

**Carvalho Homem, R. and T. Hoenselaars (eds.) (2004):
Translating Shakespeare for the Twenty-First Century,
Amsterdam/New York, Editions Rodopi B.V., VIII + 269 p.**

Kathleen Connors

Volume 51, Number 1, March 2006

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/013002ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/013002ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal

ISSN

0026-0452 (print)

1492-1421 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Connors, K. (2006). Review of [Carvalho Homem, R. and T. Hoenselaars (eds.) (2004): *Translating Shakespeare for the Twenty-First Century*, Amsterdam/New York, Editions Rodopi B.V., VIII + 269 p.] *Meta*, 51(1), 169–170.
<https://doi.org/10.7202/013002ar>

Comptes rendus

CARVALHO HOMEM, R. and T. HOENSELAARS (eds.) (2004): *Translating Shakespeare for the Twenty-First Century*, Amsterdam/New York, Editions Rodopi B.V., VIII + 269 p.

This book is a collection of articles on the translation of Shakespeare's plays. The authors have themselves done such translations, and/or studied the problems associated with this activity on a theoretical level. Roughly the second half of the volume is devoted to the study of the translation of the plays into European (as opposed to Brazilian) Portuguese. These latter essays are of course authored by Lusophone translators involved in this enterprise.

The most engaging articles for the non-specialist in this area are those which concentrate on examples of problematic vocabulary and passages in the plays, and on the illustration and justification of the solutions which the authors have adopted in specific translations. A number of them, however, are at pains to explicate the theoretical positions which underlie the decisions involved in the translation of specific passages. They also relate such decisions to more general questions as to the type of translation to be attempted. Is the translator seeking maximum linguistic "fidelity" to the original play (or "accuracy," p. 132), and, if so, does this mean finding translation equivalents in a variety of the target language from about 1600, or from one that "corresponds" to Shakespearean English in the present-day (or some diachronically intermediate variety of the) target language?

If, on the other hand, the goal is socio-cultural "acceptability," sometimes called "adequacy" (*ibid.*), meant to attract native speakers of the target language who are non-specialists (and maybe even young) to Shakespeare, how and to what extent should the translator change the original play? Consideration of such objectives means that "adaptation," and not just translation in the linguistic sense, is one of the main topics in this collection.

This eternal conflict between fidelity and current acceptability takes an interesting form in the *history* of the translation of the plays. What we might call the philological tradition, in this context, has sought to establish the most authentic version of the original, presumably the one closest to the play that Shakespeare wrote (see, e.g., the discussion at pp. 32-37). It then has striven to understand the language of this putative original text as perfectly as possible. Finally, it has marshaled the translator's presumably native knowledge of a socially and stylistically "corresponding" variety of the target language to furnish an "equivalent" to the source text. (We alluded above to the additional question of the historical period to target for the "appropriate" linguistic variety, which also has to be accessible to the target audience. See pp. 13 and 65-78.)

What I will venture here to call the artistic tradition, on the other hand, has sought not linguistic authenticity but cultural correspondence between Shakespeare's play and a current "rewriting" of it (pp. 97 and 115). The latter must be created anew, not just for each target language, but for every time and place. It is a creation spawned from the original play, whose main goal is to interest the audience and/or the readership in the story dramatized by Shakespeare, or in some analogue to it. It is the logic of this prioritization of current relevance which allows articles in this collection to deal with adaptations and even "spin-offs" (p. 79), as well as translations of the plays.

Another tension, which appears from articles here to be almost as acute as this fundamental opposition, is that between translating the play for readers and doing it for audiences. In the latter case, the translator may have, for example, to work with a director, and even actors, not only on problems posed by metrical and suprasegmental structure, but also on harmonizing language with action, on stage directions, and even on gestures (pp. 145-159 and 164-165; cf. p. 173).

For the reader of this collection who works in a related but separate field, two facts stand out. The first is that Shakespeare is not the property of the English-speaking world, but rather of universal culture. The second is that the scholarly and/or artistic contribution of the translators and adaptors of the plays is of vital importance, to the practitioners themselves, and to the breadth and depth of the cultural tradition which is the object of these essays. Just as Shakespeare's plays adopted and adapted pre-existent stories (p. 202), the translators, philologists, literary scholars, poets, and playwrights who have produced versions of them in other languages have been the exponents of a creative tradition in its own right.

Those closer to the acceptability end of the scale have necessarily also removed Shakespeare's plays from their specifically 16th-century-British cultural frame of reference, insofar as it underlay the original, which was of course the case of some of the plays more than of others. In connection with the "relevance" requirement, though it is usually only associated with these acceptability-oriented translations, any translator may want to engage his intended audience or readership socially or politically, by the very choice of the play to translate. This was the case of Luis Cardim's 1925 decision to translate *Julius Caesar* into Portuguese, which is discussed in the last article of this collection (at pp. 251-254).

This book has the great merit of highlighting the informed and insightful creativity required to successfully translate Shakespeare's plays. It therefore seems strange, even gratuitous, to denigrate this feat of scholarship, as do those "adequacy"-oriented authors included or discussed here who, paradoxically in the name of translating Shakespeare's plays, implicitly advocate writing different ones instead.

KATHLEEN CONNORS

University of Montreal, Montreal, Canada

MEGALE, F. (2004): *Diritto d'autore del traduttore*, Napoli, Editoriale Scientifica, 282 p.

L'ouvrage analyse le statut juridique du traducteur littéraire en Italie.

Les différents chapitres concernent le droit d'auteur du traducteur et notamment la jurisprudence en la matière, car on ne peut parler de droit d'auteur que si la traduction présente le caractère d'une création; les différentes clauses du contrat de traduction (durée, droits moraux et économiques, acceptation et révision de la traduction, droits secondaires, éventuelle cession de la traduction à un tiers, non publication de la traduction pour causes diverses, etc.); la rémunération et la fiscalité du traducteur littéraire; l'influence des nouvelles technologies sur le contrat de traduction (notamment les droits découlant des nouvelles utilisations numériques); les actions civiles de défense des droits d'auteurs; les services de la Société des auteurs et éditeurs (SIAE) destinés aux traducteurs.

Le livre traite également du statut de trois autres catégories professionnelles, régies elles aussi par le droit d'auteur, bien que de façon différente selon les cas: les créateurs des sous-titres des œuvres cinématographiques et télévisées étrangères (qui sont assimilés aux traducteurs littéraires); les adaptateurs, qui transposent en italien les dialogues de ces mêmes œuvres et qui bénéficient d'un statut particulier; les localisateurs de logiciels et de sites Internet (pour lesquels l'application du droit d'auteur est limitée à des cas très particuliers).