

Un-Redacted What do Your Words Mean? Pauline Rutter

A TCCE mini-publication

Un-Redacted

What Do Your Words Mean?

A mini-publication by The Culture Capital Exchange
©TCCE 2021

Copyright of each work printed herewith belong to the respective author and is reproduced here with their permission

Contents

Forward

Suzie Leighton, Founding Director, The Culture Capital Exchange and Co-Director, National Centre for Academic and Cultural Exchange

Un-Redacted What Do Your Words Mean?

Pauline Rutter, TCCE Associate

Forward

Suzie Leighton, Founding Director, The Culture Capital Exchange and
Co-Director, National Centre for Academic and Cultural Exchange

Since the inception of The Culture Capital Exchange (TCCE) in 2005 we have intrinsically and consistently tried to platform different voices, opinions, backgrounds and lived experiences in our work, with a particular attention to lifting up and amplifying the voices of women from outside the mainstream of academia and the arts and cultural sector. This impetus has been driven by a genuine belief in the need for intersectionality in meaningful discussion and debate.

The summer of 2020 was a time of huge disruption and change, the UK was in lockdown in the midst of a global pandemic and the killing of George Floyd caused global outrage and focused the attention of the world on a newly invigorated Black Lives Matter campaign. Social media exploded into a sea of corporate and individual calls to action and promises made. As a very small organisation TCCE was already evaluating our ways of working and negotiating our new pandemic reality, and it became clear to us that our former quiet approach to equity was no longer enough. However, neither did we wish to jump to make promises that didn't hold value, or that we would be unable to enact.

At this point we received word that TCCE had been successful in a bid that we had submitted earlier in the year to Research England, and had gained investment to establish the National Centre for Academic and Cultural Exchange. This allowed us the capacity to bring some "new blood" into the organisation, and we placed an advertisement for a Programme Curator to come and work with us on TCCE activity during 2020/21. We were inspired and really quite humbled by the the range of applicants, and ended up engaging not only Dr Gemma Outen who became our Programme Curator but also two TCCE Associates, Dr Rebekka Kill who has worked with us on a programme centering creative leadership this year, and Pauline Rutter, who contacted us at exactly the right moment, proposing a creative and bold "Enquiry into Equity and Social Justice in Higher Education Research".

To work with Pauline this year has been an education and an inspiration. She has taken a careful, creative and nurturing approach to making safe and imaginative spaces for minoritised people to consider their experiences in the higher education research environment. Under her careful curation the programme has progressed from an initial workshop focussed on creative writing for research equity led by author and academic Olumide Popoola through to an international seminar with keynote speakers from the US and Scandinavia exploring the role of funding in equity and social justice in higher education. This concluding event felt very much like the start of a conversation rather than the end of a series, and we very much hope to be able to continue our collaboration with Pauline moving forward.

This small publication contains Pauline's reflections on her work over the last year in a typically creative and original form. I would like to extend my personal thanks to Pauline for her exceptional work, for her

unobtrusive tutelage and her humour and strength. Our sincere thanks also go to all those inspirational individuals who contributed to events throughout the year:

Olumide Popoola
Nike Jonah
Sadhvi Dar
Deborah Brewis
Erinma Ochu
Michele Tracy Berger
Kecia Thomas
Ro Averin

And of course all those who attended the events and were so generous with their time, thoughts and experiences.

Suzie Leighton June 2021

Introduction by Pauline Rutter

In principle, I am not against procedures, guidelines, or policies for equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in support of higher education research. However, in recent months I have ploughed through the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) ethnicity analysis of funding applicants and awardees, the Race Equality Charter (REC) guidelines and Reviews and the EDI documentation of thirty UK universities. In 2020, each of these was highly rated within the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings for Sustainable Development Goal 10¹ 'Reduced Inequalities' and most were on their REC journey. I have asked myself what this investment in people, administration, activities, reports, events and conferences adds up to. In spite of years of supportive, creative and practical staff and student led initiatives across so many institutions, still "only 155 out of more than 23,000 university professors in the UK are black²."

