

we've all, we've done:
sounding a Korean adoptee archive

By

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Thesis

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Dedication

This project is dedicated to my new dear, brilliant friend Mary-Kim Arnold.

The nourishment of our friendship, conversations, and shared sounding has made
this work possible.

And to all transnational and transracial adoptees.

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we've all, we've done (an introduction)

That the exegesis is at once a polyphonic discourse and also a protest that demands that the author once more be heard... a site that encompasses a range of contesting voices.

-- Jerri Kroll, *The Exegesis and the Gentle Reader/Writer*

“we’ve all, we’ve done” is a multisensory, multidisciplinary, sound art installation that is a research creation project that presents personal and historical archival materials about the Korean War and the consequences of transnational and transracial adoption. It is a story about stories and how we tell those stories. How we transform those stories so that they no longer define us within the confines of tragedy and loss. This essay proposes two ways of negotiating and improvising with the archive of the adoptee, through “counter-listening” and “sounding.” Counter-listening is an aural equivalent to a counter-narrative. It is both an action and a result. The adoptee archive requires counter-intuitive methods of listening to its stories. It requires hearing past the stories of the “Western savior,” the “hopeless orphan,” the “broken” adult who will be forever haunted by the cultural loss and inability to form a consistent identity. A corollary to counter-listening to the archive is a practice of sounding through performance of the archive. Sounding confronts material history with an improvisational intervention that allow us to know the archive and its subjects in new ways through multisensory engagements with its materials. Weaving together the thinking of feminist scholars and artists like Saidiya Hartman, Tina Campt, Nina Sun Eidsheim, and transnational adoptee scholars Eleana J Kim, Arissa Oh, Mark Jerng, and others, this essay describes “we’ve all, we’ve done” and its alternative, creative, methods of presenting an archival research creation project and the broader, geopolitical, history of transnational adoption in which it exists.

There are inherent and obvious challenges in writing about a creative work whose subject is that of how narratives in sound and text, by necessity, must remain open, undisciplined, and *possible*, instead of foreclosed and finished. As such, this writing may do things a bit differently to honor the specific narrative approach that “we’ve all, we’ve done” proposes. I ask for your generosity in holding the spirit of “we’ve all, we’ve done,” and patience with the various recursions, repetitions, variations, dead ends, and generative structures of its writing.



Figure 1 Publicity image for "we've all, we've done"

The audio work loops at approximately 40 minutes but can be experienced in any time frame you choose

Please feel free to browse through the documents on the tables

Figure 2 Installation instruction signage

The listener enters “we’ve all, we’ve done” through a rear door at the back of the Englander Studio/Studio 2 in the Perry and Marty Granoff Center for the Creative Arts at Brown University. The room is lowly lit, with high ceilings, and wooden floors. The walls are covered with long vinyl curtains that block the outside light and light from other studio spaces. The shades are drawn throughout the room, except for a small section in the top panels. This allows for a narrow horizontal beam of natural light to provide a dusk-like atmosphere in the room.



Figure 3 Installation view of natural light from shades

In the center there are four nondescript black tables arranged in an open square. Visually, the tables recede into the background due to the lighting of room and contrast of their brightly lit surfaces. A small cluster of plants are placed in the center with a dim, yellow light illuminating the center – a hearth of sorts. On each of the tables, there is a bright white rectangle of light from an LED tracing pad. The light table provides additional ambient light, the studio is not dark but instead intimately and closely lit. The lighting suggests the stillness and introspection of the space.

On the light tables there are stacks of documents and photos printed on overhead projector transparency paper. The archive (fully detailed in Appendix A) includes historical news clippings, journal articles, US immigration documents, and the personal

archives of myself and Mary-Kim Arnold, a professor, visual artist, writer, and Korean-adoptee. A small photography loupe is also available for closer inspection of the documents. I was introduced to Mary-Kim through our mutual friend in Providence, Rhode Island, Xander Marro, who had sent me a copy of *Litany for the Long Moment*, Mary-Kim's memoir about her experience as a Korean adoptee. I'll write more about our relationship later in this essay, but her friendship and collaboration have been a crucial part of this project.

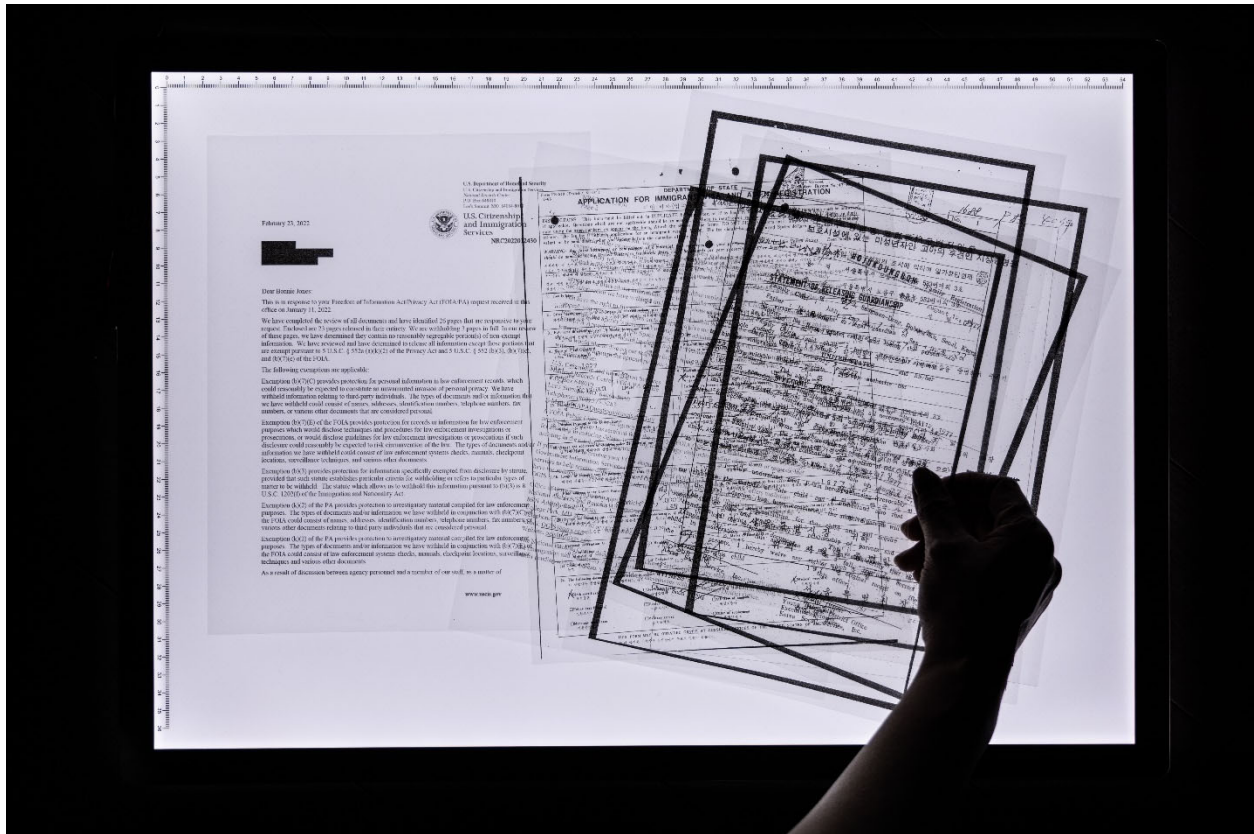


Figure 4 Printed transparencies on light pad

When the listener approaches the tables, the documents, stacked and arranged by a previous listener, create unique, palimpsestic arrangements. These at first seem opaque in

their subject matter; the listener would need to spend time reading and deciphering their contents. They would need to move and manipulate and sort the documents as they determine their meanings in relation to each other and in relation to the sounds they hear. These gestures and moments become singular experiences of the image and text and they change as the listener moves around the tables and rearranges the pages.

The text that is visible from each type of document speaks a dissonant voice that is held, suspended, within the same visual space. The voices of bureaucratic, diaristic, advertising, local color / special interest journalism, academic and scholarly, philosophical, and critical texts create clamorous moments through these layers. This makes space for readings of the text that negotiate through historical, academic, personal materials and their different textual “tones”. These make space for a simultaneous listening of these different textual registers as they move and shift on the light table.

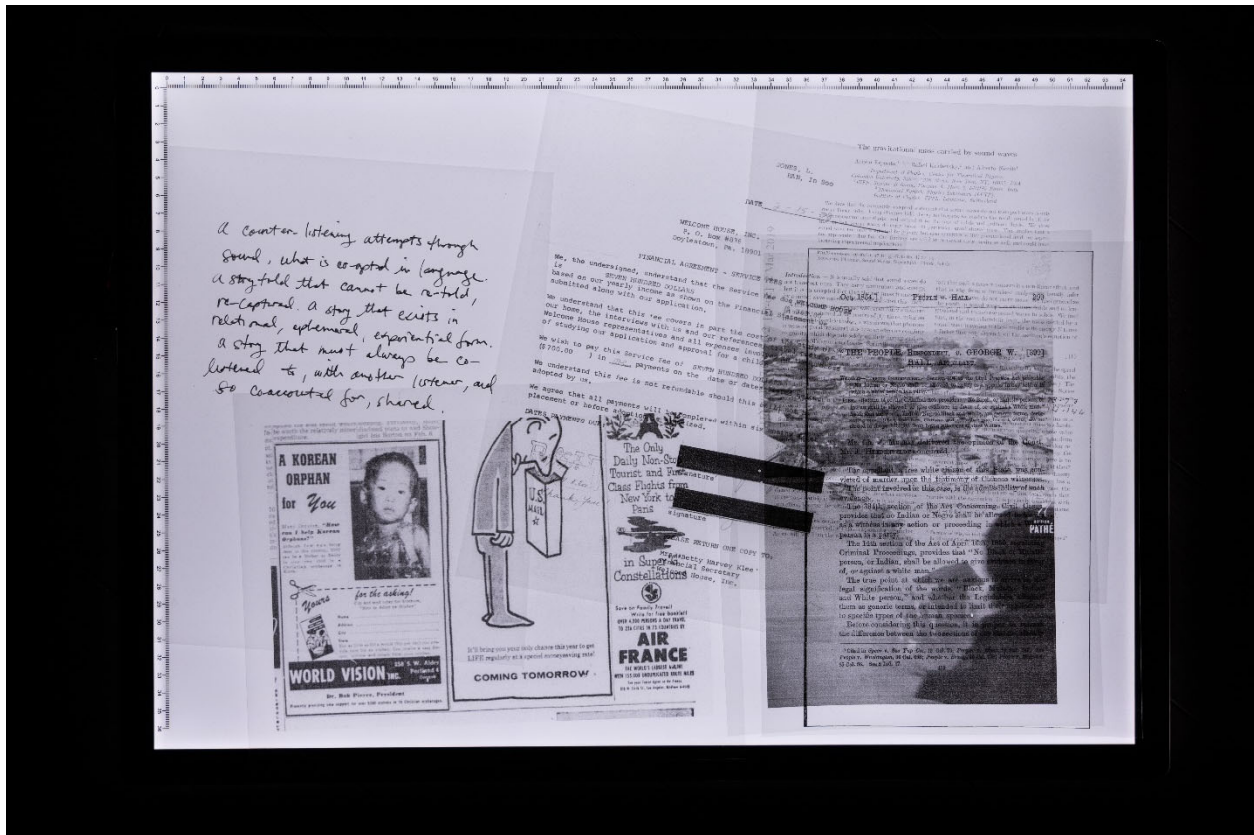


Figure 5 Printed transparencies on light pad




There are four chairs placed in the open corners formed by the arrangement of the tables. These chairs face outwards and away from each other, so when the listener sits down, they are not directly facing another seated person, but they are close to them.¹ They are in relation to the other listeners. The arrangement of the chairs and tables evoke a circular movement, a looping of text, body, and sound.

¹ The addition of the chairs happened on the evening before the opening of the show, so many of the photos in this essay, taken by professional photographer Rue Sakayama, do not show this detail. It was a moment of inspiration to include seating more directly into the piece – which places the listener more “squarely” implicated. Future iterations will include this seating as well.



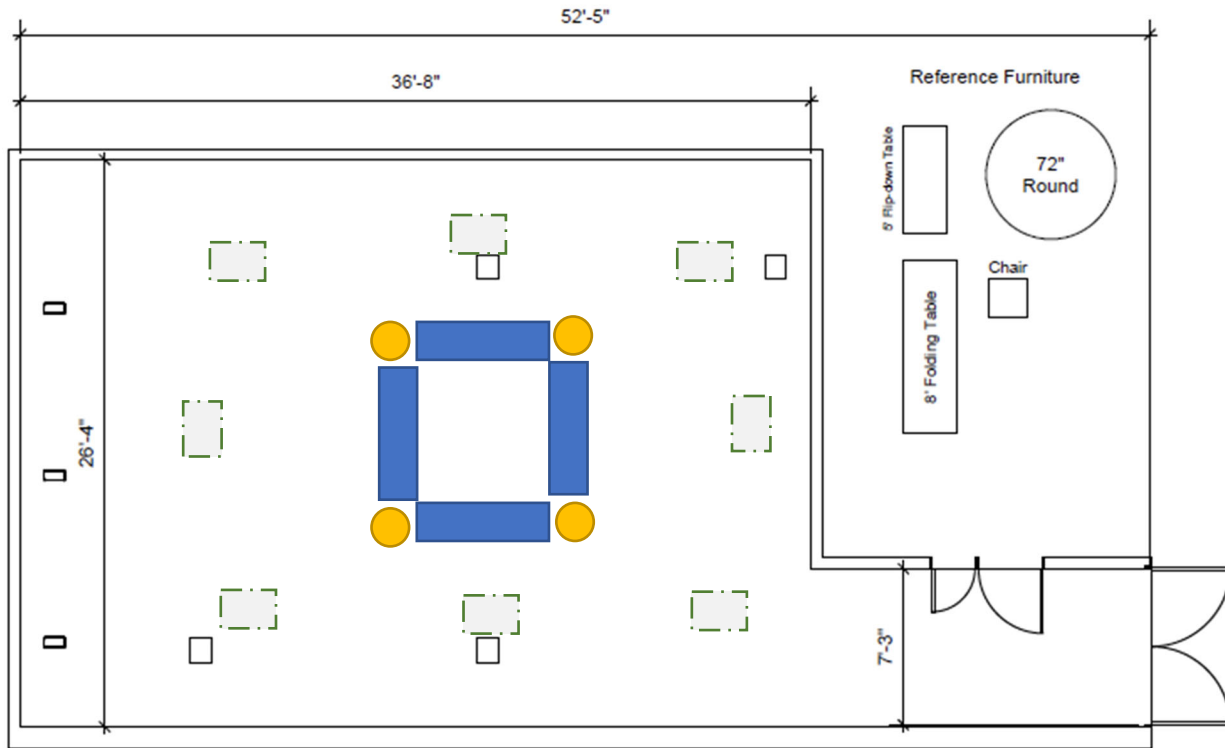
Figure 6 Installation view with seated person

When the listener is seated or standing near the tables, the room's eight Meyer speakers, located approximately ten feet up from the floor are noticeable. The tables, chairs, and speakers are shown on the diagram below.

