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MARIE OKÁČOVÁ

MYTHOLOGICAL EPYLLIA WRITTEN IN THE FORM OF VIRGILIAN CENTOS: A MODEL CASE OF INTERTEXTUALITY[1]

The focus of the present paper is on Virgilian centos, specifically on those that can be classified as mythological epyllia. These unique patchwork poems composed entirely of quotations from Virgil's works represent a major, homogenous, part of the extant ancient cento production, both in generic and thematic terms, and can therefore be studied as a specific chapter in the reception history of Virgil. First, contiguities between the miniature epics on mythological subjects and Virgil's poetry are considered. Second, a brief introduction to the theory of intertextuality is offered, providing a useful method for examining the response of the centos to their source. Next, the characteristic types (parallel/contrasting/neutral) and functions (intratextual/metatextual/intertextual) of the quotational allusions present in the patchwork texts under consideration are determined, and their relation to the overall imitation strategy pursued in the poems is explored. Further, the underlying principles of mythology — parallelism, analogy, causality, and aetiology — are shown to play an essential role in terms of the intertextual conception of the centos. Finally, it is proposed that the poems under discussion are to be identified as instances of pastiche and viewed as openly imitative additions to the body of Virgil's poetry.

Keywords: Cento, Reception of Virgil, Intertextuality, Ancient Mythology, Epyllion

The sixteen Virgilian centos surviving from late antiquity (most of them written anonymously between the third and sixth centuries AD[2]) are poems

[1] This paper was written under the auspices of the *Centre for Interdisciplinary Research into Ancient Languages and Early Stages of Modern Languages* (research program MSM 0021622435) at Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic.

[2] According to McGill, Scott. 2005. *Virgil Recomposed: The Mythological and Secular Centos in Antiquity.* Oxford — New York: Oxford University Press, XV, the *terminus post quem* for the Virgilian centos is ca. 200, and the *terminus ante quem* is ca. 534. S. McGill (2005: 56 and 72) is sceptical about any further speculations about the time of composition of the anonymous mythological and secular centos. However,

remarkable for their allusive quality. Composed entirely of unconnected verse units adopted (for the most part literally) from Virgil's works and rearranged such as to relate diverse, more or less non-Virgilian stories, the centos deserve an important place in the reception history of one of the greatest classical authors. The most numerous and consistent portion of the extant ancient patchwork poetry, both in generic and thematic terms, is constituted by centos showing generic features of epyllion[3] and covering various mythological topics.[4] These centos thus provide a representative sample of texts that can be meaningfully analyzed as a specific response to Virgil, a canonical author *par excellence*.

To what extent is it then notable that mythological epyllia written in the form of patchwork poems prevail among the extant Virgilian centos? In fact, the seven centos in question (the *Narcissus, Iudicium Paridis, Hippodamia, Hercules et Antaeus, Progne et Philomela, Europa,* and *Alcesta*[5]) represent most natural adaptations of Virgil's epics regarding both the genre and subject matter. The label "epyllion", a Modern Greek diminutive of "epos", coined in the nineteenth century, refers to a literary genre which came into being as

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other scholars have taken less cautious views; for example, Salanitro, Giovanni. 1997. „Osidio Geta e la poesia centonaria." In Haase, Wolfgang [ed.]. *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt.* Band II. 34.3. Berlin — New York: de Gruyter, 2335, boldly proposes that the majority of ancient anonymous centos originated in the fourth and fifth century AD, a period of time when the cento production reached its heyday (cf. Ermini, Filippo. 1909. *Il centone di Proba e la poesia centonaria latina.* Roma: Loescher, 42–55).

3 As far as the generic status of the cento itself is concerned, the author shares the opinion expressed by Ruzina, E. G. 1983. „Vergilianskie centony." *Listy filologické,* 106, 48f.; and later, for example, by Stehlíková, Eva. 1987. „Centones Christiani as a Means of Reception." *Listy filologické,* 110, 12, who suggest that, rather than being a separate and autonomous genre, the cento is a technique applicable in many different genres. On this issue, see also Verweyen, Theodor — Witting, Gunther. 1991. „The Cento. A Form of Intertextuality from Montage to Parody." In Plett, Heinrich F. [ed.]. *Intertextuality.* Berlin — New York: de Gruyter, 172, who argue: "Cento is not a generic term but an *écriture* — such as parody, travesty, contrafacture, and pastiche — which can be realized in a lyric and in an epic form as well as in the prose of political treatises and the literary essay, even in dramatic form."

4 In terms of the actual verse count, however, the major group of ancient centos is comprised of comparatively longer poems on biblical themes, irrespective of whether the extant corpus of Virgilian or Homeric cento poetry is considered.

5 All of the listed centos are contained in the codex Salmasianus of the *Anthologia Latina.* The edition of this collection of minor Latin poetry followed here is that by Riese, Alexander [ed.]. 1894. *Anthologia Latina sive poesis Latinae supplementum.* Pars prior: *Carmina in codicibus scripta.* Fasc. I: *Libri Salmasiani aliorumque carmina.* Ed. altera denuo recognita. Lipsiae: Teubner, poems 9–15.

a critical response of the Alexandrian school of poetry to the pompous style of the large-scale (cyclic) epic, to which, nevertheless, it remained closely related by means of metre and by thematic range.[6] Regarding the choice of myth as a subject to be treated in the form of a cento, this ordinary topic of miniature epics offered many advantages. In the ancient world, myth was viewed as a common property (*publica materies*) shared by and amply elaborated on by many generations of the men of letters.[7] No other field of interest or domain of literary endeavour was so popular and widespread among the people of antiquity.[8] What made this subject matter highly suitable for a cento adaptation was, besides its universal familiarity securing broad and competent readership for the mythological epyllia,[9] the presence of countless allusions to various mythological stories in Virgil himself. Cento writers, who were bound to stitch their texts from separate fragments of the source material, with no enviable task indeed, were thus able to enrich their compositions by taking advantage of the allusive potential of appropriate (i.e. thematically congenial) Virgilian units. It may not be very surprising then that the centonists "instinctively" inclined to the genre of brief narrative poems on mythological themes. Nevertheless, provided the centos originated, as proposed by Rosa Lamacchia, as school exercises,[10] their thematic scope may not be so much a matter of the authors' informed choice; rather, it may merely reflect a conventional school practice of using mythology as a source of various types of literary exercises involving imitation of classical authors.[11]