The findings of Nicola Rollock (2019) on 'the career experiences and strategies of UK Black female professors'³ makes visceral the exclusion and marginalisation experienced by black and ethnically marginalised academics in higher education today. Kalwant Bhopal (2018)⁴ explains how in spite of twenty years of legislation, including The Race Relations Amendment Act (2000) which outlawed racial discrimination and defined 'institutional racism,' that we are no nearer the 'post-racial' society of our imaginations. Other recent research provides stark evidence of the harm to the physical and mental health of ethnically minoritised academics due to overt and covert racial discrimination within their institutions. None of this is new. The evidence that continues to gather is deeply troubling. It represents so many fragmented and trampled careers and so many traumatised and undervalued individuals. And yet, the academics, professors, EDI professionals and arts and cultural producers of colour who I have spoken with over the last year, continue to show up with passion for their fields of expertise and for the work they do with their students and communities, even when the progress towards equity and social justice is so painfully slow.

I dedicate this publication to these individuals and to all of those across the decades who have sacrificed so much so that some of us might tentatively take up space within the academy, build confidence and work. For many, academic life remains precarious and the battles that are won and lost are fought on a daily basis. Does it ever become easier?

¹ https://www.timeshighereducation.com/rankings/impact/2020/reducing-inequalities#!/page/0/length/25/sort_by/rank/sort_order/asc/cols/undefined

² <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-55723120>

³ https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/10075/Staying-Power/pdf/UCU_Rollock_February_2019.pdf

⁴ Professor Kalwant Bhopal "White Privilege: The Myth of a Post-Racial Society" (2018)

While this 'poem' is an experimental and meditative response prompted by lines of text (in black) from UKRIs 2020 guidance on nominating bodies for REF 2021 panel membership⁵, It could just as easily have been a creative reflection on any one of a number of similar documents. For me it represents the optimism, exhaustion, frustration, sadness, rage and joy of so many inspiring women of colour whose voices become clearer to me when I am up on the South Downs where their words breathe and have space to spread out.

⁵ <https://www.ref.ac.uk/media/1225/improving-panel-representativeness-review-of-nominating-bodies-equality-and-diversity-templates.pdf>

Un-redacted – what do your words mean?

To open “Nominating bodies for REF 2021 panel membership were required to complete a template”

A story begins in the past
A line is drawn for those rendered ‘non-racial human’ to exist
While others will be bodies inside bodies.
This is the work
A proclamation that sets the pragmatic tone and must suppress broad critical
consciousness, for submission to the system is the goal.
Who steps forward to sort and inspect?
A certain type of body,
Well versed at mimicking heterosexual, male normalcy
Though, we never call it compulsory able-bodiedness⁶

Oh “How equality and diversity was taken into account”

Not taken in for accounting but taken out onto the Thundersbarrow Hill to breathe.
Does the ambiguity loosen its grip high up on the South Downs away from all structures?
This requires some thought.

All lined up “REF panels. They were also provided with contextual data”

Out here, the focus shifts
For whom the emotional toll bell rings
On land and out at sea.
We set the institutional racism free to watch over others in a huddle
Explaining and contextualising the importance of the Panel
Unaware.

Here’s “the current representation of HE academic staff across age, gender, ethnicity, and disability”

Aware and simultaneously unaware.

For “Improving REF Panel Representativeness”

Does improvement feel like the sun on your face?
Does it fill the air like the songbird overhead?
Is it the improved gaze of improved eyes that will improve the improvable Others?
The words are freakish, detaching themselves
from their meaning.

We wonder, “What can be built on, or changed, for future rounds of panel membership recruitment?”

⁶ McRuer, R. (2006). Crip theory: Cultural signs of queerness and disability. New York: New York University Press.

The questioner looked at the High Panel.
The question rolled down the hillside from Thundersbarrow.
The questioned now had the high ground and surveyed effortlessly across field,
fence, hedge or any barrier
with a gaze, unstoppable
What were you saying earlier?

