

# Rossi's *Saint Anthony*, from Beckford's Oratories to Sir Francis Cook's 'Sanctuary' in Monserrate Palace, Portugal

Maria João Baptista Neto

Universidade de Lisboa, Portugal

**Abstract** William Beckford's statue of Saint Anthony, sculpted by John Rossi, included one of the most valued pieces of his art collection. As this paper argues, this statue was modeled after a sixteenth century sculpture of the Church of Saint Anthony located in Lisbon. The statue played a major role at Fonthill Abbey, where it was displayed in a sumptuous sanctuary. The same occurred in Lansdown Tower, enthroned in a new oratory. After Beckford's death, the art collector Francis Cook purchased the statue for his Monserrate estate in Sintra, where Beckford lived between 1794 and 1795. The Lansdown sanctuary was then recreated in Monserrate as an intriguing homage to Beckford.

**Keywords** William Beckford. John Charles Rossi. Saint Anthony. Fonthill Abbey. Lansdown Tower. Francis Cook. Monserrate.

**Summary** 1 Introduction. – 2 Beckford's Devotion to Saint Anthony. – 3 Rossi's St. Anthony at Fonthill Oratory. – 4 The Statue in Saint Anthony's Church (Lisbon) as a Reference. – 5 A New Sanctuary at Lansdown Tower. – 6 The St. Antony Chamber at Monserrate. – 7 In Conclusion: A Rediscovery for Critical Historiography.

## 1 Introduction

Throughout his turbulent, glamorous and eccentric life, William Beckford (1760-1844) surrounded himself with many works of art, which were all designed, commissioned or purchased with exquisite taste, composing bold decorative, aesthetic and symbolic projects. Amongst these chosen pieces, one stands out, less so for its artistic value, but rather for the special meaning it held, closely kept until his demise: John Charles Rossi's statue of Saint Anthony [fig. 1]. It embodies his devotion for the saint, the very saint Beckford wished to see become the main reference of Fonthill Abbey. In the manner of a medieval monarch, his immense fortune from the sugar plantations in Jamaica enabled him to build a huge abbey dedicated to his patron saint, in whom he entrusted his faith

and redemption, seeking to perpetuate his memory through fame. Even after his plunge into financial ruin, with no other option but to sell Fonthill, Beckford did not abandon his faith nor did he leave Rossi's statue behind. In Lansdown Tower, he again built a carefully designed altar to enthrone the statue of Saint Anthony.

Nowadays, this sculpture by Rossi is housed in Portugal (Dakers 2018, 348), and was part of the collection of Monserrate Palace, in Sintra, the property of the wealthy English merchant, Sir Francis Cook (1817-1901). Cook, who became one of the greatest art collectors of the second half of the nineteenth century, acquired the property in 1856, refurbished it and established his summer residence there, populating its interior with nota-



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ble pieces of European and Oriental art. Monserrate held special meaning for Cook because Beckford had lived there during one of his longer stays

in Portugal, and this had been disclosed by Lord Byron to an entire romantic generation, in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812-18).

## 2 Beckford's Devotion to Saint Anthony

The devotion for this Portuguese saint began in his adolescence (Alexander 1962, 130), but his social isolation, as a result of 'the Powderham scandal' in 1784, and the death of his wife in 1786 had the effect of reinforcing his admiration and faith [fig. 2]. Exactly when Beckford commissioned Rossi to sculpt his venerated Saint is still unknown. Although the reference to the writer already having an image of St. Anthony with him during his self-exile period on the European continent, (Alexander 1962, 124), Rossi's sculpture must have only been executed a little later. Probably after Beckford had designed a series of projects that also included the construction of a special place to honor his favorite saint. He first commissioned James Wyatt (1746-1813) to execute plans for a chapel at Stop's Beacon, on the family estate at Fonthill in 1794 (Melville 1910, 214). A few months earlier, in December 1793, Beckford drew a sketch to be implemented in his Lisbon house, which was already an embryo of the spatial organization to be developed in Fonthill (Alexander 1962, 118). This project featured a sanctuary dedicated to Saint Anthony at the end of a sequence of the various rooms. [fig. 3] The Lisbon project was to be "more confined" and Beckford requested support from the architect to design the "new oratory, a sort of tabernacle with curtains and lamps and 6 altar candlesticks" (Melville 1910, 214).

In 1782, during his visit to Padua, he reacted ecstatically to the basilica dedicated to the saint, the artistic quality of the altar and its tomb (Beckford 1834 I, 149-52). Five years later, back in Lisbon, the new church built upon St. Anthony's birthplace, after the 1755 earthquake, did not arouse the same degree of admiration. However, he was not indifferent to the wooden polychrome image of

the Saint, recovered from the early church and enthroned on the main altar "in the midst of a bright illumination" (Beckford 1834, 2: 60) [fig. 4].

The Anglican Church, with its dry, rigid liturgical ritual of the time, provided neither spiritual comfort nor sensory stimulation to a sensitive mind like that of Beckford's. While in England the churches' 'centre' had shifted from the altar to the pulpit, the Roman Catholic Church continued to transform its altars into a climax of visual eloquence for the faithful. Beckford felt the power of these scenarios, he admired how manipulation of the *chiaroscuro* accentuated the drama of the compositions; how the diversity and characteristics of the materials used in their construction and decoration had the same purpose and worked together to stimulate the senses of the faithful. Furthermore, according to him, the lighted candles on the altars in praise of God and the saints contributed to "diffuse a mysterious light" (Watkin 2002, 37). Hence, the composition of the altars of the churches visited and frequented by Beckford in Portugal served as the main reference for his new oratory project in his Lisbon house.

