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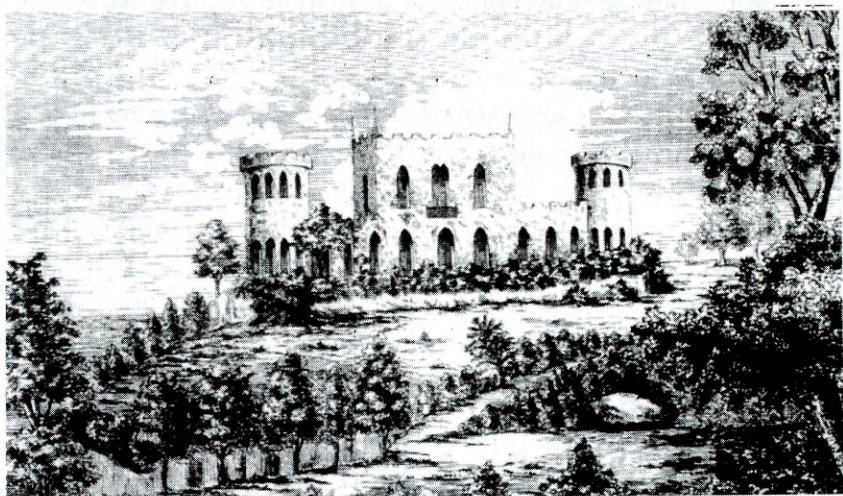
Sintra: A Glorious Eden. A Review

SIDNEY BLACKMORE

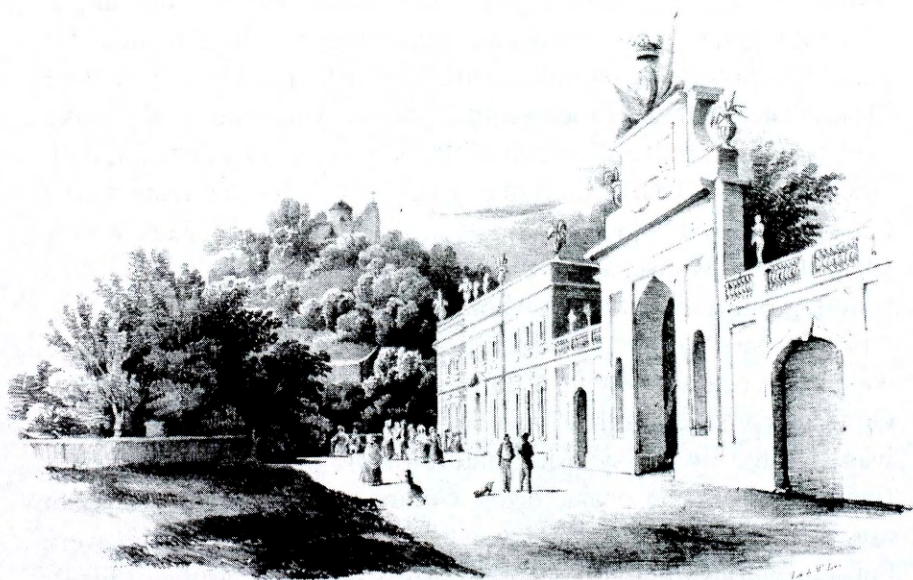
From Falmouth in the spring of 1787, William Beckford set off to visit his Jamaican estates with a heavy heart. This journey was in reality an exile from Europe, a course of action forced upon him by his family and advisors following the death of his wife. The journey, however, was to have an unexpected outcome. It was as though the gods, or perhaps his patron saint Anthony of Padua, had intervened on his behalf. By the time the *Julius Caesar*, the Beckford family ship, arrived in Lisbon, Beckford had had enough. He disembarked and was never to reach the family plantations; but in Portugal he discovered a country and a people who provided much needed solace for his bruised spirit. It is unwise to speculate on what might have happened had Beckford reached Jamaica. What is certain is that the Portuguese experience and the friendships he made in that country were to leave a lasting impression on this English romantic.

Malcolm Jack wrote about William Beckford and Portugal in *William Beckford: An English Fidalgo*. His latest book *Sintra: A Glorious Eden* (Manchester: Carcanet in association with the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 2002. ISBN 1-85754-587-7) presents an historical and cultural study of Sintra, the town where Beckford spent many months during his Portuguese sojourns.

The very geography of Sintra at the western end of the European continent where 'land ends and the sea begins' has marked the locality throughout history as a very special place. The book starts with an evocative description of the coastline, 'Through the spray, land appears and disappears, so that it is impossible to make out what is real and what imagined'. It is no surprise to learn that early man built a temple to the goddess of the moon here. From the time of Isabel, wife of King Dinis, in the thirteenth century, the town was a place of summer retreat for the



20. Ruinous condition of the 'castle' of Monserrate in 1859.
Engraving. Sintra, Historical Archive, Municipal Archive.



21. Palace of Seteais, 1860.
Lithograph by M. Luiz after C. Brélaz. Sintra, Historical Archive, Municipal Archive.

royal court from the noise and heat of Lisbon. A place where the air was cooler, where the clouds from the Atlantic hit against the hills producing a rich and luxuriant vegetation.

Visitors such as Joseph Baretti in the eighteenth century and Sacheverell Sitwell, more recently, remarked on its similarity with Italian landscape. Sitwell saw the mixture of natural and manmade as an ideal setting for the creation of myth. Such a place appealed to Beckford and also reminded him of the lost landscapes of Savoy and Switzerland so dear to his heart.

Beckford first visited Sintra in 1787 to see the villa being built for his friends the Marialvas at São Pedro. Soon he was to rent the early eighteenth-century mansion at Ramalhão, and he decorated the main salon with eleven glazed doors and windows in 'Asiatic' style to create a magic chamber. From here Beckford could indulge his passion for riding in the countryside. He rushed through 'chestnut copses and orchards to irregular spots, where self-sown bays and citron bushes hang wild over the rock margin of a little river & blossoms and their fruit into the stream'. But the estate now most closely associated with Beckford is that of Monserrate, with its mock-Gothic house, which he was to take over from Gerard de Visme in 1794. The lushness of its Claudian landscape would have delighted Beckford, who was responsible for the cascading waterfall and a cromlech. Malcolm Jack wisely suggests that Monserrate provided a place for his experiments, 'a testing ground' for Fonthill Abbey.

To Robert Southey, who visited Sintra in 1797, the landscape was 'more beautiful than sublime more grotesque than beautiful'. On a later visit even this most serious and workaholic of writers was affected by the sybaritic nature of the place. 'I eat oranges, figs, and delicious pears, drink Colares wine...dream of poem after poem and play after play...and am as happy as if life were but one everlasting today; and tomorrow not to be provided for'.

It was Byron who was to describe the place as 'Cintra's glorious Eden'. Three years after his visit he published in *Childe*

Harold's Pilgrimage (1812) his impressions of the place and, in particular, his account of Beckford's 'fairy dwelling' Monserrate, in lines which included the now famous phrase 'Vathek! England's wealthiest son', lines that went on to describe:

'Here giant weeds a passage scare allow
To halls deserted, portals gaping wide;

Vain are the pleasancess on earth supplied;
Swept into wrecks anon by Time's ungentle tide!'

Beckford's Monserrate was later purchased by another English millionaire, Sir Francis Cook, who began to rebuild the house in 1858 in an Oriental/Mogul style. By some quirk of fate it was to house Beckford's statue of St Anthony of Padua by Rossi, formerly in the sanctuaries at Fonthill and Lansdown Tower.

One quite extraordinary Sintra building is Regaleira created, from 1904, for Carvalho Monteiro, heir to a Brazilian coffee and precious stones fortune. The house in neo-Manueline style is a curious and fascinating fusion that evokes other Portuguese buildings to most dramatic effect. The garden with a chapel, terraces and curious well is marvellously described by Jack as more 'an inverted tower than a simple hole in the ground'. In the exotic and picturesque landscape of Sintra such a creation, with its Masonic resonances, is not out of place.

Sintra: A Glorious Eden describes the landscape and topography of Sintra, as well as revealing its rich historical, literary and cultural associations. The author places its inhabitants and visitors in the context of the literary and philosophical movements of their times. He rightly says that 'Despite the attempts of modern scholars to pinpoint and explain features of the Sintra landscape, something elusive and undefinable has remained in its air to inspire poets and dreamers'. It is a book to be relished by those who have walked the paths of Sintra and also for armchair travellers wanting to discover something about a place that will forever be associated with the name of Beckford.

Beckford's Tower: A Reflection on the Past Ten Years

MICHAEL BRIGGS

In 1991 I had been in touch with Elizabeth Hilliard on the subject of Beckford's Tower. It was apparent that she was finding it arduous and quite complicated to look after the Tower with the existing trustees of the Beckford Tower Trust. At our meetings I always said that if she wanted to do so, I would be happy to put it to our trustees that the two trusts should be merged and the Bath Preservation Trust would then look after Beckford Tower Trust. In December 1992, Elizabeth came to see me and said that she would like to go ahead on this basis; she asked me to get in touch with the chairman of Beckford Tower Trust, Arnold Wilson.

I had various conversations with Arnold, and with other trustees of the Beckford Tower Trust, and it was decided on the advice of both our lawyers that the best thing to do would be to replace the existing trustees of Beckford Tower Trust with Bath Preservation Trust as the sole trustee. This was done and the arrangements were completed through Messrs. Stone King. Elizabeth very generously said that she would like to make over to Bath Preservation Trust an endowment of more than £100,000 for the benefit of the Beckford Tower Trust.

In spring 1993 we purchased for Beckford Tower Trust, with support from the Art Fund, two ebonised chairs believed to have come from Fonthill. The chairs were a significant addition to the museum display of Beckfordiana at the Tower. Next spring, the Debois Landscape Survey of the Tower grounds and Lansdown Cemetery was completed.

For the summer of 1994 Jon Millington, one of the original trustees of the Beckford Tower Trust and a member of the Beckford's Tower Management Committee, organized an exhibition 'Souvenirs of Fonthill Abbey' at Beckford's Tower

which was a great success.

Philippa Bishop, who had originally been a trustee of the Beckford Tower Trust, launched an exhibition on Beckford's heraldry for the following summer of 1995 and it was received with great interest. That autumn, with the support of the Bath Preservation Trust, the Beckford Society was founded. At that time it also became clear that we would have to embark on a major programme of repairs to the Tower, and for this purpose, and in conjunction with Theo Williams, we commissioned Caroe and Partners of Wells, a well-known conservation architectural practice, to prepare a schedule of repairs.

It was clear that the repair of the Tower would involve a very considerable amount of money and Bath Preservation Trust originally approached English Heritage to see what help they could give. They said that they could not help, but referred us to the Heritage Lottery Fund. Together with English Heritage we prepared an application for repairs totalling some £650,000.

This was approved in principle in 1997 on condition that Bath Preservation Trust launched an appeal for matching funding. We embarked on a public appeal under the guidance and direction of Sophie Jeffries and Jesca Verdon-Smith. This appeal was very successful, with the generous support from individual donors and charitable trusts. The Beckford Tower Trust initiated various fundraising activities, including a Masked Ball in Queen Square, Bath in September 1997, and, at the same time, an exhibition 'Builder of Towers: William Beckford at Fonthill and Bath' held at the Building of Bath Museum. This was transferred to Christie's, London, in January 1998.

We would particularly wish to acknowledge for their generous support the Esme Fairbairn Charitable Trust, the Pilgrim Trust, the JMR Charitable Trust, the J. Paul Getty Jr. Charitable Trust, and the Garfield Weston Foundation. We succeeded in raising by our various efforts approximately £200,000 and this, together with a grant of £462,500 from the Heritage Lottery Fund, was

sufficient for us to complete the programme of repairs at the Tower along with the refurbishment of the second floor museum rooms and Belvedere, restored to its original 1844 appearance. The enhancement of the museum allowed us to display the magnificent bequest of James Lees-Milne's collection of books from William Beckford's library, bequeathed to the Bath Preservation Trust upon his death in 1997. The Beckford Tower Trust commissioned a Historical and Archaeological Survey of the Tower as part of the repairs project and this greatly enhanced our understanding and appreciation of its fabric and original appearance.

In 1999 we granted a sixty-year lease of the ground floor of the Tower to the Landmark Trust for holiday lettings. In addition to creating a spectacular apartment in the spirit of William Beckford's Scarlet Drawing Room, the rent provides a secure income for the Beckford Tower Trust.

That year we embarked on work to enhance the surrounding Lansdown Cemetery, with support and encouragement from the JMR Charitable Trust. The magnificent Entrance Gateway by H. E. Goodridge was repaired and cleaned in association with Bath and North East Somerset Council, and the Beckford Tower Trust installed new cast iron decorative railings to the boundary wall, to replace those removed during the War. This has made a huge difference to the backdrop of the Cemetery and greatly enhanced the visitor's entrance to the Tower.

In March 2001 there was an official reopening of the Tower with considerable coverage in the national press, local papers and *Country Life*. At the same time the Beckford Tower Trust was given an award for the repair of the Tower by the Civic Trust. This was followed by the Royal Fine Art Commission Trust's 'Building of the Year Award for Restoration 2002', presented to us at ceremony in London attended by Tessa Jowell, Minister for Culture, Media and Sport.

Elizabeth Hilliard died in June 2001, and was very much

mourned by all who knew her. That autumn we were very pleased to lend our support to the exhibition 'William Beckford 1760-1844: An Eye for the Magnificent' which was held in New York and London. The Beckford Tower Trust's three Willes Maddox paintings of Beckford's 'Objects of Vertu' were loaned to the exhibition and received great admiration. The exhibition did much to raise the public's awareness of William Beckford and his role as an art collector. This in return has led to a heightened interest in the Beckford Tower Trust's collection of Beckfordiana.

The museum's refurbishment had been complemented by the loan of a pair of eighteenth-century mahogany settles, but recently they were sold at auction for £282,300. We are delighted to have been able to acquire two original pieces of furniture from the Tower, for display at the Beckford Tower Museum, with support from the Art Fund and the Resource / V&A Purchase Grant Fund.

Since the Tower and Museum's reopening in 2001 we have continued to open to the public at weekends between April and October and by appointment. The Beckford Tower Trust employs a part time Administrator and relies heavily on the goodwill of volunteers to steward the Tower and Museum.

In partnership with Bath and North East Somerset Council and Walcot Parish we work hard to maintain the Cemetery in good condition. The Beckford Tower Trust has enlisted the support of volunteers to carry out a recording of the Cemetery's magnificent graves and monuments, and this information will be used to publish an illustrated trail map of the Cemetery's most important monuments and ecological areas. In 2002 the Beckford Tower Trust published the seventh edition of the guide to the Tower in full colour.

The interest in William Beckford continues to increase, and we are very happy to work with the Beckford Society in promoting Beckford's Tower and Museum.

William Beckford and Music.

9. Music in Portugal – 1787

ERIC DARTON

The Journal of William Beckford in Portugal and Spain 1787-1788 has many references to composers whose music he heard during his sojourn in Portugal. In this respect the *Journal* tells us much more than does the later ‘authorised version’, the second volume of *Italy; with Sketches of Spain and Portugal* of 1834, which gives far less detail, names fewer composers and generally fails to sparkle as does the *Journal*.

Beckford wanted to have instruments of his own for use during his time in Portugal and had pianos sent from England. He refers to them in the plural, so presumably there were two. Considering the time and the circumstances, it is likely that they were ‘square pianos’ (actually rectangular in shape) and may well have been by Broadwood, a maker with whom Beckford is known to have dealt.¹ Being wooden-framed, they would have been adversely affected by the sea voyage. ‘The pianofortes are gone out of tune and Franchi can make little of them.’²

On 28 May Beckford first met the seventeen-year-old Gregorio Franchi, later to become his resident musician, steward and general factotum. This was at the Patriarchal Seminary (the College of Music) and the visit had been made at insistence of the singer Polycarpo José Antonio da Silva, who was eager that Beckford should hear the young musician play. Seated at the harpsichord, ‘The *menino* has surprising abilities and did ample justice to the glorious compositions of Haydn he played ... Polycarpo ... hinted that my pianofortes would set off his talents to greater advantage.’ Franchi was likely to have played excerpts from Haydn’s early keyboard sonatas.

