

Memory and Menalcas Lost: Textuality in *Eclogue* 9.44-50

If the world of Vergil's Ninth *Eclogue* can be called "fragmented,"¹ then there lacks a sufficient word to describe the remarkably complex, often contradictory, tradition of interpretation it has begotten. As it stands, the reader is presented with a scene similar to — but darker than — *Eclogue* 1, wherein a certain young Lycidas and an older Moeris, the two central characters of the poem, meet together on the road and lament the irreversible loss of pastoral land. During their song exchange, however, a point of scholarly dispute arises and complicates the picture: the distribution of lines 44-50. And though some readings fail to address this issue, even to their detriment,² the arrangement proves crucial for understanding the poem. In fact, any consistent reading reveals that the distribution found in our earliest manuscripts, unlike those of later editors, not only lacks any real contradiction, but positively contributes to the poem's symmetry and, most importantly, the characterization of Lycidas and Moeris. Consequently, if the reader traces the sense of the eclogue from its beginning, it is clear that the optimistic and forward-thinking attitude of Lycidas, set against the pessimistic and homesick character of

¹ David Meban, for example, discusses the events described in *Eclogue* 9 as the "splintering and dislocation of the bucolic community." David Meban, "Virgil's 'Eclagues' and Social Memory," *American Journal of Philology* 130, no. 1 (2009): 109.

² R.B. Hardy, for example, omits the detail, even though it would almost certainly pertain to his argument. Robert B. Hardy, "Virgil's Epitaph for Pastoral: Remembering and Forgetting in *Eclogue* 9," *Syllecta Classica* 2 (1990): 29-38.

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Moeris, in conjunction with considerations of poetic architecture and meaning, almost certainly suggest the earliest attested distribution of lines 44-50 and exclude later emendations.

It will be helpful first to recount the nature and history of the textual issue at hand.³ The problem can be summarized as follows: at line 23, Lycidas sings three Theocritean lines that he once heard Menalcas singing (23-25), and Moeris responds with three lines of "Roman verse" originally sung by the same (27-29). Next, prompted by Lycidas, Moeris yet again sings five Theocritean lines performed originally by Menalcas (39-43),⁴ and at this point the crux of the disagreement arises: at first glance, it appears that Lycidas contradicts himself, first complaining that he cannot remember the words and yet singing them anyway. In response to this potential inconsistency, three different interpretations arise:

*What about those things I had heard you singing alone beneath a clear night sky? I remember the tune, if I only had the words. 'Daphnis, why you do gaze up at constellations of old as they rise? Look — the star of Dionean Caesar has dawned, the star by which the land abounds in crops and the grape in sunny fields draws its color. Plant pear trees, Daphnis; your descendants will reap your fruits.'*⁵

³ Summaries on the topic can also be found in Wendell Clausen, *A Commentary on Virgil: Eclogues* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 280; as well as Robert Coleman, *Virgil: Eclogues* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 268-69.

⁴ There is not a scholarly consensus on Menalcas authorship of these lines, but this need not affect the present argument.

⁵ Virgil, *Eclogue* 9.44-50. All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

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- M. L. L. *Quid, quae te pura solum sub nocte canentem
Audieram? numeros memini, si uerba tenerem.*
- L. M. *'Daphni, quid antiquos signorum suspicis ortus?
Ecce Dionaei processit Caesaris astrum,
Astrum quo segetes gauderent frugibus et quo
Duceret apricis in collibus uua colorem.
Insere, Daphni, piros: carpent tua poma
Nepotes.'*⁷

The "first tradition," that of the fifth century *codex Mediceus* and *codex Palatinus*, does not recognize any contradiction, assigning all of 44-50 to Lycidas. As Clausen reports, this interpretation is adopted by Ribbeck, Forbiger, Klingner, Mynors, as well as himself.⁸ The "second tradition," on the other hand, eliminates the problem by having Moeris sing 46-50 after Lycidas pleads forgetfulness in 44-45. This distribution is corroborated by "the Carolingian MSS, by an ancient corrector of the Palatinus, [and] by DServius," among others.⁹ Third and last, Robert Coleman's proposal seeks to reconcile the two previous interpretations by giving the first two lines (44-45) to Moeris, thus fixing the perceived contradiction,

⁶ These numbers correspond to the three ways of distributing the lines. See below.