-  Meyer Speaker
-  LED Light Table
-  Chair

Vectorworks Educational Version

Englander Studio



Vectorworks Educational Version

Figure 7 Englander Studio plan, speakers indicated

What the listener hears from the main speakers is a 40-minute looping, layered electronic music composition that weaves in and out with the audio from smaller Bluetooth speakers set on the tables that play back excerpts from conversations between me and Mary-Kim Arnold. The audio is at times, immersive and unsettling, appearing to move with the listener as they move through the room. Other times, quiet field recordings

of highways and forests provide a more neutral sonic engagement. Moments of respite and listening. The voices of Mary-Kim and me appear and recede within the shifting musical soundscape. Allowing listeners to catch a word here and there, or entire conversations before it flees into electronic statics and distortions. I write more later about my relationship with Mary-Kim as my friend, collaborator, and conspirator.

Each moment of “we’ve all, we’ve done” holds a story. The stories emerge from interactions between the transparency materials, the light tables, the audio composition, the texts, the archive, and the bodies that manipulate the objects and reshape the texts. Making and unmaking the archive is dynamic at each point and at any given moment. The visual and sonic materials of “we’ve all, we’ve done” invite an improvisatory “making” of and with the archive. The listener is free to move around the document tables and studio space – engaging in the work from multiple positions and perspectives. In subtle ways, the physical, practical elements of this work are designed to choreograph the listener’s experience of the physical space, inviting ways of interacting with the central orientation of the installation, bending over tables, listening, sitting, moving pages with their hands, or moving around the perimeter of the speakers. Ways of being in relation to the sonic and visual archive and interacting with other bodies in the room.



Figure 8 Installation view with two listeners

“we’ve all, we’ve done” can be experienced in long or short periods of time and the listener’s relationship to the information and content is complicated with longer engagements. Questions of what is “knowable” and what can be accessed confront the listener at each point in their interaction with the fragments of sound and text. While the audio loops at 40 minutes, the structure of the piece is persistently, open-ended, and there is no specific moment that must lead or follow the overall shape. Instead, the threads of this work are always moving together and apart, and meanings emerge like sonic resonances, meeting points of certain vibrations in the sounds and texts. The structure of the work also reveals the recursions and gaps of the archive, refusing meaning as much as it invites connection and re-connection. In this way, the work *does the work* of imagining how we are in relation to others through the specificity of personal narratives and experiences. How the personal is potential and radical connection. How Mary-Kim’s

memory becomes my memory, becomes your memory, how can we inhabit the same place of remembering and how sound animates the complex, possibility of this listening *in* collaboration *in* being.

How the West Saved South Korea and Other War Stories

I cannot tell a story about Korean adoptee archives without first returning to the war that was responsible for the creation transnational adoption. It was the so-called “Forgotten War,” due to the lack of attention it received from the media and Western public, coming as it did at the close of WWII. The Korean War structurally, financially, and psychologically devastated what we know of today as South and North Korea. In an exceptionally violent, three-year conflict, an estimated 800,000 military and 2.7 million civilians perished, leaving approximately 2 million children orphaned, homeless, and impoverished. These “war waifs” would become the subject of numerous international relief campaigns in Europe and the US during and after the war, redirecting attention away from Western complicity in the creation of these newly orphaned children, towards the charitable and humanitarian efforts of Europe and the US.

The Korean War orphan story as told to Americans and Europeans in the 1950’s relies on the creation of a white, Western savior who comes to the aid of a third world country and it’s poor, lost and suffering children. During and in the aftermath of the



Figure 9 Figure 9 Image of G.I. and “mascot” from Life Magazine feature

Korean War, popular magazines such as *Life* and *Collier’s* frequently featured stories of Korean orphans and G.I. humanitarian efforts often through the lens of the servicemen and their relationship with Korean “mascots” or “houseboys.” Mascots were young orphan boys that were “adopted” by G.I.s on the base to perform domestic tasks, provide companionship and help with navigating local

culture. Servicemen would often dote on these boys as though they were their own children some eventually legally adopted the mascots. In a common photo appearing in Western media, the child is shown sitting on the knee of a US serviceman, having been brought under his care at military base orphanages that were started during the war. The serviceman casts a paternal, loving glance down on the young dirty face of an orphan Korean child.

These articles told a familiar story and sought to hit a similar heartfelt note with readers. That of the United States military as a paternalistic figure dutifully and compassionately coming to the aid of the desperate, hungry children of Korea. Children, who, as a British Movietone newsreel voiceover intones, have “no moral values because hunger changes all moral conceptions.” Children who “do not know affection because no one has ever shown them affection, but they do know loneliness, hunger, desperation, and fear.”²

² British Movietone, AP, “Save the Children fund – Korean War Orphans – 1950s - Sound,” YouTube video, 2:40, 7/21/2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k00rPLOJohc>.



Figure 10 British Movietone / AP Save the Children Fund newsreel

Western media used this narrative to promote an image of the US as the hero and savior of Korea, first freeing Korea from Japanese colonial rule, then warding off the evils of Communism, and finally, coming to the rescue of its helpless, hopeless, orphan survivors. These articles, of course, skirted around the fact that Europe and the US were largely responsible for the increase in orphans, not only because of the numbers of civilians who had died at their hands during the Korean War, but also because these children were often the result of relationships between American and European GIs and Korean women.

As transnational Asian-American historian, Arissa Oh outlines in her book, “To Save the Children of Korea” the campaign to present the US in Cold War international geopolitics, not as an emerging, imperialist world power, but as a humane, benevolent, and compassionate big brother or father who was building their global “family,”

normalized a paternalistic, hierarchical, relationship between US and South Korea (as well as other countries) during this time. This image of the US as family father presaged the intervention of the United States in the Vietnam War. The promotion of US GI humanitarian efforts and the adoption of “mascots” by US servicemen that laid the procedural groundwork for intercountry adoption, given that US immigration still barred most Asians from entering the US, a policy that would not be wholly turned over until the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965. The popularity and profitability of Korean adoption increased dramatically with the establishment of agencies like the Holt Adoption Program in 1956. The chart below, shows the significant rise in adoptions after the 1965 act in the 70s and 80s. There was a total of 162,665 overseas adoptions out of South Korea from 1953 to 2008.

Intercountry Adoptions Out of South Korea From 1953 to 2008											
Year	Total	Year	Total	Year	Total	Year	Total	Year	Total	Year	Total
		1960	638	1970	1,932	1980	4,144	1990	2,962	2000	2,360
		1961	660	1971	2,725	1981	4,628	1991	2,197	2001	2,436
		1962	254	1972	3,490	1982	6,434	1992	2,045	2002	2,365
1953	4	1963	442	1973	4,688	1983	7,263	1993	2,290	2003	2,287
1954	8	1964	462	1974	5,302	1984	7,924	1994	2,262	2004	2,258
1955	59	1965	451	1975	5,077	1985	8,837	1995	2,180	2005	2,010
1956	671	1966	494	1976	6,597	1986	8,680	1996	2,080	2006	1,899
1957	486	1967	626	1977	6,159	1987	7,947	1997	2,057	2007	1,264
1958	930	1968	949	1978	5,917	1988	6,463	1998	2,443	2008	1,250
1959	741	1969	1,190	1979	4,148	1989	4,191	1999	2,409		
1953–1959		1960–1969		1970–1979		1980–1989		1990–1999		2000–2008	
Total		Total		Total		Total		Total		Total	
2,899		6,166		46,035		66,511		22,925		18,129	

There was a total of 162,665 overseas adoptions out of South Korea from 1953 to 2008.

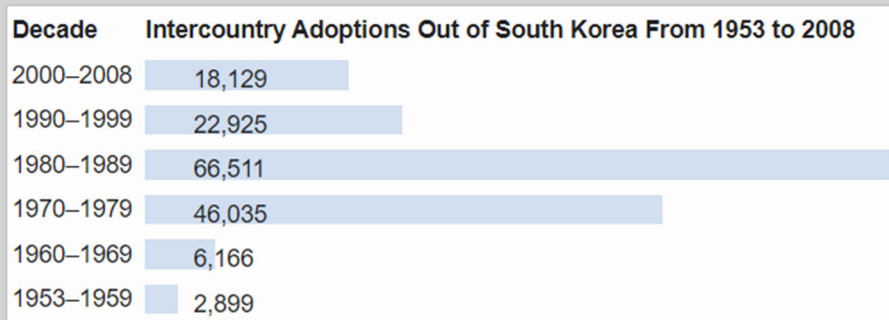


Figure 11 Hübinette (2005) and South Korean Ministry for Health, Welfare and Family Affairs (2009)

The numbers reflect that while the original motivation for adoption was to address the urgent orphan crisis following the war, the immigration procedures and policies during that time became institutionalized as a legitimate business sector nearly a generation later during the 1970s and 80s, long after those original war waifs would have been adopted.

The latter suggests that by that point different motives for transnational adoption had emerged, such as an increasing overseas demand for Korean babies and the economic profitability and reputational benefit of intercountry adoption.

The complexity of the Korean War and transnational/ transracial adoption is much larger than I could faithfully explore in this essay. It would require a deeper historical, anthropological, and sociological examination of practices and procedures that Korean and transnational adoption scholars like Eleana Kim, Mark Jerng, Arissa Oh, and Kori Graves and have done an excellent job of covering in their respective studies. However, I leave this story with an important realization; Korean adoption practices were critically entangled in US foreign policy in Asia and key to their building of a paternalistic international reputation following the end of WWII. The emerging interests of the US during the Cold War were enacted through the practice of intercountry adoption. It is *this* story, of American heroism, charity, and benevolence, which forms the fundamental view of Korean adoptees, and Koreans in general within the Western imaginary. It is the imposed narrative I grew up hearing – of how grateful I should feel towards America, of how lucky I am to be in this rich, prosperous country, as opposed to the “third-world” poverty I would have experienced back in Korea. This is the story on which the Korean American adoptee identity is formed. A complex, and contested story which, for adult adoptees, becomes the place of an uneasy and unsettled knowing. A place where an interrogation and an understanding of oneself must be conducted.

The Truth About Stories

The truth about stories is that's all we are

- Thomas King, *The Truth About Stories*

I intended both to tell an impossible story and to amplify the impossibility of its telling

-- Saidiya Hartman, *Venus in two acts*

A story of war is where this work, “we’ve all, we’ve done” begins. This is the story that we must start with, though this one isn’t exactly “mine”, but it is “mine” for how could it not be? A story about the Korean War, about the events that shape countries, that fashion nations and people. What then is this story to tell, what are the sounds to story with? A story that is “mine”, but isn’t, for how could it not be ours? Stories of war and the way a country is made by the power of another, North Korea, South Korea, America. The Korean “war waifs” were not me, I wasn’t even there then, in 1953. If you are not careful a story becomes a structure in which to build an entire person upon. If I told a story about the war, maybe I would tell of a baby boy born in 1953 in Incheon City who grew up in a war zone, a military base then in America. But this baby isn’t me, I wasn’t even there then, in 1960. But how could it not be me, how could it not be we? How is a baby like a nation? These children who are both us and each other and me, how could we not be, when no one tells the difference? There are no newsreels, magazine articles, immigration documents, which speak individually about the children, the mothers, the fathers of Korean adoption. We become formed through the partial, fragmented, narratives of heroic Americans and their mission to rescue orphan children. We become interchangeable. Our

stories are those of the faceless poor and desperate survivors of the Korean War. No one has a story to tell about the difference.



Figure 12 Jones Family portrait at St Martins in the Fields, NJ



Figure 13 Bonnie Jones at Jones Dairy Farm, family photo

Two years ago, I started collecting the materials of the personal archive presented in “we’ve all, we’ve done.” I was working on another sound installation at that time about the rare, red-crowned cranes that live in the demilitarized zone (DMZ) between North and South Korea. On a visit home, I asked my mother if she would give me my adoption paperwork. As a child, I was aware of this collection of documents kept in a metal office filing cabinet that me and my sisters³ were forbidden to go into. Of course, the minute my parents left for work or on vacation, we would explore every cabinet, cupboard, or closet. I remember how mysterious and elusive these documents felt. How a document can be dangerous, moving, and sad all at once. It can say nothing but also everything, or at least some thing. To know “some” thing, a name, an address, a port of exit.

There were approximately thirteen documents in my parents’ retained records, comprising largely of paperwork required for the foreign visa when I arrived in the US, the petition to the Bucks County Orphans Court for adoption, and the petition for naturalization, which would confer US citizenship after adoption. The archival document can be stubborn. It seems to promise much more than it can deliver. Other than an administrative detail here and there, the only truly compelling information came from the “Travel Certificate” provided by the Republic of Korea that served as a passport for my one-way travel to the US.

³ My parents adopted three children from Welcome House. Two of them from South Korea and one, the eldest, was Cree first nations Canadian.