6 For a definition of the miniature epic and a brief history of the genre, see, for example, Schönhaar, Rainer. 1990. S. v. „Epyllion." In Schweikle, Günther — Schweikle, Irmgard [eds.]. *Metzler Literatur Lexikon: Begriffe und Definitionen.* 2., überarb. Aufl. Stuttgart: Metzler, 135.

7 On the ancient notions of myth, in particular, and literary tradition, in general, see Coviello, Ana Luisa. 2002. „El centón: *opusculum ... de alieno nostrum.*" *Emerita,* 70 (2), esp. 329f., dealing with the origins of the cento in relation to one of the most prominent features of ancient literature — the cult of imitation.

8 The gradual conversion of popular myths into a complex mythology, which became one of the most compelling and attractive themes that ancient literature drew on, is discussed by Hahn, István. 1985. „Vom Logos im Mythos. Mythenbildung, Mythendeutung und Mythenkritik in der griechischen Klassik." In Kluwe, Ernst [ed.]. *Kultur und Fortschritt in der Blütezeit der griechischen Polis.* Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 129–157. On the unceasing popularity of myth in late antiquity, see S. McGill (2005: 71f.).

9 According to S. McGill (2005: 74), the conventionality of myth also facilitated the display of unconventional techniques of composition, such as that of the cento.

10 Lamacchia, Rosa. 1958. „Dall'arte allusiva al centone (A proposito di scuola di poesia e poesia di scuola)." *Atene e Roma,* 3, 193–216.

11 Cf. S. McGill (2005: XVIII–XXI).

In order to provide the ensuing examination of a corpus of the centos specified earlier with a suitable methodological basis, the poststructuralist concept of intertextuality, an essential part of the modern theory on allusion and literary influences, has been adopted here. The theory of intertextuality, first introduced in the late 1960s in the circle of French theoreticians and critics known as the *Tel Quel* group, appears far from being a unified and/or coherent matter. In general, the term "intertextuality" (whether understood ontologically as the *sine qua non* of discourse or any signifying practice in general, or primarily as a meaning-making device employed especially in literary texts[12]) refers to the ways in which texts are interrelated and interdependent. According to Gérard Genette, intertextuality is "the actual presence of one text within another", including the practice of quoting, allusion, and plagiarism.[13]

From this it follows that intertextuality is both the very mode of existence of the cento and an adequate means for its critical analysis. The use of the cento technique always entails more or less marked semantic changes within individual verse fragments, when transposed from the original context into a new one. By nature, the semantic relations between the original and the new contextual meanings of the quoted units are allusive, and can be classified into three main types, depending on their specific allusive potential: parallel, contrasting, and neutral.[14] Further, individual quotational

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12 On the vagueness of the concept of intertextuality and the terminological discrepancies it involves, see Plett, Heinrich F. 1991. „Intertextualities." In Plett, Heinrich F. [ed.]. *Intertextuality.* Berlin — New York: de Gruyter, esp. 3–5, who distinguishes three different groups of scholars, depending on their attitudes to the phenomenon of intertextuality: the progressives, including such authorities as Bakhtin, Kristeva, Barthes, Bloom, Derrida, and Grivel; the traditionalists — theoreticians such as Jenny, Riffaterre, or Genette; and the anti-intertextualists. Whereas the ontological (i.e. the wider) conception of intertextuality is typical of the initial, progressive phase of intertextual studies, the latter (i.e. the narrower) view of the intertextual phenomenon is advocated especially by the more practically-minded traditionalists, who focus on such specific forms of intertextuality as quotation or allusion, and who try to develop a terminological apparatus for the description and critical evaluation of these forms.

13 Genette, Gérard. 1997. *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree.* Newman, Channa — Doubinsky, Claude [transls.]. Lincoln — London: University of Nebraska Press, 2.

14 See Smolak, Kurt. 1979. „Beobachtungen zur Darstellungsweise in den Homerzentonen." *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik,* 28, 42 (cf. Herzog, Reinhart. 1975. *Die Bibelepik der lateinischen Spätantike: Formgeschichte einer erbaulichen Gattung.* Band 1. München: Fink, 7–13; on Smolak's classification, see also Rey, André-Louis [ed./transl.]. 1998. *Patricius, Eudocie, Optimus, Côme de Jérusalem. Centons Homériques (Homerocentra).* Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 71f.). Correspondingly, Schnapp, Jeffrey T. 1992. „Reading Lessons: Augustine, Proba, and the Christian *Détournement* of

allusions[15] embedded in the centos, ranging in quality and force from references to individual motifs to more complex thematic allusions, can produce a number of different, possibly complementary, effects. Udo Hebel, for example, specified the following three functions of allusion: intratextual (i.e. character description, drawing thematic parallels, foreshadowing, setting recall etc.), metatextual (i.e. a critical function involving thematization of another text, typically in the form of a commentary), and intertextual (i.e. narrative text authentication, magnification of the so-called "reality effect"[16]).[17] The predominant type and function of the intertextual relations

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Antiquity." *Stanford Literature Review,* 9 (2), 112, recognizes a dual consonant/dissonant relationship of the cento (namely the *Cento Probae*) to its source (i.e. Virgil). It is to be noted that the classification of the semantic relations of the cento to its source, introduced here, should not be understood in absolute terms; semantic parallelism can entail contrasting features, and secondary similarities can be implied in narrative elements that seem intertextually opposed. What is crucial for the recognition of the interpretative potential of individual allusions embedded in the cento is the specific character of the allusive response of each work to its source (cf. note 47 in this paper). J. T. Schnapp (1992: 115), for example, speaks of "incomplete parallelisms" between the Virgilian and the biblical in the *Cento Probae;* this imperfect correspondence is, in his view, instrumental in Proba's ironizing of Virgil.