Beckford's restless mind led him to embrace several projects simultaneously. 1794 was also the year when he took advantage of the departure of British merchant Gerard De Visme, to England, to sublet the property of Monserrate, in Sintra [fig. 5]. Beckford had already coveted this place in 1787 during his first stay in Portugal. It is not known whether the refurbishment undertaken by Beckford in Monserrate in 1795 also included an oratory dedicated to Saint Anthony. However, the festivities he witnessed in Lisbon on the occasion of the sixth centenary of the birth of the saint, most certainly fueled his desire to erect altars for the Franciscan miracle worker.<sup>1</sup>

## 3 Rossi's St. Anthony at Fonthill Oratory

It was at this point that he became more determined to build a "pleasure building" in Fonthill, to ornament his estate (Aldrich 2002, 121). Upon his return to Fonthill in 1796, he sought to persuade

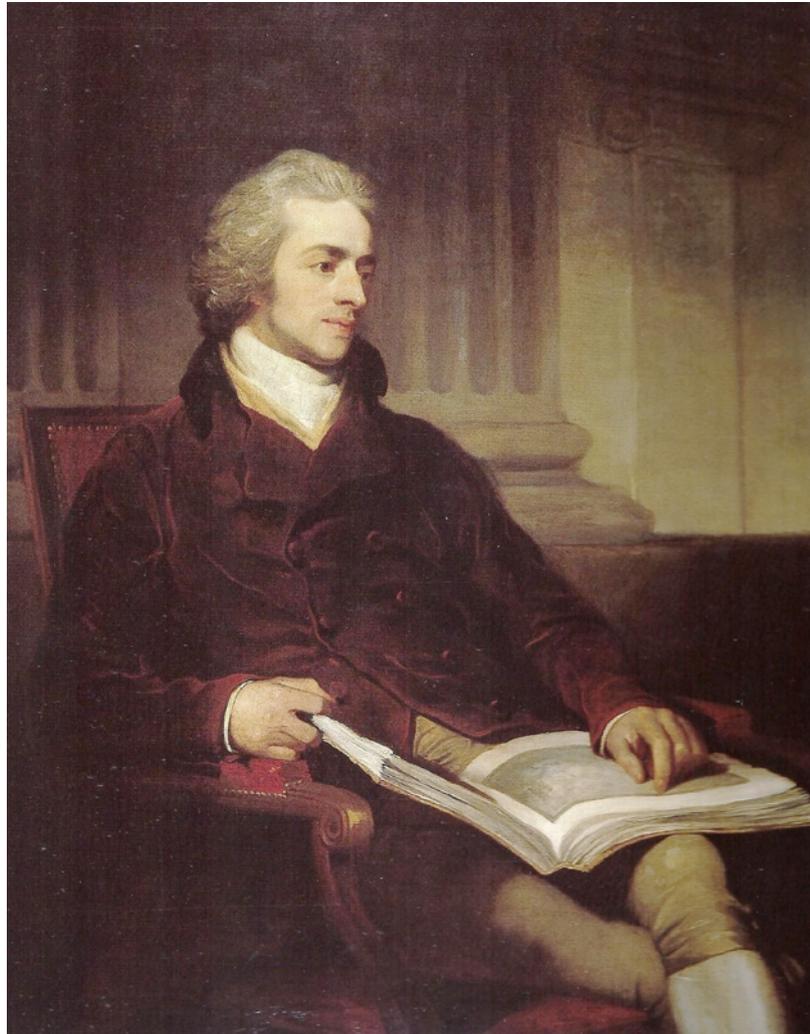
James Wyatt to design the two projects he wished to develop on his property: in Stop's Beacon, where instead of a simple chapel he intended to build a tower-observatory;<sup>2</sup> and at Hinkley Hill, the lodge, that

<sup>1</sup> Beckford's devotion for the saint was well known among the Portuguese elites, so much so that a clergyman, by the name of Gelásio da Conceição wrote about the saint in 1794, with the sole purpose of bequeathing his writings to Beckford (Pires 1987, 218).

<sup>2</sup> *The Gentleman's Magazine* 1796, 2.



**Figure 1** John Charles Rossi, *Saint Anthony and the Child*. 1798 c. Marble, limestone and alabaster, h 96 × w 43 × d 29 cm. Lisboa, Colégio São João de Brito - Centro Inaciano do Lumiar. Photo © PSML, João Krull, 2017



**Figure 2**

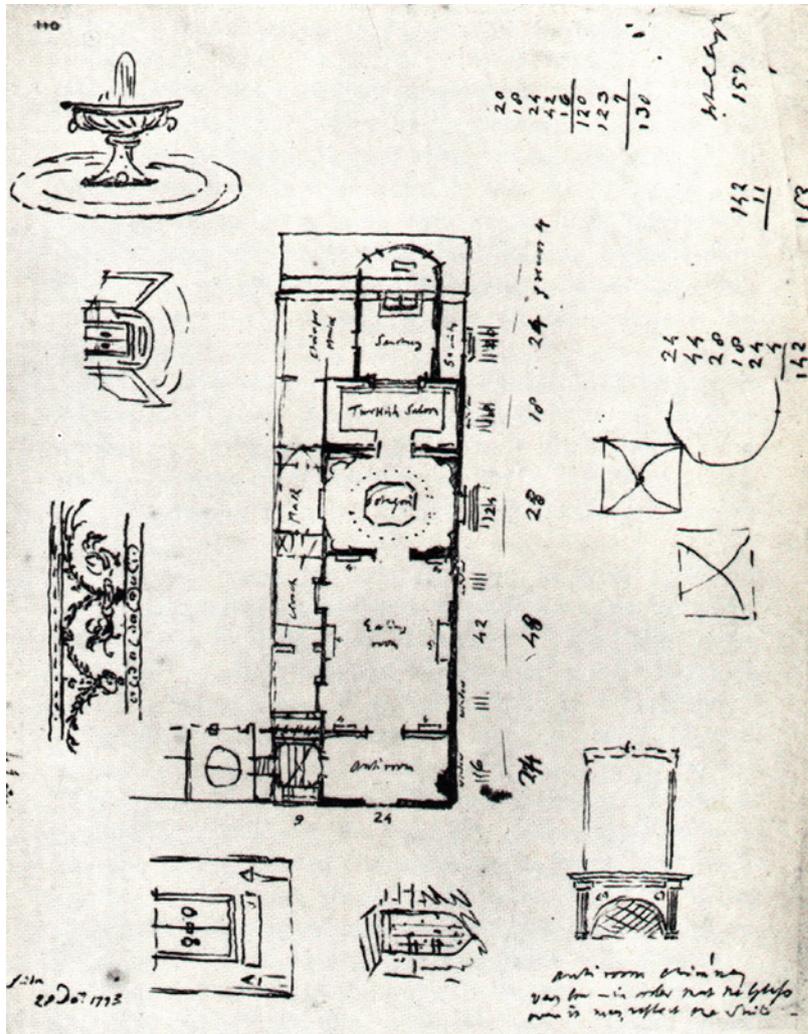
John Hoppner, *William Beckford*.  
1800 c. Oil on canvas, 124 × 99 cm.  
Nr. inv. 1868-21. Salford, Salford  
Museum & Art Gallery

