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The High Potential of Minor Poetry: Notes on Hosidius Geta's Reworking of Vergil's *Eclogues* and *Georgics**

ABSTRACT · The present article aims to explore how Hosidius Geta integrates lines of Vergil's *Eclogues* and *Georgics* into his tragedy *Medea*, written in the form of a cento. As I intend to demonstrate, if there is no generic problem in embedding material from an epic poem such as the *Aeneid* in a tragedy, the *Eclogues* and the *Georgics*, texts in genres that may be deemed incompatible with the high form of tragedy, may present certain challenges. I will try to show that, in composing his cento from a selection of units of the Vergilian *opera*, Geta arranged the bucolic and georgic material in such a way that it works in a tragic context without generic dissonance. Departing from textual analysis of lines 131-138 and 250-259 of the cento, I have sought to build on textual evidence to pinpoint how Geta used certain excerpts from the *Eclogues* and the *Georgics* and to explore the generic enrichment embedded in the reuse of these poems.
KEYWORDS · Hosidius Geta; cento; Vergil; pastoral; genre

SOMMARIO · Il presente studio analizza il modo in cui Osidio Geta rielabora alcuni versi delle *Ecloghe* e delle *Georgiche* di Virgilio al fine di integrarle nella propria tragedia sul mito di Medea, composta in forma di centone. Come ci si propone di dimostrare, se l'adattamento di un poema epico come l'*Eneide* non sembra porre particolari difficoltà al nostro autore, l'inserimento delle *Ecloghe* e delle *Georgiche* in un testo tragico rappresenta una sfida più complessa. Si mostrerà inoltre che, essendo il suo centone composto da una combinazione delle tre opere virgiliane, Osidio Geta ha disposto il materiale virgiliano in modo tale che i differenti generi potessero coesistere in modo armonioso. A partire da una analisi testuale degli versi 131-138 e 250-259 del centone, il presente studio propone dunque una ricostruzione della tecnica adottata da Geta nel riuso delle *Ecloghe* e delle *Georgiche*, e l'analisi qui condotta ci consentirà di mettere in risalto l'arricchimento di significati che inevitabilmente deriva da un simile riuso del testo poetico virgiliano.
PAROLE CHIAVE · Osidio Geta; Centone; Virgilio; pastorale; genere

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E vós, Tágides minhas, pois criado
Tendes em mim um novo engenho ardente,
Se sempre em verso humilde celebrado
Foi de mim vosso rio alegremente,
Dai-me agora um som alto e sublimado,
Um estilo grandíloquo e corrente,
Porque de vossas águas Febo ordene
Que não tenham inveja às de Hipocrene.[1]

Luís de Camões, *Os Lusíadas* 1, 4

1. Introduction

In this article, I will focus on Hosidius Geta's tragedy *Medea* among the many centos that have come down to us to pinpoint how Vergilian poetry in genres considered «minor» could be reused in other higher genres. This tragedy seems to be the only work attributed to Hosidius,[2] who probably lived in the early third century CE. The title makes clear what to expect, and the subject is well known: Medea's myth, her relationship with Jason and the Argonauts, and the emotional suffering Jason caused her.[3]

To compose this tragedy, Geta had recourse to the whole of the Vergilian corpus, from which he drew and reworked material to fit the standard formal elements of a tragedy, the characters' dialogues and choral odes. Since this is a tragedy, it would be

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[1] «And you, nymphs of the Tagus, who / First suckled my infant genius, / If ever in my rustic verses / I celebrated your companionable river, / Return me now a loftier tone, / A style both grand and contemporary; / Be to me Helicon. Let Apollo choose / Your waters as the fountain of my muse.» Translation by White in Camões 1997.
[2] Tertullian, *De praescriptione haereticorum* 39, 3-4.
[3] Because of the growing interest in centos, the bibliography presented in this article is only a selection from the many titles published in the last few decades. For editions of Hosidius Geta's *Medea*, see Salanitro 1981, Rhondolz 2012, and Galli 2017. Text and translations of this cento tragedy are taken from Rhondolz 2012, and for Vergil I follow the edition of Mynors 1969.

natural to assume that Geta used the *Aeneid* as his main source, since epic and tragedy share the same linguistic level and high register. For this specific cento, Vergil seems an ideal author to work from, since he was already associated with the tragic genre in the first century CE, as shown by an epigram of Martial (5, 5, 7-8):

> Ad Capitolini caelestia carmina belli
> grande cothurnati pone Maronis opus.
>
> Beside the celestial lay of the Capitoline war place the great work of buskined Maro.[4]

