

THE BECKFORD JOURNAL



VOLUME 11 SPRING 2005

The Beckford Journal

Volume 11. Spring 2005

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The Myriad-Minded Book Collector

JERRY NOLAN

In the catalogue of the Beckford Papers which are held in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, an item is listed as 'Beckford's Preface' with a note to the effect that he wrote an introduction dated 25 October 1834 to a selection of his reading-notes under the title *Flowers of nonsense and fruits of conceit culled from a library in the West of England*.¹ On first reading this catalogue entry, I immediately began to anticipate the discovery of Beckford's own considered view of his life-long obsession with note-taking in and around the vast range of books which over the previous fifty years he had bought, sold and stored in his libraries in the 'West of England'. I recalled that his most recent biographer Tim Mowl had concluded that during the 'dead, negative years' in Bath, Beckford planned to publish the 'venomous notes' which he had written in other men's books: "the title was to be 'Flowers'. Nothing came of it".² But then an actual reading of the brief 'Beckford Preface' revealed that the projected work was to have included extracts from the books attracting his most acerbic reactions:

Readers and reviewers, who do not always come into the former class, can hardly find time nor inclination to particularize the strange and fantastic passages which lie scattered throughout almost countless publications.

Enjoying more leisure than falls to the lot of every dabbler in Literature, I have made extracts on the fly leaves of most of the books in my library, a selection from which, accompanied by a few straggling observations of my own, may possibly afford amusement to persons not knowing how to dispose of an idle hour.

Many of the passages I have noted down are so incredibly absurd, so loftily conceited, and so arabesquely florid, that,

unless people submit to the drudgery of referring page by page to the books themselves I shall scarcely obtain credit for fidelity of transcription; I may mention however to pledge myself for their scrupulous exactitude. In many cases I have abridged – never amplified. Every line quoted in these volumes is to be found in the originals, and if these lines are too often ‘fruits of conceit and flowers of nonsense’, I am not responsible for their extravagance, my task has been merely to record curious ebullitions of egotism, and remarkable deviations from good sense, and good taste, found very often where least expected.³

No further material in connection with the Flowers project is to be found among the Beckford Papers.⁴ One can attempt to read between the lines of the Preface; it seems that Beckford intended to extend further the mode adopted in *Liber Veritatis* where he savaged the social pretensions of the newly promoted ‘nobility’ by now exposing the literary pretensions of a new generation of writers whom he regarded, after a lifetime of reading, as little more than ‘dabblers’. Such an annotated selection of the ‘Popular Writers’ in the early nineteenth century would have still left open to question the value of his own lifetime of compiling reading-notes.

In the earliest surviving notes, Beckford seems to have translated French into English. Later, as confident opinions developed, he would write his often caustic comments in English or French in the margins and on the pages of the books. Later still, as his knowledge of the world grew in leaps and bounds, he often made his notes on separate sheets of paper, usually of inferior quality, which would then be bound into the book, on occasion inelegantly, by his binders. By the 1830s Beckford must have been aware of others already expressing a significant interest in his reading-notes.

One of the most carefully compiled items in the Beckford Papers is the Transcript of Beckford’s Reading Notes made in ink

by the Abbé Ange-Denis Macquin (1756-1823) in immaculate handwriting which covers some 358 pages of a ledger. This gives the title, publisher, publication date and size of the work before copying out the reading-notes on each book pencilled by Beckford in the Fonthill Abbey library between 1815-1820. (MS. Beckford c.55.) The first book listed is Northcote's *Memoirs of Mr. Joshua Reynolds* (1813) and the final one is Joseph Spence's *Anecdotes, Observations and Characters collected from the conversation of Mr. Pope and Other Eminent Persons* (1820). One of Beckford's most enthusiastic notes, showing that his greatest interest often lay in what other eminent persons might view as marginal, was written in Spence's book: 'Delightful letter from Spence to his mother describing a play (entitled 'The Damned Soul') he saw at Turin. There is much humour and felicity of expression in this letter as in the very best of Gray and H. Walpole.' One of the longest lists of reading-notes in the Abbé's collection was taken from W. Coxe's *Poland, Russia, Sweden and Denmark* (1803) which showed just what an eagle eye Beckford had for the arresting detail to be discovered during travels in a distant country.

Unfortunately there are no references to the Abbé's great interest in and meticulous transcription of the reading-notes mentioned in the correspondence in French between Beckford and Macquin from 1806 to 1823 in the Beckford Papers other than questions of heraldry for Fonthill Abbey and Hamilton Palace, and of a mutual indulgence in swapping bitchy gossip.⁵ Yet the burgeoning friendship between the two is palpable in the exchange of letters bouncing between Fonthill and 7 Bermondsey Street with Macquin addressing Beckford as 'Monsieur et cher bienfacteur' and 'Monsieur et bien cher ami' and Beckford addressing Macquin as 'Mon cher ami' and 'Mon très cher Abbé'. Tim Mowl's view that Macquin was merely Beckford's 'learned, corrupt and cynical companion' is hardly supported by the surviving evidence.⁶ What would be quite an interesting

discovery would be Beckford's copy of *Tabella Cibaria*, a Latin poem about the pleasures of gastronomy and the mysteries of cooking, to which Macquin added copious editorial notes and which was published shortly before his death.⁷ A card index of books listed by Macquin was compiled by Boyd Alexander.⁸

Macquin's great interest in Beckford's notes is to be found among other contemporaries.⁹ 'Mr. Beckford's Critiques and Commentaries' a transcript of Beckford's notes on B. C. Walpole's *Recollections of the Life of Rt. Hon. Charles James Fox* (1806) and Sir Walter Scott's *Ministrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802-1803) appeared in the *County Literary Chronicle and Weekly Review* for 20 September 1823. Again very shortly after Beckford's death there appeared in *Mirror of Literature* n.s. 5 (1 June 1844) 'Notes on Buchanan's Memoirs, by the late Mr. Beckford' which had been found in David Irving's *Memoirs of George Buchanan* (1817). Then there was lot 735, 'Beckfordiana', in Part 1 of the 1882-1883 Beckford Library Sale at Sotheby's, described as 'Transcripts from the autograph Notes written by Mr. Beckford on the fly-leaves of various works in his Library, 7 vol. Manuscript, *very distinctly written, russia 7 vol. folio*', all of which had been compiled by the bookseller Henry G. Bohn and was bought by Quaritch for £156 to languish since in regions unknown!

Mindful of the high mountain to be climbed, various other attempts have been made to try to respond to the supreme challenge of developing a coherent view of Beckford's reading-notes as a whole. In his catalogue of the Beckford Papers, T. D. Rogers decided to include a special section 'Books from Beckford's Library in the Bodleian', most with reading notes, which are currently held in the Bodleian as a result of acquisitions at the Beckford Library Sale, 1882-1883, the generosity of Boyd Alexander and other purchases at various sales over the years.¹⁰ The volumes, with the date of publication, containing reading-notes include: Morris Birkbeck's *Notes on a*

journey through France (1814); Byron's *Sardanapalus / The Two Foscari / Cain* (1821); Conrad Gesner's *Historia plantarum et vires ex Dioscoride* (1541); William Godwin's *St Leon: a tale of the sixteenth century* (1799); V. M. Golovnin's *Recollections of Japan* (1819); Sir Francis Bond Head's *Rough notes taken during some rapid journeys across the Pampas and the Andes* (1826); Ebenezer Henderson's *Biblical researches and travels in Russia* (1826); Samuel Johnson's *A Diary of a journey into North Wales* (1816); A. H. Judson's *An Account of the American Baptist Mission to the Burman empire* (1823); Eustache Le Sueur's *La vie de St. Bruno* (1660); F. M. MacNab's *A theory of the moral and physical system of the universe* (1817); J. Mawman's *An excursion to the Highlands of Scotland and the English Lakes* (1805); R. Proctor's *Narrative of a Journey across the Cordillera of the Andes, and of a residence in Lima* (1825); Samuel Rogers's *Italy, a poem* (1823); E. I. Spence's *Sketches of the present manners, customs and scenery of Scotland* (1811); E. A. Talbot's *Five Years' residence in the Canadas* (1824); J. Wilson's *A journal of two successive tours upon the Continent, in the years 1816, 1817, & 1818* (1820). The diversity of books, even in this short selection, shows the wide-ranging research instincts of Beckford.

There are two compilations of reading-notes in the Beckford Papers. One, seeming for the most part to be very rough and ready pages, has scribbled headings of author's name and short title (MS. Beckford c.55, fols. 51-208), and another compilation of 231 leaves randomly assembled, collected together by T. D. Rogers when he catalogued the Beckford Papers. (MS. Beckford c.57, fols. 1-24.) Two of the books with a long list of reading-notes in the first compilation are Southey's *Brazil*. (MS. Beckford c.55, fol. 187) and Warner's *Bath* (MS. Beckford c.55, fol. 191). Beckford's reaction to Byron's *Childe Harold* is quite arresting for its display of a divided reaction: on the one hand, there was admiration for the many beautiful lines, but on the

other hand there was this telling response to Byron's tendency to produce 'bilge water': 'How comes the author of some of the most fervid and at the same time intensely delicate effusions in the English language suffer such lines as the following to escape him – "There's not a sea the passenger e'er puke in / Turns up more dangerous breaking than the Euxine." ' (MS. Beckford c.55, fols. 194-195.) Yet another source from which Beckford reading-notes has surfaced has been the catalogues which have listed the books and highlighted those with reading-notes to attract the eye of a purchaser. There were the catalogues listing the books from Hamilton Palace and sold at Sotheby's with the first auction beginning on Friday 30 June, 1882 – the whole sale lasted over many months with some eleven thousand titles being sold for about £74,000.¹¹

Many of these books for sale feature only Beckford's extremely sarcastic reactions to much of what he read. On minor writers we find the following dismissals: on Joseph Brasbridge's *Fruits of Experience* (1824): 'They who like Hog-Wash, and there are amateurs for everything, will not turn away disappointed or disgusted with this book'; on J. Galt's *Letters from the Levant* (1813): 'A specimen of Mr. Galt's own poetry about as harmonious as the screeching and grating of the wheels of a Portuguese dray'; on H. Vyse's *Operations at the Pyramids of Gizeh* in 1837: 'Boring without end – boring – boring – boring – nothing but boring... the thirstiest desert is not drier than Colonel Vyse's narrative.'; and on C. H. Gros's *Funeral Oration on the late Margrave of Brandenburg* (1807), Beckford could not resist pencilling near the assertion that the Margrave was never known to encourage the advances of a married woman, 'No to be sure for Lady Craven wanted no encouragement.' On major works like Gibbon's *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1781-1788) we find ten pages of scorching comments including 'your frequent distortion of historical Truth to provoke a gibe... your ignorance of the oriental languages... all the prurient and

obscene gossip of your notes... your tumid diction...'; on Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818): 'This is, perhaps, the foulest toadstool that has yet sprung up from the reeking dunghill of the present times'; and on Shelley's *Queen Mab* (1821) 'the very sort of production which may be supposed to have come forth on the eve of the avenging Deluge, just before the second father of mankind entered the Ark, when the original prick of human kindness had stiffened into a poisonous curd, and the abominable human animal, drunk with crime and with arrogance, with the strength of the Lion and the hoofs of the Ass, kicking off every trammel, pillaged, tortured and violated without restraint, spat in the face of Nature, and denied his God'.

James Lees-Milne has plausibly suggested that the apocalyptic power of such comments may well have sprung out of Beckford's first-hand experience of the French revolution in Paris.¹² Indeed he well understood Beckford's passionate hunger for books from his general scrutiny of the 9,837 Beckford books listed in Bohn's Hamilton Palace catalogues for the Sotheby 1882-3 sale. Lees-Milne summed up the wide range of subjects in Beckford's books as follows: Greek and Latin Classics, architecture, travel, engravings of paintings, theology, European literature, contemporary English poetry, witchcraft, magic, demonology and the bizarre.¹³ There were four other sales during Beckford's lifetime: 1804, 1808, 1817 and the Fonthill Sale of 1823 – in all, Beckford's books amounted to about sixteen thousand, many of them containing reading-notes written over a span of about sixty years – reading notes which ranged from abuse of a writer's opinion and style through some most interesting reflections on a vast range of topics to moments of magnificent self-revelation.

Boyd Alexander, Beckford's most outstanding biographer to date, paid close attention to Beckford as an extraordinary book lover from the age of twenty-two when he purchased rare books and manuscripts at the Crofts Sale in April 1783, and at the age of twenty-three when he was bidding successfully against the

Holy Roman Emperor and the King of France at the sale of the Duc de La Vallière.¹⁴

In the earliest stages of book collecting Beckford began to buy rare books such as part of Edward Wortley Montagu's collection of oriental manuscripts which he used to form his unique vision of the Orient, and continued to collect rare illuminated manuscripts ranging from the ninth to the sixteenth century which numbered about 800 at the Fonthill Sale of 1823.¹⁵ Beckford may well have developed the habit of periodically selling off books but then he sometimes bought them back, occasionally for less than he had sold them. Boyd Alexander drew particular attention to Gibbon's library which Beckford kept almost intact in Switzerland and the books left behind when he fled Paris in 1793.¹⁶ It is also to Boyd Alexander's great credit that he tried valiantly to document as best he could the reading-notes which had survived in Macquin's records and on those torn-off pages which he found among the Beckford Papers at Hamilton Palace.

During Beckford's productive Bath Years (1823-1844), his book acquisitiveness was intensified. Lees-Milne's explanation for this tendency is that 'he never forgot his folly and consequent misery in having parted with thousands of books to Farquhar in 1822',¹⁷ especially when he discovered that Farquhar had sold on 4,000 printed books and twenty-two manuscripts in 1823.¹⁸ There were no Beckford book sales during the Bath years.

Inevitably booksellers featured as very important people throughout Beckford's life, ranging from Thornton in London, Chardin in Paris, the Clarkes, father and son, in London, and finally H. G. Bohn who was still alive to catalogue and arrange Sotheby's Sale when Beckford's great grandson, indifferent to the heartfelt wishes of his grandmother (Beckford's daughter Susan) decided not to keep the collection together, thereby adding to the total of Beckford books in private collections, a decision that has been deeply regretted by those Beckfordians

who still feel the urge to sift through the reading-notes. Quite recently the quest for the recovery of Beckford's reading-notes has been taken up in two articles which have appeared in the *Beckford Journal*. There has been Gerlof Janzen's 'Beckford's Manuscript Notes in Two Travel Books from his Own Library'; the books with notes under discussion were William Dorset Fellowes's *Visit to the Monastery of La Trappe* (1818) and Louis Simond's *Journal of a Tour and Residence in Great Britain* (1817).¹⁹ Then there was Jon Millington's 'Beckford's Marginalia', which discussed the notes in Richard Boyle Bernard's *A Tour through some parts of France, Switzerland...* (1815).²⁰

What lingers most in my mind at the end of my exploration of what has been catalogued under 'Beckford's reading-notes' in the Beckford Papers is a vivid double-impression: the knowledgeable young man and the prophetic old man. The reading-notes made in the early 1780s after reading books about Africa, the Middle East and China are exemplary models of the young conscientious student keen to learn much from distant cultures. As one key example of his approach in the early days to learning about the various cultures across the globe, there is Beckford's great love of the Pagod in China, expressed most clearly in his translations in copperplate handwriting of the French text of the Jesuit scholar Athanasius Kircher (1602-1680) in *La Chine*: 'But few are admitted into the secret of the Pagod, where the living idol is discovered – under a constellation of lamps. Those who are denied this satisfaction content themselves with viewing their Pontif's Image exposed in a stately porch at the entrance of the palace illuminated by tapers of perfumed lights which are never extinguished.' (MS. Beckford c.55, fol. 20). Then there followed the pencil and pen-and-ink sketch of the Pagod at Ixora, which seems to be Beckford's own sketch which he based on Kircher's descriptions. (MS. Beckford c.55, fol. 41v.) Boyd Alexander bequeathed to the Bodleian Library a copy of Kircher's *La Chine*

(1670), in diced Russia, gilt (probably by Baumgarten) with Beckford's signature, dated 1778, on the frontispiece.

Today the old man Beckford seems presentient in his nailing of two contemporary books. First, there was *On Enquiry into the Origins of Christianity* by Charles Hennell (1809-1850). Beckford noted on 17 December 1841 that Hennell's 'pruning knife' cut Christianity to the very quick by cutting off 'the miraculous' and was a prime example of a 'foul prevailing taste' which was typical of what was appearing in a new line of publishing. Beckford's overall conclusion was that Hennell was a mighty cool and composed infidel who would 'send us to sea without compass or rudder, on what strand to be drifted may too easily be imagined.' (MS. Beckford c.55, fols. 210-213.) Hennell's book was first published in 1838 and the German translation followed in 1839 with an introduction by David Friedrich Strauss (1808-1874) who had published in 1835 his iconoclastic book *Das Leben Jesu, kritisch bearbeitet* (The Life of Jesus, Critically Examined). This work had subjected the supernatural element in the Christian Gospels to a form of historical criticism which had concluded that the Gospels were simply riddled with myths. A close friend of Hennell, George Eliot, published her first book in 1846 – a translation of Strauss's work. Beckford's instincts to question these tendencies in their infancy showed just how much he felt in sympathy with traditional approaches to religion, a tendency which he had first displayed in his selected translations of Kircher.

The second fashionable trend which Beckford detected was patronising republicanism, which he found in his reading of *Pleasant Memories of Pleasant Lands* by Mrs. Sigourney (1791-1865) published in Boston in 1842.²¹ Beckford noted that the memoirs of Mrs. Sigourney, formerly Lydia Huntley, seemed to him to amount to little more than 'a drama of self conceit' and that the author's republican spite, similar to 'our ribald newspapers', was lurking at the bottom of virtually all her

remarks, although the remarks were ‘sometimes concealed snake-fashion’. Beckford went on: ‘She would feign laugh to bitter scorn all feudal distinctions, and yet that innate hankering after titles, so general amongst her country folk breaks out in her pages like those utterances erupting no pill or potion can subdue.’ The climax of Beckford’s response was the penning of a poem dated 20 January 1844, just a few months before his death on 2 May:

Gladly I hail the choice intelligence –
Still I can scarce conceal a lurking wish
That you had never longed to scribble books,
But kept immaculate your paper quires
To wrap up raisins or help make a kite
That milk-white object soaring in the air
So prettily – prettier far – I guess
That all your Yankee-ship will ere compose.
(MS. Beckford c.53, fols. 214-215)

When Beckford wrote these reading-notes on Hennell and Sigourney he probably revelled in being the cold eye and solitary voice protesting against the most recent trends in religion, social commentary and politics, so at odds with what he had learned to respect and treasure as a young man.

Probably the quest for Beckford’s reading-notes will never end. Doubtless many Beckford books still moulder unread in private collections across the globe. It is to be hoped that the virtual impossibility of assembling the full evidence will not deter Beckfordians in their quest for a growing knowledge of *Beckford, Book Lover Extraordinary*. My conclusion based on the evidence so far is that Beckford was not a mere magpie book collector and that the state of current knowledge about his libraries indicates his possession of a myriad mind.

