

Kadare reflects in three essays on “great” writers in the world literary tradition: Aeschylus, whom he calls the “lost”; Dante, the “inevitable”; and Shakespeare, the “difficult prince.” Kadare’s essays provide histories of these writers’ place in the Albanian intellectual and mythohistorical imaginaries as well as in Kadare’s own thinking about the purpose of writing. Aeschylus enjoys a more or less constant presence, but Dante and Shakespeare are latecomers as a result of repressive Ottoman rule, arriving in Albanian translations only following independence in the twentieth century. Dante makes a particular impression on Kadare, who says that the Florentine poet’s greatest lesson was that “the natural state of the great writer is . . . to travel alive among the dead.” Dante is thus figured as the ultimate poet of the Albanian experience; “Dantesque” describes nothing if not the spiraling centuries of Albanian life under multiple empires and then Hoxha.

Aeschylus, the topic of his earliest and longest essay, represents to Kadare the largely lost origin of world literature and thus of “civilization” itself; though Greek, Aeschylus’s sense of the tragic emerged from a uniquely Balkan understanding of mourning, Kadare argues, and he was therefore, like any Albanian, haunted by pains peculiar to Balkan life. Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, in the final essay, represents the “impossible drama” of Albania, of the blood feuds of the traditional Albanian legal code, the Kanun, and of the centuries of ceaseless squabble over land, power, and identity that, like Hamlet’s own blood feud, made life a tragedy.

In his indelibly humanist understanding of art, Kadare conceives of literature—the work of canonically great writers—as art that “cries with the world,” seeking through letters to understand the uniquely and most deeply human: tragedy, violence, pain. He adopts the language “crying with the world” from a Gjirokastër idiom that describes intimate mourning among rela-

tives and nonrelatives alike; tragedy, for Kadare, speaking always through the violent history of the Balkans, is a binding tie among the people of Albania and its neighbors, the purest if the most painful source of literary inspiration.

Literature as a “crying with the world” is not only a lament for the self but also a reminder of those hurt in the production of the self. Kadare attests as much in his reading of Homer, one who made the Greeks’ deceitful destruction of the Trojans, murdered while they slept, the basis of Greece’s greatest epic of unified mythohistoric selfhood.

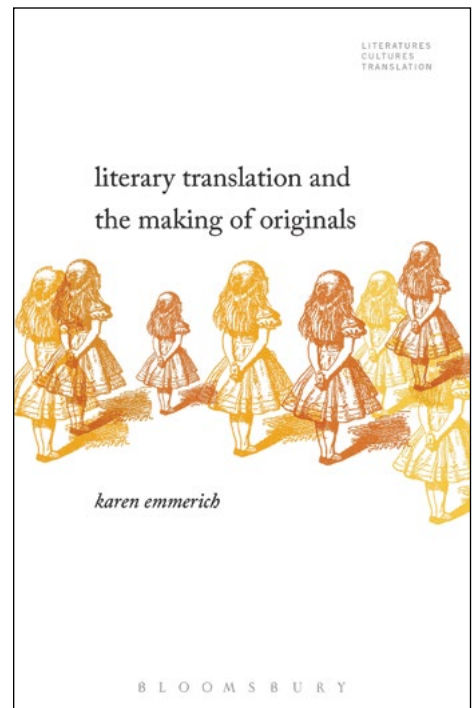
Through his provocations on Aeschylus, Dante, Shakespeare, and the vicissitudes of Albanian history, Kadare argues that to see Albanian literature as world literature is to see Albania simultaneously as the subject of its own self-inflicted tragedy and as the object of violence committed against it. It is to see Albania as European and therefore part of Europe’s imperialist history; within Europe, as unremittingly Balkan and thus always peripheral to the flows of European power; and among them all, as an ethno/geocultural essence apart—lost like the origins of tragedy, inevitable like the violence of the political, difficult like the ghosts of the past. The “world” of Kadare’s three essays on “world literature” is a reflection of Albania’s “impossible drama” on the global scale of human history, an observation at once parochial and profound, like the greatness of great art.

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Karen Emmerich  
*Literary Translation and the Making of Originals*

New York. Bloomsbury. 2017. 234 pages.

