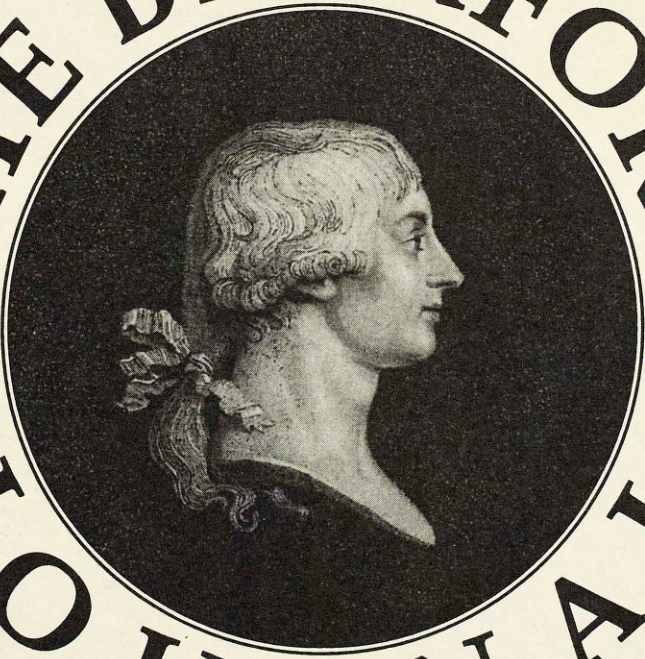


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Alderman William Beckford, Famous Londoner: (On the 300th Anniversary of his Birth) JERRY NOLAN	2
The ABC of Beckfordiana: a Review DICK CLAÉSSON	22
Compiling the Beckford Bibliography JON MILLINGTON	29
Johnson and Beckford: Contrasting Orientalists MALCOLM JACK	36
‘This sham university’: Beckford, Goodridge and Queen’s College, Bath AMY FROST	47
Beckford, William Jay and Goodridge: Religious Beliefs JON MILLINGTON	54
Beckford and the Tourists: Gothic Performances at Lansdown Tower, Bath TONY SEATON	61
Notes on Contributors	83

**Alderman William Beckford,
Famous Londoner:
(On the 300th Anniversary of his Birth)**

JERRY NOLAN

Thou breathing Sculpture, celebrate his Fame,
And give his Laurel everlasting Bloom;
Record his worth while Gratitude has name,
And teach succeeding Ages from his Tomb.

Unite in firm, in Honorable Band,
Nor let your children, at their father's hands,
Demand their birthright, and demand in vain.

Thomas Chatterton¹

When Alderman William Beckford died suddenly in London on 21 June 1770, at the age of sixty, such was his local fame that Londoners immediately decided to set up a great monument to express 'the high esteem in which the corporation of London held the memory of Mr. Beckford for his great abilities and steadfast attachment to the interests of his fellow-citizens.'² The decision was taken at a court held on 5 July 1770 when it was decided that the figure should be in white marble and the key words ought to be in gilt letters on a tablet of black marble, the completed sculpture to be placed over the 'sheriffs court' at the bottom of the Guildhall, fronting the hustings. A committee of six aldermen and twelve commoners was appointed to manage the competition and to commission the winner. Seventeen sculptors entered the competition.³ However, it would seem that the result was something of a foregone conclusion because the winner was quickly declared to be John Francis Moore, the Hanoverian who had already in 1766 produced a full-length marble statue of his

patron for Fonthill House in Wiltshire which displayed the Alderman as Lord Mayor of London in the act of delivering a speech; this statue was appreciated by the Alderman at the time and was placed in the library.⁴ In the Guildhall marble statue, Moore again represented the Alderman in his robes of office and in the act of giving a speech with the key quotation from the speech for which the Alderman should be remembered in the annals of English history: the remonstrance to George III on 23 May 1770.

At the same time commemorative medals were issued in London, which made reference to 'the zealous advocate & invariable protector of the rights, privileges & liberties of the people', and had an image of the seated figure of Justice holding scales and a cap of liberty with a book open at the words 'Magna Carta' and the motto 'True to his Trust' round the edge.⁵ On the south side of St. George's Church, Botolph Lane there was placed a scroll of iron-work in praise of Beckford's service to his country under the Beckford and City regalia and arms.⁶ Meanwhile Moore's design for a truly monumental marble Alderman was engraved by Charles Grignion for general circulation in 1771 and erected in 1772 at a cost of £1300. The evidence suggests that the monument was given an enthusiastic reception at the time, in spite of the generally held view that competition had been non-existent; but as the campaign against the slave trade spiralled and the Alderman's fame suffered eclipse, by the 1820s Moore's monument could be dismissed as 'a glaring specimen of marble spoiled'.⁷

Moore's Guildhall Monument was divided into three parts: the standing robed figure of William Beckford, Esquire, twice Lord Mayor speaking extempore; a key extract from Beckford's speech to His Majesty King George III on 23 May 1770; and two seated Amazonian figures in repose with their weapons momentarily at rest - Trade & Commerce on the right, and City of London Weeping on the left.

The following is the extract from the speech:

MOST GRACIOUS SOVEREIGN

Will your MAJESTY be pleased so far to condescend as to permit the Mayor of your loyal CITY OF LONDON to declare in your ROYAL PRESENCE, on behalf of his FELLOW CITIZENS how much the bare Appreciation of your MAJESTY'S Displeasure would at all Times affect their Minds. The Declaration of that Displeasure has already filled them with inexpressible Anxiety, and with the deepest Affliction. Permit me, SIRE, to assure your MAJESTY that your Majesty has not in all your Dominions any Subjects more faithful, more dutiful, or more affectionate to your MAJESTY'S PERSON and FAMILY, or more ready to sacrifice their Lives and Fortunes in the Maintenance of the true Honour and Dignity of your Crown.

We do, therefore, with the greatest Humility and Submission, not earnestly supplicate your MAJESTY that you will not dismiss us from your Presence, without expressing a more favourable Opinion of your most faithful CITIZENS and without some Comfort, without some Prospect at least of Redress.

Permit me SIRE farther to observe that whoever has already dared or shall hereafter endeavour by false Insinuations and Suggestions to alienate your MAJESTY'S affections from your loyal Subjects in general and from the CITY OF LONDON in particular and to withdraw your Confidence in and Regard for your People is an Enemy to your MAJESTY'S Person and FAMILY a Violater of the public Peace and a Betrayer of our happy Constitution as it was established at the glorious Revolution.

The political context of the speech was set forth in a publication, some eight years after Alderman Beckford's death, which detailed the running battle between the English Parliament and John Wilkes.⁸ Wilkes was born in Clerkenwell, being

Beckford's junior by sixteen years, and both found common cause with William Pitt the Elder. When Pitt resigned as Prime Minister in 1761, Wilkes used his maiden speech as M.P. for Aylesbury to support Pitt's call for war with Spain. When George III, crowned only on 22 September 1761, chose as Prime Minister one of his favourites, the Scottish John Stuart, third Earl of Bute, an outraged Wilkes started a radical weekly publication, the *North Briton*, to attack the whole system of royal patronage.

In 1762 Beckford became Lord Mayor of London for the first time. In the *North Briton* Wilkes took the opportunity of attacking George III's speech, believed to be written by Bute, which endorsed the Paris Peace Treaty of 1763 and which was, according to Wilkes, not peace with honour but a symptom of corruption and weakness. The King ordered general warrants for the arrest of Wilkes and the publishers.⁹ His year as London's Lord Mayor just completed, Beckford advised the prisoner Wilkes to claim that the warrant was illegal. A little later, Lord Chief Justice Pratt declared all General Warrants illegal. The released Wilkes visited Beckford in his house in Greek Street to celebrate his victory for parliamentary privilege and the freedom of the press. However the government, led by Grenville, were determined to convict Wilkes not only of seditious libel but also of obscenity related to his bawdy satire *Essay on Woman*. While the Commons debate on the matter was taking place, Wilkes fought a pistol duel to defend his honour against a fellow M.P., Samuel Martin, in which he was badly wounded, whereupon he pleaded illness as his reason for not attending either parliament or the law courts, and during the Christmas recess he slipped across to visit his daughter in Paris. The government found him guilty in his absence, expelled him from the House of Commons and pronounced him an outlaw. Wilkes's frustrated supporters were left to chant on the streets of London 'Wilkes for Liberty'. Hogarth's satirical engraving of the seated Wilkes, cross-eyed and looking demonic and with the bell of Liberty on a long pole

slung threateningly across his shoulder was used by his enemies.¹⁰ In spite of the repeated attempts of Beckford and others to get the sentence of outlawry reversed and to obtain pardon, Wilkes resided in Europe for some four years to avoid imprisonment, although he was reported to have returned to London on a few occasion in disguises.

The 1760s turned out to be a decade of ministerial instability. The young King's determination, after a period of relative continuity, to keep on changing the Prime Minister – seven were appointed throughout the decade – led to indecision, blunders and inconsistency in colonial policy, especially towards America. By 1766, the Earl of Chatham, no longer viewed as the Great Commoner, was in failing health. In 1770 Edmund Burke published a book, *Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents*, which, after an analysis of the reasons for the insecurity and instability, concluded that England was in danger of having a king who was politically overactive and was being sorely tempted to act as an absolute ruler along the lines of the reigning Kings of France and Prussia, Louis and Frederick.¹¹ With huge debts mounting in Paris, in 1768 Wilkes returned to London under the assumed name of Osborne and sought to contest a parliamentary seat, which he did unsuccessfully in the City of London. Then his friends gathered around and organized a vigorous campaign to win him a parliamentary seat in a Middlesex election.

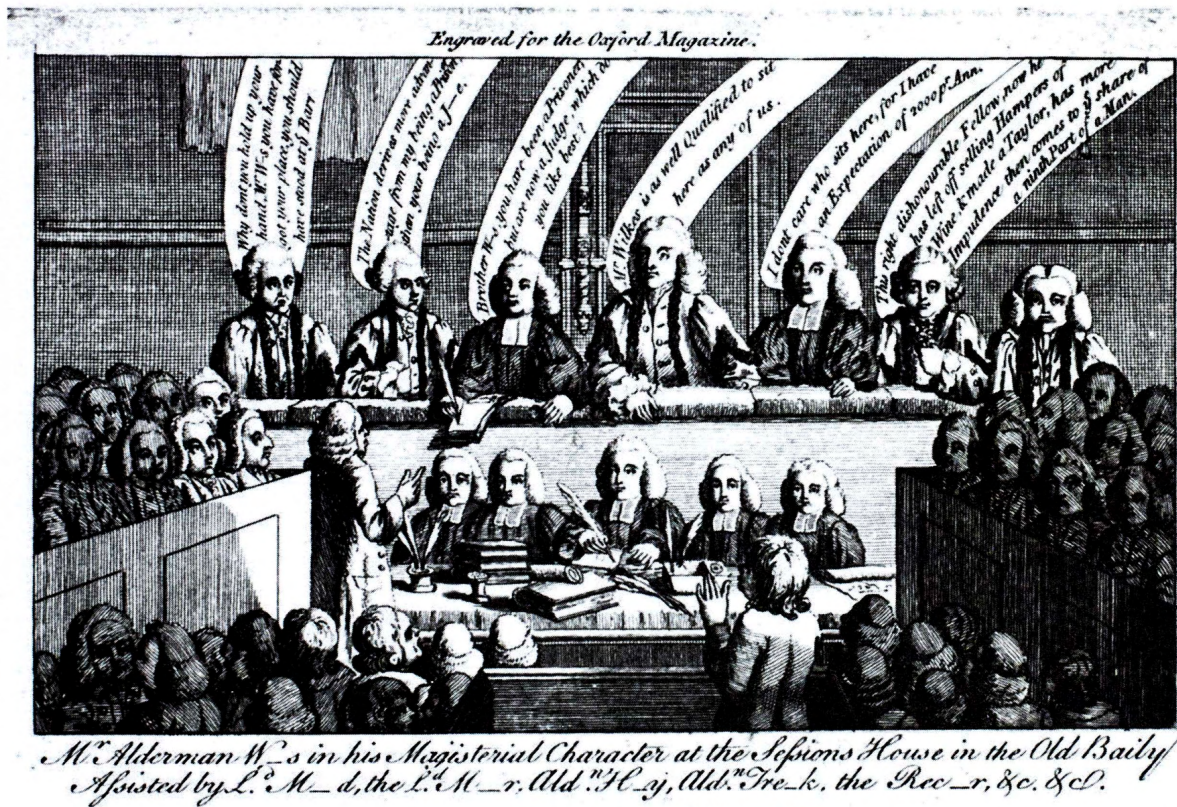
At this time Beckford was elected Lord Mayor for the second time and organized one of his sumptuous banquets to mark his friend's homecoming. Wilkes was elected alderman for Farringdon. He sat alongside the Mayor on the Bench at the Old Bailey. The old aristocratic supporters of the King, whom Beckford despised for their indolence, were outraged by such a brazen alliance. The *Oxford Magazine* published in 1770, shortly before Beckford's death, two satirical prints about the alliance between Beckford and Wilkes: one showed the Bench at the Old

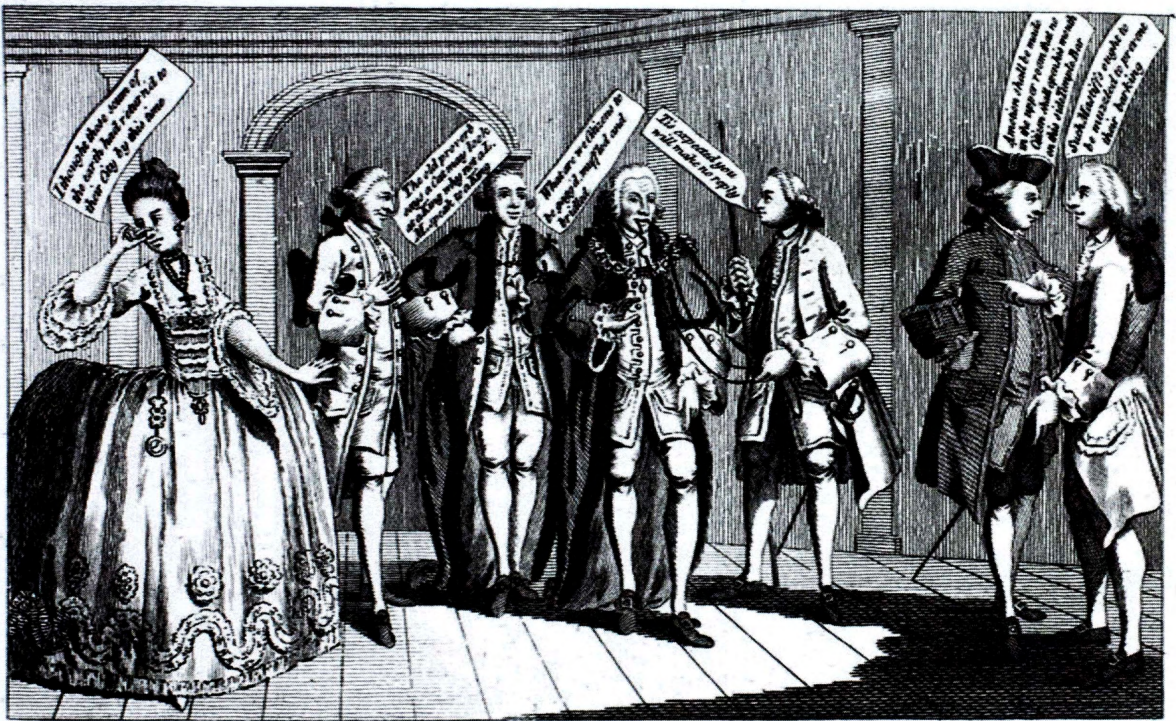
Bailey (*Fig. 1*), and the other showed the courtiers at St. James's attempting to bridle the Lord Mayor's support for the cause of Wilkes (*Fig. 2*).

When Wilkes won the Middlesex election, Prime Minister Grafton promptly expelled him but the authorities feared to arrest him in case there was a riot.¹² When Wilkes delivered himself into custody, some of his supporters managed to free him. Beckford worked to have his outlawry revoked on a technicality. The Society for the Supporters of the Bill of Rights was formed to support the causes of Wilkes. However, his enemies immediately invoked his 1764 convictions and he was placed under armed guard in the King's Bench prison. There was the 'Massacre of St. George's Fields', when six of his protesting supporters were killed. The Middlesex election was run no fewer than four times, Wilkes winning numerically on each occasion, with the freeholders, small landowners and craftsmen of the county standing steadfast behind their man. The King was said to have dubbed him 'that devil'.

