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## RECEPTION OF HERACLES AND GREEK MYTHOLOGY IN THE HAGIOGRAPHY OF SAINT ANTHONY

### RECEPCIÓN DE HERACLES Y DE LA MITOLOGÍA GRIEGA EN LA HAGIOGRAFÍA DE SAN ANTONIO

Adriana F. Nogueira  
Universidade do Algarve – FCHS, Portugal  
CECH (UC), CIAC (UAlg)  
anogueir@ualg.pt – anogueir@gmail.com  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5709-6870>

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#### ABSTRACT

This paper aims to work on a book authored by Brás Luís de Abreu, entitled *Sol Nascido No Occidente, e Posto Ao Nascer Do Sol, S. Antonio Portugues*, from 1725, a biography of Fernando Bulhões (or Martins), who was born in Lisbon (Portugal) at the end of the 12th century and died in Padua (Italy) in the 13th century, better known as Saint Anthony (to whose name both Lisbon and Padua have added their respective toponymic). In this text, Saint Anthony is compared to various figures from classical antiquity (gods, heroes, mythological and historical figures) and Christianity.

The intention is to examine the characteristics of Heracles/Hercules, analyzing which were chosen and which were omitted, how they are described in relation to the roles of each, and how they contributed to the praise of the saint (the final goal of the work).

**Keywords:** Heracles/Hercules; Christianity; Saint Anthony; Mythology; Classical Reception.

#### RESUMEN

Este artículo<sup>1</sup> tiene como objetivo trabajar sobre un libro escrito por Brás Luís de Abreu, titulado *Sol Nascido No Occidente, e Posto Ao Nascer Do Sol, S. Antonio Portugues*, de 1725, una biografía de Fernando Bulhões (o Martins), quien nació en Lisboa (Portugal) a finales del siglo XII y murió en Padua (Italia) en el siglo XIII, más conocido como San Antonio (a cuyo nombre tanto Lisboa como Padua han añadido su respectivo topónimo). En este texto, se compara a San

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Antonio con diversas figuras de la antigüedad clásica (dioses, héroes, personajes mitológicos y históricos) y del cristianismo.

Se pretende examinar las características de Heracles/Hércules, analizando cuáles fueron elegidas y cuáles omitidas, cómo son descritas en relación con los roles de cada uno, y cómo contribuyeron a la alabanza del santo (el objetivo final de la obra).

**Palabras clave:** Heracles/Hércules; Cristianismo; San Antonio; Mitología; Recepción Clásica.

## SUMMARY

1. Introduction. 2. Heracles and Christianity. 3. *Sun Born in the West* / Divine Hercules, Portuguese Saint Anthony. 4. The Presence of Hercules in the Praise of Saint Anthony. 4.1. The name - a "second birth". 4.2. The Lions. 4.3. The Hydra of Lerna. 4.4. *Non plus ultra*. 4.5. The weapons. 4.6. Friendship and Love. 5. Conclusion. 6. Abbreviations. 7. Classic References. 8. References.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Heracles is one of the characters from Greco-Roman mythology with the greatest endurance and steadfastness. References to Heracles date back to the Homeric epics of the 7<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> centuries BC,<sup>2</sup> where he appears either in connection with the Trojan War, where his descendants fought (*Il.* 2, 653; 2, 658; 2, 666; 2, 679; 5, 628; 5, 638; 11, 690; 14, 266; 14, 324; 15, 25; 15, 640; 18, 117; 19, 98 [referring to his birth]; 20.145), or in the narrative of Odysseus' return home, during which, in a descent to Hades, he encounters the hero's ghost (*Od.* 11, 601-626).

Representations of Heracles' main labors and his *parerga*<sup>3</sup> can also be found in Attic black-figure vases: it is estimated that there are about 700 extant representations of his fight against the Nemean lion and 400 representations of his fight against the Amazons (Stafford 2010, 238, n. 26). His impact was significant outside Athens, the city that especially revered him, and even beyond the Greek world, perhaps because he could easily be identified with the

beliefs and heroes of those other locations.<sup>4</sup> Unlike many heroes who were also born from gods and mortals, whose cult focused on the location of their tombs,<sup>5</sup> Heracles' influence transcended borders thanks to his tasks and adventures, which spanned a vast territory. Perhaps because of his dual nature (human and divine), "with character flaws and instincts common to all mortals" he became more "approachable" (Allan 2019, 4). He is said to have arrived in Rome by the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC (Stafford 2019, vii) and even today he remains a subject of literary and artistic interest.<sup>6</sup>

4 Such is the case with Etruria, the subject of an interesting paper by Sheramy D. Bundrick, which deals with the itineraries of objects and their contribution to the (lack of) knowledge of Etruscan history. The author mentions the existence of 'over 100 vases in the current corpus, the apotheosis of Herakles by chariot ranks among the most popular black-figure scene types of the later sixth century, especially for hydriai and amphoras'. Cf. Bundrick 2020, 86. She adds that the 'scenes of Herakles' apotheosis meshed seamlessly with Etruscan (and specifically Vulcian) belief in the passage and heroization of the dead' (Bundrick 2020, 88).

5 '[T]he hero's radius was usually more limited, and their cult concentrated on a tomb' (Bremmer 1994, 13).

6 For a concise overview of the reception of Hercules from the Middle Ages to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, see Stafford 2021, 540-555.

2 The composition dates of the poems are not universally agreed, but scholars generally accept these centuries. On the relative chronology between these early authors and their works, see Janko 2012, 20-43.

3 That is, the secondary adventures.

## 2. HERACLES AND CHRISTIANITY

The character of Heracles has been used as a resource by politicians and rulers throughout history to legitimize their power. Allan (2019, 3) asserts that “seven of Rome’s emperors (...), each adopted Heracles Invictus as their patron deity and took his epithet as their own”. Alexandra Eppinger (2015, 157; 2019, 75) gives us examples, such as Hadrian, Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius or Commodus.

In the Stoic tradition, mythological characters came to be interpreted from a moralizing point of view, due to a desire to “discover spiritual significance in the figures and even in the names of gods, and moral lessons in their adventures” (Seznec 1953, 84). This gave rise to the so-called “allegorical method”, which provided reinterpretations of mythology that explained, from this perspective, those behaviors which were considered more deviant from a moral standpoint. The Stoic view of Heracles as a model of virtue, an “unlikely hero of philosophy” (Stafford 2019, xi), contributed to his acceptance by Christianity. This moralizing tradition is also influenced by the parable of “Heracles at the Crossroads” (also known as “Prodikos’ tale” or “The Choice of Heracles” – cf. Xen. *Mem*, 2, 1, 21–34), in which the young Heracles is “tempted” by two women representing Vice (*kakia/uitium*) and Virtue (*aretel/uirtus*), to accompany them on the path which each one points out: one is easy, the path of Vice; the other is difficult, the path of Virtue, but the latter is the one the hero chooses (Stafford 2017, 140-166). His image as a wise man who must suffer at the hands of those who are inferior to him was also used by the Cynics. Additionally, a Stoic Heracles “offered an ideal paradigm for the transition from the pagan to the Christian sense of masculinity” (Anagnostou-Laoutides, 2019, 45, 46).