would later come to be called the Abbey (Brockman 1956, 95-6), which would accommodate the tower's visitors (Rutter 1823, 109). However, as construction of the Abbey expanded, the idea of making a worthy chapel for his Saint Anthony appeared to shift to this new building, as is made evident in the enthusiastic letter Beckford wrote in February of the following year to Sir William Hamilton describing the project: "It contains apartments in the most gorgeous Gothic style with windows of painted glass, chapel for blessed St. Anthony [...], gallery [...], and a tower [...]" (Alexander 1962, 159). He dedicated a large octagonal chapel to the saint, from which a nave emerged to the west, where he had initially planned to make a large banquet room, but

which later became the majestic main hall. To the south, there was a long gallery called St. Michael, providing access to the apartments.

We know from Farington's diary that, some months later, in August, Wyatt presented new details for the interior decoration of the building, including "four gothic statues by Nollekens, Flaxman, Westmacott and Rossi" (Wilton-Ely 1976, 42). It was probably on this occasion that Beckford commissioned Rossi (1762-1839) to make the statue of Saint Anthony to feature on the altar of the great chapel. Rossi had just been appointed sculptor to the Prince of Wales, the future George IV, and immediately after, in 1798, he was elected associate member of the Royal Academy (Gunnis 1968, 326-7).<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Rossi's was not the only statue to be sculpted for Fonthill. A life-size limestone statue of the saint was made by Joseph Theakston (1772-1842) for the niche above the Great West Door. This statue is currently in the Temple gardens of Wardour Park. A photograph of it was published by Lees-Milne 1976, 76.



**Figure 3**  
Beckford's own plan of his Lisbon house, drawn by himself (Alexander, Boyd 1962, 118)

The first time Rossi's statue is described in the context of a large altar is on the occasion of Lord Nelson's reception at Fonthill, in December 1800. Admiring that scene was one of the most thrilling moments of the evening for the illustrious guests. After dining in the Brown Parlor, they climbed the staircase of the octagonal tower (Nelson's Turret) walked through the Yellow Room and Oak Library to St. Michael's gallery, still under construction at the time. In the first few meters of the sumptuous gallery completed for the reception, was "a superb shrine, with a beautiful statue of St. Anthony in marble and alabaster, the work of Rossi, placed upon it, with reliquaries studded with brilliants of immense value, the whole illuminated by

a grand display of wax-lights on candlesticks and candelabra of massive silver gilt, exhibited a scene at once strikingly splendid and awfully magnificent". This entire carefully illuminated scene was reflected "in the great oriel opposite, from its spacious squares of plate-glass".<sup>4</sup>

The enthronement of the saint's statue allowed Beckford to experiment with the architectural attributes he so admired in the tricks of intense and diffused light and shadow, colour and reflection - in that which is referred to by David Watkin, quoting Soane, as the poetry of Architecture (Watkin 2002, 37). The sense of mystery was attained by the viewer, as well noted at time.<sup>5</sup> To complete such an atmosphere of magic effect, the harmony

<sup>4</sup> *The Gentleman's Magazine* 1801, 298.

<sup>5</sup> *The Gentleman's Magazine* 1801, 298.



**Figure 4** Image on the main altar of the church of Saint Anthony in Lisbon. 1939 c. Eduardo Portugal, photographer. Lisbon, Arquivo Municipal de Lisboa, AF, EDP001432, <https://arquivomunicipal3.cm-lisboa.pt/X-arqWEB/>



**Figure 5** Rural landscape in Monserrate, Sintra, unknown artist. 1810 c.  
Oil on canvas, 30.5 × 38.3 cm. Nr. inv. HD 0056.  
Lisbon, Museu Nacional dos Coches. Photo © DGPC

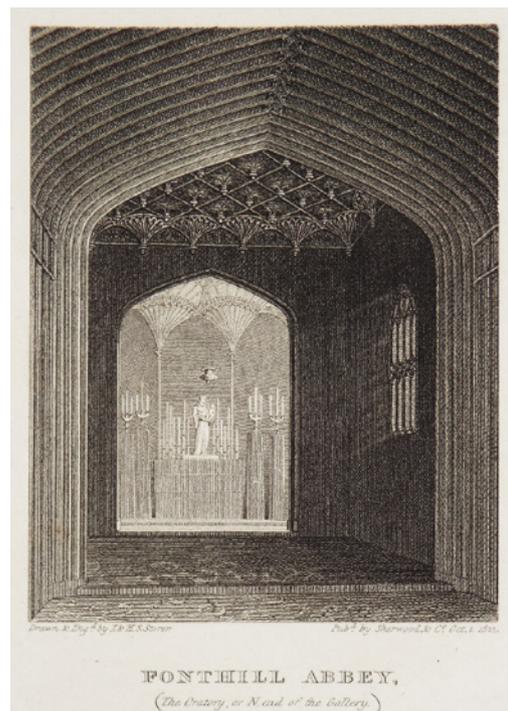
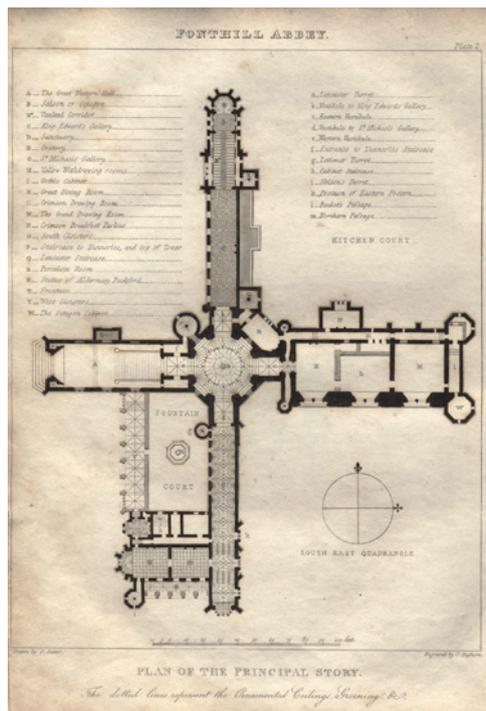
of musical chords could be heard coming from behind the statue of St. Anthony, but the performers could not be seen, as they were hidden “behind the screen of scarlet curtains which backed the shrine or from its canopy above”.<sup>6</sup> Beckford may have had the input of his Portuguese friend Gregório Franchi (1770-1828) for this entire representation. Franchi was a young musician Beckford had met in Lisbon, in 1787, who had joined him the following year in Madrid (Alexander 1957, 29)

and, over time, served repeatedly as his advisor in the acquisition and commissioning of works of art (McLeod 2002).

