Decommercialising Shakespeare: Mutran’s Translation of Othello
In a series of satirical narrative articles published in al-Sufur literary weekly in 1920, playwright and theatre critic Muhammad Taymur (1892–1921) describes a play he watched, not in reality, but in a dream. In a humorous style that oscillates between the language of fiction and the language of drama, Taymur elaborates in these articles, entitled ‘Trial of the..."
Playwrights' (Muhakamat Mu'alifi al-Riwayat al-Tamthiliyya), on the practices of both playwrights and theatre translators at the time. The defendants in this imagined, dream-like trial include such prominent figures as Jurj Abyad, Farah Antun, Ibrahim Ramzi and Lutfi Jum'a, among others. Significantly, members of the jury were the foreign writers on whose work theatre makers in Egypt drew for their performances. These included Shakespeare, Corneille, Racine and Goethe. The prosecutor was the French playwright Edmund Rostand, whose play Cyrano de Bergerac was very popular among Egyptian theatregoers at the time. Two of the defendants, Farah Antun and Khalil Mutran, were known to have practised theatre translation and were thus tried on that basis. Farah Antun was found guilty of 'translation malpractice'. According to the prosecutor in this imaginary trial, Antun ‘picked the old vaudeville plays and rendered them in a strange, astounding and distorted translation that is half colloquial, half classical, and mixed it with some Syrian jokes … to make the audience laugh’ (77).

For this commercially oriented translation practice, the jury ordered Antun to suspend his translation activity for ten years to allow the Egyptian audience enough time to forget his uninspiring translations. But as for Khalil Mutran (1872–1949), the renowned poet and Shakespeare translator, the jury only blamed him for not producing enough of his translations of Shakespeare’s drama (84).
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Sameh F. Hanna

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Notes

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"Decommercialising Shakespeare: Mutran’s Translation of Othello.” partially translated “shiq” (“A lover’s speech. 7...2. and Society in Modern Egypt. 2006). asna grave. beauty. see the editor’s introduction to T ‘nyu’s “Shakespeare in Arabic. 2.” p. no. Shakhsir f h Mis r (Cairo: al-Hay’a al-Mis ryya” . cites two earlier translations by Amr. Najm (see note 40 below. Literature.” In the play “Othello” by William Shakespeare Iago plays the master manipulator and manages to deceive many of the other characters especially Othello and Cassio. It can be said that his motives are based solely on his insecurities due to the fact his goal in the play was to ruin Othello’s life. He does this by using psychological manipulation on Othello’s thoughts and makes him believe that Cassio and Desdemona are fond of each other. Throughout the play Iago constantly reminds himself of why he’s targeting Othello. Chapter 7. On Translating Shakespeare’s Sonnets into Arabic Mohamed Enani. Chapter 8. The Quest for the Sonnet: The Origins of the Sonnet in Arabic Poetry Kamal Abu-Deeb. Chapter 9. Ophelia Is Not Dead at 47: An Interview with Naby Lahlou Khalid Amine. Decommercialising Shakespeare: Mutran’s Translation of Othello Sameh F. Hanna. Chapter 13. The Tunisian Stage: Shakespeare’s Part in Question Rafik Darragi.