

THE RECEPTION OF WILLIAM BECKFORD IN PORTUGAL

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ABSTRACT

In this paper I explore some new avenues for investigation concerning William Beckford's reception in Portugal. His literary production, as well as his life and public *persona*, were a source of inspiration to writers, scholars and musicians in Portugal. He lived on in critical and popular memory through translations, literary and research works and illustrations practically since his first visit to that country in 1787 until today. Along this article we'll see how the image of Beckford evolved in Portugal.

KEY WORDS: Beckford, literary reception, Portugal.

Following Wolfgang Iser's theory that aesthetic response corresponds to the reaction of the potentials of the human mind to the challenges that come from literature, in this paper I explore some new avenues for investigation concerning William Beckford's reception in Portugal. Being a well-known connoisseur – who acquired paintings, books, furniture and multifarious *objects d'art* in Portugal – in his role as a patron and arbiter of taste he was a significant contributor to Portuguese cultural history in the fields of architecture, painting, landscape gardening and music as I've demonstrated in my previous work (PIRES, 1986, 1987, 2000). But in this paper I intend to demonstrate that his literary production, as well as his life and public *persona*, were also a source of inspiration to writers, scholars and musicians in Portugal. He lived on in critical and popular memory through translations, literary and research works and illustrations practically since his first visit to that country in 1787 until today.

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Even regarding his most controversial attitudes Beckford found an ambience in Portugal in which even imposture concerning religious devotion was accepted and this allowed him to integrate in Portuguese society. His exaggerated and theatrical attitudes – that to the eyes of an English Protestant researcher from the 20th century may seem typical of hypocritical and reprehensible behavior – were seen from a different perspective in the atmosphere of 18th century Portugal. Beckford's confessions about how he felt at the Martyrs' Church, hearing the matins by David Perez or Jomelli's Mass for the Dead as well as his description of his visit to the Convent of Good Death, were then considered as normal attitudes (BECKFORD, 1834, p. 272). Some critics, like Boyd Alexander (1972) and André Parreaux (1935) think that the assertions of popularity made by Beckford were mere boasting with the objective of self-valorization. But both the author of *Italy* and most of his work were indeed known and admired by the Portuguese. All through this study, we'll see how the image of Beckford evolved in Portugal. At the beginning he was seen as a very rich English nobleman who was the suitor of the daughter of one the most distinguished Portuguese families, the Marialvas, and who offered magnificent gifts even to the Queen herself (1840). Personal references, such as the ones from Abade Xavier¹ – who was already dead, when Beckford returned to Portugal in 1794² – whose friendly remarks about the man and his work, which he had read and appreciated, must in the meantime have contributed to turn the author of *Italy* and *Vathek* almost into a legend in Portugal. The “fables” (REBELO DA SILVA, 1855, p. 103) created about Beckford among the Portuguese people take on such varied aspects that he was frequently mentioned not only by historians and men of letters but also in articles in different types of periodicals (PIRES, 1987). On the other hand – and this may explain their mutual attraction – Beckford loved the country so much that he wrote to one of his friends that his affection for Portugal would only end with his death.³ In his last literary production – that can also be considered as his best and is constituted by travel reports entitled *Italy: with sketches of Portugal and Spain* (1834) and *Recollections of an excursion to the monasteries of Alcobaca and Batalha* (1835) –, he attributed an important role to Portugal thus showing his vast knowledge of its culture, architecture and history, and,

as we can see in the sales catalogues of his libraries, he kept purchasing most of the books written about that country till his death.

One of the main elements for the study of the reception of an author is undoubtedly the translation of his work. We know that it was thanks to Beckford's own copies and manuscripts that some of his Portuguese friends read such works as *Dreams, waking thoughts and incidents, Vathek, Episodes*, and even the notes for the *Journal-1787*. But it was certainly after they were translated into Portuguese that their popularity increased. The first translations of *Italy* and *Recollections* were published in Portugal respectively in 1836 and 1840, in French, in a bilingual periodical entitled *A Abelha: Jornal de Utilidade, Instrução e Recreio em Portuguez e Francez*. The translations were entitled "Lettres sur le Portugal" and "Souvenirs d'un voyage à Alcobaça" and their author was Mme C. d'Andrade, the director of the periodical. Through this widely read periodical the figure and the work of Beckford became more and more popular among the Portuguese. Two other translations of *Italy* were published in the periodicals *O Panorama: Semanário de Literatura e Instrução* (vs. IV; V; XII; XIV, 1855-1857) and *A Leitura: Magazine Literário* (n. 42-47, 1895) respectively entitled "Viagens de Beckford a Portugal: cartas escritas em 1787" and "Portugal in 1787" both by Meira. In 1901, there was a new version with the title *A Corte de D. Maria I: correspondência de William Beckford 1787*. Although the translation is not signed, we know it was by Zacarias d'Aça, as confirmed by Alberto Pimentel in the *O Popular* of March 18th 1901. Neither Meira nor Aça translated the whole text of *Italy*. In *O Panorama* – and later in *A Leitura*, where it was reproduced – it was reduced to twenty-five letters, and in *A Corte de D. Maria I* to thirty instead of the thirty-four, which constitute the part of *Italy* devoted to Portugal. Meira's translation was again reproduced in 1879 by Manuel Bernardes Branco in *Portugal e os estrangeiros* (1879, p. 76-136). Comparing the different versions, it is obvious that Aça's is better for Meira's contains many mistakes besides not doing justice to Beckford's style. It is noteworthy that no new translation of *Italy* has been produced since 1901.

Recollections, after Andrade's first version, was translated again in 1914 by Joaquim L. Lobo and M. Vieira Natividade with the title *Alcobaça e Batalha: recordação de uma excursão*. It was classified as

a “free translation” of great interest for Portuguese readers but in the preface *Natividade* accumulates countless errors and inaccuracies. This being the only version through which a Portuguese reader who did not know English or French had access to one of the most admirable works written by a foreigner about his country, it deserves further references. *Natividade* considers Beckford’s work a bibliographic rarity and the translators’ “task” a “hard one” due to Beckford’s “dry and arid” style that “intimidated” them (p. 6). *Recollections* is also criticized because it contains “improbable and legendary references”. *Natividade* attacks Beckford as well for his “inexcusable” “ignorance or indifference for what is related to art” (!). He speaks of the “atrocious irony” of Beckford’s book to which, however, he allows a “certain ethnographic value”. He takes the liberty of truncating the text but omits to say that of the twelve “journeys” that constitute Beckford’s excursion he only translates five. When we collate it with the original there are so many discrepancies and “liberties” that little or nothing remains of its excellent stylistic qualities or content. The translators, besides omitting parts of the text with the intent of ‘purifying’ it from religious content – thus making it almost meaningless – also intercalated paragraphs written by themselves. Beckford is also presented in a preconceived way and when he poetically describes his sleeplessness because of Donna Francisca’s coldness, *Natividade* attributes it to the effects of Aljubarrota wine...⁴