“More should be done”

The duty.
Ah, the burden of obligation
to “become complicit in forms of ‘doing diversity’ and ‘promoting equality’”⁷

With “diversity of background, perspective, and experience **of** fundamental insight”

There is a yearning for a broader lens,
So we might see the “slippage” between intersectionality and a wide assortment of earlier
models of multiplicity: double jeopardy, diversity, multiculturalism⁸.
What sight is gained with this vision and culture of interaction
Between those from the past, our present selves and the future consciousness?
A projected race-free carapace?
Too black? Too brown to be acknowledged?

Add “value to the value of the work of REF panels”

As the value is to the work,
So the trampling of reality is to the racialised self.
Not that a policy label ‘BAME’ would ever mean a thing
To the Other(s) unrepresented who, (if anyone?)⁹

So “Increase the representativeness”

But then we have *the representative as ADJECTIVE:*
typical of a class, group, or body of opinion.
As SYNONYM:
prototypical · characteristic · illustrative · indicative ·
archetypal · paradigmatic · exemplary
As LEGISLATIVE of DELIBERATIVE
consisting of people chosen to act and speak
on behalf of a wider group.
As PHILOSOPHY
relating to mental representation
How then?

⁷ Ahmed, Sara & Hunter, Shona & Kilic, Sevgi & Swan, Elaine & Turner, Lewis. (2006). Race, Diversity and Leadership in the Learning and Skills Sector.

⁸ Harris, J. C, & Lori D. Patton, L.D. (2019) Un/Doing Intersectionality through Higher Education Research Journal of Higher Education, v90 n3 p347-372

⁹ The 2019 Holberg Conversation with Paul Gilroy - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PBntPdPcQes>

See “how equality and diversity issues were taken into account in putting forward nominations”

The act of being put on the ledger.
Put forward not backwards with humbling diversity issues blowing in the breeze
Even as the nomination begins: “there’s no quality without equality”¹⁰
So a simpering man (or woman) with the list of characteristics all separated out
Confirms no double counting.
And everyone put in their rightful context
On the field.

Still “challenges remain for improving diversity”

When words sit together, the siege begins.
Everything turns toxic,
In on itself
Waiting for improvement or choosing to be frozen out.
Even though it’s no warmer on the inside,
Don’t you know?

The “completed templates were assessed”

A little passion for the template?
Here’s the thing about loving your people.
You just love them.
And desire, oh so longingly, for a methodology that is without bias.
Yet to be found within this ‘Pedagogy of the Oppressed’¹¹
Unwilling ever to transform.
Even when you sit among the clouds
Of the Ivory Tower.

Yet “It is the panel’s view”

Survey the landscape again.
What do I see which they do not?
A mesmerising valley, alluring, hushed, warm, earth, still and stoic
Unspeakable in its truth.

Hushed? “A good number did not comment on the diversity of its membership or staffing”

Couldn’t we just have listened all day to the gentle whisper of that breeze
Bringing every clear conscience forward
While others choked on coarse, indigestible false generosity?
Eyes squinting.
Tongues out.

¹⁰ Edge, Dawn; Alston, Jamal; Ochu, Erinma (2021): ‘Scientific Racism’ and structural inequalities: Implications for researching Black mental health. figshare. Preprint. <https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.13768288.v1>

¹¹ Freire, P., & Ramos, M. B. (2017). Pedagogy of the oppressed. Penguin Books.

Speak of the “diversity characteristics of their governing body or other lead committee”

No one speaks of these when the ‘whitely’¹² bodies step forward,
Proud or quietly beaming with the unmalicious mark of hegemonic righteousness.
Carrying in their rucksacks the “heteropatriarchal norm of structural whiteness”¹³
That we have left behind
While following the path from a barrow to a copse.

No care of “How organisations identified and selected nominees, and who was involved in the decision making”

A rubric of judgement searching for its grammar, it seems.
Checking up on the shape and sound of the voices
So different in a room, on a panel, in a pandemic, or still by an ancient burial mound
Where if you take a breath, you might draw in two thousand years of living.

