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The Place of the Voice in Holly Pester's *Eclogues for Idle Workers* and Virgil's *Eclogues*

Grace Connolly Linden, Independent scholar, UK, lindengrace21@gmail.com

This essay explores the potential of the voice which makes a place of and for itself, as present in Holly Pester's *Eclogues for Idle Workers* and in its reception of Virgil's *Eclogues*. The relation between Pester's work and Virgil's is analysed in terms of Pester 'speaking with' Virgil's text: both ventriloquising it and working 'in conversation' with it. It follows Pester's critical work, as well as readings from Mladen Dolar, Denise Riley and the artist Lypsinka, in order to argue for the presence in both works under discussion of a voice which is made by and makes place. It next argues that the poetry composer-reader must work, as a lip-syncer does, to claim this voice, to intensify its presence. The work done to claim voice is also the work necessary for returning the self to a future otherwise foreclosed by the constraining linguistic context of the waged work relation.

The first speech of Holly Pester's *Eclogues for Idle Workers* concludes: 'What's your day like? Answer slowly, kindly, your voice is a shady morning woodland.'[1] The line suggests threads of inquiry that this essay will attempt to follow. First, and foundationally, the idea of the voice – to misuse the famous line in *Paradise Lost* – as being 'its own place'. The place that it 'is', is a shady morning woodland, a site that maps onto the *locus amoenus* of Virgil's *Eclogues*, the poem with which Pester's *Eclogues* engage. Virgil's poem opens on Tityrus reclining beneath a spreading beech tree; Pester's opens in the corridor of an office workspace. The relation between the two poems is held, therefore, in the place that the voice makes of itself – a relation made literal by *Eclogues for Idle Workers'* first appearance as a radio play. This essay will read Pester's *Eclogues* for what this figure of the voice *which makes its own place* implies: what does it mean for the voice to be a shady woodland in the workplace? Is it a figure for disruption or containment? Virgil's Tityrus, who shares his initial with Pester's Terry, is described both as 'meditating on' (*meditaris*) and 'teaching' (*doces*)[2] the woodland with his song: his voice both holds and unsettles its place. Pester's shift to the workplace, the possibility introduced of congruence between the Virgilian pastoral shepherd, and the contemporary workplace, is a transposal of a voice which both reflects and generates, which both echoes and creates.

This essay will begin by establishing some theoretical perspectives informed by readings from Mladen Dolar, Denise Riley and Pester herself, as well as some performances by the artist Lypsinka. It will then use these perspectives to structure an extended reading of *Eclogues for Idle Workers*, which will also discuss the points at which Pester's *Eclogues* may be said to be 'speaking with' the voice of Virgil's *Eclogues*.

Oscillation

Pester's essay 'The Body and the Page in Poetry Readings as Remembrance of Composition' gives an account of reading poetry out loud as a recursive process reaching back 'to recall speech as an already technologised sound' and forward to 'the future recall of hearing that poem as a reply to that sound'.[3] The 'technologised sound' for Pester summons up the contemporary poet's place of composition, 'that one hunchbacked engagement' with the multiple technological auxiliaries available through the internet's infinite archive of audio, literature and instant messaging. Pester's account positions the reader's voice, their reading posture, as itself a kind of oscillation: backwards into the material conditions of composition, and forwards to the reply made to those conditions. The poet speaks the place of making, is made by that place, is spoken by it. The etymology of the word 'oscillation' is useful here: from *oscilla* or 'little face', it refers to the Roman practice of hanging small, open-

mouthed, masks of Bacchus in vineyards. The wind that makes the little faces swing backwards and forwards also, as I imagine it, moves through the open mouth like a breath, or voice.

