Social Inclusion
2024 • Volume 12 • Article 8534
https://doi.org/10.17645/si.8534

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Open Access Journal

Moving Margins: Writing in Relation as Liberatory Practice

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Submitted: 29 April 2024 **Accepted:** 28 August 2024 **Published:** 31 October 2024

Issue: This article is part of the issue "Theorizing as a Liberatory Practice? The Emancipatory Promise of Knowledge Co-Creation With (Forced) Migrants" edited by Halleh Ghorashi (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam) and Maria Charlotte Rast (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam), fully open access at https://doi.org/10.17645/si.i408

Abstract

This article is a practice of writing in relation. We consciously keep the conversational format to be close to our practice as educators, migrant-artists, and scholars. We weave our personal journeys as political and urgent for epistemic justice on questions of social inclusion of (forced) migrants. We do so to question the dominant forms of inclusion practiced in institutions that our bodies have navigated and continue to do so. Our intention is to open rather than fix our approach of relational biographical writing to bring attention to some hidden forms of daily violence and paradoxes challenging the path of emancipatory practice within spaces claiming social inclusion of migrants/refugees. We reflect on why we write and why we came to academia, inviting the reader to journey with us in what we experience as moving margins.

Keywords

epistemic justice; margins; moving; practice; writing

1. Introduction: SaK Collective Memory

In this article we attempt to outline a vision for epistemic justice urgent to our practice as academics, artists, migrants, women, mothers, sisters, daughters, lovers, friends, and so much more. In the last half-decade, we have been talking to each other almost every day. Talking to question, challenge, confront, navigate, move, stay, hold, push, embrace, see, celebrate each other in relation to the structural conditions that we navigate in academic and art institutions, but also in our daily lives. We did so to thrive and inhabit spaces we are not meant to be in, asking questions we are told we are not supposed to. This is to also acknowledge the hidden labour that goes behind the written word since we have had to claim and make space for our forged sisterhood in the margins of institutional spaces, despite also encountering each other in academic institutions

in the Netherlands. We consciously keep the conversational format to be close to our practice as educators, artists, and scholars, weaving our personal journeys as political and being conscious of the reciprocal process that hooks (1994) reminds us of:

> When our lived experience of theorizing is fundamentally linked to processes of self-recovery, of collective liberation, no gap exists between theory and practice. Indeed, what such experience makes more evident is the bond between the two—that ultimately reciprocal process wherein one enables the other. (p. 61)

S refers to Saba, K refers to Kolar, and *a* refers to so many people and things that bring us together. SaK also means to question in the Swedish language, and it represents our practices. We are restlessly asking questions, activating our sense of being, while valuing overthinking as a way to navigate the world.

Writing this article is also a liberatory practice in recovering our moving selves and the writing subject as a relational being and from there building a vision for social transformation in institutions and engaged practices of teaching and research on the theme of this thematic issue related to social inclusion for refugees/undocumented migrants. It is part of doing the deep coalition building against multiple forms of oppression that Lugones (2003) and Spivak (2010) call for. This *doing* involves being open to a process of ontological displacement and moving out of one's comfort position precisely because our bodies do not speak the same language, while being able to develop a common ground to name the oppressions they have gone through. This is so because the hegemonies, as Grewal and Kaplan (1994) have pointed out, are scattered but related (Lugones, 2003, 2010). In our writing, we write in conversation, weaving our experiences in response to each other's narratives, aiming for collective consciousness, inspired by Anzaldúa (1987). We tell our stories for what Cairo (2021) calls holding space, for our knowledges. We do so to challenge the fear of our experiences being torn apart in analysis, as Hill Collins (2000) highlights. Our intention is to bring attention to some hidden forms of daily violence and paradoxes obstructing the path of emancipatory practice within spaces open to "international students," non-white students and scholarship, and knowledges of migrants/refugees. Rather than visibly exclusionary spaces we especially focus on spaces of hope that we experienced as part of institutional life in the Netherlands that, however, reached certain limits and razor edges. Such edges shed light on institutions being unable to receive and transform from the plural knowledges we carried with us as professionals moving/being moved from the Global South.

