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Edited by Myung Mi Kim
and Cristanne Miller

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NOTES

1 E. Kamau Braithwaite. *The Arrivants: A New World Trilogy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 40.

2. The line "Britons never, never, never shall be slaves" comes from a version of "Rule, Britannia!"—a patriotic British song; James Thomson's poem "Rule, Britannia" was set to music by Thomas Arne in 1740.

3. In his criticism George Elliott Clarke has argued that sermons by Black Nova Scotian pastors constituted a literary tradition.

4. The present-day practice of surrogacy exemplifies this idea of housing of the stranger.

5. Hannah Arendt, "Labor, Work, Action," in *Amor Mundi: Explorations in the Faith and Thought of Hannah Arendt*, ed. James William Bernauer (Dordrecht, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1987), 40.

6. In *Becoming Divine: Towards a Feminist Philosophy of Religion* (Manchester University Press, 1998), Grace Jantzen provides an in-depth analysis of Arendt's ideas on natality as they underpin a more feminist approach to religion, as well as an exploration of Arendt's many challenges to the patriarchal bias in philosophical studies.

7. Andrea Brady, *Mutability: Scripts for Infancy* (Calcutta and London: Seagull, 2012).

8. M. NourbeSe Philip, *Zong!* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan Press, 2008).

9. "I 'n I" is a Rastafarian expression suggesting a collectivity.

Precarity Shared

Breathing as Tactic in Air's Uneven Commons

Jennifer Scappettone

This air, which, by life's law,
My lung must draw and draw

—Gerard Manley Hopkins, "The Blessed Virgin Compared to the Air We Breathe"

then I go back where I came from to 6th Avenue
and the tobacconist in the Ziegfeld Theatre and
casually ask for a carton of Gauloises and a carton
of Picayunes, and a NEW YORK POST with her face on it
and I am sweating a lot by now and thinking of
leaning on the john door in the 5 SPOT
while she whispered a song along the keyboard
to Mal Waldron and everyone and I stopped breathing

—Frank O'Hara, "The Day Lady Died"

NATHANIEL MACKEY'S "BREATH AND PRECARITY" begins by invoking Charles Olson's canonical 1950 appeal for emphasis on the poetic line's origins in "the breath, from the breathing of the man who writes, at the moment that he writes," noting the ambient influence of this bid that hovered "in the air" of postwar poetry circles, yet wondering if "anything instructional or curricular ever came of the call for more attentiveness to breath among poets." Mackey's question is by no means limited to the

literary sphere or its curricula. A resurgence of attention to the constricting "laws and possibilities of the breath" since July 17, 2014—a necessary consequence of the horror of Eric Garner's murder by chokehold, ostensibly triggered by the petty offense of selling loosies on the street—has shown how socially instructive our scrutiny of laws of the breath can be. It has led to a collective expansion and reframing, on social media and beyond, of Frantz Fanon's 1952 statement that oppressed people have revolted because "in many respects it became impossible . . . to breathe"—as if classical promises of civil justice and arbitration through the discursive public sphere were deemed exhausted under existing political structures, on a massive scale.[1] We have reached a historical juncture at which, despite the promise of global networks to expose injustice and broadcast dissent as never before, both the generic channels for discordant voices (through the mechanisms of representative government, university campuses and other educational forums, accreditation and support for unembedded journalism, and even direct appeal to the workaday beat of the police) and their medium of transmission—the air, as literal passageway for messages and life-supporting gases—are jeopardized.

The charge with which Garner leaves us—to reevaluate the laws and possibilities of the breath at this moment—drives us once more to the seemingly arcane realm of poetics, a counterdiscursive sphere of activity that takes inspiration as its founding trope. Seeking to excavate the obscured site of breathing in intellectual culture as it exceeds the ableist and patriarchal presumptions of Olson's "Projective Verse," I will turn to the utopian feminist philosophy of Adriana Cavarero, and then to lyric invocations and theorizations of breath that help ground Cavarero's ideals in a dystopian historical moment. Mackey's lecture surrounding the instructional utility of an emphasis on breath prepares us for this trajectory by expanding the political horizons of Olson's "verse" through rectifying emphasis on performing against, and as, sociopolitical duress.

