

I hear a silent dissonance.

===

Intro

===

I breathe in yellow haze.

Particles of ash scratch my airway as they travel into my lungs.

I force out a dry cough.

The lingering feeling of friction irritates the back of my throat.

The haze has a thin smoky scent in the wet morning air.

It brings up the memory of sliding my head through the sweater in the morning after a campfire.

It is the smell of fire

suspended in cold air,

the smell of a contradiction.

===

Friction

===

My thumb and index finger gently pinch a wooden dowel.

I slide my hand down.

The friction between my fingers and the burnt wood sends vibrations to the gong under the stick.

The bronze resonates.

This technique requires the right amount of friction between the wooden stick and the skin.

Too much friction

stops the hand from sliding.

Too little,

the hand slides without making any sound.

A fragile balance between friction and motion.

The repetitive gesture of moving hands in a careful downward motion feels like a prayer:

the kind of prayer that repeats one phrase over and over again

in the hope that your devotion will reach the more-than-humans.

Too much friction between how I wish for things to be and how things are
Stops me from carrying on my day.
Too little,
I don't need prayer.
I am somewhere between the two.
A fragile balance between friction and motion.

I hear a noise.
It's the sound of the right amount of friction meeting the hardness of the bronze gong.
I hear the sensation of the fast stop-and-release my skin makes on the surface of the burnt wood.
The sound is uncomfortably high-pitched with harsh timbre.
The gong resists ringing as soon as my hands stop moving.
And so does my prayer.

===

Heat

===

The morning news says the BC government has declared a state of emergency.
More than 300 forest fires are burning in the province.
I want to care about the news about somebody's suffering. But I turn off the radio.

I hear a noise.
I hear tiny fans whirling in different frequencies:
the internet router, my laptop, and the fan above the stove on the lowest setting.
The quiet undertones of my surroundings gently vibrate the air in my room.
Small fans cooling off
small machines creating
small friction creating
small heat.

The lingering feeling of friction rings in my ear.

===

When I went to an unmarked trail in West Kelowna where a fire burned through,
I heard the wind passing frictionless by my ears.
The most discernible sound became my breaths: a syncopated $\frac{3}{4}$ beat.

One...two.three/ One...two.three/.../.../

In Korea, shamanistic rituals are often called untangle (풀이).

They believed a long draught came from a faulty relationship between the people and the land.

During a ritual, the people and the spirit get absorbed in a percussion music with a gradually accelerating rhythm.

Through collective resonance, they find empathy, then reconciliation.

We say “fighting fire”:

an entity that strikes us back with vengeance for how we mistreated the mountains.

Our words put the responsibility for the damage on the “natural force”, the more-than-human.

The fires resonate

with the unstoppable momentum of our consumption.

The fires resonate

at higher temperatures because we are burning more.

The fires resonate

in higher frequency because the pace of our lives is getting faster.

We are the ouroboros eating our own tail.

Who do I untangle/ resonate with?

===

Resonance:

to feel how others feel

to become a body that shares synchronous vibrations with neighbouring bodies.

===

My brain sends electrical signals through the nervous system.

The electrical signals contract my muscles, moving my arms to strike the stretched skin.

The impact vibrates the skin.

The vibration resonates the drum shell and the air inside.

Waves of pressurized air oscillate my eardrum,

which in turn gets translated into electrical signals

that travel to my brain.

Repeat in 4/4 at 150 BPM.

In the cycle of resonance, each part is reacting to the source of its signals.
The reaction becomes the input for the next part.

Listen

Listen to the thickness of the hide.
Listen to the contractions of muscles.
Listen to the volume of air in the drum.
Listen to the tension of the cord pulling the hide.
Listen to the texture of the wood.
Listen to the porousness of burnt trees.

Listen

to feel how others feel
to become a resonant body.

===

휘모리 (whirling wind: name of the fastest rhythm in Korean music.)

===

Some of my friends have confided in me that they feel defeated by the thought of the inevitable doom. They feel that their effort to change is meaningless on the scale of the current problems. One of them told me that there is a name for this feeling: Climate anxiety.

I pause.

Then reply, "I relate."

I wonder if climate anxiety is just another form of my usual condition of anxiety.
I have a tendency to create a sense of danger from petty things.
Is it my illness?

Being ill means that I am not in the state of well-being that most people are in.

But I wonder whether being anxious is the more appropriate response to the actions we, as a species, have been making to others and the land.

Am I an illness?

The sun glows red like a bad inflammation.

Its rays scatter through the smoke particles from the fires.

The sense of doom seen in apocalyptic movies overlaps with the desperate effort of a body to fight off an infection.

I decided not to share my thoughts.

My friend is troubled by the negative outlook on the future, not by the self-doubt that they are overthinking things.

Instead, I share that I recently had an argument with my parents.

“When do you want to have kids?”

“I fantasize about being a dad. But I am afraid that having a kid is a bad choice.”

“Why?”

“I see that the world will be difficult to live in.”

My dad and I don't see the future from the same perspective.

My grandparents survived Japan's colonization and the Korean War.

Then, my parents were born in the aftermath of the war. They grew up in an era of rapid changes.

To them, the world has always been difficult.

But they didn't let it stop their life.

Family is the beauty they found in the hardship, the lotus flower in a dirty pond.

They want me to find my own lotus.

I said we will experience global events on a scale that we have never seen before.

We will be forced into a time of regression and extinction.

I am afraid that my kids will blame me for what they will experience.

My dad asked if I blamed them for bringing me into this life.

His question feels like a thorn in my chest.

As the conversation tenses up, I see the bronze baby bowl on the shelf over dad's shoulder.

Mom gifted me just before I got married in 2015. She said it is a nice bowl for baby food.

After 9 years, it still hasn't been used as a baby bowl.

My wife stores seeds she collected from her plants.

The bowl is an affirmation of the relationship my mom and I have shared.

And it is a materialization of mom's hope that I will have my own precious relationship, except this time as a caregiver.

It is also a reminder of a choice I haven't made because of my anxiety.

==

Repeat sign

==

I listen to the recording of gongs holding water.

The gongs' fast attack and brittle decay are muffled by the fluid.

It's soothing.

Songs often end by arriving home, a relief.

I don't arrive at a relief.

I am conflicted by the fact that my response is to make art

while people, and non-human others have lost their lives to extreme weather events.

The lingering feeling of friction irritates me.

I hear a silent dissonance

from my body's innate resonance to conflicting vibration:

A misalignment between what I want to be and what I am now.

Listen

to feel how others feel

to become a resonant body.

==

Woojae Kim is a Korean artist and writer living on the unceded territories of the Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh, Musqueam, and Tsleil-Waututh peoples (Vancouver). His works explore rituals of interdependency and listening to inaudible frequencies of relationships with non-humans and the land. His work has recently been exhibited in Vancouver (Artspeak, Dreams Comma Delta, Afternoon Projects), Toronto (The Plumb) and New York (Psychic Readings*). His texts have been published in Canadian Art and the Capilano Review. Kim received an MFA from the Milton Avery Graduate School of the Arts at Bard College.