⁷ The punctuation here abides by the Oxford text in all places but the end of line 45, where I have changed Mynors' colon to a period for the sake of neutrality. R.A.B. Mynors, ed., *P. Vergili Maronis: Opera* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 24-5.

⁸ Clausen, *Commentary*, 280.

⁹ Clausen, *Commentary*, 280 ascribes this interpretation to "most modern editors and commentators." These include G. Cipolla, "Political Audacity and Esotericism in the Ninth *Eclogue*," *Acta Classica* 5 (1962): 56; Evangelos Karakasis, *Song Exchange in Roman Pastoral* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011): 201-2; and Charles Segal, "Tamen Cantabitis, Arcades: Exile and Arcadia in *Eclogues* One and Nine," in *Poetry and Myth in Ancient Pastoral: Essays on Theocritus and Virgil*, ed. Charles Segal (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981): 282. Karakasis also adds "Schmidt ... Stégen ... [and] Leo" to the list.

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and by assigning 46-50 to Lycidas, thereby maintaining a symmetry among the songs.¹⁰ Although most scholars accept one of the two earlier traditions instead of this solution, Coleman's innovation has justly found some praise.¹¹ Nevertheless, while the second tradition and Coleman's interpretation may appear attractive initially, there are clear reasons why they distort — or, at best, overcomplicate — a consistent reading of *Eclogue* 9.

Among these reasons, the simplest is that lines 44-50, when rightly understood, do not necessitate emendation. The second tradition and Coleman's solution are certainly correct in pointing out that Lycidas pleads forgetfulness and then sings, but it seems that they take him too literally. In fact, Clausen corrects these two readings by explaining that "[Lycidas] recalls the music but is unsure of the words; he collects his thoughts, however, and sings five lines of a song."¹² That is, Lycidas is struggling to remember, but it only takes him a moment to recall how part of the song goes. Papanghelis bolsters this explanation by drawing a parallel to the earlier *si valeam meminisse* ("if I can remember," 38), which, though expressing a comparable lack of confidence, nevertheless prefaces a song fragment.¹³

¹⁰ See Coleman, *Virgil*, 268-69.

¹¹ Andrew Becker, "Poetry as Equipment for Living: A Gradual Reading of Vergil's Ninth *Eclogue*," *Classics Ireland* 6 (1999): 15.

¹² Clausen, *Commentary*, 268. Meban, "Virgil's Eclogues" corroborates Clausen's explanation, as does Theodore Papanghelis. Meban, "Virgil's Eclogues, 111; Theodore D. Papanghelis, "Friends, Foes, Frames and Fragments: Textuality in Virgil's Eclogues," in *Brill's Companion to Greek and Latin Pastoral*, ed. Theodore D. Papanghelis and Marco Fantuzzi (Leiden: Brill, 2006): 384.

¹³ "The apparent inconsistency between inadequate memory (9.44-45) and the eventual citation immediately afterwards (which leads a number of scholars to attribute 9.46-50 to Moeris) is no such thing, especially when viewed in light of the preceding *si valeam meminisse*, 'jogging my

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Colloquial speech, after all, which runs rife throughout the *Eclogues*, regularly fails to comply with strictly logical sense. Therefore, it appears that whichever scribe first emended 44-50 — perhaps the ancient corrector of the *codex Palatinus*¹⁴ — somewhat hastily decided upon the sense of these lines without considering the larger structure and its implications on the meaning of the poem.