In *For More Than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression* (2003), Adriana Cavarero poses an expansive challenge to Western metaphysics by fleshing out the lasting consequences of the fact that both philosophy after Plato and Christian recastings of the Old Testament have

served to obscure the bare embodied act of acoustic emission accorded generative power in the Greek and Hebrew religions. A reigning commonplace of Western culture has since granted divine origins to the Word, or *logos*, *verbum*, and to speech's semantic function—thereby displacing the breath (Hebrew *ruah*; Septuagint *pneuma*; Latin *spiritus*) that blows upon the waters and into Adam's mouth in the ancient Hebrew texts of Genesis, or the thunderous, *langue*less vocality (Hebrew *qol;* Septuagint *phone*) attributed to Yahweh in the Psalms. Cavarero's study recalls that despite Plato's insistence on locating thought in the nobler brain, and speech, at lowest, in the mouth, thinking was rooted conceptually in the organs of respiration and phonation for many ancient cultures, including those of Greeks from Homer to Empedocles; thinking, now associated with disembodied rational intellection, was once "done with the lungs."[2] Cavarero goes on to trace the philosophical and social implications of this (mis)translation.

Recuperating the channels of reciprocal communication opened up between embodied voices, whether discursively laden or not, from philosophical abstractions of logos, Cavarero then moves discussions of voice from ontology into politics by tracing the resonance, music, and acoustic convocation that can happen *a più voci:* in plural—or, as her original Italian phrase suggests, *polyphonous*—voices. Against the logocentrism of an ideal Republic ruled by philosophers, dialogue rooted in vocality is oriented toward resonance between unique voices rather than comprehension of one by the other, "Like a kind of polyphonic song *[come una specie di canto a più voci]* whose melodic principle is the reciprocal distinction of the unmistakable timbre of each—or, better, as if a song of this kind were the ideal dimension, the transcendental principle, of politics."[3] Cavarero recognizes poetry as the primary medium in which the sovereignty of language yields to that of the voice.[4] Though her treatment of poetics is of necessity limited within a work of such sweeping scope, her analysis elucidates why Plato was hostile to poetic speech—both indirectly and by lingering on two poets in particular, archaic and current. The epic narrative of blind Homer threatens the classical philosopher who privileges acute vision because its tale cannot be extricated

from the seductive pleasures of the oral medium, or *phone*, while Kamau Brathwaite's performed and printed contemporary verse obliges colonial English to vibrate via meters like the dactylic calypso by channeling the subversive music of nation language—vocalizing both the submerged memory of African languages and the ungovernable environmental forces of the Caribbean archipelago.[5]

Despite her critique of disembodiment, in the course of seeking to extricate political theory from the confines of nativist and patriarchal nationalism, and from the traditional exclusion of women, slaves, and noncitizens from the *polis* as state, Cavarero falls back into species of abstraction with regard to the body in space that diminish the efficacy of her analysis for our times. This is especially true of her reading of political space. In an optimistic theorization of globalization, Cavarero appeals to Hannah Arendt's idealized site of political interchange: "The *polis*, according to Arendt, is not physically situated in a territory. It is the space of interaction that is opened by the reciprocal communication of those present through actions and words. In the era of globalization this interactive space could therefore be called an absolute locality [*locale assoluto*], 'absolute' because 'unleashed' from the territoriality of place and from every dimension that roots it in a continuity."[6] While apparently liberating, the nomadic conception of discourse proffered by Arendt and Cavarero disavows the constrictions on spontaneous political participation that suffocate the voices of those relegated to the elsewhere of politics; it is now impossible to deny that globalization denotes not only an era, but a form of geographical colonialism and expanse. Seeking to extricate speech from a "perverse binary economy that splits the vocalic from the semantic and divides them into the two genders of the human species," thereby excluding feminized subjects from rational discourse, Cavarero calls for a strategic stripping of identity and championing of singularity that can then place itself into dialogue with other singularities, in what appears, in practical terms, to be a void: for "the deconstruction of belongings, the marginalization of qualities, and the depoliticization of the what."[7]

