

Levels of Metaphor in the Hercules-Cacus Episode  
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Several scholars have theorized that Hercules can be seen as a forerunner of and a metaphor for both Aeneas and Augustus. Schnepf followed by Galinsky says, “Hercules is the mythical counterpart of Augustus as the benefactor of mankind, as the bringer of peace, and as a mortal deified” (*The American Journal of Philology* [1966] 25). Further evidence of this connection is put forth by Kallendorf who says “Hercules and Aeneas represent the stoic quest for uprightness and virtue (*De laboribus Herculis*, 2.487-89). What is more, the virtuous descent can be made by actually fighting with vice, as [does] Hercules, or by contemplating temporal affairs, the path that Aeneas [chooses] (2.622-23)” (*In Praise of Aeneas* 95-6). Kallendorf describes Hercules’ apotheosis (44, 188), whereby the hero is raised up to the status of a god. Aeneas receives the same treatment upon his death, anticipated by some passages early in *Aen.* (Aen.1.231-296) when Jupiter tells Venus of her son’s destiny; Augustus himself historically is raised at least to the standard of a demigod—indeed in *E.* 1 he is a god—the condition of both Hercules and Aeneas before their complete deification.

If Hercules is a model for Augustus and Aeneas, then could Cacus be a model for Turnus and Marcus Antonius? Both Turnus and Cacus are associated with fire. In Turnus’ scene with the fury Allecto, the fury sent by Hera “facem iuueni coniecit et **atro lumine fumantis** fixit sub pectore taedas” (7. 456b-7). Cacus’ association with fire comes from his father Vulcan and his fire-breath, the Hercules-Cacus episode referring back to the Turnus-Allecto episode through some key imagery involving weapons and flames. For example, one can compare “nec iam se capit **unda**, uolat **uapor ater** ad auras” (7.466) to “**fumus agit nebulaque** igens specus **aestuat atra**” (8.258), wherein both describe a black cloud. Though “undantis aeni” is only specifically named in the Turnus-Allecto episode, the description of Cacus is very reminiscent of a boiling cauldron. Furthermore, Cacus envelops his home with a blinding fog, *caligine caeca*, whereas Aeneas’ prayer for battle comes at dawn, “interea reuoluta ruebat matura iam luce dies noctemque fugarat” (10.256-7), and then his shield and helmet themselves give off light. Aeneas is here associated with providing sight, placing him in opposition to Cacus—a name that A. Smith in *Primacy of Vision* (150) interprets as a reflection itself on “caeca”—just as Turnus is Aeneas’ opposite and arch-nemesis. Turnus and Cacus are also followed by descriptions of emotional states, as Galinsky discusses (18-51). Both are overwhelmed with fury and madness, but Cacus also with trickery. This foreshadows Turnus’ own trickery which develops in 4.515 (*perfidus*) when Turnus plans to ambush Aeneas, and perhaps also Cacus’ death foreshadows Turnus’ own. As Cacus is the enemy of Hercules and Hercules a metaphor for Augustus, then perhaps Cacus could be a subtle allusion to Augustus’ enemy, Marcus Antonius. Antonius’ trickery could be assumed to be his announcement of Caesarion as Julius Caesar’s legitimate heir, thus attempting to invalidate Augustus’ right to the leadership of the Roman Empire, as Turnus tries to do in respects to Aeneas through war and Cacus to Hercules through the theft of his cattle. Cacus undermined the will of the gods by stealing the cattle that Hercules had been indirectly ordered by Juno to steal from Geryon. Along this same line of thought, it could be asserted the gods determined for Augustus to lead the Roman Empire through his own efforts, and Marcus Antonius rebelled against the gods when he tried to steal it.

Hercules was a forerunner for Aeneas, and therefore for Augustus, as noted by Gransden: “the verses “aduentare uirum et partis petere agmen easdem partibus ex isdem et summa dominarier arce” place their emphasis on the opening and concluding words: aduentare uirum, a hero is coming” (*Virgil’s Iliad* 45). Cacus “the evil one” anticipates Turnus and illuminates the ending duel between Aeneas and Turnus, and perhaps also illuminates Virgil’s own interpretation of the historical events between Augustus and Marcus Antonius.