

Introduction: *Minor Stories, an Intimate Publishing Project*

In assembling ideas that are seemingly disconnected and uneven (the seabird and the epilogue, the song and the soil, the punch clock and the ecosystem, the streetlight and the kick-on-beat), the logic of knowing-to-prove is unsustainable because incongruity appears to be offering atypical thinking. Yet curiosity thrives. [...] Also, assembling ideas that are seemingly connected (the weight and the measure, the cloth and the silk, the road and the vehicle) fuse and break apart how we know, because we seek out continuities and ruptures. And curiosity thrives. (McKittrick 2021, p. 4)

An initial departure of this thesis was my curiosity towards the question, ‘where are you from?’ Since living in the Netherlands for almost two years, I have gotten this question a lot from others. And every time I answered, ‘I am from Seoul, South Korea.’ Then, I would ask: ‘where are *you* from?’ Like a chatbot designed to converse in certain ways, I heard this way of exchange repeated in various circumstances. As continuously answering, asking, listening to, observing and engaging in conversations triggered by this question, I discovered this inquiry often turned out to be an *uncurious* question.

To understand what I mean by an uncurious question, looking into the definition and etymology of the word ‘curious’ would be helpful. Defined as ‘marked by desire to investigate and learn’, the word ‘curious’ comes from the Latin word ‘*cura*’, meaning ‘care’. It is significant that this ancient trace reminds us ‘the desire to know and learn’ once arose from ‘the desire to care for and look after’. Although, do we still approach others with caring minds?

My argument is that this category of ‘uncurious question’ reveals one’s desire to define and control by othering people. December 2022, what happened in the Buckingham palace exemplifies this. During a charity palace reception, the founder of the *Sistah Space* —a London-based domestic violence charity for women with African and Caribbean heritage—Ngozi Fulani was asked where she is from by Susan Hussey, the Lady-in-waiting, multiple times. Despite Fulani’s answer to her questions that she was born and raised in the UK, the question continued: ‘No, where are you *really* from?’

This question is draining and careless. As Kohinoor Sahota (2022) pointed out in her follow-up article in the Guardian, this question is politically loaded. It constantly reminds you: *You are different. You are not from here. You do not belong here. Why are you here?* In this question, ‘you’ are forced into the category of ‘not me’. Once you are pushed into this category, you are a target of interrogation. You must answer the question. Not only

'you' are defined as negative of 'me', you are forced to flatten your identity into a single simple answer.

This way of interaction does not leave space for 'we'—a space where 'you'(here, 'you'='not me') and 'I' can coexist. Back to the question, where are you from? I sense the clumsiness of our approach toward different beings. I wonder: Instead of positioning others in fixed places, what if the rethinking of this question shifts us from a binary opposition of 'you' and 'me' to a 'we', a question that we think through with others?

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the questions above through writing, and lay the theoretical groundwork for my graduation project, *Minor Stories*.

Minor Stories is a multi-method publishing project giving space to vulnerable and intimate feelings that people experience yet often brush aside. In this project, I intend to share vulnerable feelings in the format of storytelling and explore various intimate storytelling methodologies encompassing many forms: from physical props to digital technologies. By doing so, I will propose intimate ways of storytelling as a careful and affective publishing methodology, which I term 'intimate publishing'. How will people react if I whisper stories of my ugly-competitive side through the body of bread? (Figure 1) What kind of thoughts and emotions will occur if they read marginalized experiences from the gutter of a book? Will people open up and share their intimate stories as well? How can I disarm our cold, cold hearts and allow us to be more curious and caring? Can intimate publishing provide methods that shift audience and storyteller from a binary opposition of 'you' and 'me' to 'we' to make space for minor stories?



Figure 1. A picture taken during the first public moment at Leeszaal in the 4th semester. I whispered short stories about ugly feelings to the audience through a body of bread.

In the first chapter of this thesis, I will share the thinking process behind my graduation project by explaining how *Minor Feelings* (Hong, 2020) and *Dear Science and Other Stories* (McKittrick, 2021) inspired me to come up with the project. Hong's work is important since her text encouraged me to explore my vulnerable feelings through writing. As quoted in the opening, McKittrick gave me strength to stay curious and resilient. Whenever I felt doubt, I read the quote again and again. From her, I also learned that 'sharing stories *is* creative rigorous radical theory. The act of sharing stories *is* the theory and the methodology' (emphasis in the original, McKittrick 2021, p. 73).

In the second chapter, I will look into intimacy in translation through *Intimacy: An Alternative Model for Literary Translation* (Collins, 2020). Then I will further explore the concept of intimacy by sharing my research on the etymology of 'Chin-Mil-Gam (친밀감, 親密感)', a Korean word for 'intimacy'. Finally, I will explain the concept of 'intimate publishing'.

In the last chapter, examples of intimate publishing practices will be shared as a case study. Through reflecting on each case, I will draw key elements that could be further explored in future intimate publishing practices.

Chapter 1.

Context for the Graduation Project, *Minor Stories*

In late August 2021, I moved to Rotterdam for my studies. Since living in a new and foreign environment, I have reflected a lot on uncomfortable feelings that are hard to confront. These feelings emerge(d) from the street, around the dinner table, at the party, during the conversation, on the telephone call, and in the quality-check survey. They were prompted by stares or comments from strangers, by some jokes that I could not laugh with, or by questions without care. But self-doubts emerge(d) too. Did I really hear what I heard? Are these feelings real? Are they coming from my anxieties triggered by the news of increased racial discrimination against Asians after the COVID outbreak? Am I overthinking, overreacting, or being overly sensitive right now? In an attempt to identify and document these indefinable feelings, I started to write them down in my diary whenever I experienced them.

After reading *Minor Feelings* by Cathy Park Hong, I realized that I am not the only one who feels(felt) this way, and—in fact—these feelings are tightly connected to systemic racism.¹ In her provocative and beautifully articulated book, Hong (2020, p. 46) defines minor feelings as ‘the racialized range of emotions that are negative, dysphoric, and therefore untelegenic, built from the sediments of everyday racial experience and the irritant of having one’s perception of reality constantly questioned or dismissed’. Through her text, I started to recognize my once indefinable feelings as minor feelings. Deeply inspired by her work, I continued to reflect on and explore them through writing. Through the act of writing, these feelings became stories.

