HERACLES AND HERMES IN SÃO PAULO'S URBAN ICONOGRAPHY

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Abstract: This text discusses the insertion of Heracles/Hercules and Hermes/Mercury, two ancient deities from the Greek and Roman pantheons, in the city of São Paulo between the 19th and 20th centuries. Based on the notion of urban iconography, we will observe the specificities of São Paulo's appropriation of references to the ancient world that had already been developed within representations since modern times. Thus, the reception of these gods in the city of São Paulo was based on a complex process that included the web of elements that organized their cults and representations in antiquity, but also a sophisticated process of selections between modern and contemporary Europe and Brazil in the 19th and 20th centuries, installing Heracles and Hermes in debates that connected the city of São Paulo to traditional themes, but also to those specific to the country, such as republicanism and the ideology of work.

Key-words: Heracles/Hercules; Hermes/Mercury; São Paulo urban iconography; Architecture and urban landscape.

> The façade over the square near the pier boasts a statue of Mercury. The old Greek god of commerce seems a bit lame, with no influence around here.
>
> (Dirce de Assis Cavalcanti. *O velho Chico, ou, A vida é amável*, p. 129).

> In Ancient Greece, the great national hero was Heracles, or Hercules, as he was later called. He was the greatest of them all - and being the greatest of them all in Greece at that time was equivalent to being the greatest in the world. That's why Hercules lives on in our imagination to this day.
>
> (Monteiro Lobato. *Os doze trabalhos de Hércules, 1º tomo*, p. 3)

This text is dedicated to two deities that appear with some frequency in São Paulo: we will look at the presence of Heracles and Hermes in the city from the point of view of "urban iconography". To begin with, it is important to say that we situate the urban from the notion of the city, understanding the variety and complexity of this concept (SALGUEIRO, 2001, p. 10-1). It should also be said that the object of interest here is not urban iconography as a representation of the city (MENESES, 1996), but figurative elements available in the urban space on various supports such as *billboards*, walls, lights and, in this case, mainly building façades. In this way, we're not talking about figuration *of* the city, but *in* the city; we're distancing ourselves from the city as a reference for some creation that records a moment (or moments) of it through photographs, videos or paintings, and we're approaching the city as an extremely complex type of panel. By this, we don't mean that the city is a museum in which works are exhibited, but that the urban space and landscape frame, as a kind of panel, diverse elements, including figurative ones. We will deal with just a few of them: those that

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allow us to explore the debate on the presence of "Greco-Roman" characters in the city of São Paulo.[2]

It seems clear that the Greco-Roman gods have a very different place in our time, if we think about the mythical and cultic dynamics they played in antiquity. In other words, if something from the perspective of the mythical narratives has been taken up and re-elaborated, the same cannot be said of the cultic performance. After the establishment of Christianity in the West, in parallel with the shattering of the perspective of Greco-Roman religiosity, which came to be characterized as pagan, its deities lost the prominent role they had played in the Mediterranean for millennia, and even the impact on the landscape that their shrines presented was gradually reformulated. Thus, in this context of the triumph of Christianity, these deities ended up providing indirect references that would only be observed with greater interest from modernity onwards.However, despite the fact that these gods are not actively involved in formulations of religiosity today, they have not disappeared from the urban landscape. And it's not just the presence of cult sculptures of Athena, Zeus, Hera and Aphrodite, among many others, in various museums that indicates this; or the recovery, in terms of a logic of conservation, of ancient spaces of worship which, after being rejected and de-characterized by Christians, were made a heritage site - this is the case of the Acropolis of Athens, a complex which was at the center of Athenian religiosity articulated to a large extent by the cult of the goddess Athena in the past, and which is currently characterized as a "World Heritage Site" by Unesco (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization).

The presence of these deities is also linked to a modern reworking of their meanings. They have returned to urban landscapes, but their meanings are obviously different. The reference to the past is often evoked in some way; however, it happens in quite different contexts, in which Christianity is the predominant perspective and the past provides the basis for forms that were not necessarily articulated in terms of a faithful recovery. In other words, it was not proposed to recover the cult of these gods; and, moreover, they could take on new meanings. It is in this sense that we will consider the presence of Hermes and Heracles in the city of São Paulo. Both had a very strong connection to Greco-Roman religiosity (Hermes/Mercury and Heracles/Hercules), and this element was not recovered. It was, therefore, a recovery with an aesthetic sense connected to new symbols. And, in many cases, the civil sphere itself. This is how, for example, certain modern secular states brought central features of their composition, such as justice and freedom, closer to Greco-Roman divinities. In this sense, it can be seen that the religious aspect has been largely reformulated and replaced by new elements, which shows the clear separation from the ancient experience. If, on the one hand, it is now possible to observe the presence of religious symbols (such as the Christian cross) in state institutions such as legislative houses, courts, schools and public offices in Brazil; and a critical debate highlighting the secular character of the Brazilian state, the presence of Athena, Demeter, Zeus or any other Greco-Roman god is not included in these debates, since their religious meaning has been detached and reworked within civic and, it must be said, openly secular references. It's interesting to note that these gods have other functions in our time.

Its new functions, of course, are quite varied. One can think of their insertion in the field of politics, culture, economics, etc.; and even in these fields, there is no such rigidly articulated use. In other words, there is no set of specific rules regarding the use of these

[2] Although we believe in the specificity of the experiences that we characterize as Greek and Roman, we will use the term "Greco-Roman" as a synthesis of a process based on proposals for reading the ancient world, presented above all since modernity.

references, apart from some more or less delimited ideas of the fields in which certain gods could be associated. Asclepius is often associated with medicine, Athena with engineering, Hermes with commerce; and such associations have materialized, in various contexts, elements such as coats of arms and logos that include such gods or attributes linked to them. For example, there is a sculpture on the campus of Cidade Universitária (University of São Paulo), in an outdoor area adjacent to the Polytechnic School buildings, in which there is a large sheet metal sculpture cut out in the shape of a stylized helmet plume. The title is "Palas", a clear reference to the goddess Athena. Also, on the Cidade Universitária (Universitary City) *campus*, there is a mosaic at the entrance to the Faculty of Economics with the head of Hermes wearing a winged helmet. At the São Paulo Court of Justice, the goddess Themis appears prominently on the pediment of the main façade and, at the Municipal Theater, the god Apollo appears in medallions on the main façade. Well, the examples are many and varied. To elaborate on this, let's consider the cases of Heracles and Hermes in the city of São Paulo.

