**Visualizing Variation in a Shakespeare Re-Translation Corpus**

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This paper reports on a Digital Humanities pilot project at Swansea University. Our team is digitizing a corpus of Shakespeare translations and adaptations: so far about 45 *Othellos;* and exploring ways of developing visual interfaces which will enable users to explore when, where, and in what different ways Shakespeare's work has been - and is being - rendered into foreign languages. The pilot project is funded by Swansea University. We have made and are making applications for external funding. For now we are focusing on *Othello*, mostly in German. With Matthias Zach and others we have also been collecting sample material – translations of a single couplet – in other languages (see www.delightedbeauty.org). **We invite anyone interested to participate in this 'crowd-sourcing'.**

'Visualisation' refers to an emergent body of computational work which uses digital graphics to help people understand and explore complex data-sets. The best of this work combines artistic design and intuitive ease of interactive use. It allows us to understand important subject-matter in new ways, by literally seeing it in new ways. Excellent examples which are free to view online include:

- work by Hans Rosling which presents information on global health economics – www.gapminder.org (2008ff.)

- work by Ben Fry which presents Darwin's successive redactions of *On the Origin of Species* – http://benfry.com/traces/ (2009) – and last but not least:

- work by Stephan Thiel which presents *all the plays of Shakespeare*, using the 'deeply tagged' WordHoard digital texts, filtered through analytic algorithms – www.understanding-shakespeare.com (2010)

Our team's work in progress includes a survey of visualisation tools (Zhao Geng, with the VVV Team: "Visualizing Translation Variation of *Othello*: A Survey of Text Visualization and Analysis Tools", at http://cs.swan.ac.uk/~cszg/text/textSurvey.pdf) and Zhao Geng's animated 'tagline', a visualisation which displays the *least* frequent words in 22 German versions of Othello's long speech to the Senate about his life-story (Act 1, Scene 3) (at http://cs.swan.ac.uk/~cszg/tagline/demo.php).

The eventual aim of the Swansea project (titled 'VVV: Visualising Version Variation') is to develop analytic visualisation methods which can be applied to any corpus of variant translations associated with any source text in any language pairs. The aim is not to produce interpretations of the different translations, but to identify resemblances and contrasts among them: patterns in the historical distributions of their computable features, which lend themselves to graphic presentation. The purpose is not to answer but to raise interpretative questions. We draw much inspiration from the work of Franco Moretti  – *Atlas of the European Novel 1800-1900* (1998); *Graphs, Maps*, *Trees: Abstract Models for a Literary History* (2005); and recently 'Network Theory, Plot Analysis' (*New Left Review* 68, 2011; at http://newleftreview.org/?page=article&view=2887): an experiment in applying

graphical network analysis to the plot of *Hamlet*, raising questions about the relation between plot and style (**Figure 1**).
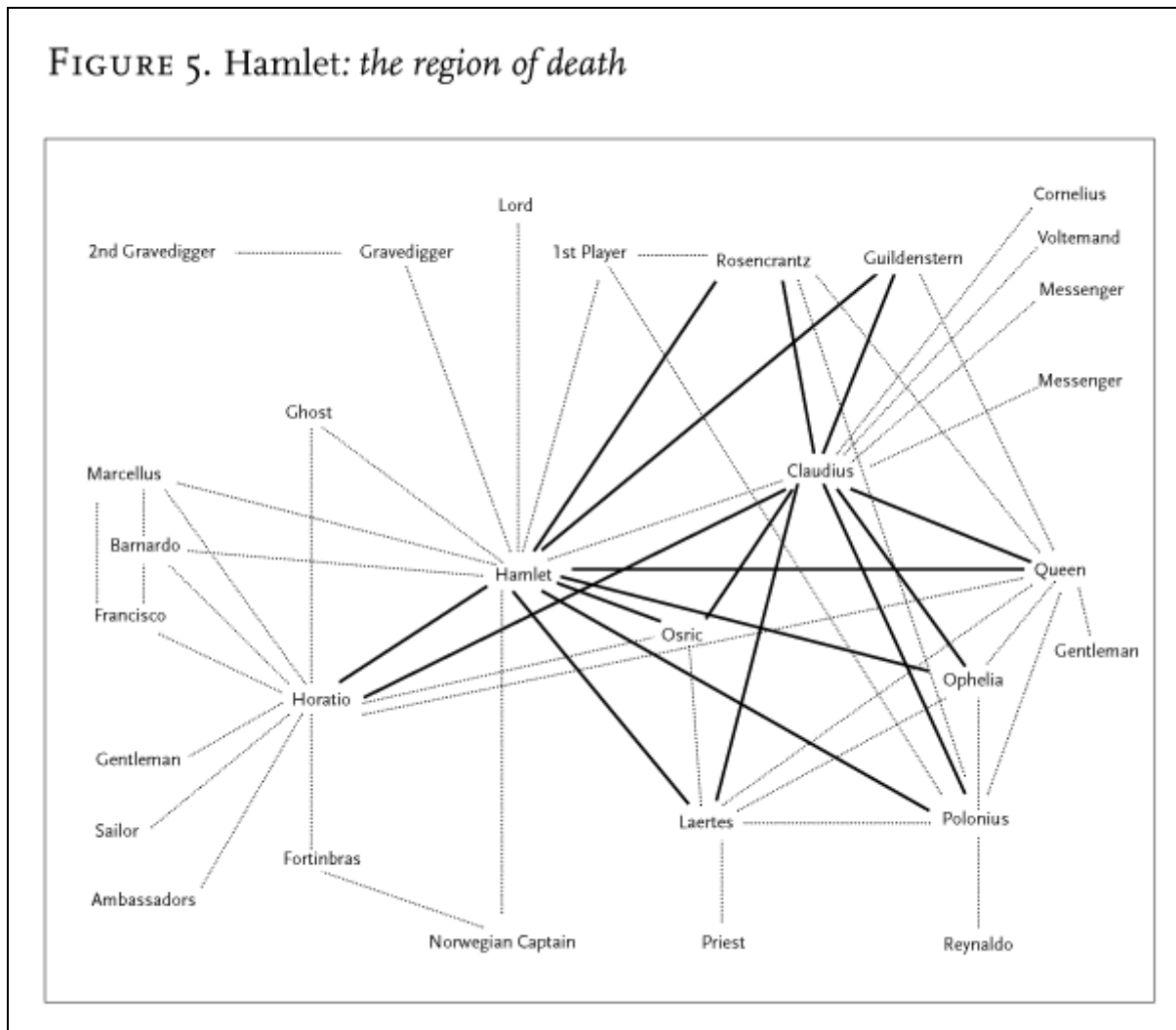


FIGURE 5. Hamlet: *the region of death*

**Figure 1: 'Figure 5' from Franco Moretti, 'Network Theory, Plot Analysis' (2011)**

Questions about Shakespeare *re*translation are not much asked, least of all in the Anglophone world. So our bigger purpose is really to seduce 'users' – teachers and students, theatre professionals, fans, as well as researchers – in order to make them curious about 'foreign' Shakespeares, by offering them ordered, easily navigable glimpses into the complexity of variation, with the option to explore further. We are finding already (having begun this project only in February 2011) that this proposal excites interest. A Swansea- and Berlin-based translation agency (Wolfestone) has offered to promote our crowd-sourcing. A leading  optical character recognition tool supplier (ABBYY) offered us a free trial of new software, helping us to convert books into digital files. At Shakespeare's Globe Theatre, Patrick Spottiswoode (head of Education) tells me that he has commissioned a version of one interface which we have in mind: a historical atlas, which plots where and when Shakespeare has been translated/adapted. The Globe intends to plot only the first translations of *Hamlet* and *Romeo and Juliet*, from each country – and offer text, audio and video of famous passages. We envisage an eventually comprehensive global mapping, which would also show which translations

last, in print and in performance, and how long, and which translations draw upon which others, within languages and between languages – with audio and video of course as well.