They “did not comment on how they selected between them in making nominations”

Nothing to be seen here.
No surprise or protest at this nonchalance.
They dance in step with “mutual subjection to a systemic imperative”¹⁴
That turns in on itself,
While the Others sing in chorus
“The times we’re living in is extreme
It’s not hollow, it’s not lukewarm. It’s either hot or cold”¹⁵

Still more symbolic gestures “Identifying a pool of potential nominees.”

A pool that is an ocean of lives
Submerged within their institutions in order to make change.
Moving synchronistically against the current.
Needing “to make something for the people that made their lives possible”¹⁶
Crashing wave after wave to unbind the tongue¹⁷
Resistant to that danger lurking on the shore.
That calls them ‘Siren.’

Some on the inside “simply identified one or more nominees who they had experience of working with, or endorsed people who contacted them”

Here a friend or there a friend, made agent,
Slipping in through doors left slightly ajar.
Then in assimilation, subserve
And settle in just enough space
For one.

¹² Chingonyi, K. (2020) ‘Whitely’: Race and Lyric Subjectivity in Clare Pollard’s Poetry, *Wasafiri*, 35:3, 43-47,

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ Steve McQueen on George Floyd, Racist Inequality in the UK and His New Series, 'Small Axe' Nov 11, 2020
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=ySnOSrQeDLU>

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ Martinez, S. (2014). For our words usually land on deaf ears until we scream: Writing as a liberatory practice. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 20(1), 3-14.

Even they need to rest,
From the every-day racism every day
“Every day, every day, every day, yeah, ev..., ev..., every day”¹⁸

As “half referred to the use of REF guidelines and contextual data provided (although in some cases the latter was rather tokenistic)”

The giver of tokenism.
The tolerant maker of spectacle
The ‘I’ that is me triggering cognitive dissonance as I breath¹⁹
In.

“A few organisations were concerned about the diversity of the proposed selection panel and therefore took steps to address this”

This for the wanderer, meandering in a daydream from path to path
Because there are no barriers.
Like sheep on the hill, one after the other
charging or racing or dancing.
Untroubled by that hot blood raging through the veins of those
Demanding things for themselves,
Things of their own.
Handled with care
And radiating “the joy and lightness that comes from the pain”²⁰

Through “complete anonymous equality and diversity monitoring forms”

No one can ‘say her name.’
The voice is cut from the vocal cords.
Leaving an indistinct whisper of a woman.
Anonymised to keep her safe?
Erased to keep her hidden?
But in mind if not in body unrestrained on Thundersbarrow
Full pelt
And in full view
Serenading all the racists from their roosts.

They “run their proposed selection process via the organisation’s (or one of the member’s institution’s) equality and diversity lead”

Enter a solitary figure.
Unburdened by their heteronormativity.
To close the gaps and salve the wounds of guilt and erasure.²¹
With calm reassurances that
“Everything’s gonna be alright”²²

¹⁸ Steve McQueen on George Floyd, Racist Inequality in the UK and His New Series, 'Small Axe' Nov 11, 2020
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=ySnOSrQeDLU>

¹⁹ The 2019 Holberg Conversation with Paul Gilroy - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PBntPdPcQes>

²⁰ Steve McQueen on George Floyd, Racist Inequality in the UK and His New Series, 'Small Axe' Nov 11, 2020
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=ySnOSrQeDLU>

²¹ Martinez, S. (2014). For our words usually land on deaf ears until we scream: Writing as a liberatory practice. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 20(1), 3-14.

²² Bob Marley & The Wailers - No Woman, No Cry (Live At The Rainbow 4th June 1977)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mZ6VezKMoRY>

Processed as “anonymised information about candidates so they were considered ‘blind’ by the selection panel, with no information being provided about their names...”

Sightless, they come, nameless and in shadow.
The sun is setting.
The air goes cold.
And banished to a darkened wilderness,
They are left to wander
In glorious ‘fairness.’

What “prompted them to consider what data collection and policies might be instituted in their organisation to help them to embed equality and diversity into their structure and processes”?

The chalkface?
The thin soil without water or light.
Still shoots emerge
Enough for a wildflower meadow
Growing in the wilderness of intergenerational sacrifice.