There are other references to the harpsichord which appeared still to have been the main keyboard instrument in Portugal,

whereas the piano was already replacing it in England and Northern Europe. 'Most of the works previous to 1766 seem to have genuine harpsichord character, while later ones exceed more and more the capacity of that instrument.'³

Subsequently Franchi spent much of his time with Beckford. On 20 August Beckford wrote, 'Franchi plays adagios of Haydn in the most mournful melancholy keys...Franchi [is] flourishing away with all his might on the pianoforte,' and on the next day of 'hearing Franchi play my favourite adagio of Haydn.'

Haydn's music was also 'performed by Rumi, Palomino and two others, the first musicians in Lisbon and perhaps in Europe.' José Palomino y Quintana (1755-1810) was a Spanish violinist and composer in Maria I's service, and Rumi was also a violinist. It is noticeable that Joseph Haydn (1732-1809) is the only Northern European composer mentioned, and was evidently popular in Portugal at a time when Italian music was most favoured and opera 'came entirely under the domination of Neapolitan composers.'⁴

Beckford wished to have musicians in residence during his time in Ramalhão, and through his connections with the Marialvas was able to command the services of Jeronimo Francisco de Lima. Their first meeting was on 3 June, 'Here is Jeronimo <de> Lima, one of the Queen's first composers, and I am going to sing with all my main.' Towards the end of the month, 'Jeronimo de Lima...played over a new air he had composed on purpose for me.'

For some five weeks Lima and a sextet of musicians were resident at Ramalhão. No information is given as to exactly who was in the group, although there are some clues. 'To be sure they are excellent; the first bassoon who played in F. José<'s> mass this morning is of the number, and a capital musician.' On 2 September, 'Lima and six musicians arrived in one of the royal lumbering coaches'. On the same day Beckford wrote of 'the harmonious notes of French horns and oboes issuing from

thickets of citron and orange'. The following day, 'The violins and French horns played so enchantingly that I was inspired with musical ideas, called for Lima and sung the *Serene tornate pupille vezzose* of Sacchini in its native key'.

Besides Lima, the band appeared to consist of two violins (possibly Rumi and Palomino) doubling on oboes (a not uncommon practice in the eighteenth century), a 'cello, presumably 'Pedro Crua, [an Italian, who] play'd on the violoncello a solo of his own composition', a bassoon and two French horns – a useful combination for music in or out of doors, although outdoors only wind instruments would be used. They remained until 9 October, 'The musicians are gone. Lima played and I sung the whole evening.'

Jeronimo Francisco de Lima (1743-1822) was a Portuguese composer who studied in Naples and worked in Lisbon, becoming cathedral *mestra de capela* in 1798 and organist of the Royal Chamber in 1802. He composed stage works and much sacred music.⁵ Beckford had had the services of one of the leading composers and some of the finest musicians obtainable, but when, on 21 November, Lima presented his account for £200, Beckford considered it excessive, said he had been fleeced and gave Lima 'a gentle hint that his visits in future would be dispensed with.' This was a little hard on one who had given so much of his valuable time.

Music in the cathedral and chapels was of a very high order, and during Beckford's regular attendances he was most appreciative of this. One of his early visits, on 27 May, was with Polycarpo da Silva, first tenor in the Queen's Chapel. Beckford wrote, 'The music of the Mass indifferent, except two sublime motets of Jommelli, worth going two leagues in the sun to hear.' Niccolo Jommelli (1714-1774) was an Italian composer of operas, religious works, cantatas and oratorios who studied in Naples. He was musical director of the Ospedale degli Incurabili in Venice (1773-1774) and Ober-Kapellmeister to the Stuttgart

Court in 1754. From 1769 he composed operas and sacred works for the Lisbon Court in exchange for a pension.⁶

On 5 August, 'I went to the new Church of St. Peter of Alcantara, and heard Lima's mass. All my musical acquaintance were employed – Rumi, Palomino, Ferracuti, Totti etc. Totti sang delightfully, he happened to be in voice'. Ansano Ferracuti, who also sang in opera, and José Domingos Antonio Totti Mencarelli were *castrati* contraltos of the Royal Chapel, which did not employ female singers.

On a later occasion Beckford visited 'the Martires to hear the famous Matins of Perez and the Dead Mass of Jommelli performed by all the principal musicians of the Royal Chapel,...those awful words which Perez and Jommelli have set with tremendous sublimity...The singers turned pale as they sung *Timor mortis me conturbat*...After the Requiem, the High Mass of Jommelli in commemoration of the deceased, which begins with a movement imitative of the tolling of bells...closed with the *Libera me, Domine, de morte aeternai*'. This so moved Beckford that he burst into tears.

David Perez (1711-1778), Italian violinist and composer, was in Italy until 1752, when he was engaged as Chapel-Master at the Royal Chapel in Lisbon. He wrote several operas and was considered a worthy rival of Jommelli. He also wrote masses, a Miserere and *Mattutino de' Morti*, printed in London in 1774, the work that so impressed Beckford.⁷

Other works came to Beckford's attention, 'some delightful music composed and executed on the harpsichord by Antonio Leal.' Antonio Leal Moreira (1758-1819) was a Portuguese composer who, as an organist in Lisbon, became Chapel-Master at the Royal Chapel in 1787, composing numerous sacred works. He wrote sixteen operas, serenatas and other works, both in Italian and Portuguese.⁸ Later Beckford wrote, 'The young lady of the house delighted me by her graceful manners and expressive countenance; but when she sung some arias by Perez and João de

Sousa I was lost in amazement.' João de Sousa Carvalho (1709-1798) was an important figure in eighteenth-century Portuguese music. He studied in Naples, where Paisiello was a fellow student, and later studied with Popora. His first opera was performed when he was twenty-one, and a year later he returned to Portugal to teach at the Patriarchal Seminary. He wrote operas, church music and keyboard sonatas.⁹

Beckford's own musical efforts were considerable, both playing and, particularly, singing, where he had a wide knowledge of opera. He wrote of 'declaiming some of the most tender and passionate recitatives in my beloved opera *Quinto Fabio*.' This was by Ferdinando Guiseppe Bertoni (1725-1813), an Italian composer of operas and sacred music who spent much of his time in Venice. *Quinto Fabio* was premiered in Milan in 1778 with Gasparo Pacchiarotti in the leading role.¹⁰ Beckford also sang 'a contata of Bertoni's, *Va ma conserva i ridei*', and 'that passionate aria of Sacchini, *Poveri affetti miei*'. Antonio Maria Gasparo Sacchini (1730-1786) was an Italian composer of serious and comic operas for Naples, Rome and London. The aria is from his opera *Creso*.¹¹

Modinhas, sensual, sentimental art songs from Brazil were becoming popular in the salons of Lisbon, and Beckford was much attracted to them. He described 'Brazilian *modinhas*...[as] an original sort of music different from any I ever heard, the most seducing, the most voluptuous imaginable'. Later he wrote, 'I must confess I am a slave to *modinhas*'. There was evidently a good supply of fresh examples, for 'in came Polycarpo, who supped with us and brought me a cargo of new Brazilian music, very quaint and original, which kept me employed till one in the morning.'

During Beckford's eight months in Portugal, he became acquainted with all the important composers, musicians and singers of the period. He heard their music and took part in instrumental and vocal works. He heard Masses and operas –

music sacred and profane. At the age of twenty-seven, music was more important to him than at almost any other time of his life. Well might he write, 'Music has once more taken full possession of me.'

¹ Eric Darton, 'William Beckford and Music. 4. The Harpsichord and Pianoforte', *Beckford Tower Trust Newsletter*, 1988. Pp. 5-7.

² William Beckford. *The Journal of William Beckford in Portugal and Spain. 1787-1788*. Ed. Boyd Alexander. London: Hart-Davis, 1954. Unless otherwise indicated, all references are from this work.

³ Christa Landon. *Preface to Haydn's Complete Piano Sonatas*. Vol. 1a. 1972. P. xxiv.

⁴ Willi Apel. *Harvard Dictionary of Music*. New ed. London: Heinemann, 1970. P. 690.

⁵ Stanley Sadie, ed. *Grove Concise Dictionary of Music*. London: Macmillan, 1988. P. 433.

⁶ Sadie, 379.

⁷ Nicholas Slonimsky, ed. *Baker's Biographical Dictionary of Musicians*, 7th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984. P. 1746. *Journal*, 73 n2.

⁸ Sadie, 500.

⁹ David Mason Greene, ed. *Greene's Biographical Encyclopaedia of Composers*. London: Collins, 1986. Pp. 428-429.

¹⁰ Greene, 378-379.

¹¹ Sadie, 651.

The Missing Islamic Summerhouse

KIRSTEN ELLIOTT

Like most people who visited the Beckford Exhibition at Dulwich, I was fascinated and delighted by seeing this wonderful collection of Beckfordiana. Many of you who went and have read books dealing with Beckford's garden in Bath must have been puzzled by what I shall call 'The Mystery of the Missing Islamic Summerhouse'. In most of the books about the estate, you will find pictures of this intriguing little Moorish-style garden shelter, which sits in the grounds of No. 20 Lansdown Crescent. Given

Vathek and Beckford's eclectic tastes, it seemed reasonable to assume that he was responsible, although one or two writers had thought it was odd that Henry Venn Lansdown had not mentioned it in his comprehensive description of the grounds in 1838. However, there is a very simple reason for his omission. It wasn't there. It does not occur on any map until the Ordnance Survey map of 1903.

I embarked on an extensive and detailed survey of the Beckford estate rather by accident. I was giving a guided tour for the Mayor of Bath's Guides in the latter part of the 1980s when I noticed that something on Hugh Crallan's map of 1966 did not tie in with what I was looking at. I decided to go back to the original tithe maps from which the map was drawn, and for the cultivated garden at the back of the houses (now Dixon Gardens) I went to the 1886 Ordnance Survey map. This map (scale 1:500) is usually accurate on the plan of gardens, and it shows a tree where the summer-house should be. Although the garden has changed, two trees in particular which disappeared only recently are in the right place, and other gardens in the area are correctly mapped on its derivative, the 1:2,500 of 1887/1888. Further confirmation is provided by its absence from Cotterell and Spackman's survey of 1852. Nor is it on the tithe map of 1840 which, although on a much smaller scale, does show a small stone shelter which still exists in the garden of Winifred's Dale. Both the 1852 and the 1886 maps correctly show the flight of steps leading to the terraces of what is now the garden to 'Beckford's Gate' (a house in Lansdown Road), so it seems unlikely that both would miss out a building however small, especially when the 1886 map indicates structures that are even smaller, such as cold frames.

On close inspection, the summerhouse, though undeniably charming, proves to be rather shoddily built. There is a window in the side adjacent to the garden wall, suggesting that the building is not on its original site, and the brickwork on this hidden side does not fit the coping stone above it. It is really

thrown together with no attempt at sound workmanlike pointing. It would not be unreasonable to guess that the stone work of the windows, coping stone and doorway, plus possibly the dome, have come from elsewhere, and the brick walls, which are plastered over only on the two visible sides, have been built at a later date to contain them



The Summerhouse. Photo: *Country Life*

The bricks themselves are also a giveaway, being far too modern-looking for the 1820s date which would be necessary for the building to be Beckford's.

There were also indications, which I could see by looking at maps, that the garden wall itself had been altered and that the doorway leading into the lane at the back had been moved to accommodate the summerhouse. To my eyes, the structure of the wall confirmed this, as the courses of the ragstone wall lost their admittedly wayward horizontality. It was always an exciting moment in any of my tours of the estate when I pointed this out, only to have some members of the party ask if I didn't think this was a little fanciful. At which point other people would leap to my defence and say they could see it too. It's amazing how such a small detail could arouse quite stirring emotions. Then Fate took a hand. Weakened, I suspect, by some heavy rain, that bit of wall fell down. Not only was I able to take some photographs of the

hidden window and the shoddy brickwork, but it was now clear that I was right, as the wall had been rebuilt – rather badly – in this area. I asked the builder repairing the wall about it, and he was in no doubt that this was the case.

So, if Beckford is not responsible, where has the summerhouse come from? As it happens a collector, Captain Frederick Huth, was living at No. 20 at the right date (circa 1900). He was a trustee of the Holburne Museum, and gave them, amongst other things, some Indian miniatures. He was also clearly interested in garden ornaments, because he was responsible for the restoration in 1914 of the Napoleonic urns in Bath's Royal Victoria Park. (Coincidentally they were bequeathed in 1874 by Joseph Fuller who lived at another Beckford house, No. 19 Lansdown Crescent.) So in Huth we have a man living at No. 20 whose interests were such that an Islamic-style structure in the garden would have appealed to him.

It took quite a long time before I could persuade local people that the summerhouse was not part of Beckford's garden, so strongly was it associated with him. One writer has even attributed it to Goodridge, but he had wrongly assumed that since the tower and the archway between No. 20 and Lansdown Place West were by Goodridge, this must be, also. Nowhere did the summerhouse make an appearance except on the now out-of-date Crallan map. I have never said that the summerhouse was not by Beckford – only that it did not stand on that site. Even if it is Huth's, where did he find it? It has clearly come from somewhere else. Was it from the Beckford estate? True, no account of the grounds mentions it and Beckford himself declared that he did not much admire Moorish taste, though it must be said that he was not noted for the consistency of his opinions. However, there is still a good chance that the original structure from which the doors and windows come may have a Beckford origin. Unless more correspondence is discovered which can cast light on its history, this building seems destined to remain a puzzle.

An Architect's View of Fonthill Abbey

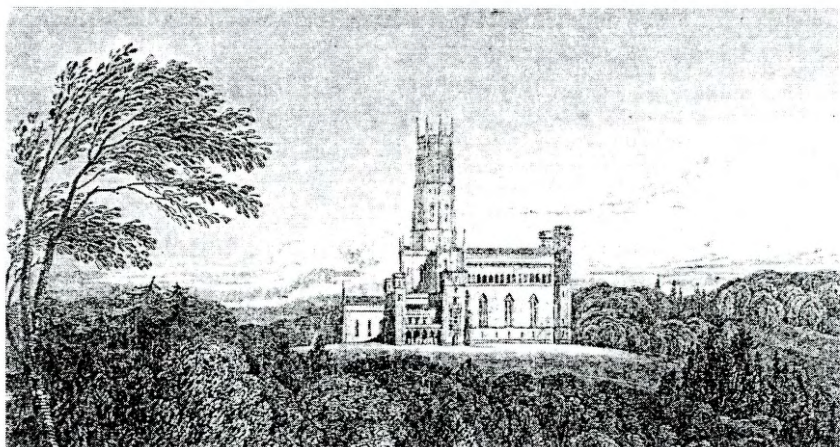
ROBERT J. GEMMETT

Any assessment today of William Beckford's Fonthill – the neo-Gothic building and its romantic landscape setting – must rely to a great extent on the contemporary descriptions of James Storer, John Britton, and John Rutter and the array of personal accounts that appeared in the local newspapers and magazines of the day.¹ These contemporary appraisals are of significant historical value because they were based on the first-hand examination of the building and the grounds when the estate was accessible to the public during the famous sales of 1822 and 1823. In another important way, they remain a testimony to the impact Fonthill had on the collective imagination of the age. Nikolaus Pevsner's observation that Fonthill was 'the first neo-Gothic building to create sentiments of amazement, of shock, even of awe' is certainly borne out by the many essays, poems, and graphic works left behind in response to the experience of visiting the Abbey.² This paper examines one of those accounts, 'Candid Critique of the Architecture of Fonthill Abbey', which appeared in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for December 1822.³

As with many essays in the periodicals of the time which were signed only with initials, this one was signed 'W. G.' The identity of the author has remained a mystery since publication. However, John Britton left behind a clue to this person's identity. In his Preface to *Graphical and Literary Illustrations of Fonthill Abbey*, he referred to a paper on the architecture of the Abbey that had appeared in *The Gentleman's Magazine* and indicated that it was written by 'the skilful architect attached to Winchester Cathedral.'⁴ This architect could only have been William Garbett (c.1770-1834), surveyor to the Dean and Chapter of this cathedral for twenty-five years and the person who supervised its architectural repairs from 1812 to 1828. Not a great deal is

known about Garbett except that he felt strongly enough about his own restoration work that when the more prominent architect, John Nash, tried to dictate advice about restoration, Garbett published a pamphlet in 1824 entitled *Observations and Correspondence occasioned by the Failure and Renovation of a Principal Pier in Winchester Cathedral* in vigorous defence of his own plans. He is also known as the author of the account of the city of Winchester for Britton's *Picturesque Antiquities of English Cities* (1828-1830). The work he carried out at Winchester Cathedral included the reconstruction of two defective piers and the design of the Bishop's throne, among other restorations. How did Britton know that Garbett was the author of the essay on Fonthill? As it happens, Britton was a friend of Garbett and when the architect finished the essay, he gave him a copy in the autumn of 1822. At the time, Britton was in frequent contact with Beckford in preparation for writing his own book on Fonthill, and in one of his unpublished letters he confirms the authorship of the article and shares it with Beckford in manuscript form shortly before it was published. 'I enclose a few remarks on the Abbey written by my friend Garbett, an Architect of Winchester, & intended by him for Gents. Mag.'⁵

Beckford's reaction to Garbett's most interesting essay is not known, but it is likely that he would have concurred with the architect's sentiments. While Beckford was proud of Fonthill and considered it to be his greatest artistic achievement, he was never blind to its faults. Beckford did examine the architectural work of William's son Edward Lacy Garbett at Theale, Berkshire, namely the imposing Holy Trinity Church, now considered to be one of the first churches of the Gothic revival designed in the Early English style. Upon visiting it in 1822, Beckford was quoted as having 'expressed himself much pleased with this beautiful little Gothic edifice, and passed the highest encomiums on the taste of the architect, in having selected the purest style of pointed architecture, the execution of which is inimitable.'⁶



South View of Fonthill Abbey, from Neale's *Seats* (1824)

William Garbett understood the difficulties any architect faced in an attempt to revive the authentic Gothic style of the medieval period. In the first place, he believed that the original ecclesiastical structures were built without any consensus regarding the underlying principles of construction. He also noted that extant examples of the buildings in England and elsewhere often exhibited the same disparities that critics were fond of pointing out as weaknesses in revival Gothic. His own work in the field led him to believe that the slavish adoption of ancient models would be unsuited to the present age because the 'improved conveniences of modern times' required substantive changes in both structure and design. In his view, any attempt to revive an architectural style could only be accomplished in an evolutionary manner, building upon the stylistic refinement that developed from the actual practice of creating new buildings or modifying old ones. But in the end, as with other ancient architectural styles, the Gothic had to comply with the practical needs of the current age and therefore would never be completely recreated. It was a point of view his son, Edward, continued to

support in his own emphasis on the role of functional convenience in artistic design.