Scholarship has focused almost exclusively on the *Aeneid*, paying little attention to the use that Geta makes of the non-epic Vergilian material. Nonetheless, I think that some interesting conclusions may be drawn from the presence of Vergil's bucolic and georgic material in the cento tragedy, especially regarding the *Eclogues*' and the *Georgics*' «generic enrichment», as Harrison has called.[5] It is true that the large majority of the Vergilian units are taken from the *Aeneid*, confirming the aforementioned assumptions: 592 in contrast to 39 from the *Georgics* and 64 from the *Eclogues*. As McGill points out, despite the malleability of Vergilian vocabulary, which allows its easy adaptation to other literary genres, the *Eclogues* and the *Georgics* have other elements which sometimes make this impossible:

> objects appear in certain poetic forms and not in others – for example, much of bucolics' flora, as well as its baskets and pipes, or the tools and crops of georgic verse – meaning that the words describing those objects do not cross from one genre into some others. Thus some Vergilian units from the *Eclogues* and *Georgics* would be unable to make the journey into a tragedy.[6]

Despite this apparent difficulty, Hosidius Geta did take units from the pastoral and agricultural poetry of Vergil, which, in different levels, is considered «minor» poetry, and combined them with the high-culture epic units of the *Aeneid* to produce a high-culture

[4] Translation from D. R. Shackleton Bailey 1993. For tragic echoes in Vergil, see Hardie 1997, pp. 312-326, and on *cothurnatus Maro* see Fernandelli 2022, pp. 321-359.
[5] On this term and its application in the *Eclogues* and the *Georgics*, see Harrison 2007, pp. 34-74, 136-167.
[6] McGill 2005, p. 38.

tragedy.[7] Which episodes of the *Eclogues* and the *Georgics* did the centonist draw on to compose his tragedy in this process of generic enrichment? How did he adapt them to serve the purposes of his text?

In what follows, I will offer an analysis of lines 131-138 and 250-259 of the cento tragedy *Medea*, focusing on certain units from the *Eclogues* and the *Georgics* in engage with the *Aeneid* and the epic tradition. These are not the only instances where Hosidius Geta uses Vergil's *Eclogues* and *Georgics*, however, and the contexts of this (re)use also vary. The units I have chosen serve as two case studies among other possibilities, to explore the richness and malleability of Vergilian vocabulary. The chosen passages of the cento tragedy contain units from the *Eclogues* and the *Georgics* which dialogue directly with the *Aeneid*, thus allowing a clearer vision of Geta's technique in combining genres.

2. THE *ECLOGUES*

Hosidius Geta used small extracts from all of the *Eclogues*, with the exception of the seventh. The eighth is the most frequently used, and this is significant since the theme of the eighth *Eclogue* is well suited to the myth and the story of Medea – notably, the theme of unrequited love, and the magical material of the song of Alphesiboeus, which can easily be applied to Medea's story and the description of magical powers, thus posing no real challenge to the centonist.

Shumilin seems to be one of the few scholars to have devoted a few lines to the bucolic/pastoral world in Geta's *Medea*, with a short analysis of lines 131-138: «The majority of passages chosen by Hosidius Geta from the *Eclogues* are characterized in their original sense by associations mainly peaceful and idyllic».[8] With this in mind, how did Geta avoid the stylistic problems that the *Eclogues* may presuppose in the context of a tragedy? I will take as a case study these same lines from the second choral ode of the *Medea*:

[7] Harrison 2007, p. 9: «Moreover, the whole poetic careers of both Vergil and Horace can plausibly be constructed as generic 'ascents': Vergil's ascent is within the hexameter genres, beginning with the slightest in Theocritean pastoral (*Eclogues*), passing through the middle stage of Hesiodic didactic epic (*Georgics*), and concluding in the highest form of Homeric heroic epic (*Aeneid*)». One may also recall the medieval *Rota Vergilii*, which offered a tripartite division of the *opera* of Vergil, attributing a *stilus humilis* to the *Eclogues*, a *stilus mediocris* to the *Georgics*, and a *stilus grauis* to the *Aeneid*. On Vergil's poetic career see, for example, Putnam 2010, pp. 17-38; for the *Rota Vergilii*, see Bajoni 1997, pp. 281-285.
[8] Shumilin 2015, p. 148.

