

Sound's physicality [ human longing

Of being in and affecting

—Myung Mi Kim, *Commons*

---that at some point in your childhood, you believed that even miles away from water you could lift the ocean to your ear. that you could hear the rush of its sounding trapped in a conch. and that, later on, you believed in the unlikely explanation that what you heard was the hurry of your blood's circulation barging towards the lips of that shell; that what was once an ocean's recorded soliloquy was really a conversation your body was having with its absence, assuring you of your own distance from its briny heave. and the knowing *now*, that what you hear in that intimate cupping of hand to shell to ear is really the resonance of everything outside your once consanguineous correspondence ---record, conversation, sonic document of relation---

---the urging through to you of what surrounds; a *communicative ambience* of torqued currents which allows for your location; your contingent position within that soundscape--- *longing* to extend the body into its *effective* being in space, in community, in communion---

---because to burn and seal the envelop of the act of listening and its object is to create a soundless vacuum;

containment without content, “human longing // Of being in and affecting” is contingent on distance, discontinuity, and a *being with* that is *without* the “Cauterize[d] condition of agreement”---

---this is the modality of the seminar space according to Myung Mi Kim’s pedagogy.

*shell as test*--- the testaceous animal, finding itself able to grow its home, expands it until it may take shelter in its own creation--- finding itself *in* its skeletal test.

*test as experiment to live in*--- finding oneself in the comfort of what is made, with support on one’s *outside*.

[“This is to be done // This is to be sung”]

the hard shell of the testaceous creature is such that its skeletal form is independent of what it carries within itself. it is, and remains *unarticulated*.

in endoskeletal humans, the only bone in the body that remains unconnected to any other bone and *unarticulated* is the Hyoid bone. the muscles of your neck support it, and in its reciprocal separateness, it forms the root of your tongue. it is impossible to fracture it in living everyday---

---when you turn your neck to face the student next to you, its unarticulated position turns with you.

however, it is this unarticulated root of your tongue that allows you to sound and speak in more registers than any other mammal. it *allows* you to sing---

---this turning of speech into song and song into address and address into the recognition of our separation within our sounding with each other is what Myung's seminar space allows for. we find ourselves as participants in an articulation of contiguity that is a contact through *nearness* so that what is said is recalibrated over and over *into* sequence, but with its original and eventual, unarticulated, uttered state firmly recognized, respected. it is the *yet-unarticulated of the said* in Myung's classroom that allows for recourse back to one's concerns--- it is what makes a community out of disparate attributions, separated bodies, situated sequences of the yet-unarticulated---

---she often says "What do you hear sounded in what is being said? More importantly, what has not been already said here that [the student] may be sounding in that comment?"

["I stayed alive and listened"]

she *allows*--- we are asked to go forth *into sequence* and find ourselves articulated in another's unarticulated situation within a sequence of thought, of speech, of gestures across the table---

---this is the *allowing of listening* to your correspondence with another; a correspondence made from bone and shelter and tongue and the test-shell cupped

to a listening praxis that allows *for listening to be a type of speech*--- for listening to be a type of singing, stringing across---

---this sung, strung sequencing of relation is the *doing* within the praxis of conversation---

---the doing of moving beyond proprioception into reception, and further into provision.

she *ignites*--- to be shelled, is also to have ourselves knocked down from fortresses this praxis of listening as a way of speaking in sequence means being *projected* forward from shelter; fired-up and out *towards* else. And to shell is also the act of *peeling away* the comfort of our shelters---

---and in this peeling away, the *test* itself is testing; experiment.

[“to set forward                      work of the house [. . .]  
intended in the branching”]

physiologically and ambiently, sound manifests through the displacement of various bodily materials and its enveloping space---

---this *displacement*, however, is what *places* a thinking and speaking subject within space. it is thus that any conversation both *takes* and lends *space*.

for Myung, the seminar room as a space is demarcated only by the very limits that it in turn communicates--- it expands and contracts; it bellows and also is *bellowed into*; it requires us to speak it into being. to recognize that record, conversation, relation can only occur as your listening takes distance from its object and its instrument is an *exhibition of the necessary space of resonance*---

---the space between ear and shell, body and body, thought from thought, practitioner from the room made for praxis. and it is in this exhibition of the necessary space that Myung makes apparent--- in the making of it *as apparent*, she makes apparent the making of the space of the seminar *as an act*. the seminar space is no longer made of walls, tables, chairs, paper and students--- it becomes an enacted scape of correspondence where through response and resonance a room emerges *as behavior*, and in its emergence, makes more room for us to room in.

the work of the shell, shelling and the work of test, listening, speaking--- to set in motion the intention to build context for our distance from each other; to be ourselves and “intended in the branching”---

---in the shared space of Myung’s seminar room, the continuously *emerging enaction* of its physical and social behavior is to *dis-place* the private work of intellection into the public work of scholarly communication; as relief, as *bringing into relief*, while maintaining the difficult *responsibilities* of one’s particular intellectual praxis--- and it is this activation that makes apparent her

pedagogical investment in the creative work of hospitality.

[“Visited by a humble pounding // The meaning of becoming related”]

“An act of hospitality can only be poetic”—J. Derrida

Derrida asks: “Does hospitality consist in interrogating the new arrival? Does it begin with a question addressed to the newcomer. . . What is your name?” here, in the *question* of who and what has *just emerged* onto the threshold is the twofold desire to know *how* and *what* to call another made newly available, and to also be named and thus recognized by that emergence--- “I who am calling on you, I who want to be called by you”---

---or does hospitality begin, as he asks further, “with the unquestioning welcome, in a double effacement, the effacement of the question *and* the name?” here, hospitality is a *given*, rather than a rendered thing-- it is characterized by an initiality that precedes the emergence of a sounded idea--- it is *offered* unconditionally.

when she asks “What do you see happening here,” Myung gestures around her ear, and when she deliberates “The connection I see forming with what has just been made available. . .,” she cups her ear---

---here: the moving of the *writing* hand to ear to shell to test. by changing the space of the resonating enclosure, one changes the pitch of every sounded thought, and the resonant potential of listening to it.

in her thinking of the “sung” as the “done,” the cupping gesture creates a smaller necessary space of interaction between two actively calibrating thinkers and “the sounded thing.” thus, the moving of the writing hand to ear to shell to test is a way of making its function *hospitable* to another. Myung’s gesture is representative of her pedagogical, poetic faith in the necessary work of hospitality--- a hospitality that both *calls into question* and *offers unconditionally*. because the “sounded thing,” the yet-unarticulated cannot be held or enveloped, in Myung’s seminar, we make room and enact a room for its *reckoning*---

---to account for, confront, name our emergence into the space of the seminar, anew---

---and this reckoning is also its hospitality.