Christian tombs from the 4th century AD confirm the enduring popularity of Heracles, as they display decorations featuring his adventures combined with biblical stories

(Nagy 2016, 385). Levente Nagy (2016, 392) primarily analyzes the paintings in the Via Latina catacomb, cubiculum N, where Heracles is represented, and the casket mount fragments of Pannonia ((late Roman Valeria province, now Szentendre, western Hungary) and highlights “the great amount of casket mounts with mythological and biblical representations found in Pannonia, Gaul, and Germania”. After serving as a “model for human energy and suffering”, Heracles becomes, “in the course of his life, a figure offering some kind of promise of religious salvation” (Junker 2012, 22).

## 3. SUN BORN IN THE WEST / DIVINE HERCULES, PORTUGUESE SAINT ANTHONY

The main work to be discussed in this paper is a hagiography of Saint Anthony, entitled *Sol Nascido no Ocidente e posto ao nascer do Sol, S. António Português* (Sun Born in the West and set at Sunrise, Portuguese Saint Anthony),<sup>7</sup> which the author dedicated to the Portuguese Royal House. In it, Greco-Latin mythology, and especially the mythology of Hercules,<sup>8</sup> was intertwined with biblical stories for the purposes of extolling Saint Anthony.

Borges and Pereira (2019, 13) highlight how devotion to this saint, born in Lisbon, spread soon after his beatification (which occurred on May 30, 1232, in record time, less than a year after his death, in Padua, Italy, the 13th June 1231), not only in the country, but around the world, “accompanying the Portuguese navigators on their journeys”, becoming “one of the most popular saints in the world”.

The text dates from 1725 and is authored by the physician Brás Luís Abreu (1692-1756), who signed himself as *cistagano* (that is, a native of the lands above the Tagus River) and *familiar do Santo Ofício* (familiar of the

<sup>7</sup> All translations into English of Portuguese quotations are my responsibility. From now on, the spelling of the title will have this updated form.

<sup>8</sup> Henceforth, the Latin form will be used, as this is the one utilized in the work under study. Whenever deemed relevant, the Greek name of other mythological figures may be indicated in parentheses.

Holy Office, a common situation among doctors of the time)<sup>9</sup> and published the work in Coimbra. The book encompasses the two main characteristics of Portuguese Baroque literature: *cultismo*, which is defined as the “taste for superlativization that mainly uses metaphors and resources of merely verbal expressiveness”, and *conceptismo*, defined as “the exercise of sharp wit, the virtuosity of a thought that proceeds by means of analogical subtleties” (Saraiva and Lopes 1996, 471).

At this time, humorous themes of a hagiographic nature were emerging, “which reflect a profound decline of religious feeling in this inquisitorial era.” However, this work is clearly not included in that movement; on the contrary, it is motivated by the author’s deep religiosity (in 1732 he had joined the Third Order of Saint Francis and become a cleric),<sup>10</sup> his love for “mythological allegories”, and his “display of sharp wit, lexical, historical, or mythical erudition, periphrastic decoration or dazzling and magnificent metaphors”, a “typically baroque form of encomiastic biography”. (Saraiva and Lopes 1996, 478, 543).

#### 4. THE PRESENCE OF HERCULES IN THE PRAISE OF SAINT ANTHONY

Mythology permeates this entire hagiography of Saint Anthony, a fact which did not hinder the approval of its publication by the Inquisition, but which confirms its relevance as a common literary device of the time. It may have helped that the stories referenced in the work were (supposedly) purged of episodes that could offend Catholic sensibilities, leaving only those that served the ultimate purpose of demonstrating the quality and greatness of Saint Anthony.

In this context of the Saint’s exaltation, the author chose characteristics of various mythological figures that could contribute to

his objective, leaving aside many others that could associate the Saint with less favorable situations. For example, Saturn is mentioned as a god of agriculture (p.3), without alluding to the fact that this Titan ate his children to avoid being overthrown and how he was subsequently castrated by his son Jupiter. In the case of Hercules, it is not surprising that there is no mention of the episode of his madness, in which he kills his children, just as that there is no mention of his death and apotheosis; this latter omission is presumably because mention of it could bring him too close to the central figure of Christianity, Jesus Christ himself.

There are no explicit suggestions in the work that Hercules is linked to Jesus, although there are several similarities: Hercules is born from a mortal, virgin, and married woman, and his father is the sovereign of the gods. He suffers throughout his life, always obeying the orders of his divine father. He travels through many regions, where he helps local populations with their needs,<sup>11</sup> and eventually he dies on the earthly plane, a victim of betrayal. In the end, he is taken to join the other gods, becoming immortal. His cult was spread over a vast territory, far beyond the Greek world. Born into the category of heroes (children of a divine parent), he ascends to divinity.

Yet, there is recognition that Saint Anthony is also a “Hero” (always capitalized) and that his actions are “heroic”; the work mentions

11 Diodorus Siculus, 4, 17, 4-5: After freeing Libya from the giant Antaeus, Hercules cultivated the land, making it prosperous, and established justice: [4] Ποησάμενος οὖν τὸν ἐκ ταύτης πλοῦν κατήρεν εἰς τὴν Λιβύην, καὶ πρῶτον μὲν Ἀνταῖον τὸν ῥώμη σώματος καὶ παλαίστρας ἐμπερίᾳ διαβεβημένον καὶ τοὺς ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ καταπαλαισθέντας ξένους ἀποκτείναντα προκαλεσάμενος εἰς μάχην καὶ συμπλακεῖς διέφθειρεν. ἀκολούθως δὲ τούτοις τὴν μὲν Λιβύην πλήθουσαν ἀγρίων ζώων, πολλὰ τῶν κατὰ τὴν ἔρημον χώραν χειρωσάμενος, ἐξημέρωσεν, ὥστε καὶ γεωργίας καὶ ταῖς ἄλλαις φυτεῖαις ταῖς τοὺς καρποὺς παρασκευαζούσας πληρωθῆναι πολλὴν μὲν ἀμπελόφυτον χώραν, πολλὴν δ’ ἐλαιοφόρον: καθόλου δὲ τὴν Λιβύην διὰ τὸ πλῆθος τῶν κατὰ τὴν χώραν θηρίων ἀοίκητον πρότερον οὖσαν ἐξημερώσας ἐποίησε μηδεμιάς χώρας εὐδαιμονία λείπεσθαι. [5] ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ τοὺς παρανομοῦντας ἀνθρώπους ἢ δυνάστας ὑπερηφάνους ἀποκτείνας τὰς πόλεις ἐποίησεν εὐδαίμονας.