1. *Catalogue of the Papers of William Beckford (1760-1844)*, compiled by T. D. Rogers, Oxford: Bodleian Library, 1987, ‘5. Reading-notes’, pp. 39-40.

I am grateful for the invaluable support of Colin Harris and his staff in Room 132 ('Modern Papers') of the Bodleian Library during my research for this article.

2. Timothy Mowl, *William Beckford: Composing for Mozart*, London: Murray, 1998, 293.
3. MS. Beckford c.55, fols. 218-219.
4. What has been identified in the *Catalogue* as a draft of the Preface, MS. Beckford c.84, fol. 70, amounts to little more than illegible scribbles.
5. The correspondence is to be found in MS. Beckford c.14, c.19, c.23, c.29, c.35.
6. Mowl, 262.
7. See Ange-Denis Macquin, ed, *Tabella Cibaria. The Bill of Fare: a Latin Poem, Implicitly Translated and Fully Explained in Copious and Interesting Notes, relating to the Pleasures of Gastronomy, and the Mysterious Art of Cooking*, London: Sherwood, Neely & Jones, 1820. The neo-Latin poem in which Macquin praises the joys of numerous dishes consists of 12 pages; and following the poem there are over 90 pages of notes, commentary, anecdotes and recipes written in English.
8. Bodleian MS. Eng. Misc. f.857, fols. 134-302, continued in MS. Eng. Misc. f.858.
9. I am indebted to Jon Millington for alerting me to the references in *County Literary Chronicle and Weekly Review*, 20 Sept 1823, 602 and *Mirror of Literature* n.s. 5 (1 June 1844): 341-343.
10. See *Catalogue of the Papers*, 72-85.
11. I am grateful to Sidney Blackmore for a transcript of some notes which he made from the Sotheby sales catalogues of 1882-1883, 1966 and 1975 (25 pp.)
12. James Lees-Milne, *William Beckford*, Tisbury, Wilts: Compton Russell, 1976, 108.
13. Lees-Milne, 106.
14. Boyd Alexander, *England's Wealthiest Son*, London: Centaur Press, 1962, 12-13.
15. Boyd Alexander, 100.
16. Boyd Alexander, 288.
17. Lees-Milne, 105.
18. Boyd Alexander, 196.
19. *Beckford Journal* 2 (1996): 9-16.
20. *Beckford Journal* 5 (1999): 48-52.
21. See G. S. Haight, *Mrs. Sigourney: The Sweet Singer of Hartford*, Yale, 1930, for an alternative view of Mrs. Sigourney's long career as a writer.

The Search for a Lost 'Greek' Statue

NORMAN KITZ

William Beckford was one of the great art collectors of the eighteenth/nineteenth centuries and a man of particularly enlightened taste. At Christie's sale of the contents of Pains Hill, held on 23 October 1797, Beckford bought the antique statue of Bacchus that his great-uncle, the Hon. Charles Hamilton, had brought from Rome some sixty years before.¹ For that statue Hamilton had paid the record price for the time of 1000 gold guineas.² The most the Pope himself had ever paid for such an object was 1000 silver scudi, and that was for a Roman copy of the Apollo Lykeios by Praxiteles which now adorns the Capitoline Museum.³ It is evident that Hamilton thought that he had purchased something much more special.

In Beckford's time attributions to a particular sculptor were not particularly advanced, but on the authority of John Britton⁴ he believed his Bacchus was of the finest Greek workmanship. Beckford was extremely proud of the sculpture which stood in a niche dominating the Great Dining Room at Fonthill Splendens.⁵

However, Beckford was a man of many moods and at this time his mind was becoming filled more and more with the gothic. He had already commissioned a building from James Wyatt in that style on a part of his estate. During construction Beckford constantly asked for changes and improvements, as he was now dreaming not so much of a house as a cathedral; indeed, the completed edifice was to be exceptional in many ways. At last, in 1807, Beckford moved into a building, the Abbey, still very much incomplete. All the same, he ordered the destruction of most of his father's grand Palladian mansion where he had lived since childhood. The contents were dispersed at a sale that lasted seven days. According to a contemporary report, 'all the rank and opulence of the adjacent counties [were present]... every day an



‘Bacchus’. Courtesy The National Trust, Anglesey Abbey.

assemblage of the most beautiful females, each seeming to vie with the other in the display of their taste in dress. The company... bestrewed themselves over the verdant hills... to enjoy their cold collations'.⁶ The sales were conducted in a quiet dignified manner by Mr Phillips and exceptionally high prices were realised. A prominent buyer was Mr Abbott,⁷ who purchased a number of Beckford's pieces, including the Bacchus which Phillips had described as a 'celebrated and unique statue'.⁸

But who was Mr Abbott and where did the Bacchus go? Searches of public collections, county archives, universities and museums, conducted over several years, proved of no avail. Then, out of the blue, came a letter from a fellow researcher of Pains Hill who had turned his attention to another great landscaped park, Hafod, in the Principality of Wales. He said that the Bacchus had once been in the mansion there. The Friends of Hafod were immediately contacted and provided a variety of references. Nicholson, in his *Cambrian Traveller's Guide*,⁹ explained that Mr Abbott was the steward of Thomas Johnes of Hafod which had recently been severely damaged by fire. Johnes wanted to restore it with even grander furnishings than before, and Beckford's possessions were ideal for the purpose. In his description of the Hafod interior, Rees said that in the hall, paved in Mona marble, was a statue of Bacchus of the heroic size which was formerly at Pains Hill.¹⁰ He went on to note that many of the rooms were enriched by carved marble chimneypieces from Fonthill, and that in the long library there were three magnificent French mirrors from the same source. For the lifetime of Thomas Johnes the Bacchus was to adorn the entrance hall, and afterwards it remained in a lonely shut-up house for fifteen years whilst the future of the estate was decided in Chancery.¹¹ In 1832 Hafod was bought by Henry Pelham, fourth Duke of Newcastle. He found a house which had been neglected since Thomas Johnes had left it, for reasons of poor health, in 1815, and now it was in need of extensive redecoration. When that task was completed

the Duke, no doubt to his surprise, found a house filled with Beckford treasures. His son and heir had just married a daughter of Susan, Duchess of Hamilton, younger daughter of William Beckford. Evidently the two ladies wanted those treasures to be taken to the family seat at Clumber because, over the next few years, the Duke gradually removed them there. Not so the Bacchus, possibly because it was not perfect, having suffered minor damage whilst at Fonthill. So, on 12 February 1839 it was sent to Christie's for private sale.¹² From that day onward the Bacchus, regarded by Gilpin as one of the best antiques in England,¹³ was not to be heard of again for a century and a half.

Knowing that the Bacchus had been at Hafod still did not tell us where it went from there. So a search had to be undertaken for a statue the appearance of which was not known and which had been missing for so long that it was unlikely that anyone alive would remember anything about it. It was known that the Hon. Charles Hamilton had bought at least one marble from the Giustiniani collection in Rome which had been dispersed in the seventeenth century. It seemed possible that Hamilton might also have bought the Bacchus from there. In their hey-day the Giustiniani published two splendid volumes of engravings of their collection.¹⁴ When these were consulted they were found to contain a Bacchus and it was assumed, wrongly as it turned out, that it must be that at Pains Hill. In January 1990 a letter was sent to *Country Life* together with a photograph of the Giustiniani Bacchus, asking whether any reader had ever seen such a statue.¹⁵ A few disappointing replies were received, but several years later the enquiry bore fruit with a letter from Philip Hewat-Jaboor who was also interested in the Bacchus because of the Beckford connection. His suggestion that it might be found at Ashridge was not confirmed by the archivist or his predecessor. Their statuary collection never included a Bacchus and is now dispersed, much of it to a National Trust property.

A further suggestion that it might well be at Anglesey Abbey

revealed that they did have a Bacchus of heroic size and they promptly sent a faxed illustration of it.¹⁶ Their statue was not the Giustiniani, as expected, but was indeed the Pains Hill one because a close inspection of the image revealed repairs identical to those described by both Britton and Warner. An immediate visit followed and there, standing in a copse, was an incredibly beautiful statue of Bacchus. Seeing it for the first time was a great surprise; John Britton had said it was of the finest Greek workmanship, but what he had not said was that it was very much in the manner of Praxiteles, the greatest sculptor of all time. Now it became clear that Charles Hamilton had bought a unique masterpiece which, even at 1000 guineas, was still, in the opinion of John Hassell, ‘absolutely stolen from Rome’.¹⁷

The Roman historian Pliny made a list of Praxiteles’s statues which included a Bacchus; only one of his statues has survived. What we know of Praxiteles’s great skills derives from the multiple copies the Romans made of that master’s works. Hamilton said that his statue was ‘the best this side of the Alps’.¹⁸ Current scholarly opinion believes the figure to be a first century Roman marble after a lost Greek original which in no way lessens the importance of its enlightened purchase by Charles Hamilton.

The author would like to thank Philip Hewat-Jaboor, Alastair Laing and Philip Warner for their help in the preparation of this article.

1. *Gentleman’s Magazine* 67 part 2 (Oct 1797): 816, and *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, ed. Kenneth Garlick & Angus Macintyre, New Haven: Yale University Press for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 1979. 10 Nov 1797: ‘The Statue of Bacchus, which was bought for Mr. Beckford, is 7 or 8 feet high. The Trunk & Head of the figure only are original – all the other parts are added. Nollekens, for himself would not have given 90 guineas for it – to Connoisseurs it might be worth 200 or £250 – Ld. King bid for it – Beckford had it for £400. Bonomi said that Mr. Hamilton told him that He bought this Statue in Rome in the year 1727 and gave £2000 for it – Nollekens does not believe it was ever sold at such a price.’ 3:921.
2. John Hassell, *Picturesque Rides and Walks, with Excursions by Water*,

- Thirty Miles round the British Metropolis*, 2 vols., London, 1817-1818, 2:268.
3. *The Capitoline Museums*, Rome: Electa, 2000, 70.
 4. John Britton, *The Beauties of Wiltshire*, 2 vols., London: Vernor & Hood, etc., 1801, 2:233.
 5. Richard Warner, *Excursions from Bath*, Bath: R. Cruttwell, 1801, 126. Philip Hewat-Jaboor, 'Fonthill House: "One of the Most Princely Edifices in the Kingdom"', in *William Beckford 1760-1844. An Eye for the Magnificent*, ed. Derek E. Ostergard, 64-65 & nn. 172-174. New Haven & London: Yale University Press for the Bard Graduate Centre, 2001.
 6. *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, ed. James Greig, London: Hutchinson, 1924. Editor's footnote, 4:197.
 7. *Gentleman's Magazine* 77 part 2 (Sept 1807): 880.
 8. Phillips. Fonthill, 17-22 & 24 Aug 1807. Pictures, furniture, etc. Lot 623.
 9. George Nicholson, *Nicholson's Cambrian Traveller's Guide*, 3rd ed., corrected by Emilius Nicholson, 1840, 275.
 10. Thomas Rees, *A Topographical and Historical Description of South Wales*, London: Sherwood, 1815, 423. *Beauties of England and Wales* series.
 11. R. G. Thorne, 'Johnes, Thomas (1748-1816)', in *The House of Commons 1790-1820*, ed. R. G. Thorne, 4:310-311. 5 vols. London: Secker & Warburg for the History of Parliament Trust, 1989.
 12. Fourth Duke of Newcastle's Papers. University of Nottingham. Ref. Nec 8449.
 13. Gilpin Notebook, 1765. Bodleian Library, MS. Eng. misc. e.522, fols. 24-31.
 14. *Galleria Giustiniana del Marchese Vincenzo Giustiniana*, 2 vols. Rome, 1640
 15. *Country Life*, 11 Jan 1990, 88.
 16. See Philip Hewat-Jaboor, 'Fonthill House'.
 17. Hassell, 2:268.
 18. Joseph Spence (1699-1768), *Observations, Anecdotes, and Characters of Books and Men*, 2 vols., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966. Charles Hamilton "Has been twice in Italy (first at the Jubilee of '25 and afterwards in '32, when he dined with Lord Middlesex at Sir John Collins's). Has lived 22 months in Rome (palace in the Corso) and kept company much with the nobility of the country. Bought his noble Bacchus of one of them with a promise of secrecy. 'Would not part with it for its weight in gold – the best on this side of the Alps,' [he remarked] twice or thrice.", 1:418, Entry no. 1103. Also: Temple to Bacchus, 1:417, Entry no. 1101.

Henry Venn Lansdown, 1804-1860

JON MILLINGTON

One of the few people to have known Beckford in his old age was a Bath artist, Henry Venn Lansdown. Fortunately he recorded his impressions in an obituary, but he is better known today for his *Recollections of the Late William Beckford of Fonthill, Wilts and Lansdown, Bath*. It contains five accounts cast in the form of letters; four were written between August and November 1838 and they described the pictures and works of art at Lansdown Crescent and the Tower, a visit to Tower, conversations with Beckford, and reminiscences of him. In the final letter, Henry recounted a visit to the ruins of Fonthill Abbey and grounds on 28 October 1844. From the date of the first letter, we know that he was introduced to Beckford on 21 August 1838, so they knew each other for the best part of six years.

Recollections was privately published by his eldest daughter Charlotte in an edition limited to one hundred copies in 1893. In her introduction she said, 'The Manuscript of the following Letters, written by my Father, has been in my possession fifty years.' This is unlikely, as in 1843 she would have been just one year old, and in any case the last letter had not yet been written. She went on to say, 'He intended to publish it at the time of Mr. Beckford's death, in 1844, but delayed the execution of the work, and sixteen years afterwards was himself called to enter on the higher life of the spiritual world.'

However, she did not claim that these letters were addressed to her, although it has always been assumed that they were. Indeed, all except the last were written in 1838, four years before she was born, so they were probably written to Henry's sister, also called Charlotte.¹ His daughter's role may well have been to copy out the letters for publication, at the same time omitting any personal references. Apart from the 'My Dear Charlotte' at the beginning

of the first letter, there are no asides that would be expected when one member of a family writes to another; the letters read more like extended diary entries. Whatever the truth is, we can only be grateful to Charlotte the younger for publishing this very important and readable account which vividly conveys Beckford's rapport with a local artist less than half his age. In 1969 the Kingsmead Press of Bath issued a facsimile edition of 750 copies, and in June last year the letters were reprinted again.² Her original manuscript was in the 'William Beckford of Fonthill' exhibition at Yale University Library in 1960³ and is now in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library there.⁴

Lansdown's obituary of Beckford was published in the *Bath Herald* on 18 May 1844. It was reprinted a few days later in *The Times* and again in William Gregory's *The Beckford Family* (2nd ed., 1898), as noted in my essay in the *Beckford Journal*.⁵ In this eulogy, Lansdown said:

It may well be questioned whether any individual ever united greater knowledge and taste in all the sister arts... He designed almost every building and piece of furniture that he possessed... His collection of pictures contained selections of the works of almost every painter of eminence in all ages... His house was one vast library; and there was scarcely a book that was not full of remarks in his own writing.

Details of Lansdown's career are sketchy, but what follows is an attempt to gather together the little that is known about him. Some information can be gleaned from John Francis Meehan who owned a number of his drawings, using some of them to illustrate a series of articles on the famous houses of Bath and district in a monthly magazine, *The Beacon* (Frome, Somerset). He reissued them in two books, published in 1901 and 1906. In the first article he wrote:

Mr. Lansdown was born in 1806 [1804] at High Littleton, near

Bath. When a youth, he studied landscape painting under Benjamin Barker [of Bath (1776-1838)]. He resided for some time in Paris, Malta and Sicily; but "chill penury repressed his noble rage," and in 1830 he was obliged to return to Bath, where he resided for about twenty years [actually 1837-1852] at 20 Great Stanhope Street; here he was visited by "Fonthill Beckford" and the *literati* of Bath. From about 1850 to the date of his death, in January 1860, he delighted his large and celebrated circle of friends with his drawings of the many "Famous Houses of Bath."⁶

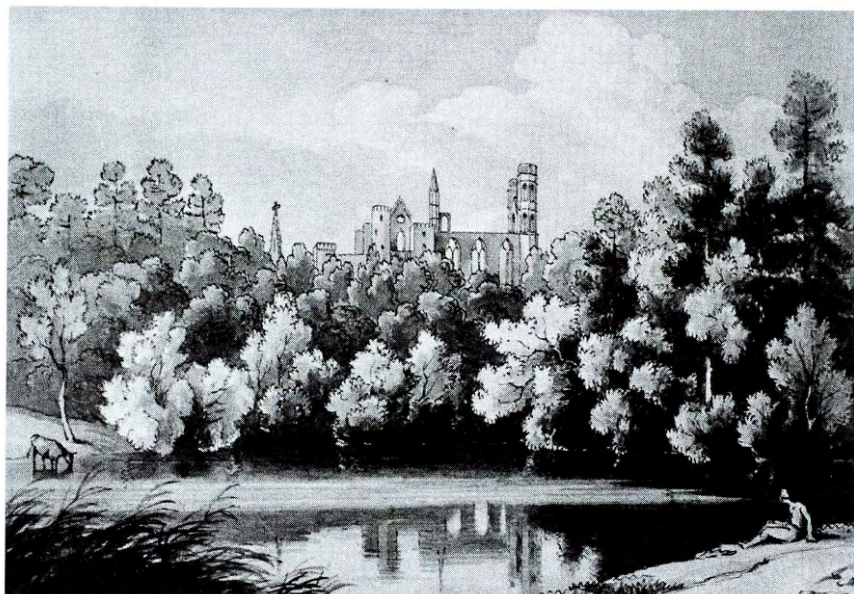
His other addresses in Bath were 10 Orange Grove where he lived 1835 to 1837 and, from 1854, 23 Upper Camden Place.

In a short obituary the *Gentleman's Magazine* said:

Mr. Lansdown was a man whose professional merits as a artist were, we fear, somewhat overlooked. At the Annual Meeting of the Archæological Institute held in Bath in July, 1858, he read a valuable paper, "On the Houses in Bath formerly inhabited by Men of Eminence;" the information communicated in that paper, as well as the research it exhibited, illustrated too, as it was, with his admirable drawings of the several mansions referred to, excited much interest. In the death of Mr. Lansdown, Bath has to lament the loss of an artist whose professional skill has served in no small degree to perpetuate "the long glories" of that celebrated city.⁷

Some of his drawings for the paper mentioned in this obituary also illustrated the preceding talk, 'Domestic Architecture of Bath at different periods', by J. H. Markland (President, Bath Literary Society). Later he 'paid a well-merited compliment to the talents and exertions of Mr. Lansdown, whose drawings were well deserving of being perpetuated by the engravers.'⁸

From a register of Bath artists by Reginald Wright we learn that he was a drawing master and topographical artist who showed at the first exhibition of the Bath Society for the



The Ruins of Fonthill Abbey from Bitham Lake. Sepia watercolour by Henry Venn Lansdown. c.1844. MS. Eng. misc. c.892, fol. 2, reproduced by kind permission of the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford

Encouragement of Fine Arts in Quiet Street, 1836-1837 and at the Society's second exhibition in 1838, where he was represented by three paintings: 'Castle of Chillon Villeneuve, Lake Geneva', 'An Egyptian Turk in morning dress' and 'Bridge on Rhone, near Avignon'.⁹ Wright said he was a pupil of Thomas Barker, contradicting Meehan who thought it was his less famous brother Benjamin.