The image of Beckford was also severely tainted with the translation of the *Journal of William Beckford in Portugal and Spain-1787-88*. The journal published, in 1954, by Boyd Alexander, the curator of the Hamilton Library, was preceded by an introduction, which presented its author in an even more negative way than the text itself. This translation, done by João Gaspar Simões in 1957, contained many mistakes. To the regret of Portuguese Beckfordians, a second edition was published in 1983 containing the same inaccuracies and attacking the image of “the fascinating friend of the Marialvas” and giving a wrong idea of his work. In the “Preface of the translator”, we read that “the letters he collected in the *Sketches*” (p. 9) are all from 1787, the date of his first visit to Portugal”. But in *Italy* there is material from 1780 (p. 1-132); texts from 1782, as “Second visit to Italy” (p. 133-141); and the descriptions of the “Grande chartreuse” (p. 142-163) and of “Salève” (p. 164-167), from 1778. Naively believing – as so many

others – that journals and private chronicles contain true statements, Simões comments on the veracity of Beckford's reports and, based on Alexander's "Introduction", concludes that he lies with the exception of the polemic meeting with the poet Bocage. Had he read the original attentively, he would see that Beckford also included texts of 1795 (*Letters XVII* and *XVIII*). I mention only two of Simões' innumerable mistakes. He thought "Alderman" was one of Beckford father's names, and he translated "I take airings every day as an old Dowager" with the Portuguese corresponding to: "I ate herrings every day like an old shrew"!

Vathek was translated by Albert Demazière, Manuel Gomes and Mário Cláudio respectively with the titles of *Vathek: conto árabe* (s.d.), *Vathek* (1978) and *História do Califa Vathek* (1982). It was, however, in the field of music – so admired by Beckford – that there was a more productive and artistic reception in Portugal for, in 1913, *Vathek* inspired a well-known Portuguese composer, Luís de Freitas Branco (1890-1955), to write a symphonic-poem with the same title and also to translate parts of the work (PIRES, 1987; 1990).

Of all the foreign authors who wrote about Portugal, Beckford was undoubtedly the one whose life and work were most often referred in Portugal. And, among the Portuguese writers, it was Luís Augusto Rebelo da Silva (1822-1871) who most contributed to turning him into a legend. Many Portuguese authors who afterwards wrote about Beckford have practically only presented variations of the portrait Silva painted in his novel *Lágrimas e tesouros: fragmento de uma história verdadeira* (1863). Silva's novel has been considered as a reliable source of information about Beckford, and *Italy, Recollections*, and even the *Journal*, as historical works. But, in spite of the subtitle *Fragment of a true story*, Silva took liberties not only about Beckford's alleged love-affair with one of Marialva's daughters but also about dates warning his reader: "There is fable and truth in the picture we offer..." (p. 97). He contributed thus to the fabulous image of Beckford in Portugal and to keeping him alive in the memory of the Portuguese. Almost all the characteristic elements of the legendary portrait of the "cultivated traveller" are in Silva's work. Beckford is introduced as "an English Protestant, so remarkable for his treasures as for the elevation and singularity of his spirit" and his efforts in favour of the regicides

of 1758 are mentioned. Beckford's visit to Alcobaça in 1794, his contested meeting with the Archbishop of Thessalonica, who treats him with familiarity and appreciation thus giving an idea of the importance attributed in Portugal to "the opulent and witty Beckford, who is the main hero in our fable" are part of the plot. Comparing the texts of *Italy* (Letter XXVII) and *Lágrimas e tesouros* (Chapters XXI and XXII) we easily detect their intimate relation. Besides the interview with the Queen's Confessor, Silva mentions most of the topics referred to in *Italy* and *Recollections*, in whose texts he looked for inspiration. This corroborates that we have here two related literary works in which both authors are faithful to their own genius but tilled the same soil, and where the one who wrote afterwards would not have created the new narrative if he were not reacting to the previous work.

Silva relates Beckford's travels in Portugal, and the attempts made to persuade him to marry and convert to Catholicism. He admits having relied on oral tradition in both cases. Another innovative aspect of this work is the introduction of a comical element. This is found mainly in the episode of the performance of the tragedy *Inez de Castro* (p. 48). Silva understood – perhaps better than anyone else – that Portugal had become the adopted motherland of the "wondering Ismael" and that Beckford reacted like the Portuguese sharing their enthusiasms and interests.⁵ If Silva's vision was of enormous importance for the gradual formation of Beckford's image, what he wrote in 1855 in the introduction to the translation of *Italy* was equally responsible for much of what later circulated in Portugal. The readers were led to see Beckford as a noble English diplomat visited even by the Queen, for Silva wrote: "Beckford, when he was closing his eyes, still had the satisfaction of welcoming in his residence the granddaughter of King John IV, Queen Mary II of Portugal..." (p. 142). Silva was here resorting again to "oral tradition" for there is no historical confirmation of this royal visit. In 1909, Silva's introduction was reproduced in *Bosquejos histórico-literários* and his "Memória biográfica e literária acerca de Bocage", included in *Estudos críticos*, mentioned Beckford's "sketch of the physiognomy of Bocage" (p. 144). At the beginning of the 20th century, there were only two incomplete translations of Beckford's works about Portugal, but from the point of view of a productive and meaningful reception, this is undoubtedly the richest period. Beckford's

name had been previously mentioned in several Portuguese periodical publications, such as *A Abelha* (1836), *A Distracção Instrutiva* (1842), *O Panorama* (1855-1856-1857), *Artes e Letras* (1872) and *A Ilustração Portuguesa*. This “literary and artistic weekly publication” mentions Beckford frequently along the years and mainly in the 20th century. In *The Quinta de Monserrate* of November 16, 1885 we read: “The extremely rich Englishman called Beckford, who did his best to embellish even more the landed property of Monserrate...”, and, in *The Ilustração Portuguesa* of 1866, first issue of this, Pinheiro Chagas speaks of “Beckford, the traveller”. Next year, in the ninth issue of the same publication, Alberto Teles writes an article about “The Monument of Mafra”, referring to it as a “subject for the famous traveller because of its stupendous dimensions”.

As an indispensable complement to the study of the Beckfordian vogue in Portugal, I have analysed the cases where the penetration of his work was more intense or resulted in a more restricted artistic production. Besides all the references to the ostentation and magnificence of Beckford’s life in Portugal, another aspect of the legend is the attribution of social and political importance to someone who, after all, was one among many foreign travellers, although Beckford always distinguished himself for the most varied reasons, such as his knowledge of the language and of Portuguese history. The opulence of his expensive cutlery and retinue, and the brilliantly successful banquets and parties he offered in his residence, which was “the meeting point of fashionable society” (*Arquivo pitoresco*, 1864), are also referred. Demonstrating the interest of his readers for Beckford, in 1879, Manuel Bernardes Branco (1879, p. 75) writes about Fonthill Abbey classifying it as a “princely abode”. In 1898, the newspaper *O Século* still mentions the expenses Beckford made with the works done at Monserrate and with the construction of the “superb cascades”⁶ A century later, in 1953, the periodical *O Século Ilustrado* published an article by César Santos referring to Beckford as “one of the richest men in England with a wealthy flow of gold”. Considering the literary echoes of the Beckfordian legend in Portugal and of the attribution of an important role to the foreign visitor, we know that, besides referring to his contested interviews with the Prince of Brazil, D. José (*Italy*, p. 268-270), and with the Archbishop of Thessalónica (p. 280-281), he relates

other circumstances proving how well he was considered in Portugal (*Journal-1787*, p. 91, 97, 105, 219, 219, 221, 265, 270-278). In this case – as in others – there are several Portuguese writers, who, possibly using Beckford’s texts, refer to the dinner with the Archbishop, such as Alberto Pimentel (*A última corte do absolutismo em Portugal*, p. 27), Caetano Beirão (*D. Maria I: 1777-1792*, p. 101) and Francisco Câncio (*O Paço de Queluz*, 1950, p. 175-176). In 1903, António César Meneses, the Earl of Sabugosa, in his famous work *O Paço de Cintra*, which is illustrated with magnificent drawings by Queen Amelia, confirms Beckford’s description of the tangled maze he had to go through when he left the Archbishop’s rooms (p. 203).