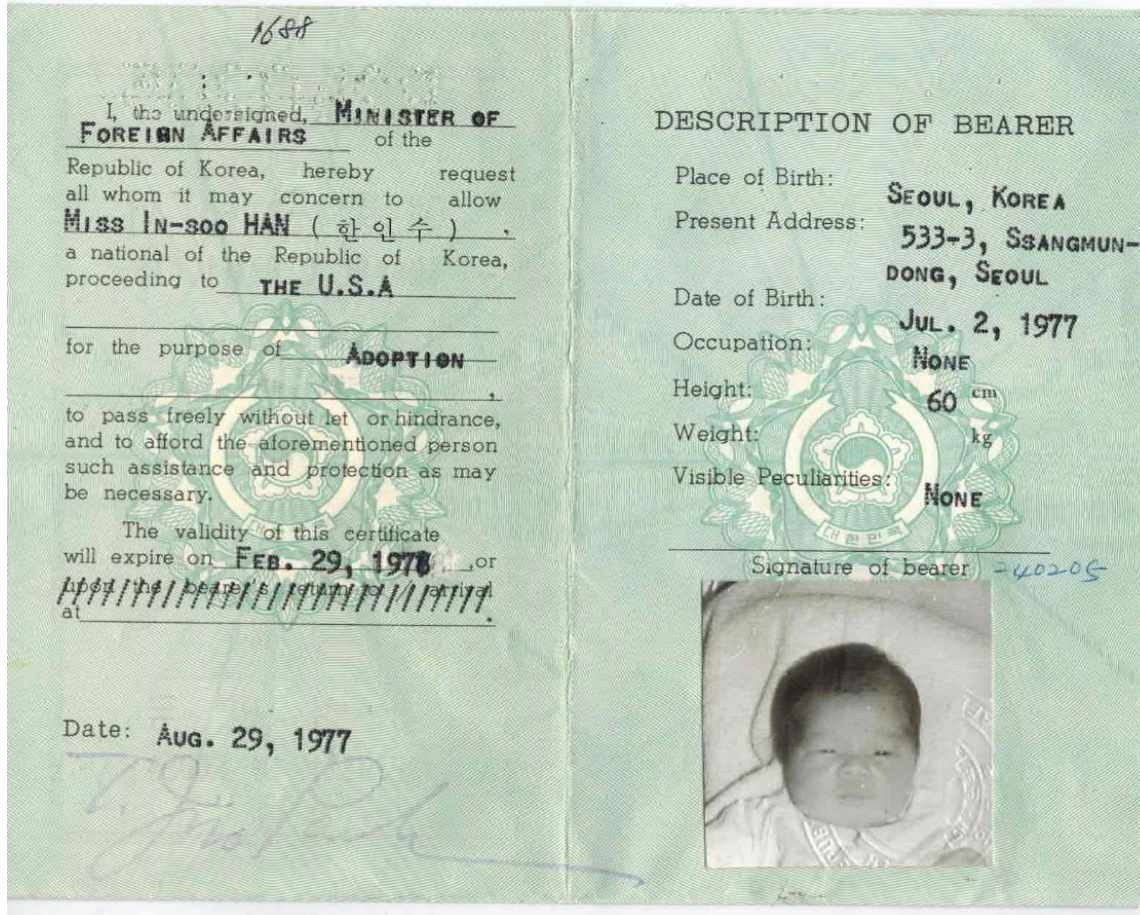


Figure 14 Travel Certificate for Miss In-soo HAN a.k.a. Bonnie Jones

The document, printed on light green, watermarked security paper has US and Republic of Korea immigration visa stamps showing my entrance into the US from Gimpo Airport on October 18, 1977. In the archive, this is the document that provided me with a name, Miss In-soo Han, which was given to me in the adoption process most likely by Korean Social Services. What is in a name and how to describe that feeling you have when you realize you have had another? When you see your other name, printed in a language you do not even understand, Miss In-soo HAN, 한인수.

I spent some time researching the meaning of In-soo, which according to Wikipedia is a unisex name, yet most famous In-soos have been men. A king, a Joseon scholar, a poet, archer, bioethics professor, a boy band singer, a football player. The “soo” means excellent and outstanding, the “in” means humanity, virtue, benevolence, charity, man. Excellent and great man, excellent human, excellently benevolent. Finding no female In-Soos, I wondered if whether this baby, the In-soo on this travel certificate, was really me? Did it look like me? I asked my friends and family this question on Facebook. Could this have been the paperwork for another baby meant to travel to the US instead? My friends didn’t seem to think this baby looked much like me at all. My mother insisted this was me.

In the process of researching “we’ve all, we’ve done” I joined several Facebook groups for Korean adoptees. In the introductory message the administrator of the Korean American Adoptees Facebook page⁴ sent me, she asked first if I knew my Korean Social Services case file, and then second that I should file a petition for the release of my US Immigration records. So, in early 2022, I filed a petition under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and the Privacy Act (PA) to retrieve my immigration records from the Office of US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). In a surprisingly quick turnaround, by the end of February, I had received the requested documents. Just in time to be included in “we’ve all, we’ve done.”

⁴ There are numerous public and private Korean adoptee related Facebook groups, the largest of which are Korean American Adoptees (7.k members) and Korean Adoptees (5.2k members). I am a member of both groups.

In twenty-six pages, my immigration records included several documents originating in the US, many of which I had found in my parent’s archives, including a copy of my naturalization document, petitions for naturalization, visa applications, and medical and immunization checks at the border. Three fully redacted pages citing various articles of exemption which allow for withholding of information related to law enforcement records that “could consist of law enforcement systems checks, manuals, checkpoint locations, surveillance techniques and various other documents”⁵ were also part of the records.

New to my eyes were several documents that originated from the South Korea adoption process, including the “Application for Certificate of Legal Guardianship for Minor Orphan who is Accommodated at Childcare Institution,” which placed Korean Social Services as my legal guardian, and a “Statement of Releasing Guardianship,” that enabled the Welcome House to take over legal guardianship once I was selected for adoption. Another document, whose purpose was less clear to me, was the “Hojukdungbon” or *hojeok*, family registration document. This document, I learned, was part of a Confucian “head of household” family census registration system in Korea called *hojuje*.

⁵ The exemptions for removed content were detailed in the cover letter from USCIS that I received with the records.

HOJUKDUNGBON (Family Registration)

Date : August 12, 1977

Permanent Address : 533-3, Sangmun-Dong, Dobong-Ku, Seoul, Korea

Family Chief : HAN, In Soo Sex : Female

Father : No Record

Mother : No Record

Family Origin : Han Yang


Date of Birth : July 2, 1977

Remarks : The above family is established as of August 12, 1977
in accordance with investigation conducted by the chief officer
of the Dobong District Office.
Being an orphan child, it was approved by the Seoul District
Court for the surname of the child to be HAN and the origin
as Han Yang on the date of August 3, 1977
It is, therefore, registered by the above date of August 12, 1977

This is a full, true and correct
translation of the attached document.
Translated by:


Ho Sun PARK
Korea Social Service, Inc.

This is to certify that the above
is a full, true and correct copy
of the original record on file in
this office.



Chief Officer
Dobong District Office
Seoul, Korea

Figure 15 Hojukdungbon Family Registration for In-soo Han

This *hojuje* system, introduced in 1898, established men as the “head of household” and as the only one having legal rights within the administration of the family. In the *hojuje* system, the male head of the family is usually succeeded by his first son, not

by his widow, to which all inheritances and properties pass. When a daughter gets married, she is removed from her father's *hojeok* and transferred to her husband's. All children are added to the father's *hojeok*. Even when a couple divorces and the mother retain custody of children, the children keep the father's surname and remain in his *hojeok* unless he gives permission to transfer to a new husband of his former wife. The *hojuje* system was only abolished in 2005, under fair criticism that it was outdated, patriarchal, gender-biased, and unconstitutional for violating egalitarian principles stipulated in the Korean Constitution.

Though the USCIS documents were somewhat disappointing in that they revealed little more than what I had already known, there was something intriguing about this new document, the *Hojukdongbon*, that inspired my further research. Dated August 12, 1977, my *hojeok* was created approximately one month after my birth and lists In-soo Han as the "family chief" with "no record" of mother or father. Within the notes at the bottom, the Seoul District Court approved my surname as HAN and origin as HAN YANG on August 3, 1977, officially and formally creating two impossible conditions. A one-person family and in an unintended consequence, a family where the *hoju* or "head of the family," is female, something that would have been prohibited at the time. I like to imagine the managers and bureaucrats contemplating the paradox that is the *hojuje* for the female orphan child. The child that cofounds Confucian bureaucracy and tests the limits of the imagination of the administrative paperwork meant to recognize this structure.

In this moment of the archive, I can hear governmental expedience and tradition conflict with dissonant voices, unable to untie the ethical and moral knot that prevents the authority of the female but must account for their ability to be the agent of their exemption

from that system. The extent of the fabrication of this document imagines a Korean family structure that is impossible and so therefore speculative and generative. The female “head of household” with the man’s name, the outlier, the lone agent, the exemption, and the exception. It is these exact moments of listening to the archive, where one hears something that radically exposes the insufficiency of state and cultural recognition as they are inscribed in forms, ledgers, application – moments where what we are, what we are made of, trouble the system from within and without.

Korean adoptees, searching for birth families and information regarding their adoption process often recount stories of discovering falsified documents, misleading paperwork, or in many cases, no records at all from Korean and American adoption agencies. Often the search, rather than clarifying, serves only to amplify the impossibility of reconciling a discordant, incommensurate past. One of the more well-known examples of the impact of these falsifications, is told in filmmaker Deann Borshay Liem’s, two autobiographical documentaries, *First Person Plural* and *In the Matter of Cha Jung Hee*. I was introduced to Borshay Liem’s story in my twenties when a friend passed along a recommendation for her first film.

In 1966, Borshay Liem was eight years old when she was adopted by a white, American family in California., The Borshays believed they were adopting a Korean orphan by the name of Cha Jung Hee, who they had been corresponding with for several months through Foster Parent's Plan, a \$15/month orphan sponsorship program. As Cha Jung Hee, now named Deann adapted to life in the US, memories of her youth in Korea began to emerge that contradicted her adoption paperwork and the story that the Borshay’s were told about her birth family – that they had both been killed and she had no living

family members. As an adult, persistent flashbacks and bouts of depression led Borshay Liem to further investigate her personal records where she discovered a letter and photograph of herself and another child at the Sun Duck Orphanage, both of whom were being passed off as Cha Jung Hee. What emerged, was that Cha Jung Hee, the child that had been sponsored by the Borshays had been picked up at the orphanage by her father days before she was to leave for the US. With limited time to create new travel and immigration documents, the social workers and orphanage decided instead, to just send another child in Cha Jung Hee's place, switching out the photos and basic identifying information so that the child, Kang Ok Jin, now became Cha Jung Hee and later Deann Borshay, interchangeable lives.

Borshay Liem's film, which screened on PBS as part of their POV documentary series in 2000, was the first time I really considered and scrutinized the stories on which my adoption and personal history were based and considered the arbitrariness of where I ended up. Like many Korean adoptees I have met over the years, we tend to all tell similar morbid tales passed down to us, of parents killed in car accidents, mothers who were prostitutes, impoverished families still struggling from the War, single mothers looking for a better life for their child. In my family, the story was that I was left abandoned on the steps of a police station in Seoul. As my research revealed, however, these types of stories, while perhaps based in partial truths, were more importantly constructed by adoption agencies and social workers to effectively sever the adoptee's Korean past from their present and future with the American adopted family.

The "clean break" approach, favored in the US and Europe after WWII, was based on the notion that it was better for the child to know nothing of their birth families and the

circumstances in which they were placed for adoption. This policy also meant that adoption records were sealed to adoptees and their adoptive families. This was combined with a humanistic adoption strategy in transracial adoption, whereby the parents assimilate their child into American culture and apply a “colorblind” orientation, effectively denying and deemphasizing, the child’s race, and ethnicity.⁶ As anthropologist and adoption scholar Barbara Yngvesson writes,

The clean break separates the child from everything that constitutes her grounds for belonging as a child to this family and this nation, while establishing her transferability to that family and that nation. With a past that has been cut away—an old identity that no longer exists—the child can be reembedded in a new place, almost as though he or she never moved at all.⁷

The “transferability” of the adoptee that is possible due to the “clean break” and “colorblind” approach ensured that for most of my life, I never really considered “where I came from” or even knew of the existence of so many other Korean adoptees. Instead, I maintained the fictional origin story of the US as my heroic savior. These, now outdated, adoption strategies meant that you never “knew” yourself through stories and histories *before* adoption, you only knew the history of the adoptive family and their culture. You assumed their kinships and genealogies and established a knowing of yourself that was, though I believe coming from a caring place, was still based on the erasures of real physical and historical differences. A Korean adoptee is the legacy of the Korean War, we are Asians living in America and impacted by American racism, we grew up in white

⁶ McRoy, Ruth G., Louis A. Zurcher, Michael L. Lauderdale, and Rosalie E. Anderson. “The identity of transracial adoptees.” *Social Casework* 65, no. 1 (1984): 34-39.

⁷ Yngvesson, Barbara. “Going ‘Home’: Adoption, Loss of Bearings, and the Mythology of Roots,” *Social Text*, 74 (Volume 21, Number 1), Spring 2003, pp. 7-27

families that didn't always expose us to people who looked like us. The way Korean adoptees of my generation were "assimilated" into Western culture exactly expressed the US policy on controlling the narrative, and promoting their own political agenda, in Asian countries during the Cold War and aftermath of the Vietnam War.

Through Borshay Liem's story, I became aware of a complicated network of possibilities for my own story and came to understand how entangled it was with the larger narrative of Korean adoption. I found myself in a situation where the specificity of my story was also completely entwined and simultaneous with the stories of other adoptees. "It could have been me" a common knowing feeling among adoptees, because – truthfully, with adoption proceeding under arbitrary and chance circumstances, it really could have been. Adoptee's identities are marked by the recognition that their adoption was in many cases the result of abstract, arbitrary conditions that would have resulted in radically different outcomes. I could have been Canadian, Norwegian, or Belgian. I could have grown up in a city, a farm, or a suburb. I could have grown up going to church every day. I could have learned how to ski. I could have been an only child.

