

THE BECKFORD JOURNAL



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The Beckford Journal

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EDITED BY JON MILLINGTON

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Clive Wainwright (1942-1999)

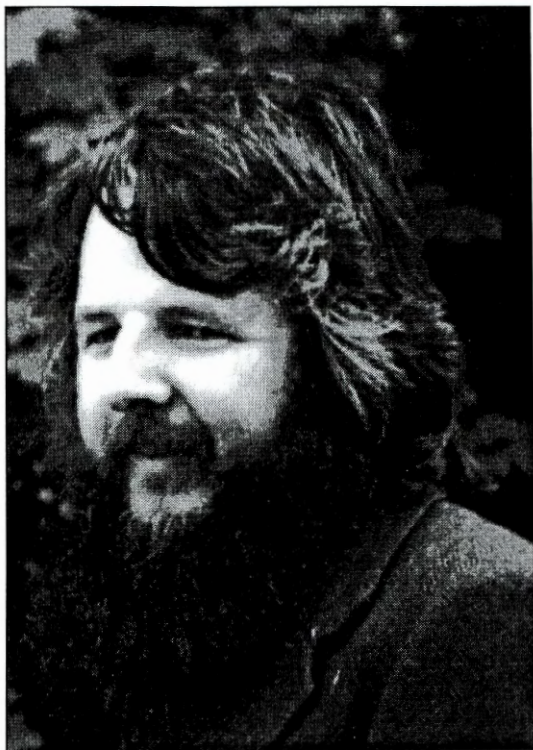
HELEN CLIFFORD

Early in the morning of 2 July, on the day he was to receive an Honorary Fellowship of the Royal College of Art, Clive Wainwright died quite suddenly and unexpectedly of a heart attack at his home in London. It is a testimony to his vigorous presence that it took time to persuade his friends, colleagues and students that this really was true.

Born in Langport, Somerset in 1942, Clive escaped from the world of research chemistry at ICI to the National Art Library at the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1966. This was Clive's true home, and no-one knew better or appreciated more its resources. With characteristic tenacity Clive took time to actually understand how the system worked, in the same way as he cracked the draconian bureaucracy of Museum accessions, thus unlocking their secrets. It was a key he was happy to share with others, delighting in new discoveries, and always directed at broadening the map of the world of eighteenth and nineteenth century decorative arts.

In 1968 Clive joined the Department of Furniture and Woodwork from where he could pursue his developing interest in collecting, with the figure of William Beckford as his focus. So important was Beckford to Clive's early career that he and his wife, Jane, seriously considered buying Lansdown Tower when it was in jeopardy in the late 1960s, and making it their home. Yet it is hard to think of Clive living outside the London he loved so much, and his Clerkenwell home, a living example of nineteenth century good taste. The pivotal importance of Beckford is self-evident in the extensive bibliography of Clive's publications, which at his death stood at over one hundred articles, essays and reviews, as well as a major book, *The Romantic Interior: the British Collector at Home 1750-1850*, published in 1989.

Clive's very first essay in print was a two-part article on Beckford and his collection for *Arte Illustrata* in 1971, followed by 'Some objects from William Beckford's collection now in the Victoria & Albert Museum' published in the *Burlington Magazine* in May that same year.



Five years later he wrote on Beckford's furniture for the *Connoisseur* and helped advise on the William Beckford exhibition which was held in Salisbury and Bath in 1976, and for which Clive wrote a chapter on 'The Collector' (the photo above dates from that time). Beckford was the catalyst, and soon publications appeared on A.N.W. Pugin, the furniture in the House of Lords, Walter Scott and Abbotsford, Arundel Castle and in 1980 on Horace Walpole. These were some of the characters and themes that he explored in his Ph.D thesis, 'The Antiquarian Interior in Britain: 1780-1850', awarded by the University of London in 1986. Here the parallel strands of interest in the history of collecting and the Gothic Revival came together. The thesis and the book that followed were produced in a museum environment which dictated that such work was done in 'free time'. The research and writing were carried out amid many other demands on his time,

including sitting on sub-committees of the Victorian Society, the Society of Antiquaries, the Furniture History Society, Sir John Soane's Museum, the International Council of Museums, and acting as a director of the Arundel Castle Trust.

Clive's expertise derived from an acute sensitivity to objects, enhanced by a practical knowledge of carpentry via his grandfather, and a photographic memory that let nothing slip. It was from these resources that he saw fit to attribute the settees for Fonthill Splendens to Sir John Soane, which were discussed in the first volume of the *Beckford Journal* by Philippa Bishop.

Despite his abilities and achievements it was only in 1988 that Clive was appointed Assistant Keeper, then Deputy Keeper. Furniture's loss was research's gain when he became Senior Research Fellow in Nineteenth Century Studies in 1992, from where he helped organise the Pugin exhibition at the V&A with Paul Atterbury in 1994, which went on to the Bard Graduate Centre in New York. A born teacher, Clive lectured regularly on the joint V&A/RCA MA in the History of Design from its inception in 1983, and for generations of students his seminars, walks round the Museum and visits were one of the highlights of their time on the course. His tweed-clad figure with pocket watch to hand belied his republican spirit, and his fascination with modern technology. The exchange programme with the University of Sussex further expanded his teaching commitments, and in 1996 he became Visiting Professor at Birkbeck College, London, where his series of twenty lectures on the history of collecting had become legendary.

At the time of his death Clive was working on many projects, including an exhibition on Beckford for the Bard Centre in New York, scheduled for 2001. Clive's interest in Beckford, his articles and books, the exhibitions he advised on, the students he encouraged seem to fulfil all the foundation aims of the Society, and it is to be hoped that through his works he will have encouraged others to follow him.

Portuguese Pilgrims and Irish Seminarists

MALCOLM JACK

As befits a Society dedicated to a restless wanderer in foreign parts, two groups of Beckfordians (with some overlap) travelled in different European countries during the summer of 1999. In late May, two hundred years after Beckford's last visit, the Portuguese pilgrims arrived for a sojourn in Sintra; eight weeks later a group of scholars attended a Beckford Round Table at the Dublin Enlightenment Congress.

The Portuguese pilgrims, who included the President, Chairman and Secretary of the Society, soon settled down to the balsamic calm of Sintra in the late spring though the first event of the visit was a lively performance of 'Waking Thoughts' in the finely restored Taborda Theatre beneath the castle walls in old Lisbon.

The play might have been entitled 'Life at Fonthill', involving as it does the life of Beckford and Franchi at Fonthill during the frenzied years of the Abbey's construction. Jonathan Weightman wrote it and took the part of Beckford in a bravura which was sponsored by the English Department of Lisbon University.

During the next, sunlit five days the group visited Monserrate and Ramalhão in Sintra as well as Mafra, Alcobaça and Batalha outside it. Queluz near Lisbon was the last stop. The tour of the gardens of Monserrate was enriched by the commentary of Andrew Bull of the *Friends of Monserrate* as well as by the consumption of some famous Sintra *queijadas* (cheese cakes) near the Beckford waterfall.

In Ramalhão, under the guidance of Mother Maria Teresa, there was a chance to see the spacious, airy apartments where the English *fidalgos* held his Oriental salon, as well as to admire the exotic frescoes in the refectory said to have been ordered by

Queen Carlotta Joaquina on her unhappy return from Brazil after the Napoleonic wars.

A day was spent visiting the great monasteries of Alcobaça and Batalha, so vividly brought to life in the *Recollections*, whilst at Mafra the pilgrims could share Beckford's own delight at the vast length of the library and its rich collection, listening at the same time to the Director's cascading commentary.

The Palace of Queluz was the last official stop of the excursion (as it was of Beckford's) but there had been time to steal a visit to the royal palace at Ajuda, not far from Beckford's first Lisbon home, as well as to enjoy domestic pleasures, in Chinese surroundings, on the Estoril coast.

The sun never stopped shining at Sintra, nor did it cease to shine over Dublin when a dedicated band of scholars assembled once again at a Beckford Round Table at the Tenth International Congress on the Enlightenment in late July. Somewhat away from the fair Georgian city at University College, Belfield, delegates nevertheless felt the shadows of *fin de siècle* decadence and world weariness fall over them as they settled down to consider the titanic struggle between nature and art, reality and artifice.

Kevin Cope launched proceedings on to a heady course by considering some the inversions of art imitating nature. He was concerned to highlight Beckford's perception of objects, his delight in finely produced commodities which gave occasional stability to his otherwise restless and imaginative search for artistic perfection.

This element of what might be called the calm within the Beckfordian storm was also identified by Laurent Châtel who searched it out in the context of a view seen from an ivory tower. Artistic unity might be found in such an approach or in the juxtaposition of topography and aesthetic precepts, with the added pleasure of debunking conventional categorisation of

Beckford's *oeuvre* into the genres of the oriental, satirical or travel writing.

The theme of artifice was pursued by Dick Claésson who gave a close reading of Beckford as a writer of fiction, albeit of a fictional narrative presented in various modes including that of the travel writer with a distinct concept of nature.

He was followed by Mirella Billi who brought a welcome Italian sensibility to bear upon the elusive relationship between fantasy and reality in Beckford's aesthetics, showing how that self-confessed mist which hovered before his eyes could obscure from vision objects as tall as the Alps which he fails to describe when crossing into his imagined, idealised southern garden.

The present writer brought the focus back to *fin de siècle* Dublin in a paper designed to show how, in his *Episodes*, Beckford anticipated the aesthetic of decadence which was so richly and extravagantly developed in Wilde's louche tale of *Dorian Gray*.

The last two papers had a forensic air about them. Crime and punishment, de Sade's evasion of capital punishment and Beckford's lifelong 'sentence' was the subject of a sharp, if exploratory analysis of social outcasts by Elinor Shaffer, whilst Stephen Clarke shifted attention to vice of a more bourgeois kind in the professional and intricate struggles between Rutter and Britton in their various delineations of the Abbey.

Exhausted by these pyrotechnics, the day ended convivially in a Dublin restaurant where the Beckfordians had occasion to practice the sybaritic arts, presided over by the benign and learned figure of Kenneth Graham, glowing in the triumph of another Beckford Round Table, the fourth since it all started in Budapest now more than a decade ago.

The Restoration of Beckford's Tower

THEO WILLIAMS

Following an attack by the common furniture beetle on the floor boarding of the Belvedere the repairs proposed needed the floor void to be opened up, and in July 1994 this allowed an inspection of a steel beam (reported in January 1993 as rusting), now visible under the ceiling beneath the Belvedere floor. Where part of the beam was concealed within the floor void no easy examination had been possible and this opening up gave an opportunity for seeing the state of things, apart from the floor boarding and its supporting joists.

What was discovered was steelwork almost denuded of paint; also both ends (where built in) were exfoliating due to the ingress of wet through the outside walls which was causing rusting of the unpainted steel. The consequent increase in the sectional area of the steel was forcing open the joints of the stonework, allowing in yet more wet and thus aggravating the state of disrepair.

Additionally, the January 1993 report pointed out that driving rain was entering through cracks and open joints in the timberwork to the lantern, and through defective joinery in the Belvedere. Also there was the perpetual problem of condensation throughout all levels of the Tower adding to the volume of free water dripping down through the Belvedere ceiling and on to the floor. There was a suspicion too that the lead-lined gutter around the foot of the lantern, although it had been re-lined with a flexible membrane, was still leaking, as the coach screws securing the base plates of the eight cast iron columns framing the lantern had been driven through the leadwork in the original construction, causing water penetration from day one; without moving the columns this problem could never be properly tackled.

Decay in the supports under one if not two of the iron columns

was attributed to this original fault in the construction and was the reason for the tilt in the lantern noticed in the 1890s. It was only partially corrected in the 1898-1901 Hayward & Wooster repairs supervised by Goodridge's son Alfred when the original tilt of eight to nine inches was reduced to between five and six inches, but the repairs then and the further timber repairs in 1954 had not brought permanent stability.

This multiplicity of certain and possible defects could only be tackled by carrying out major repairs. Was this financially possible? Fortunately the Heritage Lottery Fund, on the recommendation of English Heritage, were minded to contribute 75% of the costs which were seen as being eligible for grant, leaving the Tower Trust with its sole Trustee, the Bath Preservation Trust, to raise the remaining 25% of the eligible costs and 100% of those costs which were deemed not eligible for grant aid. This burden of raising the non-grant monies required steady nerves on the part of both Trusts to underwrite an outlay of possibly a quarter of a million pounds out of their endowment monies if the planned fund raising appeal – an operation decided upon at the same time as the Lottery application was being processed – failed totally.

In the event contributions both large and small in the form of grants from charitable trusts and gifts from individual supporters helped to build up a figure which has left the underwriters to provide some £30 000 to fund fully the repairs.

The repairs contract was let based on Drawings and a Specification priced by a local Contractor (Emerys of Bath) with work starting on site in October 1997. The scaffolding and lift both for men and materials were completed by February 1998 and the opening up work began immediately.

The contents of the Specification were limited to repairs to be carried out according to the principles of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, that is, minimum intervention causing as little disturbance as possible to the remainder of the

fabric and leaving new work clearly distinguishable from the old.

The removal of the cast iron roof (needed to free the eight columns so that these could be lifted out to correct the major imperfection in design which had lead to the ingress of water and thus to the tilting of the lantern) brought to light a totally different situation to that which had been surmised from the architect's initial inspections.

At each of the eight internal angles to the lantern for most of the height of the timber framing a vertical wrought iron tie rod was located. These rods (possible inserted during the 1898 repairs) were rusty and in places had been encased in an application of sprayed Polyfoam in 1980 in an attempt to keep the rain out, and there was a suspicion that the rods could be so wasted away due to rust that their tensioning effect was about to come to an end. To compensate for this the rods were to be replaced or supplemented (depending on their position) using wire hawsers either threaded through new drillings or passed down through existing mortices with the lengths of hawser tensioned afterwards.

What was subsequently found, however, ruled out proceeding with this part retention/part replacement programme.

Apparently in past repairs the tensioning rods had been cut through to allow for the insertion of new timbers and a series of iron straps had been introduced, coach screwed into each angle at three levels as a substitute for the original element of vertical downwards tensioning. However, the substituted assemblies of iron strapwork had little tensioning effect, for reasons which became clear later.

With the roof load removed the entire lantern, together with the eight external cast iron columns, behaved like a loosely bolted together assembly of Meccano and could be moved with just a touch. Fortunately the access scaffolding was stout enough to be altered and adapted to stabilise the loose assembly before we could decide what to do next.

Archaeological research (this together with historical research being a mandatory requirement of the Lottery grant) required a careful examination of all the timbers for carpenters' marks and details of construction so that accurate dating of original and repair work could be established.

What became clear was that the Tower lantern was not, as thought initially, a reasonably sound structure requiring only a programme of repairs; it was discovered that the structure was built up in the main from unframed timbers, the four inch and six inch spike being the preferred method of assembling the timbers together rather than incorporating proper framed joints. Some four-fifths of all the timbers were deficient in strength either through internal rot which had left the members with hollow cores or through worm or beetle attack, concealed due to layers of dirt and fly infestation on their internal faces and by thin coverings of sheet lead or lavish applications of hard stopping and paint to their external faces.

Also some of the members were found to be not of whole timbers but built up from butt jointed lengths skew spiked together, the line of the joints masked by the build up of years of fly infestation.

The substituted tensioning ironwork of three levels of iron straps had failed as a replacement to the vertical tie rods when cut through because it had been fixed using unprotected coach screws into the faces of mainly oak scantlings and the tannic acid in the oak had reduced the screws almost to rust. Hence there was no longer any possibility of the assemblies being able to afford sufficient strength to prevent distortion.

A further factor which only came to light as the eight main corner posts were dismantled was that the wrought iron tie bar tensioning system concealed within its foam casings was not the original design.

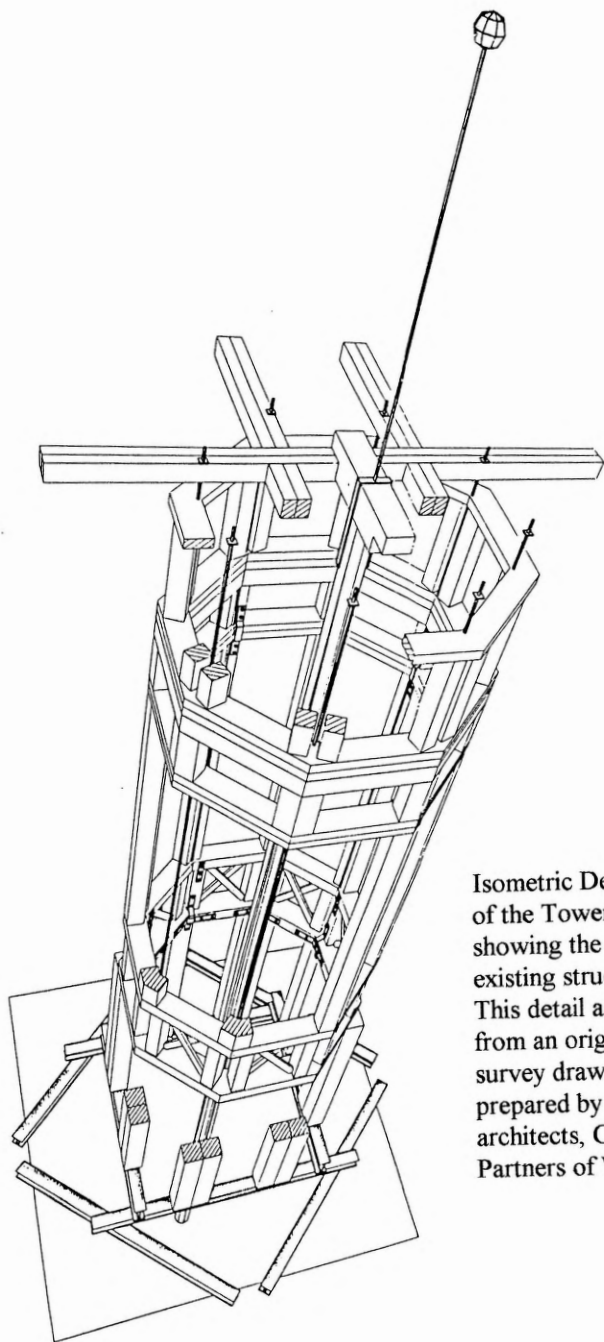
This had been a system hidden within the core of each post in two unconnected lengths of iron rod at the top and bottom of

each post, held fast at one end with an iron plate let into a slot cut through the thickness of each scantling and secured with a nut which could be tightened as the timber shrank in length through age. The other end was let through the top and bottom ring beams at either end of each post and secured to them with a nut bearing on to an iron plate washer. The rot, which had affected the core of most of the main posts, had started within the voids left by the removal of the original tensioning assemblies; why the originals had been abandoned cannot be accounted for.

