

ORATION ON RHYTHM

CYCLE TWO: BREATHING

Samuel Brzeski





*Breathe the pressure
Come play my game, I'll test ya
Psychosomatic, addict, insane
Come play my game
Inhale, inhale, you're the victim*

The Prodigy



*We are breathing too much
but we aren't getting enough air.*

James Nestor

Our breaths are too many
Our breaths are too shallow
Our mouths are too small
Our airways are constricted.

We suffer from sleep apnea
caused by incessant mouth breathing
which can lead to a variety
of other transformations in the face,
including but not limited to:

- crooked teeth
- long face
- jowly
- sad eyes
- moans
- crooked palette
- collapsed cheek
- wrinkle head
- saggy tonsil
- lazy throat

In order to avoid these deformities
there is a simple solution
that involves merely shutting the mouth
and ensuring that we breathe in
through the nose –
an act that maintains pressure
throughout the throat
and the rest of the
respiratory system.

The best way to train the system
to complete this act automatically
is by taking ten minutes per day
to focus solely upon breathing in this manner:

counting five and half seconds
per in breath
through the nose
and counting five and half seconds
per out breath
through the nose.

This contributes
to a healthy face
good sleep
more smiles
less depression
harmonic rhythm
and a general improvement.



*Just keep breathin' and breathin' and breathin' and breathin'
And oh, I gotta keep, keep on breathin'
Just keep breathin' and breathin' and breathin' and breathin'
And oh, I gotta keep, keep on breathin'*

Ariana Grande



A faint brief cry
followed by a raising
and then a dimming
of theatre lights
on a stage littered
with miscellaneous rubbish,
before the sound
of a long exhalation.

This constitutes the entirety
of Samuel Beckett's 1969 play *Breath*.

It is less than a minute long
and that is it.



*Watching every motion
In this foolish lover's game
Haunted by the notion
Somewhere there's a love in flames
Turning and returning*

Berlin

*To some secret place inside
Watching in slow motion
As you turn my way and say
Take my breath away*



Being in a condition of perpetual breathlessness
whilst remaining permanently parked
has become quite an ordinary phenomenon,
as stagnant sloping bodies
attempt to keep pace
with a multi-directional mindspeed
of fluctuating rhythms,
periodic accelerations,
and shifting vibrations.

External rhythms of chaotic magnitude
have interrupted the rhythmic intonation of the breath

*There is an increasing unease
with a traditional notion
of coherent time,
as advances in technology
have led to the measure
and use of time on a scale
that has lost its relationship
to the bodily beat of the breath.*

Wolfgang Ernst

*Breathing has become difficult,
almost impossible:
as a matter of fact,
one suffocates.
One suffocates every day
and the symptoms of suffocation
are disseminated all along
the paths of daily life
and the highways of planetary politics.*

Franco Berardi (i)

*We have grown unable to breathe
at the rhythm of our own respiration,
which has been captured by the apocalyptic force
of the algorithm of financial capitalism.*

Franco Berardi (ii)

*The social body is fragmented.
Breath is broken
and subjected to the rhythms
of the virtual machine.*

Franco Berardi (iii)

I have become unable to breathe
at the rhythm of my own respiration.

I can't breath just right when I think so fast
I can't think so much when my breath is all wrong
I can't count those tasks when they pile so high
I can't open that app, it is updating now
I can't time my breath, when my app won't open
I can't quiet my brain, until I slow my breath
I can't get to sleep, because my brain won't quiet
I can't sleep on my back, because I snore too loud
I can't wait for when I can come up for air.



I am breathing water
I am breathing water
You know a body's got to breathe
I'm drowning

REM



Heavy metal band Black Breath's 2012 album *Sentenced to Life* is a hardcore punk influenced thrash-metal escapade starting full hog from the first fast-paced track. Frontman Neil McAdams screams out every word of the ten songs on the LP as if they are formed from the last remnants of breath in his lungs.

The album peaks with the track *Endless Corpse* – a strange mix of doom metal infused slowness which is ripped through with some of the fastest, most brutal, riffs, drums and vocals on the record. Here, Neil reminds me that *A corpse is all you'll ever be*
Writhing in disfigured reality.

Black Breath

Listening to *Sentenced to Life* can lead to a sharp increase in the frequency of respiration and an almost immediate quickening in the pace of any given activity. This is particularly suited to hurried cycles to work after leaving the house slightly too late

and can also produce
explosive energy
when played during a heavy
workout at the gym.

Most of all, this type of music
can be relied upon to drown out
almost any background noise,
coupled with the sometimes desirable,
other times objectionable,
result of simultaneously placating,
yet also perpetuating,
the listener's anger and frustrations.

When suffering from
a particularly destructive
romantic calamity
a few summers ago,
I would wear Black Breath's
Sentenced to Life album cover t-shirt
as an armour-plated protection
against the elements of
unwanted conversation.

The aggressive battlements
of the leather-gauntlet-clad fist
holding a large heavy hammer
smashing a sheet of glass
kept me safe from any stray looks,
or wandering questions,
especially when paired with
my best sullen face.

I cannot say that this method
of self isolation
was a good plan,
but at the time it felt like
the avoidance of conversation
to ensure the internal confinement
of my own misery
was an effective
solution.



