

ZINE IV CROSSING & WEAVING



I. FACTIONAL STORIES AND ETHNOPOETICS: FROM CAPTURING TO PORTRAYING AND SHARING REAL LIFE AND GENUINE HUMAN EXPERIENCES. ON FACTIONAL STORIES

As shared with reader(s) in other zines of this dissertation, *Waiting for Baubo; sounding multivalent performing bodies in transdisciplinary situated artistic processes* is an arts-research by practice and written dissertation that enters into dialogue with anti-hierarchical music and arts practices that resist the notion of homogeneity among the collaborators of the fieldwork as well as its readership. By employing pedagogical methods that challenge hegemonic social relations between the collaborators and even more so between the facilitator/researcher and the collaborators, the fieldwork, my practice within it, and the writing of my research seek for a place in the genealogy of *prefigurative pedagogies* (Miner, 2013). A recently formulated pedagogical approach, *prefigurative pedagogies* have been inspired by the late 20th-century movement advocating for the enactment of *prefigurative politics*. As the leading scholar for the movement, sociologist Winifred Breine defined, *prefigurative politics* as a movement that enacted anti-organisational politics and is realised around counter-institutions, demonstrations and “the attempt to embody personal and anti-hierarchical values in politics” (Breine 1989, 6). Similarly to prefigurative practices of political organisation and mobilisation, *prefigurative pedagogies* understand the process of learning as integral to the “live practice of the movement, relationships and political forms that ‘prefigured’ and embodied the desired society” (Breines 1989, 6). Following this set of values, *prefigurative pedagogies* may provide and sustain a site of learning, where individuals begin to enact their desired way of belonging in society through nurturing non-hierarchical relationships. In “Zine III_ii Mutual belongings; prefigurative pedagogies and the medium of zines. Self-organised circulation of knowledges in the community” I have attempted an analysis of the fieldwork of this research at the intersection of prefigurative pedagogies’ and intersectional feminism’s literature. Focusing

this time on the anthropological aspect of this fieldwork and more specifically on the human experiences, my observations and understandings of the complementarity of the methodological tool of factional stories within the frame prefigurative pedagogies have helped me share with the reader(s) through the following text the interiors and the testimonies of the collaborators. Before I proceed to a more detailed analysis, I invite the reader(s) to an unmediated navigation through some selected materials that may provide insight to the our collective efforts to rehearse prefigurative pedagogies within the practice of collaborative improvisation and composition through the medium of transmedia poetry; [note I](#), [note II](#), [note III](#), [note IV](#), [note VI](#), [sound improvisation](#), [collective cooking/dinner I](#), [collective cooking/dinner II](#), [poem sketch](#), [mapping the process](#).

Also, in the process of writing about and reflecting upon the nuances, observations, information and findings of this research, I have been guided by *prefigurative pedagogies* and methodologies of *fictional narrative*, that helped me collect, document and share the material and immaterial aspects of this research. The guiding principles of these pedagogies and methodologies have suggested ways through which I can hold myself accountable and do justice to the affective, artistic and intellectual labour of the collaborators and the *assemblage* as a whole. Transcribing conversations, artistic and learning processes, as well as relationalities into text presents a researcher with many challenges, one of which may result in an intentional or unintentional disregard for the positionality and perspective of each collaborator. The process of writing the factional stories of this thesis included listening attentively to the recorded conversations and reading the reflective notes of the collective conversation in relation to instances of the encounters and the fieldwork overall. Engaging with a methodology of *fictional narrative* within the notion of *prefigurative pedagogies* has offered me a framework to write and introduce to reader(s) the factional stories as a means of reflecting on the positionality of the collaborators, my role as a facilitator, the relationships between us, and the effectiveness of the pedagogical approach we engaged with during the encounters of the workshop.

Towards the mission of *writing with* the voices of the collaborators rather than *for* them, I implemented a three-phase methodology: first I collected relevant information from collaborators (one-to-one interviews), then I organised a group discussion to reflect on the overall process of the workshop, and finally I shared the factional stories that I wrote with them to receive their feedback and proceed with the final edits to the text.

In the process I discovered that, far from merely being a tool for self-reflection, the use of *fictional stories* enhanced unexpected aspects of the workshop itself. One-to-one interviews (part-one) of the process, for example resulted in participants giving

suggestions about potentially new directions for the workshop, expressing their immediate needs with regards to the process, and providing me with prompt feedback. This feedback included reflecting upon their expectations from the workshop. As well, they expressed their opinion on how the activities of collaborative improvisation and composition could be tailored to make everyone feel equal to each other. They also shared what would motivate them intellectually and emotionally in the context of the fieldwork. During part-one of the interview process individual collaborators and I discussed specific moments of the workshop encounters to clarify what their expectations were and how the facilitation of the fieldwork and the activities of collaborative improvisation and composition can be shaped. The aim was to ensure they feel engaged in a collective and non-hierarchical process and their intellectual and emotional utterances would be motivated. Core element of these discussions was how each individual's background may influence the way they experience the workshop process. After the completion of the first phase (part one), there was noticeable change in the engagement of the collaborators in the sessions in a way that influenced the facilitation and development of the fieldwork: participants took initiative more readily by contributing ideas, they shared the facilitation of the process, suggested activities and assisted their realisation. As such I found these early interviews to have instilled a feeling of trust among the collaborators, who saw this action as an affirmation of my intention to lead a workshop on the basis of horizontal power relations. From my perspective, this experience changed aspects of facilitating the workshop since I needed to rethink some of the activities, my role, the dynamics, to introduce a slower pace in the activities, think together, try out and reflect upon different ways of improvising with sound, image and text as well as methodologies of composing poetry with sound, image, words and bodies. Moreover, I gained insight into collaborators' experience and effects of listening, observation and response on non-hierarchical manner.

The discussion and collective self-reflection (part two) took place almost at the end of the fieldwork it contributed significantly to my own understanding of the whole process, and naturally to the writing of the factional stories. In the beginning of this process and in preparation for the discussion, each participant was invited to answer a series of questions in the form of diary entries in the room by means of text, image and play. Following that, we discussed the questions and opened up to share our answers and their subtext. This gave us the opportunity to put into words our experience of the fieldwork textually, orally, and visually, as some of the collaborators drew some of their answers on paper. In this way, collaborators were engaged in the conversation without demonstrating signs of hesitation when voicing their opinions. They were given time to reflect personally, in the beginning of this session, also in part-one of this method-

ology and informally in various instances throughout the workshop encounters. Such instances included discussions, taking decisions, and self-organising collectively.

The factional stories were written after the completion of the workshop encounters, between May and September 2023. The final editing (part - three) was conducted via email exchanges between myself and the collaborators between December 2023 and February 2024. Zine IV_ii is an interpretation of all three parts of the process in a series of short factional stories and vignettes. Their form and writing style follow also the principles of 'ethnopoetics' which, as will be unfolded in the following section, intended to capture and convey to the reader the aesthetic, rhythmic, and performative qualities, as well as the affect of the exchanges between the collaborators and myself.

Factional stories in the form of vignettes and poems, were chosen for their capacity to prompt conversation within and beyond the context of this research. As well, this format makes the synthesis of the testimonies multivocal for two reasons; one being the desire to resist homogeneity across the testimonies and the subjectivities and the other to make space for the reader to engage with an interior dialogue. This dialogue aspires to share with the reader(s) the nuances, emotions as well as the uncertainties that arose throughout the fieldwork and in the writing process of this dissertation. In other words, it wishes to give space for inner and collective dialogue with self and others. Homogeneity is challenged though providing short stories that are interconnected and autonomous at the same time. The particularities of each story, both in terms of content and form are vital to the realisation of this aim. To maintain anonymity, some of the stories encapsulate experiences, affects and histories of more than one person. Other stories might amplify the voice, positionality and history of a single collaborator. The use of singular second person in the vast majority of the vignettes does not only highlight a desire to build upon our collective voice but to remind readers of possible connections. It is second person, either singular or plural, that is intended to invite the reader to explore how much of what they read resonates with their experiences and learnings. As researchers, artists, collaborators, friends, listeners and readers, we are confronted with our ethnographies, hopes, struggles and imaginings to then invent ways of realising, overcoming and resisting in a less individual but rather collective manner.

LISTENING, CAPTURING AND TRANSFORMING QUALITATIVE DATA INTO STORIES

According to sociologist Patricia Leavy, data should be perceived as existing on a continuum together with emerging themes that are based on qualitative collection methods. We as researchers should not limit our research by displaying qualitative data, but somehow transform them in different forms. These themes, she argues, may be assembled, analysed and understood in the form of a story, a "fictional narrative" (Leavy 2013, 131). Accordingly, I collated the data I collected from the first two phases/ parts of the in-depth interviewing then transform them into a series of research-oriented vignettes, otherwise known as *factional stories*. In these, – a first draft text – I attempted to intertwine the voices of each of my collaborators with my own as a collaborator and researcher. I borrowed words and phrases my collaborators used in the interviews and edited them into fictionalised accounts that propelled the narrative forward. Each story is constructed as a collage of words, phrasings and expressions of the collaborators, as they were recorded and then transcribed in written form. For the narration to remain anonymous, I avoided the use of quotation marks. The construction of a meta-narrator, a collective voice, was yet another attempt to understand and reflect upon the similarities and disparities between the collaborators, our positionalities and whether intersectional feminism can be a key to ensuring polyphony in collaborative improvisation and composition. The purpose of this approach was to suggest a method of constructing and sharing meaning in relation to collaborative and transmedia writing and improvising through showing those instances of comfort and challenge, uncertainty and reassurance, concurrence and disaccord, perplexity, difference and similarity amongst all collaborators. As Alexis Kalio (2015) argues, when we engage actively in the process of listening and reading stories, our focus is no longer on what we learn *from* but *through* the stories. Mary Ann Lanier argues that in her own fieldwork she employs diverse methodologies that allow her to collect data from different perspectives: by re-imagining the words and actions of participants to her workshops she creates "a novella with dialogue" (Lanier 2024, 165). In a similar fashion, "Zine IV_ii Weaving Factional stories in the form of short vignettes" is a series of retellings that instrumentalise imagination and interpretation in order to convey the complexity and the polyphony of the process from a partial and situated viewpoint. In other words, and as Lanier herself specifies, this is not an exercise intending to reproduce the events of the workshops for an audience that wasn't present, but an interpretation of events that resembles normative qualitative study through other means (Lanier 2024, 165). For the same reasons, but also to avoid any particular collaborator's voice being foregrounded and compromising the intended multivocal account, the

factional stories presented here do not provide a linear narration of the events of the fieldwork. Rather they resemble a “back and forth” in time, and the order in which events are portrayed does not correspond to the order in which things happened. The nonlinear morphology of the text was a means for avoiding any particular collaborator’s voice being foregrounded, while providing a multivocal account, where all voices of the collaborators are rendered in an anonymous narrator and/or the second person of the narrative. As such readers are invited to disregard the order in which the texts are presented and follow their own interests. The themes that arose in the course of my interviews/conversations with the collaborators are presented in a way that foregrounds the dialogic character of these exchanges. Examples of this intention are the stories “Tongue”, “Can you stay a bit longer?”, “Is your freedom killing me?” and “Unled or misled”, “Give me a minute or two?”, amongst others. In other stories, I adjusted the text by adding, removing, or reordering words to enhance the multivocal aspect of some experiences, or I foregrounded the singularity of perspectives, without altering their meaning. Some representative examples are the stories “Once you asked me” and “Pop Corn”, amongst others. Part of the dialogic nature of the factional stories was a discussion with my collaborators following the completion of the first draft. In this discussion (part two) the collaborators responded to the stories I wrote and related their own experience and recollections of the fieldwork as well as their thoughts on the idea of creating factional stories out of a commonly remembered event that I had reinterpreted for all of us. In this way, the factional stories also became a process of converging with the collaborators in editing the content and the form. They served as a heuristic means to construct and communicate a shared sense of meaning between us. By employing fictive writing, the narratives became processual and assisted my intention to articulate common and contrasting experiences. The collaborators raised questions, expressed their agreement and dissent. All these were incorporated into my personal fictionalised perspective. By doing so, I aimed at foregrounding commonalities and disparities. For this reason, I decided to assume a ‘composite voice’ and a second-person style of narration.

On another level, the use of factional texts aspires to provide non-academic readers of this research a friendlier way into the larger theoretical frameworks usually used in academia. Factional stories invite the reader to relate to our experience of the workshop and perhaps take part in an asynchronous dialogue way through employing their imagination. Where the communication of subtle meanings and mutual understanding may be inhibited by expressive barriers and misunderstandings, the use of factional stories as a method, employ the form of story-telling itself in order to convey the message. “Factional stories serve as a methodological tool that considers stories as

expressing more than its content information.” (Leavy, 2013). In the following sections of this Zine, I will provide an insight to the reader(s) of how factional stories as a methodological tool has contributed to my analysis, reflection and understanding of central aspects of this research and my practice in general. More specifically, the various steps of this methodology have been the ‘key’ not only to the positionality of the collaborators, but to their personal experiences and emotions in relation and beyond the shared process of improvisation and composition. Accordingly, our interiors, whether affective, emotional and intellectual, had a significant impact on our potential to collaborate on an equal basis. Collecting qualitative data during the first two steps of this methodological approach, transcribing them into text, when necessary, and reflecting upon them in relation to the entries of my personal reflective journal, preceded the writing of the factional stories. It has been a lengthy and detailed process that took a considerable amount of thinking, before writing and editing the factional stories. Each of those stages in its own way contributed to a transformative process for me in terms of how I perceive my role as an amasser of information, experiences reflections and transmitter of these to the potential reader(s). Over time, the methodology of factional stories exposed me to various states of being and feeling, such as being in awe with the importance of the information shared with me regarding the positionality and previous experiences of the collaborators, while at other times a feeling of uncertainty about my skills and capacity to analyse and convey them to the reader(s), a feeling of insecurity about the use of language and writing style of the factional stories and whether I could achieve a multivocal narration. As well, applying this methodology has offered me the opportunity to practice listening with attention to all the qualitative data that I collected. I am excited to delve into the mess of information and materials, in diverse mediums – from text, to recorded interviews and conversations, to notes and oral reflective journal entries – to analyse and synthesize them in a series of stories. Transforming the qualitative data into factional stories has helped me overcome feeling overwhelmed with the wealth of information, impressions, reflections of collaborators, granting access to a playful process of writing between facts and fiction, experience and interpretation. Most importantly, this methodology has been key to expressing my gratitude to the collaborators for trusting me with their thoughts and feelings. In the following sections of this text, I attempt to articulate how this methodology has been a tool of personal and collective negotiation of *failure* based on the subjects’ situatedness, as well as the possibilities of re-conceptualising it in a context of collective unlearning. Practicing this methodology within a territory of prefigurative pedagogies highlighted their interconnectedness and complementarity when we are willing to rehearse non-hierarchical transdisciplinary improvisation and composition.

THREE-PART SERIES INTERVIEWING; THE METHODOLOGY

This part of my research followed the model of a three-part series interviewing method, which aimed to understand the background of each collaborator, the sociopolitical and economic realities each of us has been socialised in, as well as the commonalities

and disparities between us. The first part – early analysis – of the in-depth interviews was conducted half-way through the fieldwork– between encounter-four and encounter-six of the workshop –on an individual basis. The focus of this interview and conversation was the articulating how we have been socialised in our artistic practice and every-day life in relation to gender, race, sex and class, as well as sharing elements of our biographies relevant to the subject matter of the workshop series. Since the open call-invitation to the fieldwork did not enquire about the participants’ positioning in the class stratification system, my knowledge of their background and their class positioning in terms of class, my knowledge of their background and class positioning remained limited until they were given the space and time to offer more information during the one-to-one interviews.