But how are the material conditions of composition recalled? In 'The Politics of Delivery (Against Poet Voice)', Pester locates so much that is social in the details and disturbances of a poem's intonation. Why speak a poem at all, the essay seems to ask, if not to follow its voice cues – line breaks, prosody, stress patterns – which are formed by the poem's interface with the 'speeds and rhythms' of work, gender, debt, climate change. The voice is the living part of the poem; it is precisely its ephemerality, its continually renewed presence, that renders it a continual response to the world. It is not a question, in Pester's essay, of an opposition between *speaking* and *thinking*, between *sound* and *sense*, but rather a formulation of the speaking voice as a thinking thing, an embodiment of 'the nervous static of subjectivity'.[4] To read a poem out loud is to listen 'with mental ears' to the shaped and shaping sounds of a voice which is inescapably of its historical present.

This idea of the voice as a point of echo and response between the poem and the world, and the individual and society is also found in Mladen Dolar's *A Voice and Nothing More.* Dolar describes the voice as 'an entity which cannot be met in the full sonority of an unambiguous presence, but is not simply a lack either',[5] positioned between *zoe* (bare life) and *bios* (life in the community, political life). The outcast's unheard howl has meaning, just as the politician's speech to a packed audience does, but differently. But what of the voice's power/the powerful voice? The intense presence of the structurally positioned voice which gives authority to the (written) letter of the law? The teacher's/judge's/tyrant's voice? Dolar characterises this voice as 'validity beyond meaning', the hidden heart of authority inaccessible to the *polis* at large. Pester's analysis of Catherine Wagner's *My New Job* and *Nervous Device* offers a potential response:

> A voice is speaking from within a system [...]. Hierarchies are not torn down, but by the particularity of voice and acts of the body, rehearsals for more revolutionary, or at least disruptive, modes of being are sedimenting too. This embodied subject is at work, in its corridors and angles, but is aware of these orientations and speaking back to them.[6]

What are the possibilities for 'speaking back' to the voice of power? The voice that speaks back is 'within a system [...] in its corridors and angles'; it is in between and inside, it has (as yet) no presence beyond its 'sedimenting' potential for disruption. Is it, then, this neither/nor, 'no there there', quality of the voice which is the source of its double power: to command, and to speak back?

Certainly, the idea of the voice that comes apparently from nowhere, from a hidden or displaced interior, is an image and real practice of power: think of *The Wizard of Oz*, a workplace tannoy system, the voice of God. Consider, then, how the practice of 'lip syncing' works to claim the floating voice, *as if it really came from nowhere* – as if there were no hidden interior. Performances by the artist Lypsinka available on YouTube speak to this potential.[7] One, *Telephone Mix,* begins with Norma Desmond's line from *Sunset Boulevard*: 'I've waited 20 years for this call...'[8] The character's perhaps more famous line is 'We didn't need dialogue. We had faces.'[9] – a neat summary of the work the face, and indeed the body, can do to summon a voice even when the voice is not 'there'. The experience of watching a silent film involves the 'hearing', perhaps the 'reading' of the film's voiceless dialogue, its silent voice. Lypsinka's performance shows how lip sync-ing can do what Pester claims for poetry reading: that is, it recalls the technological and material context of the voice's making, even while summoning that voice which is a response to a voice unheard (on the other end of the telephone). Further, lip-sync can be understood, perhaps as a form of, to use Pester's term, archival fan-fiction: 'an experiential category that extends critical and creative work done in the past and offers a space for future aberrance.' It is (or can be) a strategy for performance that 'pollut[es] the categories of truth, reality, practice and knowledge' by working an audio archive according to the performer's 'subjective positionality'.[10]

To mime, to pose: these are gestures which recall the original production of sound, which embody the intonation of a line, often through subtle alteration, exaggeration, even circumvention. The lip sync-er can gesture in ways which make the act of voice production more real, more alive with meaning than the original, 'real', act of voice production. The two Lypsinka performance referred to above use material that plays with this dynamic of a present absence. Lauren Bacall singing 'But Alive': 'I feel groggy and weary and tragic/Punchy and bleary and fresh out of magic/But alive!' 'You're a liar' says one voice, 'I heard you on the telephone, now get out of here!' Another longer sequence uses a voice which recounts an erotic encounter with a doctor in his surgery: the patients in the waiting room 'couldn't hear his lips, they couldn't hear him touch me or caress me'. The lip-synced, recorded voice is not a dead end: it is, rather, an intensified presence that opens up Dolar's argument that 'Every emission of the voice is by its very essence *ventriloquism*' onto a field of renewed possibility.