Within the context of the course, Experimental Publishing (XPUB), I began to share my stories with a small group of friends. The first time I shared them was during the class. It was shortly after my mom and aunt’s visit when we traveled to Paris, Brussels, and then Ghent together. During this trip, we experienced several forms of racial discrimination. Hearing racial slurs directed at loved ones was just so painful, and this sparked something inside me. I had to write. But there was something more. I felt the strong urge to read my writing to people, which I have never desired before. After reading it to my trusty XPUB colleagues, I gained enough confidence to share even more. As I shared more of my writing with various groups of people, I became more interested in storytelling.

In *Dear Science and other stories*, Katherine McKittrick—a scholar of Black studies and decolonial studies—writes on storytelling as follows:

Telling, sharing, listening to, and hearing stories are relational and interdisciplinary acts that are animated by all sorts of people, places, narrative, devices, theoretical

queries, plots. The process is sustained by invention and wonder. The story has no answers. The stories offer an aesthetic relationality that relies on the dynamics of creating-narrating-listening-hearing-reading-and-sometimes-unhearing (McKittrick 2021, p. 6).

What I noticed from my own experiences of sharing stories and from McKittrick's thinking on storytelling is that this action is inevitably relational. Storytelling creates a space for 'we'—a space beyond the binary of 'you' and 'me'. McKittrick's work greatly encouraged me to focus on storytelling as the main methodology for my graduation project. Furthermore, as the stories that I wish to share carry vulnerable and intimate feelings, I desired to propose specific settings where I—and others—feel safe to tell, share, read, listen to, hear, and experience. This is how I came up with the concept of intimate publishing.

Notes

Chapter 1.

1. I read the book *Minor Feelings* (Hong, 2020) first in its Korean translation, not in English. Reading Hong's personal stories in a language that I feel intimate with, I felt incredibly close to her text.

Chapter 2. Intimate Publishing

Intimate Feeling and Translation

During my first individual assessment, Steve Rushton—an XPUB tutor for the ‘Reading, Writing and Research Methodologies’ seminar—told me ‘an invitation of intimacy’ seemed to be a recurring theme in my work. Since then, feeling quite content with this keyword, I have started to think of my practice through ‘intimacy’.

But what is intimacy? To understand the concept of intimacy, I typed the word ‘intimate’ into an online English dictionary. Defined as ‘closely acquainted; familiar’ and ‘private and personal’, it comes from Latin ‘intimare’ (to put or bring into, to impress, to make familiar), from ‘intimus’ (inmost, innermost, most intimate), the superlative of ‘intus’ (within), from ‘in’ (in). I thought: *Hmm, that looks complicated*. And it sparked my curiosity.

While researching ‘intimacy’ and conceptualizing ‘intimate publishing’, *Intimacy: An Alternative Model for Literary Translation* by Sophie Collins (2020) was immensely insightful. In this text, a writer, poet, and translator based in Edinburgh, Collins critically approaches a normative translation model—the fidelity model—and reveals its underlying sexist, instrumentalist, essentialist, and colonialist desires. Through an in-depth analysis of Don Mee Choi’s translations of a poem by Kim Hyesoon, based in the US and South Korea, respectively, Collins proposes intimacy as an alternative translation model over fidelity model.

Pointing out a notorious obscurity of intimacy, Collins writes:

[i]t covers a range of affective state of both high and low arousal, and its valence might be positive and/or negative. Conflict and failure are as core to our experiences of intimacy as the excitement of collaborative world-building and the mental and physical benefits of another’s care (2020, p. 338).

Based on these notions, she concludes that intimate translation has two features: 1) **increased contextualization of the author and source text**, which does not need the depiction of a friendship if one does not exist; and 2) **subversion of the prevailing aesthetic standards of the recipient’s culture**.

According to Collins, Don Mee Choi’s translation work is a full embodiment of intimate translation. Collins highlights how Choi’s usage of commentary space (sharing her translation process and connecting her familial immigration story with Korean modern history) sets the ground for intimacy, helping readers to better comprehend others by **understanding their motivations, desires, and backgrounds**. Secondly, Choi’s

idiosyncratic usages of English, such as 'kisskiss', 'coldcold', 'plopplop', 'gulpgulp', showcase Choi's innovative approach towards two distinctive language systems, Korean and English (Choi, cited in Collins, 2020, p. 341).

For me, Choi's subtle, yet clear, subversions in English were truly inspiring. It instantly reminds me of playful and rhythmical aspects of the Korean language manifested in rich collections of onomatopoeia and memetic words: 'boglebogle (보글보글)', 'buuglebuggle (부글부글)', 'baglebagle (바글바글)', 'jaglejagle (자글자글)', 'giglegigle (지글지글)'—all of them referring to slightly different sizzling or boiling states(!). Choi's intimate translation practice opened up a room for interpretation and imagination.