Besides the references to the magnificence of Beckford’s life in Portugal, another aspect of the legend is the attribution of political relevance. The importance he pretends to have acquired at the Portuguese Court and which would have given him almost the fame of a national hero in Portugal is mentioned in several articles published in the periodical press thus contributing again to a type of productive reception of his work. In 1840, we can read in *L’Abeille* (1840, p. 251) that, at the request of the Marquis of Marialva, Queen Mary I of Portugal intervened with George III of England in Beckford’s favour. A hundred years later, the magazine *O Século Ilustrado* (p. 11), in the above mentioned article, attributes this intervention to the then Prince Regent and future King John VI, thus repeating affirmations made both by Manuel Bernardes Branco (1879, p. 76) and Rebelo da Silva (1855, p. 266-268). On the other hand, the secret diplomatic mission that Beckford says the future king entrusted him with would confirm the Prince’s confidence in the illustrious foreign visitor. Again in this case, such well-known Portuguese writers as Teófilo Braga (1878) and Júlio Dantas (1916), echoed in their works what would later be accepted in Portugal as an undisputed truth. Braga (1878, p. 118) attributes Beckford’s first visit to his desire to obtain “information about the princes and the Archbishop and Royal Confessor” because it was necessary in England due to “the Queen’s insanity”. He also refers to a probable – although indirect – intervention of Beckford in the attempted assassination of King Joseph in 1788, because his politics did not please England.

D. Luís de Castro, in a series of articles he wrote about Beckford for *A Ilustração Portuguesa*, also thinks “the legend established itself”.

Castro (1906, p. 431) even vouches: “Add to this that he came to Portugal, in transit, during his travels in Europe to obtain information about the nature and the society, or in a mission for his government to spy on the politics and the Court...”. This reading of Beckford’s alleged political activities is justified by the fears felt by the Police Superintendent Pina Manique that any foreigner might be a spy or might introduce revolutionary pamphlets in the country. Based on research done at the Register’s Office in Sintra, and on a study about his ancestors’ property, he concludes that Beckford never lived there (!). He does not hesitate to declare that others who also wrote about this subject – like Pinho Leal (*Portugal antigo e moderno*, 1873-1890, p. 438), Vilhena de Barbosa (“Quinta de Monserrate em Cintra”, *Ilustração Portuguesa*, 1885, p. 1), Oliveira Travassos (“O Palácio de Monserrate em Cintra”, *Arquivo Pittoresco*, 1866, p. 185), and the Earl of Sabugosa – were all wrong. D. Luís bases his own error upon the fact that, according to him, Beckford never wrote Monserrate before the dates of his letters while, on the other hand, he always did it when at Ramalhão. He also founds his views on the fact that Beckford’s name does not figure in the lease.⁷ He is again mistaken when he says that Beckford “as another Blue Beard, twice was a widower”. On the other hand, D. Luís de Castro seems to know all of Beckford’s works. As a matter of fact, in the second part of his article entitled “Beckford and Monserrate”, unlike most of those who wrote about Beckford in Portugal, he does not consider him as just the author of *Italy* and *Recollections* but he mentions “the story of the Caliph Vathek, that Lord Byron praises so much”. He also refers “Memories of extraordinary painters, a work of wit and wisdom that one still reads today with delight and profit” (“Beckford e Monserrate”, *A Ilustração Portuguesa*, 1906, p. 468).

We should not forget that, in spite of all this, a negative image and false stories are also part of Beckford’s reception in Portugal. In *Journal-1787*, we can eventually see how the false stories about him began to appear. It is however worth mentioning that, according to Beckford, many of the lies that circulated should be attributed to the English colony living in Portugal who were, after all, reacting in the same way as their countrymen in England.

This negative image of Beckford is quite different from the one that results from the reading of the two novels he inspired in Portugal

Lágrimas e tesouros (1863) by Luís Augusto Rebelo da Silva⁸ (1822-1871) and *O grande Cagliostro* (1905) by Carlos Malheiro Dias⁹ (1875-1941), in which the self-portrait made in *Italy* appears to be reinforced in its positive aspects. It is therefore unexpected and paradoxical that Beckford's image should have been denigrated by the publication of texts that were connected to his visits to Portugal, a country that he loved so much and about which he wrote what can be considered as among his best literary production. This happened due to the publication in 1954 of the *Journal of William Beckford in Portugal and Spain, 1787-1788* (1954) and of *Life at Fonthill 1807-1822* (1957). Both these editions were made by Boyd Alexander, the curator of the Hamilton Papers. The diffusion of the *Journal*, which is constituted by private travel notes never intended for the wide public and that had already been published in a literary form by their author, among other problems – and mainly for those who, as mentioned above, naively still believe that autobiographical texts contain the truth – raised doubts about the sincerity of Beckford's religious devotion as, according to the *Journal*, even his friends, like D. José de Brito Herédia, laughed about it (*Journal*, p. 80-81). It is very hard to reconcile this doubt with the spirit that permeates the reports of his visits to the churches and other places of devotion depicted in *Italy* and even with the veneration he openly demonstrated throughout his life for Saint Anthony.

As a matter of fact, according to the plans of the house he wanted to build in Lisbon,¹⁰ as well as in Fonthill Abbey and Landsdown Crescent, a statue of the Portuguese saint was always in a place of honour and in full view of all his visitors, thus demonstrating an eventual Catholic devotion that could not but blacken their host's public image who, on the other hand, seemed to worry himself so much about its preservation. It is also contradictory that, although in the *Journal* he minimizes the gifts he received because of his public devotion to the saint (p. 76), he should affectionately keep till the end of his days a leaflet about the Portuguese saint's life written by D. Gelácio da Conceição. This small handwritten leaflet – of which there is no copy in Portugal – contains pictorial ornamentations for each initial letter and several blue ribbons to be used as bookmarks and its production and the dedication prove that Beckford's devotional attitudes – besides being noticed – were appreciated and considered to be sincere even by

Portuguese friars. For his devotion to Saint Anthony and the comments it caused made a Portuguese friar write a work about the saint, which he offered to Beckford in 1794. It is entitled *Anedotas sobre a genealogia do glorioso Sto. Antonio e de alguns dos seus parentes extraídas de vários documentos antigos e autenticos* and was signed by D. Gelácio da Conceição, as no previous reference had been made to him, I tried to obtain information about this unknown friend of Beckford's. Searching the old almanacs I found that he was a teacher of History, Geography and Italian at the Royal College of Mafra, which was located at the Monastery of Mafra. Besides having in common the devotion to St. Anthony, the subjects taught by D. Gelácio must also have brought him close to Beckford. The fact that they could talk in Italian would certainly increase the English visitor's fluency (although he could speak and read Portuguese) not only about the "glorious St. Anthony" but also about History, which interested him so much. The modest leaflet, which was carefully kept by William Beckford among his personal papers till the end of his life must surely have interested him much more as an object which brought those conversations to his mind than for its content.