Denise Riley in *The Force of Language* describes the 'inner voice', the voice that is often called an 'internal monologue' as a 'voice that is heard without making any sound'.[11] Against the conception of this voice as a marker of individuality, boundaried interiority, Riley argues that 'inner speech is evidence of the sociability of the language which also makes itself at home according to the local oddness of whatever interior it

finds, but will be returned to the world.'[12] The movement, again, is between place and self: the outer, social world, and the inner, private self, 'the language [makes itself] at home'. The domestic/interior world and the social/exterior world may be distinct, but they form each other. Riley describes this process of formation as *auto-ventriloquy*: the individual finds herself voiced or spoken by language, not approaching the world from within, but approaching herself from a situation outside herself and in the world. Could the lip-sync, the poetry reading be seen, in this light, as the processual work done to claim and re-transmit the voice that speaks the individual, the voice of her sociability and material context?

This work of voicing becomes particularly politically charged in terms of lip-sync and its relation to gender, in ways that are beyond the scope of this essay to explore. Nevertheless, the idea that Riley advances: 'Sometime's what's politically demanded is not linguistic accommodation but linguistic dislocation'[13] has a range of applications. If the constraining conditions of gendered interactions, their 'linguistic contexts [that] cry out to be ripped apart', can be countered by finding the point of dislocation, by claiming the ventriloquised voice and returning it (and the speaker) to the world, the same process might be applied to the workplace represented in *Eclogues for Idle Workers*. The workplace, (like gender?) is a constraining linguistic context, which, once you are inside, appears to have no outside. It is living ('making a living') while endlessly putting life on hold. To speak within the workplace is to be spoken by it, and to seek by speaking some reply to that same workplace: what will be the voice that comes back? And can that voice ever get out?

ipsae te, Tityre, pinus,/ipsi te fontes, ipsa haec arbusta vocabant

As outlined briefly above, I intend to begin with the points at which Pester's *Eclogues* 'speak with' the voice of Virgil's *Eclogues*. The term is apposite in as far as it leaves open the possibilities of: 1. Reading Pester's work as *ventriloquising* the older text and 2. Reading Pester's work as speaking with, or communicating with, Virgil's text. The first possibility draws in analysis made above: that the author 'receiving' the Classical archive is also speaking with the voice of that archive. The second possibility suggests that discovering the points at which Pester's work is 'Virgilian' is of limited usefulness: reception is also a reply, is even a disturbance or dislocation of the classical source.

The relation is reciprocal and can perhaps be framed in the terms laid out in Pester's 'archive fanfiction', if 'archival apparatus' can be read as 'the classical text':

> Therefore, the researcher navigates and reconstitutes the records, whilst the archival apparatus influences acts of interpretation through organisational, ideological preconditions.[14]

While the classical text itself is not, as such, a physical or digital archive, it nevertheless sustains a similarly accretive and expanding zone of influence. As Charles Martindale argues, to read Virgil's *Eclogues*, a poem 'encrusted with the barnacles of later tradition', as a 'reified text in itself' would be a mystified form of historicism which, ironically, ignores the text's history.[15] Pester's *Eclogues* positions itself, therefore, within Virgil's text-as-archive and as one among that text's continuing accretion of appropriative readings. In line with this analysis of Pester's *Eclogues* as 'speaking with', the following will take as a series of starting points the episodes in Virgil's *Eclogues* which describe the act of voicing.

carmina descripsi

In Virgil's fifth eclogue, the shepherd Mopsus begins a singing competition by claiming that:

> *immo haec, in viridi nuper quae cortice fagi*
> *carmina descripsi et modulans alterna notavi,*
> *experiar : tu deinde iubeto certet Amyntas.*[16]
> No, I will try these verses, which the other day I carved on the green beech bark and set to music, marking words and tune in turn. Then you can bid Amyntas compete with me!