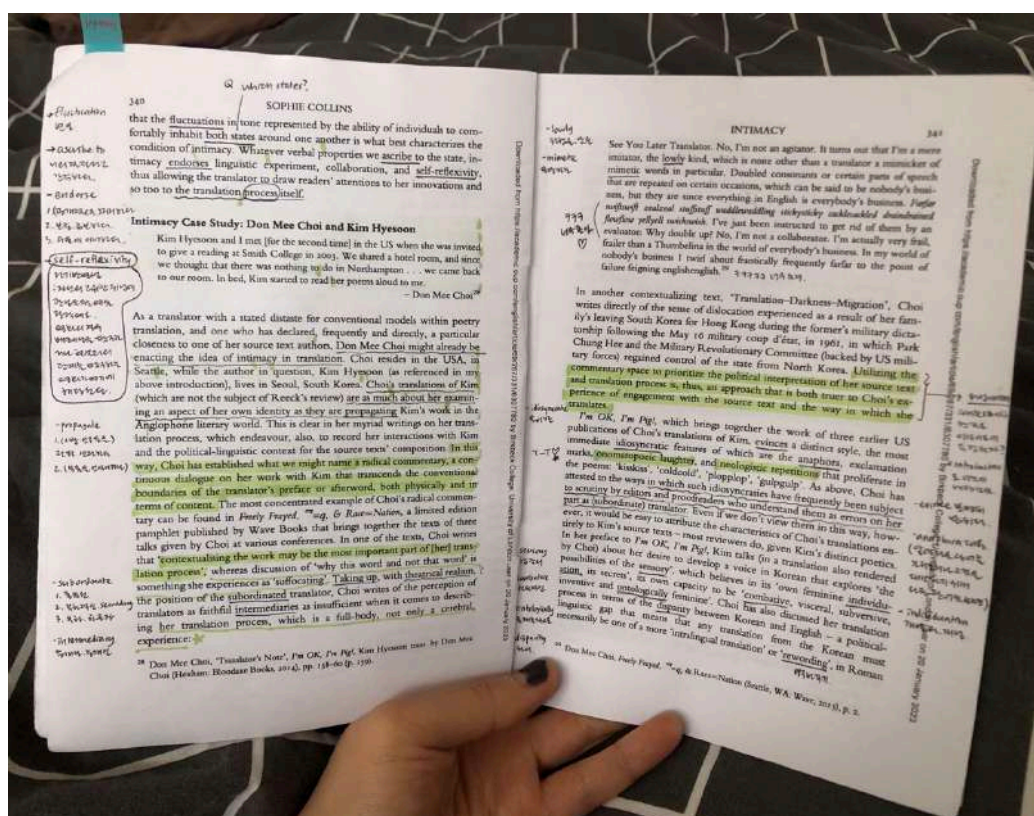


Figure 2. A picture of my hand holding a booklet of *Intimacy: An Alternative Model For Literary Translation* (Collins 2020). It is filled with Korean meanings of unfamiliar English words, ♡, ★, emotional expressions (ㄷ_ㄷ, ㅋㅋㅋ=laughter), and soft lime-green highlights.

Looking back, **reading Sophie Collins text itself was an intimate experience**. (See Figure 2) I was constantly pausing, looking up unfamiliar words in a Korean-English dictionary, making notes, reading again, and repeating this process. The moment I read examples of intimate translations by Don Mee Choi, I cackled. How can I, as a person who speaks Korean fluently, not laugh while reading '[f]arf ar swiftswif zealzeal stuffstuff waddlewaddling stickysticky cacklecakled draindrained flowflow yellyell swishswish'? (Choi, cited in Collins, 2020, p. 341)

Even after finishing reading Collin's text, some words, sentences, and meanings remained as question marks, untranslatable, and opaque. *Hmm*. The more I think about intimacy *and* translation together, the clearer it becomes that my state of being is, in fact, a translated one.¹ (See Figure 3) Carried, and transferred across the sea, speaking and writing in-between languages (Korean and English), being surrounded by different languages (English, Dutch, French, etc.), and being reminded of my translated state through uncurious questions.



Figure 3. A screen capture of the word 'translate' when one searches 'translate' and 'etymology' together in the browser.

This linkage between 'intimacy-translation-dislocation' evoked another intimate reading experience: reading *Dictee* (Cha, 1982). Again, while reading a dedicated chapter in *Minor Feelings* where Hong (2020) closely reads *Dictee* and investigates the murder of Cha, I became curious about Cha and her work. After many days of failure searching for the book in the Netherlands, luckily, my Korean friend living in Berlin agreed to send her copy to Rotterdam.

Written by a Korean American immigrant, Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, *Dictee* not only mixes multiple languages—French, Korean, English, and Latin—but also various genres—prose poetry, translation, autobiography, and ethnography. Although the copy that I got was an edition of a Korean translation, I felt like I was reading a foreign language. Sentences were chopped, photos were uncaptioned, stories continued without any contextualization. Hong read *Dictee* in English (Hong's mother language). I read it in Korean (my mother tongue). Hong (2020, p. 124) found *Dictee* liberating since Cha's aggressive usage of the period ('.') 'transformed an immigrant's discomfort in English into a possible form of expression'. To me, it was also liberating. Since its fragmented expression (unable to form a neat sentence) and refusal to be categorized in any definitive genre, reminded me of my untranslatable and translated/dislocated states.



Alongside Cha's innovative usage of languages and mix of genres, the materiality of the copy itself made my reading experience even more intimate. In fact, the copy was a bootleg version. The cover, margins, and the gutter of the book are rich with dark shadows, scratches, and annotations. Even the library classification label was copied and transferred, signaling its dislocation. My friend told me that after feeling frustrated after realizing *Dictee* is out of print, she decided to scan the entire book from the library and bound it into a brand 'new' book for herself. ²

I began to wonder: as Collins (2020, p. 340) said, if 'intimacy endorses linguistic experiment, collaboration, and self-reflexivity thus allowing the translator to draw readers' attentions to her innovations and so too to the translation process itself', why not do the same with concretizing the concept of intimate publishing?

Chin-Mil-Gam (친밀감, 親密感), Playing hide-and-seek

In Korean, the word 'intimacy' can be translated into 'Chin-Mil-Gam (친밀감, 親密感)'. ³ Defined as 'feeling or sense of being close and/or in close relationship', the word is made with three Hanja—which refers to Korean words of Chinese origin: '*Chin* (親, *close to*)', '*Mil* (密, *dense*)' and '*Gam* (感, *feeling*)'. Feeling intrigued by these combinations, I closely looked into the Hanja dictionary for 'Chin' and 'Mil'—two main characters containing the meaning of 'intimacy'—specifically the list of derivative meanings for each word. In the list of 'Chin', there are 'be close', 'love', 'become familiar', 'be skillful at', 'parents', and 'relatives'. In 'Mil' there are 'dense', 'detailed, meticulous', 'be close', 'quite, innermost', 'hide', 'secret, private', and 'comfortable'. What grabbed my attention the most was the second character, 'Mil'. *How on earth does dense and packed end up meaning intimate?* And my curiosity thrived.

What follows here is a close reading of the etymology of the second character: 'Mil (密, dense)'. According to the explanation in the dictionary, 'Mil' symbolizes a box or bowl (必) underneath the roof (宀), hidden in the inmost recesses of the mountain (山) with a dense

collection of trees. After reading similar yet slightly different variations of its explanation, an image of a small shrine located in the most tranquil and quiet center of a mountain with a dense forest begins to emerge. The denser the forest is, the more places there are to hide. As I went through the list with my eyes again—*dense - detailed, meticulous - be close - quite - innermost - hide - secret, private - comfortable*—more incongruous imageries started to fade in and out: layers of mountainmountain, ‘I’ like a tiny stick in the deepdeep mountain, memories of going through the layerlayer mountainmountain, overwhelming feelings from dense treetree and yet private and secluded feelings that denselydense treetree give.

The tension between playful and/yet nervous feelings brought up by ‘Mil’ gets heightened when it is positioned next to ‘Chin’ (meaning ‘close to’). Due to the letter ‘Gyeon’ (見, ‘see, be seen’) inside ‘Chin (親)’, it highlights the relation between proximity and visibility: Being close enough so that you can see (見) it. Or due to its visibility (見) you ‘become familiar (intimare)’, and thus emotionally feel close. But the second character ‘Mil’(密, dense) holds counteractions, keeping it hidden and out of sight. As if you are playing hide-and-seek.

