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No Word Measures Sea. All is Horizon.

Abstract:

How do we write about experiences for which there are no words? What sort of writing lets us enter the unspeakable parts of life? Much of our conscious experience cannot be grasped or described yet we experience the sensation of *something*. Moreover, we experience this *something* physically *somewhere* in our *body*. Built from Edmund Husserl's phenomenology, this work seeks to shape the unspeakable with particular attention on Husserl's *Leib*, the sensing, self-animated body. Specifically, in a multi-modal fictional structure, Husserl's heavily descriptive reductive technique is applied in a feminist context to our womanly erotic body. In this, touch is a sensory relationship. Pleasure in touch is a material expression of empathy. In our neural-driven, technological touch-screen world, this work seeks to uphold Husserl's investigations of 'the things themselves'.

Biographical note:

Monica Carroll writes short things and grows tall flowers. Her award-winning widely anthologised and has extended into many artistic collaborations. Her current research interests encompass Husserlian phenomenology, the relationship between empathy and pain, and the force of poetic structure.

Keywords:

Husserl – Phenomenology – Intersubjectivity – Alterity – Body

	Agreeable ruts of life
	Bank
	~
Alone	Dark paradise
	Envy-city
	Fascinating fur-piece
At Sea	Gentlemen's pleasure garden
	Home Sweet Home
	Inland passage
	Jewel case
Just me	Knish
	Lipped pudendal entrée
	Middle kingdom
Me	Nick in the notch
	Open charms
	Parts below
	Queeb
	Rocket socket
	Scum-twat
	Tuckedinder

Unmentionables

Wooden hand is the first to notice.

–Bow Stern, she rocks.

I look. We perceive shape from water. Movement. The shape is far but, if my perception can hold steady, it seems to grow nearer. I hold my excitement at bay. A friend. A fellow sea-farer.

The taste of community fills my mouth. I will need some words. Some things to say to my new acquaintance. We must mark this as an occasion and say significance. Only strong words should be present. Words that will not be sunk or rusted.

–Welcome opportune assembly. Rally beneath the heavens. Tie the bonds of vigour.

I wish for a flag to raise, a bottle to smash and a baby to christen. Beginnings are robust but easily broken. I hold back my legs who want to sway Hand towards the shape. Mind knows the will of Sea is always stronger. Who else can beat and beat upon the earth until it falls into grains of almost nothing? Do not vex Sea. Revenge will always be exacted. My legs clench as I stand fixed to the new compass. My feet pretend to be planted as they fight against the pitch.

The shape seems to accelerate. But speed, like distance, has no measure in this sphere. The shape has indistinct limbs. I want so much for a person, I take personness from the shape. Shadows separate into lines and spaces, as the being approaches.

There are arms. With surety I take them as arms. Arms that can hold me. Arms that will wave rounds of emphasis as we laugh about being lost and being found. Arms that may paddle beside me to a place without briny demons and endless wind. Come to me arms. Come.

Arms emerge from a torso dipping above, and not above, the skin of Sea. So wet with hunger that Sea, always one must be part of and part in. Any sense of distinction is illusory. Boundaries are capricious.

A head between arms, a torso shaping out to legs. I hear breath. It is wet and serious. The sound of breath takes me to the dryness of profound.

Part of a face, almost half tipped up to breathe, makes lines. Lips. The face has lips. Lips that can whisper, kiss, sulk. Beyond all reason, I stand quietly delirious. Do not shout, do not let Sea know of your desires as Sea will make fit to dash them. Come to me lips. Come.

Velvet glove

We balance in the small wooden Hand sitting opposite each other as we greet and share, knitting ourselves into togetherness. You appear larger than planets in my small Hand. Panting for the plant weight of your arms and legs. Your beard is a lace of salt crystal and goose barnacles; their brown peduncle feet stretching your growth into a clinking posy of shell and slick. The undersides of your arms, the fronts of your thighs and the moons of your hip bones host long tendrils of brown seaweed.

Wet as an otter's pocket

–I used to work on Land, I tell you, –left it all behind.

I tell you about my work as a Finder; discovering the words that did not exist. Highlighting editorial corrections to the language keepers. The work dried up as Sea took over. The missing words were abandoned. It's all Salt now.

You tell me about your work in the Half Building. You had your own office but no window. You were sent to Sea for forgetting that men are for husbands.

–I will become a husband, you say, –a man of bread and bacon.

–Let me touch your seaweed, I say.

You hold an arm to me, dangling lines and stalk and rubber. I run my fingers through your weeds.

–Can you feel it, I ask.

You nod but I cannot tell what the feeling is for you. Is my touch coarse after your months of lapping marine? Can you feel me as a primary contact or is it a trace sensation with your weeds as the medium?

–May I, I ask.

You nod.

I bend towards you to taste your index finger. It is disappointingly salt. Yet, where my skin remains in waterlogged ripples, yours has smoothed to a seal-like leather. An appendage of weed slaps across my bent back.

–Sorry, you say, –the blades have their own ideas, they help me swim. They are easily made jealous.

The wet smack ingeminates in me even after pinching the stipe by thumb and forefinger to return you to your side of Hand.

–It will be hard for you to be a husband, I say.