Brathwaite does not sideline the qualities of the speakers whose language he seeks to uphold, but instead exposes the way the very disabling conditions inflicted by imperialism bind subjugated speakers together in specific landscapes and qualify them for the subversive reoccupation of European languages through geographically inflected speech. The "total expression" Brathwaite identifies in *History of the Voice*, similar in political function to the absolute local insofar as it is predicated on an oral continuum of griot and audience that together compose a discursive community, comes about through the hardship of a collective of people unhoused, unprotected, and forced to rely on breath rather than the prostheses of writing—"because people be in the open air, because people live in conditions of poverty ('unhouselled')[,] because they come from a historical experience where they had to rely on their very *breath* rather than on paraphernalia like books and museums and machines."[8] A confrontation with the vocalic continuum of oral culture as the consequence of collective privation is not within Cavarero's purview.

Ashon T. Crawley offers a compelling extension of and corrective to Cavarero's abstraction of breathing space in his recent *Blackpentecostal Breath: The Aesthetics of Possibility* (2016) by tracing the link between breath and racialization. Crawley argues that categorically distinct zones of thought are predicated on the ur-distinction that dualistic thinking draws between blackness and whiteness, which in addition to skin targets an ample range of cognitively charged sensual experiences—those of sound, smell, and touch. Unlike the disembodied cognition presumed to take place in a vacuum, such experiences rely on air as their medium of transmission—air that can be as stifling as that of the crawlspace to which Harriet Jacobs was relegated for seven years. Crawley points out that as Enlightenment philosophy hankers to establish immaculate, bounded zones of thought, it pursues the evacuation of air. "Air, the impure admixture, had to be let out of thought, had to be evacuated. Thought's flourishing, its leaps and bounds, must be strangled."[9] Countering this tendency, in what Crawley defines as Blackpentecostalism, the distressed occupation of air compels attention to particular conditions of restraint

or, in aesthetic terms, compression, so that the rarefied notion of advocating a position becomes inextricable from the occupation of a particular space. As a touchstone for this focus on conception's material constraints, Crawley cites Nathaniel Mackey's assertion in *Bedouin Hornbook* that "any insistence on locale must have long since given way to locus, that the rainbow bridge which makes for unrest ongoingly echoes what creaking the rickety bed of conception makes."[10] In Mackey's articulation, conception writ large is perpetually exposed for its ramshackle foundations through the echoing of a bed in which it took place; the concept becomes reembedded in its particular, humbling location through acoustic resonance. We might recall here, additionally, Mackey's more pointed and parodic staging of thought's origins in breath throughout a work like *Atet A.D.*: in this dreamy epistolary fiction, literal "thought balloons" emerge at affective peaks from the musician protagonists' wind instruments upon blowing, inscribed with intimate confessions surrounding scent and the "erotic-elegaic affliction" it represents, until finally being popped, or vaporizing without explanation in the presence of overly insistent "tar pit premises." These scenes foreground not only the buoyancy of musical thought as conveyed by the breath—what Mackey calls "post-expectancy's non-attached address"—but its instability, its vulnerability.[11]

By grappling with sites of political interaction as real rather than virtual spaces, and with the medium of vocality as a substantial one—that of air, we can build on Cavarero's proposal for "thinking done with the lungs" while contending with the material conditions that determine one's ability to participate in the political realm. For no space of human interaction can ethically be theorized in isolation from environmental forces in our historical moment; no discursive site is freed of the territoriality of geography and its concomitant distribution of inequities based on race, gender, sexual orientation, ability, class. Ralph Ellison, for whom Heraclitus's axiom "Geography is fate" served as a touchstone, recalled the way Bessie Smith articulated the concept of "territory" in "Work House Blues";[12] Smith's lines "Goin' to the nation, goin' to the terr'tor, / / Bound for the nation, bound for the terr'tor," sing the "terror" in that delimited domain as well as its promise of freedom.

