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## Writing resistance together

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## **Abstract**

This piece of writing is a joint initiative by the participants in the Gender, Work and Organization writing workshop organized in Helsinki, Finland, in June 2019. This is a particular form of writing differently. We engage in collective writing and embody what it means to write resistance to established academic practices and conventions together. This is a form of emancipatory initiative where we care for each other as writers and as human beings. There are many author voices and we aim to keep the text open and dialogical. As such, this piece of writing is about suppressed thoughts and feelings that our collective picket

line allows us to express. In order to maintain the open-ended nature of the text, and perhaps also to retain some ‘dirtiness’ that is essential to writing, the paper has not been language checked throughout by a native speaker of English.

*Key words:* writing, co-writing, resistance, feminism

### **Where to begin?**

‘Writing is a form of collective resistance for Gender, Work and Organization.’ This sentence was given to us, a group of junior, mid-career and senior academics, as an inspiration for developing a collective piece to reflect on our writing practices as academics. Sitting in a room at Hanken School of Economics in Helsinki in a ‘Writing differently’ workshop, we use our round-table discussions and subsequent work to rethink academic writing as a form of collective resistance (cf. Grey & Sinclair, 2006; Gilmore, Harding, Helin & Pullen, 2019; Helin, Harding & Pullen, 2020). We intend to challenge patriarchal standards – academic jargon, rigid paper formats, narrow fields, quant focus, formulaic research, gendered review processes, publishing cartels and so on – that shape academia and constrain our ability to write meaningfully. After short round-table discussions, the point was clear: we desperately need a space to breathe and to move beyond the boundaries imposed on us by the disembodied metrics that evaluate our ‘intellectual’ abilities as academics. These favor quantity devoid of meaning in our academic production as opposed to meaningful knowledge.

The approach to writing we take is experimental, collective, and emerging. The idea for the piece came from Alison, Joint Editor of GWO, during our two-day workshop. The text was to

emerge from the bottom up, bringing together our voices as authors in a large group of scholars of different nationalities and in different career stages. First, we divided 22 participants into four groups where we discussed our broad theme 'Writing as a form of resistance.' Each group identified their own themes (silence, blindness, the five senses and so on), which they then developed further. We returned to the small groups the next day when each participant had had a chance to think through and experiment with the theme of the group, and to pen down a sample of writing. We continued the discussion and shared our writings within each group. The groups then shared their ideas with everyone. Before ending the workshop, we decided that all participants would write more texts of their own. Each group chose a person responsible for gathering the texts, and one person volunteered to create a structure in Google Docs for all the groups where we could all see the collective work that became a quilt of different ideas and styles. Who are we as critical scholars 'resisting' and how does our collective thinking and writing reflect it? This is what we wish to discover.

By writing this piece collectively, we embody our individual and collective struggles, and convert them into words. We, the 22 authors, put our women's and men's bodies in our texts, hairy, raw, stinky and leaky as they are (Pullen, 2018), to create a common language and through this engage in collective action. We use our individual 'I's and subjectivities with all the peculiarities, emotions, messiness, fragility and vulnerability that they carry to construct a sense of *wenness* and togetherness. We do not only write *for* each other but also *with* each other. We experience our ontologies processually and come together (Ettinger, 2006; Kenny & Fotaki, 2015). We relate, we care, we take care, we make space for our differences, we connect...we engage in dialogue. We agree and disagree.

As Helene Cixous said, we just need to write. And write about writing, we add... we need to write from our women's and men's bodies and for them. We are women and men but allow our feminine sides to emerge. By feminine we denote not the materiality of our bodies but our ability to shake the symbolic order by crying and laughing where silence 'has to be' respected, as Cixous calls for in the 'Laugh of the Medusa.' In this sense we are 'bi-sexual' and we write as such: bi-sexually to find a common voice and raise it (Cixous, 1976; Phillips, Pullen & Rhodes 2014).

We join academic reflections that call for the need to rethink writing as a creative process, and that account for the embodied, affective, and reflexive experiences of the author/s (Pullen & Rhodes, 2008; Helin, 2019; Pullen, 2018; Kiriakos & Tienari, 2018). This is a process that is about what we feel, not only about what we know or think (Rhodes, 2015; Amrouche, Breckenridge, Brewis, Burchiellaro, Breiding Hansen, Hee Pedersen, Plotnikof & Pullen, 2018). It is not a 'gap' in the literature that our text intends to fill but rather an intention to challenge prevailing conceptions of academic writing and to call for change in the way we think of and relate to it. In this creative process, we open our bodies to make space for an ethical connection with our readers and the subjects that we write about (Fotaki et al., 2014). We use our writing to speak, to connect, to challenge, and to resist. Together. We use our writing to overturn the higher order pedagogies that suppress our 'un-disciplined' bodies in the context of academic practices, writing amongst them (Bell & King, 2010; Thanem & Knights, 2019).

We know that challenging academic practices and conventions of writing will be a long process, a long journey, a battle that may be lost. But we do not stop. We continue... We take

the freedom to do it differently, without asking permission. We just do it... *differently*! And we do it for the 'I', for the 'you,' and for the 'us.'

For your benefit, Dear Reader, we include here a guide for navigating our text. In what follows, we first reflect on silence in academia and extend our reflection to 'giving voice' and keeping silent. We explore the importance of recognizing and valuing moments of silence, and argue for silent subjectivities and silence as resistance. Second, we move onto blindness in academia, and discuss its different causes, forms, and sometimes unnerving consequences. Third, we raise the question of writing as a form of collective resistance. We share some of our anxieties and use them to question prevailing forms of academic writing. We talk about love in writing and think about writing as an invitation to a dance. Fourth, we pause to reflect. We take stock of our own experiences in the writing workshop and share our thoughts on why these experiences matter from the point of view of solidarity and sensitivity. Fifth, we get together on our academic picket line and elucidate what it means to resist 'Authorship' through collective writing. Finally, we include in our joint text a coda, which is a response to the generous and constructive comments we received from reviewers in GWO. It reflects on resistance, and resistance to resistance.

## **Silence and silencing**

### ***Beginning***

The group assignment starts. We sit at a round table. Six of us. In silence. People waiting for someone to express their thoughts. Silence. The conversation slowly begins. It is about silence. It is about trust, equality and care that slowly builds around us. It is about writing, listening and agency. Passive and active voices. About personal and collective struggles.

About vulnerability. Being exposed, available, open. A rupture. The space that breaking apart creates for building a community, and for writing that enables us to challenge the status quo of the standards of academic writing. But we keep returning to silence. Our own silence and the silence of others. Through our writing. How can silence be resistance? Written in the unspoken spirit of love, here is our joint endeavor to understand the power(s) of silence through embodied writing.

### ***Incomplete***

Words through my body.

Text without pre-reflection, against everything I've been taught in academia.

Can I resist the urge to modify?

To add?

To make it complete?

Rational, neat and nicely structured.

Complete for who? Reviewers? Editors?

For an audience.

Complete in format or in message?

The audience will notice that the text is incomplete.

They will notice I am incomplete.