Then writing becomes part of reflecting on our practices of moving out of one's place in such spaces of hope and constraint, in relation. We invite the reader to journey with these reflections. We experience this process as moving margins—margins not as a space for limiting and boxing one's identity, but as a space of what hooks (1989) calls radical openness. Margins as part of moving "out of one's place," "pushing against oppressive boundaries set by race, sex and class domination" (hooks, 1989, p. 15). Moving is, at the same time, being moved by each other's journeys and life experiences. Moving is also being moved by each other's onto-epistemic (linguistic) differences (Lugones, 2010; Spivak, 2010). We therefore adopt a form of writing that allows for our streams of thought to flow in relation. As migrants from the Global South, the condition of moving and being moved inevitably also produces its own temporalities of memory.

By following what Minh-Ha (2009) calls body-writing in relation, we hold space for stories that have been buried in our bodies for the sake of "moving on." Such stories now surface in this article as the grounds on

which we build and have built our practice in order to forge what Khan (2024) calls wilful coalitions, across forms of oppression, and our relationships to academic spaces in the Netherlands. This allows us to not only critique hidden forms of exclusion in the name of inclusion but in fact to also open up the process of rescripting our subjecthood and responses to such situations in relation. This, we believe, is a necessary path in order to challenge what Lugones (2010) calls coloniality of gender in institutional spaces from a "fractured locus"—a path that cannot be created by individuals but communities (p. 747). Rather than looking for a coherent author behind the texts, we invite the reader to follow the narrating selves guiding each of the sections that follow. Such narrating selves, we contend, not only bring to light the intersectional forms of exclusionary paradigms in everyday life, but also enact writing as a process of reclaiming the self through the narration of past events in relation. We consciously write to be guided by what Glissant (1997, p. 189) calls the right to opacity, and against transparency—what he argues to be the basic requirement of Western thought. At the same time, we articulate the moments when our bodies and knowledges were asked to fit into a scale or norm of such transparency and a gaze to "understand" us. As Glissant (1997, p. 190) argues, "in order to understand and thus accept you, I have to measure your solidity with the ideal scale providing me with grounds to make comparisons and, perhaps, judgments. I have to reduce." It is at these moments when we faced the gaze that demands transparency and the inevitable reduction of knowledges involved in inclusion that we open up to in our writing process.

We consciously centre and separate "the stories" from the debates in which we embed our arguments, in order to honour the knowledges in the stories to speak for themselves to a broad audience not bounded by certain standards of legibility and qualification, or for fitting into what Karimi (2024, p. 48) calls "communities of epistemic whiteness." Instead, as feminists such as Elenes (2006, p. 216) have long argued, we write for the "epistemological validation of everyday life as a key source of knowledge." The process of writing and the words in this article, following Anzaldúa, emerge as, "blades of grass pushing past the obstacles, sprouting on the page" (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 71). We also bring people who carry knowledges—scholars, writers, poets, grandmothers, and mothers—who are not always visible or legible in the spaces we inhabit. We wish to underline that knowledge comes in different shapes and forms. This is essential for our struggle to keep our voices and make space for voices that are often not heard. Rather than writing to feed what Adebayo (2022) calls the "positionality enterprise" where researchers are pushed to reflect on positionality for the sake of reflecting rather than for social transformation, we have attempted to hold space for our writing selves to lead the way in unpacking multiple forms of oppressions we have navigated in everyday life. We do so as a practice of learning about each other as resisters to the coloniality of gender at the colonial difference (Lugones, 2010, p. 753). This path is not complete with this article nor only began with it but is and has been ongoing.

2. Theorizing Beyond White Spaces

To be honest, whenever I am asked to discuss the relationship between theory and practice, I often find myself stumbling for an answer. While I recognize their disconnect in many academic contexts, even in feminist approaches and gender studies, unfortunately, in my role as a feminist poet-scholar and educator, they've always been intimately intertwined. For me, theory is not merely abstract it is a form of practice by itself. I engage with and participate in theory-building to understand, challenge power dynamics, and raise my voice against violence, oppression, and injustice. In my work, theory seamlessly intersects with my advocacy for justice.