No matter how central to our artistic, social and political organising/mobilising is to initiate and sustain conversations about class, or else about the “elephant in the feminist room”, we often realised that not all of us committed to engaging with them. Not all of us are ready to abolish our privilege, especially when not confronted with the struggles of bodies that are significantly more oppressed than ours. The constellation of this assemblage has failed to reflect the multiculturalism of its geographical context. The assemblage consisted of collaborators from different countries, with different residency status in Greece. All of us though were white. This research failed to rise above some challenges of feminism and queer feminism in the West, but as it does not aspire to be complete and perfect, it constitutes yet another step – a practical and theoretical – to unearth those inconsistencies and coexist with “the” or “the multiple” *elephants* in the rooms of our own, the rooms where we meet each other to weave counter-institutional methodologies and pedagogies. Having a better understanding of the similarities and disparities across the subjectivities of the assemblage, I have come to approach the writing of the factional stories with less fear of appropriating voices. This became possible given my positionality in relation to those of the collaborators; I felt at ease to know that this written dissertation, and the factional stories that it includes, is not produced by yet another white person writing about bodies of colour, not another man writing for non-male subjects.

Considering my double role as an insider and outsider in this research, my relationality with the interviewees during the interviews and the workshop encounters was mainly dialogical, through conversation or through non-verbal improvisation and composition. Other modalities of communication included email and text exchange. The shifting of my role from interviewer to interviewee at certain moments, gave the interviews, gave the interviews the added aspect of a dynamic conversation at times, which contributed to the fostering of a deeper connection and mutual understanding between myself and

the collaborators; one that was an extension of the relationalities developed over the course of the workshop encounters.

The focus of the second part of the interviews was to allow individuals to reconstruct details of their experience and share their reflections as a group within the context in which the research took place. Reflecting the collective essence of our shared artistic practice and fieldwork as a whole, the second part of the interview series was conducted just before the final session, during the seventh encounter. This scheduling decision was made to accommodate the unavailability of a few individuals to attend the last encounter (encounter number 8). Putting flexibility and adaptability into practice is often reflected in minor adjustments that one is willing to undertake as a facilitator and collaborator, ensuring that the research process remains accessible and accommodates all collaborators' needs. This flexibility and possibility to adjust the structure of the process was a rehearsal of prefigurative pedagogies and socially engaged practice, as a way of moving towards a non-hierarchical site of learning and making collaboratively. This phase allowed me to observe the experiences and reflections of the collaborators, in order to understand the ways in which interconnectedness, multivocality and equality were becoming possible and to what extent, within the context of the fieldwork. By the time the collective discussion of phase two was conducted, the collaborators had already formed relationships and shared experiences. These first two phases/parts of the methodology gave space and time for collaborators to express their contrasting feelings of appreciation and confusion, satisfaction and discomfort, which I then used in my *factional stories* to show readers the complexity and uncertainty that comes hand-in-hand with a non-hierarchical approach to facilitating improvisation and composition in a collective manner and through a hybrid medium, that of transmedia poetry.

Part-three of the process, as described above, consisted of email exchanges, a hybrid conversation and exchange with each of the collaborators (December 2023 – February 2024) on the grounds of their offering feedback for the *factional stories* and me editing the text accordingly. In this phase I was held accountable by the collaborators to be more precise at times or abstract at others, in my writing, to rephrase, omit or add aspects of the process that were more or less important for them.

STORY WEAVING

Transforming interviews, conversations, and collective reflections into a fictionalised text, or in other words weaving a story out of our experiences, is accompanied by many questions and challenges related to authority on the part of the writer. For one thing, the weaving process entails multiple contradictions. Weaving narratives alone runs the risk of turning multivocality into homogeneity, and grants the singular storyteller the authority of selection—without this necessarily implying assigning affective, artistic and pedagogical value to the pieces. It is a selection and transformation process that may be communicating the collective experience of all, but in the present case it does so through the viewpoint of one. In order to achieve some balance and avoid assuming a domineering role in the process I reviewed a variety of practices, writing styles and forms. Among others I looked at poetry, dialogue, voice memos, multilingual notes, coloured transcriptions, and oral diaries and selected *factional stories* and *ethnopoetics* as a way of transforming conversations into short stories; two methods of story weaving that are not measured by 'literary' standards but are able to hold space for multiple voices and perspectives.

The qualitative data collection offered me insight and understanding of the positionality, perspective and reflections of each collaborator and organised into a three-part interviewing framework, with borrowed elements from methodologies developed by sociologist Patricia Leavy, research methodologist and music educator Alexis Kallio, as well as qualitative research professor and educator Irving Seidman. Conducting the interview as a conversation with the interviewees and documenting different stages of the fieldwork in a multimodal manner—which aimed to capture sensorial, dialogical, emotional and intellectual information—have enabled me to adopt a multi-perspective understanding of our histories, backgrounds and entanglements as a group. The data has been presented in relation to their context in order to avoid coming to generalised conclusions that eliminate the different voices, perspectives and experiences of the group. They are intended to shed light on comfort and challenge, uncertainty and reassurance, concurrence and disaccord, perplexity and similarities amongst all collaborators. Meeting people 'where they are' has been a fundamental drive of the process of writing. As such, the nature, content and volume of information that is shared in the *factional stories* reflects our backgrounds, expectations, and contemplations individually.

The process of writing the *factional stories* mirrors the structure of the interviews and their questions. This mirroring approach provided a simulation of my personal experience of getting to know the collaborators during the interviews and conversations. My

intention is to simulate, either through facts or fiction, instances of our shared process of becoming familiar with each other using improvisation, conversation, collaborative writing/composition. The arts-based, poetic and narrative approaches both in the fieldwork and the written dissertation point to my wish to shed light on the complexity and the puzzlement of personal experiences in this shared process. Through the short vignettes/factional stories included in this zine, the reader is invited to engage with a learning and learning document, whose content in relation to the audiovisual materials of the fieldwork provide an opportunity to establish connections, define difference, hopefully explore communication between the collaborators and the readers.



WRITING UP OURSELVES

Providing an interplay between fiction and factual data, the narrative simulates the environment through multiple senses virtually. This series of factional stories have come to being through a weaving process of fiction, information and data, a coming together of the voices and realities of 11 collaborators; often real while at other times imaginary. The reader(s) is invited to an open meaning-making process, that hopes to activate their imagination and let it be captivated by the possibilities that fiction and factual data present. These factional stories do not exceed the aims of this research; they do not aspire to be evaluated as an autonomous piece/work of literature nor a canonical and factual transcription of the interviews with the collaborators. The convergence of eleven voices didn't anticipate unanimous agreement from the collaborators on every story or perspective, nor did it anticipate definite responses. Through the factional stories I did not aim to present the performative elements of every given positionality of the collaborators in a textual representation, neither were they perceived as data presentations or analyses; instead, they were viewed as sites for contemplation. The boundaries between reality and imagination blur, allowing this to be an interplay with the reader(s). The factional stories are presenting themselves with inconsistencies, blurriness, non-linearity. Those get ahead to shed light on the similarities that people, assemblages and territories, of close and remote localities and temporalities, share between them. Regardless of the necessity to provide a version of them as a part of the written dissertation thesis, I apprehend them as open-ended sites of collective writing, communicating and belonging that need to be constantly approached through a critical lens, because as Schulz, Schroeder and Brody (1997) explain, stories bring with them issues of power and research ethics that call require a careful consideration and engagement with.

In order to bring together elements of interiority, exteriority and interdependence on an intermediate stage of construction, shaping, and presentation of knowledge, ethnopoetics were employed in the methodological approach of the fieldwork and the factional stories in an attempt to do justice to the non-linearity and inconsistency of the realities within which we improvise, write, compose, perform and apprehend transmedia poetry collectively. The factional stories may be understood as a reconstructed, (re) storied, fiction[al] form laid over a 'fact-oriented' research process.

WRITING OVER TIME

The practice-based research and the writing of the dissertation span a period of almost four years; it has been a learning/unlearning process that has opened up opportunities for personal and hopefully collective transformation, especially because of the situatedness of this research. Alongside the different ways the artistic research may have been a transformative experience for the collaborators of the *assemblage*, it is important to acknowledge that while we as humans change and transform over time, so do the materials we produce. Writing, as an intellectual and embodied practice, changes over time; words change over time; and so do affects too. The transformative process that I have gone through is hard to trace or put into words, regardless of my proximity to the majority of the collaborators and the interactions we have had in the different stages of this research. The collaborators' inputs, feedback and reflections have been as dynamic as our lives are. The factional stories have emerged from a particular geography and time and are affected by my personal situatedness. In the process of writing I have tried to remain distant to notions of objectivity or neutrality, while my focus has been singular: to convey multivocality, diversity of positionalities and perspectives on the assemblage, and the territory through the lens of queer feminisms, intersectionality and transdisciplinary arts learning and practice.

The process of editing according to my collaborators' feedback was intended to contribute to this sense of multivocality, even when the author was singular. Regardless of my intentions, I am aware that practicing collectively but writing individually about non-hierarchical methodologies of collective improvisation and composition through the lens of intersectionality may be a contradiction in terms. I attempted to mitigate this contradiction through creating a multimedia workshop with a virtual component. In this way, the collective voice that I assumed in order to speak for all of us in the factional stories, forms only part of a much larger collection of fragments, testimonies, notes, artistic outputs, ideas. Words and language may often fail us. Formats and disciplines may fail too, but my choice to employ this methodological approach when collecting and writing in and with those has proven to be keeping with the nature of the work and the relationalities within the assemblage and the territory of our practice. What I consider as personal methodological failings in my journey to unlearning/ learning, as well as our collective mistakes as an assemblage, have also been captured verbally and non-verbally and are considered equally valuable material to our moments of harmony and 'success'; [poem](#), [personal reflective journal](#), [note I](#), [note II](#), [note III](#), [note IV](#), [note V](#), [poem sketch](#). Notes II and IV show the contradictory feelings two of the collaborators experienced because, even though they felt comfortable enough to express themselves among strangers, the duration of the fieldwork may have prohibited their

personal creative journey and the relationships they formed. Feelings of everyday life were expressed through poetry, according to the writer/collaborator of Note IV. The encounters inspired not only liveliness, excitement and adventure in the collaborators, but also sadness, frustration and stress. The poem sketch available below, provides a reflection about collective failure that is captured in the following phrases; "so let us unapologetically fail. rapturously and emphatically. this room doesn't fall short of a masterpiece. where are we going after this? are we there yet? no we are not. we are here going nowhere."

From the same poem sketch reader(s) may gain insight to how we experienced unlearning and writing poetry collaboratively. At the same time this collective poem reflected our shared experience in the territory we shaped and as such served as a shared memory of our sensory, and creative experience at the workshop.

*perhaps this is what poetry looks like.
sitting around a kitchen table.
dieting on the softest hard quiet.
we prepared together.
no blindfolds on our feet.
head and abdomen merged.
chaotic topography for the single-minded.*

Placing transmedia poetry at the centre of this fieldwork's (un)learning toolset, encouraged most of the collaborators to write their own [auto]ethnographies and express the sociopolitical realities of their everyday life. In the work and life of Black Feminists, as exemplified here by the writings of Audre Lorde, poetry has played an instrumental role in the emancipatory actions of Black and diasporic, queer and minoritarian communities in the USA. In her text *Poetry is Not a Luxury* (1985)¹, Lorde explicitly argued that "For women, then, poetry is not a luxury. It is a vital necessity of our existence. It forms the quality of the light within which we predicate our hopes and dreams toward survival and change, first made into language, then into idea, then into more tangible action." Moreover, when poetry is rehearsed, improvised or written in a multimodal

¹ <https://makinglearning.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/poetry-is-not-a-luxury-audre-lorde.pdf>

Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Berkeley: Crossing Press, 2007), originally published 1984.

way, one may express their selves, either literally or metaphorically easier. As well, we apprehend each other's ethnographies, we are understood and heard. In a similar fashion, [mapping the process](#) is a rhizomatic gesture that demonstrates an ongoing process of sharing, editing, and transforming materials between all collaborators; a living document that grew out of the weekly contributions of the collaborators functioning as a site of dialogue and collaboration; synchronous and/or asynchronous.

Traces of our collective efforts to apply *prefigurative politics* in the way we rehearsed, improvised and wrote transmedia poetry may be found in the following selected materials; [note I](#), [note II](#), [note III](#), [note IV](#), [note VI](#), [sound improvisation](#), [collective cooking/dinner I](#), [collective cooking/dinner II](#), [poem sketch](#). The rehearsal of such pedagogies emerged from the noise of and between the bodies, the trial and errors in improvising and writing poetry together, discussing and trying to make decisions together as an *assemblage*. In our site of learning, it was fundamental to remain aware of bell hook's insight that all participants contribute in a learning environment and influence its dynamics even at times of disengagement, disagreement, or silence (hooks, 1994, p.8). Our attempt to shape and facilitate the fieldwork as a site of anti-organisational politics of (un)learning often looked and sounded messy, noisy, non-productive with moments of 'ineffectiveness'. From this process I understood how the positionality of each individual has a significant impact on the way we engage with those pedagogies and politics, how we participate in collective decision making about the facilitation of improvisation and composition, how we express ourselves across different modalities, and therefore how we self-organise collectively a shared and equal space of (un)learning and therefore to what extent transmedia poetry and factional stories are tools and mediums that may contribute to such efforts and intersectional struggles.

In the factional stories of "Zine IV_ii Weaving Factional stories in the form of short vignettes", as well as in the collective journal notes of the collaborators, the reader will encounter some of those moments of uncertainty, confusion, 'failure'. Some notes of part-two of the methodology as well as stories that serve an example for the above analysis, can be found here: [note I](#), [note II](#), [note III](#), [note IV](#), [note V](#), [note VI](#), [note VII](#), factional stories; *never good enough*, *pause*, *unled or misled?*, *hiking the horizontal*. Through those moments of 'creative respite' I realised the importance of understanding improvisation and composition through intersectional theory and prefigurative pedagogies, so that I can constantly challenge and rethink roles such as those of the collaborator, the researcher and the facilitator in order to achieve non-hierarchical (un)learning territories.

Other moments, that would be understood as conventionally more 'productive' or

'effective', helped us move forward and practice unlearning in open, prefigurative, collaborative and non-hierarchical ways. An example of this has been our common decision to establish a shared canvas – a digital online workstation – where we could share materials, notes and ideas. *Mapping the process*, as mentioned above functioned as an asynchronous 'point of exchange' or else a place where we could throw ideas without necessarily knowing if and how they could develop. Revisiting this shared rhizomatic map of thoughts, affect and materials has given us a satisfaction that within the messy process of improvising and rehearsing materials without having a goal to create a final output, our efforts were translated into something more tangible. The materials displayed at the map were placed in such way that allows us to revisit in the future collectively or individually. Somehow this map is a way for us to refer to our experience of this research with others. *Mapping the process* also helped us move from making work to reflecting upon our work and collaboration during our group discussion at the seventh encounter of the fieldwork. Reflecting on the collective aspect of our shared artistic practice and fieldwork, the second part of the interview series, included us looking through this map of materials and their connections captured in this document-archive of materials, therefore the connections between us as collaborators of the *assemblage*.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Through the fieldwork process, the conversations and the interviews of this research, I came to understand that prefigurative (un)learning sites, such as the one I assembled, do not only need a multitude of perspectives and positionalities in order to function meaningfully, but that is multiplicity and multi- positionality that form its very foundations. For a learning site to be mutually shaped and sustained, all contributing perspectives and positionalities must be recognised as material or immaterial resources. Concomitantly, the very process of articulating and archiving those resources is a responsibility to be shared and performed equally between all participants. This newfound insight became a guiding principle in my own process of transforming the information I received from my collaborators into factional stories, in all three parts of analysing, interviewing.