It is also worth mentioning that, in spite of its many inaccuracies, the translation of the journal into Portuguese in 1956 by João Gaspar Simões caused a certain renewal of interest and curiosity about Beckford and his work in Portugal. Due to the characteristics of the text and to the emphasis given in it to the "scabrous circumstances", the Portuguese readers began to have a different vision of the personality of the author of *Italy*. His name, that in the first half of the 20th century was frequently mentioned in the different newspapers and magazines, such as *Diário da Manhã* and *The Anglo-Portuguese News*, little by little ceased to interest journalists. From then on the Portuguese press only mentions the famous visitor – to whom till the fifties it devoted so many pages – practically from 1970 onwards. In the last quarter of the 20th century, Beckford was mainly seen by the Portuguese as the author of *Vathek*. From what has been said, we see how Beckford's image evolved in Portugal. He stopped being mentioned above all regarding his presentation at Court and among Portuguese nobility, or about the secret mission that had brought him to Portugal. After the publication of Rebelo da Silva's novel, to which he gave the subtitle of *Fragment of a real story* (1863), several Portuguese authors, who mention Beckford

in their works, refer to him as the man who fell in love with the noble young lady from the Marialva family but did not marry her due to religious motifs.

Beckford's name is also almost unfailingly mentioned in most of the innumerable Portuguese works written about Sintra. According to D. Luís de Castro ("Beckford em Cintra: o verão de 1787", *Ilustração Portuguesa*, 1906, p. 411-416; 431; 468-472), the spirit of Beckford still seems to inhabit that town, which has already been designated as "the most noble and beautiful landscape garden in the world" (ROBINSON, 1886, p. 5). Beckford is thus also connected to the field of landscape gardening. We can still see the mark of his presence in the gardens of Monserrate, where the next owner, Sir Francis Cook, even kept the famous waterfalls that his predecessor had ordered with such originality and enthusiasm. In this case, as in most of what concerns Portugal, there was also a mutual attraction. Beckford's name seems to be indissolubly connected to Sintra. Since his stay there practically every study or simple article written about that town mention the name of the famous English millionaire, who inhabited, decorated and improved a farm at Ramalhão and a mansion house at Monserrate. There are so many references to Beckford that it would be tedious to mention them all. It is enough to say that, at least since 1838, when the Viscount of Juromenha wrote *Cintra pinturesca ou Memória descritiva da Villa de Cintra, Collares e seus arredores* (1838) till today Beckford has been a fundamental and, in a certain way, a legendary reference, which must compulsorily be mentioned in what concerns Sintra. Juromenha (1838, p. 79) mentions his name about Monserrate, as is the case with most other references: "This house was built by an Englishman called Bekford [sic] a few years ago, in such a way that due to faulty construction and not to the fact that it was built years ago, it is in ruins." In a long and detailed description, made in the romantic style that characterize that era, the author enumerates several elements that, to those who know what has been written and painted about Fonthill Abbey, make it easy to verify that "this country house which imitates an old castle" was used as a source of inspiration, or at least, was present in the mind of the "Abbot of Fonthill". On the other hand, when we read in this work that in the gardens there was: "a waterfall made of gigantic rocks that were carried there on purpose, in an effort, through so much work, to imitate the

simplicity of the beauties of nature...” (p. 80) we immediately think of Fonthill’s gardens.

Another work, which also made both Beckford and Juromenha’s references popular, was the Portuguese translation of the fourth volume of Ferdinand Denis’s *L’Univers-histoire et description de tous les peuples-portugal* (1846). Denis, when he writes about Monserrate (p. 119), repeats word for word what was written in *Cintra pinturesca* (JURUMENHA, 1838), which had been published ten years before. Further on in this work, the author confirms Beckford’s importance for the evolution in Portugal of the taste for the movement that was designated in England as “picturesque”. On the other hand, both Juromenha’s and Denis’ descriptions of places mentioned by Beckford, such as the Convents of Our Lady of Penha and of the one colloquially designated as Cork Convent, Pedra de Alvidrar, Fojo the Moorish Castle and Penha Verde, which were written a short time after the publication of *Italy* help us understand why its author was so appreciated in Portugal. Ferdinand Denis was not the only one who used the text about Monserrate from *Cintra pinturesca*. It was also entirely repeated, in 1873, in *A Distracção Instrutiva* (v. I, n. 1, 1842, p. 17), a literary magazine published in Portugal by a well-known scholars’ society. And, A. A. da Fonseca Pinto, when he wrote an article entitled “Monserrate” for the periodical *Panorama Fotográfico de Portugal* (1873) besides referring to Beckford, as was to be expected, he quotes again Juromenha’s still appreciated text. These repetitions reveal the lack of imagination of the different authors but they also demonstrate how the subject was made popular and that the name of Beckford was still present among the Portuguese. Some years later, in an anonymous leaflet, entitled *Cintra*, published in 1888, and describing Monserrate at the time when Beckford took possession of the property, the author, besides mentioning the brilliance of the parties, adds that it was in that golden era of that mansion when the gentlemanly adventures of cape and sword and the love poems, and the sweet idylls of the soul left their memories. The anonymous author refers to the progressive decadence of the property after Beckford left and until it was sold by D. Luís de Castro Pimentel. Pinho Leal, in a long article about Monserrate (v. V, p. 436), included in his work *Portugal antigo e moderno*, also amply mentions “Bechford [sic]” thus confirming how the name of the property kept being connected to the famous

Englishman. Leal even claims that it was due to Beckford's descriptions of Sintra that Byron came to Portugal and that the comments the latter made "in his viperine style" (*Cintra pinturesca*, p. 58) resulted from his visit as well as his identification of Monserrate with Vathek's paradise. The name of the one Byron designated as "England's wealthiest son" is still frequently mentioned in connection with Sintra in the Portuguese periodical press nowadays. In 1879, Manoel Bernardes Branco, in his work *Portugal e os estrangeiros* (1879, p. 85) besides referring to *Recollections* (BECKFORD, 1835), saying that Silva used it for the historical part of his novel *Lágrimas e tesouros*, also speaks of *Italy* (v. I, p. 73-137). Branco, knowing the translation of *O Panorama* and some excerpts of Cyrus Redding's *Memoirs*, came to the wrong conclusion that, besides *Recollections* and *Italy*, there was a third work devoted to Portugal, although he had never seen it. In his notes, Branco refers to *Vathec* [sic], saying that, although he had never seen it, he knew it was a novel through "some words by Lord Byron". Writing about what he calls *Journeys to Alcobça and Batalha*, he repeats the information that Rebelo da Silva used it and that he considers it worthy to be translated.