This place of knowing, but not knowing exactly, your story and the conflation of your story with those of other Korean adoptees forms an unsettled place in which we build a knowing of ourselves. It is a dynamic, simultaneous, and co-constitutive way of knowing oneself in concert with another, a relational shaping of the identities of Korean adoptees. The narrative and the narrators are always a bit unreliable, the histories and the archives lacking. What cultural anthropologist Eleana J. Kim calls the "(im) possible lives" of adoptees, where we inhabit a charged, relational subjectivity, one in which our identities, in flux, are always radically forming and re-forming, in processual

performances. There is a strong understanding that to know yourself, one must know collaboratively and in relation to other adoptees. Their stories become entwined, entangled, and woven within the fabric of your own. Korean adoptee identities are poly-vocalizations, choral imaginations. Where the binary of possible/impossible is an unsettled, contested space that gives way to the opportunity for something else seems to emerge. A something that exceeds the archive's limited scope, that the archive cannot hold either in what it reveals or in its silences.

To recover and reclaim the orphan narrative as an adult adoptee requires a re-working of these archival materials, a creation of a fiction that lies closer to truth but claims the possibility of a different kind of speculation, something closer to what writer and scholar of African American and American literature Saidiya Hartman calls a "critical fabulation", a reimagining of the lives of those designated in the archive, but written into history not as subject, but as object. "we've all, we've done" asks the following: How can we listen to the archive relationally, imbricated with one another's identities and histories? How can aesthetic dialogues and expressions in "sound" provide a means of performing and negotiating the complex Korean adoptee identity? How does this performance, refusing as it does a settling into an a priori narrative, present us with alternative methods, radical counter-narratives, that shape our subjectivities and allows the possibilities to recognize ourselves together in difference?

Is it possible to exceed or negotiate the constitutive limits of the archive? By advancing a series of speculative arguments and exploiting the capacities of the subjunctive (a grammatical mood that expresses doubts, wishes, and possibilities), in fashioning a narrative, which is based upon archival research, and by that I mean a critical reading of the archive that mimes the figurative dimensions of history (Hartman, 11)

The stories presented in the archive foreclose possibilities in *what is there* but may open many more by *what is not there*. There are no details of who my mother or father is, why they relinquished me for adoption, whether I had any siblings, where my hometown was, what I liked to eat as a baby, what songs made me smile. The archives leave us longing, they always withhold, they are always incomplete, but that loss might not be a poverty. It is not the absence of things that we encounter in the bare archive, it is instead the invitation to invent - to fill the space with our longing, to allow longing and incompleteness to become its own story, its own space of telling, making, and staking claim. The source of rupture, the “loss” the “lack” the “erasure” becomes sublimated into generative excess, counter-narratives, counter-listenings. A possibility of knowing that exists outside of the legibility of the document and the image, outside of the archive itself, a knowing that must construct itself, in excess of, the site in which the knowing takes place.

Counter-listening to the Archive

The starting-point of critical elaboration is the consciousness of what one really is, and is ‘knowing thyself’ as a product of the historical process to date, which has deposited in you an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory...it is imperative to compile such an inventory”

-- Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*

What is crucial to the listening practice I have developed ... is an understanding of photographs ... as deeply affective objects that implicate and leave impressions upon us through multiple forms of contact: visual contact (seeing), physical contact (touching), psychic contact (feeling,) and, most counterintuitively of all, the sonic contact that I have described as a frequency that requires us to listen to as well as view images.

-- Tina Campt, *Listening to Images*

As you listen, the particles of sound (phonons) decide to be heard. Listening affects what is sounding. The relationship is symbiotic.

-- Pauline Oliveros, *Deep Listening Meditations—Egypt (1999)*

For Gramsci, knowing yourself is knowing your history, the inventory of a self that has left an “infinity of traces” on your consciousness. For the Korean adoptee, whose partial, insufficient, and fabricated history is always under threat of erasure by more powerful Western narratives of heroic adoptive parents and poor hopeless children, reclaiming the inventory through the archive is a complicated negotiation of discerning fact from fiction. The archive of an adoptee is always in flux, transformed and added to as documents and procedures are researched and traced, petitions and requests are filed. We become driven by this desire to know and to know what we do not know. As Saidiya Hartman writes in “Venus in Two Acts,” “the loss of stories sharpens the hunger for them. So it is tempting to fill in the gaps and to provide closure where there is none.” In negotiating the archive, one’s point of entry into understanding the materials always arrives with the trace, the “always already hidden” of the unknown past. To know is to not

know; what is stated in the archive obscures what is not there. The archive inhabits a complex temporal space, where there is always something that cannot be known, cannot be completed.

My travel document states that I arrived from Gimpo Airport on October 18, 1977, but where was I before that and how did I get there? My name is recorded as In-Soo Han, but who gave me that name? My mother? My father? Social Services? Where was the orphanage where I spent the first few months of my life? Who were the nurses and social workers who took care of me there? This “unknowing” presents the adoptee with contradictory impulses: on one hand, a desire to gather and accumulate as much information as possible, and on the other, a need to disavow the archive of Korean adoptee history, to refuse these imposed narratives, so that the child in the archive can flee, cannot be captured, enclosed within these pages.

When we encounter the archive, we perform its incompleteness through improvisatory gestures, looking, reading, touching, that hold the possibility of departure, break, and flight. Art critic and historian, Hal Foster, writing on the resurgence of archival art installations in the early 2000s explains the “impulse” behind working with these materials.

.. the art at issue here does not project a lack of logic or affect. On the contrary, it assumes anomic fragmentation as a condition not only to represent but to work through, and proposes new orders of affective association, however partial and provisional, to this end, even as it also registers the difficulty, at times the absurdity (Foster, 21).

Foster articulates how the partial and provisional space of the archive initiates a process with each encounter, one that generates “new orders” of association, feeling, and

relationship among the materials and among each other who witness them together. He writes about the work of visual artists such as Tacita Dean and Thomas Hirschorn, whose approach to archive and accumulation sit at opposite ends. Hirschorn's work often includes large, artfully arranged piles of everyday ephemera and garbage, provisional collections of contemporary capitalism, knowledge, and desire. Dean's work moves in hauntings and echoes, tracing imagined history through postcards, photographs, film, and audio. The materiality of media is always foregrounded in Dean's work, and her role as artist-archivist is one whose tension is present in her films and installations. I find myself in conversation with contemporary artists like Stephanie Syjuco, who frames her archival installations and visual art as "open-source systems" examining and interrogating flows of capital and racialized, exclusionary narratives of history and citizenship. In Syjuco's work the relational and associative methodology is crucial for remaking and reimagining archival material and enables both the viewer and the artist herself to be implicated in the facts and fictions of the history presented. It is archival work with a historical, critical approach to race, technology, imperialism, and capitalism.

The adoptee archive demands new listenings, it needs to be listened to in ways that exceed the limits of language, official narratives, history books and contested spaces of cultural meaning making. The archive wants the listener to negotiate and process what she encounters, to attune to other possibilities allocated within the silences, gaps, breaks, openings, and profusions – the too much and the too little, the excess and the lack. The archive wants us to confront, what musicologist Dylan Robinson calls in his brilliant book *Hungry Listening*, our "critical listening positionality." Robinson contends that the subject is *always* listening from and through their own privileges, biases, and abilities. What's more,

these positions alter and shape our perception and subjectivity. To listen otherwise we must become aware of these positionalities. In *Hungry Listening*, Robinson proposes that we understand and write listening through Indigenous perspectives. A listening that “attend [s] to the relationship between listener and the listened-to” and “conceptualizes the space of sonic encounter as a space of subject–subject relation.” (15).

How do we listen to this archive? How do we hear what we cannot see? How do we listen *in between* to what is suggested but never stated? How does this archive “sound”? What is its sound and how, when we share it with others, do we “sound” it for them? How is sounding and listening to an archive an action towards re-writing the archive? Could our negotiations, our refusals to accept the narratives of the archive in these images and sounds be thought of as counter-listenings? Listenings that become counter-narratives? A counter-listening attempts through sound, acts of narrative undoing. Providing the possibility for a story that exists in relational, ephemeral, experiential form. A story that must always be re-sounded and co-listened to, with another listener.

In her book, *Listening to Images*, black feminist theorist of visual culture and contemporary art Tina Campt, makes a careful, multisensory “haptic” negotiation through several photographic archives of the African Diaspora. These include identification, passport photos, ethnographic portraits of “rural” women in South Africa’s Eastern Cape, convict photos from Breakwater Prison in Cape Town, and photos of African Americans who were murdered by police officers – all photographic forms of administrative accounting that enact and enforce the state’s production or regulated and regulatable subjects. Within these images she “listens” for what she calls the “lower frequencies” through “a practice of looking beyond what we see and attuning our senses to the other

affective frequencies through which photographs register. (Campt, 9). This listening is multisensory and affective, a haptic approach to the whole experience of the “event” of the image and how it “moves” as a sound might, within time and space and our present interaction. The “haptic” is how the archive “touches” us through visual, physical, and sonic registers. (Campt, 72).

The haptic is not merely a question of physical touch. It is the link between touching and feeling, as well as the multiple mediations we construct to allow or prevent access to those affective relations. These haptic relations transpire in multiple temporalities, and the hands are only one conduit of their touches. (Campt, 100).

Within Campt’s proposed archival listening practice, the fabrications that constitute (and trap) the lives captured in these images are exposed within the cracks that emerge when we refuse to accept the “truth” of these images, when we perform a counter-listening of the archive. What the listener brings to these images and archives is their own resistance and refusal – the frequency on which the resistance and refusal of the photographed subject is transmitted, carried, and received by bodies, feelings, and senses.

“we’ve all, we’ve done” invites us to counter-listen to my adoptee archive, to the archive of many. The visual and sonic materials of the archive are arranged as documentation of my own counter-listenings and performances of the archive. They are the recordings, the records of an archival negotiation, a re-arranging, and re-writing of the dominant narratives told through the archive. Listening as a form of recording and writing, counter-listening as a form of re-writing, producing counter-narratives.

A short detour to discuss the Korean traditional sonic art form P’ansori might provide an interesting ear in which to hear this idea of listening as writing and storytelling.

In “we’ve all, we’ve done” I included audio and a screenshot from a YouTube interview segment with P’ansori singer and Korean Living National Treasure, Ahn Sook Sun.

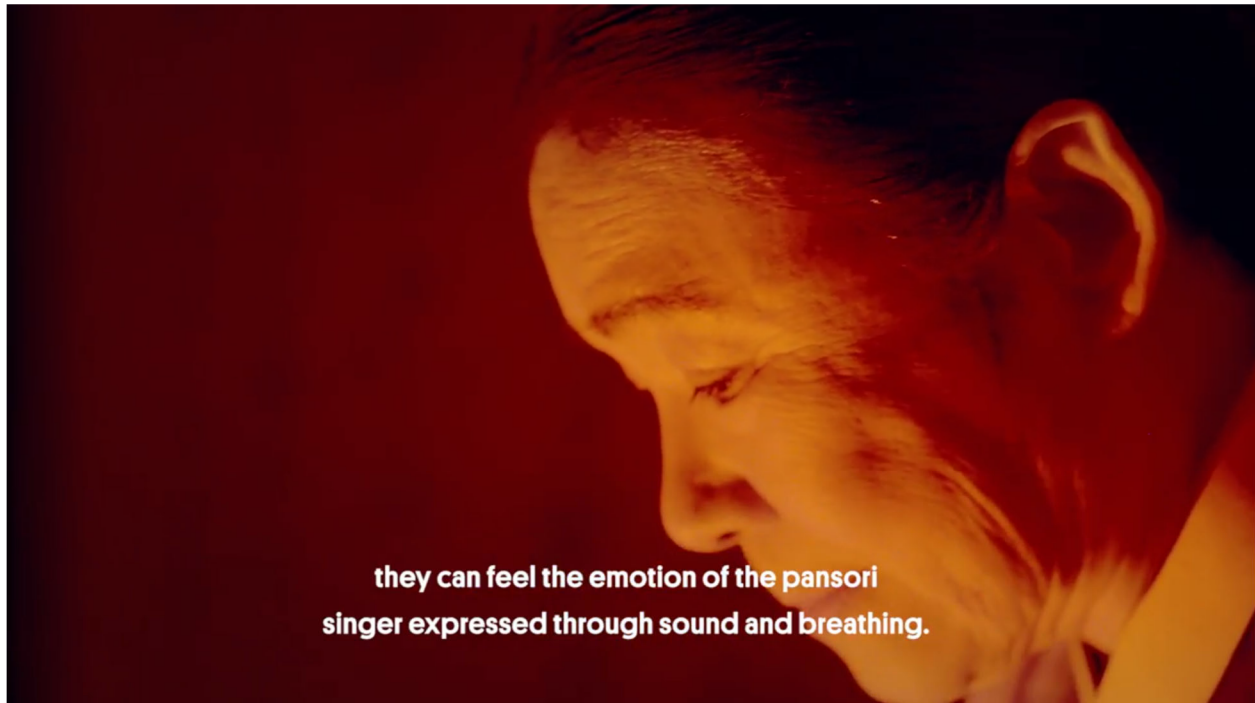


Figure 16 Screenshot of Ahn Sook Sun, Living National Treasure of South Korea

In the interview, Sun speaks of *sori*, or “sound” as not limited to the sound of the singer, but something that encompasses history, emotion, environment, and the body. The *sori* she speaks of is what Campt might call a “haptic” engagement with narrative. A multisensory, multimodal approach to storytelling. Ahn speaks of the three elements for a perfect pansori, a singer, a percussionist, and an audience. The sound, the rhythm, and the listener enable an improvisatory, performative listening and sounding practice between all those experiencing the story.

In labor and in leisure, the concept of p’an is an imagined frame of wholehearted participation, where “performance is sublimated as a processual ritual of “flow.” P’ansori, a storytelling tradition of folk origin, is a p’an whereby performer and

audience engage in a mutually reflexive communion of performance and reception.⁸

The “p’an” (participatory) is a co-constitutive, processual performance between the musicians and the audience that produces history and culture through shared, sensorial, interactions and entanglements. The singer might exclaim to the percussionist to hits the drum and grunts in response. She might call out to the audience with questions, seeking reactions or validations, engaging them with the re-writing, and re-arranging of the story in time, space and sound.

“we’ve all, we’ve done” invites the listener to hear, a document, an arrangement, an improvisatory negotiation of what I hear, and have heard. When we listen to the archive, we perform, together, what I call a counter-listening— a listening to a listening to a listening...that acts as a telling, re-telling, re-writing, of history and of the stories told and known about Korean adoptees, about me, about us. Counter-listening to the archive produces relational stories and *listenings* that exist in suspended, ephemeral, and experiential forms. These stories must always be told and co-listened to with another listener, shared and mutually accounted for together.