FACTIONAL STORIES; A WRITING-MESS

Intersectionality and prefigurative pedagogies begin with bodies that are not at ease with the state of the world and initiate the creation of non-hierarchical sites of (un)learning as a way of realising a small-scale model of their desired society through individual and collective actions. They use ‘failure’ to challenge unchecked authority, arbitrary commands to ‘discipline’, and to overcome existing structural limitations of pedagogies they do that through failure – “a way of refusing to acquiesce to dominant logics of power and discipline and as a form of critique.” (Halberstam 2011,88). In the context of capitalism, the promoted connection between success and profit, failure and the inability of individuals to accumulate wealth, persistently underscores the function of methodologies employed within formal education structures, as part of a larger social, political and financial ideology. By the same token, following Halberstam, ‘failure’ may be reappropriated in order to become an instrument of critique that allows us to decipher the intricacies of the very hierarchical systems that have until now defined its value as universally, but also selectively, negative.

In the context of this research, the methodology of factional stories – writing with instead for others – has been a means to understand failure within the research and in relation to the sociopolitical context it existed. More specifically, I have understood that our personal ‘failures’ may become experiences that reflect systemic nuances often overlooked, silenced or erased, rather than defining moments in our intellectual development. It is to a large degree our ‘failures’ in exams, tests, and competitions that assign us normalised and hierarchical roles/positions and identities in systematised education processes. Prefigurative pedagogies has proposed principles and tools that encouraged us, the subjects of this fieldwork, to co-shape transdisciplinary (un) learning territories within which we may rehearse improvisation and writing beyond those canonical roles, for example the one of the musician, the poet, the visual artist, the video artist and the facilitator. Through this I have come to realise that collaborative improvisation and composition may well become practices of and for justice and equality, territories that prefigure ways of suspending appropriation of the site of transdisciplinary learning, if rehearsed through the lens of intersectionality. By virtue of prefigurative pedagogies, we avoided imposing on the encounters of the workshop a specific systematised educational process based on hierarchical roles and structures. We certainly ‘failed’ to produce a specific artistic output that would be assigned to value, according to the capitalistic notion of experiencing and trading art. We ‘failed’ by choice to provide a rigid definition of transmedia poetry as a medium, but by acknowledging the inherited contradictions of roles such as those of the artist, the educator, the facilitator, the collaborator, the researcher, we tried to improvise and compose

transmedia poetry in a messy, polyphonic and non-linear way. Our approach to improvisation was very much driven by the materials rather than a specific method. While improvising we documented our process to listen/read/look back and then discuss if and how the materials could inform the compositional process. Often the captured materials were the draft poems themselves, meaning that the processes of improvisation and composition would often overlap. Other times the collaborators approached making the *mapping the process* document as the compositional process itself, while at still other times we collectively decided to only improvise with materials without this being followed by a composition process, without that being documented at all, so that it remains ephemeral. Our collective discussions about failure and our understanding of trial, error, productivity and value within neoliberal capitalism was instigated by the reading Halberstam's article, introduced to the assemblage by one of the collaborators. At times we transformed those conversations and intellectual exchange to [sound and text](#), either in the context of a [collective improvisation](#) or a sketch of a [transmedia poem](#). From a place of vulnerability and by establishing an environment of trust and support, we attempted to rehearse Samuel Beckett's aspiration as a way of entering improvisation, writing and composition in a transmedia and collaborative manner;

Ever tried? Ever failed? No matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better

Samuel Beckett (1983, 7)

Through the practice, the testimonies, the reflections and the written dissertation, it has become apparent for those who are interested in exploring equity in art pedagogies, what we often fail in believing that it is possible to facilitate and sustain such spaces. In other words, we may ultimately fail to reclaim hope for equity. In some of the factional stories shared in the section "Zine IV_ii Weaving Factional stories in the form of short vignettes", collaborators and myself included, shared our disappointment and dysphoria, when at times during the process we realised how difficult it is to enter the process with a willingness to see and listen to each other on an eye basis. Therefore, we articulated a shared desire for equity in our positionalities that would consequently allow for more equal collaborative arts-making. We hoped for a constructive social change to happen and for collaborative arts practice to contribute to this, but we often realised that we may reproduce literal and figurative borders that exclude otherness, because such decision poses no threat to existing privileges. For it takes responsibility to (un)learn together and hold each other when located outside of the canonical and the institutional. For it takes a big risk to practice art and conduct research in a "mess"

of positionalities, disciplines, desires, abilities and needs;. As well, writing reflections, feelings, nuances, entanglements lived and shared by collaborators is challenging, especially when the outcome of the writing will be read from people in the periphery or outside of this intimate learning/unlearning territory. As a researcher after the completion of the fieldwork, I have realised that at times the lack of cohesion of the documented materials – the messiness and the non-linearity in the way they relate to one another – make the process of analysis rather challenging. Formulating arguments and coming to conclusions that may function as my contribution to the field of transdisciplinary pedagogies from the messiness of the materials has pushed me to explore methodologies and tools such as *factional stories*, *ethnopoetics* and *zines*. Those tools and frames have provided me with the confidence to set priorities in the research; attend to the positionalities of the collaborators, adjust the facilitation of the fieldwork to the delimitations shared by the collaborators, practice trust and support in order to express our interiors, acknowledge vulnerability within the processes of improvisation and composition, inhabit diverse roles and allow this to introduce messiness and confusion in the overall experience. Depending on each person's positionality and point of perspective, both *failure* and *messiness* may be construed differently and this provides our future conversations on the subject of plurality and diversity. Aiming towards a conversation that affords multi-perspectives that are expressed in equity, I have shared with the reader(s) of this thesis audiovisual sketches, notes and journal entries of the collaborators - [fieldwork notes](#), [collective journal](#), [personal journal entries](#) – that capture some expressions of multifaceted experiences of failure, achievement, togetherness, intellectual stimulation, boredom, awkwardness, connection, amongst other, that we shared in this fieldwork.

NAVIGATING ACROSS AND BEYOND

Arts-based research crosses disciplinary, methodological, and theoretical borders (Leavy, 2011). Arts-based research, such as this one, is developed within transdisciplinary methodologies, practices and literature that rely on more than one discipline, practice, geography and tradition. Arts-based research is transdisciplinary and therefore, according to Chilton and Leavy (2014, 410), it “can be (en)acted, (en)cultured, and (em)bodied through performative inquiry”. During our workshop encounters improvisation and composition have been experienced as acts of engagement not only via textual, sonic, and visual manner, but also as cognitive and affective processes rooted in the body and its senses; vision, hearing, touch, smell, taste. As for olfaction and gustation— smell and taste— we engaged with them during session seven, in the form of collective kitchen where we slow-cooked and ate together at FAC.

In the encounters leading up to the collective kitchen, we facilitated a tea and coffee “corner” at the workshop space, where most of us offered snacks, fresh fruit and sweets. Half-way through each encounter we took a fifteen-minutes break to socialise freely at this “corner”. We had one-to-one and intimate conversations not necessarily related to the workshop. Tactile perception, or else touch, was activated during our warm-up routines, where we would explore how sound resonates through our bodies. By practicing Pauline Oliveros scores and sonic meditations, the collaborators were gently guided to locate the vibrations and the sounds of their bodies not only through listening but also by touching their bodies. As an example, they placed their palms on their chest to feel their heartbeat invited attention and focus in listening to the heartbeat itself. To explore the sense of touch in a collective manner we practiced a series of exercises and improvisations such as the piece “Heart chant” by Pauline Oliveros (2001); “place your right hand over your own heart. Place your left hand on the back of your left-hand partner (back of the heart)”. Singing, listening, writing, drawing, translating, recording, cooking, eating, making tea and coffee, drinking, observing and pay attention to one another were ways by which we (en)acted, (en)cultured, and (em)bodied transmedia poetry. By checking-in with each other regularly, we were introduced to the significance of our different positionalities as they manifest through lived experience and emotions.

Representative sections of “Zine IV_ii Weaving Factional stories in the form of short vignettes” in relation to the sharing of positionalities of the subjects-collaborators are; *All of you, Tongue, Devastating victory / Clamouring defeat, Cakes and tears, Notes allowed or Unapologetic melodies, Once you asked me*. Additionally, the reader(s) may be interested in selected archived materials of the collective journal, brainstorm process, and collective poem sketches as characteristic examples that reflect this effort; [note I](#), [note II](#), [note III](#), [poem sketch I](#), [improvised conversation I](#), [improvised conversation II](#).



STORIES IN TRANSMEDIA DIALOGUE

The factional stories may be “oppositional, subversive, transformational, and otherwise resistive” (Leavy, 2011, 106). They become available with the intention to be of help to collectives, facilitators, individuals, practitioners, thinkers and artists who are interested in exploring the potentialities of a non-hierarchical intersectional site of (un) learning by making art and/or making art by unlearning. In the context of this research, factional stories are in dialogue with transmedia poetry. The possibility of communicating perspectives and lived experiences through factional stories and ethnopoetics foregrounds verbal, non-verbal, meta-verbal, sonic, visual and performative ways of learning, knowing and experiencing the everyday by means of attentive listening, observing and sounding. By exploring the notion of attentiveness and relationality within artistic processes, this research provides findings that might be of potential use to practitioners, pedagogues and artists who understand collective writing of transmedia poetry as a means for social change.

During the process we improvised stories and documented them. We composed soundscapes, captured and synthesised landscapes. We improvised poetry beyond words and got lost in translation between more than two languages. We sung together, filmed our hands moving. We talked about the invisible labour of marginalised-non-masculine bodies in the arts, the invisible hands of the silenced and often erased bodies. Factional stories and ethnopoetics assist in shedding light to various aspects of feminist collectivity, emancipation, struggle and failure as we have experienced them throughout this fieldwork. For writing up of the interviews into stories, I borrowed elements from ethnopoetics; an approach to oral poetry that employs flexibility in writing form and format, for to capture the practice, the process and the narratives *on their own terms*. In ethnopoetics, the intellect, cognitive, sensorial and affective are to be encapsulated in the written text. Ethnopoetics encourage the practices of reading, representing, and reperforming (Foley, 2002). Within transdisciplinary research, the above can be enacted through various mediums and media, such as sound, words, image, that might contribute to a more in-reach approach to making, sharing and comprehending art.

Ethnopoetics, as a practice of listening, a means of engagement that resists the flattening of oral traditions into the fixity of the written word, is understood not only as a method of transcription but an encounter with the ephemeral and embodied presence of language. Ethnopoetics are understood, in the context of this research, by the writings of scholars and writers such as Paula Gunn Allen, Dennis Tedlock and Trinh T. Minh-ha challenge the authority of conventional literary structures by seeking ways to inscribe the fluidity of voice, rhythm, and breathing onto the page. Space becomes

available for the performative dimensions of storytelling, and words are levelled with silences, pauses, and gestures. As Allen and Minh-ha argue (Allen 1986, 233–35; Minh-ha 1989, 42–45), preserving knowledge that exists outside the structures of colonial and patriarchal domination may entail focusing on the oral. Most importantly it may encourage us to seek meaning beyond words, but at how they spoken, the interplay between sound and silence (Tedlock 1983, 19–21), noise and speech, the environment and the relationalities between the bodies of the listener and the speaker. Looking into ethnopoetics has prompted me to approach the task of writing factional stories not as a challenge of translation but of reconfiguration; to reimagine writing as an act of attention that remains incomplete. As a process of unlearning canonical methodologies of listening and writing, becoming more familiar with ethnopoetics has provided me with an opening to how traditional methods of transcription and analysis often erase the fluid, nonlinear, and polyvocal qualities of women’s oral traditions (Minh-ha 1989, 94–96). Consequently, the structure and the content of the interviews, how I enter the space as a listener and interlocutor and the practice of writing up the factional stories *with* the collaborators of the fieldwork, had very much to do with my efforts to become attentive in the ways that those scholars and writers suggest.

The reader of the factional stories may notice that they are not written in a single form or style. Some resemble the form of a vignette, while others that of a poem. Tending to prefigurative pedagogies, some of the factional stories emerge from an anti-organisational, non-linear, hard-to-follow writing style. This has been an intentional approach, aiming at transforming the affect and the ephemeral of the exchanges with the collaborators into written text. The writing of the factional stories has been highly influenced by works of writers such as Carmen Maria Machado, Kae Tempest and Virginia Woolf. Here a few examples of writing styles and forms that differ; “tongue”, “your privilege will not be televised”, “can you stay a bit longer”, “FSS”, “pause”, “hiking the horizontal”.

The third stage of this methodology functioned as an opportunity to return from the solitary act of writing to the collective. By offering the opportunity to the collaborators to provide feedback and by incorporating it to the final edit of the factional stories, the researcher holds themselves accountable before their collaborators and their learning and artistic communities. Sharing the draft document of the factional stories with them has been an invitation to an asynchronous conversation, in which they not only contributed to the editing of the stories with their feedback, but share responsibility with me to provide to reader(s) a piece of reading that resists homogeneity, appropriation and underrepresentation of voices.

PART ONE - ONE-TO-ONE INTERVIEW OUTLINE - QUESTIONS (EN)

Could you share your full name, gender that you identify with, your pronoun and age?

Would you like this interview to be conducted in English and/or Greek?

What is your first language?

Would you like to share some information about yourself and your background in relation to gender, class and race?

In which ways do you relate and/or engage with the arts and specific arts practices?

How does gender, race, class and age inform your engagement with the arts and art practices?

In which ways does queer feminism inform your life?

In which ways does queer feminism inform your practice/work?

Have you been familiar with transmedia poetry before your participation in the workshop Waiting with/for Baubo?

Can transmedia poetry serve as a tool and a medium to practice queer feminism and if so, in which ways?

What role does music play in your life?

Have you engaged in processes of collective improvisation and composition before?

If so, could you briefly one instant that stands out for you and why?

How do position yourself in relation to collective non-hierarchical artistic processes?

Is “non-hierarchical” achievable and what does it take to achieve this in a collective process such as this one?

What would you like to take from this workshop?

Would you like to add anything to and/or revise any of your answers?

