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Tragedy outside tragedy : Hosidius Geta's Virgilian cento « Medea ». With some observations on its possible Nachleben

Notice biographique

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Résumés

Dans cet article sont analysés différents aspects du centon virgilien *Medea*, écrit par l'africain Hosidius Geta (II^e s. ap. J.-C.). Tout d'abord, sont donnés quelques exemples de son intertextualité avec Virgile et Sénèque, de façon à définir l'*ars* poétique d'Hosidius. Ensuite vient une discussion sur le texte controversé du v. 191 (*Media fert tristis sucos, nigris infecta venenis*), où – malgré la difficulté métrique – je propose de conserver à la fois *Media* et *nigris* : *Media* pourrait être considéré en fait comme une allusion virgilio-sénéquienne et érudite ; l'expression *nigris infecta venenis*, pour sa part, a été réutilisée plus tard par Dracontius.

In this paper different aspects of the Virgilian cento *Medea*, written by the African Hosidius Geta (II century A. D.), are taken into consideration. First, I give some examples of its Virgilian and Senecan intertextuality, in order to qualify Hosidius' poetic *ars*. Then, I discuss the controversial text of v. 191 (*Media fert tristis sucos, nigris infecta venenis*), where – in spite of the metrical infelicity – I propose to retain both *Media* and *nigris* : *Media* might be considered in fact a Virgilio-Senecan and scholastic allusion ; while the expression *nigris infecta venenis* was later re-used by Dracontius.

Mots-clés : Hosidius Geta, *Medea*, intertextualité, Virgile, Sénèque.

Keywords : Hosidius Geta, *Medea*, intertextuality, Vergilius, Seneca.

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Introduction

Hosidius Geta is referred to in Tertullian (*praescr.* 39.3-4¹) as the author of a tragedy, *Medea*, built up with Virgilian verses² : if he was, as it seems quite probable, an African, contemporary to Tertullian, his *Medea* would be « the earliest of the surviving literary Virgilian centos³ ».

Hosidius' *Medea* looks like a sort of « miniature tragedy », especially if we consider its relations with Horace's suggestions to tragic poets in his *Ars poetica*. The protagonist is built up as a tragic character, coherent with its fame and tradition (*ars* 119-127 ; in particular, *Medea* should be *ferox invictaque*), and the choral sections have a moral function rather than a dramatic one (*ars* 193-201)⁴. On the other hand, Hosidius reduces the number of μέγῃ (which should be five, according to *ars* 189-190)⁵ – and maybe we must be grateful to him ! – and most of all doesn't comply with Horace's rule about the relation between what is acted and what is narrated : Horace recommends *Ne pueros coram populo Medea trucidet* (*ars* 185 ; see also 179-188), while Hosidius' *Medea* kills her children on the stage⁶.

¹ *Vides hodie ex Virgilio fabulam in totum aliam componi, materia secundum versus et versibus secundum materiam concinnatis. Denique Hosidius Geta Medeam tragoediam ex Vergilio plenissime exsuxit.*

² Both his name and his date are discussed : cf. DANE 1950, p. 76 (who prefers Ovidius Geta) ; DESBORDES 1979, p. 83-87 ; MCGILL 2005, p. 32-33 and 42-43 (the chapter devoted to Hosidius includes p. 31-52). I quote Hosidius from LAMACCHIA 1981 (about textual problems in Hosidius, see LAMACCHIA 1958a, 1958b, 1958c, 1958d ; MARIOTTI 1969 ; CONSOLINO 1983). I can't agree with ARCELLASCHI 1990, who asserts in his survey on Latin *Medeae* : « l'oeuvre [scil. Hosidius' *Medea*]... est écrite en centons de Virgile et d'Ovide et n'a pas d'autre intérêt » (p. 407).

³ MCGILL 2005, p. 32.

⁴ The same happens to the chorus in Seneca : cf. BIONDI 1998, p. 25-26 ; MAZZOLI 2004, p. 199-201.

⁵ In Seneca, after a « two-voice » prologue (*Medea*, 1-55 ; the chorus, 56-115), we have three episodes (116-300 ; 380-578 ; 670-848) and an epilogue (879-1027), separated by four choral sections (301-379 ; 579-669 ; 849-878 ; five, if we take into account the section belonging to the prologue).

⁶ I interpret the v. 403-407 as the words *Medea* says killing her children (as do the translators : cf. MOONEY 1919, p. 52 ; SALANITRO 1981, p. 122) : *Crimen amor vestrum spretaeque iniuria formae / his mersere malis* [she kills the first one]. *Fratrem ne desere frater* [she kills the second one]. / *Poenarum exhaustum satis est, via facta per hostis / et genus*

Hosidius' drama, which consists of 461 verses, includes a prologue, three episodes and two choral odes :

- the tragedy is opened by a « two-voice » prologue : Medea's invocation to the gods – Sun, Earth, the Furies – that they might revenge for her against Jason, who has betrayed her *conubium* (1-24) ; then a *Chorus Colchidarum* (25-51)⁷ calls on Jupiter, Juno and Hecates and mourns Medea's sufferings and lost fortune, suggesting she should kill herself ;

- I episode (52-103) : Creon tells Medea she must leave Corinth ; Medea obtains a delay of one day before she leaves, to meet her children ;

- I chorus (104-147) : it is the day of Jason's ill-omened wedding with Creusa, Creon's daughter ; the *insania* of the Corinthians, who are celebrating the marriage, is bound to be punished, just like the impious madness of Marsyas, Icarus and Pentheus ;

- II episode : in the first dialogue (148-180), Medea complains to her nurse about Jason's ingratitude and the nurse suggests that she pray to the gods, waiting for better fortune ; Medea has decided : she will either take revenge or die ; in the second dialogue (181-283), Medea tries to move Jason, reminding him of what she has done for him (most of all, the assassination of her brother Absyrtus) ; if the *superi* won't hear her, she threatens she will call the *inferi* for help (*flectere si nequeo superos, Acheronta movebo*) ;

- II chorus (284-312) : Medea is likened to a furious lioness, a serpent, furious Orestes killing his mother, a *baccha*, Philomela, Orpheus ;

- III episode : in the first dialogue (313-373), a messenger relates to Creon the encounter between Medea and the Fury Allecto, during which Medea has made up the crown which will kill Creusa ; Medea (374-381) tells the nurse to get a funeral pyre ready for her children, as she will sacrifice them to Jupiter *Stygius* ; Absyrtus' *umbra* appears to Medea and she kills her children on the stage (382-407) ; finally (408-461) a messenger narrates the death of Jason's new wife Creusa, devoured by flames while sacrificing at the altar ; Jason mourns his children's death and Medea disappears on the Sun's chariot in the sky.

invisum dextra sub Tartara misi. / Iamiam nulla mora est currus agitare volantis. On the contrary, SCHMIDT 1978, p. 37 is convinced that Hosidius « abweichend von Seneca (V. 970 ff.), aber in Übereinstimmung mit dem klassischen Präzept (*ne pueros coram populo Medea trucidet*, Horaz *a.p.* 185) hinter der Bühne verlegt ».