The whole of the timber lantern construction, where visible above the stonework to the Tower, as well as the supporting structures to it and beneath the eight iron columns needed dismantling and reconstructing.

This dismantling of the lantern and supporting components proceeded piecemeal with architect, engineer and contractor taking a view on what was re-usable and what was too decayed or weak to be re-used. Despite the complete reversal of the original intention to repair what was in place, the overriding philosophy was still to retain as much of the original material as possible, incorporating new with existing wherever possible.

The dismantling work was stopped at the level of the lowest ring beam, as shown on the isometric drawing opposite; the reconstruction started from its top face, the layout of the timbers being in the main a replica of the original but using varying timbers – second-hand Douglas Fir in repairs to the ring beams, second-hand Pitch Pine for the five new main angle posts salvaged from dismantled roof trusses from the Wimbledon Theatre – with the remaining three angle posts being old re-used and re-ended as required. All joints in the lengths of the timbers have been reinforced with stainless steel flitch plates, all bolts are stainless and throughout the angle joints have been reinforced with stainless steel straps. Eight radial beams spanning out from the lowest ring beam, each of which supports one of the iron columns, have been re-formed in two thicknesses of oak with a



Isometric Detail
of the Tower
showing the
existing structure.
This detail adapted
from an original
survey drawing
prepared by the
architects, Caroe &
Partners of Wells

stainless steel core all through bolted together. The stooling under each column, previously of loose blocks of oak, has been assembled with sections of greenheart timber through bolted which in turn support a circular block of purpleheart timber over which each column is set, so avoiding the need to use coach screws to secure each column base.

It had been the rust showing on the exposed steel joist spanning the Tower below the Belvedere floor which had been one of the factors prompting the opening up of the structure which eventually led to the present restoration.

Subsequent examination of the remaining steels throughout the Tower revealed quite serious rusting at all the ends, causing enlargement of the cross-sectional area and consequent displacement of the stonework at each bearing.

The repairs were specified as cutting back each end to where the rusting had diminished to a modest degree and re-ending with new matching sections in stainless material with fishplated and bolted connections, a difficult operation requiring a material to separate the two different types of steel.

With the internal access scaffolding in position to allow for a thorough inspection of the steels, the extent of the rusting ends beyond which it was judged safe to retain the existing mid-section of each steel threw up a difficulty not anticipated at the time of specifying the method of repair.

The points of cut-off were not achievable, as they were found to be needed in places where totally sound fishplated connections of new to old work could not be accomplished due to interference from the loads being supported by each steel.

This problem of excessive rusting away of the bearing ends of the various steels affected four out of the six rolled steel joists in the void above the Belvedere ceiling inserted in the 1931 repairs following the fire earlier in the year.

The only alternative solution to the renewal of the eight ends was to redesign the whole support system to the lantern,

returning to a layout of cross beams, repeating the pre-1931 timber beam layout; possibly these original beams had been affected by fire. Certainly they had been attacked by some form of infestation. For the redesign of the original timber grid stainless steel sections were chosen, built up into composite beams with fishplated and bolted joints to allow for easy insertion between the bearing pockets cut into the existing stonework; each end was anchored using fine concrete padstones/encasements.

The rusting away of the steel beam below the Belvedere floor likewise proved to be more destructive than had been thought initially, and to replace the whole required the breaking away of the top steps of the spiral staircase to such an extent that advantage was taken to restore the original configuration of the stone staircase and also restore the floor level of the Belvedere to its original lower position, the whole being carried on an assembly of stainless steel sections built up into composite beams in a cantilevered star-like configuration with the upper rebuilt seven cantilevered stone steps being braced against one face of one beam to supplement the wall holds.

Why was this total redesign/replacement solution for the forgoing major structural elements not originally incorporated into the schedule of works issued for tender?

As for the timberwork, the intention of the whole campaign was to repair only, retaining as much of the original structure as was deemed possible working to SPAB principles of doing as little substitution of new for old as was found feasible. However, this ideal could not be pursued for the timber structures, and reluctantly total redesign and replacement of all the steelwork above and below Belvedere level also had to be accepted.

It is to be noted that the experience of working at high level on the Tower soon brought home to the consultants and employer the realisation that the conditions of exposure being met were extreme both for the workforce (who endured considerable

hardship at times) and also for the structure itself; rain does not merely glance off the building. At times it is driven at right angles by wind – mere breezes at ground level, but gale force above thirty to thirty-five metres – and wet penetrates through the most carefully designed and executed elements of construction. It is now understood why the state of repair at the top of the Tower can deteriorate within a short period of years; the need for planned maintenance inspections was foreseen (around the lantern there is a series of secure points for clipping a harness) but the cost of maintaining the Tower is clearly going to be a more significant element in future budgets than is usual for a building ‘just brought up to scratch’.

The extensive dismantling at high level disrupted the routes of existing lighting and power circuits; also inappropriate installation of wiring down the height of the Tower was discovered, and these two factors turned what had been anticipated as a simple rewire at high level into a total rewire extending up from the basement at a most unwelcome extra cost.

At the time of drafting this report, during the first week of November 1999, it had been hoped that the internal decoration of the Belvedere and the staircase would have been proceeding. However, excessive condensation has caused a postponement of this final stage until early in the year 2000. Meanwhile a solution to the problem of dampness through condensation is being sought.

The way ahead in 2000 is to open up the first floor to allow for a larger display of Beckfordiana and lease the whole of the ground floor to the Landmark Trust to provide a two bedroom holiday flat with the layout and decoration on both floors modelled as far as possible on the original groundplans.

This programme will require major further funding to be raised by both Landmark Trust and the Beckford Tower Trust and, as ever, progress will depend to a great extent on the success of this fund-raising.

Strange Bedfellows
or
The Ambivalent Feelings and Attitudes of
William Beckford toward Holland and the Dutch

GERLOF JANZEN

William Beckford did not love the Dutch – or at least pretended not to do so. He tried to make this clear in *Dreams, Waking Thoughts and Incidents*, his most famous travel diary, which he wrote shortly after his first Grand Tour, in 1780 and 1781, a book to which I will shortly come back, but also, as I will point out, in even earlier and also in much later works. On the other hand I will try to show that Beckford was most certainly not devoid of an interest, maybe even cherished a secret admiration for and appreciation of the Dutch and their culture.

When one talks about Dutchmen and things Dutch, it is wise to define first what exactly is meant by these words, or rather to state that it is almost impossible to do so. The word ‘Dutch’ nowadays creates hardly any problem (unless it should be about going Dutch). You see, the Dutch is *us*, from Holland, from the Netherlands, from the country that we now know by that name. But what did an Englishman in the 1780s mean when he spoke about the Dutch? Clearly, when Beckford talks about people in Amsterdam, it is obvious what he means. But when he talks about swaggering Dutchmen in Antwerp, does he mean the local inhabitants of that famous harbour, or does he mean people who came from the Northern Netherlands? It is not very easy to say. As soon as he reaches Antwerp, Flanders, he speaks of the Low Countries. He is, however, quite definite about entering the United Provinces. Would a Dutchman have been any inhabitant of the Low Countries for him? He certainly nowhere mentions the Flemish as such. Let us suppose that Beckford was not too

discriminating about the political partitions on the continent and used Dutch as an adjective referring to anything sprouting from the area we now know as The Netherlands and Belgium. There is some support for this hypothesis: during his visit to the cabinet of paintings of the Chanoin Knyf at Antwerp he describes a painting by Teniers (who undoubtedly came from Flanders) as ‘well calculated to display the whimsical buffoonery of a Dutch imagination’.

However this may all be, to come from the Low Countries was obviously not something to boast of, not a recommendation, if we may believe Beckford in that most remarkable little first book of his, *Biographical Memoirs of Extraordinary Painters*, written before he was twenty years old. He tells us, in Andrew Guelph and Og of Basan, how some vile painters, known by the illustrious names of Soorcrout and Sucrewasser of Vienna, ‘attempted to depreciate, by a meanness too remarkable in several great artists, the pictures, and studies which Andrew and Og of Basan had brought from the rocks of Tyrol’ and which had been painted by the great master Aldrovandus Magnus, by putting forward that that artist, apart from the fact that he worked in oil instead of using egg-whites, that he copied nature instead of the antiques, that he had never been in Rome and was ignorant of Raphael, that, apart from all these horrors, to crown all, ‘he had been born in Flanders’. The summit of misery, indeed.

This, in fact, is Beckford’s first mention of the Dutch, and we can see it is not a particularly kind one. Or was the tongue already in the cheek? Only a few years later, in his travel diary, *Dreams, Waking Thoughts and Incidents* (1783), we find some interesting references to that part of Europe we now call Holland. Obviously, his very first impression of Holland was not unfavourable, or so it seems, judging from his rather poetical and romantic description:

Monday, June 26 [1780]...Towards evening, we entered the

dominions of the United Provinces, and had all the glory of canals, trackshuyts, and windmills, before us. The minute neatness of the villages, their red roofs, and the lively green of the willows which shade them, corresponded with the ideas I had formed of Chinese prospects; a resemblance, which was not diminished, upon viewing, on every side, the level scenery of enamelled meadows, with stripes of clear water across them, and innumerable barges gliding busily along. Nothing could be finer than the weather; it improved each moment, as if propitious to my exotic fancies; and, at sun-set, not one single cloud obscured the horizon. Several storks were parading by the water-side amongst flags and osiers; and, as far as the eye could reach, large herds of beautifully spotted cattle were enjoying the plenty of their pastures.

But it turns out the Dutch landscape is indeed just a pretext for his romantic fancies about other things and countries, for he immediately continues:

I was perfectly in the environs of Canton, or Ning-Po, till we reached Meerdyke [Moerdijk]. You know fumigations are always the current recipe in romance to break an enchantment: as soon, therefore, as I left my carriage, and entered my inn, the clouds of tobacco, which filled every one of its apartments, dispersed my Chinese imaginations, and reduced me in an instant to Holland.

Not only does Beckford tell us he hadn't been in Holland at all, but rather in China, no, he also becomes quite abusive:

Why should I enlarge upon my adventures at Meerdyke? 'tis but a very scurvy topic. To tell you, that its inhabitants are the most uncouth bipeds in the universe, would be nothing very new, or entertaining; so, let me at once pass over the village, leave Rotterdam, and even Delft, that great parent of pottery, and transport you with a wave of my pen to the Hague.

A walk through Scheveningen, now one of the suburbs of The Hague, does not bring him displeasure though he 'breathed none of those genuine, woody perfumes, which exhale from the depths of forests and which allure my imagination at once to the haunts of Pan and the good old Sylvanus.' And he consoles himself

‘with the hopes of shortly reposing in the sylvan labyrinths of Nemi.’ On his way back this forgiving mood dissolves easily when he looks into the country house of Christian Frederick Anthony, Count Bentinck de Varel, the grandson of the first Earl of Portland, whose gardens, consisting of parterres and bosquets, do by no means seem to have resembled the Gardens of the Hesperides. And so he reflects on the thrifty disposition of the Dutch, ‘who raise gardens from heaps of sand, and cities out of the bosom of the waters.’

After having spent a rather pleasant Friday, 30 June, at the Prince of Orange’s cabinet of Paintings in The Hague he attacks another Dutch garden, designed and laid-out for the Secretary of State for the States General, Hendrik Fagel (1706-1790), and he embarks on a long tirade against most things Dutch:

Every flower, that wealth can purchase, diffuses its perfume on one side; whilst every stench, a canal can exhale, poisons the air on the other. These sluggish puddles defy all the power of the United Provinces, and retain the freedom of stinking in spite of their endeavours...Who knows but their odour is congenial to a Dutch constitution? One should be inclined to this supposition, by the numerous banquetting-rooms, and pleasure-houses, which hang directly above their surface, and seem calculated on purpose to enjoy them. If frogs were not excluded from the magistrature of their country (and I cannot but think it a little hard that they are) one should not wonder at this choice. Such burgomasters might erect their pavilions in such situations.

And then he gives his theory about the origins of the Dutch which had given such delight and pleasure to the young Germaine Necker (when not yet Madame de Staël):

I am not greatly surprized at the fishiness of their scite, since very slight authority would persuade me there was a period when Holland was all water, and the ancestors of the present inhabitants fish. A certain oysterishness of eye, and flabbiness of complexion, are almost proofs sufficient of this aquatic descent; and, pray tell me, for what

purpose are such galligaskins, as the Dutch burthen themselves with, contrived, but to tuck up a flouncing tail, and cloak the deformity of their dolphin-like terminations?

He longs for the day when he will 'be delivered...from the complicated plagues of the United Provinces.'

However unkind, the episode, when next day he is truly enjoying some idyllic moments in the woods near Haarlem, is too witty to omit:

Hay was making in the fields, and perfumed the country far and wide, with its reviving fragrance. I promised myself a pleasant walk in the groves, took up Gesner [German writer], and began to have pretty pastoral ideas; but when I approached the nymphs that were dispersed on the meads, and saw faces that would have dishonoured a flounder, and heard accents that would have confounded a hog, all my dislike to the walking fish of the Low Countries returned. I let fall the garlands I had wreathed for the shepherds; we jumped into the carriage, and were driven off to the town.

It may very well have been passages like these that in 1783 prompted his family (among other reasons), after the printing of *Dreams, Waking Thoughts and Incidents* was done and publication of the Diary was imminent, to press the young author to withdraw and destroy the entire impression. Surely, a country which had just made peace, after another Dutch War (called English Wars in Holland), wasn't waiting for offending remarks like this from a youngster whose father had been a highly influential magistrate. It is interesting to note that most of the anti-Dutch remarks have been retained in the book *Italy; with Sketches of Spain and Portugal*, which he published in 1834, when he was an old man, but that the rather misogynous ones have been omitted or changed. Thus, in 1834, Beckford's nymphs have changed, upon closer inspection, into uncouth fishermen, and the garlands, anno 1780 wreathed for shepherds, now all of a sudden seem to have been fabricated for the –

hallucinated – shepherdesses. Obviously there were now different things to be worried and cautious about...

Beckford's bitchy and not always equally witty remarks vaguely remind us of Andrew Marvell's *Character of Holland*, the following couplet of which seems to comprise Beckford's attitude toward our ancestors:

Let it suffice to give their country Fame,
That it had one *Civilis* called by name,
One Fifteenhundred years ago,
But surely never any that *was* so.

Of course after four *Dutch Wars*, the last of which had started only in 1780, the English saw even less reason to be sympathetically inclined toward the Dutch, but it was neither new nor unusual for any European in that era to say unkind things about the Dutch. Had not David Hume, in a letter to John Home of Ninewelles, dated 16 March 1748, written, 'Nothing can be more disagreeable than the heap of Dirt & Mud & Ditches & Reeds, which they here call a Country, except the silly Collection of Shells, & clipt evergreens which they call a Garden'. Indeed, Beckford's description of the Dutch gardens spontaneously brings this quotation to ones mind. Other countries could be scathing about the Dutch too; Voltaire had once taken his leave from our country with the immortal words 'Adieu! canaux, canards, canaille!'

In the introduction to my Dutch translation of *Dreams, Waking Thoughts and Incidents* I have argued that Beckford's anti-Low Countries mutterings may (at least partly) have been a pose, strongly rooted and embedded in a tradition of anti-Dutch feeling and writings. When one regards his travelling scheme, it becomes clear that he might easily have skipped the Netherlands. After his arrival at Ostend, he might just have turned south, as so many other travellers on their Grand Tour had done before him and would do after. So we may very cautiously guess that he was

curious about our country and its culture. Nearly four letters in *Dreams etc...* are entirely devoted to his stay in Holland.

And there are other reasons to believe that at least Dutch culture did not entirely inspire him with the horror and repugnance he was claiming. We know exactly what books were in his possession in 1823, for example, and there were numerous titles that betray a wide interest in the goings on in the Netherlands, an interest that he seems to have kept even after his Grand Tour.