In his examination of Fonthill Abbey, Garbett identified structural weakness as the central problem with the building. He attributed this considerable deficiency to the fact that the Abbey was not constructed from a well-planned design but evolved over time as Beckford moved from his original conception of a tower design to a grander one of a Gothic residence. Looking at the Grand Saloon or the Octagon Hall, Garbett felt that it was too confined in its space and out of proportion with the ultimate size of the structure. It also lacked solidity as a base for the tower, the walls being too thin to provide the necessary support. A greater mass would have permitted the use of staircases without the necessity of turrets, which, 'however they may add to picturesque effect, may be questionable as objects of intrinsic beauty in design.' Expanding the size of the tower base would have the effect of increasing the size and function of the second level of rooms called the 'Nunneries'. With thicker walls, the removal of the turrets, and the addition of flying buttresses, Garbett explained, the 'cloud-capt' spire that Beckford originally conceived but never carried out would have been possible.

Garbett also believed that Wyatt had sacrificed 'rational symmetry' to 'picturesque effect' in the lack of height and width of King Edward's and St. Michael's galleries, the northern and southern wings of the Abbey. This became more noticeable when the Eastern Transept was viewed in relationship to the two galleries, since its enormous size tended to emphasise their more diminished character. While recognising that the Eastern Transept was never finished, Garbett further observed that the three large and imposing windows on the south side cried out for the creation of an ancient hall 'appropriated to the hospitable purposes of the banquet,' following the model of Hawksmoor's work at All Soul's College, Oxford.

In the interest of authenticity and further structural support,

Garbett would have added buttresses to both the eastern and western wings. In addition, the lack of ornamental detail on the vast surface of the wall of the Eastern Transept seemed to him to be out of harmony with the rest of the building as were the 'perforated parapets' which were too light in character to harmonise with the 'general tenor of the design.' The paucity of decorative detail on the surface of the Abbey was also shared by a critic in the *Morning Chronicle* who believed that it was needed to harmonise with the embellishments of the interior which called for a more 'florid style' in the surface of the exterior, 'enriched with the most elaborate decorations of quaint devices and antique imagery.'⁷ It was a problem generally with revival Gothic since there were few craftsmen around who could accomplish it.

Proceeding to the interior of the Abbey, Garbett itemised some deficiencies in workmanship, such as the fan vaulting supporting the lantern in the Octagon, which he believed lacked the elegance and grace of other parts of the Abbey's interior but which might, he felt, have been corrected had Wyatt lived long enough. The Brown or Oak Parlour, a long low room on the ground floor with foreshortened windows, he found out of keeping with the Gothic style as he did the two Yellow rooms above it, but he was highly complimentary about other rooms: 'when we come to the [Great Western] Hall, the Octagon, and the South and East Oriels, we find the style approximate much nearer to ancient models; the Lobbies to the Brown Parlour, the Green Cabinet Room, and the West and South Arcades, approach still nearer to perfection; and finally, the Galleries forming the library, combined with the Sanctuary and Oratory, merit the highest commendation, as well for general effect as for elegance of details.'

In other instances, where critics might have issued condemnations as deviations from 'abstract notions of correct and congruous style,' Garbett was more liberal, willing to embrace the superiority of aesthetics over rules. Where some might be critical of the extreme height of the Great Western entrance hall,

he felt that any diminution of it 'would destroy one of the finest effects produced on this stately edifice, particularly when viewed from the perspective of the Octagon.' If others argued that the arches of the Octagon were too 'acutely pointed' to satisfy the true Gothic style, Garbett answered 'that the piers supporting the Tower, being evidently elevated to the utmost admissible proportion, the acute shape of the arches rising from them will, in the eyes of those who prefer pleasing forms to fancied rules, appear a beauty rather than a defect.' While the cavilling critic might make the charge of an inappropriate mixture of the modern with the Gothic in the absence of mullions and tracery in the windows of the Octagon, Garbett argued that this would have diminished the quality of light infusing this hall and prevented the stained glass from creating the splendid effect of light that was felt and noted by almost every visitor. In short, these qualities showed that Wyatt in Garbett's mind was not insensible to the 'grace surpassing rule and order.'

So, in the end Garbett leaned in favour of the overall aesthetic qualities of Fonthill despite the faults he observed as an experienced architect. He found that the Abbey could not be judged simply as an imitation of an earlier style and according to some perceived rules of old. Indeed, the fusion of elements of the modern with the ancient was not only inevitable but also necessary. 'It must therefore be pretty obvious,' he concluded, 'that the most fastidious architectural critic of the present age would be as little pleased to inhabit a mansion built after the exact model of one of the fourteenth century, as the most discontented political reformer would be with the precise constitution of the same period. When all these circumstances are duly considered, it must remain for ever questionable, whether any other person would have conducted the same undertaking with greater success than the deceased Architect of Fonthill.'

What is instructive about Garbett's analysis is that he ended up in the same place as many of his contemporaries in their

assessment. He understood that Fonthill Abbey was not to be judged simply as imitation Gothic. As Rutter concluded in his own study, it was not a Frankenstein composed of parts drawn from existing models.⁸ The Gothic style played an inspirational role, and there were some influences, such as the monastery at Batalha, but there was no exact prototype for Fonthill. As a building, the Abbey did not conform, as Garbett elucidates, to any 'abstract notions of correct and congruous style'. Indeed, it was often the deviations from a pre-conceived type that constituted this structure's beauties producing what Garbett describes as pleasing 'effects'. In keeping with the artistic currents of the time, the Abbey's visual appeal and emotional impact replaced the authority of imitation as an aesthetic ideal.

Garbett's essay, despite its balanced approach, still reflects the ambiguities of the Gothic revival movement and its fruitless attempts to recreate an architectural style of the past in any pure sense. The religious spirit that produced the Gothic style had long since waned. The impulse behind Fonthill, on the other hand, was the romantic urge for self-dramatisation. It mirrored the increasing secular trends of the age as a church devoted to human concerns and accomplishments rather than to divine. It drew its sanctity not from its religious associations but from the boldness of its conception as a work of art and the self-asserting authority of its creator. The new divinity was now earthbound and resided in the artist's imagination nourished by the 'milk of paradise'.

Even from the point of view of a professional architect of the period, Fonthill had to be recognised as an original work and assessed in terms of its impact on the observer. Garbett was candid when he observed that in the fabric of this magnificent structure there was evidence that picturesque effects superseded the importance of rational symmetry. Fonthill was, after all, aligned with the aesthetics of asymmetry and expressive art. It is not surprising, therefore, that most contemporaries who recorded their reactions to Fonthill almost consistently found that it

promoted feelings of awe and amazement. They cared little about its congruence to the Gothic style. It was the same conclusion that H. A. N. Brockman, an architect himself, reached in the twentieth century in his own study of Fonthill: that despite all of its architectural flaws, it ‘really did *sing* as a building: it was frozen music of the most romantic and moving kind.’⁹

When the tower collapsed in 1825, many contemporaries believed that Fonthill Abbey would pass out of mind. Instead, it has survived as an indelible image that holds an important place in the realm of Romantic iconography. Captured by numerous artists during its heyday and preserved as an engraved image, the Abbey can still be seen as a magnificent architectural presence in its height and magnitude sitting in a commanding position overlooking the downs of Wiltshire – its tall tower reaching heavenward. The compelling qualities of this ‘novel and extensive’ structure, that prompted Garbett to write about it in the first place, continue to capture the imagination.

¹ I provide an extended discussion of the public reaction to Fonthill in *Beckford's Fonthill: The Rise of a Romantic Icon*, Norwich: Michael Russell, 2003.

² ‘Foreword’, H. A. N. Brockman, *The Caliph of Fonthill*, London: Werner Laurie, 1956, xii.

³ *The Gentleman's Magazine* XCII pt. 2 (December, 1822), 491-494.

⁴ This statement appeared in a note on p. 16.

⁵ Copy of a letter to Beckford, 23 October 1822, Beinecke Library, Beckford Collection, GEN MSS. 102, Box 8, f. 181.

⁶ *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, 30 September 1822, 4.

⁷ ‘Fonthill Abbey’, *Morning Chronicle*, 13 September 1823, 3.

⁸ ‘The Abbey is no *Frankenstein*, built up of the actual head of one individual, the arms of another, and the body of a third, forming a disgusting and unnatural whole. There is a tower; but it is not the tower, *faithfully copied*, of Canterbury, nor of Gloucester, nor of any tower extant. Its interior is in the ecclesiastical manner, as decidedly as that of any Abbey existing; but where is its exact prototype?’ John Rutter, *Delineations of Fonthill and its Abbey*, London, 1823, 64.

⁹ Brockman, 184.

Beckford, Brandoin, and the Gessner Monument in Zurich

WILLIAM HAUPTMAN

The social and cultural affinities between Beckford and the Anglo-Swiss painter Michel-Vincent Brandoin (1733-1790) have been suggested in two recent studies related to Beckford's activities after 1786.¹ But for Beckford scholars, as indeed for art historians, the name of the painter is hardly known, as his art remains no more than a little-known body of work of a remarkably fugitive figure in late eighteenth-century London. Brandoin's artistic career began when he was thirty years old in Chelsea where he settled after having managed the family cloth business in Amsterdam. While chiefly a topographical watercolour painter, whose works figured in the collections of Horace Walpole² and Edward Gibbon,³ Brandoin nevertheless won his reputation through a series of political and satirical caricatures, chiefly on Georgian social foibles, for which he was widely acclaimed.⁴ Prints after his drawings generated sizeable profits for his publisher, Robert Sayer, as indeed they afforded Brandoin a comfortable financial base. He remained in London until summer 1772, simultaneously producing his pungent caricatures while studying at the Royal Academy school, where, at the age of thirty-seven, he was one of the oldest students.⁵

Because of his elusive nature – and his penchant for signing all his London works 'Charles' rather than his French name – it is hardly surprising that in the decade Brandoin lived in London any relations with Beckford, if indeed there were any, are not documented. Even with newly found papers, including his London account books in which his affairs are annotated, no indexes provide information that might have placed him, even unwittingly, in the Beckford circle, nor do any of these documentary sources reveal evidence that he had any associations

with the Beckford family or with anyone connected with their associates. However, there is an indication in a letter of 1783, when Brandoin was living in Vevey and Lausanne, that he must have known, or heard about, Beckford by this time. In this letter to his immediate patron, Brandoin posed certain questions relating to a work in progress which he was then overseeing, to which he added an enigmatic post-script: 'Est il vrai que M. Beckford vient à Lausanne.'⁶

The specific circumstances in which this curious reference occurs is in the context of a project for a black marble tomb with a white marble relief Brandoin had designed for Grigori Gigorievich, Count Orloff. The tomb, now placed in a dim corner of Lausanne Cathedral, was to enshrine his recently deceased first cousin and wife, Ekatarina Zinov'era, who succumbed to tuberculosis on 27 June 1781 at the age of twenty-three while being treated in Lausanne by the celebrated physician, Auguste Tissot. Orloff, who was then in Russia, entrusted the supervision of the monument to his friend and European agent, Jean-François-Maximilien de Cerjat de Bressonaz (1729-1802),⁷ himself an intimate friend of Gibbon, who in turn commissioned Brandoin for the design. The letter in which Beckford's name is mentioned was written by Brandoin to Cerjat, who presumably must have had information on Beckford's whereabouts at this time, although there is no hint of how Brandoin knew of Beckford beforehand or from what source he had heard that he might come to Lausanne. While Beckford's visit to Lausanne in 1783 is not documented, it was not unlikely that he made the trip since he was spending evenings with the Necker family in Coppet and visiting the Guiguier family in Prangins, both a little more than an hour's ride from Lausanne.⁸ Both families were intimate with Cerjat and must have informed him of Beckford's activities, but Cerjat's letters have never been collected, nor do those of his many associates attest to specific connections with Beckford.

As is now known, the relationship between Beckford and

Brandoin began to develop when Beckford hired him as a companion on an excursion in Switzerland to alleviate his anguish after the death of his wife in La Tour-de-Peilz three years after Brandoin's question to Cerjat. This journey, which resulted in a series of landscape sketches that Beckford owned but have never been fully identified or traced, also led to a correspondence between the two during his absence from Switzerland. The actual extent of the exchange between the two cannot be determined until a complete edition of the Beckford letters is published. However, in a letter of 20 March 1789,⁹ Brandoin provided Beckford, who was then comfortably established in the splendour of the Hôtel d'Orsay in Paris,¹⁰ with information that affirms their close relationship. Brandoin not only related his current projects to Beckford, but he also addressed him as 'très cher ami', a salutation that Brandoin reserved only for close intimates. Brandoin's letter was a response to one Beckford penned earlier that has disappeared, but the contents of Brandoin's reply indicates that Beckford had asked him to fulfil certain services on his behalf to friends in the area, not the first time in that such requests were made.¹¹ Brandoin replied that he could not carry out these tasks because 'Je ne suis presque pas sorti depuis votre lettre, n'étant pas bien . . . j'aurai [illegible] de faire vos commissions [sic], bien fidelm^t.' He nevertheless hoped that Beckford would soon come to Evian and then Vevey, which he did in August of that year; whether he met Brandoin then is not known.