Of the thousands of adages that elucidate translation, one of the most oft-quoted is Jorge Luis Borges’s “The original is unfaith-



ful to the translation.” In these seven words, Borges at once invokes and turns on its head the notion of fidelity, a highly contested concept within the field of literary translation, and one that Karen Emmerich interrogates in *Literary Translation and the Making of Originals*, especially as it relates to the notion of original text(s).

Emmerich adroitly slays each of these sacred cows in a single blow, arguing, “The commonplace insistence of an ideal of translational ‘fidelity’ means that promiscuity is for originals alone; the last thing we want is for a translation to go messing around with an unstable text, much less with several at once.”

This is but one of many salvos Emmerich fires in her book, which, according to the author, “has the perhaps immodest goal of challenging the time-honored tradition—long upheld by readers, reviewers, publishers, literary scholars, even many translators and scholars of translation—of referring to the objects of literary translation as if each were a known quantity, a singular entity whose lexical context is stable or fixed: the ‘original,’ ‘the Arabic original,’



‘the original French text,’ ‘the source text,’ ‘Kafka’s German,’ and so on.”

To elucidate this claim, Emmerich reminds us that Kafka’s texts “have been multiply mediated by numerous critics over the years,” that *The Thousand and One Nights* “has a history of cross-lingual composition and circulation as complex as the stories it tells, including the translation into Arabic, and then back out again, of tales first published in eighteenth-century French,” and that Virginia Woolf’s novels were “typeset and printed in both the U.K. and the U.S. from two separate sets of proofs, exhibit[ing] slight but (some would say) significant differences across these editions,” which, she concludes, “complicat[es] the task of the translator who seeks to settle on a ‘source text’ for one of Woolf’s works.”

The oblique reference to Walter Benjamin’s seminal essay, “The Task of the Translator,” is not incidental. On the contrary, she returns to the essay throughout the text, before ultimately asserting that “Benjamin flatly declares that the translator’s task cannot be to ‘strive for similarity to the original’ or to convey ‘the form and

the sense of the original as accurately as possible,’ since form and sense are eternally in flux, and therefore impossible to replicate or even imitate in another language.”

Missing from her discussion of *The Thousand and One Nights* is any mention of either of Borges’s essays, “The Thousand and One Nights” and “The Translators of the Thousand and One Nights.” Such an omission, to this translator at least, seems regrettable, especially considering that in the former, Borges supports her central claim, writing (the translation is mine), “There is a tale which is the most famous of *The Thousand and One Nights* that is not found in the original versions. It is the story of Aladdin and the magic lamp. It appears in Galland’s version and Burton searched in vain for the Arabic or Persian text.”

*Literary Translation and the Making of Originals* should be essential reading for literary translators, translation scholars, and professors, especially those who teach literary translation. It will also be of interest to devotees of translated literature.

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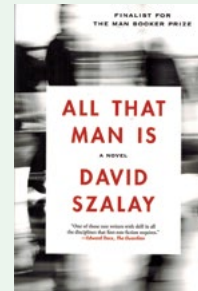
Thi Bui  
*The Best We Could Do*

New York. Abrams ComicArts. 2017.  
327 pages.

Marcelino Truong  
*Saigon Calling:  
London 1963–75*

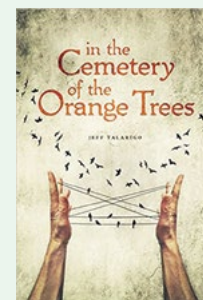
Trans. David Homel. Vancouver. Arsenal  
Pulp Press. 2017. 280 pages.

Half a century on, the West’s dominant understanding of events Americans call the Vietnam War still largely focuses through the lens of the US actors—the experiences, factual and fictional, of US soldiers and of protesters against the war.



David Szalay  
*All That Man Is*  
Graywolf Press

*All That Man Is* winds through the lives of nine men who come from all walks of life, from the greatest failures to the greatest success stories. With abundant detail and graceful prose, the book uses these men to explore modernity and manhood against the backdrop of an increasingly globalized Europe.



Jeff Talarigo  
*In the Cemetery of the Orange Trees*  
Etruscan Press

Jeff Talarigo visits the Gaza Strip to tell a history of the land and the Palestinian diaspora through the mode of mythopoetic tales that lend a sense of clarity through the very things that make them strange. Haunting and filled with sharp insight, *In the Cemetery of the Orange Trees* intensely concerns itself with the fate of the silenced.

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