This argument will consider such factors, however, beginning with how the symmetry and balance of the first tradition affirm it as the more probable distribution. *Eclogue* 9, Otto Skutsch observes, can be divided in two ways:¹⁵ on the one hand, into two sections, with the first comprising the exchanges through line twenty-nine (1-29), and the second comprising those through the subsequent thirty-eight (30-67); additionally, it can be divided into two totals of lines-per-character, with Lycidas' count amounting to thirty-eight,¹⁶ and Moeris' amounting to twenty-nine.¹⁷ Thus, a delicate symmetry relates the line count of each half of the poem to each total of lines

memory' (9.38), and its sequel." Papanghelis also supports this claim with a fascinating argument for "faltering memory as a reflexive ploy." Papanghelis, "Friends, Foes, Frames," 384.

¹⁴ This, of course, presumes that the "ancient corrector of the Palatinus" is indeed emending a second tradition manuscript subsequent to the earliest surviving first tradition manuscript. It is possible, however, that he is simply drawing upon a manuscript tradition entirely lost to us. It need not affect the present argument.

¹⁵ See Otto Skutsch, "Symmetry and Sense in the *Eclogues*," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 73 (1969): 153-69. The following ideas are wholly indebted to his diagrams. For a more recent study on the symmetry of the poems combined (but not their individual structures), see John Steenkamp, "The Structure of Vergil's 'Eclogues,'" *Acta Classica* 54 (2011): 101-24.

¹⁶ 1 (1), 7-10 (4), 17-25 (9), 30-36 (7), 44-50 (7), 56-65 (10) (= 38 total lines)

¹⁷ 2-6 (5), 11-16 (6), 26-29 (4), 37-43 (7), 51-55 (5), 66-67 (2) (= 29 total lines)

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spoken by Lycidas and Moeris, respectively. Moreover, as Clausen observes, there is balance in both singers' pieces: Lycidas remembers a Theocritean song (23-35), then Moeris a Roman song (27-29); next Moeris recites a Theocritean song (39-43), and Lycidas a Roman song (46-50).¹⁸ Even more precisely, in the second half of this song exchange, both characters encounter faltering memories (37-38, 44-45) and recall fragments of remarkably similar structure in turn (39-43, 46-50). In short, precise, balanced structures dominate the architecture of this eclogue. If one accepts the second tradition, these formal elements are lost; the line counts are skewed, and the song exchange features a forgetful Moeris three times. Coleman's solution, though managing to preserve the equity and chiasmus of roles by keeping Lycidas as the final singer,¹⁹ still violates the lines-per-character count and the balance in the second half of the exchanges in suggesting that Moeris alone bears the burden of forgetfulness. The first tradition's distribution is the only one which maintains these architectural elements — perhaps the only remnants of order in a crumbling pastoral world — and afflicts both characters with forgetfulness.

To be sure, not all scholars believe that balance and symmetry are valid arguments for accepting the first tradition. Although Perkell corroborates Clausen wholeheartedly,²⁰ Karakasis disagrees that the asymmetrical consequences of the second tradition serve as a legitimate objection against its distribution.²¹ Breed, too, is skeptical of trusting "numerological

¹⁸ Clausen, *Commentary*, 280.

¹⁹ Coleman, *Virgil's Eclogues*, 268-69.

²⁰ Christine Perkell, "Vergil Reading His Twentieth-Century Readers: A Study of Eclogue 9," *Vergilius* 47, *The Vergilian Century* (2001): 73.

²¹ Karakasis, *Song Exchange*, 201-02.

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correspondences" within the *Eclogues*.²² Skutsch himself admits that there is danger in assigning too much meaning to "demonstrable," "pretty" patterns, though he still avows their utility for textual criticism.²³ This is all to say that symmetry and balance are merely suggestive of a larger issue in emending the first tradition. They do not, however, convincingly prove why its interpretation is more meaningful than the other two within the larger context of *Eclogue 9*.

