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MAN, MONSTER, ANIMAL ? VIRGIL'S CACUS IN THE MIDDLE AGES AND SIXTEENTH CENTURY

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The figure of Cacus appears in book VIII of Virgil's *Aeneid*¹. An intriguing blend of formidable man, bestial monster, and fire deity (he is called

¹ *Hic spelunca fuit uasto summota recessu, / semihominis Caci facies quam dira tenebat / solis inaccessam radiis /... huic monstro Volcanus erat pater : illius atros / ore uomens ignis magna se mole ferebat. / attulit et nobis aliquando optantibus aetas / auxilium aduentumque dei. nam maximus ultor / tergemini nece Geryonae spoliisque superbus / Alcides aderat taurosque hac uictor agebat / ingentis, uallemque boues amnemque tenebant. / at furis Caci mens effera, ne quid inausum / aut intractatum scelerisue doliue fuisset, / quattuor a stabulis praestanti corpore tauros / auertit, totidem forma superante iuuenas. atque hos, ne qua forent pedibus uestigia rectis, / cauda in speluncam tractos uersisque uiarum / indicium raptor saxo occultabat opaco /... Amphitryoniades armenta abiturumque pararet, / discessu mugire boues atque omne querelis / impleri nemus et colles clamore relinqui. / reddidit una bouem uocem uastoque sub antro / mugit et Caci spem custodita fefellit. / hic uero Alcidae furiis exarserat atro / felle dolor : rapit arma manu nodisque grauatum / robur, et aërii cursu petit ardua montis. / tum primum nostri Cacus uidere timentem / turbatumque oculis ; fugit illicet ocior Euro / speluncamque peti, pedibus timor addidit alas. / ut sese inclusit ruptisque immane catenis / deiecit saxum, ferro quod et arte paterna / pendebat, fultosque emuniit obice postis /... stabat acuta silex praecisis undique saxis / speluncae dorso insurgens, altissima uisu, / dirarum nidis domus opportuna uolucrum. / hanc, ut prona iugo laeum incumberebat ad amnem, / dexter in aduersum nitens concussit et imis / auulsam soluit radicibus, inde repente / impulit ; impulsu quo maximus intonat aether, / dissultant ripae refluuntque exterritis amnis /... ergo insperata deprensam luce repente / inclusumque cauo saxo atque insueta rudentem / desuper Alcides telis premit, omniaque arma / aduocat et ramis uastisque molaribus instat. / ille autem, neque enim fuga iam super ulla pericli, / faucibus ingentem fumum (mirabile dictu) / euomit inuoluitque domum caligine caeca / prospectum eripiens oculis, glomeratque sub antro / fumiferam noctem commixtis igne tenebris. / non tulit Alcides animis, seque ipse per ignem / praecipiti iecit saltu, qua plurimus undam / fumus agit nebulaque ingens specus aestuat atra. / hic Cacus in tenebris incendia uana uomentem / corripit in nodum complexus, et angit inhaerens / elisos oculos et siccum sanguine guttur. / panditur extemplo foribus*

Figurer la nature. Les métamorphoses de l'allégorie (XIII^e-XVII^e siècles), éd. R. DEKONINCK, A. GUIDERDONI et B. VAN DEN ABEELE, collab. M. SCHMITZ et M. SOMON, Louvain-la-Neuve, 2021, p. xx-yy (Institut d'études médiévales. Textes, Études, Congrès, 34)

both *semihomo* and *semiferus*, and is the son of Vulcan), Cacus is described as fighting with Hercules over the possession of cattle which formerly belonged to Geryon, a three-bodied giant whom the hero has lately slain. Hercules, we are told, has carried off large numbers of Geryon's cattle, only for « four large and splendid bulls and four exceptionally fine heifers² » to be stolen again, shortly afterwards, by Cacus. In order to prevent their hooves from leaving any incriminating tracks, the latter has dragged these animals back to his cave by their tails ; but he is soon betrayed by the cry of one of them, as she responds to the lowing of the rest of the herd as they pass by. When he realizes what has happened, Hercules' rage blazes forth, and he pursues the fleeing Cacus into the latter's deep, dark cave. Cacus seeks to render that cave impenetrable by jamming an enormous rock against its doorposts, but Hercules is able nevertheless to gain access, and they fight – Cacus' principal weapon consisting of a heady brew of thick black smoke and fire, which he belches out liberally from his vast mouth. In the end Hercules seizes him, twines him in a knot, and chokes him – a feat which excites the rapt admiration of on-lookers, as they « gaze at the horrifying eyes, the face, and the shaggy bristling chest of the man-beast. »

Not surprisingly, given the canonical status which Virgil has enjoyed for many centuries, this episode was subjected to an enormous range of transformations in antiquity, in the Middle Ages and beyond. In what follows we will explore some of these variable elements, above all the tendency of authors to stress one side of Cacus's dual – human and animal – nature at the expense of the other. He (sometimes 'it') can therefore act as a valuable paradigm enabling us to explore certain points of similarity and contrast between men and beasts as these were understood in the medieval and Renaissance eras.

Virgil's account of Hercules' dealings with Cacus was the most poetically vivid, indeed the goriest version of the legend current in the ancient world ; but it was by no means the only one. It is in essence a creative reworking of material from various earlier sources (such as Hesiod's *Theogony* and the Homeric *Hymn of Hermes*) ; and it also vied with versions by at least two of Virgil's rough contemporaries, namely Livy, writing in Latin, and Dionysius of Halicarnassus, writing in Greek. Their two accounts, which are so simi-

domus alta reuulsis, / abstractaeque boues abiurataeque rapinae / caelo ostenduntur, pedibusque informe cadaver / protrahitur. nequeunt expleri corda tuendo terribilis oculos, uultum uillosaque saetis / pectora semiferi atque extinctos faucibus ignis. (P. Virgillii Maronis *Opera*, ed. R. A. B. MYNORS, Oxford, 1959, book VIII, ll. 192-267).

² This, and the other quotations from Virgil, are taken from the characterful Penguin Classics rendering by W. F. JACKSON KNIGHT (Harmondsworth, 1956). The Hercules-Cacus episode is on p. 207-209.

lar as almost certainly to be based ultimately on the same source, differ from Virgil's in three main ways : first, the fight description is very brief, and both literally and metaphorically bloodless ; second, Hercules kills Cacus with a club rather than by strangling ; and third, most importantly perhaps for our purposes, Cacus is unequivocally human – for Livy he is a fierce local shepherd, whereas for Dionysius he is a brigand, and for both he has the power of speech, able to call associates to his aid or to negotiate with Hercules³.