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recubans sub tegmine fagi	(*Ecl*. 1, 1)
diuino carmine pastor	(*Ecl*. 6, 67)
uocat in certamina diuos	(*Aen*. 6, 172)
ramo frondente pependit.	(*Aen*. 7, 67)
quae te dementia cepit	(*Ecl*. 2, 69 and *Ecl*. 6, 47)
saxi de uertice pastor,	(*Aen*. 2, 308)
diuina Palladis arte	(*Aen*. 2, 15)
Phoebum superare canendo?	(*Ecl*. 5, 9)

Lying under a beech tree's canopy
the shepherd with his divine song
challenges the gods to a contest:
he was hung from a leafy branch.
What madness seized you,
shepherd from the boulder's top
with the divine art of Pallas
to surpass Phoebus in singing?[9]

This passage is composed using four units from the *Eclogues*. In line 131 the Chorus makes reference to the satyr Marsyas, whose example, as noted by Galli, is held up as a model of *nefas*, in parallel with the marriage of Jason and Creusa.[10] As Ovid brilliantly recounts in the *Metamorphoses* (8.382-400), Marsyas incurs divine wrath by challenging Apollo to a contest, thus offering a good example of insolence towards a divinity.

Marsyas is presented here with the guise of Tityrus, resting in the shadow of a beech tree. McGill remarks that the transition of *Ecl*. 1, 1, the bucolic line *par excellence*, from a pastoral to a tragic context does not feel forced because the most bucolic word therein, *fagi*, also appears in Seneca's tragedies.[11] I think, however, that more can be said on this line and its transition from pastoral to tragedy. There are reflections to be made about the word *recubans*, strongly associated with and widely used in epic texts.[12] Its

[9] These lines may echo those at the end of the cento *De ecclesia*. I am grateful to one of the anonymous reviewers for calling my attention to this.
[10] Galli 2017, p. 205.
[11] McGill 2005, p. 40.
[12] For occurrences of words and clauses in Latin poetry, I consulted *Musisque Deoque: A Digital Archive of Latin Poetry* (MQDQ), at https://mizar.unive.it/mqdq/public/.

earliest use in surviving poetry comes in Lucretius 1, 38, a didactic author ranked by Quintilian among the epic poets,[13] and it soon appeared in Vergil's *Eclogue* 1, in the famous opening line *Tityre, tu patulae recubans sub tegmine fagi*. If we take a look at the occurrences of *recubans* and derived forms, we may reach some conclusions regarding its literary register. It appears only once in the *Eclogues*, and four more times in the *Aeneid*; it is absent from the *Georgics*.[14] It then went on to be widely used in Flavian epics, possibly with allusions to Vergil's use of it:

> Verg. *Ecl*. 1, 1: Tityre, tu patulae **recubans** sub tegmine fagi.
> Val. Flacc. 7, 523: Protinus immensis **recubantem** anfractibus anguem.
> Stat. *Theb*. 6, 274: Laeuus harundinae **recubans** super aggere ripae.
> Sil. *Pun*. 15, 428: Cyclopum domus. hic **recubans** manantia tabo.

These are only a few examples of the epic fortune of *recubans* after the *Eclogues*. This form is absent from comedy and near-absent from other genres considered minor, such as elegy (once each in Propertius, Tibullus, and Ovid's *Ars amatoria*)[15] and epigram (only once in Martial), which may indicate the *Eclogues*' generic enrichment. Regarding elegy, Propertius' sole use of *recubans* appears in elegy 3, 3, 1, a poem with a strong programmatic tone, full of Callimachean resonances:

> Visus eram mollis **recubans** Heliconis in umbra

Propertius opens his poem with the image of himself lying in the shade, just like Tityrus under his beech tree. This obvious echo of the *Eclogues* may be a way of affirming Propertius' affiliation to a high literary tradition that goes back at least to Hesiod, Callimachus, and Ennius. Fedeli calls attention to the symbolic meaning of this Vergilian echo, with philosophical readings, as does Smith.[16]

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[13] Quint. *Inst*. 10, 85-87.
[14] Verg. *Aen*. 3, 392; 6, 418; 8, 45, and 8, 297, always in the present participle.
[15] Ov. *Ars am.* 2, 342: *sub qua nunc recubas arbore, uirga fuit*. According to Janka 1997, ad loc., this line echoes Vergil's *Ecl*. 1, 1.
[16] Fedeli 1985, p. 117. Smith 1965, p. 298: «the shepherd in repose is more than a stock figure in a conventional idyllic landscape: the herdsman himself and the cool shade in which he lies are presented in symbolic fashion, so as to give coherent philosophical and political meaning to the *Eclogues*». The clause *sub tegmine fagi* also appears in line 2 of the cento *Iudicium Paridis*, referring to Paris as a shepherd.