Intimate Publishing

As explored through the Korean word, ‘Chin-Mil (친밀, 親密)’, ‘intimacy’ is an ambivalent and complex bundle of affects and desires that leave marks on people (impress), narrow the distance in-between, or push apart due to their emotional densities or other opaque desires. Then, what kind of dynamics and meanings would arise when ‘intimacy’ and ‘publishing’ meet?

To explore this question, I define intimate publishing as ‘the acts of making intimate things public and creating intimate publics in the age of post-digital networks’. In the following section, I will further look into its meaning.

Making intimate things public

Here, I want to first emphasize the importance of approaching ‘intimacy’ as the affiliation of various affects. The urgency behind this comes from the concept of ‘enclosure of the affects’, theorized by Hee-Jeong Sohn (2015), a queer and feminist researcher based in South Korea. As ‘hate speech’ and ‘hate crime’ became an urgent social problem in neo-liberal Korean society, Sohn critically inspects increasing academic literature on ‘disgust’. Giving an example of how the popular film *Inside Out* (2015) depicts affects as individual characters (Joy, Fear, Anger, Disgust and Sadness), she points out the dominant perception of imagining affects as something distinguishable from one another. She

further investigates how this understanding is connected to the ‘management of affects’ resulting in ‘pathologizing depression and praising happiness’ (Sohn, 2015, p. 140). Lastly, she emphasizes that it is important to understand affects (in her case, ‘disgust’) as streams of feelings and desires to avoid serving the needs of neo-liberal capitalism.

As a way to diversify ‘intimacy’ in ‘intimate publishing’, I suggest being attentive to what has been considered personal, minor, or trivial. Who decides what is personal, minor, or trivial after all? Again, thinking of *Minor Feelings* (Hong, 2020) is significant here. Interestingly, Hong plays with the word ‘minor’, which means ‘inferior in importance, size, or degree; comparatively unimportant’ according to the dictionary. In *Minor Feelings*, Hong explains how racism has been systemically belittling and forcing racial minorities into one single story. By exploring, sharing, speaking, and reflecting on various minor feelings, Hong diversifies a *single story* into multiple messy *stories*. In diversifying these stories, she proves that these feelings are not minor at all.

Creating intimate publics in post-digital networks

Now, what do I mean by ‘intimate publics’ and how can I create such a public? To answer this, let’s get back to the text by Sophie Collins again. Collins (2020, p. 338) argues that ‘intimacy [in translation] indicates a mutual, consensual, and willing exchange between author and translator, source and translation, without necessarily invoking any existing principles’. *Hmm*. Could it be that ‘creating intimate publics’ means encouraging a public to willingly exchange minor and intimate moments, and to be mindful of the complex relationality of this world? And if this exchange occurs between storyteller and audience, could intimate publishing provide methods that shift audience and storyteller from a binary opposition of ‘you’ and ‘me’ to ‘we’ and make space for intimate stories?

Lastly, I believe creating intimate publics *in post-digital networks* is more important than ever. In *Queering Homophily* (2018)—a new media researcher—Wendy Hui Kyong Chun explains how current networks create clusters based on *similarities* to make networks searchable. Chun points out that, as homophily becomes the axiom of network science, it results in reinforcing segregations and naturalizing discriminations. Critically pointing out the erasure of long histories of discrimination and the absence of various theories of race, gender, and sexualities in network science, Chun calls for queering homophily—staying within discomforts and imagining different ways of living together with others. Reading Chun’s text, I thought of uncurious minds lurking around uncurious questions. As Chun dreamed, I will, too, imagine ways of creating intimate publics through intimate publishing practices.

Notes

Chapter 2.

1. I first heard the etymology of the word ‘translation’ through my friend Kyuri Jeon during her artist talk in 2020. Since then, I have thought a lot about translation. Jeon also lives far away from South Korea, now based in New York, U.S.

2. It was funny to hear the back story about why my friend decided to scan the whole book. In fact, the book has been out of print since its first (and last) printing in 1997. It is extremely rare to find it on the market.

3. Depending on the context of the source text, the word ‘intimacy/intimate’ can be translated into other words such as Chin-Geun (친근, 親近), Chin-Sug (친숙, 親熟), Gin-Mil (긴밀, 緊密), Eun-Mil (은밀, 隱密), and Mil-Jeop (밀접, 密接). In this thesis, however, I decided to only focus on Chin-Mil (친밀, 親密) for three reasons:

- 1) Chin-Mil is the first search result for the word intimate/intimacy in various online Korean-English dictionary platforms.
- 2) Unlike Chin-Mil, some do not have both meanings of ‘being close’ and ‘personal nature’. For example, in Chin-Geun, both Chin and Geun, mean ‘being close and in proximity’ and in Gin-Mil, the meaning of both letters is semantically closer to ‘personal and private’. Lastly, ‘Chin-Sug’ more tends to be translated ‘familiar’ than ‘intimate’.
- 3) Eun-Mil and Mil-Jeop are not considered as ‘Gam (감, 感)’ which can be translated as ‘sense/feeling/affect’ since Eun-Mil-Gam and Mil-Jeop-Gam do not exist nor are used in daily life.

Chapter 3. Intimate Publishing in Practice

In my two years of studying in XPUB, I have tried out numerous intimate storytelling methodologies and deepened my research. These tryouts manifested in many forms—from physical props to webpages. They were based on different contexts—from school-related events to school-unrelated events. They carried various stories—from an ugly, competitive story to quirky, funny obsessions. And they were shared with a variety of audiences—from friends in Korea to complete strangers. In fact, they feel so disparate that throughout the whole thesis, this chapter was the most difficult part to write.

While writing, deleting, and re-writing this part over and over, I noticed one thing in common. The important role that the XPUB community played in developing the idea of intimate publishing. That is to say, the willingness to share ideas, disagreements, excitements, struggles, and so on. Through these mutual exchanges, I had a glimpse of how ‘intimate publics’ might be. For instance, the moment I am writing this thesis, XPUB1 has proposed to make a dinner for XPUB2 (who are all struggling to finish theses!), and deliver it to our homes(!). What an intimate gesture. A caring one. *Hmm*. I have learned so much from them, and yet I am *still* learning from them.