Still “They had not had sufficient time to put in place a fully transparent process that took equality and diversity into account when responding to the current call, but that they would do so in response to any future calls”

We stroll across the downs with stories on our lips that are the past and yet the present.
What calls to us?
An echo from the future?
A chronotope where we are what we are
Where we do what we do.
Where the space and time stretch out across an abundant smiling landscape
Can you feel it?²³

Even as “20 percent of respondents included one or more elements of notable good practice in their responses”

The judgement told us nothing of how the land was earth enough,
Of how the air was sky enough.
Not a one of us is here to break a thing
All of us are here to illuminate.
“Everyone wants to advance in their intellect
To understand the environment you’re in.
Who wants to be ignorant?”²⁴
And still I know the air is thinning as I move higher and higher.

To “go beyond the usual suspects so that we nominate people that reflect the diversity of our community as a whole”

I ask the usual suspects who (won’t speak with me)
Why I have no reflection in the mirror they are holding up to themselves.

²³The Jacksons – “Can You Feel It” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lrKZNqIR2U0>

²⁴ Steve McQueen on George Floyd, Racist Inequality in the UK and His New Series, 'Small Axe' Nov 11, 2020
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=ySnOSrQeDLU>

But every time the words land on deaf ears²⁵
I know “it does something to you inside
Mentally, physically, spiritually.
It chips away at you”²⁶

On another day, “the membership was directed to the equality and diversity guidance made available by the funding bodies”

I consulted the guidance from the Bodies
I made presentations,
I gave citations.
I took no pay.
I held my pain.
I cried in the rain.

Same old same “they were asked to nominate at least as many women as men, and to include BME selections wherever possible”

Appendix i) Diversity “a hot commodity that has claimed black women as its principal signifier”²⁷
Let some in.

“Yes!” calls “our Inclusion and Diversity lead”

We know “the word ‘diversity’ invokes difference
But does not necessarily evoke commitment to action or redistributive justice”²⁸
Where does this lead us
Round and round in circles?

Unlikely to “apply any learnings to future exercises”

Even if we pause to kneel or raise our fists or blacken every square
There’s always one more mask to wear.
“It’s a very British story”²⁹

Just as some “Made extra efforts to recruit candidates from under-represented groups”

How could they know, that everyone came down from the hill
in a celebration of the senses.
Of hearing and tasting and smelling and seeing
And each with eyes wide open.
Hopeful they may be chosen
Willing to sign away all innocence.

²⁵ Martinez, S. (2014). For our words usually land on deaf ears until we scream: Writing as a liberatory practice. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 20(1), 3-14.

²⁶ Steve McQueen on George Floyd, Racist Inequality in the UK and His New Series, 'Small Axe' Nov 11, 2020
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=ySnOSrQeDLU>

²⁷ Bilge, S. (2020). The fungibility of intersectionality: An Afropessimist reading. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 43(13), 2298-2326.

²⁸ Ahmed, S. (2007). The language of diversity. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 30(2), 235-256.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870601143927>

²⁹ Steve McQueen on George Floyd, Racist Inequality in the UK and His New Series, 'Small Axe' Nov 11, 2020
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=ySnOSrQeDLU>

And jump into “our pool ... balanced by gender. There was a representation of people of colour but no women of colour”

A deep sigh
“Out of survival we speak.
As radical women of colour scholars, this is our rite of passage”³⁰
Disappointment
Excuses
Rage
And ‘False charity’ the ruin of trust?³¹
Turns our excellence to dust.

Or “Barriers”

They can’t be seen
They shape shift and defy description.
And still we feel them.
Frosty, barbed and razor sharp.
The lines on the map.
Invisible to eyes that roam across the landscape
Foreign to our shared or stolen cultures,
That have crossed these borders long before you named them.

So “we aimed to maximise transparency and inclusivity, for example by: Encouraging self-nomination”

Who will make the silent tight-rope walk?
Heads bowed?
Hushing themselves and fading to grey.
It’s the price we all must pay.