⁷ Colchian men (according to LAMACCHIA 1958b, p. 319-321 ; EAD. 1981, p. 2) or women (*e.g.*, DANE 1950, p. 76 ; p. 78 ; SALANITRO 1981, p. 67 ; SCHMIDT 1978, p. 38 ; COLAFRANCESCO 1999, p. 109-110). In Seneca, the chorus is made up by Corinthian men, in Euripides by Corinthian women.

1. Hosidius, between Virgil and Seneca

In Hosidius we remark the important presence of the two « tragic » sections of Virgil's *Aeneid*⁸ : first, the Dido-episode, which includes books IV and (partly) I and VI ; second, book VII, where the Fury Allecto makes the war between the Trojans and the *Latini* burn out.

I won't dwell upon an issue which has already aroused the interest of scholars⁹, namely the way Dido, « the dominant model for [Hosidius'] Medea »¹⁰, is re-used by Hosidius. Here I will observe only that a significant element among the reasons suggesting this re-use to Hosidius¹¹ could have been the fact that the Dido-episode, which *is* in modern times interpreted as a tragedy¹², *was* perceived as a tragedy also *in antiquity* : Virgilian Dido, being inspired by Greek Medeas¹³, is in fact a tragic character *per se* ; if we consider that Dido's story, just like the rest of the *Aeneid*, probably used to be performed through a loud and continuous « dramatic » reading of the whole episode¹⁴, we can assume that the ancient reader, being « *lector epico* » and « *spectator tragico* »¹⁵ at the same time, was somehow forced to tragic συνομοιοπαθεῖν with the heroine and could be compared to the Augustine of *Confessions* 1.13.1, who read Dido's story again and again at school, mourning her death ; last, we also know that some theatrical performances of her story used to take place¹⁶. So, to a scholastic reader like Hosidius, the perception of Dido as a tragic character could have

⁸ « Nam facile ex illo conspicimus Aenaeidis ll. IV et VII potissimum Hosidium deripuisse, quippe qui aptius ad Medae casus exprimendos accommodari possent » (LAMACCHIA 1981, p. XXI, n. 2).

⁹ We shall keep in mind that about 1/5 of the Virgilian material exploited by Hosidius comes from Dido's story. For Dido in Hosidius, see COLAFRANCESCO 1999 ; MCGILL 2005 ; LA BUA 2006 ; HARDIE 2007. About Dido in Proba's Christian cento, cf. MORETTI 2008 ; for Dido in the « tragic » cento *Alceste*, MCGILL 2005, chapter 4.

¹⁰ HARDIE 2007, p. 174. I must thank Gail Trimble (Oxford), who introduced me to this article.

¹¹ Such as the *mixtum character*, both mimetic and dramatic, which is said by Servius to be proper to the *Aeneid* as an epic (Serv. ad *Buc.* 3.1 ; see MCGILL 2005, p. 35 ; p. 178, n. 16) and the fact that « the linguistic differences between epic and tragedy were small » (MCGILL 2005, p. 38).

¹² See WLOSOK 1999 [1976], completed by MUECKE 1983 (before them, HEINZE 1999 [1915], p. 151-180). Also LA PENNA 2003 suggests reading the IV book as a tragedy, following in his analysis the theme of the growing solitude of the heroine.

¹³ Both Apollonius Rhodius' young and enamoured Medea, and Euripides' one. For Euripides' *Medea*, see MASTRONARDE 2002 ; about Euripides-Apollonius and Virgil, cf. COLLARD 1975.

¹⁴ Cf. FERNANDELLI 2002 and 2002-2003.

¹⁵ FERNANDELLI 2002, p. 141.

¹⁶ About Dido on the stage, see e.g. the witness of Macrobius (*Sat.* 5.17.5), according to whom the story of the immoral Dido was celebrated *histrionum perpetuis et gestibus et cantibus*. In general, on Dido in Late Antiquity, see COURCELLE 1984, p. 376-377 ; LA PENNA 1985 ; POINSOTTE 1990.

suggested exploiting *Aeneid* IV in a cento-tragedy, somehow restoring the heroine to her original tragic temper.

But Hosidius' Medea is quite different from Virgil's Dido, as she appears to be an entirely evil creature, a negative and monolithic character. She looks very much like the protagonist of Seneca's *Medea*¹⁷. In fact, Seneca seems to have been the most important tragic model exploited by Hosidius¹⁸ (another one was presumably Ovid's lost *Medea*¹⁹), and is the object of a sort of « second degree » imitation : Hosidius imitates Seneca through Virgil²⁰. Some striking features of Seneca's *Medea* are common to Hosidius²¹ : Seneca's tragedy begins at its « diapason²² », with a « two-voice » prologue, where a strong antithesis can be noted between *Medea furiosa* and the chorus, singing an *epithalamium* for Jason's new wedding ; the chorus plays a mainly moral role ; the characters are rather static ; Medea herself is the antithesis of the *sapiens*, as she incarnates *furor* ; she represents anti-*humanitas* and her story results in an anti-*apotheosis*. Perhaps according to the previous Roman tragic *Medeae*, Seneca's one is too negative to live a truly tragic crisis²³.

Hence, in Hosidius we have a miniaturization of Seneca's tragedy, where Virgilian elements are re-used according to a Senecan inspiration. It is in this « Senecan » perspective that we must consider the abundance of verses belonging to the « furial » outburst of war in *Aeneid* VII²⁴.

¹⁷ About the « morphology » of Seneca's tragedy, see TARRANT 1978 ; BIONDI 1998, p. 23-31 ; MAZZOLI 2004, p. 198-205. For Seneca's *Medea*, I will refer to ZWIERLEIN 1986 and ID. 1983, p. 131-172.

¹⁸ So that SCHMIDT 1978 considers Hosidius' *Medea* as an episode of the fortune of Seneca's *Medea*, « epigonal » and « marginal » as it was (p. 38 and n. 48). Then, Zwierlein presumes he can establish Hosidius as a *terminus post quem* for the archetype of the manuscript tradition of Senecan tragedies and points out many passages in Hosidius where « die Auswahl der Virgil-Verse ... durch die entsprechenden Stichworte der senecanischen Vorlage bestimmt wurde » (ZWIERLEIN 1983, p. 50-52 ; cf. also ID. 1986, p. 166-167) : among the parallels quoted there, the most significant is the one between Hos. 385 and Sen. *Med.* 992-993. We can find the analysis of the prologue as an example of « second degree » imitation (Seneca through Virgil) in COLAFRANCESCO 1999, p. 104-109.