Meanwhile I have been carrying out preliminary 'manual' work on retranslations of one ideologically controversial couplet from *Othello*. This work (more detail below) has established that the variations tell a surprisingly detailed story of ideological change (1760s-2000s). It has also established that in German, there is a surprising gulf between the choices made by prestigious translators (famous authors) and by others, but no such gulf exists in French. The challenge for the collaborative project is to bridge the gap between these kinds of interpretative, semantic (or in the broadest sense ideological) cultural analyses, and those which operate at non-semantic levels.

Before I present some of the work in progress, some slightly more **general reflections on Shakespeare retranslation**.
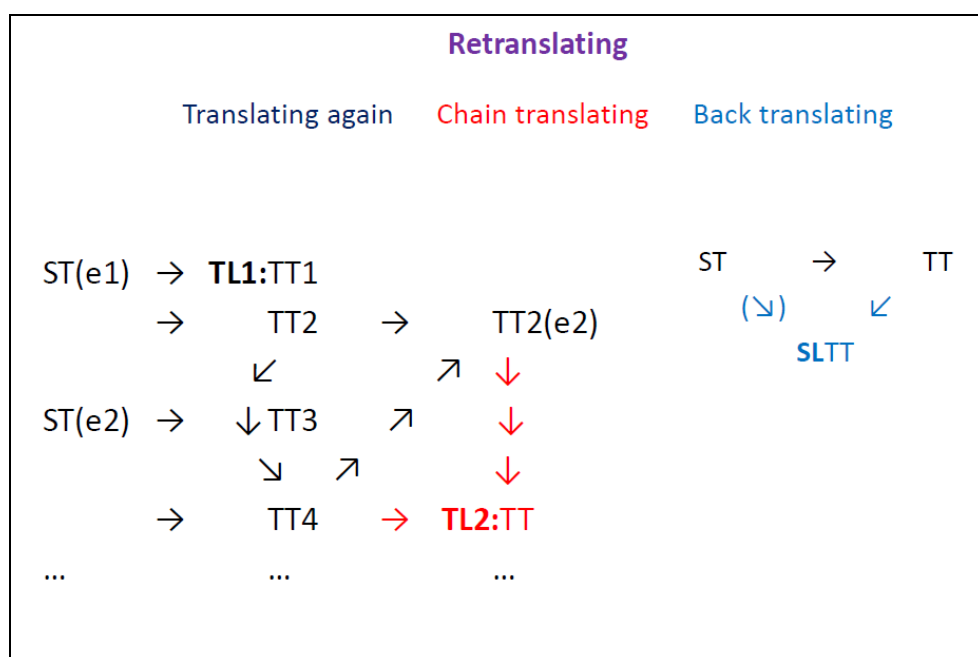


**Figure 2: Three models of retranslating**

'Retranslating' normally means 'translating the same source text again', and especially doing so in awareness of previous translations (Lawrence Venuti stresses this point in his essay 'Retranslations: The Creation of Value', 2004). But for one thing, the 'same source text' is rarely, certainly in the case of Shakespeare, 'the same'. In **Figure 2**, "ST(e1)" means 'edition one', from the point of view of the retranslation corpus: not the 'first edition' in English, but the first of those editions which serve translators as sources. Shakespeare's translators often refer to several English source editions, because editions vary not only in terms of the text they establish, but in terms of glosses, notes, and commentaries, which often direct translators' choices. For another thing, when retranslations multiply, it is not safe to assume that retranslators are actively aware of all their precursors. In **Figure 2**, the translator of (target text) TT4 refers to TT2, but not TT1 or TT3. And TT2 is revised, taking into account TT4. And both TT2(e2) and TT4 serve as sources for a retranslation – chain-translation – into a third language (TL = target language); as for example German Shakespeares served many Polish and Russian translations, and French Shakespeares served Spanish and Arabic

translations, and in our own time foreign-language adaptations of Shakespeare's plays are translated into third languages (for instance, a Dutch *Othello* for children, and a French/Portuguese experimental work based on *Othello*, have both been translated into German in the last decade).

Translating again, and chain-translating, are relatively well documented and understood, although vast areas of the resulting philological mazes, certainly in Shakespeare's case, remain unexplored. Back-translating, on the other hand, is little discussed (**Figure 2**, top right). It is not unknown for foreign-language Shakespeare adaptations to be back-translated into English, for instance when productions visit Anglophone theatres. In fact, the back-translation of Feridun Zaimoglu and Günter Senkel's *Othello*, displayed on supertitles at the Royal Shakespeare Company's Complete Works Festival (April 2006), created a disturbance which eventually propelled me on my current research path: it so shocked Stratford theatre-goers that the festival director called for future foreign-language guest productions to supply a supertitle scripts using *only the actual words of Shakespeare!!* (I've been studying Zaimoglu's work for some years. My article on his *Othello*: "Shakespeare and Othello in Filthy Hell: Zaimoglu and Senkel's Politico-Religious Tradaptation", *Forum for Modern Language Studies* (2010) 46/2: 207-220. I've also back-translated Ulrike Draesner's 'radical translations' of several Sonnets, from her hyper-modern, 'wilfully misunderstanding' German: http://no-mans-land.org, issue 5). The VVV project needs to consider back-translation, not as a creatively disruptive act of cultural trafficking, but methodologically. If we create an interface dedicated to retranslation in multiple languages, what is the default language? If it is English, do we translate everything into English? Does it make any sense to back-translate all the translations of Shakespeare? Clearly not. Samples? Perhaps. But then, do we try – or *how* do we try – to 'normalise' the language of back-translation? Or do we, in the participatory spirit of the web, 'stage' back-translation – and also other aspects of the work such as parallel text alignment – as opportunities for constructive engagement by 'users'?

