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‘So who is this William... ?’

RICHARD ALLEN

Dick Claésson. *The narratives of the biographical legend. The early works of William Beckford*. 2nd ed. Gothenburg: Göteborgs universitet, 2002. [iv], 221 pp. Skrifter utgivna av Litteraturvetenskapliga institutionen vid Göteborgs universitet No. 41.

Beckford’s writing career peaked early. *Vathek*, published in 1786 when he was only in his mid twenties, was the third of his five books between 1780 and 1800, yet little else appeared until the late flourish of travel writing in the 1830s. Although the *Episodes* were known by repute it was only after Beckford’s papers were made available to selected scholars that twentieth-century readers began to meet references to other, still unpublished, writings from that same early period. Since the Bodleian Library’s acquisition of the Beckford Papers these early writings have progressively been made available in full editions, those in French by Didier Girard, and latterly those in English by Dick Claésson.

Many Beckfordians will already know of Claésson’s work on Beckford’s early unpublished pieces in English. ‘Fragments of an English Tour’ has been printed in *The Beckford Journal*.¹ In his native Sweden he has published *The Transport of Pleasure*;² and has provided on his website³ a number of texts including the only available version of *L’Esplendente* in its original English. It is probably true, though, that these are still unfamiliar to many who know *Vathek* and the travel books, and any light shed on them is welcome.

In the book under review Claésson discusses these writings (as well as *The Vision* and the collection of letters known as *The Red Copy Book*). The text is that of his doctoral dissertation at the University of Gothenburg, and necessarily has the author flexing his academic muscles. Anyone prepared to engage with this, however, will be well rewarded.

In the early chapters Claésson maps out his territory and defines his terms. He focuses here less on the texts themselves than on issues of biography and authenticity, taking Beckford's biographers to task for reading the texts too simply, either as veiled autobiography or as outright fakery. He argues convincingly that the frequent 'I', the 'William' of *The Vision*, even the 'William Beckford' who signs some letters, should not be seen as the real everyday Beckford and should not be used as evidence for biography. On the other hand neither are they simply forgeries designed by Beckford to create a spurious biography. Both these interpretations assume an autobiographical purpose, whether to reveal or conceal, but Claésson sees the 'Beckford' of these pieces as a literary character in a never-ending story, and in Claésson's own words: 'It is this fictional pseudo-autobiography that is the focus of the present book.'

To put his thesis on a firm theoretical footing he uses two terms in particular; 'biographeme', coined by the French post-structuralist Roland Barthes, and 'biographical legend' from the Russian formalist critic Boris Tomashevsky. Briefly, the biographeme is the smallest unit of biographical narrative from which the longer narrative is constructed. The biographical legend is then the framework of narrative made up of these details. Tomashevsky's own explanation as quoted by Claésson perhaps puts it best: 'Thus the biography that is useful for the literary historian is not the author's curriculum vitae or the investigator's account of his life [but] the biographical legend created by the author himself.' Claésson's aim is to look at how the biographical legend is constructed. To do this he examines the five texts mentioned above, as well as one important real event – the visit of Nelson and the Hamiltons to Fonthill in 1800.

The chapter on the Nelson visit, the longest in the book, is a fascinating account of how one event – one 'biographeme' – has developed in the telling and re-telling from the first account in the *Gentleman's Magazine* to fictionalised re-workings in recent novels by Susan Sontag (*The Volcano Lover*) and Barry

Unsworth (*Losing Nelson*). Particularly interesting is the demonstration of how different are the two accounts by Cyrus Redding, the manuscript one being – oddly, as Claésson points out – more restrained than that published in his *Memoirs of William Beckford of Fonthill* (1859). Claésson is especially good on the verbal details, tracing phrases through the different accounts and identifying the stylistic features that give later accounts their character. The ‘solemn marches’ and ‘deep roll of numerous drums’ of Redding’s manuscript almost exactly match Henry Tresham’s ‘solemn marches’ and ‘continued roll of drums’ in the *Gentleman’s Magazine*. Once into the twentieth century Claésson notes how each biographer selects according to his agenda. Brockman’s account is the most elaborate, partly because the setting, Fonthill, is the focus of his own architectural interest in Beckford, but also because of his own ‘overtly fictional additions’. His novelistic approach is well pointed out as Claésson homes in on the words he uses to characterise Sir William Hamilton – ‘bowed’, ‘old’, ‘frail’, – in his allotted role of cuckold. Similarly, Boyd Alexander’s use of the vocabulary of psychology – ‘building mania’, ‘frustrated energy’, ‘compensation for his social disgrace’ – suits his locating of the significance of the Nelson visit in Beckford’s own psychological needs, and his parallel interpretation of Beckford’s writings as psychologically coded texts, a view with which Claésson disagrees. It would be ungenerous to point out here that this is a long way from Barthes and Tomashevsky; in any case Claésson himself emphasises that while Tomashevsky saw the biographical legend as a deliberate creation by the author, his own aim is to ‘show that [it] may also be composed posthumously.’

Claésson next turns to the early writings themselves to examine the narrator as an aspect of the biographical legend, in two chapters on *The Vision* and *L’Esplendente* (*The Vision* itself is given as Appendix 1, re-edited from the manuscript). He first looks at the range of texts he will be analysing throughout the

rest of the book. Confronted with a variety of genres ('Moving from letters to fiction, from travelogue to drama, from journal to jotting') he sees Beckford's literary persona as the linking element and, interestingly, refers to his 'narrator' rather than to the different narrators of each text: 'Whatever the context ... this narrator remains, in different ways, a facet of the dramatisation of a self.' The questions he sets himself concern the nature of the narrator and the relationship between fact and fiction, summed up in the central question 'So who is this William...?' He addresses the biographical crux directly here, rebutting Mowl's assertion that Beckford's sexual inexperience was responsible for his not finishing *The Vision*. Claésson acknowledges that it is natural to read as autobiographical a story narrated by a William that is also written by a William, but he is adamant that it is 'pure pseudo-autobiography', preferring to call it 'a hybrid narrative where the semblance of autobiographical discourse disguises the mechanics of the novelist's trade.'

Turning to genre he puts forward the idea that *The Vision* is in the line of eighteenth-century 'spiritual autobiography', citing *Robinson Crusoe* as a precursor in fiction. He is perhaps nearer the mark when he later relates the story to the genre of the quest, and his description of the fictional William as 'Everyman' certainly suits this idea. He also acknowledges the problem of analysing this unfinished narrative with its fragmentary continuations, admitting how 'decidedly difficult' it is 'to keep track of every development and every change.' He resolves this problem by allowing that 'pattern' is a better descriptor than 'plot' for *The Vision*, taking his cue from the narrator William's own description of roaming 'from Island to Island and from Hill to Hill with little more than sensation'. Perhaps more could be said on how this relates to the visionary content. The unusual verbs of motion such as 'glided' and 'skimmed', and the curious use of passive or indirect phrasing ('thus was I wafted along' or 'my motion... brought me... to the Island') suggest an unusual spiritual state in themselves. The abrupt changes from

supernaturally swift journeyings through hardly seen landscapes to passages of detailed description from an absolutely rooted viewpoint also suggest uncertainty over what the spiritual experience should be like. The narrative has the infuriating quality of a computer game in which rooms succeed rooms and the scenery morphs alarmingly. Claésson usefully contrasts the rhythmically repetitive pattern of *The Vision* with the relentless downward spiral of *Vathek*, and it may be worth noting that Beckford concluded *Vathek* by recourse to a vocabulary of stasis ('fixed', 'grief without end', 'whole ages in undisturbed tranquillity') in which the freezing of the story after so much frenetic motion is its resolution. Perhaps the pattern-structure of *The Vision* worked against the resolution that its narrative of initiation and quest required.

Claésson's thesis requires that he examine the 'biographical legend' in the case of each text, which sometimes leaves other promising avenues only partly explored. With *L'Esplendente* he again disputes the idea that it is a veiled autobiography. He dismisses Boyd Alexander's roman-à-clef interpretation in which Mehemed/Ferdinand 'is' Beckford and Jacoup 'is' Alexander Cozens by showing for example that Jacoup is too much the stereotypical Jew to be Cozens. Instead he invites us to see *L'Esplendente* as Beckford's playing with genre. To explain why it is unfinished he suggests that Beckford was uncertain what genre he was most interested in: 'While Beckford may have started to write *L'Esplendente* as a serious piece of fiction, he ended it as a satire directed at the conventions of a stale genre.' Again, more could be said. Even the more satirical second part differs noticeably from the 'Life of the Artist' genre as satirised in *Biographical Memoirs of Extraordinary Painters* (1780). There is the lure of the city but not the coarse humour of Hemmelinck's death by pike-eating, for example – and there are no comic names. Similarly, Claésson points out the contrast between the 'god-like narrator' of *L'Esplendente* and the 'involved and self-absorbed narrator' of *The Vision* but does not

comment on the intrusive authorial voice in the former ('But I think I hear my readers asking' ... 'I forgot to mention') which greatly affects our awareness of the narrator and alters the author-reader relationship. The similarities between these two unfinished stories (both feature spiritual initiations, rocky sanctuaries accessible only through hidden passages, dreams and even 'buzzing' moths) also suggest that genre was still a somewhat fluid idea for Beckford.

In the two chapters on his final texts – 'Fragments of an English Tour', *The Transport of Pleasure* and *The Red Copy Book* – Claésson shows how Beckford's uncertainties over genre and narrative begin to resolve themselves. His focus on the 'biographical legend' is clearer here, as he shows Beckford discovering the possibilities inherent in the genres of travelogue, journal and letter, and points out that *Dreams, Waking Thoughts, and Incidents*, though published as early as 1783 (in fact suppressed, but a few copies survived), is the end result of 'years of theoretical and practical experiment in the fields of travel- and letter-writing.'

The chapter on 'Fragments of an English Tour' is an expanded and altered version of the article Claésson wrote for *The Beckford Journal*. He contrasts Redding's 'simple retelling' of the journey Beckford took in 1779 with the 'introverted and poetic effusions' of Beckford's own narrative. This time he omits the references to the Powderham visit (perhaps because Beckford does not mention it himself) but adds much more on Beckford's techniques. A key idea is that of transformation. Plymouth is 'transformed, through the medium of the waking dream' into a memory of Switzerland; the cathedral at York is 'transformed from a crude architectural sketch into a description of a spiritual landscape cloaked in architecture.' Beckford's journey is factual and external on one level but spiritual and internal on another. Claésson sees this as pointing the way towards the techniques of Beckford's future writings.

In the chapter on the other two texts Claésson develops his

ideas on this duality. The pairing of fact and fiction, implicit in the whole notion of the biographical legend, is paralleled by that of reason and fancy, terms related to the 'reflection' and 'sensation' of Locke's philosophy. Reason is, in Claésson's happy phrasing, 'the guiding force of narrative as well as the ethos to which the civilised world coheres', while fancy is 'the force of unfettered imagination, governed only by the loose strictures of dreams and waking thoughts'. Here at last Claésson can bring together narrative, genre and biographical issues in a critical and philosophical framework. He acutely identifies a fundamental problem that Beckford faced in *The Transport of Pleasure*. Beckford launches straight into reverie, but the narrative becomes progressively fact-oriented, and 'When reason finally intrudes... the letter ends.' Claésson correctly points out that Beckford's handling is still unsure. The text 'moves too swiftly into the realms of fact to retain the atmosphere of... a waking dream throughout.' Still, though, he identifies an important development in Beckford's writing: 'at the heart of the narrative... the story is mainly concerned with the dramatisation of self and the fictional transformation of reality.' The key point in this development is Beckford's recognition that genres such as the letter and the journal (and the travel-book, which may incorporate either of the others) allow for the appearance of reality more readily than do overtly fictional genres. The transformation of reality into fancy or fact into fiction thus partakes of a more satisfying and convincing sleight-of-hand.

The letters of *The Red Copy Book* attract more of Claésson's attention than any text except *The Vision*. There are seventy in all (printed as Appendix 2) ranging from apparently straightforward correspondence like the lines to his young cousin Alexander Hamilton to visionary effusions such as the long letter dated 'Fonthill December 4th 1778 being the full of the Moon.' Claésson treats them as a single continuous text, referring to entries by the page number of the copy book, thus reinforcing his idea of the single narrator/narrative. They are in fact copies

(which may or may not be accurate) of earlier originals (which may or may not have been sent), and Beckford is known to have continued rewriting them in later life. This has contributed to the unease that earlier biographers have felt, attempting to distinguish between 'real' letters and those Chapman dismissed as 'reveries', or simply accusing Beckford of forgery. Claésson deals with this charge by emphasising 'the literary importance Beckford placed on his letter-writing.' He calls them a 'thesaurus', in which Beckford could keep ever more polished examples of the genre.

To underline the point that these letters are just as much literary creations as anything else Beckford wrote, Claésson emphasises Beckford's technique of transforming the setting from fact to fiction. He identifies another important duality in this process – Illusion and Disillusion. Illusion describes the fancied worlds or states into which the factual world of the letter's starting-point has been transformed; Disillusion is the sometimes abrupt return to earth. Claésson examines that long letter from 'Fonthill... the full of the Moon' in detail to see these points in action. In a particularly effective analysis he shows Beckford's language moving us ever further away from reality. First his thoughts are *wandering*, then he *imagines* himself seeing vistas, finally he *finds* himself in those very scenes. This letter has many themes and characters, even phrases, in common with *The Vision* yet Beckford manages to complete this narrative. The Illusion/Disillusion structure allows him to bring himself (or his narrator) back to reality but it is the letter genre that requires him to start and finish among the settings and conventions of the everyday. We see here Beckford finding how the letter allows him to combine his opposites – fact and fiction, fancy and reality – in finished narratives.

In the final two chapters Claésson brings Locke's philosophy into the foreground, sketching out a model against which these texts can be measured. He traces Locke's carefully distinguished stages of human perception in the similar gradations of

Beckford's writing. In Beckfordian terms, Imagination looks across to the world of Fancy but with feet still in reality, and this establishes limits to the narrative. Dreams and Visions, on the other hand, are immersed in Fancy and liberated from the constraints reality places on the narrative – though Disillusion will pull narrator and narrative back. Claésson also finds numerous examples of the Lockean vocabulary of sensation and reflection, which fully justifies the link to Locke and provides a blueprint for further studies.

Despite some repetitiveness, mainly attributable to having to perform the compulsory exercises of the dissertation process, Claésson's arguments are convincing. The exact degree of biographical interpretation that can be placed on Beckford's writings needs careful thought (and Claésson allows that Beckford chose to construct his fictions from autobiographical materials) but the main focus of any approach should surely be the literary one. This is an important contribution to Beckford studies, and it lays the necessary groundwork for the 'detailed study of Beckford's published texts and extant manuscripts'⁴ that Claésson himself has previously called for; though it is from Sweden it is entirely in Dick Claésson's excellent English.

¹ Volume 5 (Spring 1999): 14-32.

² William Beckford, *The Transport of Pleasure. MS. Beckford d.10 (Fonthill Foreshadowed)*; utgiven och kommenterad av Dick Claésson (Göteborg 1996). English text with Swedish commentary.

³ www.beckford.c18.net

⁴ Dick Claésson, 'At a Crossroads: Assessing and Redefining the Beckford Agenda,' *Beckford Journal* 4 (Spring 1998): 30.

Beckford in Los Angeles

STEPHEN CLARKE

Under the determined and apparently inevitable blue skies of a southern Californian summer, Beckford scholars from around the world gathered last August to participate in the quadrennial International Congress on the Enlightenment, meeting jointly with the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies at the UCLA campus in Los Angeles. In a meeting of over 1,000 participants, whose papers ranged from Defoe to Austen and from globalisation to gender studies, Beckford was represented by a double session organised by the doyen of Beckford studies, Kenneth Graham, whose edition of *Vathek* with *The Episodes* was reviewed in Volume Eight of this Journal. Members of the Round Table came from France, Italy, the United States, Canada, Brazil, and even England – not in vain is this Society's correct title the International Beckford Society.

The first contribution was by Paulo Kuhl, of the Universidade Estadual de Campinas, Brazil, who talked on Beckford, Opera, and Portuguese Society. He discussed the passage in Beckford's Portuguese Journal of September 1787 where he recounts how the composer Jeronimo Francisco de Lima accompanied him at the piano while Beckford sang the aria from Lima's opera *Aeneas in Thrace*, where Aeneas is called on by the ghost of Polydorus to avenge his death – a castrato aria that Beckford would presumably have sung falsetto. Kuhl suggested that its libretto of resentment and revenge reflected Beckford's experience of frustration at his exclusion from the Portuguese Court, and from this how more generally music becomes in Beckford a form of emotional release, and an essential feature in his inner landscape.

This was followed by Kevin Cope of Louisiana State University, who gave a pyrotechnic account of Beckford's invisible activity – the way in which he continues to escape not merely the moral presumptions of nineteenth-century criticism,

but also the equally rigorous straitjacket of modern preoccupations with race, class and gender. As Cope explained, 'Beckford subverts expectations that causes will line up with effects or that the perceived natural order of experience has priority over any other arrangements.' For Beckford, the supernatural, the incidental, the disruptive, are legitimate alternatives to traditional causality. Probability remains suspended somewhere between visibility and invisibility, and his characters are the tools of an unpredictable fate rather than the authors of their own distress.

Mirella Billi, who gave the lecture at the Annual General meeting of 2003, provided the third paper on the subject of Beckford and the art of representation. Taking the opening phrase of *The Vision* ('I happened accidentally to open my Casement') she explored the bizarre use of the adverb 'accidentally' – you can hardly accidentally open a window, but you may in opening a window accidentally trigger an unexpected sequence of reflections and events, and Billi explained how Beckford both manipulated and was manipulated by the consequences and inconsequences of his reveries.