¹⁹ On Ovid, see below, n. 49.

²⁰ Just like the imitation of Statius through Virgil that we can recognize in the scene of the chariot race in the cento *Hippodamia* (PAOLUCCI 2006, p. LVI-LXI).

²¹ For comparisons between Hosidius and Seneca, cf. DANE 1950, p. 78 ; SCHMIDT 1978, p. 36-38 ; MCGILL 2005, p. 180, n. 36-37 (about Euripides and Seneca, see LOZZA 2006, p. 26-29 ; COLOMBINI 2006, p. 34 ; p. 40-42).

²² BIONDI 1998, p. 24-25.

²³ BIONDI 1998, p. 68, n. 4 ; about Ennius' *Medea* and *Medea exul*, see JOCELYN 1967, p. 113-123 ; p. 342-382 (while ARCELLASCHI 1990, p. 37-99, supports the view that Ennius wrote only one tragedy, the *Medea exul*).

²⁴ *Aeneid* book VII has been studied as a tragedy and divided into five acts (cf. LESUEUR 1996 ; FERNANDELLI 2002, p. 143, n. 1). The Fury is perceived as a tragic (Euripidean) element also by Servius (ad *Aen.* 7.337).

There isn't much to add to what scholars have already said about Hosidius' poetic *ratio*, showing that we should credit him with a certain amount of « authorial control » upon his work²⁵ : an authorial control that is and has been demonstrated on the basis of the principle, either implicitly or explicitly affirmed, that the interpreter has the liberty of establishing a hierarchy among the voices of the different Virgilian hypotexts, tuning out secondary resonances in order to hear the resonances of those Virgilian fragments that Hosidius is supposed to intend as more suggestive²⁶.

Many facts show the « general grossness of composition » that might be reproached to Hosidius²⁷. For instance, he doesn't re-use what is in Virgil an (implicitly) « medean » element, namely the assassination of Absyrtus, which is hinted at in *Aen.* 4.600-602²⁸ : Hosidius omits this reference, maybe because it escapes him. Then, no wonder if he exploits the two clear references to tragic theatre which appear in *Aen.* 4.465-473²⁹, the stage similes which in Virgil describe Dido's experience likening her to two tragic characters : in her folly, she resembles Pentheus, « who imagines he's being hunted down by Furies » (cf. Euripides' *Bacchae*) and Orestes, « when he takes refuge in a temple from the pursuing *Erinyes*, and the goddesses of revenge block the exit » (cf. Aeschylus' *Eumenides*)³⁰. In Hosidius, in the I choral ode, the *insania* of the Corinthians who are bringing Creusa to her new husband, is going to be punished, like that of Pentheus, who is killed by his mother Agave and other *Bacchae*, and whose *caput* appears to pray for mercy after it has been cut off (143-147)³¹ :

Demens videt agmina Pentheus :

incensas pectore matres 145

caput a cervice revulsum 144

²⁵ HARDIE 2007, p. 171.

²⁶ This methodological principle has been explicitly affirmed by HARDIE 2007, esp. p. 169-170.

²⁷ DANE 1950, p. 75.

²⁸ *Non potui abreptum divellere corpus et undis / spargere ? non socios, non ipsum absumere ferro / Ascanium patriisque epulandum ponere mensis ?* (I quote Virgil from GEYMONAT 2008).

²⁹ ... *Agit ipse furem / in somnis ferus Aeneas ; semperque relinqui / sola sibi, semper longam incommitata videtur / ire viam et Tyrios deserta quaerere terra : / Eumenidum veluti demens videt agmina Pentheus / et solem geminum et duplicis se ostendere Thebas, / aut Agamemnonius scaenis agitatus Orestes, / armatam facibus matrem et serpentibus atris / cum fugit ultricesque sedent in limine Dirae.*

³⁰ WLOSOK 1999 [1976], p. 171.

³¹ Cf. also COLAFRANCESCO 1999, p. 113-114.

vocat agmina saeva sororum :
*iuvenem sparsere per agros*³².

Orestes is mentioned in the II choral ode, where Medea is said to resemble him who, prosecuted by the Furies, kills his mother near the altars (293a-297) :

<qualis *****>
*furiis*³³ *agitatus Orestes*
armatam facibus matrem 295
ardens agit aequore toto
patri<a>*s*<que> *obtruncat ad aras.*

As Pentheus and Orestes, belonging to the tragic stage, remind the reader of the experience of theatre, their re-use by Hosidius should not be seen as a sign of poetic ability³⁴.

On the contrary, the fact that several times Hosidius exploits the « possibilités médéenes de Virgile »³⁵, re-using Virgilian verses which openly refer to Medea, should be seen as a meaningful repetition rather than as a sign of the poet's awkwardness³⁶. Medea is alluded to in *ecl.* 8.47-50, where *Damon* laments the effects of cruel Love, who taught a mother to soil her hands with her children's blood :

Saevus Amor docuit natorum sanguine matrem
commaculare manus. Crudelis tu quoque, mater.
Crudelis mater magis, an puer improbus ille ?
*Improbus ille puer, crudelis tu quoque, mater*³⁷. 50

³² I accept the order of the verses proposed by CONSOLINO 1983, p.141-142 ; on the passage, see also CUCCURUGNANI 1984.

³³ Hosidius reads *furiis* instead of *scaenis* (see above, n. 29). *Furiis* comes from *Aen.* 3.331 (*coniugis et scelerum furiis agitatus Orestes*) and in some Virgilian manuscripts *furiis* substitutes *scaenis* also at *Aen.* 4.471. Here Hosidius is thinking both of the stage simile of *Aen.* 4.471 (as v. 295 comes from *Aen.* 4.472) and of the quotation of Orestes' story by Andromache in *Aen.* 3.331 (as v. 297 come from *Aen.* 3.332). We cannot affirm with certainty what Hosidius actually read in *Aen.* 4.471, whether *Furiis* or *scaenis*. On this passage, see also COLAFRANCESCO 1999, p. 115, n. 30.

³⁴ MCGILL 2005, p. 51 (perhaps a bit overestimating Hosidius) : « these verse units re-used in a tragic chorus can not only underscore the explicit equivalence of Dido and the dramatic characters but can also suggest that elements of her story overlap with tragedy. »

³⁵ DESBORDES 1990, p. 100.