For that confirmation, one must turn to still greater evidence, namely the characterizations of Lycidas and Moeris throughout the poem. With the first tradition in mind, the stage of this poem can be set thus: the two are on their way to the city from the country (1-6). This reversal of *Idyll Seven* immediately anticipates the despondency of the eclogue.²⁴ To add to this downtrodden tone, the trip is not even voluntary, but rather necessitated by the loss of pastoral land (2-10). Although Menalcas, it seems, attempted to forestall this dislocation (7-10), Moeris gloomily announces his failure: "our songs fare as well amid the spears of war ... as they say Chaonian doves do when an eagle is on the prow" (11-13). Whether or not this remark alludes metaphorically to real events in Vergil's Rome,²⁵

²² Brian W. Breed, "Time and Textuality in the Book of the *Eclogues*," in *Brill's Companion to Greek and Latin Pastoral*, ed. Theodore D. Papanghelis and Marco Fantuzzi (Leiden: Brill, 2006): 337.

²³ Skutsch, "Symmetry and Sense," 153, 156.

²⁴ Becker, "Poetry as Equipment," 5; Karakasis, *Song Exchange*, 185-186; M.C.J. Putnam, *Virgil's Pastoral Art: Studies in the Eclogues* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970): 294. Clausen (*Commentary*, 266, 268) calls *Eclogue Nine* "irredeemably sad" and describes its setting as "a bleak and empty landscape brightened intermittently by passages of song."

²⁵ Meban historically identifies these dispossessions to "the effects of the land appropriations instituted after Philippi," albeit "in a dramatic form." Meban, "Virgil's *Eclogues*," 108. Karakasis (*Song Exchange*, 191-2),

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clearly some “civil discord” has effected the “dissolution of the pastoral world.”²⁶ Moreover, try as they might to sing, Lycidas and Moeris are plagued by a forgetfulness for how any of the old songs go. This lapse suggests two critical facts about their situation: first, they have no means of consoling themselves in the midst of their predicament.²⁷ Second, and more importantly, memory serves a critical function in the bucolic world — namely remembering lines for song exchange. Thus, its failure results in the two herdsmen living in a fragmented community severed from the very oral tradition that once united it through space and time.²⁸ Therefore, with the loss of land and memory, the situation for these two men and the world they inhabit is, in a word, bleak.

However, each responds to this predicament with distinct characters. Lycidas, a restless young man (*puer*, 66),²⁹ is generally optimistic.³⁰ This much is clear from a number of lines in the poem: he has faith in Menalcas (7-10), he repeatedly tries to elicit song from Moeris (30-32, 64-65), and he expresses

moreover, observes that “the substitution of the hawk, the traditional enemy of the dove, by the eagle, [alludes] to the *aquila* of the Roman legion.”

²⁶ Meban, “Virgil’s *Eclogues*,” 109.

²⁷ Becker, “Poetry as Equipment,” 4, 10.

²⁸ “The songs and their recollection ... serve to unite the community of singers and help to define its past and future.” Meban, “Virgil’s *Eclogues*,” 100. See also Hardy (“Virgil’s Epitaph,” 36), who reminds us that “pastoral is regularly characterized as a form of oral poetry, and ... oral poetry is dependent upon memory.” Consequently, without memory, there is no oral poetry, and ultimately no pastoral world.

²⁹ Meban (“Virgil’s *Eclogues*,” 109) corroborates that *puer* here is the proper usage of the word.

³⁰ Hardy, “Virgil’s Epitaph,” 35; Perkell, “Virgil Reading,” 71, 78 both call Lycidas explicitly an optimist. See also Becker, “Poetry as Equipment, *passim*.”