*Breath is black
Eyes are red
I'm so used to being dead*

Black Breath



Halitosis, or chronic bad breath,
is something that mints,
mouthwash
or a good brushing can't solve.

Unlike 'morning breath'
or a strong smell that lingers after a tuna sandwich,
halitosis remains for an extended amount of time
and may be a sign of something more serious.

These somethings can include:

- cavities
- gum disease
- infections in the mouth, nose or throat
- liver disease
- gastric reflux
- diabetes

Bad breath can cause significant social stigmatising,
resulting in a clearing of space around the offender,
an inability to raise one's voice
or speak too passionately
about any given subject matter,
an abdication of friendships,
and an absence of intimacy.

All of these instances
can disrupt the harmonic internal rhythmicity
that is necessary for a pleasant experience
of being-in-the-world.

If one walks about
churning out noxious gases
in regular respirations,
then the resounding vibrations
that return in response
will be all but welcoming.



*Breathe, breathe in the air
Don't be afraid to care
Leave but don't leave me
Look around, choose your own ground
For long you live and high you fly
And smiles you'll give and tears you'll cry
And all your touch and all you see
Is all your life will ever be*

Pink Floyd



These past few months
I have been trying, once again,
to meditate on a daily basis.

Using *The Mindfulness of Breathing* method of meditation,
my app tells me to focus upon the breath
in order to understand a sense of presence
in the self.

I am directed – eyes closed, neck long,
back straight – within this state,
to focus on counting the breaths
as they pass in order for thoughts
to fall off and unpeel,
to reveal an essence
beneath.

Those that struggle particularly with anger
are directed to pay close attention
to the length of the outward breath:
the steady dilapidation of the chest,
the subtle drooping of the shoulders,
the relaxation of the palms.

The hot tempered individual
is taught to focus upon these sensations
when dealing with the unpleasant antagonisms
and impatient tensions
associated with a coming rage.

It is the hope that
they will be able to recount
moments of meditative focus
from the valley of past experience,
and bring these peaceful possibilities
into the proximity of the present
when suffering from an episode
of acerbic fury.

(this methodology has
been both terribly useful
and wonderfully useless
for my own temper management
on a variety of occasions,
depending upon the severity
of the situation)

Anxious practitioners
can place their focus upon

the labelling of the emotions
that arise whilst counting the breath:

.....fear...
.....
...worry.....
.....
..pity.....
.....
...longing.....
.....
worry.....
.....

(why do none
of the good ones
ever pop up?)

This administrative approach
comes with the hope that,
with the correct labelling and processing of emotions,
with the association of a feeling and a naming of that feeling,
alongside the slow rhythmic relief of the breath,
the person can let the anxious clouds
that are filled with the vapour of fervent concerns
steadily clear,
or at least partially subside,
so as to see the blue sky
of peaceful presence
that hopefully lies
somewhere behind.



*You came here to tell me something
I already know
The dark before the dawn
Is the darkest I can go
The calm before the storm
Is what leaves me here to breathe
So breathe*

Laura Marling



In the Inuit cultures across the American Polar peninsular
there is a method of rhythmic throat singing
called *Katajjaq*.

The traditional form of this type of breath-based singing consists of two women standing face-to-face in close proximity, singing in duet with no musical accompaniment.

Originally, it was a breathing game used as a time-filling entertainment in the form of a friendly competition – the winner being the one whose rhythmic grunts, breaths and sighs could outlast the other.

The process of throat singing is divided into two syllable segments: the first syllable is located in the voice of the mouth, laying the ground for the second bass syllable which sharply migrates to the raspiness of the throat.

The two women are reliant upon each other, working together to create the composition, imitating, echoing and repeating one another, as one leads and the other follows, to form an overarching rhythm.

It is an intensive exercise in breathing concentration, as the breath of each participant must be synchronised with the other.

The sounds created by *Katajjaq* are said to mimic the natural world – howling winds, shifting ice, breaking seas and calling birds make an auditory mirror of the polar landscape.

Although sometimes the sounds can appear menacing, and the proximity between the faces of the women could be interpreted as a posture of aggression, the game is only ever a friendly competition.

Katajjaq often ends in laughter, when one of the women stumbles, drops behind, falls out of rhythm, or runs out of breath.



*You lead me on the edge of sanity
There's not much left, just take a breath
You paint me out as mediocrity
Put to the test, just take a breath*

Staind



When an empathetic individual holds the hand of a person in pain,
heart rates and breathing rates steadily fall into sync.

Studies in hospitals have shown
that this unconscious interpersonal synchronisation
has caused the momentary subsidence of suffering and pain,
illustrating the potentially analgesic impact
of breath synchronisation through touch.

Just as one person will fall into step with another
whilst walking for any sustained period,
by activating the sensuous realm,
and by synchronising our respiring bodies,
we can focus upon the internal rhythm of the breath
to deal with the external spasms of chaos.

If I stand near to another person,
and their inhalation of air,
– by way of chance –
somehow synchronises with
my own inward respiration,
I wait in careful anticipation
for the pleasure that will follow
when two gentle sighs of outward
expulsion will entwine together in
rhythmic harmony with one another.



*Exhale, exhale, exhale
Come breathe with me*

The Prodigy



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