An interesting starting point is the very complexity of the names of these characters: Heracles or Hercules? Hermes or Mercury? Normally, the answer is that they are different names (Greek, the first, and Latin, the second) for the same deities; but does this answer really solve the problem of naming? Are Heracles and Hermes Greek names for the same deities as Hercules and Mercury, their Latin names? The names Heracles and Hercules characterize the same character in Greek and Latin respectively, but the situation is more complicated than that. One can think of the Greek Heracles in terms of his myth formulated in Greek communities, the ethical model he presented within Stoicism (IERODIAKONOU, 1999, p. 150, n. 86) and his relationship with the Roman Hercules, the latter with the Christian Hercules, among others (BONNEFOY & DONIGER, 1992, p. 184). 184); one can also think of his specificity within Greek religiosity (in which he was situated between hero and god) and the specificities in Roman religiosity around Hercules (VAN KEUREN, 2010, p. 398-411), recovering the discussion about the presence of one of the oldest "foreign" cults in the Italian peninsula (SALMON, 1967, p. 175; ORLIN, 2010, p. 62). And when it comes to Hermes-Mercury, the complexity increases.

Despite the current almost complete association between Hermes and Mercury, it is important to note that these two deities were originally distinct and were brought closer together (FOWLER, 2004, p. 120); but this was not the only association to which Hermes was linked: there was also a strong connection with the Egyptian god Thoth, who was worshipped in a city called Khmonou, a name later changed to Hermopolis, the "city of Hermes" (FAIVRE, 2000, p. 76). In this context, the myth records the narrative of Hermes-Thoth as the helper of Horus in the reconquest of the Delta; and we can also think of the formulation of Hermes-Trismegistus (the "thrice great"), within alchemy and Neoplatonism, based on this association; as well as the assimilation of Hermes-Thoth to Moses, according to Artapan, a Jewish historian from the 2nd century BC (*Idem*). We can thus see that the association between Hermes and Mercury was just one of the possibilities, endorsed by the interest that rested on a Greek and Roman repertoire seen as a unity, the very idea of a "Greco-Roman" heritage. In this sense, this identification between Hermes and Mercury, which was strong but partial in antiquity, was consistently expanded from the sixteenth century onwards, judging by the varied publications that already commented on the situation of this god (GIORGIO, 1564, p. 73, 119, 285; BAILEY *et al*, 1736, v. *Hermes, Hermes, Hermetical, Hermetick*; DANET, 1700, v. *Hermes*; HERBELOT & VISDELOU, 1777, p. 241; RAMSAY, 1779, p. 150); providing the basis for our current understanding of Hermes and Mercury as exactly the same god.

In summary, despite the associations, approximations and other similarities that were organized in a process that we would call syncretism or *interpretatio* (HORNBLOWER, SPAWFORTH & EIDINOW, 2012, p. 739), there were specificities, which indicates that such equivalences were not absolute. From this perspective, "Odysseus is Odysseus and not Ulysses. Zeus is Zeus and not the Roman Jupiter, Hera is not the Latin Juno, Athena is not Minerva, Dionysus is not Bacchus, Aphrodite is not Venus, Ares is not Mars, Hermes is not Mercury and Poseidon is not Neptune" (STRATTE-MCCLURE, 2008, s/p). And the current state of this mythical repertoire shows how our understanding of the deities who acted within it has been largely reworked, modified, and presents itself in our time in new terms, recovering only some aspects of its old formulation.

The way we understand this Greco-Roman mythical repertoire responds much more to its characterization in modern times than to the complexity of its articulations and versions in antiquity. In this way, the very choice of one of the names for each deity responds to the modern scenario of understanding about them. We have opted here to use the Greek versions Hermes and Heracles, since the original formulation of the mythical narrative and its figurative forms first appeared in ancient Greek communities; however, without any prejudice, we could use the Roman versions Mercury and Hercules, considering that the Latin literary tradition had an earlier influence on the articulation of a discourse on the "classical" since the Renaissance.

Heracles

Regarding the presence of Heracles in São Paulo, we will look at two examples that articulate in their material expression elements of the mythical narrative to which this hero belonged. It should be remembered that there was a cycle of actions carried out by Heracles characterized as "twelve labours" (GRIMAL, 2000, p. 207-13). In the center of the city of São Paulo, we will find mentions of some of these labors; namely, the subtraction of golden apples from the Garden of the Hesperides and the fight against the Lion of Nemea. The first to be dealt with is present in the Municipal Theater of the city of São Paulo[3] in a prominent situation: on the main façade, on the first floor, there are four sculptures arranged in two groups, to the right and to the left, which form part of a colonnade probably related to the Tuscan order. These sculptures are included in the repertoire of support present on the ground floor of the building, which is all characterized by the logic of rustication - an aesthetic solution that presents a more rough, rustic finish, corresponding to an idea of structural support for the building, which is not always confirmed from a practical point of view (FRANCISCO, 2015, p. 155). The very characterization of the columns in this part of the building as corresponding to the Tuscan order is linked to the rustication which, since the Renaissance, has been closely identified with the Tuscan order, according to the architect Vignola, for example (HEYDENREICH & LOTZ, 1974, p. 321). Thus, in this part of the building, there are elements clearly linked to the idea of aesthetically organized structural support: the colonnade and the rustication indicate this. In addition, there are the aforementioned sculptures.

From an architectural point of view, their characterization is varied: this type of sculpture that performs a supporting function (practical or aesthetic) is called Telamon, Atlantean or Persian, characterizations linked mainly to male figures; and, when they are women-columns, they are called Caryatids or Canephoras (SMITH, 1853, p. 889, entry *Persae or Statuae Persicae*; WORDSWORTH, 1862, p. 180). The use of these

[3] Inaugurated in 1911- see CENNI, 2002, p. 18.

names to characterize such human figures as columns in buildings is traditional and refers, in some cases, to ancient denominations. For example, the terms Caryatids and Persians were cited by Vitruvius and Pausanias (SHEAR, 1999, p. 66-7). In the case in question, there are some interesting elements that move between this architectural characterization and the mythical one, which is expressed in the very identification of the figures presented: it is Heracles on the right, identified by the lion's cape as armor (a situation probably related to the first of the twelve labors), an attribute that has identified the hero since antiquity. Next to it is the figure of Atlas, an ancient god - a Titan (**figure 1**) - who appears alongside Heracles in another "job": capturing apples of gold from the Garden of the Hesperides. There are certain variations on the mythical record, but in Synesis, it is said that Heracles had to take some golden apples from the garden guarded by the Hesperides and a dragon, and that, unable to do it himself, he asked the Titan Atlas to do it, temporarily swapping places with him, supporting the celestial vault (GRIMAL, 2000, p. 213).