To mention only a few: *Nederduytsche Poemata* by Heinsius, in an edition of 1616, biographies about the De Witt brothers and that most remarkable woman Anna Maria van Schuurman, poems by the then very famous Van Meurs, a book on the history of the Counts of Holland, numerous travel descriptions of the Low Countries, among which *Les délices de la Hollande*, a description of the castle Middaghten, *Gezichten langs de Rijn* (*Views along the river Rhine*), from 1767, two folio volumes about the Hortus Botanicus in Amsterdam, descriptions of the Townhall (now Royal Palace) on the Dam, and the famous description of Amsterdam by Wagenaar from 1760. And what about the fascinating *The Dutch Whore, or The Miss of Amsterdam*, from 1660?

Of course we cannot say for sure whether he had purchased these books (all dating from before 1760) before or after his Grand Tour but obviously he went on buying books about Holland and the Dutch even after his Grand Tour and his having written such bitter words about us, witness books that only appeared after that date, such as *Expedition to Holland* from 1800 and *Reisje van een gezelschap Heeren en Juffrouwen door Zuid Holland* (*Travels of a Company Gentlemen and Misses in the Zuid-Holland province*) which had appeared in 1789.

Seven years after his Grand Tour, his own fellow countrymen had more or less ostracised him. Consequently his opinions about other countries in general and the Dutch in particular seem to

have become more differentiated and he even seems to begin to appreciate some of their traits – and treats. His first mentioning of the Dutch when in Portugal, is on 24 July 1787:

I have been persuading the Marquis [of Marialva] to accompany me tomorrow to Guildemeester's: it is the old man's birthday, and he opens his new house with dancing and suppering. We shall have a pretty sample of the factory misses, clerks, and apprentices, some underlings of the *corps diplomatique*, and God knows how many thousand pound weight of Dutch and Hambro' [Hamburg] merchants.

And they went there, on 25 July. The old merchant Daniel Gildemeester, who was not only Dutch consul but also one of the richest merchants in diamonds in the world, had built himself a true palace – which you can still visit, as the Hotel Seteais – in Cintra. Let's have a look at this Dutch treat and let's also compare his original jottings in his diary, which he kept in 1787 and what he eventually made of it in 1834: the gardens in front of the house were not yet quite ready for the guests, and they were near being jerked into a ditch as they drove to the old consul's door. 'The space before this new building is in sad disorder. The house has little more than bare walls, and was not very splendidly lighted up', says Beckford in 1834, to continue immediately to tell us that the company were just as he expected. Here is what he wrote in 1787:

The house...was wretchedly lighted up. In several of the apartments – you will hardly believe me – one woeful candle depended from the ceiling in a solitary lantern. I leave you to represent to yourself the effect of this stable-like decoration. As for the company, it turned out just what I expected. The English part of it looked blank seemed to shrink into their native insignificance [at] every look I cast upon them.

He obviously likes Mrs Gildemeester, whom he describes as a woman of spirit and discernment, but who is not of the merciful tribe. She 'joined forces with Verdeil...in cutting up the factory'

(1834). The supper was brilliant. There was a bright illumination, a profusion of plate, a striking breadth of table, every delicacy that could be procured and a dessert frame fifty or sixty feet in length, gleaming with burnished figures and vases of silver flowers of the most exquisite workmanship. They ate the 'choicest fruits' and the best Cape Wines Beckford had ever tasted.

A funny incident happens when a certain Frenchman called Marcel, affected by a *coup de soleil* starts pouring forth his secret alliances with Mrs. Gildemeester (who seems to have bestowed kindnesses of some sort on him) and a certain English woman, whose kindnesses obviously were of another sort.

Amongst other harsh truths hurried out by this flow of sincerity was a most vehement apostrophe to the English canaille upon their behaviour to me. Mrs. Gildemeester, who was become dauntless through despair, took up the cudgels in my cause most vigorously and compared her guests to a swarm of venomous insects, unworthy to crawl upon the hem of her garment, and whom she would shake off with a vengeance the first opportunity.

Obviously, Beckford had a strong defender in the wife of the Dutch consul.

When next he visits her, however, he is not very flattering: on Saturday 18 August he goes there for tea. He found Mrs. Gildemeester 'in a dingy apartment, her toads squatting around her. She gave us some vile tea and a huge loaf smoking hot and swimming in rank butter.' But lo! what happens when he describes the same occasion in 1834:

She gave us some excellent tea, and a plain sensible loaf of brown bread, accompanied by delicious butter, just fresh from a genuine dutch dairy, conducted upon the most immaculate dutch principles.

Do we hear some irony here? What to believe? Has he felt a sort

of posthumous debt to rehabilitate his old lady friend, dead long since? But if so, why did he leave out the following incident, during the same tea-party? The 1787 report ends by Beckford's commenting on a sensible Dutch lady in waiting to Mrs. Gildemeester, a certain Miss Cotter (probably properly called Coster), 'the toad active' who had been rather pretty some twenty or thirty years ago, and who:

makes tea with decorum, shuts doors and opens windows with judgment, and has a good deal to say for herself when allowed to sit still on her chair. I amused myself tolerably well with her tittle-tattle, and have asked her and her patroness to dine with me tomorrow.

By the way, the Gildemeesters turned up for that dinner, but left poor Miss Cotter in her hole, for want of conveyance, to deplore the unhappy state of toadism and Beckford decides that when next he invites them, he will give her his own coach. But back to the tea party, which in the 1787 description ends here. It does not in the 1834 version. We get the real Dutch treat now. Remember the all of a sudden no-longer rank butter, but the Dutch dairy etcetera:

We had scarcely begun complimenting the mistress of the house upon the complete success of her cow-establishment, when the old consul her spouse entered, with many bows and salutations, bearing a huge japan tray, upon which was spread out in glittering profusion an ample treasure, both of rough and well-lapidated brilliants, the fruits of his famous and most lucrative contract in the days of Pombal. Some of the largest diamonds, in superb though heavy dutch [there we are again!] or german settings, he eagerly desired Marialva would recommend to the attention of the queen, and whispered in my ear that he hoped I also would speak a good word for him. I remained as deaf as an adder, and the Marquis as blind as a beetle, to the splendour of the display; so he returned once more to his interior cabinet, with all his hopes out of blossom, and we moved off.

Did Beckford think this passage too good not to include it, now

that all those concerned were safely buried?

With Mrs. Gildemeester, anyhow, he could never find fault: 'Mme Gildemeester is very superior indeed to the generality of females in this country and has a dry manner of expressing herself full of spirits and discernment. She is not of the merciful tribe and spares nobody. We had a great deal of slashing conversation and joined forces in cutting up the Factory.'

On 22 August 1787 he describes a birthday dinner party at a Mrs Staits', where there were assembled:

all the Scrubs and Scrubesses of the English nation at Sintra, in a damp garden...illuminated by twenty or thirty dingy lanterns...Mrs. Gildemeester, sparkling with diamonds, shone like a star in the midst of this murky atmosphere.

Beckford was sorry that he had gone at all, and tells us that his sole amusement consisted in observing the uneasiness of a certain lady whom he did not particularly like and in sitting next to Mrs. Gildemeester, who amused herself tolerably well at the expense of the entertainment. Interestingly Beckford has not left out this description in 1834.

They saw quite a lot of each other. On 23 August he is a guest at the Gildemeesters' house again, where he and Mrs. Gildemeester 'soon began levelling our conversation at Goody Fussock [another visitor] and talked of waddling and twaddling, of the amiable simplicity of geese and the lively talkativeness of turkeys, till the old lady, perceiving the drift of the allegory, called her chickens together and abandoned the field of battle.'

Finally the Dutch Miss Cotter makes her appearance at Beckford's villa Ramalhão. She:

plucked up resolution to dine with me today, though her patroness declare I shall spoil her by civilities, and to be sure I never was more attentive in my life than I have been to this neglected nymph, and she repays my attentions with the warmest encomiums.

It is too easy to suggest that after his own fellow countrymen had more or less ostracised him and even part of Portuguese high society gives him the cold shoulder, any foreigner who is kind to him and willing to hack at the horrible British, is welcome. Mrs. Gildemeester, was obviously one of the people to whom the young William Beckford took a fancy, and who were able to interest and intrigue him. It is clear that he appreciated, respected and liked her.

So far, we have seen how William Beckford's collection contained Dutch books and Dutch people. Last but not least there were of course the numerous Dutch masters in his fabulous art collection. When we look only at the strictly Dutch painters, that is: from the Northern Netherlands and not the Flemish Masters, (remember how he called Teniers, that very Flemish artist, as being 'well calculated to display the whimsical buffoonery of a Dutch imagination') we find that among others Beckford owned paintings by Backhuysen, Bega, Berchem, Berckheijde, Both, Breenberg, Cuyp, De Heem, De Heusch, De Hooge, De Vlieger, Dusart, Du Jardin, Metsu, Van Mieris, Mierevelt, Neefs, Netscher, Van Ostade, Potter, Poelenburg, Pijnacker, Rembrandt, Ruysdael, Schalcken, Slingelandt, Jan Steen, Steenwijck, Storck, Swanevelt, Van der Helst, Van der Heijden, Aert and Eglon Van der Neer, Van der Werff, Van der Velde, Van Dijck, Van Huysum and Wouwermans.

It is clear that even when in general he may not have rated the Dutch very highly, he cherished some of their works of art as his prize possessions and did appreciate many of their cultural achievements.

William Beckford and Music.

8. Publication and Performance of His Own Works

ERIC DARTON

Chapman's *Bibliography* listed Beckford's compositions as follows.¹ Published Music: *Overture to the Ballet Phaeton*, Paris, 1781 or 1782.² Unpublished Music: (i) *Arietta*, dedicated to Signora Augusta Wynne, probably 1780; (ii) *Marche* for wind, February 1781; (iii) The Score of Lady Craven's *Arcadian Pastoral*, April 1782; (iv) Eleven songs in Italian [*Stroffe*] (there should be twelve, No. 8 is missing), 1789; (v) Anthem, *Thou art worthy to take the book*, August 1800; (vi) Cavatina, [*Digli ch'io son fedele,*] in Italian, September 1800; (vii) Hymn, *O Astra, O Caelum*, 27 September 1800 (a second copy of this appears to have been sold at the 1882 Beckford Sale; (viii) *Glory be to the Father*, 11 October 1839, sold at the 1882 Beckford Sale.³

Thanks to the admirable catalogue of William Beckford's papers in the Bodleian Library, we now know that he wrote far more music than had previously been supposed. No fewer than six pages of the catalogue are devoted to music that he either wrote or collected.⁴

Accepting that Beckford 'was an accomplished musician and knew a great deal about music'⁵ and believing that his music has been unjustly ignored, I wrote in my first 'Beckford and Music' article that 'Little of this music has been heard in recent times'. I referred to the 1960 BBC recording of the *Arcadian Pastoral*⁶ and to the recording of the *Marche* and *Song* played at the 1976 Beckford Exhibition in Salisbury⁷ as the only recent examples. I concluded that 'it may not be possible to hear Beckford's own music at the present time'.⁸ Little did I think that in the space of fifteen years the whole situation would change so dramatically.

Some five years ago Maxwell Steer, a musician, came to live and work in Tisbury. 'A composer and script-writer with over

100 broadcast credits...he was formerly Deputy Director of Music for the RSC. His one-man play about Berlioz, *A Tormented God*, was commissioned by the RNT for Sir Robert Stephens'. He recently appeared in the film *The Clandestine Marriage* (1999).⁹ Soon Steer became aware, he says, of Beckford 'as the Genius Loci' and began to explore the Fonthill Estate and to research the life of Beckford. As a musician it was to be expected that he would be attracted to Beckford's own compositions.

Steer's first venture in this field was a 'Gothick' entertainment at the Medieval Hall in Salisbury in March 1998. Songs by Schubert, Marschner, Weber, Beckford and Mendelssohn were sung by Hugh Hetherington accompanied by Maxwell Steer on a fortepiano of 1835 by John Stoddart.¹⁰ Beckford songs were *Doppo in cruel cimento* (*Stroffa* No. 11) and *Cinto il Crin*,¹¹ both of 1782. The music was interspersed with readings, including one from *Vathek*.

A short recital of Beckford works was given on 2 June 1998 at 95 Sidney Place, Bath, as part of the launch for Timothy Mowl's book on Beckford. Geraldine Lawley, soprano, and Maxwell Steer, spinet, performed three items from the *Arcadian Pastoral*, three keyboard pieces and two settings of *O Astra, O Caelum*. The recital was recorded and is available on compact disc.¹²

That September there was a 'Beckford Masked Ball' in Queen Square, Bath, in aid of the Tower Restoration Fund. An account records that 'From the moment the guests entered the marquee their senses were not only bombarded by the visual delights, but also by Bath Baroque's rendition of the music of William Beckford'.¹³ This consisted of the instrumental score for the *Arcadian Pastoral* performed by Alison Townley and Anne Salamonsen, violins, Mark Davies, 'cello and Steer, harpsichord.

'Steer became interested in Beckford's music during his researches for the "Gothic" concert...He transcribed the songs on to his Apple Mac, using Logic music software, and subsequently

decided to undertake the full works, completing the edition in December.¹⁴ Considerable work was involved in checking, dating and editing. The Beckford Edition was published as complete as possible, but Beckford “must have written a good deal more than has survived: for instance, two ‘orphaned’ choruses... were evidently once part of larger works.”¹⁵ Notes in Chapman’s *Bibliography* tend to support this view as there were, no doubt, other items sold, mislaid or given away.

There are six volumes in the edition. The first contains the *Phaeton* Overture for full orchestra, a *Marche* and *Rondo Adagio*¹⁶ for wind. The second contains the *Arcadian Pastoral* complete (‘It is by no means inferior to the compositions of JC Bach which were then the rage in London’¹⁷). Works for voices and instruments are contained in the third volume, including the *Aria for Sgra Augusta Wynne*. Songs for voices and continuo are to be found in the fourth volume, with piano music in the fifth.¹⁸

The music shows Beckford as ‘a natural melodist with an instinctive sense of song form [though]... firmly rooted in the *ancien regime*’s *galante* idiom.’ He ‘never really went beyond the pleasantries of the 18thC drawing room.’ The musical ideas also reveal that Beckford had ‘a pretty clear idea about orchestration... in terms of colour and never demand[ed] anything unplayable of the woodwind or brass.’¹⁹ These considerations do tend to support my suggestions about Beckford’s musical education.²⁰

Volume six contains all the non-Beckford music to be found in the Beckford papers. Arias by Sacchini and Anfossi, and, more importantly, ten *Modinhas Brasileiras*,²¹ transcribed for Beckford during his stay in Portugal in 1787.²² At that time the *modinha*, a type of sensuous love song, was much favoured in the salons of Lisbon (‘I must confess I am a slave to *modinhas*’²³). These pieces, some of the earliest surviving examples of the form, are of value in considering the cross-fertilisation between Portuguese and Brazilian music of the period.

Last year the Oxford University Early Music Society staged ‘A Two-part Event on William Beckford’. The first, in June, entitled ‘The Man and his Talents: New Research’, comprised two lectures. Laurent Châtel spoke on ‘William Beckford as Orpheus’ and Maxwell Steer on ‘What is Beckford’s Music worth? Reflections on changing concepts on value in music’. These were followed by a concert in Trinity Chapel by Nicholas Wilshire, counter-tenor, and Steer, harpsichord, featuring *For years I lov’d* from *Arcadian Pastoral*, *O Astra, O Cælum*, Dec 25th 1780, *Andante* (22 March 1781) and *Oboe* [a keyboard sketch involving oboe] (January 1789).²⁴

As a sequel Nicholas Wilshire organised a Beckford concert in the Holywell Music Room in November.²⁵ Olivia Hinman and Marcia Pennell, sopranos, with Wilshire, harpsichord, performed five songs: *Care luci*, *Stroffa nona Nel visco in cui s’avenne*, *Stroffa decima Io’ che non credi estinto*, *O Astra, O Cælum* (first setting) and *Aria for Signora Wynne*. These were interspersed with four keyboard pieces: *Andante* (22 March 1781), ‘Untitled keyboard piece’, 27 June 1789 and Dec 25th 1780. After the interval and pieces by Purcell, the concert ended with two more Beckford songs, *To the ocean now I fly* and *O Astra, O Cælum* (second setting). There were also readings of Beckford’s comments on music from the travel diaries.

An event billed as a ‘Unique opportunity to hear the music of Wiltshire’s most exotic character’ took place at Pyt House, Tisbury, last July, featuring Susan Flannery, soprano, Charles Hetherington, baritone, Alison Townley and Sharon Lindo, violins, Mark Davies, ’cello, directed by Maxwell Steer, piano. This Beckford programme included the *Stroffe* of 1789, three piano pieces, songs from the *Arcadian Pastoral*, songs including *To the ocean now I fly* (possibly written in 1781 for Pachierotti),²⁶ piano pieces of 1789, later songs including *Cavatina Digli ch’io son fedele*, 1800 (probably written for Nelson’s visit to Fonthill), *Cantata Thou art worthy to take the*

book, also 1800 (the opening movement of a possible projected cantata on the Book of Revelations) and *O Astra, O Cælum*, orchestral song (second version, 1801).²⁷

A performance which would have given Beckford great pleasure was that by Bath Baroque on 16 October 1999 in Bath Guildhall, 'an interesting blend of Mozart and the Bath connection. Herschel, Beckford and Linley...[produced] some attractive and lesser known music.' Following Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro* overture and Herschel's Oboe Concerto, 'two songs by Beckford (*O Astra, O Cælum* and *Aria for Signora Wynne*)...allowed soprano Samantha Binnie to show...what a fine singer she is'. There were songs by Thomas Linley, 'and Beckford's largest orchestral work *Phaeton*, taken at a gallop.'²⁸ Mozart's Horn Concerto and his *Exsultate, jubilate* were also performed. Beckford was in justly deserved company.

