WILLIAM BECKFORD, THE AUTHOR OF VATHEK

BY

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I

WILLIAM BECKFORD, THE AUTHOR OF VATHEK

William Beckford, the Author of Vathek as he called himself, is not a great author. To English literature he has contributed neither a large quantity nor an unexcelled quality of writing. To many people he is almost unknown. He is not great; but he is interesting and important because he fitted into a crevice of the mosaic of English literature in the eighteenth century. Here he contributed this fleck of color, now gay, now subdued; there he wedged into a corner that served to strengthen and emphasize the position of his neighbors. Here he added something related to the preceding age; there he showed traces of influences which became more developed in the following period.

At Fonthill-Giffard, in Wiltshire, October 1, 1760, was born William Beckford, the son of William Beckford, Lord Mayor of London, by his second wife Maria, daughter and co-heir of Hon. George Hamilton. By birth he inherited not only enormous wealth, but also a renowned family name; and

1) Dr. Garnett of the British Museum by contemporary notices in the Public Advertizer and Gentleman's Magazine shows that the date, September 29, 1759, sometimes given is incorrect.
he prided himself on his family name. On the death of his father, William at the age of ten, was intrusted to Rev. John Lettice, a tutor, who not only taught him, but endeavored to suppress and regulate his undisciplined capriciousness.

Melville has divided Beckford's life into two divisions; the first embraces his travels over Europe, and the second, the fifty years he lived at Fonthill and Bath. In his early life Beckford was a rover. When seventeen years old he went to Geneva to study. In 1779 he made a tour of England, perhaps to dispel his dreaminess. In 1780 he took his Grand Tour, which lasted ten months, through the Low Countries, Germany, Italy, and France. In 1782, after a few months, he started on his way to Italy. With such grandeur and state did he travel this time, with fore-runners before and footmen behind, with his physician, musician, artist, and all, that he was thought to be the Emperor of Austria traveling incognito. On May 5, 1783, he was married to Lady Margaret Gordon. In three years she had died, and Beckford to dispel his grief was traveling restlessly through Switzerland, into England, and away again to Spain and Portugal. Paris, too, saw him at the time of

the storming of the Bastile.

Until he was thirty years of age, Beckford's life was one of almost ceaseless travel. He had seen many lands; he had met many people, had formed many friendships, had enjoyed the splendor and culture that money, good taste, and refinement can buy. Previous to 1794 England seemingly had no attractions for him; after 1794 he very seldom left England except on occasional trips to Paris. He shut himself up at Fonthill, built a high wall around his estate, and became engrossed in building Fonthill Abbey. Here he made meadows where woods had been, and woods on a barren plain; he collected rare books, prints, paintings and curiosities; he loved music and reading, and had little need for recourse to outside society. In 1822 because of losses on his plantations in the West Indies he was forced to give up his elaborate establishment at Fonthill. He saved the best of his collections, however, and removed them to Lansdown, Bath. Here he repeated his life at Fonthill. He lived to be an old man; he was ever brisk and active; his mind was clear, his interest keen. He died at Bath May 2, 1844, and was buried first in the Bath Abbey Cemetery, and shortly afterwards was reburied near Lansdown Tower.

For the sake of convenience I have divided Beckford's work into three divisions. The first, a group
of essays and letters, includes his early letters such as are found in Melville's "Life and Letters", "Biographical Memoirs of Extraordinary Painters", the "Excursion to Alcobaça and Batalha", and "Dreams, Waking Thoughts and Incidents", which he later published with a few omissions under the title "Italy, Spain and Portugal". The second group includes those tales which show foreign, especially oriental, influence, "Vathek" and "Popular Tales Translated from the German". The last includes Beckford's two satirical novels, "Azemia" and "The Elegant Enthusiast".
II

EARLY CHARACTERISTICS AS SHOWN IN

BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIRS, DREAMS, LETTERS, ALCOBÂÇA AND BATALHA.

Lord Chatham described Beckford when a boy as a combination of fire and air. Such he was in his youth; such he continued to be in his early manhood -- impulsive, imaginative, given to vague regrets and vaguer longings.

His first appearance as an author reveals the impetuosity and precociousness of his nature as well as his whimsical humor. When he was but twenty years old, he published "Biographical Memoirs of Extraordinary Painters", a fanciful bit of humorous satire on the Flemish and Dutch schools of painting. The story of the origin of the book has been often repeated -- how the old housekeeper at Font-hill used to gain a fee by showing the pictures to gaping rustics and to bestow on the painters wonderful names and still more wonderful achievements; and how Beckford, to assist her, wrote this handbook of the painters, Blunder-bussiana, Watersouchy, Og of Basan and others, which was received and retold as gospel truth. (1) Here one finds

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keen flashes of wit in the portrayal of, as it were, two conflicting schools. Good natured fun is thrust at representatives of the romantic and the classic. Og of Basan loved solitudes, sought out ruins and dismal caverns, "was carried away by the impetuosity of his imagination." (1) Watersouchy, on the other hand, insisted upon form, perspicuity, minute detail. So careful was he, that in a portrait of the burgomaster the very hairs of the eyelashes were numbered, (2) and in a counting-house scene in which people were also visible the legends on each of the coins were easily distinguishable. (3) Critics say that the sketches show a remarkable knowledge of art; (4) but today the book is interesting only for its charm of style and delicate humor.

Beckford's nature, like Byron's, seems to have been a combination of conflicting elements, of inconsistencies and incongruities. He was of a strange and visionary temperament. Into a receptive mind he had absorbed along with training in the classics, the Sorrows of Werther, Ossian,
strange tales from Germany, Persia and Arabia. He had an ardent love of music. It had the power of engrossing all his faculties, almost of enchanting him. Plaintive notes were sure to "awaken in his bosom a long train of mournful recollections,"(1 and to plunge him into languor and gloom.(2) He felt the sorrows of the music as his own. "Music raises before me a host of phantoms which I pursue with eagerness. My blood thrills in my veins, its whole current is changed and agitated. I can no longer command myself, and whilst the frenzy lasts would be willingly devoted to destruction."(3) He imposed no restraint on his idealized emotions, and did not subordinate them to reason. In this early period his acute sensibility is one of the most prominent notes in his character. A morbid love of melancholy and cruel cynicism permeated his whole being. Sadness seemingly brooded over him with outspread wings. He sat by the seaside humming a melancholy song as he traced figures in the sand, and he said to himself, "Perhaps the dead listened from their narrow cells."(4) "The North wind prevails this Evening, the Gusts

1) Dreams, p. 353, or Italy, v. II, p. 124
2) Cf. Dr. Johnson's remark: "Sir, I should never hear of it, if it made me such a fool." Boswell, VII, p. 17.
3) Melville, Life and Letters, p. 92 (Letter, Oct. 1, 1780.)
are bleak and raw, I will indulge the melancholy that has seized me and walk in the dusk of twilight on the shore of the Lake. The vast Waters are troubled and the waves rush furiously on the Beach. Dark Clouds roll from the North and bring on the Night. I see lights at a distance moving towards the City --- I am alone on the Shore --- dread is my situation --- The blasts increase and whistle dismally in my ears. I shudder --- What shriek was that? --- no Bird is that on the wing."(1) Night appealed to him as a time for visions and wanderings. Mystic longings beyond utterance then seized him. Though his thoughts were gloomy, they were not unpleasant; and he loved to press the aching spot to make it ache the more. The moon was his muse. Not so much did the blackness of midnight with crossbone and skull affect him, but the first shades of evening when the moon is first appearing, threw him into frenzied raptures. He called twilight, "'Era gia l'ora', that soothing, solemn hour, when by some occult, inexplainable sympathy, the interior spirit, folded up within itself, inclines to repel every groveling doubt of its divine essence, and feels, even without seeking to feel it, the consciousness of immortal-
ity."(2) He is a twilight poet who wrote in prose. Seeing

1) Melville, Life and Letters, p. 35. Letter Nov. 21st, 1777.
2) Redding, Memoirs, v. II, p. 64.
a flight of rooks above him, he imagined himself a lonely rook stationed to guard the others during the long night. (1) Spirits came and led him away to distant regions, sometimes through the air, sometimes into the deep, dark region underneath the earth. Bats and owls love not the twilight better than did he.

Often did he turn his eye inward to seek a fuller knowledge of himself in his feelings. He cultivated carefully a rich inner life. It is not strange then to find that he had a deep and abiding love of nature, so often that creative factor in man's life. He looked on nature with the eye of a mystic. The breezes whispered secrets in his ear. The leaves had for him a language of their own. Sometimes they plotted revenge; sometimes they brought caresses. The waves came bringing messages from far across the seas. "Five hours have elapsed! Hours of wonderment and gratitude! I have been steeped in those sensations which arise from the contemplation of the great objects of nature." (1) Unlike the polished gentleman of the Age of Anne, he loved rural scenes and rural life. He

recognized beauty in the smell of hay, in rich pastures and ample fields of grain. Oftentimes for him evening with her hushed and dying sounds soothed away the turmoil and confusion of the day. A morning filled with fragrance and freshness sent his spirits leaping on a bound, and made ill-humor for him impossible.\(^1\) Dr. Johnson had little use for a person whose spirits rose or fell according to the atmosphere. His frown must necessarily then have fallen on young Beckford. It was not the milder aspects of nature alone that influenced Beckford. Although he execrated the loose pebbles and rolling stones over which he was often forced to ride, he would go aside even when oppressed with heat to investigate uncouth rocks.\(^2\) Like Rousseau and Byron, he would hang eagerly over a dizzy gulf and strain his eyes to penetrate the gloom of an abyss in which a waterfall roared.\(^3\) A thunderstorm in the mountains, although it filled him with terror, inspired reverence and love, so that his description is graphic. Once we find him on the summit of a mountain, swinging and swaying in the branches of a towering pine, and

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\(^1\) Alcôbaça and Batalha, pp. 120, 127, 177.
\(^2\) Dreams, p. 245.
\(^3\) Dreams, p. 143, or Italy, v. I, p. 79.
surveying the world beneath him. Can one imagine, readily, Dr. Johnson in such a precarious position?