The carnal channel of poetics, when apprehended across its plurality of sensory demands, enables us to amend the utopian oversights of Cavarero's political theory. Notwithstanding its grounding in language, poetry has historically balked the abstractions of discourse, and hailed inspiration explicitly as matrix. Deriving from the Latin for "breathing in," the Western notion of inspired poetics can be traced to the Homeric epics and to Hesiod's *Theogony*, which opens with a description of the Muses who breathe the voice of divinity into the poet.[13] Passed down through the Romanticism of Coleridge and Shelley, and reemerging in Olson's "Projective Verse" as an interest in recuperating "certain laws and possibilities of the breath, of the breathing of the man who writes as well as of his listenings," this tradition rarely affirms the notion of isolated genius ascribed to it by modern and contemporary literary clichés.[14] In canonical texts, the breathing apparatus and its context dramatize lyricists' contending with pervasive forces beyond ourselves—with relentless physical, sociohistorical, and environmental conditions of alterity and subjection. The wind causing Coleridge's "Eolian Harp" to shudder provokes a reflection on "the one Life within us and abroad," binding all, such that all of nature can be seen as countless vulnerable "subject Lute[s],"

> diversely framed,
> That tremble into thought, as o'er them sweeps
> Plastic and vast, one intellectual breeze,
> At once the Soul of each, and God of all?[15]

Flexible and vast, the air joins and dooms us somatically. Though each soul, or *anima* (from the Greek *anemos*, for "wind" or "breath"), may be framed in a different way and therefore vent a distinct melody, the air nevertheless constitutes "one intellectual breeze" demanding apprehension *through* the polyphony.

Seen not as an empty virtual space but as particulate, air makes for a democracy of harm that has had artists and authors strategizing for remedies for generations—remedies that are always necessarily incomplete. A focus on air demands that we visualize the content of an apparent void,

and permits us to think through what we share intimately, often unawares. The flight paths of migratory birds that link the Americas recently animated by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the dust particles from Saharan sand storms that blanket the Caribbean, raising the heat index, incapacitating those with asthma and allergies, and weakening tropical cyclones, only render cartographically what Juliana Spahr powerfully identified from within the post-9/11 surge of U.S. nationalism as *This Connection of Everyone with Lungs*. Attempts to condition and purify a medium as pervasive as air ineluctably end up underscoring the founding exclusions of discrimination: Buckminster Fuller and Shoji Sadao's planned geodesic dome over Manhattan proposed in 1960 to regulate weather and reduce air pollution in a utopian key, but its bald selection of two miles of earth (covering only the gamut of Midtown, from the East River to the Hudson River and 21st to 64th Streets) highlighted above all the way the priorities of designers and their state or private backers determine radically divisive living conditions; Ant Farm's 1970 *Clean Air Pod* performance, using an inflatable to mock a safe space for breathing on the Berkeley campus, mocked the restrictive scope of any act of contouring a site for unimpaired breathing.

Refusal to confine our sense of the local to that of an unconditioned haven or self-sustaining organism allows us the opportunity to grasp what binds and still divides us as communities of breathers. These conditions help us to situate the poetic notion of inspiration within an expanded sensorium where breath is acknowledged not only as its literal foundation, but an agent subject to contemporary realities of contamination and chokehold. As air is life-giving in some places, but injurious in others—and as some are given the opportunity to breathe freely while others are not—this notion of inspiration highlights the uneven distribution, even the privatization, of rights and resources assumed to be shared equally by all. Air's condition as the commons we all inhabit, like it or not, makes breathing itself a survival strategy, and a political tactic.