³⁶ Cf. COLAFRANCESCO 1999, p. 109.

³⁷ Hosidius seems to understand *mater* of v. 48-49 as referred to Medea (so Serv. ad loc.), others (so D. Serv. ad loc.) refer it to Venus (Love's mother). On the Virgilian passage see COLEMAN 1977, p. 239-240.

In Hosidius these verses are used repeatedly, becoming a sort of formulaic expression of Medea's guilts : *commaculare manus* appears first in Hos. 263, referring to Absyrtus' cruel murder ; then, in a true *crescendo*, 47-48 are re-used in 400^{ex}-401ⁱⁿ, by one of the children speaking to Medea who is going to kill him, and in 441-442ⁱⁿ, by Medea in her children's epitaph ; finally, the beginning of 49 is re-used in 444, by Jason lamenting the assassination of Medea's sons³⁸. « The Virgilian cento comes fully to realise *the* Medean potential » of these verses³⁹ : so that *improbis Amor* does shade an ominous light also on a « Didonian » fragment, used by Hosidius in the prologue, where Medea says (12-15) :

Improbe Amor, quid non mortalia pectora cogis !
Iussa aliena pati iterumque revolvere casus,
ire iterum in lacrimas : sed nullis ille movetur
fletibus. ... 15

Improbe... cogis and *ire... lacrimas* come from *Aen.* 4.408-415⁴⁰, a poet's intervention, breaking the objectivity of epic diegesis, and expressing Virgil's « sympathy » with Dido⁴¹. In Hosidius the quotation, put in Medea's mouth, seems to be significantly reversed « against » Medea : the mention of *improbe Amor*, which in Virgil's text brings the reader to feel compassion with Dido, in Hosidius is probably supposed to remind him of the abovementioned passage of the VIII *eclogue*, where Love teaches a mother to kill her children (a detail which is common to Seneca)⁴², while the words *quid... cogis* – repeated from *Aen.* 3.56, where they refer to the story of Polydorus – foreshadow the tragic epilogue of Medea's story, the assassination of her sons⁴³.

³⁸ On this and other « Medean possibilities » of the Virgilian text (esp. *georg.* 2.136-155), see COLAFRANCESCO 1999, p. 117-120.

³⁹ So Hardie 2007, p. 175.

⁴⁰ *Quis tibi tum, Dido, cernenti talia sensus, / quosve dabas gemitus, cum litora feruere late / prospiceres arce ex summa totumque uideres / misceri ante oculos tantis clamoribus aequor ! / Improbe Amor, quid non mortalia pectora cogis ! / Ire iterum in lacrimas, iterum temptare precando / cogitur et supplex animos submittere amori, / ne quid inexpertum frustra moritura relinquat.*

⁴¹ On Virgil's « subjective style », see OTIS 1964, p. 41-96.

⁴² Cf. *Med.* 135-136, where Medea says she's forced by the cruelty of Love : *et nullum scelus / irata feci ; saevit infelix Amor*. But we must not forget that Seneca has in his turn taken something from Virgil's Dido (FANTHAM 1975, p. 8-10).

⁴³ HARDIE 2007, p. 174.

Maybe we should ascribe to Hosidius' intention also the omission of the epithet *infelix* (« unhappy », or better « unfortunate »⁴⁴), which is used seven times for Dido (*Aen.* 1.712, 749 ; 4.68, 450, 529, 596 ; 6.456) and is a nearly formulaic expression, that critics underline as extremely significant of Virgil's attitude towards the heroine⁴⁵. It is noteworthy that Hosidius never re-uses this adjective : this might depend on Hosidius' aim to depict a totally negative Medea⁴⁶.

Now, let's turn to the III episode, the most « Senecan » of the cento, including : (1) the *rhexis* of the messenger, telling the chorus about Medea's witchcraft and her encounter with Allecto (321-373) ; (2) the apparition of Absyrtus' *umbra* and the murder of Medea's children, slain in full view (383-407). In the interpretation of these texts I think we should attribute to « fragments » coming from *Aeneid* VII a louder voice than that of other Virgilian references.

Quo feror ? Unde abii ? <Rumpit> pavor, ossaque et artus
perfudit toto proruptus corpore sudor [= Aen. 7.458^{ex}-459],
genua labant, <gelidus> oculos stupor urget inertis 315
arrectaeque horrore comae et vox faucibus haesit. (...)
Exhinc Gorgoneis Allecto infecta venenis [= Aen. 7.341] 345
exsurgit facem adtollens atque intonat ore :
« Respice ad haec ; adsum dirarum ab sede sororum,
bella manu letumque gero [= Aen. 7.454-455] ».
Talia tcernentem tandem sic orsa vicissim [= Aen. 7.435] :
« Venisti tandem, mecum partire laborem, 350
tu, dea, tu praesens animis inlabere nostris.
Dissice compositam pacem, sere crimina belli [= Aen. 7.339]
(namque potes), colui vestros si semper honores. »
Talibus Allecto dictis exarsit in iram [= Aen. 7.445]
horrendum stridens rabidoque haec addidit ore [= Aen. 7.451] 355
« O germana mihi, mitte hanc de pectore curam,
nunc si bellare paras, et luctu miscere hymenaeos

⁴⁴ WLOSOK 1999 [1976], p. 165.

⁴⁵ OTIS 1964, p. 50 speaks of it as one of the aspects of Virgil's subjective style, a « finger pointing » epithet ; cf. also p. 61 : *infelix* is a « key word... that foreshadows future tragedy and at the same time expresses sympathy : it is the word for those who oppose fate or whom fate opposes, but are yet worthy of true pity ». Cfr. also, e.g., MUECKE 1983, p. 138-141 ; LA PENNA 2003, p. 158 ; FERNANDELLI 2002, p. 145 ; CRISTANTE 2003-2004, p. 255-256.

⁴⁶ On the contrary, Ovid's Medea addresses herself as *infelix* in *met.* 7.18 (about this passage, cf. BÖMER 1976, p. 204 ad loc.).

*funereasque inferre faces [= Aen. 7.337] et cingere flamma,
quicquid in arte mea possum, meminisse necesse est
quantum ignes animaeque valent ; absiste precando ».* 360
*Dixerat : adtollens stridentis anguibus alas,
ardentis dare visa faces [= Aen. 7.561-562] super ardua linquens⁴⁷.*

The main Virgilian hypotext here is of course the episode of the Fury Allecto : but, if we want to understand the arrangement of the Virgilian material, we must compare Seneca's « homologous scene⁴⁸ » of *Med.* 670-739, namely the *rhesis* of the *nutrix*, narrating Medea's witchcrafts : there Medea gathers terrifying snakes, herbs, and poisons of all kind, pronouncing magic *carmina*. It is a *crescendo* of horror, to which presumably only verses coming from Virgil's Allecto-episode can be apt in Hosidius' eyes.