9 See his entry in Inocêncio’s dictionary (1858, 396), where it can be read: ‘had been appointed familiar of the Holy Office, as were most doctors in Portugal at that time’.

10 Despite being married: the boys became priests, and the wife and daughters went to a kind of convent.

him as a “Sovereign Hero” (p. 2), “Famous Hero” (p. 92), and “Apostolic Hero” (p. 122), his “superior heroism” (p. 137), “heroic devotion” (p. 306), “heroic virtues” (p. 324), and as a “Most Holy Hero” (p. 431) and “Most Sacred Hero” (p. 466). While in these examples it could be argued that “hero” is being applied in the sense of “brave” or “courageous”, when “hero” and “heroism” are accompanied by adjectives that avoid a religious tone and lean towards the register of the fantastic, it can be assumed that the connection to deeds such as those of Hercules is implicitly present: “Prodigious Hero” (p. 298); “So prodigious Hero” (p. 311); “wonderful Hero ... prodigious actions” (p. 345).

In his dedication to the Royal House, Brás Luís Abreu quotes a passage of Pliny (*HN*. 2, 6), in which the properties of the Sun are described, and aligns them with Saint Anthony, in a clear programmatic allusion to the recognition of a wide range of pre-Christian deities in Anthony, which already anticipated Christianity.

Thus, already on pages 3 and 4, the work mentions a series of characters from Greco-Roman mythology (with their Latin names), whose actions are presented as paralleling those of the saint: Jupiter (here, “Jove”), Atlas, Saturn, Vulcan, Hercules and the Hydra, Nereus, Neptune, Adonis, Venus, Proserpina, and Mercury. The mixing of attributes from biblical, historical, and mythological characters is very common; for example, Jupiter’s rays are made of “evangelical light” and transformed biblical giants, while Saturn made the Church prosper in Italy “in the fields of ancient Latium”.

#### 4.1. The name - a “second birth”

In this second birth, with tears as the baptism, he exchanged the name Fernando for that of Anthony; a name that Anthony made great when he began to be a Minor. (p. 48).

This passage contains another similarity between the Portuguese saint and the Greek hero, as Hercules also became known not by

the name which his parents gave him (Alcaeus, like his paternal grandfather, or Alcides, derived from his patronymic), but by the name that, according to Pseudo-Apollodorus 2.72, was conferred upon him by Apollo through the Pythia at Delphi when the hero sought refuge after the madness inflicted upon him by Juno (the Greek Hera), which led him to kill his children and two of his nephews. The Labors were imposed on him as a punishment for those crimes, and his name became Heracles, meaning the glory (*kleos*) of Hera. Brás Luís Abreu demonstrates his knowledge of this change by ascribing to Saint Anthony epithets such as the “valiant Alcides of Lusitania” (p. 39), “Portuguese Alcides” (p. 186), and “invincible Alcides” (p. 228).

The episode of the hero’s madness and subsequent murder of part of his family is one that is not alluded to in the biography of the Saint. However, the moment of the name change is acknowledged: when Fernando, a friar of the Order of Saint Augustine, decides that he wants to go to Morocco, inspired by the first Franciscan martyrs who perished there, and transfers to the Order of Francis of Assisi (*Ordo Fratrum Minorum*), he changes his name to Anthony.

At this point Brás Luís Abreu, in his characteristic baroque style marked by accumulations and exaggerations, gradually mentions several famous Antonios: Saint Anthony Abbot; several Romans named Anthony; and Anton, a son of Hercules. In appealing to the reader’s knowledge without ever naming them directly, he begins with Anthony the Abbot (3rd-4th century), combining in a single evocation the three names by which he is best known: “Saint Anthony of Egypt”, “Saint Anthony the Great”, and “Saint Anthony the Hermit”. He then goes on: “This name gave Egypt that great Greek Hermit” (p. 48). Next is an allusion to Mark Antony: “This name gave Italy that great Roman Captain; but this name was never a pronoun for Glory”. In this passage Brás Luís Abreu is surely reminding his readers of Anthony’s betrayal,



when he sided with the Queen of Egypt against Rome, how he was defeated by Octavian in the Battle of Actium (31 BC), and his subsequent escape to Egypt, where he committed suicide with Cleopatra. The Roman emperor Antoninus Pius (86-161 AD, emperor from 138 AD to his death) is also indirectly remembered: “Do not call Rome Pious to their Anthonys; call only you, the world, Anthony Pious” (ibid). Finally, the connection to Hercules is marked by the mention of his son Anton (from whom the *gens Antonia*, to which Mark Antony belonged, claimed descent), with whom the Saint shared his name.

#### 4.2. The lions

Saint Anthony is also characterized via the metaphor of lions, which once again brings him closer to Hercules. The image of the lion is one that immediately invites correspondence with the hero, who appears dressed in a lion-skin whose head serves as a helmet in many ancient representations.<sup>12</sup> According to the mythological tradition, Hercules fought two major lions at some points along his journey. First, when he was only eighteen years old (Ps. Apollod. *Bibl.* 2, 65) and before entering the service of Eurystheus, he killed the so-called lion of Mount Cithaeron, which ravaged the lands of King Thespius. Some say that it was of the skin of this lion that the hero began to wear as a distinctive symbol (Ps. Apollod. *Bibl.* 2, 66), while others say it was that of the Nemean lion (Theocritus, 25, 278-279; Ps. Apollod. *Bibl.* 2, 74), the second he fought and the first of the “Twelve Labors”. This monster is described by Sophocles as “the scourge of herdsmen, creature none approached/ or spoke to” (S. *Tr.* 1092-1093).

Besides the most obvious association of the lion with Hercules, Abreu presents this animal as a positive symbol of power and strength,

12 For example, Antonio del Pollaiuolo's 'Hercules and the Hydra' in the Uffizi Gallery in Florence ((ón ), or the marble bust in the Borghese Gallery in Rome (<https://www.collezionegalleriaborghese.it/en/opere/testa-colossale-di-ercole-del-tipo-antinori-napoli>). Retrieved 1st June 2024.

which often serves as a metaphor for Saint Anthony. He also refers to it as a sign of the zodiac while exploring the homonymy of the words in Portuguese, since *Leão* is both “Lion”, as the animal, and “Leo” as the zodiac sign. This indirectly relates the lion to Hercules, since it was the Nemean lion that Jupiter placed in the sky<sup>13</sup> to celebrate his son's victory,<sup>14</sup> and directly to the Saint, who was born under this sign.