Cavarero commences her study with Italo Calvino, an author for whom oral culture, with its implicit "vibration of a throat of flesh," were central to intellectual life and literary composition. We might take a cue

from Calvino's writings on utopia in revising Cavarero's breath-based politics.[16] In a 1973 essay, Calvino argues that utopia "must be sought in the folds, in the shadowy places, in the countless involuntary effects that the most calculated system creates"—in the very air that designers of modern cities thought they would render immaculate, and its so-called externalities.[17] Both literalizing environmental damage and figuratively imagining its etherealization, Calvino describes his utopia as "less solid than gaseous: a utopia of fine dust [or "pulverized," *polverizzata*], corpuscular, and in suspension."[18]

Why turn to poetry, the form that "makes nothing happen," as Auden reminded us in torment, to reflect such all-encompassing damage? Poetry allows us to breathe this pulverization, for better or worse, which is fundamentally different from understanding. It samples from what can be perceived in a reciprocal exchange while admitting to being *uncomprehensive*; it inevitably falls short of, and therefore resists, the cartographic pretense of being visually intact.

The notion of poetic inspiration as the act of taking in a pulverized commons was made literal as early as Shelley's 1819 "Ode to the West Wind," in which the wind becomes a form of revolutionary Zeitgeist, with the poet's words becoming ashes and sparks.

> Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
> Like wither'd leaves to quicken a new birth!
> And, by the incantation of this verse,
> Scatter, as from an unextinguish'd hearth
> Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind![19]

And in Gerard Manley Hopkins's 1884 "The Blessed Virgin Compared to the Air We Breathe," rhythmic modulations emphasize the extended field and panting of anthropocene breath, its subjection to any number of girdles, its quandary with pentameter.

> WILD air, world-mothering air,
> Nestling me everywhere,

That each eyelash or hair
Girdles;.
...
that's fairly mixed
With, riddles, and is rife
In every least thing's life;
This needful, never spent,
And nursing element;
My more than meat and drink,
My meal at every wink;
This air, which, by life's law,
My lung must draw and draw [20]

Serving as parish priest in the slums of manufacturing cities, where coal was being burned at unprecedented rates to fuel Britain's rise to power, Hopkins understood that the air was both perpetually available and perpetually endangered—through harm to the atmosphere—by the very sun: "flashing like flecks of coal," and potentially "In grimy vasty vault." His iambic tetrameter, and the alliteration that forces awareness of exhalation effects, draws you to huff and puff your way through these lines, becoming aware, in breathlessness, of air as mixed, unimmaculate nurse possessing the insidious power to sustain or damage the lyric subject.

In the seemingly unrestricted free verse of Frank O'Hara, we see the influence of Olson's renewed appeal to "catch up and put into [verse] certain laws of the breath" nine years out, and a simultaneous effort to mend the excisions of Olson's thinking. O'Hara's "The Day Lady Died" bases its tempo on the explicit space-time of Midtown Manhattan, July 17, 1959; capacious and breathless by turns, its lines sound the teeming of unrationalized sensations generated by a roaming fueled by quandariness and the lungs' coping absorption of nicotine. Verse's nervous forward motion comes to a halt with the mute, unnamed portrait of Lady (for which we must return to the title—since in the poem itself she is indexed only as "her") on the *Post*'s front page. Recalling a night in 1957 when Billie Holiday sent a melody across the keys of Mal Waldron's

piano via a whisper conveying bodily affliction, stopping the breath of horn players and listeners alike, O'Hara stops those of readers in turn, abandoning them in the space of a voice deserted, extinguished, and unresolved by a full stop. The breathing that matters here is not simply that "of the man who writes, at the moment that he writes." It is that of the woman genius who sings, of her interlocutors in breath and the perturbed air of plucked strings, and of her listeners, as well as that of the belated reader for whom an immediate hearing has been prematurely denied. This reader and mediated listener may recall from several removes of history that due to past drug offenses, the New York Police Department had denied Holiday a cabaret license—so that the song O'Hara remembers her whispering at the Five Spot literally broke the law.[21] Given that the poetic speaker has just purchased two cartons of Gauloises and Picayunes, we assume that the immediate salve for the anguish of her death will be the nervous taking up of a cigarette: a fleeting legal fix for addiction and aspirational act of empathy through pollution of the lungs.