The debate surrounding ancient Roman literary culture, and the primacy of public readings and recitations over private (silent) reading or vice versa, is tangential to the argument of this essay. Of more immediate interest here is the way that Virgil's conceit – the imagined carving of lyrics into green wood – bypasses significant distinction between the space of the spoken and the space of the written. If Tityrus' voice taught the woodland to resound, Mopsus' writing intervenes as much and perhaps similarly in the growing space of literary composition. The key is in *viridi … fagi*: the wood is still green, alive. In the tenth eclogue, Gallus laments that he is sure to prefer to live in wild beasts' caves, and '*tenerisque meos incidere amores/arboribus*' – 'to incise my love lyrics on tender trees'.[17] As the trees grow, so will his loves grow. There is a reciprocity to both: whether the voice holds the place and is held by it, or the script writes the place and is written by it.

This reciprocity recalls Pester's argument for the poetry reading as the recall of an 'already technologised sound' which in turn seeks a reply to the conditions of its composition. It gains significance when we consider the publication history of Pester's *Eclogues*, which appeared first as a broadcast on Radio 4 in August 2019, under the

title *Poems for Idle Workers*.[18] It was brought out in print the year after as a pamphlet entitled *Eclogues for Idle Workers* by Distance No Object Press.[19] The pamphlet appears like a script, complete with directions for performance: '*Back in the 'bathroom', quite close microphone, white noise hand-dryer fx + dripping fx made by mouth.*'[20] But if the pamphlet is the script, apparently the source text for performance, how are we to receive it appearing after the broadcast? The final line of the text reads ambiguously: '[*Pause. Then we hear the actors stand down, relax/Holly thanks them, everyone leaves and breaks up*]'.[21] It becomes questionable in which sense to receive the pamphlet: as script, as transcript, as something else which bypasses the need to distinguish between either.

The BBC broadcast was performed by Maggie Nicols and Keeley Forsyth. Nicholls' career as a renowned vocalist, and one of the founders of the Feminist Improvising Group (FIG), and Forsyth's record as actor and, more recently, musician, both offer potential insight into the logic of the *Eclogues* pamphlet as both source and record. The '*fx made by mouth*' in the broadcast performance sound in the vein of Nicols' improvised vocalisations: both Nicols and Forsyth are listed as reading and singing their parts. There is space left by the pamphlet's indeterminate status for a free, improvising voice, which responds not only to the cues of the text but also to the space of performance, the social space between performers and audience. Julie Dawn Smith writes of a moment during a FIG performance at the Stockholm Women's Music festival when 'the audience spontaneously responds to the screams, wails, and instrumental flurries of the players on stage with their own shrieks and ululations'. There was, she argues, an insurgent energy to the improvising voice of this collective of queer women, which demanded response, 'an antiphonal and erotic playing by ear'.[22] Mopsus' written lyrics are only the beginning of the singing contest: they are a living score. Pester's pamphlet should perhaps be considered in the same light: as a record which demands a response.

Iupi Moerin videre priores

But neither Virgil's *Eclogues* nor Pester's operate in a zone where the voice is entirely 'free' to seek spontaneous response. Pester's introduction to the broadcast points out that Virgil's shepherds, just like her co-workers, are displaced and dispossessed, that the rhythms of the working day keep them 'cleaved together and cleaved apart'. The 'free time' that the shepherds use for singing is not really 'free', but, from the first eclogue, enclosed by the fact of forced migration, caused by the Emperor Augustus' post civil-war land reforms. As Theodore Adorno puts it: 'free time depends on the totality of social conditions, which continues to hold people under its spell. Neither in their work nor in their consciousness do people dispose of genuine freedom over themselves.'[23] and as Pester's Magatha puts it: 'I'd give up all my breaks for genuine leisure with you'.

Virgil's pastoral *locus amoenus* is already contingent and compromised, as are Pester's rest breaks: shaped by the very forces they set out to resist.