In moments when reality seemed impossible, I turned to theory to explore and carve out spaces for myself. As hooks (1994) notes, I began theorizing from a young age, even before fully grasping the concept. I rebelled against injustices, especially when I encountered gender-based discrimination, such as being told I couldn't ask certain questions simply because of my gender.

I grew up surrounded by a huge collection of books that reflected my father's genuine love for reading in general rather than with a specific preference. I was also sent to study at scientific institutions that, paradoxically, placed a greater emphasis on language and religion than science. Their curriculum was advanced, teaching high school-level material in elementary school and university-level material in high school. There, I encountered religious practices that, while slightly different from those I was learning at home, were crucial in shaping my understanding.

My journey of self-discovery and advocacy was also influenced by my mom. Despite not having a formal education, she has been a fierce feminist who challenges societal norms and stereotypes. She managed the household with strength and grace, all the while standing up for what she believed in. She fearlessly voiced her opinions on various topics, particularly when she witnessed injustices against women. Her actions and beliefs echoed those of many feminists, even though she may not have identified herself as such. However, when she was personally involved, she adhered to the very norms she opposed.

This exposure to diverse viewpoints and conflicting beliefs and practices provoked me to question more deeply and seek the truth from an early age. It also taught me the value of embracing multiple approaches and challenging the notion of a singular path. It instilled in me the understanding that writing can serve as a powerful tool for theorizing new realities derived from everyday experiences. At home, we had collections by prominent authors like Badr Shaker al-Sayyab, Nazik al-Malaika, Abdullah Al-Bardoni, and Mai Ziyada. Those were writers who challenged the traditional norms and hierarchical structures in their writings and in the way they were writing as well. Reading their texts, I felt I belonged to the spaces they created, and the issues they tackled and challenged. It was their way of freely writing that created this sense of belonging to the written word. Engaging with their writings profoundly influenced my perspectives and choices. Many people around me labeled me as stubborn, tactful, rebellious, and strong-willed, but these descriptions merely scratched the surface of who I was. They encapsulated my daily struggle against the injustices I witnessed in the world around me.

Through all of that, I found my voice as a woman and began speaking out and writing about issues that mattered to me and the people around me. My upbringing, combined with the influence of strong female figures, shaped my perspective and determination to challenge hierarchical structures and fight for justice. Writing became my sanctuary. It provided me with a home and a horizon to navigate and thrive freely without the need to engage in meaningless arguments with those who cling to the status quo or fear change. It liberated my thoughts from constraints, allowing them to roam freely without limitations or boundaries. It offered me a joyful space when joy was forbidden or prohibited. It helped me to channel the anger that arose from witnessing injustices, transforming it into power for meaningful discourses and actions.

In Yemen, I was using storytelling as an alternative pedagogy in teaching speaking skills, seizing the opportunity to address social and gender issues in the classroom, and engaging my students in meaningful debates. It was crucial to me that the classroom served not only as a space for language learning, given my role as an ESL

(English as Second Language) instructor, but also as a realm for critical thinking. Upon fleeing Yemen, I ceased formal teaching but continued to educate. I delved into numerous books, discussing them with friends, and explored new methods of engaging with people through writing, both in theory and practice. I thought of ways to attract readers and encourage a critical engagement with the subjects I was aiming to address.

Inspired by Iranian author and professor Azar Nafisi's novel *To Read Lolita in Tehran*, I integrated international literature into everyday experiences. The first blog in this series was To Read Lolita in Sana'a. Despite the platform I wrote for being blocked in Yemen, thousands of people engaged with the blog. This interaction provided both me and my editor, Abdul Rahman Faris at New Arabs, who was a prominent figure in the Egyptian revolution, with the motivation to write more blogs.

3. Narrating in a Space of White NOISE

Upon moving to the Netherlands in 2018, I wanted to delve deeper into alternative pedagogies and learn how to translate my personal experiences into a body of knowledge or find a framework for doing so. I was inspired by many fierce feminists who ignited a fire within me, making Gender Studies the most fitting place for me.