### ***Exploring the power of silence***

As academics, we enjoy the privilege of empowering others by 'giving voice to the marginalized.' However, we rarely talk about the moments when we either choose or feel compelled to keep silent. In the workshop, when we began to discuss this notion of silence, relating to our identity as women in a male dominated industry, to being non-native English

speakers but feeling the pressure of publishing in English... we decided to dig deeper into the notion of silence and to explore the power of silence.

Buddhist philosophy gives a lot of insight about silence. In Buddhism, the goal of life is the act of living it. On the one hand, silence is regarded as the expression of knowing and the inaudible manifestation of frailty of words. On the other hand, the language of silence is capable of dispelling one's inner darkness, anxiety and void. Hence, silence, in Buddhism, is an inherently powerful action for pursuing the Truth. It is itself the Truth. Truth cannot be defined or explicitly described but can only be experienced. Truth cannot be communicated with words, but only be shared with people who are willing and capable to embrace it into their own beings.

Recognition of moments of silence is central to our collective project. By deliberately elaborating the emotional and embodied experience hidden behind these moments of silence, through fleshing out the unspoken words interwoven in silence, we want to connect, relate and affect each other. In this writing, we give silent moments voice. The inaudible voices pass on important messages, which many times we would like to cry out, but there is fear to be (not) heard. I believe that we can forge a collective resistance to this highly masculinized culture in academia where control, competitiveness, aggression, power and success are over-rated, and any sign of vulnerability is repressed.

The silence that is known to most of us is its exterior absence of words. Although in such moments, words are not used, our minds are not quiet. They are filled with emotions, ideas, frustrations, desires, creativities and doubts. We choose or are compelled to keep silent when we realize we are the only woman in a 'men's space,' and being foreign in a country where we are always identified as other, when we are put up as a token of the marginalized group, when we feel overwhelmed by senses of insecurity:



*I sometimes choose to keep silent in academic conferences when I am not sure about the climate in which the discussions are taken. I guess I am unsure of whether it is a space in which my thoughts and arguments will be appreciated, understood and how others will react. Maybe it is personal insecurity. Sometimes I fear others' reactions, because, in my experience, they are not always friendly. I might feel frustrated as I already know that I do not have anything to contribute to a discussion if it takes a certain track and tone. I might feel an urge to voice my thoughts, even if I know the risks of how it might be received, depending on my own state of mind and strength, a question arises: do I open my mouth? What do I think about? The things that should be said. The things that should be challenged. The things that have not changed. But what do people think of me saying those things out loud? Who I am to say so?*

*I am a person with a lot of words. I enjoy expressing myself, my feelings, and opinions. But I have learnt to keep silent. I choose silence when I realize I am fighting a hopeless war where important decisions are made for me and others. I have learnt that silence is my safeguard. I think when I do not speak...*

*I'm not sure I ever really choose to keep silent, but rather feel compelled to by outside forces. Lots of times I am thinking about so many other things that I can't fully participate in the conversation. Sometimes I am silent because I have nothing to contribute, because I am opposed to the topic or the line of inquiry or the analytical frame, but I don't have the position or status to challenge those who lead the discourse. What do I think about when I am silent? Everything else. My body, the air, escaping. I imagine other people,*

*other places, the dead. Things that smell nice. Food. I often think of eating and drinking. How do I feel when I am silent? Private, and attending to my own self. When I speak, I feel as if I am floating and often that my voice is coming from another body. In silence I connect to that voice, and I can hear it in various ways.*

### ***Relating in silence***

Academia is full of useless noise and meaningless words.

Everyday it's getting harder to breathe.

Silence is a scream for pause.

Silence is harmony.

Silence is respect.

Silence is beauty and wisdom.

In silence, we open up and become more sensitive to others' vulnerabilities.

In silence, we relate.

### ***Sounds of silence***

The music flows around you, echoing between the stone walls of the church. The voices of the singers of the excellent choir following the gentle instructions given by the aging conductor. The singers individually performing the ancient texts, their bodies breathing together, and sounds intertwined. Listening tentatively, ready to be moved, touched, to engage in the music. Then the music suddenly, unexpectedly stops. The conductor suspends her hands mid-air. The silence happens. A rupture in the flow of music. And we wait,

listening to the silence. And just when we cannot bare the silence any longer, the hands of the conductor shift and the sounds of the human voices return.

This indefinite rest in the music is called a general pause or a grand pause. This silence in the middle of the flow of music is a powerful tool to mark a change, a shift in the temporality of the music. It is, in particular, its unexpected nature and the non-defined length of this suspension that makes the experience so powerful. Sometimes the musicians hold the pause 'too long' and someone in the audience will think that the piece has ended and starts to applaud. Perhaps we would need to think more carefully about the person who applauds, breaking the silence. What is it in the prolonged silence that forces us to take action?

Or in the words of Paul Simon:

'Fools,' said I, 'You do not know  
Silence, like a cancer, grows  
Hear my words that I might teach you  
Take my arms that I might reach you'  
But my words, like silent raindrops fell  
And echoed in the wells, of silence

### ***Subjectivities***

Please excuse my silence, which is not meant to be a slight. And I fear you will interpret it as laziness, flightiness, artlessness. But really, I was just existing as my other self, the one who attends constantly to the needs of my children, husband, family, friends, home, dirt, dust, items, empty tummies. Last week, when I met you, I was the self who thinks deeply about

what's wrong with the world and why. That self who has time to ponder big questions, and can't shut up once the mouth gets going, with ideas overlapping, feeding each other, getting tangled and complex and so very interesting. The self with capacity to collaborate. However, too much time being that self has consequences – coming home to a messy home, everything and everyone needing attention, straightening up, making proper food, helping with homework, driving them around. Just the routine stuff, but there is so much of it, and it takes time. And hence the silence from my academic self – no time to sit down and let the words flow – until it's so late that I am half asleep. Then, my eyes droop and I can hardly even move my fingers over the computer keys.

So, although my academic self, far away from home, can acknowledge the strength of:

Silence in words, resistance for agency

Amongst dominant forces, withholding secrets, subject to misinterpretation

Absent presences

What is unsaid still permeates the air, it is

something that haunts and it connects us to histories of being oppressed

What comes out when I am at home is this notion of being silenced by the second shift, being silenced by my expectations for myself as a mother, a partner, a domestic laborer and by their reliance on my having those expectations so they can exist in an orderly and pleasant home.

Together, in Helsinki, we talked about the power in silence, opting out, not participating. My silence today is not voluntary, it is done to me and holds me back. However, as someone who loves me says to me: 'you chose this.' At the time, it did feel like a choice – to get married, to

have babies... but everything that comes with it is a requirement. Then, tracing back to the original ‘choice(s)’: every time my child self pictured my adult self, I saw a nice house, a nice kitchen, nice garden, nice children, me waiting for him to come home from work. I saw myself, in what I saw, every woman around me doing, when I saw the right way to be woman.

‘Why do you want to be a scientist? How about a nice little kindergarten teacher?’

‘You are such a cute little scientist. Do you want to go out on a date? Do you want to get married and help me with my science?’