This conception of Cacus as a human being seems to have been common especially in later antiquity. One can point for example to the *Origo gentis Romanae* formerly attributed to Aurelius Victor, and to the *Collectanea rerum memorabilium* of Solinus (both fourth century). For the former, Cacus is not a monster, but rather an evil, ferocious, yet plainly human slave of Evander⁴, whereas for the latter he is an ambassador from the east, who is killed by Hercules having first been held in bondage and then escaped⁵. At least two other rough contemporaries of Livy and Virgil, however, have descriptions of the Hercules-Cacus encounter which show traces of both their versions. In book IV of his *Elegies*, Propertius mainly follows Livy, characterizing Cacus as a thief, and giving short shrift to the fight, which again ends in a cudgelling rather than a strangling. His Cacus does, however, exhibit certain traces of subterranean monstrosity, in that his robbing enterprises are centred around a dread cavern, and in that he has three mouths⁶. One guesses

³ Livy's entry on Cacus is as follows : *Pastor accola eius loci, nomine Cacus, ferox viribus, captus pulchritudine boum cum avertere eam praedam vellet, quia, si agendo armentum in speluncam compulsisset, ipsa vestigia quaerentem dominum eo deductura erant, aversos boves, exitium quemque pulchritudine, caudis in speluncam traxit. Hercules ad primam auroram somno excitus cum gregem perlustrasset oculis et partem abesse numero sensisset, pergat ad proximam speluncam, si forte eo vestigia ferrent. Quae ubi omnia foras versa vidit nec in partem alium ferre, confusus atque incertus animi ex loco infesto agere porro armentum ocepit. Inde cum actae boves quaedam ac desiderium, ut fit, relictarum mugissent, reddita inclusarum ex spelunca boum vox Herculem convertit. Quem cum vadentem ad speluncam Cacus vi prohibere conatus esset, ictus clava fidem pastorem nequiquam invocans morte occubuit.* (Titus Livius, *Römische Geschichte*, ed. and trans. H. J. HILLEN, Munich – Zürich, 1987-2000, 14 vol., here vol. 1, book I, 7, 5-7).

⁴ *Cacus Evandri servus, nequitiae versutus et praeter cetera furacissimus* (Sexti Aurelii Victoris *Liber de Caesaribus. Praecedunt Origo gentis romanae et Liber de viris illustribus vrbis Romae, subsequitur Epitome de Caesaribus*, ed. F. PICHLMEYER, Leipzig, 1911, VI, 2).

⁵ *Hic, ut Gellius tradidit, cum a Tarchone Tyrrheno, ad quem legatus venerat missu Marsyae regis, socio Megale Phryge, custodiae foret datus, frustratus vincula et unde venerat redux, praesidiis amplioribus occupato circa Vulturum et Campaniam regno, dum adtreclare etiam ea audet, quae concesserant in Arcadum iura, duce Hercule qui tunc forte aderat oppressus est* (C. Ivlii Solini *Collectanea rerum memorabilium*, ed. T. MOMMSEN, 4th ed., Berlin, 1979, book I, 8).

⁶ *Sed non infido manserunt [boves] hospite Caco / Incolumes : furto polluit ille Jouem. / Incola Cacus erat, metuendo raptor ab antro, / Per tria partitos qui dabat ora focos. / Hic, ne certa*

here, however, that Propertius is in some way confusing Cacus with the genuinely tricorporate Geryon ; and all in all his Cacus comes across, as Karl Galinsky has put it, as « a clumsy chiseller rather than an infernal creature, [whose] monstrosity ... is more picturesque than terrifying⁷. »

Meanwhile Ovid, in his *Fasti*, inclines, as one might perhaps expect, towards the more poetic version of Virgil : his Cacus is called both *monstrum* and *vir* ; he vomits roaring flames from his mouth, before being three or four times smitten with Hercules' club and in consequence emitting a mixture of smoke and blood as he perishes ; and he inhabits a vast and inaccessible cavern. Nevertheless, also for Ovid, Cacus is ultimately more giant than monster or animal – even descriptions of him as the « terror and shame of the Aventine woods » and as behaving unpleasantly towards both neighbours and guests tend to confirm, rather than contradict this, and it should not be forgotten that he only starts breathing fire as a last resort, after other, somewhat more conventional forms of combat have failed⁸.

Bearing all the above examples in mind, it would seem fair to conclude that the most striking aspect of the Cacus figure as presented to the Roman world is its variability⁹. As John G. Winter puts it : « Cacus is a constant, but constantly changing, feature of the Hercules myth. The Romans themselves

forent manifestae signa rapinae, / Aversos cauda traxit in antra boves ; / Nec sine teste deo : furem sonuere iuueni, / Furis et implacidas diruit ira fores. / Maenalio jacuit pulsus tria tempora ramo. (Propertius, *Elegies*, ed. W. A. CAMPS, Cambridge, 1965, chap. IV, 9, 7-16).

⁷ G. K. GALINSKY, *The Herakles Theme. The Adaptation of the Hero in Literature from Homer to the Twentieth Century*, Oxford, 1972, p. 138-139. More consistently relevant to the present essay is his article « The Hercules-Cacus Episode in *Aeneid* VIII », in *American Journal of Philology*, 87 (1966), p. 18-51.

⁸ *De numero tauros sentit abesse duos. / nulla videt quaerens taciti vestigia furti : / traxerat aversos Cacus in antra ferox, / Cacus, Aventinae timor atque infamia silvae, / non leve finitimis hospitibusque malum. / dira viro facies, vires pro corpore, corpus / grande : pater monstri Mulciber huius erat : / proque domo longis spelunca recessibus ingens /... servata male parte boum Iove natus abibat : / mugitum rauco furta dedere sono. / < accipio revocamen > ait, vocemque secutus / impia per silvas ultor ad antra venit. / ille aditum fracti praestruxerat obice montis ; / vix iuga movissent quinque bis illud opus. / nititur hic humeris (caelum quoque sederat illis) / et vastum motu conlabefactat onus. / quod simul eversum est, fragor aethera terruit ipsum, / ictaque subsedit pondere molis humus. / prima movet Cacus collata proelia dextra / remque ferox saxis stipitibusque gerit. / quis ubi nil agitur, patrias male fortis ad artes / confugit et flammis ore sonante vomit ; /... occupat Alcides, adductaque clava trinodis / ter quater adverso sedit in ore viri. / Ille cadit mixtosque vomit cum sanguine fumos / et lato moriens pectore plangit humum.* (Publii Ovidii Nasonis *Fastorum libri sex*, ed. and trans. J. G. FRAZER, London, 1929, 5 vol., here vol. 1, I, 548-78).