Turning to tragedy, *recubans* also occurs in Seneca's *Medea* 639, *uiuus ardenti recubans in Oeta*, establishing it as appropriate to a high literary register. The same reflection can be made of *tegmen*, which appears only twice in Vergil's pastoral poetry, the occurrence in *Georgics* 4, 566 being an echo of *Eclogues* 1, 1. However, writers of epic were fond of it, especially Silius Italicus, who used it 28 times in the *Punica*. As McGill has pointed out, *tegmen* is not the most common bucolic word for shadow, but *umbra*.[17] Thus, this unit of the *Eclogues*, probably Vergil's best-known line, offers no resistance when transplanted to the context of a tragedy. Hosidius Geta was likely well aware of the significance of these terms in the literary tradition, and their associations with epic and tragic poetry, and considered them appropriate for a tragic cento. In their new context, these units from the *Eclogues* are still strongly marked by a bucolic tone, which suits the figure of Marsyas, but also shows how seamlessly these units blend with those of the *Aeneid*, which themselves have a bucolic tone, because of the vocabulary used.

In line 132 of the cento tragedy, Marsyas is described as a shepherd of divine song with a unit of *Ecl.* 6, 67 which, in that text, refers to Apollo's son Linus, who challenged the gods to a contest:

> ut Linus haec illo diuino carmine pastor

This unit is particularly useful to Geta, not just because of lexical convenience, but because of the generic enrichment of the original unit in the *Eclogues*. In *Ecl*. 6, 67, Linus is chosen to teach Cornelius Gallus, the main figure of the poem.[18] However, Vergil overlays his bucolic text with strong Alexandrian allusions, Callimachean and Theocritean echoes, and this particular passage of the poem is full of unpastoral material.[19]

A word about the clause *diuino carmine* is also warranted. Our earliest recorded instance of this expression seems to occur in Catullus 64, 321, *talia diuino fuderunt carmine fata*, and thus Vergil's source may have been Catullus' epyllion, a poem of

[17] McGill 2005, p. 183 n. 62.
[18] Clausen 1994, p. 177.
[19] Harrison 2007, p. 55. As Ross 1975, p. 23, noted: «Virgil's Linus, though, is neither the mythical *Ürsanger*, nor the somewhat mock-heroic poet-scholar-teacher suggested by Theocritus, nor the pastoral figure we can imagine in Callimachus, but rather all three at once».

erudite taste, perhaps itself also tragedy-compatible.[20] That said, if *diuino carmine pastor* suits Marsyas' bucolic condition of satyr, its original context, despite being an *Eclogue*, has nothing of the simplicity of the bucolic world with its strong Hellenistic influence and erudition.[21]

After using two units from the *Eclogues*, Geta inserts two from the *Aeneid*, appropriately since they involve a *certamen* (the contest between Misenus and Triton, *Aen*. 6, 172). This *certamen* recalls the contest of Marsyas and Apollo. It must also be noted that the term is very widely used in Latin epic, but is also applied to the contest between Corydon and Thyrsis in *Ecl*. 7, 16.

The unit *quae te dementia cepit* in line 135, echoing *Eclogues* 2, 69 and 6, 47, on Corydon's *amor/furor* and Pasiphae's madness, respectively, has also enjoyed a certain popularity in Latin poetry.[22] In Geta's cento tragedy the unit conveys Marsyas' insolence in challenging a god to a contest. However, I think that this unit may be explored further: it is indisputable that the centonist alludes to Corydon's words and to the disastrous situation of Pasiphae, but this construction, *dementia cepit*, is also found widely in epic and tragedy. For instance, it appears in *Aeneid* 5, 465,[23] in the scene where Aeneas asks Dares what madness has taken possession of his spirit:

> infelix, quae tanta animum dementia cepit?

As Sens has noted, «the close verbal similarity between *Aen*. 5, 465 and *Ecl*. 6, 47 is not to be taken lightly»,[24] and Vergil constantly moves back and forth between the *Eclogues* and the *Georgics* to the *Aeneid* in a complex web of self-allusion and internal references, indicating that the former two works serve regularly as a model for his epic poem.[25] As Theodorakopoulos has also highlighted:

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[20] For the influence of Catullus 64 on Vergil's *Eclogue* 6, see Fernandelli 2012, pp. 140-144.
[21] Seider 2016, p. 9, compares Gallus' ascent to Vergil's own purposes: «The literary expansion proposed for Gallus is strikingly similar to Vergil's aspirations, and these likenesses highlight the kinship between the two poets while also pointing toward Vergil's significant accomplishments».
[22] Stewart 1959, p. 190, notes in this line the influence of Theocritus, *Id.* 11, 72.
[23] This line is also repeated in line 224 of the cento of Proba, referring to Genesis 3:8-11. For a deeper study on this cento, see Cullhed 2015.
[24] Sens 1995, p. 51. See also the analysis that this scholar presents in the following pages of his article.
[25] Most 2001, p. 156: «Virgil repeatedly makes explicit reference in his own texts, by means of prominent self-citations, to other texts he has written. A network of sometimes obtrusive cross-references binds together each of his published works internally and further links each one to all the other parts of his oeuvre, validating their authenticity but at the same time turning them into an apparently cohesive whole».