One of the most important cases in the history of the Beckfordian reception in Portugal is undoubtedly Carlos Malheiro Dias. Dias' name, like those of Alberto Pimentel, Rocha Martins and Júlio Dantas, to my knowledge have not been mentioned by other researchers before 1987. He is not much studied nowadays but because his most important literary work results from a productive reception of Beckford's texts he deserves to be mentioned with some detail in this essay. Carlos Malheiro Dias (1875-1941) was designated the last great romantic, the great disinherited of glory and the grandee of Portuguese letters. He lived in London and Brazil, being considered the ambassador of Portuguese intellectual life. He is practically forgotten today and some critics say he was marginalized because of political prejudices. One could obviously attribute this situation to the evolution of the taste of the reading public. His political option as a monarchist must, certainly, have been the cause why his literary production was marginalized. In the field of journalism, as much as director of *A Ilustração Portuguesa* as working at *Revista da Semana*, *O Cruzeiro* – which he founded – *O Correio da Manhã*, *Jornal do Brazil*, *O País*, and *Jornal do Comércio*, Dias proved to deserve the eulogistic tone of many of the reviews which

were published during his lifetime. As a novelist, his varied work, in which he assimilated historical themes and ‘transfigured’ them by his imagination, also deserved favourable references when he was still alive.

Here we have a Portuguese writer, who was attracted by Beckford’s personality and work, and in whose biography and interests we easily detect common points with the Englishman’s. What has been said above about Dias reveals that he may have chosen the figure of “that magnificent lord Beckford” and “secret emissary of the English politics” as one of the characters of one of his novels because he could detect in him some of the characteristics of “extreme sensibility to the tragic side of life”, which linked them. The fact that both had a long and (from a certain point of view) glorious personal and public life, which was not always easy, that they had multiple interests, and that they were not appreciated due to political prejudices, is evident to those who know their biographies and critical fortune. I detected his first references to “Lord Beckford” in the texts Dias published in *O Comércio do Porto*, which were later collected in a volume entitled *Cartas de Lisboa* (1904). In the chronicles of 1904, Beckford’s name is mentioned in Letter XXVI, entitled “Lisbon, the Fair”. In Letter IX, he considers Portuguese jewelry “memorable in Europe” and mentions the legendary incidents related to “the English Cresus” stay in Portugal, such as his offering “golden candelabra to the Queen” and building palaces to spend the Summer at Cintra, appearing to be surprised “at the abundance and beauty of the jewels that Portuguese women display in the streets, at the theatre, at home and at Court”. In his Letter XII, writing about the “feudal habits” of the noblemen, who, at the beginning of the 19th century, supported real populations of minions, “some decorated with the Orders of Aviz and Christ, who helped at the meals of the noble houses”, godsons and families of parasites in their manors, he reveals that the source of his inspiration, and perhaps of his information is “Lord Beckford”. Dias describes what he designates as “the parasite crowd that constitutes the feudal court of the Meneses family”, basing his text upon *Italy* (p. 188), invoking the testimony of Beckford, “who once counted fifty servants who were serving tea in a disorderly way at the Marquis of Marialva’s”. He also comments on the Portuguese

habit of displaying a body of coloured servants, a fact that had deeply impressed Beckford.

These are only a few examples of cases when the Beckfordian text acted upon this attentive Portuguese reader who later became a writer. Dias gets his inspiration from such descriptions of figures as “the most white and blond” Countess of Pombeiro, D. Rosa, “the African favourite”, and from descriptions as the serving of high tea in golden plated cutlery, the Marialva’s farm, at Marvila, the Convent of Mafra and the gardens of Queluz. Even when he refers to food, Dias mentions Beckford. One can also consider the hypothesis that even the very title of his work and its epistolary form – in which each chronicle constitutes a letter – may have been caused by his reading of *Italy*. On June 13, 1904, *A Ilustração Portuguesa* announced the publication of *O grande Cagliostro*. The name of the author is not mentioned, but we read that it is “a real masterpiece” and that it was “written purposely for this magazine”. It also includes some considerations about “José Bálamo, the belauded hero of so many magical scenes”. Two months later, the magazine started the publication of the “original historical novel by Carlos Malheiro Dias”. The serial was published regularly for around two years. The importance attributed to it by the editors and the readers is demonstrated by the fact that it was carefully and abundantly illustrated and by the prominent place it occupied. Sometimes the central pages of the magazine were filled with images of “His Excellency Lord Beckford”, who was depicted as “a tall and thin man, simply dressed, elegant with frills and lacy cuffs, his hair carefully powdered, wearing a black satin dress-coat and a golden sword.” In 1907, Dias – who was then the director of that “weekly magazine of the events of Portuguese life” – certainly moved by the success of the serial, decided to publish it as a book with the same title.

The importance of the figure of “Lord Beckford”, described as “a clever man who spies”, is also worth considering because through it we have access to what was the image of England in Portugal then. This interest increases because it was transmitted to the great public by one of the most popular means of communication. Dias, although presenting Beckford as “that protestant” (p. 149) and “that intriguing lord” (p. 200), cannot but express his admiration for “a cultivated

and superior man who is the dignified representative of a developed civilization” (p. 238).

Considering the significant symptoms of the reception of Beckford’s work that I find in *O grande Cagliostro* and the importance that the name of Malheiro Dias thus acquires in the history of that reception, I’ll focus him with more detail. With that objective I researched both Dias’ papers and his library trying to obtain information about the genesis of his work. Consulting his notebooks, where he registered his thoughts related to his literary production, I concluded that the figure of the hero José Bálsamo/Count of Stephanis/Cagliostro as well as that of Beckford interested him since long ago. The subject of this novel by Malheiro Dias is the description of the visit of the famous Cagliostro to Portugal in 1787. According to Dias, who inspired himself in a leaflet by the Marquis of Resende, it was during an evening entertainment at the Freire de Andrade’s that “the famous Italian impostor” met Beckford and that their two personalities collided. The idea of getting together in the same narrative: “the charlatan forger presented as a sage who possesses the secret of specific wonders, that converts mercury into gold, invokes the shades of the dead and cures illnesses...” (p. 137) may have been suggested by his reading Letter XVI of *Italy*. If that was the case, Dias selected one of the most curious of Beckford’s texts for his intensive work of appropriation. In that Letter, which has never been translated into Portuguese, Beckford tells us how he met a “Saxon Count”, at the Portuguese Ambassador’s, D. Luís de Noronha. When we read the description of the alleged Cagliostro made by Beckford, it seems quite obvious that Dias knew it (p. 220). Beckford relates this meeting in detail. The basis for this incident is in the curious short story *The mysterious visit*, that Dias could not have read, since it was only published in 1932 by John Oliver. It is Dias himself, when he relates Beckford’s meeting with Thessalónica, who tells us without any doubt how intimately he knew the text of *Italy*. This case – which I selected as an example – is just one among many others.