In this passage (p.6), terms and characters from the field of astrology (“Sun in the House of Leo”) and mythology (the Chariot of the Sun and Hercules) are used, interspersed with biblical references (“Lamb”, “Samson” - often also identified with Hercules<sup>15</sup>). For example, *Leão*, the “sign” that marks the birth of Anthony it's a “sign”, *qua* symbol of Anthony as a defender of the faith (“vigilant defender of the House of the best Sun”); and it is a “sign” that announces his future deeds. *Sol* (Portuguese for “Sun”) is the major metaphor of the work, being used to name the Saint (“our Portuguese Sun”) and to identify him with Jesus Christ himself: “Lion of that Sun which was born Lamb one night; Lamb of that Sun which on the last day will be Lion.”<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, *Sol* is the celestial body that occupies “houses” in astrological charts (“As the Sun moves through the House of Leo”), and it is the mythological deity that drives his chariot every day to illuminate the

13 Sen. *Herc. F.*, 944-5: ‘See where the lion, my first toil, glows in no small part of heaven’ (*primus en noster labor/ caeli refulget parte non minima leo*).

14 Or because the lion is the king of animals: ‘Zeus placed it [the Lion] in the sky, so it is said, because it is reckoned to be the king of the beasts’ (Eratosthenes and Hyginus 2015, 70). In the *Epitome* (which summarizes the lost work of Eratosthenes, *Catasterismos*), it is written that: ‘This is one of the more conspicuous constellations; it would seem that this sign of the zodiac was granted that honour by Zeus because the lion holds the leading position among four-footed beasts. Some say that it was placed there to commemorate the first labour of Heracles; for this was the only beast which, for love of glory, he killed without the aid of weapons, by strangling it between his arms’ (ibid, 69).

15 Gnuse, especially chapter 9, ‘Samson and Heracles Revisited’. Cf. Gnuse 2021, 131-149.

16 Further on, the equivalence persists: ‘Christ was born, the images of idolatry were ruined; Anthony is born, the idols of vanity fall’ (p.7).

world and at night travels between West and East (the journey that the Sun/Anthony made – from Lisbon to Padua – reflected in the title of the work) in a golden bowl over the Ocean. In his tenth labor, Hercules, set the task to bring Geryon's cattle to Eurystheus, convinces the Sun to lend him this bowl. Although the author presumably knew that these were different means of transportation, here they are conflated to maintain the allusion to astronomy (where "Chariot" is one of the names of Ursa Major<sup>17</sup> or a pattern of this constellation) and to associate it with the victories of Hercules, and, in turn, with Anthony, who is identified with the hero: "Giving the same Chariot to your triumphs, you were born, O divine Hercules, in the sign of your labors".

Moreover, the birth of Saint Anthony is presented as coinciding with the beginning of a special and triumphant life, which, from that moment, made clear his arduous tasks - and his triumphs - as happened with Hercules. Anthony is thus a Hercules, albeit one adorned with the epithet "divine", which distances himself from the human dimension of the hero and emphasizes that he also possesses divinity within him.

In this initial moment of the Saint's biography, historical figures are also present, such as Augustus and Saladin. Augustus, the first Roman emperor, is referred to through a play on words with the name of the month of August: "Oh month, Always August, not only for the birth of the crowned Roman Caesar,<sup>18</sup> but for that of Anthony, famous illustrious Portuguese" (p.7). Saladin, the Sultan of Egypt, is also said to state in a continuous relationship with the Saint: at the time of Saladin's death,<sup>19</sup> the adversary and persecutor of the Crusaders,

Fernando, the defender of Christ, is born: "At the same time that Anthony came into the world, Saladino failed in the Empire of the Turks. Already the Chair of Peter loses this terror when in Anthony this triumph is born." (p.7)

### 4.3. The Hydra of Lerna

From antiquity to today, Hercules' contest against the Hydra of Lerna was one of the labors that was quickly understood as potentially allegorical and open to varied metaphorical use.<sup>20</sup> This second labor allows for a plurality of interpretations, based on the elements involved in the specific adventure: firstly, it describes a hero's defeat of a monster which has the peculiarity of being almost immortal, for when one of its multiple heads is cut off, two grow back in its place; and secondly, because Hercules did not defeat the monster alone, but needed the help of Iolaus, his nephew who accompanied him on some adventures.

In a sort of prelude to the chapter (between pages numbered 1 to 4), where a list of divinities is reported, Hercules appears as the "triumphant" one, whose battles merge with those of the Catholic Church itself: "<This is> [t]he triumphant Hercules always of Catholic struggles, who, by cutting the seven heads of

<sup>20</sup> There have been numerous works dedicated to interpretations of the Hydra in various contexts. In addition to the works by Emma Stafford, who has published on the theme of Hercules, covering Greek and Roman material on the Greek hero, like *Herakles* (2012), which is an important reference, and others, some of them referred in this chapter, I will mention just two recent references on the Hydra: one is Takashi Nishi's doctoral dissertation (2014), which provides pertinent images and useful bibliography to delve deeper into the subject; the other, from a religious-political perspective, is the paper by Milton Dias Pacheco (2015). In popular culture, coaching professionals continue to use the Hydra as a symbolic resource: one example is its application to the issue of gender bias in public speaking, as seen on Marion Chapsal's blog (who identifies herself as a 'Leadership Coach, European specialist in public speaking'), at <https://www.marionchapsal.com/fighting-the-hydra-lerna-of-gender-bias-in-public-speaking>. Another example is its metaphorical use when describing lies, as demonstrated by an influencer (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=by2no140Ahw>, Retrieved May 30, 2024).

<sup>17</sup> 'The Bear, which men name the Wagon', Homer, *Iliad*, 18, 487; 'Bear, which people also call the Plow', Homer, *Odyssey*, 5, 272.

<sup>18</sup> Augustus was not born in August. The author likely intended to refer to the name of the month, which is so-called because of Augustus.

<sup>19</sup> In 1193 (Phillips 2019, 302). The birth date of Saint Anthony appears in the text as 1195, but others mention 1193 (Correia 1997, 57), and 1191 (Borges and Pereira 2019, 33, 163).

the Hydra in the seven sins of death, achieved in a single labor seven feats, crowned in a single feat seven triumphs” (p. 3). In fact, the number of heads belonging to the Hydra varies according to the author in question. Euripides (*Herc.* 419), describes the monster as being “the many-headed hydra”, without specifying a specific number; this is followed by Virgil (*Aen.* 8, 300), who notes a “multitude of heads”. Diodorus Siculus (4, 11, 5) says there were “a hundred necks, with a hundred serpent heads”, as does Ovid (*Met.* 8, 71). Pseudo-Apollodorus (*Bibl.* 2.77), asserts that the heads are nine. Pausanias (2, 37, 4) tries to impose some plausibility on the tale and states that, in his opinion, the monster had only one head, but it was the poet Pisander of Camirus (7th-6th century BC) who invented that they were many, to make it more terrifying.