15 For a brief account of the opposing opinions on the relationship between allusion and quotation, see Hebel, Udo J. 1991. „Towards a Descriptive Poetics of *Allusion.*" In Plett, Heinrich F. [ed.]. *Intertextuality.* Berlin — New York: de Gruyter, 136f., who convincingly argues for the use of allusion as an umbrella title, hence the term "quotational allusion" above, instead of "allusive quotation".

16 On the effect of classic realist literature, which presents itself as a faithful reflection of the real (i.e. non-fictional) world, see Barthes, Roland. 1989. „The Reality Effect." In *The Rustle of Language.* Howard, Richard [transl.]. Berkeley — Los Angeles: University of California Press, 141–148. Barthes labels literary texts with such aspirations as "readerly" and contrasts them with so-called "writerly" texts that (similarly to the cento itself) exhibit their modes of production, i.e. their own literariness (on this typology of texts, see Barthes, Roland. 1974. *S/Z: An Essay.* Miller, Richard [transl.]. New York: Hill and Wang, passim, esp. 4).

17 U. J. Hebel (1991: 156–158). Cf. Conte, Gian Biagio. 1986. *The Rhetoric of Imitation: Genre and Poetic Memory in Virgil and Other Latin Poets*. Segal, Charles [transl./ed.]. Ithaca — London: Cornell University Press, esp. 52–69, whose typology of allusions, inspired by rhetoric, has decisively influenced subsequent theoretical thinking about this intertextual device; Conte differentiates between an "integrative allusion", which is functionally similar to a metaphor (it produces harmonization and integration of meanings), and a "reflective allusion", which reveals the literariness of a work of literature, the process and the means of its production, and is in principle analogous to a simile (it produces juxtaposition of meanings, which remain autonomous). It is the author's opinion that Conte's integrative allusion roughly corresponds to Hebel's allusion that fulfils an intratextual function, and the reflective allusion performs Hebel's intertextual function — that is, it authenticates the allusive

in each cento are determined by the imitation strategy adopted in the poem. The main goal of the present paper is thus to identify the characteristic features of the intertextual conception of the selected centos and to decide whether their response to Virgil is generally integrative and affirmative, or contrastive and transformative, or rather polemical.[18]

As indicated above, mythological centos are compatible with their source in respect of genre and thematic range, predetermining their intertextual engagement with Virgil. Although none of the myths treated in the centos receives much attention in Virgil's poetry,[19] the semantic potential of the Virgilian material employed in these patchwork texts is, for the most part, highly compatible with their non-Virgilian subject matters. Virtually all the epyllia under examination contain cumulative allusions to one or more motifs recurring in the hypotext[20] (i.e. Virgil), supplying the narratives concerned with a suitable intertextual background. For example, the sixteen-line-long story of Narcissus' overwhelming love for his own reflection in a pool is suggestively pervaded by the echoes of various *imagines* that occur in Virgil, including spirits of the dead, various phantoms, and fascination-arousing paintings.[21] Similarly, the thirty-four-line cento *Europa,*

text, as G. B. Conte (1986: 59) himself maintains, though not by creating the reality effect in the very sense of the term (see note 16 in this paper), but rather by emphasizing the fictional nature of literature as an autonomous reality.

18 The proposed distinction reflects the characteristic qualities of imitation strategies, on the basis of which Hoch, Christoph. 1997. *Apollo Centonarius: Studien und Texte zur Centodichtung der italienischen Renaissance.* Tübingen: Stauffenburg Verlag, passim, esp. 14–16, identified the following three types of cento poetry: the "cento-pastiche", the "cento-parody", and the "cento-contrafacture".

19 The only myths narrated in the centos that are referred to in Virgil include the Judgement of Paris (*Aen.* 1.23–28), the story of Hippodamia and her suitor Pelops (*Georg.* 3.7–8), and the aetiological tale of Procne and Philomela (*Ecl.* 6.78–81; cf. *Georg.* 4.15 and *Georg.* 4.511). With the exception of the cento *Hippodamia* (150: *umeroque Pelops insignis eburno* [*Georg.* 3.7]), the other epyllia (i.e. the *Iudicium Paridis* and *Progne et Philomela*), do not use the respective verses of Virgil. This does not suggest, however, that they do not allude to the Virgilian passages concerned (see below).

20 The term "hypotext" was introduced by G. Genette (1997: 5) in connection with the category of "hypertextuality". However, as G. Genette (1997: 8–10) himself concedes, this category partially overlaps with other types of "transtextuality", including the concept of intertextuality. Throughout this paper, the term thus refers to the source of the cento.