Laurent Châtel (who had already given a paper earlier in the Conference on *The Arabian Nights* and Beckford's Orientalist writings), contributed an account of aesthetic readings of the Oriental tales, taking issue with the reading of *Vathek* of Roberts and Robertson in *Studies in Pre-Romanticism* 35 (Summer 1996) in which they had suggested that the episode of Henley's translation represents a loss of authorial authority, displacing the certainties of the text. He pointed out how Beckford had retained a manuscript before he submitted *Vathek* for printing in Lausanne and Paris – for all its complications, the text need not be abandoned as the flawed translation of a translation. As Byron had suggested, Beckford in *Vathek* had slipped into the exact costume of Orientalism; Beckford was an effective fableur whose meaning was to be divined through translation rather than being compromised by it.

Turning from literature to architecture, my own contribution explored contemporary accounts of Fonthill Abbey, both at the time of the 1822 and 1823 auction views, and after the collapse of the tower in 1825. I traced the Abbey's architectural influence at Highcliffe, Ravensworth, Hadlow Castle, and elsewhere, and argued that the very personal nature of Beckford's conception, the defective construction, the scenographic preoccupations of Wyatt's Gothic, and the extravagances of the auction sale, all contributed to limit the Abbey's architectural influence.

Finally, Kenneth Graham gave an eloquent account of how, for all its Gothic attributes, *Vathek* transcends the Gothic by its engagement with Orientalism, and with what would now be called camp. He suggested that a synchronic reading of *Vathek* and *The Episodes* reveals a pattern of repetition and metaphor, disclosing issues of enquiry, knowledge, and rebellion – the Enlightenment and the Gothic held in an unlikely truce by an Orientalism that takes neither seriously.

It was a curiosity of the Conference that, given academic preoccupations with theoretical and textual matters, the number of sessions devoted to individual authors was limited, and Beckford was, after Dr Johnson, one of the best represented. This reflects current concerns with issues of gender and marginalisation that can only serve to enhance Beckford's relevance. All six of the papers given grew out of essays contributed to *William Beckford and the New Millennium*, a collection edited by Kenneth Graham whose publication by AMS Press is anticipated this year, and which it is hoped may be a fitting tribute to Kenneth Graham on his retirement.

William Beckford's Paternal Half-siblings and Their Descendants

MIKE C. FRASER, DANA E. BECKFORD STANTON & JOHN W. FOX

In the early summer of 1756, Alderman William Beckford married Maria Hamilton. Four years later, William Beckford the younger was born to them. By her first marriage to Francis Marsh, Maria already had a daughter, Elizabeth, who was christened on 7 September 1749 at St. James' Westminster; she married Thomas Hervey in 1774. She entered into substantial correspondence with the younger Beckford; the dealings between Beckford and Hervey have been documented elsewhere¹ and so the relationship between Beckford and his maternal half-sister is a relatively well-discussed subject.

Alderman William Beckford also fathered children prior to his marriage to Maria. These illegitimate siblings affected, to some extent, the life of the younger William, yet there is little research on Beckford's paternal half-siblings, and few sources which draw out the implications of their relationship to the younger Beckford over the course of his life. Here we intend to provide as much information as has been possible to obtain on Alderman Beckford's pre-marital partners, their children and their immediate descendants. We do not profess to be complete in all details, but present this article to outline further areas on each of the illegitimate Beckford siblings.

What follows has been gleaned from a number of different sources, primarily genealogical documents such as wills and parish records. We have also drawn on existing Beckfordian literature, especially Jon Millington's *Beckford and His Circle in the Gentleman's Magazine*² which has provided some of the information contained here, as well as many more leads to follow up. We have also made substantial use of Boyd Alexander's *England's Wealthiest Son*, mainly chapter 3, 'Family Quarrels'.³

In his will, Alderman Beckford acknowledged eight children

after his legitimate son William.⁴ They were Richard, John, Charles, Rose, Thomas, Nathaniel, Barbara and Susanna. Most have obvious gender by their names, aside from Rose who was male. The order of this list is that in which the children are mentioned in the Alderman's will and therefore it is likely to be arranged firstly by gender (males then females) and secondly by age (each gender listed from eldest to youngest).

Strangely, in most sources we have encountered, the Alderman is usually credited with either seven or thirty illegitimate children. The total of seven (e.g. by James Lees-Milne⁵) seems to be derived from an accidental miscalculation in Guy Chapman's biography of Beckford which names the correct eight children but then says that they total seven.⁶ The attribution of thirty illegitimate children (e.g. by Gikandi⁷) is, according to Chapman, derived from Horace Walpole.⁸ Writing to Richard Bentley on 23 February 1755, Walpole claims to quote the elder Beckford on the subject of the fire at Fonthill, 'I have an odd fifty thousand pounds in my drawer: I will build it up again; it won't be above a thousand pounds apiece difference to my thirty children'. This is clearly a joke by the Alderman or Walpole. In either case, we return to a total of eight illegitimate children and, whilst it is clearly possible that there are more beyond those acknowledged in the Alderman's will, we have not uncovered any information that indicates further offspring.

As noted by Cyrus Redding in his 1859 *Memoirs*,⁹ the elder Beckford left £5000 to each of these children in his will. They were also to inherit his entire fortune, estates and plantations in turn from eldest to youngest son and then from eldest to youngest daughter, if the younger William produced no lawful male heir before his death. There were significant political and financial machinations between some of the illegitimate children (most prominently Richard Beckford) and the legitimate William, as described by Alexander in *England's Wealthiest Son*.¹⁰ We shall return to these disputes at the end of this article. In the following sections, we outline what has been discovered of the Alderman's

pre-marital partners, and then discuss each of their children and their descendants in turn.

The Alderman's 'natural or reputed' children, as he calls them in his will, seem to have formed a close-knit group during their lifetime, despite having at least two different mothers between the eight of them, and probably three or more. It has been difficult to find information on the mothers of the illegitimate Beckford children. This is unsurprising as parish records are not well preserved from this time, in addition to obvious reasons for hiding the parentage of illegitimate children. Alexander notes that 'Hannah Thwaites *alias* Maxwell' was the elder Beckford's principal mistress, a paraphrase from the Alderman's will. She was, in fact, the mother of Rose, Thomas and Susanna Beckford, and seems to have preferred 'Hannah Maxwell', at least by the time of her death. Hannah died in 1794 at Margaret Street, Cavendish Square, London, and left all her worldly goods to her sons Rose and Thomas, writing her will on 12 September 1789. It is likely that she re-wrote her will then because of the death of her daughter Susanna Beckford less than a month before. Alderman Beckford left Hannah Maxwell an annuity of £200 a year in his will. We cannot trace the origin of her alternative surname 'Thwaites' (other than that it is a place near Keighley in West Yorkshire), and if she was married to a Mr. Maxwell or widowed, we have not found the parish record for the wedding.

The only other christening so far traced for these children is that of Barbara Beckford, whose mother is recognised also as 'Barbara' in the relevant parish register. No surname is provided for the elder Barbara, as was common with mothers in baptismal records at the time, and we have not been able to identify her thus far. It is possible, however, that the elder Barbara was also Richard Beckford's mother, as outlined below. We should also reiterate Alexander's point¹¹ that Charles Beckford is referred to as 'Charles Beckford, *alias* Jennings' in the Alderman's will, and is therefore likely to have been the son of a mother with the surname Jennings. However, we have not been able to find any

explicit record of the mothers of Richard, Nathaniel, Charles or John. In the following paragraphs, we collate our research on each of the Alderman's children.

Richard Beckford was a West Indian merchant (variously a partner in the companies of Collett & Evans, Beckford & James and Beckford & Keighley) and Member of Parliament (sometime representative for Bridport, Arundel and Leominster between 1780 and 1796). According to Boyd Alexander, Richard married but died childless. He seems to have spent a good proportion of his life engaged in an ongoing battle with the younger William Beckford and his mother to represent the constituency of Hindon in Parliament. Richard lived in Piccadilly, London, towards the end of his life with a lady called Amy Ashton, and the children of his sister Barbara inherited almost all of his money. Richard's will is unusual compared with those of the other Beckford siblings in that, of all his brothers and sisters, only Barbara is mentioned. This may indicate that Richard and Barbara shared the same mother, although it may simply be because Barbara and Richard lived in close proximity for many years, he with his father at Fonthill, she nearby in East Knoyle with her husband (see entry on Barbara Beckford). Cyrus Redding stated that the Alderman's eldest child 'married a lady of fortune, and settled in Jamaica.'¹²

Whilst Richard did marry (although we have not been able to trace his wife), it seems strange that he would be described as having settled in Jamaica given Boyd Alexander's description of the ongoing efforts of Richard over many years to become MP for Hindon. Perhaps he was not the eldest son, but it then seems strange that he is placed first in line to inherit the Alderman's fortune behind the legitimate William. It seems more likely to us that Redding was incorrect about Richard 'settling' in Jamaica, but rather that he simply traded in Jamaican produce, and perhaps visited the island as a merchant occasionally.

John Beckford was an apprentice employed in an accountancy firm in Amsterdam in 1765 when the Alderman

wrote his will. John was married with one son, Nathaniel, although we have been unable to discover his wife's name. John later lived with a lady called Mary Middleton until his death, when she shared his fortune equally with his son Nathaniel. He died in Lambeth, Surrey, in 1814. We have not been able to trace Mary Middleton's origins, nor indeed discover whether she was related in any way to John Charles Middleton, who married the Alderman's niece Charlotte Beckford, daughter of his brother Francis Beckford. At the time of his father's death Nathaniel lived on Croydon Common with Eliza Beckford née Wood, whom he married on 27 May 1809 in St. Mary Magdalene Church, Bermondsey, in Surrey. Nathaniel and Eliza had one child, Susan Mary Beckford, who was christened at St. John the Baptist, Croydon, on 15 August 1810. Susan was living at Mill Pond Row, Bermondsey, in 1834 when she was left money by her godmother (see entry for Nathaniel Beckford). Eliza Beckford died in 1859 in Croydon and Susan Mary Beckford died in December 1866 also in Croydon, unmarried.

Charles Beckford has been the most elusive of the Alderman's children to trace. Noted in the Alderman's will as 'Charles Beckford, *alias* Jennings', he has nonetheless proved difficult to find under either name. Charles was 'still young' in 1765 when the Alderman wrote his will, and lived in Wolverhampton with Benjamin Molineux who was a highly successful ironmonger. He built Molineux House as a family home (now a grade one listed historic hotel, recently gutted by an arson attack), which gave its name to Molineux Park, the home ground of Wolverhampton Wanderers Football Club. Benjamin had two daughters and a son, but there is no mention of Charles in any records of them we have found. One possible record of a Charles Beckford is a marriage to Mary Griffiths in 1769 in Shrewsbury, although we have not been able to verify whether this is the same Charles Beckford, nor can we find any evidence of children from this marriage. Charles is not mentioned in any of the wills of the other Beckford children, so it seems likely that he

either lost touch, was spurned by his relatives or died relatively young.

Rose Beckford was at boarding school in Peckham, London, when the Alderman wrote his will in 1765. His mother was Hannah Maxwell, making Thomas and Susanna his full siblings. Five years later, when the Alderman's died, he was living in St. Catherine's in Jamaica. He wrote his will on 15 November that year, perhaps moved to do so by the Alderman's death and the £5000 inheritance he had received. Rose was in Jamaica as a merchant, and Boyd Alexander noted that 'Master Rose Beckford was accused of overdoing the ordering of stores from England during his two years or so in Jamaica, and was apparently in trouble with the Customs'.¹³ Over the next twenty or so years Rose had amassed significant sums, and when his sister Susanna Beckford died in 1789 he was left only £100 (compared to his brother Thomas who received £1000). She wrote 'as he is rich he will receive that as my reason for leaving him so small a sum and accept it as a remembrance'. Five years later, Rose is listed in *Kent's Directory [of London] for 1794* as being at the Jamaica Coffee House on St. Michael's Alley, Cornhill (now called Jamaica Street in Stepney). He died in 1801 in one of his properties in Hertfordshire, although he also lived at New Broad Street, London. In his will of 1770, the only one found on his death, he left his money to his mother Hannah, his brother Thomas and his sister Susanna. This caused considerable problems with the inheritance. Hannah and Susanna had already died by this time, and the wording of the will effectively meant that Thomas was unable to lay claim on the estate. Many of the Beckford children, especially Thomas, passed on their claim to Rose's estate to their beneficiaries. After what must have been much legal wrangling, the crown eventually remaindered the estate to the Queen in 1863. Given that Rose was considered rich, this must have been a significant blow to the Beckford family. Rose never married, being called 'a bachelor and a bastard' in the proof of his will. It also appeared at first that Rose had not had

any children, but there is significant evidence to the contrary.

At the time of Rose's death, a certain London merchant named Robert Curling was under a mortgage for one of his properties, a farm at Offley Holes near Hitchin in Hertfordshire. One interesting side effect of the legal difficulties with Rose's inheritance was that Curling ended up owning the farm, worth £12,000 at the time, by default. The notice in the *Gentleman's Magazine* of Curling's death in Camberwell, Surrey, in 1809¹⁴ implied that Curling had selfishly taken this farm for himself. This claim occasioned a response from his son, Edward Spencer Curling, printed in the *Gentleman's Magazine* a few months later that defended his father.¹⁵ Curling's son described how, on Rose Beckford's death, his father discovered that Rose had had an illegitimate daughter in the mid-1790s and found her 'unsupported and unprotected in a small village in Bedfordshire', and he placed her under the protection of 'a respectable person' in London. The article went on to say that Curling had the Offley Holes farm valued and put the equivalent sum into a trust fund for Rose's daughter. In Curling's will, he noted 'the money given by me to Rosanna Beckford should that remain or by any means come to the family then my children or grandchildren to have it divided share and share alike'. Note that Rosanna's name is a combination of the names of her father Rose and her grandmother Hannah Maxwell. In some genealogical records we have of her, she is explicitly called Rose Hannah Beckford. We have so far been unable to trace her baptismal parish record to discover her mother's identity. She married in 1813 in St. Mary at Lambeth Church in Surrey. Her spouse was Henry Dunning Harvey, a mariner from Weymouth. We can only speculate how Henry came to meet and marry Rosanna; perhaps it was while he was delivering goods on the Thames or visiting London. In any case Henry and Rosanna had moved back to Weymouth together by 1818. They had at least five children born in both Weymouth and Southampton where they moved later on. All these children and many of their descendants retained the middle name of



St. Mary at Lambeth in 1831 by Thomas Hosmer Shepherd. Parts of this church on the banks of the Thames go back to the fourteenth century, and a church of some form existed here as far back as the Domesday Book. Today, St Mary's is a museum dedicated to the history of gardening. Rose Beckford's illegitimate daughter Rose Hannah Beckford married a mariner named Henry Dunning Harvey here in 1813 before they returned to Weymouth together.

Beckford, passing on the story of Rosanna's Beckfordian ancestry. (See the end of this article for further information on Rosanna's descendants.)

Thomas Beckford was christened in St. Anne's Church, Soho, London on 20 June 1752, one week after her birth. The St. Anne's christening record identifies Thomas's mother as 'Hannah', now known to be Hannah Maxwell. Thomas's full brother and sister, Rose and Susanna, would most likely have been christened in the same church, but the decayed state of many pages in the St. Anne's parish registers prevent definitive

proof (see entry on Barbara Beckford for more on St. Anne's). Thomas was at boarding school in Peckham in 1765 with his brother Rose. Written in 1770, Rose's will mentions that Thomas was 'lately at Oxford'. He was back in London by 1774 when he married Phillis Howard at St. George's, Hanover Square, in Westminster. At some stage before 1817 Thomas and Phillis moved to Bath (he is mentioned living in Bath in his niece Susan Hyde Beckford's 1817 will). It is interesting that the younger William Beckford moved to Lansdown Crescent, Bath, in 1822 and therefore only lived about a mile from his half-brother Thomas at Kensington Place for two years, before Thomas's death in 1824. Phillis died soon after him in 1826, leaving no issue, and all their estate to Thomas's nephew James Wake, son of his half-sister Barbara Wake. By that time James Wake was living in Heavitree, near Exeter, and therefore within visiting distance of Bath (see entry on Barbara Beckford below).

Nathaniel Beckford was living with his sister Barbara and Charles Wake in East Knoyle in 1765 when the Alderman wrote his will. It seems unlikely that he was the same Nathaniel Beckford who married 'Miss Carrol with 3000l'¹⁶ in 1763 in Edinburgh, as he would have been the affluent President of the Council of Jamaica when he married, and then living with his sister two years later. We have not been able to find subsequent parish records of Nathaniel or his wife, Elizabeth. They had one daughter, Susan Hyde Beckford, who owned estates in Jamaica, presumably inherited from her parents. She was born before 1789 (according to her Aunt Susanna's will) and lived in Worthing, Sussex, and later on in Heavitree and Tavistock, Devon, perhaps to be near her first cousin James Wake (see entry on Barbara Beckford). She had no children. From her will, written in 1817, Susan knew her 'dear Uncle' Thomas Beckford well, and planned to leave him all the Jamaican estates she inherited from her mother and father. However, Thomas had died in 1824, ten years before Susan's own death, so her first cousin James Wake inherited all her wealth, being second in line in the will. Susan

Hyde Beckford's goddaughter was Susan Mary Beckford (her first cousin once removed, i.e. her Uncle John Beckford's granddaughter) who also inherited £500. She had an unrelated godson, identified as 'the honourable Mauris Curzen of Ridleston Hall, Derbyshire' in her will.