After attending some classes in feminist historiography, I began to doubt my decision. I didn't want to engage with knowledges that centred experiences of white bodies, while either deliberately or ignorantly disregarding the struggles faced by others in different parts of the world. Nor did I want to participate in abstract discussions, while millions of women and men were/are enduring violence that I thought I fled. When I joined gender studies, I believed it to be the most radical space in academia that could make a change in the world, but I remember writing this sidenote after one of the lectures that depicted my frustration: لقد تمكن الرجل الغربي من حصر المرأة قي زاوية النقد وأشغلها بمسائل فكرية ضحلة هو ليتفرغ لشئونه الخاصة. This note was written during a moment of deep frustration, as I felt disconnected from the topics discussed in the classroom. While the focus was on issues related to the body, pronouns, and sexuality, I was preoccupied with the violence experienced by the people I had left behind—violence stemming from colonialism, war, displacement, floods, and famine. These were life-and-death struggles for basic rights like survival, education, and healthcare. I had hoped for women/gender studies to be the place to address these urgent forms of violence, but I was disappointed to find that the topics covered were far removed from my expectations. As a result, I wrote this note in my diary. I have chosen not to translate the note to convey my sense of alienation to the reader. It was the day I decided I needed to rethink my whole decision. Eventually, I realized that I had to let go of my romantic idea about gender studies as a space for activism and solidarity and see it for what it is: an academic space in a white institution. I enrolled in the master's degree program in 2019 and was accepted. This was an achievement that instilled renewed hope and joy in me because I didn't have to meet additional educational qualifications or complete a pre-master's program, a common challenge for many migrant students. The program coordinator recognized my previous education and experiences as sufficient qualifications for higher education.

These are excerpts from *Reflections on Summer School, August 2019:*

> *I'll begin with the final day of the summer school part of the Gender Studies program. We were divided into groups based on colours, and I belonged to the Light Blue group. These colors were deliberately chosen to "make space" for diverse perspectives and voices. When it was our group's turn to present, I stood up*

> *silently from my seat in the middle of the hall, prompting the entire row of white students to stand up so I could pass. I neither uttered "please" nor "thank you." As I exited the hall without heading to the front, they assumed I wasn't part of the group and erupted into laughter. After my group finished presenting, I returned, once again causing the row to stand up so I could reclaim my seat. I wasn't performing silence; I wasn't silent at all, but I was amidst a white NOISE—a noise in which my voice would never stand out or be heard. So, I made a conscious decision to adopt the role of the visible invisible, protesting loudly with a muted voice. I'm uncertain if I was truly heard or seen, but I seized the opportunity to present myself—the authentic me, a complete stranger, who resists classification yet belongs to one of the most marginalized layers on Life's Screen. It exists yet remains unheard or barely seen, no matter how noisy it becomes. It doesn't manifest visibly; it's not even the black dot on a white canvas.*
>
> *Learning is a process, and if my presence was hard to be read or heard, then I believe it will have space one day, just like me in that fruitful, effective, and beneficial week. And yes, I was invading the space somehow, thanks to the people who made it possible. On the other hand, although I am struggling with the burden of doubt, as Nirmal Puwar (2004) calls it, I am trying to understand the awkward position I am in, where I must learn and unlearn at the same time. Enduring not to constantly prove that I deserve to be here and to focus more on why I am here and what it is that I want to gain.*
>
> *One of the most important reasons I chose gender studies is that I want to place my own experience within an academic framework, or in other words, explore how I can generate knowledge from this experience. What I gleaned from Mijke van der Drift's lecture aided me in delineating a clear path in my mind: understanding how to learn about what I don't yet know and then articulate what I do know to create knowledge.*
>
> *This week opened my eyes to a broader landscape of what I thought about gender and gender studies. Some lectures were not relevant to me at all, and some lectures seemed, to me, as if they were performances and the lecturers were acting. It was not the performance that bugged me but the way they acted. It was fake to me, trying to justify an idea or to say what the audience would love to hear; even if it resonated with me, it was still bothering. I then realized that there is a massive gap between what we know, what we think we know, and what we want to know. I unlearned a lot, and that was not a deleting process where unlearning means giving up knowledge. On the contrary, this process of unlearning added some valuable insights and illustrated hidden meanings for me.*
>
> *The juxtaposition of NOISE and In/visibility was a tempting theme, and asking for a reflection on it made me think of me as the other, the invisible, the not-yet-of-colour who has no shadow to be reflected. Yet, I can still read what was reflected in the mirror (that week). Coming to that conclusion, I was afraid to submit a blank page since mixing all colours would only reflect WHITE!*