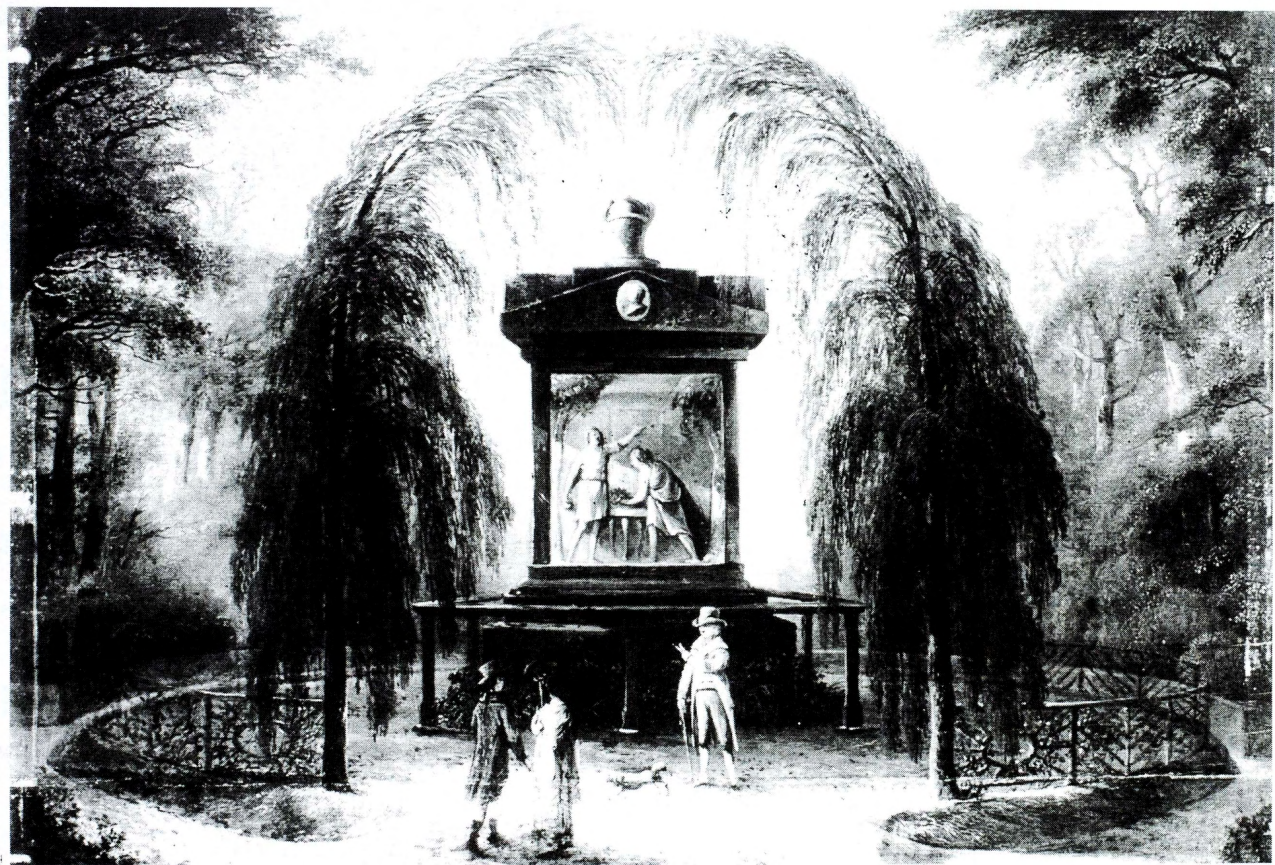
The gist of Brandoin's letter was to explain to Beckford why he could not accept an invitation to come to Paris for purposes that are not elucidated because of the absence of Beckford's original letter, but the request to join him was probably related to his collecting activities. While Brandoin told Beckford that he was seduced by the idea and would have accepted eagerly when he was younger, he was now forced to turn down the offer: 'Ne vous étonés [sic] point si je reste dans nos alpes malgré l'amicale proposition que vous m'aves [sic] faites.' Brandoin's reasons

revolved around commitments to several projects, the most important of which was his ongoing work for Antoine-Louis de Polier (1741-1795), whom in the letter he identified only as the 'Rajah'. Polier was a celebrated Swiss soldier, explorer, and scholar of Orientalia who went to India in 1758 and had recently returned to Lausanne with a notable collection of manuscripts and Indian incunabula, the first such collection in Switzerland, some of which Brandoin catalogued and copied.

After describing aspects of the collection for Beckford's exotic interests, including a coarse drawing of one of the exotic objects, Brandoin also provided Beckford with information on another project, which is cited here in full in Brandoin's original spelling:

Je ne suis pas fâché de vous apprendre qu'on a écrit de Zurich aux artistes à Vienne en Autriche, de Paris, de Berne, de Rome p:[our] des projets d'un monument p:[our] Gessner dans la promendate publique, et que celui de votre ami vient d'être couronné & accepté. Com[m]e j'ai confiance entière & bien meritée en votre goût, je vous envoie une petite esquisse p:[our] la faire voir à Paris & m'en dire vte [votre] sentiment sans fard. Le comte de Catuel [illegible] la fort approuvé, on va l'exécuter. Vous voyés que la flame de génie couron[n]e le monum^t & s'échape vers le ciel en laissant dans l'urne tout ce que G[essner] avait de ter[r]estre; il aura 16 pieds de haut. Le bas relief représente la poësie chapestre & la peinture qui couronent le medaillon du poëte, le tout est poser sur un rocher [the paper is torn here] d'un autre autrefois sort une trape d'eau, des roseaux croissent à côté [illegible] par le bruit leur fremmissen^t et celui de l'eaudans le silence nature & d'un beaujour. Le voyageur croira peut-être entendre la voix de réponse sur cette esquisse et si vous trouvés à propos de faire

OPPOSITE Johann Heinrich Wüest, *Das Salomon-Gessner-Denkmal in Zürich*, c. 1791, oil on canvas
(photo: Museum zu Allerheiligen, Schaffhausen)



Gesnner qui chante les plaisirs champêtres. J'attend votre insérer dans un journal de Paris qu'on va élever un monum^t à G[essner] à Zurich, sans dire un mot de moi cela pourroit intéresser.

Since most Beckford scholars would not be expected to know the nature of this commission, which Beckford was probably one of the first to be told about, here is the background to the subject on which Brandoin asked Beckford's opinion.

The commission Brandoin described was for a monument to be erected in Zürich to commemorate the poet Salomon Gessner who died in March 1788.¹² By this time Brandoin was already practiced in this type of architectural design, not only from the experiences of the Orloff commission of 1781, which when completed two years later won accolades from locals and tourists alike, but also one from the Necker family in Coppet in 1785-1786, which however was never realized.¹³ It was thus inherent in Brandoin's current interests in funerary monuments to offer his services for the design of the Gessner monument. In the month following the poet's death, the committee in charge of the project decided that the main sculptural element for the tomb would be designed by the sculptor and friend of Goethe, Alexander Trippel, who was then in Rome with Gessner's son and who had made a portrait bust of Gessner earlier.¹⁴ However, the committee determined that the main architectural feature of the monument on which Trippel's relief was to be placed was to be decided by a competition, which elicited several plans by noted figures in the art world. Brandoin's reference in the letter to Beckford to 'artistes à Vienne en Autriche, de Paris, de Berne, de Rome,' was an indication of some of the sculptors who sent in proposals, who included Johann Martin Fischer (1741-1828) from Vienna, Jean-Antoine Houdon (1741-1828) from Paris, Johann Valentin Sonnenschein (1749-1828) from Bern, as well as Trippel himself from Rome, who was well versed in such designs. The



Actual state of the Gessner Monument, Zurich

committee, under the leadership of one Usteri, selected Brandoin's design as the best suited to the spirit of Gessner, news Brandoin heard apparently just before he wrote to Beckford.

Brandoin's idea revolved around the classic plan of a mausoleum with a plinth placed on a rocky base, a triangular pediment on which Gessner's portrait medallion by Trippel was to be placed – already indicated in the initial design – and capped

by the accustomed funerary urn. The additional drawings Brandoin provided at the sides of the main design were meant as possible variations of other urns or reliefs that could be added to the monument should the committee so wish if they considered these elements more appropriate. While Brandoin told Beckford that the height of the project was to be sixteen feet – these were by Bernese calculations ('pieds'), which were slightly longer than common English feet – he did not note that the material he envisaged for the project was black marble with the urn at the top contrasting with white marble, a sombre but classical touch that added a physical sensuality reminiscent of the plan he had made for the Orloff tomb. Nor did he indicate to Beckford the importance of the setting in which the monument was to have place of honour, the Platzspitz. At the end of the eighteenth century this park was one of Zurich's larger public gathering areas, replete with the 'plaisirs champêtres' Brandoin strove for as a visual realization of Gessner's poetry. We have some idea of the monument in its context just after completion from a painting by Johann Heinrich Wüest of about 1791, showing the large Trippel relief as the central point and particularly the setting with the large willows that enshrine the whole (see p. 31). However, the classic beauty of Brandoin's design is no longer visible, since severe erosion turned the black marble white and the effects of disastrous renovations in 1930 reduced the monument to an almost indistinguishable shadow of its original aesthetic self.

Brandoin's indication that he desired Beckford's opinion of the design, a quick sketch of which he attached to his letter or a later one that has not been located, is indicative of his confidence in Beckford's tastes in these matters. While he noted on his copy of Brandoin's letter that he answered it on 30 March 1789, no such letter has been found in Brandoin's correspondence, thus denying us Beckford's comments, '*sans fard*', on the project itself, or whether he made any viable suggestions to Brandoin to alter the design. Nor is it known whether Beckford complied with

Brandoin's request 'de faire insérer' details on the project in a Paris journal. Nevertheless, the *Journal de Lausanne* published a brief account of the project four months after Brandoin's letter, with a note implying that it came from an 'admirateur'.¹⁵ While it is not likely that Beckford was this admirer, it must be assumed, given his taste that Brandoin believed so trustworthy, that he indeed did approve of the project, as no changes appear to have been made from the initial plan to the actual construction.

¹ See William Hauptman, "Beckford, Brandoin, and the 'Rajah,'" *Apollo*, CXLII, May, 1996, 30-39, and idem., 'Clinging Fast "To My Tutelary Mountains": Beckford in Helvetia' in Derek Ostergard, ed., *William Beckford, 1760-1844. An Eye for the Magnificent*, exh. cat., Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts, 2001, 73-87.

² These were described in Horace Walpole, *A Description of the Villa of Horace Walpole* . . . Twickenham 1784, p. 128: 'Four washed views of the Chateau of Grignan in Provence: a present from George HARDINGE, esq.' George Hardinge (1743-1816) served as secretary of commissions to Lord Chancellor Camden from 1766 to 1770 and later solicitor-general to the Queen. Hardinge's gift is noted by him in a letter to Walpole on 21 June 1779; see W. S. Lewis, ed., *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, London, 1973, XXXV, 600. Walpole accepted the gift before 4 July 1779 when he acknowledged it to its donor as 'so much more beautiful than I expected . . . they are charmingly executed, and with great taste'; Walpole, XXXV, 601.

³ At least one watercolour by Brandoin, described as showing a landscape along the Thames, was among Gibbon's possessions, for which see Meredith Read, *Historic Studies in Vaud, Berne, and the Savoy: From Roman Times to Voltaire, Rousseau, and Gibbon*, London 1897, 2:476 n1 and *Gibbon à Lausanne*, exh. cat., Musée historique de l'Ancien-Evêché, Lausanne, 1976, p. 36, Nos. 76 and 77.

Brandoin also offered to make an allegorical drawing for Gibbon as an *homage* to the completion of the *Decline and Fall*; the drawing was noted in a letter from Brandoin to Georges Duyverdon, Gibbon's secretary in Lausanne, and is deposited in Lausanne, Archives de la Ville de Lausanne, Fonds Grenier, P 224, 18, envelope 6, No. 9.

Brandoin also made a life portrait of Gibbon at this time. Although the original has not been traced, a lithograph of it by C. Constans, signed 'C. Brandoin,' is

described in Freeman O'Donoghue, *Catalogue of Engraved British Portraits*, London, 1910, 2:324. The same image in reverse was published, but without Brandoin's name, in *The Mirror of Literature* 16 (9 October 1830): 266.

⁴ For Brandoin's satiric work held in the collection of the British Museum, see M. Dorothy George, *British Museum. Department of Prints and Drawings. Catalogue of Political and Personal Satires*, London, 1935, V, with thirteen examples listed: Nos. 4601, 4603, 4922-5, 4931-3, 5081-2, 5089, and 5091, V, Nos. 4601, 4603, 4922-5, 4931-3, 5081-2, 5089, and 5091.

⁵ Brandoin's enrolment on 24 February 1770 is documented in Sidney Hutchison, 'The Royal Academy Schools,' *Walpole Society*, XXXIII, 1960-62, 135, No. 80.

⁶ Brandoin's letter is in Lausanne, Archives cantonales vaudoise, P Orloff 1. Although dated only 1783, its contents suggest it was written in November.

⁷ Although the family was Swiss, several members established themselves in England; the three sons of Jean-François-Maximilien were each officers in the British army. See Ernest Giddey, *Anglais à Lausanne au XIX^e siècle*, exh. cat., Musée historique de l'Ancien-Evêché, Lausanne, 1978, pp. 21-23.

⁸ Hauptman, in Ostergard, 78-79

⁹ The letter is in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Beckford c.27, fols. 2-3.

¹⁰ For Beckford's attachment to the city and his activities here, see Anne Eschapasse, 'William Beckford in Paris, 1788-1814: "Le faste solitaire",' in Ostergard, 99-115.

¹¹ In another letter dated 8 January 1787 also in Oxford, c.27, fol. 1, Beckford was exasperated by Brandoin's efforts, mentioning several earlier letters which 'me tombent des mains.'

¹² The most thorough literature on the monument is contained in Bruno Weber, 'Das Denkmal auf dem Platzspitz,' in *Maler und dichter der Idylle. Salomon Gessner, 1730-1780*, exh. cat., August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel, 1980, and Dieter Ulrich, ed., *Alexander Trippel (1744-1793), Skulpturen und Zeichnungen*, exh. cat., Museum zu Allerheiligen, Schaffhausen, 1993, pp. 116-123.

¹³ The history of this commission for the tomb of Mme de Staël's parents, which was never executed, is recounted in Jean-René Bory, 'Madame Necker et la mort, ou l'obsession d'une grande dame,' *Mémoires de l'Académie Stanislas*, 1963-64, 135-45 and idem., 'Le tombeau de Mme de Stäl,' *Madame de Staël et l'Europe. Actes et colloques*, No. 7, 1970, 119-28. In the former publication, Brandoin is noted as 'Baudoin.'

¹⁴ It is likely that Brandoin and Trippel knew each other since both were enrolled at the Royal Academy school at the same time. Trippel enrolled on 25 October 1771.

¹⁵ *Journal de Lausanne*, 4 July, 1789, 116.

An Incident at the Monastery of Alcobaça

ROBERT IRWIN

In an obscure nineteenth-century treatise entitled *Will Mahomedanism Be Allowed on the Moon*, the author gives a detailed account of an interview which he was privileged to be granted by William Beckford, the famous author of the oriental novel *Vathek* (1786) and the former owner of the gothic folly, Fonthill. The interview took place in 1839 at Lansdown Tower, outside Bath. The interviewer at once remarked on Beckford's haggard hollow-eyed appearance, as with shaking hands, he clawed alternately at his scalp and his chest. 'He looked,' remarks our author, 'like a character from his own feverish rendering of the awful romance of *Vathek*, indeed very like a damned soul who had just succeeded in stumbling out from the Halls of Eblis.'

Now of course it would have been interesting if Beckford had been asked about the circumstances behind the writing of *Vathek*, or the sources of inspiration for the architecture of Fonthill. A modern researcher would certainly have wished to question Beckford about the homosexual scandal which had caused him to flee England in 1785. However, our anonymous interviewer was not a man living ahead of his times and he was moreover (as must already be apparent) an obsessive. So he asked Beckford instead about his views on the question of the plurality of worlds. Beckford replied steadily enough that he did not doubt that there was life on other planets and that he was certain that these inhabitants of other planets were of a demonic nature. Then, after a silence, he added something cryptic to the effect that he was certain that the tormenting demons in Hell were recruited from the surface of the Moon.

His anonymous interlocutor seems to have expressed some incredulity, as Beckford was then provoked into favouring him with a long and circumstantial account of a disputation he had

engaged in at the monastery of Alcobaça in Portugal in 1794. Now this debate does not feature in William Beckford's *Recollections of an Excursion to the Monasteries of Alcobaça and Batalha*, which he had published in 1835. Nor do André Parreaux's admirably industrious researches seem to have thrown any light on this curious encounter and the debate at Alcobaça is not mentioned anywhere in *William Beckford, Auteur de Vathek* (1960). However, Beckford was brief and highly selective in the diary notes he took during his sojourn in Portugal and, as Chapman notes in the introduction to his edition of the published book, *Recollections of an Excursion*, the latter is an artful piece of work written to achieve certain quite specific literary and social goals. Moreover, as we shall see, Beckford may have had a quite specific reason for wishing to conceal what he had learned at the Monastery of Alcobaça for as long as he was able to endure to keep the secret to himself. Certainly, what follows must be considered to be a major literary discovery.