Among Boyd Alexander's papers at the Bodleian Library, Oxford, is a pencil and wash sketch, 'Ruins of Fonthill Abbey from the Bittern Lake'.¹⁰ The undated sepia sketch of the ruined Abbey rising above trees is seen from the south side of Bitham Lake, and reflected in its waters. There is a glimpse of the Eastern Transept towers and the gable-end of the Great Western Entrance; above this is the niche containing the statue of St.

Anthony surmounted by a boldly depicted cross. In the foreground a drinking cow on the left is balanced by a resting traveller on the right.

We can be more certain about the date of another view of the ruins, as it is signed and dated 'Lansdown del^t 1844' in the bottom left-hand corner. It was probably executed during his visit to Fonthill in the autumn of that year, and is a fascinating black and white watercolour of the remains of the Great Western Hall and the avenue beyond. To give a sense of scale, Lansdown introduced a figure standing at the gigantic entrance. What he depicted accords with his description:

We passed through briars and brambles into the great octagon. Straight before us stands the western doorway of the noble entrance hall; but where is its oaken roof, with its proud heraldic emblazonments, where its lofty painted windows, where its ponderous doors, more than 30ft high? The cross still remains above, as if symbolical that religion triumphs over all, and St. Anthony still holds out his right hand as if to protect the sylvan and mute inhabitants of these groves that here once found secure shelter from the cruel gun and still more cruel dog.¹¹

We can only marvel that at this late date so much of the Great Western Hall had survived; two years later the Abbey ruins were cannibalised to create a wing to the remaining northern portion, after which the rest was cleared away.

Most of Lansdown's surviving works are drawings and watercolours of views in or near Bath, and there are over a hundred (including a number of duplicated views and thirteen bought from Meehan's estate in 1914) in the Victoria Art Gallery,¹² with many dating from the 1850s. Perhaps this productivity was encouraged by Bath Graphic Society which flourished then under William Noble Hardwick (1805-1865). Two views of particular interest are sepia ink wash drawings of Beckford's tomb, reproduced here for the first time, and the



The Ruined Great Western Hall of Fonthill Abbey.
Black and white watercolour by Henry Venn Lansdown.
Signed and dated 1844. Private collection

Tower. Both were executed around 1855, and the one of the Tower from the south showing cattle in the foreground appeared, approximately full-size, on the cover of the 1996 edition of the guide, *Beckford's Tower, Bath* and on the back of the 2002 edition as a vignette. Lansdown was also a skilled copyist, and this included making copies of his own work. There is, for example, at least one other version of his drawing of the Tower; very similar to the one in the Victoria Art Gallery, Bath, and almost the same size; it is reproduced opposite.

Lansdown's parents were Joseph Lansdown (1779-1867), a tallow chandler and soap boiler, of High Littleton, ten miles south west of Bath, and Charlotte Venn (1780-before 1838) of Payhembury, near Honiton in Devon, and they were married on 15 April 1803.¹³ When they moved to Bath some time before 1809, he was in the same business, but in 1827 set up as a coal merchant. Henry, the eldest of their eight children, was baptised on 22 May 1804, and married Mary Ann Emery (1814-1874) of Worle, Somerset, on 17 April 1832.¹⁴ They had four sons, Theodore (1834), Henry (1836), Edward (1838) and Lewis (1840), and four daughters, Charlotte (1842), Mary (1843), Sarah (1848) and Theodora (1850) who was the only daughter to marry. It probably fell to Charlotte, as the eldest daughter, to publish her father's recollections of Beckford, while her brothers pursued their careers and attended to their own families. On leaving home she lived with Mary for the rest of her life, and Sarah also lived with them until her death in 1883. Charlotte variously described herself in the 1871-1901 Censuses as assistant governess, school teacher, private teacher and retired school governess, and she died in 1910 at Axbridge, Somerset, aged 67. Mary lived on until 1934, dying at Bath aged 91.

In his last days Henry Venn Lansdown was admitted to Brislington House, to the east of Bristol. Founded by Dr Edward Long Fox, it was one of the first private asylums for the treatment of mental ill health. Lansdown died there in January 1860 at the



Beckford's Tower, Bath, from the south.
Sepia watercolour by Henry Venn Lansdown. c.1855. Private collection

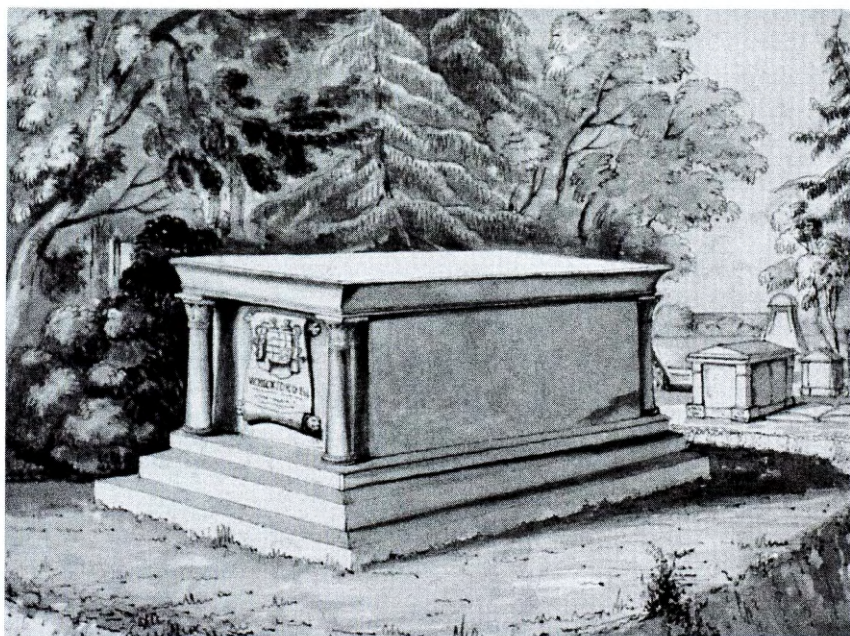
age of 55, and his death certificate gave the cause of death as 'Collapse consequent of an attack of Acute Mania'. It is likely that his stay at the asylum was a short one, since the *Post Office Bath Directory* for 1860-1861 (probably published in autumn 1859) listed him as still living at 23 Upper Camden Place. He was buried at Bathwick Cemetery, Bath.

I would like to thank my wife for much valuable advice and the suggestion that the Charlotte to whom Lansdown wrote his letters was his sister rather than his eldest daughter. My grateful thanks also to Bob Grace, Colin Hunt, Susan Mozar and Catherine Nicolson for information about the Lansdown family.

1. At the time of the 1881 Census she lived, as head of the household, aged 72, with her nieces, Charlotte, Mary and Sarah at 12 Kensington Place, Bath. Her nephew, Henry V. Lansdown, a student aged 16, was also living there. Her death was announced in the *Bath Chronicle*, 12 March 1891, 5d: 'March 9, at 8 Lower East Hayes, Kensington, Charlotte, last surviving child of the late Mr. Joseph Lansdown of Bathwick, aged 81.'
2. Kessinger Publishing, Whitefish, Montana, 2004, who have also made it available on the Internet. There is another Internet version, this one free, on the Beckfordiana website, <http://beckford.c18.net/recollectlansdown.html>.
3. Howard B. Gotlieb, *William Beckford of Fonthill. Writer, Traveller, Collector, Caliph. 1760-1844*, New Haven: Yale University Library, 1960, pp. 79-80, item 246.
4. William Beckford Collection. Gen MSS 102. Box 10 No. 245. Boyd Alexander had a photostat made and this is in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS. Facs. d.291. Extent: 105 leaves.
5. *Bath Herald*, 18 May 1844, 3; *The Times*, 23 May 1844, 6a; and Jon Millington, 'William Gregory's *The Beckford Family*', *Beckford Journal* 9 (2003): 48-49.
6. J[ohn] F[rancis] Meehan, 'Famous Houses of Bath. No. 1. Nassau House ("Prince of Orange House"), Bath', *The Beacon* (Frome, Somerset) 1 no. 2 (Feb 1898): 23. Reprinted as 'Nassau House, Orange Grove' in his *Famous Houses of Bath and District*, Bath: B. & J. F. Meehan, 1901, 1-3.
7. *Gentleman's Magazine* n.s. 8 (Mar 1860): 303-304.
8. *Archaeological Journal* 15 (1858): 380. Noted in *Gentleman's Magazine* n.s. 5 (Sept 1858): 287.
9. Reginald Wright, *Register of Bath Artists*. Bath: Bath Museums Service, c.1940.
10. MS. Eng. misc. c.892, fol. 2. The sketch measures 194 × 273 mm. A note

on the back reads: 'Mr. Lansdown did this "sepia sketch" after he had called on Mr. Beckford. His sister Lady Lansdown who lives in Bath (aged 100 or more) gave this sketch to Miss Beckford, Boston, Mass. USA. 1930.' The date 'c.1790' in another hand is obviously wrong. My thanks to Jerry Nolan for his very helpful information about this sketch.

11. Henry Venn Lansdown, *Recollections of the Late William Beckford of Fonthill, Wilts and Lansdown, Bath*, Bath: Privately printed, 1893, 40.
12. Sue Sloman, intro, *Victoria Art Gallery, Bath: Concise Catalogue of Paintings and Drawings*, Bath: Bath Museums Service, 1991, 67-69. Tower, 253 × 182 mm, no. 1926.19. Tomb, 192 × 261 mm, no. 1926.20.
13. *Bath Chronicle*, 21 April 1803, 3b. 'Friday was married at Payhembury, Devon, by the Rev. P. Dicken, Mr. Lansdown, jun. of High Littleton, in this county, to Miss C. Venn, of the former place.'
14. *Bath Chronicle*, 18 April 1832, 3a. Marriages. 'At Walcot Church, Mr. H. V. Lansdown, of the Orange Grove, to Mary Ann, eldest daughter of Mr Emory of Birmingham.'



Beckford's Tomb, Bath. Sepia watercolour by Henry Venn Lansdown. c.1855.
Reproduced by kind permission of Victoria Art Gallery, Bath

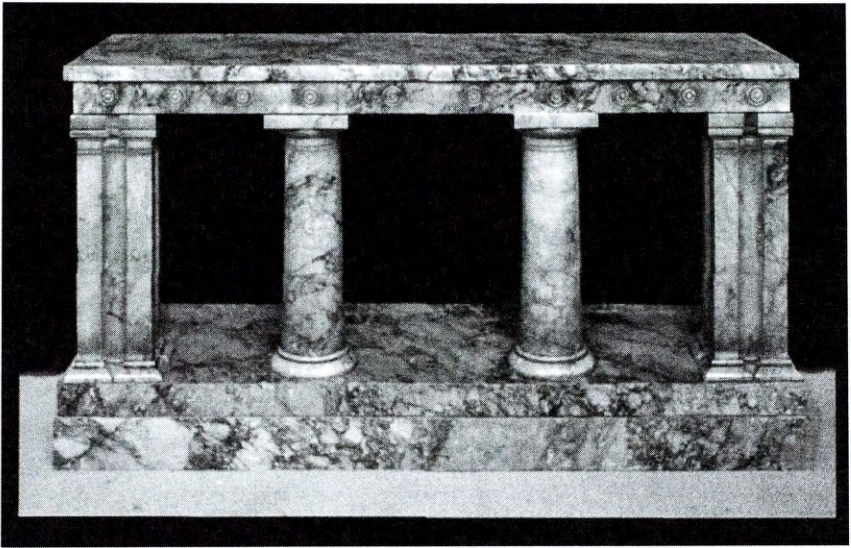
Continuing the Art of Collecting at Beckford's Tower, Bath

AMY FROST

Like any other independently-funded museum, Beckford's Tower continually faces the difficulty of wanting to enhance its collection through acquisitions, yet without the finances to do so. The Tower faces even greater difficulties than many such institutions owing to the extraordinary sums that objects, art, furniture, or any item related to Beckford can command. This article looks at two recent major acquisitions and their importance to the purpose and aims of the museum.

In February 2004 the Beckford Tower Trust was approached concerning the Sienna marble table originally designed for the Vestibule at the Tower. Following the recommendations of a reviewing committee, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport placed a two-month temporary export bar on the table. The Beckford Tower Trust was successful in having this extended to four months, allowing time for funding applications to be submitted and a local fundraising campaign to be launched.

The table was sold in 1848 on the eighth day of Messrs English & Sons sale of items from 20 Lansdown Crescent. It appears as lot 87, 'The Massive and elegant console table, of choice Sienna Marble, supported by columns and pilasters, resting on a plinth, 5 feet 10 inches long, 1 foot 10 inches deep'. A description of the piece can also be found in the 1844 inventory of Lansdown Tower compiled by English & Sons as 'a sideboard of Sienna marble with Bold Pillars and pilasters on a deep Plinth'.¹ The *Illustrated London News* account of Lansdown Tower published on 29 November 1845 refers to the 'splendid Sienna Console supported by columns', and in his *Memoirs of William Beckford* Cyrus Redding calls it 'a noble pillar table of Sienna marble'.² The table can be clearly seen in original line



Sienna marble table designed for the Vestibule at Beckford's Tower

line drawings of the Tower attributed to the architect, Henry Edmund Goodridge, now held in Bath Central Library, and was therefore conceived by the architect and his client as an integral element of the original 1828 interior schemes for the building.

However, it is by studying the view of the Vestibule by Willes Maddox published in Edmund English's *Views of Lansdown Tower* (1844) that the full effect of the table in its setting can be seen. The dark corridor of the Vestibule is illuminated by natural light pouring in from the Scarlet Drawing Room, whose entrance is directly opposite the table. This creates a natural spotlight for the table, highlighting it simultaneously as an important individual piece, and an element that works harmoniously in a bigger design scheme. The relatively small space thus adopts an atmosphere of solemnity and reverence, typical of the environments that Beckford continually created to house his most treasured possessions. The design and placing of the table in the

Vestibule is a perfect example of Beckford and his architect's ability to manipulate light, colour, texture and space to create an interior architecture for the building that reflects both the austere Greek Revival style of the Tower's exterior and the rich and elegant taste of its owner.

Missing since its sale in 1848, the table was discovered in 1991 to be in No. 10 Circus, Bath, when Philippa Bishop noticed annotations in a copy of *Views of Lansdown Tower*, once in the possession of Dr Barnes Burt.³ In 2003 English Heritage confirmed the table was not listed as a fixture of the building and following the sale of the table to a dealer in London it was removed from the house and placed in storage.

The significance of the table in relation to understanding the achievements of Beckford and Goodridge at the Tower and the importance of ensuring that it remain in the country resulted in the Beckford Tower Trust receiving great support when attempting to raised the £220,000 required to buy it. Grants were received from the National Heritage Memorial Fund (Heritage Lottery Fund), the V&A/MLA Purchase Grant Fund and the National Art Collections Fund. The widespread interest in Beckford both internationally and locally was fully revealed when in the space of seven weeks £35,000 was raised from local charitable trusts and private donations. Combined, these grants and donations made it possible for the Trust to buy the table and it is now installed in the museum rooms at the Tower.

Aesthetically this one piece of furniture is something that has divided even the most devoted followers of Beckford. Solid and imposing, it is one moment elegant, the next rather plain. However, like it or love it, the table represents far more than just a product of Beckford's passions. One of the fundamental aims of the Beckford Tower Trust when established in 1977 was to educate the general public in the life and work of William Beckford, and it was with this in mind that Dr and Mrs Hilliard began to put together the museum collection. The building itself

is the basic element of this aim and through the Maddox views of the interiors published in *Views of Lansdown Tower* in 1844 it is possible to show visitors what the interior spaces of the building were like. More important than that however, is the ability to give those spaces that no longer exist a third dimension by presenting to the visitor actual objects, furniture, and artworks as examples of Beckford's wealth, interests and taste. The experience of being within the building he built is then enhanced by being able to interact with items he possessed and handled. There is no better way to illustrate to the visitor the richness of Beckford's achievements than presenting a museum collection made up of items reclaimed from his own collection. Each new acquisition thus becomes another tool through which the museum continues to teach visitors about Beckford and the art of collecting.

The possibilities that new items in the collection can create are further illustrated through the second major recent acquisition. In March 2004 the Beckford Tower Trust bought four Willes Maddox lunette-shaped oil-on-panel paintings commissioned by Beckford for the Sanctuary at the Tower.

The story behind the lunettes is an interesting one. In the 1845 Tower sale catalogue three lunette paintings are listed as lots 334, *The Temptation in the Wilderness*; 335, *Christ's Agony in the Garden* and 336, *The Annunciation*. In Bath Central Library there is an annotated copy of the sale catalogue where, next to a sketch of one of the lunettes, is written 'the very last things Mr Beckford ordered and [he] saw them on his deathbed'.⁴ *The Temptation* sold for £16, 3s, 6d, *the Annunciation* for £15, 15s, while the *Agony in the Garden*, the work most clearly visible in the foreground of Maddox's view of the Sanctuary published in *Views of Lansdown Tower*, sold for £21. A Mr Yeeles bought them and, as with so many things sold in Bath following Beckford's death, they subsequently disappeared. They were rediscovered in 2002 during a routine valuation at Bitterley Church in Shropshire, but now there was also a forth painting of

*St Anne and St Mary.*⁵

As only three, not four, are listed in the catalogue it had for a long time been supposed that only three paintings were intended for the Sanctuary, and as the Maddox illustration of the space clearly shows two of the panels (one above the entrance to the Crimson Drawing Room, one on the opposite wall) and the *Illustrated London News* noted that 'the semicircular spaces above the doorways are filled with paintings', it had been believed that the third had been hung above the Sanctuary door. However, the very history of this commission confirms that four works had always been intended for the space. In 1829 Francis Danby began work on a commission for Beckford of four paintings for the Sanctuary depicting apocalyptic scenes. Danby exhibited two of the scenes at the Royal Academy, although at the time all four were apparently completed.⁶

Despite commissioning the works, Beckford never actually bought the Danby paintings and in 1830 they were sold at auction. Beckford then commissioned Willes Maddox to produce works for the Sanctuary, and the subject matter changed from apocalyptic views to scenes from the *New Testament*. The four panels are then actually two pairs, one set depicting events from the Life of Christ, the other the life of the Virgin Mary. With this knowledge the Sanctuary interior becomes far more understandable. With two panels at the entrance end of the corridor and the other two located at the far end by the Rossi statue of St Anthony the entire space has the balance one expects to find in the Tower interiors.