⁹ The term « Roman » is used advisedly, given that Cacus seems hardly to have been known in Greece, and certainly not to have figured as an opponent in any of Hercules's labours – not that he does this at all consistently in Roman or medieval accounts of the *dodekathlos* either.

appear to have known scarcely more about him than is known to-day, and hence a new characterization could easily be effected for him without disturbing popular tradition¹⁰. » So he is sometimes a pastoral robber, sometimes a slave with thievish propensities, sometimes an ambassador, sometimes a giant, sometimes a fire-breathing monster, sometimes clearly human, sometimes not.

A further recurring feature of these early appearances of the Cacus figure is that its moral, political or other meaning tends to be conveyed, if at all, by implication rather than by explicit statement. Virgil's account, as is well known, contains a number of pointers which encourage the reader to link Cacus with Turnus and Hercules with Aeneas and, by extension, the Emperor Augustus ; Livy uses the Cacus episode as part of his attempt to account for the cult of Hercules currently in vogue at the *ara maxima* ; and so on. As yet, however, there is very little that we might call explicit allegory, except perhaps in the *Origo*, where the author associates the name *Cacus* (with a long « a » and emphasis on the first syllable) with the Greek word for evil, *κακόν* (with a long « o » and emphasis on the second syllable). That interpretation became very influential, once it had also been retailed by the Virgilian commentator Servius¹¹ ; but it is surely based on a false etymology.

These two questions, the extent of Cacus's humanity as against animality, and the implicit and/or explicit meanings that authors and artists use him to communicate, will continue to form the basis of our discussion as we continue our survey into (and slightly beyond) the Middle Ages. Not, admittedly, that all the authors we will meet are clear about these matters. That is true, for example, of Boethius, who, in book IV of his *Consolation of Philosophy* (early sixth century), simply mentions Cacus as having been slain by Hercules and implies that the latter is to be seen as an example of virtue¹² ; and hence it is true also of those authors whose material on Hercules draws mainly or exclusively on Boethius – such as, for example, Chaucer (in his *Monk's Tale*)¹³.

¹⁰ J. G. WINTER, *The Myth of Hercules at Rome*, New York, 1910, p. 171-273 (University of Michigan Studies, 4), here p. 225-226.

¹¹ *Cacus secundum fabulam Vulcani filius fuit, ore ignem ac fumum vomens, qui vicina omnia populabatur. veritas tamen secundum philologos et historicos hoc habet, hunc fuisse Euandri nequissimum servum ac furem. novimus autem malum a Graecis κακόν dici. (Servii Grammatici qui feruntur in Vergilii Carmina Commentarii*, ed. G. THILO and H. HAGEN, Leipzig, 1884, 2 vol., here vol. 2, p. 227).

¹² Boethius also, however, influentially places Cacus amongst the Twelve Labours of Hercules : *Stravit Antaeum Libycis harenis, / Cacus Evandri satiavit iras* (Boethius, *De consolatione philosophiae. Opuscula theologica*, ed. C. MORESCHINI, Munich – Leipzig, 2000, IV, 7, 25-26).

¹³ « And he slow Cacus in a Cave of stoon. » (*The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, ed. F. N. ROBINSON, Oxford, 2nd ed., 1974, I. 2107, p. 190).

From quite an early stage, however, some more substantial interpretations of the Cacus figure were offered. The first of these to evince a Christian perspective is that in St Augustine's *De civitate Dei* (c. 400), where Cacus appears rather unexpectedly in the chapter (XIX, 12) in which Augustine discusses what he sees as the natural, instinctive desire for peace shared by all beings. Even Cacus, he argues, « a creature so unsociable and wild that people preferred to call him a semi-man rather than a man, ... so singular in his wickedness that a name was found for him reflecting that fact », nevertheless « wished for nothing other than a peace in which no man's violence, or the fear of it, should disturb¹⁴. » It would be going too far to see this as an interpretation of Cacus *in bonam partem*, but it is nevertheless a fascinating exploitation of material which is obviously (on the basis both of citation and verbal parallels) Virgilian.

Meanwhile an interesting expansion of the Servian etymology of Cacus is given by Fulgentius in his *Mythologiae* (c. 500). Fulgentius reiterates the association (or confusion) between *cacus* and *κακόν*, but develops it into an extensive, if not very systematic, interpretation *in malam partem* of various aspects of Cacus' behaviour. His breathing out smoke, for example, is seen as evil putting out « what is contrary to the truth, that is, light, or what is offensive to those who see it, as smoke is to the eyes, or what is dark and dismal raillery »; and his two-facedness in reversing and hence obscuring the tracks of the cattle signifies the multiform nature of evil¹⁵. Here as elsewhere Fulgentius stops short of the highly methodical, painstakingly detailed point-by-

¹⁴ *Sed faciamus aliquem, qualem canit poetica et fabulosa narratio, quem fortasse propter ipsam insociabilem feritatem semihominem quam hominem dicere maluerunt. Quamvis ergo huius regnum dirae speluncae fuerit solitudo tamque malitia singularis, ut ex hac ei nomen inuentum sit (Graece namque malus κακός dicitur, quod ille uocabatur), nulla coniuu ei blandum ferret referretque sermonem, nullis filiis uel adluderet paruulis uel grandiusculis imperaret, nullo amici conloquio frueretur, nec Vulcani patris, quo uel hinc tantum non parum felicius fuit, quia tale monstrum ipse non genuit; nihil cuiquam daret, sed a quo posset quidquid uellet et quando posset quem uellet auferret: tamen in ipsa sua spelunca solitaria, cuius, ut describitur, semper recenti caede tepebat humus, nihil aliud quam pacem uolebat, in qua nemo illi molestus esset, nec eius quietem uis ullius terrorie turbaret.* (Sancti Avrelii Avgvstini *De civitate Dei*, Turnhout, 1955, 2 vol., vol. 2, p. 676-677 [CCSL 47-48]). The English translation is from Augustine, *The City of God against the Pagans*, ed. and trans. R. W. DYSON, Cambridge, 1998, p. 935.

