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Summary: *Centones* are works that might be interpreted as *bis in idem*, in a positive manner, being simultaneously a revitalisation of prior works and an independent piece, which grants a perception *per se*. In addition to their poetic value, a major relevance draws from the text itself, as descendant of a previous source, perfectly known not only to the author of the *cento*, but to the public as well, capable to appreciate the virtuosity. *Cento nuptialis* composed by Ausonius is to be considered both as Vergilian inheritance manoeuvred with poetic skill and as binomial of theory and practice, preserved in the letter addressed to Paulus.

We examine two formal aspects: the *iunctura* points and the entire verses taken from Vergil. The *iunctura* of the hemistichs seems to be occasionally generated by the presence of a certain word. Regarding the entire Vergilian verses, the letter addressed to Paulus states that two consecutive entire verses *ineptum est*: the assertion might be understood either as aiming at two consecutive verses in the source text, or as two entire verses, belonging to different parts of the source text. If the second interpretation is correct, *Cento nuptialis* begins inelegantly (*ineptum*).

Key words: Ausonius, Vergilius, *centones*, *iuncturae*

1. INTRODUCTION

The present paper is not devoted to the circumstances under which Ausonius composed *Cento nuptialis* (the alleged literary competition with the emperor or the festive moment of the wedding), neither with the literary genre of *epithalamium*.¹ Its focus is given by the specificity of the *centones*, that represent a fertile field for analysis, either as *bis in idem* – being simultaneously a revitalisation of prior works and an independent piece, which grants a perception *per se* – and from the standpoint of the

¹ For both perspectives, vide EHRLING, S.: *De inconexis continuum. A Study of Late Antique Latin Wedding Centos*. Göteborg 2011 (gupea.ub.gu.se).

text itself, as descendant of a previous source (“indirect tradition” for the Vergilian *textus*); this source, perfectly known to the author of the *cento*, is supposed to be acknowledged by the public as well, who should be competent in appreciating the virtuosity of the derived work.

The Ausonian *cento* is an outstanding example, equally as Vergilian inheritance manoeuvred with poetic skill and as binomial of theory and practice, preserved in the letter addressed to Paulus that prefaces the 131 verses of the *cento*. In order to understand the mechanism of composing this *cento*, we analyse it investigating two formal aspects: the quotations that exceed the length of a hemistich (*plus quam hemistichium*) and the *iunctura* point of the hemistichs that seems to be occasionally generated (or, at least, facilitated) by the presence of a certain word.²

The epistle to Paulus³ explicitly includes the principles that govern the composition of a *cento*. Ausonius reveals (*si pateris... absoluam*) the formula used in *centones*: the secondary author, as we might call him, amalgamates hemistichs or entire verses taken from a previous author in order to compose a new poem. These fragments are not supposed to exceed one line and a half: *in unum uersum ut coeant aut caesi duo aut unus et sequens (medius) cum medio*. The poetic rule of the *cento* is reluctant to a sequence of two entire lines, that is inelegant (*nam duos iunctim locare ineptum est*), and blames a sequence of three lines as trivial (*tres una serie merae nugae*).

While Ausonius’ work certainly lacks any sequence of three consecutive Vergilian lines (*merae nugae*, in his own words), there are nevertheless some instances of what he labels as *ineptum*. Taking further this investigation, we listed all the *plus quam hemistichium* quotations from Vergil.

2. SUCCESSION OF ENTIRE VERSES

A. There are only three instances of *duos iunctim locare*.

a. vv 25–26

*nec non Thraecius longa cum ueste sacerdos
obloquitur numeris septem discrimina uocum
= Aen. 6. 645–646⁴*

It might be noticed a hesitation in the Ausonian tradition (*Thraecius: traicius, treicius, threitius, threicius*) that at least partially matches the direct Vergilian tradition *Threicius*.