Brás Luís Abreu presents the number of heads as seven, a number well-known to Christians: among other cases, God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh (Gen. 2, 2-3); while Jesus says sins should be forgiven, not seven times, but seventy times seven (Mt. 18, 21-22). By choosing the number seven for the heads of the Hydra, they also coincide with the number of deadly sins, thus making Hercules a champion of the Church, since the heads he cuts off provide seven triumphs for the hero and consequently for the Church. The reader who is familiar with Greek mythology can thereby infer that, to overcome vices, it is necessary – just as it happened with the hero – to have help, in this case the help from the Catholic Church.

Throughout the work, the Hydra continues to serve as metonym for these sins. In a direct address to the “powerful vice” that is “lust”, a “stormy gulf of sensuality” that blinds people, the narrator compares it to the Hydra:

“In the monstrosity of the venomous Hydra, your reputation is one of the most impure among its seven heads; your breath, one of the most voracious among its seven throats; because you are the one who reasons

worst and breathes worst among the seven Deadly sins.” (p. 155)

During his time in Podio (today Le Puys, a commune in southwestern France), where he arrived from Bribe (today known as Brive-la-Gaillarde, which, in the 12th century, belonged to the diocese of Limoges, France), Saint Anthony manufactured a symbolic sword (the “sword of doctrine”, which he “sharpened to behead monsters”) to fight the Hydra/ Vices. As Brás Luís Abreu reports, “[a]s it was a sword endowed with seven gifts, or seven ember-days<sup>21</sup> of grace, he intended to cut off the seven vices at once, or the seven heads of the Hydra” (p. 176). Furthermore, Saint Francis himself appears to his “dearest Fernando” (whom the narrator calls “our sleeping Palinurus”, evoking the helmsman of Aeneas – cf. Vergil, *Aeneid*, 5, 852-861) in a dream and, calling him “Alcides” and “Hercules”, predicts that he will fight and overcome “human blindness”: “With this sole endeavor, more than in the seven heads of the Hydra, you will overcome in one stroke the seven capital origins of guilt” (p. 39).

Another aspect that is evoked in the work is the iconography of Saint Anthony. Brás Luís Abreu explains “the devout impulse to adorn images of Anthony with this Infant in his arms, to thus better believe in his miracles with this prodigy” (p. 194). Indeed, one of the most frequent representations in the iconography of the Saint is the scene of the Child Jesus standing or sitting upon either a closed or open book (Fig. 1 & 2).

According to Brás Luís Abreu, the Child should be seated on an open book, thus indicating that the “Sacred Book of scriptures” is no longer closed with seven seals, as indicated in Rev. 5.1, but open, by the will of Christ. In this way, Anthony would shine, by overcoming the Hydra, replacing the heads/seven sins with crowns/seven wonders:

21 Francis Mershman, (1909): Ember days (corruption from Lat. Quatuor Tempora, four times) are the days at the beginning of the seasons ordered by the Church as days of fast and abstinence.”





Figure 1. "Saint Anthony of Lisbon, mirror of Portugal", Braga, Francisco Duarte da Matta workshop, 1734. Engraving: etching and burin, b&w; 17.7x13.4 cm (image, external square). Public copy. National Digital Library – National Library of Portugal. <https://purl.pt/1119>.



Figure 2. "Saint Anthony of Padua with the Child", ca. 1668-1669. Museum of Fine Arts, Seville. Bartolomé Esteban Murillo (Seville, 1617-1682). Oil on canvas, 283 x 188 cm. Provenance: Capuchin Convent, Seville. <https://www.museosdeandalucia.es/web/museodebellasartesdesevilla/-/san-antonio-de-padua-con-el-ni-1> (licensed with Cc-pd-mark-footer, PD-Art, PD-old-100).

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"[The Child was] seated on that book formerly closed with seven seals, which now was seen joyfully open by Anthony, who was assisted by seven celestial gifts, in order that he, tearing out of the world the seven heads of the Hydra, could shine brighter than the seven stars of the Sphere; and many times he was miraculous in overcoming the critical punishments of guilt, and he made those who, in Humanity, as heads, were seven sins that destroyed the Soul, and became, as crowns in his holiness, seven wonders, that would astonish the World." (pp. 194-195)

When he is expelled from the city of Arminio (the name by which Rimini, in northern Italy, is referred to in the text), Saint Anthony delivers a sermon to the fish (since men did not want to listen to him). Addressing the "Brother Swordfish", he challenges him to cut off the heads of the many Hydras, that is, to destroy vices. By using the adjective "mortal" to qualify the heads, he alludes to the fact that,

just as in mythology the heads of the monster can be destroyed, so in the allegory sins can be eradicated: "cast your blows in this theater of foam, against so many armies of sinners, to see if your blades can cut off the heads of so many mortal Hydras" (p. 250).

By the end of the book, in a sequence exalting the cities of Lisbon and Padua, the former is presented as the Head and the latter as the Body (p. 468-471). In developing this allegory, the Hydra is mentioned again, which, through the action of Anthony, would have its heads transformed into crowns of Grace:

"Lisbon, that Head surrounded by so many crowns as triumphs; because it is crowned by the seven Stars of Grace with the grace of the

seven gifts, it has destroyed many times the seven Idols of guilt in the seven heads of the Hydra.” (p. 468)

#### 4.4. *Non plus ultra*

Another mythological theme present in the work concerns the Pillars of Hercules. In the context of describing Christianity’s expansion to distant and dangerous destinations, these are mentioned as the “columns of faith”, pillars of the dwelling of God, which do not mark the limits of the hero’s labors (not setting the “keys to the Ocean”), because Saint Peter is the one who holds the keys, but as columns supporting the sky. If Anthony aims to spread the Christian faith, the world cannot have boundaries: “thus, the divine Hercules desire to inscribe the *non plus* of glory on the pillars of faith, by placing columns to the empyrean on the keys of Peter, instead of keys to the Ocean, to mark the ends of his labors” (p. 35).

The presentation of the Pillars of Hercules as a marker of limits is a common literary *topos*. Although Keith Hutchison has noted, on the basis of Strabo 15, 1, 7, that “the belief that the limit which Hercules labored to achieve is not exclusively attached to the Straits of Gibraltar”,<sup>22</sup> this is the naturally implied border in the text, given Portugal’s geographical position and Fernando’s intention to enter the interior of Morocco. Even though he did not have to cross this strait to enter Africa (and it would be simpler to do so along the eastern coast, since Portugal only has contact with the Atlantic coast), and although Portugal, like Spain, had discovered “new worlds” and new paths to the “old worlds” more than two hundred years before the publication of the work, the time of the narrative is prior to these explorations, as it takes place in the 13th century. Brás Luís Abreu plays with both times – his own, in which he knows the end of the story he narrates, and that of the biography he writes – in which the pillars remained a

marker of the beginning of an unknown and dangerous world.