Solitude and her charms held firm hold on his heart. Hour after hour, according to his letters, he would lie in the shadow of a spreading tree, a tablet and a pencil in his hand, a basket of grapes by his side, and a crooked stick to shake down the chestnuts.\(^1\) Hour by hour he would sit alone on a reef of rocks and listen to the waves break against them.\(^2\) He longed for a vale deep buried in the heart of some mountain to which he could carry his books and instruments, (and a few chosen friends, who, so Cowper tells us, are necessary for solitude.) The quiet of a lonely valley delighted him. Were he cooped up in the confines of a monotonous party long, his spirit could not brook such treatment. He would pant for air and freedom, and escape some way to solitude, to the humming of the bees and the blowing of the gales.\(^3\) When he found such a retreat, he would say to himself, "Here am I out of the way of courts and ceremonies and commonplace visitations, or salutations

\[\text{1) Dreams, p. 202, or Italy, v. I, p. 185.}
\[\text{2) Dreams, p. 209, or Italy, v. I, p. 198.}
\[\text{3) Dreams, p. 315, or Italy, v. II, p. 35.}\]
or gossip."(1

That William Beckford was eccentric there is no denying. Rumors and tales of all sorts and descriptions, according to report, were spread abroad concerning him; but these arose seemingly from his revolt at the old eighteenth century ideal of the golden mean, conformity. He positively refused to be hampered especially in his social life. The idea of being a charming, society gentleman such as Lord Chesterfield desired his son to be, grated on Beckford. Not for him were fulsome compliments, polite quibbles, affectation of exact, demonstrable learning, the courting of the Graces. Fashionable calls were repulsive to him. On returning home one day he found a pile of cards which had been left in his absence. "Such a sight," he said, "chills me like the fall of snow, for I think of the cold idleness of going about day after day dropping little bits of cardboard in return."(2 All mankind save a few of his intimate friends, he regarded with a morbid cynicism. In his early days to inflame this revolt he was filled with airy, phantastick, melancholy broodings. Sometimes he was flying on the hunt with a band of Indians in the future life; or

2) Dreams, p. 435.
again, he entered into consultation with the Arabians, with Mesron and Nouronihar; voices spoke to him out of the winds; a shower of apple blossoms wafted to him the messages of his beloved. Conscious he was of his own singularities, and instead of trying to crush them down, he only sought opportunities for developing his uniqueness. "I am determined to enjoy my Dreams, my phantasies and all my singularity, however irksome and discordant to the Worldlings around,"(1) he wrote December 4, 1778; and again, November 16, 1780, "I am now approaching the Age when the World in general expect me to lay aside my dreams, abandon my soft illusions, and start into public life. How greatly are they deceived how firmly am I resolved to be a Child forever."(2)

"What, my dear mother, is to make it worth my while to quit my quiet habits, to injure my health, and risk my fortune for all this unmeaning Whirl? Am I to act so lightly by all my own internal resources, and surely I have some to value, that I should make such Sacrifices to Fashion?

"They may do so who can do no better. If the Honours of my Country, and even its good opinion are to be obtained only by a Conformity to such idle modes as these,

1) Melville, Life and Letters, p. 65.
I must do without them."\(^1\)

Surely then, public life was not the sphere he chose. Not only did he seek retirement from fashionable social obligations, but he also withdrew from any active, moving, political responsibilities. His early manhood came at a period of upheaval in European politics. America struggled and freed herself from British control. France overthrew her hereditary monarchy, established a republic, and brought war to the other nations of Europe. Europe united against Napoleon and caused his defeat. Amid such turmoil absolute passivity were impossible.

At the time of the American Revolution, William Beckford was still a boy. His letters, which are the best record of his life at this period, show little concern about the movement. He preferred to employ his time in what the world called trifles, rather than to master the political state of America or plan for its future.\(^2\) He felt the situation there was so rueful, so little good could be said of it, it were best to keep silent.\(^3\) America appealed to him for consideration only in so far as it fitted into his

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1) Melville, Life and Letters, p. 222.  
3) Melville, Life and Letters, p. 46.
scheme of melancholy broodings. It excited his pity and contempt save for its savannahs, Niagaras, sunworship and Indians. Later, however, he expressed a warm regard for this country allied in so many respects to his own, and prophesied it was destined to become the first in the world.\(^1\)

In 1781 he pleaded for a few more years of freedom for his wings of imagination. "Age will soon draw on — and the gay texture be shrivelled. Then I will mump, growl, snarl, bite, and be political."\(^2\) In 1782 twelve months of leisure and tranquility he thought might prepare him for as many years of torment and illustration.\(^3\) At the time of the French Revolution he was willing in part to forget his flights of fancy. The importance of the movement pressed more heavily upon him.

Like Burke in "Reflections on the French Revolution", Beckford pleaded for respect for authority and tradition, and repudiated such ideal doctrines as those of Rousseau, Paine and others.\(^4\) France he thought was revolutionized out of the maxims of ancient wisdom and experience. To him

\(^{4)}\) See Dreams, p. 320, or Italy, v. II, p. 45.
the change seemed to bode no good. He was in Paris at the storming of the Bastile, and again at the execution of Louis XVI, and once had to hide in disguise as a bookstore clerk in order to save his life. The outrages perpetrated at this time without doubt partially account for his opposition to the Revolution and its principles. Beckford's later political career and views, his relation for instance to the War with France, to the humanitarian movement, slave trade, and kindred movements, are more clearly brought to light in his satirical novels, and therefore the treatment of them will be deferred until the novels themselves are considered.

What then in this early period was Beckford's relation to the times in which he lived, to the movements which were taking place around him? At first it seems that he is a marked representative of the growing romantic revolt. He loved the mysterious and the unknown. He seemingly pitted invention and fancy against good sense and judgment. He did not let cold reason dominate the whole of his life. Emotions were to him feelings not to be concealed, but to be made a source of pleasure, even though it be a

gloomy sort of pleasure. Extremes were not necessarily to be avoided; enthusiasm was no disgrace. When Addison traveled through Italy he found one of his greatest entertainments consisted in comparing scenes and places with the descriptions given by ancient poets; (1) not so Beckford. Although his mind was well stored with the classics, and at times a passing fancy brought to mind the ancients' lives and verses, yet his interest was primarily in himself, in his reaction to his surroundings. Bethany points out that "Dreams, Waking Thoughts and Incidents" begins with a dream, a manner altogether different from the matter-of-fact eighteenth century traveller. (2) But in spite of all this restlessness and revolt at conventions, Beckford at heart still had much of the classical or pseudo-classical character. At times he shows the Augustan indifference, love of satire and travesty, self-confidence and pride. Although he threw off the yoke of reason, he did not go to such extremes as Blake and Shelley. To me it seems that in his early life he felt he was being more rebellious than his actions seem to show he was; that underneath the surface there was a feeling, however

2) Vathek and European Travels, Minerva Library. Bethany, Intro. p. V.
slight, of restraint; there was some curb, some respect for authority and convention.
III

ORIENTAL INFLUENCE.

By means of the crusades Europe was brought into contact with the Eastern lands and Eastern peoples. Not only were the luxuries, spices, rugs, and silks, brought westward, but strange stories were diffused, of the magnificence of the Orient; and finally even the tales to which the Eastern people delighted to listen, found their way into Europe. They were greeted with a ready welcome, for the mediaeval literature of Europe abounded in tales and romances. In the Advocates' Library at Edinburgh is a manuscript written about 1330, which contains a collection of Oriental tales called "The Seven Wise Masters." Even at such an early date did the stories from the Orient drift into England. Such stories as "Barlaam and Josaphat", and the "Fables of Bidpai" were a part of the mediaeval inheritance, which brought with it also all sorts of tales of wonder, lives and miracles of saints, and French romances. Missionaries, travellers, crusaders, writers, merchants, all helped to increase the Englishman's knowledge of his Eastern neighbors.

It was not, however, until the seventeenth century that there came to be any marked increase of interest in
Eastern lore. From the middle of the sixteenth century England's commerce began to develop. At first progress came but slowly. In 1581 the Turkey Company was formed, but more important still was the East India Company which was incorporated in 1600. Somewhere between 1704 -- 1712 Arabian Nights was translated into English.\(^1\) In 1714 appeared Persian Tales\(^1\) and Turkish Tales\(^1\) and in 1730 came Mogul Tales.\(^1\) Arabian Nights especially became popular almost immediately and stimulated a renewed interest.\(^2\) Addison in the Spectator retells several of the Eastern stories.\(^3\) Besides in "Hilpa and Shalum" and the well-known "Vision of Mirzah"\(^4\) we find direct imitations of oriental fables. Nevertheless some of these Eastern ideas were looked upon with disgust by the classicists. Dr. Johnson when speaking of Knolles' "History of the Turks" said, "Nothing could have sunk this author in obscurity but the remoteness and barbarity of the people whose story he relates."\(^5\) Yet in spite of such a feeling he wrote "Rasselas". This early knowledge of the East was only superficial; scholars

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2) Conant, The Oriental Tale in England, p. XVII.
5) Rambler, No. 122.
and writers did not seem to care for a more thorough understanding, a fact which accounts for the lack of rich picturesqueness and feeling in their work.

In the middle of the eighteenth century the attention of England was centered on India by the successes of Clive, and by the expansion of power there both political and commercial. Societies were formed for Bengal and Africa. Ambassadors were sent to the court at Pekin. Then did the Orient seem alive and real to England.

William Beckford's boyhood came at a time when interest in the Orient was keen and vital. He soon learned to love Oriental fiction, which gained a firm grip on his imagination. Its weird fascination seemed to weave a spell of enchantment over him. So deeply engrossed was he, we are told, that Lord Chatham endeavored to prevent his reading these stories, and even had the books removed from his sight, but he managed to glean ideas of Asiatic manners and customs from the travels and voyages he read. His tutor tried to discourage his Oriental studies, but the young boy applied himself diligently to learning the Persian and

1) Zeidler, Beckford, Hope and Morier, p. 1.
Arabian languages in stolen moments. In his letters of travels, much unlike Addison, he was seldom reminded of quotations from Latin authors, but he thought instead of mandarins and porcelain houses. Of the Palace of Cintra he wrote, "The low flat cupola, as well as the intersections of the arches, are much in the style of a mosque; but the barbaric profusion of gold, and still more barbaric paintings -- might almost be supposed the work of Angalese or Hindostanee artists, and reminded me of those subterranean pagodas where his Satanic Majesty receives homage under the form of Gumputy or of Boodh." His "beloved" Venice ever made him think of Eastern ideas and adventures. The palace neighboring St. Marksseemed to him "some vast seraglio full of arabesque saloons, embroidered sofas and voluptuous Circassians." So steeped was he in the spirit and atmosphere of the East that they seemed to be a part of him. He called upon his knowledge to conjure up weird visions, dreams, illusions, and he often received in return a strange conglomeration.

2) Addison, Remarks on Italy. Bohn ed. Preface, v. I, p. 358. "I have taken care particularly to consider the several passages of the ancient poets, which have any relation to the places and curiosities I met with."
4) Dreams, p. 265, or Italy, v. I, p. 293.
"The winds are whispering to me the strangest things in the Universe and my ear is filled with aerial Conversations. What a multitude of voices are borne on that blast from afar! --- I walk to and fro in my Cell and fancy myself in the Caverns of Chehabeddin where every volume contained a spirit. I lay my ear close to them, listen and seem harkening to significant murmurs. The Soul of Plato talks to me from the Leaves, Homer gives responses --- I am awed, I tremble, and await their dictates in respectful silence."

More and more interest did he take in Oriental fiction until he undertook the translation of an Arabian tale, "Al Raoui." The story, although not published until 1799, was translated sixteen years before. In itself it is not very important save as it but confirms his knowledge of the Arabic. It is interesting also to note that the little volume in which it first appeared contained also a German version of the story. If Beckford made the German translation he must have had marked linguistic skill.