⁸ Park, Chan. “‘Authentic Audience’ in P’ansori, a Korean Storytelling Tradition.” *The Journal of American Folklore* 113, no. 449 (2000): 270. <https://doi.org/10.2307/542103>.

Improvisatory Conversations



Figure 17 First meetings in Mary-Kim's backyard, summer, early Fall 2020

To counter-listen to the archive of the adoptee, we must be prepared to hear many voices simultaneously, to share space with these soundings and listenings. The identity of the adoptee is always polyvocal and co-constitutive. The listener is the listened to, and sound is an intersubjective, in-between material that is always evolving, untangling, entwining, negotiating, between two subjects. Though their geographic, cultural, and familial experiences differed, the local and governmental structures and systems that administered transnational adoption were routinized and bureaucratic. As such, all

adoptees share striking similarities within their personal stories, particularly those who are close in age.

In “we’ve all, we’ve done” the fabric of these familiar stories emerges from disparate threads of news clippings, immigration paperwork, photographs, and shared stories. Interwoven into the musical and visual materials of the archive are the images and words of Mary-Kim Arnold whose friend(kin)ship evolved from our long conversations over distanced snacks and cocktails in her garden during the COVID-19 pandemic shutdowns of 2020-2021. Our intimate conversations ranged in subject matter from banal everyday life, work, school, and family topics to the highly personal and specific experiences of negotiating our adoptee identities within the American, white culture in which we were both raised.

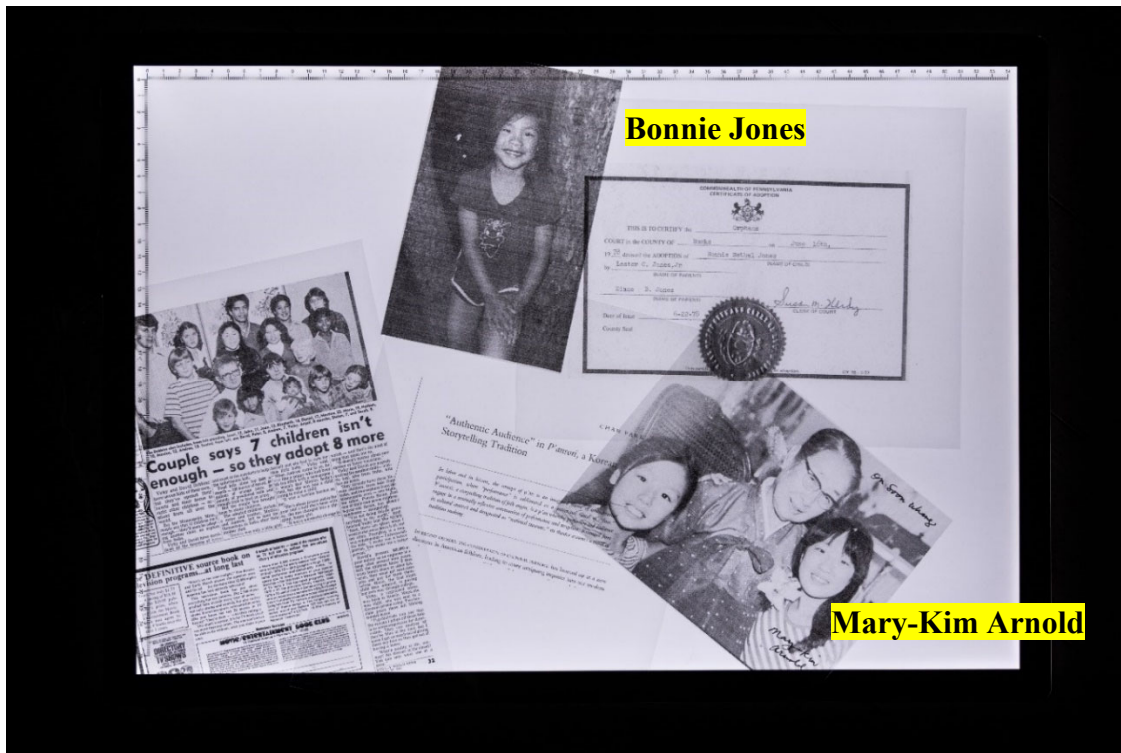


Figure 18 Bonnie Jones and Mary-Kim Arnold personal photos and news clippings

Getting to know Mary-Kim over the past couple of years was reminiscent of experiences I have had with ad hoc musical improvisation, which puts musicians who have not played together in first-time musical collaboration. I'm realizing now that perhaps our conversation became the replacement for the musical collaborations that were restricted or cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Forming new friendships solely through musical improvisation is an unusual and powerful experience that creates emotional connections by sharing, receiving, and "playing" one known set of conditions (one's musical methods and ideas) against the lack of knowing around another (another's personal interests, history, values). In an improvisatory musical encounter, I have a stake in a generative, open musical space with its co-constitutive capacity for inventing new language and ways of communicating between musicians. This musical "getting to know you" is one of interacting in your most transparent but dynamic and reflexive social self, wide-open and fully listening, across physical, musical, and psychic differences. What is so surprising about this type of improvisatory encounter is how much you can learn about a person by making music, by sounding, with them.

In early planning stages of "we've all, we've done", I knew I wanted adoptee conversations and collaborations to inform the shape of the work and provide the source materials. In the past, meeting other adoptees has always had a significant impact on my understanding of who and where I was in my life, marking moments where complex formulations of self, took shape and emerged. It's hard to accurately describe the nature of these relationships. At times it's felt akin to the bonds shared by trauma survivors and other times like meeting a beloved childhood friend who you haven't seen in decades.

Sometimes it feels like family, either the one you had growing up, or an imagination of, a fantasy of family.

The adoptee experiences a unique notion of sameness, yet difference, which requires a language that is not Korean or English, but rather a means of communication simultaneously able to unmask, yet mask the self. By playing on the sense of a double belonging, the adoptee establishes himself or herself as a participant of an articulatory space in between sameness and difference.⁹ (Rinhaug, 12)

Counter-listening is a shared listening and a differentiated listening, together, of our stories and the stories of Korean adoptees. A listening that allows you to hear the past, present, and future simultaneously. A listening that becomes increasingly more complex, entangled, and relational. Shared listenings, counter-listenings, and counter-narratives. A space between our sameness and differences, as the site of possibility and generative construction, in short, a “way out” of the stories that trap adoptees within painful and limiting narratives.

In an unusual sense, me and Mary-Kim’s negotiation of the particulars and generalities of our shared history, experience, and feelings as adoptees became the material we improvised with, played with, arranging, de-arranging, imagining, exposing, closing off, shaping. This improvisatory making of adoptee selves in words and sounds of words, became a kind of performance directed inwards, an attempt to de-naturalize the performative trap of the orphan, adoptee story, what we sometimes jokingly referred to as the “envelope of tragedy.” As in, I need to get out of the “envelope of tragedy”, and I

⁹ Rinhaug, Aino. “Adoptee Aesthetics: A Gendered Discourse.” *Race/Ethnicity: Multidisciplinary Global Contexts* 4, no. 1 (October 2010): 9–27. <https://doi.org/10.2979/racethmulglocon.2010.4.1.9>.

don't want to put anyone else in the "envelope of tragedy." My conversations with Mary-Kim were intimate improvisatory performances within the known, complex, shared experiences of adoptee identity. We were "sounding each other out," and understanding ourselves through this process of recognition and differentiation.

As Rinhaug proposes, the adoptee enacts a double figure, that of the Asian body situated within a Western cultural identity, who has little to no connection to their Asian birthplace, culture, or social structure. They are, in a sense, a stranger to themselves, disciplined within a Western, and all it implies (racism, misogyny, homophobia) discourse. Rinhaug suggests that through performance, the suppressed, authentic identity emerges in a manner that allows for the construction of the self reflexively, discursively, and socially on and through aesthetic terms. In my understanding, the artmaking serves as a space in which to activate complex identities in a constructive, generative process of formation. The art of adoptees can be a space in which identity is relationally formed with and audience and through reflection back to oneself.

The lightbox and printed transparencies in "we've all, we've done" become a visual shorthand for this complex improvisatory shaping of ourselves, together – the way difference is uniquely understood through specific but similar sets of shared experiences. The way in which listening, counter-listening for difference is always in relation to each other and to ourselves.

Identity Palimpsests

The archival documents of “we’ve all, we’ve done” were organized in four general categories and were loosely grouped on the lighted tables according to these categories. The first category, presented on the first table facing the listener after they enter the room, includes family photos and personal identity documents, like the Korean Travel Certificate and Certificate of Naturalization, legal documents, and paperwork that my parents kept in their records. These documents identify (identified) me, In-soo Han / Bonnie Jones and provided details of the bureaucratic process of changing from orphan to immigrant/alien to “naturalized” (as if born that way) American. Both my own and Mary-Kim’s photos are mixed in this set, so her image in a ballet costume could occupy the same visual space on the table as my 4-H portrait.

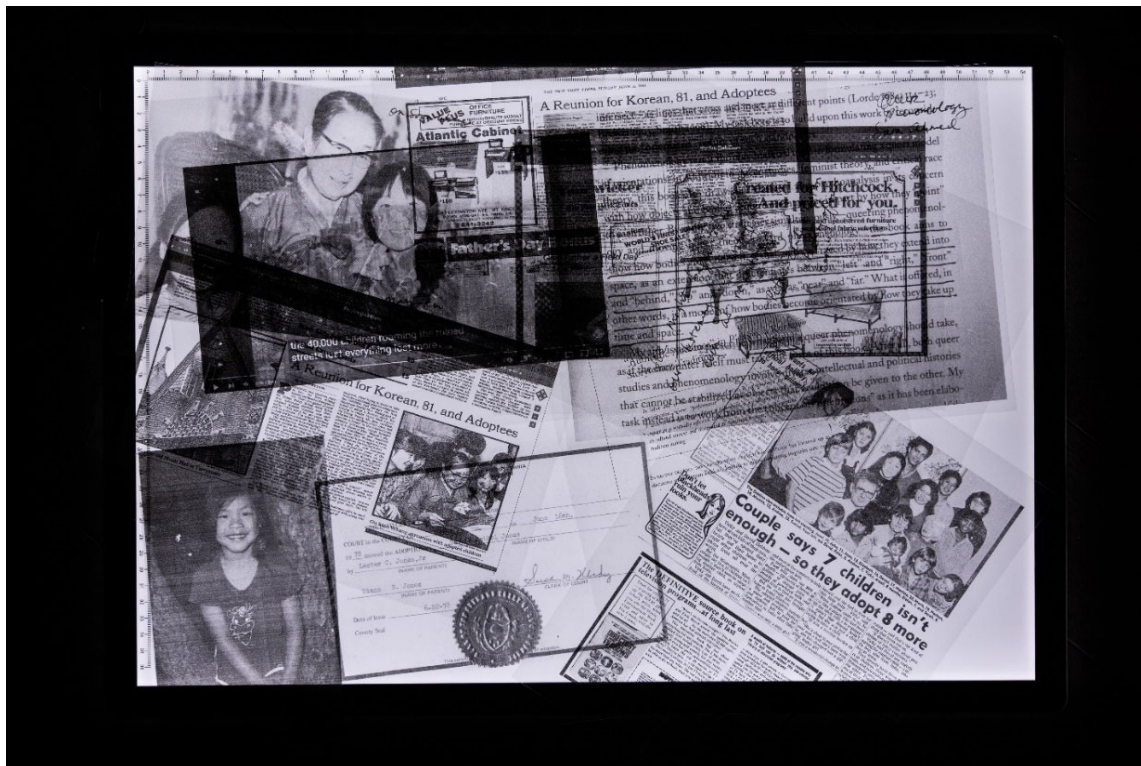


Figure 19 Bonnie Jones and Mary-Kim Arnold, news clippings and personal photos

Moving clockwise around the tables, the second set of documents includes more personal photos in addition to a *New York Times* article from June 12, 1983, about a tearful and joyful reunion in Dobbs Ferry, NY of 81-year-old, On Soon Whang, founder of one of the Korea's first home for war orphans and nine of the children who used to be in her care. These children, now adopted by white American families, are shown sitting around Whang smiling joyfully with her. The article recounts how On Soon Whang, previously being steadfast in her rejection of foreign placement on account of differences in religion and culture, and rumors she had heard about child enslavement by the West, eventually conceded to allow Bernice and Ferdinand Gottlieb to adopt a child. The Gottlieb's would go on to become the local community's Korean adoption consultant, and through her efforts several other local families adopted children, including Harry and Norinda (Nori) Arnold, Mary-Kim's adoptive parents.

In my research on Newspapers.com and Google Books, I found many newspaper and magazine articles about transnational adoption from Korea, Vietnam, and other countries. The third table includes a few these news stories, which were often feelgood, local pieces that focus on "big-hearted" Americans and their mission to save the poor children of the world. A popular headline for this type of story, would boast of how many children a family had adopted, "Couple says 7 children isn't enough – so they adopt 8 more" and "The Lord is Their Sponsor: Korean Octet Gets a U.S. Home". The latter article was about Harry Holt of Cresswell, Oregon, who with his wife Bertha, adopted 8 Korean children, and founded one of the first international adoption agencies in Korea. The Holts were responsible for pressing congress to pass a bill, in 1955, the "Holt Bill," that opened the door to transnational and transracial adoption of children in the US and

Europe. Today, Holt International Children's Services, carries on Harry and Bertha's religious mission to care for the world's orphans. The agency, located in Eugene, OR has a budget of approximately 27 million a year, with close to 90 staff in Oregon. Though accounts differ, it seems as though Holt places anywhere from 500 – 1000 children, from 11 different countries, per year in US families.

The final table includes the complete set of 26 documents received from the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services FOIA request that I wrote about in the previous chapter. The heft of these documents was noted by one of the visitors to “we've all, we've done” and it is true that when stacked the documents were somewhat difficult to separate and view. This was purely an unintended consequence of the static buildup in the transparencies, but the material, “stickiness” of the documents speaks to how the archive resists our arrangements, we must apply force in changing the archive. The archives are too little and too much.

