



# There are No Other

*A Dance Poetry Project  
between Finland and India*  
Supported by Taïke Grant, Finland

Vera Lapitskaya  
Madhu Raghavendra  
Edward Petroff  
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Isabella Mansnérus  
Natalia Kochelenko

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2022-2023



## Foreword

There are No Others is a project conceived and implemented by bringing together two artists, of two different art forms from different countries, continents, and cultures to begin with. The project led to further collaboration with a working artist team. The collaborating artists for the project are Vera Lapitskaya (dance artist, project applicant), Madhu Raghavendra (poet), Edward Petroff (videography, photography), Dimitris Tatsis (music, sound design), Isabella Mansnérus (dancer, video assistant), and Natalia Kochelenko (logistics, consultancy).

There were preliminary discussions between the poet and the dancer on what their idea of freedom and hope meant to them for a better world. The poet then wrote six poems, over a period of a few months, for the project, partly during his international writer's residency at the University of Iowa.

The dance artist, who also happens to be the primary applicant and director of the project envisioned it a way as to align it with the human relationship with nature as an underlying theme which brought a surreal lightness to the project.





The multi-layered exploration of proximity between the human body and different environments led the artist to a journey of unfolded metaphors and meanings, looking for the answers: how everyone and everything can be included, how the differences can be accepted as they are, how we can peacefully coexist with each other in this world?

The first public showcase of the project was in Helsinki on 18 February 2023 at the multidisciplinary art event organised by Catalystry, an association of transcultural artists living and working in Finland. In the year 2023, the project continues touring and will be showcased at several art and educational events in Finland and India, including X-Dance festival in Helsinki which focuses on inclusive practices and multifarious representations of body and mind in the dance field nationally and internationally. The project will also be showcased at some of India's biggest festivals like the Mathrubhumi International Festival of Letters.

We thank the Arts Promotion Centre Finland Taike grant for helping us bring this project to fruition, and reaffirming our hope in the power of interdisciplinary art.

*Vera Lapitskaya*

*Madhu Raghavendra*





## Contents

Own	13
Harmony	14
Vague	16
Peace	18
Jñāna & Bhakti	25
If This is the Last Time We were to Speak	35