After submitting my reflection on the NOISE week, the only black Dutch student in the group reached out to discuss her thoughts on my paper. She questioned whether I had read the other students' papers because, to her, my writing didn't measure up to theirs. I attempted to convey that I wasn't concerned with comparison; our distinct paths of upbringing, education, life experiences, knowledge, and backgrounds set us apart, and I viewed that as a strength rather than a weakness. However, she remained unconvinced. To her, it boiled down to a binary of good versus bad, academic versus non-academic. I learned that she had grown up and studied in the Netherlands, yet she apparently felt a stronger connection to me than to the other students.

Throughout our conversation, she continued to reflect on the papers, our work, and the notion of positionality in academia and gender studies, particularly framing it as "us" versus "them."

The only time we had a class on something related to my cultural background was on Islamic feminism. I felt deeply troubled because it romanticized "Muslim women's" experience, overlooking the diversity of their experiences. What astonished me the most, however, was how almost the entire class criticized those who advocated for questioning Islam or women's "liberation" as right-wing propagandists. I felt the dual shadow of violence within academia and the challenging position I was in, attempting to convey that so many voices get lost in such rigid paradigms.

The same friend was observing my interactions throughout the courses. She had initially come to me and asked me how I, as a mom, was managing to read all the literature assigned to the courses and ask those brilliant questions. I had explained to her that my approach to reading and questioning was focusing only on what was personally important to me. I didn't attempt to appear clever or ask "smart" questions. One day I asked her if what I was saying or asking in class resonated with her. Unlike our first encounter after the feminist histography class together and during the NOISE summer school, her approach to me was different this time. She responded, "I actually don't know what you are trying to say at all." This shattered me because, to some extent, I could agree with her.

By this second encounter I was already trying to fit into that space, witnessing all the white noise around me. It felt like I was losing my voice. It was difficult for me to keep up with all the courses and readings in the same pace as the other students. Also, the language gap, as most of them were native speakers of sorts, intimidated me. But also given the fact that I couldn't find translations for so many terms in Arabic, I had to do more work to understand specific terms or subjects. I was also afraid of sharing any of my stories to not be analysed by other academics who seemed to be more interested in building their careers by engaging with refugees and migrants' stories rather than co-working/creating. I was joining my black Dutch friend in an invisible space of violence: diversity in shape and colour but not in practice.

I spoke to my advisor about the whole thing. I was seeking help and guidance on how to move forward. She reassured me that I was progressing well and expressed her appreciation for my work. She also emphasized that what she liked most about me and my work was that I was doing it for myself and not solely for academia or academic validation. It took me some time to fully understand what she was trying to convey.

It was the distinction between what matters to me and what was deemed acceptable within academia that I was struggling with. I entered academia to find/found a framework for my knowledge and experiences, aiming to translate them into a body of recognized academic knowledge so that other women like me could find something or someone who speaks their language—a language of multilayered experiences, violence, struggles, and multiple tongues.

I aimed to break free from paradigms and theories that discussed women who may look like me but didn't necessarily reflect my own experiences.