The form of the printed transparencies allowed for an active, relational view of a complex individual identity, the relationships between me, Mary-Kim, and the larger adoption narratives. They created a simple, visual expression of how we might see adoptee history “through” each other's stories, putting our relationship into motion and visually expressing the complex and playful negotiations of history, childhood, and friendship. The layers also suggest another aspect of post war, transnational adoption, which is the transferability and interchangeability of children within the adoption process. As the story of Deann Borshay Liem's switched identity told in the section above reminds us, “it could have been us.” When a listener interacts with the visual materials, that material tension between together/apart, same/different enacts a certain cross understanding, where in the

proliferation of stories, everyone is implicated, imbricated in the transnational narrative of adoption.

“we’ve all, we’ve done” attempts a very careful, precise, and intentional balancing of the elements in the work to create sensory and perceptual conditions that invite this counter-listening, this way of being within the tension and the forces of the adoptee narrative. My methodological approach was improvisatory— placing attention, intention, and listening at the forefront. This listening is less about sound and hearing, and more about being fully, sensorially present to the conditions of the archival content, space, physical objects, and possible interactions held therein. This counter-listening, an engagement with the archive that Tina Campt calls “haptic” enables a multisensorial, multimodal “reading” of the materials of the installation. It is a capacious form of listening, that allows me to attend to the space, the tables, the documents, the chairs, the natural light, working *thorough and with* the conditions of the space, and how it suggests specific visual and sonic arrangements, encounters, and narratives.

Making it Seem Natural

The choices about studio lighting, tables, chairs, materials, and the plant “centerpiece,” were conceived of over several weeks of planning and preparation, but convey a sense of casual, “natural” execution. My intention was to guide the listener through the work without presenting any clear thesis or argument about the materials, nor any prescribed feeling or reaction to the content. The latter required careful consideration about the interaction among the content of the archive, musical composition and interview excerpts, its entanglement and (il)legibility. This “in-between” state removes an authorial direction of the work and replaces it with “threads” that weave through the installation; material threads like tables, chairs, and documents; narrative threads of adoptee stories, family narratives, war; and sonic threads, audio and sound that move in and out of audibility, moving around the room, refusing stillness.

The proximity of the arrangement of the tables and chairs metaphorically suggested an intimate, personal, space and at the same time physically put listeners close to each other and to the materials. The lighted plant that sits in the center space of the tables is a focal point of the installation, and one of the elements that wasn’t chosen to recede into the background. The decision was again both aesthetic and practical. I wanted to create a central, mysterious focus in the piece – something that would transform the room, take us somewhere else. The plants became a simple way to accomplish this, and while installing I realized that the middle space was an “in-between”, liminal, space and reminded me of the rare cranes that live in the DMZ between North and South Korea.



Figure 20 Screenshot of news broadcast about the red-crowned cranes that winter in the DMZ.

The DMZ, in the nearly 70 years since the Korean Armistice Agreement was signed, has become one of the world's richest and diverse ecosystems due largely to its absence of human activity and industry. In this intimate configuration, the archive becomes a space where listeners gather around a symbolic, lighted, hearth engaged in the act of listening together.

“we’ve all, we’ve done” attempts to balance an immersive, visual, and sonic experience that invites listeners to fully place their bodies *within* and *in relation* to the work with a “critical” experience where one is fully aware of one’s interaction with the materials in the work. One of my critiques of immersive installation work is that it tends to enclose the audience within the subject matter of the work, whether they would want to be there or not. Now one would argue that that is the purpose of immersive art, but I wanted to explore using the tactics of immersion towards a more porous, and active engagement

with subject matter. In “we’ve all, we’ve done”, my intention was to create a formal tension in the work that would enable listeners to “suspend” themselves between the archive, themselves, and each other. I wanted the listener to always feel empowered to leave the experience if they chose. As I mentioned above, the “envelope of tragedy” is something we all would like to avoid, and it was important that I allowed that for listeners of this work.

My choice to use natural lighting from the windows as opposed to house or stage lights balanced out a functional need for low light with the desire to create this neutral, porous, and suspended mood and atmosphere. The tables were purchased for the exhibition after much consideration and debate over whether to use the seminar tables usually in that studio. Ultimately, there is obviously too much that is said in industrial furniture design, and the tables I bought for the piece did one thing that the others could not achieve, they receded into the environment – they held the documents without asserting themselves in the space. The natural light and small, dark tables allowed the documents to become the primary visual element in the room – sometimes depending on the weather, if it was an overcast day, they would appear to float in the middle of the room. Suspension and holding are important tactics in my concept of counter-listening. The stories of the archive must remain in an open and interpretive state allowing the listener to find themselves *present* to a certain time and place and *listening* to their own experience, whatever that might be. The sound and music elements, which I will discuss in more detail in the next section, included four small Bluetooth speakers that played back recorded excerpts from my conversations with Mary-Kim, and eight Meyer speakers set in the ceiling playing a 40-minute, electronic music composition. These elements contributed

to the overall layered, non-directed, but open and intentional and specific formal design in the work.

Sounding and Performing the Archive

I start then with silence, and what I mean by our simultaneity in its abundant nothingness... When there is little to hear you start hearing things, and the relationship of the heard to what sounds becomes tenuous, invented, fantastical and the only certainty of having heard it at all is on my own body.

-- Salome Voegelin, *The Place my Listening Makes*

What is the story of this story? How do I tell this story? What is the sound of this story? How do I sound this story? How do I unsettle this story? The archive is a site we attempt to know through deeper engagements with its materials, moving in both real and fictive states. The archive requires counter-listening and alternative methods of sounding, activating multisensory expressions beyond the sonic. Sounding as a practice of resonating and vibrating between bodies and objects. A practice of unsettling the sensory space. When we encounter the archive, there is the necessity for improvisation, extemporization, from the Latin *ex tempore* “out of the time.” You cannot proceed from linear, prescribed routes, you must move tangentially, recursively. You must be present to the materials, listening and responding to what you hear and know. You must piece things together, moving forwards and backwards, through documents, through time. To improvise with the archive, you invent “languages” that articulate moments amidst the photos, immigration paperwork, news clippings, documents. That language is translated between mediums, transcribing meaning across the senses. To improvise is a process of listening *and* sounding. Looking from one image to the next is a form of citation, listening from one sound to the next, a performance of association. You are present, you engage your body, you allow for chance, you perform the archive by making meaning through looking, listening, touching, and moving.



Figure 21 Installation view, a listener exploring the archive materials

The archive comes to us in fragments and half-truths, pointing towards information that is unobtainable. To know the archive, requires a sounding of the archive, improvisatory movements through the text and sound of the archive, looking for what is there and listening for what is not. Sounding, like ascertaining the depth of the archive through echo and line, through feeling it out, “sounding it out.” When we sound the

archive, we perform the archive, we improvise. We engage with documents, records, newsreels, and interviews seeking personal and historical resonances. Sounding makes space for counter-listenings that allow for music/sound and its relational properties to open the archive in generative re-arrangement. A performance of the archive through sounding, is a strategy of moving beyond the abstract document towards embodied interaction with the archive, what Tina Campt calls a “haptic engagement.” A desire to exist within the temporalities of the archive, to know backwards through and outside of history. We must perform the archive for it to be legible and to reveal the things that are being made illegible, what cannot be retrieved. Sounding the archive requires making meaning and sense and then allowing for their unmaking at the same time. A recursive process of *discomposition*, unsettling the archive and narrative. There are gaps, aporias, open wounds that demand that meaning be made in them but recognize the impossibility of that action. Meaning becomes suspended, complicated, possibly fleeing; available to be transformed, always changing.

I use the concept of sounding the archive as a metaphorical gesture, but it is based in a belief that there are sensory ways of knowing across disparate materials that exists in the vibrational spaces in-between hearing, seeing, touching, smelling. Tina Campt calls one example of this the “frequency” of images, which is not sound exactly, but vibration, a relational “touch.” It is this frequency that we can “listen” to in images, connecting to a larger vibrational field of sounding and listening. What musicologist and vocalist Nina Sun Eidsheim refers to as a “vibrational theory of music” in her fascinating book *Sensing Sound: Singing and Listening as Vibrational Practice*. Eidsheim puts forth a challenge to contemporary musical analysis as the primary way to understand music and sound. She

claims that that analysis does not consider what she calls the “figure of sound”, which is an ossification of the “ever-shifting, relationally dependent phenomenon” we know as music. Music becomes enshrined in these “figures of sound” that structure our understanding in prescribed ways. When music comes to be perceived as a static sound object or incident, it becomes fixed to measurable characteristics like pitch, tempi, tonal sequence – measurable and therefore knowable things inscribed through cultural and social conditions.

Eidsheim argues for thinking of music as a broader sensorial experience, a “thick event” that has the potential to disrupt the grammar of sound that has enculturated the listener, trapping the listener in specific meanings that they believe are *only in audition*, when the possibility for several sensory modes of meaning has always existed within music. That music itself is an intermaterial practice, an “unfolding, dynamic, material set of relations.” Eidsheim’s theory works to move our conception of music away from fixed categories of “sound” towards relational, vibrational entanglements, and towards a political ontology that recognizes interaction and participation in music as ways of understanding interaction with and participation in the world. The “vibrational theory of music” is one in which the sound itself is always intimately imbricated with the listener and the listening and auditory practices of a culture.

In “we’ve all, we’ve done”, sounding the archive is a participatory, multisensory approach to understanding with and against the dominant narratives of adoptee identity. It is an action that both me and the listeners of the work perform. Sounding the archive is performing the archive, counter-listening for alternative subjectivities, radical differences,

and idiosyncratic identities. These activities happen simultaneously in our encounter of the archive. They are a knowing that knows only *through and with* each other.

Sonic Documents

There are three types of sonic documents in the audio composition of “we’ve all, we’ve done,” textual, found, and manipulated/physical. The textual sounds are excerpts from conversations between me and Mary-Kim, and voiceover audio recordings. The found sound includes historical audio related to the Korean War and Korean adoption; field recordings from Seoul, South Korea “found” on Freesound.org; and field recordings from Korean adoptees at home or in their day-to-day activities, what I call the sonic archive of “underheard Koreans.” The manipulated/physical sounds are original electronic music created with synthesizers; original electronic music created with a manual processing approach to “scrubbing” audio files in the digital audio workstation (DAW) Reaper; and a fake “fugue” created from pitch tracking a conversation between me and Mary-Kim, converting pitches into MIDI, and using the NeoPiano instrument plugin to play back the MIDI audio.

I composed with these sounds by counter-listening, working with these materials in the same way as the listener moves through the transparency documents. Forensically “leaning” into the sonic documents, sounding their materialities and subject matters. My process was one of selecting, then arranging, re-arranging, digitally processing, touching, listening to, and layering the sounds, to create a sonic palimpsest, a piece that is continuously forming and self-erasing itself. Using a spatial audio controller (more on this later) I was able to compose audio in the eight speakers in a physical, gestural, manner, enabling the final part of the compositional process to be a performance with and of the audio archive. In this way, the composition itself is the final sonic document that the

listener hears in “we’ve all, we’ve done,” the record of my sounding of and counter-listening to the archive.

The composition uses audio that directly relates to information and documents in the visual archive, adding a sonic metacommentary that connects to what the listener may be reading or looking at on the light tables. For example, a newsreel about Harry Holt, the founder of Holt International, one of the first international adoption agencies for Korean War orphans, connects to an article about his expanding family of adopted children.



FAMILY PORTRAIT shows Holt in Seoul sitting on floor of mission house clutching Paul, 10 months (left), and Betty, 8 months. On floor (left to right) are Joseph, 2½, Helen, 1, Christine, 2½, Nathaniel, 1½, Mary, 3, and Robert, 3.

'THE LORD IS THEIR SPONSOR'

KOREAN OCTET GETS A U.S. HOME

Officially it was an act of Congress which enabled Betty, Christine, Helen, Joseph, Mary, Nathaniel, Paul and Robert Holt to come to their new home in America. But it was the Christian spirit which moved Harry and Bertha Holt to bring them here. The Holts live in Creswell, Ore.—he is a retired lumberman—and belong to the Willamette Gospel Chapel in nearby Eugene. Last winter, they saw a church-sponsored movie on Korean children abandoned by G.I. fathers and Korean mothers. The Holts already had six children of their own, aged 9 to 21, but were so touched that they decided to adopt eight of the Korean orphans.

U.S. law restricts the number of foreign children a U.S. family can adopt. The quota is two. By petitioning Congress, the Holts got a law passed to extend their quota, and last fall Harry Holt came back from Seoul with his big new brood. The octet is now happily ensconced in Creswell, but the Holts disclaim credit for their Christian love and charity. "The Lord," insists Mrs. Holt, "is the real sponsor of these children."



AT HOME in Creswell, children were nervous at first, kept their new mother up many nights. Here she rocks Betty (left) and Nathaniel in nursery.

FIRST BIRTHDAY PRESENT of his life, Davy Crockett jacket, thrills Joseph at party for him. Jacket was made by Wanda, one of his new sisters.

Copyrighted material

Figure 22 "The Lord is their Sponsor," *Life Magazine*, December 26, 1955 Issue.

By placing these narrative threads of sound and text throughout "we've all, we've done" the listener connects disparate elements of the work by remembering things they heard or saw earlier in the piece, replicating an archival way of knowing that relies on association and memory.

“we’ve all, we’ve done” uses two spatial layers of sound. The first comes from four Bluetooth speakers that sit on the corner of each of the light tables. By placing the “speakers” (referring to both the people talking and the devices) closer to the archival materials and the listener, a conversational intimacy emerges. Each speaker plays a looped audio of recorded excerpts from conversations between me and Mary-Kim, and voiceover audio related to specific textual materials in the archive. These “speakers” are the narrators of “we’ve all, we’ve done.” Their (our) voices sounding and re-sounding, multiple, overlapping stories that move through different conversational registers—confessional, casual, formal.

The first story is that of an adult Korean adoptee whose personal history is conflicted, fabricated, and only understood through unreliable narrators. The second, a geopolitical narrative about the international policies of the United States towards Asia after WWII and the build up to both the Korean War and Cold War and its persevering consequences today. The third is a story about two middle-aged, female, Korean American artists, meeting in Providence, Rhode Island for the first time. These artists become very close friends as they share and negotiate together the painful and at times absurd history of Korean adoption, the intensity of two years of pandemic, a contentious presidential election, the continuing, devastating effects of American racism and anti-blackness, and the rise of anti-Asian hate crimes marked by the Atlanta Spa Shootings in March 2021. Due to the instability of Bluetooth connections the speakers were often slightly out of sync or cutting in and out – creating ghostly echoes, delays, and erasures unsettling the sonic space and narratives.