The second section, the slay of Medea's children, contains both « Didonian » and « Allectian » elements. If we want to understand the inspiration of this scene, we must compare it with Seneca again, without forgetting that the problem of the relationship between Seneca and Hosidius is complicated by the fact that some similarities between them, when shared by Ovidian texts about Medea (esp. *met.* 7 and *her.* 12), might be – and have been – explained as depending on both Seneca's and Hosidius' imitation of Ovid's lost tragedy *Medea* : e.g., the themes we find in this passage of Medea's children like *inferiae* offered to the *Manes* of Absyrtus, and of their resemblance to the father, who makes them deserve their mother's hatred, makes them deserve to die⁴⁹.

MEDEA. *Heu stirpem invisam et fatis contraria nostris [= Aen. 7.293]
Huc ades, o formose puer, qui spiritus illi !
sic oculos, sic ille manus, sic ora ferebat !
Perfidus [= Aen. 7.362] ! et cuperem ipse parens spectator adesset.* 385
FILIUS. *Parce pias scelerare manus ! aut quo tibi nostri
pulsus amor ? si iuris materni cura remordet, [= Aen. 7.402]
natis parce tuis aut nos rape in omnia tecum !
Quo res cumque cadunt, unum et commune periculum.*

⁴⁷ In what follows (363-373), Medea makes up the crown she will give as a wedding gift to Creusa, which is going to devour both Jason's new bride and her father Creon in its flames.

⁴⁸ On « scene omologhe », cf. PAOLUCCI 2006, p. XXXIX-XL.

⁴⁹ Cf. BESSONE 1997, p. 216-217 (about Ov. *her.* 12.160, Sen. *Med.* 967-971, Hos. 392-394) ; p. 256-258 (about Ov. *her.* 12.189, Sen. *Med.* 23-26, Hos. 382, 385).

ABSYRTUS. *Aspice nos ! Adsum dirarum ab sede sororum* [= *Aen.* 7.454] 390

infelix simulacrum, laniatum corpore toto :

quid dubitas ? audendum dextra, nunc ipsa vocat res.

[MEDEA] *Auctor ego audendi, fecundum concute pectus* [= *Aen.* 7.338]

Si concessa peto, si poenas ore reposco,

nullum in caede nefas : amor non talia curat. 395

FILIUS. *Hostis amare, quid increpitas mea tristia fata ?*

MEDEA. *Suggere tela mihi finemque impone labori !*

Sanguine quaerendi reditus.

FILIUS. *Nec te noster amor* [= *Aen.* 4.307] ; *pietas nec mitigat ulla,*

nec venit in mentem [= *Aen.* 4.39] *natorum sanguine matrem* 400

commaculare manus [= *ecl.* 8.47-48] ? *nostri tibi cura recessit*

et matri praereptus amor [= *Aen.* 4.516].

[Here follow the verses which accompany the assassination of Medea's children⁵⁰]

We must remember two different Senecan scenes : not only, as it is quite obvious, *Sen. Med.* 958-977, where Medea kills the first of her children and Absyrtus appears, together with the Furies, as a vision in Medea's overheated mind (just like he did in Euripides), but also the *prologus* of Seneca's *Thyestes*, which is first pronounced by the ghost of Tantalus, and then continues in a dialogue between Tantalus and the Fury⁵¹. The most interesting quotation is in fact that of *Aen.* 7.338 (*fecundum concute pectus*), the words with which Juno urges Allecto to make the war between Trojans and *Latini* break out : Allecto should rouse her own *pectus*, fertile in woes. In Seneca, who depends on Virgil, the Fury intimates *concute insano ferum / pectus tumultu* (*Thyest.* 85-86) to Tantalus' ghost, who has just been taken out of the *Inferi* in order to upset the house of his descendants, causing Atreus to commit a *horrendum nefas* (the murder of Thyestes' sons) ; *pectus* is here that of Tantalus' descendants⁵². In that prologue Tantalus' ghost foresees that his offspring *inausa audeat* (20) and in the speech of the Fury we're presented with the terrible crimes we might expect :

nihil sit ira quod vetitum putet :

fratrem expavescat frater et gnatum parens

⁵⁰ See above, n. 6.

⁵¹ *Sen. Thyest.* 1-121. About this prologue, see PARATORE 1992.

⁵² In fact, behind the prologue of Seneca's *Thyestes*, beside Euripides' *Herakles*, we find Verg. *Aen.* 7.323-371, as observed by MONTELEONE 1980.

*gnatusque patrem, liberi pereant male,
peius tamen nascentur ; immineat viro
infesta coniunx...* (39-43).

In Hosidius, as Absyrtus' *umbra*⁵³ speaks, different literary echoes crowd in the memory of the « supersaturated and suspicious » reader, « inclined to the fashionable pursuit of tracing literary histories through intertextuality⁵⁴ ». The Senecan scene is evoked also by the two preceding Virgilian half-verses (*Audendum dextra, nunc ipsa vocat res* = *Aen.* IX 320 : it belongs to Nisus' exhortation to Eurialus, before they begin to slay their enemies ; *Auctor ego audendi* = *Aen.* XII 159), where the repetition of the verb *audere* reminds us of Seneca (cf. *inausa audeat*) ; and it is Seneca (cf. *expavescat... gnatusque patrem*) who foreshadows the crime which will take place on the stage in Hosidius (a parent killing her children).

So : Hosidius imitates both Virgil and Seneca here, or better : Virgil in the light of Seneca ; and maybe this *formula*, « Seneca through Virgil », could be the synthetic definition of his poetic *ratio*.

2. Hos. Med., 191 : its text and possible *Nachleben*

A further example will shade light on what we could call Hosidius' « scholastic » poetic skill.

Medea is mentioned expressly only once in the cento, by means of a « citation tendancieuse⁵⁵ » (191-192). Jason is speaking with a *satelles*, expressing his fears about Medea's use of herbs and poisons to avoid his second marriage :

*Media fert tristis sucos, nigris[que]⁵⁶ infecta venenis,
quo thalamum eripiat atque ossibus implicet ignem⁵⁷.*

The two verses come from the combination of *georg.* 2.126, which contain the praise of citron-trees⁵⁸, and *Aen.* 7.341 (*Exim Gorgoneis Allecto infecta venenis*)⁵⁹, the last verse being

⁵³ And not Medea (cf. LAMACCHIA 1958b, p. 315-316).

⁵⁴ Così HARDIE 2007, p. 174 (« supersaturated » must refer to the rich poetic memory, shared by reader and writer).