² For a different approach, cf. EHRLING (n. 1), mainly chapter 14, *Functions of association and reconsideration of the text of origin*, where are discussed the “external” and “internal” meaningful associations (theoretical account and examples from *Centio nuptialis*: p. 198–203).

³ Ausonius, *Opuscula*. Ed. S. PRETE. Leipzig 1978.

⁴ Vergilius, *Opera*. Ed. G. IANELL. Leipzig 1930.

b. vv 75–76

*omnes ut tecum meritis pro talibus annos
exigat et pulchra faciat te prole parentem*
= *Aen.* 1. 74–75

c. vv 97–98

*succidimus: non lingua ualet, non corpore notae
sufficiunt uires, nec uox aut uerba sequuntur*
= *Aen.* 12. 911–912

Besides the rarity of these inelegant quotations (*inepta*, as Ausonius himself stigmatize the succession of entire verses), we can't help noticing their origin, as all belong to *Aeneis*.

B. Without being exactly instances to deserve the label *ineptum est*, there are three Ausonian couples of verses that consist in entire Vergilian verses, even if taken from different sections.

a. vv 1–2

*Accipite haec animis laetasque aduertite mentes,
ambo animis, ambo insignes praestantibus armis*
= *Aen.* 5. 304; *Aen.* 11. 291

b. vv 91–92

*Talia dicentem iamdudum auersa tuetur
cunctaturque metu telumque instare tremiscit*
= *Aen.* 4. 362; *Aen.* 12. 916

c. vv 108–109

*monstrum horrendum, informe, ingens, cui lumen ademptum,
eripit a femore et trepidanti feruidus instat*
= *Aen.* 3. 658; *A.* 10. 788

Just like the previous set, these three couples of verses belong to *Aeneis*; the fact that the Vergilian *loca* are distant from one another (*libri* 5 and 11, 4 and 12, 3 and 10) is probably irrelevant, *id est* not specifically intended.

C. Two more instances of entire Vergilian verses are slightly different, representing sequences of more than two entire Vergilian verses:

a. vv 97–99

The couple of verses *Aen.* 12. 911–912 quoted above is followed by another entire Vergilian verse:

ille autem: 'Causas nequiquam nectis inanes'
= *Aen.* 9. 291

b. vv 117–120

A sequence of four distinct Vergilian verses:

intorquet summis adnexus uiribus hastam.
haesit uirgineumque alte bibit acta cruorem.
insonuere cauae gemitumque dedere cauernae.
illa manu moriens telum trahit, ossa sed inter
= *Aen.* 9. 744; *Aen.* 11. 804; *Aen.* 2. 53; *Aen.* 11. 816

It is remarkable, again, that the entire verses extracted here belong to *Aeneis*; the latter case, although it includes two lines from the same 11th *liber* (not far away one from another: 804 and 816), displays a sturdy concern regarding their proximity; these verses are separated by another one taken from the 2nd *liber*.

We might speculate about considering these sequences of more than two consecutive verses in the light of Ausonius' description as *merae nugae* (*vide supra*).

3. SUCCESSION OF VERGILIAN [ENTIRE VERSE+HEMISTICH]/ [HEMISTICH+ENTIRE VERSE]/[HEMISTICH+HEMISTICH]

A. entire verse+hemistich

a. vv 14–15

conueniunt stratoque super discumbitur ostro,
dant famuli manibus lymphas // onerantque canistris
= *Aen.* 1. 700; *A.* 1. 701(in.)