With the publication of the available music and the series of concerts described, suddenly, after two hundred years, Beckford's scores have become available as never before. For this we have to thank Maxwell Steer and to congratulate him on his unstinting efforts. We have been accustomed for some years to the voice of Beckford's writings and now we can become familiar with the perhaps more intimate voice, that of his music.

'Alas, it is very true – Musick destroys me – and what is worse, I love being destroyed. Rather had I die in this style than live in any other'²⁹

Many thanks to Maxwell Steer for his help with this article.

¹ Guy Chapman and John Hodgkin, *A Bibliography of William Beckford of Fonthill*. London, 1930. pp. 109-111.

² Now in the Bodleian Library, MS. Beckford b.5.

³ All except (viii) are in the Beckford Papers. (iii) is MS. Beckford c.61 and the rest are MS. Beckford c.62/1 on the following folios: (i) 47-52, (ii) 1-2^v, (iv) 14-34, (v) 37-41, (vi) 35-36, (vii) 59-60.

- ⁴ T.D. Rogers, *Catalogue of the papers of William Beckford (1760-1844)*. Oxford: Bodleian Library 1987. Section 7, pp. 45-50, 'Music Composed or Collected by Beckford*'. Footnote *: 'Information for all the music manuscripts supplied by Mr Peter Ward Jones'.
- ⁵ Guy Chapman, *A Kind of Survivor*. London, 1975. p. 122.
- ⁶ Boyd Alexander, *England's Wealthiest Son*. London, 1962. p. 15.
- ⁷ *William Beckford Exhibition 1976*. Tisbury, 1976. See note inside front cover.
- ⁸ Eric Darton, 'William Beckford and Music', *Beckford Tower Trust Newsletter*, 1983. p. 8.
- ⁹ Programme note for Pyt House Concert, 16 July 1999.
- ¹⁰ Programme for 'Gothic Shock Horror', Salisbury, 21 March 1998.
- ¹¹ MS. Beckford c.62/1, fols. 32-33 (*Stroffa* No. 11) & 12-13 (*Cinto* etc.)
- ¹² Notes from CD insert, 'The Music of William Beckford', 2 June 1998.
- ¹³ Stephen Green, 'The Beckford Ball', *Bath Preservation Trust Newsletter*, 1999. p. 6.
- ¹⁴ Fanny Charles, 'Gothic horrors and an Arcadian Pastoral', *Blackdown Vale Magazine*, 9 July 1999. p. 57.
- ¹⁵ Maxwell Steer, 'William Beckford: the role of music in his life', 13 October 1999. p. i.
- ¹⁶ MS. Beckford c.62/1, fol. 42^r & ^v.
- ¹⁷ Maxwell Steer, 'The Love that Ruined a Genius', *Wiltshire Life*, June 1999. p. 13.
- ¹⁸ Details from *Beckford Edition Catalogue*. 1998.
- ¹⁹ Maxwell Steer, 'William Beckford: the role of music in his life', 13 October 1999. p. i.
- ²⁰ Eric Darton, 'William Beckford and Music. 2. His teachers?', *Beckford Tower Trust Newsletter*, 1984. pp. 4-5.
- ²¹ MSS. Beckford f.4, f.5 and f.3
- ²² *Beckford Edition Catalogue*. p. 3.
- ²³ Boyd Alexander, ed., *The Journal of William Beckford in Portugal and Spain. 1787-1788*. London, 1954. p. 229.
- ²⁴ Programme of Oxford University Early Music Society, 4 June 1999.
- ²⁵ Programme of Oxford University Early Music Society, 2 November 1999.
- ²⁶ MS. Beckford c.62/1 fols. 3-5.
- ²⁷ Programme note for Pyt House Concert, 16 July 1999.
- ²⁸ Peter Lloyd Williams, 'Caught Speeding', *Bath Chronicle*, 18 October 1999. p. 13.
- ²⁹ MS. Beckford c.31, fols. 65-66.

William, Elizabeth & William or Female Impersonation and Radical Satire

JERRY NOLAN

With tremulous timidity, and retiring trepidation, the unexperienced female adventuress in the literary atmosphere, ventures her enrolment among the promulgatresses of novelistic narrative. J.A.M. Jenks (1797)

Beckford impersonated two female adventuresses: the Right Hon. Lady Harriet Marlow, the authoress of *Modern Novel Writing* and the dedicatee of *Azemias* which was ascribed to the authoress Jacquetta Agneta Mariana Jenks of Bellgrove Priory in Wales. A diverting part of the literary atmosphere, during a period when many authoresses affected concealment behind a pseudonym, or even under the nomenclature of 'A Lady', was to name the closet lady novelist.¹ There were two leading contenders for Marlow and Jenks: perhaps it was Robert Merry, known to have written mirthful satire about the younger Pitt and his circle; or it could have been Charlotte Smith, who, though the daughter of a Sussex landowner, was known for democratic tendencies. She had her novel *Marchmont* published in four volumes by Sampson Low who went on to publish *Azemias* in two volumes.² Clearly contemporary readers sensed that beneath the burlesques and diversions of Marlow and Jenks, there glinted a marked degree of intentional seriousness.

A number of people have been responsible for starting the canard of Mrs. Elizabeth Hervey. Samuel Rogers revealed that Beckford wrote the novels to ridicule those of Mrs. Hervey, his half-sister.³ Cyrus Redding tried to demonstrate that the satire in the novels was directed against the bad taste of the Minerva Press lady novelists.⁴ Thomas Moore reported that the novels were parodies of the novels of Mrs. Hervey.⁵ The obsession with 'find

the woman' was started by Beckford himself when, at the end of *Azemia*, a list of the authors parodied appeared: Fanny Burnett, Mrs. Radcliffe, Mary Robinson, Mrs. Gunning, Mrs. Inchbald, Helen-Maria Williams etc. In his own copy of *Modern Novel Writing*, Beckford played the game of inscribing a dedication to himself: 'W.B. Presentation copy from the divine authoress.'

The Harvey canard, repeated in Beckford biographies over the years, has taken the form of dismissing the novels as Beckfordian dismissal of Mrs. Hervey. Lewis Melville concluded in 1910 that the appeal that two burlesques could muster was 'only to those readers acquainted with the novels of the indifferent writers who flourished at the end of the eighteenth century.'⁶ In 1937 Guy Chapman felt that the novels were 'concealed malice against Mrs. Hervey in a satirical squib'.⁷ In 1979 Brian Fothergill opted for 'a broad parody of the romantic sentimental novel of the day, a genre in which Beckford's sister Elizabeth Hervey had made her name as an authoress', but did note in passing that William Pitt was another target.⁸ In 1998, Tim Mowl concluded that 'Elizabeth was certainly the reason why her half-brother wasted two years writing two light novels.'⁹

Only in the analyses of André Parreaux and Boyd Alexander was close attention to the work itself the prime consideration. Parreaux thought that the romantic plots were of much less importance than the political satire and went on, adopting an original perspective, to suggest that Beckford's subversive criticism of Pitt's government 'took at least some measure of courage and sincerity to express...under the precarious disguise of a pseudonym.'¹⁰ In the discussion of Beckford's 'social radicalism', Boyd Alexander tellingly used points from the novels, which he referred to as having being written 'under the shadow of war with revolutionary France.'¹¹

Both *Modern Novel Writing* and *Azemia* pose a problem of focus for a Beckford scholar: how to hold in balance the unbridled zest with which Beckford revelled in the sub-romantic

dress of the sentimental novels of his day, and the radical satire which he still managed to generate from his pseudo-novelistic narratives. To interpret his female impersonation in the novels, one must begin by examining the relationship between himself and his half-sister, Elizabeth, from which his camp zest first began to flower.¹² To understand Beckford's radical satire in the novels, one has to side-track into the state of the nation at a time when he was seeking to play an important role in bringing about a peace treaty between the warring English and French. As ever, the trick is to capture in an analysis something of his essentially chameleon artistry.¹³

Beckford's mother, Maria Hamilton, was first married to Francis Marsh, London merchant and Jamaican planter. Elizabeth, born in 1748, was the only child of that marriage. Soon Maria was a widow, and she then married Alderman Beckford in 1756. The only child of that marriage was William Beckford, born in 1760. Maria became a widow again in 1770. Unsurprisingly the young Elizabeth and William developed a very close relationship. Young William's first tutor, the Scottish Robert Drysdale, was impressed by the accomplishment of Elizabeth at eighteen; she drew well and played various musical instruments.¹⁴ In 1774 Elizabeth married Colonel William Thomas Hervey of the Guards, and later she became the mother of two sons. Beckford's letters from Switzerland and Savoy to his beloved half-sister during 1777-1778 provide more than ample evidence of how both shared a strong liking for romantic fantasies. Here is one example of what the gushing seventeen year old Beckford wrote: 'How can I describe the transport of pleasure with which I seized your letter, tore it open and read its inspired effusions...Full of your letter I ascended yesterday a peaked Mountain. The path was rough...the way tedious but I was wrapt up in those Phantasies which are wont to haunt us.'¹⁵ Elizabeth's later development of her love of 'phantasies' took literary shape in the novels *Melissa and Marcia or the Sisters* and

Louisa or the Reward of An Affectionate Daughter. Beckford wrote some favourable comments on *Louisa*, probably out of a genuine empathy, when it was first published.¹⁶ Aged thirty, William could still effortlessly enter the rhapsodical world of the half-sister with whom he had once, in a truly remarkable succession of letters, poured a great range of 'interesting emotions'.

To dismiss the novels as parody of the sentimental novel is to fail to penetrate Beckford's rococo-like façade of flimsy story line, mindless characters, pseudo-poetic glosses, buffoonery and verbal foreplay. Obviously in *Modern Novel Writing* the disjointed tale of the evolution of Lord and Lady Laughable was very trite. But moments of social satire were evident in the episode of the duel of honour between Lord Mahogany and Don Pedro de Gonzales on the occasion of Mahogany's attempted seduction of the Portuguese nobleman's wife.¹⁷ Also in *Modern Novel Writing* there occurred flashes of graphic power as in the description of Mahogany Castle and grounds – probably a vignette of the Alderman's Fonthill Park in the early 1790s.¹⁸

There were examples of social satire and gothic story in *Azemias*: the satirical pen-picture of the Tory Mrs. De Malthe drew on Mrs. Piozzi, known as Hester Thrale, friend of Dr. Johnson; and the long gothic interlude 'Another Blue-Beard',¹⁹ was a story in the mode of Mrs. Radcliffe which displayed much skill in evoking an atmosphere of terror and suspense, a Beckfordian speciality after *Vathek*.

But it was the political satire, in among the novelistic assemblages, that provided the novels with their most pungent flavour. In *Modern Novel Writing*, Lord Mahogany was made to speak apparent nonsense in the throes of his death agony: 'Bottle up the war in a corn-field, and put my vote in hell. Hold me – the room is in flames, and the castle totters, what a serpent is the minister, he has stung mankind – I am a crocodile.'²⁰ Mahogany's vote in hell could be easily seen to refer to his

failure to vote in favour of the motions for peace put forward in the House of Commons by Fox, Wilberforce and Grey during the years 1793-1796. Mahogany's delirium with lucid intervals could even more easily be taken as a caricature of George III's intermittent madness. Many of Pitt's political cronies were featured in *Modern Novel Writing* – for example, the immaculate Mr. Reeves, famous for founding an Association for Preserving Liberty and Property against Levellers and Republicans which led Pitt to suspend Habeas Corpus, and to enact Bills against treasonable practices and seditious meetings, all of which inspired Beckford to dub Pitt's England 'the island of Mum'. Pitt's literary cronies were included when the writers associated with *The British Critic* were encouraged to take pride in their conservative ways in her ladyship's 'Humble Address to the Doers of ...*the British Critic*'. She called for the abandonment of the Rights of Man in the name of strong government, a clear betrayal of Lord Chatham who was once the champion of liberty: 'the absurd doctrine of the Rights of Man, shall be no more thought of, or respected, than the rights of horses, asses, dogs, and dromedaries. That your enemies may speedily be cast into dungeons, or sent to Botany Bay, and that yourselves may become placemen, pensioners, peeresses, loan-mongers, bishops and contractors, is the constant wish and earnest prayer of, Ladies and Gentlemen, Your devoted humble servant, Harriet Marlow.'²¹

The political strictures against Pitt's 'land of Mum' became more bilious in *Azemias*, all the more nauseating in J.A.M. Jenks's cloying tones. There was Mr. Paridel Puffwell's 'Ode, Panegyrical and Lyrical', written by an under-secretary as a contribution to the great Mr. Pitt's propaganda machine: 'He the multitude is humbling, / Britons that doth well befit: / Swinish crowds, who minds your grumbling? / Bow the knee to Mister Pitt. // Tho' abroad our men are dying, / Why should he his projects quit? / What are orphans, widows, crying, / To our

steady Mister Pitt?... Two thirds of that nation starving, / Now of meat ne'er taste a bit; / For his friends he still is carving, / This great statesman – Mister Pitt ...Oh! berhyme him, courtly writers! / Nares and Gifford, men of wit; / Pye, and all ye ode-inditers, / Strike your lyres to Mister Pitt!'²² The short story 'Edward and Ellen', a new twenty-seven page preamble to the second edition, drew headline attention to a humanitarian story, in the manner of a radical pamphleteer, citing the tragic fate in Pitt's England of an impoverished loving couple.²³

Some of the characters in *Azemias* were extremely shallow – for one, the hero Charles Arnold, the amiable midshipman who somehow gets to marry the beautiful Turkish heroine. But the rough-speaking sailor, Bat Bowling, was capable of voicing dissent on the whole question of free trade, especially with the French enemy: 'if they want what we can spare, why not send it them, and take in change what they can spare, and we want, without all this racket of counterband and duties? Now that's my notion of trade.'²⁴ Again Mrs. Blandford who adopted and cared for *Azemias* expressed even more radical opinions on social justice: 'there ought to be equal laws for all men...I would not have the rich live much worse than they do, but I would have the poor supported a great deal better.'²⁵

During the years 1796-1798, popular support for Pitt grew as the views of French Jacobinism, demanding radical reform of society, became increasingly seen as threatening and destructive. The naval mutinies at Spithead and the Nore in 1797, with reports of mob violence and the red flag flying, succeeded in blocking for a short time sea-borne trade at London. The national mood of peril made it easier for Pitt's government to silence all calls for reform. Of course, Beckford remained unmoved and persisted in his sympathy for France. However to explain the sheer fury of his animosity towards Pitt, one needs to take into account the fact that the two Williams as children were once the best of friends.

Lord Chatham, a political ally of the Alderman, was Beckford's godfather. As a young boy Beckford visited Lord Chatham's Somerset home at Burton Pynsent where he met his second son, born in 1759 and also a William. While there must have been early familiarity and affection between the Williams, their destinies soon diverged. The Alderman's will appointed three lords – Chatham, Camden and Lyttleton – to oversee his son's formation as a future political leader from 1770 onwards; but the guardians had little effect on Beckford's personal development. By 1784, the married and still childless Beckford, already a very bored M.P. for Wells, was being turned into a social outcast as a result of the way Lord Loughborough decided to handle the Powderham scandal which had arisen out of Beckford's indiscreet love of the future Earl of Devon, William Courtenay. By 1784, William Pitt, the beneficiary of his father's death in 1778, was already Prime Minister.

In 1794 a suspicious Beckford in Portugal turned down a request from Pitt to take up his Wells seat in the House of Commons, and applied for the Chiltern Hundreds. A little later, he must have been swayed by the euphoria of his acceptance in Portugal, where he was being flattered, pampered, admired and loved as a notable aristocrat, into entertaining the paradoxical illusion that he was at last ready to fulfil the radical role in England first adopted by the Alderman who had been a sturdy defender of civil liberties for the enterprising individual.²⁶

Beckford's intrigue to bring about a peace treaty between England and France in the mid-1790s barely concealed his ambition to be rewarded with a peerage. Even though he was able to offer favourable terms from the French, with whom he had made some friendly contacts, Beckford was snubbed by Pitt, and must have been alarmed by the Traitorous Correspondence Act. This was the creation of none other than his old enemy Lord Loughborough who became Pitt's Lord Chancellor at the outbreak of war with the French. It was against the whole

background of unsuccessful political intrigue and frustrated personal ambition that Beckford's two novels were conceived and written.²⁷ Once the platform in the House of Lords was beyond his reach, the only remaining project which would encompass Beckford's multifarious talents and energies was the creation of Fonthill Abbey, which meant the abandonment of depressing political battles in favour of the grand preoccupation with the exhilarating challenges of art.