For this reason, I will introduce five cases of intimate publishing practice, specifically done within the context of the course. The following structure will be used to compare them and find the recurring pattern:

[description of method/tool]

A clear account of the method/tool being used

[publishing context]

Since each tryout was my response to a specific context, I will describe the context in which each case was situated.

[description of setup]

I will portray the specific setup, from spatial setup to layout of a webpage.

[description of shared story]

I will give an overview of what kind of story was shared by laying out keywords for topics and/or where the story came from,

[intention]

I will explain the intentions behind each choice (method/tool, setup, shared story) to share the thought process behind these choices.

[observation and reflection]

To measure each tryout, I listened to the audio recording of the event (if there is any), asked for personal feedback from the audience, or looked into the notes that I made during/after tryouts. Based on these measurements, I will further examine

what worked and what could have been done differently.

Case Studies on Intimate Publishing

A. Whispering through the bread and Talking to the bread-recorder

[description of method/tool] Breads, a voice recorder, and question cards in a basket

(1) A storyteller whispered stories about vulnerable feelings to the audience through a piece of bread (an empty baguette).

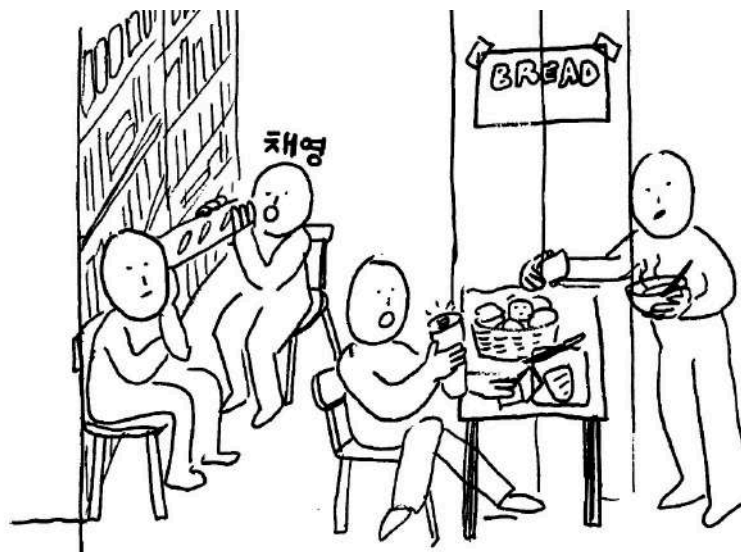
(2) The audience answered questions about difficult feelings to another piece of bread with a voice recorder hidden inside.

[publishing context] A school event open to the public

location: Leeszaal, Rotterdam

description of event: The purpose of this event was to share and test out raw ideas for graduation projects from the second-year-students (XPUB2) with the public. Beside activities related to each student's graduation project, soups and bread were served to the audience.

audience: XPUB community and people closely connected to the course



[description of setup]

layout of the setup:

(1) Whispering zone located in-between bookshelves

(2) Talking zone located at the self-serving bread table

In both zones, chairs are carefully placed to avoid direct eye contact.

capacity: maximum 2 person at a time

description of encounter:

- (1) A storyteller welcomed an audience to sit down for the whisper.
- (2) After finishing listening, the audience was guided to move to the self-serving bread table. There, the audience could pick one question from a basket and answer it to the bread-recorder (Or the other way around if the whispering zone is occupied).

[description of shared story]

- (1) Selected from my diary, short stories on the topic of 'an ugly mind with a caring mind' were drafted several hours before the event and shared with the audience.
- (2) The audience responded to the questions around the topic on 'competitiveness', 'impatience', 'not being heard or seen', 'unwelcoming feelings', or 'strategies to create personal space in public'. Or some of them shared thoughts sparked by the story they just heard.

[intention]**a. intention behind the choice of method/tool:**

- 1) to respond to the surroundings (soups and bread being served)
- 2) to pay homage to Japanese diaspora writer Yoko Tawada's expression, the human soul inhabiting in the air filling the body of bread ¹
- 3) to make the audience laugh
(by transforming the bread into tools)

b. intention behind the choice of setup:

- 1) to create a comfortable space for me/audience to be more vulnerable
(by locating in between bookshelves and avoiding direct eye contact)
- 2) to make the tool slightly hidden and lure audiences searching for bread for soups
(by positioning the tool at the self-serving bread table)

c. intention behind the choice of story:

- 1) to contrast with the funny looks of this method
(by sharing emotionally heavy and personal stories)
- 2) to have more intimate conversations with the audience

[observation and reflection]

✧ [bread as an intimate tool to spark curiosity] It seemed that the materiality of the bread made the audience feel intimate and engaged. One audience member said, 'Sonically it's such an intimate way to hear a story, because it also works as a muffler for all the other conversations.' Another shared his discovery with excitement: 'Bread has great acoustics! I did not expect that!' Also importantly, the funny looks of it lured many curious audiences to come closer and experience the method/tool.

✧ [setting up the ground for intimacy] I realized the topic of 'an ugly mind with a caring mind' allowed, both me and the audience, to share different sides of us. Although we

already knew each other and had talked before, our vulnerable stories brought us closer by letting us show our more complex sides. Even after experiencing both methods/tools, a lot of audience members stayed and continued conversations. The conventional distinction between storyteller and audience got blurred through these prolonged dialogues.

✧ [future plan, which led to case 'B'] Later, some people told me they could not participate because both zones were always fully occupied. This made me think of searching for another intimate method/tool that could host a larger number of people at the same time.

B. Listening through a tree-like-headphone

[description of method/tool] An audio-player, audio splitters, headphones/earphones, and a screen

A storyteller shared a story through an audio player connected to seven audio splitters. The audience can listen to the story by connecting their headphones/earphones to provided audio splitters. On the side, transcriptions of the story were shown via TV monitor.

[publishing context] A check-in day

location: Classroom at Piet Zwart Institute, Rotterdam

description of the event: This check-in day was a playful twist on the official school assessment. Proposed by XPUB tutors, XPUB2 were invited to become assessors to see the assessment procedure from the other point of view (as assessors) while checking in each others' projects. However, its playful intention got lost due to simultaneous deadlines and the formal seating arrangement (the presenter - the assessor).

audience: XPUB2 and some XPUB tutors



[description of setup]

layout of the setup: on the floor in the middle of the classroom

capacity: as many as the number of available audio splitters and headphones/earphones

description of encounter: The audience was invited to move away from their seating positions and sit closer to each other. Then, they were guided to connect their headphones/earphones to audio splitters and listen to the story (they could also follow the presentation through the text on the screen).