In the stormy new parliamentary session in January 1770, the ineffectual Grafton resigned as prime minister and the resilient Lord North was chosen by the King. Lord North nullified Wilkes's election as M.P. for Middlesex but released Wilkes from prison, who began once more to play a leading role as a campaigner in the fight for the Bill of Rights and for influential positions in London other than as M.P., such as sheriff and Lord Mayor, positions which in fact he would win within the next few years. Stories about rejoicings at Wilkes's release included the one about Beckford's decoration of his Soho house with a large banner which had the word LIBERTY in three-foot-high embroidered white letters.¹³ During his second term as Lord Mayor, Beckford presented a few controversial remonstrances in the King's presence, when he was traditionally accompanied to St. James's by aldermen and livery in a procession which became

Figure 1: Sessions House at the Old Bailey
(by permission of the Guildhall Library, City of London)





A Scene at St. James's, or the Courtiers attempting to bridle the Tongue of the late worthy Lord Mayor.

Figure 2: Bridling the Alderman's Tongue

(by permission of the Guildhall Library, City of London)

jocularly known as 'The City Carriers'. The Lord Mayor raised face-to-face with the King matters such as the removal of evil ministers, the correction of malpractices in parliamentary administration and some principles for the dissolution of Parliament. The King's recorded replies were hostile in that they dismissed the Lord Mayor's suggestions as disrespectful to himself, injurious to his Parliament, and irreconcilable with the Principles of the Constitution. The evidence suggests that the extract from the remonstrance on 23 May 1770 chosen for display on the Guildhall Monument arose from the need to highlight the Lord Mayor's temerity in responding impromptu fashion to the King's reply, thereby violating all custom and precedent by delivering a speech which had not been previously submitted to the King, who most certainly did not treat the episode as merely a breach of courtly etiquette. When Pitt, by then Earl of Chatham, heard about the breach of convention, he declared that 'the spirit of old England spake, that never-to-be-forgotten day'. Apart from a popular instinctive admiration for Beckford's great courage on the occasion, the key to the enthusiastic reception of the truth of the speech among reformers was Beckford's brilliant combination of a courteous tone – unlike his aggressive, colloquial tone which had been often ridiculed in the House of Commons – and his successfully highlighting in more dramatic fashion Edmund Burke's contention that England under George III might well be in danger of losing the constitutional advantages which had been gained after the ending of the Crown dictatorship of James II.

Prints provided a commentary on the Lord Mayor's record of protest. A print (*Fig. 3*) marked the visit of the City Carriers to the King in March 1770 where the King says: 'I cannot attend to your Remonstrance! do you not see that I have been employed in business of more Consequence.'¹⁴ Another print (*Fig. 4*) shows a group of delighted members of the Royal Court reacting to the announcement: 'News! News! My Lords, the City Bully

Beckford is dead' with comments like: 'Damn the Memory of all Remonstrating Rascals' and 'I thought I should have had the Pleasure of lodging him in the Tower'.¹⁵

A contrasting print (*Fig. 5*) shows the Citizens of London lamenting the death of Beckford with supporters saying such things as: 'Thus low I bow to his Memory & kiss the Coffin that contains his Corpse' and 'Yes, he was honest indeed, he shall have a place in my Temple of worthies.'¹⁶ Without some vivid sense of the Wilkes background to the reasons for the choice of extract for the Monument, there can be little understanding of why the message of the 'breathing Sculpture' seemed so significant, indeed heroic, to Beckford's contemporaries.

Likewise, the two grieving Amazonian figures on the Monument need to be seen through the eyes of its first admiring spectators. The figure representing Trade & Commerce at a Stand reminded Londoners that Beckford was one of the Jamaican Beckford Planters.¹⁷ As he was not the first son, Beckford had arrived in England at the age of fourteen where he was placed in the care of the headmaster of Westminster School, the Rev. Robert Friend. The very able scholar progressed to Balliol College, Oxford and then as a medical student to the University of Leiden and the Hôpital des Invalides, Paris. On the sudden death of his father Peter Beckford II in 1735, William Beckford returned to Jamaica to help manage the family estates with his brothers. Then his elder brother Peter, the principal heir of his father, suddenly died and his brother William became his principal heir. Records in 1754 showed that the Beckford brothers held 42,075 acres of sugar plantations: William had 22,021, Richard 9,241, Julines 8,197 and Francis 2,616. During the next ten years Beckford lived in Jamaica where he managed his properties, slaves, equipment, supplies, trade, shipping and money-lending to other planters, for the most part during an international trade war in the area between Spain and Britain. In 1737 he was elected to the Jamaica House of Assembly and was



The Button Maker.

Figure 3: The Button Maker

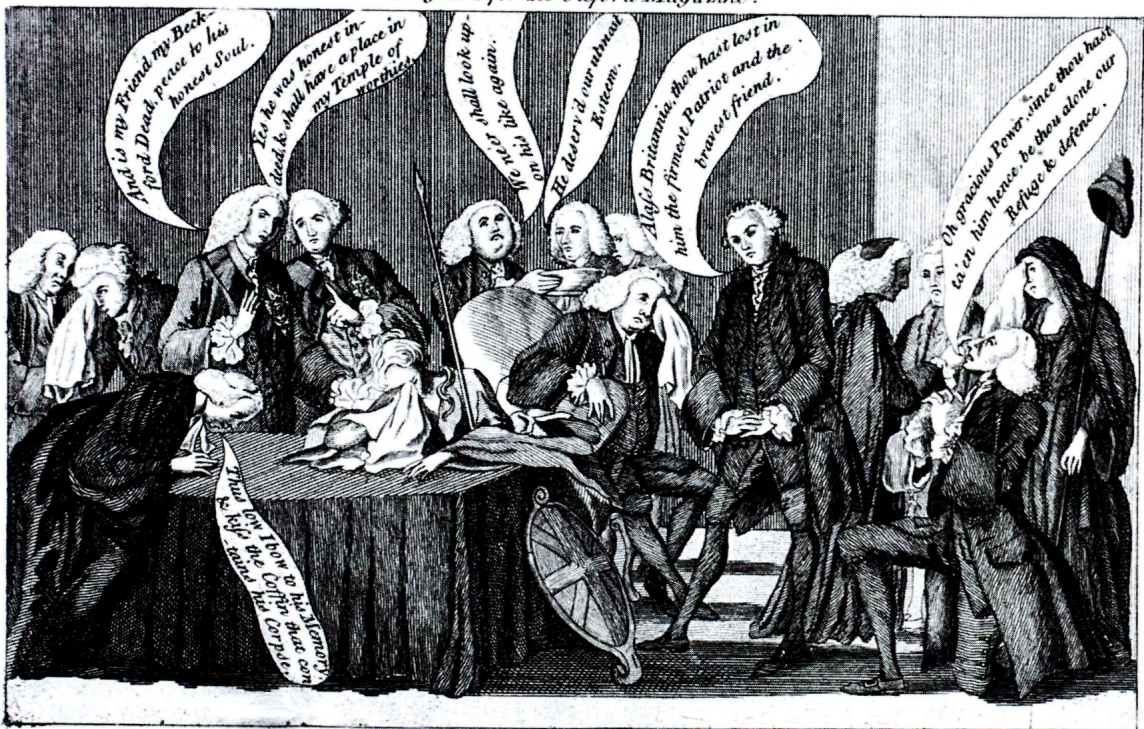
(by permission of the Guildhall Library, City of London)

active in legislative matters, along with his brothers and cousins. Beckford arrived back in London in 1744 where he soon became involved in high finance in the City in connection with his trading interests in the Sugar Islands.

His first spell in Parliament was as M.P. for Shaftesbury (1747-1754) where he became a great friend of the fourth Earl of Shaftesbury. His return to London began in 1752 when he associated himself with the Ironmongers' Company.¹⁸ His popular success there doubtless paved the way for his election as an M.P. for the City of London in 1754. Meanwhile Beckford had been creating Fonthill House on a large estate in Wiltshire first acquired in 1744, and furnishing the splendid house with spectacular works of art. At the age of forty-seven, having had eight illegitimate children, including his favourite offspring Richard, Beckford was married to Maria Hamilton, the widow of a friend in the City, Francis Marsh; and in 1760 Beckford's only legitimate son and principal heir was born, another William, who had the Elder Pitt as one of his sponsors. Thus at the beginning of that momentous decade of the 1760s the Alderman had secured a family house in the country, where he cultivated all the arts, and a meeting place in the city where he was acknowledged by many as the Sugar King and became, by dint of his tireless energies, the most powerful businessman in the City of London.¹⁹

To the modern observer, what seems the most glaring incongruity is that this absentee colonial slave-owner of very great wealth functioned successfully as a radical reformer of the parliamentary constitution in London. His obvious dependence on the slave trade for his great wealth and key position rarely surfaced in the widespread criticism of the Alderman by his political enemies – especially among the old aristocracy and county families – for such things as his ostentatious banquets, ugly Jamaican malapropisms, fragmented grammar, craggy looks, violent temper, noisy flattery, uncouth gestures, etc.²⁰ Probably the main explanation for the public silence about his retinue of

Engraved for the Oxford Magazine.



The Citizens of London lamenting the Death of Beckford.

Figure 5: The Citizens Lamenting
(by permission of the Guildhall Library, City of London)

slaves was the fact that almost every aspect of life at the time in the City of London – banks, insurance companies, museums, libraries, universities, the royal family – benefited from the politics of sugar being fully integrated into London's commercial and financial structures which would become the foundations for an early industrial revolution.

If the City's links to the slave trade during the Alderman's life had been questioned, another question might well have been asked: if the Egyptians had slaves to build the pyramids, if Athens had slaves to build the Parthenon and if Rome had slaves to build and maintain its aqueducts, why should our country hesitate to use slaves to build an improving world? The Alderman died just a few years before the issue of the slave trade began to be moved not by reformers but by abolitionists of the trading system.

Abolition rather than amelioration of the slave trade began to move to the very centre of political debate around the time when John Wesley published the influential pamphlet *Thoughts about Slavery* in 1774 which directly appealed to the moral sentiments of slave-owners as destroyers of African cultures. A commission of the House of Commons was first appointed to take evidence on the slave trade in 1775 and between 1785 and 1795 hundreds of publications opposing slavery and the slave trade were printed and distributed.²¹ If Beckford, long time absentee from Jamaica, had lived on and been pressed on the tortuous question of the slave trade, is it not most likely that he would have pointed to the positive uses to which he was putting the profits in British society?

Perhaps enough has been already assembled to explain the significance of the figure on the Monument representing the City of London weeping for its lately departed Lord Mayor. Yet mention must be made of the brief encounter between the radical Lord Mayor and the 'marvellous' seventeen-year-old, Thomas Chatterton, who had already written much poetry and prose and

who had only recently arrived in London from Bristol in search of recognition. When he heard about the Lord Mayor's stand on behalf of Wilkes before the King, Chatterton, in the guise of Probus, made it the theme of a laudatory letter to the Lord Mayor which was immediately published in the *Middlesex Journal*. When Beckford read the letter, he agreed to meet Chatterton at the Mansion House. When the two met, Beckford promised the young poet his support for a second letter on the same subject of Wilkes and Liberty that would then be published in the revived *North Briton*. Chatterton was enormously excited by the marvellous opportunity being offered to him by his new patron. Then two days before the letter was due to be published by Wilkes, Beckford unexpectedly died and soon afterwards the *North Briton* was closed down by Lord North.

On hearing the devastating news, 'the young bard is said to have been almost frantic, and to have exclaimed that he was ruined.'²² He had time to pen an elegy to express his gratitude to the dead Beckford and at the climax of the poem, Beckford was hailed as the inspiring encouragement to break every link in 'slavery's hateful chain', when the slave-drivers are the King and his Courtiers. Then on 24 August 1770, feeling in a state of isolation and despair in his attic in Brook Street, he swallowed a lethal dose of arsenic.

Thus were the deaths of Beckford and Chatterton curiously connected, and the promise of an honourable union of age and youth in the service of Wilkes's Liberty was extinguished shortly after its birth.²³

Almost ninety years later, the Whig supporter Cyrus Redding penned the most remarkable eulogy of Beckford the Elder which spread over some fifty pages with apt quotations from his speeches and letters. Redding's own tribute to London's Lord Mayor would surely have been applauded by Chatterton: 'He possessed an undaunted spirit, and great democratic pride.'²⁴ Redding's opinion on such matters initially arose from

To find a Man, long & in vain, Diogenes sought around, [This Citizen he meets, his Lantborn drops, & cries I've found.



*To the worthy **LIVERY** of **LONDON**;
this Plate is most respectfully Dedicated, by their humble Serv^t
Published June 2^d 1770 & sold by J. Dent Engraver, Ball Alley, Lombard Street. *Theo. Dent.**

Figure 6: Diogenes Finding a Man
(by permission of the Guildhall Library, City of London)

conversations with Beckford's heir in Lansdown Tower, at a time when the son had just given the Fonthill statue of his father to the City of London, where it still stands on the landing in the Ironmongers' Hall.

The most magnificent print in the M.L.A. collection of Alderman Beckford prints (*Fig. 6*) is headed with the words: 'To find a man, long and in vain, Diogenes sought around, this citizen he meets, his lanthorn drops, and cries I've found.' The etching depicts George III (on the left) in an armchair offering Beckford (in the centre) the offer of either an earl's or a baron's coronet, which the Lord Mayor waves away as he supports the fainted woman with the fallen sword who personifies London; Diogenes, the Cynic sage in antiquity (on the right), rushes on with lanthorn, while (from on high) there floats above St. Paul's and the Thames an angel with the laurel wreath to crown the victor Beckford.²⁵ Here the depiction of Beckford's famous victory shows the King offering the bribe, even though in reality the King did not do so, yet the damaging suggestion is that he was so rattled that he must have thought about it.

The descending laurel crown suggests that this moment of Beckford's loving care for the City of London will be remembered for ever, alongside national moments like Magna Carta and the Glorious Revolution, some of whose unforeseen and unintended disastrous consequences can be seen in retrospect to have survived in the British psyche as myths in the country's long quest for Liberty. Beckford's Remonstrance has never attained such mythic status, in spite of the flood of hopes which immediately followed his unexpected death. By pushing the ancient Cynic sage onto the scene, the artist seems to be hedging his bets on the future.

This commemoration of Alderman Beckford at three hundred must now end with a reminder of the health warning about the fickle nature of fame throughout history!

1. *An Elegy on the Most Lamented Death of William Beckford, Esq. Late Lord Mayor of, and Representative in Parliament for the City of London* (London: G.Kearsley, 1770), in 28 rhyming quatrains.
2. John Noorthouck, *A New History of London*, (London, 1773), Book 1, Chapter 26, p.485.
3. Prints of other entries in the supposed competition are held in London Metropolitan Archives: Antoine Benoist, Francesco Bartolozzi, Agostino Carlini and Nathaniel Smith. John Flaxman's ink and watercolour design for the monument is in a V & A collection.
4. See Philip Hewat-Jaboor, 'Fonthill House: "One of the Most Princely Edifices in the Kingdom"' in Derek E. Ostergard (ed.) *William Beckford: An Eye for the Magnificent* (Yale University Press, 2002) for further information about the Alderman's patronage of Moore. Moore's 1766 statue emerged unscathed from the destruction of both Fonthill House and Fonthill Abbey and was presented to the Ironmongers' Hall, London, by his son William in 1833.
5. See Jon Millington, 'Commemorative Medals of Alderman Beckford' in the *Beckford Journal*, 2004, 51-53.
6. Cyrus Redding, *Memoirs of William Beckford*, 2 vols, (London: C.J.Skeet, 1859), 1, 66.
7. J.T. Smith, *Nollekens and his Times*, 2 vols, (London: 1828), 2, 204.
8. *Addresses, remonstrances, and petitions (concerning the conduct of the Government of the Wilkes Case); commencing the 24th of June, 1769, presented to the King and Parliament, from the Court of Common Council, and the Livery, with His Majesty's answers; likewise the Speech to the King, made by Alderman Beckford, when Lord Mayor, etc.* (London: H. Fenwick, 1778), 151.
9. See Peter D.G. Thomas, 'John Wilkes (1725-1797)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004)
10. See Simon Dewes, *Soho* (London: Rich & Cowan, 1952), for a copy of the Hogarth print opposite p.144..
11. *Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents and Two Speeches on America*, in Francis Canavan (ed.), *Selected Works of Edmund Burke*, vol. 1, (Indianapolis, 1990).
12. *Addresses, remonstrances etc.*, 10-19.
13. Dewes, op. cit, 62.
14. This print appeared in the *Oxford Magazine* under the title 'The Button Maker'. The King's 'business' is the royal patronage of the button makers Firmin & Sons who were first given a royal warrant by his father and are still button-makers for Queen Elizabeth II. 'Buttons' began to be used as ceremonial insignia on every form of uniform, livery and badge

- throughout the land. In the scene a courtier remarks, 'What Taste! what elegance! not a Prince in Europe can make such Buttons'; while one of the aldermen accompanying the Lord Mayor remarks: 'He does not care a Button for our Remonstrance.'
15. This print is held in the Satirical Print Collection of the London Metropolitan Archives: the date is given as 1770 but the publisher is unknown.
 16. This print published in the *Oxford Magazine* in 1770 includes a weeping woman bearing Wilkes's cap of liberty, and an ailing Pitt. Like the other prints in this article, this print is somewhat surprisingly to be found in the Satirical Print Collection at the L.M.A.
 17. Richard B. Sheridan, 'Beckford, William (1709-1770)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004)
 18. Elizabeth Glover, *A History of the Ironmongers' Company* (London, 1991), 94.
 19. Hugh Thomas, *The Slave Trade: The History of the Atlantic Slave Trade 1440-1870* (London: Picador, 1997), 245.
 20. Ibid, where Thomas quotes the exceptional voice of Dr. Johnson on 'the loudest yelps for liberty among the drivers of negro slaves' and 'here's to the next insurrection of the negroes in the West Indies', pp.476ff.
 21. Brycchan Carey, 'John Wesley's *Thoughts about Slavery* and the language of the heart' in *The Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* (Summer/Autumn 2003), 269-84.
 22. John Dix, *The Life of Thomas Chatterton* (London: Hamilton, Adams & Co, 1837), 288.
 23. Alfred de Vigny's 1832 novel *Stello* included an episode describing the meeting of Chatterton and Beckford: Beckford indulges in coarse humour, ignores the proffered sheaf of poems and offers Chatterton only the post of valet – a total humiliation which causes the young man to fling manuscripts into the fire and drink the fatal draught. De Vigny saw the Alderman as infamous. See Linda Kelly, *The Marvellous Boy* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1971), 108.
 24. Redding, op. cit., 15-70.
 25. The caption in the print reads: 'To the worthy Livery of London, this Plate is most respectfully dedicated, by their humble servant Thomas Dent published June 2d, 1770.' The Livery Companies viewed Beckford as their champion.