Sticking with 'translating again', Sehnaz Tahir Gürcaglar, in her article 'Retranslation' in the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies* (2$^{nd}$ edn 2009: 233-6), cites Sirkku Aaltonen's argument that in drama, retranslation "is not only desirable but also often inevitable: with each staging of a foreign play a new translation is normally required (Aaltonen 2003)." But what is the nature of this 'inevitable requirement'? Each new professional production of a foreign-language play is an opportunity to commission a fresh translation, and/or to develop collaboratively a new script that will help the production "make an appreciable difference" in relation to previous productions (the citation, also used by Gürcaglar, is from Venuti's essay 'Retranslations, 2004 [sic]: 29). Presumably the cost of commissioning a theatre translation is lower than the cost of commissioning a translation for book publication. Yet even in the German-speaking world, where the generosity of public arts funding is legendary – and (for example) at least fifteen new *Othello* translations have been written for theatres since 1970, and eight since 2000 (see **Figure 10**, below) – many theatres avoid the costs of commissioning new Shakespeare translations, and even the costs of paying fees for re-use of existing modern translations. Dramaturgs cobble scripts together from several sources, often starting with the canonical Schlegel-Tieck, cutting and pasting passages from modern versions, and rewriting ad hoc (see Maik Hamburger, 'Translating and Copyright', in Ton Hoenselaars, ed, *Shakespeare and the Language of Translation*, 2004: 148-66). The resulting 'working versions' may be archived by the theatre, but are certainly not published either in the book trade, or as theatre scripts. In poorer countries we must expect such practices to be even commoner. When I told

Joanna Rydzewska, a Polish colleague in Swansea, that I was interested in collecting versions of a couplet from *Othello*, and that I already had over 30 different German versions, she said that there would be fewer in Polish – not because the Poles are any less enthusiastic about Shakespeare than the Germans are, but because they have, and always have had, less money. So: there are economic constraints on retranslation, and legal issues to be considered, which limit the production of retranslations and also their accessibility to researchers – these factors need reflection because they go into the constitution of any corpus of retranslations.

Gürcaglar concludes her article by saying that "retranslation [she means: when, where, by and for whom, and just how any act of retranslation is performed] is a function of the dynamics of the target context, rather than a response to any inherent features of the source text" (236). This denial of "inherent source meaning" is a standard move in post-modern translation theory: "is there a source text on this translator's desk?!" – I'm alluding to Stanley Fish's *Is There a Text in this Class?* (1980). Fish's work is a classic elaboration of the deconstructionist argument that the meanings of literary (and other) texts are not 'in' the texts, nor 'in' people's minds, but 'in' the institutionally framed regimes of interpretative discourse which are operative in any time and place. Interpretation is an act which is always at the same time over-determined and under-determined, because the available discourses are at the same time powerful regimes (they determine choices), and – at least in open societies – plural (several different choices are available). Translation is just a special kind of interpretation. But it is quite a special kind, especially when Shakespeare's is the source text.

Sameh Hanna, whose work is cited at length by Gürcaglar, argues that 'making a difference', in relation to previous translations, is the prime motivation of Shakespeare's Arabic retranslators. Drawing on Bourdieu's socio-cultural theory of 'cultural capital' and 'distinction', Hanna argues that the Arabic versions are implicitly in competition to emulate the work of Shakespeare himself, itself, by achieving transhistorical status. Only one Arabic version of Shakespeare can become the one which outlasts all the others, the 'consecrated' one. From Hanna's abstract for this conference:

> [...] the tension between early translations and retranslations [...] is not over which translation is more faithful to the source text, or more accommodating of the readers' needs. It is, rather, over which translation or translator should be classified as 'ahead of time', i.e. avant-garde, and which should be branded 'mainstream', or even 'outmoded'. In view of Bourdieu's sociology, this struggle is [...] over what I would call 'symbolic time'. The 'real time' of any translation is when it is first produced and made available for the public. 'Symbolic time' is the value attached to the translation when it moves away from its 'real time' and becomes history. The struggle is over which translation is to be "thrown outside history" and which should 'pass into history', "into the eternal present of consecrated culture" (Bourdieu, 1996: 156).

But, cogent though this account is, it does not work for German Shakespeares, for two reasons. Firstly, a solidly institutionalised, 'consecrated' German Shakespeare exists – the 'Schlegel-Tieck' edition. It first appeared in the 1830s, has been permanently in print since then, and is constantly re-consecrated by use in teaching, in citations, in theatrical productions, and in spoken language (many lines and phrases have entered spoken German). This is the version with which all retranslations must 'compete'; but the contest is hopeless; no new version can ever hope to dislodge such an

established, canonical text from 'symbolic time'. Secondly, let us imagine for a moment that Schlegel-Tieck were not there, abiding in its eternal present: we would still be looking at such a sheer multiplicity of German retranslations, a well-nigh constant stream of new versions so copious that no retranslator can be even superficially aware of them all, let alone know and work with (or against) them all. How can any translator seriously entertain the hope that theirs will somehow escape the fate of all the others, the fate of becoming historical, rather than becoming history? German retranslators cannot escape the awareness that each version they produce is of its time only. Hence, to the extent that they are rational, their normal motivation is not to transcend history, but to produce work adequate to their moment. Now, of course, translators are not necessarily rational. Some modern Shakespeare retranslators do seem to aspire to create a new, transcendent version, dislodging Schlegel-Tieck. Very clearly this is the case with Hans Rothe in the earlier 20th century: Rothe claimed to be able to intuit Shakespeare's intentions and to make his plays better in German than in any English edition; and perhaps in our own time Frank Günther, though he never makes such extravagant claims, is mounting a real challenge to Schlegel-Tieck, by gradually publishing the first ever one-man Complete Works in German. But these are exceptions: the mass of Shakespeare retranslators are working in the brief light of a commission, a production, a publication, in the shadow of their precursors, and in the shadow of those who will be coming after them, too.

When Jacques Derrida considers French retranslations of Hamlet's phrase "the time is out of joint", he cannot resist punning:

> The translations themselves thus find themselves '*out of joint*'. *However* correct and legitimate they may be and whatever *right* one may acknowledge them to have, they are all disadjusted, since unjust in the gap  [l'écart] that *affects* them: within them, for sure, as their meaning remains necessarily equivocal, then in their relation to one another and thus in their multiplicity, finally or first of all in their irreducible inadequacy to the other language and to the stroke of genius of the event that makes the law, to all the virtualities of the original. The excellence of the translation cannot help. Worse, and this is the whole drama, it can only aggravate or seal the inaccessibility of the other language. A few French examples from among the most remarkable, irreproachable, and interesting: [...]. (*Specters of Marx*, translation adapted by TC from Peggy Kamuf's, 1994: 19.)

"Irreproachable" of course means: not praiseworthy. Derrida goes on to consider four versions, one of them lamentably bad (translating 'time' as 'le temps', as if Hamlet were commenting on the weather). He models a three-fold "gap" of inevitable "injustice" and "inadequacy", a gap which multiplies within each target text, again between all the variant target texts, and again between each one and what he calls, perhaps surprisingly, the "law" of the source text: its inherent being-in-itself, as an original act of creation, replete with all its virtualities. The arch-deconstructionist here seems to be at odds with his acolytes in translation studies, who insist on the "agency" of retranslators, their desire and power not to merely remake, but to make new. No, Derrida is saying: retranslators can make all they like, but they are really remaking; their remaking falls short of the original making; and the more they remake, and indeed the better they remake, the more they set the seal on the unique power of the original language and of the original text. The more they succeed (within the terms of Hanna's Bourdieuesque 'contest'), the more they fail, both individually

and collectively, to approach the original's genius: the guardian spirit, the ghost, the spectre of Shakespeare's writing.

This brings us back to cultural politics: is retranslating (or re-adapting, or re-tradapting) Shakespeare in the end only re-inscribing the legend of Shakespeare our contemporary, the universal icon of Euro-Anglophone authenticity and global power? But that question operates at too global a level. What if we looked at those gaps more closely, and especially the gap between versions, "in their relation to one another and thus in their multiplicity"?