21 Notions of *imago* are present (in the majority of cases also explicitly indicated) in the original contexts of the fragments in lines 5 and 14 (the ghost of Dido's murdered husband Sychaeus: *Aen.* 1.350 and *Aen.* 1.352, respectively), 6 (Aeneas' fascination with a large mural on Juno's temple: *Aen.* 1.495 and *Aen.* 1.464), 8 (the soul of the younger Marcellus, one of the Trojan descendants seen by Aeneas in the underworld:

which portrays Europa's abduction by Jupiter in the guise of a white bull, employs several allusions to various scenes in Virgil where a bull appears.[22] Moreover, a large number of references to seemingly disparate episodes of the *Aeneid* are made, while sharing a motif of disguise or metamorphosis.[23] These clusters of allusions clearly underline the notion of Jupiter's animal disguise in the cento. The story of Hippodamia's love affair with Pelops, which results in King Oenomaus' demise and a tragic death of Myrtilus — a charioteer who has been secretly in love with the princess, and the mournful story of Alcestis' self-sacrifice for the sake of saving her husband's life are both especially notable for the recurring images of the Virgilian underworld evoked throughout the respective centos.[24]

This is not to suggest, however, that an isolated allusion to a particular motif can have no significance. The *Iudicium Paridis,* for example, may at first seem to disregard the motif of the golden apple, intended for the most beautiful one (in line 36 of the poem, Paris' final judgement pronounced in favour of Venus is expressed only by the vague phrase *do quod vis* [*Aen.* 12.833], originally uttered by Jupiter to his wife Juno). The award for the winner of the beauty contest seems to be alluded to in line 26 of the epyllion by means of a seemingly inconsequent reference to *Eclogue* 3; specifically, to the shepherd Damoetas' song about his beloved Galatea (*et se cupit ante videri* [*Ecl.* 3.65]). The original context of the quoted fragment, which concludes the description of Venus at the moment of addressing Paris in the

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Aen. 6.861), 9 (Iulus as a phantom of Andromache's murdered son Astyanax: *Aen.* 3.490), 11 (Mercury appearing to Aeneas in a dream: *Aen.* 4.559), 12 (Aeneas' fascination with images portrayed on his new shield: *Aen.* 8.730), and 15–16 (the ghost of Creusa or the ghost of Anchises: *Aen.* 2.792 or *Aen.* 6.700, respectively). For an analysis of the *Narcissus* from several perspectives, including that of intertextuality, see Okáčová, Marie. 2009. „*Ut imago poesis:* a pastiche of Virgil and Ovid in the cento *Narcissus.*" *Graeco-Latina Brunensia,* 14 (1–2), 177–189.

22 See lines 2 (*Georg.* 3.58), 9 (*Aen.* 9.627), 11 (*Aen.* 5.472), 12 (*Aen.* 5.477), and 29 (*Aen.* 5.382). On the significance of the bull mentioned in line 3 of the cento (*nivei solatur amore iuvenci* [*Ecl.* 6.46]), see below.

23 See lines 8 (deceitful behaviour of the cunning Greek Sinon: *Aen.* 2.61 and *Aen.* 2.59), 9 (Venus appearing to Aeneas in the guise of a Carthaginian huntress: *Aen.* 1.336), 23 (Juno's tricky peace contract with Venus: *Aen.* 4.105), 25 and 33 (the Trojan fleet transformed into sea nymphs: *Aen.* 10.231 and *Aen.* 10.227, respectively), and 29 (Queen Dido in the presence of Cupid disguised as Aeneas' son Iulus: *Aen.* 1.718 [however, the cento phrase *inscia culpae* may evoke *Aen.* 12.648 or *Aen.* 7.381 as well; cf. also the original context of line 14 [*Aen.* 1.670]). On the wide currency of the motif of metamorphosis in ancient mythology, see I. Hahn (1985: 141).

24 Fragments that allude to the underworld episodes in the *Aeneid* (Book 6) constitute approximately ten per cent of each of the centos, both of which consist of 162 lines.

cento, reads as follows: *malo me Galatea petit, lasciva puella, / et fugit ad salices, et se cupit ante videri* (*Ecl.* 3.64–65). In order to recognize the apple of Venus, the goddess of love, which in Virgil's pastoral poem Galatea throws at her lover as a kind of love token,[25] the cento readers need to remember the beginning of Damoetas' song, which actually appears to be alluded to by the new Virgilian context of the quoted unit (25–27):

et mentem Venus ipsa dedit. (*Georg.* 3.267) *decus enitet ore* (*Aen.* 4.150)
exultatque animis et[26] (*Aen.* 11.491) *se cupit ante videri.* (*Ecl.* 3.65)
"sic tua Cyrneas fugiant examina taxos." (*Ecl.* 9.30)

In both Virgil and the cento, the fragment occurs in a compound sentence, the clauses of which are joined by a coordinating conjunction *et;* further, the verbal form *fugiant* echoes the original *fugit.*[27] A competent reader of the cento can thus enjoy an ingenious allusion to Virgil by means of Virgil's own lines, an allusion that points to the symbolism of the apple to be awarded to the goddess of love by Paris, foreshadowing the final verdict of the Trojan prince. Moreover, the cento text provides a mythological basis for Virgil's own connotative use of the apple as a fruit of Venus.

Another characteristic of the intertextual composition of the mythological centos is the close thematic parallelism (accessible only to competent readers), which is allusively established between the subject matter of the centos and the congenial (i.e. thematically analogous and/or related) mythological stories included in Virgil's poetry. This feature may serve as a significant guide to the interpretation of the patchwork poems and as an essential clue in terms of their specific approach towards Virgil. References to individual narratives recounted in Virgil, which are in some respects compatible with those of the centos, typically provide a means of adding finishing touches to the typologically similar characters portrayed in the patchwork texts, serving as a semantic enrichment of the stories told and as plot foreshadowing.

One of the shortest centos, the sixteen-line-long *Hercules et Antaeus,* for instance, includes three quotations from an episode in Book 8 of Virgil's *Aeneid,* which parallels the recounted story of Hercules' glorious triumph

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25 On the connotations of throwing an apple (i.e. a fruit sacred to Venus) at someone, see, for example, Coleman, Robert [ed./comm.]. 1977. *Vergil. Eclogues.* Cambridge — London — New York — New Rochelle — Melbourne — Sydney: Cambridge University Press, 118.