The ABC of Beckfordiana: a Review

DICK CLAÉSSON

Jon Millington, *William Beckford: A Bibliography* (Warminster: The Beckford Society, 2008. ISBN 978-0-9537836-3-2)

Reading Jon Millington's *William Beckford: A Bibliography* is, to the present reader at least, very much a process of rediscovery. It's been a long time since I've been able to follow Beckford research with anything resembling complete addiction; after a decade of reading and writing about Beckford, I turned my attention to other matters after 2001. It is dizzying to return now, to 413 pages of minutely collected and presented Beckfordiana. Yet it is truly an opportune moment to return. We are in the midst of an important transformation of Beckford research, a transformation that began with the major exhibition on Beckford in 2001 and the accompanying exhibition catalogue (*William Beckford 1760–1844: An Eye for the Magnificent*) and continued with Robert J. Gemmett's seminal monograph *Beckford's Fonthill: The Rise of a Romantic Icon* in 2003. With the beautifully produced *Bibliography*, Jon Millington is putting the finishing touches to a new, modern foundation for Beckford studies.

And let me immediately say: this is a groundbreaking volume, one that cannot be ignored by anyone aiming to do serious research on any aspect of Beckford's life and works. Writing in the Introduction about the 1930 predecessor to the present work (Chapman's and Hodgkin's *A Bibliography of William Beckford of Fonthill*), Millington has only kind, gentlemanly words to offer. But as any Beckford scholar knows, the usefulness of Chapman's and Hodgkin's volume has long been questionable, and with the publication of Millington's *Bibliography* there is no longer any reason to use that rare, eighty-year-old volume as a serious aid to the study of Beckford. It's still an important book

in the history of Beckford studies. But laid side by side with Millington's book, Chapman's and Hodgkin's work simply does not hold up.

Beckford studies have come a long way since 1930. The life and works of 'the Caliph of Fonthill' have been appropriated by a great many people for a multitude of reasons in order to serve varying cultural, intellectual and ideological agendas. While Beckford may remain a marginal character in the history of literature and aesthetics, his position as a 'minor classic' is now firmly established. Leaf through the index of almost any monograph on the early or the late Romantics, on Gothic literature, on travel literature, on book collecting, on garden architecture, on gay or queer studies – to mention only a few of the areas in which Beckford figures as a point of reference – and there are almost certain to be a number of entries concerning the author of *Vathek*.

This is reflected in Millington's *Bibliography*, where thousands upon thousands of books, articles, essays, pamphlets and excerpts are meticulously listed and detailed. The main sections of the Bibliography are 'Beckford's Life' and 'Literature', and there is no need whatsoever to question the constructive vagueness of that division as it provides ample leeway for Millington to divide his findings into a multitude of highly detailed subsections. Are you interested in contemporary accounts of Beckford's life? Turn to pages 30 through 34 for a comprehensive listing. Obituaries of Beckford scholars published in the *Beckford Journal*? Pages 65 to 66. Do you want to explore Nelson's visit to Fonthill in 1800? Consult pages 105 through 106 and take it from there. Works influenced by Beckford? Certainly; here they are, detailed and divided into six distinct subsections on pages 352 through 366. There is even a subsection on articles written about the Siena marble table from Beckford's tower in Bath – listing no fewer than twelve items concerned with its recent fate (page 184). Beckford studies have certainly multiplied

in the past decades, and the depth and the detail that the *Bibliography* displays is simply astounding.

While Millington wisely adheres to a strict method of objective bibliographical research (in almost all aspects complying with the rigorous strictures of the *Chicago Manual of Style*), his labours do not only yield a mere listing. There is much additional information to be gleaned from the pages of his *Bibliography*, and it is all the better for it. Careful and highly skilled collation is often the method employed, and I will provide a random example (culled from page 112, from the subsection of contemporary accounts of Fonthill before 1822):

Easton, James. *The Salisbury Guide* ... 25th, 27th & new eds. Salisbury: Easton, 1810, 1814 & 1818. 'Fonthill Abbey. The Seat of W. Beckford, Esq. Sixteen miles west of Salisbury.', 73–76, 76–79 & 75–78. *Idem*, new ed. 1822. Same text except last two paragraphs replaced by new one, 75–78. *Idem*, 30th ed., 1825. Same text as 1822 except last paragraph omitted & tipped-in note facing p. 76 about fall of Tower, 75–77. *Idem*, 31st ed., 1830. Same text as 1825 except note about Tower (with new second paragraph) now at end, 76–78. For earlier editions see Fonthill Splendens, above.

There is a wealth of information to be had from these very compact lines, information that will save any scholar hours upon hours of meticulous bibliographical research in the stacks of the library. Entry after entry in the *Bibliography* is equally detailed. It is a marvel of scholarly discipline and quite obviously the result of decades of hard work.

Of course, as Millington spoils us, it is all too easy to come to expect even more detail. For instance, the *Bibliography* notes the following on Beckford's *Dreams, Waking Thoughts and Incidents* (page 251):

Dreams, Waking Thoughts and Incidents; in a Series of Letters, from Various Parts of Europe. London: J. Johnson, St.

Paul's Church Yard, 1783. xv, 334 pp. 30 cm. Large paper, 31½ cm. Suppressed on eve of publication, except for six copies. Beckford later publ. it in revised form as vol. 1 of *Italy* ... (1834). Chapman, *Bibliography* (1930), 2(i).

While this is informative, it does leave the reader with a few questions. What happened to the six copies? Where are they now? *Dreams* is after all a very special case as it was suppressed, and two of the copies that still exist (now at the Bodleian Library, Oxford) were used by Beckford for the 1834 revision that turned *Dreams* into the first volume of *Italy*. Both copies contain MS deletions and additions, and nowhere else in the Beckford Papers housed at the Bodleian is Beckford's method of revising and rewriting as clear as when it comes to *Dreams*. Library holdings should not, of course, be provided for all the works listed – that would be absurd and useless – but I cannot help but wish that an exception had been made in this case.

This could also be said of a few of the major manuscripts in the Beckford Papers. Yes, the *Bibliography* provides us with a listing for the unfinished novel *L'esplendente*, namely in the shape of Didier Girard's French edition. We may also consult the few articles written on *L'esplendente* over the years that Millington lists under the combined subsection of 'Other Works'. But in order to get to the manuscript itself and its whereabouts (which is, after all, the unpublished nucleus of the work), we would have to be very vigilant and note the 'MS. Beckford d. 11' in the commentary to Girard's *L'esplendente et autres contes inédits* (page 253). And we would still be guessing at the physical appearance and length of the work had we not had an opportunity to consult the French translation or travel to Oxford to see the original manuscript for ourselves.

I'm not advocating that all of Beckford's minor and major manuscripts should have been afforded a listing of their own in the *Bibliography*, on a par with the listing of *Vathek*, regardless of whether they had been published or not. Yet a few exceptions

to the rule would not have been out of place, and a subsection that provided information on the major extant manuscripts would have been helpful. An entry for the *Red Copy Book* would for instance have been very welcome indeed (though a complete collation of that manuscript would most likely yield a book-length bibliography all by itself). There does exist a good catalogue of the Beckford Papers at the Bodleian, compiled in 1988 by Timothy D. Rogers, but as this is an unpublished, 146 page typescript (which Millington dutifully notes in his entry on the catalogue on page 340) it is well without the reach of ordinary scholars, and a list of ten to fifteen manuscripts described by Rogers – and annotated by Millington – would have added to the usefulness of the *Bibliography*.

But let's not lose sight of the fact that such a subsection would have added only a page or two of information to the 413 already there. Only the most ardent fanatic would mourn their absence. Reading the *Bibliography* – and above all *using* it – one will find very little, if anything, to complain about. True, the amount of information can be bewildering, but that is the vertiginous effect of any definitive bibliography on any given subject and a hallmark of its excellence (and the general index, as well as the index to Beckford's writings that Millington provides, make sure that it is fairly easy to navigate safely through the material). Like any definitive bibliography it succinctly describes the history and current state of affairs of the subject at hand. But if we become frustrated with the latter – if we wish for something truly new to emerge from the wealth of writings on Beckford – we must not blame the messenger for informing us that much remains to be done. The division within the *Bibliography* between life and literature reflects, after all, the overall tendencies in Beckford studies, although it emphasises perhaps a bit too strongly the appearance of watertight bulkheads between the two; the study of various aspects of Beckford's life almost always interacts with the study of his writings – and vice versa. The strong tendencies

towards the 'life and letters' mode of writing displayed in the listings of the *Bibliography* is a true reflection of the traditional scope of Beckford studies. To date, there have been no fewer than eight full-length biographies of Beckford (not one of which is wholly satisfying), and the amount of shorter biographical sketches produced since the early 1800s is simply staggering. And the biographical matter does not stay within the confines of biography – studying Beckford's writings, virtually no critic or scholar has refrained from drawing conclusions about Beckford's texts based on the evidence of his life. The *Bibliography* does not explicitly emphasise the importance of life in the interpretation of literature, so it is up to the users of the *Bibliography* to draw such conclusions. The information is certainly there for us to find should we want it. Will new scholars emerge, drawn to the study of Beckford by the beacon light of Millington's work? It is very likely. Perhaps even a talented biographer, capable of absorbing and processing the mountains of research of previous generations? At the very least we should certainly expect to see a widening of the agendas and perspectives in the years to come. The publication of the *Bibliography* marks a watershed moment. It will tell us what to read and what to study, and if we use it diligently, it will show us new ways of reading, too.

While the pure scope of Beckford studies makes it difficult to say anything definitive on the subject as a whole, the subsectioned *Bibliography* reflects the very varied approaches to Beckford currently and previously holding sway. But Millington's landmark survey makes it very clear that studies on the life of Beckford (including aspects of his buildings, his collections, his biographical persona etc.) greatly outnumber studies or commentaries on his literature. This is both expected and surprising at the same time: expected, as Beckford's life is a colourful tale that lends itself to anecdotes and tall tales; surprising, as Beckford's literature is the real reason the story of his life has not long ago been relegated merely to the confines of

forgotten history. After all, there are quite a few characters from the late eighteenth century whose life, if not their work, make for good stories – but only a handful combined wealth, fortune and scandal on an international scale with literary talent. And while Millington's *Bibliography* is divided into two almost equally large main sections, life and literature, a closer inspection of the contents of each section reveals that the latter is comprised to a large degree of editions of Beckford's various texts, not to analyses or critical studies of the writings. I have previously advocated a serious return to Beckford's texts (cf. *Beckford Journal*, 1998), but perhaps now there will be a greater impetus to do just that. If it's not in 'Millington', it's not been done, it's as simple as that – so get out there and do it.

Taking our cue from Millington's astounding work, we may now easily assemble an essential reading list for the fledgling Beckfordian scholar who wishes to study Beckford's works. It should include at least three of the eight biographies: Cyrus Redding's two-volume *Memoirs of William Beckford of Fonthill* (1859), Lewis Melville's *The Life and Letters of William Beckford of Fonthill* (1910) and Brian Fothergill's *Beckford of Fonthill* (1979) (as well as a silent wish for a definitive, modern biography to emerge). It should, of course, include the best possible editions of Beckford's writings; preferably in a critical collected edition which has yet to appear (and for which Millington's bibliographical groundwork would provide the obvious foundation), and in lieu of that in a plethora of editions comprising a makeshift shelf of the collected works. A copy of the gigantic 2001 exhibition catalogue edited by Derek Ostergard, as well as a copy of Gemmett's definitive book on Fonthill Abbey – both mentioned previously – should be obtained. And to cap it all, and provide the basis for all future forays into the world of Beckfordiana, it must include a copy of Millington's spectacular *Bibliography*. This, then, is the true ABC of Beckfordiana, the bibliography to end all bibliographies.

Compiling the Beckford Bibliography

JON MILLINGTON

While working on *William Beckford: A Bibliography* I made some interesting discoveries along the way. These stray paragraphs may convey some idea of their range, and perhaps further reveal the extent of Beckford's influence in so many spheres. One particularly fruitful source was the *Salisbury and Winchester Journal*, the nearest local paper to Fonthill. It chronicled many long-forgotten incidents. Reading that in November 1796 a William Vincent, one of Beckford's workmen, drowned in a pond near Splendens, I wondered whether he was related to Beckford's gardener but have not been able to find out. And in October 1798, Dr. Ehrhart, Beckford's personal physician, was treating thirty or forty patients a day at Fonthill Splendens at Beckford's expense. Then there were remarkable items in 1823. In February, it was noted that 'Mr. Beckford, with his accustomed liberality, has sent fifty pounds, to be laid out in purchasing blankets for the poor inhabitants of his late neighbourhood.'

At the time of the Phillips sale, Farquhar allowed the tenantry and neighbours to view the Abbey and Grounds free on a few successive Sundays (when the general public were not admitted), but then, on 14 September, a crowd, consisting mainly of 'the lower orders' tried to force entry at the gates, after which the arrangement ceased.

The *Journal* also reported two coaching accidents that year. In July the Shaftesbury and Fonthill coach overturned on the road from the Abbey to the Beckford Arms, and eight passengers were hurt. Three months later a coach driver lost control while descending a hill in the Park, and the coach hit a tree and overturned. It must have been a terrifying experience, and the injured passengers were taken to the Beckford Arms.

In the early nineteenth century, newspapers and other periodicals copied extensively from each other. With a cheap weekly like the *Mirror of Literature* this was to be expected, as it was a digest of articles largely culled from elsewhere. For example, in November 1822 it published a four-page article on Fonthill Abbey, copied verbatim from Whittaker's *A New Guide to Fonthill Abbey*, by far the rarest of the Fonthill guide books. However, this article in turn was mostly culled from Rutter's *Description*. One wonders whether Thomas Dugdale, when compiling his *Curiosities of Great Britain: England & Wales* in 1843, realised how unoriginal the *Mirror* article was when he copied most of it for his entry on Fonthill.

For many years I knew about the small engravings of Fonthill Abbey which appeared in the last quarter of 1822 in the *Lady's Magazine*, but I had never seen the accompanying letterpress. Neither the British Library, some of whose run was destroyed in the last war, nor the Bodleian Library, hold this volume. In the past this magazine tended to be broken up so that its colourful fashion plates could be sold singly, while the text was simply thrown away. Then, quite recently, this very volume (July–December 1822) was offered for sale on eBay, and I managed to buy it. All the engravings were present, but, hoping for some fresh insight on the Abbey, I was disappointed to find that virtually the entire text of their 'Survey of Font-Hill Abbey', extending over the months of October, November and December 1822, had been copied from other sources, mainly Storer's *Description of Fonthill Abbey* and the *Literary Gazette*. Indeed, I was struck by how much the Fonthill guide books copied passages from Storer's work published ten years earlier; even the independently-minded Rutter was guilty.