Anthony Pym distinguished "active" from "passive" retranslations. "Passive" ones merely reveal "historical changes in the target culture" – they are predictable rewritings, at least in retrospect, from which we can learn nothing which we could not learn better by studying original cultural expressions from the time and place and in the language concerned. But "active" retranslations "yield insights into the nature and workings of translation itself, into its own special range of disturbances" (*Method in Translation History*, 1998: 82-84). This is a useful hypothesis – certainly more useful than the "retranslation hypothesis" first mooted by Antoine Berman (see Gürcaglar 233), which proposed a normative narrative of successive retranslations progressing from target-culture-oriented approximation towards source-text-attentive precision (such narratives of progress are common in writing on retranslation, but always dubious). Pym's 'active-passive' dualism has the virtue of avoiding such over-optimistic teleology, although it can be reconciled with Berman's evaluative scheme: a more 'active' retranslation is probably (but not necessarily) more source-text-oriented than a 'passive', target-culture-oriented revision. However, the distinction between active and passive seems over-simplistic and reductive. Perhaps this pair of concepts could be considered as a points on a spectrum?

This thought chimes well with Jan Willem Mathijssen's PhD dissertation, from which **Figure 3** is taken: 'The Breach and the Observance. Theatre Retranslation as a Strategy of Artistic Differentiation, with Special Reference to Retranslations of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (1777-2001)' (PhD, Utrecht, 2007, p.26). The thesis is online at: www.dehamlet.nl/the-breach-and-the-observance.htm

Mathijssen was working towards an analysis rather like Hanna's, but he arrived at his concept of "a strategy of artistic differentiation" without the benefit of knowing Bourdieu's work, it seems. Mathijssen plotted his approx 50 retranslations (he was working with theatre scripts only, excluding versions which were published but not apparently performed) on the grid in **Figure 3**. His grid features four spectrums. My summary titles, highlighting the key term 'agency' (as in the accounts of retranslation by Venuti and others) are followed by Mathijssen's own titles for these spectrums, which all run between the poles of Source and Target:

1. The translator's agency ('Initial norm: Invisible > Visible translator')
2. The theatre's agency ('Matricial norms: Text over performance > Performance over text')
3. The target culture's agency ('Textual-linguistic norms – situation: Source culture oriented > Target culture oriented')
4. The target language's agency ('Textual-linguistic norms – heightened language: Poetic function > Communicative function')

This grid effectively breaks down Pym's 'active-passive' dualism or spectrum into four relatively independent components – only relatively independent because, for example, the extent of the

translator's 'agency' in opting for a certain degree of (in)visibility will usually be limited by her or his position as a commissioned writer, who is subject to decisions made by the commissioning institution (i.e. in Mathijssen's cases, a theatre). If the director's wish is (or emerges as) a longer or shorter or less archaic or clearer version, the translator's agency is likely to be circumscribed. (Of great interest here is the work of Finnish scholars who highlight the institutional contexts of retranslation and the key roles played by editors and the like. E.g. Nestori Siponkoski's article, '145 Years of Finnish Shakespeare Retranslation: The Next Move', in *MikaEL: Kääntämisen ja tulkkauksen tutkimuksen symposiumin verkkojulkaisu / Electronic proceedings of the KäTu symposium on translation and interpreting studies* 3 (2009), currently accessible at: http://www.academia.edu/Papers/in/Translation_theory .)

Mathijssen's analytic scheme would merit longer discussion. Its main weakness is that the place of a given version on most of the spectrums can only be plotted intuitively. One can be fairly objective about 'matricial norms' (the second spectrum from left): one assesses whether or not all the words in a target text correspond to all the words in a source text (without reduction, emendation, or addition). But with *Hamlet*, which source text do we mean? Plotting a given script on the other three spectrums calls for even more debatable critical judgments.
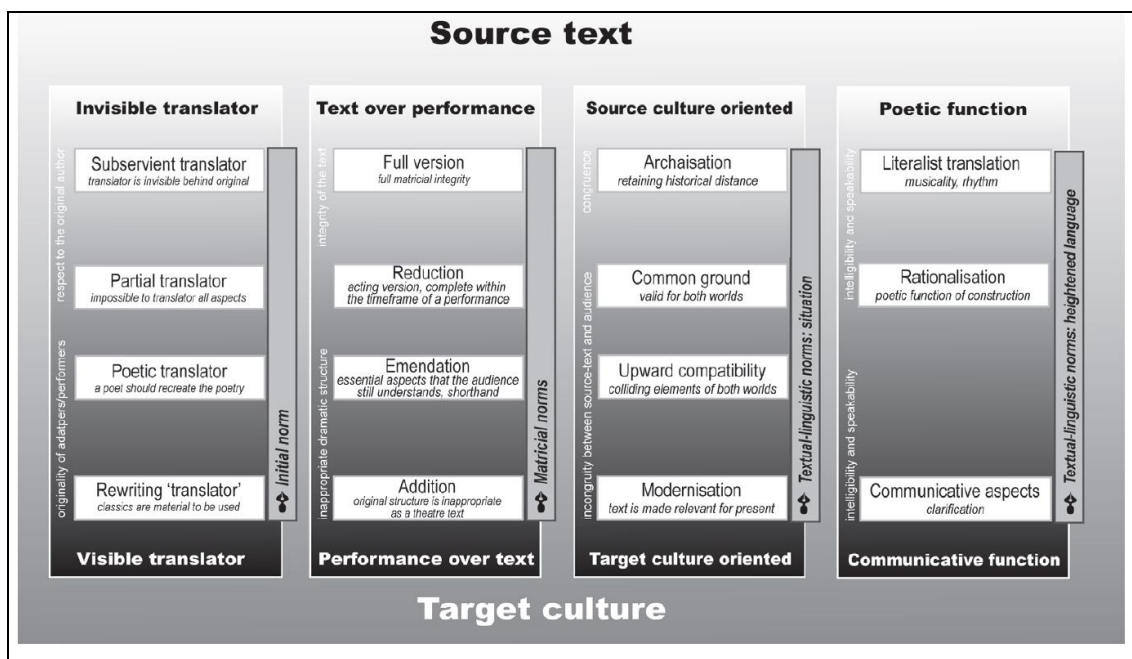


**Figure 3: taken from Jan Willem Mathijssen, 'The Breach and the Observance. Theatre Retranslation as a Strategy of Artistic Differentiation, with Special Reference to Retranslations of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (1777-2001)' (PhD, Utrecht, 2007), p.26.**

It is possible that we lack appropriate language to tabulate the possible kinds and degrees of variation in retranslations. That may be an illusory goal.

Instead, let's try being systematic, without being schematic. I'll now present some results from my work on a sample: the Duke of Venice's parting shot, addressed to Brabantio, but possibly

(depending on how the scene is directed) meant to be heard by others on stage, or overheard by them. This is the couplet which we are 'crowd-sourcing' at www.delightedbeauty.org.

If virtue no delighted beauty lack,
Your son-in-law is far more fair than black.

Crux: "delighted" (delightful)

Puns: "virtue" "delighted" "far more" "fair" "black"

Joke ↔ Serious              Insult ↔ Praise

Addressees? Overhearers?