Barbara Beckford was baptised on 9 October 1736, having been born on the 2nd. She is therefore the eldest of the Alderman's children we have a baptismal record of, although all accounts put Richard, for whom we cannot find a christening, as the eldest. As with Thomas Beckford's, her christening took place in St. Anne's Church, Soho, very close to the Alderman's London Home at 22 Soho Square. St. Anne's was a late seventeenth-century Church attributed to Sir Christopher Wren, destroyed by bombing during World War II and only recently reopened. In 1757, Barbara married the Rev. Dr. Charles Wake in East Knoyle, just a few miles from Fonthill Gifford. A widower, Charles Wake had two children by a previous marriage to Elizabeth (maiden name unknown) called Charles and Elizabeth. There was clearly a friendship of some kind between Alderman Beckford and Charles Wake and it seems likely that he introduced Barbara and Charles to one another. In any case, Charles was an executor for the Alderman's will, and therefore must have been a trusted companion. Charles was rector of St. Margaret's, Westminster, and died in 1796. Barbara had died before him, as her brother Richard mentions her as deceased in his 1792 will. Barbara had at least nine children with Charles: James, William, Henry, Charlotte, Mary, Harriott, Catherine, Magdalene and Emma.

James Wake may have been the eldest child, as he seems to have played the most prominent role in the family's dealings with the rest of the Alderman's children and their descendants. He certainly inherited much of their wealth, being the eventual beneficiary of the lines of Nathaniel, Thomas and Richard (in part). James Wake married Anna, and they had one son, Richard. They lived in Heavitree, Exeter, until James's death in 1841.



St. Anne's Soho in 1831 by Thomas Hosmer Shepherd. The church was near Alderman Beckford's Soho Square house, and at least two of his children were christened here, Barbara (1736) and Thomas (1752).

There is some evidence that Heavitree played a part in dealings with Jamaican sugar plantations, especially the existence of a place named Heavitree in Jamaica. James Wake may have contributed to these links, having inherited many Jamaican interests from the other Beckford children, although further research has shown that Heavitree in Jamaica was actually named by one John Davy from the same Devon town.¹⁷

More information on the Wake children is included in the family tree at the end of this article.

Susanna Beckford was at boarding school in Kensington in 1765, according to the Alderman's will. She never married and had no children. She was godmother to her niece Susan Hyde Beckford, her brother Nathaniel's daughter. She died of breast cancer at her house in Mount Street, Berkeley Square, London in 1789.¹⁸ She left the bulk of her fortune to her brother Thomas

and her mother Hannah, who received £1000 each. Her brother Rose was left only £100 (see entry on Rose Beckford). Further minor beneficiaries were half-brothers Richard, John and Nathaniel, Nathaniel's wife Elizabeth, and their daughter (Susanna's goddaughter) Susan Hyde Beckford. The fact that Susanna was godmother to Nathaniel's daughter and also acknowledged John and Richard in her will (both of whom also lived in London) clearly illustrates the continued ties between all the Beckford children at this time.

To conclude, we summarise the implications of two issues that arise out of our research into the Alderman's children: the feud between Richard and William Beckford; and the descendants of the Beckford children until the present day.

On the continuing feud between the illegitimate Beckford children, particularly Richard, with the younger William and his mother, Boyd Alexander comes down clearly on the side of the legitimate Beckfords, characterising the illegitimate children as 'grasping and dishonest'.¹⁹ This feud occurred primarily during the 1770s, just after the Alderman's death, although it simmered right up to 1791, when William Beckford finally 'affectionately acknowledged [Richard] as his brother'.²⁰ The feud involved at least three key issues during the 1770s described by Alexander: the fight for control by and of the Alderman's executors (including Charles Wake); the fight for control of the commissions earned on the import of sugar from the Beckford estates in Jamaica, as stipulated for any and all of his sons in the Alderman's will; and the fight between Richard and Maria Beckford's agents to represent the Hindon constituency in Parliament. Not having read the many legal and parliamentary documents referred to by Alexander, we are unable to comment much further on this issue, except to say such documents are likely to take the particular perspective of the author. That the Alderman acknowledged and wholeheartedly supported his illegitimate children, and that the younger Beckford made peace with his half-brother Richard in later years, indicates that

condemnation of the behaviour of Beckford's illegitimate children over the course of their lives would seem at the least premature. We hope we have gone some way to humanising these previously faceless Beckfords.

From the information presented here, the family tree illustrates Beckford's paternal half-siblings and their descendants for two further generations. We are currently unable to identify positively the mothers of Richard, (perhaps Barbara?), Charles, John or Nathaniel, but all other information is confirmed from documents of the time. As for further descendants, according to our research the lines of Thomas, John, Nathaniel, Richard and Susanna ended in no issue beyond those mentioned here. We have no record of Charles's descendants at all, and therefore are unable to comment on his line. We speculate that the sheer number of children of Barbara Beckford and Charles Wake means that it is likely that one or more lines of descendants still exist today from that section of the tree, particularly given that the Wakes inherited much of the Beckford children's fortune after the second generation and should therefore have been in a comfortable position.

There were numerous descendants of Rose Beckford's daughter, Rosanna, almost all of whom lived in or around Southampton throughout the nineteenth century. Many of these continued to use Beckford as a middle name up to the early twentieth century, and one of the authors of this article, Dr. Stanton, is descended from at least one such line that still passes down the middle name of Beckford. One of the other authors, Mr. Fox, is descended from Rosanna Beckford. We have compiled a more substantial tree, but there is too much information to include here; we hope to produce an article in the future describing in detail the descendants of Rosanna Beckford, the only known descendants of the Alderman to continue to use the name Beckford.

Finally, we would appreciate any contributions, confirmations, amendments or corrections from readers of this article which

might improve or advance our research. Dr. Fraser can be contacted by email at mike@mikefraser.com

We would particularly like to thank Mrs. Judy Stanton who has made our research possible through tracing her Beckfordian ancestry.

¹ Jerry Nolan, 'William, Elizabeth & William or Female Impersonation and Radical Satire,' *Beckford Journal* 6 (Spring 2000): 35-45.

² Jon Millington, *Beckford and His Circle in the Gentleman's Magazine* (London: Beckford Society, 2001).

³ Boyd Alexander, *England's Wealthiest Son* (London: Centaur Press, 1962), 51-59.

⁴ Alderman William Beckford's Last Will and Testament, available from PCC Wills online, <http://www.documentsonline.pro.gov.uk/wills.asp>. All wills quoted or referred to in this document are also available on this website.

⁵ James Lees-Milne, *William Beckford* (Tisbury, Wilts: Compton Russell, 1976), 11.

⁶ Guy Chapman, *Beckford*, 2nd ed. (London: Rupert Hard-Davis, 1952), 31.

⁷ Simon Gikandi, 'Aesthetic Reflection and the Colonial Event: The Work of Art in the Age of Slavery,' *The Journal of the International Institute* 4 no. 3 (Summer 1997). University of Michigan Press, available on-line at <http://www.umich.edu/~iinet/journal/vol4no3/gikandi.html>.

⁸ Chapman, 31.

⁹ Cyrus Redding, *Memoirs of William Beckford* (London: Charles J. Skeet, 1859), 1:61.

¹⁰ Alexander, 51-59.

¹¹ Alexander, 34.

¹² Redding, 1:61.

¹³ Alexander, 55.

¹⁴ *Gentleman's Magazine* 79 pt. 2 (Nov 1809): 1086b.

¹⁵ *Gentleman's Magazine* 80 pt. 1 (April 1810): 306b-307b.

¹⁶ *Gentleman's Magazine* 33 (Aug 1763): 414b.

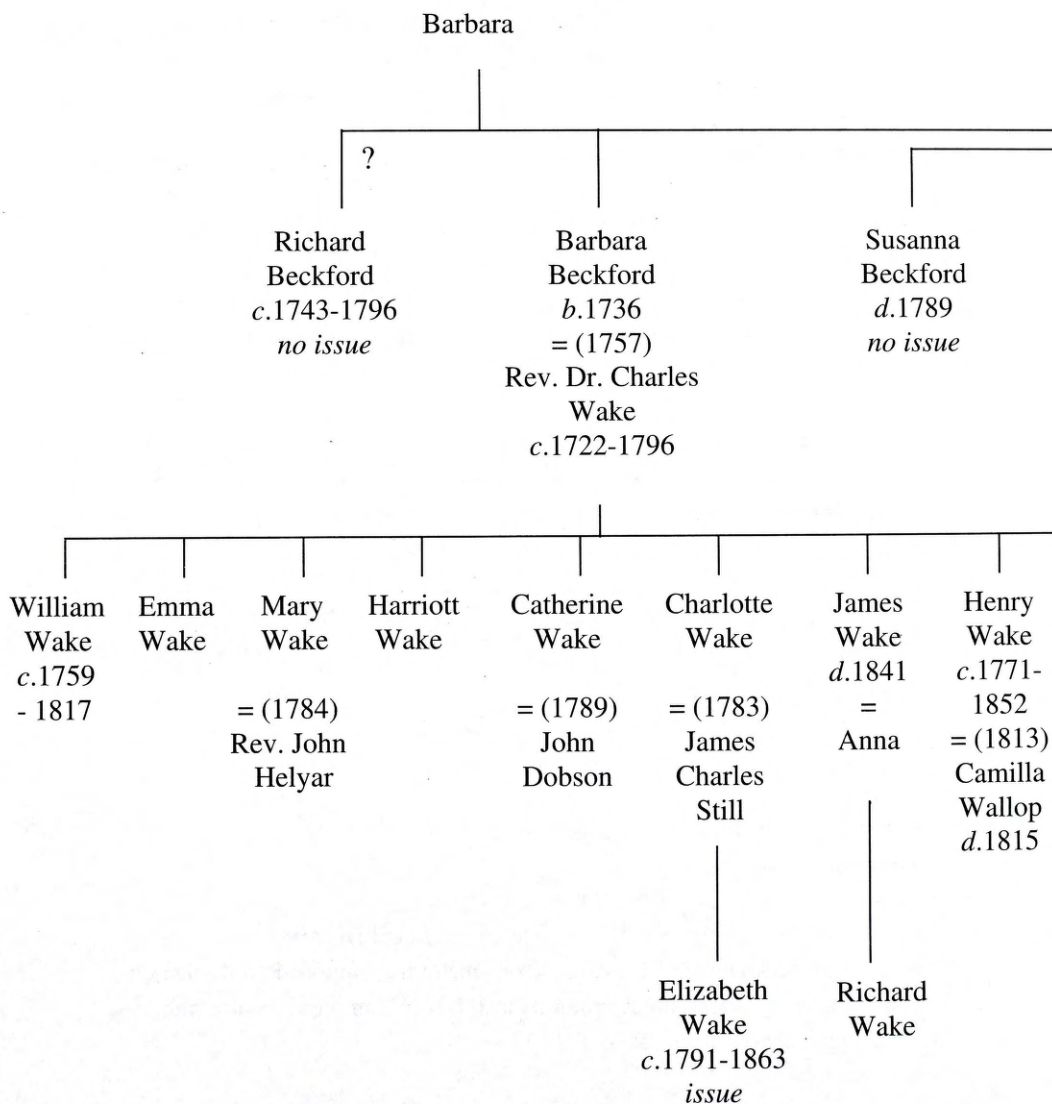
¹⁷ Martin Weiler, 'Heavitree, Jamaica,' Heavitree Local History Society *Newsletter* no. 6, August 2001, available on-line in the Jamaica Family Search Genealogy Library, <http://jamaicanfamilysearch.com/Samples/heavitree.htm>.

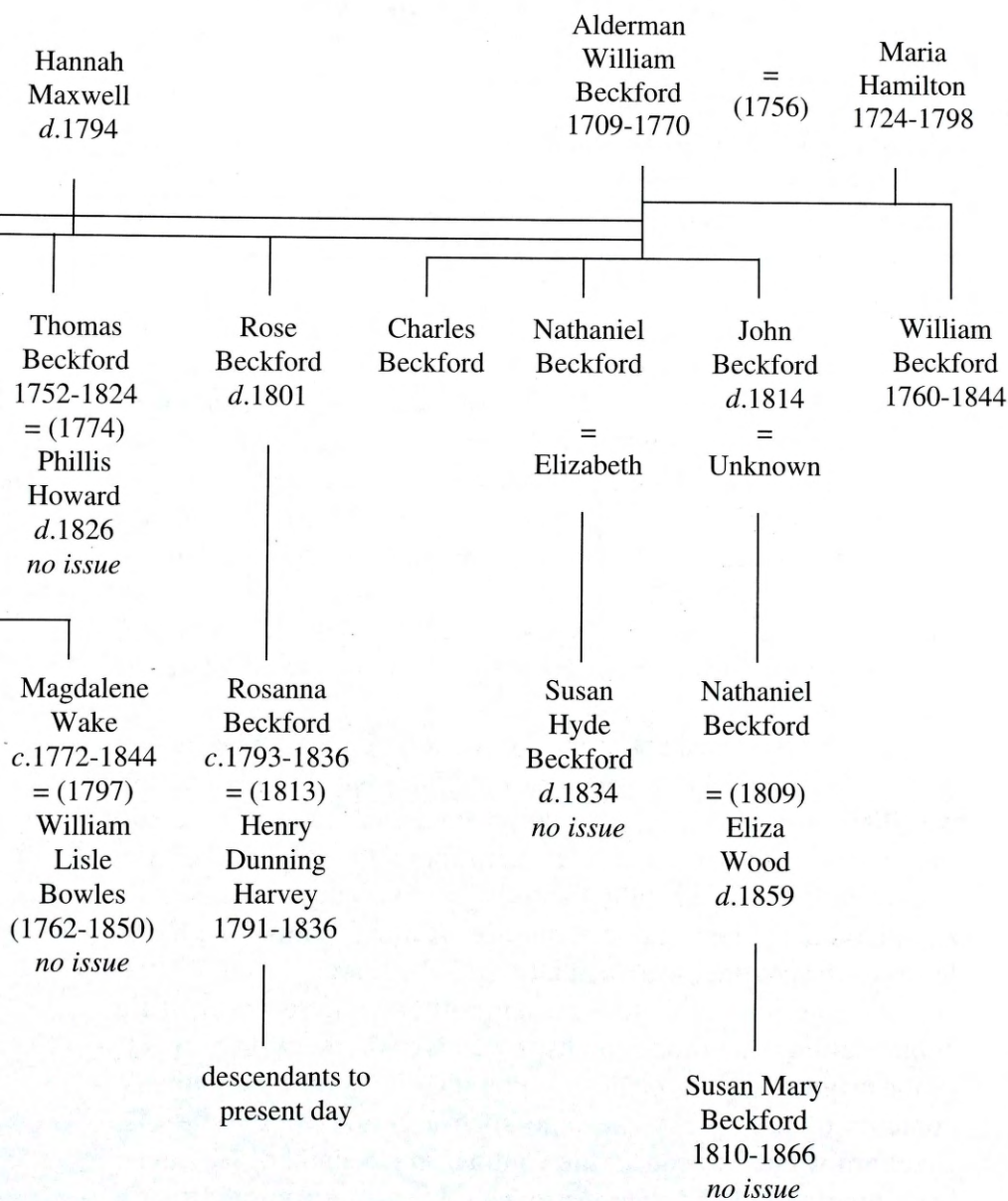
¹⁸ *Gentleman's Magazine* 59 pt. 2 (Sept 1789): 866a.

¹⁹ Alexander, 54.

²⁰ Alexander, 59.

**Alderman Beckford's children and their mothers,
with descendants of his illegitimate children
for two further generations where known**





Fonthill and its Abbey: 'The Haunt of Eager Curiosity'

ROBERT J. GEMMETT

When it was announced in October 1822 that Christie's auction of the magnificent contents of Fonthill Abbey would not take place, the general public's reaction was one of dismay – a 'Grand Disappointment,' as the *Morning Post* characterized it.¹ This response was understandable in view of the intense interest excited by the public opening of Fonthill and its grounds for the first time in their history. Captivated by Beckford's acknowledged reputation as a connoisseur and by what had been the impenetrable secrecy of his pleasure dome, the public became afflicted with 'Fonthill fever' in their eagerness to see the estate. 'The FEVER raged without control,' explained Thomas F. Dibdin. 'The whole country seemed to feel, in a *social* degree, what the earth would, in a *physical* degree, if a slight shock of an earthquake had agitated it. Across the country, in all directions, for some fifty miles, parties were in a perpetual state of locomotion.'²

The public learned about the cancellation on 6 October, when notices were posted in towns near Fonthill, indicating that access was discontinued due to negotiations that were underway to sell the entire estate by private contract. The buyer was the gunpowder millionaire John Farquhar who was represented in the negotiations by the London auctioneer Harry Phillips. The broad terms of the contract were actually agreed upon on 5 October, but the transaction did not go smoothly. There were title complications that took months to resolve. Furthermore, aspects of the original sale agreement, involving division of the valuable contents of the Abbey, became such a contentious issue that Beckford wanted to cancel the contract in December.³ However, by January 1823 the *New European Magazine* reported that a

final agreement had been reached between the principals and noted, moreover, that Farquhar had 'resolved to bring the whole of the furniture to sale in August next; previous to which the Abbey and effects will be shown by tickets, as before, and with far less reserve.'⁴ At this stage, Farquhar may not have made up his mind as to what would constitute the 'furniture' of the Abbey, but soon it also included paintings, drawings, china, a stunning array of works of art and an extraordinary collection of books and prints. It was a decision that ensured that the rage of Fonthill fever would revive again in the months that followed.