The *Aen.* 1. 701 (*dant manibus famuli lymphas*) *manibus* and *famuli* are inverted in the *Cento*.

b. vv 38–39

illam omnis tectis agrisque effusa iuuentus
turbaque miratur matrum. // uestigia primi
= *Aen.* 7. 812; *Aen.* 7. 813(in.)

c. vv 59–60

munera portantes aurique eborisque talenta
et sellam // et pictum croceo uelamen acantho
= *Aen.* 11. 333; *Aen.* 11. 334(in.)

d. vv 80–81

Postquam est in thalami pendentia pumice tecta
peruentum, // licito tandem sermone fruuntur
= *Georg.* 4. 374; *Georg.* 4. 375(in.)

e. vv 122–123

*ter sese attollens cubitoque innixa leuauit,
ter reuoluta toro est. // manet imperterritus ille*
= *Aen.* 6. 690; *Aen.* 6. 691(in.)

f. vv 128–129

*iamque fere spatio extremo fessique sub ipsam
finem aduentabant: // tum creber anhelitus artus*
= *Aen.* 5. 327; 5. 328(in.)

B. hemistich+entire verse**a. vv. 5–6**

*auspiciis manifesta fides, // quo iustior alter
nec pietate fuit, nec bello maior et armis*
= *Aen.* 1. 544(fin.); *Aen.* 1. 545

b. vv 31–32

*matronae, pueri, // uocemque per ampla uolutant
atria: dependent lychni laquearibus aureis*
= *Aen.* 1. 725(fin.); *Aen.* 1. 726

c. vv 48–49

*pictus acu // chlamydem auratam, quam plurima circum
purpura maeandro duplici Meliboea cucurrit*
= *Aen.* 5. 250(fin.); *Aen.* 5. 251

d. vv 61–62

*ingens argentum mensis // colloque monile
bacatum et duplicem gemmis auroque coronam*
= *Aen.* 1. 654(fin.); *Aen.* 1. 655

e. vv 65–66

*omnibus in morem tonsa coma; // pectore summo
flexilis obtorti per collum circulus auri*
= *Aen.* 5. 558(fin.); *Aen.* 5. 559

f. vv 78–79

*uiuete felices. ' // dixerunt " currite " fuis
concordes stabili fatorum numine Parcae*
= *Ecl.* 4. 46(fin.); *Ecl.* 4. 47

g. vv 116–117

*et super incumbens // nodis et cortice crudo
intorquet summis adnexus uiribus hastam*
= *Aen.* 6. 240(fin.); *Aen.* 6. 241

C. hemistichs

a. vv 4–5

*tuque prior, // nam te maioribus ire per altum
auspiciis manifesta fides, // quo iustior alter*
= *Aen.* 3. 374(fin.); *Aen.* 3. 375(in.)

Regarding this example, it is to be noticed that in three verses (4–6) there are two sequences of consecutive verses, given the fact that v. 5 begins with a Vergilian verse consecutive to the one quoted in v. 4 and ends with a Vergilian verse that is followed by its consecutive Vergilian (entire) verse.

b. vv 10–11

*non iniussa cano. // sua cuique exorsa laborem
fortunamque ferent: // mihi iussa capessere fas est*
= *Aen.* 10. 111(fin.); *Aen.* 10. 112(in.)

c. vv 28–29

*omnibus una quies operum, // cunctique relictis
consurgunt mensis: // per limina laeta frequentes*
= *Aen.* 8. 109(fin.); *Aen.* 8. 110(in.)

d. vv 42–43

*ornatus Argiuae Helenae: // qualisque uideri
caelicolis et quanta solet // Venus aurea contra*
= *Aen.* 2. 591(fin.); *Aen.* 2. 592(in.)

e. vv 113–114

*hic specus horrendum: // talis sese halitus atris
faucibus effundens // nares contingit odore*
= *Aen.* 6. 240(fin.); *Aen.* 6. 241(in.)

D. succession of Vergilian hemistichs (in order or reversed order) with a diminution:

a. vv 15–17

*dant famuli manibus lymphas // onerantque canistris
dona laboratae Cereris // pinguisque ferinae
uiscera tosta ferunt // series longissima rerum*

v 15 = *Aen.* 1. 701(in.) + *Aen.* 8. 180(fin.)