(STOP writing, look up)

‘Mom can you help my friend with a math problem?’ And again, I am silenced, listening to the voices in my head that I can’t find the time or place to let out. Please excuse my silence, I think (I was listening) to myself.

### ***Silence/voice***

Who do we silence in the current academic writing practices?

Our embodied voices through review processes, self-censorship and the strict conventions that we follow while constructing ourselves as ‘scientific.’

Our struggles as academic scholars, as neatly functioning parts of the publishing machine.

(Be careful, do not let anything leak out!)

What about other experiences?

The ones we do not often write about?

The ones who’s texts we do not read.

The ones who do not write.

The ones who are not taking part in these conversations, as in this room on June 7<sup>th</sup> in Helsinki.

Writing as a form of collective resistance. Silence as a form of collective resistance. Politics of representation and the question of who speaks for whom. Play of voices and silence in the classroom.

Silence can be used strategically as resistance.

But you need to have possessed a voice before you can use silence as resistance?

If you are absent and silent in a conversation, are you there to resist?

Questions of voice and silence.

Questions of production and consumption.

Of knowledge.

Of representations.

I consume and produce. Consume and produce. Consume and produce...

Where does my responsibility lie?

In my production. In my consumption.

Of I and the Other.

Quite obviously.

In the text.

In the silences of the text.

But how to enact it? How to be responsible?

How can I write and listen in a form that emphasizes the agency of others?

Staying attuned to multiple struggles, flows across, shows the different faces of silence.

Coming from yourself – empowering, comforting, joyful, sacred.

Coming from others – unjust, oppressive, disabling, lonely.

Strength and vulnerability of embodied silence.

Consumed and produced. Consumed and produced.

Unequally.

How do we come together, and from multiple local struggles form a collective resistance?

Has also the collective solution become silenced? No. Yesterday we started a process of dialogue and exchange as a foundation for this, based on our individual voices and the physical act of writing. Midst of the voices in the classroom, I sense, it is the fleeting moment of picking up a pen or starting to type – in awareness of our interconnection with others – from where the moment of ethical action arises and we can see how some struggles might be silent, but others are loud, if we only know how to write them.

### ***Silence, again***

Years spent mute.

Grounded to the chair, only fear.

Fear of what may surface, if I speak.

Contained in thought and body,

It is the way for women.

Years passed, words appeared one-at-a-time.

Observing the silent cast adrift, and often drowning, in a sea of dominant male voices,

My voice, trembling and embodied, became more articulate,

But, how, can I stop? I fear that if I stop, I may never speak again.

These lips of mine, in their plurality, have stories to tell.

Now others listen, cite and act on my words,

Fear of being quoted, reduced to a part of my being.

Controlled and contained, again.

Can women ever speak freely?

Lips enable connection, care and relationships – and resistance.

Silence ruptures male spaces.

Listening as a politics of care, of resistance.

Academia privileges those articulate subjects.

Time to hear the silence, hearing through the skin.

If we listen, what collective resistance is possible?



Every now and then, silent bodies connect, words whisper, resonate with others, and I become me... this is the power of the masses. Sometimes these whispers connect, subversive, and the rage becomes her.

## **Blindness**

Love is blind, or so they say. Violence is often blind, too, and that is what's so scary about it. The system of academic writing is based on blindness. Its review processes are a smokescreen for politicking, an illusion, a lie. From the shadows, the chosen few are elevated into the light and the rest of us are left behind and forgotten.

Let's have some names then! After each review process, accept or reject, let's have some names! Let those wonderful and generous people who help and support others come forward, into the light. And let the violent ones be named, too.

### ***Blindness around us***

Part I – Attack

Sometimes *I* just shut up

Not talk, not write, but I always think...

It was a vertical moment

Blindness around us

A silently brutal stab

towards our work, us

– dangers of researching differently

Stupidity of

simple-minded thinking

kind of blindness, too

feminists, childbirth,

*profit* of researching certain topics

HAHA!

Could you *please* shut up?

Sometimes

silence is sophisticated wisdom

Hiljaisuus

...miten kaunis sana ja tila!

Feeling empowered

by the pathetic attack

This is who I am

our writing is us

Vulnerability

and sensitivity towards life around me

are my strengths

my inspiration

and my sources of

researching differently

Part II – Aftermath

Tears,

keep coming. Let them flow, flow, flow

I've created a scene

anyway

Exposing my vulnerable

leaky

*crying-like-a-little-child-kind-of* body

to others

But crying is healing

*écriture féminine*

remains a tricky project

blind academia

with its 'neutrality' and narrow frameworks

dislikes disruptive, destabilizing

transgressive

*écriture féminine*

as a way to

confuse boundaries

or liberate our work from the standard research practices

Kind eyes, warm hugs

mobilize collective affects

*Action! #snaptivism*

Solidarity. Care.

We're in this space, together

Strength to keep writing

While academia continues

to limit my research

as well as 'free' it

and the ways in which the gendered body writes

Coda – Healing by *writing together*

Tilltufsad fjäderskrud

Hetkellinen siipirikko, lamaantuminen

*Vai sittenkin jotain muuta?*

Sara Ahmed, Hélène Cixous, Veena Das, Elspeth Probyn,

*Tack skall ni ha!*

Injurious norms, interrupted

Kvinnor som lyfter andra kvinnor

acknowledging our male allies, too

Freedom, flexibility, provocativity

without hurting

*Rakastan* akateemista työtä

Kindness

Generosity

Care

Nei momenti complicati

è bello guardare dentro un armadio

pieno di sogni.

Ga je mee?

Affective suffering as

a pivotal moment

for *transformation*

Siamo insieme

tässä hetkessä

Vis-à-vis, allons-y!

What if our *writing*

makes the contribution (*sic*), that disrupts the

twisted, dull, gloomy

thinking and writing

in academia

reaching beyond seemingly narrow topics

carefully scratching the polished surfaces

getting our feet dirty

appreciating the mundane rhythms

experiencing our sensory,

more-than-human life worlds

which, in fact, touch e v e r y t h i n g around us?

We keep writing together.

We rise by lifting each other.

Writing

as a beautiful form of

collaborative resistance

towards mental violence

and disembodied

detached

rigid

research

in academia

### ***Epilogue***

The two of us have written together for some eight years. It was an instant ‘click’ between us, a sense of meeting another researcher and woman who *feels* you, understands you and respects you. Sisters in academia. Support. Genuine goodwill. Our collaboration builds on both mental and kinaesthetic empathy. For us, writing together works as a collaborative resistance against blindness in academia. Blindness which, for us, materializes in cynical thinking and denigrating attitudes towards ‘marginal’ research topics, complicated and sometimes irrational review processes, and the inability to see worth in other than cleaned-up writing that so firmly believes in objectivity, rationality and abstraction. We resist this blindness by keeping our writing simple, direct and vulnerably alive.

A picture of a post-it note from the whiteboard at the workshop, captured by one of us. None of us wrote it and its writer remains a mystery to us, but we can thoroughly relate to it. These words resonate with the various sensations that writing evokes in our bodies, and foregrounds the aspects of ‘wanting to communicate, to talk, to share, to interact’ at the very focus, as we do in our academic work.