What form would verse need to take now to chart the fleetingly nurturing, and often sickening, unwitting kinship structures in which we participate daily—to articulate the sustained unfreedom that breath and its constriction makes palpable? Nathaniel Mackey's body of fiction, essays, and verse above all constitutes an invaluable answer to this question. As he points out in "Breath and Precarity," extending yet implicitly critiquing the masculinized presumption of stamina in Olson's breath-based poetics, the word *panic* has its etymological roots in the piper-god Pan. Pan and Dionysus, gods whose blowing of wind instruments displaces discourse, are associated with the self's dispossession. The consequences can be ecstatic—Nietzsche refers to the effect as an "unchaining" from individuality[22]—and its expression can generate the exultant music that Mackey identifies as "multiply tongued."[23] They can also be devastating. Both aspects of breathing are represented when, for example, his Djeannine in *Atet A.D.* blows across a bottle, awakening a djinn that empowers her to cover, and surpass, the Billie Holiday standard "I Cover the Waterfront" via this rudimentary instrument by lamenting the loss "not of love, but of power"—of cover itself. Djeannine's song

assumes not only Holiday's accent on the first syllable of "cover" but the freighted sound of an Arabico-Berber flute suggesting leakage, the bottle's genie finally emerging as "wasted wish as well as wasted breath, an abrasive wind intent on scouring the air."[24] Mackey's representation of breath's devastation and its musical overcoming form a singular contribution to evolving understandings of the matter of breathing, and of the poetics and politics of air.

On p. 9 of his essay in this volume, Mackey calls this a "radical pneumaticism" on display in black music and especially that of wind instruments, "in which the involuntary is rendered deliberate, labored, in which breath is belabored, made strange," transmits at once the singularity of a voice and the commonality of shared suffering. Twisting a medium riddled with hazards into collaboration through labored virtuosity, the breath of these performers "becomes tactical, tactile, textile, even textual, a haptic recension whose jagged disbursements augur duress." Verse now, 2017, if it is to be of *essential* use in a historical moment in which people of color, immigrants, women, LGBTQIA folk, and the poor are under threat unbridled even in the rhetorical performances of ascendant politicians, must extract from itself certain laws that otherwise must be hauled. As Mackey further expresses on p. 20 of his essay, through lungs drawn and drawn, verse should disclose that traffic of alternating utopian mastery and disquiet being animated through circular breathing in jazz,

> a mixed-emotional, mixed-messaging traffic, a clandestine circulation of breath rotating between utopian intimations of assured, everlasting pneumatic amenity and a sirening alarm at the precarity to which breath, especially black breath, is subject—triumphalist and agonistic both, a boastful exulting in breath and a dystopian struggle for it

No literary form modulates breath more self-consciously or expresses the tactics of surviving a flawed commons more clearly than poetry—poetry being the art form that takes inspiration most literally while forcing us to contend with what "sweeps / Plastic and vast," as semi-intellectual breeze, "At once the Soul of each, and God of all." Mackey's

writing across poetry and poetics provides a rejoinder to ubiquitous neoliberal fantasies that simply practicing breathing in and out, shamelessly appropriating ancient Eastern tactics in the service of capitalist production, can somehow subtract contemporary citizens of the West from the stresses, exclusions, and violent suppressions of the polis.[25]

A lyrical book that has been categorized through any number of generic terms, as it largely eschews verse, yet was composed by an author identified as a poet, provides us with a closing paradox. The original edition of Claudia Rankine's *Citizen* ended many pages with the forward slash associated with a cited line of poetry, as if every page recounting the punishing conditions of breath's precarity had been captured from a past history of lyricism. Rankine makes the fact that "subject Lute[s]," as Coleridge once put it, are diversely framed (if sharing the same rank air), a theme of her second collection, *Citizen: An American Lyric*. *Citizen* underscores the commonality and the division sounded and perpetuated by lyric, with its corporeal matrix in the breath. For Rankine, vocalizations like the sigh that Cavarero might have championed as expression unleashed from the discursive sphere are only partially voluntary utterances—dubious acts of *poesis* in the sense of making, or fabrication. Like the compulsory action of exhaling only to again inhale pernicious ambient forces, the sigh manifests a problem with Olson's postulation of poetic subjectivity, or "the pressure of his [that is, the poet's] breath," under conditions of subjugation.