Beckford wanted his guests to have the same sensory experience he had felt when attending the Roman Catholic religious ceremonies, by recreating an entire staging of “the grand chapel scenes and ceremonies of our ancient Catholic times”,<sup>7</sup> around Rossi’s St. Anthony.

<sup>6</sup> *The Gentleman's Magazine* 1801, 298.

<sup>7</sup> *The Gentleman's Magazine* 1801, 298.



**Figure 6** View of the West and North Fronts of Fonthill Abbey. Rutter 1823, plate 11

**Figure 7** Plan of Fonthill Abbey, the Principal Story. Rutter 1823, plate 2

**Figure 8** The Oratory at Foothill. Storer 1812, 23

#### 4 The Statue in Saint Anthony's Church (Lisbon) as a Reference

In 1806 Beckford decided to add a north wing to the abbey. It was once again in an attempt to legitimize his lineage, honoring King Edward III, of whom he believed himself to be a descendant, and his Saint Anthony. Fonthill Abbey now had the planimetric effect of a large cross, culminating in the sanctuary and the oratory dedicated to the saint [figs. 6-7]. In 1812, the new backdrop for Rossi's statue was completed. Beckford had perfected all the architectural and decorative requirements tested in Lord Nelson's reception. In his publication of the same year, James Storer stated that "the effect of this solemn recess must be seen to be conceived; nor can any description convey an idea of the awful sensations it inspires" (Storer 1812, 24). Storer accompanies his words with a drawing and for the first time we have a image of Rossi's work [fig. 8]. The statue emerged in simple, elegant harmony, nestled between the various candelabra and candlesticks, and beneath a large lamp suspended from the ceiling.

Rossi's depiction was very close to the model of the image on the main altar of the church of Saint Anthony in Lisbon, which had survived the 1755 earthquake. The differences are minimal. While the statue of Lisbon depicts the Saint with a bent right knee, it is his left leg that is bent in Rossi's depiction. The same occurs with the Child Jesus, whose legs emerge in the opposite position to that of the statue of Lisbon. In both depictions, the Saint is wearing the Franciscan habit, holding the Child Jesus in his left arm, towards whom he tilts his head, resting his contemplative gaze on the divine Child. The Child, seated on the sacred Book, himself a well modeled representation of a child's anatomy, blesses the beholder with his right hand, while his left hand rests on the terrestrial globe. However, in the image of the altar of the church of Lisbon, the globe rests in the palm of the Child's hand, who gazes into the eyes of the Saint.

It would not have been at all common for English sculptors of the time to be asked to depict a saint of Catholic hagiography. Accustomed to classical iconography or mythological and historical themes, they would have needed to seek sources to serve as references. And in this case, Beckford would most certainly have clearly defined how he wished his beloved Saint, whose iconography is particularly rich, to be depicted.



**Figure 9** Guilherme Debrie, *S. Antonius Lisbonensis, Domus mea Domus mea Orationis*. 1745. Engraving, chisel, 11 × 6.5 cm. Lisbon, National Library rs-229

In 1787, the same year that Beckford arrived in Lisbon for the first time, another reprint of the work dedicated to Saint Anthony's worship and devotion had been published. The book opened with a print of Saint Anthony's image, based on the statue of the church's main altar.<sup>8</sup> This print had been sketched in 1745 by Guilherme Debrie (?-1755), an engraver of French or Flemish origin, lured to Portugal by King John V (Soares, Lima 1960, 278-9). Debrie sketched the statue of the Saint and Child with the decorative elements and attire with which he has frequently been depicted across time, namely a habit in embroidered damask, the cross and aureole of the Saint in sil-

<sup>8</sup> See *Cultos de devoção* 1787.

ver and the cross of the Child Jesus also in silver [figs. 9-10]. During one of his stays in Lisbon, Beckford may have acquired this book along with the print, which would have inspired Rossi, in essence, as only the decorative features of the figures do not appear in Rossi's version.

One may observe in Rossi's statue how he took the model provided, but sculpted the head of the Saint as if it were a Greek hero or Roman emperor. Britton praises its "admirable taste and unaffected simplicity" (Britton 1823, 47). The neoclassical influences of Rossi's piece are clear, both in terms of the figure's physiognomy and the verticality of lines. The immense serenity of the statue in contrast to the explosion of sensations provided by the sumptuous architectural and decorative surroundings is also interesting. Yet he never appeared to

be satisfied, and in 1817, he confessed this sense of unfulfillment, calling his place of worship 'miserable' (Alexander 1957, 218). Beckford constantly attempted to improve the decoration of the oratory, altering and introducing new pieces up until the moment he was forced to sell Fonthill in 1822.

On this occasion, Rutter produced a drawing of the altar where the statue of Rossi was displayed [fig. 11]. According to him, "St. Anthony might have lodgings of larger dimensions at Padua, but he was certainly 'enshrined at Fonthill'" (Rutter 1823, 64-5). Beckford masterfully recovered the religious environment that Walpole had sought to impose on the Tribune at Strawberry Hill, but with far more theatricality (Wainwright 1989, 128) and 'authenticity' around Rossi's serene statue in the Fonthill oratory.<sup>9</sup>

## 5 A New Sanctuary at Lansdown Tower

Following the loss of this great enterprise, due to unsuccessful business ventures in Jamaica, Beckford turned to St. Anthony for hope: "The Saint who inspired me with the Abbey will also arm me with supernatural courage to do without it, and perhaps even to erect yet another monument to his glory" (Alexander 1957, 338). Rossi's statue was among the pieces he took with him from Fonthill, as he was unable to part with it.