> the *Eclogues* and the *Georgics* are not left behind in the author's poetic progress, but retain a strong presence in the *Aeneid*, and through this intratextuality they invite the reader repeatedly to look back at those parts of the Book she may consider finished and to integrate them into what she can perceive as a coherent whole.[26]

By using the adjective *infelix* from *Ecl*. 2, 69/6, 47 and *Aen*. 5, 465 with the clause *dementia cepit*, Vergil connects the texts, transporting the situation of the *Eclogues* to the field of epic and consequently rendering it appropriate to the field of «high poetry». Vergil references his own work again, repeating the figure at *Georgics* 4, 488, *cum subita incautum dementia cepit amantem*, in the epyllion of Aristaeus, probably the most famous episode of the whole poem, relating the tragic story of Orpheus and Eurydice. Another allusion to this phrase may be found in *Aen*. 9, 601 *quis deus Italiam, quae uos dementia adegit*, and, more discretely, also in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 13, 225 *nec mora: «quid facitis? quae uos dementia!» dixi*. It is also echoed in the tragedy *Octavia*, controversially attributed to Seneca: *claro tumentes genere quae dementia est* (496).

The expression *quae te dementia cepit*, and variations on it, was widely used not only in Vergilian pastoral, then, but found a place in epic, too. As Harrison notes, one must also bear in mind that in *Eclogues* 6, 47 the phrase refers to Pasiphae's madness, which drives her to love a bull, and Vergil bases his account of Pasiphae on contemporary works on this mythological theme, notably Calvus' epyllion *Io*, a poem of refined taste and erudition, in the manner of Callimachus and other Alexandrian poets.

Finally, line 138 of Geta's cento tragedy, taken from *Ecl*. 5, 9, which speaks of the audacity of Amintas in challenging Apollo to a singing contest, perfectly suits Marsyas' *hubris*, since he challenges the same god. The elevated style of this line and, consequently, allowing its appropriation to epic/tragedy is marked by the gerundive *canendo*, the verb *cano* being typical for the singing of elevated genres, used by Vergil in the very first line of the *Aeneid*, and before that in *Ecl*. 4, 1-3, where he notes the elevation of style relative to the preceding poems of the book:[27]

> Sicelides Musae, paulo maiora canamus.

[26] Theodorakopoulos 1997, p. 157.
[27] Harrison 2007, p. 32.

> non omnis arbusta iuuant humilesque myricae;
> si canimus siluas, siluae sint consule dignae.
>
> Sicilian Muses, let us sing a somewhat loftier strain. Not everyone do orchards and the lowly tamarisks delight. If our song is of the woodland, let the woods be worthy of a consul.[28]

Again within the Vergilian corpus, in the *sphragis* of the *Georgics* (4, 559-566), the poet refers to his *Eclogues* using the term *lusi* (4, 565), which was associated with the composition of minor poetry,[29] but in the following line changes the verbal form to *cano*, perhaps to evoke the idea of generic elevation:

> carmina qui lusi pastorum audaxque iuuenta,
> Tityre, te patulae cecini sub tegmine fagi.
>
> I who toyed with shepherds' songs, and, in youth's boldness, sang of you, Tityrus, under the canopy of a spreading beech.

Moreover, from another point of view, the meter of our passage of Geta's *Medea* may also underscore the elevation of the bucolic genre. The units from the *Eclogues* and the *Aeneid* used in this choral ode all belong to the second part of the Vergilian hexameter, which, isolated, is composed in paremiacs.[30] Geta used units of lines with a preponderance of spondees, perhaps in a bid to elevate the choral ode and give it gravitas. In their new life in the cento tragedy, these units have a somewhat different metrical appearance:

> rĕcŭbāns sūb tēgmĭnĕ fāgi
> dīuīnō cārmĭnĕ pāstor
> uŏcăt īn cērtāmĭnă dīuos

[28] Translations of Vergil are taken from Fairclough 1916.
[29] Cf., for example, also Catull. 50, 2 *multum lusimus in meis tabellis*; Verg. *Ecl*. 6, 1 *Prima Syracosio dignata est ludere uersu*, and *Cul.* 1 *lusimus, Octaui, gracili modulante Thalia* and 3 *lusimus: haec propter culicis sint carmina docta*.
[30] On the meter of this tragedy and how Geta adapted the structure of dialogues and choral parts, see McGill 2002, p. 146.

rāmō frōndēntĕ pĕpēndit
quāe tē dēmēntĭă cēpit
sāxī dē uērtĭcĕ pāstor
dīuīnā Pāllădĭs ārte
Phōebūm sŭpĕrārĕ cănēndo.