PART ONE - ONE-TO-ONE INTERVIEW OUTLINE - QUESTIONS (GR)

Θα μπορούσες να μοιραστείς το όνομά σου, το φύλο με το οποίο προσδιορίζεσαι, την αντωνυμία και την ηλικία σου;

Θα ήθελες η συνέντευξη να διεξαχθεί στα αγγλικά ή/και στα ελληνικά;

Ποια είναι η πρώτη σας γλώσσα;

Θα ήθελες να μοιραστείτε κάποιες πληροφορίες για τ@ εαυτ@ σε σχέση με το φύλο, την τάξη και τη θέση/κουλτούρα προέλευσής σου;

Με ποιους τρόπους σχετίζεσαι ή/και εμπλέκεσαι με τις τέχνες και συγκεκριμένες καλλιτεχνικές πρακτικές;

Πώς το φύλο, η φυλή, η τάξη και η ηλικία επηρεάζουν την ενασχόλησή σου με τις τέχνες και τις καλλιτεχνικές πρακτικές;

Με ποιους τρόπους ο queer φεμινισμός διατρέχει τη ζωή σου;

Με ποιους τρόπους ο queer φεμινισμός διατρέχει τις πρακτικές/εργασία σου

Έχεις έρθει σε επαφή/έχεις ασχοληθεί με τη διαμεσική ποίηση πριν από τη συμμετοχή σου στο εργαστήριο Waiting with/for Baubo;

Μπορεί η διαμεσική ποίηση να αποτελέσει εργαλείο και μέσο για την πρακτική εφαρμογή του queer φεμινισμού και αν ναι, με ποιους τρόπους;

Έχεις συμμετάσχει στο παρελθόν σε διαδικασίες συλλογικού/ομαδικού αυτοσχεδιασμού και σύνθεσης; Αν ναι, θα μπορούσες να αναφέρεις εν συντομία μια στιγμή που ξεχωρίζεις και γιατί;

Ποια είναι η θέση σου σχετικά με τις συλλογικές μη ιεραρχικές καλλιτεχνικές διαδικασίες;

Είναι το «μη ιεραρχικό» εφικτό και τι χρειάζεται για να επιτευχθεί μέσα στο πλαίσιο μιας συλλογική διαδικασία όπως αυτή;

Τι θα ήθελες να πάρεις από αυτό το εργαστήριο;

Θα ήθελες να προσθέσεις κάτι σε ή/και να αναθεωρήσεις κάποια από τις απαντήσεις σας;

PART TWO - COLLECTIVE REFLECTION DISCUSSION - QUESTIONS/
PROMPTS (EN)

No one can put a story inside me (but me)

Hiking the horizontal; basic instructions

Is that what poetry feels like?

We could...

Poetry games

Additional questions that were used during the discussion [here](#)

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II. WEAVING: FACTIONAL STORIES IN THE FORM OF SHORT VIGNETTES

Δε θα νιώσω ποτέ πιο έτοιμη, οπότε εντάξει
I'll never feel more ready, so let's do this

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ALL OF YOU

You are between 25 and 38 years old. You mainly use female pronouns. You may identify with a gender. Sometimes you prefer not to. Between February and April you spend your Monday evenings in the ground floor room of FAC, right next to Agios Panteleimon Church together with a bunch of people you had never met before. When you arrive, you make yourself a cup of tea. You keep a good hold of it until you feel your hands, then your voice, warm enough to speak. Sometimes, when you leave you feel yourself more present than before, sometimes utterly lost.

It's Monday afternoon, you check the time on your phone. It's almost 5pm, you need to get going, you don't want to be the last one to arrive.

TONGUE

You often find yourself in places where people ask you what your mother tongue is.

Mother tongue; definition

Mother tongue; definition – let's hear it from philosopher Ivan Illich (1926 – 2002)

The term was first used by Catholic monks to designate a particular language they were using, instead of Latin, when they were *speaking from the pulpit*. Inherited from Christianity – part of the larger project of colonialism – this term was introduced to the colonies by “holy mother the Church”.

What's your mother tongue?

Please, rephrase.

What's your ~~mother tongue~~ first language?

You take a few seconds to make sure where the question is coming from. Nine out of ten times, you know the person asking is a so-called “native speaker”, expressing their authority on their given language as opposed to others having learned it later in life.

You speak English whether it's your first language or not. You also speak a couple more languages you have either learned since you were a child or later in your life, such as German, Greek, Albanian, French and a couple of dialects. To be more precise, when in doubt with a language or dialect, you lean on how own hands move, how their face changes. Sometimes you feel at home, knowing that even if you do not wish to speak, you could get your tongue around the matter, but you still choose to remain silent. Keep listening or drift away. There are days though that you enter the world with a still tongue and you wish there was somebody in the room, right next to you, to help you find the letters, place them in the right order, make some sense or even speak up for you while you are moving arms and legs, eyes and lips, feeling speechless.

Your privilege is alive and televised

You are white. It reads on you on the street. It reads in airports and custom offices,

when waiting in lines to get things done – to pay the bills, get yourself a residence permit or a library card - not knowing a single word in Greek other than “kalimera”, “efxaristo”, “malakas”. It reminds you of all the small things you take for granted. Often evident and therefore institutionalised – your habitus, the habitus of a white body. You realise and get all frustrated about your western-European-privileged position. You are seeing the world through the lens of “I have a right”.

Down the road where you live the basement flat is rented by at least 10 people, mainly male bodies of colour. They take turns in sleeping. Morning to evening, they take turns to take a two-hours nap. Then, they disappear. You might stumble upon one or two a couple of weeks later, or not. Every time you wonder where they are you remind yourself of the latest conversation you had on the phone with your landlord; “It’s the inflation, the war in Ukraine, my daughter is studying abroad. I have no choice, but to raise the rent”. You are still hanging there, haven’t moved out yet. Let’s be blunt about this; you can still afford it.

You ~~will not~~ are able to stay home, ~~brother~~ sister

You ~~will not~~ are able to plug in, turn on and cop out

You ~~will not~~ are able to lose yourself on skag

And skip out for beer during commercials, because

~~The revolution will not be~~ Your privileged is alive and televised

You wear a pair of aged jeans and a jacket to cover you t-shirt-like-pyjama, and start walking down that same street. You have accepted the challenge; today you will register the flat under your own name in the Public Power Corporation. You can afford the extra fifty euros of the rent-raise. You are about to waste a bunch of hours queueing in the local ΔΕΗ customer services branch. Another wasted morning, you mumble. You keep walking, you are standing at the door when you decide to smoke a cigarette; kill some time before you walk in. You look at the wall on your right; “REVOLUTION IS NOT A ONE TIME EVENT, exhibition, performances, screenings, workshops”. What’s wrong with all of us white people? All you wanna do is scream your lungs out, instead you

put on your headphones. Will the voice of Gil Scott Heron ²do any better. You keep smoking.

The revolution will not be right back

After a message about a white tornado

White lightning, or white people

You will not have to worry about a dove in your bedroom

The tiger in your tank, or the giant in your toilet bowl

The revolution will not go better with Coke

The revolution will not fight germs that may cause bad breath

The revolution will put you in the driver’s seat

The revolution will not be televised

Will not be televised

Will not be televised

Will not be televised

The revolution will be no re-run, brothers

The revolution will be live

² Gilbert Scott-Heron (April 1, 1949 - May 27, 2011); American jazz poet, singer, musician, and author known for his work as a spoken-word performer in the 1970s and 1980s.

DEVASTATING VICTORY / CLAMOURING DEFEAT

“Eyes seem to roll wherever you go, whatever you say. In fact, you don’t even have to say anything before eyes start rolling”

Sarah Ahmed, *Living a feminist life*, Chapter 1, page 38

You have all the reasons to roll your eyes back to them, but you are constantly telling yourself not to. They are taking everything away from you and this is one of those things. You wanna roll your eyes 9 out of 10 times every day, but you hate yourself every time you do it.

And now, you are sitting on her couch, in her little studio on the top floor of an Athenian block of flats. You are having coffee while smoking a cigarette. You hope stress will fade away soon. She seems relaxed, but she is not, so why should you be all-aware and careful? And then, she “drops the mic” by asking how do you relate to the notion of state. You can’t help rolling your eyes. Two white bodies contemplating on borders, nationalities and sense of belonging.

You have found yourself many times in places where being white mattered the least, but still being white helped you get through the day, get through life. All you wanna say is that the country you were socialised the most till this day, was not of your own choice. But is there really a place you wish you had grown up? The ones you often move to, when you want to escape precariousness, have food markets with fruits and vegetables that taste like an A4 paper. Well, your bank account looks at its best and your fridge is stuffed with goodies. You go out for drinks with friends and feel no guilt to hop in a taxi instead of taking two night-buses to reach your flat after a crazy night out. You are there now. Until you move again, and again.

She puts song on Spotify. She claims it’s her favourite artist. You know this song well, you have sung along those lyrics many times. It was right after Brexit; Kae Tempest singing; *Europe is lost, America lost, London lost. Still, we are clamouring victory. All that is meaningless rules. We have learned nothing from history.* You can claim at least 1,000 views on their YouTube Channel. The images on the video are appalling, yet real. You cannot play shocked. You live in one of those countries that let people drown in the sea every fucking day. Until there will be no borders, your eyes will keep rolling and no nation will ever make your body feel at home, at ease, in peace. So, you ask her to

answer her own question before you do. There is a lot you wanna say about this, but you need time to put your thoughts in a row.

Albania, Germany, Greece, USA, UK. They name them, you reject them and their naming policies - geographies, locations, bodies, humans and non-humans, notions and structures.

Could you pass me your E9, please? you interrupt here.

At the end of the day, the notion of the state is anyhow class-based.



CAN YOU STAY A BIT LONGER?

People used to say “You might be a dyke but you don’t need to live or look like one. Maybe you are lesbian but you don’t need to be a butch”. People used to say this kind of things to me.

In the hierarchy of queerness being a lesbian butch is the lowest of the low. But now I hear me say “butch it is the most beautiful thing that I could be. This is me. This is what I was born. This is the ability that I have to love.”

Kae Tempest on coming out, in conversation with Annie Macmanus on instagram
02.05.23

It’s 2023. You have reached an age - or a point? - where reading Butler makes you feel less of an idiot than all those years before. In your imaginary life’s scenarios, where all your friends – real or not – are sitting in your kitchen having tea or coffee, wine and gin ‘n’ tonic gossiping through the early hours, Butler are sitting on a rocking chair or squatting on the floor. There is no such thing as an iconostasis of their books and lectures somewhere in your flat to which you pray every night and day for answers to your gender trouble.

You hear sis men and sis women saying wholeheartedly “Gender has been the easiest for me, not for many people”.

You chose to stay with your (gender) trouble.

Either queer or fem, gay or non-binary you were deemed ‘unreal’ still knowing that you “lay hold of the real, a laying hold that happens in concert, and a vital instability is produced by the performative surprise” as Butler says in her Gender Trouble, page 28 of the preface. You have recently become suspicious of and threatened by those assuming an identity for you, but you still find good reasons to claim an identity for yourself; the feminine.

“It is political”, you say.

“It is liminal” you say as well.

The limits of gender are illuminated through the sexualisation of racial gender. Terror, anxiety, frustration, suffocation and exclusion have been and still are in the mix of your relationship with your body. You migrated your body in remote and close geographies to check whether it fits better, whether life in all can be easier.

Answer no.1; Yes

Answer no.2; No

Because your class and race constantly make you feel like the Relationship Status on your Facebook account; “it’s complicated”.

You then turn to theory. This is when you want to understand this world, when you want to defend this vital instability of yours. When are seeking the perfect arguments, you struggle to repeat a sentence that you just read in a text. Why is that? You just don’t have the confidence yet to make their words your words. But a couple of years ago she - Sarah Ahmed - came into your life to put words in your daily routines and put the routines and doings - the practice, your practice - into words.

Is Sarah your imaginary friend? Is she your best friend or Halberstam? Are they flirting with Butler in your kitchen?

Anyhow, now, every time you sit on a dinner table you are aware that overcoming fixed genders and temporarily inhabiting one or another is a reassurance that you are alive. Things are tense not because you are wound up, but because they have been winding you up. Within the family and the society you grew up in, having a fixed gender mattered. Or did it not? All you can recall is that it was a great deal, a sort of deal that was never in your favour.

DOOR SIGNS

You make sense of the places you live, the people you meet - the world - through words, sketches and drawings, sounds and music, images that move and images that stand still. You were taught to appreciate art in ways that pushed you away from it. It became overwhelming and frustrating.

But not too long ago you decided to enter this room.

Did you refrain yourself right at the doorstep?

Can you recall if there was a door sign of some sort?

“Welcome”

“Please take off your shoes”

“Sorry, we are sold out”

“Please, do not disturb”

“Emergency exit only. The door must remain closed at all times” or “Private Club. Members Only”

Did someone stop you right at the doorstep?

Did you finally make it to the room?

Somehow you remember being in the room.

Not sure whether this is happening now or it has happened before.

Anyhow, you have been or you are still in there. All flesh and bones.

Your eyes blink. You see your mum. Or is she your grandma?

She is in the room. She must have come before you.

You turn back and get ready to walk out the door.

You hate door-signs, but you wished there was one saying “Non-family members only”.

Your eyes blink again. You are now standing next to a billionaire all dressed up as an art-lover. He is talking numbers and rates with the gallery owner. They are looking at one of your paintings – their gaze, the gaze of the client and the pimp. The sounding of the figure gives you shivers. Will any of your friends, any of the people that care about and understand your art ever afford to buy a painting of yours?

The answer is no. Of course not.



Jean-Michel Basquiat's untitled painting of a skull.

¹ Jean-Michel Basquiat (December 22, 1960 - August 12, 1988); American artist who became popular 1980s as part of the Neo-expressionism movement.

On Thursday May 16th, the work was sold for \$110.5 million; the highest sum ever paid at auction for a work by a U.S. artist.

You blink your eyes once more. The price is fixed. You dip your hands into your pockets. Today is the day you skim all your bills. You can already hear the feedback of your voice in the video call with your parents; “Everything sorted! I am doing well with work, dad”.

The pimp and the client have decided on your share; just about 1.000 euros. You push your hands into your pockets. Empty as usual. That feeling of emptiness. Precariousness.

You blink your eyes again. This time you wait until you open them again. You need time. You need a plan.

Eyes open. He is standing with his eyes rolling. He says he is going to give you the 1.000 euros. He is counting the paper notes, slowly and emphatically; “One, two, three..”. You feel relieved until the very moment he decides to add a little “bonus” for you; he is yelling how much of a useless piece of sh*t you are. He is calling you names while wondering out loud how perverted one could be to even think about going to bed with you. All that in the middle of a crowded open-plan office. He is “flexing” his 50 euros notes. “Nine hundred, nine hundred fifty, one thousand”. When he hands the money to you, all you do is throw it to his face. You blink your eyes, take a breath or two. You did it. This was your pay back.

Eyes open. He is on his knees picking up your fifty euros notes from the floor. Obviously, you needed the money. You needed to hear the feedback of your voice in that video call with your mum and dad, but you keep repeating to yourself “I’ll make it one day. I won’t let anyone disgrace me again”.

Since that day, you decided to never have a boss again. To never make art again.

Since that day, you dream of – to be honest, you are very much jealous of – the male locus/room. You are so much aware that it does come down not only to gender, but to race and class. So, you start with the question of class; race and gender are anyhow classed-based notions. The feeling of being immured outside of the room, yet being called upon to transcend the boundaries of your class every time you yearn for a room of your own. Every single time you dream of making something, class and gender put a damper on you. You are struggling not to become a bitch with those of your sisters that have had all the love and support to get themselves to places, buy themselves books, go to concerts and theatre plays, study and make art not for a living. Those who can set the rules of the game.

Gender is a territory of exclusions, both for you and for them. Cause you know you have privileges too, and when you shy away from them, there is always another person who is waiting behind you at the door or who hasn’t even made it to the doorstep of this room.

You are white.

Your family somehow managed to call itself “middle-class”. That was not the case with your grandparents.

And you; you are in a constant limbo that is messing up with your brain and soul, because you were conditioned to earn a life of your own. You cannot even count all that has been projected on our body and life. But still. All you have done is not enough to take away the stress of paying the rent and bills by the end of each month.

No matter if you call yourself an artist or not, if you are registered in the Chamber of any-short-of Arts or any-short-of Arts Union, all you do will never be enough. And you feel exhausted. You wanna walk away, again and again.