1) Melville, Life, p. 75.
Beckford, however, would not be recognized as an orientalist were one to judge merely from his youthful effervescence during his travels, or from his translation. It is as the author of "Vathek, an Arabian Tale" that he is most known to readers to-day. The story of his writing the tale in French, of his entrusting it to his friend, the Rev. Samuel Henley, of Henley's premature translation and publication without ascribing any credit to Beckford is well known. Well known also is Beckford's response, the immediate publication of the tale in the original French. Such topics need not be dwelt upon here.

"Vathek" is in the general plan of composition oriental. Like most Eastern stories, "Arabian Nights", "Persian Tales", "Turkish Tales", and others, it has a framework into which other stories may be fitted. The story as we have it is the frame. There are several places where the story might easily be expanded by the addition of tales. For instance at the palace of the Emir of Fakreddin, a young girl told the sultanatas who accompanied Vathek, "By the light of perfumed lamps your servants will amuse you with tales." Here is clearly an opening. Or again at the

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1) See Melville, Life and Letters, pp. 124-147.
2) Vathek, p.49.
Hall of Eblis where the princes while waiting for the execution of their final punishment agree to relate their adventures. (1)

Beckford intended to add the episodes of Vathek's companions in the Hall of Eblis. He had been working on the episodes for some time, (2) when Henley's astonishing publication caused him to bring forth his French edition also without the episodes. Even so late as 1833, (3) Beckford was considering the publication of these episodes of "Vathek", but he and Bentley, the publisher, could come to no terms of agreement, and so the matter was dropped.

It is difficult to see how the story of "Al Raoui" might have been used as one of the princes' episodes in spite of the claims that have been made for it in that respect. (4) The story is in general of the Pyramus and Thisbe type. A lover and his mistress are separated. Her father has caused her to marry another man, and she is moved away to a beautiful valley. The lover finds out her abode, pitches his tent at some distance from her, and manages to converse with her an hour each evening. On one

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1) Vathek, p. 89.
of her visits to him, she is attacked and devoured by a lion. He finds her bloody garments and dies of grief. The subdued tone of the story is hardly compatible with the general atmosphere of "Vathek"; neither does the ending harmonize with the situation. Besides the story was avowedly told to amuse the Emir of Grand Cairo whose heart was torn with unaccountable sadness. Rogers in his comments to Byron on the episodes which Beckford read to him, suggested an altogether different context for the stories. Beckford, he said, "read me his travels in Portugal, and the stories related in that small chamber in the Palace of Eblis. The last were full of unimaginable horrors."(1) "Beckford read to me the two unprinted episodes of 'Vathek'; and they are extremely fine, but very objectionable on account of their subjects. Indeed they show that the mind of the author was, to a certain degree, diseased. The one is a story of a prince and a princess, a brother and sister --- The other is a tale of a prince who is violently enamoured of a lady; and who, after pursuing her through various countries, at last overtakes her only to find her a corpse."— Recollections

of the Table Talk of Samuel Rogers.\(^1\)

In the consideration of "Vathek" as an oriental tale, two questions must be answered. First, is it a good representation? Second, what did Beckford have on which to build?

That the general form of "Vathek" is characteristic of Eastern stories has already been pointed out. Moreover, the manners and customs of the Orient are aptly portrayed.\(^2\) Here one meets with oriental methods of travel,\(^2\) with a caliph whose commands are enforced at any price,\(^2\) with perfumes, vivid colors, sounds, appeals to the senses. Vathek saluted the moon with an idolatrous air;\(^3\) he consulted the stars for his journey, for he had great faith in them.\(^4\) Here are also the customary genii, wonderful draughts that heal impossible ailments, cabalistic incantations, subterranean regions, magical unreality and the worship of Mahomet. A distinguishing feature of the Eastern method of storytelling is the emphasis on event rather than on character.\(^5\)

\(^{1}\) Works of Lord Byron, Prothero ed. v. IV, p. 209 -- note.
\(^{2}\) Zeidler, Beckford, Hope, etc., p. 21.
\(^{3}\) Vathek, p. 35.
\(^{4}\) Vathek, p. 33.
\(^{5}\) Conant, Oriental Tale in England, p. 69.
strong, and yet some individuality is given. The people are something more than mere wooden pins. Vathek is intensely selfish, haughty, cruel, overbearing and ambitious. He has an exaggerated amount of Beckford's own pride, boundless curiosity, and love of the mysterious. According to Beckford's own account some of the people at Fonthill suggested to him part of the characters in "Vathek".\(^1\) Redding was carried away to such an extent in his admiration that he compared Carathis to Lady Macbeth,\(^2\) but such a comparison is hardly justifiable. It is true both women have intense ambition and determination, but only so far does the comparison hold true. Nouronihar is for the most part a colorless creature. She shows little life in her mimicry of Vathek and her devotion to him. In "Vathek" there is also the wealth of incident and action that is found in "Arabian Nights". The story is composed of a series of episodes, all of which lead to the final damnation. The color and imagery of the descriptions is also oriental. "Vathek" is then a typical Eastern story so far as regards framework, the portrayal of manners and customs, characterization, incident and description.

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On what did Beckford base his story? What models did he use as a guide? Translations of many oriental tales became popular with the introduction of "Arabian Nights" in 1704-12. Beckford may have been familiar with tales of which we know nothing, but it is certain that he was acquainted with "Arabian Nights", "New Arabian Nights", "Mogul Tales", and "the History of Abdalla". He was evidently steeped in these stories. Seemingly from time to time as he wrote, a detail from this story, an incident from that, a description from the other would flash across his mind and be woven into the general narration.

Zeidler has already pointed out some of the similarities between "Vathek" and "Arabian Nights". The use of sleeping powder to make Mouronihar seem dead is paralleled by Zobeide in "Arabian Nights"; the many palaces, beakers, scepters of crystal, the bethrothal of cousins are common in "Arabian Nights". The punishment of Soliman in having his heart turned to crystal is comparable to that of the vizier in "The Story of the vizier that was punished".

"The New Arabian Nights", especially the History of Maugraby, shows several instances of kinship. In both "Vathek" and the History of Maugraby there is a strange

1) Zeidler, p. 26ff.
magician of hideous appearance, (1) who is able to escape bonds, and who early makes a ludicrous sight.

In "Mogul Tales" is found the incident of the flaming hearts. A man wandering along, came to a mountain about which mysterious stories had been told. He saw a light, which on following he discovered came from a flambeau carried by a little man who was entering a subterranean passage. "He beckoned me to follow him, which when I had a little recollected my spirits, I did; we went down together for some time into the mountain; at least we traversed a long alley of black marble, but so finely polished that it had the appearance of a looking glass; having passed this in the space of a quarter of an hour we reached a large hall, where we found three men standing mute and in posture of sorrow.

"The little man whom I had followed had not hitherto broke silence, but now bid me sit down by those three persons, I heard him with surprise, but obeyed him. I wish, said I to one of them, that this peace may continue always among you. --- Peace is banished from these sad places, replied the eldest of the three, with an air of sternness. --- If peace be not here, answered I affrighted, what are you, and what do you here? --- We wait, said the second, in this

sepulchre, for the just judgment of God. -- You are then, continued I, great sinners. -- Alas! cried the third, we are continually tortured for the evil action we have done, see what a wretched state we are in; then they unbuttoned their waistcoats, and through their skin, which appeared like crystal, I saw their hearts compassed with fire, by which though they were burnt without ceasing, yet they were never consumed; I then was at no loss for the reason of their looking so ghastly and affrighted; and for all those signs of agony which were painted in their faces: it was impossible for me to look on these miserably tormented men without compassion, the man who had conducted me thither perceived it. You see, said he, their punishment, but you do not know their crimes; draw that curtain and you may satisfy your curiosity."(1

Analyzing the sublimity of the scene in the Hall of Eblis is but chasing a gorgeous butterfly, catching it, tearing it to pieces, and leaving but powder and wings for the pains. Grandeur is the effect which Beckford superimposed on his model. He used the subterranean passage, the long alley of finely polished marble to which he added some of the aspects of Fonthill. He increased the three

1) Tales of the East. Mogul Tales. v. 3, p. 58.
mute persons to a countless surging multitude, and left the small number to await in fearful anticipation their horrible fate. In "Vathek" the oncoming doom approaches but slowly, and the clap comes swift and sudden. There is no explaining away, no understanding of the difficulties; that is all left to the imagination. Moreover in "Vathek" the sinners freely confess their crimes, which are not impassively revealed in a book with gold clasps.

Another detail in "Vathek" which has occasioned a good deal of comment is the caliph's eye, which was so terrible "that no person could bear to behold it, and the wretch upon whom it was fixed instantly fell backwards, and sometimes expired."(1) Such an eye was by no means uncommon in oriental tales. Count Hamilton in Fleur d'Epine depicts a princess whose "eyes are so brilliant that men die from her glance as if struck by lightning, and the artist who painted her picture had to wear smoked glasses."(2) The bleared eye of Maugraby was so infectious it tainted whatever it looked upon.(3) The Princess Louchine, in the History of Louchine and the three humpback

1) Vathek, p. 3.
3) Tales of the East. (Maugraby) v. 2, p. 219.
princes "though she was not in other respects deficient in charm; she had the misfortune to squint; this was occasioned by her having been obliged to look aside in order to bear the presence of her father, who made all the children of the isle fly from him, by the terror which his looks inspired."(1)

Perhaps the most general source of the incidents in "VathecK" is the "History of Abdalla, Son of Hanif." There is the incident of the magician's being kicked about; there too are the public criers. The greatest likeness, however, is to be found in the Dilsenquin story.(2) In the first place, both Dilsenquin and VathecK were urged on by boundless curiosity and vivacity. Both were taught magic by their mothers. (Dilsenquin loved cemeteries, mummies, etc., as did Carathis.) Both were consecrated to Eblis. The Persian tale gives more attention to the mischief Dilsenquin accomplished after he was in the subterranean region; while "VathecK" deals at length with the mere arrival. The incidents in the Dilsenquin story which are paralleled in "VathecK" are the descent to Eblis and the sacrifice to demons of those who offered aid. Dilsenquin

1) Tales of East (Abdalla) v. 3, p. 720.
2) Tales of East (Abdalla) v. 3, p. 636.
3) Tales of East, v. 3, p. 661.
had resolved on revenge because Perefine would not love him. He ran to the ruins of an old tower, dug until he forced an entrance into a subterranean department, and disappeared therein. His father offered a reward to anyone who would follow him, and discover what had become of him. Several people volunteered, but the first four who descended were brought up lifeless, and no one after that would descend. Dilsenquin, after having leaped into the hole, was plunged into a puddle, and saw a phantom with bloody hands and a "most ferocious countenance", who demanded a sacrifice. Dilsenquin thereupon strangled the men who descended to help him, and the phantom was satisfied. Carathis when shut up in her tower performing orisons, seized upon the men who came to help put out the raging fire, caused them to be strangled and burnt. Then did sweet smelling incense arise, and the scroll of instructions for Vathek appeared.