The reason given for Farquhar's disposal of Beckford's collections, according to newspaper accounts, was he felt that the contents were unsuited to the Gothic character of the Abbey. He was 'resolved to furnish it according to his own taste in a solid and substantial style of magnificence.'⁵ Having unshakable confidence in his own artistic interests, Beckford undoubtedly reacted to this revelation with amusement. But Farquhar's taste tended towards a more traditional style of interior décor, one marked by simplicity and formal grandeur and more characteristic of the other great estates in England. Recalling William Hazlitt's assessment of the Fonthill collection, one correspondent explained that 'the various articles with which Mr. Beckford furnished the Abbey in so elaborate a style, never accorded with Mr. Farquhar's taste. The latter is said to admire the bold and substantial, rather than the delicate and ornamental, in all works where the force of original genius is called into action; and hence he is not pleased with the numberless minute objects which the former has collected. As toys, he thinks they may amuse for a moment, but as decorations for a Gothic edifice he regards them as alike offensive to common sense and good taste.' This correspondent also published the rumour that Farquhar was inclined to promote a national interest in the Abbey by making it an English *Louvre*, open to the public certain times of the year as a museum set up to display splendid specimens of

the fine arts.⁶ If this indeed was a plan that Farquhar ever contemplated, he never carried it out.

Providing public access to the Fonthill estate for the second time within a year was bound to create an even greater stir than Christie's aborted sale. The Christie sale, after all, was much more limited in scope than the sale of 1823, as was evident from its scheduled run of ten days. Christie's catalogue included pictures, gold and silver plate, antique cabinets, rare japan, agate, and porcelain, some furniture, but no books and prints. By comparison, the sale conducted by Phillips on behalf of Farquhar was so much more extensive that it took thirty-seven days to complete.⁷

Both Phillips and Farquhar anticipated an increase in the volume of visitors and planned accordingly. During the Christie view, many of the rooms of the Abbey were closed to the public. Farquhar, by contrast, ordered the opening of all of the previously closed rooms, including Beckford's bedroom (the Gallery Cabinet), the Anti-Room, the Vaulted Library, the Grand Drawing Room, the miniature cabinet in the south-east tower, Beckett's Passage, and the Great Northern Passage. These changes allowed the visitor to complete a tour of the building without retracing any steps, which was not possible in 1822.

The unfinished Eastern Transept was set up under the direction of the architect Stedman Whitwell as the site of the auction to provide ample room to display to advantage the objects of vertu, paintings, furniture and books for sale. The walls were covered with a tapestry, while the joists above were cloaked with a false ceiling made of striped muslin. The auction rostrum stood in the middle of the floor surrounded by a range of wooden benches that rose from the floor in amphitheatre effect to the upper sections of the walls. The Oak Parlour, the Crimson and Yellow Drawing Rooms were also set aside as auction sites for some of the paintings and other items.

In 1822 the Beckford Arms, Lamb, Swan, and Crown Inns

nearby were filled to capacity, much to the disgruntlement of the crowds looking for overnight accommodation. For the 1823 sale some of the pressure on the local inns was relieved by fitting up the remaining pavilion of Fonthill Splendens under the direction of Thomas Harrington, proprietor of the Black Horse Inn in Salisbury. Accommodation included bedrooms offered at a reasonable rate, a large common coffee room and private sitting rooms. William Dore of the White Lion Hotel in Bath provided spirits and food all day long in the Fountain Court on the west side of St. Michael's Gallery as another hospitable gesture to those individuals who arrived from great distances.

Tickets for visiting Fonthill on any two days sold for a guinea each; tickets with sale catalogues, which admitted three persons every day, except Sundays, during the viewing and sale, sold for 5 guineas each. The ticket required for entrance was an impressive design by Stedman Whitwell, displaying the great tower from the perspective of the rear façade of the Eastern Transept. At the bottom of this card were two ornamented sections. One would be detached for the first visit; the second removed upon return. All tickets were checked at a single entrance gate at the barrier wall. In lieu of a guard house that was used for the previous viewing, Farquhar had a rustic lodge in the form of a 'moss clad shed' constructed at the gate which John Rutter depicted in a vignette on the title-page of his guide book, *A New Descriptive Guide to Fonthill Abbey and Demesne* (Shaftesbury, 1823).

Once visitors reached the Abbey, there were two entrances: one for viewing the Abbey and the other to enter the saleroom. The first was normally the servants' entrance through the door of the Eastern Postern Tower, described as 'a little low portal, latticed, and opening to a small passage' leading to the Oak Parlour.⁸ The *Morning Post* described the second entrance in what appears to be in the north side of the Eastern Transept: 'Just before entering the great quadrangle on the south of the Abbey, a



Fonthill Abbey from the South West, possibly by John Britton.
Pencil drawing dated 1823. 145 x 128 mm. Private collection.

carriage-road branches off to the right, and soon after turning to the left, by a new cut, sweeps, on a kind of natural terrace, in front of the lofty façade of the eastern transept. In the centre of this, and necessarily at a great height from the ground, owing to the great excavation beneath, an opening has been made, to which a broad and commodious covered bridge, with two flights of stairs, gives an easy and safe access.’⁹ Upon entering the building, the visitor came upon a double staircase with the right side leading to the saleroom; the left side of the stairs was used for the purpose of exiting the building. Following the right staircase, the visitor passed through an anteroom that then led to the saleroom at the level where the highest seats were located in the constructed amphitheatre.

Public inspection of the estate began on 16 June. Heavy rains marked the weather for the two months preceding the auction, but the public was undeterred. They continued to travel for hundreds of miles from all parts of the country to obtain a first-hand look at Beckford’s palace and its lavish contents. By 8 August newspaper reports indicated that over 5,000 people had visited the estate.

Farquhar himself increased the numbers dramatically by reserving Sunday 7 September for all the inhabitants of neighbouring towns and villages to attend the viewing free of charge. Over 1,500 people descended upon the estate on that single day. The visit was orderly despite the great numbers wandering through the grounds and gazing at the treasures on display inside the Abbey. But a crisis occurred when the ceremony was to end at 3 o’clock in the afternoon. A gong was sounded to inform everyone it was time to leave when suddenly another very large group of ‘Hindonians’ and ‘Tisburinians’ arrived who were not aware that the view would be closing at that time. It was quickly determined that for the purpose of maintaining order the newcomers should be accommodated, but as soon as those leaving detected what was happening, they too

crowded the entrance door and forced their way in for a second tour. As the *Morning Post* reported: 'Again they paraded the superb galleries, and praised and stared, and pointed at the treasures which they contain. They remained thus occupied for an hour and a half, when the gong again bade them "part in peace." Highly gratified by the indulgence extended to them by the present Proprietor, they obeyed the signal, and retreated in excellent order.'¹⁰

It must have been unsettling to the owners of other great estates in Wiltshire that the ex-residence and collections of the most celebrated pariah in England was receiving so much attention. Perhaps to placate them, the *Salisbury and Winchester Journal* tried to promote other attractions in the Wiltshire area:

The admirers of architecture will delight in the splendid remains of Malmsbury and in the simple magnificence of the Cathedral at Salisbury, which, as a perfect and unmixed example of the early English or pointed style, stands unrivalled. – Longford Castle (the seat of the Earl of Radnor) with its inestimable Claudes – Wilton, and its superb cloister, erected by the Earl of Pembroke, to contain his rare and extensive collection of busts, statues, &c. – the fine mansion, chapel, and ruins of Wardour Castle, the property of Lord Arundel – the Marquess of Lansdowne's picturesque seat at Bowood – Longleat, the princely residence of the Marquess of Bath – Sir Richard Hoare's house in the romantic grounds of Stourhead – and Corsham, the seat of Paul Methuen, Esq. will all furnish forth an ample feast for the lover of taste and the amateur of paintings. The geological treasures of the county are not uninteresting; and the antiquarian will be gratified by an inspection of the mysterious Stonehenge, and will find abundant materials for reflection in the antiquities of its surrounding plains. In short, there are few counties which can boast of superior attractions either to the man of science or of pleasure, especially when, to all the beauties enumerated above, is added the immense and costly assemblage of the

world's rarities which is to be found within the classic walls of Fonthill.¹¹

In view of the abrupt cancellation of the Christie auction, there was a great deal of anxiety and suspicion about the likelihood of the second sale meeting the same fate. In 1822 some dealers and connoisseurs felt duped by what they ultimately perceived to be a shrewd marketing scheme engineered by Beckford. Reports also followed in the press about the possibility of some legal actions initiated by individuals to recoup the expenses incurred from travelling long distances to the Abbey. The cynicism that developed at this time continued to be strong as Farquhar's sale approached. To alleviate such fears, frequent reassurances in the press were made that this sale would take place and, indeed, this time no postponement occurred. It began as announced on 9 September at 1 o'clock in the afternoon.

As was the case in 1822, a pilgrimage to the Abbey achieved the status of a major social event fuelled by extensive press coverage. The mania became so intense that the *New Monthly Magazine* announced at one point that the 'world may just at present be divided into two classes of persons; those who have seen Fonthill Abbey, and those who have not'.¹² The press monitored the crowds as they arrived and reported, whenever possible, their rank, attire, and occasionally their reaction to the experience. One account on the day before the auction observed that 'numberless visiters continued to arrive from an early hour in rapid succession, and at one o'clock the beautiful vista opposite the grand portal of the Abbey displayed various groups in every part, all attired in light costume, and occasionally selecting the most favourable views of the splendid edifice as they passed along the "velvet turf." The different apartments in the interior were equally crowded; and, among the personages of distinction who seemed to admire the countless objects of rare curiosity which presented themselves to the eye, were Lord Arundel, Lord

Ellenborough, Lord Northwick, with several others of the Nobility and Gentry. The ladies were very numerous, and nothing appeared to escape their notice.¹³

That this event brought about a mingling of the various levels of society became a source of fascination and amusement. One reporter attempted to distinguish between the ranks of society by describing a situation in which 'native vulgarity' was in full display:

This day brought with it a succession of visitors from an early hour. Among them were many of the bourgeois, but there were also some personages of higher note, who sported splendid equipages. They all occasionally promenaded the grounds, and inspected the interior of the Abbey. The prevailing dress among the ladies was pink, blue, and violet-coloured sarsnet, with hats or bonnets to correspond; and I must observe, however ungallant may be the assertion, that there were several of them to whom it was no difficult matter to discern the stout and sturdy daughter of the yeoman from the "gentle maid" of higher lineage, though both were equally attired in the gay robes of fashion. The former could not pass through any of the apartments without handling every object of curiosity that came in her way, gazing at it at the same time with a vacant stare, and always stumbling on a misnomer in her attempt to guess the proper designation. The latter was never observed to touch any thing, and appeared content to receive her information from those who were more experienced than herself, asking only such occasional questions as good taste and propriety suggested. In the course of the day this distinction was forcibly exemplified by the conduct of two lumpish-looking sisters with fat florid faces, prominent teeth, and large globular eyes; a pair of damsels whom Nature would seem to have formed only to stand as a marked exception to every thing wild and amiable to the sex. They had scarcely waddled into the grand saloon, when turning up the whites of their eyes in wild amazement at the

splendour of the scene, they both burst forth into exclamations which provoked the laughter of all who heard them.¹⁴

Some of the most privileged and well connected were invited to stay overnight at the Abbey. Among them were the Marquess and Marchioness of Lansdowne, with their son Lord Petty, the Dowager Lady Roden, Mr Pares, the partner of the Lord Mayor of London, Douglas Kinnaird, Byron's London banker and literary agent, and the Bishop of Winchester, who ended up incurring an injury to his leg after falling on the stone stairs in the Great Western Hall.

The newspapers were also eager to note the presence of Beckford's son-in-law, the man Beckford once rejected as an unsuitable husband for his elder daughter. In one report, General Orde, who came with his daughters, is described as a

fine-looking man, about fifty years of age, with an air and manner strongly indicative of his profession, but he appears exceedingly depressed in spirits, nor indeed is it to be wondered at, considering the close relation in which he stands towards the late proprietor of Fonthill. He now sees the magnificent mansion of his father-in-law – a palace worth of an Eastern Prince, denuded from day to day, of all its rare and gorgeous embellishments, while the structure itself, with the vast tracts of which it formed so proud an ornament, must, no longer, be regarded as the enviable inheritance of the Beckford family. All has passed into the hands of strangers! The General was accompanied by two fine little girls, his daughters, and the grand-children of Mr. Beckford. He evinced the tenderest paternal affection towards them, leading them by the hand through the different rooms, and directing their attention to such objects as he thought likely to gratify their curiosity.¹⁵

The press enjoyed noting the differences in rank all brought together in one place. But understandably they concentrated on the higher echelons of British society and identified them by

name whenever possible. Almost every newspaper article on Fonthill published in 1823 included a list of the most prominent visitors who travelled to the estate. The *Morning Post* even revealed the existence of a book that all visitors signed upon entering the Abbey. Their correspondent used it on one occasion to transcribe the names of those who signed it and then published the list in the issue of 13 October.¹⁶ The whereabouts of this book is not known and unfortunately may well be lost forever. It would have provided a valuable record of those who passed through the Fonthill portals. In the absence of this document, the only sources of information are the auction catalogues of 1823, containing the names of successful bidders, and the list of prominent figures reported by the press. The compilation that follows attempts to fill this gap and is based on the numerous press notices that recorded the names of important citizens, both native and foreign, who made an excursion to the estate during the five-month period of the public 'viewing'.¹⁷

These included the land-owning aristocracy, representing families of wealth, blood and title, members of Parliament and other persons who held high positions in government, officials of the Anglican Church, military figures – in short, those individuals who collectively constituted the cultural establishment of the country. The irony of their presence at Fonthill could not have been lost on Beckford whose secluded life there was to a great extent due to his ostracism from the very social groups who were now eager to see his residence and its trappings. Having been a place of peace and privacy, Fonthill was now transformed into a watering place, the 'scene of crowded resort', the 'gay haunt of eager curiosity'.¹⁸ Under Beckford's ownership, there had been an air of mystery and solitude about this forbidden place which now yielded to 'business, pleasure, fashion, and popular wonder', as variegated groups of people revelled in the delights that Beckford had at one time reserved for himself. For so long a symbol of isolation and security, Fonthill had now

become a poignant object of loss and transience with its treasures about to be dispersed throughout the world. Two years later, its fate was to be further reinforced as a symbol of mutability when its proud and lofty tower came crashing down to earth.

Prominent Visitors to the Fonthill Abbey Estate in 1823

Identified in Press Notices

A'Court, Captain [Edward Henry], M. P.
 Aberdeen, Earl of
 Ackermann, [Rudolph]
 Acland, Sir Thomas and Lady
 Adare, Lord [Earl of Dunraven]
 Alnutt, Mr
 Althorpe, Colonel and Mrs
 Arundel[1], Lord and Lady
 Auckland, Lord
 Bagshaw, Sir W.
 Baker, Sir E. and Lady
 Banks, [Henry], Esq., M. P.,
 Corfe Castle
 Barford, Lord
 Baring, Alexander, Esq.
 Baring, Francis, Esq., M. P.
 Barnard, Mrs and Miss
 Barry, Rev. Dr
 Bath, Marquess of
 Bebb, J[ohn], Esq. [Donnington Grove]
 Belfour, J., Esq.
 Bell, General
 Belmore, Lord
 Bench, William, Esq.
 Bennet[t], Lady M.
 Bennet[t], John, Esq., M. P.