Eyes closed. This time you are walking away with your eyes closed. You deserve to dream of your room. A room of your own.

You dream of art as a refuge – a room of your own, where “your” is plural, leaving no space for ownership and exclusions - in the same way as friendships are, as going for a hike in the mountains, as a deep dive in the sea on a hot summer day, as a hot cup of tea, sitting around a dinner table with those you call family, as a breath of fresh air. Your room has no doors, nor windows. Anyone can walk in.

Only racists stay at the door.

It is all those lived experiences of making and sharing art with others. It is an state of togetherness and potentiality, a disruption of our rationalised daily life. Your room is a room of and for all those who came before and will come after. A room where bodies mutter the impossible in languages of their own - deconstructed and reclaimed. A locus of interaction and connection where art is ugly and clumsy and the Beautify Button is nowhere to be found.

Eyes open.

Did you actually walk away?

Who knows.

Has anyone noticed?

You feel your feet more grounded; the shaking is there but it is not too much to make you tumble down. You know that you will soon fall again, but you – the plural “you” – will be there to catch the single “you”. And you will not be silenced again for long. Not this time.

You once had the feeling that art presents you with a mirror, urging you to face every aspect of yourself, unconditionally and honestly. You once said that you love μουσική [music in Greek], but not μουσικοί [musicians].

Is it still the case?

The language is yours now. You can choose the vowels that give you comfort. You are muttering, whispering, screaming, shouting the words - your words - to a mirror. They reflect back to you – the plural “you”, the queer “you”, the unpredictable and ephemeral “you” of togetherness.



FSS

they say representation; we say experimentation
they say identity; we say multitude
they say debt; we say sexual cooperation and somatic interdependence
they say human capital; we say multi-species alliance
they say power; we say potency
they say integration; we say disidentification
they say interdisciplinary; we say undisciplined
they say crisis; we say revolution

excerpts from “We Say Revolution”³ by Paul Preciado, Paris, 20 March 2013

It’s a Saturday. Mid-May or mid-February. A sunny afternoon or a chilly evening. Every time you decide to leave the house on a Saturday to go places you have the exact same feeling; Where to start?

Where to start out tonight? Since the pandemic started to faint away and the sound of a covid incident takes you by surprise, everything around you seems to be moving so fast.

Every FSS (Friday– Saturday – Sunday), events overlap with each other. According to your social media accounts, the mailing lists you have subscribed over the years and the posters on the streets of Athens, there are at least 5 things happening at the same time in walking distance from where you are. Almost all of them are for free. Yet, you do not know where to start, so you simply stay home.

You prefer staying at home than having to choose.

You prefer this than meeting lots of people in one of these places – whether a park, a bar, a square, a space of some sort – and having to respond whether you have decided about the next place. “Are you going to the next show in half an hour, and then to the assembly, to the open discussion at that place, then to the gig at 10pm and finish off with a party at 2 in the morning?”

3 <http://manuelprados.net/we-say-revolution/>

Why even bother?

At night or in the early hours, if you actually make it out, you always bring yourself a glass of water right next to your bed. You hate beers for making you wake up in the middle of the night, then crawl to the kitchen for a zip of water. You don't wanna risk having a hangover that will break you down and you'll most likely never hear the alarm clock for the 12am march on Sunday morning.

Weekends are a full-time job within your full-time job, within a week. It just feels 24/7/365.

The one is paying your bills, the other is repaying for over-hours, unpaid shifts and unclaimed holidays; for your rumpling knees and back - working days and nights in bars and cafes - for being stuck in cars and crowded buses stressed and helpless knowing that you will be late at work again, for typing yet another job application nobody is ever going to read, for scrolling day and night to find a job that your manager won't suck your blood, for holding back from crying when your boss or a client rides on and humiliates you in front of relentless audience of silent spectators – your colleagues, your workmates and friends.

Who's paying?

What's the repay?

What's the payback?

Who'll pay reparations on your soul?

Quick search on your laptop. Gill Scott-Heron's voice is busting on your speakers.

Many suggestions

And documents written

Many directions

For the end that was given

They gave us

Pieces of silver and pieces of gold

Tell me,

Who'll pay reparations on my soul?

It's Friday evening. You take a deep breath; you hold it and it catches up with you by early Sunday evening. You find yourself laying on the couch at home, staring at the ceiling, trying to process all that happened. Happy and exhausted. Alone and relieved. Tired as fuck. You are trying to recall all you have talked about, heard and seen. The things that troubled you, made you have a panic attack and run outside the bar to fill your lungs with air.

It is all coming back now. Isn't it? You are trying to remind your body what it feels like to be together again - many bodies, many voices, many faces in the same space.

Has the feeling changed? Have you changed?

Memories are coming back one after the other. She is standing at the door of the bookshop. She says she can't remember the name of the writer or the book she found it in. It could have been a post on Twitter or an article in a magazine. She makes it her own and you can see her full body – arms and legs, head to toes - animating every word of the quote. She is saying that each and every person is a universe of their own. She is drawing universes in the air with her hands and fingers. She brings her palms on top of each other to show you that these universes indeed overlap, even partially. "I don't feel knowledgeable enough. Theory is too overwhelming. Brain fried — this is how I feel every time I try to read a chapter of Butler. Whatever you want to call it, it happens to all of us at some point, or is it just me? This is why I loved this text that I read. Simple and easy to grasp. We are universes. Different and complex". She takes a breath or two. "This is why we do not fully get each other. But at the end of every day, we do overlap."

She was the first one to talk to when you arrived at the "event number one" of that Friday afternoon. She was having a drink waiting for the MKX's poetry collection launch to start. She feels at ease in big crowds, she is curious and vocal. Where she comes from, she was allowed to let herself be. Unapologetically.

The launch starts. The bookshop is packed. Some people are leaning on the cars parked outside. Cars and motorbikes are passing by. A couple of drivers slow down to check what on earth might be happening in a bookstore on a Friday evening. Since when bookshops are "the place to be" on a Friday evening?

You could see her coming. She, the second one to talk to tonight, is a couple years older than you or some part of her is coming from the future. She is confident or this is what you want to see in her. She hands you a glass of wine gives you a hug and can't help but starting with "That was so great! I loved it! Finally, a fucking break from theory. My head is so filled up with it lately, it feels it's gonna explode. All I want is to get off my books and live. How are you?".

Too much to process, but you are hanging in there.

You recall your last conversation, both ranting about the massive LED screen "we apologise for the discomfort that this might cause you", a so-called participatory arts project installed in Victoria square a couple of years ago.

This time the conversation is again wild; you are both frustrated with the appropriation of public space and queer bodies by all major performing arts institutions. You are sick with the motto "Athens is the new Berlin" and all that has caused to the marginalised/underserved communities; gentrification, exclusions, tourist-bodies pushing away migrant-bodies. Within the established neoliberal development frameworks, gender, race and class are instrumentalised in ways that the accumulation of resources and knowledge is strengthened and the inequalities are deepened. "What frustrates me is art that feigns political discourse and engagement with people. Taking no stance and then pretending you are taking a stance" she says. You couldn't agree more with her. You hope to remember her words when you get back home. You need to write this phrase down. You want to be able to reproduce it. To make it your own.

It's so often that you wished you could speak as clearly and precisely as other people do. Till this day comes, you keep all you want to say, all you wish not to forget in your notebook.

Before you finish this inner thought, she, the third one to talk with for tonight, turns to you and asks "Isn't it you who always avoids to call yourself an artist?". You nod. "I so much get it now" she says. "Making art in and of its presence, this presence, in this context, is anyhow an act of resistance, a feminist praxis. Why calling ourselves artists, then? Why putting yet another title on ourselves? I do not feel comfortable defining myself as an artist. neither making big statements on "what artists should be doing" she says. I have a feeling that the two men standing next to us are eavesdropping. They are probably trying to understand why can't we have a drink and relax on a Friday evening; why can't we talk about men and sex, money and where to go on holidays.

Till that moment you never thought of art as an act of feminism. You feel more at home when making art collectively and unpredictably, in ways that disrupt what is expected

from the industry. Making art is how you are paying your bills. You call yourself an artist, only when you sense that somebody is about to strip it away from you. Same goes with your gender and class. If not, why bother tying yourself with names, nouns, adjectives?

It's late. You start phasing out, getting lost in your thoughts. She is now busy talking with somebody else and that is somehow taking the stress away from you. Being silent in a crowded place is where you often find or put yourself into.

In your mind, you recall those moments when making something – writing a text, sketching a drawing, performing a text, putting together sounds for a video, taking a picture with your phone, singing and improvising in a group - that you feel you are standing on a verge of becoming something that you are not, while betraying your class and gender. You want to enjoy all that comes with the progress but you resist to let go of your clan. You dig into your family archive. All those who made it to university and earned a life of their own and all those who were silenced, whose stories you hardly ever heard of. Where do you stand?

You are back again. The presentation has finished. The street is still crowded. You are looking at her, the fourth one that you encounter tonight. No talking just looking at her. You are taking a guess;

She has grown up middle-class in Greece. Comparing that to elsewhere, for example the UK, you would say lower, definitely not upper. Her parents come from a working-class background, having grown up in rural places. She studied at uni. Got herself a job, made some money doing what she loves doing. Still never enough to make her feel that her efforts were valid and appreciated. The moments that she presses "send", for an email with an attached invoice whose figure before VAT made her feel like an idiot, are countless.

They say class and you say fluid. A kind of fluid that exhausts you. Constantly between classes. Constantly moving between countries provided you can pay your bills while maintaining a modicum of dignity. Transitioning between classes – basically from lower to middle to lower and back again - has made you more class-aware and yet it's hard to feel like you belong in any of those. It's complicated.

You are confused, let alone you start filling a bit tipsy. It's decision time. Are you going to drag yourself to event-number-two of this Friday night?

In theory, you can do it. It is not too late; you are not exhausted. You haven't even texted any of your friends to see what they are up to this evening. Can this night end in a family dinner, please? A dinner that none of you – the plural you – needs to be the

killjoy, cause this is for non-family members only.

Never mind, what you actually want the most right now is to start walking with no destination. You might meet friends by chance and end up dancing till the early hours.

Reality check;

You need to think of a route. It's midnight. It's Athens. It's self-explanatory. You text a couple of friends while you start walking on Mavromichali. You look at people in crowded bars. The familiar feeling of dysphoria kicks in. You are about to do it again. All those times you look at the world and you feel helpless, all you are doing is think of another book, this or that theory, but tonight you are sick and tired of it. You wish you didn't need another footnote or a reference to explain why some bodies will never feel like entering those bars. There are endless ways of being together and connecting to each other, but yet again straight couples win the game. While walking without knowing where you are heading to, you remind yourself that you are not allowed to wander. Listening to music on your headphones is already making you less reactive to any possible threat. Still, you do not want to ride on a taxi. You want to keep walking, and let yourself dream of a city where the streets have lights and people leave their keys on the doors.

It's almost 7 in the morning. You wake up on your sister's couch. You must have slept only for a couple of hours. Gossiping through the early hours, drinking tea and watching YouTube videos, laughing and crying was the best way a Friday night could have ever ended. You are tired and sleepy, but you feel as light as you haven't felt in the past 7 years.

Now she knows what has happened. You let your wounds be seen. She cooked her remedies for you. Anyways, is there a way to escape being in the 81% of women who have been harassed at least once in their lives? You belong to this figure. It was not your choice, but still. At least now, one person knows about it. You are not alone.

SONGS

Often, maybe too often, you sing the words you want to speak. Improvised and clumsy melodies together with unfinished sentences come out of your mouth quite easily. Somehow singing your words, often out of tune, is that extra push you need to say the things you want to be heard. When alone at home your singing is loud. You let yourself improvise and come up with counter melodies and catchy rhythms until you know that all that you wanted to be said is said. Nobody is listening, except for you. Still, it feels just great. You sang the words; you said the words you needed to hear yourself saying. This happens only at home, wherever home is or has been to you till this day. There are days as well that your singing goes in public. Still at home, maybe in the living room or kitchen, when you feel like exorcising your sullenness, making fun of yourself, getting a grasp of something so absurd or when you feel so happy that you don't want to just keep it to yourself. That's when the impromptu singing starts again.

Not as loud as those other times. Knowing that this time someone is looking at you, listening to where your melodies go, hearing every single word of yours. Or you think they do. Anyway, it's fun and it makes everybody laugh. You keep singing until you pause; you ask your "audience" for feedback; Is the melody catchy? Does the tune need a couple extra notes for its intro? Does that word fit best? Feedback received. You start over; a few lines changed, the melody a little, the rhythm this time more upbeat. You laugh while you hear yourself singing those words, vocalising those funny lines.

Cadence. Ritenuto. End of song.

You pause for a minute. You run and hide in a hug. You are smiling. Your words were heard. Maybe more lightweight than you wished. Never mind. The day after you forget the words, the rhythm and the melody. Never mind too. Still, it feels just great. You sang the words; you said the words you needed them hear you say.

JUST DANCE

You’ve never done it, but somehow you know that singing with others, singing in a choir feels great. Folk music is not your piece of cake, but the other night, after the gig of Pleiades⁴ at Myrtillo⁵ you pictured yourself in a folk polyphonic group singing songs from Epirus. Maybe one day you’ll join them, you thought. Maybe not? All those Mondays that you stood in a circle humming, singing, improvising with your voices, with eyes closed or open made you feel in sync. At first the feeling was unfamiliar and your voice was trembling. Over time you started enjoying it. Listening to the voices of others, hearing your own voice come in and fade out made you think that this is a real connection between people; a non-verbal but still vocal way of being together in something.

Just like dancing. Being together in something, bodies synced and lost in the music with eyes open or closed. You love dancing to music. Dancing makes music less intimidating to you, regardless if the tune is cheesy and the sound system bad as hell, you keep dancing. Until the next tune, the one after next. Until your feet are aching that you need to stop and lay on the floor for a break. Only for a couple minutes before you stand up again. No need for more drinks. You had a couple already. The queue at the bar is too long for you to wait. Screw that. Dance.



4 [Pleiades](#) is an all-female vocal group focusing on folk polyphonic singing. Pleiades were founded in May of 2006 in Thessaloniki, Greece.

5 <https://myrtillocafe.gr/en/home/>

0 DB

I know how big my body is. I know the space it takes. It's physical. It's noticeable. I cannot change how big or small my body is. You pause for a moment to realise you were answering to a different question to the one you were being asked. That's ok though, you keep talking, keep thinking out loud, trying to find your way with words. You know what your answer is, you need to find the words though, you are lost in your thoughts but you don't give up, until they land on you.

Raising my voice matters to me. When I make sound, or else when I speak, I am taking some of the shared space. It might be ephemeral, still noticeable. Every time we speak, we make sound, so this is how I think of myself in relation to sound. It doesn't always have to be about music. Mumbling, speaking, whispering, screaming all that is sound. Silence is sound.

Yet when staying silent is as if betraying yourself. Years of fighting to find your words, to speak your words, to make sure your words were heard.

“What are the words you do not yet have?

What do you need to say?

What are the tyrannies you swallow day by day and attempt to make your own, until you will sicken and die of them, still in silence?”⁶

6 Lorde, A. (1977). *The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action*, Chicago; Modern Languages Association Conference, p. 3.

Can anybody hear me?

Test, test.

One, two.

One, two, three, test.

You are standing in the middle of the stage. All in all, two bütéc stage platforms, a mic, a stereo sound system and your friend on the decs. DIY all the way. At least this makes you feel at ease. You waited for this moment too long, but check you out; you are here, in the middle of the stage; sound check done, back-track done, a disco ball hanging from the ceiling and a spotlight pointing at your face.