26 The conjunction *et* functions in this place as a *vox communis,* i.e. a word common to two neighbouring fragments, which makes their connection seem more natural.

27 It is to be noticed that the new Virgilian context of the fragment also evokes its original pastoral background — see esp. the pair *taxos/salices.*

over the Libyan monster Antaeus, the son of Earth and Poseidon; the corresponding Virgilian narrative describes Hercules' victorious combat with the giant named Cacus. Clustered allusions to this story, fragments of which are present in their original order in lines 2 (*Alcides aderat* [*Aen.* 8.203]), 8 (*non tulit Alcides* [*Aen.* 8.256]), and 10 (*corripit in nodum* [*Aen.* 8.260]) of the cento,[28] accentuate both the valour of the Greek hero and the savageness of the monster. Provided these references get identified, and their evocative potential recognized, the reader is also better able to foretell the ineluctable outcome of the hero's pursuit — the opponent's death. Furthermore, the character profile of Hercules' adversary is completed by allusions to two more giants, who are actually Antaeus' mythological relatives and whose destinies are no more fortunate, namely Tityos, the offspring of the goddess Earth, tortured in the underworld (2: *terrae omnipotentis alumnum*[29] [*Aen.* 6.595]), and the blinded Cyclops Polyphemus, the son of Poseidon, attacking Aeneas and his companions (4: *vasta se mole moventem* [*Aen.* 3.656]; 13: *verum ubi nulla datur dextra adtrectare potestas* [*Aen.* 3.670]).

Particularly fine examples of the integrative quality of Virgil's reception, which, as becomes clear, constitutes an essential aspect of the extant mythological centos, incorporating as much of the original semantic horizon of Virgil's words as possible, are represented by those texts that are intertextually linked to Virgil not only on the basis of thematic parallelism and analogy, but also on the basis of causality and/or aetiology — that is, on those principles that constitute the essence of mythology.[30] The story about the beautiful Phoenician princess abducted by disguised Jupiter to Crete, narrated in the cento *Europa,* for instance, constitutes a nucleus, an ultimate source of a series of Cretan myths joined by the recurrent motif of a bull coming out from the sea. This causal aspect of the tale appears

28 The quoted units, in fact, represent a major group of references to one and the same passage in the hypotext. Paraphrasing J. T. Schnapp (1992: 113f.), Whitby, Mary. 2007. „The Bible Hellenized: Nonnus' *Paraphrase* of St John's Gospel and 'Eudocia's' Homeric centos.“ In Scourfield, J. H. D. [ed.]. *Texts and Culture in Late Antiquity: Inheritance, Authority, and Change.* Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, 211, says that "clustered allusions to a particular passage are likely to indicate pointed reference". Cf. the concept of "Leitreminiszenz" introduced by R. Herzog (1975: 9).

29 Tityos was the son of Elara and Zeus; to protect Elara from the jealousy of his wife Hera, the father of the gods hid her beneath the earth where she gave birth to Tityos, hence his Virgilian epithet. For a review of ancient literary sources on Tityos' parentage, see Scherling, Karl. 1937. S. v. „Tityos.“ In Wissowa, Georg — Kroll, Wilhelm — Mittelhaus, Karl [eds.]. *Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft.* Reihe 2. Band 6. Neue Bearbeitung. Stuttgart: Metzler, col. 1594.

30 For a comprehensive study of the underlying principles of ancient mythographic production, see I. Hahn (1985: 129–157).

to be reflected in the intertextual structure of the cento. In line 3, there is a thematic allusion to passion that Pasiphaë, the wife of the Cretan King Minos, who was actually the son of Europa and Jupiter, felt for a white bull sent by Poseidon to her husband (*nivei solatur amore iuvenci* [*Ecl.* 6.46]), a passion that Virgil — in sharp contrast to the centonist's sensuous and lovely depiction of Europa's love affair — portrays as disgusting and detestable. Moreover, the penultimate line of the cento includes a reference to Daedalus fleeing from the island of Crete (*insuetum per iter* [*Aen.* 6.16]), where he has built, as competent readers may know, the Labyrinth for Minotaur, the son of Pasiphaë and the white bull, and where he has been imprisoned by Minos. Whereas Jupiter in the cento strives to reach Crete, Daedalus in Virgil struggles to escape from the Greek island. The cycle of the myths connected with Crete and the figure of the bull (first, as Jupiter's disguise; next, as Pasiphaë's forbidden lover; and finally, as the monster Minotaur, half man and half bull, born to Pasiphaë after her affair with the sacred bull) thus reaches its circular conclusion. What is more, both the allusions to myths referred to in Virgil's poetry, and inspired or conditioned by the mythological event described in the cento, do not only foreshadow the continuation of the plot of the *Europa,* but also establish an especially strong thematic contiguity between Virgil and the examined epyllion.

In yet another cento, the allusive interaction with the hypotext is based on an implied aetiological moment. The *Progne et Philomela* recounts a story of two unfortunate sisters who change into a swallow and a nightingale, respectively.[31] Although the cento does not explicitly refer to an aetiological aspect of the myth,[32] it does so implicitly in its prologue (1–4):

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31 There exist versions of the myth which mention the birds, into which the sisters transform, in a reversed order; the author of the cento, as well as Virgil and Ovid, however, adopts one and the same variant of the myth in which Procne turns into a swallow and Philomela into a nightingale. For a review of literary adaptations of the myth, see Radke, Gerhard. 1959. S. v. „Prokne (1)." In Wissowa, Georg — Kroll, Wilhelm — Mittelhaus, Karl — Ziegler, Konrat [eds.]. *Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft.* Neue Bearbeitung. Band 23. Stuttgart: Druckenmüller, col. 247–252; or Waldner, Katharina. 2001. S. v. „Prokne." In Cancik, Hubert — Schneider, Helmuth [eds.]. *Der neue Pauly.* Enzyklopädie der Antike. Band 10. Stuttgart — Weimar: Metzler, col. 388f. Cf. also note 37 in this paper.