Duke: status, character

Ideologies of state power, of gender, of race

**Figure 4: Problems for translators in the Duke's last couplet in *Othello***

"Delighted" is a crux in the proper sense: many early editors suspected corruption, and proposed various substitutes – the discussions in scholarly editions to 1886 are resumed in H. H. Furness's *New Variorum Othello* (p. 79, citing Warburton, Johnson, Steevens, Tywhitt, Ritson, Walker, and Delius – accessible at Google Books: link from www.delightedbeauty.org > Englishes > Glosses). At some point, editors decided to gloss briefly, with 'delightful' or 'delighting', but more is going on: there is a pun on 'light', and 'de-light' (darken?), and also an allusion to Brabantio's vicious lines, "... to the sooty bosom / Of such a thing as thou, to fear, not to delight", which makes 'delight' the antithesis of 'fear'. This then affects the way we understand "virtue". Michael Neill (Oxford, 2006) glosses: "Not merely 'moral excellence', but also 'manly strength and courage'; the sense of 'inherent quality' (used e.g. of medicines, herbs, etc.) is probably also present". "Virtue" as 'virtú', manly, dominating courage, involves fearsomeness. And that is also a feature of 'blackness'. "Black" and "fair" in the couplet are not just colours, hues, and degrees of luminescence, and aesthetic qualities, but of course moral qualities, and multivalent in that too. With "fair" and "black" the Duke may well have "(in)auspicious" in mind, thinking as he is of Othello's imminent departure to battle – as well as of his and Desdemona's marriage. This punning implication (and there are others) can be added to those glossed by Neill: "**fair** (a) fair-skinned; (b) beautiful; (c) free from moral blemish / **black** (a) dark-skinned; (b) baneful, malignant, sinister; (c) foul, wicked".

So there is a very rich feast indeed of Derrida's "virtualities" packed into this couplet ("far Moor"?). Above all it is inherently ambiguous in terms of the Duke's presumable conscious and unconscious intentions. Is he cracking a joke? How do people on stage react? Is he praising Othello or (and/or) insulting him, and his race? Is he in control of language as he speaks, or does his couplet 'slip out'? Some recent productions in the USA have cut the couplet, for reasons of political correctness (Alan Dessen, *Rescripting Shakespeare*, 2002, pp.8-9). That tells us nothing about what Shakespeare meant the Duke to mean, or meant him to be thought to mean by his onstage and offstage audiences. But it does tell us that these lines have a power which is tied to the power of the Duke, the head of state in

Venice, both on stage and off stage, as a representative of state power in the abstract. That's why politically correct productions cut these lines (and Othello's own "Haply, because I am black"), but not Brabantio's and others' far more offensive expressions. The issue really is political: it's about what state power can say or can be heard to say. The chief thrust of the couplet lies, after all, in the words "Your son-in-law": these words draw a line under Brabantio's attempt to have the marriage declared invalid. The kinship relation is stated as a given, now, with the force of the law embodied in the Duke. This is a performative, political utterance: a ceremonial, public pronouncement on behalf of the state. Yet it can be played as an aside, as a joke shared between racists. It embeds very ambivalent virtualities of aesthetics, ethics, politics, and social ideologies.

Here are the translations by Zaimoglu and Senkel (the one which started me off) and the others currently in print in Germany (Figure 5).

Solange männliche Tugend mehr zählt als Schönheitsfehler, kann man sagen, Ihr Schwiegersohn ist eher edel als schwarz.                    Zaimoglu/Senkel 2003

Wenn man die Tugend muß als schön erkennen,
Dürft Ihr nicht häßlich Euren Eidam nennen.                    Baudissin 1832

Wenn zur Tugend die Freude an der Schönheit gehört, dann ist Euer Schwiegersohn eher schön [hell] als schwarz.                    Klose 1971

Wenn es der Tapferkeit nicht an froher Schönheit mangelt, ist Euer Schwiegersohn eher weiß als schwarz.                    Bolte/Hamblock 1976

Wenn Ihr der Tugend nicht Schönheit absprechen wollt,
Ist Euer Schwiegersohn nicht dunkel, sondern Gold!                    Fried 1970

Gäbs helle Haut für Edelmut als Preis,
Dann wär Ihr Schwiegersohn statt schwarz reinweiß.                    Günther 1995

**Figure 5. German versions of the Duke's couplet currently in print**

Back-translations:

**Zaimoglu/Senkel** (a theatre script in poetic prose): So long as male virtue counts more than blemishes [beauty-flaws], one can say your son-in-law is more noble than black.
**Baudissin** (the so-called Schlegel-Tieck edition): If one must recognise virtue as beautiful, / you may not call your son-in-law ugly.
**Klose** (a corrective footnote to the 'Schlegel-Tieck' text in a cheap [Reclam] edition): If the joy in beauty belongs to virtue, then your son-in-law is more beautiful [bright] than black. (note: German 'hell', back-translated here with 'bright', as in light, also means 'light', as in skin.)
**Bolte/Hamblock** (prose translation facing the English text in a cheap [Reclam] edition): If courage does not lack happy beauty, your son-in-law is more white than black.
**Fried** (poetic verse): If you do not wish to deny beauty to virtue, / your son-in-law is not dark but gold! (note: in the German, 'Gold' is the noun, not adjectival.)
**Günther** (poetic verse): If light skin were a prize for noble-mindedness, / then your son-in-law would be pure white instead of black.

In such a semantically and ideologically rich passage, especially one which rhymes, especially a parting couplet, translators work especially hard to "make a difference". We can locate the specific difference made by each one, by close comparative reading. For example, Zaimoglu and Senkel uniquely choose a term of class difference to translate "fair": "edel" ("noble"). This makes the Duke's remark politically racist (a complacent expression of an equation between "black" and "socially degraded", "not of our superior class"). The choice is consistent with the writers' critique of contemporary racism as a political phenomenon. Their Duke belongs to the same club as their Brabantio, who will turn up in Cyprus in Act 4 and expound his neo-fascistic views on race politics to Iago, sounding very like a Berlusconi or a Sarkozy.

This strategy directly reverses that of Günther, whose *Othello* was conceived as an act of anti-racist intervention in contemporary German culture. He published it with an afterword explaining his decision not to translate the subtitle at all, and to render "Moor" with the neutral "Schwarzer" throughout, rather than risk reproducing the current language of populist racist violence. Günther's Duke speaks as the representative of a liberal, pedagogical state. He alludes, in a hypothetical grammatical construction, to the commonplace equation between dark and light skin and moral darkness and lightness, imagining a parable of metamorphosis: transformation between outward colours implies the arbitrariness and superficiality of 'racial' appearances. In doing so, this Duke mocks the ideological belief in such an equation: "pure white" sarcastically emphasises his distance from ideologies of 'racial purity'.

In these two Dukes we have two views of the contemporary German state in relation to race politics: Günther's represents the benign state which campaigns against popular racism, while Zaimoglu and Senkel's represents the state in (or at risk of falling into) the hands of a racist, neo-fascist elite.

Translators' choices do not emerge as purely individual acts, but as moments in transindividual, cultural political narratives. Choices are indeed expressions of the translators' agency, but they are also over-determined by their (only partly self-chosen) positions in relation to contemporary regimes of discourse. And contemporary regimes of discourse are also historical: they are engaged in reproducing and contesting the afterlives of expressions of previous regimes.