4. Dancing Out of My Place

The journey from dancing to geography was a painfully beautiful one. My last performance on stage was for a dance festival in the Netherlands in Spring 2007 as a student at a top avant-garde art school in Amsterdam. I danced to refuse the violence of conceptual art that was experimented on and through my body. Conceptual art that did not converse with the knowledges and stories my body carried. My body was seen as a "South Asian" dancer trained in Kathak whose embodied knowledges were to be silenced to fit the designs and concepts of the choreographer, whose body stayed in the comfort zone of thought and ideas. In one of the rehearsals, I was asked to dance the movements and gestures of kathak without my pants on. It was clear that the choreographer was "pushing our limits" while remaining within the comfort of his/their conceptual journey. I did what was asked of me. I did it to refuse the voices in my head—voice of "oh, you trained in classical Indian dance, you must find it hard to go against your guru [teacher]"; voice of "you must be rich to study in Amsterdam, India is such a poor country"; voice of "once you cross the Indian ocean you lose your roots"; voice of "always remember where you come from, don't forget your roots." I did it to refuse these voices that had stayed in my head and needed to be let out.

The Spanish co-dancer was asked to perform the routine of a namaz while we watched his/their body struggle with the gestures. We were not part of the concept-building process of the choreographer that such work would give form to. Later I would come to read in an online interview where it was mentioned by the choreographer that the people involved in creating this piece would raise questions around "the issue of war, the issue of the Other, the issue of the role of women in society." If this was the intention, my dancing body was not engaged with the research questions shaping the piece. My body was not approached as a theorising/conceptualising body. I had to reclaim my body for the performance after this abusive rehearsal. A spontaneous act of shaving my head. I sacrificed my hair. I did it, simply, without much thought, as a gesture of allowing my body to hold itself amidst the twisted gaze and power relations forcing her to move in ways she did not and had not always wanted to. In hindsight I think I did it to burn the conditions of welcoming I was offered (what was then) "here" in my new home and the road "back home" (what was then) "there." My body knew that both were unsafe. I danced the piece to burn my old self while mourning her. I danced without gratitude to the choreographer, screaming silently my exilic condition, which no one heard. I was muted by the grand visuals, the spectacular stage setting, the jarring sounds of the live music band, the spotlights, the coldness of the audience. The violence of the spectacle is that we accept the dividing line between observing and being observed. We have given up other senses in guiding this relation.

I was burnt out after this performance. I had given too much without being nourished. I tried to meet the director of the school and asked for some days of rest. He advised me to return "home." I did not know and realise that he was in fact opening a legal case of voluntary return and eventually making me quit the school but also lose my residence permit. I was seen as a burden and a student not good enough to be groomed as the school's graduates. I sensed that I was seen as not being grateful to the choreographer who was the director's good friend. What remained invisible to their eyes, but also to the structures of the arts education system, was all that was underneath the iceberg of my student registration in Amsterdam with my Indian passport. Years of training in forms and knowledges that were made illegible here but were also fixed there. Years of dreaming to escape from an unsafe home. Years of saving up and applying for scholarships. Years of not having space to rehearse and develop my own audition piece and my work as an independent dancer. Long periods of paperwork and visa procedures and even a police investigation to verify my home address before arriving

in Europe, in the Netherlands. The hypocrisies of attracting "international students" needed to claim appeal and capital as a Dutch art institution, alongside the provinciality of art schools in Europe that dismissed plural knowledges built from restless questioning, experiences, and training became evident.

There was a continuum of violence that my dancing body experienced here and there. I did not get translations of the Urdu poetry I was dancing to, across the Indian sub-continent in the 90s and 2000s. Nor did I get access to the texts behind the concepts of the piece my body was asked to move to here in Amsterdam, in one of the most avant-garde and international schools for new dance development in Europe in 2007. My movement expressions and knowledges were, on one hand, received through an Orientalist gaze as "Indian" and "timeless" fixing me in space and time and unable to catch up to European trends. On the other hand, they were used to perform a radical critique of occidental knowledges without sensing it as a theorising body. In hindsight, I was yearning to make my own space and time for building knowledges from my experiences to develop a relational frame/form for which I came to this school.

I was welcomed and celebrated as the first "Indian" student in the history of the school when I got selected as one among the 10 out of 100 dancers selected to the program. The selection committee was excited that I would be teaching Kathak to the students at this school and other schools it was affiliated with. My body was made to become "out of place" and "out of time," while in fact I was radically demanding/creating my own space and time. My body needed to rest and restore to rebuild herself from the condition of displacement and transformations part of the same. There was no space or time from the institution, staff, and the students or the procedures to allow for this.