The lasting interest of the novels for the Beckfordian stems partly from the unusual mixture of genres – sentimental novel and satirical pamphlet – being briefly deployed by an eccentric whig reformer in the last decade of the eighteenth century, and partly from the most uneasy tension between the patterns and rhythms of a sophisticated literary imagination and the raw edges of a stifled political consciousness. If only the Alderman's guardians had better fitted his William with political sense – but then Beckford would not have been in possession of his singular aesthetic sensibility. At least, Beckford realised the dangerous political situation in the mid-1790s. The disguise as lady novelists was very necessary for him, not just to allow the radical satire to bubble up unexpectedly and be savoured in the sentimental settings so favoured by Elizabeth, but to protect himself from being persecuted again by Pitt's great scourge of sedition-mongers, Loughborough, who was created the Earl of Rosslyn for his inquisitorial zeal. Pitt's highly controlled regime did not succeed in cowing Beckford into a totally silent acceptance of a propaganda-driven government which developed the happy knack of successfully ignoring England's festering social injustices.²⁸ Perhaps Beckford was all the more galled by the fact that the greatest public hostility to Pitt could be expressed by the Tory caricaturist James Gillray in 1795, when he depicted Pitt as 'Death on the Pale Horse of Hanover', galloping over the prostrate swinish multitude and back-kicking the Opposition into Hell.²⁹

The novels show how anxiously isolated and muted Beckford must have felt in England at the time of writing and publishing the novels. *Modern Novel Writing* was translated into German in 1798, while *Azemias* ran into a second edition within the year, and was translated into French in 1808. In spite of reaching a widespread readership, the secret of the authorship of the novels was not immediately discovered. There is the legend that not even Elizabeth recognised her half-brother's hand, even as she marvelled at the vignette of Fonthill Park in *Modern Novel Writing*: 'Why, I vow and protest, here is my grotto.'

A year after Pitt's death in Bath and solemn state funeral and burial in Westminster Abbey, Beckford seems to have made a backward-looking, impulsive gesture of impotent defiance by entering the House of Commons as M.P. for Hindon in 1807, although there is no surviving record that he ever addressed the House.³⁰ As he grew older, he lost the instinctive capacity to empathise with Elizabeth's imagination; as is suggested in the note to Franchi in 1818, on the prospect of her writing about the society scandals in Napoleon's court: 'What a fine opportunity for Mrs Hervey to spread her poison – she's in Paris and doubtless will write *volumes* on a theme so suitable to her genius for *romance*.'³¹

With his memories of the young Elizabeth and the other young William fast fading into the past, Beckford confessed to the female impersonation of lady novelists like his half-sister, but stopped well short of encouraging Cyrus Redding to crack the code of radical satire, which he may have finally seen as having been designed only for his own satisfaction. The simple confession was enough to preserve the novels from total oblivion, and to bequeath to future generations of readers the piquant pleasure of discovering just how hybrid were the author's intentions and inventions.

¹ See Dorothy Blakey, *The Minerva Press 1790-1820*, Oxford, 1939, for an

explanation of the popularity of feminine disguise among lady novelists in Chapter IV 'Forgotten Favourites', pp. 48-71. This book reproduces as an Appendix the Minerva Press Prospectus for 1798 which lists the great host of female novelists – all mediocre – who had yielded to the temptation to write for a mass market. Forms of social radicalism were utterly taboo among all those retiring Minerva lady novelists!

² See *The Monthly Magazine* 3 (Jan 1797). p. 47; *Thraliana: the Diary of Hester Lynch Thrale*, ed. K.C. Balderston, Oxford, 1951, pp. 1061-1062; and *The Gothick Novel*, ed. Victor Sage, London, 1990, pp. 14-5.

³ *Recollections of the Table-Talk of Samuel Rogers*, ed. M. Bishop. London, 1952. pp. 155-158.

⁴ Cyrus Redding, *Memoirs of William Beckford*. London, 1859. Vol. 2 Ch. 5, pp. 161-218. Redding included potted summaries and lengthy extracts from the novels. In Ch. 6, Redding refers to the politics of Mr. Beckford in terms of the whiggism of his father, but fails to connect it with the aforementioned novels.

⁵ Thomas Moore, *Memoirs, Journals and Correspondence*. London, 1853-1856. Vol. 2, p. 197.

⁶ Lewis Melville, *The Life and Letters of William Beckford*. London, 1910. p. 184.

⁷ Guy Chapman, *Beckford*. London, 1937. pp. 254-255.

⁸ Brian Fothergill, *Beckford of Fonthill*. London, 1979. p. 245.

⁹ Timothy Mowl, *William Beckford: Composing for Mozart*. London, 1998. p. 204. On the contrary, Eric Darton found that the lampooning lightness provided good examples of 'English humorous writing': *Beckford Tower Trust Newsletter*, Spring 1990 & Spring 1991.

¹⁰ See André Parreaux, 'The Caliph and the Swinish Multitude' in *William Beckford of Fonthill: Bicentenary Essays*, Supplement to Cairo Studies in English, 1960, ed. Fatma Moussa Mahmoud, pp. 1-15.

¹¹ Boyd Alexander, *England's Wealthiest Son*. London, 1962. pp. 144-151.

¹² See Mark Booth, *Camp*. London, 1983, for my definition of 'camp': 'Camp keeps the faculty of wonder alive. It combines intellectual virtuosity with child-like freshness of vision. It sees through the many pompous pretences and dishonest compromises of the grown-up world', p. 183.

¹³ The novels were published in 1970 as facsimile reprints (Gainesville, Florida) with an introduction by Herman Mittle Levy Jr. who argued, viewing the text from a great distance, the novels should be seen as a case of Beckford the artist critic seeking to defend the tradition of the English novel as an art form against lady novelists such as Mrs. Elizabeth Hervey, pp. vii-ix.

¹⁴ See Chapman, *Beckford*, p. 35 ff.

¹⁵ Some of the correspondence between William and Elizabeth 1777-1797 survives in the Beckford Papers at the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

¹⁶ There are four novels by Elizabeth Hervey currently on the shelves of the British Library: *Melissa and Marcia* (1788), *Louisa* (1790), *The Mourtray Family* (1800) and *Amabel; or, Memoirs of a Woman of Fashion* (1814).

¹⁷ *Modern Novel Writing*, vol. 1, pp. 207-215.

¹⁸ *Modern Novel Writing*, vol. 2, pp. 63-72.

¹⁹ *Azemias*, vol. 1, pp. 151-254.

²⁰ *Modern Novel Writing*, vol. 2, p. 48.

²¹ *Modern Novel Writing*, vol. 2, pp. 217-232.

²² *Azemias*, Vol. 2, pp. 12-17. Robert Nares edited the first forty-two numbers of *The British Critic* and was featured as Rev. Mr. Squares in *Modern Novel Writing*. William Gifford became editor of *The Anti-Jacobin* in 1797. H.J. Pye was the Poet Laureate. Beckford was only too aware of the literary hacks in the service of Pitt.

²³ *Azemias*, Vol. 1, pp. iii-xxix.

²⁴ *Azemias*, Vol. 2, p. 72.

²⁵ *Azemias*, Vol. 2, pp. 154-160.

²⁶ See Malcolm Jack, *William Beckford; an English Fidalgo*, New York, 1996, for a passionate advocacy of the biographical centrality of Beckford's 'good times' in Portugal. Certainly Beckford drew much artistic and religious inspiration from Portugal. While he may have been a virtual fidalgo in Portugal, he still longed to be a radical in England. Beckford did not return to Portugal after 1798, settling for the consolation of remembered vignettes as a favourite antidote to the spirit of Pitt's England which he continued to oppose in Fonthill as a patron of all the arts.

²⁷ See Fothergill, *Beckford of Fonthill*, for an account of Beckford's 'unavailing diplomacy', pp. 242-248.

²⁸ See Boyd Alexander, *England's Wealthiest Son*, for a discussion on why the French Revolution had a special attraction for Beckford in Chapter XI 'France and Radicalism', pp. 139-151. See Mowl, *William Beckford*, for the facetious but stimulating suggestion that Beckford's lady novelists were forerunners of Gore Vidal's satirical creation, Myra Breckinridge, p. 206.

²⁹ Draper Hill, *Mr. Gillray: the Caricaturist*, London, 1965, p. 55, Plate 51.

³⁰ For sketches of the political background to Pitt's war with France, see J. Holland Rose, *A Short Life of William Pitt*, London, 1925, in Chapter IX 'Efforts for Peace 1795-1797', pp. 130-146; and P.W. Wilson, *William Pitt the Younger*, London, 1930, in Chapter Fifteen 'War', pp. 256-269.

³¹ Boyd Alexander, trans. & ed., *Life at Fonthill*. London, 1957. pp. 248-249.

Borges on Beckford's Hell

FRANK JULIAN GELLI

Jorge Luis Borges is the remote cause of my writing these lines. This is so because it is to the celebrated originator of South American magical realism that I owe my discovery of William Beckford. When, a few years ago, I read 'On Beckford's *Vathek*', a short essay included in Borges' *Other Inquisitions*, I was intrigued. Although he dismisses the author of *Vathek* somewhat peevishly as 'a rather trivial type of millionaire', Borges asserts that Beckford's invention of the palace of subterranean fire in the novel's final pages 'is the first truly atrocious Hell in literature'. He goes on to say that *Vathek* foretells 'the satanic splendours of Thomas De Quincey and Poe, of Charles Baudelaire and Huysmans'. Now, although a clergyman might be supposed to cherish a professional interest in such matters, I must confess that hell and satanism are subjects which excite me little. Nevertheless, my high opinion of Borges' literary taste induced me to find out. So, I bought the book and read it in one sitting.

Like Borges, I am a hedonistic reader. If a book does not bring me enjoyment, I do not read it. *Vathek* certainly afforded me much pleasure and I have always been grateful to the great Argentinian fabulist for drawing my attention to it. However, a puzzlement arose out of the very passages Borges admired. Why did he think that the description of Eblis' underground kingdom deserves such a special accolade? Masterly as Beckford's depiction is, what is so 'truly atrocious' about a place where, never mind the gloom, we even find tables laden 'with a profusion of viands... and wines'?

The answer surely must lie not in, so to speak, the architectonics, or the interior design, or even the atmosphere, of this hell. (Indeed, Beckford's imagination renders the place almost attractive from the point of view of a certain suggestive

decadentisme. Try and visualise, for example, that alluring image of Eblis' tabernacle, 'hung with the skins of leopards'.) Theologically speaking, Hell is above all a place of chastisement. Its essential atrociousness must therefore reside in the infernal punishments themselves, rather than in secondary qualities like topography or furniture. With these considerations in mind, I looked again at the text. I was amply rewarded.

First, I observed that Beckford has the members of the 'vast multitude' down below behave so that they 'all avoided each other....as if alone on a desert where no foot had trodden'. I am almost embarrassed in mentioning this, but I am put in mind here of Jean Paul Sartre's notorious dictum: '*L'enfer, c'est les autres*'. The misanthropic charm of this definition seems to me undeniable, and it also explains its perverse appeal. Unfortunately, it has obscured a more universal truth. People abhor being alone. Solitude is a demon with which modern man is all too acquainted. Here Beckford is more topical than Dante, whose lost souls do not appear to be especially tormented by loneliness. Beckford appears to have hit on a (*the*, perhaps?) most dreadful punishment, as anyone who has experienced the horrors of enforced solitary confinement will vouch....Of course, the atomised alienation experienced by many inhabitants of today's megalopolises of the Western world is no literary fantasy. Besides, short of postulating *peccatum originale* and further doctrinal baggage, modern man is deprived even of the consolations of divine retribution, because his solitary hell, alas, appears to be self-made.

Second, the other striking feature in the way Beckford portrays the denizens of Eblis's kingdom is something which in the novel impresses Vathek and Nouronihar themselves. Why, they ask, 'these ambulating spectres never withdrew their hands from their hearts?'.

Why indeed? It is a memorable image. Each one of the damned, we are told, 'carried within him a heart tormented in

flames'. The explanatory notes in my OUP World's Classics edition help, but only up to a point. They refer to French literary sources the learned young Beckford probably drew upon. The hallowed game of who influenced whom, though, is not my principal concern here. Rather, I wish to speculate *why* Beckford thought a burning heart so apt as a condign image of eternal punishment. After all, if you really wanted to be creative, you could come up with worse horrors. The Ottoman Turks, for example, used slowly to flay prisoners alive.

Gentle reader, do not worry. Unlike Dickens' Fat Boy, my intention is not to make your flesh creep. Back to *Vathek*. Why the hearts devoured by flames? What is so special about the heart?

In the Bible the heart designates the whole human personality but, unlike modern usage, the emphasis is on the activity of reason and will, rather than the emotions. Christian thought developed this further, and regarded the heart as the special organ of the love of God. The Catholic devotion of the Sacred Heart of Jesus was initiated in France during the second half of the seventeenth century thanks to the labours of St Margaret Mary Alacoque. Popular pictures showing Jesus' heart, encircled by thorns and shedding drops of blood – a symbol of the outrages against divine love – have been the visual expression of a powerful spirituality deeply rooted in the piety of the Catholic faithful every since. I myself would like to think that Beckford might have been familiar with the representations of the Sacred Heart while in France and used the imagery in *Vathek*. Of course, whether it was his subconscious mind that led him to do so, or whether it came as a deliberate literary contrivance, it is impossible to say. I personally incline to the former view. It seems to accord better with Beckford's own understanding of *Vathek*'s terrors as 'undefined'.

Lastly, why did this Beckfordian inferno of burning hearts impress our literary magus so much that he assigned to it such a

primacy in the panoply of fictional hells? I would hate to attempt something as banal as to psychoanalyse the great man but some pages in James Woodall's recent biography of Borges, *The Man in the Mirror of the Book*, might, just *might*, contain a hint of a possible answer.

Woodall contends that the writer Borges, living in the midst of a deeply macho Argentinian culture, was a sexually naïve and repressed man. Yet, he was no eunuch. His sentimental yearnings were strong. Although there is no evidence that Borges' sexuality was a smouldering volcano, his emotional needs, and uneasy amorous involvements with a number of women, are well-documented. Homosexual love, on the other hand, is rarely alluded to in Borges' copious writings, although Woodall claims that the alleged pleasures of heterosexual sodomy are highly appreciated by Argentinian males. Might not Borges have felt that *corazones* devoured by unquenchable fire were a vivid way of expressing his own ambiguous inner hankerings?

Such a hypothesis may well strike the reader as either outrageous or itself naïve in the extreme. It is with modest satisfaction, therefore, that I am able to cite a passage in Witold Gombrowicz' *Journals*. (I do not mean his more widely known *Diary*.) Gombrowicz was a brilliant Polish writer and playwright who was exiled in Argentina between 1939 and 1963. For many years Gombrowicz led a Bohemian and penniless existence in Buenos Aires. He also managed to be admitted, albeit briefly, to the fringes of the exclusive literary salon of Victoria Ocampo, the owner of the magazine *Sur*, to which Borges was a regular contributor.

Gombrowicz was both impressed and irritated by Borges – the adulation of which he was the centre especially annoyed him. Nevertheless, he became sufficiently acquainted with his fellow writer to meet him occasionally. On a journal entry dated Wednesday June 1954 we read: '...while at the Cafe Rex he (Borges) talked, amongst other things, of unrequited love. It is

strange how this intensely private and refined man who does not strike me as particularly passionate, became animated and waxed excited on the subject. I remember his roving blind eye, straying again and again, unseeing, towards the next table, where some young bloods were conversing in high-pitched voices. 'Ah, Witoldo, a burning heart, a burning heart', he whispered twice, barely audibly, as if confessing a secret sin, 'what sufferings could be worse?'

Staging Beckford: The Theatre of Place and the Theatre of Self

JONATHAN WEIGHTMAN

I spent part of my childhood at Portmeirion, Clough Williams-Ellis's 1920s folly in North Wales, where my mother was living and working. It was here that I first heard of Fonthill Abbey and William Beckford.

At first sight Williams-Ellis and Beckford would appear to have little in common. Portmeirion is after all a 'successful' folly (if you will accept the oxymoron) and has acquired a commercial function. It has none of the serious majesty or quasi-religious status of Fonthill. Nor is it the supreme architectural reference that Fonthill Abbey has become. But look a little deeper and we can unearth certain parallels. Though separated by well over a century – work on Portmeirion was begun in 1926 – both men were, speaking loosely, monied aristocrats, in Beckford's case the emphasis being on the money, in Williams-Ellis's on the aristocratic. Both had vision...or 'visions', and the wherewithal to give them body. Both Portmeirion and Fonthill suffered from their creators' impatience and were shoddily built for instant effect from poor or inappropriate materials. Most important, both

were at the time unacceptably ‘foreign’ both to the English vernacular tradition and to the fashion of the time; Portmeirion a vaguely Mediterranean pastiche set down amidst the stern grey majesty of Snowdonia while Fonthill’s principal references were to the great medieval Portuguese monasteries of Alcobaça and Batalha. Both had an important element of deliberate theatrical sham: Beckford’s fancy was that his ‘abbey’ should be seen as a great monastic foundation built over centuries: Clough’s pretence was that Portmeirion was an organic and haphazard village, again built over time and in different styles. Both were carefully set in the landscape, natural and created; both were dominated by towers – Clough’s by an Italianate campanile with its false perspective making it appear taller than it really was, Beckford’s of course by the ill-fated Great Tower. Both Portmeirion and Fonthill are, in their own way, supreme examples of architectural stage sets or, ‘the theatre of place’.