We are using writing as a collective means to resist the illusion of blindness in academia.

With the concept of blindness we refer to a variety of academic practices aiming at anonymity and impersonality. They exist for good reasons: first, to emphasize that what is being argued is more important than who is making the claims and second, to assure fair and equal treatment of scholars and their texts. Despite good intentions, the blindness is an illusion, even a lie.

This blindness of practices means that the authority, expertise, gender or position of the author should not influence the assessment of the manuscript and the related decisions. However, in reality everybody who has worked in academia for some time, has experiences that make one doubt the objectivity or anonymity of the processes. Humans as we are, we continuously search for cues of who the ‘anonymous’ are and make interpretations of the people we are dealing with. Many of us play in a rather small sand box, which makes it difficult *not* to know, who the other players are and what they do. In many cases, the processes are not blind; they only narrow down the number of potential people. Whether that is a problem or something to sustain is hard to say, but if the idea of ‘blind review’ indicates that anonymity is necessary for us academics to make fair and ethical assessments and decisions, is it credible to claim we are fair and ethical behind the curtain of anonymity? Rather, the blindness of academic practices acts as a script that makes the political games less obvious and difficult to trace down.

In academic writing, the tradition of neutrality and impersonality has led to writing becoming a non-contextual, impersonal and universal practice, in which the author has to hide him/herself and his/her personality, mother tongue, context, history and body. We are expected to write as a universal academic – supposedly a white male from an Anglo-Saxon



country. Thus, writing as a blind practice not only causes all academic texts to be alike and restricts freedom of expression, but also disconnects the readers from the actual process of producing texts and the person doing it. It enforces the appearance of objectivity, expertise and truthfulness, while making academic texts clinical, often formulaic and empty of any deeper meaning.

### ***Unblinding an aspiring scholar***

In case you are expecting to join the Temple of Knowledge: *wake up!* If you yearn to meet Wisdom in people who would sell their soul to devil to know-it-all and to find a miracle in a falling apple: *unblind yourself!* You are likely to become a basic unit of production in a sloppily managed factory that will turn your natural inclination for curiosity and experimentation into process waste.

On the factory floor, people who tend to think, act and write alike establish rank and superiority by competing to see who can piss the farthest. The great task is to determine who publishes the most in places some obscure parties with power and vested interests have defined as ‘best’ and others have accepted as ‘mandatory.’ For sure, one can win because one is hardworking and talented but also because one is skilled in all sorts of misbehavior – or eager to massage the fragile egos of the members of the ruling party.

This is a ruthless hunger game that is dominated by a conservative establishment against which the other groups, including the self-proclaimed critical ones, timidly position themselves. Dissidents say ‘the system,’ ‘patriarchy,’ ‘neoliberal university,’ or ‘western

hegemony' *makes them* and nothing can be done. Slowly, you may start believing in this, citing Foucault or something else sophisticated to exempt you from personal responsibility.

Becoming a PhD-student means low levels of autonomy. The precarious employment conditions would cause an uprising in any other place. Whether you receive a position or a grant or support of *any* kind, depends almost entirely on the whims and competence of your supervisor– or any other patron you may find who happens to like you. Many fall into oblivion or predatory, abusive relations. Some are left spinning alone, some drift away fighting severe depression.

With time the imagined Temple inevitably crumbles down – and may become a labyrinth you cannot exit as your mind is trapped inside. You will find some genuinely intellectual individuals, and that is when light shines onto the factory floor. However, they may not take interest in your magnificent drafts, philosophical insights and brilliant ideas – they have their own battles to fight and demons to face. Your likely destiny is either exit or becoming a unit of production like most other technician-researchers on the factory floor.

I am still here because despite all this, academia can be an addictive, fascinating place if one can develop a somewhat functional existence in it. Many won't. I must have some undiagnosed obsessive-compulsive disorder and want to be part of *something* that is important to me that I want to defend and that I cannot define with words.

## Writing is a form of collective resistance

*I knew that I was not for this. I didn't just want to choose for myself a spacious cell in a comfortable prison. I preferred a slam in the open air, feeling the sun and the rain nourishing my skin and then writing about it. To let my body breathe more fully, to take the air down to feel my belly moving, to fill my lungs with the oxygen that I need to be able to continue living... and thus writing...or is it the other way around?*

Writing is personal. It begins with a person and it ends with a person. You can call one a writer and the other a reader, but it may not be so. Writing is collective. It begins as a relationship between people and it ends as a relationship between people. You may call one a text and the other understanding, but it may not be so. Writing is political; it produces knowledge. Writing is political; it challenges knowledge. Writing as resistance is personal; you object, refuse, insist. Writing as resistance is collective; you examine, influence, organize.

Sometimes it is important to resist writing, when the politics of writing are such that the text is no longer the purpose of writing, when writing has become divorced from the text and only the mere existence of the text is its purpose.

Writing is a form of collective resistance. Writing as a form of collective resistance is writing that also examines itself; is suspicious of itself, examines its own assumptions without turning on itself and without turning in on itself. Writing as a form of collective resistance cannot be about itself.

Academia is no longer what it used to be. We work in a time where the ability to predict consequences and possible results of research projects are decisive for managing the academic everyday, including the possibility of attaining research funding. To make sure we are not hit by surprise we can never lose control of our direction. To that end, we have to write from that which we already know, turning writing into a machinery practice as we write under publication pressure. Writing becomes fragmented, flat, disembodied, and it lacks depth just as the horizontal arrow that symbolizes this view on time.

At its worst this work hurts me, this work makes me cynical and angry. It makes me not want to write anymore. It makes me want to resist it.

### **Questioning**

What is the power that writing resists? Is it more writing, other writing, competing knowledges? How does writing resist? What is the principle with which it resists? With new words, with new voices, with new forms, with new languages. Can those be heard?

*Ok. At least writing does not kill, does it?*

I get distracted by a message from Facebook and start surfing. There has been another unfounded arrest of an investigative journalist in Moscow. A picture of protesters catches my eye. People are standing in line in order to hold a single picket. One by one. Unsanctioned collective political rallies are forbidden in Russia, and concerning this case, there is no chance a permit would be issued. A single picket is the only legal way to resist. Therefore, all

these people are waiting for their turn to hold the poster with a call to free the journalist. They are together, but, at the same time, each one adds her or his own voice to the common cause.

The pen is heavy.

The screen is blank.

Is there space for me here?

Am I experienced enough? Am I legitimate enough? Am I powerful enough? Do I need permission for this? From whom? For what? Where am I (hidden)? Where is my body?

Where is my sensuality, my affect, my rigidity, my fragility, the messiness that I carry? Why do I do this and for whom?

Should I first learn to publish more traditionally before beginning to resist it? I'd rather still write differently, because it's more fun, more lively, more what I want to do, but will I succeed to publish by doing so?

### ***Resisting prevailing forms of academic writing and resisting that resistance***

I am joining the line of those who are determined to write differently, 'acknowledging the risk of embarrassment, of not being understood, of being dismissed or ridiculed, of being considered self-indulgent, or of being rejected' (Kiriakos & Tienari, 2018: 266). While staying in the line, I am summing up what seems important to me in writing and formulating it as a manifesto, as suggested by Jenny Helin at the GWO workshop.