Figure 1. Details of the façade of the Municipal Theater of São Paulo - Atlantes: on the left, Atlas; on the right, Heracles (photo: Roger Sassaki).

These sculptures of Heracles and Atlas on the main façade of the Municipal Theater can be placed in parallel with other sculptures that make up the façades of buildings in the historic center of São Paulo. For example, the Atlanteans of the York Building, the Esoteric Circle of the Communion of Thought and a building on Rua Benjamin Constante (no. 177), and the Caryatids of the Palace of Justice in Praça da Sé (**figure 2**). However, in the case of the Municipal Theater, there are certain specificities: there, reference is made to a moment in a specific mythological narrative, and it is even possible to determine the identity of the characters. As you can see, one Atlantean, a general term to characterize this type of figure, is Atlas himself and the other is Heracles. This situation presents us with a very interesting question about the characters: there is, in this case, the articulation of distinct elements related to the logic of support - the colonnade of Tuscan order related to these Atlanteans and the rustication delimited to this floor of the building; which is ratified by the general organization of the façade, respecting the logic of more robust orders below (the Tuscan

on the rusticated first floor) and more delicate orders above (an articulation of Corinthian and Ionic columns in a region of the façade with a very detailed finish, indicating a clear difference with the rusticated lower part). In other words, the architects responsible for the Municipal Theatre's façade, Claudio Rossi and Domiziano Rossi, present a complex organization of supporting elements that move from aesthetic expression (rustication and Tuscan order) to theme (the myth related to Heracles). However, this subtlety was not the invention of these architects.



Figure 2. Caryatids and Atlanteans in São Paulo: on the left, Caryatid of the Palace of Justice in Praça da Sé; in the middle, Atlantean of the building of the Esoteric Circle of the Communion of Thought; on the right, Atlantean of a building in Rua Benjamin Constante (no. 177) (photo: Roger Sassaki).

It is interesting to note that the Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo has plaster sculptures related to the collection of the former Liceu de Artes e Ofícios, which operated in the building between 1900 and 1994, corresponding to the Atlanteans of the Municipal Theater. They were cast in Italy and served as a model for the creation of the Atlanteans on the façade of the Municipal Theatre, according to an information panel at the Pinacoteca. This information is important as it indicates both the probable participation of craftsmen linked to the Liceu in the construction of these façade elements, but also the very European reference, Italian in this case, of the element presented. This becomes clearer when you consider that this was a common solution in buildings throughout Europe. We can find Atlanteans like these (Atlas and Heracles, or simply figures of Heracles) on the façades of many buildings. For example, since the 15th century, this scheme has been used in buildings, as in the case of the Doge's Palace in Venice, where there are two sculptures (one of Heracles and the other of Atlas) on the upper part of the entrance door, making up a similar ensemble. Specifically as Atlantes, they were integrated into a variety of façades: for example, at 4 Avenue Hoche and 86 Boulevard des Batignoles in Paris (France), the Municipal Library in Subotica (Serbia), the Demidov Mansion and the Beloselsky-Belozersky Palace in St. Petersburg (Russia), the Clam Gallas Palace in Prague (Czech Republic), and the Schleissheim Palace in Munich (Germany) - **figures 3**. Clearly, this was a European trend that was transposed to São Paulo, which became part of an international phenomenon.



Figure 3: Detail of the facade of the Beloselsky-Belozersky Palace, St. Petersburg (left) and the Municipal Library, Subotica, Serbia (*Wikimedia Commons*).

It can thus be said that the façade of the Municipal Theatre, based on this specific element dealt with here, responds to multiple traditions connected to it: the presentation of classical architectural orders (the Tuscan, the Ionic and the Corinthian), the Renaissance solution of delimited rustication, the arrangement of sculptures of human figures as columns characterized as Atlanteans, a specific mythical narrative and, furthermore, its application in buildings since modern times. In other words, it is a proposal that places this building in dialog with a tradition of building and presenting certain contents in the urban landscape. Heracles, in this sense, condenses the debate about strength, a characteristic element of this hero in ancient narratives - from his general strength (observed from childhood, when he strangled two snakes as a baby) to the strength applied specifically in the narrative about the subtraction of the apples from the Garden of the Hesperides, in which he supported the weight of the celestial vault. In addition, he is connected to the idea of supporting sections of the building itself, which, together with Atlas, offers a certain idea of stability. Heracles and Atlas, who supported the celestial vault itself in ancient mythical narratives, were set the task of supporting the Municipal Theatre.

There is also another very interesting example of Héracles' presence in the city of São Paulo. This is one of the buildings of the Department of Justice and Citizenship in Pátio do Colégio, originally the headquarters of the Department of Agriculture of the Province of São Paulo.[4] This time, the hero doesn't appear explicitly, but an indirect indication comes from one of his attributes: the lion skin, his armor, which has often been identified as coming from the Lion of Nemea. However, the mythical record is varied: Heracles fought a number of lions throughout his life, including the Lion of Nemea (whose slaughter was the first of the hero's twelve labors) and the Lion of Mount

[4] Inaugurated in 1896 - see CARVALHO, 1999, p. 137.

Citeron (GRIMAL, 2000, p. 206). Whether from one lion or the other, he had removed the skin and used it on his own body as protection, and this element became one of the attributes most strongly associated with the figure of this hero, to the point where, in certain contexts, the very presentation of the lion skin was an indirect reference to Heracles. However, it's not just any lion figure, but a bald, eyeless one - a clear indication of the use made of its carapace as protection. This is precisely how several lion skins appear articulated to the keys that head the arches of almost all the windows corresponding to the first floor of this building of the Justice Department: the head with deep-set or non-existent eyes, topped by a diadem, and the slack paws reinforcing the gaunt characteristic of the slaughtered and dead lion (**figure 4**).