–Weeds will learn to love my wife.

I doubt this but do not say so.

X

Time is devoured by Sea. A sense of passing never rises. It seems we have sat together in Hand for the Ordovician. Our words crowded with eel and squid until you ask me how I came to be at Sea.

–I was banished, I say, –for not saying it.

–What did you say instead, you ask.

–I didn't say. There are no words.

–There are ten thousand.

–I looked, I truly searched. They are all names that refer, not names that *are, of*.

You frown. I sense your seaweed wanting to gag me with a frond.

–They are words *for, about*, you ask.

–Yes.

I nod and feel Hand, –Bow Stern, in empathetic unison.

–So they sent you here because of something you didn't–

–couldn't, I correct, –I *couldn't* say. There is no way to speak it.

–How can you know, with certainty, that there is no word?

–That is my profession. I find the missing words.

–A proof-reader?

–Proof. Yes. But not for the words that are written. I only read the words that are not there.

You frown again. High above our heads a tern dips.

–Do you want a metaphor, I ask.

–Yes, you say while nodding, the shells of your beard applauding you as they bump against one another.

–A bird's world is seen through the ultraviolet spectrum. Birds experience non-existent colours. I am that. A beyond-range word reader.

–But how?

The tern levels, scanning for fish beneath the surface.

–*How* not is the question. Notice within your own self, the sense of each word, each letter? 'A' is soft. You'll feel it in your upper chest, in the middle, deep within your ribs. 'Banana' is a squiggle. A sponge in your side. Say it.

–Ba-na-na.

–Feel it?

You shake your head. The barnacles peel. –I feel it in my head, in my brain, you say.

–You're trained to think-feel like that. Once you remember how to have the word-feel in your body, you can practice sensing the spaces.

–Where there are no words?

–Some spaces are meant to be spaces; some are meant to be words but the word does not exist.

The tern has disappeared.

–So, even the spaces have body-feels?

–Of course.

–And you got paid for this?

–Lots. Too much.

–But who needs–?

–Think about it – all those times words leave you. On a sunrise so beautiful it hurts and you beg your lover to hold you in their darkness where memory is the only thinking.

–There’s a word for that?

–No. There is a space where a word should be. Isn’t it obvious? This isn’t about knowing things or speaking them. This is about devotion.

–I still don’t understand who needs a word finder.

–Everyone. Not just for tip of the tongues. For how your parents didn’t love you for *you*. Or for the way new carpet is like going on holidays. Or for the –

–For this seaweed that siphons the ocean into my blood yet hangs from me knowing my uneasy suspiciousness for its strangeness.

–I like your seaweed. It’s shadowy. I run my finger through the tendrils, –Can you feel this?

–Yes. But it hurts. Your skin is acidic to its, my, leather.

I pull my fingers away, pained by causing pain. –I am so –,

Yum yum cake

–I am swimming to, you say, –not from. I hope to find someone without acid so I can be touched again.

–How did you–?

–Did they do this to me?

Hand and I nod.

–Of course.

–Why?

–You mean, how did I anger them? Offend them?

We nod again.

–I am forbidden.

–They have taken your words for it, I say, saddened and shocked as I feel his spaces.

–Yes, he nods.

–I know the words you silenced, I say with fact not threat.

–*Mitgefühl*, he says.

–Can I–, I offer.

–No, you mustn’t. I think if I keep swimming then one day...

–Of course, I say stepping back from starboard to give him room.

He holds his hands in prayer and pushes from the boat with his weedy legs and clean soles. His splash into Sea equals Hand’s waking rock. Rhythm surfaces as his flurry smooths into strokes. The lengths of his seaweed pulling the surface of Sea into humble runnels.

Zatch

The first thing to pass is the smell of him. His salty manness. My mouth has a waxy feeling as though I’d taken his semen there. It’s been a long stretch of Sea between men. Pacific proportions.

Research Statement

Research background

This research seeks entry into the unspeakable. The process of bodily experience forming written expression holds an impulse beyond given words. How do we write of our material sensations within the limits of language? Where can boundaries extend into sensorial languages?

Following Edmund Husserl's phenomenological idea of givenness this work trusts that the things in themselves (unnamed and unnameable) can be intentionally perceived, truthfully expressed. Accomplishments in this field are an act of empathy. The context of this research follows philosophical traditions of written form following analytic need. To write of unspeakable things, multi-textual creative structures are needed. Questions, here, search for our womanly erotic body. Experience rests between science (reproductive organs) and vulgarity (cunt).

Research contribution

Basing this research on my own translation of Husserl's *Ideen II* (Husserl, 1952) has generated interesting re-interpretations of Husserl. Within the work itself, the inexpressible, gives new comprehension to the key areas of concern (touch, pleasure, body, subject). Concretely, new sound combinations, impressionistic use of the page for the mimetic and skeletal narrative, produce a tactile and directive writing practice.

Research significance

This research is part of a broader project in the wordless. It forms part of a fully-funded postgraduate doctorate, has been recorded as a soundscape and used in public performance. Theoretical aspects of this work were performed as part of the 2012 Three Minute Thesis competition. Similar thesis sections are published in literary journals. A comparably thematic triptych is published in *Meniscus*.

List of works cited

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