Baudissin's version (the 'Schlegel-Tieck', the still-canonical version) elides 'colour' references, shuts off any possibility of interpreting the Duke as joking, and transforms the syntax so as to give him an imperative voice. **Figure 6** shows how this strategy derives from efforts to establish an 'idealist' version of the couplet, in the work of Voss and Schiller, collaborating in 1805. One of Voss's drafts has a pun in it ('weis' meaning 'wise', 'weiß' meaning 'white' – a pun which relates to Iago's later quayside couplet jokes, as indeed does Baudissin's choice of 'häßlich', 'ugly', for 'black'; but that would be a detour too far, here). That humorous moment was cut from the final versions. Flatter – writing in exile, publishing shortly after the end of the war – is the only retranslator who later adopted the 'no-colour' strategy. No later retranslators give the Duke an imperative, but this is the Duke who enters German 'consecrated cultural time'. He represents benign, utterly serious, imperious-imperative-imperial authority – an idealised sovereign, who admonishes racists without directly referencing race difference, leaving his position on *that* matter perfectly ambiguous.

(To save space here, I don't give all the back-translations: see www.delightedbeauty.org > German.)

**Figure 6: Variants of Baudissin's translation strategy**

**Figure 7** shows how Günther's version works a variation on a novel syntactical theme established by Rothe, whose version, published shortly after the war, not only uses hypothetical grammar, but introduces Othello's proper name and the pronoun 'we'. His Duke seems to be alluding to the recent (Nazi) past: 'we' would be 'darker' than Othello, if our 'inner appearance' (paradox? nonsense?) were what counted. The idea of colour metamorphosis then re-emerges in the 1990s. Did these retranslators know Rothe's work and adapt it? Did Günther know Motschach's relatively obscure version? Or is it just the topicality of race, migration, and multiculturalism, and especially the upsurge in racist violence in newly united Germany, in the early 1990s, that prompted both to re-invent a 'pedagogical', parable-telling Duke?

**Figure 7: Variants of Günther's strategy**

**Figure 8** shows a history for Zaimoglu and Senkel's version. These are Dukes who speak a fascistic language: the first three are from the period of fascism's emergence and pre-eminence, and nothing suggests that these Dukes are not meant to be taken seriously as serious representatives of state

authority. They emphasise colour difference, they emphasise gender difference, and their striking use of pronouns (in Engel and Zeynek) corresponds to their Dukes' personal status as charismatic leaders: the Duke/Doge as 'Führer', 'Duce'. Rothe's version belongs in this series, too, although he is also – it seems – turning against fascist discourse. Zaimoglu and Senkel's version of the couplet contains an excellent translators' in-joke in 'Schönheitsfehler', a compound noun which is a hyper-literal translation of Shakespeare's 'beauty lack'. 'Schönheit' is 'beauty' and 'Fehler' (mistake, error) shares a root with 'fehlen', 'to be lacking'. The compound means 'blemish' or 'flaw' (as of damaged or shop-soiled goods). The notion of 'passing' is all but explicit in all these versions, with all its racially offensive – intended – implications: Othello is a 'black' who can 'pass' for ('as good as') 'white', despite the 'slight flaw' of his coloration. Zaimoglu and Senkel add a sense that the Duke regards Othello as a 'thing' – just as Brabantio does.

Fried's version seems to belong in this set, but of all translations of the couplet, it is perhaps the most fertile in its own ambiguities. The choice of 'dunkel' ('dark') for black is only found in Engel, Rothe (where the comparative makes a difference), and Fried. This word seems to me to have fascistic-racist overtones, since in fascist discourse 'black' is commonly an honorific. And Fried's unique choice of 'Gold' (the noun) for 'fair' allows several interpretations, but one would be that the Duke is referring to Othello as valuable property – a commodity, a thing, or a slave. Fried's *Othello* was dedicated sarcastically to the British Home Secretary Reginald Maudlin, for his hypocrisy in rejecting Rudi Dutschke's application for political asylum. Fried's Duke seems as criticisable, as a representative of the state, as is Zaimoglu and Senkel's. But the couplet can be read/acted in other ways.

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*(Neo-)Fascistic discourses of physical colour, gender, and personal power*

Leiht Tugend ihre Farbe dem Gesicht,
Ist Euer Eidam weiß, ein Schwarzer nicht.          Wolff 1920


Spricht man von Tugend, als von einem Licht,
Scheint Euer Eidam mir so dunkel nicht.          Engel 1939


Wenn Mannesmut nicht Reiz und Glanz entbehrt,
So ist er, wenn auch schwarz, höchst schätzenswert.          Zeynek c.1945


Wenn Ihr der Tugend nicht Schönheit absprechen wollt,
Ist Euer Schwiegersohn nicht dunkel, sondern Gold!          Fried 1970


Solange männliche Tugend mehr zählt als Schönheitsfehler, kann man sagen, Ihr
    Schwiegersohn ist eher edel als schwarz.
                                                                Zaimoglu & Senkel 2003

**Figure 8: Variants of Zaimoglu and Senkel's strategy**

To examine each retranslation and see how it is inserted into the history of retranslations is – I hope – fascinating. But what about trying to obtain an overview of their variability?
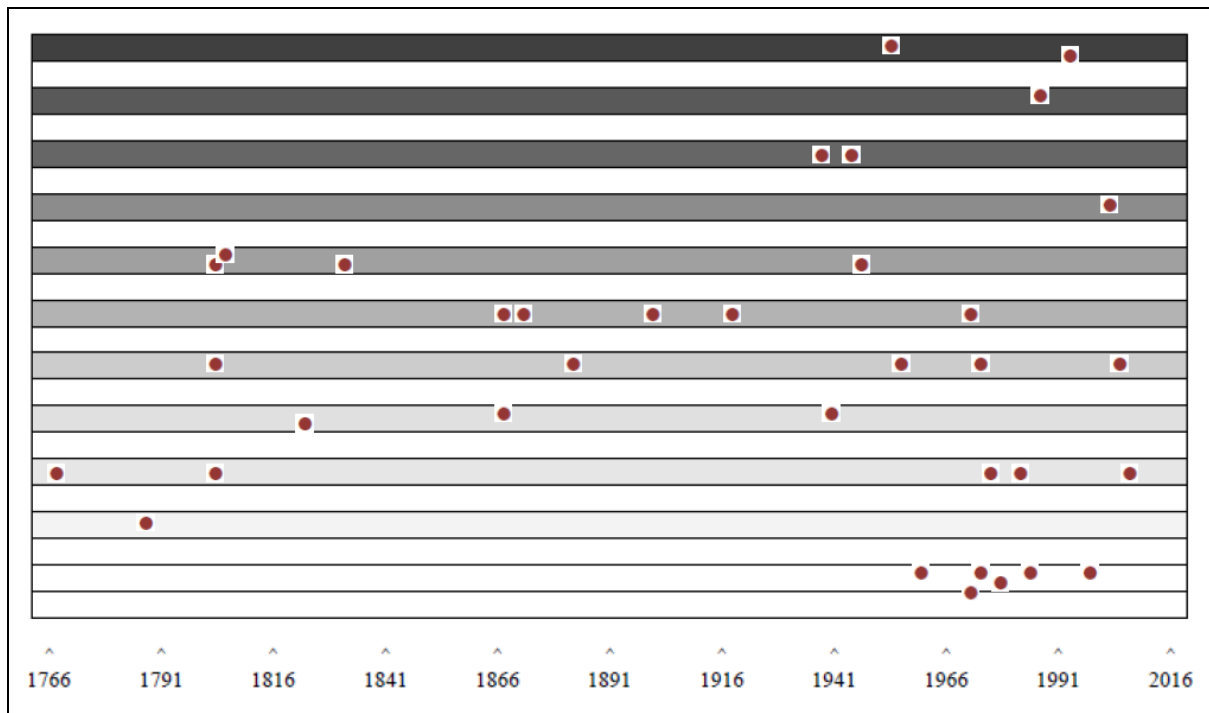


**Figure 9: Relative originality in 35 versions of the Duke's couplet, 1766-2006**

In **Figure 9**, versions of the Duke's couplet are plotted on a timeline, from Wieland's (1766) – to Karbus's (2006) (one more has been announced, by von Mayerburg – see bottom right in **Figure 10**). The **vertical axis** (here and in **Figure 10**) represents 'relative originality': from lightest at the bottom (low relative originality) to darkest at the top (high relative originality).