*dant manibus famuli lymphas // Cereremque canistris
uiscera tosta ferunt taurorum // onerantque canistris*

v 16 = *Aen.* 8. 181(in.) + *Aen.* 1. 215(fin.)

*dona laboratae Cereris // Bacchumque ministrant.
inplentur ueteris Bacchi // pinguisque ferinae*

v 17 = *Aen.* 8. 180(in.) + *Aen.* 1. 641(fin.)
uiscera tosta ferunt // taurorum onerantque canistris
fortia facta partum, // series longissima rerum

Conclusion for vv 15–17:

- a. Vergilian *Aen.* 8. 180 becomes Ausonian 15(fin.) and 17(in.); the word *taurorum* is missing.
- β. Ausonian 16 includes *Aen.* 8. 181(in.), “called” by *Ceres* (*Cereremque*) in *Aen.* 1. 701(in.), that becomes 15(in.).
- γ. The same *Aen.* 1. 701 ends with *canistris*, exactly like *Aen.* 8. 180 (v 15).
- δ. The missing hemistichs of *Aen.* 8. 181(fin.) and *Aen.* 1. 215(in.) include *Bacchus* (*Bacchumque, Bacchi*).

b. vv 53–54

extulit os sacrum caelo: // sic ora ferebat,
sic oculos // cursuque amens ad limina tendit
 = *Aen.* 3. 490(fin.) + *Aen.* 3. 490(in.)

The two hemistichs of the Vergilian A.3.490 are present in reverse order in the *Cento*, while the middle part (*sic ille manus*) is absent.

4. SUCCESSION OF NEARBY VERGILIAN VERSES

a. v 13

matres atque uiri, // iuuenes ante ora parentum
 = [*Aen.* 6. 306] *Georg.* 4. 475(in.) + *Georg.* 4. 477(fin.)

b. v 51

os umerosque deo similis // lumenque iuventae
 = *Aen.* 1. 589(in.) + *Aen.* 1. 590(fin.)

c. v 63

olli serua datur // geminique sub ubere nati
 = *Aen.* 5. 284(in.) + *Aen.* 5. 285(fin.)

d. v 65

omnibus in morem tonsa coma; // pectore summo
 = *Aen.* 5. 556 + *Aen.* 5. 558

e. v 22–23

Postquam exempta fames et amor compressus edendi,
crateras magnos statuunt // Bacchumque ministrant
 = *Aen.* 8. 184; *Aen.* 1. 724(in.) + *Aen.* 8. 181(fin.)
Vide supra v 16, where is only *Aen.* 8. 181(in.).

f. vv 44–45

talīs erat species, // talem se laeta ferebat
ad soceros // solioque alte subnixa resedit
 = *Aen.* 6. 208(in.) + *Aen.* 1. 503(fin.); *Aen.* 2. 457(in.) + *Aen.* 1. 506(fin.)

g. v 61 /14 vv/

ingens argentum mensis // colloque monile
 = *Aen.* 1. 640(in.) + *Aen.* 1. 654(fin.)

h. vv 71–72 /40 vv/

sis felix, // primos Lucinae experta labores
et mater, cape Maeonii carchesia Bacchi
 = *Aen.* 1. 330(in.) + *Georg.* 4. 340(fin.); *Georg.* 4. 380

i. v 73 /34 vv/

sparge, marite, nuces; // cinge haec altaria uitta
 = *Ecl.* 8. 30(in.) + *Ecl.* 8. 64(fin.)

Examples a-d display verses that are in close vicinity; in the examples e-i, the vicinity is less significant.