It also seems worth pointing out that lines 131 and 133 share the same metrical pattern, thus creating a metrical relation between their sources, *Eclogues* 1, 1 and *Aeneid* 6, 172, and reinforcing the generic blending.

Using markedly pastoral terms, such as *fagus* or *pastor*, Geta contrived a parallel between the episodes of Marsyas' challenge and Jason's marriage as two examples of sacrilegious behavior. Since Marsyas is a satyr, his natural habitat is the wild countryside, so the use of bucolic vocabulary is appropriate, and both genres, low and high, bucolic and tragic, can coexist in harmony. Geta used Vergilian units so malleable that there is a strong tradition of their use in the *opera maiora* of Latin poetry.[31] Even pastoral lines containing references to overtly pastoral elements gained a new generic life in this tragedy.[32]

In this analysis of some of the units from the *Eclogues* in Geta's cento tragedy I have tried to show that the so-called *stilus humilis* has the potential to find place in high generic works, here tragedy, and that Geta was aware of this. The bucolic units here dialogue harmoniously with the *Aeneid* because Geta selected phrases whose generic malleability allowed them to migrate from a genre to another. But what treatment did the *Georgics* receive? In the following section, I will try to show that Geta exploits the high-culture potential of the *Georgics*, focusing on the migration of genres and process of generic enrichment.

3. THE *GEORGICS*

[31] McGill 2002, p. 159, reinforces this point at the end of an article on the cento *Medea*: «the reuse of Vergilian units to convey a drama reveals that much poetic language, including terms with a marked programmatic significance in one context, is in itself generically neutral and capable of taking the content and register of another genre».

[32] As Harrison 2007, p. 35 has noted: «the Vergilian collection, by contrast, makes great efforts to incorporate non-pastoral material into the book's overall pastoral content, and overtly flags potential 'deviations' from the straightforwardly 'pastoral'».

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Hosidius Geta mines the second poem of Vergil's poetic career 39 times, the majority of the units from book 4, especially from the epyllion of Aristaeus and the story of Orpheus. As Galli has noted, Aristaeus, Orpheus, and Eurydice are the characters of the *Georgics* that most interested Geta, since their stories' themes of loss and proving oneself, and the connection between love and death, are well suited to the myth of Medea.[33]

Concerning the treatment of the *Georgics*, I will offer a brief analysis of a passage of dialogue between Medea and Jason, lines 250-259:[34]

[Medea]	Heu tot incassum fusos patiere labores,	(*Aen*. 7, 421)
	nec uenit in mentem fumans sub uomere taurus,	(*Aen*. 4, 39 + *G*. 3, 515)
	iam grauior Pelias et aena undantia flammis	(*Aen*. 2, 436 + *Aen*. 6, 218)
	squamosusque draco et quaesitae sanguine dotes?	(*G*. 4, 408 + *Aen*. 7, 423)
[Iason]	In regnis hoc ausa tuis:	(*Aen*. 5, 792)
	haec loca non tauri spirantes naribus ignem	(*G*. 2, 140)
	nec galea densisque uirum seges horruit hastis,	(*G*. 2, 142)
	nec uim tela ferunt: mitte hanc de pectore curam.	(*Aen*. 6, 400 + *Aen*. 6, 85)
[Medea]	Nam quis te, iuuenem confidentissime, nostras	(*G*. 4, 445)
	iussit adire domos? (…)	(*G*. 4, 446)

[Medea]	Alas, will you allow that all these labors were spent in vain –
	nor does the bull come to your mind, foaming under the plow,
	elderly Pelias and the cauldron boiling over the fire,
	the scaly serpent and the dowry sought with blood?
[Jason]	In your kingdom you dared this:
	this place no bulls plowed that breathe fire from their nostrils
	nor does the crop bristle with helmets and the dense spears of warriors,
	nor do weapons bring danger: relieve your heart of this worry.
[Medea]	And who told you, most arrogant of youths, to come
	to my home? (…)

In this passage, Medea begins by referring to the help she has given Jason on his mission and then gives a brief résumé of her efforts: bulls, Pelias' rejuvenation, and the dragon.