[description of shared story]

A three-minute scripted audio presentation of my research on ‘intimate publishing’ and my definition of ‘intimacy’ was shared.

[intention]**a. intention behind the choice of method/tool:**

- 1) to simultaneously host multiple audiences
(by having multiple audio splitters)
- 2) to make connectedness literally visible
(by not choosing wireless headphones/earphones)
- 3) to pay homage to my long obsession with headphones ²

b. intention behind the choice of setup:

- 1) to create a cozy space for us
(by inviting the audience to sit closer in a circle and listen together)
- 2) to be more accessible for audience members who do not have headphones or cannot hear well (by having the screen with transcriptions)

Intention behind the choice of story:

- 1) to serve the purpose of the event (sharing the current states of projects)

[observation and reflection]

✧ [distribution and future plan] After trying ‘A. Whispering through the bread and Talking to the bread-recorder’, I was searching for a way that could:

- 1) simultaneously host multiple audiences;
- 2) work on its own without the physical presence of a storyteller onsite;
- 3) still arouse intimate feelings.

This tryout was a successful method/tool to achieve all. This made me think of working on and developing this method/tool even further.

✧ [small gestures, setting up the ground for intimacy] After this tryout, I requested personal feedback from XPUB2 asking which part they felt intimate. I realized small gestures can create a space for intimacy. Like, the change of seating arrangement, the possibility to participate with one’s own headphone, or a short script written for this

event.

C. Delivered in a pocket



[description of method/tool] a pocket and a package

A storyteller secretly delivered a package of stories in the right pocket of an audience member's jacket

[publishing context] A special school activity

location: XPUB studio

description of the event: The activity was proposed by two guest tutors in preparation for the grad show and XPUB2 were divided into small groups. XPUB2 were asked to exchange gifts (or letters) relating to their research and discuss them with members of the group. The intention of this proposal was to support each other and find the common thread running through different graduation projects.

audience: Kimberley Cosmilla and Emma Prato

[description of setup]

layout of the setup: A printed letter, a homemade cookie, and a bright fuchsia-colored feather wrapped in another printed piece of paper. All are hidden in the right pocket of the jacket.

capacity: ??

description of encounter: No direct interpersonal encounter

Several hours after the delivery, a text message was sent to the audience saying, 'for mine, both of you, check the right pocket of your jacket'.

[description of shared story] In the printed letter, a definition of ‘intimate publishing’ and some questions relating to each one’s research project were included. In the wrapper, some snippets of my thesis (from Chapter 1 and 2) and some drawings were printed.

[intention]

a. intention behind the choice of method/tool:

- 1) to respond to the *Pocket Theory* (Whorrall-Campbell, 2022) ³
(what I was reading at that time)
- 2) to surprise and excite the audience (by hiding in their pockets)
- 3) to pay homage to my long obsession with pockets in apparels

b. intention behind the choice of setup:

- 1) to make it more quirky and less formal
(by adding the cookie and the feather)
- 2) to induce unwrapping action and give a secretive feeling
(by having the wrapper)
- 3) to allow the audience to engage with the story at one’s own pace
(by avoiding a direct interpersonal encounter and informing later)

c. intention behind the choice of story:

- 1) to serve the purpose of the activity

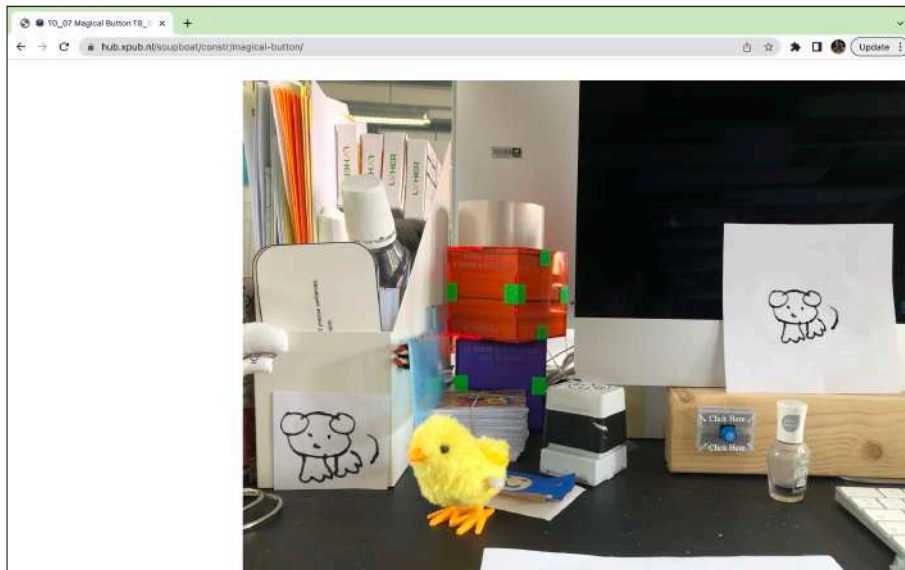
[observation and reflection]

✧ [playing hide-and-seek] To me, as a storyteller, it was very awkward to deliver—or hide—a package in someone else’s pocket. It felt almost *too* intimate, even though both audiences were my friends. At the same time, I felt excited because this method arouses the feeling of playing hide-and-seek. Interestingly, one audience member mentioned she initially disregarded the wrapper, considering it just a random scrap paper, but later noticed its importance and its role. It seemed—from the audience’s side—that the wrapper gave the sense of playing hide-and-seek.

✧ [setting up the ground for intimacy and future plan] The other audience member remarked on the role that cookie played in this method. She told me that it helped set up a space for her to enter my intimate space. This made me think of a strategic way of using snacks in the future tryouts to create a temporary space for reflection.

✧ [distribution] This method is suitable for small-scale publishing because the delivery requires some planning ahead. Although there is one example by the Los Angeles artist David Horvitz distributing 1000 editions of his work, *True Courtship Dance* (2016), by hiring specialized pickpockets during the Frieze art fair in New York.

D-1. A webpage with shapeshifting drawings



[description of method/tool]

A storyteller shared a story as a webpage with a simple function—shifting the shapes of drawings—made with HTML, simple CSS, and Java Script.