When bought the panels were in reasonable condition. Oil drying cracks and yellow oxidised varnish layers suggested very little in the way of cleaning had ever been done to them. With the help of the Bath and North East Somerset Museums Grant Scheme, the four panels have been cleaned, and the original frames fully restored and re-gilded. The results of this restoration have been enlightening. Never famed for being a greatly

accomplished artist, the details and colouring that make Maddox's *Objects of Vertu* paintings so impressive can be seen in the Sanctuary lunettes now that 160 years worth of ageing and splashes of church whitewash have been removed. The details of the scenes are superb and the vivid colours surprisingly harmonious in the subtle handling of the subject matter.



Christ's Agony in the Garden by Willes Maddox. Oil on panel. c.1840

It seemed only fitting that these panels were bought using some of the endowment fund left to the Tower and museum by the Hilliards who in 1986 bought the three Maddox *Objects of Vertu*. Buying and restoring the Maddox lunettes has encouraged the Beckford Tower Trust to begin planning the re-creation of the entire Sanctuary interior to further enhance the museum.

Beckford's Tower relies heavily on the support of national funding bodies and generous individuals, but the response of the public to every new object that enters the museum collection fully illustrates the need to ensure that items of significance to national heritage remain in the country and on public display. The acquisition of items from Beckford's collection is essential to the growth of our own museum collection and the continuing

interpretation of Beckford's life and achievements.

The Beckford Tower Trust would like to thank Members of the Beckford Society for their support and most generous donations towards the purchase of the Vestibule table.

1. New Bodleian Library, MS. Beckford c.58.
2. Cyrus Redding, *Memoirs of William Beckford of Fonthill, Author of "Vathek"*. 2 vols. London: Charles J. Skeet, 1859. 2:269
3. Now in the Beckford Tower Trust collection. Below plate III illustrating the Vestibule is written in pencil 'Sienna Marble piece in entrance hall of No. 10 the Circus'. Dr Barnes Burt was the owner of No.10 between 1935 and 1950. For a full account see Philippa Bishop, 'Beckford Items at No. 10 Circus, Bath', *Beckford Tower Trust Newsletter*, Spring 1991, 4-6.
4. Bath Central Library, Huth Collection, Classmark 5407, B645 (B018.3).
5. Colonel Price-Wood of nearby Henley Hall had gifted the paintings to the church in 1933, although how they came into his possession remains unknown.
6. Letter from Francis Danby to J. Gibbons, 7 January 1829, reproduced in Francis Greenacre, *Francis Danby 1793-1861*, London: Tate Gallery, 1988, 105. This letter was noted by Nicholas Carter and Kathryn Turpin in 'Paintings for Beckford's Sanctuary', *Apollo* 159 (May 2004): 64-67.

The Ballad of Fonthill Abbey

ANDRÉE RUSHTON

Two hundred years ago and more,
In Wiltshire countryside,
A wealthy man called Beckford lived,
Whom nothing was denied.

His home was by a sparkling lake,
Where white swans swam serene.
He roamed the fields and woods around
His mansion on its green.

He spent his childhood days at home,
In learning as he grew.
His tutors taught him how to draw,
And everything they knew.

He drew tall towers and learned to speak
Eight languages with flair.
He travelled widely in his youth,
And wandered everywhere.

Two abbeys once, in Portugal,
He sketched for hours and hours,
Their windows doors and buttresses,
Their soaring spires and towers.

At home once more, he nursed a wish
To see upon his land
An abbey he could call his own,
And so he schemed and planned.

He found a well-known architect.
Together they designed
A Gothic abbey, similar
To those he had in mind.

He took on men from all around,
Until he had a team
To quarry stone and cut it well,
And realise his dream.

The abbey rose up stone by stone,
Until its tower stood
Above the trees, and men could gaze
For miles beyond the wood.

But this took time, and Beckford raged
Against the architect,
Who often managed to escape
And other work erect.

So Beckford made the men work hard;
He drove them with his tongue.
They toiled all day, into the night –
The old men and the young.

And then, at last, the workmen stopped.
The abbey they had built
Was finished to its pinnacle,
And furnished red and gilt.

So Beckford moved in straightaway,
But found it damp and cold.
He moved away to Bath, and there
He gardened, and grew old.

One day, the tower groaned and shook;
Fell crashing to the ground.
No-one was killed, but now the trees
Were higher all around.

And Beckford, snuggled safe in Bath,
He never heard the groan,
Nor saw the Gothic tower fall,
Become a pile of stone.

In time, he built a tower in Bath,
Which rose above the town,
And from the top you see the woods
Where Fonthill tower fell down.

Orientalist Translations, Grafts and Outgrowths: New Perspectives on Beckford's 'Complete Works'

LAURENT CHÂTEL¹

After last year's celebrations of Antoine Galland's *Mille et une nuits, contes arabes* ('The Thousand and One Nights, Arabian Tales') (1704-17), it is important not to forget one of the first British men of letters who followed on Galland's footsteps. Indeed William Beckford produced a continuation of Galland's work, which he called 'Suite des contes arabes' (Continuation of the Arabian Tales). This remains little known today for various reasons.

First of all, these tales, which were composed in French, long remained unpublished. Secondly, *Vathek* stole the show thanks to Henley's English version, and as a result the whole 'orientalist' project of *Vathek*, *Les Episodes*, and the 'Suite' with which Beckford had been involved fell flat.² Thirdly, the recent edition published in France somehow misses the point; not only does it not clearly present the tales as an outgrowth of oriental manuscripts, but it gets the very title wrong.³ By not respecting Beckford's wording ('Suite DES contes arabes') it misrepresents his intention, which was literally a follow-up ('suite') to Galland's 'Thousand and One Nights', also named 'contes arabes'. 'Suite de' in French implies a succession of stories, whereas 'Suite des' means 'continuation'.

The title Beckford chose was in keeping with that chosen by his French contemporaries, notably the abbé Guillon (*Nouveaux contes arabes, ou Supplément des Mille et une Nuits*, Paris, 1788) and the more famous Jacques Cazotte and Dom Chavis (*Suite des Mille et une nuits*, Paris, 1788-1790).⁴ For all these reasons Beckford's orientalist work has remained misunderstood and neglected. Although previous issues of the *Beckford Journal* have highlighted Beckford's translating activities,⁵ the exact nature of

his own production in relation to these translations may perplex more than one Beckfordian today. New research will soon be published and it is fitting that the *Beckford Journal* should have a preview of it.⁶

Beckford's Arabic sources

Beckford's early writings betray a fascination for the East, whether it be India, Japan, China, India or Arabia, which ran parallel to that for the 'classicks'.⁷ At an early age he devoured the recently discovered 'Arabian Nights' in the French prose of Antoine Galland's *Mille et une Nuits*. It is Lady Elizabeth Craven (1750-1828), later Margravine of Anspach, who provided Beckford with a lifetime opportunity to have a first-hand access to Arabic manuscripts when she obtained the Wortley Montagu Oriental MSS (now Bodleian Orient. 550-556 + 1)⁸ from the Duke of Bedford's executor:

Mr Palmer has sent me a Catalogue – & there are so many Arabian Manuscripts that I and my friend and some Arabian Body must lay our three heads together in order not to have the wrong one translated. (undated, c.1780-1782, MS. Beckford)

Edward Wortley Montagu may have brought them from Egypt. They are dated 1764,⁹ are signed by 'Umar al-Safti' in a colophon of black and red ink at the end (Orient. 556, fol. 205) and the language is deemed to be Egyptian. Beckford made use of them between 1780 and 1787. In 1787, the Montagu MSS went for sale: an agent of Beckford's bought one bundle or 'volume' and Dr. White six volumes and one other bundle. 'Dr. White at one time intended to translate it literally, and thereby eclipse the Anglo-French version.'¹⁰ In fact, he disposed of them to Jonathan Scott; related bundles of MSS, which had wrongly been advertised separately, were reunited with the six volumes (see note in Orient. 557, fol. 7). Still Scott deplored yet another

missing 140 'Nights', which, on inquiry, Dr White deemed to be in Beckford's hands:

One or two bundles of unbound Arabic Manuscripts of the same size and handwriting of the second volume of the Arabian tales were purchased by an Agent, for Mr. Beckford of Fonthill and I have no doubt whatever, but that the deficient part of your tales is to be found in his possession.

Not having the honour of being known to Mr Beckford, I could not take the liberty of requesting a sight of his purchase. Did he know the circumstance, he would, I imagine, readily permit a transcript to be made, which I should have great pleasure in doing for the use of the Bodleian if the curators could not procure a better Copyist than myself. (Orient. 557, fols. 12-13.)

No one has located the whereabouts of the missing Beckford MS since Scott announced his translation project of the tales; no mention was made either of Henley or Beckford.¹¹ But, as it turned out, Scott did not translate the whole MSS, on account allegedly of his 'disappointment as an orientalist... on discovering upon perusal that the greater part of them was unfit to appear in an English dress.' So the only material to come out of the Montagu MSS in the nineteenth century is the following. In William Ouseley's *Oriental Collections* (1798-1799), Scott published a 'Table of contents' of the volumes as well as a bilingual edition of 'Introductory Chapter of the Arabian Tales' (Orient. 550)¹² and the 'Story related to an Ameer of Egypt, by a Courtier of his own adventures – Nights 483-489' (Orient. 553, fols. 70-78).¹³

In 1811, he published *The Arabian Nights Entertainments* (in six volumes), but only the sixth volume contained 'Tales selected from the Manuscript Copy of the 1001 Nights brought to Europe by Edward Wortley Montague, Esq.' Not until the 1880s was there a more extensive review and translation of the MSS when

Richard Burton used them for volume 5 of his *Supplemental Nights* (1888) and reprinted Scott's 'Table of Contents'. Subsequently, the 'Montagu' version of the 'Thousand and one Nights' was remarked upon by nineteenth-century Orientalists¹⁴ and twentieth-century scholars (Parreaux, Gerhardt, Mahdi, Moussa-Mahmoud and Irwin).¹⁵

Beckford's Orientalist translations

Up till 1960 Beckford was presented as a figure belonging to what some Beckfordians called 'pseudo-orientalism in transition',¹⁶ ranking him alongside other British contemporaries engaged in translating Galland's 'Arabian Nights' for the English market. In fact Beckford should have earned by now a different place in the history of orientalist tale-telling on the basis of his direct use of Arabic MSS. He may not have had one of the early archetypal 'mother' sources that Galland had – a three- or four-volume medieval MS of *Alf Layla wa-Layla* imported from Syria, but he came close to the Frenchman's authentic, scholarly perusal of genuine manuscripts. So what exactly did he do with them?

Some time between 1780 and 1786 he commissioned a Turk born in Mecca ('Zemir, the old Mahometan who assisted me in translating W. Montague's MS.'¹⁷), and with the help of Lady Craven (his 'dear Arabian'¹⁸) and Marianne-Agnès de Fauques de Vacluse, transcriptions and translations were made. In October 1782 he announced that the Christmas festivities would include 'a right old Mussulman to serve up tales hot & hot'.¹⁹ In January 1783 he wrote from Fonthill: 'We... translate Arabic every Night'.²⁰ In May 1783, on Beckford's wedding day, de Fauques, who taught French to Sir William Jones and Lady Craven, told Beckford she had sent him a transcription of his 'Darianoc' and asked him: 'Are you taking Zemir along with you?'²¹

Research has established that there are two types of translations. Firstly, there are translations into English. André Parreaux studied them but chose not to attribute them to

Beckford. Boyd Alexander (1962, 100-101) did not mention them, except for one ('Al Raoui'). Fatma Moussa-Mahmoud (1976) took them to be 'by someone in [Beckford's] service, if not by Beckford himself'²² and deemed them a 'verbatim translation' of the original MS. Nothing has ever been made of them, perhaps because more successful editorial ventures in the hands of Jonathan Scott (1811) and Edward Burton (1888) followed later on in the nineteenth century. Secondly, there are translations into French, which Beckford referred to as 'Suite des contes arabes' in an MS preface (see below). Parreaux studied them extensively and saw them as translations which Beckford adapted or amplified by adding an 'episode'. Boyd Alexander (1962, 100) considered that he 'translated a number more or less freely into French'. These two *ensembles* are the first genuine translations of Oriental tales to come out privately in England in the eighteenth century.

Although Beckford's French translations had been recorded for bibliographical purposes,²³ it is Parreaux who first provided a comparative criticism of each translation (Parreaux, 137-199). The Montagu MSS are for the most part a different rendering of the tales contained in the French National Library manuscripts used by Galland, but they also contain 'other tales' coming from other Egyptian sources which were not in Galland's. The tales were taken principally out of volumes III, IV and V (Orient. 552-554). At least two tales cannot be traced back to the seven extant MS volumes and may have belonged to the missing bundles bought by Beckford's agent; others Parreaux placed separately, partly on account of their being mere drafts in a very poor and unfinished state (Parreaux 1960, 178).

Beckford's Unsuspected Orientalist 'Garden'

Parreaux established as precisely as is possible for a non-Arabic scholar that Beckford produced translations respectful of the original MS amplified by 'suites' of his own making. It is the

nature of this amplification or extension of the given data that demonstrates Beckford's originality and that is why it is so important to pin it down. In the 1880s, Richard Burton himself vouchsafed the role of translator as amplifier of the 'Night':

There are no names or titles to the tales, so that every translator must give his own; and the endings are equally unsatisfactory, they usually content themselves, after "native" fashion, with "Intihá" = finis, and the connection with the thread of the work must be supplied by the story-teller or the translator. (Burton *Supplemental Nights*, 1888, vol. 5, foreword.)

Parreaux placed Beckford's translation side by side with Scott's and Burton's. Allowing for the necessary differences in style and phrasing, he identified the genuine Beckford input, for instance: no addition in 'Al Raoui', a young man's tale for the last pages of 'Continuation of Al Raoui',²⁴ a long landscape description of a pond and pyramids in 'Story of Elouard Felkanaman and Ansel Hougioud', the spatial evocations of the land of Camphor and Vac-Vac islands in the 'Story of Mazin', and finally the dreamlike quality of the narrative, the Djinns' plain, the Zouc-Zouc Valley and ruined tower of the 'Story of Prince Ahmed'. Beckford himself clearly spelt out his handling of the MSS, perhaps to avoid the mystification from which he had already suffered with *Vathek*:

[Here is] Yet more arabesque that I entrust to the indulgence of the public – the original [~~passage crossed out~~] can be found in the same folio on which Jonathan Scott & several of the Orientalists have drawn – Savary also paraphrased this small tale in his own way – I had started translating it literally – My arabic master, an old Muslim born in Mecca, had recommended it to me as a language exercise – yet I found the narration so [~~crossed out~~] ordinary / pompously boring that I cast it aside – Zémir tried to bridle me, quite rightly, but having taken the bit

between my teeth I galloped away into the regions of my own imagination. Here is the result – it is very little – it amused me in the past, but I do not guarantee that it will produce an equally pleasant effect on the readers / the same effect on others: – ²⁵

This preface calls for several observations. Unlike Pétis de la Croix or his exact contemporary Jacques Cazotte, Beckford did not go in for forgeries, since he acknowledged that the content of the tale could be found in the Montagu MS, a genuine manuscript. He clearly distinguished literal translations (which he made at one point for language training) from pleasant narrations ‘galloping out’ of the translations. He humorously outlined the ‘orientalist’ subtlety implied in handing ‘oriental’ material, i.e. the process of transforming or ‘translating’ the oral renderings of an Arabic speaker into a European language. We know, for instance, that the so-called ‘Al Raoui’ was ‘taken from the oral delivery of a Turk by Mr Beckford’ (whether in English or in French is not known).²⁶ As for the ‘regions of my own imagination’, they certify that the tales bear the Beckfordian hallmark because of his ‘transport’ from the original. Beckford’s ‘Orientalist’ unpublished works should therefore not be published, read or commented upon as if they were *ex nihilo* productions ‘inspired’ from the Arabic idiom: it is essential to discriminate between what it is that belonged to the MS and what it is that he amplified. For one thing, no loose definition of ‘translation’ can be sustained in this day and age of greater scholarship on the *Arabian Nights*.

Whereas seventeenth-century conceptions were less concerned with the issue of paternity, late eighteenth-century awareness of the need to achieve greater respect for authenticity had risen. It was an age drawn to ever more primitive ‘origins’ and Beckford would not have liked us to think of his tales divorced from the Oriental ‘originals’. His true contribution to orientalism thus lies in his creative grafts on original manuscripts. Such a creative

mode resembles the aesthetic mode of his architectural and garden designs, for it is by adding on or 'following up' that Beckford was at its best. Planting and transplanting were essential to Beckford in landscaping terms, but equally so in verbal terms: 'Arabian Tales spring up like mushrooms on the fresh green downs of Fonthill.'²⁷ He can be said to have produced with words an 'orientalist' garden grown out of oriental leaves.

New perspectives on Beckford's writings and aesthetics

Three conclusions can be drawn from Beckford's orientalist productions. First of all they point to a writing strategy which consisted in 'interpolating' or 'extending' a story so as to create an 'outgrowth' or 'excrescence' of his own making. Now Beckford's complete works may be envisaged in this new light. Whether you take 'The Grande Chartreuse', *Biographical Memoirs*, *Dreams*, *Sketches* or *The Episodes*, it is best not to think of them in terms of literary genres as has traditionally been the case (travel diaries, oriental tales, satires). After all, they all have some travelling, parody or orientalising, so each label taken separately does not define Beckford's specificity. However, if you allow that Beckford often fed on an existing fragment (whether textual or visual) – an oriental MS story, a 'view' in Italy, an artist's life, a letter, sentimental novels – and grafted on it an idiosyncratic 'dream, waking thought or incident', the 'episodic' pattern of his 'literary' creativity clearly stands out. Beckford's instinct for parody led him naturally to interfere with an existing format (travel letter, sentimental epistle, 'Night' etc), only then to graft on it an 'adaptation' of his own invention.

Secondly, such a strategy also explains why most of his writings are fragments, whether they be letters, biographical lives, interpolated episodes, or embedded incidents, as if the structure of all his works was shaped by the 'Arabian Nights' (see Châtel 2000). Beckford was less interested in the written word or publications than in being a 'French' fabulist, impersonating a

tale, making it alive and acting it out. He simply did not conceive of himself as an 'Author': he was concerned with the aesthetic quality and impact of tale-telling and saw himself as following the footsteps of his ancestor, Count Anthony Hamilton, and the tradition of fairy tales and the *Tales of Mother Goose* (to which he referred in his preface to *Italy* in 1834).