There were, too, other discoveries which could not appear in the relevant entries in my *Bibliography*. One of these arose from the lecture James Babb (formerly Librarian Emeritus of Yale University) gave on Beckford in his library at 19 Lansdown

Crescent in June 1966. This talk appeared in the *Yale University Library Gazette* that October, together with a list of twenty-three works from Beckford's library which Yale had acquired at the Clements sale at Sotheby's in July. One work was Jacques Henri Meister's *Letters Written during a Residence in England* of 1799 which contains a chapter on Fonthill. Checking in the Sotheby's catalogue (which Peter Summers had advised me to buy at the time of the sale), I found a fascinating note saying that the translator of the letters had wanted to dedicate the work to Beckford, but he had refused to allow it.

References to Beckford in novels are far more extensive than I would have expected, as can be seen from the pages on 'Beckford in Fiction'. It's extraordinary how many famous authors mentioned *Vathek* or the Hall of Eblis in their work. Among them we find Dickens, Edgar Allan Poe, Herman Melville, Thackeray, Tennyson, Kipling, Oscar Wilde, H. G. Wells, Aldous Huxley, and Susan Sontag. One novel that came to my notice just in time was a welcome addition, because Beckford and Fonthill Abbey feature prominently. Published by Hutchinson in 1942, this was *The Court of Dusty Feet*, by J. G. Sarasin, the pseudonym of Geraldine Gordon Salmon, a reclusive lady who produced a novel a year from the 1920s to the 1960s. It's set in the time of the Napoleonic wars and the hero, a naval captain, ends up at Fonthill. The book is very much a wartime production, but nevertheless has a colourful dust jacket depicting Fonthill Abbey framed by the three main characters, one being Beckford.

I have tried to list every known edition of *Vathek* but, as elsewhere in the *Bibliography*, there are bound to be omissions. One that did not escape was a limited 'Édition de Luxe' of 100 copies published in London by the Society of English Bibliophilists in about 1900. Specially bound in half calf, it proved to be the sheets of the Richard Garnett edition of that year with Herbert Nye's etchings, but with a cancel title page. All I have been able to learn about this society is that they published

some finely-bound limited editions between 1890 and 1905. At least half were also published by Gibbings, so perhaps it was a book club run by that firm; it would be splendid to know more about them. On the subject of *Vathek*, Swift, publishers of the *Episodes of Vathek* in 1912, also reissued Garnett's edition in the same year, and although there are several copies in America, I haven't managed to trace one in any British library.

It is well-known that there were three Beckford sales in the 1840s. The first was a very modest two-day affair of fifty-eight lots of pictures and furniture in January 1841. Beckford, ever the publicist, had cunningly advertised this sale by having a paragraph inserted at the end of December 1840 in the *Bath Herald* which stated that repeated thefts at the Tower had prompted him to sell all his articles of vertu. This announcement was noticed by *The Times*, the *Bath and Cheltenham Gazette* and the *Bath Chronicle*, thus ensuring even more publicity. This sale was followed by the far more important one of 1845 when all the treasures not wanted by the Duchess at Hamilton Palace were sold over eight days in 581 lots. There was a further nine-day disposal sale in 1848 consisting of china, pictures and many miscellaneous lots. These three Bath sales were well advertised and reported, and hundreds of catalogues must have been printed, yet few have survived. What is not so well known is that Beckford was planning a sale in 1836, and it was advertised by English and Fasana at the end of that year in the local Bath papers: 'in consequence of alterations now making at Lansdown Tower... Magnificent and Valuable Effects'. Then on 10 January 1837 the sale, planned for the 21st, was suddenly postponed and never took place.

Thinking of sales brings me to Beckford rarities, which include some of the early nineteenth-century catalogues, in particular those for the Fonthill sales of 1801, 1802 and 1807. Among the rarest books that any collector of Beckfordiana might want is one of the twenty-five copies of the reissue dated 1817 of

Storer's *Fonthill* to which were appended the pages on Beckford's library, probably written by him, from *Repertorium Bibliographicum*, although that work did not appear until two years later in 1819. Quite why Beckford chose to reissue Storer in 1817 is puzzling, since his fortunes were at a low ebb and building at Fonthill Abbey had virtually ground to a halt. A century later a limited edition of thirty-five copies ensured that Edward George Cundall's *Fonthill Abbey. A Descriptive Account of Five Water-Colour Drawings by J. M. W. Turner, R.A.* would be another great rarity. He was a salesman at Agnew's, Bond Street, and the work was privately printed in 1915 for a shipping magnate, Ralph Brocklebank. Its importance was realised by the *Burlington Magazine* who commissioned Cundall to write a condensed version which appeared in the magazine in the following year.

Gustav Waagen's *Works of Art and Artists in England*, published in three volumes by John Murray in 1838, contains an important account of Beckford's pictures in Bath. So it is not difficult to imagine his gratification that March on finding a half-page extract on his paintings in the second of two three-page reviews in *The Athenæum*. There was no mention of Beckford when the *Edinburgh Review* devoted thirty-four pages to Waagen's work in July, nor was there in the Rev. John Mitford's thirteen-page assessment in the *Gentleman's Magazine* in November. This was a journal usually sympathetic to Beckford, but not on this occasion.

In contrast was the *Gentleman's Magazine's* leading review of four pages in June 1837 under the heading 'Discourses of the late Rev. John Paterson, with a Memoir of his Life'. Unusually, there were no publication details, but on the first page of the review Paterson's diary entry for 4 June 1823 was quoted. This gave his impressions on reading *Vathek*, 'a work of considerable genius... but destitute of any permanent sentiment of utility or comfort' which prompted a footnote by the editor defending *Vathek*, 'a

work of Imagination'. Initially my efforts to trace a copy of *Discourses* were unsuccessful; I tried numerous libraries on the Internet, including the British Library, the Bodleian Library and the National Library of Scotland. Having read in the review that Paterson had died at Falkirk, I sent an email to the library there, and received a very helpful reply. It turned out that not only had the *Gentleman's Magazine* misspelt the author's name (it should have been 'Patterson' with double 't'), the title wasn't right either. Armed with that information, I was able to locate several copies, including one for sale by a Bath bookseller for £250. It also led me to reviews in Tait's *Edinburgh Magazine*, which quoted the *Vathek* passage but without the favourable editorial comment, and in the *Monthly Review*.

Recently I came across William Mavor's *The British Tourists, or Traveller's Pocket Companion* published in six volumes from 1809 and was delighted to find an account of a visit to Splendens in 1778. When I examined the work more closely, I found that it was a compilation, and that the account was an edited version of one in Sir Richard Joseph Sullivan's *Observations made during a Tour through Parts of England, Scotland, and Wales* published 1780. This was already in the *Bibliography*, so all I had to do was add Mavor's work at the end of the entry. This is just one of many instances where I have been able to make a connection between two seemingly different works.

When I was working on the index towards the end of 2007, I decided to seek out Christian names wherever possible. One of the most elusive was G. Jean-Aubry, and it was only after much searching that I found the G stood for Georges. Another person whose initials I managed to elucidate was F. D. Meredith, author of 'The Old Man of the Mountain. A story of a Wessex Eccentric' in *Somerset and Wessex Life* in 1970. This was thanks to the local studies card index at Bath Library which also yielded the information that he had presented to them a scrap album of Beckford press cuttings. When I examined it I found several

cuttings that I knew nothing about, and happily added them to the 'Beckford's Tower and Bath' section. So my efforts to ascertain Meredith's initials led me to an unexpected discovery.

References published before the end of 2005 continue to appear. One that comes to mind is John Martin Robinson's *The Latest Country Houses* (London: The Bodley Head, 1984). He discussed Fonthill House (1972–1974) by Trenwith Wills (d.1972) who, as a young architect, worked in Detmar Blow's office, and for twenty years before the last war practised in partnership with Lord Gerald Wellesley until his succession as seventh Duke of Wellington in 1943. After Wills died his practice was continued by his wife. Another omission was Nicolas Barker's *Treasures from the Libraries of National Trust Country Houses* (New York: The Royal Oak Foundation & The Grolier Club, 1999), limited to 1000 copies. In this catalogue of 122 exhibits was this entry from Hughenden Manor: '100 William Beckford, Vathek, Londres, chez Clarke, Mount Street, Berkeley Square, 1815' which was illustrated by the title page and dedication 'Benjamin Disraeli Esqre from the Author'.

John Piper's dust jacket illustration came from a most surprising source, *International Textiles* for August 1944. Inserted in that issue of this short-lived journal was an eight-page pamphlet with lithographs, 'The Colour of English Country Houses', and one of those depicted was 'Vanished Fonthill, Wiltshire'. A rather better known Piper view of the Abbey, a brooding black and white painting after John Martin, appeared on the cover of the June 1944 issue of the *Architectural Review*. It accompanied an article on the Abbey by H. A. N. Brockman, author of the fine, mainly architectural biography of Beckford, *The Caliph of Fonthill*, published in 1956. It's worth noting that Piper's two images did not end his association with the area, because he executed in oils a view of Fonthill arch from the north, 'Entrance to Fonthill, Wiltshire 1940'.

Johnson and Beckford: Contrasting Orientalists.¹

MALCOLM JACK

I

The publication of Antoine Galland's collection of *The Arabian Nights' Entertainments* in 1704 was a landmark in the long line of Eastern tales that continued to appear throughout the eighteenth century in France and in England. It is true that in the late 1680s the Genoese Giovanni Marana's *Letters Writ by a Persian Spy in Paris* had already enjoyed a vogue but Galland's translation of *The Arabian Nights* soon became the major source for all writers and scholars interested in the Orient. Galland was a Professor of Arabic at the Collège Royal in Paris; he was translator of the Koran and other Oriental texts but what was different about his work on *The Arabian Nights* was the degree to which he may have departed from the originals or even invented tales that were never within the original frame of the Sheherazade cycle. Even towards the end of the century, after numerous and varying examples of the genre had appeared all over Europe, the mystery of this formative work had still not been cleared up. James Beattie, an important authority on the subject, comments in 1780: 'Whether the Tales ... be really Arabick, or invented by Mons. Galland I have never been able to learn with certainty.'²

Robert Irwin in his erudite anthology has recently added that Galland 'played so large a part in discovering the tales, in popularising them in Europe and in shaping what would come to be regarded as the canonical collection that, at some risk of hyperbole and paradox, he has been called the real author of the *Nights*.'³

The ambiguity of Galland's originals, which continued to roll off the press in great volumes until 1717 and which were widely

read and translated into other European languages, highlights the paradox which is at the centre of Edward Said's critique of Orientalism, namely that it is a literature of the West only incidentally decorated with imagery borrowed from another culture perceived in essence to be highly alien. Orientalism is in fact a variation of Occidentalism; the West remains obsessed with itself. The question I wish to consider here takes up this theme: were the Oriental tales written by Johnson and by Beckford inspired by a real interest in the Orient or were they just *contes de fées*, diverting or satirical tales with exotic wrappers?

Johnson himself, influenced by Addison, sides himself with Edward Said when, in the *Dictionary*, he says that the Oriental fable is 'a feigned story intended to enforce some moral precept.'⁴ That moralistic purpose seems to remove such writing from the purely entertainment purpose ascribed to the earlier French tales or indeed the originals they were alleged to copy, which were said to have been written to titillate and amuse idle and lascivious princes.⁵

By contrast, William Beckford claimed that *his* Arabian Tale *Vathek* (which was written in French early in 1782) was pure entertainment inspired by an extraordinary, theatrical Christmas party held at his father's estate in Fonthill, Wiltshire a few weeks before. Although he may have been writing to entertain himself and his coterie of friends yet Beckford's tale does display the erudition and commitment of a scholar who has an interest in the Orient for its own sake. Nevertheless, Beckford shows that this serious interest was not incompatible with satirical and even 'Gothic' dressing nor did it prevent him adding a rather spurious moralistic conclusion to his tale.

The personal circumstances of Johnson and Beckford could hardly have been more different. By the time Johnson came to write *Rasselas* he was fifty years old and, although well established as a writer, still in dire need of money. Despite his impressive output, which had included the periodical pieces in

The Rambler and the monumental *Dictionary*, Johnson was still financially insecure and *Rasselas* had been undertaken so that he could support his ninety-one-year-old mother in her last days. This is made clear in a letter to his printer and friend William Strahan of 20 January 1759 where Johnson concludes by baldly urging him to 'Get me the money if you can.'⁶

By contrast, the young author of *Vathek*, William Beckford, had just come of age and inherited what was probably the largest fortune in Britain, which later earned him the sobriquet 'England's Wealthiest Son' from Byron. Beckford, unlike Johnson, had been neither to school nor to university; he had been educated privately at home by tutors and was by nature a voracious reader and devourer of arcane travel writing and Oriental literature. His classical credentials, if perhaps not to the grammarian's standard, were nevertheless high and to them he added an unusual command of Arabic and Persian. Beckford's social status was aristocratic; as a future landowner and owner of Jamaican sugar estates there was no need for him to consider making a living either as a writer or in any other profession. That was a far cry from the world of a humble Lichfield bookseller's son.

II

One shared characteristic of Johnson and Beckford that sheds light on the link between their creations, Prince Rasselas and Caliph Vathek, was their scholarliness and interest in travel literature. Johnson's first connection with Abyssinia seems to have been in translating a French version by Joachim Le Grand of the Portuguese Father Lobo's *A Voyage to Abissinia*. Le Grand's translation of the original appeared in 1728; Johnson's translation of Le Grand came out anonymously in 1735. Le Grand's work, in the usual manner of eighteenth-century renditions of earlier works contained new material which the author had garnered from other sources. But it did take from Lobo the ancient legend

that Abyssinian heirs and princes were exiled to a 'barren rock' in the Kingdom of Amhara until they came of age or succeeded to the throne. In the first accounts that exile was a dreary and melancholic affair, a condition that Johnson completely transformed by making Rasselas's 'Happy Valley' an Edenic place of a pampered and luxurious existence, even if ultimately it proved to be a prison.⁷ The actual character Rasselas seems to have come from another source, namely from Hiob Ludolf's *Historia Aethiopica*, the English version of which was in Johnson's library. In the same work an heir, the fourth son of the ruler, manages to escape from the valley just as the Johnsonian prince, also the fourth son of the ruler, was to do. The detailed description of Rasselas's place of imprisonment, a valley on top of an unusually shaped mountain, containing a lake teeming with fish and meadows of fruit trees, resembles Father Luis de Urreta's *History of Ethiopia* (1610), a work which Johnson refers to in his own rendition of Father Lobo's *Voyage*.⁸ The more concrete, Egyptian imagery associated with Rasselas, who passed through 'vaults of marble'⁹ where the bodies of former rulers are buried liked the ancient pharaohs, would most likely come from Pococke's *A Description of the East* (1743-45) which contained information about the pyramids as well as dealing with geographical aspects of the Nile.¹⁰ Over and above these specific sources of reference, Milton's shadow, in *Paradise Lost*, hangs over this Johnsonian version of the Garden of Eden.

Beckford too plundered the annals of travel literature for his sources. We learn from his own reading notes that while Caliph al-Wāthik Bi'llāh was a ninth-century potentate, the fictional Vathek also incorporated characteristics of a much later, sadistic and cruel Emperor of Morocco who featured in Windus's *Journey to Mequinez*, 1725.¹¹ Behind all of Beckford's Arabian tales was Galland's French version of the *Arabian Nights* which Beckford was already reading in his teens.¹² *Vathek* and even more the later *Episodes* followed the Arabic pattern of story-

telling, with the interweaving of themes from one tale to the next. For detailed Oriental information and imagery, Beckford relied on B. d'Herbelot de Molainville's *Bibliothèque Orientale* (1697), a seminal work which was widely known to French writers throughout the eighteenth century.¹³ Caliph Vathek, in his metropolitan court at Samarah enjoyed 'women and the pleasures of the table'¹⁴ and cavorted in the nearby mountain paradise a few miles from Samarah 'whose sides were swarded with wild thyme and basil, and its summit overspread with so delightful a plain, that it might be taken for the Paradise destined for the faithful.'¹⁵ Like Johnson's Happy Valley, this place is abundant with fruit trees – orange, citron and pomegranate – while the air is perfumed with the scent of flowers. However, Vathek, like Rasselas, is satiated by the sensuous life and, driven by a biting curiosity, follows Eblis to subterranean halls which far from being a sanctuary turn out to be a Dantesque hell. Beckford's (and his friend and collaborator, Henley's) notes display a vast and detailed knowledge of other contemporary and classical sources about the Middle East and Oriental culture which include G. Sale's translation of the Koran,¹⁶ Pococke's *Description of the East*,¹⁷ Sir William Jones's poems including 'A Persian Song of Hafiz',¹⁸ Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's *Letters*,¹⁹ and J. Richardson's *Dictionary*²⁰ and *Dissertation*.²¹

III

Both Johnson and Beckford were skilful enough narrators to set the mood of their own tales whatever the sources of their Orientalist inspiration. From the very first paragraphs of *Rasselas*, Johnson's tone is light and engaging, gently bordering on the mocking and satirical. The reader learns that in the Happy Valley, politically skilled sages indoctrinate the young princes into the joys of their existence there and contrast it unfavourably with the calamities and horrors of life outside its psychologically

and geographically encompassing boundaries. So successful were these guardians that 'few of the princes had ever wished to enlarge their bounds, but passed their lives in full conviction that they had all within their reach that art or nature could bestow.'²²

Nevertheless, Rasselas, at the age of twenty-six, shows a different disposition from his fellows. Instead of falling in with the daily round of sensual indulgence, he begins to take solitary walks and seems much preoccupied with thoughts of his own. Rasselas speculates on the nature of happiness and concludes that it cannot be equated with the hedonistic life led in the Happy Valley. He becomes the first to complain of life in what is generally regarded as an Eden. Imlac, the sage and poet who has travelled beyond its confines, whets the young Prince's appetite to see the world. Further driven on by a desire to understand the nature of happiness, Rasselas begins to consider that it can only be achieved outside of the Happy Valley and so begins to plot his escape from it. Curiosity about the general condition of mankind offers him no alternative.

