

Winner of the 2020
National Book Award

DMZ COLONY

Don Mee Choi

In our little courtyard, I skipped rope and played house with my paper dolls amongst big glazed jars of fermented veggies and spicy, pungent pastes. I feared the shadows they cast along the path to the outhouse. Stories of abandoned infant girls always piqued my interest, so I imagined that the abandoned babies might be inside the jars. Whenever I obeyed the shadows, I saw tiny floating arms covered in mold. And whenever it snowed, I made tiny snowmen on top of the covers of the jars. Like rats, children can be happy in darkness. But the biggest darkness of all was the midnight curfew. I didn't know the curfew was a curfew till my family escaped from it in 1972 and landed in Hong Kong. That's how big the darkness was.

Woven from poems, prose, photographs, and drawings, Don Mee Choi's *DMZ Colony* is a *tour de force* of personal and political reckoning set over eight acts. Evincing the power of translation as a poetic device to navigate historical and linguistic borders, it explores Edward Said's notion of "the intertwined and overlapping histories" in regards to South Korea and the United States through innovative deployments of voice, story, and poetics. Like its sister book, *Hardly War*, it holds history accountable, its very presence a resistance to empire and a hope in humankind.

ABOUT DON MEE CHOI

Born in Seoul, South Korea, Don Mee Choi is the author of *Hardly War*, *The Morning News Is Exciting*, and several chapbooks and pamphlets of poems and essays. She has received a Whiting Award, Lannan Literary Fellowship, Lucien Stryk Translation Prize, and DAAD Artists-in-Berlin Fellowship. She has translated several collections of Kim Hyesoon's poetry, including *Autobiography of Death*, which received the 2019 International Griffin Poetry Prize.

PRAISE FOR DON MEE CHOI

Don Mee Choi's urgent *DMZ Colony* captures the migratory latticework of those transformed by war and colonization. Homelands present and past share one sky where birds fly, but 'during the Korean War cranes had no place to land.' Devastating and vigilant, this bricolage of survivor accounts, drawings, photographs, and hand-written texts unearths the truth between fact and the critical imagination. We are all 'victims of History,' so Choi compels us to witness, and to resist.

—National Book Award Judges Citation

While imperial history relishes mythmaking and triumphalism at the expense of the human and psychological costs of war, Choi revels in history's untold spaces.

—*BOMB*

Playful and complex . . . Choi's zany take on militarism and the Korean diaspora may seem absurdist, but it is an inventive and daring waltz that upends what is commonly understood as the 'Forgotten War.'

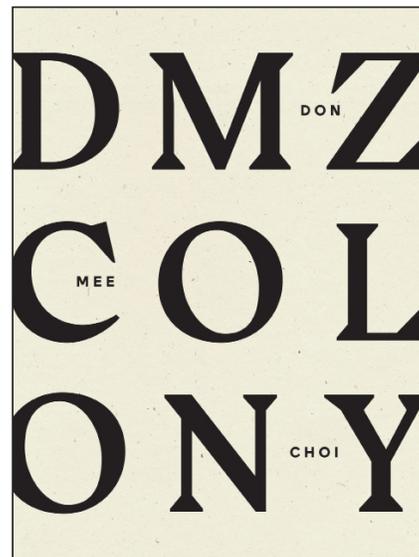
—*Publishers Weekly*

WAVE BOOKS
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Publication date: April 07, 2020

Media contact: Catherine Bresner

206.676.5337 | cbresner@wavepoetry.com



Poetry • Trade Paperback

ISBN-13: 978-1-940696-95-9

6.75 x 9 inches

152 pages

\$20

Limited Edition Hardcover

ISBN-13: 978-1-940696-96-6

\$35

Publication date: April 07, 2020

AVAILABLE TO THE TRADE:

Consortium Book Sales & Distribution:

(800) 283-3572

Small Press Distribution:

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DIRECTLY FROM WAVE BOOKS:

<http://wavepoetry.com/products/dmz-colony>