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hope through his lyrics (27-30, 46-50).³¹ Indeed, Becker notes that, even at the end, "Lycidas has not lost his belief that song will make their lives easier and more pleasant."³² Surprisingly, though, Lycidas seems much more removed from the pastoral world than Moeris. The fact that the only Menalcan song fragments with which he is familiar are ones that he has overheard from a distance (*sublegi*, 21;³³ *te [Moerin] ... solum ... audieram*, 44-45) evokes either, more broadly, the dissipation of the pastoral society, or in Meban's words, "a deliberate exclusion of Lycidas from the community."³⁴ This exclusion, though, would seem to be mutual; the absence of Menalcas and the straits of their situation do not bother him as they do Moeris (66-67).³⁵ Rather, as a forward-thinker, Lycidas wishes to integrate the old pastoral world with the new urban one. That is, he may sing a Theocritean song at first, but not long after he expresses admiration for Varius and Cinna (35-36). Far from being pastoral singers, these two are real contemporaries of Vergil who wrote elegiac poetry and perhaps epigrams — much

³¹ For a more in-depth argument about how his first Theocritean song is optimistic, see Perkell, "Virgil Reading," 80-1: "[T]he optimism," she remarks, "of the 'Caesar's Star' fragment [46-50] need not be argued," 79.

³² Becker, "Poetry as Equipment," 18.

³³ Karakasis (*Song Exchange*, 195) observes that this word entails not only an "unusual practice in pastoral terms," but being chiefly a comedic word, also "may evoke Plautine parallels." This intrusion of genre may also help characterize Lycidas as somewhat removed from the pastoral world. See below.

³⁴ This may explain why he is not privy to the latest news about Menalcas (7-16).

³⁵ Meban, "Virgil's Eclogues," 109: "... [Lycidas] seems to have escaped the dispossessions relatively untouched."

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more urbane forms of poetry than bucolic, to be sure.³⁶ His models, in other words, are no longer the singers of the old world such as Menalcas. Moreover, his recitation of "Caesar's star" (46-50) urges Moeris not to gaze any longer at the *antiquos signorum ... ortus* (46), as a new heavenly body — the *Caesaris astrum* — is on the rise (47). These lines too serve as an intrusive, if hopeful, breach into the pastoral world.³⁷ Lycidas, in short, is an optimist, aloof from the old pastoral world and eager to explore the new urban(e) one.

So much for Lycidas. Moeris, on the other hand, generally represents the opposite of his companion. He is old (51-55),³⁸ and more importantly, a pessimist.³⁹ Not only does he admit the powerlessness of song altogether (11-13),⁴⁰ but he also resigns himself to the disintegration of his memory and refuses to sing until Menalcas returns (51-55; 66-67). Similarly to Lycidas, moreover, his songs reflect his disposition. In the first fragment he sings (23-25, begun only to correct Lycidas' faulty memory, as [*i]mmo haec* implies), he describes a failed attempt to "[keep] the pastoral space immune to history"⁴¹ by persuading a certain Varus to exempt Mantua, a *locus amoenus*,

³⁶ Hardy, "Virgil's Epitaph," 33. See also Karakasis, *Song Exchange*, 198-9, where a more in-depth argument about the identities of *Vario* and *Cinna* is made.

³⁷ See Servius ad loc., "When Augustus Caesar was celebrating funeral games for his father, a meteor began to shine in the middle of the sky. He confirmed this star to be that of his parent, and therefrom these lines were composed." Perkell, "Virgil Reading," 79 also summarizes the event.

³⁸ Meban, "Virgil's Eclogues," 109.

³⁹ Hardy, "Virgil's Epitaph," 35; Perkell, "Virgil Reading," 71, 78. See also Becker, "Poetry as Equipment," *passim*.

⁴⁰ Becker, "Poetry as Equipment," 3-4.

⁴¹ Papanghelis, "Friends, Foes, Frames," 389.

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from the land confiscations mentioned above.⁴² In the second, he paints what merely appears at first to be a light-hearted Theocritean scene, but in reality departs from its Hellenistic model to express sullen, unrequited love.⁴³ The most that can be said for the tone of these two songs, then, is that it is one of hopeless longing — a feeling consistent with Moeris' characterization in general. For, unlike Lycidas, he yearns for the old pastoral world, so recently taken away from him and his companions. This nostalgia is manifest from several other hints throughout the eclogue: his belief in old Italian omens (14-16, 54-56),⁴⁴ his "penchant in ... language and metrical habits for archaic variants,"⁴⁵ and his reminiscing about the long-gone days of friendly song exchange (51-53). In all of these mannerisms, Moeris exhibits a disposition opposite to that of Lycidas; generally speaking, the former is a pessimistic, homesick old man, while the latter is an optimistic, forward-thinking youth.