⁵⁵ DESBORDES 1990, p. 101.

⁵⁶ I propose the expunction of *-que*, as I will show *infra*.

⁵⁷ See also COLAFRANCESCO 1999, p. 118-119.

quoted in full in Hos. 345. The word *nigrisque* turns out to be an addition to the Virgilian text. Even if the combination is so awkward that it results in a seven-foot hexameter⁶⁰, which would become regular with the removal of one of the two words, nonetheless Lamacchia preserves both *Media* and *nigrisque* in her edition, judging this verse a result of Hosidius' metrical naivety⁶¹.

Virgil's *Media*, the region which bears tart juices, is transformed by Hosidius into *Media* (= *Medēa* = *Medēa*⁶²), the witch who produces evil poisons.

On closer inspection, despite the semantic shift the name undergoes here, its originary Virgilian context interferes with the new one. In fact, in the *Georgics* the passage concerns the praise of citron-trees, growing in *Media*, as an antidote to the poisons used by cruel *novercae*⁶³ : while in Hosidius another *Media* produces *tristis sucos*, evil juices, a woman who – we are implicitly told – should be considered a *noverca* more than a mother.

Then, *Medea*'s name placed at the beginning of the verse has also something Senecan in itself. In fact in Seneca's *Medea* the name of the heroine occurs in first position in the verse eleven times⁶⁴, and only three times in a different position⁶⁵ ; and this fact is traditional, as in Euripides' *Medea* the name of the protagonist (Μήδεια) is always found in first position⁶⁶, except for verse 52⁶⁷.

Moreover, the word-play is based on the link the mythological tradition has established between the name of the woman and that of the region, either directly⁶⁸ or

⁵⁸ 126-130 : *Media fert tristis sucos tardumque saporem / felicis mali, quo non praesentius ullum, / pocula si quando saevae infecere novercae, / [miscueruntque herbas et non innoxia verba] / auxilium venit ac membris agit atra venena.*

⁵⁹ DESBORDES 1979, p. 99.

⁶⁰ See apparatus in LAMACCHIA 1981 ad loc. : some scholars have removed *Medea* (Wakkerus), others *nigrisque* (Burmann and Salanitro : cf. also CONSOLINO 1983, p. 142), while LAMACCHIA has maintained the irregular verse.

⁶¹ About verses in Hosidius which are longer or shorter, cf. DANE 1950, p. 75, who speaks of « metrical infelicities, which are numerous » ; PALLA 1983, p. 288-290 ; and most of all LAMACCHIA 1981, p. 24, who presents a list of these infelicities.

⁶² The name of the region, *Medīa*, is referred to the heroine (*Medēa* or *Medīa*, with *correptio* of the vowel *e/i*). Similar semantic « shifts » are common in the centos and happen to Pelias, who is a friend of Aeneas (*Aen.* 2.436) and becomes the father of the Peliades, killed by Medea, in Hos. 252 ; to Creusa, Aeneas' wife (*Aen.* 2.778), who becomes Jason's new bride in Hos. 243. See DESBORDES 1979, p. 102-104.

⁶³ See above, n. 58.

⁶⁴ In v. 166, 171, 179, 496, 518, 524, 675, 867, 892, 910, 934.

⁶⁵ In v. 8, 362, 567. In Ovid *met.* and *her.* it never appears in first position except for *her.* 6.151-152 (with regular scansion) : *Medēam timui ; plus est Medēa noverca ; / Medēae faciunt ad scelus omne manus.*

⁶⁶ In v. 7, 272, 363, 402, 663, 1122, 1295.

⁶⁷ About the relevance of Medea's name and of the quotation of names in tragedies, see TRAINA 1979, p. 273-275 and SEGAL 1982, p. 241-242.

⁶⁸ As it is in Herodotus (7.62) and Pausanias (2.3.8) : cf. MASTRONARDE 2002, p. 49.

through *Medus* : he was the son of Medea and Aegeus (Medea having married him after Jason), king of Athens, who killed Perses, and his story was told by Pacuvius (in his *Medus*⁶⁹) and Hyginus, and is hinted at by the ps.-Probus⁷⁰. A trace of the scholastic tradition linking *Medēa* with the nearly homonymous region *Medīa* can be found in the *Periegesis* of the African Priscianus (whose *floruit* was about the year 500), in the vv. 940-945, devoted to the *Medi*. There *Medēa* (the woman) occurs again at the beginning of the verse⁷¹ :

*Armenios montes si linquens ibis ad ortus,
Medica noscetur tibi tellus ; cuius ad axes
Geli sunt Mardique, viri simul Atropateni.
Ad noton inclinant Medorum rura tenentes :
Medēa huic fugiens dederat cognomina terrae ;
hinc Medi varios usus novere veneni*⁷².

We might wonder whether the metrically awkward *Medēa* of the African *grammaticus* Priscianus, placed at the beginning of the verse, could be reminiscent of Hosidius.

And what about *nigrisque* ? Where does it come from ? We don't find it in Virgil, at least in the two Virgilian verses conflated into Hos. 191. But we find something similar in the episode of Dido recurring to *artes magicae* before her death (*Aen.* 4.500-521), an episode which – together with Dido's speech to Anna (*Aen.* 4.478-499) – is also used elsewhere in Hosidius. Dido, during the magic rite which precedes her suicide, throws on the fire *pubentes herbae, nigri cum lacte veneni* (*Aen.* 4.514) : note that the words *nigri... veneni* are placed just in the same position as *nigrisque... venenis* in Hosidius ; and *infecta*, actually coming from *Aen.* 7.341, somehow evokes also the sound of *cum lacte*⁷³. So that in *Aen.* 4.514 we could find an

⁶⁹ On Pacuvius' *Medus*, see ARCELLASCHI 1990, p. 104-106.

⁷⁰ Ad *georg.* 2.126 : *Pars Parthorum Media est appellata a Medo, filius Medae et Aegei, ut existimat Varro* [scil. Varro Atacinus], *qui quattuor libros de Argonautis edidit* (= COURTNEY 2003, p. 253) ; Hygin. *fab.* 27.5 : *Medus re audita Persen* [the son of the Sun, Aeetas' brother] *interfecit regnumque avitum possedit ; ex suo nomine terram Mediam cognominavit*. Cf. MALTBY 1991, p. 373 (s.v. *Media*). A hint at the possible aetiological meaning of the mention of *Media* in Hosidius is found already in CONSOLINO 1983, p. 142.

⁷¹ The only occurrence in Latin poetry, as far as I could find in the data-base *Poetria Nova : a CD-ROM of Latin medieval Poetry (650-1250 A.D.)*, by P. Mastandrea - L. Tessarolo, Firenze, Impruneta, 2001.