Beresford, Lord
 Biddulph, Captain
 Bingham, Admiral and family
 Bolton, Lord
 Bosanquet, Mr and Mrs
 Bradford, Earl and Countess of
 Brecknock, [Earl of]
 Brogden, [James], (Chairman of the Committees in the House of Commons)
 Buckingham, Duke of
 Burdett, Lady
 Burford, Lord
 Burgoyne, General
 Burke, Colonel
 Burrough, Sir James
 Buxton, W., Esq., M. P.
 Byng, G[eorge], Esq., M. P. and Mrs
 Calcraft, [J. H.], Esq., M. P.
 Callot, Rev. Dr
 Calthorpe, Lord
 Camden, Marquis
 Cameron, General and Mrs
 Carnarvon, Earl and Countess of
 Cawdor, Lord and Lady
 Chester, Bishop of
 Cholmondeley, Mr

Clifford, Lord and Lady
 Clive, Hon. Mr and Mrs
 Clutterbuck, Mr and Mrs
 Cobham, Mr and Miss
 Cochrane, Hon. Mrs (purchaser
 by deputy)
 Cockerill, John, Esq. and family
 Cocks, the Hon. Somers and
 family
 Coffin, Colonel [Pine]
 Coffin, Rev.
 Cohan, Rev. W. B.
 Coventry, Hon. Mr and Mrs
 Cuff, Rev. Mr
 Cullum, Sir T[homas] and Lady
 Currie, E.
 d'Aglie, Count
 Dalrymple, Sir H[ew]
 Dashwood, Captain
 Davis, Richard [Hart], Esq., M. P.
 Delmar, Baron
 Dering, Sir Edward, Bart.
 Dibdin, Thomas F.
 Digby, Lord
 Dorchester, Lord
 Drew, Colonel
 Ducie, Lord and family
 Duff, A., Esq.
 East, Augustus and Lady
 Ebrington, Lord and Lady
 Egerton, Francis Esq., M. P. and
 Mrs
 Ellenborough, Lord
 Elston, Colonel
 Essex, Earl of
 Fawkes, Lady
 Finch, Hon. Mr and Mrs
 Fingall, Earl of

Fisher, [John, M. A.],
 Archdeacon [of Salisbury]
 Fitzgerald, Sir James and Lady
 Fitzhugh, Mr and Mrs
 Forbes, Captain
 Forbes, Hon. Mr
 Foster, Major
 Foulkes, Rev. Dr
 Franchi, Gregorio
 Franklyn, Sir William
 Freemantle, Sir Thomas, M. P.
 Gardner, Lady
 Gordon, W[illiam], Esq., M. P.
 and Mrs
 Gower, Lord F[rancis]
 Leveson, M. P.
 Grant, Hon. Charles
 Greenaway, G. C. and family
 Grenfell, P[ascoe], Esq., M. P.
 Grenville, Lord
 Greville, Sir Charles
 Grosvenor, Earl
 Guildford, Countess of
 Halden, General
 Hammersley, Mr and Mrs
 Hampson, Sir George and Lady
 Harrison, Rev. Dr
 Harvey, General
 Harwood, Rev. Dr
 Hasleigh, Lady
 Haviland, Captain
 Hawkins, [J. H.], Esq., M. P.
 Haylett, M. P.
 Hazlitt, William
 Head, Rev. Sir John
 Heber, Richard, Esq., M. P.
 Herbert, Lady
 Hereford, Bishop of

Heysham, Mr
 Hoare, Henry
 Hoare, Sir Richard Colt
 Hodges, Mr (of Milbank)
 Hodgson, General
 Hoffender, Mr and Mrs
 Homfrey, Captain
 Hotham, Lord and Lady
 Howard de Walden, Lord
 Howard, Lady
 Hurd, Philip
 Hutchinson, Captain, R. N.
 Ilchester, Lord
 James, Sir Walter
 Jolly, Colonel, the Recorder of
 London
 Jones, I., Esq.
 Kaye, Colonel
 Kerr, Lord Henry
 Kerry, Lord
 Killeen, Lord and Lady
 Kinnaird, D[ouglas]
 Lansdowne, Marquess of
 (purchaser by deputy) and the
 Marchioness
 Lennard, Sir T. B. and Lady
 Leycester, Hugh, Esq.
 Liverpool, Earl and Countess of
 Lockhart, [John G.?] Mr and
 Mrs
 London, Bishop of
 Lucy, [George], Esq., M. P.
 Macclesfield, Earl of
 Mackintosh, Sir James
 Macqueen, [Thomas] P., Esq.,
 M.P.
 Malet, Sir Alexander
 Marryatt, [Joseph], Esq., M. P.

Marsett, Rev.
 McDonald, Colonel
 Mengden, Countess
 Miles, P[hilip J.], Esq., M. P.
 [Leigh Court]
 Miles, W[illiam] (from Bristol)
 Millman, Lady
 Montgomery, Mr (nephew of Earl
 of Pembroke)
 Montmorency, Baron and
 Baroness
 Moody, Captain
 Moore, Thomas (the Poet)
 Moorsom, Captain
 Morgan, Sir Charles, Bart., M. P.
 Murray, Hon. [John] and Mrs
 Nepean, Sir Molyneux and Lady
 Northcote, Sir Stafford
 Northwick, Lord
 Ogleby, Sir G.
 Oldham, J. Esq.
 Onslow, Sir Henry and Lady
 Orde, General and Beckford's
 granddaughters
 Palmerston, Lord
 Pares, Mr (business partner of
 Lord Mayor of London)
 Parkinson, Colonel
 Paulett, Lord H. and Lady
 Paxton, Sir W[illiam], M. P.
 Payne, Colonel and Mrs
 Peel, Mr [Robert], (Home
 Secretary)
 Peel, W[illiam], Esq. M. P.]
 Pembroke, Earl and Countess of
 Penruddock, J. H., Esq., M. P.
 Percival, Rev. A.
 Petty, Lord

Peyton, Captain
 Phipps, Mr
 Pole, Rev. Dr
 Pole, Sir W[illiam Wellesley],
 Bart.
 Pontesso, Marquis (from Madrid)
 Porchester, Lord
 Portman, [Edward Berkeley],
 Esq., M. P.
 Powlett, General
 Prevost, Rev. Dr
 Price, Captain
 Pringle, Sir J[ohn]
 Prudhoe, Lord
 Redesdale, Lord
 Ricardo, Mr and Mrs
 Rivers, Lord and Lady
 Riversdale, Lord and Lady
 Rochford, Earl of
 Roden, Earl and Dowager
 Countess of
 Rogers, [Samuel] (the Poet)
 Ross, Sir P.
 Roxburgh[e], Duchess of
 Rumbold, [Charles E.], Esq.,
 M. P.
 Russell, [J.] Watts, Esq., M. P.
 Sadler, Lt., R. N.
 St. Germain, Lord and Lady
 St. Quintin, E. H. Esq. and Mrs
 Salisbury, Dean of [Hugh Nicolas
 Pearson]
 Salisbury, Lord Bishop of [John
 Fisher, D. D.]
 Sanganskow (two Russian
 Princes)
 Scott, Sir Claude (purchaser by
 deputy)

Shuckburgh, Mr
 Smith, Rev. Mr
 Somerset, Duke and Duchess of
 Somerset, the Ladies
 Somerville, Lord and Lady.
 Stair, Earl
 Stanhope, Colonel
 Steward, Captain
 Steward, Lt. Colonel and Mrs
 Stopford, Hon. I.
 Stormont, Viscount
 Stowell, Lord
 Strobe, Captain
 Stuart, Hon. C.
 Sturt, [Charles E.]
 Symons, Major
 Talbot, Sir George
 Theobald, Mr, Esq.
 Thynne, Lord John, M. P.
 Torrens, Count and Countess
 Trench, [Frederick W.], M. P.
 Trotter, Sir Coutts and Lady
 Ulston, Colonel
 Verdunin, Count
 Vivian, Colonel H.
 Warren, Rev. Dr
 Way, Rev. J.
 White, Colonel
 Wilder, Sir F[rancis] and Lady
 Williams, Lady Hampden
 Wilson, Sir Henry
 Winchester, Bishop of
 Woodcock, Rev. Dr
 Wray, Sir. B., Bart.
 Wrottesley, Sir John, M. P.
 Wyndam, Wadham, Esq., M. P.
 Wynn, Sir W. W., Bart. and
 Lady

¹ *Morning Post*, 8 Oct 1822, 3.

² *The Museum, or Record of Literature, Fine Arts, Science, Antiquities, the Drama, etc.*, 5 Oct 1822 and 9 Nov 1822, in R. J. Gemmett, *Beckford's Fonthill: The Rise of a Romantic Icon* (Norwich: Michael Russell, 2003), 274, 286.

³ For details of the negotiations, see Gemmett, *Beckford's Fonthill*, 124-127.

⁴ *New European Magazine* 2 (Jan 1823): 83.

⁵ 'Fonthill,' *Morning Herald*, 9 Sept 1823, 3.

⁶ 'Fonthill,' *Morning Herald*, 3 Oct 1823, 3.

⁷ Based on information provided in Phillips's 1823 sale catalogue, I indicated in *Beckford's Fonthill* (p. 138) that a separate sale of the wines and liqueurs in the Abbey cellars took place on 30 and 31 Oct 1823. However, I have since determined from further research that Phillips re-scheduled this sale. It actually occurred on Saturday, 15 Nov. He also issued a separate catalogue for the occasion.

⁸ 'A Day at Fonthill Abbey,' *New Monthly Magazine* 8 (Oct 1823), in Gemmett, *Beckford's Fonthill*, 330.

⁹ 'Fonthill Abbey,' *Morning Post*, 8 Sept 1823, 3.

¹⁰ 'Fonthill Abbey,' *Morning Post*, 10 Sept 1823, 3.

¹¹ *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 4 Aug 1823, 4.

¹² 'A Day at Fonthill Abbey,' *New Monthly Magazine* 8 (Oct 1823), in Gemmett, *Beckford's Fonthill*, 326.

¹³ 'Fonthill,' *Morning Herald*, 10 Sept 1823, 2.

¹⁴ 'Fonthill,' *Morning Herald*, 12 Sept 1823, 3.

¹⁵ 'Fonthill,' *Morning Herald*, 27 Sept 1823, 3.

¹⁶ 'Fonthill Abbey,' *Morning Post*, 13 Oct 1823, 3.

¹⁷ The following list includes individuals who visited Fonthill in 1822 but whose names did not appear again in the press notices for the 1823 sale: Lord Andover, Lord Apsley, Lord Ashley [Earl of Shaftesbury], Duke of Beaufort, Lord G[eorge] Bentinck, the Right Hon. Sturges Bourne, Lord Braybrooke, Earl of Bridgewater, Lord and Lady Bridport, Earl of Carlisle, Lord Carrington, Romeo Coates, Mrs Coutts [Harriet Mellon], Earl Cowper, Earl of Craven, Earl of Darnley, Countess de Rolle, Duke of Devonshire, Countess of Effingham, Lord George Fane, Lady Fraser, H. R. H. the Duke of Gloucester, Earl Harcourt, Lord Holland, Countess Howe, Sir Thomas Lawrence, Sir Charles Long, Lord and Lady Murray, Lord and Lady Northcote, Lady E. Palk, Lady Pollen, Lady Mary Vaughan, Duke of Wellington, Earl of Westmorland.

¹⁸ 'Fonthill Abbey,' *Morning Chronicle*, 26 Sept 1823, 3.

Magnificence in Eighteenth-Century Portugal

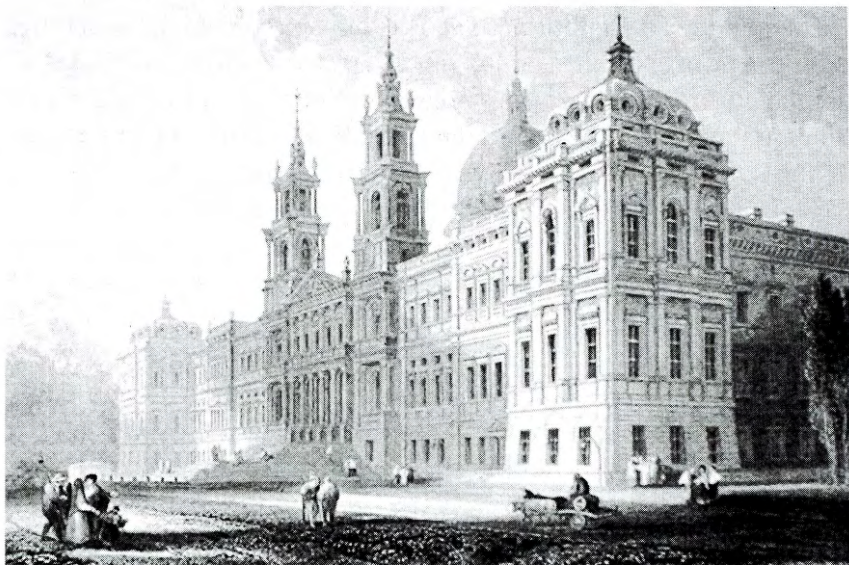
MALCOLM JACK

Angela Delaforce, *Art and Patronage in Eighteenth-Century Portugal*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. 553 pp. £120. ISBN 0-521-57130-8.

The first shipment of Brazilian gold arrived in Lisbon in the last year of the seventeenth century, seven years before the beginning of the reign of King Joao V, known as the Magnificent, in 1706. A few decades later, when the King was still only halfway through his reign of forty-three years, diamonds were discovered in Bahia, the northern capital of Brazil. These discoveries led to an enormous increase in revenue for the Portuguese crown (and those aristocrats involved in colonial administration or trade) and enabled the King to indulge his passion for the arts as well as for grand architectural projects. Beckford, well-aware of this Joanine heritage, later wrote of 'the lavish expenditure carried to such triumphant excess by that most magnificent of modern Solomons, King John V'.

Royal projects included the commissioning of civic monuments such as the Lisbon Aqueduct; the elaborate Royal Library at Coimbra University and numerous ecclesiastical buildings of which the Patriarchal Church in Lisbon and the vast baroque splendour of Mafra Convent were the most outstanding. João Frederico Ludovice, the architect of Mafra was also made responsible for the rebuilding of the principal royal residence in Lisbon, the Ribeira Palace.

In her monumental and entertaining study of *Art and Patronage in Eighteenth-Century Portugal*, Angela Delaforce manages to recreate this entire Joanine world as it emerged in the first part of the eighteenth century. This is done in a series of thematic chapters rather than in a chronological sequence. Gradually, however, the author moves through the whole



Mafra. Drawn by D. Roberts and engraved by W. Finden.
 From *Finden's Illustrations of the Life and Works of Lord Byron*, 1833-4

century, exploring subjects like the Lisbon earthquake and the Pombalese restoration, the position of the Church as a patron of the arts and the movements in arts and style toward the end of the century. By the end of the book we have had an extensive and detailed tour through the history, art and culture of Portugal during the entire period.

Among the most fascinating chapters are those which deal with the contents and collections amassed in the Ribeira Palace which, with its Oriental ceramics, fine tapestries and vast library of rare books and manuscripts was burnt to the ground in 1755. Close knowledge of archival sources has enabled Delaforce to present what can only be described as scholarly detective work of the highest order. Hundreds of objects have been identified, described and then relocated, as if in virtual reality, to their original places within buildings. The vast library, with its emphasis on the royal passion for history, has been carefully

reassembled. The author adds to this unusual technique a distinct understanding of the importance of symbolism such as is displayed in the imperial association of the tapestries known as the 'Conquest of India' or in the identification of the rise and fall of the sun with the wisdom and all-embracing protection of the Crown. These insights enrich Delaforce's work as a cultural commentary. We feel we are entering the ornate rooms of the royal palace (and other buildings) on a specialized and expert guided tour. By describing the style and content of nearby buildings, such as the Patriarchal Church and trading houses, the author brings the whole area of riverside Lisbon of the early eighteenth century before our eyes.

This technique of scholarly recreation is applied to other aspects of cultural life in eighteenth century Portugal. One chapter is devoted to Rodrigo Annes de Sá Almeida e Meneses (Marquês of Abrantes), a vivacious, talented multi-lingual diplomat and connoisseur who set out to conquer Rome socially when he was sent to the Vatican as Portuguese envoy. Not only did the Marquês set himself up in stately fashion and entertain lavishly in pursuit of his policy of gaining favours for Portugal from the Holy See but his patronage extended to taking Portuguese artists, such as Vieira Lusitano, to Rome where they were able to imbibe Italian influences at first hand. The importance of the symbolic connection between Lisbon and Rome materialized in the form of a magnificent triumphal arch erected in Lisbon in 1708. Figures representing the two cities were united on it; a telling inscription described Lisbon as an 'emulator of Rome'.

Of many foreign visitors, Delaforce identifies Beckford as the one who instinctively understood the King's attempt to recreate the grandeur of Rome in Lisbon. Beckford's comments are most perceptive when he visits Mafra, admiring the colossal marble statues of the saints at its entrance, comparing its portico with that of St. Peter's and praising Trevisani's masterly altar piece within the church.

Further chapters in the book cover a host of subjects in the same rich vein. There is an essay on collecting by the clergy and the nobility (the latter encouraging the Portuguese passion for Far Eastern porcelain noted by Beckford at aristocratic tables in Lisbon); another covers the Church as patron of the arts (containing an interesting sketch of the Tuscan Nicolau Nasoni's work in churches in the north of the country). Elsewhere Delaforce describes the monuments of the reign of the sybaritic Dom José (1750 –1777) including the pink Rococo palace of Queluz (where Beckford cavorted with the ladies in waiting among orange trees and marble statues), a sumptuous and ornate new Opera House; the Lisbon earthquake and Pombal's reconstruction of riverside Lisbon in a modern, grid system; academic and naturalist collectors of the late eighteenth century and the art, theory and design of the Portuguese Academy.

By the end of these dense but well-paced essays we have had a survey of the entire cultural map of the country in the decades before Beckford's arrival. His own comments, which the author finds sometimes perceptive, sometimes caustic, are woven into the story. While his connection with the powerful Marialvas gained him an entrée into aristocratic houses, we know he was not always impressed by what he saw. His comments are most carping when he visits the family Quinta da Praia at Bom Successo near Belém. He is more enthusiastic when speculating on the treasures of the ruined Palace of Loreto, the grand residence of the family in Lisbon which had been destroyed in the earthquake. Only at the Penalva Palace, with its Flemish masters and centre piece in the best manner of Raphael, is his account entirely glowing.

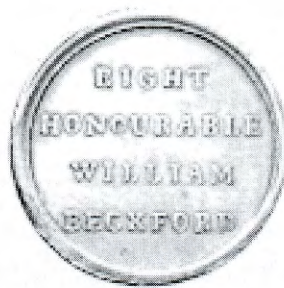
Delaforce's book is lavishly illustrated and handsomely produced with colour plates, black and white engravings and photographs of the highest standard, as well as being supported by an extensive bibliography and a full index of persons and places. It will take its place as a major work of reference for future generations of scholars.



43 mm medal by Kirk. 1770



35 mm medal by unknown maker. 1770



26 mm medal by Kirk. 1773

Commemorative Medals of Alderman Beckford

JON MILLINGTON

Such was Alderman Beckford's fame that two medals of him, based on contemporary portraits, appeared soon after his death in June 1770, while a third was issued in 1773. What made him a worthy subject was his support of John Wilkes, who had been charged with libel, and his speech to George III in which, in his second term as Lord Mayor of London, he defended the right of its citizens to question the results of a Middlesex election.