⁴² The identification of Varus is disputed, but Coleman identifies him thus: "Alfenus Varus, who came perhaps from Cremona (*schol. ad Hor. S. I.3.130*), was a notable jurist (Gell. 7.5.1), hence well qualified to serve on the land-commission that dealt with the settlement of veterans in Cisalpine Gaul in 41 B.C." For the rest of the discussion, see Coleman on *Ecl.* 6.7, 177. As for Cremona, Vergil implies in line 28 — *vae miserae nimium vicini Cremonae* ("Alas! Too close to poor Cremona") — that its proximity to Mantua was the only reason Mantua was included in the dispossessions. Indeed, Clausen (*Commentary*, 276) notes that "[Mantua was] some forty miles away [from Cremona]." Servius, commenting on the same line, remarks that "Augustus, victorious, granted the land of the people of Cremona to his soldiers, and when this was not enough, he added in the Mantuans' land, arrogated not because of any misdeed on the part of the citizens, but because of its proximity." This is certainly a pessimistic song choice. Perkell, "Virgil Reading," 68.

⁴³ *Ibid*, 81-2.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 83.

⁴⁵ For the full argument, including examples of this "linguistic characterization," see Karakasis, *Song Exchange*, 207.

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At last, in conjunction with the structural niceties of this eclogue, the reader must utilize these characterizations of Lycidas and Moeris to evaluate how the second tradition and Coleman's solution ultimately mar this reading. At first glance, the second tradition does fix the possible inconsistency of remembering in 45-46,⁴⁶ and indeed, when considered in isolation from more important arguments, the emendation seems reasonable. However, as mentioned above, these lines *qua* colloquialism or understatement need not represent a contradiction. If they are reassigned, not only do they undermine the architecture of the eclogue, but more severely, they distort the characters of Lycidas and Moeris. Lines 46-50, in other words, cannot belong to Moeris. Were they assigned to him, it should raise the reader's suspicion that the old man, who — according to this emendation, at least — sings about fruitful new beginnings in one place so bitterly ends the song exchange twenty lines later (46-49; 66-67).⁴⁷ Rather, to this end, the traditional distribution proves much more consistent both with Moeris' attitude overall, since he remains pessimistic,⁴⁸ and also with that of Lycidas, because he gets to sing the hopeful

⁴⁶ Karakasis (*Song Exchange*, 201) provides a different reason for abiding by the second tradition, namely that it is "appropriate to the status of Moeris as a deserter of the bucolic space." To the contrary, however, on Karakasis' grounds (variation of genre), both singers are "deserters." Moreover, Moeris is not a voluntary deserter, but, having been forced off his land, an involuntary exile.

⁴⁷ Not all readings of this ending have been pessimistic. Hardy, for one, suggests an alternate interpretation: "[T]he eclogue does suggest the possibility of new song—the last word is, after all, *canemus* ("we will sing"). The sense of loss evident throughout is balanced by a sense of expectation, and of songs still to be sung." Hardy, "Vergil's Epitaph," 35. Nevertheless, as Clausen (*Commentary*, 268) sadly remarks, "Poetry fails in the end [W]hen will Menalcas come?"

⁴⁸ Breed, "Time and Textuality," 364-5.

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"Caesar's star" fragment. The latter is all too ready to migrate into the new world, suggesting that they "set the kids aside ... and head to the city all the same" (62).⁴⁹ In short, then, it is evident that the second tradition's main justification — to fix the apparent contradiction in 45-46 — is unnecessary, and in fact does more harm than good by damaging the balance of the *Eclogue* and the consistency of the characters themselves. Therefore, it is clearly not the most probable distribution, and one can conclude that 46-50 fit much better with Lycidas.