Moreover, these columns were said to bear an inscription printed in a somewhat “latinesque”<sup>23</sup> style which Brás Luís Abreu cites: *non plus ultra*. On this subject, Rosenthal’s study, which was revised by Hutchinson, has shown that the idea of the existence of columns marking a space “beyond” and a “boundary of virtue” (2009, 162) can be traced back to antiquity, appearing in various authors, such as Pindar (“Theron now reached the furthest point/ with his achievements and/ from his home”<sup>24</sup> grasp the pillars/ of Herakles. What lies beyond neither wise man/ nor fools can tread. I will not pursue it; I would be foolish.” *Ol.* 3, 41-45). However, it was only in the 16th century and after the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V (Charles I of Spain) adopted “plus ultra” as the *motto* of his empire that the form with the negative became popular, especially in Spain. The sense given by the negative expression was that a peak of excellence had been reached, where there was “nothing beyond”.

Brás Luís de Abreu oscillates between these two senses: he implies the sense of limit when he refers to the “endpoints of the labors” and “keys to the Ocean”, but he implies the sense of excellence when he wants “this divine Hercules” to engrave the glory of the deeds of the Saint, in the name of the Christian faith, on the “pillars of faith”, “the *non plus* of glory”. This sense of “maximum excellence” permeates other passages of the book, such as in the references to “the *non plus ultra* of virtue” (p. 39), the “*Non plus ultra* of favors” (p. 189) or “the *Non plus ultra* of his prodigies” (p. 122).

These columns are also referred to as “Atlas” or “Atlantes”, alluding to the ancient Titan punished by Zeus to hold up the earth (or, on some accounts, to hold the earth and sky together). However, in this passage of the

23 Cf. ‘latinesque’, Hutchison 2009, 155, 156, 158; ‘bad latin’, Rosenthal 1971, 217, 2018, 222-227

24 The translator of this ode, William H. Race, inserts a note concerning this specific verse, referencing the scholiast’s commentary on virtue: ‘I.e. through his native virtues (schol.)’.

22 It could also go east. Cf. Hutchison 2009, 160.

work, they indicate an architectural reference, without mythological suggestion.<sup>25</sup> They also mark a way to maintain cosmic balance, as Hutchinson notes: “Philostratus’s observation, that the pillars have something to do with keeping the elements in harmony”, connects to “the cosmological tradition that the sky needed to be held up” (2009, 169). It is this architectural association that is present when the narrator expresses admiration for the fact that the Child Jesus includes Saint Anthony in the doxology “Glory be”: “Gloria Patri, et tibi Antoni, et Spiritui Sancto. Glory to the Father, and to you, Oh Anthony, and to the Holy Spirit” (p. 193). As he asks there: “But tell me: if the two Atlantes of your apostleship, John and James, do not deserve Heaven at your side, how do you give to Anthony not only in Heaven, but in the midst of the Trinity, your Throne?” (p. 193). The implicit biblical reference is to Mk 10.35-45, where the two brothers James and John, disciples of Jesus, ask him: “Grant that in your glory we may sit one at your right and the other at your left.” (Mk 10.37). Jesus denies their request. However, what he doesn’t bestow upon the apostles, who are pillars in the form of men (“two Atlantes”, as they are called), he grants to Anthony.

The Saint is also referred to as holding up the world: when describing the vision of the child in his arms, the narrator says that the “arms of Anthony [...] happily served [...] as Atlas to that Heaven” (p. 186). In iconography one can also see the infant Jesus holding the globe in his hand.<sup>26</sup>

Regarding the religious agenda of the work, Brás Luís Abreu uses the image that the devout reader has of Saint Anthony with the child in his arms to convey that he is the true sustainer of the world:

“In the two Columns, Faith and Charity, this Hercules wrote the *Non plus ultra* of his wonders; so that, like the Sun, he would

illuminate the World; like Hercules, he would sustain the Sky;<sup>27</sup> he who, like Anthony, having God in his arms, contained within himself what does not fit in Heaven; he bore within himself what sustains the World.” (p. 122)

#### 4.5. The weapons

Saint Anthony is also portrayed as a good soldier of the Catholic Church (“the Cross on his arm was his shield, and with marvelous skill he made it a sword in his hand”, p. 9). Jesus himself, when he intervenes in Anthony’s dreams, calls him a “soldier of Christ” (p. 37) and a “sovereign soldier of the banner of the Cross” (p. 38). Throughout the text, the metaphor of the brave and fearless soldier continues – for instance, the narrator reports that Saint Anthony was a soldier who used the Cross as both shield and sword (“O valorous soldier of the militia of Christ! How brave, how gallant”, p. 272) – but Saint Anthony’s role as a soldier extends beyond the protection of the Catholic Church to include the defense of his own country. In 1663, the king enlisted Saint Anthony in the Portuguese army as a soldier. The salary he received was put towards a fund to support the orphans and widows of soldiers. In 1683, he reached the rank of captain in the Regiment of Lagos (Algarve, Portugal), and later that of Lieutenant Colonel. In Brazil, he even reached the rank of General (Borges and Pereira 2019, 80). Around 60 years later, Brás Luís Abreu was aware of this fact, and to this day Saint Anthony remains the patron of the Regiment according to military tradition.

The importance of this aspect is emphasized by the author when addressing the King in his initial Dedication:

“To defend and secure the vast domains of the Lusitanian Crown, the aids of his assistance, the squadrons of his virtues, the sleeves of his tunic, the lines of his habit, the regiments of

<sup>25</sup> In other passages, in fact, the Titan Atlas will appear, but he does not fall within the scope of this article.

<sup>26</sup> E.g. the wooden 17<sup>th</sup> century sculpture at the Mother Church of Tavira (Algarve, Portugal).

<sup>27</sup> The author also reveals his familiarity with the episode that occurred during Hercules’ final labor, namely his theft of the golden apples from the Garden of the Hesperides. For a short period, Hercules exchanges places with Atlas out of self-interest and holds up the sky.

his life, and the sword of his Cross is enough. Above all, the laurels of victory depend on his arm, for he holds in his hand the Lord of Hosts. At the same time, he can assist in Portugal, govern in Brazil, and triumph in India.” (p. 3)

It is also well-documented iconographically<sup>28</sup> with images of the Saint depicted with varying degrees of military adornment. For example, at the Church of Saint Francis in Bahia (Brazil), the Saint is portrayed in an officer’s tricorne hat, epaulettes, sword, and spurs. Conversely, in Lagos (Algarve, Portugal), at the Church of Saint Anthony, he is represented with an officer’s sash and staff of command. At the Tavira’s Mother Church in Algarve, the Saint is depicted with just a sash, while in Angola he is depicted with “only a silver saber” (Borges and Pereira 2019, 115).