The '**relative originality quotient**' of each version was calculated by counting ('by hand') variation in renderings of 'virtue', 'delighted', 'beauty', 'fair', 'black', the syntax, and use of pronouns. For each of these source-specific elements, one or two norms emerge from the set of retranslations. For example, 'black' is normally (± 85%) 'schwarz' ('black'), and 'fair' is normally (± 75%) either 'schön' ('beautiful') or 'weiß' ('white'). Translations scored a point for every deviation from a statistical norm; for abnormal syntax, or use of pronouns, two points. At the middle of the vertical axis is an 'average' position. Versions low down on the vertical axis make very few choices which depart from the norm. Versions high up make a lot of unusual choices. Relative originality quotients are calculated with reference to the set of versions and their aggregate choices, not to the source text.

**Figure 10** shows the results in more detail for the period since 1939 (when Erich Engel's script was performed at the Deutsches Theater, Berlin). My corpus of German *Othellos* is much closer to being complete for this period than for earlier periods. This graphic gives translators' names, and distinguishes between three translation text genres (the works of Schröder and Fried don't quite fit any of the three, but are closest to the first genre): first, multi-volume publications with a large selection of Shakespeare's works, designed to be read for pleasure, but also acted; second, study

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editions, with translations designed neither to be acted, nor to be read for pleasure; and third, theatre scripts – texts not accessible through the book trade, but from theatre publishers (via the trade catalogue at www.theatertexte.de). These are for acting, not for reading. I also include (top right) some recent adaptations, theatre scripts which do not translate the couplet in question.
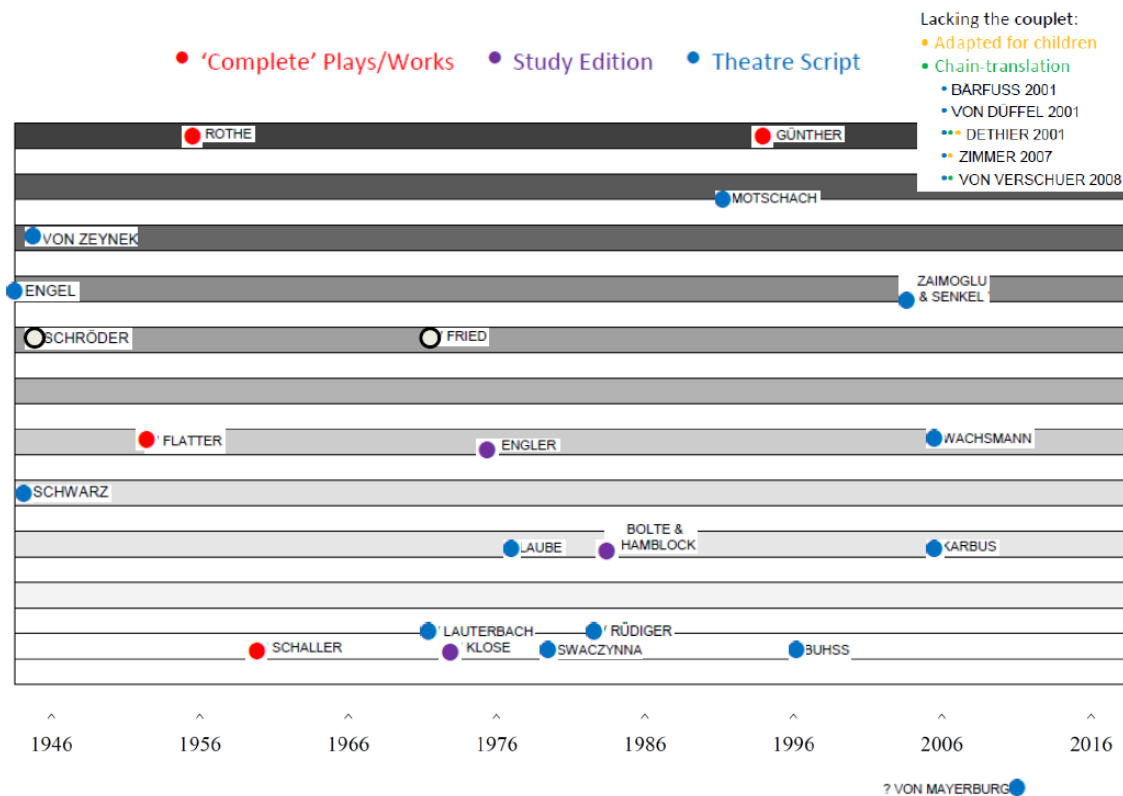


**Figure 10: Relative originality of German retranslations of the Duke's couplet, 1939-2011**

There were several German 'adaptations' of *Othello* in the early nineteenth century – comical burlesques. I can find no more until the 2000s, when suddenly they proliferate (some for children, some translated into German from third languages). Also around the year 2000, *Othello* overtook *Macbeth* as a favoured source text for German translators and adaptors, for the first time. I calculated this by counting all the editions of both plays recorded in Blinn and Schmidt's compendious bibliography *Shakespeare – deutsch* (2003), as well as all the scripts of both plays which are accessible via the www.theatertexte.de catalogue. This calculation confirms Edward Pechter's claim in 1999 that "*Othello* has become the tragedy of choice for the present generation" (cited in Neill, ed., *The Oxford Shakespeare: Othello*, 2006, p.1). It also highlights the need to generate multiple graphics of this kind, before generalisations can be risked.

It must be stressed that the graphics in **Figures 9 and 10** show only retranslations which differ in the Duke's couplet. There are more retranslations than these, in total: especially in the 19th century, many retranslators reproduce Baudissin ('Schlegel-Tieck'), or Schiller, over long or short stretches. However, only one retranslator I know of since 1939 has reproduced a precursor's Duke's couplet (Karl Brunner's study edition, 1947, borrowing from Baudissin).

So, what does **Figure 10** tell us?

The **red dots** show Austrian (Flatter), West German (Rothe), and East German (Schaller) editions of the complete works, or at least major selections, being produced in the 1950s: rival efforts to re-establish Shakespeare as integral to post-Nazi national cultures. Unsurprisingly (to German Shakespeare specialists, at least), these dots show that Rothe's version is by far the most original, or abnormal; Flatter's is average (judicious); and Schaller's is very normal (unadventurous). Surprisingly, though, the fourth red dot, Günther's 1995 version, is just as abnormal as Rothe's. Is this true of all Günther's work? Rothe is notorious for looseness and wilfulness as a translator: persecuted by the Nazis, he is still routinely treated with disdain by German Shakespeare translation scholars. Günther is among the most celebrated living Shakespeare translators, widely viewed as brilliantly combining playability and closeness to the source. That would lead us to expect a translation with a roughly average relative originality quotient. Is it just that this couplet has prompted him to make, for him, untypically bold choices – choices which in fact closely resemble Rothe's in key ways? What will we find when we carry out more systematic analysis of a larger sample of his and other translators' work, or indeed whole plays?