¹⁵ *Cacus enim Herculis boues furasse dicitur, quos cauda in speluncam tractos abscondidit, quem Hercules presso gutture interfecit. Cacon enim Grece malum dicimus. Ergo omnis malitia fumum eruptuat, id est aut quod contra sit ueritati, hoc est luci aut quod acerbum sit uidentibus ut fumum oculis aut quod semper occultas obscurasque cauillationes obiciat. Ideo et duplex quod malitia multiformis, non simplex sit; triplici etiam modo nocet malitia, aut in euidenti ut potentior aut subtiliter ut falsus amicus aut occulte ut impossibilis latro.* (Fabii Planciadis Fulgentii *Opera*, ed. R. HELM, Leipzig, 1898, II, 3 [p.42]). The English translation is from L. G. WHITEHEAD, *Fulgentius the Mythographer*, Columbus, 1971, p. 69.

point allegory of a mythical text that we associate later on with authors like Bernardus Silvestris or Coluccio Salutati, but the extent of his shift towards so quintessentially medieval an approach is plain.

When we turn to the reception of Cacus in the Middle Ages proper, we can observe three trends – a literary one, a natural historical-cum-moral theological one, and a political one. Under the heading of « literary reception » one can include above all a series of works of imaginative literature in which Cacus is presented principally as a monster, and in which his allegorical or symbolic meaning is conveyed only implicitly and/or briefly. This category includes such vernacular retellings of the *Aeneid* as the French *Roman d'Eneas* (from c. 1160) and its German adaptation, the *Eneasroman* of Heinrich von Veldeke (c. 1175). Both of these works deal with Cacus in about twenty lines, both depict him as a man-eating villain ; but there, rather remarkably given the general closeness of the relationship between the two works, the similarities largely end – proof in itself that what seems to have been an intrinsic flexibility and versatility of the Cacus motif persisted well into the Middle Ages. For the *Roman d'Eneas*, Cacus (more precisely, *Carus*) is a monster, who lays waste the countryside and eats human beings with appropriately monstrous relish. Moreover when he is killed by Hercules the latter hangs the *mostre's* head from a tree¹⁶. By contrast Veldeke's *Câcûs*, although described as a *monstrum*, seems more animal than bloodthirsty ogre. Crucially, the narrator also refers to him as an animal (*tier, kunder*) ; we are baldly informed that he has killed many people, but that is all ; and, when in turn killed by Hercules, his carcass is burnt, rather than his head being displayed on a tree¹⁷ – in other words, in death he is treated more as an animal than as a vanquished humanoid antagonist.

¹⁶ « Lo jor avoit fet a sa guise / molt hautemant un sacrefise / d'une feste, en remembrance / de la merveilleuse vanjance / que d'un mostre fist Herculés, / a icel jor, ilueques pres, / qui degastot tot le país ; / quant il avoit un home pris, / il l'acorot, son sanc bevoit, / la char manjot, les os rooit ; / il ne manjot se homes non ; / Carus avoit li mostres non. / Quant Herculés vint an la terre, / a sa fosse l'ala requerre / por un forfet que il li fist ; / par grant vertu iluec l'ocist, / a un arbre pendi la teste. » (*Eneas. Roman du XI^e siècle*, ed. J.-J. SALVERDA DE GRAVE, Paris, 1925-1929, 2 vol. , vol. 1, ll. 4627-43 [CFMA 44, 63]).

¹⁷ « Ez was antach daz Hercules / ein wunderlich tier dâ erslûch, / daz in leides tete genûch : / der lûte ez vile erbeiz, / also man noch wole weiz. / ez was vil unreine, / in eime holen steine / was sîn wonunge und sîn hûs : / daz monstrum hiez Câcûs. / harde wûstesz daz lant. / dô daz Hercules bevant / und daz wunder dâ vernam, / von sîme lande er dare quam. / her hete manlîchen mût. / dô wâfende sich der helt gût, / daz ez manich man ane sach. / her quam dâ daz kunder lach / und slûch'z ze tôde / und lôste vone nôde / daz lût von dem lande. / daz kunder her verbrande : / des lobete man in wît. » (Heinrich von Veldeke, *Eneasroman*, ed. L. ETTMÜLLER, trans. D. KARTSCHKE, Stuttgart, 1986, ll. 6044-65).

The most famous literary treatment of Cacus in the Middle Ages is that in canto XXV of Dante's *Inferno*¹⁸. Here Cacus is a centaur – whether in an attempt to follow to its logical conclusion Virgil's own characterization of Cacus as both *semihomo* and *semiferus*, or for some other reason, one can of course only speculate. Cacus's role in the *Inferno* is not a prominent one : he approaches the poet and his guide Virgil and addresses them « full of rage », whereupon the latter names him « Caco », and states that he is in Hell in his capacity as a cattle thief who has got his come-uppance at the hands of Hercules' club (an echo of Livy, or indeed Ovid). A fascinating innovation on Dante's part, however, is that the source of Cacus' fire is not his own mouth, but rather a dragon lying on his shoulders behind the nape, who sets on fire anyone it encounters. This dragon, along with the various snakes which accompany it, has considerable symbolic value, as the devil (and/or his agents) who, as Luther was later memorably to put it, rides the human will – here literally – like a horse. The Christian message conveyed here by Dante is not made explicit, but is clear enough – particularly given that the scene is set in Hell, that Cacus is associated with rage, theft and fraud, and that by Dante's time Hercules had become widely regarded as an appropriate personification of Christ¹⁹.

The identification of Hercules with Christ is meanwhile made more (if not completely) explicit in the brief Cacus excursus that appears in certain texts of the *Ovide moralisé* tradition. In both the fourteenth-century French verse and fifteenth-century French prose versions, for example, Cacus is described as a giant, who is overcome by Hercules in Hell, where he is seeking to rescue Theseus and Pirithous ; and in the accompanying allegorical interpretation Hercules, whilst not mentioned by name, is nevertheless plainly understood as personifying Christ, who has descended to earth not least to extirpate heresy – as represented by Cacus and the other opponents he encounters there²⁰.

¹⁸ « E io vidi un centauro pien di rabbia / venir chiamando : < ov'è, ov'è l'acerbo? > / Maremma non cred'io che tante n'abbia, / quante bisce elli avea su per la groppa / infin ove comincia nostra labbia. / Sovre le spalle, dietro de la coppa, / con l'ali aperte li giocea un draco, / e quello affuoca qualunque s'intoppa. / lo mio maestro disse : < Questi è Caco, / che, sotto'l sasso di monte Aventino, / di sangue fece spesse volte laco. / Non va co' suoi fratei per un cammino, per lo furto che frodolente fece / del grande armento ch'elli ebbe a vicino ; / onde cessar le sue opere bieche / sotto la mazza d'Ercule, che forse / gliene diè cento, e non sentì le diece. > / Mentre che si parlava, ed al trascorse. » (Dante Alighieri, *La Divina Commedia : Inferno*, ed. U. BOSCO and G. REGGIO, Florence, 1979, XXV, 17-34).