Thirdly, that he transplanted himself into another field or material, both on land and on paper, shows that there is no point separating gardening on the one hand and writing on the other. Instead of divorcing his so-called 'literary' achievements from the supposedly dilettantish artistic activities of his later life, it should now be possible to envisage a more unified picture of Beckford's creativity with an aesthetic strategy, by pen and by spade, based on framing, grafting, transplanting and outgrowing a pre-existent given. The art of transplantation and grafting is a defining element of his overall aesthetics and aptly characterizes all his works – be they of the verbal or artistic kind. Beckford's 'Queen of Delusions' (Red Copy Book) was a transplanting imagination.

1. This piece is written in homage to André Parreaux.
2. 'Orientalist' is here preferred to 'Orientalism' because of the connotations now attached to this concept since Edward Said's *Orientalism. Western Concept of the Orient*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1978.
3. *Suite de contes arabes*, ed. Didier Girard, Paris: José Corti, 1992. Some tales were then added later in *Histoire du Prince Ahmed* (1993) and in *L'Esplendente* (2003), which kills off the coherence of the original project since the latter includes English texts foreign to the 'orientalist' oeuvre.
4. There is an English translation by Robert Heron, *The Arabian Tales, or a Continuation of the Arabian Nights*, Edinburgh, 1792.
5. *Beckford Journal* 8 (2002): 50-65 & *Beckford Journal* 9 (2003): 52-61.
6. This paper is a brief summary of chap. III (149-216) of 'Utopies paysagères: vues et visions dans les écrits et dans les jardins de Beckford' (Doctorate, Université de la Sorbonne-Nouvelle, 2000), to be published in 'The Reception of William Beckford in France, 1760-1844, Part I and Part II', *The Reception of William Beckford in Europe*, ed. Elinor Shaffer &

- John Wilton-Ely (forthcoming) and *Landscaping Utopias on Paper and on Land: the Aesthetics of William Beckford*, Oxford: The Voltaire Foundation, forthcoming.
7. Boyd Alexander, *England's Wealthiest Son*, London: Centaur, 1962, 41 wrongly assumes that in Beckford's mind the East could not be reconciled with a liking for the Greeks; for an analysis of Beckford's cult of Greece see Châtel, 'Of Greeks and Goths in the English Garden', *Bulletin de la société d'études anglo-américaines des XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* (June 2005).
 8. Bod. 557 is a bound volume added as an appendix by Scott to the 7 volumes to pass on information related to the papers to the Bodleian Library curators. Hence the shelfmark (Orient. 550-6 [7 vols.] + Orient. 557 (Scott's appendix).
 9. Vol. II (Orient. 551, fol. 152v) ends with '20th Sha'abân, A.H. 1177.' It is reproduced in Muhsin Mahdi, *Alf Layla wa-Layla. From the Earliest Known Sources. Arabic Text Edited with Introduction and Notes*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1984-1994, plate 70.
 10. Richard Burton, *Supplemental Nights to A Plain and Literal Translation of the Arabian Nights Entertainments*, Benares ,1888. Vol. 5, 'Translator's Foreword'.
 11. William Ouseley, *Oriental Collections consisting of... Asia*, London, 1798-1799, 1:245.
 12. Ouseley, II, n°2, 160-174 + n°3, 228-256.
 13. Ouseley, II, n°4, 349-367. This is a different phrasing from the 'Al Raoui' found in French and in English in the Beckford papers, and of *The Story of Al Raoui, a tale from the Arabic*, almost certainly printed by Henley in 1799.
 14. Henri Zotenberg, *Histoire d' Alâ Al-Dîn... publié avec une notice sur quelques manuscrits des Mille et une Nuits*, 8vo., Paris: Imp. Nationale, 1888.
 15. André Parreaux, *William Beckford, Auteur de Vathek. Etude de la création littéraire*, Paris: Nizet, 1960, chap. 2 ; Gerhardt, Mia I. *The Art of Story Telling: A Literary Study of the Thousand and One Nights*, Leiden, 1963; Moussa-Mahmoud, 'A Manuscript Translation of the Arabian Nights in the Beckford Papers' *Journal of Arabic Literature* 7 (1976): 7-23; Mahdi (1984-1994); Robert Irwin, *The Arabian Nights, A Companion*, London: Allen Lane, 1994. Parreaux's and Moussa-Mahmoud's research should have received greater attention earlier.
 16. Mahmoud Manzalaoui, 'Pseudo-Orientalism in Transition: the Age of Vathek' in Moussa-Mahmoud, ed. *William Beckford of Fonthill 1760-1844*:

- Bicentenary Essays*, Port Washington, NY: Kennikat, 1972, 123-150.
17. Letter to S. Henley, dated from Vevey, 13 April 1786 in Alfred Morrison, *The Collection of Autograph Letters and Historical Documents formed by Alfred Morrison*, Second Series, compiled by A. W. Thibaudeau, [London]: privately printed, 1893, 1:196.
 18. Letter to Lady Craven, 29 June 1782, Red Copy Book (MS. Beckford e.1).
 19. Letter to S. Henley, dated 28 Oct 28 1782 (in Morrison, I, 187).
 20. Letter to Mr. Hamilton, dated 'Fonthill, Jan. 4th 1783' (RCB).
 21. 'Voilà votre Darianoc. C'est pour vous l'envoyer que je vous écris. ... Vous emportez donc Zémir?' (MS. Beckford c.35.)
 22. Moussa-Mahmoud's (1976) hesitation on p. 21 is not resolved later since she writes on p. 22, 'The hand of the folio translations was the same all through and it is a European hand, probably someone working for Beckford, not necessarily English. The translation itself is that of a foreigner who is familiar with English idiom, but the grammar is often faulty'.
 23. Guy Chapman and John Hodgkin, *A Bibliography of William Beckford of Fonthill*, London: Constable, 1930.
 24. For Beckford's authorship of 'Al Raoui', and Henley's second usurpation of his works after *Vathek*, see Châtel in Shaffer & Wilton-Ely.
 25. Beckford referred to an 'Introduction de la suite des Contes Arabes' on the folder of 'Histoire de Schahanazan' (MS. Beckford d.23, pp.xix-xxi) : '[Voici] Encore de l'arabesque que je livre à l'indulgence publique- l'original [crossed over] se trouve dans le même recueil ou Jonathan Scott & plusieurs Orientalistes ont puizé – Savary aussi a paraphrasé ce petit conte à sa manière – J'avais commencé à le traduire littéralement – Mon maitre d'arabe, un vieux Musulman né natif de la Mecque, me l'avait recommandé comme exercice de langue – J'ai trouvé pourtant la narration si si peu [unreadable] si ordinaire ^{pompeusement ennuyeuse} que je l'ai jetté de côté – Zémir voulut me brider, comme de raison, mais ayant pris le mors au dents je me suis emporté à grand galop dans les régions de ma propre imagination. Voici le résultat – c'est peu de chose – il m'a amusé dans le temps, mais je ne repond pas qu'il produira sur les lecteurs un effet également agréable: -- WB ^{mais je ne repond pas qu'il produira le même effet sur les autres} (Parreaux (1960) 145; Girard (1992) 23 changed the spelling, left out the variants, and substituted 'voyageuse imagination' {travelling imagination} to 'propre imagination' {my own imagination}).
 26. Orient. 553, vol. IV of the MS, fol. 78 recto, 'x' opposite Night 489, page 409; also quoted in Moussa-Mahmoud, 20.
 27. Letter to S. Henley, dated 'Portici, Aug. 27th 1782' (RCB).

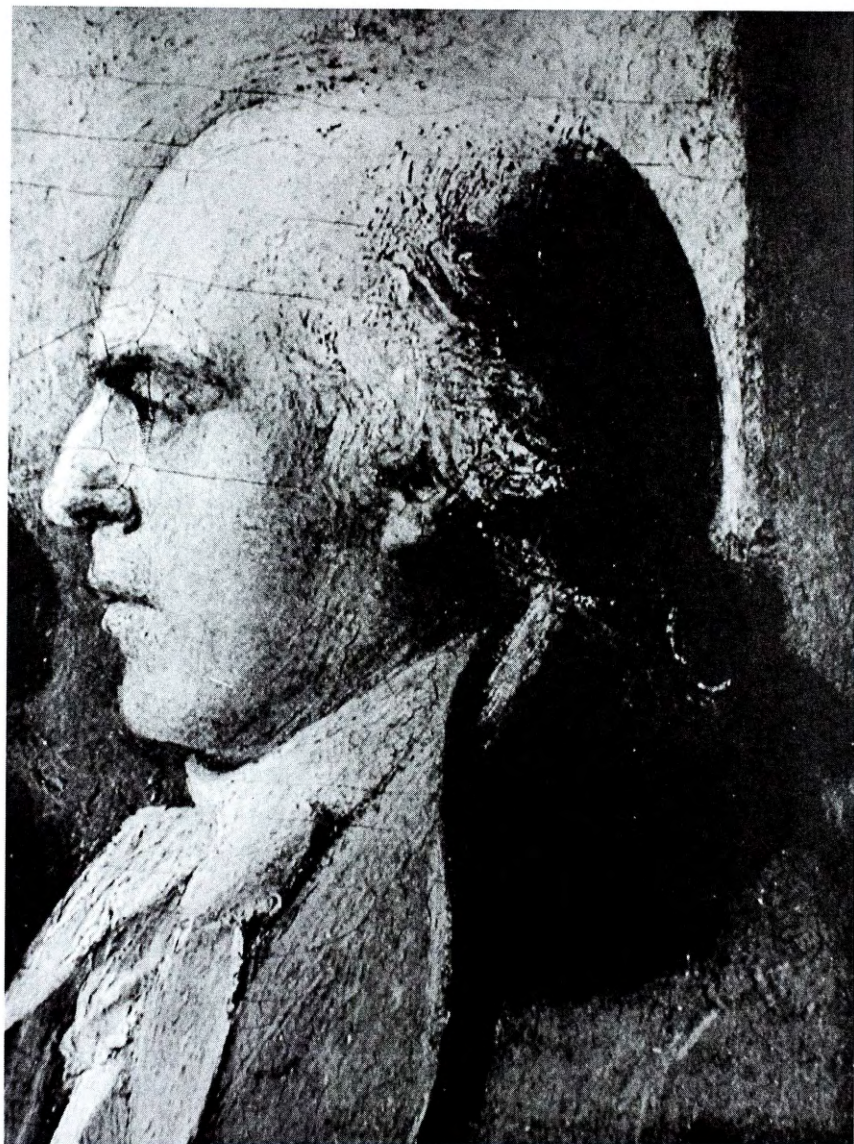
William Beckford in Farington's Diary

With at least one eye to posterity, the landscape painter Joseph Farington, who was much involved in the affairs of the Royal Academy, began his diary in 1793 and continued it until his death in 1821, filling sixteen stout volumes. These were sold at auction exactly one hundred years later to the *Morning Post* at the prompting of its art critic, James Greig. The diary's serial publication in the *Post* was so successful that it was published by Hutchinsons in eight volumes from 1922 to 1928, although Greig included only what he considered to be the more interesting passages, omitting many significant details.

In 1934 the *Post's* owners presented the manuscript volumes of the diary to George V, who placed them in the Royal Library at Windsor Castle. Soon afterwards a transcript, the Windsor Typescript, was prepared in the royal scriptorium and this was used, in part, for *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, published in sixteen volumes by Yale University Press for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art between 1978 and 1984. Volumes 1-6 (July 1793 to Dec 1804) were edited Kenneth Garlick and Angus Macintyre, and 7-16 (Jan 1805 to Dec 1821) by Kathryn Cave. I would like to thank Yale University Press for their approval of the idea of extracting the Beckford entries which follow, a task which was greatly helped by the invaluable index by Evelyn Newby, published in 1998.

Joseph Farington's diary vividly brings to life the character of Beckford and his acquaintances who have hitherto been just names. Many of the entries on Beckford derived from Farington's conversations with his friend Benjamin West, who of course knew Beckford well, and, to a lesser extent, James Wyatt. To show Farington's likely source of information, wherever possible the last person he mentioned is given, for example, 'West I called on'. It is interesting to note that out of either respect or deference Farington normally referred to Mr. Beckford rather than plain Beckford. Some anecdotes appear more than once in the diary, such as: Dover messenger, 922 & 1117; wrong spectacles, 2092 & 4397; Altieri Claudes sold to Davis, 3307 & 3309. Perhaps in these cases Farington forgot that he had already mentioned these episodes or wanted to add further details.

Spelling, capitals, punctuation and paragraphing are Farington's, and as are printed in the Yale edition, as are any square brackets added by the editors; my insertions are indicated by {}. – Editor.



Joseph Farington. Detail from *The Royal Academicians In General Assembly* by Henry Singleton. Oil on canvas. 1795.
Reproduced by kind permission of the Royal Academy of Arts, London

4 June. Wyatt said a good deal to me abt. Mr. Beckford of Fonthill – He thinks him a man of extraordinary abilities. – Of unbounded expence. His income from Jamaica for the three last years has not been less than 120,000 a year. Wyatt believes that the greatest part of this enormous sum he expends. Beckford is easy to professional Men, but of consummate pride to people in higher situations.

About a month before Beckford was talked of Wyatt went to Fonthill with him. Beckford shewed him a copy of a Patent of Peerage then making out for him to be Lord Beckford of Fonthill. – This was abt. the beginning of Pitts Administration. The Peerage was quashed in consequence of the rumour. 1:196.

20 July. Wyatt is going to Font Hill to Mr. Beckfords, who after an absence of 3 years, is lately returned to England. Wyatt shewed me the Plan & Elevation of a Tower, which He is going to build for Mr. Beckford. It is to be situated on a Hill, about 3 miles from Fonthill. At the foot it is to be 175 feet Square. The height is to be 175 feet. The Story on which He is to live is to be 60 feet from the ground. The Upper Story is to be one room occupying the square of the Building; and to [be] lighted by a lanthorn from the top. It will be upwards of 70 feet high. Mr. Beckford proposed this scheme some four years since, and said, but Wyatt thinks witht. any serious contention, that He would direct that He would be buried at the top of the lanthorn. Mr. Wildman, his agent, startled at the apprehension of such singularity after what had been said of Mr. Beckfords conduct, has hitherto thrown obstacles in the way of it. – Mr. Beckford asked how He shd. get up to his first floor 60 feet high. Wyatt said He should have a Stair Case to a Hall with 4 fire places in it, up which staircase He might drive a Coach & 4 & turn in the Hall. The heighth from the Hall to the first story wd. be trifling.

Mr. Beckfords income is £70,000 all which He expends, and sometimes overdraws His agent. He has two daughters, who are with his mother at West end, Hampstead. 2:612.

22 Dec. Marchant I called on...

Mr. Beckford of Fonthill talks of encouraging the English arts. – West is to paint a picture for him. – De Cort is to pass this Christmas with him. 3:726.

31 Dec. Wyatt says Beckford of Fonthill is disposed to encourage the English Arts. – West & Wyatt are to go to Fonthill on Wednesday to stay a few days. 3:734.

- 6 Jan. West is gone with Wyatt to Mr. Beckford, Fonthill. Bourgeois said Beckford, it is reported, is to lay out £60,000 in purchasing modern Art. 3:739.
- 20 Jan. Shakespeare Gallery I went to. J. Boydell & J. Ireland there. Boydell said that Mrs. Beckford his neighbour said Lady Loughborough had contributed more than any body to blazon abt. the story of Beckford & Lord Courtney and by affecting to make it up, published it. 3:754.
- 22 Jan. Humphry has given a very flowery description of the talents of Beckford to Malone; and instanced that He could read the 3rd. & 5th. lines of a Book at once, which enabled him to skim the cream of most books...

Fuseli I called on.

Beckford of Fonthill, some years ago proposed to publish his travels. Johnson printed them in Quarto. The were written with genius, – full of reflections on Individuals & on nations, – malevolent & expressive of a bad heart. – The descriptions of Landscapes &c were admirable, – throughout the whole there was a spirit like Champagne prevailing, sparkling everywhere. – Fuseli had half a doz: of leaves of the letter press which He gave to Edwards of Pallmall. – When ready for publication the Books were all sent for, and faithfully delivered by Johnson to Beckfords Agent. – Beckford had been prevailed on to suppress the work, as it would have made him enemies everywhere. /

Revd. Mr. Henley his Tutor said Beckford had no generosity. – The affair with Lord Courtenay was made known by Beckfords own relations; Lord Strathaven slapt his face. – Beckford is of a very unamiable disposition. Jealous of everybody who excells. – Parsons, his Music Master, He was jealous of on acct. of his professional knowledge. – He is an Actor, but no gentleman, said Fuseli. – He speaks many languages, – dances, – sings, mimicks, you see the Character is irregular by looking in his countenance, there is a twist in his look.

With regard to the Criminal accusation Henley his Tutor, said traps had been laid for him; That Lady Lough: [borough] was in love with him & being disappointed, – sought revenge. 3:755-6.

- 23 Jan. Bacon I called on...

"I knew Beckford of Fonthill formerly very well", said He. "I saw nothing about him uncommon. He had many Fancies, – among others a Dormitory which He proposed to light by *reflection*." 3:756.

- 2 Feb. On his way to Fonthill, Humphry in company with West & Wyatt was obliged to sit up all night at Amesbury... The private company at Fonthill consisted of Lady Boynton & some other Ladies, a Mr. Williams, De Cort,

two Germans & a Physician. – The table was sumptuously served. 3:762.

4 Feb. Humphry came to tea...

Beckford is very quick of apprehension, – will not bear contradiction, – or to be applied to. – He mentioned Having been recd. at Court of Lisbon in opposition to British Ambassador. – He mentioned the Courtney family and shewed himself intimately acquainted with its ancestry. – He hates Mr. Pitt. 3:763.

25 Feb. Beckford of Somerly, told Humphry that Beckford of Fonthill, has no heart, no feeling. – Humphry says Beckford is at times insolent in the greatest degree. Humphry applied to him to subscribe a guinea to an emigrant. – Beckford flew into a passion, & speaking superciliously of Mr. Goddard, Member for Wiltshire, whose sisters are promoting the subscription, asked Who is He? Humphry replied He is a gentleman of 3 or / £4000 a year, and of *spotless character*. Humphry after this behaviour resolved to leave the House, but was prevailed upon by West & Wyatt to stay.

Beckford afterwards signified his dislike to the emigrants in consequence of ill behaviour in a set of 16 who came to Fonthill with the Margravine of Anspach. – They wanted to borrow £3000 of Beckford which He refused, and their unhandsome treatment of the Margrave caused him to oblige them to quit Fonthill.

Mrs. Harvey, half-sister to Beckford, visits him, but told Beckford of Somerly, she does not allow Her Son, a youth to go. 3:778-9.

14 Apr. Last night the Council made out list of invitations... Wyatt then *after introduction* proposed Beckford of Fonthill. A dead silence. West then spoke of the intention of Beckford to patronize the Arts, and that shd. an invitation be sent it would *not be accepted but as a compliment*. – No remarks till Westall observed that if Mr. Beckford was not to come why send the invitation? if He were to come wd. it not be improper. Wyatt then said if any opposition He should not press the matter. Hoppner & Rigaud then expressed some disapprobation & the subject dropped. 3:821.