This unfree freedom brings into relief the problem of voicing in a constraining linguistic context. If the *locus amoenus*/the rest break, itself compromised, is the place of voice production, does it not follow that the act of voicing is itself compromised. In Virgil's ninth eclogue, the shepherd Moeris tells Lycidas that:

> *[…] vox quoque Moerin*
>
> *iam fugit ipsa; lupi Moerin videre priores.*
>
> Even voice itself now fails Moeris; the wolves have seen Moeris first.

Lycidas replies, begging Moeris to continue singing, pointing out that:

> *et nunc omne tibi stratum silet aequor, et omnes,*
>
> *aspice, ventosi ceciderunt murmuris aurae.*
>
> Now the whole sea plain lies hushed to hear you, and lo! every breath of the murmuring breeze is dead.

The wolves Moeris speaks of refers to the belief, recounted in Pliny's *Naturalis Historia*, that if you are seen by a wolf before it sees you, it will steal your voice. Moeris has been correcting Lycidas' belief that another shepherd, Menalcas, has saved his farm by singing: songs, he says, are as useful among the weapons of war, as doves when eagles attack. It is all lost together – the place for voicing, the voice itself, the reply the place might make. The wolves stand for power outside our reckoning, beyond the social realm, 'validity beyond meaning'; the voice of power (the cause of displacement, alienation and violence) comes from an unseeable source and admits no reply.

Pester's sixth eclogue, which holds, like Virgil's ninth, the penultimate place in the series, has Magatha in conversation with a hand-dryer. The hand dryer is at first 'A silent eavesdropper/ready to scream on me.',[24] until Magatha sees it, describes it, addresses it directly, 'Hey hand-dryer, there's something like a gargoyle/about you'. The hand-dryer is a machine 'Like old factory days', which permits 'an exchange of powers' – 'I press you again and again./If someone came in now there'd be no telling us apart.' The line recalls Karl Marx in *Capital*: 'In the factory we have a lifeless mechanism independent of the workman, who becomes its mere living appendage.' The striking part of Pester's response to Virgil's tenth eclogue, is that this lifeless mechanism is welcome to Magatha: 'I'm as resourceful as the machine and can shout too […] It means I have a heart that works.' The senseless voice of the hand-dryer, its 'mad air' is still a

voice, which must mean that there can be a reply. Magatha sees the wolf/hand-dryer first, and in this way avoids Moeris' fate. She works to claim a voice, however senseless; in doing so she works to claim a living self.

What chills about this episode is the sense that the hand-dryer is only a reminder of the work-relation, itself alienating, that Marx was analysing. There are no machines with immediate (and hence capable of being disrupted) functions in this workplace, only 'the to-do list', 'resolving and sequencing [...] projecting and modelling', itself a deferral of action through administration. In Dolar's chapter *Kafka's Voices*, he offers a reading of Franz Kafka's *The Castle*, which focuses on an episode in which K. hears on the other end of a telephone

> the echo rather of voices singing at an infinite distance – blended by sheer impossibility into one high but resonant sound that vibrated on the ear as if it were trying to penetrate beyond mere hearing.[25]

For Dolar, this is the voice of the law, to which 'access is always denied; the place of the letter is infinitely elusive.' The workplace of Pester's *Eclogues* is also governed by this voice of endless deferral, a fleeing voice which robs the worker of her own voice, her ability to reply. The vocalisations heard in the broadcast can be heard as fugitive, senseless voicings, as much as they can be heard as a voice getting free. Pester's introduction is interspersed by the voice of a telephone operator, asking the automatic, bureaucratic questions that so often render the listener voiceless, that are themselves the silencing of that operator's self. The overarching lack that puts the whole poem sequence into focus, is of the character's voices actually working, that is, not on their breaks. There is, in place of the reply to the machine, the 'exchange of powers' of the factory system, the silence of 'the electrical voice' of data-processing, administration and task management. This workplace, unlike the 'old factory days', but like Moeris' woodland, is controlled and maintained through infinitely deferred access to really speaking, really doing, really being alive.

surgamus

Virgil's *Eclogues* ends, like the working day, with the coming of evening:

> *surgamus: solet esse gravis cantantibus umbra,*
> *iuniperi gravis umbra; nocent et frugibus umbrae.*
> *ite domum saturae, venit Hesperus, ite capellae.*[26]

> Let us arise. The shade is often perilous to the singer – perilous the juniper's shade, hurtful the shade even to the crops. Get home, my full-fed goats, get home – the Evening star draws on.