> The sigh is the pathway to breath; it allows breathing. That's just self-preservation. No one fabricates that. You sit down, you sigh. You stand up, you sigh. The sighing is a worrying exhale of an ache. You wouldn't call it an illness; still it is not the iteration of a free being. What else to liken yourself to but an animal, the ruminant kind?[26]

The sigh does not prevail over conditions of duress but only permits breathing to occur, temporarily clearing the obstruction of a general ache in favor of self-preservation, an individual's continuing to live. *Citizen*'s "just" relates flatly that this is a questionable achievement in a context in which one's fellow citizens cannot breathe, are left to die.

In "Projective Verse," Olson affirms the linear progression from "the HEART, by way of the BREATH, to the LINE," confident that "breath is man's special qualification as animal" because "[s]ound is a dimension he has extended"—presumably by succeeding in modulating the pace of breathing, and therefore breaking vocalization into precise units of sound, gradually establishing the fine motor skills needed to form language. (This qualification is not, of course, the result of man's heroic agency, as Olson intimates, but arises through the glacial and objectively determined evolution of the human species.)[27] Rankine, who in this volume largely relinquishes the line of verse and its "qualifications," goes further: to trouble the line between man and animal (and, for that matter, woman) by reminding us of the discomfitingly hybrid nature of the vocal channel. Speaking entails a primary dislocation not only of breathing but of eating, and vice versa; the Latin *rumen* signifies the throat, and in its extended form means chewing over again, thereby confusing thinking and its vocalic transmission with the cow's chewing of cud, of regurgitated matter. A continuum of racial oppression, from a host of seemingly involuntary microaggressions perpetuated against professionals in professional settings to unending dismissals of illegal chokeholds by the security state, and the chronicle of unfreedom registered in age-old lyric form, ensures that pressure is on the breathing of speakers of color rather than the other way around. Atmospheric, this pressure is, by extension, on all poets, and all speakers, to answer Rankine's piercing question: "Did that just come out of my mouth, his mouth, your mouth?"[28]

NOTES

1 See Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks,* trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2008), 201 Fanon's statement has been widely misquoted as if it were written in the first person plural through its circulation on social media, a fact fascinating in itself. By contrast, the original French reads, "Ce n'est pas parce que l'Indochinois a découvert une culture propre

qu'il s'est révolté. C'est parce que 'tout simplement' il lui devenait, à plus d'un titre, impossible de respirer."

The thinking reflected in this essay owes much to conversations over the course of 2015–16 with Caroline Bergvall and Judd Morrissey, with whom I shared a Mellon Collaborative Fellowship in Arts Practice and Scholarship at the Gray Center for Arts and Inquiry to work on a project called The Data That We Breathe. Thanks as well to our students in the Breathing Matters: Poetics and Politics of Air seminar at the University of Chicago.

2. Adriana Cavarero, *A più voci: Per una filosofia dell'espressione vocale* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2003), available in English as *For More Than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Vocal Expression*, trans. and with an introduction by Paul A. Kottman (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005).

3. Cavarero, *For More Than One Voice,* 201, but translated differently by me so as to reflect the musical implications of Cavarero's initial phrase.

4. See *For More Than One Voice,* 10.

5. Cavarero discusses Brathwaite in a brief section under the heading "The Hurricane Does Not Roar in Pentameter," while referring to Homer throughout the book. See *For More Than One Voice,* 146–51

6. *A più voci: Filosofia dell'espressione vocale,* 222, my translation. In the English edition this quote falls on page 204.

7 *For More Than One Voice,* 207, 205.

8. Kamau Brathwaite, *History of the Voice: The Development of Nation Language in Anglophone Caribbean Poetry* (London and Port of Spain: New Beacon Books, 1984), 18–19. Cavarero discusses the vocalic continuum in Brathwaite in *For More Than One Voice,* 150.

9. Ashon T. Crawley, *Blackpentecostal Breath: The Aesthetics of Possibility* (Bronx, NY: Fordham University Press, 2016), 15.