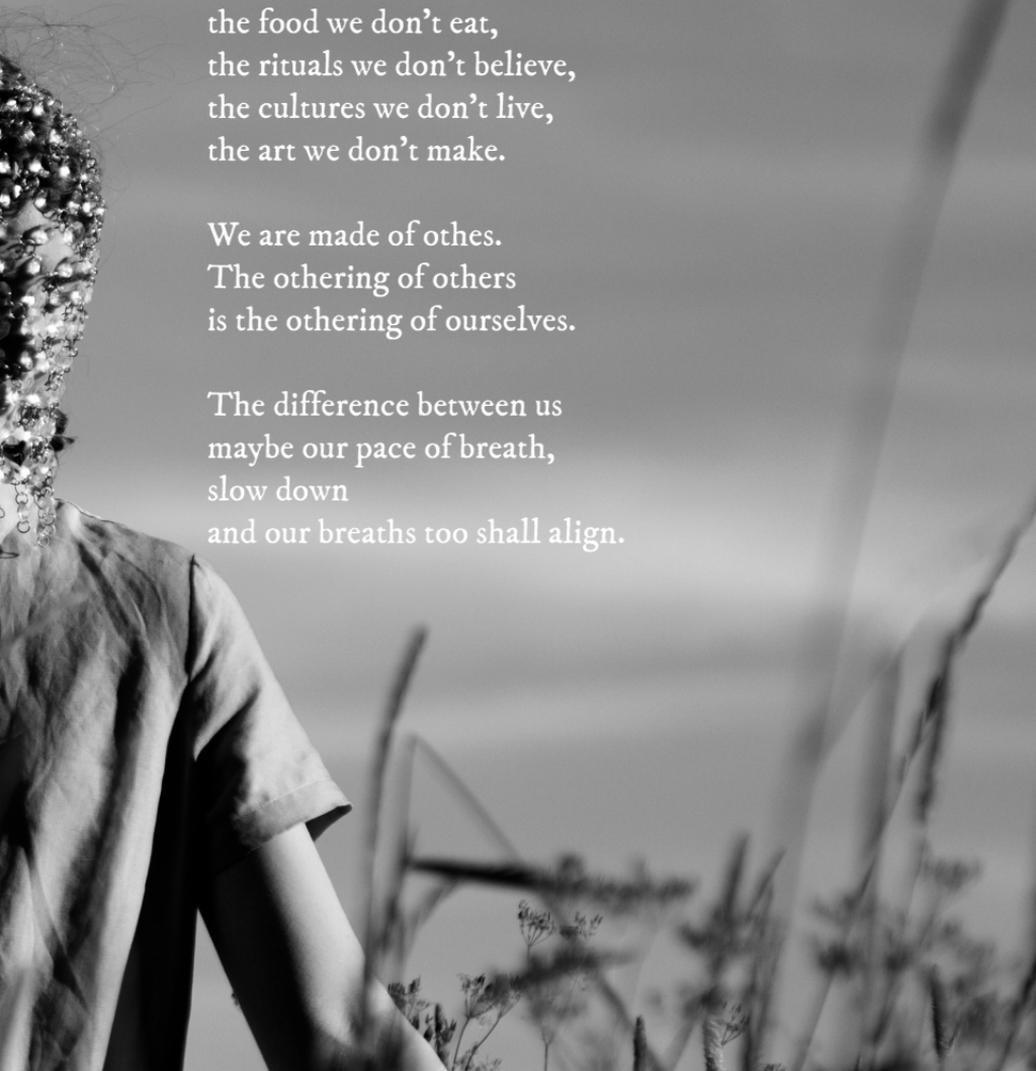


## Own

We are also the songs  
we don't sing,  
the food we don't eat,  
the rituals we don't believe,  
the cultures we don't live,  
the art we don't make.

We are made of othes.  
The othering of others  
is the othering of ourselves.

The difference between us  
maybe our pace of breath,  
slow down  
and our breaths too shall align.



## Harmony

When you feel lonely, sit by a river  
When you feel empty, gaze at clouds  
When you feel tired, lie on the grass  
When you feel defeated, befriend a firefly  
When you feel anxious, shut your gadgets  
When you feel pensive, listen to the rain  
When you feel rushed, follow a snail  
When you feel restless, take a hike  
When you feel heavy, hold a leaf  
When you feel happy, climb a tree  
When you feel angry, watch a butterfly  
When you feel disconnected, grow roots  
When you feel full, step into an ocean  
When you feel useless, plant a sapling  
When you feel something

Share it with nature

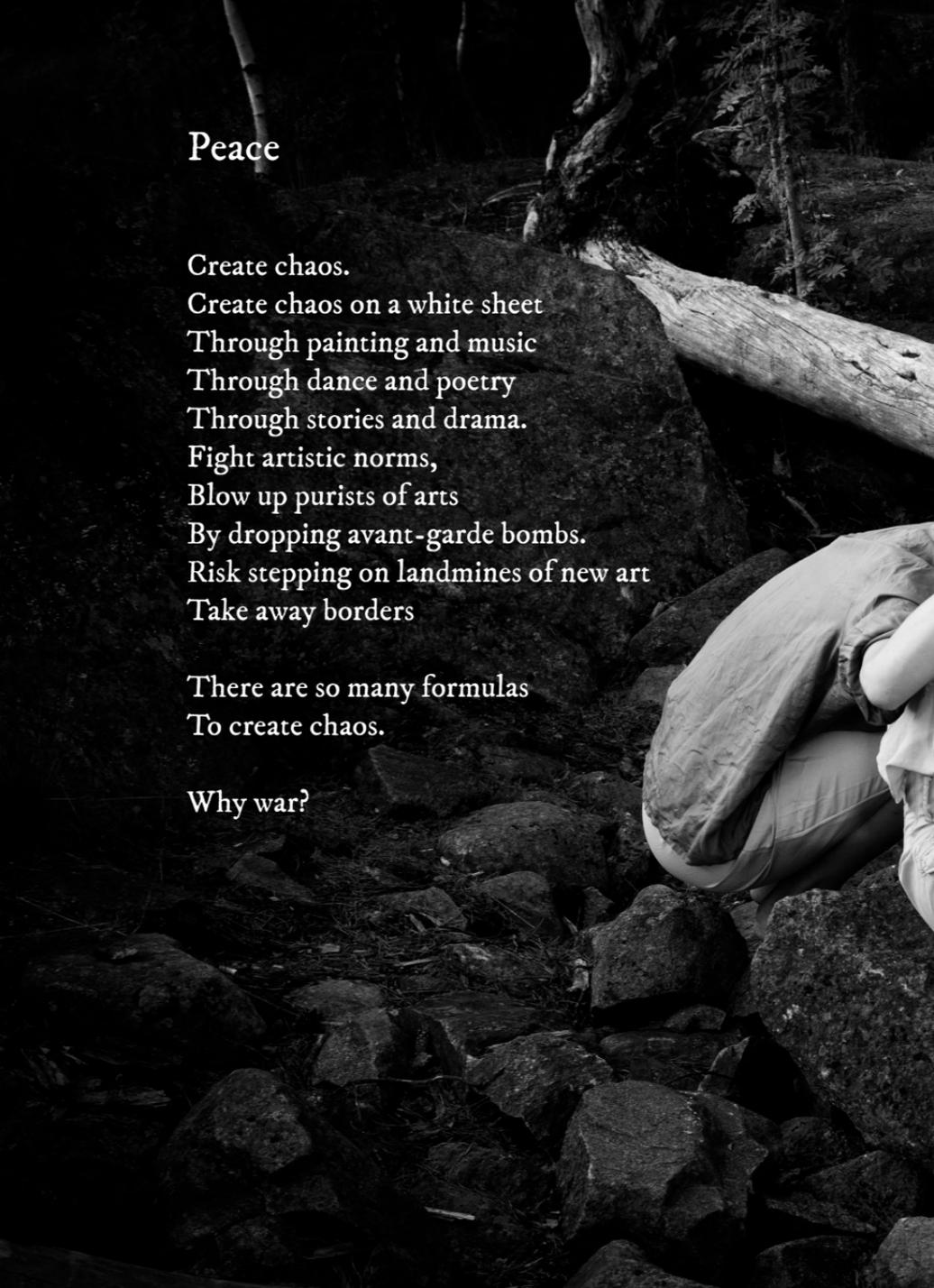
What you learn from nature  
Share it with yourself