32 Cf. the aetiological passage which concludes Ovid's treatment of the myth: *Met.* 6.667–674: *corpora Cecropidum pennis pendere putares: / pendebant pennis. quarum petit altera silvas, / altera tecta subit; neque adhuc de pectore caedis / excessere notae, signataque sanguine pluma est. / ille dolore suo poenaeque cupidine velox / vertitur in volucrem, cui stant in vertice cristae, / prominet inmodicum pro longa cuspide rostrum: / nomen epops volucri, facies armata videtur.*

aspice ut insignis (*Aen.* 6.855) *vacua atria lustrat*[33] (*Aen.* 2.528) *hirundo!* (*Aen.* 12.474)
vere novo (*Georg.* 1.43) *maestis late loca questibus implet;* (*Georg.* 4.515)
victum infelicem (*Aen.* 3.649) *maerens Philomela sub umbra* (*Georg.* 4.511)
adsiduo resonat cantu (*Aen.* 7.12) *miserabile carmen.* (*Georg.* 4.514)[34]

The opening lines include multiple allusions to *Georgics* 4*,* namely to the story of Orpheus and Eurydice, enclosed within the aetiological epyllion about the bee-keeper Aristaeus. Apart from the three fragments included in the inherently aetiological prologue (lines 2, 3, and 4), the cento contains two more Virgilian units which, in their original settings, describe Orpheus' folly (i.e. his unfortunate look back at Eurydice following him out of Hades: 14 [*Georg.* 4.488]) and his sorrow at the second death of his beloved wife (13 [*Georg.* 4.525]). The cumulative effect of these echoes is thus primarily that of adding an elegiac tone to the story related in the poem.

Moreover, the first three quotations under discussion come from Virgil's explicit comparison of Orpheus' laments to the sorrowful song of a nightingale who has lost her young.[35] These allusions clearly point at the double identity of the nightingale described in lines 2–4 of the cento[36] (a bird meta-

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33 The phrase *atria lustrat* is common to both *Aen.* 2.528 and *Aen.* 12.474, facilitating the joining of the units (cf. note 26 in this paper).

34 Lamacchia, Rosa. 1984. S. v. „Centoni." In Della Corte, Francesco [ed.]. *Enciclopedia Virgiliana,* I. Roma: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 735, says that only the first two lines of the poem function as an aetiological preface. Her view has, however, been challenged by Perrelli, Raffaele. 1995. „Il centone virgiliano *Progne et Philomela.*" In Moreschini, Claudio [ed.]. *Esegesi, parafrasi e compilazione in età tardoantica: Atti del Terzo Convegno dell'Associazione di Studi Tardoantichi.* Napoli: D'Auria, 324, who plausibly argues that the term *philomela* in line 3 of the cento is (like the word *hirundo* in line 1) a common rather than a proper noun, and that the aetiological prologue thus extends over the first four lines.

35 Virgil (*Georg.* 4.511), in fact, uses the name *philomela* (instead of the word *luscinia*) for its mythological connotations.

36 Regarding the intertextual structure of the preface examined above, the author assumes, like R. Perrelli (1995: 326f.), that the swallow is referred to only in the first line of the cento. The punctuation adopted by A. Riese (1894 — see the text of the preface quoted above) may thus be rather misleading. The same holds true for all the other editors of the cento, except for the very first one (Burman, Pieter [ed.]. *Anthologia veterum Latinorum epigrammatum et poematum sive catalecta poëtarum Latinorum, in VI. libros digesta.* Tomus I. Liber I. Amstelaedami: Schouten, 1759, poem 168: *adspice ut insignis vacua atria lustrat hirundo; / vere novo moestis late loca questibus inplet, / victum infelicem moerens Philomela sub umbras / adsiduo resonat cantu miserabile carmen*). For suggestions on how to punctuate the text appropriately, see R. Perrelli (1995: 327) and Paolucci, Paola. 2003. „La voce del sangue. Emendamento al centone virgiliano *Progne et Philomela* (*AL* 13,18–19 R.^{2})." *Giornale italiano di filologia,* 55 (2), 267f.

morphosed from a human being) and thus foreshadow the development of the cento story. Besides, the evoked simile contained in Virgil becomes as if "authorized", and its impact exaggerated in the mythological narrative recounted in the epyllion; the crime that Philomela commits, the killing of her own offspring,[37] accounts for the mournful song of the nightingale into which she changes and to which Orpheus can thus be well compared (after all, Orpheus did also cause, though unwillingly, the second death of his beloved Eurydice).

The echoes of *Georgics* 4 (employed in the introduction of the cento and specified above) establish a correspondence between the examined patchwork epyllion and the Orpheus epyllion by Virgil, evoking the fate of the poor Philomela. This thematic contiguity between the cento and its hypotext is further reinforced and confirmed by allusions to those verses of Virgil which, in fact, retell the same story as the cento — that is, to *Eclogue* 6 (78–81):

aut ut mutatos Terei narraverit artus,
quas illi Philomela dapes, quae dona pararit,
quo cursu deserta petiverit, et quibus alte
infelix sua tecta super volitaverit alis?

