

**Brian W. BREED**

**The Songs in *Eclogue 5*: Text, Time, and Dialogue**

The fifth *Eclogue* is nearly unique among the *Eclogues* in incorporating a written text into the fiction of the poem: Mopsus refers to the song he sings as *quae cortice fagi | carmina descripsi* (13-14). The present paper examines consequences that the presence of writing carries both for the songs of the characters Mopsus and Menalcas and for Virgil's pastoral generally. In keeping with pastoral's tendency to offer within its fiction images of its own literary processes, in *Eclogue 5* the presentation of shepherds' songs reflects on Virgil's Theocritean intertextuality and, more broadly, on ways in which pastoral represents speech through writing. Writing potentially disrupts the temporal relations between songs in amoebian exchanges and so problematizes the seemingly attractive metaphor of "dialogue" for describing the responsiveness between pastoral songs, whether of shepherd characters or of authors writing in the pastoral tradition.

Amoebian exchanges such as those in *Eclogue 3* and Theocritus 4, which rely upon a fiction of extemporaneous communication and dialogue between two pastoral singers, are commonly considered normative for pastoral (e.g., Alpers, *What is Pastoral?*). The fifth *Eclogue* initially suggests the pattern of such an exchange, in which the second of two singers listens and responds to what he hears from the first. But the responsive songs of Mopsus and Menalcas are not produced extemporaneously; they are incorporated from other contexts. Mopsus' song has a history outside of the dramatic encounter as a written text. Menalcas' song is, likewise, incorporated from a prior context: Mopsus has heard it praised by Stimichon (54-55). Although Menalcas' song responds to Mopsus' by continuing the theme of the death of Daphnis, this is not a traditional dialogue. The shared aspects of the two songs are the product not of the second singer listening to and matching the first, but of the two singers individually addressing the same topic. Strict chronology thus is not of use in describing the relationship between the two songs by determining which is the "model" and which the "copy." Incorporation of songs from other contexts figures also in Virgil's Theocritean models. Thyrsis' Daphnis song in Theocritus 1 has a history of previous performances (19-24). The direct inspiration for Mopsus' written song is Theocritus 7, in which Lycidas sings a song he had previously "worked out"; *cepo nasa* (51) suggests not a herdsman's improvisations but the written efforts of a learned poet (cf. Hunter's note). On account of these connections incorporation is important for defining the intertextual relationship between Virgil and Theocritus. The disruption of chronology that incorporation allows for in *Eclogue 5* might suggest that in his relationship to Theocritus Virgil is not "belated" by a strict literary-historical chronology. This gesture of temporal independence on the part of an alluding poet is a common one in Hellenistic and Roman poetry (see Barchiesi *HSCP* 95 [1993]).

The presence of writing is crucial for defining the type of dialogue represented within *Eclogue 5* and between *Eclogue 5* and its Theocritean models. Inasmuch as Mopsus' song is written like Virgil's poem that presents it, the act of reading becomes an experience through which the reader's encounter with the poem translates into the experience of represented speech within the poem and vice versa. Allusions point to other places in

Theocritus and the *Eclogue* in which speech and writing overlap. Within his song (43–44) Mopsus quotes the epitaph that will be written on Daphnis' tombstone, alluding not only to the epigrammatic dying words of Daphnis in Theocritus 1 (120–21), but also to Theocritus 18 and the inscription on a tree sacred to Helen (47–48). In these instances allusion is figured as incorporation by way of inscription. Theocritean bucolic is written into Virgilian pastoral. Within the intertextual fabric of *Eclogue 5* the incorporation of Mopsus and Menalcas' two Daphnis songs from contexts outside of the dramatic encounter, and particularly the presence of Mopsus' song as an inscribed text within the fictional world, suggests that in a sense every allusion is an act of incorporation by writing. *Eclogue 5* reminds readers that even if the fiction of song exchanges in the pastoral world depends upon spoken communication, the intertextual density of pastoral poetry is impossible without writing. The poem does not dissimulate the textuality of its represented speech; it even goes to some lengths to isolate and imitate Theocritean speech that is as much written as spoken. While speech is ephemeral and extemporaneous, the presence of writing in *Eclogue 5* speaks to words that have an objectified existence beyond the frame of mimesis, to permanence, and memorialization (cf. Ong, *Orality and Literacy*). Through a contrast between speaking and writing the poem suggests the limited validity that metaphors which are appropriate to the spoken word, such as dialogue, have when applied to relationships between written texts.