This profile of Saint Anthony recalls Hercules and other deities, which are named in hagiography as contributors to the characterization of the Saint, given that they are all associated with wars. For example, Hercules fought with a club, which he made himself, and he is often covered with the skin of the lion he had killed. The remaining weapons were gifts from the gods: from Hermes, he received the sword; from Apollo, the bow; from Hephaestus, the golden armor, and from Athena, the tunic (Ps. Apollod. 2, 71). The club is Hercules’ most characteristic weapon. Often being equated with the Cross, which is also made of wood, it is a symbol of the sufferings of Christ and Christians, wielded by the Saint: “The one [Hercules], with the Club, counted triumphs, counting labors; this one [Saint Anthony], with the Cross, suffering countless labors, left triumphs unnumbered” (p. 28).

The club, like the other weapons (such as the bow and arrow), does not cause fatigue, but, due to the transformative effect of religion, turns into the Cross, which appears as the true

weapon of the Church: “nor does the invincible Club disturb your rest, or the victorious arrows of Alcides; because for you, only the Cross of Christ is the Bow of the most celebrated triumphs and the Club of the most glorious labors” (p. 40). The Child Jesus, in the dream mentioned above, also presents the Saint with the most recognizable attributes of Hercules, the club and the lion’s skin: “Come on, valorous Alcides of Lusitania! Invincible Club of the Cross in the hand, for victories; rough Lion’s skin in the attire, for protection” (p. 39). Finally, at the end of Anthony’s life, it is the club that he returns to. In the Saint’s last moments, when he faints in the arms of his companions, it is said that “the same sovereign Hercules, who, having the Cross as a club, owed so many triumphs to his valor, as bold actions to his arm, remained fainting in their arms” (p. 306).

Alongside Hercules, and as mentioned in the Dedication, other gods appear, such as Jupiter and Neptune, who are also recognized by their most characteristic weapons (thunderbolt and trident, respectively). The association of these deities with the Saint is sometimes portrayed through the characters who provide him with symbolic versions of these weapons. The Saint, by manipulating the weapons, becomes the one who uses them: “[Saint Anthony] was the divine Hercules, tamer of human monstrous beasts, because his hand wielded this club; he was the thundering Jove, dominator of the false, lying gods, because his hand hurled this thunderbolt; he was the Sacred Neptune, moderator of the wandering tempestuous seas, because this trident ruled in his hand” (p. 9). Moreover, just as the text has been “cleaned” of some episodes of Hercules’ mythology, the same happens in the case of Jupiter. The Christian “cleansing” also silenced other aspects that were “uncomfortable”, such as the numerous seductions that classical mythology attributes to them (of men and women, virgins or married), including incest. More, Jupiter he is never highlighted as the supreme god or king of the gods, nor as the father of Hercules (as if there were no coincidences between his

28 In 2022, the Museu de Lisboa – Santo António, promoted an exhibition about Saint Antony in the Army. Cf. <https://www.agendax.pt/events/event/santo-antonio-militar/> and <https://museudelisboa.pt/pt/acontece/noticias/exposicao-santo-antonio-militar-na-biblioteca-do-exercito>. Retrieved 31st May 2024.



stories and the Christian god and his son) but is treated as just another one of the Olympian gods. Thus, what distinguishes him is his power over thunder (“thundering Jove”) and his lightning bolts, which also contribute to overcome the false gods.

Of all possible weapons (besides the Cross) at his disposal, the one that is unique is the Child Jesus himself, whom the Saint “wields” in one of his arms. In him, all the armament that the Church needs is gathered through Saint Anthony, who became various symbols from both the ancient gods (Jupiter’s lightning bolt; Hercules’ club; Neptune’s trident; Mars’ sword) and from the saints and prophets of the Church. Examples of the latter include Moses’ staff, Peter’s key, Paul’s sword, and the writing-pen of the Church doctors: Jerome, Ambrose, and Augustine.

Throughout the text, the identification of Saint Anthony with mythological deities is made using the second and third-person indicative. Here, referring to Jesus, a list of weapons is also mentioned into which he could (hypothetically) transform himself, if he were in the era of Greco-Latin mythology and if Saint Anthony were one of the ancient deities. But since this is the era of a single God and not of Greek ones, the Child Jesus is still a weapon for the Saint to use, by “embodying” all the qualities and distinctive symbols of different saints:

“This sovereign Infant placed in your hand, O glorious Anthony, if you were Jupiter, would be the Thunderbolt with which you strike down the Giants of Heresy; if you were Hercules, would be the Club with which you shatter the monsters of sin; if you were Neptune, would be the Trident with which you quell the waves of vice; if you were Mars, would be the sword with which you rout the armies of guilt. But because you are Moses, it is thus a Staff, with which you perform miracles; but because you are Peter, it is thus a key, with which you unlock Heaven; but because you are Paul, it is thus a sword, with which you defend the Church; but because you are Jerome, you are Ambrose

and you are Augustine, it is thus a Quill, with which you refute heresies, confound sects, and confirm faith.” (p. 191)

#### 4.6. Friendship and Love

Hercules’ temperament contrasts with that of Saint Anthony when it comes to moderation and the constancy needed to deal with difficult situations, which the author compares to the “ardent impatience of the Hercules and the Alexanders” (p. 284). However, the author scatters elements throughout the text that provide a glimpse of a Saint with a heroic spirit, with strong emotions (e.g., “fervent preaching,” p.286; “his fiery spirit,” p. 287; “inflamed heart (...), fueled by fire, only lived for the benefit of the flames,” *ibid.*), which is capable of intense friendship and love. Moreover, when it comes to friendship, Abreu lists a series of famous mythological, biblical, and historical pairs, including Hercules and Theseus, and culminating in the depth of the bonds that united Friar Adam Marsh to Saint Anthony:

“In Milan, in search of our Saint, where he still lingered preaching and shining, his dearest fellow disciple arrived, as filled with longings as with virtues; a true example of the closest friendship; for more than Castor to Pollux, than Hercules to Theseus, than Acates to Aeneas (...), and than Jonathan to David, Friar Adam Marsh loved Anthony with close bonds of religious friendship.” (p. 278)

Friar Adam Marsh was a Franciscan monk who, despite coming from a wealthy and influential family, chose the vows of poverty. It is possible that Friar Adam corresponded with Anthony and that they were friends, as the text tells us, but not in order to reprimand Friar Elias of Cortona,<sup>29</sup> who “was now trying to introduce some abuses and corruptions against the purity of the Rule” (p.297). The author may

<sup>29</sup> Controversial figure, he lived between c. 1180 and 1253 and was a friend of Saint Francis of Assisi. After Francis’ disappearance, he was elected General Minister at the General Chapter of 1232 (one year after Saint Anthony’s death) and attempted changes in the Order, which led to discontent, resulting in his excommunication but later pardon.



have been familiar with the *Chronicle of the Twenty-Four Generals of the Order of Friars Minor*, which mentions their collaboration, but “the chronology will not do: St Anthony was dead long before the events described, and even before Adam had joined the order” (Lawrence 2018, 172).