In order to show the process of appropriation and of productive reception more clearly, we need to compare Beckford’s and Dias’ texts. Concerning the Archbishop’s words, Dias confesses, in a footnote, that they “are entirely reproduced from Letter XXI by Lord Beckford, dated September 12, 1787”. Through this note we conclude that the author

of *O grande Cagliostro* did not read Beckford's work in English but in a Portuguese translation, in which – as we have already seen – the number of letters was reduced, Letter XXVII thus corresponding to Carta XXI. There is however a difference: in *Italy* Beckford's interview with the Archbishop occurs in Sintra, in the Swan Room of the Royal Palace, while in *O grande Cagliostro*, the meeting takes place at Caldas da Rainha. In Chapter XI, entitled "The secret emissary", there is also an adaptation of the text of *Italy*. When he relates the *rendezvous* with the Prince D. José, Dias attributes to his character Lord Beckford a description of the Palace of Palhavã that is the same of *Italy's* Letter VII. Almost all the elements of the part of *Italy* devoted to Portugal can also be found in the Portuguese text, such as "the ugly labyrinth", which curiously is not Dutch (p. 222) but Danish, and references to Aspasia and the roses. In spite of these similarities, Dias' work is, however, valid and original, thus confirming most of the theories about the history of reception. Dias attributes great importance to the oral tradition that sees "lord Beckford" as a spy, adding that he had been sent to Portugal to "secretly evaluate which of the two had more chances of winning: the Revolution or the Monarchy?" (p. 195). With this novel, in which he "works" on texts by another writer and on popular traditions, he demonstrates how a talented author can always put a personal mark on everything he writes. The success of the serial and of the book *The great Cagliostro* was such that his author was recognised as a novelist. A year later, there was a comedy based on the same theme and with the same title and Dias was again successful as a playwright. In a long and informative preface, Júlio Dantas (1916) speaks of the genesis of *The great Cagliostro* saying it was in the leaflet *Pintura de um outeiro nocturno* by the Marquis of Resende that the author found the source for his play, just as Marcelino Mesquita before him, in 1899, found his inspiration there for his play *Peraltas e sécias*.

Previously the figure of Cagliostro had inspired *Der grosse Kaphta* by Goethe, a comic opera by Scribe, and the play *Joseph Balsamo* by Dumas. But Dias connecting Cagliostro to William Beckford, who was well-known to the Portuguese public, assured the success he obtained with the serial, the novel and with "one of the most charming comedies that make Portuguese literature proud" (p. 224). The meeting of these two strange characters is not so incredible as one might think. The

Marquis of Resende mentions the presence at the evening entertainment in which Beckford participated of the famous Italian impostor Joseph Bálsamo who after travelling through Europe with assumed names of Marquis Pellegrini, of Earl of Harat, of Count of Phoenix, of Marquis of Annas and, finally, of Cagliostro. Carlos Malheiro Dias tells us in *Cartas de Lisboa* (I Série, 1904) that, according to his research at the Police Archives, in May 1787, a man called D. José, count of Stephanis, who “was actually the famous Cagliostro, who had run away from London” (p. 226) was in Lisbon and there were indeed several opportunities during which Beckford might have met Cagliostro. And, in London, as well as in Paris or Lisbon, the personality of the “great apostle of the franc-masons”, who was persecuted and expelled and who practiced alchemy and black ‘sciences’, would certainly attract Beckford. Dias centring the plot of his novel on the two foreign visitors, who were simultaneously so similar and so different, besides assuring the success of his work, demonstrates a deep psychological vision, which is rare in his time. Beckford’s name and work were thus mentioned and contributed to Portuguese literary productions in such popular fields as the theatre and newspaper serials. It is also noteworthy that Dias, like other Portuguese writers, sees Beckford as the Englishman would like to be seen and seems to try and do him justice. He is raised to nobility, and designated as “Lord” and “Sir William” and the Prince Regent D. José declares he wants to receive him with all the honours, ceremonial and etiquette (p. 228).

Nowadays, when we read in the *Journal* about all the effort involved in Beckford’s presentation to the Portuguese Court or when we see that in England the legend that persisted (and persists) was the one of the obdurate homosexual who participated in orgies, it is undoubtedly worth noticing how he was seen in Portugal in 1905. Another aspect of the reception of Beckford in Portugal is related to *Vathek* and to Dias’ work. In Dias’ Cagliostro there is something of the satanic figure of Vathek. Cagliostro can thus be included in the line of ‘fatal’ men, of Byronic heroes with features of Angel, Devil and God. He is also integrated in a topic of the “roman-feuilletons” in which the heroic and noble bandit has a double personality, which is evident even in the different names he uses. His ending as a victim of the Inquisition puts him in the same situation as Lewis’ Monk and Mrs

Radcliffe's Schedoni. But there may also be some other contribution of Beckford through the complex character of Eblis to the creation of the "adventurer, franc-mason, ruffian and wizard" (p. 28) and "supernatural man" (p. 34). Dias tells us that "Lord Beckford" feared him (p. 115), that Macchiavelli's blood ran in his veins (p. 51), Cagliostro was a wizard full of mysteries, who knew even state secrets, and was "an adventurer with the wisdom of a philosopher and the arrogance of a prince" (p. 198), thus reminding us of Eblis' description as "he displayed the full effulgence of his infernal majesty". The character of Lorenza, like that of Nouronihar in *Vathek*, is very ambiguous. She may be a naïve angel manipulated by Cagliostro (thus being in the line of persecuted female victims, like Gretchen, Clarissa and Pamela) or a coadjutant demon that actively participates in the stratagems of Bálamo/Cagliostro. Dias – unlike Beckford with Nouronihar – presents Lourenza as having "a still weak murmur of resistance in the depth of that domesticated and enslaved soul" (p. 72) in the presence of Cagliostro, "the corrupting and wicked god who had created her infertile and childish" (p. 76). Beckford's letters to Henley express the same doubt regarding his female character: "Is there something of the angel in the most hidden depths of that vitiated soul?"

The abovementioned aspects can be considered intrinsic to the character-types of the literary genre that Dias cultivated, in which there is historical reconstitution, adventure and violent passions. But another characteristic in Cagliostro's figure confirms that his creator read *Vathek*: the multiple references to the "flaming look" (p. 17) of the "adventurer" (p. 198). In the first description of Cagliostro, we read that "his fiery look immobilized the Police Superintendent" and that the presumed Earl of Stephanis had a "blazing look" (p. 17). It is also "Cagliostro's look" that keeps the Archbishop of Thessalónica motionless in his chair (p. 43). And, when he met "Lord Beckford", it was still the look of the "terrible beholder" that "penetrated the souls" (p. 48) that, at a distance, withers a bouquet of roses intended for D. Henriqueta Marialva. When we read in *O grande Cagliostro*: "The flaming look carried on his work of destruction" (p. 49) or that Lorenza: "fell speechless, as if struck by the blazing look that paralysed her will, neutralized her voice and closed her eyelids" (p. 76), it reminds us of the description of the grandchild of Haroun al Raschid. This satanic characteristic of Dias' hero is

common to some of Poe's or Gautier's characters, who could also have suggested to him this topic of romantic literature. Through Byron and Walter Scott, whose works were so popular in Portugal, Dias could also have known many of the elements, which characterize a villain-hero like, for instance, Childe Harold, Giaour or Marmion. But, among the English writers who dealt with the topic of the terrible fascination of the glance, we must however, at least attribute the primacy to Beckford. And knowing Dias' knowledge of Beckford's work, we can conclude that *Vathek* must have been the main source of inspiration for the figure of Cagliostro.