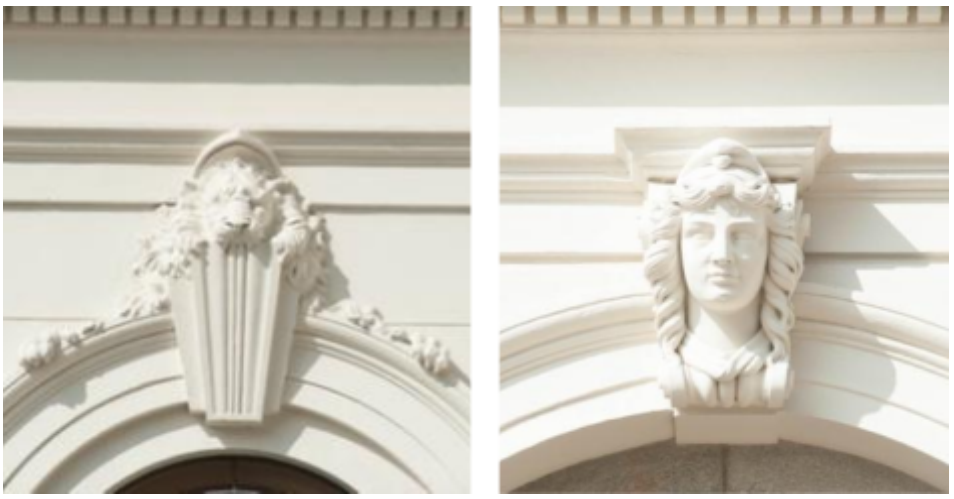


Figure 4 - Details of the façade of the former Secretariat of Agriculture of the Province of São Paulo (currently the headquarters of the Secretariat of Justice and Citizenship): on the left, a key with a lion skin; on the right, a key with the Republic's protome - photo: Roger Sassaki.

The lion skin that protects Heracles is associated with the keys of the arches, which brings us back to the articulation of architectural (aesthetic and structural) and symbolic, more precisely mythological, meanings. The key is an essential element of the arch's stability. It is from it that the set of stones cut at an angle (the voussoirs) is locked, maintaining the structure. Important forces such as gravity and thrust act on it (KOVACH, 2004, p. 54; PIOTROWSKI, 2011, p. 127); and, given this structural importance, in many cases the keys are highlighted as a voussoir of a different size or material. In ancient times, they could also be associated with symbolic elements such as masks, even fulfilling an apotropaic (protective) function. In Roman buildings, strongly characterized by the constitution of arcades and vaults, the keystones played an important structural role, since the arches were obviously organized from stones (solid or created from concrete). Since the Renaissance, this logic has changed a lot and these arches appear aesthetically organized, but not always really organized by stones, but by sculptures of them. In São Paulo's eclecticism, largely characterized by the low quality of materials, many of these arches were presented with layers of stucco imitating stone. In this way, the key retains the aesthetic and symbolic character of the past, but not the structural function. This is the case with the keys to the arches of the Justice Department building. But in any case, it is important to note that, aesthetically, the idea of stability caused by the position of the key appears; and, in this case, articulated with an element of strength according to the mythical narrative: the lion skin-armor of Heracles.

This is an important first level to consider: the overlapping of meanings related to strength, protection, moving between the architectural aesthetic discourse (the very situation of the key in the arch) and the mythical reference condensed in the lion's skin related to Heracles. However, this was not a new solution either. In the context of the construction of the building in question, designed by Ramos de Azevedo, in France, for example, there was a profusion of similar uses dating back to the 16th century, as can be seen in the François I Gallery of the Chateau de Fontainebleau, where there is the presence of Heracles in lion skin armor on a door and as an ornamental architectural element. Associated with keys, the same scheme can be found in Avignon at the entrance to the Hôtel de Blanchetti and in Strasbourg at the Palais Rohan. In Paris, there are several examples scattered around the city, featuring the lion skin or Heracles with the lion skin as armor associated with keys or other supporting elements such as modillions: Hôtel Amelot de Bisseuil, 11 rue de l'Université, 1 avenue de l'Opéra, 2 rue d'Argenteuil, 4 rue Royer Collard, 6 rue de Braque, 12 rue de Jouy, 14 rue de l'Opéra, 24 rue Lafayette, 42 rue François Miron, rue Abel, corner with rue Parrot, among several others. There are two more examples that should be looked at in more detail: the first is the Porte Saint Denis and the other, the Musée D'Orsay (**figure 5**).



Figure 5: Detail of the Porte Saint Denis (left) and the façade of the Musée D'Orsay (*Wikimedia Commons*).

The first is an important historical monument in Paris, whose situation helps us to understand a little more about other levels of insertion of Heracles, be it himself or, as we have seen, the common indication by means of the lion skin. At the Saint Denis Gate in Paris, the lion skin itself replaces the key to the arch. This is, of course, the symbol of strength associated with the myth of Heracles and, moreover, with a triumphal arch commemorating some of Louis XIV's military victories (GERBINO, 2012, p. 77-84). This portal is a reference to the hero who, as well as being characterized by strength, was also a deity who protected the entrances to houses. As we have seen so far, the lion skin appears at the head of arches and associated with building keys. This position may also indicate the aesthetic revival of this ancient function of Heracles as the protector of house entrances: in the Greco-Roman world, Heracles and also Hermes were deities related to the protection of houses (VERMASEREN & VAN ESSEN, 1965, p. 16; DOWNEY, 1969, p. 57-60, 82 and 95-6; MENESES & SARIAN, 1973, p. 99). This articulation between the two gods is clearly seen on the façade of the Musée d'Orsay, where each arch has a key that articulates the caduceus (an attribute strongly linked to the god Hermes, which will be explored further in this text) and Heracles' lion skin. It

should be remembered, in this sense, that the current site of this museum was formerly a train terminus (Paris-Orleans), and that this function of controlling entry and exit concentrated on these two deities would make perfect sense. It is quite clear that at the end of the 19th century, when this building was built, Hermes or Heracles were no longer worshiped; but, from these examples, it can be seen that the aesthetic expression of some aspects of their former functions was already recovered.

Let's go back to the headquarters of the Justice Department. It is important to know that the insistence on describing some French solutions was not for nothing, and the very situation of the building in question here indicates this. Recalling what we have seen so far, there was a clear reference to an element linked to the myth of Heracles, the lion skin, which in various contexts articulated the idea of strength contained in the myth to the idea of structural support for sections of buildings. Furthermore, we can see that the function linked to ancient religiosity has not been completely lost, to the extent that aspects of it are presented in an aesthetic way. However, it should be emphasized that nothing of the cult and belief in a universe of mythological and religious references is reaffirmed. In this sense, the façade of the building in question presents something new. When designing the then headquarters of the Secretariat of Agriculture, Ramos de Azevedo inserted a sequence of 21 lions associated with the arches of the windows on the side and rear façades (**figure 4**); but on the main façade, in a tripartite entrance, there is a break: the arches corresponding to the three doors do not feature the lion skin, but the effigy of the Republic, which is quite significant (**figure 4**). On the main façade of the building, it is not the reflection on the Greco-Roman myth that appears, but the Republic itself. If there is indeed any idea related to strength, support and protection, it is the Republic itself that performs this function in this situation. In other words, this rupture indicates not only an engagement with tradition, but its instrumentalization in a fundamental debate in Brazil at the end of the 19th century - republicanism. And, on this issue too, the relationship with French solutions can be observed.