## Vague

We stand beside each other  
watching a child dance  
The silence between the words  
in your language  
and the silence between the words  
in my language  
Effortlessly sound the same  
It is the sounds of words  
that have to work hard  
Very, very hard, to make it clear  
Whom to hate  
When you choose hate  
You have to be attentive  
Very, very attentive  
Because hate is vague  
Very, very vague  
So much so that  
if we are not careful  
it could end up be directed  
at a dancing child  
that is yet to learn a language.





## Peace

Create chaos.

Create chaos on a white sheet

Through painting and music

Through dance and poetry

Through stories and drama.

Fight artistic norms,

Blow up purists of arts

By dropping avant-garde bombs.

Risk stepping on landmines of new art

Take away borders

There are so many formulas

To create chaos.

Why war?













## Jñāna & Bhakti

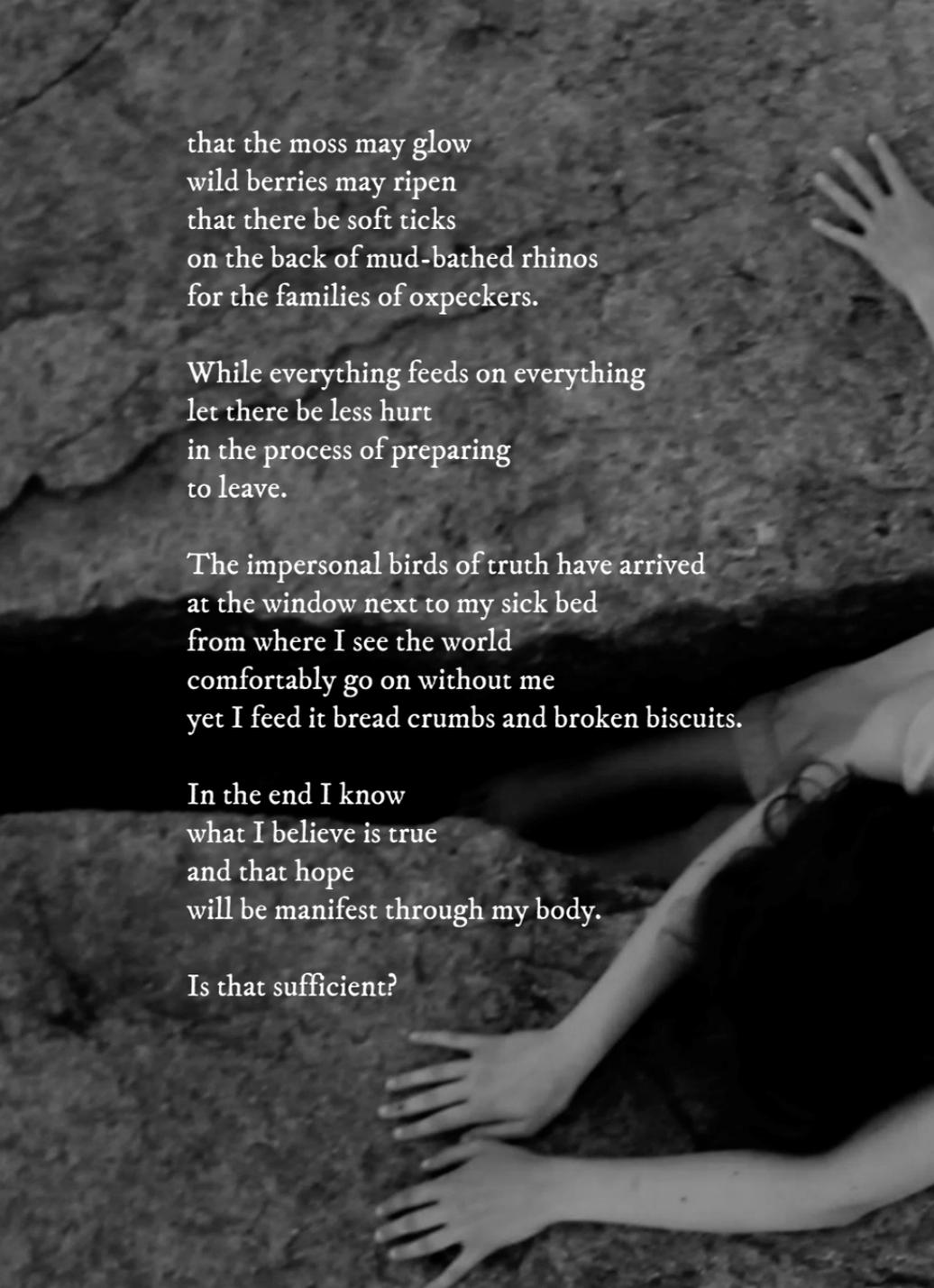
### Jñāna

With each passing year  
the bulging of the veins  
on our hands appear  
like tributaries of rivers  
seeking the ocean.

The warmth of the volcanic ash  
that hatches the iguana  
can burn them too.  
The endless mountains  
that stretch like a san-mai sword  
can slice the sky.

Things that can erase each other  
are glued together  
with an eternal adhesive.  
In this ocean of samsara  
there is no easy route.

In these moments  
of our becoming  
let us turn  
into a morning prayer



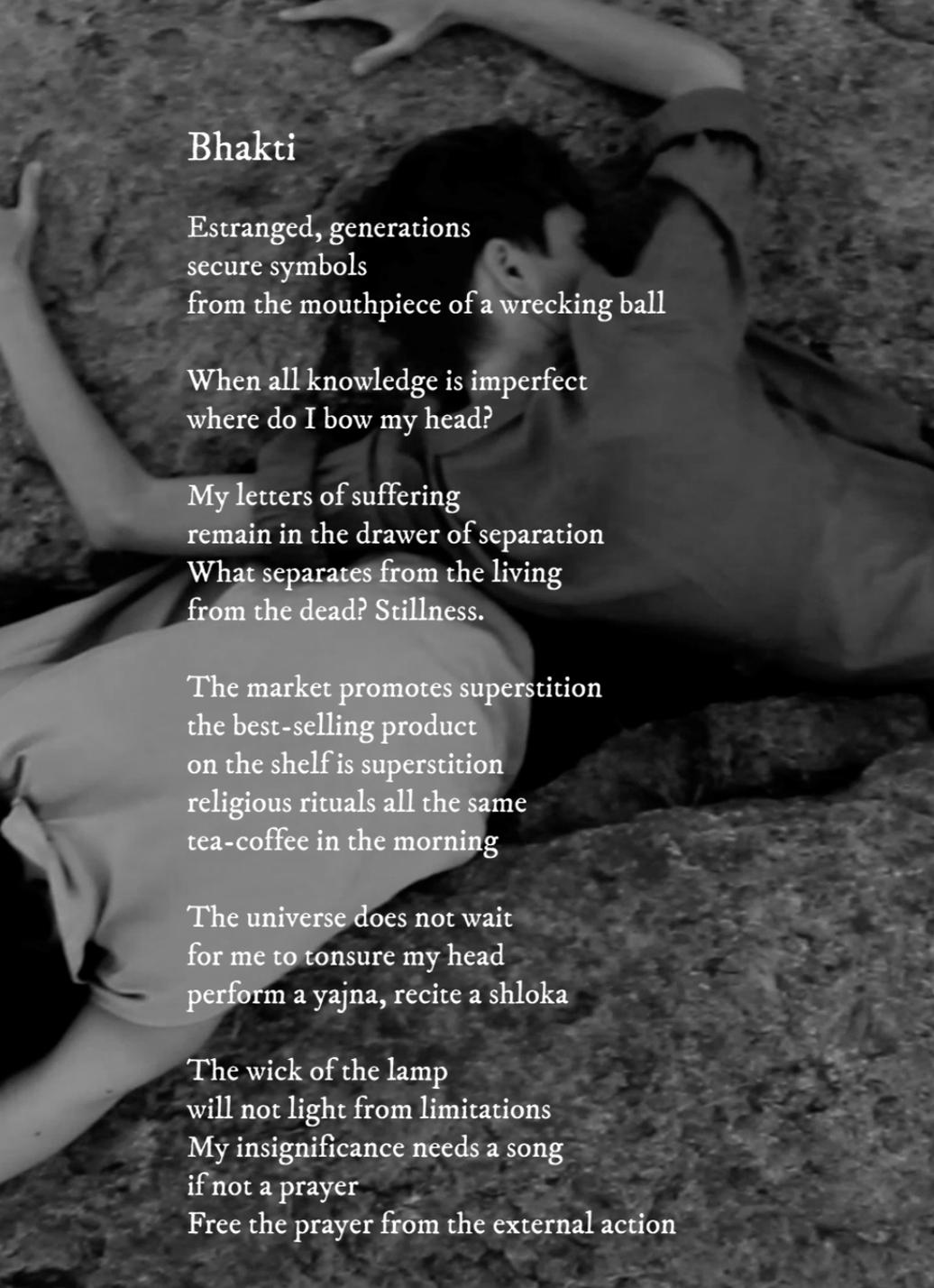
that the moss may glow  
wild berries may ripen  
that there be soft ticks  
on the back of mud-bathed rhinos  
for the families of oxpeckers.