Still “It is worth putting in that bit of extra effort to try to ensure that we have not unconsciously overlooked good candidates”

What unconscious, pathological responses to oppression³² is this?
One that finds ‘good candidates’
Who can go the extra mile?
“Yeah, yeah, yeah, up the hill backwards.
It’ll be alright”³³

See here “We created our own briefing pack about the process, which, attempted to simplify it and make no assumptions that people would be familiar with it, to encourage people who would not previously have considered themselves eligible”

So much trying on of language to fit a different tongue.
“Don’t they know we’re British?”
We look one to the other.
All eyes ‘without assumption’, knowing themselves ‘eligible’:
“*entitled · permitted · allowed · qualified*”

³⁰ Martinez, S. (2014). For our words usually land on deaf ears until we scream: Writing as a liberatory practice. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 20(1), 3-14.

³¹ Freire, P., & Ramos, M. B. (2017). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Penguin Books

³² Walsh, M., B. (2015). Feminism, adaptive preferences, and social contract theory. *Hypatia*, 30(4), 829-845.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/hypa.12175>

³³ David Bowie (1980) “Up The Hill Backwards” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=38pAlti-dXE>

· *acceptable* · *suitable* · *appropriate*
· *fit* · *fitting* · *worthy* · *competent*.”

“We informally monitored this information as our shortlist of nominees grew and sought to address obvious gaps”

Commend this move,
with promise of results.
Through careful monitoring,
close inspection,
detailed analysis,
and minding of the gaps.

Others “Sought specific advice from one of our associates with expertise in E&D”

And because we have been outside we are no longer experts of ourselves.
It’s not with malice that they mobilise upon the hillside
They whisper kindly to each other,
“That’s how we position ourselves in the university,
as the equity experts and if there are things to be operationalised”³⁴ we will make it so.

Some may ask “What is meant by ‘equality and diversity issues’”

Good question.
What is meant?
I looked it up.
Google offered “About 214,000,000 results”
A lifetime of knowledge, it seems.
But not a day of understanding.

“That nominating bodies should not include potentially identifying personal data about nominees’ protected characteristics”

A few pages more
The sunlight brings clarity.
I have to be optimistic.
My characteristics need no more protection than any others.
But none of those Bodies know how to
Just say stop.
No more inspection, description, labels or scores
No more separation or closing of doors.

Ask “What might constitute positive action (e.g. requiring nominations of both men and women), and what constitutes discriminatory practice?”

Positive/negative
Listen.
Outside/inside
Listen.
Men/women
Listen.
If you stand on the wrong side of history

³⁴ Ahmed, S. (2007). The language of diversity. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 30(2), 235-256.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870601143927>

The land will eventually swallow you up.
Deny you the sunrise.
“I don’t want to explain ignorance and stupidity and foolishness,
I won’t do it.
It’s enough to have to live it”³⁵
Need I go on?

No, to more “types of reasonable adjustments that can be made in relation to panel meetings”

You and I know too well
“Institutional statements expressing commitment to equality and diversity lack sincerity”³⁶
Out here on the hillside, the words resist adjustment
As I speak them out loud
They show themselves for what they are
Cloying, jumbled, a subterfuge
Designed to make no sense
Enacted to keep all change at bay.

Why “Re-design the template so that it is more structured?”

To reinforce the fortress of inflexibility?
To aggravate and irritate?
To blindside the allies and silence the collective wisdom?
The scowling faces that never meant to
Throw the doors wide open
Are seen for what they are.
Stony, bland, the colonialist-colonisers.
If only courage was all they needed.
But no.
The choking grip has never been released
Only tightened.

Another day and “nominations will only be accepted where accompanied by a statement setting out how equality and diversity has been taken into account”

“what are our values, who are we as a university?
Are we doing all the things that we said we do in our mission statement?”³⁷
Time to re-wild all that we survey.
To let loose the community of life and love upon the hill.
To be,
To feel,
To do
Something.

³⁵ Steve McQueen on George Floyd, Racist Inequality in the UK and His New Series, 'Small Axe' Nov 11, 2020
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=ySnOSrQeDLU>

³⁶ Times Higher Education; London Iss. THE 2393, (Feb 7, 2019).