The effigy of the Republic was a common feature at the time. The first republican coins in Brazil had it in profile, referring to a use that had already been made in France, Argentina, the USA and, soon afterwards, on Portuguese republican coins (NOLTE, 1882, p. 42; CARSON, 1962, p. 445; MEDINA, 1990, p. 129-31; VAN WIE, 1999, p. 18; MANESS, 2010, p. 359; CHICO, 2013, p. 294; HANSON, 2015, p. 201). In this way, it can be seen that the Republic was constituted from the physical characteristics, anthropomorphized, of a young woman with a cloak, shoulder-length hair and the most indicative element was the Phrygian cap, called in French iconography *bonnet rouge*, an element present in the clothing of the *sans-culottes* in the context of the French Revolution (PETREY, 1980, p. 58; AUSLANDER, 2009, p. 118). In this sense, there are some important issues: the creation of a humanized form for the Republic which, as far as we know, was consistently organized in the French revolutionary context (going back to the 18th century), its classical origin, and the adhesion of Brazil, already a Republic, to this project. This allegory of the Republic was based on a deep identification in this revolutionary context between liberty and opposition to the monarchical system, thus proposing the republican system as a solution. The personification of Liberty even had a name: *Marianne*, the articulation of two common feminine names - Mary and Anne (HANSON, *Op. cit*., p. 211-2) - very often characterized by the red hat, as can be seen in Eugène Delacroix's emblematic painting, “Liberty Leading the People” from 1830 (KIDD, 2006, p. 379 sqq.; NIELSEN, 2013, p. 136-7).

This way of representing freedom was not actually new. There was a well-established repertoire among Romans in the presentation of the goddess Liberty

(*Libertas*), who was often associated with a type of hat, a *pileus*, as attested to by various sources (WEINSTOCK, 1971, p. 138, pr. 15; TATUM, 1999, p. 165). And at this point, the situation seems to get complicated, since it was not the Phrygian cap used in French iconography and later that appeared there. The "Phrygian cap" is a specific type of cap whose contextualization is complicated by associations with the *pileus* - a type of Roman hat identified with freedmen. The *pileus* was a symbolic hat that fulfilled functions in a variety of contexts, including its association with freed slaves (CLELAND, DAVIES & LLEWELLYN-JONES, 2007, p. 148). According to the sources, freedmen wore the *pileus* immediately after having their heads washed and their new status was identified by this attribute which, it must be said, had a much wider range. For example, Roman citizens who lived in captivity in Carthage, Gaul and Greece took part in processions (as freedmen) wearing the *pileus*, a *pileus libertatis*. In addition, the goddess Liberty (*Libertas*) herself carried the *pileus* as an attribute, as seen in cult statues (for example, one of the goddess Liberty on the Aventine), and in the minting of Roman coins (FEARS, 1981, p. 869-70). In other words, the association between this type of hat, the idea of freedom and even its divine personification was already well developed in antiquity. In France, it seems that this ancient content was appropriated and reactivated in connection with the republican ideology of the French Revolution, in which the goddess Liberty became the Republic itself. But even this recovery was not originally established in this revolutionary context. The *pileus* associated with the beam and the axe, characteristically Roman elements, was already mentioned on 17th and 18th century coins from Bern and in Louis XVI's France, thus pre-revolutionary (COMITE, 1992, p. 219).

The Latin term *pileus* comes from the Greek (*pilos*), whose original meaning is very indicative of the materiality of this object: it is a felt hat (compacted wool), and in Greek, the term *pilos* means wool or felt and, consequently, objects produced with this type of material - in addition to the hat in question, shoes, rugs or covers - (BAILLY, 1963, v. *pilos*). While the Latin term is fixed on the hat (or cape) and its meaning: hat of the freedman, of freedom (GAFFIOT & FLOBERT, 2008, v. *pileus*). However, the name *pileus* itself doesn't seem to have been used in a specific way, since some ancient authors characterized different types of hat and with different materials as *pilei* (O'NEILL, 1897/2003, p. 924). This repertoire also included the Phrygian cap, a type of oriental hat already present in the characterization of some characters in Greek iconography, such as Mithra and Paris, both of Asian origin. However, there was an association between these two types of hat (the Roman *pileus* and the Phrygian cap) as early as antiquity, given their similarity. The god Mithra, who was characterized by wearing the Phrygian cap, was called in a Christian context "deus *pileatus*" (god who wears the *pileus*) (DÖRNER, 1978; WORKMAN, 1980, p. 35; FOAKES-JACKSON, 2005, p. 184-5; RUCK, HOFFMAN & CELDRÁN, 2011, p. 30). Generally speaking, the Phrygian cap could also be characterized as a type of *pileus* (see CLELAND, DAVIES & LLEWELLYN-JONES, 2007, p. 148).

All of this suggests that it was this semantic elasticity of the term *pileus* that gave rise to the consolidation of the Phrygian cap as the hat indicating freedom and its association with republicanism in the French version, which can be seen in the figure of the Republic on the main façade of the Justice Department in Ramos de Azevedo's project (**figure 4**). It is interesting to note, in this sense, the dialogues between Brazilian and French republicanism (BARRETO, 1990, p. 44; LEITE, 2000, p. 305; COELHO, 2002, p. 43), and the adoption of this figure as the French Marianne in the minting of coins and in the iconography of the Republic in various contexts (SCHWARCZ, 1998, p. 470, 473-6, 501-2), including these figures of the Secretariat of Justice show such

alignment. In contrast, the North American version, created in 1781 by the French engraver Augustin Dupré for Benjamin Franklin, the *Libertas Americana*, sought another reference: a medal with the figure of Liberty associated with the hat in question, a scheme that was appropriated in later *half-cent* coins (VERMEULLE, 2007, p. 29; HERITAGE, 2009, p. 29). 29; HERITAGE, 2009, p. 26-7; GIBBS, 2008, p. 397-9), in which Liberty does not wear the hat on her head, but has it associated with her side supported by a staff, and the hat in question has the shape closest to the Roman *pileus* (without the high part arched forward like the Phrygian barrette), an evident recovery of forms from ancient Roman iconography. However, after the consistent French solution, even US monetary iconography opted for the figure of the Republic wearing a hat (this time a Phrygian cap) directly over his head. In other words, Ramos de Azevedo appropriated this internationally renowned creation.