Despite the fact that Beckford readapted incidents and details from many other books, the story of "Vathek" remains distinctly his own. This is partly due to the style. Some of the vivid passages of airy fancy such as fill "Dreams, Waking Thoughts and Incidents" are lacking,

1) Vathek, p. 29.
but in their place are passages of grandeur and sustained imagination. Bold strokes of humor, sometimes cynical, such as appeared faintly in "Biographical Memoirs" flash out suddenly; but the book as a whole is far from humorous. Flippant, fantastic, mocking passages often lighten the horror and the crime. Sometimes there is a lyrical note, especially in descriptions, and then so lightly does Beckford dip with the pencil that the words seem almost to sing. The descriptions of sights and sounds are vivid. Clear, forceful, graphic is the style, because of the simplicity of the language, a simplicity which remains in spite of the many Eastern terms.

"Vathek" is a book which has few, if any, companions in English. It is related in part to the feeble attempts at orientalizing which preceded it, but it is more alive than any of them. The imagination is striking. Some way Beckford succeeded in catching the oriental spirit, the oriental atmosphere. This in part is brought about by the use of terms, but it is brought about more by an indescribable general air. Byron's praise has been quoted often. "For correctness of costume, beauty of description, and power of imagination," he wrote in one of his diaries, "'Vathek' far surpasses all European imitations; and bears such marks of originality that those
who have visited the East will find some difficulty in believing it to be a translation. As an Eastern tale, even 'Rasselas' must bow before it: his 'Happy Valley' will not bear a comparison with the Hall of Eblis."

J. E. Reade\(^{(2)}\) compared the grandeur of "Vathek" with Milton's sublimity, but such praise it seems is too extravagant. As for its place in the history of literature, Miss Conant calls it the last notable oriental tale of the century, and says it foreshadowed the coming work of scholars and poets;\(^{(3)}\) while Vaughn claims that the romantic novel first took shape in the period 1775-1805, and that Beckford's novel was the first romantic novel.\(^{(4)}\)

\(^{(3)}\) Conant, Oriental Tale in England. Intro. p. XVII.
\(^{(4)}\) Vaughn, Romantic Revolt, p. 99 and 111.
IV
GERMAN INFLUENCE

With the first half of the eighteenth century England came to have increasing influence on German literature. "Robinson Crusoe", which was translated into German in 1720, only a year after its publication in England immediately became so popular that it ran through five editions in one year.\(^1\) Bodmer in 1721 founded a literary school at Zürich, which published a journal called "Discoveries of the Painters," in imitation of the Spectator. The Tatler, the Spectator, the Guardian all had a numerous progeny. Milton, too, became popular with the Germans. In 1732 appeared a prose translation of "Paradise Lost" and also Gottsched's "Cato". In 1740 Brockes defended Milton in "A Critical Disquisition of the Wonderful in Poetry," and in the same year translated both Pope's "Essay on Man" and Thomson's "Seasons." So it was that England's influence in Germany kept growing and increasing during the first half of the eighteenth century.

\(^1\) Thomas, History of German Literature, p. 212.
It was not, however, until the second half of the century that German literature came to have any interest for the English people. Lord Chesterfield said he did not know whether the German language contained any classics, and he did not care to find out. He but voices the general sentiment of his time. Herzfeld has outlined in part some of the early English translations from the German, such as the first feeble attempts at Gellert's "Countess of Guildenstern,"(2) Klopstock's "Messiah,"(3) the more successful translations from Gessner,(4) the popularity of Wieland,(5) the slight influence of Lessing,(6) and the reception of Goethe's "Werther."(7) All of these works had been translated before the last decade of the century. All the translations left much to be hoped for, but they were significant of a growing influence which Germany was to repay to England.

England of the early part of the century had been tied down by a narrow outlook on life. Both England and Germany had been held under the French influence of rules, of rationalism, and finally both sought for a change.

2) Herzfeld, Wm. Taylor von Norwich, p. 3
3) " " " " " " p. 5
4) " " " " " " p. 6
5) " " " " " " p. 9
6) " " " " " " p. 8
7) " " " " " " p. 11
"The age was tired of polish, of wit, of over-civilization; it was groping toward the rude, the primitive, the heroic; had begun to steep itself in melancholy sentiment, and to feel a dawning admiration of mountain solitudes, the hoary past. Suddenly here was what it had been waiting for -- 'a tale of the times of old.' These two notions found a kinship of interests in fairy lore and popular superstitions, in tales of the times of yore. Germany by periodical spurts had managed to keep alive folk literature, the drama, the song, the tale. Men like Gellert, Bürger and Herder gave fresh impetus to the feeling. In England such an interest had also been aroused by Ossian and Percy's "Reliques". Gray, too, had been delving around in the sagas of the Norseland and Wales. With a re-bound from the narrow confines of rationalism, people eagerly seized upon the strange and terrible, the supernatural and the wonderful. All sorts of stories were published, romantic and oriental tales, fables in prose and fables in verse.

William Beckford shows a combination of these two interests, the German influence and the folk tale influence.

1) Beers, English Romanticism in 18th Century, p. 327.
Most, if not all, of the discussions which center about Beckford elaborate on "Vathek", mention "European Travels" and "Biographical Memoirs", allude to "Azemia", suggest the possibility of there being such a book as the "Elegant Enthusiast", and absolutely ignore the existence of "Popular Tales of the Germans, translated from the German".

This little known book was published in two volumes in 1791, at a time when, as has been pointed out, the English interest in German literature was gradually increasing. It contains an introduction called A Dialogue consisting chiefly of Soliloquies and five tales: Richilde, or The Progress from Vanity to Vice; The Chronicles of the Three Sisters; The Stealing of the Veil, or, The Tale a la Mongolfier; Elfin Freaks, or The Seven Legends of Number Nip; and The Nymph of the Fountain.

One of the most interesting parts of the Tales is the introduction which is original with Beckford. Perhaps, since the book is not well known, it will not be

amiss here to quote:

A Dialogue
consisting chiefly of
Soliloquies.

Reviewer.
Where, friend, in the name of nonsense, did you rake all this rubbish together?

Publisher.
"Alas, poor Semele! the Thunderer's blaze was too much for thee!' -- Mercy, good Sir: have some consideration of these poor shattered nerves. Relax the dignified severity of that stern brow a few folds, and let those oracular lips forbear to pout such cutting contempt. I feel every bud of hope in my bosom nipped by the frost of disdain. -- But, between friends, suppose you unmask for a moment, and descend from your monthly stilts, that we may have a little confidential chat. We booksellers and you critics are, you know, to one another, alternately patrons and proteges. A good understanding may be

serviceable on both sides. As to the author of these tales, I did indeed make a slight enquiry concerning him; and was told, if I recollect right, that his bones were mouldering in the churchyard at Weimar, or a place with some such barbarous name. His spirit, for aught I know or care, may be freezing in Saturn or frying in Mercury: or, perhaps, the German is basking in the Elysian fields along side of the Grecian Musaeus, encircled by a ring of baby ghosts crowding to hear his Lilliputian tales. But, whether alive or dead, a foreigner is never likely to come under articles with me; so I pay little regard to his birth, either in this or the other world, these being matters quite out of my line. What is to our present purpose is simply this: -- The Translator came and laid his bundle at my door; I was tempted to take the foundling, and bestow upon it a decent dress -- which was certainly not cut out for a shroud. As my gentleman went off, he said: 'I shall lie for the present under a total eclipse. Should the Reviewing Pack give their tongues merrily, and the public heartily join in the cry, I shall emerge, like Madam Luna, at the hooping and hallooing of the cannibals, from the jaws of the great dragon, and I may possibly be visible with another bantling or two of the same breed in my arms.'
Under such a total eclipse has he remained even to this day. He must be still shut up in the dragon's mouth.

In this Dialogue is evident a reappearance of the same vein of satiric humor which had brought forth "Biographical Memoirs", and which was to come to light later in "Azemia" and "The Elegant Enthusiast". Two things are noticeable in this introduction; 1) the baffling mystery which is made to surround the real author of the tales, and 2) the satire on the publishers and reviewers of the time.

One is at first almost tempted to believe that the Tales may not be translations at all, but might have been original with Beckford, for they contain many stray threads and incidents akin to the oriental tales with which Beckford was familiar; and then, too, he offers sly suggestions that they may be original. The Reviewer said of them, "We have not been able to discover whether this collection of puerilities is of our own, or, as is pretended of foreign growth." (1) "We suspect, however, that in this instance the author, if there be really more than one person concerned, has suffered from the negligence or unskillfulness of the translator." (2) The Publisher later added, "And for my part I engage, if I can once lay
hold of the translator, to extort from him a full account of their origin."(3) Fortunately the Publisher unguardedly let slip a clue when he spoke of the German basking in the Elysian fields beside the Grecian Musaeus.(4) Musaeus it proves is the author of the tales Beckford translated.

A second point of interest in the introduction to "Popular Tales" is the satire on the publishers and reviewers of the time. In the first place the league between bookseller and critic is pointed out. If a publisher brought out a book at the request of the author, all was well and good; the critic might judge it as he saw fit. But if the publisher stood sponsor for the book, then should the critic deal gently with it. In the second place Beckford pointed out in satirical form the lack of justice back of most of the critical reports. If the book reviewer were a personal friend of the author, then he would give the book a puff; but if, on the other hand, he bore some petty grudge, he would permit it to

2) Popular Tales, v. I, p. x.
bias his critical judgment.\(^1\) He laughed at the reviewers' pompous dictatorship which would brook no contradiction, in which they so cavalierly garble, misrepresent, and confute the remonstrances of the damned,\(^2\) when it did not prove better to ignore them altogether.

The decision which the reviewer first passed upon the "Popular Tales" was crabbed and dogmatic. It almost settled the matter at the very outset. "Wherever it (the collection of tales) was found it would have been far more advisable to leave it in its original obscurity than to expose its absurdities thus naked to public form."\(^3\) The chiefest charge the reviewer brought against the book was its use of "profane allusions". "Whenever the author, whose range of information seems unusually narrow, is at a loss for a metaphor or an allusion, he has recourse to his Bible."\(^4\) Finally the critic in order to make it appear that he knew his trade well, turned to sweeping generalities. Neglecting the fact that these are folk tales, a type to themselves, he said that the

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1) Popular Tales, Intro., p. iii.
2) Popular Tales, Intro., p. iii.
3) Popular Tales, Intro., p. iv.
4) Popular Tales, Intro., p. viii.
author had failed to use his material well, that he had not interested the reader in the fortunes of any of the characters, nor had he given his people decision of character. Sounding stock comparisons then rolled from the reviewer's lips. The Legend of Number Nip was like the Tempest or Midsummer Night's Dream, only it was not like either; for Number Nip himself lacked "the airy lightness of Ariel"(1 and had not the"entertaining half malicious archness of Puck."(1 In the end, what good does the critic's report do? The Publisher solves the difficulty by pointing out the fact that when the reviewers prove hostile, an appeal to public candor stills remains as a standby.