Some call it rap and other spoken-word; Why does it matter? As long as it doesn't sound too sophisticated and pretentious, you are happy with it. You flow with it. You look in people's eyes. You can't help but looking while singing. You want to make sure that you haven't betrayed them, that they can see in you. That they can look inside you and know where you are coming from.

You are singing the words while silently telling yourself "Don't let yourself take the wrong turn way. Hold. Hold your own until you know that nobody can take it away from you." You know who they are and how they do this. They take it and then place it on their shiny institutional window display. A few hashtags and an Instagram story with it and it's gone. It's theirs not yours, not ours anymore. Let them not appropriate your lives.

Days and nights, years and years spent in practicing rooms. You've spent half of your life in practice rooms, in WGs and shared flats, you turned your room into a practicing room. A flute, an accordion, a guitar, a piano or a violin inside its case waiting for you to open it and start playing. Listening to the metronome, looking at the tuner, staring at the music or looking away to make yourself learn it by heart. Practicing till your hands were sore and your back was too tired to keep your head in place. That's when you stopped for the day to look at the calluses on your fingers – calluses of pride and calluses of pain. The more you practiced at home the more your neighbors turned into enemies, so when you finished high school you left home early and took the bus to the music school. You would spent the entire day there going from practicing to theory class, to orchestra rehearsals, to practicing again. In between those the chit chat with the other students. Laughing your hearts and crying your eyes out loud.

All those years giving all you had to be the perfect musician, not even knowing though what that was and who was the one to decide upon that. Never good enough. Never talented enough. You can hardly recall a moment that you felt great on stage. Stress and fear of failure was all that you can recall. You wished you were someone else, someone good enough. You loved it too much though, to let go of it, so you kept trying, pushing yourself too hard. You knew that you were not the only one struggling, but this didn't make you feel less of a loser. You kept trying, until you couldn't anymore.

You were old enough now to realise the system you were born and raised. Now you knew what made you feel the way you did at school and at music class. Feeling an outsider was just not cool, at least though you could finally tell why.

The reasons are well known amongst you who have been classically trained as musicians. Conservatoires, auditions, competitions, exams and masterclasses around the world. If you want to succeed, all you need to do is isolate yourself in practice rooms until you manage to get a position at an orchestra or a conservatoire. The higher profile the better. Then you can return to everyday life. Only then can you allow yourself to check what has happened while you were in your isolated – almost sound- and life- proof – practice room. "Been there, done that. Never again" The day you said this to yourself you felt as if you took your life in your own hands and kissing a life-lover goodbye.

Since then, you pick up the violin, the flute, the guitar or the accordion less often. Everywhere you move you take them with you. You are at the gate ready to board the return flight and you realise that you haven't open the case. You travelled all this way

together with this instrument to bring it back again untouched. Never mind, next time. Now you are friends with it. It is no longer staring at you waiting for you to prove that you can still master it. You are friends and true friendship waits.



CAKES AND TEARS

Is it impossible?

If we try harder, will we make it?

Will we ever manage to make this music, play this music and live our lives in this music?

Some years ago, you moved out of London. Of all places you have been since, the trip back was at least 2 hours long. Add to this the travel to and from the airports, queuing on gates to board, standing on platforms to jump on a train that brings you downtown. Early hours and late-night flights, traveling alone, in between work, skipping work, lying at work to squeeze four days of rehearsing, performing, recording and being left with zero time to be friends again.

It's been almost eight years now. Forming a quartet with your closest friends, your sisters in London, is how you find meaning in making and sharing your music with others. Playing, chatting, listening, baking cakes and cooking dinner, crying and laughing. Missing each other a lot, missing what this quartet could become if there were less struggles to fight as women in different cycles of life. Hanging there against odds and difficulties, longing for that moment that you make sound together with others in rooms and hallways, backyards and DIY stages.

Last week your friends and families held your hearts and backs for you to jump on a stage and perform your first album. It took eight years for it to become an object that you can now look at, hold to, give to others. Was that it? Is there still more to go or is that already too much to ask as a quartet of four introvert women in their thirties approaching forties?

You are looking sitting in a room in an Athenian flat and wondering how many times in a row do you need to listen back to your album to not let go of last week. The flight is three and a half hours long, the ticket no less than three hundred euros return.

You press play.

PAUSE

Κι αν οι ήχοι δεν αρκούν;	What if sound is not enough?
Θα κεντήσω τα δάχτυλά μου με ακριλικά και θα περιμένω θα έρθεις με κλωστές να μου τα λύσεις	I'll prick my fingers with acrylics and wait. You'll come with threads to untie me
και θα περιμένουμε μαζί γιατί δεν ήρθε ακόμα θα περιμένουμε μαζί μέχρι	And we'll wait together For it hasn't come yet We'll wait together
να/θα	for/until
θα έρθει με θόρυβο, μουτζούρες, συλλαβές θα πατήσω τότε pause	it comes in noise, scribbles, syllables I'll then press pause
θα είμαστε εδώ και θα κρατήσει για πάντα	we'll stay here and it will last forever

PANIC

It's February. You are all together waiting in one room, around one table.

“Call until you receive an answering call. Echo that call.” Pauline Oliveros’ words are resting on a piece of paper on that same table right next to scissors and colourful pens. No one seems to be moving. All still and silent. You wait for a while, then you grab a pen and make the first “call”. Instantly most of you have chosen their own spot on the paper. The paper is filling fast. How long have you been moving around this piece of paper adding more and more to it? The room is no longer silent. Some chat or laugh, others pause to think and write and draw, others stop to have a look with a mug of tea or coffee in between their palms

You pause as well and look around the room. You remind yourself of how little you know all these people. It has only been a week that you first met them. Noise on paper and noise in your ears help you become invisible while you look at each one of them. How do they look like when they are writing their words? How do their fingers crawl around a pen when they are drawing? How do they change places around the table and how do their hands move when there are talking to one another? You switch between them and the [noisy piece of paper](#); scattered words, drawings, cuts & pastes of what once used to be poetry or graphic scores.

Words are **echoing** from one side of the paper to the other. Words are repeated. Maybe you were looking for/at the same thing. Maybe when **other people** see the **chaos** in this piece of paper, this mess wishes, hopes, thoughts, scribbles, lines, dots and



drawings, they will start listening to the noise in our heads, the noise in the room we met every Monday, the noise between your bodies; the noise you *waited with* and the noise you *waited for* all those Mondays you spent together.

Noisy words, noisy sounds, noisy images, noisy rooms and bodies filling time or killing time, as they observe their interiors and exteriors ***unfold***.

It's April. You are all together in the same room. You know them better now. You cooked dinner with them, you sung and wrote poems together.

You echoed their call. They did too.

NOTES ALLOWED

OR

UNAPOLOGETIC MELODIES

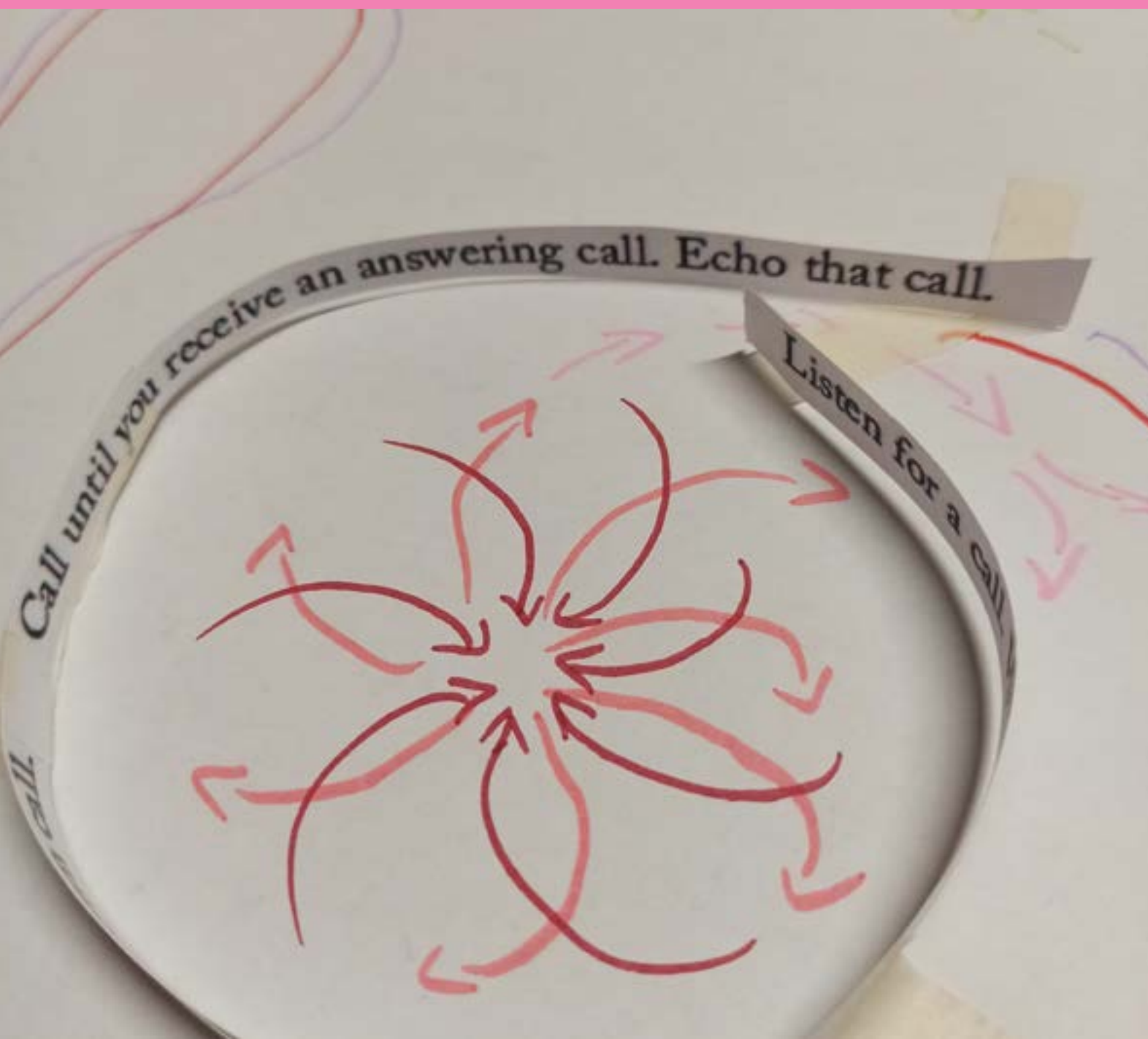
You are about to book your flight to Berlin for a job-interview. Still unsure whether this is where you want to live or the job you want to be doing these days. Mixed feelings almost staring at you to place them in an order. Seems too much to take on, so you look for flights instead. You can't help but typing "Heraklion" at the destination field. You just want to squeeze a couple days of sun before this job interview. Itinerary confirmed/ booked.

ATH – HER

HER – BER

It's early morning. Everybody is asleep. You are sitting at the kitchen table drinking coffee browsing family albums. *Am I what, nostalgic?* You wonder. *Not ready to move on.* You admit. *Never mind.* Relieved and unapologetic you keep flipping through the album.

Photos at dinner tables, holidays at the sea, your grandma in her Athenian flat, end of school year celebration, a folk fiesta in a village square. In every other photo you are holding a violin. As you grow, the size of the violin does too; $\frac{1}{4}$, $\frac{3}{4}$, full size. Your training at the local music school was all about rights and wrongs, the fear of mistakes, the fear of stage and fear of failing. Yet you would take your violin out its case and fiddle around at every family and school occasion, play folk tunes while others would sing along. You didn't give a fig about rights and wrongs, as long as there was no sheet music and a music stand in front of you. You later learned how to enjoy playing music in orchestras and ensembles, but none of this felt as good as when you listened again and again to the melody someone was singing at fiestas and folk festivals and searched for every note, pressing your bow gently on the strings. When you had the melody, you let the weight of your right-hand rest on the bow and your sound was loud again. Here is a photo of you at your grandma's country house. Wearing your swimsuit and an oversized hat, playing your violin in the middle of the garden. Your mum and dad, aunties and cousins whose names you hardly can recall sitting on white plastic chairs eating, drinking and singing. *What a mascot have I been?* You smile at yourself and keep flipping through the album till your mum opens the kitchen door. She makes herself a coffee too and looks at the you, then the family album. She doesn't dare to ask how you are. Maybe she doesn't need to. She has seen you come and go many times now. In a few days from now she will pick up her phone and hear on the other



end of the line that you got that job, you always do. She might then ask you what's your new address and send you a couple of those photos, for you to have on the kitchen wall of your new flat.

Joy of playing comes and goes so often. It's like a life coming and then slipping away again.

She actually did send you a letter. A card for your bday and a photo of you and your best friends. The three of you, around mid-high-school, playing music in the living room of your parents' house. You loved this band; endless improvisations, sliding your fingers between well-tempered notes to find out melodies of old ottoman songs. Trying to hide away your classical training and play the maqamats as close to the original as possible. Beautiful melodies and sliding notes, complex rhythmic patterns and long amanets. Quite tonal in its sound, still free, cause now you know that freedom lies in the space in between us, not in scales, harmonies and rhythms.

IS YOUR FREEDOM KILLING ME?

It's been five years now, or more, that you often find yourself grieving what you once called *the collective*. Assemblies advocating self-governing societies based on voluntary institutions, local initiatives against common struggles. Us on the streets, in squatted houses and DIY festivals.

Now you are exhausted. All are exhausted. You look them in the eyes as if you are asking them to pull you through this. Is it all gone now? Did we consent?

You haven't yet, have you?

Exhausted and despaired you talk politics and hate yourself for not acting upon it. *Maybe it has something to do with me*, you keep saying. *So, before we even start talking about collective art or art and politics, let's be honest. They have been winning and we have lost.* You closed the lid of your laptop not even pressing "Save As" and rolled another cigarette. *Is that it? Have we lost? Are we fucking lost?* If you pull this through, if you find the courage to believe again in the collective, you will make sure that your voices are heard this time. *Otherwise let them keep freedom to themselves, cause their freedom sounds white to me.*

UNRESERVEDLY

In the haze of daybreak, you found yourself wrapped up in the throes of your nine-to-five-job, grappling with the question that gnawed at your soul: *Would this be our lives, toiling endlessly day in and day out?*

A profound loneliness clung you like a ghostly specter, rendering companionship an elusive quest. Solitude has been your constant companion in your one-bedroom flat, when walking in town, when knitting and drawing in your studio, when fiddling around with your pencils, notebooks, cassette players, effect pedals or mics. In your readings and writings, you are filling your thoughts with the allure of togetherness. You are reading about it, dreaming about it, but here you are; another day alone in your one-bedroom flat.

There's this simple yearning, you know? For that raw, unfiltered connection with a handful of friends or soon-to-become-friends, sharing a collective longing, real and unreserved; a longing for those moments of togetherness. One that resists the common sentiment that veers towards a desire to be forced to follow, forced to comply. You do understand their reasoning, when they think that all we need is someone to call the shots, but you need to admit to yourself, that you just love staying with the trouble, getting lost and improvise a way into things with others without a prescribed recipe.

Collective processes; the pressure to deliver an immaculate end result of some short; a performance, a text or a poster. Never good enough, never happy enough, because at times the political lied concealed, the social suggested, and the artistic has found itself cast aside or the political resided in the unspoken, the artistic in the subtle allusions, the social was forsaken, brushed away from entirely. Left with a taste of discontent lingering upon your tongue, you feel lost.