[publishing context] A workshop at XPUB

location: <https://hub.xpub.nl/soupboat/constr/magical-button/>

description of the event: Facilitated by Raphaël Bastide (2022), the workshop was intended to create small but radical web page(s) under specific constraints to experiment with coding as a performing practice. Some of the examples of constraints were: coding with ‘only one hand’, ‘only with found materials’, ‘no charger, no wifi’, ‘only one color’, etc. My constraint was only using ten strokes of the drawing of ‘Mamang’—a lost puppy doll from my childhood.

audience: XPUB workshop participants, people who are curious about the course, and unknown online audiences

[description of setup]

layout of the setup: A webpage showing the picture of my desk in XPUB studio as a background image. A looping animation saying ‘Click Here’ and a clickable blue button on the right-bottom of the webpage. A shape-shifting drawing positioned diagonally above the button and the animation.

capacity: ??

description of encounter: No direct interpersonal encounter

The user/audience is triggered to click the button, and this action runs the function of changing the positions of ten drawing strokes.

[description of shared story] Nine different variations made with ten drawing strokes of Mamang were shared: a cook, a basketball player, a person walking, a dog, a face with glasses, etc.

[intention]

a. intention behind the choice of method/tool:

- (1) to serve the purpose of the workshop (building small and radical webpages)
- (2) to arouse a sense of engagement and reveal different drawings at one's own pace (by having the button that activates the function)

b. intention behind the choice of setup:

- (1) to serve the purpose of the workshop
- (by limiting layouts and styles based on constraints I chose)

c. intention behind the choice of story:

- (1) to stay close to my drawing practice
- (by making more drawings with one drawing)
- (2) to pay homage to my long obsession with the story of 'Mamang'

[observation and reflection]

✧ [the intimate webpage] One audience member pointed out the pixelated drawing, weird layout of the webpage, and personal collections of objects in the background image, which made him already connect and feel intimate, even without the interactive part.

✧ [staying close to the context] In retrospect, I extremely limited myself to work within the constraints to embody the purpose of the workshop. This led to one unusual choice to another, resulting in a unique webpage. For instance, the image of the desk was chosen because that was where the drawing of Mamang was found. And random objects on my desk led to the position of the button and the drawing. It was interesting for me to observe all these choices were highly interconnected with each other—achieved through limitations.

✧ [distribution and the audience] Among other cases, this has been shared the most with others. Because it is a simple webpage and easy to share via link, I shared it with my friends in Seoul, people who were curious about the course, and strangers unfamiliar with artistic publishing practices.

✧ [future plan, which led to case 'D-2'] After showing this webpage to many, I realized the powerful-yet-unexplored possibility of this format. That is, to invite others to join this playful activity—making drawings together. Although I also found myself continuously explaining the backstory of this webpage. These reflections made me think of using this webpage as a surface to collect more stories (drawings) from others. And finding a way to

include the lost story of Mamang for contextualization.

D-2. translating a letter from my childhood and collecting stories in a tiny notebook

[description of method/tool] a printed publication, a letter from childhood, and a tiny notebook

(1) A storyteller shared her lost story with the audience by reading aloud the publication and the letter to her lost doll. The letter was alternately read in Korean and in English-translation.

(2) The audience shared their lost stories in a tiny (5cm by 5cm) notebook.

[publishing context] A school event open to the public

location: Het Bollenpandje, Rotterdam

description of the event: Like case 'A', the purpose of this event was to share work-in-progress graduation research of XPUB2 with the larger public. At that time, there was a strong need to test out ideas to people who are unaware of the context of XPUB. For this matter, XPUB2 decided to host the event at Het Bollenpandje—an active community center located in the west of Rotterdam, where the locals from the area would meet-up and organize events. Several days before the event, each XPUB2 prepared one page of publication sharing one's research. Each page was bound together as a collective publication and worked as a presentation surface on the day of the event.

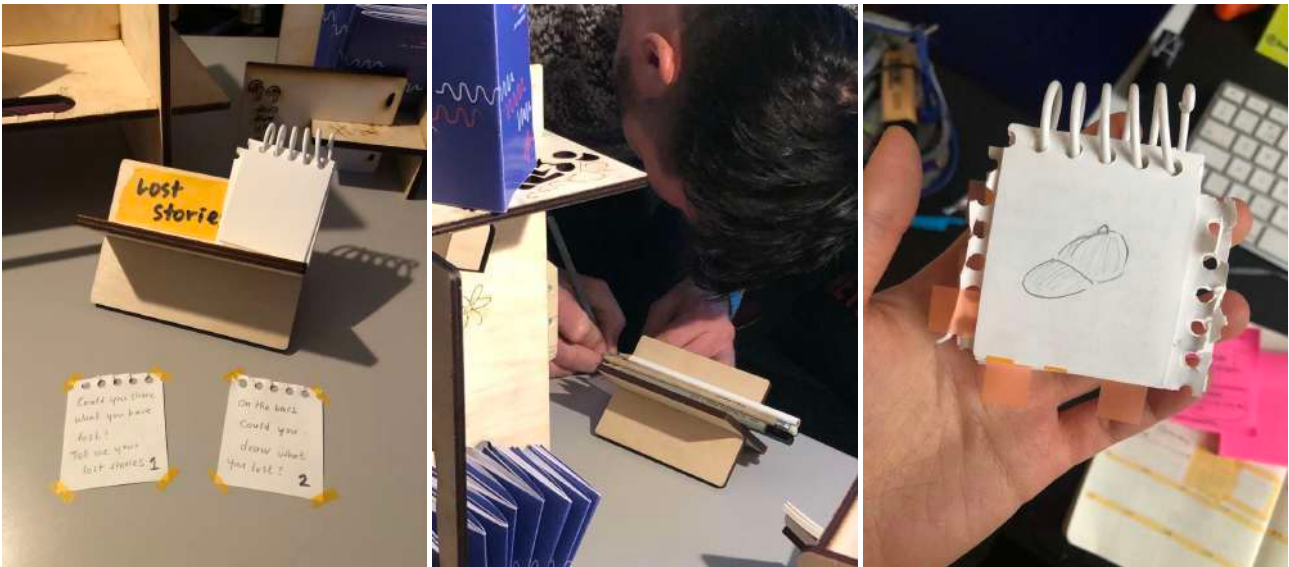
audience: XPUB community and people who are unfamiliar with the field of artistic publishing

[description of setup]

layout of the setup: Several copies of collective publications and the tiny notebook with instructions on how to share lost stories were on display.

capacity: Maximum 1 person at a time

description of encounter: After sharing her lost story, the storyteller verbally sent out an open-invitation towards audiences onsite to share their lost stories in the notebook. The audience could freely walk in and share their stories until the end of the event without having a direct interpersonal encounter with the storyteller.