¹⁹ See C. H. MILLER, « Hercules and his Labors as Allegories of Christ and His Victory over Sin in Dante's *Inferno* », in *Quaderni d'Italianistica*, 5 (1984), p. 1-17.

²⁰ Verse text : C. DE BOER *et al.* (ed.), «*Ovide moralisé*». *Poème du commencement du quatorzième siècle*, Amsterdam, 1915-1938, 5 vol. (Verhandelingen der Koninklijke Akademie van

Finally in this section we can point to two further texts with brief moralizations of Hercules and Cacus : an East Anglian Virgil commentary from the 1380s discussed by Christopher Baswell, whose lapidary start to its treatment of the episode reads : « Note the place of Cacus and apply it to Hell, Christ to Hercules, the cattle to those held in Limbo²¹ » ; and a heavily illustrated short work from Northern Italy around 1420 called *De deorum imaginibus libellus*, which speaks of Cacus as a centaur (this seems to be a specifically Italian feature), and interprets him along the same lines as Fulgentius²².

Alongside this eclectic group of medieval literary treatments of Cacus we must now place a much more tightly related group of encyclopaedic and moral theological works, particularly in Latin, in which he was to play a role that could scarcely be more different. Seemingly at the head of this tradition stands the so-called *Liber monstrorum*, probably compiled in England in the eighth century, possibly by Aldhelm of Malmesbury. Its title is misleading, since it is really a kind of bestiary, but one which happens to deal with monsters before the other forms of wildlife. In its chapter *De Caco Arcadiae* (I, 31), Cacus is nevertheless characterized as a *monstrum*, living in Arcadia, spewing flames from his chest, and hairy or bristly all over (*totum setosum*). Several details of Aldhelm's description of Cacus stealing cattle reveal an at least indirect knowledge of Virgil, though the human aspects of the latter's Cacus are largely excluded, and there is no mention of Hercules or the combat in which the two engage²³.

Wetenschappen te Amsterdam, Afdeling Letterkunde, Nieuwe Reeks part 15, 21, 30/3, 37, 43) (Reprint Wiesbaden, 1966), VII, 1716-1717 and 2013-2015. Prose text : ID. (ed.), "Ovide moralisé" en prose. *Texte du quinzième siècle*, Amsterdam, 1954 (Verhandelingen der Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, Afdeling Letterkunde, Nieuwe Reeks part 61/2). The latter tells us of Hercules that *si tua Cacon le jayant* (VII, 10, p. 213-214), and of Christ that *si fut par luy toute heresie effacée* (VII, 11, p. 214-215).

²¹ London, British Library, Ms. Add. 27304. See C. BASWELL, *Virgil in Medieval England. Figuring the "Aeneid" from the Twelfth Century to Chaucer*, Cambridge, 1995, p. 136-67, especially p. 157 (Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature, 24). The original wording is *Nota de loco caci et applica inferno, cristum herculi, boues detenti in limbo* (note 96, p. 371).

²² This is edited in H. LIEBESCHÜTZ, *Fulgentius metaforalis. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der antiken Mythologie im Mittelalter*, Leipzig, Berlin, 1926, p. 117-128 (Studien der Bibliothek Warburg, 4), here p. 126 and pl. XVI-XXXV : *Moraliter autem Cachus [sic] malus interpretatur, qui latet in spelunca, quia nunquam malitia libere frontis est. Sed Cachus fumum et nebulam emittit, que visui nocent, quia malitia semper occultos deceptiones mollitur.*

²³ *Erat monstrum quoddam in Arcadia, nomine Cacus, in antro fluminis Tiberini, flammis de pectore evomens et toto corpore setosus, qui IIII tauros furto et totidem vaccas abduxit armentario et eos per vim fortitudinis retrorsum, ne investigarentur, caudis traxit in antrum.* (*Liber monstrorum*, ed. F. PORSIA, Bari, 1976, p. 184).

By the time Cacus found his way into the great nature encyclopaedias of the mid-thirteenth century, however, « he » had, for the first time unequivocally, become an « it ». The first version (« Thomas I/II ») of the *De natura rerum* of Thomas of Cantimpré includes a substantial entry on the cacus, *De caco*, which is placed programmatically in Thomas' book IV, *De quadrupedibus*²⁴. Moreover the chapter in question (IV, 20) begins equally programmatically : *Cacus monstrum est in Archadia. Hoc animal totum sesotum est quasi porcus*. Cacus, then, is both a monster (presumably a representative of a genus of monsters, rather than a unicum), and a porcine animal. Overall, Thomas' chapter is firmly based on that of the *Liber monstrorum*, but he does add some additional material of uncertain origin. He states, for example, that the cacus attacks not just other animals but also human beings, and is at its likeliest to breathe out smoke when angered – a statement which leads to a ten-line excursus explaining how an animal can breathe fire without itself being consumed, and finally to a comparison between the cacus and the fire-breathing animals of the Book of Wisdom.

Thomas' account of the animal cacus was to prove very influential. It appears in much the same form in the encyclopaedias of Albertus Magnus (XXII, 23) and Vincent of Beauvais (XIX, 5), as well as, considerably abbreviated, in the mid-fourteenth-century vernacular *Buch der Natur* of Konrad von Megenberg (c. 1350). Konrad's version is in fact a largely straightforward translation of a shorter variant of Thomas' encyclopaedia, generally called « Thomas III »; but he too introduces an apparently original element, which must have resulted from a simple misreading of his source manuscript(s). In chapter III. A.14, beneath the transliterated chapter heading *Von dem cachen*, Konrad says of the *cachus* (or *cathus* – as always, manuscript « c »s are hard to differentiate from « t »s) that it is « ain tier in dem land Archadia, daz ist ze mal flinchend alz ein verunraint fwein²⁵. » It stinks porcinely, in other words,

²⁴ The chapter continues : *Et sicut scribit Adelinus [= Aldhelmus !] philosophus, flammis de pectore suo eructuat, id est anhelitum et spiritum flammeum. Facit autem hoc maxime, cum ira permotum fuerit... Horum animalium similia fuerunt illa, de quibus in libro Sapientie scriptura testatur divina, quod ignes de ore suo spirabant... Hoc animal invadit subito vaccarum et tauro-rum greges, nec unum ei de grege sufficit, sed per caudas tauros tres aut quatuor apprehensos vi fortitudinis sue in antrum trahit occulte gressu retrogrado, ne scilicet investigari possit de facili. Est autem non solum infestum animalibus hoc animal, verum etiam ipsi homini gravissime insidiatur, cum tamen ipsum hominem plurimum timeat. Cacus signat quosdam iracundos, qui quidem ad modicum primum irasci sibi videntur interius, sed cum se ipsos ira crescente refrenare non possunt, quasi flammis in proximum contumelias et probra eructuant adeo, ut non solum se, verum etiam plures ad odium secum ira victos inflammant.* (Thomas Cantimpratensis, *Liber de natura rerum*, ed. H. BOESE, Berlin – New York, 1973, p. 120-121).