Johnson's portrait of Rasselas is sympathetic; there is nothing unpleasant or untoward in his behaviour. Indeed there is considerable nobility in the character of a prince who would 'injure no man ... provoke no resentment ... relieve every distress.'²³

Nor is there anything sinister in the character of Imlac, the man of learning who opens his eyes to the possibility of life outside the Happy Valley. Imlac seems pleasant, even donnish. If at the end of the journey near the pyramids of Cairo, Rasselas finally comes to understand that there is no conclusion to his quest because it is not the lot of man to discover certain happiness, there is no great bitterness in the way he has come to make his journey or in his decision to return to Abyssinia.

That is a very different mood from the one hanging over Caliph Vathek's journey to the Subterranean Palace of Fire. Although Vathek is also motivated by a deep curiosity, which is

'blind' and 'restless',²⁴ his character is immediately portrayed in off-putting, even nasty, ways. Caliph Vathek lives in another hedonist's paradise – the Palace of the Five Senses – but unlike Rasselas, he indulges lavishly in every sensual excess. Moreover, despite his 'pleasing and majestic appearance',²⁵ when he is angry 'one of his eyes became so terrible, that no person could bear to behold it; and the wretch upon whom it was fixed, instantly fell backwards, and sometimes expired.'²⁶

Despite his commitment to the sensuous life, Vathek is also driven by an insatiable curiosity. He has a tower built from which he can survey the universe and puzzle on the meaning of creation. Once again a stranger appears in the story to spur on the protagonist's natural curiosity, but unlike Imlac this stranger is a sinister Indian, eventually to be revealed as the monstrous Giaour. His method of tempting Vathek is to present him with sabres on which there is a mysterious inscription that keeps changing each day. When the Giaour in his first incarnation escapes from prison, Vathek is infuriated and spends an entire day kicking the corpses of the guards who let him get away. Later he makes a pact with the monster, involving the slaughter of innocent children and sets out, with his mother the Lady-Macbeth-like Carathis, on the fatal journey that takes them to Hell and to eternal damnation.

IV

If narrative form or history is a characteristic both of *Rasselas* and of *Vathek* what importance can be attached in each case to the Oriental imagery that the authors use? How intrinsic is it to their purpose and style in story telling?

Both Johnson and Beckford were familiar with the satirical use of the Oriental tale by French eighteenth-century writers preoccupied, as were their *moraliste* predecessors, with the human condition. When Montesquieu wrote his *Lettres Persanes* (1721) his main focus was to provide a critique of contemporary

European society. Only incidentally was he concerned with the louche details of life in a Persian harem, however titillating such a setting might have been for his readers. His use of Oriental imagery was echoed in other writers, notably Voltaire whose Eastern tales *Mohamet* (1742) and *Zadig* (1748) achieved wide popularity. Significantly, *Candide*, which was published just a few months before *Rasselas* in 1755 and which Johnson himself saw an affinity to, had no significant Oriental motif.

In England the Anglo-Saxon propensity to moralize predominated even in settings with an exotic Oriental wrapper. In the immensely popular *Spectator* Addison and Steele used foreign figures to show up and lampoon the foibles and weaknesses of English society.²⁷ Tillotson has claimed a connection between Johnson and 'Namby-Pamby' – Ambrose Philips, Addison's friend and the author of *Persian Tales*, themselves a rendition of the work of Pétis de la Croix.²⁸ But Oriental imagery could be used for opposite effect, namely to trumpet the immense advantages of polite, commercial society when contrasted to the barbarism of Oriental life where tyranny was the common form of governance. Johnson's own friends James Hawkesworth and Oliver Goldsmith both reverted to Oriental themes for different purposes. For Hawkesworth the Oriental provided the exotic cover for adventure stories of a fantastical nature; Goldsmith's visiting Chinese, by contrast, were sophisticated and cosmopolitan critics who mocked English customs and manners with a gentle, ironic humour.²⁹

Johnson himself had already dabbled with the genre of the Oriental tale in his *Rambler* essays. In numbers 204 and 205, he depicts another Abyssinian prince, Seged, who resolves to retire from the burden of public duties to a house of pleasure in Lake Dambea for ten days of unalloyed happiness. Ordering only subjects who could suppress any look of discontent or sorrow to attend upon him, the Prince nevertheless finds a new source of disappointment or annoyance each day so that the much sought

after felicity eludes him. The moral of this *Rambler* essay – that there can be no lasting happiness on earth – is the same moral as in *Rasselas*, for the protagonists of both stories seek to find, and then capture, the secret of eternal happiness on earth. Both are thwarted in their quest. Although Johnson uses Oriental imagery and as we have seen, weaves facts and locations of Abyssinian history into his tale, in essence *Rasselas* is a moral tale, a conversation about the human condition, however light and bantering the tone of some of its passages can be. Nor does *Rasselas* have anything of the mood of an Arabian or Persian tale in which a sequence of thrilling episodes, magical happenings and exotic figures takes forward the dramatic action. Quaint in its link to a distant country, its narrative tone is distinctly Enlightenment, its dénouement that of a philosophic essay rather than an Eastern drama.

The cloak of Orientalism in Beckford's *Vathek* is more tightly drawn over its subject. That is because Beckford's engagement with Eastern culture went a great deal deeper than Johnson's. Henley's notes to the text display considerable knowledge of Eastern cultures, as transmitted through the well-known authors that Beckford himself had read in his father's library as a teenager. The clearest echo of the *Arabian Nights* style of story-telling – with the frame story encompassing another in an endless chain – is in the later tales that Beckford added to his Arabian tale, *The Episodes of Vathek*.³⁰ But examining the subject matter of those tales, as well as the imagery of *Vathek* itself, uncovers another major strand in Beckford's story-telling, namely that of the Gothic. Despite Beckford's undoubted erudition in Oriental literature, his Gothic impulse to pursue the full sequence of a horror story soon takes over as we follow Vathek to the fiery caverns of Eblis or hell. What is more, Beckford's tone suggests more than just an intention to shock (though that is undoubtedly there) by choosing to dwell with an obsessive interest on the heterodox subjects of homosexuality, incest and necrophilia.

Beckford's heroes journey through a dark universe where demonic forces lurk at every turn. Their creator joins the decadents for whom 'the unnatural and the strange have an allure and perfume of their own.'³⁰

1. This paper was first presented as a lecture to the Johnson Club in March 2009, commemorating the 300th anniversary of Johnson's birth and the 125th anniversary of the Johnson Club.
2. James Beattie, 'On Fable and Romance', in *Collected Works* (London: Routledge, 1996), 509.
3. Robert Irwin, *The Arabian Nights: A Companion* (Harmondsworth: Allen Lane, 1994), 14. A new, exhaustive edition of the *Nights* has recently been published. See *The Arabian Nights. Tales of 1001 Nights* (trans. Malcolm C. Lyons, with Ursula Lyons and annotated by Robert Irwin) 3 vols. (London: Penguin, 2009).
4. S. Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language* (First and Fourth Editions), ed. A. McDermott [CD-ROM] (Cambridge: CUP, 1996).
5. Montesquieu used his *Lettres Persanes* to offer a critique of French society; the beginning of the moral tale in France is ascribed to Marmontel, whose *Alcibiade, ou Le Moi* appeared in 1755 as well. On this subject see K. Astbury, *The Moral Tale in France and Germany 1750-1789* (Voltaire Foundation, 2002), 17ff.
6. B. Redford (ed.), *The Letters of Samuel Johnson*, 4 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992-94), iv. 179.
7. For a discussion of the connection between these two visions of paradise, the quest for knowledge and its relation to taste, see A. Liu, 'Toward a Theory of Common Sense: Beckford's *Vathek* and Johnson's *Rasselas*', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 26 (1984), 183-217.
8. Samuel Johnson, *Rasselas and Other Tales* (ed. G.J. Kolb), vol. xvi of the Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), xxvii-xxix. (To mark the 250th anniversary of the appearance of *Rasselas*, a new edition edited by T. Keymer will be published in June 2009 in the Oxford World Classics series).
9. *Ibid.* 117.
10. Pococke's two-volume work was also known to Beckford.
11. B. Alexander, *England's Wealthiest Son* (London: Centaur Press, 1962), 87.
12. The original notes to *Vathek* were compiled by Samuel Henley, Beckford's collaborator, when he translated Beckford's original French into English for the 1786 edition. Henley used the 1783 edition of

- Galland. Beckford himself edited the notes for the 1816 edition of *Vathek*.
13. See Malcolm Jack (ed.), *Vathek and Other Stories* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1995), 98-121.
 14. Ibid. 29.
 15. Ibid. 36.
 16. G. Sale, *The Koran, Commonly Called the Alcoran of Mohammed, Translated into English ...* (1734; 2nd ed., 4 vols 1764).
 17. R. Pococke, *A Description of the East and Some Other Countries*, 2 vols (London, 1743-45).
 18. See Sir William Jones, *Poems Consisting Chiefly of Translations from the Asiatic Languages* (Oxford, 1772).
 19. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, *Letters ... Written during her Travels in Europe, Asia and Africa*, 4 vols (London, 1763).
 20. J. Richardson, *A Dictionary, Persian, Arabic and English*, 2 vols, (Oxford, 1777-80).
 21. J. Richardson, *A Dissertation on the Languages, Literature and Manners of the Eastern Nations* (Oxford, 1777).
 22. *Rasselas*, 15.
 23. *Rasselas*, 51.
 24. Jack (ed.), op.cit., 97.
 25. Ibid. 29.
 26. Ibid.
 27. One of the earliest examples was no. 159 in which Addison claims to have translated an Egyptian manuscript, 'The Visions of Mirzah'; see J. Addison and R. Steele, *The Spectator* (Everyman's Library), 4 vols. (London: J.M. Dent, 1907, repr. 1930), i. 278-82.
 28. G. Tillotson, *Essays in Criticism and Research* (Cambridge: CUP, 1942; repr. Archon, 1967), 111ff.
 29. James Hawkesworth's essays in the *Adventurer* followed Johnson's *Rambler* essays in 1752-54; his *Almorán and Hamet* followed *Rasselas* in 1761. Oliver Goldsmith's 'Chinese Letters' finally appeared as *The Citizen of the World* in 1762.
 30. See Malcolm Jack (ed.), *The Episodes of Vathek* (Sawtry, Cambs: Dedalus, 1994).
 31. Fernando Pessoa, 'The Unnatural and the Strange', 1906; unpublished, but quoted in M. L. Machado de Sousa, *Fernando Pessoa e a literatura de ficção* (Lisbon, 1978) 132.

‘This sham university’: Beckford, Goodridge and Queen’s College, Bath.

AMY FROST

One of the most notable absences from the correspondence to and from Beckford contained within the Beckford Papers is the lack of any substantial material concerning Henry Edmund Goodridge, the architect of Lansdown Tower.¹ Beckford first employed Goodridge in 1823 when he undertook the survey of land that would make up part of the garden at Lansdown.² It was a relationship that would continue for the remainder of Beckford’s life and would prove to be one of mutual respect and inspiration. The scarcity of surviving correspondence between the two men during an acquaintance that lasted over twenty years makes those letters that do exist vital to the understanding of that relationship, and the knowledge of Goodridge’s architecture in Bath.

Of the few letters from Beckford to Goodridge that survive the most eloquent and intriguing is one written to Goodridge from Lansdown on 30 October 1838.³ In this letter Beckford conveys to the architect his reactions to a design that Goodridge had forwarded to him, although the building the design relates to is not named. However, closer study of the letter in relation to architectural developments in Bath during the later 1830s reveals that the building in question was the unexecuted Queen’s College in Bath. Originally intended to be an auxiliary college of Oxford and Cambridge, Queen’s College was to be built at Claverton Down in Bath, near Sham Castle (the eye-catcher built for Ralph Allen in the eighteenth century), and would have been highly visible from the city.⁴

The prospectus for Queen’s College was published in 1839, but plans were well underway during 1838.⁵ Incorporated into the rear of the prospectus is a transcription of the speech delivered by

the College founder James Abbot of Queen's College Cambridge, on 16 November 1838, two weeks after Beckford wrote to Goodridge concerning the design for the College. It is therefore likely that what Goodridge sent to Beckford was an earlier printed prospectus for the College or a copy of an engraving of the proposed design.

The two architects who were associated to the design for Queen's College were James Wilson and George Philips Manners, both based in Bath and both significant figures in the emerging new styles of the mid nineteenth century in the city. The design incorporated into the copy of the prospectus that survives in Bath Central Library is by G. P. Manners. However, earlier news reports from 1838 also illustrate the alternative Wilson design, and by the time the College was reported on in the *Mirror of Literature, Amusements and Instruction* it is noted that it was Wilson's design, not Manners's, which was finally selected for the building.⁶

Considering the comments Beckford makes in his letter, it is apparent that the design he had been sent by Goodridge was the one by Manners (*Fig.1*). The building Manners proposed consisted of individual blocks or ranges, no doubt each catering to separate faculties within the College. These blocks are united to form a large central range flanked by two projecting wings. It is neo-Norman in style, and the assortment of elements provided the design with a varied roofline and the asymmetry that was essential to ideas of Picturesque architecture, which Goodridge and Beckford had introduced into Bath at Lansdown Tower.⁷ It is the north wing of the design, with its tall tower and projecting wing with an interlocking arcade on the lower storey, that confirms this was the design Beckford saw when he wrote:

I thank you my dear sir, for your obliging attention in sending me the design, but as to the design itself, I cannot pretend to say that I greatly admire it. The heavy Tower capped with the usual

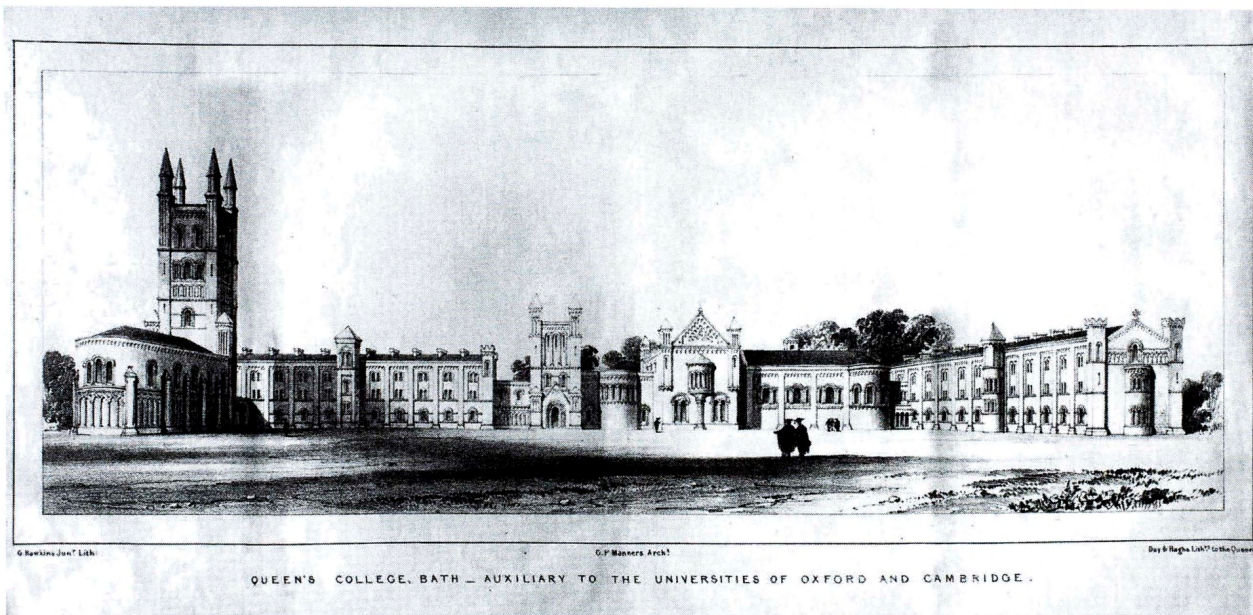


Figure 1: Design for Queen's College, Bath, by George Philips Manners:
 Lithograph by G. Hawkins Junr: Published by Day & Haghe
 (Image by courtesy of www.bathintime.co.uk - Bath Central Library)

four “fungi” sadly oppresses the small five windowed chapel rounded off like a bead box.⁸

Following the establishment of University College, London in 1826, and the impact of the Reform Act of 1832, the need for high quality education that catered to the increasingly influential merchant and professional classes saw the establishment of institutions of further education outside of Oxford and Cambridge. Although aimed at being an auxiliary of those two universities, Queen’s College in Bath was to also have had two schools for boys aged seven to sixteen, which would have been attended in preparation to completing studies either in Bath or advancing to the other two universities. But the main intention of the College was not simply to educate its students in classics, geography and history, but to also further their moral and religious education. It is the religious purpose of the college that the remainder of Beckford’s comments concerning the design are focused on.