10 May. Beckford has sent Foxhall to Smirke wanting some pictures to be painted. – Also would have bought the two pictures from Quixotte. 3:836.

16 May. Smirke called – has been with Beckford, who ordered 4 pictures of Sapho &c. – Foxhall told Smirke, Beckford has ordered pictures from West of value £3000 and has paid him in advance £1000. – Beckford also gave Romney the other day 300 gs. for a picture. 3:840.

21 May. Beckfords schemes in favor of art will be great. He has superior taste. – He has allotted £200 a month for his pocket money. – He is expending £50,000 a yr. on the building in his Park. 3:842.

22 May. Exhibition I went to... / Beckford bought an India view of Daniell –

wd. have bought a selection of his original drawings – Daniell discouraged this proposal. 3:842-3.

23 May. Smirke called – had been to Beckford, who was delighted with his designs for Sapho & Phaon.

Westall called – West pressed him & Lawrence to obtain an invitation to the Academy dinner for Beckford. 3:843.

6 June. Marshall said Beckford had recd. permission through Delacroix to go to Paris with his suite & reside there. – In his letter Delacroix on politicks wonders our Ministry do not renew the negotiations for peace. 3:851.

17 June. Wyatt I met and spoke to him abt. Beckford & Cozens. – has heard Beckford commend old Cozens – but calls young Cozens an ungrateful scoundrel. – will speak to Mr. Williams, Beckfords agent – Beckford wd. have given 2 guineas. to Humphrey but damned the emigrants – Humphry said it wd. oblige Mr Goddard – Beckford flew out – hating Goddard who formerly solicited him but has since avoided him. – Beckford is whimsical but with so much money may be so. – is not going to France. 3:855.

5 Aug. Humphry in eving – Wyatt has sounded Beckford abt. Cozens and Hodges Children – it must now work through Mr. Williams. 3:880.

6 Aug. Wyatt I called on in moring – saw designs for Beckfords Gothic building – which is now much enlarged – among the furniture are to be four Cabinets of £500 value each – all in Gothic taste – four Gothic statues to be executed by Nollekens, Flaxman, Rossi & Westmacot. The *Tower* is not proceeding with at present but in his will Beckford has directed that it shall be finished shd. He die before. – Humphry was to blame in what passed about Emigrants, flew into a passion – wd. go away. 3:880.

4 Oct. West called on me... He has been to Fonthill with Wyatt – *was desired to go down previous to dinner given* at Salisbury by the Corporation – met there Beckford & Dr. / Lettice His Tutor, and with Wyatt went to the dinner – Company abt. 140 – all gates thrown open for Beckfords Carriage – when He entered room *all stood up* – Beckford sat on left hand of the Mayor – West next – then Wyatt & Lettice – Lord Radnor on *right* of Mayor, also Bouverie and Hussey &c – Beckfords Health was drank with and company rioted with Joy. Dinner was served at ½ past 3 – Beckford went away at 6 to *His House* in the town, – where they had Coffee & Tea and were attended by some Members of Corporation – abt. 8 set off for Fonthill in Beckfords Coach – On their way Beckford remarked on Lord Radnors *manner* – said He would have carried it off better. – Hussey, He said, He would trust from his looks and manner.

Beckford usually rises about 6 – breakfasts at 10 which lasts half an Hour – dines at ½ past 3 in an hour or so has Coffee and then quits Company to ride &c – Such as choose it remaining at the Table. His

income this year is £155,000 – He has just recd. information of 7 of his Ships being arrived uninsured, by which He saves £12,000. He pays £75,000 duties this yr. to government. The King is well inclined to Beckford but Pitt & Lord Loughborough are his determined enemies. 3:900-1.

- 11 Oct. Richd. Smirke calld. Foxhall informs his Father that Beckford approves Cabinet pictures but objects to price – thought 150 gs. sufficient, but remainder will be paid, if demanded. 3:905.
- 13 Oct. Smirke I calld on – He is recovering – shewed me a letter to Foxhall on Beckfords business – Foxhall manoeuvring in the payment &c. took his letter to consider. 3:906.
- 14 Oct. Smirke I calld on – talked to him abt. Beckfords business and proposed to him to write to Beckford not to Foxhall. 3:906.
- 16 Oct. Smirke I calld on – talked abt. Beckfords conduct & that of Foxhall – mentioned a regulation for himself which He much approved.
Richd. Smirke in eving calld with rough Copy of a letter to Beckford, I proposed some alterations. 3:907
- 17 Oct. Smirke to look over letter sent tonight to Beckford. 3:907.
- 24 Oct. Smirke to tea – Foxhall has written to him – & returned drawings which were sent to Font-hill and added that Beckford did not mean to purchase them. 3:909.
- 25 Oct. Smirke I calld on – shewed me a letter He intended for Beckford – I proposed to send for Daniell to hear his sentiments on the business – He came & thought it best not to force the drawings on Beckford – but finding Smirke had formerly made sketches which were returned seemed to alter his opinion – I advised to write to Foxhall to know if He had been directed to settle with Smirke – and wait for his answer. {other paragraphs follow}

Smirke has recd. a *verbal answer* from Foxhall – to call on *him* on Thursday at 4 oClock. On first impression Smirke prepared a note for Foxhall in answer – but now thinks He shall go – not worth while doing otherways. 3:909.

- 29 Oct. Lysons mentioned the evident puffs of Beckford in the newspapers, seconding the extravagant character given of him in the last European Magazine recommending him as the most proper person to negotiate a peace with France. – He also remarked on his reconciliation to his Tutor Dr. Lettice after a separation of some years, on which Beckford in lieu of an Annuity settled on the Dr. paid him £5000.

The Bishop of Salisbury on Mrs. Harvey, – Beckfords Sister, having expressed concern at his situation, said to her that He saw no prospect of him again being admitted to Society – but that the best thing He cd. do would be to endeavour to prevail on some well connected Young Woman

to marry him, that wd be his only chance.

Beckford wrote a romance in French, called Vertac [Vathek] – which is said to be very clever – it has been translated into English. 3:910.

31 Oct. Smirke called. Wyatt has been with him this eving. – said He never saw Beckford in such a passion as when He shewed him Smirkes letter; to be suspected of wanting inferior things touched his pride. A painted glass acct. in which there was an appearance of imposition came at same time unluckily. – an Artist of name of Boileau is also dismissed for imposition. Wyatt wd. have Smirke write or do something – so would Foxhall. 3:911.

1 Nov. Wyatt I called on this moring... We talked much of Smirkes affair with Beckford – latter furious on rect. of His letter, & at Pearsons proposed charge for painted glass – said “they are all rogues.” – Pearson had said to Wyatt He shd. charge for each figure in painted glass to be copied from Wests *Paintings of Saints* for the purpose, 100 or 120 or 150 gs. Pearson had been mentioned by West to Beckford, but rather as a *stranger* than as an *acquaintance*. Beckford called at Wests to see one of figures finished; Pearson, *accidentally on purpose*, came in – Beckford told Wyatt He *soon saw through him*, but left it to Wyatt to settle – Pearson also demanded a Sum of money *in advance*. – Wyatt privately desired His nephew Jefferey Wyatt to write as from himself to Eggington, who resides near Birmingham to know his terms for such work. Eggington replied *50 guineas a figure, 7 Feet ½ high & 3 Feet ½ wide* – and to finish 8 figures in two years. This difference appeared to make Pearsons charge monstrous. – Beckford, however, offers Pearson a figure to execute at 100 gs. if He chooses. Wyatt thinks Beckford leans to West on acct. of his situation with the King – likes His sketches but not his pictures, and wishes him to make them like his sketches as He can – Wyatt wishes Smirke to write to Beckford and after stating circumstances leave price to him, – no bad consequence can ensue.

Smirke I called on & related what had passed with Wyatt. He wrote to Beckford but wd. not leave price to him. 3:912.

2 Nov. Beckford did not mention having recd. a letter from Smirke yesterday – has always behaved well & respectfully to Wyatt – but frequently to others shews great Hauteur. – His Mother says, He is by his manners, his own enemy in his particular situation, as He does not *conciliate*. She complains of *Beckford pride*. He sometimes speaking of Her, talks of / *Hamilton pride*, – Beckford has thought the King is against him, Wyatt relates to him, that the King always asks him what He is doing for Mr. Beckford with such enquiries as He wd. not make, if He Mr. Beckfords name were obnoxious to Him. – He thinks King shd. notice him – Wyatt observes that cannot be expected till He has smoothed the way *with the people*. 3:913-4.

6 Nov. Mr. Beckford went down with Wyatt yesterday to see Hatfield House, and in the dining room were surprised to see a cloth laid for Lord & Lady / S. in a meaner way than could have been supposed. – The House is also very inadequately furnished.

Beckford yesterday told Wyatt that He had an intention of taking down *Fonthill House*, which is badly situated – and in that case enlarge the Gothic Building now erecting to be His Mansion House. He observed that being only 2 miles from the other house, one or the other of these buildings will hereafter be taken down, as they are too near each other to be made independent Houses for families ineach. – Wyatt remarked that should the House be taken down, much blame would be thrown on him as the adviser, – Beckford answered “You are older than I am, yet I have lived long enough not to mind what the world says”.

This, owing to the Season having been uncommonly dry, has been an unprofitable year for the Jamaica Crops, – yet Mr. Beckford receives, clear of all expenses upwards of £55,000 – His estates in England are 16 or £18,000.

Pearson continued to insist on having 150 guineas for each figure in painted Glass – but on today being told that Mr. Beckford had refused to agree to more than 100 gs. He consented to take it. 3:915-6

7 Nov. Wyatt said...

Fonthill House was build by late Alderman Beckford – finished, if not designed by Adam, must have cost towards £100,000.

The Spire of the new Gothic building is to be 300 feet high. 3:918.

10 Nov. Academy Club I went to. / ...

The Statue of Bacchus, which was bought for Mr. Beckford, is 7 or 8 feet high. The Trunk & Head of the figure only are original – all the other parts are added. Nollekens, for himself would not have given 90 guineas for it – to Connoisseurs it might be worth 200 or £250 – Ld. King bid for it – Beckford had it for £400. Bonomi said that Mr. Hamilton told him that He bought this Statue in Rome in the year 1727 and gave £2000 for it – Nollekens does not believe it was ever sold at such a price. 3:920-1.

11 Nov. Lysons {, Wyatt & Smirke} I dined with. /

Mr Beckford has recd. letters from Mr. Williams, his agent in Paris, – the Messenger was stopped at Dover, – and the letters taken from him and sent to the Duke of Portlands Office – Duplicates of the letters dated the 2d. of this month at Paris, were forwarded by Mr. Williams and recd. by Mr. Beckford, who also applied to the Duke of Portland and recd. the others *sealed* – but it appeared by different coloured wax, that they had been opened – The contents of these letters were, that Mr. Williams had been with the Secretary for foreign affairs and with others – that it had been

proposed to him "that if the Government of England would privately advance £6000 to be made use of in *feeing* certain persons, and would give security for a million being paid for the *use of the Directory* as it was understood, *peace* shou'd be agreed to – England retaining *Cape of Good Hope* – &c &c." – in short better terms than perhaps were looked for. – Beckford is so confident of the ground of this proposal, as to offer to risk the £6000 from his own pocket. He is to see the Duke of Portland again on the subject on Monday next the 13th. inst. 3:922.

24 Nov. Twenty were at the Club today. I did not go. – West told Marchant that Beckford is innocent of the Charge brought against him. 3:927.

17 Dec. Wests I stopped at till one o'Clock. – He told me a person (Beckford) had put into the hands of Ministers a proposal for peace, which, on the part of the French, was sufficiently vouched. – That we are to keep the Cape of Good Hope & other possessions of the Dutch & to make some arrangements in the West Indies. – *That* nothing was said of the Toulon Ships or anything proposed derogatory to this country. The fact is the Ministers do not dare shew the papers to the King so adverse is He to peace as not to be directed. – West felt the Kings mind on the subject, but found him violent – hoped never to hear of peace with such a people. 3:948.

24 Dec. Beckford had spoken of Louis 17th. [18th] who has an implacable hatred of this Country – and is a detestable character.

The Margrave & Margravine of Anspach went to Fonthill and carried Six emigrants of Rank. The Margravine solicited assistance for them from Beckford, who proceeded to give 500 guineas to each of them. They wrote to the Margravine that necessity obliged them to accept the offer but they despised the character of Beckford &c &c. – She thought this behaviour so abominable, that she carried the letter to Beckford, who in an interview with one of them, desired they would quit His House. 3:954.

1798

1 Feb. Cosway I calld on.

Bourgeois has mentioned to him absurdity of Wests story abt. Beckfords scheme of peace. 3:976.

21 Feb. Christies sale – 10 pictures by Wilson. – Beckford there. 3:984.

24 Mar. Went to Opera... West told Williams – go to America if cd. get £16,000 paid. – Trumbull with Beckford to induce purchase in America. 3:994.

31 Mar. Wyatt at Club... proposed National Gallery by private subscription – Beckford wd. give £10,000. 3:995.

8 Apr. Wyatt called – been with King abt. Roman works of art – shewed

policy of making National Gallery – to educate students at home – already too much inclined to democracy – King said young Artists, young / lawyers & young Physicians. Beckford wd. go to Italy if approved and lay out £50,000 – for self – *decorations not Statues*. 3:997-8.

19 May. Wyatt I saw in mornng... Beckfords spire 300 feet high. 3:1010.

20 May. Beckford directed Williams to have interview with West Trumbull & another abt. purchasing in america – Williams questions always interrupted by West – Beckford sees through it. 3:1011.

18 Aug. Hamilton came to tea. – Has been at Fonthill ten days, and very handsomely treated.

He has made designs, (8 Doctors of the Church) for a window in the new gothic Building. – Mr. Beckfords mode of living is most sumptuous. – He spoke to Hamilton & Wyatt of the great men who formerly visited him. That Pitt had been there three days, – and that Lord Thurlow, while Chancellor, was there a week doing the business of the nation there. – It was unaccountable their having ceased to visit him – perhaps He did not at the [time] reckon enough upon the honor, they did him.

Mr. Beckford is an excellent Mimic, and often exhibits the affectations of Ladies of Fashion. – The expences of entertainments &c when He came of age, amounted to £40,000. 3:1047.

13 Sept. Boydell told us that the late Mrs Beckford of West-end, Hampstead often talked to him abt. her Son, (Beckford of Fonthill) and of his situation in consequence of the odium which lays upon him. She said his pride had prevented him from doing what would have been most prudent. – He should have gone to Covent Garden, said she, and have got ½ a / dozen woemen abt. him, – this would have done more to remove the suspicion than anything else. 3:1057-8.

1 Oct. Humphry called... Wyatt going to Falmouth with Mr. Beckford, who is going to Portugal. 3:1063.

5 Nov. John & Wm. Offley called... Mr. Beckford has a beautiful seat about 15 miles from Lisbon, it belonged formerly to a Mr. De Visme. 3:1081.

16 Nov. Hamilton came. – Beckford gone to Lisbon for 2 years. Unwilling at last to depart. – Wyatt went with him to Falmouth. – New building to be called Fonthill Abbey – the Spire to be 17 feet higher than the top of St. Peters at Rome. – The Abbey to be endowed, & Cathedral Service to be performed in the most splendid manner that the Protestant religion will admit – A gallery leading from the top of the Church to be decorated with paintings the works of English Artists. – Beckfords *own tomb* to be placed at the end of this gallery, – as having been an encourager of Art. Society of artists, He says, He prefers to all other.

West & Trumbull have induced Beckford to purchase an estate in

America, and Ralph West sailed for America abt. the 26th August last, to be agent to Mr. Beckford and to Manage His Fathers estate. About 12 months ago He married a Country girl, daugtr. to a Farmer near Sunning / Hill, to the great mortification of His Father and mother, she is gone with him to America. – It is thought Beckford has paid too dear for this estate. 3:1091-2.

8 Dec. Mr. Penns I dined at – Wyatt there.

Mr. Beckford allows himself £2000 a Month for his expenses in Portugal. So many schemes of expence it is difficult to keep them within / his great Income. West, Trumbull, & R. West, and a Mr. Wroughton were at Fonthill last Summer and induced Beckford to purchase an estate (covered with wood) of 25000 acres at the price of 10 shillings an acre. – It is considered a monstrous price.

It is understood that West is to proceed painting for Mr. Beckford to the amount of £1000 a year. – West has signified that if He could obtain payment from the King of the great demand on him, He would quit England for America. {other paragraphs follow}

Lord Strathavon went to Fonthill to take away his Sister Lady Margaret Beckford, but she wd. not go. He very much insulted Beckford. The late Lord Pembroke told Wyatt that Beckford shd. have shewn a Pistol to Lord S., which wd. have ended the matter. 3:1105-6.

22 Dec. Wyatt told me that Mr. Beckfords Gallery which is to lead to the *Revelation Chamber*, in the Abbey now building, is to be 125 feet long and 12 feet wide. It is to be wainscotted with Ebony, and in compartments are to be Historical Pictures by English artists. Tresham was introduced to Beckford to propose to him to purchase some of Lord Cawdors works of Art. Tresham is to paint four pictures for one of the Compartments. The largest of them 4 feet 3 Inches wide. – The Revelation Chamber is to have walls 5 feet thick in which are to be recesses to admit coffins. Beckfords Coffin is to be placed opposite to the door. The room is not to be entered by strangers, to be viewed through wire gratings. The floor is to be Jasper. This Gallery and room are to be over the Chapel. West is to paint all the pictures for this room, and is now limited to £1000 a year while He is proceeding with the pictures. Beckfords situation certainly preys on his mind. He is cheerful in Company. He has frequently alluded to his situation in conversations with W[yatt]., more particularly of late. – At Mr. Wildmans in Kent (His American Agent) Lord Romney, Sir John Honeywood &c expressed their having no objection to meeting him, which was signified to B[eckford]., but He would not go; not bearing to be recd. again into Society by Steps, so that He makes the difficulty greater. His late French negotiation was an ill-judged measure. A messenger dispatched

from Paris by his agent Mr. Williams, was arrested at Dover, by order of government, His papers taken from him, & He was obliged to return immediately. On which the French Directory threw Williams into Prison for a fortnight. Lord Thurlow having been referred to by Beckford on this occasion, called on him in Grosvenor Square, and condemned his conduct, telling him He had made himself liable to be indicted for treason for corresponding with His Majestys enemies. 3:1117.

- 24 Dec. Mr. Beckford has written from Portugal that He has not had his health so well there, as while He was in England. 3:1119.

1799

- 15 Mar. Mr. Beckford, Wyatt said, had made his return of Income, and given £110,000. {other paragraphs follow} /

... Beckford is often in a rage at being disappointed by Wyatt.