²⁵ Konrad's chapter continues as follows : « Der maister Adelinus schreibt von dem tier, daz ez flammen auz feim hals lazz, daz tût ez allermaift, wenne ez gar zornig wirt. Daz tier gleicht den,

and does so presumably because « f »s and « f »s are often as well nigh impossible to distinguish from each other in late-medieval bookhands as are « c »s and « t »s. In other words, either Konrad or the scribe of his source manuscript has obviously read *setosum* (bristly) as *fetosum* (smelly) – hardly a reprehensible error, especially given that pigs are in any event both coarse-haired and pungent, and that the editor of Konrad’s source text (« Thomas III ») reads exactly half of its manuscripts at this point as saying *fetosum* and the other half *setosum*²⁶. Another revealing misunderstanding occurs, by the way, in one of the two manuscripts of the *Buch der Natur* which feature illustrations of the cacus, namely Strasbourg, Bibliothèque nationale et universitaire, ms. 2264 (c.1460, from Bavaria). The illustrator here conceives of it as a fire-breathing ox, presumably due to confusion between the *cathus* itself and its bovine booty²⁷.

Meanwhile, in Lilienfeld in 1351, we find the Cistercian abbot Ulrich von Lilienfeld using the same (« Thomas III ») description of the cacus that Konrad von Megenberg is consulting, more or less simultaneously, in Regensburg. In his colossal illustrated compendium of sermon sketches known as the *Concordantiae caritatis*, Ulrich employs the *catus* [sic] as an exemplum for preachers to use on St Martin’s Day. He too tells us that it is bristly (his source manuscript obviously had *setosum*), is *ut porcus*, and breathes fire, and he adds only the statement that it is a small animal – an aperçu which for sure owes more to his desire to describe St Martin, in the appended interpretation, as *paruum per humilitatem* than it does to any natural historical insight. Accordingly, the accompanying illustration does indeed render the cacus as a kind of piglet²⁸.

von den man schreibt in dem pûch der weifhait, daz fevr auz im munden gieng. Pei dem tier verften wir die zornigen nachreder vnd die alten weip, die gûten laûten ir ere verfwertzent mit dem fevr, daz ist mit den worten, die auz im hals gend. » (Konrad von Megenberg, *Das “Buch der Natur”. Band II : Kritischer Text nach den Handschriften*, ed. R. LUFF and G. STEER, Tübingen, 2003, p. 154 [Texte und Textgeschichte, 54]).

²⁶ That editor, the late Benedikt Konrad Vollmann (Eichstätt), was kind enough to send me his edition of the relevant books of « Thomas III » in advance of its publication. The work has now appeared, as THOMAS VON CANTIMPRÉ, “*Liber de naturis rerum*”. *Kritische Ausgabe der Redaktion III (Thomas III) eines Anonymus*, ed. B. K. VOLLMANN, Wiesbaden, 2017 (Wissensliteratur im Mittelalter, 54/1).

²⁷ See U. SPYRA, *Das “Buch der Natur” Konrads von Megenberg : Die illustrierten Handschriften und Inkunabeln*, Cologne, 2005, especially p. 113 and fig. 55 (Pictura et Poesis, 19).

²⁸ See H. MUNSCHCK, *Die “Concordantiae caritatis” des Ulrich von Lilienfeld. Untersuchungen zu Inhalt, Quellen und Verbreitung, mit einer Paraphrasierung von Temporale, Sanctorale und Commune*, Frankfurt am Main, 2000, especially no. 225/4, p. 429. The *Concordantiae* are now edited : H. DOUTEIL, *Die “Concordantiae caritatis” des Ulrich von Lilienfeld. Edition des Codex Campiliensis 151 (um 1355)*, ed. R. SUNTRUP, A. ANGENENDT and V. HONEMANN, Münster,

The most significant moral theological work to be influenced by Thomas of Cantimpré's (here « Thomas I/II »'s) conception of an animal cacus was, however, the *Etymachia* treatise, composed in Austria probably in the early decades of the fourteenth century, but read very widely in the German-speaking world right up to the end of the Middle Ages. In this work's cavalcade of personified sins and virtues, the cacus (some mss have *catus* or indeed *cactus*), is the mount of gluttony, *gula*, because it is in the habit of simultaneously dragging three or four oxen back to its cave with its tail, and devouring them – insatiable behaviour which is then rather incongruously compared to that of the Israelites in the desert refusing to be satisfied with manna, and instead hankering after the spices and sweetmeats of Egypt²⁹. As with Konrad von Megenberg, however, the devil, as far as the cacus is concerned, lies not so much in the detail of the *Etymachia* as such, but rather in that of its manuscript tradition, and for that matter of its fifteenth-century German translations. Inevitably, perhaps, the translator of one of the German versions (« A », oldest manuscript probably Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, ms. germ. qu. 1860, dated 1443) renders *catus* as « wilde chacze », a wild cat. Meanwhile the translator of version B/ii (most representative manuscript New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, ms. 782, c. 1460) appears unclear as to whether the creature he is describing is an animal or (presumably given its fiery breath) a monstrous dragon; accordingly he calls *kakus* a *wurm oder tier*. Species confusion also reigns in illustrated manuscripts of the *Etymachia*: in most of these the cacus is a not plainly differentiated, but manifestly bellicose monster; but in Klosterneuburg, Stiftsbibliothek, ms. 384 (from 1343) it is a large feline, in München Cgm 514 (from 1457) a harmless domestic cat, and in München Clm 15139 (also from 1457) a badger. Here the illustrator is in fact merely picking up on an error by the scribe, who has read