The second layer of sound comes from a multichannel composition that plays in the eight, Meyer studio speakers set in a rectangle above and around the central light table installation. The audio composition, approximately 40 minutes in length, uses seemingly disparate musical elements (sonic documents) that weave in and out of the speakers using a special multichannel spatialization method called vector-based amplitude panning, or VBAP. Following this notion of sounding the archive and unsettling the narrative, my intention was to create a sound piece that would intrude and recede into the space in unusual, and fragmented ways. A piece that would be immersive at times, but also recede into the background at others. I was also conscious of not wanting to tax the listener if they stayed in the piece for longer durations. The composition is open, spacious, with many moments of near silence or quiet sounds. Volume of more intense electronic music sections is carefully calibrated for the studio to be immersive without being overwhelming.

Found Sounds

The composition uses several found sound, field recordings, some of which were sourced from the royalty free, user-generated, sound source website, www.freesound.org and others which I solicited directly from Korean adoptees. I first started working with field recordings of Seoul and South Korea from freesound.org users nearly a decade ago, when I incorporated a recording of Cheongnyangni fruit and vegetable market, 청량리청과물도매시장, uploaded by “sazman”, into my live, improvised, performances. I’ve become intimately attached to this sample after using it numerous times over the past decade in performances, recordings, and installations. When I listen to it, I conjure both real and imagined associations to the market, which I visited when I lived in Korea in 2003-2004. The voices of the sellers, calling out to passersby, the Korean “fox trot” oldies music that plays at music vendor’s stall near the subway entrance, the horn honks of small Hyundai vans carting vegetables. In the recording, I can also hear how “sazman” listened to Korea, what they decided to “capture” in their recordings, how and where their body moves as the recorder captures movement into and through the marketplace.

When working with freesound.org field recordings, I find myself counter-listening to these audio documents captured by another’s “ear.” Only through the process of several soundings of this sample in my own live performances, record releases, sound papers, and this installation project can I transmute “sazman’s ear” into my own ear, complicating our shared listening. Using these and other field recordings in my work has always felt productively conflicted. Since they are licensed under Creative Commons, I am free to work with the audio as I like, but the question of why I use field recordings taken by other

listeners of a place in which I have an intimate connection remains. What does it mean to use another's listenings in your own soundings? What can I make of this process in which I return these listenings to my own ears, to your ears?

Using the Korean field recordings are my version of a conflicted adoptee "search and reunion" narrative. The "search and reunion" story is often told about adoptees who return to Korea to search for and reunite with their birth parents. It has become a popular trope in adoptee media and art. About a decade ago, the Korea Broadcasting System (KBS) hosted an immensely popular reality television show called "I Miss That Person" that reunited families and adoptees who were searching for each other. Using freesound.org recordings are, on the one hand a way to develop intimacy with the soundscape of Seoul that I have limited access and relationship to. On the other hand, it is a particular forgery, a false representation of my listening. When the samples are heard in the composition, the listener likely assumes that I was the recordist, and that these recordings tell the story of my return and reunion with Korea. The fact that I appropriated them from freesound.org users, complicates this return and reunion narrative and places a productive pressure on how I compose with these sounds. The legibility of this for the listener is less important than how this knowledge alters my compositional process and changes the shape of the work. Anthropologist and adoptee scholar Eleana Kim writes about adoptee artists who negotiate this narrative in their work in the edited volume, *War Baby/Love Child: Mixed Race Asian American Art*. She writes of a complex representation of identification/disidentification that often occurs in adoptee art.

...in contrast to the search-and-reunion narrative's injunction for self-completion by solving the puzzle of kinship, adoptee artists produce missing persons through their work by highlighting the contingency of relatedness and the open-endedness

of identification and disidentification. (81)

The Korean field recordings are the “missing persons” that Kim writes about. They are sounds, taken by a person who isn’t me and most likely isn’t Korean, of a place that is “mine” but really isn’t at all. To listen to Korea through a non-Korean is both an act of reclaiming those sounds for myself, but also a recognition that my “listening” is not really that different from theirs. I am also outside of Korean geography, people, and culture. Instead, I am producing the “missing person” by appropriating Seoul recordings to create virtual, fabricated cities where both me and the freesound.org users are foreigners authoring an imagined space.

As a companion to these re-appropriated field recordings, the composition also includes audio that I call the “underheard Koreans” sonic archive. Underheard as a contrast to unheard or overheard – these are not eavesdroppings, or absences, they are instead, the recognition of the simple presence of the Korean adoptee, emphasizing not the tragic figure but something more banal and every day, more human and real. These recordings exist because of a brilliant auditory accident. Mary-Kim, after finishing a work phone call, accidentally kept her phone recording for the next five hours. The resulting audio is the unremarkable (and yet incredible) recording of her working at home, moving around the house, reading, having a glass of water, typing on her computer, talking to a student. I first listened to this document at home while I was working on other projects and found the insignificance of the recording somehow comforting. I decided to solicit additional recordings from other adoptees at home and extracts of these are included in the composition. Truthfully, I am not entirely sure what it is about the simplicity of these recordings that appeals to me more than other instances I’ve heard in the past. There is

more to be explored in considering an audio recording as a document of an adoptee at home. I plan on taking this project a bit further in the future.

Bodies of Sound

The composition of “we’ve all, we’ve done” opens with a Save the Children newsreel audio about Korean “war waifs” and extends, through an extraction and copying of the last few seconds of the reel in *Reaper*, into a seven-minute section of buzzing, pulsing, electronic tones. The original newsreel excerpted tone is augmented with computer-generated sine tones that “ring out” various frequencies in the original extraction creating pulsing psychoacoustic difference tones. For several years, I’ve been working with simple un-synthesized electronic tones like sine, triangle, and sawtooth in my compositions. My interest lies in the psychoacoustic properties of these simple sounds and how one can produce strong, perceptual effects by using two or more tones that are closely matched in frequency. The sonic spaces produced by these sounds has a visceral, physical, “presentness” and “touch” that I find difficult to replicate with more musical electronic or instrumental sounds. An additional benefit of simple tones is that their representational analogies are limited. It’s hard to describe a sine tone sound as sizzling bacon, insects, engines, refrigerators, etc. (these are real accounts of what my music has sounded like to previous listeners). In this composition, the sine tone is a “clearing” gesture, a sonic no-man’s land.

Physical intervention and tampering with the digital audio files of the archive are characteristic of my approach in creating the original electronic music of “we’ve all, we’ve done.” I repurposed, resampled, and remixed much of the original found sound, interview, and field recording files using AudioMulch software, an Arturia Microfreak synthesizer, and invented digital processing techniques. These processes created sounds

that had a tactile, molded, and shaped quality. You could almost hear the gestures and touches of my hand on the material.

One technique I developed was to “scrub” the archival audio by running the cursor over the waveform in Reaper, creating an effect like running a length of audio tape over a magnetic tape head. Reaper and other popular DAWs allow you to manipulate audio files at very small, granular levels. By zooming in very closely on the waveform I could extract, through this “scrubbing” gesture, low, pulsing, stretched sounds. Then with a simultaneous, quick zoom out in the DAW, the audio file shortens and the cursor scrubs over more legible material like voices, or instruments that produce a clearer sound like tape or vinyl manipulation. I equate these textures to what ethnomusicologist and electronic dance music aficionado, Luis-Manuel Garcia calls the “fleshy timbre” of music. This characteristic of EDM heightens tactility and embodied intimacy and enables sound to be an affective bridge between touch, sonic experience, and a sense of connected sociality. While this work is far from the rhythmic structures of EDM, the bodily, and tactile sound of the “scrubbing” produces a similar effect. It creates a sound that is a representation of movement through time and space, and an audible record of a body moving through and stretching the time and space of the audio file.

A recursive, manual processing is used in what I call the fake “fugue” that occurs at about 25 minutes into the piece. I was inspired by how the fugal structure is a compelling metaphor for the process of Korean adoptee identity formation. The multiple voices, the variations, reversals, and permutations of the subject(s), who emerge and flee the foreground periodically. The layered, canon-like stretto, where the subject(s) overlap, moving together and apart in increasingly complex, entwined, sonic formations. The word

“fugue” comes from the 15th century Latin *fugere* (to flee). It is also the source of words like “fugitive,” “refuge,” “refugee,” “subterfuge,” and others. In addition to the musical form, fugue is also a psychiatric condition sometimes called a dissociative fugue (psychogenic fugue, or fugue state) that presents as sudden, unexpected travel away from one's home with an inability to recall some or all of one's past. Onset is sudden, usually following severe psychosocial stressors.¹⁰ This piece was created in Reaper and is a piano approximation of a conversation between me and Mary-Kim. The ReaPitch plugin roughly tracks the pitches of the conversation which are translated into MIDI and using a simple, free, virtual instrument NeoPiano by SoundMagic, I can play back this MIDI in the lilting, halting piano voice you hear in the composition. I then took this new audio, exported it as a file and repeated the process of pitch tracking and MIDI translation four more times, creating a feedback process between the recording and the MIDI output.

Each of these processed, shaped, and manipulated sounds build upon electronic music practices that I've been using for several years that find and exploit the unintended uses of a technology or digital tool. In the case of the “scrubbing” technique, I make the DAW into an instrument and play this through the manual gesture of moving the cursor and zooming in and out on the audio file. The resulting music is a sonic document that captures the performance of playing the audio file in Reaper using a manual granular synthesis- like procedure. Finding new ways of translating an audio file into other “languages” like MIDI, uses the workflow of live audio production in a counterintuitive, hacked, fashion. This counterintuitive approach allows me to turn electronic devices and

¹⁰Britannica, s.v. "fugue state," <https://www.britannica.com/science/fugue-state>

tools into playable instruments with highly expressive sonic voices. This technique also places the human musical agent in the foreground of the electronic composition. The composition becomes a document that captures the gestural, physical interactions of the human and technological elements of electronic music. How each “plays” the other.

Spatializing Sound

“we’ve all, we’ve done” is composed of documentations of physical, performative gestures and idiosyncratic playing methods. This idea is expanded upon in the work’s novel approach to spatializing multichannel audio. Multichannel compositional techniques were originally developed through the film industry and more recently the gaming industry. Generally, the goal is to provide a semblance of auditory realism around a specific focal point – usually a screen, and to provide this for a specific ideal listening position, the so-called “sweet spot.” In your home theater set up, your speaker system would mirror the action taking place on the screen. If a car rumbles past from screen left to right, the audio would move from the left speakers to the right, simulating that motion. Film multichannel audio is created in the studio, with audio effects and sound movements choreographed in advance with an ear towards creating that realistic, immersive, soundscape.

For multichannel compositions in the realm of sound art and musical performance, a variety of techniques are used to spatialize the sound for different effects and intentions. Compositional decisions in spatialization may create psychoacoustic effects, make poetic or metaphorical suggestions, or map out virtual, surreal acoustic spaces. A primary goal of these compositions, as with theater sound, is to emphasize and explore the immersive sonic experience achieved with multichannel speaker systems. Typically, spatialization decisions that disrupt this immersive “suspension of sonic belief” are avoided. For instance, a car that zooms around in an unrealistic pattern through the speakers would be noticeably forced, rather than “natural” spatialization.

In “we’ve all, we’ve done,” instead of creating realistic soundscapes with moving sound objects and events, the multichannel spatialization was achieved through a site-specific performance of the audio piece using Space Controller a Wi-Fi/Bluetooth plugin and app designed by Sound Particles, a Portuguese 3-D Audio Software development company. The plugin allowed me to use a mobile device as a controller to move audio from Reaper tracks into specific speakers in a horizontal¹¹, surround sound setup. Space Controller works by using vector base amplitude panning (VBAP) algorithms enable sounds to be moved within a multichannel speaker system as though they are coming from “virtual” object sources.

Using Space Controller, I was able to “play” the sonic documents of the archive in a way that was like the “scrubbing” process of the audio file in Reaper. As the tracks of audio were playing back through the eight speakers, I used the controller to move their position in the speakers in relation to other audio and to my movement within the installation. For example, in the section after the opening Save the Children newsreel audio, there is a strong sense that the tones are circling and moving around the installation light tables. This was achieved by moving around the tables using Space Controller to make the tones follow my movement and position. In the screenshot below of my Reaper project, different tracks include multiple sonic documents from the archive.

¹¹ The plugin can also be used for spatializing ambisonic audio and other speaker arrangements that include height information.

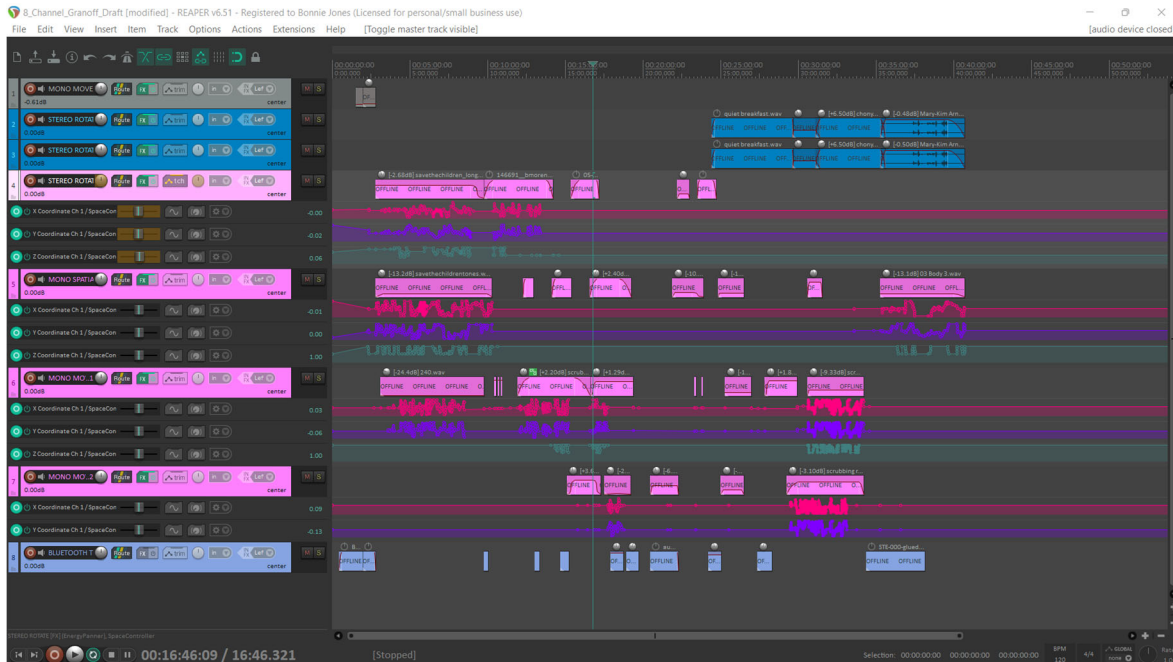


Figure 23 "we've all, we've done" audio composition in Reaper

Each of these tracks and sections of audio can be spatialized separately using Space Controller. The automation tracks beneath specific tracks show how the x, y, z coordinate location information for that track is being panned back and forth (x), side to side (z), and up and down (y). Of course, in my speaker set up there were no speakers above or below the horizontal eight speaker arrangement, so the Y and Z axis panning were not as inconsequential, but I did find that the plugin's attempts to digitally "dimensionalize" the sound beyond the horizontal X axis created some interesting, unintended realizations that I incorporated into the overall effect of the piece.