The prospectus of Queen’s College very clearly illustrated the reasoning behind its establishment, and from the opening line it had a decided air of evangelism about it when it stated that:

There is no man in the British Empire, be he so indifferent or impartial, who can deny or gainsay the damagingly rapid increase of Popery in this Island.⁹

The college therefore, was to symbolise more than just an institution for learning coming to Bath; it was to be a symbol of the strength and righteousness of the Church of England in the city, a symbolism that would have been reinforced by the choice of location, overlooking the city and clearly visible to all those who inhabited it. But why build the College in Bath in particular, rather than another provincial city? The answer to this was the imagined need to defend Protestant seats of learning from the increasing number of Catholic colleges. The Queen’s College

prospectus highlighted that out of the nine Catholic Colleges in England, three were in Somerset, referring to the college of St Gregory's at Downside, and to St Peter's College and St Paul's College, both at Prior Park in Bath. It was undoubtedly in response to the increasing presence of the Catholic Colleges in Bath that the city was chosen to be the site of the Queen's College, and this reasoning was also behind the impassioned prospectus language which, when commenting upon the presence of these colleges in Somerset, exclaimed that they '... must be taken as signs of the times, as awful warnings of approaching evil; as tangible evidence of the wide and increasing spread of the faith and those doctrines which are at open variance with the principles of our pure and Holy Religion'.¹⁰

What makes the Catholic colleges in Somerset of further significance, considering Beckford's letter about Queen's College, is that they were both designed or enlarged by Goodridge. In 1820-23 Goodridge designed the new college and Chapel at Downside for the Gregorian Brothers to be run as both a school and seminary. Of greater significance to the Catholic presence in Bath was that from 1829 until 1836 Goodridge was also responsible for the major enlargement of Prior Park following its purchase by Peter Augustine Baines, the Vicar Apostolic of the Western District. Bishop Baines was an ambitious and charismatic leader who had great plans for bringing the Catholic congregation of Bath out of the shadows. In purchasing the estate of Prior Park he found the ideal site on which to show the strength and determination of the Catholic Church. Built on the southern slopes of Bath for Ralph Allen, to the design of John Wood the Elder, Prior Park had been an advertisement for Bath stone, highlighted by its location overlooking the city.¹¹ The purchase of the mansion and the enlargement of its wings by Goodridge immediately caused unease in Bath, and within the Abbey Church congregation. Fearing the apparent growing strength of Catholicism in the city,

the Abbey called for 'increased vigilance on the part of the Ministers of the Church to counteract its influence'.¹²

Bishop Baines had always intended for Prior Park to become a Catholic University and Goodridge proposed a domed Corinthian chapel which, had it been built, would have towered above the original mansion house, enhancing the College's appearance of dominance over the city.¹³ On viewing Goodridge's plans for this new Catholic College in 1835, Beckford had written to the architect noting that:

Your design, my dear sir for the Cathedral at Prior Park is one of the happiest, and most striking I ever beheld. It is all, I should think, the Bishop can desire – the symmetry perfect, the proportions excellent, the style uniform & correct.¹⁴

Although Goodridge's grand scheme for a Greco-Roman Catholic chapel at Prior Park was never executed, Beckford's response to his design clearly showed that in 1838 the hope still existed for the building of it. It was the idea of Goodridge's monumental neoclassicism sitting on one hill of the valley, and Manners's neo-Norman Queen's College being located on the adjacent hill, which stirred in Beckford a response that indicates much about his regard of Goodridge's design from three years earlier. It also illustrates Beckford's opinion of not just the different architectural styles of these two designs, but the state of these two religions in the city as well, when he concludes that:

It is to be hoped that the doctrines taught in these buildings may be purer than the style adopted in their construction. Heartily do I wish they would leave the expansive green hill alone. Sham Castle is far less obtrusive than this sham university, this by-blow of Oxford and Cambridge sent out to nurse in our neighbourhood. If old Madam Rome sets up her grand cupola – how gloriously she will flaunt above plain, dull, half & half gaudy England.¹⁵

1. A collection of thirteen letters from Beckford to Goodridge is in the Beckford Papers at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. A letter from Goodridge to Beckford is in the Bodleian Library, MS Beckford, C.30, f, 187, and a further letter is currently on loan to the Beckford Tower Trust collection.
2. The signed Quarter Sessions Map by Goodridge from 1823 is in the Somerset Record Office, QS/R 430.
3. Beckford to Goodridge, 30 October 1838, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, GEN 162 1/ii/18.
4. The University of Bath would eventually be established on the same hill, further south from Sham Castle; see. Buchanan, 'Bath: A University City', in *Bath History* (Bath: Millstream, 2002), 160-180.
5. *The Prospectus and Deed of Settlement of Queen's College Bath* (Bath: Longman & Co, 1839). A copy of the Prospectus can be found in the local studies special collection of Bath Central Library, LS B378BAT.
6. *Mirror of Literature, Amusements and Instruction*, Saturday, September 28, 1839.
7. N. Jackson notes that Manners was likely to have drawn inspiration for his design from Charles Kelsall's design for a College of Natural Philosophy published in *Phantasm of an University* in 1814: see N. Jackson, *Nineteenth Century Bath Architects and Architecture* (Bath: Ashgrove Press, 1991), 212.
8. Beckford to Goodridge, 30 October 1838, op. cit.
9. *The Prospectus and Deed of Settlement of Queen's College Bath*, 1839, p.7.
10. Ibid.
11. Ralph Allen was the owner of the stone quarries on the south of the city and his mansion at Prior Park was designed to show the glory of the stone when used for fashionable buildings, and to encourage people to purchase it from him.
12. Report on sermon at Bath Abbey church recorded in *Bath Chronicle*, 13 May 1380.
13. Goodridge's watercolour design for the Chapel and further enlargement to the wings of Prior Park is in the Yale Center for British Art, Yale University, B1975.2.763.
14. Beckford to Goodridge, 24 January 1835, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, GEN 162 1/ii/18.
15. Beckford to Goodridge, 30 October 1838, op. cit.

Beckford, William Jay and Goodridge: Religious Beliefs

JON MILLINGTON

William Jay's *Autobiography* contains some interesting pages on William Beckford and his father, written by the editors of the work. This is not altogether surprising, for two reasons: Jay was apprenticed as a stonemason to his own father and they both worked at Fonthill Splendens; then, Beckford, after moving to Bath, became aware of Jay's preaching and writing, especially *The Christian Contemplated*¹, a book containing twelve sermons. Jay, eight years younger than Beckford, was Minister at the Argyle Chapel, near Pulteney Bridge in Bath, from 1791 until a year before his death in 1853, aged 84. In Jay's *Autobiography* the editors wrote:

To the fact of Mr. Jay's having been employed, apparently for more than a year, at Fonthill Abbey [actually Splendens], we have his own testimony; yet he makes no allusion to any intercourse or acquaintance with Mr. Beckford, nor does he give any intimation that Mr. Beckford knew the fact of his having been employed at the Abbey. There appears to have been no mutual recognition, although in their later years they became neighbours.

But never did two men come into contact and comparison with each other whose lives, deeds, characters, and ends, furnish more affecting and instructive lessons, than William Beckford, the gay, learned, accomplished, sumptuous proprietor of Fonthill Abbey, and William Jay, the stonemason's son, become minister of Argyle Chapel, and, by his books, the instructor of myriads of his fellow-creatures in the way of salvation.²

In a two-page review the *Gentleman's Magazine* observed: 'At pp. 23–30, there is a long editorial digression on the Beckfords; a difficult subject for editorial hands.'³ This detour made such an

impression on Henry Edmund Goodridge that he wrote a long letter to the publishers to correct the hostile account of Beckford's life in the Rev. Erskine Neale's *The Closing Scene* ⁴ and pointing out that in spite of Beckford's admiration for Jay, they never met. Goodridge went on to discuss Beckford's character and religious beliefs, and the publishers felt this letter was important enough to be included in all subsequent editions of the *Autobiography*:

Gentlemen, – Some particulars mentioned in the extracts inserted in your first edition of the Rev. W. Jay's Autobiography, respecting Mr. Beckford, from a work by the Rev. E. Neale, entitled the "Closing Scene," are so incorrect, that I have thought it desirable to put you in possession of some facts which have come under my own observation, and which will modify and correct the statements made by Mr. Neale and quoted by you.

During a period of nearly twenty years, I enjoyed the pleasure of constant and familiar intercourse with Mr. Beckford, and, being professionally employed as his architect, frequent were the opportunities afforded me of knowing his sentiments. I presume, therefore, on your kindness for the insertion of the following brief account.

In the many hours spent in conversation with that highly-talented individual, theological and religious subjects were frequently introduced. Mr. Beckford knew I was an admirer of Mr. Jay and a constant attendant upon his ministry. His texts, the treatment of his sermons, and their divisions, were sometimes alluded to; and being on one occasion at the horticultural Exhibition at Sydney-gardens with Mr. B., Mr. Jay being there also, I pointed him out, and as Mr. B. was desirous of seeing him, we walked towards the place where he was standing, and I exchanged salutations; but there was no introduction; nor did Mr. B. at any subsequent period become acquainted with Mr. Jay; so that the statement of his corresponding with him, on hearing him preach; is wholly incorrect and unfounded.

On the publication of his "Recollections of Alcobaça," Mr. Beckford presented me with a copy, which I lent to Mr. Jay; and

mentioning the circumstance to Mr. B., he inquired if he had been pleased with the perusal; on my answering in the affirmative, he withdrew to his chamber and returned with a copy, inscribing, "*From the Author*," on its pages. "Take this," said he, "to the good and holy man; say all that is kind from me to him, and beg his acceptance of it." My commission was duly executed, Mr. Jay observing, I am indebted to you for this: and then addressing his son, said to him, "I will send him my book," meaning "The Christian Contemplated." I immediately responded, it would afford me much pleasure to be the bearer. He then wrote "*From the Author*," and forthwith it was conveyed by me to Mr. Beckford. I drew his attention to the preface, recommending the perusal as developing the character of the man. At my next visit, Mr. B. almost immediately referred to the book, saying, he had not only read the preface, but the work itself. The whole of his numerous notes he then read to me, among which was the memorable passage inserted in your work at p. 24. It was inserted by myself in the Bath papers, after Mr. Beckford's death. So pleased was Mr. Beckford with Mr. Jay's book that, on the next visit of his daughter, the Duchess of H —, to Bath, he informed me that he had placed the book in her hands. Some time prior to this he had read Dr. Dick's "Philosophy of a Future State," lent him by myself; and not many months previous to his death, he had been engaged in writing a poem, the subject of which was "The Temptation of our Saviour in the Wilderness." This he read to me in manuscript. The expression and tone of voice added much to it. The awful and dignified reply of our Saviour I never shall forget. In sublimity of conception it reminded me of Milton's Paradise Lost; and had I not known who had written it, might have supposed him the author. I much regret it has never been published.

Preceding his illness, he had commenced a perusal of "Strauss' Life of Christ," from which, at times, he read to me extracts, commenting on the blasphemous character of the work. Indeed, had his life been prolonged, the Duchess was anxious he should have published his strictures on that work. Mr Beckford's religious belief was Orthodox; but he had been much disgusted

by the sacred calling having become too professional, and characterized by a greater regard for the fleece than the flock. His observations were repeated on several occasions and in very strong terms.

Speaking of religious opinions he remarked, "If a man was a Trinitarian he could not be very far wrong;" and Socinianism he denounced, calling it a Christless Christianity, cold as the grave. His penetration into the thoughts of those he conversed with was extraordinary. He observed that he could read men's minds by their countenances. From my earliest acquaintance I have heard him speak severely on the vicious habits and follies of many of the aristocracy. His "*Liber Veritatis*," to which he often alluded, and which he intended should be published after his decease, was so cutting a sarcasm that it has been withheld from the eye of the public. One day he said that he murdered Lord —. I observed I could not comprehend his meaning. He repeated it. I asked an explanation. He replied — "Having in vain endeavoured to get rid of the Fox-hunters in my neighbourhood, I ordered notices to be fixed in different parts of my estate at Fonthill, that, after a certain time, I should sink pits:" which he accordingly did. "Lord — fell with his horse into one of them; he broke his leg and died. I, therefore, murdered him."

On his Tower on Lansdown being robbed of some most rare articles, which from their antiquity could not be replaced, I naturally expected he would have been greatly disturbed; but, to my surprise, on meeting him there, he remarked, with inconceivable equanimity — that "they were only toys for our amusement for a short time." His memory was remarkably retentive. Any author being quoted, he would almost immediately refer to the part. Although eighty-four years of age, his eyesight was good to the last, reading without the assistance of glasses.

The last interview I had with him was on a Sunday, when he seemed much surprised to see me, as I had invariably refused meeting him on that day. He asked, on my entering, what brought me there. My reply was, to inquire after his health. We conversed for some time. He was calm and self-possessed, manifesting no

anxiety as to the result of his illness, and apparently had not the least apprehension on his mind. The Duchess of H— shortly after arrived; her physician from London, also, came down to see him, being the first time medical advice had been sought. The attentions rendered by the Duchess were most affectionate, devoted, and incessant. In conversation with her Grace, reference was made by her to his religious belief, as she had doubts that he was a Roman Catholic. I informed her to the contrary. As the prospect of recovery became very doubtful, the Duchess asked him to see a Roman Catholic priest, but to that proposal, as well as for the rector of the parish to visit him, Mr. B. objected. I suggested to her Grace that she should ask Dr B., (who was then visiting him as a physician,) to draw his attention to the near approach of death; which she did; — and he very kindly undertook to do so. He informed me, that when speaking to him on our common depravity — that we had no merits of our own — but must all come as guilty sinners to a crucified Saviour, whose atonement alone was sufficient for a penitent, he listened with much calmness and attention, clasping his hands with evident approval and acquiescence. He died the following day.

Mr. Beckford's character underwent a great change after he came to reside at Bath. His paroxysms of passion, when first I knew him, were most fearful; but, in his latter years, he had obtained a wonderful mastery over himself, and which was seldom broken through. He used to say he could not now afford it. The resources of his mind were vast. He said he never knew what *ennui* meant; being always occupied, he was not its subject. Persons in distress were very frequently relieved by him, but he never would allow any one to know it, or permit his name to appear as a donor or subscriber. I have been the bearer of a handsome subscription to a neighbouring church, and for charitable and other purposes.

He directed by his will that his body should be embalmed and deposited in a solid granite tomb, previously erected in his garden, on Lansdown, but the inscription, said in your extracts to have been chosen by himself from "Vathek," was selected by his executor; and that on the other side from verses written by

himself, I suggested, being subsequently approved by the Duchess.

I cannot forbear, in conclusion, introducing two very striking aphorisms of Mr. Jay, not noticed in your work; and being so peculiarly characteristic of him should have a place in it.

Faith he described as "Conviction in motion and action;" *Despair*, as "locking the door of heaven, and throwing the key into the bottomless pit."

I remain, Gentlemen, Yours most truly, H. E. Goodridge.

Bath, Nov. 17, 1854.⁵

In the fourth paragraph, Goodridge referred to a letter he had written to the Bath papers after the death of Beckford, quoting one of his annotations in *The Christian Contemplated*. In my bibliography of Beckford I noted⁶ that this letter, published in the *Bath Herald*⁷ (and four days later in the *Bath and Cheltenham Gazette*⁸), was signed 'G', as I did not then know that Goodridge was the author:

'The Late William Beckford, Esq.' Sir,—At the present moment the following prayer composed by that highly-gifted individual, and inserted in Britton's Fonthill, may not be uninteresting to many of your readers. [Then followed Beckford's sixteen-line poem, 'A Prayer.']