Figure 6. Detail of the façade of the former Finance Department of the Province of São Paulo (currently the headquarters of the Justice and Citizenship Department) - photo: Roger Sassaki.

Having drawn this scenario of framing the figure of Heracles and his relationship, in the building in question, with the Brazilian Republic itself, it is possible to think of a communication framework, even if only speculatively. It should be noted that this building was designed to house a public office: from the outset, it was thought of as a building linked to the sphere of state administration. As in the building next to it, the former headquarters of the Treasury Department, symbolic elements of the Republic were combined with symbols related to an ancient classical, Greco-Roman repertoire. In the case of the Treasury Department, the pediment features the Coat of Arms of the Republic articulated with cornucopias, from which coins, fruit and flowers emerge, a clear ancient example that refers to the idea of fertility and wealth (**figure 6**). In the case of the Secretariat of Agriculture, which we followed in more detail, we saw an intricate design that presented the logic of the myth of support articulated with the architectural logic of support, and a transition from a Greco-Roman repertoire to a Brazilian republican repertoire that, to a certain extent, also dialogued with a classical reference. The question here is to think about the possibility of understanding this framework of references. Who could actually interpret these elements? And by "interpreting" we

mean everything from the simple identification of one or other of these figures (the lion referring to Heracles, the Republic, etc.) to more precise associations (this figure of Heracles or the Republic also appears in France, this is the "Republic" on the coins...). It's important to note that, if we think of a more complete picture of interpretation, the most apt to carry it out were the members of the Brazilian elite, especially from São Paulo, those who had studied in Europe or participated in trips that "rediscovered" the ancient world in terms of a *grand tour* (SCHELLING, 1991, p. 77; GOMES JR., 1998, p. 35). By mobilizing this entire repertoire and establishing such connections, it seems that Ramos de Azevedo was targeting this "public".

Hermes

Since the beginning of the 20th century, when you pass by Praça da República, facing Avenida Ipiranga, you can see the god Hermes resting. In fact, this is a sculpture produced at the Liceu de Artes e Ofícios de São Paulo entitled "Mercury at rest" (**figure 7**), and fixed there in the square since 1907, but the set of references doesn't end there. This is a bronze reproduction of a sculpture preserved in the Archaeological Museum of Florence: a Roman copy dating from around 100 BC, based on the original Greek one from the 4th century BC, which would have been made by the Greek sculptor Lysippus or in the context of a "School of Lysippus". It was its discovery in the 18th century in Herculaneum that led to it being sent to a museum and being prominently included in art history references (for example, Winckelmann, in the 18th century, said that it was one of the most beautiful ancient bronzes and Monaco, at the beginning of the 19th century, said that it was the "most celebrated bronze of antiquity" - MATTUSCH, 2015); thus providing, at the beginning of the 20th century, a tradition of copies that still manifests itself today in the figure of this and other sculptures in public spaces in São Paulo. The situation of this Hermes thus responds to a traditional environment like others described here, of Greek formulation, Roman appropriation and reactivation of meanings (and the creation of others) in modernity. This Hermes of "Lisipo", of the "School of Lisipo", of the Archaeological Museum of Florence, of the Lyceum of Arts and Crafts, of Praça da República, and therefore also of the city of São Paulo, opens the way for us to discuss the complexity of the insertion of this god in São Paulo, which, it must be said, has a very broad presence.

Before that, we need to think about the characterization of Hermes in Antiquity and the elements that were appropriated from that context. To begin with, it's important to know that this was a multifaceted god. For example, he was a god linked to inventions, language skills, luck, music, theft, travel, borders, herds and, of course, trade. In addition, he had an important function connected to transporting the dead to Hades, from which he was also characterized as *Psychopompos* ("conductor of souls") (RAYOR, 2004, p. 127). He was also a god of competition, and had a *kataibates* dimension ("the one who descends"), referring to his function of communication between the world above (of the Olympian gods) and the world below (of mortals and Hades) (PADEL, 1994, p. 8); among others. With regard to his relationship with commerce, he was referred to by various ancient authors as *diemporos, empolaios, palinkapelos, kerdemporos, agoraios*, qualifiers that connect him to the universe of commerce and material wealth, from where he was also characterized as *ploutodotes*, given his relationship with enrichment and abundance (FORCELLINI, DE-VIT & FURLANETTO, 1854, p. 413, v. *Hermes*). In other words, in the ancient repertoire that organized the performance of the god Hermes, there was a set of very broad possibilities that were more or less connected. In its contemporary appropriation, specifically in São

Paulo, we can think of some of them (such as the aesthetic recovery of the sense of protection, as seen above); but above all the choice of the insertion of the god in the things of commerce as a defining characteristic. Thus, a selection of ancient aspects that indicate the instrumental nature of his reference in São Paulo.

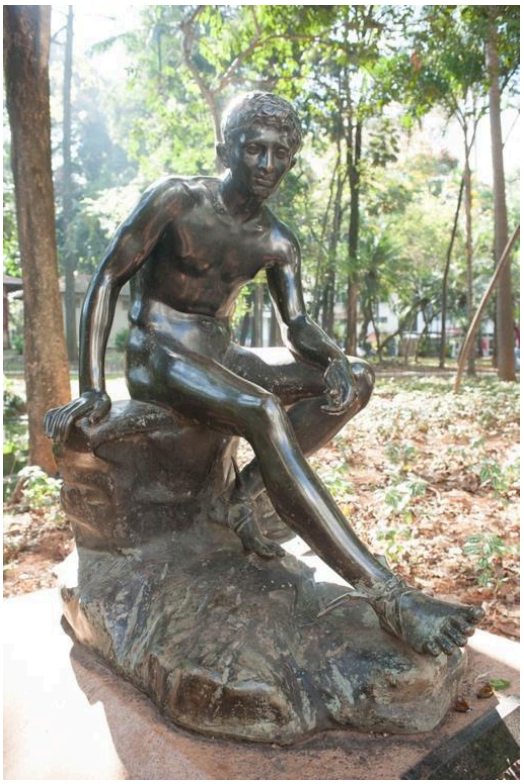


Figure 7: Mercury at rest, Praça da República, SP (photo: Roger Sassaki).