I intend

to be honest to myself in writing;

to lean on, but not to hide behind stronger others and to be supportive myself;

to allow myself to write slowly, but to keep on moving, stretching higher and deeper;

I will try to find the strength to write through being weak, shamefully imperfect and vulnerable, but to save and protect the vulnerability

Just because there,

on the other side of a journal,

probably, there is Someone.

A One who waits for my text,

needs it the way I needed

Academic Writing as Love

by Carol and Janne.

*No, no, I will not. I will not participate in this collective resistance thing. I am not yet there; I have not yet learned to fill the gaps properly. Besides, they all are so cool, and experienced, and 'vertical' in writing, and so poetic.*

I keep staring at Carol Kiriakos and Janne Tienari's article 'Academic Writing as Love.' I see writing as a long-term relationship, in contrast to writing as passion and competition. I do not like the idea of participating in the race. It does not inspire me, this race, which suggests no space and time for dealing with being weak and vulnerable, being attentive and protective to others.

*'You see. Love has been conceptualized for you personally. Have you not been looking for it? Just take it.'*

*I find it difficult to find the balance between peaceful me and collective resistance. As I see it, the 'battle, fight, protest, resistance' -rhetoric is about looking for courage in myself to oppose dominating power. However, opposing is not the aim in itself.*

*All these are questions that have been circulating in my head since the early years of my PhD, unsettling my few hours of rest, the endless nights that I spent alone after long days of developing rigorous argumentations and deductions of 'counter-intuitive' (but otherwise soulless) hypotheses for my academic texts. What a word! Counter-intuitive! It has to be so to 'sell' ... just doing the intuitive is not enough.*

*Just writing is not enough! ... for what really matters!*

*For years, I kept my body constrained; limiting it from its potential to express what inherently inhabited it... ideas, dreams, sensations, pleasure, pain, worries, confidence or lack of it... I held back from writing a language that touches, to write about a topic that touches, to write about writing itself. I kept all of this for my personal scripts, which I had very little time to care about. And I was afraid of sharing these concerns with my supervisors or colleagues, in fear of being seen as the crazy one.*

*Vulnerability in academic criticism... In fear of being rejected... Yet another time!*

*I wish I could be brave enough.*

I suppose people hurt people in academia, purposefully or accidentally. During the workshop, I heard about the power game that is ongoing in academia. This game makes even the most experienced and highly respected professors to be afraid to speak out so that they would not sound stupid! I did not want to sound stupid or ignorant. I did not want to be ‘revealed’ as someone who really does not have a right to be here with such a short history in the academic world. I noticed the vulnerability where I expected to see stable self-confidence. This was a relief to me because it made the academic world look more human. Is showing our vulnerability through experimenting different styles of academic writing a threat to us?

According to my observations during my short experience in the academic world, there is something hurtful in the appreciation of criticism. Although critical thinking is, in my opinion, a necessary practice to produce any new understandings and therefore new knowledge through research, it can be used in harmful ways in the academic world. After listening to more experienced colleagues, it seems to me that criticality is too often used as a form of oppression or to bolster the individual’s place in the hierarchy. That is the opposite to what the critical thinking tradition, in theory, was supposed to do (Duncum, 2008). Critical theory aims to break free from the prevailing and ‘taken for granted truths,’ but it is itself taken for granted in education literature (Duncum, 2008) and in academic practices in general.



*'We honor others by challenging them when we think they are wrong, and by thoughtfully taking their criticisms of us. To do so is to take them seriously; to do any less is to dismiss them as unworthy of serious consideration, which is to say, to treat them with disrespect. Respect means the willingness to listen, openness to the possibility of learning from, responsiveness, criticizing when necessary. [...] Respect does not mean that everything they do is "fine for them" or beyond the pale of critical judgment. Emphasis on the acceptance of difference is meant to express and encourage tolerance. Sometimes it succeeds in this. But sometimes it can have the opposite effect. Valorized differences can harden into Difference.'* (Fay, 1996, 239)

'Critical theory tends to operate from within the binary terms of dominance and a liberating counterpoint in which a singular truth is opposed by a singular alternative' (Duncum, 2008, 253). I think that this kind of confrontation about accepted truths in academia silences us. It puts us in the position of self defence and makes us to focus on fighting for our existence in academia instead of creating a fruitful conversation. 'One truth colliding with another does not necessarily lead to enlightenment but to retreat, not to synthesis or compromise but to an endgame' (Duncum, 2008, 250). So how to criticize without hurting? How to take criticism and avoid cutting vulnerability out of it?

### ***Resistance as a fight or invitation to a dance?***

Gilmore et al. (2019) are calling us to arms towards the positivist and normalized understandings of the only right way to do research. But is the war as a form of collective resistance that can really make space for difference and multiplicity in writing that Gilmore et al. (2019) want to achieve? I agree that fighting and defending oneself is sometimes necessary, but are there some other ways to create space for different forms of academic writing?

I might be naïve and childish by saying this, but cannot we just do it? Write differently and by doing so, be the examples of how different forms of expression in academic texts can create more understanding of the complex world we live in? And can we with those texts invite others, that might not accept this kind of writing as academic, to a dialogue? Are we who want to defend the ‘polyphony’ of different ways of expressing research (Bakhtin, 1981, according to Duncum, 2008) able to understand or at least give space to others that do not want to allow this plurality?

Could we somehow go beyond the attack-defence practice that is experienced as hurtful by many in the academic world? Could we somehow just ask or persuade the other who thinks differently than us to join the common dance (Duncum, 2008)? Can we give space for the other who might want to stay still and not dance with us? After all, we are all in the same ‘academic ballroom’ and any kind of expressions of movements in that space should be allowed.

I know your rules. I tried to play by your rules. Let's just try to play by different (my) rules. And then we will discuss it and agree on common rules. And I promise I will respect your choice.

This text is *y-ours*.

Being at the workshop in Helsinki, among colleagues who persist in asking difficult questions although there are no immediate answers, who understand and embody the need for safe inquiry spaces to emerge, and who create the moment where we can have conversations ‘for

real,' offers resistance in solidarity. It is pockets (or picket lines) like this that give hope for another future in academia.

And thus share, and thus resist...

And finally here I am, with all of you... not alone anymore...

I now feel that I know the answer:

I write to relate. I write to share. I write to live and to continue to live...

I write for me and for you ... with you...

Just add your voice. Free yourself. You are not alone. There are others to support you.

### **Reflecting**

During the GWO workshop I noticed more clearly how those who have been in academia for long have a kind of hard message for me who is just starting in this field: 'This work hurts me, this work makes me cynical and angry. It makes me not want to write anymore. It makes me want to resist it.' I did not have enough time to ask the questions: 'Why this work makes you angry? What things in academia make you cynical?' I guess that writing academic papers is sometimes so hard that it makes you want to quit, but I don't think that it is the reason that makes people cynical, angry and raises resistance.