2010, 2 vol. The *catus* section reads (I, 470) : *Adelinus dicit, quod catus est animal paruum in Archadia, setosum ut porcus et quasi flammeum anhelitum ex se spirat. Quem per catum reccius nisi beatum Martinum accipimus ? Qui in rerum natura fuit animal, tamen racionalissimum per uite puritatem, paruum per humilitatem in Archadia, quod desertum interpretatur, natum per sanctitatis singularitatem. Fuit eciam quasi animal setosum per aspere conuersationis austeritatem. Hoc enim animal, beatus scilicet Martinus ex se flammeum anhelitum exspirauit, quando pro se et suis subditis Domino deuoto animo supplicans cecis uisum, claudis gressum, peccatoribus veniam mortuis uitam et quasi omnia, que postulauerat, inpetrauit, quia ad omne bonum ipsum semper Sanctus Spiritus inflammauit.*

²⁹ *Gula dicitur sedere super animal quod dicitur cacus, quod est talis nature quod tres boues uel quattuor simul cum cauda sua trahit in antrum et deuorat, ut dicit Solinus. Et significat gulosos, qui numquam saciantur, sicut Iudei in deserto, qui non poterant saciari cibo celesti et manna quo pauit eos Dominus, sed desiderabant carnes et pepones et cibos Egyptiorum. Tunc Dominus dedit eis carnes in habundancia* (N. HARRIS, *The Latin and German "Etymachia". Textual History, Edition, Commentary*, Tübingen, 1994, p. 136 [Münchener Texte und Untersuchungen, 102] ; also p. 139, 200-202, 251-252, 262, 348-349).

catus or *cacus* as *taxus* – again, a not unreasonable mistake to make given that an « x » can also look very much like a « c » or a « t », and one which is then carried to a bizarre logical conclusion by the illustrator, who replaces the *cacus*' oxen with mice.

The distance between such an account and the Hercules-Cacus episode of the *Aeneid* hardly needs stressing. That Virgil was not unread in the later Middle Ages is, however, demonstrated by the Italian Humanist Coluccio Salutati, whose monumental *De laboribus Herculis* was left unfinished at his death in 1406. This is a work of quite astonishing thoroughness that leaves no stone unturned in its quest to uncover meaning, allegorical or otherwise, in every detail of the mythological material it covers, and to incorporate this meaning into Salutati's own ethical system, which mixes Classical and Christian thought in a sophisticated if at times elusive way. A case in point is his very long chapter on Cacus, which is based mainly on Virgil himself and on Servius, and which represents a kind of semi-secularized variant on the Christian Hercules tradition : Cacus is interpreted as the human temperament, frequently at war with Hercules, representing virtue, and posing a threat to the safety of the bulls, who represent our affections³⁰. The whole thing is a fascinating mixture of early Humanist thought and late-medieval allegorical technique ; but by the same token it is *sui generis*.

One might expect the reception of Hercules and Cacus in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, at least insofar as it emanated from a Humanist context, to follow the lead established by Salutati in demonstrating both a somewhat greater interest in Cacus' humanity and a rather more detailed and informed appreciation of the *Aeneid* ; and, by and large, such an expectation would be correct. Certainly Cacus' human traits are restored in all sixteenth-century literary and artistic depictions of him. One can indeed observe an inverse procedure to that adopted by many late-medieval writers – that is, he

³⁰ *Rapit autem Cacus tauros, id est : affectus nostros, de custodia Herculis, id est : virtutis, et cauda retroversim suum reducit in antrum, hoc est : in sui domini potestatem. Sicut enim via virtutis est recta, sic vitiorum est retrograda et obliqua. Fur autem dicitur Cacus et furtim rapuisse tauros. Nam hec complexionis vis intra penetral hominis est occulta et furum more decipit et compilat. Rapit autem quatuor tauros totidemque iuencas. Nam affectus nostri quadrifariam dividuntur... Hercule tamen abitum preparante, ut se in perfectiorem statum erigeret, cum omne nemus impleretur querelis, quoniam laboriosa est via virtutis, < reddidit una boum vocem vastoque sub antro mugit et Caci spem custodita fefellit.> Quotiens enim sub virtute nostri ceperunt affectus pergere, iam assueti bono virtutis malignitati incipiunt reluctari. Et quia magnum et arduum est inclinationem atque vim complexionis superare, non sufficit potentia concupiscibilis, que fertur simpliciter in bonum, nisi moveatur et irascibilis, que fertur in bonum et arduum.* (Coluccio Salutati, *De laboribus Herculis*, ed. B. L. ULLMANN, Zürich, 1951, 2 vol., here vol. 2, III, 30).

becomes to all intents and purposes a human being, almost entirely stripped of monstrous or feral propensities. In the celebrated Hercules and Cacus depictions by sixteenth-century artists such as Baccio Bandinelli (1534), Hans Sebald Beham (1545), and Hendrik Goltzius (1588 and 1613)³¹, for example, one sees something far more akin to the man described by Livy and Dionysius, than to either the bestial *catus* of the Middle Ages or indeed to Virgil's semi-feral man-monster – though Goltzius does at least have the motif of Cacus breathing fire.

The second discernible Humanist-inspired development in the reception of Hercules and Cacus could be described as a political one. Georg Braungart has spoken of a « Politisierung des Mythos im 15. Jahrhundert », which « markiert in ihrem Rückgriff auf antike Deutungsmuster den Beginn eines spezifisch neuzeitlichen Mythosverständnisses³² » ; and he might well have used the fate of Virgil's Cacus as a case in point. Already from the later fifteenth century onwards, one can observe at least occasional uses of the Cacus figure for the purposes of political propaganda in favour of princes – one of the aims which, after all, he can be said to have served originally for Virgil and Augustus. A good example of this is the series of pantomimes depicting the twelve labours of Hercules performed at the marriage of Charles the Bold, Duke of Burgundy, to Margaret of York at Bruges in 1468. Verses written to accompany the brief play devoted to Cacus speak of him as a « fort larron », who is defeated by Hercules in the interests and as an expression of justice – a quality which is then commended to princes including and on behalf of Duke Charles, under the motto « Justice fait aimer et douter le vassal³³. » Less well known than this is a Hercules play written by Benedictus Chelidonius for performance before Maximilian I in Vienna in 1515, called *Volup-*

³¹ The relevant images can all be viewed on line : Bandinelli at (e.g.) http://farm1.static.flickr.com/11/12679053_6f2b3f33 ; Beham at (e.g.) http://1.bp.blogspot.com/_rMwAfCDehdM/SwhYtG_CBvI/AAAAAAAAAB9M/JvVhrZBOR/s1600/Hercules_killing_Cacus_at_his_Cave.jpg ; Goltzius 1588 at http://www.casa_in_italia.com/artpx/dut/Goltzius_woodcut_Hercules_Cacus_1588.jpg ; Goltzius 1613 at <http://www.1st-art-gallery.com/thumbnaill/89971/1/Hercules-And-Cacus-1613.jpg> 1613 (consulted 2nd November 2010).