On the evening of June 9 Beckford had returned from a visit to the nearby Monastery of Batalha, in an ill humour, quite disgusted by the excesses of the monastery's Manueline style of architecture 'with all its scollops and twistifications.' His ill humour increased when he learned he was no longer the Prior of Alcobaça's sole guest of honour, for Abd al-Rahman al-Shibshuki, the newly accredited Moorish ambassador to Lisbon, had arrived in Alcobaça earlier that day and was proposing to take advantage of the famed hospitality of the Cistercian monks. He carried with him a letter of introduction to the Lord Abbot from the Portuguese Prince Regent. This Abd al-Rahman, a distant cousin of the ruling Sharif Sulayman, appears to have been a man of some cultivation. However, Beckford formed no favourable impression of the man's appearance. The Moor's face was sallow and he spasmodically clutched at his face and head with palsied hands. Beckford at first supposed that it was the

Moor's difficulty in understanding what was being said around him which caused him to act in this strange manner. Having exchanged some politenesses with the ambassador and the Abbot, Beckford went up to change.

Dinner was given in the Abbot's private saloon. The company – the Abbot, Abd al-Rahman, Beckford and Beckford's personal physician, Dr Ehrhart – were comfortably seated on settees. Beckford's travelling cook, Simon, working with the monks in their magnificent kitchen, had once again excelled himself with his sauces, so that what might have been a plain meal of macedoines, ortolans, quails and bechamels was turned into a feast. But, alas, the conversation (which was in French, of which language the Moor had as easy a command as any in the company) did not begin auspiciously.

Beckford spoke of his admiration for the Sharifs of Morocco, especially for the savage despot, Mulay Ismail, and he quoted admiringly the latter's prescription for dealing with his courtiers, 'I like to keep them stirring constantly like rats in a sack.'

We may readily surmise that Abd al-Rahman supposed that Beckford wished to include him in his sackful of rats and the Moorish Ambassador's humour can hardly have improved when Beckford went on to make disparaging remarks about the deleterious influence of the Moorish taste for ornateness on the antique architecture of Portugal, citing the unhappy example of the Monastery of Batalha. Abd al-Rahman, thus challenged, responded by belittling what he had seen of modern European architecture at Gibraltar and in Lisbon and went on to make great claims for the superiority of the Muslims in mathematics and astronomy. Beckford denied this, citing Galileo and Kepler in his support, and he pointed out that, since the Moors made no use of the telescope, they must be quite ignorant about the nature of the Moon and the curious configurations of its craters.

To this Abd al-Rahman, smiling calmly, replied that his fellow citizens were very well acquainted with the true nature of the

Moon, since for some years now, they had been in communication with the inhabitants of that globe.

‘By God!’ said Beckford. ‘Is there then a Lunar Embassy in Fez?’

‘No,’ said Abd al-Rahman. ‘But, since I see that you are importunate, I shall tell you how things are.’ And he gazed upon the company with what Beckford thought was a remarkably evil smile.

‘A little less than a year ago one of our most respected dervishes went out to the desert to perform the ritual of the *halwa* (a period of isolation, fasting and prayer in a desolate place). After the prescribed thirty days, this dervish returned to the city and, a few days after his return, he preached in one of the city’s little mosques. Fortunately, as it turned out, his audience was small. The dervish’s sermon dealt with the correct manner of performing the ritual ablutions. There was nothing remarkable in this, but having dealt with the forms of the ablution according to the religious law, the dervish was then impelled to add some news of his own.

The dervish told them that he had indeed gone out into the desert to perform the *halwa*. But though he sought complete isolation, this was not to be and he had had a visitation that was not of his seeking. On the fifth night of his prayers and meditations, he sat looking up at the Moon. He thought he saw a shadow pass across its face. He watched the shadow and, as he watched, it seems that his attention attracted its attention. He felt its approach and the shadow filled the horizon, then, as it came closer yet, it seemed to shrink and then to slip through the space between his eyes and into his head. An instant later, he heard the shadow speak within his head. Its manner of speech was curious, for it spoke no Arabic nor any other language. Rather, it was as if it played tunes with the ideas that were already in the dervish’s head.

In this manner and from such a creature, he learned about the Moon and its inhabitants. The dervish told his audience [and Abd al-Rahman had been one of the handful of listeners that fateful Friday] that there is no rainfall on the Moon and therefore no vegetation and, consequently, no corporeal inhabitants. Rather, the surface of the Moon is covered by thought forms, bodiless beings. Centuries old, they have no colour nor mass, they inhabit no buildings and do no work in fields, they have no need to eat or sleep. Their only desire is to multiply, yet since they have no bodies, copulation is impossible for these creatures and they would long ago have become extinct, if they had not made use of other creatures to transmit their lineage.

In a single shuddering instant the dervish understood that he had now become one of those creatures to be used, a host to an unearthly parasite, a bearer of a *nazafa al-aql*. [Here, uniquely, Abd al-Rahman had some difficulty with finding the correct French for what he wanted to express, but, after some consultation with the Abbot, he settled on *vampire dans la tête*.] A *nazafa* preys upon the ideas of sentient beings and, according to the dervish, a *nazafa* prefers to link up with ideas that are akin to it, ideas about witchcraft, changelings and ghouls, also ideas about parasitism and replication. It derives its energy from being thought of by the host body. It is impossible for it not to be thought of, for if one tries not to think of the *nazafa*, by that very token, one infallibly finds oneself thinking of it. It makes its nest within the intricate filigree of a man's thoughts and, day by day, it grows within the head, preying on every other idea in there, until, in the end, the skull has been hollowed out like a calabash, and it is inhabited by nothing save the *nazafa*.

Since the *nazafa* knows that human beings are mortal, it has to transmit itself from host to host, in order to survive. So it propagates itself by speech or writing, moving from person to person, just as a fly, leaping from corpse to corpse, communicates plague. Entering through the ear, it discharges itself out through

the mouth or the hand and enters as an uninvited but noisy guest into its new host's skull.'

Here Abd al-Rahman clutched at his own skull, before throwing out his arms in a dramatic gesture. ' "Tell my story to someone else. If not, you suffer and die!" Day and night, I hear the *nazafa* making this cry!'

Then he continued more calmly, going on to explain how the *nazafa's* desire to be spoken of is an integral part of the *nazafa*. Indeed, the creature's need to hear stories about itself is the most important part of the creature which is transmitted in the telling of the *nazafa*. Its host can obtain relief, albeit of a temporary sort, only by passing the *nazafa* on to someone else.

At this point in the narrative, Beckford leaned over and pinched his anonymous interlocutor on the arm, saying 'It is very like what schoolboys do. "A pinch and an punch for the first of the month and pass it on!"'

He laughed a nasty little laugh. Then he sat in silence for a while, perhaps ashamed of this unwonted and somewhat childish display of glee, before returning to his relation of what the Moorish Ambassador had passed on to the company at Alcobaça.

According to the Moorish Ambassador, the dervish's audience left the mosque, very ill-contented with what they had heard. They reviled the dervish to their wives and friends, for it was due to this man's folly that they too had fallen prey to the *nazafa* and had become like a herd of cattle to be milked by it. Its pestilence began to spread through the city.

'I had not intended to tell this story,' Abd al-Rahman concluded. 'But now that I have done so, I feel at peace with myself – insofar as it is possible to find peace within myself in these blighted days.'

Now Abd al-Rahman's audience, heavy-headed and heavy-stomached, were not at all at peace with themselves, but they all affected, as well as they could, to greet the Moor's tale with

jovial incredulity.

‘What is *nazafa*’s religion?’ cried the Abbot mockingly. ‘Is it a Muslim or a Christian?’

‘Whatever will best allow it to multiply,’ replied the Moor somberly. ‘My *nazafa* has taken on Muslim notions, but I am sure he will find other notions to feed on in other heads.’

‘Quite Erastian then,’ mused the Abbot, suddenly gloomy.

‘But surely you are the only one to have been seized by this lunatic idea?’ enquired Dr Ehrhart.

The Moor’s response was impatient: ‘I have told you. I was in the mosque, and there were some thirty of us in the audience that Friday. Since that fateful day, each of us has, I think, been driven to pass on the story to at least two or three others. That was before the Sharif first had us put under quarantine and then he sent us abroad, lest the *nazafa* be communicated any further in his own land. Now, though I have only been a few weeks in your delightful Portugal, I find that, tonight, I have communicated the *nazafa* to three others.’

The Abbot sat silently working on the sums. At length he looked up at the rest of the company. ‘By the year 2000, this idea...this...this *nazafa*, will be in heads of everyone on earth!’

Abd al-Rahman nodded: ‘And now I think I must thank you for your generous hospitality, while apologising for the uninvited guest that I have brought with me. But it has done me good to have an audience.’

And with that, the Moor rose from his seat and, kissing his listeners on their cheeks, declared it was time for him to retire.

The company were not allowed to remain silent for long after his departure, for a few moments later Beckford’s music master, Franchi, accompanied by two gleeful monks, burst in upon the company, desirous to entertain them with a concert played upon Jews’ harps. Beckford however was not in the humour and he walked out and, finding his way with difficulty through the

darkened cloisters, he stumbled out of the Abbey. He walked briskly, seeking the cooler air in the orchards higher up.

Passing by some monks cooling their feet by a watermill, he was struck by the innocent pleasure they found in creating patterns in the water with their feet and he could not help contrasting it with the (surely ?) abstract danger conjured up by the villainous Moor. Yet, as he walked through the moonlight, he found he could not shake the idea. Again and again, he found that he was congratulating himself on having at last succeeded in thinking of something else, only to realise in the next instant that he was never more aware of the *nazafa* than when he fancied that he was not thinking of it.

And later that night when he slept (but this he achieved with great difficulty) it seemed to him that, as he slept, the *nazafa* burrowed and toiled within his head, seeking congenial ideas and images, mingling with them and then devouring them, until even Beckford's dreams were possessed by the sleepless *nazafa*.

'Possession is a curious thing. Do I possess the *nazafa*, or does it possess me? I see that you are unable to help me. Well, now that I have told you, I dare hope that I shall sleep peacefully tonight. After that, we shall see.'

And since Beckford had no further thoughts to communicate on the subject of lunar life, he saw the unknown author of *Will Mahomedanism Be Allowed on the Moon?* out of the door and, smiling sweetly, escorted him down the garden path.

Though there is more in the treatise, what remains is of little interest. Lot number 148 will certainly fetch a good price when it comes up for auction in a few weeks' time [at Sotheby's in May 1992]. In the meantime, I feel impelled to pass on what I have learned from *Will Mahomedanism Be Allowed on the Moon?* as swiftly as possible.

[This is a shortened version of an article first published in *Interzone* 58, April 1992.]

William Gregory's *The Beckford Family*

JON MILLINGTON

At a time when Beckford studies were at a low ebb, an anthology was published in Bath in 1887. It was compiled by William Gregory (1817-1898), a bookbinder and second-hand bookseller who in later life turned his hand to literary pursuits, including works about Ralph Allen and John Wilkes. This anthology, *The Beckford Family. Reminiscences of Fonthill Abbey and Lansdown Tower*, traced Beckford's life through extracts from contemporary books and journals, and may have been prompted by the great interest in the Hamilton Palace sales of 1882-1883.¹

Only one hundred copies, numbered and signed by Gregory, were printed; they were attractively bound in deep crimson cloth over bevelled boards, with the title in gilt on the upper cover. The engraved frontispiece was the profile of Beckford from the *New Monthly Magazine* for June 1844, but there were three extra engravings in a few copies: a south west view of Fonthill Abbey (facing p. 26) from the *Gentleman's Magazine* for September 1822, Lansdown Crescent (facing p. 38) and Beckford's Tower (facing p. 75) from Everitt's *Views in Bath and Its Vicinity*, published c. 1849.

There is no need to discuss most of Gregory's sources since at the end he provided quite a comprehensive list (unfortunately omitted from the second edition). Yet the origin of one passage is of interest, and this is the description of the rooms in the Tower. It came from Cyrus Redding's 'The Tower of the Caliph' in the *New Monthly Magazine* for August 1844 and reappeared slightly altered in his *Memoirs of William Beckford* (1859).² Redding's description is so similar to Edmund English's in his *Views of Lansdown Tower, Bath* (1844), pages 6-9, that one must have been based on the other. Probably Redding's was the source, since *Views*, originally scheduled for publication in February

1844, did not appear until October.

Prompted by the favourable reception of *The Beckford Family*, Gregory produced a much-expanded second edition of 250 numbered copies. He was very proud of this, his last work, which was published in February 1898, a month before he died at the age of 80.³ It was advertised for sale at 10s. 6d. with a 'beautiful Medallion Portrait of Mr. Beckford and 20 other illustrations. In fine Cloth, bevelled and gilt edges, gold lettered and blocked'.⁴ On the upper cover in gilt was a view of the Tower and Cemetery Entrance taken from Everitt's engraving of circa 1849, 'Beckford's Tower, Walcot Cemetery, Lansdown, Bath.'

Unlike the first edition, this one was divided into chapters. However, the title was now rather misleading because only the first chapter related to the Beckford family, the rest being about William Beckford, author of *Vathek*. Gregory added five chapters of new material, but without giving any sources for them – an omission which is remedied here.

The first of the 'new' chapters is Chapter 4, 'A Frenchman's Description', which was taken from Letter XIX, 'Fonthill', in Jacques Henri Meister's, *Letters Written during a Residence in England*. Published in London in 1799, the work was a translation of *Souvenirs de mes voyages en Angleterre*, Zurich, 1795. This is a valuable account written at a time when little was known of Beckford's life at Fonthill Splendens. Meister provided a description of the grounds followed by a brief but flattering sketch of Beckford's character, pointing out that the 'mental powers which Mr. B. is possessed of as much exceed, perhaps, all example, as does his fortune'.

Next comes Chapter 10, extracted from the second of the two chapters on Beckford in Jerom Murch's *Biographical Sketches of Bath Celebrities* which had recently appeared.⁵ Having given a brief sketch of Beckford's life in the first chapter, Murch, in his role a member of the management committee of Victoria Park, provided some rather more personal reminiscences:

Comparison between the 1898 and 1887 editions

Contents of 1898 edition	1887 edition	
1. Genealogical – Alderman Beckford	1-9	1-8
(Lament on death)	9-11	
2. William Beckford	12	8
(Lord Chatham)	12-14	
	14-19	8-12
	19-20	25-26
3. The New Fonthill	21-25	12-14
4. A Frenchman's Description	26-33	
5. Visit of Lord Nelson and Lady Hamilton	34-42	15-21
6. Fonthill Abbey Finished	43-52	23-25
		26-31
7. Visit of the Duchess of Gordon to Fonthill	53-55	21-23
8. Sic Gloria Transit Mundi	56-58	31-33
(Fonthill poem)	58-59	
	59-63	33-37
9. Lansdown Tower	64-97	37-63
10. The Late Sir J. Murch's Reminiscences	98-102	
11. Death and Funeral of Mr. Beckford	103-109	63-68
12. Sale of Lansdown Tower and its Contents	110-119	69-75
13. Consecration of Lansdown Tower	120-123	75-77
14. Beckford and Edgar Allen Poe – A Comparison	124-137	
15. A Contemporary Tribute	138-142	
Letter from Sir Isaac Pitman	143	
16. Lecture by an Anglo-American	144-153	
17. Conclusion and Poetry	154-171	78-91

I was a little disappointed in the plantations around the tower, although if I had known the hill before they were made I might have had a different feeling. A dull, flat piece of ground, open to the west wind; nothing but a careful selection of trees would have made it interesting or answered the owner's purpose. But the building and its contents were well worth may a visit, showing the most exquisite taste in all respects, as well as the most thorough provision for intellectual enjoyment.⁶

Contrary to the opinion expressed in a recent essay⁷ that Chapter 14, 'Beckford and Edgar Allen Poe – A Comparison' was by Gregory, it is in fact a reprint of most of an anonymous article in *The Broadway*,⁸ a little-known literary monthly first issued in September 1867. The author (an American, according to Gregory) noted 'certain striking points of similarity between the genius and the nature of two equally extraordinary men' and went on to declare: 'We believe we may even go farther and say that the likeness between Beckford and Poe was so striking that by looking at both, the one becomes more the interpreter of the other than if they are looked at singly.' Gregory unfortunately omitted a short passage beginning: 'Imagine Beckford without money and you have Poe. In fancy, strip the wealthy commoner who owned Fonthill, of the means of building up in the world of fact the vast fabric of magnificence that he reared...'.⁹ In its stead he contrasted Beckford's sobriety with Poe's drunkardness which resulted in his early death at the age of forty.

