
Count Me Out

Ad-judged, this fragile sum
Born of failed talks,
Death by command.
Poor country, where I come from.

This number hurts
My skin feels it,
My senses reel it,
My kind of woman bears it.

Traded in words
In an opaque structure
Scattered coins of recognition
A song paid for silence

Yet the words that trail behind
Pretend to love me,
With an unholy cheer
They name what the figure hides.

Your words don't count.
They echo the misery of the sum
That snaps me mid-flight,
As I stretch toward belief.

I count no hours —
I blend my life with the burn of thought
Still, the count fails to tell
The weight of care I put there.

To innovate, to steer, to spark,
To assist, to grow, to mark,
To close, to open, to learn
To be there. Because someone must.

I thought you were close.
Born of the same wounds,
Those that place us lower.
But now I dread the scent
Of whitened power in the air.

It cuts twice:
For being her,
And not being *her enough*
For the center to see.

When the world cries,
We keep on listening.
The cases spin, the papers churn.
And we — steady, silent, firm.

It cuts twice:
For being here,



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And not being *academic enough*
For the capital to see.

Still, this number might suffice
In a world drunk on rivals.
Left or right, it slaps
A reminder to stay in file.

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Third path — you are.
That's what they say.
Not second-class,
On a road well-paved for less.

All I ever learned
Was to contest the colonizer
Never to bargain with a dean,
I hide behind my thick silence.
Angry is my value

Woman. . . where are you?
Are you near — or part of it too?

Who cares?

I feel locked in this number:
Unable.
Unseen.
Unworthy

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Explanatory footnote

“Count Me Out” exposes business school professors’ salaries as a locus of intersectional discrimination rather than a neutral metric of value. The poem illuminates how women – particularly those racialised or coming from “colonised countries” bear both the material and symbolic burdens of undervaluation, even when they outperform. It also denounces what appears as socially acceptable compensation exposing it instead as an institutional mechanism that legitimises exclusion, competition and moral injury within neoliberal academic hierarchies where monetary rewards and publication metrics prevail. Moreover, it questions gendered leadership models, although often framed as “caring” may inadvertently reproduce these structural inequities rather than redress them.