[description of shared story]

- (1) A brief lost story of Mamang, the letter I wrote to Mamang at the age of nine, and the case of 'D-1. A webpage with shapeshifting drawings' were shared and introduced.
- (2) Thirteen lost stories were contributed by the audience (e.g. 'a black wool scarf' carrying memories of first time being in Paris / 'childhood drawings' lost after the separation of parents / 'an online community' where one could share thoughts as a non-heterosexual woman but then deliberately lost, etc.)

[intention]

a. intention behind the choice of method/tool:

- 1) to arouse unfamiliar feelings to non-Korean-speaking audiences
(by reading alternately in Korean and English)
- 2) to lower the pressure of drawing something
(by limiting the size of a collecting surface)

b. intention behind the choice of setup:

- 1) to allow an intimate space for the audience to share one's lost story
(by collecting contributions anonymously and not having a direct interpersonal encounter)

c. intention behind the choice of story:

- 1) to appeal audience members who are unfamiliar with the field of artistic publishing
(by choosing the topic of lost stories that people can easily relate to)
- 2) to arouse strong streams of feelings such as longing, humor, or affection
(by choosing to read a letter from my childhood)

[observation/reflection]

◇ [setting up the ground for intimacy] I noticed the letter itself invoked various feelings and created a space for the audience to be intimate. While reading it, I could feel the

shifts of moods in the audience: from laughters (due to the dramatic tone of 9-year-old me saying 'I am not even a person' to her doll) to melancholy feelings (coming from the story itself).

✧ [shared stories and future plan] After the event, I was thrilled to see 13 intimate lost stories collected in the notebook. This excitement made me think of continuation of collecting lost stories from others. The following is the current inventory of lost stories: 1 tree / 1 luggage / 2 doll / 1 instrument / 1 collection of childhood drawings / 5 clothing & accessory / 1 online community / 1 pet

✧ [future plan, linking D-1 and D-2] The starting point of this tryout was 'D-1' and thus, my initial plan was to share the contributed lost stories in the format of webpage(s) as a final output. However, in the process of scanning and converting to digital format, I realized this plan was not realistic. Thus, I am currently working on a webpage with the following functions:

- 1) collecting/saving lost stories in 'txt.' and 'svg.' files;
- 2) collecting/saving each stroke of a drawing as separate svg. files;
- 3) allowing users to make different variations of one's drawing through moving and rotating strokes;
- 4) saving different variations of drawings.

✧ [multilingual situation] As a non-Dutch speaker, I became aware of what it means to work in the Netherlands without knowing how to speak Dutch. On the day of the event, I realized that I had not carefully considered the local community of Het Bollenpandje (mainly non-English-speaking Dutch-speakers). This awareness led me to recognize various communities and people. It also made me curious about how to approach different multilingual situations in the future.

Notes

Chapter 3.

1. In the book, *Erzähler ohne Seelen* (Tawada 2011), there is one paragraph that I really love. Here is my crude English translation of it:

There are two images that come to my mind when I think of the human soul. In this first image, souls look like the long hard rolls I first ate in Tübingen. These hard rolls are called 'souls' in Swabia, and many people have souls of this shape. But the soul does not inhabit the body like bread itself. Rather, the soul is like empty holes within the body of bread, which has to be shaped like this hole or filled with a fetus or something like the steam of love. Otherwise, soul-carriers will feel that they lack something (Tawada 2011, pp. 24-25).

2. My obsession with headphones started in 2015, during a trip to New York with a close friend. We were sharing a room and a bed together for several days. I found myself putting on my headphone, whenever I felt the need for my own space. This made me notice how headphones are being used to create a space for oneself by blocking one's surroundings and others.

3. I was so thrilled to read the following part in *Pocket Theory* (Whorrall-Campbell, 2022):

The ephemerality of Tony and Benjamin's gestures belies the fact that what is important is not what is held, but how things are passed; it is not the details in the note, nor the present inside the sock, rather the method of communication itself that defines the experience (Whorrall-Campbell 2022, p. 76).

The method—delivering to the pocket—was a direct reference to this paragraph.

Epilogue

Writing this thesis has been a slow and interesting journey for me. With a few exceptions, I would first write in Korean and then translate it into English. It took twice as long—*well, definitely far from efficiency*—but I felt more intimate. During the process of translating bodies of texts from Korean to English, a lot of words got lost, remained untranslated, or changed their shades and textures. Yet, because of that process, I could stay in between two language systems. As Don Mee Choi and Theresa Hak Kyung Cha did, I could be more playful and expressive.

I found joy in writing.

And it gave me a space to reflect. A space where I could play with words, experiment with different ideas, and be generous in taking time. It provided a space for me to stick around, where I could be more patient with my curiosities without giving up so easily. I started to observe how each letter, word, and sentence can engage. I became more attentive with each element. Along the way, I was able to frame the concept of intimate publishing as well. For the first time, I could put my practice into words and communicate with worlds. *Now, I could even introduce myself to others, ‘Hey, I am an intimate publisher!’* Through the lens of intimate publishing, all my seemingly incongruous and disparate artistic tryouts start to make sense and shimmer. Something I did not think of at the beginning of this thesis-writing.

And I hope to continue writing after this.

No, I *will* continue writing.

Reminding myself of things that I learned during this journey.

Like, not to give up and be generous with time.

Thinking all the twists and turns I have encountered.

Like, the moment of restructuring the thesis with intimacy, or the moment of thinking translation and intimacy together.

Remembering the power of playfulness and sincerity.

Like, the sparkles that Cathy Park Hong, Katherine McKittrick, Don Mee Choi and Theresa Hak Kyung Cha shared with me. ° °.*

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Colophon

This work has been produced in the context of the graduation research of Chaeyoung (Chae, or Chaiyoung) Kim from the Experimental Publishing (XPUB) Master course at the Piet Zwart Institute, Willem de Kooning Academy, Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences.

XPUB is a two year Master of Arts in Fine Art and Design that focuses on the intents, means and consequences of making things public and creating publics in the age of post-digital networks.

This publication is based on the graduation thesis, *Spark(l)ing Curiosities: Through Intimate Publishing* written under the supervision of Natasha Soobramanien.

The drawings were made by Chaeyoung Kim.

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Special thanks to Natasha Soobramanien, Marloes de Valk, ✧ XPUBies ✧, and all my friends with whom I had intimate and sparkling discussions that pushed my research further. Also, big thanks to Henam Shin, for sharing her intimate version of *Dictee* to me.