Beckford settled in Bath in 1823, and purchased two houses in Lansdown Crescent, but it did not take long before he had picked a plot of land on one of the nearby hills on which he intended "to build a Tower dedicated to meditation" (Alexander 1962, 153). In 1827, Beckford had his new *villa* - where he would live out the last 17 years of his life - designed by a young local architect, Henry Goodridge (1797-1864)<sup>10</sup> [fig. 12]. One of the areas on the first floor, next to the emblematic tower, was consecrated as the new sanctuary to house Saint Anthony's statue, brought from Fonthill. Here, Beckford envisaged a different way to showcase Rossi's piece, as may be observed in Willis Maddox's watercolor, published as coloured lithographs in 1844 [fig. 13]. Beckford continued to play with the effects of light and shadow, but focused more on the architectural forms and natural light, in the manner of Soane (Watkin 2002, 37). He did away with the retable and multiple candles

and chandeliers that surrounded the statue in the Abbey in order to harness the natural light onto its image through a coloured skylight. The statue was positioned on a plinth of Roman design and a squared block of marble on which "DOMINUS ILLUMINATO MEA" ("The Lord is my light" - Psalm 27 of David) was inscribed. By including a biblical inscription at the feet of St. Anthony, Beckford may well have sought inspiration from Dibrie's print, which featured the expression "DOMUS MEA DOMUS ORATIONIS" ("My house shall be called a house of prayer" - Matthew 21,13). Behind the Saint, an arched structure created the effect of a false niche, in scagliola imitating porphyry, with a Siena green inlay and mosaic border (Woodward 2002, 289).

Following Beckford's death in 1844, the statue of St. Anthony was one of the many pieces in the great auction of the writer's collection, held a year later. Cited in the press reporting on the auction, an engraving of the statue appeared in *The Illustrated London News*, on November 29, in which it was highlighted as "one of Rossi's best works, if not his *chef-d'oeuvre*" [fig. 14]. According to the same newspaper, the sculpture was sold on the seventh day of the auction for £ 34 2s. 6d, while *The Times* claimed that it had been purchased by "Mr. E. F. English" and "the arched recess and pedestal, [...] were sold at 14 guineas".<sup>11</sup> If it re-

<sup>9</sup> On the matter of Beckford's religiousness, see Darton 1998, 33-8.

<sup>10</sup> On the house's stylistic influences, see Wilton-Ely 1976, 59; and Woodward 2002, 283-6.

<sup>11</sup> *The Times*, 1845.



**Figure 10**

*Saint Anthony and the Child*. 16th century. Polychrome wood. Main altar of the church of Saint Anthony, Lisbon

ally had been purchased by Edmund Francis English, the auctioneer responsible for its sale, this may suggest that no one else had been interested in purchasing it. This is not surprising, given the particularity of the statue in the context of a Protestant England, despite the early signs of a new position adopted by the Anglican Church, as a result of the Oxford Movement. Beckford's repeated projects to exhibit St. Anthony in oratories he had specifically created for such purpose undoubtedly

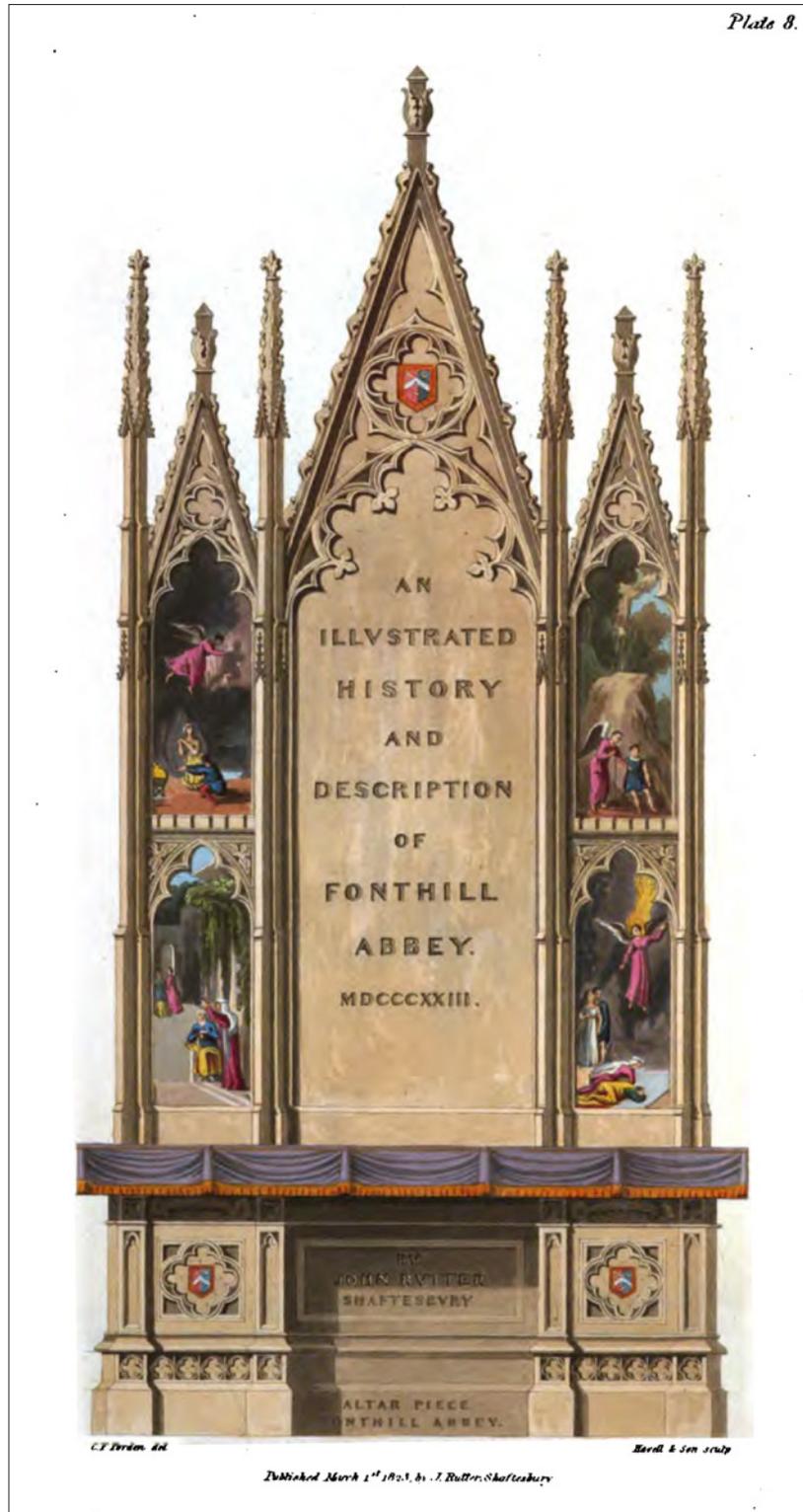
represented a highly unusual example in his time, when all figurative and symbolic sculptures in medieval churches were carefully concealed (Clark 1983, 154). Thus, it is likely that the auctioneers and dealers, English & Son, had held on to the statue, putting it back on the market four years later, as confirmed by the advertisement published in the press on September 13, 1849, in which it was specifically referred to as "the St. Anthony by Rossi of Lansdown Tower".<sup>12</sup>