São Paulo is notorious for ratifying an ideology of work, productivism and relatedness that has strongly articulated aspects of the identity discourse over time. Thus, São Paulo is characterized as the "land" or "city of industry" (GALVÃO, 1981, p. 25; CADERNOS, 1992, p. 32), constituting a common sense of the "city of work" (CISCATI, 2001, p. 81). For example, in a speech by then president Juscelino Kubitschek, this argument is made explicit: "I am very honored to visit you, my friends, at this time when we are celebrating the fourth centenary of this city of work, the standard of our country's progress and a valuable measure of what we are capable of building and accomplishing" (KUBITSCHEK, 1959, p. 39). In this set of mythological representations of itself, it is (according to the song "Tema de São Paulo") a city that "dawns working/ (...) that doesn't know how to fall asleep" (FERREIRA & MAHL, 2008, p. 214). It is seen as a "*city of nec-otium*", the negation of leisure (BOLLE, 1994, p. 374, n. 38); the Latin expression from which the word "business" comes; in other words, a "city of business" (BASTOS, CABRAL & REZENDE, 2014, p. 260), "of banks, factories, stores and administration" (MONBEIG, 1957, p. 59) and "production" (CARLOS, 1994, p. 66). And since it was never actually the capital, like Rio de Janeiro and then Brasília, the idea that São Paulo is the "economic and financial capital" of the country was established (PARRON, 2003, p. 50; LUNA, 2004).

The city, which had occupied such a symbolic position since the beginning of the 20th century, was the setting for the creation of a series of magazines related to commercial propaganda, such as "Mercúrio, órgão central de propaganda comercial"

and "Mercúrio, periódico de apoio aos comerciantes e industriais paulistas" (both from 1904); "Mercúrio, periódico literário e comercial" (from 1905); and "O Mercúrio, órgão comercial de propaganda" (MARTINS, 2001, p. 195-6). At this time, figures of Hermes were already beginning to appear around the city, such as the sculpture in Praça da República shown above, and others clearly associated with the world of commerce. For example, on the façade of the *Au Grand Depôt* establishment in 1908, which was located at 91 Rua São Bento, there was a sculpture of Hermes associated with the cornice of the building (BARBUY, 2006, p. 150-1). A little later, in 1944, in a criticism of the high profits that São Paulo's bakers were making, the editorial in the newspaper "Correio Paulistano" evoked "the good old days (...) when the ethics of Mercury, God of commerce, advocated that only profits of ten or twenty cents were reasonable" (CYTRYNOWICZ, 2000, p. 60). This god had already been positioned at different levels of everyday life in São Paulo since the beginning of the 20th century, and this situation has left deep marks on the city today.

In order to continue interpreting the presence of Hermes in urban iconography in São Paulo, it should be noted that, as in the case of Heracles, in many situations the god is not presented properly, but through a very indicative attribute: the caduceus (a staff with two serpents associated with it and sometimes with two wings at the top); which, along with the traveler's hat and the winged sandals, was one of the most recurrent attributes in the figurative presentation of Hermes/Mercury in antiquity (SMITH, 1859, p. 311). 313, v. *Hermes*). It is therefore possible to observe the presence of this god associated with the caduceus on a variety of supports and, in the case of Roman coins, in many cases the caduceus appears in isolation. However, in this context, the caduceus is not only related to Hermes; there is a group of deities such as Peace (*Pax*), Happiness (*Felicitas*), Mars and the Dioscuri, also related to this attribute (MCDONNELL, 2006, p. 144); which, among the Greeks, was almost exclusive to the god Hermes. But it is interesting to note that in these two contexts, the caduceus could appear in isolation, thus establishing some reference to the god Hermes; which was also appropriated later.

In modern times, this more elastic insertion between the caduceus and other divinities practically disappeared, establishing an environment of almost exclusive relationship with Hermes, but also with Asclepius, the god of medicine; an association that dates back to the Renaissance, probably recovering the relationship between Hermes and alchemy. In addition, this appropriation began with some editions of medical literature whose publisher's symbol was the caduceus, which was extended to the symbol of medicine itself (replacing the chalice of Asclepius with just a serpent): for example, the title page of a book on tropical diseases - *The cures of the diseased in remote regions* (London, 1598), written by George Watson, featured the caduceus, as did a later publication (Amsterdam *pharmacopoeia*, 1736), which bore the caduceus as the mark of the publisher Prudenter. Today, although there are efforts to rehabilitate a preferential reference to Asclepius in medicine, the appropriation of the caduceus seems to be consistent: for example, it has become the symbol of the *British Medical Association* and the *US Army Medical Corps* (LOCK, LAST & DUNEA, 2001, p. 262, v. *emblems*). In any case, from the issues indicated above in São Paulo, the caduceus, even in isolation, certainly refers to Hermes.

It was connected to the ideology of work, industrialism, commerce and business that Hermes introduced himself into various contexts in São Paulo; and some examples clearly show this. The first of these is the headquarters of the São Paulo Court of Justice in Pátio do Colégio, formerly the Commodities Exchange,[5] features Hermes prominently (**figure 8**). On the corners of the main façade, there is a sculpture of this

[5] Inaugurated in 1933 - see CARVALHO, 1999, p. 150.

god, easily identified by his winged helmet. There is also a stylized caduceus at various points on the building, indicating that this theme dominates the façade. This situation is quite coherent, considering the building's original function, linked to business (a stock exchange). It's interesting to think that a certain coherence was thought up by the architect who, considering the building's function, strongly marked the façade with a theme related to the activities that would take place there. Today, only aesthetically do these references to Hermes play a role, since the logic of a Court of Justice is not very coherent with the figure of this god. Another example of the connection between Hermes and commerce is the Álvares Penteado School of Commerce Foundation building in Largo São Francisco[6]. There are plenty of references to Hermes on the façades, divided into two forms: panels with Hermes' winged helmet at the top of plain medallion frames and the figure of the caduceus very prominently displayed (**figure 9**).



Figure 8. Details of the façade of the São Paulo Court of Justice in Pátio do Colégio, formerly Bolsa de Mercadorias (photo: Roger Sassaki).

[6] Inaugurated in 1908 - see FUNDAÇÃO, 1952.