West told us a long story about Beckford. That it was owing to his having an Amour with a young married Lady at Powderham Castle, which was discovered by a letter carelessly dropt by *young Mr. Courtenay*, that the report of his being guilty of improper conduct originated. – Incensed at what Courtenay had done, Beckford, on discovering it, went to his room, and horse whipped him, which created a noise, and the door being opened, Courtney was discovered in his shirt, and Beckford in some posture or other. – Strange story. 4:1173, 1175.

- 13 Apr. West I called on & told him of the remarks which have been made on his inviting Mr. Williams, Mr. Beckford's agent. – He said He would speak to Wyatt abt. it. 4:1198.

- 14 Apr. Sir F. Bourgeois call'd this morning to know if I had spoken to West abt. Williams. I told him I had. – He said the invitation of Williams was much scouted by Northcote, Opie & Fuseli. – I said West was to consult Wyatt abt. it. 4:1199.

- 15 Apr. West I call'd on – He means to propose to Wyatt to make the invitation of Williams *His* measure. I told West the disadvantage arising from his inviting Williams would be that He could not hereafter check others. 4:1199.

- 2 May. West told us... / Tresham has purchased the Altieri Claudes for Mr. Beckford – the price 6500 guineas. 4:1215-6.

- 7 May. West called and left me Card to see Altieri Claudes at Beckfords. 4:1218.

- 8 May. West I called on.

Tresham transacted the business of purchasing the Claudes for Mr. Beckford. – He gave 7000 guineas for the 2 Claudes and small pictures, / one of which, the Nativity by L. Carrach, West says is a very beautiful

picture. – Beckford wrote from Portugal to have them purchased, witht. mentioning any Sum.

Mr. Angerstein offered £4000 for the Claude which has the Sacrifice in it.

Hearne I called on gave him one of Wests Tickets to see the Claudes. Mr. Beckfords in Grosvenor Square I went to with H. Hamond. – Smirke. – Daniell – Rooker – Garvey – Duppa – Kearsley – Bonomi – Mary Smirke – Edwards – Rigaud – Turner – Owen – Shee – West – Lord Fitzwilliam – Lord Yarborough, – &c &c there. West observed that Claude had so contrived his lights that the eye always settled upon the distance & the Center of the picture, – as the eye naturally does in viewing the scenes of nature. – He remarked how carefully Claude had avoided sharp & decided forms in the distance, gradually *defining* the parts as He came nearer to the foreground. – He thinks Claude began his pictures by laying in *simple gradations* of flat colours from the Horizon to the top of the Sky, and from the Horizon to the foreground, witht. putting clouds into the sky or specific forms *into* the Landscape till He had fully settled those gradations. – When He had satisfied himself in this respect, He painted in his Forms, by that means securing a due gradation, – from the Horizontal line to the top of his Sky, – and from the Horizontal line to the foreground. – Smirke remarked how entirely all *positive* colour was avoided, even to the draperies of the figures. Turner said He was both pleased and unhappy while He viewed it, – it seemed to be beyond the power of imitation. Duppa told me that Fagan & Grignon purchased these Claudes for abt. £500. 4:1218-9.

9 May. Lord Walpole I called on & took him to Mr. Beckfords at Eleven oClock to see the Altieri Claudes. – I staid there till near 5 oClock. Much Company there. {List of sixty-one people who were present.}

{Paragraph of comments on the Claudes.} /

I had some conversation with Mr. Williams, who said, Mr. Beckford in his letter stated that to procure those pictures & fix them in England wd. be to serve the Art, & credit the country. – I told him it was an addition to the National property. 4:1220-1.

27 May. Turner called...

Mr. Beckford has written from Portugal to desire that Turner may go to Fonthill, but He does not know what the commission is to be. – He is also to make views of Salisbury cathedral for Sir Richard Hoare. 4:1229.

17 June. Tresham called after dinner, – has purchased the 2 Colonna Claudes, 2 Salvators & 2 Raphaels from Ottleys collection for 2000 guineas for Beckford. – Tresham thinks West was too slack in not purchasing some Orleans pictures for Beckford – it is thought owing to his wish to sell *Trumbulls to him*. 4:1240.

- 20 July. Wyatt I called on in morning. He had set of an hour before with Tresham for Fonthill. – Mr. Beckford is expected home from Lisbon tonight. 4:1254.
- 31 July. Orleans Gallery, Pallmall, I went to, being the last day of exhibiting the collection. I made a sketch of the arrangement of the pictures. Beckford, attended by Williams and Foxhall was there. He told Daniell that owing to some bungling West had not purchased for him several pictures for which He wd. have given any price. – The 3 Marys – A Carrach – Moses striking the Rock, N. Poussin, – last Judgment, L. Bassan, The Circumcision, G. Bassan &c. 4:1259.
- 1 Aug. Jeffery Wyatt I met... Mr. Beckford has bought his Exhibition drawing of the Palace of Alcinous. He expects £50 for it. He executed it in a fortnight. 4:1261.
- 2 Aug. Wyatt I called on this moing... He dined with Mr. Beckford yesterday – West was there, – the misunderstanding abt. West not having purchased pictures out of Orleans collection for Beckford is done away, Bryant having exculpated West.
- Beckford will probably now reside sometime in England. He says it is the only country to live in. 4:1261.
- 3 Aug. Hamilton is going tomorrow with Beckford to Fonthill, – West, Tresham, Turner are to follow in a week or ten days. Beckford was in great agitation a few nights ago at Wyatt not coming to him, – and teased himself with many suppositions. – Foxhall always dines &c at the Stewards table, Beckfords jeweller, a man who travels in his own Coach does the same at Fonthill, B. – never admits his tradesmen to his own table. – Hamilton says He is an excellent Mimic when He chooses to be so. 4:1262.
- 29 Aug. Letter from West at Fonthill... Hamilton & Wyatt at Fonthill. 4:1272.
- 31 Aug. Shelley I called on... He has been to Fonthill with Foxhall, who wished to show him the Abbey, but Beckford desired it might not be seen till completed. 4:1273.
- 11 Sept. Turner called on me. I told him only one Associate wd. be elected but I had no doubt of his Success. He has been at Fonthill 3 weeks, – Tresham, West, Hamilton & Wyatt there part of the time. – He is to make several drawings, – views near the Abbey &c. They breakfasted with Williams at nine – Beckford himself at Eleven as He rides out before breakfast – dined at 4 – Walked out at 6, tea at 8 – supper at 10 – Beckford retired abt. 11 or little after. 4:1277.
- 22 Sept. Wyatt told me that a clear title cannot be made out to the estate which Mr. Beckford was to purchase in Pensylvania, at the instance of West & Trumbull. 4:1281.
- 23 Nov. Hamilton dined today with Mr. Beckford, with whom when in town,

he dines usually 2 or 3 times a week. There were 10 servants waiting though the Company only consisted of a French Doctor, who is often there, Mr. Williams, Mr. Beckfords agent and Hamilton. The Table was served in a style suitable to the number of servants. 4:1308.

27 Nov. Hamilton told me that Mr. Beckford had said to him, that Carathis, the Mother of the Caliph Vathek, a character in an Arabian tale written by / him and printed for Johnson in 1786, was strictly drawn from the life, being as exact a description of a woman He knew as He could make it. – Fuseli & Lawrence think the description of the black spirit inferior only to Milton. 4:1309-10.

1 Dec. Hamilton told us that Mr. Beckford holds his intention of pulling down Fonthill House. – In February next He will reside at the Abbey. He eats heartily of many and chiefly made dishes, – usually allows himself only 7 Hours & a half for going to Fonthill from London which is more than 90 miles.

The last Sunday Hamilton took him to see Woodehouses pictures. There are abt. 35 of them all locked up in mahogany cases. 4:1313.

7 Dec. Academy Committee I went to... /

Wyatt described the 2 frames which He designed for the Altieri Claudes now Mr Beckfords. They are 12 inches wide, – project 10 Inches, and *at the corners* 12 Inches. The pattern is something of the old pattern. He supposes they will cost £400. 4:1319-20.

1800

14 Jan. West I called on... a friend of His yesterday asked him whether He had lost the Kings Commissions also those of Beckford as it was so reported by those men. West replied that on the contrary a week ago He recd. from the King money on acct. – and that Williams had been with him from Beckford to know if he was getting on with the Revelation Chamber pictures. 4:1349.

4 Feb. At Half past 8 West after the minutes {of an Academy General meeting} were read & before they were confirmed read His defence against the charges of Tresham viz: “That He had acted unbecoming a President, – and not with the civility of a Gentleman” – in respect to the letter which Tresham had addressed to Him...

Tresham then sd. He required time to answer so elaborate a statement as Mr. West had produced, – denied that He had ever spoken disrespectfully of Him relative to Fonthill &c. 4:1371.

6 Feb. West I called on. – Mr. Beckford was with him yesterday. West shewed him the paper which He had read to the Academy. – Beckford said He had made up his mind abt. *a person* sometime ago. – He said also He

- had found Hamilton to be what West described him. 4:1372.
- 4 May. Exhibition I went to with Daniell. – Sat sometime with Wilton – West came there with Mr. Beckford & Williams. 4:1392.
- 11 May. Hamilton called on me. – Ralph West is returned from America. Having discovered that a set of swindlers were endeavouring to impose on Mr. Beckford He suddenly came & prevented Mr. B from paying the money agreed on for the sale of certain estates in America. 4:1394.
- 10 July. Turner I drank tea with at his lodgings in Harley St. – He thinks of charging Mr. Beckford 40 guineas each for the drawings of Fonthill Abbey. They are seven in number. – The size about 40 Inches by 29 or 30. – His picture of the plague in Egypt is abt. 7 feet by 5. – Mr. B. has also bought it. 4:1418.
- 8 Nov. Hamilton called – Has been at Fonthill near 4 months. Smith & Turner were there & Tresham for a week. – One wing of the Abbey is finished & furnished. – but Mr. Beckford has never slept in it. – Hamilton remarked on the extraordinary effect which that species of building when suitably furnished, as is here the case, has on the mind. It fills the mind with a sentiment which is almost too much to support, certainly of too melancholy a cast to be long dwelt upon; He therefore is not surprised that Mr. B. has not yet had inclination to dwell in it. 4:1452.
- 8 Dec. Mr. Powel told me that Mr. Thorpe has the largest property of any one in Jamaica. Mr. N. Bailey & Mr. Beckford the next. Mr. Beckford has lost one estate from not having foreclosed on the mortgage, & is threatened with two other suits. 4:1464.

1801

- 13 Apr. Hamilton came to tea. – He was at Fonthill at Christmas when Mr. Beckford gave his first entertainment in the Abbey. – Sir Wm. Hamilton & Lady, – Lord Nelson, – Madame Banti, – several French Emigrés, a Portuguese Nobleman, – a few Country neighbours, – West, – Tresham, – & Smith were there. – They went from Fonthill to the Abbey by Torch light and arrived abt. 6 oClock finding Dinner served at the moment.

Lady Hamilton, in the evening between eleven & twelve displayed Her attitudes. – She is bold & unguarded in her manner, is grown fat & drinks freely. /

Turner had 150 guineas for his picture of Moses exhibited last year, and 35 guineas each for the drawings made near Fonthill. 4:1537-8.

- 26 May. Mr. West called on me in the evening...

Mr. Beckford is going to France in a day or two. Wyatt is to accompany him to Dover. – The expence He has already been at on the building & furnishing the *Abbey at Fonthill* is £242,000. – It will cost him

near as much more to complete it. 4:1554.

1 July. H[amilton] has found B[eckford] what might be expected. – After 3 months instruction at F[onthill]. given to the daughts – no notice of remuneration was taken and B. was leaving the Kingdom without any mention of pay for anything – H noticed this to W[yatt], which caused B to require a demand. – H. Made a demand for works finished, but not being a *drawing master* wd. not propose anything for that service but leave it to B., who allowed the difference remaining in settling the other accounts which amounted to £27. – H. on this saw his situation & mentioned to W. / 6 months instruction given in London, for which He sent in a charge of a day lost each time at 2 guineas a day. It amounted to abt. £47 – & was paid – with insolent disapprobation. – So ends as others have done this connexion, fully shewing the character of the Man, – Who insensible to the claim of an individual thus serving his views, a few days afterwards being applied to by Banti, the Opera Singer, on acct. of her benefit, took a single ticket and gave her 100 guineas. 4:1570-1.

4 July. Beckford has ordered the Colonnade, & wings of Fonthill to be pulled down. The body of the House is to remain & to be the residence of his daughters who are to have an establishment of £10,000 a year. 4:1573.

1802

26 Feb. I went to Christies to see Beckfords pictures brought from Fonthill. – Among them the “Rakes progress by Hogarth”. – 8 pictures. – 4 by Louthburgh – 2 by Webber, 2 by Hamilton. – The Cabinets painted by Smirke. 5:1751.

1803

23 May. Sir George Beaumont called in the afternoon... Lady Beaumont had made him a present of one of the large Landscapes by Rubens... I went to him to West's to see the picture. Mr. Beckford came in to the room to us while Sir George & I only were there & was in raptures with the picture, making remarks with a vivacity that never ceased, & left little room for other remark. – He spoke of the pictures now placed in the gallery at Paris as having mostly been painted upon: The Transfiguration &c. 6:2035.

4 July. Beckford of Fonthill was mentioned. Dr. Munro said when He first saw him it was at an auction talking with West & He took him for a picture dealer, not thinking He looked at all like a Gentleman. Hoppner concurred in it. 6:2073.

17 July. West thinks W[yatt] a most malignant man.

He wished us to see a picture by Gaspar Poussin belonging to Mr. Beckford, brought from Paris. 6:2083.

- 18 July. West I called upon today to see the picture by Gaspar Poussin. It was some years ago one of the Ornaments of the Colonna Palace at Rome. 6:2084.
- 30 July. He {West} told me that a Copy of the Gaspar Poussin which was brought from the Colonna Palace & bought by Beckford and now at Wests has been lately brought from Italy and is now in Oxendon Street. It has deceived *Knight*, who mentioned it to West, & that Sir Richd. Worsley had offered 700 guineas for it. After seeing the Gaspar at West's, Knight wrote to him, attributing his mistake to a dark room and want of Spectacles. – So uncertain is Connoisseurship. 6:2092.
- 5 Aug. West mentioned to me that attempts had been made to injure him at Court. A letter had been shewn among the Royal Family as having been written by Mr. Beckford, stating that He had recd. a letter from Mr. West who expressed how much pleasure He had in visiting Fonthill but that Mr. Beckford must excuse him if He declined to go there at any time when Mr. Wyatt shd. happen to be there. – The letter shewn was an imposition which West told the person who informed him of it He wd. soon prove. Mr. Beckford a little time after arrived from Paris, when Mr. West mentioned the circumstances to Him to his astonishment. He agreed that West shd. write to him desiring him to answer, whether He, Mr. West, had ever written to Him a letter containing such a declaration. Mr Beckford / replied to it with a full denial of his ever having done so, & West delivered Mr. Beckford's letter to be shewn to the Royal Family. 6:2095-6.
- 16 Dec. West I called on before dinner. He was describing the violent behaviour of Copley, Bourgeois & Soane at the Council last night & their extravagant abuse of Richards when Mr. Beckford came in & I soon after left him. 6:2193.
- 17 Dec. West I called on. – He told me it was from Mr. Beckford that He obtained the information that came from Wyatt. – Beckford participates in the feeling of the Royal Academy, thinking that the general tendency is to make the King's will to supersede everything and that He himself suffers from the prejudice which was entertained against his Father the late Alderman Beckford on Political accts. 6:2194.

1804

- 7 Jan. West spoke abt. Beckford. A Spanish Gentleman of distinction is desirous to marry one of his daughters. Beckford has written to Her His sentiments, expressing his approbation provided it shd. prove agreeable to Her. – In his present *excluded situation*, He says Beckford avows a repentance of two things, – one of his having at the intreaty of his wife left the Kingdom when the reports against Him were first circulated. – The

other of his having against the advice of His Mother, gone to Powderham Castle (Lord Courtenay's) where He seems to wish that it shd. be considered that He fell into a snare. 6:2213.

8 Jan He {the King} talked abt. his new building at Kew, & said He should have thought it impossible 30 years ago that He should ever encourage Gothic Architecture. – Wyatt He sd. was now in the habit of it. At Fonthill He had done a great work. – Wyatt had said to him that there had been no regular Architecture since Sir William Chambers, – that when He came from Italy He found the public taste corrupted by the Adams & He was obliged to comply with it. 6:2214.

23 Jan. West I called on. He goes tomorrow to Beckford's at Fonthill. 6:2224.

1 Feb. I dined alone – and drank tea at Mrs. Wests, He being returned from Fonthill...

Mr. Beckford at Fonthill resides at the Abbey, but His two daughters live at the Great House as it is called, from which they go every day to dine with him at the Abbey at 5 oClock. – It is 3 miles distant. – Beckford has arranged 9 pictures by West in one room. – He has also arranged some pictures by Hamilton of whom He always speaks with respect. 6:2230.

29 Mar. West spoke of T. Hope's pamphlet on Wyatt's design for Downing College. – He sd. He dined at Beckford's at West end last week & Beckford stopped at His House to take the pamphlet which after dinner He read. He said Tom Hope was right in His remarks. – He said He felt the force of what He observed of the Abbey at Fonthill being a Gothic design ill placed within view of Salisbury Cathedral; but that He had a particular motive for it. The Gothic windows & compartments afforded him opportunities to blazon and introduce the arms of the various great families that did & had existed in Europe from which His daugtrs. are descended or to which they are allied. – He is much dissatisfied with Wyatt who perpetually disappoints Him. – He said if Wyatt can get near a large fire, and have a bottle by Him He cares for nothing else. He lately left Him at the Abbey on pretence of being obliged to go immediately to town. He stopped at Fonthill House belonging to Mr. Beckford, 3 miles from the Abbey, there found Foxhall, the Carver, & staid with Him there *secretly* a day & half enjoying Himself, which Beckford a week after discovered. 6:2283.

18 Dec. West was going to dine with Mr. Beckford, who He sd. was quite in a rage at Wyatt's attempt at the Presidency. 6:2474.

1805

5 Aug. Boydells at West End I went to and dined... Much was said about the

conduct of Beckford of Fonthill to his daughters. – They now reside with Lady Ann Hamilton their relation. He allows them £1000 a year. He is incensed against the youngest on acct. of her refusing to marry a Spanish Count who came to England for that purpose. The Marquiss of Douglas offered to marry her if Beckford would have given her £20,000 a sum required by the Marquiss to settle some affairs. – Beckford refused. – He has had his West India Estates greatly curtailed by claims being made to several of them which his Father had got / possession of in consequence of having large mortgages upon them, but he neglected to foreclose the mortgages, and the Heirs having lately sued for them have recovered them. It is said Beckford has now only £30,000 a year. 7:2601-2.