Some may doubt that Beckford was familiar enough with the German language to make a skillful translation, and it may seem that there are grounds for the doubt. German was only beginning to be considered a literary language. There is no evidence in Beckford's biographies nor in his writings that he had any special fondness for German, nor that he stayed in Germany for any length of time. In his early travels he seemed to

1) Popular Tales, Intro., p. viii.
consider it but a country through which he must hurry in order to get to his beloved, classic Italy. Could this story have come to Beckford through a French medium? That he was an adept in French is shown by "Vathek". Unfortunately for such a theory the "Volksmärchen der Deutschen" of Musaeus were not translated into French until 1844. Then to Beckford must be given the credit not only for writing England's best original, oriental tale in French, but also for being one of the early translators of German literature.

One is led to wonder why Beckford chose Musaeus' Tales. There had been other tales written which were better than his. Zacharia, Bürger, Wieland, Vosz and others had already led the way in readapting folk tales. Similar stories were popular in France. Musaeus, out of fairy stories and sagas, myths and tales from foreign lands, and local stories, created his Volksmärchen. Into these he wove historical persons and events, and yet

2) See Musäus in Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie.
retained the poetical tone of the Märchen. A summary of one of the tales may in part reveal the general nature.

Once upon a time there was a baron who had three daughters. He lived in splendor until his money was all gone. Then one day as he wandering listlessly on the edge of a forest, a terrible bear shambled up to him and was ready to devour him. The poor, old baron begged mercy, and finally forfeited his oldest daughter, Wulfilda, to become the wife of the bear, and so he rescued his life. The bear agreed to come to ransom his wife on the seventh day. On the seventh day a handsome knight came and carried off Wulfida, and left a hundred pounds weight of gold behind. The baron soon ceased grieving, and lived again in splendor until his money was again all gone.

When he was wandering along in the forest, a huge eagle swooped down upon him. The baron gave his second daughter to the eagle to be called for in seven weeks. At the end of the seventh week a richly dressed knight appeared and carried away the second daughter, leaving a large ransom behind. The third daughter was sacrificed in a similar manner to a whale. When his last daughter was gone, the old man dealt frugally with his money.
Finally his young son, who was born after the sisters were stolen, grew to manhood. He broke the enchantment which kept the bear a bear for six days in the week, and allowed him to be his natural self, a prince on the seventh; which made the eagle an eagle six weeks and a prince the seventh; which confined a prince in the form of a whale for six months and allowed him to be a prince but one. Happiness and restoration of prosperity to all closes the story.

Into the mouth of the Reviewer Beckford put a criticism of his method of translation. The Reviewer felt that there were throughout the tales some few "glimmerings which might have been easily improved into bright coruscations of wit. 'We suspect', he added, 'that in this instance the author .... has suffered from the negligence or unskillfulness of the translator, who appears sometimes to suppress local allusions, and sometimes to substitute ideas or terms more familiar to the English reader.' "(2) Beckford did not follow slavishly the exact

2) Popular Tales, Intro., p. x.
literal translation of the text before him. He made some few changes, but he is for the most part accurate and retains the spirit of the whole. One can perhaps best judge of his method by comparing a passage from the original with his translation.

Richilda had a magic mirror of which she was permitted to ask three questions.

"Eine Frage hatte sie noch nicht erlaubt, entweder weil ihr zur Zeit noch kein kritischer Umstand vorgekommen war, der eines Rathgebers bedurft hätte, oder weil sie zu scheu war und befürchtete, ihre Frage möchte vorwitzig und unbesonnen sein, und der blanke Spiegeldürfe darüber erblinden. Unterdessen machte die Stimme der Schmeichelei ihre Eitelkeit immer mehr rege und erzeugte in ihrem Herzen den Wunsch, das in der That zu sein, was das Gerucht tagtäglich ihr in die Ohren gelte; denn sie besasst die so seltene Klugheit der Groszen, in die Sprache ihrer Höflinge eine gerechtes Misztrauen zu setzen. Einem aufblühenden Mädchen, wesz Standes und Würden sie sei, ist die Frage über ihrer Wohl-oder Miszgestalt ein so wichtiges Problem als einem orthodoxen Kirchenlehrer die Frage über die vier letzten Dinge. Daher war eben
nicht zu verwundern dass die schöne Richilde Lehr' und Unterricht begehrte über eine Materie, die ihrer Wiszbegierde so interessant war; und von wem konnte sie hierüber sichere und ungezweifeltere Auskunft erwarten als von ihrem unbestechlichen Freund, dem Spiegel? Nach einiger Ueberlegung fand sie die Aufrage so gerecht und billig dass sie kein Bedenken trug, solche an die Behörde gelangen zu lassen. Sie verschlosz sich also eines Tages in ihr Gemach, trat vor den magischen Spiegel und hob ihren Spruch an:

Spiegel blink, Spiegel blank,
Goldner Spiegel an der Wand,
Zeig' mir an die schönste Dirn in Brabant.

"She had not as yet allowed herself a single question, either because no critical situation had yet called for the voice of an adviser, or because she was timid and apprehended lest her demand might be forward and inconsiderate, and the bright face of the mirror might grow dim. Meantime the voice of flattery continued to nourish her vanity, and at last produced in her heart the desire to know whether what rumor so loudly tinkled every day in her ear was fact; for she possessed what is uncommon in the great, penetration enough to consider the language

of her attendants with proper distrust. To a girl in the bloom of youth, of whatever rank or station, the question concerning her personal charms is always the most important problem that she can wish to have solved. It was then by no means strange that the fair Richilda should desire information on a point so interesting to her curiosity; and of whom could she expect a more certain and definite answer, than from her uncorruptible friend, the mirror? On little consideration she found the question so just and reasonable, that she had no longer hesitation in making the trial. She shut herself up accordingly one day in her apartment, stepped close to the magic mirror, and pronounced the proper words:

'Mirror, let thy burnished face
Give me instant here to trace
The fairest maid of Brabant's race.' 

"Popular Tales of the Germans" is then a book which in itself is important: 1) because it illustrates the interest of the time in folk tales; 2) because it illustrates the increasing influence of German literature in England.

With the appearance of Richardson's 'Pamela' in 1740, the English novel, which had gradually been gathering accretions out of mediaeval romances, picaresque tales, Italian novella and character sketches, took definite shape. Side by side there have always been writers who have taken their attainments seriously and others who have made sport of that which the first have accomplished. Thus in the trail of 'Pamela' followed Fielding's 'Joseph Andrews'. In a short time Richardson's efforts brought in their wake a school of "sentimental" novels, of which Mackenzie's 'The Man of Feeling' is perhaps the most thoroughly representative. As the tide rises high and then is checked in its progress, so the sentimental novel as it tended to become too affectedly tender was checked by the burlesque. The novel of manners also, which rapidly developed, became more and more a social satire; while the novel of purpose frequently made sport of existing conditions. Toward the end of the century this feeling of revolt at excesses came to be more and
more marked. Not only had the heart strings of men and women in novels been strained to the breaking point by woeful disasters, the singing of a nonsensically plaintive ditty, for instance, but the emotions of real men and women in real life had been cruelly tested. The French Revolution, the protracted war had revealed the bitterest suffering. There grew up a feeling of Toryism, of restraint at the overabundance of romanticism, of sentiment, not only in politics but also in literature. Jane Austen's "Sense and Sensibility" and "Northanger Abbey" written just at the close of the century although not published until later reveal clearly this spirit.

In 1796 and 1797 William Beckford published two little books which show this reactionary feeling. Little attention has been paid to these later efforts of Beckford either in regard to their general relation to the period, or to any individual merit which they may possess. Melville, indeed, mentions the fact that Beckford wrote and published in 1796 "The Elegant Enthusiast", and in 1797, "Azemia". "It seems likely", he goes on to add, "that the novels his 'sister', Mrs. Hervey wrote, suggested to him these burlesques. . . . . It is supposed that the principal heroine of 'Azemia' was intended for
Mrs. Hervey; and Thomas Moore relates in his Journals how that lady 'read those parodies on herself quite innocently, and only now and then suspecting that they were meant to laugh at her, saying: "Why, I vow and protest, here is my grotto", etc, etc.' These burlesques, which are a reversion to the style of "Biographical Memoirs of Extraordinary Painters" are good fooling; but to-day their appeal is, of course, only to those readers acquainted with the novels of indifferent writers who flourished at the end of the eighteenth century."

Redding suggested that "it is not possible for the generality of readers to comprehend the ridicule and sarcasm conveyed in the foregoing works, without perusing with attention beforehand one or two of the productions of the ruling taste of their departed era. Many who read them now would think them very flat and unmeaning when they are really admirable. They are hardly, it is true, broad enough for the multitude".

In such a manner they have usually been dismissed.

"The Elegant Enthusiast" was published in 1796. The title page suffices to give the general atmosphere.

The printer, it seems, must have used every size and kind of type available on this one page.

Modern Novel Writing, or the Elegant Enthusiast; and Interesting Emotions of Arabella Bloomville. A Rhapsodical Romance; interspersed with Poetry. In Two Volumes.

Vol. I.

By the Right Hon. Lady Harriet Marlow.

I nod in company, I wake at night, Fools rush into my head, and so I write.

Pope.
The book as a whole stands as a matchless piece of incoherence. It involuntarily brings with it a sense of confusion at any attempt at treatment. The structure is bewitchingly lax. On almost every page a new character is introduced in a casual manner; he bows and departs, never to be heard of more. Another character appears, bows, and is left standing with hat in hand. Thus the gentle reader leaves him, pursues the varying adventures of twenty or thirty other characters through a hundred pages, and finally returns in time to see the gentleman placing his hat on his head to depart.

Most harrowing adventures take place, but nothing ever happens. There is little if any regular plot development. All that can be safely asserted is that Arabella Bloomville loves (Vol. I, ch. 1) and is loved by (Vol. I, ch. 3) Henry Lambert who is away at war. They meet once, Henry decides Arabella does not love him and departs in haste (Vol. I, ch. 16). Arabella (Vol. II, ch. 16) who has "got a violent swelled face, by sitting out all night to listen to the mournful song of the nightingale, whose gentle warblings were echoed from grove to grove, and sweetly floated on the balmy zephyr to soothe her ravished ear", suddenly starts from the bank of violets
on which she is reposing, and exclaims, "'O, Heavens! was that a spirit passed me?" Thereupon Henry rushes forward, seizes the enchanting Arabella by the hair and says; "'O matchless effervescence of human happiness, divine empress of my soul, I have languished for ages to behold thee, I have been burnt up and consumed by the unquenchable fire of exhaustless passion. Every moment that passed, seemed to me the duration of a century. The sports of the field were vain in thy absence. I seemed like a forsaken doe on the banks of the Tigris. The golden glory of the sun when darting his meridian splendor on the sycamore shade, had no solace for my distracted heart ... .