10. Original quote is from Nathaniel Mackey, *Bedouin Hornbook* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1986), 30.

11. Nathaniel Mackey, *Atet A.D.* (San Francisco: City Lights, 2001), 56, 114.

12. See "Going to the Territory," in *The Collected Essays of Ralph Ellison,* ed. John F. Callahan (New York: Modern Library, 1995), 605: "Geography as a symbol of the unknown included not only places, but conditions relating

to their racially defined status and the complex mystery of a society from which they had been excluded."

13. For a condensed history, see "Inspiration," in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, eds. Roland Greene et al. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), 709–11.

14. Charles Olson, "Projective Verse," in *Collected Prose*, ed. Donald Allen and Benjamin Friedlander (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 239.

15. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "The Eolian Harp," in William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads and Other Poems* (Ware, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 2003), 236.

16. Italo Calvino, "A King Listens," a libretto conceived for a work of musical theater in collaboration with Luciano Berio, qtd. in *For More Than One Voice*, 2.

17 The grid of the 1811 Commissioner's Plan for Manhattan was "to unite regularity and order with the public convenience and benefit and promote the health of the City [by allowing] a free and abundant circulation of air." Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 420. The notion that city parks act as "the lungs of the city" has become a cliché so pervasive that its etiology is difficult to pin down.

18. The 1986 English translation reads "a utopia of fine dust," but Calvino uses the term "*polverizzata*." Italo Calvino, *The Uses of Literature: Essays*, trans. Patrick Creagh, 1st U.S. ed. (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986), 255. The essay was originally titled "Which Utopia?" and published in 1973.

19. Percy Bysshe Shelley, *The Poems of Shelley, Volume Three: 1819–1820*, ed. Jack Donovan, Cian Duffy, and Kelvin Everest (New York and London: Routledge, 2014), 212. James Chandler writes of Shelley's "defining poetry against the rational will, and aligning it with the spirit of the age, precisely because this alignment lifted it clear of the calculating faculty. The Wind makes Shelley make the Wind make Shelley make the Wind. But perhaps better: Shelley is led by the events of post-Revolution history to construct an account whereby he and post-Revolution history make each other." James Chandler, *England in 1819: The Politics of Literary Culture and the Case of Romantic Historicism* (University of Chicago Press, 1998), 553–54.

20. Gerard Manley Hopkins, *Poems and Prose* (New York: Penguin, 1985), 54. I am also indebted to Julie Carr, "Hopkins's Wildness," a talk as yet unpublished, for drawing me to this poem.

21 See Brad Gooch, *City Poet: The Life and Times of Frank O'Hara* (New York: Harper, 2014), 328.

22. See Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, trans. Francis Golffing (New York: Doubleday, 1956), 82.

23. Nathaniel Mackey, with reference to the horn of Eric Dolphy, in *Paracritical Hinge: Essays, Talks, Notes, Interviews* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 224.

24. *Atet A.D.*, 87, 89.

25. Examples of this tendency are abundant, but I will cite a recent audio work called "Transcenmentalism": "In some modern societies, the economy has achieved the status of a living, breathing human being. Often it is afforded greater protection and rights than the communities it is supposed to support. Although all-knowing and all-powerful, the economy still struggles, fails and sometimes, even 'hurts.' To some, these conditions make it even more holy. As our society's most powerful contemporary deity, don't we owe it to the economy to not only sacrifice our time, our loyalty and our children's future, but our very spirit? This guided economic mediation will harness your conscious experience, allowing you to finally become one with the most supreme being of our times." Jessie Borrelle, "Transcenmentalism," *Paper Radio*, Podcast audio, August 30, 2015, http://www.paperradio.net/fm/transcenmentalism, accessed January 5, 2016.

26. Claudia Rankine, *Citizen: An American Lyric* (Minneapolis: Graywolf, 2014), 60. Olson quote is from "Projective Verse," 273.

27 See, for example, Philip Lieberman, "The Evolution of Human Speech: Its Anatomical and Neural Bases," *Current Anthropology* 48, no. 1 (February 2007): 39–66.

28. *Citizen*, 9.