These three medals¹ (shown here, enlarged) were produced in copper or bronze, although silver examples are known.² The largest measures 43 mm, a little more than a crown coin, and was made by the family firm headed by John Kirk (1724-1776) in St. Paul's Churchyard, London. They were 'toy makers', at that time the name given to producers of small metal objects such as buckles and buttons as well as medals. This medal is a fine example of the high quality achieved by the firm, and depicts a three-quarter draped bust of Beckford holding a sword, surrounded by: 'WILL^M BECKFORD . ESQ^R'. On the reverse is the legend: 'THE . ZEALOUS . / ADVOCATE . & INVA / RIABLE . PROTECTOR / OF . THE . RIGHTS . PRIV / ILEGES & LIBERTIES / OF . THE . PEOPLE .' The exergue reads: 'OBIIT . 21 . JUN . 1770 / ANNO . ÆTATIS / 65'. He was born in 1709, so '65' is a mistake.

The maker of the other medal made in 1770 is unknown. It is 35 mm in diameter, somewhat smaller than a crown, and shows a draped bust of Beckford in full-bottomed wig facing right, surrounded by 'W^M BECKFORD ESQ . LORD MAYOR OF LONDON'. On the reverse a seated Justice holds scales and cap of liberty with, on the right, a book open at the words MAGNA CARTA. Round the edge is 'TRUE TO HIS TRUST', with the date 1770 in the exergue. This medal was struck in pewter as well as silver and copper.

Even three years after his death, Alderman Beckford was still famous enough to be depicted on one of the medals issued by the *Sentimental Magazine*; everyone would have known who he was. On the obverse of this medal, far commoner than the two larger ones, the draped bust of Beckford wearing a wig faces left, and 'KIRK' and 'FEC' are at the lower left and right. The reverse reads: 'RIGHT / HONOURABLE / WILLIAM / BECKFORD'. This 26 mm medal is between a 10p and 2p coin in size, and occurs in two different thicknesses, one being three-quarters of the other.³ The very rare 'silver' issue was actually Barton's metal, a silver-copper-silver sandwich in which there was no attempt to hide the copper by silver plating the rim.

Modelled on the *Gentleman's Magazine*, the *Sentimental Magazine*; Or, *General Assemblage of Science, Taste, and Entertainment. Calculated to Amuse the Mind, to Improve the Understanding, and to Amend the Heart* was a miscellany which included serialisations, historical anecdotes, theatrical news, character sketches, poetry, book reviews, foreign and domestic occurrences, correspondence, bankrupts, marriages and deaths. Most of the engravings depicted people engaged in pursuits such as card playing or duelling. The magazine appeared monthly from March 1773 to December 1777, generally with forty-eight pages and one or two engravings per issue. In those days the word sentimental meant deriving from views or opinions, as opposed to its use today to suggest nostalgia.

From the outset a commemorative portrait medal in copper, 'sealed up in a kind of silky paper to prevent injury to the impression', was given away with each issue. However, only once during 1773 was there any indication in the magazine of who was portrayed on the medals, when in August (p. 288), under 'To our Contributors', the editor wrote: 'We are much obliged to Mr. D—d—y, who professes himself an admirer of the Medals of Mr. Garrick, and of the late worthy Patriot Beckford, and hope he will be equally well pleased with that of George the Second'. So the last mentioned was issued in August, with, probably, Garrick in June and Beckford in July.

The medals presented in the first ten months of the magazine's existence, all made by the Kirk firm, were listed in the preface to the issue for January 1774 (p. [iii]), 'To the Public'. After thanking them for 'the uncommon eulogiums they have paid to the Medals', the editor continued, 'We have already given heads of the King, Queen, Duke of Gloucester, Mr. Garrick, Mr. Alderman Beckford, George the Second, Mr. Alderman Wilkes, Oliver Cromwell, the Earl of Chatham [William Beckford's godfather], and Lord Camden.' If they are listed in order of appearance, this further suggests that Alderman Beckford's medal was presented with the magazine for July 1773. All were dated 1773 on the reverse, except for those of Beckford, George the Second and Cromwell.

In the first month's issue of the *Sentimental Magazine* in March 1773 (p. 38) the editor noted that, 'The best translator of the two following [French] fables will be entitled to a silver medal, with his name or signature engraved thereon, whichever is most agreeable to himself'. In some months as many as six medals were awarded, and they bore the same image as that month's copper medal. This explains the existence of a 'silver' medal of Alderman Beckford.

Medals of notable people continued to be issued throughout 1774, but in March 1775 the editor wrote, 'At the Desire of several Correspondents, we have omitted a Medal in this Number, and Given two Copper-Plates.' After that, no further medals appeared.

¹ All three medals can be seen in the Department of Coins and Medals at the British Museum, nos. M 4774, M 4775 & M 4794.

² Laurence Brown, *British Historical Medals. Vol. 1. The Accession of George III to the Death of William IV* (London: Seaby, 1980), 32, nos. 141, 142 & 39, no. 170.

³ Michael Mitchiner, *Jetons, Medalets and Tokens. Vol. 3. British Isles Circa 1558 to 1830* (Sanderstead, Surrey: Hawkins, 1988), 1757-1760.

Completing the Episode: Clark Ashton Smith and *The Story of the Princess Zulkais and the Prince Kalilah*

STEVE MOORE

If ever there was a thankless task, it must be the ‘posthumous collaboration’, where a later writer completes, usually as a compliment, a tale left unfinished by a deceased predecessor. Such collaborations are always likely to receive a critical reception from admirers of the earlier author; while admirers of the later writer simply wonder why he bothered, instead of producing more original work. Nonetheless, such posthumous collaborations occur rather more frequently than one might think, and in the 1930s Beckford’s *Third Episode of Vathek* was completed by Californian author Clark Ashton Smith (1893-1961). Whether Beckford himself would have appreciated the compliment is, perhaps, a moot point.

Smith’s early writing career was devoted to poetry, mostly in traditional rhyme forms. His mentor was San Francisco poet George Sterling (1869-1926) and he moved in West Coast literary circles that included Ambrose Bierce and Jack London. Yet if Smith is remembered at all these days, it’s mainly by a small but devoted group of admirers of his weird fiction, which was mostly written in the 1920s and 1930s, and little of his work remains in print, except in small press editions.¹ This neglect is probably due mainly to his writing style, which, being baroque, poetic, Latinate and peppered with obscure words and archaisms, is generally too ‘difficult’ for twenty-first century readers. In his time, however, Smith was considered one of the ‘Big Three’ contributors to the American pulp magazine *Weird Tales*, along with H. P. Lovecraft (1890-1937; author of the cycle of ‘Cthulhu Mythos’ stories) and Robert E. Howard (1906-1936; creator of ‘Conan the Barbarian’), with both of whom he was a long-time

correspondent. He also wrote science fiction, but after the deaths of Lovecraft and Howard wrote few more stories, concentrating instead on poetry, naïve art and miniature sculpture.

Smith first read *Vathek* in 1908 at the age of 15, and in his extant correspondence he lists it, along with the *Arabian Nights*, Thomas Moore's *Lalla Rookh* and the Indian stories of Rudyard Kipling, as a considerable influence on his teenage fiction-writing.² The influence, however, was rather more in terms of content than style for (despite the opinion of Lin Carter that 'Smith derived much of his prose style from *Vathek*'³) when Smith lists those authors who influenced his handling of prose, he mentions Edgar Allan Poe, Ambrose Bierce, Lafcadio Hearn, Oscar Wilde, and several others, but *not* Beckford.⁴ This juvenilia, described by Smith himself as 'lurid Oriental romances', was mostly set in more recent historical times, and included rather fewer fantasy elements than some of the books that influenced him, and resulted in a small number of short stories being sold to *The Overland Monthly* and *Black Cat*, in 1911 and 1912.⁵ After this, however, Smith turned his attention mainly to poetry, publishing a number of books which were well received locally, and only began to produce significant quantities of further fiction in 1929. He rapidly became an established author of horror-fantasy short stories, and was a regular contributor to the highly-regarded monthly, *Weird Tales*.

Smith obviously never quite forgot his interest in the Oriental tale, and in November 1930 he completed an Arabian horror story, 'The Ghoul', which, in line with their common practice of mailing each other their manuscripts, he forwarded to H. P. Lovecraft.⁶ Interestingly, the tale opens with the words: 'During the reign of the Caliph Vathek...' though there is no other Beckfordian reference.

Perhaps remembering 'The Ghoul', in August 1932 Lovecraft and his friend James F. Morton suggested to Smith that he might write an ending for Beckford's *Third Episode*, with a view to publishing it in *Weird Tales*. At the time, Smith had not seen the

Episodes, but greeted the idea with enthusiasm, and also talked of composing entirely new fourth and fifth episodes, correctly remembering that Vathek and Nouronihar had met five persons awaiting their doom in the Halls of Eblis, but not that four of these formed two pairs.⁷

Within a month, Lovecraft had loaned Smith his copy of the American printing of the Marzials/Melville edition of the *Episodes*.⁸ By 16 September Smith had written a 4,000 word completion, and forwarded the 'ghostly collaboration' to Lovecraft for comment. In his letters, Smith speaks of having a lot of fun finishing the story, and his fascination with Beckford's original fragment. He also mentions that the project set him re-reading *Vathek* with new appreciation.⁹

Before looking at Smith's completion in a little more detail, we might first follow the publication history of the 'collaboration'. At the beginning of October 1932 Smith submitted the manuscript to Farnsworth Wright, the editor of *Weird Tales*. He was rather doubtful of the story's acceptability, both on the grounds of its length and the 'perversity' of the subject-matter, though he remained hopeful during the ensuing months. Ultimately, however, Wright returned the story to him by the end of January 1933 with the explanation that he 'saw no opportunity of using it'.¹⁰ In March, Smith submitted the story to *The Golden Book*, but once again it was not accepted.¹¹

After this, Smith appears to have put the story aside, and in June 1934 sent the holograph manuscript to the young Robert H. Barlow (1918-1951), a collector and correspondent of the 'Lovecraft circle', who later wrote poetry and fiction himself before turning to anthropology. In 1936 Barlow sought Smith's permission to use the story in an amateur, mimeographed magazine he intended to publish, and it finally saw print in the first issue of *Leaves*, dated Summer 1937.¹² The collaboration's first professional publication did not occur until 1960, in a collection of Smith's tales, *The Abominations of Yondo*, as 'The Third Episode of Vathek'.¹³ The completed tale has also appeared



in the collection edited by Lin Carter, *New Worlds for Old*, where it is erroneously stated to be 'By William Beckford, translated by Clark Ashton Smith';¹⁴ in all cases the Beckford part of the story is the text translated by Marzials.

It may be recalled that Beckford's tale broke off at the point where Zulkais has been abandoned by the Palm-tree-climber in the underground labyrinth of Omoultakos, the Jinn of the Great Pyramid and, having

dreamed of her brother Kalilah in the company of Eblis (who would ultimately allow their union), had taken the brazen-banistered stairway that led to a disquieting chamber. Smith, working only with the Marzials edition, would have been unaware of Beckford's apparent intention, recorded by Samuel Rogers, to provide a conclusion to the story where Kalilah 'had carnal connections with this sister, in the centre of the great Pyramid'.¹⁵ Knowing this, it's easy to see that Beckford foreshadowed this with the apparition of the blue light over the pyramids at the time of the twins' birth, and that Omoultakos was the appropriate Jinn to bring about this consummation. Hindsight is a wonderful thing, however, and it's perhaps forgivable that, lacking any such pointer, Smith missed these hints and went his own way with the story.

Briefly, in Smith's conclusion, Zulkais meets Omoultakos in the chamber where Beckford left her, and the Jinn turns out to have the likeness of a mangy baboon with its tail perpetually afire. After a tour of the chamber and its curious treasures, Omoultakos brings Zulkais to an open sarcophagus in which lies Kalilah, apparently killed by lions in the Nubian desert and brought to the chamber by subordinate Jinns. In return for a pledge of fealty to Eblis, Omoultakos provides her with a restorative; later, he rescues Zulkais from apparent danger in return for a similar pledge by Kalilah. The twins then live for an indefinite time as lovers in a pavilion in his subterranean gardens. Eventually, an earthquake plunges them into an underground river, where they are carried along on a raft of serpents until they reach the halls of Eblis, learn their horrid fate, and eventually meet Vathek.

Does Smith's continuation *work*? This, of course, can only be a matter of opinion. Stylistically, it seems to me that Smith has managed a fairly close match with Beckford, whose prose is generally rather more light and fluent than Smith's, in his normal style. Smith's imagination, however, is somewhat more macabre than Beckford's, and there is a detectable change of tone in the continuation, both in content and the nature of the descriptive passages. Perhaps more important, though, is the matter of Zulkais and Kalilah's arrival at Eblis's Palace of Subterraneous Fire. Unlike Vathek himself, and the heroes of the first two *Episodes*, the twins do not travel to Istakhar and descend to Eblis by the staircase. This is perhaps forgivable, in terms of variety. More important, however, is that all the other characters to be met with in the Halls of Eblis have arrived there voluntarily, in the hope that in the subterranean realm they could freely indulge in the sins that were forbidden to them in the upper world. Smith seems to have missed this. His Zulkais and Kalilah pledge fealty to Eblis, which he may have thought was sufficiently close, but they are tricked into doing so, and eventually arrive in the Palace by accident rather than intent. Smith thus ends up giving the

impression that a pair of innocents are punished, rather than a pair of hardened sinners. This is not an uncommon occurrence in Smith's other fiction, but is rather discordant with Beckford's general design.

So, much as I admire Smith's other work, it has to be said that his completion of the *Third Episode* is interesting, but rather less than successful. There is perhaps one last question to discuss here, and that's whether Smith's reacquaintance with *Vathek*, and the *Episodes*, was responsible for any detectable influence on his own work. In the absence of any outright evidence from Smith himself, this must be uncertain, but it seems to me that there are some hints of this.

Smith wrote several cycles of stories in which each tale shared the same overall setting: in ancient Hyperborea, Poseidonis (his version of Atlantis), on other planets, and so on. His best known and best-loved cycle of stories, however, was set in Zothique, a continent of the far future, when Earth's sun has turned red and humanity has reverted to primitive and sorcerous barbarism.¹⁶ With the exception of a couple of later tales, these stories were written between 1932 and 1937, and mostly published in *Weird Tales*. Smith wrote the first two stories in January and July 1932, before he'd been loaned the *Episodes*, and in these the kingdoms of Zothique are rather nebulously defined in terms of climate and culture. From the third story onwards (written in November 1932), however, several stories are set in desert areas of Zothique. The characters ride dromedaries, there are frequent mentions of ghouls, mummies and Jinns, and there is an evil god, Thasaïdon, who lives in a subterranean hell. Conscious influence would be impossible to prove, of course, but it may well be that Smith rediscovered, in his reading, his teenage delight in Beckford and the Orientalists, and came full circle to reflect that same pleasure in his writing.

¹ A broad selection is currently available in Clark Ashton Smith, *The Emperor of Dreams* (London: Gollancz, 2002). The majority of Smith's work (both

poetry and prose) is also available online at <http://www.eldritchdark.com>

² Clark Ashton Smith, *Selected Letters of Clark Ashton Smith*, ed. David E. Schultz & Scott Connors (Sauk City, WI: Arkham House, 2003), xvi, 249, 359, 371.

³ William Beckford, *Vathek*, ed. Lin Carter (New York: Ballantine Books, 1971), xii (introduction). Carter's scholarship leaves something to be desired. In the same introduction he states that after *Vathek* Beckford 'never wrote a second novel'.

⁴ Smith, *Selected Letters*, 37, 361-362.

⁵ A considerable quantity of Smith's previously unpublished Oriental juvenilia (including a full-length novel) has recently been published by Hippocampus Press of New York: *The Black Diamonds* (2002), *The Sword of Zagan* (2004).

⁶ Smith, *Selected Letters*, 136, 139. The story was not published for over three years, appearing in the amateur magazine *The Fantasy Fan*, January 1934. The story is collected in Clark Ashton Smith, *Other Dimensions* (Sauk City, WI: Arkham House, 1970), 319-323.

⁷ Smith, *Selected Letters*, 185.

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

⁹ Smith, *Selected Letters*, 188-191.

¹⁰ Smith, *Selected Letters*, 194, 199.

¹¹ Smith, *Selected Letters*, 203-204.

¹² Smith, *Selected Letters*, 257, 275. *Leaves*, No. 1, Summer 1937. The pagination is peculiar. Beckford's unfinished *Episode* appears on pages 1-16, 16a-16d. Smith's continuation appears on pages 17-24, and is dated at the end 'September 16th, 1932.' There are occasional changes in typeface in the Beckford section, where the mimeograph stencils have been prepared on different typewriters. Only 100 copies were printed.

¹³ Clark Ashton Smith, *The Abominations of Yondo* (Sauk City, WI: Arkham House, 1960), 177-222. Subsequent UK editions: hardback: London: Neville Spearman, 1972; paperback: London: Panther, 1974. French translation: *Les Abominations de Yondo*. NEO, 1988.

¹⁴ Lin Carter, ed., *New Worlds for Old* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1971), 3-57, as 'The Story of the Princess Zulkais and the Prince Kalilah'. Carter makes the same 'translation' error when referring to Smith's completion in the introduction to his edition of *Vathek* (which also includes the *Episodes*); in this 'complete' edition, Carter does not use Smith's conclusion.

