

Claire Gullander – Drolet

### Don Mee Choi's Radical Historiographies

This essay attempts to think through two things: 1) what a feminist refusal to translate might look like, and 2) what the implications of such a gesture might be with respect to our engagements with history as written and lived practice. Reading two works by Korean / American poet and translator Don Mee Choi—2016's *Hardly War* and the 2020 translation manifesto *Translation is a mode = Translation is an anti – neocolonial mode*—this essay considers how Choi narrates key events in the (still – ongoing) Korean war across different registers in English and Korean, with an emphasis on the political work her refusals and omissions perform. Choi's anti neocolonial politics—shaped as they are by “the knowledge that not only our lives and struggles are interconnected, but that our languages are also interconnected by histories of imperialism, colonialism, and militarism, and by increasing economic interdependence” – recognize translation work as an ambivalent historiographic practice, one with the capacity to recuperate and remember, but also to injure and cause harm. Though Choi explores the negative valences of translational refusal through her treatment of media accounts of the Korean War, her own refusals to translate are offered up in service of the forgotten victims of this forever conflict. By refusing to translate these subjects out of history, Choi writes them into a distinct counternarrative—a counternarrative that is now part of a crucial dialogue with other feminist translators and activists working through the legacies of war and imperialism in the Asia Pacific region.