- 1 Dec. Grignon of Russell street... told me that His {late} Brother was a half sharer in the purchase of the *Altieri Claudes* which with great difficulty they got from Rome & shipped them at Naples, carrying them to Palermo & from thence to England. – Mr. Beckford of Fonthill bought them, & a few other pictures and gave £7000 for the whole together; but the other pictures were comparatively of little value. – The *Altieri Claudes* after being purchased by Grignon & his partner were enclosed within a wall to avoid a search of the French Revolutionists then in power in Italy. 7:2653.

1806

- 15 June. The Academy I went to in the afternoon with Daniell. While we were there Wyatt came with 2 Miss Beckfords, 2 Lady — Hamiltons, daugtrs. to the Duke of Hamilton, & Lord [blank]. – Matthew Wyatt was also there, and the Portuguese Ambassador, – De Susa. {other paragraphs follow} /

The eldest Miss Beckford is much taller than Her sister & handsomer with an acute countenance. – The younger Sister is low in stature, & ordinary in her face and general appearance. 7:2783-4.

- 13 July. West I met... Mr. Beckford has told West of the breach between Wyatt & Tresham. – Matthew Wyatt spoke to Foxhall of the ill usage & disappointment His Father had met with in having the proposed election of Bonomi opposed, – and of Father's indignation at Tresham and others. – Foxhall repeated this to Beckford. 8:2811.

- 28 Aug. Lawrence came to tea. – He dined / yesterday at the Lord Chancellor's at Hampstead. – The Company consisted of... Miss Susan Beckford... {another paragraph follows}

Miss Susan Beckford sings exquisitely but it is a rule for Her not to sing in any House but in that in which she resides with Lady Ann Hamilton in Baker St. 8:2843-4.

- 16 Oct. He {Jeffery Wyatt} talked a good deal abt. his Uncle James Wyatt, now President of the Royal Academy. – He sd. He had now been out of

town 4 months witht. once having come to London. He has moved from Mr. Codrington's to Mr. Beckfords, & from thence to Lord Pembrokes & the Marquiss of Hertfords – backwards and forwards, neglecting all his business in other places. For the distance He travels He charges *Half a crown a mile*, but does not charge *for time while travelling*; but when stationary at any House He charges five guineas a day. – I, said Jeffery charge two shillings a mile for *travelling*, and three guineas a day while stationary. He said His uncle is a very singular man. He will often employ himself upon trifling professional matters which others could do, while business of importance is waiting for Him. – When a Commission to build a House or to do other professional business is proposed to Him by a Nobleman or Gentleman by whom He has never before been employed, He will eagerly attend to it till He has got all the instructions necessary for the commencement of the work, but then He becomes indifferent to it, & has lost many great commissions by such neglect they having after long delay been put into the hands of others. – At times He will when at the House of an Employer work very hard in making designs & will frequently leave the Company & bottle after dinner to go to his Clerk. – Such is the irregularity of his habits.

Jeffery {Wyatt} sd. that abt. 4 months ago He (Jeffery) was at Fonthill and saw the *Abbey*, which is so strictly forbidden to be shewn that His Uncle, who was then there, could not undertake to shew it to him. He therefore threw Himself in the way of Mr. Beckford who asked Him to go to the Abbey / where He dined and stayed the night. The Miss Beckfords did not then reside at the Abbey or at the old House at Fonthill, but at a House in a neighbouring village. Such is Beckford's singularity. – Not long since Sir Richard Hoare of Stourhead applied to Mr. Beckford to *see the Abbey* which Mr. B. granted & attended Sir Richard when He came for that purpose. These civilities which passed between them were reported to the neighbouring gentlemen who took such umbrage at it, as conceiving that Sir Richard was giving countenance to Mr. Beckford that a Gentleman wrote to Sir Richard in His own name & in that of others to demand of Him an explanation of that Proceeding, as they meant to regulate *themselves towards him accordingly*. – Sir Richard applied to His friend the Marquiss of Bath upon it, & represented that He had no further desire but to see the Abbey and the meeting with Mr. Beckford was accidental & to Him unexpected. – Such is the determination of the Wiltshire gentlemen with respect to excluding Mr. B. from all gentlemanly intercourse. – Jeffery said that He concluded Mr. Beckford had heard something of what had passed, as at breakfast He said before Jeffery “He wondered how He could be such a d–d fool as to allow Sir Richard to see the Abbey.”

With respect to the stain upon Mr. B's character He seems to act like an innocent man & does not avoid a subject of that nature. – James Wyatt told Jeffery that Mr. Beckford had talked about the *Warrington people* who were taken up for a dreadful crime.

Mr. Beckford sd. that Sir Richard Hoare while looking over the Abbey made some good observations but He afterwards sd. "Sir Richard had no taste". 8:2887-8.

1807

3 Sept. Caleb Whiteforde was at the Gallery. He was at Fonthill with Nollekens during two days of the sale. By taking down the House & selling the furniture Mr. Beckford will be relieved from an annual expense of £3000 to keep it up & probably recieve £25,000 for what is sold. 8:3116.

14 Dec. Mr. West I called upon before 12 o'Clock... / ...

He then said he Wyatt had ruined the King, as He had done *Mr. Beckford of Fonthill*. The King's private purse had been exhausted by Him in building at *Kew* & in other places, & now everything is at a stand, & many persons left in a situation subjected to great losses.

He then told me that the latter end of October, while He was at Bath, Mr. Beckford requested Him to come to Fonthill, which He did & staid there three days. Mr. Beckford represented to Him the state of His affairs, exhibiting a very great change indeed from His former situation. Four years ago the building of the *Abbey* at Fonthill had cost £242,000. He shewed that Wyatt by His negligence & inattention, had caused Him an / unnecessary expense of £30,000. He said that at present, such is the state of commerce, that His Jamaica estates are rather an expense to Him than a source of Income; that He had to answer claims upon Him been obliged to sell his estate in *Bedfordshire* which brought £62,000 & His estate in the neighbourhood of St. Pancrass for £12,000. Nothing now remains to Him but His unproductive Jamaica estates, & the Fonthill estate which is reckoned at £10,000 a year: more might be made of it were the extensive park & grounds turned to greater advantage. Upon this income He knows it is impossible to keep up His former establishment, & He has accordingly reduced it to a very limited scale compared with what it had been. His carriages & Horses have been sent away for sale, & Coachmen, Grooms & attendants discharged. He also desired West to assist Him in disposing of His valuable collection of pictures and drawings, saying at the same time He should feel much at parting with them as they never could be recovered by Him. I asked West how He was in spirits? He said, He appeared to bear it in a manly manner, saying, He had been accustomed to *persecution* & mortification, observing that the change from what He had experienced in

early life had been great indeed. Then incense was offered to Him & flowers strewed in his way wherever He went. He seemed to think His education had not been conducted judiciously, and that being brought up in private, He had not experienced those checks which are useful: That at a public school He should have been exposed to make His way among others, taking the consequences of things as they might happen. He has at times spoken of the charge which has caused Society to withdraw from Him, which He always represents to be persecution founded in injustice & falsehood. He says He can never forgive Himself for two things: One the breaking His promise to His Mother who urged Him not to go to Powderham Castle (Lord Courtneys) at the time He did, when the affair took place which has so much injured His reputation; – and the other His yielding to the entreaties of His wife, Lady Margaret Beckford, to quit England, & go for a time to *Swisserland*, – while this matter was agitating the public mind. Dr Lettice, His ci-devant Tutor, & Lord Thurlow, both seconded Lady Margaret in Her endeavour to effect this point.

West said, that Mr. Beckford's mother never believed Her Son to have been *criminal*. She wished Him, she told West, not to visit at Powderham Castle as she was convinced there were persons who wished to injure His reputation & lower His importance. She said the fact was, that Lady Loughborough, aunt to Lord Courtney, was in love with Beckford, and had a correspondence with Him by letter, while on this visit at Powderham Castle, & Lord Courtney then a Boy, carried the letters, one of which He so mismanaged that it fell into wrong hands, which Beckford discovering & being very passionate, He went to Lord Courtney's room, while He was in bed, it being morning, & locking the door, He horsewhipped Him, which causing the Boy to scream out; His Tutor came to the door & found it / *locked*. – This gave cause for the suspicion & the reports which were soon after circulated.

I listened to this relation which with many other circumstances was given to Him by Mr. Beckford's mother when at Her desire He visited Her alone at Her House at Hampstead; but I could not but feel the improbability of much of the story, it not at all agreeing with many other well authenticated circumstances, & being in itself difficult to give credit to; and from all I have heard the stories told to clear Mr. Beckford have not been well considered; though on the other hand, it does not appear that there is any proof actually to support the charge against Him.

West told me that Lord Aboyne, brother to the late Lady Margaret Beckford, who went down to Fonthill to effect a separation between Her & Mr. Beckford after the report was circulated, and quitted them in the most hostile manner has of late written to & had intercourse with Mr. Beckford.

Lady Margaret was pregnant at the time & continued attached to Mr. Beckford till Her death which happened two or three years afterwards while they were abroad. 8:3165-8.

1808

- 1 July. Owen told me today that Harris, the picture dealer, bought the Altieri Claudes of Mr. Beckford for 10,000 guineas, & yesterday sold them to Mr. Davis of Bristol for 12,000 guineas. 9:3307.
- 4 July. It was stated by Thomson that Harris, the Picture Dealer, had given Mr. Beckford 10,000 guineas for the Altieri Claudes, & has sold them to Mr. Davis of Bristol, member for Colchester for 12,000 guineas. 9:3309.
- 22 Nov. ... dined Mrs. Harrisons ½ past 4... /... J Hope offered to Miss Susan Beckford... 9:3376-7.

1810

- 6 Apr. West I called on... We found Mr. Beckford of Fonthill there. 10:3627.
- 29 Apr. The Marquiss of Douglass was married to Miss [blank] Beckford, 2d. daugr. to Mr. Beckford of Fonthill a few days ago. No person was present at the marriage but the Clergyman & Mr. Beckford. 10:3645.
- 27 Aug. I left Salisbury in the Mail Coach... We passed through the village of Wilton, and by the gate of Lord Pembroke's mansion; also by the Park of Fonthill, Mr. Beckford's, and the Plantations of Wardour Castle, Lord Arundel's... The Tower of Mr. Beckford's Gothick mansion is a conspicuous object from the road. 10:3727.

1813

- 13 July. Mr. West spoke of the ignorance of many professed amateurs of the fine Arts, and gave an instance of Mr. Knight having admired as being a fine & celebrated picture by Gaspar Poussin, an indifferent copy which had been imposed upon the late Sir Richd. Worsley at the price of £800. – The original picture was abt. the same time brought from Paris & bought by Mr. Beckford. Mr. West shewed it to Mr. Knight who acknowledged his mistake and said it was owing to having seen it through wrong spectacles. 12:4397.
- 7 Sept. Mr. West came in & was much struck on hearing the acct. of Wyatt's death. He sd. it [would] be on his mind for 48 Hours. He spoke of the trouble Mr Bedford [Beckford] had been subject to by Wyatt's neglect, and that when Wyatt has been confined in a Spunging House, Mr. Beckford has bailed him out from that situation. 12:4422.

Other people mentioned in the extracts from Farington's Diary

- Aboyne, George Gordon, 5th Earl of (1761-1853),
Beckford's brother-in-law
- Angerstein, John Julius (1735-1823), philanthropist
- Anspach, Elizabeth, Margravine of (1750-1828), formerly Lady Craven
- Bacon John (1740-1799), sculptor
- Banti, Brigida Georgi (c.1756-1806), singer
- Bath, Thomas Thynne, 2nd Marquis of (1796-1837)
- Beaumont, Sir George (1753-1827), connoisseur & amateur painter
- Boileau, François-Jacques (1720-85) or Pierre (1721-84)
- Bonomi, Joseph (1739-1808), architect
- Bourgeois, Sir Peter Francis (1756-1811), portrait painter
- Bouverie, Hon. Edward Pleydell-Bouverie (1760-1824)
- Boydell, Josiah (1752-1817), print publisher
- Boynton, Anna Maria Parkhurst, Lady (c.1764-1853)
- Bryan ['Bryant'], Michael (1757-1821), dealer & connoisseur
- Cawdor, John Campbell, 1st Baron (1723-1821)
- Chambers, Sir William (1723-1796), architect
- Copley, John Singleton (1738-1815), history & portrait painter
- Cosway, Richard (1740-1821), portrait & miniature painter
- Courtenay, William (1768-1835)
- Daniell, Thomas (1749-1840), landscape painter
- Davis, Richard Hart (1766-1842), MP
- De Cort, Henry Francis (1742-1810), Flemish landscape painter
- Delacroix, Jacques Vincent (1743-1832), French lawyer
- Duppa, Richard (1770-1831), artist & author
- Edwards, Edward (1738-1806), history painter
- Eginton, Francis (1737-1805), glass painter
- Fagan, Robert (1761-1816), portrait & history painter
- Fitzwilliam, William Wentworth-Fitzwilliam, 2nd Earl, (1748-1833)
- Flaxman, John (1755-1826), sculptor
- Foxhall, Edward (d.1815), Beckford's furnisher
- Fuseli, John Henry (1741-1825), history painter
- Garvey, Edmund (d.1813), landscape & scene painter
- Grignon, Charles, Jr., (1754-1804), painter
- Hamilton, Lady Anne (1766-1846), eldest dau. of 9th Duke
- Hamilton, Emma Hart, Lady (?1761-1815)
- Hamilton, Sir William (1730-1803)
- Hamilton, William (1751-1801), history & decorative painter
- Hamond, Rev. Horace, brother-in-law of Farington
- Harvey, Mrs. Elizabeth (b.c.1745), Beckford's half sister
- Hearne, Thomas (1744-1817), watercolour painter
- Hoare, Sir Richard Colt (1758-1838), antiquary
- Honywood, Sir John (d.1806), ?banker
- Hope, Thomas (1769-1831), art collector & connoisseur
- Hoppner, John (1758-1810), painter
- Humphry ['Humphrey'], Ozias (1742-1810), miniature & portrait painter
- Hussey, Thomas, son-in-law of 1st Earl of Orford
- Jeffery. See Wyatt, Jeffery
- Kearsley, Thomas (1773-c.1801), miniature painter
- King, Peter King, 7th Baron (1776-1833)
- Knight, Richard Payne (1750-1824), author & numismatist
- Lawrence, Sir Thomas (1769-1830), portrait painter
- Lettice, John (1737-1832), poet & divine, tutor to Beckford
- Loughborough, Alexander Wedderburn, 1st Baron (1733-1805)
- Loutherbourn, Philip Jacques de (1740-1812), landscape & history painter
- Lysons, Samuel (1763-1819), barrister & antiquarian
- Malone, Edmund (1741-1812), critic & author
- Marchant, Nathaniel (1739-1816), medallist
- Monro, Dr Thomas (1759-1833), physician
- Nollekens, Joseph (1737-1823), sculptor
- Northcote, James (1746-1831), portrait & history painter
- Offley, John (d.1812) wine merchant & William, nephew
- Opie, John (1761-1807), portrait & history painter
- Orford, Horatio, Lord Walpole, 1st Earl of (1744-1809)
- Owen, William (1769-1825), portrait painter
- Pearson, James (d.1805), glass painter
- Pembroke, Henry Herbert James, 10th Earl of (1734-1794)
- Penn, John (1760-1834), writer
- Pitt, Hon. William the Younger (1759-1806)
- Portland, William Henry Cavendish-Bentinck, 3rd Duke of (1738-1809)
- Richards, John Inigo (1731-1810), landscape painter
- Radnor, Jacob Pleydell-Bouverie, 2nd Earl of (1749/50-1828)
- Rigaud, John Francis (1742-1810), history & portrait painter
- Romney, Hon. Charles Marsham, 1st Earl of (1744-1811)
- Romney, George (1734-1802), portrait painter
- Rooker, Michael 'Angelo' (1743-1801), topographical & scenery painter
- Rossi, John Charles Felix (1762-1839), sculptor
- Shee, Sir Martin Arthur (1769-1850), portrait painter
- Shelley, Samuel (c.1750-1808), miniature painter
- Smirke, Robert (1752-1845), painter
- Smith, John 'Warwick' (1749-1831), watercolour painter
- Soane, Sir John (1753-1837), architect
- Strathavon ['Strathaven']. See Aboyne
- Thomson, Henry (1773-1843), painter & illustrator
- Thurlow, Edward Thurlow, 1st Baron (1731-1806)
- Tresham, Henry (1756-1814), history painter
- Trumbull, Col. John (1756-1843), American history painter
- Turner, Joseph Mallord William (1775-1851)
- Walpole, Lord. See Orford
- Webber, John (1752-1793), draughtsman
- West, Benjamin (1738-1820), American portrait & history painter
- Westall, Richard (1765-1836), painter & illustrator
- Westmacott, Sir Richard (1775-1856), sculptor
- White, Mr. ?Beckford's agent
- Whitefoorde, Caleb (1734-1810), diplomat & wit
- Wildman, Henry, Beckford's agent
- Williams, Beckford's agent. ?JF's error for Wildman
- Wilson, Richard (1714-1782), landscape painter
- Wilton, Joseph (1722-1803), sculptor
- Worsley, Sir Richard (1751-1805), antiquary & traveller
- Wyatt, James (1746-1813), architect
- Wyatt, Jeffery (1766-1840), architect, nephew of James Wyatt, Matthew (1777-1862), painter & sculptor, son
- Yarborough, Charles Anderson Pelham, 1st Baron (1748/9-1823)
- Yenn, John (1750-1821), architect
- No information on Bailey, Mrs Harrison, J. Hope, Powell ['Powel'], Thorpe, John Woodhouse, Wroughton

Notes on Contributors

Laurent Châtel, Maître de Conférences at the Université de Paris-IV Sorbonne, is currently working on translating his doctorate on William Beckford for a book with the Voltaire Foundation, Oxford. His research interests are British landscape aesthetics, oriental tales, and Beckford. He has publications in the *Beckford Journal*, the *European Romantic Review*, *XVII-XVIII- BSEAA* and in two books (*WB and the New Millennium*, ed. Graham & Berland and *The Reception of William Beckford*, ed. Shaffer & Wilton-Ely).

Amy Frost has been the Administrator of Beckford's Tower & Museum in Bath since 2002. Her interest in Beckford began while studying for an MPhil in Architectural History that specialised in the Gothic Revival. In 2004 she curated the exhibition *John Wood and the Creation of Georgian Bath* at the Building of Bath Museum and is currently researching for her PhD on the life and work of Henry Edmund Goodridge, the architect of Beckford's Tower.

Norman Kitze OBE is a computer pioneer. When he took up residence at Pains Hill he fell in love with the derelict park there. He then led a group of enthusiasts who managed to persuade Elmbridge Borough Council to buy the land with a view to restoring the park. He and his wife did much of the early historical research and published a book on the subject in 1984.

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

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

Andrée Rushton has for many years spent week-ends and holidays in the village of Tisbury, near the Fonthill estate. She became interested in William Beckford through getting to know the area. She has a long-standing interest in history and is a keen walker. In recent years she has been writing poetry.