¹⁵ William Beckford, *Vathek with The Episodes of Vathek*, ed. Kenneth W. Graham (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2001), 33, 331.

¹⁶ Clark Ashton Smith, *Tales of Zothique* (West Warwick, RI: Necronomicon Press, 1995).

Redding's Alps and Beckford's Pencillings

JERRY NOLAN

Cyrus Redding (1785-1870) has been much derided for his reminiscences of Beckford. This began immediately after the publication in 1859 of the Beckford volumes when *The Athenæum* thundered: 'As an authority, this book is quite worthless. There is no art in its construction. You might as well call a hodman an architect as this writer an author.'¹ Abuse from Beckfordians has stemmed from the pigeon-holing of Redding as a *mere* journalistic interviewer of national celebrities, many of them leading contemporary writers and politicians. The often repeated condescending view of the Beckford memoirs has been that they are repetitive, rambling, un-chronological and at times downright self-contradictory. Some of Beckford's biographers have been particularly dismissive of Redding: for example, the most recent, Timothy Mowl, blithely asserts that Redding's text was 'censored' by the Duchess of Hamilton and 'stuffed with false reminiscences' by Beckford himself.²

Redding's heartfelt tribute to a kindred spirit had been published in the *New Monthly Magazine* in the wake of Beckford's death in 1844 as two articles entitled 'Recollections of the Author of "Vathek",' and another, 'The Tower of the Caliph'.³ In 1863 Redding commented on the genesis of his Beckford memoirs when he recalled the commission by Henry Colburn, the publisher of the *New Monthly Magazine*, to write a small biography of Beckford following the publication of these articles.⁴ Doubtless Redding must have occasionally wondered about the 'disappearance' of the original manuscript which had been submitted in 1846 to Colburn, whose death in 1855 brought matters to a head. One explanation is that the Duchess, perhaps in an anxious attempt to discourage biographies of her father, probably bought the manuscript from Colburn. Yet she did not destroy it, and it survives in the Beckford Papers in all its original

sprawling glory.⁵ Could the Duchess have stored it because she never got round to reading it or did she keep it for future generations to discover? That inveterate researcher of the Beckford Papers when they were still in Edinburgh, Boyd Alexander, had some words of praise for evidence of 'a journalist's ear' in Redding's manuscript version ('we can really hear Beckford talking'), but then suggested that the Duchess must have 'suppressed' the manuscript version because she took exception to its revelation of her father's character.⁶

In his own account of the origin of the memoirs, Redding admitted that he was forced to write again about Beckford from scratch without many notes but clearly felt no resentment against the Duchess of Hamilton when he stated some four years after her death that she was an 'amiable and excellent lady'.⁷ Beckford was to become a recurring subject for Redding's impassioned recollections. In addition to the *New Monthly Magazine* articles (1844) and the *Memoirs* in two volumes (1859), there was also a chapter in both *Fifty Years' Recollections* (1858) and *Past Celebrities whom I Have Known* (1866).

The first intimation of their friendship occurred when Beckford's newly published *Italy; with Sketches of Spain and Portugal* was given a favourable unsigned review by Redding in the *Bath Guardian* when he was the newspaper's editor. About a year later, he wrote a note to Beckford dated July 1835: 'With the editor's respects and thanks for the excellent work for which he laments lack of space he has only been able to give so inadequate a notice.'⁸ According to Redding, Beckford was so pleased by such a high opinion of his work that when the two did eventually meet at Lansdown, his host assured him: 'If you had read my thoughts, you could not have better understood the springs that moved me in my observations... My sketches were drawn up from notes very inefficient in themselves, but my memory supplied what was wanting.'⁹ Was Redding in this account slyly hinting at his own difficulties in recovering memories of Beckford?

What shines through all the stream of anecdotes – some penny-plain, some twopence-coloured! – is the vibrant sense of a strong affinity felt between the two as poets. That affinity first surfaced in Beckford's very favourable reaction to Redding's poetry. Redding recalled the circumstances of their rendezvous: 'I sent Beckford, at Lansdown, a catalogue of Sanscrit and Eastern books, given me by Sir William Ouseley, a copy of a poem of my own, of which not many got into the world. It was but a few days before I quitted Bath.' Beckford sent a note, dated 16 September 1835, with an invitation to Redding to visit him:

Mr. Beckford thanks Mr. Redding for the catalogue (book-learned and curious), but ten times more for 'Gabrielle,' which so vividly recalls the Alps to his imagination.

Mr Beckford will feel much pleasure in looking over this fervid and most impressive little poem with its author, any morning (between twelve and two) that might happen to suit Mr. Redding's convenience.¹⁰

During Redding's visit, Beckford 'read and commented upon different passages as he proceeded – pencil in hand. He wondered I did not publish it more extensively.' Beckford urged a reluctant Redding not to lose any time in doing this but then had to confess that even though he might soon publish the *Episodes of Vathek*, he might be unable to bring himself to let out the *Liber Veritatis* on which he was currently working.¹¹

Closely reading *Gabrielle* now, with Beckford's initial pencilling only in the mind's-eye – his copy of the book has never resurfaced – it seems worthwhile to speculate on what might have attracted Beckford to this poem.¹² In it, Redding unfolds the story of Gabrielle, a young girl living in the region of Mont Blanc, who is driven both to madness as a survivor after a great avalanche and to her death when she attempts to scale the summit. The poem conjures up the great natural beauty of the Alpine region and the pathos of the mad girl travelling blindly across an apocalyptic landscape. I suggest that these few lines

might well have been selected by Beckford, from the choice of over twelve hundred in rhyming couplets, for his famous pencillings:

The impact of the avalanche first described:

It is the Avalanche, passing in his might
With his attendant thunders, swift as light
In his destruction, sweeping mightiest pines
As stubble with garment, oaks in lines,
Rooted in thousand years in strength of pride
Strewing in destruction far and wide.
She sees all vanish! – in a moment's space
Herself the last lorn remnant of her race. (p.10)

The Spirit of the Alps rendered in all its apocalyptic glory and horror:

The snowy summit of each awful height,
The untrodden world of glaciers left and right,
Flash grandly in their own pure hemisphere;
Above them all Mont Blanc towers high and clear.
The mountain giant whose great offspring round
Near their steep sides in mist, like him snow-crowned.
Dark vales unfathomable lie between;
Horribly silent – fearfully serene
Are their blue walls of ice; there rift and steep,
Tower inaccessible, or sink hell-deep,
And yawn destruction at the wanderer's feet. (p. 41)

Gabrielle's mad ascent of the mountain movingly depicted:

There Gabrielle would climb, and madness well
Might fancy beings in such place to dwell,
Earth disembodied – 'twas a haunt for dreams
And phantoms of the brain, and those crude gleams
That break upon the soul, of an unknown
And an untried existence, near the throne
Of formless vision, where dim shadows lie

Awaiting shape for futurity.
Such dreams had Gabrielle, as o'er the height,
With sapphire, ruby, emerald, chrysolite,
Alternate coloured, ceaselessly she flew,
One moment seen, then hidden from the view. (p. 47)

The beauty of Gabrielle's frozen death commemorated :

And there she walked a traveller in the skies,
Where cold eternal the sun's heat defies;
Moving minute upon that ocean hoar,
A lonely ship seen from a mountain shore –
A single star o'er heaven's vast field careering –
A little moment on Time's desert steering.
In an abyss of ice for ever laid,
Unchallenged by death is now the maniac maid

...

She, while the eternal glaciers last, shall be
Fresh in corporeal immortality. (pp. 49, 51)

Beckford's sharp pencil might well have lightly wandered into Redding's Notes with their references to Milton's *L'Allegro*, Theocritus's *Idyll x*, *The Book of Esther*, and Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Beckford himself had been working about this time on the myth of Hylas to be found in Theocritus's *Idyll XIII*.¹³ But what seems to have attracted Beckford's attention was Redding's quotation in his Notes from M. Saussure's *Voyages dans les Alpes*: 'The calm and profound silence which prevailed in this vast extent, raised the imagination higher, and inspired a sort of terror. I thought I had survived the universe, and saw its ruins under my feet.' (pp. 123-136). In his *Memoirs of William Beckford*, Redding noted:

Saussure [had]... ascended Mont Blanc, explored the glaciers of the Alps and Mont Rosa, and died in 1799. He was a man of large property, celebrated for his philosophical researches. He had a country house on the banks of the lake, where he was visited by young Beckford.¹⁴



Ascents of Mont Blanc (seen, above, from Chamonix) had been featured in the *New Monthly Magazine* with vivid accounts by Dr. E. Clark, Captain Sherwill, and M. Jackson, including one of the tragic death of young M. Eschen who had been ‘discovered, fixed upright in the sides of the chasm, quite dead, and firmly cemented to the icy walls. The heat of the body had melted a thin stratum of the ice, without soon recongealing, had strongly agglutinated him to the sides of the crevice. Not without considerable difficulty it was extricated.’¹⁵

Doubtless the fact that Redding had chosen a tragic young woman rather than an adventurous young man as the protagonist would have intrigued Beckford. One feature of the long poem which this choice of Gabrielle greatly enhanced was the graphic descriptions of nature, a passion which Beckford shared with Redding, and a fact which delighted his companion because the younger man was only too aware of the older man’s short-sightedness and feeble hold upon existence:

He spoke of his travels, and how the scenery affected his mind.

That he often left his carriage in the Tyrol, and, mounting the horse of an attendant, rode down some mountain hollow, got off his saddle, flung himself by a gushing stream, and there experienced in silence and solitude, as respected the world, the most soothing and delightful sensations.¹⁶

Another important feature of Gabrielle as tragic heroine was the sign of a significant development of Redding's view of heroism which had been clearly expressed in *A History of Shipwrecks*, a work already in Beckford's library when the two first met.¹⁷ In this four-volume work Redding much praised gallant English seamen whose example of courage in danger, defiance in suffering, and unflinching perseverance was cast in sharp contrast to the dotage of cabinets, the imbecility of courts and the frivolities of modern society – all of which sentiments would have found a sympathy in the radical Beckford at work on *Liber Veritatis*. Beckford seems to have felt a great sympathy with Redding's celebration of the 'gallantry' of Gabrielle. Perhaps Beckford was strongly reminded of his own beloved wife Lady Margaret with whom he had explored the Alpine region from La Tour de Peilz during those few years of happy marriage which preceded Margaret's tragic death in 1786 from puerperal fever after the birth of Susan Euphemia, the future Duchess of Hamilton.¹⁸

In Redding's review of a new edition of *Vathek* in the *Bath Herald* of 3 October 1835, he saw the novel as sublime poetry: '*Vathek*, of its kind, stands alone and unrivalled in our language... its fund of imagery and great resources of fancy.'¹⁹ During a gloomy February day in 1836, having waited fruitlessly for the arrival of the Duke of Hamilton, Beckford read, 'without spectacles', the *Episodes of Vathek* to Redding alone in the Park Lane abode; and what lingered most in Redding's memory was Beckford reading the episode which 'depicted a beautiful female, a half mortal, half angel, abstraction, coloured in the author's richest Oriental manner.'²⁰

In a letter to Beckford dated 17 February 1836, Redding confessed that it was the poetry in his friend's recently published travel books which most appealed to him:

They are filled with poetry, fine noble poetry... with thoughts that have the mysterious garments woven of rainbow hews... Perhaps poetry is the glimpse of the language of disembodied being? We do not enjoy it by our reason but through an instinct of our nature.²¹

There followed an interesting extension of their Alpine affinity through poetry when Beckford challenged Redding to write a poem based on a contemplation of the Raphael picture of St. Catherine in the Lansdown collection. Beckford admitted that he had made an attempt to write some verses upon it but confessed that he now felt too old for poetical inspiration and had to look towards a man twenty years his junior – try it, encouraged Beckford, perhaps remembering the lines in *Gabrielle*:

Her head at times thrown back, her forehead bare,
As Raphael might paint Madonna's hair
In holiness of beauty, scarce earth-born
Seeming all things but those of heaven to scorn. (p.48)

Redding records that the reading of his poem on Raphael's St. Catherine prompted Beckford to recite by heart a number of lines from Milton's *Paradise Lost*, after which he denounced 'man as a devil' and promised to show Redding the scene of the saint's martyrdom in one of Callot's etchings.²² Redding included the fifty-four line poem as one of the appendices in his published 1859 *Memoirs*, although it had not been included in the 1846 manuscript. Inevitably Beckford's pencil was busy on the poem which he had commissioned:

The massive iron, crushing bone and vein,
Into a shapeless mass of quivering pain;

The sinking pulse, the shrieks for mercy sent
The fluttering heart, life ebbing, fibres rent,
The death-damp on the temples, and the chill
That wrestles with hot fever ere it kill,

The verdict of Time has not been kind to Redding's work, and his very existence has remained unrecorded in the standard histories of English literature. He was primarily a journalist who aimed at being so much more.²³ Among other things, he turned his hand to writing about the history and description of French wines; guide books to the counties of Lancaster and Cornwall, and to London during the Great Exhibition of 1851; some five novels, the best of which was *Velasco*, set in Spain;²⁴ a heroic history of shipwrecks; collections of memoirs, the choicest of which were about Beckford; occasional poetry, most of which he wrote under pseudonyms and about which he lacked confidence, the great exception being *Gabrielle*.

A just verdict on the connection between Redding and Beckford will be achieved only when some ambitious young scholar has the time, the knowledge of the historical context and enough of an eagle eye to undertake the vast task of correlating the published 1859 volumes with the 1846 manuscript. The perspective for a pioneering work, should it ever happen, must be a respect for the dialogue about poetry which began when Beckford's pencil got to work on Redding's poem about the Alps and climaxed when the ageing Beckford acknowledged a kindred poetic spirit. Would it not both amuse and delight the two friends to note that Redding's *sole* claim to fame nowadays, for all his prolific literary outpourings in many genre, is his association with Beckford?

¹ The review of *Memoirs of William Beckford of Fonthill. Author of Vathek*, 2 vols. (London: Charles. J. Skeet, 1859) appeared in *The Athenæum*, 11 Dec 1858, 749-752. Quoted in Jon Millington, 'Cyrus Redding: Beckford's First Biographer,' *The Beckford Journal* 2 (Spring 1996): 26-33.

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

1998), 301.

³ See issues of *New Monthly Magazine* 71 (June, July, August 1844).

⁴ Cyrus Redding, *Yesterday and Today* (London: T. Cautley Newby, 1863), 3:33-35.

⁵ Bodleian Library, MS. Beckford c.85-86, *Memoirs of William Beckford Esq.* dated March 4 1846: Vol. 1, fol.1-169 & Vol. 2, fol.1-164. One of the most obvious differences between 1846 and 1859 versions is that in 1859 Redding highlights Beckford's literary output, including the chapter on the burlesque novels, with perceptive comments on the poetic parodies in both novels.

⁶ Boyd Alexander, *England's Wealthiest Son* (London: Centaur, 1962), 4.

⁷ *Yesterday and Today*, 3:34.

⁸ The original review appeared in *Bath Guardian*, 12 July 1834, 4.

⁹ *Memoirs of William Beckford*, 2:309-310. Beckford's reported comments on Redding's review, most of which appeared in an Appendix, 2:396-402.

¹⁰ Cyrus Redding, *Fifty Years' Recollections, Literary and Personal, with Observations on Men and Things* (London: C. J. Skeet, 1858), 3:106.

¹¹ *Fifty Years' Recollections*, 3:106-108.

¹² Cyrus Redding, *Gabrielle, a Tale of the Swiss Mountains* (London: John Ebers & Co., 1829).

¹³ See "William Beckford's 'A Day at Tojal' including 'The Idyllium of Hylas'," *Bodleian Library Record* (April 2003): 31-42.

¹⁴ *Memoirs of William Beckford*, 1:130

¹⁵ From p. 444 of volume in British Library of collected articles on the ascents of Mount Blanc (434-469) which appeared in *New Monthly Magazine* 1825-6.

¹⁶ Redding, *Past Celebrities whom I Have Known* (London: Skeet, 1866), 337.

¹⁷ See Cyrus Redding, *A History of Shipwrecks* (London: Whittaker). Vol. 1, 'The Northern and Polar Seas' & Vol. 2, 'The Atlantic and Southern Seas' were published in 1833. Vols. 3 & 4, 'Disasters at Sea' appeared in 1835.

¹⁸ See *England's Wealthiest Son*, 118-119; Mowl, *William Beckford*, 131-133.

¹⁹ MS. Beckford b.6, fol.153.

²⁰ *Fifty Years' Recollections*, 3:108.

²¹ MS. Beckford c.34, fol.109.

²² Redding, *Memoirs*, 2:394-395.

²³ See Cyrus Redding, *Literary Reminiscences and Memoirs of Thomas Campbell*, 2 vols. (London: Skeet, 1860) where Redding describes how, with his close friend the Scottish poet Campbell, he tried very hard during the 1820s to promote a genuine appreciation of literature in London. Redding dedicated *Gabrielle* to Campbell who was being widely acclaimed as the author of the poem 'The Pleasure of Hope'. See especially vol. 2, 261ff.

²⁴ Cyrus Redding, *Velasco, or Memoirs of a Page*, 3 vols. (London: T. C. Newby, 1846).

A Mind of Fire

JOHN WILTON-ELY

Robert J. Gemmett, *Beckford's Fonthill. The Rise of a Romantic Icon*. Norwich: Michael Russell (Publishing) Ltd., 2003. 473 pp. 29 pl. £35.00. ISBN 0-85955-284-5.