While everything feeds on everything  
let there be less hurt  
in the process of preparing  
to leave.

The impersonal birds of truth have arrived  
at the window next to my sick bed  
from where I see the world  
comfortably go on without me  
yet I feed it bread crumbs and broken biscuits.

In the end I know  
what I believe is true  
and that hope  
will be manifest through my body.

Is that sufficient?



## Bhakti

Estranged, generations  
secure symbols  
from the mouthpiece of a wrecking ball

When all knowledge is imperfect  
where do I bow my head?

My letters of suffering  
remain in the drawer of separation  
What separates from the living  
from the dead? Stillness.

The market promotes superstition  
the best-selling product  
on the shelf is superstition  
religious rituals all the same  
tea-coffee in the morning

The universe does not wait  
for me to tonsure my head  
perform a yajna, recite a shloka

The wick of the lamp  
will not light from limitations  
My insignificance needs a song  
if not a prayer  
Free the prayer from the external action

In surrender of the jiva-atman  
to param-atman there can be no conditions  
no shapes, no specific days, no mediators  
no fears, no asks, no sacrifices  
a feeling, like the feeling of a beautiful day

It is ambrosial  
how we eat and eat and eat and eat  
words that are porous  
till we are impenetrable

In a festival of emotions  
I partake, knowing 'I' am  
surrounded by all things  
have a path of its own

Effortlessly accept  
the collisions, the drifting away  
freedom of experience without rucksack  
all the nomenclatures and misnomers  
travelling towards  
the Shunya — the mouth of the zero.

*Two-part poem; jñāna (knowledge/awareness) and bhakti (devotion), two of the paths to attain moksha (liberation from this cycle of life and death). Tajna: sacred fire; shloka: hymn; jīva-atman: the individual/self; param-atman: absolute soul; shunya: void*













## If This is the Last Time We were to Speak

Good Morning  
You are enough for this world  
You are not alone.

Space connects all things; nothing is something.  
I'll see you again, sometime, somewhere.  
Either everything is a miracle or nothing is.

My brain is resurrecting old memories.  
I don't have one.  
Being kind is the most important thing in the world  
since you never know what someone is going through.

As Auden says, if equal affection cannot be,  
let the more loving one be me.

*This is a chain poem created by students during a poetry workshop with students from the Scattergood Friends School on the Iowa prairie, USA. The school practices a college-preparatory curriculum, farm experience, a shared work program, and community living in the spirit of Quaker faith. The students who created the poem were Lily Jampoler, Dina Wettig, Bazs Vande Hey, Lilah Burke, Dylan Asikin-Garmager, Eliza Meisenbach, Raven Ball-Trevor, Esu Vande Hey, Paul Taylor, and Sam Taylor*