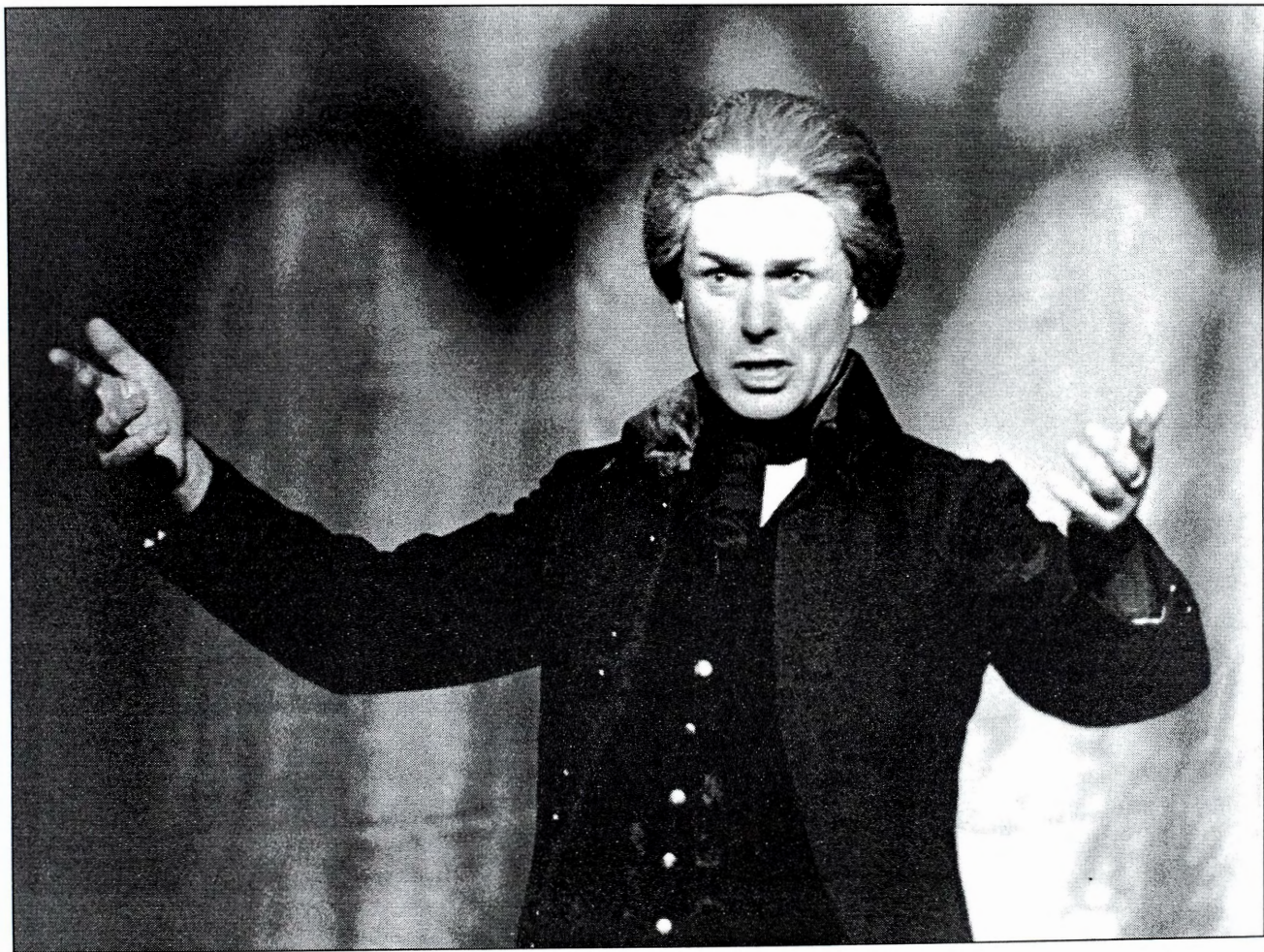
So it was through Portmeirion and the idea of Fonthill Abbey that I discovered and delighted in the idea of the ‘theatre of place’. But not entirely unrelated is the ‘theatre of self’, a term used by the modernist Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa to describe his *heteronyms*, a series of over seventy poetic alter-egos through which he expressed himself. ‘*The poet is a faker*’¹ runs the first line of one of his best known poems. Beckford surely would have understood the idea. As an outsider to conventional society in so many ways he used his art and arts to invent himself in countless different ways – as Vathek, as the abbot of Fonthill, as the autocratic aesthetic, the country gent, the playful romper with boys, the priest of a new religion, the serious bibliophile and collector, the lord of the manor, the builder, the aristocrat, the defender of human and animal rights, the revolutionary, the reactionary – a startling array of contradictory personae that he was only able to contain with great artifice and invention. It was the ‘theatre of self’ over a hundred years before the modernists suggested the notion of multiplicity in the artist’s

persona. And that is not quite the end of the parallel with Pessoa. About Pessoa hangs too a certain amount of sexual ambiguity: one of his most developed *heteronyms*, Álvaro de Campos, in his urge to ‘experience everything’, was as much attracted to men as to women. And one of Pessoa’s earliest published works was the long poem in English, *Antinous*,² the lament of the Emperor Hadrian for his young slave boy drowned in the Nile.

So if Clough Williams-Ellis and Beckford challenged the notion of architectural good manners and challenged accepted notions of what was appropriate or unified, so, in a different age, Pessoa – and others – challenged the notion of the unity of the self. ‘Be plural, like the universe!’ exhorted Pessoa. And the builders answer ‘Be a towering but purposeless medieval octagon in the midst of the Wiltshire countryside or a Mediterranean village with oriental flourishes in Wales!’

I re-encountered Beckford when I moved to Portugal; Rose Macaulay’s *They Went to Portugal*³ led me first to the creatively fictionalised *Recollections of an Excursion to the Monasteries of Alcobaça and Batalha*,⁴ written with such delightfully inventive hindsight over forty years after the events it describes. All of this was brought significantly to life by an exhibition at the Palácio de Queluz in the 1980s about Beckford’s travels in Portugal. All of this was fuel, but what really fired me to write about him was the discovery of his long-term relationship with Gregório Franchi, very hazily documented and, if not ignored, certainly treated as no more than a footnote to Beckford’s life. This led me to his journals – *The Journal of William Beckford in Portugal and Spain 1787–1788*⁵ and *Life at Fonthill 1807–1822*,⁶ and it was here that I discovered that his affair, his friendship, and his affective and business relationship with Franchi, far from being a footnote to any account of his life was in fact a major sustenance

Opposite: Jonathan Weightman as William Beckford in *Waking Thoughts*. Taborda Theatre, 1999.



and, even, a source of inspiration. When they were apart they communicated by letter – usually in Italian – nearly every day – and Franchi was consulted and informed about every detail of Beckford's life and work – from the practicalities of the building and decoration of Fonthill to salacious gossip and sexual fantasy. The largely ignored and unsung Franchi was in fact a major bulwark to the complex construction that was William Beckford.

Waking Thoughts (my play, the title of which is, of course, derived from Beckford's work *Dreams, Waking Thoughts and Incidents*) is also an attempt to drag Gregório Franchi from obscurity. I have never seen a painting or engraving of him. I have read little of what he wrote and seen a smattering of his drawings. But from the journals one does get a picture of someone of stature. Solid and down-to-earth in many ways; a counterpoint to the mercurial and unpredictable Beckford – willing to go along with Beckford's flights of fancy but with his own feet firmly on the ground. He was also a man of not insignificant talents – musical, linguistic, and he possibly had an active part in the arrangements and decoration of Fonthill. From tiny hints I have made of him an Anglophile and a Catholic renegade set against Beckford's Anglophobia and attraction (to the trappings anyway) of Roman Catholic worship – a good example of dramatic licence taken on rather spurious evidence. I was able to discover very little objective information about Franchi. I dug out a little monograph published in the early 60s by the British Historical Society of Lisbon with the title *From Lisbon to Baker Street*⁷ which was at least an acknowledgement of the importance of Franchi in Beckford's life but was most discreet and told me little I had not already discovered from the journals.

However, and partly because of the *lacunae*, I now realised that there was indeed a play in the making. It is the gaps in documentation – or, I must admit, a lack of ability or, really, desire to fill these gaps – that allowed me room to write a play

about the two of them. (My original plan to write about Beckford and his first biographer Cyrus Redding was abandoned and the spotlight switched to the far more crucial and interesting relationship between Beckford and Franchi.)

What we have left of the correspondence between Beckford and Franchi is largely one-sided – very little remains of Franchi's side of the exchange. But this is rich meat for the playwright – it gives enough hints and clues as to the nature of the relationship but leaves plenty to be filled in by the imagination. What I have attempted to do in the play is to touch on the idea of 'home life at Fonthill', a glimpse of Beckford and Franchi – as well as the unseen but ever-present servants and workmen – safe behind the Barrier, safe from the world outside, playing games, camping it up, making music and defying the order and restrictions that govern the world outside.

To a serious Beckfordian researcher I am only too aware that there is much in the play that is strictly speaking inaccurate. But I do also feel that as a writer of a play I am in a sense freed from that weight of information that is the proper domain of research papers but can be crippling to a writer of 'fiction'. A play is necessarily a fiction even when based on fact. I would like to claim that a writer of a play about Beckford (himself a great indulger in 'play') must be allowed to embroider the life of someone who so carefully embroidered and even invented his own.

The play is, on the surface at any rate, about two things: the rise and fall of Fonthill Abbey and the rise and fall of Franchi in Beckford's life. In the end neither Fonthill nor Franchi gave Beckford lasting nourishment for the spirit. What I have extrapolated – perhaps on too scanty evidence (but do remember the play is a fiction!) is that despite his obsession with the building of the Abbey he did not, in the final assessment, regret its fall and sale but that the void left by the love and service that Franchi bore him was, in later life, indeed a cause for regret, and

even, extraordinarily for a man of Beckford's disposition, even possibly for repentance.

As any Beckfordian who has seen the play will realise there are nuggets of quotation embedded in the text. For me there are two which throw a most extraordinary and perhaps unexpected light on the character of Beckford. One is his reaction to the Vere Street arrests.⁸ 'Poor sods... What a pity not to have a balcony in Bow Street to see them pass, and worse still not to have a magic wand to transform into a triumph the sorry sequence of events'.⁹ Here he displays a real and, I feel, touching sympathy with the men but, oh, in such a Beckfordian way. The magic wand, the miraculous transformation of which he is the agent. Egotistical, yes, but with a weight of genuine and heartfelt feeling behind it. The other is less self aware, unguarded. 'What are forms? The heart is everything',¹⁰ he says. Too late he has realised that an exploration of the mysteries of the human heart has passed him by. Here is a moment of shocking self-knowledge.

The world of William Beckford, that almost impossibly remote world of the late eighteenth century and the early nineteenth, that world that Beckford and Franchi inhabited has so completely passed away that it requires a considerable imaginative effort to make sense of it. As author of the play *Waking Thoughts*, and perhaps even more as the actor pretending to be Beckford, I am constantly aware that I am at the most only giving the slightest of hints as to what might have been. But in the final assessment that is not so much what matters. It is a fiction. It is an interpretation. If it throws an occasional shaft of light into that vanished and remote world that is fine. But for what it is worth I feel that I must say that Beckford comes across to me, despite the years and conditions that appear to separate us so utterly, as someone extraordinarily real. I love his curiosity, his brilliance, his subversiveness, his playfulness, his humour and sympathy. That he is commonly seen as arrogant, selfish, peevish, disdainful and cold may well be the other side of the

coin but detracts not a jot either from his fascination nor from his essential humanity.

My journey to Beckford has taken me from Portmeirion to Pessoa and Portugal. As someone who works in theatre, the drama of Fonthill (as of Portmeirion more than thirty years ago) cannot fail to impress. The fact that Fonthill Abbey no longer exists makes it even more enticing. Add to this the fascinating and complicated theatre of Beckford himself and the mixture is heady.

¹ Fernando Pessoa, *Autopsicografia*. trans. Richard Zenith. Fernando Pessoa, selected Poems: New York, 1998.

² Fernando Pessoa, *Antinous*. Poemas Ingleses. Lisbon, 1974. Antinous was published in 1918 and received a favourable review from *The Glasgow Herald*.

³ Rose Macaulay, *They Went to Portugal*. London, 1946.

⁴ William Beckford, *Recollection of an Excursion to the Monasteries of Alcobaça and Batalha*, first published 1835.

⁵ Boyd Alexander, ed., *The Journal of Beckford in Portugal and Spain 1787-1788*. London, 1954.

⁶ Boyd Alexander, trans. & ed., *Life at Fonthill 1807-1822*. London, 1957.

⁷ Boyd Alexander, *From Lisbon to Baker Street*. Lisbon: The British Historical Society, 1977.

⁸ A notorious case of the period when a large number of homosexual men and boys belonging to the so-called Vere Street Coterie were arrested in a raid at the White Swan, Vere Street in the summer of 1810 and later tried. Beckford's comment is actually about the way they were treated by the mob; in the play I have made it a reaction to the sentencing.

⁹ *Life at Fonthill*. p. 92.

¹⁰ Remembered by his daughter, the Duchess of Hamilton. James Lees-Milne, *William Beckford*. Tisbury, 1976. p. 122.

The Troubled Gestation of Britton's *Illustrations of Fonthill*¹

STEPHEN CLARKE

Britton's *Illustrations of Fonthill* and Rutter's *Delineations of Fonthill* are the primary contemporary printed accounts of Fonthill Abbey. They were rival productions, both published in 1823 on the tide of public interest at the time of the Fonthill sales. Both are illustrated quarto volumes sold by subscription, and they have much in common. Rutter's book is the more substantial – ignoring introductory matter and appendices, it contains nearly one hundred pages of text to Britton's thirty-seven, is more handsomely produced and on better paper.

But one of the most striking differences to the reader is the tone of the introductory pages. Rutter is urbane, perhaps bland and suitably obsequious in his acknowledgements; Britton is by turn accusatory, defensive, injured. In his Address to Subscribers he speaks of falsehood and misrepresentation and of hostility and enmity. In his Preface, he writes 'It would afford me much gratification to express thankfulness to other persons, from whom I had a right to expect friendly and useful co-operation; but, as I cannot praise, I forbear to censure.' It is the object of this paper to examine the causes of these frustrations from Britton's surviving correspondence – with his artists, with Franchi, with Rutter, with his subscribers and with Beckford himself – and how they influenced the published book.

Britton first met Beckford in 1798 when, as a young and inexperienced topographer, he visited Fonthill while preparing materials for the first two volumes of *The Beauties of Wiltshire* (1801). In 1834 he recalled in a letter to Beckford how he had then been 'first gratified with the sight of, and kind notice by

Opposite: John Britton, from the *European Magazine*, April 1820.



you,'² and he acknowledges in the book that Beckford provided the second of the two plates that illustrate Fonthill Splendens and its grounds.

What the young Britton had to offer Beckford it is hard to say, though his increasing knowledge of Gothic architecture and his series of publications on *Architectural Antiquities* (1807-1814) and *Cathedral Antiquities* (1814-1835) would have rendered him of interest. The 1882-1883 sale catalogue of the Beckford library from Hamilton Palace contains twenty-one lots of books by Britton, including sets of the *Architectural Antiquities* and the *Cathedral Antiquities*, a number of presentation copies, and one (Britton's account of Corsham) with two pages of Beckford's caustic notes on its inaccuracies. There were also six copies of Britton's *Fonthill*, including one on the largest paper with proofs and etchings and the artists' original drawings bound in.

In 1817 Beckford corrected for Britton an account of Fonthill Abbey. The corrections by Beckford are minor and stylistic ('The building has been chiefly erected from the designs of James Wyatt' becomes 'The principal part of this noble pile has been erected from the designs of James Wyatt,' for example) but the manuscript has been endorsed by Britton: 'Corrected by Mr Beckford June 1 1817 – who then invited me to Fonthill.'³ Beckford refers to this visit in his letter to Franchi that appears in Boyd Alexander's *Life at Fonthill*. On 21 October he notes the presence at the Abbey of 'that highly ridiculous, highly impertinent Britton, the Cathedral fellow' but adds 'Britton does not displease me.' The next day he writes 'No one in the world has remained so content, so honoured and so enthusiastic as poor Britton. His Britannia, with the Abbé as Neptune, has sailed through the Abbey with zephyrs and cupids playing round. I have not yet seen him because I was in the woods at my daily occupation, but they all tell me that he is the most agreeable, lively, continentalish and knowing(?) little personage in the world.'⁴ Britton's awed enthusiasm and Beckford's detached

ambiguity are recurrent themes in their correspondence.

On 1 July 1822 the doors of Fonthill were opened for the first auction view. There was great public interest, and John Rutter, the Quaker bookseller and publisher of Shaftesbury, capitalised on this by publishing as a guidebook his *Description of Fonthill Abbey and Demesne*, which went through six editions in 1822, with a *New Descriptive Guide* appearing the following year. Britton, encouraged by Beckford, determined to produce a more detailed illustrated account of the Abbey. Later that year he wrote to a prospective subscriber to the project 'I set about it coolly & with some hesitation nor should I have done it at all but from the very encouraging letters of Mr Beckford, who, I certainly promised five years back to write something about the place.'⁵ Beckford must have seen the book as a celebration of his achievement now that he was abandoning Fonthill rather than as merely useful publicity for the sale, as it was never envisaged that the book would be published before Christie's auction date of 1 October.