The authorship of Chapter 15, 'A Contemporary Tribute', was revealed at the end in a facsimile of a letter in phonetic writing from Sir Isaac Pitman to William Gregory. Pitman had enclosed with the letter an article by his brother, Ben, and suggested where it might be placed: 'If you will add it to your book to follow Mr Lansdown's article, I will make a fair copy in common spelling'. A further indication that Henry Venn Lansdown wrote the 'Tribute' occurs in the second paragraph of the chapter: 'A few particulars respecting this extraordinary man, from one who,

during the last five years, had frequent access to him, may not for the present moment be uninteresting.' In a letter to his daughter Charlotte dated 21 August 1838, Lansdown mentioned meeting Beckford less than six years before his death. This letter was the first of a group privately printed by her in 1893 (reprinted in 1969 by the Kingsmead Press). The 'Tribute' first appeared in the *Bath Herald* a fortnight after Beckford's death,¹⁰ and the *Gentleman's Magazine* made extensive use of it in their obituary of him.¹¹

As Isaac Pitman had suggested in his letter, the next chapter was 'Beckford, "Vathek," Fonthill' ('Lecture by an Anglo-American' on the contents page), by his brother. It was originally published in phonetic English in Isaac Pitman's *Phonetic Journal*,¹² a twelve-page weekly, and here are the first few lines:

BEKFORD, VATHEK, FONTHIL.

*A Lektur bi Mr Ben Pitman, at de Skul ov Dezjn, Sinsinati
{Cincinnati}, U. S., Oktober, 1874.*

Før men hav eksersjzd a singular influens in jepin
mj mædz ov fot, and determinin, tu sœm ekstent de destini
ov mj lijf. Tú ar amœŋ de ilœstriœs livin; tú ar wið de
glœrifd ded. Før men mœr œnljk in ðer tests and livz
hav skersli livd in modern tjmz. ðe ar œnli aljk in dát ðe
ar sælz ov de fœnest kwoliti? ðe ar œl men huuz livz ar
wœrtj qœr nœŋ, az ðer rjtinz ar wœrtj qœr ridin. ðe ar Bek-
ford, Wœterton, Rœsskin and Emerson. Œnli a sort ov per-
sonal interest jœstifz wœn in plœsin Bekford wið de rest.

Beckford's writings and life were briefly covered by Ben Pitman in his article, including an amusing anecdote. Before moving to Cincinnati, he was apprenticed to a Bath architect, Mr. Lewis, who knew Beckford and had designed a Gothic church in the neighbourhood. 'One bright moonlight evening', Pitman wrote,

Beckford rode down from Lansdown Hill, his residence, attended as usual by his dwarf, to look at the new church. When he came within seeing distance he put spurs to his horse, galloped at his utmost speed around the church, and then shot

off like an arrow. Mr. Lewis used to laugh at the thought of Beckford racing around that church, followed by his dwarf, perfectly satisfied, perhaps horrified, with half-a-minute's examination of what had taken years to build.

No review of the first edition of *The Beckford Family* is known, but the second was noticed by several journals. Since it was printed and published by the *Bath Chronicle*, their review was, not surprisingly, unstinting in its praise:

Mr. Gregory has spared neither time nor expense in obtaining materials, both literary and pictorial, to enhance the value and interest of his work. If he has gone far afield he may readily be excused because of the side-lights, if we may so call them, he has thrown upon a historic family as well as upon the life of a remarkable person, who was not only a millionaire and a magnificent patron of the arts, but an author whose principal work has become a classic, and who was a citizen of Bath.¹³

Keene's Bath Journal adopted much the same tone, noting Gregory's 'untiring zeal and enthusiasm' and reminding its readers that 'Mr. Beckford has left a name that excites compassion rather than respect. But he used his great gifts – for he had consummate taste in art and architecture – so whimsically that his life is always worth reading. It is nowhere more so than in Mr. Gregory's pleasant pages, and the elegantly got up little volume they compose is a very welcome addition to the biography of famous Bathonians.'¹⁴ There was also a review in the *Bath Weekly Argus* on 19 February.

Fortunately for Gregory, the long notice in the *Athenæum* did not appear until after his death.¹⁵ The reviewer was generally unimpressed: 'The extracts culled from various sources with undoubted industry are so loosely strung together as to be far indeed from realizing the "coherent whole" which it was his object to make of them...There is, moreover, no little overlapping of matter, whilst involved sentences and solecisms in

grammar are unhappily frequent.

Looking at *The Beckford Family* a hundred years later, we might be inclined to think that the last review was rather harsh, especially as the additional chapters in the second edition gave more permanent form to some interesting periodical articles that might otherwise have been forgotten. It is also fascinating to see from photographs what the places familiar to Beckford looked like at the end of the nineteenth century. Finally, we can still appreciate the great efforts that William Gregory made to bring into being such an attractive and finely-produced book.

I would like to thank my wife for much invaluable advice.

¹ *The Beckford Family. Reminiscences of Fonthill Abbey and Lansdown Tower*. Bath: Queen Square Library, 1887. iii, 91 pp. Frontis. 15½ cm. 2nd ed. London: Simpkin, Marshall, etc., & Bath: Bath Chronicle, 1898. ix, 171 pp. Frontis. 20 pl. 19 cm.

² [Cyrus Redding]. 'The Tower of the Caliph.' *New Monthly Magazine* 71 (Aug 1844): 457-466 & *Memoirs of William Beckford*, 1859, 2: 261-279.

³ He was buried in Bath Abbey Cemetery on 29 March 1898, not far from Beckford's former grave.

⁴ *Bath Chronicle*, 17 Feb 1898, 8. Repeated on 24 Feb.

⁵ Jerom Murch. 'Mr. Beckford. Part II.' in his *Biographical Sketches of Bath Celebrities*. London: Isaac Pitman, 1893. Pp. 300-303, 304-305.

⁶ Murch, 300.

⁷ Benjamin F. Fisher. '“To Distinguish Between One That Translates and One That Invents”: Some Recondite Beckford Legacies.' In *Fictions of Unease: The Gothic from Otranto to The X-Files*, Eds. Andrew Smith et al. Bath: Sulis Press, 2002. P. 51.

⁸ 'Beckford and Poe.' *The Broadway, A London Magazine* n.s. 2 (June 1869): 317-322.

⁹ 'Beckford and Poe', 318.

¹⁰ *Bath Herald*, 18 May 1844, 3. My thanks to Dick Claésson for obtaining a copy of this page. Mostly reprinted in *The Times*, 23 May 1844, 6a.

¹¹ *Gentleman's Magazine* n.s. 22 (Aug 1844): 212.

¹² Ben Pitman. 'Bekford, Vathek, Fonthil.' *Phonetic Journal* 34 (1875): 9-11.

¹³ *Bath Chronicle*, 24 Feb 1898, 6.

¹⁴ *Keene's Bath Journal*, 5 March 1898, 8.

¹⁵ *Athenæum*, 13 August 1898, 225.

Fatma Moussa-Mahmoud: Brief Encounter with an Egyptian Beckfordian

JERRY NOLAN



Towards the end of March 2003 I went Cairo for an International Symposium organised by the Department of English Language and Literature at Ain Shams University on 'New Readings of Old Masters' and was honoured to have my keynote address on 'The Savage Indignation of Jonathan Swift' chaired by Fatma Moussa-Mahmoud, Professor Emeritus of English at the University of Cairo, well-known scholar whose work for many years has been about cultural links between the East and the West and, of course, a long standing Beckfordian. With only about an hour available for conversation afterwards, she spoke in a very animated way about William Beckford, often mentioning his interest in Arabic versions of the Arabian Nights, and generously presented me with some copies of her own published work. Before we parted, Professor Moussa was kind enough to agree to my editing her view of Beckford for The Beckford Journal in this format of a few key questions and answers. I am most grateful to her daughter, Ahdaf Soiuf (Mrs Ian Hamilton), who lives in London, for additional information.

JN: How did you first become involved in the 1960 world-wide celebrations of the bicentenary of William Beckford?

FMM: I came to England from the English Department of Cairo University in 1954 in order to research the subject of 'The Oriental Tale in England in the nineteenth century (1786-1824)'

at Westfield College, London University, for a Ph.D. At the same time another colleague from the faculty of arts in the University of Cairo, Magdi Wahba, was researching another aspect of eighteenth-century English literature for a Ph.D at Oxford. As postgraduate researchers in London and Oxford, Magdi developed a strong interest in Dr. Johnson's *Rasselas* while I became greatly interested in Beckford's *Vathek*. Back in Cairo University by 1957, Magdi decided to add to the series *Cairo Studies in English* with scholarly views on Johnson's *Rasselas*. Magdi sent invitations to Johnsonians all over the world. Magdi's challenge to the scholars was to establish the perennial relevance of *Rasselas* together with a reminder that it was surely very fitting that such a reappraisal would be collected in a publication appearing in a country which was the scene of the young prince's apprenticeship in wisdom. The response to Magdi's appeal was impressive – twelve scholars from different countries, most of them not known to one another. My contribution to Magdi's collection was an essay '*Rasselas* and *Vathek*'. As I said at the time, a period of less than thirty years separated the works of Johnson and Beckford but no two novels could have been more different – the difference stemming from the two diametrically opposed temperaments: the sedate Augustan of fifty and the rhapsodic romantic of twenty-one. With the prospect of the bicentenary exhibition of Beckford at Yale University Library, I decided to follow Magdi's example by issuing an invitation to scholars of varied nationalities to pay tribute to Beckford. In my approach to potential contributors, I suggested that Cairo University was an ideal place for Beckfordian Studies, standing with one foot in the East and another in the West. Needless to say, I was very pleased that international Beckford scholars of the calibre of André Parreaux, Boyd Alexander, Geoffrey Bullough, in addition to the Egyptian scholars Magdi Wahba and Mahmoud Manzalaoui, contributed significantly to my collection. I was most pleased to include the essay by Parreaux who had been a

devoted Beckfordian for more than thirty years and whose monumental study *William Beckford, Auteur de 'Vathek'* was published in 1960.

JN: What has been the most interesting aspect of your research into Beckford?

FMM: My desire to investigate Beckford's orientalism led to my establishing his close connection with the Wortley Montagu MS of the *Arabian Nights* in the Bodleian Library. This MS had sometimes been dismissed by scholars of the *Arabian Nights* as of uncertain origin, and then confused with a fragment of the *Arabian Nights* held at Christ Church, Oxford. The MS in the Bodleian was brought to the West from Egypt by Edward Wortley Montagu. Some scholars used to claim that the country of origin of the MS was Turkey, but my detection of colloquial Egyptian in the Arabic convinced me that the MS had originated from the northern provinces of Egypt. The MS is composed of seven volumes of about equal size accompanied by a table of contents in English and Arabic by Jonathan Scott, a British army man and protégé of Warren Hastings, who probably added this information when he sold the MS to the Bodleian in 1802. It is very clear from Scott's own edition of the *Arabian Tales* in 1811 that he knew little Arabic and even less about the origin and nature of the tales. Samuel Henley worked for Beckford between 1781 and 1786, and enlisted the help of Sir William Jones, one of the leading orientalist of the day, in the compilation of the notes. In his Preface to the first English edition of *Vathek*, Henley referred to it as his own translation of one of the stories from a MS first collected in the East by 'a man of letters'. This provoked Beckford, in the Lausanne French edition of *Vathek*, to reclaim *Vathek* as his own original work, and to name Wortley Montagu as the collector and the Duke of Bedford as the owner of the famous MS of the *Arabian Tales* in Arabic, then in circulation. In

fact, it was Robert Palmer, Wortley Montagu's solicitor, who arranged for the loan of this MS to Beckford as a result of the good offices of Lady Craven, an aristocratic London hostess – as is revealed in an undated letter from her to Beckford, probably written between 1780 and 1782. After Wortley Montagu's death the MS, as part of Wortley Montagu's Arabic and Turkish library, passed into the legal keeping of his fourteen-year-old son, the black Mas'oud – also known as Fortunatus – who was born out of the relationship between Wortley Montagu and an Alexandrian concubine. There is not much doubt about the fact that the Duke of Bedford and Beckford borrowed the MS via Palmer from Mas'oud who adopted European clothes after his father's death in 1776 and lived in England under the very vigilant supervision of Palmer as guardian. Beckford seems to have had transcripts and translations made of the MS while it was in his possession. When the MS was sold following the early death of Mas'oud in 1787, Beckford did not bother to buy the whole MS and instructed his agent to buy one bundle which has not been traced. Among the Beckford Papers six foolscap folio exercise book survived, containing some 400 pages of translations of the *Arabian Nights* into English. Beckfordians like Guy Chapman, Andre Parreaux and Boyd Alexander could pay only limited scholarly attention to these because they knew little or no Arabic. During my sabbatical leave at King's College, London University, in 1963-1964, I went to Oxford twice a week to work on the Wortley Montagu MS. During this period I visited Boyd Alexander a number of times at his house near Oxford to examine the Beckford Papers then in his possession, and he was kind enough to allow me to photocopy the MSS. in French relating to the *Arabian Nights*. It was only in 1975, during another sabbatical leave at St. Anthony's College, Oxford, that I put together the nature of the folio rough translations of the *Arabian Nights* in the Beckford Papers, which were moved from Hamilton Palace to the British Council library in Edinburgh so that I could examine them afresh. My research,

which involved collating the English translations and the Wortley Montagu MS during a period when the Wortley Montagu MS and the Beckford translations were *not* to be found together in the Bodleian Library, pointed to the unmistakable fact that the translations were made verbatim from the MS – a fact which a Beckfordian without a detailed knowledge of Arabic could not have verified and evaluated.

Who did these translations? Beckford seems to have employed Emir the Turk in 1780 to teach him Arabic and the bright young man probably translated some of tales himself. There were other possibilities – a number of Syrian translators who worked for embassies or for orientalists in many parts of Europe were available for hire. In particular, there was Mirza, supposedly a Syrian, whom Sir William Jones invited to Oxford at his own expense, hoping that other members of the University would be interested in learning Arabic and help defray his expenses. I became fascinated by the stories selected by Beckford for English and French translation, especially in those that had been translated into English. At one stage I scrutinized the translated tales with a view to publishing the details of my conclusions. Much of my work on these translations from the Arabic has never been published – yet! In view of Beckford's strong interest in the Arabic originals, it is curious that he did not use more of this extremely rich material. Perhaps he would have made further use of the colours, the lights and people in the *Arabian Nights* if his young writing career had not been so rudely interrupted by great social scandal. Here I must confess that the mysteries surrounding Beckford's life and literary activity have tended to deepen in proportion to the amount of time I have spent studying his worlds! What is clearly beyond dispute is that Beckford possessed the first direct translation of the *Arabian Nights* into English ever attempted – of which he made interesting, if somewhat limited, use.

JN: To what extent do you consider Beckford's *Vathek* and the

Episodes to be important manifestations of the Oriental Tale?

FMM: Beckford's *Vathek* contained all the stock themes common to oriental tales previously published – love, adventure, magic and the quest for hidden treasure. Beckford's story opened with a suggestion of supercilious lighthearted mockery, but at its climax a note of deep tragedy was struck. The tragedy of the damned Vathek was more tragic than anything recorded in the oriental tales known at that point. Yet it must be said that the character of Eblis was far removed from the perverse character of the fallen angel depicted in the Koran and to which the Muslim imagination strictly conforms. Vathek's descent into Hell could have been imagined only by a European, but this limitation was offset by the great care paid to many details of local colour and historical nuance. The formidable array of notes, drawn from a great number of sources of information available in 1786, were unprecedented in an oriental tale as practised by a Westerner during the eighteenth century. In addition to a display of erudition on subjects Arabian, there were other references to the classical and biblical worlds. The number of books which Beckford must have read before writing the tale in French shows to what extent his youthful curiosity was drawn to the travellers' tales from the East. The *Episodes* which Beckford early intended as a companion piece to *Vathek* were revised, polished, and rounded during his long years of isolation, to the point of exhibiting a depth of cool criminality which surpasses by far the wickedness of the Caliph. Probably Beckford would have published the *Episodes* in his lifetime if he could, but unfortunately the qualms of squeamish publishers prevailed. It was a great pity that Beckford's interest in the Arabic originals of the *Arabian Nights* was not more widely known in the years following 1786, because there were so many other writers without the least literary talent and without the slightest knowledge of the Arabic and Persian originals who insisted on circulating bad translations and

imitations. When Byron mentioned *Vathek* in the final note to his own Turkish tale *The Giaour* in 1813, Beckford's oriental preoccupations were accorded a fair degree of publicity, yet the acclaim from this rising star and rival seems not to have been greatly appreciated by Beckford. The oriental tale in English went on its nineteenth-century course for the most part uninfluenced by Beckford's orientalism whose curious power depended on a young man's heated and highly sensitive imagination. After Napoleon's Egyptian expedition, Europe came to know the Orient more scientifically. Oriental languages began to be more fully acquired by a growing number of scholars, and learned societies like the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and the Oriental Translation Fund were founded during the 1820s. The East began to be viewed through the eyes of well-informed historians and archaeologists. Impartial objectivity in portraying Arab Muslim manners and customs was brought to a peak with E. W. Lane's *Modern Egyptians* in the 1830s.