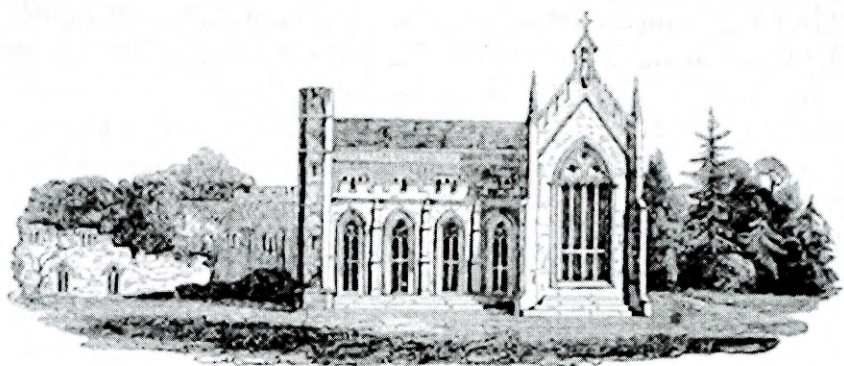
As a leading student of Beckford, the author is already well known to readers of the *Journal*, not least through his scholarly editions, bibliographical studies and articles as well as his previous study, *The Consummate Collector: William Beckford's Letters to His Bookseller* (2000). This latest indispensable publication gathers together many discoveries from his earlier researches as well as assembling a substantial amount of unfamiliar material and fresh perceptions concerning the origins and development of Beckford's greatest creation – Fonthill Abbey, its building, landscape, and interiors – and, most importantly, its contemporary reception. Indeed, the book almost constitutes a Fonthill Companion or Anthology. It satisfies the Baconian criteria of being a book to be 'tasted' as well as to be 'read wholly, and with diligence and attention' since over 200 pages covering two appendices in the second half of the book provide a remarkable collection of sources on the Abbey between 1797 and 1844. These include press accounts, magazine articles, visitors' impressions, expert critiques, satires, eulogies and poems, qualified by invaluable comments, given that authorship is frequently a complex issue to unravel. There is also an extremely useful Fonthill Bibliography with a list of major archival and other collections as well as printed sources.

In reading this book we are constantly reminded of the sheer comprehensiveness of Beckford's genius in producing and overseeing a work which covered such a spectrum of artistic disciplines and conceptions. Moreover, the subtitle to Gemmett's work, 'The Rise of a Romantic Icon', is aptly chosen, for Fonthill

epitomised its age to a extent that perhaps no other building or property in Britain succeeded in doing, as revealed by a sequence of eye-witness accounts assembled here for the first time, ranging from the world of the tabloid journalist to that of the broadsheet expert. One is also left with a deeper understanding of the emotional and sensory factors at the heart of Romanticism and their interaction in an exceptionally composite work of art.

In the first chapter, the book covers familiar territory with an analysis of the conceptual origins of the Abbey from Beckford's earliest impressionable years, following the Alderman's death in 1770, when exposed to the shaping influences of his mother with their combination of religious intensity and aristocratic lineage. A critical phase was marked by the artistic and literary impact of Alexander Cozens, and subsequent travel experiences during the 1780s with his son John Robert. These impressions were to be brought together in the *mise en scène* for the coming-of-age party at Splendens in 1781, as well as deeply affecting the subsequent creation of *Vathek*. The chapter ends with the influential travels and residence in Portugal where Alcobaça, Batalha and Montserrat, among other seminal experiences, added potent ingredients into Beckford's imaginative store. These intense experiences are never far away from Beckford's profound feelings for nature.

The following chapter focuses on the early history and critical role of the Fonthill landscape in Beckford's activities, conditioned by theories of the Picturesque, critically affecting the genesis of the Abbey. Gemmett illustrates an early but undated landscape design by James Wyatt for the old park of Splendens, c.1781, which shows the architect's association with Beckford to be considerably earlier than previously thought. It is also interesting to learn that Beckford's supposed tuition by Sir William Chambers is supported by the discovery of a presentation copy to him of the second edition of the *Dissertation on Oriental Gardening*, inscribed: 'From the Author, 19th March 1773'.



THE CONVENT IN RUINS.

Inevitably, another critical chapter is devoted to the building history of the Abbey, and Professor Gemmett has well summarised the current reviewer's researches, adding further supporting material, principally from the published essays assembled in the anthology which his tireless searches have brought to light. Among the plates, his use in Fig. 9 of Rutter's 1823 reconstruction of the earliest idea of the 'Convent in Ruins' (c.1796-7), as engraved by Higham (shown above), usefully prompts one to revalue this image as perhaps more than a tentative reconstruction based on the famous description of the convent in the woods in Rutter's *Delineations*, particularly when one learns that he had access to Wyatt's drawings and records. In this image, the four-bay hall with, to its right, the larger adjoining structure featuring a large traceried window, might conceivably be a rejected predecessor to the first Abbey design, as represented by the perspective view in Bolton Art Gallery, when the Batalha octagon was incorporated in the composition and the library wing extended. (Incidentally, Gemmett's scepticism about the attribution of the Bolton watercolour to Turner is unfounded since the artist regularly undertook such basic topographical work in his early years and, moreover, was valued enough by Wyatt and his patron to be brought back in 1800 to record the later design under construction.) Significantly, further support to

this idea is found later in the book where Gemmett quotes Benjamin Wyatt's defence in 1823 of his father's role in the conception by pointing out that 'when the building now called Fonthill Abbey was first begun, the project was confined *exclusively* (as I can prove by a variety of evidence in my possession), to that small portion of it, which now constitutes the south eastern wing, and which was then denominated by Mr Beckford "the Convent".'

In his fifth chapter Gemmett returns to consider the significance of the landscape as it developed concurrently with the Abbey's construction. As early as 1799 Repton had offered to be involved but Beckford, in deciding against this flattering proposition, made it clear that his own approach was concerned with the entire site and required far less intervention in the workings of nature. Several of the accounts quoted later in the anthology were to praise the essentially untouched feel of the Fonthill landscape. The distinguished garden theorist and practitioner, J. C. Loudon, after visiting Fonthill both in 1807 and 1833, praised the consummate integration of architecture and setting in an extensive article in the September 1835 issue of the *Gardener's Magazine*. Beckford's creation of pictorial effects – the naturalistic woodland character of the landscape, the mixture of carefully zoned deciduous and coniferous plantations, the preference for turf over gravel, along with the creation of the Nine Miles walk and carriage drive around the property, the highly atmospheric Bitham Lake with the American Garden, the Norwegian Lawn, the Kitchen and Flower Gardens – commanded the respect and admiration of visiting specialists who appreciated these features' contribution to the unity of purpose. Moreover, the site itself was highly unusual since, unlike British medieval abbeys which were normally placed in valleys or plains, the location of Beckford's Abbey was inspired by great Continental monastic buildings with their commanding situations. The *Morning Chronicle*, commenting on Fonthill in September 1823, referred to a rare sense of 'seclusion with

authority’.

In the next chapter, ‘A Triumph of the Eye’, where we are invited to approach, perambulate and then enter the completed Abbey itself, the challenge to assess its internal significance as fully as that of the landscape fails to meet the same level of consideration. The asymmetrical plan with its scenic potential, along with the skilfully controlled lighting, changes in scale, texture, style and mood, are all satisfactorily assessed. However, the nature and functions of the collections within this setting – complex as any consideration of specific works is bound to be with Beckford’s constant rearrangements – should have been discussed with the same thoroughness as the natural setting. Admittedly, the limits of illustration are always a problem for a reasonably priced scholarly book but the reader would have greatly benefited from images of a handful of works which are repeatedly mentioned in the transcribed visitors’ accounts; for instance the Cellini Ewer (a work which provoked heated controversy at the time, as the anthology reveals), the Borghese Table or the Rubens Vase. Similarly, an indication of Beckford’s advanced tastes in paintings, both historic and modern, as an important contribution to the setting, would have been of value, particularly as a prelude to the extensive coverage of this aspect in the anthology. Since these objects and art works were set within some of the most innovatory interiors anywhere in Europe, especially in terms of their orchestrated and striking colours, hangings and eclectic ornamental details, and anticipated the Regent’s achievements at Carlton House and Brighton, the absence of such a discussion is more noticeable when reading through the extensive visitors’ impressions in the first appendix.

Chapters devoted to the sales of 1822 and 1823 set the scene for the flood of accounts which form a major part of the anthology. The outbreak of ‘Fonthill Fever’ (the actual title of Thomas Dibdin’s article from *The Museum* in October 1822) has a particularly modern ring with the inflated publicity, celebrity status for the owner, devious negotiations, last minute deals,

information leaks, ticket touts, exaggerated accommodation prices, traffic congestion in rural lanes, and above all, despite Beckford's ambivalent attitude to the whole operation, the 'spin' of publicity to force up prices. Given this mass exposure of the structure to the pressures of considerable throngs of people and its known weaknesses, it is all the more amazing that the sensational fall of the tower only a few years later, in December 1825, with which the chapter ends, did not occur earlier with considerable loss of life.

Chapter Nine, 'The Contemporary Reception of Fonthill', is also an essential prelude to the wealth of material in the second half; some twenty-four out of the thirty-four pieces reproduced in the two appendices being published in the frenetic sale years of 1822-1823. What is particularly striking is the considerable unanimity of praise by those who recorded their first impressions of Fonthill, accessible after years of rumour and, one senses, deliberate mystification. As Gemmett points out, the material he has assembled bears out Nikolaus Pevsner's assertion that Fonthill was 'the first neo-Gothic building to create sentiments of amazement, of shock, even of awe.' Some were struck by the sheer extent of achievement over a thirty-year period. One unidentified observer commented in 1823 on the transformation from 'an indeterminable extent of bare down, with scarcely a tree upon it... [to] a magnificent domain, including nearly all the natural beauties that can belong to a spot of the kind, and crowned by a building of unrivalled extent and grandeur'. While others marvelled at the interiors and exceptional quality of the furnishings, art-works and objects, it was inevitable that there would be voices of dissent, particularly from politically radical quarters. The background to Hazlitt's well-known antipathy and diatribes is perceptively discussed, and even when financial difficulties compelled him to return to write a more favourable critique of the paintings, a skilled use of irony indicates his continuing gut reactions.

This chapter also provides a useful review of the respective

origins and natures of the definitive books on the Abbey by Britton and Rutter. We are reminded how Britton, as an acknowledged antiquarian and topographer, was able to assess the Abbey in terms of its mediaeval sources, significantly giving Beckford credit for the overall conception in design while blaming Wyatt for the shortcomings and avoidable alterations in design, due to his neglect. At this point, Gemmett quotes the heated response to this by Wyatt's son, Benjamin, which throws valuable light on his father's creative relationship with Beckford as well as the latter's marked appreciation of Wyatt's qualities, despite the tensions and disillusionment at the end. We are shown how Rutter ultimately proved more successful, both with his cultivation of Beckford and his flair for pitching the approach and visual nature of the book to secure a wider audience. In this comparison, the artists and engravers of the plates in both volumes are given the fresh attention they deserve since they were to play a key role in determining the mythic images that transmitted an important part of the Fonthill legacy after the virtual destruction of the building.

The final chapter, 'An Artistic Tout Ensemble: The Legacy of Fonthill', all too briefly takes the story from the opening phase of the Victorian Gothic Revival up to our own times. While the Abbey was too idiosyncratic a creation to play a dominant role in the era dominated by the moral rectitude of Pugin and Ruskin, as is pointed out, its oblique influence upon country house design during the earlier decades of the nineteenth century can be seen, for example, at Eaton Hall, Hadlow and Highcliffe Castles, and Toddington Manor. Not mentioned, however, is Fonthill's more profound impact on one major public building; namely, the plan, spatial and decorative concepts of Barry and Pugin's Palace of Westminster, opened in 1852. As late as 1872, it is interesting to note that Eastlake, in his magisterial *History of the Gothic Revival*, considered that the Abbey, with all its deficiencies, 'for its size, eccentricity of character and bold adaptation of Gothic form was unequalled in importance by any which had preceded

it'. Thereafter, the fortunes of the Abbey suffered a severe decline in reputation until the inter-war years of the last century which saw its significance revalued in Kenneth Clark's pioneering study, *The Gothic Revival* (1928), and in Oliver's equally important biography of Beckford of 1932. Although the author pays tribute to Brockman's *Caliph of Fonthill* (1956) and the exceptional contribution of Boyd Alexander's studies, notably *Life at Fonthill* (1957), it is disappointing that no mention is made of the impact on scholarship of the Beckford exhibitions of 1966 and 1976, where the Abbey in its totality was a major focus. Presumably the book was written before the major Bard exhibition of 2001-2.

There is no space here to do justice to the wealth of material contained in the two appendices that follow. The first and larger one, 'Contemporary Essays and Commentary on Fonthill: 1797-1844', begins with an 'Account of the Christmas Festivities at Fonthill' from the *European Magazine* of January 1797 and closes with 'The Gem and the Wonder of the Earth' from Henry Venn Lansdown's *Recollections*, published in 1893 but referring to a deeply moving visit to the Abbey ruins in October 1844, only a few months after Beckford's death. Apart from passages providing valuable evidence in reconstructing the progress of the building and landscape development of Fonthill, several other entries stand out. The architect William Garbett's professional assessment in 1822 of the building's merits and structural weaknesses is paralleled by Loudon's positive evaluation of Fonthill as a landscape garden. Accounts of the sale, general and specific (including several commentaries on the picture collection) are interwoven with eye-witness descriptions of touring the Abbey, epitomised at its finest by 'A Day at Fonthill Abbey' from the *New Monthly Magazine* of 1823 which, interestingly, swiftly reached a North American audience when it was published in New York the same year. In the second appendix, 'Contemporary Verse Inspired by Fonthill: 1800-1829', the eleven pieces range from sonnets and brief poems to John

Jefferson's epic (1824) of some 720 lines with many splendid declamatory phrases. Among the most intriguing are the two final works, meditating on the collapse of 1825, which might be considered belonging to the 'Ozymandias paradigm'. Fonthill Abbey, ever the icon, was to deliver its final contribution to Romanticism as an evocative ruin.

Notes on Contributors

Richard Allen has been a member of the International Beckford Society since its inception. He has recently retired after over thirty years teaching 'A' Level English Literature. His interest in Beckford was kindled by the appearance of the Penguin edition of *Three Gothic Novels* on the syllabus in the 1970s.

Stephen Clarke is a London lawyer and the joint author of a bibliography of R. W. Ketton-Cremer, the historian and literary biographer. He has published papers on Beckford, Walpole, Sterne and on architecture and landscape gardening issues in the novels of Jane Austen, and has a particular interest in the early Gothic revival.

Mike Fraser is a lecturer in Computer Science at the University of Bristol, and maintains an interest in novel technologies for cultural, historical and scientific exhibition. In his spare time over the past two years, he has been investigating the genealogy of Alderman William Beckford. **Danaë Stanton** is a senior lecturer in Psychology at the University of Bath, researching technologies for children. She is a ninth generation descendent of Alderman William Beckford. **John Fox** retired after 46 years with the Ministry of Defence as a Physicist / Electronic Engineer. Now able to follow Ham Radio, an interest of 55 years (G3KHR), and family history research. John is an eighth generation descendent of Alderman Beckford.

Robert J. Gemmett's most recent contributions to Beckford studies are *The Consummate Collector: William Beckford's Letters to His Bookseller* (2000) and *Beckford's Fonthill: The Rise of a Romantic Icon* (2003). Formerly Provost and Vice-President of Academic Affairs at SUNY

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Malcolm Jack's book on the cultural history of Sintra (*Sintra: A Glorious Eden*) was published in 2002. He is at present working on the Lisbon earthquake for the Voltaire Foundation. His books on Beckford include *Vathek and Other Stories* (1993), *The Episodes of Vathek* (1994) and *William Beckford: An English Fidalgo* (1996 [1997]). He is Chairman of the Beckford Society.

Jon Millington is on the Council of Management of the Beckford Tower Trust and wrote the guide to the Tower. For the 1976 Beckford Exhibition he produced the slide show and contributed to the catalogue the essays, 'Man of Letters' and 'Bibliophile Extraordinary'. He edited the *Beckford Tower Trust Newsletter* (1980-1994). To mark the 150th anniversary of Beckford's death he devised the exhibition *Souvenirs of Fonthill Abbey*.

Steve Moore is a freelance writer and sometime editor and bibliographer, who lives in London. Most of his fiction work is in the comic-strip field, where he writes fantasy and science-fiction stories. His non-fiction writing is mostly on oriental and historical subjects.

Jerry Nolan. A freelance writer who lectures and publishes essays on the cultural aspects of the Irish Revival dating back to the late nineteenth century. Recently he has published *The Tulira Trilogy of Edward Martyn (1859-1923)*, *Irish Symbolist Dramatist* and *Six Essays on Edward Martyn (1859-1923)*, *Irish Cultural Nationalist* in the Edwin Mellen Press Series of Irish Studies, nos. 10 & 11 (Lewiston/Lampeter, 2003-4). His ongoing interest in Beckford is now very much focused on Beckford's Indian Summer years in Bath.

John Wilton-Ely, Emeritus Professor of the History of Art in the University of Hull, has been a committee member of the Beckford Society since 1996. He has published definitive papers on the architectural history of Fonthill Abbey and helped organise the 1976 Beckford Exhibition as well as contributing to its catalogue. The works and impact of Piranesi provide another area of study and his most recent books are *Piranesi, Paestum and Soane* for Sir John Soane's Museum and an English edition of Piranesi's polemical *Observations... and Opinions on Architecture* for the Getty Research Foundation, both published in 2002.