It is, however, after 1904 that Beckford begins to be present in the magazine *A Ilustração Portuguesa* not only due to the references made to his work or life but also because there was a process of productive reception. This was obvious mainly thanks to the interest of a newspaperman Francisco Rocha Martins (1879-1952). As so many others before him, Martins also wrote several articles about Sintra in which he speaks about "Beckford, that witty and millionaire Englishman, man of great taste and ill fortune" (p. 163), and of "Lord Beckford, that Englishman full of wit and of literature" (p. 164). A brief analysis of the literary production of Martins is enough to conclude that he deserves a special reference among the Portuguese who wrote about Beckford or appreciated his work. Besides mentioning him in several of his articles, Martins seems to have been directly influenced not only in his choice of topics but also in his style as is obvious in his weekly series entitled "Crónicas" (1904-1906) included in *Lisboa de ontem e de hoje*. Thus, the subject of the chronicle "Prophet in his own house" was Saint Anthony, and the processions were the topics of "Os círios", "O general São Jorge" and "Corpo de Deus" in which there is an 'appropriation' of the passage of *Italy* where Beckford depicts Marialva's homecoming after a pilgrimage. In "História dos velhos páteos de Belém e Ajuda", Beckford's influence is felt when Martins describes the Viceroy of Algarve as "an Angeja [who] spent his days slobbering and waiting to hear the bell playing Our Father to go along Junqueira hatless...". In "An oriental tale" I detect a Beckfordian inspiration through *Vathek*. Martins tells us here how "a certain caliph who dressed in gold and brocade, was shining like a star [...], "arrayed in the robes which were only worn at the most distinguished ceremonials [...]" "led the most dissolute life,

drank more wine, and smoked more opium, laughed and rejoiced, went to Mecca and astonished by the magnificence of his garments, of his retinue and of his horses” reminding us of the story of the ninth caliph grandson of Haroum al Raschid.

Rocha Martins does not mention *Vathek* nor its author but, in what can be considered a Freudian lapse, to illustrate his Chronicle he chose some photos of the Palace of Monserrate, that is related to him. On the other hand, at the end of the tale he includes a noteworthy paragraph: “I spend the nights in a very lazy way in a corner at the “Swiss” [a coffee-shop] listening to things Oriental for the pleasure of my readers, and which I am told by counsellor X in his soft and ironic voice “(MARTINS, 1945). This “counsellor X” with his ironic voice can represent the author of *Vathek*, a work Rocha Martins could easily read in any of its French versions. Beckford’s figure and his visits to Portugal interested Martins till he died. He wrote many articles in which he dealt with his favourite theme. In 1932, he wrote “Bocage e Lord Beckford” and, in 1946, “A visit of Beckford to Laveiras”, where he also speaks of Domingos Sequeira and of his stay at the “Carthusian convent of Caxias, where the friars lived”, whose head-house in Chartreuse Beckford had visited and described in an unforgettable way in *Italy*. In his essays entitled *Lisboa ontem e hoje* (1945), there are frequent references to “the illustrious Englishman”. Here Martins mentions again Marialva’s return from a pilgrimage on the other side of the river also related by Beckford saying: “In the mansion of the Marialvas at Belem, Beckford saw the most peculiar procession...”. He also makes the unavoidable references to the love affair of “Beckford, the great artist”, whose name seems to come to his mind in connection with whatever subject he mentions. When he speaks about the usage in Lisbon of “the women standing at the doors talking” he adds “that Beckford had already noticed it with sadness”. In the chapter devoted to “Old monasteries” he cannot but say about the Salesian convent: “where Beckford contemplates the beautiful students of Father Theodore de Almeida”.

But it was not only Rocha Martins who kept Beckford’s figure alive in Portugal. Other writers of minor works, full of information about a nostalgic past, seem to feel the same type of attraction for the “noble English artist” and “Beckford, the humorist” is mentioned in *Lisboa de outrora* (1938), a work by João Pinto de Carvalho. Carvalho

designated Beckford as “the most wealthy Sir William Beckford” and also “the father of the Duchess of Hamilton” and devoted one of the chapters of his book to Beckford “one of the most beautiful type of cosmopolitan [...] a full romantic before his time or a pre-romantic”. Although Carvalho did his bibliographic research – as we can see in his footnotes, which include references to J. Oliver, C. Redding, the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004), French magazines, such as *Nouvelle Revue Française*, and English and French editions of *Vathek* (such as the one of 1876 which contains Mallarmé’s preface) – there are some mistakes in his Chapter V, entitled “Beckford”. He says that “Sir William Beckford” was four times in Lisbon, in 1787, 1791, 1793 and 1798 and declares it was in 1791 that he lived “for one year at Monserrate, in his beloved Sintra”. Carvalho has, however, the merit of calling our attention to a fact not mentioned by any of his contemporaries. He comments on Carrère’s work *Tableau de Lisbonne* (1793) where we read that Dr Ehrhart, who had participated in the French Revolution, was, however, allowed to remain in Portugal and to be received at Court, because he was a member of Beckford’s retinue. The fact that Pina Manique exceptionally allowed it is rightly considered by Carvalho as a proof of the high esteem and appreciation the Portuguese Court had for Beckford (p. 100). Besides mentioning an attack Beckford suffered, Carvalho, in his research at the National Library, found documents, which confirmed that several pieces of Beckford’s furniture had been stolen (p. 103). He also found proof that some textiles and other objects for interior decoration had landed and passed through customs at the request of the “most cultivated rich man” (p. 107). In the sketch he makes of “Sir William Beckford’s” life, he mentions that he wrote *Vathek* in French at the age of twenty-one (p. 107) referring this information was “in his [Beckford’s] memoirs” (p. 243), thus assuming that *Memoirs of William Beckford* was written by Beckford and ignoring Redding. He also mentions three unpublished episodes of *Vathek* thus revealing not only knowledge of the details of Beckford’s life but also of the part of his work which had not been devoted to Portugal.