As far as translation from Arabic was concerned, Richard Burton – soldier, linguist and explorer – published his monumental translation of the Arabian Nights in the 1880s. The shaky edifice of the romantic East constructed by Beckford and exploited to a nauseating extent by Byron was put into a new perspective by the writings of travellers who had actually lived in and absorbed teeming ordinary life in the East. An outstanding example of this kind of traveller may be found in the case of the diplomat James Justinian Morier in *Hajji Baba of Ispahan* (1824) which wrested the oriental tale from romance and incorporated it into the growing realistic tradition of the English novel by describing reality on the streets of Ispahan in contemporary Persia. In 1855 George Meredith's *Shaving of Shagpat* depicted the lying, scheming Shibli as a vain, storytelling barber and contributed to the realistic-comic tendency in the fantastic oriental tale. My own view of the English novel developed to a point where I came to see George Eliot as the English novelist

best epitomising the nineteenth century, largely because she argued that there need be no contradiction between realism and the role of imagination in art, and in her best novels put that principle into practice. In the light of the detailed accounts by actual travellers in the Orient, many began to see Beckford's *Vathek* as little more than a literary curiosity and precious bauble, or a herald of that literary legacy of perversity and punishment which Mario Praz characterised in *The Romantic Agony*' (1933). *Vathek* still remains an important work to be studied at university here in Egypt as a landmark example of the influence of the Orient on a brilliant young English millionaire and romantic who did not settle for the available Antoine Galand's French translations of 1704, but studied Arabic in order to read the *Arabian Nights* in the original language. From my intensive study of the Beckford Papers, I conclude that Beckford's Arabic was limited. I would say that he was familiar with the script, certain expressions and various terms of speech, but that he needed a master to read for or with him. No doubt Zemir, 'a Turk native inhabitant of Makka', performed that good service.

A Biographical note on Professor Fatma Moussa-Mahmoud

Professor Moussa has been for many years one of Egypt's and the Arab world's foremost academics, educators and literary critics. She became Professor of English at Cairo University in 1972. Between 1981 and 1993, she was the Professor of English at the King Saud University, Riyadh, where she took a great interest in the Women's College and in the Research Centre. In 1994, she became Professor Emeritus of English at Cairo University. In 1998 she was awarded the highest honour the Egyptian State can bestow upon an academic. In addition to her great interest in the world-wide influence of the *Arabian Nights* which explains her abiding interest in William Beckford, Professor Moussa has written much about the novels of the Nobel Prize Winner Naguib Mahfouz and about Women and the Arabic novel in Egypt.

Among the many organisations in which she remains active are the Egyptian Writers' Union, PEN Egypt (Vice-President), British Society for Middle Eastern Studies and the International Association of Comparative Literature. In 1978 she translated Mahfouz's *Miramar* into English and, in 1985, *King Lear* into Arabic; a work-in-progress is the translation into Arabic of *The Map of Love*, a novel by her daughter Ahdaf Soueif.

Selected Bibliography of Professor Moussa's work in English on Beckford and the Period

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Journal of Arabic Literature (Leiden) 7 (1976): 7-23.
- 'The Beckford Papers.' *Times Literary Supplement*, 22 July 1977, 895. *Suite* to *Al Raoui* is shown to be Beckford's translation from the Wortley Montagu MS.
- 'Mme Vauclose, Author and Femme Philosophe of the Eighteenth Century.'
Cairo Studies in English (1978): 155-180 (Material in Beckford Papers.)
- 'Sir William Jones and Mme Vauclose.' *Revue de Littérature Comparée* 54 (Jan-March 1980): 5-16. Two letters from Sir William Jones to Mme Vauclose in the Beckford Papers.

‘George Eliot’s Theory of Literature.’ In *Centenary Essays on George Eliot*, ed. Magdi Wahba, 89-118. Cairo, 1981.

‘English Travellers and the *Arabian Nights*.’ In *The Arabian Nights in English Literature*, ed. Peter L Caracciolo, 95-110. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988.

(Beckford did not qualify for explicit treatment in this essay because he had not actually travelled in the East.)

Notes on the Wortley Montagu Arabic MS by Jerry Nolan

See *Catalogue of the papers of William Beckford (1760-1844)*, compiled by T. D. Rogers (Bodleian Library, 1987), 35: ‘(c.51-4) English translations of the *Arabian Nights*, from the Wortley Montagu Arabic manuscripts, now MSS. Bodl. Or. 550-6. The Arabic manuscripts are described in detail in Alexander Nicoll and E. B. Pusey, *Catalogi codicum manuscriptorum orientalium Bibliothecae Bodleianae pars secunda* (Oxford, 1835), pp. 145-150. The literal translations into English, made for Beckford c.1780-2, are all in the same unidentified hand, from Wortley Montagu MSS. III, part of V, and VI-VII (MSS. Bodl. Or. 552, 554-6), and are in folded, sometimes sewn, sections. They are discussed by Fatma Moussa Mahmoud, ‘A manuscript translation of the *Arabian Nights* in the Beckford papers’, *Journal of Arabic Literature*, 7 (1976), pp. 7-23.’ The English translations are c.51-4 and the French translations are d.23-6. According to Professor Moussa, the French translations are mainly in the handwriting of Madame Anne Marie de Fauques de la Cepede (de Vaucluse) who became better known as Mme de Starck (1720-1805), the French authoress who published many oriental tales in English and French, settled in England, taught French to Lady Craven’s daughters, may have well launched Sir William Jones as an orientalist and in old age probably corrected Beckford’s French.

See Peter L. Caracciolo, ed., *The Arabian Nights in English Literature* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988) for much on Sir Richard Burton (1821-1890) who made translations from the Wortley Montagu MS in his *A Plain and Literal Translation of the Arabian Nights’ Entertainments* (16 vols. Bernares: Kamashastra Society, 1885-1888). See in particular W. F. Kirby compilation ‘Comparative Table of the Tales in the Principal Editions of the Thousand and One Nights’ for the Burton edition, here reprinted as an Appendix giving a full overview of the many translations of the Arabian Tales throughout the nineteenth century, 289-315.

Ill-favoured by the Sun: The Orientation of Slavery in William Beckford's Imagination

STEPHANIE SMITH

Beckford's Orient is not exclusive to the East. His Orient – or rather, the exotic orientation of his imagination – is a luscious conflation of assorted mythic lands and fallen empires from all over the globe. It comprises Middle Eastern caliphates, dynasties of 'ancient "Afric and Ind" those countries most favoured by the Sun',¹ empires of 'China and Japan, full of the rarest stories imaginable of Castles, Treasures and miracles'² and the newly-found Pacific islands, with their reputation for sensuous indulgence.³ His waking dreams of Mexico and Peru are also integrated, as he speaks 'of the *Incas*, of their gentle empire, the solemn worship of the Sun, the charms of *Quito* and the majesty of the *Andes*.'⁴

But the New World majesty represented by Beckford's imaginative compass cannot be confused with the real Americas or West Indies. His is a topography of escapade, in which he loses himself in fairy woods or is consigned to the moon, where he never needs to relinquish 'the strangeness of my fancies'⁵ for the mundaneness of 'the World in general'.⁶ In 'Regions, long concealed from the eye of Man',⁷ Beckford roams through a mélange of diverse dreamscapes, constructing a protean imaginative geography. This geographic orientation could never have included the real West Indies, particularly Jamaica, the source of his vast wealth and the scaffold of the life that allowed the flow of his astonishing imagination. What Beckford's Orient eschews is the actual world of colonialism, mercantilism and slavery. Jamaica, for Beckford, was an unseemly actuality best shielded from the sun. Slavery and tyranny, while intrinsic to his fictional world, subsist only as part of copious fantasy, not as authentic images of degraded bondage.

Just a few months after his eighteenth birthday, Beckford declared himself stubbornly 'determined to enjoy my dreams, my phantasies and all my singularity, however irksome and discordant to the worldlings round me'.⁸ He declares that he 'would have given the Indies' for one of those fairytale potions designed to 'lull us to sleep for ever'.⁹ His correspondence over the last years of his minority is littered with references to his resolve to defy the encroachment of adult concerns. During the last moments of childhood, he reinforced his personal hemispherical divide between the things of the West, which represented maturity and responsibility, and those of the East, which represented all-consuming pleasure and indulgence. 'I scarce ever reflect at present', he says, 'on the state of Affairs either in England or America. If I did, what should I encounter but disgust and Indignation?'¹⁰

Beckford was interested in lands and peoples, actual or mythic, of which he could tell tales – but only invigorating and visionary tales devoid of practical reality. He strongly denied any self-identification with the colonial fiscal mercenaries that formed the ranks of the West Indian planters of his father's ilk, whom he called *Ferenguis*. He neatly stacked the deck against maturity and mercantile interest in favour of exotic, majestic kingdoms cleansed of any of the necessarily unsavoury practices that upheld them. His insistence on the limpidness of these gentle empires of the sun deflects attention away from moral discourse, from the reality that the ancient Peruvian civilization, for instance, of which he dreams, was built by slave labour and maintained by the fear of often brutal tyranny and human sacrifice. It could be said that Beckford's avoidance of depictions of non-Orientalist slavery betrays a certain amount of anxiety over the institution as practiced in the West under his personal auspices. The particular brand of East/West orientation that inspires his fiction partakes of a distinction made early in his life between the fantastic and the commercial. His Arabian tales

demonstrate his dichotomy between Oriental fantasy and Occidental reality, emphasising the distinction that he himself maintained between the fanciful and the real.

There was a good deal of indignation in the late eighteenth century over West Indian slavery. Public debates were on-going as to the benefits of the triangular trade and the efficacy of its abolition. The Orientalist literature of the era provided for oblique discussion of West Indian slavery. Whether an Englishman was for or against 'the trade', he could not deny that 'the East and the Caribbean were linked in a variety of current discourses...While the West Indies are the chief focus of attention in this dispute [over the slave trade and its abolition], the East – mainly though not solely in its Muslim aspect – figures as a recurring point of reference in the arguments of both sides. Notice is invariably taken of the fact that slavery is an Asian institution, and that the Asian presence in Africa is responsible, if not for the existence of slavery there, for at least one established branch of the trade'.¹¹ Abolitionists utilized the spectre of the Oriental tyrant who held absolute sway over his minions. 'The Tyranny and Despotism of the East,' wrote John Wesley in 1774, '[had] long since become a proverb'.¹²

At the time Beckford assumed his majority, there were at least 14,000 black men and women living in England.¹³ Though some were free, the majority were slaves. Campaigns for abolition were being waged in the press and from the pulpits, including those of the sect to which Beckford's mother belonged. Maria Hamilton Beckford was a devout Methodist, duly disturbed by her son's fascination with the *Mohammedan* tales, with which he was so preoccupied. Though Beckford would complain of his mother's overwhelming religious imposition on his life, his biographers do not mention any discussions Mrs. Beckford may have had with her son about the slave trade or the source of the family's wealth. Such discussions were more than conceivable, since Methodists were active in missionary work on the plantations in the Indies.

While not committed to abolition, they were largely responsible for Christianising the slave populations and installing black preachers. Whatever Mrs. Beckford's personal views were, she did not seem to impart any particular sense of outrage over slavery to her son. If she harboured any personal emancipationist sentiments, she kept them to herself and did not let them interfere with her lucrative marriages to two wealthy West Indian merchants, the second being Beckford's father. For her son, Jamaica served primarily to remind him of the burdens he would inherit along with his wealth. In the year 1781, when he came of age and took control of his family's commercial affairs, a devastating hurricane hit the island. He sees in this an adolescent independence of spirit that resents the inevitable encroachment of maturity and accountability. Beckford writes:

This whole morning I have been condemned to the perusal of Jamaica letters filled, as you may imagine, with ruin and desolation...the West Indian seas seem to have been swept from one extremity to the other, and the ports of almost every Island strewed with wrecks and devastation. Happily for me the power of the storm and earthquake fell upon those villages in which I have the least concern.¹⁴

Beckford never set foot in Jamaica. Throughout his life, he displayed an effectively psychosomatic abhorrence of the very idea of travelling there. Whenever the subject of touring his plantations was broached, he claimed some form of physical or occupational ill-disposition in order to avoid it. Even in the face of the socially disabling Powderham scandal, Beckford would not be prompted to continue a journey to Jamaica, upon which he embarked in March 1787 with the intention of rehabilitating himself in the eyes of society as a successful merchant prince. Upon taking leave of England, the habitually dramatic Beckford remarked that 'no one ever embarked even for transportation with a heavier heart' than he. 'The more I hear of Jamaica,' he said,

'the more I dread the climate, which I fully expect will wither my health away.'¹⁵ After a storm that forced his vessel to put to port at Lisbon, Beckford disembarked and refused to go further. In Portugal, while pleased to have received correspondence from home, he was annoyed that 'they contain nothing material, except accounts of the preparations which were making in Jamaica for my reception, and which will cost me a swingeing sum.' Though he writes later that he is less concerned with the prospect of irreclaimable expense than with the flattering reports that 'my not proceeding on my voyage was felt by the whole Island as a severe disappointment.'¹⁶

While displaying little interest and an active distaste for the particulars of his West Indian holdings, Beckford did enjoy their fruits. Upon achieving his majority he is said to have 'carefully guarded his interests as a Jamaican proprietor, lobbying for lower duties on sugar and opposing [the pro-abolition efforts] of Wilberforce's parliamentary campaign'.¹⁷ Fothergill claims that Beckford 'was unable to reconcile himself [toward the end of his life] to the idea of the abolition of slavery. The prejudice inherited from his West Indian slave-owning ancestors was too strong, and for once his imagination failed to envisage the iniquity and inhumanity of the system and rebel against it. Perhaps', Fothergill conjectures, if Beckford 'had ever visited his Jamaican properties and seen the institution in operation he might have joined his voice with the emancipationists, but he preferred to shut his eyes to the evil.'¹⁸ This is a commendable suggestion and, as an admirer of Beckford's fiction and his engagingly eccentric spirit, one would be forgiven for styling this bit of speculation as true. But it is not warranted. Little culled from his life or writings leads one to suppose that Beckford would have been sympathetic to the plight of the men and women he owned. While he certainly empathised with the causes of liberty, equality and fraternity as articulated in the early days of the French Revolution, a general affection for the rights of man does not

automatically translate into a particular compassion for the plight of one's own bondsmen. In his dealings, Beckford proved himself a compassionate and generous man, known to have confidentially provided support and annuities to acquaintances and dependents who rendered him good service. Records indicate that he maintained these lines of support for as long as he was able, even in times of considerable financial constraint. But again, even life-long laudable action does not automatically equate to latent commiseration with the cause of abolition.

By acknowledging and then bracketing what we now know of Beckford's attitude toward and actions in regard to his West Indian self-interests, we can make a significant distinction between the slavery of his biography and that of his fiction. In his fiction, there is evidence of an anxiety over human bondage that was not evident in the accounts of his life and his ratification of his livelihood. While not being abolitionist in any way, Beckford's depiction of slavery in *Vathek* and *The Episodes of Vathek* failed to reinforce the contention that Africans, those specifically chosen for transport to West Indian plantations, were particularly or inherently suited to servitude due to their colour or nationality, as contemporary pro-slavery voices declared. Though Beckford does portray the Caliph Vathek as an arch tyrant bent on achieving his ends by any means, no matter the detriment of those who serve him, who represent an array of humankind. Mimicking the actual conditions of slavery known to exist in Asia, the Middle East and North Africa, the slaves and concubines of Vathek were multi-racial and multi-cultural. That they were culled from many nations and peoples exemplifies the tyrant's potency and the far reach of his power.