Yet, you press *send*; maybe seeing her at a couple of parties, knowing that she is a good friend of your ex made you think she might not be that bad. *Anyhow it is just a workshop. If she is good at it, we might actually reach that point where we do this together and nobody will pressure us to deliver. If not, I will simply walk out.* It's Wednesday evening, you are sitting in front of your laptop typing an email to her; greetings, a sentence or two, your name and age, a poem and a text attached. You press *send*.

Here you are in your one-bedroom flat; your New Year's resolution etched into existence. From February you will be spending time, making, discussing with a bunch of people that you possibly haven't met before. Eight Mondays—neither abundant nor scarce—a modest count. Is *waiting with/for Baubo* every Monday between 6 and 8pm

at FAC the stage for your collective endeavor.

Stage fright kicks in and you start mumbling; *If this collaborative something thwarts me, then let me tell you bitches; I am SO out and sick and done with collective whateverness.*

In the midst of all the jinxes, you hold fast to the hope that, at the very least, this endeavor shall unfold with grace.

A TEA MUG BETWEEN YOUR PALMS

In this room, you cradle a tea mug between your palms, sipping its warmth and nibbling on snacks during before the session starts. Sitting almost in silence before the warm up begins. This room is warmer than yours; nice to be warm for a break. In the warm up you take a moment to ground your thoughts, feel your feet steady on the floor, bring your breath back to your belly. You are looking around at their faces. They have started to look familiar. This time “working together” might work. No one needs to call the shots. We will figure it out. It might take longer than we thought, so why not trying?

There is a fire in you yearning to be stoked, to talk things through, try things out, make something with them. How you longed to be pushed further, craving the edge of comfort. Rain check; where is everybody else standing? *Push and hold. Hold this space together and let it not dissolve.* Inner voice calling. Message received.

In this space, this room, you drift amidst a sea of thoughts, ideas, voices and gestures. You sometimes feel lost, adrift without somebody to tell you what to do next. You feel frustrated, somehow away from the shores of clarity. You look around at their familiar faces. *Do they feel lost? Certainly not. Or maybe? We are so accustomed to follow instructions and produce deliverables. How to resist this? I want to figure out what the fuck is happening here. Help me untangle the threads of intent that make up this room.* Agreed; Next Monday we will have a chat about this all together.

Isn't it that time between Mondays flies and moments slip through your fingers like sand? It's like living in the intervals between heartbeats, feeling stretched and compressed like an accordion bellows.

It's Monday again you cradle a tea mug between your palms, sipping its warmth and nibbling on snacks during before the session starts. Accompanied by a whirlwind of thoughts and emotions, you start the conversation. You want to embrace it all, the imperfections and vulnerability, you want to stay with the troubles and enjoy the process, but still you cannot let go of the deliverable. In theory you find a purpose in the process but when you look around – outside of this room – you cannot help by needing to make something, do something, put it out there and make it be seen and heard.

Phew, somehow it was good to say this out loud. You sit back and wait until someone else adds something to it.

In this waiting, you realize you are not waiting for nothing; you are not just killing time between breaths. She starts then talking. She hasn't spoken much till this time, so everyone else leans forward to listen to her. She sounds confident and while she is

speaking, she hopes that at the end, things might actually end up how she imagined them to be. *I want to stay in the moment. Learn together how to un-learn. Reading texts together, scribbling poems, making sounds and singing together. Sometimes sitting in silence and other chitchatting endlessly together. One day we could cook all together, sit at the table and have dinner together. Go for a drink together.*

You look around the room and see faces nodding with relief. *Is this then what we are doing? I guess yes, cause almost all of them agree. Let's do it and if we fail, we would know it's not the first time.*

The room is buzzing again. Pencils of all colors dancing on a big white paper. Words waiting to blossom and color the room in hues, cause you are not just waiting with your words, your sounds, your drawings and your music; You are waiting with their words too. You are waiting for their bodies to speak; each move a brushstroke, a scribble or a line passed to the next person in the room.

So, you wait, with your tea mug held close and your heart open, ready for the magic to unfold.

UNLED OR MISLED?

Let's put this straight; #collaboration, #participation and #collectivism are top ranking words in theory texts lately. If you pair those up with #diversion and #inclusion and feed them all in ChatGPT alongside with the question "Could you please provide a 500-words artistic project description", you only need to spend ten or so minutes for minor tweaks and you are ready to go with your next funding application. Or else almost ready to go with your abstract for the publication of an article of some sort in a magazine or a conference in five months from now.

Why even bother doing this kind of work? You ask yourself and you immediately pick up your phone; Time for some job-related gossiping. *What time is in Pittsburgh now?* It should be around 10am. *Great, the kids should be at school, she should be free.* You buzz her.

Ready for it? I gotta spill the tea on this recent thing that went down. So, I went to two workshops, right? And they were almost a hot mess or how to say this; a disaster. They were calling it "experimental," but I was left scratching my head. Can people finally start contextualising what experimental is and stop hiding behind buzz words? I cannot recall the exact description of it, but I swear #collective, #experimental and #non-hierarchical was there. Possibly #diversity too. They wanted us, the participants, to take the lead, but it felt like a jumbled mess of alternative hierarchy without any clear direction. Talk about confusing!

She is listening to you, laughing and rolling eyes while drinking her third coffee of the day. Since she had kids she has doubled her daily dose of caffeine. She takes her turn.

Oh friend, not again and yet again. This is hopeless. I mean, those situations are all about doing it together. No one's supposed to be calling the shots. But nah, this will never happen if we keep resisting to unlearn. Patterns, constructions, old ways and roles. But let me be real with you, this ain't a one-size-fits-all kinda thing. It's ongoing.

No magic formulas, thank you very much. You add to her line.

A process, a never-ending frustrating, complicated journey. She adds. It's almost eight in the evening where you are, so you decide to walk to the kitchen and pour yourself a glass of white wine. She is still on coffee. Cross-Atlantic calls leave at least one of the two sober.

You take a sip and go on with the subject, this time moving away from the bitch-mode-on style of yours. *In these work, there seems to be this looming expectation to churn out something, an outcome, a piece of art, a performance, a deliverable, which, in all*

honesty, is super counterproductive. Why rushing to produce X when simply being in the moment is already enough? Why can't we acknowledge the importance and the meaning that is contained in being together and unlearning together?

Welcome to late capitalism, my love. She responds and cracks laughing. *What about all these fake exhortations to create yet another collaborative piece and "fake it till you make it" nonsense of participatory arts project, where bottom line everything in the room is super hierarchical.* She is on a roll. *And let's not forget to be once again romantic and delusional about what the arts could achieve in a society. Give us a break, please. Are we ever going to talk about the how self-referential and absorbed we as artists and researchers may be, when we engage ourselves in socially engaged projects?*

Hey, before you go, you interrupt her, knowing that she never has more than fifteen minutes to talk. *Are you planning to visit Europe this summer holidays?*

You put on some music on the speakers. The gossip is still happening silently in your head; unlearning is the key. A semi-structured guide to unlearning. Let us not forget though when and where we meet each other and what our common ground is. So many hats one can wear, and such a challenging one the role of those who instigate such process. She might have mentioned it earlier, commitment to guiding instead of obsession to leading. And a shared commitment to change and transformation of the ways we learn and express ourselves together.

Maybe this is a way in.

WE ARE FAMILY, AND MAYBE THAT'S THE PROBLEM

We are sitting at the dining table of a family house. The rules are strict but we are told this is the only way to go through this life-or-death sort of a game. The game is on. All in.

Much later, in the years to come, we come to realise that this game is inescapable. We are woven and trapped in a tapestry of power, almost powerless to break free, until we waive this world goodbye. At times we may try to shake it off, threading through life looking the monster straight in its eyes; dipoles, power struggles, misconduct, abuse and countless contradictions. At times a flicker sparks alive – a hope that maybe, just maybe, there are other ways to work this mess out, with those around us, free from this ridiculous dance.

Power and hierarchy intertwined in role and power games, bound with responsibilities with a bunch of responsibilities, we might unknowingly be feeding those very beasts we're trying to tame. What's it truly mean to shoulder responsibility, to face it with unwavering determination? And on the flip side, what about evading it, shrugging off the weight of those burdens? Peering into these reflections, we might just allow ourselves to practice empathy.

Unraveling the puzzles of power and hierarchy, decoding their weight on our lives and the lives of those around us. Are we taking the road less travelled? Are we not? No big promises, let's just go for a walk together, a long walk, or a hike to what we believe horizontal is.

HIKING THE HORIZONTAL⁷

[...] the movement came first as a way of explaining why I wanted to live in a non-hierarchical world. Imagine for a moment a long, upright line that runs from top to bottom. At the top is art so separate from the rest of the culture that its greatness is measured in part by its uselessness. [...] At the bottom is art so embedded in its culture that no one thinks to call it art.

(Lerman, 2014, p. ix)

Today is Monday; the seventh Monday, it's late afternoon. We have turned the room into a dining room. We are sitting around the table. It's full of food, fresh and cooked, baked and boiled. Veggie soup and salads, spinach pie, humus and a plate of cheese next to a banana-bread and a chocolate tarte with strawberries. There is more in the oven. More food in the fridge. Water and some beers. We are eating and chatting, some of us are smoking at the backyard.

We pause the talking for a bit and put on music through a tiny Bluetooth speaker. Keep changing playlists until we find a good match. We put the volume down.

You hand out pens and papers. You say no more. The questions are on the papers. You sit in silence, stressed and shy. They fiddle around with the papers, they take notes. They fill page by page with letters and words, drawings and scribbles; we are sketching affirmations, scattered thoughts and intimate speculations on how to be and become together, with otherness; bullets points and paragraphs, sentences and words. We will not put together a recipe. We will not pave a way. We speculate an affectionate send-off to ourselves and those who wish to hike the horizontal.

⁷ *Hiking the horizontal* is a phrase borrowed by choreographer and writer Liz Lerman and her book "Hiking the Horizontal; Field Notes from a Choreographer", Middletown, Connecticut, Wesleyan University Press, 2014.

give yourself permission to believe in it
explore the non—linear
give more space to silence
stay puzzled
be proactive
listen
think in the “we”
ask questions
refrain from questions
give answers
refrain from answers
have awareness
be mindful of others
share resources
ask for permission
cross disciplines
repeat
take time
get rid of habits
resist existing roles
challenge authorship
create a common understanding of how you work together
take responsibility
share responsibility
trust your intuition
improvise
avoid coercion
check-in
be curious
keep listening
respect persons, feelings, opinions
make the space safe
disagree with an open heart and mind
talk about feelings
be present
avoid assumptions
resist efficiency
take time

build trust
practice empathy
share and exchange
be gentle
be accessible
translate
make it easy to ask questions
shyness is ok
stress-free zone
pressure-free zone
lead as an act of giving
make time
take time
go along with
follow
guide
keep listening
create a frame – a subversion of patriarchal and capitalistic logic
process vs product
be there as an individual but only because...
set boundaries
talk about boundaries
come up with a shared frame of being, working, talking together at the beginning
name struggles
notice false struggles
don't interrupt
resist judgment
feel good
learn
unlearn
give silence, pause and awkwardness more space
create moments
grant memories
explore the unfamiliar
give space
hold your space
let go
make the walk walkable

ONCE YOU ASKED ME

I thought it was the same as asking me if Polyamory is possible.

If somebody is listening, then your answer is yes.

If is just us listening, then your answer is *I have no clue, but I am not losing faith for either one or the other.*

(notes on polyamory and non-hierarchy)

THE KICKER

The time is Saturday, afternoon. You are on the overground heading south. You are meeting her at the lower entrance of Filopappou hill; where Dora Stratou's theater is. Today she can walk more easily. She is in less pain than the last few days. You cannot wait to see her.

You walk and talk. Some sort of music comes from afar, something like brass instruments, percussion at times and a few voices. They start and stop and again they start. You listen to her talking with the sound of the music rehearsal at the background. The Open Orchestra⁸ rehearses here every Saturday. Maybe one day you will feel less shy and join them. Anyhow, back to her talking to you about power relations, hierarchies, arts and capitalism, or else about our lives.

Deep in the groves of power, we find ourselves wrestling with daunting actions. Believe in them, they say. Don't give up. Wait, hold on a minute, I say, 'cause if and when we wade into the labor market, the discussion has to shift. It's a whole other ballgame when you're producing to sell, making a living from it, or not. Think of them, for instance, the Open Orchestra. She says and point at them. The stakes, my friend, they're on a whole new level. When you commit to the collective, a whole new dynamic unfurls. It becomes something beyond the sum of individualities. It should, otherwise why even bothering? But I've been thinking, what's the fallout when we throw punches at the concept of power? You guessed it—micro-powers come roaring out of the darkness. Why do we always act as if we need a leader to navigate this maze? This mess? And here's the kicker—I believe we haven't experienced the collective over time. The dynamics of it, they're elusive. We gotta figure it out together, set up some mechanisms and processes.

She stops for a moment and apologises for talking long. She has been alone at home for ten days now and she cannot help herself from spitting it all out. You give her a rolling-eye-what-are-you-talking-about-look to signal that all is fine and you cannot think of anything better at the moment, than listening to her. She then takes a breath and continues.

8 https://www.facebook.com/o.p.e.n.o.r.c.h.e.s.t.r.a.l/?locale=el_GR

Now, picture this—a culture of the collective, embodied and experienced by those who are willing to commit to it. It guards itself, doesn't need external validation. It resists to carry the weight of patriarchy and capitalism; it detects its fall outs and fixes them back again. Fear and anxiety for those remain, but the collective pushes them away. Let's not wage those wars on a personal level. No, let's aim higher, let's gather in the collective ranks. That's where the real fight is.

You agree, but it all feels like a chicken-and-egg situation. You look at your phone. You have to head back home before it's too late and it gets dodgy. She gives you a kiss goodbye.

IN THEORY, YES.

Theoretically, of course yes.

When I say yes, I mean creating something from scratch.

In a non-hierarchical manner.

Theoretically, yes.

It is possible.

Of course, yes.

But it requires quite a few things as a foundation; some common goals, you know.

Common understandings of how you want to.

How you could.

Work.

With each other.

Know.

Each other.

Hold.

One another.