The student mentor supposed to offer guidance and supervision and in charge of our well-being tried to reveal aspects of "Indian culture" that she was exposed to as a tourist in South India. She told me that she had been to Hampi (in South India) and had been "dancing on the rocks." Her gaze had no space for my inner transformations. She gave me a small elephant made from stone to support me. These symbols of "my culture" coming through her visits to "India" that were being offered to me in fact kept me in place—i.e., under her gaze. My art history teacher covered movements such as Dadaism, showing us videos of dancers in Europe and the US such as works of Martha Graham and non-representational pieces from Yvonne Rainer, among others, that did not pass through my body. We did not get much context to situate these works in larger geopolitical, political, historical, economic, cultural circulations, let alone global designs of cultural imperialism shaping "canons" of European art history. The staff were predominantly white not in terms of appearance but in terms of speaking, and assimilated into the singular language legible to the institution and trends circulating in Europe and North America, even if the forms we were all trained in looked different.

I was burnt out from being unable to hold my space in a white institution that had failed to provide the safe and brave space needed to find a frame for my experiences and to build theories from there. I moved to academia to protect my body and for the same reason that hooks (1994) talks about—because I was hurting.

5. Theorising as Conversing To Go-On

I remember theorising at the age of five or seven, sitting next to my father, on the pavement by the temple at the corner of the street between my home and school. He simply kept repeating that he did not want to live, that he wanted to die, and could not go about his daily life. I was trying to find words to not only comfort

him but to get him to move from inside out, and in the process trying to move myself and play with him. I was trying to love as play, embracing his urge to kill himself while trying to grow with him through conversations. I felt it was a play that often went in loops. All he could say was "ನನಗೆ ಆಗ್ತಾಯಿಲ್ಲma" (*I cannot go on*). I was searching for a frame to name his/our struggles to be able to love, in a society where naming a mental health condition would result in out-casting someone. I wanted to find a way of articulating our struggles to get him out of his condition through my thoughts and words articulated orally. I did not read much but kept finding a way of talking to everyone around me in coded languages and measuring their responses, denials, body expressions, gestures, silences, to build my own framework to navigate my father's struggles in relation to my family's struggles.

I had to find a way to make him see the light of moving and living. I remember affirming him of his strengths, of why I love him, and that this would pass, and so on. Recently, after more than three decades, his response was the same. But my location had shifted. I began to see his struggle as part of the societal violence to silence knowledges. Theorising meant finding ways to talk about something that one does not yet have the vocabulary nor the space for, while being spoon-fed with narratives that were indigestible but meant to be "good for you" or given as "the truth." I had been doing this sub-consciously but now I became more conscious of this, which is part of the writing process of this article.

At the same time, I remember looking into the eyes of my great-grandmother, as a seven-year-old child. She was blind and had never been to a formal education system. I remember feeling the magic of storytelling and imagination. As a child I remember entering her room like I was entering a magical land. Her eyes were so lit up and full of stories that had the power to transform the little room—a small bed, cupboard, and a toilet—into a magical land. Her stories speculated on futures she did not have this life. Storytelling was her way to empower herself and the women she knew who were struggling with limited options to transform their lives in the material world by imagining and living future lives and therefore their daily life. This was/is magical for me because it was a practice of theorising as active dreaming urgent to pass through her/their daily struggles. This is what I hold on to today for building theorising practices as liberatory.

My theorising has always been oral from early on. Till today, it's my capacity to have conversations and theorise while talking, finding ways to transform each other's day-to-day struggles. Theorising is for finding a reason to move and act and be in this world as relational beings, always incomplete, broken, and beautiful. Conversing allowed me and us in this article to rescript our subjecthood against the violence we carry in our bodies intersecting with broader phenomena of war, colonialism, inter-imperialisms, racism, gender discrimination, caste, class, social inequalities across places and times.

