Made-Ground: a Sens\(^1\) of Place

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ABSTRACT

Without us being in space, there are no places, and home is the first poetic of place. The groundedness in geo-specific space and rootedness in a Heideggerian sense of phenomenology underscores this poetic in the pieces presented here.

Without home, we do not belong (be anywhere long), as Olsen (cited in Clark, 2000, preface iii) says: “I have this sense/ that I am [not] one/ with my skin”.\(^2\) That is not to say that whilst our home is our first universe, that it is our only place; we come and go through a world of inter-related other places and outer spaces.

The theme explored in these pieces is that we are our home; we are palimpsest, place-bound and emplaced (embodied) simultaneously in our

\(^1\) These pieces abide in the phenomenological. Another way of putting this is that they are formed of a physical (sensory) feeling (seemingly a contradiction in terms), one which is/has material/materialised, and is the root (being rooted in) of that sense (i.e. its derivation, from which it is derived). That is to say, rather than representing a sentimental feeling or being ‘about’ something, which is derived from the feeling, they are composed of and from it. There is no narrative, no story being told. For this reason ‘sens’ is a vital word; it is the Latin root for ‘sentire’ (sensus): to feel “the home world might be understood as a sphere of ownness [Eigenheitssphäre] (…) it is not only the world we experience, but the world from which sense is derived; it’s root. There are over 200 words in use today that use this particular root, so here I am explicitly emphasizing the actual root – the sens – by reverting back to the root in my formation. I am using expressly the root, not a derivation or offshoot i.e. the ‘sens’. Nor am I using one of the words containing or building upon the root, e.g. sentimental. The piece is thus being both; both formed of roots in a physical sense, and also made out of (is) the morphological and etymological root of the language in which it is rooted. It is playing with the “essential duplicity of words” (Quartermain, 1992), whilst simultaneously pointing to the materiality of the ephemeral (i.e. of sense made concrete – a take on concrete poetry). The sens is sens. It is where the word and its syllables are the same as its intention, where they coalesce and become one, i.e. not a second removed use of, or derivation. That there is no slip between the cup and the lip may be another way of putting this. It means what it says. It is that from which it is formed. It is neither metaphysical nor representational. Sens(e) is a physical phenomenon as well as a transcendental thought. Having the sense one was born with: a sense of place, a sense of smell, a sense of danger, the sense not to stick your head about the parapet….

names, ourselves, our multiple places, and our dis-places. We dwell in all of these, all at once. Steinbock tells Husserl (Steinbock, 1995, p. 222): “the homeworld might be understood as a sphere of ownness [Eigenheitssphere] (...) it is not only the world we experience, but the world from which we experience.”

Taking that a step further, we may be said to physically embody home, that home is phenomenologically akin to our body (Jacobson, 2009). It is the bag that our bones are in. Our s/kin. Our sens of things. That is not to say that we are often not strangers in strange lands. In Frost’s words: “If the day ever comes when they know who/ They are, they may know better where they are” (cited in Kimbrough, 1962, pp. 104-107).

The method of my practice is an exploration of the sens and materiality of words, of their being-in-place, and of the alternative knowledge that is uncovered/recovered in the physical place-ment of words. I am interested in the perpetual destabilisation of wor(l)ds by words through their place-ment and the manner of physically doing that. There is meaning-making importance attached to the composition of, or the exact location of, the place in the space of the page where the words are each place/d. The words are placed in an architectural or organically botanical manner, much like the placing of bricks, or the sowing of seeds in a vegetable plot. The approach to place-ment of words, and the space (and relationship) between them, is developed through a material process of building/growing/making, rather than through the traditional syntactical approach to words in their constituent structure of grammar. Another way of putting this is that the meaning-making is not linear and is beyond the purely language-linguistic.

Perhaps I am working in a similar space as that identified by Pound as “logopoiesis” (Pound, 1918, p. 57). My words come with anchoring roots and are then unearthed. They are dis-placed and re-placed through my composition and my practice of apo koinou, the simultaneous holding of all directions in common. Combined with parataxis, this creates a stumble and a removal of syntactical closure, and in so doing, opens up a new sens of place. The pieces are visual and morphological, passing from text to image, in hand with ‘passing from syntax to morphology’ (Huddleston, 1989, p. 22). The pieces focus on the liminal moment when we ‘move
downwards beyond the word' (Huddleston, 1989, p. 22) into roots, moving into the soil, into the grounds\(^3\) of our groundings. In undermining conventional grammatical and syntactic strategies, the pieces become reordered, they become patterns that subvert expectations and provide an alternative form of knowledge. This is a new field (or ground\(^4\)) that challenges the notion of fixed clarity and the concept of any absolute truth, and instead points to the fluidity and complexity of the phenomenological world as it is, without reaction or revolt, in all its richness and intrinsic duplicity.

Bibliography


\(^3\) The etymology of ground is fertile in this context and underlies much of my work. Consider grounds as forming a basis for action, or the justification for a belief; grounds being solid particles, forming a residue, a sediment; dumping grounds, usually offshore; grounding being an electrical connection with the earth – to earth or to ground neutral; ships run aground and bombers are grounded in bad weather. To know something solidly is to be grounded; an artist’s ground is the prepared surface upon which work is performed, gesso for example, which means on the ground, being really there and being there really. Consider ground control, controlling ground (gardening) and directing flights back to ground for a safe landing. And consider common ground and ground glass, and land-ing.

\(^4\) Ibid
We are this
starched stars scorched

flat
ten
thousand
men

march
I
Ching

parched
eyes right
all along the
Lethe grows
daisies pushed up
thigh bones head stoned
home grown
did these feet

walk time?
And this.

Rhi

Zhomed

Seed

Ling

Car

A

Paced

Lace

Wing

*flutters*

*by*
We were this.

cata
  strophic
    arc
      fired
        blue
          tongued
            sand
              painted
hail
  stormed
    drought
      sired
        skin of land
          wood cut
topographed
dreaming bones
smashed ash, rocked stones

GRIND
And before that, we were.

topo
graphed
land
scaped
ever
greened
tran
slated
scar
red
inte
grated
phano
poetically
A
lethia
night
mare
some
place
some
where
else.
4NW Corridors 5A, 5B

In the amber of the blank-eyed doors
In the North Sea churn of the linoleum
In the maze and the warren and the hive
In the inner-faced, in the occluded
In the dust motes and the turbid sens
Pinned papers lepidotomised
walls, introducing
Between doors,
Worlds without end.
with my eyes closed
you could set me
down
and I would be right
there
every aureole pricked pattern-full
breathed again and
picked me out still
there
a little dusty
after 20 years,