I noticed that on the first day it was not easy for me to talk about my thoughts among the more experienced colleagues. I think this happened because of the respect that I felt for the experienced colleagues. When this happened, I did not really know why I felt this way. I got

caught in the practice that values highly the appreciation of the experience and some sort of hierarchy that is embedded in academic culture.

### *Experiment survivor*

I decided to participate in the writing workshop organized by GWO and hosted by the GODESS Institute (Gender, organization, diversity, equality and social sustainability in transnational times) at Hanken in Helsinki. I entered the workshop with the 'standard' expectation of improving my writing and, in particular, writing academic journal articles. I left the workshop realizing that I have started a new journey during the process of battling with the uncertainty and my own inertia through writing. We were quickly grouped with participants who we haven't met before. My group was quite diverse in terms of academic background. It wasn't easy to produce a coherent idea for a small piece of writing given that we had just met.

We discussed in our small group what we were resisting collectively in writing. Resistance against the dominant publishing regime, against Authorship with the capital A? Towards the end of the workshop, I came to realize that I was resisting my 'old' self! No one has forced me to write for a particular journal, with a particular group of scholars, or even just to continue with the same way of writing. It has always been me. It's not easy to move out of the comfort zone that one has built. And this is just me in my 4<sup>th</sup> year of an academic job. What a terrifying thought to think that I am just going on like a publishing machine.

I also learnt how to write through vulnerability. As an Asian female, I have always tried to keep my head down. I blame Confucius for the bad influence of the 中庸philosophy (The

Doctrine of the Golden Mean). I have learnt to just take on whatever comes to me and try not to talk about the negative, the challenging and most importantly the painful experiences.

What a liberating moment for me it was to know that one can seek to heal by writing about these vulnerabilities in academia, too. Reflecting on my research journey on the topic of gender, it suddenly became clear to me that I am now strong enough to face this issue straight on. I have been hiding behind the excuse that it would be too painful for me to research gender particularly in my country of origin. My academic 'father,' a gender sociologist, has been so awfully gentle and kind to me when I continuously discarded gender by listing it as limitations in my PhD thesis, my articles (written mostly for jobs and with as much of me in them as possible), and in my book (written for my interviewees who I didn't think would know how to care for gender). At this stage of my career, I am truly glad that I came to the realization that researching gender won't cause me more pain than the gendered phenomena around me have already done. Instead it will be a way for me to heal my long term wound regarding gender, probably since I was born.

I heartfully thank the workshop organizers for their unconditional authentic love in educating junior academics. As much as I felt like an animal being experimented on during the workshop, I have rediscovered so many important things not just for work, but also for life. I can now joyfully claim that I understand the power and meaning of education.

### ***Solidarity***

Joining in and contributing to a workshop on collective writing left me with a sense of academic solidarity which still exists in today's academia that is dressed in competition and pressure for productivity. Like Jenny Helin proposed in her presentation about the valuation, and recognition, of vertical time, so was the workshop a pause in the seemingly chronological

timeline of academic work where junior researchers aim to one day become recognized senior researchers, perhaps professors, that are cited more, more and MORE, in order to be someone, to EXIST. The workshop embodied scarcity and unfinishedness, in its beauty – showing its participants how we are not alone in our struggles in the neoliberal academia.

Not only did it leave us with a sense of solidarity, it made us act: Alison's suggestion of becoming involved in a collective act of resistance through writing made us activate our hands, our minds, mouths, pens, laptop buttons – for a joint effort. While we started to work collaboratively to achieve a goal of sorts (an outcome submitted to GWO), I argue that it was more about being HERE and NOW. It was vertical time that we experienced – and, I suggest – we keep on experiencing, as we open our joint writing documents of our own group and carry on writing. Carrying on, carrying on, pausing, pausing. To work as a collective cannot carry on *without* a time to pause, to let others speak and write. That is one of the reasons why collective writing is so powerful. It invites, perhaps forces, us to solidarity and sensitivity.

### ***Sensitivity***

Working on sensitive issues together is, well, sensitive. I believe in letting everyone speak, even if they speak against the grain. Then I see some others being offended and hurt.

Sometimes I do not even see this, but I am reminded about it later. I know I should do better, and see, but time and again I am caught in this dilemma. When someone pours their heart out and there may be collateral damage, I am blind and clueless... because who am I to police others?

Perhaps time is again the great healer. Perhaps we need time. Writing, and writing together, is one way to heal; to bring multiple voices into the open, to converse, perhaps. We do not have

to agree, but let's listen to each other and care. Even if we sometimes end up hurting each other. Because those who hurt have themselves been hurt.

### **The academic picket line – or resisting ‘Authorship’ through collective writing**

Two interrelated themes emerged in our group when exploring ‘collective writing as a form of resistance.’ First, we see collective writing as a resistance strategy against the prevalence of hierarchical articulations of academic Authorship and certain institutionalized discourses and interests. This resistance takes the form of collective writing as a form of *picketing*, a demonstration of solidarity through which writing becomes an embodied practice, and our writing together marks an assemblage of bodies in solidarity. Second, by drawing upon tensions, power struggles and ambivalence within collective resistance, we suggest that collective writing may be considered a form of ‘unionizing’ that could help scholars better advocate marginalized issues, challenge dominant norms, rules and customs and promote care, respect and community within academia.

The following paragraphs are a collection of reflections and responses grounded in our experiences as early-career scholars with different disciplinary backgrounds, coming together in a workshop on writing, assembled to speak to, and with, each other. By mixing our voices, we explore possible strategies for a collective resistance against hierarchical articulations of individualized academic Authorship and knowledge production. Our focus is placed on discussing the challenges and possibilities in the collective construction of resistance against an Authorship, that is, the contemporary competitive logic of scholarly work, which has turned academic publishing into an individualized production line.

### *One Authorship, One Academia?*

What is the soul of the text? Maybe a discussion around Authorship and the redistribution of academic capital – is that playing into and reproducing a capitalistic logic? There is something about a paradox; the horizontal and vertical that actually each serve their purposes; we do not need to choose one. But by engaging with one, at a certain point in time (!), there is also a need for full, honest, true commitment to the cause; that is why we draw on the metaphor of picketing and the picket line that one collectively ensures is not crossed. Not by people who are, who belong to, who oppose, or just randomly walk by. It works to disrupt very concretely, but also takes up space, calls attention to spread, in the minds and in the practices of organizations that share similarities.

Already in this writing process, our voices start to mix. I read you, you read me, who are you, who am I? What remains a topic of uncertainty is the actual error in the current scene of academic publishing. What is so wrong about it that we want to stand in the picket line? It is a crucial question, as we probably all have published and been excited to see our own names as authors of a particular piece of research and writing. It is a piece that embodies so much more effort than can be guessed from reading the typed words from a, usually electronic, paper. But when ready, who cares to protest or rebel? Can we not just adjust? Our answer is no, not really. To write collectively also speaks against the drawback of who actually benefits from an academic outcome. To write alone, or with two, three, or four colleagues – especially if you are not a big name in your ‘field’ and thus you are assumedly insecure of whether your work will actually be read and, yes, cited – requires an effort that does not equal to the ‘prize’ one gets when the work is eventually published.