Figure 9. Details of the façade of Fundação Escola de Comércio Álvares Penteado - FECAP (photo: Roger Sassaki).

The two buildings inaugurated in the first half of the 20th century had elements that added to the various references to the god, making up a landscape whose presence of Hermes was something predictable and commonplace. We mentioned above the presence of the god on the façade of the *Au Grande Depôt* store and FECAP, both from 1908, and there are several others from the first decades of the 20th century. For example, on the corner of Quintino Bocaiúva and Rua Direita, it was possible to find Hermes on two different façades opposite each other: that of Palacete Tereza Toledo Lara, from 1910 (currently under renovation) and the building of the former Cinema Eldorado (now Clovis Calçados), from the following decade. The strength of Hermes' presence and his constant association with commerce and relationships offered a scenario that was easy to understand symbolically; in other words, the figure of the god or his attribute, the caduceus, almost directly informed a reference to commerce, which was widely exploited in urban iconography. A clear example of this is the constitution of the coat of arms of the Commercial Association of São Paulo. It is possible to think of two aspects of insertion: one is the tradition of presenting the coats of arms of similar organizations based on references to Hermes, such as the symbol of the Faculty of Economics and Administration of the University of São Paulo, composed of the head of Hermes wearing a winged hat; and, above all, the emblematic caduceus that also appears on the coat of arms of the Order of Economists of Brazil. However, in the case of the Commercial Association of São Paulo, the situation is more complex: present on the façade of the institution's headquarters, it consists of a version of the coat of arms of the city of São Paulo (**figure 10**): there is, on a shield, an arm of armor holding the caduceus in place of the flag with the cross of Portugal or the cross of the Order of Christ. Below, in place of the motto NON DVCOR DVCO, the abbreviation for the association A.C.S.P. (Associação Comercial de São Paulo). On the city's coat of arms and that of the association, the lateral supports are fruity coffee branches and, above, in place of the mural crown that makes up the city's coat of arms, a superimposed gear. It

is interesting to note that the creation of this new coat of arms proposes important connections, the first being the identity between the city of São Paulo and the commercial institution; the other, more specific, is the situation of the caduceus of Hermes replacing the city flag.



Figure 10. Details of the façade of the São Paulo Commercial Association (photo: Roger Sassaki).

In this example, there is a game of substitutions clearly enhanced by familiarity with the meanings contained therein, in which the caduceus refers directly to a known content: Hermes and commerce, a fundamental element in establishing the identity of the association mentioned and its identity with the city of São Paulo. There are also some examples that show how Hermes was used as an easy-to-understand iconographic resource, around which a specific scheme was built in São Paulo. Next, we'll look at an example that indicates another level of meaning, endorsing the easy-to-understand logic that this god presented in São Paulo based on his imagery. We will now consider an element of the current Secretariat of Agriculture and Supply of the State of São Paulo (formerly the Ermírio de Moraes Building, and previously the Esplanada Hotel)[7]. The façade has been somewhat modified, but much of the original features are still present. From this, you can see some original elements such as certain medallions featuring three figures (**figure 11**). Only one of them is a specifically defined character: the god Hermes. The other two are allegories which, together with Hermes, evoke Industry (a man holding a gear) and agriculture (the figure standing out in the center - a woman holding a pitchfork and a stalk of wheat). Agriculture is featured prominently there, while Trade and Industry are at the bottom.

[7] Inaugurated in 1923 - see VALENZUELA, 2019.



Figure 11. Detail of the façade of the Ermírio de Moraes Building (formerly the Esplanada Hotel) - photo: Roger Sassaki.

A very similar situation can be observed in the Matarazzo Building, currently the headquarters of São Paulo City Hall (officially called the Anhangabaú Palace);[8] Meanwhile, between the 1930s and 1970s, it served as the headquarters of Indústrias Reunidas F. Matarazzo. On its main façade, there is a set of five panels organized in sequence, the direction of which is unclear. Starting from the left, the first panel depicts the textile industry, with relief figures of a loom, rolls of yarn and fabric. The next depicts the steel industry, showing a furnace with pressure pipes, an anvil and a gear. The next panel depicts agriculture, with tools for working the land such as a shovel, a plow, some stalks of wheat below and, above, two cornucopias from which fruit and leaves come out. This, the central panel, has a plain border with associated ribbons. The next one seems to indicate technology, consisting of a microscope, laboratory condenser and retort. Finally, the trade itself, featuring a winged railway wheel, a rope with a pulley for lifting, related to warehouses, an anchor referring to displacement by water and, arranged vertically in the center of the panel, a winged caduceus (**figure 12**). Here we see a composition whose logic is practically the same as that of the aforementioned building: an allegorical repertoire is created to describe sectors of industry and agriculture. In the description of commerce, although the allegorical repertoire also appears, it is Hermes indicated by the caduceus who condenses this activity.

There are also some other examples that only confirm what we've seen so far: medallions with the figure of Hermes in the Post Office Palace, corresponding to the logic of communication that the god was imbued with, having been characterized as a "messenger"; a stained glass window with the figure of Hermes in the Catavento Cultural and Educational Museum, the former Palácio das Indústrias, a building built to house agricultural and industrial exhibitions; as well as the profusion of citations to Hermes in the Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil (the CCBB) -- the former headquarters of Banco do Brasil in São Paulo; among many others.

[8] Inaugurado em 1939 – ver TONHÃO, 1993, p. 115-39.



Figure 12. Detail of the facade of the Matarazzo Building (photo: Roger Sassaki).

Two divinities, two different paths

The discussions presented on the presence of Heracles and Hermes in the city of São Paulo indicated two different paths. The first example, about Heracles, showed us two intricate ways of constituting meanings; and, moreover, architectural debates that went back to forms already present in European buildings. This was the case with the presence of Heracles in the Municipal Theater and the whole debate about strength and support, and with the former Secretariat of Agriculture in the Pátio do Colégio, both connected to architectural solutions already consolidated in Europe. The enjoyment of these elements on São Paulo territory, in a more developed way, would be based on a certain erudition constituted from some contact with these foreign creations. In the case of Hermes' iconography, this dialogue with European forms can also be observed; however, it can be thought that, in the city of São Paulo, an insertion of its own was created, connected to the constitution of an identity for its citizens, which would inevitably involve an ideology of work and modernity based mainly on industry and commerce. Hermes, in this sense, became an element that synthesized this identity construct. Two examples that reinforce the complexity of the insertion of the classic in the city of São Paulo.

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