Though the slaves described in the text as specifically Negro, Ethiopian or African are not singled out by their colour for servitude, they are still marred by a kind of negative stereotype common in Beckford's day. Very much a man of his time in relation to colour bias or phrenological typing, Beckford's

fictional black slaves were rarely beautiful and often displayed distinctly animalistic tendencies. The novel and the tales are peopled with devious, self-serving black eunuchs: negress witches, ugly, deformed and in league with the devil; and concubines, kept more for variety's sake than peculiar beauty, who exhibit ox-like strength rather than the attractiveness and sexual artistry of other species of women slaves. But despite his lack of enthusiasm for black grace or beauty, what marks the condition of a slave in Beckford's fiction is his or her absolute subjection to the monarch, not colour.

Just as the Western institution of slavery had its model and counterpart in the East, so did the Western slave owner have his Oriental template. As with Beckford, slavery in eighteenth-century Oriental fiction was servitude to tyranny. Infractions are often paid for in blood, the potentate having absolute power over life and death, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. In the common imagination the correspondent of the Oriental tyrant was the West Indian planter, styled as a brutish and impolite self-made man.

The wealthy Creole slave-owner became its own literary type, a figure of conspicuous and grotesque consumption, labelled parvenu and nouveau riche as he encroached upon an established society that would readily welcome him (though they would never like him) just so long as his money did not run out. The sting of illegitimacy that stuck to the image of the Creole was no less tenacious than the reports of his brutality to his slaves. It is no wonder the William Beckford we know – sensualist, fantasist, voluptuary – kept his distance from his island font, preferring instead his extended tours of fancy to a tour of his Creole roots. In the following letter to a friend, we see Beckford slipping away from the harsh realities of the Western world that fuelled his fire, preferring to yoke together sketches of devoted Oriental bondsmen attending their masters' camels by firelight with shades of American savages and fairytale monsters. He and his

travelling companions retire:

into a Bay amongst the Spice Groves and, felling tall Trees, form a fence to guard us from the Monsters that prowl nightly in the Woods. Thus secured we would visit our Camels and the attendants of our journey. These we would treat gently and having kindled a prodigious Fire carouse and feast around its blaze. Perhaps a Nation of Savages would spy its smoke at a distance and might say amongst themselves... What means then...yonder sparks that indicate a triumphant Fire?...One of those [servants] who watch over the security of our repose would hear the fleet of a multitude descending the Slopes of a *Savannah* in the silence of the Night and... rouse us from our Slumbers.¹⁹

This is a boys' tale of adventure, in which the boys need not attend to the actualities of exploration, encampment or self-protection, but have only to bask in the care of attendants, whom they treat 'gently' in return for devoted service. This is a far cry from the experience at large of servants and masters that Beckford was determined not to face until compelled to do so.

¹ Brian Fothergill. *Beckford of Fonthill*. London: Faber & Faber, 1979. P. 225.

² Fothergill, 208.

³ William Beckford. *The Journal of William Beckford in Portugal and Spain 1787-1788*. Ed. Boyd Alexander. London: Hart-Davis, 1954. P. 294.

⁴ Lewis Melville. *The Life and Letters of William Beckford of Fonthill*. London: Heinemann, 1910. P. 66.

⁵ Fothergill, 67.

⁶ Fothergill, 95.

⁷ Melville, 38.

⁸ Fothergill, 66.

⁹ Fothergill, 94.

¹⁰ Melville, 66.

¹¹ & ¹² P. H. Knox-Shaw. 'The West Indian *Vathek*: A Novel by William Beckford.' *Essays in Criticism* 43 no. 4 (October 1993): 290.

¹³ Wylie Sypher. *Guinea's captive kings: British anti-slavery literature of the XVIIIth century*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1942. P. 2.

¹⁴ Knox-Shaw, 285.

¹⁵ Beckford, 14.

¹⁶ Beckford, 169.

¹⁷ Knox-Shaw, 288.

¹⁸ Fothergill, 346.

¹⁹ Melville, 38.

Sir William Holburne and William Beckford

LISA WHITE

If William Beckford stands pre-eminent as a collector amongst residents of Bath in the nineteenth century, then Sir William Holburne (1793-1874) must have a claim to be next in line. In addition, his collection, which testifies to his admiration of Beckford, survives virtually intact in the Bath museum bearing his name, unlike the long-dispersed treasures of the Caliph of Fonthill.

Close links between Beckford and Holburne are difficult to establish. Holburne's name does not appear in Beckford's surviving papers, and the fierce 'weeding' of Holburne's documents after his collection passed to the trustees of the fledgling museum in 1882 leaves little information. However there are teasing references, direct and indirect, which convey a sense of Sir William's interest in and admiration of Beckford.

Sir William Holburne and his family were near neighbours of Beckford in Bath. From 1801 Holburne's parents, Sir Francis and Lady Alicia and their five children lived in 7, Lansdown Place West, a relatively modest but elegant house a few doors from Beckford's later residence in Lansdown Crescent from 1822. An early link between the two collectors was the acquisition by Sir Francis Holburne, probably between 1805 and 1808, of two paintings, 'Spring' and 'Summer', c. 1760, by Andrea Casali (1705 -1784) which had formed part of Alderman Beckford's collection at Fonthill Splendens. These paintings passed to William Holburne after his father's death in 1820. The family continued to live in Lansdowne Place West until 1829.

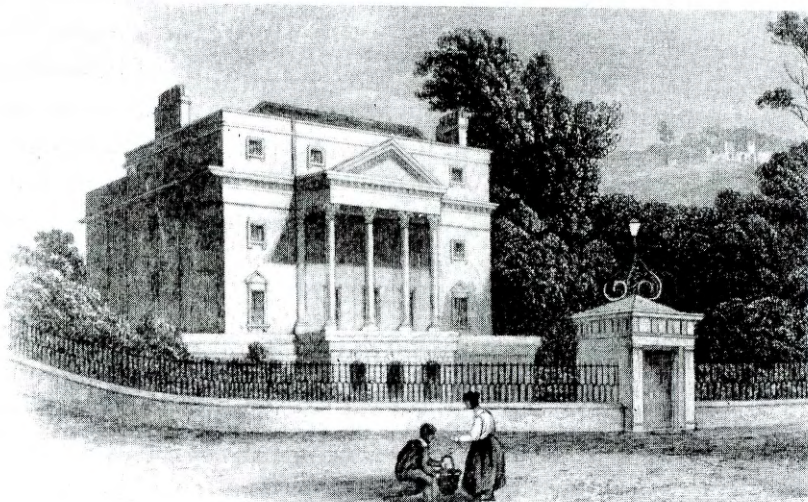
The Holburne family appear to have moved in elegant society in Bath, London, Brighton and at Harewood, Yorkshire, where they enjoyed their status as cousins to the Lascelles family and stayed regularly during a period of great artistic patronage.

William and his elder brother Francis served in the wars against the French, Francis with the Foot Guards in the Peninsular Campaigns, dying of wounds in 1814 after the battle of Bayonne. William served in the Navy from 1805-1815, seeing action at Trafalgar, the Siege of Toulon, across the Mediterranean, Caribbean, Western Approaches and English Channel. In this respect, the lives of the socially-accepted Holburnes and the reclusive Beckford could not have been more different.

However the Holburnes must have been well aware of Beckford's alterations to his houses in Lansdown Crescent (a few yards from their own home), the creation of the Tower on Lansdown and development of the picturesque ride up Lansdown hill in the 1820s. In 1829, following his mother's death, Sir William Holburne acquired his own house and land just below Beckford's in Cavendish Crescent and there, for the following forty-four years he amassed his collection of paintings, sculpture, silver, ceramics, bronzes and *objets d'art*. Behind the house Holburne laid out a picturesque garden with serpentine walks, specimen trees and shrubberies, the relics of which exist to this day, and beyond lay an open view to Beckford's house.

A further geographical link between the two men can be traced to the presence, again a few yards away, of the artist Thomas Barker (1767-1847). In 1803 Barker commissioned Joseph Michael Gandy, a pupil of Sir John Soane, to design an impressive Greek Revival house and gallery, called Doric House, on Sion Hill, visible from Holburne's doorstep, and just down the hill from Lansdown Crescent. Both Holburne and Beckford collected paintings by Barker, in Holburne's case with his acquisition of Barker's fine self-portrait and a number of landscapes which remain in the Museum's collection.

Both direct and indirect references to Beckford in Holburne's collection show that the range and richness of the Caliph's trophies fascinated the younger, poorer man. Undoubtedly Beckford's reputation, as a collector on a daunting scale, must



Sydney Hotel, from Everitt's *Views in Bath* (1844), now
the Holburne Museum of Art, Sydney Gardens, Bath

have been the main influence on the impressionable naval officer.

Direct references are in Holburne's acquisitions from Beckford's own collection at Lansdown Crescent and Tower, sold by Messrs. English in Bath in November 1845, which Holburne attended. These include a pair of Meissen porcelain cups and three saucers 'painted with views in Germany' (Holburne 1887 Cat. 1190), a small cream ewer formed from an eighteenth-century Chinese porcelain cup mounted in silver-gilt (Holburne Cat. 1209), and a small crystal cup mounted in silver gilt (Holburne Cat. 477), identified by Bet McLeod during research for the recent exhibition 'William Beckford 1760-1844: An Eye for the Magnificent' (New York & London, 2001-2002).

Also acquired was a set of twelve silver-gilt teaspoons of naturalistic form in a mahogany velvet-lined box with a brass shield on the top inscribed 'Beckford's Tower 185, 21st Nov 1845' (Holburne Cat. 108). These were described in Holburne's

silver catalogues as 'German, 18th Cent.', but actually carry a maker's mark for the London firm of J. W. Storey and William Elliott, 1812. They were commissioned by Beckford to make the superb set of silver-gilt bread and butter dishes he and Gregorio Franchi designed in 1813, which have recently been on the market, and also a fine pair of sugar tongs now in the National Museum of Scotland.

Holburne seems to have been proud of the provenance of all these pieces, for his catalogue carefully notes that most of them were 'From the Collection of William Beckford'. The only other sources Holburne mentioned in his catalogue of the collection are the Duke of York's and Duke of Sussex's Collections from which he acquired fine pieces of silver-gilt. All the pieces, although minor items in Beckford's massive collection, reveal both the old and new owner's taste for jewel-like quality in ceramics, metalwork and other *objets d'art*.

Holburne's library of approximately 1800 volumes, which also survive in the Museum, contains books and catalogues connected with Beckford: 1834 editions of *Vathek* (with *The Castle of Otranto*) and *Italy; with Sketches of Spain and Portugal*, Willes Maddox's *Views of Lansdown Tower*, 1844, the *Catalogue of Beckford's Library* and the sale catalogue of 1845 bound with Christie's catalogue of the sale of the Duke of Sussex's collection of June 1844. Also in the collection is a battered but fascinating scrapbook, probably assembled by Sir William's sisters, into which were glued the pages illustrating and describing Lansdown Tower published in the *Illustrated London News*.

Compared to those of Beckford in his heyday, Holburne's wealth and available resources for collecting were small, and only a few of his treasures can aspire to the quality or status of those acquired by Beckford. Furthermore Holburne was constrained by the size of his home – a luxurious, but standard-sized terraced town house in Bath, rather than an extensive country house, or even the double-sized town house developed by Beckford in

Lansdown Crescent.

Despite these limitations, the character of Holburne's collection pays homage to his neighbour on Lansdown, from the Italian and Dutch paintings to the elaborate silver-gilt seventeenth-century plate, richly-decorated Chinese, Meissen and Sèvres porcelain, Italian bronzes, maiolica, Limoges enamels, and *objets de vertu* in agate, crystal, malachite, lapis lazuli, coral and ivory. Recent research and assessment of Holburne's collection reveals more and more vividly these indirect but significant references to knowledge of Beckford's taste and acquisitions.

One significant area in which Holburne was unable to emulate Beckford was in collecting furniture. Again, he was limited by the space in his town house. However, his seventeenth-century Antwerp tortoiseshell, ebony and ivory cabinet on stand (Holburne 1887 Cat. 1629), a curious set of cane chairs in the late seventeenth-century style (Cat. 1621), a curious composite marquetry table (Cat. 1628) and a marquetry chest of drawers (Cat. 1634) illustrate his taste for elaborate Baroque pieces. The probate inventory taken of the contents of 10, Cavendish Crescent after Holburne's death in 1874 reveal his taste for Boulle marquetry, rosewood, luxurious fabrics and rich gold wallpaper, none of which survive in the current museum collection.

The final link between Holburne and Beckford remains in their deaths. After his initial interment in Lyncombe, Beckford was eventually buried in the cemetery next to his Tower on Lansdown in 1848. In 1874 Holburne, too was buried a few yards from the man whose influence upon him was so significant, and his three sisters were also buried in the same tomb. There were no close relatives or immediate descendants of the bachelor collector and spinster sisters of Cavendish Crescent, but through the laudatory actions of Mary-Anne Barbara, Holburne's youngest and last surviving sibling, his collection, with its memories of Beckford, has survived into the twenty-first century.

Notes on Contributors

Sidney Blackmore was a Foundation Trustee of the Beckford Tower Trust and is a member of the Tower's Council of Management. An independent lecturer and writer with particular interests in Italy, the Grand Tour and the influence of Classical art and architecture on later styles and tastes, he has organised exhibitions on Neo-classicism, the eighteenth-century Gothic revival, and the planned townscape. He regularly leads study tours to Italy.

Michael Briggs has been closely involved with various museums and conservation / preservation projects in Bath, including fundraising, over the last thirty years. He is Chairman of Bath Preservation Trust, the Building of Bath Museum, the Bath Spa Trust and the Beckford Tower Trust. In December 2002 he was awarded an honorary degree by the University of Bath in recognition of the major role he played in safeguarding Bath's heritage.

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, since enhanced by studying Beckford's writings, conversations with James Lees-Milne and Leslie Hilliard, and visits to Fonthill. Jon Millington introduced him to additional aspects of Beckford and encouraged him to write about them.

Kirsten Elliott is a writer and guide to the city of Bath. She became interested in William Beckford's estate in Bath when living in Dixon Gardens. Her researches into what she calls 'Beckford's Secret Garden' have helped to increase interest in this neglected aspect of his life. Her thoughts about the Tower have led her to 'collect' the histories and myths about other towers, which she has assembled into a talk: 'Beckford's Tower – facts and fantasies'.

Robert J. Gemmett's most recent contribution to Beckford Studies is *The Consummate Collector: William Beckford's Letters to His Bookseller*. He is also the author of a new book, *Beckford's Fonthill: The Rise of a Romantic Icon*, to be published soon by Michael Russell Ltd. Formerly Provost and Vice-President of Academic Affairs at SUNY College at Buffalo, he is currently Professor of English at SUNY College at Brockport.

William Hauptman, an independent art historian, specializes in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European art. He has published a catalogue raisonné of the Swiss painter Charles Gleyre, curated several exhibitions, and contributed to many scholarly journals. He is currently writing a study of the French perspective of British painting during the nineteenth century and a new exploration of nineteenth-century British watercolours for Phaidon Press.

Robert Irwin has published six novels. He is also author of *The Arabian Nights: A Companion* (Allen Lane, 1994) and translated *Night and Horses and the Desert: An Anthology of Classical Arabic Literature* (Allen Lane, 1999).

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 and publishes 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, and edits their quarterly newsletter. He is the Secretary of the Irish Literary Society, London, originally founded by, among others, W. B. Yeats. His continuing interest in Beckford remains centred on exploring the religious, apocalyptic and radical dimensions in his life and works.

Stephanie Smith is a writer, former film maker and current Ph.D candidate in eighteenth-century British literature at Princeton University, specialising in travel narratives and the Gothic Semantic. She has published work on slavery and the Atlantic Middle Passage in *The Literature of Travel and Exploration*, forthcoming from Taylor & Francis, and contributes literary, film and cultural reviews to *The Times* and BBC Radio 4.

Lisa White is the Leathersellers' Company's Curator of Decorative Art at the Holburne Museum. Previously she worked in the Departments of Furniture and Textiles, Victoria and Albert Museum, taught in the Department of History of Art, University of Bristol, and continues to teach at the School of Architecture, University of Bath, for the MA in History of Decorative Art at the Wallace Collection, London, and for the Attingham Summer School.