O Queen of all my wishes, O incomparable Arabella ... . wilt thou be mine, wilt thou bless thy Henry by accepting his proffered hand? ... ." To this rhapsody Arabella replies, having eaten up all her turnips, "'To be the object of the adoration of such a mind as thine is, my Henry, of itself sufficient to raise the most humble to the pinnacle of human greatness'. The tone of thy melodious voice falls on my nerves, like the calm operation of opium on the wretch in pain. Sweet Henry, pretty youth, fine gentleman! - I will, I will be thy wife immediately - let no time intervene till we are One." They are
married in the next chapter.

Whenever the story seems to begin to be fairly connected, it becomes necessary "to drop the veil of oblivion on so deeply interesting a contemplation"(1 and to begin a fresh chapter. References are made to occurrences which never take place, and no explanation is given. A broken thread of mystery appears and disappears from time to time; now a bear, now a ghost, a duel or an intrigue. The narration halts for a word of moralizing. There is no restriction, no limitation. Politics and ethics may be likewise included. There is in point of fact ample room for the discussion of any of the important questions of the day. The manipulation of character and events is skillfully, nonchalantly left to chance. Events take place with little respect to the characters who are to take part.

The characters are by no means real people. They are not even moral abstractions governed by humors. As many as fifty different people appear in forty pages. Some are from high life, some from low, but their station makes no difference. They pass without speaking. Others

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exude in outbursts of conversation which might readily flow from almost anyone else. Would you know Arabella Bloomville? She is a maiden, young and fair. "Seventeen summers only have bleached her snowy bosom." "Her dear and valuable parents are in the grave, alas!'" Only they are not. Day by day does this lovely girl, pensive and matchless, sit by the window holding "her blushing cheek" in her "lily hand", indulging her tender grief and softly answering "with her sighs to the pathetic melody of the feathered songstress". (1)

The style has much the same interesting indefiniteness as does the structure. Lady Marlow in the dedication explained her object. "I have endeavoured", she wrote, "to unite correct, delicate, and vivid imagery to an animated moral sensibility, and at the same time to enrich it by various incident, lively sallies, fashionable intrigues, picturesque description, and infine, to mark it with the striking features of a bold originality, without which no daughter of the Muses can ever expect to produce that phoenix of literary zoology -- a perfect novel". (2)

Striking originality most certainly has been obtained.

1) Elegant Enthusiast, v. I, p. 2,3
The diction is refined and clarified in a surprisingly "elegant" way. The Enthusiast waxes grandiloquent over scenes of nature. "This castle was situated on a rising eminence, with a beautiful command of the adjacent prospect, where verdant meadows and fallow lands, upon either bank of a rapid navigable river, delighted the roving eye. Cattle of every kind there cropped their green delicious banquet, and there the placid sheep by their innocent bleatings gently aroused the plaintive echoes of the circumambient groves." Unity and coherence in sentence or paragraph are, it seems, to be studiously avoided. "Henry (during his wedding ceremony) looked grave, at times, and a silent tear stole down his cheek not entirely unobserved, for a farmer's man stept up to him, and in a whisper informed him that he had found a hare sitting, this a good deal disconcerted the Doctor, who shook his wig with disdain, and eagerly enquired, if there was any extraordinary news from the Continent." To add to the beauty of the whole there are frequently interspersed, grave and lively, sonnets, odes, acrostics, and songs.

The question naturally arises what did Beckford

1) Elegant Enthusiast, v. I, p. 62
mean by this rollicking satire. That he had many of the different tricks in the technique of novel writing clearly in mind is evident. He combined the novel of manners and of purpose, and the sentimental novel in a grand jumble. He gave to an already formless structure a little more confusion than was customary, and thereby showed onto what dangerous shoals the novel was drifting. He did not utilize many more people than did other minor writers of the time. Nor did he desert his characters in any more ridiculous situations than had Sterne; he only left them pausing awkwardly oftener and for a longer time than did other writers.

In his airy flights of language his diction is not more exalted than was frequently to be found. If the books which he knew were accessible it might not be difficult to find exact parallels and transcripts of various passages. At the close of "The Elegant Enthusiast" he causes Lady Marlow to say in An Humble Address to the Doers of that Excellent and Impartial Review, called the British Critic: "If it should appear that I have occasionally borrowed a sentence or a thought from some of our most admired modern writers, I trust you will graciously forgive so venial an offense, as I am ready to affirm that any
passages I may thus have selected, and transplanted, which shew to disadvantage in their new situations, were not inserted with a design of depreciating their excellence, but merely to display that happy intricacy of style and sentiment, without which no novel can have a just claim to your notice and approbation. With all humility, therefore, I am free to assert, that some of those extracts which unfortunately in my little work may seem ludicrous and absurd, possess great beauty and propriety as connected with their original combinations. If you should suppose that I have wished to excite a laugh at the expense of their respective authors your high and mightinesses are mistaken, my sole intention having been by a happy mixture of discordant parts, to produce a pleasing regularity, with a lively and captivating variety."

(1) But what is this disavowal save shrewd and keen satire?

One of these "most admired modern authors" from whom ideas without question marks were obtained is Mrs. Mary Robinson. "Vancenza, or the Danger of Credulity" served as a fit laughing stock for Beckford and offered him many choice selections. Thus for instance, in "The Elegant Enthusiast" there is a chapter called "Description

1) Elegant Enthusiast, v. II, p. 222-3
of a Beauty". The "beauty", Arabella, offers all the extravagances one might expect in a burlesque, but the chapter as it stands is taken as a direct quotation from "Vancenza". Again, Amelia offers an extravagant eulogy on love which is also but a transcript from "Vancenza". This is but one of the methods Beckford used to gain humor.

Humor is also secured by incongruity in choice of details. A supposedly dignified chapter is brought to a close in the following way. "The virtuous and much injured Amelia having brought her forlorn history to a conclusion began to weep, and the susceptible Arabella hastened to pour a healing balm into her recent wounds, then kindly led her to her chamber, and wishing her a goodnight, retired herself also to enjoy the refreshing slumbers of innocence. At the same time Margaret Grimes ascended to her little garret, and the cat slept in the kitchen."

Into this volume, "The Elegant Enthusiast", are brought not only one or two, but almost all the typical situations and adventures to be found in the novels of the time. With such unexpected suddenness do they appear

1) See Appendix.
that the reader cannot connect them with anything that precedes, or anything that follows. Now it is a meeting with a bear, now a duel, now an abduction, now a ghost, a masquerade, a polite circle, "phrenzy, despair, and death", a wedding, a murder, an intrigue, "a critical moment".

Sterne it has been said wrote a sentence, called it a chapter, and started over again. Beckford followed his example. In spite of the ridicule of the strawberry type of recognition in Fielding's "Joseph Andrews", mysterious orphans continued to be identified in that distinguishing manner. Beckford also directed raillery against it.

The Countess of Somebody, reviving, fixed her eyes mournfully on Arabella, and asked her to take off her glove. "'It is,--it is my Arabella!' said she with a strong emotion; 'I have indeed found my long lost child; that strawberry on her arm confirms the decision.'"(1

For seven minutes and a half neither was able to speak.

Mawkish sentimentality such as was common in many novels fills the pages. Lurid drops quiver on eyelids. Charming cheeks are bathed in tears; liquid sorrow flows apace; eyes are of expressive languor.

But "Azemia" is more of the so called sentimental novel than "The Elegant Enthusiast".


"Fair views and beauteous prospects, I invent,
Pines, poplars, ruins, rocks, and sentiment;
Fond lovers sigh beneath my vines and larches,
White ghosts glide grimly grave through glimmering arches".

"Azemia" appears as a companion piece to "The Elegant Enthusiast". It is, in my opinion, the better piece of workmanship. In the early travesty, Beckford went to extremes in his raillery. His rollicking frolic as such is enjoyable, but Azemia offers a subtler, more sustained sort of parody. Here most of the underbrush of chaotic confusion has been cleared away, and the only obstacles are the rambling, winding paths of digressions that loiter along. The story is however more definite, more a whole than the earlier burlesque.

Azemia, a Turkish girl is on board a French
trading ship which is seized by an English commander. She is taken to England by the Commander whose actions are rather questionable. Charles Arnold, a midshipman, sees her, loves her, declares his love, although she knows scarcely a word of English, and he not a word of her language. Azemia, arrived in England, undergoes a series of varying misfortunes. She is shifted about from person to person, all of whom gain advantage from her. Finally a motherly hearted woman, Mrs. Blandford, teaches her English, introduces her into society, and gives her a pleasant home life. During Mrs. Blandford's absence one day, Azemia is stolen by a duke, and is carried away to one of his estates. At length she escapes, is marvelously rescued by Charles Arnold, and is restored to Mrs. Blandford. Arnold's uncle makes him a present of fifteen hundred pounds, Mrs. Blandford gives Azemia four thousand pounds, and Charles and Azemia are married.

The general plan of the novel is typical of the times. It was a favorite trick of the novelist to have an unsophisticated foreigner comment on English institutions and manners. Thus in Mrs. Inchbald's "Nature and Art", the little boy from a desert island persists in calling
battles massacres and compliments lies. Miss Jenks informs the reader that "as the heroine is a Turkish girl, she has never been spoiled by modern education."(1) Azemia is characterized by a childlike simplicity, so that she finds amusement in the flowers and birds about her. When asked if she did not like England a great deal better than her own country she replied no, that she disliked it very much, "for the women here did nothing but find fault with one another, and tear each other's character to pieces; whereas in my native country, they desired only to amuse each other and were happy to sit and embroider, or sing together."(2) Masquerades had no attractions for her. "'It is', said she in her broken English,'such a melancholy sight to see such a number of people making simpletons of themselves by way of trying at something extraordinary, which, after all, seems to amuse none of them. I could not help being quite sorry to look at some of them dressed up so little like reasonable beings, and squeaking nonsense, with such deformed masks on, that they seemed to try both in their minds and persons to libel human nature.'"(3)

The plot has a fairly regular development although it pauses for informal chats, digressions on patriotism, novel writing, and "an episode, which has as much to do with the principal action as episodes generally have." This episode, one of the most entertaining and well written parts of the book, is a little novel unto itself. It is clear cut. The characters although not fully developed are boldly sketched. A friend of Mrs. Blandford sent her a letter containing the story of "Another Bluebeard". Mr. Grimshaw was a brute. He had money and rank, but that was all. His first wife, Gertrude, was so reduced by ill usage that he dared not let her be seen by her relatives and said she was dead long before she was. He married a second time, and kept his wife in a prison as it were. Her sufferings were horrible. Gertrude's ghost and the ghost of her murdered brother finally opened a way of escape for Eleanor. Every incident, every detail in the episode is made to count. The characters, especially Mr. and Mrs. Wapping seem natural people. Conversation is suited to character; while character and event are interrelated in a way not found in the general story of "Azemia".