The three **purple dots** show the study editions. Balz Engler's is surprisingly 'relatively original', by the standards of the period: the 1970s are a time of cautious theatre scripts, too, and indeed the run of rather similar, cautious 1970s versions makes a large contribution to constituting the statistical average of the entire set. (Engler's version gives 'licht', roughly meaning 'brightly-lit', for 'delighted', a unique choice; and 'hell' for 'fair', a rare choice. Reminder: all the versions are at [www.delightedbeauty.org](www.delightedbeauty.org) > Multilingual Materials > German.)

The **historical distribution** of retranslations in **Figure 10** is very interesting. We can see two periods of intense, simultaneous *Othello* retranslation activity, when retranslators are making highly differentiated choices: spread vertically, some in the upper half of the graphic. These periods are the Second World War, and the early 2000s. Apart from these periods, retranslations appear at seemingly random intervals, but not significantly clustered. (The cluster around 1805, visible on **Figure 9**, represents Voss and Schiller's multiple drafts.) Four new *Othellos* were made between 1939 and 1945 – only Engel's, as far as I know, was performed – and this might be six if, as I suspect, Flatter and Rothe wrote their *Othellos*, during the war, in exile, only publishing them in the 1950s. Six new *Othellos* were made between 2003 and 2006: three with the couplet; three without. This looks like a very strong correlation between *Othello*-work and periods of ethnocultural-ideological warfare: I refer to the Nazi war of annihilation against Jews, Slavs, and other groups defined as 'other' in 'racial' and ideological terms; and to the post-9/11 'war on terror' and European Islamophobic panic, along with German involvement in the war in Afghanistan. But this can only be a tentative finding. We will need to see whether the *Othello* pattern departs from Shakespeare retranslation patterns in general.

It must also be noted that the post-2000 efflorescence is anticipated in the 1990s – a period of great public debate about multiculturalism and migration in the German-speaking world, closely connected with the national identity crisis ensuing upon unification. There was a lull in new *Othello*-work during the 1980s: why? And why did the 1960s also see no new *Othellos*? In the years after unification, years of national identity crisis and widespread violence against 'foreigners', the versions of Motschach and Günther broke away sharply from the 'normal' run which had been established – at least in this couplet – since 1970. The other version of the 1990s, by Buhss, premiered in 1996 and

is still being revived. It is very unoriginal in the Duke's couplet, but in general Buhss is intentionally controversial: responding to Günther's would-be anti-racist self-censorship, Buhss subtitled the play *Venedigs Neger* ('Venice's Nigger'). Clearly, *Othello* has become a field of cultural battle as never before – not since the Nazi period, anyway.

**Figure 11** extends the work in progress to French sources; here I am indebted to Matthias Zach for compiling 22 of them. I can't here go in to the very different history of the couplet in French, or discuss any of the "remarkable, irreproachable, interesting" individual versions. (A short essay in the forthcoming *Cambridge World Shakespeare Encyclopedia* does that, though without giving the French or German – back-translations only!) I just want to point out the remarkable differences at the level of *aggregate* choices again, viewing the two sets synchronically.

This table is based on 33 German and 22 French versions, dividing each group into 'authors' and 'others', where 'authors' are bearers of prestigious names – either known for their work as writers, as well as translators, or especially known as Shakespeare translators. The names of authors are historical: they belong to culture as it is still transmitted in our institutions of learning and teaching; the names of 'others' belong to history. The distinction is imperfect, and it gets harder to decide, the closer one comes to the present. But a little arbitrariness does not matter: we are only looking for broad statistical correlations and differences.

| BLACK | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | German 'authors' (11) | German 'others' (21) | | French 'authors' (11) | French 'others' (11) |
| null | 5 | 2 | | 1 | 1 |
| schwarz/noir | 4 | 18 | | 10 | 10 |
| dunkel | 2 | 1 | | | |
| ugly | 1 | | | | |

| FAIR | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | German 'authors' (11) | German 'others' (21) | | French 'authors' (11) | French 'others' (11) |
| null | 2 | 1 | | 2 | |
| schön/beau | 1 | 12 | | 4 | 3 |
| weiß/blanc | 4 | 4 | | | 2 |
| hell/brillant | 1 | 2 | | 1 | 3 |
| liebenswert/ agréable/plaisant | 1 | | | 2 | 2 |
| blond | | 2 | | | |
| other | 4 | 1 | | 2 | 1 |

'Authors': Wieland, Voss (3 versions), Schiller, Baudissin, Gundolf [George], Rothe, Fried, Günther, Zaimoglu/Senkel; Le Tourneur (2), de Vigny (2), Hugo (2), Aicard, Robin, Jouve, Bonnefoy, Déprats.

**Figure 11: German and French, 'authors' and 'others': choices for 'black' and 'fair'**

What **Figure 11** shows is that in German, 'authors' and 'others' tend to make rather different translation choices. For instance, 4 of 11 'authors' choose 'schwarz' for 'black', but 18 of 21 'others'

make that choice; and only 1 of 11 'authors' chooses 'schön' for 'fair', but 12 of 21 'others' make that choice. In French, the corresponding differences are very slight. So it looks as if the notable German Shakespeare retranslators, those who have a public name (at their time of writing: a name to earn, or a name to preserve and defend), work hard to distinguish themselves from the run of working retranslators. Not so the notable French Shakespeare retranslators: no difference is apparent between choices made by historical names and by names from history.

What does this difference mean? Will we still find it if we carry out a similar analysis of a larger, perhaps more random – less ideologically loaded – sample of retranslated Shakespeare? Will we find it if we take a set of retranslations of sources other than Shakespeare? It is well known that in German, more is at stake in Shakespeare retranslation than in French. Shakespeare is (or is he, still?) more of a foreign curiosity in French; but in German, since Goethe's time, there is an anxious need to *own* him, or his work – a desire which is bound up with ideas about the national culture, cultural identity, European culture and identity, and these ideas are in turn bound up with ideas about the state and power, and the public, and the role of the writer, the intellectual... So Shakespeare translation is, in brief, more politicised in German than in French. But is that the point? Or is it that public culture in general, in French, is less differentiated than in German: in terms of geographical differences, historical breaks, and cultural class divides – say, between a (not so small) minority of self-consciously 'elite', 'active' retranslators, and the 'passive' rest? Or...?

At least, the study of retranslations *en gros* seems able to throw up interesting questions, which demand (as Moretti puts it) "fruitful doing" – for example, building datasets, creating visualisations, and above all "sharing raw materials, evidence—*facts*—with each other" – "more than clever thinking" (2011, conclusion).

Swansea, 19 April 2011

PS – Nevertheless, a final thought: metaphors for translation are many and varied, but perhaps this one is new and even useful: having in mind Derrida's "event that makes the law", the reader should address the source text, keeping the translation in view, saying: ".... Your son-in-law ......"