We do not get direct compensation for our efforts. Our work is fueled by long temporalities and a wish that our work is recognized sometime in the future by our ‘colleagues,’ or strangers, who might be able to find our work from the jungle of academic publications (all of which nobody ever has the chance to go through in peace as we, at least many of us, are obliged to produce, produce, produce). Our work is fueled by a third-party benefit as well, as we feed the journals that feed us indirectly, and get their compensation for doing that. Yet, there is more complexity: our universities might form a block to this author → editor(s) of journal → reviewers → editor(s) → author → journal (x 1,2,3,4) → money to the journal through subscribers → possible reputation through citations to the author / significant merit in the CV to get an academic position, by not allowing (cannot afford?) access to journals in which our work is published, thus blocking the distribution of our efforts to our own communities. So, the question ‘can we not just adjust?’ is crucial: we simply cannot, even though we have to be part of the system to be alive as academics.

We need to be bold and brave. This means that we need to be ready to face the criticism regarding our statements as well. This is far easier to do when we write together – when we stand together – when we write as a collective. This does not mean hegemony. This means diversity and its embracement. This means multidisciplinary in its fundamental sense. Why? Why to write as a collective? What are our motivations to stand in the picket line? In a neoliberal world of academia, academic publishing counts as a quest and competition of individual academic capital. This is the enforcement and feeding of An Authorship. The big A.

Our first suggestion is to give away authorship by signing it over to anonymity. But that is nothing, it is not generative of academic capital, it does not resist the dominant discourse

around Authorship, it just rejects it and takes the conversation to a different space. One where authorship does not exist. A similar idea, that insists staying with, resisting or challenging dominant discourses on authorship, is one that does not turn over authorship to anonymity, but which turns it over to a collective, defined by individuals who turn over authorship. That is the union. Would it be possible to unionize; have one writing union that publishes, but still keeps track of authors. Allow the union to negotiate terms of publications, but also to redistribute capital among the members. By, for example, publishing member lists which shows the number of publications each member has published or contributed through reviews or otherwise. Maybe citations are shared; maybe a reviewer is allowed a share in citations in terms of h-index; impact and so on.

In the case of writing in academia, we can form different fortresses by choosing with whom we write, to which journals we write, and advocate for the meaning in the texts that we produce as opposed to those produced by the 'other'. However, there is just one academia. It is a paradoxical Yin-Yang relationship because all the different kinds of writings co-exist together. With a white dot in the black half and a black dot in the white half, the collective whole of writings in academia are balanced.

While we pick our own picket line, we must also look beyond the line. As we march forward in the line, we do not forget that there is a bigger world out there.

***We write. United.***

A picket line is a shared embodied space, where workers stake out common grounds to signal their needs for change in their working conditions. It is a safe and protected space for individuals to advocate for things that matters to them. In a similar vein, academics need a

safe haven to feel that we can write authentically what we think. And this applies especially to academics who work on less dominant topics from marginalized perspectives. Collectively by standing in the picket line, we can resist towards the powerful established discourse of Authorship.

To stand in the picket line is not to try to destroy the system altogether at once – even though it can be an effort towards such aim. It is more about disrupting what is problematically normalized. It is about chewing one part of a bread and putting it back in the bag. Communal chewing! To stand in the picket line evokes communality which encourages academics, be they junior, senior, whatsoever, to take part in discussions that are possibly not one's 'specialty.' It gives room for learning from each other while it forms a united voice. A united voice that is multivocal. Paradoxical, yet necessary. A rainbow-colored, non-hegemonic voice of the union, affectively engaging with writing as picketing.

### **Together**

As bell hooks reminds us: 'feminist theory is complex ... it is less the individual practice that we often think and usually emerges from engagement with collective sources' (1991, p. 3). In this spirit, we are writing resistance together. Co-writing is a practice shared with others to craft a message. Writing with others, with others in mind, calls for negotiation, respect and care. At times, it is necessary to set aside individual aims to accomplish this for the sake of clarity – in order to be coherent individuals have to conform – but within compromise and negotiation there is possibility for building on each other's ideas.

Collective writing, as resistance, enables us to produce something together, the 22 of us, to face these challenges, both temporal, content-wise, and bound to 'expertise.' It does not mean we would only write whatever comes to our minds – no. This piece of writing we now produce together may not fulfil the requirements of a 'proper academic paper,' if you wish, entailing sections positioning to a particular field of research, review of earlier work done, empirical fieldwork and analysis, discussion and conclusion. Nevertheless, it is a piece of writing that has enabled us to learn from each other, to affect each other, and hopefully also to affect others. This piece of writing is about suppressed thoughts and feelings that our collective picket line of many authors allows us to express without revealing ourselves as individuals.

## **Coda**

The reviewers for this paper were wonderfully supportive of our initiative. They did, however, encourage us to reflect a bit more on what resistance means to us, and what resistances to resistance came up when we engaged with the concept of the 'collective.' This last section of the paper consists of ideas that many of the authors shared as a response to the reviewers' comments. Like in the preceding text, there is no one way to approach resistance, or resistance to resistance.

It was almost as if we did not have to define resistance, neither what it meant or what it could be. Perhaps, because we somehow assumed that we originated from similar positions because we already were there together, envisioning this form of collective work. I am still not sure whether this is an issue, or just a reflection of contemporary diffusion of structures. What can become of resistance when what you are 'supposed to' oppose is everywhere and nowhere at

once? And when that something cannot be clearly represented but rather functions as a lingering sense or anxious trace.

Resistance, in our view, materializes in an ability to allow for interconnected and shared vulnerability, continuously questioning existing thinking patterns, and still appreciating the various opinions and ways of living around us. We initially felt that everyone in the workshop would be like-minded and that the workshop would allow all of us participants to be and express our vulnerable selves. However, this was an illusion. We experienced a surprising emotional attack on our research and thoughts. We received warm encouragement from many others. The collective existed and, in this way, the collectivity endured beyond the confines of the workshop. Writing about the experience together worked as a powerful way of processing what we had experienced. Writing together worked as a way of allowing and not suppressing all kind of sensations, exposing our vulnerable selves and ‘letting go’ of some of the pain and insecurity.

This is resistance that strives for freedom. Freedom to write. Freedom to engage with the world through an embodied text, which is not contained by the author or words it is formed by. It comes to life in its relationality. Voices in the workshop were not unitary, nor were they meant to be. *This writing experiment does not form a unitary voice, it forms a collective voice.* From the beginning of the writing process, preserving and respecting different voices, I’s, in the workshop and in the text was important for us. Nevertheless, bursts of resistance (perhaps resistance to our collective resistance) were noted, some of them unexpected. Sudden and personal, hurtful and disruptive as they were, they brought up vulnerabilities, solidarity and care on which we could further build as a collective. This text is part of what

allows this collectivity to transcend the confines of the workshop. Collectivity endures and is shared in this text and in the relationships it creates.

I resist the concept of the collective, but I also use the collective to hide my silence. I resist being individualized in my struggle for time, space, and voice because I know these struggles are not unique; that they are shared by many others. To me resistance in this case means waking up. It requires me to stop trying to fit in, as well as to stop waiting when others take responsibility and solve problems for me. It means joining those people who are strong enough together to act in following their true beliefs.