None of the quoted verses of Virgil's pastoral poem is actually present in the cento. The passage as a whole, however, appears to be evoked by the concluding three lines of the epyllion (22–24):

polluit ore dapes, (*Aen.* 3.234) *quidquid solamen humandi est.* (*Aen.* 10.493)
dum genitor nati (*Aen.* 10.800) *morsu depascitur artus,* (*Aen.* 2.215)
et soror et coniunx (*Aen.* 1.47) *petierunt aethera pinnis.* (*Aen.* 11.272)

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37 Whereas Ovid in his famous treatment of the myth (*Met.* 6.424–674) follows the original Attic tradition and identifies Procne as Tereus' wife, the centonist, as well as Virgil (*Ecl.* 6.78–81), provides an inverted version of the same story, in which Philomela plays the role of the king's spouse, murdering her own child. The fact that the cento and its hypotext coincide in this respect can be viewed as a subtle reference to Virgil's own adaptation of the myth, to which the patchwork text, as will be shown, alludes in a more significant and ingenious way in the concluding lines. On the reversal of the roles of the female characters in the cento, see also S. McGill (2005: 81). Unlike McGill, R. Perrelli (1995: 324) supposes that Tereus' wife in the cento is Procne, which, however, seems unlikely. As a matter of fact, the proem (1–4) appears to correlate with the very last line of the cento (24: *et soror et coniunx petierunt aethera pinnis*); hence, the swallow (i.e. Procne) mentioned first in the opening naturally becomes the *soror,* and the nightingale (i.e. Philomela) becomes the *coniunx* referred to at the end of the cento. The fact that the nightingale (*philomela* [*Georg.* 4.511]), alluded to in the prologue, is a mother lamenting the loss of her children (see above) also supports the conclusion that it is Philomela who acts as Tereus' wife and Itys' mother in the cento.

The obvious verbal echoes of the original (i.e. Virgil's) version of the myth include *artus, dapes, petierunt/petiverit,* and *pinnis/alis.* The text simply alludes to Virgil by means of Virgil himself;[38] the allusive structure of the cento thus reaches another, higher level of intricacy.

A supreme example of the integrative approach to Virgil characteristic of the mythological centos may be found in the *Iudicium Paridis,* whose thematic links to its hypotext have a particularly significant causal dimension. Much like the myth of Jupiter and Europa, the Judgement of Paris has far-reaching mythological consequences. Paris' famous encounter with the three goddesses (Juno, Pallas, and Venus) and its disastrous outcome (i.e. the Trojan War) represent a "historical" beginning of the story of Aeneas' adventures, following the sack of Troy, and predetermine Aeneas' future struggles and experiences with the deities concerned. Juno and Venus, the two divinities that play the roles of rivals in the beauty contest described in the cento, are also very important characters in the *Aeneid,* where they act as contradictory driving forces, propelling the narrative forward. Whereas Juno, still offended by Paris' decision in favour of the goddess of love, is biased against the Trojans, Venus plays the role of their benefactor, aiding her son, the Trojan prince Aeneas. Thus, it seems natural that the parts of Virgil's epos where the two antithetical goddesses most significantly intervene in the narrative (i.e. *Aeneid* 1, 4, 8, and 10) constitute a major source of the Virgilian units employed in the cento (approximately a quarter of the extant hexameters of the poem comes from the specified passages of the *Aeneid*).[39] Allusions to the relevant parts of Virgil's epic suggest a level of semantic and narrative overlap between the story of the Judgement of Paris and the events recounted in the *Aeneid,* whose interference is, in this case, enabled by both the thematic analogy and mythological causality. The

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38 For an examination of other instances of allusion to Virgil by Virgil's own lines in the *Progne et Philomela,* see R. Perrelli (1995: 328f.), who offers interesting suggestions regarding the absence of proper names in the epyllion and its perceptibly Ovidian flavour as well.

39 Instances of the goddesses' divine intervention in the *Aeneid,* alluded to in the cento, include Juno's appeal addressed to the god of the winds, Aeolus, to bring a storm down upon Aeneas and his fellows (6 [*Aen.* 1.64] and 31 [1.73; the fragment — *coniugio iungam stabili propriamque dicabo* — may also come from *Aen.* 4.126 and allude to Juno's treaty with Venus]); Jupiter's kind reply to Juno's intercession on behalf of the Trojans (10 [1.278] and 35 [1.260]); Aeneas' meeting with Venus in the city of Carthage (21 [1.320], 22 [1.402], 23 [1.405], and 39 [1.364]); the peace treaty concluded between Juno and Venus (3 [4.94], 20 [4.107], and 32 [4.103]); Venus' gift of a shield forged by Vulcan to Aeneas (23 [8.388], 33 [8.617], and 38 [8.404]); and a council of the Olympian gods, which develops into an argument between Venus and Juno (5 [10.6] and 14 [10.96]).

whole text of the cento thus becomes even more meaningful; for example, Paris' question posed to the divinities, *pacemne huc fertis an arma?* (5 [*Aen.* 8.114]), and his defiant pronouncement, *licet arma mihi mortemque minetur* (36 [*Aen.* 11.348]), are of greater poignancy indeed.[40]

The causal analogy allusively established between Paris' and Aeneas' stories culminates at the end of the cento. Lines 40–41 include two consecutive fragments taken from Queen Amata's emotional monologue concerning her daughter Lavinia's planned marriage with Aeneas: *penetrat Lacedaemona pastor* (*Aen.* 7.363) / *Ledaeamque Helenam Troianas vexit ad urbes* (*Aen.* 7.364). The quoted fragments, in fact, form part of Virgil's own comparison of Aeneas' potential abduction of Lavinia, which Amata is afraid of, with Paris' abduction of Helen, thus gaining the status of a paradigm in the simile.[41] At this point, the intersection between the narrative discourse of the *Aeneid* and that of the cento, enabled by a perfect symbiosis between the original and the new context of the quoted fragments, finally becomes absolutely clear; Virgil himself explicitly compares two narrative lines that are implicitly compared by means of an allusive structure of the cento.