6. Conclusion: Writing as Making Times and Living Spaces of Liberatory Practice

In writing in relation, we articulate the everyday dynamics of silencing in spaces especially interested in including "diverse" and marginalised voices, that our bodies have gone through (Spivak, 2010). In doing so, we underline the power of language in shaping such contours of global epistemic standards (see also Aparna & Hamzah, 2023), not only in terms of English language skills but also in the lesser visible exclusions in the name of "critical academic language" or "avant-garde art" in schools of gender studies and performing arts. The identity politics of looking, performing, and sounding different while becoming the "marginalised other"

who is legible, audible, and visible to, what Khosravi (2024) calls white ears, and eyes, we argue, limit epistemological plurality.

Writing this article is our practice to weave ourSelves in relation. It is at the same time a practice of not separating theory and practice, art, activism, daily lived knowledges/experiences from "critical academic" thought and writing. Theorising for us is a practice of raising our voice when the lived realities become impossible to inhabit. It is a practice to develop tools to detach from the performativity of the "critical academic subject," or "conceptual artist," that appears diverse in shape and colour but not in practice. It is a practice to theorise from that space where our bodies refuse to name our feminisms within the boxes of Islamic or South Asian feminisms. It is a practice to reclaim our writing, dancing, living, conversing, and theorising bodies as relational and unique, rather than to fit into standards defined externally. Writing this article is our practice to not reproduce the violence that our bodies carry in some of our engagements in institutional spaces. It is a practice to build on the knowledges that have otherwise not counted as knowledge carried in our bodies and passed on as wisdom from strong women, men, mothers, grandmothers, and great-grandmothers, without romanticising them but learning and unlearning to read them as we pass through white institutional spaces.

Writing is a practice of making a home and horizon when and where they do not exist. Teaching and learning a new language is a constant practice of searching for vocabularies to name and overcome shifting gender and social inequalities that our bodies experience. At the same time teaching and learning a new language also means opening them up for others to relate, write, and think from. Writing is also a practice of naming our experiences of navigating White institutional spaces and asking how we can nevertheless reclaim ourselves, and our voices, and build open-ended theories from there. Writing is a practice of moving to not fit into standards that erase the literacies and knowledges of our/other marginalised daily experiences. Such knowledges we believe have the power to transform power hierarchies and inequalities while opening pathways for alternative epistemologies needed for the same. Writing this article is our practice of making our times otherwise not granted to us—times that are not linear or fixed to dominant speeds, narratives of progress, and histories or geographies or subjectivities or identities that are bounded. Writing this article is our practice of living spaces of relational subjecthood otherwise not granted to us—spaces where the I becomes many *I*s and the pre-determined "We" is disturbed. We write as living spaces for conversing endlessly without boundaries of personal and professional and theorising from there. We write as weaving our trajectories without imposing, keeping close to our daily lives to open rather than bounding them to fixed narratives of oppression or liberation. We write as a practice of not defining the path to liberation but making times and living spaces of liberatory practice otherwise not granted. We bring attention to the specific institutional spaces mentioned above because they continue to be spaces of possibility and hope for us, despite the limits in breaking silences on structural racism in the present. We write to reclaim our roles as writers, academics, artists, mothers, friends, sisters, daughters within and at the margins of various institutional spaces from the kitchen table to the board rooms of scientific and artistic institutions and the playing fields beyond.

Acknowledgments

All authors have contributed equally to this article. We thank the editors for the invitation to this thematic issue and for their support in the process of writing this article.

Funding

The Centre of Excellence in Law, Identity and the European Narratives (grant numbers 312431 and 336678) at the Academy of Finland has supported Kolar Aparna's work.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Saba Hamzah سبأ حمزة is a poet-scholar, author, and educator. Her research delves into the intersections of knowledge production, memory, and social justice from a decolonial lens. Saba's work critically examines the power structures embedded in society, using art and literary interventions as tools for education, social mediation, and transformative change. With a strong foundation in art, history, and gender studies, Saba approaches knowledge production and justice with a focus on curating and preserving the narratives of marginalized communities.

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