As for Coleman's solution, which presents itself as an attractive compromise between the traditional distribution and the second tradition, it is, in a sense, inviable from the start. That is, because Coleman explicitly seeks to accommodate the second tradition, his emendation is already predicated in part upon an unnecessary correction. Had the lines never been erroneously redistributed in the first place,⁵⁰ there would be no need for such a compromise. Nevertheless, he does rightly assign 46-50 to Lycidas. The problem, then — besides the considerations of balance and symmetry enumerated above — lies in Moeris' speaking 44-45, from which the reader can identify two critical inconsistencies with the rest of the eclogue. Not only does Coleman's solution relieve Lycidas from any burden of a faltering memory, implying that the pastoral world may not be in the very disarray that the rest of the poem suggests, but it also neglects the fact that (according to the

⁴⁹ Hardy, "Vergil's Epitaph," 31: "Vergil incorporates [urban life] into his *Eclogue* to suggest the death of pastoral." Compare also with *Eclogue* 2, where (as Papanghelis, "Friends, Foes, Frames," 400 elegantly summarizes) "Alexis' urban-elegiac arrogance and disdain of the pastoral world represent the main closural threat to song."

⁵⁰ Again, this is assuming a chronological priority of the first tradition over the second tradition. This need not be the case, however.

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traditional distribution) Moeris does not once reply to Lycidas unprompted. Indeed, reflective of his pessimistic and forlorn attitude, whenever Moeris speaks, it is either because he must correct the misguided *puer* or respond to his incessant inquiries. If the reader looks back at the entire poem, it will be evident that Lycidas initiates the whole encounter with a question (1), to which Moeris replies (2-6). Then the former proceeds to recall a *fama* that Menalcas has saved the pastoral land (6-10) and misremembers a Menalcan fragment (23-25), both of which Moeris corrects in turn. Next, Lycidas tries to lure his fellow traveler into more singing (30-32), and the latter reluctantly consents (37-43). He tries again, even encouraging Moeris by giving him part of a once familiar song (44-50), but the forgetful old man gloomily refuses and passes the burden on to the absent Menalcas (51-55). Lycidas tries once more to get Moeris to sing (56-64), but at last the latter grows impatient and reprimands the boy, ending the encounter (66-67). At no point in this exchange does Moeris indicate a desire to carry on the conversation, and if it were not for his younger companion's need for correction or response, the reader can easily imagine the sullen old man traveling in silence. Coleman's solution seems to overlook this dynamic, for in assigning 44-45 to Moeris, it uniquely imparts to him a genuine desire to hear what Lycidas has to say and a role in perpetuating conversation. In short, although the distribution that Coleman suggests is at first attractive, it breaks down upon more thorough consideration of balance and characterization.

At last, the reader is left with the first tradition of line distribution: Lycidas sings all of 44-50. If the crux of the debate, the singer's apparent self-contradiction in lines 44-50, brought nothing to bear on the rest of the eclogue, perhaps the reader

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would not question the second tradition or Coleman's solution. As it is, however, these lines — which need not represent a contradiction in their earliest attested distributions — have a crucial effect on the reader's understanding and appreciation of the poem when they are recited by Lycidas. Indeed, this arrangement contributes profoundly not only to the poem's architecture, creating an intricate web of symmetry and balance, but also to its characterization of both speakers. Any other distribution undermines the consistency of each; first, Lycidas would be exempt from the plight of forgetfulness disintegrating the pastoral world. Further, and just as incongruously, the old Moeris would be enlivened with an inexplicably youthful optimism among otherwise pessimistic sentiments. In the end, the arrangement found in our earliest manuscripts paints the most probable, if not the most pleasant, picture: "[p]oetry fails in the end. Moeris has forgotten so many songs; it will soon be dark and rain threatens."⁵¹ Both memory and Menalcas have slipped away, taking the old bucolic community with them. Now a new star rises, heralding the dawn of a world unknown not only to our herdsmen, but indeed, perhaps to their author as well.

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⁵¹ Clausen, *Commentary*, 268.

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