The "Christian Contemplated" by the Rev. W. Jay, had been perused with much interest by Mr. Beckford, as appears from his numerous notes written on its leaves; and from which the following is extracted — "This man's mind is no petty reservoir supplied him by laborious pumpings, — it is a clear transparent spring, flowing so freely as to impress the idea of its being inexhaustible. In many of these pages, the stream of eloquence is so full, so rapid, that we are fairly borne down and laid prostrate at the feet of the preacher, whose arguments in these moments appear as if they could not be controverted, and we must yield to them. The voice which calls us to look into ourselves and prepare

for judgment, is too piercing, too powerful to be resisted, and we attempt for worldly and sensual considerations to shut our ears in vain.”

Your's, very sincerely, G.

It would be fascinating to see Beckford's copy of *The Christian Contemplated*, but unfortunately its whereabouts is not known. It does not appear in the Beckford Library Catalogue of the Sotheby's sales in 1882 and 1883. Nevertheless, we have Goodridge to thank both for recording Beckford's opinion of the work and for deepening our understanding of his religious convictions.

1. William Jay, *The Christian Contemplated, in a Course of Lectures delivered in Argyle Chapel, Bath* (London: Bartlett, 1826), xxxv, 396 pp. 8vo.
2. William Jay, *The Autobiography of the Rev. William Jay*, ed. George Redford & John Angell James (London: Hamilton, Adams, 1854), 26–27.
3. *Gentleman's Magazine* 48 n.s. (Feb 1855): 172.
4. Erskine Neale, *The Closing Scene; or, Christianity and Infidelity contrasted in the Last Hours of Remarkable Persons*. 2nd Series (London: Longman, etc., 1849), 1–29. For example, on p. 28 Neale wrote: ‘His income for many years was little short of 100,000l. per annum. What hospital did he build? What asylum did he endow? What school did he originate?’
5. Jay, *Autobiography*, 2nd ed. 1855. Pp. 581–584.
6. Jon Millington. *William Beckford: A Bibliography* (Crockerton, Wilts: The Beckford Society, 2008), 334.
7. *Bath Herald*, 18 May 1844, 3e.
8. *Bath and Cheltenham Gazette*, 22 May 1844, 2c.

Beckford and the Tourists: Gothic Performances at Lansdown, Bath

TONY SEATON

Beckford's life in Bath is too well known to need much retelling. In 1822 he moved into Nos. 19-20 Lansdown Crescent, and created a landscape garden with a path that climbed to Lansdown Hill a mile or so behind it. At the summit of the hill he built a smaller house with a tower 150 feet high, designed by the local architect, Henry Edmund Goodridge. The Tower house became a spillover place for his possessions and a sanctuary to which he retreated on his walks. He was buried near it, in a tomb of his own design, in an adjoining field that had been consecrated as a cemetery some time after his death.

In the twentieth century Tower and cemetery fell into dereliction. In 2000, after years of debate about their future, both were restored or reclaimed, and have been marketed since 2001 by the Landmark Trust, a heritage charity that renovates old buildings and lets them as self-catering accommodation. From the main dining/drawing room of Lansdown Tower (once a laying out room for the dead) and the windows of the bedrooms, guests enjoy a view of the graveyard and, if they climb to the top of the Tower, obtain a panoramic view over Somerset and Wiltshire.

Lansdown is thus a multiple attraction: a literary shrine, a historic cemetery, a celebrated architectural monument, and self-catering accommodation. It is also an educational centre, since the Landmark Trust supplies guests with a small library of books and materials on the building, its restoration, and Beckford's life and work. There is also a Museum in the Tower, open mainly during the season, which holds a variety of memorabilia, texts and artefacts.

THE VISITOR, THE LOGBOOK AND THE RESEARCH

Who visits this extraordinary site? How do they view Beckford? How does the stay affect them? At Lansdown visitors are quickly confronted by these questions, because there is a large logbook in which they are invited to write their comments, and most not only do so, but assiduously work their way through those made by previous guests. It runs to 350 pages and includes entries that range from a few lines to over four pages.

Readers of the *Beckford Journal* may be interested to know what kind of people come to stay at Lansdown, what they make of it while they are there, and to what extent they share a mutual passion for Beckford and his legacy. This article explores these issues, based on an analysis of logbook entries made between 2001 when the Tower opened to the public, and the end of 2007. It focuses on three questions:

- Who were the visitors?
- How did they react to Lansdown during their stay?
- How did they view Beckford?

These were not questions the logbook was primarily designed to illuminate. Its original purpose was more pragmatic, less about revealing the motivations and perceptions of current visitors, than gaining useful, tourist information for future ones, as the instruction to writers in the front of the book made clear:

‘Please write in this book anything of interest you have discovered during your stay, for the benefit of those who follow.’

Not surprisingly, in response to this, many comments were quasi-guidebook tips on restaurants, museums, trips to other attractions, transport arrangements (including Park and Ride schemes), and shopping opportunities. But there was also a

significant amount of comment that went beyond the instruction, revealing surprising and thought-provoking insights into visitor reactions to both the site and Beckford himself. Accordingly, all the comments that were simply tourist information, around sixty per cent of the original responses, have been cut. What is left is an analysis focusing on how visitors narrated, and related to, Lansdown Tower, the Cemetery, and William Beckford.

THE EUPHORIA OF THE STAY

The most obvious finding was that a stay at Beckford Tower captivated a lot of people. The dated entries suggested that there were staying guests during most weeks or weekends of the year, an enviable level of occupancy. Lansdown's ability to please was reflected in the enthusiasm of the comments which were unanimously, often hyperbolically, appreciative:

‘Beckford Tower exceeded all expectations ...’

‘Landmark you have surpassed yourselves. Beckford Tower is a delight ...’

‘What a wonderful Christmas. This is a fantastic restoration!’

Several visitors to Lansdown were making their second or third trip, and many more expressed their intentions of returning.

VISITORS ANATOMISED

What kind of people were these visitors? To anyone acquainted with the socio-demographic characteristics of tourists with a taste for cultural tourism, Lansdown visitors had the familiar look of ‘usual suspects’. They tended to be middle-class professionals, people whom marketers and media planners categorise as belonging to ABC1 Social Grades (with the

emphasis on ABs rather than C1). They were likely to be older – some retired – and in a few cases much older, as in the case of the jaunty couple in their mid-80s who climbed the 150 steps to the Tower, and declared :

‘Had we been 5 years younger we’d have risked taking the gin up!’

Many had tertiary education and above average incomes. They lived mainly in the Southern Counties, particularly the South East, with fewer from the North East or North West, and even fewer from abroad. A handful of visitors from the US, Australia and Germany noted that they were the first from their countries to stay with Landmark.

Occupationally the visitors included teachers, educators, public servants, and a sprinkling of cultural virtuosi – people from the performing arts, a few writers, executives in arts management, including museum curators and heritage workers. Their comments often suggested a high degree of literacy and literary acquaintance, a factor that will be discussed more fully later.

There were exceptions to this general picture. Though visitors included many older and retired couples, there were some young families with children and, in a few cases, with babies. In general though, the most numerous visitors were solid middle class, including some of its grander denizens, unembarrassed to flaunt their status:

‘After a day dodging (other) tourists in Bath, you don’t have to read Vathek to see the advantages of having your own Tower to get away from hoi polloi ...’

‘Just put Tristram and Fifi Lupin to bed. Mummy is writing this letter after just coming down from the Tower – what a blast! We are lucky enough to be able to afford very good food, although Tristram turned his nose up at the Foie Gras ...’

BECKFORD AND THE VISITORS

How did visitors view Beckford?

One of the most surprising results of the study is that Beckford was a minor factor in attracting visitors to Lansdown.

The second is that most visitors did not know much, if anything, about him. By far the biggest reason for visiting Lansdown was the fact that it was a property of the Landmark Trust, an organization that was viewed as a brand synonymous with elegant living and interesting heritage. Many visitors were serial visitors to Landmark properties and delighted to name the number of stays they had made which ranged from two to more than thirty.

This lack of awareness of Beckford may seem faintly shocking to *Journal* readers who might have expected that he would be the main attraction. However, the picture changes, if the focus moves from looking at why visitors came initially, to examining in more detail what happened once they were there.

Though Beckford played a small role in precipitating a stay, he later became a major part of the experience and was mentioned frequently. In order to understand why, it is necessary to distinguish between two types of visitor – those who knew of Beckford before they came and those who did not. The first will be designated ‘Knowledgeable Beckfordians’, the latter ‘Beckford Novitiates’.

Knowledgeable Beckfordians were a minority, mainly found among the AB virtuosi. Their number included: a famous actress who ‘knew a little about Beckford’; two architectural historians; a couple who had visited two previous Beckford exhibitions in London; and a male couple describing themselves as:

‘Two art historians in love with Beckford for a long time ...
Loving every one thing about the Tower ...’

The comments of the Beckfordians suggested that they were well satisfied with what they saw of the restoration and learned things that were new:

‘Having studied Beckford and his collections in the past I immediately planned to stay here when I read of Landmark’s involvement. I have not been disappointed, well done Landmark. I especially like the woven horse hair covers on the dining chairs and the most elaborate kitchen console I have ever seen ...’

‘I came to Beckford’s Tower as longterm enthusiast for / student of 18th c. architectural history, and one who watched the present restoration with great interest for a few days’ rest/retreat, imagining that I knew most things about this splendid building. I didn’t. Caroline Stanford’s history is marvellously enlightening and I was fascinated by the massive number of changes this building has endured.’

From the materials and information provided by Museum staff one Beckfordian was able to discover new perspectives on Beckford’s architectural influence:

‘It was interesting to learn of Beckford’s seminal contribution to the Victorian villa – it’s worth a visit to Borthwick Hill to see Goodridge’s Montebello (visible from the road, slightly altered) and Fiesole. The latter is now a youth hostel so we can see it without compunction ...’

A famous female actor with ‘some knowledge of Beckford’ read *Vathek* for the first time, and identified a film possibility during her stay:

‘I cannot think why someone has not already begun realising it as an animated film (the certificate would have to be ‘18+’ if it were done faithfully) ...’

And two male art historians spent part of their time attempting, with limited success, to work out the path Beckford created between Lansdown Crescent and the Tower, as well as making constructive suggestions for improving the library of books available to visitors:

‘Two books worth reading and missing here, Beckford’s “Biographical memoirs of extraordinary painters” and the recent exhibition catalogue for “William Beckford, an eye for the magnificent” with great chapters on Beckford in Bath and the Tower ...’

But Knowledgeable Beckfordians were a minority. Most visitors knew nothing about William Beckford before they came but became enthusiastic Novitiates during the course of their stays:

‘... (Never heard of B.) ... but ... now feel I know the man on a personal basis ...’

‘What a character Beckford was! Didn’t he have fun spending a grand fortune ...’

The evolving knowledge of Beckford obtained by Novitiates during their stay produced striking kinds of commitment:

‘I have grown very fond of William Beckford - the books are all brilliant - and will be very sad to leave such a special place.’

Visitors came to feel that they knew Beckford sufficiently well to be able to make judgements about his character. One guest described him as ‘a great guy’, another as ‘different from the usual run of men ...’. Another felt she had gained:

‘... a fascinating insight into Beckford’s sad (?) and unhappy life. The highlight was watching the rehearsal of Rossini’s Stabat

Mater in Bath Abbey ... Even Beckford would have enjoyed this. But many thanks for building this, William, and I hope many more enjoy it as we have ...'

Others thanked him and drank to Beckford ('Every dinner was finished with a toast to W.B ...'; 'We drank to Beckford's eccentricity ...') and a few paid tribute at his grave:

'On Wednesday night we left a small lamp burning on Beckford's grave, to celebrate the birthday ...'

The intensity of the imaginary relationships visitors with no previous knowledge formed with Beckford was a testament to the excellence of the support materials provided by the staff working on site and in the Museum. These, along with the logbook itself, received frequent comment for the pleasure and information they provided.

'Much enjoyed reading Jon Millington's concise and readable guide to the Tower ...'

'Whatever you do don't miss the fascinating documentation on the history of the Tower ...'

'Respectful congratulations on Caroline Sandford's history, including Landmark's part in restoration. And it is very well looked after by Mrs Pam Reed, in the fine tradition to which Landmark (and its tenants) owe so much. The bookshelf and the Tower Museum give an extended view ...'

'I enjoyed reading about Mr. Beckford who was an intriguing man if totally bonkers. I tried to get into Vathek but gave up ... Reading about the man himself was more interesting.'

The Tower and Museum staff were widely praised for their time, knowledge and enthusiasm:

‘The gentleman in the Museum was a mine of information, so it’s a good idea to visit, also they have postcards of the Tower ... Thank you Landmark and Mrs. Reed, you both do a splendid job.’

‘The guides to the Museum are charming and allow some extra privileges if you reveal your residence of the rooms below.’

One of the reasons why the staff were so well regarded was the personal relationships they were able to forge with guests, and the attention they offered which seemed beyond the call of duty. This was revealed in the Christian name terms by which staff were mentioned in the entries:

‘An unexpected bonus was an individual “tutorial” from Amy, the Curator (?) of the Museum) who so enthusiastically shared her knowledge with us while awaiting the arrival of her students...’

‘What an enthusiastic and knowledgeable young lady ...’

‘... “Thank you” to Amy ... for opening the Museum and keeping us totally entertained. “Good luck with the Ph. D.!” We are sure you will sail through it and thank you to Sarah for the little touches and your help.’

Not all readers of the materials became Beckford fans. His wealth and profligate spending irritated some:

‘Despite his boundless imagination and successful collaboration with architects I think it is fair to say that William Beckford was a feckless playboy with too much pocket money.’

Some were more divided:

‘Maybe I am just a little ambivalent about the man himself. Whatever else may be said of his character his animal

sentimentality manifests itself in an anti-country sports attitude, and his wealth was based on the slave trade. Moreover he seems never to have followed the example of Sir Thomas in Mansfield Park who took trouble to inspect his estates ...'

Love him or hate him, people who previously knew nothing about Beckford came to know him through their stay at Lansdown. The property is thus serving a significant educative function in widening awareness and recognition, to such an extent that a local book dealer said that he now tried to hold a stock of Beckford books because he had become an increasingly important figure for tourists in Bath.

LANDSDOWN AND GOTHIC PERFORMANCE

A second effect of a Lansdown stay, discernible in the comments of both Beckfordians and Novitiates, was of repertoires of behaviour that may be viewed as a developing Gothic awareness. This came about almost from their arrival at Lansdown. Few knew beforehand what to expect so their first encounter with the old Tower and the wild cemetery was a shock. 'What a sight to be lit up by our car headlights' was one visitor's immediate reaction. The shock was even greater for visitors arriving in bad weather:

'It was a wild and windy night when we arrived just the time to be entering a former graveyard. The surprise when we opened the doors was complete ...'

'... spookiest arrival ever to a Landmark trust property! Dropped off at cemetery (by taxi) we entered through there with the golden top of the tower lit up, welcoming us through the frightening dark and mist ...'

A woman writer found the 'otherness' of arrival both exhilarating and nerve-wracking:

‘As we approached in the car, I could immediately feel the warming atmosphere of Beckford’s tower. Its beauty and grandeur was astounding. I was so excited to open the door – it was like Christmas, entering this fantastic house ... We finally found the tower key. By this time it was dark but the torch came out and off we went. I must admit that a bit of disco knee came into play I think this was adrenalin from the slight sense of fear and anticipation of what lay ahead ...’

For those arriving too late to be able to see much on arrival, the shock came in the morning:

‘Two surprises as a result of arriving in the dark, seeing a lantern illuminated as we drove up Lansdown Rd, and then opening the shutters and curtains the next morning to find we’d slept in the middle of what looked like Highgate ...’

‘Having arrived late and in the dark, pulling back the curtains was quite a shock. Did the graveyard not merit a mention in the literature?’

A few continued to have feelings of unease and recorded disquieting effects. Here a woman writer describes a restless first night:

‘Didn’t sleep too well, felt a bit spooked –no not a bit, a lot. Lots of unexplained clanging and creaking ...’

Strange footsteps troubled another group:

‘On Tuesday night, 4 June, after we had all turned in to sleep we heard footsteps on the Tower staircase, but there was no one else at Beckford’s Tower. It must have been the ghost of Wm Beckford returning to the belvedere to look out over Bath. Spooky but true ...’

And a male couple were unnerved by the wholly explicable sensation of being followed by the eyes of subjects, in a religious picture, who had been painted frontally :

‘I’d like to point out how perturbed we have been by the sinister picture of the Madonna and child in the Crimson Room. This certainly helped in our first night’s foray into ghost-story telling, convinced that the eyes may be focused on you, wherever you are in the room ...’

But for most these initial impressions of disquiet, provoked by the stereotypical features of the site, quickly passed:

‘ Exploring the cemetery by moonlight at 2.am with the mist swirling around between the gravestones should have been a very spooky experience - but it wasn’t - the looming ever watchful Tower seems to give the place a certain serenity - the faded splendour of the stones is fascinating ...’