Britton was initially enthusiastic, although his attitude towards the stylistically hybrid, scenographic Gothic of the Abbey was ambivalent – writing to Beckford on 24 September 1822 he was at pains to make clear that his intention in writing of the Abbey was to 'be more descriptive than critical.'⁶ On 19 August Britton wrote to Beckford that he would to leave London for Fonthill that Friday and spend three or four days at the Abbey. He asked Beckford's advice on subjects for drawings and told him that he intended to have a ground plan, about six interior and exterior views and some details of furniture.⁷ He took as his artist George Cattermole (1800-1868), who had been placed with him at the age of fourteen and with his brother Richard had worked on the *Cathedral Antiquities*.

On arrival at the Abbey Britton found that he had underestimated his task: 'I am rather embarrassed with the Complexity, intricacy, splendour, and extent, of the Edifice,' he

wrote to Beckford at the end of the month. Three or four days had become eight, and he found that he needed 'elaborate, highly finished drawings.'⁸ Beckford, meanwhile, was not prepared to advise Britton on illustrations for the book – he wrote that, impressed as he was by Britton's taste and zeal, 'I cannot but still refrain from pointing out any particular object for the pen or the graver.'⁹

Where Beckford did influence the book was in steering Britton – whose style could be 'incorrigibly pompous'¹⁰ – away from a dry topographical description of the adjoining villages and churches. The catalyst for this was Britton's prospectus, whose heading offered topographical notices of Fonthill Gifford and Fonthill Bishop. Beckford wrote on 7 September that 'we are not entirely agreed' on the issue... 'We have had quite enough of flowery descriptions,' and proceeded to quote Walpole's *Aedes Walpoliana* as the kind of dry catalogue to avoid.¹¹

Britton had returned to London after spending a full month at the Abbey, leaving his artist Cattermole to stay on at the Beckford Arms to complete his drawings. His response to Beckford was compliant. 'I have received the corrected Prospectus & also received the remarks you made to the Chevalier Franchi & shall attend to both.' He agreed not to 'encumber and leadify' his pages with useless topographical detail, and promised only a few remarks on the old mansions of Fonthill and a brief description of the scenery. He suggested a detailed map of the Estate and – most appealing to Beckford – an engraving of his full coat of arms for the title page.¹²

Beckford's reply of 3 October is perhaps the most important in the correspondence. He urges Britton that 'confining yourself wholly & solely to the description of the buildg. and its integrant decorations with as little as possible about groves or lawns, or shrubberies, lakes, tunnels, and promontories, would be the best plan, why mention at all the past mansion already described so often or the present Churches neither of which as

you so justly observe possess any merit ancient or modern? Why not keep totally clear of the mud & slush of the contiguous villages? Why suffer a single spot from their splashings to sully & vulgarise the pages of yr superior & elegant work for such it promises to be.' He praises Cattermole's drawings as 'beautiful correct and full of feeling' and consents to the use of his quarterings ('They are picturesque enough I believe in their way') and apologises that he would never have interfered 'had not the terror of long winded biographical memrs. & dull parochial insignificancies (as announced in your 1st. prospectus) got the better of me.'¹³ It is interesting to speculate to what extent Beckford's objections were founded on the incipient dullness of local history, or a desire that the celebration of his achievement at the Abbey should not suffer any competition from the previous buildings on the estate, or (and I am indebted for this suggestion to Laurent Châtel) a different desire that his very personal creation of the landscape of the Abbey grounds should not be compromised by Britton's prosaic and insensitive description.

By a letter of the same date Franchi assured Britton that he had removed the original prospectus from the Galleries at the Abbey and had urged Cattermole not to distribute it, exhorting Britton to keep 'intirely in the bounds suggested by Mr. B.'¹⁴ On 23 October Britton wrote to Beckford confirming that he had resolved on a new prospectus and sent it to him for approval.¹⁵ As issued this accordingly omits all references to local topography and concentrates on the Abbey itself, and in the Preface to the book Britton justifies this as being on the advice of 'an eloquent and discriminating correspondent and friend' – Beckford himself.

By the beginning of October, however, Britton had far more pressing problems. On 1 October he wrote a furious letter to Rutter (who had printed the first version of the prospectus) on learning that Rutter intended to publish a rival book. He accused

him of deceit, patronised him ('Expecting you to be a fair, honourable, & candid tradesman...') and threatened to produce a guide to the Abbey to injure the sales of Rutter's successful Guide. He also significantly adds of his artist Cattermole that he had written to him to say 'that if he makes any Dgs for your work, he will never make more for me.'¹⁶ Cattermole's reply survives, but was of little comfort to Britton, as he defends Rutter's integrity and right to compete, and acknowledges that he had already been engaged to provide a view of the Abbey for a new edition of Rutter's *Description of Fonthill*.¹⁷ Equally damaging to Britton was the cancellation of the auction and the sale of the Estate to Farquhar as Rutter (perhaps with a view to further publicity and the prospect of the following year's sale in mind) was given extensive access to make drawings. The suspicious Britton requested reassurance from Franchi that Cattermole was not making drawings for Rutter.¹⁸ He also wrote to the artist and engraver Thomas Higham (who was at Fonthill working for Rutter) claiming to have introduced him to the Abbey and endeavouring to have some drawings engraved by him.¹⁹ In response to Higham's reply that he had already been engaged by Rutter, Britton explained that part of his argument was that he had proposed to co-operate with Rutter, taking a half share with him in a book on Wiltshire.²⁰ Britton presumably felt that Rutter had abused his confidence in rejecting this proposal and announcing his rival publication after Britton had already committed himself. Higham was in fact to engrave plates for both publications.

The correspondence ²¹ between Cattermole at the Beckford Arms and Britton in London throughout October and early November did little to calm Britton's fears. The fundamental argument that developed was whether Cattermole had promised by the end of September to provide finished drawings, as Britton insisted, or merely sketches on the spot for him to work up afterwards. Britton was acutely conscious of the need to take

advantage of his start on his rival, and found Cattermole's delay in finishing the drawings for engraving deeply frustrating. This was exacerbated by the fact that Cattermole was in these months his sole regular source of information from the Abbey, and that information was almost invariably aggravating. 'Rutter himself is here sketching almost every day,' he tells Britton on 2 October. In an undated letter, perhaps of 2 November, he recounts how Rutter had allegedly been promised the support in London of 'every Bookseller of consequence,' and then finishes his letter, 'Do you reckon Sir R. Hoare among your Wilts: friends? I know he is giving Rutter every encouragement – and has furnished him with an introduction to the new Abbot and I am much mistaken if he (R.) is not more graciously treated than formerly at other head-quarters, he is frequently at the Abbey, and Higham, favoured, his artist dines there every day.' He even had to explain to Britton in a letter of 26 November how, when walking in Fonthill grounds with his brother and the artist Henry Porden, they met Rutter who, on being introduced promptly engaged Porden's services for his book. Cattermole insisted that Franchi disliked and avoided Rutter, and Franchi's letters to Britton tend to support this, as well as confirming the extensive access Rutter was now enjoying from Farquhar.

All this only served to increase Britton's concern at Cattermole's delay in providing the finished drawings, repeatedly voiced and repeatedly met by Cattermole's insistence that Britton's anticipated time scale was unrealistic, that the complexity and detail of the subjects demanded more time, and that he was not the cause of Britton's difficulties. The argument was compounded when the drawings were at last delivered. On 15 November Britton lists and criticises the drawings: the Ground Plan is incomplete, the north east view is not in outline as agreed, the south east view is not the clever, finished drawing that had been requested, the distant view was too large, and the view from the lake inferior to that of Higham – and so on. Britton

in fact used Higham's view from the lake as his plate 5, described as from a sketch by Higham, while the equivalent view in Rutter, his Plate 13, is drawn by Cattermole and engraved by Higham. Cattermole's offended response of 20 November provides a detailed defence of his actions, and whatever his intentions repeats his insistence that he is engaged to Rutter for one drawing only. The correspondence closes at the end of November in a rather more conciliatory tone, with Cattermole calculating his time to be charged to Britton as seven weeks at £35, and on 30 November explaining how the new Abbot of Fonthill had at dinner, on hearing that Cattermole intended making another sketch, 'immediately signified by some broad hints and afterwards by a rude message that he wished it not again to be meddled with...' Cattermole left Fonthill for London the following week.

Britton's concerns at the quality of Cattermole's drawings is reflected in the fact that whereas four of the plates in his book are described as from drawings by Cattermole, four more are credited to other artists from sketches by him, and that the disappointingly flat plate of the Octagon appears with no credit at all. When summarising the illustrations in his List of Plates, he apologises for their imperfections as being inferior in quality to those of the *Cathedral Antiquities*, adding that 'the author and publisher of an embellished work is necessarily at the mercy of others: and as all persons have not the same feelings – the same zeal – and the same responsibility, it is not surprising that there be carelessness in one – want of judgement in a second – defective taste in a third – and dishonesty in a fourth.' This contrasts painfully with Rutter, who in his preface thanks his artists for their zeal and ability. Britton had seven of his eleven original plates destroyed, in part because of his concerns as to their quality. Six of those seven were from drawings by Cattermole, and in the Fonthill Abbey volume of correspondence at Devizes are two of these repeatedly crossed through,

presumably by Britton. Beckford, on receiving his copy of the book, airily acknowledged the inferiority of the plates in a way that can have brought Britton little comfort: 'The observations you candidly make on your own work, the plates &, are strictly true; and there is nothing so delightful as Truth.'²²

It should be mentioned here that this was not the first time that Britton had fallen out with his artists. When preparing the first of his *Cathedral Antiquities* series at Salisbury, he felt that his artist Nash had been seduced by the Cathedral verger William Dodsworth for his competing account of the Cathedral. More damaging was his dispute with Frederick Mackenzie, his artist on the Lichfield volume. On a note 'To Correspondents' on the wrapper of the second number, he blamed his delay in publication on his draughtsmen and engravers. Mackenzie responded by circulating a printed letter quoting the allegation and commenting on it as reflecting Britton's liberality in his treatment of artists, but he had already taken his revenge by including within the jumbled words of an inscription in one of the Lichfield plates the words 'a fine drawing spoilt by John Britton.'²³

Britton eventually published his book at the end of August 1823, just before the Phillips sale. He described it as 'now launched' in a letter to Sir Richard Colt Hoare of 31 August,²⁴ in which he also spoke of his rival's treachery. The magisterial reply reminded him that Rutter's published interest in the Abbey preceded his own, and that 'whichever is the best, will succeed best.'²⁵

A comparison of the published books of Britton and Rutter is revealing, both as to text and plates. Rutter's text is far more detailed, describing the Abbey room by room with general comments and separate sections on architecture, furniture and heraldry. His summary of the interior alone amounts to fifty-eight pages, compared to Britton's eighteen. He also devotes a chapter to the exterior and others to walks and rides in the grounds, as

well as giving ostensibly dispassionate observations of the shortcomings of the design and accommodation provided by the Abbey.

In contrast, Britton's text is linked by a series of apologies. After opening his Address to Subscribers with 'a few words in self defence,' he apologises at page 19 for not giving a detailed Catalogue Raisonné of the Abbey's contents, for which he refers his readers to Christie's sale catalogue. He then at pages 32-33 excuses himself from giving a detailed account of the grounds on the basis that it would require a very extended essay, which 'fearing it would be tedious and prolix to the reader, I decline attempting it.' At pages 38-39 he declines to give any full critical account of the architecture of the Abbey: 'I could easily write a volume of comment and criticism on the building now under notice: but however well such a volume might be written, however plausible the tone of argument, and sound the opinions, I am doubtful of its utility, and am not at all inclined to undertake the task.' Rather than dispense easy criticism he elects that without 'animadverting on the faults or incongruities of the building of Fonthill, and without pointing out its deviations from genuine examples, it will be most accordant to my feelings, and in unison with my general maxims, to describe it "as it is".' And in concluding his account of Fonthill, he acknowledges at pages 58-59 that 'The descriptions might have been extended several pages further, but I forbear to enter into more minute detail, fearful of making the narrative prolix and tedious.' Of the previous owners of the Abbey, of its contents, of the building of the Abbey, of Beckford and Wyatt, 'I have, of course, heard much, and have noted down many memorandums respecting them; but am inclined to think that however favourably such details might be received by the candid part of the public, they would not be equally appreciated by those who are too apt to regard such matters with a jaundiced and envious eye.'

Why is Britton so circumspect and so limited? One reason is

no doubt the range of his commitments. In 1823 he published not only *Illustrations of Fonthill* but also (with Pugin) the *Specimens of Gothic Architecture* and was working on his *Canterbury Cathedral* (1821-1823) and *Wells Cathedral* (1823-1824). As he explains in the footnote on page 58, 'The greater part of it indeed has been penned after nine o'clock at night, and after days of varied, active, and distracting occupation.'

But I would suggest that there is a more cogent reason for the shortcomings of the text which are tied to Britton's relationship to Beckford. His apologies echo his acquiescence to Beckford's concerns in the correspondence. Remember Beckford's contempt for the dry catalogue of the *Aedes Walpoliana* and his injunctions urging Britton to include 'as little as possible about groves or lawns, or shrubberies, lakes, tunnels, and promontories,' as well as Britton's reassurance that he would be 'more descriptive than critical' and Beckford's injunction to avoid 'the mud and slush of the contiguous villages' and their parochial history. Britton was already overstretched, and given his awed and continuing relationship with Beckford he was inhibited by his perception of Beckford's expectations; hence the apparent advantage of Beckford's approval and encouragement of his venture may help to account for the rather gelded character of the letterpress.

Consistent with this is his emphasis on heraldry and the splendours of Beckford's descent – Beckford had suggested that 'A few token pages well fraught with topographical and heraldic detail, (blazonry happening to form so characteristic [a] feature of the building) would be newer ground' than flowery descriptions.²⁶ Britton has no fewer than ten pages of genealogical tables, compared to Rutter's four, though Rutter lists the shields that decorated the Abbey's interiors.

If Britton's relationship with Beckford impacts on his text, his relationship with his artists impacts on his illustrations. He has eleven plates and one woodcut compared to Rutter's thirteen plates and fifteen woodcuts. Despite all Cattermole's assurances,

Rutter's book contains plates from two of his drawings. One is the view of the west and south fronts from beyond the lake (where Britton had preferred Higham's drawing) and the other is a view of the Western Hall looking towards the Octagon, where Britton had used Cattermole's drawing looking the other way, out of the Hall and up the Great Western Avenue. Three of the plates in Rutter are in colour, two in Britton. Rutter includes among his plates a folding map of the Estate, and two sections through the Abbey. Britton had proposed 'a fine, correct, trigonometrical map of the whole domain' to Beckford²⁷ and Franchi had proposed to Britton a section showing the full length of the galleries²⁸ – but Britton had failed to pursue either suggestion.

There are five subjects illustrated in both books. Both have a plan of the Abbey, though while Britton gives the pattern of four of the decorated ceilings around the edge of the plan, Rutter has a separate and more detailed plate of these. It is perhaps symptomatic that Britton's description of his plan includes an apology for an inaccuracy – the lozenges in the ceiling of King Edward's Gallery are shown without their cinquefoils. As already mentioned, both books have views of the Western Hall from a drawing by Cattermole. Rutter's plate 4, engraved by Varrall, emphasises the dizzy height looking up the stairs towards the Octagon. Britton's plate VI is described as drawn by Gastineau from a sketch by Cattermole, and unlike Rutter – or the frontispiece to Storer's *Description of Fonthill* of 1812 – shows the head of the vertical panelling round the walls as arcaded.

The third plate is the view of the Abbey from the north west. Rutter's plate 11 is from a drawing by John Martin, engraved by Higham, as is his view of the south front, and both of these have a sense of drama that Britton's artists cannot match. The plate in Rutter shows the entire western side of the Abbey, and illustrates the effectiveness of its massing. Britton's plate II, engraved by Lambert from Cattermole's drawing, is portrait shaped, does not

give the full length of the building, appears flatter in effect and makes the skyline more confused than picturesque. Both books also have a distant view from the south west (Britton's plate V and Rutter's plate 13), where Britton preferred Martin's drawing from Higham's sketch, while Rutter used Cattermole's drawing engraved by Higham – Cattermole's drawing is larger, but both are highly finished.

Finally, both books show the interior of King Edward's Gallery, where Britton's plate VIII, engraved by Le Keux from sketches by Cattermole, Shaw &c, can best be compared with the uncoloured proof drawn by Porden and etched by Cleghorn, found in addition to the coloured version in those large paper copies that Rutter produced with proofs and etchings. Britton's view looks north, past the Borghese table towards the Oratory. The copy in the Fonthill Abbey volume of correspondence at Devizes is endorsed 'spoils solemnity & illusion' for the way it suggests the Oratory is bathed in clear light. Rutter's plate, looking in the opposite direction to the Octagon and beyond, does not share this problem. Unlike Britton, it does not attempt to show the pattern of the damask wall hangings, and there are other discrepancies.²⁹

Britton and Rutter shared a number of the same artists – Cattermole, Higham, John Martin, and Havell & Son for some of the colour plates – but it is hard to deny Rutter's superiority. This is effectively acknowledged in the reviews of both books in the *Gentleman's Magazine*,³⁰ which accepts Britton's admission that his plates are not equal to those in the *Cathedral Antiquities*, comments that he speaks 'rather too fully' of his own publications in his preface, praises Rutter's Estate Plan and prefers Rutter's plates.