## 6 The St. Antony Chamber at Monserrate

Beckford's exceedingly cherished and revered piece had to await a buyer who understood its cultural value. Beyond the intrinsic artistic quality of the sculpture, it was also important for the prospective buyer to understand its symbolic importance for the original owner, and be acquainted with his architectural and artistic projects to exalt Saint Anthony. This person turned out to be Francis Cook [fig. 15]. We do not know at what point Cook bought the Saint Anthony statue, but he was certainly aware of its importance when he purchased it, and had his own purpose in mind.

Cook discovered the romantic attributes of Sintra in 1839, when passing through Lisbon on his way to Italy for his Grand Tour. It was then that he met the young Emily Lucas, daughter of an English merchant living in Portugal, who he married two years later in Lisbon. The young couple settled in London, where Francis displayed his business acumen at Cook, Son & Co. Sintra was a place of leisure for the merchant, who periodically came to Portugal in the company of his wife to visit her family. His cultural and artistic sensitivity contributed to fueling his interest in Monserrate's estate, with its house, formerly inhabited by Beckford, now in ruins [fig. 9].

<sup>12</sup> *Wiltshire Independent* 1849.



**Figure 11** Altar piece. Fonthill Abbey. Rutter 1823, plate 8



**Figure 12**  
Lansdown Tower. Bath. Madox 1844

Cook acquired Monserrate in 1856 and assigned refurbishment of the house to architect James Thomas Knowles (1806-1884). Knowles, respecting the preexisting construction, designed an exuberant decorative membrane which was applied to the old exterior and interior walls of the country house between 1863 and 1864 [fig. 16]. In Knowles' architectural drawings, this Victorian house was appropriately named *Beckford Hill* (Neto 2016, 124).

According to a memory kept within the Cook family, Francis had been staying in Sintra when he saw an advertisement for the sale of some of Beckford's belongings in *The Times*, among which was a statue of a cardinal with a boy on his lap. As it was commonly known at the time that Beckford had kept a statue of St. Anthony in Monserrate, Cook believed that the statue for sale might well be the statue in question, and went immediately to London in order to purchase it.<sup>13</sup> This story infers that Cook bought the statue after purchasing Monserrate, and after the renovation of the house had been completed. However, the possibility that the wealthy merchant may have purchased the piece before, or even at the aforementioned auction in 1849, cannot be ruled out. In that same year, Francis and Emily settled in Richmond, where they acquired Doughy House. The young couple may well

have been attracted by the English & Son advertisement in September, 1849. It could also be the case that the piece may once again have had no prospective buyers, and Cook may have purchased it some years later from one of their creditors, following the bankruptcy proceedings of these auctioneers in 1852.<sup>14</sup>

Cook began his art collection precisely by buying pieces to decorate his houses, first in Richmond and then Sintra. If the purchase of Beckford's Saint Anthony occurred before 1856, then Cook's attitude should be construed as an indicator of his determination to become the owner of Monserrate and of having a project, from an early stage, to evoke the writer's memory. We may be certain that not only was the statue in Monserrate in 1869, but also that Cook had decided to recreate a sanctuary similar to that of Lansdown Tower. Such confirmation was provided by an interesting description of the English millionaire's house in verse, published in London in 1870 but written at least a year before.

This unusual work sought to celebrate the cultural and artistic program sponsored by Cook in Monserrate for which he received the title of Viscount granted by the King of Portugal in 1870, in recognition of his restoration of the historic prop-

<sup>13</sup> *Ilustração Portuguesa* 1904.

<sup>14</sup> *The London Gazette* 1852, 3636.



**Figure 13** *The Sanctuary at Lansdown Tower. Maddox 1844*

SALE OF THE BECKFORD COLLECTION.

Vespaire.—A very fine Portrait of Philip IV. of Spain, £44 10s.  
 West.—A Grand Mass in the Interior of St. George's Chapel, Windsor, in which are introduced the Kings of France and Scotland, when prisoners at Windsor, £118 8s.  
 Waterloo.—Highly-finished Wooley Landscape, £38  
 Peter Street.—The Interior of a Magnificent Cathedral, £137  
 Copy of Fielding.—Landscape, with Cattle—View of Hurstmonceaux Castle, looking towards Devensy Levels, £14  
 W. Allen.—Barren Hill Landscape, with Peasants Travelling, £4 10s.  
 Mitchell Woodcock.—Poetry, in a Magnificent Landscape, £158 5s.  
 De Cuv.—Very Highly-finished Landscape, with Ecclesiastical Towers and Water, £84  
 De Jern.—and Bonaventura Pines, 1806.—Still Life, £92 8s.  
 West.—The Opening of the Seventh Seal.—Painted for Mr. Beckford, £13 2s.  
 Waldenberg.—The Building of the Tower of Babel, £121 10s.  
 D. J. F. Fossillon, 1601.—The Triumph of Neptune, £91 5s.  
 Giovanni Bellini.—A fine Portrait of Andrea Vendramin, Doge of Venice—1476, £50, 6s.