³² G. BRAUNGART, « Mythos und Herrschaft : Maximilian I. als Hercules Germanicus », in *Traditionswandel und Traditionsverhalten*, ed. W. HAUG and B. WACHINGER, Tübingen, 1991, p. 77-95 (Fortuna Vitrea, 5), here p. 81.

³³ « Herculès endormy, Cacus, le fort larron, / Ses boeufs luy desroba, trainant à reculon. / Mais, quelque fort qu'il fust, l'occit le champion. / Si fit de luy justice sans mercy ne ranson. / Empeurs, Roys et ducs, princes en général, / Faictes comme Herculès, le très espécial ; / Soyez prompts en justice, dont il ne vient que mal, / Et vous souviennne bien de ce vers principal : / Justice fait aimer et douter le vassal. » Cited in M.-R. JUNG, *Hercule dans la littérature française du XVI^e siècle. De l'Hercule courtois à l'Hercule baroque*, Genève, 1966, p. 34 (Travaux d'Humanisme et Renaissance, 79).

tatis cum virtutis disceptatio, in which Cacus represents passion and anger, both of which are suitably overcome by the virtuous Hercules and, by implication, the comparably virtuous Maximilian³⁴. Furthermore Cacus appears briefly in the *Chasse Royale*, a poem in praise of the French King Francis I by the translator of the *Iliad*, Hugues Salel. Hercules is praised for various of his labours, including the « bean fait » of killing Cacus ; but such achievements have been eclipsed by Francis' own « joyeux record / D'avoir vaincu et mis à mort Discord³⁵. »

Finally, in the field of the pictorial arts there is the famous sculpture of Hercules and Cacus by Baccio Bandinelli, which stands in juxtaposition to Michelangelo's David outside the *Palazzo Vecchio* in Florence. It is generally, and surely correctly, assumed that the Medici wished to be depicted in this very public place, the *Piazza della Signoria*, as combining the spiritual power of David with the physical strength of Hercules, and as possessing what comes across in the sculpture as the latter's rationality and moderation – Bandinelli shows a Hercules who is, after all, in full control of the situation, waiting and looking ahead of him, before (one assumes) delivering the *coup de grâce* to a very human Cacus. As with Charles the Bold, Maximilian I and Francis I, then, the Medici are here presented, at least implicitly, as embodying much the same impulse towards order and justice that Virgil had originally claimed on behalf of Augustus – a fact that, as our survey has shown, seems to have fallen largely into oblivion during the Middle Ages, but which, under the influence of Humanism, enjoyed – like so many other features of ancient culture – a kind of renaissance.

When adumbrating such potentially clear-cut cultural-historical periodizations, one must always be careful. After all, the Medici were already commissioning Andrea Pisano to sculpt Hercules as the slayer of Cacus on the *campanile* of the Florentine *duomo* as early as the 1330s ; and Marc-René Jung has drawn attention to the Hercules-Cacus legend being used in historical-political writing in Spain as early as 1243, the year in which Rodrigo Ximenes de Rada completed his *De rebus Hispaniae* – in which Hercules defeats Cacus, king of the oriental provinces, and drives him into exile in Rome, before civilizing Castille through the foundation of numerous towns³⁶. By the

³⁴ See BRAUNGART, « Mythos und Herrschaft... », p. 83-84.

³⁵ « C'est ung bean fait que de Cacus occire, / Vaincre ung Antlée, et mettre à mort Busire, / Hydra diffaire, et centaures dompter, / Gérion battre, et monstre surmonter, / Mais trop plus grand est le joyeux record / D'avoir vaincu et mis à mort Discord. » Cited in JUNG, *Hercule dans la littérature...*, p. 163.

³⁶ M.-R. JUNG, « Hercule dans les textes du Moyen Âge : essai d'une typologie », in *Rinascita di Ercole. Convegno internazionale (Verona, 29 maggio-1 giugno 2002)*, ed. A. M. BABBI, Verona, 2002, p. 9-69, here p. 28-29.

same token some medieval perceptions of Cacus persisted well after the putative dividing line between Middle Ages and Renaissance. The notion of the Christian Hercules remained current, not least in Ronsard³⁷; and the animal Cacus continued to appear occasionally, in contexts such as the French manuscript of Virgil's works from the very end of the fifteenth century, which is now kept (as Ms. Richardson 38) in the Houghton Library at Harvard³⁸. The Cacus of this manuscript certainly has a humanoid face, but his/its body is an eccentric mixture of dragon, horse, giraffe, and camel.

Nevertheless the increasing politicization of the *Aeneid*'s Cacus episode in the sixteenth century remains striking – and it goes hand-in-hand with a thoroughgoing emphasis on the human side of Virgil's *semihomo* and *semiferus*. This should not surprise us, reflecting as it does both the greater interest in specifically human nature and the more detailed knowledge of Classical culture and its priorities that we rightly associate with Renaissance Humanism. That said, our survey of the vicissitudes of Cacus has shown us once again that the paradigm shift between « the medieval » and « the modern » was by no means an absolute one; and it has suggested that significant perceptual changes were often attributable to very particular concatenations of everyday circumstances. Much, not least especially in the Middle Ages, could depend on the precise variant readings of the source manuscript an author had in front of him, on the quality of a scribe's handwriting or a reader's eyesight, or on the resources an author had available to him to check a questionable fact or the philological validity of an appealing etymology – in short, on a whole host of very specific, short-term influences and experiences many of which we can neither fully understand nor satisfactorily reconstruct.

³⁷ See his hymn « L'Hercule chrétien », especially ll. 148-57 : *Les oeuvres de Pierre de Ronsard. Texte de 1587*, ed. I. SILVER, Chicago, 1966-1970, 8 vol., here vol. 6, p. 154.

³⁸ Several illuminations from this manuscript (including that featuring Cacus, on f. 216) are online at <http://pds.lib.harvard.edu/pds/view/5141192> (consulted 2nd November 2010).