The lines are troubled in precisely the way Pester's closing lines are: how can the shepherd go home, if home is being destroyed? How can the voice, which continues, impossibly, despite displacement and encroaching darkness, bring an end to itself and to the poem? Virgil's shepherds, and Pester's Magatha and Terry, have found relief, the possibility of continuing to live, in their speech with one another, but in doing so they have created a new place that holds them and stops them from leaving. The shade of the tree under which Tityrus lay at the beginning of the first eclogue in order to sing, has become the shadow which harms the singer.

In Pester's fourth eclogue, Terry recalls a lost song, which the co-workers sing together:

> I think I'll call in sick, said the barmaid to her shoes
>
> I think I'll call in sick said the farmhand to his boots
>
> I think we'll call in sick, said the students to their books
>
> I think we'll call in sick, said the gun dogs to their...[27]

The song, with its overtones, perhaps, of the passed-between-people folk song, again recalls an older form of work relations, when workers could, as it were, down tools because they had tools to down. As in the hand-dryer episode, the text is haunted by the possibility of striking/striking back. Virgil's shepherd also speaks to the tools of his trade, driving them along so that they can return together: 'Get home, my full fed goats.' It signals the end of the shepherd's work, and the end of the poem. For Magatha and Terry, however, the lunch break singing does not bring an end to the day or to the poem: 'T: The lunch break is over/We accidentally got comfortable'. The lost song brings comfort, with its vision of the potential for disruption that the 'historical worker' is imagined to have had, but does not actually bring an end to the working day.

The relief brought by singing calls to mind Dolar's further reading of Kafka's story 'Josephine the Singer, or the Mouse Folk'. The 'special power' of Josephine's voice is that it is 'nothing out of the ordinary':

> Is it in fact singing at all? ... Is it not in fact just piping [whistling]? And piping is something we all know about, it is the real artistic accomplishment of our people, or rather no mere accomplishment but a characteristic expression of our life.[28]

Significantly for Pester's singing characters, Josephine's singing, 'if it does not drive away evil, at least gives us the strength to bear it.' As a singer, Dolar argues, Josephine's song is a 'readymade' piece of art, a found object common to all, but elevated to our notice by her performance, set free from 'the fetters of daily life [...] it sets us free too for a little while.' Josephine, I would hazard, is also a folk singer, an artist of the people, and hence subject to the paradox which renders being 'an artist of the people' an troubled prospect: to sing the people's song as an individual artist encloses the common singing that is the substance of that song. Terry and Magatha sing the lost song *together*. The song itself summons the idea of other workers, other acts of resistance. The work begins to be sung as part of a collective identity, the silence starts to break: 'what survives? the work and the tradition of living in the worker/in the records of their songs'.[29]

Pester's final eclogue, however, does not have Terry and Magatha walking into the sunset, arm in arm with a crowd of their fellow workers, all singing their work away. The respite place that they create for each other through their shared voicings is neither home nor work, but 'the sound/of life missing life'. 'How do we end it for now?'[30] asks Terry, a line which means, of course, 'how do we end work for the moment and return again tomorrow?', but also, how do we end it (work/the poem) for (for the sake of) now (the present, life)? There is an implication, too, that poetry itself might entrap, might cause disassociation from the imperative to survive, to live ('Art made me thin, took me away, into other worlds,/I was very quiet, art took all my time'.)[31] And yet, Virgil's shepherd speaks the dispersal of place – the gathering shadows – and the completion of his work – the full up sheep go home, and the place and work are dispersed and completed. As Moeris' silence demonstrated above, the pastoral setting depends on the pastoral song just as much as the pastoral song depends on it. If the voice which makes and sustains a (work)place can be claimed, it can also be made to stop, and the same follows for the (work)place.