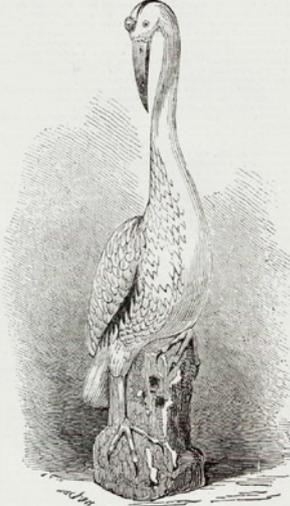
TEA BOX AND JAPAN SUGAR BASKET.

R. R. Reliance.—Rocky Landscape, with a Winding Brook running through the middle ground, £8 8s.  
 Francesco Mola.—Rocky and Romantic Landscape, £147  
 Twelve curious Illuminated Miscel Drawings, mounted in two black and gold frames, £19 12s.  
 Willis Mackay.—The Temptation in the Wilderness, £17 6s.  
 Child's Agony in the Garden, £21  
 The Annunciation, £15 15s.  
 [These pictures, the subjects of which were suggested to the artist by Mr. Beckford, were painted expressly for the Sanctuary.]  
 De Witt.—Interior of a Cathedral, with figures habited in the dresses of the times, £49 7s.  
 Copy of Fielding.—A Vessel endeavoring to enter a Harbour, at the approach of a storm, £152 8s.  
 Schellman.—Highly finished and pleasing Landscape, £74 12s.  
 Thomas Barker.—Scene in the Campo Vaccio, £39 18s.



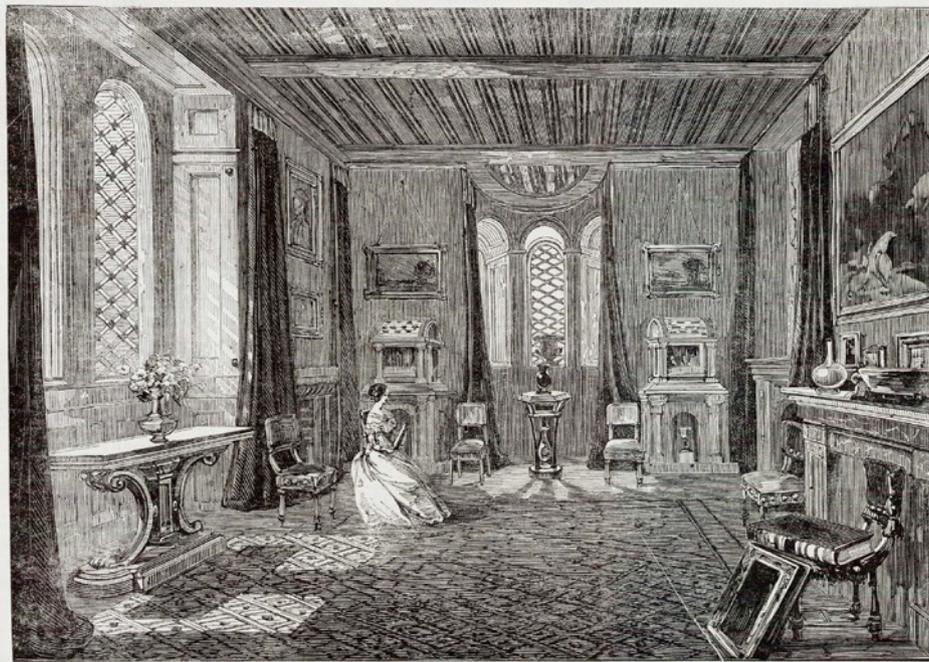
MARBLE STATUE OF ST. ANTHONY, OF PADUA.—BY ROSSI.

The Chapel.—Interior of a Grand Salon, adorned with many highly-finished pictures, £43  
 Cuyper.—A Portrait of a Lady, with a ruff, £25 4s.  
 A. Mendham, 1838.—A Landscape, with corn fields, wooden bridge, &c., £11 11s  
 Gilroy.—A pair of Oracles—Caricatures, £3 3s.  
 Guasola.—Pen and Ink Drawing—Head of a Youth, £1 15s.  
 It will thus be seen that the total sum realized by the sale of the pictures amounted to nearly £3000.  
 The pair of pictures by Jean Couin, Lot 303, which, to the uninitiated, certainly had no great claims, were highly prized by their late possessor. It was imagined that they would be sold for a trifle, and were actually put up at ten guineas; but the judgment of Mr. Beckford was corroborated, and they brought 60 guineas.  
 Lot 305.—A picture by Duménilloin, which some of our friends thought inferior to many paintings of similar size which they had seen on the lids of snuff-boxes,—brought 100 guineas. So much for the honour of coming from the Almostrém palace, and having had a place in Lansdown Tower!



PARO OLD INDIA CHINA STORK.

Lot 312.—Albert Cuyper, brought 175 guineas. The picture, by Bonaventura Peters, which was of a corresponding size—and an unbiased judgment would have deemed quite equal to Cuyper's—brought only 48 guineas.  
 Lot 313.—"The Last Ripening Sunbeam," by G. Lance. (This fine picture was engraved in No. 146 of the ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS.) It is related, that when Mr. Beckford first saw this picture in the last exhibition of the Society of British Artists, he intimated to the Secretary his wish to purchase it, but was told that it had already been disposed of. Without asking either the price of the picture or the name of the purchaser, he desired the Secretary to present his compliments to the owner, and to say, that if he would, to his favour, to accept of double the cost price, he should feel sincerely obliged. The gentleman who had bought Lance's picture was the artist's friend, and, sensible of the advantage of placing one of his productions in Mr. Beckford's collection, he relinquished his claim, and paid in Mr. Lance the double sum. A letter, detailing these particulars, written by Mr. Lance, was offered by Mr. English to the per-



LANSDOWN TOWER.—THE SCARLET DRAWING-ROOM.