⁷² Ed. VAN WOESTIJNE 1953 (at v. 517 we find the name *Medea* with regular scansion : *Has* [scil. *Absyrtidas*] *olim Colchi tenere feroces, / lassi dum frustra Medēae furta sequuntur*). The corresponding section of Dionysius' *Periegesis* (1016-1029) doesn't contain at all the name of the heroine, who is only said to have come to a homonymous land (ὁμώνυμον ἵκετο γαῖαν, v. 1026).

⁷³ We could here repeat what said by CONTE, BARCHIESI 1989, p. 101-103, about one of the examples they considered in their study of intertextuality : « L'éco è attraente senza essere del tutto razionalizzabile : vi concorrono numerosi fattori metrico-verbali, nessuno dei quali per la verità unico e incontrovertibile » (p. 102).

argument to support the point that *nigrisque*, although not completely Virgilian, nonetheless could have been inspired to Hosidius by Virgil. That's why I would also like to preserve – like Lamacchia – *nigrisque*, though correcting it into *nigris*.

The expunction of *-que* is due to two reasons. First, *-que* is not necessary for the sense of the sentence (« Medea produces evil juices, stained of black poisons »)⁷⁴. Second, *-que* is absent from the form in which the half-verse seems to be alluded to in Dracontius. The half-verse *nigris infecta venenis* is in fact attested (after Hosidius, presumably not independently from him) in Dracontius, who knows Hosidius, as he proves in his *Medea* (*Romul.* 10)⁷⁵. Dracontius could so be a witness for an ancient variant of Hosidius' text, unless we think that *nigris infecta venenis* might have been created *ex novo* by the two poets, independently.

Dracontius' quotation comes from the III book of the *De laudibus Dei*. There the poet, after a condemnation of human greed for richness, summons up his arguments, saying that *nil opus est praeferre Deo, Deus omnis amor sit / ante <artus> animamque* (92-93). Then he presents us with a series of ambiguous *exempla*, taken from the Greek and Roman tradition, of people who for the sake of glory lost their own lives or killed their relatives (257-261) :

*historias curram Danaum gentisque Quirini,
qui pro laude sua uel qui pro regno alieno
mentibus infectis animosae cladis amore
ausi omnes scelerare manus de morte suorum 260
aut certe de strage sua. (...)*

Among them, the two Carthaginian brothers *Philaeni* (297-321), who, when their town struggled with Cyrene about a boundary⁷⁶, sacrificed themselves and died to establish an advantageous boundary for their town ; in the place of their burial lie the *arae Philaenorum*. In the description of the *Libycae harenae*, which were both the theatre of the episode of the two *Philaeni* and the object of their greed⁷⁷, we read (302-304) :

⁷⁴ Cf. also CONSOLINO 1983, p. 142.

⁷⁵ Dracontius seems to have known Hosidius' work, as we can argue from his own *Medea* : cf. QUARTIROLI 1947, p. 22 ; BRIGHT 1987, p. 72 and *passim* ; WOLFF 1996, p. 188 ; KAUFMANN 2005, p. 52 and *passim* in the commentary.

⁷⁶ Their story is told in Val. Max. 5.6 ext. 4, as an example of *pietas erga patriam*.

⁷⁷ Cf. SIMONS 2005, p. 124-125.

*portio telluris tantum concessa Medusae*⁷⁸,
*solis adusta rotis, nigris infecta venenis*⁷⁹,
ignibus aethereis, gelidis obsessa cerastis.

Here Medea, the character whom this *hemiepes* is linked with in Hosidius, doesn't seem to be involved. But we must remark that, in the preceding and in the following passages of *De laudibus Dei*, there are at least two hints at her.

We find the first one in the section devoted to Daniel, one of the biblical heroes praised for their *fides* (together with Abraham, Isaac, the three children in the furnace, the apostle Peter). Thanks to his *plena fides* Daniel was able to kill the lions and, as a servant of the true God, is said to be different from the priests of the cruel virgin *Diana*, who enjoys human sacrifices (217-221) :

Ille (scil. Daniel) Dei famulus fuerat, non forte Dianae,
quae solet insontum fuso gaudere cruore,
sanguinis humani numquam satiata catervis
hospitibus caesis ; humana tabe madescens 220
*Taurica per Colchos*⁸⁰ *crudelis virginis ara.*

These verses remind us of Medea⁸¹, who, according to Dracontius (*cf. esp. Romul. 10.9-10*), was a priestess of Diana and used to sacrifice strangers⁸².

The second element which might be reminiscent of Medea occurs in the following section, that of pagan *exempla*. Among those whom *Romanus amor* (« l'amore per Roma », according to CORSARO 1962) forced to kill their offspring, such as Brutus (324-343) and Torquatus (362-397), Dracontius speaks of Verginius (344-361⁸³), who killed his daughter so that she wouldn't be violated by the *decemvir* Appius Claudius (348-351⁸⁴) :

⁷⁸ It is from the blood of Medusa, killed by Perseus, that the serpents of the African desert are said to be born : *cf. MOUSSY 1988, p. 83-84.*

⁷⁹ No reference to Hosidius in the rich apparatus of *loci paralleli* presented by VOLLMER 1905, p. 100 (who quotes just Verg. *Aen. 7.341*). Note that *venenis* is translated « reptiles » by MOUSSY 1988, « veleni » by CORSARO 1962.

⁸⁰ For the difficulty of the presence of *Taurica* and *per Colchos*, we shall assume that Dracontius either confuses the two places or rather means « the Colchian (namely : located in Colchis) altars of the goddess Diana, who is worshiped in Chersonesos Taurica » (Diana's cult demanded the immolation of strangers : see the myth of Iphigenia). *Cf. MOUSSY 1988, p. 76 ; KAUFMANN 2005, p. 61, n. 196.*

⁸¹ So KAUFMANN 2005, p. 54, n. 163.

⁸² About the theme of Medea, priestess of Diana, see BRIGHT 1987, p. 54-55 ; KAUFMANN 2005, p. 48 ; p. 50 ; p. 53.

⁸³ Who is not mentioned *expressis verbis*.

⁸⁴ For the anecdote, see Val. Max. 6.1.1 and mostly Liv. 3.44-48.

*Causa pudicitiae naturae iura diremit,
libertatis amor vicit pietatis amorem.
Immemor hinc generis factus, non immemor Urbis, 350
Sanguinis oblitus fecit de patre novercam.*

In this catalogue of impious parents, who murdered sons and daughters, Medea would easily come to mind to anyone ; beside that, v. 351 is similar to what Dracontius says elsewhere about her : *quando cruentatam fecit de matre novercam / mixtus amore furor* (*Romul.* 10.22-23).