³⁷ Ahmed, S. (2007). The language of diversity. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 30(2), 235-256.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870601143927>

While “Very small organisations, or those who do not normally nominate to such exercises, might wish to consider working with one or more other nominating bodies”

Ask where this wishful thinking leads?
Beyond best wishes for a small rebellion.
Or earnest struggle.
Or do they join us in that striving,
Knowing “if there is no struggle there is no progress”³⁸

For “underrepresented groups (such as BME), may mean that they have the right experience without having attained the usual markers of seniority”

Who is this BME?
Not I
Not me
Not any other.
Don't call me BAME³⁹
Pronounce my name.
She/her, they/them
We are not the same
Forgive yourself
You always do,
For never having known me more than smiles.
Then say my name
And tick your box
And say my name
Again.

You'll mark me with “the full range of protected characteristics”

To disguise or fetishize,
My blackness centred,
And what of “other intersecting modalities of oppression”⁴⁰
What more protection does the institution need?
I'm just a person.

And time spent to “consider the diversity of the panel”

Leaves me cold
When out here, there's a landscape to explore
Of ditch and gully.
Of woodland,
And of wide plateau.
A view beyond the middle distance.
Much wider than blinkered panel vision.

³⁸ Frederick Douglass (1857) “West India Emancipation” speech at Canandaigua, New York, on the twenty-third anniversary of the event <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/1857-frederick-douglass-if-there-no-struggle-there-no-progress/>

³⁹ <https://civilservice.blog.gov.uk/2019/07/08/please-dont-call-me-bame-or-bme/>

⁴⁰ Bilge, S. (2020). The fungibility of intersectionality: An afropessimist reading. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 43(13), 2298-2326.

So what! “Provide information to potential nominees about how the organisation will go about the selection process”

“Consider offering feedback to individuals considered for nominations but not put forward to the funding bodies”

“Provide clearer and directly relevant information in response to each question.”

The pattern repeating
The pick-n-mix boredom setting in
The comings and the goings.
The waiting to perform,
The musical chairs
Where every time a friend will lose.
And so it is with
THE ORGANISATION

The “Panels will meet in early 2020 to identify areas where additional membership is required”

And “Provide information about how equality and diversity issues were taken into account”

Here we are again.
Jennifer is asking
“Can a Language Go Mad?”⁴¹

When back and forth, “the information provided by nominating bodies will be reviewed”

Until we all are stuck,
Behind their wall of “analytic sensibility”
While on our side Crenshaw’s intersectional “analysts concerned with wicked problems
Illuminate the psycho-social phenomena”⁴²
Only to be told by the Sewell gang⁴³
“We no longer see a Britain where the system is deliberately rigged against ethnic minorities.”
The cry goes up
‘False your honour.’

So “findings will be summarised and published in a report”

The waiting game,
As the years roll by.

That “Information on equality and diversity in the nominations process submitted in this template may be disclosed on request, under the terms of the relevant Freedom of Information Acts across the UK”

And eyes begin to close.
The path scuffed up again,
So none may follow.

⁴¹ Gaffney, J., & DePaul University. (2015). Can a language go mad? Arendt, Derrida, and the political significance of the mother tongue. *Philosophy Today* (Celina), 59(3), 523-539. <https://doi.org/10.5840/philtoday201551471>

⁴² <https://ukscs.coop/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/S05-Dankwa-149.pdf>

⁴³ The report of the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities (31/03/2021-28/04/2021)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-report-of-the-commission-on-race-and-ethnic-disparities>

They take the “responsibility to decide whether any responses, including information about your identity, should be made public or treated as confidential.”

Either or, it's never with care, it's never with love.

Just more time to “describe the process your association or organisation followed in making nominations, and how equality and diversity issues were taken into account in the process followed (max 750 words).”

Describe the whole ambition of a life wandering this terrain.

Energised to start,

The excellent leaders of themselves.

And even as they take another weary step together,

Having carried their dreams so far,

The glorious sunset

Beckons them

To their rest.

The
**Culture
Capital**
exchange

exchange