The author feels on friendly terms with the reader.
The history can easily pause for a while, as did Fielding's, for friendly confidential chats concerning the author's aims and accomplishments. Readers of Richardson, it is said, were wont to threaten him with lively sallies on account of the fate he reserved for some of his characters, or because of the sentiments others expressed. Miss Jenks foresees that such attacks are in store for her also, and forestalls the criticism. "Now am I well aware, that many of my female readers will abuse me, and cry out,--'Bless us, Oh! Lord! Lord! here is our friend Miss Jacquette A. M. Jenks writing about sailors and bumboat women! -- people of whom that have lived among us, as she has done, can know nothing in the world." (1)

Again she implores the sagacious reader not to close the book in dismay, and consider remarks Azemia made as not in character with a girl of seventeen, but to remember that the heroine of a novel has unlimited privileges. (2)

Because she desires to stay on friendly terms with the reader as she nears the close, she hastens on, so she says, that she may not take undue advantage of the reader's impatience. (3)

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In one of the digressions she treats of her opinion of novels, an opinion which in the end proves to be not hers at all, but an acceptance of rules already laid down. Her characters are to be neither saints nor demons. She is to avoid all inflammable questions, such as politics, negroes, slavery, or even nobility. In return she is to be allowed a little pretty scenery, a ghost or two, if they are proved not to be ghosts, and some banditti to arouse excitement.¹

Many of the stock situations such as were used in "The Elegant Enthusiast" appear also in "Azemia", but the satire is more skillfully worked out. In "Azemia" the beauties of the masquerade are dwelt on at length -- details of dress are elaborated. Several ghosts appear surrounded in a deeper spirit of mystery than in the earlier work. Boards creak, footsteps are heard, the wind howls; and the heroine, of course, shudders. The tea table or polite circle is ridiculously made sport of. Who is it that gathers at these "excellent dinners"?

"Here (to arrange them with due accuracy) were to be seen, "Aeronauts and Architects, Actors and Archbishops,

¹) Azemia, v. I, p. 64.
Alarmists and Auctioneers, Attorneys, Astronomers and Archdeacons, Accoucheurs and Aides-des-Camp, Antiquarians, and Associators and Agents.

"Booksellers, Botanists, Baronets, and Blacklegs, Barons, Brewers, Bankers, and Butts.

"Critics, Counts," etc. (1)

Beckford here has made use of his customary method,--that of taking the ordinary standpoint and carrying it to extremes.

The characters in "Azemia" are more alive, have more flesh and blood than do those in "The Elegant Enthusiast", although much is still intentionally wanting. There are multitudes of people, such as those who appeared at "excellent dinners", but the main characters have individualizing features. Azemia, Mrs. Blandford, and Arnold seem, to be sure, rather priggish, but so they must be in a sentimental novel. Miss Ironside, the old maid who thought she was not old, and took all of Azemia's glory to herself, and Mrs. Albuzzi, who had an inexhaustible supply of Mrs. Malaprop's variety of learning, show Beckford's ability in caricature.

In "Azemia" the incoherency of style is wanting. Paragraphs and sentences are fairly connected. Conscious effort is directed along other lines. There are not so many flamboyant eccentricities as in "The Elegant Enthusiast". At times it is true, the muse has an inspiration. "It is not so now. Love, unhappy love, has obscured all my prospects, and blighted the bloomy blossoms of benevolent beautitude. In vain for me would be all the luxuriant luciousness of lavish nature."

1) "The congeniality of the sentiment reconciled our clerical wanderer for once, to what he had, on so many occasions, described as the senseless suavity of sentimental simplicity or the piping plaintiveness of parading pathos." (2) The introduction or "Exordium Extraordinary" sounds the grand flare of trumpets, however, as far as big words and rhetoric are concerned. "The narrator of adventures of juvenile humanity finds less of labyrinthine involutions in the eccentricities of accumulated improbabilities, less of indescribability in the multifarious camelionity of terraqueous variety, or in the revolutionary scenery of planetary evolution, than dismay ing incomprehensibility in

the enfoldings and vicissitudes of the involucrums of the pericardic region," etc.\(^1\)

Beckford in "Azemia" has doubtlessly used sources as freely as he did in "The Elegant Enthusiast". From Fielding he gained many suggestions as to form and general treatment. Like Fielding he did not hesitate to pause and invoke the muse.\(^2\) Then too, his peroration to the introduction of the hero closely corresponds in form to the introduction of Sophia.\(^3\) Lord Orville's sister, in Miss Burney's Evelina may also have suggested the "languishing fair one, who with head inclined, and doing her possible to raise a blush -- sat, or rather leaned, on a sofa in a most becoming attitude, and looked down."\(^4\)

One of the ways by which the satire is most strongly brought out is by parenthetical remarks and footnote comments. "The moon," Beckford wrote, "(which in all the most celebrated novels lately published, shines every night in the most accommodating manner in the world) had given this information to Bat," etc.\(^5\) "Wrapt in this

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sad but soothing contemplation, as in a pelisse, she advanced
till it grew late, and a wheelbarrow, left there by the
carelessness of the undergardener, obstructed an opening
path apparently designed to lead to some place (as most
paths do, except in novels)."(1) The plaintive Philomela
is made to commence her evening melody in dulcet trills,
and the footnote comments on the fact that the bird is
being overburdened by novelists. "But when the sun and
moon are also in continual requisition shall not a bird
obey the witchery?"(2) When it seems that the wistful
sentimentality of a pathetic passage is in danger of being
overlooked a note points out the "tender susceptibility of
refined elegance."(3) These explanations are most
noticeable in the harmonious melody of the poetical
outbursts which appear from time to time. Mr. Hillary,
for instance, is reading a touching Ode to Sentiment.

"My senses trill!
By mazy rill,
That seems all form'd of lovers' tears,
The poet of the living lyre appears!"

"° -- Nothing can be more truly appropriate; or more
affectingly beautiful than the image of a rivulet of lovers'
tears. How unlike the puerile and prosaic images of most
modern poetry."(4

Beckford seemingly hated to publish a book without a fling at reviewers. His ridicule of them in the introduction to "Popular Tales" has already been pointed out. The "Humble Address to the Doers of that Excellent and Impartial Review, called the British Critic," at the close of "The Elegant Enthusiast", it has already been noted speaks of the "invaluable criticisms which proceed from the joint labors of many ingenious men and respectable old women."(1) The value of friendship in securing a puff is harped on in both articles. "Azemia" closes with an address "To the Reviewers of all the Reviews; All the Magazines; and All the Newspapers." In this account the reviewers are lauded for their "impartiality", "discriminating knowledge" and "refined taste". "Party, which has so much effect in this our beloved country --, never, I know, induces any of you to make the smallest variation in your rectitude."(2) In this appeal to the public Beckford causes Miss Jenks to explain for the advantage of the critics her use of sources. She does not feel she is a plagiarist. She has availed herself of models in order to avoid becoming a mannerist,(3) and she endeavors to

explain the cause of her choice of models and the success she has attained in her imitations. Praise she renders to other novelists and hopes to receive friendly returns, especially since her Grandmamma was an acquaintance of some of the reviewers. As a beginner she also feels deserving of consideration and gentle treatment. A thorough knowledge of the critical methods of the different reviews of the time is doubtlessly necessary for the full appreciation of the Criticisms Anticipated. The keynote of them all is the fawning adulation, due of course to the friendship of her family with the reviewers. The objections are only quasi suggestions. The moralist wants more moralizing; the politician, less criticism of existing conditions and more praise of government.

A word yet remains to be said concerning Beckford's later politics especially as revealed in his novels. When England became involved in the war with France, Beckford as might easily be imagined was a fervent advocate of peace. Doubtlessly the main reason was that war was inconvenient. In 1799 he wrote to Sir William Hamilton of the "confounded political Hurricanes which had been so long menacing us with destruction --- The West Indies are going to the Devil."(1) Beckford was, it must be

1) Melville, Life, p. 257
admitted a confirmed egotist; but perhaps a few less personal motives may have governed his feelings. In "Azemia" the sufferings of the poor are often dwelt upon. The cynicism and mockery of the prosperous are made fun of by the self complacent Mr. Wildcodger who recommended that the poor be allowed to satisfy their hunger by gazing on pictures of rich banquets; their cold, by looking at paintings of fire. Beckford, it must be said, did try in part to alleviate the suffering of the poor in his own vicinity. A remedy often suggested and discussed in "Azemia" is the leveling principle. Pitt, it is said, discouraged all trifling and insignificant leveling, but was himself a leveler on a most grand scale, for he made the rich poor! Mrs. Blandford, and I think she sums up Beckford's general attitude, said, "I do not join in that clamour (for universal equalization). I know and so does everybody of common sense, that equality, according to the sense you affect to annex to it, cannot exist: but there ought to be equal laws for all men."¹ "I would not have the rich live much worse than they do, but I would have the poor supported a great deal better."

Such in the main is a general outline of Beckford's work. I have endeavored to point out his relation to the general movements of the time. In his early period he was governed by an abundance of emotions, of individuality: In his middle period he showed the influence of the Orient and of Germany. In the last period of his writing he showed a reaction against the extremely romantic novel which was popular at that time.
APPENDIX

A -- PARALLEL PASSAGES FROM THE "ELEGANT ENTHUSIAST" AND "VANCENZA"

The Elegant Enthusiast, Vol. I, p. 31 ..... 

Arabella, as has been observed, had now attained her seventeenth year: her form was the animated portrait of her mind; truth, benignity, pure and unstudied delicacy, the meekness of sensibility and the dignity of innate virtue, claimed the esteem, while the exquisite beauty of her bewitching countenance captivated the heart of every beholder! She was tall and finely proportioned; her complexion was neither the insipid whiteness of the lily-bosomed Circassian, nor the masculine shade of the Gallic brunette; the freshness of heather glowed upon her cheek, while the lustre of her dark blue eyes borrowed its splendor from the unsullied flame, that gave her mind the perfection of intellect! Her hair which fell over her shoulder in copious ringlets, was of the most beautiful brown, rather inclining to the auburn, and her teeth and lips, 'Were pearls within a ruby case.'
Her bosom was the throne of love, full, firm, and fairer than the purest ivory; her voice was mild as the cooing of the ring-dove; and her smile the gentle harbinger of tenderness and complacency! She had also acquired considerable eminence in the science of harmony: her singing was the seraphic eccho of her lute whose chords spoke to the soul, under the magic touch of her skillful fingers. She had all that animation which is more usually found among the natives of the South of Europe; yet this spirited expression often melted into softness so insinuating, that it was difficult to say whether pensive tenderness or sparkling vivacity was the most predominant: in short she was everything that fancy could picture or conviction adore! Perfection could go no further. Her arms were of a delicate snowy whiteness, and cast in the most exquisite mould of tapering formation, and her little feet were so enchantingly pretty, that they ravished all beholders. Such was Arabella.

Vancenza, Vol. I, p. 17 ....