So : for the half-verse *nigris infecta venenis* in Dracontius we might assume a Hosidian origin. Dracontius might have read Hosidius' cento as it must have circulated in Roman Africa, before being copied into the poetic anthology preserved by the *Codex Salmasianus* about the years 533-534⁸⁵.

Moreover, a somehow analogous expression appears in a description of the Fury Tisiphone (*Iohann.* 3.111-115)⁸⁶ by Corippus, who knew Dracontius⁸⁷ and whose *Iohannis* must date to the years following John Troglita's expedition against the *Mauri* rebels (546-548⁸⁸). In the long speech delivered by the tribune Caecilides Liberatus, asked by John Troglita to explain the reason for the difficulties of Africa, Liberatus tells the story of Antala, son of the *Maurus* Guenfan, who some years before had rebelled with his *Frexes* against the Vandals, causing Belisarius' military intervention in Africa. After his birth, a *sacerdos* told Guenfan⁸⁹ that Antala was bound to cause the ruin of both Vandals and Maurs, and that, during his youth, the Fury Tisiphone raged :

*Flammea Tisiphone tortis saevire chelydris
incipit, erexitque rigentes vertice crines
ara per vacuum, nigris infusa venenis
ora madent, foedant oculis linguisque trisulcis
temperiem, diroque horrescunt tempora tabo. 115*

⁸⁵ Cf. TARRANT 1983, p. 9-13 ; CONSOLINO 1999, p. 71-73.

⁸⁶ About him, cfr. CONSOLINO 1999, p. 82-86.

⁸⁷ MOUSSY, CAMUS 1985, p. 99-100 ; KAUFMANN 2005, p. 47-48 and n. 126.

⁸⁸ TOMMASI 2001, p. 42 ; ZARINI 2003, p. 141.

⁸⁹ This scene is probably meant to criticize the barbarians' paganism : cf. ZARINI 2003, p. 117-121, who points out Corippus' stigmatisation of the « tromperie ammoniaque ».

Nigris infusa venenis might come from a conflation of the two Virgilian abovementioned *loci* (*Aen.* 7.341 and 4.514), without presupposing the knowledge of Hosidius⁹⁰. But shall we suspect at least the knowledge of Dracontius ?

Hence I would also retain *nigris* in Hosidius : a *nigris* which, during the last two decades of the V century, would come down to Dracontius, and then – perhaps – to Corippus.

To sum up, if we preserve *Media*, we'll have Hosidius use the Virgilian text : first, to offer both an allusion to the passage of the *Georgics* and a word-play based on aetiology ; second, to evoke the tragic heroine, using the traditional position of her name within tragic verses (at least in Seneca and in Euripides). At the same time, the possible *Nachleben* of the second *hemiepes* (*nigris infecta venenis*) suggests we should preserve *nigrisque*, though correcting it into *nigris*.

Conclusion

Hosidius' « scholastic » tragedy, written probably for something like a *declamatio* at school or in a reciting hall⁹¹, had to face a double challenge : (1) that of changing the literary genre, converting Virgil's « narrative-dramatic » epic (*cf.* Servius) into a purely « dramatic » text ; (2) that of aiming to build up a « Senecan » tragedy by means of Virgilian raw materials.

If Proba was capable of making every Virgilian fragment evoke its original context letting it shade light on its new context⁹², Hosidius seems to be a little less skilful in this

⁹⁰ See TOMMASI 2001, p. 150, according to whom Corippus « Secondo la solita dinamica, ... rifonde le formulazioni di Verg. *Aen.* IV,514, *nigri cum lacte veneni* (nell'invocazione che Didone fa agli dèi inferi prima di morire) e di *Aen.* VII,341, ottenendo una sovrabbondanza di stampo manieristico ». *Infecta* could have been changed into *infusa* on the basis of another hypotext of the passage (Lucan. I 647-48) : *cf. ibidem*, 150-151, ad 113-115.

⁹¹ We can argue that such texts were performed in this way also from the anecdote which closes Mavortius' cento *De ecclesia*, where the poet, after reciting his cento, is proclaimed as *Maro iunior* (for the « reciting room » were probably composed tragedies since the Augustan age : TARRANT 1978, p. 260) ; SCHMIDT 1978, p. 35, defines Hosidius' *Medea* as a « *carmen theatricum* ». Hosidius writes a « recitation drama » according to LA BUA 2006 (*cf.* also DANE 1950, p. 77). We have to note that in Hosidius all markers of dramatic performance are lacking : MCGILL 2005, p. 36.

⁹² *Cf.* CORSARO 2007 ; MORETTI 2008.

aspect ; nonetheless his attempt bears witness not only to Virgil's popularity⁹³, but also to Virgil's reception as a tragic author in antiquity, a reception which – in Hosidius, at least – was strongly influenced also by the Senecan tragic model.

Let me conclude by remarking that *fecundum concute pectus* (Hos. 393), namely the words Absyrtus' ghost says to Medea, exhorting her to dare to kill her children, are interpreted by Hardie as an image of the poet's « high degree of metapoetic self-consciousness »⁹⁴ : the centonist seems to be conscious of the fact that, in his dis-membering and re-membering of Virgil⁹⁵, he is daring to undertake a difficult – if not impious – enterprise. And perhaps not only the anonymous poet of *Hippodamia*, who re-uses the same *hemiepes* in the proemial section of his cento, referring it to his poetic inspiration⁹⁶, would agree with Hardie, but also the other centonists, who must have been conscious of the act of *hybris* they were making when they transformed Virgil's *parole* in a *langue* they could manipulate into expressing whatever they liked.

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⁹³ HARDIE 2007, p. 170 defines centos as acts of « Maronolatry ».

⁹⁴ HARDIE 2007, p. 175.

⁹⁵ HARDIE 2007, p. 171 describes the centonists' work with the metaphor of « re-membering » Virgil's *disiecta membra*.

⁹⁶ 1-7 : *Pandite nunc Helicon, deae, nunc pectore firmo / este duces, o si qua via est, et pronuba Iuno ; / pallida Tisiphone* [here Tisiphone must represent either poetic inspiration, or the *ira* moving Enomaus to kill Hippodamia's suitors], *fecundum concute pectus* [the poet's heart] ! / *Non hic Atridae nec scelus exitiale Lacenae ; / hic crudelis amor. Nunc illas promite vires, / maius opus moveo : quaesitas sanguine dotes / et scelerum poenas inconcessosque hymenaeos.* On v. 3, cf. PAOLUCCI 2006, p. 24-26.

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