One writer went out of her way to contradict the fears recorded by others in her own party who claimed they had been woken in the night by strange noises off, and had barricaded their windows:

‘Despite the gothic setting, one that Edgar Alan Po [sic] would have been proud to Grace [sic], nightly driving rain, howling winds rattling the sash windows and swirling mists that engulfed the entire hillside. There are no Ghosts or Gauls [sic] gliding in and out of the rooms or up and down the tower stairs. Narnia isn’t in the wardrobe. In short all is well in the house ... I can recommend sleeping in the chapel of rest behind the sofa. I had no trips of tap dancers nor did my windows need barricading with suitcases against tumultuous storms. Cozy and comfortable I slept well oblivious to my companions’ exploits and experiences ...’

Another writer dismissed tales of the uncanny told by one of the Lansdown staff :

‘... [the] housekeeper told us about strange smells being emitted in the flat, a cross between burnt electric and lily of the valley. We never smelt this during our stay ...’

But though intimations of the uncanny were mostly discounted, many comments made by guests suggested that their behaviour at Lansdown was distinctively shaped in several ways as a response to the physical setting, the history of the Tower and Cemetery, and their evolving knowledge of Beckford.

These repertoires of response comprised a kind of improvised Gothic Performance recognizable, not just in the activities recorded in the logbook, but in the way they were narrated. The performance comprised three aspects: Gothic role taking; Gothic parody and burlesque; and Literary immersion.

GOTHIC ROLE-TAKING

Role-taking involved fantasy enactments, in which experiences at Lansdown were performed, or self-consciously imagined and narrated, as events in gothic melodrama:

‘Our stay at Beckford Tower has been something of an episode of *Vathek*. A ferocious storm on Saturday tripped the power out for a little while and we discovered that Victorian window frames are not particularly good at keeping the rain out. This ability was further reduced after we broke the glass trying to shut the window tight. Later in the evening the burglar alarm went off and we discovered to our relief that the Bath and Avon constabulary takes about 10 mins to get here. All in all we had a gothic experience of the kind that I am sure William Beckford would have approved of ...’

Here the writer has self-consciously adopted a narrative mode, characterized by selective emphasis on stereotypical incidents found in gothic fiction (a storm, windows that shake, an alarm in the night, the threat of crime and transgression, rescue and relief),

and expressed in archaically understated language ('been something of', 'tripped the power for a little', 'window frames not particularly good at'). And, to drive the effect home, the whole event has been explicitly positioned within a Beckfordian frame (viz. - it could have been an incident from *Vathek*, or an *Episode* - it was an incident Beckford would have approved of) at both the beginning and the end. The strategies at work in this entry, the narrating of events in terms of stereotypical connotations of the gothic, can be seen elsewhere:

'The wind was high last night and all the windows rattled – which added to the whole experience ...'

Here is a guest describing the routine process of working out domestic arrangements in the Tower:

'After discovering the fridge behind the door we went on to explore the other cupboards for any secret rooms. In the cupboard with the light there appears to be some doors behind it where does this go? We also discovered the hidden cupboards in the bathroom have you?'

The writer has here made the process of searching out the prosaic details of where things are kept, into a Gothic quest of exploration and discovery in a labyrinthine house with hidden cupboards and secret rooms.

The tendency to gothic role-playing, induced by the physical architectural features of Lansdown and mythic features of its owner, was aided and sustained by guest perceptions of its theatrical features and effects. These were most frequently noted in the cemetery:

'The frost on the tombs added a dramatic touch to the imposing tower..The crimson room has a dash of Oscar Wilde to add atmosphere ...'

‘ “We had snow on Sunday, and the patterns of snow on the Victorian tombstones in the winter sunshine were a photographer’s paradise ...’

‘A wonderfully theatrical stage set for the Beckford experience. A great location for a first novel all the elements are here, including the deer through the bedroom window this morning.’

‘Get some mist on the graveyard and it could be a “Hammer House of Horror” film ...’

GOTHIC PARODY AND BURLESQUE

Along with this tendency for guests to mythologise their experiences as gothic revival and survival, there was a countervailing tendency for a few other guests to subvert them with deflating parody and burlesque:

‘The weather was apauling but we felt really protected by the tower and the spirit of Willy was ever present. I missed Holyoakes this morning but that doesn’t paterb me as much as I expected ...’

This was a famous rap singer who here deflates the gothic by a combination of: matey forms of address (‘the spirit of Willy’); discordant, contemporary juxtaposition (‘I missed ‘Holyoakes’); and (deliberate?) misspelling. Another ironist wrote:

‘Last night we heard some ghastly chanting monks ... or was it just the local rugby club turning out ...?’

For satirical effect one writer linked Beckford’s homoerotic life to his practice of maintaining a dwarf in his household, by confessing that during his stay:

‘I had sex with a dwarf as a tribute to William Beckford ...’

(In the margin a later writer had added the riposte: ‘This cannot have been pleasant for the dwarf.’)

Two others wrote a sexually-nuanced burlesque about the Tower as a gay indulgence financed by economic exploitation, and fantasised about what Beckford’s tastes might be in the present:

‘How splendid to have tea in and not a little sympathy for the creator of this pinkly thrusting erection. (It’s difficult to like the unloved and unlovely roué who made his money from slave-harvested sugar) ... We feel Beckford would have appreciated the 2 fire-eating street entertainers in their studded leather posing pouches outside the Pump Room today. The climax of their show was synchronised handstands with lighted sparklers twinkling from their tightly-clenched buttocks. Taste! Style! Discernment!’

The interesting point about these burlesque incursions is that, though attempts to subvert the gothic manner, they are actually not inconsistent with it.

Cultural critics and historians have long commented on the ‘camp’ ambivalence of the gothic mode where deliberate effects of sublimity and terror may co-exist beside theatrical pastiche, arch humour and irony, qualities found in Walpole and the suppressed edition of Beckford’s *Dreams, Waking Thoughts, and Incidents*.

GOTHIC PERFORMANCE AND THE LITERARY

The other feature of gothic performance, apparent in the logbook, was extreme valorisation of the literary – as consumption, inspiration and commemoration.

Literary consumption has already been discussed in terms of the importance of the Lansdown reading materials in educating visitors about Beckford. A second effect was to sensitise guests to the literary pleasures of an imagined, early-nineteenth-century, gothic life-style.

The gothic had started in England as an entertaining, literary genre consumed to fill the leisure moments of an expanding, middle-class reading public. Logbook comments reflected attempts to replicate the reading atmosphere of this seminal period at Lansdown :

‘We enjoyed reading on the sofa (and imagining Jane Austen ladies), strolling in the cemetery after dinner (very spooky) ... We heard strange noises in the night and an owl too and saw a deer in the field by the bins. Atmospheric. Scarlet. Wonderful hidden drawers and cupboards and the hangings are sumptuous. We’ve paid our respects to Mr Beckford in the graveyard ...’

A male party of four, one of whom was a museum curator, expressed similar satisfactions:

‘Weather was ... wild gales, rain and snow storms! However , we were cosy inside and delighted in the tales of “Life at Fonthill” from the correspondence of William Beckford ...’

Another couple wrote:

‘The wild weather has added to the Gothic atmosphere ... Where better to read about William Beckford than in a former chapel of rest to the sound of torrential rain and gales! ...’

All of these suggest delight in role-playing the literary habits of the past in an authentic setting. They seem like pastiche simulations of half-recollected images of Georgian cultural practices - a miniaturised re-run of Polidori, Byron, Shelley and Mary Wollstonecraft telling each other ghost stories in Lausanne?

A caricature subject for James Gillray depicting ladies gathered together in polite drawing rooms to read *Tales of Wonder*?

A second literary effect of a Lansdown stay for a select few was an inspirational one, as described by an enthusiastic, but unpublished, author, who also added a modest ‘plug’ for ‘work in progress’:

‘We’ve had a wonderful week reading and writing at the top of the Tower each morning and exploring every afternoon (watch out for Jason Willow in the future – probably available via internet downloads if certain publishers don’t wake up to the golden opportunity laid before them ...’

More extraordinary was the testimony of two Mills and Boon authors, middle-aged ladies who had been released by their husbands to go away for a creative break to finish a book, and work on a new one. The impact of Lansdown was to inspire a whole new direction for their oeuvre:

‘... William Beckford has worked his magic on us and we have acquired a “taste for the magnificent” not to mention the exotic. Because of this we have been inspired to begin work on our serious masterpieces. Watch out for two new best sellers, “The language stealers” and the “Magic Box” both of which will undoubtedly feature scenes from the Belvedere ...’

Even for those without authorial ambitions, Lansdown stimulated a desire to commemorate their stay in literary terms. In two instances this meant poetical pastiche, as in these two sonorous tributes to Beckford:

‘One may adapt Shakespeare to quote: “O William Beckford, thou art mighty yet”. His persona lies across the place ...’

‘Hence with denial vain and coy excuse
So may some gentle Muse

With lucky words favour my destined urn
And as he passes turn,
And bid fair peace to my sable shroud.'

Others attempted original composition, the longest of which was a three-verse celebration by a Yorkshire man, of the occasion that had brought him and his friends to Lansdown – the Powergen Rugby League Final between Bradford and Leeds in 2003.

Only one guest attempted to get to poetical grips with the distinctive gothic features of Lansdown:

'There are places where magic lives, in certain folds of time
and space,

Where the wind rages against the shutters, and shadows move
in the darkest part of night,

Where the dead whisper to the living, and speak of things, we
must face,

There you climb above the bone and stone upon the dawn's
early light.'

GOTHIC PERFORMANCE - VULGARITER AND NOBILITER

The range of gothic performance features recorded in the logbook suggests variations within them that may be conceived along a qualitative scale that differentiates between two ideal types of gothic response. They will be called *Vulgariter* and *Nobiliter*. Both types depend upon the subject's previous knowledge and assimilation of textual representations of the gothic.

In *Vulgariter* performances these are those casually acquired through popular culture, particularly film and music. They may, for example, be detected in logbook comparisons made between Lansdown and Michael Jackson's *Thriller* pop video, also to

Hammer House of Horror productions or, as here, the Addams Family:

‘We’ve had a wonderful time staying in this stunning Landmark ... reading about Beckford ... going around the graveyard and watching the bats while having dinner. Quite the Adams family [sic] now ...’

‘Bats’ and ‘the Adams family’ act as popular, referential points to the gothic code governing the significance of the narrated activities. This kind of invocation of the popular, explicitly or tacitly, is also found in children’s responses to the gothic, which are invariably in Vulgariter mode. Here a sixteen-year-old girl describes her reactions to Lansdown:

‘What a daddy cool building this is huh? ... The graveyard is a bit on the spooky side though ... We took a lovely photograph of me pretending to be a zombie in my pyjamas – I had only just woken up so it was quite realistic! ...’

The zombie impression, celebrated as a photograph, seems to be derived from zombie images in film or TV precedents. The description exemplifies two other features of Vulgariter performance – its playful spontaneity, and its tendency towards demonstrative action. Another teenager recounted how he and friends improvised a game in the cemetery:

‘I thought the cemetery a bit spooky until me and Nick and some friends went grave hunting. You had to find the spookiest grave ...’

Nobilitar mode, by contrast, is cerebral, more than emotional, performance. Detachment and considered analysis preponderate over spontaneity and demonstrative action. The representations that feed it will include popular ones, but will also comprise a much greater and diverse literary referentiality. Here, as

exemplification, are the logbook comments of a couple on the cemetery that are almost Proustian in their exact and measured reflexivity:

‘... The proximity of the cemetery reminded us of the haunted nights spent at Mangell’s in the 1980s but no such irritations arose here – although the impenetrable blackness of the nights was a bit of a shock after the light pollution of our London street ... Afterwards we explored the cemetery but perhaps because of the snow could not locate Goodnell’s [Goodridge’s?] grave. We were intrigued to see the grave of our George Uvedale Price – presumably the granda [?] of the author of the Essay on the Picturesque which caused such waves at the end of the 18th C (see Neil Jackson’s book for more thereon)...Delighted to see that Ancestral Voices was showing for a 3 nights at the Theatre Royal studio and were lucky enough to get the last 2 seats for the Thursday performance. It’s based on the diaries of James Lees-Milne which is on the shelf and proved to be a riot ...’

This short passage is freighted with respected names from the literature of architecture and aesthetics (Price, Lees-Milne, Jackson).

The mode of narration is at the furthest remove from the spontaneous with its careful attention to remembered details, its tentative, causal suppositions (‘But *perhaps* because of ...’; ‘*presumably* the granda ...’), and its pedantic, academic referencing, expressed slightly archaically (‘see Neil Jackson’s book for more *thereon* ...’).

Another quality of Nobiliter performance is often an ambivalent irony in which contradictory attitudes to the gothic seem to co-exist. In this entry an evening walk by moonlight is narrated in an allusive and tumultuously affective style:

‘...we’ve just walked back from the Hare and Hounds through the starlit cemetery, shining with a glowing full moon, still and splendid, a Caspar David Friedrich painting. This is all

our gothic dreams; an Edward Gorey fantasy; an Addams Family retreat; and an inspiration (what a man Beckford was) at once'

Yet the intensity of the description, left by two male guests, ends with the admission that they adopted the nicknames 'Morticia' and 'Gomez' throughout their stay – names surely intended to be a playful subversion of gothic role-playing, if not characters in a film called *Carry on in the Cemetery*.

Recognition of the two modes helps to explain Lansdown's broad appeal to all its guests. It was able to engage the minds of the Nobiliter literary imagination - a group that was mainly constituted by virtuosi and those professionally involved with heritage, history or aesthetics - while appealing to the simpler and more expressive tendencies of the non-specialist adult, and children enjoying the cartoon film effects of a spooky holiday home that had belonged to 'cool' Mr. Beckford.

CONCLUSION

The gothic experiences and enactments recorded in the logbook reflect the wide ambit of gothic performance - its melodramatic intensity, its 'camp' theatricality, its ironical and burlesque elements, and its underlying dependence on literary conventions for its content and forms of narration. All of these constitutive facets of the gothic were both adopted and partly shaped by Beckford's life and work.

Perhaps the main truth to emerge from the logbook is that for most visitors the gothic is an enjoyable, part-time leisure activity, but one that exists with many others, including those that were recorded in the sixty per cent of the responses excluded from this analysis. Only for the deranged (or the professional researcher!) would the gothic be an all-governing preoccupation, or the only reason for travel.

Notes on Contributors

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Amy Frost has been the Administrator of Beckford's Tower & Museum in Bath since 2002. Her interest in Beckford began while studying for an M.Phil. 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 Ph.D. on the life and work of Henry Edmund Goodridge, the architect of Beckford's Tower.

Malcolm Jack's book on the cultural history of Lisbon (*Lisbon: City of the Sea*) was published by IB Tauris in 2007. A Portuguese edition (*Lisboa: Cidade do Mar*) has recently been published by Aletheia Editores, Lisbon. His books on Beckford include *Vathek and Other Stories* (1993), *The Episodes of Vathek* (1994) and *William Beckford: An English Fidalgo* (1997). He is the chairman of the Beckford Society.

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'. To mark the 150th anniversary of Beckford's death he devised the exhibition 'Souvenirs of Fonthill Abbey'. He edited the *Beckford Tower Trust Newsletter* (1980-1994) and the *Beckford Journal* from 1995 to 2005. He is the author of *William Beckford: A Bibliography* (2008).

Jerry Nolan is a London-based freelance writer. In 2008 he launched a self-publishing company, The Agathopolis Company, whose second publication was the play *Extraordinary Views at Lansdown Tower: William Beckford & Cyrus Redding*. Recently New Hibernia Review (University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, Minnesota) published his essay 'In Search of an Ireland in the Orient: Tom Moore's *Lalla Rookh*'. A play about Savonarola's Florence, *The Golden Caterpillar with Black Tail* is the forthcoming publication of The Agathopolis Company. Further information can be found at www.jerryolanwriter.com.

Tony Seaton is Professor of Tourism Behaviour at the University of Bedfordshire and Director of the International Tourism Research Centre there. In 1993 he founded the Scottish Tourism Research Unit. His research precipitated the establishment of the book town in Scotland at Wigtown in 1997 (which was modelled on Hay-on-Wye), and his consultancy was part of the planning of England's book town in Sedburgh (for which he is a sponsor). He has represented the UK in diplomatic missions by the Department of Trade and Industry to India and Greece, and worked on major collaborative EU projects in Bulgaria, Greece, Norway, Belgium, France and the Netherlands.

He has written/edited five books, contributed chapters to fourteen others, published over seventy articles and papers, and is on the editorial board of two international tourism journals. He has lectured, researched and been visiting fellow or professor in sixty countries including USA, Australia, and most countries in Europe.

His main leisure interest is book collecting on travel history, Iceland and Sicily, thanatology, caricature art of the 18th and 19th centuries, and medieval popular culture. He has written for the antiquarian bibliophiles' magazine *Biblio*. He is currently writing a history of travel associated with death, *From Ampullae to Althorp*, for Hambledon History, London.