Figure 14 Marble Statue of St. Anthony, of Padua — by Rossi. In The Illustrated London News, 29 November 1845, 345



**Figure 15** Sir Francis Cook. 1890 c.



**Figure 16** Unknown artist, *Monserrate Palace*. 1880c. Engraving, 20.5 × 15 cm. Sintra, Arquivo Municipal de Sintra, 15629-15



**Figure 17** *Monserrate Palace, St. Anthony Chamber*. 1905. Photo © David Knights-Whittome. Sintra © PSML

erty. The eloquent stanzas on the “chamber rare” housing Rossi’s St. Anthony – “this gem of sculptured art” – are a clear sign of how, by means of the adored statue of the saint, the space served as the climax of the evocation of Beckford’s presence in Montserrat:

For Vathek lived again [...] And long this proud one kept, In blazoned ‘Sanctuary’, His gem, but years have swept Its venturous history: Long lost, now found by spell Of Fay’s puissant word, The saint returns to dwell, Where Vathek once was lord!<sup>15</sup>

Cook was certainly familiar with the Beckford sanctuaries for the statue of the saint through the works of Rutter, Britton and Maddox, and wished to recreate these environments in Monserrate, particularly the last scenario envisaged by Beckford for Lansdown Tower. It may also be the case that the merchant believed that Beckford had brought Rossi’s statue to Monserrate with him on his last visit to Portugal, in 1798-99.

In a photograph of the chamber by David Knights-Whittome (1876-1943), it is possible to observe that Cook not only purchased the statue but also the base with the inscription of David’s Psalm 27 [fig. 17]. Moreover, if the arched structure that framed the saint’s image was not purchased, an attempt to recreate that false niche is quite apparent (Grilo 2017, 279). Just as Beckford had done, he sur-

<sup>15</sup> [Cargill] 1870, 229-30.



**Figure 18** Saint Anthony statue at Saint John de Britto college. 1969. Lisbon, Arquivo Municipal de Lisboa, AF, AND000388. Photo © António Duarte. <https://arquivomunicipal3.cm-lisboa.pt/X-arqWEB/>



**Figure 19** John Charles Rossi, *Saint Anthony and the Child*. 1798 c. Detail. Photo © PSML, João Krull, 2017

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**Figure 20** Statue of St. Anthony by Rossi, in the Monserrate Revisited Exhibition, Sintra, Monserrate Palace. 2017. Photo © Luís Duarte. © PSML

rounded Rossi's statue with damask curtains, sacred art, furniture, paintings, and religious-themed sculpture. He even placed colorful stained-glass geometric windows opposite the shrine, which, given their west-facing position, projected multiple colours on the white stone of the statue.

Of the many collected pieces in the house of Monserrate, designed as a museum,<sup>16</sup> St. Anthony was one of Cook's most valued pieces, and he proudly displayed it to his illustrious guests, making sure to refer to its provenance (Loring 1891, 131).

## 7 In Conclusion: A Rediscovery for Critical Historiography

After the death of Francis Cook, this entire discourse became diluted and lost visibility, in the face of a new, cleaner taste, characteristic of functional modernism, which is particularly critical of the 'excesses' of Romanticism and Victorian times.

With the sale of the property in 1947, and the auction of the collection of pieces a year earlier, the whereabouts of the sculpture became unknown, and only in 1975 was it located again in a school of Jesuit priests in Lisbon (Kinsbury 1976, 4). A photo was reproduced in the *William Beckford Exhibition*

1976 Catalogue, but without an analytical study.

The statue was acquired by the Emauz e Silva Family of Lisbon and bequeathed to São João de Brito School in 1952 (Azevedo 1980, 91). The image of the saint was to be placed on one of the chapel's altars that was undergoing construction at the time. However, it was not particularly appreciated, possibly since Saint Anthony was not a saint of the Jesuit Order [fig. 18]. The statue was kept in the crypt, until it was moved to the priests' lounge area.<sup>17</sup> In 2017, on the occasion of the *Monserrate*

<sup>16</sup> Regarding conception of 'the house as Museum', see Watkin 2002, 39-41.

<sup>17</sup> In 1987, Laura Pires already referred to the statue being in the school's teachers' lounge, see Pires, 219.

*Revisited* exhibition, marking the 200th anniversary of Sir Francis Cook's birth, the statue was loaned from the São João de Brito School at our request as curator of the exhibition.

Rossi had carved the head of Saint Anthony and the Child in Carrara marble, while the body of the saint was in limestone with brown veins. The head of the saint was no longer connected to the body, and seemingly disjointed, disrupted the original harmony and proportions of the statue. The saint's neck was too slender, and the angle between his and the Child's gaze was misaligned. A restoration of the statue integrated the head in the original position and the piece regained its integrity<sup>18</sup> [fig. 19].

The exhibition allowed the study of the piece that makes up this article [fig. 20]. Although some of the data presented was briefly referred to in Beckfordian historiography, the importance of the statue for Beckford was not properly determined. Also the iconographic and formal reference underlying Rossi's execution of the sculpture hadn't deserved attention.

The role that the statue played in Beckford's architectural and aesthetic projects is now demonstrated. Within Protestant England, Beckford could not resist recreating Catholic liturgical en-

vironments and drawing a stimulating sensory experience from them. It was only in the second half of the nineteenth century, with the cultural and artistic values of the Victorian era, that it became possible to look into the fantasy world of Beckford, his peculiar aesthetic sense, his magnitude as an accomplished connoisseur, capable of admiring and combining pieces of different origins, ranging from oriental exoticism to Greco-Roman and Gothic mysticism. It was then that Francis Cook understood the importance Rossi's Saint Anthony had for Beckford. He not only bought the sculpture but also recreated the Lansdown' sanctuary in Sintra house.

Unlike Beckford, the merchant was not devout to the Saint. His admiration was for the man who had commissioned the sculpture. What motivated Cook was Beckford's personality, his passions, his aesthetic dimension and his taste; Cook identified with the figure of Beckford, the art collector and patron who, despite not having been born into wealth, had placed his fortune at the service of the arts, albeit with aspirations of nobility. For all this Cook designed an interesting evocation and tribute to "England's wealthiest son"<sup>19</sup> in Monserrate, a place that both owned and cherished.

<sup>18</sup> Restoration of the statue was undertaken by the *Archeofactu* studio in Lisbon, and supported by *Parques de Sintra - Monte da Lua*, the entity with tutelage over Monserrate Palace, and which promoted the exhibition.

<sup>19</sup> Lord Byron (1812), *Canto I*, Stanza XXII.

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