Can Magatha and Terry enact the same ending through their speech?

M: You say, mind how you go, and then you go for your jacket.
T: Mind
how
you
go
for
your
jacket'[32]

This appears first as a command which assumes a response: say this, and it is done. For example, 'let there be light, and there was light.', or 'go home, my full fed goats', and one presumes that the sheep go home. But Terry does not actually go for their jacket, which could be indicated in stage directions, but instead says 'Mind how you go for your jacket'. One might read this as suggesting that Terry and Magatha never leave, but the poem does end here, and the working day does (thanks to workers' struggles of the past!) have an end. Perhaps, in the act of reply, the taking up of the action into speech to a colleague, a kind of provisional solidarity is established: Magatha's instruction is given back in a new form. The two colleagues voice each others' departures, and it is this voicing which admits the posture of leaving: saying 'mind how you go for your jacket' is minding how you go for your jacket, is going for your jacket. The action becomes possible when it becomes shared.

More than this, the line breaks in Terry's reply alter the phrase, giving it a prosody which dislocates the phrase from its assumed function. In *Against Poet Voice*, Pester refers to 'a relatively simple act of generating affective surplus through the shifting of breaks to create intonating stresses.'[33] The line sounds a certain way because it breaks in a certain way. But Terry's line is completely, as it were, broken. The pattern of stress becomes unpredictable, the voice fights the separation of words, or becomes artificially staccato, each word has its own weight. Perhaps the word that stands out in such a regular sequence is the middle word 'go', the pivot of the phrase and the point at which Terry has elided Magatha's instruction: 'mind how you go/go for your jacket'. Rather than enclosing an affective surplus, the line breaks stretch the line's sense beyond immediate comprehension, as with someone learning to talk, or returning to language. Terry is claiming the phrase, I think, perhaps, rather than being claimed by it: the instruction does not move her, as much as she moves it, stretching it out, weighing it, finding in it the gaps through which to get out.

Conclusion

You cannot change the place you see as easily as you can change the place you hear, just by sighing, or groaning, or saying 'hello'. Conversely, you cannot stop yourself from hearing as easily as you can shut your eyes. There is a kind of chaos to the voice, therefore: a permeability between inside and outside yourself, and a constant interchange between the place you make audible and the place made audible to you. It is the attention in Pester's *Eclogues* to the possibilities for getting out and living achieved through working the voice/working against the voice, that I have tried to appreciate through the writing of this essay. To continue the lines from Pester's *Comic Timing* quoted above:

> the determination is produced from the work done + sung and
> cannot be separated from the work of the fight from the work of
> asking in the given and perceived moment
> who has the right to life?[34]

The suggestion is that by voicing what we are working (for or against) in its moment, we seek a reply, a way of speaking ourselves into a future otherwise foreclosed – not 'life missing life'[35] but 'life beyond life'.[36]

Notes

[1] *Eclogues for Idle Workers* (London: Distance No Object, 2019), p.1.

[2] Virgil, *Eclogues*, *Georgics*, *Aeneid I–VI*, trans. by H. Rushton Fairclough, rev. by G. P. Goold (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), p.25.

[3] Holly Pester, 'The Body and the Page in Poetry Readings as Remembrance of Composition' in *Memory in the Twenty-First Century*:*New Critical Perspectives from the Arts*, *Humanities*, *and Sciences* ed. by Sebastian Groes (UK: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2016) pp. 271–275.

[4] Holly Pester, "The Politics of Delivery (Against Poet-Voice)" in *The Poetry Review*, Vol. 109, No. 2, Summer 2019, accessed at: https://poetrysociety.org.uk/the-politics-of-delivery-against-poet-voice/

[5] Mladen Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006) p.121.

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Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.