A strong joint force is definitely required and only a relatively large number of people who share the same conviction can make it. I do love to be part of and contribute to the 'collective resistance' process, an approach that I consider can work for change and challenge the ingrained patriarchal system for 'newcomers' in academia. But still, I have to reflect that there are probably resistances to resistance that came up. I hesitate, even now, to have the confidence and most importantly I think, power, to stand up against the mainstream domination since the system seems to always work for the privileged.

It is clear that the understanding of resistance put forth in this paper may have been very different for each one of us individually. However, it feels like we are able to combine individual understandings to create a whole, which unveils a shared approach to resistance that emerged inter-subjectively through our collaboration and writing. This feels like it is going beyond the mere combination of the sum of our different understandings of it, or a clearly defined decision that we made upfront. It is not only about what is said but also about what is not said but felt while writing, or what is often compromised. It is enhanced in our

conversations and through it, as our voices intermingle. This is what we also want our readers to do while reading our text; to reflect and challenge their 'decisions' or pre-conceptions about what academic writing has to look like or about what resistance might be or how it can be manifested. The idea is to be open to resistance as an idea, from wherever it comes because only in this way we can be open to different voices and work for meaningful change together.

Resistance to resistance may have been experienced in different fronts. To some extent we all had to make do with the fact that our 'dear' texts may have been touched, altered or even deleted from the final paper, and we may have wanted to resist this. However, we realize that here it is not about what you or I wrote, but about what we all wrote. This is an important realization for junior and senior academics alike. Our individual 'narcissism' is lost in a creative polyphony. We tried to include the voices of all 22 workshop participants and authors in this text, but it was perhaps inevitable that some specific resistant voices were lost. How wonderful that none of us resisted by walking out on this exercise! Also, some of us can hide in the crowd, to be part of a collective of like-minded people who we trust even though we do not know them... and be able to say safely and without the usual fear of (much) expected retaliation something valuable about ONE of the many things that makes us sad, angry and hurt in academia. Writing. Saying something that matters.

I think that what is to be considered resistance towards resistance itself, and resistance towards the collective formation (as a form of resistance) are very different things here. There were definitely some initial tensions towards coming together, perhaps because we are so used to be evaluated by, and form our academic understanding of ourselves, around our

possible contributions. As if it was something individual, which of course is absurd, for are we not supposed to build on the work of others?

Something happens when one is continuously being molded into setting oneself apart from others... There was a trace of this when we began to discuss this in groups, as if we partially could reflect upon a perceived, harsh condition of individualization (which we sought to resist) while at the same time negotiating boundaries through differentiation among us. What could possibly be left of 'me' under the umbrella term of 'you' or 'us'? Was this a resistance towards resistance though? I'm not sure. Perhaps, rather a reflection of why this collective expression felt so urgent at times: a response to communality becoming strange.

There is a limit to how long we can stay silent or our resistance will turn on us and our space will be diminished. Words matter. We matter. Meeting silence with silence can make us all just feel unmoved, untouched, unnoticed. Perhaps there is a rhythm to this game we need to embody.

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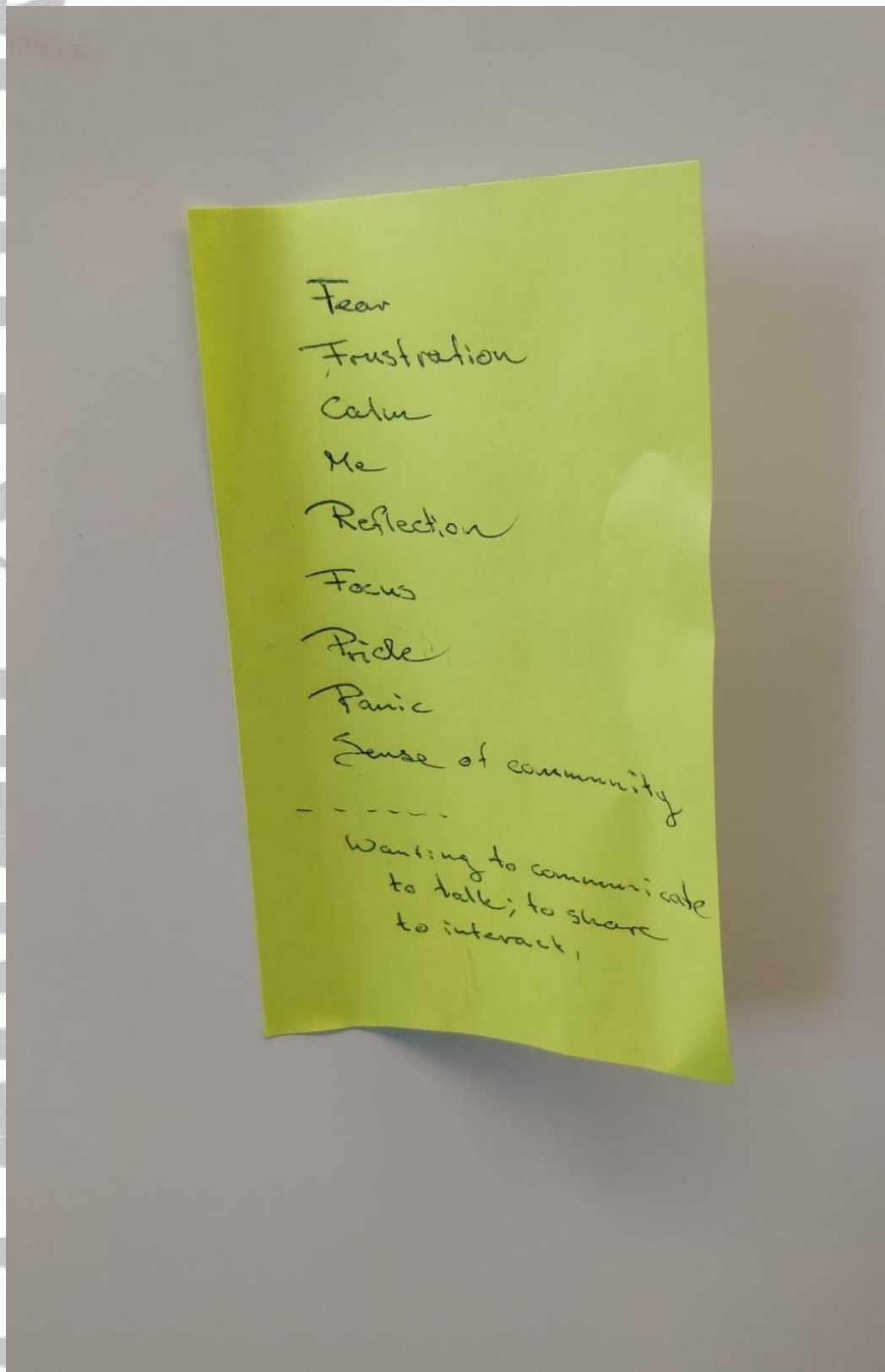


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Accepted Article



Picture 1: A post-it note that matters