[33] Galli 2017, p. 173.
[34] This is not the only passage that could be studied. Lines 222-236, for example, also offer a very reasonable number of units from the *Georgics*, in a similar context to lines 250-259.

In the *Georgics* there is a lot of material that could serve to illustrate this scene, especially passages relating to the animals involved in this myth. The unit referring to the bull is taken from *Georgics* 3, 515, where a bull foams at the mouth as it drags the plow, suffering from the disease which afflicts cattle at the end of *Georgics* 3. The verb *concidit* in 3, 516, which refers to the *taurus*, is not suitable for Geta's purpose, so here the bull foams in full health and anger, a demonstration of vigor in Medea's account.

The word that is probably the most problematic in this *Georgics* unit, because of its specific connection to farm work, is *uomus*. It is not entirely alien to high literature, however, for it appears in the *Aeneid*, and in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. The clause *uomere taurus* also found some favor in high Latin literature, for example, in Catullus' epyllion 64, 40 *non glebam prono conuellit uomere taurus*, Horace's *Carmina* 3, 13, 11 *fessis uomere tauris*, and Ovid's *Fasti* 2, 295 *nullus anhelabat sub adunco uomere taurus*.

The phrase *squamosus draco* comes from Cyrene's advice to Aristaeus when she warns him about the many shapes that Proteus may assume when he tries to capture him (*G*. 4, 408).[35] Its appearance in the mock-epic *Culex* 195 *horrida squamosi uoluentia membra draconis* probably marks the influence of the *Georgics*.[36] However, Geta used the figure of a certain warrior Pelias from *Aen*. 2, 436 to introduce the theme of the rejuvenation of old Pelias, one of the magical deeds of Medea, since this name only appears in two consecutive lines of *Aeneid* 2, and never in the context of the myth of Medea and the Argonauts.

The same *taurus* motif that Medea uses appears again in line 255, but this time in a very different context: Geta picks lines from the *laudes Italiae* of *Georgics* 2, 136-176. This episode is very convenient because it makes explicit reference to the story of Jason and the Argonauts. However, I think that we should explore the content of these lines a little further, because they have a very strong link with the epic tradition. The expression *spirantes naribus ignem* probably first appeared in Latin poetry in Lucretius 5, 30, referring to the horses of Diomedes, but the image had already appeared in Apollonius of Rhodes 3, 496, ταύρω χαλκόποδε, στόματι φλόγα φυσιόωντας («Breathing fire from their mouths»).[37] However, Vergil may himself have modeled this phrase on Ennius fr. 606

[35] It is worth noting that this episode also has an epic antecedent, as it is based on Eidothea's advice to Menelaus in Hom. *Od.* 4, 398-463.
[36] Proba, for example, repeats this full line of the *Georgics* in line 103 of her cento, but in the context of a catalogue of wild beasts.
[37] Translation from Race 2009.

Sk, *funduntque elatis naribus lucem*, thus giving his pastoral text a tragic overtone.[38] Besides appearing twice elsewhere in Vergil's corpus (*G*. 3, 85, *Aen*. 7, 281), the expression *naribus ignem* is also found in later epic, being present in Valerius Flaccus and Silius Italicus.[39] I also wish to highlight the large number of spondees in this line, which may be considered to give it a solemn tone:

> hāec lŏcă nōn tāurī spīrāntēs nārĭbŭs īgnem.

Next, Geta uses two lines from the *laudes Italiae* (*G*. 2, 140; 2, 142) connected by *nec* (255-256):

> haec loca non tauri spirantes naribus ignem
> nec galea densisque uirum seges horruit hastis.

The only word with a strong rural significance here is *seges*, but one may find some occurrences of it in association with *horreo* and weaponry in, for example, *Aeneid* 7, 526 *horrescit strictis seges ensibus, aeraque fulgent*.[40] In Livy's historiographic prose we find similar vocabulary, for instance, in the phrase *intentis horrentis hastis* (44, 41).

In this passage, I think that Geta may also have had Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica* in mind. In *Argonautica* 1, 221-222, one can read:

> quantus io tumidis **taurorum e naribus ignis**!
> tollunt se **galeae** sulcisque ex omnibus **hastae**.
>
> Ah! mark the fierce flames from the heaving nostrils of the bulls! Helms are springing forth and spears from every furrow.[41]

Compare the text of the cento tragedy (255-256):

[38] Servius, commenting on *Aen*. 12, 115, notes the Ennian influence on this line: *LVCEMQVE ELATIS NARIBVS EFFLANT Ennianus uersus est ordine commutato. ille enim ait «funduntque elatis naribus lucem»*. Nelis 2001, p. 368, has dedicated a few lines to this verse, noting the similarities with *Aen*. 7, 786.
[39] Val. Flacc. 1, 221; Sil. 6, 232, 7, 358.
[40] Mynors 1990, ad loc., points out the resemblance to Lycophron's *Alex*. 252.
[41] Translation from Mozley 1934.