Traditionally, it is said that Hercules belonged to a generation preceding Theseus and that Theseus admired him so much that he sought to emulate him.<sup>30</sup> Not all ancient mythographers agree, but there are versions which place them together in some expeditions, such as Theseus’ campaign against the Amazons.<sup>31</sup> The greatest display of friendship between them can be expressed by Hercules’ descent into the Underworld to rescue him.<sup>32</sup> Indeed, it is the word “friend” (*philos*) which Euripides chooses in the tragedy *Hercules* (or *Hercules Furens* – *Herakles Mainomenos*) for the hero to utter when identifying the approaching Theseus: “my kinsman and friend” (1154). The underlying concept is that of *philia*, “affectionate regard, friendship (...) usually between equals” (LSJ), an “existence of friendly feelings” (Diggle).

Abreu also displays his knowledge of the distinction between the various types of love that existed and were distinguished by the Greeks. In addition to *philia* (which also applied to the love between siblings and husband and wife – cf. Diggle, n. 3), there are many examples of “love” in religious contexts, whether for God, of God for men, or of the Saint for humanity; these are marked by the Greek term *agape*.<sup>33</sup> This reference is to

be expected, given the work’s hagiographic nature. In some passages, we can see the shift from one category to another, such as when the parents of the future Saint Anthony tried to “put traps in his blindfolds” (pp. 24-25). Yet, as the passage continues, “Fernando, who felt more penetrating arrows from another love, without being caught in the traps, broke his blindfolds” (p. 25); this indicates the transition from filial love to love for God, or from *philia* to *agape*. The same can be seen when the fire that Prometheus gave to men serves as a metaphor for divine love: “Fernando, like sovereign Prometheus who set the world ablaze in the fire of heavenly love, ignited the torch of his heart in the chariot of the Divine Sun” (p. 34).

In various contexts, love appears as Love (capitalized), sometimes being identified as “Cupid” (to whom the Child Jesus, in one occurrence, is compared: p. 186), but without exploring the aspect of carnal love, which the Greeks called *eros* (“sexual love”, “passion”, “desire”), which was also the name of the Greek god of love. This love is referred to as temptations of “sensuality” or “lasciviousness” (p. 156), a “vice” to which the author dedicates an all paragraph in p.155.

The cleansing of mythology present in the work and themes potentially considered unseemly to a Christian outlook, can generally be understood as a result of the author’s choice. But it is somewhat unexpected that, in describing the admiration and devotion that Italians had for Saint Anthony, examples of loving pairs from mythology, the Bible and history, who exemplify less conventional kinds of love are given; for instance, among the twenty-eight examples presented are Ganymede and Hylas, two boys who had a loving relationship with an older man (a god and a hero, respectively). Homosexual love is also compared with the love shown by the Italian people for the Portuguese saint:

“Aurora lost less her heart in love for Tithonus, Apollo for Daphne, Venus for Adonis, Diana for Endymion, Jupiter for

30 Cf. Plu. *Thes.* 11, 1. ‘And he did this in imitation of Heracles.’

31 Cf. Plu. *Thes.* 26, 1. ‘He also made a voyage into the Euxine Sea, as Philochorus and sundry others say, on a campaign with Heracles against the Amazons, and received Antiope as a reward of his valor; but the majority of writers, including Pherecydes, Hellanicus, and Herodorus, say that Theseus made this voyage on his own account.’

32 Cf. E. *Herac.* 218-19, when Iolaos is talking to Demophon, the son of Theseus, he says: ‘Heracles gave him as his reward the fair Antiope and brought your father out of the dark recesses of Hades.’

33 Which is the love ‘between God and humans or

between Christians’ (Diggle).

Ganymede, Hercules for Hylas, Neptune for Tyro, (...) Holofernes for Judith, and Samson for Delilah, than the hearts of Italy gained in divine affections for Anthony.” (p. 216)

## 5. CONCLUSION

To conclude, in *Sol Nascido no Ocidente e posto ao nascer do Sol*, S. António Português, Greek mythology is used as an aesthetic and literary device, in which mythological figures serve as effective metaphors for understanding human beings, from the simplest to the most prominent, namely the work's subject, Saint Anthony. The frequent references to figures from the Greek tradition showcase the narrative utility of organizing the world into typologies (as the use of the plural in “of the Hercules and the Alexanders” helps us understand). Thus, we can speak of the work's use of “mytheme”, that is, minimal units of myth, which serve as the basis for the construction of *exempla*, like an archetype that fits into different situations related to different people.

This analysis has also highlighted how the author's omission of some of the adventures that Hercules went through cannot simply be seen as a device to “cleanse” the name of the hero, whom the author wanted to pair with Saint Anthony, but may only be because it was not necessary, since he uses some less virtuous ones. The appropriation of Greek mythology in general, and the allusions to Hercules in particular, is advantageous for showcasing the greatness of the Saint to educated recipients (the King, first and foremost, and all censors through whom the book passed before being published), as well as devotees of Saint Anthony who were familiar with mythological themes that were incorporated into Portuguese literature following the Renaissance. In his Baroque style, with its many figures of speech, twisted syntax and far-fetched vocabulary, Brás Luís Abreu shows that the marvelous and the fantastic are possible and that a human being can act like a god and attain communion with divinity. The underlying mytheme for

both Saint Anthony and Hercules is that of the hero who struggles and suffers, dies, and achieves immortality (and, in the case of Saint Anthony, “sainthood”). The immortality of both is proven by the survival of their stories throughout the many centuries that followed. The use of mythology, the Bible and history to praise the strong and powerful further magnifies the Saint, favoring the corollary of what it was intended to validate: Hercules did well, but Anthony did better.

## 6. ABBREVIATIONS

- Diggle Faculty of Classics, University of Cambridge, and James Diggle. 2021. *The Cambridge Greek Lexicon*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- LSJ Liddell, Henry George, Robert Scott, and Henry Stuart Jones. 1996. *A Greek-English Lexicon*. 9th ed. with revised supplement. Oxford: Clarendon.

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