Britton was surprisingly realistic in his assessment of Rutter's book, perhaps eased by the fact that such was the interest in Fonthill that both were to succeed, and Britton's 500 small and 300 large paper copies soon sold out. He wrote to Beckford: 'I

presume you have seen the modest quaker's book, & cannot doubt but you readily perceive its merits & defects. – It surpasses my expectation in many points. Its dedication has mortified some folks - & not much flattered others – I presume. Though mine shrinks by its side, in quality of paper quantity of Engravgs. & printing, I hope it will not lose by comparison in matter or manner. Some of its plates are also much better; & all should have been so had my artist done his duty.³¹

Beckford had been asked by Britton at the end of July 1823 to read his proofs,³² and for all his deferential qualms, the book seems to have done little to harm their relationship. He wrote to a subscriber at the time that 'my Vol. has not lowered me in his estimation. Indeed he has repeatedly said that I am very high in his esteem.'³³ Within a few days of publication Beckford wrote to Britton that he had heard the book 'warmly and generally commended, by persons of taste.'³⁴

In what appears to be the draft of Beckford's reply to Britton's comments on Rutter's book, he confirms, 'I certainly have seen the Quaker's grand Catalogue in some parts most furiously deraisonné.'³⁵ Their correspondence continued until the early 1840s, somewhat obsequious on Britton's part, gratifyingly complimentary on Beckford's. It is entirely consistent with this that Britton in his *Autobiography* proudly recalled how he and his wife had been four or five times honoured with Beckford's carriage calling for them to escort them to his house in Bath.

In 1825 Britton noted in the *Brief Memoir* of his life that 'Though this speculation proved successful, it occasioned me much sorrow, for I was imposed upon, deceived, and injured by persons whom I had treated as friends.' The dedicatee of the book, John Broadley, when acknowledging his copy warned Britton how 'the irritability of a too acute mind' had clouded his judgement,³⁶ and the scattered surviving correspondence, when read together, not only supports that view, but helps to explain something of the limitations of Britton's book.

¹ An expanded version of a paper given at the International Society for Eighteenth Century Studies Tenth International Congress on the Enlightenment at Dublin in July 1999.

² Britton's copy of letter of 21 December 1834, Bodleian MS. Eng. Misc. d. 222, fols. 55-56.

³ Ibid, fols. 70-72.

⁴ Boyd Alexander, *Life at Fonthill*. London, 1957. pp. 228-229.

⁵ Britton's copy of letter to Charles Bowles, Beinecke Beckford papers, Gen. MS. Series IV, Box 8, folder 181 (a notebook into which Britton has copied twelve letters and a list of some of his subscribers, hereafter referred to as Britton copy letter book).

⁶ Britton copy letter book.

⁷ Bodleian MS. Beckford c. 27, fols. 9-10.

⁸ Britton's copy of letter of August 1822, Britton copy letter book.

⁹ Britton's copy of letter of 24 August 1822, *ibid*.

¹⁰ J. Mordaunt Crook, 'John Britton and the Gothic Revival' in *Concerning Architecture*, ed. John Summerson. London, 1968. p. 116.

¹¹ Britton copy letter book.

¹² Britton's copy of letter of 24 September 1822, Britton copy letter book.

¹³ Britton copy letter book. Beckford's draft of this letter is at Bodleian MS. Beckford c. 27, fol. 15b-c, there misdescribed as a draft of a letter to Rutter, with a fragment of an alternative draft at 16a.

¹⁴ Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society (WANHS), Fonthill Abbey volume of correspondence, f. 133.

¹⁵ Britton copy letter book.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Letter of 2 October 1822, Beinecke Beckford papers, Gen. MS. Series I, Box 4, folder 90.

¹⁸ Letter of 9 November 1822, WANHS, Fonthill Abbey volume of correspondence, f. 136.

¹⁹ Britton's copy of letter of 18 October 1822, Britton copy letter book.

²⁰ Britton's copy of letter of 14 October 1822, Beinecke Beckford papers, Gen. MS. Series I, Box 4, folder 92.

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- ²¹ The letters from Cattermole to Britton are at Beinecke Beckford papers, Gen. MS. Series I, Box 4, folder 90. Britton's letter to Cattermole of 15 November 1822 is in folder 87.
- ²² Copy of letter from Beckford of 5 September 1823, WANHS, Fonthill Abbey volume of correspondence, f. 131.
- ²³ See Mordaunt Crook, p. 113.
- ²⁴ Britton copy letter book.
- ²⁵ WANHS, Fonthill Abbey volume of correspondence, f. 145.
- ²⁶ Britton's copy of letter 7 September 1822, Britton copy letter book.
- ²⁷ Britton's copy of letter 24 September 1822, *ibid*.
- ²⁸ Letter of 3 October 1822, WANHS, Fonthill Abbey volume of correspondence, f. 133.
- ²⁹ Rutter shows the detail of the candlesticks lining the western wall, and an inaccurate detail of the pendants of the base of the Borghese table. The shields placed within the quatrefoils around the frieze are larger in Britton's plate, which also shows the vases surmounting the cabinets either side of the fireplace.
- ³⁰ XCIII, II, September 1823, pp. 242-243, and October 1823, pp. 345-346.
- ³¹ Letter of 22 November 1823, Bodleian MS. Beckford c. 27, fols. 18-21.
- ³² *Ibid*, ff. 16b-17.
- ³³ Letter from Britton to Thomas Adams of 12 November 1823, Beinecke Beckford papers, Gen. MS. Series I, Box 4, folder 85.
- ³⁴ Copy letter of 11 September 1823, WANHS, Fonthill Abbey volume of correspondence, f. 131.
- ³⁵ Bodleian MS. Beckford c. 27, fol. 20.
- ³⁶ Letter of 6 September 1823, WANHS, Fonthill Abbey volume of correspondence, f. 146, referring back to Britton's comment on 'that irritability which always has and ever must belong to acute minds' in his Address to Subscribers, p. vi.

Nichols' *Historical Notices of Fonthill Abbey*

JON MILLINGTON

By 1836 Fonthill Abbey must have been a distant memory for most people, but not for the publisher John Bowyer Nichols. Having acquired the plates from Rutter's *Delineations of Fonthill and its Abbey* (1823) he presumably decided that it would be a worthwhile venture to reissue them with a text culled from several sources. Nichols went some way to explaining the aim of the venture in his introduction:

The present Publication adds another link to the history of the Abbey of Fonthill, as recorded in the works of Sir R. C. Hoare, and Messrs. Britton, Rutter, and Storer. Scarcely had the Abbey ceased to be the property of its celebrated Owner – who, with an air more of romance than reality, had caused its erection – than, as if by a final waive of the magician's hand, its principal features ceased to exist.

As Nichols was also the publisher of the *Gentleman's Magazine* he was clearly in a position to see that his compilation, *Historical Notices of Fonthill Abbey, Wiltshire*, was favourably noticed. And indeed it was, in the July 1836 issue of the magazine where the enthusiastic review extending over a whole page must have boosted its sales:

The review of the history of this extraordinary structure appears like an attempt to recall the features of a splendid vision – so ephemeral was its existence that it seemed but as a speck in the annals of time. Yet, brief as that existence was, it excited an interest which, perhaps, no modern building, possessing even higher claims to attraction, ever succeeded in attaining...the present compilation will be a cheap, and, at the same time, a comprehensive account of the once famed Abbey, and will prove to all possessors an excellent remembrance of a structure which in its brief day made no small noise in the world.

Two versions were available, a quarto edition (28½ cm) at fifteen shillings and, at twice the price, a large paper one (38 cm)

with better quality paper. Otherwise both versions are identical, with fifty-two pages and eleven plates. The book, published in London, would probably have been valued in 1836 for the way in which it brought the Fonthill story to that time, as well as for giving the magnificent engravings from Rutter's *Delineations* another lease of life.

John Bowyer Nichols (1779-1863) was a printer and antiquary who wrote on topographical and antiquarian matters. Sir Richard Colt Hoare's brother, Merrik, commissioned him to produce the *Catalogue of the Hoare Library at Stourhead, Co. Wilts* (1840) in which Fonthill Abbey and Beckford (whatever Sir Richard Colt Hoare may have thought of them) are well represented. It must be admitted, however, that Nichols was less well known than his father, John, a prolific literary biographer of the eighteenth century and editor of the *Gentleman's Magazine* for forty-eight years. On his death in 1826, John Bowyer took over the printing of the *Magazine* and assumed the editorship in 1833, a position he held until 1856 when he sold the concern to the architectural writer and publisher John Henry Parker.

Nichols relied heavily on John Rutter's *Delineations of Fonthill and its Abbey* (1823) and it was clearly the principal source. Not counting the lithographed map, it contained thirteen engraved plates. All but the three coloured ones appear here, together with the fifteen wood-cut vignettes. For some reason Rutter never numbered the last engraved plate, 'South West View of Fonthill Abbey'. Neither was it mentioned in the 'Description of the Embellishments' or elsewhere in the book, although it normally faced page 100. Its plate area is smaller than that of the others, and was engraved for his earlier *A New Descriptive Guide to Fonthill Abbey and Demesne* (1823)

Unlike Rutter's *A Description of Fonthill Abbey* (1822) which went into six editions within a short time, there was only one edition of the *Delineations*. However, there are a number of different issues identifiable by minor textual changes. In some

issues, probably early ones, the 'Description of the Embellishments' ended at page xxiv. Then, more generous spacing resulted in the need for a further leaf, with the numbering ending at page xxvi. Where relevant, page numbers for both issues are noted below.

It is not surprising that Nichols made extensive use of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, but just how eclectic was his work can be appreciated from the diverse sources listed here. In the order in which they appear in his work, they are:

John Rutter, *Delineations of Fonthill and its Abbey*. Shaftesbury, 1823.
John Rutter, *A Description of Fonthill Abbey and Demesne*. 2nd-6th edns. Shaftesbury, 1822.

James Storer, *A Description of Fonthill Abbey, Wiltshire*. London, 1812.

Gentleman's Magazine, chiefly for 1801, 1822, 1825 and 1826.

Richard Colt Hoare, *The History of Modern Wiltshire. Hundred of Dunworth and Vale of Noddre*. London, 1829. Printed by John Bowyer Nichols and Son.

Christie, *Magnificent Effects at Fonthill Abbey, Wiltshire*. London, 1822.

John Britton, *Graphical and Literary Illustrations of Fonthill Abbey, Wiltshire*. London, 1823.

Since *Historical Notices of Fonthill Abbey, Wiltshire* is now a rare book, a list of the contents follows, together with the sources (as far they could be ascertained) from which John Bowyer Nichols compiled it.

CHAPTER I. HISTORICAL NOTICES OF THE MANOR OF FONTHILL GIFFORD; AND OF THE FORMER MANSIONS.

pp. 7-12: from Rutter's *Delineations*, pp. 103-107 (Appendix A).

CHAPTER II. MEMORANDA OF THE ORIGIN AND PROGRESS OF FONTHILL ABBEY.

pp. 13-15 & 19-21: from Rutter's *Delineations*, pp. 108-112 (Appendix B)

pp. 16-18: Nelson's visit, from *Gentleman's Magazine* 71 Pt 1 (April 1801), pp. 297-298.

p. 21: Eastern Postern Tower, from Rutter's *Delineations*, p. xxii or xxiii.

CHAPTER III. DESCRIPTION OF THE ABBEY, AS IT APPEARED IN 1822.

pp. 22-23: Bowles' Poem, from Rutter's *Description*, 2nd-6th edns.

pp. 23-24: Exterior, by John Britton from *Gentleman's Magazine* 92 Pt 2 (Oct 1822), p. 101, (reprinted from *London Museum*).

pp. 24-26: Interior, from *Storer*, pp. 9-14 & 20-24.

pp. 26-28: Impressions, by Viator (thought to be Beckford himself) from *Gentleman's Magazine* 92 Pt 2 (Oct 1822), pp. 291-292

p. 28: Fountain in the court, from Rutter's *Delineations*, p. xxiii or xxiv.

CHAPTER IV. SALES AT FONTHILL, AND DISPERSION OF THE FONTHILL ESTATE.

p. 28: Articles of virtue, from Rutter's *Delineations*, pp. xxii-xxiii or xxiii-xxiv.

pp. 29-30: Sales 1801-1822, from Colt Hoare, p. 26.

pp. 30-31: 1822 Sale, from Christie's catalogue, *Magnificent Effects*, pp. iii-v.

p. 31: Sale to Farquhar, from Colt Hoare, pp. 26-27.

p. 32: 1823 Sale, by Nichols.

p. 32: Fall of Tower, from *Gentleman's Magazine* 95 Pt 2 (Dec 1825), p. 557.

pp. 33-34: Farquhar's disposal of estate, from Colt Hoare, pp. 23-24.

p. 34: Farquhar's Will, from *Gentleman's Magazine* 96 Pt 2 (Sept 1826), p. 280 and Nichols.

CHAPTER V. DESCRIPTIONS OF THE PLATES, REPRESENTING THE ABBEY AS IT APPEARED IN 1822.

pp. 35-38: from Rutter's *Delineations*, pp. xvii-xx or xviii-xxi.

plates 1-10 (numbered I-X in the text) from Rutter's *Delineations*, plates II-V, IX-XIII & one unnumbered.

plate 11 (unnumbered), from Colt Hoare, plate v, 'Fonthill.- eheu! dilapsus A^o. 1825.'

p. 39: Abbey ruins now and list of plates in Colt Hoare, by Nichols.

p. 40: Regrets about Fonthill, from Colt Hoare, p. 28.

CHAPTER VI. ARMORIAL BEARINGS OF MR. BECKFORD.

pp. 41-44: from Rutter's *Delineations*, pp. xx-xxii or xxi-xxiii.

CHAPTER VII. FONTHILL GIFFORD CHURCH.

pp. 45-46: Church with plan, from Colt Hoare, p. 22.

CHAPTER VIII. APPROACHES TO THE ABBEY, AND GROUNDS WITHOUT THE BARRIER, AS THEY APPEARED IN 1822.

pp. 47-49: from Britton, pp. 33-35.

pp. 49-50: Quarry and Boats, from Rutter's *Delineations*, p. xxiv or xxv.

CHAPTER IX. AMERICAN PLANTATIONS, AND GROUNDS WITHIN THE BARRIER, AS THEY APPEARED IN 1822.

pp. 51-52: from Britton, pp. 35-36 (continued from previous quote).

Notes on Contributors

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 Sterne and Jane Austen, and has a particular interest in the early Gothic revival.

Helen Clifford is a course tutor on the Victoria & Albert Museum / Royal College of Art MA in the History of Design based in the V&A. It was as a student on this course in the 1980s that she met Clive Wainwright, and was fortunate to become a colleague of his in the Research Department in 1996.

Eric Darton is interested in music, art and literature, particularly relating to the eighteenth century. His first visit to Lansdown Tower in 1978 aroused an interest in William Beckford. Study of Beckford's writings, conversations with James Lees-Milne and Leslie Hilliard and visits to Fonthill stimulated further interest. Jon Millington introduced him to additional aspects of Beckford and encouraged him to write about them.

Frank Julian Gelli has worked as a freelance journalist, playwright and lecturer in Rome, Ankara and London. One of his plays, *Dolcino*, about a medieval heretic, was performed at the Spoleto Festival in 1968. His interests range over philosophy, literature, politics, mysticism and, of course, William Beckford. In 1987 he was ordained as an Anglican priest and served as chaplain in Turkey. He was Curate of Kensington until last year, when he devoted himself to writing full-time. He has just finished his first novel, titled *Odysseus*.

Malcolm Jack's books on William Beckford include *Vathek and Other Stories* (1993), *The Episodes of Vathek* (1994) and *William Beckford: An English Fidalgo* (1996). He has written widely on Enlightenment subjects and reviews books on Portuguese history and fiction. He has been commissioned to write a book on Sintra. Chairman of the Beckford Society since 1995, he is now also Secretary of the Johnson Club.

Gerlof Janzen, who teaches clinical psychiatry at Rotterdam Medical Faculty, is one of the founding members of the Beckford Society. He is

also a founding member and Chairman of the Dutch Byron Society. He regularly publishes articles (only some of which are on Beckford) and poetry. His translations of Beckford's Travel Diaries have helped a little to familiarise the Dutch with Beckford. He has also translated works by Keats, Shelley, Pater and Wilde. He collects Beckfordiana and is a great lover of the Grand Tour.

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*.

Jerry Nolan, a freelance writer, lectures on and continues to publish scholarly essays on the cultural aspects of the Irish Revival which took place about one hundred years ago. He is on the National Council of the British Association of Irish Studies, as well as being editor of the Association's quarterly newsletter. He is the Secretary of the Irish Literary Society London which was originally founded by, among others, W.B. Yeats in 1892. His continuing interest in Beckford remains centred on exploring the religious, apocalyptic and radical dimensions in Beckford's life and works.

Jonathan Weightman is a founder member of Tagus Theatre, a Lisbon-based theatre group that performs in English. Besides *Waking Thoughts*, his play about Beckford's relationship with Franchi he also wrote for Tagus *Pessoa Personae*, a play based on the literary alter-egos of the modernist Portuguese writer Fernando Pessoa. He lives in Lisbon and teaches at the Faculdade de Letras at Lisbon University.

Theo Williams, a Trustee appointed to the Council of the Beckford Tower Trust, is a retired chartered quantity surveyor. Latterly he has concentrated on older buildings in Bath and around the U.K., working at Lichfield, Winchester and St Paul's Cathedrals as well as for the National and Landmark Trusts; he is a Trustee of Landmark. For the Tower restoration he prepared the pre-Contract documents and then became a volunteer helping to obtain a grant from the Lottery Fund.