A thinking in the we

SHAREBONE

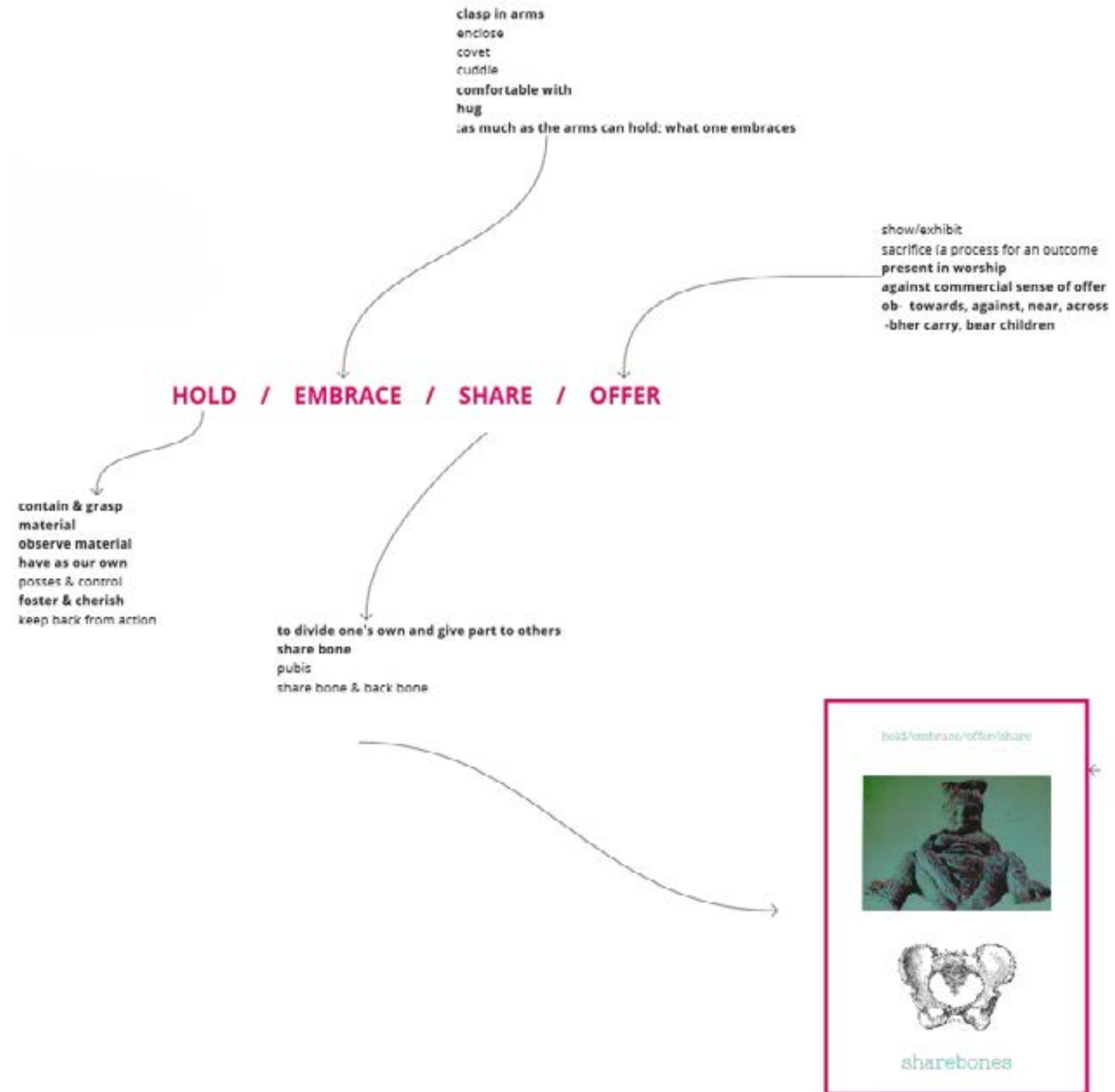
Is thinking in we ever enough, when being in we hardly ever comes?

You entered the room quite desperate that Monday evening. Half of us were there, others starting coming later. They were at work, their bus was late, other couldn't make it at all. You said that you had spent almost all morning trying to think what makes it so hard to move from thinking about non-hierarchy to being non-hierarchical when writing together. Why is it always so hard to do it and when it happens, why does everybody from the outside react with a "naaaah" as if your words, your telling of what happened does not sound real or legit enough? Even if they seem convinced, they pull out an ace from their sleeve that sounds like the following questions; What about a final outcome? Is it ever possible to make something when no one is calling the shots? If not, then what is your method? Are you willing to share it with us?

Share; this verb kept buzzing in your head. It almost felt as if it was buzzing in the room, so loud that you couldn't say it out loud and beg the others to discuss about it all. The workshop was coming to an end. Today was the last encounter; the last Monday that you met at FAC. The conversation started spinning around the verb *share*. Some were talking while others were taking notes and drawing, looking up the definition of the verb *share* to soon bump into the word *sharebone*, or else the pubis. Immediately you were reminded of Baubo's body; their upper and lower mouth and their legs spread apart. Their sharebone veiled or unveiled, was there to *hold* the weight of their non-verbal encounter.

Over the course of the conversation, you realised that *share* was not enough, it couldn't encapsulate all that you were negotiating. At that point of the conversation, you were negotiating how we open up non-hierarchical sites of (un)learning, as this one, to others who wish to engage in such an exchange. How do you talk about our process and how do you make the material and immaterial resources and findings of such pedagogies available and accessible.

After lots of back and forth, you concluded that the site of our site of (un)learning resembles a sharebone that *holds*, *embraces* its interior, to then *share* and *offer* it to its exterior. Like Baubo held and embraced Demeter's grief to then share and offer her a space and time to be seen, heard and felt in an instance of togetherness.



GIVE ME A MINUTE OR TWO

It's Monday evening probably around 8ish in the evening. This must have been a couple of sessions before last. You are curious and excited. Next Monday there is going to be no inner-stress to write a poem, to come up with another fresh idea; next Monday we are putting together a *food feast* instead. Cooking and chatting, listening to some music and sitting around a table for as long as we feel like. Yeah, there is going to be talks about our poetry, our sounds, the words and the images that we come to create together, but this time is going to be more fun. Just fun, you know.

Maybe this is what we need to get to know each other better; share our favourite recipes, cook something at home, pack it in a container, grab a couple of beers from the kiosk and bring it at FAC. Some of the cooking we could do together. Maybe a soup? This time we will be at the kitchen, all together. Some of us cooking, some of us doing dishes, pouring drinks, listening to music, laughing, crying when chopping onions. Then we will move to the main room to set the table and sit around. Chilled and relaxed, as we want it. As we do it with our friends.

Maybe we could also go for a walk. Walk and talk, talk about things we hadn't had the chance to share during the Monday meetings. "Again, and again; time is never enough. Time flies", you tell yourself. It has always been that way. It always feels that way. Time flies and before you know what you want to say, do or make, time is over.

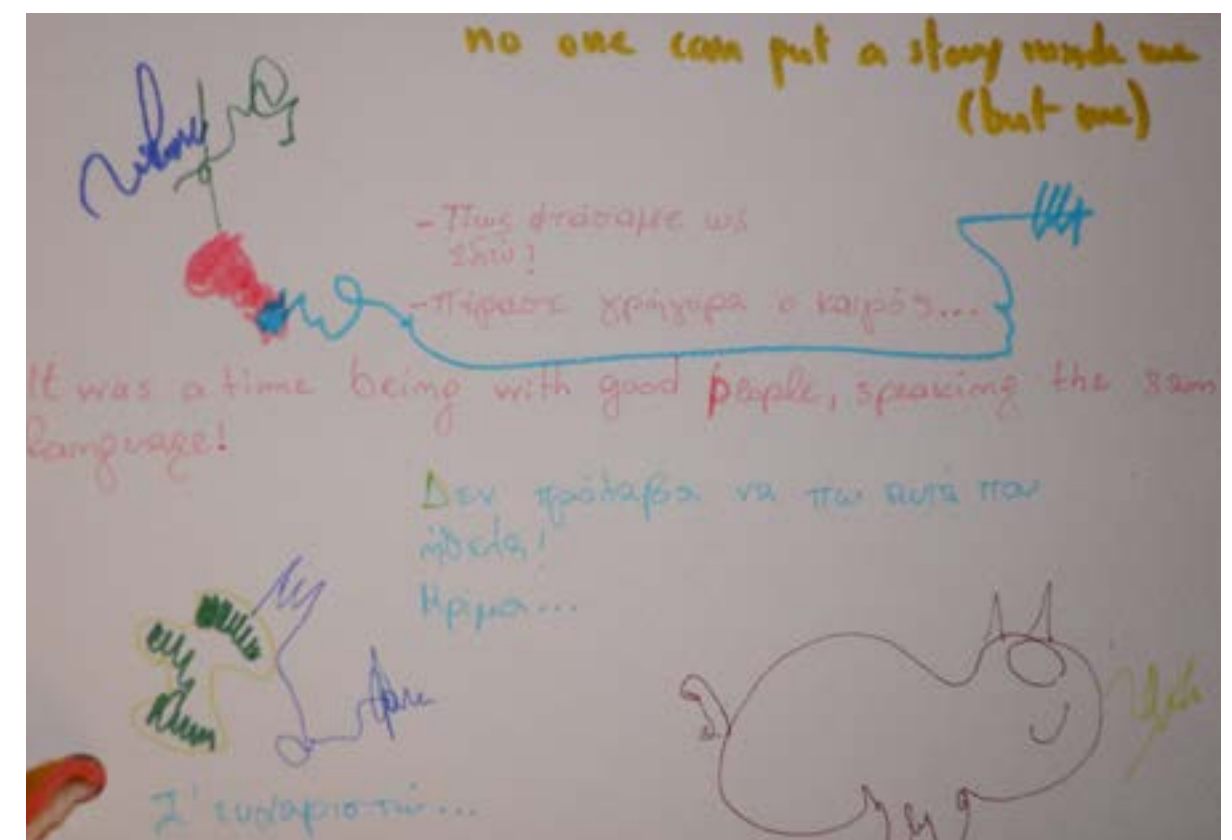
"Wait, just give me a minute to think" you look at us and speak. You need this time to think of all those that you wish for this workshop, this time together to be. You are thinking back when you wrote that email, when you wrote a couple of lines, drop a poem of yours at the email-body and pressed sent. What were you really hoping back then? When you walk out of the room, out of this building's door in a couple of weeks from now, what will stay with you? What would it be the "thing" you take with you and will there be such a thing/one?

Ideas pop in your head; a zine, a booklet, a poster, a track, a video, a map, a note, a poem, a text. "All and none of it, actually" we hear you saying while emerging again in the room after sitting with you in silence for the past five or so minutes. "What I wish for is to remember this path we walked together. I wish to take with me something that reminds me of having been inspired by each one of you along this time we spent together. Is that too big or abstract? All I want to say is that I don't want to walk out with an artwork. Material and immaterial as it can be, whatever is that I take from you I wish for it to be *shared*; something that belongs to all of us and to none of us, at the same time. For it belongs to the collective."

"Wait, give me a minute to think too".

When I leave, this room I mean, I want to have hope that we can do this. We can wave hierarchy goodbye. That we can let go of roles that are imposed on us. Cause hope is all we have, when we reclaim the roles we want for ourselves and the spaces we want to meet and be with each other; when we want to say the words, write the sounds, draw the worlds we wanna live in"

Time and time again. If we only had more of it, you might have given yourself permission to talk more, to share more of the words, the feeling, the thoughts that you have been keeping back. But is it only time that we wish for?



PUT THE BLAME ON (TI)ME BOY

It's been some months since this was over. Not really over, cause you keep writing, thinking, talking about this. Maybe too much time sitting on the chair makes your body ache. How much is enough? When do you know it is too much? When does it start and does it ever end?

Now your Monday evenings are free. Some of us wanted this to last for longer. Some of us wanted to not let go. Some of us might have had the time, heart- and headspace to keep going, but others not.

"Come on, let's be honest. It is not just about time and you know this". All of a sudden, your inner voice is so loud that you look around to see if the others can hear it. You are on your way to the pool. It's Tuesday morning and you are going swimming before you lock yourself in the studio to finish this piece of work, sooner rather than later than this f**ing deadline. Do people think of you as privileged when you say that you go to the pool every day? Do they think of you as one of these artists that take swimming, meditation, pilates and yoga classes back-to-back to feel grounded before they walk into their studio. When was the last time somebody asked you, *do you really have time to go swimming every day before you go to work?* And when that happened was there any energy left in you to tell them that your back is a mess and it aches like hell? And that skipping pool might fix you in a wheel chair for the rest of your life.

"Never mind" you tell yourself "time is relevant and time is money."

Back to your Tuesday inner monologue; time was not the only thing to blame. It would have been great to see more faces in that room. More of the otherwise. More of the difference that surrounds us in this city. The *otherwise* that you cannot predict, that surprises you and moves something in you. The *otherwise* that doesn't leave you hurt, that holds you and longs to be held.

SHOES AT THE DOOR

"Why did we never leave shoes at the door? I am thinking to myself. It's too late to be thinking about this now, isn't it?"

If they have left their shoes at the door, I might have stepped in a pair or two. I might have tried a couple on, just to see how it feels.

Are they too big?

Are they small?

Do I look nice in them and would I walk in and out of this room with their shoes on?"

I am listening to you mumbling while I am drinking my last sip of coffee. We are almost done with this interview, but it feels that there is a lot that you are thinking and I don't want to stop you by doing so. Is it too soon for you to answer this question? Is it too soon to ask you which role you want to inhabit in this group?

You smile and look at me. "Thanks for asking, I will think about what my role is in this workshop, I guess there is still plenty of time to try things out, before it all comes to an end"

We place our mugs on the table, we look at each other knowing that this hasn't been the question, but maybe it is so unusual to be asked "what do you want to take out of this", that our system cannot process it yet.

As you said though, *there is still time*.

There is still time to listen, time to read, time to make, time to ask, get lost and found each other again in this process. You hated poetry at school. It's been only two years that you realized it does speak to you. There is something in it that moves you. Poetry printed in books, poetry in sound, sound in poetry, improvised and ephemeral poetry, poetry between scribbles and drawings, us writing poems together; us wondering what is poetry and where are we standing in relation to it?

Before leaving the room, that last Monday, did you take any of that poetry with you?

UNFIX ME, PLEASE

We are waiting, are we allowed to keep waiting for a little while? We demand space and time to keep waiting. To keep waiting together for the words to become less stiff, for the sounds to be heard, for our voices to be listened. We demand the waiting-time, we reclaim a waiting room, a waiting room of our own to be playful, to be bold, to be together; for the writing to look less academic, for the poetry to take over and hold our sounds, our images, our moves, our wishes, my body, your body, our bodies.

Please hold on the waiting

Hold it while we become untight, while we push away the blockings that were imposed on us, while we say our names, resist our tames, weave our struggles and resist the pain. At the end of the day who gives a s***t if the poetry looks great; it speaks to us and others might feel the same.

POP CORN

It doesn't really matter which Monday out of all it was, does it?

You are walking down the road joyful, curious and excited, yet ambivalent. You are meeting with people that you hardly know. They are so much into arts and you feel you are not. You don't know what this even means, but still, it pulls you down, makes you feel less. Less than whom? Them? Never mind, you keep walking.

It's always that ambivalence that keeps you distant from any sort of artistic stuff. *They are great*, you feel. *I am a mess*.

This time though feels not the same. Noone is watching from above, calling the shots and naming names. It starts to feel more safe, definitely pushing that inner voice that drags you down away. *There is this other thing as well*, you say; that transmedia thingy that every time we meet makes sound, image and text floating, merging in random ways.

You are writing, drawing, playing sounds off your phones, reading text out loud, all together in one room. You feel lost, this kind of being lost that you have longed for. You stop worrying what the prompt was, the question or the task. You let your self get lost in making things and it just feels great. Unapologetically. Unpredictably.

Ideas, words, sounds, voices keep popping; a giant pop corn machine, seeds turn into pop corns and fly in the room.

This is how you wanted to be; easy as a pop corn machine.

This is what I am taking with me, an eruptive, glittery, loud pop corn machine.

MEMORY

A pop-corn machine; the smell, the taste, the popping and flying of seeds, the flying,
the sound of them roasting, the laughs in between.

A pop-corn machine that lasts and doesn't go unheard or unseen.

A room that it fits in.

A power plug that is working.

Some music to dance to, the lights on and poetry that we read.

We are not putting together a show, a print of some sort or any of those public things.

We walk this room knowing

that we failed to produce for a crowd that applauds

that we failed to deliver for a price at any cost

that we waited together with a wish for this to become a memory that stays within.

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