> haec loca non **tauri** spirantes **naribus ignem**
> nec **galea** densisque uirum seges horruit **hastis**.
>
> this place no bulls plowed that breathe fire from their nostrils
> nor does the crop bristle with helmets and the dense spears of warriors.

Flaccus and Geta show how suitable for elevated poetry some parts of the *Georgics* can be, rearranging the Vergilian material in a very similar way and presenting remarkable similarities of vocabulary. That both found in the *laudes Italiae* suitable material and vocabulary for their own very different purposes, shows the fluidity of this poem, offering a new reading of «agriculture» that can compete in the field of elevated genres.[42]

Finally, in line 258 of the cento tragedy, Medea addresses Jason directly. To make this conversation possible, Geta mines an episode of *Georgics* 4 where Aristaeus asks Proteus the cause of the loss of his hives. In the *Georgics*, surprised at Aristaeus' audacity, Proteus responds:

> nam quis te, iuuenem confidentissime, nostras
> iussit adire domos? (4, 445-446)

In Geta's cento tragedy, the *iuuenis* is no longer Aristaeus, but Jason. The word *iuuenis* is perfect here, since Jason is often figured as a young man in Latin poetry. For example:

> Ov. *Ep*. 12, 66: Aesonio iuueni, quod rogat illa, damus.
> Ov. *Met*. 7, 132: in caput Haemonii iuuenis torquere parentes.
> Val. Flacc. 7, 350: rursus ad Haemonii iuuenis curamque metumque.

Jason is usually called «young man», not *pater*, like Aeneas. *Iuuenis*, used by a furious Proteus to refer to Aristaeus, is thus perfect for the indignation of Medea.[43] The transposition of this unit transforms the seer Proteus into the sorceress Medea, both of whom are characterized by wrath at the insolence of a young man. The keyword for Geta

[42] One must not forget the epic treatment that Apollonius of Rhodes gave this part of the myth in his *Argonautica* 3, 1278-1407. For epic influences on the *Georgics*, see Farrell 1991.
[43] Centonists seem to use this line and a half of the *Georgics* together as a unit, since it is also quoted in lines 439-440 of Proba's cento.

here was, I believe, *iuuenis*, which allowed the connection of two very different episodes that had in common only the motif of anger. Geta may have found this theme in various passages of the *Aeneid*, but it was Aristaeus' epyllion that offered what he needed.

As with the preceding analysis of units from the *Eclogues*, my main goal here was to take some units of the *Georgics* in the cento *Medea* as a case study, to show that, among many other possibilities and readings that this text offers, the centonist was well aware of the high-culture potential of Vergil's bucolic verse, and challenged the generic boundaries of a poem on agriculture and the countryside, a theme many would consider dry and dull, and found in it material and vocabulary worthy of a tragedy.

4. Conclusion

To conclude, my main goal with this analysis of these two excerpts of Hosidius Geta's cento tragedy *Medea* was to show that he was aware of the high generic connotations of material in the *Eclogues* and the *Georgics*, and played with them, showing that units extracted from both could coexist effectively with textual units from the *Aeneid* to produce a tragic text. The passages considered here, however, do not represent an exhaustive analysis of the material from the *Eclogues* and the *Georgics* in this cento. As I have said, they are but two possible case studies among many that show one of Geta's techniques of (re)working Vergil's material. I chose these passages because they present units of both the *Eclogues* and the *Georgics*, interwoven for good measure with units of the *Aeneid*.

Despite the *Eclogues* being a work in a genre considered minor, and the *Georgics* similarly being a work of *stilus mediocris*, they shown that the vocabulary of non-epic Vergilian texts may be malleable to the point of fitting an epic or tragic context. What I intended to show is that, although Hosidius Geta used non-epic Vergilian material, the original contexts of his «minor» material are not that «minor», and the centonist benefited from the generic elevation of specific passages. Geta took advantage of Vergilian self-allusion in the *Aeneid*, which had already conferred epic status on passages that had not originally been epic, or at least belonged to non-epic texts, and thus were not out of place in a tragedy, despite their original pastoral or rustic context. The coherence of Hosidius Geta's cento thus comes from the fact that Vergil extensively makes explicit reuse of his own work.

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