Elvira had just attained her fifteenth year; her form was the animated portrait of her mind; truth, benignity, pure and unstudied delicacy, the meekness of
sensibility and the dignity of innate virtue, claimed the esteem; while the exquisite beauty of her bewitching countenance captivated the heart of every beholder. She was tall, and finely proportioned; her complexion was neither the insipid whiteness of the lily-bosomed Circassian, nor the masculine shade of the Gallic brunette; the freshness of health glowed upon her cheek, while the lustre of her dark blue eyes borrowed its splendor from the unsullied flame, that gave her mind the perfection of intellect. Her voice was mild as the cooings of the ring-dove; and her smile the gentle harbinger of tenderness and complacency. She was everything that fancy could picture, or conviction adore. -- Perfection could go no further.

Elvira had acquired considerable eminence in the science of harmony; her voice was the seraphic echo of her lute, whose chords spoke to the soul, under the magic touch of her skillful fingers. She was well acquainted with the works of the most celebrated French and Italian authors; the beauties of Metastasio and of Petrarch by turns captivated her heart; she felt the force of their compositions, though she was a stranger to the sensations that inspired them. Happy Elvira! who, nursed in the
tranquil bosom of retirement, feared not the vicissitudes of fortune, or the corroding pangs of agonizing disquietude.

The Elegant Enthusiast, Vol. I, p. 82 ......

(He was thrown from his horse at our door, and having fainted away, was in consequence brought into the parlour, and laid upon a blue damask sofa, when I unfortunately entered.) The crimson fountain of life had scarcely spread its soft tints upon his pallid lips, when his lanquid eyes were fixed in speechless extasy on the countenance of your poor Amelia, whose cheek met his gaze as the meek rose encounters the burning glances of the meridian sun! Overpowered by his admiration, I was preparing to depart, when the Captain fearful of losing the sight of so charming an object, in a feeble voice accompanied by the most impressive manner entreated me to stay, 'beauteous Lady', said he, 'if thou art indeed a mortal, for thy outward form bears strong resemblance of divinity, suffer me for a moment to enjoy the Elysium that presents itself before me: surely I am in the castle of enchantment, and thou art the fair mistress of the air-built habitation! if my returning faculties do
not deceive me, I awake from the shades of death to taste the supreme felicities of a terrestrial paradise!' 

Vancenza, Vol. I, p. 27 ...... 

(The prince had been wounded during a boar hunt.) 

The crimson fountain of life had scarcely spread its soft tints upon his pallid lip, when his lanquid eyes were fixed in speechless ecstasy on the countenance of Elvira, whose cheek met his gaze, glowing and lovely, as the meek rose encounters the burning glances of the meridian sun! Overpowered by his admiration, she was preparing to depart, when the Prince, fearful of losing the sight of so charming an object, in a feeble voice, accompanied by the most impressive manner, entreated her to stay. "Beauteous Lady!" said he, "if you are indeed a mortal, for your outward form bears strong semblance of divinity, suffer me for a moment to enjoy the Elysium that presents itself before me: surely I am in the castle of enchantment, and you are the fair mistress of the air-built habitation! If my returning faculties do not deceive me, I awake from the shades of death to taste the supreme felicities of a terrestrial Paradise!"
(Amelia says) 'Love has that sweet, that indescribable power, which gives mildness to ferocity, and resolution to instability; it humbles the proudest, and exalts the meekest; the libertine is awed by its influence, and the man of feeling adds dignity to his being, by following its dictates. The tenderness of refined sympathy, the rapture of conferring happiness, the conscious delight of expunging from the soul every vicious propensity by the dispassionate councils of reason and penetration, are the peculiar attributes of a beloved object. The most dulcet tones, the most sublime efforts of persuasive eloquence, and the tinsel blandishments of empty sophistry, vanish before the resistless influence of the voice we love! It has the power to harmonize the feelings with indescribable magic, leading the senses captive, till every idea is fascinated with the spells of admiration and esteem.'

Vancenza, Vol. I, p. 77 ......

(The author comments) Love has that sweet, that indescribable power, which gives mildness to ferocity, and resolution to instability; it humbles the proudest and exalts the meekest: the libertine is awed by its influence,
and the man of feeling adds dignity to his being by following its dictates. The tenderness of refined sympathy, the rapture of conferring happiness, the conscious delight of expunging from the soul every vicious propensity, by the dispassionate councils of reason and penetration, are the peculiar attributes of a beloved object. The most dulcet tones, the most sublime efforts of persuasive eloquence, and the tinsel blandishments of empty sophistry, vanish before the supreme influence of the voice we love! It has the power to harmonize the feelings with irresistible magic, leading the senses captive, till every idea is fascinated with the spells of admiration and esteem.

The pilgrim described in the "Elegant Enthusiast" (vol. II, chap. 13) corresponds in part to the traveler described in "Vancenza" (vol. I, chap. 3). Perhaps also the boar hunt in "Vancenza" may be accountable for the sudden and unexplained appearance of the bear in the "Elegant Enthusiast" (vol. I, chap. 3)
B -- PARALLEL PASSAGES FROM "AZEMIA" AND "TOM JONES"

Azemia, Vol. I, p. 25 ....

Now once more, all ye Muses that sip the Castalean spring, or play on the biforked hill! once more I invoke you -- and you, ye Graces: whether ye wanton amid the flaxen ringlets (postiche or otherwise) of Lady Seraphina, or beam from the eyes of the Countess of -- - - - - - #, whether ye wait on the Farren, or lurk in the arch smile of the Jordan -- whether ye attend on Parisot or Hilligoberg -- a moment, a little moment, preside on my pen! ......

# -- Whatever Countess the reader prefers.

Tom Jones, Vol. I, p. 163 ....

Ye Muses, then, whoever ye are, who love to sing battles, and principally thou who whilom didst recount the slaughter in those fields where Hudibras and Trulla fought, if thou wert not starved with thy friend Butler, assist me on this great occasion.

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Azemia, Vol. I, p. 18 .......

And now, reader! thou hast perhaps seen the agile Gardel, or the immortal Vestris; thou mayest,
peradventure, have beheld the celebrated Didelot of the present day; or, if thou art a lover of the beauties of Grecian sculpture, thou mayest have gazed with scientific eyes upon Apollo, or contemplated the proportions of the Farnesian Hercule. If in a less elevated sphere of life, where these examples of grace may never have been presented to thee, thou hast, peradventure, turned with tasteless indignation from the reedlike and slender figure of Lord Fritterville, eldest son of the Marquis of Maccaroon, and surveyed with more British approbation the nervous strength and gigantic form of the Russian or Big Ben; be that as it may, and to whatever class of social life thou belongest, equally must thy imagination be called upon to embody a form to which no description can do justice. It is, gentle reader! my hero whom I am about to present to thee. — A youth so amiable in manners, so unexceptionable in morals, in person so beauteous, as fancy hardly ever formed, unless in the early dreams of some fair visionary virgin by the side of a murmuring fountain on a sopha of moss and flowers, and overshadowed by myrtle and mimosa — when, after the perusal of some soul dissolving tale of tender sympathy (printed by the Minerva press), and overcome by the languor of a summer's day, she half indulges the
sweet illusions of elegant imagination, and dreams unutterable things! I will try however, for such as have less facility at this ideal painting, to tell what he was. Aid me, ye gentle muses of Britian! ye, who know so well and have so oft described -- "Youths as they ought to be!"

Some lines of the "Swan of Lichfield" present themselves, which are glowingly imitatively descriptive, such as ever flow from the energetic pen of that celebrated young lady:

O'er his fair brows, the fairer of their shade,
Locks of the richest brown -- luxuriant play'd.

And again of his height:

Tall as the pine amid inferior trees,
With all the bending osier's pliant ease!

Here then I must rest my description of the figure of this insinuating youth. But I must not omit his face -- he had, then, full eyes of indescribable colour, beaming with sweetness, sparkling with intelligence, and surmounted by full dark eye brows. As to his nose! if a connoisseur of noses had made on purpose a voyage of discovery to the Promotory, and under the immediate directions of Don Diego himself, a more exquisitely formed nose could not have been imported. His lips emulated the Kentish cherry; of course his teeth rivalled mother-of-pearl, and he had the most interesting beard in the world. Such was
the person of Charles Arnold, a midshipman, alas! he was only a midshipman on board the Amputator.

Tom Jones, Vol. I, p. 137 ..... (Book IV, Chapter II)

Reader, perhaps thou hast seen the statue of the Venus de Medicis. Perhaps, too, thou hast seen the gallery of beauties at Hampton Court. Thou mayst remember each bright Churchill of the galaxy, and all the toasts of the Kit-cat. Or, if their reign was before thy times, at least thou hast seen their daughters, the no less dazzling beauties of the present age; whose names should we here insert, we apprehend they would fill the whole volume.

Now if thou hast seen all these, be not afraid of the rude answer Lord Rochester once gave to a man who had seen many things. No. If thou hast seen all these without knowing what beauty is, thou hast no eyes; if without feeling its power, thou hast no heart.

Yet it is possible, my friend, that thou mayest have seen all these without being able to form an exact idea of Sophia; for she did not exactly resemble any of them. She was most like the picture of Lady Ranelagh: and, I have heard, more still to the famous duchess of Mazarine; but most of all she resembled one whose image never can
depart from my breast, and whom, if thou dost remember, thou hast then, my friend, an adequate idea of Sophia.

But lest this should not have been thy fortune, we will endeavour with our utmost skill to describe this paragon, tho' we are sensible that our highest abilities are very inadequate to the task.

Sophia, then, the only daughter of Mr. Western, was a middle-sized woman, but rather inclining to tall. Her shape was not only exact, but extremely delicate; and the nice proportion of her arms promised the truest symmetry in her limbs. Her hair, which was black, was so luxuriant that it reached her middle, before she cut it to comply with the modern fashion; and it was now curled so gracefully in her neck, that few could believe it to be her own. If envy could find any part of the face which demanded less commendation than the rest, it might possibly think her forehead might have been higher, without prejudice to her. Her eyebrows were full, even, and arched beyond the power of art to imitate. Her black eyes had a lustre in them, which all her softness could not extinguish. Her nose was exactly regular, and her mouth, in which were two rows of ivory, exactly answered Sir John Suckling's description, in those lines:
Her pure and eloquent blood
Spoke in her cheeks, and so distinctly wrought
That one might almost say her body thought ....

Her neck was soft and finely turned: and here, if I was not afraid of offending her delicacy, I might justly say, the highest beauties of the famous Venus de Medicis were outdone. Here was whiteness which no lilies, ivory nor alabaster could match. The finest cambric might indeed be supposed from envy to cover that bosom which was much whiter than itself -- It was indeed,

Nitor splendens Pario marmore puritus,
A gloss shining beyond the purest brightness of Parian marble.

Such was the outside of Sophia.

Beckford did not follow "Tom Jones" so slavishly as he did "Vancenza", but he succeeded admirably in keeping the same atmosphere.
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