1 | INHALE

I am travelling in between times,
    your experience of violence inscribed in mine

As you read my skin tightens,
    disabling the muscle regulating my breath

I am affected by you and your ability to speak,
    as well as the listening of others

The care-full attentiveness pushes me to a past encounter,
    not long after I began to speak myself

While the intrusions of Men linger on my skin,
    it is these words that do me most violence

"Now I respect you more"

Who says that to someone after learning that they have been raped?

You did.

Now you respect me more?
The absurdity hit me as I write out the words,
This cannot be right? I cannot be right?

My tears began to fall as you continue to read,
(y)our memories now moving me to write

2 | EXHALE

This is a raw poetic expression, birthed through a sense of individual and collective vulnerability (Helin, 2019). Individual as it is grounded in the porosity of my (academic) self, collective as such porosity implies an embodied openness toward others and otherness. A collapse of boundaries between you, me, and the world (Pors, 2019). The poem was written as an affective response to a conference workshop where experiences of sexual abuse were shared and where I found myself “broken” by a past encounter: an argument over the importance of the #MeToo movement with a senior male professor from my institution and where I also shared that I had been raped. Though I have reflected on this encounter many times before, it was not until the workshop that I realized how my experiences had been objectified through his construction of “me” and my assumed respectability, premised on an idealized depiction of a victim. Contained. Rather than being silenced (Hussein, 2022), I was thus allowed to speak only to have his script written over my embodied experiences, numbing me through secondary violence. This realization was made possible by witnessing the attentive listening of others at the workshop, which allowed for experiences of abuse, survival, and vulnerability to be voiced and to resonate among bodies instead of being reduced to an individualized matter. In that moment—as the construed boundaries of my own experiences collapsed—my inhale and exhale grounded me in the midst of sheer panic. A reminder of our right to exist on our terms, now reflected in this brief poetic expression.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT
Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analyzed in this study.

REFERENCES

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Alice Wickström is a researcher at Aalto University, School of Business, Helsinki, Finland. Together with her colleagues, she explores organizing and issues related to inequalities, difference, ethics, and inclusion from feminist and post-structural perspectives.