5. CUMULATED NON-AENEIS HEMISTICHS

In *Cento nuptialis*, the verses taken from *Eclogae* and *Georgicon* are considerably less frequent than those belonging to *Aeneis*. *Vide supra* examples 3.A.d (vv 80–81 = *Georg.* 4. 374; *Georg.* 4. 375 + *Aen.* 8. 468) and 3.B.f (vv 78–79 = *Aen.* 3. 493 + *Ecl.* 4. 46; *Ecl.* 4. 47) that display a succession of four verses (vv 78–81) not belonging to *Aeneis*. One more example attests 4 hemistichs from *Georgicon*, in a row:

a. vv 19–20:

non absunt illic // neque oues haedique petulci
et genus aequoreum, // dammae ceruique fugaces
 = *Georg.* 2. 471(in.) + *Georg.* 4. 10(fin.); *Georg.* 3. 243(in.) + *Georg.* 3. 539(fin.)

6. IVNCTVRAE

a. We have already mentioned some *iuncturae* that seem to be generated by the missing hemistichs, *id est* the entirety of a verse that is quoted only as hemistich; *vide supra* the example 3.D.a (vv 15–17): v 16 includes *Aen.* 8. 180 inc., “called” by *Ceres* (*Cereremque*) in *Aen.* 1. 701, that becomes v 15(in.); the same *Aen.* 1. 701 ends with

canistris, exactly like *Aen.* 8. 180 (v 15); the missing hemistichs of *Aen.* 8. 181(fin.) and *Aen.* 1. 215(in.) include *Bacchus* (*Bacchumque*, *Bacchi*)

b. vv 2–3

ambo animis, ambo insignes praestantibus armis;
ambo florentes, // genus insuperabile bello
 = *Aen.* 11. 291; *Ecl.* 7. 4(in.) + *Aen.* 4. 40(fin.)

The missing hemistich of *Ecl.* 7. 4 (*aetatibus Arcadus ambo*) includes another *ambo* that resonates with the first word of the verse, nevertheless with the repeated *ambo* of *Aen.* 11. 291.

c. v. 7:

tuque puerque tuus, // magnae spes altera Romae
 = *Aen.* 4. 94(in.) + *Aen.* 12. 168(fin.)

The second hemistich begins with *magnae*, while *magnum* is the first missing word of *Aeneis* 4. 94, the source of the first hemistich: *magnum et memorabile nomen*.

d. vv. 31

matronae, pueri, // uocemque per ampla uolutant
 = *Aen.* 11. 476(in.) + *Aen.* 1. 725(fin.)

The connection with the Vergilian *Aen.* 11. 476 is fluid: *matronae puerique uocat labor ultimus omnis*, given the Ausonian migration of *-que* from *puerique* to *uocemque* and the homoarkton of the successive word: *uocem* in *Cento*, vs *uocat* in the missing hemistich.

7. CONCLUSION

Our research is intended to be a direct approach of Ausonius' *Cento nuptialis* and its Vergilian sources. As previously underlined, the letter addressed to Paulus labelled two consecutive entire verses as inelegant, *ineptum est*. If we consider these two entire verses literally, even as belonging to different parts of the source text, *Cento nuptialis* begins gracelessly (*ineptum*) and the fact would be consistent with Ausonius' deliberately unpretentious portrait of himself: *ut doceam docendus ipse*. On the other side, this assumed posture is a concise formula for his readers, as well, as they are supposed to recognize the Vergilian verses in order to value Ausonius' virtuosity: the harmony author-reader (*id est*, secondary author-secondary reader) depends on Vergil and his legacy, as perpetual literature, contemporary to the next generations of readers. The *ars memoriae* is inherent in the Ausonian approach and Quintilian's representation, *memoria* as *media manus*,⁵ may easily be transferred from oratory to

⁵ Quint. *Inst.* XI 2. 3 *ita cum semper cogitatio ultra eat, id quod est longius quaerit, quidquid autem reperit quodam modo apud memoriam deponit, quod illa quasi media quaedam manus acceptum ab inventione tradit elocutioni.*

poetry and the practice of reading poetry. The Vergilian hemistichs chosen by Ausonius to compose his own *epithalamium* are subtly sustained by the remaining part of the respective verses, in a subsequent poetic harmony between written words and remembered words, between text and silence.

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