To conclude, the present inquiry into the nature of the intertextual composition of a number of the centos classifiable as mythological epyllia indicates that the inherent quality of Virgil's imitation in these poems is integrative and affirmative. According to Christoph Hoch's neat typology of the centos, the examined compositions can be viewed as instances of pastiche,[42] involving conscious imitation of another author's style, in-

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40 The original meanings of both the quoted units are not without pertinence to the cento story either. Paris' question was originally posed by King Evander's son Pallas to the approaching Trojans, which suggests the following consequential parallel between the cento and Virgil's narrative: Paris' engagement with the divinities eventually caused the Trojan War, the ultimate cause of the Trojans' arrival in Italy and the fierce war that they "unintentionally" provoked there. Paris' second pronouncement was originally uttered by a Latin named Drances, who in this way addressed the Rutulian King and Aeneas' adversary Turnus, blaming the war on his arrogance and pride; correspondingly, Paris' self-centred and haughty behaviour is ultimately to be blamed for the origin of the Trojan War.

41 See *Aen.* 7.359–364: *"exulibus ne datur ducenda Lavinia Teucris, / o genitor, nec te miseret gnataeque tuique? / nec matris miseret, quam primo aquilone relinquet / perfidus alta petens abducta virgine praedo? / an non sic Phrygius penetrat Lacedaemona pastor / Ledaeamque Helenam Troianas vexit ad urbes?"*

42 On Hoch's classification of the cento poetry, see note 18 in this paper; cf. also Bažil, Martin. 2009. *Centones Christiani. Métamorphoses d'une forme intertextuelle dans la poésie latine chrétienne de l'Antiquité tardive.* Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 56–58. It is to be added that ancient patchwork texts that fit into Hoch's category of parodical centos include the anonymous *De panificio* and *De Alea*,

cluding integration of generic and thematic elements.[43] Indeed, the poems create an impression of having been written as apparently secondary (i.e. unoriginal) supplements to the corpus of Virgil's writings; in other words, as being *addenda Vergiliana,* which, however, cherish no aspirations to be identified as Virgil's own works.[44]

The allusive structure of the mythological epyllia is based on thematic parallelism, rather than on a semantic contrast between the contextual meanings of the individual fragments in Virgil and the cento (the polysemy and ambiguity inherent in Virgil's language,[45] i.e. qualities requisite for cento parodies, being in this case mostly extraneous to the objectives of the text).[46] In a significant number of cases, the Virgilian material used in the centos does not remain inert; on the contrary, it becomes assimilated into new non-Virgilian narratives. Further, quotational allusions embedded in the mythological centos characteristically function intratextually — that is, they accentuate the classicizing style of the poems, adding semantic richness to the narratives and foreshadowing their outcomes within the narra-

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Ausonius' *Cento Nuptialis,* and Luxurius' *Epithalamium Fridi,* and that the form of imitation identified by Hoch as contrafacture is characteristic of biblical centos.

43 The conclusion is not to suggest that individual poems cannot exhibit traits of irony or playful polemics in terms of the allusive potential of discrete fragments employed. This does not stand in contradiction to the light-hearted (but respectful) imitation typical of pastiche (for a definition of this critical concept applicable to different kinds of art, see Schweikle, Irmgard. 1990. S. v. „Pastiche." In Schweikle, Günther — Schweikle, Irmgard [eds.]. *Metzler Literatur Lexikon: Begriffe und Definitionen.* 2., überarb. Aufl. Stuttgart: Metzler, 345; for a detailed comparative study of the term, see Hempel, Wido. 1965. „Parodie, Travestie und Pastiche. Zur Geschichte von Wort und Sache." *Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift,* 46 [Neue Folge: 15], 150–176). S. McGill (2005: 85–87), for example, suggests that the *Hippodamia* can be read as a polemical response to Virgil's explicit rejection of mythological topics (including the Hippodamia myth) as banal at the beginning of *Georgics* 3; the author convincingly supports his claim by the presence of a couple of playfully polemical allusions to the mentioned programmatic statement of Virgil in the cento.

44 A similar idea was expressed by Bažil, Martin. 2011. „Pozdněantické *cento* jako intertextuální literární forma, II. Roviny intertextuálního čtení." *Auriga,* 53, 10, suggesting that the authors of the mythological centos meant to write what Virgil as the imitated author "could have written himself, but actually did not".

45 On the typical qualities of Virgil's language as a source of the centos in comparison with the language of Homer, see Pavlovskis, Zoja. 1989. „Proba and the Semiotics of the Narrative Virgilian Cento." *Vergilius,* 35, 72–75.

46 Cf. R. Perrelli (1995: 325), who argues that an absence of semantic tension between the cento and its hypotext is characteristic of pagan centos in general. This, however, does not apply to parodical centos.

tive scope of the centos.[47] Sometimes they even do so within the contiguous episodes of Virgil's own works (a fine example represents the *Iudicium Paridis*). It can therefore be argued that the aim of the centos is to incorporate the maximum of the semantic potential of the Virgilian material and to confirm the literary status and cultural significance of the hypotext. That is the centos do not aim to dissociate themselves from (and constitute themselves in opposition to) their source.

Finally, from a mythographic point of view, the intertextual structure of the centos appears to reflect the generative principles of a myth-making process itself. Criteria of analogy, parallelism, causality, and aetiology, which guide the selections of individual fragments included in the poems, in fact, represent the essential features of ancient mythology, or rather, mythology in general. Recurring motives, standard characters (archetypes), and analogous narratives form the cornerstones of mythology. Mythological epyllia legitimately employ them to support and confirm their own intertextual response to Virgil. In other words, it is the self-imitative aspect of mythology that facilitates the remarkably integrative imitation of Virgil in the mythological centos.

47 It is possible to argue that this holds true for the overwhelming majority of allusions included in any of the surviving ancient centos. Nevertheless, as has been demonstrated, an evocation of parallel stories in the mythological centos has a specific underlying reason, namely to assimilate as much of Virgil as possible in an uncritical and affirmative manner.