Performing the archive using Space Controller allowed me to compose with improvisatory gesture and movement. The resulting composition is a document, a record of a sounding of the archive, of my counter-listening to the archive. I imagine this counter-

listening metaphorically and literally. The first is a way of listening *to* someone else's listening or listening *for* someone else's listening – a way of being *present* with the person who once sounded. The second is a more literal action, one where we actively reject and refuse the meanings inscribed in the archive that remove autonomy, agency, identity. So that when I hear a newsreel about Korean War orphans who “have no moral values, because hunger changes all moral conceptions” I can redirect and make a gesture that symbolically complicates and changes that material through sound spatialization, performance, and material manipulation. Within the shared space of the sound installation, that counter-listening and sounding becomes entangled with your listening and your invitation to counter-listen. It “unsettles” the sensory space and brings the listener's identity into an entangled relationship with the identities of the adoptee archive.

we have all, we have done (a return)



Figure 24 Installation View, "we've all, we've done"

As the listener exits “we’ve all, we’ve done,” they return to the glass stairway lounge of the Granoff Center. This brightly lit and “loud” public space may feel in stark contrast to the dimly lit, intimate space of the installation. A moment of reorientation may need to be taken, a moment to re-attune to one’s surroundings. The reverberations of the work still holding and claiming their space.

While the installation was open to the public, I often sat gallery hours. Typically, the listener would come out of the exhibition and there I would be! These moments were awkward, and sometimes emotional, but very interesting. It’s not often you immediately confront the subject of the art installation you just experienced. It wasn’t intended to be

that way, but in retrospect I realize something critical is activated by this interaction. It creates an inability for either of us to fully retreat from the subject matter.

Often, the listener's immediate reaction was a need to "settle" from what they had just experienced. They would come sit with me and take a moment to collect their thoughts. The conversations that took place outside the studio were often generous and emotional, with visitors sharing their personal and complex reactions to the work. Sometimes the work was too much for them and sometimes their feelings were too much for me. In either case, the act of speaking together about the experience, communing with each other in this way was a powerful experience. I often found myself emotionally depleted after gallery hours in ways that surprised me. The feedback of listeners reminded me that the work of "we've all, we've done" is the work of sharing space, stories, and responsibility for our histories.

"we've all, we've" done is the culmination of an intensive multi-year research project into my own personal, archival adoptee records. The depth of my investigation into the history of Korean transnational and transracial adoption has opened channels that will reverberate for some time to come. The information I did and didn't find in these books, articles, documents, and video reels keeps this always an active and searching project. From connecting with adoptee resources online, there are additional searches for information and archival materials that I can undertake through Korean Social Services and other post-adoption services. So future iterations of this project will find my archive growing.

I have always had a hard time with endings so it's no coincidence that my work tends to be stubbornly open ended, incomplete, and iterative. "we've all, we've done" is

no exception. Already I am imaging the next iterations and manifestations of this work and several great ideas have emerged from feedback I solicited from exhibition attendees, advisors, and readers of this essay. Future directions may include developing more interactive controls or sensors in the work that enable listeners to influence not only the visual but also the auditory elements of the work. Using the installation as a stage set for a theatrical or music performance is also something I'm interested in pursuing in the next phases of my collaboration with Mary-Kim Arnold. Perhaps the work becomes a theatrical performance piece, where both of us are "characters" in the work, moving and manipulating images, text, and sound in live improvisations. There is also a desire to further spatialize the audio piece in larger studio arrangements. I am already planning to spatialize the audio work at the RISD Spatial Audio Studio and expand my use of Space Controller within their 25.4 speaker system. I also want to expand upon my "Underheard Koreans" audio archive and collect more samples from other adoptees at home. I'm not sure what I would make with these sounds but bringing this into existence give me a certain satisfaction and joy.

Appendix A: Inventory of visual archival materials

I. United States Citizenship and Immigration Services Documents obtained through Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and Privacy Act (PA) request.

- a. Blank Page
- b. Photocopy of Certificate of Naturalization, 9/19/1984
- c. 2 pages, Petition for Naturalization, 2/16/1984
- d. 2 pages, Application to file petition for naturalization in behalf of a child, 1/18/1983
- e. 2 pages, Statement of ... CTS for Preparation of Petition, February 1984
- f. 2 pages Front/Back of photo for Naturalization Document
- g. Immigrant Visa and Alien Registration, 9/23/1977
- h. 4 pages, Application for Immigrant Visa and Alien Registration (English/Korean) 9/23/1977
- i. Blank page, PAGE WITHHELD PURSUANT TO (b)(7)(e) (a)(k)(2) (a)(k)(2) (b)(7)(c)
- j. Blank page, PAGE WITHHELD PURSUANT TO (b)(7)(e) (a)(k)(2) (a)(k)(2) (b)(7)(c)
- k. Blank page, PAGE WITHHELD PURSUANT TO (b)(3)
- l. Statement of Releasing Guardianship (English)
- m. Statement of Releasing Guardianship (Korean)
- n. Application for Certificate of Legal Guardianship for Minor Orphan Who is Accommodated at Childcare Institution (English), 8/22/1977
- o. Application for Certificate of Legal Guardianship for Minor Orphan Who is Accommodated at Childcare Institution (Korean), 8/22/1977'
- p. Hojukdungbon (Family Registration) (English), 8/12/1977
- q. Hojukdungbon (Family Registration) (Korean), 8/12/1977
- r. 2 pages, Front/Back of Immigration medical check

II. Personal Photos and Documents

- a. Scan of Travel Certificate, Republic of Korea, 8/29/1977
- b. Scan of vaccination record, Republic of Korean, 8/29/1977
- c. Scan of Certificate of Naturalization, 9/19/1984.
- d. Welcome House Financial Agreement – Service Fees, 2/15/78
- e. Welcome House Adoption Agency Advertisement for Korean adoption, date unknown.
- f. 4-H Photograph of Bonnie Jones, date unknown
- g. Photograph of Bonnie Jones at Jones Dairy Service, November 1980
- h. Jones Family portrait at St. Martin's in the Fields, date unknown
- i. Photograph of Mary-Kim Arnold in ballet costume, date unknown
- j. Photograph of Mary-Kim Arnold with On Soon Whang, June 1983.

III. Magazine Clippings

- a. Melvin, Tessa. “A Reunion for Korean, 81, and Adoptees” *New York Times* (New York, NY), Jun. 12, 1983.
- b. Stecklow, Steve. “‘Amerasian’ children and the law: A cry of concern” *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, PA), Mar. 30, 1982.
- c. “Couple says 7 children isn’t enough – so they adopt 8 more” *Weekly World News*, January 27, 1981, 32.
- d. “The Lord is Their Sponsor: Korean Octet Gets a U.S. Home” *Life Magazine*, December 26, 1955, 58.
- e. World Vision, Inc., “A Korean Orphan for You.” Advertisement. *The Los Angeles Times*, Jan. 19, 1956, 67.

IV. Newsreel Screenshots from YouTube

- a. Screenshot of Ahn Sook Sun, subtitles “they can feel the emotion of the pansori singer expressed through sound and breathing.” Great Big Story, “Pansori: South Korean’s Authentic Musical Storytelling,” YouTube video, 4:32, August 21, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Kt7YdXsWzg>.
- b. Screenshot of children walking on railroad, December 31, 1953, closed captioning “the 40,000 children roaming the ruined streets lost everything lost more... British Movietone, “SAVE THE CHILDREN FUND - KOREAN WAR ORPHANS - 1950'S – SOUND,” YouTube video, 4:32, August 21, 2017,
- c. Screenshot of newscaster in front of greenscreen of DMZ and cranes, subtitles “Every winter, majestic red-crowned cranes visit Yeoncheon, near the DMZ on the inter-Korean...” Arirang News, “Winter life in DMZ: how red-crowned cranes survive cold,” YouTube video, 2:39, Jan 14, 2021.
- d. Two screenshots of Pyongyang. British Pathé, “Devastation in Pyongyang, Korea (1950),” YouTube video, 3:12, August 27, 2014.

V. Handwritten quotations, text excerpts

- a. Top of the first page, abstract of the journal article. Park, Chan. “‘Authentic Audience’ in P’ansori, a Korean Storytelling Tradition.” *The Journal of American Folklore* 113, no. 449 (2000): 270. <https://doi.org/10.2307/542103>.
- b. First page, abstract of the journal article. Esposito, Angelo, Rafael Krichevsky, and Alberto Nicolis. “The Gravitational Mass Carried by Sound Waves.” *Physical Review Letters* 122, no. 8 (March 1, 2019): 084501. <https://doi.org/10.1103/PhysRevLett.122.084501>.
- c. First page of “People v. Hall, 4 Cal. 399 (1854).” Caselaw Access Project: Harvard Law School. Harvard Law School Library, Aug. 29, 2019. <https://cite.case.law/cal/4/399/>.

- d. Underlined text from introduction to “Queer Phenomenology.”

... the book aims to show how bodies are gendered, sexualized, and raced by how they extend into space, as an extension that differentiates between “left” and “right,” “front” and “behind,” “up” and “down,” as well as “near and “far”. What is offered in other words, is a model of how bodies become orientated by how they take up time and space.

Ahmed, Sara. *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006.

- e. Handwritten quote from “Just memory: War and the ethics of remembrance.”

In a doubled ethical memory, remembering is always aware of itself as being open ended and in flux, rather than being satisfied with fixity and conclusiveness.

Nguyen, Viet Thanh. "Just memory: War and the ethics of remembrance." *American Literary History* 25, no. 1 (2013): 144-163.

- f. Handwritten note by Bonnie Jones.

I started collecting documents from my adoption archive two years ago. I was home for a holiday and asked my mother to give me whatever she had kept. When I was younger I remember a manila folder in her filing cabinet which we were not allow to go in. But when my parents were out, me and my sister would go and look through our files. The hangul was a secret code, and one that could not be known. Sneaking into the filing cabinet was forbidden, the archive was dangerous.

- g. Handwritten note by Bonnie Jones.

A counter-listening attempts through sound, what is co-opted in language. A story told that cannot be re-told, re-captured. A story that exists in relational, ephemeral, experiential form. A story that must always be co-listened to, with another listener, and so co-accounted for, shared.

- h. Handwritten quote from “Dictee.”

Tell me the story / of all these things. / Beginning wherever you wish, tell even us.

Cha, Theresa Hak Kyung. *Dictee*. Univ of California Press, 2001.

i. Handwritten quote from “Listen a History of our Ears”

We might begin to envisage our listenings as writing or even as re-writing

Szendy, Peter. Listen: A history of our ears. Fordham Univ Press, 2009.

Appendix B: Inventory of audio materials

I. Historical, Documentary, Audio

- a. British Movietone, "SAVE THE CHILDREN FUND - KOREAN WAR ORPHANS - 1950'S – SOUND," YouTube video, 4:32, August 21, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Kt7YdXsWzg>.
- b. British Pathé, "KOREAN WAR: Orphans from Korea evacuated to Chejudo Island (1951)." YouTube video, 0:36, November 11, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x9X3QtwqP6w>
- c. British Pathé, "Devastation In Pyongyang, Korea (1950)" YouTube video, 3:12, August 27, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h9u7_W4T1Qo
- d. Great Big Story, "Pansori: South Korean's Authentic Musical Storytelling," YouTube video, 4:32, August 21, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Kt7YdXsWzg>.

II. Freesound.org Recordings

- a. " korea_morgenansprache.flac" by nikitralala, <https://freesound.org/people/nikitralala/sounds/239938/> is licensed under CC BY 1.0.
- b. "0047-quiete-street-birds-and-some-cars" by bmoreno <https://freesound.org/people/bmoreno/sounds/146691/> is licensed under CC BY 3.0.
- c. "frogsinrice.mp3" by omjn <https://freesound.org/people/omjn/sounds/24139/> is licensed under CC BY 3.0.
- d. "061224-chongnyangnyi-market2.wav" by sazman, <https://freesound.org/people/sazman/sounds/28251/> is licensed under CC BY 3.0.

III. Korean Adoptee Recordings

- a. Recording of Bonnie Jones, Joshua Gen Solondz, Ted Kennedy making breakfast in Hudson, NY, June 2014.
- b. Recording of Mary-Kim Arnold, accidental phone recording in purse, January 2022.
- c. Recording of Liz Sargent, January 2022.
- d. Recording of Kimsu Theiler, February 2022.

IV. Electronic music

- a. Excerpt of "Body 3" from the recording "Vines", by Bonnie Jones, EMR, Los Angeles, CA 2006.
- b. Original electronic music created with Microfreak synthesizer, sinetones, Reaper pitch tracking, MIDI recording, "scrubbing" audio file processes, by Bonnie Jones.

V. Voice recordings

- a. Bonnie Jones, Mary-Kim Arnold, recorded by Bonnie Jones.

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