19 Martin Hurlimann and Rex Warner, *Athens,* London: Thames & Hudson, 1956.

20 James Stuart and Nicholas Revett, *The Antiquities of Athens,* London 1762 et seq. The Choragic Monument is shown in vol. I, ch. IV, pl. III.

21 William Taylor, *Greek Architecture,* London: Arthur Barker, 1971, 44, 78.

22 Stuart and Revett, op. cit., vol. I, ch. III, pl. III.

23 Charles E. Lee, *St Pancras Church and Parish*, London: St Pancras Parochial Council, 1955.

24 Jon Millington, *The Restoration of Beckford's Tower, Bath,* Bath: Beckford Tower Trust, 2000.

25 James Stevens Curl is in the vanguard of those who advocate the term 'Doric Revival' in place of 'Greek Revival', chiefly on the grounds that buildings with Ionic and Corinthian Orders are not readily distinguishable from their Georgian elders with features derived from the Romans by way of the Renaissance. Some with purer Ionic features, like the British Museum front, are an arguable exception.

Notes on Contributors

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STEPHEN LLOYD is an art historian and has been Curator of the Derby Collection, Knowsley Hall, Merseyside since in 2012. He received his doctorate from the University of Oxford on the Regency artists Richard and Maria Cosway. They were the subject of a major exhibition he curated at the Scottiish National Portrait, Edinburgh, and the National Portrait Gallery, London in 1995-6. He worked for many years as Senior Curator at the SNPG, where he curated a number of exhibitions, especially on portrait miniatures, but also on the Scottish pastellist Archiblad Skirving (1999), Lord Byron (with the NPG, 2002), and with Kim Sloan, *The Intimate Portrait: Drawings, Miniatures and Pastels from Ramsay to Lawrence* (with the British Museum, 2008-9). He co-edited with Viccy Coltman *Henry Raeburn: Context, Reception and Reputation* (Edinburgh University Press, 2012). He also edited *Art, Animals and Politics: Knowsley and the Earls of Derby* (Unicorn Press, London, 2016).

ERIC RATCLIFF practices as a consultant psychiatrist in Launceston Tasmania. He has been writing and lecturing on architectural topics since 1966, and his major four-volume work, *A Far Microcosm: Building and Architecture in Van Diemen's Land and Tasmania 1803–1914* was published in 2015. His particular interest is in the architectural transitions of the nineteenth century and the changes in taste and sensibility associated with them. His fascination with Beckford and his buildings began in his teen years, and he joined the Society in 1995. He was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia [OAM] for services to his profession and to architectural conservation in 2004. His last opportunity to climb Beckford›s Tower was in August 2019.