The work of Francisco Cântio (1940) belongs to the same type of literature as Martins’. Cântio mentions Beckford in 1939 saying: “[He] visited us at the end of the 18th century”. In *Lisboa de outros séculos*:

cem anos de pittoresco (1940), I notice a productive reception of Cântcio when he describes a street from Lisbon. He borrows from Beckford's texts, without even mentioning either him or his work. In *Figuras e casos do passado* (1942), Cântcio quotes Beckford saying: "as William Beckford wrote" (12). But, it is in *O Paço de Queluz*, (1950) that the quotations of *Italy* are more frequent as well as the references to its author as "the opulent English aristocrat" (p. 84). Here Cântcio quotes him when he describes the Earl of Vila Nova (p. 49) and the Duke of Lafões (p. 89). One of the texts is practically based on quotations from *Italy* and starts in a typically Beckfordian way: "While Beckford admired the roses, the month of May was passing in a deliciously luminous way" (p. 90). "Our Beckford" is also quoted concerning the theatrical performances at Condes (p. 101) and Salitre (p. 105), and the "modinhas", "the most bewitching melodies that ever existed since the time of the sybarites" (p. 106); a recital at the house of the old Chivalry Captain called Scarlatti (p. 107); the processions (p. 110) and "the lively watercolor of the return of one of the pilgrims to Lisbon" (p. 122); the Prince of Brazil, D. José (p. 169); Carlota Joaquina and dancing the "bolero" with Antonita (p. 325). Cântcio finishes his book making references to the "opulent Englishman and D. Pedro, Marquis of Marialva, both elegant, well-mannered, young and noble". But Cântcio, who is familiar with *Italy*, or with its translations, seems not to know *Recollections* for he declares that "Beckford, like Murphy, Ruders and Carrère, does not mention the *fofa*"; in fact that dance is mentioned when he visited the Monastery of Batalha (p. 42).

Among the editors of the magazine *A Ilustração Portuguesa* there is still a rather well-known writer who was interested in Beckford and whose works can be classified as productive reception, he is Júlio Dantas (1876-1962). Dantas seemed to have all the required conditions to become the fervent admirer of Beckford he proved to be for the rest of his life. He had a taste for the ephemeral and a fascination with opulence and cosmopolitanism. Among the countless articles that, from 1906 onwards, he wrote for *Ilustração Portuguesa* (24/9/1906, p. 239; 22/10/1906, p. 353; 28/5/1906, p. 513), some may have been inspired by his reading of Beckford's works, such as "Cintra, country residence of nobility", where Dantas describes "Lord Beckford wooing at Seteais" and "Lord Beckford, the friend of the Marialva House". In this article,

when he speaks of Ramalhão, Dantas even uses the same expressions as Beckford. In 1909, in an article entitled “Ambassador in Lisbon” (24/9/1906, p. 239) that although anonymous may be attributed to him, Dantas mentions Beckford about the sale of the Palace of Cova da Moura. It says that Beckford may have bought the mansion to Thomas Orne [sic], his agent and banker, in 1794, while he was waiting for a residence of his own. It includes two portraits, wrongly saying that one of them represents Beckford in his old age when it is the reproduction of a portrait by Sauvage when he was thirty-one! In his work *Outros tempos* (1916) there are descriptions of bullfights in Lisbon and references to Brazilian “modinhas”, to the carriages of the Court and also to “Lord Beckford” (p. 238). Dantas mentions Beckford when he writes about Princess Maria Benedita, the widow of the Prince of Brazil, describing her mourning and saying she “looks like a figure by Velasquez” (p. 288). “The very rich Englishman” (p. 151) is also mentioned about Bocage, “a beggar poet”. In *O amor em Portugal no século XVIII* (1916), Dantas, as Martins and Cândia before him, was influenced by Beckford borrowing his texts. In “Serenades of Queluz”, he makes a type of mimetic reception, when he describes the sisters Lacerda, the mulatto Caldas, the Earl of Pombeiro and the ladies-in-waiting and when, referring to the madness of the Queen, he ends the essay with the mad Queen locked up in the oratory yelling: “Ai, Jesus! Ai, Jesus!”. Dantas is mainly known as a playwright and Beckford’s shadow also hovers on his play *Carlota Joaquina* (1919) for, when he speaks of the Court at Queluz, Dantas ‘creates’ the figure of Antonita, the Spanish lady-in-honour of the Queen who sang *malagueñas* to the sound of castanets and brings to mind the scene depicted in *Recollections* (twelfth day). Dantas’ interest in “the young English millionaire” was still alive forty years later when he wrote a “Sunday Feuilleton” entitled “A propósito de Beckford” for the newspaper *Diário de Notícias*. Dantas refers to what he most admires in Beckford’s works as something he also finds in English painting: the ability to make portraits, sometimes made in only two or three lines, calling our attention to Beckford’s power of observation and deep psychological intuition. He thus recovers much of what can be designated as Beckford’s legend. Júlio Dantas, along his vast work, also reveals the interest he felt for Beckford. At the centenary of the death of the author of *Italy*, he wrote the above mentioned article

in which, besides designating him as the Catholic William Beckford, he asked who was the young dandy (who, we must not forget, was the *protégé* of Pitt) invested with any secret mission of a diplomatic nature. At the end of the article, Dantas, in a long paragraph, expresses his bewilderment at the ambiguous personality of the “great English writer” whose attitudes raise “legitimate doubts”.

Other highly considered authors in Portuguese literature were also thrilled by Beckford or by his work. One of them is Raúl Brandão (1867-1930), who, in his historical novel entitled *El-Rei Junot* (1912), also quotes from *Italy* and mentions Beckford’s letters and his descriptions. Brandão, in this novel, tells us that Beckford “travels in Portugal” (p. 22) and comments: “as the Lord says”. He even invokes him and encourages his reading public: “Read Beckford...” (p. 74). I conclude these reflections on Beckford’s reception in Portugal hoping to have clarified some points and quoting Iser’s illuminating words: “If a literary text does something to its readers, it also simultaneously tells us something about them”.

A RECEPÇÃO DE WILLIAM BECKFORD EM PORTUGAL

RESUMO

Neste artigo exploro novas pistas de investigação para o estudo da recepção de William Beckford em Portugal. A produção literária de Beckford, sua vida e *persona* pública foram uma fonte de inspiração para escritores, estudiosos e músicos em Portugal. Ele continuou vivo na memória crítica e popular através de traduções, obras literárias e de investigação e de ilustrações praticamente desde a sua primeira visita em 1787 até hoje. Ao longo do artigo, será possível ver como a imagem de Beckford evoluiu em Portugal.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Beckford, recepção literária, Portugal.

NOTAS

- 1 *Abbé* Xavier, as Beckford calls him, was an old friend of the Marialva family.
- 2 Beckford’s stays in Portugal occurred in 1787-1788; 1794-1796 and 1798.
- 4 “...mon affection pour le Portugal et mon désir d’y retourner ne cessera qu’avec mon existence...”, Letter to Jacinto Bandeira, 19/11/1804.

- 4 Beckford appreciated this red wine from the centre of the country as well as others which he kept buying in Portugal till his death.
- 5 The topic of the murder of the Prince's lover, which was treated by Camoens in the epic poem *The Lusíads*, is one of the most popular in Portuguese literature.
- 6 "O Palácio de Monserrate", *O Século*, 9/10/1898.
- 7 The lease was negotiated by Beckford's agent, Thomas Horne, who signed it.
- 8 Besides being a famous novelist, Rebelo da Silva is one of the most important Portuguese historians of the 19th century.
- 9 Carlos Malheiro Dias was a well-known journalist, novelist and playwright who lived his final years in Brazil.
- 10 The house was situated at Rua da Cova da Moura, near the Royal Palace of Necessidades.

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